The Problem of Applying Theories of Depiction to Non-Figurative Art

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Abstract

Generally speaking depictive theories attempt to explain the experience of looking at paintings and drawings, in particular they describe the process by which a viewer makes sense of a surface that has been intentionally marked in such a way as to describe some thing in the world.

Depictive theories have generally been developed with reference to figurative work where the viewer is able to recognize the depicted object(s). The aim of this thesis is to determine the extent to which they apply to non-figurative work, what is commonly referred to as abstract art, and to identify what factors can influence the understanding and interpretation of such work.

The method used is a combination of theory and practice. An analysis of theories of depiction and of contemporary scholarship on the subject is undertaken. Using the results of this work and by reference to the key concepts of these theories an analysis of specific artworks is carried out in a series of case studies.

The purpose of the case studies is to identify, in the first instance, how certain theories of depiction can be seen to apply. In other words how they explain the experience of looking at a figurative artwork. The case study approach is an essential element of the methodology of the project. It is used, initially, to interrogate a work by Titian that is, arguably, readily explained by 'traditional' depictive theories. The procedure evolved for this analysis is then applied to the less figurative works of Auerbach and Twombly and from this process a non-iconographic approach to depiction is developed which is tested by application to my own work and to that of two contemporary artists.

The thesis concludes that a comprehensive theory of depiction must allow for such factors as material and facture and that, as a result of this research, the meaning of the term 'depiction' can, under certain conditions, be extended to include for non-figurative work. It suggests that some theories may usefully be modified to accommodate the findings of this research. Dominic Lopes argues that 'a complete account of pictures should explain abstract pictures as well as figurative ones.' This thesis is seen as making a contribution to the development of any such account.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Figure 1. Titian *Bacchus and Ariadne*, detail   Figure 2. John Adams *Poetic Field*, detail

1.1 Description of the Research, its Aims, Objectives and Research Context.

This thesis and the research it articulates is part of an ongoing enquiry led by and manifested in a practice that is concerned with the representation of landscape. Specifically it seeks to understand how landscape can be depicted in non-figurative paintings and drawings.

My own practice has, as one of its central concerns, an interest in the way that mark making contributes to the depiction of a landscape. It is an interest that has developed over the course of both my undergraduate studies and the research carried out as part of my MA by Research (cf.p.145). The practice work has become increasingly non-figurative in an attempt to represent landscape through capturing some aspect of it without resorting to resemblance. My contention is that the drawings and paintings produced are depictive in the sense that they refer to specific aspects of landscape. The thesis proves that existing theories of depiction are unable to account for how this may be and that an extended theory of depiction needs to be developed to validate my claim. An outline of such an extended theory of depiction is provided by the present study.

This is undertaken in the first instance through a critical evaluation and analysis of the principal theories of depiction to determine what their claims are as to how depiction works. This reveals that, in general terms, all the theories apply to figurative work, but have little or no relevance to non-figurative work. Both Walton[1] and Wollheim[2] make some claim as to how their theories may apply but the arguments have limited application. It is from this procedure that the key questions for the thesis are quantified. These are 'Can theories of depiction, based largely on figurative painting, be usefully developed to apply to non-figurative work?' 'What are the key elements of those theories that would influence this work?' and 'What further theoretical basis may be needed to establish such a position?'

In order to answer these questions a series of comparative case studies of selected and increasingly non-figurative works are undertaken to determine the degree to which each of the theories can be applied to these paintings. The studies reveal that interpretation or understanding of a work in terms of any particular theory becomes increasingly problematic the less figurative the work is.

However in Chapter 4, and from the analysis in Chapter 2 and the studies in Chapter 3, a mechanism of depiction is established. Using this, together with a reading of Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze, a non-iconographic approach to depiction is determined. This extended definition of depiction is considered in relation to two drawings from my own practice. These are examples of non-figurative representations of landscape and landscape activities whose claim for being depictive, in the extended sense established by the thesis, is made through the material and facture they possess. Three works by contemporary practitioners are then considered in order to establish the relevance of the arguments beyond my own practice. In the conclusions to the thesis, articulated in Chapter 5, the case is made for the authenticity of this approach.

The thesis determines therefore, that depiction is generally taken to apply to those artworks that have recognisable imagery and where the materials of painting and drawing are used in a two-dimensional picture to describe something in the world (a landscape, portrait, still-life, historical or religious scene, or allegory as examples).

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[1] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundation of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990. p. 76.
[2] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 62.

It concludes that the term depiction can be extended, through a consideration of the material of a work, its facture, and any symbolism used, to apply to some types of non-figurative work where the represented object is indicated or signified. This signification operates, it is argued, through the processes of denotation and connotation as described by Barthes and through an understanding of the forces and sensations of a work described by Deleuze.

To put this point pictorially the thesis shows how established theories and definitions of depiction can readily be shown to be applicable to a work by Titian (Figure 1) but not applicable to a non-figurative work such as my own (Figure 2). An enhanced definition is required that allows for interpretation of non-figurative work such that it can be seen to depict using the same mechanism as that for figurative works. Both of these works are described, referenced and analysed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The literature and information searches establish that there is a continuing interest, particularly in scholarly circles, as to how paintings and drawings are able to describe that to which they refer. The core question for researchers addresses the question as to how a surface may be marked by artists in such a way that their intentions can be conveyed to the viewer. As a result of this interest a number of conferences and papers have debated and reappraised the established theories of depiction. Most of the recent literature refers to earlier theorists on the subject notably by Ernst Gombrich, Nelson Goodman, Richard Wollheim, and Kendall Walton. John Dilworth for example extends Wollheim's notions of 'seeing-in' and 'twofoldness' such that the materiality of the work and how this is used are seen as essential to its understanding. This is a point stressed by Michael Podro[3] in his writing on depiction.

1.2   Thesis Structure

The present chapter introduces the thesis, briefly setting out its aims, objectives, research context and the research questions (1.1). It then outlines the structure of the thesis (1.2), describes the methodology used in the project (1.3), and clarifies the key terms used in the argument (1.4).

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[3] Michael Podro, *Depiction*, London: Yale University Press, 1998.

Chapter 2. 'Depiction Theories' gives details of the literature review and takes a critical look at the main arguments of the principal theorists on depiction namely Gombrich, Goodman, Wollheim, and Walton. It then looks at how these theories are extended or modified by more contemporary scholarship on the subject. There are a number of writers who make important contributions in this area such as Michael Podro, John Dilworth, Alan Paskow, Andrew Harrison, Dominic Lopes and Robert Hopkins. The gaps in their approaches are identified as is their respective strengths and weaknesses and from this analysis the research questions are formulated. The findings and conclusions from this chapter are used in the case studies in chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 provides case studies of works by Titian, Frank Auerbach and Cy Twombly. The purpose and number of case studies is identified, and reasons given for the selection of the art-works to be analysed. Each study is undertaken to a particular structure and the degree to which the theories of depiction can be seen to apply is identified in each case. The conclusions drawn from these studies are that all of the theories have little or no relevance to non-figurative works but that elements of them indicate how an extended theory of depiction may be developed. This is taken up in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 focuses on the practice work. A non-iconographic approach to depiction is developed by reference to Deleuze and Barthes and a generic mechanism for depiction is determined. The practice work is contextualised and explained both by reference to a post-modernist view of landscape and to an understanding of visual metaphor. Two works that are representative of my practice are interrogated using this approach and a number of conclusions are drawn. These indicate that the drawings can be read as being depictive not only because of the perceived association of the material of the drawing to that of the landscape object but also the marking of the surface can be identified with actions and patterning that occur in the depicted landscape. Works by Gary Hume and Richard Long are then investigated to further test the evolved theory.

Chapter 5 presents the findings and conclusions of the research project. The analysis of the studies carried out in Chapter 3 indicates that although most theories of depiction explain the perceptive experience of figurative artworks, their applicability

to less figurative and non-figurative work is increasingly problematic. However the study undertaken in Chapter 4 makes the case that there are some bodies of work where, by extending the established view of what depiction is taken to mean, a position can be taken which crosses over into non-figurative work. It is this reassessment of the meaning of depiction that constitutes the addition to knowledge.

1.3   Methodology

This PhD research project falls into a category of enquiry that is referred to as arts-based research as explained in the following paragraphs. There are a number of researchers in this area, notably Michael Biggs, Daniela Büchler and Stephen Scrivener and it is their texts that are used to describe the methodology used and to help explain the significance both of the objects used and their role in the research.

Biggs and Büchler identify a number of generic requirements for research, which they list as 'question and answer', 'method', 'knowledge', and 'audience'[4] and these are consistent with those described by Scrivener.[5] These criteria are met in this project by the fact that the literature search in the area of interest (depictive theories) establishes a gap in knowledge on the subject of their applicability to non-figurative work. It is from this that the research questions have been formulated. In order to answer the questions a case study methodology has been adopted which has been used to interrogate a number of works to see how established theories, as extended or modified by contemporary thought, can be seen to apply. Using this analysis an extended meaning of the term depiction is evolved and in this way new knowledge is created which can be reviewed, debated, and critiqued by the academic and practice–based communities.

The discipline specific aims of this thesis are best described by Scrivener who identifies three 'ways of thinking' about art-based research[6] namely 'research into

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[4] Michael Biggs and Daniela Büchler, in 'Eight criteria for practice-based research in the creative and cultural industries, in Art', *Design & Communication in Higher Education Volume 7 Number 1*. Article. English language. doi: 10.1386/adche.7.1.5/1 c Intellect Ltd. 2008. Retrieved 02/01/2010 from http://r2p.herts.ac.uk/biggs1.html

[5] Stephen Scrivener, *The Norms and Tests of Arts Based Research*, draft paper retrieved 01/05/2010 from http://www.chelsea.arts.ac.uk/17858.htm

[6] Ibid. p.1.

art', 'research through art', and 'research for art'. This latter is defined as being concerned with how 'the given can be meaningfully expanded'[7] and as such correlates to the declared aims and outcomes of this research as articulated in both section 1.1 and in chapter 5. Scrivener's additional research criteria associated with arts-based research are met in this thesis through the claim that theories of depiction can be extended to include some non-figurative works (the criteria of transformation); works of art have been produced and presented in this thesis that demonstrate how the extended concept of depiction can be understood in terms of the artefacts (the criteria of method and justification); the artefacts have been presented and discussed at a number of research seminars (the criteria of communication).[8]

Scrivener and Chapman articulate a Creative-Production model of Arts-based PhD research[9] that identifies a number of factors they consider essential for a creative-production project. These include pre-project reflection on practice, identification of relevant resource domains, periodic reviews and reflection on the project issues and concerns, and post-project reflection and evaluation. This project subscribes to this model of research and responds to the factors identified in the following way.

The practice element of this project originates in my research MA[10] that looked at visual metaphor in landscape art. Many of the themes from that research inform this project and therefore served as an invaluable tool in reflecting, at the pre-project stage, on what the concerns and issues were both theoretical and practical. As this project has developed, its aims and direction have been modified and given greater focus. Reflection and interrogation of the whole process has enabled a more articulate contextualisation of the practice element that has in turn suggested further post project directions. It has been important to me to identify the way in which the relationship between theory and practice has come ever closer as the project has developed through an iterative process of practice-theory-reflection-practice-theory etc. One result of this process is the production of artefacts that, with attendant textual information, support an enhanced or changed way of experiencing landscape and as

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[7] Ibid. p. 10.
[8] Ibid., Table 4.
[9] Stephen Scrivener, 'The practical implications of applying a theory of practise based research: a case study', Working Papers in Art and Design 3. Retrieved 02/01/2010 from URL http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol3/ssfull.html ISSN 1466-4917
[10] John Adams, *Visual Metaphor in Landscape Art*, MA (Res) thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2004.

such is proof of a new possibility. More importantly for the aims of this project they help provide an understanding of how the term 'depiction' can be extended to apply to some non-figurative artworks. How this can be done is explained in detail in Chapter 5.

The project specific method however is that of the case study approach. In this a series of case studies of specific works of art are undertaken to see how established and contemporary theories of depiction are able to account for the imagery in them. A limited number of works are considered which enables each work to be described and looked at in detail. This is the process of 'thick description' described in Chapter 3, which allows the analysis of each work to reveal what aspects of it are relevant to this enquiry and how comparison of the results show that the established theories have little or no relevance to increasingly non-figurative artworks. From this procedure a non-iconographic approach to depiction is developed which is used to analyse examples of my practice work. These are non-figurative artworks but, it is argued, act in a depictive way using a mechanism similar to that of figurative works. Three works from contemporary practices are considered to further test the applicability of this non-iconographic approach.

1.4   Terminology

Important to arguments put forward in this thesis is the distinction to be made between the terms abstraction, figuration, and non-figuration and to explain how they are used in the project. In this thesis 'Abstraction' is used to identify the process of image making in which only some of the visual elements usually ascribed to the natural world are discernable.[11] I have used the term 'non-figurative' to refer to works of art where there is no recognisable subject matter or where there is no intentional reference to objects in the world. The term 'figurative' is used in this thesis to describe work where there is legible subject matter. The term 'figural' is as defined by Deleuze in 4.2.1 and is used by him to describe work where its figurative basis is 'stretched' to allow the capture of the sensation of the represented object. It is used to develop an extended theory of depiction in 4.2.3.

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[11] *Dictionary of art*, edited by Jane Turner, Basingstoke: Macmillan 1996. p. 88.

'Representation' is one of a number of terms used in discussions on depiction such as 'denotation', and 'resemblance', that are used in the literature on this subject which appear to be either synonymous or have an overlapping meanings. Of these apparent synonyms 'representation' is the most significant as all of the other terms mentioned above are contingent upon an understanding of what is meant by it.

In pictorial art one definition given for the word representation is 'the depiction of someone or something in a picture or other work of art'.[12] More generally:

> Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent meaningfully, the world to other people. It involves the use of language, of signs, of images that stand for or represent things and is part of a process by which meaning is exchanged between members of a culture.[13]

What this language is and how it is used in painting is the concern of various writers on depiction. They have different ideas as to how a viewer can come to understand the content of an intentionally marked surface and how this surface may be marked so as to communicate something to the viewer.

According to Stuart Hall there are three different accounts of representation.[14] The reflective approach suggests that language of any form merely reflects the meaning of something as it exists in the world. In this way a drawing or painting for example simply mirrors or imitates nature and this account is therefore sometimes known as the mimetic approach. I suggest that this concept of representation supports the resemblance view of depiction analysed in Chapter 2.

The intentional approach suggests that the author imposes his/her intended meaning on the world through the words or language used. This creates problems of communication between author and receiver if the languages or codes of communication are different.[15]

The third account is the constructionist approach, which states that meaning in language cannot be fixed by the user or by things in themselves. It is not the material

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[12] Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage Publications 2003, p. 15.
[13] Ibid., p. 15.
[14] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[15] Ibid., p. 25.

world that conveys meaning but rather meaning is conveyed between us using sets of coded systems determined by our culture. These are the linguistic and other representational systems that we have constructed.[16]

This latter approach is more consistent with the ideas expressed in this thesis for the very specific reason that it best describes the process by which a viewer can make sense of a deliberately marked surface. It is at the core of most theories of depiction.

There are however two variants to the constructionist approach to representation.[17]

> The discursive approach (influenced by Foucault)
>
> The semiotic approach (influenced both by Saussure's linguistic theories and Peirce's classification of signs).

The first of these is based on a notion of discourse as put by Foucault by which is meant a 'group of statements which provide a way of representing or talking about a particular topic at a particular moment in time'.[18] This approach states, using an example given by Stuart Hall, that one cannot determine 'the meaning of an object outside of its context of use'.[19] A stone used as an implement has a different meaning to that of a stone used as the basis of a sculpture. The meaning is different depending on whether 'implement' discourse is relevant or whether 'sculpture' discourse is. The stone would therefore represent different things depending on the type of discourse and the elements that constitute that discourse (Hall gives a number of examples[20]).

How this approach to representation and its effect on how depiction operates is difficult to judge and is not pursued any further in this thesis. I suggest that this could form the basis of separate studies but it is not clear how these might proceed. The third, interpretive, stage of Paskow's three modes of viewing described in 3.1 can be seen as a discursive stage. In this thesis, however, it has been used to test the applicability of the depictive theories to the artworks selected for the case studies.

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[16] Ibid., p. 25.
[17] Ibid., p. 15.
[18] Ibid., p. 44.
[19] Ibid., p. 45.
[20] Ibid., p. 45.

The second variant posits that representation is the link between concepts and language. It enables us to refer to the real world of people, objects, events etc and to the imaginary world of fictional things. Language is a system of representation consisting of signs, which stand for, or represent, concepts and the relations between them. Language in its broadest sense can mean words, writing, images, sounds, gesture etc. The question then arises as to how do we know which sign represents which concept? In the case of visual signs (photographs, printing etc) this may seem simple enough but even when they bear close resemblance to the things to which they refer they are still signs. They carry meaning and have therefore to be interpreted. As the relationship between a sign and its referent becomes less clear the meaning begins to slip away and no longer transparently passes from one person to another.[21]

The relationship between concept and sign is more difficult in the case of written and spoken language as the words do not look like or sound like the things to which they refer. In part this is because there are different kinds of sign. Generally speaking visual signs are known as *iconic* signs as they bear a resemblance in their form to that which they refer. Written or spoken signs are *symbolic* signs. They bear no resemblance to that which they refer.[22] In this case the relationship between sign, concept and object is coded such that when we think of a stone the code tells us to use the word 'stone'.[23] *Indexical* signs have a causal relationship to whatever they represent.

It can be said therefore that 'representation is the production of meaning through language'[24] where the word language is used here in its broadest sense. The constructionist view is that we use signs organised into languages to communicate with others. Languages use signs to symbolize, stand for, or reference objects, people, and events in both the real and imaginary world.[25]

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[21] Ibid., p. 32.
[22] In terms of C.S.Peirce's classification of signs icons resemble their subjects, indices point to some entity, and symbols conventionally signify something. From *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce,* Editors C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958.
[23] Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage Publications 2003, p. 27.
[24] Ibid., p. 28.
[25] Ibid., p. 28.

For Saussure the sign had two elements:[26]

> The *signifier* (the form or actual word or image) and

> The *signified* (the corresponding concept that the sign brings to mind).

The relationship between the two can and does change over time such that differences in meaning can be ascribed to the same sign. It is clear from this that understanding the meaning of a sign involves an active process of interpretation. The reader becomes as important as the writer (and the viewer as important as the artist). In a semiotic approach, clothes, for example, can act as signs to say something about the wearer. In which case the cloth or material of the clothes and how it is cut or fashioned can be seen as a signifier and the meaning attached to it, its statement about the wearer that we construct, is the signified.[27] This process of recognising the material to be an article of clothing and then linking these signs to a broader cultural theme and meaning, Barthes describes as being one of *denotation* and *connotation*. These terms and how they are used in this thesis are explained more fully in Chapter 4.

In the pictorial arts the term 'representation' has differing meanings. Gombrich talks of how the skilfulness of pictorial representation progressed from rude beginnings to the perfection of illusion. By this representation equates to resemblance. However he establishes a basic definition for his work where representation can be seen to mean both 'portrayal' and 'substitute'[28] and it is in this sense as used by Walton in 2.2.4.

Podro uses the word depiction to cover what he terms representational painting. By this I am assuming he means works that look like or resemble their subject. He adds that his arguments for depiction hold, in some essential way, for twentieth century abstract painting where there is no pre-pictorial subject.[29] It is implicit that for Podro there is a difference between depiction and representation although this is not clarified. He holds that recognition of subject is an essential element of depiction and that this remains the case even when the painter 'radically transforms'[30] the image.

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[26] Ibid., p. 31.
[27] Ibid., p. 37.
[28] Juliet Graver Istrabadi, 'Ernst Gombrich', in *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century,* USA: Routledge, 2003, p. 138.
[29] Michael Podro, Depiction, USA: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 1.
[30] Ibid., p. 5.

In her concept of representation Kristeva takes up Freud's theory of drives of instinctual energies that operate between biology and culture, between soma and psyche, between body and representation. For Kristeva all representation is composed of two elements, the semiotic and the symbolic. All signification is composed of these two elements. In the representational arts the semiotic element is described as the discharge of bodily drives as they are discharged in signification and as evidenced by rhythms, tones, colour and movement. This drive can be destabilising and it is the symbolic element that gives stability and provides the representational element in a work. She asserts that the structures of grammar and syntax are the symbolic supports of the process of representation [in the literary arts]. Kristeva suggests that words refer to things because of the symbolic structure of language but that words give meaning to life because of their semiotic content. Without the symbolic all signification would be babble or delirium but without the semiotic all signification would have no meaning or importance in our lives. Different forms of representation have different combinations of semiotic and symbolic elements. The tension between the two is what produces representation, which by its nature is precarious.[31]

For Kristeva the semiotic element of representation has its roots in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, which says that in the process of becoming an individual the early experiences of the maternal body need to be repressed. The semiotic rhythms, tones and movements associated with these first experiences of the mother try to find their way back and can only do this through artistic representation.

Kristeva's concepts of representation, finds a parallel with Deleuze. Kristeva sees the artistic process as making sense of chaotic inner drives and forces whereas Deleuze sees the same process as making sense of the chaos that exists outside of the body. Deleuze's theory of art is key to the development of an extended theory of depiction and is explained in 4.2.1.

In this thesis the term 'representation' is used in the sense of 'portrayal' or 'substitute' which allows inclusion of works that contain abstracted elements of original objects and where the artist has developed his own system of symbols. As an example of this

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[31] Kelly Oliver, *Julia Kristeva*, article in *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century,* USA: Routledge, 2003, p. 167.

I have in mind the middle to later work of Kandinsky where elements of his figurative works were used and modified or codified in his later works.

'Resemblance' will be used to describe works where:

> …something appropriately perceptual happens when people look at a picture that to some (unspecified) extent meet the ideal of matching.[32]

In other words where the viewer is able to recognize and match elements in the picture with features of the outside world. This would include, for example, pictures that fit with the idea of the imitation of appearances where, in Goodman's words:

> A picture drawn in correct perspective will, under specified conditions, deliver to the eye a bundle of light rays matching that delivered by the object itself.[33]

'Depiction' is used in this project in the way that Wollheim defines it namely to manipulate particular materials in a way as to create a recognisable representation of something. These are the recognitional and configurational aspects of a picture that Wollheim uses in his analysis of pictorial depiction actions of seeing-in and two-foldness. Wollheim's ideas are modified by Dilworth as described in 2.2.6.

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[32] Patrick Maynard, *drawing distinctions: the varieties of graphic expression,* USA: Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 102.
[33] Ibid., p. 102.

Chapter 2

Depiction

2.1 Introduction

What is it to depict something in terms of two-dimensional works of art? The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives only part of an answer by giving the definition 'to show or represent by a painting or drawing' and the etymology of the word does not give much away either. It is from the Latin verb 'depingere' where the 'de' prefix of the word has the meaning 'completely' and 'pingere' means to paint. But the literature on the subject suggests something more. To paraphrase Richard Wollheim it suggests that depiction in painting and drawing means to mark a surface in such a way and with such intention as to produce a recognisable image of something in the world. The fashioning of the material of the work, its 'facture', is to portray or indicate this something in the world.

Theories of depiction, and there are many of them, seek to explain how this is done. Or rather how we, the viewer, can understand and respond to what has been done. To demonstrate this pictorially, consider the following two images. One is a detail taken from the other.

In Figure 3 a garden scene is depicted with a bridge over a pond. There are water lilies growing on the surface of the water, various plants around the edge of the pond, and in the background is a weeping willow, which is reflected by the water. The detail shown in Figure 4 gives an insight as to how Monet painted this picture. There is a dense network of different marks that reveal his painting technique. In this detail the surface texture of the canvas is apparent and this, together with the marks of the paint, serves to remind us that a painting or drawing is, in the first resort, an intentionally marked surface.
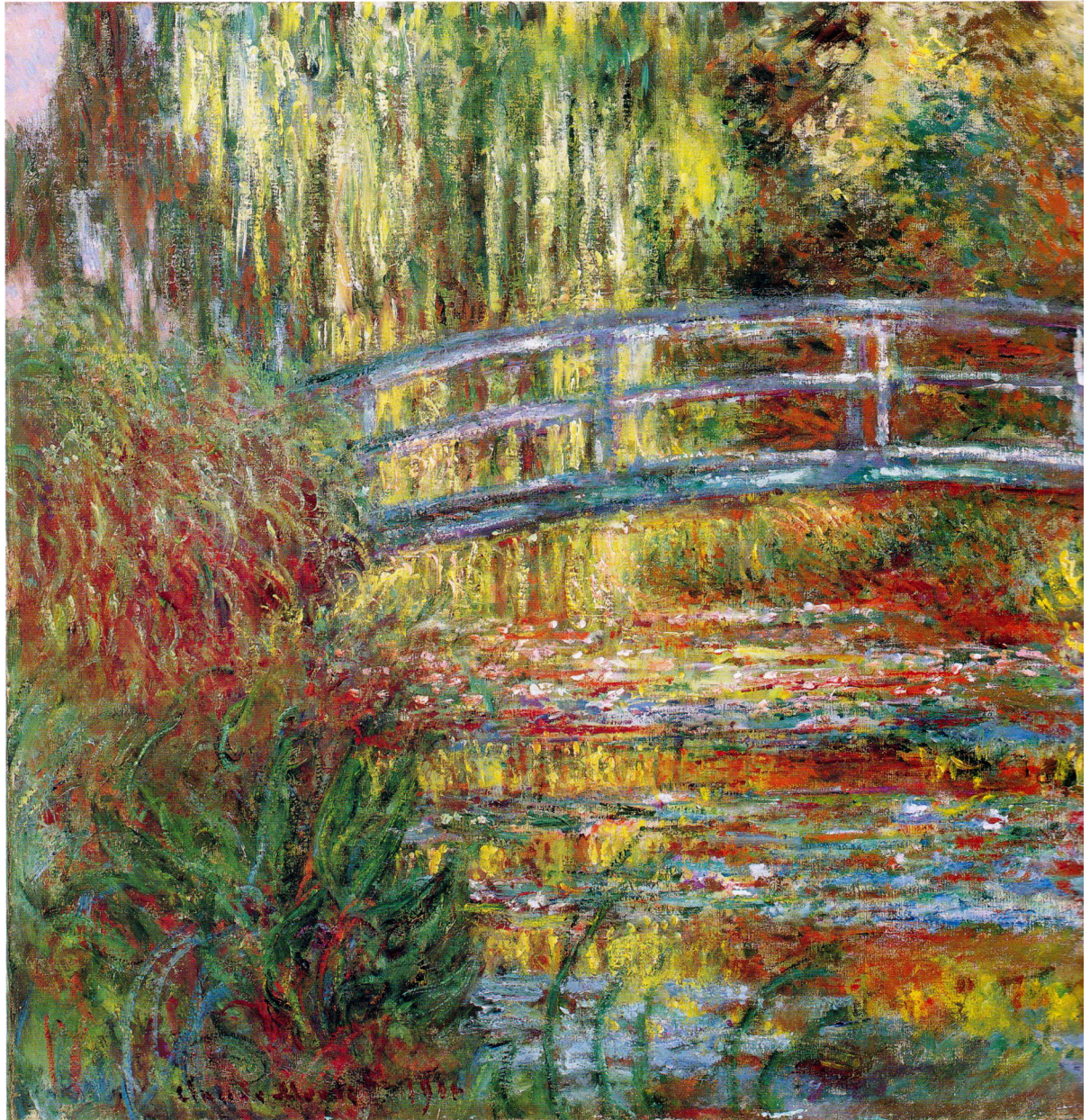
Figure 3. Monet, *The Water Lily Pond*, 1900, oil on canvas, 9000mm x9200 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
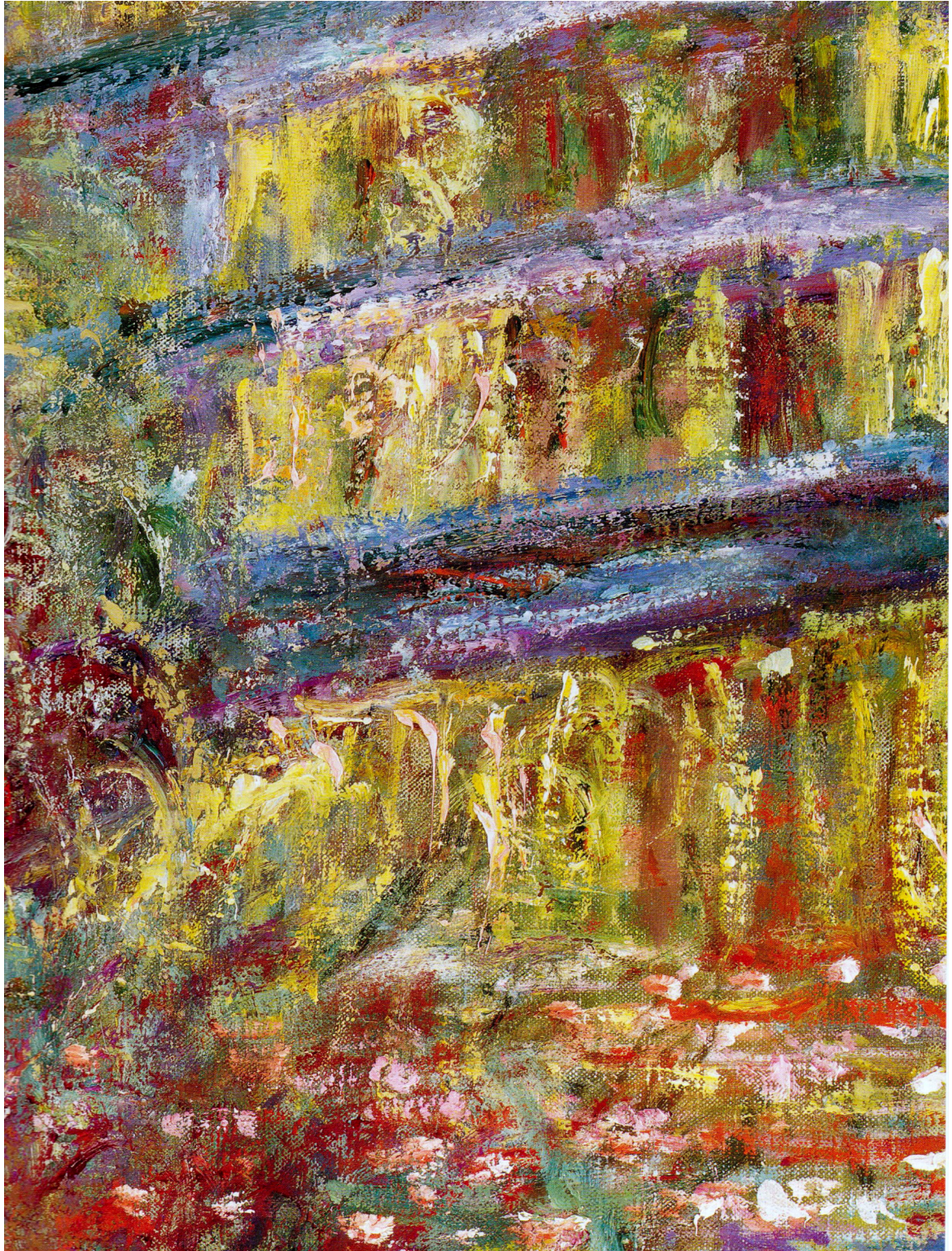
Figure 4. Detail of *The Water Lily Pond*

How this intentionally marked surface is used by the artist to convey some meaning to the viewer and how the viewer understands this meaning is the subject of attention in this chapter.

This is the area of interest of theories of depiction. The literature review revealed a number of these and this chapter makes a critical survey of the principal writings on depiction. It was clear that any such survey had to include the work of Ernst Gombrich, Richard Wollheim, Nelson Goodman and Kendall Walton. They are key writers on the subject and their work invariably serves as foundation for more contemporary writers. These latter include Michael Podro, John Dilworth, Robert Hopkins, Dominic Lopes, Flint Schier, Andrew Harrison and John Kulvicki.

A short description of each of the above is useful at this point before a fuller appraisal is made. This latter attempts to capture the key arguments of each of the theorists and to distil into a few paragraphs what are, in many cases, complex and extensively reasoned theories.

Gombrich is central to theoretical arguments on depiction since the publication of *Art and Illusion* in 1960 and has clearly influenced such writers as Wollheim and Walton. His idea was that a picture gave the illusion that the viewer was seeing the object portrayed. In other words the viewer is fooled into thinking they are seeing the portrayed object.

Wollheim suggests that our viewing of a picture is a two-fold experience whereby we see a depicted object in the myriad of marks that form a painting or drawing (what Wollheim terms seeing-in) at the same time as being simultaneously aware of the marked surface.

Goodman approaches the question from a semiotic viewpoint in that a picture contains a number of signs that can, like a language, be read so that we can understand what it is that is being depicted.

Walton proposes that a picture act as a prop in a game of make-believe, undertaken by the viewer, based upon the depicted content of the picture.

Podro has written extensively on depiction and essentially from the viewpoint of one who has first hand knowledge of paintings and painters.

Dilworth has written on depictive theory particularly in relation to Wollheim's notion of two-foldness, which he extends to recognize the material of the work and how it has been applied (its facture).

Hopkins explains his 'resemblance' theory, which asserts that pictures trigger a perceptual state in which the experience of the picture can be likened to the experience of the object depicted.

Lopes, together with Schier, give perceptual accounts of depiction that state that pictures serve to bring in to play our abilities to recognize the object portrayed in them.

Kulvicki is mentioned here as he provides an important contribution to the subject of pictorial depiction and in particular a critical commentary on Goodman's theory.

Harrison writes on philosophy and the arts and in particular gives a clear account of visual metaphor.

Gombrich, Wollheim and Podro are art historians and writers on art. Dilworth, Goodman, Harrison, Hopkins, Kulvicki, and Lopes are philosophers with concerns in Aesthetics or are analytic philosophers.

The key theories of depiction are described and critically appraised and a summary made of each. This process helps identify certain gaps, which are then addressed in the Case Studies carried out in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.2   Depiction Theories

2.2.1 Gombrich.

In his book *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* Gombrich traces the history of representation and addresses the problem of the 'rendering of visual effects to create the illusion of life-likeness'.[34] He asserts that a painting is created by a process of trial and error where the artist first constructs a basic model or schema. This is gradually corrected and /or modified until they match the desired impression of the object.

He rejects both the idea that the artist is able to make a true or identical copy of what he sees and the idea of the innocent eye arguing that our experience and knowledge of the world play such a crucial part in our perception of it that we cannot completely separate them from our seeing and interpretation. Our perceptions are also influenced by the history of painting itself.[35] Drawing analogies with scientific discovery[36] Gombrich makes the point that painting proceeds through a process of 'making coming before matching and the making process itself going through the process of schemas and corrections'[37]. He suggests that artists need to create a schema that can be adjusted to the needs of portrayal and the painting itself needs to match those aspects of experience that have become important for people to capture.[38]

In his work *Meditations on a Hobby Horse or Roots of Artistic Form*[39] Gombrich gives account of his approach to representation and the development of naturalism in *Art and Illusion*. [40] He first decides that an ordinary hobby horse is not an image of a horse as it is not an imitation of the horse's external form. It does however represent a

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[34] Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2002. p. 246.

[35] David E. Cooper, 'Ernst Gombrich', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David Cooper, USA: Blackwell Publishers-1997, p. 173.

[36] As described in Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London: Routledge, 1992.

[37] David E. Cooper, 'Ernst Gombrich', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David Cooper, USA: Blackwell Publishers-1997, p. 174.

[38] Ibid., p. 174.

[39] Ernst Gomrich, 'Meditations on a Hobby Horse or Roots of Artistic Form', in L.L.Whyte(editor) *Aspects of Form: a symposium on Form in Nature and Art,* New York:1951 (reprinted in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other essays on the Theory of Art*, London: Phaidon, 1963)

[40] Juliet Graver Istrabadi, 'Ernst Gombrich', in *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century,* edited by Chris Murray, USA: Routledge, 2003, p. 138.

horse in the sense that it is a substitute for a horse but not a portrayal of a horse. Having thus decided he makes a number of points:[41]

> To a child a hobbyhorse is like all other horses. The degree to which an object represents something is totally independent of its degree of difference to the original.
>
> That art is creation and not imitation is consistent with how art was used in the past where the image served as a substitute for the original much in the way the hobby horse does.
>
> In contemplating a possible scenario as to how the first hobby-horse may have been used Gombrich comes to the conclusions that substitution may precede portrayal and creation may precede communication.
>
> The same stick that was used for the hobby-horse could become a substitute for something else in another setting. It could be given a different meaning by a different group.
>
> A conceptual image may not consist of features that make up the image of the object in mind. It may be that there is a minimum image, which fits into a psychological lock.[42]

Referring to the Monet painting in Figure 3, in Gombrich's terms we are fooled into thinking we are actually viewing the bridge over the pond.

Gombrich's account of depiction is, therefore, that pictures of objects and scenes trigger illusions that induce in us experiences similar to those experienced when actually viewing those objects and scenes.[43]

No account of depiction could be undertaken without an account of Gombrich's contribution to the subject and his work has clearly influenced a number of the writers on depiction especially Walton and Wollheim.

2.2.2 Wollheim.

Wollheim develops Wittgenstein's idea of 'seeing-as'[44] to formulate his notions of 'seeing-in' and 'twofoldness.' He explains his ideas of seeing-in by first considering the roles taken by both the viewer and by the artist. The viewer is not to take a passive

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[41] Ibid., p. 139.
[42] Ibid., p. 139.
[43] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures,* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996, p. 8.
[44] The example for this is that of the image where it can be seen to depict either a duck or a rabbit.

role but an active one where he/she is attentive to the information provided by the picture. The role of the artist is to fulfil both the part of agent and that of the viewer such that the painting should produce a certain kind of experience in the viewer that reflects the intentions of the artist. The viewer can only get this experience through looking at the picture and attending to how the artist has worked.[45]

Seeing-in can therefore be seen as the psychological capacity for seeing marks on a stained or painted surface and seeing the effects of those marks as distinct aspects of the same perceptual experience. He argues that it is a feature of art that both artist and spectator are required in the making and responding to the work. It is this that opens up the work to criticism and interpretation.[46]

Although he recognises a legitimate role for background information affecting how the viewer will see a painting he insists that primary information must come from looking at the painting and he decries those schools of thought that propose to explain pictorial meaning in terms of rule, convention, symbol system, or analogy to linguistic meaning.[47]

Wollheim develops a theory of 'two-foldness' in which he argues that that the artist builds up analogies between medium and the object of representation. He cannot be content, however, to leave the two visual experiences in such a way that one floats above the other. The artist must be concerned to return one experience to the other such that we do not have two experiences of the picture but one experience where the perceived aspects of both the materiality of the surface and of the configuration of the subject, interact and transform each other within our experience.[48]

He develops this further when he talks of 'thematization' or the use of the materials of the painting to endow the painted surface with a particular meaning. He argues that the purposeful use of materials converts them into a medium that, unlike the materials themselves, is endowed with content or meaning. Dilworth points out that, at various

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[45] Richard Wollheim, 'What the Spectator sees', in *Visual Theory* edited by Norman Bryson and Michael Ann Holly, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 102.
[46] Carolyn Wilde, 'Richard Wollheim', in: *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David Cooper, p. 448.
[47] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 76.
[48] Ibid., pp. 44-46.

points in his argument, Wollheim claims either that a medium has meaning or content, or that it generates meaning, or that it is capable of carrying meaning.[49]

In the example of the Monet painting shown in Figure 3 what we see, in Wollheim's terms, are a range of different marks in different colours painted in an energetic way which depicts a garden scene with a bridge over a pond. By Wollheim's argument we are simultaneously aware of both the way the medium of paint is used and that which it describes. But background information tells us his concerns at this point in his development are with technical and formalist issues. The painting is one of a series that Monet painted at this time and marks a 'moment of critical change'[50] where the pigments are more highly coloured and the brushwork bolder than previous work. They lead on, some twenty years later, to paintings with the same subject matter that have vibrant colour, more chaotic brushwork, and where form has all but disintegrated.[51]

Wollheim lists:

> …three fundamental perceptual capacities that the artist relies upon the viewer to have and to use. These are seeing-in, expressive perception, and visual delight.[52]

These capacities allow the artist to represent external objects, express mental or internal phenomena, and induce a form of visual pleasure.[53]

Seeing-in precedes representation, says Wollheim, in that if a surface is marked in such a way and with the intention that something specific A is seen in it, and if a number of people readily agree that A can be seen in it then it is held that the correct reading of the marked surface is of A. Any other reading of it is incorrect.[54] This, however, raises the questions:

> What is and what is not representation?
> What can be represented?

[49] John Dilworth, *The Double Content of Art*, Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2005, p. 112.
[50] George T. M. Shackleford and Mary Anne Stevens, *Monet in The 20th. Century*, Newhaven, New York: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 118.
[51] Ibid., plates 78,79 and 80.
[52] Richard Wollheim, 'What the Spectator sees', in: *Visual Theory* edited by Norman Bryson and Michael Ann Holly, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 104.
[53] Ibid., p. 104.
[54] Ibid., p. 107.

In what sense is a representational painting realistic?[55]

In responding to his first question Wollheim identifies information signs and maps, for example, as areas of representation that do not require us to see whatever they are in their surface whereas figurative painting and much abstract paint does.[56]

As to what can be represented Wollheim identifies a simple distinction between objects and events. This is further classified as specific (identified) objects-or- events and objects-or-events of a particular classification. In other words a painting may be of a Mrs. Barton who is a young woman or it may be a painting of an unidentified young woman (being that classification of representational paintings known as portraits which have as their subject young women).[57]

In answering his third question Wollheim comments that the word realistic is interchangeable with naturalism, lifelike, truth to nature etc. The point he makes is that most accounts of naturalism concentrate only on the recognitional aspect of a painting and ignore that aspect of seeing-in, which is our awareness of the marked surface itself (i.e. how the picture is configured). An adequate account of naturalism needs to take into account these two aspects of the visual experience.[58]

To summarise Wollheim's ideas he proposes that we possess a perceptual capacity that he calls 'seeing-in'. This capacity to see a depicted object within the marked surface together with our simultaneous awareness of both object and surface, which he refers to as 'two-foldness', is deeply seated within human psychology he claims. This facility precedes seeing what is represented in the painting.

However, to see what is represented in the painting requires us to see what it was that the painter intended. He contends that what a painting represents can be defined in terms of what a spectator can see in it, provided only that what he sees in it concurs with, and is brought about through, the artist's fulfilled intention.[59]

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[55] Ibid., p. 115.
[56] Ibid., p. 118.
[57] Ibid., p. 129.
[58] Ibid., p. 133.
[59] Richard Wollheim, 'What the Spectator Sees', in: *Visual Theory* edited by Norman Bryson and Michael Ann Holly (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 107.

There a number of objections to Wollheim's theory of depiction together with some proposed modifications. Lopes, for example, suggests that only some pictures would allow for the 'two-fold' experience[60] and that, in the final analysis, Wollheim's theory explains the experience of viewing a picture but does not explain how it depicts. Gombrich thought that two-foldness is impossible as there could not be a simultaneous experience of surface and depicted object. The experience has to be of one or the other. Wollheim sees the twofold experience as being analogous to the actual experience of seeing the depicted object but, for Hopkins, Wollheim stops short of giving any explanation as to how this happens.[61] Dilworth sees the theory as being incomplete and proposes modifications to make it more coherent (see 2.2.6).

The main question for this project is to determine through the analysis undertaken in the series of case studies if Wollheim's theory, as modified by Dilworth, can be usefully applied to non-figurative works. In this respect Wollheim offers the example of a Hans Hoffman painting[62] (see Figure 15) in which he claims that his theory of seeing-in and two-foldness apply based primarily on the visual experience of space engendered by the painting. This, I assume, is Hoffman's idea of 'push and pull'. The application is limited however and Wollheim does not develop the argument further.

In contrast to Wollheim's theory on depiction Goodman developed a semiotic approach.

2.2.3   Goodman

Goodman in his book *Languages of Art*[63] examines the varieties and functions of symbols and symbol systems used in the arts, and maintains that 'works of art belong to symbol systems with determinate syntactic and semantic Structures.'[64] Understanding a work of art consists in interpreting it correctly.

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[60] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996). p. 50.
[61] Robert Hopkins, *Picture, Image and Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998, p. 20.
[62] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 62. The painting referred to is Hans Hoffman's *Pompeii*, Collection of The Tate.
[63] Goodman, Nelson, *Languages of Art-An approach to a theory of symbols*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
[64] Catherine Z. Elgin, 'Nelson Goodman' in: *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David Cooper, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992, p. 175.

Artworks are seen as 'characters' in a system of symbols that must be read. A 'character' in this sense is a class of symbol tokens or marks. What makes something a symbol in the sense used here is its incorporation into a scheme that is used to refer to objects.[65] In Figure 3 Monet uses a series of marks (symbol tokens) that are incorporated into a scheme that then depicts by referring the viewer to a bridge over a pond.

Languages of Art deals with clarifying the structures and limitations of the systems that the various arts employ and talks of symbols operating by using two modes of reference. These are denotation and exemplification.[66] A symbol denotes whatever it applies to (a name denotes its bearer, a portrait denotes its subject). Denotation works by a mechanism where the symbol points at or indicates an object (e.g. cruet pots can represent players in a football game). Some symbols do not even denote but employ other modes of reference one of which is exemplification whereby a symbol refers to itself (i.e. it is an example of what it refers to). Elgin gives the example here of a Mondrian painting exemplifying the squareness of the shape it contains and the example of the commercial paint sample exemplifying the colour and sheen of the actual product.[67]

Goodman goes on to say that denotation and exemplification need not be literal. A distinctive aspect of his theory is that 'metaphorical' symbols genuinely refer to their figurative subjects such that Michelangelo's *Pietà* genuinely refers to sorrow. A work of art expresses the properties that it metaphorically exemplifies.[68] Being an inanimate lump of stone the *Pietà* cannot literally exemplify sorrow but it does exemplify sorrow metaphorically – it therefore expresses sorrow:

> Interpreting a work of art involves discovering what symbols constitute it, how they symbolize, what they refer to, and to what effect. Because of the variety and richness of symbols there will be many interpretations, but not all will be correct. Goodman argues that only those interpretations that make 'good

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[65] Charles Nussbaum, 'Nelson Goodman' in: *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Chris Murray, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 143.
[66] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art-An approach to a theory of symbols*, p. 5. and p. 52.
[67] Catherine Z. Elgin, 'Nelson Goodman' in: *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by David Cooper, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992, p. 175.
[68] Ibid., p. 176.

sense' of the work's symbolic functions are acceptable. The feelings that a work of art evokes are sources of understanding.[69]

Goodman differentiates between pictorial denotation, which he terms 'representation,' and linguistic denotation, which he terms 'description'. Pictures can denote but may require the addition of a title to do this and fix the reference uniquely.[70]

To be able to depict something a representation (painting) must denote within a pictorial system of symbols. But denotation in itself is not enough for depiction. The picture must say something about the depicted object in order for it to be depiction. Put another way there has to be some degree of predication. In the Monet painting what is denoted is a bridge but what is predicated is a particular type of bridge.

But what is a pictorial symbol system? In essence it is a plan of correlation whose principles are a 'matter of the habits and practices of the users of the system.'[71] A pictorial symbol system is defined by the way things are represented pictorially, by the system users, in a particular context. For example Japanese painters of the nineteenth century would be operating within a different pictorial system to Venetian painters of the sixteenth century. When a system becomes entrenched in the practices of its users a standard of realism is attained whereby pictures are decreed realistic by the extent to which they resemble a depicted object.[72] 'Realism is relative, determined by the system of representation that is the standard for a given culture at a given time.'[73]

Pictorial symbol systems consist of character sets, which are made up of marks. These character sets refer to or denote a domain of compliants, which are objects in the world. In the Monet painting the depicted elements (bridge, tree etc) are the character sets, which are built up with a series of marks. How these marks make up the character sets is the syntax of the system, which, in pictorial symbol systems, Goodman defines as being dense.[74] By this is meant that differences in the properties

[69] Ibid., p. 176.
[70] Charles Nussbaum, 'Nelson Goodman' in: *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Chris Murray, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 144.
[71] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures,* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996, p. 65.
[72] Ibid., p. 65.
[73] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 37.
[74] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, p. 67.

of the marks will make for a different character in the system. The semantics of the system concerns the relationships of the character sets to the compliants. Each character has its 'character constitutive aspects' (CCAs) by which is meant such things as colour and shape, things that are important for the picture to be whatever it is a picture of.[75] Pictures are analogue representations in that they are essentially replete in the sense that they have more CCAs than other types of pictorial systems. For Goodman pictures contain three principal structural features; syntactic density, semantic density and relative repleteness.[76]

As an example of these basic considerations of Goodman's theory consider the Monet painting in Figure 4 again. The character sets are fashioned by a series of painted marks. These sets we can relate to some object in the world because the pictorial symbol system we use tells us that a particular character set is compliant with a particular object in the world – a bridge say.

To summarise Goodman's semiotic approach to works of art is one that looks at the varieties and functions of symbols and symbol systems used such that understanding a work of art consists in interpreting it correctly.[77]

There are many objections to this approach. Wollheim was dismissive of it as there was no consideration of the art of painting. Alon Chasid argues that one aspect of pictures is that they show an aesthetic property of the depicted object and this requires the engagement of aesthetic judgement. Goodman's thesis states that pictures only refer to these aesthetic properties and as reference is based on arbitrary rules of correlation the pictures cannot therefore be accessible to aesthetic judgement.[78]

Douglas Arrell [79] suggests a modification to Goodman's theory in which he claims that Goodman never defines what he means by the term denotation and concludes that

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[75] John V. Kulvicki, *On Images: Their structure and content*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.16.
[76] Ibid., p. 17.
[77] Charles Nussbaum, 'Nelson Goodman' in: *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Chris Murray, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 143.
[78] Alon Chasid, *Why the Pictorial Relation is not Reference*, British Journal of Aesthetics vol. 44 no.3 July 2004.
[79] Douglas Arrell, *What Goodman should have said*, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Crticism, Vol. 46, No.1 (Autumn), 1987, pp. 41-49.

it means reference, which does not depend on any pre-existing relationship between symbol and referent. This equates to Peirce's definition of a symbol (a sign whose fitness to represent lies in the fact that we want it to). Reference does not require resemblance, which, Arrell states, is not absolute but depends on what properties are shared between picture and subject. As all objects share some properties, how is it we notice some of those shared by symbol and referent in the case of representation and not notice them in the case of denotation? How does representation tell us which of its properties we are to notice? Goodman should have written that representation is a symbol which refers to an object and exemplifies one or more of the properties of that object. Arrell proposes that the theory be modified such that a symbol exemplifies a property only if it refers to and possess that property, it represents an object only if it refers to that object and exemplifies one or more of its properties, and it denotes an object only if it refers to that object and does not exemplify any of its properties. Goodman does not directly address the issue of application to non-figurative art and his theory is therefore aimed at explaining figurative work. Notwithstanding this there are elements of it, particularly the notion of a pictorial symbol system, which have application in understanding non-figurative art. These are looked at in Chapters 3 and 4.

Kulvicki suggests[80] that Goodman did not do enough to define CCA's and Lopes argues that pictures are not denotative as Goodman maintains, rather they substitute for objects in the way Gombrich suggests. This point leads us to Walton's theory in which the idea of the substitute prompts specific imaginings.

2.2.4   Walton

Kendall Walton develops a theory of depiction which states that it is the function of representational works of art to act as props in games of make-believe. The perceptual experience and our imaginings when we look at a work of art are connected acts. The imaginings prompted by the picture that is being looked at inform the experience of looking at it.[81]

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[80] John V. Kulvicki, *On Images: Their structure and content*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 29.
[81] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundation of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 69.

Walton initially draws a parallel between children's games of make-believe and the way in which we understand paintings, films etc.[82] The objects in children's games give rise to their imagining what he calls 'fictional truths' that are associated with the object. The object acts as a 'prop', or prompt, to cause certain imaginings.[83] He questions these 'objects of imaginings' and differentiates between imaginings related to an actual object and imaginings that are not. In the former he suggests the experience is richer and more vivid than the latter. He gives the example of actors in a theatre production who, being real and present, are more the objects of the spectator's imaginings than those in a film where the experience may be less vivid.[84]

Walton suggests that one of the most important objects of imaginings is the imaginers themselves and that imagining essentially involves imagining about oneself.[85] In other words it is an important aspect of imagining that we are aware that it is we who are doing the imagining. As he puts it:

> We are to imagine of our activities of looking at the patterns of marks on a surface that form the picture that this is the seeing of the portrayed subject.[86]

In the Monet picture in Figure 3 we are, to take Walton at his word, to imagine that the markings of the paint and the patterns they form that we are on the edge of a pond looking at a (Japanese style) bridge.

Representations, then, are things that have the function of requiring us to imagine in certain ways depending on their relevant properties. Visual depiction involves not only imagining something and imagining seeing it, but also imagining something about our own perceptual actions.[87]

Imaginings can take place in a number of settings and Walton lists dreams, daydreams, games of make-believe, and experiencing works of art.[88] If we imagine in

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[82] Ibid., p. 11.
[83] Ibid., p. 21.
[84] Ibid., p. 26.
[85] Ibid., p. 28.
[86] Patrick Maynard, *drawing distinctions – the varieties of graphic expression*, USA: Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 88
[87] Ibid., p. 88.
[88] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundation of the Representational Arts*, USA: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 35.

a game of make-believe that something happens then Walton calls this a 'fiction' or 'fictional truth'. As an example of this he gives Seurat's picture of La Grande Jatte which shows, amongst other things, a couple strolling in the park and it is this Walton describes as a 'fiction' or a 'fictional truth'. The picture acts as prop to the viewer to imagine a couple walking in the park and indeed mandates the viewer to do this within the set of rules surrounding the picture itself.[89]

Although toys, works of art, wall patterns etc are seen as props in games of make-believe the differences in the nature of these props needs to be identified in order for Walton to develop his theory. Whereas certain objects are used as props for a single game, representational works of art are made specifically for use as props of certain kinds.[90] Appreciating them is a matter of playing the game of make-believe in a manner prescribed in their making. We can be interested in what contribution they may make to this game, what fictional truth it is their purpose to generate, without actually playing the game of make-believe itself.[91]

It is the function then, of a representation to be used as a prop in a game of make-believe and to allow the viewer to take part in this game by prompting them to imagine things associated with the representation. The word 'function' as used in this context is to indicate that certain rules apply as to how the work is to be used in the game of make-believe. These indications or 'propositions' associated with or deriving from the work of art mandate the viewer to imagine things about the work that are fictional and it is these that Walton calls 'fictional truths'.[92] He gives the example of the markings on a canvas which prescribe imagining that a unicorn is surrounded by a fence. It is a fiction that this is so, he claims, and the work acts as a prop in generating this fictional truth.[93] We are therefore dealing with two fictional situations, one inside the other. The painting sets out a fictional situation outside of which is our activity of perceiving it.

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[89] Ibid., p. 39.
[90] Ibid., p. 51.
[91] Ibid., p. 51.
[92] Ibid., p. 69.
[93] Kendall Walton, *Précis of Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts,* in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. LI, No. 2, June 1991, p.380

Walton raises the question as to what qualifies as a representation and he looks at both figurative and non-figurative art. He makes the distinction that figurative works of art 'point beyond' themselves whereas non-figurative art does not[94] (this is arguable and is addressed in Chapter 5).

Walton looks at abstract or non-representational painting as he refers to it and concludes that 'many of them are representations in that the characters in their fictional worlds are simply the coloured patches on their surfaces'[95] and it is these that prompt imaginings. Of what sort these are is not clear but my idea of non-iconographic depiction as explained in Chapter 4 may give some explanation.

In his book *Mimesis as Make-Believe* and his précis of that work, Walton explores the workings of the representational arts in which he includes novels, theatre, film, sculpture and figurative painting. He does this through a comparison with children's games of make-believe. Both involve fictional worlds and require the exercising of the imagination.[96] It is clear from this that Walton places great emphasis on the role of the viewer (participator) in the games of make-believe. Little is said, however, on how the author of a work may influence the way in which the work is received.

The seeing and imagining required when one looks at a picture informs the experience of looking at it and are bound together in this one experience.[97] The game of make-believe involved must be rich and vivid and is determined by the depth of the experience the viewers have when they imagine performing the visual actions they carried out.[98]

In applying his theory to pictorial works of art in particular Walton makes the analogy between pictorial and verbal representation, between depiction and description and between showing and telling.[99]

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[94] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundation of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, p.58
[95] Ibid., p. 380.
[96] Kendall Walton, *Précis of Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts,* in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. LI, No. 2, June 1991, p.379
[97] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundation of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 295.
[98] Ibid., p. 296.
[99] Ibid., p. 293.

Bence Nanay notes[100] that Walton's theory contains his own notion of two-foldness which, he claims, does not contradict that of Wollheim's whose concept of seeing-in has the twofold experience that permits simultaneous attention to what is represented and to the representation, the object and to the medium. Walton's claim is, however, that the experience of the artwork is an imagined experience of the subject of the work whereas Wollheim stresses that the experience is of the artwork itself.[101]

Although Walton gives an example of how his theory may work in relation to non-figurative art the case made seems unconvincing. It is not clear what imaginings may be prompted by abstract forms or how these may be directed by the artist.

2.2.5   Podro.

Podro traces the theme of representation of a subject in painting back to Alberti and Vasari.[102] He maintains that drawings and paintings achieve this through abstracting elements of the subject and transforming them through their respective procedures. This process of abstraction requires that the selected elements have to be kept in mind in the act of painting and that the painting subsumes them.[103] He quotes Andrew Harrison in this respect:

> How the maker of the picture made his picture becomes a way of seeing how he attended… how the materials were put together partially re-enacts the pattern of his attention, and the attention to a possible, imagined, seen object he invites from us. He is at the same time depicting an object and his attention to how the unorganized units of his attention could be seen to be related…In so far as we can regard the construction of a pattern or organization of material as a testimony to the exercise of thought of a maker, the expression of his thought in making, we are thus led to see the depicted objects in terms of that expression of practical thought with materials.[104]

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[100] Bence Nanay, Taking Twofoldness Seriously: Walton on Imagination and Depiction, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:3 Summer 2004.
[101] Ibid. 288
[102] Michael Podro, 'Depiction and the Golden Calf', in: *Visual Theory* edited by Norman Bryson and Michael Ann Holly (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 163.
[103] Ibid., p. 162.
[104] Andrew Harrison, *Making and Thinking: A Study of Intelligent Activities*, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978, p. 184.

Podro's concerns, therefore, are with the way a painting or drawing selects from and reconstructs the subject in the 'medium and procedures of painting'[105] and how it can address itself to the viewer such that they recognise the subject remade within the procedure of the painting.[106] In analysing this further he addresses two principal questions: How can the three dimensional world be shown on a two dimensional surface? And how does the material and facture of the work enter into our awareness of the subject depicted? These two questions are about the conditions that make depiction possible. Once resolved the critical question then becomes is how these conditions are used by the artist.[107]

In resolving his first question Podro states that a flat, two-dimensional surface cannot look like or represent a three dimensional scene. For one thing to represent another it must be intended to do so and this must be seen to be so. It is a matter of convention that we use flat surfaces to represent the (three dimensional) world. As an example of what he means Podro gives the example of the *Golden Calf* painting by Poussin. The gold of the calf is represented in the painting by a flat lustreless patch of canvas. Podro claims that we make a negative adjustment in that we restrict our expectation of what will appear. This works, he says, because there are similar "sacrifices" made with the other areas of the depicted scene such that the painting retains cohesiveness and comprehensiveness. 'Short of making a simulacrum of your subject you have to make an interlocking set of sacrifices'.[108]

We have to make similar adjustments, Podro maintains, when considering spatial relations within the depiction.[109] What makes convincing spatial relations in a painting or drawing are changes of scale, overlapping of forms, degrees of clarity or intensity, and the sense that one figure may seem to be looking or moving toward another.[110]

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[105] Michael Podro, 'Depiction and the Golden Calf', in: *Visual Theory* edited by Norman Bryson and Michael Ann Holly (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 164.
[106] Ibid., p. 164.
[107] Ibid., p. 165.
[108] Ibid., p. 166.
[109] Ibid., p. 166.
[110] Ibid., p. 168.

In responding to the second question Podro states that we need to look at the painted (or drawn) surface in two ways. Firstly we scrutinize the surface to see what we recognize in the painted forms that are shown. Secondly we need to recognize that the surface itself has an appearance, which interacts with the form of the depicted subject.[111]

To explain how this may be he looks at a drawing by Poussin, shown in Figure 5, in which forms are created by areas of shading and untouched paper (i.e. the drawing consists of light and dark patches). The drawing presents us with a marked surface that we can scan in a particular way for whatever is depicted.

Figure 5. Nicholas Poussin, *The Baptism of Christ*, Drawing, medium and size not known, Musée Condé, Chantilly.

In terms of the Monet painting in Figure 4, Podro suggests that we first scan the surface to see what we recognize (bridge, pond, tree etc). We then take notice of the surface to see how the work has been painted and the depicted objects formed in the paint. This, according to Podro, stimulates a particular sensation in us.

These are outline answers to the questions of how we can have a convincing two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object and how the surface of the drawing can be part of the depiction? This then begs the third question of how does the viewer and the artist use 'the interpenetration of the painting's real presence and

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[111] Ibid., p. 170.

the projected or imagined world?'[112] Podro's answer to this is to say that they form

part of a single interest. Put another way we participate in a new kind of experience of

the subject and it is that in 'which the relation between the spectator and the subject is

mediated by the art and procedure of painting'.[113]

To clarify and illustrate his ideas Podro looks at the work of Frank Auerbach (Figure

10) where the subject matter was Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*.[114] In particular he

tests the relevance of his ideas against the particular painting and drawing procedures

of Auerbach. Commenting on these Podro remarks:

> A series of drawings were done which must have run concurrently although in
> no simpler relation to the final painting. The sense of summation, of gradual
> stripping down of changing the factors which become focal and their
> reconstruction into a work with its own driving movements can be followed
> through the drawings.[115]

Podro sees both the painting and the drawings by Auerbach as 'insisting on their own

procedures'[116] such that it may seem the original subject of Titian's painting has

almost disappeared. In this case however he explains that the subject of Auerbach's

work is not the subject of Titian's painting but rather Titian's painting itself.[117]

Podro does not to expound a theory of depiction as such. His is more a coherent

commentary on the subject which recognises not only the subject matter but how the

material and facture of the painting enter into our awareness of the subject depicted.

There appears to be an alignment therefore between Podro's comments and

Wollheim's theory.

2.2.6   Dilworth

Dilworth offers a theory of the nature of artworks that is centred on his

'representational content' thesis.[118] This claims that all artworks occur solely as the

'representational content' of some concrete representation. On this view, concrete

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[112] Ibid., p. 173.
[113] Ibid., p. 173.
[114] Shown in Figure 6.
[115] Ibid., p. 178. Three of these are shown as Figures 9, 10, and 11.
[116] Ibid., p. 178.
[117] Ibid., p. 178.
[118] John Dilworth, *Three Depictive Views Defended,* British Journal of Aesthetics Vol.42, No.3, July
2002, 262

artefacts or events represent artworks rather than themselves being, or being instances of, artworks.[119] In other words there is a difference between artefact and artwork. He gives two analogies to explain this.[120]

The mirror image – where the image is non-concrete and distinct from the physical mirror that displays or provides access to it. In imagining the image to be somehow fixed relative to the mirror the relation of the mirror to the image could be seen as analogous to the relation between a physical painting and the visual artwork that it displays. In this analogy the visual artwork would be non-concrete in much the same way as is the mirror image and would be represented by the physical painting much as the mirror displays or represents its image.

The other analogy is that of virtual images seen through lenses as in optics. He likens a physical painting to a lens that can in some way represent or give perceptual access to the artwork.

Since many artworks are representational in that they are about something, or have a subject matter, then there must be two levels of representation. There is a first stage in which a concrete artefact represents an artwork and a second stage in which that artwork represents its subject matter.[121] Dilworth labels this his 'double content' theory. He initially defends this theory in relation to the other arts where he compares the 'condition of originality' of visual artworks to those of plays, novels etc. In the former there is an original artwork but in the latter there is no unique physical artefact to which the artwork is identified (Goodman describes these as *autographic* and *allographic* works respectably).[122]

He develops the theory regarding the visual arts by expanding Wollheim's theory of twofoldness. He sees a problem with this on the grounds that Wollheim implies that the configurational aspect refers to the materials of the painting and does not use the idea of how these are used. In relation to this Dilworth questions how these

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[119] John Dilworth, *The Double Content of Art,* Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2005, p. 15.
[120] Ibid., p. 13.
[121] Ibid., p. 15.
[122] Ibid., p. 67. (Autographic - written with the authors own hand of or pertaining to reproduction by direct facsimile. Allographic - each of two or more alternative forms of a distinctive unit of a writing system. As a letter of an alphabet.)

configurational objects (the intrinsic, inert, materials of a painting) can generate the meaning required for the recognizable content of the two-fold experience.[123]

To make sense of Wollheim's twofoldness claim, Dilworth proposes a tripartite distinction between configuration, medium and subject matter.[124] This would mean that the pictorial experience simultaneously involves the materials of the artwork, the way they are used, and what the subject matter is.

Using the Monet painting in Figure 3, as an example Dilworth is suggesting that the stretched canvas upon which are different pigments each suspended in an oil base, is a concrete artefact. What makes this an artwork is that the materials have been used in such a way that some recognizable form is seen and is intended to be seen in it. The perception of the artwork involves two 'hierarchically related stages.'[125] The first stage he refers to as a relatively low level stage in which notice is taken of the material of the work, how this is used to make marks, and what stylistic aspects there are. The second stage is more conceptual and is to do with the perception and recognition of the subject matter, which has been described by the marks.

Dilworth's theory corresponds directly to Wollheim's in that both allow for two distinct kinds of content namely medium content and subject content. It is the former that Dilworth stresses should be expanded to include how the medium is used. This usage would include stylistic, expressive, medium related, formal, and intentional factors.[126]

He clarifies and refines his argument by claiming that not all artistic meaning and communication can be explained in representational terms. There must be more to the understanding of an artwork than an analysis based on the subject matter only. There are other components of meaning involved in artistic communication not least of which could be expressive, stylistic, medium-related, formal and intentional factors.

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[123] John Dilworth, *Three Depictive Views Defended,* British Journal of Aesthetics Vol.42, No.3, July 2002, p. 259.
[124] Ibid., p. 262.
[125] John Dilworth, *A Double Content Theory of Artistic Representation,* The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 63:3 Summer 2005, p. 249.
[126] John Dilworth, *Three Depictive Views Defended,* British Journal of Aesthetics Vol.42, No.3, July 2002, p. 260.

These he classifies as *aspectual* factors (in that they are aspects of the artwork distinct from the subject). He voices a concern that a general theory of representation concerning itself with a reading of signs and symbols only (he cites Goodman) will be unable to capture what is specifically artistic about an artwork.[127]

The artistic aspects of representational artworks 'could then be explained in terms of the characteristic richness of their aspectual content as compared with their subject matter content.'[128] Wollheim's idea of twofoldness can then be explained in terms of the simultaneous perception of both kinds of content.[129]

Dilworth develops his theory by looking at stylistic content for which he uses Impressionism as an example. He argues that some issues of meaning must relate to the particular style (e.g. paintwork of the Impressionists). This style is not identifiable with the subject matter as such although an experienced viewer would recognize both style and subject matter just as easily.[130]

The question arises for Dilworth as to how to distinguish different kinds of content. If stylistic content is separate from subject content how can this separateness be explained in terms of representation? He suggests that artworks *indicate* (that is they aspectually represent) by virtue of how they are done, their style, how expressed, their context, provenance etc. (in other words these are *aspects* of the work that *indicate* a certain content which is associated with but separate from the subject matter). He uses the word *represent* to mean that which is associated with subject matter content.[131]

As to how a viewer can differentiate 'aspectual from subject matter information when any given area of the surface has to supply both kinds'[132] of information Dilworth suggests that the artist has available a number of aspectual elements which can be arranged with variations in shape, colour, texture to provide information on the subject matter. The viewer can perceive both the stylistic elements and the subject

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[127] John Dilworth, *A Double Content Theory of Artistic Representation*, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism: 3 Summer, 2005, p. 249.
[128] Ibid., p. 250.
[129] Ibid., p. 250.
[130] Ibid., p. 250.
[131] Ibid., p. 251.
[132] Ibid., p. 252.

matter and be able to distinguish between them as exemplified by the Monet painting in Figure 3. The way in which a painting is painted (its style) contains encoded information about the subject matter content.[133]

Dilworth further argues that 'any apparent iconicity in pictorial cases' (recognisable subject matter in a picture) 'pertains in the first place exclusively to aspectual perceptual content rather than to subject matter content' (the first thing that you perceive, albeit at a low level of perception, are those things related to the medium and how it is applied and not the subject of the picture). 'Aspectual indication' (e.g. how the paint is applied) 'is a purely iconic mode of signification' (in that it tells you something about the subject) 'whereas subject matter representation is exclusively symbolic' (it is a sign that operates within some convention system and signifies some thing).[134]

Dilworth's position is that he basically concurs with Wollheim's notions of 'twofoldness' and 'seeing-in' but argues that a more coherent theory of pictorial depiction requires some modification to these. Instead of a two-way distinction between configurational (material object) and recognitional (subject matter) aspects of a picture there should be a third element, namely medium content.

Dilworth does not look at non-figurative works but his ideas on how aspectual elements, as he defines them, can provide information on the subject matter is used in chapter 4 in the development of my own claim as to how depiction theory can be extended.

2.2.7   Hopkins

Robert Hopkins' account of depiction is essentially that of experienced resemblance. In this he suggests that the depicted object is experienced by the viewer, through the painting, by virtue of the fact that they recognize the object's outline shape.[135] As Hopkins puts it:

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[133] Ibid., p. 252.
[134] Ibid., p. 255.
[135] John V. Kulvicki, *On Images: Their structure and content*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 198.

Something O is seen in a surface P if P is experienced as resembling O in outline shape.[136]

He adds this can only happen if it is intended that O can be seen in P and that there is some 'standard of correctness that establishes that it is right to see O in P'.[137] To refer to the Monet painting again we can see in the picture a shape that is clearly recognisable to us as that of a bridge. We recognize it as such because of our past experiences of seeing bridges both in reality and as depicted. Monet's depicted bridge is a series of painted lines that he intended we should read as being a bridge and which he painted in the conventions of western art.

In this account it is perhaps self evident that there can be no application to what I term non-figurative art. Indeed I can find no reference in Hopkins to this or other associated terms such as 'abstract art'.

2.2.8   Lopes

Flint Schier and Dominic Lopes both subscribe to a 'resemblance' view of depiction[138] and I will therefore look at the theory of Dominic Lopes as his is the most recent contribution.

He asserts that any theory of depiction must address four issues or 'constraints' as he puts it. The first of these is that the theory must recognize the many ways in which a picture can represent. In other words it must be able to accommodate different styles of painting. This he calls his 'diversity constraint'[139]. The second constraint is to do with the fact that we are readily able or competent to understand any picture of a familiar object. Familiarity in this sense means an evolved or 'generative' experience of pictures.[140]

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[136] Robert Hopkins, *Pictures, Images and Experience: a Philosophical Enquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 77.
[137] Ibid., p. 77.
[138] John V. Kulvicki, *On Images: Their structure and content*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 42.
[139] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 32.
[140] Ibid., p. 70.

His third and fourth constraints are both pictorial ones and concern what he calls 'phenomenology and two-foldness'. The first of these he explains as meaning that the viewer has an experience of an object through looking at the picture of it as if the object were actually there.[141] This is the resemblance aspect of his theory. The fourth constraint is that as described by Wollheim namely the seeing-in of a marked surface such that the object is seen in it thus giving a two-fold experience.[142]

To explain all this in terms of the Monet painting in Figure 3 we would say that Monet paints in a particular style (Impressionist) but we are able to recognize the principal features depicted (bridge, tree, lake etc). It is a style of painting well accommodated by constraints three and four (resemblance and two-foldness) and thus satisfies constraints one and two.

This is all very well but Lopes declares at the outset that his theory of depiction does not accommodate non-figurative work. He takes what he terms 'demotic' pictures as fundamental. These are non-art pictures as he describes them and include such things as banknotes, maps, architectural elevations etc. He explains this position by saying it parallels the methodology in the philosophy of language which attempts to explain ordinary linguistic communication first and only then proceeds deal with other modes that support languages aesthetic potential (he gives metaphor as an example here).[143]

In so doing he has, as he declares, to limit his theory to figurative pictures and as such does not attempt to give any account of non-figurative works.[144]

2.3   Conclusions

There is some diversity in the theories of depiction discussed above but there are three principal theorists of those looked at (namely Wollheim, Goodman, and Walton) and most contemporary discussion relates to or expands and extends their work. Dilworth, for example, develops his own theory and although this extends into other art forms that aspect of it that concerns itself with pictorial art is based on what Wollheim had

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[141] Ibid., p. 174.
[142] Ibid., p. 174.
[143] Ibid., p. 7.
[144] Ibid., p. 8.

to say. In his comprehensive survey of drawing and drawing practice Patrick Maynard looks at a number of depiction theories and commentaries (Wollheim, Goodman, Gombrich, and Podro) but adopts Kendall Walton's ideas as offering a fuller account of how depiction works.[145]

Wollheim and Dilworth stress the importance of the material and configurational aspects of depiction and how these can be used by the artist to inform the viewer and assist in the reading of the artwork. The work of both Gombrich and Podro are in alignment with this.

Goodman's theory of depiction does not address this material element in any significant way concerning itself with the language of the imagery and how this refers to the outside world.

This project takes the view that the material element of an artwork must play an important part in how it is both made and received and how it portrays whatever it is that it intends to portray. To this end the theories of both Wollheim as modified and extended by Dilworth will be central to the progression of the project. Elements of Goodman's semiotic theory are used in this respect, as there is some correlation to Barthes' ideas on denotation.

The question arises as to what strategy or method is to be adopted to test these theories and more particularly ascertain what relevance they have for contemporary practitioners.

There is clearly much debate as to the nature of depiction. Notwithstanding the influence of Plato and Alberti, these debates were initiated in the twentieth century by Gombrich and were the province of art historians (Wollheim, Podro and Gombrich himself). More recently it has been the contributions of philosophers of aesthetics that have been prominent. The possible exception to this is that of Goodman who, as an analytic philosopher, introduced his semiotic theory of depiction. Some of the theories looked at are predicated on their applicability to figurative works of art only (Lopes

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[145] Patrick Maynard, *drawing distinctions – the varieties of graphic expression*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005.

and Hopkins). Wollheim, Walton and Podro claim some relevance to non-figurative work. Goodman makes no such claim. Wollheim develops his theory with reference to a number of works of art in order to make his points. Podro does to a lesser extent. Many of the other writers use only limited reference to specific works. Goodman references none.[146]

It is for this reason that a series of case studies are carried out in the next chapter. Their purpose is to analyse three pictures of decreasing figurativeness to see how well the various theories cope with explaining how the works depict. The objective for this exercise is to ascertain which of the theories, or rather what elements of them, are useful in accounting for non-figurative works.

My procedure is, therefore, to analyse each of the works selected using the theories discussed in this chapter. I have put them in three groupings the first of which are those theorists who essentially see depiction as being related to our ability to see one thing in another. It is what has been called seeing-in and twofoldness. In this grouping is Wollheim himself, Podro, and Dilworth. The second grouping is that of Gombrich and Walton who claim that pictures fool us into thinking that we are actually seeing the depicted object. Thirdly there is Goodman and his semiotic view of depiction. This leaves Lopes and Hopkins both of who claim their work is not applicable to non-figuration. They do however give important insights into the nature of depiction as do Kulvicki and Harrison and I will use their commentary in the case studies to affirm or highlight a point.

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[146] I am using the term 'reference' to mean the development of a theory being explained with the use of pictorial examples

Chapter 3

Case studies.

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of the case studies is to investigate, in the first instance, how certain theories of depiction can be seen to apply. In other words how do they work? How do they explain the perceptual experience of looking at, or being in front of, a picture?

Many of the established theories of depiction are based on figurative art where the imagery is recognizable and relates to objects in the world (a portrait painting or a landscape scene for example). The word 'depiction' carries this meaning. The aim of this thesis is to consider under what circumstances the meaning of 'depiction' can be extended and where the artwork can be understood to denote or indicate something in the world without resembling it. The question arises as to how to get from one position to the other.

It is clear from the literature search that little detailed analysis of specific works has been undertaken by any of the writers on depiction. The possible exceptions are Wollheim and Podro, both of who use a number of artworks to reinforce their arguments. In this study the strategy undertaken is to select a limited number of works of increasing abstraction and to identify how theories of depiction can be seen to apply. To do this a case study approach has been used which will enable an analysis to be undertaken of each artwork, allow development of the structure of the analysis, and permit comparisons and conclusions to be made. These studies form the basis of Chapter 3 and the conclusions from it will be used in an interrogation of my own work, which is undertaken in Chapter 4.

The case study approach has been adopted as it is particularly appropriate to the research question posed. A small number of studies have been selected such that a qualitative in-depth analysis of each artwork can be undertaken to achieve an understanding of the interplay of the variables involved in the perception and

understanding of these works[147]. This involves a process known as 'thick description' whereby a thorough description of the entity being evaluated is carried out.[148] It will include such factors as the characteristics of the work, how and why it was derived and, in one of the studies, the nature of its location both now and as intended.

Thick descriptions have to be comprehensive enough that anyone can understand the findings of the study[149] and other researchers can determine whether the findings of a study can be transferred to cases other than those studied in this thesis.[150]

The structure of each of these case studies has been derived from a reading of Paskow.[151] His declared aim is to quantify why paintings are important to us and, as part of his project, he determines a method of interrogating pictures, which he simplifies to a three-stage procedure that is described in the following paragraphs. His procedure has been adopted in this project as it has correlation with a number of the depictive theories described in Chapter 2 and allows for interpretation using both knowledge about the picture and conceptual knowledge that could, for example, place the picture in a particular cultural context.

Paskow considers there to be three modes of viewing. The first of these is described as 'both visual and affective'[152], and can be described as that first sensory experience or phenomenological approach. The second phase is described as needing a reflective effort on behalf of the viewer. In other words this may be, for example, a second viewing after the viewer has been able to explore a number of facts about the work such as what does the depicted scene represent, why was it painted, where was it intended to be hung, was it painted in a particular style etc. In other words it is gaining knowledge about the painting that enhances the viewing experience.

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[147] Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley, 'Introduction', in *Case Study Method*, edited by Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., Foster, P., London :Sage Publications, 2000, p. 4.
[148] Yvonna S. Lincoln , and Egon G.Guba, 'The Only Generalization Is: There is no Generalization' in *Case Study Method* edited by Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., Foster, P., London :Sage Publications, 2000, p. 40.
Yvonna S. Lincoln, E. G. G. (2000). The Only Generalization Is: There is no Generalization, in *Case Study Method*. M. H. Roger Gomm, Peter Foster. London, Sage Publications Ltd.
[149] Ibid., p. 40.
[150] Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley, and Peter Foster, 'Case Study and Generalization' in *Case Study Method* edited by Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., Foster, P., London :Sage Publications, 2000, p. 100.
[151] Alan Paskow, *The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
[152] Ibid., p. 159.

Paskow's third stage of viewing or 'level of awareness'[153] he initially describes as an:

> …evaluative effort to place or contextualize the work according to one's viewing objectives for example as an image manifesting certain aesthetic qualities comparable to those of other paintings of the same period and region or as a depiction of a cultural concern of the period.[154]

He gives a fuller account of what he means when he carries out an interpretive study of Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance.* Here he categorizes contemporary interpretive accounts of artworks into a number of different 'schools'.[155] In this chapter and in Chapter 4 I have used this third interpretive account to test the applicability of depiction theories to the work being studied.

Paskow's description of the first mode of viewing has been expanded to allow for the effect of the facture of the work and, what I am calling, its materiality. This is the impact on the viewing experience of the materials of the work.

Wollheim contends that when we stand before a painting our awareness is almost always two-folded involving two aspects of a single experience. We see a flat surface that has been marked in a particular way and we see, simultaneously, a depicted world.[156]

Paskow, however, rephrases this to suggest that the depicted scene 'has something meaningful and engaging in its own right.'[157] This is a position he takes based on his reading of Heidegger in which the Cartesian object-subject relationship that one takes to normally apply to the viewing of art should be replaced with the notion that 'self' and 'world' are unitary phenomena. The consequence of this is that we enter into a depicted scene and imagine its contents, both people and things, to be real. As such we can become emotionally involved in the painting and not separate from it as Walton seems to suggest. This emotional engagement with the work allows us to find out something about ourselves he maintains but is regulated by awareness that this is a

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[153] Ibid., p. 160.
[154] Ibid., p. 160.
[155] Ibid., p. 205.
[156] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 46.
[157] Alan Paskow, *The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 62.

fictional situation. Paskow describes these two states as Consciousness 1 and Consciousness 2.[158]

Paskow, therefore, seems to take a position somewhere between Wollheim and Walton suggesting that the first phenomenological experience of a painting is in fact twofold. The 'first fold' of awareness being that of a physical object with a surface marked in such a way as to describe a depicted scene. The 'second fold' of awareness is that of the depicted scene, which in Walton's terms, we enter into and use for a game of make-believe

To test how these theories may apply, three detailed qualitative case studies are undertaken in this chapter. These are of specific works by Titian, Frank Auerbach, and Cy Twombly. The other two works are from my own practice. The first study is of a typically figurative painting by Titian titled *Bacchus and Ariadne* that hangs in the National Gallery in London. There are a number of reasons for selecting this work. Firstly the painting is accessible being on permanent display in the National Gallery. The direct experience of a work is an essential element of the perceptual experience as described by Wollheim, Dilworth and Paskow. Secondly it is advantageous to analyse a painting by an artist who is used by a number of writers on both depiction theory and on the materials of paintings. This direct commentary will be of particular value when analysing the works. Wollheim, for example, uses Titian's work to explain aspects of his ideas on painting. In particular, he uses Titian's work as examples in his discussions of the effect of a painter's style on the perceptive experience,[159] how motifs are borrowed or referred to by painters (Poussin's borrowing from *Bacchus and Ariadne*),[160] and the metaphorical associations of paint as a medium (paint as flesh in *The Death of Actaeon*).[161] Carolyn Wilde, in her discussion of the essential contribution of the medium in painterly activity refers to Titian as a:

> …master of his medium who remained challenged by the possibilities of the handling of paint and its specific effects.[162]

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[158] Ibid., p. 63.
[159] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 35.
[160] Ibid., p. 201.
[161] Ibid., p. 322.
[162] Carolyn Wilde, 'Style and Value in the Art of Painting', in *Richard Wollheim on the Art of Painting*, Editor Rob Van Gerwen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 122.

There has also been recent scholarship on the nature and chemistry of painting, the materials used and their application. Frequently these writers have referenced Titian as an exemplar.[163]

The second work to be looked at is Frank Auerbach's studies based on Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*. These works are now in the collection of The Tate. Auerbach's work is a transcription of Titian's and is a series of pencil sketches culminating in an oil painting. They are written about by Podro at some length to describe how an artist can fashion an image using different materials and be consistent with their concerns as an artist.

The third work to be analysed is Cy Twombly's *Quattro Stagioni: Autunno*. This was included in a retrospective exhibition of Twombly's work held at Tate Modern in London in 2008.[164] The painting was viewed on a number of occasions during this exhibition. There are specific reasons for selecting it for this study. I have little experience of Twombly's work and it therefore provided a new and fresh viewing experience. In contrast Titian's and especially Auerbach's work is well known to me. *Quattro Stagioni: Autunno* can be considered a non-figurative work although, as I go on to show, there is a specific qualification to this because of the use of text in the work. This is discussed in more detail in the section on this painting.

As previously stated, the approach to these studies is based on Paskow's three modes of viewing the first of which is the initial sensory experience of a work, of which there are a number of elements. These include such factors as what does the work show or represent, whether it is figurative or not, how big it is, where it is hung, how it is lit. Three of the most important influences on the sensory experience will be the colouration of the painting, the style in which it is painted and the material of the work. The first case study addresses these points.

For the purposes of this document, each study will be identified separately. The first study is divided into separate sections as follows:

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[163]James Elkins, *What Painting Is*, New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 169-170. and Philip Ball, *Bright Earth - The Invention of Colour*, London: Vintage, 2008, pp.140-142.
[164] *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, Tate Modern, 19th. June-14th. September 2008.

3.2   Study 1 - Titian *Bacchus and Ariadne*

3.2.1 Description of the work and of the first sensory encounter.

The painting hangs in Room 10 of the National Gallery in London. There are thirteen other paintings in this room five of which are by Titian. The other eight works are by contemporaries of Titian and all are Venetian painters. The painting of *Bacchus and Ariadne* is clearly given prominence in this room by hanging it in the middle of one of its two longer walls and by placing the viewing seat directly in front of it. The painting itself is the largest of those in the room and is flanked by two earlier works of Titian.

Two aspects of the painting initially strike the viewer and these are almost simultaneous. They are its colour and the vitality of movement in the depicted scene. This immediate phenomenological apprehension of the work, in part a function of its size, finds correspondence with Wollheim's idea of two-foldness whereby these can be seen to be two aspects of the same experience. Arguably these elements help give the sense that this is a painting of an exotic and erotic scene.

Figure 6. Tiziano Vecellio (Titian), *Bacchus and Ariadne,* 1520-1523, Oil on Canvas, 1765mm x 1910mm, The National Gallery, London.

The depicted scene consists of a central leaping figure, a group of maenads, goat-footed satyrs and others on the right side of the picture, and a single cloaked female figure on the left. An imaginary diagonal line across the painting from bottom left to top right reveals two principal areas of colouring and tonal values. The upper left side of the painting is essentially painted in shades of blue and has a 'still' quality capturing perhaps a particular moment in time. The lower right side of the picture is generally painted in earth and flesh colours that are darker in tone than those on the upper left side. There is great activity in this part of the picture and a use of rhythmic lines in its structure. The whole painting has a richness of colour and an intense luminous quality.

The paintwork has to describe a number of different things in this painting (for example cloth, skin, hair, fur, metal, vegetation, sky). The painting of the human figure is of a perceptibly different nature to that of the animals for example. In the former the brushwork is hardly noticeable and the paintwork seems to be denser indicating a building up of layers[165] to suggest the corporeal quality of the skin. The painting of the animals has been done using noticeable brush-marks to describe the fur. The dominant figure in the painting is that of Bacchus and Titian has painted him at the moment of his leaping from his chariot almost as if he is flying, perhaps emphasising his divine status.

Some of the characters appear to mirror each others' actions as, for example, Ariadne and the maenad with the cymbals. The colours used appear to be symbolic in a number of cases. Does Bacchus's purple robe signify god-like status? Does Ariadne's red 'scarf' show her to be of royal blood?

The paint is handled in a more controlled way than his later work with the result that the form is precisely delineated. The most striking aspect of the painting when first approached is the intensity of the colours of the oil paint that adds to the vitality of the work. This is especially evident after the cleaning of the work between 1967 and 1969. The paint surface has a shiny and polished texture suggesting that it has been treated with various levels of varnish. But what is the effect of this on the experience

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[165] Jill Dunkerton, 'Titian's Painting Technique', in *Titian*, edited by D. Jaffe, London: National Gallery Publications, 2003, p. 46.

of viewing the painting? Perhaps one aspect of this surface treatment is to give the work the quality of a valuable object in much the same way that an item of jewellery may be regarded. The framing of the picture adds to this perception as does the fact that it hangs in one of the world's most important art galleries.

Paskow suggests that further understanding and experience of the picture will require a 'reflective' effort on behalf of the viewer and this can only be achieved through knowledge of such things as what the depicted scene is about, why it was painted, how it was painted etc. In the case of this picture there is much information.

3.2.2   What is known of the Painting?

It was painted by Tiziano Vecellio (known in English as Titian) between 1520 and 1523 and was a commission from Alfonso D'Este, Duke of Ferrara. He originally approached a number of artists to work on this commission including Giovanni Bellini, Raphael, Michelangelo, Fra Bartolomeo and Titian. In the end five paintings were done:
A bacchanal by Bellini '*The Feast of the Gods'* now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC
'*Bacchanal with Vulcan'* by Dosso Dossi since lost.
'*Bacchus and Ariadne'* by Titian now in the National Gallery.
'*The Andrians*' and '*The Worship of Venus*' both by Titian and both in the Prado Museum Madrid.[166]

The commission required that the painting was to depict the meeting of Bacchus and Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete as described in the poems of Catullus and Ovid. Titian was also supplied with the materials for the work. He knew that the painting was to be hung, with the others, in a marble study or reception room, a Camarino d'Alabastro, in Alfonso's Palace in Ferrara.[167]

From the story referenced by the painting, Ariadne travelled with her lover Theseus from Crete where he had, with her help, slain the Minotaur. Theseus, however,

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[166] Nicholas Penny, 'Bacchus and Ariadne', in *Titian*, edited by D. Jaffe, London: National Gallery Publications, 2003, p. 104.
[167] Ibid., p. 101.

abandoned Ariadne on the island of Naxos and sailed away. The scene depicted shows the moment when Ariadne has woken from sleep to realise that Theseus has gone (it is his ship that is shown). Catullus describes the moment thus:

> There, staring out from Dia's surf-resounding shore,
> And watching Theseus sailing off with his fast fleet,
> Is Ariadne, nursing at heart unmastered passions,
> Nor can she yet believe what she is seeing,
> That very moment woken from deceiving sleep
> To find her poor self left behind on lonely sand,[168]

It is at this moment the god Bacchus and his retinue appear. Bacchus is in his chariot drawn by cheetahs and attended by maenads, goat-footed satyrs and a drunken Silenus clinging to his long-eared ass. 'Voice, colour-and Theseus, all were gone'. Bacchus has fallen in love with Ariadne from afar and leaps down to carry her off.[169]

There are two accounts of the meeting of Bacchus and Ariadne that were used by Titian in structuring this painting both of which were given to him by Alfonso.

Ovid's account in *Metamorphoses* is concise. Here Ovid states that Bacchus found Ariadne after she had been abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos and offered her love and help. He took her crown (she was a princess) and threw it into the heavens where it became a constellation (Corona) and carried her away.[170] Ovid gives a fuller account in his poem *Ars Amatoria* in which he focuses on the moment that Bacchus meets Ariadne:

> 'Lo here am I' said the god to her,
> ' a more faithful lover; have no fear,
> Gnossian maid, thou shalt be the
> Spouse of Bacchus… He spoke,
> And lest she fear the tigers, leapt
> Down from the chariot, the sand
> Gave place to his alighting foot; and
> Clasping her to his bosom (for she
> had no strength to fight) he bore
> her away; easy it is for a god to be
> all-powerful… so do the bride and

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[168] Catullus, 'Catullus 64', in *Catullus - The Complete Poems*, translated by G. Lee, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 83.
[169] *The National Gallery Companion Guide*, London: National Gallery Publications, 1996, p. 159.
[170] Ovid, Metamorphoses, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 302.

the god meet on the sacred couch.[171]

It was this version that the Duke of Ferrara gave to Titian with the instruction that it be used in the formulation of the painting.

The other poem given to Titian was that of Catullus who describes in some detail the frantic nature of the participants:

> But in another part Iacchus in bloom flew by
> With rout of Satyrs and Nysigenous Sileni,
> Seeking you, Ariadne, and burning with love for you.
> For him the Thyads raved around with frenzied mind,
> Shrieking *Evoe, Evoe*, twisting their heads about.
> Part of them were shaking *thyrsi* with covered spike,
> Part threw the limbs of a dismembered steer,
> Part wrapped themselves about with wreaths of writhing snakes,[172]

Titian appears to use Catullus's account to depict Ariadne turning towards Theseus's departing ship and to describe the wild and frenzied procession accompanying Bacchus but uses Ovid's account to depict Bacchus leaping from his chariot.

Although most literature refers to Bacchus's followers as being driven mad by drunkenness and hedonism, Robert Graves speculates that the main cause for their intoxication was the ingestion of a:

> …raw mushroom *amanita muscaria* which induces hallucinations, senseless rioting, prophetic sight, erotic energy, and remarkable muscular strength.[173]

3.2.3   Titian's techniques and materials.

Titian was taught by the Venetian painters Giovanni and Gentile Bellini and was influenced both by the 'freer and more natural style' of his fellow pupil Giorgione and by the contemporary artists of the day (Raphael, Durer, Michelangelo).[174]

Titian emphasised the autonomy of paint and its colour above its use to describe textural qualities.[175] His use of colour changed as he developed. In his early years he

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[171] Ovid (2005), *The Love Books of Ovid Being the Amores, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoria and Medicamena Faciei Femineae of Publius Ovidius Naso*, Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005, p. 114.

[172] Catullus, 'Catullus 64', in *Catullus - The Complete Poems*, translated by G. Lee, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 95.

[173] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: 1*, London: Penguin Books, 1975, p. 9.

[174] Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian Mostly Iconographic*, London: Phaidon, 1969, p. 19 and p. 42.

[175] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

construed colour as being dictated by the nature of the objects being depicted. In his middle period his concerns were more with the colour pattern of the painting so that picture colour becomes more important than object colour. In his final years he seems to regard colour as 'diffused in space, being concentrated and diversified in individual areas.'[176]

This view of Titian's changing style is not inconsistent with Charles Hope's view who considers Titian as pioneering the 'the expressive range of oil-based paint.'[177] Whereas the Florentine artists used drawing in the design of their works Titian painted directly on the canvas. This gave them a 'beauty of surface unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries'.[178] Later in his career (in the 1560s) Titian's paintings were concerned less with the precise definition of form but more with the suggestion of form through the application of paint with free brushwork. This had a significant effect on the course of European painting as a whole in that the way an artist handled the material of paint became as much part of the aesthetic interest as the depiction of the underlying form.[179]

In Titian's later years Hope observes that there is a 'loss of colouristic brilliance in the definition of form'[180] and that at this point in his life he developed a style 'characterised by sketchy brushwork and a narrow colour range'.[181]

Panofsky suggests that there are three principal periods in Titian's work that identify changes in style and concerns that take into account changes in his handling of colour preferences for certain types of subject matter, changes from formal schematisation to more fluid compositions, and contrasts in his handling of paint from a calm reflective manner to a more expressive style.[182] *Bacchus and Ariadne* can be seen as an example of a more formal schematisation and a reflective handling of paint whereas *The Death*

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[176] Ibid., p. 16.
[177] Charles Hope, 'Titian's Life and Times', in *Titian*, edited by D. Jaffe, London: National Gallery Publications, 2003, p. 18.
[178] Ibid. p. 18.
[179] Ibid. p. 24.
[180] Ibid., p. 26
[181] Ibid., p. 27.
[182] Ibid., p. 11.

of Actaeon (painted 1565-1576) is seen as an example of a more fluid composition and a more expressive handling of the paint.[183]

Elkins suggests that painters were extremely protective of their techniques and, like alchemical recipes, were always semi-secret and not passed on.[184] Consequently the techniques of the Venetian Painters were lost to posterity over a number of generations. Modern methods of chemical and physical analysis have helped to enlighten us on this subject.

It had become common practice by the time that Titian began his career to use drying oils such as walnut and linseed oil and to paint onto stretched canvas. This was particularly true of Venice where the existence of the maritime industry demanded great quantities of canvas. As was the practice in the sixteenth century the canvas would have been primed with a thin layer of gesso to fill the interstices of the weave that would, however, still remain visible and be used by Titian in his paintwork. The surface was then, usually coated with a further coat of gesso to prevent the ground absorbing too much of the oil medium in the paint layer.[185]This is shown in the following detail that was:

> …prepared from paint samples taken from the painting. They show overlapping paint layers where Ariadne's vermillion scarf was painted over her arm, which in turn overlaps the azurite blue of the sea. At the bottom of the sample is the gesso ground.[186]
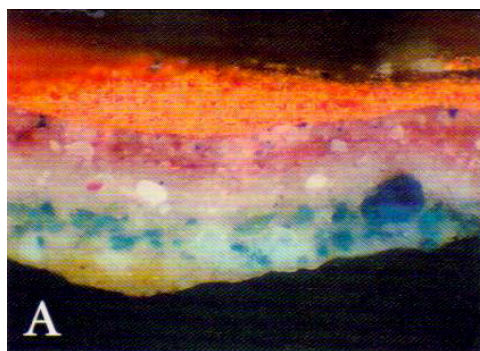
Figure 7. Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne,* Detail of Figure 6.

[183] Ibid., p. 21.
[184] James Elkins, *What Painting Is*, p. 175.
[185] Jill Dunkerton, 'Titian's Painting Technique', in *Titian*, edited by David Jaffe, London: National Gallery Publications, 2003, p. 45.
[186] Ibid., p. 46.

Titian's palette was colourful due in part to rich patrons and in part to the fact that the paint pigments and materials were readily available in a city that was the main trading port for the whole of Italy and the centre of its pigment trade.[187]

Dunkerton suggests there were two other influences on the Venetian palette.[188] Venice was the main port through which the art of Byzantium was brought into the country following the crusades of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is an art that is rich in dazzling jewel work and used strong colours to give an impression of light and space. These were the qualities that came to preoccupy the Venetian painters more so than the mathematical perspective and *disegno* of the Florentine painters.[189]

The fact that Venice was a port built on the lagoon and surrounded by water and inundated by the canal system may also have played a part in influencing its painters. The light would have been very different to the harsher light of the Tuscan landscape.

How would a painting such as *Bacchus and Ariadne* have developed? The painting is on a stretched canvas, the grain of which would have been used by Titian to enable him to mix the paint directly on the canvas and to allow under-colours to show through where the brush had passed over the textured surface.[190] As a consequence the painting had a vitality and energy reminiscent of the brushwork of the Chinese and Japanese artists and 'none of the invisibility of effort that Vasari so exalted.'[191]

It is evident from X-radiographic analysis[192] that, after painting a layer of gesso on the canvas, Titian then painted the background in full before laying on the foreground figures. Each of these was, however, painted over a white ground to retain the luminosity of colour.[193] The painting contains most of the pigments that were commonly used at that time.

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[187] Ibid., p. 46.
[188] Ibid., p. 46.
[189] Philip Ball, *Bright Earth - The Invention of Colour*, London: Vintage, 2008, p. 139.
[190] Ibid., p. 140.
[191] Ibid., p. 140.
[192] Jill Dunkerton, 'Titians Painting Technique', in *Titian*, edited by David Jaffe. p. 46.
[193] Ibid., p. 145.
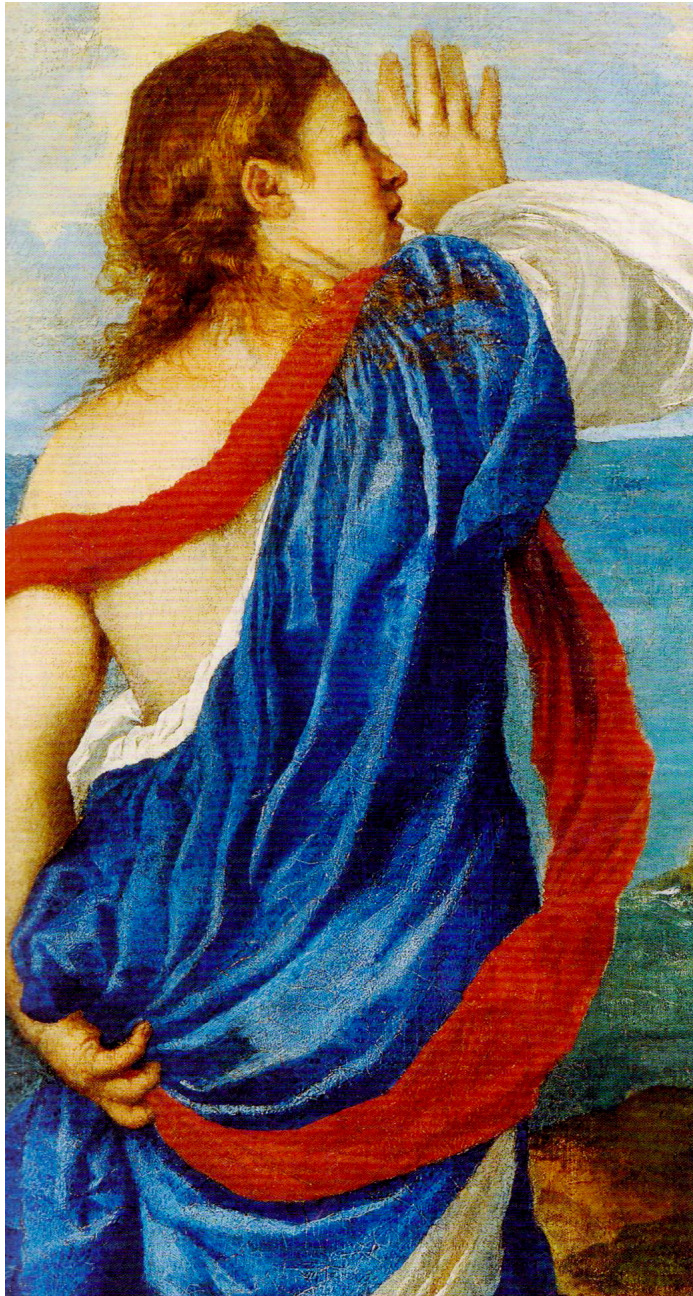
The greens are malachite, green earth, verdigris and copper resinate. Ultramarine is used profligately-not only in Ariadne's robe but also in the remarkable sky, the distant hills, and even in the shadows of some of the flesh tones. Ariadne's scarf is vermillion, its strong opacity here needed to contrast with the blue robe: and Titian has given it added brilliance by glazing a thin layer of coarse-ground, darker pigment over a thick layer that is more finely ground. Such touches make it clear that the painter knew how to extract the best from his materials. The orange robe of the cymbal player is unusually vivid, for Titian has here taken advantage of Venice's access to realgar. The picture blazes with bold, differentiated colour; yet Titian breaks the rules of Alberti's colour contrasts, placing the blue robe adjacent to the blue sea and sky, and warm orange and tan tones next to each other. He relies on materials to distinguish the robe from the sea – ultramarine for the first, greenish azurite for the second.[194]

Figure 8. Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Detail of Figure 6.

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[194] Philip Ball, *Bright Earth - The Invention of Colour*, London: Vintage, 2008, p. 142.

Many of these pigments would have been extracted from minerals or dug from the earth itself and in this respect there is a connection to my own work as described in Chapter 4.

3.2.4   How the theories of depiction apply

A reasonably full account of this work is given in order to identify a number of issues that are important to this thesis as a whole. In particular it is important to reveal how the materials of the work, specifically the pigments used, can be seen as signifying the status and nature of the characters depicted and to note how Titian has responded to the poems given to him as part of his brief. It is the capturing of the moment when Bacchus leaps from his chariot, as described in the poems, that Titian has so astonishingly depicted in paint that not only illustrates the veracity of some of the depictive theories but also has a connotive element that leads into my arguments in chapter 4. Knowledge of all these aspects of the work affect the experience of it and how one engages with it.

In Gombrich's terms our viewing of the picture 'fools' us into thinking we are experiencing the actual event depicted. Whether or not we believe in the existence of the pantheon of Greco/Roman gods is irrelevant. We suspend belief to witness the moment depicted and this leads us to Walton's idea that the picture acts as a prop for a game of make-believe. In this sense we imagine ourselves to be almost in the picture itself and observing what is happening. For this to be a successful involvement it is important to know what the scene is about. We could enter the scene and construct from it an event or narrative from our own imagination but then, to some degree, we would not be in accord with the artist's intentions as Wollheim puts it. It is implicit in this that we, the subject, remain separate from the picture (the object) and its depicted content.

For Paskow our entering into the narrative of the painting has a different meaning to that of Walton. He suggests we enter into the depicted scene such that we inhabit the world of the picture so that it becomes part of our world. In this way we may identify with aspects of the story as depicted. In this sense we might identify with Ariadne's predicament or that we may see the actions of Bacchus's retinue as symbolic of the

darker sides of our nature and in this way the picture can tell us something about our own nature.

Paskow's holistic view of painting finds support from another quarter. The materiality of the work is connected to its representational content through the notion of the 'solid metaphor' as espoused by Tilley in which he suggests that some objects and materials are imbued by different cultures as 'material metaphors essential to encoding and making sense of the world'[195]. Although Tilley's work is perhaps more concerned with archaeological and ethnographic studies I would suggest that his work has a relevance to the role that artworks can play in western culture. His primary point is that people need things to make such that they themselves can be transformed. It is these made things that act as solid or material metaphors. The way in which these metaphors work to create meaning is, in the first instance, dependent on their internal qualities, their shape, structure, colour, texture and form.[196] They need to be understood in terms of how they are produced; from what sources and materials and the way these materials have been combined and handled.[197] Because these metaphors are solid the process of reading them is immediate unlike the linguistic metaphor that has to be read and is therefore discontinuous in nature. Material metaphors are dense in the sense that every aspect of the work contributes to its meaning.[198] By these criteria a painting such as *Bacchus and Ariadne* can only be fully understood by giving full cognisance to both its represented content and its material content.

This is a position echoed by Dilworth in his critique of Wollheim where he suggests that a 'good theory of depiction' will account for not only subject matter and medium but also how the latter has been configured.[199]and is consistent with the position taken by Wollheim and Podro. In Wollheim's terms the viewer would be aware simultaneously of the marked surface and of the depicted scene. The depicted content as we perceive it concurs with the artist's intentions, as we understand them to be. It is essentially Podro's position as well. The imagery has been put together with the painter's craft such that the surface of the picture interacts with the depicted subject.

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[195] Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999, p. 262.
[196] Ibid., p. 263.
[197] Ibid., p. 264.
[198] Ibid., p. 264.
[199] John Dilworth, *The Double Content of Art*, New York: Prometheus Books, 2005, p. 109.

I suggest that there is a correlation between this viewpoint, Wollheim's first 'fold' of twofold-ness in which attention is paid to the marked surface, Walton's idea of the work acting as a prop for a game of make-believe as modified by Paskow, and his position, based as he claims on Heidegger, that viewer and artwork are part of the same world and that latter can be interpreted as informing us about ourselves.

There is another sense in which we may identify with the work. For those involved in the process of making of material representations there will be a consciousness of how the work has been made and with what. The descriptions as to how Titian mixed and applied the paint and the part that the nature of the canvas material played in the making of the work will find resonance with those who actively participate in the acts of painting and drawing.

In Hopkins' terms we can see in the painting a series of shapes that we recognize as figures, animals, trees etc. We recognize these as such because these shapes correspond to our past experience of seeing such things both in reality and in other depictions. In the Renaissance convention of painting it is right to see the shapes as figures. What is not dealt with is how would we know what the scene is about. In a mythological painting as this much of the information for this understanding would have to be textual but some information is connoted through the 'value' of the pigments used.

For Lopes, the work has to make sense in terms of three of his 'constraints' that form his theory of depiction. The first of these is that we are able to understand any picture of figures, animals tree etc because of our culture's experience of pictures. It is this he terms our evolved or generative experience. His second and third constraints are reminiscent of Gombrich and Wollheim. The second constraint is a phenomenological one, as he names it, in which we experience the scene as if we were actually there. The third constraint is that as described by Wollheim namely the seeing-in of a marked surface such that the scene is perceived in the marks so giving a two-fold experience. As with Hopkins none of this tells us what the scene is about and I suggest that my comments above would apply here as well.

On the basis of this study there is some evidence to suggest that this picture makes sense in terms of a semiotic view of depiction as described by Goodman. The marks used (character constitutive aspects) form and delineate characters. Because of the pictorial symbol system we share with Titian we are able to relate these characters to things in the world and with the addition of textual information, we can understand what the scene is about.

Arguably Goodman's approach can be considered particularly relevant to allegorical, religious and mythological paintings where the figures involved are either symbolic or could be considered to be archetypes. Goodman does not however consider the material element of a work in his semiotic view of depiction. The pigments used in *Bacchus and Ariadne* are from the best and most expensive materials and can be seen to indicate the status of the work, its maker and its patron in the manner suggested by Baxendall.[200] But they can also be seen to seen to indicate the status of the principal characters in the scene suggesting that these plastic elements have a depictive role. Goodman's theory could be extended to include this.

3.2.5   Findings and Conclusions of the First Case Study.

I have made the case that each of the theories of depiction is applicable to this particular painting. This is hardly surprising as these theories are predicated on a work being figurative. Wollheim's idea that our perception of a work of art is a single experience with two folds to it well explains the viewing experience with its awareness of paintwork and colour and how these are used to describe the depicted scene. Even at this level of figuration it is possible to see the painting in terms of just its plastic elements, as Wentworth[201] describes them, such as colour, line tone, texture etc. It was only in the sixteenth century, when Titian was active, that 'texture became an active element in the working of paintings'.[202]

Both Walton's view, and Paskow's modification of it, that the depicted scene acts as a prop or trigger for a game of make-believe seem to work successfully in this case. But

[200]Michael Baxendall*., Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford: Clarence Press, 1972, p. 2.
[201] Nigel Wentworth, *The Phenomenology of Painting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 53.
[202] Ibid., p. 53.

it is apparent from this study that, to some extent, the 'game of make believe' is influenced by such plastic elements of the painting as colour and material.

This conclusion can also be made when considering how effective a semiotic understanding of the viewing experience is. There is an indication that these same plastic elements can behave as signs indicating aspects of worldly values (e.g. expensive pigments suggest social hierarchies). In this way Goodman's theory could be extended.

The structure of the study looks robust. It has allowed the work to be interrogated to see how the various depictive theories can apply. The notion of 'thick description' has helped draw out a number of issues as described above and suggested extended definitions of existing theories.

These themes are further considered in the next case study, which is of a work by Frank Auerbach.

3.3 Study 2 Auerbach's Transcription of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*

3.3.1 Introduction

This case study follows a modified template to that used in Study 1, there being less content to address as regards subject matter and types of materials. The study concentrates, therefore, on how the artist uses the material of the paint to describe the subject and maintain his concerns as a twentieth century painter.

The structure of this study is

3.3.2 The work investigated and the reasons for its selection

3.3.3 Description of the work and of the first sensory experience.

3.3.4 Auerbach's method of working.

3.3.5 How the theories of depiction apply

3.3.6 Findings and conclusions

3.3.2 The work investigated and the reasons for its selection

The first question to be addressed is why use Frank Auerbach's painting in this study and why this particular work of his, which is a transcription of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*? Podro analyses this work by Auerbach in his writing on depiction and, more particularly, uses it as an example to develop his argument on the question of the relationship of subject matter to the plastic material of the paint itself.[203]

Auerbach's work can also be seen to be central to the tradition of twentieth-century figurative expressionism[204] and as such lies on a path between figurative and non-figurative abstraction. This particular work is a transcription of the painting considered in Case Study 1. It therefore gives an indication of how the concerns of painting moved from sixteenth-century Renaissance notions of realistic depiction to twentieth-century involvement with Expressionism and Abstraction. The works considered are all accessible albeit they can only be viewed by arrangement.

It is the oil painting by Auerbach that is the focus of this study but three of the 'on site' preparatory sketches are included in this initial assessment for the reason that the painting is based on these drawings and they therefore provide a link between Titian's work and Auerbach's transcription of it.

Auerbach made a number of pencil sketches before making the painting in 1971. Although originally a private commission, fifteen of these drawings have since been bequeathed to the Tate, none of which, at the present time, is on display. Three of the sketches are held in the Prints and Drawing room at Tate Britain and it was here that they were viewed. The other sketches have been framed and are held in the Tate stores, as is the painting. It was here that the painting was viewed.

The three sketches used in this case study are those reproduced in Colin Wiggin's booklet on Frank Auerbach at the National Gallery.[205] Michael Podro's paper shows a different set of sketches from the original group but these were not accessible at the time of writing.

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[203] Michael Podro, 'Depiction and the Golden Calf' in *Visual Theory*, edited by Bryson, Holly and Moxey, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 178.
[204] Michael Podro, *At the edge of Awareness*, The Times Literary Supplement. 2001,
[205] Colin Wiggins, *Frank Auerbach and The National Gallery: Working after the Masters*. London: National Gallery Publications, 1995.

Figure 9. Sketch 1. Frank Auerbach, *After Titian, Bacchus and Ariadne,* 1970-1, Pencil, 22.8 x 27.2 cm, Tate Gallery London

Figure 10. Sketch 2. Frank Auerbach, *After Titian, Bacchus and Ariadne,* 1970-1, Pencil, 22.8 x 26.8 cm, Tate Gallery London

Figure 11. Sketch 3   Frank Auerbach, *After Titian*, *Bacchus and Ariadne,* 1970-1, Pencil, 22.8 x 26.8 cm, Tate Gallery London

Figure 12. Frank Auerbach, *After Titian*, *Bacchus and Ariadne,* 1971, Oil on Board, 153 x 122.3cm, Tate Gallery London

3.3.3.   Descriptions of the works and of the first sensory experience.

Sketch 1 is the most heavily worked of the three showing intensive working and great pressure being used in the application of the pencil. Auerbach uses a range of marks to describe his reaction to the Titian from rhythmic, continuous lines to short, stabbing marks. The structure of the original can still be identified in Auerbach's sketch, as can the principal figures. It appears that the tonal values of the Titian are replicated in the pencil sketch by the use of heavily worked hatching.

As with all three sketches there is the sense that Auerbach has sought to redefine the painting in his own terms by showing a concern for its underlying geometry and structure. Above all there is the impression of working at speed and intuitive decision-making. These are small studies and suggest a very concentrated effort of drawing.

Sketch 2 is less dense than Sketch 1 in that there are fewer pencil marks on the paper but the figures are delineated more clearly by the use of short jagged marks. Again there is the impression of working at speed and of intuitive decision-making.

Sketch 3 is sparser than the other two. Some of the forms from the original painting are still recognizable. There is virtually no hatching with most of the marks describing the characters in Titian's painting being short and angular.

Where the subject of a painting cannot be located to the studio (landscape and studies of old masters) Auerbach uses pen and pencil sketches to trigger the physical and sensory experience of what it was he was drawing. They evoke sensations and recollections 'analogous to the power of smells.'[206] They are included here to show Auerbach's way of working in those circumstances where direct painting from the subject is impractical for whatever reason. It is the way that Auerbach handles the paint in his transcription of Titian's work and its relationship to the subject matter that is the primary of concern to this project.

The surface of the painting is covered with broad, brush-marks that can in some cases seem like slashed marks. These marks have great energy suggesting they have been applied with an intense consideration of their direction, geography, and relation to each other, and what they are used to describe. The colours used are loosely related to Titian's original. But this is a transcription painting which is based both on his memory of the work and on a number of pencil studies of Titian's original. The painting itself appears at first glance to be non-figurative with none of the painted marks noticeably used to describe objects in the original. Closer inspection, however, enables the viewer to identify what marks have been used to represent which

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[206] Catherine Lampert, *Frank Auerbach*. London: The British Council, 1986, p. 9.

figures.[207] Auerbach's concerns appear to be with the geometry of the original. His paint-marks suggesting a scaffolding or armature on which the painting is structured. This first experience of the Auerbach work reveals a painting of raw energy with the transformations of the details of the Titian painting being quite extreme.[208] This is a painting that is based on a very depictive work but its painterly concerns locate it almost as being non-figurative. Auerbach's paintings are never large in the way that Cy Twombly's works are. The selected painting of each artist is typical of the scale at which they work. In Auerbach's case the paintings are generally of a size no larger than the span of one's arms. The immense effort dictated by Auerbach's way of working would mitigate against the works being any bigger. The visual impact of this is the sense of concentrated effort that has gone into the making of the work.

This transcription appears to contain all the structural elements of Titian's original even down to the depiction of the 'corona' constellation at the top of the painting which has been rendered in a rainbow of colours.

3.3.4   Auerbach and his method of working

Frank Auerbach is a London-based artist who came to prominence in the second half of the twentieth century and is still active at the time of writing. He was part of a group of artists that included Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud, Leon Kossof and Michael Andrews. Each had their own particular concerns in painting but Auerbach and Kossof are linked in both their subject matter (landscapes/cityscapes and portraits) and stylistically. This expressive style may be traced back to their one-time tutor David Bomberg and in Auerbach's case an interest in the work of the American Abstract Expressionists in particular Willem de Kooning.[209]

By his own admission, Auerbach's work owes a debt to the work of past masters in saying 'Without these touchstones we would be floundering.'[210] He follows very much in the tradition of western art whereby both students and established artists

[207] Colin Wiggins, *Frank Auerbach and The National Gallery: Working after the Masters.* London: National Gallery Publications, 1995, p. 31.
[208] Ibid., p. 31.
[209] Norman Rosenthal, 'Auerbach and His History', in *Frank Auerbach: Paintings and Drawings 1954-2001*, edited by Rosenthal, N., Lampert, C., Carlisle, I., London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001, p. 14.
[210] Colin Wiggins, *Frank Auerbach and The National Gallery: Working after the Masters.* London: National Gallery Publications, 1995, p. 6.

would copy or make transcriptions of masterworks. A prime example of this is Picasso who made literal copies of old masters as a student but then, as a mature artist, made radical transcriptions of the work of such masters as Velazquez[211]. It is in this tradition that Auerbach has been making sketches and paintings from works in the National Gallery since he was a student. One of these transcriptions is the subject of this case study.

Auerbach's sketches present us with a gradual stripping down of the pictorial elements of Titian's work and a 'changing of the factors which become focal.'[212] It is an abstraction of Titian's work and, as evidenced by the sketches, moves towards the non-figurative. But they are figurative enough to allow the study to look at the depictive aspects of the Auerbach painting to see how it may inform the debate *vis a vis* depiction theory and non-figurative work. It is in this sense that this particular work by Auerbach is used by Michael Podro to demonstrate how painting procedure and subject matter "interpenetrate" in a more 'contemporary way.'[213] Podro is not specific in what he means by this but the following suggests an explanation.

Auerbach's work can be seen to be described[214] by Sickert's commentary on his own work that:

> The real subject of a picture or drawing is the plastic facts it succeeds in expressing; and all the world of pathos, of poetry, of sentiment that it succeeds in conveying by means of the plastic facts expressed, by the suggestion of the three dimensions of space, the suggestion of weight, the prelude or refrain of movement, the promise of movement to come, or the echo of movement past.[215]

There are elements of this statement that can be seen to be true of Auerbach's transcription of the Titian. The leaping movement of Bacchus in Titian's painting that captures the description in Ovid's verse is reflected in the arrangement of marks used by Auerbach. The twist of Ariadne's figure anchored by the thrust of her right leg seems to be exaggerated by Auerbach in his painting by a series of marks which help

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[211] Pierre Daix, *Picasso*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1964, p. 228.
[212] Michael Podro, 'Depiction and the Golden Calf' in *Visual Theory*, edited by Bryson, Holly and Moxey, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 178.
[213] Ibid., p. 175
[214] Norman Rosenthal, 'Auerbach and His History', in *Frank Auerbach: Paintings and Drawings 1954-2001*, edited by Rosenthal, N., Lampert, C., Carlisle, I., London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001, p. 13.
[215] Walter Sickert as quoted in Herbert Read *A Coat of Many Colours: Occasional Essays*, London, 1945, p. 137.

hold the pictorial surface together. But the narrative of the Titian is not the primary concern for Auerbach whose interest is more in the 'raw energy and emotion of the Titian, revealed paradoxically through the formal rigour of the geometry.'[216]

Auerbach's materials usually consist of pencil on paper for sketches, charcoal on Arches 'Not' surface paper for drawings, and 'Stokes' oil paint on canvas or board for painting.[217] The arches paper is heavyweight and robust with a rougher surface than the cold pressed paper. It provides greater resistance to Auerbach's strenuous method of working which entails a constant process of application of charcoal and erasure. The oil paint has a density of colour and a malleable viscosity, which allows the paint to be used thickly, and facilitates bold and gestural marks.

For Auerbach charcoal drawings are as ambitious as the paintings[218] and share many similarities with them. The repeated application and erasure of the charcoal gives the surface of the paper a similar density and presence to that of the paintings.[219]

Robert Hughes compare Auerbach's landscapes to those of Constable who, he suggests, is able to describe the:

> …light, earth, and vegetation by turning the pigment itself into the substance of imaginative realisation…the qualities of the landscape are rolled back into the qualities of the paint.[220]

As with the drawings, the paintings are the product of a continuous process of painting, scraping, and beginning again. But underpinning this Auerbach needs a painting to have a clear geometrical structure for it to work.[221]

Arguably one of the most important influences on Auerbach was that of David Bomberg, his tutor at the Borough Polytechnic. Bomberg's ideas on perception were derived from an understanding of the philosopher Bishop Berkeley who considered human beings could only connect sight to objects in the world through early

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[216] Colin Wiggins, *Frank Auerbach and The National Gallery: Working after the Masters.* London: National Gallery Publications, 1995, p. 31.
[217] Catherine Lampert, 'Auerbach and His Sitters', in *Frank Auerbach: paintings and Drawings 1954-2001*, edited by C. Lampert, N. Rosenthal and I. Carlisle, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001, p. 19.
[218] Robert Hughes, *Frank Auerbach*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 135.
[219] Ibid., p. 135.
[220] Ibid., p. 170.
[221] Ibid., p. 171.

developmental experiences of these objects by touch and other senses.[222] Visual
perception by this argument becomes deeply affected by our experience of the haptic
qualities of things:

> We elucidate sight from the memory of touch and out of our understanding of
> that architecture we then make an image out of lines and other marks.[223]

Auerbach's heritage line as an artist can be seen to stretch back through Bomberg and
Sickert to Constable and arguably back to Titian. He shares with them a belief that the
qualities of paint can be so manipulated to influence our perception through a
correspondence of the tactile qualities of the paint with that of the objects they
represent.[224]

3.3.5   How the theories of depiction apply

Auerbach is an important figure in the tradition of twentieth-century figurative
expressionism and although his work practice is such that subject matter becomes
increasingly difficult to recognise, it never disengages completely from the medium in
the sense that there is always a recognisable element in his work.[225] It is always
possible to see the depicted subject in the painting or drawing in any one of his three
main subject areas of portraiture, landscape and transcriptions of master-works. In this
respect, the principal theories of depiction evolved, as I maintain, for work with
recognisable imagery, may prove to be problematic in their application.

This is particularly true when considering Walton's idea that the picture acts as a prop
for a game of make believe. In this case the viewer is presented with a work from
which, without prior knowledge, it would be difficult to discern any clearly
recognisable imagery. This begs the question as to how Walton's theory could be
applied in this case. What game of make-believe could be triggered from this tangle
of brush marks? Arguably none that would be based on any sort of narrative that is
arguably at the core of Walton's ideas. It would be difficult to determine a game of
make-believe based on the imagery presented that would be in any sense consistent

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[222] Ibid., p. 32.
[223] Ibid., p. 32.
[224] Norman Rosenthal, 'Auerbach and His History', in *Frank Auerbach: paintings and Drawings 1954-2001*, edited by C. Lampert, N. Rosenthal and I. Carlisle, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001, pp. 13 and 14.
[225] Michael Podro, *At the Edge of Awareness*, The Times Literary Supplement, 2001, p. 19.

with the artist's concerns and intentions. It could be argued, perhaps, that because of the connection between this painting and the original of which this is a transcription, Walton's theory could be applied. That in some way the original prompted game of make-believe can be modified or reinterpreted by looking at the Auerbach painting. There are works, such as Duchamp's work titled *L.H.O.O.Q.* in which he painted a moustache on a print of the Mona Lisa, where this can be considered to be the case. In Auerbach's transcription such a reinterpretation would be highly speculative.

Auerbach's concerns are not directly to do with the story of the Titian. They are more to do with paint, with surface marking, and the geometry and structure of the work. Because of this Wollheim's description of seeing-in and the twofold experience of looking at a painting may be more relevant. As discussed in Chapter 2 Wollheim contends that what a painting represents can be defined in terms of what a spectator can see in it, provided only that what he sees in it concurs with the artist's intention.[226] The artist builds up analogies between the medium and the object of representation such that there is a single experience of the picture where the perceived aspects of both the materiality of the surface and of the configuration of the subject, interact and transform each other within the viewing experience.[227] He argues that the purposeful use of paint converts it into a medium that is endowed with content or meaning or that it is capable of carrying meaning.[228]

This argument has a clear relevance where the subject matter is easily recognisable. In this case the subject matter of Titian's painting is barely discernible but, as Podro says, is never 'disengaged from the distinctive properties of the painter's medium.'[229] Auerbach has reduced the figures in the Titian to a series of marks or signs that, in some cases, convey the dynamic of the original. But these are only part of the principal concern of the painting which is to reveal the 'raw energy and emotion'[230] through the rigorous pursuit of its structure. Arguably Wollheim's assertion holds true

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[226] Wilde, C. (1997). 'Richard Wollheim', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by Cooper D., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997, p. 448.
[227] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 52.
[228] Ibid., p. 44.
[229] Michael Podro, *At the edge of Awareness*, The Times Literary Supplement. 2001. p.
[230] Colin Wiggins, *Frank Auerbach and The National Gallery: Working after the Masters.* London: National Gallery Publications, 1995, p. 31.

even at this level of abstraction although what we are presented with is a painting 'whose subject is not the subject of Titian's painting but Titian's painting itself.'[231]

Goodman argues that, for any picture, there should be two questions asked of it. What does the picture represent and what type of picture is it? Pictures can only be understood by reference to the conceptual framework within which they should be interpreted and the classification system in which they fall.[232] For Goodman's theory of depiction there are three central points. Firstly, pictorial representations denote (refer or stand for) objects in the world. Secondly, they do this within a system of symbols that are correlated to a reference field. Thirdly this symbol system must be a pictorial one.[233]

To understand Auerbach's painting in these terms is problematic. The imagery in the work is attenuated compared to Titian's original. How does this painting meet Goodman's criteria that, on the face of it, are readily applicable to works with recognisable imagery but have little or no application in this case? It is not clear what objects in the world are denoted by Auerbach in this work nor does it fit easily within a system of symbols that relate to a set of subjects.

As stated the object of reference, however, is not the subject of Titian's painting but Titian's painting itself and the pictorial symbol system is that developed by Auerbach through his particular way of working. He consistently uses certain types of marks to describe things in the world, which are as a result of his concerns as a painter with the geometry of a work and how the paint itself is used to describe the external object. This is, if anything, his conceptual framework.

3.3.6   Findings and conclusions

It follows from the preceding analyses, that applying Walton's ideas on depiction to this painting is problematic. At this level of figuration where, at first sight, there is no recognisable imagery it is difficult to see how the painting can prompt the imaginings

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[231] Podro, M., 'Depiction and the Golden Calf' in *Visual Theory,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 178.
[232] Giovanelli, A. (Spring 2009). The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. E. N. Zalta.
[233] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, London: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 59.

required by Walton's theory in any sensible way. Neither does it give the illusion required by Gombrich to fool us into thinking we are actually viewing Titian's depicted scene.

Understanding the work in Wollheim's terms is more fruitful. There is a two-fold experience of simultaneously being aware of the painted surface and how the paintwork has been used to describe, in a sort of shorthand notation, the figures in the Titian painting. In addition to this there is the experience of how this paintwork makes the viewer aware of the artist's concerns regarding the underlying structure and geometry of both the original work and its transcription.

Attempting to understand the work in Goodman's terms is instructive. The marks used by Auerbach to signify or stand for the different elements of the original can be seen to be part of his own symbol system much as Kandinsky did as he moved further towards abstraction.

In both Hopkins' and Lopes' terms there are difficult decisions to make. There are no easily recognisable shapes that Hopkins requires of us to see. But to understand the work by reference to the original, as seems perhaps sensible, then Auerbach's notation for the elements of Titian's work can be interpreted as being depictive in Hopkins's terms.

Auerbach's way of dealing with the figurative elements in Titian's painting does not, on the whole, correspond to our general experience of pictures of people, animals etc. It is how Auerbach works and is outside of our evolved or generative experience of pictures as Lopes argues.
With this work the lack of recognisable imagery has militated against a comprehensible understanding of it in terms of Walton's theory of depiction. It has, however, indicated that both Wollheim and Goodman's theories can be interpreted in such a way that their relevance to non-figurative work can be justified in some circumstances. This is developed in the next case study.

3.4   Study 3   Cy Twombly - *Quattro Stagioni: Autunno*

3.4.1   Introduction

Although this is essentially a non-figurative work the study includes analyses based on those theories whose application is predicated on work with recognisable imagery. The template used is similar to that in the other case studies.

3.4.2   The work investigated and the reasons for its selection.

3.4.3   Description of the work and of the first sensory experience.

3.4.4   What is known of Twombly and his way of working?

3.4.5   How the theories of depiction apply.

3.4.6   Findings and conclusions.

3.4.2   The work investigated and the reasons for its selection.

The third work to be analysed is Cy Twombly's *Quattro Stagioni: Autunno*. As the name indicates this is one of a set of four paintings representing the four seasons that was shown as part of a retrospective exhibition of Twombly's work held at Tate Modern in London in 2008. The painting was viewed on a number of occasions during this exhibition. Twombly painted two versions of the *Quattro Stagioni* the first of which is in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York. The second version, of which this painting is a part, is in the collection of The Tate[234] but is not on display at the time of writing.

There are specific reasons for selecting it for this study as outlined in the introduction to this Chapter. Twombly is, however, a difficult artist to understand and comprehension of his work requires some study.[235]

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[234] Nicholas Cullinan, 'Quattro Stagioni', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by N. Serota. London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 193.
[235] Nicholas Serota, 'Forward', *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons,* edited by Nicholas Serota, London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 7.

3.4.3   Description of the work and of the first sensory experience.

The painting was seen in Room 11 of Tate Modern in the course of an exhibition of Twombly's work titled *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons* shown in 2008. Both series of *Quattro Stagioni* were on display but it was the series belonging to The Tate that is the subject of this study as it gave the possibility of viewing the canvas at a later date.

Ostensibly any one of the four paintings in this series could have been selected for this study but the *Autunno* painting relates to the subjects in the other two studies through a connection to Bacchus that is made through the mention of Pan and by a connection to wine harvests and bucolic scenes through the associations with Autumn. This particular painting was selected from the quadryptich purely for thematic reasons.

The painting itself is over three metres high and over two metres wide. Because of this there are two viewing distances. Inspection of the surface of the work requires the viewer to be within five feet but in order to see the whole of the work the viewer needs to be ten to fifteen feet away. On a canvas this size it can be difficult to experience the simultaneous awareness of the painted surface with that which the paintwork describes (i.e. the depicted object) in the manner that Wollheim explains.

As with much of Twombly's work there is the impression of graffiti. There is generally no discernible or recognisable object depicted, the paint is applied in splodges that have been allowed to drip. Some of these have horizontal paint marks emanating from them. In some cases the paint has been applied in a circular motion, as has the crayon that accompanies it.

Figure 13. Cy Twombly, *Quattro Stagioni: (A Painting in Four Parts)-Part III:Autunno*, 1993-1995, 3136mm x 2150mm, Acrylic, oil, crayon and pencil on canvas, Collection of The Tate

The overall impression of colour is of blood or wine. This is consistent with the word *Autunno* that is boldly written across the top half of the painting. A few of the marks on the canvas have been made by the merest touch of the surface with the tip of the brush which has then been allowed to bleed. There are other pencil graffiti such as the reference to Pan, the Greek god of shepherds and flocks, of rustic music and hunting who is normally associated with Spring but has been depicted offering grapes to Bacchus (Dionysius) and in Titian's painting appears in his retinue. Much of the written element in the painting is barely decipherable.

The paint (especially the reds) in some areas has clearly been applied or worked with the fingers echoing Titian's later works. The colouring, predominantly reds, browns and yellows can be seen to connote the season of the year represented that is itself written in a naïve way on the work itself.

In some areas the canvas has been untouched and in others there is a very thin yellow colouring. In other areas text and graffiti have been painted over as if an initial idea has been rethought.

3.4.3 What is known of Twombly and his way of working?

Twombly was born in Lexington (Virginia) in 1928 and studied art at Boston, New York and at Black Mountain College (NC) where he met Robert Rauschenberg and, through him, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell.[236] In the early fifties he travelled and lived in North Africa, Spain and Italy and in 1957 he moved to Rome. Still a resident of Italy he now shares his time between Rome, Naples and Virginia.[237]

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[236] Nicholas Serota, 'History Behind The Thought', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Serota, N., London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 43.
[237] Marjorie Welish, 'The Art of Being Sparse, Porous, Scattered, Roland Barthes on Cy Twombly', in *Signifying Art,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 49.

Figure 14. Detail of Figure 13

His artistic career was influenced in its early stages by Abstract Expressionism but the move to Europe resulted in a development along very independent lines. His work is characterised by a range of:

> …unruly marks – stammering, energetic, and raw. Both extensively
> considered and spontaneously acted upon, his surfaces are palimpsests of

impure lines, painterly gesture and incident, and script.[238]

As with his contemporaries, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, Twombly is heir
to the contributions to pictorial space that Abstract Expressionism gave:

> total freedom of content and composition; emphasis on the spontaneous
> gesture, straight from the artists psyche, both as objective and subjective fact;
> opening up of pictorial space; and acceptance of the matter of paint as the
> essence of painting.[239]

And it is through the influence of the Surrealist artists on the Abstract Expressionist
movement that perhaps Twombly became aware of the expressive use of line and the
fact that paint need not be used to represent an object but was in itself a creative
material.[240] His work had become linear, graphic, and graffiti-like before his move to
Rome in the late 1950's. This move created a 'Mediterranean' effect, as Barthes
describes it, in his work wherein the early canvases from this period contained the
summer light of southern Italy (he was painting on the island of Procida near
Naples)[241]. Colour appears more often in his work from this time, as do the references
to the myths, legends and landscape of the Mediterranean world. It is also at this time
the mark is used to form an 'extensive vocabulary of signs, numerals, diagrams and
occasional words and phrases.'[242]

Twombly has always been interested in landscape in the sense that he has an acute
interest in place. This is revealed in the way that many of his paintings are inscribed
with the name of places visited, passed through, or for some reason significant to
him:[243]

> Landscape is one of my favourite things in the world. Any kind of landscape
> stimulates me…I would liked to have been Poussin, if I'd had a choice, in
> another time.[244]

Indeed it is to Poussin that the comparison can be made when looking at Twombly's

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[238]James Rondeau, *Cy Twombly: The Natural World, Selected Works, 2000-2007*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 15.

[239] Harald Szeemann, 'Cy Twombly: An Appreciation', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings - Works on Paper – Sculpture*, edited by H. Szeemann, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987, p. 9.

[240] Ibid., p. 10.

[241] Nicholas Serota, 'History Behind The Thought', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Serota, N., London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 71.

[242] Smith, R., 'The Great Mediator', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings - Works on Paper – Sculpture*, edited by H. Szeemann, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987.

[243] Rondeau, J., *Cy Twombly: The Natural World, Selected Works, 2000-2007*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 19.

[244] Ibid. 19.

two versions *Quattro Stagioni (A painting in Four Parts).* Twombly was of a similar age to Poussin when he painted his cycle of four paintings (*The Seasons*) in his later life[245]. These now hang in the Musé du Louvre. It is not known if Twombly was directly influenced by these four paintings but, by his own admission, he looks a lot at Poussin and has 'always wanted to do a brown painting'[246] What is known is that the *Quattro Stagioni* were painted in Gaeta, near Naples in the period 1994-1995.

Twombly is a keen reader of Keats who, in his poem *The Human Seasons*, draws the parallel between the seasons of the year and passage of human life, which has its roots in the classical concept of the ages of man. In this sense Spring is seen as lusty, Summer as sensual, Autumn as indolence or idleness, and Winter as seeing approaching death.[247] In Renaissance times the seasons were identified with pagan divinities such that Venus was seen as representing Spring, Ceres for Summer, Bacchus for Autumn, and Vulcan for Winter.

Twombly's colour scheme is consistent with traditional pagan depictions of the seasons basing his paintings around a scheme of blood red for Spring, yellow bile for Summer, black bile for Autumn, and opaque phlegm for Winter. The Autumn painting in each of the two versions of *Quattro Stagioni* relates specifically to the Autumn wine festival in Bassano (Bassano Romano to the north of Rome) where the paintings were begun.[248]

The New York version of *Autunno* has clear references to both Autumn and to wine in the names of both Bacchus and Silenus which have been 'scribbled' in pencil on it. In the Tate version, apart from the strongly written word *Autunno*, the only other legible reference is to that of Pan who is usually associated with Spring but in Titian's painting appears as a member of Bacchus's retinue.

In his documented interview with Nicholas Serota there is a clear picture given of how Twombly works and of his painterly concerns. There are a number of points of interest from this interview. The paintings were completed in Twombly's studio in

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[245] Nicholas Cullinan, 'Quattro Stagioni', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Nicholas Serota. London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 193.

[246] Nicholas Serota, 'History Behind The Thought', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Serota, N., London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 46.

[247] Nicholas Cullinan, 'Quattro Stagioni', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Nicholas Serota. London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 193.

[248] Ibid., p. 193.

Gaeta (near Naples) primarily to accommodate the size of them (they are over three metres high). The shape of the canvases being determined by the two-metre width of the canvas roll in the first instance and, probably, by the height of the studio room itself. Twombly stresses that, although these paintings are of the normally accepted format for portraits, they are not to be considered as such indeed there is no format model for the series 'It was' he states 'from scratch'.[249]

How does Twombly paint? What meaning can be put to all those scribbles, marks and blobs of colour and how does his painting respond to the picture surface and its edges?

Arguably the very essence of a painting is the marks made by the artist. These are the very structure of the painted surface whatever it is that is represented. 'A painting's entire resources are documented in the brush strokes comprising it.'[250] A point echoed in the quotation from Harrison in Chapter 2.2.5.

Twombly developed a way of working that reduced painting to the elements of drawing where he used the mark and the line to express his responses to his subject. His particular, scribbled use of line opened up his art to the use of language and writing as a graphic way of responding to his subject matter.[251]

When viewing Twombly's work one is struck by the sense of freedom of his mark making presenting us with 'various combinations of scrawls, graffiti, paint smears, letters, numerals, words, word fragments, diagrams and sign.'[252] This quality of seemingly out-of-control mark making is suggestive of the Surrealists and, in turn, their influence on the Abstract Expressionists with who Twombly was associated in his early career.[253]

The general feeling of Twombly's paintings over the past few decades is lightness of touch and, almost as a consequence of this, an intensity of meaning in the marks used.

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[249] Nicholas Serota, 'History Behind The Thought', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Nicholas Serota, London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 48.
[250] Marjorie Welish, 'The Art of Being Sparse, Porous, Scattered, Roland Barthes on Cy Twombly', in *Signifying Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 35.
[251] Smith, R., 'The Great Mediator', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings - Works on Paper – Sculpture*, edited by H. Szeemann, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987, p. 13.
[252] Ibid., p. 15.
[253] Marjorie Welish, 'The Art of Cy Twombly', in *Signifying Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 43.

Paint is applied in blobs and smears denoting no form but redolent of 'visceral or organic matter.'[254] There is the sense of enquiry to the marks that reinforces the impression of meaning attached to them 'his touches encapsulate both rich content and strong signifying purpose.'[255]

Barthes wrote on two occasions on Twombly's work and it is revealing to examine what he says. The writing element of the works does not adhere to any graphic code, he suggests, but are just a series of shapes that are borne out of the very surface on which they are written. His argument is that any canvas or paper that is to be drawn on will contain any number of slight blemishes as well as the patterning or weaving caused by its manufacture and these will influence the mark making. [256]

He further considers that Twombly's marks, and particularly the writing element, can be compared to ideographic writing where the character symbolises the idea of something without indicating the sounds needed to say it.[257] By making this analogy Barthes is seeking to emphasise the importance of the shape and slant of the lines and written characters and that the written element of a work has two levels of interpretation. The first is the word as signifying something in the world (in this case Autumn or Autunno). Secondly the word or letters as written with their quality of line and shape contribute to the graphic structure of the work.[258]

Twombly, by his own admission, works in a somewhat fitful way. Long periods of reflection in the studio are followed by short periods of intense activity. But the impulse for a painting or a series of paintings comes from the landscape around him or from a reference to something he has been reading (Twombly is, as an example, an admirer of the imagist poet Ezra Pound).[259] These intense moments of painting activity means that he decries the use of the brush as the charge of paint on it soon runs out thus inhibiting his work. Paint then can be applied and worked with the fingers much in the manner of the later Titians. This way of working lends itself to the immediacy of the drawn line, the written word, and the scribble.

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[254] Ibid., p. 36.
[255] Ibid., p. 38.
[256] Roland Barthes, 'Non Multa Sed Multum', in *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*, edited by J. Sylvester, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2004, p. 27.
[257] OED
[258] Roland Barthes, 'Non Multa Sed Multum', in *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*, edited by J. Sylvester, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2004, p. 29.
[259] Nicholas Serota, 'History Behind The Thought', in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, edited by Nicholas Serota, London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 50.

3.4.5   How the theories of depiction apply?

Twombly's art is difficult for many people to fathom even for those who maintain an interest and involvement in contemporary art.[260] His assemblages of scribbles and twirls of paint defy immediate comprehension.

As with most art, and especially with a painter like Twombly, the physical experience of the work is of utmost importance. It is only by standing in front of the work can we come to understand and sense the differences of touch of the various materials used to make a mark whether a pencil, a brush or a finger. But Twombly's paintings also allow us to bring to mind the landscapes that affect him and, perhaps through that, the sensual pleasure of life:

> He evokes rather than describes, choosing the metaphor rather than the simile as his language of expression.[261]

Perhaps more than any other contemporary artist he has used line and colour in such a poetic way.[262] Indeed it is certain Greek and Roman poets, and Keats and Eliot that are an inspiration and a source of much of his work.[263]

His work is essentially non-figurative in the sense that there is little recognisable imagery in his paintings. For the work under consideration this is certainly the case. More recent work does, however, present us with a stronger figurative element, for example the series of 'rose' paintings, prompted by a poem of Rilke, that were exhibited at the Gagosan Gallery in London in 2009.

The recognisable imagery that is used is that of the written word. This seems to me to operate in the two ways suggested by Barthes, namely as referring to something in the world and as being part of the painting's structure. It is possibly this latter sense that carries the most import.

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[260] Nicholas Serota, 'Forward', *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons,* edited by Nicholas Serota, London: Tate Publishing, 2008, p. 7.
[261] Ibid., p. 7.
[262] Harald Szeemann, 'Cy Twombly: An Appreciation', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings - Works on Paper – Sculpture*, edited by H. Szeemann, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987, p. 9.
[263] Smith, R., 'The Great Mediator', in *Cy Twombly: Paintings - Works on Paper – Sculpture*, edited by H. Szeemann, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987, p. 13.

When considering Walton's idea that a work of art acts by stimulating us to take part in a game of make-believe the graphic element of the work, used in its linguistic sense, triggers the 'game' which is supported by other signs in the painting. But what sense would viewers make of the painting if they did not understand written English or Italian? If for example their written language was based on pictograms as is the case with many of the eastern languages. In these cases the experience of the painting would be one of graphic marks and paintwork only. It is in this sense that I propose to consider this work. And it is in this sense that it should, I maintain, be considered non-figurative and would certainly appear to be so in that first, phenomenological, stage of viewing.

On this assumption can Walton's theory of depiction be seen to apply? He makes a case for its applicability to non-figurative art[264] but, as with Wollheim, the argument seems to be restricted to spatial illusion in geometric and non-figurative works and how this may prompt a game of make-believe (in Walton's case he uses a work by Malevich). This argument in itself would not allow an adequate interpretation of Twombly's work which is not only rich in allusions to its subject matter but requires interpretation of the way the materials of the work itself has been handled. As with the work by Auerbach it would be difficult to determine a game of make-believe based on the imagery presented which would be in any sense consistent with the artist's concerns and intentions.

Wollheim's and Dilworth's ideas on depiction stress how the material of a work is used and handled to describe and give meaning to the object represented. This has a clear relevance where the subject matter is easily recognisable. It is difficult to apply this to the Twombly painting which has no recognisable imagery. Wollheim, like Walton, tests his thinking in relation to non-figurative art[265] and, in essence, concludes that his notion of twofoldness is met by the attention to the marked surface on the one hand and by virtue of the fact that what is represented in abstract works, as he labels them, is depth. Where depth of field is not a concern of the artist and is therefore not represented then two-foldness cannot apply.

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[264] Kendal Walton, *Mimesis and Make Believe*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 54.

[265] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 62.

By this argument Wollheim's theory of depiction cannot be applied to the Twombly painting there being no evidence, written or otherwise, that illusion of depth is a primary concern in a painting of this type.

We also cannot understand the painting in either Hopkins' or Lopes' terms and we would not expect to. There are no recognizable outline shapes that correspond to our experience of seeing things in the real world and nothing that corresponds to our evolved or generative experiences of viewing.

To reiterate the comment in Case Study 2 Goodman argues that, for any picture, there should be two questions asked of it. What does the picture represent and what type of picture is it? Pictures can only be understood by reference to the conceptual framework within which they should be interpreted and the classification system in which they fall.[266] For his theory of depiction there are three central points. Firstly pictorial representations denote (refer or stand for) objects in the world. Secondly they do this within a system of symbols that correlate to a reference field. Thirdly this symbol system must be a pictorial one.[267]

A first experience of a (non-figurative) Twombly painting will evoke feelings of pleasure perhaps in the way the materials of the painting have been used and manipulated and in its facture generally. Conversely it may of course evoke feelings of confusion and rejection. But it is difficult to interpret the painting without knowledge of the artist, his influences, his context, and his way of working. For figurative work this is less true. Some interpretation of the Titian in the first case study can take place without any knowledge of the above. To understand Twombly's painting in Goodman's terms requires answers to the questions and points raised in the previous paragraph for which background knowledge is needed.

As to what the picture represents and what type of picture it is the concise reply is to say that it is a landscape painting that represents the (Italian) landscape in the Autumn season. The question is how does the painting achieve this?

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[266] Giovanelli, A. (Spring 2009). The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. E. N. Zalta.
[267] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, London: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 59.

Twombly's marks and symbols are very much part of his own pictorial system. They operate by evoking the sensations related to the subject matter and do this through a combination of mark-making, graphic symbol, and signifying colour. This latter operates in much the same way that colour is used in the Titian painting. This is very much a connotive work in the sense explained by Barthes.[268] In his terms the painting can be seen to be an example of Twombly's connotive procedure whereby the 'message' is alluded to through the gestures of the painting operating in a metaphoric way.[269]

To put this another way the viewer is faced with a canvas upon which are various squiggles, scratches and paint that has been manipulated directly by hand. The work is non-figurative in the sense that there is no recognisable imagery. The scribbled text in the painting, specifically the word *Autunno*, highlights the problem of interpretation. As a linguistic sign it denotes what the dictionary definition says it means namely the season of the year that occurs between Summer and Winter. But this signifier has other, implicit, meanings to the dictionary definition. These can be both culturally and geographically based and constitute what is signified connotively in contrast to the denoted signification. In this painting these connoted meanings relate to the time of year denoted but as experienced in a wine-growing region of Italy just north of Rome. The colouring and marks allude to sensuousness, to blood or wine and to mellowness. These are all properties we may associate with Autumn.

There are further levels of meaning attached to these signs. The idea of wine may, for some, bring to mind the myths and gods of the Mediterranean region that are associated with this time of year. Bacchus and, by association, Pan are examples. It is clear that these connotations are culturally based. Innuit tribes-people for instance would not understand the painting in these terms.

3.4.5   Findings and Conclusions

This work by Twombly is essentially non-figurative and as such trying to apply the depictive theory of Walton becomes problematic. As with the Auerbach painting the

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[268] Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, p. 20.
[269] Barthes writing on denotation and connotation is examined in the next chapter in more detail. It becomes a key element in my argument as to how some non-figurative works can depict.

lack of recognisable imagery makes it difficult to see how the painting can prompt the imaginings required by Walton's theory in any meaningful way.

Applying Wollheim's theory to the painting runs into the same problems. There is no recognisable imagery for the paintwork to describe and in this sense the theory of depiction cannot be seen to apply. When seeking to apply his theory to twentieth century abstract art, Wollheim limits his analysis to the question of whether one condition of the two-fold experience is met by the illusion of depth that he finds in a Hans Hoffman painting but not in a Barnet Newman painting.[270]

Although the Twombly painting does display the illusion of depth this is not a condition of the painting. More interesting is the consideration that Wollheim's theory could be seen to work if the awareness of the painted surface and how the paint has been applied (one condition of the two-fold experience) is experienced in relation to, not what object in the world they may describe, but to what they may allude to or bring to mind. This is looked at more closely in the next chapter.

One interpretation of Goodman's theory would be that this work is not a depictive in the sense that, being non-figurative, it is problematic as to what is denoting and what is it that is being denoted. In other words one can ask the questions what are all these marks on the canvas? If they are signs then what system do they belong to? What do they denote i.e. what is their field of reference or what pictorial symbol system do they belong to?

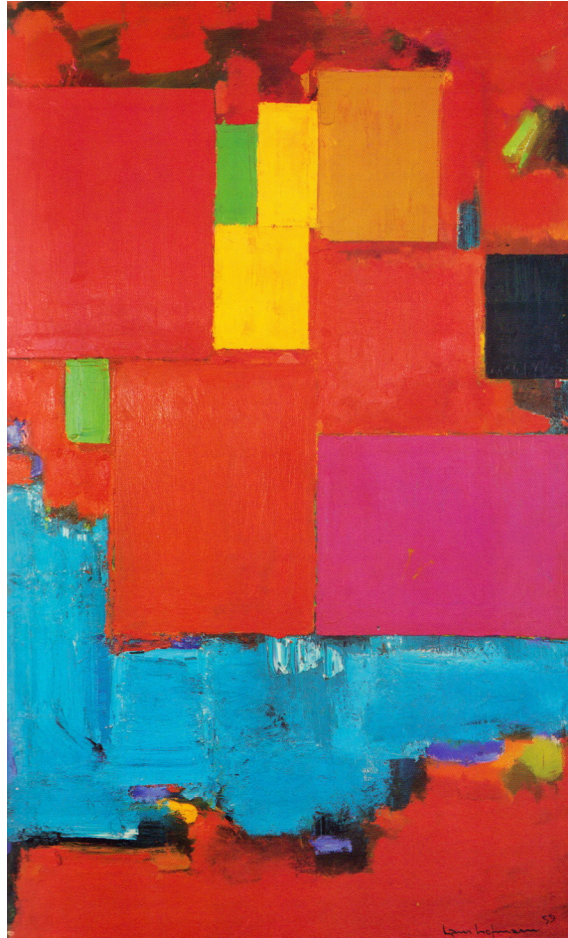
[270] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 62.

Figure 15. Hans Hoffman, *Pompeii*, 1949, 2140mm x 1321mm, Oil on Canvas, Collection of The Tate.

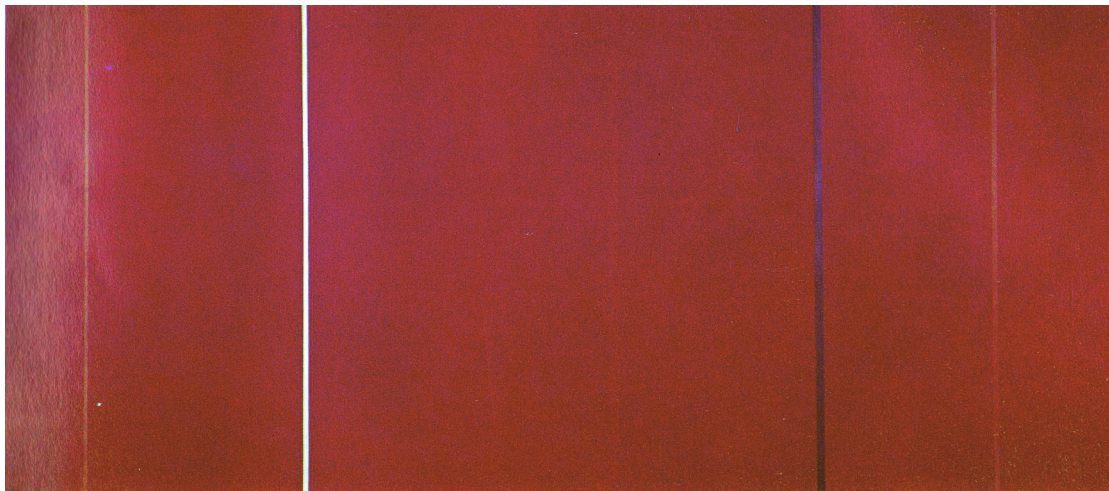

Figure 16. Barnet Newman, *Virheroicus Sublimus*, 1950-1951, 2423mm x 5417mm, Oil on Canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

As suggested above, however, to understand this painting by Twombly it needs to be read in a particular way. The marks made, the way they are made and the significance of the colouring are suggestive of aspects of something, in this case autumn. It seems therefore that this work indicates autumn without strictly fitting into any of the theories of depiction. The conclusion of this is that some works or types of work can be considered depictive by virtue of them operating in a connotive way and that any definition of depiction would have to be extended to include this. This point is explored in the next chapter.

3.5   Findings and Conclusions for Chapter 3

The case studies confirm that the established theories of depiction each provide satisfactory explanations of the viewing experience of figurative works of art. This is on the basis that the work chosen (*Bacchus and Ariadne*) is typical of all figurative works of art in the sense that the imagery can be easily read.

The studies also indicate that applying these theories to abstracted and non-figurative work becomes increasingly problematic. In particular Gombrich's and Walton's ideas on depiction become less relevant to paintings as they move towards non-figuration. Walton's suggestion as to how his own theory can apply to these types of work has limited relevance. This is also true when using Wollheim's theory to analyse these works. If, however, Wollheim's ideas are modified in the way Dilworth suggests (i.e. where the facture of the paint material is taken into consideration) then I suggest this modified theory could be useful in understanding certain types of non-figurative work. This point is also discussed in the next chapter.

The theories of Hopkins and Lopes become increasingly untenable the more abstracted a painting becomes. This is not unexpected as both are predicated on our seeing recognisable shapes in a painting that correspond to our experiences of seeing the depicted objects in the real world.

For certain types of work, Goodman's semiotic theory of depiction can be considered depictive if it is extended by the distinction made by Barthes between denotation and connotation. In this way some works can be seen to indicate that which they represent

by the particular use of mark-making signifying through suggestion, metaphor, allusion etc. This is explored in the next chapter.

Where has this led us? For the most part theories of depiction do not explain non-figurative works of art. Depiction is, after all, a characteristic of figurative art. But, as we shall see, there are some works that denote things in the world without there being any recognisable imagery to indicate this. How this may be is hinted at in Wollheim's theory as modified by Dilworth and by Goodman's theory as extended using Barthes. In the next chapter an argument is developed that seeks to explain how some types of work can be both non-figurative and depictive.

Chapter 4

Case Study of Practice Work

Figure 17. *Chalk Face* – Detail   Figure 18. *Poetic Field* - Detail

4.1   Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework needed to extend existing notions
of depiction such that their relevance to some types of non-figurative work can be
seen. This notion of depiction is tested against two works that have evolved through
the practice element of the research and is then used in the analysis of two other non-
figurative works in which the material of the work has an important depictive role.
These are works by Richard Long and Gary Hume.

It was suggested at the end of the last chapter some elements of Wollheim's theory of
depiction, modified by Dilworth, and Goodman's theory as extended using Barthes
could be useful in developing a theory that seeks to explain how some types of work
can be both non-figurative and depictive. Neither of these lines of reasoning is in
themselves enough for this task. We need to look somewhere else.

In Chapter 3 Dilworth suggested that there must be more to the understanding of an
artwork than an analysis based on the subject matter only. There are other components
of meaning involved in artistic communication not least of which could be expressive,
stylistic, medium-related, formal and intentional factors. These he classifies as

aspectual factors (in that they are aspects of the artwork distinct from the subject).[271]
He suggests that artworks *indicate* (that is they aspectually represent) something
about the depicted object by virtue of how they are done, their style, how expressed,
their context, provenance etc. (in other words these are *aspects* of the work that
indicate a certain content which is associated with but separate from the subject
matter). There is some correspondence here with Deleuze in his writing and
development of a 'theory of art' as Polan refers to it.[272]

4.2   Deleuze, Barthes, and a Non-Iconographic Approach to Depiction.

4.2.1   Deleuze – Force and Sensation.

Deleuze considered the common goal of the arts as being not 'a question of
reproducing or inventing forms, but of harnessing forces.'[273] The art of painting he
saw as a creative enterprise whose object was to create, not concepts, but an
aggregation of sensations. He considered the artist to be a thinker not in terms of
concepts as such but more in terms of concepts as they are formed by acts of
perception (percepts).

In his work on the painter Francis Bacon titled *The Logic of Sensation (Logique de la
Sensation)* Deleuze attempts to create the concepts that correspond to the percepts or
sensations he experiences in Bacon's paintings. In doing so the basic question he puts
to a work of art is not 'what does it mean?' but ' how does it function?' To answer
this he isolates various aspects of Bacon's paintings such as figure, surrounding
colour, and the boundary between the two that defines the shape of the figure. With
the more complex paintings (coupled figures, triptychs) Deleuze identified other
structures and aspects such as isolation, deformation, coupling, and rhythms.[274]

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[271] John Dilworth, *A Double Content Theory of Artistic Representation*, The Journal of Aesthetics and
Art Criticism: 3 Summer, 2005, p. 249.
[272] Dana Polan, 'Francis Bacon' in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy* edited by Constantin
V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 233.
[273] Ronald Bogue, 'Gilles Deleuze: The Aesthetics of Force', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, edited by
Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 257.
[274] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, London: Continuum, 2004, pp. 69-71.

The underlying concept in his analysis is that of figuration. Deleuze suggests that modern art challenged the domain of representation (the unchallenged acceptance of dominant figuration) and focused its attention on the conditions of representation by questioning how a painting represents an object.[275] To break away from the clichés of representation Deleuze thinks that modern painting took two routes in its attempt to escape figuration and achieve sensation directly. These were the two forms of abstraction as he puts it. The first of these was that of painters such as Mondrian and Kandinsky with their refined and geometric forms demanding an intellectual response from the viewer. The other route was taken by the Abstract Expressionists who went beyond representation and the figurative by dissolving all form in a fluid and chaotic mass of lines and colour. In so doing both of these routes broke with the traditional notion of the artistic task as being one of imposing form on matter.[276]

Francis Bacon took a middle path, the path of the 'figural' being that which was still connected to the figurative but sought to capture the sensations of the object without the concerns of strict resemblance. The solution to this problem was something he shared with Cezanne, which was to use the figure as a framework that carries or sustains the sensation that they wanted to convey. In this way the figure could be extracted from its figurative, narrative and illustrational functions.[277]

Deleuze's notion of sensation is taken from phenomenology and in particular the ideas of Erwin Straus as expressed in his book *The Primary World of Senses.* In this, Straus suggests that perception is a secondary rationalisation of the primary, non-rational forces of sensation.[278] The primary elements of sensation are located in a chaotic world of forces, which the artist confronts and tries to harness in his work. Each artist has his/her own procedures for capturing these forces and doing so in a way that Deleuze describes through his concept of the diagram. This he defines as the preparation of the canvas such that a combination of marks, rubbings, scratches etc

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[275] Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, edited by Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 42.
[276] Ibid., p. 43.
[277] Ibid., p. 44.
[278] Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience*, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.

are applied in a haphazard, random, and non-figurative way that prepares the ground for painting:[279]

> These marks, these lines are irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, driven by chance. They are non-representational, non-illustrative, non-narrative, lines of sensation. The hand becomes independent and passes into the service of other forces, tracing marks that do not depend on our will or on our vision. The artist's hand has stepped in to exercise its independence and to smash a sovereign optical organisation. Nothing more is seen as in catastrophe or chaos.[280]

The diagram, so defined, allows the artist to create what Deleuze calls a 'haptic' space', that is a space created through its colour contrasts, through coloured planes, and through a world that is sensed through its tactile intensities.[281]

The whole procedure of painting is seen as the imposing of a rhythm on chaotic forces and it is this rhythm that constitutes sensation as Deleuze sees it and in which he locates his 'logic of sensation'. A logic that is neither cerebral nor rational.[282]

Cezanne is quoted as saying that to paint a landscape one must look beyond it to its chaos, not to look at its component parts but to see only its forces, intensities and densities.[283] These can be harnessed through an act of aesthetic comprehension to one of perception (apprehension, recognition). The painterly process can be seen in these terms as being a perceptual flow from the initial confrontation with chaos, through the use of the diagram to gain an aesthetic comprehension, to the final reproduction of these elements to give a form of a different nature. During the course of the production of a work this process will flow back and forward.[284]

Deleuze therefore describes a painting in terms of sensation, the forces of colour and light, and those forces that disrupt the figurative:

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[279] William James, 'Deleuze on J.M.W. Turner', in *Deleuze and Philosophy-the Difference Engineer*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 242.
[280] Ibid., p. 242.
[281] Ibid., p. 243.
[282] Ronald Bogue, 'Gilles Deleuze: The Aesthetics of Force', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, edited by Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 258.
[283] Ibid., pp. 34-35.
[284] Daniel W. Smith, *Deleuze on Bacon, Three Conceptual Trajectories in The Logic of Sensation*, Authors Introduction to the American version of 'Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation', retrieved from http://www.upress.umn.edu/excerpts/Deleuze.html

> The aim of art is not to represent the world but to represent a composition of forces that together present a sensation.[285]

In other words, the painting itself is a sensation and does not represent an object or tell a story but rather acts as a sign, it is something that can be felt or sensed and acts directly on to the nervous system without passing through the brain. The problem then becomes one of how does the medium that is used become capable of capturing the forces that produce the sensation that the painter is trying to achieve. This becomes a matter of judgement of in the first place the artist and secondly of the viewer. Both Bacon and Cezanne for example would reject many of their paintings simply because they did not attain this sensation but fell back into the cliché of figuration and narration. Auerbach addresses this problem by the continued reworking of a painting until the required sensation is achieved.[286]

Deleuze's notion of 'intensity' is predicated on the idea that matter or material is never completely homogenous but has its own traits. It is intrinsic to the material used in an artistic endeavour to have its own energy that can be in continuous variation.[287] The artistic task is, as he sees it, to take a material that has its own particular intensive traits and use it in such a way as to harness these intensities to produce an object of separation (a painting).[288] As Auerbach puts it:

> There must be a physical engagement with the paintings' own forces and composition. There must be an eye, brain, implement, paper connection otherwise these energies will remain inert.[289]

These captured forces will in turn evoke a sensational response from the viewer. Deleuze's theory and what Barthes writes on denotation and connotation are in some sense, I suggest, connected.

4.2.2   Barthes and Semiotics

The term 'denotation' is generally used to describe the literal meaning of a sign. In linguistics this would be the dictionary definition of a word. 'Connotation' on the

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[285] Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, edited by Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 41.
[286] Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, edited by Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 42.
[287] Ibid., p. 43.
[288] Ibid., p. 43.
[289] William Boyd, *Auerbach's Masterclass*, in Modern Painters, Summer, 1995, v.8, p. 28.

other hand refers more to the social, cultural and personal associations of a sign and as such is more open to interpretation than denotative signs.[290] This interpretation is determined by cultural codes to which the interpreter has access.[291]

Connotation and denotation can both be understood in terms of having different levels of meaning or different levels of signification.[292] The first order is that of denotation in which the sign consists of a signifier and that which is signified. Barthes describes these as a plane of expression and a plane of content.[293] The second order of signification is that of connotation, which uses as its signifier the denoted sign in the first order and attaches to it an additional signified sign. In Barthes terms the first order is the plane of denotation and the second order is the plane of connotation.[294]

To understand this in terms of the Twombly painting studied in the previous chapter the scribbled word 'autumn' on the painting highlights the problem of interpretation. The painting, we are told, relates to the time of year as experienced in a particular wine-making part of Italy just north of Rome. As a linguistic sign the word 'autumn' denotes the season of the year that falls between summer and winter. But as used here this signifier has implicit meanings other than just the dictionary definition. These can be both culturally and geographically based and constitute what is signified connotively as opposed to the denoted sign. These connoted meanings of the word suggest wine harvest, colour etc. But these two orders of signification can combine to give a first order signifier from which further connotively suggested meanings can be understood. This for instance could be the idea of the myths and gods of the Mediterranean region that are associated with this time of year.

Changing the form of the signifier can generate different connotations. Picasso's portrait of Dora Maar considered in 4.3.3 was one of a number of such portraits he painted of her but they are different in form to the one shown and would not have the connoted meaning that this version has for Andrew Harrison. Tropes such as

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[290] Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 140.
[291] Ibid., p. 142.
[292] Ibid., p. 142.
[293] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, New York: Hill and Wang, 1964, p. 89.
[294] Ibid., p. 89.

metaphor, operating in a visual sense as explained in 4.3.3.can therefore generate connotations.[295]

Consideration of the ideas of both Barthes and Deleuze together with elements of those of Dilworth and Wollheim suggest a modified or extended view of depiction that is described in the following section.

4.2.3 A Non-Iconographic Approach to Depiction

In developing this idea of depiction I am, in the first instance, considering its applicability to landscape painting in western art. Roughly speaking this covers a time span that starts with Joachim Patinir's paintings from the beginning of the sixteenth century and continues through to the present day.

For the most part these paintings relate to a specific landscape or scene, fictional or otherwise. There are of course exceptions such as Philips Koninck's work where a painting was constructed from a number of sketches not necessarily of the same scene. These are hybrid landscape perhaps but landscapes of a type.

The question arises as to how do these depictive landscape paintings operate? As with all depictions I suggest they work by directing us, the viewers, via or through themselves to the specific landscape. We will notice things about this landscape because the painting will bring to our attention particular features of it. This will happen whether or not we are acquainted with the landscape. How and why this happens is the subject of the various theories of depiction discussed in Chapter 2. One element of all of these theories is to do with the iconography of the painting. That is, in one way, or another, we recognise the shapes in the painting as being similar to those in the landscape it is depicting. This argument is consistent with what the theorists on depiction state. Gombrich suggests that artists need to create a schema that can be adjusted to the needs of portrayal; Wollheim and Dilworth talk of the recognitional aspect of a work; Goodman refers us to a pictorial symbol system; Walton suggests that the perceptual experience and our imaginings when we look at a work are connected acts; Podro's concerns are with how the viewer can recognise the

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[295] Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, p. 143.

subject remade within the painting; Hopkins talks of experienced resemblance and Lopes of an evolved or generative experience of paintings.

Put diagrammatically the depictive process is thus:

Artist ← Object or aspect of Object

Viewer ← Artwork

→ What the artist does
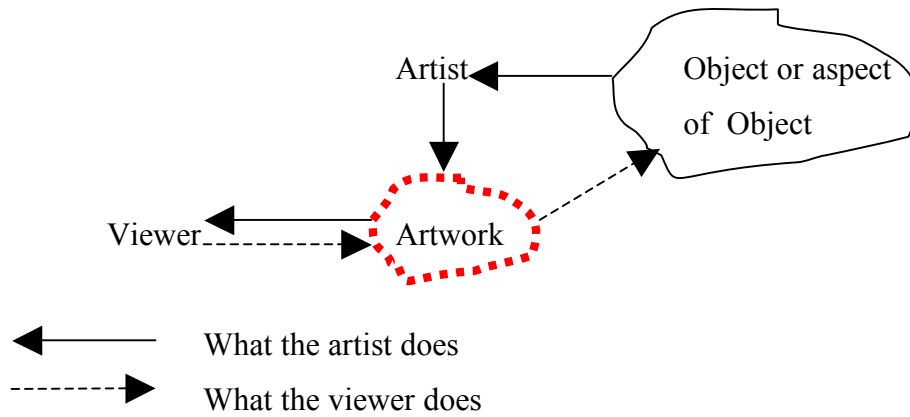⇢ What the viewer does

Figure 19 Depictive process for Figurative Works.

In non-figurative work this element of similar shapes is removed and we are left with colour, texture and perhaps non-similar shapes amongst other things. These are some of the aspectual characteristics to which Dilworth refers. The question for this thesis has been how can some types of non-figurative works be seen to depict in the sense described above. I suggest that, in these cases, the position is as follows.

To paraphrase Deleuze the aim of art should not simply be to give a pictorial representation consisting of recognisable forms but rather to present the viewer with a composition of forces that gives a sensation. This sensation is the one that is experienced and captured by the artist in the way he/she applies and uses their chosen materials to relate to some aspect of the subject of the painting. It is a position consistent with the views of a number of artists who stress the importance for them of capturing the essence or sensation of their subject and avoiding resemblance.[296] It is then a matter of judgement on behalf of the viewer as to whether the artist has successfully carried out this task. Deleuze suggests the materials used to create an artwork have their own inherent properties and energies whether oil paint, acrylics,

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[296] The art critic David Sylvester, in conversation with the artist Jasper Johns, talks of 'the painting trapping the sensation you have when you look about you' and of investing 'the canvas and paint with a sensation that resembles the sensation of looking at reality.' Jasper Johns interview with David Sylvester, *Art in Theory:1900-1990: An anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by C. Harrison and P. Wood, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford: 1996, p. 721.

watercolour, household paint, metal paints etc. Deleuze's idea that the material of a work can be used to evoke the sensation of the depicted object is consistent with the configurational aspect of Wollheim's theory of twofoldness. In Wollheim's terms it is the job of the artist to use these properties of the chosen materials in such a way that the artwork will evoke a sensation in the viewer. The purpose of a painting is to trigger a response that is in accord with the artist's intentions.

How this may happen without the iconography of figurative works can be understood by reference to Barthes description of the process of denotation and connotation. By harnessing the plastic properties of the paint materials, consideration of the way they have been used or applied, together with the possible use of symbol the artist can, I suggest, denote some aspect of landscape in such a way that the viewer will have some understanding of their intentions. For Deleuze the painting is a sensation that acts as a sign that impacts directly on to the nervous system. The sign consists of a signifier (the painting) and that which is the signified (some aspect of the subject of the painting). In Barthes' terms this is a definition of denotation. How the viewer interprets the sign is dependent on its connoted value which is based on what information the artist has tried to communicate through the facture of its materials, the materials themselves, colour, and any symbol system used.

For some types of non-figurative work and quasi-figurative work the intentions of the artist and the reception and understanding by the viewer can operate on these lines to indicate and suggest some aspect of landscape or landscape activity. This point, which is the crux of this thesis, is explained by reference to two works from my practice. Before this is done it is important to understand where these works stand in relation to contemporary practice and what aspect of landscape informs them.

4.3   Landscape Defined, Landscape Art, and Visual Metaphor

The two works from my practice that have been selected for study are a chalk drawing titled *Chalk Face* and an etched steel plate showing a linear design marked out in clay titled *Poetic Field.* These two works represent different strands of my practice and are used here to help develop my argument that certain types of non-figurative work can

be seen to be depictive in the sense that they indicate those things in the world that they represent.

The formats of the two studies are identical and are similar to those undertaken in Chapter 3 that follow the structure suggested by Paskow. The second element of this structure, namely the reflective phase where the viewer seeks to establish background information on a work in order to enhance his/her understanding, enjoyment, and aesthetic pleasure, is used here to explain the purpose and intentions behind each work. The third element is an analysis based on an extended view of depiction detailed above.

These works are two of a number of studies that explore issues of representation of landscape. More particularly they reflect an interest in the way landscape is marked, shaped, used and transformed by human intervention. This leads to the need for a definition of landscape that is relevant to the practice work, the art historical context of this, and an explanation of how visual metaphor operates, essential for the understanding and analysis of one of the case studies undertaken in this chapter. These issues are dealt with in the following three sections.

4.3.1   Landscape defined.

A reading of literature on the subject reveals that different words are used to define landscape. These are principally 'environment', 'nature', 'place', and 'landscape' itself. It is important to make a clear distinction between them so that a useful definition of 'landscape' can be identified.
The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following definitions.

Environment:

> From 'environ' vb. ORIGIN Middle English from Old French *environer*, from *environ* 'surroundings', from *en* 'in' + *viron* 'circuit' (from virer 'to turn, veer')
> - The set of circumstances or conditions esp. physical conditions, in which a person or community lives, works, develops etc. or a thing exists or operates: the external conditions affecting the life of a plant or animal.
> - The region surrounding a place
> - A large artistic creation intended to be experienced with several senses while one is surrounded by it.

Nature:

> Old and modern French from Latin 'natura', from *nat* – past participle stem of
> 'nasci', be born.
> - The inherent or essential quality or constitution of a thing
> - The inherent power or force by which mental and physical activities are
>   sustained
> - The creative and regulative power conceived of as operating in the
>   material world and as the immediate cause of all its phenomena: these
>   phenomena collectively: the material world; specially plants, animals and
>   other features and products of the earth itself as opposed to humans or
>   human creations or civilisations.

Place:

> Old and modern French from a proto-roman alteration of Latin *plateau*
> 'broadway or open space', from Greek *plateia* 'broadway'.
> - A particular part or portion of space or of a surface, whether occupied or not; a
>   position or situation in space or with reference to other bodies
> - A particular part of space, of defined or undefined extent, but of definite
> situation. (=Locus, OE stow.) Sometimes applied to a region or part of the earth's
> surface.

Landscape:

> Middle Dutch *lantscap*, from *land* 'land' + *scap* (equivalent of -ship)
> - Picture of natural scenery. Formerly, also, the scenery forming the
>   backdrop of a portrait.
> - A view presented by an expanse of terrain or district which is visible from
>   a particular place or direction: an expanse of (country) scenery.
> - A tract or region of land with its characteristic topographical features, esp.
>   as shaped or modified by (usu. natural) processes and agents.

The artworks that form parts of this project are derived from a particular area of
south-east England namely the Chiltern Hills. It is an area traversable by foot in any
direction within a few days walk. From some vantage points it is almost all visible.
There is a consistency of culture across as it is essentially farming but with increasing
levels of both light industry and leisure industry. It retains remnants of the traditional
industries of brick making and chalk quarrying. This latter supplies both local
agriculture and the cement manufacturing processes now located in Rugby as well as
some local construction works. These works are a result of increased housing levels
and improved transport infrastructure. It is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural

Beauty[297] and is in the commuter belt for London. Geologically it is chalk down-lands and clay vales.

A cursory inspection of the definitions given above would seem to suggest that the word 'place' defines an area too restricted in size to adequately describe this landscape. 'Nature' would seem to apply to a larger arena than that required here. 'Environment' on the face of it could apply but I would suggest the present day connotations of its use would confuse matters. In the terms of the OED the word 'landscape' seems an appropriate word to use to describe this area. However further analysis of the use of these words is required to see how they are used in current writings on cultural geography and related disciplines and in what context they appear.

The cultural historian Kate Flint and anthropologist Howard Morphy talk of:

> The environment we inhabit is inseparable from human culture. Landscapes, cities, and seas are traversed and used to meet the needs, practices and desires of particular societies. …Culture is that which enables people to survive in a particular 'environment' and express themselves in relation to it.[298]

'Environment' as used here seems to cover too large a field to be used as a term in the context of this research project. The archaeologist Barry Cunliffe has a more defined understanding of the environment and focuses more on the reaction of the individual (or individuals) to what he calls the cognitive environment (that which is known and experienced) and is 'more appropriately called landscape.'[299] He says that 'environment' is to 'landscape' as 'space' is to 'place'. 'Environment' and 'space' he sees as semi-infinite, without dependence on the observer. 'Place', he sees, is specific to time and to people such that 'Landscape' can be seen as a network of personal places.[300] The social anthropologist Timothy Ingold puts it another way with an interesting metaphor:

> …the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein…that the physical environment (that is measurable and absolute) is a blotting paper into which the cultural images of landscape are absorbed.[301]

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[297] As designated by the Nature Conservancy Council.
[298] Howard Morphy and Kate Flint, *Culture, Landscape and the Environment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 1.
[299] Ibid., p. 111.
[300] Ibid., p. 111.
[301] Ibid., pp. 112 – 114.

Steven Bourassa specifically looks at the term 'place' as an alternative to 'landscape' and as a term to be used in his study of the aesthetics of landscape. The term 'place' he sees as being partly defined by the values of insiders (i.e. those who directly experience a particular area or place). He quotes the geographer Edward Relph in this respect who sees 'place' and 'environment' as terms that do not necessarily involve perception:

> …whether place is understood and experienced as 'landscape' in the direct and obvious sense that visual features provide tangible evidence of some concentration of human activities, or in a more subtle sense as reflecting human values and intentions, appearance is an important feature of all places. But it is hardly possible to understand all 'place' experiences as 'landscape' experiences.[302]

'Place' seems to be used generally as a subsidiary or component part of 'landscape' and as such will be used in this section.

In the eighteenth century landscape was synonymous with an area or region and was the object of scientific investigation. Cosgrove shows that the modernist (detached) concept of landscape developed with the change from a feudal to a capitalist mode of land tenure.[303] Nowadays such terms as environment, region and area are the stated objects of scientific study and the word 'landscape' is used for an aspect of geography known as humanistic geography that is concerned with the subjective meaning of places for people. Humanistic geography is seen as a way of approaching and understanding the cultural landscape and addressing what it is to exist within and experience the landscape.[304]

The practice part of this research project draws upon an area of chalk down-land and clay vale as described above. The artworks themselves use materials that are taken from this area. These materials play an important part in the culture of the area (both historically and in the present day). That they do is an important element of the project as will be explained and described later. The definitions given above suggest that the terms landscape and place are related. The practice work described and analysed in section 4.4 is related to specific sites (quarry, field, hillside etc). These are

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[302] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessnes*s, London: Pion Ltd., 2008, p. 31.
[303] Dennis C. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, pp. 48-50.
[304] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, London: Bellhaven Press, 1991, pp. 2-3.

places where particular activities occur that have meaning for those who work in them. The terms 'landscape' and 'place' are both used therefore, in terms of the meaning they have for those who experience them as places to live, work or play in. It is not unreasonable then to apply the word 'landscape' to denote not only a particular, and geographically bounded, area but also one that has a particular culture and it is in this sense that it is used to define the practice side of this project.

My practice is concerned with the representation of agriculture as well as other activities that shape and mark the landscape and have a productive purpose. This is a position articulated by Allan Carlson[305] who suggests a different aesthetic to that developed in the eighteenth century, which was based on notions of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque. This was an aesthetic that valorised mountains and lakes at the expense of ordinary and agricultural landscapes. Carlson argues that there is great aesthetic value in such landscapes, which can be appreciated for their functionality and productivity.[306]

Carlson articulates some of the current debates relating to landscape and landscape aesthetics and these will be looked at in order to position this research in a contemporary context. I shall map the various arguments on to the work by Bourassa[307] that in itself endeavours to put forward a paradigm for research and theory in landscape aesthetics. The aesthetic theory so evolved is used to support a post-modernist definition of landscape known as 'critical regionalism'.

Bourassa initially looks at various theories of aesthetics to shed light on landscape aesthetics. An important point for him is that aesthetic values must be viewed in their cultural and historical contexts and he thus rejects Kant's notion of universal subjectivity. He quotes Cosgrove in support of this point who he says:

> ... ably demonstrated that the painterly or scenic sense of landscape fails to comprehend adequately the subjective experience of landscape because it is the view of the detached outsider, devoid of the perspective of (what Relph referred to as) the 'existential insider'.[308]

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[305] Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. He has particular interest in the aesthetics of agriculture and the environment.
[306] From Allan Carlson's paper given at 5th. International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics: The Aesthetics of Agriculture, Leppa, Finland, August 3rd.–5th,, 2003
[307] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape.*
[308] Ibid., p. 3.

As an example of this Bourassa looks at the close relationship that Australian aborigines has with the land and how this is revealed in their artworks. Experience of landscape he maintains is not just a visual one but the other senses are involved such as touch, smell, and hearing. In his development of an aesthetic of landscape he argues that every landscape is 'a combination of art, artefact and nature, and the relationships among those categories are complex.'[309] This indeterminacy led Carlson to observe that:

> …natural objects possessed an organic unity with the environment of their creation and have developed from the forces at work within that environment. This environment was therefore aesthetically relevant to these natural objects.[310]

In his search for an explanation and description of the levels of aesthetic experience associated with landscape Bourassa refers to the philosopher George Santayana and the architect Jon Lang and uses their analysis of aesthetic experience as a starting point for his discussion. This maintains that there are three levels of aesthetic experience namely sensory, formalist, and symbolic.[311] The sensory experience he sees as essentially biological in nature involving all the senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing). Aesthetic experience is, in some part, conditioned by a complex combination of perceptions given by these senses.[312]

Formalist theories (Bourassa quotes Clive Bell, Roger Fry, and Aubrey Beardsley) generally maintain that beauty can be defined in terms of the formal characteristics of things and places. Bourassa for his part suggests that a cultural theory of landscape aesthetics is more concerned with the symbolic aspects of landscape. His argument being that a 'cultural theory of landscape must take into account the attitudes people bring with them to the landscape.'[313]

This symbolic aspect of experience has great significance for Bourassa in developing his paradigm for landscape aesthetics. He makes the point that different groups or individuals will see different meanings in the landscape depending on the differing symbol systems they bring with them. The 'insider' will see things of practical

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[309] Ibid., p. 10.
[310] Allan Carlson, Appreciation and the Natural Environment, in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 37(3) 1979, pp. 267-273.
[311] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, p. 22.
[312] Ibid., p. 23.
[313] Ibid., p. 92.

significance to him/her that will be different to that seen by the 'detached outsider'. Kant characterized aesthetic experience as 'detached' whereas Dewey perceived it as engaged and stressed the importance of the interaction of the subjective and the objective. Dewey thus maintained that aesthetic 'value' could only be realised through the interaction of the two. Bourassa thus develops his own 'tripartite' theory of aesthetics based on three levels of experience, which he defines as 'biological, cultural, and personal.'[314]

He asserts that what he calls the laws of 'biological' aesthetics must be based in the need of an individual or species to survive and in this respect he refers to the geographer Jay Appleton's Prospect-Refuge theory.[315] In defining what he calls 'cultural' rules Bourassa states that these values are communicated between groups through symbols and that a theory of landscape aesthetics should emphasize both symbol and habit. Culture is defined by persisting symbols through which a landscape can acquire meaning for a particular group who will seek to maintain that symbolic landscape which provides meaningful (and therefore aesthetic) experiences for them. The personal level of aesthetic experience he sees as related to creative outputs and their application to landscape aesthetics.[316]

This theory of landscape aesthetics is then used as a basis for embracing a particular post-modernist view of architecture and planning identified by the architect Kenneth Frampton.[317] Bourassa initially defines post-modernism as a rejection of the rationalism of the enlightenment that modernism adopted. Twentieth century modernity freed itself from specific historical ties through the rejection of idealisation and ornament. In architecture this equated to functionalism and the machine aesthetic which expressed rationality regardless of materiality or methods of construction. In urban planning, problems could be solved through rational and comprehensive

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[314] Ibid., p. 64.

[315] Prospect-Refuge theory maintains that the individual has an intuitive attraction to those aspects of landscape affording refuge and an open prospect arguing that these have been necessary requirements for survival.

[316] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, p. 91.

[317] Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *An Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post Modern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983.
Frampton actually addresses his writing to the situation in architecture and urban planning. These are ingredients of the whole landscape discourse and Frampton's comments are taken to be relevant to this wider picture.

planning where zoning would separate incompatible land uses and major surgery was advocated to combat congestion and slum areas. In contrast to this Bourassa sees post-modernism as having a distrust of human rational abilities, a respect for tradition, an eclectic aesthetic, places importance on ornament and symbol and on context and has an incremental approach to the solution of problems.[318]

Bourassa, however, sees two strands to post-modernism. Firstly there is that which he calls the 'post-modernism of reaction' wherein the functionalism of modernism is reacted against by the use of historical allusion and ornament. The vernacular styles of commercial developments such as Las Vegas are extolled. Secondly there is the 'post-modernism of resistance' wherein there is a passive accommodation of the market forces and pressures, a rejection of fake classicism and which looks for something that reflects the place that is being built in.[319]

For Frampton the 'post-modernism of resistance' identifies a strong sense of regionalism that recognizes the importance of local issues, culture, social institutions, building styles and techniques and other elements of the regional context. He labels this a 'critical regionalism' which seeks to increase the cultural density of the built fabric by enhancing the identity of places. Frampton sees creativity as essentially an individual matter and critical regionalism as the output of individuals working with a commitment to a local culture.[320]

For Bourassa, a theory of landscape aesthetics embraces the post-modernism of critical regionalism. Witty and ironic forms of reactionary post-modernism are rejected as reflecting a superficial formalism but critical regionalism is seen as producing a vitalizing culture. It defines a creative engagement with the various dimensions of a local context and 'has the potential to be a powerful and invigorating force in the human landscape.'[321]

There is a direct connection between 'critical regionalism' and what I have defined as 'landscape' earlier in this section. They both have a particular identity and culture and

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[318] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, p. 136.
[319] Ibid., pp. 136-139.
[320] Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a critical regionalism: six points for an architecture of resistance', in *Post-modern Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 1985.
[321] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, p. 145.

stress the importance of local issues, social institutions, building styles and techniques. The word 'landscape' is used throughout this project to carry this meaning.

From an anthropological point of view the archaeologist and anthropologist Christopher Tilley[322] specifically looks at metaphor in relation to landscape, which he sees as a rich source for metaphor as it is the medium for bodily actions and for the home. He sees knowledge and the metaphorical understanding of landscape as being bound up with the experience of the body in place and the movement between places. Places he says form landscapes which may be defined as sets of relational places each embodying (metaphorically) emotions, memories and associations derived from personal and shared experiences. He makes the point that space is an abstract and empty analytical concept whereas places are tangible and physical and their meanings tied to the people who inhabit them and who experience the landscape through all of their senses. He stresses the importance of landscape metaphors in relation to places and paths of movement.[323]

Tilley also looks at the example of different cultures in describing what he calls the solid metaphors of material objects (i.e. they have a meaning beyond that of just their physical appearance) that are used to make sense of their world. He draws the conclusion that people require things to make and transform themselves.

The term 'landscape' is, therefore, taken to have a particular meaning for this project. The geology and topography are the most significant factors that have affected man's relationship with the landscape in the Chiltern Hills since Neolithic times allowing the creation of such local industries as agriculture, mineral extraction, and leisure pursuits.

There are social institutions and groupings that are active in the area that are involved at a local level in the management of the land, the conservation of local identity, and with the provision and management of leisure activities and facilities in the area. There are other, wider, issues that impact on this landscape such as housing strategy, transport infrastructure, and the use of natural resources affect the landscape. All of

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[322] Tilley, Christopher, *Metaphor and Material Culture*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999.
[323] Ibid., p. 183.

these factors impact on the fabric and cultural density of the area and as a consequence can be identified with Frampton's definition of Critical Regionalism and Bourassa's ideas of landscape aesthetics.

The artworks in this project derive from a particular landscape and one in which there are activities that physically shape the landscape (agriculture, construction, leisure). The materials of the landscape are transformed by these activities. For example, in agriculture the plough furrows the clay soil and in construction, the bulldozer shapes and scrapes the chalk. These actions and materials are used directly in the artworks and are mirrored in their production. The activities themselves give meaning to those who live and work in this landscape and provide different aspects of the culture of the landscape.

The question arises as to how the subjective or 'existential insider' definition of landscape aesthetics can affect and inform the artwork. I suggest that if the work is produced from a well-founded experience of the landscape it seeks to represent it will, in some way or another, reflect such aspects of that landscape as its structure, productiveness, history, and awareness of its culture.

There are a number of examples of this, two of which are from my own practice and are studied in 4.4.1 and 4.4.2. Two other examples are from contemporary architecture in the area of the Chiltern Hills. The first is a theatre complex whose design is influenced by the materials, shapes of the geography, and industry of the area. It is shown in Figures 20 and 21. The second is a house design, which is a co-operation between the architect and the client who is a geologist. It was the client's wish that the structure and design of the house should reflect the materials and structure of the chalk strata that form the Chiltern Hills where this house is located. This is shown in Figures 22 and 23.

To summarize, the research process has enabled the project to articulate and focus on an approach to landscape defined by cultural geography as distinct from a lexical definition. The relationship of landscape and place has enabled the artwork to centre on particular arenas of activity and involvement such as a field or a quarry. In so

doing the landscape source and the other meaning that may be brought to mind are more readily linked by the artwork.

The use of materials from the landscape in the artworks reflects aspects of Frampton's definition and can be seen as a metaphor for the locally experienced and therefore meaningful elements of landscape aesthetics outlined by both Carlson and Bourassa. They are made with materials from these activities (chalk and clay etc) or with materials (crayon, pencil, charcoal etc) that share some property with the represented material. They are not depictive in the sense there will be no recognisable subject matter but can be seen to be depictive in an extended sense of the word where the materials used and their method of application or how they have been worked, denote a particular aspect of a landscape. This is consistent with the view taken by such writers as Carolyn Wilde who argues that meaning in painting is more than just pictorial depiction but is essentially to do with the material of paint and how this is used. [324]
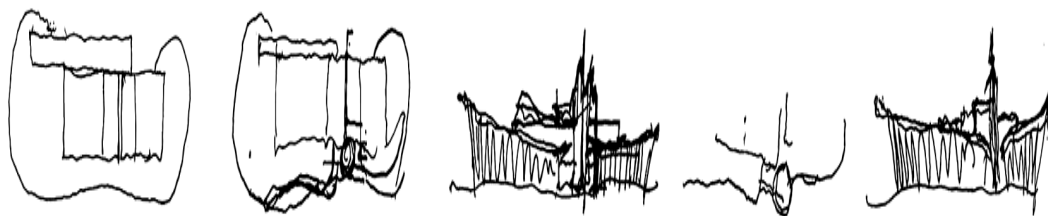

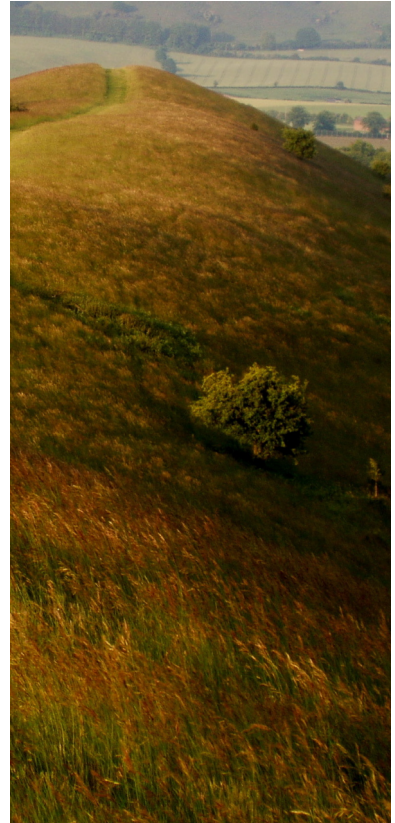Figure 20. RHWL Partnership, *Aylesbury Waterside Theatre*, 2010, Design Sketches

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[324] Carolyn Wilde, 'Style and Value in the Art of Painting', article in *Richard Wollheim on the Art of Painting* Edited by Rob Van Gerwen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 122.

View of external walls
showing tree-like columns
and curved roof structure.

Chiltern woods

Chiltern down-land

Figure 21. RHWL Partnership, *Aylesbury Waterside Theatre*, 2010, Digital
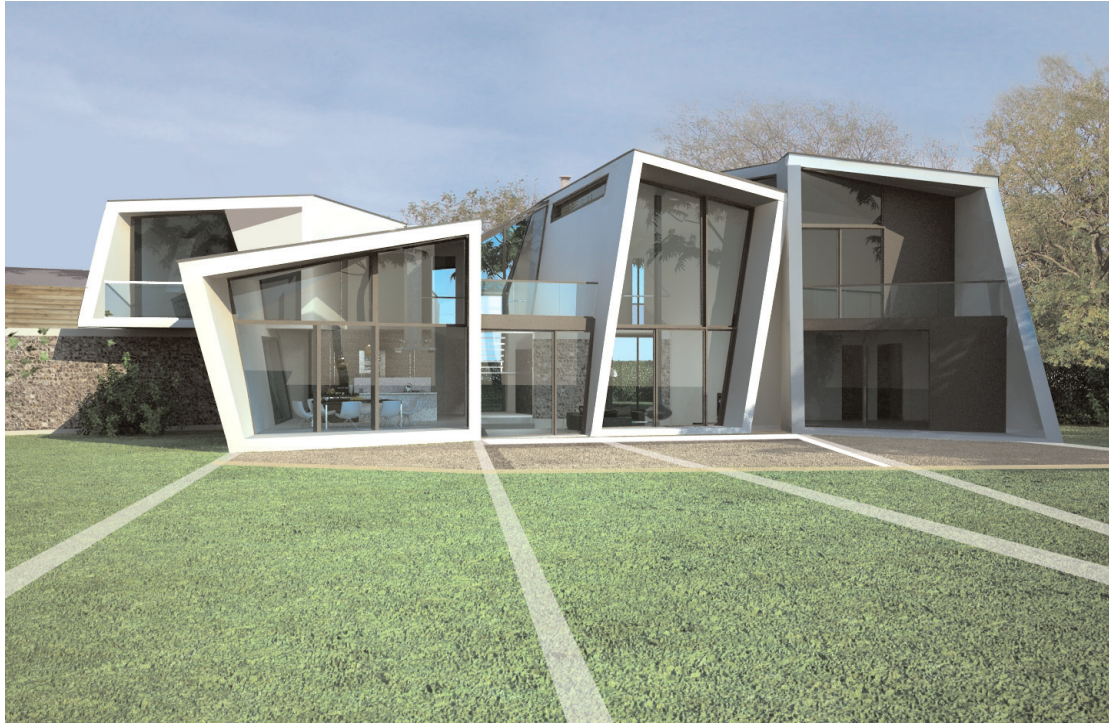Photographs of Landscape Elements.

Figure 22. Lewis and Hickey Partnership, *Badgers View Farm, Chinnor*, 2010, Photomontage.

Figure 23. John Adams, *Chalk Structure in The Chiltern Hills*, Tottenhoe Quarry, 2009, Photograph.

In Figure 24 the drawing enacts the quarry process of removal. The surface of the paper has been removed by erasure and the erased material of the drawing (paper and charcoal) has been allowed to collect on the floor. A number of studies were carried out on this basis as shown in the collage that is Figure 26.

In Figure 25 a different working process is shown that also enacts the process of removal. In the left hand panel paper has been drawn on using chalk powder, water and ink. This drawing has then been removed from the wall supporting it to reveal the trace of both the drawing and the process of its making and this is shown in the right hand panel. The final drawing is the trace on the wall.

The actions involved in the landscape that are of concern to my practice are scraping, cutting, and mixing. Both scraping and cutting in this context result in the removal of surface material and its collection. Some of these actions are copied in the actions of drawing where scraping and removal of a surface can be seen to equate with erasure, and cutting with the incisive marking of a surface.

My practice is essentially drawing based. It can be seen to reflect on or even reverse an engagement I once had with landscape in my profession as a civil engineer. In this, drawings were produced that embodied dense sets of information conveyed as formal drawing, text, symbol and numerical sign. It was on the basis of these drawings and the information contained in them that a landscape would be altered. My artistic practice now goes in the opposite direction. It seeks to represent in paintings and drawings, activities that have taken place in the landscape and to do this by manipulating materials related to those landscapes using different graphic devices. These drawings are also dense with information but need to be understood in a different way to those above. This understanding or reading of the work is one where the materials, their application and the relationship between thematically related works may bring to mind aspects of the landscape-shaping process and act in the way that analogy or metaphor does to reveal something new.

The practice work connects to a contemporary view of landscape art as described in 4.3.2.
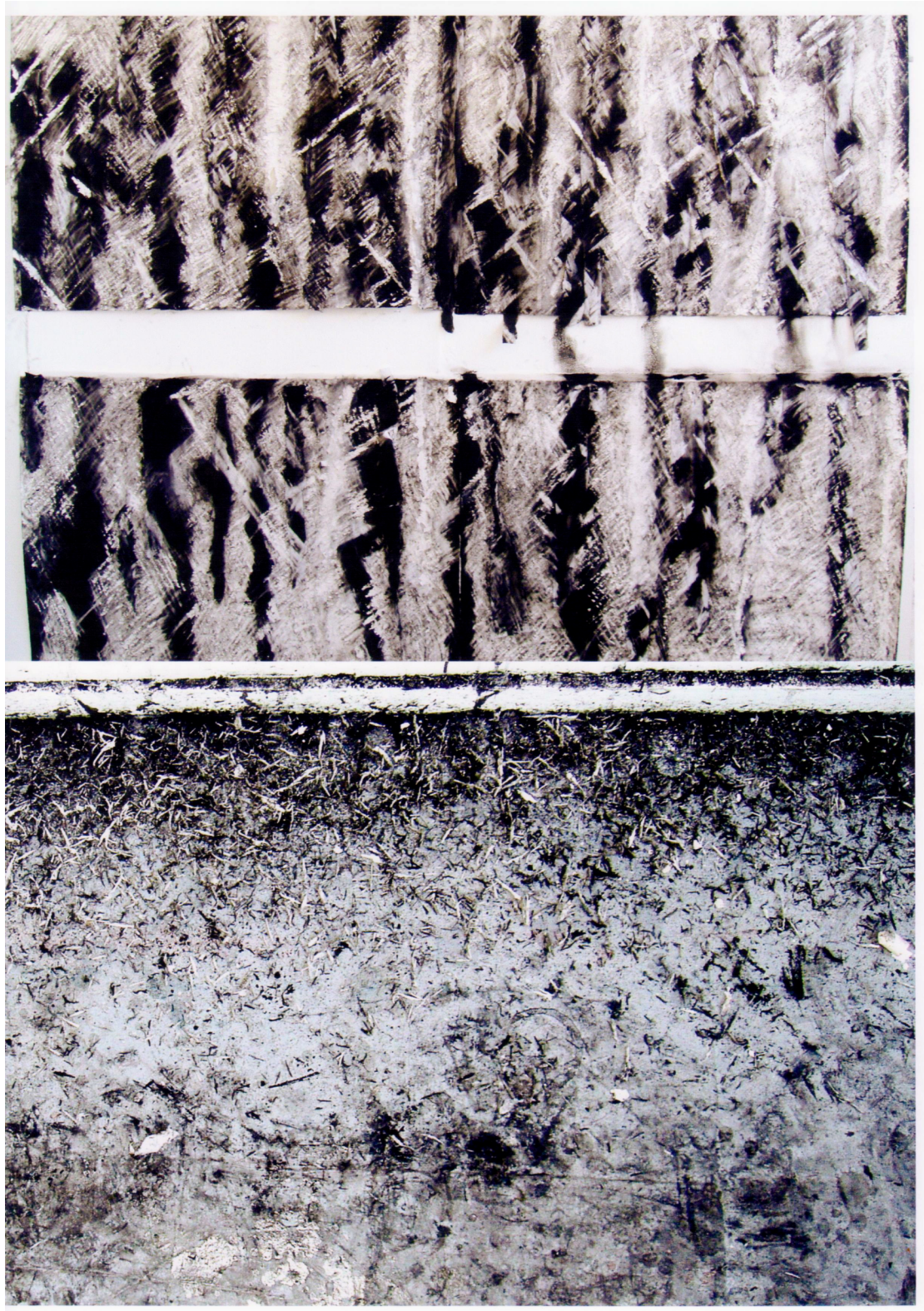
Figure 24. John Adams, *Chalk Face Drawing-1*, 2008, 2000mm x 1800mm approx.,
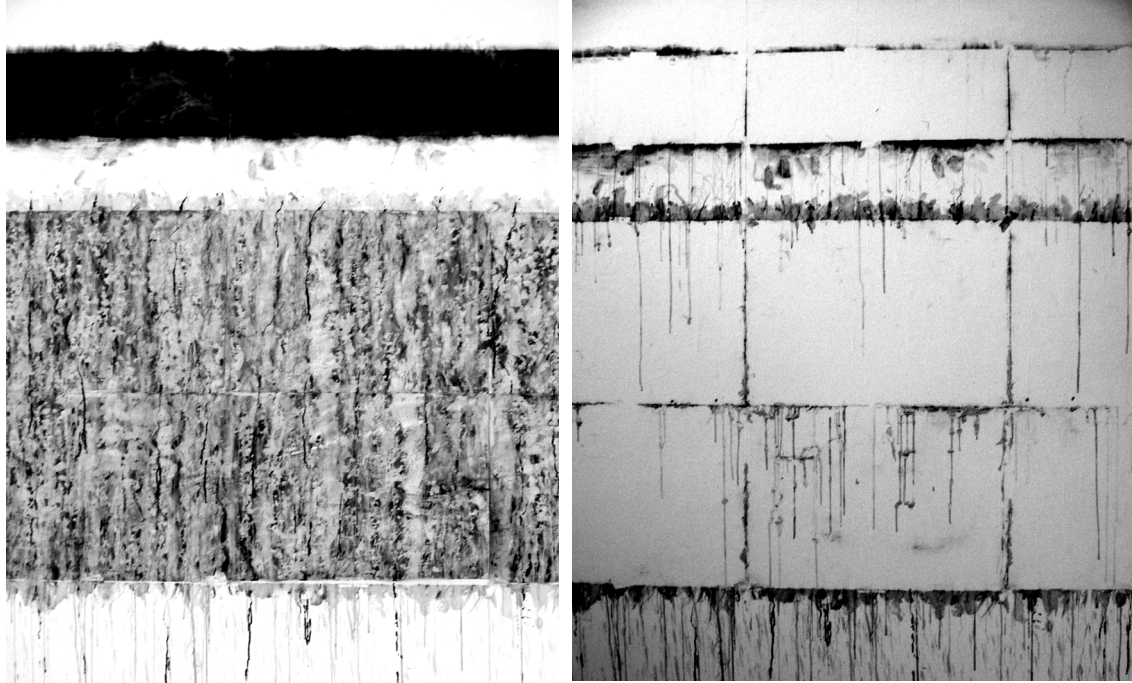Charcoal and paper with erased material.

Figure 25. John Adams, *Chalk Face Drawing-2*, 2008, 2000mm x 1800mm approx., Chalk Powder, Charcoal, Water, Ink on Paper.
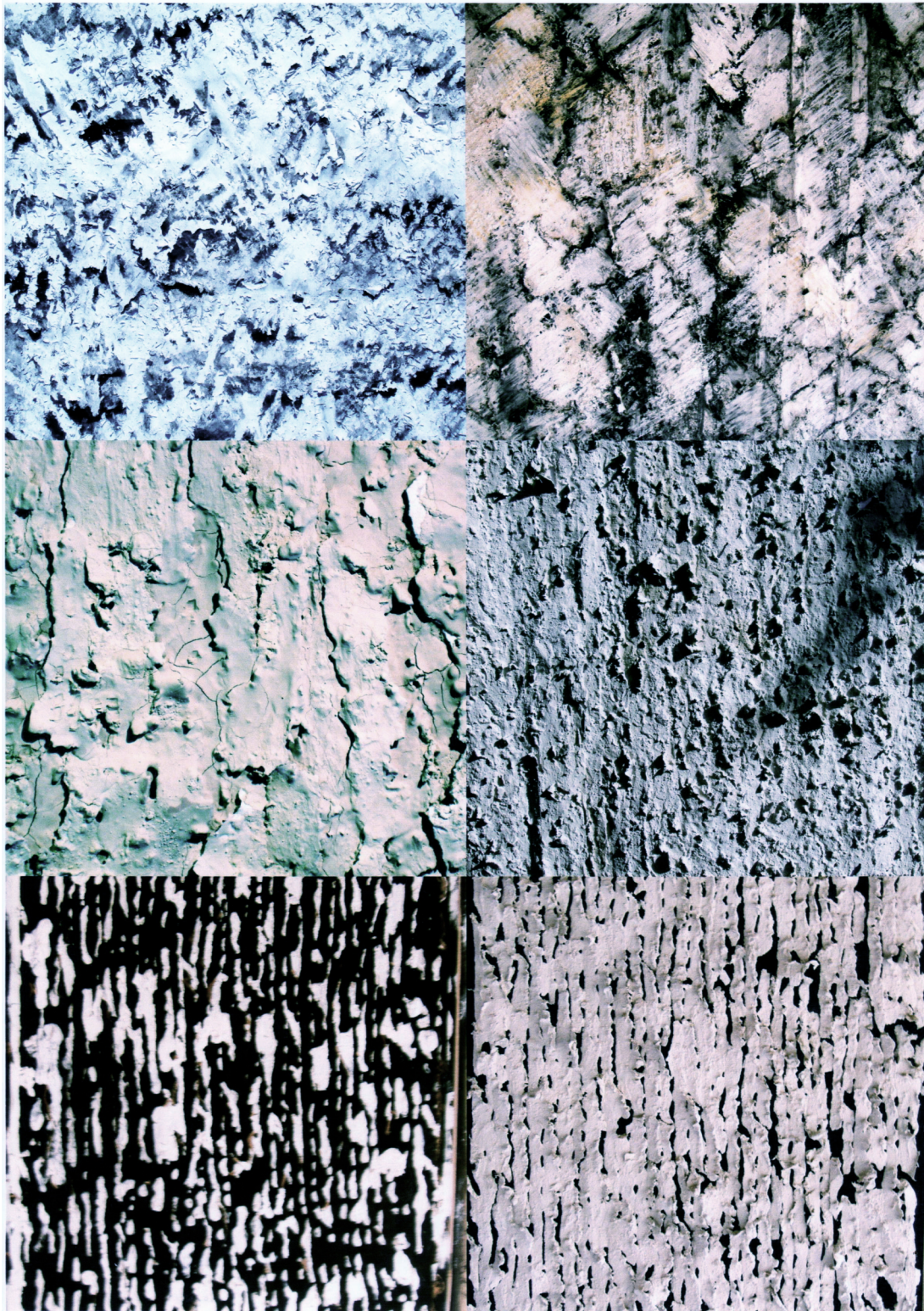
Figure 26. Surface textures of a number of drawings depicting the excavation face
of a chalk quarry. The materials used are chalk, paper, ink or charcoal. The
drawing processes are tearing, erasure, layering, and removal of surfaces using
power tools.

4.3.2   Contemporary Landscape Art

Either as a concept or as an art form, landscape has not played a significant part in modern art but has become increasingly important in post-modern art. Rebecca Solnit articulates a modernist view of landscape in which:

> …the passive landscape and the supine woman are linked in western painting that identifies woman with nature and the body, men with culture and the mind.[325]

Contemporary artists however recognize landscape as:

> …the environment which includes politics and economics, the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic, our bodies as natural systems that pattern our thoughts structured around metaphors drawn from nature.[326] [327]

To some degree Solnit seems to echo Barrell's view in stating that art traditionally contained metaphors of dominance. The position and depiction of the rural poor was a metaphor for a detached position from which the landscape and agriculture became part of the capitalist economy and as such was regarded as something to be used and stood as a symbol of power. In contrast to this the 'new metaphor' of landscape, as she puts it, is one of involvement, interconnectedness, relationship and locality.[328]

It was the rise of land and environmental art in the late 1960s and 1970s that developed out of a desire to break with the very personal statements of American post war abstraction when an interest in 'landscape' art became a primary issue in contemporary art. Earth art was usually site specific and therefore made links with the history and memories of the place it was in and as a consequence had associations with such disciplines as archaeology, history and geology. This focus on what was excavated and revealed and lies on the surface was seen as 'a descent from the above ground architectural metaphor of minimalism.'[329]

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[325] *Elements of a New Landscape*, essay by Rebecca Solnit in *Visions of America*, Denver Art Museum and the Columbia Museum of Art, 1994, pp. 101-102.
[326] This is not explained but it is likely that this refers to the idea of conceptual metaphors outlined in section 1 of this thesis
[327] 'Elements of a New Landscape', essay by Rebecca Solnit in *Visions of America*, Denver Art Museum and the Columbia Museum of Art. 1994, p. 102.
[328] There is a connection here between this statement and Frampton's idea of Critical Regionalism in Section 3.3
[329] Causey, Andrew, (ed), *Sculpture since 1945*, Oxford History of Art, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 10.

Landscape art and land art along with process art questioned notions of what the artistic object could be and the authority of its context, for example, did it have to be in a museum? In relation to his work "continuous project altered daily" Robert Morris saw the interest in landscape evolving not from the landscape itself, but from work whose concerns were change, spread, lack of centre and unfocused boundaries. Changes in sculptural technique at this time (1960s and 1970s) were not connected with landscape itself but coincided with a new interest in 'nature'. A lot of land art at this time was undertaken in the open space of the desert and 'Nature' in this sense referred less to the spiritual inspiration of a place than an interest in the basic materials of the landscape itself and the changing nature of the art object with the passage of time.[330]

What came to be known as Earth Art took on different meanings. In America it could mean a construction in the landscape (Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* or Heizer's *Displaced/Replaced*) or the use of the materials of the landscape in a studio environment (Walter de Maria *New York Earth Room*). Most of the artists involved in this work had their roots in minimalism and as a consequence their work always retained that connection. The gallery-based work for example explored the dialectic between the white-walled, box-like constraint of the gallery structure and the unorganised and raw base materials of the landscape itself (rock and earth). Much of earth art was concerned with the processes of change, removal and reforming and stressing the importance of the process by which the object is arrived at and not the object itself. Particularly in the USA there evolved from these concerns a (sculptural) art that was site specific and, even more than earth art, looked for meaning to be completed by its surroundings. Richard Serra's work in steel plate can be seen as an example of this in particular where these are located in a public place. His work 'Tilted Arc' was placed in the middle of the Federal Plaza in New York and in so doing, Serra argued, gave a 'sculptural form for people to measure themselves against.'[331]

In Europe earth art tended to take on a different, less monumental, form. Richard Long's work had an altogether lighter touch than the Americans making little

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[330] Ibid., p. 169.
[331] Andrew Causey, *Sculpture Since 1945*, Oxford History of Art, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 216.

disturbance to the landscape and making no constructions above or below the ground. His arrangements of rocks, slates or flints in the gallery reflect the nature of the material and the space itself and become 'a simple metaphor of life'[332]. They are not monuments to anything but 'represent a personal experience of the landscape by bringing in to the gallery something of the landscape's commonality'[333]. Two examples of Long's two-dimensional works are looked at later in this chapter to see how they could be interpreted in terms of a non-iconographic approach to depiction. The notion of the object in a landscape giving definition to the landscape and drawing meaning from it is linked in my practice to the ideas of Borassa and Dewey on landscape aesthetics and what Frampton calls 'critical regionalism'.

4.3.3   Visual Metaphor

In addition to the discussion on representation given in Chapter 1, drawings and paintings can be seen to have a metaphorical relationship to that which they represent. My own practice is concerned with the representation of landscape and particularly the relationship that exists between studio materials and processes that are used to make an artwork (S) and those materials and processes that exist in the landscape (L). This can be put in a number of ways. How can (L) be understood in terms of (S)? How can (S) be seen to stand for or represent (L)? Is the world or some aspect of it (L) like this (S)? These questions have their equivalence in linguistics in which there are various figures of speech by which on thing or action is compared to another of a different kind. The purpose of the comparison is to illustrate, ornament or give meaning to the subject of the sentence. Of these the figure of speech known as metaphor operates in a way that is analogous to the perceived problem.

The dictionary definition gives:

> A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from or analogous to, that which it is literally applicable.[334]

and

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[332] Malpas W., *Land Art, Earthworks, Installations, Environments, Sculptures*, Crescent Moon Publishing, 1998. p. 90.
[333] Andrew Causey, *Sculpture Since 1945*, p. 182.
[334] Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 5th. Edition, s.v. "Metaphor".

A thing considered as representative of some other (usually abstract); a symbol.[335]

To illustrate what is meant by this, in the metaphor 'Juliet is the sun,'[336] the descriptive word or phrase in this case is 'sun'. This is transferred to the object 'Juliet' which is of a different category of objects to that of the 'sun'. (What the dictionary definition does not state is why this comparison is made. The comparison is made so that some qualities or things that are known about the sun can be ascribed to Juliet. We thus come to understand something about Juliet in terms of these 'sun' qualities).

I am suggesting that paintings and drawings can, in some circumstances, operate in a similar way. Harrison gives an account as to how this can be when looking at a particular painting by Picasso and my own MA research thesis[337] developed this in terms of landscape art.

In his analysis of what metaphor is and how it works Harrison argues that 'no language could have enough terms to describe the world around us'[338]. Sometimes therefore we need to understand something in terms of something else. This requires some work on behalf of the audience who will have to guess the context to establish the meaning for example 'an argument is hard to swallow' is not a blockage in the oesophagus. He therefore defines metaphor as 'a normal (literal) comparison of one thing or feature with another – the basis of the comparison being tacit (i.e. the context being understood)'.[339] He sees metaphor as being related to imagery and therefore an understanding of metaphor might help traverse the boundary between different systems of communication.[340]

Harrison goes on to expand on some of these conditions. He argues that, as both pictures and the world that they represent are each visual, they tend to operate metaphorically at two interacting levels. He firstly sees the tactile qualities of a

[335] Ibid.
[336] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2.The Arden Shakespeare, Editor Brian Gibbons, London: A&C Black, 1980. The context is 'But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the Sun! Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon,'
[337] John Adams, Visual Metaphor in Landscape Art, MA (Res) Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2004.
[338] Andrew Harrison, *Philosophy and the Arts-Seeing and Believing*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997, p. 105.
[339] Ibid., p. xii.
[340] Ibid., p. 107.

painting as being metaphorically associated with our concept of the physical aspects to making art. Secondly he states that 'what is depicted can be incorporated within the metaphorical process of representation'. As an example of this he refers to Wollheim's analysis of the paintings of Thomas Jones in which he sees the painting of buildings as presenting their surface to us as some type of skin. Through the picture the buildings then become metaphorically eroticised. Although he considers this plausible Harrison sees a wider role for metaphor in the arts and gives the example of the ballet *Coppelia* which work he sees as a metaphor about the limits of human autonomy.[341]

As an example of how visual metaphor may work Harrison looks at a painting by Picasso of Dora Maar.

Figure 27. Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman*, 1932, oil on canvas
555mm x 465mm, Musée Picasso Paris

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[341] Ibid. p. 145.

He states, 'how we construe the lines of the drawing enables us to recognize in the picture a structural analogue not merely of an appearance but of an experience'.[342] In so doing our conception of grief expands so that we learn that it is not just sadness but can be a disintegration. So we have a change in how we conceive of grief, not merely the appearance of grief.[343] This process of depicting something in a particular way such that our conception of it may change because of the way that we experience the work is perhaps more commonplace than we imagine.[344]

Wendy Dawe in her thesis on metaphor suggests that allegory, symbol and simile are identified as tropes that are allied to metaphor. The first two 'occupy linguistically uncontentious places in the vocabulary of art: metaphor is more fugitive.'[345] Dawe refers to various definitions of metaphor, from the Aristotelian 'transference description that denotes a carrying over of meaning from one context to another' to:

> …the vehicle, something well known, is set against something more obscure, the tenor. By applying what we know about the one to the other a new meaning is found which illuminates our understanding.[346]

But if an artwork is metaphorical, she concludes, it will say more than it represents and for this to happen there must be adequate clues for it to be meaningful to a 'suitable viewer'. Creative metaphor can only be present if the viewer has to mentally transfer what he or she sees to another concept that may be referred to either through the content of the artwork or through its surface.[347]

My MA[348] thesis suggested that there are a number of factors that can affect this transfer. I have listed these for clarity:

Types of material used.

How these materials are shaped, used or formed.

Overall form of the artwork.

Use of literary devices (e.g. title or epithet)

Use of figurative elements (total or in part)

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[342] Ibid., p. 146.

[343] Ibid., p. 146.

[344] Ibid., p. 147.

[345] Wendy Dawe, Visual Metaphor and the Ironic Glance, Ph.D. Thesis, Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, 1992. p. 7.

[346] Ibid., p. 10.

[347] Ibid. p.42.

[348] John Adams, Visual Metaphor in Landscape Art, MA (Res) Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2004. p. 95.

Significance of the location of the work (e.g. site specificity).

Scale of the work

These factors are used in the analyses of my own work to show how they may be interpreted and to argue that, in the case of some non-figurative works, the meaning of depiction needs to be extended.

4.4   Case Studies of Practice Work.

4.4.1   *Poetic Field* - Case Study.

Figure 28 shows the work *Poetic Field* which is 1000mm x 900mm and is of 1mm mild steel plate on to which has been acid etched an ornate pattern which has been further picked out in clay from the Chalfont St Giles area of the Chiltern Hills. The clay is used in the manufacture of locally made bricks. The artwork shown here is one element of a proposed larger work that will be a floor-based work.

Figure 28 John Adams, *Poetic Field*, 2010, Acid Etched Mild Steel and Clay, 1000mm x 900mm.

The work is intended to capture the rhythmic movements and articulations of the process of ploughing that takes place in specific locations in this defined landscape. To do this comparison is made through the artwork between the actions of ploughing and those of a baroque dance. There are perceived similarities in my experience between them in that they both have rhythmic structures and both involve the relationship between two elements. The ploughing operation requires the handling and control of the motive power of the tractor and the manipulation of the ploughshare. They are in a particular relationship when on a ploughing 'run' and in another when the run is complete. At this point, determined by the physical constraints of the field being ploughed, the ploughshare harness is raised, the ploughshare itself is spun on its axis during which process the tractor and the whole assemblage turns to commence a new run in the opposite direction.

Figure 29. John Adams, *Ploughing Operation*, Digital Photographs, 2008

The turning and spinning motions operating in different planes contrast with movement of the plough run and form their own aesthetic, one that brings to mind a baroque dance. It is this that informs the artwork. The symbolism used takes particular elements of dance notation from texts on the subject[349]. The 'loure'[350] referred to traces the related movements of a male and female dancer on the dance floor. The symbolic notation used is reflective of the baroque aesthetic and is therefore contemporary to its time. The dance was performed at the English court to celebrate the birthday of Queen Anne but is very much influenced by French dance. This is the time of Andre Le Notre and the formal landscapes of palaces and gardens such as that of Versailles, which are again influenced by the baroque aesthetic.[351]

Figure 30. Baroque Dance Minuets, from Kellom Tomlinson-*The Art of Dancing*, London: 1724.[352]

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[349] These notational elements are from Feuillet, *Orchesography and A Small Treatise of Time and Cadence in Dancing,* translated from the French by John Weaver, London: H.Meere, 1706, republished, New York: Dance Horizons, 1971. The 'loure' dance is that of 'The Pastorall by Mr Isaac' given in Anne Hutchison Guest, *Dance Notation: The Process of Recording Movement on Paper,* London: Dance Books, 1984, p. 63.

[350] A baroque dance for two people.

[351] Michael Conan, 'Introduction: The New Horizons of Baroque Garden Cultures", in *Baroque Garden Cultures: Emulation, Sublimation, Subversion* edited by Michael Conan, Washington: Harvard University Press, 2005.

[352] Retrieved 01/03/2010 from http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin. (Library of Congress-american memory-performing arts-search Kellom Tomlinson-art of dance-go to page 159-then 'next page' etc)

The intention is that the work should operate in the way of visual metaphor as described in 4.3.3 in that it compares two activities the first of which is a landscape activity and the second that of a baroque dance. This latter is revealed through the 'design' of the artwork, which has been acid-etched into the steel plate. The landscape activity is alluded to in two ways, firstly through the design and secondly through the material of the work. The design is picked out in local clay, one that is used by local Chiltern brick-makers. This is the clay soil that is ploughed using the steel of the ploughshare which itself is alluded to in the steel of the artwork.

The plough field patterns are referenced in this work by the floor pattern of the dance notation.

Figure 31. John Adams, *Field Patterns*, Digital Photographs, 2007

My contention is that this work operates in the sense of visual metaphor as described and has an additional connoted message to the viewer through its material element. The viewer is thus directed by the artwork and through itself to a specific object and activity in the world. This is the mechanism by which depiction works but in this instance there is no iconography directly associated with the world object.

4.4.2   *Chalk Face* Case Study

This second work from my practice is shown in Figure 32 and is 1500mm x 1000mm approximately. The work consists of layers of chalk paste overlaying a base layer of clay with some charcoal. The chalk layers have been heavily worked in two different ways. For the lower half of the work the chalk paste, consisting of chalk powder and rabbit skin glue, has been applied with both brush and trowel and by pouring onto the work, as it lay flat. This has been allowed to dry and the surface sandpapered with a power sander. This whole process has been repeated a number of times. The chalk in the upper half of the drawing has been applied using sticks of chalk containing some embedded veins of colour. It has been applied over a layer of clay wash using vertical strokes and laid in horizontal bands. This, again, has been a repeated process. The surface has then been cut into and marked using a power tool with different wire brush attachments.

The intention has been to produce a sensuous portrait of both the geological structure of the chalk element of the Chiltern Hills and of the process of excavation of this chalk that takes place in the many quarries in the area. The Kensworth quarry shown in Figure 32 is typical. The banding of the top half of the work relates to the excavation terraces of this quarry. The lower half of the work attempts a sense impression of the nature of the untouched and unexcavated chalk and to indicate its texture.

Consideration has been given to the edges of this work. The science of soil mechanics treats large masses of material as being 'semi infinite' when considering their stress effects on adjacent masses and built structures.[353] By this is meant that, although

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[353] Karl Terzaghi, Ralph Peck, Gholamreza Mesri, *Soil Mechanics in Engineering Practice*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996, p. 176.

clearly not infinite, the effect of the mass is as if it was. This notion of the semi-infinite informs a particular strand of my work in the sense that awareness of the work and what it represents are both part of a wider whole. The treatment of the edges of the work attempts to indicate this.

There are a number of points to be made in respect of how this work functions. In the first place it is intended to refer to the activity of quarrying. Whereas the previous work (*Poetic Field*) operates as visual metaphor this work functions more as visual simile. The marks made are similar to the marks made in the quarry by the excavation plant. The process of erasure or removing material from the artwork is similar to the removal of material from the ground.

Secondly the drawing attempts to capture the sense of the mass of the chalk through a consciousness of its weight and mass and this has influenced the way the chalk is depicted in the lower half of the drawing. These two phenomena are related in physics by the formula mass x gravity = weight where gravity is the force exerted on a mass. The lower half of the drawing tries to capture the sense of a mass formed from a chaotic past created through the geological forces that shaped it. The upper half of the drawing refers to the dynamics of the excavation process.

In terms of the model of depiction developed in 4.2.3 the drawing can be understood as follows. It has two areas where the surface treatment has been effected in a distinct fashion each of which will impact on the viewer in a different way. The scored and scratched mark making in the upper half signifies (the signifier) a dynamic process of surface removal (the signified). The mark making is in horizontal bands signifying a structured process. In the lower half of the drawing the marks are of a different nature to those in the upper half. The build up and treatment of the material of this part of the drawing (the signifier) indicates the way that the actual material in the landscape (chalk) was created through the sedimentary process of its geological past (the signified).

The two areas are united in one drawing suggesting a connection between the two elements. This is the connoted value of the work that can be understood through it's respective signifiers as depicting or denoting a process that takes place in a chalk

landscape and involves the systematic removal of material from a surface. Reference to section 4.3, that describes the overall context of my work, suggests further connoted interpretations that help locate the work more specifically. These include such associations as the particular landscape in which the activities take place, that it is a quarrying activity referred to, the nature of the quarried material and its use in industry and agriculture, the impact the activity has on the surrounding landscape and the value and importance it has for those who live and work there.

The work functions therefore in a way suggested by the model of depiction described in 4.2.3. The material used and its method of application can be seen as creating a sensation that signifies an aspect of landscape activity that has to do with the recovery or excavation of material. Within the limits of information given by the drawing itself there are connoted signs suggesting a quarrying activity in an area where chalk strata are accessible. Reference to the contextual envelope of which this drawing is a part allows further interpretations.

The mechanism of depiction is apparent. The viewer is directed through and via the work to specific aspects of the object in the world in much the same way as a figurative landscape work does. The mechanism is no different to the Monet painting used as reference in Chapter 2.

A point to be made that is relevant to *Chalk Face* and *Poetic Field* is that the titles are used to lock the drawings in to a specific meaning. This is consistent with both Wollheim and Goodman who recognise a legitimate role for background information.

Figure 32. John Adams, *Chalk Face*, 2009, Quarry Chalk and Clay, 1500mm x 1000mm.

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Figure 33 John Adams, *Kensworth Chalk Quarry*, Digital Photographs, 2010

4.4.3   Conclusions to the Practice Work studies.

The intentions for the practice element of the thesis have been to represent, in some way, particular actions in a landscape. Arguably the materials and their application allude to this. We know this through finding out about why the drawings were done. This is Paskow's second phase of viewing that requires a reflective effort on behalf of the viewer.

Figurative works depict things in the world through the painting or drawing of recognizable subject matter. My drawings refer to objects or actions in the world but do so in another way.

These works are made from chalk and clay, materials that have been directly recovered from the ground. In this sense there is a connection to the pigments used by Titian. The chalk and clay relate to a specific landscape formed from these materials. The drawings therefore indicate a landscape purely through a material connection in much the same way that a studio work by Richard Long, for example, made from River Avon mud would indicate that landscape. The materials are applied to the support ground (in this case paper) with particular actions that produce clearly defined marks in a specific pattern. They too allude to those actions in the landscape where these materials are excavated and mined for industrial purposes leaving marks and traces on the landscape.

It is my contention that these non-figurative drawings have a depictive relationship with the landscape they represent and that they describe aspects of that landscape. The case studies in Chapter 3 have shown how theories of depiction can be seen to apply to figurative paintings and drawings. In these cases the experience of the plastic elements of a work and how these are used to create a recognizable form describe aspects of the observed world. This is true for the explanation of the twofold experience of seeing-in (Wollheim, Dilworth), the picture as a prop for games of make-believe (Walton, Paskow), or the semiotic view of depiction where the picture can be read as containing signs that indicate things in the world (Goodman). In the case of non-figurative work the plastic elements are used in other ways. The body of work analysed in 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 describes aspects of the world by identifying the

marks and materials of the work directly to aspects of landscape. In this way they too can be seen to be depictive.

There are two examples from contemporary practices where the mechanism of depiction, as described above, operates. The first is a work by the painter Gary Hume and the second by the landscape artist Richard Long and these are described and analysed in the next two sections 4.4.4 and 4.4.5.

4.4.4 Study of *Dream* by Gary Hume

This is one of a series of paintings by Gary Hume that uses the motif of a door. It is shown in Figure 34. The idea originated in an image seen in a newspaper advertisement for private health care at the time of cutbacks and closures that took place in the later years of Margaret Thatcher's first period of government.[354] It was at this time that Hume was looking for something to paint and he:

> …saw the doors as an ideal picture that was also an object, and symbolic, and very clean.[355]

He found the use of gloss paint to be one that not only suited him but also one whose highly reflective surface makes it difficult to see the shapes and to recognize the image of the doors. The paintings are 'less like images of doors than simply door like'.[356] His method of working has been to repeatedly apply layers of gloss paint on to stretched canvas, MDF board, or aluminium supports and to sand down each successive coat of paint to achieve a very smooth and highly reflective surface.

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[354] Thomas Lawson, 'Gary Hume: Modern Painting' in *Gary Hume: Door Paintings*, catalogue for exhibition at Modern Art Oxford, Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2008, p. 6.
[355] Ibid., p. 6.
[356] Suzanne Cotter, 'The Black Swan' in *Gary Hume: Door Paintings*, catalogue for exhibition at Modern Art Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2008, p. 14.
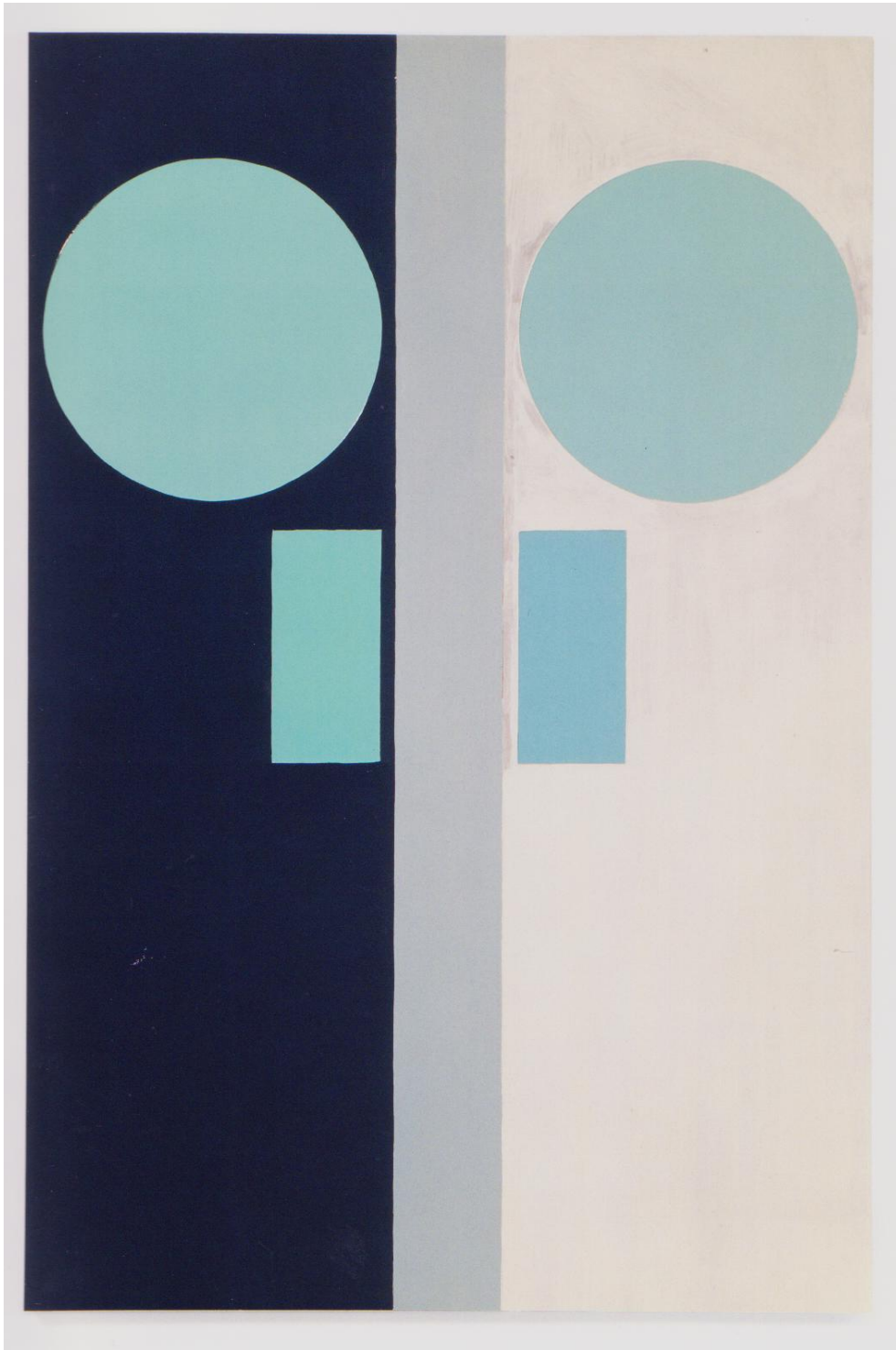
Figure 34. Gary Hume, *Dream*, 1991, Gloss Paint on MDF Board, 2180mm x 3660mm, Private Collection

The materials of the paintings are identical to that of hospital doors although the imagery is an abstraction of them. The message in this work is a connoted one. Hume admits that the choice of subject was a form of engagement with the social conditions of the time:[357]

> …that just as the image was appropriated entirely from a real and somewhat depressing reality, so was the use of gloss paint an appropriate material, lending a patina of mundane grit, while simultaneously creating a magical immaterial space.[358]

> The idea of the wide swinging hospital door speaks of institutional power, of fates unknown, futures out of reach. [359]

The viewer understands the works through a connoted message that makes a statement about a particular place through abstracted imagery and the use of a paint material and its application. The mechanism of depiction is apparent. The viewer is directed through or via the work to specific aspects of the object-in-the-world in much the same way as depiction works for figurative works.

4.4.5   Studies of *Porthmeor Arc* and *Earth* by Richard Long

Richard Long is often referred to as a practitioner of Land Art, which in itself was not a movement as such in the traditional sense. Its participants had different interests, which they pursued with no single principle connecting them other than the use of elemental materials.[360] In Long's case this has meant walking in the landscape, creating works in the landscape, and works in both the studio and the gallery. These latter include text works and two-dimensional work on the floor and on the wall. Two of these are looked at in this brief analysis. The two wall works shown are typical of this particular strand of his work being drawings in mud with different but specific symbolism.

In the first of these, *Porthmeor Arc*, shown in Figures 35 and 36, the symbolism is connected to the shape and architecture of the Tate St. Ives gallery, which in its turn reflects the curved shape of Porthmeor Beach itself. This is a shape that Long has

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[357] Ibid., p. 16.
[358] Thomas Lawson, 'Gary Hume: Modern Painting' in *Gary Hume: Door Paintings*, catalogue for exhibition at Modern Art Oxford, Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2008, p. 6.
[359] Ibid., p. 6.
[360] Clarrie Wallis, 'Making Tracks' in *Richard Long: Heaven and Earth*, catalogue to Exhibition at Tate Britain 2009, London: Tate Publishing, 2009, p. 58.

used in other works suggesting perhaps that it is a motif of particular significance for him. It may be that there is a connotation of mass and of gravity both of which, it is suggested, are of importance in his work.[361] The work itself is made from two types of clay or mud both found in the South West of England. The darker clay is mud from the Avonmouth area and the white clay is China Clay from St. Austell near St. Ives. The detail insert reveals the gestural marks that form the drawing. They act in much the same way as the Constitutive Character Aspects (CCA's) do as described in the section on Goodman in Chapter 2.

The second work *Earth* is shown in Figure 36 and is described thus:

> This new work is based on the I-Ching symbol for *Earth*. As such, the medium for the work of art is aligned with its meaning. Taken from the earth, the mud now refers back to it. Echoing Chinese ideas about the reconciliation of opposites, it exists as a record of impermanence: energy made visible, order imposed on chaos, a trace of the artist's direct involvement with his materials As suggested by their splashes, drips and handmarks, such works are made freely and gesturally. They are nevertheless underpinned by principles of arrangement and order. Like the stones and sticks used in the sculptures, inert matter is drawn into a complex pattern or system. In Long's work medium and meaning are closely interrelated.[362]

Writing in 1968 Lippard and Chandler state that:

> The visual arts at the moment …appear to have come from two sources: art as idea and art as action. In the first case matter is denied as sensation has been converted into concept; in the second case, matter has been transformed into energy and time-motion.[363]

Long's drawings mobilise the forces and sensations that Deleuze identifies in Francis Bacon's work but in this case they relate to landscape in such a way that we are led to specific aspects of it or to a specific landscape. They achieve this through a combination of symbolism and the material element of the drawing and how this has been worked.

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[361] Ibid., p. 59.
[362] Paul Moorhouse, 'The Intricacy of the Skein, The Complexity of the Web – Richard Long's Art', in *Richard Long: A Moving World*, in catalogue to Exhibition at Tate St. Ives 2002, St. Ives, Cornwall: Tate St. Ives, 2002, p. 23. This is a somewhat lengthy quote but the writer's comments have a direct correspondence with Deleuze's analysis of Francis Bacon's work.
[363] Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, *The Dematerialization of Art*, Art International, vol. XII, no.2, February 1968, p. 31.

Figure 35. Richard Long, *Porthmeor Arc*, 2002, Avon River Mud and China Clay, Tate St.Ives
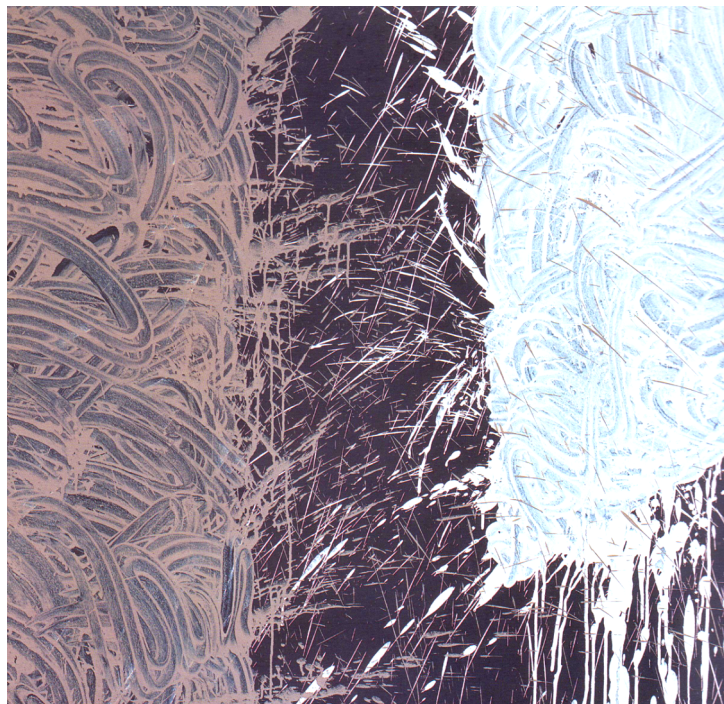

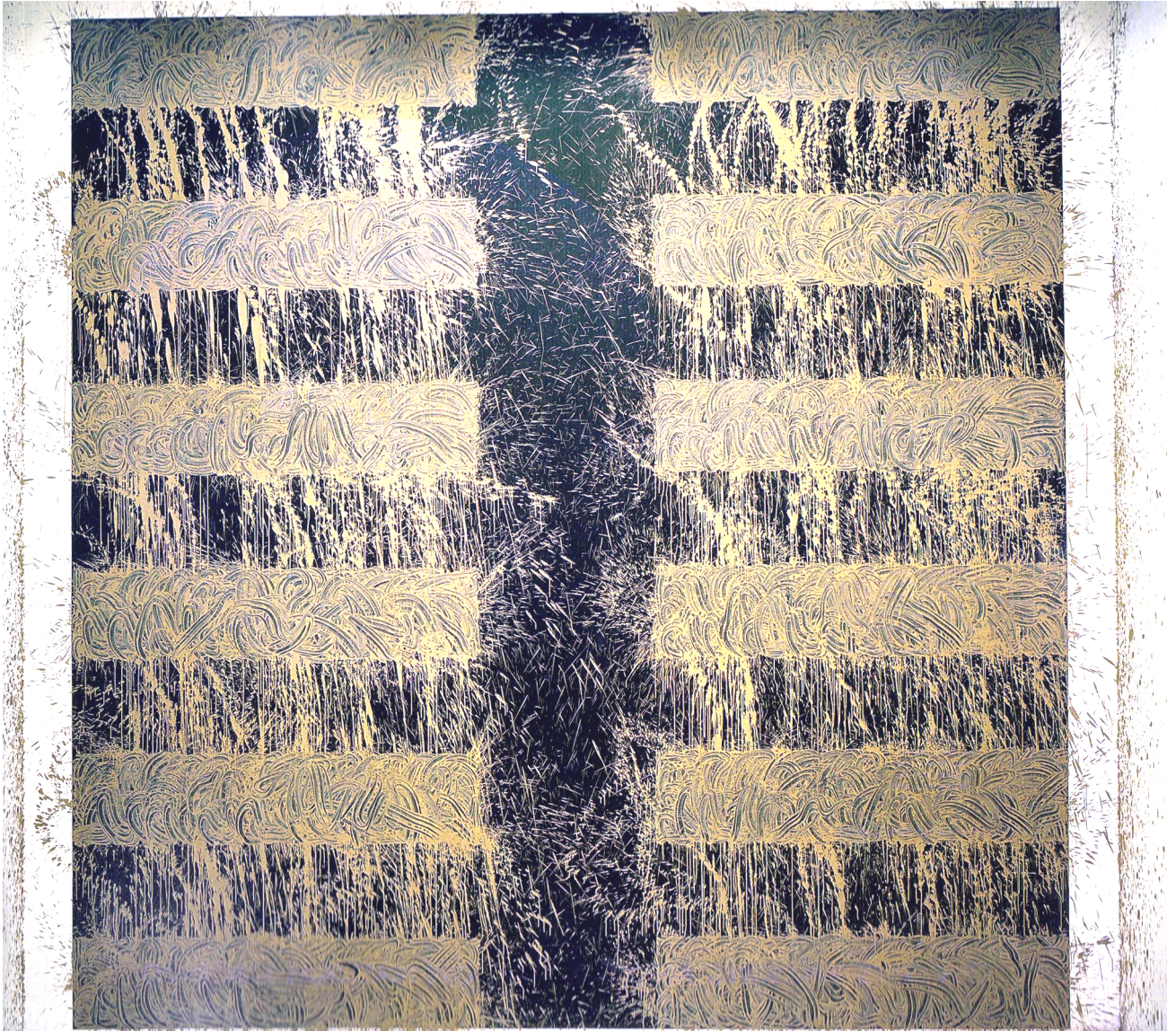Figure 36. *Porthmeor Arc*, Detail

Figure 37. Richard Long, *Earth*, 3500mm x 3500mm approx., 2002, Avon River
Mud, Tate St.Ives

4.5   Conclusions from Chapter 4.

Through a reading of Barthes and Deleuze it has been shown that for some artworks the material of the work and how it is applied can be an important element for the viewer to understand the artist's intended meaning.

In the case of the Gary Hume painting the household gloss paint and the way it has been applied to give a highly reflective and smooth surface has the connotation for some of the coldness an institutional building which is its referent. It is the quality of the paint finish that conveys the meaning in this context.

The works by Richard Long are clearer in revealing how the artist has manipulated the chaotic elements of water and mud to produce clearly defined symbolism that gives meaning through the very nature of the material itself. *Porthmeor Arc* follows the structure of the gallery itself, which in turn reflects the plan shape of Porthmeor beach. The use of Cornish clay and Avon river mud allow the viewer to connect the work to the landscape object through a process of connotation.

In my own work Poetic Field uses clay and steel to denote the connection to landscape and a landscape activity. The intended reading of the symbolism leads the viewer to an understanding of a landscape aesthetic different to that of the picturesque.

Chalk Face operates in a slightly different way in that symbolism has not been used. The landscape depiction is managed by the use of landscape materials that have been applied in a way that echoes some of the quarry processes and to denote the mass of the geological structure of the Chiltern Hills.

All of these works are made using the material of the represented object. For two of the works (*Dream* and *Chalk Face*) this material is applied or used in a way that parallels the way it is used in or on the real world object.

All four of these works, to a greater or lesser degree, are non-figurative and yet they manage to inform the viewer about, and direct them to, a specific landscape or place.

They do this not by using traditional, recognisable iconography but through a combination of material, method of application and symbol that operate to suggest or denote the referred objects.

Chapter 5

Findings and Conclusions

5.1   Background

This research project originates from my practice that has as one of its primary concerns the way in which mark making can contribute to the non-figurative depiction of specific aspects of landscape. The practice focuses on the use of landscape materials in the artworks and how these are manipulated to give both a sensation of a landscape and to signify some aspect of it. The practice explores the way in which this signification can operate in terms of denotation (that which is indicated) and of connotation (what factors can influence it's interpretation)

The purpose of this research project has, therefore, been to find out how a non-figurative, two dimensional, artwork can be seen to depict a landscape. The problem being that depiction is generally understood to be a characteristic of figurative works of art.

5.2   Reflection on Decisions Taken.

A reading of Wollheim on twofoldness and depiction, encountered in my MA by Research, triggered the research interest and it was from the literature search that followed which helped identify a core group of theorists on the subject of depiction. In addition to Wollheim these were Gombrich, Goodman and Walton and it is these writers, who have distinct ideas on how depiction works and have published extensively on the subject, who provide the key texts for this project. Further research identified a number of critically acclaimed texts by more contemporary writers principally Lopes, Podro, Harrison, Hopkins, Dilworth, and Kulvicki. These writers have also published extensively on the subject of depiction, made critical commentary on the work of the more established theorists, and developed their own distinct ideas on this subject.

There are other philosophers who have written on the nature of depiction whose work has not been used in this research. Max Black suggests that a number of factors, such as causal history, intentionality, embedded information and resemblance, may be critical to how depiction functions. He concludes that these criteria form a skein in that none of them by themselves are either necessary or sufficient but each of them relevant in the sense of potentially counting towards the proper application of the concept of depiction. In perfectly clear cases all of the relevant criteria point together toward the same judgement. Whether we rely upon what we know about the method of production, the intentions of the producer, or the sheer look of the picture as it appears to a competent viewer who knows enough of the tradition in which the picture is produced.[364] The theorists used in the analysis chapter on depiction incorporate, in my view, Black's theory.

Norman Bryson proposes a semiotic approach to visual interpretation[365] in which he suggests that perceptualist accounts of pictures concern themselves with perception and recognition of subject matter but do not account for the role and meaning art can have for society as a whole. He puts forward the idea that a picture can be seen as a sign that allows the image to be thought of as a discursive work, allowing a wider interpretation than that of resemblance. Bryson's approach is predicated, in the first instance, on the recognition of the iconography of a picture and as such was not considered in this research as adding further to an analysis that concerns itself with non-figurative works.

This thesis has attempted an account of both established and contemporary thought on depiction theory and the selection made provides a comprehensive basis for the analyses undertaken in chapters 3 and 4.

The selection of the paintings used in the case studies in chapter 3 was justified on the grounds that they meet an adopted set of criteria. There were a number of other artists whose work was considered as were the number of case studies. Part of the strategy for selection was that works selected had to show a progression from figurative work

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[364] Max Black, 'How do Pictures Represent?' In: *Art, Perception, and Reality,* USA: The John Hopkins University Press, 1972. p 128.
[365] Bryson, N., 'Semiology and Visual Interpretation', in Visual Theory', edited by Bryson, N., Holly, M.A., and Moxey, K., Polity Press: 1992. p. 61.

to non-figurative work the intention being to test the depictive theories described in chapter 2 to the limits of their relevance. A number of works and artists were evaluated for the case studies including Constable, Turner, Monet, Mondrian, Kandinsky, De Kooning. It was considered that the selection made (Titian, Auerbach, Twombly), was 'fit for purpose' and that any other selection would not affect the results of the analysis.

5.3   Outcomes

The first step has been to understand how theories of depiction apply in the first instance to figurative works of art and a case study of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was undertaken. These theories were then tested to see how they may apply to two increasingly non-figurative works and to identify if any elements of them could be relevant to this enquiry. In these studies it was demonstrated that for most theories of depiction the iconicity of a work is an essential element in determining how a work depicts something. If perceived resemblance is removed as a useful element in understanding a picture, as one would have to do in the case of non-figurative works, then what is left? For the reasons argued and concluded in sections 2.3 and 3.5 we would have to ignore the depictive theories of Gombrich, Walton, Hopkins, and Lopes. We are left with such pictorial elements as how a work is painted, its colour, what the materials of the work are, and what is its context.

This being so we then have the depictive theories of Wollheim, Podro, and Dilworth all of whom emphasise the painterly aspect of depiction. We also have Goodman's theory but only in the sense that an artwork depicts by denoting the object being depicted. In themselves they are not enough to respond to the research questions although elements of them have proved useful in developing the arguments made.

There are certain conclusions that can be drawn from this. If, as has been stated, depiction is a characteristic of figurative works then the mechanics of what happens is that the artwork directs our (the viewers) attention through or via itself to the object in the world, which we can see in the painting. It does this generally due to the fact that we recognise the shapes and colours in the painting because of our visual experience

of the depicted object. This is in line, in one way or another, with all the theories of depiction.

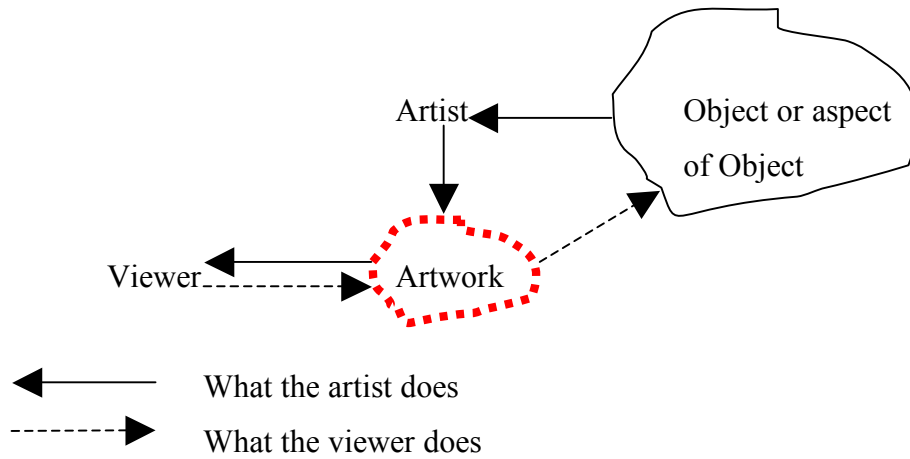To repeat the diagram in 4.2.3 the process is thus:

Figure 38 Depictive process for figurative works (Figure 19 repeated)

To answer the question as to how non-figurative works can be considered to depict something we have to look elsewhere and this leads us to the work of Roland Barthes and to that of Gilles Deleuze. Barthes explains how artworks can connote a message to the viewer. In other words the author is able to influence how a work is received or understood through the use of particular materials, their facture, and possibly the use of specific symbolism.

Deleuze writes of the artist capturing the essence of an object and representing and/or depicting it by using the forces and sensations of the material of the work. Deleuze uses the term 'figural' to describe these phenomena when he analyses the work of Francis Bacon. A number of artists including Lucien Freud, Frank Auerbach, and Francis Bacon talk, in one way or another, in terms of the paint and how it is used as revealing the true nature of the subject of the painting without resembling it.

This argument helps to give an understanding of the practice work together with work such as Gary Hume's Door paintings and Richard Long's 2-D work where the material of the object represented is itself used in the making of the work. In the case of the practice work and with that of Hume how the material is applied is also part of its depictive element.

The mechanism described above still works in those cases where the artwork is not figurative but refers to something in the world by virtue of how it is painted and with what. There are a number of examples given in Chapter 4 where this is shown to be the case. In this sense the generally accepted meaning of depiction could be extended and the process can again be put diagrammatically as follows:
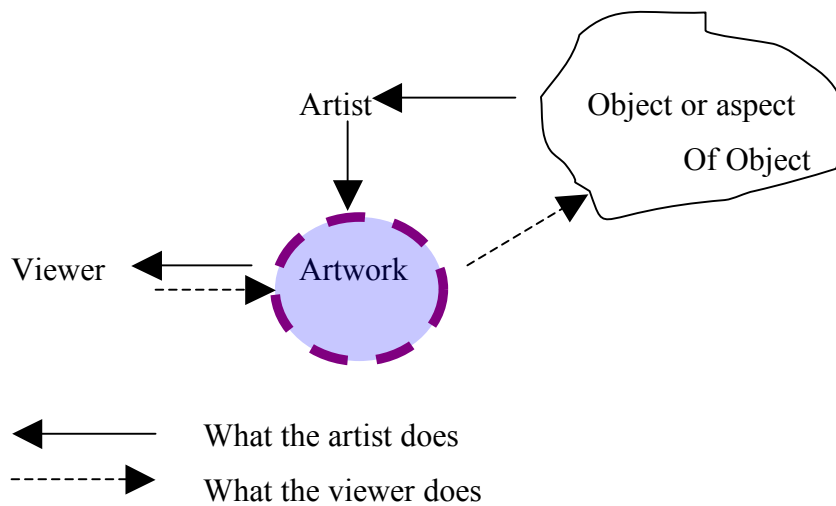

Figure 39 Depictive process for non-figurative works

The conclusion of this research is, therefore, that the term 'depiction' can have an extended meaning, one that would explain how some non-figurative works are able to represent things in the world without containing any recognizable form.

This study suggests that further research is needed into how this conclusion can be used to modify existing theories of depiction. This could be especially true of the semiotic view of depiction taken by Goodman who talks of denotation being at the core of depiction but does not consider denotation's corollary, connotation, in the way that Barthes does. The reading of the plastic elements of a work as having inherent properties, as described by Deleuze, that can be manipulated to signify things in the world usefully extends Dilworth's ideas on how depiction works.

Lopes suggests that 'a complete account of pictures should explain abstract pictures as well as figurative ones'[366]. This thesis is a step in that direction.

The outcomes of this research and the addition to knowledge it generates can be summarised as follows:

> Through a consideration of the mechanism of depiction as initially articulated in this thesis in 4.2.3 and by reference to Deleuze (4.2.1) and Barthes (4.2.2) the general concept of depiction, predicated by reference to figurative works of art, can be extended to account for some types of non-figurative work. These are works where the materials used and the ways these are applied are essential elements in the depictive process.

> Interpretation of works by Hume and Long, described in 4.4.4 and 4.4.5, can be enhanced in the light of this research.

> The case studies of the practice work undertaken in 4.4 show how the extended theory of depiction is used in the interpretation of non-figurative works such that an enhanced aesthetic and understanding of landscape can be made.

5.4   Responding to the Research Questions

The research questions, stated in 1.1, ask the following:

> Can theories of depiction, based largely on figurative painting, be usefully developed to apply to non-figurative work?

> What are the key elements of these theories that would influence this work?

> What further theoretical basis may be needed to establish this position?

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[366] Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 6.

This thesis has shown that theories of depiction rely on the iconography of artwork and as such have little or no application to the understanding of non-figurative work. This is one of the conclusions to be drawn from Chapters 2 and 3. As suggested in 3.5 the theories of Wollheim and Dilworth, that stress the importance of the plastic elements of a work and how they are used, have been instrumental (4.1) in developing this extended theory of depiction. They could themselves be developed further in the light of this research as suggested in these conclusions. To develop this extended theory a further theoretical basis was required and this came from a reading of Barthes and Deleuze as described in 4.2.

5.5   The Limitations of the Research

The research question arose as a direct consequence of my practice in the sense that the practice asked the fundamental question of how could landscape be represented in a non-figurative and two-dimensional way. From this came the question of how can it be depicted which in turn engendered the enquiry into the nature of depiction itself. This was carried out in the first place by a literature search which revealed not only different ideas on the subject but the extent to which they could apply to non-figurative works. It was at this point that a limited number of qualitative case studies were decided on to test the limits of applicability of the depictive theories. These studies used the notion of 'thick descriptions' as described in Chapter 3. It is useful to reflect at this stage if the same conclusions would have been arrived at if a number of quantitive case studies were used instead. This would have resulted in a greater number of pictures being analysed but in a more limited way and it is problematic as to what the selection criteria would be, what data should be collected, and what value this would have.

Apart from my own work the case studies in chapter 4 have looked at three other works of art to test the applicability of my extended theory of depiction. For the purposes of the research this number of studies was deemed sufficient to confirm the applicability of the theory. For the outcomes of the research to have a proven and wider impact further investigation and case studies would have to be undertaken but this thesis represents a first step to an enhanced way of understanding some types of

drawings and paintings, those where material and facture are important elements in their interpretation.

5.6   Dissemination and Future Research.

As this research has progressed its interim findings at any one stage of its development have been disseminated in a number of ways. Two papers have been given at seminars arranged for the University of Hertfordshire's Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Research Institute (SSAHRI), and two presentations have been given at research seminars undertaken by the School of the Creative Arts. A poster presentation was given at the 2008 meeting of the Drawing Research Network at Loughborough University School of Art and Design and undocumented discussion of my work was given at two events organised by the University of the West of England that focussed on drawing practice and discourse.

Following completion of the research the next steps will address two different communities. The intention is to submit a paper, based on this thesis, to appropriate forthcoming conferences and to submit a paper for publication in The British Journal of Aesthetics or similar journal. In this way it is hoped to expose the arguments of this thesis to criticism and debate from those members of the academic community whose concerns are with the nature of depiction.

The other area of dissemination is that of practitioners. The practice has been opened up, through the research, to two strands of work as exemplified in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2. and these will be developed further. The strategy is to seek to exhibit these in galleries and public spaces located in the area of landscape that has been the setting of this study. This is in line with Frampton's ideas of critical regionalism as described in Chapter 4. Exactly where these may be is dependent on a number of factors not least of which is the target audience. Two possible locations for example are the new theatre and exhibition complex at Aylesbury and the contemporary art gallery run by the Rothschild estate in Buckinghamshire.

Further research will address both the way in which a non-iconographic approach to depiction can be developed and the influence that recent writings in cultural

geography can have on my practice as a landscape artist. A provisional schema for this research envisages a study of the work of such writers as Ingold and Crouch who have declared interests in the influences of anthropology and cultural geography on the representation of landscape in art practice. It is anticipated that the practice work produced as a result of this study will inform the development of my ideas on depiction in non-figurative paintings and drawings.

5.7   The role of practice in this research

My practice has, historically, been concerned with the representation of landscape in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms. With the former the interest has been with the way a surface can be marked to convey some aspect of the landscape considered. The work has moved away from pictorial representation to more abstracted forms and in the course of this project began increasingly to explore the sensation of the facture and materiality of the picture surface and how these two factors affect both the intentionality behind the work and how it may be interpreted. As the project developed it became necessary to provide a theoretical basis to understand how these non-figurative works could function and be understood. The project can therefore, be seen as having been led by the practice in the sense that it has motivated the research.

One outcome of this has been that the research has met one of Stephen Scrivener's[367] 'ways of thinking' about art-based research[368] namely that of 'research for art' which is defined as being concerned with how 'the given can be meaningfully expanded.'[369] The criteria for this is met in this thesis through the claim that theories of depiction can be extended to include some non-figurative works (the criteria of transformation); works of art have been produced and presented in this thesis that demonstrate how the extended concept of depiction can be understood in terms of the artefacts (the criteria of method and justification); the artefacts have been presented and discussed at a number of research seminars (the criteria of communication).[370]

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[367] Stephen Scrivener, *The Norms and Tests of Arts Based Research*, draft paper retrieved 01/05/2010 from http://www.chelsea.arts.ac.uk/17858.htm
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid., Table 4.

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