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PAINTING TOWARDS A NEW FEMININE NOISE

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Massey University

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ABSTRACT

This exegesis seeks to offer insights into and critical analysis of the motivating ideologies and painting methodologies undertaken within my studio practice. The structure of the document is oriented in relation to each word of my thesis title, Painting, Towards, New, Feminine, Noise, exploring how I understand and position these terms.

My creative practice doctoral study brings together a series of visual art bodies of work, predominantly studio-based painting extending into working with photographic processes, and found objects (historical records). The visual research is underpinned and in conversation with a consideration of how Lauren Fournier's articulation of Autotheory¹ intersects with my positionality as an artist. While at the same time the research reflects on trajectories of practice and political thought prior to and during this doctoral study, (encompassing the hybrid practices of painting and Noise Music) in order to develop a deeper understanding of and language for painting towards a new feminine noise.

Through artistic experimentation I explore how my painting practice operates in response to the new conditions of noise I propose in order to develop a deeper understanding of, and language for, painting towards a new feminine noise. This research considers the traditional meaning or intention of Noise Music as a politicised musical genre where loudness and annoyance are recognised as a protest against the status quo, during which I also observed and considered the wider patriarchal histories of Western art from a critical position.

In order to explore impacts on new meanings in sonic thought, my painting practice seeks to imagine and test ways in which the work can paint towards a new feminine noise. One such conceptualisation can be understood through artist Ellen Moffat's words: "...the capacity of small sounds to sound the differences of others..."²

1. Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and, Criticism* (London, The MIT Press, 2021).

2. Ellen N Moffat, "Strings of Sound and Sense: Towards a Feminine Sonic" (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. 8201, 2021), ii.

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INTRODUCTION

a. Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise

My thesis project *Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise* aims to reroute an understanding of Noise Music through a process of reclamation towards a feminine and feminist context, where noise is no longer the provenance of a largely patrilineal history. The version I have imagined is still free to contain volume and works towards an 'expanded field of noise' to make and hold space through the presence of my musical interests and visual work for those previously overlooked. Through this work, I hope to extend upon extant interventions in this space such as that by Fanny Chiarello's recent publication titled *BASTA NOW women, trans & non-binary in experimental music* and in doing so address the wider exclusion of women, trans and non-binary people in experimental music.³

The structure of the exegesis document is oriented in relation to each word of my thesis title, *Painting, Towards, New, Feminine, Noise*, exploring how I understand and position these terms and to tease out the questions and answers within this investigation. I discuss each word as a sequential chapter heading, as they are positioned in order of their location within the title's sentence structure, and as I gather knowledge towards resolution as the thesis progresses.

This document addresses both the theoretical and visual research I embarked on to explore how my painting practice operates in response to the new conditions of noise I propose, and with that, how I understand this functioning in current local and global contexts. Central to this has been a deep investigation into several questions including "who has the right to make noise and how do I define this?" Is noise just sound, or does it encompass other things? Is a concept or definition of noise "political"? How do visual artists see noise as part of their practice? Who are the feminist and/or female noise makers of relevance past and present? How can noise be redefined outside of a dominant masculine narrative? How do painting and audio/noise work together, and what does this achieve?

While my practice embraces both noise/music and painting, the works being put forward for assessment are solely visual, rather than sonic in their final form. The fundamental (but not exhaustive) research points underpinning the greater material investigation of this project has been the transferal of musical theorems into the methodology of painting, for example by utilising and shifting Richard Serra's verbs list⁴ – originally conceived for sculpture – into a language for paint.

Key for my research has been finding inspiration from a selection of local and globally residing female musicians and artists from across the decades who breathe revolutionary life into the twentieth and twenty-first century creative worlds I occupy, those who chime with my own route as an artist. The women

3. Fanny Chiarello, *BASTA NOW, Women, Trans & Non-binary in Experimental Music* (Permanent Draft, LDN, 2024)

4. Richard Serra. verb list. 1967 | MoMA, accessed January 11, 2025, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/152793>.

I speak of work both inside and outside of academia, and have art practices I would position as existing inside their practice-of-living, not as an adjacency, or to paraphrase American art historian David Joselit, not “beside it”.⁵

By framing my practice with the title, *Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise*, I am positioning the work in a conversation with ideas of the feminine and feminism. Part of this investigation has been a deep engagement with my own lived experience, but it was important for me to also engage with others, to hear their experiences, and to reflect on both synergies and divergences. Hence the contextual research includes interviews with practicing artists operating in similar creative areas to my own. Particularly illuminating and heartening has been their wide-ranging and personal responses to both the words ‘feminine’ and ‘feminism’ and these demonstrated that the contemporary understanding of these terms is polymorphous in nature.

I also discuss the Noise Music genre as belonging to a dominating patrilineal legacy, and noting that while it can be viewed as a vehicle for protest and revolution, its values, signifiers and strategies, broadly speaking, mirror aspects of what it is remonstrating.

The patriarchal structures that continue to guide and systemise the realities of everyday life have been well-documented in the art world and beyond, but I advocate that this situation need not be the dominating condition within a studio practice. I have difficulty aligning myself with many historical theorists, those embedded within the culture of patriarchy. In this area I have always felt, in my gut, that their history is not my history. One of many artists I could cite as an ally in this regard would be Peaches⁶, a prominent musician whose life practice is that of a feminist artist. In SPIKE Art Magazine’s issue on the subject of Patriarchy, Peaches explains, “I see patriarchy as the most problematic system the world is facing. We must work together to dismantle the intersectional injustices... Patriarchy isn’t about individual situations, it’s about systems.”⁷ I understand this statement from Peaches as being less about apportioning individual blame for the continued existence of patriarchy, but more crucially as an ongoing dominating system of oppression that requires a complete overhaul.

b. Autotheory

Autotheory seems to best describe the practices of artists, writers, and other art and culture workers who move between the worlds of contemporary art, literature, and academia, in spaces where practice and research, writing and studio art, self-reflection and philosophical study meet... juxtaposing critical research with autobiographical reflection.⁸

5. “beside it”, paraphrased from the title of David Joselit’s essay, “Painting Beside Itself”, *OCTOBER* magazine, No.30 (Fall, 2009, The MIT Press).

6. Peaches, is an iconic American feminist, musician, director and performance artist, born 1966

7. Peaches, “Peaches – How Do You Take Down the Patriarchy?” *SPIKE Art Magazine* ISSUE 68, (Summer 2021), 121.

8. Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and, Criticism* (London, The MIT Press, 2021), 19.

Fundamental to this document has been an engagement with developing ideas around Autotheory, where throughout this exegesis I seek to explore this merging of theory with everyday, lived experience. Writers, philosophers and artists have challenged painting's critical legitimacy throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. Feminism has similarly been subject to critique, necessitating a theoretical revision centered upon feminism's claims to speak for all women, and the need for more fulsome consideration of race, gender, religion, disability, class and an intersection with the environment. The feminist approach undertaken in this PhD acknowledges there is always work to do; however it is also worthwhile to reflect on what helpful actions have occurred. For myself, I consider feminism as a set of responsive, living theories and actions.

In the interest of clarity, and to be responsible and responsive to Autotheory's emergence from and alignment with black and queer communities, I acknowledge my positionality accordingly. I am a Pākehā and an AFAB (assigned female at birth) woman and feminist, and spent my early years living in a farming district at the south of the South Island of Aotearoa. Therefore it is self-evident that within my own life, my experience will always be that of a Pākehā feminist. I am aware of this positionality and partiality. I do not stake any claim to my work *being* Autotheory, however the context of some subjects discussed, in my mind, have resonances with my life politics as a feminist and as an art practitioner. I have looked towards Autotheory as both an inspiration and support mechanism. My introduction was through Lauren Fournier's 2021 book *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*⁹, published by MIT Press. In this text Lauren Fournier states,

The term "autotheory" emerged in the early part of the twenty-first century to describe works of literature, writing, and criticism that integrate autobiography with theory and philosophy in ways that are direct and self-aware. Most simply, the term refers to the integration of theory and philosophy with autobiography, the body, and other so-called personal and explicitly subjective modes. It is a term that describes a self-conscious way of engaging with theory—as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice—alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment...¹⁰

Both my visual and written research emerges from a position asserting an artist can work from the place of their own life experiences, all the while new experiences are unfolding and assimilated into the intellect, stored for use—now, or later. My background has everything to do with the formation of my current artistic and personal belief systems. I can find an orientation with Autotheory through aspects of a life practice lived through a lens of feminism. The life practice I refer to was well-formed prior to entering tertiary education in 2009. I maintained a decades-long experimental music practice in the genres of Noise and Riot Grrrl, both openly politicised musical practices of protest. As a person who has resisted patriarchal dominance I found in my lived experience I had ideas in common with aspects of Autotheory. Especially

9. Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and Criticism*.

10. *Ibid.*,16.

that of feminism and the body as a listener and performer, through my work as a drummer/percussionist, audience member and observer where I then translate these musical experiences into the “fictions and non-fictions”¹¹ of painted work. Influential precedents of feminist performers and video makers from feminism’s second wave such as Carolee Schneemann complete a circle where in the twenty-first century I can find a commonality with Fournier’s citing of former colleague Shannon Bell’s ideas around a performance-based philosophy,

Performance art is at the forefront of postmodern theorizing. Artists are performing theory: acting out theory. Performance art destabilizes the established conception of what is considered theoretical engagement and broadens the concept of theory to include new areas of life and new political subjects.¹²

With these thoughts in mind, I found a critical alignment with Autotheory, and as Fournier notes, ‘...the history of feminism is, in a sense, a history of Autotheory—one that actively seeks to bridge theory and practice and upholds tenets like “the personal is political.”¹³ Further to this, Fournier remarks “the topic of theoretical reflection is catalyzed by their lived experience as women in patriarchal and colonial societies.”¹⁴

I can attempt, through a multiplicity of choices and with care, to direct my gaze towards communities who by varying degrees locate themselves away from the status quo.

To carry this conversation into contemporary genealogies as an added condition towards Autotheory, I can draw in the catch-all term D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself), a phrase for explaining the activities of individuals and groups. Groups usually associated with D.I.Y. activities are often motivated to do so by political choice, economic-driven choice or necessity, artistic vision or a combination of all three. In any case they all tend to display an avoidance of the usual processes and channels for operating creative tasks. For example, running your own small record label to avoid the struggle of convincing a ‘major’ record label to release your experimental or noise—hence of little commercial value—music.

Adding to the understanding of D.I.Y. there is also the phrase ‘self-organised’. A few years ago, while visiting a bookshop I spied on a pink spine capitalised, bold black text bearing the title *SELF-ORGANISED*¹⁵. Under time constraints, at a quick glance one of the authors I am familiar with, Jan Verwoert, Berlin-based art critic and cultural theorist was in the contributors list. I was attracted to the title as it rang in as another moniker for do-it-yourself. With an alternate angle of interest and signaled by Verwoert’s presence, it was worthwhile to note this text had a particular specificity towards, but not limited

11. Lauren Fournier and McKenzie Wark. “Autotheory as Feminist Practice”, November 30, 2020, *The MIT Press Podcast*, podcast, Hosted and produced by Sam Kelly, 44:15, <https://mitpress.podbean.com/e/lauren-fournier-and-mckenzie-wark-autotheory-as-feminist->

12. Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and, Criticism*, 28.

13. *Ibid.*, 17.

14. *Ibid.*, 18.

15. Stine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen, *Self-Organised* (London, U.K, Bergen, Norway: Open Editions ; Hordaland Art Centre, 2013).

to, the art world. Verwoert states,

In the arts, the question of self-organisation usually presents itself in very concrete terms: either you do it, or you drown... if we don't our lives tend to fall apart very quickly... The need to create and maintain the economic conditions for the continuation of your practice is a daily challenge.¹⁶

From my own history I would offer the economic realities and methodologies at work in a rural setting, self-organised and D.I.Y. skills are paramount. I absorbed this template into my own life and creative practices, with a side benefit qualification as a feminist. As I explained in an interview from BLOT online magazine in 2021,

Feminism means different things to every person, for myself, feminism came into my life early on and it's wholly due to my background. My folks were almost eco-terrorists but were also devout Catholics. There were a lot of contradictory elements going on and so feminism came upon me naturally as a way to unbind myself from various expectations. Therefore as part of the make-up of my person feminism carried through into my art practice.¹⁷

I was influenced early on to occupy my art practice as a 'way of life' or a 'way to life' similar in construction to the D.I.Y. nature of farming, later leading to among other things releasing my own and friends' musical recordings. Curator Natasha Conland recognised this D.I.Y. aspect of Aotearoa's culture with her curated 2014 exhibition titled *Freedom Farmers: New Zealand Artists Growing Ideas*, in which I was lucky enough to be included with a suite of 40 paintings titled *The Social Life of Painting*. The coupling of my feminism with the self-organised conditions of my background, while working for a long while outside of university structures and then later on gaining tertiary qualifications, led me to recognise commonalities with Autotheory's meld of critical theory with life practice.

c. Background and Context

My philosophical approach in this thesis is constructed from my background, which I position as being crucial to the formation of my art practice. While my thesis remains acutely aware of the tensions and multilayered complexities of a contemporary feminist discourse, my feminist politic is one that I hope supports all artists and people who have experienced exclusion. I aim not to speak for other marginalised artists, that is to not make their voices my own, but alternately my art practice aims to open and secure spaces for artists who have experienced marginalization due to the dominance of patriarchal cultures both within the context of Aotearoa and abroad.

The location of my birth was in the southern farming district of the Southland township known as Tūātapere which borders on the Fiordland National

16. Hebert and Karlsen, *Self-Organised*, 123.

17. Stella Corkery, "Questions for Stella Corkery," web log, *Blot* (blog), September 2022, <https://www.blot.online/journal/1/questions-for-stella-corkery/>.

Park region. Living with my parents I grew up on a coastal sheep farm in the district of Te Wae Wae, just six miles from Tūātapere. The farm reached down to the cliffs of Te Wae Wae Bay and the mouth of the Waiau awa, on clear days standing on the edge of the cliffs we could see further south to Hautere (Solander Islands), and always in sight to the west are the Takitimu Mountains. In the 1960s and 1970s Tūātapere was a busy small country town, thriving from the milling of native and introduced colonial pine forests. Southland was in many ways isolated from the rest of Aotearoa, yet due to its agricultural economy and a conservative predilection it appeared to be a fiscally healthy and politically independent province. That was until the 1980s, when economic decisions from within Aotearoa and broader global occurrences drastically affected the economy of the region.

Through the 1960s I attended the sole-teacher Te Wae Wae Primary School while growing up on the family farm with my parents (Chris and Pat), while my older brothers and sister would come and go from their private boarding schools in Otago. My parents adored the region, especially the lake areas of Lake Hauroko and Lake Manapouri. Both were deeply involved in local ecological issues, such as The Save Manapouri Campaign which was very prominent in our lives. On weekends during this campaign I would accompany my father as we drove around the nether regions of Southland and Fiordland door knocking and seeking signatures for the Save Manapouri Petition.

After a full day farming, in the evenings my father would often be busy in his workshop building boats, which he then moored on Lake Hauroko. During the 1940's, as a young couple my parents explored and photographed widely the Fiordland Lakes area. As a family through to the 1970s we spent a great amount of weekend time boating in the Lakes region, Boating was purely recreational, no water sports, just driving around on Lake Hauroko looking at the scenery or picnicking on a tucked away beach. The experience was idyllic and the area was almost always completely deserted. Ours was the only one of two boats moored on the lake for years. Very few people came to Lake Hauroko for weekend excursions, due to the intensity of the sandfly population. The non-visited status of the lake was one reason my parents loved this place. I think they viewed no one else visiting the area as fortunate, in that it kept the relatively undiscovered (by Pākehā) environment unspoiled.

Te Wae Wae School closed in 1971 with eleven students remaining on the roll, of which four were my year-class. The school made the transition to the bigger school in Tūātapere and by contrast my new year-class contained forty-three pupils. By 1973 my parents had shifted me to a public secondary school in Invercargill, boarding privately in various homes for the following five years. Chris and Pat were both gifted musically, and my father also in the visual arts, they ensured that my siblings and I undertook four or five years of piano theory and practical lessons: however, for them these interests were to remain as hobbies only. Pastimes such as the local pottery club or the theatrical society were places where community members would enjoy local company as social activities over any vocational ambitions.

I maintained a powerful inclination towards both music and the visual arts, and so I left the rural district of Te Wae Wae in 1978 at eighteen, relocating

to Dunedin to pursue university study. It was an easy move to Dunedin, away from what did appear to be an idyllic life in Southland, however remaining in the district came with its own expectations I was unable to live up to. Still the early experiences of my youth living in and around Western Southland and Fiordland remain a constant in my memories.

Dunedin was already familiar to me, as family had always lived in the area. I was aware the region was steeped in a visual art and bohemian history. At the time I arrived in 1979, the contemporary alternative music scene of Dunedin was forming. In time I left academic study and instead became involved with the art and music scenes active in the Otago region throughout the 1980s. During the mid 1980s I found a large unoccupied villa in nearby Port Chalmers, moving in with friends. My time was spent working for The Chippendale House Arts Collective and developing a knowledge of experimental and improvisational musical forms. My first band, Angel Head, began at that time and later released a cassette on the Xpressway¹⁸ label.

In 1989 I moved to Tāmaki Makaurau, continuing performing music with my southern cohorts as Angel Head who had also ventured north, essentially relocating to the like-minded creative community of Auckland. By 1994 I had opened a small, curated retail store named Bunny Boutique on Karangahape Road serving the local community in a unique way. At Bunny we worked with friends from the local music and art community. The boutique became a hub for a particular group of musicians, fashion lovers, and cross-generational artists.

Having had music released through Xpressway, Flying Nun and Siltbreeze (USA) previous to the Bunny days, with Angel Head and then Queen Meanie Puss (QMP) – who as it turned out with our mix of southern noir, experimental music ideas and a feminist manifesto, we were a precursor for the later Aotearoa Riot Grrrl Bands. Later in the decade it felt fitting to use the platform of Bunny to produce small runs of seven inch lathe records. I began my two small run record labels, GIRL ALLIANCE, releasing vinyl to document and represent the new local Riot Grrrl scene, and Pink Air, as a more underground lathe-cuts and CDRs alternative through which we released local experimental, noise and psychedelic music. After QMP concluded I co-formed a new experimental noise band, White Saucer and then Fake Purr, one of the burgeoning local Riot Grrrl bands. The ‘scene’ was inclusive and carried with it a certain cachet as to what was occurring musically and socially. Pink Air is still active with the recent release of a cassette titled Fields under my solo nom de plume, *Arrows*.

18. Xpressway was a Ōtepoti based record label started in 1988 by musician and author Dr Bruce Russell and musician Peter Jefferies.

PART ONE and TWO: A Synopsis

PART ONE: The Text

To return to the thesis title, *Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise*, although conceived of quickly, became intrinsic to the process of developing the work. The words of the title announce the process of the visual as it unfolded through the emerging exegesis, holding fast to the driving conceit. In my mind the project was bound to paint towards a new feminine noise in order to unravel whatever answers formed themselves out of the progression of its own making. Additionally, when I visualise the written portion in my mind's eye, I see it almost from a position once removed, which could be said to be a painter's way of viewing. I have always imagined the written structure as a visual design, even diagrammatic. This may sound risky to admit, but as I have conceived of this why-for in writing form, the exegesis titles appeared as the titles of an album of songs, then leading into the album's fuller liner notes, framing Part Two - the album. In reality Part Two is an account of the visual works created through this research study, containing critical engagement with aspects from local and international artists influential to this process, important studio investigations, and the visual work presented for examination.

In Chapter One: Painting, I discuss how my practice responds to the ongoing assessments and reassessments of the critical 'Deaths of Painting'. In this manner I find a common bond of contrapuntal development and assurances with the rises and falls, collapses and fails, of four waves of feminism. I will offer an overview of both the waves or movements of painting and feminism in this chapter. Like a one-part electric and one-part fusty scent, I find these properties to be the bass note of my painting practice. Inquiries into sound absorb both paintings and feminisms' calamities reflecting them back onto the canvas surface as material responses in colour, form and gesture.

In Chapter Two: Towards suggests the motion of this investigation as centred in the process of an ongoing research as both theoretical and practical, aiming to build momentum through experimentation and plain old slog in the studio. This is supported by an ambition to locate some visual sense for the conceptual quest of how the New Feminine Noise may appear.

Continuing to Chapter Three: New, ideas of the new unfold in the studio as experiments with paint reveal unforeseen material proposals, speaking to the concepts of feminine noise I seek to discover. Additionally the exegesis highlights art practices previously overlooked. There is an emphasis placed upon the awkwardness of belated discovery when coupled with the celebration of overdue recognition, a phenomenon particular to our current decade.

In Chapter Four: Feminine, the complexities of the feminine are explored as tools for opening out visual discussions on feminist ideas. The feminine subjects researched are firstly pulled from ancient history with a discussion on the origin of the word feminine. I investigate relationships between musical practices and visual art practices relevant to the context of my sound and painting practice. This occurs through research into local and global cross-generational art practices that in my view contain feminist subject matter. The feminine and feminism are both discussed in additional depth in

interviews with fellow practitioners (as mentioned earlier) in the Appendix at the rear of this document.

Lastly in Chapter Five: Noise, I explore 'noise' as it is associated with my sound practice, where noise has been identified with an experimental sound culture of extreme volume as a form of expression and protest. It has been noted that the genre of noise and experimental music is weighted towards a masculine culture of exclusivity and non-acknowledgment of artists outside of that paradigm. Artists discussing said exclusions can be found in a number of areas; for example, Tara Rodgers' 2010 significant publication *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound*¹⁹, cites experimental composer and musician Annea Lockwood identifying this absence as a

'...great hole, a black hole of no info' about women composers (interview with author, September 25, 2004). Another artist remarked that her entrée into the world of electronic music felt as if she had landed on a planet where something had happened to make all the women disappear.²⁰

Additionally, Leah Perry's essay *I Can Sell My Body If I Wanna: Riot Grrrl Body Writing and Performing Shameless Feminist Resistance*²¹, discusses "riot grrrl's impetus was to combat patriarchy and to empower young women to connect with one another and take up space in unprecedented ways, in the punk scene and in the world."²²

The version of noise I wish to create is still free to contain volume but aims to open this into an expanded field, a concept that makes the in-real-life presence and recognition of women, non-binary and trans people, the noise. The chain-linked history of my noise project takes its cues not from a male-dominated historical legacy but exchanges this for a curated, personal genealogy of expanded noise, both in music and painting, almost entirely forerun by women. I will explore this through a transposition of sound into the medium of paint.

PART TWO: The Work

In Part Two, I discuss the works made in response to my investigations into the concepts around new feminine noise. The majority of the works are grouped into series with one work, *Drummer Leg*, sui generis. The series are grouped as follows:

- *Atmosphere/s*
- *Sound Like Air Group*
- *I Hear You*

19. Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

20. *Ibid.*, 2.

21. Leah Perry, "I Can Sell My Body If I Wanna: Riot Grrrl Body Writing and Performing Shameless Feminist Resistance" *Lateral* 4, no. 1 (May 2015), <https://doi.org/10.25158/14.1.3>.

22. Perry, "I Can Sell My Body If I Wanna: Riot Grrrl Body Writing and Performing Shameless Feminist Resistance", 2.

Selected works from each series as well as *Drummer Leg* were exhibited at the Engine Room Massey University in July 2024.

As an approach to this exegesis document I recommend reading Part One inline with the order you would read the heading title, chapter by chapter as it outlines the broader framing of this research. This written portion moves through the questions, problems and discoveries that occur throughout the research process leading into Part Two: the creative work. In Part Two the visual work is documented chronologically in written form, as created through the timeline of the PhD study. The progressive nature of the thesis in part is a documentation of events, therefore I aim for this presentation to be in the manner of, or in line with an autotheoretical approach.

PART ONE: Addressing The Title

PAINTING

I understand painting to belong to an arena²³ with the capacity to encompass many material mediums, types of surfaces and installation strategies, any of which may no longer need to be fastened to a wall or vertical substrate. However, within this exegesis my painting practice operates largely in contradiction to the radicalised nature of the expanded field of painting. My painted work in the main resides within the traditional format of oil paint, gesso, on cotton or linen canvas, attached to a square or rectangular shaped wooden stretcher-frame-support and finally for display attached to an up-right structure or wall.

There are, however, a few exceptions to this rule that have developed out of my study as part of the usual activity of experimentation at play within a studio practice, ideas are tested and thoughts are executed with various materials on differing grounds. As examples of this expansion and produced in the initial year of this study, I can offer the series of six text experiments — the *Electric Folk* paintings, painted on plastic structures. Nearer to the conclusion of the project — the painted work moved away from stretcher framing into loose open canvases, e.g., *Drummer Leg* that were affixed to the wall only by a small number of attachments running along the top of the painting (this is discussed in more depth in Part Two: The work). Further examples of a divergence from the traditional stretcher and canvas constructions of my practice would be the painted surfaces of ten and twelve-inch records. These part paintings part painted objects in turn were absorbed by photography and digital assemblage and titled *I Hear You*, which is discussed more fully in Part Two: The Work.

A 10" Record, I Hear You and *Drummer Leg* went on to accompany the *Sound Like Air Group* — a selection of small stretcher-based paintings as part of the visual examination at The Engine Room in 2024.

As introduced in the Synopsis earlier on page eight, the groups of painted work for examination will be discussed in greater depth in Part Two: The Work, of this document. For the moment however Part One: The Titles, will continue to discuss the significance of the PhD title as it is broken down into its solo word constituents; 'Painting', 'Towards', 'New', 'Feminine', 'Noise'. We begin again with Painting.

There is a material satisfaction when working with the traditional stretcher support as it offers a solid physical foundation or an object to work from. I consider the preparation of the ground, the hand stretching of the canvas, stapling and applying the gesso surface to the canvas as one of the integral parts of my painting practice. The ongoing physical relationship of crafting or building this object provides a material relationship with the painting's assembly, enriching the experience of being a 'painter'. Additionally emphasizing the

23. A term coined by the American critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952 to define a specific set of Abstract Expressionist artists who saw the canvas as an "arena in which to act." <https://www.artsy.net/gene/action-painting>

human to object relationship as an adjustment away from objects and painting supplies as factory made. To add, the construction or crafting process offers a feminist intervention into the legacy of painting. A fellow art student I studied with a number of years ago, Cathlin Ward-Michell, summed the function of the frame up neatly when I asked her what she thought of the act of 'throwing a tantrum with paint', Ward-Michell thought this was all very well as long as the tantrum was kept within the confines of the frame. This assertion offered me a renewed perspective for the purpose of the stretcher frame, as a container and not so much as a restrainer.

In the previous paragraph I italicised the word 'traditional'. I do this as recognition of a change in the conception of painting as a tradition prolonging the status quo. As I bring the 'feminine' increasingly into the forefront of this work, I observe progressively explicit sideways shifts away from the center, opening the medium up to connect with specific painting treatments and identities from the past by reaffirming them in the present. As another painter who operates in this way locally, I would cite the painted work of Emma Fitts, as noted in her artist page biography Fitts engages in:

Rehabilitating histories, she takes as her subject matter...political personages such as Louise Henderson, Edith Collier, Frances Hodgkins...and Marilyn Waring. Inspiration is provided by almost out-moded fashions, aged clothing patterns as well as worn bolts of cloth. Aside from these historically-informed re-visitations, Fitts also attempts to realise felt-states in configurations or block-like shapes of darkened fabrics...²⁴

To my mind this statement recalls the women designers and artists of the Bauhaus era. It is not essential they are known specifically as painters, but as dedicated artists who experimented with textile and colour. In Aotearoa a contemporary connection with textile works can be established by two 2024 exhibitions. Firstly *Margery Blackman: Weaving Life* at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, co-curated by Elle Loui August and Jane Groufsky display woven tapestries crafted through the late 1960s to the 1980s of noted Otago fibre artist Margery Blackman. While the group show *Modern Women: Flight of Time* curated by Julia Waite and exhibited at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gathers together lesser known works of painter Flora Scales and the 1958 handloom-woven curtains of Ilse von Randow sharing gallery space with iconic and generationally separated artists such the painter Louise Henderson and Jacqueline Fahey.

Another disclosure that connects a traditional narrative to the formings of intersectional contemporary painting comes from Amy Sillman's panel Q&A from a 2010 symposium²⁵ and transcribed in the book of the same name, *Painting, the Implicit Horizon*.²⁶ Sillman asks...

24. "Emma Fitts," Melanie Roger Gallery: Emma Fitts, accessed January 10, 2025, <https://melanierogergallery.com/stockroom/emma-fitts/>.

25. Symposium - Painting: The Implicit Horizon 2010, Jan van Eyck Academie at Maastricht, the Netherlands.

26. Carol M. Armstrong et al., *Painting, the Implicit Horizon* (Maastricht, NL: The Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012).

Why are there so many queer painters in their twenties and thirties right now? Well, I think it's because they didn't think that (painting) was done for. Or they thought that it was pleasurable to do something that was supposedly forbidden and dead. There's a paradox...is the forbidden on the other side of the coin of pleasure?²⁷

The 2010 timing of this symposium places Sillman's statement in line with a resurgence of interest in identity politics, importantly within painting and among artists younger than myself. This is performed as a renewed attention to figuration. Locally this can be witnessed through the work of artists such as Rea Burton, Owen Connors, Brunelle Dias, Christina Pataiali and August Ward. While my painted work continues to ground itself in abstraction, as a feminist practitioner I also found agency in the realm of painting through the abandoned spaces the topos of the 'Deaths of Painting' revealed.

The Deaths Summarised

The themes of the deaths and recoveries are far broader than this document can attest to, however, to follow is a starting point into a history that has held a fascination for my practice. It is helpful also to keep in mind activities exploring the ideas of 'death' as obsolescence around prevailing theories of art and painting were, I would propose, explored in many artists' studios near the recorded times that so far remain undiscovered by the greater world of art.

I have chosen a precis of artist and curator Peter Fischli's explication of the deaths of painting from his essay *The Illuminated Dim Bulb* published in the catalogue for his curated 2021 exhibition *STOP PAINTING* with Fondazione Prada.²⁸ According to Fischli the first widely documented 'death' is said to have occurred in 1840 when the French painter Paul Delaroche declared upon hearing of the discovery of photography, "From today, painting is dead!"²⁹ Painting was no longer the only provider of representational images from the surrounding world. This statement (with relations now to a contemporary echo of AI inducing concern) is thought to encapsulate the anxieties surrounding new technologies as they appeared throughout the industrial revolution of the mid-19th century. The second death can be attributed to the invention of the readymade. As a development onwards from the procedures of photography with new and more accurate methods to depict the world, the readymade utilised items actually from the world. Edgar Degas for example, presented his sculpture *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* 1879-1881 dressed with a hair ribbon and tutu made of fabric.³⁰

Fischli identifies the third demise as 'the death of the author', "after the topic of representation was attacked through photography, and after the topic of creation and creator was attacked through the readymade, the next attack was against the author or the idea of authorship."³¹ Fischli continues, adding "the idea of the genius creator was called into question" providing us with the example of twentieth century painter Lucio Fontana as an artist

27. Carol M. Armstrong et al., *Painting, the Implicit Horizon*, 128.

28. Peter Fischli, *Stop Painting* (Milano: Fondazione Prada, 2021).

29. Ibid., 8.

30. Peter Fischli, *Stop painting Exhibition leaflet* (Milano: Fondazione Prada, 2021).

31. Peter Fischli, *Stop Painting*, 3.

who did indeed paint his canvases but also slashed and cut them, an act of destruction albeit in a composed manner. In addition to this Roland Barthes' text *The Death of the Author* published in 1968 is noted as a marker in this era of a critique into the concepts of originality, purity and authenticity. Fischli however also draws our attention back to the idea of authenticity as something addressed by artists for many years prior to Barthes' book, citing the work of Manet. By adopting the compositional structure of an earlier 1500s Italian painting by Titian—*Venus of Urbino* Manet's 1863 work, *Olympia* adopts "sampling strategies from the art historical cannon."³²

To offer more models of the various participants in the narrative of the Death of Painting and onwards to the fourth cessation, there is a historical argument for a ground-zero position for painting in the form of the 'black painting'. A much earlier precedent of such a work is Kazimier Malevich's 1915 *Black Square*, Malevich himself describing the work as the "zero point of painting"³³. In the late 1950s and 1960s, black paintings rose again in the U.S.A.. Fischli quotes the American painter Ad Reinhardt as saying he was "just making the last paintings which anyone can make"³⁴ in reference to his own series of black works.

As we reach Fischli's final and fifth argument the focus is on paintings' crises throughout the 1980s, painting now finding itself being absorbed into the prevailing economic conditions, Fischli stating "the fifth narrative thread focuses on the crisis of criticism as such in the so-called late capitalist society. Since the 1980s the idea of the avant-garde became obsolete and dissolved. Criticism began to be absorbed immediately by the market."³⁵ continuing to state "under such conditions, painting can be seen as a metaphor of neoliberal capitalism."³⁶

Yet there were those artists who were not a part of the highly capitalised patriarchal western painting systems; they continued to paint right through these histories and remained perhaps, for better or worse, untainted and at a distance. Stepping back from the death-drive narrative to address the wider situation of the well-known painters, the 1960s artists' such as Ad Reinhardt (noted above) and Frank Stella were embroiled in the zero points of a white, masculine, western painting critique. There were however other painters at this time who were inspired, Lee Krasner and Mary Heilmann (to mention just two) to paint on in spite of the prevailing theories. Dwelling in this era also was another variation on the main narrative of black paintings as the final word, there were those artists who created 'black' paintings but alternately from the experience of *being* black, and alive and present, such as Norman Lewis, Romare Bearden and Vivianne Browne.

Offering a contemporary path away from the repetitive deaths, another contributor to the *STOP PAINTING* catalogue, artist and writer Arthur Fink in his essay *Obituaries and Eulogies for Painting... And Their Amendments* calls attention

32. Fischli, *Stop painting*, 3.

33. Aleksandra Shatskikh, *Black Square: Malevich and the Origin of Suprematism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

34. Fischli, *Stop painting*, 4.

35. *Ibid.*, 4, 5.

36. *Ibid.*, 5.

to Isabelle Graw³⁷ who believes strongly in the vitality of painting, Fink notes, "Painting according to Graw, has always had the ability to absorb criticism and to re-mold it to reinforce itself."³⁸

The Waves of Feminism Outlined

As a feminist and dedicated painter, in my view there are commonalities in the form of a highly considered process of critique found within the waves of western feminism and the aforementioned 'Deaths of Painting' I will propose a similar situation of critique, absorption and reconfiguration holds true for the legacies of feminism. To demonstrate feminism's ability to accept both criticism from outside the 'movement' and self-critique as it operates from within to respond with a newly generated self awareness I argue has developed vital conversations full of fertile histories in both painting and feminism, which I find inspiring to engage with.

The waves of feminism I refer to are largely thought of as four movements occurring from the mid to late nineteenth century until now. The recent 2021 UN discussion paper *New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations by UN Women*³⁹ maintains the 'waves' of feminism are used to periodise the evolutions of feminism, to capture significant features that happen at different times indicating "more intense social movement activism"⁴⁰. The metaphor of the wave can be thought of as a modulating wave where high feminist activity is noted as the rise in the wave, whereas at times of reassessment and reorganisation the wave is at a lower position, "It is important to note that the temporality of a wave has no sharply delineated beginning or end. Some forms of activism continue for a while, while others fade away."⁴¹

The waves signify previous generations of feminist activity dependent upon their own eras' context, enacting politics in different ways. Past feminisms may both chime or conflict with changing social and cultural awareness as we develop individual and collective consciousness. I offer a top level synopsis of thought about the four waves, which is by necessity brief and an overview for the purposes of considering how I have understood feminism, and how waves generally map against published thought in relation to Painting's recurring 'deaths', and the chronology of Noise Music.

Sharon Crozier-De Rosa states in her article *What are the four waves of feminism? And what comes next?*⁴², the first wave is considered to have originated and grown in momentum from the mid-nineteenth century as the calls for a woman's right to vote became emboldened. In fact, it was in 1893 the first nation to finally acquiesce and grant women the right to vote was Aotearoa.⁴³

37. Isabelle Graw is a writer, curator, educator, co-founder & publisher of *Texte zur Kunst* art journal.

38. Fischli, *Stop painting*, 201.

39. Maxine Molyneux, Adrija Dey, Malu A.C. Gatto, and Holly Rowden. *New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations* (UN Women Discussion Papers, (2021). doi:10.18356/25216112/40.)

40. Molyneux, *New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations*, 4.

41. *Ibid.*, 4.

42. Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, "What Are the Four Waves of Feminism? And What Comes Next?," *The Conversation*, (March 8, 2025) <https://theconversation.com/what-are-the-four-waves-of-feminism-and-what-comes-next-224153>.

43. *Ibid.*,

Members of this early feminist movement were known as the Suffragettes and continued to be visibly active up until 1920 when the vote was awarded to women in the US. It is crucial however to qualify this as pertaining only to the white women in the United States of America. The *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE* online blog *Not All Women Gained the Vote in 1920*⁴⁴ points out full electoral equality was withheld from “Native American, Asian American, Latinx and African American suffragists” and that for many women this was the beginning of an extended fight over many decades.

Genna Carlisle writes on second wave feminism in her article *Why should we challenge assumptions about second-wave feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand?* located in the online journal *Australian Women's History Network*

Second-wave feminism took hold globally from the late-1960s to mid-1980s, and is well-known in its calls for a united ‘sisterhood’ and its challenges to society’s patriarchal structures. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this saw a boom in feminist organisations, movements, events, publications and more.⁴⁵

Outside of Aotearoa and as an invaluable counterpoint to the still prevalent *white-feminism* of the western world, Crozier-De Rosa adds, “African American feminists produced their own critical and influential texts, including bell hooks’ *Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* in 1981 and Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* in 1984.”⁴⁶ However in Aotearoa Geena Carlisle reported “The individual and gender-based focus of this feminism meant that the movement overlooked other forms of interconnected oppression....one that excludes the central importance of Māori women in the development of the nation’s feminism works.”⁴⁷

The 1980s to the 1990s delivered the third wave of feminism. Policy related activism occurred for example in academic areas women’s studies were consolidated as a discipline (now reconfigured as Gender Studies) and grass-root actions for organisations raising awareness of violence against women received wider public recognition. The third wave produced the Riot Grrrl movement, the bands and publications with affiliations covered issues like “homophobia, sexual harassment, misogyny, racism, and female empowerment.”⁴⁸ Later in the decade from Europe there appeared the radical feminist band Pussy Riot. The third wave era was known also for igniting the term ‘Girl power’ and for the rise of Corporate-feminism.

Following the 1990s and on into the 2000s feminist activity was more subdued until the follow-up fourth wave began to appear. At first glance quietly by way of the developing world-wide-web in the form of personal blogs on

44. *Not All Women Gained the Vote in 1920*. PBS, July 6, 2020. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/vote-not-all-women-gained-right-to-vote-in-1920/>.

45. Geena Carlisle, “Why Should We Challenge Assumptions about Second-Wave Feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand?,” *Australian Women's History Network*, May 29 (2024), <https://www.auswhn.com.au/blog/second-wave-feminism-in-aotearoa/>.

46. Crozier-De Rosa, “What Are the Four Waves of Feminism? And What Comes Next?”

47. Carlisle, Geena. *Why Should We Challenge Assumptions about Second-Wave Feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand?*, (2024).

48. Crozier-De Rosa, “What Are the Four Waves of Feminism? And What Comes Next?”

newly developed platforms such as tumblr and Myspace. Soon the internet would connect and mobilise action for feminists on a global scale. As Sharon Crozier-De Rosa explains:

The fourth wave is epitomised by digital or online feminism which gained currency in about 2013. This era is marked by mass online mobilisation. The fourth wave generation is connected via new communication technologies in ways that were not previously possible.⁴⁹

Feminism is acknowledged once more on a global scale and by 2017 loudly so. The re-establishment of protest actions and mobilisations most notably being the international street demonstrations for the #Metoo movement confirmed the return to grassroots mass activism.

"#Metoo was first founded by Black activist Tarana Burke in 2006, to support survivors of sexual abuse."⁵⁰ In the late second decade of the 2000s #Metoo was repurposed and mobilised political action and demonstrations worldwide against rising rightwing politics. This current era is widely known by the term 'new feminism' as discussed further in the 2021 *UN Women* paper as,

...broadly, what distinguishes the new feminism from its antecedents are the social and political changes that it is heir to... these changes are reflected in young feminist movements' direct embrace of struggles beyond those pertaining to women's rights, such as supporting environmental justice and LGBTQI+ and other identity movements and being expressly committed to antiracist, egalitarian practices and politics within their own movements and in on-the-ground collaborations.⁵¹

With each wave's progression, each is historicised. Feminism today, I would maintain, has in part absorbed past critiques and aims collectively to understand where different oppressions intersect. The fourth wave in contrast to previous decades and on a larger scale, recognises intersectional oppressions which now "rest at the centre of feminist debates, with current movements seeking to better incorporate various political agendas, including struggles against racism and for LGBTQ+ rights."⁵² and with that climate crisis activism. Hence the most current term – Intersectional Feminism, possibly signaling our entry to the tentative fifth wave.

To return to the commonalities found between the waves of feminism and the 'Deaths of Painting' and while after decades of debate "no one today especially believes that painting is dead"⁵³ the critiques of western feminisms along with critiques of painting, followed by their shared actions of recuperation and emendation, form the points of linked interest that became the basis for my work. Repeated historical evaluations imprinted upon feminism and painting, I believe, now echo an expected internal critique, a locus of self-reflection within

49. Ibid.,

50. Ibid.,

51. Molyneux, *New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations*.

52. Ibid., 20.

53. Arthur C. Danto, "The Mourning after: A Roundtable," *Artforum*, September 26 (2023), <https://www.artforum.com/features/the-mourning-after-a-roundtable-165892/>.

both practices. Therefore, my inclination is towards activities that interrupt or critique dominant and questionable histories such as the patriarchal history of art and painting. When I began my tertiary study into fine art in 2009 my theoretical and practical studio research was primarily with twentieth century painting through practitioners who, within their own time, had questioned the canon of art history.

In my awareness at the time of earlier study, an example I would cite that contributed to the undoing of the canon as a gatekeeper of style, content, and identity (which translates as an exclusion to the usual channels for exhibiting) would be Manet's 1868 portrait of *Emile Zola*. Manet painted the jacket of Zola as a near blob of black colour, expressing the idea — an indication of the jacket shape would suffice as a register of the garment, further information such as tailoring details were not required. Manet paints towards or signposts through paint to the imminent arrival of an abstraction that distills a concept to its central core. There was not only a minimum of visual information offered but also a provisional⁵⁴ conception of a painted object, the appearance of being unfinished and a new causality⁵⁵. In my mind I ponder these strategies appearing potentially as an unprofessional approach, unstudied and under qualified, amateurism, paradoxically also charges cast towards female painters both at that time and over time.

French artists and sisters Berthe and Edma Morisot were painting at the same time as Manet; as a peer, Berthe Morisot was well acquainted with the scene as it occurred in Paris and in Europe. The English critic and writer Laura Cumming opened her review of the 2023 Dulwich Picture Gallery exhibition *Berthe Morisot: Shaping Impressionism*, with the quote,

'What a shame they are not men,' penned by Édouard Manet upon meeting the gifted young artists in 1868 and writing on the possibilities of Berthe and Edma Morisot sustaining a career in painting. Their paintings were, he feared, almost certain to be ignored by the male establishment.⁵⁶

As part of the renewed dialogue surrounding Morisot, in 2024 the author Sebastian Smee published a book *Paris in Ruins*⁵⁷ covering many of the developments of French Impressionism. In this book he focuses often on the painterly relationship between Manet and Morisot:

It's clear that she is conversing with Édouard. On the one hand, she seems to be daring him to experiment with a bolder lack of finish: the background is made up of loose, cross-hatched brushstrokes that peter out into nothing... Two paintings by Berthe, also called *On the*

54. Raphael Rubinstein, "Provisional Painting," *ARTnews.com* (December 12, 2022) <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/provisional-painting-raphael-rubinstein-62792/>.

55. Sharon L Butler, "ABSTRACT PAINTING: The New Casualists," *New American Paintings* (June 1, 2011) <https://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/sharon-l-butler-new-casualists>.

56. Laura Cumming, "Berthe Morisot: Shaping Impressionism Review – a Woman's World," *The Guardian* (April 2, 2023) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/apr/02/berthe-morisot-shaping-impressionism-dulwich-picture-gallery-london-review-a-womans-world>.

57. Smee, Sebastian. *Paris in ruins: Love, war, and the birth of impressionism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2024).

Beach, were created along the coast at Fécamp. In one, the bodies of the group promenading on the boardwalk are reduced to smudges in the salty air. A triangle of turquoise sea is wedged between sky and receding boardwalk.⁵⁸

As I raise the issue of unfavorable viewpoints directed towards female painters at the time of Impressionism and onwards. I would like to offer, as an example of the temporal reach of published derogatory remarks, one that has been arguably the most repeated in the world of painting. Georg Baselitz's comment "Women don't paint very well. It's a fact"⁵⁹ from a 2013 interview in the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, served as the inspiration for Helen Gorrill's 2020 text *Women Can't Paint: Gender, the Glass Ceiling, and Values in Contemporary Art*⁶⁰, is reflected on in the introduction accordingly:

"This book was stimulated by Georg Baselitz's widely publicised doctrine 'What's the Biggest Problem with Women Artists? – None of Them Can Actually Paint'. His claim that women lack the basic character to become painters led to the reconsideration of Linda Nochlin's widely contemplated question and exploration of a worldwide art historical issue stemming from 1971 entitled 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?'"⁶¹

Returning to the ideas of breaches or interruptions occurring in dominant ideologies, much later into the twentieth century, Helen Frankenthaler's paint pouring techniques, seen in *The Bay* (1963) further reduces information into core values of abstraction. There remains only large portions of chroma in the absence of visible brush marks, there is even less detailing across the painted surface. Swathes of colour now bleed out over expanses of canvas lain on the floor, the painter's easel no longer in use.

Artists who aligned with feminist theory, many of them fearless, set about attempting to demolish patrilineal narratives. One important practitioner recognised for her groundbreaking work and fortitude, is Carolee Schneemann. Her 1975 painting performance entitled *Interior Scroll* not only expanded painting from the historical structure of the frame but expanded minds with her radical and challenging presentation of the female body as painter.

There were artists of the twentieth and twenty-first century who questioned the rules and traditions around painting by experimenting with 'undoing' the stretcher frame, the canvas and quantity of the paint material. To name only a few of the women involved with this undoing of painting I would look towards Helen Frankenthaler, Adrian Piper, Eva Hesse, Aysha Arar, Karla Black, and locally Vivian Lynn, Sriwhana Spong, Judy Millar, Anoushka Akel, p.mule and

58. Sebastian Smee, *Paris in Ruins: Love, War, and the Birth of Impressionism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2024), 298.

59. Nick Clark, "What's the Biggest Problem with Women Artists? None of Them Can Actually Paint, Says Georg Baselitz," *Independent* (February 6, 2016) UK edition, sec. Culture, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/what-s-the-biggest-problem-with-women-artists-none-of-them-can-actually-paint-says-georg-baselitz-8484019.html>.

60. Helen Gorrill, *Women Can't Paint: Gender, the Glass Ceiling and Values in Contemporary Art* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).

61. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," essay, in *Women, Art, and Power* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988).

Emma Fitts. Enacting this idea of undoing or nullifying history by eliminating or rearranging the canvas and stretcher frame and or using less paint is a challenge to the supremacy of the patriarchal painted image and its attendant institutional histories.

In the interview below an extract from Tāmaki Makaurau and Berlin-based painter Judy Millar (located in the Appendix), Millar explains her approach to a practice of eradicating unwanted histories through material explorations of removal, and hence nullifying,

In the late 1980s [sic] I returned to university to study feminist theory. I wanted to understand more about the perspectives of women working in other fields who were taking on the patriarchal system. Getting involved in that women's studies course opened my eyes to many things. It allowed me to see, when I rubbed out a failed work with a cloth soaked in turpentine, that obliteration, wiping away, removing the image, could be a strategy of defiance against the brush, and a way to literally clean my way into a history that I was supposedly excluded from.

I would align these actions of removal or refusal with feminist, and poet Anne Boyer's "poetics of no" as being a part of an abandoning of traditional art histories. In her essay titled "Anne Boyer's Thrilling Taxonomy of Refusal"⁶² from *Frieze* magazine issue 201, Negar Azimi writes on Boyer's book, *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate*⁶³, emphasizing Boyer's words "'History is full of people who just didn't' reads the first line of her riveting opening essay, which also serves as a sort of statement of intent."⁶⁴ Boyer's book offered an assurance to my decision making, saying no to the aspects of the status quo I was/am in a position to refuse. The 'nos' create a place to hesitate and reflect upon possibilities for constructing pathways removed by the traditional power structures of Western society.

To return to earlier studies, an art collective I previously researched was the French group known as BMPT⁶⁵. A short-lived collective operating in the late 1960s, they were influential through their status as disruptors, and in particular, their disruptions of art institutions such as the Paris Salons (operating from 1673). Of particular interest to me at this time was the work of BMPT group member Olivier Mosset. Artist Gwenael Kerlidou noted in a 2018 article for the online journal *Hyperallergic* "What separates Mosset from the rest of the group, however, is his rejection of a signature style." Kerlidou goes on to add:

After finishing his 200th (or so) circle painting in 1974, he became a sort of vagabond in the landscape of abstraction, borrowing here and there in the modernist repertory..... He is also the only one of the group to have taken the full measure of Abstract Expressionism and

62. Negar Azimi, "Anne Boyer's Thrilling Taxonomy of Refusal." *Frieze* no. 201 (March 2019). <https://www.frieze.com/article/anne-boyers-thrilling-taxonomy-refusal>.

63. Ann Boyer, *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate* (Ugly Duckling Presse USA, 2018).

64. Boyer, Ann, *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate*, 19.

65. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Group That Was (Not) One: Daniel Buren and BMPT" *Artforum* (September 26, 2023) <https://www.artforum.com/features/the-group-that-was-not-one-daniel-buren-and-bmpt-188135/>.

I understand Mosset's approach at that time to be one of exploration, committed to the vocation of deep learning around the many theories of painting and in particular, the advantage of putting varying hypotheses to the test with actual paint.

Mosset's rejection or absence of a signature style resonates with me as a quality I have seen operating within my own practice of experimentation through improvisation, first instigated as a pathway to making a painting through utilising these similar approaches in my musical practice. The question of learning from each painting is at the forefront of each painted improvisation, occupying an equivalence to improvisation or the live composition of a musical piece.

Ōtepoti-based artist Kim Pieters would explain painting by improvisation as,

"I compose these gestures in an improvisational manner within a field and without predetermination. I do not know what I am going to produce; I do not want to know; the decisions I make are not arbitrary but necessary to the field."⁶⁷

Once you are set to begin a painting you make your mark, from your repertoire of learned gestures and an unselfconscious approach towards making 'mistakes' you lay down your second mark in response to the first and so this follows on until you are finished.

The BMPT group and their approach to painting has been noted as a precursor to the Supports and Surfaces Movement, close in time to BMPT, their work extending into the 1970s. Supports and Surfaces artists continued BPMT's work of undoing the status quo by literally picking the painted object apart, performing strategies that included dismantling the wooden stretcher frame support structures, releasing attached canvas from the stretcher frame and distilling paint marks across the surface of a canvas. Later the German artist Sigmar Polke pushed the disruption of the institution of painting further by performing critiques of the painted surface, through acts such as substituting painted grounds on cotton duck or linen with shop-bought fabrics covered in pre-made commercially printed patterns.

In more recent years German artist Cosima von Bonin (born 1962) adopted aspects of German artist Sigmar Polke's strategies by utilizing pre-printed commercial textiles. By employing traditionally 'feminine' craft and folk techniques of applique and quilting, von Bonin would attach or craft images onto the surfaces of these fabrics, henceforth projecting her paintings further into the language of the feminine domestic. Some work continuing to engage in the conversations of painting, remaining within the realm of two dimensional wall mounted objects, while other textile constructions expanded out to floor

66. Gwenaél Kerlidou, "Abstraction with a Political Conscience". *Hyperallergic* (October 6, 2018) <https://hyperallergic.com/460623/olivier-mosset-abstraction-with-a-political-conscience>.

67. Christina Barton, ed. "What is a life? / Kim Pieters". (Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi at Victoria University of Wellington, 2015).

based soft sculptures.

As an influence on my earlier student work, the American painter Josh Smith (born 1976) challenged the status quo further with effect by returning some of the shunned strategies of painting to the picture frame; using more paint, multiple brush strokes, bright colour and repeatedly using ubiquitous subjects from outside the art-world.

Locally, the art practice of Julian Dashper made sense to me as another way of disrupting tropes of painting. Dashper's critiques of the status quo of western taste were revealed to me through his large, irreverent, and beautiful 'abstract expressionist' oil paintings on velvet, one example being *Purple Rain at Gorit* (oil & conte crayon on velvet 374x2140mm, 1986). Dashper challenged and confused polite European taste by transfiguring the legacy of Abstract Expressionism into 'velvet painting'. Velvet painting was characterised by its use of lush 'black' velvet as a ground in replacement to canvas and was popularised in the western world during the mid-twentieth century by its use of 'kitsch' subject matter, having little connection to the institutionalised world of fine art. Another example of Dashper unpicking of the legacy of painting is a series of more sparsely painted works on canvas, provisional in appearance with some tight forms bumping up against untidy marks, one example being titled *Nineteen Eighty Four* (acrylic and pencil on canvas, 650 x 830mm, 1989). Inspired by Dashper's painted works, in 2017 I embarked on a velvet painted series, albeit on a smaller scale.

As noted, I identify as a feminist practitioner and so with that in mind, I am aware there are a good number of male artists as influences and supporters for my art practice, from both abroad and from Aotearoa. This may seem counterintuitive, therefore it is important to clarify throughout the earlier portion of study towards a fine arts degree that my research was weighted towards male painters. At that time, I found it difficult to find female painters engaging with the ideas I was researching. This is both a symptom and a problem of the visibility and support women artists were afforded in the art world. I found a quote from Ann Cahill helpful when substituting the word 'philosophers' for artists or painters when she states "Feminist philosophers can't possibly limit themselves to thinkers or subfields that aren't marked in some way by sexism – we'd run out of interlocutors pretty quickly if we did that."⁶⁸ When Cahill writes 'sexism', I will take that to mean the patriarchal system we are immersed in. To add, it is not my intention to erase aspects of the artistic community I have always been part of. Luckily as time went by, the world of painting opened up to me further, and with some additional research I was able to catch up with the female artists that earlier had eluded me.

In the same year of study in 2009 I encountered David Joselit's essay, *Painting Beside Itself*⁶⁹ published 2009 in the art journal OCTOBER. In a portion of the essay Joselit writes of artist Jutta Koether's Reena Spaulings exhibition Lux Interior 2009. The tenet of Koether's exhibition is to connect painting, musical subculture and performance. The Reena Spaulings exhibition features just

68. Ann Cahill, "Carnal Ethics." Interview by Richard Marshall." originally published 3AM. Now available 3:16. No publishing date available, <https://www.3-16am.co.uk/articles/carnal-ethics>.

69. David Joselit, "Painting Beside Itself". *October* 130 (The MIT Press, 2009).

one painting, *Hot Rod (after Poussin)* 2009 with props included from defunct performance spaces. The exhibition itself was accompanied by several performances by the artist. Joselit's *OCTOBER* made apparent Jutta Koether's connections to the international music community of noise, experimental and avant-garde musical artists. This kind of art practice mirrored my own creative pursuits and so it was gratifying to discover a female artist who also operated dual practices of music and painting. Although separate from one another, Koether's music and painting practices granted each other conceptual and community linkages. Her work has remained influential to me to this day.

To demonstrate the extent of Koether's influence among the more contemporary radicalised painting community there is a work by Belgium/UK painter Sara Knowland titled *Not Beside Herself* 2021. Knowland has painted a representation of a photographic image taken of Koether performing and on foot circling around her painting, speaking, chanting and ranting various writings. This is one of a series of Knowland paintings that confer with the works of Jutta Koether. From my own reading of the work, in concert with our written conversation, Knowland regards this series, specifically the painting *Not Beside Herself (JK)*, as a critique of the title of Joselit's essay *Painting Beside Itself*⁷⁰, in part a consideration of Jutta Koether's painted work and performance, while making reference to the patriarchal trope of the 'hysterical women'.⁷¹

Discovering Jutta Koether's work enabled me to bring a larger feminist dialogue into my own practice. This was largely assisted by the commonality I felt with her involvement in an experimental music culture that lay to one side of the world of art.

Koether was often required to answer the question of why she had chosen a known patriarchal art form over other mediums that are more explicitly feminist. Benjamin Buchloh pressed Koether twice in an interview from a later 2016 issue of *OCTOBER* art magazine⁷². "Why do you try to resuscitate painting with those means when others are available? Why not accept painting's obsolescence or historical conclusion?" and continues to probe, asking why she chose not to follow "...explicitly feminist practices, like that of Ulrike Rosenbach, for example..." Koether's response was honest and specific to her ambitions. Tackling the gender question in painting, she explains:

Sure, as a young artist I looked at Rosenbach's work, as well as at the feminist book-shop and its School for Creative Feminism and related activities in Cologne at that moment, but they were really not an option for me generationally... When I started to study in Cologne in early 1977, painting was, for many different reasons, inaccessible... I had to deal with the artists you mentioned and other performance practices, especially in the feminist arena...I kept asking, Why must feminist art practice perform 'otherness' in an 'other' medium? Why

70. David Joselit, "Painting Beside Itself". *October* 130 (The MIT Press, 2009).

71. The conversation with painter Sara Knowland on pages 95-98 can be found in the Appendix – Interviews section of this document.

72. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "A Conversation with Jutta Koether". *October* 157 (The MIT Press, 2016).

not in painting?

Koether mentions a proposition new to me: "...not an option for me generationally". I find this an interesting perspective, and I wonder what this might mean? Isabelle Graw is of the opinion Koether "...creates her own kind of software (that is defined by an extreme porosity towards para-artistic inputs such as music, or text)"⁷³. In saying software, I understand Graw to mean Koether builds her own artistic scaffoldings or theoretical procedures. According to Graw, Koether forms her own specific newness, and in doing so is honoring the radical nature of past feminist trailblazers from previous generations, who built their own specific newness within a patrilineal system.

It is important that this should not be understood as a rejection of those who have traveled before. To my mind the previous generational artists 'newness' Koether speaks of, is a psychic relationship of support over material commonalities plus a documented proof that newness or change can be achieved.

By allowing herself to formulate strategies that exist authentically within her own generational context, Koether affirms her own work perhaps more than carrying art strategies forward that she may not share an affinity with. I like the idea of opening up your own space to newness, to move your work into this space materially and conceptually and separate at least in some ways from patrilineal legacies.

Returning to Buchloh there is a request for further clarification to her 'curious' entry into painting and he continues with... "Nineteen ninety-one was the end of Neo-Expressionism, wasn't it? Or the end of the return to painting?" Koether responds,

Totally. That's why it felt like a good moment to step in and really fight for it. I was making use of it and also attending to it. It was not meant as a heroic act in any way, but there was a slightly exhilarating energy that emerged from the feeling of starting something from scratch.⁷⁴

Jutta Koether's interview with Benjamin Buchloh is thorough in its ability to ask and answer the important issues at stake, not only questioning the validity of painting as a practice in relation to the Critical Deaths, but also highlighting the mood of puzzlement surrounding why a feminist artist would consider entering the practice of painting in the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. Koether herself agrees the genre felt "inaccessible" to women and yet importantly she found her way 'in' through art's own criticisms, the key also to my painting practice.

However, in the decades discussed and still further forward, there remained/s a masculine authority over the medium. In critiques of Koether's decision to paint, the legacy of the European feminist movements was strong, she was asked and expected to explain, from varying quarters within the art world, why

73. "Cold Cold Chills Isabelle Graw, David Joselit, Jenny Nachtigall, and Caroline Busta on Jutta Koether's 'Tour de Madame'". *Textezurkunst* (December 18, 2018) <https://www.textezurkunst.de/en/articles/brandhorst-debate/>.

74. Buchloh, "A Conversation with Jutta Koether", 19.

she had not followed feminist predecessors to work instead in the mediums of sculpture or film. Koether wasn't about to be cut out of a genre she felt a strong connection with, and although she studied art, she was arriving also from a subculture of 'punk-rock' as a critical writer for SPIKE music magazine and a noise musician, where rules concerning who can do what and with whom were less immediately pronounced.

Casting an eye back to Joselit's essay "*Painting Beside Itself*"⁷⁵, it was this article that drew attention to the valuable links her visual art practice had with the musical subcultures she surrounded herself with. These subcultures and communities held many similarities of work and play to my own in Aotearoa. Koether was, and importantly still is, a crucial artist to offer substantial conceptual and practical knowledge to my field of research. It was through discovering the experimental music and visual art practices of Koether and sometimes collaborator Kim Gordon, that brought my outer life into my painting practice, foregrounding various commonalities with the musical.

Like Koether, who in the 1990s felt the building of painting had been abandoned and therefore there was space to move right in, I too concluded there was a lot of available real estate in the painting world. The World Wide Web, smart phones and similar technologies opened many creative practices to a more accessible public realm, the entry into which seemed to underscore the presentation of painting as a degraded genre.

My practice was able to enter painting with an enthusiasm empowered by iPhone painting apps⁷⁶. Although it was more than occupying available space, with a feminist manifesto I could make use of the distilled and mediated digital ipaint marks. With an interest in ideas surrounding the aforementioned degraded genre as also echoing abandonment, for my purposes I could embrace the painterly gestural in the newly available digital painting technologies. The ubiquitous nature of the ArtStudio – Draw and Paint app, the menu of preordained marks and hyper-colour toned choices, the strangeness of the layering effects and their inability to create an illusion of real life painterly-woven-layers, and all this presented on a glossy screen of superficial surfaces read to me as if history had become deleted subject matter, or to reference the title of German painter Francis Hunger's 2012 exhibition, "History Has Left the Building"⁷⁷

Regardless of the new tech monetising the painted gesture and additionally owning an iPhone, therefore implicating the user in further late capitalist scenarios, this commercialised technology can propose painterly gestures as free floating and untethered from painting's histories. In my mind the app's features allowed my entry to painting. I adapted the digital realm dematerialised⁷⁸ techniques and gestures through co-opting the ArtStudio app into my own 'in real life' rematerialised painterly language. Indeed, passing in and out of ArtStudio felt more like The Matrix than art history.

75. Joselit, "Painting Beside Itself".

76. The invention of the iPhone and Smartphones in general created a new avenue for portable art creation. Applications like Brushes and Art Studio – Draw and Paint enabled artists to create digital art using tools that mimicked physical media like oil paints, pencil, airbrush and felt tip.

77. Francis Hunger, "History Has Left The Building" (HMKV, April 21, 2012).

78. Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 ...* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

In contrast to the argument of evacuation, I give equal significance to these words from San Franciscan painter Alex Olson when interviewed in 2013 by curator Eric Crosby, Olson explains:

It's impossible to make a mark at this point that doesn't come with a historical referent, but this is actually a huge benefit. You can pull from art history's enormous catalogue and build off a past meaning, re-situating it in the present toward a different end. In doing so, it's important to understand how a specific mark or idea functioned in the past versus now, and to consider what using it now would mean, but this creates even richer possibilities to choose from.⁷⁹

The repeated Critical Deaths, or ruptures and revisions of both painting and the waves of feminist theory, offer each other some common ground in commiseration. Additionally, entering the art world via a long running experimental musical practice, which operates under its own systems, is for me, something akin to a golden triangle of prime elements merging. In my mind these three points — painting, feminism, and experimental music — align to award women, feminists, LGBTQ+ art practitioners an 'all access' pass into painting.

Multiple conversations linger around the critique of painting's 'Deaths'. In 2021 the same year I began my PhD a group exhibition entitled *STOP PAINTING* conceived of by artist Peter Fischli opened at Fondazione Prada in Venice. In this exhibition, Fischli "investigates the persistence of painting in the twenty first century" presenting, "a kaleidoscope of repudiated gestures," to explore five ruptures within the history of painting over the last 150 years.⁸⁰ In Fischli's catalogue essay 'The Illuminated Dim Bulb'⁸¹, he offers another path towards considering the way we have previously perceived the so-called 'Deaths of Painting', where a rupture does not mean a full break, rather he proposes a new, hopefully more thoughtful lens, from which to view this historical narrative.

Swapping out the titles of Deaths with a reconsidered nomenclature of 'ruptures', I find a commonality within this revised way of considering seemingly played-out concepts within painting to the so-called beginnings and endings of feminist waves as discussed earlier in this chapter as more extended periods of change where some activities are passed over while others linger and remain.

As pessimistic as the 'Deaths' may sound there are the correspondingly positive aspects that expand outwards. With each rupture in painting and the following critical re-assessments, the denial of death and following re-growth returns with genre-shifting vigor, due to this ever-expanding critique, not in spite of it. Isabelle Graw's book *The Love of Painting* (2018), states as much in the introductory portion when she writes, under a section heading of "Paint-

79. Alex Olson and Eric Crosby, "Remarks on Surface: An Interview with Alex Olson," *Walkerart.org*, 5AD, <https://walkerart.org/magazine/remarks-on-surface-an-interview-with-alex-olson/>.

80. "Stop Painting." Fondazioneprada.Org, 22 May 2021, https://www.fondazioneprada.org/wp-content/uploads/Fondazione-Prada_Stop-Painting_PR.pdf.

81. Peter Fischli, *Stop painting*. (Milano: Fondazione Prada, 2021).

ing's Exceptional Position in the Twenty First Century"⁸² "... the high status of painting is above all explained by its intellectual prestige, the past criticisms expanding painter knowledge with every recuperation. More than any other art form, it has a long history of theoretical exaltation." (The exaltation of course after the cutting down). For the contemporary to further the idea of "cyclical resurrection and abandonment"⁸³, in the well-documented genre reconciliations to the expanded space of painting, Australian critic Terry Smith states in an interview with Jeffrey J. Williams under the title "The Contemporist", "it's not just the coexistence of difference it's the connectivity of difference, which is what we are moving towards."⁸⁴

82. Isabelle Graw et al., *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018), 10.

83. Jan Verwoert and Hugh Rorrison, "Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it's a good idea." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* (2005): 7 - 16.

84. Jeffrey J Williams, "The Contemporist: An Interview with Terry Smith." *symploke* 22 (2014): 361-385. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5250/symploke.22.1-2.0361>.

TOWARDS

I slip into the sound's long duration and merge with its translucent materiality which stretches me along its reflective surface. This silence does not organise itself into an idea, but enables its audition, which opens hearing to an infinity of possibilities forever⁸⁵

To create an understanding for (Painting) Towards, I explore the derivation for the word 'towards'. Originating as an adjective, in its English definition, towards – writes, reads and speaks as an adverb, a preposition. Pre the position, as a precursor to the event, a provisional state by nature of its defining incompleteness, designated as existing always before and up to, the point of resolution. The attributes of movement and the provisional can be easily transported into making a painting conversation. They align with the inner voice, acting as the instructor as you move the wet painting material around a surface. As a word used frequently, towards often glances by unnoticed, the purpose being simply to locate something in train, somewhere other than its point of origin.

Although never a material portion of what constitutes a particular something, towards is wholly part of the effects that constitute the substance of a particular element. Towards may not have the quality of matter to create effects but it is contingent with them, absorbing experiences. Within its own logic, towards is affected by events while moving through the passage of time. By visually capturing towards, time is offered a chance of being understood in relation to physicality, grasping time's very presence.

While writing on events that formulate a particular contrivance as being present, I am reminded of Jane Bennett discussing the circumstances that surround things in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 2010. Bennett states "...what makes the event happen is precisely the contingent coming together of a set of elements."⁸⁶ Towards, an abstract phenomenon is an element poised or continuously in motion, no matter the trajectory or velocity, acting through propulsion, a catalyst of sorts connecting happenings of varying im/materialities.

Sound to Gesture

In the following sections I discuss the transmogrification of sound into painting; sound moving forward into the visual. I begin with a historic example of a technological invention that fulfilled this aim and then discuss my painting practice and my use of sound as an instigator for mark making.

The Pitch Impressions by Margaret Watts-Hughes are examples of two of her original nineteenth century experimental works where she asks how sound, and in this case her voice, can be represented through visual means. These early images of sound waves were sung by Watts-Hughes as she trials differing vocal tones. First, pigmented materials are placed upon a glass

85. S. Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010).

86. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 34.

surface. As the modulating pressure waves of vocal sounds pass over and around the surface, they push the pigments into patterns. If we observe the coloured forms of the hue tones or patterns we can ascertain both the origin and conclusion of the sound of Watts-Hughes' voice and hence the forward moving air pressures of sound waves. By demonstrating how to inscribe the vibrations of her voice through the pigments on the glass surface Watts-Hughes invented what she called the Eidophone⁸⁷.

As Joselit theorises, "Objects act in various ways, including provoking future events or effects. Representing is always retrospective: something has to pre-exist the art object in order to be re-presented. I think art's special capacity is, on the contrary, its futurity."⁸⁸ In the work of Watts-Hughes, and the object discussed, i.e., the immateriality of sound, we are presented with an early and 'retrospective' painted recording of the unseen pressures of sound upon the atmosphere, made visible through the physical behaviour of a viscous material.

Sound... it pulls the seen towards me... Sound involves me closely in what I see; it pulls the seen towards me as it grasps me by my ears. Sound renders the object dynamic. It makes it 'tremble with life' and gives it a sense of process' towards is the very investigation, the exploration, it is "the gap between the work and myself."⁸⁹

The above quote from a text concerning Sound Art is for me a compelling one as it pinpoints the effects that sound has on my own work. It is a connector between my inner world and the outside world. It is a source of inspiration, a catalyst for creation. Inspired by the Eidophone as a tool to transmute the sounds of Watts-Hughes voice into visual marks, I let the audio environment surrounding me influence how the paint is distributed on the canvas.

My painting methods experiment with a series of gestures and markers suggesting the layers and varied movements of sound. Those movements are generated and inspired by the natural environment e.g., the wind, rain, insects buzzing and through human participation or other instigators of sound or noise e.g., cars driving by, lawnmowers and power tools, neighbours playing

87. The invention of the Eidophone is one important discovery among a group of technological innovations of the time. Professor Steven Connor introduces Friedrich Kittler's view on the technological breakthroughs of the nineteenth century in his essay *Photophonics* from 2011 (Steven Connor, "Photophonics", *Sound Effects* 3, no.1-2(2013):137, <https://doi.org/10.7146/se.v3i1-2.156455>). Kittler writes, there was "a kind of conversion mania, as inventors and engineers sought more and more ways in which different kinds of energy and sensory form could be translated into each other." The Eidophone experiments of Margaret Watts-Hughes as evidenced through her sounding drawings bringing the invisible space of sound into the visual arena of the gesture. Watts-Hughes experiments capture a memory of my teenage schooling, where my interest in science laboratory and art studio was active. Dare I say, one of the good things about secondary school was the pool of interests on hand every day. As the child who dismantled the family cuckoo clock to see how it worked, the science lab was a significant place of interest. Created from her own voice manipulations Watts-Hughes' experiments demonstrate - without direct intervention from the human hand - an original process of translating the invisible forces of sound waves into another register of visual paint marks. Similarly, it is important to recognise Margaret Watts-Hughes was one of few women from the nineteenth century's discovery era to be publicly acknowledged for her science, sound and art discoveries.

88. Quote from the conversation between David Joselit and David Andrew Tasman, *dis magazine*, (2015) <http://dismagazine.com/discussion/75654/david-joselit-against-representation/>

89. Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*.

music, music being played on my own devices etc. My observation of the audio environment is informed by composer Pauline Oliveros' concept of deep listening.⁹⁰

Deep coupled with Listening or Deep Listening for me is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound— encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible. Simultaneously one ought to be able to target a sound or sequence of sounds as a focus within the space/time continuum and to perceive the detail or trajectory of the sound or sequence of sounds. Such focus should always return to, or be within the whole of the space/time continuum (context). Such expansion means that one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond.⁹¹

The resultant marks and gestures are adaptations of scientific definitions of sound behaviours, things such as the smooth symmetrical yet contrasting up/down curves used to portray how a sine wave moves through space. Science can provide a drawing of a sound in motion as a basis to describe audio, whereas written theory, using words such 'adagio', translated from the Italian to the English to mean 'in slow time', become interpreted through the imagination based on a shared cultural understanding of western music performance. The hand then uses mark-making tools to infer upon the viewer the form of a sound and perceptions of speed. Types of technical descriptions are also considered for inspiration, such as the drumming instructions; 'double strokes' or 'ghost notes' offering a broad spectrum of adaptable linguistic expressions. Scientific descriptions and theoretical definitions are merged through visual interpretations of these languages, the purpose being to construct sound subjects within the painting.

Painting manifests thought processes, such as a meditation on "I am painting into the future". This example of thinking through concepts exists simultaneously as an inner monologue, an attitude, and in the studio as a set of in-real-life material actions toward a resolution. The physical motion of painting is attempting to push out into the future, a viscous material placed under real physical pressures pushed towards an unknown outcome. In this thesis I am painting towards or into an unknown group of future works, that within my practice I hope represent a specific new painted feminine noise.

Earlier in my PhD study, while researching the pioneering women of electronic sound and musical composition of the Twentieth Century, I began painting experiments that aligned with electronic processes, although these methods were new to me in the painting studio. To acknowledge these inventive women, I began to construct a series I have described as *Punch Card Paintings* by executing system-based works. To act on this idea and to acknowledge the inventive work of Laurie Spiegel composing music with computer punch cards, I chose to paint black rectangles reminiscent of the punch card holes. With no commitment to realism and ample openness for interpretation, I

90. Pauline Oliveros, *Quantum Listening* (Terra Ignota, UK, 2022).

91. Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (iUniverse, New York Lincoln Shanghai, 2005), 14.

painted rectangles vertically on a canvas stretcher positioned on my easel in landscape orientation. The canvas ground had been prepared with various multicoloured acrylic gestures over the white gesso surface as an allusion to a worldly atmosphere. As the rectangles were painted, I began to track or map the coloured abstract marks below, accentuating the perception of the black shapes travelling across a surface. The rectangles' response to the under-painting created an unplanned but appropriate additional narrative of the work connecting the two different elements (landscape and the digital) not unlike the warm and very human sounding Laurie Spiegel punch card generated work *Appalachian Grove*⁹². This may sound like an obvious reflection, however for me this systematic approach of working with preordained marks – the black rectangles – was a completely new way of composing a painting. The rectangle placements were deliberate *and* intuitive. As the works increased in number and were then perceived as a whole, a vibratory optical tracking effect occurred.

Placing this series of works into the narrative of towards makes sense to me as the group, when viewed as one, alludes to an oncoming future, while together they take on an animated presence. The paintings' busy cumulative effect indicates punch cards contain information, and additionally infer that further information gathering and collating is present and ongoing. I have since placed the Punch Card series on pause. While doing valuable research into the visual effects of systemised marking, at this stage of my PhD I elected to return to the more painterly experiments I originally intended to pursue, to observe and follow where the explorations of, as yet unknown, semi-improvised experiments would lead.

92. Laurie Spiegel, "Appalachian Grove", Track 6 on *The Expanding Universe*. Unseen Worlds, 2012, CD.

NEW

Within the art world, I would suggest the concept of something or someone being 'new' is often defined by those who view rather than by the artist. There are countless female artists who were bypassed in their lifetime or found success towards the end of their lives that were considered 'new' by audiences when their work was finally acknowledged. Within the premise of this project 'the new' refers to both contemporary artists practicing now and historical artists who have been under-documented, under-acknowledged, and perhaps misrepresented due to the oppressive nature of the dominant historical patrilineal narrative, in its social and cultural form. Since beginning my study in 2021 there has been a significant surge of overlooked women artists, now rediscovered/discovered. Again, in the view of the art world, these are 'new' artists showing 'new' and as yet 'unseen' works.

A case in point, the Tate Britain in London has announced (January 2025) *Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520–1920*.

'Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520–1920' celebrates over 100 women who forged public careers as artists. The exhibition begins with the earliest recorded women artists working in Britain. It ends with women's place in society fundamentally changed by the First World War and the first women gaining the right to vote. Across these 400 years, women were a constant presence in the art world. *Now You See Us* explores these artists' careers and asks why so many have been erased from mainstream art histories.⁹³

Looking at the Western culture of art from the Twentieth Century to the early twenty-first there has been a small number of women who painted, and were recognised, both within their own countries and garnered some recognition internationally while still living; Paula Modersohn Becker, Leonora Carrington, and Louise Bourgeois are three such examples. Nevertheless, to qualify that statement it should be mentioned that Paula Modersohn Becker died young at the age of thirty-one years suffering a postpartum pulmonary embolism and for Louise Bourgeois, greater recognition did not occur until she was in her 70s. Writer and curator Ashton Cooper penned the essay – "*The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion*", first appearing in the catalogue for a Barnard College alumina exhibition *Lucid Gestures* in 2014. Here Cooper notes, "the Museum of Modern Art gave her a retrospective that amounted to her debut on the international art scene. She was 71".⁹⁴

Many women did not enter the practice of painting at all, as admittance to a career in this field was controlled by the patriarchal art world. Women were actively discouraged from painting and so were alternately drawn to the 'outer' fields such as textile arts and photography.⁹⁵ Textiles were considered a

93. Tate, "Now You See Us: Tate Britain," *Tate*, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/women-artists-in-britain-1520-1920>.

94. Ashton Cooper, "The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion," *Hyperallergic* (2015) <https://hyperallergic.com/173963/the-problem-of-the-overlooked-female-artist-an-argument-for-enlivening-a-stale-model-of-discussion/>.

95. Helen Gorrill, *Women Can't Paint: Gender, The Glass Ceiling And Values In Contemporary Art*.

feminine creative area, and photography because of its comparative newness as a technology, had fewer formalised rules and methodologies as well its lack of stature as an artform.⁹⁶

During the years of the mid twentieth century, many women artists began working within the developing fields of both film and video. Artists such as Valie Export, Cecelia Sandoval, Ana Mendieta and Hannah Wilke, extended the legacy of woman photographers which in turn afforded these practitioners fresh territory to explore. Art critic, writer, activist and curator Lucy Lippard expresses this sentiment in her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* published in 1973, "The inexpensive, ephemeral, un-intimidating character of the Conceptual mediums themselves (video, performance, photography, narrative, text, actions) encouraged women to participate, to move through this crack in the art world's walls."⁹⁷

The Absent, the Uncelebrated and the Misplaced

The female artistic rebirths for those who were forgotten, ignored, and sidelined have been headlines in various art journals for at least a decade, with no signs of waning.

In American painter Mira Schor's blog *A Year of Positive Thinking*,⁹⁸ discusses the number of women recently re/discovered, or as she prefers to refer to them, "hidden in plain sight". Here Schor notes that the ways in which these women are reported on through social media newsgroups and art magazine headlines, in their old age or in their death, has been phenomenal of late. It is significant to finally have the knowledge of these artists' existence, but also sheds a highly problematic light on a disappointingly long sexist reception for women, and how this reception has been reported.

As I write this paragraph, Hyperallergic reports of Mary Sully, "an indigenous modernist artist finally gets her due."⁹⁹ Self-taught Yankton Dakota artist, Sully, deceased 1963, has her first solo show '*Mary Sully: Native Modern*' exhibiting currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts American Wing. Another example of this phenomena has been the headlines surrounding Cuban born artist Carmen Herrera (1915 - 2022), who after a life-long career had not sold a painting until 2004 at 89 years.

As someone who researches art, and especially painting fervently, it is distressing that for most of my life these and many other women artists and painters passed well under my radar. During my earlier studies I had not been aware of many important women artists and as a feminist artist, I took this as a shortcoming of my own – even though knowing at the same time this gap in my knowledge can be viewed as the result of embedded systemic misogyny.

(London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 25.

96. Gorrill, *Women Can't Paint: Gender, The Glass Ceiling And Values In Contemporary Art*, 30.

97. Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 ...* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), xi.

98. Mira Schor, "Normalizing Inequity" *A Year of Positive Thinking* (May 9, 2016) <https://ayearof-positivethinking.com/2016/05/09/normalizing-inequity/>.

99. Julie Schneider, "An Indigenous Modernist Artist Finally Gets Her Due". *Hyperallergic* (November 19, 2024) <https://hyperallergic.com/966368/indigenous-modernist-painter-mary-sully-finally-gets-her-due/>.

In her lecture "*Miraculous Resurrections: The Contemporary Art Market Of Older And Deceased Women Artists*"¹⁰⁰ Marta Gnyp attributes the rediscovery of older and deceased women artists to market driven phenomena:

The first reason, thus, for the sudden interest in the older women artists is the market's big appetite for new, whereby new doesn't necessarily mean young. Collectors, who are the driving force in the current art market, are permanently in search of new artists who will fulfill their expectations of artistic creativity, deliver high quality works, and, preferably, gain importance in the history of art. At the same time, they often seek artists who promise growth not only in terms of artistic value but also in price... These artists offer mature material and strong connections to already recognised artists and movements, which in the broad network of experienced gatekeepers can be turned into artistic and market significance. This is of course not limited to women artists, but women artists also offer another important story, the story of vindication. This is the 2nd important reason for the strong interest in older women artists. These women were previously unrecognised by an art system favouring men.

To follow is a list of additional examples that I have come across over the recent past. This is not a definitive list, but rather is intended to map my own growing awareness of these women.

- Lebanese American artist Etel Adnan, deceased at ninety-three years in 2021, made her debut solo exhibition at the American Museum, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2018.
- Aboriginal Australian artist Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, deceased at ninety-one years in 2015, according to records only began painting in her early eighties.
- Polish artist Alina Szapocznikow, rediscovered outside of Poland well after her death in 1975. First retrospective show was in 2012 at the Museum of Modern Art NY.
- Swedish artist Hilma af Klint, deceased at eighty-one years in 1944, wished for her works to remain unseen until twenty years after her death for fear they would be misinterpreted.
- Aotearoa artist Vivian Lynn deceased at eighty-seven years in 2018. By my admission unknown to me until I viewed her work in the pop-up group exhibition curated by Phillida Reid of then Southard Reid, London in Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021.

In giving a local context, I cite the work of Vivian Lynn as an artist I only recently discovered. This could be attributed to oversights of my own making. My art world is not an artworld shared by many: my years of study have been to observe women who primarily pushed oil paint around in tandem with an experimental noise practice, running almost entirely, if not physically, then

100. Marta Gnyp, "Miraculous Resurrections: The Contemporary Art Market of Older and Deceased Women Artists," *Gnyp Art Advisory* (June 8, 2022) <https://www.martagnyp.com/publications/miraculous-resurrections-the-contemporary-art-market-of-older-and-deceased-women-artists>.

psychically, to one side of the fine art world. For years Lynn ran under my radar; more recently, her name would bob up to the surface and then recede back down. However, her posthumous presence in a group exhibition curated by Phillida Reid in Auckland 2018, was my introduction. I was attracted to her unique perspective. Lynn's relationship with the Rorschach motif in her *Mind Fields* works in part inspired a series of ink Rorschach augmentations to the acrylic drawings *Tambourine Séance 2022 – 2023*.

To continue, Ashton Cooper remarks how in Rosalyn Deutsche's class "Feminism and Postmodernism",

...showed me the connection between images and the maintenance of sexual difference: how masculinism suppresses otherness and elevates the concept of the heroic, alienated (or, 'Genius Male') artist, and how feminist artists have tried to produce different kinds of images as a challenge to phallogentrism.

Mira Schor responded to this article in her blog *A Year of Positive Thinking* under the heading 'Normalising Inequality' stating that writing on women artists oscillates between "two polarities or scenarios of what one might call terminal inclusion, 'still too young' and 'not dead enough'"¹⁰¹. This trend, whether expressed in the twentieth and twenty-first century understanding of feminism of the time, can now be understood as a part of an early feminist critique of not only painting but society as a whole. Cooper makes an excellent point when also stating the intention in her essay is to draw attention to how "institutions and publications – both major and minor – are guilty of perpetuating a schematic and damaging narrative about the lives of women artists. These paradigms of understanding are stale caricatures of these artist's lives."

Two new local publications were developed around the time of the COVID Pandemic and released recently. First, Lissa Mitchell's 2023 publication, *Through Shaded Glass. Women and Photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960*¹⁰² and a year later curator Kirsty Baker's book *Sight Lines. Women and Art in Aotearoa*¹⁰³ was released. *Sight Lines* offers a broad spectrum of artists and the treatment of each artist is well written and interesting. The artists' respective stories drew me in. The author does not make a claim to have published an encyclopedic coverage of all woman artists of Aotearoa, nor did she come from a non-inclusive perspective. As discussed in an interview with NZ Booklovers¹⁰⁴ Baker articulated her philosophy for the publication and the contested meanings around the word women:

I'm interested in the shortcomings and exclusions of feminisms, and how we can go about trying to rectify them. I wanted to write an account of art making here that pushed back against the biological essentialism of the word 'woman' and that presented a complex,

101. Mira Schor, "Normalizing Inequity".

102. Lissa Mitchell, *Through Shaded Glass: Women and photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960* (Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2023).

103. Kirsty Baker, *Sight Lines. Women and Art in Aotearoa* (Auckland University Press, Auckland 2024).

104. Kirsty Baker, "Interview: Kirsty Baker talks about Sight Lines". *NZ Booklovers* (July 2024) <https://www.nzbooklovers.co.nz/post/interview-kirsty-baker-by-sight-lines>

nuanced and multifaceted line-up of artists, to push back against the idea of woman as something monolithic or easily definable.

Lissa Mitchell's book *Through Shaded Glass* is an intriguing journey into the early stories of the (mostly) European women who immigrated to Aotearoa from the early period of colonisation, and then traversing across one hundred years of women's lives in photography up until 1960, where upon colour and candid photography began to dominate this profession.¹⁰⁵ More than a technical overview of photography, Mitchell's book reveals the situations and status of women's lives; the conditions of sexism in their social, domestic, and professional experiences, and also their successes within the medium over the one hundred years specified within the title.

Of interest to my practice are the stories of those women who were employed or assisted in studios tasked with the process of color tinting of black and white photographs. A few women did own and operate their own photographic studios; however, more commonly they were assistants to a photographic studio run by a husband, a brother or father. Throughout these early years "employment of married women remained contentious"¹⁰⁶ consequently women merged the tasks of home-keeping with the less profiled tasks of studio assistant.

Women who had a talent for the visual arts or had trained previously in drawing and painting prior to immigrating to Aotearoa were able to take on an adaptive role in a form of painting that was specifically developed to merge with photography. To wit "skilled women workers were assets in prosperous photography studios, part of a 'female economy' that provided services to women..." Additionally in the privacy of the studio's rooms, which could be considered intimate... "They also added an air of respectability"¹⁰⁷ The service offered of 'colouring and finishing' photographs was often advertised as a task supervised by a woman, separating the division of labor in the studio into gendered roles.¹⁰⁸ For instance, in the studio of Clifford & Morris (Dunedin), their advertisements made the division of labor clear: "Robert Clifford and John Morris were the 'operating artists' while 'tinting and colouring was done by Mrs. Clifford and assistant,' 'assistant' likely being daughter, housekeeper or niece."¹⁰⁹

The processes of tinting or colouring photographs I found intriguing, particularly in exploring the intent of the colourist and/or the studio's taste predilections and authorship restrictions. The following three images are examples of the many interpretations of tinting and colouring included within *Through Shaded Glass*. Firstly on page 20 from Clarke Brothers Auckland 1873 "an unknown colourist has taken detailed care with the miniature painting of a floral arrangement and headdress in this portrait of Kate Alderson"¹¹⁰.

105. Mitchell, *Through Shaded Glass: Women and photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960*, 133.

106. *Ibid.*, 117.

107. *Ibid.*, 22.

108. *Ibid.*, 25.

109. *Ibid.*, 25.

110. *Ibid.*, 20.

Yet although close in year to the previous example, any tentative approach to augmenting an image is gone, a “Portrait executed by Helen Stuart a celebrated portraitist, did more than just add light touches of colour such as pink cheeks...she applied thick layers of paint” (oil), “that disguised the photographic surface entirely, her portraits of Māori chiefs and notable Māori women were highly regarded at the time.”¹¹¹ The image attribution found on page 24 text reads, “Hand-painted portrait of an unidentified Māori woman, 1886. Helen Stuart.” Stuart as the colourist has seemingly taken full ownership of the unidentified Māori woman’s image. Further into the twentieth century and for the third example, the attributed text for a portrait of a young European woman reads “portrait of a girl wearing a dress with a shirred top.1960s” demonstrates a more delicate, translucent all over coverage with water colour paints.

I have explored photography as studio research for some time and exhibited, as part of my PhD visual examination with the series *I Hear You*. I came upon Lissa Mitchell’s book *Through Shaded Glass: Women and Photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960*¹¹², it was post the visual examination. However through this text I was able to give attention to Aotearoa’s legacies of women and photography. As a precursor to the digital tools of Photoshop, I was especially interested in the techniques of tinting and colouring photos I am often experimenting with the colourising Photoshop function. Within the wider *I Hear You* series there is an assemblage of photographed and found elements, digitally assembled, colours are altered and tinted as fits the needs of the work. I found a commonality in approach for my contemporary digital collages and those ‘touched-up’, as colloquially known, tinted and coloured photographs executed over a century previously.

As a practising artist I have noticed over the last few years a shift within exhibiting institutions and publishing initiatives to seek to rebalance the visibility of women, non-binary and Indigenous artists—in essence, a new intersectional approach to art delivery and documentation.

Although a full discussion is outside the scope of this thesis, I would like to make a note of a few examples. Locally within the gallery context in Tāmaki Makaurau, Season gallery formed in 2021 during the Covid Pandemic by Jade Townsend (Ngāti Kahungunu Te Atihaunui-a-Pāpārangī) and Francis McWhannell. Season is an exhibition space with a dedicated program of nearly one hundred percent Māori and Pasifika artists, including the painter Robyn Kahukiwa and from a younger generation, painter Ayesha Green. Likewise, Tim Melville gallery, operating since 2007 includes a substantial percentage of Māori artists, including significant painters such as Star Gossage and Nephi Tupaea. Pasifika artists also enjoy visibility within this exhibition space, of note is the painter, Salome Tanuvasa. Tim Melville recently added a number of First Nations artists and collectives to their program, including the Warakurna Artists Community, Australia. In this year, 2024, the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki has made an increasingly evident lean towards younger Māori, Pasifika and gender diverse artists in their inaugural exhibition *Aotearoa Contemporary* (2024), curated by Cameron Ah Loo-Matamua and Natasha Conland.

111. *Ibid.*, 26.

112. *Ibid.*

Painting Towards New

I consider the painter's situation in the studio as a list of pragmatic incidents and contingencies occurring between the body, applicator tools, and viscous materials. In Graw's discussion with Charline Von Heyl, further into *The Love of Painting*¹¹³ Graw situated Von Heyl's work as a "... spectrum of forms of materiality... different types of brushstrokes, textures and surface effects co-existing side by side."¹¹⁴ Throughout *The Love of Painting* Graw proposes arguments and conversations with well-known painters (of the western world) for the enduring capacity of painting. I understand the enduring capacity in Graw's definition to mean its 'on-goingness', continued re-invention, therefore continued new-ness.

Painting returns decade after decade with a proven capacity to absorb what is surrounding it. In an ongoing conversation for the continued vitality of painting vs. the so-called theoretical deaths, Graw quotes from Joselit's essay "Painting Beside Itself" (2009), "painting is viewed as a medium destined to absorb social and digital networks into itself."¹¹⁵ Paintings' deaths and rebirths are reinvigorated and re-organised into new conditions and new combinations with fresh subject approaches in a cycle of perpetual renewals.

On a macro scale, the condition of being neoteric – new, is the result of actions such as matter transforming, rearranging or replacing other matter. In the much smaller scale of this meta-assertion, an individual's art practice (mine) operates in a room in a house in Tāmaki Makaurau, performing also within the universal conditions of transformation and re/arrangement, although at a proportionately micro level. The logics of transformation remain a key factor within the collective groups of work created for this research. Newness forming is at once the pragmatic material labor of making paintings coupled with the internal juggle of concepts surrounding the Feminine and Noise (sound).

In the beginning, New materialises in the studio as a freshly prepared canvas surface and unfolds with varying degrees of ease throughout the process of experimentation and improvisation, until eventually or sometimes hastily, I decide or the painting decides we have reached a point of resolution. I want to qualify the idea of 'resolution', as this initially may read as something peaceful, as 'problem solved'. The place of resolution, however, harbours multiple aspects of completion. There are paintings whose material issues were resolved this afternoon and yet may feel unresolved tomorrow morning, with some aspects of a work remaining in progress to be reimagined sometime further down the line. Consider also that an artwork can be reconfigured from exhibition to exhibition, through a being in a new location, placed within a new installation and or viewed by new audiences. Furthermore, classifications of meaning can be redefined or adjusted by changes within cultures. An artwork can be impacted by new social and cultural conditions when perceived at some point in the future by people and cultures with new or different perspectives from the norm at the time of the artwork's creation.

113. Isabelle Graw et al., *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018).

114. *Ibid.*, 12.

115. *Ibid.*, 13.

In my practice, I am aware of the patriarchal hegemonies of art history and I attempt resistance to this history's linear narrative. One aspect of resistance my practice is known for is its varying stylistic approaches where no one painting looks the same as another. However, in desiring to bend with some of my self-imposed rules, this PhD study allowed me the studio time to research more closely ideas of sameness as newness and as evidenced in these four paintings from the *Sounds Like Air Group* series as reducing some visual options. There may be similarities in theory to the repetition of the *Punch Card Paintings*, however these works land more in the area of an experiment, weighing in more heavily with the nuances of an abstract material investigation. Perhaps this overrides the concepts concerned with performing repeated systems or at least shares the stage. *Sound Like Air Group* differs in scale, form and paint application to the *Punch Card Paintings*. Their purpose is to experiment with formal and material ideas as studies for another much larger future work namely *Drummer Leg*, whose form was already implanted in my head. My beginning experiments were with patterning, the aim to push serialism-as-form some way further into chance and improvisation.

Personal preferences when choosing painting tools and the haptic nature of the hand-made, no matter the intention towards exactitude, any group of works begins with new marks. Rarely do the gestures manifest exactly as they are seen in the mind's eye. The examples shown derive from the one formalistic beginning, i.e. applying paint to the surface then wiping or scraping it off, leaving an abstracted stained ground to work from, a starting method I use in a large portion of my work. Devising a process to favour similarities over broad differences and while still using oil paint, a visual closeness is attempted by employing simple printing methods. In the above works a simple press or monoprint method is employed. With a slight deviation, instead of producing just the one pressing as is the rule for the monoprint, a small amount of the painted-first-surface or positive image motif is pressed repeatedly, making use of the irregular paint distribution on the artwork's surface.

The method is implemented on two occasions, once with curved lines to image a wave and another circular form created through various sized pressed spherules to imagine perhaps percussions or interferences. Three of the paintings also have their scale split roughly in two by horizontal blocks of colour. Amongst these image-building strategies there are further incremental transformations, lines spilling, edges blurring, moments where backgrounds or foregrounds obscure what may appear repetitive and other disappearances. The incremental moments speak at times to effects of touch when performing with musical instruments, paying special attention to strategies that surround difference. Turning into noise.

FEMININE

This investigation involves concepts drawn from the multitudes of ideas that circulate in discussions of what the feminine is or could be. My research into this subject has considered cultural factors, alongside related visual art and sound practices. The question of what was, and what is the feminine, looms large across this work. Keeping this in my mind, I have also looked towards locations the feminine occupies within feminism as it relates to my practice. In my painted work I have explored colour as an aesthetic emblem of the feminine in tandem with sound communities who engage with artists endeavoring to stand apart from cultures of patrilineal gatekeeping. In the following chapter Noise – I explore in greater depth how selected feminine ideas manifest through noise and sound.

As I acknowledge the feminine, I see this term as referring to a broadly understood group of ideas based around but not limited to, the idea of woman. The origin of the word feminine is ancient, and in my understanding was conceived through a reading of philosophical thought in Ancient Greece and Rome. According to Anne Carson in her essay “The Gender of Sound”¹¹⁶, the term feminine was used to identify, separate and exclude women and also as named in that time; “catamites, eunuchs and androgynes” from the burgeoning culture of patriarchy. Anne Carson’s writing indicates the concept of the ‘feminine’ as being an oppressive and exclusionary force pressed upon women, queer and non-binary people (named as we would identify in our current context).

“The Gender of Sound” points to some of the earliest misogynist, sexist, homophobic human behaviors organised socially and culturally and into the law as originating in the Greek/Roman era. I would contend this indicates the length of time oppressive behaviors and phobias have been in practice, and as such supported by the English language and western law, both having their origins from this era. I would maintain embedding such age-old behaviors of misogyny and homophobia into the DNA of western thought, culture and system of laws.

On Colour

... colour as object is earthy material stuff. Colour as subject arches over everything like a rainbow, from cosmic rays, to the minerals in the earth to what happens inside your eyes, from religious symbology to philosophical problems, from phenomena to noumena...But aside from all that, colour is just the tool the painter wields in making a painting. Each hue adds an almost anthropomorphic character...to deal with colour as a painter is to render these over-arching problems as physical propositions, as sensuous experiences synesthetically merged under the sign of the hand.¹¹⁷

In my life experience and art practice the feminine as a cultural phenomenon is

116. Anne Carson, “The Gender of Sound”, *Glass Irony and God* (New Directions, NY,1995).

117. Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Painting beyond Itself: The Medium in the Post-Medium Condition* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016),105.

intertwined with feminism and both the feminine and feminist are brought forth visually through aesthetic decisions. Humanity manifests a historical deeply rooted relationship with colour, altering its positioning as cultural and political changes occur over time. As Gray notes, “Colour carries many connotations and has historically been used to signify social and political status and other symbolic and cultural meanings.”¹¹⁸ Within my visual work for this investigation I make use of the colours belonging to the red spectrum, where referents are many.¹¹⁹

For the painter, there are many shades of red oil paint available, to name a few there is Cadmium Red Light, Medium and Deep Red, Naphthol Red, Radiant Red and Alizarin Crimson. To differentiate further, Naphthol Red, has a blue/violet bias, offering a cool red, while the Cadmium Red has an orange bias, offering warm red. In the business of art supplies there are more than forty shades of red oil paint commercially available, with different tinges of yellows, blues, whites and black pigments, the range is broad.

In Michal Kunięki’s cognitive Event Related Potential (ERP) research on red from 2015 which bears the title *The color red attracts attention in an emotional context*¹²⁰, Kunięki states “The color red is known to influence psychological functioning, having both negative (e.g., blood, fire, danger), and positive (e.g., sex, food) connotations.”¹²¹ Further quoting J.B. Hutchings’ study *Color in Plants, Animals and Man* from 1997 as saying “colors may also guide attention towards important objects, since color is used both in nature and culture as a powerful signal.”¹²²

Among the spectrum of tonalities for Kunięki’s broad range of experiences and objects (see above) which reach across “blood” through to “food” when seeing red (no pun intended but does have a basis in psychology) one can imagine any number of variations and combinations of these indicators having the ability to trigger emotional responses as colour makes its way through the gamut of the red colour spectrum.

John Monteleone writes in the forward to Dr. Sally Gray’s text for the exhibition *Thinking Through Pink*,

Throughout the centuries, pink has at various times been perceived as masculine; feminine; erotic; kitsch; sophisticated and transgressive. It continues to be one of the most divisive colours, arousing strong negative and positive responses. Gender-coded notions of pink - as an expression of delicacy, frivolity and fragility were firmly established in the mid-twentieth century-epitomised in the ‘pink for girls, blue for boys’ tradition, still entrenched in contemporary Western culture. In

118. Sally Gray, *Thinking Through Pink* (Wollongong Art Gallery, 2022) Published following the exhibition *Thinking Through Pink* at the Wollongong Art Gallery, Wollongong, New South Wales.

119. M Kunięcki, J Pilarczyk and S Wichary, *The color red attracts attention in an emotional context. An ERP study* (2015) *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* 9:212. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2015.00212

120. M Kunięcki, J Pilarczyk and S Wichary, *The color red attracts attention in an emotional context. An ERP study.*

121. *Ibid.*, 1.

122. John B. Hutchings, “Color in plants, animals and man’ in *Color for Science, Art and Technology*, ed K. Nassau (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1997), 222–246.

the 1980s the pink triangle-previously used to identify homosexuals and mark them out for persecution during the Nazi period-became a symbol of gay activism in the face of HIV/AIDS and is now indelibly associated with the LGBTQIA+ community.¹²³

With an awareness of the definitive reach of colours in the red and pink range I have created a conversation with the feminine and feminism through the application of these varying red tones. I have frequently chosen to work with particular variations from the red spectrum deep cadmium red through to a pale wash of pinks. While the interpretations of the colour are primarily a personal experience for the viewer – of which individual sensibilities I am not in complete control of— I am not unaware of the multiple connotations red tones bring to any project, as I make use of tonalities to build context.

Jan Verwoert has written in his *For the Future of Painting* essay, published originally in the exhibition catalogue for the Mary Heilmann & David Reed: *Two by Two* exhibition, expresses that the purpose of colour relations is to touch upon a “sense of grammar”, relationships between colours and the world, and goes on to suggest,

A particular combination and arrangement of colours can convey the qualitative parameters of a whole world. It attunes me to this world. It makes me experience this world in the light of the relations generated by these colours. It pulls my *élan vital* in a new direction. This is more than a mere process of representation. Rather, it is like tuning up in music...¹²⁴

Isabelle Graw identifies a number of variations in grammar relations for pink in her notes for the curated group exhibition *The Vitalist Economy of Painting*. For Jutta Koether's 2018 painting *Isabelle Bild #3*, she states, “The neon pink marks suggesting Graw's sneakers likewise makes the picture shine from within, translating Monet's rosés into a different register endowed with an even more forceful air of agency.”¹²⁵ Then also to Amy Sillman's “dirty pink... dominates its surface lends a fleshy presence streaked with blackish grime... an embodied painterly creation disfigured by the marks of the contemporary world.”¹²⁶

In my sound and visual work I register the feminine and feminism as a fluctuating situation of disembodied concepts; as a set of aesthetics, I use this as a tool to push the visual work away from past negative dominating lineages. These aesthetics may come from both the abstracted material of ideas and within life's real materialities and events, dispensing content in multiple complex and intertwined ways. Additionally within my practice I have developed a personal cross-modal lexicon of colours and forms. These may appear as part of a network of links from previous work and to artists I have researched and

123. Sally Gray, *Thinking Through Pink*, 2.

124. Jan Verwoert, “For the Future of Painting.” in *Two By Two*. ed. Mary Heilmann and David Reed (Nationalgalerie. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. June 2015), 1.

125. Isabelle Graw, *Notes on the exhibition The Vitalist Economy of Painting* (Galerie Neu, 2018) Published following the exhibition *The Vitalist Economy of Painting* at Galerie Neu, Berlin, 3.

126. *Ibid.*, 19.

found commonalities with.

The forms and or symbols chosen to accompany colour may be a human body part such as a portion of a leg and a symbol would be a free-floating inverted triangle. A symbol could be non-human, a material object abstracted, a tambourine reduced to a scatter of moving parts, denoting vibrating hi-key percussive sounds. Form and colour speak to multiple subjects; they contain alignments and influences from societal histories, personal histories, and current social relationships. Forms propose musical performances, acts of listening and looking, live situations and the implied or explicit signatures of other artists of influence.

Over time I have gathered a group of female artists who have been and remain important for my artistic and cultural development. Initially and they remain so, the following three women are of particular importance; Kim Gordon, Jutta Koether and Rita Ackerman. All are visual artists, working as painters and have participated for extended periods of time in various subcultures of experimental music. These artists are from my generation and carry within their work a continuity of influences, namely musical and also the frequent presence of the female body in their visual work, informing how these bodies are considered in the conversation between the feminine and feminism. My visual and sound practice similarly occupies various interpretations and explorations of the feminine.

The basic dictionary list below seems like a trivial addition but as a ground zero explanation for the feminine and one easily accessed through a quick internet search, the definitions are revealing in their banality.

Dictionary.com/browse/feminine...¹²⁷

Feminine: adjective

1.being or relating to a woman or a girl:

feminine beauty;

feminine dress.

2.having qualities traditionally ascribed to women, such as sensitivity or gentleness.

3.effeminate; womanish: growing up he had been told he had a feminine walk.

As a set of explanations or assumptions the statements are marginally helpful, pointed while being sweeping. The above offers no illumination as to what a woman or a girl could be, what beauty is or the feminine qualities of a dress are. When explaining point '3' – effeminate, to my ears there appears a derogatory tone or judgment stemming from the word "told". I detect the tone of this definition disapproves of the effeminate if presented as womanish or feminine. I am confused by why this happens in this brief defining and widely available statement. Returning to Carson's essay "The Gender of Sound"¹²⁸ explanations for the term of 'feminine' stem from ancient times. Carson looks

127. "Feminine Definition & Meaning." Dictionary.com. Accessed January 9, 2025. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/feminine>.

128. Carson, "The Gender of Sound".

far back to the past Western histories of the Romanesque era and discovers the origin of the term feminine, then defining the essence and presence of women anew, but not in a positive way.

According to Carson, during ancient times establishing a lexicon of the feminine was crucial, and so therefore defining an opposite term namely as masculine was established. The concept of binary was created and understood as masculine/feminine or man/woman. Feminine/masculine traits had at their heart social, cultural and political power plays. To gain authority to control the populations Aristotle and his associates utilised a campaign of devaluing women: one effective method was through demeaning the pitch of their voices. It was campaigned that a high-pitched voice in a person was considered to be someone who was deviant or 'loose' in character. That state was deemed to originate from women, catamites, eunuchs and androgynes — as named in those times. "Their sounds are bad to hear and make men feel uncomfortable."¹²⁹ People deficient in the masculine ideal of self-control, those deemed loose were therefore unfit to reside in positions of power, where clear controlled thinking is of paramount importance.¹³⁰

As Carson attests, for the purposes of garnering greater power, Aristotle and his followers demonised a higher pitch of voice, creating psychological and physical divides between the masculine and feminine. Those considered masculine were identified as having a low pitched and controlled voice. Meanwhile, the women, catamites, eunuchs and androgynes who displayed characteristics identified as feminine were bundled into the same scorned group.

An online blog, *The Existence Machine*¹³¹ critiques matters pertaining to human existence, discussing both *The Gender of Sound* and Chris Knight's text *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the origins of culture* (1991)¹³², suggesting the power structures of Aristotle's time exerted considerable restrictions on women's access to the civic developments of the new epoch. Affirming Carson's words, *The Existence Machine* points out:

Knight notes in several places that, built into many of the myths of the systems of taboos and the origin stories is the admission by men that the true power originally belonged to women and that the men took it from them and now must prevent women from taking part in it.

Carson references Maud Gleason's chapter "The Role of the Voice in the Maintenance of Gender Boundaries" from *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*¹³³, describing the negative words and concepts ascribed to women, stating:

129. Ibid., 119.

130. Ibid., 119.

131. Richard (last name unknown), "Anne Carson's "The Gender of Sound", etc.", *The Existence Machine*. <https://yolacrary.blogspot.com/2014/02/anne-carsons-gender-of-sound-etc.html>.

132. Richard (last name unknown), "Being Human", *The Existence Machine*. <https://yolacrary.blogspot.com/2007/07/becoming-human.html>

133. Maud W Gleason, *Making men: Sophists and self-presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Aristotle tells us ... the high-pitched voice of the female is one evidence of her evil disposition, for creatures who are brave or just (like lions, bulls, roosters and the human male) have large deep voices. If you hear a man talking in a gently or high-pitched voice you know he is a kinaidos ("catamite").¹³⁴

A catamite in ancient Greece and Rome is said to be a boy who was an intimate companion to usually an older male; calamite was also used as an insult when directed toward a grown man. Tactics of insulting women due to the sonority of voice were undertaken in an attempt to shame those who may have demonstrated feminine characteristics.¹³⁵

Marie Thompson expands further on Carson's theories of the feminine voice for the journal *Contemporary Music Review* in the 2016 article, "Feminised Noise and the 'Dotted Line' of Sonic Experimentation"¹³⁶. Pointing out the contradictions and paradoxes of meaning within sound in the context of the feminine, she argues,

Though often associated with silence and silencing, Eurocentric concepts of femininity have significant metaphorical resonances with notions of noise. The feminine shares with noise connotations of disorder, chaos, complexity and excess. The silence has been construed as 'virtuous': for Aristotle, 'silence is a woman's glory but this is not equally the glory of man' (trans., 1905). Conversely, sounds, vocalizations and speech deemed feminine have often been construed as negatively noisy. As Carson notes in her essay, 'putting a door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture from antiquity to the present day. Its chief tactic is the ideological association of female sound with monstrosity, disorder and death'¹³⁷

Thompson continues ...

The purported 'noisiness' of femininity is intensified by certain co-constitutions of race, class and gender. Noisiness is often heard as a marker of class (or lack thereof), while working-class women are understood to be noisier than middle-class women.¹³⁸

Artists who tackle the patrilineal disregard for women head on, and those too who simply turn away to build their own worlds are of specific interest to this study. In a recent interview with curator Massimiliano Gioni for *Elephant Art Magazine* the artist Judy Chicago pointed out the "patriarchy is a belief system"¹³⁹. This assertion makes sense to me, as the patrilineal system is proven to be embedded within our western culture and my view so entwined

134. Anne Carson, "The Gender of Sound", 119.

135. *Ibid.*, 119.

136. Marie Thompson, "Feminised noise and the 'dotted line' of sonic experimentalism" *Contemporary Music Review* Vol.35:1 (2016) doi: 10.1080/07494467.2016.1176773, 85-101.

137. *Ibid.*, 86.

138. *Ibid.*, 87.

139. Tschabalala. "'patriarchy Is a Belief System': Judy Chicago in Conversation with Massimiliano Gioni." *ELEPHANT* (October 1, 2024) <https://elephant.art/judy-chicago-first-came-to-consciousness-in-her-studio/>.

as a governing and dominating system it is difficult to untangle from.

Those who work in aesthetics inquire into the ways that gender influences the formation of ideas about art, artists, and aesthetic value. Feminist perspectives in aesthetics are also attuned to the cultural influences that exert power over subjectivity: the ways that art both reflects and perpetuates the social formation of gender, sexuality, and identity.¹⁴⁰

As I attempt to unravel the experience of femininity these ideas present themselves through aesthetic decisions in the visual work intersecting with ideas or proposals of a feminist position. The project has involved how to unpick the feminaue and feminsim as they work with or against each other, while considering their roles in the languages of noise. Oftentimes there appears an ideological clash where they collide, like sisters who enjoy a closeness but can also carry tension, confusing each other and each concept.

I draw attention to the witty and sarcastic work of Lily van der Stokker, an example being the work *Yelling Women* from 2014¹⁴¹. Stokker unites a number of concepts: being female, of an older generation and unafraid to wield a particular, frequently used milky tone of pink. A signifier of childhood femininity, understood with her identity as an adult woman, the colour arguably confuses generational expectations of women and infantilises their experiences. Frustration and anger can appear in much feminist work. Lily van der Stokker work *Yelling Woman* 2014 certainly carries the tone of frustration within its note of sarcasm; art can be a place where you do not need to be so quiet.

I hear the shouts of femininity and feminism together in the *Witch* paintings of Belgium born English painter Sara Knowland. Knowland's *Witch* paintings, and Kim Gordon's *Noise Poems* express the nuances and entanglements of feminine and angry, feminist and delicacy. I discovered the painted work of Sara Knowland on a visit to London when I stumbled upon her exhibition *Mostly Women* in 2019 at Soft Opening gallery. In Knowland's striking paintings of witches I was surprised to see the classic trope of a twentieth century cinematic witch presented and with such an intense delivery. The witches' visualization was tempered with some light wash colour tones, as if dressed in a shadow of silk gauzes. I was excited by these paintings, recognizing a live action contemporary feminist agenda at work. Amongst or because of the painted cinematic judders, dislodged fractured realities, shatterings and interruptions, I recognised a similar shattering of realities in Carolee Schneemann's 1963 photo series *Eye Body*.

I understand Schneemann to also knowingly utilising tropes of fractured identities. Broken shards of mirror, repeating images of a fractured face evoke the fear and confusion of psychological stress. Split realities, the anxiety of identity recalls twentieth century psychological film thrillers or horrors and

140. Carolyn Korsmeyer and Peg Brand Weiser, "Feminist Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/feminism-aesthetics/>

141. Lily van der Stokker *Yelling Women*, acrylic paint on wood, 100 x 108 x 8cm, 2014.

experiences of Halls of Mirrors in circus entertainments. Such works evoke the uncomfortable horror trope of female madness and the insinuation of violence from the sharp shards of mirror glass.

In a similar discussion of feminist anger and frustration, Kim Gordon's ongoing series of text-based 'noise paintings' of borrowed and original phrasings pay homage to and poke fun at friends as she dishes out dis/respect to noise bands, often quoting their band names. Gordon's intentions, I argue, are to critique capitalism and destroy the patriarchy with just a few words. The painting *You Don't Own Me*¹⁴² is lifted from a song which for its time and pop context is a surprisingly feminist song. Originally released in 1963 and performed by Lesley Gore in the anthemic and emotional girl group style of the era, the song performance is no less truculent and fraught than Gordon's 2017 text painting from decades later, rendered in Gordon's signature messy form delivered in lux gold paint.

It is interesting to acknowledge the background and social context of the era: this song was written in 1963 by David White and John Madara and produced by a young Quincy Jones, notably his first 'hit' production project. According to the transcription from the US radio show *American Anthem*, the episode "'You Don't Own Me', A Feminist Anthem With Civil Rights Roots, Is All About Empathy"¹⁴³ episode creator Neda Ulaby discusses...

...this fiercely feminist anthem was written by two men. David White died earlier this year [2019] but John Madara, now 82 years old, says the two songwriters were disgusted by how much music written for female singers in the early 1960s centered on mooning over guys and decided to try something: 'Let's write a song about a woman telling a guy off.' ...Madara says the song's sensibility was also shaped by his upbringing in a multiracial Philadelphia neighborhood and his participation in the civil rights movement. 'I saw how black people got treated,' he says. 'It was horrible, horrible, horrible. My friends and I got locked up in Philadelphia and Mississippi, and they treated us like gangsters. And my black friends got hit more than I got hit. [The police] had billy clubs and hit you across the legs, but the black guys got hit across the body. Those are things you don't forget.'

You Don't Own Me resonates across the decades, finding renewed relevance as it goes, notably in 2018 sung by the female guests and cast of *Saturday Night Live* the night of the USA Women's March. While Shana Redmond adds when addressing the topic of,

violence against disenfranchised people who stand up to oppression... 'All of these things still exist. And that is literally the haunting of 'You Don't Own Me' — all of the ways in which systems of patriarchy continue to reveal themselves in our everyday lives.'¹⁴⁴

142. #*You Don't Own Me*, acrylic on canvas, dimensions unknown, 2017.

143. Neda Ulaby "'You Don't Own Me,' A Feminist Anthem With Civil Rights Roots, Is All About Empathy" (NPR Music, 2019) <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/26/735819094/lesley-gore-you-dont-own-me-american-anthem>

144. Ibid.

I have discussed the influences and contexts of language of interest to me within the framework of my feminist art and sound practice through of the explanation and presentation of the title chapters of this thesis, supported by a discussion into the origins of the term 'feminine' by means of Anne Carson's Gender of Sound¹⁴⁵ essay. To explore further into the contexts of the term 'feminine' and its relation to noise I return to the article by Marie Thompson, "Feminised Noise and the Dotted Line of Sonic Experimentation"¹⁴⁶ where Thompson states,

At the centre of this article lies an important question: These two terms '(feminine and feminism)' pertain to different analytical moves. Where the former primarily refers to forms and qualities that have been designated as feminine within Eurocentric culture, the latter, as I understand it, primarily refers to action, a 'doing'.¹⁴⁷

The culturally and socially entwined feminine is a long and strong force, with many ways to be interpreted, understood and viewed. I believe it is impossible for feminism to position itself outside the psyche of said phenomenon responding as it does to the voluminous complexities of the feminine.

145. Carson, "The Gender of Sound".

146. Marie Thompson, "Feminised Noise And The 'Dotted Line' Of Sonic Experimentalism", 85-101.

147. Ibid., 87.

NOISE

It is the questions and nuances of the feminine within my work that bring outer worlds of feminist action in. When reflecting on feminist politics, as they may exist in the field, let us say at the grass roots level of actions, for example attending a protest march or organizing a petition. I have not (as yet) considered these types of actions as my art but I would take the energy from this type of critique with me into my studio practice. In this way I can apply the lens of feminism to the feminine. My work looks to explore these conceptual and real-life entanglements through my own idiosyncratic aesthetic choices. The following chapter 'Noise' is the last chapter in Part One of this exegesis where I consider how selected feminine ideas manifest through noise as I perceive it. Part Two will be an exploration into the ways the material processes and ideas surrounding this project manifest in the various groups of physical work.

There are many ways to determine a meaning for Noise. Tara Rodger's book *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound*¹⁴⁸, describes the phenomena as "site of disturbance and productive potential."¹⁴⁹ At the start of Lauren Boyle's *GUTTER: Girls of Noise* (2011) documentary, a documentary about women in the US noise scene circa 2011, the following text is displayed: "noise means unwanted sound or noise pollution. Noise can block, distort or change/interfere with the meaning of a message in both human and electronic communication".¹⁵⁰

As any number of musicians could testify with access to an upright piano at an early age, you learnt quickly the delight taken in bashing the keys to make atonal, nonsensical noises that were guaranteed to be disruptive and deemed unwanted noise by other family members. With this came the admonishments of destructive behavior and warnings that it's possible to damage the instrument through these careless (or carefree) actions. Some of us stored this information away for use later on.

To travel further back in time than my childhood misdemeanors, I can locate two recorded examples of significant noise developments – both in the category of intentional noise. The first is from the seventeenth century, where the Italian architect and sculptor, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, is credited with inventing an insomnia treatment machine using the principles of sleep-inducing white noise. As the story is told, on the day of Pope Clement IX's election in 1667, he commissioned architect Bernini to solve his chronic insomnia. Bernini built a white noise machine; a wheel that struck a series of paper globes, providing sleep inducing sounds that simulated running water.¹⁵¹

The second example, a few centuries later, is found in another Italian, Luigi Russolo. Russolo was a member of the politicised Futurist movement who published a noise manifesto, *L'arte dei Rumori* (*The Art of Noises* in English)

148. Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

149. Ibid., 19.

150. Lauren Boyle, Dir., *GUTTER: Girls of Noise*. YouTube video, 36:11 (July 6, 2011) <https://youtu.be/dzvduxWzuZg?si=M8OYpe6JX5sk-Az>

151. Michele Augusto Riva et al., *Gian Lorenzo Bernini's 17th century white noise machine. The Lancet*. Neurology volume 16, issue 10 (2017).

in 1913. Within this booklet Russolo was waging a linguistic war on traditional music. Entirely separate to Bernini's approach, Russolo, in collaboration with some members of the Futurist group, designed sound machines with the aim to deliver maximum acoustic destruction.

Closer to the contemporary, in 1977 the economist Jacques Attali published *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. The text is well known by both musicians and academics and often cited by those who study Noise as it has been historically defined. Attali's thesis in part aligns with Russolo's resistance to traditional music as it operates in an institutionalised, capitalist, musical context. Russolo defines noise as an agent of violence, a precursor to change, in comparison to more commercially oriented popular music operating as it affects taming and subjugation of noise.¹⁵²

In considering unintentional noise it is worthwhile also to consider noise from a contemporary utilitarian context with the development of specific technological advances in professional audio production where there is an underlying focus on reducing or eliminating noise. Such considerations may apply to unwanted buzzing and hums from nearby electronics, sounds of the outside world and the build-up of ephemeral sounds that are a result of the recording process. Combining multiple tracks of audio can result in a buildup of unintended and undesired sonic artefacts.

Noise is also a contemporary music genre. There are multiple definitions and categorisations built around developments from the later twentieth century all brought together under the 'Noise Music' banner. Within this music genre there are further sub-genres including 'power electronics', 'Japanoise', 'ambient industrial', 'drone', 'noise rock' etc. Many of these codifications have their origin in commerce e.g., where to locate any given audio artefact in a record store catalogue or mail-order website so as to facilitate purchase, and can therefore be somewhat arbitrary. The Noise Music community is an active community where new terms are brought to the discussion regularly and there can be much overlap.

Over the past decade or more there has been a profusion of literature built around the questions of how Noise Music may be defined, and who are the practitioners. An internet search 'Noise Music publications' shows much writing on around the topic, whether academic or ethnographic, the authorship is most frequently male with just a smattering of writing by women within the field of noise. The first aggregator site to appear in the search 'Noise Music publications' is *Good Reads*, offering a list of fifty plus books. The initial seventeen books belonging to their list are authored by men with number eighteen written by Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England, 1600-1770*. As the list continues the balance is twenty-eight books authored by men to eight by women. To add the BOMB Magazine website, their Noise Music section offers interviews with nineteen male artists and two interviews with cis couples. As such I would argue that the documentation of a noise lineage is weighted firmly towards patriarchal observations. This said in

152. Jacques Attali, *NOISE, The Political Economy of Music*, translated by Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

my investigations I have found some mentions of women in noise publications especially as we have moved into the twenty-first century.

One discussion of women in noise is found in Dimitri della Faille and Cedrik Fermont's *Not Your World Music: Noise in South East Asia*¹⁵³ (2016,) which includes the chapter "What is Noise Music? An Attempt at an Anti-Sexist and Anti-Colonial Definition." This represents a key contribution to this field, addressing the exclusion of under-represented artists in terms of gender and ethnicity. The authors presuppose the critique of a Westernised historical model by also bringing attention to South East Asia as an unrepresented region in the field of Noise Music.

As stated above the myopic gap starts to be addressed as we move further into the twenty-first century. With a few exceptions such as *Beyond Unwanted Sound*¹⁵⁴ (2017, Marie Thompson) many publications have not originated from the academic sphere, instead centering more around the worlds of Punk, where the women concerned are already famous as musicians. While not originating in academia, we can observe linkages to Autotheory, as the books are most often of a biographical or autobiographical nature. Some examples worthy of note include Sara Marcus's *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*¹⁵⁵ published in 2010. Three significant books followed in 2014, Viv Albertine's *Clothes clothes clothes Music music music Boys boys boys*¹⁵⁶ and Kim Gordon's *Is It My Body? Selected Texts*¹⁵⁷ and *Art Sex Music* by artist/musician and Throbbing Gristle member Cosey Fanni Tutti.¹⁵⁸ Gordon is academically educated, and so her publications sit in a space in part critical theory, part storytelling, part autobiography. In 2015, another Gordon book *Girl in A Band*,¹⁵⁹ primarily an intentional autobiography was published, followed later by *Revenge of the She Punks*¹⁶⁰ by Vivian Goldman, published in 2019.

According to Marie Thompson in her 2016 essay "Feminised Noise and The 'Dotted Line' Of Sonic Experimentalism"¹⁶¹,

Noise has been feminised by a number of recent historiographical and curatorial projects that have sought to amplify the creative work of women in experimental and electronic music, the most prominent of which are the Her Noise project and Tara Rodger's *Pink Noises* project.

153. Cedrik Fermont and Dimitri Della Faille, *Not Your World Music: Noise in South East Asia: Art, Politics, Identity, Gender and Global Capitalism* (Berlin, Ottawa: Syrphe ; Hushush, 2016).

154. Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501313349>

155. Sara Marcus, *Girls To The Front, The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (HarpersCollins Publishers USA 2010).

156. Viv Albertine, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes: Music, Music, Music: Boys, Boys, Boys: A Memoir* (New York, N.Y: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015).

157. Kim Gordon, *Is It My Body? Selected Texts*. edited by Branden W, Joseph (Sternberg Press, UK, 2014).

158. Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Art Sex Music* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2017).

159. Kim Gordon, *Girl In a Band* (Faber And Faber, 2015).

160. Vivien Goldman, *Revenge of the She Punks, A Feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot* (Omnibus Press, 2019).

161. Marie Thompson, "Feminised Noise and the 'Dotted Line' of Sonic Experimentalism." *Contemporary Music Review* 35, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2016.1176773>, 85-101.

The *Her Noise* project was instigated by Lina Džuverovic and Anne Hilde Neset back in 2001, exploring the sonic practices and performances of women. I found *Pink Noises* to be an illuminating text, presenting a series of interviews concerning the topic of feminine noise. Thompson declares the book to be “decentered networks of sonic experimentation.”¹⁶² By presenting the conversations of a group of women who are sonic practitioners including DJs, electronic musicians, and sound artists, both the *Her Noise* project and the book *Pink Noises* “challenge the authority and plausibility of the naturalised patrilineal ‘dotted line’ of sonic experimentation.”¹⁶³

In Ellen Moffat’s recent thesis document, “*Strings of Sound and Sense: Towards a Feminine Sonic*”¹⁶⁴, 2021, Moffat claims

The feminine sonic highlights the relational and embodied interconnectivity of material and immaterial, corporeal and incorporeal, and subjective and intersubjective dimensions of sound art as unfolding relations of sound and space, sounding bodies, and sonic fluctuation.¹⁶⁵

In my mind this statement has absorbed the earlier work of the key sound artists Pauline Oliveros, Eliane Radigue, and Annea Lockwood. The innovative research around performance and listening by these women and their cohorts embraced the relational aspects and perceptions of the body as an all-inclusive experience in the sonic arenas.

As the women-in-music market expands an opening for a broader definition of women in music develops and we were rewarded with Julia Eckhart’s *Eliane Radigue: Intermediary Spaces*¹⁶⁶ in 2019 and more recently in 2022, a reprint of Pauline Oliveros’s original *Quantum Listening*¹⁶⁷ from 2010. This year, 2025, as my PhD finds its conclusions a most timely publication from *Permanent Draft* – the French poet and enthusiast Fanny Chiarello’s *BASTA NOW, Women, Trans & Non-binary in Experimental Music*¹⁶⁸ lands.

Within the book’s foreword Chiarello summarises...

...having spent forty years exploring vastly different musical landscapes from baroque to noise and free jazz... after having noticed the dizzying under-representation, if not total absence, of women... after having heard men talk about their best records of all time for decades (no women in sight) I began to make a list of women in experimental music whose work particularly interested me...¹⁶⁹

The number of experimental musicians discussed in this book reaches “2371 womxn”, most still alive and practicing today. The many politicised statements,

162. Thompson, “Feminised Noise and the ‘Dotted Line’ of Sonic Experimentalism”, 86.

163. *Ibid.*, 91.

164. Moffat, “Strings of Sound and Sense: Towards a Feminine Sonic”.

165. *Ibid.*, 130.

166. Julia Eckhart, *Eliane Radigue, Intermediary Spaces* (Umland, Brussels, 2019).

167. Pauline Oliveros, *Quantum Listening* (Terra Ignota, UK, 2022).

168. Chiarello, *BASTA NOW, Women, Trans & Non-binary in Experimental Music*.

169. *Ibid.*, 9.

with all the varying degrees of commitment to a manifesto (of sorts) BASTA NOW makes clear that in its entirety there is a strikingly political statement on gender discrimination and restoration. While discussing the manifesto for the publication, Chiarello writes, “This book has nothing against men, it’s just not about them. It focuses on women, trans, non-binary, and AFAB (assigned female at birth) musicians.”¹⁷⁰ Chiarello along with percussionist and drummer Valentina Magaletti founded the entity *Permanent Draft*, which is dedicated to promoting contemporary female, non-binary and transgender artists. BASTA NOW is their first self published, major written publication, prior to this they have released all-female sound recordings and micro-press printed projects. The *Permanent Draft* achievement of publishing is indeed a living example of opening out spaces for those artists just plain ignored, a task which often could not be done unless done oneself. There is no point waiting for the status quo media to produce such a publication, especially if the motivation is not near purely commercial. This text differentiates itself from the many other and no less worthwhile books on the topic of gendered sonic practices in that it is self-published and presented on the authors’ own terms.

BASTA NOW’s incredible 2371 entries of women, trans and non-binary artists is by no means a closed list. The shared act of creating this book together with their life as a queer couple, with art practices of music, poetry and documentary style writing along with releasing limited sound imprints, I would argue aligns them with an autotheoretical intervention into patriarchal systems.

To focus again on noise as a musical sound, this can be brought to life through the voice, manipulation of classical instruments, as well as the usual band equipment initially created for a more user-friendly experience like pop and rock music, and electronics. By using the term ‘electronics’, I’m referring to synthesisers and effects, like effect-pedals, but also the overall manipulation of electronic instruments and objects as they are brought together in an interplay or collaboration with other people and electricity. The difference noise creates is its reach beyond popular aesthetic pleasures of what contemporary society defines as music into more difficult spaces of excessive volume and dissonance, often with a subtext of being direct sonic attacks on consumer culture and traditional institutions. I would argue for women and gender non-conforming artists this idea of in-real-life noise and its attendant concepts act as a motivation and device for a politicised artist.

The 2021 release of the film *Sisters with Transistors*¹⁷¹ was a timely and significant moment in my sound investigations, in that the knowledge gained helped me reposition ideas of noise. The documentary – telling the story of some of electronic music’s overlooked female pioneers – immediately became a crucial element in this research project en route to constructing a series of painted works under the umbrella of ‘feminine noise’. A favorite scene was of earlier sourced material of Maryanne Amacher in her home with Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore. Her entire house is a mass of speakers, amps, synthesisers and cables, she performs for Gordon and Moore and causes her house to shake with the seismic, vibratory resonances of sound she emits from a group of synthesisers. A number of years prior to the films making

170. Ibid., 9

171. Lisa Rovner, Dir., *Sisters with Transistors* (Anna Lena Vaney, 2020) 1hr 26min

Amacher passed away and Seth Colter Walls' authored a tribute for the New York Times, "Ghosts are pretty much all we have left of Amacher's work. When she died in 2009, at seventy-one, she left few authorised recordings behind, and even fewer published scores." And of her music... "It had texture,"¹⁷²

The composer George Lewis said in the documentary, recalling the very loud yet very subtle electronic music of Maryanne Amacher. "It had ghost things inside. I think she actually said, 'You have to listen for the ghosts.' And then once you started hearing them, they were always there."

It is important to state at this time and before going further into exploring the film that while so much of this documentary has been informative and helpful, in my opinion it is thoroughly vexing how the director covered the work of trans electronic composer Wendy Carlos. The coverage of her work was minimal compared to the other artists profiled and there was an unfortunate edit between the Carlos section and Suzanne Ciani where Ciani directly critiqued Carlos' Switched On Bach album. The other artists covered did not have their works negatively critiqued. It would have been meaningful to hear more details of her life experience and original compositions had she been given an equal weighting to the other women involved in the film. I did read Carlos did not want an interview however one questions if there could have been other creative options available to celebrate her original accomplishments in the world of electronic composing.

In the film's prologue and in citing the film's mission, the narrator and ground breaking musician – Laurie Anderson begins with...,

This is a story of women who hear music in their heads, of radical sounds where there was once silence, of dreams enabled by technology. Technology is a tremendous liberator, it blows up power structures. Women are naturally drawn to electronic music. You didn't have to be accepted by any of the male-dominated resources: the radio stations, the record companies, the concert hall venues, the funding organisations. You could make something with electronics and you can present directly to your audience and that gives you tremendous freedom.¹⁷³

Further on the composer Charles Amirkhania speaks about the experience of listening to musician Pauline Oliveros perform in the late 1960s,

the music area was evolving into an area that was very fresh and exciting...Pauline (Oliveros) was on stage with an accordion, the room was exploding with sound that was ear-splitting, I had never experienced that kind of volume before!¹⁷⁴

Other interviewees add to Oliveros' story, sound artist Jessica Ryan states

172. Seth Colter Walls, "Reviving the Ghostly sounds of Maryanne Amacher" in *The New York Times* (2017) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/arts/music/reviving-the-ghostly-sounds-of-maryanne-amacher.html>

173. Rovner, dir., *Sisters with Transistors*.

174. Ibid.

“feminism was at the center of what she was doing.” And in a further enlightening moment with words from composer Ramon Sender,

...Pauline, it was hard...she's come out of the '50s and here she was a woman, gay, avant-garde music, each thing by itself would be hard but she had three things that were hard and women composers were not being performed.¹⁷⁵

An expanded conversation around some of the artists featured in this film, such as Annea Lockwood, Pauline Oliveros, Laurie Spiegel and more not featured, can be located in the MIT Press publication *SOUND* through William Furlong's reprinted 1994 essay *Sound in Recent Art*. Here Furlong calls attention to Charles Amirkhanian's curated LP recording from 1977, as being the first anthology of women's electronic music and work in sound. Amirkhanian stated in the LP sleeve notes, “Today we have composers willing to mix media and sonic materials in thoroughly inventive ways to achieve ends which are new sounding and often more engaging than that of the ‘academic’ avant-garde.”¹⁷⁶

Laurie Spiegel, who in 1986 created Music Mouse for Macintosh, Amiga and Atari computers, believed the practice of electronic composing as being an unexpected and fortuitous entry point into sound. Like many eras the 1970s was principally dominated by male musicians who ruled in performance areas¹⁷⁷. Electronics was a largely unoccupied and spacious landscape, with a legacy that women had already begun to develop a few decades prior. Delia Derbyshire's work at the BBC developing Radiophonic Workshop and Eliane Radigue's experimental studies in sound in France, all pointed to a space of electronic sound production where women could almost quietly enter. Computers were seen as the enemy of the counterculture, Spiegel says “the banks, the military and the insurance companies, computer music was the utter dehumanization of music, rather than to some few of us, the liberation of it.”¹⁷⁸

Throughout my practice I have discovered musical artists that excited me immediately, such as Adris Hoyos the experimental drummer for Harry Pussy and Yoshimi P-We also a drummer with a number of bands, notably the Boredoms. It was Yoshimi who opened my mind to a drumming practice that could occupy more than the seated position at the back of the band. I was lucky to purchase her 1993 Big Toast seven inch record¹⁷⁹, which featured drums as the sole performed instrument. This release exploded my idea of what a drummer could be and (what an artist could be) and inspired my first solo seven inch record release and also the first release for my record label Pink Air. The chain-linked history of my noise project takes its cues not from a male dominated historical legacy but instead exchanges that for a curated, personal genealogy of expanded noise.

175. Ibid.

176. Caleb Kelly, *Sound*. London (Cambridge, Mass: Whitechapel Gallery ; MIT Press, 2011).

177. Simone Krüger Bridge, “Gendering Music in Popular Culture.” *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication*(2020).

178. Rovner, *Sisters with Transistors*.

179. Yoshimi, *Big Toast* (Ecstatic Peace! E#31, 1993) 7” Phonograph Record.

As my visual work developed it was central to extend the questions of “who has the right to make noise, and how do we define this?” In my quest for a potential answer, I turned my practice to face women, like those of *Sisters with Transistors*, and began to draw conceptual inspiration through their thinking on expansive approaches toward the sonic, including ideas of listening and considering the most basic parts of the world that surrounds, the surfaces and depths. Each group of visual work has come about through researching the fluctuating regions that discuss contemporary noise as an expanded arena for multiple perspectives.

PART TWO

IF I HAD A BAND IT
WOULDN'T SOUND LIKE
ANYTHING AT ALL, IT
WOULD JUST SOUND LIKE
AIR JUST AIR AND THE
EARTH AROUND ME. IT
WOULD BE MY INSIDES.
I COULD TASTE EARTH FLIRT
IN THE AIR. I WOULD DO
IT FLANA CHLOA STYLE.
IT WOULDN'T EVEN MATTER
WHAT PEOPLE SAID BC IT WOULD BE PURE¹⁸⁰

THE CREATIVE WORK

Since painting is increasingly understood as a system of signs rather than as a medium with the primary purpose of recording what is perceived, as Ernst H. Gombrich still saw it, conditions of painting outside the genre become important, too. Painting may transmit information which can adapt to content in the process of painting. This is to say that painters paint right through the medium, or rather the beholder's eye, in order to connect transmitters (the conveying forms, content, and discourse) and receptors (the beholders' emotions).¹⁸¹ — Eva Maria Stadler

I find commonalities with Stadler's statement in its relevance to my own work where "conditions outside the genre become important"¹⁸². For instance, the western sound worlds that have formed my personal background and background as a painter operate both inside and outside the genre of painting and the larger world. While some conditions inside the academic sphere and those outside aspects of sound will naturally merge, my practice would occupy any combination of these worlds. Theoretical and studio research is sourced from within my genre of Painting, from the greater art world for example sculpture and from, as an example, the outer realms of sound such as Riot Grrrl and cinematic soundtracks. This is not to say aspects of these musical practices do not have material and conceptual allegiances to the art world but for some other aspects of research sound arrives from outside of 'art' and is absorbed conceptually, materially and visually into the work. In contrast to this and perhaps more so for some experimental sound practices such as with the work of Pauline Oliveros and Ellen Forman I would note I consider their work to be very much part of the larger world of art. To offer another explanation, my painting practice investigates varied sound sources and reports back in paint.

180. Odwalla88, *Earth Flirt*, Ooga Booga Records OB-006, 2015. One Sided LP.

181. Eva Stadler et al, *Why Painting Now?* (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2013).

182. *Ibid.*, 99.

The material enquiry underpinning the greater portion of this project has been to reposition various musical theorems into the methodology of painting. While taking care to avoid explicit literal representations the work's sources can be, one: scientific knowledge around the form and movements of sound waves, two: the language of musical theorem I learnt as a much younger person, in particular the Italian theory for piano from the Royal College of Music London and three: Richard Serra's infamous verb list¹⁸³ made for sculpture students, applying terms from this lexicon to the painting methodologies of gestures and marking — at times adding my own terms. Finally four: in close relation to the verbs there is the addition of a method of my own, borrowed from the language of onomatopoeia as a sounded word instruction. An earlier interpretation of this idea is within two studio drawings of experimental text, *Noise Poems: Ugly Subject & Crash*, utilising song lyrics, percussion objects and sounds. To move this idea further into the realm of gesture, when making a mark by using onomatopoeias the action of the marking simultaneously makes the sound of the said mark. I understand this as a form of 'painting by percussion'. Words useful here to transform into visual expressions can be "to slosh" and "to scrape". The work to follow is discussed chronologically in order of its execution.

1. ATMOSPHERE/S

I began the group of work called *Atmosphere/s* with the working title *GUU*, a reference to the 1990 Sonic Youth song, though theirs is spelt *Goo*. For this developing series my purloining of Sonic Youth's song title came from the use of a key acrylic gel paste medium. I had experimented with this material previously and was attracted to its volume adding sculptural quality and translucency. The medium is manufactured in various formulations, which allow for variations in transparency from clear to milky vapor-like to opaque. The medium afforded additional potential, releasing ideas (away from Sonic Youth) not yet brought into being when first conceptualising these paintings.

The preliminary thinking for this series came about during a residency in Te Whanganui-a-Tara in 2021. The Te Whare Hēra Artist Residency is situated at the end of a wharf which gave me ample opportunity to view the oceanic business of the city. This marked an important primary source of inspiration for the *GUU* series and was the key transition I had been looking for, but I had not yet realised. Upon arriving at the residency I was interested to work with earlier Noise Poems made as painted drawings. Yet with distance from the familiarity of my studio it became clear I needed to develop a deeper understanding around the complexities and possibilities of feminine noise and I decided to pause the thread of Noise Poems. What was required was a way to establish a pathway that would move sideways from literal noise concepts such things as harsh tonalities and volume intensity.

I mentioned previously viewing the film *Sisters with Transistors* as being an informative acknowledgement of the work from a previously under-recognised group of mid twentieth century electronic and electroacoustic pioneers. One of the featured artists that resonated with me during the Te Whare Hēra stay was French composer and sound artist Eliane Radigue. Radigue's words on

183. Richard Serra. verb list. 1967 | MoMA. Accessed January 11, 2025. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/152793>.

her project of *Occam Ocean*¹⁸⁴ materialising by way of images connected to water corresponded with my thinking on the activities I was observing across the harbor, those that expressed an expanded politic of noise in the conditions of 2021. The Te Whanganui-a-Tara activities of commercial and public vessels and the daily visitors to the wharf was an important opportunity to research music and sound as belonging to a terrain or space. Connections between the location of Te Whare Hēra with the Wellington City Council and the French Embassy and the oceanic ecosystem became known to me during my stay. The daily working and recreational activities of boat travel across the oceanic systems of the harbor was, as I envisioned it, bustling with experimental events. Visible risk taking and risk management, known skills and improvisations, choreographies of comings and goings, and contingencies all at play upon the water.

As a locale and space for experimental actions I found there was an intriguing synchronicity with ideas that surround experimental sound and noise events. A vessel enters the sea realm where ocean water behaviors can only be predicted, the aim to navigate a successful, if on occasion perilous, journey across an unstable surface. I found the situation to be remarkably painterly and musical which generated a series of ink drawings in an attempt to record the atmosphere. I incorporated musical theories from the milieu surrounding Eliane Radigue to the thinkers and practitioners Pierre Schaeffer and Theodore Adorno. Schaeffer, the founder of *Groupe de Recherche de Musique Concrète* (GRMC), is well known for his accomplishments in electronic and experimental musical innovation. Eliane Radigue worked with Schaeffer for some time before embarking on her own experimental musical career. These musical thinkers and pioneers were radically opposed to the status quo of the pervading popular musical composition and reception of the time. Schaeffer and Adorno theoretical premises formed the titles of the ink drawings and *Vers une musique informelle* (2021) and *Vers une musique expérimentale* (2021).

Upon returning to Auckland from Te Whare Hēra and with further reading into Radigue from Julia Eckhart's 2019 book *Eliane Radigue, Intermediary Spaces*¹⁸⁵, brought an additional significance to my exploration of the harbour's surrounding environment. The increased consideration of Eckhart's text prompted an amendment in the working title of *GUU* to *Atmosphere/s* and thus grounding and setting the tone for the paintings to come.

My thoughts were absorbed by the kinds of sound behaviors operating within an invisible atmosphere, the places and spaces of the unseen. I am thinking about the living atmospheres surrounding the Earth, the gaseous areas known collectively as air and its potential contents that share space and proximity with the spectrums of sound. The occupying contents are invisible pervious substances with no solid graspable material or visibility. We are all familiar with this gaseous airy place as we pass through each day, yet we cannot witness any of the unseen natural occurrences, as these incidents travel by with only their consequences perhaps noticed. By engaging with the neighboring locations of Te Whare Hēra and Elaine Radigue's introduction to the "vibratory universe"¹⁸⁶

184. Julia Eckhart, *Eliane Radigue, Intermediary Spaces* (Umland, Brussels, 2019), 158-161.

185. Eckhart, *Eliane Radigue, Intermediary Spaces*.

186. Ibid, 158.

of sound and noise I was introduced to exploring the landscape surrounding my own home in Tāmaki Makaurau. My observations and hypotheses were on the movements within airy atmospheres made by and guided by air pressures including wind behaviours and, as such, directed by obstacles like trees, leaves, garden objects, pathways, walls, fences, the myriad of channels and impediments to the flow of sound pressures.

With these thoughts in mind the meeting of air molecules, sounds and shapes I take time to speculate on visual possibilities, developing the *Atmosphere/s* series. The paintings are not of the landscape but visual thoughts of the shapes of sound existing within. Sound phenomena in a suburban space observed in the day, at dusk and at night. "...sinking in to relationships with the world you have around you"¹⁸⁷ I am asking what are we gliding past and pushing through on a daily basis? My research arena is my immediate suburban audio ecology witnessed from the living room window. My field of listening... facilitating a fluctuating acoustemology, a surround sound map, a sonic environment of unscripted improvisations where vibrations, oscillations, waves shuffle and jostle around finding rhythms and syncopations, phasing in and out of the audio spectrum. They are informed by the neighbor's stereo moving through the wind with arrhythmic fluctuations and volumetric dropouts, alterations to pacing and timbre. They are informed from thinking through Western science regarding sound waves; how they behave, their form, weight, their potential to levitate objects¹⁸⁸. They are informed by the concept of the modern sound score, drawings of sound, sound scores that are instructional but freely expanded upon¹⁸⁹.

The lines and marks present as sound, as an active participant in the outdoors ecosystem. It is notable to bear in mind sounds from outdoors do not presuppose the beauty of the natural environment, there is ample noise from nearby roads and construction sites generated in many a contemporary urban soundscape. The series explores real acoustic phenomena proposing aural worlds, drawing actions marking time and being time. The lines, marks and swaths of colour presenting as sound as an active participant in the outdoor ecosystems. As I work in my basement studio in Tamaki Makaurau, with the windows open I am observing by listening and imagining, building an Acoustic Ecology¹⁹⁰ of the sounds that inhabit my neighborhood.

In the book *Breakdown Workbook #3: Sonic Meditations: Immersive Ecological Entanglement, Volume 1*, which offers focused reflections on aspects on the work of composer Pauline Oliveros – author Brett Bloom paraphrases Oliveros, writing in a section titled 'Sonic Environments': "Sound occurs in a setting, a sonic environment, or soundscape – first articulated by Murray Shafer,

187. Brett Bloom, *Break Down Workbook #3, Sonic Meditations: Immersive Ecological Entanglement, Vol. 1* (Auburn: Breakdown Break Down Press, 2017), 4.

188. "Scientist Explains How to Levitate Objects With Sound | WIRED," YouTube, accessed January 12, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MXVsdXZzpc>.

189. Amongst Pauline Oliveros' collected text scores (Oliveros, Pauline, Samuel Golter, Lawton Hall, and Brian Pertl. *Anthology of text scores*. Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2013.) is my favourite of her works named 'Horse Sings From Cloud'. In it she instructs the performer to play one sound or group of sounds beyond the point where it gets uncomfortable aesthetically and when it gets comfortable play something new.

190. Bloom, *Break Down Workbook #3, Sonic Meditations: Immersive Ecological Entanglement, Vol. 1*, 12.



1. Stella Corkery, *Garden*, digital photograph, 2022

composer and naturalist. Sometimes sound moves from one sonic environment to another...¹⁹¹ facilitating various sonic environments Bloom proposes sounds can travel from one environment to another with the qualities of each environment in turn changing the sound. “The features of these environments contribute to how the sound moves through them—sounds bounce off hard surfaces or get absorbed by dense structures. There are an infinite number of sound permutations that you will encounter.”¹⁹² These paintings take journeys through the environmental pathways of the surrounding neighborhood and into my garden. Sounds of the everyday, nature, musical sounds changing weather conditions, traffic, garden tools, birdsong, insects, dogs, people walking, ringing telegraph wiring, building construction – unpredictable and random sounds. Many and various volumes depend on the time of day, weather and other effectors.

Although the context of my practice time-wise, is number of years apart from, and in location many miles from Pauline Oliveros's home in California, in respect to both Oliveros and Eliane Radigue I would not understate their influence on my interpretations of listening advanced by research into Radigue's practice of *musique concrète* and further compositions plus Oliveros's composition, musicianship and life-practice of Deep Listening. In addition, Oliveros's commitment to a personal and distinctive practice of feminism adds to my interest in her work. As Tara Rogers has noted,

Deep Listening is a life practice of cultivating awareness of all sounds across all of spacetime, formulated through Oliveros's own feminist consciousness and techniques of meditation. It suggests that attending carefully to all sounds enables more mindful and constructive intersubjective experience (Oliveros 2005; Oliveros and Maus 1994). Feminist movement, then, is a continual negotiation of sounding and

191. *Ibid.*, 11.

192. *Ibid.*, 11.

deep listening.¹⁹³

To assist building further mental and visual scaffolding among the *Atmosphere/s* paintings it is advantageous to remember that sound is a form of energy, in the same way electricity or light is energy. Likewise, my work takes into account the various characteristics that are part of the qualities of sound/waves as follows:

- pitch — as it relates to the perception of changes in frequencies or the number of vibrations per second.
- intensity — is concerned with the magnitude of shift, push or displacement of a sound wave.
- the presence and type of harmonics or overtones, meaning waves performing together.
- the speed of sound is determined by the physical properties of the mediums or impediments present, for example air; its density, pressure and temperature are crucial for understanding phenomena like echoes.

The volume of sound depends on these multiple factors, making me consider the vibrations or qualities of sound having the power to rupture molecular space. Sound is broadcast through the phenomenon of collisions, an impact causes molecules to bounce about and collide with one another therefore creating vibrations. It is the force of the collision that determines the velocity or the speed of the sound, the vibrations creating the noise.

Content for drawings and paintings come about through listening-observation and imagining mixing up science or involving science, perhaps even in clumsy ways, not only in mark making but with physical collisions and ruptures of painting materials on the surface of the canvas. Leaps of faith and an idea of what a 'quasi' science might be are abstracted. I invent and bend the meaning for 'quasi' for my own requirements, appealing to do as the definition for quasi is "something is almost but not quite what it describes"¹⁹⁴. I make marks like foggy smears or broad swirls, with an interest in transferals; transposing shapes and patterns, combined with a belief that not all things are 'real' in the way we view a solid reality of material objects, these ideas dissolve into the interior logic of the painting, as a place of unfinished business while at the same time oscillating between the penetrable and impenetrable surfaces and the free-floating possibilities.

Within an atmosphere a given sound-making event forces or propels air away from the sound's point of origin in the form of a pressure or sound wave. The pressure wave consists of repeating patterns of high and low moving or active pressure regions. The wave moves in two motions, one the longitudinal wave moving forwards, the other transverse wave – moves as concurrent peaks and troughs, which is how a wave is often drawn. This group of atmosphere paintings surfaces and material substances are analogous to atmospheric zones, these zones are perceived as proposed sites of activity; the invisible

193. Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound*, 19.

194. "Quasi - Definition, Meaning & Synonyms." *Vocabulary.com*. Accessed January 12, 2025. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/quasi>.

spaces that sound occupies, marked out by the volume or the presence of the acrylic gel paste. I am considering the sonic collisions that alter the movement and re-shape sound waves as they travel through sound sensitive zones or as I have also imagined the paintings oil paint and gel paste material spaces as they contain the potential to capture a chrysalis state.

A sound wave strikes or encounters the force of another sound wave, or a piece of matter impacting with an immeasurable number of barriers, bare molecules, semi/gaseous substances to rain showers to chunks of matter such as semi pervious shrubbery or solid walls. All things presenting an obstacle to the flow of sound waves. Unless there is a human imperative, obstacles don't appear as disadvantages but the mere recipients of an impact, interrupting and redirecting a flow. Sound waves have no form and like water they mold themselves to their surroundings and finding passage where surroundings allow.

At the point of encounter when a sound collision occurs the sound created is broadcast by the collision, then left to splay away and disperses towards other possible collisions, other possible noises. The sound may be held in suspension; eventually reaching a place of dissolution, whereupon the wave dissolves and enters the wider solution or atmosphere. The entry to the solution as dispersion comes as the transferal of sound energy or pressure makes contact with any number of molecules. The paintings attempt to proffer these ideas of collision and dispersal, while making use of the vocabulary of physics, musical theory and the everyday use of verbs and onomatopoeia. With both under- and over-painting, prompts such as slam, curve, mumble, swirl and collide.

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The gel paste recalls the mechanics of the wider world, specifically within the medical sector with ultrasound probes in an acoustic coupling with ultrasound gel creating images of different parts of the body. The ultrasound transducer, also known as a probe or scanner, is “a device that produces sound waves that bounce off body tissues and make echoes. The transducer in return receives the echoes and sends them to a computer that uses them to transcribe a picture called a sonogram.”¹⁹⁵ The acoustic gel serves as a conductor

195. “Ultrasound Transducer,” Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, accessed January 12,

of information while its material cousin – artist’s acrylic gel paste – also presents as an infrastructure, connecting information and imaging suspending sounds in the atmosphere of the painted object. I can imagine arial conditions, bodiless and intangible places of indeterminate scale, populated by ungraspable materials. The gel becomes a chrysalis, an incubator for change in things, transporting things, transforming things. An agar gel, an atmosphere where molecules and ions are free to bounce about and collide in embryonic fluids, a cocoon where the tones hang in space together vibrating.

Annihilation Atmospheres

Allusions to transformations and indeterminate spaces directed my thinking to past influential cinematic highlights. Two relatively recent examples would be Colm McCarthy's *The Girl with all the Gifts* 2016, based on Mike Carey's 2014 novel of the same name, and Alex Garland's 2018 film *Annihilation*. Garland's film is in part adapted from Jeff VanderMeer's 2014 novel, also of the same name. Notably both novels published in the same year, symptomatic of a morphic-resonance of occurrences and subjects belonging to similar contrivances. Elvia Wilk's e-flux article *The Word Made Flesh: Mystical Encounter and the New Weird Devine*¹⁹⁶ notes Jeff VanderMeer's writing and describes it as "soft" science fiction – the natural world being the primary site of speculation rather than technology." This brings to mind Annea Lockwood's slow noise experiments where she has planted pianos outdoors to experience the oncoming potentiality of sounds as the garden engulfs the piano, albeit quite slowly. Experiencing examples of Wilk's *New Weird Devine* as they occur in the cinematic vision of *Annihilation*¹⁹⁷ bring forth the potentials for incubation within a chrysalis and the object-ness of the *Atmosphere/s* as zones and areas where matter-as-sound is an open spectrum of forming. Where sound is a marker of time and yet is also incongruous of time in the larger sphere. Unexpected or surprising relationships occur within acoustic-ecology, blends of substances, or in the case of the paintings marks and material behavior not previously considered, congeal.

2.SOUND LIKE AIR GROUP

By 2023 I needed to enact a creative pause into the investigations of *Atmosphere/s* paintings, enabling me to more carefully observe the working methods and absorb the material results. This led to a redesign in my process, still in line with the visual techniques I had acquired from working with *Atmosphere/s* but implementing oil paint solely and at a smaller study-size scale. I enjoy the material experiments oil paint can provide and so carried the narrative of revealing feminine noise through sound impressions with layers of oil paint, and so resuming with the quest towards a resolution for this project. Within these smaller works I continued to conceptualise a sound location, building space through form and colour. In truth this new phase was less about directing thinking and more concerned with absorbing or relaxing into previously learned ideas. I certainly feel the *Atmosphere/s* work lead me here.

The smaller vignettes of the larger *Atmosphere/s* carry forward ideas of transposing sound behaviors, namely the new weird analogies of Elvia Wilk and theoretical musical definitions being placed into the painted-space. A definitive change from the literal volumetric material space of acrylic gel. As a starting point and to bring forth ideas of pigmentation I painted with a red toned palette as shown in the earlier Red series of works, *In a Gown* and *In a Gown at a Distance* (page forty-one). With that, calling to mind the informative and varied red tonalities of Jutta Koether's paintings as she imagined activities and energies generated by the body in space. It was during this time early in 2023 I had decided to create the large free-hanging canvas painting. The

196. Elvia Wilk, "Toward a Theory of the New Weird." *Literary Hub* (May 23, 2022) <https://lithub.com/toward-a-theory-of-the-new-weird/>.

197. Alex Garland, Dir., *Annihilation* (Skydance, DNA Films, Scott Rudin Productions, Huahua Media, 2018) 1hr 55min.

group of smaller studies became warm ups for the already conceptualised and titled, however as yet unpainted *Drummer Leg*. It was through this change of ideation, in conjunction with studies at a reduced scale, the *Sound Like Air Group* came about. The title from this group lifted from an Odwalla88¹⁹⁸ poem or spoken word performance or both, referred to in Part Two: The Creative Work.

As I thought on ways to approach the large unpainted area of *Drummer Leg*, the studies adopted a new larger format as I made use of longer than wider canvas remnant strips as preparatory sketches of scale. This led me into a painted vocabulary that could traverse across a wider canvas size. The sound vocabulary to draw upon is vast, each painting potentially holding any number of sound instructions. For example during a percussion performance, verb words such as strike, sustain, pluck, push, rub, brush, dissolve, splay or shake are used. Developing from the variable forces of sound creation to continue imagining the way noises move through space.

The *Sound Like Air Group* as smaller studies reached a natural conclusion as I planned the approach for the larger work *Drummer Leg*. During this time also my long since deliquesced Riot Grrrl band — Fake Purr were invited to reform and open for an also reformed and touring Bikini Kill in 2023. For the weeks before the performance Fake Purr moved into my painting studio, where we rehearsed songs from twenty years prior over the coming weeks. Approaches to *Drummer Leg* had to be reconfigured, such as using the available floor space to stain the sizable blank canvas surface in large swaths of colour as the canvas lay undisturbed on the studio room floor was now shelved. As Fake Purr were now occupying said real estate the blank canvas was stapled perpendicular to the floor on the available if crooked wall space. This serendipitous occurrence placed my musical practice and painted work, directly beside each other. Developments into the making of *Drummer Leg* occurred as concentrated activity followed by lengthy pauses as I reviewed what had occurred and thought about what could follow. The creative pathway through this work is accounted for further below in section five. I would step back from *Drummer Leg* pursuing other studio projects that continued to align with the thesis enquiries.

3. PAINTED 10”s & 12”s

In 2023 I authored an essay for Bruce Russell and Luke Woods’ newly published book, *A Record Could Be Your Whole World*¹⁹⁹. The premise; discuss a key album in your life which must have comparably key cover art. I chose Diadal — the duo of Jutta Koether and Rita Ackermann’s self-titled double LP²⁰⁰. The double album has — yes — two records, however their difference is while the separate pieces of vinyl hold one side of recorded sound, on their reverse sides they both were devoid of any recorded sound at all. In the place of sound, each side bears an etched drawing, one side by Rita and one side by Jutta. As an avid record collector of many experimental

198. Odwalla88, *Earth Flirt* (Ooga Booga Records OB-006, 2015) One Sided LP.

199. Russell, Bruce, and Luke Wood. *A record could be your whole world: Vinyl records as the total artwork of the late Twentieth Century* (Christchurch Ōtautahi, New Zealand Aotearoa: Ilam Press, Ilam School of Fine Arts, 2024).

200. Diadal, *Diadal* (Hot Cars Warp Records – # 7/8, 1998) 2LP.

and esoteric albums over time, among my collection a number of etched records are housed. The vinyl etching process offers a visual and sound artist a unique opportunity to stretch their creative might further than producing a purely sound based object. By pairing the visual aspect of etching with the physical sound object, material integrations of an artist's parallel praxes are assembled onto the piece of vinyl itself. I continue to find this visual and sonic collaboration on vinyl appealing.

While on the trail of further paint and sound connections I looked to artists who had researched similar areas. Applying paint to augment the surfaces of vinyl records is part of a twentieth century tradition of creating 'record-art' for music-heads. From Aotearoa, Michael Morley would be one such musician and artist, painting hundreds of dead-stock seven inch records individually as they spun around in place on a turntable, producing quite perfect seeming circles on the vinyl surfaces.

As a day-off activity from studio work and a long-term desire to produce an etched record myself, so far prohibited by the cost of such a project, I conceptualised a method to impersonate the etching process by drawing lines through wet paint layered thickly on the surface of vinyl records. I began by choosing other people's discarded records from opportunity shops at around a humble dollar or two each, repurposing an abandoned object.

It became apparent there was more to offer here amongst the boxes of discarded records than the casual activity of choosing LPs at random to use as simple inert surfaces. After a few tests back in the studio the experiments showed the brighter colours of center labels like the reds and oranges from records made in the 1960s and onwards, would bleed through the opaque white paint once applied. This wasn't going to work. The plan was to use a sharp tool to craft channels deep enough into the all-over-white-painted layer so as the black record surface would appear through as shapes and lines, with no interference to the monochromatic design. The intended result was to generate a kind of reverse mimicry, still appearing as any line drawing might with black ink or pencil drawn onto a white paper ground whereas in this case the black line is drawn out of the surface of paint.

The seeping through of bright colours necessitated a closer attention to which records could be chosen, reducing the available supply. My sourcing targeted records manufactured prior to the 1950s and as far back as the 1920s. This period offered ten and twelve inch sized records with center labels commonly printed in black or burgundy, navy or dark green, all colours that disappeared under the density of the titanium oil paint. A record's original purpose from these early years of manufacture in the 1890s through to the early twentieth century was as an affordable accessible object to distribute pedagogical information, most frequently a Christian spiritual message of some sort into the home. Then to follow suit a range of recorded fine art music, such as musical pieces from Chopin, Bach or Wagner. These were groundbreaking innovations where recorded sounds are for the first time accessible to people's homes, rather than an audience needing to travel to large venues or church buildings to listen to sermons or symphonies.

The very early twentieth century records manufactured from faith-based sources the likes of the Christian WORD record publisher bore darker-coloured centre labels coupled with curious song titles and perhaps concocted artist's names. To study these objects decades later I am given the impression of reaching straight back in time through a portal of song and spoken word to rituals for esoteric purposes. Such as the record titled *Yesterday's Voices*, published by the WORD imprint. The centre label for this release has artists named as Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday; to my mind these monikers suggest other curious factors beyond a journey into sound.

The older records are further differentiated from those manufactured in the mid-twentieth century as being several grams heavier and with an observable material variance. These earlier records were made from a material known as shellac, (predating contemporary polyvinyl chloride) composed of the natural resin secretions from the insect *Kerria lacca* or Lac Bug. The shellac record (no longer manufactured) is heavy and brittle and not at all as flexible as the vinyl records manufactured contemporarily.

Taking into account the intent and the era the shellac records were originally conceived, distributed and listened to draws a new attention to sound as a hermetic carrier, as a medium, in an uncanny way. I can draw comparisons to how messages were supposedly sent, transported and received through spiritualist encounters in the form of the séance, popular too in the earlier years of the twentieth century in particular social groups. Adding to the mysterious status of the shellac records they are listenable only at the now redundant playback speed of 78 revolutions per minute. Contemporary record players do not operate at 78RPM.

As a fan of the recorded object, I find the aura of the record has a resilience that at once signals time and yet also surpasses this phenomenon as a linear concept. By painting the surfaces of specifically chosen discarded records I was able to experiment with their material and intangible contents. The psychic echo of *Yesterday's Voices* calling back and forth makes me curious of the logic operating at this time and additionally when read now under different social and cultural circumstances. The lines drawn into the wet paint applied to the shellac phonograph records become kinds of evocations due to the historical qualities of the records, from purposeful cut spirals of recorded yet unplayable sounds to the augmented surfaces of paint covered with lines and smears, we are unable to fully absorb an accurate language of the object. We are left with these signs as prompts to engage with our memory and imagination. With these hypotheses in mind the combinations for the works for *I Hear You* came together.

4. I HEAR YOU

If photography provides us with the means to contemplate the transient in the visual domain, what might freezing sound produce? I like to think of it as a kind of revelation of a hidden spectral content in the recorded sound where a parallel world of this latent harmony is

opened up as a result of being given duration.²⁰¹

A group of photo-collage images set out to present an extension of the newly painted records. Exploring the ideas discussed above on the topic of messages, transubstantiation and time by way of an esoteric delivery system such as that of the spiritualist medium along with the apparent invisible nature of atmospheres and the contents within. Photographs of paint tests on canvas, musical instruments, selected hand painted records and various photocopies with research images from web investigations, paper research elements found in the studio were digitally combined and collaged into the sounding messages of *I Hear You*.

I recognised some similarities within the artist Sriwhana Spong's thesis investigations into the intangible experiences of mystic women of the Middle Ages and early modern Europe where transcendent encounters, as Spong refers to in the words of Elvia Wilk, "...move through other mediums in order to translate what cannot be said."²⁰² Within my studies I am thinking about where and how sound ideas facilitate movements of energy and in the example of the *I Hear You* works, what lies below the paint covering the vintage record, what do the lines infer or release, plus what does addition of the collage materials offer the project? The action of drawing through the thick paint with a sharpened object felt like an unusual moment, while engaging a comparison of cutting through vinyl to impress sound whereas in this case the cutting of troughs through a thick covering layer of wet paint feels as if something is releasing. Additionally there was regret, as a sickly feeling, looking at the circular spreads of thick oil paint, finally calling a halt to the known intended capacities of the record.

I Hear You series of six framed works presented for my visual examination at The Engine Room in 2024, *Painting Towards A New Feminine Noise*. The exhibited work is made up of black and white and coloured photocopies installed into kitset frames. These are containers for images of acoustic instruments either at rest or poised in my studio along with documentation of painted canvas, painted records, ephemera and various staged photographed situations.

The digital prints are intended to propose something further from the documentation of the painted and inscribed shellac object. Within this work I am asking the question of what more can these altered objects do when placed into a collaged and photographic situation? My reasoning for moving the record into another format was, firstly I was unsure about the status of 'ready-made' and particularly for a repurposed record, asking if past known designations of 'record-art' would be too overbearing and hence overrule other ideas that may be generated. Secondly, I was keen to experiment with my previous research documentation considering what new places could these images inhabit? I have faith the photographs are successful to some degree, diluting

201. Joanna Bailie, "Squeezing out the music from real sound" in *Interpretations. A reader*, ed. Eckhardt, Julia & Heylen, Eveline (Brussels: Q-O2, 2014), 105.

202. Sriwhana Spong, "Scirinz (a running sore): particular and ecstatic scripts of the body by mystic women in the Middle Ages and early modern Europe" (Doctoral Thesis in Fine Art, Auckland University, 2021) <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/items/d43cd90e-4417-4089-8f77-959c05690ab8>

the found-record-art genre and pointing towards other narratives within the location of collage, photography and frame.

When choosing the kit-set frames I aimed to place the images into the everyday, albeit a private everyday of documenting, souveniring and memorializing. In my past I recall framed photocopies of personal images and newspaper or magazine clippings and the like used in the home of close family and other relatives or in private members clubs, community halls and churches as documentation. Due to economic, time or location constraints photocopies and pre-made kit-set frames were often more accessible than a professional photographer or framer to memorialise an event.

I Hear You was influenced by historical photographic style as well as events that related to first wave feminism. I hoped to emphasise the earlier era by creating photocopies with subdued tonalities that look close to monochromatic, with an aim to accentuate a past that continues to carry potential. The intention was to create a kind of cusping, of never quite fulfilling, remaining in a state of 'towards'. In tune with the nature of transience; as towards a regenerative cycle, a locked groove, a looping mechanism, an activated atmosphere.

Reflecting on the discovery of photography in 1822 and considering what other significant inventions made their first appearances at that time, namely electric light in 1809, the telegraph in the 1830s and the telephone shortly there after, I believe it makes sense that in this extraordinary era of discovery some people felt the urge to investigate the possibilities of the immaterial world, hence the emergence of the Spiritualist movement.²⁰³ I found an alignment with the works of *I Hear You* and the Medium as conduit, in my mind the framed xerox prints present something akin to the go-between or facilitator between worlds.

The entry of the Medium and the Spiritualist belief system into popular western culture had its beginnings in the mid nineteenth century to remained popular well into the later twentieth century. Women almost solely occupied the role of Medium as a vocation. In the text produced for the 2018 online exhibition *Beyond the Veil: Spiritualism in the 19th Century*²⁰⁴, Katie Keckeisen claims "Many (women) gravitated towards Spiritualism because... Spiritualism rebelled against traditional religions authority, and, instead, emphasised "radical individualism". This individualist outlook meant that Spiritualism was the sole religion of its time that saw women as equals." Continuing, Keckeisen adds "For a time, Spiritualism was the only way women were allowed to speak in public. Female mediums used this as a way to champion ideas of women's suffrage, equal rights, and the abolition of slavery."²⁰⁵ Through the medium women could find a voice for their 'unwanted noise' and speak for what had previously been silenced.

203. Maurice Leonard, *People from the Other Side: A History of Spiritualism* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011).

204. Katie Keckeisen, "Beyond The Veil: Spiritualism in the 19th Century" (Austin: The O Henry Museum, October 2018).

205. Ibid.

Sending and receiving through messaging and related technologies was revolutionised in less than half a century's passing, a cluster of related events happening in a short period of time. I consider the images of *I Hear You* through a somewhat refracted lens from these long-distance callers. I think about them being part of a time altered, confluences occurring, re-read with results unexpected, belonging more in the vein of the New Weird or for that matter the Old Weird.

5. DRUMMER LEG

The genesis for *Drummer Leg* began a short while prior to my band Fake Purr reforming after a twenty-two-year break to perform with Bikini Kill in Auckland, 2023. The original preparations for the painting and space of the room had to be reconfigured to accommodate three additional people plus their equipment. Cables, microphones, mic stands, guitars, amplifiers, plus my drum set. As the band revised songs in my home basement studio the psychic residues or memories of the songs in tandem with the Riot Grrrl and post-Riot Grrrl culture of the previous era in the 1990s and early 2000s became present. In making this painting it was as if a pathway towards visualising feminine-noise had been cleared. It seemed as if I had nailed the painting before I had barely begun, the sensations of energy and excited anticipation were already in the room.

In advance of making this work I recalled the era of the late 1990s as a time very centric to the idea of Riot Grrrl and conceptualizing the experience of live performances as an aspect of feminine noise. From the inception of this work, it was important to conceive of a way to draw in the audience within this community that had always played a key role in the success of the gigs held. The bands that both locally and globally kept the energy of the Riot Grrrl movement alive remain in my mind as one of the central dominating genres of music that defined a political and musical era in the late twentieth Century.

Later into the first decade of the 2000s the musical flavors of the movement had begun to change from folk and punk/rock-like performances to electronic performances. One of two bands that left an impression of melding performance with audience energy and with the addition of electronic beats was *Crack WAR* [We Are Rock] (since defunct) and the duo *Numbers* (now *Peaking Lights*). There are still a few lo-fi video clips of *Crack WAR* and *Numbers* to be found on YouTube, one in particular, a basement gig, showcasing the driving intensity of *Crack WAR*'s song "Hooker Leg" with the hyped enthused audience. For *Numbers* there is a memorable video document of a house demolition party where the band's performance was so manic, its fast drum beat intensified and driving synth waves produced an air of abandonment. Prompted no doubt by the knowledge the gig was a demolition party, the ensuing excitement inspired various dancing audience members to disrobe.

The global connectedness between the two bands and their audiences was the initial spark for the painting *Drummer Leg*. A band's action to offer to fans who reside many miles away, online video access to their live performances is a generous and inclusive activity, building relationships with an intimacy in a way similar to a mail order fan-zine or magazine subscription can do. By attending or viewing a gathering of people that entertain sub-cultural com-

monalities I would contend this experience empowers the live audience, the viewer at home, and in return to the band. All participants thereby heartened by a shared aesthetic or politic beyond what may exist in your own home or town. Through the screen the viewer witnesses the band and audience as a synthesised experience where differences between the two entities are somewhat dissolved.

In this situation it is the site of a shared experience operating as one of the key materials of the performance. It's about being with your people and celebrating the differences that keep you together. These observations are



2. Stella Corkery *Drummer Leg*, detail, 2023.

how I understood Crack WAR's and Numbers performances, the original Riot Grrrl gigs in Auckland and the recent Fake Purr with Bikini Kill in Auckland. The conditions of the live performance are what I hoped to access in the painting *Drummer Leg*. The experience of the interconnectedness between band and audience is mediated through the screen via YouTube as the experience of the live performance is mediated through the painting.

In the painting there is a synthesis with sound. Physics also tells us that sound has a mass, therefore surprisingly a weight and therefore a force. At the correct volume sound has the capacity to raise an object, known as acoustic levitation, using ultrasound waves to trap objects in mid-air²⁰⁶. Scientific facts can lead to all kinds of leaps in artistic logic, imagining sound can rise and fall under its own weight, beyond known horizontal wave motions or other pressures. The concave and convex marks rising and falling in areas around the work make reference to these scientific facts, bending knowledge for the painting. It is with adaptations of the literal and the leaps of logic generated

206. "Scientist Explains How to Levitate Objects With Sound | WIRED," YouTube, accessed January 12, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MXVSdXZzpc>.

from known truths that the image making of the painting is put into motion.

To image what may happen to the air with the hard hit of a drum, dependant on what you are striking with and at what velocity the sounds emitted could be painted as you imagine staccato snaps. Or to imagine the reverberating shimmers from splays of expanding sound waves, created by an intense buildup of multiple strikes upon a cymbal. The musician's cymbal is made from forged rings of brass forming circular ridges. The cymbals are hammered with various techniques in cycles leaving circular ridges as acoustic impedances, catching the vibrations as they pass over the top and underneath the brass surfaces.

In my studio there are some peculiar architectural features, impedances of their own. One of the wall areas is divided into shaped portions lying between two doorways, it is made of three semi flat adjoining areas of varying lengths changing direction three times. I had used this entire crooked wall previously for another even longer painting, exhibited at Michael Lett in 2017, with the title *Theme for a Science Fiction Vampire: breath on breathing*. While making the Vampire painting, I had to push through considerable self-doubt, questioning my ability to manage this first attempt at a large-scale painting. When producing a second work of a similar scale, if slightly shorter in length but greater height, I found a way to honor the labor of Vampire and move on to enjoy the lessons of that painting. The challenge of working again with this scale was enjoyable. The crooked and somewhat not flat form the wall took was a major element in beginning a formal narrative for both paintings, portioning out pre-made zones from defining the bumps and abrupt shifts in wall direction below the canvas surface.

Deciding to work with the surface interruptions, the peculiarities of the wall substrate lying beneath, establish an early route for mark making. What would normally be a flush wall are framings for built in cupboard doors and the doors themselves create vertical ridges. I run the canvas continuously across these surfaces, staple gunning in place from the top selvedge, the painting is taller than myself. I leave the canvas to float freely at the sides and along the length of the lower selvedge, just a few centimeters above the floor.

Before commencing the painting there is always a time in the studio maybe meditative, maybe sitting and staring blankly at the work but once you pick up the tool you have chosen it's all in the action of verbs and processes, to consider all the interactive potential elements, the sediments of paint inspired by sounds that slip backwards and forwards within each other. The energy of the aforementioned performances exist as subject matter, I imagine sounds to paint, they become atmospheres that sounds exist in, moments of concentrated density coupled with loose sounds, sounds breaking away, these subjects are foremost in my mind.

With a dry brush I mark out vertical lines with grey dashes indicating zones. It would be impossible to not have the protrusions and obstructions from the wall surface beneath not rub up against the canvas surface, consequently it was preferable to give the lumps some subject matter. I added the vertical dashes of a broken line to offer, in my mind at least, an imagined permeable

barrier for a freer flow of paint between the dashed regions. The vertical dashes sit within rubbed and smudged colours, narrow and wide sweeping brush markings, visualizing the myriad of sound shapes rushing forth from the percussion, electronic instruments and effect pedals. Tones hang in space together, vibrating. The resulting forms and colour combinations can be tense and pushy, in some instances the rules I imagined have broken down, some painted situations are going to push back, in this way the previous forms go on to instruct the following forms, as improvisation and contingency take their places.

As the pre-gessoed canvas fabric had been kept in storage some visible creases developed, running horizontally, just above a midway mark and along the full length of the entire piece. By using a method similar to the original Surrealist's technique of frottage, I rubbed a paint-soaked rag along the canvas where the creases occurred. The surface disturbances highlighted, forming the basis of a series of horizontal sequential markings. The canvas creases were recorded by the paint being brushed across their surface, tracing the unintended crinkles and folds, accentuating the negative space of the crease.

One initial and unanticipated visual effect that emerged was akin to an impression of recorded musical tracks as they move along the x-axis of time in Logic Pro²⁰⁷. When you watch the operation of Logic Pro on screen, seeing the horizontal musical waveforms move and pass unfolding onwards, as a viewer you experience the sensation of the duration of time. Inside the application acoustic and electronic sounds become similar condensed digital languages and maybe repeated to infinity. Outside of the digital application of Logic Pro in real life spaces, sound goes by, spreads outwards and disperses, slowly breaking down or warping as a distortion from the origin sound, eventually completely dissipating. Sound exists in a myriad of forms, and yet there is no material residue for the vibration of sound, leaving no evidence or signature of itself in the wider world only as a memory or an effect on the physiology of beings as they hear or listen.

If I considered any colour or mark as dominating the collective nature of the painting I would rub pigment away or over paint in another paler translucent layer. Whatever was needed to subdue, so the zones started to bleed and blend into one another while still retaining the appearance of panels, which began to appear as moving bands of colour. I sponged on watery translucencies making use of inevitable dripping, some intentional, others not. Red drips were fashioned as rhythms, and a visual experiment, as a trope of femininity or feminism and in part a call back to a series of incandescent paintings from 2021 entitled *The Red Group*. I would signal to the proposed bodies in the room by applying various tones of pink and red suggesting the high-key energy created during performance. Populating the lower portion of the full spread of the canvas, choreographed dripped forms fell from the repeated motifs of pale coral-coloured inverted triangles. Suggestions of the triangle form and colour are a referral to gender as a concept not as an assignment.

207. Logic Pro is a proprietary digital audio workstation (DAW) and MIDI sequencer software application developed by Apple Inc.

As shapes form across the whole piece, the midway creased surface disturbances continue to be worked on with dabbing and rubbing painted rags and large brushes, translucent layers are added one upon the other over the entire surface area. The mid-horizontal region of varied crinkled marks becomes increasingly pronounced in my thoughts and I recall the historical painting trope of the painter's horizon and with that the text *Painting—The Implicit Horizon*²⁰⁸.

Any thought I had of the horizon as represented in Painting was as a historical term and had little bearing previously on my work. Nevertheless a horizon line appeared, developing through my own language of sound. Through this advent I reached an understanding of the horizon's provisional capabilities. Always ahead without an end point, the vast plain of the horizon line becomes a baseline for other marks to react to. Concepts emerged out of the painting as I worked, sound suspended, paused, colliding, unfolding, tumbling along this line until to the right the lines and smudges merge with the drawing of the leg motif. The leg motif was rendered early on in the painting, hanging there in space waiting for all the other marks to catch up. The torso portion of the body above the waist has disappeared.

When a band enters the bar or the club, you look around to take in the situation locating where to set up your equipment, first noticing all the objects in the room that define the space. The light is dim, the furniture sparse, arranged in corners and in booths, a larger open area remains vacant to be filled later with the bodies you are hoping will gather together. Although empty and quiet the atmosphere is still charged. A small rise in the floor indicates the stage area, scattered with various paraphernalia, cables and scuffed monitor wedges. The tension of expectation from multiple group and solo practices rises as the band gear is dropped, laid out and set in place, sound check soon follows. Then you play and weeks of accumulated rehearsal is electronically, physically and psychically released on the audience. Sound waves collide with the audience, they impact and travel through their bodies, an invisible force, unseen but felt. Sound enters through the ears and the bodies through the surfaces of skin. Sound comes on in a rush or in droplets. Whether on a stage or in the crowd, bodies are on display, the force of sound is a big energy in the room, co-mingling, the catalyst of an experience, an atmosphere envelops the crowd.

5a. The Leg

The leg motif has appeared in a few previous paintings of mine possibly operating as a sort of message from me, an action or an advance. Recently on her *Fashion Neurosis*²⁰⁹ podcast, Bella Freud spoke with Kim Gordon about hair, dressing up and down and performing. Although Kim mentions she thinks about dressing 'age appropriate' a lot more these days, yet on stage she prefers to wear shorts, her legs seen, Gordon says in an amused and nonchalant way, "I just got more energy from showing my legs"

208. Armstrong et al, *Painting, The Implicit Horizon*.

209. Bella Freud and Kim Gordon, "Fashion Neurosis with Kim Gordon," YouTube, accessed January 13, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-aYpZ5nyZM>.

To expand further on the presence of the leg in my painted work, there is the most recent *Drummer Leg*. Previous to this, in 2016 I have a painting known simply as *Leg*. This work is the first painterly reference I made to Crack War We Are Rock's dance anthem *Hooker Leg*, (the live video²¹¹ for this song is spoken of earlier in the introductory paragraph of this section). *Drummer Leg*, in one part of many parts circles back to explore the song *Hooker Leg* again. To begin with *Warm Your Feet By The Fire* from 2014 began my inspection of the leg, at least from the knee down, where multiple legs compete with each other for placement on the paintings surface. While the context, colour and painting styles vary from painting to painting, within these three works the presence of a 'leg' carries import for me as a person, signaling a vitality and an energy of advancement, an assertion of being propelled forward. The leg acts as a key participant within this painting, as it was rendered at the very beginning of the work the presence stresses the painting belongs in the realm of sound, images and flesh. When I'm playing the instrument-object my thoughts are often around the requirements of the body, the object demanding gestures to create a sonic architecture. Or at times contrary to this, contingent upon ample pre gig practicing thoughts can completely leave your body only to return when the song has finished.

There is considerable physical action when playing drums, your limbs moving rapidly in a mind, body, object swirl. The 'swirl' has brought me to consider the performance work of Carolee Schneemann. In the photo of the performance *Up to and Including Her Limits* 1973–76, I observe Schneemann as performing a mind-body-object swirl of her own, striking a paper surface as she swings about.

I observe a correspondence with Schneemann, a painter's allegiance, as it was her insistence that she was always a painter, whatever the artistic medium.²¹⁰ I admire her belief in painting, but perhaps more importantly the belief in her own self and body as a tool for expression and resistance. This was demonstrated through the radical methods used to execute her ideas, plus her insistence upon describing her work on her own terms. In the essential performance and installation *Up to and Including Her Limits* 1973–76, Schneemann, fitted herself with a tree surgeon's harness and hung naked, swinging about, holding crayons and would strike the nearby surfaces of paper every time her body came near enough to make contact, eventually coating her skin with rubbed marks picked up from the surfaces she was marking. Schneemann seems to have little fear of displaying her naked body in motion and getting a little grimy, testing her physical and psychic limits of what can and cannot be done²¹¹. The confrontational situation Schneemann subjected her body to can be observed as being part of the abject.

Meaning bestowed upon the word 'abject' therefore upon those who behave in an abject way are thought to be degraded, craven, groveling, servile or obsequious. According to the TATE glossary for art terminology "...abjection

210. "I'm a painter. I'm still a painter and I will die a painter. Everything that I have developed has to do with extending visual principles off the canvas." Quote from Carolee Schneemann in *Imaging Her Erotics: Carolee Schneemann* (1993), vhs, 5 mins, a video collaboration between director Maria Beatty and the artist.

211. Carolee Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (The MIT Press, 2001).

literally means 'the state of being cast off'.²¹² In the book *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*,²¹³ Julia Kristeva explains the abject as a complex psychological, philosophical and linguistic concept where "the abject covers all the bodily functions, or aspects of the body, that are deemed impure or inappropriate for public display or discussion."²¹⁴ and further "The abject has a strong feminist context, in that female bodily functions in particular are 'abjected' by a patriarchal social order."²¹⁵ The radical or risky or courageous display of the female body remains a constant within the world of performing music. Often when playing an instrument or singing it becomes necessary to dispense with the perceptions of grace or deportment to reach a required creative goal, for some artists the dispensing of grace may be part of the point.

Eliza Douglas's paintings from 2016–17 of hands and feet share associations too with my free-floating body parts where large portions of the entire human figure are smudged away or missing. An exception being that with Douglas's works, she carefully illustrates the appendages that I have chosen to obscure. The extremities in Douglas' canvas works are executed with a precision that I find almost bloodthirsty (read abject). They frequently dissolve away into abstracted smears above the wrists or ankle, the place where she stops, I start.

Eliza Douglas mentions Maria Lassnig²¹⁶ as one of her pivotal inspirations and I realise we both hold her in shared esteem. Personally, I find Lassnig's paintings often ugly and gut wrenching; this does not mean I do not admire them. Throughout all the eras of her life-cycle the painted portrayals of her own body were distorted and abstracted, confronting her thinking around being woman and aging and the mysteries and inescapable situation of belonging to a body.

It is also important to acknowledge German artist Monika Baer as inspiration around my work and the thinking for *Drummer Leg*. Baer produces varied approaches to abstraction, sometimes her paintings include carefully detailed body parts only to be sliced apart or displayed with some additional minor object such as a cigarette, painted or collaged onto the surface. For instance, breasts in various styles are often included and surrounded by abstracted surfaces or enigmatic landscapes. Some are whimsical yet gruesome, as the work *Untitled, 2008*²¹⁷ shows slices of breast meat peeling away, neatly positioned with humor often found in the comic art form and a kind of surrealist violence. To consider another style of Baer's painting, in *Jäger im Regen* from 2003²¹⁸ Baer demonstrates her figurative skills, the work appearing juicy and fleshy but not without humor as the breast in this painting is dressed in a countryfied hat. The breast with hat floats amongst a landscape of washed-out

212. "Art Term: Abject art." www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abject-art. Accessed January 9, 2025.

213. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press, 1982)

214. "Art Term: Abject art." www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abject-art. Accessed January 9, 2025.

215. Ibid.

216. Eliza Douglas and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "Artist, Model and Musician Eliza Douglas in Conversation with Hans-Ulrich Obrist," *Modern muse*, n.d., <https://hero-magazine.com/article/146845/artist-model-and-musician-eliza-douglas-in-conversation-with-hans-ulrich-obrist>.

217. Monika Baer, *Untitled, 2008*, Watercolour, acrylic, oil on canvas and thread, 68 x 46 cm, 2008.

218. Monika Baer, *Jäger im Regen*, Oil on canvas, 1900 x 3000mm, 2002.

shapes, seemingly delicate but conflated by the splash of red fluid, strawberry juice or blood?

To create a painting of a musical performance that has its roots within the Riot Grrrl movement coloration was a critical element, integral to the work functioning as an anchor, mapping out surfaces, identifying intervals between forms, exposing portions, elevating viewer energy and triggering responses. The purpose of the red pigments governed tonal ranges was to elicit bodily perception, both as a radiance booster and as a manifestation of the high-key energy of relationships between people, music and politics during exciting live musical performances.

While working on *Drummer Leg* I was reminded of Kim Gordon's watercolours, known collectively and published as *Performing Guzzling*²¹⁹ 2010. The book's publisher states, "the watercolours in this artist's book are inspired by on-stage performances where the faces in the audience become a dreamy and ethereal blur of colour."²²⁰ Through *Drummer Leg* I was looking to expand the idea of 'the band viewing the audience' to incorporate the audiences' participation in live performances into the overall perception of the event. I planned to execute this idea by developing something like a visual artist's diagram of the experience of performance. My aim was to rather than split the people involved into two groups — band member and spectator viewing each other from the opposite positions in the venue, to alternately unite and imagine performers and audience together, sharing the gig-going experience, as an increasingly circular event.

219. Kim Gordon, *Kim Gordon: Performing/Guzzling* (Rizzoli International Publications, 2010).

220. Nieves · Kim Gordon. Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://www.nieves.ch/921/performing-guzzling>.

CONCLUSION

A question persists for the study of gender and for feminist approaches to aesthetics in its various forms, namely: To what degree does a 'feminist' perspective overlap with what can be considered a "feminine" approach to cultural values? This is a tricky issue to dissect, since social framing of character traits that are designated proper to females has long been recognised as constricting opportunities for education and employment, not to mention personal development outside conventional stereotypes. And yet at the same time, so-called feminine traits may also be ones that the dominant culture undervalues, and hence many feminists seek to reclaim them.²²¹

This thesis set out to explore the possibilities of what feminine noise may be and how this concept could operate in my visual practice. I set forth using the title of the research project, *Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise* as a framework for the five aspects of this inquiry. Each aspect being a word from the title, the research questions were in turn prompted by this phrase. Beginning with — who has the right to make noise and how do I define this? Is noise just sound, or does it encompass other things? Is a concept or definition of noise "political"? How do visual artists see noise as part of their practice? Who are the feminist or female noise makers past and present? How can noise be redefined outside of a dominant masculine narrative? How do painting and audio/noise work together, and what does this achieve?

At the theoretical center and guiding this research has been aspects of Lauren Fournier's 2021 book *Autotheory, as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and Criticism*. In the introduction to this exegesis, I outlined commonalities with Autotheory's core philosophy, which underpins a belief in life-practice as central to one's art creation. My alignment to Autotheory has been generated from my life-long and continued feminist art practice dedicated to the visual and sound arts.

This doctoral research has enabled a critical review of this lived experience, viewed through an autotheoretical lens. One of my research goals was to explore and find a way to express how my painting and noise practices inform each other, and in particular how my painting practice embodied and drove a trajectory 'towards a feminine noise'.

Therefore, as sound feeds into my painting practice the research was borne out of a desire to make a conceptual shift in my long running experimental and noise musical practice as a drummer and percussionist. The shift was initiated as a move away from dominant patriarchal narratives of noise culture towards a greater understanding of a feminine centered approach and to also question what is noise – is it just sound or does it encompass other things? Is a concept or definition of noise "political"?

To action this changing definition I sought to amplify the presence of women

221. Carolyn Korsmeyer, Preface for "Gender and Aesthetics." in *Estetyka i Krytyka—The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* (February, 2016),10.

in this study, claiming the idea of taking up space or presence as politicised noise. I redirected my gaze towards a deeper study of female experimental musicians of the mid twentieth century. Female composers of interest in this era inspired as their practices operated in areas of electronic sound experimentation as yet unoccupied. I admired their ability to carve out new creative territories and for the most part run their practices on their own terms. The musical conversations these artists incurred were their observations of subject matters outside of themselves, of atmosphere's and environments. These ideas focused my research towards feminine centered sound and paint environments and were pivotal to the direction of the investigation and the resulting visual work.

I was curious to interrogate current and potential relationships between painting language and practice, and noise language and practice, particularly how I could observe and articulate their entanglement with each other, and with tenets of feminism and the feminine. A strong impulse within the research has been how language and studio process can be understood and re-framed by a strategic examination of overlooked historical and contemporary practices by female (inclusive of cis and trans folk) and non-binary artists.

Throughout this exegesis I have argued that the sidelining of historic and contemporary female practices could be seen as defining their artistic work as 'noise' – a version of “unwanted sound”²²²— like the ancient Greek/Roman view of the feminine sound being “...bad to hear...”²²³ This would also point to the definition of noise as being political as it can be used to define a segment of marginalised culture as being 'lesser'.

Through my investigations into feminist sound the painted work focused on creating generational links between the feminist sound/artists of the 1960s and 70s to the rising contemporary scene of the 1990s feminist musical movements of experimental, Riot Grrrl and post-Riot Grrrl scenes. I looked to post-Riot Grrrl bands continuing to perform music with a feminist politic such as the electronic duo ODWALLA 88. I found their work made for a compelling musical argument, as they orchestrated sporadic and disjointed beats on drum machines combined with winey-toned text and vocal performances. Amongst their idiosyncratic sounds was a dedication to the natural environment through their album title *EARTH FLIRT* and poetic lyric “sound like air”, hence becoming the title of my painted series *Sound Like Air Group*.

It became evident through the research that there was a compulsion to attend to these experimental sound practitioners, as well as to notice and engage carefully with a selection of painters, and artists that sustain parallel art and sound practices. I did this mindful of the multiplicity of interplays between the practices that I was examining.

The experimental electronic movements from the mid-century composers, Riot Grrrl bands and post-Riot Grrrl, felt like interventions into a system set in stone. The group of paintings called *Punch Card Paintings 2021* addressed

222. Lauren Boyle, Dir., *GUTTER: Girls of Noise* (YouTube video, 36:11. July 6, 2011) <https://youtu.be/dzvduxWzuZg?si=M8OYpe6JX5sk-Az>

223. Carson, “The Gender of Sound”.

feminist musical electronic histories, being of both abstracted and systemised painting processes. These are in part homage to the women who worked the weaving looms in the 1890s when punch cards were invented for textile manufacturing and in another part homage to Laurie Spiegel who in 1986 invented the software program Music Mouse.

The abstracted marks brought a return to improvised work in which I further developed to explore Eliane Radigue's and Pauline Oliveros' approaches to sound and landscape focusing on a heightened attention to visual minutiae and a slowing down of treatment in contrast to my more spontaneous painted work. I proposed to integrate painted landscapes of sound and environment as another way to consider a feminist position on noise. This led into the *Atmosphere/s* series of ten 910 x 610mm, portrait orientated works. With the aim to build an exaggerated material and conceptual spaces.

I was interested in sound's ability to reconfigure forms and tones through collisions with other obstacles both the seen and the immaterial. By paying close attention to the air space and landscape surrounding my own home I tasked myself to create a group of work as observations on sounds present and passing through. I expressed this by proposing abstract painted gestures of micro and macro environmental responses. Initially the painted marks were making reference to speed and collisions. However, as time passed, I began to consider the atmospheres of this series as also suspensions or incubators, moving at a slower pace. The *Atmosphere/s* group of work led me to consider a vocabulary of sound beyond the translation into gesture to the behaviour of sound as it takes on various forms within different environments.

Following the *Atmosphere/s* series I chose to work with oil paint solely on smaller canvases focusing less on sound instructions and more on studies of spaces. These changes facilitated a greater attention to the nuances of marks, colour and surface. I embarked upon various experiments with the aim that they would be viewed more as considered moments or sequences as opposed to larger, fuller, busy ideas of sound within a 'landscape'. This group of paintings has the title *Sound Like Air Group*.

While constructing the smaller sized works *Sound Like Air Group* I had in the back of my mind one much larger work. I had the canvas rolled and stored and had begun to call the unmade work *Drummer Leg*, already picturing the leg as we see illustrated in the final work. The large blank canvas measuring 5440 x 2810mm was attached loosely to the wall. Drawing upon techniques developed previously I was able to apply the paint materials to the canvas surface with a well-rehearsed vocabulary of forms guiding my way across several meters of canvas surface. By utilizing these material insights firsthand in the process of painting I was able to invite conversations of the feminine and feminism.

As it happened, during this time my early 2000s Riot Grrrl band *Fake Purr* reformed to perform once more. This brought back memories of shows played twenty-plus years prior, the genres of music I was interested in at that time and the community that surrounded the movement of Riot Grrrl. *Fake Purr* practiced in my studio for several weeks, adding to and solidifying my thoughts of

performance atmospheres. I did not want to define bodies in my painting in a figurative sense, in an attempt to circumvent enforcing identities, but I did hope to reach towards the shared energy amassed in a room between the performers and the audience. Within the painting the atmospheric representations of bodies, musical instruments and actions dissolve in and out of form and focus.

My investigations extended outside of a purely painting focused practice. I tested a variety of forms, systems, scales, media and studio practice across the period of the research. This included media that as yet had remained in the private space of my studio up until this project's completion. I observe a ritual of studio documentation and play made easy through the convenience of an iPhone camera. This occurs during the process of painting and in 'down' periods when the work was paused. I would take multiple photographs of works in progress and set up visual scenarios with combinations of objects, research ephemera and paintings at various stages of making and take photographs of these arrangements.

It occurred to me as a practicing musician, avid record collector and visual artist I could experiment with the legacy of augmenting the recorded object. I painted directly onto one side of a group of twenty vintage records in white oil paint and exhibited (in the anteroom) a sample of one, *A 10" Record* in close proximity to six framed digital images titled *I Hear You*. My observation from the suite of painted records was; although they had their surfaces covered by paint and incised drawings; the visible signs of the sound-producing object were all but removed, the object however still retained strong ties to the realm of the readymade. I felt the histories of the readymade overwhelmed any new concepts that may have appeared. My objective was to make something new from this painted record. I moved the record another step farther from their real-life purpose and so made photographs of them along with other objects and ephemera from my studio. I noticed immediately the photograph accorded the objects within the photo the same value, this is when I sensed I was arriving somewhere else.

The near monochromatic printouts encased in the wooden frames altered and slowed the messaging speed released from the images contained. The invisibility of sound and the invisibility of the atmosphere chime in these images in a way that calls histories back and forth. I observed a channeling pathway opening as a site not unlike the experience a spirit medium may espouse. There is a contemporary resonance with the medium as woman, not only in the task of spirit medium-ship, as employed in the years this pastime was popularised but as also as a channel for burgeoning feminist and feminine actions.

From the practical position of the painter, I have had the opportunity to enjoy more time to practice moving paint around, therefore broadening my grasp on the materialities of paint. This included new ways to build layers of translucency high lighting different tones and marks which in turn build additional possibilities for speculating on narratives both in question and those new stories created by material surprises. There has been further experience gained on working with large scale paintings, pragmatic things like negotiating how much material covers how much space, how areas of tone read differently in large

works over small works hence the entire surface material exploration can be weighted quite differently to work of a smaller scale. It is not simply the act of transferring an idea to a larger scale; say via an overhead projector or printing out a larger version of a digital image, there are many more nuances involved with the material of paint and the scale and nature of the surface..

The painting *Drummer Leg* was a key moment for the research. With this work I felt I had successfully integrated my investigation into new feminine noise as both a consideration of the past and a push towards the abstract nature of feminine representation as a shared experience in sound and paint. On consideration of 'noise' as stated above sound and the feminine will remain a foundation of my work. In addition to the ongoing painted work that develops through my studio practice I plan to continue my readings – and listenings – into the myriad aspects of this world. 'Noise' has shown itself to be a deep well with many contributing underground channels that I plan to pull from for the foreseeable future.

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APPENDIX

22/02/2021 Human Ethics clearance: 4000023939

INTERVIEWS an introduction

I asked a small group of art practitioners I have known, or known of for some time, if they would discuss the subjects of feminine and feminist noise with me.

All the interviews have been edited in some way for clarity.

The interviewees also agreed to have their interviews published in this format and be identified by name. I asked a variety of questions specific to their art practice. However the one subject I had for all the interviewees was did they believe any feminine, feminist and or noise conditions existed within their art practices?

These inquiries are not intended to represent the wider pool of artists and musicians opinions on multiple feminine nor feminist political positions; they are personal viewpoints.

The interviews are with a select group of fellow artists whose practices I believe have made significant contributions to the field of contemporary feminist art and thinking.

The artists included in the interviews were pressed for time in various ways, living, relocating, managing employment, family and or their art practice. Their responses have been invaluable towards helping me make sense out of the ambitions I had for this project. All showed great generosity of time and thought offering thought provoking, unique interviews towards finding an understanding within a community of art practitioners. I am immensely grateful for their time and thoughts.

Ruth Buchanan. I met Ruth in the 1990s while she was studying art the Elam school of Fine Arts. Ruth left Tāmaki Makaurau for Europe soon after finishing her Fine Arts degree. Shortly before Ruth left she mentioned her grandmother and my mother had been close friends at boarding school in the early-mid twentieth century. Not aware of this connection however I did know of Ruth's grandmother as my mother often talked about their friendship, her family lived in a country area near my family in the South Island. This was fascinating to me knowing the culture my mother belonged to. I see Ruth's practice as politicised and so I reached out to her just shortly before she was leaving Germany with her family to take up the role of Director at Artspace Aotearoa in 2022. And although pressed for time while packing her home Ruth generously agreed to a zoom conversation.

Anja Buchele. Anja is from Germany currently living in the UK. A classically trained multi-instrumentalist, a player of piano, cello, violin, electronic instruments such as guitar, drum machine, various synthesisers and percussion, uses any of these instruments plus voice in her band Triple Negative (with old friend to me, artist and writer Mathew Hyland).

Georgina Freya Brett. Georgina lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau, they have studied fine art at the Elam school of Fine Arts graduating in 2013. Georgina's work occupies a position that utilises sound, text, body and installation techniques to explore ideas of queerness and the experimental.

Hermione Johnson. Hermione lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau, a highly accomplished, classically trained musician, composer and pianist using techniques of experimentation, improvisation and prepared piano, while also performing with pipe organ and synthesiser. Even though we live in the same city and share many similar musical interests, for example improvisation Hermione and my own paths have not crossed frequently. Hence I contacted Hermione to learn more and she gratefully agreed.

Sara Knowland. Sara lives in the UK, although was born in Belgium. I kind of stumbled upon Sara's work in London when I discovered *Soft Opening* in 2019. I saw her show – *Mostly Women*, which left an everlasting impression upon me.

I cold called Sara and she agreed to be interviewed. I emailed Sara a lot of questions and she made an amazing voice reply via forty-five instagram dm's The recorded length of a voice message at max sixty seconds a shot.

Judy Millar. Judy is from Aotearoa and has lived between Aotearoa and Germany for many years. Judy is a highly knowledgeable painter of world renown, a clear and confident thinker whose paintings are produced through strong physical gestures. Judy moves her body with the paint and whatever tools are called for in a concentrated and skilled manner calling on both intuition and know-how.

Rachel Shearer. Rachel is from Aotearoa, we met in the 1980s in Dunedin. We have worked together on various musical projects, playing in the bands Angel Head and Queen Meanie Puss. Rachel currently records and performs under the moniker Lovely Midget. Due to our long-running shared histories in the Aotearoa sound community I invited Rachel to share her thoughts.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung. I met Molly in New York in 2016 through a friend inviting me to a dinner post another friend's opening exhibition. The dinner was with several other serious heavy hitters in the feminist art scene, I think I felt a little overwhelmed...anyway Molly is a greatly respected artist/painter and educator. In 2022 I picked up Sara Marcus's book, *GIRLS TO THE FRONT, The True Story of the RIOT GRRRL Revolution* (2010) and there was Molly in the pages of this story. When I reached out she was happy to be interviewed for this research.

INTERVIEWS

Ruth Buchanan

SC...When I spoke to Ruth (2022) I was proposing a different understanding around noise, as another view to what we may know as 'noise-music' as being a dissidence of thought, materializing itself in different ways.

RB...that's how I would understand noise because obviously I am not a musician, noise for me, what I would relate to the concept or proposition of noise as something that is sort of uncomfortable...and as my practice is mostly spatial I would think about noise – that's friction! that's the friction of being in a space that's alive and produced as something that does not sit in the world in a way that we expect it to sit in the world and how I would think noise for me because yeah like you said noise is like dissidence, it's interruption, it's interference ...for me a strong thing about noise as opposed to sound would be the visceral-ness of noise, like it catches, it catches on 'things' or it doesn't sit quite right, it does something to your body, your physical body that maybe sound may not always have the capacity to...RB describing an installation... I have done this a few times like really gouging into the building and removing parts of the building and putting the speakers in the building so it's like a penetration and when I do that the speakers are always like fist size ...so it's always almost like I've punched a hole in the wall.

SC...My questions around feminism were formed around the recent past (as a working theory all feminism's pasts are comparatively recent) and present conditions, how do we understand what feminism can be now and in working towards the future.

SC...There have been and still will be unresolved issues within feminism. I was interested in what it means to think about feminism now in people's practices, in the context of 2022? Feminism — the word is there in your work...would this be as a concrete form for you or is it like ghosting in some way (by ghosting I mean by floating or implicit over explicit). So I wondered if the word is there in a concrete or ghosting form?

RB... there's lots of facets there to what you describe... a kind of movement away, a wanting to reject things like "What is feminism?... if I'm not a feminist then what am I?"

SC...do we still need that word?

RB...definitely, In the same way we need words that are about identifying other forms of being 'anti other forms of oppression' ...limitation, we also need to talk about feminism and anti racist, anti colonial, anti ablest, anti bigoted, all those things are real but I think feminism if it's not alive it's not worth anything either. It has to be a live form, you have to think of it as a live form other wise it is anachronistic and not applicable. For me feminism is about an offer or a question— "how can it be otherwise?" so how can the world be otherwise, how can my individual practice be otherwise, how can our conversation be otherwise? I would see it as part of a – for me – a broader set of worldviews that are emancipatory, like I wish for it all to be better & feel better and make sense. I wish for the world to be more formed around abundance, and I think that kind of, yeah the creative energy, or like the aphrodisiac-ness of what feminism can propose I think is really something I do hold on to. And that it is a form that's like the pleasure and the fullness, the friction of being a thinking and imagining person in the world, for me those things would always be political. But I do think feminism needs constant redress. There are things about feminism that have failed all of us and probably my idea about feminism, and you know with this focus on setting (?) deformation, like you know it's about deforming things. If feminism becomes too fixed or dogmatic then that's not feminism that's just DOGMA, I don't care what the dogma is if it's not about being alive and being something that welcomes being penetrated or being the thing that interrupts then I don't find it meaningful. But yeah I do use the term and I will use the term and I definitely describe that as a foundation – that's where my practice comes from – and that doesn't mean that there aren't things about it that need to die and change but that is true for my practice. It's a world-view and I would feel sad if we had to ...(pause) if we couldn't use the word anymore. I think it's amazing that there's a world-view that has 'fem' in the beginning, we should have that but feminism needs to get better at sorting out it's own shit. I can't imagine personally saying I'm not a feminist. What would I be? But at the same time I think it's totally legitimate to insist that feminism offers you something, what does it offer me, what questions does it help me ask, and if it doesn't help me ask those questions, why not?... for me feminism can't be de-aggregated from class, race, ablest discussions and I guess that's the issue...we've been brought up in a western paradigm...and it's about how much we are willing to shake it off and unlearn that stuff.

Anja Buchele

SC...When I introduced the interview idea to Anja I spoke about my inquiry being centered around what noise can be and in the future through a feminist lens and I am also hoping to inquire about the feminine. The questions are asked in the context of Anja's being a musician and her band Triple Negative.

SC...How long have you been playing musical instruments ?

AB...Since I was six years old, so about twenty-one years!

SC...Are you classically trained?

AB...yes — on the piano and the cello.

SC...Are you self taught?

AB...yes — on the violin, the guitar, percussion.

SC...Was there an 'aha' moment that was formative for your experience as a listener and a musician?

AB...Hah yes! When I was nine years old we moved to the city. I was really unhappy and did not leave the house at all. One day, my dad bought me a plastic record player and Schubert's 1st and 8th symphonies. I listened to them over and over and over again. They became like a world I could inhabit inside the flat. There was no need to go out. The music became a whole universe. I was really very happy then. When I listen to them today, they transport me back into exactly that feeling.

Later on my big brother had a big influence on me. So age twelve it was all Kate Bush and Talking Heads. Then, at school, there was this super talented musician. He got me into Quincy Jones, age fourteen. Shortly after my new best friend got me into punk and punk rock. I formed my first two bands with him.

SC...what was your first band?

AB...We started out as a cover band — I got to sing "Search & Destroy" by Iggy and the Stooges, age sixteen, making a massive racket with pedals on the guitar. Then we started writing and playing our own songs, played gigs, and had lots of fun. Two core members and other people kind of circled around us. That band existed until I moved to London.

SC...did you and or do you perform as a solo artist?

AB...I did for a while between ages fifteen and twenty-five but I realised that the whole beautiful thing about music is that it's something that happens between people.

SC...What instruments did you play?

AB...as a "solo artist" I played the casio keyboard and the electric guitar and the drum machine inside my casio keyboard.

SC...How long have you been Triple Negative?

AB...Triple Negative evolved out of Philosophie Queen and Double Negative, so it's quite a long story — around 20 years?

SC...Do you have a 'specialty' instrument?

AB...The Glockenspiel.

SC...Is Triple Negative a noise band?

AB...most definitely. But also many other things.

SC...Are you a feminist noise band?

AB...for sure.

SC...Are you feminine in a noise band?

AB...I'm probably the least feminine of the three of us (the two others are 'male') ;-)

SC...Is Noise Music relevant for you?

AB...of course!

SC...For you — is Noise Music part of a tradition?

AB...that question is too difficult. I mean yes there is definitely a tradition of Noise Music that runs through all Genres. Classical music has elements of Noise Music. And yes, it has a tradition for me, personally, in my life, also.

SC...Are you breaking or hoping to break from tradition?

AB...by means of tradition, hoping to break tradition wide open.

SC...Are you acting/ performing about the patriarchy?

AB...not explicitly — but trying to blast away the whole system which of course includes patriarchy.

SC...When you perform are you hoping to project an action onto or towards the listeners or audience? What might that be?

AB...to dance. to feel great joy. to feel like they inhabit a whole other universe, if only for an hour. To take comfort in and strength from that.

SC...Do you think your musical performance is formed through being a woman?

AB...hard to say. probably yes. In the early days it was really unusual to be a woman in a band, especially not being the “front woman”. It’s really different now which is so great! But back then I intentionally stayed in the background, I wanted to be perceived as part of the whole, not as some standout feature. Later on I had bands with a mixture of men and women which was already a lot better.

SC...Would you call Triple Negative a political band?

AB...yes!

SC...Would you express politics within your musical performance, in a physical way?

AB...yes!!!! Well — Triple Negative do. There is a show of sorts. Of disgust, of anger, of love. Matthew does a lot of that showmanship. I still keep to the background during performances.

SC...Is your performance strategic as in planned or is it improvised?

AB...half/half. We have a backing track of previously recorded stuff that kind of provides the frame and we improvise over this.

SC...How would you express the political intent of your band?

AB...not different from my own. Shatter everything. It can be built again. Better.

SC...What do the sounds you make say?

AB...disruption--physical force of world -- resting face in low hums --- percussion makes bones clatter --- bones clatter loudly, inviting other bones --- making waves, making waves.

SC...Is improvisation a form of chaos?

AB...not at all. It’s all about listening and moving onwards and feeding back. Some kind of many-voiced dialectic?

SC...Is performance a haptic experience for both the performer and audience?

AB...I think probably only for the performer. Unless the audience dances and touches the sound waves?

SC...Is there irony in your performance?

AB...no. Or... hardly.

SC...Is there wit in your performance?

AB...yes!

SC...Is loud a thing?

AB...OMG yes, especially for the musicians. IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO BE LOUD!!!!!!

Georgina C Brett

SC...What brought you to performing Noise, what is driving you?

GB...I came to Noise about four years ago after a bit of a hiatus from art making during which time I would describe myself as an installation artist with a very experimental and sculptural approach. In my Masters year at Elam I started exploring (what I referred to as) un-bodied media; non-material sculptural mediums - specifically sound and electricity. I can pin-point the moment I wanted to abandon my entire years work for exploring sound — I was at a gig at the Audio Foundation, which I decided to drop into before going to a gallery opening. During one of the performances I had a lightning-bolt moment — sound as a *modus operandi* made complete sense. It was everything I had been reaching for but failing through physical materials. Post art school I hit a wall of dissolution in art having any kind meaning, on a personal level and generally in the world — so I just stopped making art and sat with that void, except being an artist as you will know isn't entirely a choice, with my back to the art world and out of creative hunger I decided to buy an electric and amp and commit to Noise. Making noise now feels innately primal — I need to make Noise as a means of survival in a world I feel utterly at odds with. I had no intention of putting noise into an art context, but I guess I can't live with it and I can't live without it — guess I am doomed to be in an eternal love/hate relationship with it.

SC...Do you call your performance with guitar, amp, pedals, sound or something else and why either way?

GB...It's resolutely Noise, in the inaudible sense, something which is a disturbance of harmony, something by conventional standards perceived as undesirable, unnatural, abrasive and chaotic.

SC...Why do you play guitar?

GB...There's something about the guitar's sound pitch/frequency and tonal range I like, I have a preference for string instruments. There's also something in the physicality of its body and your relationship to it through playing which feels similar to sculpting art objects. When I am playing there's a transcendental moment of un-bodiedness; my body/me and the instrument/guitar are obliterated into just Noise.

SC...You perform with guitar but I saw in your recent exhibition at Enjoy Proposal for a Body (2024), you also use the guitar as a prop, (guitar & chain hanging in space) what do you think this is doing or you hope it's doing?

GB...Initially the exhibition install didn't include my guitar, amp, pedals etc but there was always going to be a live performance — I have a very low-fi and minimal approach and prefer unprocessed qualities and raw states. I wanted to make the guitar levitate in space to conceptually signify that transcendental experience of playing — but I didn't want to create an illusion of a body suspension, that would feel dishonest — I don't conceal things like power cords and I like showing process all of it is part of the work. I was also into the brutality of suspending a guitar/body on chains. I like using trade-wear materials and I chose chains for their metal and punk associations but the white plastic chains are specifically a direct nod to Julian Dashper.

SC...How do effect pedals influence your sound?

GB...I am pretty basic with my use of pedals, in fact I only own a few pedals. I use pedals to both distort the quality of sound and increase pitch to abstract sound; to create discord and a harshness — to amplify the brutality of the sound, which makes it Noise. I also have found objects I play my guitar with. In this exhibition I used a goat's tail (that fell off a goatskin I have), a rock from a Coromandel river, a metal bolt and spring I found.

SC... What are you hoping to express with your sound and or instigate from/with the listener/viewer?

GB...For a lot of people the noise will feel uncomfortable to listen to, and that's intentional. There are three recordings playing in the space, each noise recording has a different personality, the combination of the three is chaotic and the

change in pitch is unpredictable. I expect this will cause people to move their proximity to the positioning of the speakers depending on how repelled or attracted they feel towards a specific noise composition/recording.

SC... Is it important to view your performance over purely listening and why?

GB...No, of course the performance element is very important but I am interested in how sound, as a recording steps into an art context, not really as Sound-Art, in part yes but as a kind of sculptural immaterial substance in a sense not so dissimilar to Conceptual Art — I am interested in an art medium that like conceptual art is very transportable.

SC...Does your sound have a politic, can you explain? And are you a feminist? If yes/don't know/no, can you explain how this would influence your sound making?

GB...Yes, Noise in this sense is very political as it directly subverts gender perceptions of what is deemed natural, desirable and acceptable. Noise as a condition is loud, volatile, unpredictable and distasteful.

SC... Do you have a relationship with the feminine, if yes how do you hope this would manifest in your performance? If not, can you explain why?

GB...I really can't stand the term feminine, it's not one I identify with — in fact I utterly reject it! It connotes submissiveness, I find it prescriptive and undermines the existence of free personhood. Noise and femininity don't mix, and I feel liberated by the knowledge that noise is an attack on concepts of femininity. As someone who is not desirable in this context, noise is an expression of that rebellion.

SC...I read you reference the body in texts for your recent performance at Enjoy, can you explain why this would be important?

GB...I am interested in nuances of being-ness and personhood from both a gender political and an ontological perspective. The exhibition presents sound/noise and poetry as liminal mediums, abstract by nature, to describe the experience of being a body in the world, while inhabiting a new body — a text-body and a noise-body — that is how we can have weight in the world in an abstract sense.

SC...Are there other mediums you work with in expressing or enlarging your sound concepts?

GB...Aspects of drone, metal, rock, punk music are present, as is folk and baroque. Minimalism, abstract and conceptual art and branches of philosophy specifically ontology and phenomenology.

SC...Can you explain your sound concepts?

GB...Hmmm...by describing my approach with terms such as experimental, minimal and lo-fi speaks for itself.

SC...Does gender have any weight in your performance? How would this occur?

GB...To that I would say fuck binaries! there's a fair amount of ferocity, fervour and vehement that fueling a performance.

SC...What is your aim/wish when you perform?

GB...The act of performing in itself is the aim — because it is at this moment I feel vital and true to myself — at the same time its accepting fear of failure, discomfort and vulnerability.

SC...Is there a specific reason for playing/performing seated on the floor?

GB...In this instance my performance is just another element of the exhibition installation, in the sense that my body is just a conduit for Noise to manifest. But, I generally use the floor, I don't use plinths which are conventional hierarchical art supports that signify 'mastery' and 'technical skill'. The floor is a functional space for real life things to happen — where things happen; are happening, the plinth would also signify finality. The same goes for suspending things in space, or not using the gallery wall. Outside the gallery, I would still choose to perform on the floor, the same level as the audience — a stage like a plinth is an elevation device — Noise is anti-hierarchical and anti-ego.

SC...Do you have an opinion on the term 'noise' and would you like to share this?

GB...Noise belongs along with other outsider artists' and anti-art forms.

SC...Is there anything you would like to add to the methods of your playing/performance?

GB...A couple of years ago I had a bad accident from which I sustained serious injuries — I couldn't use my hands to play so I had to use other things to strum with and this really changed my method of playing. I used my brokenness to my advantage, amplifying everything I felt about myself was faulty. Doing what I could was not just good enough but everything. For the show at Enjoy, myself and Jo were going to title our performance "You just happened to be here at the same time" our audience might be disappointed to know that their presence wasn't that important — we weren't performing for them rather sharing, or allowing others to be present — but essentially the performance was for us — which is why there was no introductory announcement that our performance was starting and when it was done we just walked away

Hermione Johnson

SC...You are a woman, do you think this is obvious in your work?

HJ...I am a woman. If someone saw me playing the piano it would be obvious that I'm a woman.

I don't sing, so I suppose it might be harder to tell just by listening.

If I think of what I have produced rather than how I perform, I would say that sometimes my gender is obviously female.. my last album had titles that were quite vulnerable: the title was 'tremble' it had a track named 'papered thigh', and the music was intimate. I think of being intimate and vulnerable as feminine traits I suppose...

But I don't think of music in that way. Gender politics hasn't been in my thoughts when making music. My gender isn't something I've ever questioned. I really don't know much about gender politics!

In my work I think in terms of form and structure...I go for what sound might say in itself.

I don't think of being a woman when I'm making music. But I suppose because I am a woman, and identify strongly as a woman, I would express some kind of womanliness without being conscious of it. Like I did with the album Tremble. It was not a conscious decision to be feminine. But when I play live, when I'm not naming things, I don't think it's obvious no. Long answer!

SC...Do you work with a particular sensibility?

HJ...Yes!

SC...Do you feel you are inserting your work into a masculine field?

HJ...No I don't. My work doesn't break any particular 'gender normal' moulds though. Maybe if I was playing rugby — but I've never been stopped or barred from playing music because I'm the wrong sex.

The people who have inspired my work are mostly men. Cecil Taylor blew my mind...Anthony Pateras (Australian pianist) who I saw playing at Bomb the Space in 2004, but then it was Magda Mayas (German pianist) who really blew me away, largely because she was amazing but also because she was a woman like me. She has been a big influence on my thinking and on my career. Incredible musician, and strongly feminist, visited New Zealand in 2008 I think it was (as a duo with her partner Tony Buck). I produced a concert for them in Wellington, and she organised a concert for me in Berlin in 2011 — that's when I started taking myself a bit more seriously, I think.

But all of these people were introduced to me by my ex-partner Jeff Henderson. It was a male dominated scene in Wellington. And I was part of that scene largely through the connection I had to Jeff. I suppose I was inserting my work into a masculine field. But it's nuanced and complex and ongoing.

Generally speaking, I am part of a healthy community. People are interested and supportive. There's no overt sexism. I've never felt I was at a disadvantage, except in ways that are insidious and part of my own psychology — an unavoidable part of living as a woman in a misogynist world.

Women can be just as sexist as men. A lot of sexism is internalised by women. I have ideas that stop me. I'm not very good at being a band leader for instance. Psychologically, I find it difficult to direct other people to play the way I want them to. But I have female friends who are confident and can say what they think without trouble. I don't think the men on the scene feel threatened by that.

It's a hip scene!

I don't know enough about feminist theory to understand how these things play out all that well...

SC...Could you say you were/are a feminist?

HJ...Yes I am a feminist. Women are clearly disadvantaged in our society.

SC...Could you say your approach does or may embody feminism? Implicitly or explicitly?

HJ...Not without understanding feminist theory, I can't really say. My interest has been in music, not feminism. Might be a great thing to get my head around though!

SC...Or could you say your approach does or may embody the feminine?

HJ...I would hesitate to say that. What is the feminine? Is being a woman different from being feminine? My playing can be very physical, and I am a woman...I don't know that it's feminine.

SC...Do you think there is a difference in your work between a feminine and a masculine approach?

HJ...That's a very off-putting thought. I don't have a masculine or feminine approach. But I do have a variety of sounds that could be interpreted in different ways. There are binaries of soft and loud, fast and slow and the like. You could decide that somehow one is feminine and the other masculine, but it's not part of my thinking.

SC...The Feminine is regarded as not gender specific, does this idea affect the 'meaning' of the feminine?

HJ...Yes I'd say it would affect the meaning of the feminine.

SC...Can we say feminism is not specific to any one gender?

HJ...I suppose you could argue that. What is gender though?

SC...Can you be aggressive in your work?

HJ...I don't really like aggressive music, but sometimes my playing could be regarded as aggressive. High energy might be a kinder description. I use my elbows sometimes, and I often get a few bruises trying to play as many notes as close together as I can. When I'm playing loud and fast like that the keyboard becomes like a forcefield, or a river, or dough maybe - something quite fluid that my hands and fingers are inside of instead of on, and I have a purpose and a design. From the outside it could be seen as plain old aggression maybe. But to me I'm building something — getting the sound going as a malleable physical thing that I can manipulate... it's making a thing to make something from, a thing to form. Which is quite difficult.

SC...Do you think the work you are doing is feminist or is it distinctly feminine?

HJ...I think it has to be, because I am doing it, and I am distinctly feminine and feminist.

Sara Knowland

SC...where did you study painting?

SK...I did my undergrad in Fine Arts at the SLADE school of Art which is part of UCL between 2003–2007. Prior to that I took a foundation course also in London at Camberwell School of Art and that was before it was part of the whole UAL happening. Before that I'd started a degree in English, before pulling out and I had to go waitress etc. Then eventually I followed the art route. After a BA at the Slade I had a job year — the Post Grad equivalent to masters, at the Royal Academy Schools (royal academy of Art London). Not officially recognised as a University but it is regarded as a Masters. Across these study experiences, not always in painting but for a lot of the time working between the sculptural and painting, these days I'm definitely just painting.

SC...Do you think of yourself as a feminist?

SK...my answer is yes..ahh...I think it would be quite weird if it was a no, I also think it's quite a kind of average and what I would expect of people and how I'm interested at the moment...I feel it's an expanding subject and I guess I'm wanting to remain...I'm wanting to be and grow as to being open to...the places where that position is going. I want to understand the conversation which is, that of say trans awareness and it's an intersectional subject and I think the position itself is also intersectional because I'm a feminist. I feel like that position at the moment is very different to say, for example my mum — being a feminist, so it's like post-second wave and it's moving. And I recognise though, of course within it,

within that kind of position there are strata, so to be someone of color, which I'm not, and feminist you know there's the confrontation there of like...oppression is far greater.

SC...do you bring feminism to your paintings?

SK...Yes ! Also, I'd say my research looks at various feminist texts and writers and is really rooted in that subject matter. Particularly for example the shift from feudal era to the dividing of the commons and into capitalism and the witch hunting era is where a lot of my subject matter resides and provides me with really kind of fecund imagery.

SC...Do you think you bring noise to your paintings?

SK...I'm not really thinking that much of noise – per say – that often, there was that, there has been some paintings I have made using the witch where I did think about this kind of RUSH that was going on and I think I was thinking also of cartoons that I would have watched when I was a kid. When I was looking at cartoons ...like cartoonish imagery...I was remembering watching a lot of cartoons as a kid. I found it quite hectic and nearly a nauseous experience, I found it really really loud.

SC...In your press release for the Soft Opening show Mostly Women it said you read *Caliban and the Witch* – was that profound for you ?

SK...Yeah, I think it has been hugely profound for me reading that text by Silvia Federichi. I also read the addendum, the shorter text she has written since that initial text being written and published as a continuation and exploration of contemporary witch hunting practice and how that resides particularly in parts of the world, particularly in South America & parts of Africa. But yeah I think for me it was very profound, angry yet very clear. The visuals of that text are very provocative and rich and that's been a massive kind of inspiration for me. It's a text I continue to return to, to kind of help even broaden the visual repertoire of say objects, animals, things that I look at. So like all that I have been depicting in recent paintings, absolutely a pivotal moment for me.

SC...You literally painted a witch from a film, why this witch?

SK...That is the quintessential witch, the wicked witch of the west...and played amazingly by Margaret Hamilton. I've had various people come to me and ask me — if there's like this kind of gay celebrity and iconography that's situated around that character? It's much more for me to do with the connotations that come with the idea of the 'west' and the political there... white European ...I think we pin quite a lot of tropes onto that character. But I think it's also such a memorable character for many generations for both the idea say of a fairy story through to Hollywood, the idea of this you know evil character and one that is absolutely female.

SC...I think these witch paintings judder, do you think so? And, you have said to me previously the witches are rushing and perhaps that was noisy do you still think that?

SK...the rushing is kind of like they are bursting through the structure I did or attempted to do, I guess it's kind of elemental, crossing a threshold, maybe overturning something. There was this point where I was kind of remembering things about and then reading things about the kind of politics of say Road Runner and other moments of Disney and thinking about a kind of rushing noisiness with regards to those witches, but I guess overall I'm not so much thinking about sound.

SC...Another artist I interviewed thought it was possible to think of feminism as an aphrodisiac, what do you think of that?

SK...Aphrodisiac – ha I wonder whether she means the feminine :-)) I think of feminism as much less like heady and druggy and or sort of transcendent than as – if those things are aphrodisiac – then I think of feminism being a lot more kind of everyday and like a need to sort of fight for within your everyday and where there are rumbles around and I think we still live in very much a world that is seated on white western and patriarchal ideals.

SC...would you think feminism is acting something or performing something or trying to push something out?

SK...I think possibly it is sometimes all of those things, where you have to act something in certain situations, or circumstances perform something. I think it's mostly definitely something trying to push something out – which is to crack something, which is what I mentioned before, which is sort the way in which it feels like historically, the way in which our society has been built...cont'd

SC...Do you think your paintings are acting something or performing something or trying to push something out?

SK...cont'd...and so then in regards to the paintings, are they acting something or trying to perform something out? I would like to think the paintings are very aware of themselves as performing or acting something because I think that goes hand in hand with the idea of making a painting or working with image and that you are adhering to certain things. Even like the limits of the edge of the fucking canvas, trying to push something out...if that is some thing that's really like anger and an expulsion then yeah and I think that they do try to confront and maybe something of that confrontation is about painting's art history...cont'd

SC...Are you trying to project a kind of action to the viewer/audience out of your painting?

SK...cont'd...and all of that in the way of the above question. I like to think that really ...there's an awareness of say... paintings proclivity for the expressive and like art's proclivity for the idea of the expressive and in the end I feel most interested in the idea of an expression and kind of something that's quite emotional and that is what I am trying to convey to the audience.

SC...Your Jutta Koether painting titled Not Beside Herself that surprised me, it was funny. Something I wasn't expecting. Was that a criticism of Joselit's theories & the essay Painting Beside Itself?

SK...It would be worth me trying to preface something about your next question on the Jutta Koether painting, which was titled Not Beside Herself, as to why I have been working on those paintings. Really in a way, it was spurred by a kind of visually formal moment where I realised that this image I'd had of Jutta Koether performing in Lux Interior at Reena Spauling around 10 years ago, I had printed off from someone's sight on My Space or something. The image had been floating around the studio and on the floor for a long time and I had just made this painting of these three witches. It's a painting that got shown in Paris in a two person show at Gallerie Pact. Suddenly I noticed there was this kind of formal echo between the print out of Jutta Koether, sort of jumping out from the side of her painting, which was referred to as a male art historical painting and that of my painting of the witches bursting out of the side of this structure. This had a kind of relationship with the structures that Francis Bacon used within his paintings. At this point for me there was suddenly my license to work with this image that I had not known what to do with. I had come to the point of being very much a fan of Jutta Koether but also know there is a kind of chime between works. Also that I would be painting her in performance rather than you know like entirely appropriating a work of hers. There's something there in terms of the kind of witchyness and the idea of say conjuring that's happening at various levels almost fractually. A bunch of that formed the basis of why I have been making them.

I'm also very aware of the history of mental health and women. I'm interested in the notions of the female as hysteric, propagated by Freud. I'm interested in and I really like Kier-La Janisse who wrote the book House of Psychotic Women and discusses the representation of women within the horror genre and other moments in cinema. So I'm interested in the depiction of women on those levels and within those art forms and genres. Within language there's a kind of bridge to more say the female when it comes to say an undoing or a transformation so for example if you are "beside yourself" you're beside yourself with pain or horror like you've lost your shit, that's sort of some of the play I did there with that title. It wasn't really a criticism of Joselit's theories in that essay...maybe I find it a bit annoying that how much clout that essay brought and from memory, I mean I've only read it about twice but there wasn't so much that it annoyed me but that maybe I found it a bit boring, a bit limited, but you know it had a close rapport with that particular work that particular performance of hers as well.

SC...Are you breaking or hoping to break from tradition?

SK...I don't know, I think I'm working within a very traditional medium and like I suppose at points that has felt like a worry and I have tried to do other things. I was trying to break down what I was doing but in the end I sort of dismantled all of the dismantling that I did through my education time. I had to rebuild, what I was doing and that brought me to ha ha painting figuratively and sort of semi-expressively again. So I don't think that any of that is like breaking from tradition and maybe something about traditions parameters I find quite useful to kind of work within. But maybe try to prod against from inside and the edges, but I don't think I'm doing anything radical or like that ha ha. I suppose I'm really aware though also that I'm not trying to make pretty paintings, which I think is quite obvious.

SC...When you are painting are you acting/ performing about the patriarchy?

SK...I've got the construction of that or rather the female in relation to the patriarchy and being in it's sort of clutch, hmmm or I don't know if I'd quite put it like that but anyway you know the female is framed by or historically was and you know a big awareness of that superstructure is definitely in the background of my work & the research and so forth yeah. I'm definitely not pretending it doesn't exist.

SC...Is your work strategic or straight from the heart?

SK...I think it's a bit of a combination of both. I suppose my method is I read, I watch films, I'll gather images that respond to that. There's this kind of period of me gathering and collecting and needing to find the material that prompts me to want to make work with certain imagery before getting to the painting part. At that stage there are still certain ideas and devices that mean I will paint in a certain sort of way. For example, wanting to remain quite aware of things like the light in films or cinema and the kind of gauziness in terms of the kind of light in screens. But I think I am also trying to be not too kind of clever about the way I paint, at that point I think it is kind of I suppose the words you use are "from the heart".

SC...Are your paintings a protest?

SK...I think protest is really at the heart of being an artist and I also really love to say a lot of medieval painting and ideas that surround the grotesque and the carnivalesque. The carnival itself was sort of a moment of protest against the status quo. I think as well the fact that I'm not making pretty work is...it can sort of hinder things, like me earning not much money off the paintings but I think that there is something about their ferocity that is about protest.

SC... Why are you using sepia tones in paintings like Pigdog? Is this a protest painting? (I think this may have been more the tone of my computer screen!)

SK...Not really sepia tones.... not a relationship to sepia photography going on there, the tones are murky and sort of Netherland-ish, greens and browns and so on. It references a very small detail in a Bosch painting and I suppose I was in a politicised and relationship towards/with the history of the witch. Pigs ah well no dogs for example, are part of a kind of group of animals often associated with the witch. These are accusations that the witch was pressed with like bestiality ...but you know like dogs and man is a sort of long standing weird one in a relationship. I was also curious about how dogs are also weaponised as well, for example within police structure and women are very much policed.

Later on I also learnt about sows, specifically pigs blood, sows blood being used within horror films to denote menstruation and the sort of body horror connected with that. Those rumble around there..."is it a protest painting?" Probably, I made it around the time when there had been a really famous or became this famous murder case last year of a girl who was killed by an off duty cop and then there was a vigil held which the cops infiltrated and overthrew.

Judy Millar

SC...Are you driven by a feminist politic in your practice, implicit or explicit?

JM...To say I am 'driven' by a feminist politic or feminist politics wouldn't be correct, but you can't be working as a painter and be a woman and not be aware of the complexities of gender politics of the medium you're working in. In Western art history, we've been taught until very recently, that the history of painting was a male history.

As a student in the 1980s, if you decided to paint as a woman, it was extremely difficult for you. There was the assumption that the media of film or photography, being newer, were freer of the weight of male dominant history and therefore more appropriate means of expression for women. This always seemed like a weak argument to me, (even though I think there was remarkable work made by women in the 1970s and 80s within performance and film).

I grew up in a household with three sisters and a mother who called the shots. It never occurred to me that a female voice was less, or that females couldn't achieve anything they applied themselves to. There were significant women painters that I could look to, Dorothea Rockburne, Susan Rothenberg, and Georgia O'keefe all-important figures for me, but generally I was confronted by a field dominated by male practitioners.

In the late 1980s I returned to university to study feminist theory. I wanted to understand more about the perspectives of women working in other fields who were taking on the patriarchal system.

Getting involved in that women's studies course opened my eyes to many things. It allowed me to see, when I rubbed out a failed work with a cloth soaked in turpentine, that obliteration, wiping away, removing the image, could be a strategy of defiance against the brush, and a way to literally clean my way into a history that I was supposedly excluded from.

From then on processes of removal and cleaning became central to my practice.

SC...I have been pulling various artists' ideas of feminism and feminine apart for my thesis, do you think feminism is a driver for your work?

JM...I guess I've covered this in the answer above. But for sure it's interesting to question the relationship between feminism and the feminine. Battles have been fought (and are still fought) over whether the feminine is a social construct to be opposed or a biological tendency to be celebrated. It always seemed incredibly reductive to me to align the feminine with women, I see femininity as a human aspect that can be seen in both males and females. I completely rebelled against a feminism that wanted to celebrate women as wombs, vulvas, and caregivers.

If feminism is a desire for everyone to be seen as a whole person, rather than a feminine person, then yes that is a driver for my work.

SC...Is feminism difficult to address in a painting project or your painting project?

JM...Fran Leibowitz was once asked if a female voice was different from a male voice in literature. She brilliantly replied that a female voice was different from a male voice *on the telephone*. As a female painter you will address feminism whether you want to or not. What are you painting? How are you going about painting it? What colours are you choosing? How big is the work? How is the paint applied? How thick is the paint? What concepts do you bring to the work? Do you avoid concepts in the work? All of these things, and many more, will give endless information as to how you live as a female in our society, and that is the basis of feminism. Every choice you make places you within a relationship to dominant societal codes. You don't have to be making didactic work or be presenting slogans to be communicating and therefore exposing how it is to be a female in our social set-up.

In all kinds of ways, the very act of making a painting as a female is a political act that upsets the imbalance of art history.

SC...If you are engaging with the feminine can you explain how that would be?

JM...I've always been very careful about the word feminine because it's so relative. Feminine as opposed to what? For me the feminine/masculine divide was never clear-cut. As a child I was constantly asked whether I was a boy or a girl and the only answer I could find was yes. I'm tall, physically strong, never played with dolls, like intellectual pursuits; so where do I fit?

In many ways I regard *all* painting as falling on the more feminine side of the gender divide because it involves sensitivity, beauty, being vulnerable, being openly emotional; perhaps this is why much painting is talked about in macho terms, as a cover for what's really going on.

I was once told by a male colleague, in a disgusted tone, that I paint like a man. As if I was exposing, in a back to front way, the femininity of male painting. It's very clear that the feminine does not belong to the female and nor does the masculine to the male. For me Pollock is a weaver of space, not at all the macho figure we've been asked to believe in.

SC...Sexuality, the body and performance are involved in a painting I am currently working on. Do you identify sexuality with your painting making? Can you describe how that may manifest?

JM...Sexuality and the erotic might not be the same thing but since the erotic always involves the emotions it interests me more. All art is for me based in the erotic. It is an energy flow between individuals. A person-to-person transmission through the sensual that goes from body to body directly. To say you are touched by a work is to acknowledge that works are about our emotional connection through various forms of the erotic. Beauty, aggression, suggestion, anger, fear, desire, love, pleasure, repulsion., fluidity, wetness. When good, painting is sexy. The sexuality can't just be as a subject of the work it must be embodied in the erotic of the painting process itself. To paint is a sexy business.

Rachel Shearer

SC...You are a woman, do you think this is obvious from your work? Do you care about that?

RS...I am not sure I can separate how I approach my work and my gender, like a fish that doesn't know it's in water. I am not worried if people think that my work expresses something fundamentally feminine. There are generally fundamental themes associated with the feminine I engage with such as listening/earth/communicating certain feelings but at the same time I think it's implicit rather than explicit. I don't care if others think there is the feminine apparent in what I do, but then I can think of some men practitioners who might work in a similar way/with similar themes.

SC...Could you say you were/are a feminist? Does that matter to you?

RS...I was and am a feminist. There was a period in my younger years fifteen to twenty-five the term that contributed to my identity/sense of self. And then I stopped thinking about it as defining me. I remember feeling awkward with the term around 2010 so I leant into it and interrogated my relationship with the term. As a result of that I decided that I am happy to say yes to the question 'are you a feminist'. As part of that, I've become more aware of the nuances of language and politics around feminism and its role within an intersection of oppressions – racism, ableism, classism etc. So, these days I would clarify that I am an intersectional feminist. It does matter to me that female/male gender equity is still an issue and it's important to clarify where I stand on the issue – especially to be a role model for my children.

SC...If yes what does this mean to/within your art practice? Is this something happening that is obvious and perhaps practical and or both... that a concept of feminism is implied?

RS...In terms of my creative practice, I am more focused on intersectionality rather than just feminism and tend to look at the more than human – ecological, colonial issues, the feminine in relationship to everything else as part of a whole. I am interested in a 'quiet politic', presence rather than statement, underpinning the work.

SC...Do you feel like you would prefer to swap in the word feminine and remove the word feminist?

RS...I guess you could say that there is an awareness of the feminine principle rather than overtly feminist messaging in what I do. However, working with feminine principles could be described as a feminist action so each word has its relevant context.

SC...Do you feel a greater affinity to the concept of the feminine? How so if so?

RS...Yes, especially in terms of ecological awareness in my work, the earth as a feminine entity (across diff cultures) though again I don't state that explicitly in my work. When pressed to define though, I feel it is just language and I can articulate my relationship to both of those words to contextualise their relationship to me.

SC...Would your approach be like an embodiment? How?

RS...I'm soft with boobs and vagina. Being nice, kind, nurturing, empathetic has been baked into my psyche. I am that for real but not always. I try to teach my son to be those things too. I am also good at tech (masculine!) or traits that are neither gender – sometimes industrious, sometimes lazy. As I age, I try to be as honest as possible and express that through my work as best I can. I think being female has had a profound effect in how I have evolved and what I do and how I think so yes, I embody the feminine and that affects my creative expressions.

SC...Do you think there is a difference in your work between a feminine and a masculine approach? If yes, is it possible to identify this?

RS...Mostly when I think of the difference of approach, I think of the men who haven't been hobbled by confidence issues, women are so often growing into their confidence when they get older (generalization).

SC...The Feminine is regarded as non - gender specific, what does this idea do to the meaning of the feminine?

RS...It points to a much deeper understanding of the feminine beyond societal/cultural practices and also contemporary understandings/acceptance of the gender crossovers that many people experience.

SC...Would you say Feminism has a gender?

RS...Men can be feminists too, but women are more likely to understand its manifestations on a lived level. However plenty of men have experienced negative patriarchal judgments or oppression and so can probably relate to women. This is back to the intersectionality distinction. Things are more complex than purely male-female dynamics.

SC...Do you or have you ever felt there was urgency in your music? Can you explain what this may be if yes or no?

RS...In terms of content, there can be urgent in the sense of requiring immediate attention – but that doesn't necessarily mean something that is aurally/visually aggressive. I'm thinking of a current install I'm working on involving a disappearing glacier. Climate change action is urgent, but the sound component isn't saying urgent, urgent, urgent – rather, this is the sound of the glacier crumbling and collapsing, so what do you think? I make sequences that are intense – is this urgency?

What I love about making music is the timeless space I enter when it's all going well. I look for timeless zones to inhabit.

SC... Has your work been affected by feminist or feminine issues?

RS...I think it's taken years to build up confidence in myself and self-expression and it's probably limited what I've made and how much work I've done in the past due to fear of showing who I really was. I believe this is based in feminist issues of how I perceived myself in a world.

SC...There's a potential difference between the feminine and the feminist do you have anything you would like to say about that?

RS...I would think of those terms quite differently. I think of the feminine as something or an action that features qualities associated with female appearance/behaviour/traditions (which could include feminist traditions). I think of feminist as being more about a recognition and opposition to the social/political/physical oppression of females.

SC...Do you feel as though you may appropriate a patriarchal story or not or if that would be something that would concern you?

RS...I would be fine appropriating a patriarchal story for my own storytelling purposes. I would be sensitive to what the story was saying in terms of gender/race dynamics and seek to subvert or highlight for my own storytelling purposes.

SC...Is the patriarchy the default? Would / do you work differently to this or combat it, if so?

RS...Yes, it is but there are pockets that aren't. I think it's good to grow/contribute to the non-patriarchal pockets where it feels right and be present in the patriarchy when needed to potentially subvert it by being present and authentic. As long as I've got the energy for that, when I don't I withdraw.

SC...Do you think there is a feminine sensibility in sound? What is it?

RS...On a deepest level I'm not convinced there is – aggression, tenderness, softness in all of us and should be available for all of us to express when and where we want. However, I think there is in terms of how people are influenced through media/social messages growing up, which becomes hard to untangle or even become aware of how you have been 'programmed'. For every field of sound that could be described as feminine (eg: ambient drone or riot girl punk) there is a male equivalent.

SC...Do you think the work you are doing is feminist or is it distinctly feminine?

RS...In terms of who I am, it is inevitably inherent to what I do, and I can't see the forest for the trees. My current work is more about considering the wider network/interconnectedness of all matter - humans/material/systems – which when viewed ethically, is the antithesis of the patriarchy. Perhaps it comes from my feminine/feminist world view but looks to recognise the interconnection of the masculine and the feminine.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung

Molly has answered some of the questions in an all-in-one paragraph.

SC...what led into the scene of Riot Grrrl.?

MZH... The lead-in to the Riot Grrrl scene in Olympia was before my time. I think I am a bit younger than you. The late 1980s in Olympia were told to me only in rumors, hearsay. I think Bridget Irish, Calvin Johnson, Slim Moon, Lois Maffeo, Diana Arens were all there. There was a club called Reko Muse, which sounded incredible. All very new wave, avant garde feeling, especially for a small remote logging town. There were a few bands, like the Wipers in Tacoma, which I heard about later. I think it was very guy dominated, but the people I have mentioned, and the club, Reko Muse, was more androgynous, new wave influenced. The Wipers were hardcore, and the lead singer was gay. That music was incredible, like Rites of Spring, rich, thick sound, full of longing and loneliness. Obviously it was also really rough, full of drunk dudes at shows, moshing, puking, drinking beer, sweating. The bar music scene in Olympia was always rough and dirty and male centered. Took a lot for the Grrrls to push back. Most shows took place in Bars or in all ages clubs in alleys, standing around in the dark smoking cigarettes.

SC...What did you do, in a practical sense, like on the ground?

MZH...I went to only two or three Riot Grrrl meetings. I remember driving back downtown from The Evergreen State College, where meetings were held, sitting on Becca Albee's lap. Becca was really sweet to me. I wrote spoken word and performed it at a few shows, backstage at The Capitol Theatre. I was one of the primary organisers of the first Ladyfest - 2000. (But of course that is much later. My first meeting was in 1992. I organised and edited and designed the program for Ladyfest 2000. Mostly I was working in used bookstores, reading and writing and hanging out throughout the nineties. I was an unofficial "intellectual" of the scene, for better and worse. I stimulated thought, asked questions, and recommended books. I gave Nomy Lamm the book *Shadow on a Tightrope*, which hurt her feelings and then she started the Fat Revolution, partly because of it.

SC...what did it mean for you...philosophically and practically?

MZH...the question what did it mean to me is just too big. It was my world. I didn't know anything else, really. I went to my first meeting at age seventeen. The question we all answered was "when do you feel your gender as female?" We went around the circle and described shame, sexual harassment, all the ways we internalise how we are treated as women in this society. It wasn't like yay, it was survival. There has been so much made of the whiteness of Riot Grrrl, and also of the gender closure of "female" in feminist movements, but my experience was, yes it was mostly white, definitely, but progressive whiteness. We all read Cherrie Moraga, bell hooks, Angela Davis. We were trying to deconstruct our white privilege. As for the gender thing, feminist community in Olympia was filled with people changing their genders, becoming trans, changing their names. People moved to Olympia from all over the US in order to become themselves. It was a place of deep self-actualization. The feminist community of Riot Grrrl organically evolved into the queer community, fat-politics community, trans community. By the time we named Ladyfest, it was so clear to us that gender was performative, that we could give it this name as a badge of identification. Anyone who wanted to participate in it, passing from lady or towards lady, who wished to identify as lady, was welcome to participate, to play, perform, show art, or organise. The "sound guy" was a trans person from LA. It meant all this to me — this ability to think critically about who we were, to make culture happen for ourselves, to communicate globally with other like-minded people and to make our own fucking world.

SC...would you have called yourself a feminist at that time?

MZH...had always and continues to consider myself a feminist. In middle school I wanted to be on the football team and the coach wouldn't let me — something about locker rooms. Feminism is not a dirty word for me.

SC...were you painting at the time?

MZH...I started painting in 1998, the year I graduated from college at Evergreen.

SC...where did Riot Grrrl lead you?

MZH...Here I am :)

SC...do you continue to call yourself a feminist? Can you explain?

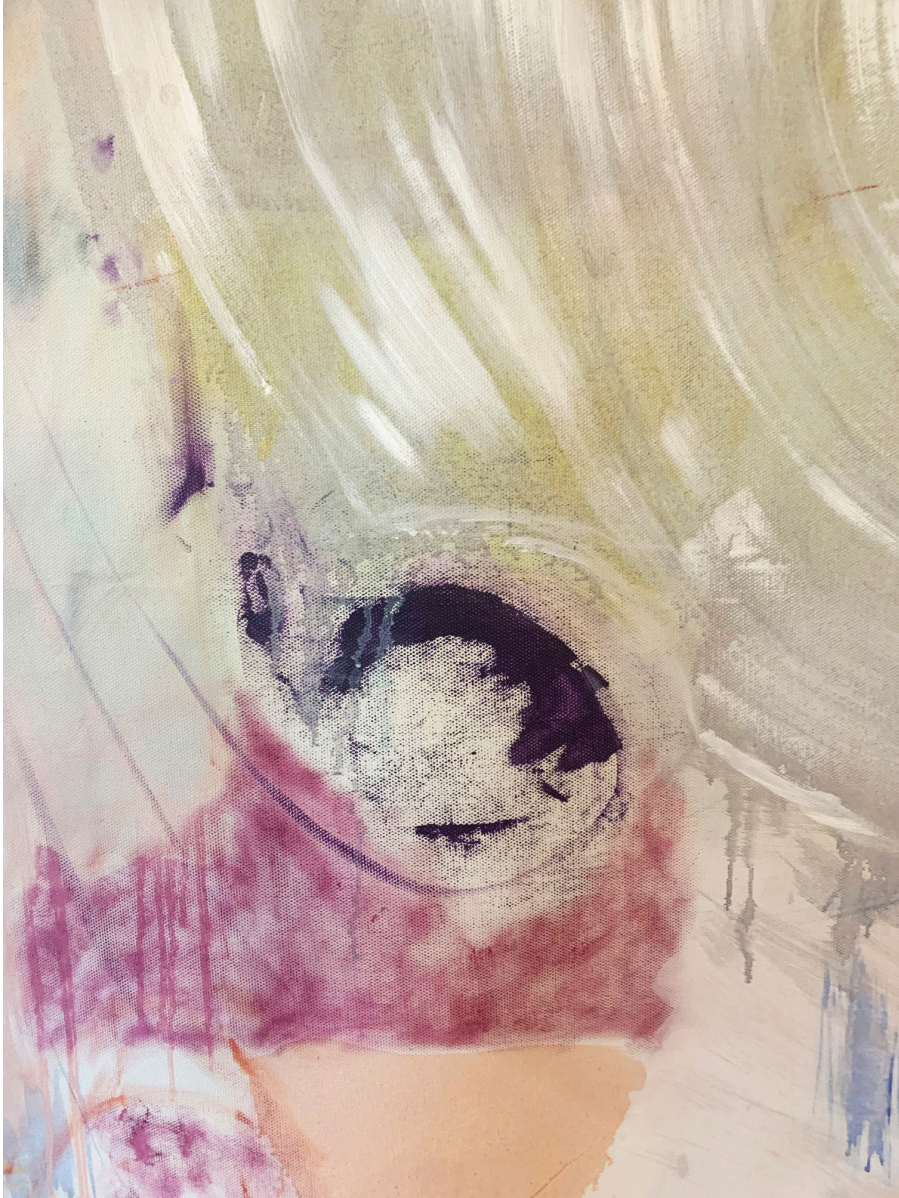
MZH...I do continue to call myself a feminist ? Despite constant backlash especially amongst younger people whose whole lives depend on the struggles fought. It is a historical category. I absolutely get how "white feminism" has been blind and oppressive toward women of color sometimes. And that is tragic, and I regret that and do not want to uphold that legacy as positive. On the other hand, Bell Hooks has written, and this checks out with my own experience, that the feminist classroom was the only place where she felt able to explore her experience, to synthesise, to challenge patriarchal structures, to challenge pedagogical conventions. The only place where she felt empowered. It wasn't perfect, but it was a hell of a lot better than the white male dominated classroom. I think we can grow and progress with a loving critique which upholds the ground we have won. At this point we in the US are living in a catastrophic backlash where women hate themselves and vote against their own bodies and interests. And there are new politics which make it impossible to even address this.

IMAGE GALLERY

Painting Towards a New Faminine Noise Examination Images



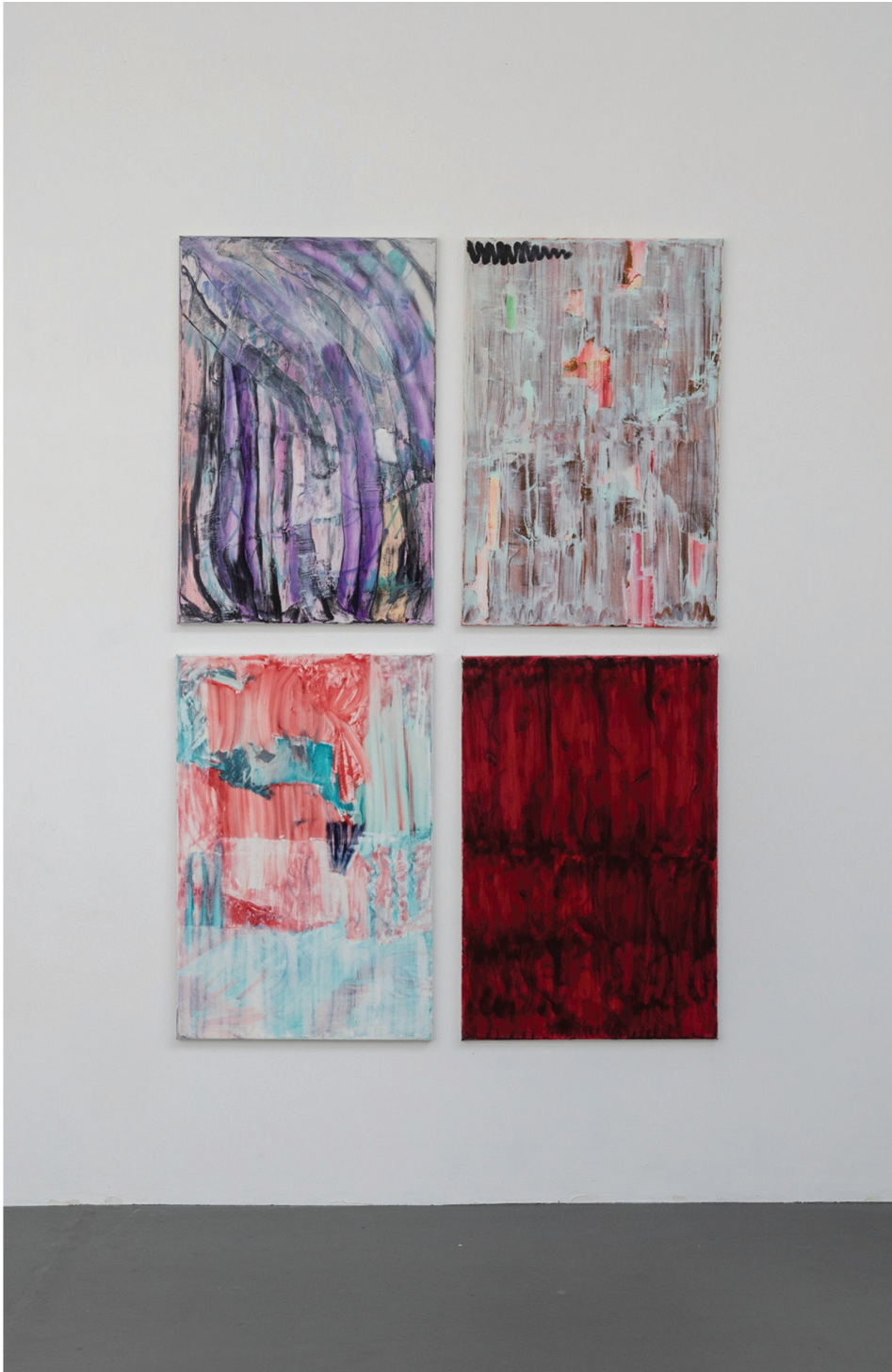
Drummer Leg 2023 Oil on canvas, 2180 x 5440mm, Engine Room



Drummer Leg 2023 (detail) Oil on canvas



Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise Installation view, Engine Room 2024



Atmosphere/s (series) Installation view Engine Room 2024



Painting Towards a New Feminine Noise (I Hear You and Painted 10") Installation view, Engine Room 2024



Painted 10" record Oil paint, shellac record, reclaimed window frame Engine Room 2024