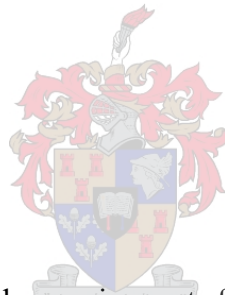# Ever-shifting matter: an investigation into the spatial, temporal, and sensorial process of my artmaking

by

Pierre Vermeulen

Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in Visual Arts in the Faculty of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University

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## Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work; that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

April 2022

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This thesis is the written component of my practice-based research. This piece of writing takes the form of a journal in which I discuss my interest in the philosophy and practice of meditation, and the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. I focus on how these relate to one another, and on the impact they have on my life and practice. Because the method that I use is the self-reflexive practice of journaling, concepts and theories are engaged informally as they pertain to my own understandings of them, and I focus mainly on how they influence and inflect my work and process. The accompanying glossary provides more academic definitions, obtained from a wide variety of sources.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis is die geskrewe komponent van my praktyk-gebaseerde navorsing. Die skryfstuk neem die vorm aan van 'n joernaal, waarin ek my belangstelling in die filosofie en in die beoefening van meditasie, asook in die teorieë van Deleuze en Guattari bespreek. Ek fokus op hoe bogenoemde met mekaar verband hou, en op die uitwerking wat dit op my lewe en op my praktiese werk het. Vir hierdie doel maak ek gebruik van selfondersoekende dagboekinskrywings. Konsepte en teorieë word dus informeel opgeteken in terme van my eie begrip daarvan, en ek konsentreer hoofsaaklik op hoe dit my werk én my werkproses beïnvloed en nuanseer. Die meegaande woordelys verskaf verdere akademiese definisies wat uit 'n wye verskeidenheid van bronne verkry is.

**Table of Contents**

List of Figures

Figure 1. Pierre Vermeulen, *Vermillion monochrome nr. 3.* 2019. Acrylic on Belgian Linen, 100 x 73 x 4.5 cm.

Figure 2. Pierre Vermeulen, Detail of *Hair Orchid Sweat Print, Red, Orange and Grey*. 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, acrylic and shellac on DiBond, 148 x 110 cm.

"The world is an illusion, and art is the presentation of the illusion of the world."

Paul Virilio (Baume, 2008: 16)

Figure 3. Pierre Vermeulen, *Mind map drawing*. 2021. India ink on paper, 42 x 60 cm.

11

## What is this all about?

This text is the written component of my practice-based research.[1] It is a reflection on my studio practice, meditation practice, and the conceptual underpinnings that inform my studio practice and thinking since 2019. As a drawing is made up of lines and marks made by an extended arm, so too, this thesis is an extension of a selection of things I have been thinking about. Broadly this thesis is about change (i.e. something changing over time) and paying attention to change as it folds. I make use of the concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari[2] to discuss this change and I make use of vipassana[3] meditation as a daily practice to be aware of the change. In my studio practice these two components of change and meditation are key driving forces in how I use materials that become the works that I eventually exhibit as artworks.

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[1] Practice-based research "involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry" (Nelson, 2013: 8–9).

[2] Gilles Deleuze (1925 - 1995) was a French philosopher and Felix Guattari (1930 - 1992), a French psychoanalyst and political activist. Together they wrote a couple of works as well as numerous works individually. While their contemporaries, like Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, focussed on critical theory and critiqued discourse by deconstructive methods, Deleuze and Guattari, O'Sullivan proposes, moved further by developing a new, generative or productive theoretical model (O'Sullivan, 2006: 10). Their ideas were rooted predominantly in new ways of thinking rather than in the critique of existing discourses. When compared with their contemporaries, the radical innovation of their work might create a disordered and unruly effect, as they moved away from those, they called the "signifier enthusiasts" (Ibid.). They proposed a new way of thinking which shifts away from representation, as representation relies exactly on the recognisable and that which is already in place (Ibid.: 1). Their meandering and poetic way of writing can thus be seen as an experimental project about thinking differently. The works they produced together, and single-authored works present a 'new image of thought' that privileges becoming, process, creativity, and invention over recognition, being, identity and stasis (Ibid.: 2). As a political activist, Guattari travelled a lot and encouraged Deleuze to join him. Deleuze, however, preferred to stay in Paris as he was more home-bound. Guattari would send Deleuze his writings, which varied in topic and inspiration. Deleuze would expand on the ideas and weave them together (Sweet, 2021).

[3] Vipassana meditation is one of the oldest known meditation techniques from India. It was re-discovered roughly 2500 years ago by Gotama the Buddha. *Vipassanā* means 'insight' in Pāli – to see things as they truly are. It "is the intuitive light flashing forth and exposing the truth of the impermanency, the suffering and the impersonal and unsubstantial nature of all corporeal and mental phenomena of existence. It is insight-wisdom *(vipassaná-paññá)* that is the decisive liberating factor in Buddhism …" (Nyanatiloka, 2004a: 216).
Vipassana is a practical method that can be practised by almost anyone. The goal of vipassana is to 'purify' the mind and do away with tensions and negativities that creates suffering (Fleischman, 2014: 4). To learn vipassana one would usually go on a ten-day course. Broadly speaking, the meditation practice entails paying attention to the subtle sensations the body produces. By doing this is to pay attention to the 'reality' of the body – how the body experiences itself. One practices experiencing life as it truly is and not through the illusory subjective lens (Nyanatiloka, 2004a: 216). Mindful meditation is another name for the practice.

I have approached this thesis in two writing tones. I move between a journalistic self-reflective (or self-reflexive) style when writing about my own work, and a more academic style for my theoretical musings. Weaving these two styles together and moving between the two is like thoughts coming and going. The shape and nature of thoughts surfacing and fading away in this thesis follow a stream of consciousness. Journaling is integral to my practice – I always move around with a journal in hand that contains drawings and writings and ideas. Some sections are longer in academic style and others shorter. In some parts the two styles are tightly interwoven. As I weave between these two styles, I make use of a glossary which contains the key academic terms I use throughout the thesis.

Important image-forms that I will be returning to throughout this thesis are knots and waves: more specifically in their verbal use of knotting and waving – the *doing* of these image-forms of knotting and waving. I borrow the concepts of knots and waves from Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's curation of the 14th Istanbul Biennial titled *Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms* in 2015. The biennial was described as an exhibition that hovered "…around a material – salt water – and the contrasting image-forms of knots and waves" (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015: XLIII). She writes about the "collisions between art and life, [and] the knots that tie them together" (Ibid.). I will carry these two image-forms of knotting and waving throughout this thesis to help me understand the intersections between the materials I use and my thoughts about my work, and to navigate and map my processes in art and in my meditation practice.

An integral part of my life is vipassana meditation. I will share aspects of this practice and explain how I apply the conceptual and practical application of this 'way of being' into my studio.

As a personal philosophy the constant changing nature of existence is a concept that I am drawn to and one that I feel I have begun to experience through the practice of meditation. I use this practice as an umbrella guiding-tool for my art practice. Through this practice I come to the experiential understanding that I do not think my thoughts. Thoughts think themselves; I am merely aware of them. This understanding allows me to stay consciously

aware of the nature of life as an endless, changing process. As an extension of this awareness, my mission is to pay attention to the subtle shifts in the materials I use in my studio practice as I keep aware of the flux of my thoughts.

My practical work aims to bring awareness of my relation to the world around me, and in turn to open up the possibility that the work could catalyse a sense of awareness in viewers. My hope is that the work can be seen as meditations in their own right, or as object(s) on which to meditate. They do not aim to relate any specific meaning; rather the material, light, space, and sound in the work might open up possibilities for contemplation and questions.[4]

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[4] I best relate to Anish Kapoor's method of working where the work leads the artist. He describes two methods of working: one where the artist leads the work, and the other where the work leads the artist. When the artist leads the work, it must be assumed that the artist has something specific to say and know specifically what it is doing. He prefers the opposite which is a "process of discovery." He says: "I don't have anything I'm dying to say, but I do know if I allow myself to excavate, to research, the process leads to meanings that could never have been logically imagined" (Baume, 2008: 39–40).

John Cage (1959: 109)[5] wrote:

"I have nothing to say

and I am saying it…"

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[5] This quote comes from John Cage's *Lecture on Nothing* (1959) that was printed in the way I copied the quote. On how to read the text, the instructions are: "Each line is to be read across the page from left to right, not down the columns in sequence. This should not be done in an artificial manner (which might result from an attempt to be too strictly faithful to the position of the words on the page), but with the *rubato* which one uses in everyday speech" (Cage, 1959: 109).

How does one say something without saying anything? For me, this is possibly best described through the absence of form or material or imagery. The absence of something needs the presence of something else to define its absence. The notion of the void (imagined here as a hole) is a good example of this. The outer surface of the hole is needed to define the cavity or void. It can also be said that the cavity or void defines the surrounding material. In my meditation practice I pay attention to thoughts to create space in the mind. In paying bare attention to thoughts, there is no necessary identification with the thoughts and thus they become absent in their ability to cause identification. Their absence defines the spaciousness in my mind, and when a thought does present itself, it can do so vividly in my open mind. I liken this sentiment to my practical work too. I do not aim to tell the viewer anything specific: an absence of signification creates space for the viewers to situate themselves in the work.

In discussing the material and sensorial aspects of my work, I also explore the relationship between maker and viewer, space and object. My practice is process-based and hence non-linear as I often revisit and incorporate elements of earlier works. As a result, I will discuss works produced before I embarked on this course of study. This non-linear and fluid way of working resonates with my choice of theory and literature that is woven into this collection of writings.

Time and thoughts can be understood as having no beginning and no end, but rather can be seen as non-linear currents – continuous and unfolding (Groys, 2015: 34). In his short essay *Time Waves*, Boris Groys writes that the question of how to think about time "has usually been answered in two ways: as a direct line leading from the past to the future, or as a circle" (2015: 34). Linear time holds the promise of progress, but it also alludes to "mirages that seduce us to go further and further in the same direction – leaving ruins in our wake" (Ibid.). Circular time counters linear time, when there is a need to return to "point zero, to restore the harmony between man and nature, individual and society, time and space" (Ibid.). However, as Groys suggest, this notion of operating in a circle without outcome eventually calls for the linear-time-view that promises a sense of progress again. When linear time becomes stale again, circular time is called for and vice versa.

Groys asks us to imagine a succession of waves coming and going. Waves differ in shape; however, they have the same trajectory which shows that their motion is linear. Yet, there is no sense that this linearity will eventuate in progress as the waves look more or less the same. "Thus the waves escape any description in terms of identity and difference, and the movement of the waves escapes any description in terms of linearity and circularity" (Ibid.). Groys argues that "on the most immediate, everyday level of our existence we experience time precisely as a succession of waves – not as a direct line and also not as a circle" (Ibid.). He explains: when looking at history from a certain point of view it seems linear and circular as the events have beginnings and ends or are turning points. However, the experience of these events *in situ* operates more like waves: waves approaching and waves passing. Therefore, "every historical wave begins to look to us like every other wave. It may be different in shape, but it is similar in its trajectory – as transitory as every wave before and after it" (Groys, 2015: 34).

I borrow this notion of non-linear time as waves coming and going in relation to my practice. There is no necessary outcome that I strive for. Rather, there is an awareness of the work ebbing and flowing. Looking back at what I have made over an extended period, the oeuvre looks both linear and circular; however, the making process operates like waves. The experience of the waves is also important. As Groys says, it is in the experience of time presenting as waves that one can escape linearity. I weave and knot this experiential understanding of waves coming and going with meditation while keeping an awareness of the unfolding of materials in the studio.

In formulating my thoughts for this thesis, I made use of various sources of information such as audio books, podcasts, academic books and articles, essays, my own journals, images, artworks, movies, music, iPhone notes and voice recordings. They provided insights and reference for this methodological non-linear, wave-like process.

The sections in the thesis can be read in any order. The invitation to read this thesis from any given 'entry point' is borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the rhizome as a meandering and centre-less organism. Only the first and last sections should be read first and last. In their text *A Thousand Plateaus* (2012), Deleuze and

17

Guattari explore rhizomatics and nomadic thought (Massumi, 2012: xi), which relates to being receptive to all of life[6] coming one's way, followed by elimination of fragments that are not beneficial. Deleuze and Guattari serve as the main philosophical anchors in this thesis which I reflect on from my own understanding. All their ideas and philosophical themes are intricately interconnected and operate very much like knots and waves. I explain the interconnectedness and entanglement of these ideas in the glossary and footnotes.

In addition to Deleuze and Guattari's theories, I refer to Vipassana meditation discourses[7] as taught by S.N. Goenka.[8] I also refer to Bronwyn Davies' writings that explore the connections between Buddhist[9] theories and Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies of becoming and difference.

Addendum A is the catalogue of the accompanying exhibition that I titled "*Thoughts Think Themselves*". The exhibition was held at SMAC Gallery in Stellenbosch from 4 December 2021 to 5 February 2022.

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[6] 'All of life' here refers to: all information, doctrines, ontologies, perspectives, events, people, life in its totality.

[7] The discourses of vipassana meditation are instructions on the meditation technique as well as quotations of Buddha and his disciples from the "Collections of Discipline (*Vinaya-pitaka*) and of Discourses (*Sutta-pitaka*) of the Pāli canon" (Goenka, 2013: vii).

[8] S.N. Goenka (1924 – 2013) was a vipassana teacher. Born in Burma, he was taught the vipassana technique by Sayagyi U Ba Khin in 1955 after he retired as an industrialist. After years of training under his teacher he qualified as a teacher himself in 1969 and set out to spread the practice in India (the land of its origin) and later to other countries (Hart, 2014: 1). At the vipassana centre I trained at, his discourses were played as audio recordings and video recordings.

[9] "Vipassana contains the core of what later has been called Buddhism"(Fleischman, 2014: 4).

Figure 4. Pierre Vermeulen, *Studio March 2021*, 2021.

As I walk into my studio (Figure 4 & 5), I become aware of sweat droplets developing on my upper lip. I realise that I am sweating all over. My studio gets early morning sun through the wall with the most windows. Afternoon sun shines through the opposite wall with the fewest windows. During the summer months I must arrive as early as possible and open the windows so that a draft may pass through the studio before the first rays hit the glass. This morning, however, I arrived with the sun: the studio is already warm, and the gold-leafed panels glow radiantly as the light pierces through the blinds and touches them. Even though the blinds provide some relief, without a draft the studio becomes as humid as a green house. As sweat particles start to gather, I am reminded to go practise hot vinyasa yoga to collect more sweat.

Figure 5. Pierre Vermeulen, *Studio March 2021*, 2021.

I take a seat at my working table and start knotting the hair I have been collecting over the years. Next to me is a box of ponytails donated by a hair salon up the road.[10] There is an array of various colours and lengths of hair which I regard as timelines of sorts since they contain DNA and tell a story of how unknown persons has lived their lives throughout the time it took to grow the length of hair. This insight motivated my decision to keep my hair 'buzz-cut' short, since it can be seen as a means of letting go (of the past) and a way to stay weightless. I continue to knot the hair. After the six segments of the orchid are made (three sepals and three petals), I knot them together. All these knots have transformed timelines into a hair orchid (Figure 6). Orchids are bilateral symmetrical organisms just like many animals and human bodies. I experience these incredible plant

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[10] I used to only use my own hair for orchids, and sometimes still do. Earlier, when my hair was quite long, I used only my own hair collected from my hairbrush for orchids. I branched out to other hair as different thicknesses of hair produce a different textured hair orchid. This applied particularly to the hair-orchid-sweat-prints. Different hairs deliver different types of prints, some of which I prefer to the type of print my own hair gives.

forms as palpating organisms and ones that evoke desire. In translating these flowers into matted hair sculptures, I am conscious of the tactility of the material and the haptic experience of knotting each sepal and petal.



Figure 6. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair orchids in the studio*, 2021.

While working, my mind wanders to Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* (2008), the story of a Brahmin's son who sets out on a spiritual journey to realise that nothing is essentially something. In this tale it is revealed that his observations taught him that nothing has an essential nature. The story explains that there cannot be a doctrine that can be defined as the right/true/real one to follow, but that all of them are just that, doctrines. They all rely on the opposing concepts of illusion and truth. Yet in being able to distinguish between illusion and truth one is still captured in a dyad of 'this' or 'that'. He explains that to *see* something as an illusion one must realise that *seeing* is also a way of distinguishing, of making distinctions. Siddhartha calls this wisdom, but it can also be called mindfulness.

21

I reflect on this, possibly, because this wisdom is taught through various Buddhist meditations, one of which is vipassana meditation. My daily practice of vipassana meditation exposes me to the challenging teachings of this ancient wisdom.

English philosopher and author, Alan Watts (2013) refers to this state of mindfulness as 'zen'. He describes that there is no 'this' or 'that', there is only the middle: an all-encompassing way of seeing. 'This' requires 'that' to exist as our thinking relies on something to have an opposite (Stagoll, 2013a: 74). He explains that being able to hold two opposing concepts together is the resting place of the middle.

My mind wanders again, and connects these concepts to a recent section I read in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1994). He describes relationship between the virtual and the actual. He explains how the actual is called forth by the virtual. (Ibid.: 263). In my understanding of these concepts, the falling away of the distinction between illusion and truth in vipassana meditation can be likened to Deleuze and Guattari's work.

Deleuze and Guattari borrow from Henri Bergson the terms actual and virtual. Simply put: the actual is the present and the virtual is the past. The actual (present moment) is an actualisation of the virtual (past). The actual expresses itself from the virtual. The actual has the potential for the future because of the actualisation of the virtual (Young, 2013d: 330) (Colebrook, 2013: 9–10). Take genes for example: "As genes unfold, the information becomes apparent in the actual world; the person becomes what the information formatted that person to become. But the information itself, even though it exists, does not exist in actuality. It exists virtually in the structure of the genes" (May, 2006: 47–48). The illusion that the past is gone and does not exist is overturned by Deleuze and Guattari to show that the past exists in the present moment. Just like the possibility of the genes exists in the actual moment, they just need to be actualised.

Siddhartha realised that the virtual (illusion) is actualised in the actual (truth) and therefore to see them as opposites holds no ground. My understanding of this, is that they are within each other – the one calls forth the other. By being within each other I understand them as being in the middle of one another.

On reading Deleuze and Guattari I find their philosophy to rest very much in this middle space. They also discuss the middle as a place to locate oneself (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 25). First, I should outline where their philosophical perspective comes from, which means to discuss ontology.[11] This will be a quick, deep dive, since a more detailed exegesis of ontology is a complex and purely philosophical enquiry in which I cannot indulge.

According to author Todd May, in *Gilles Deleuze an Introduction*, his philosophical perspectives are primarily concerned with ontology: Deleuze's "works are steeped in ontology" (2006: 15). May elaborates on this: "To read Deleuze is to be introduced into a world of proliferating beings and new forms of life. These beings and forms of life are not a part of our everyday existence. Nevertheless, they inhere in the fabric of our existence" (2006: 15). He argues that the main ontological question rooted in Deleuze's philosophy, and by extension Guattari's too, is "*how might one live*" (Ibid.: 3). He explains that they are constantly asking "how we might think about things in ways that would open up new regions for living" (Ibid.: 3). Bronwyn Davies echoes these thoughts in her essay *Intersections Between Zen Buddhism and Deleuzian Philosophy* as Deleuze and Guattari's "approach is to generate movement beyond fixed places by finding ways to think the unthinkable" (2011: 29). They "generated new concepts not as an epistemology to impose on or explain being, but as a generative practice that might unlock fixed ways of being" (Ibid.). Since ontology concerns being, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical inquiries explore the impact that the way we think about the material world (epistemology) holds and how this affects being (ontology). Their philosophy may thus be regarded as a radical exploration of how epistemology and ontology are co-productive

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[11] The term 'ontology' has different meanings in philosophy. The analytical school refers to it as "the study of what there is." "What are the ultimate constituents of the universe?". In the school of Continental philosophy, the term refers to "the study of being (or Being). What is being? What is the meaning of being? What is it for something to *be*?" (May, 2006: 13). There are intersections between these two schools as both ask about the nature of what there is. However, their approach to it is different. "Analytical philosophers are interested in the beings of which the universe is constituted. They seek to account for the nature and existence of those beings and their relationships to one another. Continental philosophers often see a question of being that cannot be addressed in terms of constituent beings. Following Heidegger, they see in the attempt to reduce the question of being to that of being as a symptom of an age that is too ready to accept the terms in which science conceives the world" (May, 2006: 14).

and co-extensive, rather than two distinct concerns. This resonates with Buddhist philosophy, in which being and mind become completely entangled and monadic.

According to Deleuze and Guattari: ontology, as a study of what there is, is to be understood as 'creation' and not 'discovery'. Whereas 'discovery' implies a finality of sorts because it points to what already exists, creation is expansive and productive (May, 2006: 18).

> Nietzsche, Sartre, Foucault, and Derrida have shown the constrictions that arise when the question of how one might live must answer to ontology. Deleuze suggests that it is possible to move in the opposite direction, to create an ontology that answers to the question of how one might live rather than dictating its limits (May, 2006: 17).

For me, this is an important observation to pause on. My reading of Deleuze and Guattari continuously return to the way they refuse to accept a limit or to stop at a point of disagreement. When a limit or disagreement arises, Deleuze and Guattari nudges in a direction (what they would call 'a line of flight') that has not been explored yet, in order to find new forms that might manifest in agreement (Ibid.: 32). I find this insistence that there are no corners to get stuck in, very liberating. They urge the overcoming of labels and prescriptions ('territorialisations') as restrictive devices that compel deteritorialisations or lines of flight to occur. This allows me to step outside an understanding of a 'fixed' worldview that I am often so comfortably and wilfully captured in, and to be amazed by new proliferating manifestations. These concepts provide a comforting refuge for the unknown, and to make the unknown more common and everyday rather than seeing it as an exception. There are so many everyday possibilities where lines of flight emerge and create reterritorialisations: their philosophy is like a pair of glasses that opens my eyes to see erupting possibilities.

Todd May writes that for Deleuze [and Guattari], "the failure of ontology to discover identifiable entities does not spell the end of ontology, the 'death of philosophy' as some writers would have it. This failure is, in fact, the beginning of ontology" (2006: 18). May

24

elaborates that we can continually engage with ontology as it responds to the question of "how one might live" and by doing so we stop seeing ontology as a mission of identity[12] (Ibid.). "We begin ontology when we abandon the search for conceptual stability[13] and begin to see what there is in terms of difference rather than identity: … difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing … To see being as difference is at once to refuse to philosophy in terms of identities and to jettison the project of ontology as discovery" (Ibid.:19).

Philosophy according to Deleuze and Guattari is ontology and speaks of what there is. The things that it speaks of must be identified for language to be useful. Deleuze and Guattari asks us to look behind the identification of things, because identification is a mere "single manifestation" or "single actualisation" of what there is (Ibid.: 21).

> What there is, is difference: a difference that is not simply the distinction between two identities (which would subordinate difference to identity) or the negation of one of them (which would think of difference only negatively). What there is, is difference itself, a pure difference that forms the soil for all identities, all distinctions, and all negations. The task of philosophy is to create concepts for difference. (Ibid.).

My understanding is that difference is ontological as it is the ground for being. This being is in a continual process of change through difference and therefore being is always becoming. The constant in being is becoming. Identity, in these terms, takes a backseat. Identity therefore does not point towards growth and possibility, but rather to sameness and stillness.

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[12] Deleuze and Guattari's opposition to "identity is directed at the falsifying power of identity in representation. Identity works against and covers deeper pure differences."…"Identity is opposed to multiplicity."…"Concepts and representations do not correspond to anything in reality. This is because all things are connected to multiplicities, that is, to uncountable and unidentifiable processes of becoming, rather than existing as fixed beings with identifiable and limited predicates or essences" (Williams, 2013: 127).

[13] "In their different ways Nietzsche and Sartre and Foucault and Derrida argue that there are no ontological identities to be discovered, that what looks like a stable identity is not. Particular identities have become sedimented in our philosophical views not that they reflect the ways things really are but because our history or our fears or our language has placed them there. Ontology, far from being an engagement with what there is, denies the shifting character of reality or the porous quality of our language. Since it is a project of discovery, ontology requires identity, because it does so it is a philosophical failure" (May, 2006: 18).

On contemplating these complex insights, I understand that this concept of difference can be seen as fertile soil from which possibilities germinate. Considering this, I reflect on this my practical process. When working, I either have a vague image in my mind of how the artwork will emerge, but sometimes I have no idea, perhaps at most a thought or feeling. The identity of the work is still relatively unknown to me and I launch into a process that entails the constant becoming of the work, which responds to the intensities and flows of forces in myself and in the studio – forces such as heat and sweat and chemical reactions and the affects of colours and light. Therefore, the virtual (the way I think about the work, or rather, the pure potentiality of the work) and the actual (the material manifestation of the work) is constantly interlinked. My understanding of this, is that ontology is not only about difference, but also about the virtual becoming actual.

My bare awareness keeps me in the moment where difference unfolds, and things are never static, despite, for instance, the constant repetition of breath: each breath is still dissimilar. This means a state of constant mindfulness is present to the possibility of becoming, which, in my understanding, is Deleuze and Guattari's version of ontology.

In my process-based practice, time plays a very important role. There can be no becoming without time: it is within time that change occurs (Rovelli, 2018).

My studio practice, for me, generates from this place of difference, and there is no specific similarity to the artwork in my mind and the realised artwork in my studio. The work emerges through difference from the virtual, and once it has actualised it is identifiable and starts to potentially generate meaning. The process of identification continues through the work's title; which category of art it occupies; who owns the work, the location of the work, etc. Therefore, difference precedes identity (May, 2006: 19).

In the *Hair orchids* series (Figure 7), each unique piece can be considered an assemblage, its 'put-together-ness' is different depending on a flow of factors such as temperature, grain or texture of the hair; my degree of attention; the location at which I make them,

my degree of hunger, etc. – all of which constitute part of the assemblage which produces an object, inspired by the orchid.



Figure 7. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair orchids in the studio.* 2021.

In the sculpting and knotting of hair into *hair orchids*. I am primarily concerned with hair as a material and how the material qualities can be transformed into a complex form. After the transformation of the material I am still concerned with difference-in-itself as the hair orchids then responds to the environment in which it is exhibited, and the affectual potentialities between the viewers and the *hair orchids*.

> Representation cannot help us encounter the world as it appears in the flow of time and becoming. It constitutes a particularly restricted form of thinking and acting, working according to fixed norms, and which is unable to acknowledge difference 'in itself' (Marks, 2013: 228).

27

Even though I call them *hair orchids*, they do not necessarily represent orchids as a fixed identity for me. I rather see them in their state of becoming, located in difference.

I make use of James Williams (2003: 12) explanation: in order for things (anything) to be identified, one needs repetition. This repetition happens in two ways, according to Deleuze; through habit, and recognition which refers to memory. By recognising something, that *thing* receives a fixed identity hence habitual repetition. This is recorded in memory and primes one to have fixed representations of things: an animal prowls a recognised territory, for example.

Yet, there is a third form of repetition, which is where difference resides and overturns the two former mentioned manners of repetition. It explains how the virtual (the past) expresses itself in the actual (the present) and show that the first two forms of repetition are illusory (Ibid.):

> According to Deleuze, repetition in habit and memory are only possible on a background of virtual differences. There is not only the repetition of the prowl round the territory and the memory of that prowl but further infinite series of other repetitions that the particular territory abstracts from (Ibid.).

For example: the change of weather, other animals prowling on the same path, the age of the animal, the 'encroachment' of humans on the animal's territory, fluctuations of mood and desires, vegetation, and the threat/presence of other species, etc. all have an impact. Therefore, there is always a return to a form of abstraction. This abstraction emanates from difference and therefore there is never a return to the same. What stays the same and what returns is difference in itself[14] (Ibid.). In the *Hair orchids* the means of making them are exactly the same. I follow a repetitive process, I prowl the same path: from the selection of hair to the knotting of the petals, and then the assembling of all the petals. I understand this repetition as engaging with the concept of becoming. However, each

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[14] Difference, according to Deleuze and Guattari, should not be seen as differentiating between things/entities/concepts, as that would privilege identity thinking which is what [Deleuze] wants to decouple from. Difference should be seen as difference in itself (Stagoll, 2013a: 74), and therefore it helps to understand this difference as a realm from where possibilities germinate (May, 2006: 19).

orchid, even if I repeat the same design, will look unique. I encourage viewers to see the hair objects not as representing orchids, but as orchids-becoming-something. The *hair orchids* are produced in the same way, but they actualise differently and the idea of them being orchids always return to abstraction[15].

For this project I want to stay inside the realm of difference, where becoming unfolds. Difference alludes to process, which is key to my studio practice. I treat the studio as an incubator for difference to emerge in whatever form the encounter brings. I pay attention to how materials interact with each other and how they interact with the studio. The weather and season also play a role, along with the conscious states within which I find myself. It is a multiplicity of encounters. The realm of difference is often unsettling as there is no location to hold onto. There is no fixity to provide an anchoring point. It is an ever-sprawling, non-static, infinite realm that keeps on emerging anew. I treat my practice as "difference in itself" (May, 2006: 19).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss immanence as being "everywhere" (2012: 227). It is their founding concept in the ontology of difference, one that they borrowed from philosopher Baruch Spinoza (May, 2006: 27). My understanding of immanence is that it points to that which rises from within and not that which is coming from the outside/external/transcendent. Todd May (2006: 41) looks at the Big Bang as an example: we, living today, are extensions of that Big Bang. It happened long ago, it is literally as old as time, yet it is still happening. It is an immanent process that is unfolding, of which we are part of. Everything today came from, or out of, the Big Bang. In 1000 years, everything will still come from the Big Bang, but it will include what happened in 2021. The potential of the year 2021 is an actualisation of what came before and what is yet to come.

I apply this as conceptual framework to the materials I use, and the connection between object and viewer/maker: the work evolves through the process of making. In working with various substances and variables the materials transform themselves through a series

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[15] "To abstract is to express the virtuality of nature, to make known some instance of its possibilities, to actualise a relation out of infinite relationality, to manifest the manifold" (Baume, 2008: 26).

of complex responses/reactions/oxidizations; and in a similar way, I have observed that the process of making comes from the sensorial and temporal experience of the work.



Figure 8. Pierre Vermeulen, *Detail of a hair orchid sweat print*. 2021. Sweat, gold-leaf-imitate, acrylic and shellac on DiBond.

Figure 8 is an example of a hair orchid sweat print. The process of making is as follows: I spray my sweat that I have collected[16] all over a hair orchid. The orchid is then placed on the prepared surface of gold-leaf-imitate and left to dry overnight. During this time of drying the oxidation unfolds. Some areas oxidise more intensely than others. In Figure 8 the green lines are the colour I painted underneath the gold-leaf-imitate. The colour is

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[16] I explain this process in the section Sweat Collection.

exposed as the oxidation intensity dissolved some of the gold-leaf-imitate. The colour extends through the gold-leaf-imitate immanently. The more I use the hair orchids the more they lose their recognisable flower-like shape and become more abstract. Figure 8 shows this to be the case as the shape becomes more abstract and organism-like, floating on the gold leaf surface. The encounter of sweat, gold-leaf-imitate, and colour transforms in an immanent process of becoming.

The sweat used in these pieces is an extension of me. Through the immanent process of sweating, oxidation occur. Through the shedding of my hair, and the entanglement of other hair, the *hair orchids* are manifested. These pieces are a knotting of myself and anonymous people's hair: for me, all of it can be considered an extension of the Big Bang which is now actualised in these hair orchids. As with my other work, the hair orchids allow a response to the work that is not fixed. As I have nothing particular to say, I have no definite preconceived meaning that I want to convey through the work. There are rather many different meanings that are produced every time someone encounters the work. It becomes something new as the viewer becomes new, since both the orchid and the viewer stay in a process, I believe that this process can be considered as one of becoming.

On reflecting back to the story of *Siddhartha* (Hesse, 2008), I regard the ontology of difference as pointing to this non-distinction mindset that Siddhartha was pursuing. The middle or in-between perspective before distinctions of 'this' and 'that' are made. In his spiritual journey, Siddhartha addressed this very question of 'how might I live' that Todd May suggests is the question at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's ontology (2006: 3). To see the world through the realm of difference is what I discovered to be possible through vipassana practice. Bronwyn Davies maps out intersections between Buddhist thought and Deleuze and Guattari philosophy as "both open up new ways of thinking" (Davies, 2011: 28). That might be why I find so much refuge in Deleuze and Guattari's ontology. I relate the mental state that one enters in meditation to be the realm of the constant play of difference. Meditation is a mental state that precedes identity, where the concept of distinction plays no role. There is a mere interest in whatever comes to mind

31

in the meditation (called 'bare awareness' in Buddhism), but one then allows the thought to pass again, like a wave[17].

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[17] I elaborate on this idea in the section Vipassana Pips.

Encountering the <u>rhizome</u>

It took me more than a year to scratch the surface of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking. Every couple of months I thought I finally understood them until I re-read the same text and found myself sinking even deeper into their work. My understanding of their closely interrelated ideas was a process of <u>becoming</u> that I could witness. I could survey the <u>lines of flight</u> that emerged in my studio and meditation practice during my study of these concepts. I could see the everyday multiplicities of life cross-pollinating and forming new connections. It took time to understand this new way of thinking. Once the rhizome of new thinking emerged, I could not see otherwise.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (2012) Deleuze and Guattari discuss the rhizome root system as an analogy that points to the interconnectivity and connection-seeking nature of the world. They refer to the a-centred root system of grasses that opposes the centred root system of trees. The rhizome occurs "between the most disparate and the most similar of objects, places and people; the strange chains of events that link people: the feeling of 'six degrees of separation', the sense of 'having been here before' and <u>assemblage</u> of bodies" (Colman, 2013a: 232). Rhizomatic thinking steers one to create sites of intensity, expansion and connection whereas 'tree'-thinking would hold onto fixed ideas, the organised body,[18] morality and opinion (Sweet, 2021). Deleuze and Guattari "describe the rhizome as an action of many abstract entities in the world, including music, mathematics, economics, politics, science, art, the ecology and the cosmos" (Colman, 2013a: 233).

My understanding of Deleuze and Guattari is that they point to the interconnections of existence unfolding rather than trying to deconstruct why the connections have happened. For example, instead of focusing on the type of thought that emerges, they point towards the emerging process of the thought itself. They are not so much interested in interpretation and deconstruction as they are in the action of process itself. If the type of thought is not productive, they would find new ways to generate a productive thought. That is because their philosophy is concerned with practical application (O'Sullivan,

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[18] The organised body is opposed to the <u>Body without Organs</u> (BwO).

2006: 22) and intent on creating new ways of thinking (Parr, 2013: 33). They are interested in actions and verbs – to stay in movement. Through their philosophy they celebrate the free flow of ideas in an open-ended manner and show how this movement is generative and productive (Massumi, 2012: xii).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, one can access the rhizome from any node. The closest node is probably the best as it requires the least travel distance. Once you are inside the rhizome you are at its centre and a network unfolds to reveal infinite connections. There is no predetermined path to follow, there is only surveying and mapping as one travels through the noded realms. The rhizome is not fixed, nor is it rigid or imposing. The rhizome is adaptable and allows change to unfold in productively desired manners. One can leave the rhizome through its many exits or rupture an exit for oneself. The message I take from this for my creative process is to become aware of the productiveness of the rhizome by allowing a work to unfold, to sprawl where the process takes it.

I use the image of the rhizome as an image for the process-driven nature of my studio practice, as it is shaped by various connections forming. I experience connections between objects, things, texts, dust, rubble, tools, myself, visitors, the architectural layout of the studio and the panoramic view of Table Mountain through my studio windows. There is no necessary beginning I can trace back to when I start to engage with a new material. There is only a more or less continuous, flowing moment of encounter between me and the materials – like waves passing. I therefore always find myself in the middle of the connection. As Deleuze and Guattari writes: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 25). I repeat this quote quite often to stay in the spirit of 'allowing' - allowing myself to be affected by the materials and creation.[19]

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[19] I endorse Simon O'Sullivan's notion of an art practice as he writes: "An art practice is a fluid, dynamic system always in connection with a number of different regimes and registers and always in contact with an outside however this latter is theorised. What an art practice 'is' then is defined by its outermost edge, its boundary line or simply its line of flight, understood as the furthest point from within its territory. Indeed, the artist, when he or she is an artist, is this line of flight, or more accurately operates on this line and at this edge. An art practice is then a specifically open system in this sense, one that changes its nature as the number of its dimensions increase (as it crosses into other milieus). In this place art is less the name for an object or a discipline as such but again a name for a function of deterritorialization" (O'Sullivan, 2006: 32).

In the making-process of works the connections are not necessarily the product of deliberate decision-making. Connections are made rather spontaneously and unconsciously. They, so to say, happen by themselves, immanently, before I am aware that I had made them. I allow the materials to lead me through the process of their becoming to create new sites of investigation. For example: I only realised months after I developed the vermilion colour I often use (Figure 9), that the colour probably derived from one of my studio chairs (Figure 10). This observation proved to me, that even though unaware at the time, all things that surround me, influence and connect to make up the rhizomatic realm of my art practice.

Figure 9. Pierre Vermeulen, *Vermillion monochrome nr. 2.* 2019. Acrylic on Belgian linen, 100 x 73 x 3,5 cm.

Figure 10. Pierre Vermeulen. *Photo of studio chair.* 2019.

The affect of gold can be likened to the sun, as it has been a signifier for sun gods in many religions (Peterson, 2021). Jordan Peterson suggests that, from a Jungian perspective, the sun is the hero that defeats the night and rises every morning for humans to be active again. As diurnal biological organisms, we are dormant when the sun sets at the end of the day and we are active when it is shining again in all its glory to provide light (Ibid.). It is nature's clock, and it keeps earth's diurnal life active at desire-production. I want to suggest that gold does the same: its glistering promise[20] becomes desire-production. Many are drawn to gold and want to keep it close, or stare at it. In addition to the cultural codes that have been bestowed on gold, our physical reaction to gold, according to Peterson is undeniable (Peterson, 2021). Though cultural codes solidify gold as a significant presence by attaching signifiers to it, it can be said that the body feels and reacts to the gold before the mind interprets its value. Therefore the affect and sensation[21] of gold can be understood as the first principle in our encounter with this glowing material.

For me gold has an enigmatic *pull*. Gold has been drawing humans towards it for millennia. I had a fantastic first-hand experience of Renaissance art in the Uffizi Galleries in Florence in 2019. There I witnessed gold-covered artwork that has been glowing for hundreds of years. It was awe-inspiring. Most of the application I saw was for backgrounds and halos and gilded frames. Covering the backgrounds allowed for a radiance to surround the religious figures so that they seemed to be floating in gold. It was very transformative. It had me think of the hair orchid sweat prints floating on a radiant background of gold-leaf-imitate.

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[20] "When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. These cluster of promises could be embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea – whatever." … "The object of desire … [is] … a cluster of promises … [that allows] … us to encounter what is incoherent or enigmatic in our attachment" (Berlant, 2010: 93).

[21] "Deleuze substitutes sensation for form, intensity is what is given priority. What the artist aims towards is indeed sensation. Sensation is intimately related to the intensity of the forces that it does not represent. Sensation is the affect, which is neither subjective nor objective; rather it is both at once: we become in sensation and at the same time something happens because of it" (Boundas, 2013b: 135).

In my practice, I work repeatedly with gold leaf[22]. Typically, gold leaf and gold-leaf-imitate[23] are used quite sparingly applied to artworks, partly so that it can retain its affect, and partly because it is very expensive. In specific pieces of mine, I want the gold surfaces to be immersive - to be confrontational in a way. I find that the use of gold in this way, draws the viewer in from afar. As light reflects off the gold panels it is almost impossible not to notice them in a room.

Many times, I have asked myself about my use of gold-leaf-imitate and what it says about my studio practice and about the people who eventually buy the pieces. I do not use the gold leaf and gold-leaf-imitate as any political or social commentary. The material can, of course, be viewed as an actor in politics and history – especially in South Africa with our history of gold mining. However, such interpretation of the work leans towards a more linear perspective that is not compatible with my interest in the material. I am interested in the material's affectual ability – its non-linearity. It is something that cannot necessarily be explained but should rather be experienced, like waves. To explain the political/historical/social/cultural usage of gold would be to make use of an 'in-relation-to' means of discussion, which refers to identity – I see this as the second principle of gold. In such an interpretation, my use of gold would be to tell a story, which means that it is representational, which is never my goal. I want to stay in the first principle of gold – in the realm of difference – in what the gold 'does' experientially.

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[22] My particular use of gold leaf happened through a chance encounter. In 2012 I was surveying an art materials shop in Stellenbosch. I do this quite often to explore materials I have not yet worked with. I came across gold-leaf-imitate and asked the shop assistant how one might use it. They advised me which glue to use (called 'size'), and indicated/suggested the drying time before applying the gold-leaf-imitate. At the time I had been working with the idea of the 'official portrait' and had made many portraits of myself in various media. I gilded the border of the page of one charcoal drawing – this was my first use of gold-leaf-imitate. Months later I created a book about my first drag character called 'Mandonna' in which I used the technique intensively. The book consisted of photographs of Mandonna, printed with a transfer-printing technique with gold-leaf-imitate details. The cover of the book was covered in gold-leaf-imitate. During the opening of a small Art Department exhibition, people could page through the book and therefore touched the gold-leaf-imitate. Three years later, in my final undergraduate year, I revisited the book and found fingerprints etched onto the metal leaf. I realised that gold-leaf-imitate oxidises. Gold-leaf-imitate is a composition of copper and zinc that oxidises the same as copper: in hues ranging from brown to verdigris. I took a line of flight and decided to use a lot of sweat on large panels covered with gold-leaf-imitate – to cover my whole body in sweat and use it as a stencil on the panels.

[23] Gold-leaf-imitate (*schlag* leaf or Dutch metal) is a composition alloy of copper and zinc (Mactaggart & Mactaggart, 2015: 4). The zinc turns the colour of the copper to gold. Gold-leaf-imitate is thicker than gold leaf and comes in larger square sizes. Its oxidational properties are the same as copper and it oxidises verdigris in colour. It therefore needs to be varnished to prevent oxidation.

So, what is the realm of difference in gold? Where is the gold? Does it lie on the surface or just behind the surface where reflected images manifest? It is the spatial indeterminacy of gold that creates such a strong pull, for me it sits in the "intermezzo"[24]. That might be why it is so wonderous in its affectual ability. It "marks a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 2), as a reflected body finds refuge in gold. It brings to question why has it been rooted in humanity as a material of great significance? I argue that this power of gold is not from a point of identity (social/political/cultural), but from a point of difference – in what it 'does' or 'produces' in those who behold it. It is about how light bounces from gold; it is about its weight, how it endures through time. My speculation is that its great light-reflecting properties remind us of the vitality of life. Not 'remind' in terms of literal memory, but 'remind' in terms of affect – I experience it as a physical and emotional response of the sensation that precedes thought. We are dormant whilst asleep and active when the sun is out. It might be a will to life itself – to be active when encountering gold: a reminder to live and perhaps bring about the question *how might one live?*

The awareness and experience of that reaction are important to me. Bodies are pulled towards it; light bounces off it; it becomes a glistering promise. As viewers walk past the works or towards the works the light refraction changes, depending on where the viewers are. The doing of the work functions interdependently with the viewers' physical position, and it changes as the viewer moves, or as the light changes. Gold is not just a metal, it is an interplay of light, the eye, the body, and the awareness of the whole unfolding. There is a push and pull effect in the gold. It is capable of balancing the dyad of push and pull. This balance can be seen in the intersection between Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies and Zen Buddhism. At this intersection, binaries (dyads) are rather to be understood as complementary and not as opposites: the one cannot exist without the other and should therefore be celebrated in a balanced and harmonious manner (Davies, 2011: 30).

In my large gold panels (Figure 11) viewers can walk past and sense their reflection in the work or navigate the mapping of light reflections. They become with the gold panels.

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[24] "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 25).

Figure 11. Pierre Vermeulen. *Sweat Print nr. 23.* 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on DiBond, 100 x 142 cm.

In Figure 12, part of the *Corner Piece* series, an interesting optical effect happens in the viewing of the work. The *Corner Pieces* are created in such a way that an ellipse is formed where the two pieces meet in the corner. Some pieces have a rectangle inside the ellipse, while others only have the ellipse. The rectangle produces a trompe-l'œil effect that is created by the depth of the corner when standing about five metres from it. This results in an optical illusion where the rectangle appears to be floating in front of the receding lines of the corner. More importantly, because they are of gold leaf, these panels reflect one another and therefore create a double image that looks like another dimension that opens inside each reflection (Figure 13). As the viewer is pulled towards the gold panels and then pushed back by the light reflection both panels are pulled into the other and then pushed away by their respective reflections. The canvasses, situated in the corner, have a sense of coming out of the corner. They move outwards and is accentuated by the

reflective properties. In the case of this *Corner Piece* (Figure 12) the floating vermilion circles add emphasis to this movement. It calls to mind particle-ness and materiality floating in space: space in terms of out-in-the-universe, and space-as-open-areas-on-earth. I was thinking about thoughts waving in the mind, coming and going, approaching awareness, and drifting off. Within this piece, without interpreting it, I focus on its potential affectual-pull. For me, there is movement created by the shapes; there is a sense of becoming created by the oxidations and the deterritorialisation of my reflection in the surfaces. It is the sense of in-between-ness or middle-ness that I enjoy most. For me, this work is a way of becoming aware of the complexity of perception and serves as an experiential reflection on space and matter. It allows me to witness a becoming unfolding – it becomes an intermezzo itself.



Figure 12. Pierre Vermeulen, *Corner Piece – Peach ellipse with vermillion circles and blue.* 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, shellac and acrylic on Belgian linen, 185 x 210 cm per panel.

Figure 13. Pierre Vermeulen, Detail of *Corner Piece – Peach ellipse with vermillion circles and blue.* 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, shellac and acrylic on Belgian linen, 185 x 210 cm per panel.

The application of sweat on gold-leaf-imitate was free flowing and this initial discovery expanded into a significant part of my practice. Here it is important to stress, once again, that my studio practice is not pre-meditated, and hence not representational.  I have nothing particular to say.[25] I am more interested in the sensory[26] experience and experimentation. As the combination of sweat and gold-leaf-imitate developed, I began to think of them as assemblages. Thoughts, movement of body, time, space, and light combine to reveal certain temporal and sensorial aspects to the relationship of processes and materials.

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[25] To not have anything particular to say allows "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 22).

[26] I repeat the following quotation: "Deleuze substitutes sensation for form, intensity is what is given priority. What the artist aims towards is indeed sensation. Sensation is intimately related to the intensity of the forces that it does not represent. Sensation is the affect, which is neither subjective nor objective; rather it is both at once: we become in sensation and at the same time something happens because of it" (Boundas, 2013b: 135).

The process-based work I have been practicing has led me to many new plateaus.[27] In my creative understanding of plateaus, I see a multiplicity of situations in and outside of the studio unfolding. The studio is therefore a location for fabrication and the collecting of ideas or new materials, but the generation of work is not limited to this one location. Quick drawings in my journals, snippets of thoughts I voice-recorded or type on my iPhone, photos I take with a film camera or iPhone, pips I collect on a vipassana course, a piece of wood I found in my dad's garage, a cutting from a plant someone gave me, the light reflecting from a shocking-pink bookmark, a book I randomly pulled from a library, all contribute to the multiplicity of my work.

A quote from *A Thousand Plateaus* (2012) encapsulates for me the complex nature of situational interchanges that happen daily:

> Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation — all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic ...). But [there is] another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 25).

I am interested in situations we might call serendipitous. I understand these as lines of flights. Deleuze and Guattari (2012: 25) states that to start from "a clean slate" implies "a false conception voyage and movement" as every time I start with a new work, I draw extensively from what I have done before.

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[27] I make use of the term 'plateaus' as Deleuze and Guattari used it. "Rather than plotting points or fixing an order, Deleuze and Guattari wrote their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, as a rhizome composed of 'plateaus'" (Lorraine, 2013a: 208). Plateaus designates a 'continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities' that does not develop in terms of a point of culmination or an external goal. Plateaus are constituted when the elements of a region (for example, the microsensations of a sexual practice or the microperceptions of a manner of attending) are not subjected to an external plan of organisation" (Ibid.).

This middle way of placing oneself, as always-already being in the intermezzo, reminds me of a Lao Tzo saying that I discovered during my first gold-leaf-imitate oxidations years ago:

> Do you have the patience to wait
> till your mud settles and the water is clear?
> Can you remain unmoving
> till the right action arises by itself?
> (Lao-Tzu, n.d.)

The concept of the rhizome, as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, emphasises that things/matter/thoughts are in constant motion and never cease to form connections between entities that merge into each other's territories. In seeing the world through this rhizomatic lens, I can sense the constantly changing nature of the world around and within me in a free-flowing manner. I notice the intricate unfolding nature of life, the movement between things. In the act of walking, making, thinking, etc., the focus of these insights is on the process rather than on the outcome. The outcome of 'an event' is fleeting and ultimately makes up another component of an ongoing process. "To experience an event is to experience its passing" (Massumi, 2011, back cover). In my unfolding experience, and understanding of this theory, the process, the in-between space, is where the interesting things happen.

"Stand still and rot"[28]

I am reminded to keep moving and propel into <u>lines of flight</u> as they present themselves. Allow connections to arise by themselves, <u>immanently</u>, as I watch mud settle until the water is clear. It is a means of balancing stillness and movement – to stay in the middle.

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[28] I read this from a neon artwork by Angus Fairhurst in the restaurant *Paris Bar*, Berlin, in 2015. The work was made in editions between 1997-2004. The words have stayed with me all these years and are a constant reminder for me to keep moving.

Figure 14. Pierre Vermeulen, *Sweat Print nr. 3.* 2018. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on DiBond, 280 x 300 cm.

In my *Sweat Print* series (Figure 14) I use my body and sweat to oxidise the gold leaf surfaces. The first *Sweat Prints* were printed very intuitively. I would place the panel on the floor and map out a possible visual movement I could create with my body. I would spray my sweat that I collected earlier[29] on my body and place my body on the panel and keep the position for 100 breaths. This would be enough time for the body to heat the area of the panel it touched and initiate the oxidation process. After the printing session is completed, the panels rest until the desired oxidation intensity is reached, and then the whole panel is varnished.

I liken these pieces, and processes that create them, to thoughts coming and going.

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[29] I expand on the sweat collection in the section: "Sweat collection".

I relate the recent *Sweat Prints* to the notion of the Body without Organs (BwO): a Deleuzeo-Guattarian concept that, to my understanding, refers to the body being an interconnected process of becoming, interrelated to all organs depending on one another – by studying one organ, one is studying all the organs (Message, 2013a: 37–39). Before I knew about the BwO I had the intention to revisit three works I had made in 2017. I informally call them *Butcher Prints* as the prints are composed of segmented body parts arranged in a grid-like pattern (Figure 15). I wanted to revisit these works by 'stitching' or re-assembling the segmented body parts in new arrangements as a means to expand the notion of the body as "*How might one live?*" – how the body might be (May, 2006: 3).

The new arrangements seen in Figure 16 and Figure 17 echo the intentional spontaneity Deleuze and Guattari advise to relay lines of flight. I see it as to not stand still and rot, but to wait until the water is clear.

Figure 15. Pierre Vermeulen, *30seconds Sweat Prints in Square, nr. 1 – Butcher print.* 2017. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on DiBond, 190 x 190 cm.

Figure 16. Pierre Vermeulen, *Sweat Print no. 21.* 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on DiBond, 105 x 94.5 cm.

Figure 17. Pierre Vermeulen, *Sweat Print no. 22.* 2020. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on DiBond, 95 x 105 cm.

Encountering knots and flows of events

Knots and waves can be understood as nouns and as verbs, i.e: knotting and waving. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's curation of the 14th Istanbul Biennial titled *Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms* reflects on the concepts of knots and waves. In this exhibition she explores the connections "between art and life, [and] the knots that tie them together." (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015: XLIII).

This expansive show in 2015 was positioned on both sides of Istanbul and on the Bosporus, and in my understanding could be considered an intermezzo space of [becoming](). Christov-Bakargiev stresses the importance of the intersection of artworks, places, and people. She speculates on the nature of "waves of time, and the knots of war" (Ibid). These encounters shape ideas, they shape thought and stir new possibilities into becoming by their "agency [to] transform the world." (Ibid.). As well as drawing on the contrasting images of knots and waves, she focusses on saltwater as a significant life-giving medium, since it exists both within our bodies and within the sea, from which life emerged. In this exhibition, she is particularly interested in the body of water that divides and joins the land masses in question, to present her theory of thought forms. The encounter initiates the objects' "ability to operate, to have agency and transform the world" (Ibid.).

The geography of the Bosporus, as Christov-Bakargiev explains, is an area of immense historical interchange of ideas, objects, people and things. In her conceptualisation of the show, waves become a way to not only see these things as essential within themselves, but to become aware of how they present themselves and how prior events and intersections have resulted in their manifestation (Ibid.: LIII). All things are connected to other things.

I return now to Groys' notion of non-linear waves as not having a necessary beginning or end, only a 'more or less' beginning and end (2015: 34). The water in a wave is not separate from any other water elsewhere in the ocean. Water circulates indefinitely, moving and flowing, evaporating, solidifying as rain, so that all waters are connected.

52

Scooping up some water and releasing it a couple of kilometres further would not make a difference to the water – it will become part of the whole again; it will form a wave again. The waves are not just in the ocean, but also part of all living organisms:

> … waves of people, waves of emotion and memory. It is through the identification of waves, the seeing of waves, that we acknowledge patterns – patterns of water, or patterns of wind. Perhaps a wave is simply time – it is high and low points capable of marking the experience of time, and thus of space, and thus of life. Could a wave ultimately be a knot?
>
> (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015: LI).

I use these figures of knots and waves as a means of thinking about how all my thoughts are tied together. Christov-Bakargiev used knots and waves to imagine the ebb and flow of cultures and the exchange of ideas (2015: XLIII). In doing so she is able to question received traditions and identities and allow for a more expansive and inclusive perspective of events/things.[30]

Knots form when intersections occur between things (Ibid.). With the assistance of participating artists, Christov-Bakargiev demonstrates that some knots are tighter than others. Some knots take longer to tie and longer to become undone. Donna Haraway's concepts and insights echo and resonate with many of these points. In her book *Staying with the Trouble* (2017) Haraway writes:

> It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties.

In the hair orchids I make knots which are literally made as strands of hair intersect and cross each other like waves (Figure 18). It is literally the coming together of strangers as I use different colours and thicknesses of hair in various degrees. The shedding of our hair are like traces we leave behind. We leave trails of DNA everywhere we go, and the currents of life take these strands on further journeys. Our hair then becomes, with their locations unbeknownst to us, travellers with no end point, de- and reterritorialising

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[30] This perspective evokes both also Spinoza's immanence and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome.

rhizomatically. They are literal lines of flight. It brings questions to my mind of abstraction, more so than a narrative journey of humans. Abstraction in terms of thoughts coming and going, events coming and going, and, of course, the refusal to stand still and rot. However, there is an ambiguity in that these specific hairs in the *hair orchids* have actually been captured and knotted together into an object that is put on the wall. Its movement has been slowed down in the gallery. Yet, this is just another moment of proliferating possibilities of territorialisation with viewers, light and other art objects, for example.



Figure 18. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair Orchid.* 2018. Human hair, 8 x 8 x 9 cm.

Through Christov-Bakargiev's Biennale, I was introduced to the work of Annie Besant (1847-1933), a socialist, theosophist[31] and feminist. The compilation of drawings and writings, *Thought Forms* (1905) was published by Besant and Charles Leadbeater with drawings that prefigured modern abstract theory, and showed their concern with the revelation of the invisible (or virtual). According to Besant and fellow theosophists, these images, like Figure 19, are "embodied entities of the imagined realm, visible and vibrating states of what remains generally visible. They are forms of the real world that can be apprehended in intense states of awareness, meditation or attention" (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015: XLVI).



Figure 19. Annie Besant & Charles W. Leadbeater, *Radiating Affection.* c.1901. (Besant & Leadbeater, 2020).

The discovery and contemplation of these early-Modern thought forms have become a great source of inspiration to my own thought processes and work. It is a concept that makes sense of the images I see when listening to music, or the dynamic shapes I see

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[31] "Theosophists [were] spiritualists who studied ancient and contemporary religions comparatively and believed in the equality of people, irrespective of race, religion and ethnicity. They also believed in the need to study science for the purpose of understanding and caring for nature, and they were amongst the first modern environmentalists." (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015: XLVII).

when I close my eyes.[32] For years, the images I see in my mind's eye have guided the compositions of the *Hair Orchid Sweat Print* series.



Figure 20. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair Orchid Sweat print black and red nr2.* 2021. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, acrylic and shellac on DiBond.

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[32] Deleuze writes about the eternal return to the 'abstract' every time we encounter something recognisable. In keeping with his general understanding of repetition and difference, the encounter will be different every time (Spinks, 2013: 86). We are always returning to a form of 'the same', but that form has experienced change and is thus abstract. I connect this to thought forms, the abstract visuality of thoughts. I expand on this idea of abstraction in the section Through Difference.

In Figure 20, I wanted the sensibility of the work to be that of floating. At the time of making the work my mind's eye was concerned with chaotic floating, which I can only articulate as a state of being without any anchoring point or direction; a suspension of time. Thoughts come and go, and I do not think anything in particular. Rather, what I have now come to refer to as, thought-forms arising and subsiding without gaining purpose. The ground behind the gold-leaf-imitate is black and red. These were the colours that came into my mind and that I used for the groundwork of this piece. I found that these colours revealed themselves on the borders of the painting and gave depth to the work. The majority of Besant and Leadbeater's thought-form images are made on a black background. I was taken by the stark directness that the black contributed. In considering the use of black, I understood it to operate in a similar way to the gong of a singing bowl[33] (as used in Buddhist meditation). The sound of the gong emanates from the middle and reverberates outwards. I connected this sound and vibrations to the affect of the black pigment and reflect on the connections between the image and the process of meditation – of paying attention.

In *Cave* series Figure 21 I used two black paints: an acrylic that absorbs light, and black oil paint. The oil in this particular work surrounds the gold and the acrylic surrounds the black oil. The interplay of the two blacks allowed the oil to be visually pushed forward as the light-absorbing acrylic black pulls back. This made the gold salient to me. The gold in the centre, for me, became an illuminating doorway. The hair orchid sweat prints swirled, suspended. I saw these as thought forms, that follow the logic of waving and knotting.

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[33] Singing bowls are circular in form and are played by gliding a wooded stick around the outer rim of the bowl or by tapping the rim to make a gong sound. It is from this centre that sound emit through vibrations. The vibrations move outwards in all directions from the bowl. I have used singing bowls as sounds to listen to in the studio and have incorporated them into my installations. Their vibrational qualities resonate through all matter around them. When I play singing bowls through a speaker in my installations, people tend to fall dead silent. The sound fills every corner of the room and affects every particle.

Figure 21. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair Orchid sweat print black shape black.* 2021. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, acrylic, oil and shellac on Belgian linen, 40 x 50 cm.

I listen to and feel the radiating sound of singing bowls. These inform the shape of the thought forms in this work. For me, the vibrating intensities of colour and form are extensions of the sonic and meditative experiences. One of the principles of Deleuze and

Guattari's rhizome is that it spreads and expands from the middle. An essential part of this concept is that that the middle is everywhere.[34] Singing bowls have formed an experiential and conceptual 'middle' in my practice for many years.

The first time I used singing bowls in an exhibition I was surprised that I could not necessarily locate the speaker which emitted the sound. In an interview, John Cage agrees that this instrument has the unique ability to generate sound that does not seem to come from anywhere specific, but seemingly comes from everywhere in the room (Furlong, 2010: 53). It is always in the middle and the middle is everywhere.

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[34] "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 25).

It is late afternoon and yoga will be starting soon. I wash my hands and get dressed in a pair of long-sleeved polyester tights and t-shirt. I fill a bottle with water and add a couple of dashes of Elite Electrolytes. This is to make sure I stay hydrated through the intensive sweating practice. I grab a towel and yoga mat and leave the studio to visit the yoga studio up the road. I pass the sprawling city with its inhabitants and visitors. In yoga, as with meditation, my conscious state shifts between acute awareness of the body moving and my mind's random thoughts arising. I become much more acutely aware of my mind's wandering when paying attention to that which does not think – the waving, moving body doing yogic postures.

In the yoga studio the air is hot, and humidity is high. I breathe in. It is not as hot as a sauna (another means of collecting sweat). In the square room everyone's mats are placed on a marked dot on the floor. This is to allow equal spacing between everyone and to create a sense of orderly arrangement as bodies stretch, knot and release. I unroll the yoga mat on an open dot, lie down in savasana[35] pose and close my eyes. Thinking about the layout of the studio with the dots in the square room and the rectangles of the yoga mats, I am reminded of the grids that form when the gold-leaf-imitate is applied to panels. The sweat collection happens in the yoga studio where bodies are arranged in a grid. This is mirrored by the sweat oxidising the gold-leaf-imitate in a grid arrangement. I think of the grid layout of the streets I just walked on, and the grids that form on iPhone screens through the arrangements of apps. The layout of the motherboard in the iPhone (our digital-world grid) can be likened to the city (our physical-world grid), and through that, all grids. I think of the latitude and longitude lines that humans draw to make sense and order the planet earth. I allow this thought to hover until the yoga instructor calls the start of the class.

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[35] *Savasana*, corpse pose, is a resting posture in yoga. Sava = corpse; asana = posture. One lies on one's back with arms and legs comfortably relaxed. The intention is to become a corpse and not have any intention of moving. One usually practices this pose before and/or after a yoga practice routine (Costello, 2013).

I start Ujjayi breath,[36] a yogic breathing technique that brings attention to the breath. The breathing sounds like the ocean waving or the flowing of wind through trees. Rhythmic breathing heats up the body and keep thoughts at bay to prevent them from taking root in the mind. I pay attention to my muscles warming up and stretching and pulling. The heated room assists in the muscular relaxation, and I lunge into deeper and longer stretches. The tiny pores in my skin are opening and flows of sweat are pouring out.

My biggest organ, my skin, perforated by all the tiny holes, is dripping with sweat. Small dots appear on the towel below me as sweat droplets fall from my face. Human bodies can sweat up to 1,2 litres of sweat per hour (Bryson, 2019). I was somewhat amazed to read this, however, the amount of fluid that my body releases to compensate for temperature regulation in hot yoga convinces me that this must be true. After a hot yoga session, I wring out the clothes I wore, and I collect about 300 ml of moisture. Of course, a lot of sweat is absorbed by the towel, or gets lost lying on the mat, or through post-exercise sweating. My bottle of electrolyte water or coconut water[37] aids with hydration helps to "modulate fluid exchanges between the body's fluid compartments and promote the exchange of nutrients and waste products between cells and the external fluid environment" (Bernhardt, n.d.).

My mind wanders to consider how electrolytes can be seen as an extension of *Salt Water Theory* (Christov-Bakargiev, 2015). Electrolytes is a term for minerals, like salt or ion, in the blood or other bodily fluid that carries charge (Bernhardt, n.d.). They promote communication and exchanges throughout the channels in the body. For the electrolytes to communicate successfully with the body the balance of water and electrolytes are key. "If you consume too much water and not enough electrolytes, your body pulls electrolytes from its cells in order to create the right balance for absorption. If you consume too many electrolytes and not enough fluid, your body pulls fluids from within to create the right

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[36] "*Ujjayi* (translated as "victorious") breathing should be both energizing and relaxing. In the Yoga Sutra, Patanjali suggests that the breath should be both *dirga* (long) and *suksma* (smooth). The sound of Ujjayi is created by gently constricting the opening of the throat to create some resistance to the passage of air. Gently pulling the breath in on inhalation and gently pushing the breath out on exhalation against this resistance creates a well-modulated and soothing sound—something like the sound of ocean waves rolling in and out" (Miller, 2007).

[37] Coconut water naturally contains electrolytes (Zeratsky, 2019).

balance for absorption" (Bernhardt, n.d.). Sustaining such a physical balance reminded me of staying in the middle – the balanced path. A couple of times I have found myself close to fainting in the yoga studio due to dehydration. Flowing suddenly from forward fold[38] to high mountain pose[39] almost had me lose my consciousness as a rush of thick, cloud-like feeling in my head almost made me topple over. It is the strangest feeling, to experience your consciousness slipping away, but because you are witnessing it, there is nothing to do but to ride out the wave of losing consciousness and hope not to fall over.

My mind becomes distracted and starts to attach to thoughts by drifting off to a memory. By the greenbelt in Constantia, I am walking with my animal companion, Mumok, past a stream. We follow the flow of the channel into the thick of the ferns off the walking path. This leads us down a couple of rocks where the water breaks into a pool in which a floating branch is tumbling around. The plunge of water falling muffles all other sounds and forms a white noise which drowns out the cacophonic hum of the city. The sound is totally encompassing, it knots to my eardrums and creates a bubble in which I can think clearly. I am only aware of my thoughts coming and going. My thoughts have no particular plan, but simply let themselves be known and so too the water: it has no plan, but just behaves in accordance with its environment. I am reminded of the complexity of this situation of water channelling its way down Table Mountain by making knots when passing streams, filtering and gathering minerals, cleaning the soil and stones, gathering in pools for organisms to grow. I look down at the small puddle of sweat that has dripped on the laminated wood flooring in the studio as I reached over the yoga mat.

The class is gaining momentum and the movements are flowing from one posture into another. Ujay breath has warmed my body from the inside and I can feel my lungs cleaned by the hot air. I feel by body as a Body without Organs palpating sensations as one organism, interdependent. I see my veins are visible on my sweaty hands as I place them

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[38] Forward fold, Standing Forward Bend or *Uttanasana*. ut = powerful; tan = to stretch; asana = posture. Legs standing straight and the torso bending over with hands touching the floor. The key is to bend forward from the pelvis and not so much bend from the back (Lee, 2010).
[39] Mountain pose, or *Tadasana.* Tada = mountain; asana = posture. Stand up straight with pelvis tucked in a bit and arms against body, palms face forward (YJ Editors, 2007a).

62

together in samasitihi[40]. I think of Bruce Lee reminding us to behave like water – "you put water in a cup, it becomes the cup."[41] There is no time wasted for the water to decide what to do, it just does.

As the sweat drips down my body in tree pose,[42] I become the tree. My leg muscles are tightly pulled up into my *gluteus maximus*. I feel aware of unbreakable strength in my legs that elegantly fold into chair pose[43] – I become the chair. As I'm sitting next to the stream and thinking thoughts, Mumok gently asks to leave. We climb up toward the footpath from the low-lying stream. Immediately the waterfall sounds unknot from my eardrums and are replaced by two humans jogging past and weed-eaters chopping down unwanted green growth behind suburban fences. We continue our walk down the gravel path that bends around the corner far ahead.

The sweat is coursing silently down my arm in downward dog position.[44] I look at my toes gripping the mat like a patch of grass nestling its roots between rocks. I unroot my left toes and swing my leg upwards; and then back underneath my body to re-root my left foot. My core muscles pull together and send my torso up with arms next to my ears.

What am I doing by collecting sweat and using it as a medium? My body becomes a filter for all the liquids I have ingested. A channel through which minerals pass. The body secretes sweat during action – physical or emotional – it is effectively a responsive action (Bryson, 2019). I use sweat as a medium that comes from a responsive action. I knot sweating with thoughts. My thoughts are a responsive action of my mind. Although I do not will my thoughts, they will themselves, just as sweat happens involuntarily. I consider hot yoga, an affectual practice that can be seen as a meditation in itself – physical and

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[40] Equal Standing, called *Samasthiti* in Sanskrit "is a command to attention, to stand in balanced stillness" (YJ Editors, 2021a).

[41] The famous quote by Bruce Lee reads as follows: "Be Water, My Friend. Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless, like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend" (Pax, 2020).

[42] Tree Pose, called *Vrksasana* in Sanskrit (*Vrksa* = tree, *asana* = pose) establishes strength and balance in the legs, and helps you feel centered, steady, and grounded (YJ Editors, 2021b).

[43] Chair Pose, called *Utkatasana* in Sanskrit (*Utkata* = powerful/fierce, *asana* = pose) works the muscles of the arms and legs, but it also stimulates the diaphragm and heart (YJ Editors, 2007b).

[44] Downward-Facing Dog Pose, called *Adho Mukha Svanasana* in Sanskrit (*adho* = downward, *mukha* = face, *svana* - dog, *asana* = pose) works to strengthen the core, improve circulation and full-body stretch.

mental meditation of paying attention to movement. Just as sweat evaporates from my body and bodies around me into the atmosphere, and sometimes linger in odour, so too most of our thoughts just disappear into our minds, into the universe of our internal and external landscape, into the cosmos.

Back in the studio I wring out the sweat drenched clothes. I decant the sweat in a spray bottle and keep it aside for tomorrow when I will be making hair orchid sweat prints.

Intermezzo - a meditation

Inhale deep breaths at the start of the curves to their peaks.

Exhale following the curves downward. Move to the next curve.

Focus on the feeling of air entering and leaving the lungs.

Feel the weight of the body on the chair.

Feel the weight of the body on the spine.

Continue breathing on the curves.

Vibrations of cello are sending pulsing waves. Growing, radiating, and waking up. Becoming aware. Atmospheric and full of life. Particle-ness becomes wave-ness. Waves become granular particles passing through one another. The cello waves are picked up by gentle piano notes willing themselves into existence and then becoming the release of cello strings again. Up and down. Drifting waves waving. Effortless. Allowing themselves to just be without any sense of effort – just happening. Kasper Bjørke's *Quartet: The Fifty Eleven Project* (2018) wakes up my studio. It is an album I always return to when I need to have an intermezzo; when my mind is too full. I breathe through the two hours and three minutes of the quartet as the low and high notes vibrate through my studio speaker. The opening track *Line of Life (Prologue)* (2018) opens with a cello followed by a piano. It becomes an introduction to a meditation for my mind to create thought forms[45].

My current studio of four years welcomes the sun each morning from the eastern windows. The studio has white walls and grey floors. There is a sink and kitchen island on wheels that I built. Opposite the entrance door is a room I use for storage. The rest of the studio is divided into two sections. I mainly work in the one and use the other for hanging works; to keep them close by for consideration before they move to the storage room. I prefer to have the studio neat and orderly.[46]

I consider the rhizomatic[47] nature of how my thoughts and materials in the studio unfold. Empty fixative cans have been left on the floor, used masking tape is curled against a bench, acrylic paint offcuts, charcoal dust, drawing books, used mugs, open drawers, dirty sink, dusty tables, empty paint tubes and tubs. The studio breathes in activity. It inhales and exhales busyness, messiness, stillness, and orderliness. It ebbs and flows between

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[45] I discuss thought forms in the section: Encountering knots and flows of events.

[46] Jenny Saville mentioned in a podcast that she prefers to keep her working table next to the painting she works on, with her palette, turpentine, brushes, etc. quite clean and neat; and leave the active and messy energy to rather happen on the canvas (Luke, 2020). I have more or less worked in this manner but became more active in Saville's approach after listening to the podcast. It helps to keep the action on the canvas rather than all over the studio.

[47] I discuss rhizomatics in the section: Encountering the rhizome.

these states. I am bound to disappoint myself if I try to commit to strict orderliness and so I focus rather on 'allowing'[48] things to be the way they are.

When I have allowed the studio to become too full and disorderly,[49] I start to make space again by moving towards the middle. Very much like meditation, it is a constant practice to maintain. In these moments I find new entry points to new works. It is a moment where my studio practice reveals itself in its chaos. I navigate the chaos like a map and trace the *doing* of my practice.

The layered assemblage of studio items germinates new ideas. It might be the way the masking tape is curling on the side of the bench, or the wave of gold-leaf-imitate residue flakes float as I walk past them. Looking around me and seeing all the overlaying things in the studio, puts me in the centre from where thoughts start to pollinate. For me, it is about noticing and 'allowing'.

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[48] One of the main Deleuzeo-Guattarian traits is their undoing of opposing dyads through multiplicity (Parr, 2013: 181–182). As with the 'many' and 'one', things are never one and not the other, there is always a flow on the spectrum of the dyads. So, I use the term 'allow' to navigate between oppositions. To allow is to become witness to what is unfolding. I make incremental decisions as processes unfold in my studio. I avoid choosing between left or right/right or wrong but rather move through the activities in a much more nuanced approach.

[49] Deleuze and Guattari embrace moments of breakdown. This is when the rhizome ruptures and a line of flight emerges. They refer to those moments as being rife with possibility for something new to emerge (Sweet, 2021).

Figure 22. Pierre Vermeulen, *Untitled (Dust Ellipse)*. 2020. Acrylic paint dust, 110 x 18 cm.

An ellipse is temporally formed on my studio floor. Its stillness seems orderly (Figure 22). A gust of wind, energy, movement will shift and break up this orderliness. Its matter is made up of three years' dust particles from the sanding down of paintings.[50] Figure 23 and 24 shows different colours of sanded acrylic paint particles. The granularity of time is present. Particles from 2019, 2020 and 2021 all are nestled together in an ellipse shape that takes the shape of galaxies; it reminds of primordial soup or thought forms[51]. An ellipse, for me, has the sensibility of a circle in movement. As these ideas start pick up speed they unfold into a state of becoming.

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[50] In many artworks, with acrylic paint as background to the gilded areas, I sand the paint down to create a smooth surface. Gilding intensifies the surface's texture through its reflective properties, it is therefore necessary to have the surface as smooth as possible. Even hairline grooves are noticeable after the surface has been gilded. I use an orbital sander and collect the residue in jars.

[51] I discuss thought forms in the section: Encountering knots and flows of events.

69

Figure 23. Pierre Vermeulen, *Photo of sanded acrylic paint,* 2021. Acrylic paint, dimensions variable.



Figure 24. Pierre Vermeulen, *Photo detail of sanded acrylic paint*. 2021. Acrylic paint.

Figure 25. Nasa, *M81 Galaxy is Pretty in Pink.* 2007. (NASA, 2007).

I am still unsure where the ellipse shape that I use so often came into my work. After I started using the shape, I recognised it all around the studio. When you look at a jar or a pot from an angle, the opening becomes an ellipse. I realised an ellipse is a circle from an angle, a circle in motion and moving through space. In space itself, galaxies take the shape of ellipses. They swirl towards the centre (Figure 25). An ellipse can also be a circular hole seen from an angle. Look around any physical space and there will be ellipses formed by circles on an angle. The ellipse becomes an image of movement to me. It might also be a portal into the unknown or even a black hole[52] with its non-escapable, gravitational fields into which even galaxies are pulled. In the painting, *Hair orchid sweat print vermilion orange black silver* (Figure 26) I used a black paint that reflects almost no light as it is very absorbent of light. It makes the black seem velvety and visually behaves in a

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[52] A black hole, in physics, is a space "that cannot be escaped from once drawn into". In the context of *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari extends the term to present "as being one – unwanted but necessary – outcome for a failed line of flight." It is "one possible outcome of an ill-conceived (which often equates to overly self-conscious) attempt at deterritorialization that is caused by a threshold crossed too quickly or an intensity become dangerous because it is no longer bearable" (Message, 2013b: 34).

71

way that makes it seem like there is a hole in the painting, or a hole in reality. This, for me, resonates with the entryways and exits of the rhizome. I consider them as nodes in a rhizome and as a line of flight, emerging.



Figure 26. Pierre Vermeulen, *Hair orchid sweat print vermilion orange black silver blue.* 2019. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat, acrylic, silver leaf on Belgian linen, 144.5 x 277 cm.

I am reminded of Anish Kapoor's investigations of the void, in *Untitled (Void)* (Figure 27) and Yves Klein's *Leaping into the Void* (Figure 28). Both artists echo John Cage's sentiment of not having something to say, yet saying it (1959: 109), which in turn relates to my ongoing concern with absence and presence.  Kapoor and Klein have long been influential to how I think about creating space for the mind in a meditative sense. Their use of pigment is particularly interesting to me – Klein with his International Klein Blue monochrome paintings which he associated with "the sky, the intangible, and emptiness" (Baume, 2008: 114) (Figure 29), and Kapoor with his pigment sculptures from the *1000 Names* series (1979-1985)  (Figure 30). Kapoor's sculptures posit the recognition of the granular-molecular constitution of substances. Their shapes remind that everything returns to dust, both on earth and in outer space. It evokes a cyclical return of dust knotting into form, into substance and then disintegrating into dust again – it is the wave of time approaching and passing. They therefore "suggest a process of becoming, both experientially and imaginatively" (Baume, 2008: 16). For Klein the void was "a physical,

sensorial, visual, and spiritual phenomenon"[53] (Baume, 2008: 114) – I see this as an affective encounter. Kapoor expands on the sensibility of the void as "not an empty space but as space with substance" (Ibid.). The absence of something can be understood, not as the "subtraction" of that something – but rather something positive. Baume explains that absence always points to presence (Ibid.). He describes the void as a placeholder, a space to become in and become with.



Figure 27. Anish Kapoor, *Untitled (Void)*. 1989. Fiberglass and pigment, 98 x 98 x 98 cm. (Kapoor, 1989).

Figure 28. Yves Klein, Harry Shunk and János Kender, *Leap into the Void.* 1960. Gelatin silver print, 36 x 27.4 cm. MoMA, New York, United States of America. (Klein, Shunk & Kender, 1960).

In contemplating this notion of the void, I return to consider *Untitled (Dust ellipse).* I made this piece on the third floor of my studio (Figure 22). This was followed by another iteration of the work in the empty elevator motor room on the sixth floor. Carlo Rovelli in his book *The Order of Time* (2018), explains that time unfolds differently at different altitudes. Following Rovelli somewhat literally, time was moving faster when I made the

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[53] He presented the void "in monochrome paintings and austere white rooms and above all in the Theatre of the Void, a joyous manifestation of immateriality with no stage, no actors, no scenery, no narrative, and no spectators" (Baume, 2008: 114).

work on the sixth floor compared to when I made it in my studio. As Rovelli (2018) explains, time moves slower closer to the earth's core. Considering this, I understood that the particles on the sixth floor were moving faster as I dusted them into an elliptic shape: my heart was racing faster, I was aging faster. In relation to this phenomenon, I reflect that all matter reflects time. I imagine the material unfolding in waves as the colours overlap one another and knot in places of intersection. The ellipse stretching across the room. For me, it serves as a marker of time unfolding - of becoming. The long ellipse occupies the space, leaving a passage around it. I see the short curve and long curve of the form as a wave. Within this wave a pulsating rhythm is created, like a heartbeat or breath. In considering these concepts I return to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desire and connection inherent to the nature of rhizome theory. Possibilities open – perhaps a gust of wind created by a passer-by would shift the dust particles. For me, this emphasises the temporal, unfixed and constantly shifting and changing nature of all things[54].

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[54] I think of the Big Bang that has never stopped, that is still extending outward. It extends from within, from its center, from its 'middle'. I think of the dust that everything will become and the dust that already is. This is the wave-like cyclical nature of difference, always returning to the same, yet always maintaining its abstraction (Williams, 2003: 12).
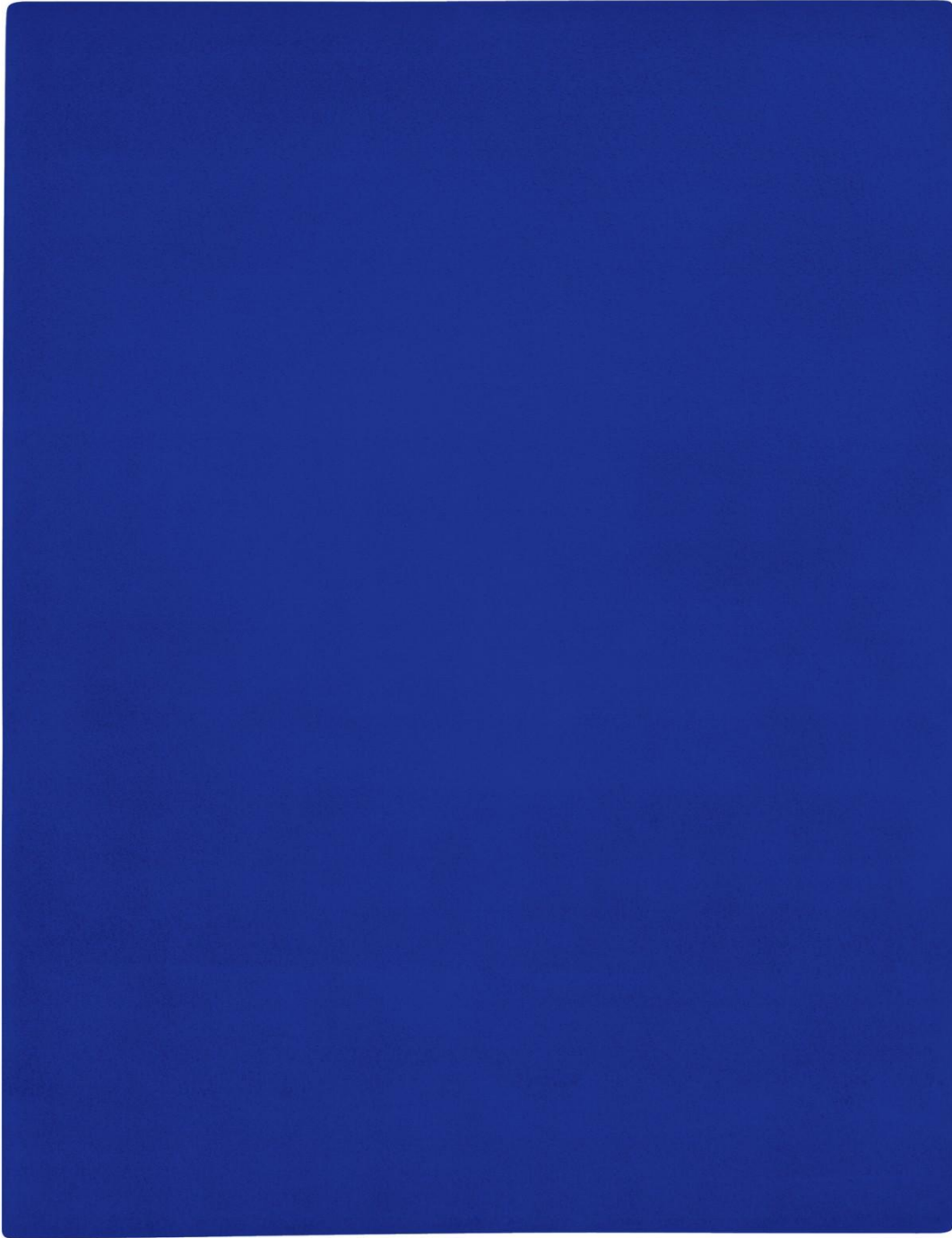
Figure 29. Yves Klein, *Untitled Blue Monochrome (IKB 3).* 1960. Dry pigment and synthetic resin on gauze mounted on panel, 200 x 153 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France.
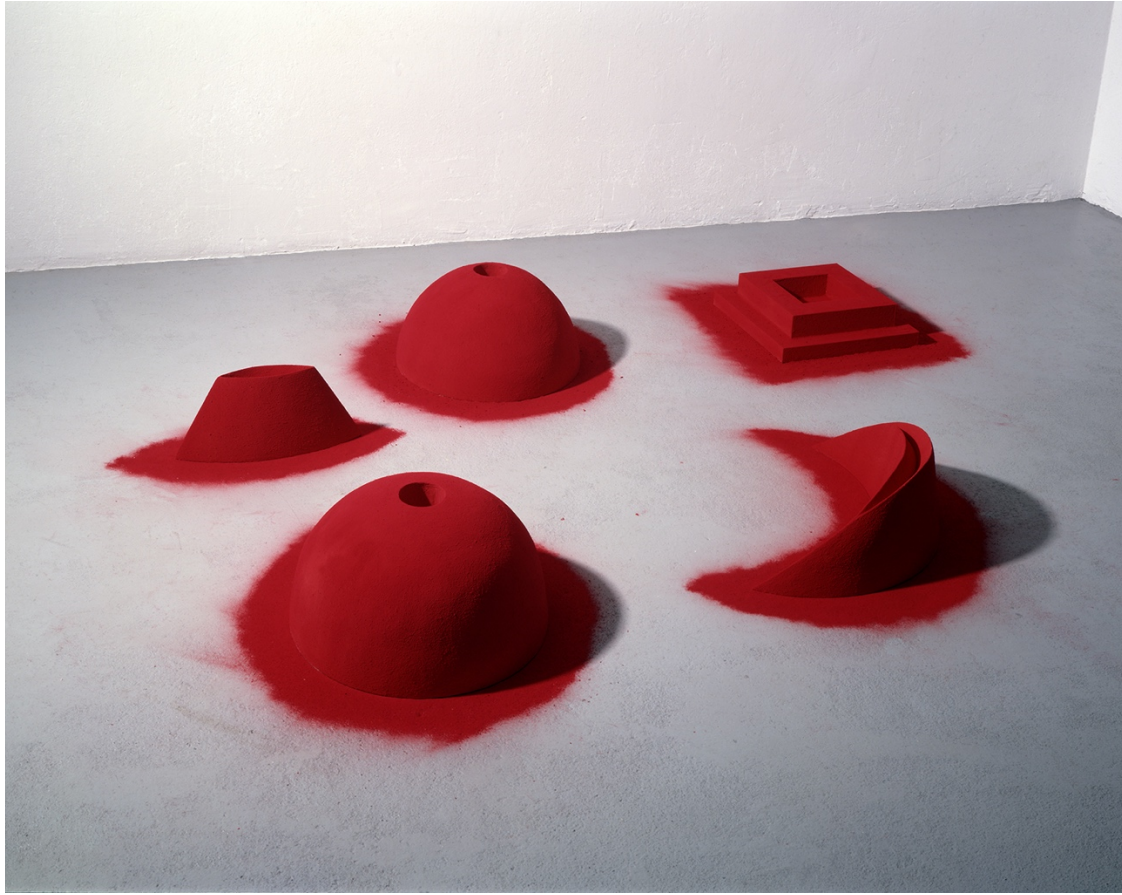
Figure 30. Anish Kapoor, *1000 Names.* 1984. Mixed media and pigment, dimensions variable.

Orchids

I began the journey of working with orchids forms very intuitively and have only recently made the connection to my father's greenhouse of cymbidium orchids in his garden. As a child, I remember the cut orchids being in the house. The memory and potential influence of this has been unconscious to me until now but has probably informed the draw to these evocative forms.

There is something alluring about an orchid's centre. Their bilateral symmetry is compelling to me. For me, they speak to the Deleuzean fold[55] and have the sensibility of a target: a target that pulls your visual focus inwards – through its form – to a complex, structured centre.

I am reminded of the symmetry of Rorschach blots when considering them. Their beauty and elegance are an ideal for me, and a model of the mind and the psychological unfolding of the unconscious, of the unknown, as I experience it in meditation. In my meditations on them, they appear to me as thought forms. They also look like otherworldly beings and, as such, they awaken both my fascination and my desire. The range of orchids' colours comprise almost the full colour spectrum: from highly saturated tones to the palest of washes. Some colours are so vibrant they remind of chemically produced pigments; other colours are so faint they seem like milky water after a watercolour brush had briefly been dipped in water. Many of the colours I have used in my work over the years have been inspired by orchids. Orchids' fleshy petals vary from waxy-shiny to a fine-matte-velvety texture. I find that they offer so many visual gifts and am drawn to the questions orchids raise in me. It is an abstract, untranslatable feeling to stare into an orchid's centre. I wonder at the existence of something so exquisite: its intricacies allow me to consider

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[55] Drawing from architecture and various disciplines Deleuze, in his extended essay *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), discusses the fold. He "uses the allegory of a two-storied Baroque house to define a relationship between the 'pleats of matter' and the 'fold of the soul'. Secondly, Deleuze references the separating and unifying qualities of Baroque architecture, particularly the relationship between inside and the outside … Thirdly, the elaborate topographies of Baroque interiors provide a tangible example of material folding and the search for an expression of infinity" (Livesey, 2013a: 109). The fold is regarded as a unifying structure that create "intricate topographic and spatial effects and affects; this means that a singular gesture can achieve great complexity, and has the ability to engage an infinity of folds" (Livesey, 2013a: 109).

my own veins, organs, and cellular structure. These are contemplations of my own awareness. I become aware of being aware. The orchids centre pulls me in to what feels like an endless void.

Having worked with images and shapes of orchids for years, I have now found an entry point and theoretical handle of the possible associations these forms hold.

In reading *A Thousand Plateaus* (2012: 10), Deleuze and Guattari discuss the rhizomatic relationship between the wasp and orchid. They explain the nature of this relationship through the concept of territorialisation, which, inter alia, deals with the merging and interchanging of species identities, and more metaphorically, identity and difference in general. The wasp does not keep its contained identity of 'wasp' when meeting the orchid; the wasp *becomes* the orchid in the event of their connection. By mapping the image of the wasp, the orchid *deterritorialises* and the wasp *reterritorialise* on the image of the orchid (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 11). The wasp is *deterritorialised* by becoming part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus and then *reterritorialises* the orchid by transporting its pollen to a new terrain where it will again root. Their connection-seeking desires forge a bond and an exchange. A process of becoming unfolds, the orchid-becoming-wasp and the wasp-becoming-orchid (Ibid.: 10). I understand this to be the process where the orchid and wasp have extended past their territorial boundaries through an extension of their rhizomes, which paradoxically increases their territories through this process of deterritorialisation. This interpretation, for me, allows me to imagine a rhizomatic expansion, that grows to the points of rupture which is where it "lengthens", "prolongs" and "relays the lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 11).

Inspired by these concepts, I observe a constant de-/re-territorialisation happening in the world around me, in my work and in my studio. There is no beginning or end to the creative process as it is continuously unfolds – For me, it is a becoming-with between entities. I look at the materials and substances in my work, on my body and in the space around me. The sweat on my body and in the works, I see as sweat-becoming-oxidation. My thoughts are thoughts-becoming-forms. The hair on my head and in the work are hair-

becoming-orchid. The dust on the shelves and in the artworks are paint-dust-becoming-ellipse. I realise and see a constant exchange and cross-pollination that is productive.

These possibilities of interchangeable, inter/intra related relationships of matter, lead me to reflect on a piece in my studio. In this work the reflective properties of the gold leaf, and the play of light on the surfaces serve as a mirror. When walking past the large panels, especially this six-metre-long piece, *Sweat Print no.20* (Figure 31), the reflection of the viewer, the room and objects are evident in the surface of the work. The work 'contains' and absorbs all that is around it. Could it be that this is unfolding of territory, or a de-/re-territorialisation as described in Deleuze and Guattari's writings?

Unlike a clear and crisp mirror, these surfaces do not replicate a clear image, rather the hazy reflections, for me, give a sense or idea of what is around it. This blurriness allows for a sense of not knowing, and desire to draw closer.



Figure 31. Pierre Vermeulen. *Sweat print no. 20, 6 metre movement.* 2018. Gold-leaf-imitate, sweat and shellac on aluminium, 210 x 630 cm (6 panels 210 x 105 cm each).

I relate the reflection in the gold to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming. This proposes that nothing is static, everything is in constant change and reciprocating movement. I also see this concept as resonating with Buddhist practice of emptying oneself of identity. This is done in order to lean away from a sense of individualism and to become receptive to the experience fo connectivity. As Bronwyn Davies explains in

her text *Intersections between Zen Buddhism and Deleuzian Philosophy,* "interdependence of subject and object, knower and known. One becomes aware of 'a mutuality in which subject creates the object just as much as the object creates the subject'" (Davies, 2011: 34).

Mirror Machine

Within the hazy reflection of my gold panels, I would like to look at Deleuze and Guattari's critique of identity as fiction. According to James Williams in *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition, A critical introduction and guide* (2013: 127), for Deleuze and Guattari, the fictional-self can be seen as the construct of identity. Their opposition to "identity is directed at the falsifying power of identity in representation. Identity works against and covers deeper pure differences." In short, "Identity is opposed to multiplicity … Concepts and representations do not correspond to anything in reality. This is because all things are connected to multiplicities, that is, to uncountable and unidentifiable processes of becoming, rather than existing as fixed beings with identifiable and limited predicates or essences" (Ibid.).

For me this resonates with the basic tenets of vipassana practice, where witnessing thoughts is a means of not attaching to thoughts, or to the notion of an abiding 'self' to which they give rise. Alan Watts explains that in Zen thinking, the mirror is an image that points to the clarity of the mind in meditation. A mirror contains no colour because its function is to *reflect* colours. So too, the mind must not attach to thought so as to reflect clearly on thoughts (2013).

Yet in my works the reflection is hazy and blurred in the gold panels as in Figure 32. In my understanding this evokes Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the self as fictionalised. Could it be that in the moment of me witnessing my reflection, a territorialisation happens, in that I grapple with the paradox of self as difference and self as identity. The hazy, blurry and vague reflection prevents a recognition of my identity and acknowledges *witnessing* itself. I suggest that this witnessing can be seen as difference. The witnessing of 'something' in front of the panels is an acknowledgement of the act of seeing. The opaque quality of the reflection affirms a becoming from difference, because there is no specificity in the reflection.

81

Figure 32. Pierre Vermeulen, *Untitled (Mirror piece, gold).* 2021. 23.5ct Gold leaf, bole, gesso on wood, 31 x 35 cm.

In *The Order of Time* (2018) Rovelli explains the world as a ceaseless process of change. Instead of thinking of the world in terms of things or pieces, one can think of the world as events, happenings, processes, things that occur and die away: the world is a collection of events and processes. Things persists in time; events have a limited duration. We understand the world by studying change, not things. We understand the world in its becoming, not its being (Rovelli, 2018). Deleuze's understanding of "an event is the potential immanence within a particular confluence of forces" (Stagoll, 2013: 90). The

82

event is not a joining of forces according to Deleuze, as an event is situated in the "middle" and is, therefore not a beginning or end point. The event therefore represents "just a momentary productive intensity" as "becoming 'moves through' an event" (Ibid.: 91). In terms of Deleuze's model of thinking he states that "thinking and creating are constitute[d] simultaneously" and not that "one thinks and thus creates" (Ibid.). It is in the studying of my senses when confronting the reflections that I can bear witness to the unfolding happening within myself. It is in the careful attention to breath in vipassana that I gained access to experiencing the flows, waves and knots pulsating through my bodily self. Perhaps the gold panels might prove some insight in this experience too.

Simon O'Sullivan, in *Art Encounters, Deleuze and Guattari, Thought beyond Representation* (2006: 22), speaks about Deleuze and Guattari's mechanical[56] thinking as a way of understanding art that is less concerned with questions of definition and more concerned with questions of function. O'Sullivan calls this "machines against meaning" which asks questions like "what does this artwork *do?"* and not "what does this artwork *mean?"* (Ibid.). If we see things as machinic, i.e., in terms of pure functionality, we look at them in a stripped way (without identity) – unsentimentally but with acute interest, which is really bare attention.

Thinking with the art-machine functions as a means of mapping and surveying which is to be understood as producing *effects* (Ibid.: 22). "For Deleuze, art is in the realm of effects" (May 2006: 20). One of these effects produced is the aesthetic effect. By looking at the aesthetic through the notion of the machine one moves "away from the metaphysics

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[56] To think about things through machines, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is to move away from thinking about things through the individual subject. The machine concept can be used in multiple different ways (a machine can be a person, a group, plants, a business, bodily processes, things, anything). Machines can be seen as an entity that seeks connections with other machines to bring about an actuality. An actuality is when an encounter brings about the virtual (the past) into the actual (the present). A machine does not have a particular goal as it can change its desires at any time. A bicycle for instance does not have a particular purpose, it can be used for many different purposes. Alone, the bicycle is not necessarily actualised, the bicycle needs to be coupled with another machine. When a human (machine) uses the bicycle (machine) to ride to work the bicycle is actualised for a purpose – for transportation. Thereafter its tyre (machine) is fixed because it coupled with a nail (machine) when it rode over it. The bicycle can also be sold or displayed as an artwork. In each situation, when an actualisation unfolds, the identity of the bicycle changes. The bicycle is always becoming, there is no fixed identity for the bicycle (West, 2019). "Everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections ... Hence we are all handymen: each with his little machines" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000: 1).

of presence, away from a transcendent horizon, towards a field of immanence"
(O'Sullivan, 2006: 22), since the *effect* is extruded from the experience of looking at the
artwork. The effect, in Deleuzeo-Guattarian terms, is called 'affect': in relation to art it is
the effect the artwork has on the viewer and that which establishes the art object
(O'Sullivan, 2006: 6). Affect is "a transitory thought or thing that occurs prior to an idea
or perception" (Colman, 2013b: 11). It is the desire-production at work that pulls entities
together. Aesthetics then becomes an understanding of deterritorialisation, a process of
becoming (O'Sullivan, 2006: 22). I relate this understanding to the 'enigmatic *pull* of
gold'[57]. I see this *pull* as the mechanical understanding of gold – what gold does. To me
this is a process of de-/re-territorialisation may occur between the viewer-machine and
the gold-machine.

O'Sullivan continues that it is not the art-machine alone that produces aesthetic effects
and affects, but it is in conjunction with the subject machine, the viewer of the artwork,
that this arises (2006: 22). It is in the interplay between these two that an effect is
manifested. In Buddhist terms, as I have raised earlier, Davies echoes this idea of the
interdependence of subject and object, "knower and known. [Where] one becomes aware
of 'a mutuality in which the subject creates the object just as much as the object creates
the subject'" (Davies, 2011: 34). My understanding is that is therefore a multiplicity that
is involved in the becoming unfolding.

The multiplicity of the art-machine manifests in numerous ways: it may be a meditation
machine, a scent machine, a visual machine, a music machine, etc. The multiplicity of the
art-machine is the many aspects of it contained within itself (O'Sullivan, 2006: 23), or as
according to Boundas: "They are intensive multiplicities with subdivisions affecting their
nature" (2013b: 197). These many aspects are not separate parts that make up a greater
whole or unit, rather they are fluid, momentarily forming and then disbanding – in this
way, affect is also an event (Stagoll, 2013: 90). To me the art-machine could be regarded
in light of difference – a space where all the different aspects pertaining to the unfolding
of the viewing event, makes it emerge as a meditation machine, a scent machine, a visual
machine, a music machine – a mechanic assemblage that constantly produces sensorial

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[57] I discuss the pull of gold in the section: Sweat and the pull of gold.

affects.[58] This combination changes in each event of connection. When the viewer encounters the artwork it is the multiplicity of the viewer-machine coupling with the multiplicity of the art-machine that produces affect (O'Sullivan, 2006: 23).

According to O'Sullivan there are many ways in which the art-machine functions. Other than the aesthetic affect the art-machine can also produce political or critical affects. The question is what kind of machine would be capable of manifesting these effects? What kind of couplings or assemblages would unfold? The preferred affect can also be predetermined (i.e., conceptualised in advance) and then reverse-engineered to create the type of machine that would produce the preferred affect (2006: 23). My work is not this latter type of machine. I am more interested in allowing the work to lead the effects and affects, much in the way that Anish Kapoor allows materials to lead his practice (Baume, 2008: 39–40). This allows me to stay in the realm of difference, and allows a rhizomatic mode of meaning-production.

In light of these complex concepts I understand the hazy reflections in my gold panels as observing a presence and preventing an identification to be recognised. I see this process as myself as a machine looking into the gold-panel-machine. For me the event of witnessing the hazy reflections rest in the realm of difference palpating becoming as I witness myself moving across a panel.

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[58] "Assemblages, as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning. Assemblages operate through desire as abstract machines, or arrangements, that are productive and have function; desire is the circulating energy that produces connections" (Livesey, 2013b: 18).

On gilding

My first attempt at traditional water gilding required me to use bole. Bole is an extremely fine clay that is applied onto gesso. The bole clay is mixed with distilled water to form a paste. Prepared rabbit-skin glue is added to create a cream-like consistency. One must grind everything down to a fine paste using a porcelain pestle and mortar to get rid of even the most minuscule kernels of bole. The mixture is then sieved through a nylon pantyhose. After a patient mixing process, an equally slow and patient application process starts. With a shuji brush (Japanese calligraphy brush) I apply the bole on to the gesso quite liberally. I create a puddle in the one corner and spread it over the rest of the demarcated area. I keep it quite wet and must keep a consistent pace to allow the newly applied bole to blend in with the already applied areas.

Once the large puddle of bole is dry, usually by the following day, I sand it down. Then I use a very fine, wide acrylic brush and distilled water to wipe the ground dust into the grooves created by the sandpaper. The porous and dry bole immediately sucks the water into its surface. This process of preparation for gilding is slow, careful, tender, and patient, yet it requires a great deal of determination and zest. I repeat this process a couple of times until the surface is perfectly level. I then use a razor blade to scrape the surface from left to right, up and down, corner to corner until a faint sheen appears on the surface.

After the scraping is done, I burnish the bole. I use an agate burnishing stone to burnish. I have two stones: a flat, wide one and a curved one forming a tip for smaller areas. Burnishing is another very patient, long process. Once the surface is burnished to a shiny finish, I can finally apply the 23.5ct gold leaf. Transfer golf leaf comes attached to a thin wax paper to make the handling easier, since loose leaf is incredibly fragile and tricky to use. One slight quick exhalation of breath sends the leaf flying. All windows must be closed to shut out any draught. The specificity of the environment and process demands a specificity of behaviour from me: controlled breath, controlled easy-steady use of hand and arms. Controlled pressure of brushes in lifting the gold leaf. It is a meditation in itself. Becoming aware of each moment is critical to the final outcome, and if done successfully,

it is very rewarding to see the glimmering gold. Absolute focus on every movement is required.

The difficult task of applying the goldleaf is a lesson in mindfulness and bare attention. First, I make a solution of rabbit-skin glue (rsg) and distilled water. To do the application of the gold, I rely on six years of practice in gilding with gold-leaf-imitate, yet this is child's play compared to water gilding. Again, I apply with a fine shuji brush apply rsg mixed with distilled water and an alcohol solution to the bole surface. This should be applied liberally without allowing the water to bead. Then at a gradual pace, without creating gusts of air, I pick up the gold leaf with a pickup brush – a long-haired flat brush with few bristles. I pick up the leaf and place it down onto the wet bole. The water grabs the leaf and sucks it into the bole. It is as though a vacuum is formed so that, within split seconds, the hair-thin gold leaf is incorporated into the surface. I repeat this process all over again. After two hours of drying time (in winter, longer drying time is needed), and once the surface makes a hollow click when tapped by the agate stone, the work is ready to be burnished again. The burnishing process pushes the gold leaf into the clay and brings out the sheen previously created on the bole through the burnishing process described earlier. Now, finally, the unique lustre of gold emerges.

Once I ran out of loose gold leaf, and even though only loose gold leaf is advised (Mactaggart & Mactaggart, 2015: 44), I tried to use transfer leaf. To my surprise it worked quite well. On top of the first layer of gold leaf I applied a thin layer of the rabbit-skin glue and water solution and placed the sheet of transfer leaf on top. This leaf is much easier to handle as one does not touch the gold, only the wax paper, which has a little border around the leaf to grasp. As with the first layer, the water sucks the gold leaf into the surface and releases from the wax paper. I gently run my finger over the wax paper to ensure the whole sheet of gold leaf is fixed to the surface. Another two hours of drying time, I burnish the surface to a brilliant lustre as in Figure 33.

Figure 33. Pierre Vermeulen, Detail of *Untitled (Mirror piece, gold).* 2021. 23.5ct Gold leaf, bole, gesso on wood, 31 x 35 cm.

I always wonder why I endure this long and laborious process of water gilding. I suppose it has to do with how the amount of time devoted to this delivers dividends. The gleam, lustre, and patina; the spatial indeterminacy it possesses, for me, as mentioned before, gives it an otherworldly quality.

I see the making of these works, as an event. While working, I process many thoughts and feelings. This repetitive process allows space in my mind to witness myself working, to witness my thoughts and let them flow. The 'doing'/activation between the material/matter of the work, myself and the space, architecture, light translate into large and small panels. These panels engage with their environment and continue the process of oxidising, reflecting light. In this sense I not only see myself as engaging with Deleuze

and Guattari concept of becoming but also that the works themselves are in a state of
becoming.

Figure 34. Pierre Vermeulen, *Vipassana Pips.* 2017. Fruit pips, polyester pillow case and cotton string, 23 x 63cm (opened).

A draft enters through the studio windows and pass over me towards the fire-escape door. I feel the hairs on my left cheek move in the flow of air, and my eye catches an earlier work of mine, titled *Vipassana Pips* (Figure 34) on stack of art books and catalogues. The work had been stored away for over a year and a half since I made it. When I arrived home from a vipassana retreat in 2017, I stored it inside my bedside drawer for safe-keeping, perhaps hoping to dream as deeply and vividly as I did during the retreat. A year and a half later I took the work out of the drawer and pulled the two strings of the knotted bow that had kept it rolled up. I unrolled the piece on my bed and the pips revealed themselves after more than 18 months of silent, dark waiting.

In the guidelines for the vipassana retreat they strongly discourage any form of activity, from yoga, taking photos, or journaling – you may only walk, eat, sleep and meditate. This is to constantly keep your focus on your mind and to prevent you from slipping into distraction. I was very happy to follow the rules and I managed to do so, but I dearly wanted to make an *in-situ* work from the experience. Every day, at 17:00, we received fruits to eat for supper and I kept one fruit pip for each day. The first couple of days we

had peaches, the last couple of days we had watermelons and apples. I placed the collected seeds on the windowsill in my room in the order in which I ate them. At that time, I had no specific work planned. I was not even certain whether I was going to be able to make something with the pips or not. On the last day I had the dilemma of how to keep the pips in their right order – the order in which I ate them which also constituted a tracing of time passing. I felt they had to be kept in their eating order – the same order in which I had become closer to a form of enlightenment. I looked around in my room and thought that rolling them up in a pillowcase might work. I removed the pillow and flattened the pillowcase on the mattress. I placed the pips 3 to 4 cm apart in a row from left to right, and slowly rolled them up. I found a piece of string in the room and used it to fasten the rolled-up work.

As I am writing, the piece is in my studio rolled up and all the pips have maintained their order in which they were eaten. Meaning is produced (created); it is not found nor is it discovered (May, 2006: 16). Evidently, I had no particular meaning in mind for the work when making it. It was a mere gesture during the ten days in which I became aware of how my mind and body work together. Like shape and colour – one does not find a shape without a colour, nor does one find a colour without a shape. They go together like mind and body (Watts, 2013). The work reminds me now of patience. I did not eat all the fruits in one sitting. I had two or three fruits a day and depending on their size I chose one pip to keep each day. Patiently, persistently, and continuously I meditated through the ten days. I remember S.N. Goenka reminding the students daily during the evening discourses: "You are bound to be successful" when allowing yourself to work "diligently, patiently, persistently and continuously."

The assemblage of pillowcase, pips and string were intersecting during the most mindful time in my life. My mind was so crystal clear. I could feel, sense, experience my body in its entirety in a way that defies explanation.

It is very difficult to explain how my body and mind were in full transparent exchange during the vipassana retreat next to the Matroosberg Mountains. I could feel how my brain was telling my arm to lift, feeling how calcium and magnesium were interacting to

enable me to move my limbs. I could feel the little gas bubbles and tingles popping and moving through veins and muscles. It was all so vibrantly crystal clear, and I have never felt so alive. By sitting as still as possible I could explore the inner landscape of my body; how my consciousness relates to the experience itself and to the fact, that, it was a brand-new experience all together. The dyad of body and mind disappeared at the affective register, since "thought is itself a body, embodied" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 3).

> Cast forward by its open-ended in-between-ness, affect is integral to a body's perpetual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter (Ibid).

The practice of vipassana I relate to the encounter of mind and body; and the focus on the constant becoming unfolding during the meditation. As I have experienced this vipassana-sensation before, I can more or less recall how it felt: my brain has stored these vivid experiences. However, language fails to successfully translate it, confirming again Deleuze and Guattari's suspicions about representation. I therefore rely on other media – the media of form, colour, texture, and light to relay experiences such as these.

As I was eating the fruit at the end of each day in the eating hall staring at the wall,[59] I savoured the whole experience. My upper teeth piercing the fruit's skin, gliding through the flesh, and meeting my bottom-row teeth. Slurping silently, to keep the sounds to myself, before the juice escapes my mouth and trickles down my neck. My taste buds fired with excitement as the fructose met them. My brain rose with zest as the fruit sugars gave me just enough energy to complete the last sessions of meditations for the day.

The order of the pips are as follows: two peach pips, two plum pips, one apple pip, two watermelon pips, one apple pip and two watermelon pips. I remember I was hoping to get more peach or plum pips because they are bigger than the watermelon and apple ones.

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[59] The men's eating hall has two rooms lined with a 50 cm-deep table running along the walls. We ate staring at the walls as not to be distracted by each other. In the beginning I was staring up and down the wall to find a point of interest. The last couple of days I would pay as close attention as possible to the eating experience. Every bite-sized portion I cut and placed in my mouth. The exact colour of the food. The smears the food made on the plate. The sounds. The whole experience became incredibly interesting by the depth of sensations that I witnessed.

Alas, the peach and plums were the first fruits to ripen and thus the first fruits made available to us. There is a rhythmic sequence of 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2.

In my reading and understanding of difference I relate it to the mental state I have experienced in meditation. However, I should be more specific as in meditation the focus is constantly shifting between mind-wandering and awareness of bodily sensations. To learn vipassana meditation, I first had to train myself to focus. The instructions were as follows: I paid attention to the breath inhalation and exhalation without using my internal voice to guide myself through the process, as in 'breathe in' and 'breathe out'; or counting the breaths. I had to focus without using language and experience the breath as such. I practised this for two days. By the second day, I become aware of more subtle changes in my body. I shifted my attention to the prickling sensations around my upper lip and nose for two more days. On the fourth day I could enter the state of vipassana by doing full body scans and focussing on the vibrations pulsating throughout my whole body. The practice is to start from the crown of the head and work your way down the body towards the tips of your toes and then back again and repeat.

I liken this mental state of focus to being in the realm of difference, as difference is pre-linguistic (pre-identity).[60] In meditation I am constantly paying attention to when and how thoughts manifest. Sometimes thoughts present themselves through language – an internal narration. When this happens one moves out of the realm of difference and into that of identity, as thoughts and the internal narrator refers to that which is identifiable. If I avoid this narration and stay in difference, I experience my body unfolding in real time. I witness a pain erupting in my back and I follow the sensation. I gradually bring my attention to the very centre of the pain and experience it fully. The pain becomes interesting and less affective as I pay more attention to my experience of it, and if I do not identify with the emotional reaction to the pain. I witness the shape of the pain and its stinging intensity not from memory or habit, because I am not identifying with it, but from difference-in-itself. Then, suddenly the pain subsides, and I move on with the body scan. Without using language to interpret or emotionally respond to the pain I witness it within itself: as itself, as mere pain, an intensity. By doing so I am understanding my body

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[60] Difference precedes identity – it is therefore ontological (May, 2006: 19).

through difference. It is an immanent process as the whole experience is witnessed as rising from within.

During this practice my mind is continuously distracted by discursive memories or a tendency to start narrating the meditative experience. I remember Goenka reminding us to "… practice diligently and persistently … diligently and persistently, continuously …" These distractions are what I would regard as jumping back to identity – traversing difference. My body experiences difference where no word is present by the feeling of my body – what it abstractly feels like to be a living being in that particular moment. The next moment the mind thinks again. It switches back to interpreting the experience and manifesting a memory. It will continue to think more thoughts until I realize this is happening and bring my mind back to the breath. It is like someone interrupting you in mid-sentence. I then must be mindful of the mild feeling of annoyance – a sense of judgment – that I feel towards myself because I was not paying pure, bare awareness to the body's sensations. By doing that, I become aware of the sensations again. I continue the body scan until I am distracted by thoughts thinking themselves again. That is roughly what I experience in meditation. The immanent becoming of my body is witnessed by me in the realm of difference.

94

Waves of knotting plateaus

> If the world is upheld by the dancing Shiva there must be ten thousand such dancing Shivas (Rovelli, 2018).

In *The Order of Time* (2018) Rovelli discusses the nonuniformity of time. Time does not unfold with the same momentum anywhere at the same time. Time passes slower the closer to the earth's core. Should you live on a mountain and your friend by the coastline, time will pass faster for you and slower for your friend. What does this mean for our everyday life? The difference is so slight that there will not be striking, noticeable differences between you and your coast-dwelling friend, but the fact of time's nonuniformity points to the nonspecific connection-seeking nature of the rhizome. It decouples the rigid sense of homogeneity which the realm of difference undoes. This helps to understand the unique and precious unfolding of an event, its process and the experience thereof. No time is the same, and therefore the savouring thereof is significant. If time then unfolds at its own speed where creation and destruction happen differently at all places, it evokes "… ten thousand such dancing Shivas. Like the dancing figures of Matisse" (Rovelli, 2018).

The studio unfolds as a wave of thought approaches me on the different time zones in the studio while I am gilding. The thought intersects the tempo of the singing bowl playing through the speaker – sending waves of vibrations through the table. On the floor a gold-leaf flake twirls as Mumok walks over to ask for a treat. My phone rings as someone on the other side of town seeks my attention. The induction stove switches off as the eggs reach their desired level of doneness. A trickle of sweat runs down my inner arm and is absorbed by my t-shirt sleeve. The afternoon light hits the side of a canvas and glows vermilion against the white wall.

The between-ness, the bouncy nature of wiggly bits, particles becoming particular, changing and returning to change, to the ever abstraction of *how I might live.* Waves are waving and knots are knotting, erupting from difference. I must stay attentive to the unfolding as the water becomes clear.

95

The studio speaker changes track: a flute starts, followed by a procession of drums thumping, and then Jimmy Somerville releases in full falsetto, echoing the non-duality of *Siddhartha* (Hesse, 2008):

<div align="center">

I am coming

I am coming

I am coming through

Coming across the divide to you

In this moment of unity

Feeling an ecstasy

To be here, to be now

At last, I am free


Yes, at last, at last

To be free of the past

And of the future that beckons me.

I am coming

I am coming

Here I am

Neither a woman, not a man.

We are joined, we are one

With the human face

I am on Earth

And I am in outer space

I'm being born and I am dying

At last, I am free

(Somerville, 1993).

</div>

Note: Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is generally accepted as very complex. The explanations I chose from several sources for the following terms best describe my own application of these terms in my practice and writing. They are not necessarily complete from a purely philosophical perspective.

**Abstract Machine**

"Unlike everyday technical machines, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that 'abstract' machines involve the manner in which human beings (or other 'matters') are caught up within, or a part of, '*mechanical*' processes. When machines function in a technical sense, they are abstracted, or separate from, their milieu (that is, the domain in which they have an effect), and are thus 'self-destructive', or cannot truly maintain themselves" (Young, 2013a: 17).

"'[M]achines' can be considered in an ontological sense rather than an everyday technical sense … such as they function to actually *disrupt* rather than *maintain* their separation from actual assemblages. In this manner, human beings are not part technical-machine (à la cyborgs), but part abstract machine; that is, we *are* machines in the sense that our desire is inextricably bound up with machines (it is '*machinic*'), and machines must be connected (or immanent) to non-technical processes of desire in order to truly function" (Young, 2013a: 17).

"[D]esiring-machines are non-Oedipal and engaged in real processes of production. They express a direct link between desire and production. Their components couple and connect with each other *and* cut the fluxes of desire; libido is both energy that is expended in and produced by the couplings. And they break down, but continue working nonetheless. Desiring-machines function and have no inscribed meaning. The realm of production and organisation is that of design-machines, but they pour over the surface of anti-production, the body-without-organs, connecting together, and with components of anti-production by means of disjunction" (Genesko, 2013: 85).

**Actuality/Actual/Actualization**

"The actual is the complement or the product, the object of actualization, which has nothing about the virtual as its subject" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007: 149).

"[Actualization] is the process whereby the virtual is made present in time (in distinction from the realization of a possibility), while preserving the singularity and a temporality of the virtual; the incarnation of ideas, their differentiation" (Young, 2013b: 22).

"For ideas, to be actualized is to be differentiated … something which exists only in the Idea may be completely determined (differentiated) and yet lack those determinations which constitute actual existence (it is undifferentiated, not yet even individuated)" (Deleuze, 1994: 350, 280).

"If there is something actual it is not because it takes up time, nor because time is that which links or contains the changes of actual beings; rather, actuality is *unfolded* from potentiality. We should see the actual not as that from which change and difference take place, but as that which has been effected from potentiality. Time is not the synthesis or continuity of actual terms, as in phenomenology where consciousness constitutes time by linking the past with the present and future. Rather, time is the potential for various lines of actuality. From any actual or unfolded turn it should be possible (and, for Deleuze, desirable) to intuit the richer potentiality from which it has emerged" (Colebrook, 2013: 9-10).

*Also see: Virtual*

**Affect**

"Watch me: affection is the intensity of colour in a sunset on a dry and cold autumn evening. Kiss me: affect is the indescribable moment before the registration of the audible, visual, and tactile transformations produced in reaction to a certain situation, event, or thing. Run away from me: affected are the bodies of spectres when their space is disturbed. In all these situations, affect is an independent thing; sometimes described

in terms of the expression of an emotion or physiological effect, but according to Deleuze, the affect is a transitory thought or thing that occurs prior to the idea or perception" (Colman, 2013b: 11).

"Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness:* in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 1).

In relation to 'becoming' and 'transformation' "for Deleuze, affect can produce a sensory or abstract result and is physically and temporally produced" (Colman, 2013b: 12).

"Affect is the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide, or come into contact. As a body, affect is the transitional product of an encounter, specific in its ethical and lived dimensions and yet it is also as indefinite as the experience of a sunset, transformation or a ghost" (Colman, 2013b: 11).

"[B]odies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 2).

"Affect marks a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in *non-belonging*, through all those far sadder (de)compositions of mutual in-compossibilities (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 2).

Affect is linked to other Deleuzeo-Guattarian concepts: becoming, multiplicity, rhizomatics, experience and lines of flight. It is "situated as part of the Deleuzian 'and' of becoming, the molecular threshold of bodies and things as events are described by

Deleuze in terms of affective happenings; occasions where things and bodies are altered" (Colman, 2013b: 13).

"In its largest sense, affect is part of the Deleuzian project of trying-to-understand, and comprehend, and express all of the incredible, wonderous, tragic, painful, and destructive configurations of things and bodies as temporally mediated, continuous events" (Colman, 2013b: 11).

**Assemblages**

Assemblage relates to "the process of arranging, organising, and fitting together" (Livesey, 2013b: 18).

"Assemblages, as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning. Assemblages operate through desire as abstract machines, or arrangements, that are productive and have function; desire is the circulating energy that produces connections" (Livesey, 2013a: 18).

"According to Deleuze and Guattari there is both a horizontal and vertical axis associated with assemblages" (Livesey, 2013a: 18).

"On a first, horizontal axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *mechanic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or *reterritorialised sides*, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialisation*, which carry it away" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 97–98).

100

"An assemblage merges when a function emerges; ideally it is innovative and productive. The result of a productive assemblage is a new means of expression, a new territorial/special organization, a new institution, a new behaviour, or a new realisation. The assemblage is destined to produce a new reality, by making numerous, often unexpected, connections" (Livesey, 2013b: 19).

**Bare Awareness/Attention**

"… bare awareness," then, may be said to mean bare observation of mind-body sensations prior to any arising mental associations. 'Bare attention,' meanwhile, may be taken to mean an act of observing a mental action, while heedfully watching mental thought moments for arising mental intentions, leading to mental reactions—while standing back with detachment and analyzing potential energy sources as causes in the processes of arising mental associations, then catching and cutting them off, if they are unskillful, thereby avoiding the development of unwholesome attachments that will lead to reactions and effects that will habitually upset mental balance and equanimity" (Holmes, 2021).

**Becoming**

"In so far as Deleuze champions a particular ontology," difference and becoming "are its cornerstones, serving as antidotes to what he considers to be western tradition's predominant and unjustifiable focus on being and identity" (Stagoll, 2013: 25).

"[T]he primacy of identity is what defines a world of re-presentation (presenting the same world once again), then becoming (by which Deleuze means 'becoming different') defines a world of presentation anew" (Stagoll, 2013: 26).

"Taking inspiration from [Friedrich] Nietzsche, 'becoming' is 1) unlimited and unending, as it has no true point of origin or destination (the world is always is 'flux'), and 2) insofar as the past is itself considered *infinite,* the present counter-intuitively always occurs as the 'return' of recognizable and even foreseeable forms, but is irreducible to such forms precisely because becoming can never be 'given': it is, as Deleuze shows, always in

between the past and future since 'it moves in both directions at once' and 'always eludes the present'" (Young, 2013c: 40).

"Becoming is the pure movement evident in changes *between* particular events" … "[B]ecoming is the very dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or end-state"… "Becoming 'moves through' every event, such that each is simultaneously start-point, end-point and mid-point of an ongoing cycle of production" (Stagoll, 2013: 26).

"[T]he present moment is merely the productive moment of becoming, the moment correlating to the productive threshold of forces" (Ibid.: 27).

"[T]here is no being, only becoming. Or, as Deleuze puts it, that the only being is the being of becoming" (May, 2006: 94).

"The human subject, for example, ought not to be conceived as a stable, rational individual, experiencing changes but remaining, principally, the same person. Rather, for Deleuze, one's self must be conceived as a constantly changing assemblage of forces, an epiphenomenon arising from chance confluences of languages, organisms, societies, expectations, laws and so on" (Stagoll, 2013b: 27).

"One way of characterizing becoming is with the following schema: virtual/real↔actual/real↔virtual/real. What such a diagram points to is that becoming is not a linear process from one actual to another; rather it is the movement from an actualized state of affairs, through a dynamic field of virtual/real tendencies, to have the actualization of this field in a new state of affairs. The schema safeguards the reversible nature of virtual and actual relations" (Boundas, 2013: 300–301).

"For there is no being beyond becoming, nothing beyond multiplicity; neither multiplicity nor becoming are appearances or illusions… Multiplicity is the inseparable manifestation, essential transformation and constant symptom of unity. Multiplicity is the affirmation of unity; becoming is the affirmation of being" (Deleuze, 1983: 23–24).

**Body without Organs (BwO)**

Deleuze's "early work on Spinoza foregrounds this [BwO], when he showed that bodies cannot be defined in terms of forms, organs, functions, or subjects. Rather, they must be defined *kinetically,* in terms of an infinite number of particles in relations of 'motion and rest', and *dynamically,* in terms of 'the capacity for affecting and being affected' – that is, an intensive determination" (Young, 2013d: 51).

The organised body is in relation to the Body without Organs. "…the Body without Organs exists within the stratified fields of organisation at the same time as it offers an alternative mode of being or experience (becoming) … the Body without Organs does not equate literally to an organ-less body" (Message, 2013a: 38).

"The body without organs does not lack organs, it simply lacks the organism, that is, the particular organization of the organs. The body without organs is thus defined by an indeterminate organ, whereas the organism is defined by determined organs" (Deleuze, 2003: 47)

"Sensations passes over and through the body in waves and rhythms that meld its perceptible sites or organisations of parts into vibrations and spasms" (Conley, 2013: 248).

"In [Deleuze and Guattari's] reading of [Antonin] Artaud, and in Deleuze's analysis of art, that which involves the *unending* pushing back of or confrontation with the limit(s) of subjectivity, stratification, and the organism; that which unifies fragmented organs or parts of the body to produce an indeterminate organ or unactualized organs, rather than unifying those fragmented parts such that they form an organism with a predetermined function that restricts or limits the processes of desire; in Deleuze's analysis of art, the result of an experimentation on the body that undoes the organic association that organs have with one another other (physically) or with a function (psychically) to create the condition for new, inorganic physical associations and psychic functions" (Young, 2013d: 53).

"Deleuze and Guattari encourages us to remove the poles of organisation but remain a mode of articulation. They advise that in seeking to make ourselves a BwO, we need to maintain a mode of expression, but rid language of the central role it has in arbitrating truth and reality against madness and the pre-symbolic real.
(Message, 2013a: 39).

"You never reach the Body without Ogans, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2012: 166, 150).

**Desire**

"'Desire' is one of the central terms in Deleuze's philosophical lexicon. In his work with Guattari, Deleuze develops a definition of desire as positive and productive that supports the conception of life as material flows" (Ross, 2013: 65).

"[D]esire is not self-preservative or self-destructive *per se*, but 'productive' and social. That is, if desire is truly unconscious, then it has no representative content and therefore cannot 'lack', as there would be no actual object presented to the drives to obtain. Desire is, instead, 'continuous' and therefore connective and productive by nature. Those things which we would normally associate with the *satisfaction* of desire (security, comfort, pleasure, even orgasm) are manufactured by consciousness and its representations, and are actually 'interruptions' of the naturally continuous process of desire itself" (Young, 2013e: 80).

"Desire is also a crucial element in Deleuze's critique of philosophical dualism. Such dualism, whether in Immanuel Kant or psychoanalysis, is able to submit desire to a juridical system of regulation precisely because it first distinguishes the domain of existence from those transcendent values that arrange it in relation to ordering principles. In the case of psychoanalysis this exercise of transcendent regulation erroneously contains desire in the field of the subject's sexuality and turns it into a problem of interpretation. Against psychoanalysis, Deleuze tries to de-sexualise and de-individualise desire. Sexuality is one flow that enters into conjunction with others in an assemblage. It

is not a privileged infrastructure within desiring assemblages, not an energy able to be transformed, or sublimated into other flows" (Ross, 2013: 66).

"The concept of desiring-production prevents desire from being understood in terms of 'lack' (as it has been in western metaphysics from Plato to Freud): desiring-production actually produces what we take to be reality (in the sense that a lawyer produces evidence) through the investment of psychical energy (libido), just as social-production produces what we take to be reality through the investment of corporeal energy (labour-power)" (Holland, 2013: 67–68).

"Instead of a regulation of desire by pleasure or lack in which desire is extracted from its plane of immanence, desire is a process in which anything is permissible. Desire is accordingly distinguished from that which 'would come and break up the integral process of desire'. This integral process is described in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the construction of assemblages" (Ross, 2013: 66–67).

"Understood as an assemblage, desire in Deleuze's vocabulary is irreducible to a distinction between naturalism/artifice, or spontaneity/law. For this reason when Deleuze argues against the dualism that prohibits or interrupts desire from the external points of lack or pleasure, he also makes ascesis an important condition for the process that constructs assemblages of desire" (Ross, 2013: 67).

**Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation**

"[D]eterritorialisation can best be understood as a movement producing change. Insofar as it operates as a line of flight, deterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations" (Parr, 2013: 69).

"[Deleuze and Guattari] explain that the earth and the cosmos are composed of both 'mechanical' phenomena (that is, stable forces or milieus) and of 'mechanic' phenomena is it that expresses the rhythmic relation between such stable milieus. 'Territorialisation' does not necessarily emerge from some *interior*, repressed or neurotic drive (as Freud

105

might have it), but is a seizure and assemblage of these *exterior* forces. The animal or human being acts (individually or in groups) on these phenomena in order to establish itself in its environment, to create a border between inside and outside. While territorialisation can function in a 'transcendental' fashion for assemblages of oppression, this establishment has no function analogous to the function that it appropriates; therefore, they conclude that when taken for its self, its actual function is *expressiveness*. This locates territorialisation as the origin of art and music: nature and the interactions of living things, following Von Uexkull's insights, is a symphony. It is not 'an impulse triggering an action', but the style of motives, counterpoints, and refrains. The novelty of territorial expressiveness often comes from its 'opening' onto other assemblages, or onto the 'cosmos'; that is, when expressiveness no longer functions strictly for the territory but expresses a becoming – a loss or a change of function – it is deterritorialised" (Young, 2013c: 307).

**Difference**

Deleuze "is concerned to overturn the primacy accorded identity and representation in western rationality by theorizing difference as it is experienced. In doing so, Deleuze challenges to critical pre-suppositions: the privilege accorded Being and the representation on model of thought … Deleuze uses his notion of empirical and non-conceptual 'difference in itself' in the service of such a disruption" (Stagoll, 2013a: 74). "It is because Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel drew a comprehensive and cohesive world of Being that made him such a significant target for the Deleuze's critique. On such an account, difference is subordinated to sameness, and becomes an object of representation in relation to some identity. As such, it is never conceived in terms of 'difference-in-itself', the uniqueness implicit in the particularity of things and the moments of their conception and perception. Rather, difference is understood in terms of resemblance, identity, opposition and analogy, the kinds of relations used to determine groupings of things" (Stagoll, 2013a: 75).

"Consider the two propositions: only that which is alike differs; and only differences are alike. The first formula posit resemblance as the condition of difference. … According to the other formula, by contrast, resemblance, identity, analogy and opposition can no

longer be considered anything but effects, the products of a primary difference or a primary system of differences" (Deleuze, 1994: 143, 116, 117).

"Deleuze's liberation of difference from such a model has two parts. First, he develops a concept of difference that does not rely on a relationship with sameness and, second, he challenges the philosophy of representation" (Stagoll, 2013a: 75).

"Deleuze's difference-in-itself releases difference from domination by identity and sameness. Indeed, on this account, identity must be referred to the difference inherent in that particulars being 'swept up' in the process of constructing a relationship between them. To realise this is to meet Deleuze's challenge of developing a new perspective in order to resist transcendence. However, to do so routinely is not easy. Only by destabilising our thinking, disrupting our faculties and freeing our senses from established tendencies might we uncover the difference evident in the lived world, and realise the uniqueness of each moment and thing" (Stagoll, 2013a: 75–76).

"Deleuze's theory of difference also challenges the traditional theory of representation, by which we tend to consider each individual as representing ('presenting again') something as just another instance of a category or original. On such a view, difference is something that might be predicated of a concept, and so logically subordinated to it, whilst the concept can be applied to an infinite number of particular instances. To think in terms of difference-in-itself means to set the concept aside and focus instead on the singular, and the unique circumstances of its production. Awareness is of such specific circumstances means that the notion of some 'thing in general' can be set aside in favour of one's experience of *this* thing, here and now" (Ibid.: 76).

"Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Re-presentation has only a single centre … Difference [by contrast] must become the element, the ultimate unity …. Each term of a series, being already a difference, must be put into a variable relation with other terms, thereby constituting each other series devoid of centre and convergence. Divergence and decentering must be affirmed in the series itself. […] Difference must be shown deferring" (Deleuze, 1994: 68, 56).

"Philosophy is ontology; it speaks of what there is. But what there is cannot be identified. Or better, what can be identified is only a single manifestation, a single actualization, of what there is. What there is is difference: a difference that is not simply the distinction between two identities (which would subordinate difference to identity) or the negation of one of them (which would think of difference only negatively). What there is is a difference in itself, a pure difference that forms the soil for all identities, all distinctions, and or negations. The task of philosophy is to create concepts for difference" (May, 2006: 21).

"[D]ifference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing" (Deleuze, 1994: 57).

"For Deleuze, living consists in difference and it's actualization. Difference is not a thing, it is a process. It unfolds – or better, it is an unfolding (and a folding, and a re-folding). It is alive. Not with cells or with respiration, but with vitality. To ask what living consists is to ask about this vitality at the heart of things" (May, 2006: 24).

**Identity**

"In Deleuze's work identity is perhaps the most heavily criticized concept from the philosophical tradition. […] Deleuze's opposition to identity is directed at the falsifying power of identity in representation. Identity works against and covers deeper pure differences it does so because of the dominance of the demand to represent in the history of philosophy. Objects, subjects, faculties, feelings, ideas and thoughts must be represented for them to become a legitimate part of philosophical debate. For this representation to take place they must be identified" (Williams, 2013: 126–127).

"So what concerns Deleuze is not only the claim that truths and goods must be represented, but also the belief that thought is dependent on representation and on identity for its path to be good and the true. His critiques of other philosophers often depend on showing how this image of thought is operating unconsciously and damagingly in the works. The damage is caused because reality is a process of becoming, which involves

pure differences that cannot be represented" … "Deleuze's philosophy can be seen as a critical attempt to cure us of the self-destructive dependence on identity" … "Identity is opposed to multiplicity, in that multiplicity is both an accountable and not open to a reductive logical or mathematical analysis" (Williams, 2013: 127).

"Concepts and representations do not correspond to anything in reality. This is because all things are connected to multiplicities, that is, to unaccountable and unidentifiable processes of becoming, rather than existing as fixed beings with identifiable and limited predicates or essences" (Williams, 2013: 127).

"So though we represent what we think and talk about, a series of unidentifiable processes are always at work behind that representation. There can be no identity without pure differences standing in the background as a condition for the illusory appearance of a pure, well-determined identity" (Williams, 2013: 128).

**Immanence**

"Immanence and transcendence are philosophical terms that are deeply bound up with theology; in the case of immanence, God is 'within' the physical world, and in the case of transcendence, God is 'above' or beyond the physical world. This distinction also extends to metaphysical concepts in general, and Deleuze, of course, values concepts that arise from (or express) things that can be sensed, perceived, or imagined (emphasising the imminence of virtual ideas to the real), rather than concepts which explain things according to separate, abstract criteria" (Young, 2013f: 162).

"He [Deleuze] takes Spinoza as his archetype for a philosopher of immanence, and with Guattari, he shows that the object of desire is not absent or 'beyond' the social world (that is, it does not arise from dream or phantasy); rather, desire is a process that is immanent *to* the social world" (Ibid.).

"Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, to something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject. In Spinoza immanence is not immanence to substance; rather, substance and modes are in immanence" (Young, 2013f: 162-163).

"…immanence signifies first of all the University of the attributes, the same attributes are affirmed of the substance they compose and of the modes they contain" (Deleuze, 1988: 52).

"…only God is a cause; […] the cause is essentially immanent; that is, it remains in itself in order to produce (as against the transitive cause), just as the effect remains in itself (as against the emanative cause)" (Deleuze, 1988: 54).

**Intensities**

"Intensity is a key notion in the Deleuze's philosophical project: it manifests its self as the intensive virtual of his ontology; as the affirmative and creative desire of his ethics and politics; as the affect of his aesthetic theory; as the motivation for his methodological decision to opt for transcendental empiricism; and as the guarantor of a theory of difference (different/citation) (Boundas, 2013: 133).

"Intensities are not entities, they are virtual yet real events whose mode of existence is to actualise themselves in states of affairs" (Boundas, 2013: 133–134).

"Placed in the context of the two sides of the Deleuzian ontology – the virtual and the actual – intensities catalyse the actualisation of the virtual, generating extension, linear, successive time, extended bodies and their qualities" (Boundas, 2013: 134).

"in his aesthetics Deleuze substitutes sensation for form, intensity is what is given priority. What the artist aims towards is indeed sensation. Sensation is intimately related to the intensity of the forces that it does not represent. Sensation is the affect, which is neither subjective nor objective; rather it is both at once: we become in sensation and at the same time something happens because of it" (Boundas, 2013: 135).

**Line of Flight**

"… *ligne de fuite,* also translated as *line of escape*" (Young, 2013g: 183).

"A 'line of flight' is a path of mutation precipitated through the <u>actualisation</u> of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit (or '<u>virtual</u>') that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond" (Lorraine, 2013b: 147).

"What Deleuze calls a *line of flight* is not a leap into another realm; it is a production within the realm of that from which it takes flight" (May, 2006: 128).

## Mindfulness (*Sati*)

"'mindfulness' is one of the five spiritual faculties and powers … one of the seven factors of enlightenment … and the seventh link of the Eightfold Path … and is, in its widest sense, one of those mental factors inseparably associated with all karmically wholesome … and karma-produced lofty … consciousness" (Ven, 2004: 180).

"the four 'foundations of mindfulness' [*satipatthāna*] … are: contemplation of body, feeling, mind, and mind-objects" (Nyanatiloka, 2004c: 181).

"A detailed treatment of this subject, so important for the practice of Buddhist mental culture, is given in the 2 Satipatthána Suttas … which at the start as well as the conclusion, proclaim the weighty words: "The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbána is the 4 foundations of mindfulness.

After these introductory words, and upon the question which these 4 are, it is said that the monk dwells in contemplation of the body, the feelings, the mind, and the mind-objects, ardent, clearly conscious and mindful, after putting away worldly greed and grief.

These 4 contemplations are in reality not to be taken as merely separate exercises, but on the contrary, at least in many cases, especially in the absorptions, as things inseparably associated with each other. Thereby the Satipathána Sutta forms an illustration of the way in which these 4 contemplations relating to the 5 groups of existence *(khandha,* q.v.) simultaneously come to be realised, and finally lead to insight into the impersonality of all existence.

111

(1) The contemplation of the body *(káyanupassaná)* consists of the following exercises: mindfulness with regard to in-and-outbreathing *(ánápánasati,* q.v.), minding the 4 postures *(iriyápatha,* q.v.), mindfulness and clarity of consciousness *(satisampajañña,* q.v.), reflection on the 32 parts of the body (s. *káyagatásati* and *asubha),*analysis of the 4 physical elements *(dhátuvavatthána,* q.v.), cemetery meditations *(sívathiká* q.v.).

(2) All feelings *(vedanánupassaná)* that arise in the meditator he clearly perceives, namely: agreeable and disagreeable feeling of body and mind, sensual and super-sensual feeling, indifferent feeling.

(3) He further clearly perceives and understands any state of consciousness or mind *(cittánupassaná),* whether it is greedy or not, hateful or not, deluded or not, cramped or distracted, developed or undeveloped, surpassable or unsurpassable, concentrated or unconcentrated, liberated or unliberated.

(4) Concerning the mind-objects *(dhammánupassaná),* he knows whether one of the five hindrances *(nívarana,* q.v.) is present in him or not, knows how it arises, how it is overcome, and how in future it does no more arise. He knows the nature of each of the 5 groups *(khandha,* q.v.), how they arise, and how they are dissolved. He knows the 12 bases of all mental activity *(áyatana* q.v.): the eye and the visual object, the ear and the audible object, mind and mind-object, he knows the fetters *(samyojana,* q.v.) based on them, knows how they arise, how they are overcome, and how in future they do no more arise. He knows whether one of the 7 factors of enlightenment *(bojjhanga,* q.v.) is present in him or not, knows how it arises, and how it comes to full development. Each of the Four Noble Truths *(sacca,* q.v.) he understands according to reality.

The 4 contemplations comprise several exercises, but the Satipatthána should not therefore be thought of as a mere collection of meditation subjects, any one of which may be taken out and practised alone. Though most of the exercises appear also elsewhere in the Buddhist scriptures, in the context of this Sutta they are chiefly intended for the

cultivation of mindfulness and insight, as indicated by the repetitive passage concluding each section of the Sutta (see below). The 4 contemplations cover all the 5 groups of existence *(khandha,* q.v.), because mindfulness is meant to encompass the whole personality. Hence, for the full development of mindfulness, the practice should extend to all 4 types of contemplation, though not every single exercise mentioned under these 4 headings need be taken up. A methodical practice of Satipatthána has to start with one of the exercises out of the group 'contemplation of the body', which will serve as the primary and regular subject of meditation. The other exercises of the group and the other contemplations are to be cultivated when occasion for them arises during meditation and in everyday life.

After each contemplation it is shown how it finally leads to insight-knowledge: "Thus with regard to his own body he contemplates the body, with regard to the bodies of others he contemplates the body, with regard to both he contemplates the body. He beholds how the body arises and how it passes away, beholds the arising and passing away of the body. 'A body is there' (but no living being, no individual, no woman, no man, no self, nothing that belongs to a self; neither a person, nor anything belonging to a person; Com.): thus he has established his attentiveness as far as it serves his knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world."" (Bhikshu, 2020).

**Multiplicity**

Multiplicity is one of Gilles Deleuze's grounding concepts to his philosophy and the basis for concepts such as assemblage, rhizome and 'concept' itself. A multiplicity is "a complex structure that does not reference a prior unity" and are "not parts of a greater whole that have been fragmented, and cannot be considered manifold expressions of a single concept or transcendent unity." Based on this understanding, "Deleuze opposed the dyad One/Many, in all its forms, with multiplicity." It is important to think about multiplicity in its "substantiative form – a multiplicity – rather than as an adjective – a multiplicity of something." On these terms everything is a multiplicity (Roffe, 2013: 181–182).

"In D&G's characterisation of the rhizome, the manner in which subjects are not unified with, or subjected to, a dominating signifier, power, object, or any supplementary dimension (rendering a collective assemblage of enunciation that expresses desire)" (Young, 2013a: 212).

"Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudo-multiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in this subject. […] A multiplicity as neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combinations therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 8).

"… there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a mechanic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012: 26).

**Rhizome**

"'Rhizome' describes the connections that occur between the most disparate and the most similar of objects, places and people; the strange chains of events that link people: the feeling of 'six degrees of separation', the sense of 'having been here before' and assemblages of bodies. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'rhizome' draws from this etymological meaning, where 'rhizo' means combining form and the biological term 'rhizome' describes a form of plant that can extend itself through its underground horizontal tuber-like root system and develop new plants" (Colman, 2013a: 232).

"The real implications of the concept, however, are developed utilising the language of botany to introduce the reader into *A Thousand Plateaus* (and in fact to discuss the status of books) before listing six principal characteristics of the riser: 1) connection (vs. order or model), 2) heterogeneity of coding, where semiotic chains connect to other assemblages, 3) multiplicity in determination, magnitude, or dimension (vs. unity in subject or object), 4) a-signifying ruptures of segmentation, stratification, and territory, 5) cartographic production (vs. *tracing*), 6) 'decalcomania', in that any tracing (s with a decal that is transferred onto another medium) would in fact 'be put back on the map'

because apparent reproduction gives way to asymmetry or difference. With this as a starting point, the concept is elaborated throughout their text" (Young, 2013b: 262).

"A tree has particular roots that embed themselves in the soil at a particular place and give rise to branches and then leaves in a particular way. It is a system of derivation: first the roots, then the trunk, then the leaves. The roots are embedded here and not elsewhere. The branches are bound to the trunk, the leaves to the branches. Rhizomes do not work that way. Kudzu is a rhizome. It can shoot out roots from any point, leaves and stems from any point. It has no beginning: no roots. It has no middle: no trunk. And it has no end: no leaves. It is always in the middle, always in process. There is no particular shape it has to take and no particular territory to which it is bound. It can connect from any part of itself to a tree, to the ground, to a fence, to other plants, to itself" (May, 2006: 133–134). This is not to necessarily dismiss the analogy of the tree root system, but to present a new way of thinking through the rhizome analogy (Sweet, 2021).

"Rather than reality being thought of and written as an ordered series of structural wholes, where semiotic connections or taxonomies can be compiled from complete root to tree-like structure, the story of the world and its components, Deleuze and Guattari propose, can be communicated through the rhizomatic operations of things – movements, intensities and polymorphous formations" (Colman, 2013a: 234).

"The rhizome conceives how everything and everybody – all aspects of concrete, abstract and virtual entities and activities – can be seen as multiple in their interrelational movements with other things and bodies" (Ibid.: 233).

"Rhizomatic writing, being, and/or becoming is not simply a process that assimilates things, rather it is a milieu of perpetual transformation. The relational milieu that the rhizome creates gives form to evolutionary environments where relations alter the course of how flows and collective desire develop" … "The rhizome is a powerful way of thinking without recourse to analogy or binary constructions. To think in terms of the rhizome is to reveal the multiple ways that you might approach any thought, activity, or

a concept – what you always bring with you are the many and various ways of entering any body, of assembling thought and action through the world" (Ibid.: 235).

**Virtual**

"In Deleuze's ontology, the virtual and the actual are two mutually exclusive, yet jointly sufficient, characterisations of the real. The actual/real are states of affairs, bodies, bodily mixtures and individuals. The virtual/real are in corporate events and singularity is on a plane of consistency, belonging to the pure past – the past that can never be fully present. Without being or resembling the actual, the virtual nonetheless has the capacity to bring about actualization and yet the virtual never coincides or can be identified with its actualization" (Boundas, 2013: 300).

"While we normally associate the virtual with a 'reality' engendered by computers, 'virtual reality' would be a tautology in Deleuze's terms: the virtual is not another plane of reality that exists above all beyond this reality; rather, the virtual both *composes* reality and, in itself, contains *all possible* realities. This 'differentiated' virtuality cannot be perceived or felt because in order for these realities to be conflated (or 'co-implicated'), they cannot all occur simultaneously in regular time or space. Thus the virtual is 'real', but that which we do perceive and feel from it is 'actual'" (Young, 2013d: 330).

"After studying Bergson's notion of the pure past, Proust's immemorial memory, and Nietzsche's is eternal return, Deleuze insists that the actualization of the virtual is not the 'realization' of possibilities; there is not, in other words, some omniscient creator, à la Leibniz, that would realise the best possible world. Nor does the actual world somehow 'resemble' a more perfect virtual world (à la Plato). Rather, if the past is infinite, all possibilities have essentially already occurred: the question is whether they can be 'thought', and whether they will be 'actualized'; it is in this sense that virtual concepts retain the infinite and inclusive whole of possibility (which distinguishes them from scientific variables)" (Ibid.).

*Also see:* Actuality/Actual/Actualization

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Addendum A

*Thoughts Think Themselves* was exhibited at SMAC Gallery in Stellenbosch from 4 December 2021 until 5 February 2022. The following images are of the exhibited works, installation images and a floorplan of the gallery.

List of works



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (1)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (1).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (2)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (2)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 200 x 180 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (3).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (3).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen . 200 x 180 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (4)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (4).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Oil, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 180 x 200 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (5)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, Oil, and Shellac on Hemp. 133 x 133 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (6).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Oil, Acrylic, Shellac and Sweat on Hemp. 133 x 133 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (7).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, Oil, and Shellac on Hemp. 133 x 133.5 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (7).* 2021. Golf Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, Oil, and Shellac on Hemp. 133 x 133.5 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (8).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (8)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (9).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (9).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

138



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (10).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.
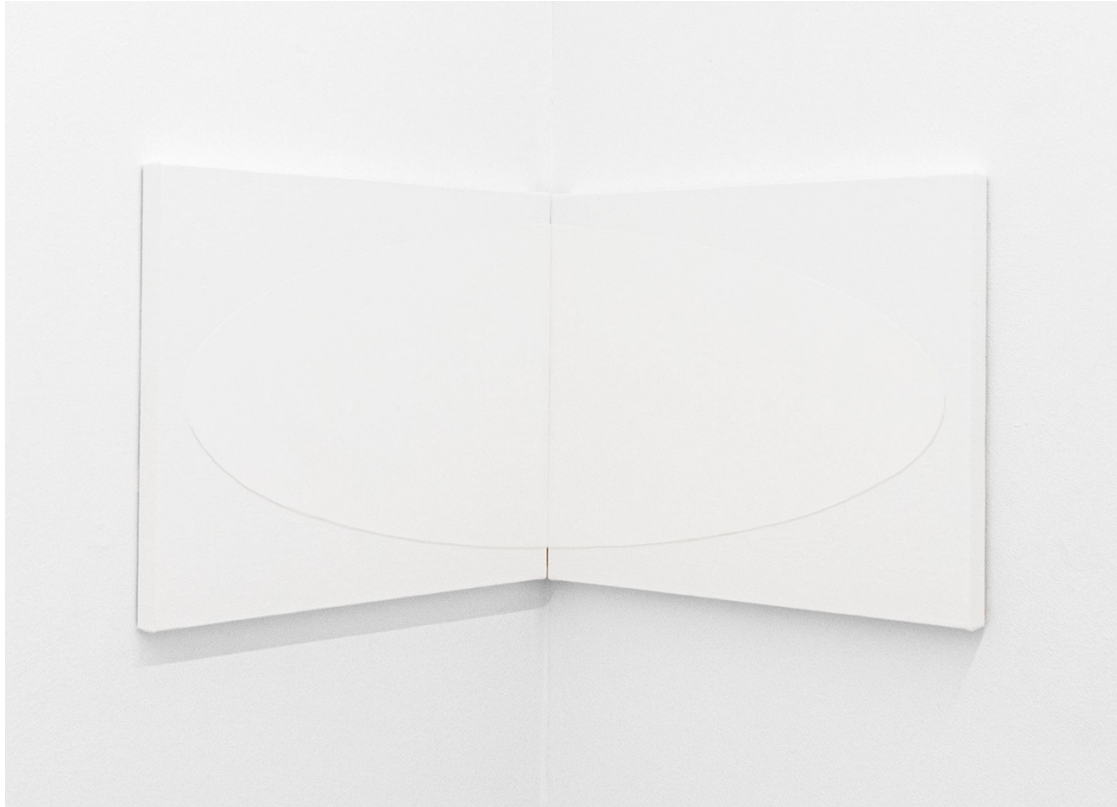
139



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (10).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (11).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen.
26 x 20 cm.

141



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (11).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic, and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 26 x 20 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (12).* 2021. Gesso on Belgian linen. 2 panels, 40 x 60 cm each.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (13).* 2021. 23.75 Carat Gold, Bole and Gesso on Wood. 34.5 x 30.5 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (14).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen.
50 x 40cm.

145

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (15).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

146



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (16)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (17)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen.
50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (18)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (19)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (20)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (21)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (22)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

153



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (23)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

154



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (24)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (25)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (26)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

157



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (27)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

158



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (28).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (29).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (30)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (31).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

162

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (32)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen. 50 x 40cm.

162

163



Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (33)*. 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen.
50 x 40cm.

163

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (35).* 2021. Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate and Shellac on Aluminium Composite. 150 x 130cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (36)*. 2021. Gold Leaf, Sweat, Imitate and Shellac on Aluminum Composite._130 x 150 cm.

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (37).* 2021. Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate and Shellac on Aluminium Composite._150 x 167 cm.

166

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (38).* 2021. Gold Leaf Imitate, Sweat and Shellac on Aluminium Composite._170 x 150 cm.

167

Pierre Vermeulen. *Untitled (39).* 2021. Gold Leaf, Sweat, Imitate and Shellac on Aluminum Composite._60 X 50 cm.

Installation images



Installation of room Sala Grande



Installation of room Sala Grande

Installation of room Sala Grande



Installation of room Sala Grande

Installation of room Sala Grande



Installation of room Sala Grande

Installation of room Sala Grande



Installation of room Sala Grande

172

Installation of Viewing Room



Installation of Viewing Room

Installation of room Aula I



Installation of room Aula I

Installation of room Aula I



Installation of room Aula I

Installation of room Aula I



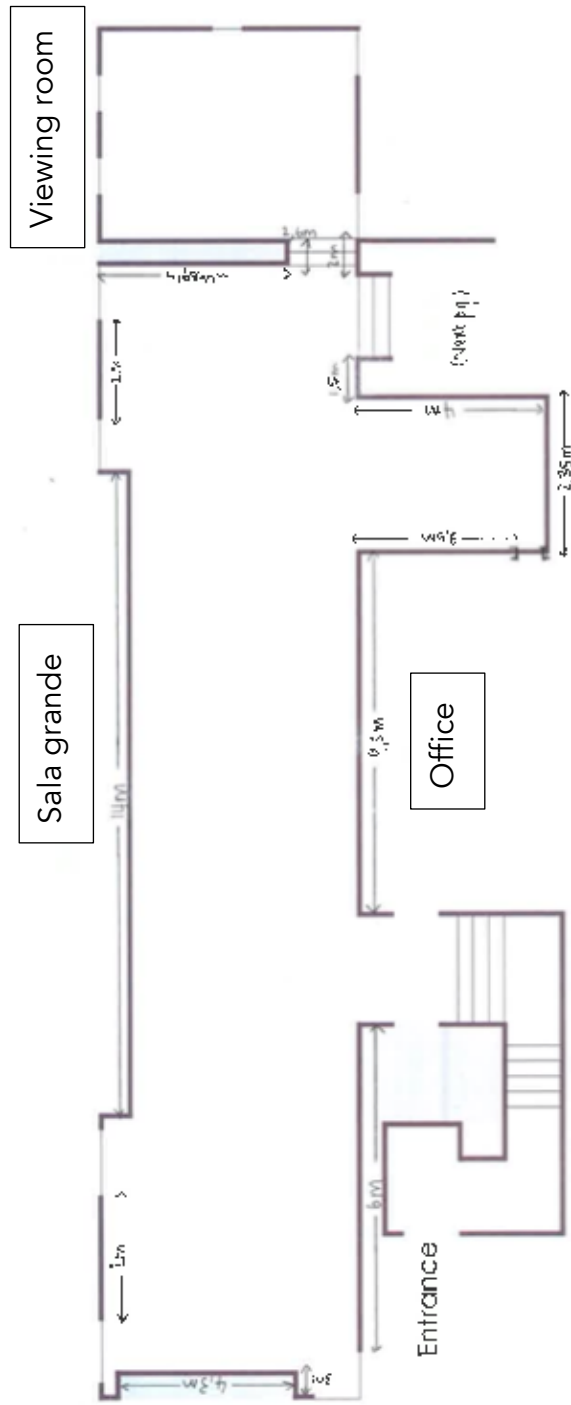Installation of room Aula II

Installation of room Aula II
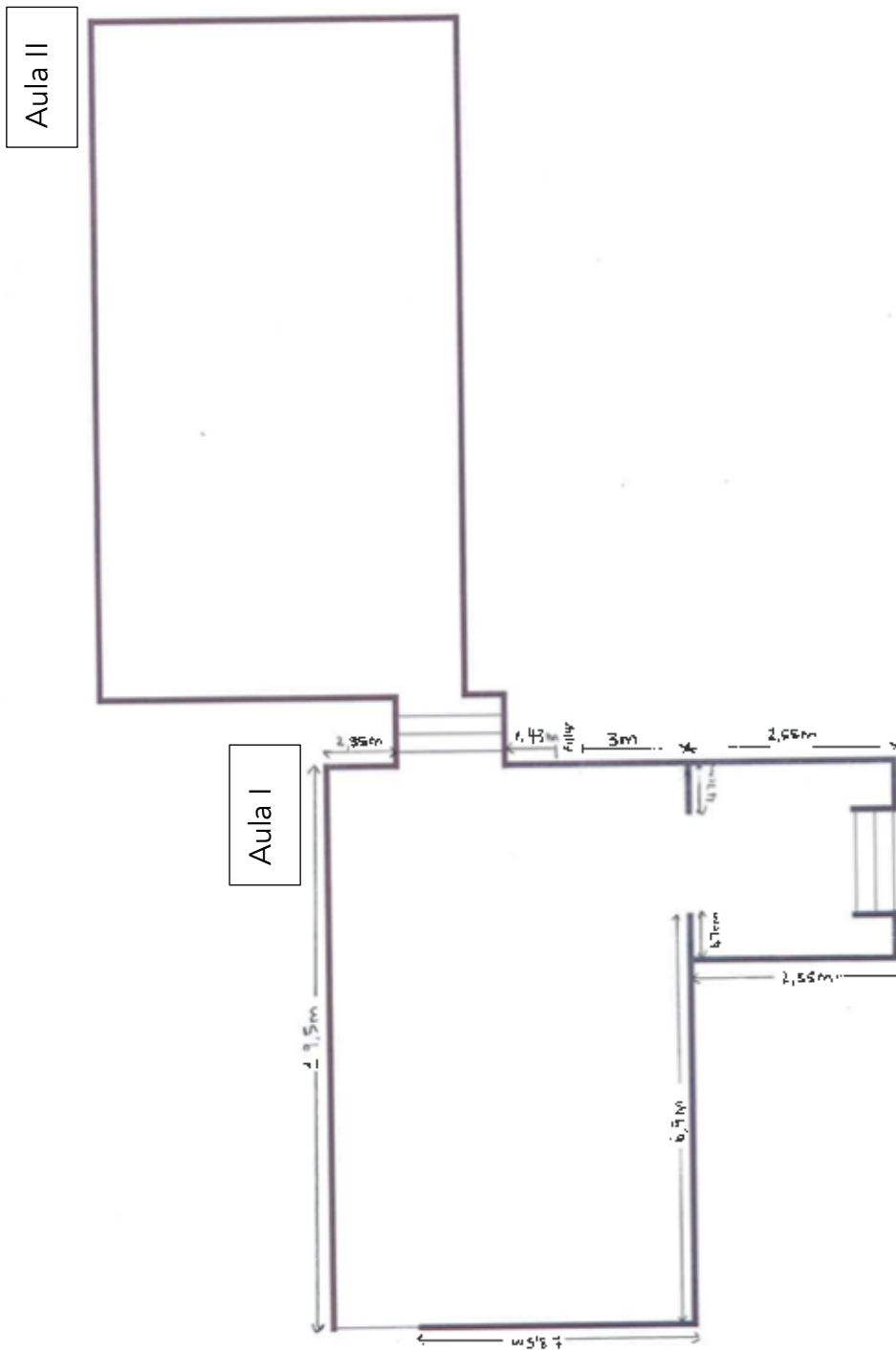


Installation of room Aula II

Installation of room Aula II

Gallery Floorplan

Aula II

Aula I

2,35m

1,43m

3m

2,55m

9,5m

6,9m

2,55m

7,8,5m

180