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An investigation into a concept of painting via an experimental process of practice-led methods, including an artistic trial of Grounded Theory Method coding, led by a series of painting experiments that focus on the significance of ground

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**An investigation into a concept of painting via an experimental process of practice-led methods, including an artistic trial of Grounded Theory Method coding, led by a series of painting experiments that focus on the significance of ground.**

Puy Soden

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

July 2019

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## **Abstract**

This practice-led investigation into a concept of painting has sought to expose thoroughly the execution and analysis of a series of painting experiments. Pursuing an early hunch that discoveries were to be made via a close engagement with the ground, the painting experiments increasingly focused on an exploration of various literal, physical, historical and metaphorical grounds including: ground-based materials; grounds as sites; and ground in painting as in the figure-ground function. British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes' writing has been used to contextualise the painting experiments' particular focus on a search for a sense of grounding, therefore becoming Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs).

Recent activities and outputs within the discourse on painting as an expanded discipline continue to concentrate on the production of the autonomous artwork in relation to issues including representation, image, colour, form and the viewer's participation. This research project has focused on a process of experimental methods to investigate a painting practice to which these issues are not central. My main aim to expose, focus and analyse iteratively a practice-led painting process has driven a development of methods, incorporating the trialling of a component of Grounded Theory Method (GTM): coding. This artistic interpretation of GTM coding, a specific means of analysis originating in a qualitative research method in the social sciences, has enabled a thorough, exposed investigation of the experimental process. The research findings displayed in the Huddersfield studio show how the GTM coding trials have become an integral part of the artwork rather than an objective, evaluative add-on once the practice has been completed.

The thesis consists of three interdependent parts: the image book; the displayed studio findings; and the written submission. The Image book and the written submission are bound in a single volume. The Image book contains digital images of the displayed studio findings.

## **Image book**

## Image book contents

### Stage one: early painting experiments

#### 1. Exploring touch, resonance and grounding

Experiment group	Experiment finding /image sheet description	Page(s)
Early painting experiments	<i>Push Up</i> , 2014-2015. Huddersfield.	12-13
	<i>La Chair</i> , 2014-2015. Huddersfield.	14-15
	<i>Sack</i> , 2014-2015. Huddersfield.	16-17
	Several findings, 2014-2015. Huddersfield.	18
	<i>Sack 2</i> , 2014-2015. Huddersfield.	19
	Chalk paint trial, 2015. Puyseggeny.	20
	Casein paint trial 1, 2015. Huddersfield.	21
	Casein paint trial 2, 2015. Puyseggeny.	22
	'Good' and 'bad' paint, 2015. Huddersfield.	23
	'Bad' paint 1, 2015. Puyseggeny.	24
	'Bad' paint 2, 2015-2016. Puyseggeny and Huddersfield.	25
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	'Bad' paint 4, 2015. Puyseggeny.	28
'Bad' paint 5, 2015. Puyseggeny.	29	
Tempera limit testing	<i>Lines towards the heart</i> , 2015, R. Merry Session. Périgueux, France.	30
	Tempera limit test, 2015. Puyseggeny.	31
	Tempera lab, 2015. Huddersfield.	32-33
	<i>Tell me how your feet feel</i> , 2015. Huddersfield.	34-35
Industrial Unit Collaboration	Other than colour, 2016. Mirfield.	36-38

#### 2. U N N A W A Y painting experiments

Experiment group	Experiment finding /image sheet description	Page(s)
<i>The Curtain Parts</i>	Experiment for <i>The Curtain Parts</i> , 2015. Huddersfield.	39
	<i>The Curtain Parts</i> , 2015. Huddersfield.	40
	<i>Where's the 'Ouch?</i> , 2013. Huddersfield.	41
<i>Nothing</i>	Experiment for <i>Nothing</i> , 2015. Huddersfield.	42-43
	<i>Nothing</i> , 2015. Huddersfield.	44
<i>...And To Dust We All Return</i>	Experiment for <i>...And To Dust We All Return</i> , 2016. Huddersfield.	45,47-48
	<i>...And To Dust We All Return</i> , 2016. Huddersfield.	46

**Stage two: becoming Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs)**

**1. GPEs 1-4 and other experiments focusing on grounding**

<b>Experiment group</b>	<b>Experiment finding /image sheet description</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
<i>GPEs 1-3</i>	<i>GPE 1, 2016, Huddersfield</i>	50,68
	<i>GPE 2, 2016, Puysegeney</i>	51
	<i>GPE 3, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney</i>	52
	<i>USE LOVE, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney - Lascaux - Huddersfield</i>	53
<i>Groundworks</i>	<i>Groundsocks, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney</i>	54
	<i>Groundsocks, 2017, Dartmoor - Lascaux</i>	55
	<i>Groundsuit, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney</i>	56
	<i>Groundsuit, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney - Huddersfield</i>	57
	<i>Groundworks, 2016, Giverny - Puysegeney</i>	58-59
	<i>Groundbook, 2016, Giverny</i>	60-61
<i>GPEs</i>	<i>GPE 4, 2016, Puysegeney</i>	62

**2. Groundworks: displayed findings from the stage two experiments listed above**

<b>Experiment group</b>	<b>Experiment finding /image sheet description</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
<i>Groundworks</i>	<i>Groundworks, 2016, Huddersfield</i>	63-67

**Stage three: Grounding Painting Experiments France (GPEFs) and an interpretation of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding**

**1. Preliminary coding trials**

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	Coding wall, 2015 - 2016, Huddersfield	71
Second coding trial	GPE 1 coded field notes, 2016, Huddersfield	72-75

**2. GPEFs**

<b>Experiment group</b>	<b>Experiment finding /image sheet description</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
GPEFs, 2017.	<i>GPE-Chalk</i> . Ville-Dommange, Reims, France ↔ Huddersfield	76-79
<i>GPEFs 1-30, 2017.</i>	<i>GPEF 1</i> , Puyseggeny	80-81
	<i>GPEF 2</i> , Puyseggeny	82
	<i>GPEF 3</i> , Puyseggeny	83
	<i>GPEF 4</i> , Lascaux - Puyseggeny	84
	<i>GPEF 5</i> , Puyseggeny	85
	<i>GPEF 6</i> , Puyseggeny	86
	<i>GPEF 7</i> , Puyseggeny	87
	<i>GPEF 8</i> , Puyseggeny	88
	<i>GPEF 9</i> , Puyseggeny	89
	<i>GPEF 10</i> , Puyseggeny	90
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	<i>GPEF 12</i> , Puyseggeny	92
	<i>GPEF 13</i> , Puyseggeny	93
	<i>GPEF 14</i> , Puyseggeny	94
	<i>GPEF 15</i> , Puyseggeny	95
	<i>GPEF 16</i> , Puyseggeny	96-97
	<i>GPEF 17</i>	98
	<i>GPEF 18</i> , Puyseggeny	99
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	<i>GPEF 24</i> , Lascaux	105
	<i>GPEF 25</i> , Lascaux	106
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	<i>GPEF 28</i> , Lascaux	109-110

	<i>GPEF 29</i> , Puysegeney	111
	<i>GPEF 30</i> , Puysegeney	112
Interpretation of GTM coding	White field note book and coding continuum, 2017, Puysegeney	113
	Coding continuum, 2017, Puysegeney	114
	<i>GPEFs 1-30</i> grids-on-grounds, 2017, Huddersfield	115-129
	Coding painting, 2017, Huddersfield	130-131
	<i>GPEFs 1-30</i> and final coding trial, 2017, Huddersfield	132-138, 154-157
	White field note book, coded field notes, <i>GPEFs 1-30</i> , 2017, Huddersfield	139-146
	Overview analysis, 2017, Huddersfield	147-148
	Plan chest contents	149-151
	Final reduction	152-153

## **Stage one: early painting experiments**







*Push-up*, 2014-2015, studio wall, ready-made frame with glass, oil-based floor paint, 23 x 28cm. Huddersfield.

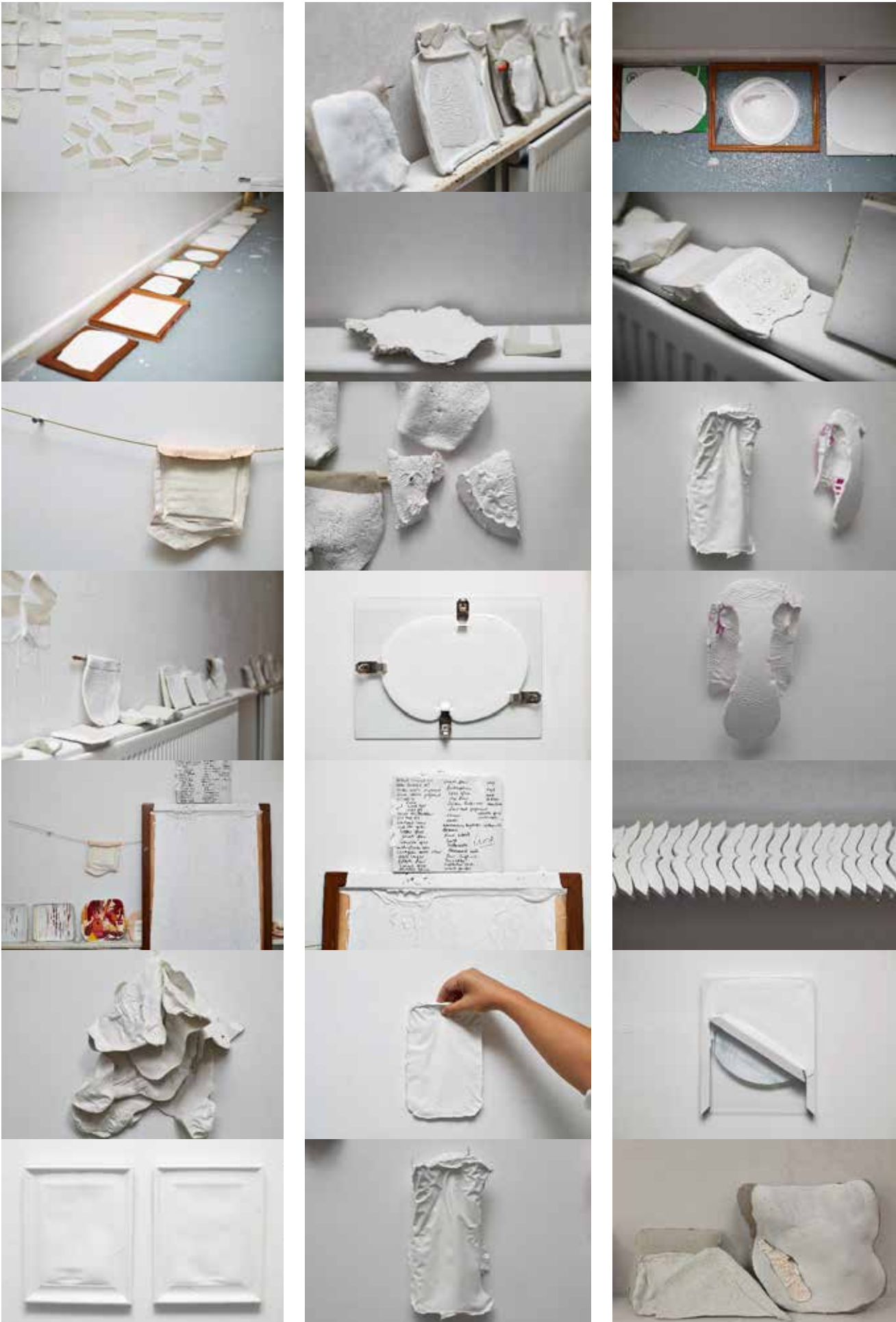








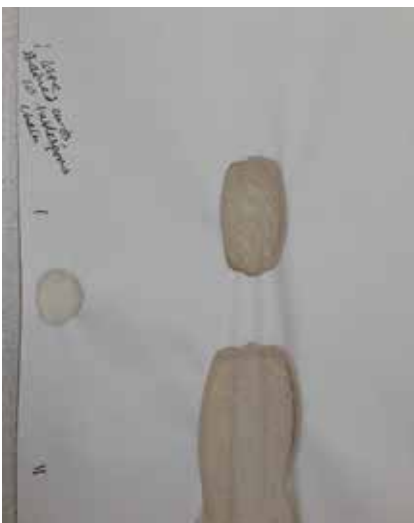
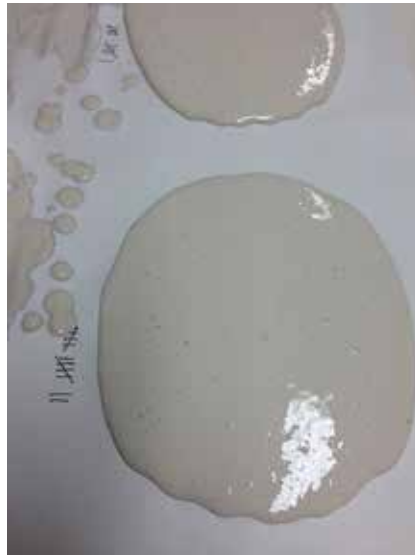






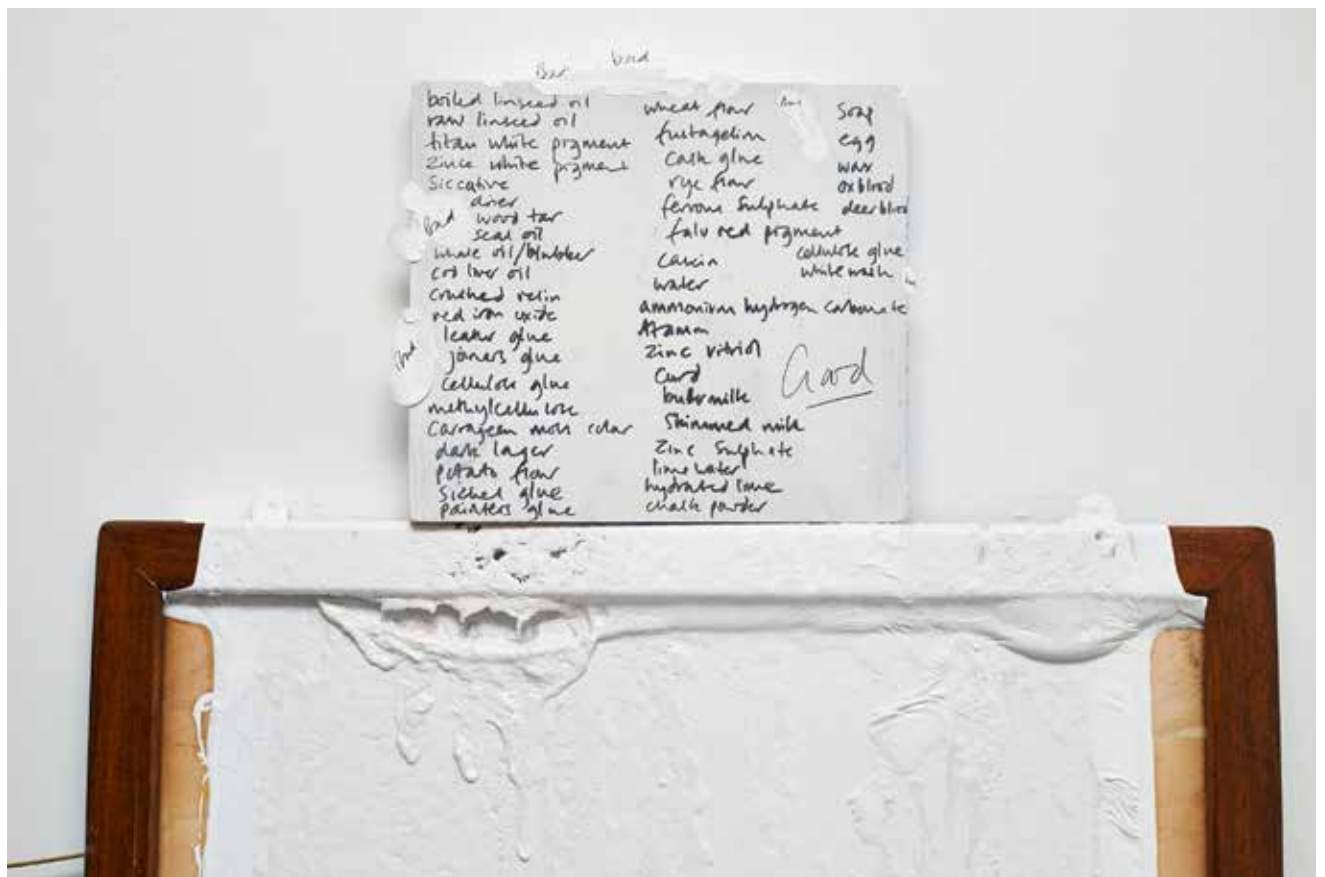
















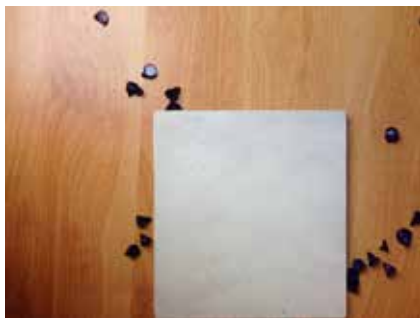
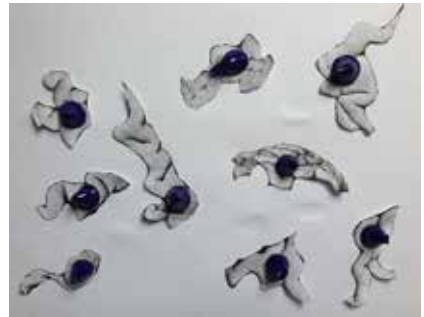
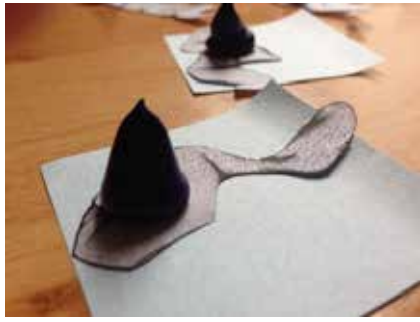


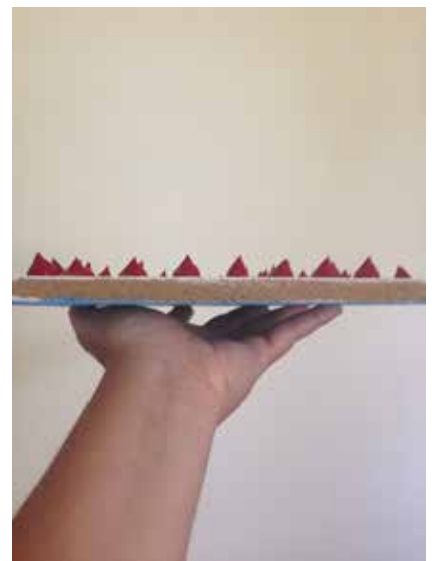












'Bad' paint 5, 2015, acrylic ready-made paint, emulsion-primed wooden support. Puysssegenny.

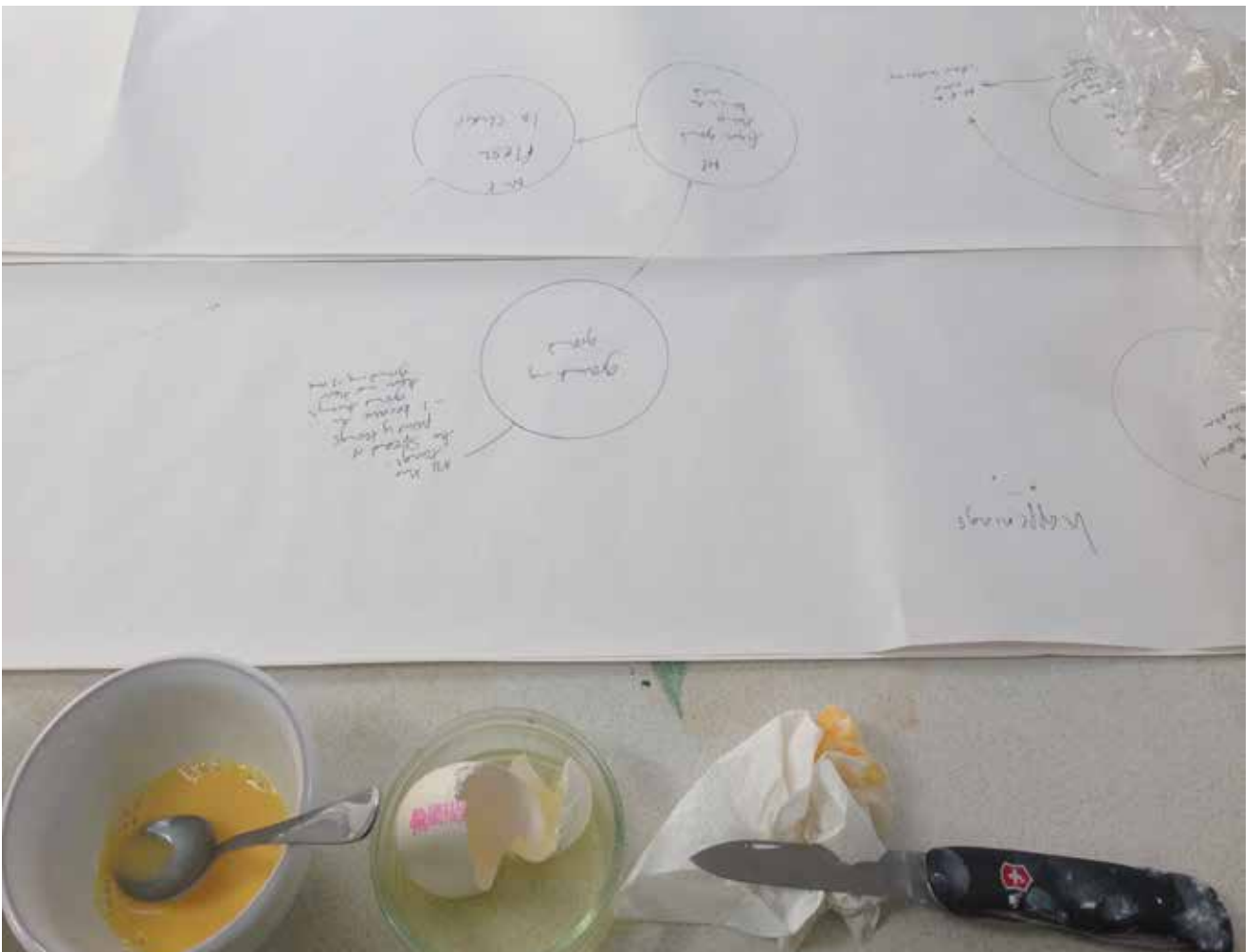


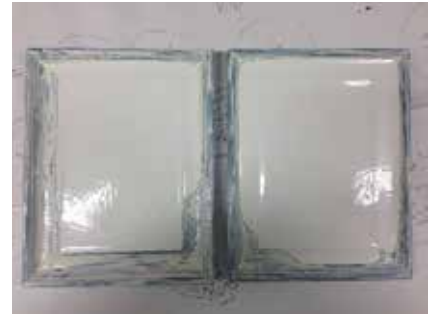
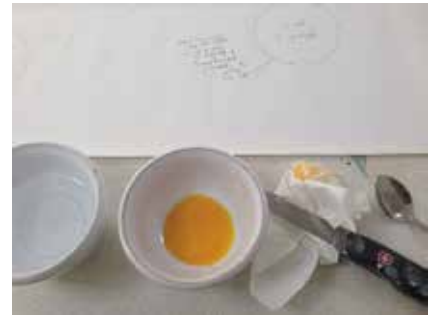










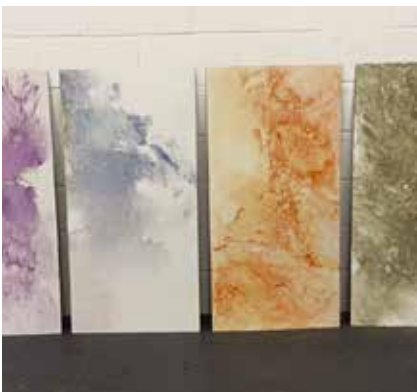
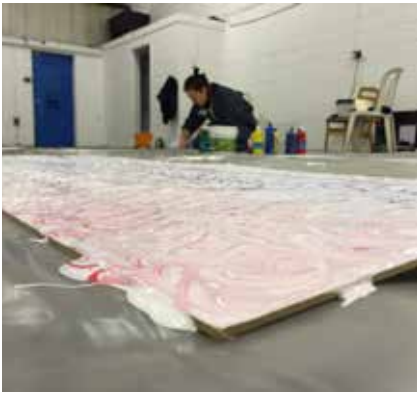






*Tell me how your feet feel*, 2015-2016, wood ready-made frames, oil-based floor paint, egg tempera, 41 x 24cm.

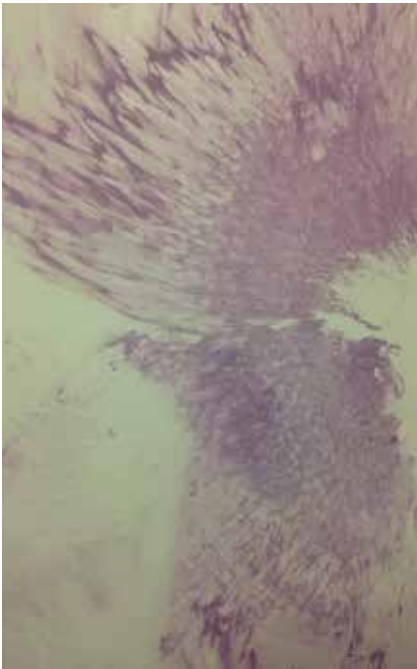
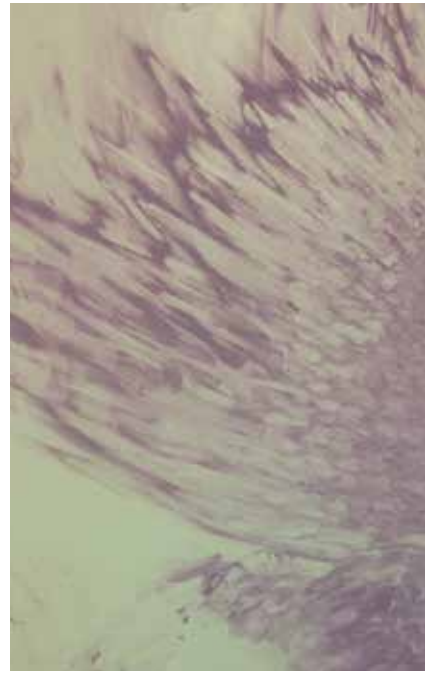
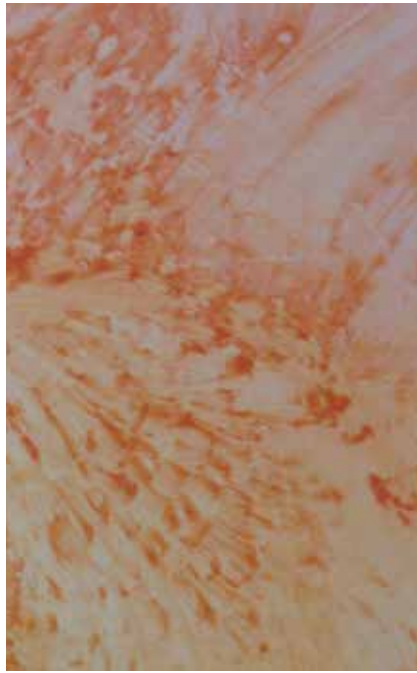


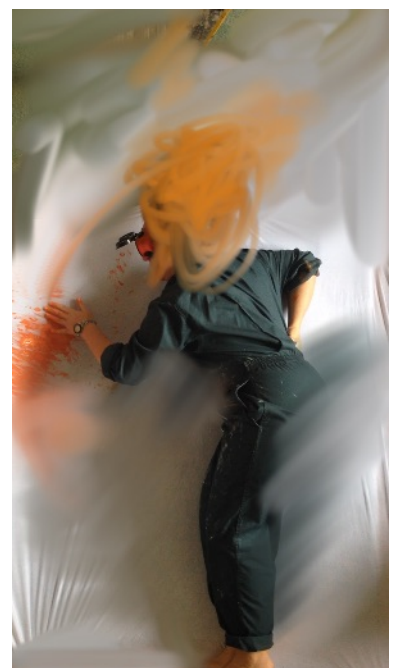
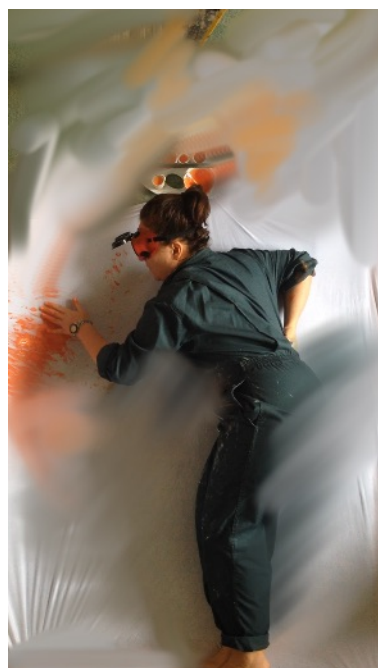
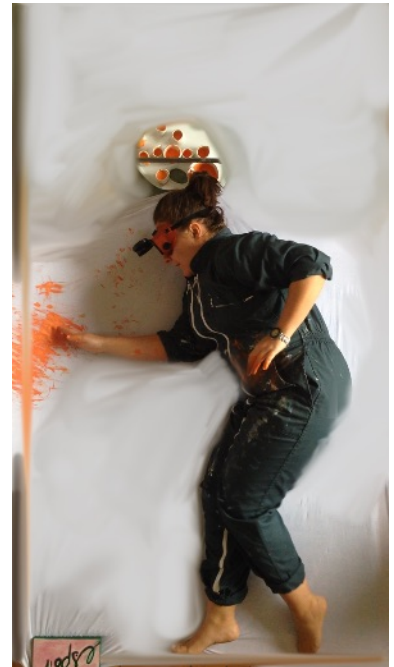
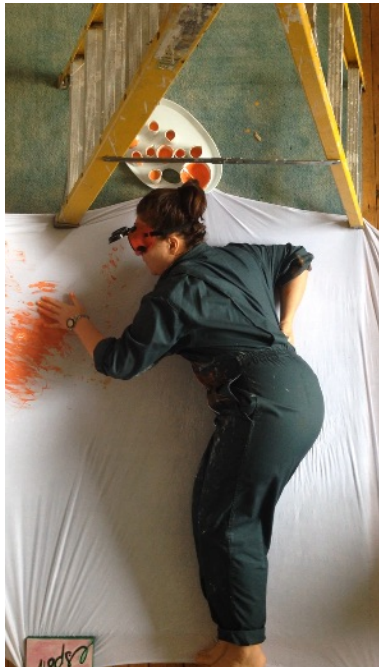




Other than colour, 2016, industrial unit collaboration. Mirfield.



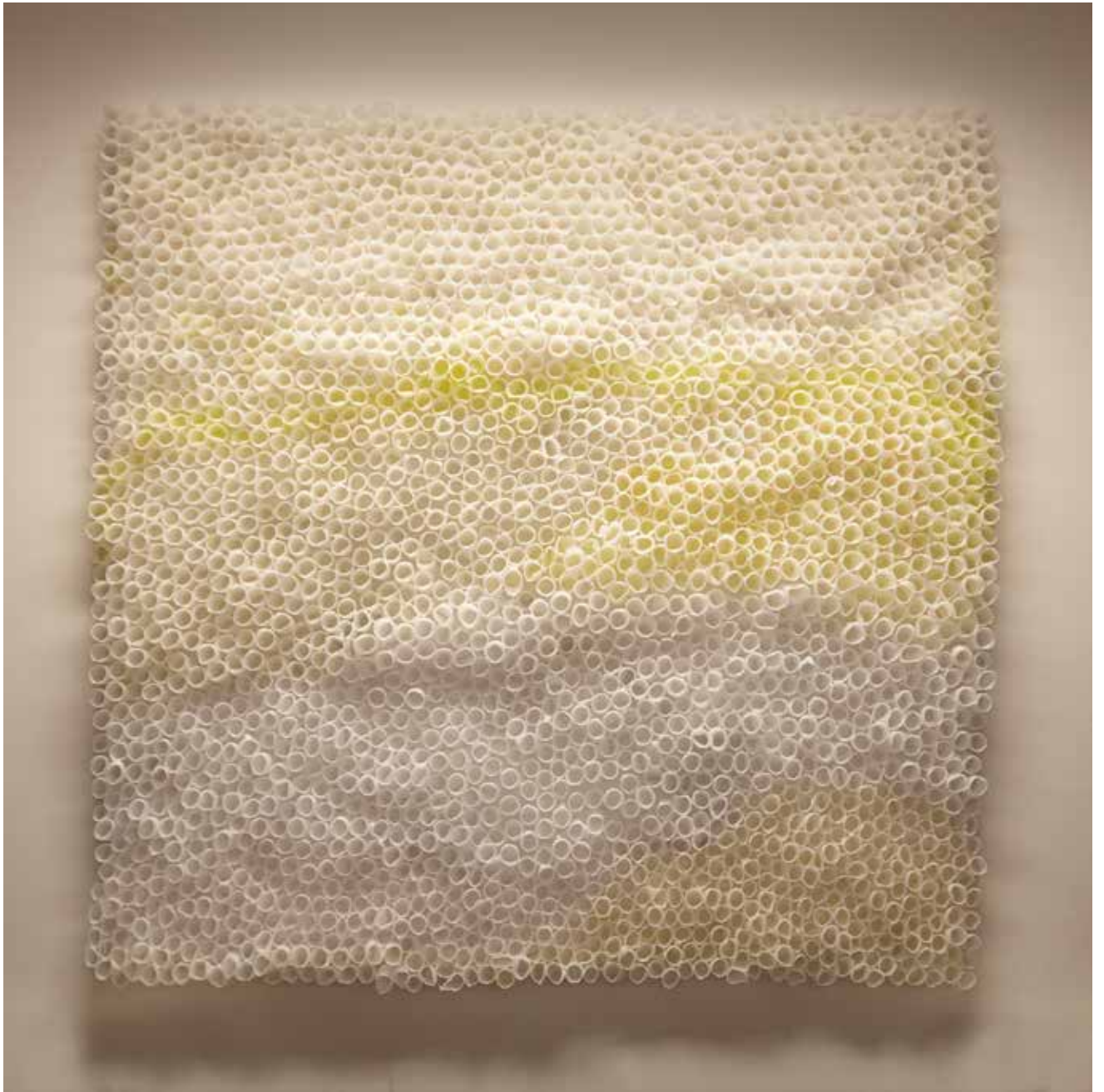




Experiment for *The Curtain Parts*, November 7-13, 2015, U N N A W A Y, 9 Market Walk, Huddersfield.



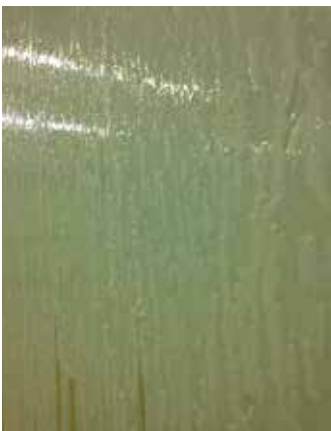
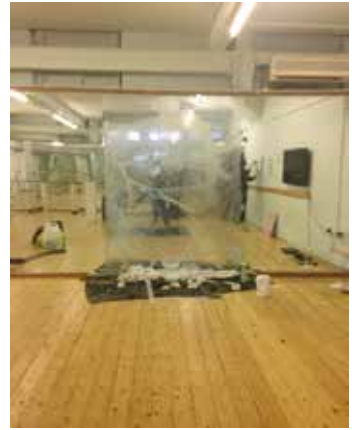
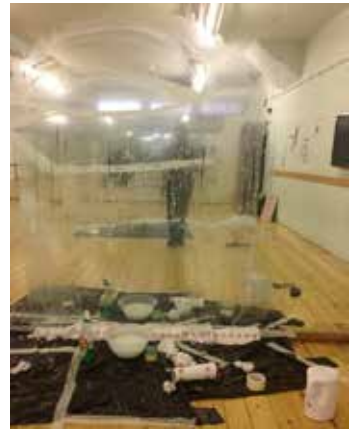




*Where's the 'Ouch?', 2013, studio wall, candle wax, 95 x 95cm. Huddersfield.*





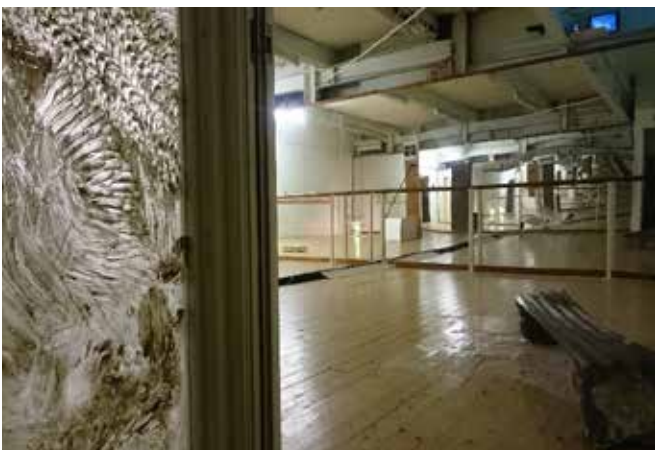




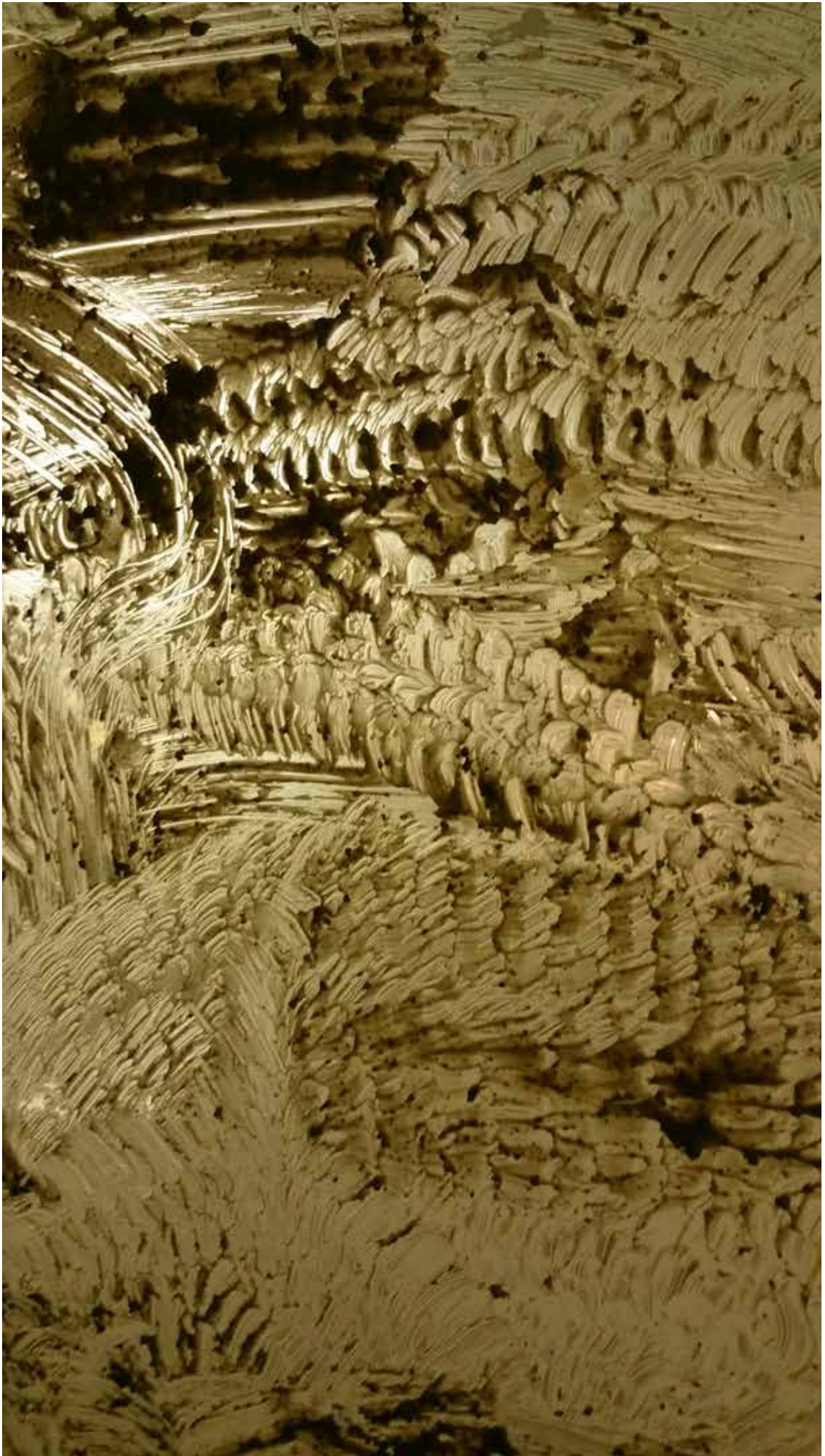












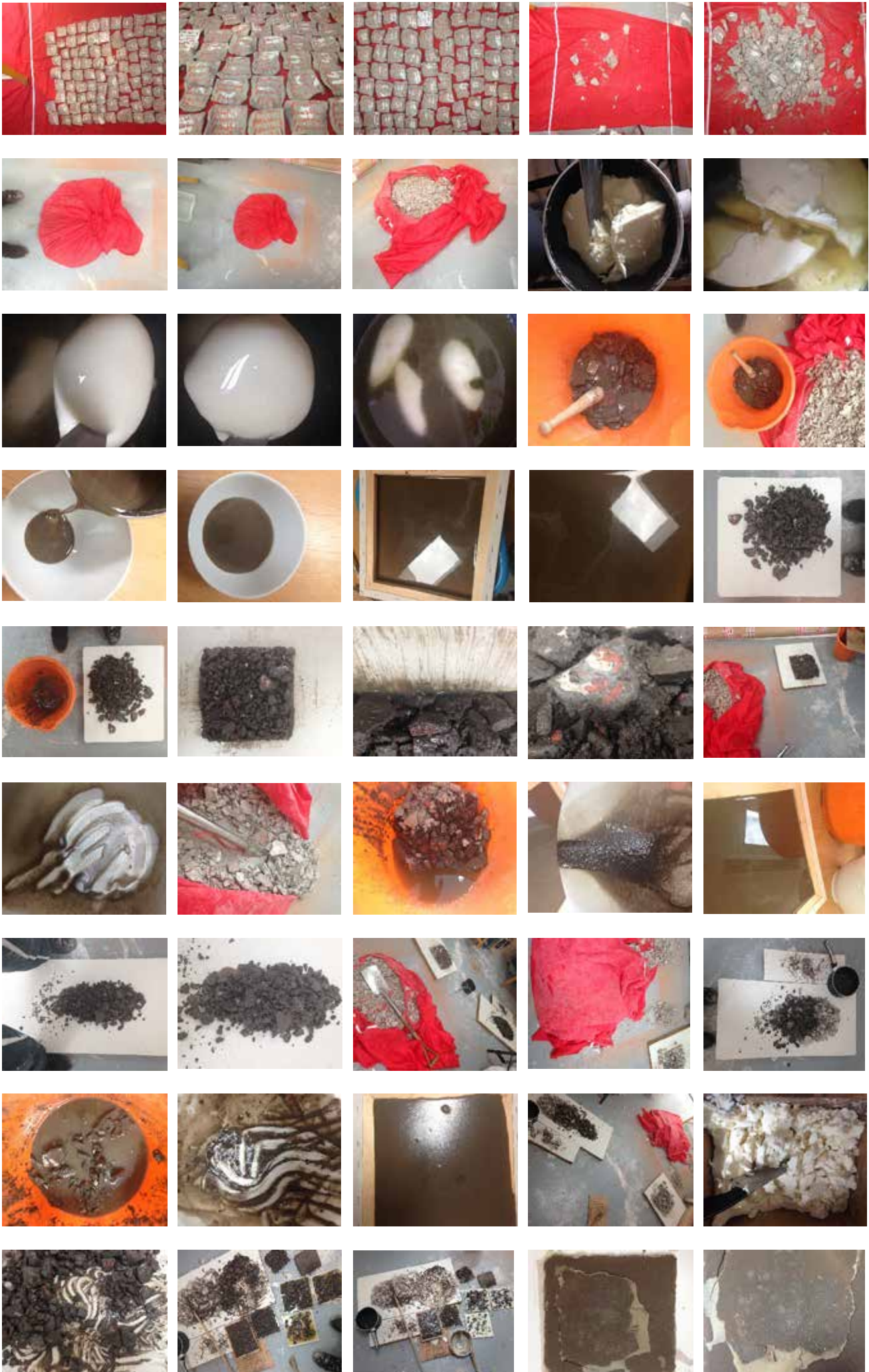
Experiment for ...*And To Dust We All Return*, Jan 23-Feb 5, 2016, U N N A W A Y, 9 Market Walk, Huddersfield.







## **Stage two: becoming Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs)**



GPE 1, 2016, clay, red synthetic fabric, palm oil, receptacles. Huddersfield.





GPE 2, 2016, paper ash, linseed oil, receptacles, stretched canvas, paper, Puysegney ground.Puysegney.





GPE 3, 2016, Giverny ground, childhood drawing, glass, receptacles, wood, stretched canvas, shower curtain. Giverny-Puysegney.





*USE LOVE*, June 23, 2016, wood, shower curtain, linseed oil, Giverny dirt, salad dressing tube, Lascaux dirt.  
18 x 20cm. Giverny-Puysegney-Lascaux-Huddersfield.









Groundsocks, 2017, white socks, conference participants, Dartmoor ground, Lascaux frame. Dartmoor-Lascaux.









*Groundsuit*, 2016. Giverny-Puysssegney-Huddersfield.

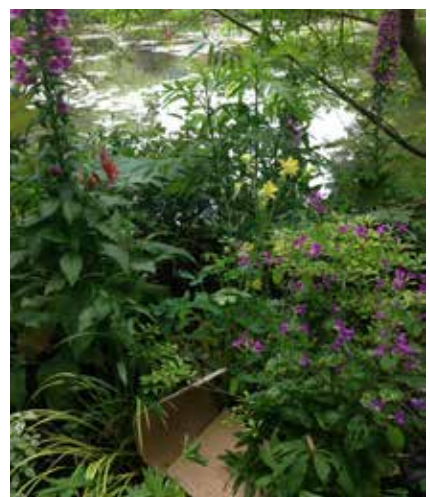












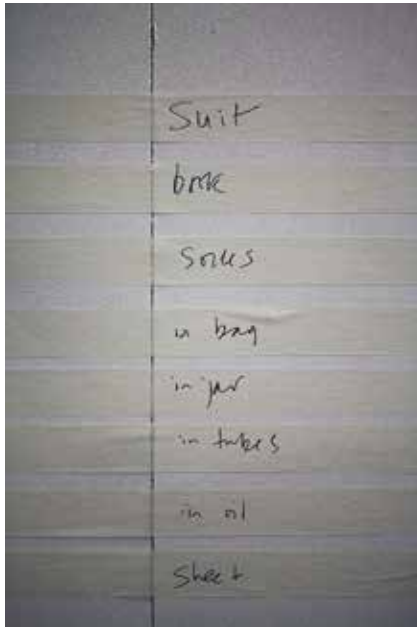






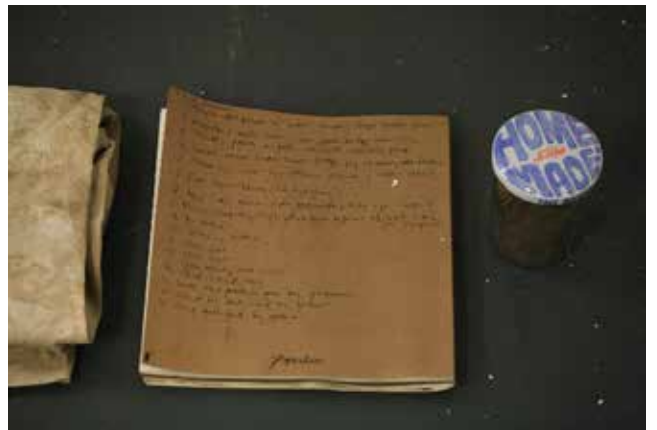
















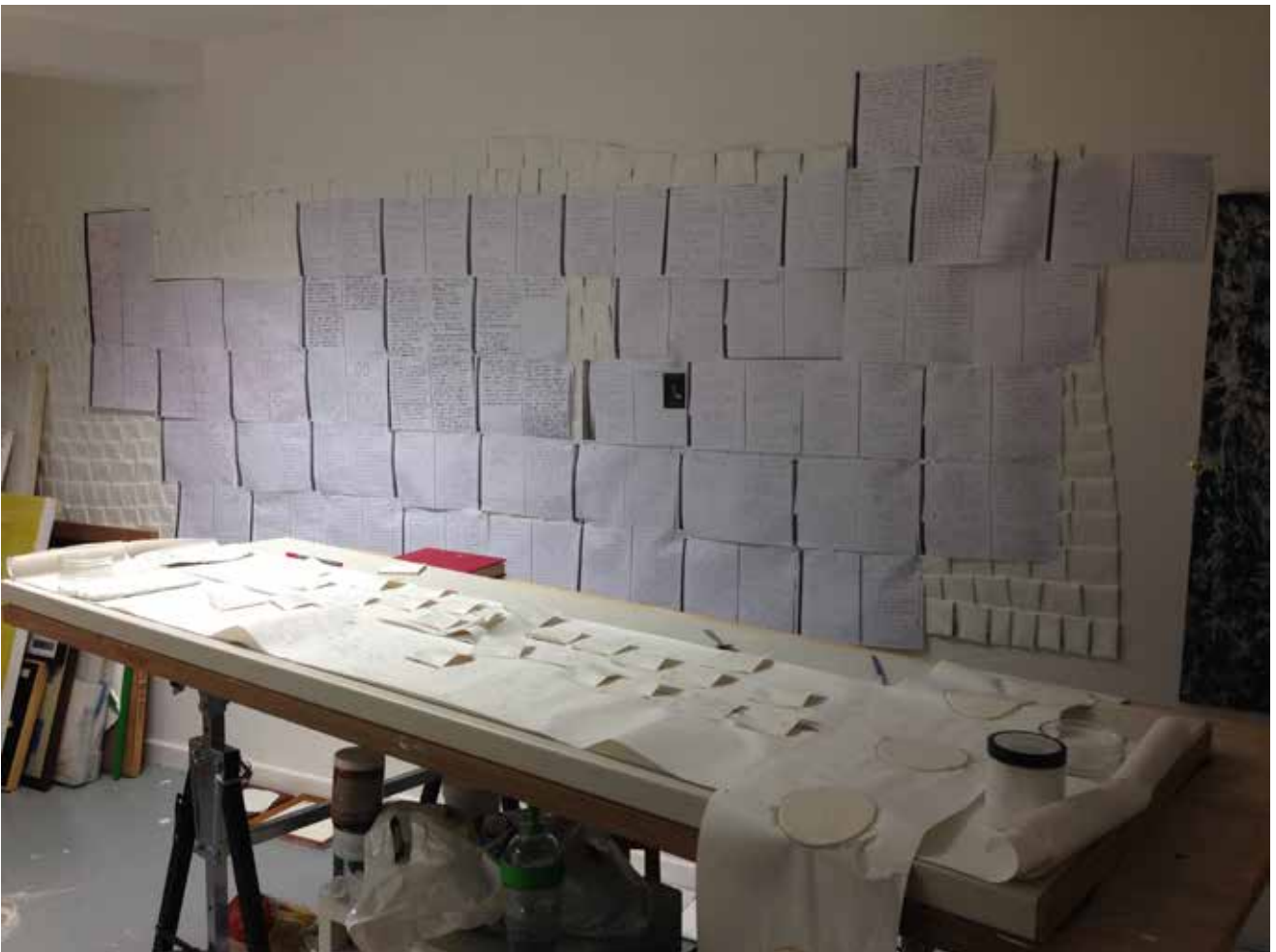






**Stage three: Grounding Painting Experiments-France (GPEFs) with an interpretation of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding ideas**







First coding trial, coding wall, 2015-2016. Huddersfield.



DISCOVERY

DOMESTIC / INTERNATIONAL  
KITCHEN / INDUSTRIAL

GPE1 field notes continued

16 May 16

14:26

methods

openness

violent + busy

demoted or promoted?  
love of series

remembrance enquiry

work heavy

digging outdoors

PAINT

Isn't this what painting actually is? places to go up or out? MATRIX

MATRIX

Context

demonstrating / cooking / homely

building site / earth / destruction

international / tropical / foreign / food / cosmetics

interest combinations - origins, locations, settings

Been melting palm oil in a kitchen pan and then mixing it with the rubble. Did not know where it was going. Discovered that the powder of the smashed clay transferred to the molten fat - a carrier and a pigment. The fat therefore holds the dust of the experiment and the dust of the clay pieces. A paint has been made. Wanted to pour it somewhere. Found unused ready-made canvas frames - perfect for holding the molten matter. Going to make several. Use of domestic utensils and vessels. Red material holding the rubble and orange bucket for mixing it with the liquid fat. It's easy to melt. Satisfying. Is there any sense of grounding so far? There is a sense of ground in the objects made. Excavation. Archaeology. Broken vases from the past.

16:37

KITCHEN + BUILDING / EXCAVATION SITE

Several pan loads of oil have been mixed with the rubble. A spade has been used to get the rubble more easily into the bucket. Thinking about how the essence of things is captured and transferred. The fat that is poured into the frame contains the essence/dust of the clay pieces that have been through a process. So it's process paint. Worrying too much about the aesthetics of the coding painting. It should just be a place to get the memo-ing and coding up somewhere so it's exposed and visual. But there's a need to interpret differently. As a painter rather than a social scientist. Just need to keep doing it and it will develop. The first one is bound to be clunky. The process was as usual physical - lots of movement and use of the body - on different levels (walking from studio to kitchen, kitchen hob, back to studio, bucket on floor, then mixing on floor, pouring on table, various grounds and various figures - do a diagram of this?).

HOMELINESS → NOT UNHOMELINESS → NOT UNCANNY  
A PAINT HAS BEEN MADE

- USING UP
- HOARDING
- SCRAPING
- HEATING
- PRESSING
- CUTTING
- GRABBING
- PUSHING
- EXCAVATING
- DIGGING
- LIFTING
- EXPOSING
- MELTING
- MIXING
- SMARTING
- HOLDING
- POURING
- EXCAVATING
- DIGGING

BODY  
↓  
METHODS  
↓  
PAINTING  
↓  
PROCESS



18 May

11:51

Body heavily involved  
It's hard work and I move around a lot. Digging, mixing, lifting, pouring. The dirty fat is the reward. It is satisfying how the rubble works as a filter, and the oil runs through, bringing with it the dust of the work. Working with all the objects makes me feel amidst the process. What

distillation

press material

not true process!

Sadness

naturally open

the 'new' material needs to be held in place in a painting

check reference

the interest/discovery is in the midst of the mess

Sense of grounding also comes from visiting my small place

aware of method

happy with this! WAD scientist?

building and chemistry

GROUNDING - becoming ground

IS OIL? does this fat mean? It is not just about using up the material left behind from the last

UNNAWAY show. Although that context is important.

ATTACHMENT - Care material!  
I worry about what will happen to the objects.

a need to digest/ deconstruct this via writing.  
Meaning of/in materials?

acceptance?

There's a pointlessness in all the tasks. None of these paintings will ever go anywhere. I just have to do the things that I am driven to do. I need to move about with these materials. See what happens with them. The moment when something new and interesting happens is

feeling at home doing this that objective? optical not tactile?

grasped and captured in an object. So in this case, as soon as I saw the oil carrying the dust, I had to pour that somewhere to keep it, make a painting of it.

THINGS DISCOVERED ARE CAPTURED IN PAINTINGS. A PAINTING IS A FORM OF FREEZE FRAME

12:04

Perfume - wax is used to remove the scent from the body?

Do I feel grounded? I feel unsure about everything. Why am I doing this? What is the point?

chemistry, distillation, exploitation, body, sin, etc

these things are drivers -

Perhaps there needs to be little point in order for there to be space for something new.

13:10

It is impossible to stop and write while making - the process is so messy. Which is when the most interesting things happen. Maybe that's the point? That I can't get the language or the means to pin the grounding down, so it's never truly grasped.

reasons for seeking grounding, also grounds for insecurity!

need to apply/pin down/define

When cutting up the oil (solid at room temperature) I think about where it's come from. The consequences. Is it an insult that I'm using it in such a pointless way? I feel guilty about this

global

responsibility, guilt

is there a way of capturing without language?

but it makes me more aware of the biggest ground: the earth, and my insignificant place on

Contradiction: doubt -> need for grounding

FREEZE FRAME

CUTTING

perspective



my tiny space

it. The microcosm of the material while thinking about the macrocosm of the planet has a strangely grounding effect.

13:16

bush, primal

Using my hands to grab the richer parts of the rubble-oil mix (where the smaller particles have formed a mud) - it is warm, grainy, rough, earthy - I need to use this rich matter and

mud is rich need to capture this rich material in a painting

make paintings from it. These are not just mud pies. Although it feels like play, I am constantly thinking about why, what next, how etc. There are always problems and always

ideas for the next stage. - progression? Series

A GPE comes to an end when I feel I have got as far as I can with the current set of objects

- intuitive connection with materials + objects

and materials. There is still further to go with this matter. There is a lot of rubble left and I want to see what will happen when the oil sets and solidifies opaque.

- unable to leave materials unused

The studio floor is like an excavation site. I feel good within it. The organised mess. The

grains!

feel at home in mess - eating mess

sense of a series and a form of development within the mess. The thoughts about the

process are positive. The work that's in the process pics and the films is important. The

feels like work!

feeling ok

it's all part of the same work process

colours that just are because of the utensils and vessels and innate qualities of the materials. - imagining the colours of the process pics

19 May

10:49

knowledge

The paintings had set as expected (the fat had solidified). I decided to turn them out as you would a cake out of a mould. This was quite difficult - a lot of pushing and pressing on the

reaction to what's there - fulfillment - need to do something satisfying - push further

reverse (canvas) side with the thumbs. They did not turn out perfectly, but the revelation of

using the other side (no image!!)

the layers was interesting. Very earthy. Like compact sediment. Some layers darker than

GROUND - GRANT

others where the clay particles had been more concentrated. I decided to scrape it all up

physics

into the pan and melt it down again to do one last pour so that there aren't layers. Perhaps it will turn out in one piece. Although the palm oil is interesting to work with, I feel I have

homely repeat

development

need to make a painting - something complete + "finished"

SENSE OF A SERIES AND A FORM OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN ORGANISED MESS.



Intuitive - going with intuition

body metaphor

own material? more significant? safer? more connected?

reached the end with GPE1. There is more leg room in the rubble, perhaps, but not with the palm oil for now. I find the heating of it unsettling rather than grounding. It is uncomfortable to use in terms of ethics - the link to sustainability issues, the risk entailed heating it in order to melt it. Will my kitchen go up in flames? Will I burn myself? These thoughts are not conducive to grounding! Although the palm oil has enabled thoughts around capturing the essence of a material (the clay) and its evolution via a painting process (its turning into a part of another material in order to investigate feelings and movements in the studio).

Technical use of palm oil - when the material is important in terms of enabling feelings of grounding.

11:04 Heat/fire are not grounding.

working/technical/valuing to use materials up

No-one has been burnt or blown up! I might use the palm oil again - it is difficult to throw away materials even when it feels like an experiment has come to a natural end and it's time to move on to the next. I hoard materials. Many of the experiments happen because of materials and objects re-discovered.

Intuitive - link with materials

realisation / California via units

Self here's an intuitive connection

11:12

technical terms series

Learning images

I've done the final heated pour of GPE1. Once they are solidified I will turn the others out and lay them across the studio floor. The images will then be used for memoing. I want a more immersive memo-ing process. I am trying to merge things. The experiment goes on,

Stay in the process

the field note (like this) goes on, then there is coding. Maybe I need to relax and just see this as data gathering for each experiment. Then when I have several experiments, I can do selective coding which will involve distilling-via-painting on the coding-painting-wall. I need to stop worrying about what the coding-memo-ing paintings look like. There might be memos of these. Just do what I need to do at the time and it will emerge. Trust the emergent!

Be open to the experiment! Which includes this experimental form of GTM.

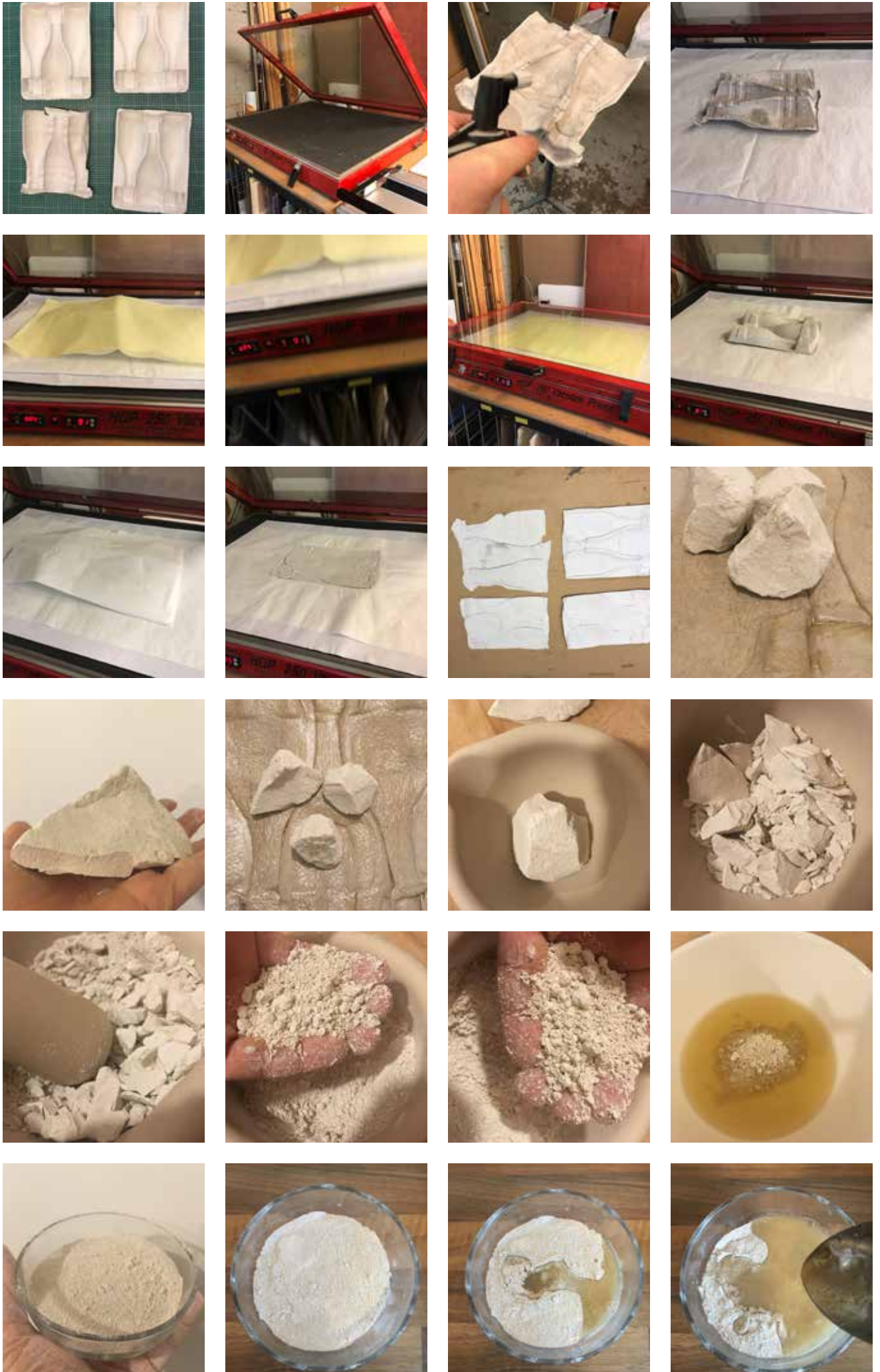
(remember) self not to try to fix things / finish things. This is release. This is an experimental use of GTM methods.

(C)

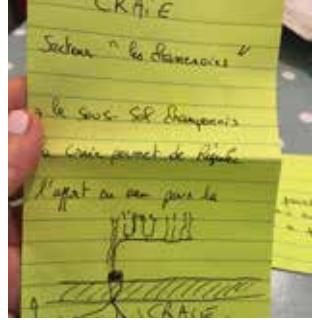






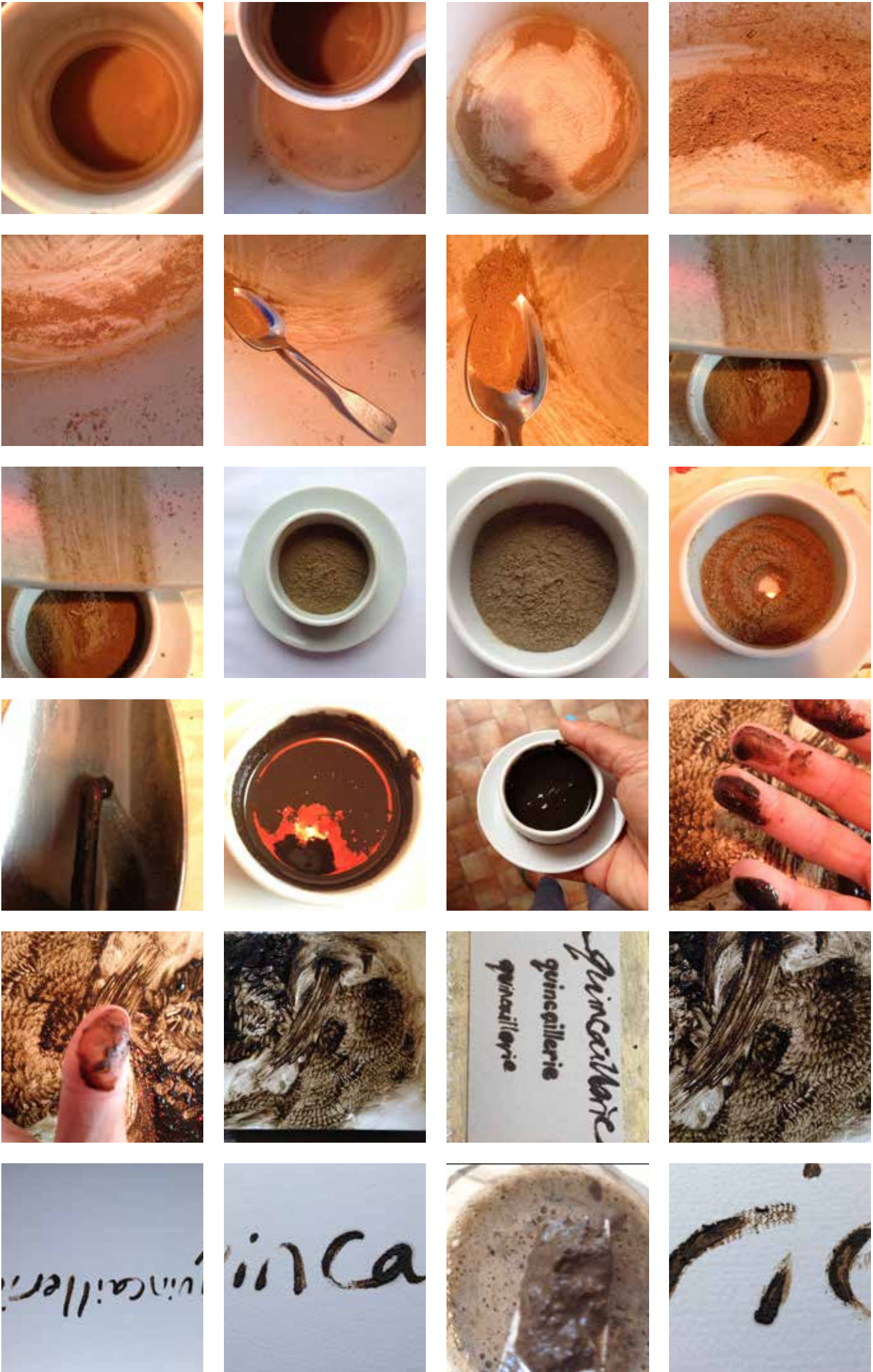


GPE-Chalk, 2017-2018. Ville-Dommange, Reims, France - Huddersfield.









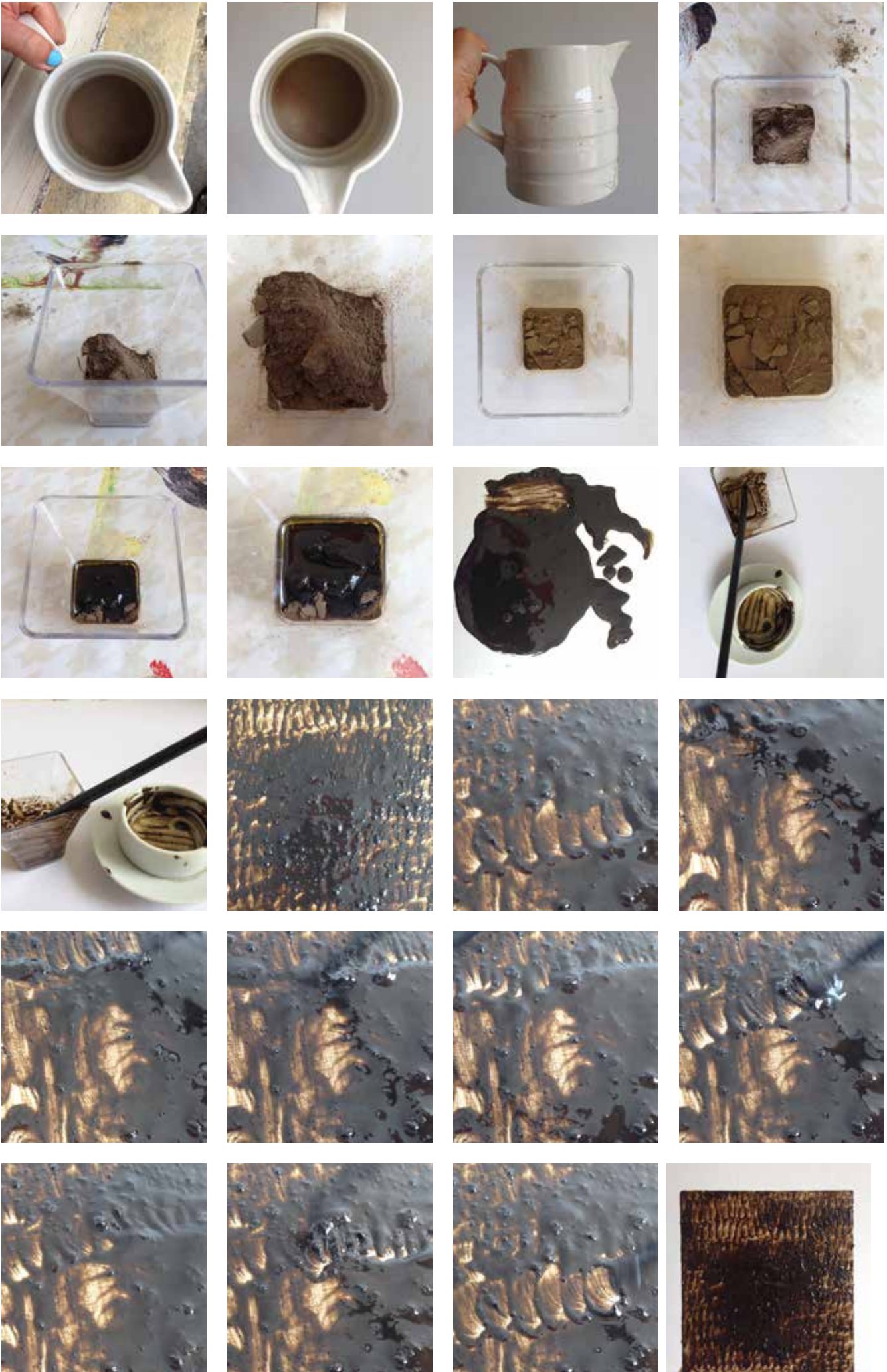
GPEF 1, 2017, Puysegney ground, linseed oil, paper, various utensils and receptacles, emulsion primed MDF support. Puysegney.





GPEF 1, 2017, Puissegeny ground, linseed oil, muslin, various utensils and receptacles. Puissegeny.

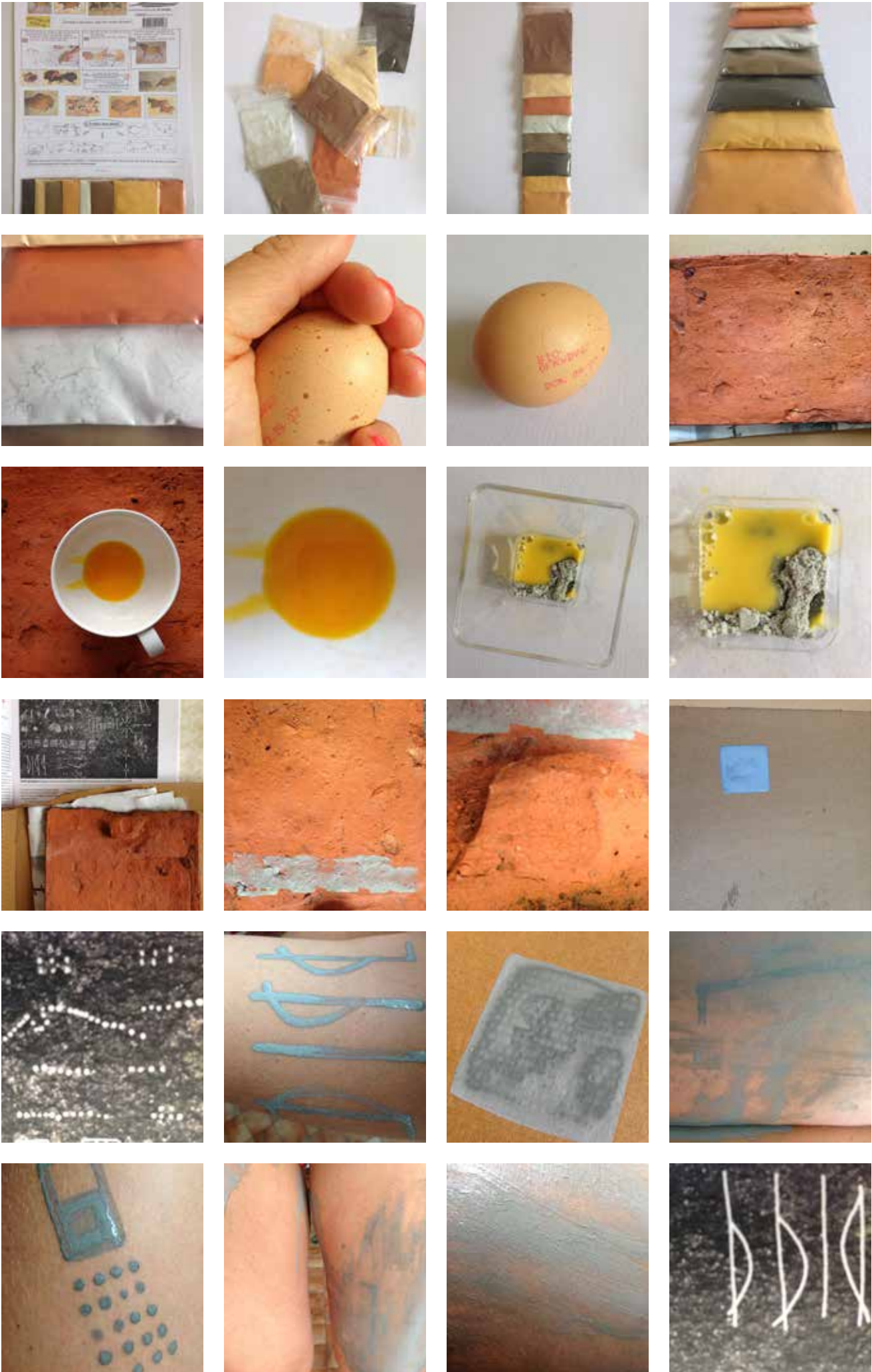




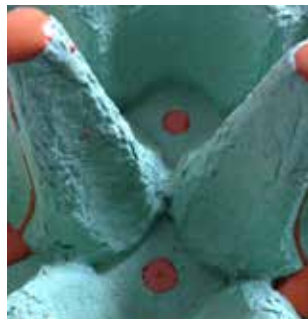
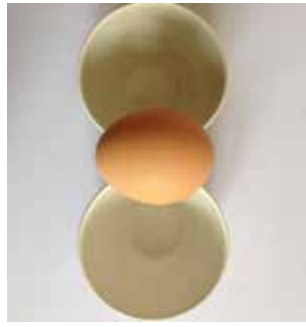
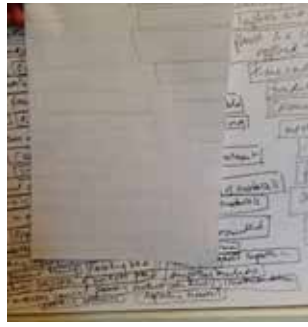
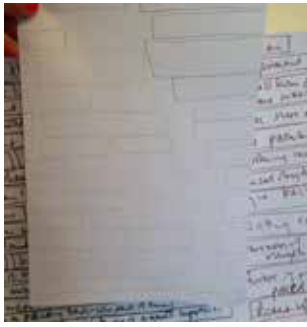
GPEF 2, 2017, GPEF 1 Puyseggeny ground, linseed oil, various receptacles, emulsion primed MDF support. Puyseggeny.

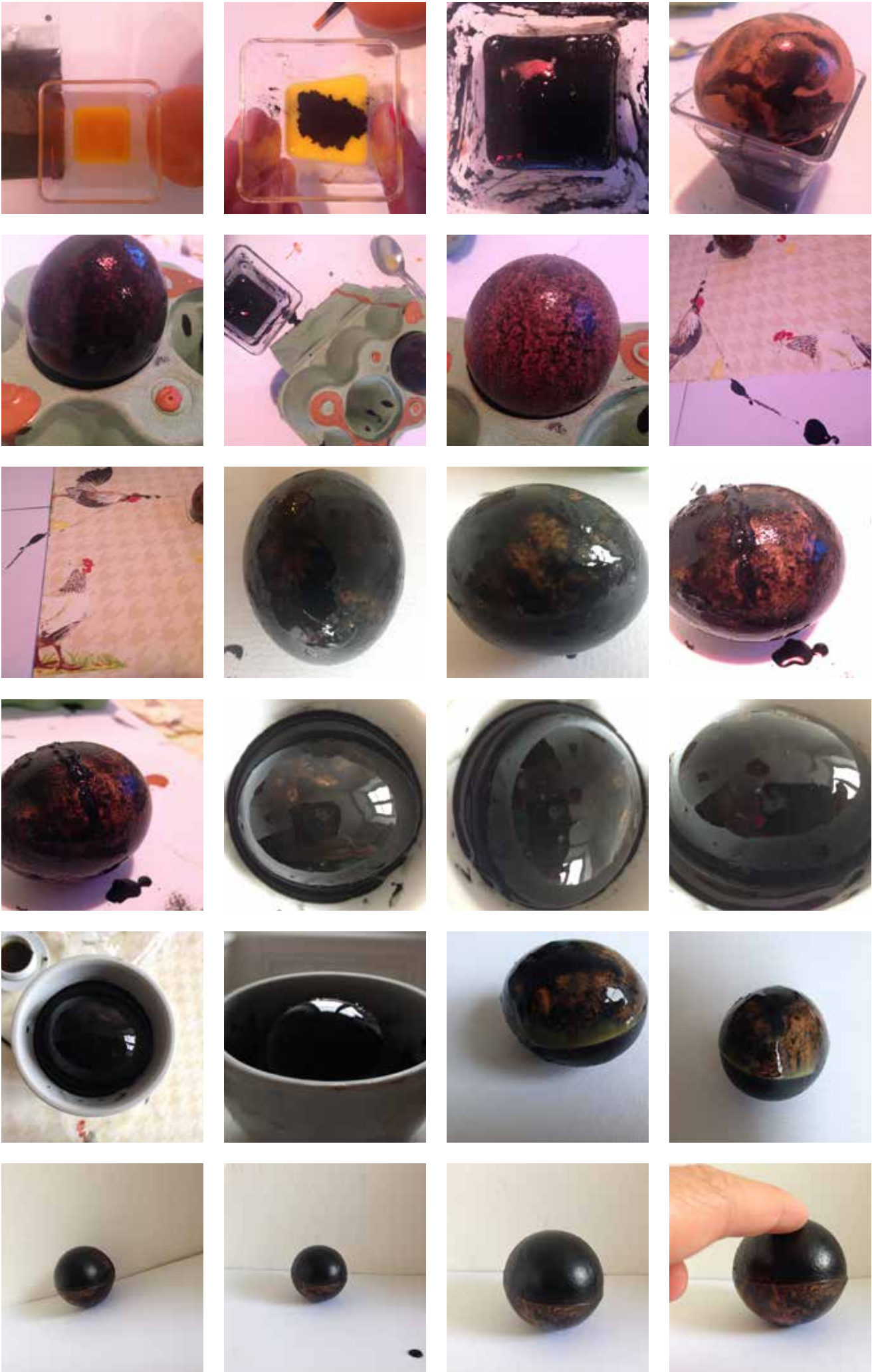










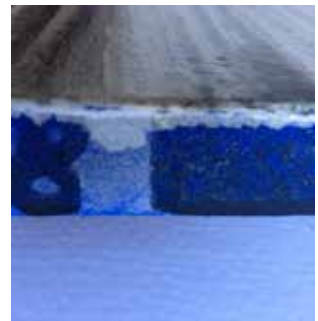
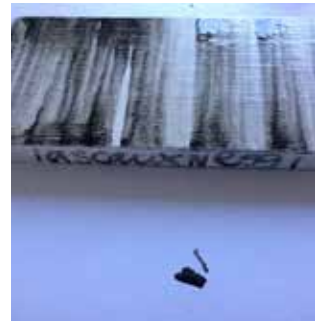
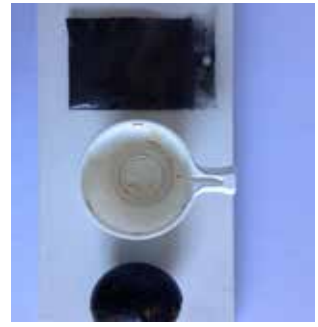


GPEF 6, 2017, egg tempera, farm egg, Lascaux pigment, receptacles, French supermarket egg box. Puyseguey.

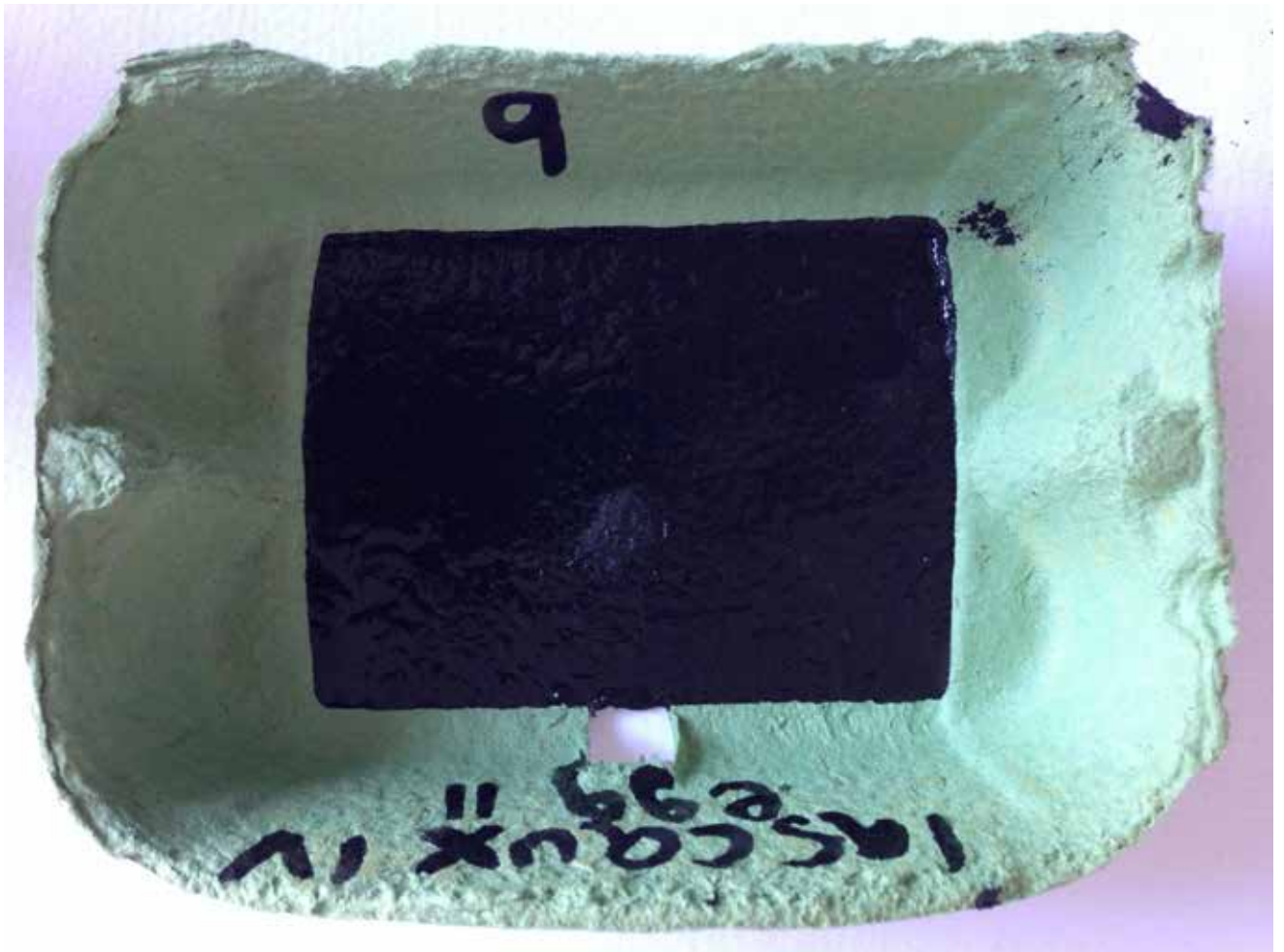
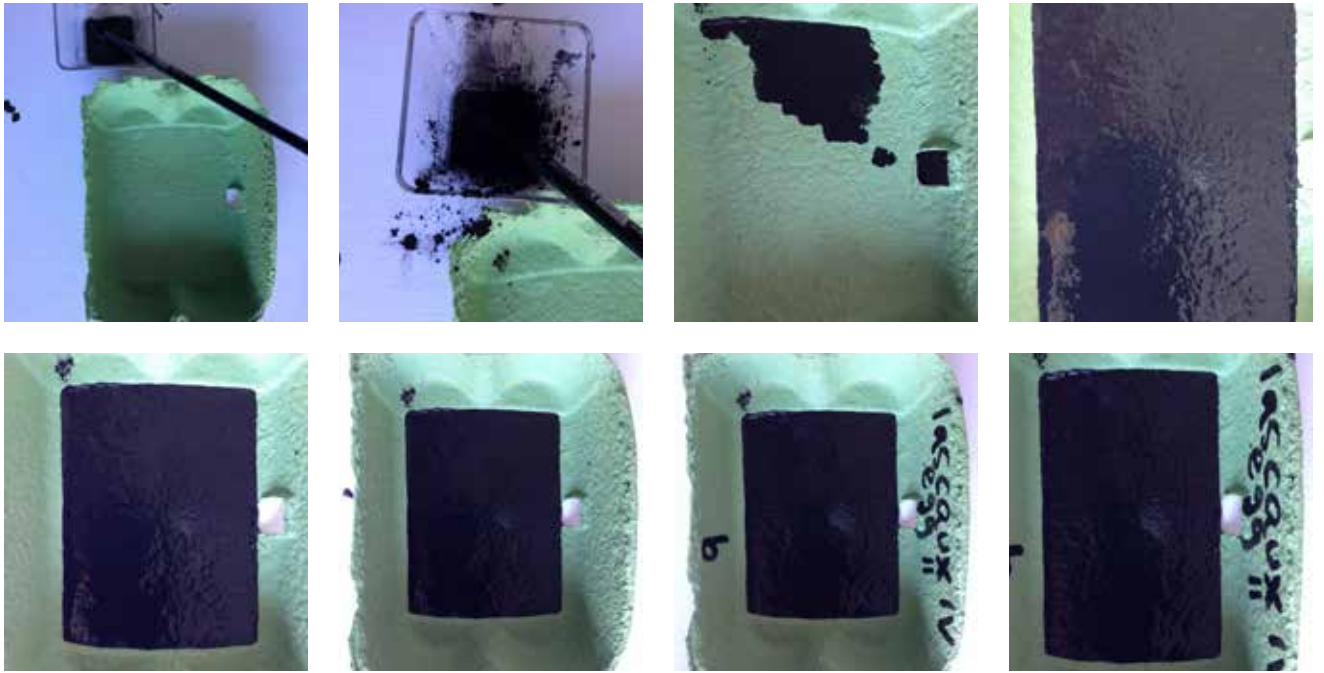




*GPEF 7, 2017, egg tempera, Lascaux pigment, GPEF 6 farm egg. Puyseguey.*

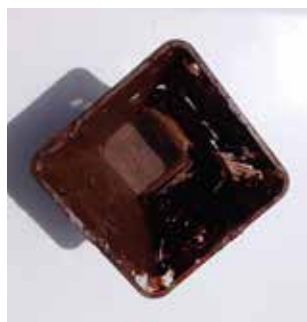












GPEF 11, 2017, corks, egg tempera, Lascaux pigment, Puyseggeney ground and wall. Puyseggeney.









GPEF 13, 2017, Puysegney ground, paint brush. Puysegney.















GPEF 16, 2017, Puyseggeny ground, paint brush, emulsion-primed MDF support. Puyseggeny.

Page 24  
field note  
coding  
box 2

— GPEF/17

Some experiments look

Aware of wall + corners as

still room to grow out crowd

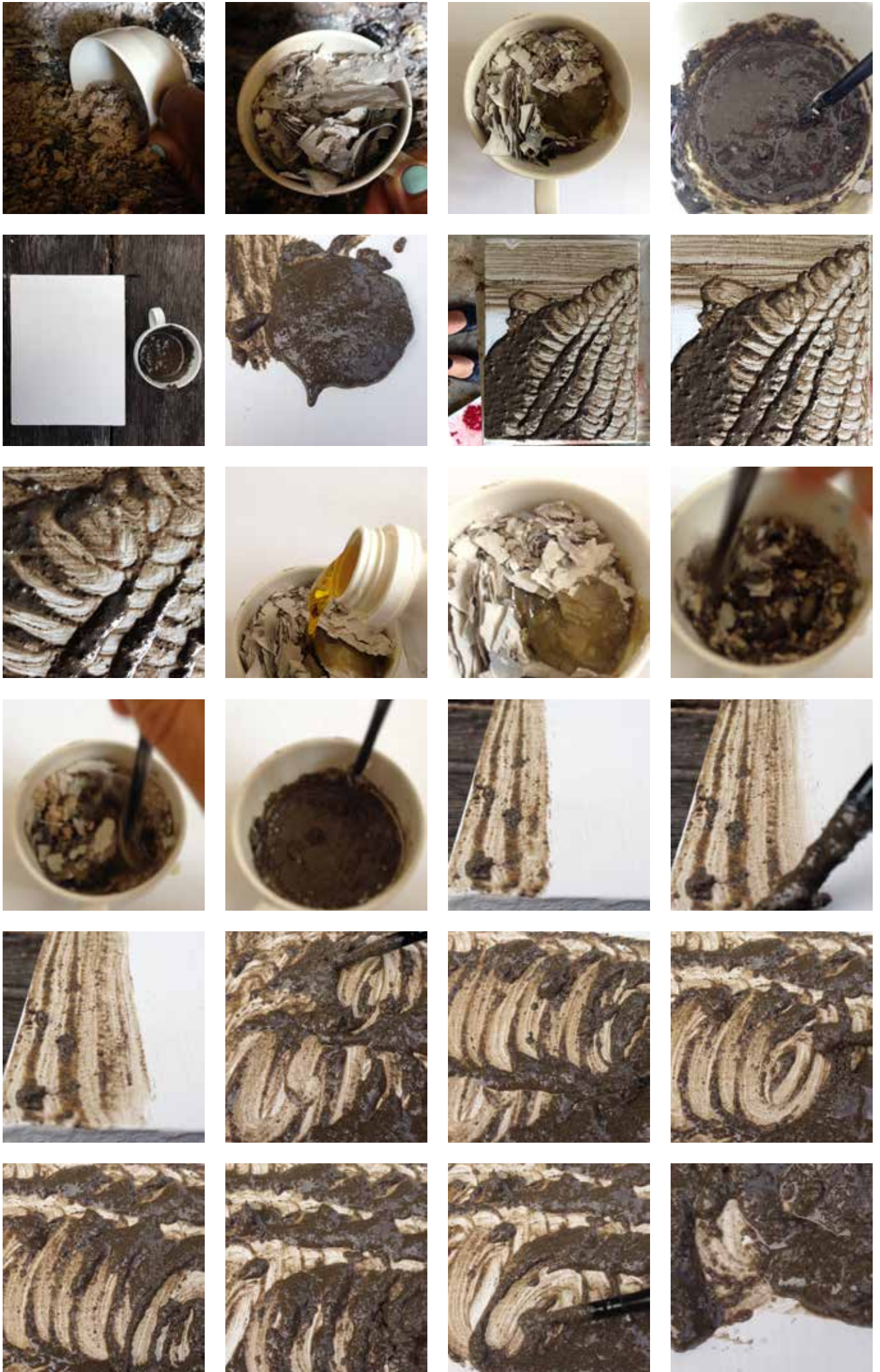
Don't feel finished

Application + removal

about heavy

zity

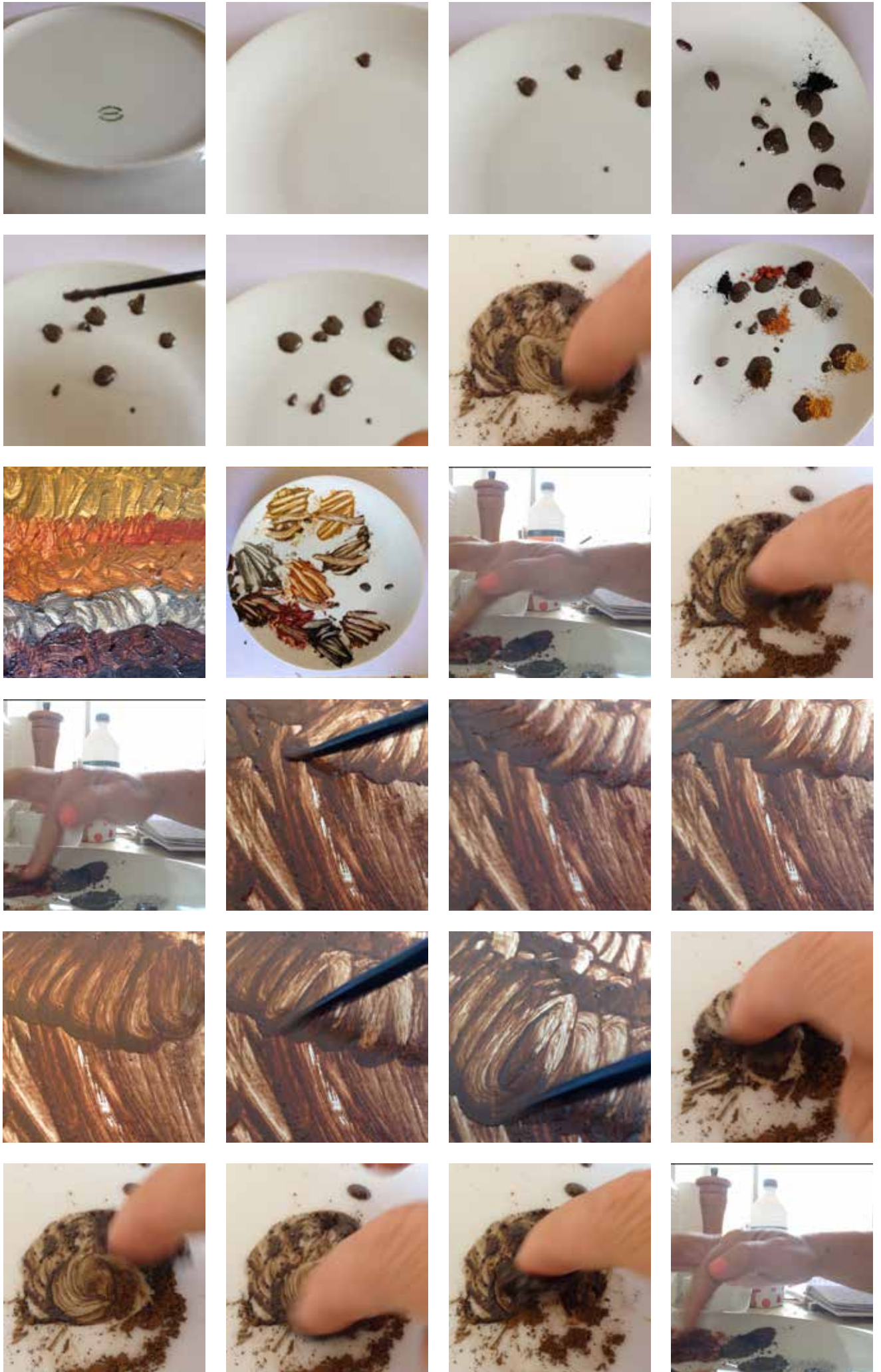




GPEF 18, 2017, paper ash, receptacles, linseed oil, emulsion-primed MDF support. Puysegney.





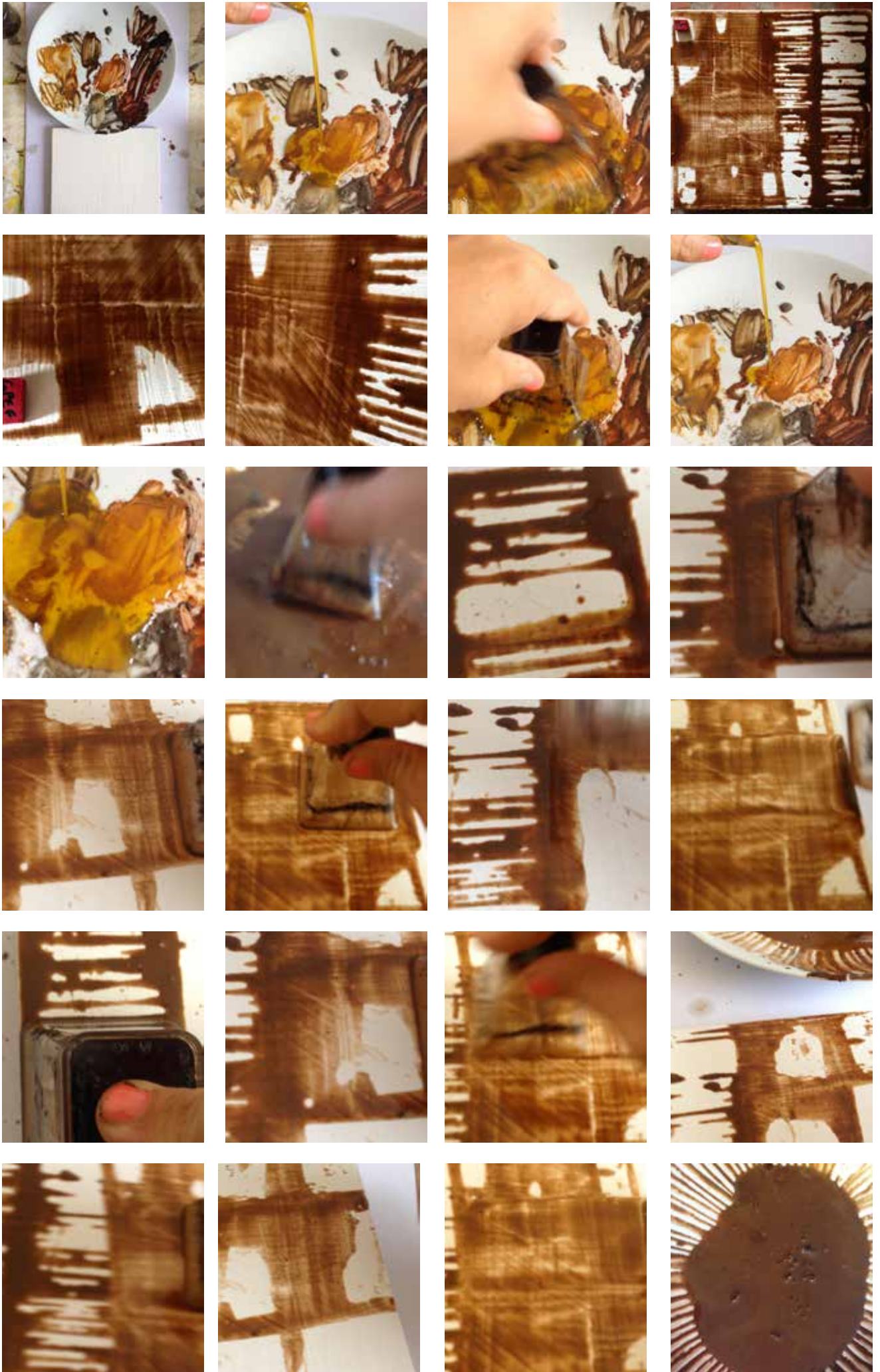


GPEF 20, 2017, material from GPEF 19, Limoges porcelain plate, Lascaux pigments, linseed oil. Puyseguey.







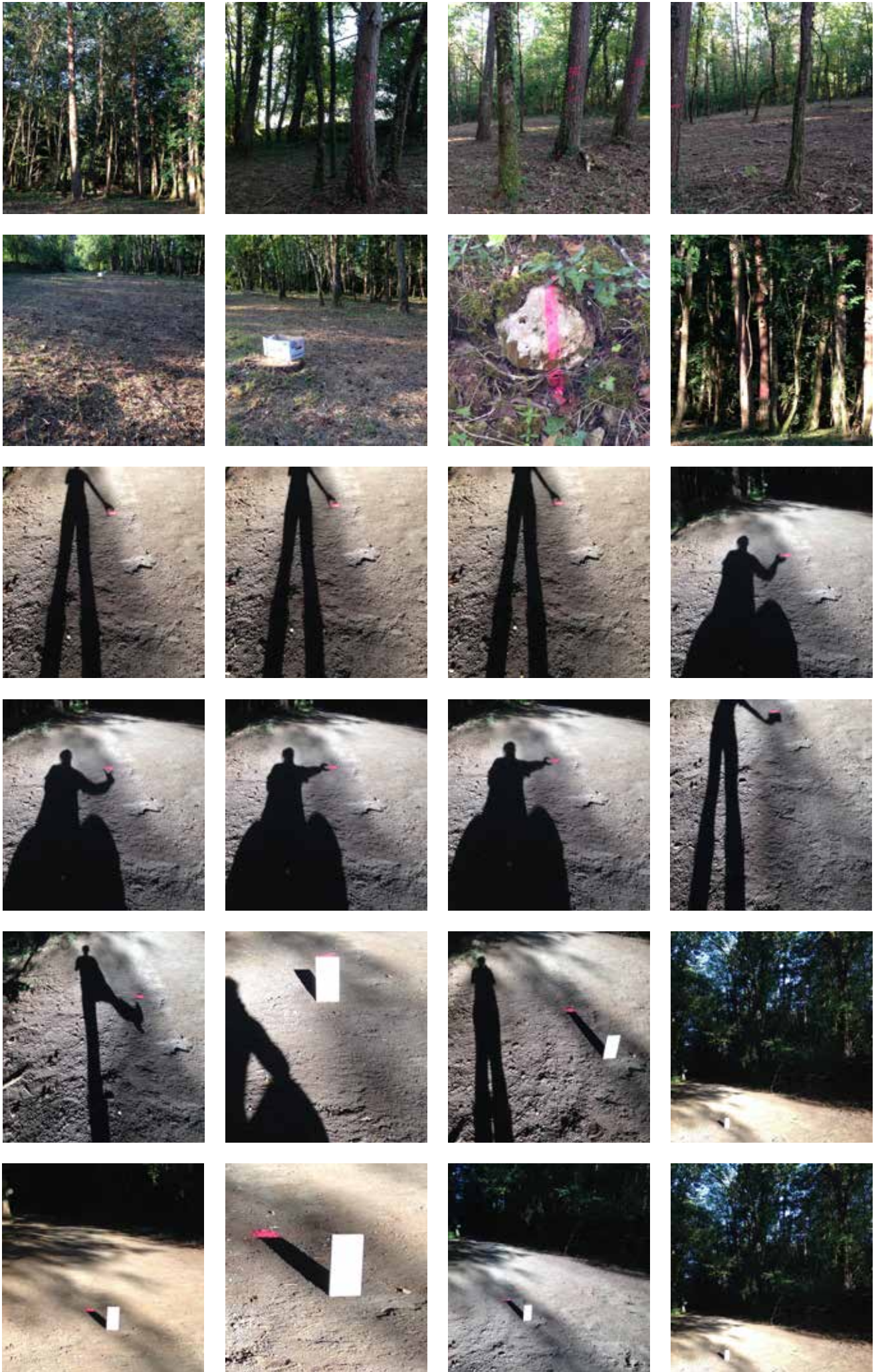


GPEF 22, 2017, material from GPEF 21, linseed oil, receptacles, emulsion-primed MDF support. Puysegney.



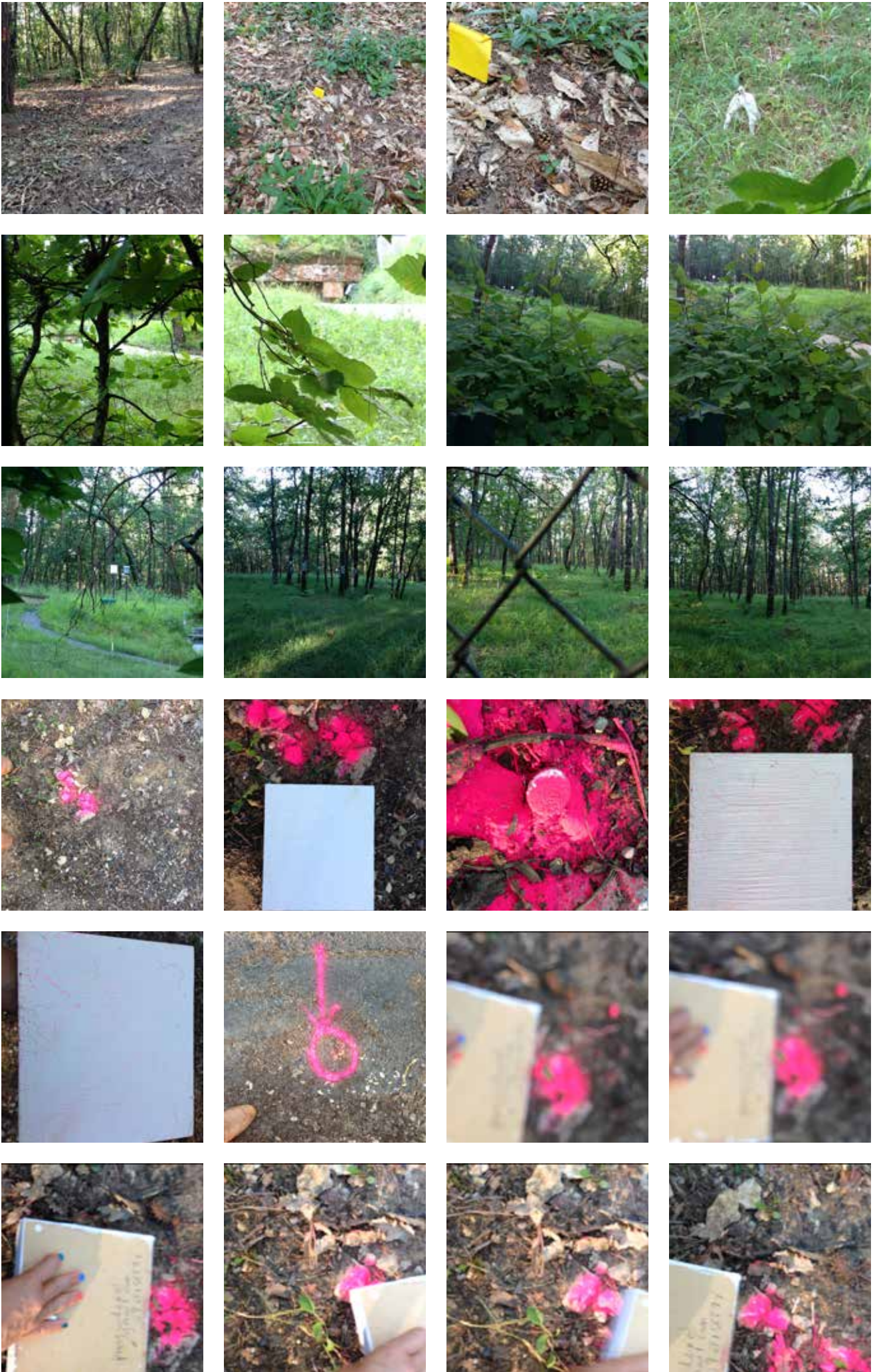






GPEF 24, 2017, Lascaux ground, emulsion-primed MDF support. Lascaux.















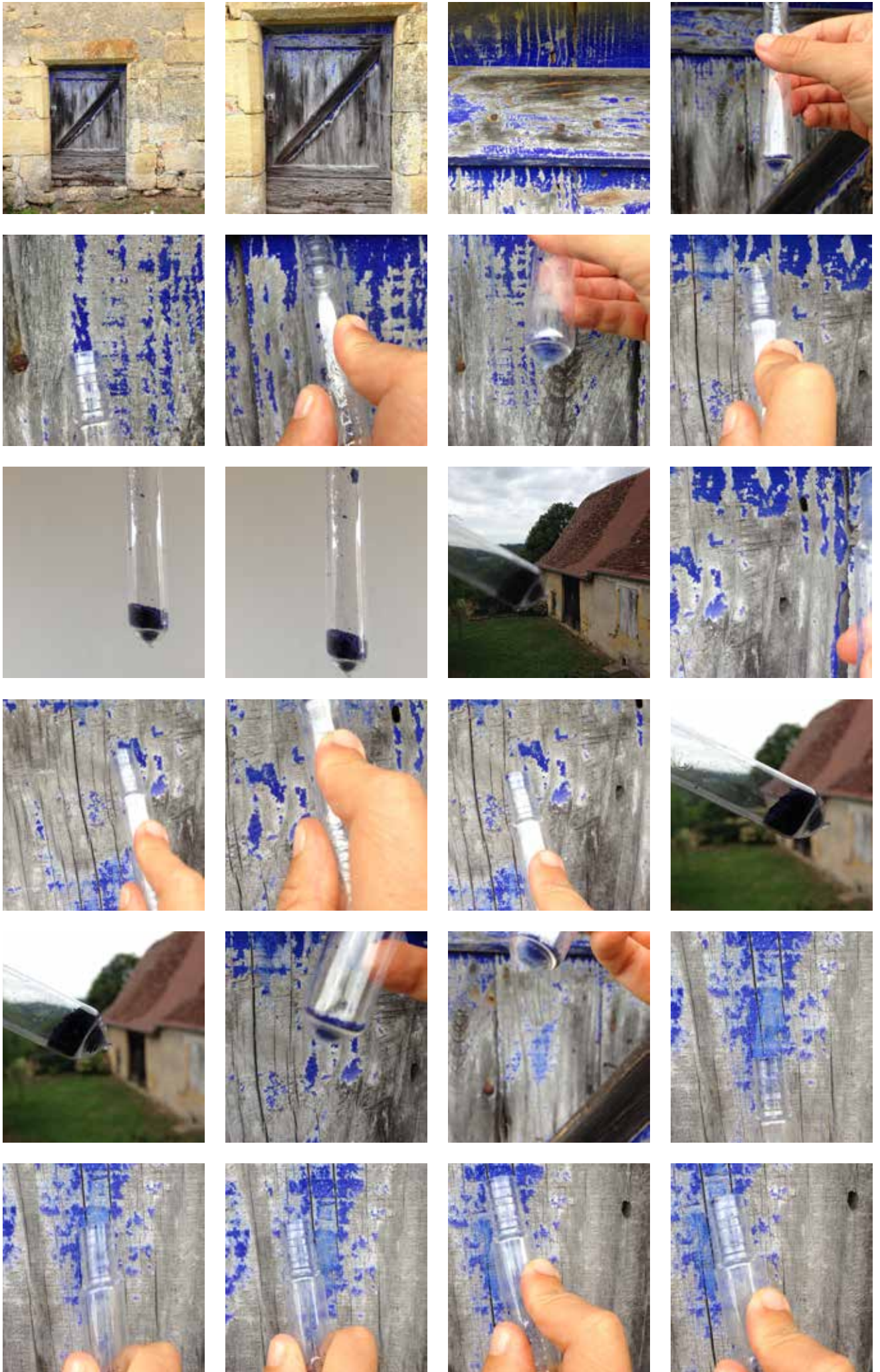


GPEF 28, 2017, Lascaux ground, emulsion primed emulsion-primed MDF support. Lascaux.







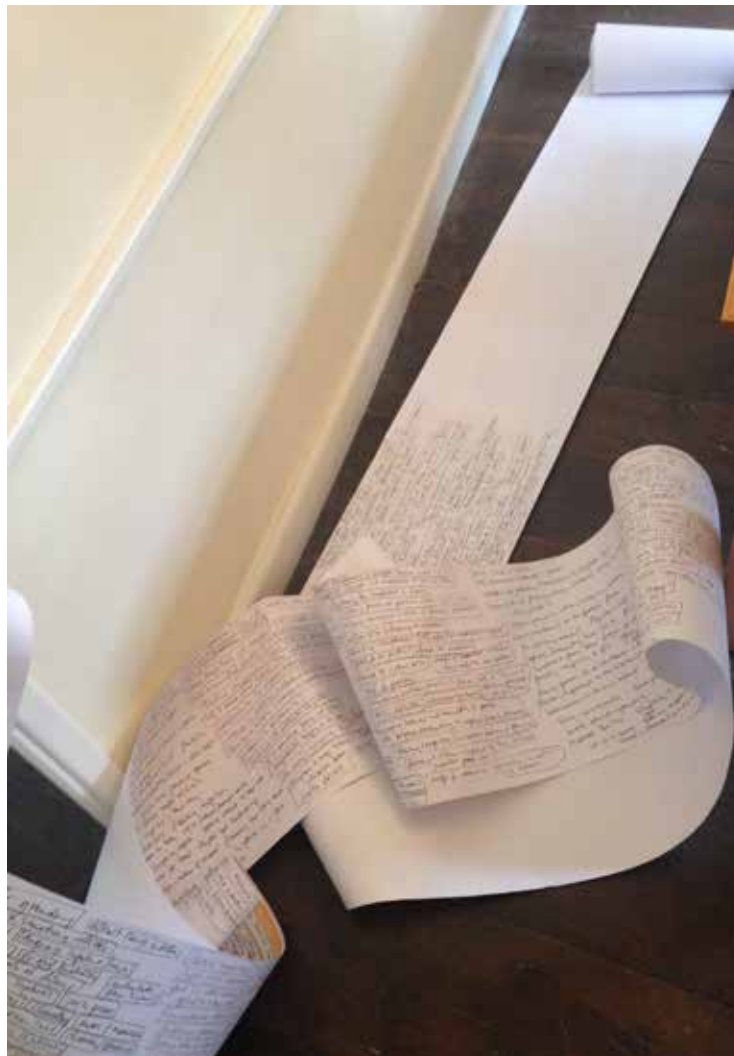
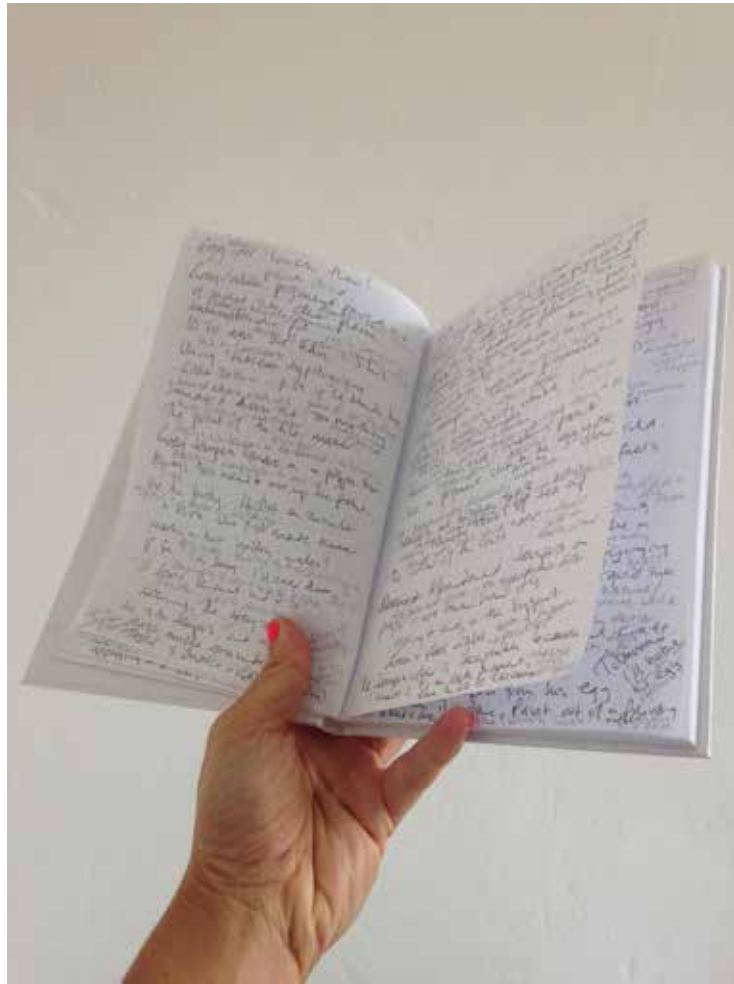


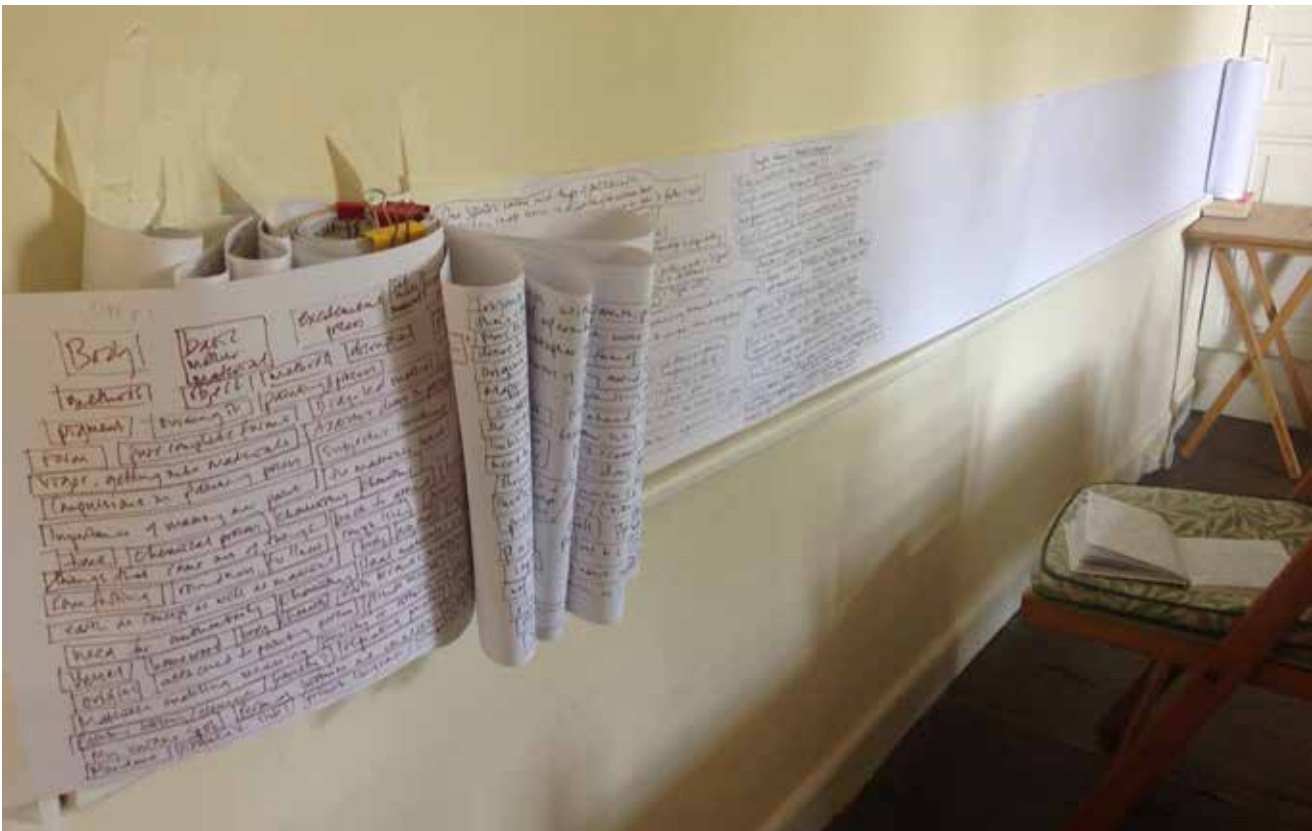
GPEF 29, 2017, Puysegney door, salad dressing tube, old door paint. Puysegney.





































Page 24  
field note /  
cutting  
Dante

city

Some experiments look  
[ Above of wall + corners as  
still room to grow out coral  
Doesn't feel finished  
Application + removal  
about heavy















Grids-on-grounds, *GPEF 25* and *GPEF 26*



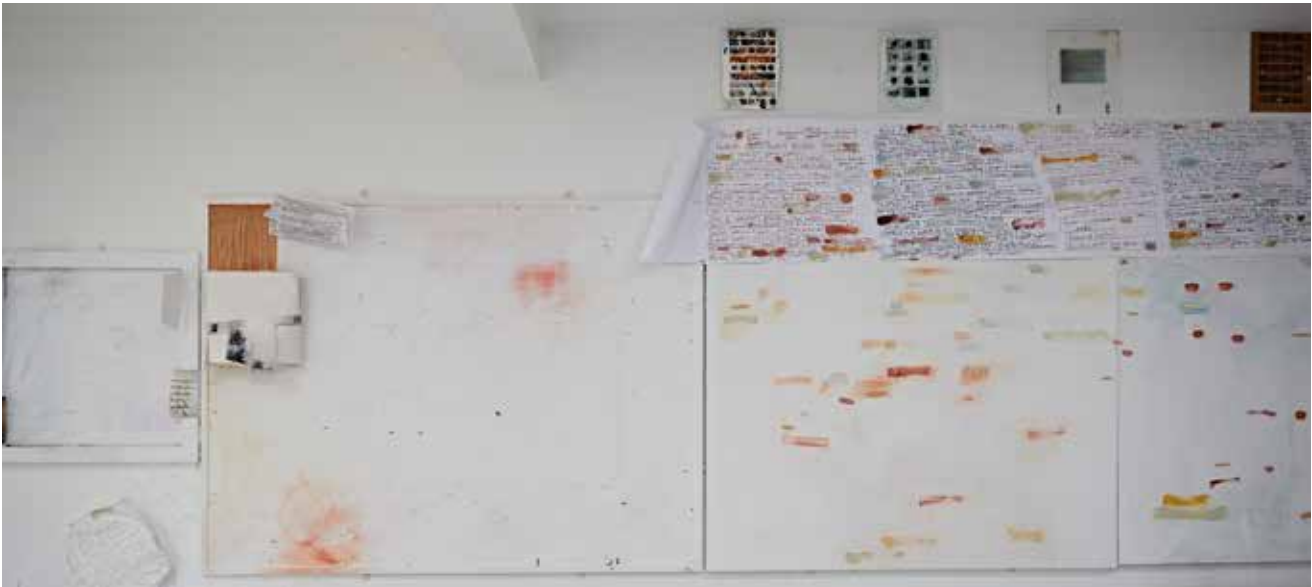
































GPE 9/1

Warm earth. Can't wait to  
 Sample the surface and hope to  
 find Cretaceous base payment from  
 the S.D. code.

Regretive wish of sampling  
 and the need to remove it all  
 make it all loose.

Satisfaction of having made  
 it - having waited for it  
 to improve and find a reason  
 the 2 still left in the  
 earth still has a  
 warm feel of completion  
 like the earth gave the  
 earth feels clean and  
 wholesome. Best's meaning.

GPE 9/2

Arrived stuff of life  
 relationships like found in painting  
 Need to rotate the ground of  
 GPE 9/1. Use the words.

White pig for lotteries  
 Made in England  
 Squatting on the 2 dirty  
 to me the earth part makes it clean

With 20th century payment fees from  
 process/paying bottom very costly  
 very pleasing to see it loose  
 in the first part

Answer for the 2nd part  
 Answering. (Squid on the 2nd part)  
 feels more than just cash  
 because it's a detour of my  
 process and very part of the  
 custom when the int is added  
 more a heavy. City circulation  
 very strong, intricate.

GPE 9/3

Need to see up to the top  
 feet for GPE 9/1 and GPE 9/2  
 Make a large  
 Very busy morning to make  
 base with no money. He or I work  
 together.

Working of paper  
 need to see each before  
 mechanical system  
 knowledge how to use a fuel  
 types of work

GPE 9/4

Following the 2nd part  
 Bought 10 cases of  
 with the 2nd part  
 Small pieces of paper  
 Answered at the station  
 Care taking by November  
 So decided to make  
 because they were bought at  
 the new location machine but  
 lost as they actually on  
 industrial street some  
 payments for daybook  
 in 1 house of par  
 environment.

Controlled to see the  
 10,000 of the 2nd part  
 Co. to see the 2nd part  
 (Change) (Change) (Change)  
 of the 2nd part  
 cleaned on side with water  
 left the 2nd part on the  
 holding in the 2nd part  
 washing egg  
 Dated 09/07  
 Temporarily a file  
 rejected before egg found  
 Second part of the 2nd part

GPE F/5

... the shape of protein ...  
 ... the iterative process of ...  
 ... cooking ...  
 ... the color of the case ...

Temperature  
 ... the color of the case ...

Temperature  
 ... the color of the case ...

GPE F/6

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

GPE F/7

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

GPE F/8

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

... the color of the case ...

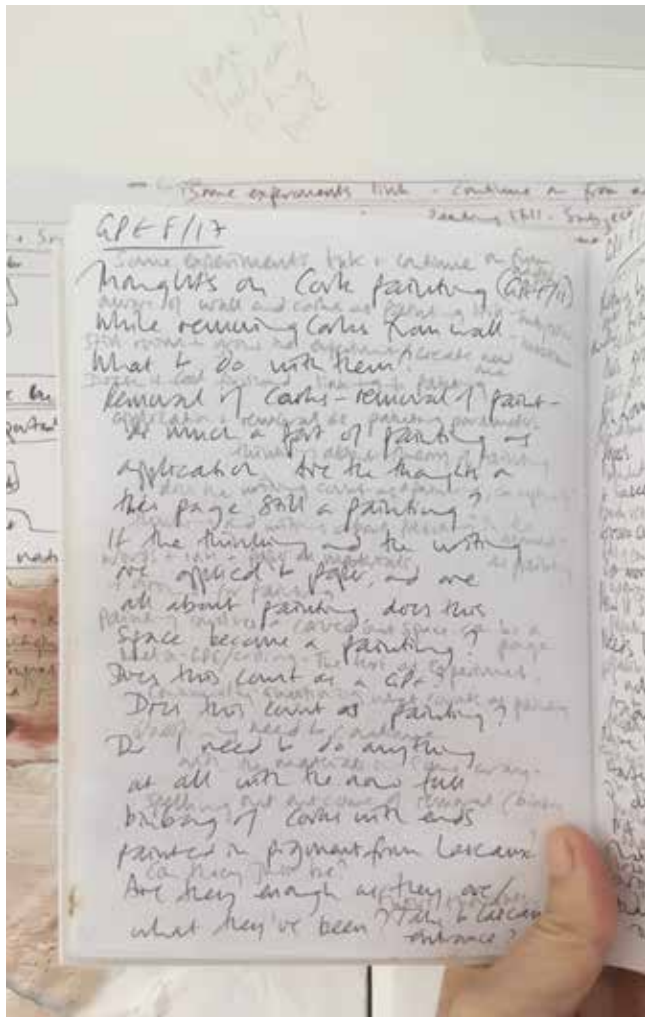
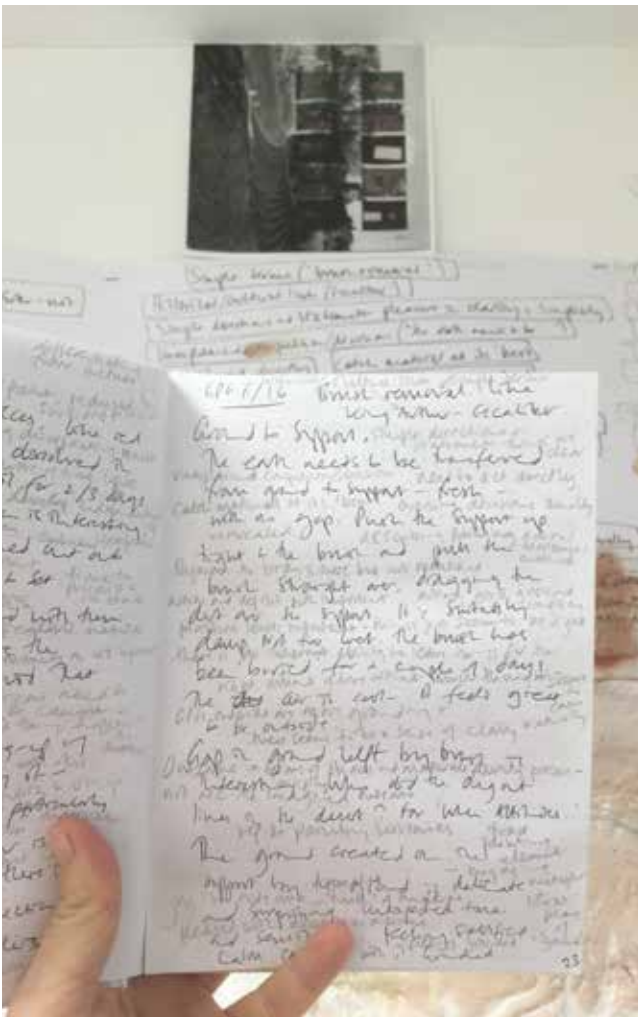
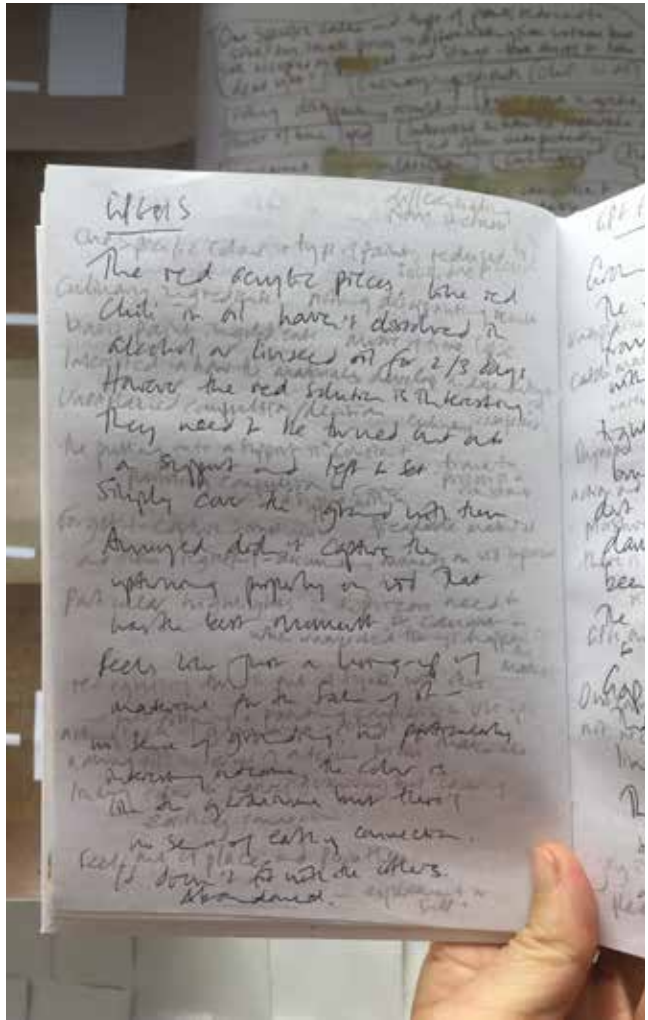
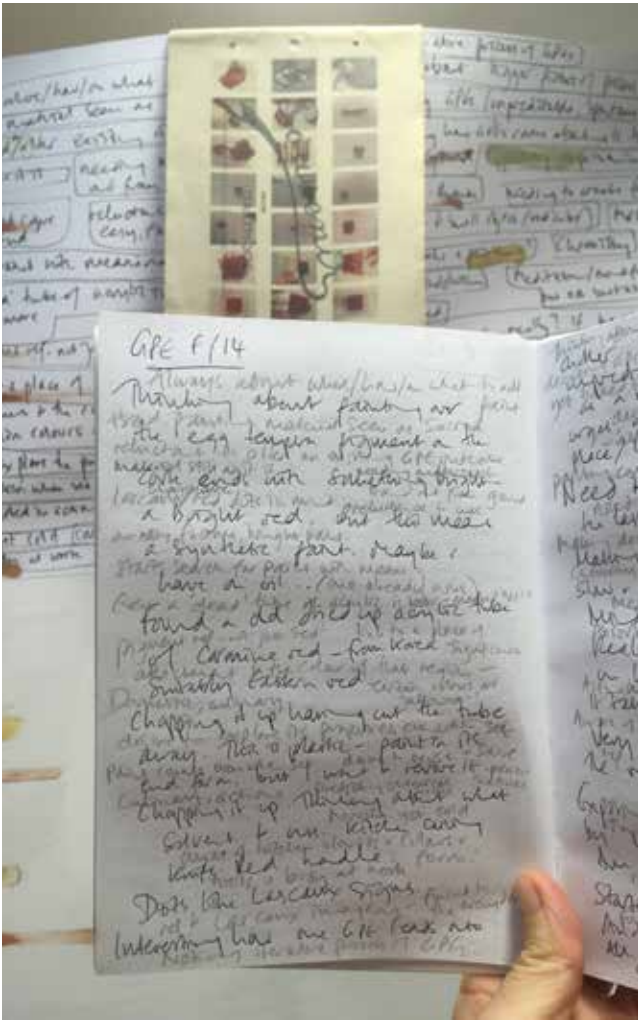


GPE F/9  
Lascams IV egg II  
low of space looking for a  
recovery of the program  
Lascams IV egg I revealed more  
about ground - pairs to be put in  
the ground) this is done after a  
program on a egg box ground  
The working will put a line  
to clear up of an egg shell  
do not forget to the white board  
Johnetta handles the hole  
Lascams IV egg I - which one has to  
happen while taking video  
Colours of a space to fill very  
satisfying (un)pleasant that  
But having the material away  
then, having their ingredients to  
using them in a special place,  
having visited a regular site  
all make this finding very clear

GPE F/10 Lascams IV egg III  
Patching egg inside  
more of egg  
herald shell going a lower  
big waste egg shell mess up  
lane bit a paper ground  
Fresh material! holding phase  
video interesting to go/gone phenomenon  
between pairs of egg - pairs on paper  
and had white to fill the space in  
the phase came from there while  
pairs in shape of sounds noise added  
to the feet - excavation -  
digging gathering - LABOUR  
The sound of the ground whirring  
then the brush followed the sound  
while creating a ground of  
egg made from Lascams ground  
Stop - not making for a historical  
table class

GPE F/11  
Lascams IV egg III  
low of space looking for a  
recovery of the program  
Lascams IV egg I revealed more  
about ground - pairs to be put in  
the ground) this is done after a  
program on a egg box ground  
The working will put a line  
to clear up of an egg shell  
do not forget to the white board  
Johnetta handles the hole  
Lascams IV egg I - which one has to  
happen while taking video  
Colours of a space to fill very  
satisfying (un)pleasant that  
But having the material away  
then, having their ingredients to  
using them in a special place,  
having visited a regular site  
all make this finding very clear

GPE F/12  
looking and the ground for a  
suitable ground. Or the tile  
Somehow not right. A full tile  
made on a wall's height  
leaning against a wall of a  
barry in an alley - that's right  
A five feet between  
the vertical - the horizontal  
Washed the tile and  
tried it on it fits very  
leg perfectly. My height  
who was she - how did it feel?  
How does that relate to painting?  
Is that just a game  
maybe it doesn't need to  
have paint put on it  
leave it for the field study





Some experiments with - continue a few

GPEF/17

Thoughts on Cork painting (GPEF/17)  
 While removing Cork from wall  
 What to do with them?

Removal of Corks - removal of part  
 It must be a part of painting  
 application for the month  
 the page still a painting  
 If the thinking and the work  
 are applied to paint, and we  
 all about painting does this  
 space become a painting?  
 Does this count as a GPEF?  
 Does this count as painting?  
 Do I need to do anything  
 at all with the new felt  
 binding of Corks with ends  
 painted or fragment from lacquer  
 Are they enough as they are/  
 what they've been?

Performance to looking that all & present  
 and different types of experiments  
 very different between groups  
 the occurrence of power left  
 pure material domestic (1990s)

GPEF/18

Noting to see how used previously in  
 with for a based left, but not a  
 that group of cork - with by using a lot of  
 the form long bones - very burnt  
 paper remember - now with all  
 & traces of air - feeling coated  
 Expressing full of air - too much of air  
 to more air - needs to be thicker  
 Now it's more of a paste like grey felt  
 Needs to go into a support  
 It's not cork but the materials are  
 paint and feel good first  
 don't draw that with a brush - after  
 Starts with impure, too heavy what  
 I did then just painting with a  
 not satisfied with that and more impurity  
 but it's not enough like some in Move it  
 around without thought of paint or found  
 this material to material a body touch  
 to brush with feeling that you give  
 in an it's done

GPEF/19

Once there's nothing to do up a ground  
 looking for ground/a ground to  
 pick up - landscape & use of nature  
 use up all - traces of past part  
 base to ground - traces of past  
 If in doubt, use the body  
 seems obvious use - Oh, outside  
 time for a shower anyway  
 sitting on lawn stone steps  
 naked painting huge with  
 word HEFT

Amusing and sensual at  
 a ice. Very calming  
 Smoking, fire, body  
 immersed at snow on edge  
 of bath  
 the dirt of painting and  
 the body body presence in  
 the snow

GPEF/20

White  
 Parcel  
 No dirt  
 Smells  
 Corker  
 kea  
 Will  
 the  
 mix

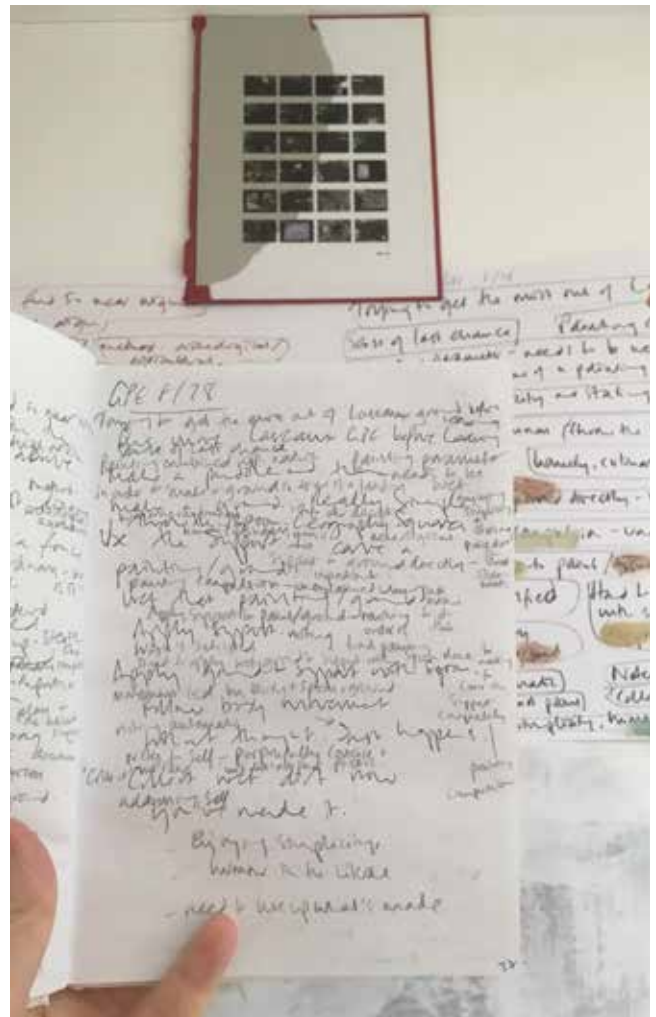
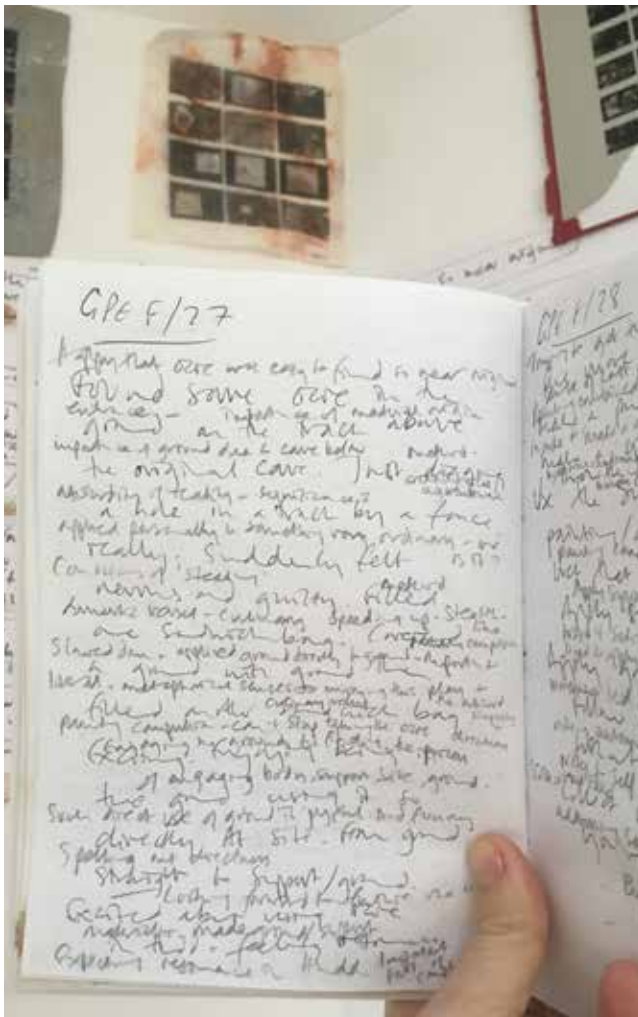
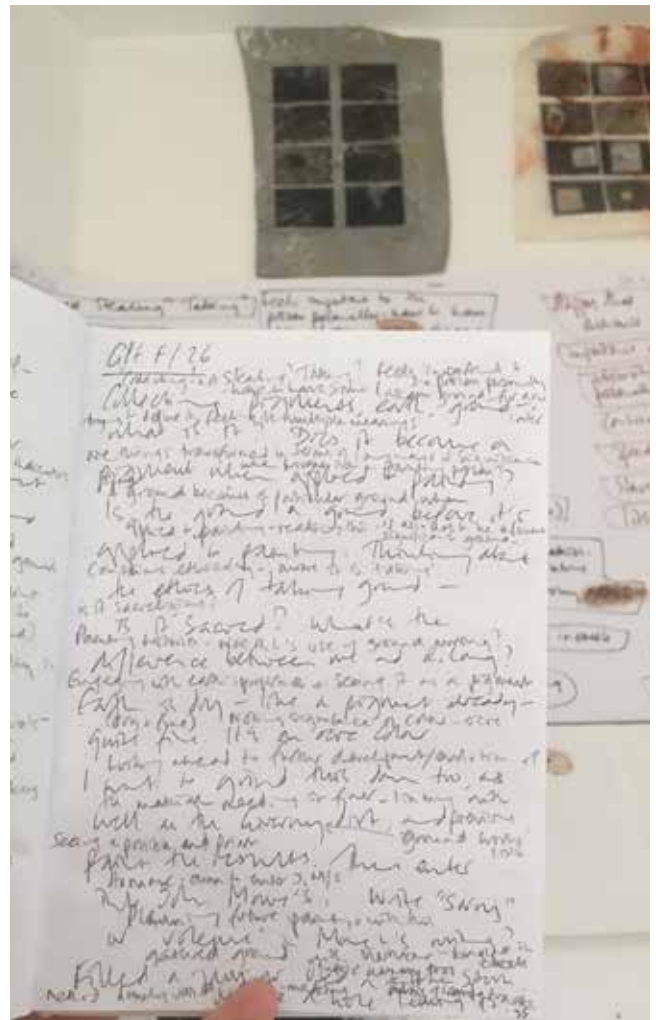
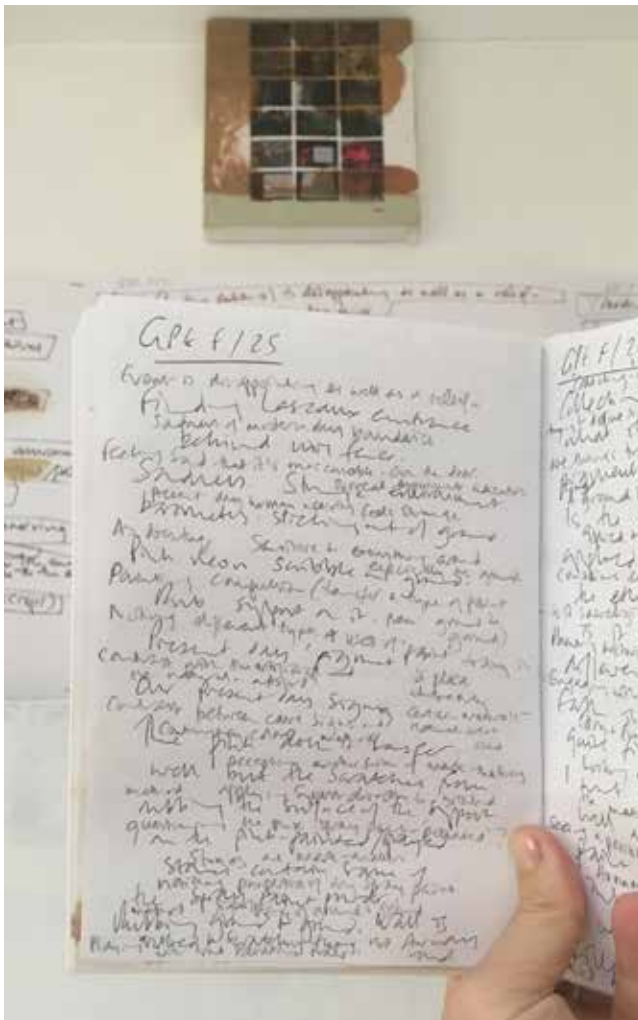
Health survey - scene of oil engaged  
 Accepted as creation of - of different rooms & materials  
 Putting together the two but - for a stand  
 Key of bag to -

GPEF/20

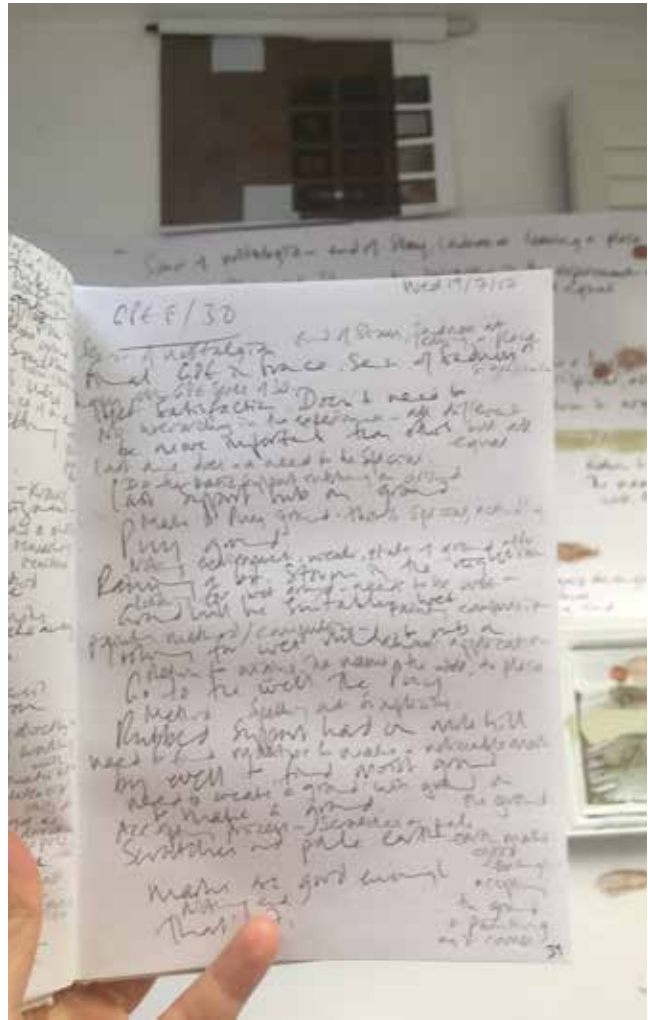
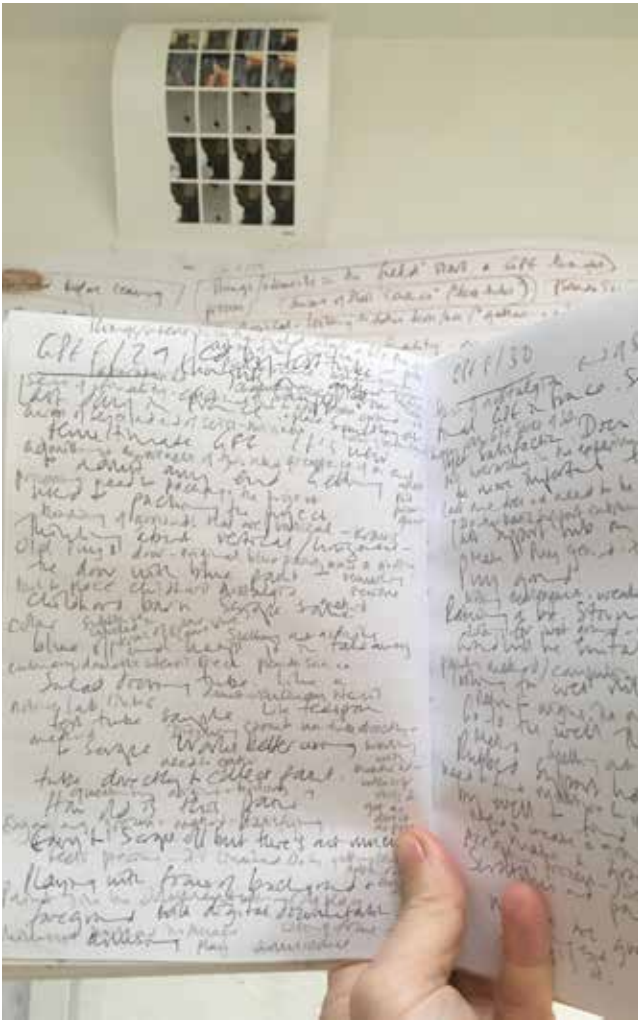
Needs to use up the remaining  
 not in mind a material paint  
 I'll no go GPEF/19  
 when I believe fragment  
 mix ash + traces of oil with affect  
 pigment + make a palette - with  
 painting material never  
 materials usually. Corker  
 White family plate  
 No delicate here - slip it in  
 Smells appears - the traces of  
 Corker - a palette of affect char-  
 will have to use trace of  
 body - got know  
 the material not safe to  
 painting - looking - with  
 mix - in the plate -





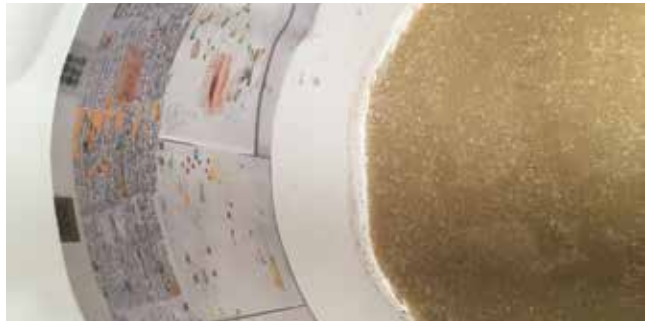


White field note book, coded field notes GPEFS 25-28.





































## Introduction

### Brief overview

I have sought to investigate thoroughly my painting process consisting of an ongoing series of short-lived, unrepeatable experiments. The development of the investigation, the practice-led enquiry, is presented in three stages, demonstrating the focus of the experiments on a search for a sense of grounding. Due to the experiments' increasing focus on ground and a sense of grounding, they have become Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs) and are named as such throughout the second and third stages. The GPEs have been the practical, central means, based on material-led explorations into the medium and activity of painting, by which I have trialled methods to discover what is happening in terms of the materials and my experience while immersed in each experiment. The GPEs themselves have become a method. While continuously exposing the analysis of the painting experiments and their documentation, I have trialled a specific part of a well-known method of qualitative analysis, Grounded Theory Method (GTM): 'coding'. The third stage and final trial of an artistic interpretation of GTM coding took place between specific sites in France and my Huddersfield studio via the simultaneous execution and analysis of an experiment group, *Grounding Painting Experiments France 1-30 (GPEFs 1-30)*. The process of this culminating trial is displayed in the Huddersfield studio. From the start of the research enquiry there were no planned outcomes, although the intention to expose and display the process has remained throughout.

I have been concerned with how a painting practice investigating a concept of painting might progress as an iterative process. I have investigated painting as an experimental, experiential process aside from the deliberate production of an image, construction of form, decisions based on colour, intentional representation, figuration, composition or intended outcome. Therefore, the early painting experiments of the PhD research focused on three aspects identified as key to the research practice: 'touch', 'resonance' and 'grounding'. The origins of the early experiments are located in the findings of my Masters by Research investigation, which I now describe in brief to explain how the hunch driving this PhD research project began. My motivation to trial GTM coding has developed from an urge to 'get to the bottom' of my painting practice while following the hunch that discoveries were to be made by getting as close to the ground as possible. I therefore began a practice-led investigation into the various literal, metaphorical and historical



senses of ground, via the GPEs, while experimenting with methods to expose, focus and analyse iteratively the entire process.

### Pre-PhD – investigating ‘touch’ via the analysis of an experience of twenty-nine Robert Ryman paintings

It is necessary to explain how the research led me to the start of the PhD in order to locate this project’s position in the practice and the history of painting. I begin that explanation with a summary of research and questions that arose from my practice-led Masters by Research investigation, ‘Touch: an enquiry’.<sup>1</sup> The MRes research was structured by my analysis of a three-day experience with twenty-nine paintings by North American artist Robert Ryman. Ryman, commonly associated with Conceptual Art, identified as a painter and a ‘realist’, using the medium of painting to work with “real light and space”.<sup>2</sup> I received funding to visit a converted textile factory, the Hallen für Neue Kunst in Schaffhausen, Switzerland to experience the twenty-nine Ryman paintings over three days in May, 2013.<sup>3</sup> German artist and curator Urs Rausmüller founded the Hallen in 1982 to exhibit a collection of ‘new art’, a term introduced in the 1960s to describe emerging practices including those associated with Land Art and Arte Povera. The practices associated with these crucial movements made artworks that foregrounded processes, concepts and experimental uses of unconventional materials. The contextual analysis of my PhD research practice in the following chapters clearly situates Arte Povera and Land Art as fundamentally important precedents to my work. As well as installations of works by central figures in Conceptual Art, Minimalism, Arte Povera and Land Art, the Hallen held the largest permanent exhibition of Ryman paintings at that time.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the MRes was the investigation of touch in my

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<sup>1</sup> Puy Soden, ‘Touch: an enquiry’, MRes diss., University of Huddersfield, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Hudson records Ryman’s ‘realism’ in ‘Robert Ryman, Retrospective’ which is included in the most useful anthology of writing on Ryman, Vittorio Colaizzi and Karsten Schubert, eds., *Robert Ryman, Critical texts since 1967* (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 376.

<sup>3</sup> The three-day visit from May 24 to May 26, 2013 to the Hallen für Neue Kunst, Schaffhausen, Switzerland was funded by an award from the Windle Charitable Trust. The Hallen closed in 2014 due to the depletion of funds following a long legal dispute involving ownership of the Joseph Beuys installation, *Das Kapitäl Raum 1970-1977* exhibited there, and is unlikely to reopen. The Robert Ryman paintings were moved to The Dia Art Foundation in New York. <https://www.diaart.org/collection/collection/on-view/on/object-type/painting/page/3> Accessed October 19, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Urs Rausmüller and Robert Ryman installed an exhibition of fifty Ryman paintings together in 1983. In 1993, they updated the installation, reducing the collection to 29 Ryman paintings, and named it *Advancing the Experience*. This information is confirmed in the exhibition catalogue of a

practice, exploring painting, structured by my analysis and practical response to my first-hand experience of Ryman's paintings in the Hallen. The purpose of the Hallen visit was to remain open to that which might occur during the three days with *Advancing the Experience* and gather information empirically. I was to use this information on return to the Huddersfield studio in a practical response during which the heuristic, direct examination of my own art-making process would enable findings relating to an experience of touch as well as the development of my methods.

While the critique on Ryman constantly reaffirms that the purpose and point of his works can only be grasped while in their presence, in my review I could not find a recorded study of a specific, individual, first-hand experience. I intended to research my own direct experience of the paintings and use the findings as material to inform a practice-led investigation into touch. I was most interested in how my own thoroughly-documented account of experiencing the 'how' of Ryman's painting processes might inform, develop and focus my investigation. My methods of researching a concept of painting as a process were developing: information gathering of a direct experience with painting; objective and subjective analysis of that information; and experimentation working with the analysis to investigate my own painting practice.

I took basic tools and materials to gather information in the form of notes, voice recordings, digital photographs and drawings. I was prepared with enough for simple data gathering, which was my main aim. I was not expecting any great revelation or enlightening experience but intended to remain open and collect as much information as possible in various forms. The information I collected at the Hallen during my three-day experience with the Ryman paintings included:

- a descriptive list of the 29 Ryman paintings in *Advancing the Experience*;
- a commentary of the entire experience handwritten in a journal;
- voice recordings by Dictaphone of my detailed descriptions of each Ryman work which I made as objectively as possible;
- voice recordings describing my subjective response to each Ryman work;

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later Raussmüller-Ryman project: Urs Raussmüller and Christel Sauer, eds., *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House*, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, July 27 - October 8, 2006 (Frauenfeld/Basel: Raussmüller Collection, 2006), 17. In addition to the Ryman paintings, the Hallen housed installations of works by Joseph Beuys, Bruce Nauman, Carl Andre, Mario Merz, Sol LeWitt, Jannis Kounellis, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Richard Long, and Lawrence Weiner. A list of the Ryman paintings exhibited in *Advancing the Experience* between 1993 and 2013 at the Hallen is included as Annex A in the written component of my MRes dissertation.



- notes about my subjective experience of each Ryman work handwritten in grey ink on single, plain, detached A5 notebook pages;
- digital photographs of the single pages on their respective area of floor underneath the Ryman work that they described;
- a large roll of brown paper which I lay out on the floor underneath each wall length in the exhibition space to make a drawing beneath the Ryman works in order, individually;
- various digital photographs of the entire floor space.

There was no grand revelation. However, I did return with a great deal of information of which the subjective voice recordings formed the larger part. Having transcribed the voice recordings, I analysed the account of my first-hand experience with the Ryman paintings and identified common themes. The main theme that emerged was bodily awareness as sensed through a form of haptic engagement with the paintings and the installation as a whole, in particular relating to my legs, feet, and my connection with the floor. The floor of the Ryman exhibition area in the Hallen had become central to my experience. This was partly because I had been given permission to photograph the floor area only. However, as well as being the only physical area on which my activities could practically and legitimately take place, it also became the focus of my bodily awareness. The floor was a very interesting, polished patchwork of various skin-coloured materials, marked with the evidence of the machinery that had existed during the building's previous function as a textile factory.<sup>5</sup> I moved to-and-fro between the paintings constantly, without my shoes in order to feel the floor and to tread softly. My focus of attention or physical position constantly transferred from the vertical plane to the horizontal. While looking at the Ryman works on the wall in a standing position and recording my subjective experience, I found myself talking about sensations in my feet. I responded to *LUGANO*, a large painting in the centre of the longest wall, by lying down.<sup>6</sup> All my written and drawn responses were made on the floor beneath the paintings.

My methods of analysis of the Hallen recordings formed the early stages of trialling ways to analyse my practice systematically, with the view to creating more work in response to that which the analysis exposed. To summarise the process: 1. I attempted an objective response to the Ryman paintings in the preliminary voice recordings using a Dictaphone.

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<sup>5</sup> Other works included in the Hallen, such as American sculptor Carl André's floor-based, minimal work *Cuts*, (1967), 9.35m x 13m, concrete bricks, contributed to my experience of the foregrounding of the floor.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Ryman, *LUGANO*, (1968), 228.9 x 229.7cm, 12 sheets, polymer on paper.

2. I made longer subjective voice recordings. 3. I made notes and drawings as an additional part of my attempt to record a subjective response and wrote a commentary in a journal throughout. 4. My attention and activity focused on the floor and my connection with it. 5. I returned to Huddersfield and transcribed the voice recordings. 6. I looked for repeated themes in the transcripts of the subjective recordings and the notes, of which the dominant theme was bodily awareness, mostly relating to the feet and legs, and my connection with the floor. 7. I made work in response to the findings, including *Blanks*, which incorporated the use of my feet and legs in an exploration of haptic engagement with materials, specifically clay.<sup>7</sup> 8. I took notes while immersed in the art-making process. 9. I included sections from the journal, the written contents of the note pages and three subjective recording transcripts as annexes in the MRes written thesis. 10. In the main text of the MRes written component, I demonstrated my identification of the references to bodily awareness discovered throughout all the subjective recordings in a method that could be interpreted as the early stages of a GTM coding trial. 11. I included the references to bodily awareness by printing words onto backgrounds made with digital photographs of the clay used to create *Blanks*. 12. I reduced the references to single words and phrases relating to the feet and the floor, demonstrating how the analysis of the experience had identified a significance concerning the ground. This significance I had identified developed into a strong hunch that there were discoveries to be made via further, thorough investigation that sought to 'get to the bottom' of my experimental painting practice.<sup>8</sup> The metaphorical meaning of this expression manifested in literal realisations as the painting experiments increasingly focused on the ground, in its various literal and metaphorical senses, becoming GPEs.

### The components of this PhD thesis

The PhD thesis consists of two components.

1. This bound volume containing two books: an Image book documenting the enquiry in digital images; and the written submission.

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<sup>7</sup> Puy Soden, *Blanks*, oil-based undercoat for wood and metal on air-dried clay, various dimensions, 2013. Images included in Soden, 'Touch: an enquiry', MRes diss., University of Huddersfield, 2014. I refer to *Blanks* in 'The Practice Led Enquiry' in terms of its use as a material in *GPE 1* (Image book page 46).

<sup>8</sup> The German word for 'thoroughly', *gründlich*, which is directly translated as 'groundly', portrays the sense I am looking for better than the English phrase 'to get to the bottom', as it implies that you 'get to the ground' to be thorough.



2. The research findings displayed in the Huddersfield studio demonstrating the process of execution, documentation, and analysis of the culminating experiment group *GPEFs 1-30* using an artistic interpretation of GTM coding.

The following four chapters of this written submission

In the first chapter, 'Historical Context', I refer to two main art movements of the twentieth century, Arte Povera and Land Art, as essential precedents to my research practice. The Italian Arte Povera artists expanded painting in their process-orientated artworks. I reference Italian artist Giulio Paolini's installations that demonstrate the Arte Povera dismantling of the tradition of painting and the focus on its physical components, materials and processes. Many references to the traditional components of painting as a discipline emerged in the activities and documentation of the GPEs, echoing the Arte Povera artists' expanded use of painting. I provide further analysis of my research project via a brief review of the catalogue and critical commentary of the ground-breaking exhibition of 1969, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information* that included Arte Povera artists and artists associated with Land Art.<sup>9</sup> The total disintegration of traditional disciplinary boundaries in art represented in the exhibition foregrounded ways of making art that today provide a context for my research project. I have worked directly with the land, using ground literally and metaphorically in an investigation into a concept of painting via a specific process of analysis. I discuss the concept of landscape and the figure-ground function as a trope that recurs in my painting experiments. As central themes in painting, landscape and the figure-ground relationship have been thoroughly employed, discussed and contested by artists. I introduce the origins of figure-ground in Gestalt psychology and explain how a working note by French twentieth-century philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Flesh of the *Gestalt*', has helped me to locate an explanatory language for my understanding of figure-ground in terms of my experience while immersed in the GPEs. North American painter Helen Frankenthaler, with her soak-stain method of paint application, made a significant advance in the development of the contemporary discourse around the figure-ground relationship in New York School painting of the 1950s. I include a reference to Frankenthaler to explain further the significance of Lascaux hill in southwest France as a

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<sup>9</sup> Harald Szeemann, director, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information*. Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, March 22 - April 27, 1969. [http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald\\_Live-In-Your-Head\\_When-Attitudes-Become-Form\\_1969.pdf](http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald_Live-In-Your-Head_When-Attitudes-Become-Form_1969.pdf) Accessed December 1, 2018.

site of the later GPEs. Having established the historical background, I provide a contextual review of the GPEs in reference to specific examples of artworks that I have established as precedents to my research practice. The practices associated with Land Art and Arte Povera have been useful to explain my approach to investigating a concept of painting. For example, I explain the relationships between a Grounding Painting Experiment, France (GPEF) carried out on Lascaux hill, *GPEF 27*, using material extracted from that ground, and its referent evidence and documentation in the Huddersfield studio in terms of the function of American land artist Robert Smithson's *Site-Nonsite* works which he began in 1968.

Having established the historical background and provided a contextual review of my research in the first chapter, 'Historical Context', in the following chapter I provide a contextualised account of the project in three stages. The second chapter, 'The Practice-Led Enquiry' describes: 1. the early painting experiments; 2. the painting experiments focusing on grounding becoming GPEs; and 3. the painting experiment group *GPEFs 1-30* and a culminating, artistic trial of GTM coding.<sup>10</sup> An analysis of the experiments I made for three U N N A W A Y exhibitions structures the first stage in this chapter. I refer to *Gnaw* and *Loving Care* by American contemporary artist Janine Antoni, and British artist Richard Long's mud work *Waterfall Line* to explain my use of materials in the three experiments for U N N A W A Y, two of which were made on-site.<sup>11</sup> These experiments show the progress of the practice as the experiments moved towards a focus on a search for grounding. Stage two of the practice-led enquiry records the painting experiments becoming GPEs. I have selected *GPEs 1-3* and *Groundworks* to demonstrate the focus onto a search for grounding via an engagement with specific sites and materials. The exploration of the possibilities and limits of traditional paint-making formulae is a line of experimentation that has run throughout the practice since the early painting experiments of the first stage. *GPE 1* took place in Huddersfield and used the clay from *Blanks* and the

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<sup>10</sup> Practice-led research is now widely understood as research carried out through creative practice. Practice-led research "not only affirms the primacy of practice in the research process, but it proclaims that the techniques and tools used by the practitioner can stand as research methods in their own right [...] these methods, specific to practitioners [...] become the spine of the research process". Barbara Bolt and Estelle Barrett eds., *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2007), 151.

<sup>11</sup> Janine Antoni, *Gnaw*, 1992, two 600 lbs cubes chewed by the artist, one of lard and one of chocolate, and objects made separately from the chewed materials. *Loving Care*, 1993, performance with *Loving Care* hair dye, Natural Black, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London. <http://www.janineantoni.net/> Accessed December 1, 2018. Long, Richard. *Waterfall Line*, 2000, black painted wall and white river mud, 4.54 x 145.5m, site-specific wall-painting commissioned for Tate Modern opening, May 2000. <http://www.richardlong.org/Exhibitions/2011exhibitupgrades/waterfaline.html> Accessed December 1, 2018.



vegetable fat from another artist's work also exhibited in the third U N N A W A Y show.<sup>12</sup> *GPE 2* is included as an example of investigating further the carrier-pigment possibilities of paint, given that paint is traditionally a mixture of carrier and pigment. In *GPE 2* I used linseed oil and ash to explore this. *GPE 3* pushed the idea that anything could be a carrier, and anything could be a pigment. I rolled in the mud of the Giverny carpark (pigment) while wearing a white suit (carrier). The dirt that I later collected, having brushed it off the suit, was used to make a paste with linseed oil. I used the Giverny dirt and oil mixture to make the painting, *USE LOVE*. The plan chest in the Huddersfield studio, documented in the Image book at the front of this volume, contains various findings from this second stage of the enquiry, including *Groundsocks*, *Groundbook* and *Groundsuit*, collectively called *Groundworks*, as well as other findings from the three stages. Stage three provides an overview of how I have carried out, documented and analysed a specific group of GPEs. *GPEFs 1-30* were carried out in France, many on Lascaux hill. Built into this group of experiments from their start was the culminating trial of GTM coding as an approach to investigating a painting process. The coding trial therefore began in France and was continued in the Huddersfield studio where the entire process of *GPEFs 1-30* is displayed.

In the third chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)', I explain my definition of a sense of grounding that has developed throughout my research. I describe the key texts that have contributed to the GPEs' focus on a sense of grounding and contextualise the specific sites that I have selected as important grounds for experimentation in relation to those texts. The selected sites include Puysegney, Giverny and Lascaux; places of personal and historical importance that became grounds of the GPEs during three different periods of research in France (June 27 - July 22, 2015; June 2 - July 8, 2016; and June 11 - July 20, 2017). Puysegney is located in southwest France, near Lascaux, and has been an important family place since 1972, prior to my birth. Giverny, the location of French impressionist painter Claude Monet's house and gardens, was chosen as a ground for several GPEs given Giverny's place in the history of painting. A significant site in terms of anthropological, archaeological and art history near Montignac, a town in

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<sup>12</sup> Puy Soden, *Blanks*, oil-based undercoat for wood and metal on air-dried clay, various dimensions, 2013. I made *Blanks* in response to my experience of the Robert Ryman paintings in the same year. U N N A W A Y was an artist-led organisation set up in 2015 to initiate and support art research activities, including four exhibitions in the former dance studio of Barbara Peters, 9, Market Walk, Huddersfield. As explained fully in the first section of 'The Practice-led Enquiry', I made experiments for three of these exhibitions. In my on-site painting experiment for the final exhibition, *...And To Dust We All Return*, I used the solid vegetable fat that the U N N A W A Y curators had installed to remake Hannah Regal's sculpture, *Please*, which had been exhibited in her solo show, *Want Me to the Marrow*, Rice + Toy, London, February 25 - March 8, 2015. <http://www.hannahregel.com/wantmetothemarrow.html> Accessed December 1, 2018.

southwest France, Lascaux is a hill inside which a cave of remarkable Upper Palaeolithic paintings was discovered in 1940. This location has become the main site of significance for many of the GPEs in the second and third stages of the enquiry. *Groundworks*, a body of work I exhibited in August 2016 at the University of Huddersfield, included findings from the GPEs that I had carried out on Lascaux hill during the second period of research in France, June 2-July 8, 2016.

British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes' book, *A Land*, has been useful for my thinking about the GPEs. I explain why *A Land* has become what I call a 'grounding object' during my enquiry due to the uncategorisability of Hawkes' approach to expressing a unity between humankind and the land. I define the importance of this uncategorisability and a sense of unity in Hawkes' writing with an analysis of information I sourced at the Jacquetta Hawkes archive, held at the University of Bradford's Special Collections in the J. B. Priestley library. Hawkes evokes a sense of unity by reminding the reader that not only has our development been shaped by the physical qualities, availability and locality of materials, but also that we share our land-based origins with these materials on which we have long depended for creative, innovative progression in all areas of human endeavour. This has shaped my thinking about the GPEs and helped form a definition of a sense of grounding sought via my material-led experiments. By including an interpretation of *A Land* to explain further this sense of grounding in my research, I have provided context for a study of Hawkes' lectures on Lascaux. This has intensified the significance of Lascaux as a ground for the GPEs and links the site to the sense of grounding as defined via Hawkes' writing in *A Land*. The image Hawkes uses to begin *A Land*, describing her lying down in her garden, an 'open tray', provides a point of entry for incorporating Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta in order to explain how my practice differs in terms of engaging with the ground. I have referenced *Imagen de Yagul (Image of Yagul)*, an 'earth-body' work that Mendieta made in 1973 as part of the *Siluetas* series that continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. I reference further examples of Land Art practices that have been included in a contemporary response to the Jacquetta Hawkes archive to illustrate how my experiments working with the ground, literally and metaphorically, have a different approach.

The fourth chapter, 'Methods', provides a condensed review of GTM, explains how the main principles of GTM fit my research, and establishes why I have chosen to trial GTM coding as an integrated part of a painting process. I include a brief description of GTM coding, referencing the main GTM authors, prior to providing an account of how I have trialled coding ideas as an artistic method within the experiment group, *GPEFs 1-30*. I reference the methods of other art researchers' PhD theses who have mentioned GTM, or



used it to analyse the practices of others rather than their own, including British artist Alec Shepley. I demonstrate how my approach differs, as an in-depth, experimental trial of GTM coding as part of my integrated methods to investigate thoroughly a concept of painting.

In the 'Conclusion', I describe how I trialled GTM coding with a specific explanation of the findings of the culminating coding trial with *GPEFs 1-30*. I summarise my discoveries as an artist trialling GTM coding, particularly in terms of the matter of subjectivity. I conclude my experimental approach to methods development and include a specific explanation of how I have used the tool of handwriting. The method of handwriting has been essential to record the experience while immersed in the painting experiments. I provide two examples of the use of writing in art practices to differentiate my approach conclusively: *sidekick*, started in 1997 by British artist Elizabeth Price; and a brief summary of how writing and text were employed in the works of Art & Language, an artistic practice and partnership started in 1968 by British artists Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell.

My research aim has been to expose, analyse and focus iteratively my painting process rather than to focus on any intended outcomes. I have been driven by the incessant need to find out and expose exactly what goes on in terms of my interaction with the various elements involved in each GPE. I have sought to investigate my particular painting process and the methods by which to do this. The painting experiments are at the core of my methods. As they have developed into GPEs, they have become the methodological devices through which I have explored a sense of grounding, following my hunch that significant findings were to be discovered via my close engagement with (the) ground in various senses. With the painting experiments as central, my research project as a whole has dealt with the experimental trialling and construction of artistic methods that are themselves continually exposed, while simultaneously developing to analyse and focus the research practice.

## **Chapter 1. Historical Context**

In this chapter, I describe certain practices that are relevant to my research project in order to set the historical context and to begin an explanation of my approach to investigating a concept of painting focusing on the significance of ground. These practices are associated with significant international art movements that happened mainly in Europe and North America in the 1960s and 1970s: 1. Arte Povera; and 2. Land Art. I do not claim to have appropriated or responded directly to these precedents, however, they must be acknowledged as fundamental to my historical moment and used to describe how my research practice relates to land, site, materials and process. Having provided this background, I include a contextual review of the Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs), my research practice, in reference to specific examples of artworks relating to these art movements. I use further examples of these precedents in the following chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry' to contextualise selected GPEs within the analysis of the development of the research enquiry in three stages, and to explain further my approach.

### 1. Arte Povera

Many art practices today echo the various ways of using simple materials and experimental processes as introduced by the Arte Povera artists in the late 1960s, including my painting practice. The Arte Povera artists worked to free their practices from established ideologies and preconceptions as part of a critique of capitalist priorities such as consumption, ownership and value.<sup>13</sup> This liberation of the work from the traditions of the commercialised gallery system led to the experimental openness to processes and materials that is an essential precedent to my research practice. The Arte Povera practices were highly diverse in their explorations of techniques, forms, materials and processes and a complete account is not possible here. Therefore, in this section I introduce Arte Povera briefly and generally in terms of its associated practices' shared characteristics as the precedent to my experimental use of materials in a process of investigation into a concept of painting. I provide a review, selecting artworks and observations relevant to my research, of the catalogue of a ground-breaking exhibition in

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<sup>13</sup> This radical move away from the traditional boundaries in art-making was part of a more general rejection of the status quo in the late 1960s. The riots in France in 1968 marked the pinnacle of the worldwide escalation of social conflict and an era of revolution and political upheaval had begun.



1969 that included many works by Arte Povera artists, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information*.<sup>14</sup>

Italian art critic Germano Celant coined the term Arte Povera in September 1967 to describe the practices of an Italian group of artists working mainly in Turin in the late 1960s.<sup>15</sup> The movement took place between 1967 and 1972, after which the artists associated with Arte Povera continued to work in similarly conceptual ways but showed their work independently. In her definitive survey, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, Rome-based critic and curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev describes Arte Povera as follows:

Arte Povera used simple, 'poor' gestures and materials – twigs, metals, glass, fabric, stone, even live animals [...]. They explored the relation between art and life as it is made manifest in natural processes or cultural dynamics [...]. Bridging the natural and the artificial, the urban and the rural, Mediterranean life and Western modernity, Arte Povera's impact still resounds.<sup>16</sup>

Exploring the intersections of art and life, nature and culture, in a quest for truth and authenticity, the Arte Povera artists worked conceptually in a range of experimental, open approaches to processes, mediums, locations and techniques using mainly raw, organic, 'poor' materials (including beeswax, coal, fat, brick, vegetables, peat, rags, hessian sacks, wood, soil, seeds, felt, string, twigs, sand, water, chemical elements, glass, metal, stones, clay, wire, animal hide etc.). The open, material-focused approach to my own investigation via a process of painting experiments echoes the Arte Povera sensibility. Christov-Bakargiev sums up the importance of Arte Povera in the history of art:

So pluralistic are its manifestations and manifold its concerns that even today [...] it is difficult to define Arte Povera. Its richness lies in this very variety; at once conceptual and sensual, literal and metaphoric, poetic and down-to-earth, it is close both to the natural processes of the present and at the same time aware of the past through memory. Radically transforming the language of contemporary art, Arte Povera has changed Western art-historical premises whilst pursuing the broader definitions of cultural practice. The acceptance of contradiction and complexity, tied to a sense of the importance of openness, fluidity and subjectivity,

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<sup>14</sup> Harald Szeemann, director, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information*, Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, March 22 - April 27, 1969. [http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald\\_Live-In-Your-Head\\_When-Attitudes-Become-Form\\_1969.pdf](http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald_Live-In-Your-Head_When-Attitudes-Become-Form_1969.pdf) Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> The main artists of the Arte Povera generation: Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini and Gilberto Zorio. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, ed., *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 1999), 17-18.

<sup>16</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, i.

positions the practice of Arte Povera beyond Modernism, and sustains our continuing fascination with it.<sup>17</sup>

It is generally agreed in art-history discourse that the Arte Povera practices led the disintegration and expansion of disciplines including painting at that time. Therefore the radical approaches to art-making in Arte Povera opened up painting to infinite possibilities.<sup>18</sup> My analysis of the Grounding Painting Experiment (GPE) field notes during the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding trials (explained fully in the following chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry', the 'Methods' chapter and the 'Conclusion') particularly with the experiment group *Grounding Painting Experiments France 1-30 (GPEFs 1-30)* in the final stage of the enquiry, revealed the repeated importance of testing, referencing and rearranging traditional painting methods and components. When the Arte Povera artists employed the traditional discipline of painting, they broke the boundaries of the medium, in "a new alphabet for a non-mediated language of real experience – neither visually nor verbally representational, neither figurative nor abstract".<sup>19</sup> I would not be investigating a concept of painting as I am today, as a process of material-led experiments that contain references to disassembled yet inseparable components of the painting medium, without this total disintegration of art discipline boundaries in Arte Povera practices. As Christov-Bakargiev states, "when traditional painting is referred to or used in Arte Povera, [...] it is done in order to expand painting by combining it with the possibilities of process-oriented work".<sup>20</sup> Having expanded painting, the Arte Povera artists dispersed components of its traditional, physical make-up and tools (stretcher, canvas, paint receptacle, pigment, frame, implement, and raw materials of which these objects consisted) scattered and incrustated in new meaning for others to pick up or reject completely. Arte Povera Italian artist Giulio Paolini is a clear example of how the tradition and process of painting have been broken down and reassembled.<sup>21</sup> Paolini's works reduce painting's components such as a stretched canvas to "what it truly is [...] the material itself [...]. If I use it directly -

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>18</sup> The art history discourse on the expansion of painting is vast and although it is fundamental to any painting practice today, I focus on specific contexts within that discourse such as Arte Povera which relate more closely to the painting experiments of my research project. For a thorough, art historical survey on how expanded painting practices have developed from 1940 to 2016 and a collation of the key, relating critical texts: Sinead Finnerty, 'Outward and Boundless: Painting in the Age of Expansion', Masters diss., California State University, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 37.



in the conventional way - the canvas becomes the world. Reversed, it is only a canvas".<sup>22</sup> In my enquiry, I have sought to reduce a painting practice to an exploration of my experience of the basic methods and activities of painting, such as making paint and applying matter to a surface. I have sought to find out 'what truly is' via the documentation of a series of painting experiments and an exposed process of analysis.

On the exhibition, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information.*

What is striking is the artists' complete freedom in the use of materials as well as the consideration of physical and chemical properties [...] now the activity of the human being, the artist, is the main subject and the content [...] never before has the artist's inner attitude so directly become the work. Of course it has always been this way - Mondrian and Pollock allowed the inner attitude to become form - but with respect to the finished result, the autonomous object. But the artists in this exhibition are not object-makers; instead they seek freedom from the object [...]. They want the artistic process to be visible within the final product [...]. Works, concepts, processes, situations, information [...] are the 'forms' in which these artistic attitudes have taken shape. They are 'forms' that have arisen not out of previously held pictorial opinions, but out of the experience of the artistic process.<sup>23</sup>

Several artists associated with Arte Povera and Land Art showed their work in various ground-breaking exhibitions in the late 1960s, including the 1969 defining exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information.*<sup>24</sup> The total disintegration of traditional disciplinary boundaries in art

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<sup>22</sup> Giulio Paolini in Susan Taylor, 'Interview with Giulio Paolini', *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, no. 5, New York, November/December, 1984, in Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 259. Paolini's works that use physical elements of painting include: *Senza titolo [Untitled]*, 1961, wood stretcher, tin of white paint, plastic, 21 x 21cm. "Like *Disegno geometrico*, *Senza titolo [Untitled]* reflects on the process of making art. On the bottom ledge of a small wooden stretcher, Paolini has placed a can of white paint and then covered the entire composition in clear plastic. The materials of art-making - stretcher, canvas and paint - are presented, with minimal mediation, as the work of art itself". Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> This translation by Shaun Whiteside of 'Zur Ausstellung', Harald Szeemann's foreword to the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* is included in the collection of documents at the back of Christov-Bakargiev's book, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 225.

<sup>24</sup> I have chosen to focus on *When Attitudes Become Form*. Other important exhibitions of the late 1960s that showed ways of working relevant to my research were numerous and included: Lucy R. Lippard, director, *Eccentric Abstraction*, Fischbach Gallery, New York, September – October, 1966; Virginia Dwan, director, *Earthworks*, Dwan Gallery, New York, October, 1968; Willoughby Sharp, curator, *Earthart*, White Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, January - February, 1969.

represented in the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* foregrounded ways of making art that today provide a context for my research project. As Scott Burton stated in 'Notes on the New', his introductory essay for the *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue: "[...] relationships between art and idea, art and site, art and material, art and methodology are pushed to their limits [...]. Categories are being eradicated [...]. The difference between painting and sculpture has gone [...] art and ideas are becoming indistinguishable [...]"<sup>25</sup>

On viewing the only available, original hardcopy of the *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds,<sup>26</sup> I found that the presence of ground, land, and earth is strong throughout. In the photographic portraits of the artists and images of their work, often showing both artist and artwork together, the boundaries between the interior gallery space and the outside are ambiguous. In their photographs, that were often artworks in themselves documenting otherwise fleeting interventions, the artists interacted and merged with wide land spaces. They brought nature into buildings and placed piles of natural substances mixed with man-made objects onto an interior floor. Nature was brought inside as organic matter was used as art material alongside everyday objects. New York-based artist Rafael Ferrer, crouched in a concrete stairwell in a pile of dried leaves, wearing outdoor clothing, seemed to herald the earthworks coming in.<sup>27</sup> Photographs of piles of ground, made elsewhere in previous exhibitions, included New York-based artist Hans Haacke's *Grass Grows*, North American artist Robert Morris' *Earthwork*, and German artist Reiner Ruthenbeck's *Aschenhaufen III*.<sup>28</sup>

Italian artist Giovanni Anselmo, associated with Arte Povera, used buckets, sacks, stone and cement in *Tosione (Twist)* and *Senza titolo (Untitled)*.<sup>29</sup> Mario Merz, another major figure in the Arte Povera movement, combined painting as an element in the production of

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<sup>25</sup> Scott Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New' (1969) in *Scott Burton, Collected Writings on Art & Performance, 1965-1975* (Chicago: Sobercove Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>26</sup> I reference the catalogue pdf rather than the hard copy:  
[http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald\\_Live-In-Your-Head\\_When-Attitudes-Become-Form\\_1969.pdf](http://www.radicalmatters.com/metasound/pdf/Szeemann-Harald_Live-In-Your-Head_When-Attitudes-Become-Form_1969.pdf) Accessed December 27, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Rafael Ferrer, *Staircase Piece/103 West 108<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, Dec 4, 1968 (Three landings, 36 bushels – leaves)*. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 57-58.

<sup>28</sup> Hans Haacke, *Grass Grows (Grass mound in Earth Art Exhibit)*, 1969, Cornell University, Ithaca. Robert Morris, *Earthwork*, 1968, earth, peat, steel, aluminium, copper, brass, zinc, felt, grease, brick. *Ausstellung Earthworks*, Dwan Gallery, New York. Reiner Ruthenbeck, *Aschenhaufen III*, 1968, 150cm. Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp. *Ibid.*, 62,111,135.

<sup>29</sup> Giovanni Anselmo, *Tosione (Twist)*, 1968, cement, cow skin, wood, 100 x 40cm. *Senza titolo (Untitled)*, 1969, glass, sawdust, cotton, bucket with water, 210 x 210cm. Galerie Sonnabend, Paris. *Ibid.*, 23-24.



works along with wax, neon light fittings, iron, glass and mastic. Merz' *Appoggiati* (*Leaning*) consisted of a series of several glass squares resting on the floor and against the wall, their edges smeared in thick, grey mastic.<sup>30</sup> Like many of the artists in the show, North American artist Richard Serra focused on the manipulation of the properties of a specific material. Burton described Serra's *Splash piece* of molten lead poured directly onto the gallery floor "as situationally specific as any architectural or relief sculpture was ever meant to be, but by a very novel and simple means".<sup>31</sup> The height from which Serra poured determining the distribution, the capturing of this performance in the solidified substance, and the fact that the piece could only exist in one specific place, all combined the importance of materials with 'process becoming product'. Similar to Paolini's use of painting, North American artists Richard Tuttle and Robert Ryman in *When Attitudes Become Form* challenged the traditional set-up of the components of painting while focusing on the materials and the process. Burton's description of Tuttle's large, irregular, octagonal pieces of canvas, simply named *Canvas*, summarised the disorientation of art disciplines' conventions at that time: "[...]they have no back, no front, no up or down, they may be attached to the wall or spread out on the floor [...] it is not possible to say whether a Tuttle is a painting or a sculpture; it uses properties of both and is probably neither [...]".<sup>32</sup> Ryman's *Classico III*, a large, thin work from the *Classico* series made between 1968 and 1969 and named after the brand of paper Ryman used as the support in that series,<sup>33</sup> was viewed by Burton as a reaction to the thickening of American paintings that were becoming larger, heavier, fatter, as painting "asserted more and more its objectness".<sup>34</sup> However Ryman, generally "wasn't really reacting against anything in

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<sup>30</sup> Mario Merz, *Appoggiati*, 1969, glass and mastic, 60 x 300cm. Galerie Sonnabend, Paris. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 106.

<sup>31</sup> Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New', 72-73. Richard Serra, *Splash piece*, 1968, lead. "Made first in the Artist's Studio, showed in public for the first time at Leo Castelli's Warehouse Exhibition, December 1968". Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New', 77, 152. Richard Tuttle, *Canvas*, 1967, 135 x 135cm. The Betty Parsons Gallery, New York. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 152.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Ryman, *Classico III*, 1968, 233.5 x 222.5cm. Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf. Ibid., 137. For process and material-focused descriptions of the *Classico* series: Jean-Pierre Criqui, 'Signed Ryman', in Vittorio Colaizzi and Karsten Schubert, eds., *Robert Ryman, Critical texts since 1967* (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 221. Urs Rausmüller and Christel Sauer, eds., *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House*, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, July 27 - October 8, 2006, published on the occasion of the exhibition, (Frauenfeld/Basel: Rausmüller Collection, 2006), 56-57 and 82-84.

<sup>34</sup> Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New', 77.

particular”,<sup>35</sup> and at the time was investigating supports that could bring the painting surface as close to the wall as possible. Furthermore, the most important point to make here is the fact that neither Burton nor any part of the *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue had mentioned anything about painting at all. In a useful book on Ryman, Vittorio Colaizzi and Karsten Schubert’s *Robert Ryman, Critical Texts since 1967*, there is an essay by French artist Daniel Buren, a friend of Ryman making work at the same time: ‘The Ineffable - About Ryman’s Work’. In this essay, Buren argued an interesting possibility (although Buren was adamant that it was fact) which has long been overlooked or forgotten: at the time of *When Attitudes Become Form*, which coincided with the early years of Ryman’s career, the curators of various international exhibitions “in no way considered Ryman to be a painter, but rather as a Post-Minimalist, or even a Conceptual Artist”.<sup>36</sup>

[...] it is surprising that work like Ryman’s could have been considered anything other than painting, especially as he has never attempted to hide the fact that he is a painter [...]. Yet this visual and mental confusion is extremely enlightening. On the one hand, it denotes the originality of this painting, which so ‘blinded’ the curators at the time that they did not recognize it as such. On the other, the relevance of this unidentified object must have been extremely intriguing to have captured the interest of these curators! [...] It was included through a total misunderstanding. Nobody really knew what it was, so it could safely be categorised with Conceptual Art, a wonderful grab bag of art movements!<sup>37</sup>

It is now understood that painting *had* to exist in the exhibition through the omissions and references to the institutional conventions of pictorial practice that the artists used in their

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<sup>35</sup> “In the sixties, for many artists, painting was dead, many of them turned to sculpture or Conceptual Art. I wasn’t really reacting against anything in particular, I just wanted to learn more about painting, I wanted to know what was possible, what I could do”. Robert Ryman, 1981, in conversation with M. Deschamps, cited in Criqui, ‘Signed Ryman’, 224.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Buren, ‘The Ineffable - About Ryman’s Work’, in Colaizzi and Schubert, eds., *Robert Ryman, Critical texts since 1967*, 314. First published in Daniel Buren, *The Ineffable – About Ryman’s Work*, trans. Lisa Davidson (Paris: Editions Jannink, 1999), and reprinted in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon and Stephen Melville, eds., *As Painting: Division and Displacement* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 243-249. Buren and Ryman have long been associated in terms of the reduction of painting to its ‘basics’. Along with Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni, Buren was part of BMPT, a Paris-based group that made conceptual art in the 1960s questioning the relationships between the support and the medium, the artwork and its context, and authorship. At that time, Buren described his painting practice as ‘degree zero of painting’, in which he extended pictorial practice into the environment while questioning painting’s materiality, processes and consumption. While this is important context to Buren’s comments that I mention on Ryman, I do not refer to Buren in greater detail since the dominant themes of his work are not part of my research: illusion using stripes; colour; form; perception; viewer participation and authorship (‘degree zero painting’ references *Writing Degree Zero*, 1953, the first full-length book by French theorist Roland Barthes known primarily for his seminal essay, *Death of the Author*, 1967).

<sup>37</sup> Buren, ‘The Ineffable - About Ryman’s Work’, 313-315.



conceptual language, even if in more muted ways than that of Paolini. A form of rejection of painting (many of the Arte Povera artists had started out as painters) had to have happened in order for it to have broken down. Buren continued: “[...] what is interesting is the subtitle of the exhibition: ‘Works, Concepts, Processes, Situations, Information’.

Nowhere was the word ‘painting’ visible! It had been banned from the vocabulary and the painters along with it”.<sup>38</sup> Ryman’s inclusion despite a possibly-deliberate ‘exclusion’ of painting is of great significance. The works that referenced painting in the exhibition did so conceptually, and Ryman’s work installed among them marked the beginning of a painting practice retaining the specificity of painting as a discipline while becoming as open and as inclusive of any materials and techniques as the other practices in the show. Furthermore, a year later Ryman participated in the second exhibition to include Arte Povera artists held in a public institution in Italy, *conceptual art arte povera land art*.<sup>39</sup> One of the two, small black and white images of this exhibition in the ‘Group Exhibitions’ section of Christov-Bakargiev’s complete survey of Arte Povera practices shows a wall installation of a group of six paintings that probably (Christov-Bakargiev does not include an image title) belong to a series of works, all given Roman numerals as titles, painted on corrugated cardboard that Ryman made in 1969.<sup>40</sup> The exact number of works in this series is unknown.<sup>41</sup> The series was part of Ryman’s focus on the act of applying paint to thin supports that could be attached as closely to the wall as possible.<sup>42</sup> The closeness to the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>39</sup> Germano Celant, curator, *conceptual art arte povera land art*, Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna, Turin, June 12 - July 12, 1970. Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 65. The brief description and list of artists who participated included by Christov-Bakargiev alongside the images is the only instance Ryman is mentioned in her book.

<sup>40</sup> Images of paintings that are identified as part of this series, that look like those in the photograph of *conceptual art arte povera land art*, are included in two important texts on Ryman. Suzanne Hudson’s complete study, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, includes an image of an installation of *VII* in the Ryman retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Ryman, *VII*, 1969, Enamelac on seven corrugated paper panels mounted on aluminium. Hudson, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, 237. The exhibition catalogue of *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House* includes a full-page image of *I* and a description explaining Ryman’s choice of materials and the process of making the painting. Ryman, *I*, 1969, Enamelac on corrugated cardboard, 152.5 x 152.5cm. Raussmüller and Sauer, eds., *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House*, 38, 44, 86-87.

<sup>41</sup> Ryman created another similar work on corrugated cardboard for the *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* exhibition, Marcia Tucker and James Monte, curators, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, May 19 - July 6, 1969. Ryman, *Untitled*, nine panels installed in three rows of three panels placed one above the other, 457.5 x 457.5cm. Exhibition catalogue pdf: [https://archive.org/stream/antiillusionproc61whit/antiillusionproc61whit\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/antiillusionproc61whit/antiillusionproc61whit_djvu.txt) Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Investigations into the relationship between the work and the wall have continued throughout Ryman’s practice. Hudson dedicates an entire chapter to this, entitled ‘Wall’, in *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, 193-243.

wall that Ryman sought required a thin, rigid support, that in turn affected his selection of a specific type of paint.<sup>43</sup> The works that Ryman showed from these early exhibitions and onwards were the products of experiments, selected from an ongoing line of enquiry into a material-led process of painting. Ryman and the other artists who used painting in *When Attitudes Become Form* reduced it to 'what it truly is' without fully abandoning it, as explained in Celant's statement introducing an earlier exhibition, *Arte Povera – Im Spazio*, that marked his first use of the term:

Thus, in the visual arts, visual and plastic reality are seen as they happen and as they are. They are reduced to their linguistic artifices [...]. The empirical quality of artistic inquiry, rather than its speculative aspect, is exalted. The hard facts and the physical presence of an object, or the behaviour of a subject, is emphasised. Hence Paolini's painting of painting [...].<sup>44</sup>

Remnants of these linguistic artifices of painting have emerged in the GPEs. In the process images of the GPEs, squares repeatedly appear. By choosing square receptacles and frames, assembling material into roughly square-shaped formations and by cutting squares directly into and out of the land, I have referenced Ryman's 'comfortable, equal-sided spaces' specifically, and the significance of the square in painting's Modern history more generally.<sup>45</sup> There are four works in the *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue that involve squares in their play with other conventions such as

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<sup>43</sup> "Ryman had to take account of the material's sensitivity to temperature and humidity. Clearly he had to avoid water-based paints since the cardboard would have soaked up the liquid, thereby losing its stability. Accordingly he used a shellac that protected the cardboard by sealing it. Another challenge was the consistency of the Enamelac. It had to be thin enough to dry almost instantly in order to have as little effect on the cardboard as possible. Ryman diluted the alcohol-based shellac creating an almost transparent solution with very little pigment. Since alcohol vaporises very quickly, it had to be applied equally quickly in one go. To achieve this, Ryman used a relatively broad brush and applied the paint with energetic up and down movements in three horizontal bands. The quick-drying Enamelac allowed an accumulative application of several fine layers and a subtle adjustment of the quantity of pigment. All in all, Ryman applied four layers of paint, creating two additional denser bands of colour. The result was a structure consisting of five horizontal bands that interlock but differ as to their density and, consequently, transparency". Description of the painting, Ryman, *I*, 1969, Enamelac on corrugated cardboard, 152.5 x 152.5cm. Raussmüller and Sauer, eds., *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House*, 86.

<sup>44</sup> Germano Celant, *Arte Povera – Im Spazio*, La Bertesca/Masnata/Trentalance, Genoa, 1967. This exhibition marked the first use of the term Arte Povera. Published in English in *Arte Povera Arte Povera*, trans. Paul Blanchard (Milan: Electa, 1985). In Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 221.

<sup>45</sup> In an interview with Phong Bui in 2006, Ryman was asked about the square and he replied: "Well, I don't know exactly. I've always been comfortable with that because it's an equal-sided space [...] It could be large, it could be small. It just has a good feeling [...]" When asked if there was any thinking in reference to Malevich, Mondrian or Albers, Ryman replied: "No. It's just that it's a comfortable, equal-sided space". Phong Bui, 'Robert Ryman with Phong Bui', Art INCONVERSATION, *The Brooklyn Rail, Critical Perspectives on Arts, Politics and Culture*, 2007. [www.brooklynrail.org/2007/06/art/ryman](http://www.brooklynrail.org/2007/06/art/ryman) Accessed March 18, 2013.



site, ground, perspective, process. 1. Dutch artist Jan Dibbets' *Perspective Correction* was photographed from a certain angle and distance in order to create the illusion of an upright line drawing of a square with two dissecting lines each drawn between opposite corners.<sup>46</sup> The artwork was: the drawing of the lines on the grass; the position of the artist who drew them; the working out of how to draw the lines, or how to counteract the perception of perspective in order to create the illusion; the position of the photographer; and all of these different points of location captured in the photograph. We are now accustomed to seeing similar tricks employed by companies who use adverts painted onto sports playing grounds in such a way that the flat image appears to stand perpendicular to the pitch due to 'perspective correction' when viewed from the stand or the screen. 2. North American artist Sol LeWitt's *Wall Markings* consisted of four sets of squares made up of fine, straight pencil lines drawn in a pre-planned system and very closely together directly onto the wall. LeWitt's markings could not be moved without being destroyed: "[...] if they do not exist in a fixed relationship to their environment, they do not exist at all".<sup>47</sup> The site-specific works in the *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue and exhibition occupied spaces both inside and outside in ways that best fit the artist's particular idea. Therefore, any floor, wall or outdoor space offered a possible environment for the artwork. 3. The photograph of British artist Richard Long's *Squares on Grass* brought site, painting and ground together.<sup>48</sup> 4. North American artist Lawrence Weiner's work is one of the most documented in art history of the exhibition. A 36" x 36" *removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wallboard from a wall* which Burton called "a work in which absence constitutes presence",<sup>49</sup> was completely about the idea. Weiner repeated the work in Amsterdam and New York, and explained that "the idea is exciting" while being filmed chipping away at the wall in Bern.<sup>50</sup> He clearly stated that the work could exist anywhere, as a statement on a piece of paper.

<sup>46</sup> Jan Dibbets, *Perspective Correction*, 1968. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New', 72. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 92.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Long, *Squares on the Grass*, 1967. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 95.

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence Weiner, *A 36" x 36" removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wallboard from a wall*, 1968. Seth Siegelau, New York. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 160. Burton, 'When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New', 73.

<sup>50</sup> A film clip of Weiner making the work and talking about it to a journalist in Kunsthalle, Bern, for *Live in your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7dK-9w\\_LGg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7dK-9w_LGg) Accessed November 20, 2016.

## 2. Land Art

Within the wider conceptual art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, various practices that engaged directly with the landscape and its natural materials came to be called Land Art, including Earthworks. None of the artists associated with Land Art have ever named themselves as such. Art historians and artists generally agree that Land Art is a historically-specific term to describe collectively the wide-ranging practices of various artists making art directly in/on/with the land, in broadly different ways and each with an individual approach, from the 1960s to the present day. I have worked directly in and with the land, using ground in literal and metaphorical ways. Piles of earth and other land-related substances, areas of ground and receptacles of land-originating materials are present throughout the documentation of my enquiry. Rather than appropriating previous Land Art practices or the anti-formalism that many of those practices intended, this is the physical evidence of an exploration into a concept of painting that has focused on the importance of using ground-based materials in order to search for a particular resonance, a sense of grounding (explained and contextualised in the third chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)').<sup>51</sup> The GPEs have increasingly focused over the course of the enquiry on an engagement with ground-based materials and significant sites, culminating in *GPEFs 1-30* (this development is described in the following chapter, 'The Practice-Led Enquiry').

Suzaan Boettger situates Earthworks in the context of the shift from "traditional genteel conservation into actively protectionist environmentalism" in the late 1960s in Europe and North America:

Earthworks came to public attention concurrently with a growing mass interest in ecology [...]. They were generally understood as a manifestation of that ecological sensitivity - even as a symptom of the decade's "back to nature" pastoral desires - despite the contradiction that these earthen works appeared as an open grave, a disorderly mound of dirt, an arrangement of bins of sand or rocks and, when made on open land, were located not in felicitous pastoral countryside but in remote wilderness terrains accessible only over rough dirt roads. There, the works took the form of a random splay of troughs hacked out of a fissured desert, deep trenches, or a gigantic, enigmatic spiral.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Suzaan Boettger states that Earthworks "were among the earliest manifestations of the anti-formalist moves that would be called Conceptualism, Anti-Form, and more generally, Postminimalism". Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks. Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



Ben Tufnell describes Land Art as “characterised by an immediate and visceral interaction with landscape, nature and environment”, and that despite ideological differences, all those practices associated with Land Art offer “a set of propositions about our relationships with the land and nature, about the way in which art can articulate the experience of landscape and nature”.<sup>53</sup> The practices associated with Land Art usually:

- involve works made directly in the landscape;
- view the physical contact between the body and the work, and therefore between the body and the ground/landscape, as a necessity;
- explore the physical nature and possibilities of materials found in the land;
- convey the artist’s unique, personal experience of the landscape;
- collaborate with natural processes while examining the relationship between the artist and the environment;
- demand the viewer’s physical engagement with the site, and/or a grasp of the concept of the work through an interpretation of its documentation.<sup>54</sup>

These tendencies challenge the traditional conventions of creating landscape artworks that up until the second half of the twentieth century, had involved a more distanced portrayal of a scene. Land Art entails a direct, immersive and instinctive interaction with nature and the environment. I mentioned British artist Richard Long briefly in the previous section, in my review of *When Attitudes Become Form* catalogue. Long is well-known as one of the artists in Europe and North America who began working with and in the land in the 1960s in ways that radically changed how landscape and art relate. Long’s contemporary, David Nash, a British sculptor who primarily makes works that function within the landscape with naturally-fallen wood to explore processes of transformation such as drying and charring, summed up the move away from the traditional, pictorial idea of landscape as demonstrated in Long’s work:

The term ‘landscape’ is like ‘portrait’. It is an expression of distancing: here I am and there it is. But what has been happening [...] is that artists have been getting right in there. Saying no, it is not out there. It is here. We want to make our images

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<sup>53</sup> Ben Tufnell, *Land Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 15.

<sup>54</sup> For common characteristics of a number of artists who have been described as land artists, such as the Americans Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Nancy Holt, Helen Mayer Harrison, Newton Harrison, Peter Hutchison, Dennis Oppenheim, James Turrell, and Europeans including Richard Long, Giuseppe Penone, Hamish Fulton, David Nash, Anthony Gormley and Andy Goldsworthy, see Tufnell, *Land Art*, 15-19.

with what is here - here. That is why it is called land art rather than landscape art, 'scape' denoting distancing.<sup>55</sup>

Long has consistently used walking through natural terrain as a medium to achieve the direct, close, real engagement with the land as described by Nash in the above quote.<sup>56</sup> These walks, artworks made in the landscape, have focused on a connection with the earth's natural materials. Printed language describing Long's personal experience of the landscape through walking contains many references to encounters with these materials and other natural features of the land. Working closely and literally with materials in and from the landscape is fundamental to many of the GPEs. More relevant to my research than Long's artworks in the landscape made by walking are his mud works. While Long has engaged with matter from the ground in various works, he has mostly used mud from the river Avon that runs through his hometown, Bristol. Many of Long's mud works have involved the rhythmical, repetitive application of the mud with his hands across very large walls in white gallery spaces forming circles, orbs, arcs and crescents.<sup>57</sup> I refer to these larger works later in the following chapter 'The Practice-led Enquiry' while describing an early painting experiment that investigated the possibilities of a material via an application of repetitive touch (Image book pages 42-43). Long also made smaller-scale mud works, such as *River Avon Mud Drawings, Ten Mud-dipped Papers*, 1988.<sup>58</sup> All of Long's works using ground-originating material, large and small, belong to an expansive process of interconnecting concepts such as touch, ritual, the human condition and our relation to land, time and space, all constituting "a portrait of an artist touching the earth".<sup>59</sup> For his

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in William Malpas, *The Art of Richard Long, Complete Works* (Maidstone, Kent: Crescent Moon Publishing, 2005), 62.

<sup>56</sup> Long's most renowned walk took place in November, 1968, when he walked for ten miles in a straight line across the moorland of Exmoor on a compass bearing of 290 degrees. Long documented the work by the relevant section of the Ordnance Survey map with the line of the walk drawn in pencil, and the inscription below, "A ten mile walk England 1968". Nicholas Alfrey, 'Ten Miles on Exmoor', *Tate Papers*, no.17, (spring 2012). <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/17/ten-miles-on-exmoor> Accessed September 26, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> For example, *River Avon Mud Arc*, 2000, Guggenheim, Bilbao and remade 2008, Haunch of Venison, Berlin. <http://www.richardlong.org/Exhibitions/2011exhibitupgrades/makingavonmud.html> Accessed October 9, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Long, *River Avon Mud Drawings, Ten Mud-dipped Papers*, 1988, ten works on paper, mud, each 41 x 30.5cm. Tate/National Galleries of Scotland. Ruth Burgon, in her 2012 entry to the Tate website page that describes these works: "The resulting patterns are largely the effect of chance, with the rivulets of muddy water following the most straightforward path down the paper, in the same way that rivers flow through the landscape on their way downhill". <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-river-avon-mud-drawings-ten-mud-dipped-papers-ar00616> Accessed October 9, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Long quoted in Tufnell, *Land Art*, 31.



large, wall-based mud works, Long has taken matter directly from the ground and mixed it with water, creating that which he views as the most basic, natural and purest of paint. Long kept using the river mud for its “tactility, material simplicity, and its geological significance having been created by the movement of water over millions of years”.<sup>60</sup> The personal significance of the mud due to its originating from his home river, its availability, and the purity of the natural, every-day, basic material that contained ground-down ancient rock, were also integral. In the ground-based material, the Avon river mud, there is combined personal and historical meaning linked with the geological significance of its age that reminds us of our earliest origins. Considerations of meaning combinations contained in ground-based materials, in terms of our connection with the land, became central to the GPEs and resonated more strongly as the enquiry developed. This is described in detail in the annex to chapter two, a contextualised analysis of *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)* to explain further the significance of a specific material in a GPE’s search for a sense of grounding.

### Figure-ground and Lascaux

The figure-ground function is fundamental to the history of painting, and today artists continue to work with figure-ground relationships in a wide variety of art practices. In the history of painting, the ground in the traditional figure-ground binary structure has moved from the background in the image of a scene, through various disassemblings, to contemporary practices that play on this tradition. Texts by North American art critic Rosalind Krauss are central to the canon of art historians’ writing on practices in the mid-to-late twentieth century that disorientated figure-ground. Krauss coined the term ‘expanded field’ and described practices that dismantled and restructured figure-ground relationships in her seminal essay of 1979, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’.<sup>61</sup> I do not intend to produce a full account of the widely-discussed figure-ground theme. However, it is necessary to introduce briefly the origins of figure-ground in Gestalt psychology before I

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<sup>60</sup> Ruth Burgon, Tate website, 2012. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-river-avon-mud-drawings-ten-mud-dipped-papers-ar00616> Accessed October 9, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Rosalind Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, *October*, vol. 8, (spring, 1979): 30-44. <http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz/assets/images/reading/Krauss.pdf> Named after North American art critic Clement Greenberg’s essay of 1948, Krauss’ essay of 1979, ‘The Crisis of the Easel Picture’ analysed figure-ground as verticality-horizontality. *The Optical Unconscious*, 1993, and the essay ‘The Master’s Bedroom’, 1989, are also core texts by Krauss that include discourse on figure-ground.

explain how a particular text has been useful for understanding my immersive experience while carrying out the GPEs.

My research has focused on painting experiments that engage with the ground and investigate a sense of grounding. I have created grounds within the experiments, operated on specific grounds of personal and historical significance, and worked within my own constructed landscape of interlinking GPEs. Thus, an awareness of figure-ground possibilities is intrinsic. I have been preoccupied with figure-ground variations throughout the GPEs as a means to explore grounding in my investigation of a concept of painting that has developed in the course of my experiments. My research is not about producing paintings where figure-ground problems might be worked through and viewed.<sup>62</sup> However, it is necessary to explain the origins of figure-ground which lie in visual perception.

Figure-ground as a visual dichotomy can be traced back to the perceptual organisation theories of early twentieth-century European Gestalt psychologists.<sup>63</sup> Theories of Gestalt psychology drew attention to the visually-perceived relationships between elements, forms with contours, contexts with and without boundaries, and the concept of ‘the whole being more than the sum of its parts’. Gestalt psychology defined perceptual differentiation in which we perceive a form (figure) standing out from a surrounding area or background (ground).<sup>64</sup> In our perception, the relationship between figure and ground is ambiguous, as there are visual situations in which something initially perceived as figure can sink back to become ground, and the area previously perceived as ground can come

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<sup>62</sup> Figure-ground has been and arguably always will be intrinsic to painting in some form or another. The practice of twentieth century New York based Abstract Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning is an example of the working-through of figure-ground problems on/in a picture plane that is not part of my research. My painting experiments explore figure-ground but are not confined within the pictorial boundaries of a stretched canvas. It is well documented that W. de Kooning was constantly preoccupied with the relationships between figure and ground, incessantly reworking the surface of his paintings. Krauss quotes W. de Kooning’s Chelsea studio neighbour on the painter’s struggle with “the plainest problems of painting”: “I often heard him say that he was beating his brains out about connecting a figure and a background”. Edwin Denby, *Willem de Kooning: Paintings* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1994), 16, quoted in Rosalind Krauss, *Willem de Kooning Nonstop. Cherchez la femme* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 5, 11.

<sup>63</sup> The main founders of Gestalt psychology were in Germany and included Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, Kurt Goldstein and Kurt Koffka. For a full account see Johan Wagemans, ‘Historical and conceptual background: Gestalt theory’, *Oxford Handbook of Perceptual Organisation*, August 2014. [http://gestaltrevision.be/pdfs/oxford/Wagemans-Historical and conceptual background Gestalt theory.pdf](http://gestaltrevision.be/pdfs/oxford/Wagemans-Historical%20and%20conceptual%20background%20Gestalt%20theory.pdf) Accessed June 3, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> Kurt Koffka, a protagonist in early Gestalt psychology, defined perceptual differentiation of figure from ground: “[...] generally stated, from an unlimited and ill-defined background there has arisen a limited and somewhat definite phenomenon, a quality”. Kurt Koffka, trans. Robert Morris Ogden, *The Growth of the Mind: An Introduction to Child-Psychology* (London: Kegan Paul, 1928), 145.



to the fore. This ambiguity due to our perceiving an oscillation between two elements was explored by Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin. Rubin described his experimentation with the visual experiences of figure and ground in his doctoral thesis, *Synsoplevede Figurer (Visually Experienced Figures)*, published in 1915. This included his experiment involving participants' responses to the common example of figure-ground ambiguity known as the Rubin vase/faces illustration.<sup>65</sup>

The Gestalt psychology origins of figure-ground concentrate on visual perception. Throughout this research project, I have been exploring a painting process with an approach that is concerned with investigating the experience of a process rather than producing outcomes intended for viewing. The investigation has been multisensory, and led by a painting practice exploring matters other than the visual, representational, or pictorial. I have continually found a physical examination of figure-ground possibilities to be important, but not in terms of producing an image, an optical illusion, or experiments in visual perception. I sensed something in-between that could be produced while experimenting within the possibilities of figure-ground, but not in a traditional, binary, image-focused way. I sought a philosophical model to aid my understanding and analysis of this phenomenon that I sensed while 'being in the paint'. Twentieth-century French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty analysed and contested Gestalt psychology at various points throughout his writing, from his first published work of 1942, *The Structure of Behaviour*, to the *Phenomenology of Perception* of 1945, and finally in a work he did not complete before his death in 1961, *The Visible and the Invisible*, published in 1964. Merleau-Ponty moved away from the basic principles of Gestalt psychology, dissolved barriers between figure/ground, mind/body, subject/object, and described a far more fluid, complex, intersensory, perceived experience of the 'body-subject' ('*sujet-incarné*'). Merleau-Ponty wrote about the whole body as a perpetual system, not just the brain and eyes, and described how we are so embedded in our world that there is no objective reality to be interpreted. Meaning is derived from a constant, multisensory process of interaction and movement.

During the enquiry, I found the three essays associated with painting in Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and The Invisible*<sup>66</sup> useful while considering the immersive

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<sup>65</sup> Jörgen L. Pind, "Looking back: Figure and ground at 100", *British Psychological Society*, online journal, January 2012, vol. 25, 91. <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-25/edition-1/looking-back-figure-and-ground-100> Accessed June 3, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> 'Cézanne's Doubt', 1945, 'Indirect Language and Voices of Silence', (1952), 'Eye and Mind', 1960. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith eds., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader; Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

experience of the GPEs in phenomenological terms. These texts have been referred to thoroughly in art history and art-making discourse. Towards the end of the second stage of the enquiry, I focused on a small, specific section of Merleau-Ponty's works, the 'Working Note' *Gestalt* of September 1959<sup>67</sup> at the end of *The Visible and The Invisible* (and therefore at the end of his life). I provide an edited version here:

What is a *Gestalt*? A whole that does not reduce itself to the sum of the parts [...]. From within, then, what is a *Gestalt*?

[...] The *Gestalt* is not a spatio-temporal individual, it is ready to integrate itself into a constellation that spans space and time - [...] it is everywhere present without one ever being able to say: it is here. It is transcendence [...]. It is a double ground of the lived.

[...] It is a body - In what sense? My body is a *Gestalt* and it is co-present in every *Gestalt*. It is a *Gestalt* [...]. it is flesh; [...] -- And at the same time it is a component of every *Gestalt*. The flesh of the *Gestalt* (the grain of the colour, the indefinable something that animates the contour [...]) [...].

The *Gestalt* therefore implies the relation between a perceiving body and a sensible [...] world - [...]. There remains to understand precisely what the being for itself of the *Gestalt* experience is [...].<sup>68</sup>

This sense of grounding-in-making might be a case of being aware of the self as another *gestalt* in a landscape of *gestalten*, figure becoming ground, ground becoming figure, with the 'flesh' continually 'running on' in between, over and underneath: "it is everywhere present without one ever being able to say: it is here. It is transcendence [...]. It is a double ground of the lived."<sup>69</sup> The painting experiments involve an immersion in a world of materials, utensils, objects and process: 'the *sense of gestalt*, is one that emerges because of an embodied immersion in a world of things'.<sup>70</sup> Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological definitions of the *gestalt* helped locate a language to describe and understand my immersive experience of 'being-in-the-experiments' as something more fluid than simply sensing a notion of either figure or ground. At the end of the second period of research in France, June 2 - July 8, 2016, I attended the 33<sup>rd</sup> Psycart

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<sup>67</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Gestalt, September, 1959', Working Note, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 205-6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> I paraphrase Lawrence Hass, 'Sense and Alterity; Rereading Merleau-Ponty's Reversibility Thesis' in Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley, eds., *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 93.



International Conference on Psychology and the Arts, June 29 - July 4, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne. I presented a conference paper, 'Grounding painting: an artist-researcher's experience of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the *Gestalt*'. The paper analysed my experience of the GPEs that I had carried out during that period in France leading up to the conference in terms of figure-ground ambiguities and Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the *Gestalt*'. My presentation included a continuous slideshow of images I had taken while engaged in the GPEs to evoke in the audience the sense of immersion in various grounds, or *gestalten*, that I had experienced.<sup>71</sup>

It is not possible within the space of this written component to provide a full account of how previous and contemporary painters have explored the figure-ground function. Figure-ground is fundamental to painting and the possibilities and problems relating to figure-ground always have been, and always will be endless. To refer to a specific and ground-breaking example, Helen Frankenthaler, a second-generation American abstract expressionist painter, used a soak and stain technique that involved pouring turpentine-thinned oil paint from cans onto floor-based raw canvas. In her painting practice, Frankenthaler was drawing on the formal, technical discoveries and imaginative worlds of abstract expressionist painters working in New York during the 1940s and 1950s including Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, who worked to expand the figure-ground function in painting. Critics argue that Frankenthaler made a far more significant advance in terms of achieving figure-ground ambiguities within the painting plane with her pioneering soak-stain technique.<sup>72</sup> Frankenthaler viewed the paint-free, un-primed canvas, the ground, as equal to the painted areas: "the thing was to decide where to leave it, or where to fill it".<sup>73</sup>

Introducing Frankenthaler leads this historical context chapter to a brief account of the interest of Lascaux and its particular spatial ambiguities for artists. I have identified how certain contexts, that are key to my research, converge in terms of their connection with the site of Lascaux. Developing an understanding of Lascaux as a node of historical contexts has contributed to the resonance of this specific site as a ground that I selected

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<sup>71</sup> <http://conf.psyartjournal.com/2016/> Accessed October 12, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> See Alison Rowley, *Helen Frankenthaler, painting history, writing painting* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 53.

<sup>73</sup> Helen Frankenthaler quoted in the audio clip (at 1:03) included below that discusses *Mountains and Sea*, 1952, oil and charcoal on un-sized, un-primed canvas, 219.4 x 297.8cm. On loan to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA, Collection Helen Frankenthaler Foundation Inc. <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/audio/collection-highlights-east-building-english/mountains-and-sea-frankenthaler.html> Accessed October 11, 2018. The complex significance of *Mountains and Sea* is fully analysed by Rowley in *Helen Frankenthaler, painting history, writing painting*.

for several GPEs in the second and third stages of the research enquiry. A significant site in terms of anthropology, archaeology and art history in Montignac, a town in southwest France, Lascaux is a hill inside which a cave of Upper Palaeolithic paintings were discovered in 1940. Since their discovery, these cave paintings have caused considerable debate as to the motivations of those who made them. I discuss Lascaux fully in the third chapter 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)' and explain how it has become an important site of my research, a ground of the GPEs, and a contextual ground with reference to Jacquetta Hawkes' writings.

The original cave, Lascaux I, was discovered on September 8, 1940, and was closed to the public in 1963. The creation of the replica of a principal section of the original began in 1978 and Lascaux II opened on July 18, 1983. Lascaux II is near Puyseggeney,<sup>74</sup> opened four years after my birth and has remained a site of significance in my personal, cultural context and history. Lascaux III, consisting of replicas of areas of the cave known as the 'Nave' and the 'Shaft Scene', which were not reproduced for Lascaux II, began touring internationally as a mobile exhibition in 2012. Lascaux IV is the biggest replica so far of Lascaux I and a permanent part of a large museum at the foot of Lascaux hill, the Montignac-Lascaux Parietal Art International Centre that opened on December 15, 2016. While I will only ever have access in my lifetime to the replicas Lascaux II and IV, (and III, depending on its location), Hawkes, Frankenthaler and Merleau-Ponty accessed the original paintings of Lascaux I. In August 1947, Hawkes visited the original cave that closed to the public in 1963, now known as Lascaux I.<sup>75</sup> Various texts written by Hawkes refer to Lascaux I in such a way that strengthens the resonance of the place as an important ground of my research. I explain this in terms of Hawkes' writing on her first-hand experience of Lascaux in the third chapter. Frankenthaler visited Lascaux while on honeymoon with Robert Motherwell in 1958.<sup>76</sup> In the same year, Frankenthaler painted

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<sup>74</sup> The base in southwest France for the three periods of research: June 27 - July 22, 2015; June 2 - July 8, 2016; and June 11 - July 20, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> British archaeologist and author Christine Finn is writing Hawkes' biography. In chapter six of the online version, Finn states that Hawkes and her husband Christopher visited Lascaux in August 1947, guided by two of the same three students who had discovered the cave seven years earlier. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160405145918/http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/ChristineFinn/Home> Accessed February 24, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> In 'Selected Chronology': "1958: Marries Robert Motherwell in April. Travels extensively on honeymoon including trips to Altamira and Lascaux". E. A. Carmean, ed., *Helene Frankenthaler, A Paintings Retrospective*. Catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, June 5 - August 20, 1989 (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1989), 96. Published online by Museum of Modern Art, 2017. [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_catalogue\\_2126\\_300062912.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2126_300062912.pdf) Accessed August 14, 2018.



*Hotel Cro-Magnon* and *Before the Caves*, and a year later, *Cave Memory*.<sup>77</sup> The memory of the Lascaux visit became part of these paintings.<sup>78</sup> Merleau-Ponty is quoted in the Lascaux literature available onsite.<sup>79</sup> In 1964, two years after his major theoretical text *Phenomenology of Perception* was published in English,<sup>80</sup> Merleau-Ponty wrote in his essay 'Eye and Mind':

The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as are the fissures and limestone formations. Nor are they *elsewhere*. Pushed forward here, held back there, supported by the wall's mass they use so adroitly, they radiate about the wall without ever breaking their elusive moorings. I would be hard pressed to say *where* the painting is I am looking at.<sup>81</sup>

From the perspective of a writer of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty was describing the historically well-discussed figure-ground ambiguity of the Lascaux cave paintings, which was achieved by the Cro-Magnon artists' use of the irregularities of the cave walls.<sup>82</sup> Elaine de Kooning, second-generation abstract expressionist painter, art critic and teacher who married Dutch-American painter Willem de Kooning in 1943, also commented on the Lascaux cave artists' deliberate use of the figure-ground function having visited Lascaux in

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<sup>77</sup> Frankenthaler, *Hotel Cro-Magnon*, oil on canvas, 172.72 x 205.74cm, 1958. Milwaukee Art Museum. <http://collection.mam.org/details.php?id=10786> Accessed August 17, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Art historians make this association, for example, Anne Wagner, 'Passages: Helen Frankenthaler, 1928-2011', *Artforum International*, vol. 50, issue 8, New York (April 2012): 51-52, and Shepherd Steiner, 'Occupy 21<sup>st</sup> Street! Helen Frankenthaler at Gagosian', *Afterall. A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, vol. 35, University of the Arts London (spring 2014).

<sup>79</sup> The translated quote by Merleau-Ponty from his essay, *La Prose du Monde*, included in the English edition of Jean-Michel Geneste's book *Lascaux* available in the Lascaux II bookshop: "The first drawings on the cave walls defined an unlimited field of research, positioned the world as a place to be painted or drawn, beckoned to a boundless future of painting; we find them so moving because they resonate with us, and we respond through the metamorphoses that operate between us". Merleau-Ponty, *La Prose du Monde*, 1969, ed. Claude Lefort, cited in Jean-Michel Geneste, *Lascaux*, trans. Lisa Davidson (France: Gallimard, Hors Série Découvertes, 2012), 43. Also found in Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 72.

<sup>80</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2002). First published in French in 1945 and in English in 1962.

<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', in Galen A. Johnson, ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader, Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 126.

<sup>82</sup> For an example of this common observation, Hugh M. Davies referred to the Lascaux artists' use of the irregular surfaces of the cave walls in his introduction to the catalogue for the 1996 exhibition *Blurring the Boundaries. Installation Art, 1969-1996*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. "What is also significant about these elegant murals is that they were made directly on the wall [...] The depicted animals follow the contours of the irregular surfaces of the wall as if the rock itself provides a painterly landscape background. These lovingly rendered hoofed creatures symbolically negotiate the uneven terrain they inhabited in reality". 'A Legacy from Lascaux to Last Week', in Anne Farrell, ed., *Blurring the Boundaries. Installation Art, 1969-1996* (Seattle: Marquand Books, 1997), 8.

1983.<sup>83</sup> Her response, a body of paintings entitled *Cave Walls*, was exhibited at the Fischbach Gallery in 1988.<sup>84</sup> The walls of Lascaux continued to be a dominant theme until her death in 1989. E. de Kooning described her experience of Lascaux:

There's also a tremendous immediacy about the cave work that has much more to do with today's art, than, let's say, with Renaissance art. There's this directness, when you can see exactly how it's done [...]. Especially in the dazzling caves at Lascaux, no matter how ungainly or disproportionate, you know immediately this is a horse, a bison [...]. All these visual stimulations fit exactly into everything I've been doing as an artist.

I was also very excited about the interplay between the contours of the animals and the action of the walls - the bulges and cracks and fissures that the cave artists either incorporated or ignored.<sup>85</sup>

E. de Kooning described the figure-ground 'interplay' between the images and the wall surface that Merleau-Ponty had referred to in the previous quote at least thirty years earlier. Since Lascaux I closed to the public in 1963, E. de Kooning's 1983 experience must have taken place in Lascaux II, the first replica, and it is interesting that this fact is not mentioned in her interviews about the paintings she made in response. I do not intend to elaborate on the question of the aura and the original (I mention this briefly in the third chapter which further explains the significance of Lascaux in my research). However, the co-existence of the original, unseen cave and its two versions in and on Lascaux hill that continue to attract many visitors has raised questions relating to figure-ground and an experience of something that is beyond the image, pulling me to the site to use its ground literally and metaphorically in the GPEs. It is possible that Merleau-Ponty's visit to Lascaux informed his writing on the Gestalt, and it is clear that Frankenthaler and E. de

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<sup>83</sup> The date of E. de Kooning's visit to Lascaux is stated in the Los Angeles Times newspaper article announcing E. de Kooning's *Cave Walls* exhibition: Zan Dubin, 'Elaine de Kooning Finds Light in Paintings of 'Cave Walls'', *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1987. [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-10/entertainment/ca-5882\\_1\\_cave-paintings](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-10/entertainment/ca-5882_1_cave-paintings) Accessed September 26, 2018. Also confirmed in the Guggenheim biography: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/elaine-de-kooning> Accessed September 26, 2018. According to the official Lascaux blog, Lascaux II opened on July 18, 1983. <https://www.lascaux.fr/en/blog/detail/25-lascaux-lascaux-ii-iiiand-next> Accessed August 14, 2018. Lascaux I, the original cave, was closed to the public in 1963. Therefore E. de Kooning made paintings in response to the first replica, not the original.

<sup>84</sup> North Carolina State University Libraries Collections. Images of the *Cave Walls* paintings by E. de Kooning, Fischbach Gallery, New York, November 5-30, 1988. [http://images.lib.ncsu.edu/luna/servlet/view/search?q=%22Elaine%20de%20Kooning%20\(American%20sculptor%2C%20painter%2C%201920-1989\)%22](http://images.lib.ncsu.edu/luna/servlet/view/search?q=%22Elaine%20de%20Kooning%20(American%20sculptor%2C%20painter%2C%201920-1989)%22) Accessed August 14, 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Zan Dubin, 'Elaine de Kooning Finds Light in Paintings of 'Cave Walls'', *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1987. [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-10/entertainment/ca-5882\\_1\\_cave-paintings](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-10/entertainment/ca-5882_1_cave-paintings) Accessed August 14, 2018. E. de Kooning famously stated: "A painting to me is primarily a verb, not a noun, an event first and only secondarily an image". P. G. Pavia, ed., *It is: A Magazine for Abstract Art*, No. 4, Autumn 1959, New York: Second Half Publishing, 29-30.



Kooning used the cave paintings as source material for their own painting practices. The influence of Lascaux is not unusual since many artists have responded to prehistoric art. However, most of the responses have focused on the images of the animals, the symbols and other marks: essentially the 'figure' in the paintings.<sup>86</sup> In the GPEs I have been focusing on the significance of ground. Lascaux has become a significant site where the convergence of historical contexts relevant to my practice has emphasised the meaning of Lascaux where a phenomenological sense of something in-between figure-ground might be experienced.

### Contextual review of the Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs)

Having provided the historical background, I now provide a contextual review of the GPEs in reference to specific examples of artworks that I have established as precedents to my research practice.

The experimental approach to processes led by a sensitivity to materials evidenced in the artworks in *When Attitudes Become Form* echoes strongly throughout my practice-led research project. Serra's *Splash piece* was made by pouring molten lead directly onto the gallery floor.<sup>87</sup> In my early painting experiments in particular, and many of the later GPEs, I have repeated the pour or drop of materials, which has involved the multi-levelled positioning of the body (I was often up ladders, amidst the vessels on the ground, standing on a chair, lying on a table etc.). These were some of the many actions that felt necessary at certain points to meet the demands of the different GPEs depending on the materials and tools involved, and were not final artworks in themselves. I was documenting the investigation into my experience of the physical properties of paint as a medium by experimenting with various ways of immersing myself in the activity, of which the pouring of paint formed a part.

Substances similar to those used in the works shown in *When Attitudes Become Form* and the importance placed on their properties can be found in the GPEs, as well as

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<sup>86</sup> For example, Arte Povera artist Mario Merz, *Rinoceronte bianco [White rhinoceros]*, 1980, mixed media on canvas, neon tube, 284 x 515cm. Neon tube 250cm. "Painting, for Merz, is an expressionistic process suggesting growth and creative force. It harks back to original, primitive expression such as cave painting but links it to the contemporary. He uses painting as an element in the production of his works combined with other materials to create installations, often taking ancient animals as his subjects". Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 122.

<sup>87</sup> Serra, *Splash piece*, 1968, lead. Catalogue pdf, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 146.

industrial, every-day, functional objects and utensils. For example, Ruthenbeck's *Aschenhaufen III*<sup>88</sup> means 'ash heap' that links to *GPE 2* in which I used the ash of burned personal papers as a 'pigment' while exploring the possibilities of the traditional components of paint, pigment and carrier (Image book page 51, explained fully in the following chapter). While I carried out the GPEs, piles of different types of matter were produced and accumulated in various ways in and outside the studio as I investigated the metaphorical and literal meanings of ground. This gathering of natural material alongside the man-made may appear reminiscent of Art Povera practices, but the positioning of the natural substances and objects was more arbitrary in the GPEs. The piles of matter in the GPEs appeared as a consequence of the immersion in an ongoing process of investigating the significance of different materials and sites in my particular painting process, rather than having been placed consciously as artworks in themselves or presented for viewer interaction. My intention was always to explore my own experience while carrying out the GPEs rather than create artworks that might evoke a specific experience when viewed. Similarly, while there are echoes of the land artists' 'ecological sensitivity' in the ground-based activities of my research, my connection with the land via the GPEs has become part of an ongoing process to explore if and how the meaning of materials from significant sites can bring a sense of grounding. The dirt mounds, holes in the ground, buckets and bins of organic material, and other such objects reminiscent of certain Land Art practices, have appeared in the documentation of the GPEs due to their function as experiment equipment, gathering throughout the process rather than having been consciously assembled as artworks in themselves or as intended, direct references. The Earthworks of the Land Art movement were made to be viewed and experienced. I have focused on my own experience of the GPEs, and the documentation recording that experience has been created to enable the ongoing analysis as part of the empirical process.

Via the GPEs' engagement with literal and metaphorical grounds, my research project can be considered as coinciding with the characteristics and activities associated with Land Art at different points throughout the enquiry. However, an investigation of a concept of painting via an iterative process of analysis has remained central and any intersections with Land Art practices are more incidental than deliberate. It is necessary to analyse my research in terms of certain Land Art practices however in order to explain my approach, which has clearly involved a connection with the ground and the land, inevitably echoing these precedents. Throughout the history of Land Art, the direct, physical, non-

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<sup>88</sup> Ruthenbeck, *Aschenhaufen III*, 1968, 150cm. Ibid., 62,111,135.

representational, non-pictorial engagement with site and experience within the landscape has taken many forms, and is unique to each artist. Relevant to the geographical context of this thesis given that my experiments have taken place in England and France, Tufnell points out that there are clear differences between the ideologies of North American artists known for making large-scale Earthworks, for example, and those of European artists “whose work is perhaps small-scale or ephemeral”.<sup>89</sup> Long, whose work has always been strongly associated with Land Art, stated:

My interest was in a more thoughtful view of art and nature, making art both visible and invisible, using ideas, walking, stones, tracks, water, time, etc., in a flexible way [...]. It was the antithesis of so-called American Land Art, where the artist needed money to be an artist, to buy real estate, to claim possession of the land and wield machinery. True capitalist art.<sup>90</sup>

As explained in the next chapter ‘The Practice-led Enquiry’, during three separate periods of research, I carried out many of the GPEs on specific sites in France. This, along with my rural English origins and the fact that the key text I have identified as useful to define my sense of grounding is by British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes, connects my work more closely with the British and European sensibility of previous land artists. Although elements of my research coincide with the above definitions of Land Art, the approach was to investigate my painting process during which the land became important as a source of significant grounds in various senses, rather than create any sense of antithesis to those American practices Long described.

In terms of the activity of the GPEs, my research could be considered reminiscent of the British and European sensibility of Land Art as described by Long. However, an example by North American land artist Robert Smithson is useful to introduce the function of a particular GPE in terms of the relationships between the activity, site and materials of that experiment and the documentation and analysis displayed in the Huddersfield studio.

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<sup>89</sup> Tufnell’s book *Land Art* “attempts to redress a historical imbalance in previous accounts, whereby American artists, particularly those working with earthworks, are prioritised over Europeans whose work is perhaps small-scale or ephemeral. The implication in these studies is that the impermanent, nature-based aspects of the genre produced in Europe represent a kind of watered-down response to the ground-breaking work being done in the US, something that is clearly not the case”. *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Long quoted in Tufnell, *Land Art*, 15. Boettger includes a quote by Long who saw Land Art as a term coined by American critics to define an American movement: “[...] which, for me as an English artist in the sixties, I saw as American artists working in their own backyards, using their deserts to make monumental work, and only in America. They needed a lot of money to make art, as they had to buy land, or hire bulldozers, so it was about ownership, real estate, machinery, American attitudes. It was a very different philosophy from my own work, which was almost invisible, or made only by walking, or used the land in a freeway, without the need for possession or permanence”. Boettger, *Earthworks. Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, 172.



Smithson, known primarily for the large-scale Earthwork, *Spiral Jetty*,<sup>91</sup> made a series of work that explored the relationship between artworks he called either *Site* or *Nonsite*. The *Site* was the place in the landscape where Smithson had made (or suggested he had made) a sculpture, or carried out an activity of some kind. The *Nonsite* was ‘an indoor earthwork’, a sculpture or installation in a separate exhibition space that corresponded to the sculpture or activity outside in the landscape. The *Nonsite* was accompanied by documentation that described the *Site*, usually specifying its location.<sup>92</sup> As well as some form of description such as a drawing and/or text, the *Nonsite* often contained natural, land-originating material that Smithson had gathered from the *Site*. The documentation accompanying the *Nonsite* usually confirmed that the material included in the *Nonsite* installation had been taken from the *Site*. The *Nonsite* was therefore more than a correlative representation of the *Site*, since it contained material removed from ‘elsewhere’.<sup>93</sup> Smithson was exploring how the viewer interpreted the sense, or the absence, of the *Site* via an experience of the *Nonsite*:

The range of convergence between *Site* and *Nonsite* consists of a course of hazards, a double path made up of signs, photographs and maps that belong to both sides of the dialectic at once. Both sides are present and absent at the same time. The land or ground from the *Site* is placed in the art (*Nonsite*) rather than the art placed on the ground. The *Nonsite* is a container within another container- the room. The plot or yard outside is yet another container. Two-dimensional and three-dimensional things trade places with each other in the range of convergence. Large scale becomes small. Small becomes large. A point on the map expands to the size of the landmass. A landmass contracts to a point.<sup>94</sup>

The displayed research workings of *GPEFs 1-30* in the Huddersfield studio can be analysed in terms of Smithson’s *Site-Nonsite* relationships, of which there are many possible combinations. For example, in *GPEF 27*, I searched for the permanently-closed

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<sup>91</sup> Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, April 1970, mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water coil, 457.2m x 4.6m, Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah. Dia Art Foundation. [https://www.robertsmithson.com/earthworks/spiral\\_jetty.htm](https://www.robertsmithson.com/earthworks/spiral_jetty.htm) Accessed October 1, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Smithson referred to the *Nonsite* as ‘an indoor earthwork’ in his essay, ‘A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites’, in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996). <https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm> Accessed October 1, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Smithson’s first of this series of *Sites* and *Nonsites* made in 1968, *A Nonsite (an indoor earthwork)*, later retitled *A Nonsite, Pine Barrens, New Jersey*, exhibited at Dwan Gallery, 57<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, March 1968 in Smithson’s second solo exhibition. The accompanying text read: “*A NONSITE (an indoor earthwork)*, 31 sub-divisions based on a hexagonal “airfield” in the Woodmansie Quadrangle - New Jersey (Topographic) map. Each sub-division on the *Nonsite* contains sand from the *site* shown on the map. Tours between the *Nonsite* and the *site* are possible. The red dot on the map is the place where the sand was collected”. Boettger, *Earthworks*, 67.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Smithson quoted in Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 137.

entrance to Lascaux I (*Site*), dug ochre from the topsoil of Lascaux hill very near the entrance having found it (*Site*), and rubbed the ochre on a support. In the Huddersfield studio, the printed grid<sup>95</sup> at the top of the wall contains the iPhone images taken during *GPEF 27* (*Nonsite*). The support rubbed in Lascaux hill (*Site*) ochre is on the floor underneath the *GPEF 27* image grid and analysis (*Nonsite*). During the experiment, I recorded the experience in the white field notebook (*Nonsite*). Having finished experimenting on Lascaux hill and returned to Puysegney (*Site*), I analysed the field notes of *GPEF 27* using GTM coding (*Nonsite*). The concepts that emerged during the coding were transferred to the coding continuum that I had attached to an interior wall in Puysegney. In a sense, the field note book thus became *Site* to the coding continuum *Nonsite*, since the notes that contained the experience of the experiment became abstracted via the process of coding and extracting concepts. Furthermore, in France the coding continuum was a *Nonsite* to *GPEF 27* that had been carried out on Lascaux hill (*Site*). Once transported to the Huddersfield studio, it fluctuated between its original *Nonsite* position, and its new role as *Site* to the analysis and further experimentation that I later carried out underneath in response to the coding. The ochre I extracted from the ground of Lascaux hill near the Lascaux I entrance is included in the research findings both in its raw, bagged, physical state and in the rubbings on the support (*Nonsite*), a prop used in the activity on Lascaux hill (*Site*). Therefore, to summarise, with Lascaux hill and the activity of *GPEF 27* that took place there as *Site*, the other components of *GPEF 27* function as follows in the studio:

- *GPEF 27* printed image grid: *Nonsite* to the Lascaux hill *Site*
- Lascaux hill ochre in its raw, bagged state, in the marks on the rubbed support, and in the image grid: *Nonsite*
- Field note book containing notes of the experience: *Nonsite* to the *Site* of *GPEF 27*
- Field note book containing coded notes: *Site* to coding continuum
- Coding continuum: *Nonsite* to *GPEF 27* and coded field note book writing, and *Site* to the further analysis and experimentation beneath.

Smithson explained:

The site, in a sense, is the physical, raw reality - the earth or the ground that we are really not aware of when we are in an interior room [...] and so I decided that I would set limits in terms of this dialogue (it's a back and forth rhythm that goes

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<sup>95</sup> I assembled the iPhone images I took while immersed in each GPE into image grids. The image grids for each GPEF were printed onto different supports, or grounds, and attached to the top of the wall in the Huddersfield studio. I later refer to these as grids-on-grounds. See Image book pages 115-129.

between indoors and outdoors), and as a result [...] instead of putting something on the landscape I decided it would be interesting to transfer the land indoors, to the Non-Site, which is an abstract container.<sup>96</sup>

In the gallery, 'an interior room', the text and map were to evoke the sense of a place elsewhere that had become a significant *site* through Smithson's allocating an artwork to it. According to Boettger, no work has been identified as the associated outdoor earthwork for *A Nonsite (an indoor earthwork)*, and 'what was out there was the land itself'.<sup>97</sup> The fact that the GPEs *did* take place on specific sites that I had selected for their personal and historical significance (which I explain in the third chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)') is a crucial factor. The sense of grounding on which the GPEs came to focus was dependent on the significance of their selected grounds.

I have established that in the late 1960s, Long and other artists who came to be associated with Land Art radically challenged the relationship between landscape and art by working directly with the land and land-originating materials. I will complete this section by summarising landscape in terms of my research. I have investigated an experience of painting experiments that seek a sense of grounding that relates strongly with the land. Land and landscape are fundamental: the GPEs have engaged with the land both practically and metaphorically. In practical, literal terms, I have carried out GPEs on and with specific areas of the land and used materials originating from those chosen areas of land in subsequent GPEs. These sites in the land have been selected due to their personal and historical significance, such as Lascaux hill. Those materials therefore have contained meaning due to their specifically-selected origins. As well as literally using land-based materials as the substance for the experiments and areas of land as the experiments' sites, the painting experiments have explored ground and grounding metaphorically. For example, my engagement with the land has become metaphorical via my operating within my own 'painting landscape' of interconnected GPEs. While carrying out an individual GPE, I have felt the resonance of several grounds interconnecting. Throughout the enquiry there have been innumerable experiences of different literal and metaphorical grounds and their interconnections, both made and sensed, which I have attempted to capture in the process documentation of the GPEs. These various interrelating grounds have included: the ground-based materials; the resonating ground at the sites of their origins; the ground(s) on which the GPEs took place; and the grounds within the GPEs that I have sensed while exploring the figure-ground function. I have immersed myself actively in a metaphorical and physical

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<sup>96</sup> Smithson quoted in Boettger, *Earthworks*, 66.

<sup>97</sup> Boettger, *Earthworks*, 64.



field of painting experiments, connected with the land and its materials, moved between figure-ground ambiguities, and become part of my own created ground: my own metaphorical painting landscape. The figure-ground function has been a constant, central trope of my research enquiry. Through figure-ground explorations within the GPEs that have attempted to bring ground to the fore, I have experienced a particular sense of ambiguity.

I have described the idea of landscape in terms of my research as a sensed field of interconnecting GPEs and their various interrelating literal and metaphorical grounds. Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the *Gestalt*' has been useful for articulating my experience of immersion in this sensed landscape that I have constructed in the process of the GPEs. The GPEs' engagement with literal and metaphorical grounds has been strongly linked with the history of painting through their continued exploration of figure-ground. I have referenced Frankenthaler whose soak-stain technique made a figure-ground breakthrough in painting. The convergence of specific contextual references onto Lascaux, a site that has interested many artists, philosophers, historians, archaeologists and scientists since the discovery of the paintings in 1940, has increased its significance as a ground for the GPEs. I will now describe how I have engaged literally and metaphorically with various grounds via the GPEs in my investigation into a concept of painting in the next chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry'.

## **Chapter 2. The Practice-led Enquiry: the development of the painting experiments described in three stages**

In this chapter, I describe and analyse the development of the research enquiry in three stages. At the start of this practice-led research project I identified ‘touch’, ‘resonance’ and ‘grounding’ as central preoccupations while investigating my own painting process.<sup>98</sup> During the first stage of the project, I explored these three aspects via a process of unrepeatabe, open-ended, short-lived, material-led painting experiments. By the second stage the experiments had started to focus on the search for a sense of grounding, becoming Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs). The GPEs followed the hunch that there were discoveries to be made while investigating a painting concept that engaged with ground and grounds literally, and explored the various metaphorical meanings, historical precedents and contextual ideas relating to ground. I began to investigate how to progress, focus and analyse the GPEs that formed the practice of my enquiry by trialling Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding ideas. In the third stage, I carried out a self-contained group of GPEs in France, *GPEFs 1-30*, and simultaneously analysed these experiments with a final, integrated trial of GTM coding ideas.

My research aim has been to expose, analyse and focus iteratively my painting process rather than to focus on any intended outcomes. I have been driven by the incessant need to find out and expose exactly what goes on in terms of my interaction with the various elements involved in each GPE. I have sought to investigate my particular painting process and the methods by which to do this. The painting experiments are at the core of my methods. As they have developed into GPEs, they have become the methodological devices through which I have explored a sense of grounding, following my hunch that significant findings were to be discovered via my close engagement with (the) ground in various senses. With the painting experiments as central, my research project as a whole has dealt with the experimental trialling and construction of artistic methods that are themselves continually exposed, while simultaneously developing to analyse and focus the research practice.

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<sup>98</sup> As explained in the introduction, I explored touch specifically in my painting process in the practice-led Masters by Research project, ‘Touch: an enquiry’, MRes diss., University of Huddersfield, 2014. I investigated haptic engagement in painting while making work in response to a three-day study of my experience in April 2013 with the works of Robert Ryman in Hallen für Neue Kunst, Schaffhausen, Switzerland (funded by an award from the Windle Charitable Trust). The Hallen für Neue Kunst closed in 2014 and the Ryman paintings were moved to The Dia Art Foundation in New York. <https://www.diaart.org/collection/collection/on-view/on/object-type/painting/page/3> Accessed October 19, 2018.

## Stage one: early painting experiments including the U N N A W A Y painting experiments

### 1. Stage one: early painting experiments

The first stage explored my experience of touch, resonance and grounding via various experiments, initially using readymade paint and later transitioning to the testing of traditional paint-making methods. Several of the physical research findings from the early experiments using mainly oil-based floor paint are displayed in the studio plan chest, including *Push-up*, *La Chair*, *Sack* and *Sack 2* (Image book pages 12-19). These early experiments using readymade paint and the later testing of the possibilities of various traditional paint-making formulae focused on the behaviour of the materials in conjunction with my physical involvement.<sup>99</sup> For example, I used twenty-four eggs instead of a single egg in an experiment that explored the limits of egg tempera, and trialled casein, hydrated lime, chalk and flour paint recipes with similarly extended proportions (Image book pages 20-22, 31). These experiments often demanded immersive bodily activity, a variety of receptacles and utensils, and varied in length from a few hours to several days. My intention, that has continued throughout the enquiry, was to investigate thoroughly essential elements of the activity and the medium of painting. Via that investigation comprising of an ongoing series of experiments, I was to gather empirical evidence of my particular understanding of a certain concept of painting and the process that was constantly developing.

The iPhone images of the early painting experiments captured the experience and documented the process while becoming an integral part of the work. By collating the multiple images of the process of each experiment in grids, I created a concise, contained referent of each specific, immersive experience of testing the materials. These are presented in the Image book which is at the front of this volume. The painting experiments were so-called since they sought to test, trial and discover, however they were not deliberate demonstrations of a pseudo-science. The experiments involved a great deal of messy, spontaneous, exploration and spillage, and could not be repeated. They explored a hunch rather than a hypothesis, and contained random accidents fuelled by urges to test spontaneously without objective control.

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<sup>99</sup> I searched several resources for the traditional paint-making formulae that provided the starting points for various limit tests, including technique-focused guides such as Margaret Krug, *An Artist's Handbook. Materials and Techniques* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2007) for chalk paint and chalk gesso recipes; Mark David Gottsegen, *The Painter's Handbook* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2006); and Ashok Roy, ed., *Artist's Pigments, A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, vol. 2. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).



The egg tempera experiments were informed by a session on July 13, 2015 with Rebecca Merry at her studio in Périgueux, near Lascaux, during the first of three periods of research leave in France.<sup>100</sup> Merry is a British artist specialised in egg tempera painting who continues to operate within this traditional, fine art discipline. Merry showed me her method of making egg tempera which followed the Renaissance tradition. We made *Lines from the heart* to test the material properties of the freshly-made egg tempera and to demonstrate 'intention in the moment'.<sup>101</sup> I had previously made the clay supports and the colours were chosen arbitrarily by Merry (Image book page 26). One of the oldest painting mediums, tempera is made by mixing powder pigment with a water-soluble binding agent such as egg, gum Arabic or animal glue. Egg tempera is made traditionally from precise proportions of egg yolk, distilled water and powder pigment, with the proportions differing very slightly depending on the individual properties of each pigment. While tempera paintings have been identified as originating in Egypt around 30-40 A.D., egg tempera was the primary medium of representations made during the mid-Renaissance.<sup>102</sup> During the fifteenth century, Italian artists including Fra Angelico, Andrea Mantegna, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Sandro Botticelli exemplified the exacting, deliberate, systematic technique that has continued to define egg tempera traditionally. Egg tempera has been associated historically with small, intimate, concentrated works. This is due to a combination of factors: the religious association with portable panel paintings; the time constraint of the medium since it is best used fresh within two hours; the expense of the fine, rare pigments; and the consequent tendency to mix small amounts.<sup>103</sup> However,

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<sup>100</sup> [www.rebeccamerry.com](http://www.rebeccamerry.com) Accessed July 15, 2015. The three periods of research leave in France: June 27 - July 22, 2015; June 2 - July 8, 2016; and June 11 - July 20, 2017. I have written a full account of the session: 'If paint is not colour? A reflection on what paint means following a tempera-making meeting with Rebecca Merry'. This essay was included in the first-year progression monitoring report as Appendix A and includes an in-depth discussion of Merry's egg tempera practice in comparison with my own. Merry explained how she found viewers to be drawn particularly to her paintings that contained more 'lines drawn from the heart'.

<sup>101</sup> Merry and Soden, *Lines from the heart*, 2015, two pieces, egg tempera on clay, 15 x 15cm and 15 x 15cm.

<sup>102</sup> An exhibition collaboration between the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York that showed examples of the earliest tempera paintings, confirmed that tempera originated in the Fayum region of Egypt between 30 and 40 A.D., around the same time as encaustic (a method of mixing pigment with beeswax often involving a 'burning-in' application). Dorothea Arnold, Lila Acheson Wallace and Marsha Hill, curators, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*, February 15 – May 7, 2000, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York. <https://www.metmuseum.org/press/exhibitions/2000/ancient-faces-mummy-portraits-from-roman-egypt> Accessed December 21, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> Koo Schadler, North American Master Painter of the Copley Society of Boston specialises in egg tempera and has written a concise history of the medium. Although tempera can be dated back to 30 A.D., Schadler associates the beginning of egg tempera's popularity with an increased demand for portable panel paintings in the Medieval era for which the medium was suited. She explains that by the mid-Renaissance, egg tempera reached its zenith as the main form of easel

larger egg tempera-painted surfaces do exist, for example: *The Old Testament Trinity*, the most famous work by fifteenth century Russian icon painter Andrei Rublev; Italian Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*; and modern tempera paintings such as *Christina's World*, by twentieth century North American painter Andrew Wyeth.<sup>104</sup> By the beginning of the fifteenth century, oil-painting had become established as the primary medium of easel painting throughout Europe and egg tempera had become unfashionable. The publication of three texts marked and encouraged the revival of egg tempera in the 1930s in North America and Europe: *A Manual of Tempera Painting*, by British artist Maxwell Armfield; the translation by Daniel Thompson, Professor of Yale School of Fine Art, of Cennino d'Andrea Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte, The Craftsman's Handbook*, an instructive record of painting techniques written in 1437; and *The Practice of Tempera Painting*, also by Thompson.<sup>105</sup> Contemporary artists continue to refer to Cennini's handbook, with the intriguing language of its age and the instructions in minute detail providing interesting, early-source material.

My early exploration of egg tempera paint-making was part of my determination to develop further understanding of paint as a medium. It followed an urge to push the limits of traditional painting methods while thinking about paint as other than a vehicle for colour when applied to a surface to create an image. The possibilities of the physical properties of egg tempera as a material kept raising questions. A greater volume could be made, and one single pour could take place in under two minutes, rather than the gradual application of thin layers using a smaller amount over two hours or more. With no precious pigment to use sparingly, greater quantities of egg, distilled water and hydrated lime or chalk powder could be poured and allowed to flow and dry in different volumes at any given time. This would explore egg tempera, free from its more traditional, tighter constraints, with unknown and unpredictable results (Image book page 31). During the

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painting in Italy and other European countries. Koo Schadler, 'History of Egg Tempera Painting', 2017. <http://www.kooschadler.com/techniques/history-egg-tempera.pdf> Accessed December 21, 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Andrei Rublev, *The Old Testament Trinity*, 1422-27, tempera on wood panel, 142 x 114cm. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1482-85, tempera on canvas, 172.5 x 278.5cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus> Accessed May 21, 2018. Also in In E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995, sixteenth edition), 264. Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948, tempera and gesso on panel, 81.9 x 121.3cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>105</sup> Maxwell Armfield, *A Manual on Tempera Painting* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1930). Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *Il Libro dell'Arte, The Craftsman's Handbook*, originally translated by Daniel V. Thompson in 1936 (New York: Dover Publications, 1960). Thompson, *The Practice of Tempera Painting* (New York: Dover Publications, 1936).

session with egg tempera artist Merry, we discussed how we differed in terms of our views on paint and painting. For Merry, 'paint is indisputably colour' and egg tempera was the most suitable vehicle for her choice of image production. I felt strongly otherwise: there is infinitely more to the medium of paint than colour, and if it is not for depicting an image, then in terms of my practice, what is it and what is it for? These questions regarding paint as other than a carrier of colour were linked to my connection with paint as a material with many physical properties and endless possibilities.<sup>106</sup> This preoccupation with experiencing, exploring and recording experimental painting activity as other than that intended for the production of pictorial representation continued into the second phase of stage one.

## 2. Stage one: three U N N A W A Y painting experiments

During stage one of the research enquiry, I was involved in three exhibitions curated by an organisation of fellow practice-led researchers, U N N A W A Y:<sup>107</sup> *The Curtain Parts*, *Nothing*, and *...And To Dust We All Return* (Image book pages 39-47). This enabled three on-site painting experiments, included here as specific examples of the early painting experiments in which I started to work with certain themes (figure-ground and 'becoming ground'), methods (open, onsite experimentation) and approaches (the significance of certain materials and their properties driving the process). These demonstrate the beginnings of the painting experiments' focus on the search for a sense of grounding.

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<sup>106</sup> Ryman's statement about the endless possibilities has influenced my practice from the start: "[...] very little is said about the 'how' of painting, I mean what I call the real part of painting, [...] I do something with the paint, but I'm not painting a picture of anything. I'm not manipulating the paint into an illusion of something other than what the paint does. I make a painting. Painting will go on. Painting is by far not finished, it will never be finished, because it's too rich. The medium is too challenging. What could be more challenging than to have endless possibilities [...]" David Carter and Robert Ryman, 'Robert Ryman on the Origins of His Art', *Burlington Magazine* 139, no. 1134 (September 1997): 631, quoted in Suzanne Hudson, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2009), 239-240.

<sup>107</sup> U N N A W A Y was set up by fellow practice-led PhD art-researcher-curator, Charlotte Cullen. Exhibition information: "U N N A W A Y is an artist led organisation based in Huddersfield, established in 2015 to develop critically within artistic frameworks and facilitate engaging, ambitious and reflective artistic dialogue through exhibitions, residencies and events [...]. U N N A W A Y aims to develop experimental sites of production, engage in artistic collaborations and utilise unconventional sites to bridge the gap between the current grass roots initiatives and more established arts institutions. Named after the Unna Way junction connecting Huddersfield to the rest of the country, U N N A W A Y aims to act in a similar fashion, connecting Huddersfield to a wider artistic conversation".



2i. Painting experiment for *The Curtain Parts*<sup>108</sup>

The experiment for *The Curtain Parts* referenced two performative works that provoked thinking around concerns important to the practice, including figure-ground, touch, and 'becoming ground': *Mapping*<sup>109</sup>, a choreographed piece by Phoenix Dance Theatre at the West Yorkshire Playhouse viewed on October 2, 2015; and *Blindly*<sup>110</sup>, a film by Artur Żmijewski viewed at Tate Modern on October 11, 2015.

I adapted the concept of *Mapping* in a floor-based painting experiment that I filmed from above with my iPhone attached to the ceiling. I wore orange, plastic, soldering goggles smeared in paint to impair my vision and to focus on a haptic engagement with the paint and other elements of the experiment set-up. I filmed myself working blindly with my fingers from small pots of Ryman orange<sup>111</sup> paint that I had prepared in different dilutions.

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<sup>108</sup> Charlotte Cullen, U N N A W A Y curator, *The Curtain Parts*, former dance studio of Barbara Peters, 9, Market Walk, Huddersfield, November 7-13, 2015. <http://unnaway.com/exh2> Accessed May 17, 2018.

<sup>109</sup> On October 2, 2015, I saw a performance at the West Yorkshire Playhouse by the Phoenix Dance Theatre, a contemporary dance company that formed in Leeds in 1981. The last piece of the show, *Mapping*, premiered in February 2014 and is the latest design of artistic director, Darshan Singh Bhutter. 'Obsessed with maps, moved by a book of photography *Earth From Above*, and inspired by silent movies filmed from above', Bhutter choreographed a piece whereby dancers move around on the floor while filmed from the ceiling. The film is displayed live to the viewers on the wall behind the floor on which the dancers slide around in a horizontal position, their whole bodies in contact with the ground. Space and movement are still achieved, but the dancers never break free from the ground; they are stuck in it and writhe around in enforced slow-motion; they become ground, while the film projected on the wall becomes the figure. Immersed in the whimsy of the film, we forget that they are not on their feet until we allow the illusion to be interrupted by returning our gaze to the slithering bodies on the floor. On the wall their projected images look fluid and beautiful, while on the floor their bodies seem clumsy and awkward. This raises interesting questions that Krauss addressed: verticality perhaps having some hierarchy over the horizontal. <http://www.phoenixdancetheatre.co.uk/work/mapping/> Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>110</sup> Artur Żmijewski, *Blindly*, 2010, video, colour and sound, 18min 41sec, Tate Modern, October 13, 2015 - January 10, 2016, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/display/artur-zmijewski> Accessed December 12, 2018. I was intrigued by the fact that the blind participants, invited by Żmijewski to paint portraits and landscapes mostly on large, floor-based surfaces, continually asked which colour they were using, suggesting their concern with how their paintings would be later viewed by sighted spectators and an inseparable relationship of paint and colour. The painters' haptic engagement with the painting process was amplified to the viewer and enabled empathetic connection via the film, but this seemed to be of secondary importance to those painting. As a sighted viewer, the tactile experience was the most intriguing, while to the sight-impaired participant/painter, their preoccupation was that of positioning and colour: image.

<sup>111</sup> I referenced Ryman via the orange colour of the paint in order to link this experiment with Ryman's primary concern about the 'how' of painting. Ryman's focus on the material properties of paint and the 'how' of painting could not be separated from colour but involved as much reduction of colour relations as possible. "The white just happened because it's a paint and it doesn't interfere. I could use green, red, yellow, but why? It's a challenge for me to use paint and make something happen with it, without having to be involved in reds, greens, and everything which would confuse things". Robert Ryman in Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Robert Ryman',

In relation to my exploration of painting as much more than a visual vehicle of colour, I focused on feeling the paint and applying it to the sheet on which I lay according to its varying, felt viscosity rather than its visible colour. I was aware of carrying out painting as performance, partly due to the exhibition brief, which resonated with the recent experiences of *Mapping* and *Blindly*, and the contrived composition set up for filming. However, the work was driven by the urge to get inside [the] painting, both in terms of the haptic engagement with the floor and the paint, and an attempt to 'become ground'<sup>112</sup> by experimenting with figure-ground relationships. The resulting images of this painting experiment were produced from film stills taken from the iPhone video. A print of one of the images was displayed on the wall of *The Curtain Parts* exhibition at a low level alongside the soldering goggles. A series of stills from the film is included in the Image book (pages 35-36) to document my exploration of figure-ground ambiguities within this painting experiment.

This experiment was concerned with my getting as close to the ground as possible while exploring a haptic engagement with the paint.<sup>113</sup> The documentation by filming was

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*Artforum* 9. No.9 (May 1971), 46, quoted in Hudson, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, 249. The orange I reference is in Ryman's earlier paintings, for example, *Untitled (Orange Painting)*, 1955, 1959, *Untitled*, 1956, and *Untitled Study*, 1956. "I actually used a lot of colour at the beginning [...]. I wanted to see how the paint worked, thick and thin and all these things, what you could do with it. Then it developed through the years slowly, it became a certain preference I had. What mattered was how things should look, how I put things together". Robert Ryman in conversation with Vesela Sretenović, New York, February 2010, in Sretenović, *Robert Ryman, Variations and Improvisations* (Washington DC: The Phillips Collection, 2010), 7. For further information on these earlier paintings and Ryman's remarks on colour: Hudson, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, 55-57, 247-249.

<sup>112</sup> This term comes from my reading of Laura Levin's analysis of past and contemporary women artists exploring their relationship with ground (metaphorically, literally, physically) in *Performing Ground, Space, Camouflage and the Art of Blending In*, (New York: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2014). While the book deals with relevant concerns such as how artists work with figure-ground concepts and blur the boundaries of the dichotomy, I did not find specific references to any form of 'becoming ground' via painting process.

<sup>113</sup> For definitions of the haptic sense see: Laura Marks, *Touch - Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 3, 17-18, and by the same author, *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 183-185; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 493; Jennifer Fisher, 'Relational Sense: Towards a Haptic Aesthetics', *Parachute* 87 (1997): 6; Milena Marinkova, Michael Ondaatje, *Haptic Aesthetics and Micropolitical Writing* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 4-12; Matt Fulkerson, 'The Sense of Touch' (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2010); Beth Harland, 'A Fragment of Time in the Pure State; a Mapping of Painting's Time, through Proust, Deleuze and the Digital Image' (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2010); Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch - Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007); Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, 'Cinema as skin and touch', in their book, *Film Theory, an introduction through the senses* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 108-128.

important to capture the work and provide a physical finding for the exhibition. As with the documentation throughout my research, it was also important as a tool to reflect on the work via a certain framed view, and potentially discover something that could be used in further experiments. I was conscious of being within a contrived composition, and highly conscious of the paint via the sense of touch. The decision to film from above originated from the viewing of *Mapping*, and an intention to reference the figure in a frame while playing with figure-ground relationships. I wanted to include my whole body, particularly my feet, since I had been preoccupied with the significance of my contact with the floor. I knew that somehow my research had to explore a connection with the ground via making, and that floor-based activity was key. The intention to create stills from the film was there from the start, with the view to using the prints of the stills later in future experiments beyond the exhibition: the film still of the grounded figure engaged in painting was to become a ground further along the process for more painting. I have included one of the prints in the line of supports that runs around the middle perimeter of the studio walls, on which I worked the final GTM coding trials with *GPEFs 1-30* (explained later in this chapter and fully in the fourth chapter, 'Methods', and documented in the Image book, pages 113-153).

As previously stated, I am aware that the exhibition title, *The Curtain Parts*, with its allusion to theatre, the clear reference to *Mapping*, and echoes of previous floor-based artworks involving the body might associate this experiment with performance art. However, I can differentiate my intention from that of performance art by a brief comparison with a painting-related performance work made in 1993 by North American artist Janine Antoni, *Loving Care*.<sup>114</sup>

In a video of a conversation in 2011 at Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, Antoni described the making of *Loving Care*:

[...] rather than using sculpture, I was going to try to take on painting. It is a performance piece where I fill a bucket to the top of Loving Care hair dye, and I use my hair to mop the floor. I was thinking this [touches her hair] would be a pretty nice paint brush, so if I was going to paint with my hair, it seemed that hair dye was the appropriate choice [...]. When I start the room is filled with people, and I mop the floor, slowly pushing people out of the room. So that is important for me because I am very vulnerable there on my hands and knees [...]. *Loving Care* is about the conflict of trying to be the model and the master at the same time.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> <http://www.janineantoni.net/#/loving-care/> Accessed May 17, 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Conversations@Moore, Janine Antoni with Janet Kaplan and Jonathan Wallis. Published April 14, 2011, Moore College. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvV0fxY1YAU> 11:50-13:38. Accessed May 17, 2018.



In *Loving Care*, Antoni referenced previous painting practices while ‘using her body as a tool’.<sup>116</sup> Antoni responded to French artist Yves Klein’s *Anthropométries* of 1958, in which Klein instructed nude female ‘collaborators’, or ‘human paintbrushes’, to make marks with their bodies having covered themselves in ‘International Klein Blue’ paint. Antoni also referenced Jackson Pollock, and stated in the same conversation quoted above that the style of the documentation of *Loving Care* mimicked Pollock’s ‘dance around the canvas’. For Antoni, the reclaiming of the floor space with her body was very important, as emphasised in her description of ‘pushing people out of the room’. The viewer was therefore essential and participated in her performance-painting by being overruled and marginalised by her movement, her body and her hair dye trails. My experiment for *The Curtain Parts* was not a piece of performance art: the viewer was not considered. I was alone while I investigated specific painting-related concerns and at the time did not know which part of the experiment would be exhibited in *The Curtain Parts*. The film was made for me, to enable discovery in the work and my sense of grounding from a certain perspective. I played with figure-ground while creating a painting of myself exploring paint as other than colour. The painting produced would later provoke questions regarding the ambiguity of my body’s relationship with the ground (standing or lying?) but this viewer reaction was not the primary goal. The print of the film-still provided for the exhibition was a research finding from a particular experiment. It was to be used in an ongoing process rather than as a final, autonomous outcome.

## 2ii. Painting experiment for *Nothing*<sup>117</sup>

I made the painting for the *Nothing* show on-site in the U N N A W A Y exhibition space in the former dance studio of Barbara Peters, and discussed possibilities openly with the

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<sup>116</sup> Antoni was also referencing previous floor-based artworks such as the site-specific performances by New York artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Ukeles placed herself in physical contact with the ground in her Maintenance Art Performance Series of 1973-74, including *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside*, 1973, during which she scrubbed the front steps of Connecticut’s Wadsworth Atheneum Museum for several hours, forcing the watching visitors to adjust their routes depending on where she was cleaning. The ground-based, repetitive labour is relevant to my experiment, however Ukeles’ work was a deliberate performance that depended on audience participation, and “insisted upon the spectator’s recognition of women as *threshold figures* between public and private space [...]”. Levin, *Performing Ground*, 113. Ukeles’ performances were clearly linked to feminist practices of the 1960s and 1970s that critiqued gendered and classed environments and activities such as essential yet overlooked everyday maintenance. My research does not employ performance as a means to investigate a concept of painting, nor do I address gender issues. The experiment for *The Curtain Parts* was set up to explore figure-ground relationships while metaphorically and physically getting inside the ground of a form of painting that was motivated by haptic rather than visual activity.

<sup>117</sup> Cullen, U N N A W A Y curator, *Nothing*, former dance studio of Barbara Peters, 9, Market Walk, Huddersfield, December 5-18, 2015. <http://unnaway.com/exh3> Accessed May 17, 2018.

curators throughout. I came to the site with the material and the intention to carry out a painting experiment that was to explore certain ideas about painting, but had no fixed plan. The combination of the pro-experiment openness of the collaboration with the curators and the unique nature of the space allowed a creative, messy process with no clear, fixed outcome. I used the material from a previous work, *Where's the 'Ouch?'*<sup>118</sup> I had made this work in response to an experience with Ryman's paintings while investigating touch (Image book page 41).

Traditionally, paint as a physical medium is the combination of a carrier and a pigment. Continuing with the view that the carrier and the pigment could be anything, I used a PVA and water mixture as the carrier, given its translucence when dry, as well as its adhesive properties. This followed the group decision to use part of the large mirror-wall as the experiment support. I was interested in the experience of using a large space whose surface would not necessarily allow optimum adhesion of the glue-based mixture but could enable a full reach while I attempted an application. The wax tubes of *Where's the 'Ouch?'* were broken down and mixed with the PVA solution in a large, plastic container. The smashed-up wax became a form of pigment (Image book page 42). While paint can be viewed as carrier plus pigment, painting in basic, physical terms is the putting on of a wet matter that sticks to a surface. The fact that most of the matter fell to the floor during a seemingly endless and desperately careful attempt to apply it to the mirror-wall brought a humorous sense of futility to the demise of the wax tubes from *Where's the 'Ouch?'* and the experiment in general. Most of the broken-down wax tubes were bundled away with the plastic sheeting protecting the floor during the experiment (Image book page 43). Again, the importance of the floor emerged, in three main ways: 1. The thin residue left on the mirror-wall was grossly out of proportion to the large amount of physical activity that had taken place on the floor before, during and after to achieve it; 2. The majority of the material (PVA solution mixed with the broken-down wax tubes) ended up on the plastic sheeting spread beneath; 3. A few wax-tubes that had not been ground down were lined up on the floor beneath the ballet bar of the exhibition space (Image book page 44), linking the wax-pigment on the mirror-wall to its original material and previous painting form, *Where's the 'Ouch?'*

The experiment for *Nothing* was about the immersion in the process of working with specific materials within a particular setting, while thinking about traditional definitions of the physical properties of paint and the action of painting. The significance of the wax as

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<sup>118</sup> Puy Soden, *Where's the 'Ouch?'*, 2013, painted studio wall, candle wax, 95 x 95cm. For a full account and analysis of this work: Soden, 'Touch: an enquiry', MRes diss., 2014.

the material of a previous work and the openness of the on-site process were crucial. The physical work required of the body and the action within the experiment space were also notable factors, but not in a performative sense. The crux was the use of a material that held a certain significance. In this case, the previous state of the wax from *Where's the Ouch?* as a painting resonated in the experiment for *Nothing*. The painting experiments that followed were to investigate this further.

Wax is an early medium, yet art historians have noted a 'silence on the topic' in art history.<sup>119</sup> In her introduction to *Theorizing Wax: On the Meaning of a Disappearing Medium*, 'On the Substance of Wax', Hanneke Grootenbrer states that, "having never truly disappeared, wax has since ancient times always existed in the margins, where it played a crucial part in art practice as a basis for encaustic painting and in the lost-wax process of making sculpture".<sup>120</sup> Wax made a significant return as an art material in the twentieth century in the practices of Arte Povera, a ground-breaking European conceptual art movement that demonstrated enormous sensitivity to a wide range of simple materials, as explained in the previous chapter, 'Historical Context'. Wax's status as a paradoxically marginal material with a rich cultural history appealed to the artists of Arte Povera, along with its associations with the human body and skin, ritual, preservation, natural origins and the every-day. As well as these associations, the physical properties of wax as malleable, easy to melt, pour, cast and solidify at room temperature meant that it recurred in Arte Povera artworks that celebrated the materiality of wax in its own right. Artists continue to use wax due to this combined historical and material significance, including Leeds-based sculptor Sheila Gaffney. Wax 'dominates the materiality' of Gaffney's 'body referential' work because "wax is the soft 'other' of sculpture, a mutable material, never static. It melts and congeals, it is vulnerable to heat. It takes impressions, it is the volatile medium of transference, the unseen container, giving birth to form through flux".<sup>121</sup> While the references to the history and practices inherent in my original choice of wax provided a layer of significance to the material, the primary meaning in this case was that it had

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<sup>119</sup> Hanneke Grootenbrer, 'Introduction: On the Substance of Wax', in *Special Issue: Theorizing Wax: On the Meaning of a Disappearing Medium*, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 36, issue 1 (March 1, 2013): 6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Johanna Dahn, '*Penumbra: skirting the shadow*', essay accompanying the exhibition *Penumbra*, November 3 - 31 December, Crossley Gallery, Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, which included Sheila Gaffney's sculpture, *How She Became Not-He*, 1994, wax, casein buttons, text (in graphite on wall), 609.6 x 457.2 x 213.36 cm. <http://www.sheilagaffney.com/index.php?/reading-room/catalogue-essays/> Accessed December 11, 2018. Gaffney has used wax in more recent works such as *footNOTES*, 2003 and *To the Table*, 2009.



existed as a previous painting, was broken down, and used as a 'pigment' in a new painting experiment.

As previously explained, the wax used in the *Nothing* experiment came from *Where's the 'Ouch?*, a painting of wax tubes I had made in response to Ryman.<sup>122</sup> The combined significance of using wax in the experiment for *Nothing* therefore constituted: my connection with the wax, while aware of its art-historical references; the link to *Where's the 'Ouch?* that was a means to investigate touch in response to Ryman whose paintings involve haptic engagement; and the breakdown of the painting *Where's the 'Ouch?* in order to use a material that contained my investment in a new experiment concerning the possibilities of painting's components of carrier and pigment. While the Arte Povera group were reacting against mainstream, commercialised art and abandoning the traditional painting art form, I have consistently retained these references to painting as important factors. For the *Nothing* experiment, the wax from my previous painting was ground down and mixed with a carrier as a reference to traditional paint-making. I was exploring both the resonance of using a material that was significant having been used in a previous work, and the experimental experience of expanding the basics of a traditional painting formula. The synthesis of these two strands of investigating started to become central to the research practice. This was different from the Arte Povera methods of using wax that was usually melted, moulded, poured or cast.

### 2iii. Painting experiment for ...*And To Dust We All Return*<sup>123</sup>

The painting experiment for ...*And To Dust We All Return* also happened on-site, and further explored the meaning of materials. A work by Hannah Regel, *Please*, included in the previous show *Nothing*, consisted of an aluminium cast of a cow's stomach placed on top of a plinth of solid palm oil (Image book page 44).<sup>124</sup> I decided to use the palm oil

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<sup>122</sup> *Where's the 'Ouch?* was made with Ryman's famous quote in mind: "I thought I would try and see what would happen [...]". Ryman's statement made in 1986 about the beginning of his practice is quoted frequently. For example, in Hudson, *Robert Ryman - Used Paint*, 9-10.

<sup>123</sup> Cullen, U N N A W A Y curator, ...*And To Dust We All Return*, former dance studio of Barbara Peters, 9, Market Walk, Huddersfield, January 23 - February 5, 2016. <http://unnaway.com/exh4> Accessed May 17, 2018. Hannah Regel, *Please*, aluminium, lard. 2015, from the solo show, *WANT ME TO THE MARROW*, Rice + Toye, London, February 25 - March 8, 2015. <http://www.hannahregel.com/wantmetothemarrow.html> Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Lard was Regel's original fat of choice, however palm oil was used in the *Nothing* show as it was easier to obtain in the short amount of time available. The curators were aware of the controversy of palm oil and had checked for sustainability stamps. The important point was that the support for the cow stomach cast was made of fat, enabling a certain connection with the

while considering the iterative process of research and the resonance of previous works within the ever-changing exhibition space. I felt that the potential of the palm oil as a painting material had to be explored, again with the traditional formula of paint as a combination of carrier and pigment in mind. For *Blanks*, a previous work I had made between 2013-2014 in response to the experience with the Ryman paintings in Schaffhausen (I mentioned this work in the Introduction and I have displayed some remaining pieces in the Huddersfield studio plan chest, Image book page 151), I had moulded clay pieces on the tops of my right thigh and right foot as part of an investigation into my preoccupation with the painting support as well as the emerging importance of the floor.<sup>125</sup> For the *...And To Dust We All Return* experiment, these clay supports were broken down further to form the 'pigment'. The windows inside the exhibition space were chosen as the painting experiment site, echoing the diptych, and perhaps even the polyptych due to the adjacent mirror-wall's reflection. I ground the clay pieces to a powder in a pestle and mortar. The palm oil, melted in a bain-marie, was blended into the ground clay (Image book page 45). In the studio at that stage, and during a collaboration in an industrial unit in Mirfield with a fellow painter-researcher from Dublin, Marc Guinan (Image book pages 36-38), I was carrying out painting experiments that eliminated vision and pushed the smearability of painting materials and the stamina of my hands/fingers to their limits.<sup>126</sup> The repetitive touch while working haptically with the paint revealed the

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accompanying text. Regel explained: "The fat seemed to make more sense than a conventional plinth [...]. I am always drawn to sculptural materials that are malleable. So, the way the lard acted as a document of its surroundings; it would literally act like a magnet picking up hair and dirt and finger prints etc. Something about it felt unstable in that way, which felt important. Like it was a dumb witness to that space [...]". Email conversation, January 30, 2015.  
[http://files.cargocollective.com/582678/hannahregel\\_FINAL--2-.pdf](http://files.cargocollective.com/582678/hannahregel_FINAL--2-.pdf) Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>125</sup> Clay has forever been a central material in man's creative and constructive endeavours and has been associated with the earth and origins of life. For the artists associated with the Arte Povera movement that formed in the late 1960s (see previous chapter), clay was included in the wide range of basic, often natural, everyday materials used to make art that was closer to authentic, lived experience. Arte Povera artist Marisa Mertz continues to use clay, for example in her unfired clay head sculptures. Clay was the material used in British sculptor Antony Gormley's *Field* project, made across continents between 1989 and 2003. "The basic concept of the *Field* project is to take the earth beneath people's feet, allow them to touch it, shape it, and, in the process to find a form unique to each maker [...]". 'Antony Gormley in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist', 2018.  
<http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/interview-item/id/167> Accessed November 12, 2018. My choice of clay for making *Blanks*, supports for painting made on my feet and thighs, has inevitably been informed by these previous and existing practices, contributing to the significance of the material.

<sup>126</sup> I rented Unit 255, Ashley Industrial Estate, Huddersfield Road, Mirfield through Mark Smith, Executive Director of Axisweb, Creative Industries Space, The Art House, Wakefield. My collaboration with Irish painter-researcher Marc Guinan, January 2-6, 2016, featured in ARC, Art & Research Collaboration, The Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, Ireland (IADT) Art and Research Collaboration. [http://arciadt.ie/?page\\_id=1083](http://arciadt.ie/?page_id=1083) Accessed January 2, 2016.

physical properties, 'the truth' of the material as it was spread across the support in a particular rhythm. A similar exercise was carried out on the inside of the internal windows with the palm oil-clay paint (Image book pages 46-47), although this time without the blindfold.

I mentioned Antoni's *Loving Care* in the previous section to explain how my painting experiment for *The Curtain Parts* addressed figure-ground rather than any intentional floor-based performance. Here I refer to another example of Antoni's work in order to describe how my paint-making use of the palm oil for *...And To Dust We All Return* differed from Antoni's sculpture involving lard. Antoni worked with blocks of malleable, edible substances for *Gnaw*: "600lbs chocolate cube and 600lbs lard cube gnawed by the artist, 27 heart-shaped packages of chocolate removed from chocolate cube and 130 lipsticks made with pigment, beeswax and chewed lard removed from lard cube".<sup>127</sup> While Antoni had melted and cast the lard in order to create a cube before gnawing it, I cut lumps from the palm oil I had removed from Regel's pedestal in order to melt it as a carrier for a painting experiment. Antoni's gnawing the lard led to products with particular associations (lipsticks and chocolate hearts),<sup>128</sup> while my melting the palm oil was for further experimentation in my specific painting process by using a material associated with a previous work connected with the site. I was exploring the resonance of materials: the clay containing significance from previous painting experiments, and the palm oil from the previous show.<sup>129</sup>

There was a considerable amount of activity demanded of my body in order to carry out all three of the U N N A W A Y experiments. The movement of the artist's body while working with a specific material is central to Long's mud works, such as *Waterfall Line*, a site-specific wall painting, commissioned for the opening of Tate Modern in May 2000.<sup>130</sup> Using mud taken from the River Avon near his birthplace Bristol, Long applied a water-

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<sup>127</sup> Janine Antoni, *Gnaw*, 1992, description on artist's website. <http://www.janineantoni.net/#/gnaw/> Accessed May 19, 2018.

<sup>128</sup> The combination of Antoni's choice of materials, the resulting products, and the use of her mouth 'as a tool' was a feminist challenge to previous male sculptors, their industrial construction methods and their use of marble and steel.

<sup>129</sup> It is necessary to note an essential difference between Antoni's use of materials and mine. Antoni's materials echo earlier feminist discourse around gendered practices in art. My research does not address gender issues.

<sup>130</sup> Richard Long, *Waterfall Line*, 2000, white river mud on black emulsion, 454 x 14550cm <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-waterfall-line-t11970> and <http://www.richardlong.org/Exhibitions/2011exhibitupgrades/waterfaline.html> Accessed May 20, 2018.



mud mixture to the pre-painted wall length with rhythmic, energetic hand gestures. Long stated that the speed of the hand gestures was important, to create the splashes that revealed the wateriness of the mud, since it was in fact water, not mud, that is the main subject of these works.<sup>131</sup> During the experiment for *The Curtain Parts*, my focus remained on the haptic engagement between the orange paint of varying consistencies, the receptacles, my hands and the under-sheet. The connection of my entire body with the ground restricted the contact between my hands and the sheet to small, repetitive movements. The action of painting, in terms of the definition of applying wet matter to a support, was therefore reduced to a small area within which I could only make slight gestures. This small focus juxtaposed the long video that recorded the experiment. The gestures were much broader during the experiment for *Nothing*. The combined decision to use the mirror wall as a support and to make a large quantity of the wax-PVA mixture enabled an experiment that revealed the mixture's materiality as well as my body's activity. While carrying out the experiment for *...And To Dust We All Return* the use of my hands was important in order to get close to the clay-oil material and understand it haptically, and to immerse myself in spreading it rhythmically across the glass of the internal windows. The clay had been chosen as it linked this experiment to a previous work that had investigated the significance of my connection with the ground via explorations into touch via painting. It contained personal meaning having been shaped into supports on the tops of my feet in response to my connection with the floor during the experience with the Ryman paintings in Schaffhausen, and could be ground down in reference to traditional paint-making.

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<sup>131</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-waterfall-line-t11970> Accessed May 20, 2018. Also, exhibition catalogue, Clarrie Wallis, curator, *Richard Long, Heaven and Earth*, on the occasion of the exhibition, Tate Britain, London, June 3 - September 6, 2009 (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 58-59.

## Stage two: painting experiments focusing on a search for grounding, becoming GPEs

During the U N N A W A Y painting experiments, I had moved away from the synthetic, ready-made paint of the early painting experiments that had involved pouring, setting, dipping, moulding, and casting. Early on, synthetic, shop-bought house paint had been useful for exploring the medium as other than a carrier of coloured pigment via activities such as pouring, given its physical properties and availability. However, it lacked meaning and authenticity, and I needed to follow much further the hunch that discoveries were to be made close to the ground. Using readymade paint labelled 'for floors' had begun to feel superficial. Via further painting experiments, I came to understand that the materials I would use in the experiments investigating a sense of grounding would be those carrying elements of my personal history as well as organic origins. Following the rejection of shop-bought, readymade, synthetic paint and an urge to carry out experiments that explored an engagement with the ground, the investigation reached an important point during the second period of research in France in 2016. This significant shift in the enquiry entailed the painting experiments focusing on a search for a sense of grounding, becoming Grounding Painting Experiments, (GPEs). The sense of grounding developed over the second and third stages of the enquiry through the GPEs' exploration into its various literal, metaphorical and historical meanings.

My reading of British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes' book, *A Land*, written between 1949 and 1950, contributed to the development of the experiments becoming GPEs and their focus on an exploration of grounding. *A Land* is exemplary of Hawkes' unconventional, creative approach to the scientific discipline of archaeology, and has become what I have called throughout my enquiry a 'grounding object'. In the following chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)', I introduce *A Land* in detail to provide a contextualised explanation as to how the painting experiments have sought to identify and define a sense of grounding specific to my practice and context. I explain how Hawkes' writing on Lascaux has contributed to the significance of that site as a ground of the GPEs in the second and third stages of the enquiry.

### 1. Stage two: Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs) 1-3

Having focused on the search for a sense of grounding, the GPEs took various forms in order to follow this line of enquiry thoroughly. Via the GPEs, I investigated the intersections of different meanings of ground associated with particular materials, art-

making histories and sites. During this second stage, I discovered that the resonance of these points of intersection, possible moments of experiencing a sense of grounding, occurred most strongly when the GPEs combined:

- the contingency aspect of using materials ready-to-hand in the immediate field of studio, kitchen, garden, shed, local vicinity;
- materials selected for their unique properties and significant origins, such as the malleability and meltability of a fat, the grindability of a clay, the pulverisability of ash, raw pigment or jar of ground, and how they could be worked into painting experiments that reference painting's histories and traditions;
- the need to return to the land, searching for something meaningful from significant grounds; those made, dug, rubbed and walked on.

I provide a more detailed, contextualised analysis of a GPE in the annex to this chapter: *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)*. In the *GPE-C* essay, I explain more fully the significance of the material as a criterion for the possibility of experiencing a sense of grounding.

### GPE 1

In *GPE 1*, I painted the word 'painting' onto seventy small clay supports that I had made by pressing the clay onto my feet during an earlier experiment, *Blanks*, as previously mentioned. From the top of a stepladder in the Huddersfield studio, I dropped the clay supports onto a large piece of red fabric spread on the floor beneath. The origin of this starting point had come from a Buddhist monk's explanation of a physical method to let something go: write the problem on an object and throw it away.<sup>132</sup> Once all had been dropped, I collected the clay pieces in the centre of the red fabric, gathered it up, and trod on the bundle in order to break down the clay further. I melted several medium-sized kitchen panfuls of the palm oil that I had used in the experiment for ...*And To Dust We All Return* (explained in section 2iii above). The molten fat was mixed with the crumbled clay in various ways for a two-fold investigation: the continued experimentation with these two

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<sup>132</sup> This is a common method taught by Buddhists. Buddhist monk Ajahn Brahm explains this in 'Four Ways of Letting Go', at minute 06:45. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USC5MJVZLy8> Accessed August 21, 2018.



materials functioning together in the traditional paint combination of carrier (palm oil) and pigment (clay); and my experience of that process. Apart from the use of the kitchen hob for melting, the activity was entirely floor-based. I passed the oil through the clay collected in buckets, to then cast the molten fat and clay-dust mixture into various square-shaped, Limoges porcelain plates and discarded picture frames. A few days later, I turned the set, oil-clay castings, kept some for documentation, and reused others to repeat the process in a slightly different way (Image book pages 50, 68).

*GPE 1* involved constant, studio-floor-based, physical activity. I dropped the clay from a height, gathered it up, trampled on the bundle, opened it up, shovelled trodden, crumbled clay into buckets with a garden spade, moved backwards and forwards with various kitchen and garden receptacles, waited for heating and cooling, and constantly made a great deal of documentation with an iPhone camera while inside the experiment. I continued to think through the various grounds that I had experienced while immersed in *GPE 1*:

- a. The ground of the studio floor – the ‘field’;
- b. Each individual visible ground of every clay piece, which also had the background of their having been made on my feet previously;
- c. The fabrication of the clay itself, with reference to earth, our beginnings;
- d. The red fabric on the studio floor like a grounded parachute;
- e. The multitude of grounds, in the pictorial sense, within the many iPhone process pictures;
- f. The ground of the histories of painting, or painting as a ground for experimentation;
- g. The sense of being *within*, *in between*, and *a part of* all the grounds of the experiment in process: when I stood amidst the mess, thinking about how the materials felt in relation to my body, and the way the experiment was going in terms of what the materials were doing.

By writing the word ‘painting’ on the clay pieces, throwing them to the floor, breaking them down with the intention of using the clay as a ‘pigment’ in an experimental way, I was attempting to think through the iterative nature of my particular painting process. To revisit

the Buddhist origin of the experiment: I wrote 'painting' on clay objects and threw them to the ground where they were reused rather than throwing them away to be forgotten. As part of the ongoing process of painting experiments, they were ground down to investigate another pigment-carrier possibility.

## GPE 2

GPE 2 took place during the second period of research at Puysegeney in southwest France, near Lascaux. I burned personal papers and later collected the ash once completely cooled. Continuing with the exploration of carrier-pigment possibilities, the ash in its light, abundant, pure, powdery state offered an interesting opportunity. Linseed oil has been traditionally used as a common oil-paint carrier since oil paint took over tempera paint-making methods (as described in section 1 of this chapter, tempera is made from a carrier such as egg yolk and water, or animal skin glue, mixed with a pigment) in the fifteenth century. Artists have been experimenting with different formulae to develop and adapt their mediums for centuries. One of the earliest, documented experiments in paint-making that sought to extend the usability time period of paint was Jan van Eyck's exchange of egg yolk for oil that revolutionised the methods and use of the medium.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, employing cold-pressed linseed oil as the carrier, I mixed the paper ash with the oil in a jam jar. The ash-oil mixture was tested on paper before I felt the strong urge to engage more closely with the material on a larger scale outside on the ground. This was provoked by thoughts of Hawkes' descriptions of the flipper-fins of early life squelching in prehistoric mud. I poured large amounts of the same mixture onto a one metre-squared stretched canvas on the ground, and used my bare feet to spread it within the edges. Returning to the tests on paper, I found that these forms of solidified linseed oil-ash mixture could be removed in one piece. I took them outside, cut them up on the ground, and placed them in various compositions. Using the iPhone camera, I documented the

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<sup>133</sup> "What he achieved was a new prescription for the preparation of paints before they were put on the panel [...] all through the Middle Ages the main ingredient of the liquid had been made of an egg, which was quite suitable except that it dried rather quickly [...]. It seems that Jan van Eyck was dissatisfied with this formula, because it did not allow him to achieve smooth transitions by letting the colours shade off into each other. If he used oil instead of egg, he could work much more slowly and accurately [...]". An example of an early oil painting is Jan van Eyck, *The Betrothal of the Arnolfini*, oil on wood, 81.8 x 59.7cm, 1434 (National Gallery, London). E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 240-241. Certain contemporary painters have returned to egg tempera for the very reasons which caused van Eyck to move away from it: "[...] the medium's limitations dictate certain desired outcomes. Opaque and textureless, tempera cannot be blended on the picture surface, making blurred effects a challenge". Regarding the practice of Scottish artist Andrew Grassie who uses egg tempera to make self-referential pictures, in Valérie Breuvar, ed. *Vitamin P. New Perspectives in Painting* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 124-125.

experiment throughout in images which enabled a review of figure-ground relationships that had occurred during the experiment. The foot-ash-oil painting was made in response to Hawkes' descriptions of our earliest experience of grounds: "[...] in the ground of being [...] the mud curls between the toes [...]. Mud. Mud. Mud. Sucking, pulling mud".<sup>134</sup> *GPE 2* is one example of how, at this stage in the enquiry, Hawkes' descriptions of our mud-based origins resonated with my increasing connection with the ground in basic ways, such as using my feet and horizontal painting supports. These descriptions feature mostly in the chapter 'An Aside on Consciousness' in *A Land*, the chapter 'Backbone' in *Man On Earth*, and the beginning of *A Quest of Love*. For example: "The toed feet could feel the ground, be aware of the different texture of sand, wet stone or slime [...]"<sup>135</sup> In *GPE 2* the exploration was driven by the material qualities of the ash of burned personal papers and produced a 'mud' via an interpretation of a traditional oil paint-making recipe that explored carrier-pigment possibilities grounded in Hawkes' descriptions.

### GPE 3

Before leaving England for the second period of research in France, June 2016, I bought a white linen suit from a charity shop to use in the garden of French impressionist painter Claude Monet at Giverny in Haute-Normandy. The intention was to wear the suit, roll in the ground of the garden by the lily pond that Monet repeatedly painted so that the suit collected as much of the ground as possible, and therefore 'carry' the ground to the research site, Puysegney. I had planned two days to connect with the ground of Monet's garden, in various literal and metaphorical ways, and spent the first day creating *Groundbook* (Image book pages 60-61) and *Groundsocks* (included in *Groundworks*, explained below). On the second day, the garden itself was closed due to severe flooding of the river Seine nearby. However, still on Giverny ground, I rolled in the mud of the Claude Monet Foundation car park, not far from the main garden. Having coated and soaked the white suit completely in Giverny car-park mud, I continued the journey south to Puysegney. Hung out to dry, the *Groundsuit* became stiff, incrustated with Giverny ground. Some days later, I put the *Groundsuit* back on, and over a large plastic groundsheet, rubbed off the dry Giverny ground with the clear intention to collect it. I swept up the ground dust and contained it in a Parfait jam jar. The *Groundsuit* and jar of Giverny ground were included in *Groundworks* (Image book pages 56-59, 63-67).

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<sup>134</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, *A Quest of Love* (London: Chatto & Windus Limited, 1980), 11, 21, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Hawkes, *A Land*, 37.



I used a small amount of the collected Giverny ground in an extension of *GPE 3*. I attempted to grind the ground on glass in order to form a paste with linseed oil, which I applied to a small support in the form of the words *USE LOVE*, an anagram of *VOLEUSE*<sup>136</sup> (Image book pages 52-53, 66).

## 2. Stage two: *Groundworks*

I displayed the physical findings of *GPEs 1-3* as a body of work, *Groundworks*.<sup>137</sup> This enabled a review and critique by others of the progression of the *GPEs*. Digital photographs of the exhibition are included in the Image book (pages 63-67), and the *Groundworks* objects are presented in the wooden plan chest in the Huddersfield studio along with other *GPE* objects. The *Groundworks* objects presented included *Groundsuit*, *Groundbook* and *Groundsocks*, which were all made on Giverny ground. Other items included in the plan chest that were exhibited as *Groundworks* include Dartmoor and Lascaux *Groundsocks* and *USE LOVE* (Image book pages 149-150).

As explained in the previous chapter, the body of work *Groundworks* was not intended as any homage or appropriation of previous practices associated with Land Art but rather came together as a collation of findings from the *GPEs* of stage two. *Groundsocks*, *Groundsuit* and *Groundbook* were made with the intention of gathering (literally) and engaging with (metaphorically and literally) the ground of Giverny via an investigation into the possibilities of what the traditional paint-making components of carrier and pigment might entail while simultaneously exploring a sense of grounding.

I carried out *Groundsocks* on other grounds including that of Dartmoor. A large area of moorland in southern Devon, England, Dartmoor is a protected, wild landscape containing many Bronze Age remains such as stone circles, menhirs and cairns. Certain artists associated with Land Art in the 1960s and 1970s made work on Dartmoor while responding to the prehistoric remains of human ritual. The significance of prehistoric Dartmoor in twentieth century art is discussed fully by North American art critic and writer Lucy R. Lippard in *Overlay* which she wrote during her year-long stay near the moors. *Overlay* is an important text about “prehistoric images and contemporary art [...] the

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<sup>136</sup> French word for ‘thief’ in the feminine form.

<sup>137</sup> The various physical findings of *GPEs 1-3* were exhibited as a body of work, *Groundworks*, in T1/09, Technology Building studio, University of Huddersfield, September 12-21, 2016.

juxtaposition of two unlikely realities combined to form an unexpected new reality”.<sup>138</sup> However, I have not connected with *Overlay* in the same way as I have with Hawkes’ book, *A Land*. Lippard’s *Overlay* describes practices that have worked with ancient images, artefacts, ritual, mythology, which are not relevant to my research. Hawkes’ *A Land* focuses on how our connection with the land has forever been embedded in the materials on which we depend and with which we share our earliest origins. I explain the relevance of this to my research more fully in the annex to this chapter, a contextualised analysis of *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)*, and in the following chapter, ‘Defining Grounding (a hunch)’.

As part of his approach to sculpture created in the open, natural landscape, Long has continued to make artworks on Dartmoor since his most renowned straight line walk in 1979.<sup>139</sup> Previously, North American land artists Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt had made work there relating to a fascination with man’s imprint on the wild, remote landscape. Their first visit to Dartmoor in 1969 coincided with the ground-breaking exhibition that same year, *When Attitudes Become Form* (discussed in the previous chapter, ‘Historical Context’) which included Smithson’s earthwork. Holt described the experience:

We went to Dartmoor [...] where I made the series of photographs, *Trail Markers*. I followed the orange circles painted on rocks or fence posts guiding you along the walking route and took photographs. I hadn’t seen markers like these before. I didn’t know if they were unique to this place or not, but in any case they lent themselves to my project. We had never been to any place like these moors before. As a matter of fact, we felt that the whole trail, the moors, the rocks and the sheep – was otherworldly [...]. We were stunned by this place [...]. Walking on that Dartmoor trail was a pivotal experience [...]. It all works on the psyche.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay* (New York: The New Press, 1983), 1. Lippard described *Overlay* as “an attempt to recall the function of art by looking back to times and places where art was inseparable from life”. While I have not dealt with any political aspect in this project, I am aware of the possible socio-political reasons for American artists turning to prehistoric art: “[...] the most recent archaeological impulse in avant-garde art in America arose in the late 1960s, just at the time of the greatest recent rebellion against political, institutional, and aesthetic tradition. [...] Many of these artists turned to prehistory for inspiration and encouragement because of a fundamental dissatisfaction with American society [...]. For some, ‘primitivizing art’ was an escape; for others, it was a way of sharing their individual psychic experiences with their audiences by using the common language of the collective unconscious [...]”. Lippard, *Overlay* (New York: The New Press, 1983), 4, 6.

<sup>139</sup> “I was quite proud of the fact that no one had walked across Dartmoor in a straight line before”. Associated works: Richard Long, *A STRAIGHT NORTHWARD WALK ACROSS DARTMOOR, ENGLAND, 1979*, *Dartmoor Walks, 1972*, and *Two Straight Twelve Mile Walks on Dartmoor, England, 1980*. Richard Long, *Heaven and Earth*, on the occasion of the exhibition, Tate Britain, London, June 3 - September 6, 2009 (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 3.

<sup>140</sup> American artist Nancy Holt in conversation with Simon Grant, May 3, 2012, Tate.

The orange marks that Holt discovered could be interpreted as echoes of the marks in red, yellow and orange ochre that have been categorised as some of the oldest man-made traces, the earliest known Land Art. For example, in Werner Herzog's film about the 32,000-year-old paintings in Chauvet Cave, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*,<sup>141</sup> archaeologist Dominique Baffier explains the significance of the group of red dots that marked the entrance, first seen by Jean-Marie Chauvet when he discovered the cave in 1994.<sup>142</sup>

In Dartmoor National Park, I ran a practical workshop as part of the interdisciplinary postgraduate-researcher conference, *On the Moors*, organised by the University of Plymouth, June 9 - 10, 2017 (Image book page 55).<sup>143</sup> I provided the forty participants with new, white socks and suggested they use the socks outside in any way while connecting with the ground of the moors. The discussion that followed once participants had returned brought up questions of figure-ground. I was interested in the participants' experience of engaging with the ground, via their feet, and their haptic relationship with the grounded socks both during and after their activity on the moor. Having returned from the moor, the socks were placed individually inside transparent, supermarket-bought sandwich bags, attached to an interior wall of the main conference room in a square-ish arrangement, and left for the duration. We discussed the possibility of the activity as painting, and how the figure-ground function was key: figures that wandered across the Dartmoor ground in white socks; their focus on the ground while feeling a sense of being figure, exposed on the moor; the sense of touch in the feet becoming figure on the perceptive field, while *on* a field; the Dartmoor mud-covered *Groundsocks* becoming a work placed on a wall so the transferred ground might literally become figure; an expanded concept of painting in which the ground came to the fore, whereby the participants in socks (carrier) brought the Dartmoor ground (pigment) into the arrangement on the interior wall.

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<sup>141</sup> Werner Herzog, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, feature film (Revolver Entertainment, 2011). The red dots, or hand prints, are discussed at minute 10:40 and minute 31:10.

<sup>142</sup> The blood-red dots are very clear handprints, of a six-foot man, who began mark-making from a crouching position and finished the piece by stretching to his highest reach. "Despite [the cave painters'] anonymity and the blurring of time, one individual can be singled out", since the archaeologists have noticed in the prints that this man clearly had a unique characteristic: a crooked little finger. Thanks to this slight deformation, Baffier and her team have followed this man's movement through the cave. *Ibid.*, minute 31:10.

<sup>143</sup> The University of Plymouth annual trans-disciplinary practice-research postgraduate conference organised by *Performance. Experience. Presence.* committee members Beth Richards, Chris Green and Katheryn Owen. *On the Moors*, Dartmoor National Park, June 9-10, 2017. Schedule, biographies and abstracts: <https://plymouthpostgraduateconference.wordpress.com/about/> Accessed October 16, 2018.



*Groundsocks* therefore formed part of my ongoing investigation into the possible variations of the traditional formula of paint as a combination of carrier (the white socks) and pigment (Dartmoor ground). The activity was not about our relationship with clothing, although I am aware that the use of the plain, everyday socks echoed the works of certain Arte Povera artists who used cloth and clothing items in their installations. Bologna-based Arte Povera artist Pier Paolo Calzolari created performances that he called *Acts of Passion* involving himself, other performers, animals and the audience. These included *Il filtro e benvenuto all'angelo* [*The filter and welcome to the angel*] in 1967, known as Calzolari's 'first environment event':<sup>144</sup>

Upon entering, viewers were asked to remove their shoes, put on red socks, and then follow a narrow corridor with a soft rubber floor, illuminated by ultra-violet light, to emerge in a wide, well-lit space full of live white doves. Calzolari wanted to broaden the dimension of painting, which he felt was merely descriptive, into highly allegorical and emotional installations. The dazzling white of the doves contrasting with the red socks on an intensely green base of artificial grass created a visionary suspension between reality and dream.

*Groundsocks* on Dartmoor was the only GPE during which I involved others. While 'broadening the dimension of painting' could be identified in all the painting experiments of my research project, *Groundsocks* explored figure-ground relationships rather than being part of multi-sensory, multi-dimensional scenes that communicate the colour and form of religious imagery as in Calzolari's *Act of Passion* described above. As stated by Christov-Bakargiev, this work referred to "Byzantine cosmogony and contains symbolic references to states of spiritual transcendence. The dark corridor acts as a purifying 'filter' in preparation for the epiphanic vision of the 'angel'".<sup>145</sup> The 'broadening' intention in the Dartmoor *Groundsocks* version was to expand my own solo *Groundsocks* experiments that I had previously carried out on the grounds of Sutton Bank, Giverny and Lascaux hill, by involving more feet and more socks in a specific space at one time.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore and crucially, it was an opportunity to discuss the concepts I was exploring via the GPEs more widely with other researchers. The broadening intention throughout the GPEs more

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<sup>144</sup> Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il filtro e benvenuto all'angelo* [*The filter and welcome to the angel*], 1967. Environment with participants, doves, artificial green grass, socks, ultra-violet light. Dimensions variable. Installation, Studio Bentivoglio, Bologna. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, ed., *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 1999), 43, 90.

<sup>145</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, ed., *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements*, 90.

<sup>146</sup> English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner made six sketches of the views at Sutton Bank, as identified in the recent cataloguing of Turner's Yorkshire sketches for Tate by David Hill, University of Leeds. I used the ground at 'Turner's viewpoint', Sutton Bank for the first set of *Groundsocks* on October 10, 2016. I had been researching significant grounds in painting history and found the Yorkshire Turner Trails: <http://turner.yorkshire.com/trails/sutton-bank> Accessed December 12, 2018.

generally has been to explore the possibilities of painting while experimenting with various ground-based materials (literal ground) and activities across different grounds of meaning (metaphorical grounds and grounds of historical significance, including those of specific sites, of painting, of figure-ground).

The third period of research in France, June 11 - July 20, 2017, started immediately following the Dartmoor conference. As I had proposed during the workshop discussion, I transported the participants' Dartmoor-ground-covered socks by car to Lascaux hill where I had carried out an earlier version of *Groundsocks* the previous year. Near the entrance of Lascaux II, I took iPhone camera images of the bagged-up socks in a pile on the ground as if they had fallen out of an existing outdoor, metal frame (Image book page 55). I was considering the possible resonance achieved by linking the two sites Lascaux and Dartmoor as part of the *Groundsocks* experiment process. The *Groundsocks* made across the various sites are displayed in the plan chest in the Huddersfield studio.

It is possible that *Groundbook* (Image book pages 60-61) might bring Long's various mud books to mind, such as *River Avon Book* and *Nile (Papers of River Muds)*.<sup>147</sup> To make *River Avon Book*, Long dipped paper into the mud of his homeland river and then cut the paper down to be bound into a book. For a later version, *River Avon Mud Book*, the paper was not dipped but made from a mix of pulp and mud.<sup>148</sup> This process was repeated for *Nile (Papers of River Muds)*, for which each page was made using the mud of a different river. In this book, mud from Long's home river Avon was used to make a page alongside those of the Nile, Umpqua, Hudson, Murrumbidgee, Mississippi, Indragoodby, Jordan, Condamine, Chitravathri, Amazon, Rhine, Guatiquia and Huang He. In the most basic terms, the activity of painting as a traditional discipline is the transference of matter to a surface. As previously described, the matter, the paint, is essentially a combination of carrier and pigment. The carrier provides the wetness and/or adhesive properties required for the matter to stick to the support. When making *Groundbook*, I was concerned with the transference of Giverny ground to the pages of the plain note book which I used as a packaged collection of supports. I did not intend to create a stand-alone artwork as with

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<sup>147</sup> Richard Long, *River Avon Mud Book*, 1979, book with mud on paper, 15.8 x 14.2 x 1cm. Artist Rooms Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-river-avon-book-ar00144> Accessed December 12, 2018. *Nile (Papers of River Muds)*, 1990, book, 37 x 30.4cm unconfirmed. Artist Rooms Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-nile-papers-of-river-muds-ar00599> Accessed December 12, 2018.

<sup>148</sup> Long, *River Avon Mud Book*, 1981. For an account of Long's books, Andrew Wilson, 'From Page to Page, an introduction to Richard Long's books', in Wallis, curator, *Richard Long, Heaven and Earth*, 194-199.

Long's *River Avon Book*, but rather sought to gather grounding material, both literally (the books pages picked up the wet ground of the Monet Giverny garden) and metaphorically (the experiment contributed to my ongoing investigation into a sense of grounding).



## Stage three: culminating in GPEFs 1-30 and the final trial of GTM coding ideas

### 1. Stage three: analysis of GTM coding trials

GTM is originally a social sciences qualitative research method, originating from Glaser and Strauss' *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*<sup>149</sup>, 1967. I introduce GTM and GTM coding fully in the following chapter, 'Methods'. Here I explain how my artistic interpretation of GTM coding fits within the research enquiry.

Coding in GTM can be understood as labelling the phenomenal world. It means identifying phenomena found in the data during its analysis, and attaching conceptual labels to that data. Once data are categorised into conceptual labels, the data are 'fragmented' and analysed. Codes can then be linked together and a new theory can be built, from the ground up.<sup>150</sup> In the early trials of GTM coding during the first and second stages of the enquiry, the field notes written during the painting experiments were copied from the field notebook, and expanded across a 'coding wall' in the studio. I analysed the wall of painting experiment field notes with line-by-line coding in order to dig out key references and themes that I felt, thought about and experienced during the painting process. The idea was that these discoveries would then be worked with in further painting experiments in order to increase the frequency of moments where a sense of grounding resonated most strongly and in turn help to define this sense more comprehensively. It was important that the whole process of analysis was exposed and spread out across the studio wall.

This initial period of practice that explored the potential of GTM coding as an approach to my particular painting practice led to the following conclusions at that time:

- GTM coding provided a systematic, iterative approach to the analysis, while being open to discovery, bringing structure to a fluid and often scattered painting process;
- Coding offered a useful way to look inside the happenings of the painting experiments and draw out key conceptual concerns;

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<sup>149</sup> Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967).

<sup>150</sup> "A researcher can think of coding as 'mining' the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasures contained within the data". Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), 66.

- Using GTM coding ideas to investigate my painting process thoroughly fitted with my concern to expose and make use of meaning implicit in phenomena. Linking and relating abstract concepts, GTM coding was useful for drawing out and focusing main themes discovered between the lines of experiment field notes. This offered the opportunity to pull out the buried, slippery, phenomenological stuff within the process.

Therefore, rather than use one of the GTM versions established in social sciences in a conventional way, I have trialled GTM coding ideas as an approach to my particular painting process, and finalised the trial with a specific, artistic interpretation of GTM coding ideas via the *GPEFs 1-30* group.

## 2. Stage three: *GPEFs 1-30* and the final trial of GTM coding ideas

As described, during the first and second stages I explored different ways of using GTM coding as a means of analysing and focusing the experiments. The third stage involved the culminating trial of my experimental, artistic interpretation of GTM coding ideas as a process-suited method to analyse the specific experiment group, *GPEFs 1-30*.<sup>151</sup> The final phase of the GTM coding trials took place: 1) during the third period of research in France, while carrying out *GPEFs 1-30*; and 2) on return to the Huddersfield studio where the process continued. The purpose was to investigate thoroughly the painting process while immersed in the *GPEFs 1-30* and focus the development of the project systematically and iteratively via an exploration of GTM coding ideas.

To summarise the process in brief, during each *GPEF* I hand-wrote in ink the details of the happenings and the experience in a white, hardback, A5 field notebook (displayed in the studio and in the Image book, pages 139-146). These field notes recorded my

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<sup>151</sup> As GTM author Kathy Charmaz states, GTM “is a method that studies process, and a method that is *in process*”, placing great importance on “making the study of action central”. Charmaz, YouTube lecture, “The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory”, BSA MedSoc. 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY1h3387txo> Accessed January 27, 2015. Charmaz also emphasises the discovery of processes, actions and meanings in her paper: ‘The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory’, *A Journal of the BSA MedSoc Group*, vol. 6, issue 3 (October 2012): 2-3. [http://www.medicalsociologyonline.org/resources/Vol6Iss3/MSo-600x\\_The-Power-and-Potential-Grounded-Theory\\_Charmaz.pdf](http://www.medicalsociologyonline.org/resources/Vol6Iss3/MSo-600x_The-Power-and-Potential-Grounded-Theory_Charmaz.pdf) Accessed June 2, 2019.

GTM is a means to truly focus on *what is really going on* in a specific field of human endeavour. Barney G. Glaser, co-ordinator of GTM who I refer to in the following chapter, repeatedly emphasises the question, “what is actually happening in the data?” For example, see Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity, Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 1978), 57.

experience while immersed in the painting experiments in terms of my observation of the materials, my bodily awareness, use of utensils, connection with site, my subjectivity, ideas, concerns, discoveries and thinking about historical contexts. Soon after completing the experiment if not immediately (it was often impossible to write before cleaning my hands) I coded the field notes in pencil. These codes were then transferred to the coding continuum, a scroll of white, Fabriano 250g paper that had been attached to the longest, interior wall at Puysegenev (Image book pages 113-114). It was important that the experiment codes were transferred from the field notebook to the coding continuum in the order they were carried out. Each numbered experiment section formed part of a whole that recorded and analysed an exposed, ongoing process.

On return to the Huddersfield studio, I fixed the coding continuum above a line of connecting supports, functioning as grounds, that I had previously attached around the central area of the interior walls. These grounds, relating to early experiments before and during stage one of the enquiry, had been attached before carrying out *GPEFs 1-30* in France. The intention was to use these grounds in some way on returning from France to analyse the information collated while carrying out the experiments. The coding continuum contains the concepts discovered via the coding of the field notes written during each *GPEF*. I carried out an analysis by marking each dominant, repeating concept with a different pigment mixed with linseed oil (Image book pages 130-131). Throughout this final stage in the project, the *GPEFs 1-30* led the process as the central research practice, and the experimental use of GTM coding became an integrated part of the work, as displayed in the Huddersfield studio. I describe and analyse fully my interpretation of GTM coding ideas as an approach to my particular painting process in the fourth chapter, 'Methods', and present my discoveries in the 'Conclusion'.

### Summary

I explored thoroughly the immersive experience of the painting experiments throughout the three stages of the research enquiry via various methods of documentation. This thorough documenting was a large, integral part of the work that enabled ongoing analysis and discovery leading from one GPE to the next. I pursued a hunch that the purpose of the GPEs was to seek a sense of grounding, as well as to explore and demonstrate the analysis of a painting-research process collectively. I was driven by the incessant need to find out and expose exactly what was going on in terms of my interaction with the various elements involved in each GPE. The final project that concluded the practice-led enquiry, *GPEFs 1-30* and their analysis via my specific GTM



coding trial, exposed my particular experience of a painting process while visually demonstrating the iterative possibilities of GTM coding to develop this very same process. The documentation of each GPE while in-the-making, the visual demonstration of the final GTM coding trial that enabled an opening-out out of field notes onto studio walls and floors, developed iteratively as an art-making method for both analysing and progressing a painting research process. Throughout the enquiry, I sought to investigate my particular painting process and the methods by which to do this. The Image book at the front of this volume presents the image documentation of the painting experiments from each of the three stages of the research described in this chapter.

In the following chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)', I further explain the sense of grounding that has become the focus of the GPEs with reference to Jacquetta Hawkes' writing. I describe how Hawkes' book, *A Land* has become a 'grounding object' while thinking about my approach to the experiments. In the second and third stages of the enquiry, Lascaux was established as a significant ground of the GPEs. I also explain how Hawkes' writing on Lascaux has been useful to define this particular significance in terms of my research project.

Prior to chapter three, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)', I include a Chapter Annex which explains in detail, contextualised with reference to Hawkes, how a specific GPE, *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)* has explored a sense of grounding.

## **Chapter Annex to Chapter 2, The Practice-Led Enquiry:**

### **Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)**

In this section I use *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)* as a detailed example of how a Grounding Painting Experiment (GPE) might explore and identify a sense of grounding (explained fully in the following chapter, 'Defining Grounding (a hunch)'). Each GPE is different due to its circumstance, site and approach, but all are driven by the significance of their specifically-selected materials, engagement with the ground, and the urge to investigate thoroughly a developing concept of painting. While I have explained this significance in the previous chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry', I describe it here in greater depth via the analysis of a self-contained GPE, *GPE-C* (Image book pages 76-79).

*GPE-C* took place in September 2017 between two sites: the vineyards in Ville-Dommange, near Reims, Champagne-Ardenne, France, and the studio in Huddersfield. This explanation and analysis of *GPE-C* addresses the significance of a specific material: Champagne chalk. Sourced for particular reasons from a certain site, transported and used in a different place before returning to its origin as a physical GPE finding, the Champagne chalk contained historical, artistic, cultural, agricultural and personal significance. This combined significance qualified a material to be used in a GPE, and that of the Champagne chalk described here was unique to *GPE-C*.

I was a member of a small harvest team<sup>152</sup> in September, 2017 for the independent champagne producer Olivier Coulon, of Coulon Père et Fils.<sup>153</sup> I spent twelve days working for ten hours daily in the vineyards of Ville-Dommange, cutting grapes with hand-held secateurs. At the end of the harvest I was given permission to dig lumps of Champagne chalk from the ground of the vines. As I have established, sourcing a material directly from the ground has been one of the principle criteria for a GPE to explore a sense of grounding.

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<sup>152</sup> During the harvest we worked in pairs: a cutter on either side of each 'route' of vines, facing each other through the plants. My harvest partner was Margaux Chépy, a Masters student (WINTOUR Wine Tourism Innovation) born in Champagne. I recorded the following excerpt from Margaux's perspective on the meaning of 'ground' in winemaking: "Any earth work, like viticulture, is fascinating because by participating in it you get to witness the transformation from the ground to the final product. Nature and winegrowers are working together for the vine to be healthy and to grow beautiful grapes. I like to think [...] that the ground will carry its story to the glass through the grapes. And I guess that makes us - the workers, the winegrowers, the wine-makers - everyone involved in that complex process - the ground storytellers". Conversation with Margaux Chépy, Ville-Dommange, September 6, 2017.

<sup>153</sup> The website of Coulon Père et Fils: <http://www.champagnecoulonpereetfils.com/> Accessed March 25, 2018.

The material's significance has increased when it has been gathered from a site, or ground, with which I have engaged. I felt connected to the ground where the Champagne chalk originated, having been immersed in the vines and the conversations about the land during the intensive work of the harvest. I had developed an understanding of that particular ground.

Chalk is absolutely fundamental to the Champagne region both geologically and culturally. Chalk is not only the main bedrock of that land, but also an essential element of the champagne-making process.<sup>154</sup> Without chalk, the vines that produce the grapes for champagne would not survive. The porous layer of chalk under the topsoil, a sponge-like reservoir, regulates the flow of water to the plants during weather fluctuation, as well as providing champagne with a characteristic mineral taste.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, the chalk underground is indispensable for the life of the vines as well as the final product's authenticity: it is well-known that champagne is exclusively produced in the region after which it is named, while everything else is sparkling wine.

Chalk is also one of the earliest materials used in mankind's creative activities. Easy to find, excavate and grind, chalk has been used as a painting medium for thousands of years. Since medieval painting, chalk has been mixed with a carrier-binder such as rabbit-skin glue to form the traditional *gesso* ground.<sup>156</sup> With chalk as the essential component, *gesso* ground provided the primer standard for egg tempera painting, layered to create a smooth, white surface on wooden panels.<sup>157</sup> In paint-making, chalk remained unrivalled as a

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<sup>154</sup> Chalk was formed during the Cretaceous period between 100 and 60 million years ago. It underlies areas of Britain as well as the French Champagne region and other northern European countries, and is a well-known, every-day material most commonly used for building. A palaeontology summary of its locations, formation and uses can be found here: [http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/chalk\\_formation\\_fossils.htm](http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/chalk_formation_fossils.htm) Accessed March 24, 2018.

<sup>155</sup> The official website for the Champagne region confirms this: <https://www.champagne.fr/en/terroir-appellation/champagne-terroir/limestone-subsoil> Accessed May 9, 2018.

<sup>156</sup> There are many sources on paint-making that confirm this, for example: "In northern Europe, from early medieval times - particularly in England, France and the Low Countries - chalk was employed with animal glue for making the ground coat or preparation layer of panel paintings in order to produce a white background and a proper surface for painting". Ashok Roy, ed., *Artist's Pigments. A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, vol. 2 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 205.

<sup>157</sup> "Gesso is the Italian word for Gypsum [...]. In Italian panel painting, grounds are usually based on a combination of gypsum and animal glue, which tends to be referred to as 'traditional gesso'. In Northern Europe, artists made a similar ground using animal glue and calcium carbonate (whiting, chalk) [...]". Pip Seymour and Yvonne Hindle, eds. *Paint Theory, Paint Practice, Materials and methodologies within contemporary painting practice* (UK: Lee Press, 2000), 19.



basic white pigment until the Egyptians created lead whites. These offered an opacity that European painters came to favour over the transparency of chalk mixed with a carrier such as linseed oil. The fifteenth century guide to painting methods, *Il Libro dell'Arte, The Craftsman's Handbook* by Cennino d'Andrea Cennini (mentioned previously in 'The Practiced Enquiry'), translated and revived in the twentieth century, provides detailed evidence of chalk's important role in the history of painting, particularly as a gesso ingredient.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, Champagne chalk has been recorded as the most popular chalk for artistic use since it can be ground to a very fine grade.<sup>159</sup>

GPE-C has been informed by a 'return to ground' concept explained by producer Olivier Coulon's description of "le retour a l'équilibre naturel".<sup>160</sup> Olivier Coulon made it clear during our conversations that vine growers must accept that biological sensitivity rather than intensive agriculture is essential for optimum crop production. The decline of biological activity in our soils caused by modern agro-industry is a world-wide problem, and agronomists such as Claude Bourguignon call urgently for a renewed respect for the natural laws that maintain the biological balance of the planet's soils.<sup>161</sup> Olivier Coulon's generation seeks to reconnect with the ground and heal the land that has been damaged by the machines and pesticides of modern vine growing techniques. In Olivier Coulon's words (which I have translated from French):

My father worked with horse-drawn ploughs before the Industrial Revolution [...] which sought to make life easier for man, but not for the ground [...]. In the eighties and nineties, the wine-growing process used methods that [...] created deficiencies in the vineyard. The agricultural and phytopharmaceutical industries have created products of substitution in order to make up for these deficiencies. All this has

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<sup>158</sup> "[...] the gesso grosso is your foundation for everything". Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *Il Libro dell'Arte, The Craftsman's Handbook*, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, INC., 1960), 72.

<sup>159</sup> For example, see Ashok Roy, *Artist's Pigments. A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, 204.

<sup>160</sup> In conversations with Olivier Coulon, the 'return to ground' referred to the present-day quest for biological rebalance in agriculture, following a post-Industrial-Revolution disconnection from the natural intelligence of the land. Conversation with Olivier Coulon, Coulon Père et Fils, Ville-Dommange, Reims, Champagne-Ardenne, France, March 19, 2018.

<sup>161</sup> French agronomist engineer, Claude Bourguignon, whose work is followed by Olivier Coulon, states that there is a constant fall of biological activity in the soils. For example, in France, 90% of soil fauna has disappeared. Bourguignon's talk, 'Where is the world heading?', at the Round Table, Ecology and the World, December 10, 2010, described the fundamental importance of soils that has been forgotten: "[...] the essence of life is in the soils [...] we are losing our soils". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYda6X1U3LM> Accessed April 18, 2018.

weakened the ground and therefore diminished the resistance of the plants to insects and diseases.

Today, we must return to working with the ground, using the plough and grass cutters. We must re-learn to re-plant life into the ground, leaving the vine to rebalance itself, using locally-available, natural resources.

The forest does not require anything and the current ways of working the land are returning to this concept. The ground must find its natural balance again.<sup>162</sup>

These words echo the writing of British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes in *A Land*, nearly seventy years ago: “Finally, all soils owe something of their quality to the life they have supported, to the vegetable and animal matter that falls back into them, builds up the humus, giving them what Englishmen have called their ‘good heart’. It is no empty, sentimental term, for the structure of the soil depends on the organic contribution, and it is a quality which cannot be given by artificial fertilizers.”<sup>163</sup> Hawkes’ critical view of the Industrial Revolution is clearly expressed in the penultimate chapter of *A Land*, ‘Land and Machines’, and summarised by Hawkes herself later in *Man on Earth* in terms of disconnection:

I have written in *A Land* of the devastation our kind has worked upon earth since it plunged blindly into industrialism, of the hideous mutilation of the countryside, followed by its dereliction. Its effect upon man as the bearer of evolving consciousness has been even more devastating. It has broken his relationship with nature [...].<sup>164</sup>

The Champagne chalk I used in *GPE-C* was dug from a place where the current generation of agriculturalists are returning to traditional, natural methods, having experienced the culmination of devastating effects of the Industrial Revolution. My understanding of Coulon’s ‘return to ground’ intensifies the significance of the Champagne chalk as a medium linking many ‘grounding’ meanings together in one GPE. “Life has grown from the rock and still

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<sup>162</sup> Conversation with Olivier Coulon, Ville-Dommange, France, March 19, 2018.

<sup>163</sup> Hawkes, *A Land*, 125.

<sup>164</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, *Man on Earth* (London: The Cresset Press, 1956), 228. Hawkes also writes about disconnection in *A Land*: “I do not wish to suggest that there was any lessening of man’s dependence on the land, of his struggle to extract a living from it; that is the stuff of existence and cannot be reduced [...]. But the individual life, the individual culture, was not sensitively adjusted to locality and the nature of the relationship was profoundly changed. It ceased to be creative, a patient and increasingly skilful love-making that had persuaded the land to flourish, and became destructive, a grabbing of material for man to destroy or to refashion to his own design. The intrusion of machines between hand and material completed the estrangement”. Hawkes, *A Land*, 177.

rests upon it; because men have left it far behind, they are able consciously to turn back to it. We do turn back, for it has kept some hold over us".<sup>165</sup>

The following summary describes the process of *GPE-C* in stages chronologically:

- I had become connected with the ground of the vineyards in Ville-Dommange, Reims, Champagne-Ardenne, France, during the twelve-day immersion in the grape harvest.
- I dug up lumps of Champagne chalk from this ground with which I had connected.
- On returning to Huddersfield after the harvest, the Champagne chalk, in its raw, rock form, was left for four months on the floor of the studio to dehydrate.
- Along with the chalk, I returned to Huddersfield with sections of moulded paper-pulp packaging used by the champagne producers to protect the bottles in transit. These had been chosen in the vine grower's cellar in Ville-Dommange to be used as the supports for the experiment.
- Once pressed by a picture-framer in Huddersfield, the flattened sections of packaging were primed with several layers of rabbit-skin glue over a few days.
- I ground the Champagne chalk rocks into a powder using a pestle, mortar, and sieve.
- I mixed the Champagne chalk powder with molten rabbit-skin glue, using a traditional painting recipe for *gesso* ground.<sup>166</sup>
- I built up the *gesso* ground on the primed, pressed packaging sections, layer upon layer, over two weeks.

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<sup>165</sup> Hawkes, *A Land*, 91.

<sup>166</sup> I used chalk and glue *gesso*-making recipes from Margaret Krug, *An Artist's Handbook. Materials and Techniques* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2007), 217, and Mark David Gottsegen, *The Painter's Handbook* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2006), 62-63.



- On the solidified, part-sanded surface of the *gesso* ground, I made a graphite drawing of a particle of chalk, or coccosphere,<sup>167</sup> as seen under a microscope.
- I returned the Champagne chalk to its origin in the form of the final *GPE-C* object. It now sits on a shelf in Olivier Coulon's office, and is used to illustrate to his champagne clients the importance of chalk in the champagne-making process.

The grounding experience of the harvest, being immersed in the vines for hours on end, contributed to the significance of the Champagne chalk gathered from the ground of the vines and the grounding potential of *GPE-C* overall. The combined significance of the Champagne chalk to viticulture, the 'return to ground', and the history of painting, enabled *GPE-C* to identify a sense of grounding. This sense resonated as I returned the material to its origin and placed the physical, final *GPE-C* finding on Olivier Coulon's office shelf.

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<sup>167</sup> "Chalk, which is derived from marine ooze, is largely composed of fossil remains of unicellular algae of the phylum Chrysophyta [...]. The principle 'nanofossil' remains, which characterize chalk, are tiny disk-like forms called coccoliths. These are minute calcareous platelets that in the living organism are often bound together to form a spherical shell called a coccosphere [...]. Coccospheres make up much of the phytoplankton of the northern and southern seas, and are important in the marine food chain". Ashok Roy, *Artist's Pigments. Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, 205.

### **Chapter 3. Defining Grounding (a hunch)**

This research project has been led by a process of painting experiments that have increasingly focused on a sense of grounding. I have described fully the development of the project in three stages in the previous chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry'. To re-summarise the development in brief, during the first stage of the project the painting experiments explored various intersections of three key aspects of my painting practice: touch, resonance and grounding. During the second stage, I discovered through ongoing experimentation that of these three original aspects, grounding was to be the focus. This came about via a convergence of elements in my research enquiry on ground(s) in various literal, metaphorical, historical, painting-related and material senses. These elements included: the literature that resonated with my focus on a connection with the land in a material-driven way; the painting experiments' natural tendency to happen mostly on the floor/terrain; and the trialling of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding ideas to 'dig into' the field notes of the experiments. My trials of GTM coding ideas as an approach to investigating a concept of painting constitute a significant part of my research. I have introduced these trials in 'The Practice-led Enquiry', and explain the process fully in the following chapter, 'Methods'. The experiments therefore became Grounding Painting Experiments (GPEs), exploring the interconnections of various grounds and their significance in a search for a sense of grounding.

The sense of grounding has remained difficult to grasp and describe. The GPEs and the experimentation of methods for analysing the GPEs as a process have sought to explore and define grounding in terms of my practice. Examples of art practices associated with Land Art and Arte Povera relevant to the GPEs have been included in the first chapter, 'Historical Context', to provide the background of precedents to my approach to investigating a concept of painting. Here I introduce a key text that I have used while thinking about the GPEs and the search for grounding: *A Land*, a book written in 1949-1950 by British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes that has become what I have called throughout my enquiry a 'grounding object'. Contemporary publications that have incorporated the work of Hawkes, specifically *A Land*, are included in this chapter to differentiate further the GPEs from examples of Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s. As an annex to the 'The Practice-led Enquiry', I have included the analysis of a specific experiment, *Grounding Painting Experiment-Chalk (GPE-C)*. This stand-alone analysis references Hawkes, and explains how using a material

with a particular, combined significance is a key criterion for a GPE to search for a sense of grounding.

I explain why I have selected Lascaux hill in southwest France as a ground of activity to explore grounding via the GPEs.<sup>168</sup> I reference Hawkes' writing on Lascaux, particularly her lectures, which were considered unconventional in their approach by archaeologists at the time. Hawkes herself often referred to her unusual, uncategorisable approach to archaeology and cultural history as a hybrid practice of art and science. I expand on the uncategorisable quality of *A Land* later in this chapter. This is an important context for the citations I have used from *A Land* that have helped to approximate a definition of grounding. Twenty years after *A Land* was published, Hawkes maintained that her approach was unusual. For example, in the introduction to the lecture 'Nothing But Or Something More': "[...] my published works have occupied a no-man's-land between scientific and imaginative ends; I have advocated subjectivism in the writing of archaeological works; I have attached statistics; I have denied that Stonehenge and other such monuments are computers [...]"<sup>169</sup>

The site of Lascaux has developed considerably as an internationally-recognised cultural centre since the discovery of the cave paintings in 1940. The Centre International d'Art Pariétal opened in 2016 and includes the second, more complete replica of the original cave, Lascaux IV.<sup>170</sup> As well as housing the latest, largest replica, this big museum aims to provide a more varied, participatory 'Lascaux experience' using interactive technology that focuses on the cave paintings, their production and the lives of the Cro-Magnon artists. The opening of Lascaux IV demonstrates the continued pull of Lascaux as a significant site in the story of human history that is specifically related to early painting. Most commentaries on the Lascaux cave paintings centre on the quality and concentration of the animal images. As the experiments of my research have not focused directly on issues relating to image, representation and colour, I have been attracted to Hawkes' unusual approach to the Lascaux paintings. Hawkes maintained that the Lascaux cave paintings were made as

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<sup>168</sup> Lascaux hill is just outside Montignac, a village in the Dordogne, southwest France. Puysegney, my base during the three periods of research in France as explained in the previous chapter, is 45km north of Montignac. When I use the word 'Lascaux' without a Roman numeral, I mean the site of Lascaux hill and the group of caves that exist there: the original cave, Lascaux I (discovered in 1940 and closed in 1963); the first replica, Lascaux II (opened in 1983); and Lascaux IV, the second, more complete replica within the large museum, the Lascaux-Centre International d'Art Pariétal (opened 2016).

<sup>169</sup> 'Nothing But Or Something More', John Danz Lecture, delivered at the University of Washington, Seattle, May 1971 (Gillingham, Dorset: The Blackmore Press, T.H. Brickell & Son Limited, 1971), 3. Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, University of Bradford, Special Collections, J. B. Priestley Library, 4/17.

<sup>170</sup> <https://www.lascaux.fr/en/prepare-your-visit/visit-lascaux/international-centre-for-cave-art> Accessed November 12, 2018.



art, but more importantly in terms of my research, in her particularly poetic approach to a scientific discipline, she described how they were products of a complete union between the artists and their environment.

### A grounding object in my research: *A Land*, Jacquetta Hawkes

In this section, I explain why Hawkes' book *A Land*, first published by Cresset Press in 1951, has become a grounding object in my research. I explain how Hawkes' uncategorisable way of writing has resonated with my approach to investigating a concept of painting and contributed to the GPEs' focusing on a search for a sense of grounding.

In *A Land*, Hawkes compacted Britain's geological history along with our human development in terms of our relationship with materials originating from the land. Hawkes sought to evoke what she described as "[...] the image [...] of an entity, the land of Britain, in which past and present, nature, man and art appear all in one piece".<sup>171</sup> Hawkes uniquely and creatively crafted the story of Britain from her particular, imaginative perspective while remaining true to geological fact. As Hawkes herself stated in the first line of the preface: "In this book I have used the findings of the two sciences of geology and archaeology for purposes altogether unscientific. I have tried to use them evocatively [...]".<sup>172</sup> As if narrating a film of Britain from the earliest period of denudation to 1950, *A Land* returns to the beginning of life in early muds, speeds through the changing geology of the land and growth of life upon it, and ends with humankind's relatively rapid development of the landscape via the use of ground-based materials. Hawkes' uncategorisable approach combines art with science, employing geological and archaeological knowledge in a poetic way to describe how our development is inseparable from the land and its resources with which we share our origins.

My experience of *A Land* as a grounding object has influenced my thinking about the development of the experimentation with ground(s). Certain descriptions in the book have resonated with my approach and have helped shape my attempt at defining a sense of grounding via the painting experiments, subsequently enabling their becoming GPEs. These descriptions of our 'affinity with rock and with soil' build a strong sense of a certain return to

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<sup>171</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, *A Land*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1959), 9. The fact that my copy is the second edition of 1959 has contributed to my connection with the book as a grounding object. Instead of the larger, hardback Cresset Press publication of the first edition in 1951, Hawkes' 'single piece' is contained within the compact dimensions of a Pelican paperback.

<sup>172</sup> Hawkes, *A Land*, 9.

ground-based origins that have always ‘kept some hold over us’.<sup>173</sup> The beginning of chapter one, ‘Two Themes’, sets the grounding tone that I sense throughout the book:

When I have been working late on a summer night I like to go out and lie on the patch of grass in our back garden. This garden is a square of about twenty feet, so that to lie in it is like exposing oneself in an open box or tray [...] the turf on which I lie is meagre and worn, quite without buoyancy. I would not have it otherwise, for this hard ground presses my flesh against my bones and makes me agreeably conscious of my body.<sup>174</sup>

This image of a ground-based, ‘open tray’ and Hawkes’ bodily awareness felt within it is significant. Having connected with Hawkes’ descriptions throughout the book of how the land’s geology evolved and how people developed in terms of their relationship with ground-based materials, I often returned to the opening description. In the context of the book’s strong sense of ground throughout, Hawkes’ grounding via her body while lying in a square of garden, which could be interpreted as a painting-like space, strengthened my urge to get physically close to the grounds of the GPEs. I acknowledge previous incidences of artists lying in or on the ground in conceptual practices associated with Land Art and Performance Art in the 1960s and 1970s. While these autobiographical, land-based practices were wide-ranging in their approach, a physical, close connection with the ground was indisputedly a common factor. However, my connection with the ground differs from that in artworks of those practices that dealt with notions of mortality, rebirth, myth, and ancient ritual while using the artist’s body and the earth as mediums. For example, Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta’s *Siluetas* series of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> “Life has grown from the rock and still rests upon it; because men have left it far behind, they are able consciously to turn back to it. We do turn back, for it has kept some hold over us”. “Men know their affinity with rock and with soil, but they also use them, at first as simply as coral organisms use calcium, or as caddis-worms use shell and pebbles, but soon also consciously to express imagined ideas”. Ibid., 91, 95.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>175</sup> I focus on Ana Mendieta here because the link between the specific examples I use from Mendieta’s *Siluetas* of the 1970s and 1980s, and my opening reference to Hawkes lying in her garden ‘tray’ enables an explanation of my approach as well as further definition of *A Land* as a grounding object. In addition, I must mention two other important examples of artists merging their bodies with the ground: British artist Keith Arnatt’s *Self-Burial*, 1969, and North American artist Charles Simmonds’ *Birth*, 1970. These performances differ from Mendieta’s *Siluetas* in their approach although the photographic documentation constituting the artwork demonstrates a similarly direct, full-body involvement with the land. Ben Tufnell describes Arnatt’s *Self-Burial*: “[...] a figure (the artist) stands on an open patch of earth, against a background of trees and hills. Over a series of nine black and white images, he gradually sinks into the earth. By the eighth image, only his head is visible and the rest of his body is beneath the ground. In the final picture the landscape is empty: the implication is that Arnatt is still there, but has been absorbed into the ground”. Arnatt’s *Self-Burial* was his personal ‘theatricalisation’ of the critique at that time by various artists associated with Conceptual Art and Land Art, of an art world limited to white gallery walls and commodity exchange. Arnatt stated that he was commenting on the “egoistic behaviour connected to making art”. <http://www.keitharnatt.com/about.html> Accessed November 11, 2018. In *Birth*, Simmonds was

In the artworks that Mendieta called 'earth-body works', she sought a reconnection with the earth, 'an omnipresent female force', via performative interpretations of pre-Christian belief systems and prehistoric art, involving her full-body contact with the natural elements of specific sites, often merging with the ground. Mendieta stated that she was seeking to "become one with the earth [...] an extension of nature", as a "reactivation of primeval beliefs".<sup>176</sup> *Imagen de Yagul (Image from Yagul)*, 1973, was one of the first 'earth-body works' in the *Silueta* series that Mendieta made directly in the landscape between 1972 and 1985.<sup>177</sup> Mendieta made *Imagen de Yagul* during her second visit to Mexico when she visited Yagul, a site of pre-Hispanic archaeological importance in the Valley of Oaxaca.<sup>178</sup> Mendieta positioned herself inside a Meso-American open grave and instructed Hans Breder, her then collaborator and lover, to cover her naked body in market-bought flowers:

The thing that really struck me about the Mexican site, was the fact that they were overgrown with grass, and bushes and things [...]. It just seemed to me it was nature's reclaiming of this thing, this site, taking over. And I wanted to get in touch with my body. So I went out and bought a bunch of flowers in the market [...] and set

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similarly working from a critical standpoint outside the conventional art world confines via a direct, personal connection with environment that Lucy Lippard called "communication between the real artist and the real world" (in her letter, 'To Whom it May Concern' of May 31, 1973, in support of Simmonds' *La Placita/Project Uphill* which proposed to create a community earthwork in a city park <http://www.charles-simonds.com/texts/letters/lippard.pdf> Accessed November 11, 2018). Tufnell describes Simmonds' *Birth*, 1970 as "[...] a raw, primal landscape of mud and earth. Something seems to move under the surface and then a figure (again, the artist) gradually emerges, naked and covered head to foot in clay. Golem-like, a creature born out of the land itself, the artist is thus explicitly identified with its materials and meanings". Tufnell, *Land Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 62. Simmonds stated: "*Birth*: In 1970 I buried myself in earth and was reborn from it. [...] I'm interested in the earth and myself, or my body and the earth, what happens when they become entangled with each other and all the things they include emblematically or metaphorically; like my body being everyone's body and the earth being where everybody lives. [...] In my own personal mythology I was born from the earth. [...] To leave the art world is viewed as going to an absolutely barren desert. From my standpoint to leave the art world is to go from a prison into the most richly textured jungle." Simmonds, 'Microcosm to Macrocosm, Fantasy World to Real World', interview with Lucy R. Lippard, *Artforum* 12, February 1974, 36, 39. Simmonds' *Birth*, 1971, 35 chromogenic colour plates, 16.5 x 11.6cm, and instructions for a 25.4 x 213.4cm installation can be seen at <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56186> Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>176</sup> Mendieta, quoted in Stephanie Rosenthal, 'Ana Mendieta: Traces' in Rosenthal, ed. and curator, *Ana Mendieta: Traces*, catalogue for the exhibition, Hayward Gallery, London, September 24 - December 15, 2013 (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 11.

<sup>177</sup> Rosenthal describes Ana Mendieta's first of the *Silueta* series, *Imagen de Yagul*, 1973: "Mendieta lay down in one of the open graves in Yagul and instructed her partner, Hans Breder, to cover her body with flowers that she had bought at the market". Rosenthal, 'Ana Mendieta: Traces', 10.

<sup>178</sup> Rosenthal, 'Ana Mendieta: Traces', 10, 19. Discovered by archaeologists in the 1960s, Yagul was declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2010. This site of pre-Hispanic significance, a 500AD Zapotec settlement, includes pre-historic caves where rock-art of hunter-gatherers and the earliest evidence of maize domestication were discovered. "The cultural landscape of the prehistoric caves of Yagul demonstrates the link between man and nature that gave origin to the domestication of plants in North America, thus allowing the rise of Mesoamerican civilisations". <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1352> Accessed November 11, 2018.



it up. It was a tableau, but just set up [...]. Actually, the way I really thought about it was having nature take over the body the same way that it had taken over these symbols of past civilisations.<sup>179</sup>

Although the grave in which Mendieta lay was essentially an open, tray-like space in the ground, her action had a very different meaning from that of Hawkes. Hawkes was using the connection she felt with a small piece of hard ground in central London to think about her writing about the land, “to ponder these recollections lying in darkness in the empty tray of my garden”.<sup>180</sup> Mendieta lay down in an ancient tomb, creating an artwork, which she termed a tableau, concerning nature and rebirth.<sup>181</sup> The image of the grave containing Mendieta’s body that appeared as a source for living flowers recalls the beliefs of her Latin American ancestors that associated death with fecundity. In *Imagen de Yagul*, Mendieta was returning to the Earth Mother, an example of how she searched for reconnection with her roots throughout the *Siluetas* series:

I have been carrying out a dialogue between the landscape and my female body [...]. I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth-body sculptures I become one with the earth [...]. I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body. This obsessive act of reasserting my ties with the earth is really [a] reactivation of primeval beliefs [in] an omnipresent female force.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Rosenthal, ‘Ana Mendieta: Traces’, 10.

<sup>180</sup> This line opens the final chapter, repeating the previously quoted image that begins the book. Hawkes, *A Land*, 193.

<sup>181</sup> A ‘tableau’ can be defined as “a painting or photograph in which characters are arranged for picturesque or dramatic effect and appear absorbed and completely unaware of the existence of the viewer”. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/t/tableau> Accessed November 15, 2018. The term was coined by French eighteenth century philosopher, writer and art critic Denis Diderot, who co-created along with Jean D’Alambert, *L’Encyclopédie*, an overview of the arts and industry in Western Europe, between 1761 and 1772. As she stated in the above quote, Mendieta made this particular ‘earth-body-work’ while conscious of the set-up of a tableau, a painting-like scene, and referenced a term in the history of painting. Rosenthal confirms that throughout her practice, Mendieta clearly differentiated between tableau and performance works. Rosenthal, ‘Ana Mendieta: Traces’, 10. My research project is about a painting process in which my experiments have referenced traditional, historical components of painting as a medium and discipline. The fact that *Imagen de Yagul* references the ‘tableau’ is useful as an example of how another ground-based artwork might link to previous painting conventions. However, I mention Diderot only briefly to explain Mendieta’s reference. Otherwise, a full inclusion would link this project to the eighteenth century French discourse on aesthetics and Diderot’s placing great importance on the sensations evoked by an artwork in the viewer: “First touch me, astonish me, tear me to pieces, make me shudder, weep and tremble, make me angry; then soothe my eyes if you can”. *Ibid.*, 89. This has not been my concern while undertaking the painting experiments.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. The message of this declaration repeats throughout Mendieta’s statements and manifestos, for example, as quoted in Charles Merewether, ‘From Inscription to Dissolution: An Essay on Expenditure in the Work of Ana Mendieta’, in Gloria Moure, ed. *Ana Mendieta*. On the occasion of

Although there is often bodily engagement with the ground in the GPEs, my research is not in-line with Mendieta's motivations. Mendieta was seeking to reconnect with a primeval source and to "assert [her] emotional ties to the earth and conceptualise culture".<sup>183</sup> I have investigated the concept of grounding in the history of painting combined with an experimental-analytical engagement with a particular piece of land in France with which I have a lived relationship. This land is also significant due to its importance in the history of art. My engagement with specific areas of land and the physical grounds within them has been part of a process during which I have experimented with the specificity of painting in terms of its traditional components, functions such as figure-ground, and certain formulae of paint-making. I have explored an engagement with the ground in terms of: a literal use of the earth's surface as material in the GPEs; my physical connection with the ground while investigating pigment-carrier possibilities (e.g. *Groundsuit* and *Groundsocks*); and an exploration of the figure-ground function in painting that has involved a physical closeness between my body, the experiment and the ground. I have not sought a connection with the earth as described by Mendieta. Another essential difference is in terms of documentation. Mendieta's *Siluetas* happened once on specific sites and were therefore viewed in photographic form. The photographs and other documentation of Mendieta's *Siluetas* were presented as artworks in their own right. The iPhone images I have taken while carrying out the GPEs have always been integral to my practice but for the purposes of documentation, reflection and analysis. I have used the iPhone camera as a tool to record my immersion in the experiments in order to produce documentation of a process rather than to use any of the images as autonomous artworks. This method has enabled a recall of each GPE and an analysis of the experimental process. The Image book at the front of this volume presents the visual documentation of my research project.

Hawkes develops a strong sense of ground throughout *A Land*, consistently leading the story with descriptions of the land-based materials that have fuelled, enabled and inspired humankind's progress. Having sped through creation, Hawkes pauses her narration to write in detail about the once close relationship between people and specific types of rock across Britain.<sup>184</sup> This forms the seventh chapter, 'Digression on Rocks, Soils, and Men' in which

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the exhibition *Ana Mendieta*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, July 23 - October 13, 1996. (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, S.A., 1996), 107, 108.

<sup>183</sup> Ana Mendieta, in Moure, *Ana Mendieta*, 182-183.

<sup>184</sup> Running throughout the chapter is the crucial fact that the relationship between our development and use of the land works both ways: "[...] the Carboniferous rocks may have been well adapted to the character of the Victorian Age, but then the character of the Victorian Age would not have been the same without the Carboniferous rocks". Hawkes constantly creates this sense of return, which has influenced my thinking about a sense of grounding. Hawkes, *A Land*, 104.

examples of this relationship emphasise Hawkes' call for a return to an awareness of our earthy origins and early connection with the land. The entire chapter is about the 'intimate relationship between men and stone' and was originally titled 'Stone and Soil' in Hawkes' first handwritten draft.<sup>185</sup> Hawkes describes why and how we have used, in terms of their geological origins and physical qualities including density, resilience and colour, various ancient, ground-based materials such as granite, slate, alabaster, marble, limestone and chalk. For example: "Another stone of high individuality, formed just as the Keuper lakes were giving way to the Liassic sea, was to appeal to the inconstant eye of man [...]. Gases seeping through Keuper mud have given Cotham Marble the curious markings that look like avenues of trees in heavy summer foliage".<sup>186</sup> 'Digression on Rocks, Soils, and Men' has been useful while considering the significance of materials in the GPEs. Via Hawkes' descriptions, my engagement with the ground in various literal and metaphorical senses in the GPEs has linked with our long human history of connecting with ground-originating materials via creative processes. *A Land* has become a grounding object when Hawkes' descriptions have resonated with, or given meaning to, my experience while immersed in the experiments. Certain descriptions have resonated more strongly, such as the following example from the same chapter in which Hawkes expresses a sense of unity as the beginnings of life co-exist in our present relationships with materials:

It is hardly possible to express in prose the extraordinary awareness of the unity of past and present, of mind and matter, of man and man's origin [...]. Once when I was in Moore's studio and saw one of his reclining figures with the shaft of a belemnite exposed in the thigh, my vision of this unity was overwhelming. I felt that the squid in which life created that shape, even while it still swam in distant seas was involved in this encounter with the sculptor; that it lay hardening in the mud until the time when consciousness was ready to find it out and imagination to incorporate it in a new form.<sup>187</sup>

Here Hawkes expresses a sense of unity that repeats in her writing, in an example of her uncategorisable, poetic approach to explaining our connection to the land from which we have developed and used materials of shared, early origins. My visits to the Jacquetta

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<sup>185</sup> Large notebook, S.O. Book 129, issue of 1943, 33 x 21cm, handwritten text of *A Land*, much corrected, front page dated 'Feby 10<sup>th</sup> 1949'. Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, University of Bradford, Special Collections, J. B. Priestley Library, 1/27.

<sup>186</sup> Hawkes, *A Land*, 108-109.

<sup>187</sup> Hawkes was referring to twentieth-century English sculptor Henry Moore. Another example of a description that resonated particularly with my experience of the GPEs: "It is curious to think that granite and basalt, with H<sub>2</sub>O, N, and CO<sub>2</sub>, the water and early atmosphere of earth, have made all the material paraphernalia with which man now surrounds himself, the skyscraper, the wine-glass, the vacuum cleaner, jewels, the mirror into which I look. And the woman who looks? Where did it come from, this being behind the eyes, this thing that asks? How had this been gleaned from a landscape of harsh rock and empty seas?" Hawkes, *A Land*, 94, 19.



Hawkes Archive, held at the University of Bradford's Special Collections in the J. B. Priestley library, enabled a study of original items specifically relating to *A Land*. The uncategorisable quality and intention of *A Land* was confirmed by others and in Hawkes' own letters. It is clear from the reviews that Hawkes' uniquely crafted, condensed vision of the creation of Britain communicated the sense of connection and unity she sought to evoke.<sup>188</sup> Found in the archive, Hawkes' original, hand-corrected, typewritten draft letter to British historian, Professor George Macaulay Trevelyan<sup>189</sup> requesting a foreword to *A Land* described its originality:

*A Land* stands out, partly because of its own imperfections, still more (I like to think) because being a genuinely original book it falls between all accepted categories of publication. I am sure *A Land* needs all the help it can get.<sup>190</sup>

Trevelyan's poetic approach to writing history suited Hawkes' unconventional, creative approach to the sciences of geology and archaeology. Hawkes' approach to writing *A Land* coincided with Trevelyan's view that facts should be presented imaginatively: "[...] I believe it contains scattered through it a number of original ideas [...] and above all that it represents a method which must be developed by many people more inspired than myself. That is to say the use of scientific facts for essentially imaginative purposes".<sup>191</sup> Hawkes continued in the same letter:

It is an attempt, rather a desperate one perhaps, to evoke the idea of the creation of a land, its people and their culture as a single process [...]. At the same time I try to suggest the emergence of consciousness in the human mind to the point at which it turns back to discover its own origins through archaeology, palaeontology [...]. The consciousness of the people is also turned towards their land which they give a new reality as they recognise first (dimly), its shape and character, name its natural

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<sup>188</sup> For example: H. J. Massingham notes the book's "absorption entirely with earth", its "poetic earthiness", Hawkes' emphasis on "the intuitive faculties which draw their nourishment from the earth" and "her personal vision down into the depths of the earth's stony matrix". H. J. Massingham, 'Sermons in Stones', press cutting review of *A Land* in *Spectator*, June 15, 1951, 725, 2/4/1/37. "She sees it all as if it were happening now [...]. She sees the grains of chalk accumulating on the floors of the Cretaceous Seas, like a 30-million-year fall of snow [...]. Consciousness, she believes, must now search back to its beginnings, must acknowledge its wholeness with the natural world [...]" Author and date unrecorded, 'The Shaping of Britain', press cutting review of *A Land*, 2/4/1/41.

<sup>189</sup> George Macaulay Trevelyan's significant work, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries* (London, 1942) is noted as poetic for its time when history writing was becoming more scientific. [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/historians/trevelyan\\_george.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/historians/trevelyan_george.html) Accessed February 18, 2018.

<sup>190</sup> Hawkes in her draft letter to Professor George Macaulay Trevelyan, asking him to write a foreword to *A Land*. Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, University of Bradford, Special Collections, J. B. Priestley Library, 2/4/1/11.

<sup>191</sup> Hawkes, draft letter to Trevelyan, asking him to write a foreword to *A Land*. Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, University of Bradford, Special Collections, J. B. Priestley Library, 2/4/1/11.

features, link themselves to it with myths and deities, and finally portray in maps, and express through poetry and painting.<sup>192</sup>

Hawkes' intention with *A Land* was to create a condensed narrative, showing how the early development of humankind's connection with the land is embedded in our consciousness and echoes in our more recent creative activities. Throughout the book, Hawkes clearly and creatively describes our connection with the land in terms of our use of ground-originating materials which has shaped our development. The GPEs during the second and third stages of the enquiry focused increasingly on the significance of ground(s) in various literal, physical, metaphorical and historical senses. Hawkes' focus on the fundamental importance of our use of ground-based materials as key to our connection with the land resonated with my literal use of ground on and from specific sites. Hawkes' uncategorisable approach to recounting our connection with the land via our use of ground-originating materials could be described as a form of poetics of archaeology, in which a scientific discipline has been artistically interpreted or adapted in a very particular way. Not only have Hawkes' descriptions of our age-long use of materials resonated with my use of literal grounds in the GPEs, but also her hybrid way of writing that is hard to categorise as a discipline has chimed with my experimental process incorporating GTM coding. My approach to trialling GTM coding (introduced in the previous chapter and thoroughly explained in the next) could be compared to Hawkes' use of 'the findings of archaeology for purposes altogether unscientific'. I have taken a specific part of GTM, a social sciences qualitative research method, and trialled it artistically as a structure to investigate thoroughly a painting process focusing on the significance of ground.

### Lascaux

My use of *A Land* has informed my understanding of Hawkes' discussion of Lascaux in her lectures, the original copies of which I studied during the visits to the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive at the University of Bradford. Lascaux became an important site of the GPEs in the second and third stages of the enquiry. During the latter two research periods in France in 2016 and 2017, I made several visits to Montignac, Périgord, where Lascaux I was discovered on September 12, 1940.<sup>193</sup> The chance discovery by Marcel Ravidat (his dog, Robot, was the first to find the hole) and three fellow teenagers, revealed one of the most significant Upper Palaeolithic galleries of cave paintings, renowned for its unusually high

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> The teenagers and their dog discovered the entrance on September 8, 1940, and later returned with their teacher on September 12, 1940, when they entered the cave, discovering the paintings.

concentration of images within a considered composition working with the rhythm of the walls. The 18,600-year-old paintings of the original cave, Lascaux I, were closed to the public in 1963 due to mould caused by exhaled carbon dioxide.<sup>194</sup> Lascaux II, the highly accurate replica of eighty percent of the original is located two hundred metres from Lascaux I. Lascaux II opened in 1983 following ten years of planning and creation.

In the second stage of the enquiry in 2016, I used Lascaux hill as a ground for the experiment group *Groundsocks*, which I introduced in the previous chapter. The motivation for making a set of *Groundsocks* at Lascaux (Image book 149-150) was a combination of an ongoing preoccupation with metaphorical and literal explorations of the ground of painting at a site considered significant in painting's histories, and the paradox of ordinary ground covering a hallowed 'birthplace of art'.<sup>195</sup> In 2016, I rubbed my white-socked feet in the mud of the area above where the Lascaux I paintings remained closed-off, creating a set of *Groundsocks*. In 2017 during the third stage of the enquiry, I returned to Lascaux with the *Groundsocks* made during the Dartmoor conference as explained in the previous chapter. That same year, in the final experiments of the *GPEFs 1-30* group, I used the ground above Lascaux I in various ways: I dug up soil and ochre (*GPEFs 26-28*, Image book pages 107-109); rubbed emulsion-primed MDF supports on areas of ground, including spots that had been marked by ground-keepers with spray paint (*GPEF 25*, Image book page 106); and explored figure-ground ambiguities (*GPEF 24*, Image book page 105). The ochre dug from the ground above the original cave was used in *GPEF 27* (Image book page 108). I used the same ochre in the practical analysis of the *GPEFs 1-30* that continued on return to the Huddersfield studio (explained fully in the following chapter). The interplay of the relationships between the site of Lascaux, the ground of Lascaux both literally and

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<sup>194</sup> The literature available onsite does not appear to reach an agreement on the age of the Lascaux paintings. Estimates range from 15,000 to 20,000 years across various sources. The paintings were made with mineral pigments and therefore could not be carbon dated due to the lack of organic matter on the walls. The following appears to offer the most exact information: "At the end of the 1950s [...] the cave was thought to have been occupied between 15,000 and 17,000 years ago. But in 2000, from samplings of a spear made out of reindeer antler [...] scientists set the date at 18,600 [...]". Jean-Michel Geneste, Tristan Hordé and Chantal Tanet, *Lascaux: A Work of Memory*, trans. David and Nicole Ball (Périgueux: Éditions Fanlac, 2003), 50. Older cave paintings have been found in France and elsewhere: the cave paintings of Le Pech Merle in Cabrerets are 25,000 years old, and Chauvet Cave in Combe d'Arc, discovered by Jean-Marie Chauvet on December 18, 1994, 34,000 years old.

<sup>195</sup> Georges Bataille named Lascaux 'The Birth of Art' in 'Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art', trans. Austryn Wainhouse, that introduced Albert Skira's series *The Great Centuries of Painting* (Switzerland: Éditions Skira, 1955). Also see Bataille's lecture on Lascaux, 'Lecture, January 18, 1955', in *The Cradle of Humanity, Prehistoric Art and Culture*, ed. Stuart Kendall, trans. Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 87-104, which describes a phenomenological experience of Lascaux and its 'timelessness'.



metaphorically, the material and the analysis of the experiment displayed in the Huddersfield studio is explained in the context of Robert Smithson's *Site – Non-site* works in the first chapter. Hawkes referred to the Lascaux artists using the ochre that they would have extracted from the same area of Lascaux hill in her later book, *Man on Earth*:

These early Europeans in a world where, quite simply, there had never been art, took manganese and haematite and ochre [...] and painted [...] superb portraits of the wild beasts among which they found themselves. This is originality unequalled and almost beyond understanding. It is as though a beggar wandered into a desert by night and returned bearing pearls, wine, and a lighted lamp.<sup>196</sup>

Lascaux continues to attract and affect people, and it appears that interest has consistently increased since the opening of Lascaux II in 1983. American archaeologist Leslie Van Gelder has written extensively on cave art and the philosophy of place. Van Gelder has studied the lines she calls 'finger flutings' made by Palaeolithic people with their hands on the walls of prehistoric caves in France, Spain and Australia, focusing on an identification of each individual mark-maker. In her essay, 'In the Narrows', Van Gelder quotes the guide who led her visit to Lascaux II: "Even here, in the replica, sometimes, if we stop here for a moment too long, someone in the group will begin to cry. I do not know why [...]"<sup>197</sup> I do not include an analysis of Lascaux in terms of the historical discourse regarding the original artwork, the copy, and the aura.<sup>198</sup> While it is impossible not to consider Lascaux's particular original-replica situation that contributes to the intrigue of the place, I have not sought to investigate this matter specifically in my research enquiry. However, the inaccessibility of Lascaux I was a crucial factor in the later *GPEFs 1-30*, in that the otherwise ordinary ground above the original cave contained a certain significance as a cover concealing the important paintings underneath. The figure-ground ambiguities within Lascaux IV have affected my experience of Lascaux as a site that I have linked with my own figure-ground explorations. An example of a figure-ground ambiguity I experienced in Lascaux IV entailed the new museum's method of allowing visitors to view the cave paintings on different, dislocated sections of replica cave wall. Having been guided through the full replica cave, visitors are led to the largest exhibition space in the museum in which separate pieces of seemingly

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<sup>196</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, *Man on Earth* (London: Readers Union, The Cresset Press, 1956), 108.

<sup>197</sup> Leslie Van Gelder, 'In the Narrows: Lascaux II and the Geography of Hope', in *The Wayfarer*, vol. 4, issue 2 (autumn 2015). Blog essay published September 19, 2015. <https://thewayfarer.homeboundpublications.com/in-the-narrows-lascaux-ii-and-the-geography-of-hope/> Accessed February 24, 2018.

<sup>198</sup> German cultural critic Walter Benjamin proposed that the aura of the artwork was devalued by mechanical reproduction in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1935. An analysis of the phenomenological impact and replica originality of Lascaux II and IV could potentially contest this.

light, fibreglass copies of cave-wall surface sections are suspended and dramatically lit. I was fascinated by the spectacle of the installation and activity in the room as a whole, as the many visitors focused their attention solely on the illusion of the images of the paintings projected onto the surface of the strange, floating, sculptural forms. These forms could be seen to represent ground (cave wall, underground mass) becoming figure (above ground, spot-lit sculptural installation around which people move and participate). A complete discussion of my experience of Lascaux IV would require emphasis on the viewers' perception of image in order to make differentiations fully between figure and ground, which is not the focus of my research. All these considerations contribute to the significance of Lascaux as a fascinating node of possible theories and debates which, combined with the personal significance of the place, led to my selecting Lascaux as a ground for the GPEs. Hawkes' writing on Lascaux contributed largely to this combination of considerations which I have deliberated while exploring a sense of grounding via the GPEs.

Hawkes wrote her lectures on Lascaux in a similarly cross-disciplinary style to *A Land*. In the 'Lascaux' lecture of 1948, Hawkes argued that the paintings were artistic products of a complete union between creative humans and their environment, 'in an age when art and life, people and nature were inseparable'.<sup>199</sup> The Lascaux lectures echoed Hawkes' call for an understanding of unity and connection that she sought to evoke throughout *A Land*:

These people lived among animals and wholly dependent upon them [...]. They wished for a kind of communion with the animals, a re-identification with the natural world, the universe about them [...]. The drawings were a kind of communion, as art has always been [...] in that uncomplicated life, with its to us almost unimaginable unity [...].<sup>200</sup>

Hawkes' view of the Lascaux paintings was unconventional at the time, as she focused on this sense of unity as the force behind their production. The museums that house Lascaux replicas II, III and IV focus the visitor experience on the images of the animals and the symbols. Hawkes' understanding of Lascaux reached beyond an appreciation of the images, although like most, she also noted their remarkably executed attributes. Summed up in

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<sup>199</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, 'Lascaux', original typewritten and hand-corrected lecture script, dated 1948, place of presentation unknown. Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, University of Bradford, Special Collections, J. B. Priestley Library, 4/1/3.

<sup>200</sup> This excerpt from Hawkes' 'Lascaux' lecture coincides with the following passage from *A Land*: "I think that we are returning to an awareness of our unity with our surroundings, but with an awareness of a much more exalted kind than anything that has existed before. The primitive tribesman, to go no further back than the early days of our own species, was still so deeply sunk in nature that he hardly distinguished himself from his environment [...]." Hawkes, *A Land*, 41.

Hawkes' various writings was the importance of Lascaux as a place where early art and a very close connection with the land converged most directly.

As explained in the previous chapter, *Groundworks*, a body of work I exhibited in August 2016, included findings from the GPEs that I had carried out on Lascaux hill during the second period of research in France, June 2 - July 8, 2016. Several of the *GPEFs 1-30*, the self-contained experiment group realised during the final period of research in France, June 11 - July 20, 2017, also took place on Lascaux hill and used materials originating from that site. This return to the site later in the enquiry enabled further experiments exploring grounding within the more focused structure of the *GPEFs 1-30* project. The resonance of the site of Lascaux continued to increase throughout the research enquiry.

#### Other projects that have referenced *A Land* and how my approach differs

Extracts and archive items of *A Land*, and elements of Hawkes' biography have been included in two relatively recent, contemporary art works. Kate Morrell's response to the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive included an artist's book, *Index: A Land. Fragments from the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive*, 2014, produced from the original, hand-written index compiled by Hawkes and her son. The book accompanied an exhibition *Pots before Words*, "a series of new object-based works and drawings, examining the issues which arise when interpreting or translating from an incomplete or inaccurate record".<sup>201</sup> Morrell's practice "interlaces drawing, text, sculpture, book works and archival research. Her work is centred on forgotten histories and instances of amateur and inaccurate interpretations of historical material" which leads her to "engage with disciplines outside of the traditional remit of the arts, including archaeology and geology".<sup>202</sup> My interest in *A Land* is due to Hawkes' descriptions of unity, connection, timelessness, and authenticity, to which we are linked via materials. I have studied the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive in order to search for Hawkes-Lascaux connections, to attempt an understanding of Lascaux as a ground of the GPEs from Hawkes' particular perspective rather than making an artwork in response to the archive directly as in Morell's work.

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<sup>201</sup> Kate Morrell on her solo exhibition, *Pots before words*, in response to the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, Gallery II, University of Bradford, April 10 - May 22, 2014. [http://katemorrell.com/?/projects/Pots\\_before\\_words/](http://katemorrell.com/?/projects/Pots_before_words/) Accessed February 21, 2018.

<sup>202</sup> Morrell, <http://katemorrell.com/?/projects/About/> Accessed February 21, 2018.



Another project used the original, uncategorisable nature of Hawkes' approach as the historical context for addressing the 'ephemeral performance works',<sup>203</sup> within the 'landscapes as practice' of Annabel Nicolson, Carlyle Reedy, and Marie Yates. Active in London in the 1960s and 1970s, the curators argue that their work remains 'outside art historical discourse'.<sup>204</sup> The two-part publication that accompanied the exhibition, *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text* (the title is taken from one of Hawkes' notebooks held in the archive) states: "It was a desire to excavate the work of Hawkes that provided the motivation for this exhibition, not least how such a prominent figure in pre- and post-war cultural life had become so marginal".<sup>205</sup> In his review of the exhibition and echoing the early reviews mentioned previously in this chapter, Jonathan Watts mentions the curators' understanding of *A Land* as "difficult to define, fusing art, geology, archaeology and literature into a single continuous process the durational existence of Britain [...]. It is this resistance to easy categorisation, concern for process, and understanding of physical and cultural landscape that links her with Nicholson, Reedy and Yates".<sup>206</sup>

In order to get nearer to a definition of grounding and differentiate my research practice from certain Land Art practices of the 1960s and 1970s, I refer to the works featured in the two publications of the project, *The sun went in [...]*. Two works made in 1975 by Annabel Nicholson, artist, filmmaker and performer are useful to explain how my engagement with the ground in certain GPEs I made in France in 2016, which culminated in *Groundworks*, had motivations that differ from those of two film performances by Nicholson. *Sweeping the Sea* was a performance by Nicholson using a large broom to sweep slowly towards the

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<sup>203</sup> Letter of February 3, 2016, from Cherie Silver, Chelsea Arts Club Trust Research Fellow, to Alison Cullingford, Special Collections Librarian, Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford, which is attached to the publication held at the Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, for the exhibition *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text*, curated by Karen Di Franco and Elisa Kay, January 27 - March 4, 2016, CHELSEA Space, London. For further information including images, see the CHELSEA Space website exhibition archive: <http://www.chelseaspace.org/archive/landscape-info.html> Accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>204</sup> Karen Di Franco, foreword to the first publication that accompanied the exhibition, *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text*, 1. However, this is not quite true, as Marie Yates' work appears in the chapter 'Screening the Seventies: sexuality and representation in feminist practice – a Brechtian perspective', in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: femininity, feminism and histories of art* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>205</sup> Karen Di Franco, *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text*, January 27 - March 4, 2016, 1.

<sup>206</sup> Jonathan P. Watts, review of *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text*, Frieze Critic's Guide London, [http://www.chelseaspace.org/images/pdf/landscape/frieze\\_review.pdf](http://www.chelseaspace.org/images/pdf/landscape/frieze_review.pdf) Accessed February 23, 2018.

incoming tide.<sup>207</sup> In *Combing the Fields*, Nicholson used a large, handmade comb to rake frost-covered grass leaving her efforts visible in the landscape.<sup>208</sup> As explained in 'The Practice-led Enquiry', the *Groundsuit* experiment was driven by the need to investigate the traditional composition of paint as carrier and pigment (e.g., traditionally, an egg yolk solution as in tempera painting or an oil in oil painting as the carrier, and a powder pigment). Claiming that paint could consist of any carrier and any pigment, I chose to wear a white linen suit as the 'carrier', and the mud of the Giverny carpark as the 'pigment'.<sup>209</sup> To re-summarise the process, having rolled in the mud on Giverny ground, a place prominent in painting's histories, I transported the suit to Puysegney (the site of the three periods of research undertaken in France each year), and left it hanging to dry for several days. On a dry, still day, I put the Giverny mud-encrusted suit back on, stood over a large, plastic sheet, brushed the mud off with my hands and then swept up the dust to keep it in a Parfait jam-jar. The sweeping was not the work, but part of a series of connecting events that attempted to investigate particular grounding circumstances and methods required for the collection and formation of a significant, painting material, while exploring carrier-pigment possibilities. The jar of Giverny dirt, now in the Huddersfield studio, resonates with the investment in the specific process that was principally about thinking through an element of painting – one version of the endless possibilities of making paint and immersing myself fully in the method - rather than performance or emulating past sweepings of the landscape.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Annabel Nicholson, *Sweeping the Sea*, Southampton Festival of Performance Art, 1975, mentioned in the first publication of *The sun went in, the fire went out: landscapes in film, performance and text*, 10.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Giverny in Normandy, France, was the home of French Impressionist painter and gardener, Claude Monet for over forty years until his death in 1926. I arrived at Giverny on June 2, 2016 when heavy rain had caused severe flooding in Paris. The swell from the river Seine travelled west and affected my visit to Giverny, which sits near the right bank of the river only fifty miles from Paris. Despite having entered the gardens successfully and completed *Groundbook* and other *Groundworks* on June 3 on-site, the whole museum and grounds were closed on June 4, resulting in my carrying out the first part of *Groundsuit* in the carpark rather than the garden itself as previously intended.

<sup>210</sup> Sweeping was an activity that British artist Alec Shepley documented along with other 'ritualistic pre-working studio tidy-up' activities to 'get the chaos back in the work'. This was part of Shepley's move away from the production of finished paintings, that "were not representative of the whole process, and not revealing enough of the 'situation' when and where it was made", to installation art practice. Alec Shepley, 1998, *'Untitled' Studio Activity*, (various materials, dimensions vary), Winnipeg, Canada. Alec Shepley, 'Installation art practice and the 'fluctuating frame'', PhD diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2000: 267, 275. While I have not investigated installation art in this research project, revealing the entire process has been a fundamental concern. I refer to Shepley in the following chapter when I explain my artistic interpretation of GTM coding.

A brief comparison to Marie Yates' work can similarly help to differentiate the research practice from another area of Land Art practices of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>211</sup> *The Field Workings*, 1971-74,<sup>212</sup> discussed in the first publication of *The sun went in [...]*, involved journeys, "to discover remote places off the beaten track where our presence would be fleeting and unnoticed",<sup>213</sup> where Yates made "minimalist object installations on arrival but which were always removed and taken away. The main intention was to document an event that did not happen as it were – epiphanously: we went there, we arrived, we left, the place remained the same, as if we had never been there".<sup>214</sup> Yates' chosen places were open and isolated, so that traditional components of painting such as viewpoints of maker and observer could be detached and dispersed:

However my own image was never in the picture [...]. This was because by that time I was beginning to question the hierarchical relation between artist and observer and the so-called correct place of view assigned in traditional painting [...]. The image or presence of a woman in these photographic records would have changed the whole event – the image would have transformed the event or non-event into a problem [...]. So the Field Working Project became for me a battle over representation and the construction of meaning [...].<sup>215</sup>

Had Yates been in the picture, the whole point of disorienting viewpoints and relative positions in traditional representational painting would have been lost. While Yates removed the personal, my presence in the GPEs is central and has not been edited out, censored or deliberately omitted from the documentation even when it is not directly visible in the process images.<sup>216</sup> It has always been important throughout the enquiry to immerse myself as much as possible, to record from within that immersion, throughout the process of carrying out, documenting, and analysing the GPEs. As previously mentioned, the documentation has been produced to record and analyse the ongoing painting process. As I have sought to capture as much as possible, I have inevitably appeared in the images. This recording of my

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<sup>211</sup> Yates has been described as a painter, an environmental sculptor and landscape artist, and later a conceptual artist addressing representation and sexual difference. Marie Yates, artist website <http://www.users.otenet.gr/~myates/biographymarieyates.html> Accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>212</sup> Yates, *The Field Working Papers, 1971-73*, exhibited in the solo exhibition, *Recent Field Workings*, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, 1973, and *The Field Workings, 1971-74*, Arnolfini, Bristol, 1973. Later works in a similar series in *Elements of Landscape*, 1974, Arts Council Touring Exhibition, and group show, *Artists Overland*, Arnolfini, Bristol, including Richard Long, 1975.

<sup>213</sup> Yates, *The Field Workings* section of her website: <http://www.users.otenet.gr/~myates/thefieldworkingsproject1971.html> Accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> "In the writings that I made in situ, the "I" was often present, but this presence was written out in those later revisions to remove too much of that which was personal - the subject". Ibid.



presence is incidental and later more deliberate: my feet are present in the process images that captured my small surrounding area of experiment activity from above while immersed; and I have included my feet consciously in the digital photographs of the *GPEFs 1-30* image grids printed on selected grounds (grids-on-grounds), taken before I attached them to the uppermost area of the wall in the Huddersfield studio (Image book pages 115-129). The stages at the mid-point of the project's progression, when I attempted distancing techniques to test GTM coding ideas objectively (discussed fully in the next chapter), showed that my subjectivity was material to use rather than anything problematic or superfluous to detach, distance or eliminate.

I have provided examples of Hawkes' writing in *A Land* to demonstrate how her book became useful as a grounding object during my working through grounding via the GPEs. I have underpinned these examples with an explanation of Hawkes' uncategorisable and hybrid approach, informed by my review of original archive items, which fits with my own approach to investigating a concept of painting. Having explained how *A Land* resonates with the sense of grounding I have explored in my research, I have demonstrated how Hawkes' lectures on Lascaux, in her unconventional way, have increased the significance of the site as a ground selected for the GPEs. I have differentiated selected GPEs from previous Land Art practices, using examples of artworks of the 1960s and 1970s that have been re-examined in recent contemporary art projects using *A Land* as context and material for appropriation. In the following chapter I describe my experimental development of methods to which the GPEs have remained central.

## Chapter 4. Methods

In this chapter I explain why and how I have trialled a specific part of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) known as coding. I have consulted a range of GTM resources in order to grasp the principles of the method as a whole, and to understand coding in its original context. This has provided a basis of understanding for my interpretation of GTM coding for artistic research and later, has enabled me to identify the differences between my artistic use and conventional forms usually found in the social sciences. I refer to texts relevant to my enquiry by the main GTM authors. These include the founding and subsequent books of the 1960s and 1970s by GTM's co-origins, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. I have studied guides produced in the last thirty years, including those from the later partnership of Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, as well as texts by Kathy Charmaz and also Cathy Urquhart. In addition, I have referred to texts by Antony Bryant including his most recent book published in 2017, and an anthology of GTM contributors' essays co-edited by Charmaz and Bryant, published originally in 2006. Having provided a brief background of GTM referring to these main authors, I describe examples of how other researchers have used GTM previously in art research and how I differ in my approach. The final chapter, 'Conclusion', presents my discoveries as an artist having trialled coding, a specific, characteristic part of GTM within an artistic, experimental process.

### Clarification of terms: GTM and coding

It is necessary to clarify the difference between the terms 'Grounded Theory Method (GTM)' and 'grounded theory'. GTM is the qualitative research *method*. A 'grounded *theory*' is (usually) the resulting product of employing GTM, the method. I use the acronym GTM since I believe it is the correct way of referring to the method, and my practice-led investigation has trialled a specific, essential part of the method: coding.<sup>217</sup> My aim has been to expose, focus and analyse iteratively my practice-led process rather than to produce any intended outcome. I have not set out to create a 'grounded theory'.

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<sup>217</sup> Some GTM authors do refer to the method as 'Grounded Theory' which I believe can lead to confusion. It is of primary importance to clarify that I am using part of the *method*. As Antony Bryant states in his latest book: "[...] the term *grounded theory* is something of a misnomer if applied to the method as opposed to the outcome; hence my preference for grounded theory *method* and the acronym GTM". Antony Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing. Pragmatism in Research Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xv. Cathy Urquhart also makes this distinction and uses the acronym GTM. Cathy Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research, A Practical Guide* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 2.

Coding is GTM's means of analysis and its fundamental, identifying component. Various coding techniques have developed since GTM's creation by Glaser and Strauss, officially publicised in 1967 with their book, *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*.<sup>218</sup> In his useful paper that maps an overview of the different models of GTM, Gary Evans states the well-known fact that "the process and methods for coding have created the highest level of debate" for researchers.<sup>219</sup> The debates about coding distinctions between the main GTM models, re-modelling concerns, mixing of methodologies, and the erosion of conceptualisation due to over-rigid coding structures, contributed to my interest in GTM.<sup>220</sup> Coding processes are constantly adapted and part of an evolving qualitative research method that is rooted in contention and forever in flux.<sup>221</sup> Despite this, the main principle of coding remains common throughout: the researcher studies her 'data' very closely, and by 'reading between the lines', applies 'codes', or labels, to ideas drawn out via this process.<sup>222</sup> I describe coding in more detail later in this chapter.

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<sup>218</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967).

<sup>219</sup> Gary L. Evans, 'A Novice Researcher's First Walk Through the Maze of Grounded Theory: Rationalisation for Classical Grounded Theory', *Grounded Theory Review, An International Journal*, issue 1 (June 2013). <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2013/06/22/a-novice-researchers-first-walk-through-the-maze-of-grounded-theory-rationalization-for-classical-grounded-theory/> Accessed June 2, 2019.

<sup>220</sup> The main models are usually identified as Glaserian-traditional, 1978, Straussian-evolved, 1990, Wuest-feminist, 1995, and Charmaz-constructivist, 2000. Cheri Fernandez, 'Guest Editorial, Themed Section', *The Grounded Theory Review*, vol. 11, issue 1 (2012): 27. The main feminist GTM text: Judith Wuest, 'Feminist Grounded Theory: An Exploration of the Congruency and Tensions between Two Traditions in Knowledge Discovery', *Sage Journals, Qualitative Health Research* (February 1, 1995).

<sup>221</sup> As Annells states in Mills and Birks' 'Essentials of grounded theory': "Grounded Theory is evolving and it is not only acceptable but also beneficial to have multiple modes of Grounded Theory from which to choose". Birks and Mills add: "Dividing grounded theory into either traditional or Glaserian grounded theory and evolved or Straussian grounded theory is not very helpful. Doing so fails to account for the subtleties and differences in grounded theory design that have developed in third, fourth and fifth moments in qualitative research. Methodologically, there are no right or wrong approaches to using grounded theory methods; however, there are differences that need to be taken into account". Birks and Mills, 'Essentials of Grounded Theory', 2010, 8.

<sup>222</sup> Cathy Urquhart's explanation of GTM coding as a social sciences qualitative research strategy for data analysis is the easiest to follow, in *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research, A Practical Guide* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 35-53. I refer to Urquhart's guide later in this chapter.



## Summary of my review of GTM literature and other resources

I provide a summary of my study of GTM resources since a complete GTM literature review is unnecessary: my research project is a practice-led investigation into a concept of painting that has developed through a process of experiments, during which a specific element of GTM has been trialled. I have not set out to investigate how GTM works, nor have I employed GTM as a qualitative research method to analyse objectively the data created by others. Furthermore, I have not analysed data in any conventional GTM way. Technically, and according to most GTM researchers, this would be impossible given that I have created all the data. I have experimented with ways of analysing my own painting experiments' field notes via coding, and discuss the key matter of being both data creator and analyst in the context of my findings described in the final chapter, 'Conclusion'. Firstly, I provide a summary of the GTM resources that informed my decision to incorporate GTM coding trials into my practice-led research methods, why trialling a GTM component suited my research enquiry, and how I carried out the coding trials.

GTM authors that describe the history of the method all agree that GTM emerged in the 1960s through the joint research on dying in hospitals by the American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss at the University of California, San Francisco. Their first book, *Awareness of Dying*, was published in 1965, and their founding book on GTM, *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* in 1967. In the late 1970s, the co-originsators went their separate ways and produced texts independently. The key texts by Glaser that I have consulted include: *Theoretical Sensitivity*, *Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*; *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs Forcing*; *Doing Formal Grounded Theory: A Proposal*; and *No Preconceptions, The Grounded Theory Dictum*.<sup>223</sup> In all these books, Glaser strongly advocates GTM's fundamental and arguably unique principle: allowing the findings (the innate and implicit concepts in the experiences and processes described by the interviewee) to emerge from the data, free from any preconceptions that a literature review completed upfront might introduce. In 1990, the text by Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* caused a disagreement between Glaser and Strauss due to

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<sup>223</sup> Barney G. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity, Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 1978); *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs Forcing* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 1992); *Doing Formal Grounded Theory: A Proposal* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 2007); and *No Preconceptions, The Grounded Theory Dictum* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 2013).

differences in the specifics of how to conduct the method.<sup>224</sup> Glaser criticised Strauss and Corbin's design in 1992, mainly for its over-rigid coding structures, with the book *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs Forcing*. Glaser disagreed with Strauss and Corbin's breaking down of the coding process into prescriptive steps within one, fixed coding paradigm.<sup>225</sup> Glaser believed that Corbin and Strauss' design limited the conceptualisation that could be achieved by allowing any of a number of overlapping, flexible coding 'families' to emerge from a completely open approach, led entirely by a sensitive and thorough connection with the data.<sup>226</sup> It is well known that a divide between the Straussian and Glaserian GTM models began at this point.<sup>227</sup>

The issues of contention in GTM's past and present, and its ever-evolving state have contributed to my interest in GTM as a long-established method in flux. I saw an opportunity to use a core part of GTM, a method designed to investigate and expose exactly what is happening inside a specific process, in my own artistic and openly-experimental way. My reading of the early texts by Glaser and Strauss both as co-originators and separate authors has enabled an understanding of the essential principles of GTM that resonated with my research aims. Texts by other GTM authors have also been crucial. I have used Strauss and Corbin's *Basics of Qualitative Research* to understand the various stages of GTM, specifically coding. Charmaz's book published in 2006, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* has also been helpful to understand GTM as a whole and coding as a constant, integral part of the method.<sup>228</sup> Charmaz co-edited a GTM staple text with Bryant, *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, originally published in

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<sup>224</sup> Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008). First published in 1990 by Sage Publications.

<sup>225</sup> "Glaser felt that to 'force' coding through one paradigm and/or down one conditional path ignored the emergent nature of GTM". Cathy Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research, A Practical Guide* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 19.

<sup>226</sup> Glaser lists 18 possible coding 'families' in the chapter 'Theoretical Coding', *Theoretical Sensitivity*, 72-81.

<sup>227</sup> Two articles that are useful for background summaries, including explanations of the differences between the Glaserian and Straussian models: Diane Walker and Florence Myrick, 'Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Process and Procedure', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol.16, no.4 (April 2006): 547-559. Gary L. Evans, 'A Novice Researcher's First Walk Through the Maze of Grounded Theory: Rationalisation for Classical Grounded Theory', *Grounded Theory Review, An International Journal*, issue 1 (June 2013). <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2013/06/22/a-novice-researchers-first-walk-through-the-maze-of-grounded-theory-rationalization-for-classical-grounded-theory/> Accessed June 2, 2019.

<sup>228</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014). Charmaz' lecture on YouTube, 'The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory', is also useful: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY1h3387txo> BSA MedSoc 2012. Accessed January 27, 2015.

2006.<sup>229</sup> This compilation of various GTM authors has been essential for grasping the different positions and perspectives of GTM fifty years since its beginning. Later in this chapter, I reference Bryant's most recent book, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing. Pragmatism in Research Practice*.<sup>230</sup> Urquhart's *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide* published in 2012 is a clear, practical guide that Urquhart produced in response to her postgraduate researchers expressing a lack of any such resource.<sup>231</sup>

I have searched for other art research theses that have used or referenced GTM. I have not discovered any currently-available research using GTM or any of its elements in a practice-led doctorate study, whereby the artist-researcher uses GTM to analyse their own practice.<sup>232</sup> British artist Alec Shepley referred to GTM briefly in his thesis, 'Installation art practice and the 'fluctuating frame'' regarding GMT's central tenet of remaining open to discoveries rather than testing existing hypotheses. In the methods chapter of his thesis, Shepley also made a brief reference to an account by Strauss and Corbin regarding "the decisions and choices facing the researcher when conceptualising a descriptive story about the central phenomenon of the study".<sup>233</sup> Shepley mentioned GTM in the context of using qualitative over quantitative analysis rather than GTM specifically. Shepley's thesis has been useful in terms of the methods used in 'separating the selves' and achieving critical distance, which I explored in stage one of the research project during the early GTM coding trials. I refer to this later. However, Shepley's description of the methods used to analyse the information gathered during his interviews with seven artists including himself did not incorporate GTM, and he did not use it as an integrated part of the process of his own practice-led investigation.

I have found two examples of painting research using GTM but the method was used to create a theory having investigated the practices of others: R. Keith Sawyer, 'How artists

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<sup>229</sup> Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (London, UK and Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007).

<sup>230</sup> Antony Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing. Pragmatism in Research Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>231</sup> Cathy Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research, A Practical Guide* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013).

<sup>232</sup> Of course, there are incidences when qualitative research designs are used generally in arts research, but not GTM coding specifically. A text where painting research and qualitative research methods overlap is Graeme Sullivan, 'Painting as Research, Create and Critique', in J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole eds., *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), 239-250.

<sup>233</sup> Alec Shepley, 'Installation art practice and the 'fluctuating frame'', PhD diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2000, 45, 57.



create: An Empirical Study of MFA Painting Students',<sup>234</sup> and Mary-Anne Mace, 'Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Art Making'.<sup>235</sup> Sawyer and Mace used GTM to study the creative practice of others rather than their own. Mace stated that before her study there was "little systematic experimental research investigating the details of the creative process based on the observation and experience of creative production of those involved". Mace added that few studies have focused on revealing and grasping what artists actually do during creative production, while it is actually happening. In the published article of her research, Mace confirmed that she had used a Corbin and Strauss GTM approach "to investigate this phenomenon and develop a dynamic, descriptive model of the art-making process".<sup>236</sup> Mace referred to 'real-life' instances of creative endeavour carried out in 'real-world' settings, and explored this activity as it took place in its normal production context and with self-initiated artwork. Our studies differ majorly in that Mace investigated the practices of others and I have investigated my own. Although Mace looked at 'real-life instances of creativity' rather than retrospective art-making accounts, the artists interviewed were required to be producing work for exhibition or commission during the research.<sup>237</sup> By contrast, my research project has investigated my own practice via painting experiments exploring a hunch, without the influence of producing outcomes for any client or exhibition requirements.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, I have used GTM to analyse my process of investigation iteratively, with the painting experiments and the GTM coding trials becoming integrated in my ever-developing methods. Other theses are likely to contain elements or influences of GTM, since GTM is one of the many qualitative research methods that have developed from origins such as Donald Schön's 'reflection-in-action': "reflection-in-action necessarily involves experiment".<sup>239</sup> I refer to Schön later in this chapter.

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<sup>234</sup> R. Keith Sawyer, 'How artists create: An Empirical Study of MFA Painting Students', *Journal of Creative Behaviour*, vol. 52, issue 2 (June 2018): 127-141.

<sup>235</sup> Mary-Anne Mace, 'Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Art Making', PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 1998.

<sup>236</sup> Mace and Tony Ward, 'Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Art Making', *Creativity Research Journal*, vol. 14, issue 2 (2010): 179.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, I have performed an exhaustive search of GTM and painting in Proquest Dissertations and Theses, ETHOS, the Summon Index and Dimensions from Digital Science. A conversation with Ben McLeish, Director of Engagement and Advocacy at Digital Science, a company that tracks a range of sources to capture and collate the conversations online about scholarly content, confirmed that the search across both Dimensions and Altmetric covers around 340 million items.

<sup>239</sup> Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think In Action* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), 141.

During the first stage of my enquiry when I began to consider using GTM, I started discussions with Graham Gibbs, GTM specialist and Reader, University of Huddersfield.<sup>240</sup> I attended Gibbs' course on GTM at the University of Huddersfield on February 10, 2015, had one-to-one meetings to discuss GTM and my practice, and for further information on coding and GTM generally, I accessed Gibbs' YouTube channel.<sup>241</sup> I have found Charmaz' conversation with Gibbs useful to understand further the main principles of GTM.<sup>242</sup> I invited Gibbs to view and discuss the findings of the coding trials and *GPEFs 1-30* displayed in the studio on December 7, 2017. Gibbs confirmed that from his experience my use of GTM is original and made him "think about the nature of the coding activity in research".<sup>243</sup>

### Overview of GTM in terms of its fit with my practice

During the first stage of the enquiry, I looked for ways to structure the analysis and progression of the painting experiments simultaneously. I was forming a combination of practice-led methods, with the painting experiments themselves as the core method and the practice central to the investigation. My main objective was to expose and analyse what was actually happening while immersed in the GPEs. The ongoing process of analysis was to form part of the work itself, as a synthesised process, rather than a separate evaluation at the end of a period of practice. Having researched GTM as outlined above, I felt that its fundamentals were in-line with my research aim: that I had to dig into the practice in an ongoing, iterative process, with the analysis both focusing and becoming the practice-led research. I was to remain open to making discoveries within my practice in a revealing, systematic way, by truly 'getting to grips' with it, and by thoroughly 'getting inside it'.

As previously mentioned, GTM continues to maintain certain defining characteristics despite having evolved into different versions since its creation. The fundamental principal is that the culminating discovery (traditionally a theory, or an interrelating set of concepts, and in my

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<sup>240</sup> Gibbs is situated in the Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences, School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield.

<sup>241</sup> <https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/capr/staff/drgrahamgibbs.php> Accessed July 5, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/user/GrahamRGibbs> Accessed July 5, 2018.

<sup>242</sup> 'A Discussion with Kathy Charmaz on Grounded Theory', interviewed by Graham Gibbs at the BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section Conference, University of Huddersfield, UK, September 4-6, 2013, published February 4, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5AHmHQS6WQ> Accessed July 10, 2018.

<sup>243</sup> "I think the work you are doing is fascinating and it's making me think about the nature of the coding activity in research". Graham Gibbs, email to Puy Soden, February 1, 16:47.

case, the research practice itself) is grounded in the data, emerges from an open approach, and seeks 'to dig out' the implicit in phenomena. GTM authors agree that GTM is particularly useful for understanding the experience of a particular process or phenomena.<sup>244</sup> The difference here from the sociologists' perspective is that the phenomenon under investigation in this project has been about my being immersed in interrelating concepts, rather than viewing a phenomenon as an entity to study objectively.

GTM brings about something new generated from the data itself, rather than testing an existing theory, because the researcher remains open to discoveries while maintaining persistent interaction with her data. As Glaser states: "[...] enter the research with as few predetermined ideas as possible [...] In this posture, the analyst is able to remain sensitive to the data by being able to record events and detect happenings without first having them filtered through and squared with pre-existing hypotheses and biases. His mandate is to remain open to what is actually happening".<sup>245</sup> Glaser describes this as 'grip' and 'grab' achieved through systematic, close, constant analysis of the data, enabling 'traction'.<sup>246</sup> This rang true with my original hunch that I had to 'get to the bottom' of what was actually happening in the painting experiments, as well as the focus on a process that could be openly analysed throughout, rather than the production of an intended outcome. I was to carry out the experiments that were to investigate the significance of ground and grounding, and expose their analysis in an ongoing, iterative process. As stated by Bryant and Charmaz, "data collection and analysis process simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other".<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents", (Strauss and Corbin, 1990); "[...] for new phenomena it's an ideal choice", (Urquhart, 2013); "[...] an inductive form of qualitative research in which novel explanations and understandings of phenomena are developed by close examination of data", (Gibbs, 2008); "Grounded theory is most appropriately employed in studies where little is known about a phenomenon of interest", (Mills et al, 2014); "GTM puts things together in new ways, in a new theoretical understanding of the phenomena you're exploring", (Charmaz, 2012); "[...] phenomena and relationships between them become visible that you only sensed beforehand", (Charmaz, 2014).

<sup>245</sup> Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity, Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 1978), 3.

<sup>246</sup> Glaser mentions the 'grab' of grounded theories and their 'traction over data' in Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity, Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 1978), 3-4, 118, and Glaser, *No Preconceptions, The Grounded Theory Dictum* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 2013), 101.

<sup>247</sup> Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz, 'Introduction: Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices' in Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (London, UK and Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007), 1.



Authors agree that GTM is particularly suited to analysing a process, since it is a process in itself. As Charmaz states, GTM “is a method that studies process, and a method that is *in process*”.<sup>248</sup> ‘What is actually happening?’ is a question that runs throughout the main GTM texts and Charmaz encourages the researcher to look for gerunds while interacting with the data via coding. GTM is a means of truly focusing on ‘what is really going on’ in a specific field of human endeavour. The consulted authors unanimously state this.<sup>249</sup>

At its Glaserian root GTM stands apart as a qualitative research method in its demand for ‘no preconceptions’ to remain open to that which emerges.<sup>250</sup> GTM research starts with the initial idea that a phenomenon might be an interesting topic of study, not with the aim to test predefined hypotheses or answer a specific question. Before GTM, coding was set-up prior to the data collection, with codes and their inter-relationships already established from hypotheses of existing theories.<sup>251</sup>

My aim has always been to expose, focus and analyse iteratively my practice-led process that has been led by painting experiments seeking a sense of grounding. Therefore, having thoroughly grasped the principles of GTM, during the second stage of my research I came to the following conclusions that GTM:

- would offer a systematic approach to the analysis of the experiments, a grounding structure to focus a fluid and often scattered painting process;
- would fit with my openness to that which emerges while my painting process and its documented analysis were carried out simultaneously;
- would co-operate with my concern to expose meaning implicit in the phenomena of my experience while immersed in the experiments.

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<sup>248</sup> Charmaz, Kathy. ‘The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory’, *A Journal of the BSA MedSoc Group*, vol. 6, issue 3 (October 2012): 2-3.  
[http://www.medicalsociologyonline.org/resources/Vol6Iss3/MSo-600x\\_The-Power-and-Potential-Grounded-Theory\\_Charmaz.pdf](http://www.medicalsociologyonline.org/resources/Vol6Iss3/MSo-600x_The-Power-and-Potential-Grounded-Theory_Charmaz.pdf) Accessed June 2, 2019.

<sup>249</sup> For example, “what is actually happening in the data?” Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity*, 57.

<sup>250</sup> This is emphasised throughout in Glaser, *No Preconceptions, The Grounded Theory Dictum* (Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press, 2013).

<sup>251</sup> Bryant explains this in ‘Coding, Terminology and Clarification’, in *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing*, 117-132.

## How I trialled GTM coding as an approach to investigating a concept of painting

Having concluded that GTM's essential principles would fit my research aim, I became interested in how GTM might be used as an approach to investigating a concept of painting that was developing via the central method, the GPEs. I have established that I decided to use a specific GTM component: coding. I explored coding as a means to analyse the field notes of the painting experiments, and I carried out various coding trials which culminated in the findings of *GPEFs 1-30* displayed in the Huddersfield studio. Before describing these preliminary trials and the final coding trial with *GPEFs 1-30*, I will provide a more detailed description of coding. It is important to explain coding as a GTM means to analyse data before describing how I have used coding in my arts-research project.

While different tactics of coding have developed over the last fifty years, coding has remained a distinctive, key element of GTM. Despite their different positions and techniques, all GTM authors emphasise the need to get close to the data via coding.<sup>252</sup> 'True' coding is a matter of dispute among GTM authors. While the evolution and contention around GTM coding has contributed to my fascination with it, I have not intended to contribute to this debate.<sup>253</sup> Rather, I have demonstrated how an interpretation of coding can be used openly and practically as a possible approach to investigating a concept of painting that emerges via experimentation. At the centre of my research project has been the investigation of my painting process via experiments that search for a sense of grounding. GTM coding has been trialled as a means to analyse and structure the iterative progression of this process, to delve and get to the nub of things while enabling the practice to focus along a line of enquiry.

Coding entails identifying phenomena implicit in the data during its analysis, and attaching conceptual labels to that data. Once data are categorised into conceptual labels, the data are 'fragmented' and analysed.<sup>254</sup> Codes can then be linked together, relationships start to form, and in research that uses GTM conventionally, a theory can be built about that which has emerged from this coding process. While coding can be used in various ways to analyse qualitative data, the GTM way of coding is only ever bottom-up: codes are suggested by the

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<sup>252</sup> Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing*, 175.

<sup>253</sup> Urquhart summarises the "complex intellectual history" of GTM, including the "long and bitter dispute between Glaser and Strauss" and the resulting two strands of GTM that followed the publication of Strauss and Corbin's *Basics of Qualitative Research* in 1990. Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide*, 14-21.

<sup>254</sup> As Bryant describes, "in producing codes in the early stages of a project researchers are involved in breaking down the data into components and analysing the resulting fragments in order to propose ways in which some of them might be related as clusters, themes, or patterns". Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing*, 118.

data and coding can only be carried out by getting as close to the data as possible. The GTM process of coding is open to discoveries that are grounded in the data and in some of the main authors' descriptions about coding techniques there is a sense of excavation.<sup>255</sup> As Corbin and Strauss describe, "a researcher can think of coding as 'mining' the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasures contained within the data".<sup>256</sup>

Urquhart provides the clearest and most comprehensive explanation of coding in her practical guide, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research*, and presents Glaser's three stages in simple terms:

*Open coding* means just that – going through the data, line by line or paragraph by paragraph, attaching codes to the data and very much staying open, seeing what the data might be telling you.

The open codes are then grouped into larger categories in the stage of *selective coding*, on the basis of the key categories that are shaping the theory.

In *theoretical coding*, those categories are related to each other and the relationships between them considered.<sup>257</sup>

Having considered the various versions of GTM coding,<sup>258</sup> I decided to trial an artistic interpretation of traditional, Glaserian coding since it coincided with my research motivations: get as close as possible to what is actually happening, 'dig into the data' (the painting experiment field notes) and be completely open to discoveries. In *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser stated that in 'open coding', the researcher must analyse the data line-by-line in order to gain true 'traction' on the data and, as the term describes, to remain deliberately open. I was attracted to this thorough technique that would allow a very close analysis of the painting experiment field notes while being open to discoveries. Urquhart advocates Glaser's line-by-line rule: "[...] the discipline of coding line by line – that detailed consideration of the text in front of us – helps free us of our preconceptions [...] line-by-line coding also forces a

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<sup>255</sup> "Coding: the process of defining what the data is about. Unlike quantitative research, which applies preconceived categories or codes to the data, a grounded theorist creates qualitative codes by defining what he or she sees in the data. Thus, the codes are 'emergent' - they develop as the researcher studies his or her data. The coding process may take the researcher to unforeseen areas and research questions. Grounded theory proponents follow such leads; they do not pursue previously designed research problems that lead to dead-ends". Charmaz, quoted in Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing*, 120.

<sup>256</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures*, 66.

<sup>257</sup> Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide*, 10.

<sup>258</sup> Urquhart provides tables describing the evolution of the different GTM coding procedures championed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser independently (1978, 1992), Strauss independently (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008), and Charmaz (2006). Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide*, 22-23.



real intimacy with your data [...]”.<sup>259</sup> Continuing in GTM terms, selective coding involves considering and grouping the themes emerging in the data into categories. Theoretical coding is when the categories are related to each other and the researcher looks at the nature of the relationships between those codes.<sup>260</sup> While my analysis happened in different stages that could be seen to follow a similar rhythm (open coding, selective coding, theoretical coding), my research project has not been about producing a final theory that would pass a GTM checklist from one particular position. Instead, I have demonstrated a use of coding that is first and foremost an artistic interpretation. In terms of essential GTM principles that underpin my interpretation, I have been drawn to the core Glaserian tenets of openness and ‘emerging not forcing’. The following section describes how I have trialled GTM coding as a means to analyse iteratively my experience while engaged in the GPEs.

### My GTM coding trials

During the first stage of my enquiry, following the review of selected GTM resources as outlined earlier in this chapter, I started trials that explored GTM coding as an analytical, open approach to investigating an ongoing, iterative painting process. I did not intend to follow GTM coding rules or restrict the practice to fixed GTM requirements. Rather, it was crucial to allow the practice to lead the research via the GPEs while being open to the possibility that discoveries could be made through my artistic use of GTM coding. It was key from the start that the whole process would be documented and openly displayed.

For the first coding trial in my Huddersfield studio, I wrote field notes in a red notebook while carrying out the early painting experiments. Once I had completed approximately forty painting experiments, I stopped. I then photocopied the field notes and fixed the pages in chronological order across the longest wall in the studio. It was important to open out the book literally to expose the field notes and their analysis across the ‘coding wall’ (Image book pages 70-71). I intended to code the painting experiment field notes as a whole, while trying to achieve a sense of overview and distance. At this time, I was considering methods to operate from different perspectives, as artist and as researcher. Therefore, in overalls I engaged in the painting experiments and wrote the field notes, and later, in a lab coat, carried out line-by-line coding on the coding wall (Image book pages 70-71). The intention was to create distance in order to analyse objectively. There was a linear, separating sequence: 1. I carried out several experiments over a period of time; 2. I paused; 3. I spread

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>260</sup> Urquhart, *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide*, 26.

the field notes across the coding wall; 4. I analysed the field notes of this particular set of experiments on the coding wall with line-by-line coding; 5. I carried out further experiments while working with a set of themes that the coding had exposed, and repeated steps 1-5.

Via this early trial, I started to build an awareness in terms of what was happening in my experience of the painting experiments. The spread of coded field notes across the coding wall was useful for overview, and for mapping the various, repeating themes that I was drawing out of my handwritten painting experiment records. However, this order of activity (the distinct activity segments of experimentation, pausing, coding) caused separation while I was in fact seeking ongoing immersion. I felt that the tactics for a sense of objective distance were missing the point and blocked the progression of the practice. I came to realise this sense of resistance was due to my approaching the coding from a stance closer to the GTM perspective: that distance achieved via stepping back was required for classic GTM objective analysis, with the view that any interference from the subjectivity of the researcher might be a problem. GTM users in the social sciences who carry out their analysis from the GTM viewpoint often see their subjectivity as something to manage or even eliminate as much as possible. The issue of subjectivity in art has been thoroughly exposed, explored and critiqued by artists and art historians. I have not approached my research project with the intention of directly investigating the matter of subjectivity in art making. However, it must be recognised that as I have used GTM coding to analyse my own experiments, the essential difference exists: I cannot separate my subjectivity, while researchers who employ traditional GTM in other disciplines usually consider it important to adopt a stance that is as objective as possible, following Glaser's original decree.

Having abandoned attempts to achieve objective distance from the field notes, I moved on from the first coding trial and changed the order of the coding activities. Once a painting experiment had taken place, I analysed the field notes of that experiment using line-by-line coding before carrying out another experiment. I found that this strategy was better suited to the ongoing flow of my painting process, and encouraged continuation. This use of coding formed part of the methods that enabled the painting experiments to focus on a sense of grounding, becoming GPEs. For the group of painting experiments *GPEs 1-3* in the second stage of the enquiry, I trialled the following sequence: 1. I carried out the painting experiment; 2. I immediately wrote about the experience in a Word document; 3. I printed the document; 4. I analysed the printed notes via hand-written line-by-line coding. As an example of this second trial, four pages of the coded notes of *GPE 1* are included in the Image book (pages 72-75). Following this useful preliminary trial of 'coding from within', I developed this strategy while carrying out a group of thirty GPEs, *GPEFs 1-30*.

### GPEFs 1-30

In the second chapter, 'The Practice-led Enquiry', I described how the research progressed over three stages, culminating in *GPEFs 1-30*. Under the subheading 'Stage three: *GPEFs 1-30* and the culminating interpretation of GTM coding ideas', I explained how I carried out *GPEFs 1-30* during the third research period in France. To explain this further:

1. I wrote field notes in the white field note book while immersed in a GPEF;
2. I analysed the field notes of that GPEF without delay with line-by-line coding in pencil;
3. I transferred the themes in pencil that the coding had drawn out of the field notes to the 'coding continuum' that I had attached to the longest interior wall;
4. I carried out the next GPEF while the discovered themes of the previous one still resonated.

I was immersed in the flow of the activity, and used the themes that emerged from line-by-line coding to progress and focus the continuing GPEFs.<sup>261</sup> The urge to experiment, dig out discoveries via coding, and view the GPEFs in their written, distilled form on the coding continuum gained momentum and intensity. I concluded that this use of coding was more suited to the practice in the following ways:

- the GPEFs were leading the process yet the coding was becoming incorporated in the work;
- it enabled immersive analysis and flow from *GPEF 1* to *GPEF 30*;
- I could demonstrate a new, artistic use of coding openly and visually;
- the white field note book became an important component of the work, containing the *GPEFs 1-30* in terms of my written experience;
- the coding continuum became an important element of the work that contained a distillation of my painting process as well as a demonstration of key themes extracted via line-by-line coding.

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<sup>261</sup> My way of using coding to analyse, focus and progress the GPEFs could be seen as "moving in a series of loops between the empirical process under scrutiny and the stream of conceptual thinking or theorizing about it", as depicted in Jörg Strübing's diagram of the 'logic of inquiry in grounded theory'. Jörg Strübing, 'Research as Pragmatic Problem-solving: The Pragmatist Roots of Empirically-grounded Theorizing', in Bryant and Charmaz, *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, 595.



The following 'Conclusion' provides an explanation of my research findings of the culminating painting experiment group *GPEFs 1-30* and final GTM coding trial. I summarise my discoveries as an artist trialling GTM coding within a research project of experimental methods, of which the research practice itself is the central part.

## Conclusion

In the previous chapter, 'Methods', I condensed my review of GTM into a brief overview in order to explain how the core principles of GTM (the researcher stays close to the data, remains open to discoveries and 'gets to the bottom' of what is happening) fitted with my approach. I explained GTM coding before describing my artistic interpretation of this specific component of GTM analysis, which has culminated in the experiment group *GPEFs 1-30*. I will now present my discoveries as an artist who has trialled GTM coding as an approach to investigating a concept of painting with the main aim: to discover and expose exactly what was going on in terms of my interaction with the various elements involved in each GPE. My artistic use of GTM coding has been driven by the need to focus and analyse iteratively my practice-led process. Firstly, I will describe how I trialled GTM coding in terms of the final experiment group *GPEFs 1-30*, starting with an explanation of the findings of that culminating trial displayed in the Huddersfield studio.

### An explanation of the findings of *GPEFs 1-30* displayed in the studio

The Image book at the front of this volume contains documentation of the findings of the experiment group *GPEFs 1-30* displayed in the Huddersfield studio (pages 132-157). As described in chapter two, 'The Practice-led Enquiry', all *GPEFs 1-30* were carried out during the third period of research in France, on various grounds of significance including Lascaux. The Image book contains the documentation of *GPEFs 1-30*; the iPhone images I took while immersed in the experiments (pages 80-112). While carrying out a GPEF, I recorded my experience in the white field note book in black-ink handwriting. Having completed a GPEF, I coded the black-ink field notes in graphite pencil with a form of GTM line-by-line coding as previously explained in the 'Methods' chapter (Image book pages 139-146). The themes that emerged in the line-by-line coding of the experiment field notes were transferred from the white field note book to the coding continuum (Image book pages 113-114) in black or brown marker-pen ink as the experiments progressed. I alternated my use of the black and brown marker pens in order to differentiate the groups of themes that corresponded to each GPEF. As planned, I continued the investigation on return to the Huddersfield studio. I attached the coding continuum above the line of supports, or grounds, that I had fixed around the perimeter of the interior studio wall. These grounds had accumulated in the studio over the three years of the enquiry as objects of past experiments. The coding wall of the early GTM coding trials (as explained in the section of the 'Methods' chapter, 'My GTM coding trials') was left beneath these grounds on the longest studio wall. Along the top of the wall and

corresponding to the sequence and position in the coding continuum of the experiments' coding themes, I positioned the image documentation of every individual GPEF, each printed in a grid format on a separate support, or ground. I refer to these as grids-on-grounds. I photographed the grids-on-grounds individually, before attaching them to the wall, with digital photography equipment in the photography studio at the University of Huddersfield (Image book pages 115-129). The white field note book containing the field notes that I had handwritten during each experiment in black ink and then coded line-by-line in graphite pencil was displayed on top of the plan chest (Image book pages 150-151).

In an attempt to bring the information in the coding continuum that had been extracted from the experiment field notes literally down to the ground, I experimented with an interpretation of that information via a use of the materials I had found, made and tested in the *GPEFs 1-30*. This level of experimentation echoed the second stage of coding in Glaserian GTM, 'selective coding', which involves considering and grouping the themes emerging in the data into categories. I started to use different mixtures of the various materials (pigments and other ground-based substances that I had sourced, mixed with linseed oil) that I had used in the *GPEFs 1-30* to mark groups of repeated themes within the coding continuum writing that had emerged during the line-by-line coding. On the supports, or grounds, that had been fixed underneath, I simultaneously made marks in response to the repeated themes in the coding continuum. The image documentation of this stage can be seen in the Image book (pages 130-138).

Having finished the marking and considered the exposed, experimental analysis of the *GPEFs 1-30* as a whole for a while, I carried out further experiments with the materials I had used in specific GPEFs on the studio floor (Image book pages 152-153). This level of experimentation echoed theoretical coding, the third stage of Glaserian GTM coding, when the categories are related to each other and the researcher looks at the nature of the relationships between the themes. The areas of floor where I worked corresponded with the marks made on the grounds above. I sought a converging of the concepts onto the ground, via a material-led interpretation of the practical analysis of the *GPEFs 1-30*. The workings of these experiments carried out as a final stage were left visible on the studio floor. The intention was to draw the work on the walls down to the ground while using ground-originating materials in the final stage of an experimentation of methods incorporating GTM coding artistically. This drawing-down to the ground combined literal and metaphorical meanings. I will explain this in terms of the sequence of events:

- Literally, the direction of the activity that analysed the GPEFs in the studio flowed from the top of the wall to the floor. 1. A grid-on-ground attached to the top of the wall



referred to a GPEF. 2. The corresponding section of the coding continuum below contained the key themes extracted from the activity and experience of the GPEF, following the line-by-line, open coding in the white field note book. 3. Materials previously used in the GPEFs were applied to interpret and analyse the discoveries in the coding continuum. 4. The distribution of marks made on the coding continuum was transposed to a previously-attached support, or ground, below it. 5. An experiment that responded to the marks made on the support, using physical findings from the GPEFs, was carried out on the floor underneath.

- Metaphorically, the drawing-down cooperated with the intention of each section of the process as described above to engage with the ground as closely as possible, to seek the sense of grounding I have explained. 1. The GPEF had been carried out on (sites) and with (materials) grounds selected for their significance in a search for a sense of grounding, and the documentation of this activity that focused on grounds and grounding formed a grid-on-ground. 2. The marks made in the interpretation of the discoveries in the coding continuum were, in GTM terminology, 'grounded in the data'. 3. The materials used to make the marks originated from the ground, and from grounds (sites) where the GPEFs had taken place. 4. The GPEF findings made with ground-based materials brought back from France were used on the floor to create further grounds. 5. Experiments responding to the marks on the supports/grounds underneath the coding continuum were carried out on those grounds made on the floor, demonstrating a form of distillation onto the ground and evoking a sense of grounding.

### My discoveries as an artist trialling GTM coding

Common issues in the GTM literature include how to deal with subjectivity in terms of the level at which the researcher participates in forms of data collection such as interviews, and how objective she can be during the data analysis. The main positions of GTM (as identified in the previous chapter: Glaserian-traditional, Straussian-evolved, Wuest-feminist and Charmaz-constructivist<sup>262</sup>) have dealt with subjectivity in various ways as part of, or in response to, the social-science research history that has often viewed subjectivity as a problematic obstacle to achieving objectivity in research. The Glaserian-traditional approach

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<sup>262</sup> For an explanation of the different positions of GTM and how this affects coding styles see Jane Mills, Melanie Birks and Karen Hoare, 'Grounded Theory', in Jane Mills et al., eds., *Qualitative Methodology, A Practical Guide* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014), 107-121.

is to step back from the data, distance oneself from it, and then to conceptualise abstractly.<sup>263</sup> In contrast, Corbin and Strauss argue that it is essential and inevitable that the researcher put herself into the research.<sup>264</sup> Wuest argued for a feminist GTM approach positioned in the constructivist paradigm with reflexivity as a key component, “allowing for disciplined reflection on the reciprocal influence of the researcher on the research process”.<sup>265</sup> Similarly, Charmaz describes GTM as an ‘embodied process’, in that the embodied experience of the interviewer is just as present as that of the research participant. Charmaz’s constructivist philosophy asserts that all theory acknowledges subjectivity, and views the researcher and the researched as inseparable.<sup>266</sup> This coincides with practice-led arts research in that the researched, or the ‘inquired into’, is part of the researcher’s subjectivity. The Glaserian emphasis on continually staying open to ‘what is actually happening’ and allowing themes implicit in the phenomena to emerge, coincided with my goal to lead with an immersion in my painting process, all the while open to discoveries. While remaining open rang true from the start, I explored different degrees of distancing myself from the data while coding. The fact that my practice has led the research, and I have been both the enquirer and the enquired-into, artist and analyst simultaneously, offered opportunities for interesting tests. As previously mentioned, I experimented with ways of achieving a sense of objective distance in the early stages of the enquiry. I explored the possibility of different selves to trial ways of analysing the early experiment field notes. These selves, allowing different stances, included artist-analyst in lab-coat (playing the traditional, Glaserian GTM position that requires a stepping back from the data), and artist-practitioner in overalls (closer to the constructivist position whereby the researcher becomes co-participant). Ways of distancing from the work during art-making have long been used by practitioners to explore, progress and analyse new areas of art practice. As explained in the previous chapter, Shepley’s thesis analysed seven case studies of artists who had reacted to the studio limitations of painting by transitioning to installation practices, including

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<sup>263</sup> Glaser, *The Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, 11.

<sup>264</sup> For example, Corbin and Strauss, *Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures*, 32.

<sup>265</sup> Judith Wuest, ‘Are We There Yet? Positioning Qualitative Research Differently’, *Sage Journals, Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 21, issue 7 (2011): 877-878.

<sup>266</sup> “[...] reflexivity is of paramount importance in constructivist grounded theory, with the researcher at the same time striving to know the world from the viewpoint of the research participants. Positioning yourself as anything other than a traditional grounded theorist requires a transformation of the participant/researcher relationship so the researcher prioritises and analyses interactions occurring between the two [...] all constructivist grounded theorists believe it is impossible to separate researcher from participant in the generation of data”. Charmaz cited in Mills et al, ‘Grounded Theory’, 112. Also see Charmaz, ‘Constructing Grounded Theory’, 231.

himself.<sup>267</sup> For Shepley, conversations with his alter ego 'Shelley Cape' became a significant part of the practice:

Including myself as an example and including my own creative work within the research project has been interesting and exciting and the objectivity afforded by being, in a sense, 'two people' has added focus to my creative work. In fact, this investigation partly came about because interviewing myself had become a part of my creative practice. Invented, imaginary 'alter egos' that were anagrams of my own name such as, Shelley Cape, had been used in projects such as *Vignettes* (1995) [...] *Imagined others* allowed for another, possibly more objective point of view - an outsider's point of view - and this helped the development of my work and practice.<sup>268</sup>

Although other selves offered the opportunity for different perspectives of the work, Shepley mentioned the ever-present problem of separation during the self-interviews:

There were problems with including myself: for example, it was difficult maintaining a separation between 'myself as researcher' and 'myself as practitioner'. This had 'knock on' effects, for example, during the interviews there was always the possibility of answering questions that have not been asked. However, with hindsight, this can be true of the other respondents, too.<sup>269</sup>

Shepley stated that he was concerned with maintaining objectivity 'so as not to invalidate the findings'.<sup>270</sup> This would follow the traditional GTM approach. Unlike traditional GTM theorists, constructivist GTM author Charmaz argues that "rather than being a distant expert, grounded theorists are instead implicit in the research process, co-constructing experience and meaning with research participants".<sup>271</sup> When using constructivist GTM, researchers are to think about what they themselves are doing, while constructing the analysis, and consider the effect they are having on the data and subsequent findings. By the final stage of my enquiry, during the culminating *GPEFs 1-30* and coding trial, I had started to experience a specific synthesis. The painting experiments and my subjective experience of them had become methodological devices *and* data; research material. Only through subjective, reflection-in-action could I achieve a closeness to the content, the meaning of the materials, and the activity of the *GPEFs 1-30* via my artistic interpretation of coding. The close analysis of my subjective experience of the *GPEFs 1-30*, and the immersion in the creative

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<sup>267</sup> Shepley found that none of the artists he had interviewed completely abandoned painting. Instead they sought to reassess their practices in terms of material and conceptual limits and explore the problems found in painting in installation artwork.

<sup>268</sup> Shepley, 'Installation art practice and the 'fluctuating frame'', 68.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>270</sup> Shepley, 'Installation art practice and the 'fluctuating frame'', 69.

<sup>271</sup> Charmaz cited in Mills et al, 'Grounded Theory', 111.



interpretation of coding, combined to enable an exposed, iterative demonstration of methods experimentation.

It is important to include here Donald Schön's epistemology of professional practice based on the idea of 'reflection-in-action' which underpins practice-led research.<sup>272</sup> Schön predicted the merging of researcher and practitioner, with reflection-in-action a necessary means to deal with the 'divergent situations of practice'.<sup>273</sup>

When the phenomenon at hand eludes the ordinary categories of knowledge-in-practice, presenting itself as unique or unstable, the practitioner may surface and criticise his initial understanding of the phenomenon, construct a new description of it, and test the new description by an on-the-spot experiment. Sometimes he arrives at a new theory of the phenomenon by articulating a feeling he has about it [...]. When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context.<sup>274</sup>

Schön advocated that "reflective research requires a partnership of practitioner-researchers and researcher-practitioners", and that "the reflective researcher cannot maintain distance from, much less superiority to, the experience of practice [...]," that she "[...] must somehow gain an inside view of the experience of practice".<sup>275</sup> Therefore, if the situation that calls for reflection-in-action that Schön describes (i.e. when "the phenomenon [...] presents itself as unique or unstable") is what happens most of the time while finding problems in art practice-led research, then the literal collaboration that Schön predicted (researcher and practitioners must work together) gets played out in the reflective practice of the researcher-artist-practitioner.

Subjectivity in art-making is a huge issue that cannot be fully addressed here. The idea that subjectivity might be essential in art-making has been fully critiqued in the work of artists and art historians. The argument that subjectivity is not necessarily an essential, natural quality of art-making, but rather a historical development in Western art in the late eighteenth century, has been thoroughly made. I have not intended to contribute directly to that argument. Through the early GTM coding trials, I have demonstrated how I have discovered that any attempted distancing of my own subjectivity missed the point of my research enquiry. From the start, I had intended to 'get inside' the painting experiments as far as possible, and any attempts to achieve objectivity during the analysis of the field notes

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<sup>272</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 61-68, 323-324.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-68.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

impeded my immersion in the process (as explained in the 'Methods' chapter, under 'My GTM coding trials'). Therefore, from the perspective of a social scientist, my interpretation of GTM coding would perhaps be viewed as sitting at the 'extremely subjective' end of an objectivity-subjectivity scale demonstrating the range of GTM users' positions in terms of how much they allow themselves to participate in data collection and analysis (should such a scale exist).

Throughout this PhD research project, I have explored a concept of painting, focusing on the significance of ground, via the GPEs which have sought a sense of grounding. As explained in the previous chapter, the GPEs have become a method through which I have investigated a concept of painting, *as well as* remaining the central means by which I have trialled GTM coding to focus my main aim: to 'get to the bottom' of my research practice while exposing, analysing and developing the process iteratively. Since the first practice-led theses were officially recognised forty years ago, art researchers have been developing their own research methods and theses structures via the development of their practice, rather than forcing their practice into existing research procedures.<sup>276</sup> More recently, art research has started to consider practice as the creation of methods, however the focus has remained on outcomes, or 'completed' artworks. During my research enquiry, I have found that recent, public activities and outputs in contemporary painting, including research events such as symposia and conferences as well as certain exhibitions, have continued to focus on the production of the completed artwork (completed in the sense that the artist has chosen to stop and possibly show the artwork publicly at a certain point).<sup>277</sup> In these activities,

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<sup>276</sup> T. Fisher and J. Mottram, 'Researching the Research Culture in Art and Design: The Art and Design Index to Theses', *Design Research Society* (International Conference in Lisbon, IADE, 2006).

<sup>277</sup> The activities I refer to include the exhibitions: Simon Wallis, director, *Hybrids: International Contemporary Painting*, Tate Liverpool, April 6 - June 24, 2001. *As Painting: Division and Displacement*, May 12 - August 12, 2001. *Painting Forever!* Cooperation of Berlinische Galerie, Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, September 17 - November 10, 2013. *Painting Now- five contemporary artists*, Tate Britain, London, November 12, 2013 - February 9, 2014. Sarah Kate Wilson and Zoë Sawyer, co-curators, *Painting in Time*, The Tetley, Leeds, April 3 - July 5, 2015. Deb Covell and Jo McGonigal, co-curators, *Real Painting*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, June 12 - August 2, 2015. Manuela Ammer, Achim Hochdörfer and David Joselit, curators, *Painting 2.0. Expression in the Information Age*, Museum of Modern Art Foundation Ludwig Vienna, MUMOK, June 4 - November 6, 2016. The conference: 'Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium condition', organised by Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw, Sackler Museum, Harvard University, 2013. Activities in which I participated: 'Painting and Research', Paint Club Research Student Network Visual Symposium, University of the Arts London, April 26, 2013. 'Paint Factory', an event I initiated and organised at the University of Huddersfield at which British artist Neal Rock gave a talk on his practice, September 18, 2015. Carole Kirk, 'The Garden of Earthly Delights', Alec Clegg Studio, stage@leeds, May 18, 2017, an event of ten participants organised by Kirk as part of her practice-led PhD research. My participation and comments are recorded in the online documentation and the written thesis of Kirk's research: <https://dancingwithpaint.wordpress.com/events/the-garden-of-earthly-delights/> Accessed November

discussions have primarily involved the positioning of painting as an expanded discipline and painting practices that continue to deal with problems of representation, image, colour, form, and the relations between the artwork and the viewer. My intention from the beginning of this practice-led PhD project has been to expose and analyse an ongoing process that investigates a concept of painting to which issues relating to representation, image, colour, form and the viewer are not central. Furthermore, I have not intended to produce finished, autonomous artworks. Nor have I investigated painting-as-process generally, but rather I have carried out a very specific enquiry into a concept of painting that has developed via a particular process of experimentation. The process of experimentation has developed via a series of painting experiments that have led my research project. These experiments have focused on the search for a sense of grounding, leading an investigation into the hunch that discoveries might be made involving a close engagement with the ground. I have explored the significance of various physical, historical and metaphorical grounds: ground-based materials; grounds as sites, and the source of those materials; ground in painting, as in figure-ground; grounds within the experiments and their documentation.

The hunch that the focus must be ground-based began to develop pre-PhD during my practice-led enquiry into touch in response to my experience with the twenty-nine Robert Ryman paintings in the Hallen für Neue Kunst, as explained in the Introduction. This formed part of my early investigations into the process of my painting practice. Over the course of my PhD enquiry, the painting experiments have focused increasingly on an investigation into grounding, becoming GPEs. The writing of Jacquetta Hawkes, including *A Land*, which I have come to call a 'grounding object' throughout my enquiry, has helped define a sense of grounding while thinking about the significance of using land-based materials with which we share our earliest origins. The GPEs have sought to explore thoroughly and openly, in a material-focused way, the various literal and metaphorical meanings of ground in their search for a sense of grounding. The GPEs have explored the use of ground-based materials from and on specific sites. These sites have been selected due to their significance in the history of painting and my personal history, and have been used as grounds in the GPEs both literally and metaphorically. In the second and third stages of the enquiry, Lascaux became a particularly significant site in my investigation. Several experiments of the

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11, 2017. Kirk, 'Painting as Emergent Knowledge. Exploring contemporary artistic labour as a process of ecological cognition', PhD diss., (University of Leeds, 2018), 128, 142. Other events I attended: 'Symposium: What is the Future of Painting?' organised by Patrick O'Donnell and Nick Pace, Phoenix Brighton, February 16, 2013. 'Paint Club Presents: Conversations about *Painting in Time*', organised by Catherine Ferguson, Judith Tucker, and Eirini Boukla, The Tetley, Leeds, June 4, 2015. 'Teaching Painting: A Conference'. Manchester School of Art and The Whitworth Art Gallery, October 29-30, 2015.



culminating experiment group, *GPEFs 1-30* took place on and with Lascaux ground, in physical, literal and metaphorical senses. *GPEFs 1-30* involved further exploration of the figure-ground function, a fundamental concern in the history of painting.<sup>278</sup>

I presented the intersections of various historical contexts in chapter three, 'Defining grounding (a hunch)' that converged on the important contextual premise to my research that Lascaux continues to exist as a site of great interest in the history of painting. I have described how Lascaux is a node of various key interpretations including Hawkes' writing and the artworks of others. It has been said that the Lascaux artists created the earliest known conscious demonstration of figure-ground ambiguity. This has increased the significance of using Lascaux as a ground both literally and metaphorically in several of the *GPEs 1-30*, through which I explored the figure-ground function in painting while searching for a sense of grounding.

Having completed a review of GTM resources, I began the GTM coding trials with the understanding that using a specific component of GTM while keeping the practice central would: offer a systematic approach to structure the analysis of the experiments; fit with my openness to that which might emerge while the experiments and their analysis were carried out simultaneously; and expose meaning implicit in the phenomena of my experience of immersion in the experiments. Having trialled GTM coding in various ways as explained in the previous chapter, the culminating trial with *GPEFs 1-30* involved a sequence of events that enabled greater flow, iterative development and immersion: 1. carry out a GPEF and write field notes about the experience from inside the experiment; 2. use line-by-line coding to analyse the field notes of that experiment; 3. write the themes identified via the coding onto the coding continuum; 4. carry out the next experiment while the previous experiment resonated. In this way, the coding continuum and the field note book became referents of my subjective experience of the experimentation, as central parts of the work as well as tools for documentation. In summary, the culminating coding trial with *GPEFs 1-30* concluded that:

- the GPEFs were leading the process yet the coding was becoming incorporated in the work;
- this sequence enabled immersive analysis and flow from *GPEF 1* to *GPEF 30*;
- I could demonstrate an original, artistic use of coding openly and artistically;

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<sup>278</sup> "[...] painting's most basic structure". Alison Rowley and Griselda Pollock, 'Painting in a 'Hybrid Moment'', *Critical Perspectives in Contemporary Art: Hybridity, Hegemony, Historicism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and Tate Liverpool, 2003), 55. Following the exhibition, Simon Wallis, director, *Hybrids: International Contemporary Painting*, Tate Liverpool, April 6 - June 24, 2001.

- the white field note book became an important component of the work, containing the *GPEFs 1-30* in terms of my written experience;
- the coding continuum became an important element of the work that contained a distillation of my painting process and a demonstration of key themes extracted via line-by-line coding;
- as an artist interpreting GTM coding as an approach to investigating my own painting practice, I abandoned any attempts to achieve objective distance during the analysis and demonstrated how the coding process might work when the artist-researcher's subjectivity is inherent rather than considered a problem to be managed (as is often the case in social sciences research projects using GTM);
- by incorporating an interpretation of GTM coding, the *GPEFs 1-30* did find focus. To offer one level of interpretation, this is demonstrated physically in the direction of the movement of the work as displayed in the Huddersfield studio;
- the use of GTM coding enabled a thorough, iterative, practice-led investigation into a concept of painting, through which the trials of the analysis methods became part of the work.

To expand on the last point, the main purpose of this PhD has been to investigate thoroughly a concept of painting as a process, and to experiment openly with methods that analyse and become part of that process. The trialling of methods has become integrated in the research practice rather than taking place as an objective, evaluative add-on once the practice has been completed. Similarly, the documentation has remained integral. In the first chapter, I referred to how the relationships between artworks and documentation became important in terms of certain practices associated with Land Art, and referred to relevant examples of those practices. The role of documentation in contemporary practice-led art research is thoroughly discussed. I offer an exposed process by which the documentation has become part of the work itself when no intended outcome has been produced, rather than using documentation to record the making of an artefact, or responses to the artefact by others.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> For example, artist Nithikul Nimkulrat who works with paper and fibres to create sculptures, explains the role of documentation as separate and complementary to the finished art objects. Although the documentation is essential to record and develop the practice, it is not an intrinsic element of the work. 'The Role of Documentation in Practice-led Research'. *Journal of Research Practice*, 3:1, Article M6, 2007. <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/58/83> Accessed October 31, 2018. Ann-Sophie Lehmann discusses the documentation of creative practice as 'source material' to study the complex procedures involved in the making of artefacts. Lehmann terms 'showing making' as a line of enquiry in which documentation images have four elements: "an archival function, as they store tacit knowledge about making; an instructional function, in that they enable the acquisition of skills and material knowledge; a participatory function, in the sense that demonstration incites pleasure in the viewer through kinaesthetic identification with the depicted process; and finally a display function, which showcases some but hides other elements of the creative process". Ann-Sophie Lehmann, 'Showing Making: On Visual Documentation and Creative Practice', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 5:1, 2012, 9-23. While the archive function is relevant to my research, the participatory

My handwriting has been a tool for both documenting and creating the work. By hand-writing the field notes and the line-by-line coding of the field notes, I was able to record the experiments from within the experience and carry out the coding as soon as possible. By hand-writing the themes onto the coding continuum, I created a continuous piece so that on return to the studio, I could attach it above the previously-fixed supports with the intention of analysing its contents in a practical way. Therefore, the method of hand-writing has been essential to record the experience while immersed and to allow for the spreading-out of the themes discovered, following the intention to open out the process for a practical form of analysis. My use of writing in the culminating GTM coding trial with the final experiment group *GPEFs 1-30*, as displayed in the studio, is simple to explain but difficult to categorise. It is not possible in the space available here to fully pursue a review of the use of writing in art practices. I will use two examples to differentiate my approach.

1. While my writing is inseparable from the work, it does not function in the same way as writing-artworks such as *sidekick*, by British video artist and 2012 Turner Prize winner Elizabeth Price.<sup>280</sup> In very simple terms, the text of Price's *sidekick* is a piece of writing and an artwork in itself, and an indispensable partner to the process of making the artwork-object that the text describes.<sup>281</sup> The text records and analyses in great detail the physical, material reality of the packing tape that Price has repeatedly unwound from hundreds of rolls upon which it is commercially distributed and onto itself, creating a form Price refers to as

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function is only present in the sense that I offer a contribution of original knowledge. I do not attempt to offer any instruction or describe any skill, although I do contribute to material knowledge. I do fully expose and display my creative process as far as possible. There is a further function that Lehmann omits: the iterative. With the final *GPEFs 1-30* part of the investigation, by using documentation to analyse the practice via particular methods the documentation has become an integral part of the work.

<sup>280</sup> Part of the Contemporary Art Research Centre at Kingston School of Art, the Centre for Useless Splendour is a virtual institution for innovative discussion and action in contemporary art, with respect to the social sphere, technology, models of knowledge and modes of experience. The Centre for Useless Splendour is divided into five interconnected conceptual spaces. For example, 'The Lumber Room - art and materiality' attends to 'the possibilities of materiality and process, unfolding the making of images and objects through accident and event'. Art theorist Katy Macleod contributes to this virtual institution and has co-edited a book that reflects on how art research processes might be understood within a broader academic framework, *Thinking Through Art: reflections on art as research*. The book includes the artwork essay *sidekick*, started in 1997, by Elizabeth Price, who is also a contributor to The Centre for Useless Splendour. Elizabeth Price, *sidekick*, (1994-2004) in Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge, eds. *Thinking Through Art: reflections on art as research* (London: Routledge, 2009), 122-131.

<sup>281</sup> "*sidekick* is a descriptive text which annotates the incremental progression of a labour-intensive activity [...] boulder was started in 1996 and is ongoing [...] One of the critical problems of this work, has been knowing how to conclude it [...] I have resigned myself to continuing it indefinitely. *sidekick* was initiated in 1997. It was started when boulder began to slow down. It is ongoing." Price, on *sidekick*, quoted by Ruth Holdsworth, initiator of 'Associates Reading Group at Spike Island', 2010. <https://associatereaders09.wordpress.com/> Accessed October 17, 2018.



'boulder'. It also scrutinises Price's experience of the process and her relationship with the artwork and its making, which is never finished.<sup>282</sup> While the coding continuum, field note book, and these chapters are all forms of writing that operate in a mutually-dependent way and describe a practice-led process, the relationships between them function very differently to that of *sidekick* and 'boulder' to which it is attached. *sidekick* is a piece of writing about an art-making process, focusing on the relationship between the maker, the making and the object, 'boulder'. Price's highly detailed, dense description and analysis of the process and experience is at odds with the factual simplicity of the method (unwinding roll after roll of packing tape onto itself, creating a sphere). My writing about the painting experiments has been an intentional means to simplify and reduce my experience, as a way of managing the recording and analysis of a large quantity of short, unrepeatable, open painting experiments.

2. My use of writing in my artistic trial of GTM coding as displayed in the Huddersfield studio is very different from how certain art practices have employed text as a specific material, such as Art & Language, for example. Art & Language, the name of an artistic practice and a partnership, was started in 1968 in Coventry, England, by artists Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell. From 1970 to 1983, several other contributors joined the group, including Charles Harrison, Joseph Kosuth, Ian Burn, Roger Cutforth and Mel Ramsden. The activities of Art & Language, that included exhibited artworks, lectures and publications such as their main published output, the journal *Art-Language*,<sup>283</sup> worked in the areas that had been opened up by the conceptual art practices of the 1960s, including those that I have described in the first chapter.<sup>284</sup>

The use of text in Art & Language was linked to a key principle that had political implications: that art projects might be created by a collaborative group, with partnership as a social and intellectual requirement, so that the work be discursive and based on shared theoretical concepts.<sup>285</sup> The output of Art & Language has been extensive, but this principle remained at

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<sup>282</sup> "[...] As the sphere grows larger it becomes more difficult to manipulate, this is an inexorable condition of the thing. To some degree this is just an issue of scale, and would pertain to other materials. But the misfit of the relation between the tape and the sphere means that at different moments, different aspects of the process slip in and out of ease and precision. Now that the sphere is large, the surface is more apt for the application of the tape, but because it is heavy it is more difficult to rotate, to allow the tape to be applied [...]" Elizabeth Price, *sidekick*, (1994- ), in Macleod and Holdridge, eds. *Thinking Through Art*, 128-129.

<sup>283</sup> *Art-Language* was published between 1969 and 1985.

<sup>284</sup> "Art & Language [...] served as an intellectual base from which to pursue that hardly imaginable change in the profession and position of art that the conceptual art movement seemed to promise in the late sixties and early seventies". Charles Harrison, 'Art & Language Paints a Landscape', *Critical Inquiry*, University of Chicago Press Journals, vol.21, no.3 (spring, 1995), 612.

<sup>285</sup> For the group Art & Language, "individuality and authorship were viewed as a suspect value and as potentially inhibiting to the pursuit of these projects". *Ibid.*, 613.

the core of all the group's activities.<sup>286</sup> Baldwin and Ramsden worked particularly with the tradition of painting. They wrote texts proposing paintings to be realised in the future, to 'challenge the capacities of painting that is conveyed by their language'.<sup>287</sup> The texts themselves were presented as paintings, printed or painted onto stretched canvas or other supports often under glass, to confirm their status as completions rather than proposals; they were not simply a form of painting with words.<sup>288</sup> Harrison, in *Conceptual Art and Painting. Further Essays on Art & Language*, describes artist's writing in three subcategories: 1. writing as documentary accompaniment to art practice and artworks; 2. writing as literature and 3. writing produced, approached and conceived as art.<sup>289</sup> My handwriting that forms an essential element of the process as displayed in the studio is not an accompaniment. It does not exist in a complementary relationship to any of the other research findings; it is an integral part. It is not literature. It is to be conceived as art, but in a way that is very different from Art & Language's use of text. The works that involved text in Art & Language demanded a critical reading from the viewer, and the participation of the viewer remained central to their exhibited artworks throughout. While the coding continuum contains my writing, its primary purpose has been to form a support for the key themes that have been extracted via the line-by-line coding of the experiment field notes. The coding continuum has enabled a form of distillation. It is documentation and it is artwork.

In 'The Problem of Documenting Fine Art Practices and Processes', British artist-writers Rebecca Fortnum and Chris Smith summarise various research initiatives during the early 2000s that investigated the relationship between visual artists' thinking and making.<sup>290</sup> These activities looked at a shift in contemporary art practices from *what* artists might document, to *why* and *how*, with a growing emphasis on articulating and understanding the tacit in art-

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<sup>286</sup> As previously stated, I have not addressed any political aspect in my research, and I only include this point to illustrate a key underlying reason for Art & Language's approach to using text.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 622.

<sup>288</sup> For example, in the mid-1990s, Baldwin and Ramsden made the *Hostages* series of works that they situated within the genre of landscape painting, which included a text describing a form of landscape painting that only ever existed in the imagination of the spectator/reader: "*Hostage III; Fields Near the Astrop Road*, oil and gold leaf on canvas 120cm x 180cm." This is my very simplified explanation of the idea which was in fact a complex statement of combined theoretical functions with ironic purpose "mobilising the power of language against the spurious authority of the visual". *Ibid.*, 626.

<sup>289</sup> Charles Harrison, *Conceptual Art and Painting. Further Essays on Art & Language* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>290</sup> Rebecca Fortnum and Chris Smith, 'The Problem of Documenting Fine Art Practices and Processes', *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, vol. 6, issue 3 (2007): 167-174.

making.<sup>291</sup> Exposing and analysing the tacit in my investigation into a concept of painting has been a fundamental motivation. It has not been a separate exercise, but rather it has formed an integral part of the work. Certain research activities that have investigated how artists use documentation have focused on the relationship *between* the artists' work *and* the documentation of its process, therefore maintaining two separate entities. For example, the symposium, 'Did Hans Namuth kill Jackson Pollock? The problem of documenting the creative process',<sup>292</sup> referred to the German-born photographer whose film revealing Pollock's painting technique paradoxically increased Pollock's fame and purportedly caused his fatal return to drink.<sup>293</sup> At that time, the 'problem' was that any exposure of the studio artist's private, secret creative processes was feared as detrimental intrusion and avoided. There was a clear division between the work that was chosen to be seen, and that which was hidden. While Fortnum and Smith acknowledge that 'the exchange between documentation, process, and finished art work has become blurred', there remain distinctions between these areas of the work. For example, in the exhibition *Inspiration to Order* that coincided with the 'Did Hans Namuth kill Jackson Pollock?' symposium, ten exhibiting artists 'displayed their decision-making processes alongside their artworks'.<sup>294</sup>

I did not set out to investigate how art-making and scientific structure might synthesise. There are various art practices and art research activities in which the art-science

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<sup>291</sup> Fortnum and Smith quote Nigel Whiteley, initiator of The Visual Intelligences Research Project at the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts: "Description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation combine to give a rich insight into the evolution of an art work, revealing what is usually tacit knowledge and, most significantly, adding the dimension of *why*, to the usual realm of *what*, and the occasionally available *how*". Ibid., 172.

<sup>292</sup> Questions that could be related to my research included: "Does documenting art 'kill' it? [...] If it is not possible to make a document that doesn't impinge in some way on the creative process, can it tell us much about how creativity happens?" 'Did Hans Namuth kill Jackson Pollock? The problem of documenting the creative process', symposium organised by a collaboration between The Visual Intelligence Research Project, an initiative within the Institute for the Contemporary Arts and Lancaster University, *Journal of Visual Art Practices*, *Journal of the National Association for Fine Art Education*, Camberwell College of Art, University of the Arts, London. Held at Chelsea College of Art, London, April 28, 2006. <http://www.visualintelligences.com/did-hans-namuth-kill-jackson-pollock.html> Accessed October 31, 2018.

<sup>293</sup> Hans Namuth approached Pollock in 1950 to photograph his painting activity. Unsatisfied, Namuth returned in 1951 to capture Pollock in motion. The ten-minute film, *Jackson Pollock 51*, affected Pollock emotionally and reportedly led him to take his first drink in two years. A version of the event and the film are available here: <https://process.arts.ac.uk/content/did-hans-namuth-kill-jackson-pollock/index.html> Accessed October 31, 2018.

<sup>294</sup> For example, "Paula Kane exhibited her 'studio wall' of studies and resource material as well as her landscape paintings". Documentation of the symposium, 'Did Hans Namuth kill Jackson Pollock?', 2006.

relationship has been explored and this is a wide area in contemporary art.<sup>295</sup> I am aware that there is a possibility of reading my project in terms of past and present explorations of science and art cooperation in art research, given that my enquiry has taken the form of a series of painting experiments and I have trialled an element of a qualitative research method that originated in the social sciences. However, I do not believe my research belongs in the field of practices that investigate the wide range of arts-science intersections. This is one of the reasons why Hawkes' uncategorisable writing about Lascaux and our connection with the land through our use of materials has been useful to contextualise my definition of grounding. Hawkes' writing could be described as a form of poetic archaeology which has created the artwork *A Land*, rather than a scientific book that is simply imaginatively written.

I have not approached my research project with the intention of contributing to the arts-science field. Rather, I have investigated systematically a particular concept of painting whereby an analytical structure originating in another discipline has been incorporated in the process through its artistic interpretation within the conventions and histories of art-making. The art-making has led the research and the coding trials have undergone testing under the conditions of a painting practice. I chose to experiment with GTM coding because it fitted with the fundamental hunch of my research as well as the requirement for an iterative means to focus and analyse simultaneously an empirical enquiry about painting. *I wanted to see what could be revealed*. It has not been a question of demonstrating art practice as scientific or the experiment as artistic, although there are possible readings as such since some interdisciplinary synergy might be felt.

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<sup>295</sup> There are many contemporary artists who use scientific structures in their work. For example, Ursula Biemann is a video essayist who creates multi-layered films from her fieldwork investigating climate change and the socio-political implications of human use of natural resources. Biemann draws on areas of scientific knowledge to structure her artistic output, often with a focus on 'situated materiality'. An example of this is Biemann's 2005 film, *Black Sea Files*, that focuses on a natural resource, Caspian oil in Caucasus, Turkey. "Drawing on investigatory fieldwork as practised by anthropologists, journalists and secret intelligence agents, the *Black Sea Files* comment on artistic methods in the field and the ways in which information and visual intelligence is detected, circulated or withheld". Human geography provides an ordering system for this and other examples of Biemann's work. Ursula Biemann, *Black Sea Files*, 2005, two-channel video installation, 43 minutes, first shown in Kunstwerke Berlin. <https://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos/black-sea-files> In *Twenty One Percent*, a science-fictional performer in a bodytech suit 'lays out the concept of cosmic cooking' by manipulating a range of different minerals, recognised foods such as forest fruits, inedible substances and liquids laid out on a table in the woods near Zurich. "Rather than the production of edibles, it aims at the transformation of matter into different states of being by extracting, distilling, filtering, cooking, jellying, reducing, decomposing, pulverizing, macerating. The video foregrounds the materialities and processes by which human and other organic bodies are kept alive, intensifying the relations to the subtle, multiple, living world". Biemann, *Twenty One Percent*, 2016, video by Biemann and Mo Diener, 18 minutes. <https://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos/21-percent> Accessed December 2, 2018.



Based on the knowledge gained from the analysis of my experience with the twenty-nine Ryman paintings, I drew the inference that the focus of my painting experiments was to be ground-based. My enquiry followed a process of experimentation, investigating a concept of painting whereby the painting experiments at the core of that process explored ways of engaging with ground in various literal and metaphorical senses. With the final experiment group, *GPEs 1-30*, this search for grounding continued while I simultaneously trialled methods, from within the experiments, following the urge to reveal the tacit in my painting activities. The displayed findings in the Huddersfield studio perhaps function on a further revelatory level, operating as a body of interconnecting elements. They are however, first and foremost findings of my process of experimentation into how to investigate thoroughly a concept of painting focusing on the significance of ground.

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