

LITAKER, ALEXANDRA, M.F.A. Spontaneous Trail: Mapping the Moment (2019)  
Directed by Barbara Campbell Thomas. 26pp.

My artistic research involves paper and cellophane as media for performative acts of drawing and encountering. The paper undergoes a metamorphosis from a site of reflective space to a physically animated space and, as it does so, it embodies transformation. With both paper and cellophane, I explore the relationships between place, body, and material as moments of becoming. These explorations relate to writing the self and these actions speak to the larger social body as micro political acts.

SPONTANEOUS TRAIL: MAPPING THE MOMENT

by

Alexandra Litaker

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro  
2019

Approved by

---

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by Alexandra Litaker has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barbara Campbell Thomas

Committee Members

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Cassidy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Heather Holian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Meanley

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leah Sobsey

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dane Winkler

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Final Oral Examination

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. A PROCESS OF BECOMING:	
A BODILY EXPLORATION OF MATERIAL RELATIONS .....	1
A Drawing, Listening, Encountering Body in Relation.....	1
<i>At Place</i> (2017-2018) Ongoing Investigations .....	5
<i>Paper Trail</i> (2018) .....	6
<i>And having returned again to the moment</i> .....	9
<i>the turn of it</i> (2019).....	16
Listening and Excavating.....	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	21

## CHAPTER I

### A PROCESS OF BECOMING: A BODILY EXPLORATION OF MATERIAL RELATIONS

#### **A Drawing, Listening, Encountering Body in Relation**

Running through my artistic practice are themes of dislocation in dialogue with place, the body, text and reading. Integral to my artistic work is an investigation of the function of time and memory in relation to place and body. I am drawn to theoretical writings that move and circulate and I am interested in exploring how this circulation can be present in and inform my work. This kind of circulation can be linked to the concepts of errantry and circular nomadism that Édouard Glissant develops in his book *Poetics of Relation*.<sup>1</sup> Glissant describes this nomadism as a process of circulation in which no place is conquered but instead encountered. Within my artistic works presented in this paper enough is left open to the imagination and the moment of encounter that a wandering is embedded therein. Another facet of this encounter is a becoming in relation to the other. Errantry and errant thought are a way of thinking that is relational, and lead to thinking about identity that is outside of nationalism. Glissant contrasts thinking with errantry and totality with thinking with voyage and other, then further with thinking with territory and self, writing “In this context uprooting can work toward identity, and exile can be seen as beneficial, when these are experienced as a search for the Other (through circular nomadism) rather than as an expansion of territory (an arrowlike nomadism).”<sup>2</sup> This way of imagining encountering the world as a relational movement relating to a whole versus defining a territory speaks to what I explore and

---

<sup>1</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics Of Relation*.

<sup>2</sup> Glissant 18.

critique with my work. An important thread that I examine is uprooting through the movement of the female artist subject in relation to place.

*Performance as drawing, drawing as becoming in relation*

Throughout my artistic work drawing holds a critical place. I work with drawing as a response to experience and drawing as marking or measuring space with the body. I once created a score in which I measured the great hall of Grand Central Station using my body to mark the space. I performed this action in Iceland. I was interested in ways spaces experienced continue to mark the current spaces we inhabit, as well as the way the body is marked by place. Marking is not just a visible marking but the way in which we mark time and space internally. Thinking about this experience of place as a marking I came upon Brian Massumi's writing about the proprioceptive experience that exists as an internal coding that allows us to function in space.<sup>3</sup> Massumi writes, "Movement is no longer indexed to position. Rather, position emerges from movement, from a relation of movement to itself."<sup>4</sup> I related this to my thinking about marking space and being marked by space in which not only are the body and the place marked but they are changed and in relation they compose each other. I wondered about the way in which this mapping and marking is not only measuring the space but a way of orienting through movement, an internal drawing that echoed the one made in the space. This reminds me of painting, the way in which color is fundamentally changed when it comes in contact with another color. Karen Barad develops the theory of "intra-action" in which objects emerge through encounters. Barad writes of encounter: "The primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations."<sup>5</sup> Barad relates intra-

---

<sup>3</sup> Brian Massumi, 180.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Barad, 135.

activity to speech and words as “material discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted.”<sup>6</sup> This intra-activity as constituent of material and identity is part of my ongoing exploration of encounter. I see the encounter as my physical engagement in time with space and material as well as an engagement with the moment of encounter including that with the other/participant.

*Listening as practice, listening as material*

In my artistic practice being in place is a relational act of embodied listening. Listening is a practice of awareness of presence. Listening has a material place within my body of work as each work maintains a kind of quiet, even when the sound is overpowering the quiet is present. The quiet speaks but at a distance. It is knowable but anonymous. These qualities gesture at the creation of a space of encounter. Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Listening* describes this act as being on the “lookout for a subject... that identifies *itself* by resonating from self to self...”<sup>7</sup> Nancy goes on to describe sound as “vibrating from the come-and-go between the source and the ear, through open space, the presence of presence rather than pure presence.”<sup>8</sup> He describes the way in which sound is not present in the sense of a fixed position because it is something resounding and happening as an echo across space is encountered as many spaces. My works engage a practice of listening both in the making and in the experience of the works. There is an element of waiting for the encounter to emerge. The quiet and the sound speak to the space of the moment of presence.

---

<sup>6</sup> Barad, 135.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy, 16.

*The female body as subject in relation with the environment*

Having the opportunity to engage with the films of Ana Mendieta installed in the gallery setting at the exhibition “Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta” at the Gropius Bau in Berlin afforded me the opportunity to experience the works simultaneously and in conversation with each other. Mendieta’s engagements with the environment are captured in short films as if annexing time. In them she explores a moment captured that extends beyond the temporal boundaries of the film to a relationship with geologic time and bodily time. This is a recurrent space for exploration in my own works *At Place* and *Paper Trail*. What keeps the relationship between natural environment and the female body embedded within the films from becoming essentializing is the way in which the environment, body, and traces of the body engage with each other to destabilize the notion of the cartesian subject.<sup>9</sup> Watching Mendieta’s work I was inspired by the ways in which she explores displacement and presence through absence. In *Creek* (1974) she is naked in a creek the water washing over her, she is always herself and yet we see her body being affected by the water and the water moving around her. In her later work *Untitled* (1981) she created a video of bodily silhouette that is slowly unformed by the sea in such a way as to explore the expansiveness of geological time memory and the space between her motherland of Cuba and her homeland of the United States.

---

<sup>9</sup> Amanda Boetzkes, 54.



## ***At Place (2017-2018) Ongoing Investigations***

### *Drawing takes flight*

In 2017 I began a series of works in which I explore being in relation to place and landscape. I take paper to places out beyond cities and human habitat. My engagement with the paper in place is simultaneously drawing and performance. These explorations exist as performance, as material drawing, and as video. The empty space of the paper functions as a space of displacement and a place of possibility. It is the blank slate of the blank page. Something is there, almost, but not quite. That Something there is a shape forming, a relationship in process. It may not seem like It belongs. It is out of place. But in relation It is placed. Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Pleasure of Drawing* writes “Think of all that has been drawn that we name “hand” or “circle,” and everything for which we have no name, which are allures, inflexions, intervals, bear- ings, flux, torsions, and so on.”<sup>10</sup> In my work these unnamed spaces exist between space, paper and body.

*At Place* involves being in the landscape, in place or environment. Being in the landscape involves being as a body and with paper in relation to the landscape view. Being in the environment and place relate to the place itself and the elements. In this way the paper and body take on a form that is as if a feature of the landscape. The paper is empty space that is also a form, a mediator, an object of relation. The body is the body of the artist, my body, an individual body, and a female body. As the female body of the artist it speaks of a relationship to earth and nature that avoids any essentializing because there is a space for the viewer to imagine and determine the possibilities of meaning in relation to form as the form is constantly shifting. The body can also

---

<sup>10</sup> Nancy, *The Pleasure of Drawing*, 26.

be substituted for the empty space of the page. The page itself can be as if the ground space, in which case the place itself has become dislocated. The paper begins smooth and crisp and is marked by the movement, the place, the elements. The videos also capture these sounds of the wind, the interaction between body and paper. The body becomes in this way part element and the paper becomes part body. The drawing is this becoming through interaction. The meaning lies in the truth at the edge of the work that Nancy describes as being formed by desire of the viewer.<sup>11</sup> The viewer is left to determine the meaning when reading and encountering this relationship.

### ***Paper Trail (2018)***

#### *Mapping and marking the moment*

My artistic practice deals with readability and the search for meaning. The performance *Paper Trail* explores a fractured journey that is at once becoming situated, structured, grounded as it becomes unreadable and dislocated. This paradox is important to my work because it points toward the way in which self is composed in relation to memory. A book is taken apart. A book about dislocation is taken apart and further dislocated and located thus creating a path out of pages of a book. Each page exists as a moment in the time of the performance that is physically located in the environment while it is also becoming an unlocatable moment within the context of the book itself. It is an embodied mapping. The performance takes place beside an actual road as an impermanent alternative path. I take apart the book, page by page. Placing each page before me, stepping on it to get to the next, fixing each page to the ground with whatever is at hand,

---

<sup>11</sup> Nancy, *The Pleasure...*, 26.

grass, rocks. The place, the page, the body come into conversation meeting in a moment. Then the body, the person marking continues.

The book I take apart is Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), a novel that critically responds to modernism through its exploration of the voice of female alienation. It is a psychological portrait of a woman's experience as dislocated in relation to the social structure, her own memory, to culture, to language, to place. The book has a sense of movement and entrapment and of entrapment in an endless movement. This movement is both a search for location in and escape from memory and place. I introduce these ideas as I begin the performance.

The book taken apart is now fractured, unreadable, resituated as a pathway, a journey. This creates an experience of dislocation. The trail, enacted by the body, becomes an impermanent path. The body marking, mapping the moment. Each participant will experience this performance differently and create their own narrative of understanding. Brian Massumi writes about the body experiencing in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement Affect, Sensation*, "Topologically speaking, space and time are dependent variables. They are not formally distinguishable. They cannot be separated from each other without stopping the process and changing its nature."<sup>12</sup> In this performance I explore mapping both space and time with the body. The moment when the page, the rocks, the grass the ground and the body come into contact is a moment of locating within a larger space of impermanence. This is a moment in which different forms of measuring time come into contact: the time of the body, the geological time of the rock and earth, and the unlocatable time of the written narrative. This moment of locating the self in

---

<sup>12</sup> Massumi, 185.

the passage of time speaks to the ways in which we compose ourselves in relation to our experience. Here the movement must follow a prescribed path that the tearing and placing of pages along with each step of the foot allows. Past and present become visible as the path is marked, allowing the participant to move between a macro and micro engagement with the work and so become dislocated in relation to their own sense of themselves and to time and body.

*In conversation, Cy Twombly*

Cy Twombly's compositions that are drawing in painting captivate me. Twombly's *Nini's Paintings* (1971) use writing as a symbol. One reads these paintings anticipating, searching for meaning to emerge, and yet knowing it never will through linguistic means, but will remain as mark on paper, wax and pencil on canvas. A different meaning emerges through meaning of the mark itself. *The Bolsena* (1969) in which the marks and the color both appear to be applied and erased, address the blank space as both the applied paint and the mark erased. There, color seems to hover as a mark. Color is drained from the image and so each moment of mark and color becomes as important as rain. The marks and color create rhythmic movement within the frame of the painting. The work exists as drawing and painting and moves between the two as it moves between color and mark. You read the work by whatever your eye falls upon first. Your subjectivity is engaged, and it is the viewer who composes the work.

This tension between form and drawing is embedded in my work *Paper Trail*. I unfold the trail, marking the ground with the paper, marking the paper with the ground and the body, and moving on towards the rock and the end of the book. There I tell another story, pointing to another space further on— a space of habitation, a tent, the moments of the page, of the story, of the future, interlacing in a memory. Where the participant chooses to look or chooses to engage is

where the meaning lies at that moment. There is no composition. It performs itself as an act of writing. It exists as a sensory experience, a sensory memory. It is mapping, a writing of something, a drawing.

***And having returned again to the moment***

*And having returned again to the moment traces are emitted, transmitted, and redistributed and having returned again to the moment* (subsequently *And Again...*) is the title of my MFA thesis work, consisting of performance, video and sculptural installation exhibited at Greensboro Project Space. *And Again...* began with a series of performative explorations that became an ongoing practice of returning and attending to the moment. These explorations took place in a small room, the space of which was integral to the conceptual underpinnings of the work. They were filmed at a low angle so only the lower half of the walls and floor were visible. Central to the exploration was the impulse to explore the luminosity of the large reflective pool of light in the center of the room and through this to explore my ongoing practice of engagement with environment, here contained in the studio space. This kind of performative practice can be traced to Bruce Nauman and his early work such as *Bouncing in the Corner* (1968), using his body as material for his sculptural time-based works. Charles Haxthausen writes of Nauman's early work, "A contiguous relation of an object or substance to his physical being is the condition of its becoming art: the work of art is the indexical sign of that relation."<sup>13</sup> *And Again...* explores an ambiguous empty space, the bodily relationship to it, and the captured space of the video image. The initial performance investigations of *And Again...* explore the relation between my

---

<sup>13</sup> Charles Haxthausen, 646.

body, the room, the material yellow cellophane, the material space of the room, and the space of the frame. There is an exploration of both sensing and the sensuous within the work as it explores touch, sound, light, reflection, diffraction, movement.

*Performative explorations in the non-space*

The performative explorations take place in a room that is an anonymous space which contrasts to the sensuality of light. Brian Massumi describes this phenomenon: “The liminal non place has been characterized as “peri-personal.” It lies at the border of what we think of as internal, personal space and external, public space.”<sup>14</sup> The room exists as a potential internal psychological space and a universal anonymous space. It is at once hermetic and expansive in the way it moves both literally and figuratively into the reflective space of the reflected light in the concrete. The room is also an abstraction and the blank space of possibility through which I move.

The work begins with slow explorations of being in the space, a mapping of the space with my body. I bring in the yellow material and this material surprises me. These explorations seem to reveal something. The colors become as if the inside of the earth, the color of the sun, a ball of energy.

When I work to map the room, I enter into the space with an intention, but my intention often shifts mid exploration. Something takes over and directs the work at hand. The yellow material was transforming in relation to me at times it was a membrane, at times a trail I followed, at times something I pushed or carried. It was at once body and place, and all of this

---

<sup>14</sup> Massumi, 187.

within the blank anonymous void of the room. In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit writing on Yves Klein's photograph *Leap into the Void*, says, "The leap into the void is sometimes read as a Buddhist phrase about enlightenment, about embracing the emptiness that is not lack as it seems to westerners, but letting go of the finite and material, embracing limitlessness, transcendence, freedom, enlightenment."<sup>15</sup> *And Again...* approaches this space of the void, but it opens and folds in upon itself. Embracing emptiness and letting go of material gets at the work- at the space of the unknown and unlocatable, the missing boundary is between here and there. "Here" is the room where I stand watching the space of reflection, the space of diffraction through the screens. It becomes a question of not just where we are, but what we are and with what porous boundaries are we in relation to the surrounding world.

*The material object, animated, self, other*

The movement captured in the performative explorations of *And Again...* involves material, and sometimes the material itself is the only thing within the frame. At these moments, the cellophane is animated. The material rolls and turns, as in a washing machine, as in a kaleidoscope. Most of us recognize on a visceral level the material qualities of cellophane and relate to an encounter with it with an awareness of its physicality. But how cellophane moves, or its natural state, is less accessible. In *And again...* the material moves between the animated and the objectified. Thrown into the space of the room it exists as pure color. Its identity as material is blurred.

In interacting with the material, it surrounds me, it trails me, it overtakes me and obscures me. I wrestle with it, roll with it, become enmeshed in it. It spills out of me, it is under me, it

---

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Solnit, 172.

moves towards me. The material is a trail that I follow as I hold it, it falls, it leaves the frame, a moving trail traveling towards me, it is animated. It is a trail that is gathered into me which then spills out, encircles and surrounds, becoming a webbing or a sac. My relationship with the material is always shifting.

The trail of the cellophane trailing me becomes line and shape. It is both moving the action and moved by action. It is both animated and a passive material. Its identity becomes present through the intra-activity between the me and the material. The yellow is at once membrane and innards. It occupies both the space of the other and of the inner self. As Karen Barad writes, “matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity.”<sup>16</sup> The way in which Barad talks about the lack of difference between the human and the non-human makes me think about the ways the environment, the material, and I are becoming in relation with each other. This yellow cellophane that is becoming something in relation to me and me to it posits questions around what it is to matter. It is through this intra-activity between material body and world that becoming happens and this is what it means to matter.<sup>17</sup>

I am wondering about this matter at the heart of the work. The ways in which the matter at hand and the space we perceive is never actually as it seems. The matter seems to be the anonymous space, the body, the reflective space, the plastic material. This matter becomes itself in the relations and as such, matter is a doing.

---

<sup>16</sup> Barad, 139.

<sup>17</sup> Barad, 141.



*Traces are projections...*

*And again...* is composed of the explorations described above and their existence in relation to the forms and shadow arising from the installation in space. This installation is composed of three video projections, sculptural forms hovering along the floor, casting shadows both real and constructed. The projections are immersive in such a way that what is material and what is not is thrown into question. The yellow cellophane in the video projection creates a sensuous experience that belies the impersonal, lifeless material. This sensuality is visually prominent in the dark space of the gallery.

The sculptural forms are almost ephemeral and unreadable. They exist, hovering in space, and lie like bodies or topographical areas. These forms are made of actual material screens made into amorphous dimensional shapes. They serve as space for projection and as shadow embodying the dual meaning implied in their name, "screen". Each form folds around itself while casting shadows of its layers. These layers become animated spaces, their shadows trailing into darkness creating a space for something forgotten or unknown to emerge. The forms echo islands, bodies, landscapes. These are groundings and infinite spaces: lit from without and within, fading into darkness, merging into moving images, floating unknowable, unseeable but perceived.

*The screened image becoming screen becoming shadow*

The shadows are multiple as the screened image is itself a shadow and the screens cast shadows into the projections, and to the floor. On the floor are black shadows- an infinite abyss below the screens created of black carpet, and alternately shimmering reflections of light, grounding the silver screens in a pool of clear plastic. These shadows extend the spaces of the installation into the reflective space of the projected video.

In one area of the room-the video is projected onto an entire wall-it is a rectangular wall taller than it is wide, abutting a corner and ending in darkness. The video fits it exactly, then after a cut, continues onto another moveable wall that is placed forward in the space. On this wall, the video matches the side and upper and lower area exactly then juts to an angle-and the video and projected shadow blur into each other, thus complicating space. It becomes difficult to distinguish between projection and shadow.

*The matrixial borderspace and co-becoming*

In performing with the cellophane, I walk on the yellow as it unfolds below, then gather it into a ball, my relationship with the material is always shifting. This shifting relationship speaks to me of ideas of co-becoming and co-poiesis. Bracha Ettinger develops the concept of the matrixial borderspace, a space that exists different from and prior to that of the realm of the phallus. Ettinger develops the idea of “metamorphosis” as a web of links that signals woman as not other but as “co becoming self with m/Other.”<sup>18</sup> Ettinger writes, “Thus, female bodily specificity is the site, physically, imaginatively and symbolically, where a feminine difference emerges, through which a ‘woman’ is interlaced as a figure that is not confined to the one-body, but is a hybrid ‘webbing’ of links between several subjectivities, who by virtue of such a webbing becomes partial.”<sup>19</sup>

Reading Ettinger, I was inspired to think of the ways in which questions around the themes “what is body” and “what is material” are called into relief in my artistic work. The transparent material is echoed by the actual screens, which are forms in the space, casting

---

<sup>18</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “Matrixial Trans-Subjectivity,” 103.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 103.

shadows back into the projections, themselves being projected upon. What is “material” here? The material of the other, the material a plastic non-material, identityless and transparent, itself transforming and becoming in relation to the body, the artist, the space. The material is skin, mass, and membrane. This material is the other, the self, the path it is something whose identity emerges through the relationship. The boundaries of subject and notions of the real are shifting in relation to each other. The sound of the material moving is ever present. The space echoes this sense of shared becoming in its oceanic nature. Sound, space, color, self are intertwined.

*The onsite performance, the material*

On the second floor of Greensboro Project Space is a small room with two visible windows. There I place a mass of clear and yellow cellophane lit by blue and pink lights to bring out the colors and reflectivity of the material. The room is also lit with natural light and in the evening, as the sun goes down, the lighting becomes more dramatic. I had the windows open to allow the wind to move the plastic and a fan in the room that also caused the material to move. At times throughout the evening I came up and moved the material, at other times people could move in it themselves. A longer performative engagement with the material resulted in a worked mass of cellophane that existed as a sculptural trace of the actions and also as simply a mass of material.

Here, the material of the installation in the video projections is no longer but instead an excess of material, almost filling the room. This material is to be observed, touched, pondered, again calling to mind questions around the relationship to material. This material-what is it? It is cellophane- the familiar made unfamiliar. In its excess it is bodily. In *And Again...* the cellophane inhabits a complex space in which the highly artificial becomes sensual and alive. I am inspired

by Ana Mendieta's *Silhueta* series and *Creek*, works in which she puts herself directly into the landscape and we see her there or her trace and read her female body in relation to place/out of place. The way in which the cellophane in a certain way will never change except in relation to the body doing seems to be analogous in certain ways to the relationship of Mendieta's body to the environment. As the body will always exist in relation but never as the environment, so the cellophane will always be in one sense just the cellophane until it becomes something in relation to another.

***the turn of it (2019)***

This work consists of three video projections. The video images revolve from screen to screen room, sometimes all three screens have the same video and at other times each screen is different. These videos capture moments and a marking of space. The videos are of a stomach being taped and untaped, a paper being saturated with drops, wind on the grass, and a hoof in almost motion. The repetitive sounds are of pulling and tearing and placing of tape, the breathing of a large animal, wind, the sound of something akin to drops on a drum or skin.

Filmmaker Chantal Akerman, exploring relationship to time, memory, and place, said in an interview, "All you have is time. In my films you are aware of every second passing by. Through your body. You are facing yourself."<sup>20</sup> Brenda Longfellow, writing about the matrixial borderspace and trauma describes Akerman's Films as such: "Each plays with extended duration, testing our tolerance for the absence of action, narration, or purpose, but in so doing they allow us to feel the phenomenological press of time, the irresistible movement toward an end of time from

---

<sup>20</sup> Brenda Longfellow, 124.

which there is no escape.”<sup>21</sup> Looking at Akerman’s *No Home Movie* from 2015 I am inspired by the ways in which the relationship to time and presence becomes a subject of the work. *The turn of it* explores time of the present moment and to the body sensing, and it is as if a space of time opens up, and time assumes a special realm. Time in this instance is something like sound it exists over space and in between. The body sensing is here the body of the viewer. The work itself calls to this body to experience the moment. This is the missing body at the center of the work. It is a call to excavation of relationships with the surrounding world and a call to listening.

This environment of body, touch, ground, wind, place is one in which the familiar is made unfamiliar as the belly button is covered and uncovered, excavating a place on the body everyone has. The body is here, present, hovering yet grounded. A light installed in the center of the space descends from the ceiling, a bell silver shape as if a hoof hovering just above the ground, a pool of light above a pile of Mica, glittering and reflective, brought from the earth. The presence of the actual excavated, dug up, pieces surfacing in the real as the sound and images revolve around you. You become the body grounded. The light becomes as though a campfire.

André Masson, as quoted in *The Pleasure of Drawing*, said “I draw—This line will not enclose or surround an emptiness. A trace extended from a body’s wake and its breathing, this will be a sign chosen from a thousand others, but it will assume them all.”<sup>22</sup>

Here are these traces— The unmarked belly, the belly marked by tape, the dripping water marking, the hoof steady but wavering, the light of the mica twinkling in the pool, repeating and circling. Drip, drip, drip. The sound is as well the marking of marks, the wind.

---

<sup>21</sup> Longfellow, 124.

<sup>22</sup> Nancy, *The Pleasure*.

*In conversation, Joan Jonas*

In *Stream or River, Flight or Pattern* (2016-2017), as seen at the Tate Modern 2018, Joan Jonas explores drawing, shadow, time and memory. In this work Jonas travels through foreign lands, her shadow and the shadows of others appearing as though layered on the video and between layers of the video. There are children enacting a lesson in drawing and Jonas drawing with a stick, childlike. She is dressed up as a wizard of some kind, in drawing she is encountering the child within. The actual child is drawing shadows. There are birds in a cage. The imagery circles through these moments and to the landscape outside. It is a moving disruption of time and place using the shadow of the image and the interplay with shadow to play with memory and its relation to the viewer. Jonas places herself as a shadow in her own work. Just as I put myself into her work as I watch. In doing this she creates an empathic connection that powerfully evokes a sense of relation to the passing of time and our own mortality. This kind of relationship with viewer is something I approach in my work *Paper Trail* in which I deconstruct the book placing each page as a step. The participant is placed into relation with the entire work and the shadow of memory and time itself.

### **Listening and Excavating**

With each almost step of the hoof in *the turn of it* the moment is anticipated. The expanding of the moment its anticipation becomes a subject. This is also at work when I walk through the pages torn from the book, and as I step across the plastic, it expands as though alive and watching it expanding you anticipate the unfolding and you know it, you know the material.

Listening becomes a place within my body of work as well as within my practice. Each work maintains a kind of quiet. Even when the sound is overpowering the quiet is present. It

speaks but maintains a distance. It is knowable but anonymous. The relationship is distanced, between the page or the paper and the body, between the plastic and the space- mediated.

In *the turn of it* the body is both obscured and unveiled as paper is saturated and trees are moved. These relationships between the body, the landscape, the environment cycle around. The pieces of Mica are as the pieces of tape. Is it the body itself that has been excavated? The mica dug from the ground, located but unlocated when placed here in the gallery echoing the shape of the tape on the body. Is something more grounded than the grounding in the earth? The grounding in the moment. The moment of feeling in the present.

In the wet, the paper marked is dissolving, unbecoming as the hoof in place is on the verge of movement and the wind continues blowing. The light hovering, in constant movement almost still, as the tape to the skin, the hoof to the ground, the wind to the grass blown, uninhabitable, at home, almost tangible. Suddenly outside by the fire, the light, is it inside the body? What is this body?

These art works explore the breath, the sound of paper, of materials, and places of contact and relation. They each exist as becoming in place, and as an unbecoming in a moment. The works create a space for listening with the body, listening for the place of self. The place is here, or it is just over there. Is it the place where you are? Is it the moment? You almost reach this moment as it passes. The body just out of reach. You are inside of it.

Hovering oscillating the space moves as if around me. There is adherence, there is linking, there is weight. A line, drawn offers you that light. The marks and the line are as well the

light. The relational aspects to the work are layered. There is participation and an experience of encountering, of becoming part of a voyage, as one orients in relation to the paper, body in the environment.

Dislocation does not have to be negative, it can be a space of possibility or a generative space. But it is an unknown. As it is dislocated, it does not belong. As in memory, you turn and see the trail behind you. *It* circulates. *It* is all of this, but *It* is this as well. The circulating is the turn of it. It is like a map, a topographic map. The drips on the paper, the movement of a horse's leg, the leg and hoof hovering between movement and stillness- the moment becomes so large but is also transient swirling, moving from location to location. The body here, the navel, becomes as large as a landscape, a space to be mapped, the body space, the rain space, the wind space, the horse all of these come into conversation, a map being located but also something being erased, or obscured and revealed. This something is both grounded as the plants in the wind and ungrounded as the hoof lifts weighted. The body itself missing, what is the body- the body of the person encountering the work, the body of the horse, the body of the earth? The body missing presents the body experiencing.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barad, Karen. "POSTHUMANIST PERFORMATIVITY: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW MATTER COMES TO MATTER." In *Material Feminisms*, edited by Alaimo Stacy and Hekman Susan, 120-54. Indiana University Press, 2008.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzgqh.8>.
- Baum, Kelly. "Shapely Shapelessness: Ana Mendieta's "Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints: Face)", 1972." *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 67 (2008): 80-93.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20442638>.
- Blocker, Jane, and Ana Mendieta. 1999. *Where Is Ana Mendieta?: Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Boetzkes, Amanda. "Contemporary Art and the Nature of Site." In *The Ethics of Earth Art*, 25-64. University of Minnesota Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt24.6>.
- Ettinger, Bracha. *The Matrixial Borderspace*. Theory Out of Bounds, V. 28. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Ettinger, Bracha L. "Matrixial Trans-Subjectivity." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (May 2006): 218-22. doi:[10.1177/026327640602300247](https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640602300247).
- Glissant, Édouard, and Betsy Wing. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Haxthausen, Charles W. "Bruce Nauman. Los Angeles." *The Burlington Magazine* 136, no. 1098 (1994): 646-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/886191>.
- Kaplan, Caren. "Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse." *Cultural Critique*, no. 6 (1987): 187-98. doi:[10.2307/1354261](https://doi.org/10.2307/1354261).
- Lichtenberg Ettinger, Bracha. "Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere." *Parallax* 7, no. 4 (2001): 89-114. doi:[10.1080/13534640110089276](https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640110089276).
- Longfellow, Brenda. "The Matrixial Borderspace: The Complex Inscription of Trauma in Chantal Akerman's No Home Movie." *Camera Obscura* 34, no. 100 (2019).
- Lorz, Julienne and Lissoni, Andrea. *Joan Jonas*. Munich: Haus der Kunst, Munich Tate Enterprises LTD, Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2018.

Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. 1st ed. Jstor Eba. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Pleasure in Drawing*. Translated by Philip Armstrong. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. 2013. Accessed April 17, 2019.

Pollock, Griselda. "Thinking the Feminine: Aesthetic Practice as Introduction to Bracha Ettinger and the Concepts of Matrix and Metramorphosis." *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 1 (February 2004): 5–65. doi:[10.1177/0263276404040479](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404040479).

Philbrick, Jane. "Paper Trail: (Re)viewing "Lines in the Sand" and Other Key Works of Joan Jonas." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 26, no. 3 (2004): 17-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3246472>.

Rhys, Jean. *Good Morning, Midnight*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

Savory, Elaine. "Jean Rhys's Environmental Language: Oppositions, Dialogues and Silences." In *Jean Rhys: Twenty-First-Century Approaches*, edited by Johnson Erica L. and Moran Patricia, 85-106. Edinburgh University Press, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt16r0hd3.10>.

Solnit, Rebecca. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Twombly, Cy, Nicholas Cullinan, Tacita Dean, Richard Shiff, Nicholas Serota, Nicholas Cullinan, Richard Shiff, Tate Modern (Gallery), Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, and Galleria Nazionale D'arte Moderna (Italy). *Cy Twombly : Cycles and Seasons*. Edited by Nicholas Serota. New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art, 2008.

Zimmerman, Emma. "'Always the Same Stairs, Always the Same Room': The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight." *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 4 (2015): 74-92. doi:[10.2979/jmodelite.38.4.74](https://doi.org/10.2979/jmodelite.38.4.74).