

**School of Design and Art**

**Fugitive Immensity: Sensations of Sublimity through Quotidian Car  
Travel**

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## Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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## Abstract

Rooted in lived experience and unfolded through exegetical enquiry and studio-based investigation, this research attempts to formulate the sensation of “quotidian-sublimity” and consider how it arises during everyday car travel. Drawing on and departing from existing theories of the sublime, quotidian-sublimity is conceptualised as a sensation of immensity so great that it forms an impression of infinity. It is characterised by a cognitive threshold and lingering sense of awareness, yet is not grand or majestic but irreducibly involved with the ordinary. Analysing the role of daydream and habit as conduits for this sensation, experiences of car travel are examined through intersecting ideas about landscape, mobility and the travelling body. An expanded photographic practice, incorporating animation, painting and solvents, is employed in seeking quotidian-sublimity through art. Addressing the seeming paradox involved in making art about an ineffable subject, photography-based works are used to approach the quotidian-sublime indirectly, to orbit it rather than attempt to evoke or illustrate it. As such, this research aims to develop the quotidian-sublime through theoretical and studio-based enquiry whilst allowing it to remain fundamentally fugitive.



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# Introduction

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A few years ago I experienced a sensation, which wasn't a starting point or pivotal moment for this research, but which represented for me an emerging sense of something hitherto unexamined. I was in the passenger's seat of a car, travelling North along the base of the Perth hills. The highway was an accretion of scrubby median strip trees, cars spaced far apart and cirrus clouds scudding through the sky. I was thinking of nothing in particular, listening to the radio, watching speed pull the landscape into threads of colour and then knit it back together into signs, rocks and brake lights. Lulled by the changing timbres of road noise and the almost imperceptible vibrations of the seat, the world felt reassuringly torpid, a mid-afternoon daydream sequestered in motion. I looked up at a blue sky and lost myself amongst constellations of dust on the windshield – and that's roughly where the sensation began.

Mediated by the glass window and metabolised by movement, I found myself caught between the car interior and an imagined inhabiting of the world constituted by the highway; I was both within and without, merging with the landscape across a rapidly dissolving boundary. The roadscape stretched out in all directions, a multitude of mundane objects; crash barrier, trailer, weeds, overpass, no end to their limitless permutations. This impression grew down through the depths of my daydream, swept out in the slipstream of the car, and reached into a reservoir of similar memories, similar roads. Just for a moment, all the roads I knew or had forgotten swelled behind the image of the highway in one immense, ungraspable form. I was overwhelmed, aware of an extent I couldn't grasp, unable to see the limits of what I felt. When I tried

to hold onto the sensation, it fled, slipped back into the familiar shapes of median strips and cars, clouds and windshield dust. Yet, an imprint of the experience was left, a kind of awareness – that of an immensity so great, it could be infinite.

It was from this experience and others like it that I began to formulate the concept of “quotidian-sublimity”. The quotidian-sublime is characterised by a sensation of immensity that eludes grasp but produces the impression of infinity,<sup>1</sup> similar to many theoretical renderings of the sublime throughout history. Yet, in a crucial way it departs from these, shedding the unnecessary ornament of grandeur and majesty, and instead finding itself irreducibly involved with the ordinary. I outline the quotidian-sublime as a fugitive sensation of immensity that arises through the everyday, contingent on ordinariness and yet suggesting the infinite – it exists beyond cognitive grasp but leaves a lingering impression or awareness of infinity. It is important to note that the sublime and quotidian are not perfect opposites. They do not form a binary, but rather are asymmetrically linked. There is something of a paradox in their coupling, as the sublime usually precludes the everyday, and the everyday seems uncondusive to the sublime. Yet in this research, which arises from the example of lived experience, the two are seen together, formulated through their entangling and the somewhat uneasy co-existence they eke out in moments of emergence. Returning to my initial experiences of quotidian-sublimity, I chose to focus on car travel, as an instance in which the importance of movement and landscape could be examined, and the significant catalysing effects of daydream taken into account.<sup>2</sup> The idea of the “everyday” as a broad category is not deemed as useful as considering the specific examples

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1. In this research, infinity is defined as a lack of limits; it is the quality of boundlessness, limitlessness or endlessness. Though infinity exists, it cannot be sensibly expressed or experienced, only sensed as an impression. The idea of infinity is used to describe the quality of limitlessness, which exceeds comprehension.
  2. However, I do not propose that the experience of quotidian-sublimity is limited to the car.

of landscape and the car, everyday spaces with their own particular sets of qualities and experiences. As such, analysis of the everyday will be limited to its intersections with landscape and car travel. The “quotidian” of the quotidian-sublime thus refers to curbsides, windshields and brake lights. Formulating the quotidian-sublime, analysing how it can arise during car travel, and examining ways it can be approached through visual art, form the core aims of this research.

In opening this exegesis with a personal recollection of quotidian-sublimity, I intended to emphasise the roots of this research in lived experience. The quotidian-sublime is not an isolated theoretical construct, nor an attempt to visually conjure a sensation into being, but rather a fugitive experience which I seek to define through a combination of exegetical theorisation and art-making. It is important, then, to note that this research traces the quotidian-sublime along two threads, namely, the exegesis and creative practice. Along the thread of exegetical enquiry I draw on the core phenomenological idea that understanding is derived from experience, in order to keep the concept of quotidian-sublimity as close as possible to its experiential substrate. The phenomenological idea of embodiment, borrowed from philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, underlines this approach to sublimity and car travel; as theorist Joseph Parry points out, the mind is understood to be situated in the body, and so it is the body that perceives (2011). This underlying phenomenological tendency informs the subsequent conceptualisations of quotidian-sublimity, though this research is not broadly defined by a phenomenological framework. The thread of theoretical enquiry seeks sublimity whilst situating it in the realm of experience rather than rhetoric. In the corresponding thread of creative practice, the methodology is not quite as clear. Photography is the primary medium through which the quotidian-sublime is sought, though it is an expanded photographic process, one that requires solvents, paint brushes and video to be fully realised. Photography is significant as it is conventionally considered to have an ontological tie to the visible world, and though I argue that this

assumption is false, it can be exploited in order to create works that press against the invisible. Creative practice as research does not follow a linear progression – it diverts through intuitive channels and follows tangents, embracing the unexpected and unpredictable. Here, daydream becomes not just a subject of analysis, but a method in itself, a way to pull the loose threads together. The thread of creative enquiry meanders, becomes coiled, knotted, and interweaves itself with everyday life. Thus, part of this research finds itself constantly back in the car, returning to lived experience. Practice-led research is permeable, and life continually leaks through; exegetical and practice-based investigations are intertwined, through common roots and goals. Throughout this research, the two threads of theory and practice meet and diverge, and the places where they intersect will hopefully shed some light on the slippery subject of the quotidian-sublime.

In seeking to formulate and make art about the quotidian-sublime, it is important to address an issue that seems problematic; that the sublime, by nature, is ineffable. By attending to this here, I set the tone of the research and provide a brief definition of quotidian-sublimity. As will be expanded upon in Chapter One, this research draws upon historical and contemporary theories of sublimity, identifying similarities and proposing three fundamental characteristics of the sublime: firstly, that it is a sensation of immensity so great it suggests infinity; secondly, this immeasurable sensation occurs beyond cognitive grasp or understanding and so is ineffable; and thirdly, that despite this, a lingering impression, or awareness, of the existence of infinity remains. It is the second point in particular that seems to problematise analysing the sublime. However, it is imperative to note that though the sublime cannot be written, it can be written about. This provides a functional way of approaching the sublime in this research: a method of indirectness. The exegesis and artworks do not seek to recreate quotidian-sublimity, an impossible task, but rather aim to orbit it, to press as close as possible. An indirect, even peripheral approach is utilised in writing and making art

“about” the sublime. As such, the tone of this research is hopeful – it proceeds through the understanding that something can be said about the quotidian-sublime, and attempting to formulate it is not an exercise in futility. A particular usage of language bears out this approach; words like “immensity” are employed to suggest that whilst infinity is impossible to grasp, it is the impression of infinity that is important.<sup>3</sup> So, although one of the central traits of sublimity is its existence beyond conscious grasp and resulting inexpressibility, this research approaches it indirectly, with the belief that quotidian-sublimity can still be conceptualised and considered in a meaningful way.

This exegesis develops the idea of quotidian-sublimity in car travel across the following four chapters: “Seeking the Quotidian-Sublime”, “Winding Daydreams Around Traffic Cones”, “Pressing Against the Invisible” and “Moving Through Images”. Each integrates theoretical and practical investigation, though this is less the case in Chapter One, which engages in more theoretical analysis in order to provide a working concept of quotidian-sublimity at the outset. The core focus of each chapter can be indicated by key phrases: quotidian-sublime (Chapter One), landscape and car travel (Chapter Two), photography (Chapter Three), and movement and video (Chapter Four). Nevertheless, these only provide the most macro overview; the central concerns represented by each term find their way into every chapter, attesting to the way in which they are inextricably linked. Thus, photographers are discussed in Chapter One, movement in Chapter Two, suburban landscapes in Chapter Three and car travel in Chapter Four, with sublimity appearing across all. In a way, the chapters are paired, with One and Three focusing more with sublime ineffability, and Two and Four on mobility and landscape, but again the main concepts permeate them all.

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3. The last section of Chapter One engages in a more in-depth examination of these relationships, through Burke’s notion of sublime boundlessness, and the Romantic idea of the fragment. Chapter Three introduces the idea of “photographic irony” as a way of framing the capacity of visual art to suggest invisible sensations, focusing specifically on art making and sublime ineffability.

The first chapter, "Seeking the Quotidian-Sublime", formulates the concept of quotidian-sublimity predominantly through theoretical examination. The lineage of the sublime is traced through history, moving from its etymological interiors out into landscape, with different theories being drawn upon and departed from in conceptualising the quotidian-sublime. This ranges from the interstitial immensity of Baroque ceiling painting, through Edmund Burke's "quaking nerves" as an embodied sublime, to the contemporary considerations of theorist Markus Poetzsch who connects the quotidian and sublime in poetry. Immanuel Kant's idea of the sublime as human ascendancy over nature will be analysed, and rejected, as it relies on a separation of mind and world which this research disagrees with. Instead, daydream will be investigated as a merger of worlds, and as such, a catalyst for experiences of quotidian-sublimity. Daydream's own paradox, the coupling of wakeful self and dreaming self, will be scrutinised through the writing of Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan. Reverie here is a state that dissolves the boundaries between self and world, and allows the immensity of both to coalesce. Habit, posited as a kind of "body-thinking", is proposed as a substrate for daydream, an embodied encounter in which intentional thought recedes and the dreamer becomes open to the world. This idea recurs throughout the exegesis, important both as a ground for quotidian-sublimity and an element of everyday car travel, drawing upon a number of theorists, from nineteenth century philosopher Felix Ravaisson to cultural geographer J.D. Dewsbury. Chapter One closes with a consideration of the quotidian-sublime in art, elaborating on the idea that it is the impression of infinity, rather than actual infinity, which is significant to the sublime. An analysis of sublime expression in art follows concerns from Caspar David Friedrich to the contemporary work of Julian Bell, seeking the sublime not just in subject matter but in the use of materials. Finally, "Seeking the Quotidian-Sublime" ends with a look at an artist whose work can be said to suggest the quotidian-sublime, Ed Ruscha. His photobooks form a point of departure for considering immensity and ordinariness intertwined. At this point, the sublime has arrived, from etymological origins, through the vast mountain ranges of Romanticism, to a landscape much more quotidian.

The enfolding of landscape and traveller forms the focus of Chapter Two, “Winding Daydreams Around Traffic Cones”, which brings consideration of the quotidian-sublime to experiences of car travel. This chapter begins by defining landscape against certain restrictive definitions, such as the idea that it is a neutral backdrop, a container for experience or a set of symbols. Instead, by analysing theories of space by Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey and Tim Ingold, landscape is examined as an enfolded, unfixed, temporal multiplicity of objects and experiences. John Wylie’s and Harriet Hawkins’ ideas are also invoked in arguing that human relationships to landscape can be embodied and proximate rather than distanced and disconnected. Aspects of these approaches to landscape are identified in the work of artists Peter Lanyon, Tommy Hilding and Tom McGrath, whose streetscapes and aerial views further incorporate a moving vantage point. These works betray a peripheral approach to place, in which elements of landscape overlap, intersect and blend together. The process of layering, using digital and material methods, is investigated through a series of artworks I made for the exhibition *New Photography*, which merge daydream into the accumulated heterogeneity of landscape. Perth’s roadscape is scrutinised as the sites of this research; Marc Augé’s pervasive idea of the highway as a “non-place” is critiqued through Peter Merriman’s idea of driving materialities, and the concept of “edgelands” is proposed as a more fitting description for transient, peripheral landscapes. These considerations lead into the final part of the chapter, an examination of car travel as a site for daydream and quotidian-sublimity. Here, the idea of passage is considered in terms of how the traveller seeds the world with experience, and has experience inscribed upon them. Through an oscillation from the specific to the multitudinous, the interrelation of travelling body, landscape and sublimity are examined in this chapter, wound together through daydreams and traffic cones.

Chapter Three, “Pressing Against the Invisible”, grapples with the ineffable element of quotidian-sublimity through photographic practice. As mentioned earlier, photography

is the main medium utilised in this research, but it is an expanded approach that dismantles some of the limiting assumptions about what it means to create a photograph. In doing so, I formulate the theory of “photographic irony”, the use of a medium conventionally tied to visibility to suggest the invisible. Photography occupies a tenuous position in which it is considered both ontologically tied to the world, as indexical image or reproduction, and yet is not thought of as objective. In arguing against the evidential status of the photograph expounded by theorists such as Roland Barthes and artists like Jeff Wall, this research seeks to escape the restraints of depiction and embraces the idea that photographic artworks are reconstructions, drawing instead on ideas from James Elkins and Lyle Rexer. Artists who eschew the camera as a pointing device, including Uta Barth and Eliza Hutchison, are examined here. As such, the artworks created in this research are “undisclosed images” that aim to press against sublimity, bringing visible and invisible together. The method of solvent wash is important in this, a process involving direct application of solvents to a photographic surface to disperse the image. Importantly, this does not add or remove visual information from a photograph, but rather pushes it into a newly ungraspable arrangement. The role of digital processes is also considered here, through a rejection of the idea that digital photographs lack tactility. This chapter closes with a closer look at the act of taking a photograph, drawing on approaches from photoconceptualism to further dispute the idea that a photograph is simply a reproduction. Returning to Ruscha, considered alongside Robert Rooney, snapshotting as a method of simultaneously embracing the typical and acknowledging the distinctive is elaborated through suburban photoconceptualism and a focus on roads. In a sense, then, this chapter moves in reverse, opening with ideas about what a photograph is, shifting back through ways of constructing photographs, and returning at the end to the act of taking a photograph. In doing so, methods of approaching the quotidian-sublime in landscape are investigated through the taking, making and conceptualising of photographs.

Movement is fundamental in both experiences of car travel, and quotidian-sublimity. The car moves in landscape, the traveller moves through their daydream, and the everyday and elsewhere approach one another in a motion of coalescence. Chapter Four, "Moving Through Images", returns to car travel with greater emphasis on the car itself, and how habitual actions in driving and passengering can constitute a form of "bodying-forth" (Thrift 2004) into landscape. Further analysis of the interrelation of car and traveller is carried out through David Bissell's investigation of vibrating bodies, and Nigel Thrift's idea of distributed intentionality. Mobility theories from contemporary cultural geography are drawn upon here to examine the materialities of car travel. The tension between being and doing, mobility and passivity, are examined in car travel in terms of quiescence and habit; the body is not wholly inert, but shifts between passivity and activity. Following from this, movement is considered in a different way as an aspect of the solvent wash process, a reconfiguring of static imagery into motion. Focusing on a series of my works titled Slipstreams which explores the ongoing roadworks on Perth's Tonkin Highway,<sup>4</sup> the wash becomes a kind of slipstream itself, unfixing depictive elements and creating a mobile surface. In yet another sense, the term "movement" is used to describe the overarching methodologies employed in making artworks - the incorporation of both conceptual approaches and material investigation, which constitute transitions and oscillations between image and experience. And finally, movement is expressed as a significant part of the solvent wash based video works, perhaps the culmination of practical investigation in this research. In creating stop motion animations, in which every frame is prepared through a solvent wash, the texture and materiality of travel and daydream find themselves conveyed through movement. In seeking the quotidian-sublime in car travel, movement is key, and this chapter brings the exegetical enquiry to a close with an examination of moving bodies, moving materials and moving images.

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4. This is a major highway that runs North-South through the Eastern Suburbs. Roadworks began in 2014 as part of the "Gateway WA Perth Airport and Freight Access Project" (Main Roads WA 2013).

Though it may be impossible to fully grasp the quotidian-sublime, this research aims to approach it through detailed examination, whilst remaining sensitive to its ineffable nature. Formulating it theoretically and reaching towards it through creative practice become dual ways of defining and suggesting quotidian-sublimity as a fugitive experience. In writing this exegesis, I proceed through an idea that the logic of dissection which could be employed here would be ineffective; to anatomise this subject, to first cut it into pieces before analysing it, would remove from the quotidian-sublime one of its key characteristics – elusiveness. Instead, this investigation utilises an indirect approach, aiming to keep the quotidian-sublime intact. The quotidian-sublime is an immensity contingent on the everyday, catalysed through daydream as a merging of worlds, and so involves dissolution of dichotomies that seem, at first, to keep the sublime and quotidian apart. In collapsing false binaries, between invisible and visible, between unfamiliar and familiar, there is a resulting coalescence of ideas and experiences. The spirit of this enquiry is thus one of congruence, reoccurrence and convergence, so that crucial ideas flow throughout. In seeking the quotidian-sublime, this exegesis is punctuated, much like my daydreams, with traffic cones, median strips and dust.

**Chapter 1:**

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**Seeking the Quotidian-Sublime**

Quotidian-sublimity is a sensation of immensity that arises through the everyday. It involves the converging of two typically separate realms, that of the elevated sublime and the understated quotidian. The impetus for formulating this concept was to describe a lived experience, which in turn led to a need to provide a theoretical underpinning for it in order to consider how it might be understood through creative practice. An underlying theme of this research is the rejection of dichotomies – inside and outside, visible and invisible, ordinary and extraordinary. Yet, the coalescence of quotidian and sublime is not a simple dissolution of a conceptual barrier; the quotidian and sublime are not exact opposites, paired together across an insurmountable division. The terms skew away from one another, but not symmetrically. In conceptualising the experience in which they meet, the quotidian and sublime are not collapsed together, but shown to be mutually emergent. The everyday, as a reservoir of the ordinary and accessible, cannot be elevated to a status of grandeur without losing its essential character; conversely, it is impossible to remove the sensation of immensity from the sublime and have it remain sublime. In this chapter, I attempt to formulate quotidian-sublimity as a sensation of fugitive immensity that arises through everyday experiences. The everyday is rendered sublime not by shedding its ordinariness, rather it becomes sublime precisely because of that ordinariness; the sublime finds itself rooted in the quotidian, not as its more dilute cousin “wonder” but as infinity textured by the ordinary. The quotidian-sublime will be shown to have only the appearance of a paradox.

In order to formulate the quotidian-sublime, this chapter will focus on sublimity beyond the specific example of car travel, expanding on it over three sections. Firstly, in “Dust and Mountaintops” the history of sublimity will be examined to identify key aspects of the sublime and probe the possibility of an elevated immensity which is not grandly majestic. In “Where Immensities Meet” the roles of daydream and habit as conduits for quotidian-sublimity will be analysed, looking at the blending of internal and external worlds. And finally, in “Probing Paradoxical”, examples of the

sublime in art will lead into an overview of the practical component of this research, introducing the quotidian-sublime in visual expression and informing the following chapters. Beginning with examples drawn from the interior spaces of the sublime's etymological roots, this chapter moves through historical and artistic currents towards the mobile exterior of quotidian-sublimity in landscape.

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## Dust and Mountaintops

Though the sublime has varied throughout history, each permutation shares a set of common elements that can be used to define it, and these can be perceived in the ordinary as much as the grand. It is widely supposed that the sublime was originally articulated as such in the first century CE by the Greek literary critic Longinus in his treatise *On Sublimity (Peri Hypsous)*. In *On Sublimity* Longinus uses the sublime to refer to greatness in rhetoric, an elevated style which moved the reader.<sup>1</sup> Loftiness, elevation and grandeur came to be associated with sublimity; however, its etymological roots reveal a more ordinary character. The word "sublime" finds its genesis in the lintel piece of a doorway, the Latin *sublimis*, a combination of "sub" as "up-to" and "limen" which refers literally to the top piece of the door: the lintel (Shaw 2006, 1). From this root arise two important characteristics of the sublime that have come to define it. Firstly, the sublime is understood to involve elevation, which is often construed as being above or beyond the ordinary. Secondly, the sublime is characterised by a threshold (limen), a limit to cerebral grasp and rational expression. Immensity and awareness are also essential to the sublime. Classical scholars such as James E. Porter argue that there is a tradition of sublimity that predates Longinus in images of massiveness and greatness (Janowitz 2013). These involved experiences of

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1. As silent reading was unknown at this point in history, the reader was simultaneously a listener, experiencing the rhythm of words as sound (Grube 1991).

awe in the face of immensity, such as the largeness of a mountain, in which infinity is beyond conscious grasp and yet an awareness of it is manifest. In relation to this, theorist Philip Shaw writes that:

Sublimity, then, refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for that which lies beyond thought and language (2006, 3).

This quote identifies the essence of awareness in sublime experience. Many phenomena have been described as sublime for combining elevation, immensity and a threshold with a fleeting sense of awareness, from the grandness of nature to the unknowable infinity of deities, yet it is the dusty lintel piece from which the sublime originates. Quotidian-sublimity acknowledges the potential of these characteristics to arise from experiences of the ordinary rather than the grand and majestic. Existing theories of sublimity can be re-evaluated in conceptualising intimate immensities, questioning whether the dust above the doorway is just as sublime as mountaintops.

As an intermediate between the ordinary realm of humans and divine Heaven, Baroque ceiling paintings suggest that the sublime is interstitial, caught between two worlds. Though the sublime regained popularity after William Smith's successful 1739 English translation of *Peri Hypsous*, it had already re-entered art and theory through the painted ceilings of Baroque architecture.<sup>2</sup> Lydia Hamlett in "Longinus and the Baroque Sublime in Britain" extends the architectural metaphor of the word "sublime" to ceilings, describing the elevated threshold as the "upper limits of the earthly sphere touching the rim of Heaven, the sky, the *cielo*, vault or ceiling" (2013). According to Hamlett (2013), the painted Baroque ceiling manifested the sublime as an intermediate

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2. *Peri Hypsous* was first translated and published in Europe in 1554.

between humans and God, Earth and Heaven, and was intended to move viewers to a more active faith. She suggests that illusionistic painting or *quadratura* (Figure 1) blurred the boundaries between real and imagined worlds through a partnering of history and allegory, painted space and architecture (Hamlett 2013). In transporting the spectator upwards through the vault into the heavens, Baroque ceilings highlight the space between realms as a sublime threshold and reveal a focus on earthly wonders as a vehicle for immense experience (Hamlett 2013). In this sense, the Baroque sublime can be described as intermediate, arising in the liminal zone between knowable and unknowable realms. Whilst the quotidian-sublime is not transcendent, it occurs in a peripheral space in which internal and external worlds come together. The word

Figure 1. James Thornhill, Greenwich Painted Hall ceiling, 1708-1712

“liminal” arises from the same root as sublime, the Latin *limen*, suggesting that the periphery is a threshold. Notions of excess seem incongruent with the peripheral, and yet the sublime experience is one of immensity in the margins. The quotidian-sublime is characterised by this sense of liminality, which makes immensity ungraspable and arises in the shrinking space between worlds. Thus, the Baroque sublime as an interstitial infinity provides an understanding of the quotidian-sublime as both peripheral and immense, as well as suggesting that the sublime threshold can be made manifest as an intermediate space, in this case the painted ceiling.

In 1757 Burke wrote in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful*<sup>3</sup> that sublime terror involved a tension in the nerves, and thus he gave rise to the idea that sublimity is embodied. The quotidian-sublime finds its earliest theoretical ancestor in Burke, as mental and bodily responses are intertwined in his formulation of the sublime. This is perhaps intimated in his overall approach to sublime aesthetics (Burke 2015), specifically in his argument that aesthetics is important in its own right and can affect a person without needing to lead to “grand ideas”, as is the case in Longinus’ sublime (Guyer 2015, ix). He writes, “I should imagine, that the influence of reason in producing our passions is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed” (Burke 2015, 38-39). As Paul Guyer points out, Burke believed that emotion could be aroused without the need for an intellectual payoff, and he instead sought to explain the sublime response in naturalistic terms (2015, ix). Burke’s sublime is a combined mental and physiological response to the infinite and to terror at a distance. He argues that pain and fear arise from a natural tension in the nerves, and thus pain operates in the mind through the intervention of the body (Burke 2015, 105-107). Terror is therefore both a physiological and imaginative tension. This resembles the phenomenological perspective put forward

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3. Hereafter referred to as *Enquiry*

by Merleau-Ponty, summarised by Parry as the understanding that consciousness is rooted in experience of the world, and that in turn experience is rooted in the body, thus people are embodied beings and it is the body that perceives (2011, 5-6). It is not a disembodied mind seeking grand ideas that is affected by the sublime, but a consciousness experiencing through the body. Though the quotidian-sublime departs from many of Burke's ideas, in particular his theory that the sublime involved terror and pain, it nonetheless draws on his understanding of the sublime as an aesthetic experience arising jointly through the body and imagination.

In opposition to Burke's sublime are the ideas of Kant, which can be used to contrast with the understanding of how sublimity originates in the quotidian-sublime. Though Kant's sublime is similar in its focus on the immeasurable and ineffable, he situates sublimity within the human mind. His early book *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*<sup>4</sup> ([1764] 1960) follows Burke in locating sublimity within objects and focusing on feeling;<sup>5</sup> however, his later theories of the Mathematical and Dynamical sublime, involving the overwhelming nature of immensity and power respectively, broke drastically from this. In his *Critique of Judgement* ([1790] 2010), under a section titled "Analytic of the Sublime", Kant argues that the human mind can comprehend infinity under a concept, and thus surmount its excess (Kant 2010, 79-82). He writes that "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the [subject] judging, not in the natural Object"<sup>6</sup> (Kant 2010, 80). In Kant's conception, sensible intuition – feelings – are synthesised and represented through the faculty of imagination and then thought in understanding, and thus the sublime is the ascendancy of supersensible reason over the empirical evidence of the senses

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4. Hereafter referred to as *Observations*

5. In *Observations* Kant wrote of sublimity: "it does not matter so much what the *understanding* comprehends, but what the feeling senses" (1960, 72, original italics).

6. The square brackets are in the original source.

(Shaw 2006, 74-75). This was part of Kant's "Copernican Revolution", the positioning of the human mind at the centre of the world, and it relies on the fundamental assumption that the mind and world are separate and opposed, and that the mind is disembodied. My conceptualisation of the quotidian-sublime, framed within understandings drawn from Burke and phenomenology, rejects Kant's position and instead contends that sublimity is experienced through the body in conjunction with the imagination, rather than an abstract consciousness. The concept of infinity falls short of actual infinity, as it is only an approximation, and so rather than being able to conceptually contain infinity within the mind as Kant claims, it can be argued that consciousness can only press against the limits of cognition, producing awareness without knowledge. Additionally, the quotidian-sublime, rather than a Kantian dominance of the "other" is decentred, peripheral and diffuse. Kant's sublime as an ascendancy of reason is rejected in this research, as understandings of quotidian-sublimity involve removing the human mind from the centre of the universe, in what might also be considered an echo of Copernicus.

In continuing the analysis of whether sublimity is inherent in objects or present only to the mind, rhetorical and natural sublimes can be compared in order to further situate quotidian-sublimity. The natural sublime is the understanding that the origins of sublimity can be found in the world. In contrast, the rhetorical sublime is the contention that sublimity arises through artistic expression. The late seventeenth century writers John Dennis and Joseph Addison, adherents to the idea of rhetorical sublimity, believed that "the sublime emerges at the point where the grand or terrifying object is converted into an idea" (Shaw 2006, 38) or expressed in language. Writer John Baillie added to this the idea that expressions of immensity in the mind and in nature are interrelated, and produced by a system of thought (Shaw 2006, 45). In Shaw's words, "sublimity therefore no longer resides in the object, or in the mind of the beholder, but in the discourse within which it is framed" (2006, 45). Quotidian-

sublimity is more akin to a natural sublime, a sense sublime, the origins of which are in the world rather than representations of the world. Yet rhetorical and sense sublimities are not entirely incompatible. German Idealism<sup>7</sup> in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought the sublime in both the world and art. In the wake of Kant, the German Idealists emphasised the failure of the imagination to realise the ineffable. As Shaw points out, the sublime came to be associated with a particular coupling of pleasure and pain; the capacity of the self to dominate nature was considered positive, and yet it also removed humans from nature, which was posited as a negative experience (2006, 91). A desire to overcome this split between ideas (noumena) and nature (phenomena) prompted the notion that art was a medium through which the sensible and transcendental reunited<sup>8</sup> (Shaw 2006, 91). Therefore, the sublime had a role to play in both the world (or mind) and rhetoric. A similar overlap can be found in Baroque ceilings. The painted architecture can be understood to engender the sublime as a rhetorical call to religious feelings in spectators, but the subject of these works, the divine, was also considered sublime in itself. The ineffability of heaven meant that the sublime was evoked without being illustrated – art served to suggest the sublime, not contain it. As in German Idealism, art gave sensuous expression to the sublime concept, harmonising idea and reality, mind and world; artworks were not analogous to the infinite, but represented its immediate intuiting (Shaw 2006, 92-93). So, whilst the quotidian-sublime is more strongly a natural sublime, rooted in an understanding that the origins of sublimity exist in the world, art is still considered a vehicle for suggesting the sublime in an indirect way.

Given that quotidian-sublimity is positioned more as a sense sublime, it is perhaps important to consider the predominantly rhetorical sublimities of more contemporary

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7. Also known as “post-Kantian idealism”.

8. This will be discussed further at the end of this chapter in “Probing Paradoxical”.

approaches and elaborate on why they are not as relevant to this research. Postmodern sublime theories, expounded by theorists like Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, are indebted to the ideas of Kant (Shaw 2006, 116-117). This is not just in their formulations of sublimity, but also because their ideas are predicated on a separation of mind and world, and division of the mental faculties into reason and imagination. Postmodernism, sceptical of master concepts and abandoning authenticity, gave rise to theories which focused on the framing of sublimity as the vehicle for sublimity – the sublime does not exist in the world as in quotidian-sublimity, but is a function of discourse. Shaw frames Derrida’s sublime as one facilitated by the limits of the conceptual “system” in which it is expressed, and becomes the recognition that boundlessness is an effect of consciousness, the cognitive setting of limits (Shaw 2006, 119-120). This echoes Kant’s idea that the sublime is the ascendancy of reason, yet it departs from it in focusing solely on consciousness as a framing device. The pleasure in sublimity in Derrida’s formulation comes not from an awareness of boundlessness, but from the setting of limits (Shaw 2006, 118). Thus, with its focus on sublime rhetoric and grounding in a disembodied mind, Derrida’s sublime is dissimilar to the quotidian-sublime. A more relevant idea that is present in postmodern conceptualisations of sublimity is that the gap between noumena and phenomena cannot be bridged in art. Lyotard sublime, in Shaw’s estimation, involves recognising that attempts to bridge such gaps between the theoretical and the practical are absurd (Shaw 2006, 123). In considering quotidian-sublimity, this becomes the recognition that art cannot evoke the sublime but can approach it indirectly. Derrida argues that boundlessness cannot exist without a limit, a paradox which is also examined in this research, though through an understanding that sublimity exists in the world and not just as an expression of a system of consciousness. In focusing on rhetorical sublimity and a disembodied consciousness, postmodern theories of sublimity are incompatible with the rendering of the quotidian-sublime, which supposes sublimity to arise not as a system of thought, but in the world and an embodied self.

In seeking the quotidian-sublime, the “visionary dreariness” of Poetzsch becomes relevant in focusing on familiarity, but also highlights a need to make the everyday imperative. The “mountaintop paradigm” is a concept created by Poetzsch (2006) to describe a sublime inspired by Burke and Kant which focuses on grandness in nature and the aggrandisement of the Romantic subject. In his book *Visionary Dreariness: Readings in Romanticism’s Quotidian Sublime*, Poetzsch re-reads Romanticism and identifies a recurrence of everyday subjects engendering soaring imaginations in the work of several English poets. He describes this as quotidian sublimity,<sup>9</sup> though in contrast to this research his aim is not to formulate a new theory of the sublime but to reassess existing examples. He aims to widen the purview of the sublime “to include not only mountaintops but grains of sand” (2006, 15). Poetzsch’s (2006) theories align with the quotidian-sublime in this research as they contend that sublimity can be intimate and familiar, and is not defined by oppositional structures which rely on a sense of otherness. However, at the same time, Poetzsch’s objective and focus are different and not entirely compatible. In widening his scope to include experiences of “simple wonderment, reverent awe, as well as those visionary soarings of the imagination” (2006, 15), Poetzsch runs the risk of losing what is central to sublimity – the defining characteristics of immensity, threshold and a fleeting awareness. In failing to differentiate between sublimity and wonder, Poetzsch conflates the ontological origin of the sublime with an attitude of childlike sensitivity to the world. A further issue occurs in the potential for simply transposing mountaintop sublimity onto ordinary settings. He writes of the poem *Floating Island at Hawkshead*, c. 1820, by Dorothy Wordsworth that “what makes dreariness so wondrous in this case is its apparent *uncommonness*” (2006, 13, original italics). This is problematic as the ordinary object only becomes sublime when it ceases to be ordinary, and thus the category of “quotidian” becomes tenuous, giving way to an aesthetic of grandeur. In

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9. I differentiate my use of this term from Poetzsch’s by including a hyphen.

this research, examinations of immensity in the everyday focus on the root of sublimity in habit and a consonance of worlds, so that the quotidian is imperative to sublime experience. A dust mote is not sublime because it is grand, but as it is encountered in a state of commonness: in this research, to remove the quotidian is to remove the possibility of sublime experience.

### \_\_\_\_\_ **Where Immensities Meet**

The term “daydream” almost contains a paradox in the positioning of dreams within wakefulness, and an elaboration of this seeming incongruity can illuminate the way daydream catalyses immensity as a merger of worlds. In probing the nature of daydream as a superposition of wakeful and dreaming self, an image arises of a porous experience through which worlds can merge. Unlike in dreams that occur during sleep, daydream involves a wakeful cogito. In *The Poetics of Reverie* Bachelard highlights this lingering sense of self: “the night dream is a dream without a dreamer. On the contrary, the dreamer of reverie remains conscious enough to say: it is I who dream the reverie” (1971, 22). Similarly, in *Passing Strange and Wonderful*, Tuan (1995) describes sleep as an immersion in oblivion in which consciousness cannot grasp hold of a fugitive world. In contrast, the drowsy indolence experienced whilst drifting into sleep can be enjoyed aesthetically (Tuan 1995, 9-10). Both these authors highlight the wakeful cogito, and yet a complete account of daydream needs also to incorporate the substance of dream. Dreams are unmoored from reality, and they involve a total immersion in a world which lacks boundaries between self and not-self. Transposed into wakefulness, the daydream is thus caught between a self that remains and a world that dissipates; it is interstitial, and unstitches the boundaries between self and world, making them porous. Furthermore, the wakeful dreamer is present in a body, and so unlike nocturnal dream, daydream is physiological as

well as psychical. If the mind is embodied, then the body dreams, and so likewise becomes porous. Consciousness seeps out into the world as the world leaks in – an osmotic transference. The coupling of a wakeful self and a dreaming self in reverie combines the awareness of consciousness with the porousness of dreaming. Thus, daydream becomes a conduit for the blending of worlds, creating the possibility of immensity through an awareness of internal and external boundlessness.

The kind of self that remains in the dissolving world of daydream is not the fully conscious psyche but a habitual awareness anchored in the body. Habit is the substrate of daydream, and daydream is the catalyst for immensity. This view requires a reframing of habit as a mode of becoming rather than a mechanistic acting or withdrawal from the world. Dewsbury (2015) in “Non-Representational Landscapes and the Performative Affective Forces of Habit: From ‘Live’ to ‘Blank’” considers the habit drill as an example of how habitual action enables the body to do the thinking. Through repeating the habit loop of cue, routine, and reward, intentional and thoughtful thinking recedes and action becomes wired in the body (Dewsbury 2015, 33). For any habitual action, the thinking has thus already been completed, not as conscious thought but as a result of how the body relates to a specific environment (Dewsbury 2015, 33). Merleau-Ponty describes this as “knowledge in the hands”<sup>10</sup> (2002, 166). Tuan (1977) writes about habit in terms of movement in *Space and Place*, suggesting that spatial skill is situated within a body encountering an environment. People do not negotiate space as if reading from a spatial configuration or map inside their heads, but as a succession of movements remembered within the body (Tuan 1977, 70). Drawing on Ravaisson’s idea that habit is neither mechanical nor

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10. Merleau-Ponty expands upon this to suggest that habit is inseparable from bodily action: “If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 166).

psychological, but is a separate phenomenological realm, Dewsbury argues that habit is the mode in which we become constituted as who we are, contending that individuation is situated (2015, 38). Spatial encounters give rise to senses of self, as becoming always unfolds in a situated manner between body and environment (Dewsbury 2015, 40). Habit is therefore a form of body-thinking, distinct from consciousness, which arises in a situated manner.

As a substrate for daydream, it is not just the capacity of habit to transfer thinking into the body, but also its role in opening the self to the world that is significant. This is connected to the way that habit involves passivity, the body being acted upon as well as acting. According to a tradition of ideas stemming from René Descartes and Kant, identified by contemporary theorists such as Dewsbury (2015) and Catherine Malabou (2008), habit is mechanistic and dulls the senses; however, there is another thread of thought on habit that can be traced to Aristotle, noted by theorist Clare Carlisle, which acknowledges the role of habit in shaping the self and opening one to the world (2014). In this understanding, habit is characterised through a combination of difference and sameness (Carlisle 2014, 17). Carlisle (2014, 17) suggests that habit combines constancy and change, as it keeps the shape of a being the same through repeated patterns, yet habits develop when these repetitions alter a being's constitution. The Greek word for habit used by Aristotle is *hexis*, meaning "to have" or "to hold", suggesting that habit is a way of holding oneself; at the same time, it is only from this state of constancy that change becomes possible (Carlisle 2014, 19). Habit involves plasticity – as opposed to flexibility – because it incorporates both resistance and receptivity to the world (Carlisle 2014, 20-22). This highlights the capacity of a person to be affected by the world through a passive or enabling disposition (Dewsbury 2015), but also provides the opportunity for change. As Merleau-Ponty writes, habit makes a person "open

to the world, and correlate with it" (quoted in Dewsbury 2015, 33). Hence, habit is a precursor for daydream, which opens one to the world via receptivity and change anchored in a kind of passivity.

In making the dreamer porous, reverie allows worlds to blend, but it is the immense nature of those worlds which prompts sublimity. Realisation of the depthless world of the dreamer becomes consonant with the infinite and infinitesimal world beyond, a congruence of "internal" and "external" space. This consonance is of memory and world, expressible as cosmos and microcosm. The Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius, writing before Longinus' *On Sublimity*, described experiences of awe, immensity and mathematical infinity in what could be called a "cosmic sublime" (Janowitz 2013). In *The Nature of Things (De Rerum Natura)*, c. 95-55 BCE, Lucretius wrote of infinitesimal particles, numberless in the vast void of the universe, suggesting that the apprehension of these caused awe (Janowitz 2013). What is significant in Lucretius' cosmic sublime is its strict materialism – there is nothing magical, mysterious or transcendent behind the infinite moons, stars and seas. In a sense, his cosmos is entirely factual and ordinary, and yet the familiar becomes wonderful as it is perceived to be infinite. In *The Nature of Things* there is a merging of loftiness and colloquialism, of particles and the universe (Jenkyns 2007, xxi). This correlates to the joining of quotidian and sublime, "so that we can behold the dust-motes dancing in the sun"<sup>11</sup> (Lucretius 2007, 40). In the quotidian-sublime, this ordinary, infinite cosmos is consonant with the internal depths of the dreamer, revealed through reverie. The manifold textures of a person's inner world can here be termed "memory", as a category of mental process which trespasses temporally into both past and future. Memory is not just remembering, but interweaving past and present to project futures, and so infinite possibilities exist. The worlds that merge across daydream are infinite, as the

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11. "Although the blows that move them can't be seen by anyone" (Lucretius 2007, 40).

world-space involves numberless elements, an accumulation of ordinary objects, and the dream-space is depthless with temporal possibility. Thus, consonance between immensity of self and world, the infinite and infinitesimal, becomes a conduit for sublimity: where immensities meet, the quotidian-sublime arises.

Though theories of sublimity often involve an encounter with the “other”, quotidian-sublimity is an intimate infinity in which the world is at once familiar and ungraspable. Where Lucretius turns to atoms and the cosmos for the sublime, and Baroque artists look through the ceiling to the starry vault of heaven, the quotidian-sublime begins at the level of the ordinary. Indeed, it is impossible to experience quotidian-sublimity in the face of grandeur if that grandeur is arresting enough to banish the possibility of idle reverie. The intimacy of the quotidian-sublime is evident when examining its components; the memories of the dreamer and the world space are an accumulation of numberless, ordinary objects. Yet, quotidian-sublimity is also infinite and ungraspable. Bachelard writes of intimate immensities in *The Poetics of Space*, using the example of a forest to describe a sensation of “going deeper and deeper’ into a limitless world” (1994, 185). However, for Bachelard (1994), the forest itself is not endless, rather immensity arises as a sensory impression in the imagination. Thus, the infinite is intimate because “immensity is within ourselves” (Bachelard 1994, 184). For Bachelard, reverie “transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity” (1994, 183) but in quotidian-sublimity, daydream transports the dreamer into the immediate world, beyond the appearance of a finite composition, into the infinite. This world is still constituted by the familiar, but it has become vast and inaccessible. Therefore, quotidian-sublimity is an intimate immensity not just because it arises through the familiar, but because the familiar is rendered infinite, revealing the ungraspable nature of what is habitually known: quotidian-sublimity is ungraspable and familiar, infinite and intimate.

In examining the quotidian-sublime in art, it is important to consider the significance of infinity as impossible to comprehend. The sublime is defined in relation to infinity, as an immense sensation, and thus artworks have to grapple with what expressing infinity means. Central to this is the idea that it is not an actual infinity – which is a perceptual impossibility – that is important to the sublime, rather it is the impression of infinity. In this sense, the use of words such as “immensity” and “immeasurable” are relevant approximations suggestive of the character of infinity made accessible. Here, it is not infinity but its image that is key. This relationship between excess and actual infinity begins to unravel the apparent paradox of the sublime as a boundlessness defined by a limit; sensory extrapolation bridges these terms. As Burke writes, “the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effect as if they were really so” (2015, 60). The same applies to consciousness: it is unable to grasp infinity and so the sublime is characterised by a cognitive limit, yet this limit produces the impression of infinity. Thus, limit and limitlessness work in tandem. As Burke (2015) points out, the senses can impress the imagination with ideas that progress beyond their actual limits. It might be said, therefore, that the sublime does not truly tangle with futility either, as it is not actual infinity that is central, but the impression of infinity. In making art about the quotidian-sublime, differentiating between actual infinity and impressions of infinity is crucial, and the notion of sensory extrapolation provides an understanding of bounded boundlessness.<sup>12</sup>

The idea that the sublime in art involves a partial rather than total connection to infinity was cause for examination during Romanticism, in which the idea of the “fragment” took hold. According to Duncan Heath and Judy Boreham, the Romantic critic Friedrich Schlegel viewed the world as fundamentally incomplete, and describes

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12. An in-depth examination of this idea, focusing on the possibility of suggesting the invisible through visual means, forms the basis of Chapter Three.

the fragment as a kind of ironic expression (2012, 68-69, 85). As completeness was not possible, the fragment stood in for sublime inaccessibility, alluding to the sublime through its own inadequacy. Heath and Boreham contend that the fragment was an expression of Romantic irony, a self-awareness of the gap between the goals of sublime expression in art and its inherent impossibility (Heath and Boreham 2012). Yet the fragment is both incomplete and complete at the same time. In Heath and Boreham's words, "by suggesting incompleteness, it [the fragment] is a more complete embodiment of the unknowability of the universe and the impossibility of rendering it artistically than a work aiming at totality" (2012, 85). Thus, it is the fragment, incomplete and indicative, that can approach sublime infinity. A more contemporary iteration of this idea in art is Sianne Ngai's aesthetic of the "interesting". The interesting is not tied to any particular set of features but instead is characterised by indeterminacy and a capacity for duration (Ngai 2008). As interest can be positive or negative (for example, an irritating or pleasant interest) it may be said to begin with uncertainty, where the viewer is unsure of their exact feeling (Ngai 2008, 786-789). This indeterminacy generates a sense of anticipation, so that the viewer returns to the work, enacting a sustained immersion (Ngai 2008, 786). This durational incompleteness differs from most aesthetic experiences, which are conventionally thought of as final and total (Ngai 2008, 787). Similarly to the Romantic fragment which parallels the incompleteness of the world, artworks that are "interesting" in this sense parallel the indeterminacy of the world and its continual becoming. Ngai thus offers a complementary understanding to the Romantic fragment in acknowledging that the world is unknowable not just because it is vast but because it continually changes. The infinite possibility of the world may be impossible to comprehend, but within the experience of sublimity, it is the impression of infinity that is important; artworks can approach this as incomplete, temporal fragments. Art is always a fragment, yet through its incompleteness and durational indeterminacy, it is able to approach the sublime which itself exists in a world that is unknowable.

In considering immensity, it is important to note that the quotidian-sublime involves both the infinite and infinitesimal. These two poles of infinity are present in the cosmic sublimity of Lucretius, as he focuses on both the vastness of the universe and the minuteness of elemental particles. Lucretius understands everything in the universe to be made from tiny, indivisible atoms which cannot be perceived, and writes: “We term them in philosophy, according to our needs; matter, atoms, generative bodies, elements and seeds; and first-beginnings since it is from these that all proceeds” (2007, 5). He further suggests that void is enmeshed in everything (Lucretius 2007), and thus particles become a kind of microcosm of the universe, as both consist largely of emptiness with physical matter accounting for only a small percentage of each. This recognition of the vast and minute as both engendering infinity is echoed in Burke’s *Enquiry* in which he writes that we cannot distinguish between the effects of extreme littleness and extreme vastness (Burke 2015). However, for Burke, minuteness is borne of endless divisibility of matter rather than an ultimate tininess: “As the great extreme of dimension is sublime, so the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime likewise; when we attend the infinite divisibility of matter” (2015, 59). In the quotidian-sublime, both vastness and minuteness form impressions of infinity; similar to Lucretius, it is understood that the infinity of the cosmos is echoed in the infinitesimal, and following Burke, that endless indivisibility leads to a depthless sublime. In examining the catalysts of quotidian-sublimity, it is not immediately perceptible whether instances of immensity in the world constitute a vast array of the minute, or vastness compressed within the minute. Immensity in the dreamer is an infinite depth of something that does not have form: the imagination is at once infinite and infinitesimal. It might therefore be said that daydream causes the two poles of infinity to coalesce, and quotidian-sublimity involves an inability to extricate one from the other.

Figure 2. Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Mists*, c. 1818, oil on canvas, 98.4 × 74.8 cm

The Romantic artists had a complex relation to the sublime in nature and many of their ideas have permeated through to contemporary practices that investigate landscape and immensity. Questions of subjectivity were central to Romanticism, yet the focus on the link between subjective consciousness and the outer world of objects effectively estranged consciousness from the phenomenal universe (Heath and Boreham 2012, 80). As previously discussed, Kant placed human subjectivity at the centre of experience, and in doing so implied that the world as it appears to the senses (phenomena) and the world as it truly is (noumena) are distinct (Shaw 2006). These ideas led to a paradox in the Romantic imagination; it simultaneously bonds humans to nature and estranges them from it (Heath and Boreham 2012, 83). Artists like Caspar David Friedrich probed these concepts through landscape painting, placing the human figure within but separate from nature. In *Wanderer*

*Above the Mists*, c. 1818, (Figure 2) a man – understood to be the artist – stands astride a rocky outcrop, surveying the foggy mountain landscape below. He has attained the heights and awareness of the Romantic visionary, and is depicted within the landscape; yet, at the same time, he is estranged from the sublime world he observes by an unbridgeable gulf that stretches out before him. In *Monk by the Sea*, 1808-10, (Figure 3) the human figure is dwarfed by an impenetrable and menacing storm, a sublime after Burke which inspires both awe and terror through indefinite and boundless forms. The inclusion of a figure to emphasise the vast and powerful character of a landscape is a Romantic tactic that can be seen in contemporary works, such as Bell's painting *Darvaza*, 2010, (Figure 4). *Darvaza* depicts a gas crater in the Karakum Desert, Turkmenistan. In 1971, geologists tried to burn off the natural gas beneath a collapsed drilling rig, setting a fire that continues to rage to this day (Bell 2013). The immense power of nature is expressed through luminous yellow flames that cover most of the canvas, beside which a tiny and almost indecipherable human figure stands. The artist identifies this figure as himself (Bell 2013) – unlike the

Figure 3. Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*, c.1809, oil on canvas, 110 x 171.5 cm

Figure 4. Julian Bell, *Darvaza*, 2010, oil on canvas

Romantic visionary in *Wanderer Above the Mists*, Bell depicts himself as insignificant and powerless in the face of nature, more like the figure in *Monk by the Sea*. Yet, the viewer is positioned looking down at the landscape from an aerial perspective. This has a twofold effect of allowing the crater to take up most of the canvas, emphasising its magnitude, and estranging the viewer from the landscape by removing them to a remote height. Here, again, a gulf separates humanity from the sublime world. Bell's work is an example of how the Romantic idea of bonded estrangement, coupled with Burke's concept of awe-inspiring terror, continues to inform contemporary approaches to the sublime in art.

Yet, Bell's work, at first glance appearing to be a reiteration of Romantic sublimity, involves another approach to the sublime which is more relevant to the methods employed in this research. When painting *Darvaza*, Bell began by flipping the canvas upside down and pouring a loose turpentine solution of strong yellow liquid down its surface (Bell 2013). This resulted in stains and sediments forming by chance, creating the inferno in the crater's belly (Bell 2013). What is significant about this process is its appeal to chance – the sublimity of a raging fire is formed through the

uncontrollable motivations of paint. Bell describes this method as a way of “reaching out to touch something other in my studio – something not entirely self-willed and human” (2013). Chance is not just about courting the unexpected but an attempt to go beyond the artist’s control and comprehension, into the unknowable. This use of material unpredictability to reach towards the sublime is a central part of making the solvent works in my research. As in Bell’s work, the creation of an image hinges on the unpredictable movement of solvent solution which occurs beyond my own cognition, in a space that defies command and cannot be tracked. In the process of a solvent wash, a photographic surface is disrupted and settles again into an unknowable space of films and sediments.<sup>13</sup> This is not just an aesthetic decision, but an attempt to push the image into a space that cannot be grasped. In Bell’s case, after the yellow solution spread into configurations of flame, he painted back in with a brush to produce the familiar, representational space around the crater (Bell 2013). In the solvent works, digital editing is used to reintroduce recognisable elements; in both cases, the works pivot between the familiar and the ungraspable in their visual appearance and their method of creation. As can be seen in contemporary works such as Bell’s *Darvaza*, the sublime can be approached through art using methods that push beyond the artist’s grasp, entering a space of unknowability.

In examining the possibility of a quotidian-sublime in landscape art, a move away from the Burkean grandeur of Romanticism and its contemporary extrapolations means turning to examples in which the ordinary is emphasised. A pertinent example of how the sublime can arise through typical landscapes in art is Ed Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966, (Figure 5). Ruscha produced this work by driving up and down that famous boulevard in Los Angeles – the Sunset Strip – with a camera attached to his car, and printing the resulting photographs in a folded book.

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13. This process will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Figure 5. Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* [detail], 1966, artist's book, 54 pages (folded), black and white photographic illustrations, accordion fold, 18 x 14.2 cm closed, 18 x 750 cm pages extended

Figure 6. Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966, artist's book, 54 pages (folded), black and white photographic illustrations, accordion fold, 18 x 14.2 cm closed, 18 x 750 cm pages extended

This method privileged the perspective of the passer-by, capturing myriad details typical of a city streetscape: pavements, alleyways, billboards, bus stops. As Sylvia Wolf points out, there is no hierarchy of built information in this accumulation of typical vernacular; neither palm trees, nor parked cars, nor street lights stand out as the sole focus of attention (2004, 141). In approaching the city this way, Ruscha does not merely present everyday subject matter but alludes to the vastness of L.A. as an immensity of the unremarkable. Jon Leaver (2014) in “Urban Sublime: Visualizing the Immensity of Los Angeles” posits that the mass of ordinary details in *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* seems to suggest that the rest of the city is much like the view of this one street, that the immeasurable complexity of L.A.’s sprawl is made from the humdrum detail of utility poles, vacant lots and building facades. As such, immensity is shown to be constituted through the ordinary. Further to this, the fact that Ruscha’s book is folded (Figure 6) (with a full extent of 7.5 metres) problematises the viewer’s attempt to take it in as a whole; as a totality, it is ungraspable, yet its immensity is engendered through incompleteness. Compare this to a panoramic city view like Peter Alexander’s *PA and PE*, 1990, (Figure 7), in which the geographic vastness of the city is laid out from a high vantage point and reduced to strips of light. As Leaver (2014)

Figure 7. Peter Alexander, *PA and PE*, 1990, acrylic and oil on canvas, 190.5 × 508 cm

Figure 8. Andreas Gursky, *Paris, Montparnasse*, 1993, photograph, colour, on paper between glass and Perspex, 134.2 x 319 cm

points out, despite the multiplicity of lights in this image, it reduces the complexity of L.A. onto canvas through necessary editing and so creates a sense of being “scaled down”. In a slightly different way, the photographs of Andreas Gursky also seem to be “scaled down” despite their size and the use of digital manipulation to graft different images together into panoramas (Figure 8). Even though Gursky’s subjects are often vast and uncountable, their uniformity coupled with a compositional balance suggests an underlying order which belies heterogeneous multiplicity. In contrast, the immensity in *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* unfolds through fragments, denying this reduction. Through glimpses of the endless vernacular of city sprawl, Ruscha’s work uses the ordinary to inspire an image of infinity. In doing so, it evokes a quotidian-sublime, rooting infinity in a typical streetscape. Sublimity, here, arises concurrently as the limitless details of a street and the internal impression of a city, emphasised through the incompleteness of the view which is ungraspable due to its format.

Similar tactics to Ruscha’s are employed in this research, seeking fugitive immensity with photography as a point of entry. As identified in the introduction, the works that make up this research are predominantly photography based, although they

diverge from some of the traditional methods and ideas about photography. The processes used in creating such works will be examined in much greater detail in Chapters Three and Four through analysis of photography and video respectively, but for now these methods can be illuminated in brief to contextualise further discussion. In approaching the quotidian-sublime, I utilise a process that is best described as a “solvent wash” in order to create a slippage between familiar and ungraspable spaces in the photographic image. This method involves pulling a printed photograph through a bath of solvent, resulting in the printed toner loosening to the point where the image disperses, spreading across the paper into new and unfamiliar configurations. Visual information is not removed, but becomes unfathomable; in the solvent wash, depictive and material space become analogous. In shifting ordinary landscapes into undisclosed forms and then reintroducing certain elements such as street signs and traffic lights through digital manipulation, I seek the texture of daydream as a conduit, with a rising and falling between attention and distraction. The daydreamer becomes lost in the limitless space of typical street vernacular even as it disperses into an ungraspable form. For example, in the work *Bridge*, 2015, (Figure 9) the “bridge” ceases to be the tangible construction over which I, as the photographer, travel, and moves instead into the immaterial space between the perception of everyday landscape and the immensity of daydream. The sweep of colour merges these inner and outer worlds together; the quotidian-sublime as a consonance of internal and external boundlessness. A tension plays out between the evident and the undisclosed, quotidian-sublimity as an experience which is cognitively unavailable yet provokes a sensation of the immense unknown. This immensity remains a function of the everyday, not occluded by abstract interventions but pushed beyond grasp. In a way that echoes Ruscha’s work, immensity is suggested through a repetition of the ordinary, in traffic cones, palm trees and overpasses, and as in Bell’s approach, painting materials and chance are employed to reach towards the unknown.

In this chapter, the quotidian-sublime has been formulated as an experience of immensity so great that it registers as the image of infinity, ineffable and ungraspable. Throughout history, the sublime has had many permutations, but three enduring traits can be identified: it is characterised by immensity, a cognitive threshold and a sense of awareness. Unlike many previous conceptions of the sublime, quotidian-sublimity is not majestic or grand but rooted in the everyday, arising via habitual encounters and reverie. Daydream can be understood as a mode of being through which immensity becomes present, an intimate merger of worlds. As such, quotidian-sublimity is not a transcendence of the ordinary, but inextricable from it. It is interstitial like Baroque ceiling painting, bound to the body like Burke's tremulous nerves, and present both in the world as well as rhetorically through art. The quotidian-sublime can be sought through art not as actual infinity, but as the impression of infinity, incorporating the Romantic idea of the fragment as a correlate with the incomplete world, but departing from Romanticism's focus on human subjectivity in the face of nature estranged. Bell's use of paint offers an approach to sublimity and the unknown in the very processes of art making, and Ruscha's work provides a point of reference for quotidian-sublimity in the endlessness of unremarkable landscape vernacular. In the following chapter, focus will shift to examining these everyday landscapes, and considering the role of daydream, passage and liminality in experiences of quotidian-sublimity in the car.



Figure 9. Lydia Trethewey, *Bridge*, 2015, solvent wash, 80 x 110.7 cm



## Chapter 2:

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# **Winding Daydreams Around Traffic Cones**

If quotidian-sublimity arises through the enfolding of self and world, it is critical to examine the nature of landscape and how it is experienced in car travel. This chapter will analyse landscape and mobility through theoretical and practical investigations, drawing together ideas from cultural geography and sociology with artistic methodologies. The first section, "Enfolded Landscape", seeks to define landscape against a backdrop of what it is not: a neutral, objective container of experience, or a symbolic network of cultural ideologies. Wylie (2013) identifies two predominant perspectives on landscape in contemporary discussions: phenomenological approaches which focus on lived experiences, and culturalistic ones which view landscape as a set of abstract symbols. Wylie (2013) points out in "Landscape and Phenomenology" that both have shortcomings, as the former risks neglecting wider cultural influences and the latter conversely lacks a sense of the landscape as lived in. Utilising theories of space from Lefebvre and Massey, landscape in this research is framed as a plural, temporal intertwining of experiences and objects. Like the sublime, it is fugitive, unfixed, and potentially immense. The second section, "Liminal Zones", focuses on the marginal nature of the roadscape which form the subject of this research, examining the ideas of non-place and edgelands in terms of how they encompass transience and liminality. The final section, "Passage", continues the analysis of mobile landscape with a particular focus on movement and habit. Daydream and experience are revisited here in the context of highways, traffic cones and overpasses, and the experiences we weave around them, effectively illuminating the quotidian-sublime as it arises through landscape during car travel.

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## Enfolded Landscape

In order to examine how experiences of quotidian-sublimity can arise through a consonance of self and landscape, it is first necessary to define landscape as fluid and plural. Dominant understandings of landscape such as those identified by Ingold have framed it as a neutral or naturalistic backdrop to human activity (1993), or the mathematical and scientific concept of a three-dimensional extent in which things exist (Lefebvre 2015). Yet these ideas, particularly the former, are predicated on artificial distinctions between nature and culture, or self and world. Instead, landscape can be understood as an enfolding of experiences and ideas, drawing on spatial theories from sociology and cultural geography. Lefebvre (2015) in *The Production of Space* rejects the idea of space as a vessel in which objects are contained, proposing instead that it is a social morphology tied to lived experience. He writes that “vis-à-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere ‘frame’, after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it”, rather it is a social construction produced through activity and thus always in a state of becoming (2015, 93-94). Another understanding of landscape that acknowledges this heterogeneous becoming is Ingold’s “dwelling perspective” in which he attempts to remedy the issues latent in purely phenomenological, culturalistic or landscape-as-background theories (1993). The dwelling perspective frames landscape as a continually unfolding story which contains the traces of lived experience of all those who live there (Ingold 1993, 152). As a result, body and landscape come to be complementary terms, each amplifying the other (Ingold 1993, 156). The idea of landscape as socially or experientially constructed still privileges the human subject, which in quotidian-sublimity ceases to be primary, but these understandings begin to suggest that it is the body, not just subjectivity, which is significant. Dismissals of space as a container, in favour of space as a plural unfolding, provide an entry point into considering landscape as fluid.

In formulating landscape as a continually unfolding plurality, the idea of temporality is important. Again, theories of space are useful counterparts, especially Massey's concept of trajectories. According to Massey (2005), space is a product of interrelations that are constituted through interactions, and thus is a sphere of possibility in which exists multiplicity. Space is a contemporaneous plurality in which distinct trajectories co-exist (Massey 2005, 9). Movement and time are therefore intimately bound with space. As in Lefebvre's theory of space as social construction and Ingold's "dwelling perspective" in which landscape is never finished, Massey's idea of trajectories highlights becoming in time. As she writes, "perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (2005, 9). Ingold (1993) in "The Temporality of the Landscape" clarifies that temporality is not the same as chronology, as a system of dated intervals in which events take place, nor is it history in the sense of a series of events dated chronologically. In temporality, time is "immanent to the passage of events", encompassing a pattern of past and future (Ingold 1993, 157). Temporality is not a container for, but a quality of, landscape. The idea of space as "endlessly becoming" can be transposed to landscape, prompting an understanding of landscape as a temporality as well as spatiality, a multiplicity which allows for limitless experiences without prescription. This means that it is not any specific experiences which create landscape, but the fact of their existence which is important, for as Massey contends, "it is not the particular nature of heterogeneities but the fact of them that is intrinsic to space" (2005, 12). The idea of trajectories places emphasis on the process of change, carried out through temporal and spatial movement. As a temporal simultaneity of trajectories, landscape can be understood as fluid, enfolded and multiple.

In the eighteenth century, Romantic individualism gave rise to the idea of the sublime as an encounter with the other; this can be compared with contemporary phenomenological subjectivism in order to address the relation between humans and landscape in the quotidian-sublime. Wylie suggests that even though Romanticism did

not play a defining role in the emergence of phenomenology, it is possible to discern Romantic motifs and inheritances within the rise of phenomenology in the 1930s and 1940s (2013, 54-56). This is evident in the Romantic involvement of the human subject with the world, and the shift away from framing subjectivity as a rational, distanced observation in favour of engagement and immersion (Wylie 2013, 56). Where Romanticism focused on the individual as a solitary genius absorbed in the world, phenomenology investigates the nature of individual human subjectivity (Wylie 2013, 56). In both of these approaches, the dualism of humans and nature is present: the Romantic conception of landscape was as something other, sensations of sublimity emerging through contact with “wild” nature,<sup>1</sup> whereas phenomenology centres on engagement of self with world through lived and embodied experience. Both assume a pre-given self that encounters landscape (Wylie 2013). In moving beyond this to situate quotidian-sublimity as a merger of self and world, post-phenomenological frameworks that focus on affectivity rather than subjectivity are useful. According to Wylie, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari contend that senses of selfhood and senses of landscape are equally emergent (2013, 62). Rather than positioning the human subject as an individual who encounters landscape, it is the enfolding of the two which is important. As Wylie points out, landscape and life shape one another reciprocally and cannot be separated into discrete entities (2013, 60). By examining the root of phenomenological subjectivism in Romantic individualism, the pitfalls of a self-landscape dualism can be identified and overcome through the idea of a concurrent emergence.

The relationship between landscape and the human subject is also critical to understandings of landscape in art. The appearance of the word “landscape” in the sixteenth century linguistic terrain signalled the term’s relation to depiction, as it referred to both pieces of land and pictures of that land (Ingold 1997, 5). Thus, from

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1. This reflects Burke’s sublime as terror and awe in the face of an external object. The Romantic outlook manifested as both engagement with and estrangement from the world.

its etymological inception, landscape has bound the world with its representations, foregrounding visibility. As Hawkins writes in "Picturing Landscape: Landscape, Art and Visual Culture": "One of the principal coordinates for the analysis of landscape art is vision" (2013, 191). This has led to understandings of landscape in which observation is primary, both literal visibility and culturalistic ideas of seeing as interpreting. For example, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (1988) in their book *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* contend that landscape is in fact a cultural image, but what is meant by this is not that landscape is a picture but that it is a text, a set of layered ideological concerns. Cosgrove and Daniels argue that actual landscapes and depictions are equally real – that a park is no more or less actual than a painting or poem (1988, 1). This arises in part through the idea that meanings of the built, visual and verbal landscapes are interwoven (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, 1). Implicit in this understanding is the reduction of landscape to the meaning of landscape, a culturalistic approach which eschews the importance of lived experience. As a subject for "academic" painting in the West, landscape rose to prominence in the eighteenth century, and as Hawkins suggests was derived from close empirical observation and verification borrowed from a scientific way of looking (2013, 190-191). This scientific gaze was intended to be a distanced and rational observation, and was entrenched in the false separation of nature and culture. As Hawkins points out, engaging landscape from a distanced position (the "god's eye trick") is disrupted by the feelings one experiences when actually in the landscape, including sensations of pleasure and discomfort, fear and desire, which disturb the position of the stable and detached seeing subject (2013, 191-195). In other words, sight is located in a feeling body (Hawkins 2013, 195). Therefore, although visibility has been emphasised since the etymological genesis of landscape, the relationship of humans to landscape is not one of detached observation or interpretation but of bodily, experiential engagement, and this is as much the case for landscape art.

Figure 10. Peter Lanyon, *Soaring Flight*, 1960, oil on canvas,  
152.4 x 152.4 cm

Many artists seek to evoke bodily visuality, and these can be considered in terms of how they approach the enfolding of self and landscape. Hawkins' (2013) example of an artist whose work is more than visual is Peter Lanyon, whose paintings of the St Ives coast are ambiguous landscapes filtered through his own experience. Lanyon's works do not merely aestheticise the Cornish landscape, but express abstractly what it feels like to be standing on the edge of a cliff or walking along a shoreline (Hawkins 2013, 196). He was interested in the spatial experience of the body in landscape, as can be seen in the overlapping spaces of sea, sky and self in *Soaring Flight*, 1960, (Figure 10) with its enfolding of perceptual impressions (Button 2009).<sup>2</sup> As Lanyon writes:

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2. Lanyon even took to gliding to unlock an aerial point of view (Button 2009).

Detached & objective vision relies on a basic opposition of man and nature...Nature, however, has not remained as a panorama or a place to be surveyed from a vantage point...Landscape cannot any longer be governed by static horizons which derived from a fixed viewpoint (quoted in Treves and Wright 2015, 24).

Thus, in *Soaring Flight* the overlapping forms emerge from an embodied visuality in movement, disrupting static viewpoints. Instead, what is conveyed is a multiplicity of simultaneous impressions (Treves and Wright 2015). Lawrence Alloway wrote that Lanyon approached landscape as “a series of different viewpoints along a walk [arranged] so that nature became a continuously unfolding spectacle” (quoted in Treves and Wright 2015, 25), which echoes the idea that landscape is endlessly becoming. As can be seen in *Soaring Flight*, for Lanyon, experiences of landscape involve the enfolding of traveller and surroundings, and unfixed visual expression is central to evoking this.

Two contemporary artists who probe the enfolding of self and landscape are painters Tom McGrath and Tommy Hilding, who also approach landscape through movement.

Figure 11. Tom McGrath, *Big Sky*, 2002, oil on canvas over panel, 142.2 x 243.8 cm

McGrath works from the vantage point of the car, taking the idea of the mobile observer in the tradition of plein air painting and relocating it to the interstate highway (Kantor Gallery 2010). He uses paint in a fluid way to collapse visual phenomena such as glimpses of cars, splashes of rain and windshield wipers, utilising blurring, smearing and bleeding (Kantor Gallery 2010). This can be seen in *Big Sky*, 2002, (Figure 11) in the merging of road, sky and window. Perception in his works is not disoriented, but shown to be imbued with the materialities of the moving landscape – vibration, movement, distraction – and thus his paintings occupy a space beyond mere observation, in which the materiality of paint parallels and engenders an enfolding of the travelling self and landscape. In a similar way, the paintings of Tommy Hilding go beyond optics through tactile, at times visceral, indications of movement in paint. In *B-side #12*, 2010-2011, (Figure 12) the cityscape, seen from a moving vantage point, blends together through a rush of paint. The dissonant green drips are reminiscent of graffiti, swept up in a movement that renders scaffolding as fleeting moments and collapses buildings, bridges and pavement into a single

Figure 12. Tommy Hilding, *B-side #12*, 2010-2011, oil painting, 50 x 75 cm

Figure 13. Tommy Hilding, *Escapeland (Skymd)*, 2015-2016, oil painting, 40 x 60 cm

sensory impression. This is taken to an extreme in the tactile obliteration of works such as *“Escapeland” (Skymd)*, 2015-2016, (Figure 13) and in the layering of *B-sides #3*, 2010-2011, (Figure 14) in which the visual cues of reflections on the window suggest an enfolding of mobile materialities.<sup>3</sup> In the paintings of Lanyon, McGrath and Hilding, there is a sense of closeness and immersion that manifests as tactile knowledge, a body “caught in the fabric of the world”, to borrow Merleau-Ponty’s phrase<sup>4</sup> (1964, 163). Just as this research does not seek to illustrate quotidian-sublimity, the work of these artists suggests rather than demonstrates enfolded landscape, working from within the spaces they explore. In making solvent artworks I seek a similar enfolding of self and landscape, probing undisclosed space through the process of solvent wash. As

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3. Writer Gary Tischler states that “Hilding’s paintings could almost be Polaroids after the sun has had its way with them or dreams impressing themselves on old landscape photographs” (2015).

4. “Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 163).

Figure 14. Tommy Hilding, *B-sides #3*, 2010-2011, oil painting, 50 x 75 cm

discussed in Chapter One, in making material and depictive space analogous, the solvent wash signals the interwoven nature of tactility and visuality in experiences of landscape. Engaging with tactility, ambiguity and fluidity, these approaches to landscape become more than visual and begin to evoke the body enfolded with the world.

Whilst the process of solvent wash begins to suggest a fluid enfolded of self and landscape, the significance of temporality is highlighted in a small series of works I made for the 2017 *Here & Now: New Photography* exhibition.<sup>5</sup> In previous solvent works, digital editing involved restoring certain aspects of the image as focal points or providing a semi-transparent under-layer of details. These digital additions were drawn from the original source image and so could be almost seamlessly incorporated. In contrast, the five solvent works made for *New Photography* emphasise the process

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5. Curated by Chelsea Hopper at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, WA.

of digital layering by using imagery that is dissonant with the original photograph. For example, in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse*, 2017, (Figure 15) a miniature disused aeroplane sits in an empty lot in a suburban street. It seems simultaneously to belong there, in disrepair, with panels missing and weeds growing beneath it, and to be incongruent. The layering is intended to accentuate the role of memory and daydream in landscape through a suggested temporal and spatial slippage. In *Wandering Into a Limitless World*, 2017, (Figure 16) a figure steps off the road into a building site. At first they seem to be part of the scene, but on closer inspection it becomes clear that they are in a different space, wandering into a forest that has slipped into being betwixt the Colorbond fences.<sup>6</sup> The point is not to create a narrative; in fact, diaristic suggestion is avoided through obtuse juxtapositions on the one hand, and integration of images to a degree of imperceptibility on the other. Rather, the aim is to suggest traces of memory within the otherwise undifferentiated wash. Recalling Massey's comment that "it is not the particular nature of heterogeneities but the fact of them that is intrinsic to space" (2005, 12), it is, likewise, the existence of remembered residues rather than their content which is significant. Memory and daydream as catalysts for quotidian sublimity manifest as a layering of trajectories and traces, a plural enfolding of landscape and self.

Although it is not specific memories or daydreams that are the focus in the *New Photography* works, the particular imagery still plays a role in determining tone. This signals a move beyond a homogenous space of daydream into an acknowledgement of sensations of pleasure and discomfort, possibility and strain, which, as Hawkins maintains, disrupt the detached seeing subject and emphasise embodied encounter (2013, 195). This can be seen in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* in which the intruding

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6. The title is a reference to Bachelard's daydreaming as "going deeper and deeper' into a limitless world", in which he was describing a forest (1994, 185); and also to "mind wandering" as another term for daydreaming which emphasises passage.



Figure 15. Lydia Trethewey, *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse*, 2017, solvent wash, 82 x 118.1 cm



Figure 16. Lydia Trethewey, *Wandering into a Limitless World*, 2017, solvent wash, 82 x 117.9 cm

image of the aeroplane disrupts the cohesion of the scene, creating a sense of tension. It is not important to know that I first encountered the aeroplane at a particular life juncture in which I was feeling stressed, blindsided by a sudden and inexplicable anxiety about flying and finding myself on a Turkish runway looking out at a broken plane, all the vulnerabilities of the vessel on display. The tension in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* is not contingent on that experience, rather it is a transposition of sensation into a new space, in which tension is implied through compositional dissonance and textural similarity. The image of the plane is placed within the empty lot, a somewhat desolate space in itself in which a tension between use and disuse is already present. Between the lot and the plane, a subtle menace is emergent. This is reinforced by the title; as a microcosm of disaster, the daydream is characterised by tension and anxiety, a dream of a tiny apocalypse. This work proved particularly difficult to make, in trying to integrate the plane into the empty lot and create a sense of dissonance whilst avoiding a collage aesthetic. Unlike the figure in *Wandering into a Limitless World*, it is immediately evident that the plane in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* does not belong in the roadside landscape; there is an aberration of scale. The work underwent a number of iterations (Figures 17 and 18) in which the relationship of the plane to the brick letterbox proved problematic, dividing the space into four segments. The size of the plane in relation to the lot was altered many times, and different attempts were layered together. The solution involved a departure from the processes used to make the other *New Photography* works. I combined the images of the plane and the empty lot before the solvent wash stage rather than after, and then masked out the plane. In doing so, the plane came to appear more immersed in the lot, rather than seeming like an addition. In a sense, the tension in the final work came to echo, for me, the difficulties in the process itself, though this is in no way explicitly suggested in the image. The inclusion of the plane in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* is thus used to evoke a mood of tension, without necessarily alluding to a particular memory.



Figure 17. *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* work in progress, 2017



Figure 18. *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* work in progress, 2017

The use of contrasting imagery in the *New Photography* works is also present in *On This Particular Day I was Happy about the Future (2013)*, 2017, (Figure 19) in which the title plays a greater role in emphasising incongruence. The brightness of sunlight reflected in the mirror, coupled with the almost jaunty red tint of the power pole and light sky, forms a more cheery image than *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse*. Yet, on closer inspection, the figure standing across the road – who has been digitally inserted – is staring out onto a grey-skied scene of industry. Again, the specific origin of these tonally dissimilar parts matters less than their compositional meeting and the suggestion of a heterogeneous daydream. The figure looks across a freight-train track, not divided from it by a fence but standing almost on top of it; he has crossed a threshold into a prohibited space, and now as a daydream he crosses again from the past into the present. Though the train track is difficult to see, the dissimilarity between the grey scene of the figure and the brightness of the rest of the work is evident, though the viewer must look closely. At first glance, the figure does not seem out of place. The title, outwardly a redoubling of happiness, begins to undermine the image; if a person was happy in 2013, and such a feat is noteworthy, it could perhaps be indicative of a declining feeling since then, given that the work was made in 2017. The proximity of the figure to the train tracks becomes vaguely sinister. Yet this tension is not reliant upon recalling a specific memory, but on relocating a figure into a new contextual milieu. The contrast between one space and another, one time and another, emerges through the relation of the title to the work. Like in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse*, the specific imagery incorporated is used to suggest a particular atmosphere, indicating the experience of daydream without becoming a personal recollection. In *On This Particular Day I was Happy about the Future (2013)* a sensory entwining of self and landscape occurs through daydream, with the title complicating the relation between each part of the image to evoke tension.



Figure 19. Lydia Trethewey, *On This Particular Day I was Happy about the Future* (2013), 2017, solvent wash, 82 x 111.9 cm

In a seemingly paradoxical shift away from embodied experience, quotidian-sublimity as the focus of this research can be examined through flat ontology, to highlight the role of immensity in landscape. Quotidian-sublimity arises out of a consonance of depthless daydream and limitless world, and as described in Chapter One in relation to Lucretius' cosmic materialism and Ruscha's photobooks, in the case of car travel this immensity is contingent on repeating accumulations of visual roadside vernacular. Flat ontology, or object-oriented ontology, is a philosophical perspective which privileges objects over human perception. In Kant's legacy of transcendental idealism, Being only exists in subjects; however, the foundational principle of flat ontology is that things, or objects, also have Being (Bogost 2012, 3-6). This stands in contrast to preceding approaches to phenomena, such as George Berkeley's subjective idealism in which objects are only bundles of sense data in the mind, or Heidegger's objects that exist beyond consciousness but which only attain Being as they enter human understanding (Bogost 2012). The speculative realist Quentin Meillassoux provides the term "correlationism" to describe these views in which beings only exist as correlates with the mind or world (Bogost 2012, 4). In essence, object-oriented ontology is the idea that all objects<sup>7</sup> equally exist, and that they relate to one another, not just to humans (Bogost 2012). As Ian Bogost points out in *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*, this leads to an understanding of objects in the world as inherently interconnected, a mesh of things (2012). In examining the role of landscape in the quotidian-sublime, flat ontology provides a way of understanding the endlessly recurring objects which make up landscape as a mesh. Bogost contends that the use of the term "network" to describe these immeasurable relationships of objects is unsatisfactory, as a network is an overly normalised structure driven by order and

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7. The term "object" refers not just to physical objects but to abstract concepts. Thus, traffic lights, car tires, real estate opportunity, the sound of aeroplane engines, pedestrians and suburban sprawl are all categorised as objects.

predefinition; instead, Bruno Latour proposes the term “imbroglio”, which means confusion (Bogost 2012, 19). Through this imbroglio, a sensation of immensity beyond the realm of cognition is emergent – objects escape from human access and offer only an ungraspable impression. In flat ontology, there is no hierarchy of being, only a density of being. Thus, the immeasurable nature of landscape can be described as an imbroglio or mesh, engendering immensity through the infinite interconnection of objects, which merges with the daydreamer into an experience of quotidian-sublimity.

Understood in contiguity with object-oriented ontology, landscape escapes from the ordering of humans and becomes immense; but it does not necessarily follow that humans have no place in landscape. Landscape as a mesh of objects can be likened to Massey’s idea of a simultaneity of trajectories, or the enfolded nature of Ingold’s dwelling perspective. Flat ontology is the idea that all objects have the same ontological status, whether corporeal or incorporeal, material or abstract (Bogost 2012), and this provides a space to consider traces of memory as equally existent to palm trees and highways, and daydreams as real as a set of traffic lights. A flattening of importance means that all elements of landscape become potential focal points; in this research, landscape is approached through the travelling body, and so bodily experiences are significant. The function of flat ontology in this research can be likened to Lucretius’ cosmic sublime, a strictly materialist approach to infinity in which objects are not transcendent but amass into a condition of immeasurability. Lucretius focused on stars and seas, but this could as easily be applied to bus stops and traffic cones in their infinite extent. Many ontological approaches consider humans and the world to be inextricably linked, but tend to reduce the realm of objects to a singular concept (for example, nature), whilst allowing the subject (humans) to be multifarious and complex (Bogost 2012, 4). Consideration of quotidian immensities involves discarding the idea that landscape is singular. In *The Democracy of Objects*, speculative realist Levi Bryant states, “The world does not exist” (2011, 270), by which he means that the

world as a singular concept situated above being does not exist. Landscape, like the world, is not an overarching container or extent, but a mesh of interrelated objects. In defining landscape as a mesh of material and intangible objects, flat ontology provides a perspective in which immensity in landscape is a result of the ordinary rather than the grand or exalted; sublimity emerges through the quotidian.

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### **Liminal Zones**

An important aspect of quotidian-sublimity which can be echoed in landscape is liminality. The quotidian-sublime involves a sensation of encountering a threshold, between the familiar and an undefined, perhaps peripheral, infinity. Etymologically, part of the sublime is derived from “limen”, which refers to the lintel or threshold, and which is also the root of the word “liminality”. A sense of the edge or margin is present in the very word “sublime”. In choosing subjects for the solvent washes from my experiences of car travel, those with a particular sense of liminality were selected as they already begin to parallel the quotidian-sublime. The edge of the wash then becomes a kind of wavering threshold, at the margin of familiar and unfamiliar; space is undisclosed and the peripheral dominates. Lanyon’s enfolded landscapes are also marginal zones, between cliffs and sea, sky and land; the “edge of landscape” (Button 2009, 42). In his work, clear delineations are denied in the junctions of landscape topographies. Wylie, in his account of walking the West Coast Path of Cornwall, “A Single Day’s Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path”, notes that the landscape in that part of the country becomes wilder, existing as “fractured configurations of cliff, sky and ocean” (2005, 241). The liminal nature of Perth can be examined with a similar focus on the road as a transient margin, and suburbia as a kind of edgeland. In outlining these landscapes as liminal zones, the emergence of quotidian-sublimity gains further momentum, echoed in the fringing qualities of median strips, petrol stations and vergesides.

In elucidating the liminal nature of landscape, it is important to address the pervasive idea of roads as non-places. Augé's concept of non-place has been widely influential in defining motor landscapes, shifting the highway and its asphalt offshoots beyond experiential understandings into the paralysis of supermodernity. Augé (2008) first introduced his theory of non-places in an essay of the same name,<sup>8</sup> in which he defined non-places as transient spaces produced by supermodernity which are traversed but not inhabited, such as airport lounges, motorways and shopping centres. Contrasted with anthropological place, which is relational, historical and concerned with identity, non-places are transit paths and temporary abodes in which a person is solitary, anonymous and unable to engage (Augé 2008, 63). The resulting numbness of non-places thus precludes material and perceptual engagements. However, as Merriman (2004) points out in his essay "Driving Places: Marc Augé, Non-Places, and the Geographies of England's M1 Motorway", this means that critical analysis of non-places is fundamentally problematic, as subjects are considered unable to fully recognise their own presence due to the paralysing influence of supermodernity. The detachment and lack of presence required for something to be a non-place renders observation and analysis impossible (Merriman 2004, 148). Merriman claims that Augé, in his sharp distinction between anthropological place and non-place overstates the role of difference, homogeneity and blankness in the latter and so fails to acknowledge the potential materialities and heterogeneities (2004). In polarising place and non-place, the emphasis is on presence and absence rather than multiple, partial and relational 'placings' that arise through diverse encounters with place (Merriman 2004, 147). Augé does acknowledge that place and non-place interfere and tangle together, that one never exists without the possibility of the other, but this admission is undermined by the contrasting nature he ascribes to their core

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8. And later, a book of the same name.

qualities – the difference between transit and dwelling, interchange and crossroads, passenger and traveller. In the example of a highway, the idea of non-place renders the car as a prescriptive space with a single function, which overlooks the manifold purposes one might find there: talking, reading maps, listening to music, playing games and so on (Merriman 2004, 157). A highway on which people drift, daydream or experience infinity is decidedly unlike Augé's descriptions of non-place. Through a critical examination of the limitations of non-place as a descriptor for transient, liminal zones, it can therefore be argued that Augé's theory, however pervasive, does not adequately cover the experience of car travel, and can be replaced with heterogeneous, meaningful and material understandings.

Rather than the paralysing effects of non-place, liminality can be understood as an aspect of "edgelands". The concept of edgelands originated in Britain as a way of describing particular spaces that didn't fit within either the city or the country. Existing in between other, more well-defined spaces, edgelands have an atmosphere of liminality, as thresholds from one space to another (Mabey 2013, 6-8). Yet, as thresholds, edgelands do not signal a movement from city to country or suburb to city so much as they open a crossing from familiar spaces into those not ordered by cogent human activity (Mabey 2013, 6-8). Edgelands are marginal, porous zones that are frequently overlooked or unkempt, wayward outgrowths that push against more ordered configurations of space; as Richard Mabey writes in *A Good Parcel of English Soil*, they represent the "fraying of its neat edges" (2013, 7). Alan Berger uses the term "drosscape" to describe this, the unsightly transitional spaces of railroad yards, vacant lots, and car parks, which resist stability and signal the dissolution of clear boundaries between city and country (2006, 2-7). The ecological concept of the ecotone becomes relevant here, as a zone in which one habitat merges into another to create something greater than the sum of its parts (Mabey 2013, 7-8). Ecotones have no real edge and are inherently unstable, caught between two other habitats that continually advance

and retreat; similarly, edgelands exist along an edge, but have no edge (Mabey 2013, 7-8). Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts (2012) in their book *Edgelands* set about writing what is almost an ontographical list, recording objects and spaces on which a particular sense of liminality condenses. Containers, landfill sites, retail parks, wires, airports and piers: all can be seen as examples of edgelands (Farley and Symmons Roberts 2012). Roadside edgelands form the primary subject of artworks in this research; roadworks,<sup>9</sup> highway overpasses,<sup>10</sup> empty lots<sup>11</sup> and median strips<sup>12</sup> are all liminal by nature<sup>13</sup>. Key tensions between infinity and banality play out through these unkempt and undefined spaces in which the peripheral echoes the quotidian-sublime. As marginal spaces which secrete a sense of the indefinable, edgelands are liminal zones and thus form the primary subject of artworks in this research in seeking the threshold of quotidian-sublimity in car travel.

The significance of Perth as the site of investigation in this research is further illuminated through the idea of edgelands, and their relation to the car. The atmosphere of Perth's built environment has something decidedly ecotonal about it. Architect Robin Boyd in his book *The Australian Ugliness* denounces Australian cities as accumulations of practical convenience: "the ill-considered and uncoordinated assortment of posts, hydrants, bins, transformers, benches, guards, traffic signs, tram standards [...] all bundled together like an incompletely rolled swag with loops and tangles of overhead wires" (2010, 38). Boyd's objections to Australian cities seem to arise from his view that they should have a preconceived formal order, as

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9. *High Vis*, 2016, solvent wash and paint (Figure 20).

10. *The Place Where the Planes Land on the Bridge*, 2016, solvent wash (Figure 21).

11. *Rootless*, 2016, solvent wash (Figure 22).

12. *Corner Store*, 2016, solvent wash (Figure 23).

13. Roadworks and empty lots are temporal edges between stages of development; overpasses and verge-sides are more spatially liminal.



Figure 20. Lydia Trethewey, *High Vis*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9 cm



Figure 21. Lydia Trethewey, *The Place Where the Planes Land on the Bridge*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 82.1 cm



Figure 22. Lydia Trethewey, *Rootless*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 83 cm



Figure 23. Lydia Trethewey, *Corner Store*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 83.5 cm

in some European examples. Yet it is precisely this lack of underlying uniformity and a subsequent embracing of heterogeneity that allows for the proliferation of undefined, edgelands spaces. Perth's built environment is suffused with liminality, through the examples of suburban sprawl, the heterogeneous clamour of retail, and the endless transitioning of empty space. Perth as a car-dominated city is reflected in the promulgation of edgelands. Edgelands are often places that are inaccessible to walkers, usually experienced from the car. As Farley and Symmons Roberts write, "motorway verges today are pesticide-free strips of wilderness, as difficult to reach as sea cliffs, miniature landscapes that run along this in-between space for thousands of miles" (2012, 100). This is partly due to the fact that they are often places people would not normally visit – sewerage works, urban ruins, industrial warehouses – and so they tend to be experienced in passing<sup>14</sup> (Farley and Symmons Roberts 2012). The location and character of edgelands is frequently defined through car culture. Farley and Symmons Roberts note that many examples of edgelands such as shopping mega-malls, car dealerships and wreckers yards are deliberately placed away from train lines and beyond walking distance because they are supposed to be driven to, constructed at the edges of cities (2012, 7). Berger contends that sprawl is a result of the city becoming more diffuse, of decreasing transport costs and the relocation of manufacturing and industry away from city centres (2006, 2-7). Perth, a city built for the car, has a particular abundance of places that are only glimpsed from roads. I emphasise this role of peripheral zones and glimpsing in the animation *Space Will not Hold Still*, 2017, (Figure 26), in which an industrial building seen from a highway becomes a focal point for the roaming eye. A similar industrial mill situated between

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14. Ruscha's subjects often incorporate a sense of edgelands, such as the empty lots in *Real Estate Opportunities*, 1970, (Figure 24) and the roadside petrol stations in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963, (Figure 25). He said in a 1988 interview, "When I drive into some sort of industrial wasteland in America, with the theme parks and warehouses, there's something saying something to me" (Ruscha 2002b, 18).

Figure 24. Ed Ruscha, *Real Estate Opportunities* [detail], 1970, artist's book, 48 pages, black and white photographic illustrations, 17.7 x 14 cm closed.

Figure 25. Ed Ruscha, *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* [detail], 1963, artist's book, 48 pages, black and white photographic illustrations, 17.9 x 14.1 cm closed.

a commercial area and suburban streets is also a reoccurring subject and focus of *Interstices*, 2017, (Figure 27).<sup>15</sup> These sites cannot be reached by walking, located in out-of-the-way places and behind barbed wire, and instead become elements of the automobile landscape. As undefined, marginal zones that reflect the peripheral nature of quotidian-sublimity, the idea of edgelands highlights this research's connectedness to Perth, and the intimate relation of liminality to car travel.

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15. These works are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.



Figure 26. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [still], 2017, stop-motion animation, 2 minutes



Figure 27. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [still], 2017, three channel stop-motion animation, 2 minutes

The idea that mobility can be a catalyst for internal sensations has historically focused on the realm of walking, but much recent discussion has extended this to include car travel. Mike Featherstone in his introduction to “Automobilities” points out that automobility has been a neglected topic, often discussed only in relation to negative experiences such as car crashes, pollution and ecological impacts (2004, 1). The idea of the car as machine-like travel, an “incarceration” of an immobile body, coupled with automotive landscapes – including highways, street signs and roadside motels – being dismissed as non-places have contributed to negative perspectives of car travel. Perambulatory experience has been emphasised in considerations of mobility, privileging proprioception as the means for mind-wandering. Rebecca Solnit writes in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* that movement in the mind only arises through bodily movement, not travel, and so does not include motion in a car, boat or plane (2014, 6). However, she also acknowledges that it is as much “the sights going by” that seem to engender mental motion (Solnit 2014, 6). Featherstone points out that the idea of autonomy is central to the car; automobility is self-directed, independent, and speaks to adventure and freedom in the capacity to go anywhere (2004, 17). Even the built environment has been changed to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles, as noted by Thrift (2004) and Featherstone (2004), in the lighting of cities and the spatial organisation of roads, city layout and suburban housing. An important part of this research involves dismantling certain negative ideas about automobility, to instead focus on how car travel can engender sensations of quotidian-sublimity, through habit, daydream and passage.

Though it has been established in Chapter One that quotidian-sublimity arises from a consonance of self and landscape, this can be elaborated upon in more detail in the context of car travel. The idea of passage is significant here – bound up in movement, car travel stimulates a convergence of internal and external passage. This

can be elucidated through the twin ideas of seeding and inscribing, which frame memory and daydream as locational. Solnit formulates seeding as an unconscious process in which a traveller “seeds” their surroundings with an invisible crop of memories and associations, which seem to take hold in the landscape and grow as the subject continues to inhabit those same places (2014, 13). This perceptual connection of subject and landscape is bound up in movement. As she writes, “the passage through a landscape echoes and stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts” (Solnit 2014, 5-6). Massey’s concept of space as continually unfolding also alludes to this seeding, in both the idea that space is constructed – “you are not just travelling *through* space or across it, you are altering it a little” (2005, 118, original italics) – and that revisiting the same spaces reconnects you to the memories you have sown there – “linking up again with trajectories you encountered last time you were in the office” (2005, 119). The counterpart to this is Bissell’s notion of the landscape “inscribing” the traveller, which he explains in “Travelling Vulnerabilities: Mobile Timespaces of Quiescence” as a process of landscape acting on the subject: “Through repeated journeys along the same route, objects in the landscape become inscribed into memory through the body, resurfacing through repeated sightings of these objects” (2009, 433). These are not causal processes, but interlinked, attesting to the enfoldment of self and landscape. As Ingold writes, “remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past” (1993, 152-153). The idea of a strict dividing line between inner and outer worlds is rejected by this fluid and locational approach to memory. The terms “seeding” and “inscribing” indicate the convergence of self and landscape through passage and memory, conducive to quotidian-sublimity.

The locational functioning of memory as reciprocally experienced between landscape and self brings to attention the role of daydream and habit, the conduits for quotidian-sublimity. As discussed in Chapter One, daydreaming unlocks an internal immensity which merges with landscape and it emerges through the body from habit. Daydreaming in the car, produced by habit, is perhaps not spontaneous but inevitable. The Western Australian *How to Pass Your Driving Assessment* booklet issued by the Department of Transport suggests that before someone considers taking their practical driving assessment, they should be able to drive without having to consciously think about it<sup>16</sup> (2017). Habit, as examined through Dewsbury's idea of body-thinking, is evidence of action wired into the body (2015, 33). Tuan (1977) examines this in the specific example of passage, looking at the way people negotiate space. Driving, he contends, involves a degree of geographical competence which is not stored internally as a spatial configuration or map but as a succession of movements remembered through the body (1977, 70). The driver "blanks out" yet the body "maintains control" (Tuan 1977, 69). Encounters with specific landmarks signal what to do next; Tuan elaborates this in relation to Brown's research in 1932, and he writes, "Brown's experimental works suggest that when people come to know a street grid they know a succession of movements appropriate to recognised landmarks. They do not acquire any precise mental map of the neighbourhood" (1977, 72). What Tuan's conceptualisation of habit in driving indicates is the importance of passage to body-thinking; the body remembers movement as succession, through habit. Each step illuminates the next, as do the sequentially encountered landmarks. As with Solnit and Bissell, the body secretes and absorbs memory to and from landscape. As a habitual negotiation of landscape, car travel utilises habit in relation to passage, amplifying the role of situational, bodily memory in the emergence of quotidian-sublimity.

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16. "When your driving flows it means you do not have to think consciously about what to do. That is, you can do things 'automatically'" (Department of Transport, Driver and Vehicle Services 2017, 12).

In relation to locational memory and passage, habit can be elucidated as a means through which bodies have access to unfolding landscape. The “double law” of habit is outlined by nineteenth century philosopher Ravaisson in his essay *Of Habit*. Ravaisson contends that repetition or continuity originating within the body reproduces itself, so that actions or perceptions repeated over and over again hone the body and strengthen the action (2008, 31). An example of this is learning to drive, in which repeated actions become second nature. However, Ravaisson suggests that effects of repetition coming from outside the body are felt less and less, so that prolonged exposure to a sensation dulls the reception of it (2008, 31). It is the first of this double law that is most relevant to driving as habitual, and yet the two can be linked. The idea of habit is often accompanied by apprehension at being passively molded by outside forces. Dewsbury critiques this, arguing that framing humans as completely intentional, deliberate and rational is limiting (2015). Instead, he offers the idea of habit as a mode of being which includes both acting and being acted upon, a combination of Ravaisson’s dual law (2015). He writes that “the ontology of habit [...] offers a way of moving beyond the increasingly redundant paradigm of the sovereign will cast in a relation of mastery to its milieu” (2015, 32). Habit constitutes humans in a state of becoming, in passive as well as active relations to the world. This foregrounds openness to being imprinted upon or inscribed, landscape and self as equally emergent. As a kind of thinking dispersed through the body, habit also reaches forwards and backwards in time, and yet is distinct from memory or imagination as a state of being. Carlisle in *On Habit* writes, “if memory is an image of the past, habit is the past’s repetition in the present. Our habits are not souvenirs, but the living embodiment of our history” (2014, 25). Habit also reaches forward into the future, as the expectation that what will happen is going to be similar to what has happened (Carlisle 2014). Thus, the habitual body is temporal. Habit becomes a ground for daydream opening the body to experience and rendering it in time.

Integrating passive with active states, seeding and inscribing, habit elucidates the way bodies can access and interlink with the trajectories and unfolding pluralities that constitute landscape, as a temporal and spatial passage.

Habit and passage are the particular focus of a series of solvent works that investigate quotidian-sublimity on the highway. These were exhibited as a solo show titled *The Paths Themselves Become Unstable* in January 2017 at Paper Mountain, WA, the title alluding to the fluidity and changeability of roadworks and daydream. The subject of these works is the ongoing roadworks along Tonkin Highway, the aim to contemplate how the uprooting of familiar paths provides an opportunity to consider the ways we negotiate landscape. Here, the quotidian-sublime and daydream are examined through the materiality of passage and a set of tensions engendered by habit: attention and distraction; tactile and intangible sensations; temporal and spatial reconfigurations. Movement through internal and external space is highlighted, foregrounding the idea of passage. In *Bridge, elsewhere*, 2016, (Figure 28) the process of solvent wash is utilised to dissolve pictorial space into an ungraspable elsewhere, making the highway fluid as it becomes simultaneously an expression of immense internal and external passage. Yet, the idea of passage comes across most strongly not within the works, but between them. In *The Paths Themselves Become Unstable* five large works line one wall; *Digger*, 2016, (Figure 29); *Bridge, elsewhere*, 2016, *Bridge, paths*, 2016, (Figure 30), *Container*, 2016, (Figure 31) and *Bridge*, 2016, (Figure 32). This series of images is not a direct sequence, but shifts backwards and forwards in time through the construction of a bridge, and across different weather and perspectives. In each, different parts of the bridge are emphasised; in *Bridge* it is the vast flat vertical surfaces which will support the bridge; in *Bridge, paths* it is various objects on the bridge such as lights and tanks that punctuate the landscape; and in *Bridge, elsewhere* the bridge is dissolved through rain. Between one bridge image and the next, focus shifts across specific elements, and the rest falls away into undisclosed



Figure 28. Lydia Trethewey, *Bridge, Elsewhere*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 83.4 cm



Figure 29. Lydia Trethewey, *Digger*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 84.6 cm



Figure 30. Lydia Trethewey, *Bridge, Paths*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 82.7 cm



Figure 31. Lydia Trethewey, *Container*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 86.6 cm



Figure 32. Lydia Trethewey, *Bridge*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 84.9 cm



Figure 33. Lydia Trethewey, *Sleepwashed*, 2015, solvent wash, 56 x 76 cm

solvent space. As is the case in actual experiences of car travel, attention vies with distraction as the traveller negotiates familiar spaces made unfamiliar through the imposition of road works. It is the movement from one work to the next, as much as the emphasis of specific elements against the solvent dissolution, which suggests car travel as a habitual kind of passage in which landscape ebbs and flows.

It is important in examining habit and passage within the artworks to acknowledge the role of haptic seeing. Haptic perception is the combination of tactility, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive sensations, which together form what might be called “touch”, or as theorist Laura Marks puts it, “the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies” (2002a, 2). Following on from this, haptic visibility is the kind of seeing which draws on other forms of sense experience, so that vision becomes tactile. In Marks’ words, “the eyes themselves function like organs of touch” (2002a, 2). This is important to both experiences of car travel, in which the way a traveller sees the landscape is influenced by the tactility of movement, and also in the viewing of artworks in which the materiality of the solvent wash seeks to convey these experiences in a tactile way. Haptic visibility involves the body with seeing, drawing on elements of travel as a kind of “seeing-with”. “Seeing-with” is a concept devised by Alphonso Lingis, which Wylie explains as the way in which particular materialities and sensibilities become phenomenon with which we see, rather than what we see (2005, 242-243).<sup>17</sup> In *Bridge, elsewhere* the materialities of rain are emphasised by the solvent wash which extends them beyond the windshield, into a more palpable dissolving of the bridge into atmospheric conditions. Here, visibility involves a tactile seeing-with the rain, rather than a looking at it. A similar merging takes place in the earlier work *Sleepwashed*, 2015, (Figure 33) in which solvent dissolution blends the rained-on windshield with a tangibly fluid space, a tactile evocation of a rain-washed world. The haptics of habit, as a bodily experience that rises and sinks through different

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17. This is perhaps present in the embodied visibility of Lanyon, McGrath and Hilding.

levels of consciousness, is sought through material processes of dispersal, dissolution and slippage. The solvent works in *The Paths Themselves Become Unstable* seek the shifting materialities of highway travel as a function of distraction and attention, tactile experiences that involve the body as part of landscape rather than the road as viewed entirely through vision. The use of undefined space, the shifts between depictive and non-depictive elements, and blending, become tactics to evoke the materiality of habit, daydream and immensity. Thus, encounters with the solvent works aim to engage haptic rather than purely visual seeing, drawing on experiences of seeing-with the materialities of habit and passage.<sup>18</sup>

In this chapter, landscape has been formulated as plural and fluid through the theories of Massey, Lefebvre and Ingold. The dimensions of landscape art that go beyond pure visuality have been examined in histories of observation and “seeing” and in the work of Lanyon, McGrath and Hilding, in order to contend that landscape and self are enfolded. Flat ontology has provided an understanding of landscape as immense, in which traces of memory comingle with traffic cones and palm trees. The peripheral nature of edgelands has been analysed in framing Perth as a city of margins, echoing the quotidian-sublime as a liminal experience, and emphasising car travel. Memory has been defined as locational, providing insight into the convergence of self and landscape in quotidian-sublimity, and this has been situated within car travel in terms of passage and habit, experiences of the quotidian-sublime in movement. The next chapter will focus on specific methodologies of evoking the quotidian-sublime, examining photography, invisibility and ineffability.

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18. In the next chapter, specific methods of making will be examined in elucidating the role of photography and solvents in evoking haptic experiences of quotidian-sublimity.

## Chapter 3:

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# **Pressing Against the Invisible**

Invisibility might be described as that for which the eyes have no counterpart. It is not an absence or blankness, but a quality of sensation beyond the limits of sight. And yet, like the ineffable awareness at the core of quotidian-sublimity, an invisible sensation can be suggested, hinted at, through a visual medium. An examination of this idea forms the focus of this chapter in considering how invisibility, as an attribute of the quotidian-sublime, can be approached through a medium that is conventionally tied to the visible world – photography.

Throughout this chapter, the significance of photography as a medium for suggesting quotidian-sublimity will be analysed. In doing so, it is important to recall that though the sublime cannot be written, it can be written about. Transposing this idea to the studio, it becomes a way of framing artistic endeavours towards sublimity. The aim is not to make artworks that recreate the sublime, but to allude to it indirectly, to orbit the quotidian-sublime experience whilst arriving as close to it as possible. As the quotidian-sublime arises beyond conscious grasp, a peripheral approach is necessary. In adopting such an approach, the role of photography is important. As a medium historically anchored in the observable world, it has the potential to act as a hinge between visible and invisible. This is elaborated upon through the idea of “photographic irony” in the first section and forms an underlying understanding of the medium. The ability of art to allude and suggest, to be simultaneously one thing and another, becomes a way to enlarge understanding of the quotidian-sublime, even if it cannot be expressed directly.

This chapter is structured, in some ways, in reverse; it begins with analysis of ideas about what a photographic artwork is, moves backwards in the second section to the creation of the photographic artwork in the studio, and finishes in the third section with the taking of the initial photograph. It is imperative to work in this order, so as to first set out the core ideas which frame understandings of the medium, and to

highlight the significance of studio processes over the actual taking of a photograph. Thus, in “Photographic Irony” I propose a concept which critiques the idea that photography is innately about reproduction, suggesting instead the possibility for the visible to interlace with the invisible. “Undisclosed Images” considers the function of withholding and revealing visual information in the creation of photography-based solvent works. “Snapshotting the Suburbs” returns to the moment of the shutter closing, considering the act of taking a photograph through ideas drawn from photoconceptualism.

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## **Photographic Irony**

If conventional spoken irony is the use of what is said to suggest what is not said, then photographic irony might be described as using the visible to indirectly allude to the invisible. In attempting to suggest quotidian-sublimity I utilise methods of making invisible via a visual medium. Consequently, it is important to reframe photography beyond the historical discourse of visibility in which it is entrenched. Discussion of photography as a medium has centred on its relation to the visible world, notably ignoring photographic practices which explore photography as a non-depictive and non-descriptive medium. In this sphere, debates about photography frequently return to the apparent contradiction in which photographs are considered both subjective depictions and evidentiary impressions of light on a surface – “indexical images”. Photography is often defined through the idea of indexicality, which is the medium’s physical relation to the thing it pictures. As the photographic image emerges through direct contact of light on a surface, it is considered to have an ontological tie to the world (Marks 2002b). Focus on indexicality has led to the photograph being thought of as fundamentally a reproduction of the visible world, depictive in nature. Wall asserts that “it is in the physical nature of the medium to depict things” (1995, 32) and

Figure 34. Jeff Wall *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue*, 2000, silver dye bleach transparency; aluminium light box, 174 x 250.8 cm

"depiction is the only possible result of the camera system, and the kind of image formed by the lens is the only image possible in photography" (1995, 40) (Figure 34). In these statements the prescriptive nature of such ideas is in evidence. In this research I utilise the pervasive notion of the photograph as evidentiary in order to pivot from the ordinary visible world into the sublime invisible. Photographic irony becomes an important understanding of photography which allows it to approach the quotidian-sublime, playing with the notion that the medium is tied to the observable world in order to intertwine it with the invisible.

In reframing photography beyond notions of reproduction, the relationship between the photograph and the visible world must be examined in more depth. As mentioned, there is a contradiction at the heart of much discussion on photography, that whilst photographs are acknowledged as subjective they are also given an evidentiary status. As Karen Donnachie and Andy Simionato write in "Photofinish", "the contemporary image is caught between its inability to return a truth (that ship has sailed) and its irrational, yet persistent role as evidence, instigator, potential narrator of an event" (2014, 6).

I propose that this is partly due to an overemphasis on the action of light on a surface during the taking of a photograph, a process that appears to confer upon the medium the status of reproduction or evidence. The notion of evidence does not speak to an unadulterated reality, as it has been well established that the subjectivity of the photographer ekes into the photograph. As Susan Sontag points out in *On Photography*, even in attempts to neutrally capture something that is “out there” photographs will always be haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience (1973, 6). What is suggested by the term “evidentiary” is not “reality” but a sense of authenticity, what Barthes alludes to in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* when he writes that “in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation” (2010, 89). The photograph is positioned not as a truth, but as a record or reproduction, something that says “this was here” rather than “this is reality”. This stems from the idea that images made directly from the contact of light on a surface are tied to the observable world, hence Barthes’ claim that “the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent” (2010, 80). Therefore, whilst the subjective nature of photography is not in dispute, it is still widely cast as evidential, a reproduction. As theorist Vilém Flusser (2012) notes in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, this has led to thinking of photographs as linked to the world, and hence, rather than being criticised as images, they are often used for analysis of the world. The notion of a photograph as evidentiary, a record or reproduction, thus arises through an ontological linking of image to world via the action of light on a surface, emphasising the visible as fundamental to the medium.

It is also important to note that this focus on indexicality tends to cast the analogue and digital in something of an opposition – digital photography, whilst still thought of as evidential, lacks indexicality. The digital photograph is not produced directly by light, but involves light being translated through ones and zeros, a black box of computing. It still forms initially from the action of light on a surface, but the image

is then enfolded in symbols, losing its directness. This sets up a strange tension, in which the digital photograph is still thought of as “capturing” a moment, but is regarded with more suspicion. A degree of distance presumably enters the image, but authenticity is still demanded of it. Whilst the idea of the photograph as foremost a reproduction of reality applies to both analogue and digital photography – and which is examined together in the following paragraphs – it is necessary here to address a related issue, which is the notion that lack of indexicality in the digital image involves a corresponding lack of materiality. This idea can be countered through a recognition that the materiality of an image is not contingent on whether or not light forms a direct image, but on the appearance of the image itself and how it relates to its surface. As Marks points out, “it doesn’t necessarily follow that because the digital medium experiences all its objects symbolically (as 1s and 0s) so too must the human viewer” (2002b, 149). This extrapolates from the end of the previous chapter, which introduced the idea of “haptic seeing” as a way of engaging with images in which sight draws on other senses, becoming tactile. Haptic images have a sense of materiality, rather than working through distanced observation. In her essay “Video Haptics and Erotics”, Marks (2002a) contends that some images are more haptic than others, and this has to do with the way certain images engage both the intellect and senses without separating them. In a haptic engagement, thought becomes entangled in the body. Ruth Pelzer-Montada (2008) suggests that more photorealistic works tend to engage optical reception due to there being less emphasis on surface. Unlike in an optic image, which is more distanced and disembodied, in a haptic image details do not settle easily into visibly determinable forms – you cannot necessarily name the objects in a haptic image, but rather understand them through visual touch (Marks 2002a). Marks proposes that most images involve different degrees of haptic and optic visibility, and the comingling of touch and vision works to engage the senses and intellect as one (Marks 2002a). Digital photographs, with their capacity

for obscuring, layering, blurring and dissolving, have as much haptic potential as analogue photographs. As Marks (2002c) contends, the digital loss of indexicality does not mean a concurrent loss of materiality. Thus, despite a lack of indexicality, digital photographs can engage a sense of tactility and have materiality.

In order to consider how photographs might break away from the idea of reproduction, it becomes imperative to examine the assumption that light falling on a surface means capturing a moment. Elkins frames the question well in *What Photography Is* when he ponders, “what is gained [...] by proposing that the familiar elements of photography are best understood in terms of Aristotelian cause and effect or the most esoteric and abstract interactions of subatomic particles?” (2011, 23). The relationship between a photographic image and the visible world may appear as a direct translation of what is seen, but there is no standard appearance for photographs and more accurately, it might be said that the practice of photography introduced a particular codified way of seeing, seeing via photographs or “camera vision” (Rexer 2013, 10). In the mid seventeenth century when William Henry Fox Talbot began experimenting with photography, he found that there was no standard appearance in the resulting images (Figure 35) (Rexer 2013, 28-29). A number of tints were possible based on the chemical fixing solutions, ranging from lavender to red, orange, yellow, brown, to green, so uniformity was a matter of taste and interpretation (Rexer 2013, 29-31). Unlike the human eye, which adjusts automatically to light and hence produces a “normalised” view, exposure can be adjusted manually with a camera, altering the way tones are rendered. Therefore, the impression of light on a surface is mutable at the behest of the photographer. Given the control of the photographer to intervene with the action of light, photographs might be more accurately described in terms of what Rexer calls a “visual reconstruction of reality” (2013, 32). This differs from the idea of a reproduction or recording, which imply a direct simulacrum, in that a reconstruction invites imperfection and chance, and acknowledges conscious decisions on the part

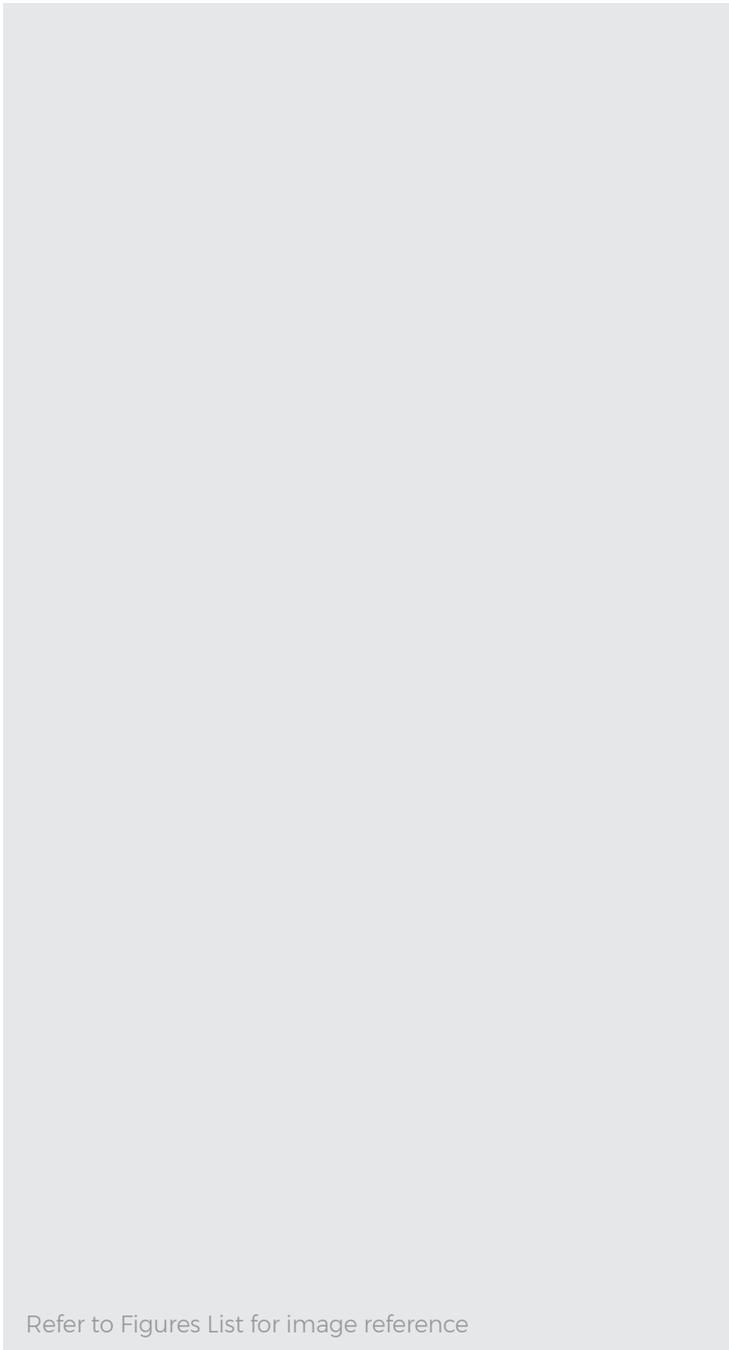


Figure 35. William Henry Fox Talbot, *China Bridge at Lock Abbey*;  
Top: Waxed calotype negative, 1841, 13.6 x 21 cm; Centre:  
Salt print from waxed calotype negative, 1841, 14.1 x 21 cm;  
Bottom: Salt print from earlier state of the negative, 1937,  
16.1 x 21.6 cm

of the photographer. To suggest that the action of light on a surface equates to a moment of time being captured, implying a uniform and accurate reproduction of the visible world, ignores that processes of exposure are adjustable, and that ways of constructing photographs are informed as much by the conventions of the camera and interventions of photographer.<sup>1</sup>

Part of the problem with reducing the fundamental aspect of photography to the action of light on a surface is the obstruction therein of other significant processes that occur before, during and after the shutter opens. The early photographic work *Mediterranean Sea at Sète*, 1857, (Figure 38) by Gustave Le Gray provides an interesting example of a photograph which at first glance appears to support the notion that photography is the capturing of a moment, but on closer inspection reveals this to be an illusion. Whilst it looks like a single coherent record, *Mediterranean Sea at Sète* was actually created by combining two different negatives, one of the sea and one of the sky, which was essential as each element required a different exposure time (Rexer 2013, 33). Further to this, Le Gray was known for altering his negatives, retouching them to remove figures or exaggerate geographies (Rexer 2013, 33). As such, the photograph is not so much about fixing a moment as constructing a version of one. As Rexer writes:

The objective for Le Gray was never inspection but rather construction, not the world viewed impassively and mechanically or an instant pulled from

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1. The idea that a photograph captures a moment in time is subverted in the work of Atta Kim, in which time is used as a method to remove visual information. In his *ON-AIR Project*, 2002-present, (Figure 36) the shutter is left open for a long enough time span that the movements of people disappear, and only the landscape remains (Rexer 2013, 185). What occurs is a loss of visual information, moments eschewed in favour of longevity, the transient and temporary disappearing with only the unmoving left. A similar effect occurs in Matt Logue's *Empty L.A.* photographs (Figure 37), with the grey city vernacular emptied of movement.

the river of time but the world without a past or a future, brought into congruence with an interior impression, a greater subjective truth [...]. The capture of light was only a starting point, and a photograph was not so much a record of an event as the accumulation of interventions (2013, 34).

Figure 36. Atta Kim, *ON-AIR Project, New York Series, 57<sup>th</sup> Street*, 2005, eight-hour exposure; Chromogenic print

Figure 37. Matt Logue, *Empty L.A.; Untitled #12*, digitised photograph, dimensions variable

Figure 38. Gustave le Gray, *Mediterranean Sea at Sete*, 1857,  
albumen print from two glass negatives, 32.1 x 41.9 cm

As can be seen in the work of Le Gray, processes of construction and alteration indicate a potential diversity of visual interventions in photography. Approaching the medium as a reconstruction expands photography beyond the idea of evidence or reproduction. The photograph is no longer limited to a mere reproduction or “captured moment”, and a more open-ended approach can follow in which the action of light no longer reigns supreme.

If recognising the role of construction and intervention in photographic artworks offers a counterpart to evidential understandings, it does so in a way that does not necessarily negate visibility but can invite it into ironic play. Conceptualising the photograph as a potential reconstruction of the visible world implies an indirect yet apparent relationship to the visible which can be used to revise, deny, recognise, and otherwise explore the observable world as it relates to images, perception and “reality”. The tension between perceived closeness to and distance from observed reality forms a fertile ground for investigating invisibility, and through it the quotidian-sublime.

Figure 39. Anna Atkins, *Spiraea aruncus*  
(*Tyrol*), 1851-54, cyanotype,  
35.1 x 24.6 cm

The cyanotypes of English botanist Anna Atkins (Figure 39), one of the pioneers of photography, exemplify such tensions in the medium between visible recognition and abstraction at the crossroads of the artistic and scientific (Rexer 2013, 27-28). Photograms are made by placing an object directly onto photosensitive paper and exposing it to light, leaving solid patterns where the object was. This sense of 1:1 correspondence of an object to an image heightens the perception of the photograph as an evidential impression; however, the images are abstractions as no surface detail is transferred, only outlines and some shades of white where the object is transparent (Rexer 2013, 27-28). Atkin's cyanotypes hence suggest a direct recording of an artefact whilst existing also as an abstract image, the photogram pivoting between form and object narrative, unfamiliarity and recognition. Here, the association of photography with the visible can become an ontological hinge between the visible and invisible.

In moving away from the idea that a photograph is simply an impression of light, consideration can be given to the role of the surface in approaching invisibility. To examine the photographic surface, Elkins uses the metaphors of the selenite window and black ice. Selenite is a crystalline mineral, which was once used as a material for window panes. Black ice or “congelation ice” is that which forms on the bottom of an established ice cover on lakes without many air bubbles, resulting in a more transparent surface through which the black colouring of the water is evident.<sup>2</sup> Due to its mineral components, a selenite window causes light to bend in such a way that the world outside is occluded, or in Elkins words, “rigorously unseen” (2011, 17). The window as a surface inverts the usual function of seeing, problematising clear vision through its materiality. When looking at black ice, the material surface is of miniscule thickness meaning there is no clear distinction between the ice and water, between the pane<sup>3</sup> and the world beyond – the two are fused, much like the surface and world in a photograph (Elkins 2011, 19). Digital photographs on a screen also have an almost imperceptible thickness, a physicality. Amanda Starling Gould in her article “Grounding the Cloud, or, Mapping a Digital Metabolism Through Art” counters the rhetorically established distancing of the digital, pointing out that however much we think of screens as immaterial, the digital image has a physical substrate – it is embodied in light inside optic fibres, magnetic charges on disks, and data traces on drives (2015, 125). For Elkins, the on-screen image is a “fuzzy mosaic of RGB sub-pixels” (2011, 26). In drawing attention to the materiality of surface in rock and ice, Elkins expresses how surface is both inseparable from, and involved in forming, the photographic image. He emphasises the materiality of this photographic surface, digital or analogue,

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2. Interestingly, “black ice” is also the term used when ice forms over a road, which similarly complicates the idea of surface.
  3. Elkins refers to black ice as a “horizontal window that looks down onto nothing visible” (2011, 19).

on-screen or mixed with paper fibres (2011). As he argues, whilst the surface does not equal the photograph, to forget the surface is to forget the photograph (2011, 28). In this research, through processes utilising solvents, the irreducibility of image and surface is thrown into sharp relief. The image and surface shift together via the application of acetone, highlighting the materiality of the photograph. Through this, the intangible space that is created retains a distinct tactility, an ungraspable space that is nonetheless material. In recognising the surface as significant to the photographic image, invisibility can be approached through texture and a kind of “unseeing”.

The imperfect seeing or “imperception”<sup>4</sup> possible in photography as evidenced through the metaphors of black ice and selenite windows can be seen in the work of Uta Barth. Her photographic work *Ground (95.6)*, 1995, (Figure 40) offers a particular perceptual experience in which visibility gives way to visual imperception. The image is not depictive, and instead attempts to embody the act of looking itself. Barth is resistant to the idea that a camera is a “pointing device” (quoted in Higgs 2004, 20) and the function of photography to make meaning through picturing. In an interview with Matthew Higgs, she explains that “if you are not interested in this type of meaning, if you are not invested in pointing at things in the world but instead are interested in the act of pointing (and looking) itself, you have a big problem” (Higgs 2004, 20). It is important to note that her interest in looking in these works is not about the power relations of the gaze, looking as it pertains to subjects and meaning, but rather embodying particular experiences of vision, including stillness, inactivity, peripheral vision and optical fatigue (Higgs 2004, 22). Often this means pressing against the limits of vision, acknowledging that the visual sense is partial and fallible.

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4. Here, I employ the word “imperception” to refer to an imperfect perception, as opposed to “misperception” which seems to suggest that perception has been displaced or missed a particular target.

Barth created *Ground (95.6)* by taking photographs in a generic outdoor location, focusing on a subject in the foreground, and then removing that subject from the visual field (Lee 2004, 43). *Field #3*, 1995, (Figure 41) is another example of Barth's undisclosed photography. The work hints at the existence of a representational subject but problematises the viewer's ability to perceive it clearly. Instead, the subject becomes marginal and peripheral, disappearing as the invisible act of looking itself is foregrounded. In exploring liminality and ungraspable spaces in the everyday, Barth's work also bears resemblance to quotidian-sublimity. The deeply precarious nature of perceptual habits, and what theorist Pamela Lee describes as "failures" of vision

Figure 40. Uta Barth, *Ground (95.6)*, 1995, colour photograph on panel, 51 x 43.5 cm

(2004, 37), are examined by Barth through her utilisation of photography's own set of visual limits and imperceptions. Using a medium conventionally tied to depiction to create images that deny visibility, Barth's works express a kind of photographic irony through imperception, approaching the invisible through the visual.

Figure 41. Uta Barth, *Field #3*, 1995, colour photograph on panel, 58.5 x 73 cm

Figure 42. Eliza Hutchison, *Senna's death, Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari*, 1994, 2012-13, inkjet print, 36.5 x 54.8 cm

Imperception and evoking the invisible do not need to be tied to failures of vision, however, as is evidenced in the work of Eliza Hutchison. Hutchison's photographs do not focus on looking or exclude the subject from photography, rather they enact an intertwining of the two through which the unspeakable is suggested. Her work utilises processes of separating out and blurring to push photography beyond representation, imbuing the work with uncertainty. *Senna's death, Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari*,<sup>5</sup> 1994, 2012-2013, (Figure 42), from Hutchison's *Hair in the Gate*<sup>6</sup> series, could be described as intensely visual, but it is not depictive. Her works instead deal with memory through images which dissent from the idea that a photograph is a captured moment of reality – the photograph is not a fixing of a static moment, and memory is fluid and slippery. Writer Dan Rule describes Hutchison's works as reconstructed memory (2015, 23), but more than that they are photographs as reconstructions, attesting to the way that remembering itself reconstructs the past. Photography here is an unhinging of certainty and stasis. Helen Johnson, discussing the *Hair in the Gate* series in her essay "Memory is Not a Recording Device: On Eliza Hutchison's *Hair in the Gate*, a Biograph" states that "Hutchison [...] uses photography, the medium most closely associated with representation today, to deal with unrepresentability" (2013, 11). This is an articulation of photographic irony, using the visible to engage with invisibility. The apprehension in the image is not derived from observation of a subject, but a felt engagement with an ungraspable space (Johnson 2013, 7). Hutchison thus utilises photography to press against the invisible, not through a rejection of visuality but by embracing it beyond the constraints of clear depiction and observation.

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5. It is interesting to note that in Hutchison's title, "Ferrari" is spelt without the third "r" as "Ferrai".
  6. This phrase is a reference to the phenomenon in motion picture cameras in which a slither of celluloid or "hair" breaks off as the film passes through the gate, and forms a dark line on the frame.

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## Undisclosed Images

In considering the potential of photography to evoke the invisible, it is important to examine the way that photographs can both withhold and reveal. Rexer uses the term “undisclosed” to refer to photographs that complicate the opposition of abstraction and depiction, and writes that “insofar as they reconstruct reality, photographs withhold a measure of it” (2013, 32). This proposition contains an acknowledgement that photographic works are always formed from an initial source. They render that world unfamiliar by withholding part of it, engaging in “unseeing”. It is important here to differentiate between undisclosed images and photographic irony. The intertwining of invisible and visible refers to the sensory realm, the capacity of photography, drawn inexorably towards the visual, to approach the unrepresentable. The pairing of disclosed and undisclosed, however, alludes more to the availability of information in the artwork itself; whether an image withholds or reveals understanding of itself and its links to the world. In the example of Uta Barth, photography is employed ironically in that it uses the visuality of the medium to probe the partiality of looking. The resulting images are undisclosed, as they withhold understanding of their world. These two pairs of terms are thus intertwined, describing the potential of photography to be opaque. In the quotidian-sublime, infinity is sequestered beyond a cognitive limit, withheld from understanding, and yet a sensory impression of immensity is present. In withholding information, invisibility is felt. Therefore, in seeking this experience in art, an effective balance of revealing and withholding must be struck, in images that retain enough familiarity to provide an entry point for viewers, leading through to the unfamiliar. In doing so, photography’s supposed link to the world is exploited, even as that world slips into an impenetrable form. In this section, consideration will be given to methods that strike a balance between revealing and withholding, focusing on material investigations.



Figure 43. Paint and solvent transfer test

In experimenting with the most effective ways to allude to quotidian-sublimity through photographic artworks, I carried out a number of investigations, some of which led into fruitful territory and others which were abandoned. As discussed in Chapter One, the terms quotidian and sublime are not perfect opposites, but enfolded into a single experience; they emerge mutually as internal daydream and external limitless of landscape. In making artworks, the need to pivot between these unsymmetrically positioned parts meant finding a way to allude to the slippages between one and the other. The first method I employed in attempting this slippage approached the photograph in a more static way, and utilised painting as a fluid counterpart (Figure 43). Onto a photographic image, printed by solvent transfer, I reproduced colours and forms loosely as a painted layer. The aim of this was to create a space that shifted between the familiarity of the lingering photographic details and the unfamiliarity of an abstracted area. However, this was problematic as the tension between accessible and inaccessible spaces became contingent on the use of different materials, setting up a false parallel of “photograph = familiar” and “paint = unfamiliar”. As the paint was an addition to, rather than an extrapolation from, the

quotidian landscape in the image, this method did not adequately account for the irreducibility of the quotidian and the sublime, suggesting instead two separate elements. As a result, I put aside paint and focused solely on the photograph, and how the ungraspable sublime might be pulled out of its quotidian familiarity. It was through the very lack of effectiveness of these early experiments that an avenue for seeking quotidian-sublimity was clarified; if the ordinary and the immense were to be visually intertwined without being opposites, they must emerge from the same material root – in this case, the photograph.

A second set of early experiments discarded paint and examined methods of disrupting photographic surfaces so as to push them from the everyday into a space of elsewhere. This involved a continuation of solvent transfers as a method of moving an image from one surface to another, and in the process removing or obscuring parts of it. In making solvent transfers, a digital photograph is printed in toner<sup>7</sup> and then transferred by rubbing a solvent (eucalyptus oil) on the back of the image, and applying pressure. Intrigued by the potential of solvents to lift away an image from its paper substrate and shift it into new configurations, I began experimenting with different papers and chemicals (eucalyptus oil, acetone, xylene, bleach, lacquer). This led to a twofold use of solvent – firstly, applied directly to an image in order to disrupt it, and secondly (after having scanned it and printed it in toner) as a means to transfer it to a new surface. In investigating physical and chemical interventions in photographic surfaces, the art of Curtis Mann was influential. Mann gathers photographs of war- and poverty-stricken areas from a number of sources such as news websites, and, printing them into physical copies, applies bleach to unsettle the image (Flack 2017). The result is works in which recognisable scenes dissolve into stark white, yellow and orange spaces, which seem at once violent and subdued (Figure 44).

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7. Ink does not react with the solvents.

Figure 44. Curtis Mann, *attempt, connection (somewhere, Israel)*, 2007, chromogenic development print; graphite; mixed media, 40.6 x 41.9 cm

Mann's application of solvents directly to a photographic surface prompted me to experiment with the same, but beyond the obvious methodological links, Mann's work also follows a similar logic of challenging the truth value of photography. As writer Travis Flack (2017) points out, in disrupting existing images from photojournalists, Mann contests the original role of such photographs as evidence or records of events. After applying solvents directly to the surface of the photograph, I printed the images using solvent transfer, this time only partially transferring the image and leaving white spaces. The aim of this was to suggest the ungraspable nature of quotidian-sublimity through a slide into blankness. In Figure 45 this can be seen in the way the recognisable elements of landscape become disrupted and in turn give way to white paper, left to right a total reduction of the familiar to a blank. Again, this was problematic. In such



Figure 45. Solvent transfer test

an extreme withholding of visual information (blankness) the works tended more towards ideas of disintegration than immensity, the disappearing image a sensory null.<sup>8</sup> As with previous experimentation, these works proved useful in identifying what was not effective – the quotidian-sublime could not be conveyed through the absence of phenomena, but instead must be the ordinary reconfigured into the immense. Recognising this, the action of solvent itself upon a photograph became the point of departure for making works in which the unfamiliar was just the familiar rearranged.

All of these early material experiments signalled something important about solvent, and that is its capacity to manipulate images without addition or removal of visual information. In applying solvent directly to a photographic surface, the image is dispersed into unfamiliar forms, but does not lose itself. For example, in *Station*, 2016, (Figure 46) the petrol station is swept away, becoming a formless wash of colour; however, the visual information that constituted those buildings remain in the

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8. In a similar group of works, I introduced whiteness along the contours of objects so that it was suffused through the image, as in Figure 47, but again this was more suggestive of dissolution than sublimity.



Figure 46. Lydia Trethewey, *Station*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 82.3 cm

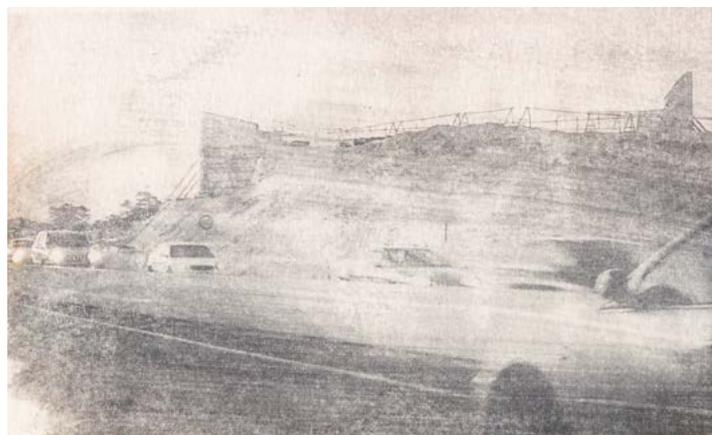


Figure 47. Solvent transfer test

sediments of grey that collect in the corner, in the lights that are skewed into streaks of yellow, white and blue. Unlike in Mann's photographs where bleach is often used to completely wipe away parts of the image, in my solvent works acetone functions to loosen the points of toner, allowing them to slide into new configurations without being removed. There is a different logic to this process than the careful dissection of images that goes on in Mann's work. Often, as in *Station*, it is the focal point of the image that is subject to the most dissolution. This process is significant in that the depictive space and material space of the photograph become analogous through the use of solvent – altering one necessarily means altering the other. This is consistent with Elkin's emphasis on the photographic surface – the idea that to forget the surface is to forget the photograph (2011) – in this case, the surface is split into a substrate and a liquid component, the image released and made boundless. In beginning with a familiar image of suburbia, and then applying solvent to disperse it into an unfamiliar form, nothing has been added or removed; the unknown has been derived from the known. In this way, the idea that the quotidian and sublime are not opposed but interlinked is upheld. Exemplifying the concept of photographic irony, the visible origin of the photograph is used to suggest the invisible.

In attempting to make artworks that shift between known and unknown spaces, the tactic of revealing and withholding visual information is further utilised in digital and material processes. Where more recent works employ masking fluid to retain familiar details,<sup>9</sup> earlier images relied upon digital manipulation in Adobe Photoshop to reintroduce lost elements. This involved softening the starker sediment edges in order to produce a fluid transition from one space to another. In *Passing the Invisible*, 2015, (Figure 48) and *1407*, 2015, (Figure 49), the parts of the image recognisable

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9. Certain parts of the image are coated in masking fluid (a rubber latex solution), so that they are not dispersed during the solvent wash stage.



Figure 48. Lydia Trethewey, *Passing the Invisible*, 2015, solvent wash, 84 x 120.2 cm

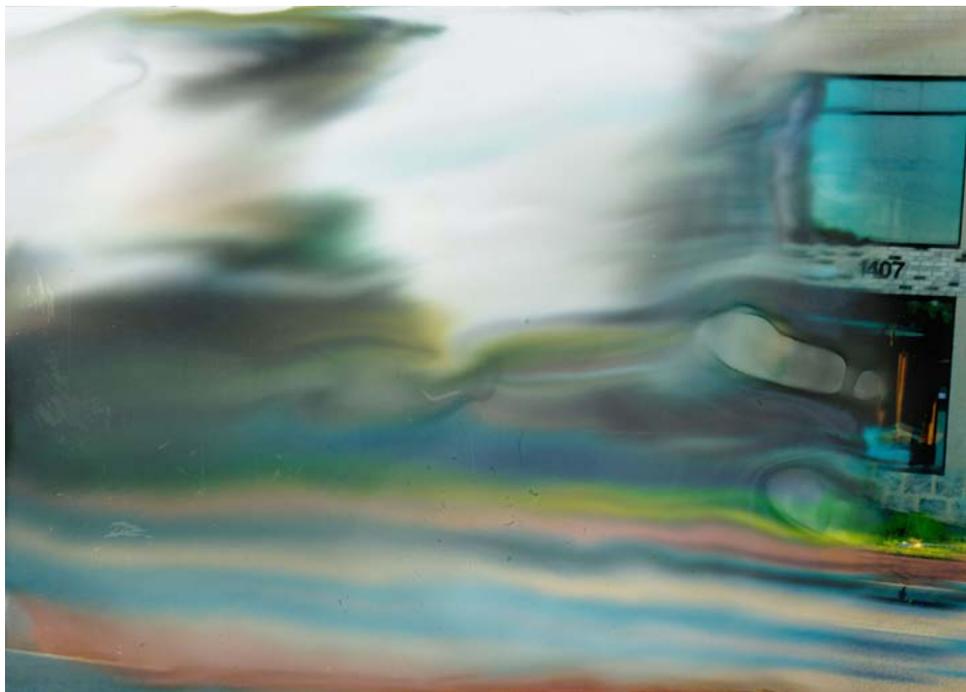


Figure 49. Lydia Trethewey, *1407*, 2015, solvent wash, 84 x 116.9 cm



Figure 50. Lydia Trethewey, *Swell*, 2015, solvent wash, 60 x 89.7 cm



Figure 51. Lydia Trethewey, *Paths*, 2016 solvent wash, 60 x 80.6 cm



Figure 52. Paths work in progress, 2016

as a suburban street are sequestered to one side of the wash, dispersing into an ungraspable formlessness. Images like *Swell*, 2015, (Figure 50) utilised digital processes of layering and transparency to reintroduce elements of the original photograph that had become lost in the wash, as can be seen on the left side where a warehouse and truck are just visible through the undefined space. These details provided a point of reference for the quotidian, emphasising the slippage between known and unknown values. *Paths*, 2016, (Figure 51) is perhaps the most extreme example of digital intervention, created by combining two entirely different solvent images into one (Figure 52). In works that utilise masking fluid, the recognisable elements also serve the purpose of directing the flow of solvent. In *Returning*, 2016, (Figure 53) the horizon line has been masked out, ensuring that the river and sky remain as separate spaces with distinct colours. Further to this, gestural strokes of masking fluid have been applied to the left hand side, creating another kind of surface disruption as the solvent-image settles around the contours and streaks. Here, unrecognisability is interweaved with the familiar. The solvent wash artworks therefore traverse digital and physical processes in seeking a balance between what is revealed and withheld, using masking to retain parts of the image, and digital layering to restore details.<sup>10</sup>

It is through the boundlessness of solvent wash coupled with detail preservation via masking and digital processes that these works approach the other significant aspect of quotidian-sublimity – not mere unknowability, but a reach towards infinity. Whilst this is considered at the close of Chapter One, in relation to incompleteness and

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10. I use the term “solvent wash” to describe these works, even though they predominantly manifest as digital prints, for two reasons. Firstly, many of the works exist only in the stages of their creation, as physical photographs or digital images, and so cannot be described as digital prints. Secondly, following a tradition of nomenclature in printmaking, this descriptor of the medium focuses on the process through which the works are made, rather than the material stuff which it eventuates as.



Figure 53. Lydia Trethewey, *Returning*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 82.8 cm

the Romantic fragment – the idea that it is implied infinity, not actual infinity, that is important – it is worth reiterating the role of solvent wash in approaching the quotidian-sublime. Burke, understanding sublimity to be a kind of boundlessness, writes:

Hardly any thing [sic] can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing (2015, 52).

For Burke, the limitless nature of the sublime can be expressed through a kind of indistinctness. In the solvent wash works, this is sought through the ungraspable space into which the quotidian slides. In an important way, this is simply the extending

of objects beyond their normal limits. As seen in *Excavation*, 2016, elements of the landscape reach out and coalesce with each other, to become the very space of the unknown itself. Indistinctness is not just blurring or obscuring, but a result of objects pushing towards an immeasurable form. The recognisable details that remain – warning sign, pavement, cloud streaks – are more like notations of themselves, signalling the ordinary vernacular from which this sublime space has arisen. As elements of the landscape shift, slipping between known and unknown, subject to the whims of solvent, the image reveals and withholds, suggesting quotidian-sublimity as the photograph presses against the invisible.

### \_\_\_\_\_ **Snapshotting the Suburbs**

As alluded to earlier, this chapter has moved in reverse, from the photographic artwork, through the making of it, and now to that initial action of taking a photograph. Arranging analysis in this manner was important in order to outline at the beginning the key theoretical underpinnings of photography in this research. The idea of photographic irony is contingent on the medium having a link – assumed – to the world, and it cannot be ignored that photographs tend to begin with an initial source. It is imperative, therefore, to scrutinise this initial photographic image, the visible and quotidian link from which photographic irony swings into the unknown. This initial act of photograph-taking is more closely related to the quotidian than the sublime, yet does not involve a neutral or objective recording of landscape. Rather, the relationship of photography to the everyday manifests in this research through a particular approach to the medium, which can be examined through the example of photoconceptualism and might be called “snapshotting”.

In this research the photoconceptualist approach is drawn upon to emphasise that the camera is not simply a recording device, but a creator of primary images. Conceptual Art can be framed as a logic of specification, in which photography is used in image formation rather than documentation of an experience. Liz Kotz proposes this idea in her essay “Language Between Performance and Photography” in which she differentiates the use of photography in Conceptual Art from the earlier moments of Happenings and Fluxus (2005). She argues that in Conceptual Art, the photograph is a realisation of an idea, as opposed to in Happenings and Fluxus where it functions as a secondary documentation of a primary experience (Kotz 2005, 3). As a structure of specification, photoconceptualism shifts away from the photograph as a recording device, and instead approaches photographs as manifestations of ideas – the generation of specific realisations (photographs) from general schema (ideas) (Kotz 2005, 14). Margaret Iverson (2010) uses the terms “utterance” and “instruction” to describe these two key components; as a primary action, the taking of a photograph is an utterance of an instruction. This can be elucidated through the photobooks of Ruscha, for example, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963, (Figure 54). In making *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* Ruscha began with the title, which serves as an instruction – photograph twenty-six gasoline stations along Route 66 – and then set out to take the photographs (Heckert 2013; Rawlinson 2013). The resulting images are not records of his car trip, but primary images that manifested his idea. A similar attitude is taken in this research; photographs are not used to document experiences of car travel in a diaristic or narrative way, rather they are realisations of a search for the quotidian-sublime in familiar landscapes. Understanding photography as involved in making primary images, rather than secondary recordings, photoconceptualism elevates the photograph from a document of experience to an experience itself.

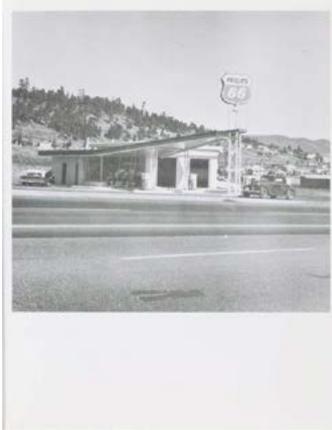


Figure 54. Ed Ruscha, *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* [detail], 1963, artist's book, 48 pages, black and white photographic illustrations, 17.9 x 14.1 cm closed.

It is worth lingering on Ruscha for a moment longer as his work provides insight into the idea of snapshotting as a method of taking photographs. As theorist Aron Vinegar notes (2010, 34), the term “indifference” is often employed in discussing Ruscha’s work to refer both to his attitudes towards the “art” components of photography, and a particular quality he seeks in the works themselves. Ruscha claimed that he wanted “absolutely neutral material” in his photobooks (Ruscha 2002a, 26), which may have

been a response to his immediate surroundings, the “sunstruck, sign-filled vacancy of Los Angeles”<sup>11</sup> (Schjeldahl 1985, 48). Ruscha’s desire for neutrality has often been interpreted as an anti-aesthetic statement, for example, by Wall who writes:

Although one or two pictures suggest some recognition of the criteria of art-photography [...] the majority seem to take pleasure in a rigorous display of generic lapses: improper relation of lenses to subject distances, insensitivity to time of day and quality of light [...] (1995, 43).<sup>12</sup>

Yet, Ruscha’s images are by no means lacking in aesthetic considerations, in the processes he uses to select, crop, and arrange them into books. It is important to note, as theorists Costello and Iverson do, that in considering the relationship of ideas to images, that the divisions in Conceptual Art between conceptual and pictorial have been frequently exaggerated (2010). Ruscha’s neutrality seems to relate more to an aim of purging the photograph of the personal, embedding it instead in ideas and images. This is where the method of snapshotting comes in. In a 1965 interview with John Coplans, Ruscha described his photographs as “nothing more than snapshots” (2002b, 24), suggesting the role of the camera to produce images quickly. Ruscha’s use of snapshotting reflected the ordinariness of his subjects, without elevating them to the plane of “high art”. This is not an anti-aesthetic, but an embracing of the aesthetics of the vernacular, a kind of unselfconscious image-making. At this time, cameras were becoming more common, and photography was no longer

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11. Though, here, it is interesting to consider Uta Barth, who also works in L.A., and whose works manifest slowness and stillness. In an interview with Matthew Higgs, she said, “One does not think of the stereotypical California lifestyle as one that embraces ideas about slowness, or attention to anything other than the spectacle or the event” (quoted in Higgs 2004, 12).

12. Wolfgang Brückle notes that Wall’s account is self-admittedly incomplete: “we have to be aware that Wall’s afterthoughts on conceptual photography are as partial as the framed view from his car. They are designed to invest his later practice with the legitimacy of an heir to the very essence of photography” (2010, 158).

Figure 55. Robert Rooney, *Holder Park 1 and 2*, 1970, polaroids, each 12.6 x 12.7 cm

only in the realm of the expert. The same use of photography is employed in this research; snapshotting becomes a method of quick image-making, suitable for use whilst travelling at speed in a car, and the kind of images produced have a degree of indifference to the subject and step back from the personal chronicle.<sup>13</sup> This kind of photography is more immediate. Thus, it is again the example of photoconceptualism which provides a method of photography that emphasises the quotidian.

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13. In an essay written for my exhibition *The Paths Themselves Become Unstable*, Anna Sabadini wrote of my work that “these are not photographs taken with a self-consciously ‘aesthetic eye’, lifting them to the level of high art in response to a historical perception that photos are less worthy. These works originate as ordinary snaps of the suburbs, almost distracted snaps” (2017, n.p.).

It should be noted, when discussing photoconceptualism, that it does not expunge experience in favour of ideas. The work of Robert Rooney is an example of photoconceptualism that whilst visually similar to Ruscha's has a greater focus on encounter with specific landscapes. As curator Maggie Finch contends, Rooney's photoconceptual works, like *Holden Park 1 & 2*, 1970, (Figure 55) reconcile a conceptual focus on seriality and visual accumulation with everyday life in suburban Melbourne (2010). To make the work, he stuck pins at random into a road directory, and then travelled to where they directed, photographing the suburban streets he encountered there (Engberg 1995). As such, the resulting photographs are both utterances of an instruction (the pins in the book) and visual explorations of particular sites. Rooney wrote that his works were always "organized from experience" (quoted in Engberg 1995, 11). The setting of the suburbs is again important, containing the edgelands that Boyd entreated against, or as writer and curator Chris McAuliffe (1995, 24) describes them, a place where nothing or anything might happen. Rooney did not intend to exalt the ordinary by photographing it, but to investigate visual experiences (Phipps 1995). He believed that repetition of similar images could be used as a way of inviting nuance and variety, locating difference in noticing the details that divide one place from another (Engberg 1995). Contemporary photographer Robbert Flick revisits photoconceptualism with a similar focus on experience. In works like *P2760885-904*, 2011-2013, (Figure 56) images of L.A. taken from a moving car on a highway are sequenced into a continually unrolling landscape, which as Rexer points out highlights repetition and difference through a visual grid (2013). Similarly, in this research, though a general schema serves as an instruction for the taking of a photograph (the idea to photograph roadscape experienced during my daily travels), they still engage in consideration of particular sites, focusing on elements of interest or subtle differentiations. Like in Rooney's work, I use snapshotting to both distance myself from my subject – shedding personal anecdote and embracing typicality – and to draw closer to it, investigating in detail each palm tree, storm water drain and chain-link fence.

In this chapter, the role of photography in approaching the quotidian-sublime was examined. Through the concept of photographic irony, the potential of photography to suggest the invisible through the visible was formulated; in doing so, the idea that the photograph is a simple record or reproduction was rejected. In acknowledging the role of reconstruction and intervention in the creation of photographic artworks, the method of solvent wash was examined as a way of approaching the ungraspable space of the quotidian-sublime. By withholding and revealing visual information, solvent washes coupled with digital and material manipulation of details seek the slippages inherent to quotidian-sublimity. In dispersing imaged objects beyond their limits, towards a boundless space, the solvent works approach immensity. This all begins with the initial act of taking a photograph, which through the method of snapshotting involves a further rejection of the idea of photography as a secondary documentation of experiences and instead draws it towards the quotidian and experience itself. This chapter closed with a consideration of Ruscha and Rooney, whose works not only utilise snapshotting but explore the ordinary and typical in suburban and city streetscapes, often from the vantage point of the car. In the next chapter, car travel becomes the specific focus in examining solvent-based video works. The idea of undisclosed images, and of the capacity of the photograph to press against the invisible, is extended into moving images.

Figure 56. Robbert Flick, *P2760885-904*, 2011-2013, archival pigment print, 50.8 x 84.5 cm



## Chapter 4:

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# Moving Through Images

“You can’t hold places still”

- Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (2005, 125)

Mobility catalyses daydreams, metabolises space and forms a condition from which quotidian-sublimity can arise. Throughout this exegesis, the idea of the quotidian-sublime as an immeasurable sensation beyond cognitive grasp has been examined, and in this final chapter, a return to the materialities of car travel will serve to deepen the link between fugitive immensity and everyday mobility. Movement has been analysed as a function of lived in, layered space and trajectories, as a passage through reverie, both spatial and temporal, and as an experiential core of the sublime itself in the collapsing motion of self and world; but in this final chapter, movement in that familiar zone of highways and roundabouts, suburban streets and roadworks, becomes the specific focus of inquiry.

Movement and the notion of “moving through images” take three forms in this chapter. Firstly, they facilitate a revisiting of ideas of mobility and car travel with more emphasis on the car itself and the way it modulates sensory experience. Concepts drawn from cultural geography expand the landscape into the moving landscape, and consider what it means to be in a car on a road, beyond just the space of memory and daydream. Secondly, moving-through-images takes the form of a brief assessment of some of the underlying methodological concerns of this research in the realm of practice, looking at images in the spirit of conceptualism and at the transitional nature of work that moves between image and experience. To close this chapter, an examination of stop motion animation as a method for approaching quotidian-sublimity, perhaps the culmination of the practice-based research, will take place. These works involve literal image movement, but also sensory and implied motion. In considering the texture of movement and its importance to quotidian-sublimity, a circle of inquiry from car travel, to transitional images, to moving images will be completed as an examination of mobility in art making.

In analysing car travel it is important to acknowledge the significance of the body, not as a totally passive or “incarcerated” self but as a nexus of sensory and perceptual experiencing. Solnit identifies a problematic tendency in postmodern responses to the body in motion which tend towards the extremes of either total passivity or utter mobility (2014, 28). The passive postmodern body is a site for sensations, processes and desires, rather than a source of action and production – it does not strain muscles or wander around in the rain (Solnit 2014, 28). This body becomes a sort of specimen for dematerialised concepts. The mobile body is conceptualised as having an extreme velocity, for example, when travelling globally by plane – it moves without rest (Solnit 2014, 28). Yet, this mobile postmodern body is still passive – it does not move, but is moved. It is incarcerated in speed, subject to exterior motion but lacking its own. As a result, the body in both cases is reduced to a proxy for abstract concepts, rather than an agent with sensations and perceptions. Tim Cresswell explains this reduction as the effect of a hierarchy of movement and fixity. In *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* he points out that considerations of mobility often assume that fixity has a moral and logical primacy in place and space, and so when mobility is given attention, it is through the lens of fixity and thus rendered ideal (Cresswell 2006). The assumption is that things do not move if they can help it; that tendencies are always towards the least net effort (Cresswell 2006, 29-30). A result of this is the theories of bodily mobility that Solnit identifies, in which bodies do not ache, sleep, sing, or make decisions as they move. In Cresswell’s words, movement becomes a “dysfunction” (2006, 29). In focusing on the quiescent experiences of daydream and the bodily origins of quotidian-sublimity, this research frames the travelling body in the car not as an abstract or passive site for sensations but as a corporeal entity. Understanding the body in movement as engaged perceptually and corporeally in

mobility is important in order to elucidate the ways in which the traveller relates to the car, and how the car modulates experience; in other words, to recognise the materialities through which daydream and sublimity can occur.

In previous chapters, particularly Chapter Two, this research has repudiated the idea that the car is a space separated from landscape. In dispelling notions of automobility as an experience of isolation, it also becomes important to consider the ways that the car is not a container for bodies but is instead an interface. Rather than a barrier interposed between self and landscape, the car can be conceptualised as a hybridisation of body and machine. Thrift proposes that systems of driving and passengering produce their own embodied practices – the car, as a hybrid entity, facilitates a means of “bodying forth” (2004, 49). The body, as and through the car, extends into and enfolds with landscape. Drawing on the research of Jack Katz (2000), Thrift proposes a number of ways in which drivers experience cars as extensions of their own bodies, as bodying-forth, for example, via a repertoire of reciprocal communications such as horns, lights and hand gestures (2004, 47-49). Utilisation of certain “tactics” or ways of getting around, rooted in bodily motions of feet on pedals, hands on steering wheels, are also examples of the car extending the body’s movements (Thrift 2004, 47). This is particularly noticeable in the awareness drivers have of their position on the road, an expanded proprioception that allows for slow backwards manoeuvres into parking spaces, or the ability to overtake without scraping against other vehicles. The body of the car is a hybrid extension of the driver, though its specific mechanisms may remain unseen. Mirrors alter the dimensions of vision, and varying road surfaces are felt tactilely through seats. Therefore, far from being a container which encapsulates the driver away from landscape, the car is like a secondary skin relocating rather than removing sensory experience, so that vision, tactility and proprioceptive senses are reconfigured as part of a human-machine hybrid. The body is not lost or isolated, but adopts a different engagement with landscape that utilises habitual tactics of movement and bodying-forth.

Thinking of car travel as a kind of hybridised movement returns again to the idea of habit as body-thinking; in this instance, false assumptions of separation or isolation are dissolved. The role of habit in travel has been discussed previously in Chapter Two specifically in relation to memory embedded in landscape, but in this section is analysed in terms of what Thrift describes as intentionality and intelligence being distributed across the human and non-human (2004, 49). In focusing on the habitual dimension of driving, habit becomes a lens through which to understand the driver-car hybrid as diametrically opposed to notions of isolation and incarceration. Acceleration is a useful example of this. Consider the way that the driver feels acceleration and deceleration, not as an external force pulling them forward or pushing them back, but as something felt within their own body. Small adjustments are made by the driver to suit changing road conditions, yet these are not consciously thought out but habitually implemented. It is the body, not cognition, which responds to the signals and materialities of the road. Habit, conceptualised as body-thinking (Dewsbury 2015), blurs the distinction between mind and body by allowing musculature, skin and viscera to think and respond beyond awareness or cognisance. If habit is extended beyond the corporeal body into the car-body hybrid, it can then be said that the car acts habitually as a thinking body. This exercise is not intended to imbue the machine with human-like qualities of thought but to lift it above the state of a dumb, mute object of use into a body that interfaces with the world. In doing so, the assumption of a dichotomy of human-machine, or inside-outside space is challenged. If the human body is no longer a passive receptacle of the mind, the car is freed from its classification as a vessel. A breaking-down of dichotomous ontologies, which situate the traveller within the car as the mind within the body, is set in motion by the realisation of habit as body-thinking. The car is thus reframed, not as an isolated bubble but a merger of intentions, an entity that makes available a new set of experiences.

The interrelation of car and traveller is perhaps most evident in the example of the driver, but the corporeality of mobility is still very much key to experiences of passengering. For the driver, habitual, instinctual logics are easier to identify, but the passenger's lack of direct input into the car's movement does not mean that they do not experience the materialities of car travel or that they are passive bodies. Bissell (2010) in "Vibrating Materialities: Mobility-Body-Technology Relations" makes a case for the interrelation of quiescent bodies and mobile technologies in the example of vibrations felt during train travel. Vibrations produced as the train moves are felt through the fabric of the seats, in exposed skin and internal musculature, but are not, Bissell maintains, linear motions affecting a passive body (2010, 480). As the persistent reverberation enfolds the train carriage, the traveller who wants to rest or sleep must negotiate the seat, which is the primary interface.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, rather than sensible, cognate thought, it is a kind of visceral knowledge that is produced (Bissell 2010). This sense of getting comfortable interweaves with tangible political and economic logics, which are partially responsible for the configuration of the seat (Bissell 2009, 436-437). Through this negotiation, the dualistic renderings of materiality that accentuate an ontological separation of train (actively vibrating) enclosing body (passively suffering) are avoided (Bissell 2010, 480). Vibrations draw attention to the usually hidden or obscured relationships inherent in mobilities, and indicate a way in which the passenger is implicit in the body-mobility-landscape connection (Bissell 2010, 484-486). A similar conclusion can be drawn from the passenger in the car - they experience the materialities of the road, the tactility of the seat, sunlight slanting through the window and so on, as negotiations, not as phenomena acting upon them. Through specific materialities, the corporeality of the passenger is apparent, and bodily experiences of car travel are manifest, even in quiescence.

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1. Bissell writes in "Travelling Vulnerabilities: Mobile Timespaces of Quiescence", "[...] the body has to explore and negotiate the materiality of the seat in order to find a comfortable position" (2009, 436).

Quiescence as an experiential state in car travel is particularly important in this research, as to some degree it characterises habit and daydream, and thus facilitates quotidian-sublimity. In the car, this quiescence is played out through a tension between being and doing. The idea of immobility sequestered within mobility has influenced many theories of car travel, and though the concept of utter passivity is counteracted through habit and hybridity, which posit the body as engaged in movement, a sense of doing nothing still permeates experiences of automobility. Doing and being become alternating plateaus of consciousness as the traveller slips in and out of daydream. These shifts are not easily defined by the corresponding concepts of presence and absence as it is often a lack of activity in quiescence that makes a traveller *present* in being, and an engagement in habitual doing that gives rise to *absence*. Rather than poles of experience, doing and being are intertwined in car travel. These fragile boundaries between active and passive states, which tend more towards each other than their extremities, provide an echo of the thresholds that the daydreamer crosses into quotidian-sublimity. Solnit articulates the difference between working and idling in relation to a productivity-oriented culture, in which doing is perceived as normal, yet being, in the form of daydreaming, wandering or wool-gathering, is almost taboo (2014, 10). For Solnit (2014), walking effects a balance between being and doing; and the same can be said of car travel, a space in which most other work becomes an impossible or dangerous intrusion. In the car, a traveller's only job is to be moving, a role that takes place below the threshold of cognisance and gives rise to the possibility of daydream; yet, moving is not continually possible as evidenced by traffic lights and road works, causing the driver and passenger to sink and rise between attention and drift, caught between being and doing. It is thus the qualities of quiescence and the transitions between states that provide the texture of daydream, realised through an interplay of materialities and dissolving boundaries: the driver-car hybrid, habitual bodying-forth, and being coalesced with doing.

The materialities of daydream in car travel are approached in this research through creative practice, foremost in the technique of solvent wash, by incorporating tactics of masking and painting to focus on sensory experiences of movement. In the car, manifold sensations occur that combine auditory, tactile and visual input, from the perception of wind whipping by, to the composite of bumpiness and road noise. These become a base level experience for daydream and quotidian-sublimity, and can be suggested through the solvent wash as an evocation of slipstreams. The sense of a rush, of sounds being swept away, is characteristic of the slipstreams that occur as a car travels at great speeds along the open pathway of a road. This is investigated in the series of works *Slipstreams*, 2016, through a focus on the way specific elements of landscape, such as traffic cones and workers in high-vis vests, punctuate an otherwise mobile surface in which familiar scenes are unfixed and swept away. In *Airstream (behind the fence)*, 2016, (Figure 57) the wash engulfs a highway sound barrier and the ground beneath it, unsettling a house from its rootedness in place and redistributing it as part of the slipstream. The wash-slipstream shifts upwards and downwards slightly, containing pockets of visual information like eddies in the rush of wind. Here, the slipstream effects an unfixing and propels the landscape into movement, but is itself embedded in the material fixity of pigments and solvents that settle into a new arrangement, transfixed. The visual, aural and tactile sensations of the slipstream are converted into a material expression. To this solvent dispersal is added painted detail in the form of a white air-conditioning box, a glimpsed point of attention in the moving landscape. Through the process of solvent wash and painted elements, the slipping between attention and daydream is evoked through the materiality of the slipstream.

The logic of the solvent wash as a dispersing agent is used to slightly different effect in the work *Caught in the Slipstream*, 2016, (Figure 58) in which highway architecture is dissolved and rebuilt through the slipstream. In the solvent works discussed previously,



Figure 57. Lydia Trethewey, *Airstream (behind the fence)*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.8 cm



Figure 58. Lydia Trethewey, *Caught in the Slipstream*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9 cm

elements of the landscape are masked and so they remain after the process of the solvent wash. These are sometimes combined with or emphasised by aspects of the original image, layered together in Adobe Photoshop. However, in *Caught in the Slipstream* and other works from the *Slipstreams* series, there is no masking and so the wash affects all visual information. Details such as traffic cones and concrete barriers are then reinserted carefully with paint, but these are not faithful replications. Instead, they are warped and bent following the flow of the solvent-slipstream. In *Caught in the Slipstream* this can be seen in the orange traffic marker which bows as if in a pigmented wind, following the whims of liquid toner. This slight departure from the original image and from the concretely recognisable elements of quotidian vernacular arises as a response to the materialities of the highway slipstream, the way that landscape seems to get caught in its movement, and reconfigured. The architecture of the highway – crash barriers, traffic cones, flag strings, yellow sand – is rebuilt through the movement of the car as a rush of wind and sound. More so than *Airstream (behind the fence)*, the focus of *Caught in the Slipstream* is as much the sensory effects of movement as it is the punctuation of details in the landscape. The materiality of the slipstream as part of a rising and falling daydream emerges through the solvent wash, but also via the painted elements of the highway which reimagine landscape through movement.

In seeking the materialities of car travel, it is important to consider the tensions between being and doing as expressed in the corresponding sensations of movement and pause. A conspicuous precedent to the idea that movement can be manifested visually through a slipstream is Giacomo Balla's *Abstract Speed - The Car has Passed*, 1913, (Figure 59) which provides an interesting point of comparison. In Balla's painting, the lines of force and noise are depicted as intersecting planes of landscape and wind, with pink-tinged edges perhaps reminiscent of exhaust fumes (Giacomo Balla: *Abstract Speed - The Car has Passed* 2004). The passage of the

Figure 59. Giacomo Balla, *Abstract Speed – The Car has Passed*, 1913, oil on canvas 50.2 x 65.4 cm

car, the ostensible subject, is represented as an afterimage of speed, its movement having the power to enfold trees, sky and road, through a materiality of slipstreams. Solvent works like *Caught in the Slipstream* and *Airstream (behind the fence)* are not preoccupied with the Futurist narrative of the car as a symbol of speed and modernity, but they are similar in depicting the highway in such a way that the car is only tangible through suggested movement. *Abstract Speed – The Car has Passed* and the works in *Slipstreams* employ different methods in seeking the materiality of movement, and both result in visual depictions of the car being mostly removed. For Balla, the car has passed; in *Slipstreams*, it is implied from the vantage point of a window or windshield, movement experienced from the car. In a similar application of absence to suggest action, Louis Porter's practice of "small-scale suburban conflict photography" (Figure 60) examines the car's movement without it being present (Porter 2011, n.p.). Focusing on Australia's "car-dominated" suburbia, Porter's subject is the minor scratches, scrapes and dings in power poles and street signs that are

lingering markers of past accidents (Porter 2011, n.p.). As Porter himself observes, the action has taken place already, and in its wake is a pause (Porter 2011, n.p.). Perhaps it is possible to discern such pause in the slipstream of Balla's speed, the moment when action eddies into stillness. In the solvent work *In the Wake*, 2016, (Figure 61) a couple of traffic cones lay on their sides, knocked over by some past action; solvent crowds against the left hand side and rebounds, a momentary cease in the continual movement. In *Slipstreams* the car is present without being visible, and in the rising and falling of solvent daydream it may also be possible to sense pause alongside motion. There is consonance in the shifts between movement and pause, washes and punctuations, which is not just reminiscent of the tension between being and doing but seems also to imply a similarity in the nature of slipstreams and daydreams, a shifting from one state to another. Created from the vantage point of the traveller in the car, it becomes apparent that this research is grounded not just in theories about car travel but in car travel itself.

Figure 60. Louis Porter, *Small Conflict Archive: Bad Driving*, 2008-2011, digitised photograph, dimensions variable.



Figure 61. Lydia Trethewey, *In the Wake*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9 cm

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## Between Image and Experience

There is no possibility of pinpointing the exact origin of this research in terms of a moment when the central concern was realised from murky subconscious aggregations; what is known, however, with a confident sense of certainty, is that this juncture would have occurred whilst travelling in a car. The car has been considered so far as a potential site of daydream and quotidian-sublimity, the subject of investigation, but it is also important as a space in which formulation and conceptualisation of research occurs. Habit, reverie and passage through a landscape become not just the subjects of inquiry, but methods of inquiry, with car travel as an overarching methodology. Some of my previous research has investigated the car as a site for a spectrum of thought, from daydream to cogitation, rumination through reflection, and though these facets of driving and passengering have been less important in the current research, travel by car continues to be a way of thinking and doing. Just as an ethnographer inserts themselves into their research through lived-in engagements with particular places and people, so too does this research involve a continuous returning to the subject of inquiry, a literal getting inside of the experience, and working backwards and forwards through it. The first step in making artworks is to drive, or be a passenger, to look and experience seeing-with the car, and to take photographs. Car travel, therefore, has a dual function: it is simultaneously subject and method, a starting point and an ongoing process, which roots the research in a continually unfolding experience.

As a result of “car travel as inquiry”, there is a degree of consonance in this research between subject and method, in terms of daydream, habit and quotidian-sublimity. Practice-led research involves a number of processes that cannot be adequately contained<sup>2</sup> by “objective” and systematic approaches; rather, as Lesley Duxbury

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2. Or constrained.

(2009) points out in “Ways of Analysing: From Reverie to Reality”, methodologies need to allow for the unpredictable and intuitive, as well as that which emerges directly through an engagement with materials and media. In the case of this research, the slipperiness of daydream gives rise to a foregrounding of indeterminate spaces in the artworks; the nature of sublimity as beyond cognitive grasp forms a fulcrum with fugitive methodologies. There is something nebulous about using reverie and habit as points of departure for thinking and making, and yet it arrives closer at a direct experience of quotidian-sublimity. Influences on creative production can be intertwined, irreducible from the sediments of personal experience and memory, and as Duxbury claims, form an “intersecting network of ideas, thoughts, images and elements,”<sup>3</sup> (2009, 55). It is important to acknowledge the role in this research of light sliding through car windshields, roads that are not flat and uniform but slanted to one side and patched with tarmac stitches, a particular light reflected off a power pole that looks red in the evenings but grey at dawn, and the sinking and rising through autopilot and invisible motions of hands on indicators, feet on pedals. The experiential dimensions of car travel, in daydream and habit, form a mesh of influence on the unfolding research, and it is through daydreaming itself that these elements can be brought to light.

At the same time, certain images condense through experience, which plays a direct role in the creation of artworks. Photoconceptualism again becomes an important point of departure; it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that this research has at times been carried out in the spirit of conceptualism.<sup>4</sup> The rise of conceptually focused

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3. Though perhaps, following the object-oriented ontologists, “mesh” is a better term than “network” for describing these disordered interrelations.

4. In this research, the term “conceptualism” is used to differentiate Conceptual Art, as the small group of artists working in the U.S.A and Europe in the 1960s-1970s, from a larger global pattern of concept-based making. As Terry Smith (2011) explains, the term “conceptualism”

art can be thought of in part as a global response to newly available, cheap materials, that could be easily printed and distributed, as well as a greater access to cameras (Finch 2010, 4). Consider the way that Rooney referred to the role of the camera as a “dumb recording device” (quoted in Finch 2010, 3) and John Baldessari’s claim to use photography as a form of visual note-taking (Baldessari 2012). A new materiality emerged, which was rooted in concepts as an impetus and yet tied these directly into an experiential landscape. Conceptualism involved a fusing and overlapping of life and art through new materials and photography. Though ideas are purportedly central to conceptualism, it is in fact the intersections of ideas with materials and experiences that forms the ground for making art. In seeking the character of this relationship, I formulated the concept of “imago”, drawing on the Latin root of the word “image” (Trethewey 2015). The Latin *imago* has a wide variety of connotations, including picture and representation, as well as concept and idea, and even ghost, echo and shadow (Trethewey 2015, 416-417). From this, I derived a framework for thinking about the impetus for artmaking as transitional and transformative, in such a way that images can simultaneously or sequentially take on the character of ideas, echoes and unknowns, sinking and rising through states of metaphor, cogitation and corporeal memory (Trethewey 2015). This leads to a suggestion that a photograph of a palm tree is not simply an image but simultaneously a memory, a thought and a superposition of experiences that give rise to an artwork. As conceptualism markedly engages with the slippages between conceptual and perceptual, and between image and experience, it can be seen as an important methodological forebear. Thus, the works in this research can be said to exist between images and experiences, made through intertwining avenues of daydream and car travel in a conceptualist spirit.

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was initially rejected by artists who viewed the commonplace suffix of -ism as a pathway to premature institutionalisation, but is now more widely accepted to refer to a broader trend of artists working with concept-based art.

The manifestation as artworks of these ways of working indicates important aspects of the exegetical relationship of ideas to images, to experiences. This can be seen in the recurring motif of the palm tree in my work. In a perceptual-conceptual matrix, palm trees seem to promise paradise in suburbia, involving a personal sense of attraction and repulsion as they appear both out of place and ubiquitously necessary. My experience of palm trees whilst travelling suburban streets takes me backwards into a childhood spent in the Perth hills, sans palm trees, and a lingering sense that my life in the suburbs has been spent as a tourist rather than an inhabitant. Tensions between belonging and peripheral alienation play out through the palm tree, but these contribute in a formless way to my overall impression of palm trees which my travelling daydream clusters into a single set of meaning. That the palm tree has specific resonances for me becomes subservient to the fact that I notice them at all and that they punctuate my daydreaming landscape. The palm tree is an image of spiked leaves fountaining from a textured trunk, in green, red, yellow pigment, but it is simultaneously the concept of suburbia, aspiration hinged with ennui, an image and experience that collapse together through daydream. Making occurs in the interstice of these realisations, between image and experience. In carefully tracing photographic leaves with a brush laden with masking fluid, I keep intact something that I notice, and follow lines through memory and experience into the image. The process of making is thus both tactile and cerebral.<sup>5</sup> With the application of solvent, all information but the palm washes away. The palm remains through the slippage but becomes irrevocably removed from its networked self as part of bus stops and sound barriers. Instead, it is an accumulation of all other palm trees, a harbinger of sublime immensity. In this way, daydream as a method dissolves the space of image and experience, resulting in artworks that are both conceptual and material.

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5. This further suggests a breaking down of the tenuous mind-body binary in favour of an integrated understanding.

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## Space Will Not Hold Still

In seeking to evoke experiences of car travel, stop motion animation is used as a medium with which to suggest movement. The idea of sequencing is important in this, as it is partially through a tension between continuity and stillness that the artworks gain a sense of elusiveness. Movement within the solvent washes is distinctly fluid, occurring through physical transitions, but in stop motion animation, movement is created through the sequencing of still images. Unlike in the solvent wash, this type of movement can be slowed to a stop, each frame available to view, and so to some extent the unknown phases of motion are made accessible. The process of solvent wash animation involves a number of steps. Firstly, a video is taken from the car, the camera held in the hand so that vibrations and bumps in the road are conveyed through the body into the recording. From this video, still frames are extracted in Adobe Photoshop at a rate of 25 frames per second (fps), and these are then printed individually onto photographic paper. At this point, each frame is physically altered using masking and a solvent wash, in the manner of previous works. Particular details are emphasised and followed across numerous frames, at times disappearing and reappearing as focus shifts around. Each image is then scanned and arranged back into sequence. This rendering of a video as still frames is not a process of truncation, but of expansion; movement as a continuity is separated apart like an exploded view diagram, and then collapsed back together.<sup>6</sup> In a way, this process occludes the result, as it is virtually impossible to tell what the animation will look like from the array of stills, before the final stage in which they are returned to sequence. A sense of unknowability rather than accessibility emerges. In this process, an element of chance comes into play, and a sense of fugitive immensity gets into the work as

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6. This links back to the idea of mobility/immobility in car travel – the method of stop motion animation represents a tension between stillness and movement in the use of still images to produce motion.

it slips beyond grasp. I become a witness to the quotidian-sublime unfolding, rather than a creator of it. This is the “undefinable moment” that Barbara Bolt writes about in *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*, the point at which an artwork escapes the artists control and comprehension, and becomes something separate with its own internal logic (2004, 1). There is a strange sense of dissonance in the sequencing of still images into movement, which is heightened by the way that animation hides its own making – the process is hugely laborious, and yet the final product moves with a sense of ease.<sup>7</sup> Through the process of sequencing, which renders movement as segments only to regroup them in an unknowable way, an indefinable and fugitive logic becomes a central part of the work.

The animations evoke car travel more readily than the still works through the recording of actual movement, and the selective processes of masking are used to emphasise specific phenomena of motion. *Space Will not Hold Still* (Figure 62) is made from a recording taken on Perth’s Roe Highway,<sup>8</sup> with a view shifting between the front and left windows on a grey-skied, traffic-laden day. *In Space Will not Hold Still* certain elements of the landscape appear from the undefined space of solvent, like glimpses, rising to attention and then dropping away again. The distribution of attention across the moving surface and the direction in which objects move is taken into consideration when deciding which moments to highlight. This is most evident in the way that diggers, trees and signs advance forward as the car approaches, and other vehicles recede and progress in the suggestion of a mobile vantage point. The dotted white lines bisecting lanes on the road set up certain tempos through the

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7. A similar play between stillness and movement can be seen in Flick’s work in which fragments coalesce to form a landscape experienced from within. Echoing a cut up film strip, works like *P2880833-863*, 2011-2013, (Figure 63) suggest that each moment is simultaneously unique and an element of a larger scheme (Robbert Flick: *Freeways* 2014).

8. A limited access highway and partial freeway linking the north-eastern and south-western suburbs.



Figure 62. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes



Figure 63. Robert Flick, *P2880833-863*, 2011-2013, archival pigment print, 61 x 91.4 cm

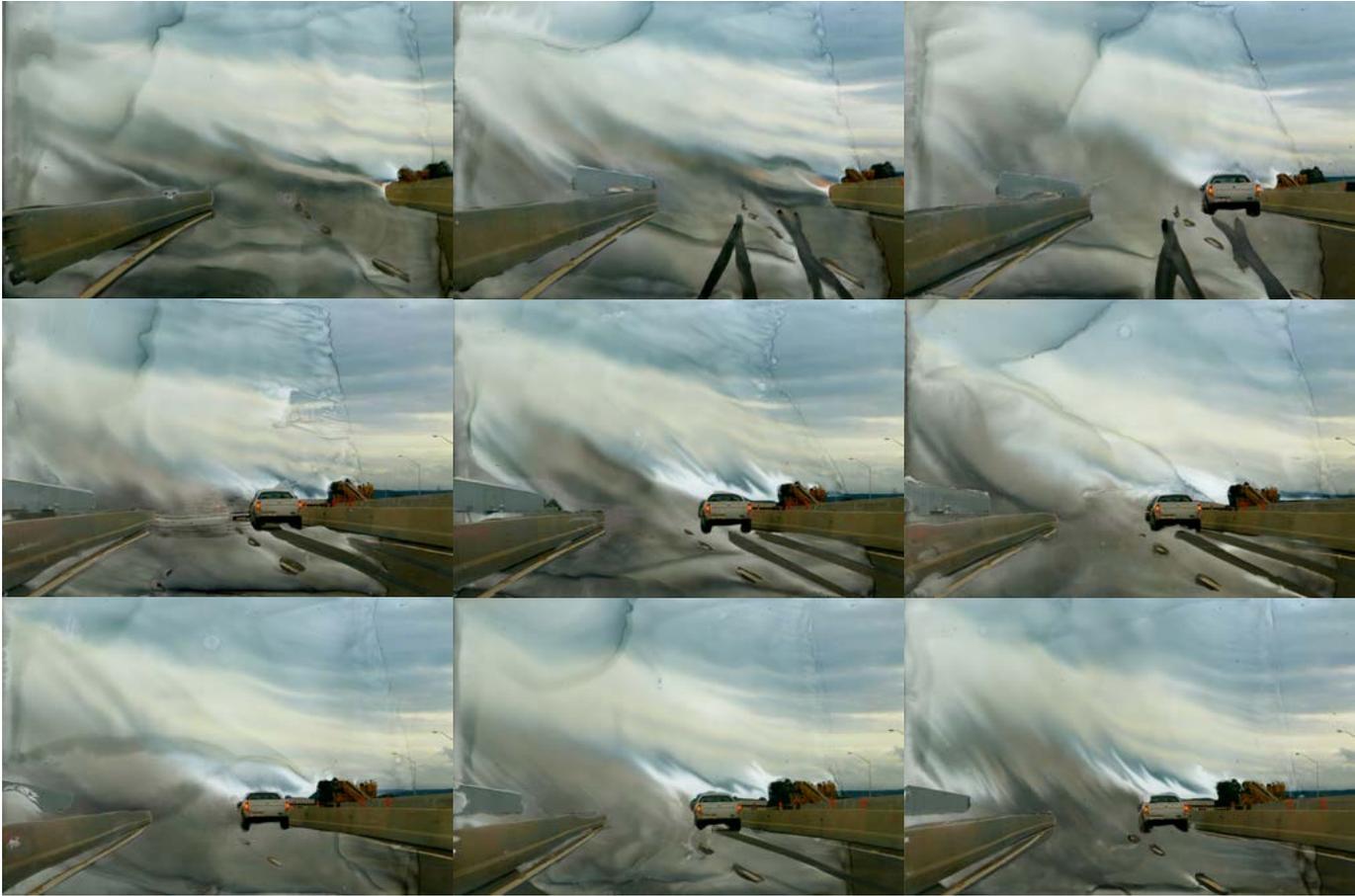


Figure 64. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes

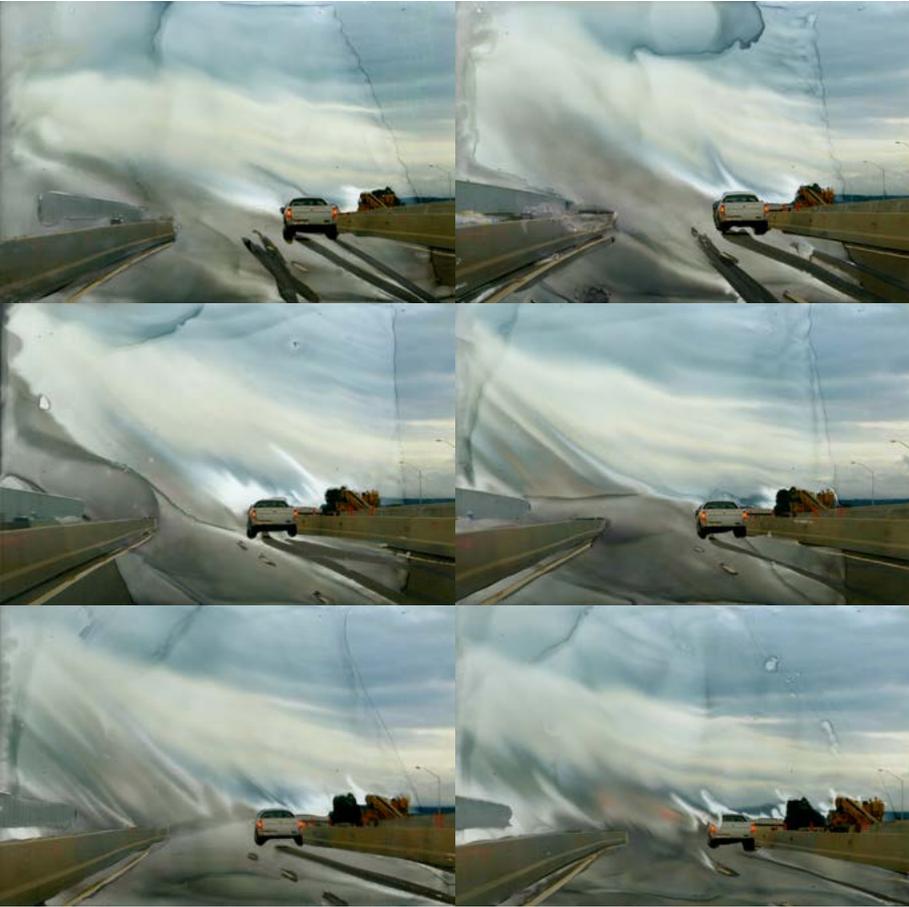


Figure 65. Richard Hamilton, *Transition III*, 1954,  
oil on hardboard, 91.4 x 121.9 cm.

speeds with which they disappear off the bottom of the screen, progressions of varying lengths that remain visible for most of the animation. A particular phenomenon of moving landscape that is evident in *Space Will not Hold Still* is the way objects at different distances from the roadside seem to move in opposite directions. Midway through the animation, this can be seen in the way that a tree and a digger on the right hand side, at first positioned with the digger on the left, swap over as motion reveals the tree to be some distance behind (Figure 64). Depths of landscape that would be hidden in a still image are revealed through movement. This perceptual phenomenon is identified by Richard Hamilton in his painting *Trainsition VIII*, 1954, (Figure 65), a landscape which explores the experience of looking out the window of a moving train (Godfrey 2014). Hamilton noticed that when he concentrated on the middle distance, faraway objects seemed to move in the same direction as the train and nearby ones seemed to move in the opposite direction (Godfrey 2014, n.p.). In *Trainsition VIII* he couples depiction of specific elements of landscape with diagrammatic arrows that illustrate the direction of motion (Godfrey 2014, n.p.). *Space Will not Hold Still* sheds reliance on signalling movement through symbols by incorporating actual movement, emphasising the relationship of motion to perception by selecting objects that reposition themselves over time. In taking note of the way that movement affects perception of landscape, the movement captured in the video recording is not simply relied upon to convey senses of direction and distance in time but becomes a ground from which specific objects are selected and consciously emphasised.

Focusing on the perception of landscape in movement and the materialities of travel raises questions about how mobility influences experience, and these are explored in the animations through a number of tactics which highlight the car as a modulator of sensation. As discussed in Chapter Two, Wylie draws on Lingis' concept of seeing-with in relation to landscape to contend that "landscape is neither something seen, nor a

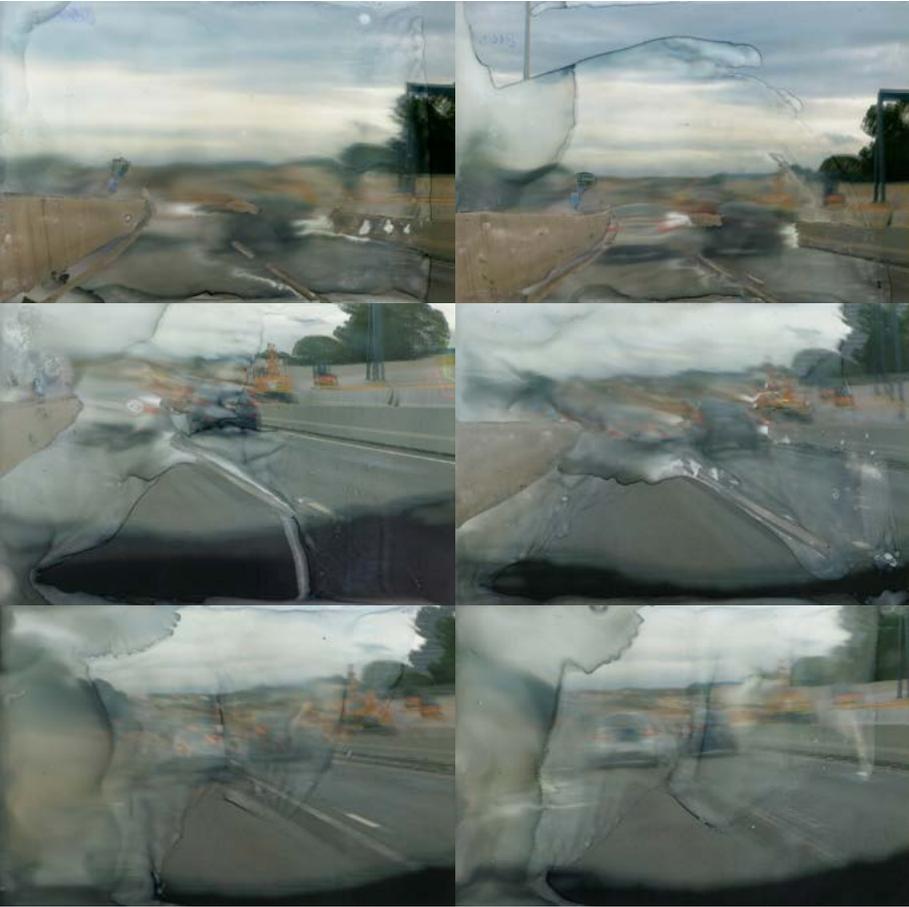
way of seeing, but rather the materialities and sensibilities *with which we see*" (Wylie 2005, 243, original italics). Here, the problematic idea of seeing as interpretation is discarded in favour of a visuality that is affected by the mesh in which one finds oneself. Substituting the car for landscape in this example, the car is no longer a lens or frame through which a person sees but a set of conditions which shape seeing.<sup>9</sup> In *Space Will not Hold Still* the car as an interior largely disappears, but is suggested instead through positioning and movement. Yet, visuality in the animation is still a seeing-with the car, as the materialities of travel affect its formulation and can be perceived by viewers. The small vibrations of the road can be discerned through the slight wavers in the camera, reiterated by the quick flickers of the solvent wash from one frame to the next. The viewpoint bobs up and down in places across uneven asphalt, and is particularly evident towards the end of the animation where the camera jerks around considerably on a downwards slope (Figures 66). Here, again, the solvent wash is used to highlight the mild discomfort, with more drastic lines that vary between frames in contrast to the smoother, more consistent washes preceding it. The vibrations and bumping, along with bodily sensations triggered by slight acceleration, show the influence of the car as a set of materialities "with which we see". The tracking of vision from front to side as well as focus on particular elements corresponding to the camera zooming are also tactics for suggesting materialities modulated by automobility. Gilles Deleuze argues that visuality is not confined to the eyes, using the example of painting which he contends can give sensation to other parts of the body such as ears, stomach and lungs (Kul-want and Piero 2010, 166). Methods employed in making the animations, such as panning the camera,

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9. Wylie (2005) also points out that the idea of seeing-with calls into question Western sublime optics, which are predicated upon a separation of observer and observed. Rather than externalising sublimity in a landscape that is "out there", seeing-with provides another avenue for the partial coalescence of subject and sublime.



Figure 66. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes



holding it in two hands to convey vibrations from body to lens, and emphasising these through variations and compositions of solvent washes, are used to evoke the experience of car travel as a perceptual seeing-with the car.

After *Space Will not Hold Still* the embodied nature of vision was investigated through the use of multiple simultaneous recordings in the creation of a three-channel stop motion animation *Interstices*. The atmosphere of *Interstices* is quite different from *Space Will not Hold Still*, with blue skies and a flatter route which passes through various kinds of edgelands, from a commercial area of large retail warehouses and carparks, past a vast empty lot across which can be seen an industrial mill, to the denser residential streets of suburbia (Figure 67). Focusing on the organic shifts between such spaces, which occur over a short distance, the intention in choosing this route was to signal the instability of Perth's roadscape, the fraying edges of interstitial zones. Three simultaneous recordings were taken along these roads, from the front, left, and right sides of the car. The resulting footage then underwent the same processes as *Space Will not Hold Still*, rendered into frames, printed, altered with solvent wash and then collapsed back into a stop motion animation. The use of three videos meant consideration was given to the relationships between landscape objects across multiple viewpoints, for example, a car moving alongside the right camera continued to be emphasised as it moved into range of the front camera (Figure 68). In other cases, objects present in one recording would "disappear" into the wash of the next. The aim of this was to create a sense of objects rising to attention for different durations, and then slipping away. At times, this was difficult, with the slight delays between videos. As there is space between the front and back seats, objects would "disappear" for a few seconds before reappearing on the adjacent camera. Whilst I was conscious of creating a sense of continual flow, I came to acknowledge that the "blind spots" of the car would become more noticeable in the animations. Here, the impeded vision of car travel hints at the tensions between being and doing

latent in habit and daydream, as a kind of dispersed seeing in which elements of the landscape are experienced through attention and distraction. The use of three simultaneous recordings in *Interstices* was thus intended to highlight seeing-with the car, probing the distributed visibility of driving and passengering.

It is worth lingering for a moment on the method of recording the three videos in *Interstices*, as it raises some important questions about the role of chance, reproduction and the personal in approaching quotidian-sublimity. The three concurrent recordings used to make *Interstices* were filmed by three different people,<sup>10</sup> rather than fixed cameras. It was important to have people do the recording as it allowed for a more organic interaction with the landscape, with roaming viewpoints that pan across the landscape, and zoom in and out on particular objects. Test recordings made with fixed cameras lacked a sense of engagement with the landscape, and mimicked the false objectivity of “dash-cam” footage which is often used by drivers as evidence in case of accidents. Yet the necessity of involving other people in the recording process raises questions about the links between what is filmed and the idea of quotidian-sublimity, and of my own personal connection to the research. To frame the role of these people as simple recorders, ignoring the idiosyncrasies and personal histories that they bring to their engagements with landscape and car travel, would be to reduce the process of gathering footage to mere recording. This would mean undoing the idea of photographic irony and returning to a superficial understanding of photography as neutral. Instead, the role of personal experience in recording can be understood as a factor of the unknown, inviting chance into the work. Although I did direct the other people to some extent, indicating parts of the landscape to focus on (Figure 69), they did so through the lens of their own experience without a sense of being limited by aesthetic concerns.

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10. One of which was me.



Figure 67. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes





Figure 68. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes





Figure 69. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes



It is useful to consider the creation of *Interstices* in stages. Recording the initial video is just one part of the process, like snapshotting in the case of the still works. Similar to Bell's pouring of yellow paint down a canvas, having other people record became a ground of the unexpected and uncontrollable, through which a sense of elusiveness can get into the work. Throughout this research, I have attempted to distance the quotidian-sublime from personal considerations; though the impetus for the work was something I had experienced, the intent has never been to produce a diaristic evocation of this. Similarly to how snapshotting is employed to simultaneously draw closer to, and push away from, details in the landscape, so too has the use of other people in recording car travel involved concurrent senses of immersion and distance. The work slips beyond my control, even as it embeds in experiential engagements with landscape. The other people recording thus become elements of chance, their personal engagements with landscape nudging it further into the unknown.

Involving other people in making the recordings for *Interstices* further underscores the idea that there are processes in art making that cannot be adequately accounted for, and it is interesting to consider this facet of chance in relation to quotidian-sublimity. Duxbury suggests that, though artists do not create in an unconscious or unthinking way, there are always "gaps" in understanding, elements of processes and influences that cannot be accounted for as they arise through inextricable accumulations and networks of experience (2009, 55). These are aspects of art making that cannot be pinned down or explained – fugitive elements. The way that the unknown seeps into *Interstices* through utilisation of chance can be understood as an unaccountable aspect of art making; it is not consciously directed, but emerges from an inability to control. It is fluid and organic, reflecting the role of the unknown in experiences of car travel. Yet, gaps are not merely absences, but junctions in which understanding comes together. The movement in stop motion animation is a result of gaps, the split-second blank space between frames as they appear and disappear, held still

for a fraction of a moment. In this example, gaps are an agent of movement, points of connection between one frame and the next. These gaps hold the animation together. A parallel can perhaps be drawn with the quotidian-sublime; it is held together by an unaccountable quality, something ungraspable which cannot be seen but which gives form to the experience. Quotidian-sublimity remains sublime through a cohesive unknowability, yet this attribute is unfathomable. The role of chance in *Interstices*,<sup>11</sup> induced through the uncontrollable recordings made by other people and the use of solvents, is employed to approach this sublime unknown, an analogue of ungraspable conditions. Thus, quotidian-sublimity and chance approach one another through the gaps in art making, which manifest across the thresholds of material processes and unexpected behaviours.

A significant element of *Interstices* is its immersive nature, and in examining this, it is worth returning to the idea of “haptic visuality” specifically in terms of tactility in video-based work. According to Jennifer Barker (2009) in her book *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, touch is not skin deep, but experienced at various surfaces and depths. This attests to the way that the materiality of the car, and the corresponding tactility of video, is felt not just on the surface, but within the body. Barker contends, in a not-quite literal but also not metaphorical way, that film has a body; it is possible, as a viewer of a film or video-based artwork, to have an intimate connection with this body (2009, 9). This idea is not intended to anthropomorphise film, but to allude to the way that viewers make contact with images not as

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11. The title *Interstices* itself is the result of an intersection of different ideas informing this work. Firstly, it focuses on edgelands spaces that are interstices in the sense that they exist between other more well established places. Secondly, the viewer is situated between the three screens, in the gap that constitutes an integral part of the work. Thirdly, the work hints at the gaps or interstices in animation that make movement possible. Fourthly, the work returns to the quotidian-sublime, which itself is a gap in comprehension, an interstice insinuated by a cognitive threshold. As such, this work seems to have emerged from a meeting of interstices.

disembodied or distanced observers but through a bodily, tactile engagement. It is important to note that, like in haptic seeing, this is not necessarily a literal tactility but a way of engaging the sense of touch in visuality. Barker proposes that skin, as a boundary between inside and outside, is continuously enacting a covering and uncovering, in proximity to both the world and the inner body; it simultaneously reveals and conceals, is reciprocal and reversible, and thus can be used to describe both the body of the viewer and of film<sup>12</sup> (2009, 27-28). The artwork reveals and withholds itself by degrees, as discussed in Chapter Three. Touch becomes a way of engaging with artworks, attesting to the immersive nature of film, as a body that presses against that of the viewer. As Barker writes, “watching a film, we are certainly not *in* the film, but we are not entirely *outside* it, either. We exist and move and feel in that space of contact where our surfaces mingle and our musculatures entangle” (2009, 12, original italics).<sup>13</sup> Barker points out that what we call vision is actually light falling on – touching – our retinas, and this light does not just make contact with our eyes but touches the rest of our skin, our shoulders, cheeks, wrists, and so in a way the body of film, the tactile image that we make contact with, reaches out to us (Barker 2009, 30-31). This could be the light from a projection, or the light emanating from a screen. Barker’s idea that film has a body thus becomes a way of understanding the immersive nature of video-work, as an entangling of tactile bodies.

In attempting to create an immersive experience for the viewer, the installation of *Interstices* is central, and significant in approaching quotidian-sublimity. The three channels are installed in a way that echoes the configuration of car windows; each one is installed on a separate wall, forming a space between where the viewer is

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12. It is interesting to note that the words “skin” and “film” are sometimes used to mean the same thing.

13. This echoes Merleau-Ponty’s question in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?” (1969, 138).

situated. In doing so, the viewer can look left, right and forward at the animation, engaging from a similar position to the traveller in the car. Enclosed by movement and seeing-with the materialities of the car, the viewer is within the work rather than looking at it. Awash with light from the screens, there is perhaps a point of contact between viewer and work, a visceral sensation in which the bodies of each entangle, as Barker suggests. Barker writes that some films slip from grasp, eluding direct gaze and “slipping through our fingers” (2009, 11), and it is this sensation that I seek with *Interstices*. This would be conducive to tactile evocations of car travel, with sensations of vibration and movement, and textures of daydream.<sup>14</sup> Yet, further to this, the positioning of the three channels is important in suggesting the quotidian-sublime, as it complicates the viewer’s ability to take them all in at once. Instead, the viewer must choose where to look, whether at power poles, street signs or the abandoned mill, and in doing so is unable to see parts of the other channels. This is coupled with the effects of movement and the solvent wash, elements of the landscape being continually swept away, so that the work as a whole cannot be taken in. Glimpsing, rather than grasping, becomes the mode of engagement. This can be linked back to the first example given in this exegesis of quotidian-sublimity in art, Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. Viewers are unable to grasp Ruscha’s work in its totality both because of its format, a folded book with a large extent, and its subject, the limitless vernacular of L.A. replete with inexhaustible detail. In *Interstices*, the installation, three screens on separate walls, means that the viewer cannot take it in as a whole, and the landscape in the animation, through movement and solvent wash, slips beyond grasp. The viewer’s ability to comprehend the landscape is thus

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14. It is important to note that there is no sound component to *Interstices*. After experimenting with different kinds of sound, I decided that audio recordings of road noise were too didactic and weakened the suggestions of daydream and elusiveness. Conversely, more melodious sound like instrumental music was too prescriptive, intruding on and potentially overwhelming the sensory aspects of the moving images. There is thus no prescribed sound to accompany *Interstices* other than the ambient noise of the gallery.

problematized, the familiar becoming ungraspable whilst remaining quotidian, and through this, the work approaches quotidian-sublimity. In echoing the arrangement of views from the car, the three screens of *Interstices* create an immersive space, complicating the viewer's attempt to grasp it as a whole and therefore providing a space in which quotidian-sublimity might arise.

In this chapter, movement has been examined in terms of car travel, approaches to art making, and stop motion animation. Pervasive ideas about the car as an autonomous space in which travellers are "incarcerated" have been countered through a theorisation of the car as a hybrid entity, drawing on a number of concepts from cultural geography. Rather than an isolated experience of travel, driving and passengering become ways to body-forth into landscape. Focusing on the materialities of the car, experiences of quiescence and quotidian-sublimity have been considered in relation to the process of solvent wash in evoking slipstreams, analysing the potential of still images to reconfigure the highway through movement. The relation of experience to images has been examined through a look at practice-led research, rooting this research in the car itself. And finally, the use of stop motion animation was considered in terms of how it can evoke movement and provide a space for quotidian-sublimity to arise, as an immersive experience in which the viewer cannot grasp its totality. In doing so, concerns of landscape, mobility and the travelling body came together with habit, daydream and immense sensations in art. The viewer, just as the traveller, has an embodied engagement with car travel, entangling with the space of landscape and the potential of a mobile sublimity. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it" (2002, 171, original italics). If space will not hold still, neither will our bodies.

# Conclusion

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At the beginning of this exegesis, the idea that the sublime cannot be contained or expressed directly, but can be written about and suggested indirectly, opened a path of enquiry. Now, at the close of the exegetical part of this research, it is important to look back and consider exactly what has been discovered, what tangible conclusions can be drawn from the methods of indirectness. In order to re-evaluate what has been revealed about quotidian-sublimity, its potential genesis in car travel, and its evocation through visual art, this conclusion returns to those core points around which the enquiry grew: sublimity, landscape, photography and video, and car travel. Throughout this research an underlying understanding has been that art making, theoretical examination and lived experience form a mesh, rather than a structured network, and so there will always be influences and associations that cannot be accounted for. Yet to recognise these “gaps” is not only to hint at the flight of instinct and intuition over otherwise unbridgeable impediments, but to acknowledge that a gap can be a joint, a connection rather than a cessation between two parts. Thus, this conclusion will emphasise the junctions of ideas, and the understandings that emerge from them.

In bringing together relevant historical and contemporary theories of sublimity and analysing them in relation to concepts of daydream, travel and photography, this research has formed a cohesive concept of the quotidian-sublime. The quotidian-sublime is a sensation of immensity so great that it registers as the image of infinity; like

Lucretius' cosmic sublime, it arises through an intuiting of immensity in the familiar, material world, and like Burke's sublime, it is felt by an embodied self. Unlike previous conceptualisations of sublimity, the quotidian-sublime is contingent upon the intimate interrelation of infinity and the ordinary, evident in the merging of limitless landscape and depthless daydream. It is neither transcendent nor immanent, and discards the notion that sublime feelings are reliant upon an encounter with the "other". Instead, it is formulated as involving the dissolution of boundaries between self and world through daydream, an extension of the ideas of Bachelard and Tuan. In taking the core ideas of sublimity and developing them through the intersections of existing theories, this research provides a new understanding of the sublime as it arises in the quotidian.

In formulating the quotidian-sublime, some predominant understandings of everyday car travel have been reframed. Through ideas of habit as "bodying forth" and habitual encounters as an opening of the travelling body to the world, the car as an isolated or autonomous space is contested and instead is proposed as an extension of body-thinking. Theories of hybridity and habit drawn from the cultural geographers and Ravaillon were combined to generate new understandings of quiescence and daydream in travel; the car and body are no longer vessels but interfaces, and further to this, sites for sublimity. The porousness of the travelling body in the car allows for a recognition of congruent immensities in self and landscape, from which quotidian-sublimity emerges. Landscape is understood as heterogeneous, plural and temporally unfolding, via Massey, Ingold and Lefebvre. In the context of Perth roadscapes, liminal zones are repositioned as "edgelands", rejecting Augé's pervasive idea of non-place. Immensity is evident in this endlessly recurring vernacular, which is multitudinous and peripheral. It can be invoked through Lucretius' materialist sublimity, the "unknowable mesh" of the flat ontologists, and in Ruscha's photographs of a Los Angeles street. Having drawn on such diverse sources and found similarities

in each, there is an implicit suggestion that quotidian-sublimity exists in the world, and continues to inform our engagements with it. Though fugitive and enigmatic, the quotidian-sublime can be identified in these convergences, in the enfolding of art, cultural geography and philosophy. The role of this research has been to give form to quotidian-sublimity, to elucidate its slippery subsistence within the specific example of car travel.

Perhaps the more elusive aspect of this research was the parenthetically related question of how to approach quotidian-sublimity through art. As previously mentioned, the point of departure for this enquiry was an acceptance that sublimity could not be visualised or expressed directly, but could be approached indirectly. I therefore aimed to create works which pressed against sublimity, providing a space in which it might arise. Like its conceptualisation, these methodologies involved a reconsideration of not-quite opposites; perceptual-conceptual, image-experience, movement-stillness. Understandings of photoconceptualism in particular informed this rejection of simple binaries in the balance of idea and encounter. Embedded in the suburban landscapes I was investigating, I used photography to draw closer to my subjects whilst simultaneously eschewing personal significance, reaching for typicality in the paradox of the idiosyncratic. Derived in part from photoconceptualism and spurred on by a rejection of traditional ideas about the photograph as reproduction, I used snapshotting as a method for engaging with landscape via the car. This was not an anti-aesthetic statement, but one that was configured through a thorough consideration of photoconceptualism as utterances of ideas, grounded in a refutation of the perceptual-conceptual dichotomy. In examining how photographs could indirectly suggest the ineffable, I developed the idea of photographic irony. This played with the pervasive notion that photographs are ontologically tied to the world, created through impressions of light. In realising that this assumption could be exploited to create images that were undisclosed, I opened an avenue for

seeking the invisible sublime in visual images. The ironic element of this echoes the Romantic idea of the fragment – incompleteness is a more complete realisation of an incomplete world, the visible can pivot into the invisible. In formulating photographic irony and employing the method of snapshotting, I sought to expand the role of the photograph beyond that of a record and allow it to reach towards the infinite.

In terms of creative practice, the method of solvent wash became indispensable, borne from experimentation and a consideration of other artists' work. Solvent wash is significant in that it renders material and depictive space analogous – there is no addition or subtraction of visual information, only reconfiguration, and this was more truthful to the idea that in the quotidian-sublime experience, immensity arises through the everyday, rather than being superimposed on it. In the wash, objects slip beyond their bounds, prompted by acetone, with solvent unfixing the landscape like the slipstreams of a car or the daydreams of a traveller. The limitless landscape detail suggested in the snapshot merged with an unbound materiality. Influenced by artists like Mann, Hutchison and Barth, framed within ideas drawn from Rexer and Elkins, I experimented with the creation of undisclosed images. Working with a number of chemicals and surfaces, I carved out my own particular approach within photochemical methodologies. From still images, I moved to stop motion animations, in which the unavoidable “fixing” in still images was resolved through sequential movement. In the still solvent works, movement is implied, a tactile memory; in the animations, it is emphasised, providing a greater sense of car travel and the potential of immense, ungraspable sensations. The constantly unsettled surfaces of the thousands of images which make up *Space Will not Hold Still* and *Interstices* make it impossible to hold onto a single moment, allowing the everyday to slide in and out of comprehension and providing a space for the impression of immensity to arise. Extending the process of solvent wash into animations thus became a way of suggesting the quotidian-sublime as it arises during car travel.

In a sense, the clue to investigating the quotidian-sublime was in its very name – limen, or liminality, an etymological vestige which suggests an indirect approach through the periphery. Yet this has not meant sacrificing thorough examination. Rather, the quotidian-sublime has been formulated from a filtrate of experiences, ideas and processes, organised and integrated into a rigorous concept. The silt of sublimity collects into coherence but retains its fundamental indistinctness, the elusive quality that defines it. Approaching the quotidian-sublime involved bridging unknowns and finding connections, acknowledging that the “gaps” in enquiry were not blanks or absences but the interstices in which understanding comes together. In conceptualising the quotidian-sublime, examining it in the experience of car travel, and seeking it through creative practice, I have attempted to create a space in which the quotidian-sublime might be understood, even as it remains fugitive.

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Figure 49. Lydia Trethewey, *1407*, 2015, solvent wash, 84 x 116.9 cm.

Figure 50. Lydia Trethewey, *Swell*, 2015, solvent wash, 60 x 89.7 cm.

Figure 51. Lydia Trethewey, *Paths*, 2016 solvent wash, 60 x 80.6 cm.

Figure 52. *Paths*, work in progress.

Figure 53. Lydia Trethewey, *Returning*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 82.8 cm.

Figure 54. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* [detail], 1963, artist's book, 48 pages, black and white photographic illustrations, 17.9 x 14.1 cm closed, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/427.2008.a-w/>.

Figure 55. Robert Rooney, *Holder Park 1 and 2*, 1970, polaroids, each 12.6 x 12.7 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, <https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail-LRG.cfm?IRN=97039&PICTAUS=TRUE>.

Figure 56. Robbert Flick, *P2760885-904*, 2011-2013, archival pigment print, 50.8 x 84.5 cm, Rose Gallery, Santa Monica, <http://www.rosegallery.net/robbertflick/works/freeways>.

Figure 57. Lydia Trethewey, *Airstream (behind the fence)*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.8 cm.

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Figure 58. Lydia Trethewey, *Caught in the Slipstream*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9 cm.

Figure 59. Giacomo Balla, *Abstract Speed – The Car has Passed*, 1913, oil on canvas 50.2 x 65.4 cm, Tate Collection, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/balla-abstract-speed-the-car-has-passed-t01222>.

Figure 60. Louis Porter, *Small Conflict Archive: Bad Driving*, 2008-2011, digitised photograph, dimensions variable, <http://louisporter.com/bad-driving/>.

Figure 61. Lydia Trethewey, *In the Wake*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9 cm.

Figure 62. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

Figure 63. Robbert Flick, *P2880833-863*, 2011-2013, archival pigment print, 61 x 91.4 cm, Rose Gallery, Santa Monica, <http://www.rosegallery.net/robbertflick/works/freeways>.

Figure 64. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

Figure 65. Richard Hamilton, *Trainsition IIII*, 1954, oil on hardboard, 91.4 x 121.9cm, Tate Collection, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-trainsition-iiii-t01201>.

Figure 66. Lydia Trethewey, *Space Will not Hold Still* [stills], 2017, stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

Figure 67. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

Figure 68. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

Figure 69. Lydia Trethewey, *Interstices* [stills], 2017, three-channel stop motion animation, 2 minutes.

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# Appendix



## Lydia Harriet Trethewey

Age 21

### Freeway

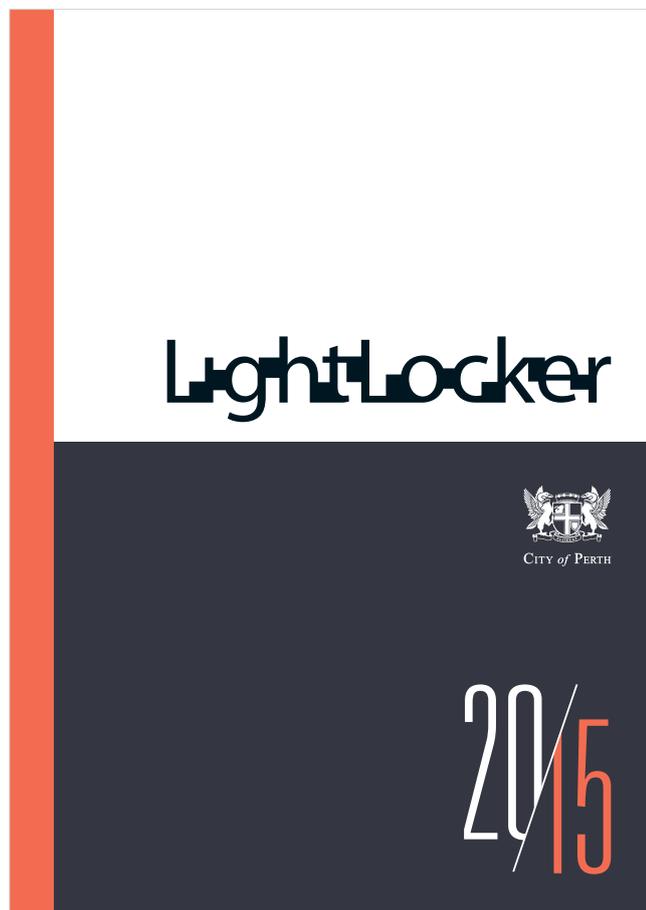
*mixed media on paper*  
30cm x 25cm each

Sometimes it is fragments, revealed through glimpses and glances, which go the furthest in revealing the unfathomable whole. This series is situated between my investigations of the car as a lens for experiencing landscape and an exploration of the coalescence of mundane and sublime. Here the mundane-sublime is considered as an experience of phenomena rather than an inherent property within objects, encompassing the wonder felt in encounters with the immeasurable, entangled realities of everyday life. Movement and passage are central to these works, manifested through the quality of the blur. Within a blur one is unable to grasp something in its entirety and as the exact nature of the landscape eludes the viewer, travel becomes the site for constantly shifting experiences of the incomprehensible. Through a process of obfuscation something ineffable is revealed about the nature of daily travel.

## **25 Under 25**

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4 - 13 April 2014, curated by Ashleigh Whyte,  
Moore's Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle.



*LightLocker 2015 catalogue [extract incl following pages]*

## ***Re-Imagined Picturesque***

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15 May - 17 September 2015, curated by Ashleigh  
Whyte, Grand Lane Lightlocker Art Space, Perth.

REIMAGINED PICTURESQUE, May 2015 - September 2015

# REIMAGINED PICTURESQUE

By Rachel Ciesla

---

The picturesque was once associated with the radical blurring of art and life, it was a mode of seeing in which everyday things could become a source of sensory pleasure, and subsequently, aesthetic pleasure.

*Reimagined Picturesque* endeavours to reclaim the picturesque from the realms of kitsch, reinstating a criticality to the landscape that is rooted in social reality. Guy Loudon, Taylor Reudavey, Fiona Harman, Jess Boyce and Lydia Trethewey have created works that respond to the physicality of this discreet urban passage, illuminating the unattainability of knowledge, utopia, inclusivity and freedom.

Lydia Trethewey's *Street Slippage* (2015) engages with Perth's sprawling suburbs through spaces of drift and daydream in car travel. A silver sedan emerges from a haze of washed out colour to a clear expanse of blue sky, carrying with it the immeasurable sensation that accompanies everyday quiescent

travel. The car becomes the locus for this slippage between what is known and unknown.

A similar material investigation into the suburban landscape takes place in Fiona Harman's *Pilars of Tulum* (2015), where an ethereal 'model home' lies in wake on a dormant plot of land. Appropriating signifiers of desire, escape and impossibility common to real estate and travel advertisements, this painting reflects on real and imagined experiences of suburbia. The architectural motifs replicated within the work prompt the viewer to question the impact of architecture on their perception of the suburban landscape.

Taylor Reudavey's *Window* (2015) also seeks to examine the way in



which our surrounding environment constructs meaning. Using an everyday office scene as a point of departure, Reudavey begins to unpack the tensions between inclusivity and exclusivity that are implicit within the urban landscape. Typically the office is a secure, productive environment but from its elevated position within the laneway this everyday office becomes inaccessible and aloof. The stale venetian blind reinforces the physical and symbolic separation of the work from the city street.

Jess Boyce's *Turn left on Wellington Street and look up* (2015), investigates how the reproduction of images influences preconceptions of place. Here the artist combines traditional map forms with imagery from contemporary mapping system Google Moon and arranges these to create a three-dimensional landscape. This typical landscape scene provides an entry point into an otherwise inaccessible place – the moon, opening it up to the possibility of adventure and exploration.

In colonial outposts like Australia, zoos functioned as 'acclimatisation committees', molding the existing environment into one of European sensibilities. Guy Loudon's work *Acclimatisation* (2015) explores the transformation of zoos, as propagators of colonialism to champions of conservation. Photographed using lurid failing film stock from the era of its construction, there is a peculiar blend of disenchantment and splendor present within the overgrowth of this long-abandoned zoo enclosure.

To reimagine and ultimately reclaim the picturesque is to propose a new way of viewing the landscape, one that is of our time. Within each of these works – a suburban street, an ordinary office space, a ruinous construction, a new housing development – are elements of the picturesque; they are views of the ordinary but they have the ability to arouse our curiosity, drawing us into these familiar everyday scenes.

REIMAGINED PICTURESQUE, May 2015 - September 2015

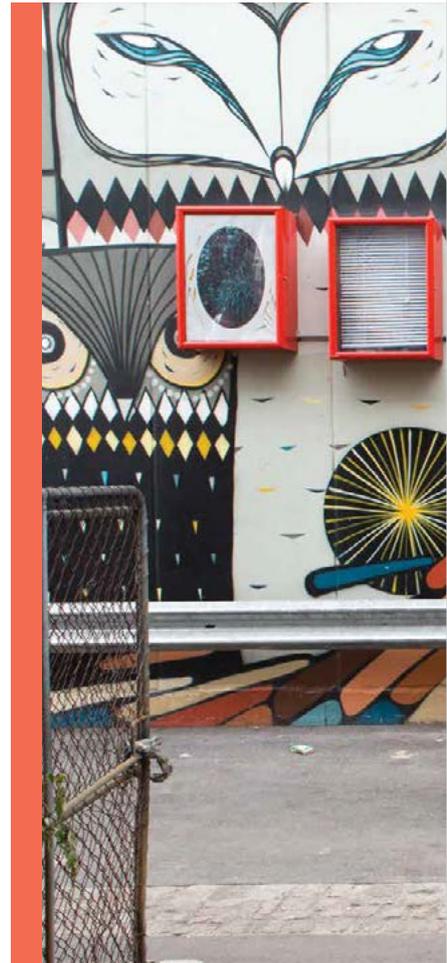


*Street Slippage, 2015*

**Lydia Trethewey**

Digital print

In the process of solvent dissolution, depictive photographic space and material space become analogous. This work engages with quiescent spaces of drift and daydream on car travel, combining the 'flatness' of photoconceptualism with the shifting materiality of solvent based printmaking. Light is used to simultaneously illuminate and obfuscate, in exploration of the slippages between known and unknowable.







## 21 RILEY, Dasha

*Terra Australis 1* | 2015 | digital photograph

The tradition of the Old Masters and my European roots are the main influence in my images. Inspired by the Old Masters' use of chiaroscuro, the subjects of my images emerge from darkness, partly obscured in shadow or under grainy texture. I am intrigued by the mystery of shadows, the magic that happens when we have to illuminate what we can't see with our imagination. My images are based on dreams and visions, with narratives touching on themes of European heritage, solitude, the otherworldly, and awareness of our connection to spirit. All of my images undergo extensive post production in Photoshop, where I make use of my training in drawing and painting to re-create my visions.



## 22 TRETTEWEY, Lydia

*Bridge* | 2015 | digital print

In this work, the 'bridge' ceases to be the tangible construction over which the photographer passes, and moves instead into the immaterial space bridging the perception of everyday landscapes and the space of daydream they dissolve into. *Bridge* does not explore the content of daydream, but rather the texture of slippage between mind-wandering and mindful attention. The sweep of colour and merging of spaces was created through a process of solvent dissolution, a physical dispersal of toner from a printed image that is then re-digitised and further smoothed, blended together with previous incarnations of the photograph.

Sunshine Coast New Media Awards catalogue [extract]

### **Sunshine Coast New Media Awards**

10 October – 1 November 2015, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast.



*Passing the Invisible*, 2015, solvent wash, 84 x 120.2cm

***City of South Perth Emerging Artist Awards***

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2015, South Perth Community Centre, South Perth.

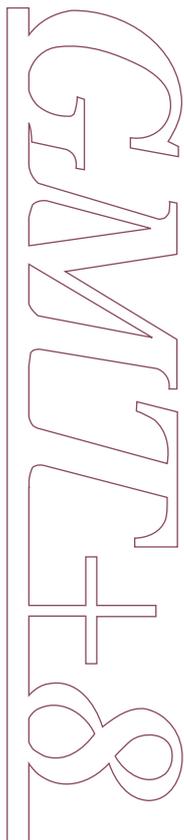
*Won the "Young Artist" award category.*

*Overleaf:*

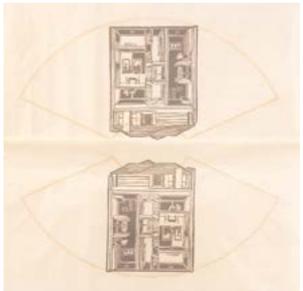
***GMT+8***

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2015, curated by Ann Schilo and Susanna Castleden,  
Chinese Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China.










**1** **Monika Lukowska** *Horizons.*  
2015. diptych, digital print, 27 x 76cm each print.

**2** **Fran Rhodes** *Neither here, nor there; Integration Attempt GMT+8.*  
2015. Solvent transfer with paper cut. 42 x 50cm

**3** **Layli Rakhsha** *At 7:30 pm.*  
2015. Four colour silk screen print. 20 x 48.4cm

**4** **Peng Liu** *Shàng Xià.*  
2015. linocut on rice paper. 66 x 68cm

**5** **Alana Carol McVeigh** *Juncture.*  
2015. Porcelain. 10 x 8cm

**6** **Lydia Threthewey** *Sleepwashed.*  
2015. Digital Print. 56 x 76cm

**7** **Joel Louie** *timbre.*  
2015. 56 x 77 x 76cm

**8** **Melanie McKee** *Here to there and back again.*  
2015. Solvent transfer on Chinese silk. 107 x 42 cm

**9** **Leonie Marie Mansbridge**  
*The UNseeableness of sharing air.*  
2015. Digital print, vinyl lettering, photocopy, paper. 56 x 76, 21 x 29.7cm.

GMT+8 catalogue [extract]



## CLIP AWARD 2016

### Contemporary Landscapes In Photography

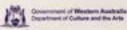
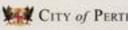
### STUDENT CATEGORY

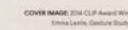
 <b>MATTHEW ABBOTT</b> <i>dregs</i> SILVER GELATIN HAND PRINT 22.5 x 101 cm \$700. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CINDY ADDISON</b> <i>Paradise Memorial</i> INKJET PRINT 24 x 82 cm \$400	 <b>MALIA BAGOETT</b> <i>What Lies Beyond</i> ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT 82 x 82 cm \$900. Ed. 1/10	 <b>LYLE BRANDON</b> <i>hiding behind the rocks</i> HANHEIMPLE FIBREART 52 x 75 cm (Panel) \$450. Ed. 1/10	 <b>GEORGINA CAMPBELL</b> <i>Magic Playground</i> C-TYPE PRINT 62 x 118 cm \$1200. Ed. 2/10	 <b>BRIAN CASSEY</b> <i>Number 55</i> INKJET PRINT 90 x 98 cm \$850. Ed. 1/10	 <b>JONATHAN CREEDON</b> <i>Children on a rooftop swimming pool in Osaka</i> INKJET PRINT ON FINE ART PAPER 52 x 70 cm \$65. Ed. 2/10	 <b>DIANE FERRIER</b> <i>Neo-Miami</i> INKJET PRINT 47 x 48 cm \$20. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CHRISTINE KO</b> <i>There's a Place and Time I</i> ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINTS WITH COUTURE FORAGGONE 60 x 82 x 2.5 cm \$300. Ed. 1/10
 <b>SIMON DEADMAN</b> <i>Wetlands IV Perth, 2015</i> HANHEIMPLE FIBREART 22 x 82 cm \$350. Ed. 1/10	 <b>RENEE DOROPOULOS</b> <i>Infinite Distance</i> DIGITAL C-PRINT 62.5 x 91.8 cm \$150. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CHRIS FAGERLUND</b> <i>Unlimited</i> HANHEIMPLE PHOTO BAG 52 x 84 cm \$350. Ed. 1/10	 <b>TIM FENSY</b> <i>Floors</i> C-TYPE PRINT 60 cm x 70.2 cm \$250. Ed. 1/10	 <b>JANE FINLAY</b> <i>Higher ground 03</i> PIGMENT PRINT 52 x 92 cm \$150. Ed. 1/10	 <b>JULIAN FRICHOT</b> <i>Aerialbridge 6-10-2015</i> HANHEIMPLE FIBREART SMOOTH 102 x 98 cm \$700. Ed. 2/10 + 2AP	 <b>MIKE GRAY</b> <i>Backyard Bag Study</i> ARCHIVAL INKJET 120 x 90 cm \$300. Ed. 5/10	 <b>TIM PALMAN</b> <i>Unlimited</i> CANON PLATINE FIBRE BAG 47 x 50 cm \$150. Ed. 1/10	 <b>MARC PRICOP</b> <i>Hood Pine</i> RAG PEARL INKJET PRINT 22 x 42 cm \$100. Ed. 1/10
 <b>COURTNEY HIBBERD</b> <i>UNTITLED (Great Eastern Highway)</i> DIGITAL C-PRINT 75.2 x 102.5 cm \$700. Ed. 1/10	 <b>TIMOTHY HILLIER</b> <i>Desert Arterial #1</i> DIGITAL C-TYPE FLEK PRINT 28 x 30 cm \$550. Ed. 1/10	 <b>GEORGINA MACFARLANE</b> <i>Still Standing</i> INKJET PRINT 88 x 102 cm \$500. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CHARLES MCKEAN</b> <i>Boonara</i> FINE ART PRINT 27 x 29 cm \$25	 <b>SALAR NIKNAFS</b> <i>In Presence #1</i> INKJET PRINT 20 x 29 cm \$10. Ed. 1/10	 <b>ASHLEY PORTER</b> <i>Sand, Contemplation</i> HANHEIMPLE PHOTO BAG 52 x 58 cm \$220. Ed. 1/10	 <b>JOSHUA RAMPLING</b> <i>Columbus, Ohio</i> GICLEE PRINT 102 x 100 cm \$400. Ed. 1/10	 <b>LUKA PRIJATELJ</b> <i>Unlimited</i> INKJET PRINT 42 x 58.4 cm \$400. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CAMERON RITCHIE</b> <i>Half Dome Above The Smoke</i> HANHEIMPLE FIBREART 18 x 31 cm \$450. Ed. 1/10
 <b>JON REID</b> <i>Black Springs #3154</i> PURE PIGMENT PRINT 40 x 60 cm \$250. Ed. 1/10	 <b>BEN REYNOLDS</b> <i>A house and</i> FINE ART PRINT 30 x 70 cm \$150. Ed. 1/10	 <b>MICHELLE RICHTER</b> <i>Rock &amp; Water</i> INKJET PRINT 30 x 48 cm \$750. Ed. 2/10	 <b>LEWIS RODAN</b> <i>View from Myojima</i> HOGAN ENDURA LUMINE 43.84 x 63.8 cm \$200. Ed. 1/10	 <b>CHRIS ROUND</b> <i>Aerialistic Ball</i> INKJET PRINT 33 x 74 cm \$750. Ed. 1/10	 <b>VALENTINA SCHULTE</b> <i>The Map</i> ARCHIVE BFK RIVES, ROOMS COTTON BAG, SILICA, CHROME, PIGMENT INK, GICLEE PRINT 70 x 80 cm \$1000. Ed. 2/10	 <b>JAMES SIMMONS</b> <i>Fuck Equipment Suck, On My Suck</i> S/PORD TEXTURED COTTON GICLEE PRINT 50 x 70 cm \$4000. Ed. 1/10	 <b>MANDY SCHÖNE-SALTER</b> <i>Film Above</i> INKJET PRINT 20.6 x 9.7 cm \$400. Ed. 1/10	 <b>PAUL SUTHERLAND</b> <i>Interrupted Recollection VII</i> LUSTRE INKJET PRINT 30 x 40 cm \$200. Ed. 1/10
 <b>KURT SORENSEN</b> <i>I get some terrible flights here</i> C-TYPE PRINT 58 x 78 cm \$900. Ed. 1/10	 <b>LISA STONHAM</b> <i>Unlimited</i> ARCHIVAL PRINT 70.55 x 47.53 cm \$750. Ed. 1/10 + 2AP	 <b>PIPPA TANDY</b> <i>Village Colours</i> HANHEIMPLE PHOTO BAG INKJET PRINT 32.5 x 48.5 cm \$250. Ed. 1/10	 <b>JUNA TOLONEN</b> <i>The Playground</i> HANHEIMPLE FINE ART PRINT 60 x 60 cm \$300. Ed. 1/10	 <b>APRIL WARD</b> <i>Perth Summer</i> INKJET PRINT 50 x 40 cm \$150. Ed. 1/10	 <b>QIAN ZHAO</b> <i>Offcut, the edge</i> C-TYPE PRINT 43.63 x 62.88 cm \$1000. Ed. 1/10	 <b>18 Colin Street, WEST PERTH</b> www.pcp.org.au info@pcp.org.au	 <b>JOSHUA SYLVESTER-BURTON</b> <i>Geometric Landscape 005</i> INKJET MATTE PAPER 42 x 63 cm \$250. Ed. 1/10	 <b>LYDIA TRETTHEWEY</b> <i>Sediment</i> INKJET PRINT 60 x 83.3 cm \$550. Ed. 1/3

**CLIP AWARD 2016**  
18 March - 17 April 2016  
The CLIP Award is an internationally recognised photographic prize for new perspectives in natural and urban landscape photography.

**CLIP Judges**  
Cristina de Middel ARTIST  
Marie Bonnal FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE CLIP AWARD  
Dr Christopher Cochrane ARTIST & WRITER

**Acknowledgments**  
The Perth Centre for Photography would like to acknowledge the following supporters & sponsors:



COVER IMAGE: 2016 CLIP Award Winner  
Lydia Tretthewey, *Sediment* Study #3

CLIP Award catalogue [extract]



**LYDIA TRETTHEWEY**  
*Sediment*

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INKJET PRINT  
60 x 83.3 cm  
\$550. Ed. 1/3

**CLIP Awards**

2015, Perth Centre for Photography, West Perth.



*Slippages* catalogue [extract incl following pages]

## ***Slippages***

---

23 - 26 April 2016, Solo Exhibition, Free Range Gallery, Perth.

## Slight Right

- 
1. "Green means... GO!" – My eighteen-month-old nephew is in the back. And, as a consequence, I find myself narrating the trip from O'Connor to Hillarys Boat Harbour, in its entirety. A solid forty minutes of pointing things out on the Freeway North; over and over and over again. It reminds me of a drive I went on with an instructor when I was enrolled in a day-long defensive driving course (at my mothers dogged insistence) after my first car accident. My fault. I had to verbalise every single thing that I observed while I was driving. *A small pearly white Mazda is pulling out in front of me...* I remember being pretty good at swerving and then breaking, hard, to avoid orange traffic cones set out in a specific configuration to try and trip me up in a baking bitumen carpark.
  2. It's not that I am a bad driver. I am careful and relatively considerate on the road. I'm not prone to flying into fits of bird-flipping, spitting and swearing when something untoward happens in front of me. I don't live up to the 'Perth driver' stereotype; I can merge and, not to blow my own trumpet, I have mad reverse parking skills. But, I kind of lose myself in the moment when I'm driving. I drift off. Not off the road, but off into the interior landscape of my mind, only half aware of what is going on around me.
  3. Slow acceleration and the undeniably worrying sound of gurgling coming from somewhere within the turbo diesel i30 Wagon.
  4. Lydia and I both grew up in the Perth Hills. We went to the same public high school, six or so years apart. And, if Lydia's experience of being a teenager in 'The Hills' is anything at all like my own, then the very first thing she did when she turned sixteen was to get her drivers license, and drive away.
  5. Go.

6. The lure of the Flats and all that the suburban sprawl of Perth had to offer was just too strong. I couldn't wait any longer. Getting my license and my first car soon after, meant that the stretching Flat Land was finally traversable. The time of twilights spent with my folks in the back seat of their VeeDub van, parked up at the top of the Zig Zag, the twinkling 'City of Lights' before us, was over.

7. I used to drive a lot. Living in the Hills for most of my young adult life meant that I was at least twenty minutes drive from anywhere. Everywhere. Spending a lot of time on the road has given me a pretty good sense of the lay of the land. I couldn't direct someone where to go, when to turn, but I intuitively know when I'm the one behind the wheel. I can out drive my partner any day of the week.

8. "In two hundred meters slide right..."

Slight right?

9. Mum's driving me to the domestic airport. It's all new and neither of us have made this trip before; Google Maps is helping. Some. Not much. Especially not when it tells us to "slide right". Usually, when Mum is in the passenger seat and she thinks I'm not breaking early enough; she slams both her hands against the dashboard. Hard. She does it when Dad is driving too. It scares the living daylights out of me. It's nearly as bad as having, or witnessing, a near miss. You see everything really clearly again afterward. The feeling of sliding from one place to another is punctuated by profound attentiveness. Despite the windscreen being a smeary mess.

10. Maybe Lydia feels this way too, maybe this is why she makes the kind of work that she does. Maybe she feels this sliding sensation too when she drives. I'm driving from my flat in one of the southern suburbs of Perth to meet up with her. I am off to get a sneak peek at the work she's making for *Slippages*. Creeping over Canning Bridge at around 9am, the stop starts of the morning traffic keep me on my toes.

—

Shannon Lyons  
April 2016

**Interview with Hayley Anschutz, Colosoul Magazine, April 19th 2016**

<https://www.colosoul.com.au/tag/lydia-trethewey/>

***H: Where did the works start?***

L: The works in *Slippages* came out of looking at car travel, and in particular certain experiences that occurred during car travel like daydream. I have a sort of fascination with suburban landscapes that maybe comes from having grown up in the hills. There's this flatness and limitlessness of the mundane built environment that I find interesting that in the hills is... offset by the beauty and naturalness of the bush. I'm interested in palm trees and fences and cracks in the pavement... I found that when I was driving down in the suburbs, and sort of absorbing the landscape I travelled through, and being imprinted by it, that I had this sensation that went beyond wonder that I could only describe as the sublime. So I came up with this concept, quotidian-sublimity, to describe this sensation, and through my work I open it up and explore it... It sits in between the visible and invisible, or the known and unknown, which is where the name *Slippages* comes from.

### ***Why photography and printmaking?***

I was always suspicious of photography, because I never had any interest in the technical aspects of cameras and because I didn't like being removed from the artwork, the way a camera seems to remove you. That black-box thing where you don't know what goes on inside the device. I liked to get my hands on things. So I started with printmaking, solvent-transfers, where I could use rags and chemicals to influence the image. Photography was like note taking, where I could get detailed images almost instantaneously whilst the car moves down the road. Doing solvent transfers also allowed room for unexpected occurrences, and for me to play with the white space of the paper. I was hoping to find something about invisibility in the image disappearing, or partially disappearing. But I think in this case the invisible is also tactile: it can't be seen, but it's felt.

There are types of seeing that involve invisibility.

### ***Do you think there's something of a contradiction in making visual art about the invisible?***

Maybe. Although I think there are types of seeing that involve invisibility. If I'm experiencing quotidian-sublimity, maybe it influences the way I see. Then there's this idea of haptic seeing versus optic seeing. Haptic seeing treats the eyes like organs of touch. It acknowledges that the body is involved in seeing, proprioceptively and kinesthetically. So vision isn't disembodied, and maybe invisibility presses against the body in a way that can be translated visually.

***But you stopped doing solvent transfers and came back to photography***

I don't know that I'd call these works photography. They're certainly photographic, but they arose somewhere in the space of photography and printmaking, explorations with solvent. Photochemical maybe. I call them solvent washes, because I think to call them photographs misses too much of what they are.

***You seem to have a problem with the idea of making photographs***

I don't have a problem with photography, but maybe some of the history of it. Historically photography has been tied to notions of reality and reproduction; the photograph records something that is 'out there' and the camera becomes a sort of pointing device... I find it very restrictive, and prescriptive because it seems to always mean that the photograph is about time, lost time, memory and ephemerality, and irretrievability. Which are all interesting subjects for art but not really what I'm into. I wanted photography to do something different, to be able to be something different. The works in *Slippages* are somewhere between photography and something else.

***Would you say they are abstract?***

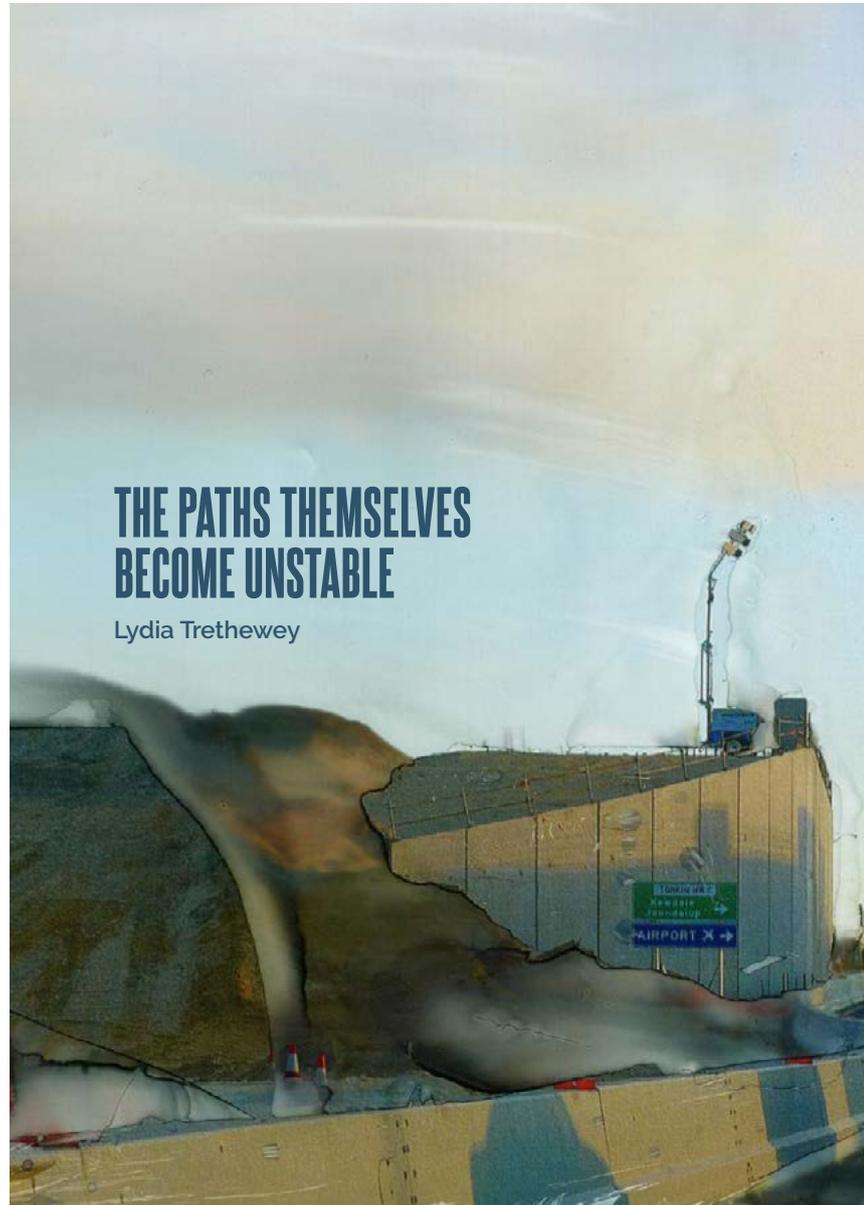
I wouldn't necessarily call them 'abstract' but maybe they are, and maybe I'm just uncomfortable with the term because it's like it's borrowed from painting. I'm wary of talking about photographs in terms of how they are or aren't like paintings. The language around early photography is littered with that sort of thing: "drawing with light" and such. There have been more than a few occasions when people have seen my works and mistook them for paintings, or discussed the way that they're painterly. And for me they're not really painterly, because making them isn't at all like making a painting. It's kind of the opposite, working backwards towards blankness, because if I use too much solvent I get left with a white surface.



*Slippages* exhibition at Free Range Gallery, Perth, 2016.  
Photographs taken by Melanie McKee.



*Slippages* exhibition at Free Range Gallery, Perth, 2016.  
Photographs taken by Melanie McKee.



*The Paths Themselves Become Unstable* catalogue  
[extract incl following pages]

***The Paths Themselves Become Unstable***

---

13 -29 January 2017, solo exhibition, Paper Mountain, Northbridge.

# THE PATHS THEMSELVES BECOME UNSTABLE

Lydia Trethewey

Paper Mountain ARI  
13 - 29 January 2017



*Airstream, (behind the fence), 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17,8cm (from the series 'Slipstream')*

## Slipstreams

Essay by Anna Sabadini

There's a sensory aesthetic that accompanies driving through the city; bitumen, concrete curbs, sand, dry grass, magenta bougainvillea and blue sky broken up by electricity lines and terracotta rooves. There's the radio maybe, or doof doof; zinalume flashes and precast planes off which WA light bounces. Then, shade, as you pass under a concrete bridge. You're sitting on grey vinyl or polyester, protected by the UV tint on the window screen.

You see this stuff over and over; yet, you don't see it because you're daydreaming. You arrive automatically at your destination, surprised because you haven't retained even a single memory of getting there.



*Caught in the Slipstream*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.9cm (from the series 'Slipstream')

Lydia Trethewey's work takes as its starting point the experience of daydreaming whilst driving. She is investigating a visual language that brings together the visible familiarity of Perth from the car, seen over and over again, with the curious experience of not seeing what is in front of your eyes when you're daydreaming, but instead seeing whatever is playing in the mind's eye.

In painting there are many ways to suggest the framing of reality through various bodily and psychological states. Many of these are culturally unconscious and subtle, so as to be invisible to audiences of the day. They simply constitute what is perceived to be reality and

the best way to convey it. Always there is some level of distortion or emphasis involved, an ordering of what is important.

The photograph has enjoyed a somewhat privileged position since it was invented because it was thought to represent an unmediated reality, a sort of truth. With the advent of digital photography especially, and the many manipulations possible with any image, we now know that this truth is in fact a selective process, again. Yet, the photograph's association with an ultimate reality sticks. Photography is reality.

In this body of work Lydia explores dissolving forms to suggest the leaving of



*Flight*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.2cm (from the series 'Slipstream')

reality and the entering of daydream. She could have achieved this virtually through digital manipulation but instead has chosen to print off the photographs, to acknowledge their materiality and work further on them. In this way she continues the dialogue between painting and photography that Degas started when he borrowed photographic composition for his paintings. Yet Lydia's studied emphasis on the relationship between painting and photography suggests further invested meaning.

These are not photographs taken with a self-consciously 'aesthetic eye', lifting them to the level of high art in response to a historical perception that photos are less worthy.

These works originate as ordinary snaps of the suburbs, almost distracted snaps. And as such they retain those mechanistic qualities that allows us to accept them as unmediated reality. We see this in the remnants of palm trees, electric wires, corrugated fencing, and cars at the periphery of many of them. We see this in the particular qualities of blue that we read as 'real' sky rather than a painted sky.

But also present are the artefacts we usually associate with painting, particularly watercolour painting – fluidity of pigment dissolved in water, a gradation of colour and tones made by osmotic creeping, the dark gathering of pigment along drying edges,



*Hidden in the Slipstream*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17.1cm (from the series 'Slipstream')

a certain loss of control of the medium. Additionally, in sections of the work, objects are painted in 'by hand' more wilfully, using thicker pigment.

Whilst we are often conscious of the eye of the photographer, we are not generally conscious of their hand, whilst in painting we can be conscious of both even when the painter is trying to paint photographically. As a result of the immanent reality we perceive in photographs, we tend to think of them as immaterial. In this way photos have achieved what the best Renaissance painters aimed for, the impression of being a window into the world. In Lydia's work, however, noticeable

distractions make us conscious of the physicality of the photographs in the same way we are conscious of the physicality of paintings – pigment and paper subject to physical laws as well as the hand and eye of the artist.

This play between material and immaterial makes an important connection between the perceived opposition of daydreaming and reality. We tend to think of daydreaming as immaterial, anti-reality, anti-rationality. Metaphorically, we 'escape' the real world to enter daydream. We escape our bodies and seemingly carry out all sorts of activities in our minds, which are not subject to physical laws, to being present in the same way our



*In the Wake*, 2016, solvent wash and paint, 12 x 17,9cm (from the series 'Slipstream')

bodies are. We don't even see what is actually before us when we daydream. Lydia breaches traditional categorisations that accompany painting and photography in order to suggest what it's like to be on Tonkin Highway with your mind elsewhere – simultaneously in and out of place.

The experience is actually quite fluid. You get into the car, start driving, and daydream. Interestingly, there are many driving metaphors to describe this switch back and forth between daydreaming and reality (disengaging, going into automatic, mind travelling, changing gears). These speak of driving's capacity for seamless initiation into

movement. And it is movement Lydia's work is ultimately concerned with – movement between what we see and what we imagine and how the car facilitates this.

Whilst driving, the imagery of habit quickly becomes invisible. Familiarity with the route provides the means through which familiarity dissolves. By dissolving into an interior screen the suburbs are both present and absent, the same way that Lydia's works are both paintings and photographs. Their familiarity is immanent in our daydreams the same way that reality is immanent in photographs.



*Here & Now 17: New Photography* catalogue [incl following pages]

***Here & Now 17: New Photography***

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29 April – 8 July 2017, curated by Chelsea Hopper,  
Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Crawley



#### CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chelsea Hopper, Curator of *HERE&NOW17: New Photography*, would like to thank all of the staff of the UWA Cultural Precinct, particularly Caine Chennatt, Kate Hamersley, Clare McFarlane, Anthony Kelly, Lyle Branson and the install team of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery for their assistance in producing this exhibition.

Thanks also goes to Stefaan Bruce-Truglio and Ryan Gibson for their assistance in the production of the 24Seven video; Danny Bourke for the design and production of the upcoming exhibition catalogue of *HERE&NOW17: New Photography*; Michael Power for editing; and Stuart Ringholt, Shaune Lakin, Helen Ennis, Helen Hughes, Darren Jorgensen and Peter Hopper for their ongoing support and guidance throughout this project.

This project would not be made possible without the work, patience and support from all of the artists, Jacqueline Ball, Scott Burton, Lucy Griggs, Georgia Kaw, Dan McCabe and Lydia Trethewey, who continue to keep me on my toes. Special hanks also to Ted Snell, Chief Cultural Officer at the University of Western Australia and to the Australia Council for their support.

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The University of Western Australia, 2017.  
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#### IMAGE CREDITS

Cover:  
Dan McCabe, *-33.101547, 115.697146 (plane)*, 2017, acrylic sheeting on Alubond in custom frames, 87cm x 62cm

Inside left - right:  
Jacqueline Ball, *Diving high viz*, 2017, Inkjet print on photo rag, 108 x 72cm  
Scott Burton, *Herdsmen Business Park 2*, 2017, digital print on premium art stock  
Georgia Kaw, *There Must Be A Rainbow Somewhere*, 2017, digital print on paper  
Lucy Griggs, *Purple Tossels - Sowerbaea laxiflora - Family Anthericaceae*, 2016, cyanotype, 26cm x 18cm

Back cover:  
Lydia Trethewey, *On this Particular Day I was Happy About the Future*, 2017, solvent wash, 82 x 111.9cm



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CRCOS Provider Code: 001260



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Australian Government through the  
Australia Council





## NEW PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography has always been in crisis. In the beginning, the terms of this crisis were cast as dichotomies: Is photography science or art? Nature or technology? Representation or truth? Over the intervening years such questioning has intensified and become more complex. At times, the conditions of cultural representation and the advent of new technologies have required a profound rethinking of what photography is, does, and means. This is one of those times.

What is at stake today in seeing something as a photograph? What is the value of continuing to speak of photography as a specific practice or discipline? Is photography over?

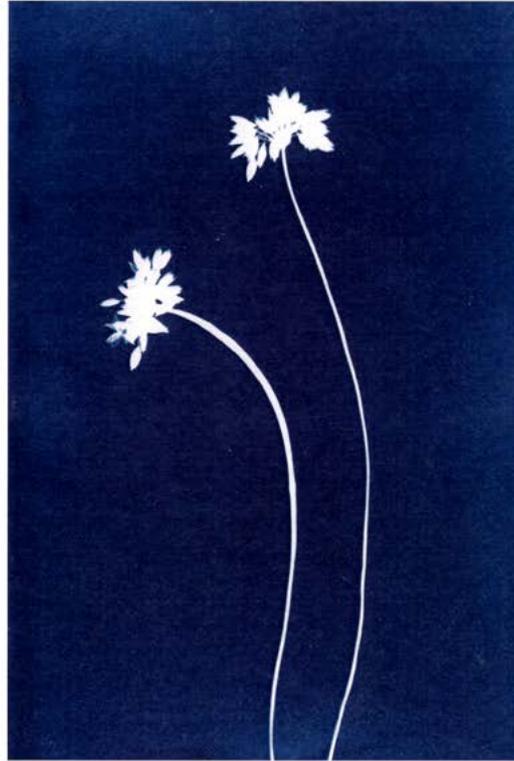
Well, it's not. The artists in *New Photography* open up a space for new ways of thinking about photography as it rapidly changes. Some are armed traditionally with a camera; from digital, medium format to 35mm film. Some manipulate, enlarge or distort images using Photoshop. Some use camera-less processes or some do not use cameras, instead capturing moments with the sun. Some even explore how we can consider traditionally human faculties, such as memory, as being photographic tools.

Dan McCabe captures significant sites in Western Australia that resonated with him when he first moved here four years ago. Rejecting the cultural dominance of the camera, he relies on his own memory of the landscapes he has encountered to formulate

a representation based on highly saturated blocks of colour. With a lack of immediate site specificity or recognisability they remain abstractions; the compositions draw attention to the viewer's reflection in the work; the coloured shapes are recognisable as an out of focus background of a selfie or a pixelated thumbnail from a Facebook profile page.

The camera is a dumb recording device for Lucy Griggs who utilises Perth's uniquely harsh sunlight, the brightest of any capital city in Australia, using the early photographic technique, of cyanotypes to create blueprints of wildflowers she collected during the 2016 wildflower season. The flowers are hand-pressed, placed onto paper, doused in ammonium iron citrate and potassium ferricyanide and then left in the sun to react with ultraviolet light. This process results in a positive image tracing only the outline of the pressed flowers.

There does stand a great deal of variation in the materiality and texture in Jacqueline Ball's work. She has battled with five different cameras to create a cluster of 28 large scaled images. Taken in a moment of recalibration, the images trace her recent experiences of place with her own body, her close relationships and her own environment and by exploring how the nature of these spaces can shape gender and identity.



A photograph can also be ontologically tied to reality — a reproduction or copy. Lydia Trethewey challenges this connection in her images by applying a solvent wash process to photographs. By treating the photographs physically as objects or surfaces and working on them with the solvents, the action across the photographic surface disperses the toner and ink, which shifts and moves. It becomes a space where elements of the familiar press against the unfamiliar.

Among the millions of artists who use Instagram, Scott Burton (@scobierobie) confounds the digital-age boundary between 'user' and 'artist'. Scott does not consider himself an artist, but he has a strong understanding of architecture which he previously studied. This understanding lends to an ability to see to how bodies 'sit' within the surrounding formalism of architecture as an element in the design of his photographs, and how, as shapes or aesthetic forms, these bodies contrast or compliment the suburban architecture and setting. Popping into a square frame, his subjects include unassuming members of the public and unremarkable, brutally sun-lit Perth suburbia, which is transformed into abstract formalist settings. By liberating the images from the screen, printing and framing them, we are presented with a new appreciation for these selective moments frozen in time.

Similarly, Georgia Kaw uses her iPhone to capture random moments in her immediate surroundings. However, she does not upload them online. Instead, her intention lies on using low-resolution images as a starting point for a sculptural intervention which is developed over time. Operating on a tenuous boundary between sculpture and photography, the scale of the image becomes so large that it is printed in two separate pieces. The depiction of a humble 'Op-shop' front on Leach Highway is completely transformed making the viewer physically realign themselves with how and what they view in an image that was once was trapped behind the screen.

It remains a new challenge to find ways to tackle how fluid photography is because of its multifaceted nature. Considering its inherent ambiguity, the approaches of the six artists in *New Photography* becomes a useful tool for interrogating the very conceptual, theoretical and ontological debates that are integral to a cultural and aesthetic understanding of contemporary photography.

Chelsea Hopper  
Curator, *HERE&NOW17: New Photography*

**Here & Now 17: New Photography**

**Review [extract] by Francis Russel, 23 May 2017, Artlink**

Employing a radically different embodied aesthetic to similarly anonymous ends, Trethewey's photographic and video work, incorporate solvent washes to produce a fluid and malleable distortion of urban and suburban spaces. Framed through the car window, Trethewey's images manifest the seemingly endless production and reproduction of the suburban and outer-metropolitan sprawl of WA. This is particularly evident in her video work, in which the chronology of the car ride is disrupted by the stuttering aura (like a migraine) of the solvent wash effect. This spectrally haunting work, as a semi-translucent film, and conjures a force beyond the spatial environments depicted. Like global capital itself, unrepresentable except for the affects it has on the boom and bust cycles it engenders, the solvent washes disrupt the urban and suburban settings of her works without presenting themselves with a stable identity or cause.

*Kevin Ballantine: Photography 1986-2001 | Here&Now17: New photography (Review)*, 2017. Artlink. <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4592/kevin-ballantine-photography-1986E280932001-7C-here26now/>

# Highway Meltdown

Melinda Reid

79

Reid, Melinda. 2017. "Highway Meltdown."  
In *New Photography*, ed. Chelsea Hopper, 79-81.

A first impression of a city, or campus, or some other new location can feel strange in retrospect. Although handheld maps like Waze or Google Maps can curb the likelihood of getting lost, they cannot completely control how one first sees and builds a vague sense of a place. This first impression is usually based on chance movements and whatever appears on the path between 'point a' and 'point b.' Perspective forms orientation: buildings appear to face certain ways, trees become markers of a turn made, roads lead in particular directions. Without prior knowledge, unimportant façades or objects can be given false significance. Unlike conventional maps, this 'internal map' lacks concrete bearings like east or west; rather, it is determined by happenstance and a need to make sense of the unfamiliar.

If a place is revisited enough times, this impression—or memory—can be patched over and edited. The initial internal map is lost as one discovers new orienting markers of space: a bus route, a frequented street, or a familiar house. Gradually, this initial sense of place is reshaped to fit the appearance of everything else. When this happens, walls of buildings felt to be the front turn out to be the back, once prominent trees seem less important, and streets begin to fit together. When recalled, one's first sense of a place can feel bizarre, as if the place had been initially misunderstood or read back-to-front like a sentence in a mirror.

For Miwon Kwon, a place is 'a network of unanchored flows.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, a place is not just a physical location; it is also a site of habits and attachments that become entwined with identity.<sup>2</sup> The paths that we take, which are in one sense just combinations of memory and movement—or rather, movements that are remembered and repeated—through places, are among the various flows through which planned and arbitrary objects are clustered into places. Places and paths both depend on remembered acts and routines. As a result, they are changeable and given to slippages, but can also feel concrete and ordered. What happens, however, when an outside force changes a place's order? What happens to the pathways that we make and the memories and movements that produce them?

The outside force in Lydia Trethewey's series is tedious and everyday: government implemented roadworks on a public highway. Along the intersection of Perth's Tonkin Highway and Kelvin Road, car and cycle lanes are being added and turning lane pockets extended. These additions are small, but they are already changing the landscape of the roadways as well as how this area is understood and remembered. For the Government of Western Australia, the roadworks are a demonstration of progress and improvement; the most recent official update announced that the roadworks are speeding up 'traffic flow by reducing delays, improving safety and reducing driver frustration at peak periods.'<sup>3</sup> Trethewey, by contrast, observes these roadworks as interruptions to well-travelled paths and places.

In Trethewey's photographs, the highway and its surroundings appear unstable, almost dream-like. Portions of the landscape swell and leak into abstraction. A sense of liquefaction pervades the scenes; roadsides and traffic cones dissolve, the skies swell, suburban areas are reduced to puddles, and nature strips melt away. Signs, rear vision mirrors, brick columns, lane markings, and rooftops seem to float in their watery backgrounds. The roadworks seem to have disturbed the order of these places, sending them into a slow meltdown.

The painterly qualities of Trethewey's images also echo the practices of early twentieth century pictorialists who favoured techniques that drew out the expressive capabilities of the camera. Pictorialism was typified by soft focus photographs, printing processes that required hand coated surfaces, and subtle tonal manipulations. The resulting imagery was often affective, but to diverse ends; while Edward J. Steichen depicted artists and buildings as shadowy enigmas, Alfred Stieglitz found calm in steamy streets and moody clouds. Portraiture also varied, from the daydreamy—illustrated well by Eva Watson-Schütze's portraits of young women—to the sorrowful—as seen in F. Holland Day's crucifixion series. Above all else, pictorialism emphasised that photography was more than a scientific tool or recording device: it was an artistic medium.

Unlike traditional pictorialists, however, Trethewey opts for sweeping strokes and layered

interventions that make her transfer process much more visible. This element of her practice reminds me of *kintsugi*, a Japanese practice of mending cracked pottery with gold lacquer resin, a filling that leaves the breaks in the ceramic visible. The history of the object and the hand of the artist remain present through this practice, emphasising their role in creating mistakes and marks. In Trethewey's work, her presence is made apparent through her clear interventions in the photographed landscapes, drawing attention to the surface of her prints and the liquidity of her solvent washes.

These interventions also produce gaps in the landscape. Looking at Trethewey's prints and stop motion film, it is easy to feel as if we are observing extracts of old memories. While some details of these memories have decayed others remain vivid. For instance, in *On this Particular Day I was Happy About the Future*, a side mirror reflecting the flare of the sun and a red telegraph post come into sharp focus, while the streets are almost washed away into nothing more than vague shapes and colours. As Georges Didi-Huberman has suggested, memory can be as haunting and tenacious as it is vulnerable to disappearance.<sup>4</sup> Since remembering is always an act of recreation—a recollection—the more that something is remembered, the more it is simultaneously forgotten. Some of the things seen from Trethewey's car window have been remembered and thus remain visible. Others have been forgotten and slip away.

Memory can also be diaphanous, fold in on itself, and warp chronologies. Sometimes one memory wanders through—or perhaps on top of—another. Trethewey's layered exposures add to this atmosphere of hazy memory, skewing perspective and creating interesting slippages in time and space along the highway. This is particularly apparent in *Dreams of a Tiny Apocalypse* in which an airstrip sits impossibly close to a suburb and unusually tall grass. The instability of memory is also clear in *Wandering into a Limitless World* in which a person appears to walk off towards a foggy non-place. By leaving the dislodged portions of these memories visible, Trethewey captures memory's patchy relationship with time and place.

As the roadworks continue and the highway changes, memories of its old appearance

will soon fade and perhaps feel odd once remembered. By softening what is already disappearing and sharpening what might manage to remain, Trethewey creates an affective record of the roadworks' interruption to the flows and memories associated with a small section of Perth's highways. She illustrates that a sense of place is fleeting, just like a moment along a highway.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

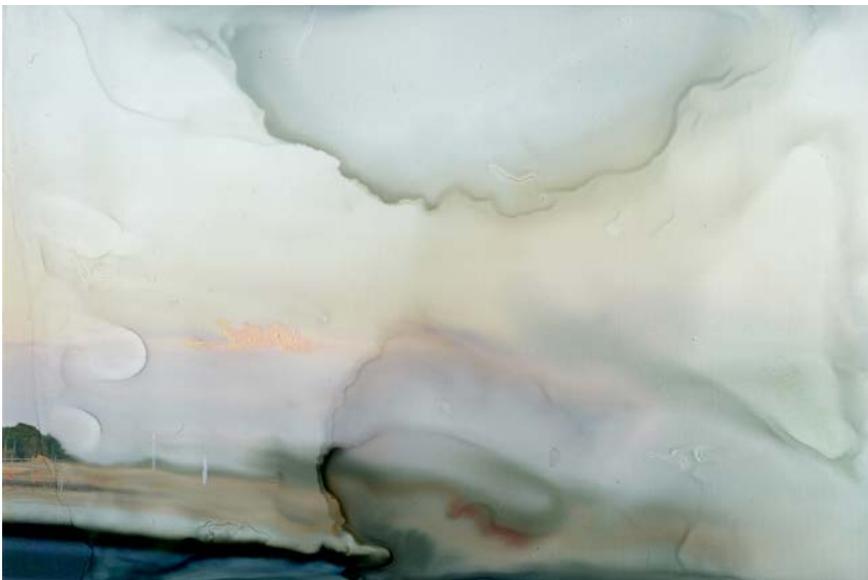
Melinda Reid is a writer, educator, and PhD candidate at UNSW Art & Design in Sydney.

#### NOTES

- 1 Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another," *October* 80, (1997): 109
- 2 *Ibid.*, 108
- 3 "Tonkin Highway/Kelvin Road upgrade," *Mainroads Western Australia*, last modified 17 February, 2017, <https://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/BuildingRoads/Projects/UrbanProjects/Pages/tonkinkelvin.aspx>.
- 4 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011), 81



*Strato*, 2016, solvent wash, 12 x 17.7 cm

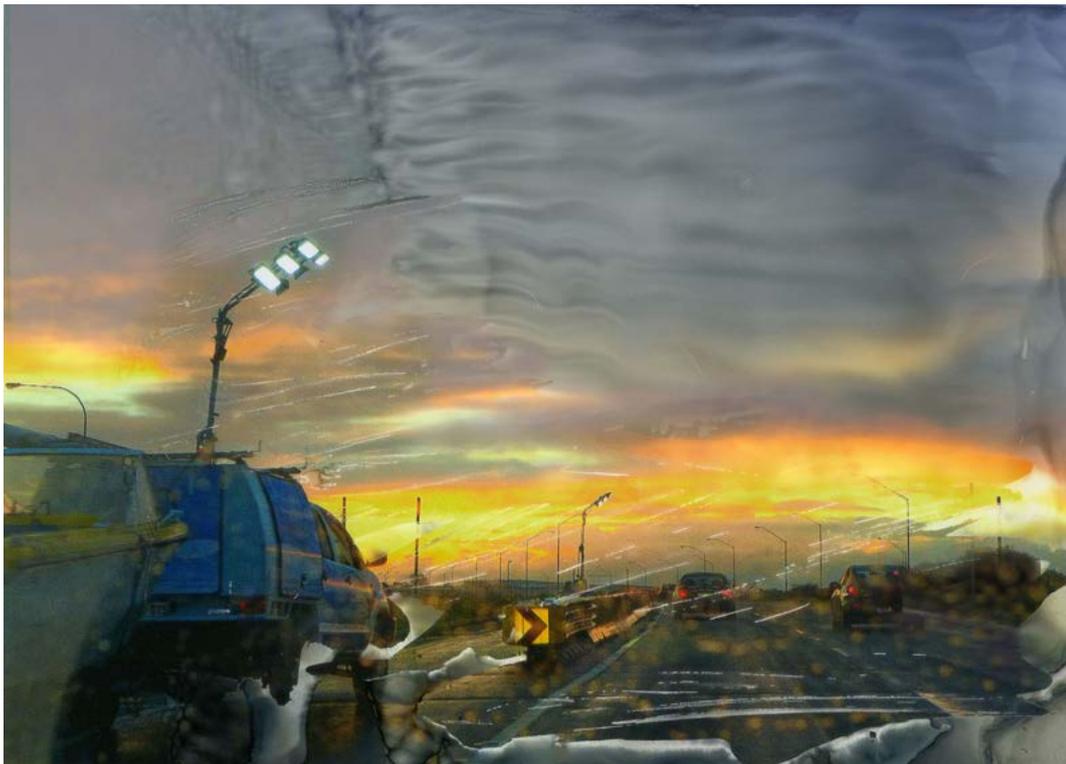


*Cumulo*, 2016, solvent wash, 12 x 17.9 cm

### **Staffroom 2017**

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22 – 29 April 2017, curated by Mark Parfitt,  
Edward Millen House, Victoria Park.



*Dusk Caught in Puddles and Glass*, 2016, solvent wash, 60 x 83.1 cm

### ***Gosnells' Art Awards***

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5 – 12 May 2017, Agonis Building, Gosnells.

*Won the "Digital Media" award category.*

**Artist statement:**

*Where There are no Corners* and *Waiting* form part of a body of work in which I explore daydream and sensations of immensity that arise during everyday travel. Utilising a process of solvent wash the photographic surfaces are dispersed, objects in the landscape spilling beyond their bounds in a slipstream of movement. These particular works focus on experiences of liminality – daydream constitutes an interstitial space between alertness and distraction, a paradox of wakeful dreaming. Through daydream familiar places are unfixed, sliding towards the periphery.

The sites explored can also be considered zones of liminality; the transient space of the bus station, a glimpse of trees between power pole and fire warning sign. On a macro level, Perth can seem peripheral, as a city on the far edge of a vast continent – and Kalamunda within it is a kind of fringing place, caught between metro and country, suburbia and bushland. Having grown up in the hills I find myself interested in the periphery, the importance of things just off to the side. Waiting too long for a bus that doesn't come, and staring into the depthless bush, is to be lost in a daydream.

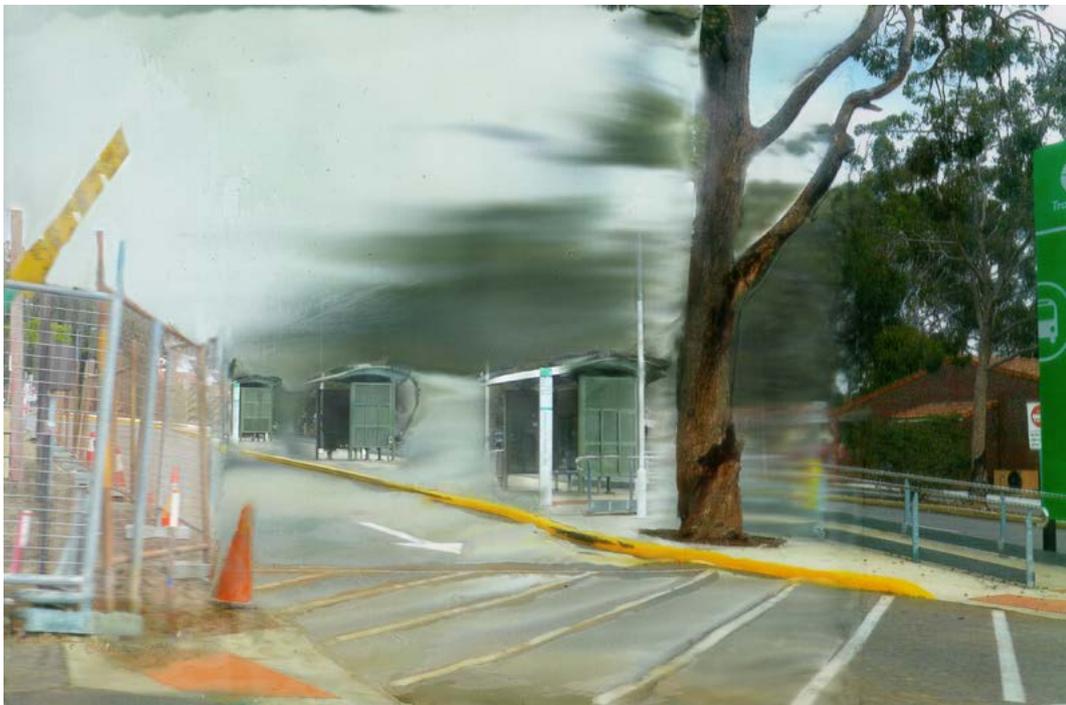
***Placing the Periphery***

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1 – 17 September 2017, curated by Hayley Anschutz and Lydia Trethewey,  
Zig Zag Gallery, Kalamunda



*Where There are no Corners*, 2017, solvent wash, 60 x 40 cm



*Waiting*, 2017, solvent wash, 60 x 40 cm



*Placing the Periphery* catalogue [extract incl following pages]

# Lydia Trethewey



**Waiting**  
2017  
solvent wash  
400 x 600mm  
Edition 1/3  
(only 2 of the 3 editions are for sale)  
\$250



**Where There are no Corners**  
2017  
solvent wash  
400 x 600mm  
Edition 1/3  
(only 2 of the 3 editions are for sale)  
\$250

*Where There are no Corners* and *Waiting* form part of a body of work in which I explore daydream and sensations of immensity that arise during everyday travel. Utilising a process of solvent wash the photographic images are dispersed, objects in the landscape spilling beyond their bounds in a slipstream of movement. These particular works focus on experiences of liminality; daydream constitutes an interstitial space between alertness and distraction, a paradox of wakeful dreaming. Through daydream familiar places are unfixed, sliding towards the periphery.

The sites explored in these works can also be considered zones of liminality; the transient space of the bus station, a glimpse of trees between power pole and fire warning sign. On a macro level, Perth can seem peripheral, as a city on the far edge of a vast continent – and Kalamunda within it is a kind of fringing place, caught between metro and country, suburbia and bush. Having grown up in the hills I find myself interested in the periphery, the importance of things just off to the side. Waiting too long for a bus that doesn't come, and staring into the depthless bush, is to be lost in a daydream.

## Placing the Periphery

By Lydia Trethewey

**W**hen we talk about the periphery, usually what we mean is things just off to the side – the edge or limits of an area, an indistinct shape in the corner of your eye. To couple this with the more defined idea of “place”, or placing, seems strange. Can the periphery be a place, and if so, what does it mean to place the periphery, to try to put your finger on something marginal, shifting and indefinite? The eight emerging artists in this show, *Placing the Periphery*, explore place through the periphery, and the peripheral qualities of place. Each takes a different approach, examining the tensions between liminality and rootedness, engaging with familiar locations and remembered spaces, and evoking imagined topographies.

Yet for these artists, place is not merely a subject, but informs the act of making itself. Here “peripheral” is not intended as a description of how the work is situated within a larger context (that is to say, we’re not implying that these artworks are of marginal importance). Rather, the idea of the periphery and its relation to place hints at a broader sense of liminality that infuses the work, signalling the significance of Perth as a site for art-making. Perth, one of the remotest capitals in the world, might be considered marginal in a geographical sense – it sits on the edge of a vast continent, permeated to some degree by a sense of isolation.

Within Perth, Kalamunda (where the Zig Zag Gallery is located) is itself a fringing suburb – it is caught between suburbia and bushland, metro and country. The term “ecotonal” could be employed here to describe this liminal quality – an ecotone is an interstitial environment, situated in the push and pull between other, more well-defined spaces – for example, the tide pools along a shoreline. As a threshold between flat suburbs and undulating bushland, Kalamunda could be an ecotone, a continually regenerating place pregnant with possibility. It is the fluctuating quality of the periphery, here a threshold, which is important in forming such a unique sense of place. Perth and Kalamunda can perhaps be said to precipitate art which resonates with a sense of the periphery, as place here is suffused with the liminal.

In Paul Sutherland’s work, the periphery manifests as half-remembered, half-forgotten place. Playing with the relationship between photography and memory, Paul’s image reconstructs a scene rather than reproducing it. His *Interrupted Recollection XI* questions the indexicality of the photograph – that is, the idea that a photograph faithfully records what is “out there” – and engages instead in material rearranging. Here remembering, like photography, is a process of continual intervention.

Memory is also important in the work of Carly Lynch, but rather than personal recollections it is the role that museums, libraries and archives play in forming our memories of place. What happens when a piece of history is deemed to be no longer relevant? In *What Remains of Hermes?* Carly explores the fate of a boat (Hermes) that was removed from the WA Maritime Museum’s collection. In *Wharfie*, her experiences of Fremantle’s Boat harbour are printed onto a pair of found overalls, probing the thresholds between memory and memorialisation.

Jarrad Martyn's work *Maralinga Tjarutja* also draws its subject from an archive, the National Archives of Australia. It references the nuclear tests conducted in Maralinga, South Australia, in 1956, creating an image that is at once quiet and alive with foreboding. In *Thoth*, a group of Australian White Ibis scavenge around a bin, skulking in the margins. The behaviour of this bird, sometimes referred to as the "bin chicken", has adapted to an urban environment. Both of these works contemplate the relationships between people and place, and how nature has changed (and been changed) over time.

The margin comes to the fore in Matt McAlpine's *The colonial frame (deconstructing the James Stirling portrait frame)*, in which it is the frame itself that is brought to attention. This work is a replica of a frame that supported a painting of James Stirling, the first Governor of Western Australia. In removing Stirling, the supposed splendour of the gilt gold frame begins to peel and slump, lacking the support of the artwork and the colonial histories it represents. In *The colonial frame (crumbling the James Stirling portrait frame)* red earth is used, a direct reference to the lands Stirling invaded. Through the conflicting materials of paint, plaster and earth, the continuing conflicts of place in Australia are investigated.

The importance of materials in representing and evoking place is also central to Tessa Beale's work. Taking as her point of departure a series of photographs she took in Albany, Tessa focuses attention on the natural world. In *Penumbra #2* a miniature stage is erected for the play of shadows in a tree; in *Reflection #3* the textures and light of nature meet the materiality of graphite and paper. In both these works the peripheral aspects of place, the shadows that dance beneath a Summer sun, become the focus.

My own works, *Waiting* and *Where There are No Corners*, are likewise inspired by a particular place – the Perth hills, where I grew up. These works manifest my interest in transient places like bus stations, and peripheral spaces like those glimpsed between street signs. Coupled with my fascination for daydream as a peripheral zone in itself, these works utilise the materiality of photographs to evoke a sense of the in-between.

For Sophie Durand, the art gallery itself becomes a place to be examined. Bringing together interests in art installation and theatre, Sophie considers the way her works are situated within the existing system of the gallery. In *Hungarian Vignettes* a series of art zines, including stories of her experiences in Hungary, suggest the impossibility of repeating past moments and seem to comment upon the gallery as a place in which experience seems to be, but can't be, manifested again.

A similar tone is perhaps felt in Jess Boyce's *Browsing*, which imitates the glossy pages of a magazine and yet is blank, images removed to leave holes in the paper. It may be that the pictures, perhaps of far-off places, have been collected, carefully snipped out and kept. *Under the same Moon*, but not the right one represents a different kind of collection, that of postcards and the impossible. Here the moon has been superimposed into places it shouldn't be, creating views that will never be seen, like those cut from a travel magazine.

The works in *Placing the Periphery* investigate place through the margins, as histories, memories and experiences. They deal with place as remembering, as archives, and as re-imaginings, engaging with a diverse array of materials and methods; in a distinctly Perth context, these artists explore the way we place the periphery, or are placed within it.

***The Sublime as 'Merely Interesting': Ruscha, Rooney and  
Quotidian-Sublimity in Conceptual Art***

Arts in Society Conference, 2015, London, UK

Abstract:

This paper examines how art that evokes a sensation of quotidian-sublimity can be understood through the seemingly paradoxical aesthetic of the merely interesting. The quotidian-sublime is conceptualised as a sensation of immensity experienced simultaneously as a cognitive limit and an awareness of endlessness, drawing upon aspects of Romantic sublimity as an image of infinity whilst departing from the concept of transcendence. Sensations of immensity are understood as engendered by accumulations of locational memory in the everyday, avoiding a transposition of 'mountaintop' sublimity into a commonplace setting and distinguishing the concept from wonder. This quotidian-sublime in art can be examined through Sianne Ngai's aesthetic of the merely interesting, which unlike traditional aesthetics of beauty or sublimity involves a temporal lengthening and sense of partiality rather than instantaneous totality. Focusing on conceptual artists Ed Ruscha and Robert Rooney in the antipodal settings of Los Angeles and Melbourne, the interesting is used to consider the way photoconceptual art can be rooted in experience as much as ideas and can involve elements of not-knowing. The aesthetic of the interesting can hence provide a framework for thinking about the sublime in everyday art in which sublimity is not a grand impact but an invitation to look, and look again.

## ***Image as Impulse: Ruscha, Printmaking and Conceptual Art***

Impact 9, 2015, Hangzhou, China

Abstract:

Working from an extended definition of the term 'image' based on the etymological Latin root *imago*, this paper re-evaluates the concept of image in relation to artistic practices. Rather than approaching image as something wholly visual, *imago* encompasses the more tenuous existence of image as 'semblance', 'apparition', 'echo' and 'ghost'. In this definition image is not limited to a perceivable surface but can manifest as an impulse that precipitates the creative act or as a director of visual decision making working under the guise of intuition; internal images. Focusing on the art of Ed Ruscha, who emphasised repeatedly the significance of images rather than photographs in his creative practice, the role of the image will be examined in the context of 1960s conceptual art. The re-iteration of motifs across different mediums in Ruscha's practice, particularly the gasoline station, will be used to generate discussion of how the image can act as an imprecise internal compulsion towards certain subjects. This will then be related to the role of new modes of printing production and dissemination in the 1960s, particularly Ruscha's dismissal of photography as a medium and embrace of the book format as a collection of images. His focus on images rather than photography provides grounds to consider photobooks such as *26 Gasoline Stations* within the area of printmaking, and is perhaps prescient of what might today be described as 'post-print' printmaking. The process of manifesting an image in material form will also be likened to the conceptual practice of performing instructions, highlighting the unsystematic, fluid and chance elements of such practices. Through re-evaluating what is meant by image via returning it to the root *imago* and considering how it might be more than just physical depictive surfaces, new understandings of what drives artistic practices and printmaking can arise.

***Photographic Irony: When the Photograph Presses Against the Invisible***

AAANZ, 2015, Brisbane, Australia

Abstract:

Conventional spoken irony can be described as the use of what is said to suggest what is not said. This paper examines photographic practices in which the visible is used to indirectly allude to the invisible, what might potentially be called photographic irony. Debates about photography frequently return to the apparent contradiction in which photographs are considered non-objective, but also evidentiary as direct impressions of light on a surface. This paper argues that photography is not about fixing a moment but can instead be a means of escaping stasis as a hinge between the visible and invisible. This de-stabilises assumptions about photography as purely depictive and involves questioning the relation of photography to authenticity. The notion of imperception, a failure to perceive, becomes a new ground on which to consider photography's relation to visibility. The purposefully out of focus photographs of Uta Barth, which question the role of the camera as a 'pointing device', will be examined as deliberate imperceptions which forge a link between the camera and the eye, machine and body as engaged with imperfect seeing. The photographs of Eliza Hutchison will then be considered for the way they take a medium conventionally associated with visibility to explore unspeakable subjects. Finally I will turn to my own creative practice, in which photography traverses physical and digital spaces in search of an ineffable sublime, using solvents to materially unfix depictive space. In this paper photography is examined for its capacity to make fluid rather than to fix, through ideas of imperception and photographic irony that play off notions of visibility whilst pressing against the invisible.

## ***Doing “Nearly-Nothing”: Alveolic Thoughts and Fermented Images***

ACUADS, 2016, Brisbane, Australia

### Abstract:

Alveoli are part of the inner lining of the lungs, involved in gas and blood exchange; fermentation is a metabolic process of transformation. In the proposed paper these processes become metaphors for art-making, forming the basis of a discussion on how passivity, slow transitions and unsystematic progression can be integral to practice-led research. The notion of doing ‘nearly-nothing’ as distinct from doing nothing emerges here as a proposition that ideas and images often need time to breathe and ferment, and that cycles of activity can be framed in terms of inhalation and exhalation. Examining my own artistic practice as an example, specifically my current PhD research, I investigate the role of doing nearly-nothing in creative processes and look for ways to write about it in a meaningful way. Acknowledging that periods of doing nearly-nothing occur, and aren’t the same as doing exactly nothing, can perhaps make the fugitive model of the exegesis more accessible by probing the nuanced and subtle elements in creative practice. This paper doesn’t seek to comment on the structure of arts education, nor offer methods of reform, but simply aims to underscore the importance of passive transformative processes through a new language. In examining the composite nature of arts-research as a balance of disciplined and undisciplined approaches, the idea of doing nearly-nothing signals the importance of recognising all aspects of practice-led research, whether they are immediately evident or not.

***The Flesh of Pixels, the Liquid Image***

AAANZ, 2016, Canberra, Australia

Abstract:

Taking as its point of departure the rejection of the photograph as reproduction, this paper investigates photographic practice in the interstice of digital and analogue. Focusing on the iterative nature of my own photographic practice, I will examine digital and analogue processes as complementary modes of making which exist in a nexus of stasis and flux. Utilising a process I term “solvent wash,” my photographic works involve both digital photography and material intervention, so that the flesh of pixels becomes visible and images are made liquid. Carrying a single image through multiple iterations serves to question whether digitisation is a dematerialisation or instead a single step in an ongoing processes of re-materialisation. Examination of the photograph as a site of continued becoming then leads to a consideration of where the studio is, as it is de-centred from both the dark-room and the computer. I propose that the camera itself, through its portability, becomes a kind of moving studio that disperses the site of making and meaning, and entangles it with everyday lived experience. Photoconceptualism will be examined as an example of dispersed studio practice, drawing on Liz Kotz’s notion that the photograph is not a secondary documentation but a performative utterance of an instruction, as well as Margaret Iverson’s suggestion that this opens photoconceptualism to chance. This approach situates the photograph as a series of steps, highlighting an extended procedure of making and a studio that is spread across space and time. Through an investigation of digital and analogue processes it will be argued that hybrid practices potentially take place in a dispersed studio, and in doing so the historical role of the photograph as reproduction is questioned, giving way to an understanding rooted in fluidity, fleshiness and flux.

