

**City&Guilds
of London
Art School**

**IN BETWEEN ALL PERSPECTIVES: THE MAP, THE
DIAGRAM, AND THE LINE OF FLIGHT**

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Introduction

I stare at the world in an abstract and structural way but without losing awareness of its materiality. It often feels as if I am looking at a space in which things relate to each other quite smoothly but which it is difficult to move around. My art practice has to do with re-assembling what is fragmented and mending the void of separation, in an actual and a metaphorical sense. It allows new connections between elements that I thought would not meet and creates new points of entry to encounter the world.

I was trained as an architect; from this I have kept a particular way of approaching ideas and forms- I include every part of what I encounter within a vaster plan. My work emerges from the territory of abstraction in the way that an architect starts with the abstract and works toward the real world within which moments, places, memories and desire reappear. My art practice exists as something that moves from the act of looking towards the act of re-processing reality- what is around us, what we are part of, what we encounter. It goes in and out of structure and uses different types of diagram to move between ‘structure’ and ‘surface’ – ‘visual experience’ and ‘objective presence’.

It combines influences, frictions and envy of the work of others like Antoni Tàpies and Gianfranco Baruchello and finds echoes in the theory of the Rhizome, among others, by Deleuze and Guattari, that allows for multiple, non- hierarchical entry and exit points in the representation and interpretation of information. There is not one entry into my work but many: a fact that reflects the education and influences I have received since an early age.

I grew up in Paris into a family of architects; immersed in floor plans and section plans drawn on tracing paper and sketch models since my early years.

My father would explain things to me with little sketches and arrows on napkins (the word ‘map’ in fact comes from the Ancient Greek word for napkin!) and tablecloths in cafes. At the time I knew nothing else than buildings, heard numerous arguments in cafes and at home about the city, the modernist approach and the vernacular one, the idea of the cell, the separation between living and working, these kinds of things. During my architecture studies I spent my idle time visiting Le Corbusier’s architecture. I also worked as a resident guide in the Convent of La Tourette, in a Modulor- room design. My professional practice

in the architecture offices was not creative at all – it was mostly about tracing the projects of others, changing the scales and rendering façade with colour pencils.

I moved in London in 2000. It is there that from being an architect I turned into a compulsive painter. In 2008 I was commissioned to make a sea painting, from which a whole series of work followed. The impermanence of the sea makes it inherently abstract: it is a mass but you can go through it, it is a container and yet a surface on which things can float, it is a splash and a wave, a cave underneath, a line in between, and all these at once. That was what interested me. The sketch on the right demonstrates a diagrammatic approach to painting that is close to the architectural diagram.



Ocean Lobby and preliminary diagram

The painting 'Playground' then marked a turning point in the development of my work. With this work I let go completely of the idea of representation to produce a painting in which opaque surfaces and sensitive areas excited one another, a solid block of memories that somehow allowed for lightness. It is also about an ability to undo a fixed reality to let other worlds emerge from the one we inhabit. The undoing process is in this case an action of assembling surfaces made of very different moods and types of action. It is an act of reunion in which the far and the close would meet, conveying within it the idea of a possible expansion of reality, somewhere within and also beyond the surface.



Playground, 2014, Acrylic and pencil on canvas, two panels of 60 by 90cm

From that point my practice has evolved from making ‘a picture at the time’ to a more inclusive understanding of an art practice. Today the studio is a ground on which I can play safely, assemble and de-assemble, work from above like a cartographer or in the easel position like a painter, jump and switch sides, in between all perspectives. I rediscovered what I have always used, seen and been drawing: The Diagram.

My work was then to bring some of ‘the world’ back to my surface using the crucial tool of the diagram. ‘*A diagram*’ says Jakub Zdebik, ‘*is commonly understood as a drawing conveying information about something incorporeal*’,¹

Zdebik provides a few different ideas about the diagram in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari. Here I will explore my work using some of those categories, divided into three sections.

These are:

1. The Diagram as Tracing and Map, which explores the difference between tracing and mapping and between the Tree and the Rhizome in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. It looks at the work of Gianfranco Baruchello and Antoni Tàpies, and explores the idea of being ‘in between all perspectives’.

¹ Jakub Zdebik, *Deleuze and the Diagram*, Bloomsbury, London, 2012, p1

2. The Diagram as Abstract Machine, which contains work in which I am 'playing for real'; work which constructs a new reality rather than representing this one. It also considers painting in the expanded field and the idea of the diagram as transferrable through media.
3. The Diagram and the Line of Flight looks at the Deleuzian concepts of Desire, Assemblage and the Line of Flight. It concludes by following many lines into the future.

Presenting and evaluating my current practice as well as the one of other artists, I will present a theory 'at work', rather than illustrate it. I will argue that the diagram is not just a tool to produce work but it is a 'function' to painting. This way I seek to make works that connect to other forms organised upon similar diagrammatic functions.

Section 1- The Diagram As Tracing and Map

‘As described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaux*, tracing is a process of graphic translation. Tracing operates through blind repetition, through a process of constant skipping back onto the outline of the object it traces...’² A tracing can be cartography that delimitates and simplifies. It is often the world as seen from above, a structure which supervenes on life’s complexities. A map has generally been seen as a code, something that is ‘to scale’. But this has not always been what people are doing when they are making maps, as we shall see. Deleuze and Guattari see mapping as the opposite of tracing - tracing copies and mapping creates and expands.

‘The diagram is a duality composed of tracing and mapping. Deleuze and Guattari concede that tracing and mapping must be superimposed to form a process of simultaneous constraint and expansion.’³ The work that I am making uses aspects of tracing, but always complicates this schema by making things to be personal, by combining and juxtaposing perspectives, by having no fixed scale or language. Other artists also take the idea of the tracing and broaden it, such as Gianfranco Baruchello and Antoni Tàpies, two artists very important to the development of my work.

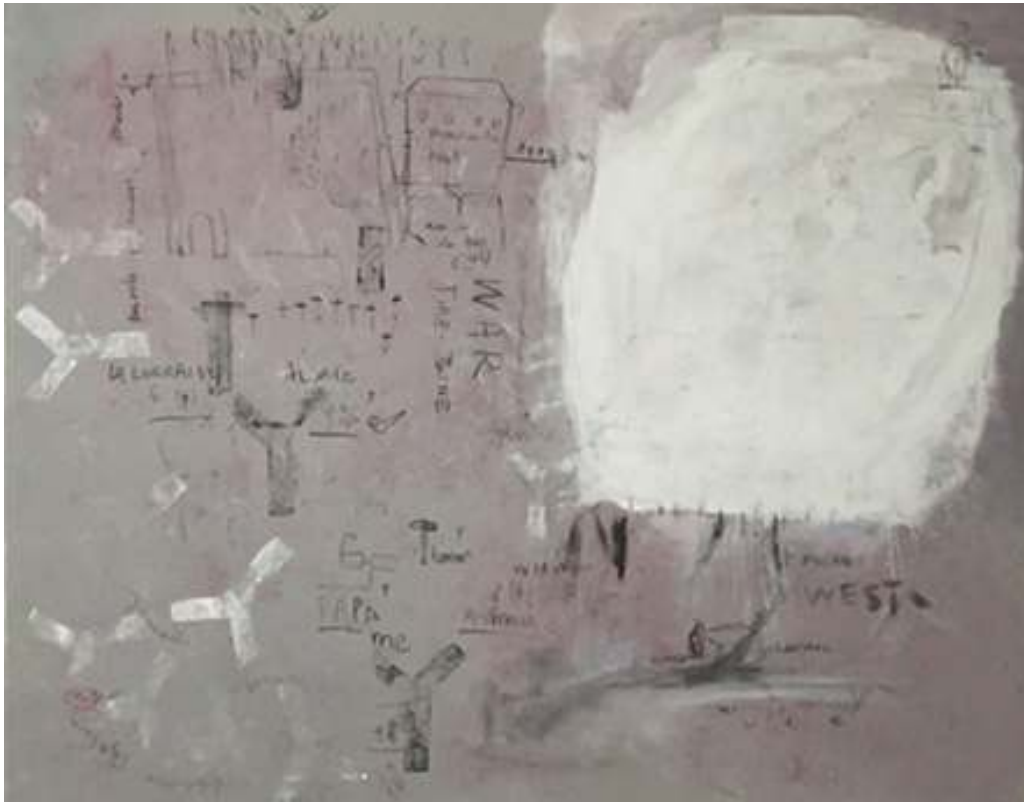
Deleuze and Guattari connect the idea of tracing to the idea of ‘tree logic’, as against the *Rhizome*. ‘All of tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction. In linguistics as in psychoanalysis, its object is an unconscious that is itself representative, crystallized into codified complexes, laid out along a genetic axis and distributed within a syntagmatic structure.’⁴ The duality Deleuze and Guattari are presenting is of crystallisation being opposed to the free flowing of symbols and ideas. The work that we will examine now exhibits what is, perhaps, a partially crystallised structure- one with voids and gaps which allow for other meaning to emerge.

1.1 *Fold: tree logic and the Rhizome*

² Deleuze and the Diagram, p109

³ *ibid*

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (tr. Brian Massumi), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1987, p12



On My Mother's Side, 2015, Mixed media on linen, 115 by 140cm

On My Mother's Side is a large piece which embodies a genealogical tree. It is at certain points a classical family tree. But it includes other languages of signs, and other perspectives interrupt the linear diagram. On the right there is a great white void where the bulk of my mother's family lie, with their histories unknown and the evidence lost.

The work is made using a kind of stamp that I produced prior to making the work, a linoleum 'Y' shape which leaves its imprint and creates a dichotomy. At each branching, the connection acquires vitality - or loses it, either way there is a transformation.

I used different primers to create a surface that would look homogenous from a distance but rich and porous from near. I did not want to paint a surface but to create one, which is a different thing.

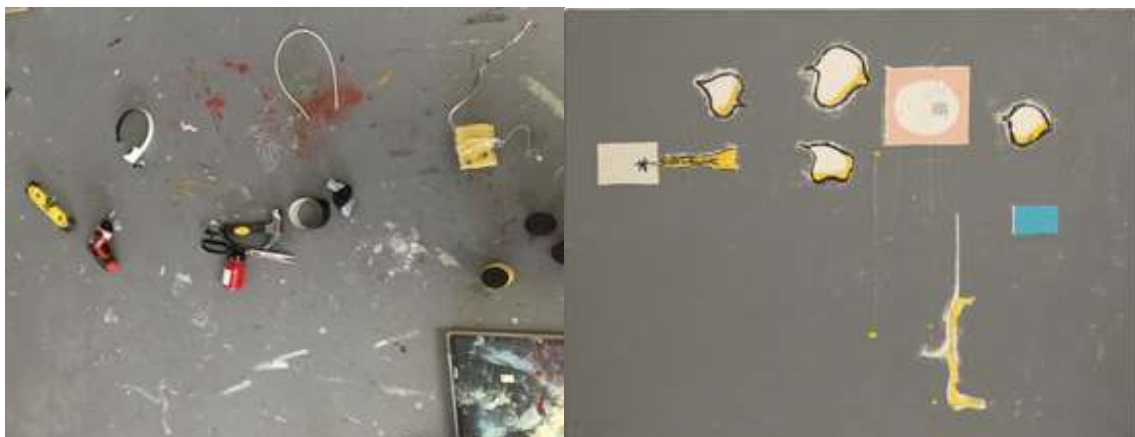
The Y is a formal device, or perhaps I might call it a formal principle around which the work is structured. Using one formal principle, or tracing structure, one can create infinite numbers of difference in the creative 'mapping' process. It is the same as in architecture, where the Y would be a generalised formal device to be customised according to the individual circumstances.

I approached the painting as a tree (Deleuze's 'tree logic') in which ready-made dichotomies are stamped to create an infinite structure, creating a 'fractal' logic which leads from the tree to the rhizome. I wanted to think about how to approach the infinite within the painting's surface. The branching dichotomies are interrupted by my own stories and those of my ancestors, mixed up and retold and drawn by successive children, perhaps. These have their own logic and their own sense of up and down. This heterogeneity creates a rhizomatic element.

1.2 Baruchello, Mapping and Confusions

Gianfranco Baruchello makes diagrams which combine different subjects, different languages of signs and different material ways of signifying. His varied work embodies the rhizomatic mode. Baruchello has for a long time and in many different ways created worlds of complicated information, with personal stories, politics, modes of production and dead information, all existing in a non-hierarchical space.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the Rhizomatic as a mode in which 'semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status.'⁵ My work also contains many languages, material forms, subject matters which rub together and contradict. My work also lives at many points, from whimsical humour to tragedy.



My Studio Floor/ Baruchello's painting

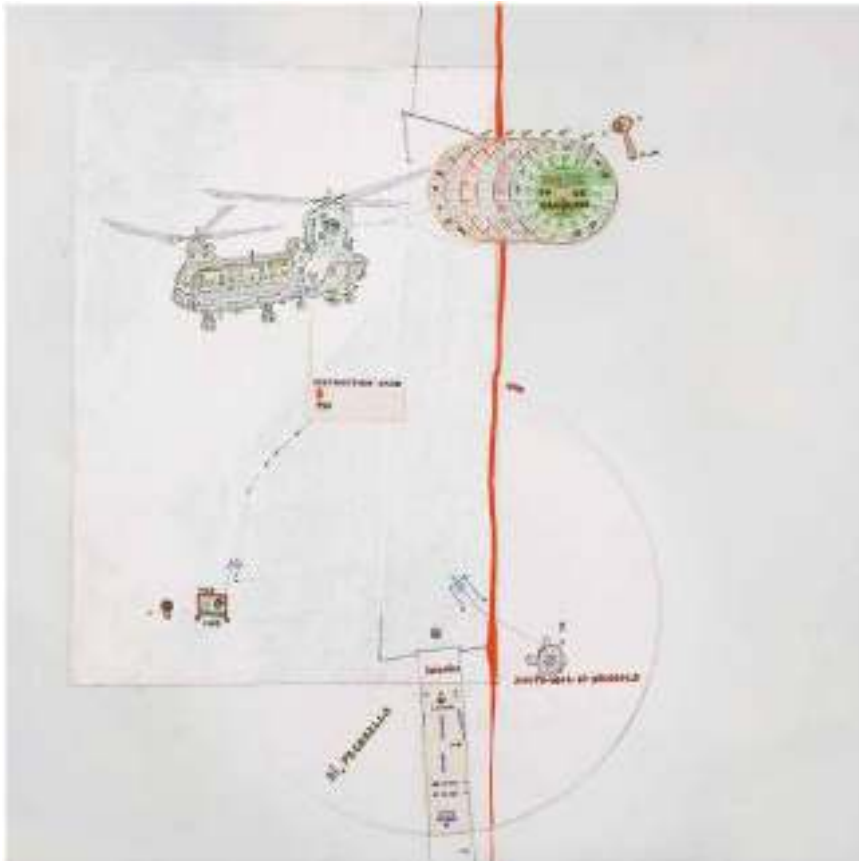
⁵ A Thousand Plateaus, p7

Baruchello's work relates to doodles, graffiti, things scratched into walls, instructions for oneself and symbols which mean something only to their creator. Many of them have the lack of perspective found in children's drawings. I see in these works also something that I might call the 'vertigo of reminiscence'... In some of my work the reverie or remembrance is related to a feeling of losing your sense of placement, of up and down, and of what is near and what is far.

Gilbert Lascault wrote of Baruchello's work: 'Adventures are offered for the eye and for the senses, for princes and vagabonds alike [...] There is no longer a centre; there are no longer boundaries, nor a path to guide you. Each one of us must lose ourselves before finding ourselves again. Each one of us must discover our own itinerary.'⁶

Baruchello makes tracings -he looks at systems as if from above, as if he is crouching over them as their creator. But his works are more truly maps; he shows us systems with many points of entry and no centre, no key to the code. I find this an inspiration. His work is comparable to mine in creating a great and unorthodox network of connections that point outside of themselves – to a vaster territory.

⁶ Gilbert Lascault, *Baruchello ovvero del divenire nomadi* (Baruchello, or Becoming Nomads), Il Chiodo arte contemporanea, Mantua, 1977, in Subrizi, op. cit., p. 75



Gianfranco Baruchello, *Smith-Voce-di-Bambola*, collage, 24 by 16cm

1.3 Architectural drawing, scale and memory



“*La Nuit Tous les Chats Sont Gris*”, 2014, Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 90 x 60cm

“La Nuit Tous les Chats Sont Gris” is a French saying that means both, ‘at night every cat is grey,’ as well as meaning that at night we all fuse into a grey area. In the work is embedded a story about a real cat, told from many points of view, or at all of them at once. It is an image, a section plan and a frontal view all at once. It combines perspectives and skews scales.

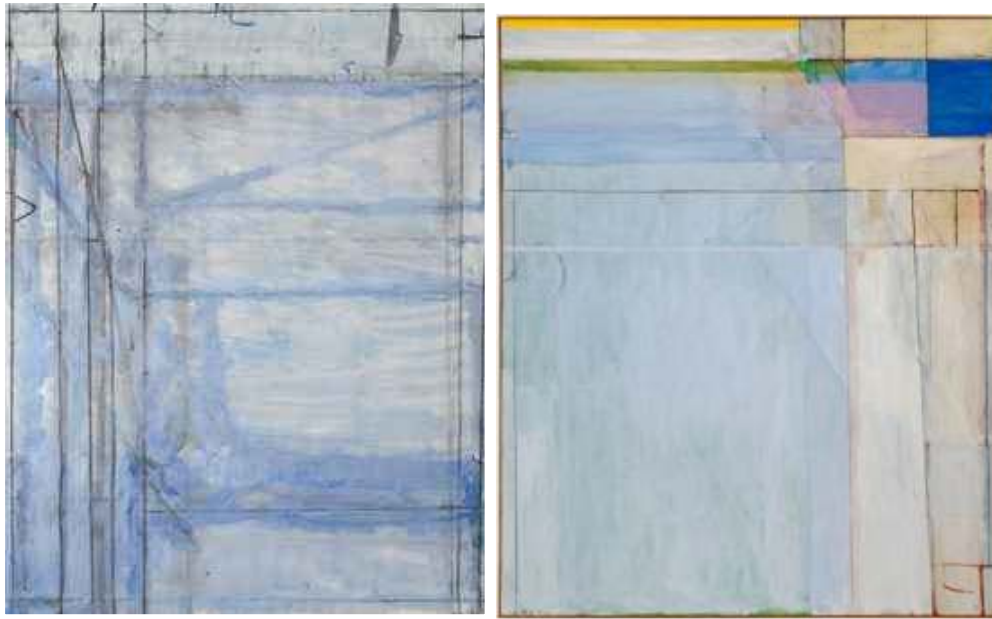
The idea of the section plan is important in this painting, and I think it tells something about the different diagrams one can make of reality. A section plan is an architectural drawing in which a fragment of a building is represented, like a vertical cut through material and space. It can be imagined upon an existing building or be a stage of thinking through a building to come. A section will show parts that would not be connected otherwise. They are not level but seen on the same surface. And yet they often refer to the same system, whether a building, a ground, or the sea. The matter is abstracted and analysed as fragment.

In Proust’s *‘La recherche du temps perdu’*, the network of signs disappears and reappears somewhere else in the book, just like my cat in the surface. My paintings come all at once and grew organically from a germ or seed. The side effect of such methodology is that for a while I have mistaken what drives the work (for example the cat that ran away) with its real aim: to assemble heterogenic elements along a function in order to create a new reality.⁷

1.4 Richard Diebenkorn and the map

Richard Diebenkorn has another relationship to the tracing and the map. His paintings and drawings can look like cartography, as if he is looking at the Californian landscape from above and delimitating sections. But the perspective is not stable, and the way the ‘map’ is created materially introduces doubt, which is often doubt about scale.

⁷ Deleuze and the Diagram, p3



Richard Diebenkorn- Untitled, 1974-77 Ocean Park 54, 1972

In Diebenkorn's Ocean Park series, the painting activity spreads on the whole of the surface. Lines go then separate, conduct and surround the surface while sensual overdrawn marks disturb the precise drawn lines. From clarity to blurriness the eye and the mind wander, looking for a scale and a point to enter. At some point I look at the painting as if I am standing at a high point and I am tracing the lines of the suburban roads and roofs. At another it is as if this is my desk and these are the scratches and splashes of ink that I have made over time.

His work 'scales out' more than it constructs or de-constructs. It is a system that has its own logic and in which the artist works by analogy. It also refers to a painting like Matisse's *Notre Dame* in which the interplay of the different perspectival lines turns a flat surface into a three dimensional volume.

Diebenkorn's work is a diagram of space- it introduces volume into flatness. Diebenkorn's work makes me think in my own work of the confusion of figure and ground, and the map and the reality. I see his influence in my drawings sometimes, when I see moorings in Venice from my window and from above at the same time, and make a stratified drawing which vibrates with different energies. A pillar in Venice has more than one function: it divides the surface and directs the boats, associated with other pillars it creates a virtual line for the eye to follow, also creating primary and secondary avenues for the vaporetto.

The basic elongated pillars would announce a parking spot, as the crafted painted ones the entrance to a special palace. On a larger route they relay electricity - under the water I image the little fishes stick around.



Venice Pillars, 2015, Felt tip on paper, 11 x 15cm

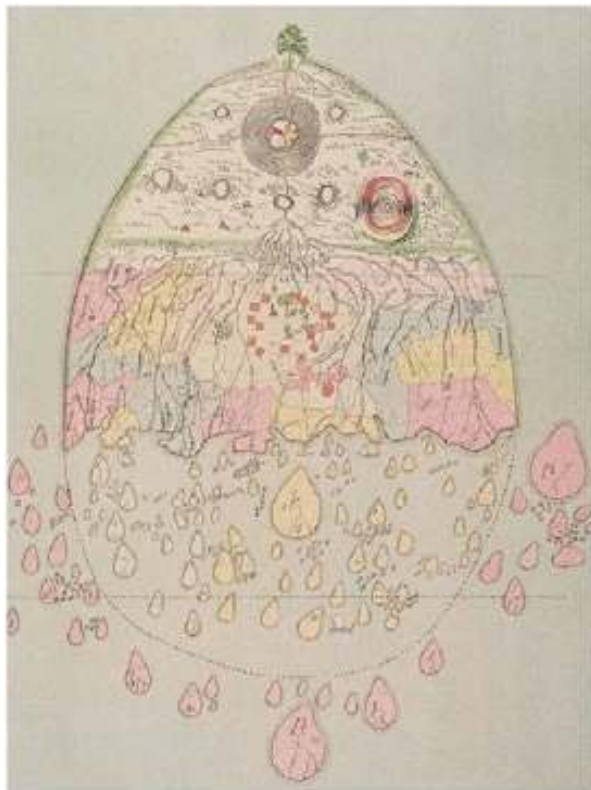
1.5 Scale and Perspective



The child's drawing, like this one I made when I was seven, has some features which survive into my work today. It is seen from above, an image and a function, but when I want to represent something from a different perspective I can also do that. This idea of heterogeneous perspectives also appears in Medieval painting, where people can be bigger

or smaller depending on how important they are to the story, and where figures are made to fit into grand schemes even if they have to be skewed or squashed.

Something related is in this 19th century Burmese map which James Elkins presents in the book 'How To Use Your Eyes'⁸. This is a wonderful example of the interplay between the tracing and the map, in Deleuze's sense. It is a map of the world made under the aegis of a Buddhist cosmology. The form of the diagram takes precedence over the display of information. The world is a breaking egg. But since the map exists in the age of British colonialism, an attempt has been made to conform to the tracing- parts have been divided from each other and coloured in pastel shades, seemingly at random. This is a true diagram which attempts to be something less than it is, a fascinating convergence of two mutually exclusive perspectives.



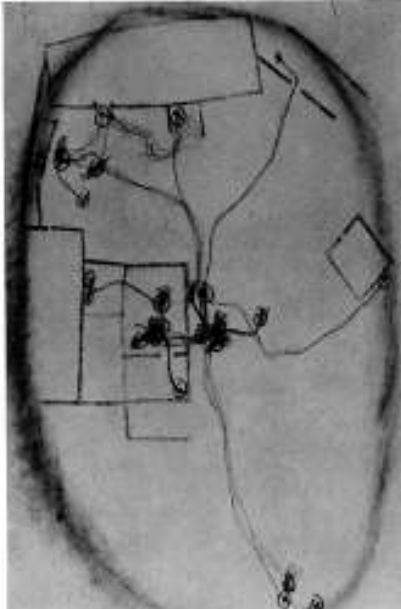
Fernand Deligny, a pioneer and scholar in non-conventional education, worked and lived in the Cevennes with children affected by Autism. In his film 'Ce gamin, la'⁹, Deligny works with Janmari, an autistic boy and seeks a language that reflects the autistic 'way of

⁸ James Elkins, *How To Use Your Eyes*, Routledge, Oxford and New York, 2000, p128

⁹ Fernand Deligny et Renaud Victor, *Ce gamin, la*, Les Films du Carrosse, 1975

being'. In his movie he talks about a 'ligne d'erre' and a 'cerne d'aire', roughly translated as a line of wandering (drift) and a pouch of area (air).

The word 'erre' suggests a boat that is drifting as its engines have turned off- when I paint I pause in such areas of 'erre'; I am adrift, giving myself up to the contingencies of the materials and of the mind's pathways.



Drawing by the child 'Janmari'

In the drawing above there is a large pouch area in which other smaller pouches exist, terminated by a flower shape. An object becomes a "node within a network."¹⁰ The drifting lines and flowers are kept within the pouch. The 'Cerme d'aire', the open egg shape, enables him to start repossessing his reality.

In my work 'Horseshoe/Horseshow' there is a similar attitude to space, surface and mark making, an immediacy in the creation of an enclosure by the 'pouch'. And I have kept the space enclosed within the area of wandering, empty of readable information and suggested activities. It is an open egg shape in which marks of prints can be noticed; the grey surface is a land that provides potentials and possibilities- in this case it is a generalised diagram of memory more than a direct recreation.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews*, New York, Pantheon, 1980

Deleuze writes, ‘Fernand Deligny transcribes the lines and paths of autistic children by means of *maps*... this does not only apply to walking; he also makes maps of perceptions and maps of gestures.’¹¹



Horseshoe/ Horseshow, 2015, Acrylic on linen, 90 x 105cm

Some of the writing in Zdebik’s book that seems to point directly to my work has been in fact about Paul Klee. This quote, for example: ‘Indeed, Klee’s paintings are not just maps or tracings; they are both. And if they are tracings, then they are tracings of a virtual materiality... The play of perspectives makes the painting a diagram because it shows dimensions that seem to come out from a space that is not traced on the canvas.’¹²



Paul Klee, *Landschaft mit Eseln*, 1932, 47 by 60cm

¹¹ A Thousand Plateaus, p224

¹² Deleuze and the Diagram, p89

It is an inspiring way to think about my work, that of tracing a virtual materiality. And that of a space which is not traced on the canvas. The play of perspectives in my work points to a vaster territory of which every diagram is a part.



Going Up (For Example), 2015, 18.5 by 27cm, Acrylic and Felt Tip on Wood

1.6. Tàpies: between the tracing and the abstract machine

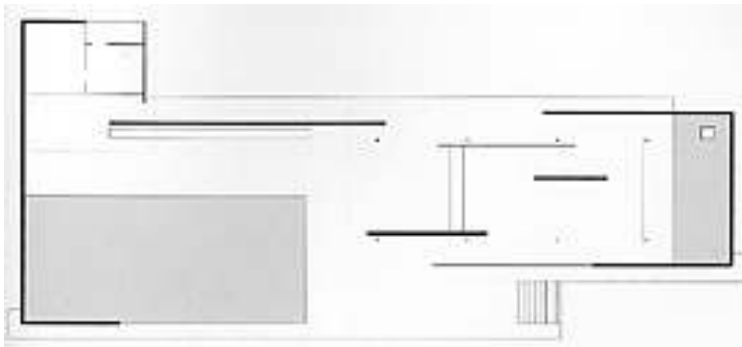
There are certain ‘limit cases’, which I consider to be between the ‘Diagram as Tracing’ and the ‘Abstract Machine’; to contain elements of both paradigms.

In the next section I will talk about Tàpies as making ‘abstract machines’, and how this has influenced my work. Here I write of a work of Tàpies in which it is a floor plan, with a relation to tracing. Perhaps in fact it crosses the boundaries between them.

In Catalan the title means ‘speak, speak’, but in French it means, with a little change, ‘this way, this way’. This is my preferred meaning, for I see this as a floor plan with history, with the white strips of material (bandages?) as interior walls. A younger person may see this as a video game in which you navigate around the walls, controlling a character from above. They might also see it as a side view of floating platforms onto which you jump. But again, one cannot ignore the complexity of the surface, with its stencilled marks and reminders of time. The shapes on the surface even introduce a kind of depth to the surface, as if it is a container.



Parla, parla, 1992



Mies van der Rohe, *Barcelona Pavilion*, floor plan

The same diagram can be a section or a floor plan- what it always shows is the freedom or limits of a space. Structural elements in my work (the Y shape, the bridge, the hopscotch) take on different roles according to different perspectives, the marks of time taking on new forms, and cryptic personal messages sitting in an in-between space. I always start with a tracing- it establishes intention and a connection to material reality and scale. The creative work of mapping sometimes starts within the framework of tracing but it will soon move from those constraints, following new paths along the lines and areas it creates on the surface, evincing a progressive autonomy.

Section 2- The Diagram as Abstract Machine

We have seen in the first chapter that the diagram does not represent an objective world but rather creates a new type of reality. This new type of reality defies reason and constitutes a new cartography. ‘The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality.’¹³

In this chapter I will briefly present Deleuze’s theory of the abstract machine (or diagram) in which content and form unite and crystallize. I will look at my practice and work in relation to this theory as well as its material properties and inspirations. I will look at the notion of assemblage and differentiation in levels of abstraction within my work, other artists’ works and within Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the Rhizome. I will then try to ‘measure’ and ‘qualify’ the gap that exists between the abstracted drawing of the architect and the built reality to further explore the use of sketches, diagrams and ‘conditional painting’ in art practice.



Sprayed marks on Kennington Park Road

In my current artistic exploration I have taken pictures of fragment of places. These photographs are a part of my material; they make me think about painting as a ground and

¹³ A Thousand Plateaus, p142

evaluate the different aesthetic of the diagram, and the possible connection between the abstract and the real. How to name these dots, lines and bright colours? They are aesthetic and functional at once, and I would like my work to sometimes take this form- made for a purpose, a function that can be transformed into art by the viewer.



The diagram on the street- it can be fleeting, like the constellation of lights in the photograph above. It is an arrangement, a diagram of light. Children are chasing after the shapes as if they can be caught. This makes me think that every such diagram is of a temporary state, which is perhaps why the lines of the diagram lead into the past for me.

2.1 Antoni Tàpies - paintings as walls and improper connections.

‘Ecriture sur le mur’ (Writing on the Wall), mentioned in section one, is a painting made by Antoni Tàpies that I have always ‘observed’ from an aerial point of view, and this despite the title chosen by the artist. Made in 1970, the painting demonstrates the artist’s reflection on abstract art as well as on personal experiences with suffering people in the city and of street graffiti. The colours are many greys and earths - above the highly textured and complex juxtaposition of marks, scribbles and scratches sits a very clearly defined diagram which divides and also includes the ground within.



Antoni Tàpies, *Ecriture sur le mur*, oil painting and mixed media on canvas, 270 x 200 cm, 1971



A bridge of lianas in Cote d'Ivoire

I have been also making improper associations between the painting and a bridge of lianas in West Africa and then with the game of hopscotch. This came after another improper connection between the Tàpies work and the Ellsworth Kelly work 'Black Square with Blue'.



Ellsworth Kelly, *Black Square with Blue*, 1970



A sketch made looking at the Kelly work

The improper connection was about the movement one performs in front of this painting, as the eye-level surface leads you upwards and to walk backwards, which then bounces you back and leads you back in again. The blue surface becomes like a full-length mirror, while the black is like a stop sign. The painting therefore makes you do a kind of dance. And I saw, thought and felt all at once: Hopscotch!

The work of Tàpies does more than ‘appear’; this is my thesis. His work is not always satisfying to me. It often seems like easy symbolism, or letting the weight of the materials carry the piece. The work ‘Ecriture sur le Mur’ is special though- it is the one in which I at once saw a diagram instantiated- I saw a vine bridge, a net, a road to be crossed. It seems to be representing some structure from above, as if it is the simplest kind of map. But it does not feel like a map with a mimetic relationship to reality. There is a complex interplay between the lines and the ground- the lines are not drawn onto the ground, but carved, and the ground’s surface is complex and seemingly weathered by time. As if it really is a piece of the earth, or a wall written on in protest.

There is, before all, the sense that the diagram not only induces a journey from the bottom to the top but that the journey might continue within and outside the ground. The diagram always points to a vaster territory, and this diagram leads me to make work about crossing the line, bridging the gap, lines which are carved and lines which float. The entire surface has been scaled down in a movement that goes from macro to micro – an element of dust that has been reopened into the macro across the suspended lines. A diagram has no scale. It could be any ground but a word written on a wall (or on the pavement) is unique and important: it brings a human instant of revolt into the piece.

2.2 Hopscotch as a function

We have looked at the diagram as tracing, with the invisible connective lines in Baruchello’s work and those in the work of Diebenkorn and Tàpies that move in and out the material to organize and nourish the surface within a movement that implies different perspectives.

The diagram of the game of hopscotch is a diagram as tracing, like a map of the world from above. It also has a different perspective; it goes from the Earth to Sky in a movement of flight. The diagram in Deleuze is defined as a function, meaning that the diagram abstracts qualities and links from an arrangement in the world which can then be instantiated in some other form.¹⁴ In the chapter ‘System’ in Zdebik’s book there are three sections that illustrate the fact of the passage of function from one state to another. He presents instances where the function moves from an abstract or conceptual state, to a real, concrete one.¹⁵

Deleuze most famously uses the example of the prison (Foucault’s example) - Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon being a diagram of the function of surveillance, which can be realized in other material structures like schools, hospitals or friendship groups. So when we are thinking diagrammatically about the street games in the photograph below, the friendships and arguments between the children could also be the foundation of a diagram, as well as the white lines on the asphalt. In my work, and in that of Deleuze, the diagram reveals the unexpected systems underlying everything, and the way that different types of information may overlap with each other and branch off from each other.



Arthur Leipzig, *Chalk Games, Brooklyn, 1950*

¹⁴ Deleuze and the Diagram, p1

¹⁵ Deleuze and the Diagram, p24

Clearly, then, the same interconnectedness exists in all games and spheres of life. The difference with hopscotch is its impermanence that makes it inherently abstract. It can happen anywhere, and it takes only a few kids and a chalk to make it happen and to transform the street. Hopscotch is the abstraction drawing of a game and it exists independently of the place in which it sits.



Hopscotch, Linocut print, 40 x 25cm

Deleuze writes that the map is ‘open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.’¹⁶ Here a game that is public is taken into a private sphere of memory, cropped, printed and reversed.

¹⁶ A Thousand Plateaus, p12

2.3 Mind The Gap and new forms of assemblage



Mind The Gap, 2014, mixed media, 2 x 60 by 90cm

This work, 'Mind the Gap', expands further into new materials. Like Dieter Roth's 'table mats', which collected all the stains, tape marks and scribbles from his other work, the upper surface is a cutting mat which has collected stains and splashes from my studio- a record, an object and a painting all at once. There is a gap between this mat and a flat grey surface which was half of a previous split painting.



Dieter Roth, *Tischmatte*, Mixed media on cardboard, 1997—2004

My new idea in this work was to bridge the gap between surfaces with a train track, which brings to life a diagram of a journey I had made while in Liverpool Street Station. I wanted to materialise the function of the journey, to make a painting that was also a journey, to make a game that was also for real... In rhizomatic thinking, all the different parts of the artworks can be recombined to create new roots. Every artwork has many nodules for new growth.

2.4. T Like Thomas: Desire and Assemblage



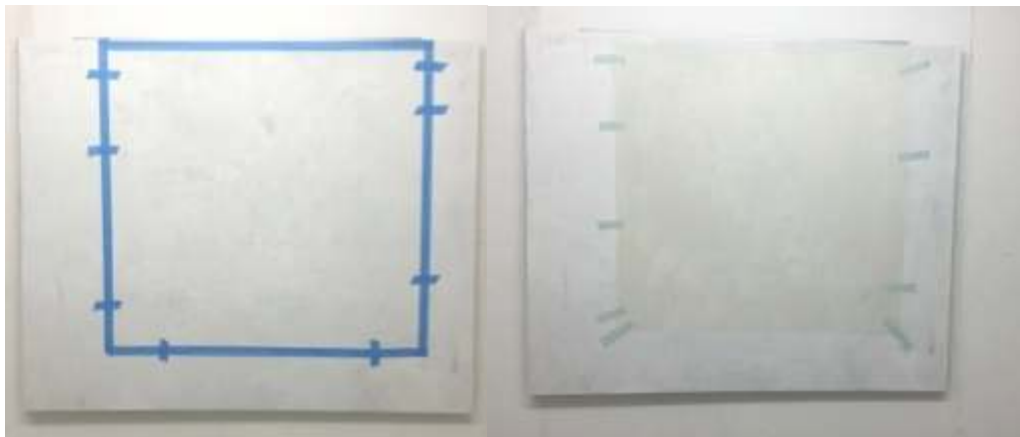
T Like Thomas, Acrylic, masking tape and T square on canvas, 2014

The T in this work stands for the architect's tool, but also for Thomas, my father's surname. The T device here stands as a symbol of the architect, as a visual ratio which divides space and for the passage between a vertical and a horizontal state, as in the movement from seeing the painting on the floor and on the wall.

The painting assembles elements that navigate between the abstract and the concrete. The configuration and superimposition of the painted surface seem to follow a system that is abstract, and reflective only of itself. It looks to the viewer as if there are three semi-transparent layers held there by pieces of tape 'to keep things in place'.

The readymade, juxtaposed with the painted surface, brings something that belongs to the outside world, so it refuses to speak only one material language. The painting's support is a metaphor for the architectural drawing table. In fact it is a little more than a metaphor- it is a diagram that is also an object. So it is a painting and also a drawing table.

What the work communicates: it tells the viewer to move the T, draw a line, I am inviting you to participate, the author has gone, you see. When I say that the author is gone, I mean that while making the work the 'play session' stopped; I made a decision to absent myself, not to impose my floor plan on these layers of absence. It is more about the desire to draw and the end of that desire- the line of desire paused at some point to leave a space for the viewers (including me) and carried on in the painting after this one; it became an open circle of 'becoming'.



Work in progress photographs for *T Like Thomas*

The mood with which I have tried to achieve this piece was very close to acting 'as if for real'. I was setting up my paper and tracing paper on a table to eventually draw a floor plan, create an image. The movement between the floor plan and the wall-bound painting is always interesting for me. All my surfaces are walls but also grounds - we live in between horizontal and vertical planes (the walls of our houses, the walls on the streets, the streets in the town, the virtual walls of our frontiers) and the space we actually live in relates in one way or another to these two positions. There is a relevant quote by Leo Steinberg, from 'The Flatbed': *'There is no law against hanging a rug on a wall, or reproducing a narrative picture as a mosaic floor. What I have in mind is the psychic address of the image, its special mode of imaginative confrontation, and I tend to regard*

*the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture.*¹⁷



Synecdoche, 2015, Acrylic, tape and postcard on canvas, 100 x 120cm



Faire Charette, 2015, Mixed media

¹⁷ Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art*, p61

The white board within the installation 'Faire Charette' is the original surface, in a conceptual sense, for all the other surfaces. It is the 'becoming' of the new works. It is a further extension of the idea of the painting-function. The piece is made from storage units in my studio, still in use, and resembles the carts that used to take the architect's drawings to the academy in 19th century Paris. The piece is an assemblage of different functions which come together to make a new, imaginative function.

*"The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept or the signifier, but the assemblage"*¹⁸ says Deleuze. Deleuzian assemblage is a collective notion. It is something that I try to bring to bear in my work, within and outside the work itself, looking at disparate elements such as affects and events, surface, found object and symbolic object. In my work the assemblage navigates between the abstract and the concrete, as an architect navigates between the sketch and the vision, from the concept to the concrete.

I am interested in the possible relations between architecture and painting in terms of possible relations between the abstract and the real, thinking that it is also where the diagram sits, between the abstract lines of the architectural diagram and the built project.

2.5 Painting Outside of the Rectangle- Painting in the Expanded Field

A part of my work's exploration is of expansion- a rhizomatic expansion outside of the boundaries of the surface support. Many of my works contain linen that flies free of the stretcher, or objects which act as extensions of the stretcher, or stretcher bars which break free of the canvas. I am aware of the many historical debates about the surface support, the recognition of the flat surface in much of early 20th century painting, and numerous attempts to challenge it later by Modernist artists such as Stella or Rauschenberg.

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Dialogues II*, New York, Columbia UP, 2002, p 51



Frank Stella, *Ifafa II*, 1964



Robert Rauschenberg, *Collection*, 1954

The debates of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried about what is essential to painting do not really relate to my work's concerns. My work assembles fragments and a sense of unity results from the work of assembling. It often grows from the inside and forces its way out of the rectangle through the force of its connections. There is a feeling of a logic that holds the work and by extension the viewer's eye. In my work, as in the work of Rauschenberg but not Stella, there is a reciprocal relation between art and life. Each one gives generously to the other.

An example of an idea which reoccurs in my work is the fantasy about a solid base which could support all sorts of reverie in a kind of expanding cloud. One can see this idea in my previous split painting works, and in the diagram shown below.



Diagram for Reverie, 2014



Antoni Tàpies, *Frame covered with plastic*



Jessica Stockholder, *Your Skin in this Weather*
Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume, 2005

Jessica Stockholder is institutionally classified as a sculptor but I see in her work the suppression of the third dimension usually attributed to sculpture. It is painting in an expanded field. It is a function taken from painting and translated into three dimensions. Her objects are constructed out of everyday materials; she does not use paint and canvas but she makes work that enters into the discursive territory of painterly problems, like implied depth. In a sense she makes us see painting where there is not and challenges the definition of painting.¹⁹ In my work the transparency is not a literal but a phenomenal one: it is an inherent quality of organisation that is detached at the very beginning from any connection with matter. Stockholder's way of breaking out of the rectangular boundary seems to concord with my idea of the function being the driving force for the expansion outside of painting's usual limits.

I think that if the artist wishes to expand her work outside of the conventional frame of painting, then this has to come from the wellsprings of the painting; from the function, not as a predetermined form. This idea will return in the next section, about the diagram as a germ of organization from which chaos can grow and find its centre.

¹⁹ Stan Allen, "Painting and Architecture: Conditional Abstractions", *Abstraction: The Journal of Philosophy and Art*, London, March 1995, p64

Section 3 **The Diagram and the Line of Flight**

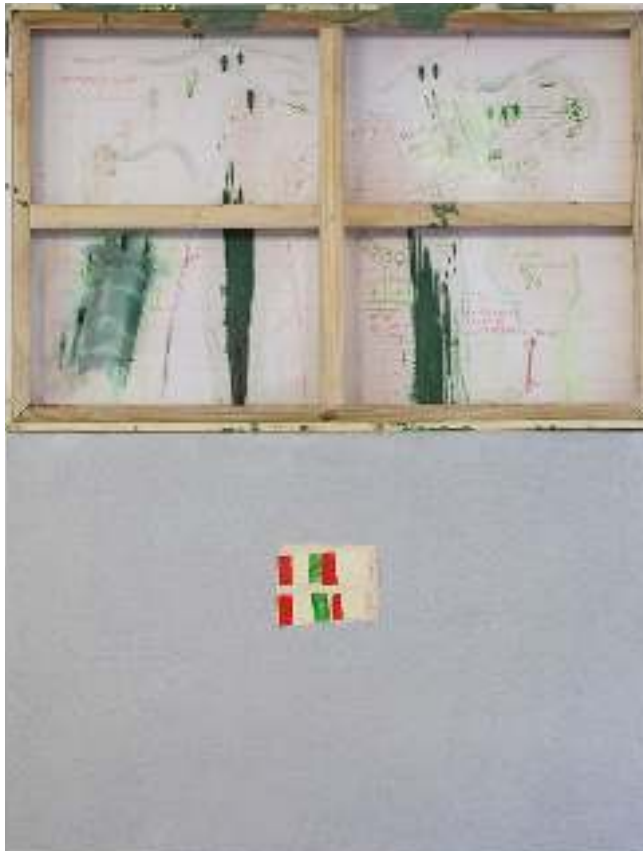
In the first part of this essay, the artists and works examined are creating abstraction from realities in the world, repeating and capturing the complexity of changes, movements and transformations via the different paths of mapping. In the second part the starting point is abstraction, abstraction as the conditions for different realities to emerge, new and outside the confines of meaning. In this last chapter I will look at works in which the two movements would meet, interplay and nourish each other. I will argue that they do not really mix but meet in *desire*, in a rather special definition of that word.

This entire process of desire is described in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the construction of an assemblage. Desire is active, a form of creation. Understood as an assemblage, Deleuze's term underlines the view that desire is experimental and related to an outside.

3.1 Welcome to Pizza Vesuvio – Desire as Assemblage

“There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particules of all kinds. There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individualisation that constitute collective assemblage.”²⁰

²⁰ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p266



Welcome to Pizza Vesuvio, 2015, mixed media, 2 x 60 by 90cm

Welcome to Pizza Vesuvio is a painting in which back and front, far and close, smooth and rough are reunited, in the actual sense and in the metaphorical. It is a painting and an object both at once. We see here a flat surface that has been deconstructed, or an assemblage if we think in terms of sympathies, not juxtaposition and formal tension.

*'It is a multiplicity which is made of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes relation between them, across ages, sexes and reigns, different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: It is a symbiosis: a sympathy.'*²¹

It is a painting through which I have re-activated and materialised a desire; a desire of closeness between my son and myself. I have stuck a drawing made by my son while he was little (an Italian flag), and have written on the surface above messy scribble about events from the past; a past where both were separated. And then there are green shapes that are suggestive of trees and lines that indicate routes - going up. Close and far are reunited in a childlike or medieval landscape. As often with my work, the writing functions

²¹ Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p69

as any other lines, helping hand and thoughts to move around the surface without communicating literally.

It is important here to briefly explain how desire in Deleuze's theory differs from the Hegelian/Lacanian notion of desire, which derives from a lack, an internal lack or as a process whose goal is dissolution in pleasure (addiction, sexuality). Against this alliance Deleuze describes desire as a 'construction of a plane of immanence in which desire is continuous'.²² For Deleuze desire is fully positive and to desire is to construct an assemblage- what we desire is not an object but a field of connections: "*The assemblage is always collective which brings into play within us and outside us population, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events*"²³

The American philosopher C. S. Peirce's description of desire is slightly different from Deleuze's because it includes the notion of wish and will. C.S. Peirce explains that in order to answer a question about wishing for a thing, a human being resorts to abstract observation: 'He makes in his imagination a sort of skeleton diagram, or outline sketch, of himself, considers what modification the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in that picture, and then examines it, that is, observes what he has imagined, to see whether some ardent desire is there to be discerned.'²⁴ So, as in Deleuze, to desire is to create a new state of things.

In my work, the 'narrative' has an intensity that varies- it is a material like paint or wood. It never condenses into a concrete image or expression of a feeling, there is no time and no desire for it. The bridge that I am constantly crossing from the abstract to real is a bridge made of continuous desire. And it can be crossed either way: From the new reality that I am creating to a past that has no matter and no form - from a container (my head or a surface) filled by marks, places and things, to the assemblage of the elements in a purified abstract machine.

²² Adrian Parr (ed), *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010, p71

²³ Dialogues, p69

²⁴ Deleuze and the Diagram, p15

3.2 History of a Picnic: A Germ of Organisation within Chaos.

There are other ways to reach a sense of the real than to proceed by pure assemblage. With the painting 'History of a Picnic', I have composed a game and organised the different elements; I have played for real, like with 'T Like Thomas', but this time the game was not planned: it comes out of chaos.



History of a Picnic, mixed media on canvas, 80 x 100 cm, 2015

The work is highly textured and painted with a dominant earthy colour that is like a dusty brown. On the upper corner of the painting is a piece of kitchen roll paper decorated with flower designs. The same paper covers other areas of the work but then most often mixed and assimilated with the paints. There are bits of pink, gold and silverfish colours that contrast with the matt brown.



Work on *Picnic* in progress

Unlike the works in the previous sections, with this work I had no foresight into what I was going to create. It came out of a struggle. I remember well the beginning, when I placed three plates on the surface, as if I was setting a table for three people, thinking partly of my family. Then it went ugly, stupid but I did not care, I was playing for real, adding red for jam, brown for chocolate, wiping the dirt with the kitchen roll paper, then I decided that one was eating something like pork and needed more paper, these kinds of things.

During the process I tried not to look at the whole work too much, and keep busy with the setting. I was somehow making a painting-reality. At some point there was no reason to carry on, all was in place, all had been done, I could leave and contemplate from a farther distance the history of a fantasy. And I was exhausted, like at peace after war. It was “*a whole Rhizomatic labour of perception, the moment when desire and perception meld.*”²⁵

In his book ‘Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation’, Deleuze explains what is at work in the diagram in the context of painting.²⁶ The example he gives comes from Francis Bacon’s *Painting (1946)*, in which a shadowy figure with a Mussolini face, flanked by two sides of beef, sits under an umbrella. In his interview with Sylvester, Bacon says that he was attempting to make a bird alighting. “The umbrella suggested an opening-up into another area of feeling altogether. And then I made these things: I gradually made them. So

²⁵ A Thousand Plateaus, p283

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*

that I don't think the bird suggested the umbrella: it suddenly suggested this whole image. And it carried it out very quickly, in about three or four days"²⁷.

Here is the diagram as a germ of transformation, and from it emerge a series of accidents 'mounting one on top of another'²⁸ Bacon does not follow a diagram-function as in the works where I 'play for real' but follows another kind of graph in which a prime idea is somehow lost, then found again, as if re-visited in a different form. I would say that we have in common the faith of the adventurers, who, lost in the middle of nowhere, see within marks on the ground, the alignment of the birds in the sky, the suggestion of a route.



Black Box, 2015, Perspex box and prints on paper, 50 by 90cm

²⁷ David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact : Interviews with Francis Bacon*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1987, p11

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, p126

I believe that this work, *Black Box*, combines many of the themes of this essay. It is a map, an abstract machine and also an assemblage of desire. It is an assemblage in which a white surface imprinted with Y stamps shows more difference the higher one looks- there is a top to the work but no end. There is no beginning either; the black box might be the past, where things usually come from, or the future, which we cannot know. There are no memories attached to it: it is just a fact that time passes and transforms the child into an old person, a daughter into a mother. The black box makes me think about the black box of the missing aeroplane that contains a 'block of history', a real one.

We are navigating among signs here, a bit like Proust in his great novel. For Deleuze *La Recherche* is encyclopaedic because it contains a large amount of heterogeneous material, and also because of the progression of learned experience. For Deleuze, Proust's book describes the progress of an apprenticeship.²⁹ And the progress through life is manifest in a network of signs that intermingles many different domains, stepping back and forth in time and in the book itself. Nicola Luckhurst quotes the novelist Italo Calvino's statement on *La Recherche*: "The reason (for which Marcel Proust could not put an end to his novel) was that the work grew denser and denser from the inside through its own organic vitality"³⁰ Additionally, I would posit that for Proust it is the state of desire (as continuously active and of constant intensity) that allows him to slip along different paths in time and space- to break apart the bonds of things.

And there is, therefore, a process of 'looping' that is happening in my work. Objects in the real world trigger desire which turns them into abstract diagrams. These diagrams can be applied in different circumstances and materials- they are a function. The function is translated into the past and then paths are opened up in all directions, into the future.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 1964, (tr. George Brazillian, third ed), 2008, p25

³⁰ Nicola Luckhurst, *Science and Structure in Proust's A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p199

Conclusion- The Diagram That Leads Forward – A Line of Flight

Throughout *A Thousand Plateaux* Deleuze and Guattari describe how things connect rather than how they 'are'. I have shown, through their writings as well as using specific examples in the field of painting, that art (starting from my own) is not so much about representation as about possibility. Art and signs evolve in creative mutation, rather than in the re-production of the past.

Deleuze talks often about 'lines of flight'. The line of flight is a path of mutation that somehow precipitates during the making of the work. It conveys the actualisation of connections that were only implicit (like thoughts, feelings or memories) - constant movement into new territory. *'Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities.'*³¹ The surface acts and responds to the new powers released; the assemblage along the line of flight is territorial (it keeps the connection within the territory) but goes also beyond and is transformed through lines of deterritorialisation. In the abstract machine as well as in process of mapping the line of flight fosters actions, passions reacting to painting, brushstrokes, moving toward the surface, moving backwards, looking. On the other hand it is an assemblage of incorporeal transformations and statements attributed to the work; what it is, what it is made of; different meanings emerge through the 'reading' of the assemblage.

My found objects flow on a line of deterritorialisation and bring the work and the viewer together, somewhere outside the work, and actualise new connections. Since I am making diagrammatic work I have noticed similar diagrams, in the street, in books, in other artists' work, bringing the world into my studio and my work into the world. In that sense I will say that my work is a mediator, not an end. It is many different things that are materialised, paused, crystallised in the surface. The surfaces will remain in its nature unchanged but will generate a multiplicity of different experiences. I am an artist and also a viewer amongst other viewers. The work expands through the force of its connections and its assemblage, the rhizome growing into the future.

³¹ *A Thousand Plateaux*, p9

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