

FATA MORGANA

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Sol Hashemi
Martin Katzoff
Natalie Purschwitz
Xan Shian
Dion Smith-Dokkie

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Introduction

Marina Roy

All fixed, fast-frozen relations with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life ...¹

In November 1902, the Russian ship *Zarya* was locked fast in the frozen waters of the Laptev Sea. Four men disembarked and walked in the direction of an island that was clearly located on a map (Sannikov Land, 74.3° N, 140° E). Expecting the island to manifest at any moment, the explorers pressed on, jumping from ice floe to ice floe. But the island never appeared, and the men disappeared, never to be found. Two prior Arctic expeditions had sighted an island there, the first time in 1811 by Yakov Sannikov, the other in 1886 by Baron Eduard von Toll. They had only ever viewed the island from the ship. They trusted the eyewitness perspective registered on cartographic records, not once considering the possibility of a wondrous optical phenomenon, known to occur in Arctic conditions, happening at that very same location seventy-five years apart – a Fata Morgana projecting onto their retinas, the image of a distant island existing in altogether distant coordinates.

The phenomenon is rare but manifests itself when the chilly air above a cold sea has a warmer layer of air above it. This temperature inversion causes an atmospheric duct to be produced that acts like a refracting lens. Light rays bounce off a distant object, bending as they pass through the colder air to create an illusion of a floating world at the horizon.

The world is full of invisible forces that can create illusions of difficult to ascertain causes, and therefore risk wreaking havoc. Unusual celestial phenomena and freak weather patterns can change the course of history. Before there were scientific means to record such temperature inversions, sailors were abandoned to their imaginations – such visions were attributed to spirits or witchcraft, believed to be luring them toward death. However,

the *Zarya's* failed expedition at this juncture in history points more to a benumbing to enchantment. One would have expected a familiarity with such climactic expressions by generations of seafaring explorers before. One could therefore read this misinterpretation metaphorically, as an instance of nature's revenge against capitalist-colonial impulses. But it is perhaps more than that. At the time, no one suspected nature being capable of tricking "rational" courageous explorers, making them fall prey to illusion. It was as if the age of magic and myth had been obliterated from the collective unconscious. *Fata Morgana* could neither be embodied as illusion nor as belief system. The only thing their colonial desire could understand was that this mirage was *terra incognita*.

We know that there are things we do not know. These things we do not know confirm the independent reach of ontology outside and beyond what our current epistemologies allow us to understand – indeed they are the continuing condition of an ever changing and more refined epistemology. What things are, how they connect with each other, what relations exist between them may be beyond our capacities for knowing at any moment in history: this in no way lessens what there is. Indeed these limits add an ethical and political dimension to the processes of knowing: they signal what is funded, supported, normalized as a research paradigm. They also signal how new forms of knowledge may be developed, new paradigms can emerge that may address what exists quite differently, even, perhaps, in incommensurable terms. It is because ontologies have ethical and political—as well as aesthetic and cultural – resonances that they provide limits and obstacles, an outside, to epistemological frameworks. Ontologies have ethical and political implications in the sense that they make a difference to how we live and act, what we value, and how we produce and create.²

Wonder is creeping back into our lives, a new historical materialism, beyond the dancing wood tables,³ beyond the phantasmagorias conjured by invisible hands. New islands are appearing, floating above the horizon, in defiance to the false promises of past colonial exploits. For it was in wresting all the magic from the world that capitalism was able to cast its own spell – an infernal new order where beings were led down the garden path and abandoned to an unspeakable fate. Entangled life worlds were traded for a never-attainable mirage – elusive powers guided multitudes toward a fictional land of plenty founded on a gagged nature and a slave labour. Everything that mattered was translated by objective, positivist forces into a new language, new names, and duly recorded ... The extent of the destruction now settling in, we are tasked with surfacing what has been buried and silenced. The world is never (re)written once and for all.

There are other invisible forces. Dark matter dominates the universe. We have become unwitting hosts to the zoonotic spillover of fast mutating viruses and antibiotic resistant bacteria. Some forces are hidden or disavowed, resulting in devastating effects such as climate change and mass species extinction. Suddenly we wake up to how our actions are implicated in how everything has come to be. How do we envision new ways of living and cooperating with organic and inorganic life, to bring about a future different from the present? Our beings are tentacular and entangled, part of a vast network of interconnectivity with things known and unknown ... Sometimes it is only through the creation of artifice that new future relations can be expressed, intuited, envisioned, and tested. What new technologies and art paradigms will best contribute toward the greater good of all entangled life forms?

For a long time, we were directed to follow conceptions of progress, discovery, and production increasingly grounded in relations of alienation. Art was, by no means, exempt from such relations, nor are they now – all that came to be recognized was eventually tethered to that umbilical cord of gold ... How do we develop an art based in new understandings and a new ethics by which to live? We are witness to a new generation of artists grappling with this urgent issue. Every moment teeters at the fulcrum of an unknowable future, with so much at stake in terms of liveability, diversity, and equity. It is more urgent than ever that we engage critically and with great sensitivity and care toward collective new forms of productivity, aesthetics, and ethics, and to ask, for whom and for what do they serve?

I thank this year's MFA visual art cohort, Sol Hashemi, Marty Katzoff, Natalie Purschwitz, Xan Shian, and Dion Smith-Dokkie, for igniting these questions/thoughts in my mind – through the sustained dialogue we've engaged in together and through the artwork they've produced, which have offered new critical perspectives toward a more magical thinking in the face of turbulent presents and hazy futures.

1 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 223

2 Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 4.

3 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1990), 163-64.

SOL HASHEMI

Thought-images for Sol Hashemi's Technical Objects

Rosamunde Bordo

Emerging out of Sol Hashemi's everyday encounters and activity are strange mood and consciousness-altering objects, photographs, and beverages – inventive and imaginative while sometimes deceptively mundane. Similarly embodying this sensibility is a wild yeast called *Saccharomyces paradoxus*, an undomesticated relative to the baker and brewer's yeast. *Saccharomyces paradoxus* is a sugar fungus that is contrary to expectation, *paradoxical, marvelous, and strange*.

"Images and evolution!" – an old sticky note in Sol's handwriting in Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire*. It's stuck beside Pollan's reflection that his choice to plant a particular potato was determined by the persuasive images in a seed catalogue. For a species to be photogenic and attractive to humans is a good survival tactic.

Alchemy is a process of transformation and creation that is magical-scientific. Fermentation as alchemy: life invisibly emerges from mush. Humans partnered with yeast for thousands of years before the magical force that brought life to wet grain became visible through microscopes. Humans and magic yeast are in a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship. Brewer's yeast is vital for research in molecular biology because of the similarity between yeast's cellular organization with that of more complex organisms. In 1996, brewer's yeast became the first fully mapped genome, leading to the international Human Genome Project. In 1968, Hitachi released its Magic Wand. Marketed as a product to massage sore muscles, it quickly became an iconic symbol of female sexual independence after artist/sex educator Betty Dodson popularized it in the 1970s as a vibrator. The Wand symbolized the reclamation of both female sexual pleasure and magic. Vexing to many is Hitachi's enduring silence on this topic.



Sol Hashemi, *Prospero's Wand*, 2021, beverage. Courtesy of Gaia

Recently, the artist-photographer used grow lights in the gallery to assist the growth of his colleague's art. Indoors, photosynthesis is possible through the absence of green light; plants thrive under the pink LEDs because they isolate blue and red light. Chartreuse is a neon green hue produced naturally by the chlorophyll of 130 plants, herbs, and flowers distilled in wine alcohol. Both the colour and liqueur are named after the order of ascetic monks who produce this medicine based on a recipe by an unknown alchemist, originally called the "Elixir of Long Life."

Often, the ingestion of psychedelics is felt to be ego-dissolving. The temporary sensation of an egoless *seeing* and *being* in the world offers lessons that endure far beyond the trip. Psychedelic experiences are also possible without the use of drugs, as with meditation, lucid dreaming, and art. *As process, the artist-photographer would sit for hours and stare at objects, picturing their history of motion in his mind's eye as they moved without human intervention, in and out of the space and all at once.*

To keep the mind open to perceiving the ideas and forms of nature, Goethe advised an approach to scientific research that applied imagination, empathy, and intuition to empirical observation. He called this a "delicate empiricism." In observing natural phenomena he writes, "if I ... inquire into its creation, and follow this process back as far as I can, I will find a series of steps."² Through this process, object and subject dissolve as "empirical observation finally ceases, intuitive perception of the developing organism begins."³ Through practicing empathic observation, we begin to receive nature itself as idea, and as we develop our intuition, *seeing becomes beholding.*

The artist-photographer's idiosyncrasies are in his photographs. *Slideshow memories from a recent exhibition: hops on bed, fig studded cake, hoses, hives, stacks of Tupperware, pot on the stove, jam. Accumulation without cumulation. Fragments of everyday life – but not exactly.* Each photograph itself is an experiment. And each photograph-experiment documents another kind of experiment. *Experimentation as mediator.*

After closing one eye long enough, everything appears flatter. Stereo vision gives us the ability to perceive depth. Re-opening the eye offers a moment of appreciation for re-immersion inside the world. *I can rotate the photographed objects 360° on the screen: an oak gall, the swan-like sculpture with \$10 in toonies, a terracotta pot with soil & dollar bill, and a water glass with radial leaves of an azalea.*⁴ *Sol tells me that these photo-objects are placeholders for a website. Even so, I pick an object. I rotate the gall, clockwise and counter. With eyes shut, I concentrate on the image in my mind. I will try to trace its history. Beginning with the image on screen, I move backwards to the website coding, the photographic process, and everything I must visualize until I arrive at the wasp larvae.*

- 1 Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire* (New York: Random House, 2002), xv, Sol Hashemi Post-it note.
- 2 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Studies for a Physiology of Plants [A Schematic Fragment]," in *Scientific Studies*, ed./trans. Douglas Miller (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1988), 75.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Sol Hashemi, <http://www.objecthistoryawareness.org/>

MARTIN KATZOFF

Matthew Ballantyne

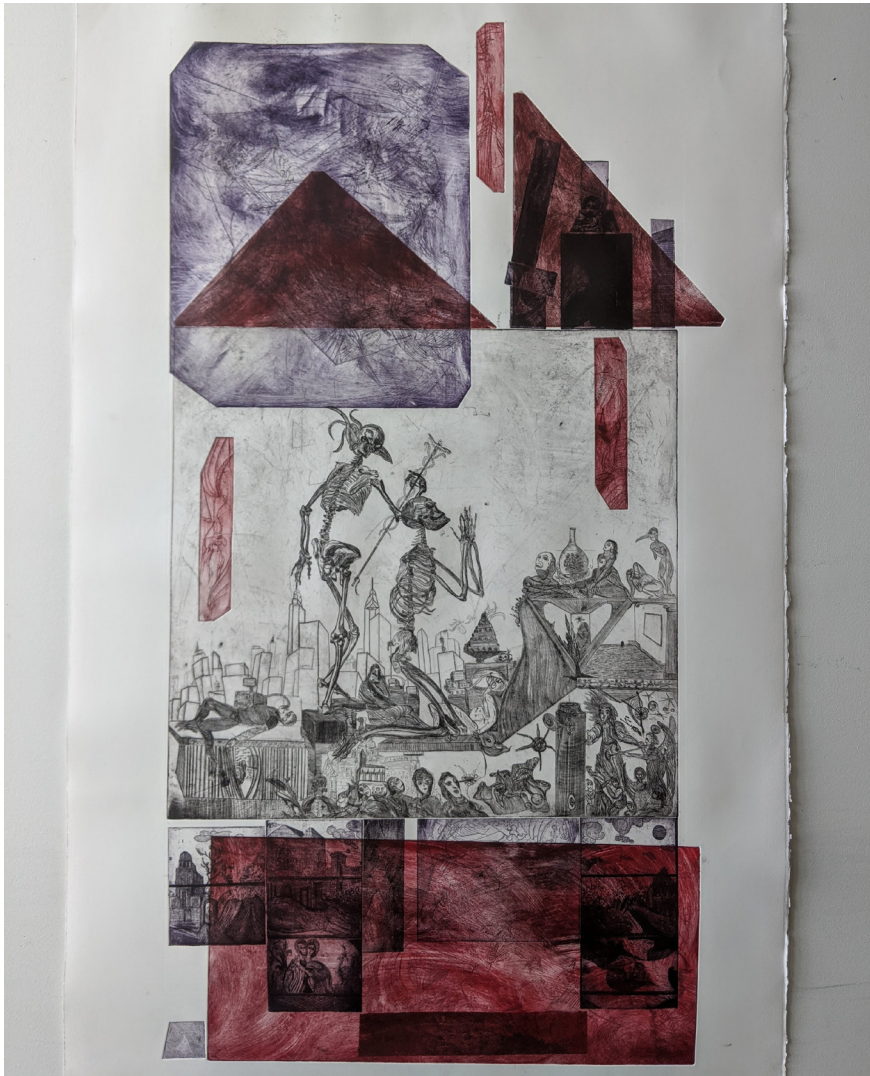
Is what most people call mysticism an escape from reality or a means of entry into it with greater intensity ... Does it make life more interesting, or less?

-Peter Cole ¹

Marty Katzoff is trying to make life more interesting however he can. He is a painter, a printmaker, a writer, and a conversationalist. Everything he does is born of the same necessity. Seeing his output gives one a sense of an artist who knows that time is valuable and that making a record of experience is a priority. His collection of influences is dizzying – he is as comfortable speaking about Jewish mysticism as he is about rap beefs. When he turns his attention to something, it consumes him completely, as evidenced by the abundance of ink in his skin.

Katzoff is neither insider nor outsider. He's not naïve, nor is he cynically knowing. "Irony plays for a draw,"² writes poet Michael O'Brien. Adam Zagajewski casts a net wider: "Some authors flog consumerist society with the aid of irony; others continue to wage war against religion; still others do battle with the bourgeoisie. At times irony expresses something different – our flounderings in a pluralist society. And sometimes it simply conceals intellectual poverty. Since of course irony always comes in handy when we don't know what to do."³ There is an *irony* in Zagajewski's idea, as just as often, when we don't know what to do – we look to God, hoping he plays for more than a draw.

In earnestly seeking, Katzoff tries to connect to something beyond himself. Looking back to ancient civilizations, holy texts, alchemy, dead languages, and so much paint, charcoal, and printed material along the way, his goal is not to divine a harmonious worldview, but to intensify one; he attempts to cut through to what is vital and persisting across cultures, time, and geography. His endeavour can't work if *fitting in* becomes a preoccupation. As a result of his points of departure, and handling of materials, his work can often feel alien from many of the contexts it finds itself in. It doesn't ape fresh-off-the-copier human resource materials or performatively shout back at the fever dreams of 24-hour news



Martin Katzoff, *Elude sequence four*, 2021, etching on paper, 146.1 x 99.1 cm. Courtesy of the artist

cycles. Its concerns are located *elsewhere*. Refreshingly so.

The ease of thinking through Katzoff's work only in terms of ironic pastiche is a disservice to the work, and to the artist. While there is often a surface of quotation, Katzoff's work is not interested in rote recycling of forms for the sake of playful citation or a position in a pantheon. Instead, I suggest *syncretism* as an imperfect guidebook. Katzoff is the product of these convergences in the bleed between ideological and aesthetic hybrids, attempting to reveal new amalgamations that serve him presently in making sense of the past and the future. The difference between pastiche and syncretism for Katzoff is the sincerity of intention with which the latter is approached. Katzoff's art often uncomfortably makes known its reverence, wonderment, and ardour for the drives that have directed its creation. It isn't cool and detached; it's celebratory; it affirms whimsey and mystery. For Katzoff, intuitive application of paint or dextrous control of an etched line in a copper plate is a numinous affair; it's a sacred interface – not replacing ritual or ceremony but enlarging them. The worlds Katzoff evokes and aspires to are not reducible to what can be tallied, known, or decided by consensus.

The critical distaste towards the anodyne individualisms of so much unexamined spirituality and New-Age writ large feels entirely reasonable. This said, artists are not scientists, or logicians, or epistemologists. To stick *all* spiritual inclinations in the same sack and ignore them outright is to abandon a journey because of a badly drawn map. That cynical reaction disregards the endless ways to orient ourselves toward the world, and the ever-new maps to be drafted of an unfixd, rapidly shifting territory.

- 1 Peter Cole, *Hymns & Qualms: New & Selected Poems and Translations* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017).
- 2 Michael O'Brien. *Sills: Selected Poems 1960-1999* (Norfolk: Salt Publishing, 2009).
- 3 Adam Zagajewski. *A Defense of Ardor: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

NATALIE PURSCHWITZ

Divinations & Translations (for NP)

Sheryda Warrener

What is a grid?

graft a
poetic idea
onto space

a constellation of live
objects in a house of memory

infernal touching
missions

the hard gardening
of knowing

I was a shape
but one where everything inside me
was in motion

windcrossed

What is a grid?

Grafting poetic ideas onto space: a constellation of creatures in a house of memory. Slicing through the wind. A touch of hell's mission. I was one in spite of my form. Where everything within me was moving within me. A gesture of care and reparation. An arcane garden of the unknowable.

What makes a still life?

it's a very
modern feeling

phantoms and dead batteries

taking the lids off
all things lidded

moment of transformation

a long time to arrive
from not very far away
loosen its graceful sweep
threads that fall
into each other and encourage
mutual sparkling

What makes a still life?

Phantom death cell. Lidded bird without a lid. One's blueprint comes loose. Threats are avenged and banter is exchanged. I was out of shape and all who inspired me were out of shape. A discrete feature. Notes on the human field. A monument of translation. A distant future not far off. Confluence of threads.

What can a garment upend?

an ancient
category
beautiful green possibilities
without interruption
disconnects between
signals
a ribband of blue
woven into the fringes

What can a garment upend?

Anti-disaster: beautiful green possibilities in the midst of intolerance. Signal to noise ratio. Ribbons weathering on the edge.

What can a hand tie together or tend to?

weird, elusive organizing openings
that the material presents
the closely monitored palette
an element of 1980s kitsch, a vulgar
pink for example

mulching around not knowing
fragrance widens under a hemline
the marks construct an instant
of nature gradually

What can a hand tie together or tend to?

Natural green installations dominate the market. A kind of trivialization. Electric Kitsch, Fragile Pink, extra multi-incense notes. A fragile winter under the hemisphere. Weaving in and out of the direction of the elements. Granny knot. A granular mauve. Cloth pattern a picture for colouring in. A point constitutes a moment by degrees.

What can a net catch or release?

debris, from
debriser: to break apart
the eros of lyric is coherence
the fairest order
in the world is a heap of
random sweepings
shapes are how
you make distinctions, get
the lay of the land,
or even tell time
body as geological
record: strata, rock, action
synchronized, harmonized, hands,
hair, pouring, standing, music, sleep,
wind, seeds, dirt, shale

What can a net catch or release?

There is a confluence of verbal errors. Recursive order is a random sweep. Form is the embodiment of distance. The last lantern announces the time. Constructive geology: layers, work, fluctuations. Fine dust. Combined voices pouring out the underlying music. Seeds of wind, impurities, volcanic ash.



Natalie Purschwitz, *Unknown Variables* (detail), 2021, mixed-media installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

Process Notes

"*Divinatio*, in the ancient art of the oracle, was the gift of prophesying the future by observing bird migrations and interpreting dreams," writes Judith Schalansky. I sought out my own divinatory sources to consult while thinking about Natalie Purschwitz's work and practice, summoning books by poets and artist-writers that I thought would offer insights, slippages and surprising discoveries. I spent several mornings asking the books questions, one by one, opening to a random page and noting down whatever fragment struck me in the moment. I assembled the fragments loosely into poetic forms and began to impose various translation experiments, as if passing language through a net several times to see what might slip away and what might catch.

Writers summoned, in order of first appearance: Lara Mimosa Montes, *Thresholds*; Renee Gladman, *Calamities*; Dara Wier, *You Good Thing*; Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses*; Amy Sillman, *Faux Pas*; Mary Ruefle, *My Private Property*; Anne Carson, *Plainwater*; Sawako Nakayasu, *Some Girls Walk into the Country They Are From*; Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*; C.D. Wright, *The Poet, the Lion, Talking Pictures, El Farolito, a Wedding in St. Roch, the Big Box Store, the Warp in the Mirror, Spring, Midnights, Fire & All*; and Heraclitus via Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*.

The poetry and poetics of Mónica de la Torre and Sawako Nakayasu inspired the translation experiments, which included running the poems as texts through the predictive and text replacement features on my phone, and then using free online tools to translate from English to Japanese and back into English. I'm indebted to Valentina Desideri and Denise Ferreira da Silva for introducing me to this mode of divination in the first place.

XAN SHIAN

Skin to Skin

Marilyn Bowering

In a house in a wood near a cove on Vancouver Island, the minister who married her parents in the same living room beside the fireplace, reads a Celtic Baptism. Her family, godparents and friends stand in a circle. Each holds her a moment to speak a wish for her wellbeing. Her poet/wiccan godfather names and blesses her in the old way with earth, water, fire, and salt 'by the power of Love, Light and Truth.' It is a beginning woven of Gaelic, Celtic, and folkloric beliefs, a family legacy of light and dark. At the cove, midden shells wash onto the foreshore. When she is older, she watches seals from the rocks there, and swims out to them.

*...a face swimming up/through the sea doors; a human being in the rain/
crouched and searching,/just emerged from the sand (Marilyn Bowering, 2019)*

A place of transformation in Scottish Gaelic folklore is the threshold, the literal step at the door of a dwelling entry. Forbidden to compose verses either indoors or out, the seventeenth-century Scottish Gaelic poet Mary Macleod defied erasure by composing there, signifying that creativity was a gift of liminality and belonged only to the locale of communication between worlds. In *Threshold*, a book Xan Shian and I made together, her analogue photographs contextualize my words and Mary's life through images of Scottish landscapes that free the photographs of relative time. As metaphors, the photographs provide a ground from which the poetry spins, a conceptualization born of heritage and lived experience – hope and witnessing.

Xan Shian's installation at the Polygon Gallery (2020 Lind Prize Shortlist Exhibition) occupies a corner space. Light flickers over ocean water projected onto glass, tracks vanishing and returning to and from an invisible source. Her hands appear in salt-encrusted photographs. In one, her palm cups a mussel pearl and becomes its shell. In another, they hold a tiny frog, arrested between forms. In both, the artist's skin is in contact with non-human accreting/sloughing skin. Other artefacts are caught at a raised "tideline" from which slip-cast mussel shells spill; all are transforming through mediation by water



Xan Shian, *See the shapes you were*, 2021, latex, biodegradable netting and salt blocks, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

and salt. People pause at the perimeter of the space before entering. One young man approaches and crouches in the centre. The work is a re-creation of the threshold itself, the transition zone between the domestic and the elemental in negotiation with human intrusion into the wild and the unknown.

Liminal spaces appear in all cultures, places accessed by intuition, heritage and perhaps by what Xan Shian references as the assistance of “unknown wights.” You cannot live with a forest and not sense this, or walk a foreshore in bare feet and not absorb it. To wear human skin is to take on biological and cultural complexity. The skin, literally and metaphorically in her work, receives, transmits and interprets – it is its own threshold between body and world.

Recently, Xan Shian's transition zone has become more tidal, concerned with fluidity of life and death through stages of dissolution and re-creation. The bhean-nighe of Scottish folklore, the washerwoman foreteller/midwife of transition passages, is embodied in artefact. A video shows a linen shroud cut to the shape of the artist's body, tumbling in sea-wash. The foreshore is that of the artist's upbringing, her place of negotiation with transformation. Extracted and hung on a steel structure, the shroud recalls the living body's absence, its "housing" as temporary. Iron plates left through turnings of the tides are retrieved to dissolve on a gallery floor. Cement and latex castings are additional body artefacts, shadows of presence and absence where living things discover and uncover identity. One state yielding to another.

I slip behind rocks to remove my skin/ it gathers around my feet (Xan Shian, 2020)

In Xan Shian's work, the foreshore/threshold continues as metamorphic locus; the shroud expresses the power of the feminine, and the skin becomes the placeholder of what is happening *now*. The key to the formative tale of the Selkie is the existence of the seal-woman's skin as separate from the body in which she is imprisoned by love and desire on land. The Selkie's gift is capacity to shift from one species to another, to inhabit two worlds. The price is permanent longing for the world she is not in. In the tale, the Selkie finds the skin her husband has hidden, and returns to the ocean. She calls to her human children to let them know she is watching over them – as we may feel the dead, ghosts of species lost, and extinguished cultures do. Latex shed-skin sculptures supply the moment before or after metamorphosis. On one side is innocence and freedom; on the other imprisonment and knowledge. But once the boundary is crossed, complete separation of worlds is not possible and the Selkie's dilemma is not *where do I belong?* but *how do I accommodate spirit and heart in both?*

DION SMITH-DOKKIE

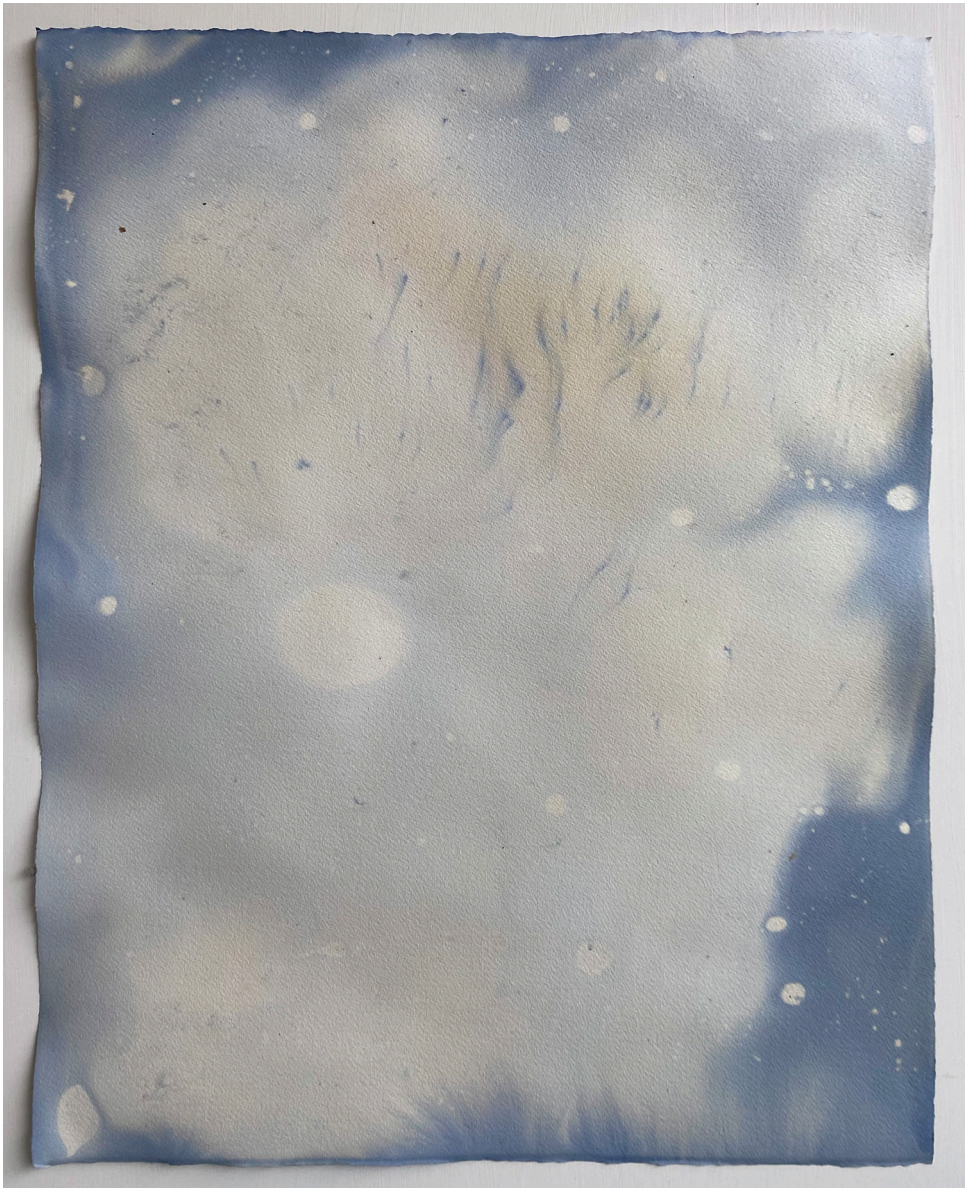
The Whole Body Feels Light and Wants to Fly – Stretched Electric Painting Screens and the Teledioptric I[eye]ris in the Sky.

Carolyn Stockbridge

After visiting the studio occupied by Dion Smith-Dokkie, a big painting is stuck in my mind. Reminiscent of a Claude Monet *Water Lilies* painting, part water, part flower, otherworldly colours are strewn across the surface like light catching oil slicks on water. Sensitive gestural marks, lines and arcs made at various speeds like electric eels in a river, deposit like detrital material in layers of oil paint. It's sort of like observing Monet's paintings on LSD, but this is painting electric by DSD.¹

DSD's art practice involves not only painting but video work and an interest in seeing sciences. Like Monet's, DSD's sights fix on an unquashable desire to construe different environments in paint, where both painting and video practices are containment fields to explore spectrums of colour and themes. Monet's *Water Lilies* were made with the artist's onset of cataracts. Clumps on the lens of the eye changed ways of seeing and painting; shapes, colours and application of materials were mutable.² DSD carries the mutable theme by employing mechanical devices to manufacture disrupted ways of seeing. Capturing forms in motion on the computer screen and further stretching on a photocopier, DSD uses digital imagery to navigate back toward the painting surface as a cyclical digital/analogue process.

In the painted representations of frozen digital frames, DSD ensures time is registered and revealed in the layers of paint that are worked into, stretched across, blended down and built up again. Elongated shapes act as sub-surface waves of colour-light-energy conversions to explore an economy of information below the painting surface/s. As delicious as these appear, a disturbing psychological or emotional process lingers: the work remains in a state of flux – feelings don't resolve but float, signs don't fully signify but are buried.



Dion Smith-Dokkie, *Study (Ripples)*, 2020, watercolour and isopropyl alcohol on paper, 40.6 x 50.8 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Isabelle Graw talks about Painting's struggle to remain medium-specific in the post-medium condition.³ The digital screen is one problem that attempts to push Painting beyond itself and is ever present in Painting practice – as in how painters use it, or outright tell it to piss off.⁴ DSD tackles this problem by positioning the practices side by side for the viewer to resolve...so, here goes:

i. The omnipresent teledioptric artificial "I[eye]ris in the sky";⁵ video on screen with blue background and floating flower split/mirrored in the centre obscuring the sun, is a slow-moving dreamlike loop that demands the attention of the viewer to reach its depth and scope. Massive paintings are a tactic to interrupt the gaze upward to the "seductive shiny," to recalibrate the viewer's lines of sight back to earth surfaces.

ii. Imagine hallucinogenic pollen discharged by the I[eye]ris, its potency clutches viewers in a trance. Painting's sight goes fuzzy because it has an allergic reaction to digital's airborne allergens.

iii. Did the I[eye]ris grow out of the Painting Field? Digital turns a blind eye to Painting, renounces distant cousins (Monet's *Water Lilies*), cuts its own stem, unrooting from the painting ground.

iv. Painting surfaces risk failure if their existence is comparable to the video/digital screen;⁶ Painting must shake off digital's infectiousness, strengthen its constitution, resource its own secretions. All systems open – Painting is Painting's natural remedy.

These artworks are self-prescribed "pleasure exchange matrixes"⁷ for the sheer delight of looking, dreaming and escaping that enliven the senses, as much as they are systems to work complicated problems through. Still, the viewer can sense the elasticity expanding beyond the structure of the frames as contradictions and dualities. But no matter what objectives DSD's work has its sights set on, it's an outpouring of rapture and ideas combined that bends them into life.

I acknowledge writing this essay as an uninvited settler on the Unceded Territories of the x^wməθkwə'yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətał/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

- 1 DSD (Dion Smith-Dokkie) is a signifier of self-sovereignty. Agreed upon in conversation with the artist on February 16, 2021.
- 2 Clumps of deposits on the lens of the eye = thick bits of muck on the surface of the canvas. As Monet's eyesight blurred, brush marks broadened and paint thickened. "Monet's Health," C. Monet Gallery, <https://www.cmonetgallery.com/cataracts.aspx>.
- 3 Isabelle Graw, "The Value of Painting," keynote speech as part of the symposium, *A Crimp in the Fabric: Situating Painting Today*, Emily Carr University of Art and Design, September 2017.
- 4 Conversations with the artist, ongoing from December 2019 to February 2021.
- 5 Johann Zahn's 1685 book *Oculus Artificialis Teledioptricus, Sive Telescopium (The Teledioptric Artificial Eye, or Telescope)* suggests that every luminous object in the universe varies in appearance depending on the viewer's position, <https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/oculusartificia00zahn>.
- 6 The video screen is seductive, "the shiny new" compared to absorbent painting materials on the surface.
- 7 In Dion Smith-Dokkie's April 2020 essay "Cloud Escapism", the author includes a passage describing exchanges between love, pleasure, risk and danger as an "exchange matrix."

List of Works

All works courtesy of the artist, except where noted

Sol Hashemi

Care, 2021

Dogwood, 2021

Fig Storage, 2021

*Higher Consciousness (Do You Mean
Consciousness?)*, 2021

Luck, 2021

Muddy Jeans, 2021

*Near Death Experience (Do You Mean
Experience?)*, 2021

Not Chartreuse (Do You Mean Chartreuse?), 2021

Prospero's Wand, 2021

Purpose, 2021

Tastes Like Chicken, 2021

Thuja Plicata, 2021

Weighted Carpet, 2021

all works are beverages

Courtesy of Gaia

Martin Katzoff

Adelphia, 2021

oil on canvas

118.1 x 152.4 cm

Martin Katzoff

Digging for Herkimers, 2021

oil on wood

243.8 x 121.9 cm

Martin Katzoff

Elude sequence one, 2021

Elude sequence two, 2021

Elude sequence three, 2021

Elude sequence four, 2021

all prints are etching on paper

146.1 x 99.1 cm

Martin Katzoff

Landscape Work, 2021

oil on canvas

236.2 x 200.7 cm

Martin Katzoff

Reflections of Olana, 2021

oil on plywood

243.8 x 121.9 cm

Martin Katzoff

Transference, 2021

oil on wood

243.8 x 121.9 cm

Natalie Purschwitz

Geomatrix: A Guide to Making Sense, 2021

website

<https://geomatrix.hotglue.me/>

Natalie Purschwitz
Unknown Variables, 2021
mixed-media installation
approximately 460.0 x 760.0 x 610.0 cm

Xan Shian
Corps chloïche (between), 2020-21
concrete, plaster, latex, biodegradable netting
and sea salt
dimensions variable

Xan Shian
Mo anart-bàis / dress for the dead,
2020-21
Scottish flax linen, seawater
dimensions variable

Xan Shian
Shedding skins (language), 2021
rebar, concrete and plastic
dimensions variable

Xan Shian
Threshold (each-uisge), 2021
glass, Scottish flax linen, sea water and steel
dimensions variable

Xan Shian
Untitled (imprints), 2021
steel plates, salt water and rust from body contact
dimensions variable

Xan Shian
See the shapes you were, 2021
latex, biodegradable netting and salt blocks
dimensions variable

Dion Smith-Dokkie
Luscious arc I, 2021
Luscious arc II, 2021
Luscious arc III, 2021
Luscious arc IV, 2021
all paintings are oil on canvas
243.8 x 228.6 cm

The artists wish to acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x̣ṃəθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam) people and are deeply grateful to have studied and lived on this territory.

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Edited by Jay Pahre

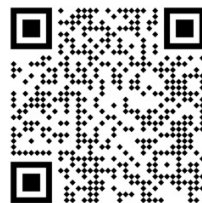
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