

# ARTICULATIONS OF INTANGIBLE THINGS

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## ABSTRACT

The essence of my project has been to give a visual form to things that are intangible, such as time, memory, emotion and transience through drawing, photography and printmaking techniques all the while working with environmental factors such as sunlight, tactile materials and my hands as the main elements of manufacture. Through this, I have looked into the idea of a 'void', as something that is rooted in personal interpretation, and giving this both a physical manifestation through photography representing an element of reality, and also an artistic interpretation with inks and paper that also confronts the viewer of the work. I have worked with a large emphasis on environmental elements such as sunlight, stormy weather and its effects on both a personal and visual level. This has influenced most pieces of work I have made this year, and working with tactile materials such as charcoal, which can be affected by touch as it transfers, is something I was interested in experimenting with. I have also worked with the idea of time and how to document it through drawing. It is something I found to be extremely personal, as tracking finite time is different to documenting personal time - for example, taking a pulse on the wrist and making a mark to each heartbeat produces different results to making a mark to a clock ticking, although it is a similar reminder of mortality and transience. Therefore, through these thought and artistic processes, I was able to realise my intention.

## ARTICULATIONS OF INTANGIBLE THINGS

### INTRODUCTION

The intention of my Master project has been to realise the relation between a human being and time. Through this, I wish to explore the way in which a human body influences its surroundings, and in turn, is influenced by its surroundings. When stripping back intense emotion such as love or anger, joy or pain, and feeling what we do on an every day basis is difficult to realise, as such a thing is intensely personal and different depending on the individual, however, if we can step back from this, and only acknowledge how the present moment feels, we have an understanding of how each moment builds up, and how we can have an overview of time spent as a being whose intricacies are inexplicably linked to the external, and can build up a personal interpretation of time based art over minutes, days and months.

Perhaps, the most intrinsic part of my research has involved the idea of visual tactility. Tactility, by my definition, being the feeling or something either emotive or physical. A tactile emotion being one what we all know, and can empathise with, a physical tactility being something that can be touched, sensed or felt by the hands or by the body. As time is something that cannot be seen and only felt, it is an objective of mine to make my work as physically real as possible, and so create works

that have a texture, to further emphasise this. As the work I have made consists of unrestricted expressions and attention to the workings of the mind and the movement of the body, the idea of giving something that is not a physical manifestation and cannot be seen is both vital and evocative. My intention in entering the Master year was to create a visual personification of a "void" and be able to fill it somehow. In creating works that are visualisations of internal workings, it is important to bring something that cannot be seen, into a context where it can be seen, and also interact with environmental factors that everyone knows and recognises that give it more of a physical reality. For me, this is light. Natural light, rather than artificial, as I feel that to bring together a living thing, with a natural occurrence relates in a more profound way, and so produces more interesting and more relevant conclusions.

Throughout this year, I have had a shift that changed my original intentions from what I thought they should become, to what organically came into being. Rather than filling a void which I felt must exist in some form if I searched hard enough for a way to find and express it, I found that looking back over my research and final works, my point of view changed from filling a void, to finding little personifications of nuances we all possess, like windows or "voids" that I was able to look into and experience as my project progressed. My question in the beginning was; "How is it possible to make a "void" a visual and tactile reality for others to see and experience?" but now I see that it is, and should have been from the beginning; "Articulations of intangible things." Or, "How can we give a visual form to things that cannot be seen, but only felt and experienced, that are part of existing as a transient being?"

## VOID

Personification physical/visual

The idea of a "void" has interested too many different people to make note of. Artists, philosophers, academics, scientists can all be mentioned here. What exactly is a void, and how can it be accurately represented in a way that can be seen, read or heard. How can it be properly interpreted, and does everyone react the same to a personification of a void? I feel that, no, it is a personal interpretation and strikes chords differently with individual people depending on what they have experienced in their lives, and what they perceive to be a worthy articulation of such a thing. In my opinion, a void can be both a physical and visual thing. It can also be felt. To me now, the most accurate example of a void would be the ocean. For those reading this who have never lived near-by the sea, or have never visited the seaside in stormy weather, I ask you to remain open-minded, as my interpretation will undoubtedly differ to what constitutes a void in your eyes.

I would also like to note that I am not alone in thinking that the ocean is significant in its vastness. I want to discuss two photographers visualisations of the sea as a void after my own, and then give my opinion, as I have only come across these artists in the past month or two, but I had wanted to discuss this idea of the sea as a void for some

time before I was aware of them. Their works justify my thoughts, and I am right in saying that it is something that is deeply rooted in not just memory, but also physicality. It doesn't matter the person, their achievements, wealth or what country they were born, it resounds the same regardless of anything that sets us apart.

Growing up next to the sea was an intrinsic part of my childhood and after. It is something I have wondered about since I was able to speak. I find it even more difficult to articulate such a thing to those who haven't experienced it themselves. And to me, it is different to any beach in and around Belgium as the United Kingdom are separated from the rest of Europe by an expanse of water. The beaches of Scotland are lonely places, with nobody else on them in the middle of winter. To be alone here, on the edge of the sea, is to be truly apart from everyone else. The expanse is crushing, and the wind and the cold eradicate the land of life. The waves are mutinous, and sometimes there is no horizon line. The sea and the sky become fused in a grey mist and all that you can see may be only three meters in front of you, or three hundred. Its impossible to tell, and impossible to know, and such a thing is an experience to undertake. Such a thing is to really be in the hands of nature, as there is nothing you can possibly do to try and oppose it.

The town that I am from in Scotland is a medieval place. It consists of many longstanding buildings and ruins that can be admired while walking along the cliff face above the beach. The furthest point that the town possesses expands away from the land, and is northeast facing. There is an ancient pier there. It has carried many feet and braced many storms. It advances into the North Sea. There is a little tower at the end of it that fishermen can sit on to cast a line into the sea on a calm afternoon. If you were to sail directly onwards there is nothing but an expanse of sky and water until you reach Denmark. One day last summer I took my camera and shot some photographs of a coming storm (see fig. 1., 2.). When there is a shift in the weather in Scotland, we experience something called "harr" [haar], it is a thick mist that sweeps in from the sea and chills you deeper than your skin. There is something similar to this in Belgium, I am told though I haven't experienced it yet, however, the name in Flemish is 'zeevlam'. When it occurs in Scotland is most evocative, and if you are standing in front of rolling harr, fighting the wind and on the edge of being engulfed,



Fig. 1. *Seascape*, (2014)

Fig. 2. *Seascape II*, (2014)



Fig. 3. *Ohne Titel*, (1987)



Fig. 4. *Carribbean Sea, Jamaica*, (1980)

it is a phenomenon that erases you temporarily from the earth. It is a true void. It is consuming and strangely constricting, even though you are standing in the open air, the wind itself tries to push you in its own direction, while you are on the edge of the furthest point that land and sea can collide. And you can feel it creep in as deep as your skin, as deep as your bones.

The photographer Detlef Orlopp takes photographs of natural phenomena, the sea, rock formations, natural but unusual landscapes. His work on seascapes is difficult to define, as the different pieces don't have an obvious link to each other, other than perhaps an observation at their natural structure or movement. It seems clearer on second observation, however, that his works are about a kind of natural rhythm. Maybe organic, static and/or physical. However within the rhythm, there is a lacking of anything relating to humanity. The photographs he has are devoid of the presence of people, of objects made by people, and without any suggestion of their relevance to his work. His photographs of the sea are pure graphic art. They are all about the contrast both subtle and harsh between the development of the photograph and the mood of the sea. They focus on a particular area of water that has ripples or waves but not yet formed, as they would appear on the shoreline (see fig. 3.). They are different to each other, and are presented in a series, so it is like reading music off paper as the series progresses in a linear format. I feel a particular pull to these works, they are simple in subject matter, but they bring attention to the associated feeling for me that the sea conjures. And these are photographs of particular bodies of water that I have never experienced, nor seen in real life. It doesn't matter, and that isn't the point. It's relatable for all those who are familiar with the sense that the sea is both an area we as people cannot inhabit and cannot survive in such a force on our own without help. It is a literal, natural void. It reminds us that what we see on the surface has no value of the depth and the pull from beneath the surface.

Another photographer similar to Orlopp, Hiroshi Sugimoto, captures his personification of a void through his collection of seascape photographs. They are images of different oceans around the world where the viewpoint is elevated so all can be seen in the image is the water with no shoreline and sometimes the horizon in the distance (see fig. 4.). The expanse of water and air is empty of anything else, it is purely

an infinite vastness of nothing. This particular notion, as with Orlopp's work, struck a cord with me, as I can be, and have been, fully immersed by the vastness of the sea for as long as I can remember.

The artist and philosopher Lee Ufan, one of the forerunners in the Mono-ha movement of the 1960s is one who rather identifies with the idea of 'artistic voids'. He often opposes natural substances (most commonly he uses a large piece of stone) to a man-made product, for example, a piece of glass vs. a stone. The idea for him is "material objectivism". His voids are created from the contrast and non-kinetic opposition between the two materials. The void he creates manifests between the two objects as they resist each other. It is a non-physical void that is given a form of low-key encounter. It is a type of void that couldn't be more different to that of the encounters with the ocean. The ocean is, for human beings, an infinite thing. It is constant and will always be. There would be no life without water, and will so remain until a time that humanity may not live to see. However, infinity has a hard meaning to grasp, it is, in reality too great a concept to rightfully conceive of. Ufan explains the difference in interpretation between the English definition of the word, and the Japanese;

"In Japanese culture, "everything is transient." Made from soil and wood, everything will break down. You see infinity as the existence of things going on forever, but we see infinity as things slowly disappearing." (Ufan, 2011)

This notion of diminishing things is something that is an interesting idea in relation to artistic voids. The work will not remain forever. It will diminish. It will age. But with this idea, and with Ufan's art working in opposition to each other, does a void ever tire? Does it ever lose momentum or static force? In creating works about artistic voids, how can we define something so monumental, that it plays with the intricacies of the way life is possible on this planet? I feel it is impossible to "define" a kinetic or non-kinetic force without delving into science, which I am wary to do. One artist who has done this very effectively in my opinion, however, is Alicja Kwade, who combines art and scientific explorations into string theory and parallel universes and as such calls into question the reality of life itself and how what we experience may be reflected identically somewhere else in time and space. I am particularly interested in her work "Der Tag ohne Gestern" (2009) (see fig. 5.) in which she made audio voids in which you can hear electrical light

by attaching a microphone to a strip light on the ceiling and using large metal sheets bent to bounce the sound off each other and encapsulate the visitor in static sound while they walk through the exhibition.

With that said, however, for my own creative work, I prefer to work with people, and the confrontation be between them and themselves, rather than what Kwade does with her sound confrontations, however much I enjoy her work. When creating such a thing as a personification of a void, it seems intrinsic to me that there must be something that has a pull to it, something that is either able to be seen or sensed. It must have depth, and it must have a quality to it that is not just visually pleasing. These works in Indian ink are significant for me, as something that appears to be stretched or strained. They are deep visually, but still have pieces of the paper texture visible. It is the depth of the ink that gives physicality to the work. The layer upon layer of brushstrokes contain traces of moments passed but have white spaces of blank paper where nothing collided and changed in that moment. It is time spent and time spared. It is both black space and white space. Positive and negative. They balance each other. They hold each other upright. There are two paintings that go together, either side by side (see fig. 6.), or head to head (see fig. 7.). They can oppose each other or complete each other, like magnetic poles. While watching people view this piece at my GYM Exhibition, it was interesting to see that the paintings drew the viewer in close, and pushed them back. So the viewer wanted to first see the work up close, and from a step or two's distance, as though trying to see how it best made sense to them. This was an interesting thing to watch, as the viewer and the work had a moment where they confronted each other, and so my intention behind the piece was realised.



Fig. 5. *Der Tag ohne Gestern (Dimension 1-11) n°2*, (2009)

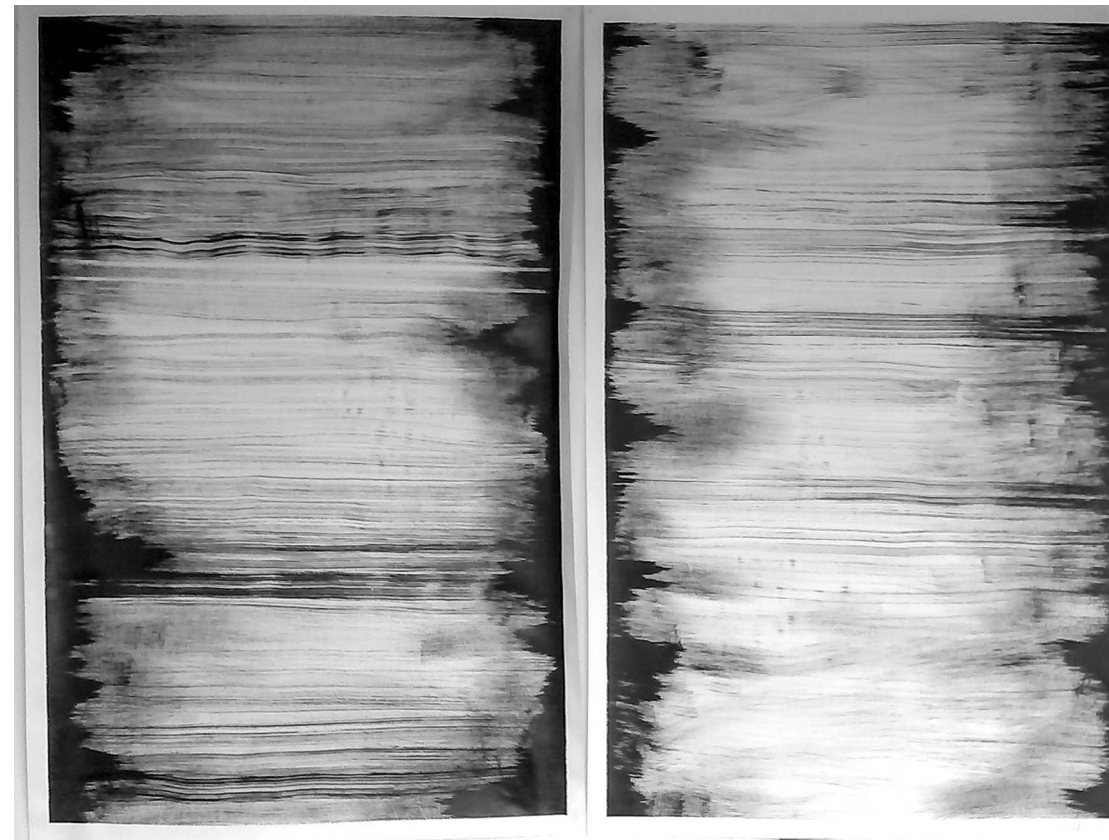
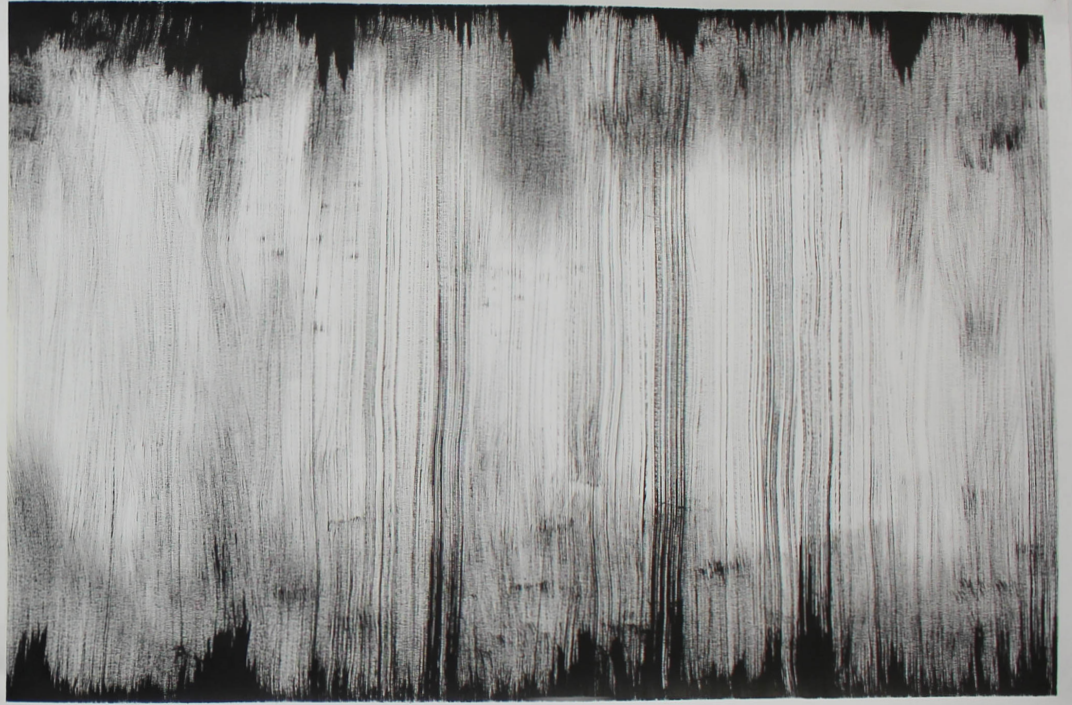
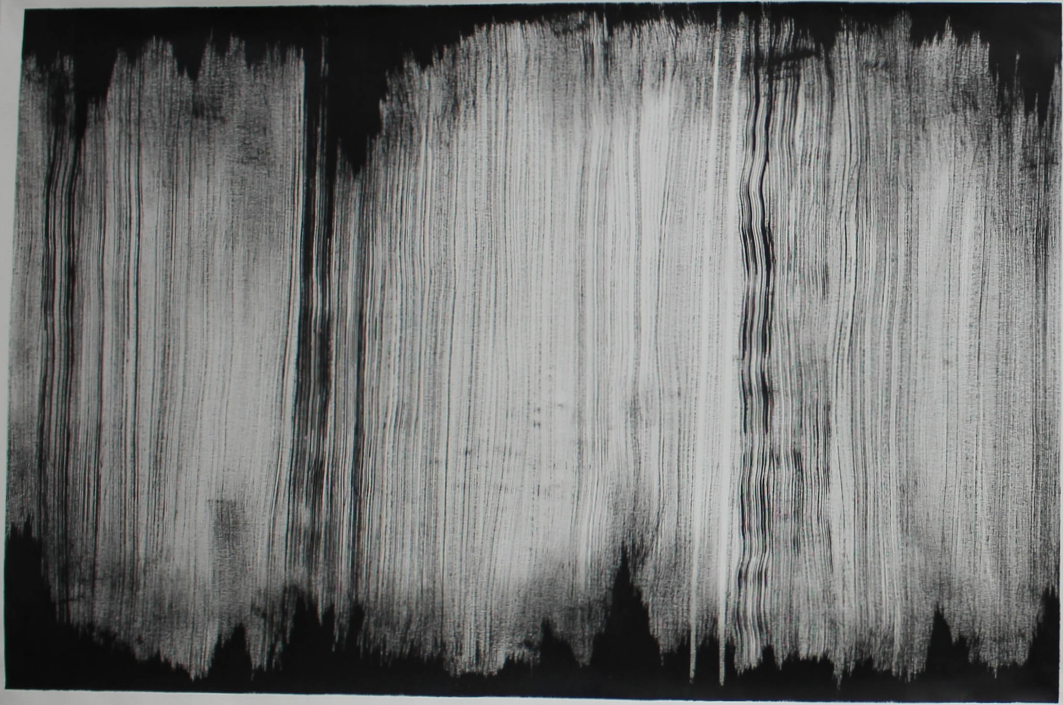


Fig. 6. *Deep (complete)*, 2015

Fig. 7. *Deep (opposed)*, 2015 (next page)





## EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Light and movement and therefore time are factors that play a significant part in my work. The wellbeing of the artist comes into play here, among other contributing factors. For example, allowing the hand to glide uncontrolled across the paper, to make a line that is jilted, not fluid, or maybe an impulsive motion used for the creation of something more dramatic from the shake of a hand to the full fluid motion of the body. Light can also be utilised to create tone and other aspects in my more dimensional works. It is a variable that changes depending on the time of day, the sky being overcast or clear, natural vs. artificial light, and even on the height of the viewer perceiving the work as well as the place of presentation itself. This organically juxtaposes my work. This particular constituent can change the chiaroscuro of the work, and therefore, the perception of the work itself.

For example: on the 26th of February 2015, my work (see fig. 8.) was on the wall facing North, West in the GYM Exo at coordinates 50°56'16.3"N 05°20'53.9"E. The sun was in the sky from 7.56am until 17.58pm, a total of 10 hours 02 minutes. At any point during the daylight hours, the image would have looked slightly different depending on the brightness of the sun, its position in the sky, and the person

at that specific time. This collection of work I have made is called the "Latitude and Longitude series", so called, that when they are placed on a different wall their coordinates change, and so the way they will be effected by the sun will also change (see fig. 9.). The work is altered slightly by its particular location, and so the shadows cast on the work are diversifying the image, changing its visual texture, meaning that the exact coordinates for this piece as it was on the wall in the Gym, are individual. As the light will only affect the work as it did that day, for that specific amount of time, for that specific intensity, it is never going to be viewed in that manner again. It can be viewed in a photograph as it was at that moment in time, as it was perceived in that exhibition, but it will look different in reality as the months roll on, and by the time it is viewed in May or June, it will appear differently, as I will. The image itself is an impression of mind space – my personal mind space. As I am transient, ever changing, ever developing, I will never be the same person as I was when I took the photograph of this work in February. I will have aged, developed, changed but imperceptibly to those around me. In these physical works, they do change, but very subtly, they can be touched, they have a texture, unlike what they represent which cannot be accessed literally from inside my mind. They are dimensional, the same as I am a dimensional being. They in this way, are also transient. And so, they will age as time passes, as everyone does. They can be moved around and viewed in different ways, but they will never be exactly the same twice.

While classical landscape painters may have been told to paint strictly at noon, facing north to get the best shadows and colours to capture the scene with appropriate gusto, I find it interesting the idea of light being used to change a particular piece of work. Light has always fascinated me, and in photography, my favours in the perception of light changed from harsh contrasted images, to subtle understated images. What connects them both is their atmosphere. Chiaroscuro, mise-en-scène, these are the "technical" words to describe what I was interested in capturing and questioning in a photograph before I even realised what I was attracted to in photography at age sixteen. It is through this that I became interested in the darkroom process.



Fig. 8. *Latitude and Longitude 50°56'16.3"N 05°20'53.9"E, (2015)*

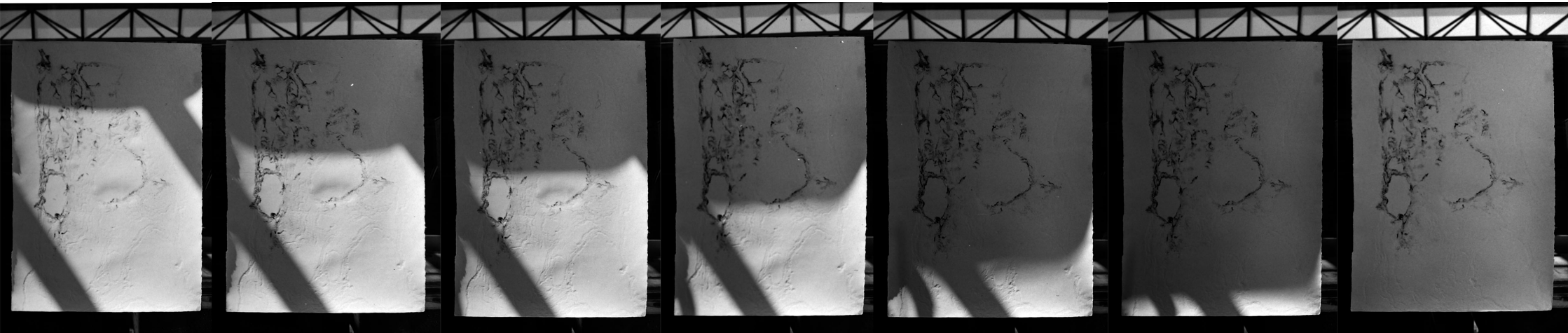


Fig. 9. *Latitude and Longitude (Sun cycle), (2015)*

There is something about the experience of the darkroom which is a little sinister, or macabre. Though photography is most commonly now instant and digital, it remains to be a frozen moment in time and a manifestation of pixels in digital photographs. However, in analogue photography, perhaps still a frozen moment but with a time based result. How long a photograph can be exposed for is dependent on the developer, and the image wanting to be created. The darkroom is like a cave in which a tiny amount of red light makes the developers reactions change and adapt to the dark. The time and process are ritualistic, and the gentle trickle of developing liquids and water are all that can be heard from such an experience, apart from that, is silence.

It to me, is a beautiful thing, as analog photography will always have a physical reality, it will always be 'real', even in negative form. It can be reproduced, but it cannot be edited to the same extent as Photoshop is able to remove the mistakes or flaws without any trace. It is arguably, therefore, a more honest representation of its subject. It is possible however, to create illusion through analog photography. Just look at the work of Moholy-Nagy from the Bauhaus era, for example (see fig. 10.). However, these are illusions that to me are far more intriguing than an image that has been Photoshopped, as there is a certain amount of darkroom 'magic' used here. For my own photography, I feel that the use of light and space has been, for me, my own way to produce illusion. It is a representation of a space, but the space cannot be seen. It is a 'non-space'. What constitutes it as a space at all is the way that the light sources interact with the composition. The architecture in which it stands is not important, and so the visual information is focused purely on the light that may not have a visible gravity, but is suspended, or floating, in black space (see fig. 11., 12.). This is something that can be done with digital photography, of course, but I think that this relation of space is a more physical space than a digital program can convey. It has an actual existence.

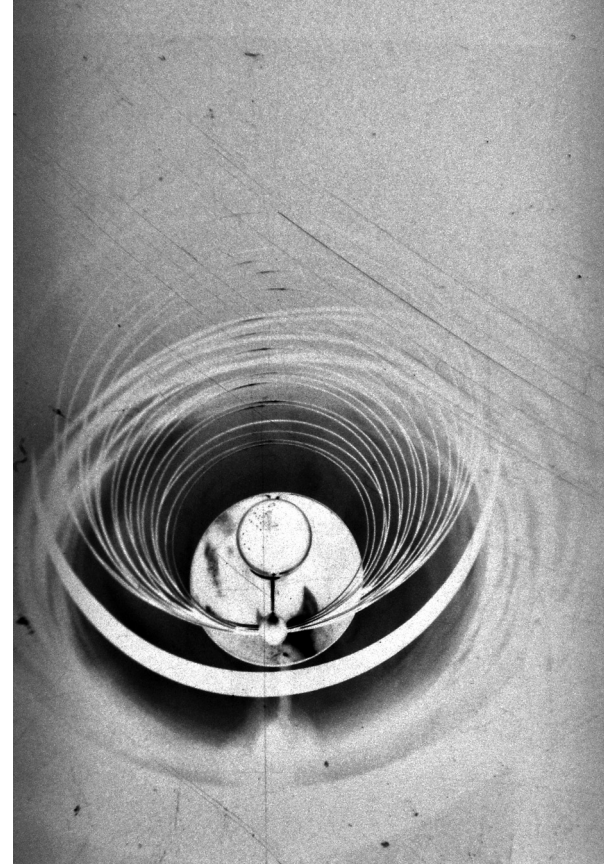


Fig. 11. *Space and Light*,  
(2013)



Fig. 10 *Selbstportrait im Profil*,  
(1926)

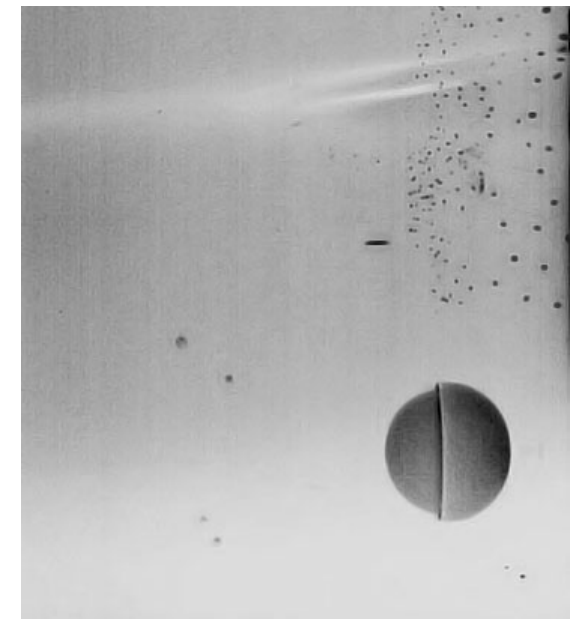


Fig. 12. *Space and Light II*,  
(2013)

whatever I create is going to be flawed and not perfect. But I enjoy that, and it's important to me. By embellishing the flaws, there is something more "human" and less "machine" about works that are created by hand. To me, it's a more honest representation of personal creativity. Perhaps some would argue more naïve, but it's a stronger statement about the works and the creator. The humanitarian touch is something I have embraced whole-heartedly. As my project has developed, it has developed organically, and so a lot of myself is reflected in my works. From my fingerprints in oil paint, to my physical movements required to create the larger works, I am able to be perceived in the work and as part of the work, something that I enjoy seeing in other people's work as well.

## UTILISATION OF THE ARTISTS HAND

### Humanitarian touch

There is such an emphasis on digital processes in art currently, we are in a hi-tech golden period where things are possible through technology that weren't so little as five years ago. For me, as much as I embrace technology and digital processes, there is something about it that isn't completely comfortable. By this I mean that I prefer having a relationship with what I create on a first hand basis. Not to in anyway condemn others who have another opinion on the matter, but for me however, I feel there is something missing between the screen and the person. For example, speaking to somebody over Skype is fine, it simulates the reality, but we have no sense of touch, of real experience or of something solid. It is not the same as when we speak face to face. For me, this analogy is similar in relation to creating digital imagery. Through the use of digital programmes, we seem to have lost a connection with first hand perception and the physicality of reality. Not only the reality of yourself and the people you interact with through such programmes, but also the reality of creativity. There has been something lost while embracing the digital era. We have actually been able to perfect the perception of artwork to the extent that we have lost the artist behind the digital veil. I enjoy working with my hands and being able to see physical results of my labours, therefore

### Nuances that a digital programme cannot achieve

Although through Photoshop and other programmes, it is possible to be a "digital artist". Brush strokes and such can be achieved, but for me, it's an intangible thing that's been created. It exists only in pixels and data, there isn't something physical to the work until it's printed, and even then its lacking in depth and relationship between the surface its printed on and the material used to create it. There is nothing to suggest that the artist collided with the substance and changed it, as its been only ever handled by machines. Due to this, I feel there is a lack of intimacy between the work and the viewer. There is something extremely beautiful and rare in the variable in which ink comes into contact with soft watercolour paper. The way it bleeds, with depth and translucency, the articulation of the artist's hand as the movement is fluid or stilted. The inky deposit that follows from reloading the brush. The trace of thought that passed while creating such a thing. All are nuances that a digital programme cannot achieve, and so, are things that matter a great deal to me, and my work. There is also something to be noted here, that a digital piece has no impression of time. By that, I mean that as physical works are built up and composed, there is a visible timeline which can be interpreted as evolution of the drawing. It is here that an image has physical depth and visible intention, imperfections and deliberation. In a similar work of a digital nature, this cannot be seen immediately. Many of the imperfections are removed without a trace, there is no notion of physical build up

of materials that make up its development. It is therefore, devoid of a timeline of creation in a physical sense until it has been printed. The print only represents the image at completion, giving the impression of a "perfect" version of the work. It lacks the progression, and therefore, in my opinion, lacks the human quality of imperfection. Not in a diminishing way, but in a compassionate sense of esteem for our physical labours and our artistic process.



Fig. 13. *Lines on the wall (detail) I*, (2015)

## RELATION BETWEEN WORK AND FEELING

We as human beings have the dexterity to feel emotionally connected to visual, audio and tactile things. Anthropologically, it depends on the individual being a lateral or logical thinker. Lateral thinkers tend to be impulsive and don't always rely on a pre-conceived knowledge or a formula to reach a conclusion to a problem. Those who are logical prefer to work from facts and a process to accurately problem-solve. Of course, some people may be half and half; others may have some aspects of lateral, but may predominantly be logical and so on.

As I am not an anthropologist or psychologist, I feel that my knowledge of such things are retained through my own interest in the subject, so my opinions and observations are those of an interested party, not in any way one educated in the intricacies of the subject. To my eyes, those who are lateral thinkers tend to be more emotive, where as those who are logical are more rational. As a creative and lateral thinker myself, I am definitely driven by feeling for my work, other peoples work, and all aspects of creativity. By this I mean, that I respond to art or sound instinctually and process it emotively rather than for example someone who is highly logical and critical who can identify and relate exactly what and why they find something appealing. I've always found

this an interesting aspect of myself, but also extremely difficult to accurately articulate.

Some people (both logical and lateral) can stay un-phased by their existing surroundings and create work that differs neither here nor there on their personal mental state at that moment in their lives. I feel conflicted with this, as my internal welfare plays intensely and fervently in the interest and creation of my works. Because of the nature of my work, I feel that the development this year has been extremely important but also interesting to reflect upon. I can see my mood, my confidence differ at the time in question, I can even see how the time of year has affected my mentality. In the middle of winter my work takes on a darker, more brooding depth to it, and coming round to spring, there is an uplifting lightness to what I've produced. Not only does the weather and season reflect in my work, but also even my motivation. There were times when I was creatively stimulated for weeks on end, others when I preferred to read, as the next move for my project was unclear to me. Upon reflection, my project is intrinsically about time. Time as is relative to me, my mind as opposed to relative to a clock, seasonal shifts, sentiment and a tactility to documenting this particular chapter of my life.

This is an interesting topic for discussion, the artist and philosopher Lee Ufan has stated that;

"Time has two faces. The first is time as a finite measurement, as "clock time," very matter-of-fact or physical. The second is time as memory, as human-based experiences. The two do not exist individually, sometimes they go together and sometimes they separate, all the while influencing each other." (Ufan, 2011)

For Ufan, he states that time and memory are both interconnected. He suggests that both "clock time" and time in memory influence each other, meaning that if we had no perception of finite time, time in memory relevant to the human mind would perceive things differently, perhaps in a different order, perhaps with a different feeling, perhaps in a different circumstance. By this, it's open to interpretation that without the existence of a clock, it is possible that what we remember may not be a realism of how the time actually passed. We all find that time seems to move quicker when we are busy, or slower if we are un-stimulated, but if we had no mathematical measurement of time,



would we be as surprised by the rate in which it seems to pass? Ufan continues to states that;

“ ‘Ticking’ time - next and next and next - this is the nature of time. Is it like one continuous line, or does it break up by each tick? The theory of time is a very difficult subject. With memory, we remember things in our brain that we have done before and continue on from there. But this continuity will change as new experiences intermingle with stored memories. I do not know if it continues in purity.” (Ufan, 2011)

The space in memory where we collect past thoughts and feelings is certainly linked to emotion. It is difficult to hold on to a memory of a mundane day, with nothing that made us feel overly happy or sad, with a routine that went uninterrupted. It becomes unimportant and blurry, therefore signifying that such a period is a continuous line of time. However, things we do remember, such as a memory linked to fear, linked to happiness, linked to elation do stick out in memory as “ticks” in time. Perhaps it’s difficult to recall what came before of after that moment, but the moment itself, and the feeling attached to it, is something that will be remembered regardless of the details. To me, this signifies that time in memory runs parallel to finite time. Finite time will always pass, and it is a continuous line from birth to death. Time in memory are periods of thought related to feeling that are split. To me, they have an emotive spark that whether acknowledged or not, is the reason they remain.

To this end, as I was making marks or “ticks” (see fig. 14.) on paper with different factors being my means-to-an-end, I am documenting primarily ordinary moments, those that might not be first and foremost retained. But looking back now, I have many of them, meaning that I have physical articles that trigger memories I may not have retained had I not documented a few weeks in October/November 2014, where I was adjusting to life in a foreign country, where I was trying to improve my understanding of a language, and when I had turned 23. These are not visible parts of my work for an audience to see, but to me, they are valuable for more than just the effect they have on paper. They are moments that can be reviewed and relived again, only for me, but they contain emotive sparks of fleeting moments that are easily otherwise forgotten.

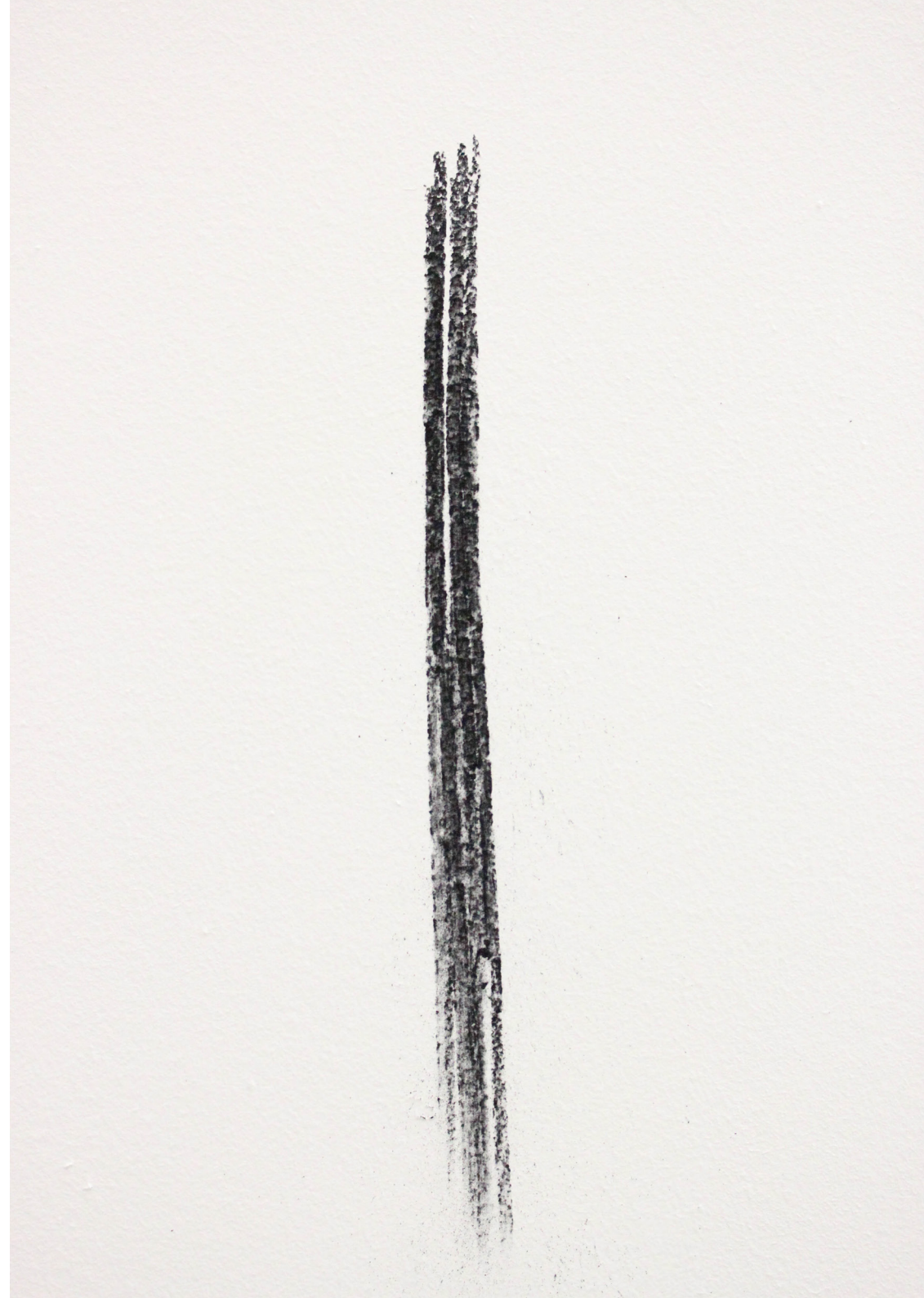


Fig. 14. *Lines on the wall (detail) II*, (2015)

## INSTINCTUAL REACTION TO SHAPE

### Visual tectility

The idea of something being visually tactile is a bit of a juxtapose, as you cant feel something through sight. But it is possible to sense the feel of something before touching it. Or envisage the texture of something that may not be able to be handled. The use of charcoal in my work is important to me, as a form of impermanence, of dust and of time. Charcoal is one of the most diverse materials for me, and its use in my work is primarily for the tactile quality it possesses. The drawings are never set with a spray, as the dust deposits left on anyone who touches it are traces of the work itself. It's a cycle, I put the material on paper, I have the dust on my fingers, and the person who is able to touch the work days, weeks, months later, has the dust left behind on their fingers, and so it is transferred from the paper onto somebody else who carries it with them until its washed away. For my GYM Exo, I created a wall piece which encapsulated this idea. The final result was a 12 metre long wall of charcoal gestures (see fig. 15.). My hands were covered in dust, and there were dust deposits on the floor all along the wall. I took water to half the wall, and washed some marks away. Some gestures were altered by the water, and changed their appearance from a dusty material, into something much more akin to ink. There were some drip marks that ran down the wall. The process

was the most important part. The tactility was evident, someone had placed the marks there and changed them, and the viewers can touch the work for themselves and change it too.

### Instinctual mark-making

Mark-making is one of the most important exercises for someone practicing art, in my opinion. Everyone does it from childhood as it creates a bond between the material and the person, an understanding of intention or spontaneity, a chance to handle the material personally and connect it to the paper and to the imagination. My research period for the master took me all of the first semester. In the creation of several hand-bound books of experiments with materials and shapes, and a box that's filled with individual gestures using mainly charcoal and oil bar, I produced, in my opinion, my most "honest" drawings. They were made without any pre-conceived notions about what they should be, what they should convey, exactly what they would become later on. They are pure expression, and due to this, intrinsically valuable for me to look back on in the second half of my master project. The only thing I had in my head while creating them in the very beginning was to look at the shapes being made, look how the material worked with the paper, and see how they developed on their own. I was tracing around industrial shapes that I had found in the print room atelier and looking at how they moved over paper and documenting their journey. I even tried large scale drawing called "Loose threads" where the paper was attached to the wall like a roll of wallpaper and a simple biro pen documented the fall of gravity with a print roller as it travelled down the wall. I continued drawing until my pen ran out. Around this point in time, my work turned to counting. And it changed the way I was working. Counting paces and making a mark, like when reading music, there is a rest beat. I counted heartbeats and made a mark. I started instinctual motions and made marks where it felt right. I drank coffee and made marks, the caffeine made my hand shake in a different way to my other drawings. Through these, I found a something rhythmic appearing, that very much looked to me like ticks from a clock, or the tapping of fingers on a desk, or the drip of water from a tap.



Fig. 15. *Lines on the wall (detail) III*, (2015)

## SPATIAL AWARENESS VS. LITERAL SPACE

When discussing spatial awareness we must acknowledge the fact that nobody identifies with space in the same way. We must address that there are many people who suffer from conditions like claustrophobia and agoraphobia (the lesser known phobia of wide open or crowded spaces), and some who prefer to live and work in a small space or spread out over a huge area. This is literal space. Literal space is intrinsic when showcasing the work for viewers however, there is also something about spatial awareness when it comes to human to human. Personal space. And some that don't abide by the boundaries preferred by the other. We can also talk about mind spaces, and how sometimes it feels like we have too much in our heads to make room for each individual task or thought. Or our creative brain, when we visualise an idea or have the manifestations of a concept to pursue.

In my work, the space in my mind where I visualise ideas becomes clouded easily, it's not a clear space. I never have just one individual thought that can be acknowledged and dealt with individually; there are always so many fighting for air and justification. From this, was a very good place for me to try listening to something fairly monotonous and continuous, as it disconnected me from my spatial awareness in the atelier so I could concentrate without being distracted. I could let the creative juices flow easily without other interfering factors. They were able to allow me to listen to a part of my mind where I visualise

the atelier so I could concentrate without being distracted. I could let the creative juices flow easily without other interfering factors. They were able to allow me to listen to a part of my mind where I visualise organic thoughts, that are in their purest form.

The works of latitude and longitude are extremely pure examples of what I'm discussing (see fig. 8.). These are the inner workings of my mind, an actual visual representation of what cannot be seen or touched physically by anyone else. They are the shadowy corners of thought memory, the illuminated parts that click when there is a sudden rush of inspiration, veiled and exposed in a texture and are all intertwined like thread. They are also a form of void, however not a void as previously discussed. These are white space. It is clean air, and some mist and shadow. As it is, this is perhaps my most personal work so far, and therefore, my most intimate. However, these works are to be effected by a light source, the sun, and immediately they become something more interesting. They become something else. They are given a life of their own, and they can interact with the viewer who perceives them. They have a personal heart-to-heart with the viewer that is also a purely individual encounter.

The works I have made most recently, the "Aspects of Light" series, are also some that interact with light, or more purposefully, react with the light of the sun. They are pure environmental works. They were created with a slightly transparent, light paper, and hung by the window where the light of the sun gives dimension and depth. They were photographed, developed, transferred to an etching plate and printed. The end result is an image that has been created through sunlight and it's interaction with sunlight. They are a far more literal time-based work. It can take hours or days for the final image to be fully completed. The photographic pieces that can be seen are also what can be called "environmental" works. They are made purely from shadow and light. I find that I dislike the way in which "environmental art" is perceived currently, it has become somewhat of a cliché and so immediately conjures ideas of recycling and working around nature with natural products, all the while casting off and sometimes condemning anything that hints at mass-production or unnatural products. I want to stress that my ecological opinions do not affect my works made this year, however, in this way I feel conflicted, as I enjoy working with natural

products, but it is not my intention to use them for an exclusively “environmentally friendly” approach. I use them because they are tactile, they are of natural existence as we are, and they come from the earth. I want to work with natural phenomena, but not to harness it, nor work around it. I embrace it, and do not interrupt it. I want my works to function in an environment, but do not intersect or oppose it. I would like to make the viewer marvel at the natural phenomena that inspired the works. An environment can be both an external place and an interior. I want to bring a part of the outside, inside. To take something from the external world, to interact with the internal. Both in relation to me, my mind, my works, but also internally into a physical space that can be viewed by others. I want to work with external factors and not oppose them, or change them. As Otto Piene stated; “...to attempt to re-harmonize the relationship between man and nature...not putting the artist into the position of a fugitive from the ‘modern world’ but rather having the artist use the tools of actual technical invention as well as those of nature... [he is able to work with the environment.]” (Piene, 1986)

We should not be afraid to embrace the natural world. In my mind, we should work with what is available to us, and try not to oppose it. The whole expanse of the earth’s surface is all that most people will experience in their lives, and many won’t even experience 5% of its entirety. The place in which my work interacts with natural materials and natural phenomena, is not meant to immediately conjure ideas of environmentalism and ideas of a natural lifestyle. It is to interact with natural phenomena so as to remind the viewer that it is there and it will always be there, despite the harm we cause to so much of the earth’s surface. It will remain when humanity ceases to exist and it can be embraced as something beautiful and immensely powerful. Not only in rural places, where people may find it at its most obvious, but everywhere. Not just in relation to sunlight, but also rain clouds and stormy weather. Not simply in relation to greenery in the warmer months, and exposed branches in winter. Even if we are talking of pure appreciation, I feel it as something many people don’t stop to appreciate or even think about until they are reminded of it, which is a saddening reality for us in our current climate.



Fig. 16. *Aspects of Light I*, (2015)

Fig. 17. *Aspects of Light II*, (2015)

Fig. 18. *Aspects of Light III*, (2015)

Fig. 19. *Aspects of Light IIII*, (2015)

## TO CONCLUDE...

My intention upon starting my project for this year, was to give a form through tactile imagery and photography to things that cannot be seen, but are intrinsic within a person and their interaction with aspects such as time, memories, emotions, experiences and transience. Through these, I explored the intricacies of entanglement between a person and their surrounding environment, both interior and exterior, and expressed how my visualisation of such things for me, convey such experiences. It was extremely important to me to convey my concept through physical processes that allowed me to work by hand and with physical materials rather than digital processes. I feel that this year has provided me with a project that I could potentially pursue for many years to come. It is such a thing that the intention collides with the progress, and while my project has been intrinsically about time, emotion and transience, it has the capacity through these topics for me to continue along this road for as long as I wish, or as long as I am able to continue to create work.

To conclude, my question of "How can we give a visual form to things that cannot be seen, but only felt and experienced, that are part of existing as a transient being" has been answered, to the extent of my Master project this year. I have created imagery that is both tactile and dimensional but also have the other quality of working within it's current environment, both interacting with the sun, and with the viewer. Not only drawings, but also photography that work with pure light and form, that give representations of "non-spaces", that don't represent spaces that we can inhabit, but spaces that we can perceive through light. The end result being a collection of work that all interact with each other and whoever chooses to view them. I hope that at least one person who views my work or reads my article will call into question what exactly do these things mean to them, and how do they perceive of their own mind space, or their own interpretation of time passing, differ to mine? Though these aspects are what make us all individuals, and make us all different to interpretation, they are also qualities that we all possess and are all inexplicably tied to.



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Figure 6. Emma Rankin, *Deep (Complete)*, [2015], [indian ink on paper], own work.

Figure 7, Emma Rankin, *Deep (Opposed)*, [2015], [indian ink on paper], own work.

Figure 8. Emma Rankin, *Latitude and Longitude 50°56'16.3"N 05°20'53.9"E*, [2015], [silver geletin exposure], own work.

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Figure 12. Emma Rankin. *Space and Light II*, [2013], [silver gelatin exposure], own work.

Figure 13. Emma Rankin. *Lines on the wall (detail)*, [2015], [charcoal and water on the wall], own work.

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