Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces:
An investigation into ambiguous spatial effects created through the use of
reflective materials, fragmented abstract form and oblique linear
structures.

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgment has been made, the works is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Summary

This practice-led art research project investigates the relationships between geometric abstract painting, architecture and urban space. The outcome of the research is an exhibition of ten large-scale and several medium-sized geometric abstract paintings on canvas that explore issues of reflection and spatial deformation. Compositions drawing from the spatialities of contemporary architecture and urban space are examined through the use of reflective materials, fragmented abstract form and irregular structuring to create a range of spatial interpretations intended to engage and manipulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space.

This project focuses on inventive uses of reflective painting materials and recently developed synthetic colours influenced by digital technologies and high-gloss surface qualities. Innovative possibilities and opportunities in contemporary abstract painting practice are investigated through the use of newly developed commercial paint materials, pigments and mediums to create new perceptual and physiological experiences for the viewer.

From the position of being a contemporary abstract painter I investigate key issues of spatial unease, disorientation and instability experienced in contemporary architecture and urban spaces, in order to produce highly ambiguous pictorial spatial experiences in my own work, including infinite reflections, permutations and deformations. This project contributes original research to the field of abstract painting, and produces a new body of knowledge about pictorial spatial structures, colours and surface effects that generate disorientating viewing experiences and build on the relationship between abstract painting, architecture and urban space.
Introduction to the Research Project

The aim of *Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces* is to create a new body of geometric abstract paintings that investigate illusory spatial readings designed to engage and manipulate a perceptual and physiological response from the viewer. The focus of the research project is to examine the use and function of form and colour in my own practice and to contextualise this in relation to the work of other artists and architects. This research demonstrates that ambiguous spatial effects can be created through the use of oblique linear structures, fragmented abstract form and reflective materials.

This project explores the impact of contemporary architecture and urban space on contemporary abstract painting. From the position of being a contemporary abstract painter, I have observed that reflection and spatial warping, including the experience of disorientation, are frequently experienced in major contemporary cities on a daily basis. For instance, we regularly view the physical world through a series of highly warped and splintered reflections (Figure 1 and Figure 2). These paradoxical visual experiences, including the sensation of push-pull, are explored in my abstract paintings. I investigate these sorts of unnerving illusory spatial effects in order to advance the field of abstract painting and to create new perceptual experiences and optical effects for the viewer.

Figure 1
New York City, 2010
Reflection and spatial warping
Collection of the artist

Figure 2
Hong Kong City, 2011
Reflection and spatial splintering
Collection of the artist
My research builds on the historical relationship between abstraction and representation, in particular how contemporary architecture and urban space can affect contemporary abstract painting. I argue that architectural surfaces and structures, specifically newly developed reflective materials and oblique geometry can impact on current abstract painting practice. The project indicates that technological, social and economic developments and concerns in the physical world can open up new formal and conceptual possibilities and potentialities in contemporary abstract painting.

Gestalt psychologist and art theorist Rudolf Arnheim has importantly examined structural principles to illustrate the psychological aspects of sensory perception. Similarly, writing by key art historians and theorists Meyer Schapiro, Rosalind E. Krauss, Briony Fer and David Batchelor, among others, have critically analysed the significance of pictorial structures in Western modern art. Collectively, their writings discuss the theoretical nexus between grid theory, geometric abstract art, architecture and urban space. Krauss argues that the ubiquitous use of the grid in early twentieth century European painting is the signifying emblem of modernism (Krauss, 1986, p.9). She observes that the formation of the grid is modular and repeated, and that spatially it is "Flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimemetic, antireal” (Krauss, 1986, p.9).

According to Krauss, the grid’s power is its paradoxical nature that simultaneously conceals and reveals, and proposes “science, or logic” alongside “illusion, or fiction” (Krauss, 1986, p.12). Reflecting on Pictorial spaces builds on this idea, but also displaces the stable vertical-horizontal axis with obliqueness (and irregular geometric structures) to generate spatial contradiction, illusion and implication. The aim is to develop new structural connections and potentialities between geometric abstract painting, architecture and urban space. The project confirms that abstraction has continuously developed, and reinvented itself through responding to changes and/or developments in the physical world. This research asserts such possibilities include reflective surfaces and new perceptual configurations of disorientation.

In Painting Abstraction: New Elements in Abstract Painting, (2009), art writer, curator and critic Bob Nickas observes that we are currently living in an extremely unsettled world that is forever changing and increasingly sped up. He describes the
situation now as unstable, fast paced and tragic, and he suggests that these conditions prompt some contemporary abstract artists to examine transformation in everyday life in their painting practices (Nickas, 2009, p.7). He explains, “all works of art come from the facts of everyday life, from the texture of lived experience” (Nickas, 2009, p.7). He adds, “Abstraction can be thought of as a ‘filter’ through which the recognizable passes and is transformed” (Nickas, 2009, p.11).

This transformation and tension between the physical world and abstraction is explored in my work. In particular, I create affective “structural conditions” that relate to the experience of navigating through skewed geometric structures analogous with warped buildings and oblique views of interior and exterior spaces such as windows, doorways, corner spaces and buttresses. These abstractions operate as complex reflexive objects that simultaneously represent and distort the physical world, engage and procure a perceptual and physiological response from the viewer, and literally echo and respond to external changes in the surrounding environment.

My abstract paintings propose a dynamic dialogue between pictorial space, the viewing encounter and spatial context. Each work of art is designed to heighten the phenomenological relationship between the viewer and an artwork. Theatrical experiences are produced through the use of scale, format, structure, form, colour, surface qualities and spatial installation. I propose that the use of oblique angles and corner spaces can draw out unnerving and uncertain experiences from the viewer, for example feelings of spatial unease, including disorientation, unbalance, claustrophobia and vertigo. The artworks in this project assert that there is a tension between scale and intimacy, and exploit the tensions between small-scale paintings that encourage an intimate or up-close viewing position, and large-scale paintings that can overwhelm the viewer and enhance a physical bodily encounter. The spatial installation of the paintings also influences the viewing experience. These alternate cognitive and phenomenological responses in the viewer are emphasised in the different projects produced during the PhD.
In the new work I have developed specific compositional strategies informed by gestalt theory\(^1\) to investigate issues of spatial deformation, fragmentation and instability in my painting practice through figure-ground ambiguity and implied and actual movement. Gestalt theory argues that exposure to fragmented forms, diagonal and asymmetric motifs, and reflective surfaces can affect human behaviour and perception.

In this project irregular structures and asymmetric forms are investigated to create a variety of ambiguous pictorial spatial readings, including figure-ground reversal, elongation, compression and fragmentation. These compositional tactics are deliberately deployed to disorientate, destabilise and ambulate the viewer. Multiple perspectives and inverted viewpoints are utilised to create the illusion of movement, spatial depth and disorder, and in turn, draw out unnerving experiences such as dizziness and anxiety. The directional forces implicit in oblique structures and jagged forms are used as strategies for encouraging viewers to physically move in front of an artwork and experience it from several viewpoints, including peripheral, up-close and far away positions that generate alternate spatial readings and perspectives.

For instance, oblique perspectives and acute angles are purposely designed to simultaneously absorb and eject the viewing subject. The deep perspectives draw in the viewer, whereas the fractured or shard-like forms are potentially unsettling, repellent or forceful. Perplexing perceptual and physiological encounters are also generated via silhouetting devices and/or simplifying forms so that they appear obscure. Additionally, interleaving and overlapping structures are explored to render pictorial space highly illusory and dynamic.

My compositions investigate contemporary architecture, in particular buildings that feature oblique structures, irregular forms and reflective surfaces. Throughout the project I compiled visual material sourced from current architecture and city environments, and correspondingly experimented with ideas of reflection and spatial deformation in my own work to create new compositional structures in contemporary abstract painting intended to incite bewilderment. Warped “structural conditions” are

investigated to provoke the viewer perceptually and physiologically. For example, many of my awkward forms reference the illusion of out-of-kilter architecture projected on the reflective gloss glass facades of modern high-rise buildings. In other instances, the angular geometric motifs also reference the unsettling and vertiginous experience of navigating one’s way through acute angles. Immersive, interactive and affective viewing encounters are carefully constructed as a critical interchange between the viewer, an artwork and the surrounding space.

Modern art historian and theorist, Walter Benjamin, sociologist and philosopher, Georg Simmel, and contemporary architectural theorists, Mark Wigley and Anthony Vidler, among others, have described the topography of major contemporary cities as labyrinthine, highly reflective and illusory. In discussing the psychology of modern architecture and contemporary cities they argue that overbuilt and congested cities generate complex “spatial situations” that are potentially perceptually and physiologically confusing, fragmented and unnerving. Inside contemporary cities our perception and understanding of space can become extremely warped and confused.

The tendency in some contemporary architecture is to now displace the vertical-horizontal axis and/or dominance of the grid with obliqueness and skewed geometric structures (Koenig, 2009, p.6). Recent architectural practices utilise oblique geometry as a psychological “structural condition” with its suggestion of instability, disruption, distortion and dislocation (Koenig, 2009, p.6). There are architects who purposefully create challenging spatial experiences for the public to encounter through the use of voids, tilted walls, floors and ceilings that are intended to operate as metaphors for a complex and unsettled world.

Wigley and Vidler point out that some contemporary architecture is extremely skewed and irregular, which prompt unnerving visual and physical conditions for the spectator to encounter. My contention is that contemporary painters have not yet fully explored these architectural spatial effects and perceptual experiences in their work. Consequently, this research project develops new cognitive and phenomenological situations for the viewer through creating pictorial spatial configurations.
Architectural facades made from the latest reflective technologies such as high-gloss glass and polished metals that maximise the vivid interplay of the reflection of light, shadow and space (Meyhöfer, 2008, p.52). Shiny surfaces and oblique structures in current architecture reflect, distort and fragment the human body and the environment in ways that provide mimetic and illusory visual experience. These disorientating spatial experiences prompted my use of reflective materials to create scintillating visual effects that are comparable to the reflection and refraction of changing light and the surrounding environment on contemporary buildings made from the newest lustrous materials (Puglisi, 2008, p.23 and pp.122-123).

This project focuses on innovative uses of reflective painting materials and new synthetic colours influenced by digital technologies and high-gloss surface qualities. Reflective materials are utilised as a metaphor for instability and flux in city environments. The changeable nature of reflective paint materials is exploited to create unstable colours and surfaces, in particular perceived and actual movement on a static, two-dimensional, surface. Gleaming colours and fluctuating surface qualities are developed to create disorientating, illusory spaces that elicit perceptual and psychological responses from the viewer similar to those experienced within the fragmented, reflective and distorted spaces of contemporary architecture.

Contemporary manufacture of reflective paint materials and technologies has impacted on the perceptual experience of colour, surface, light and space. Such reflective materials are employed in my work to emphasise light reflection and refraction, mirroring and blurring, as well as mimicking literal changes in the light and the surrounding environment. Reflective finishes stress the transience of time and space, activate viewer presence and participation, and encourage the viewing subject to experience colour and surface variation. Fluctuations in the appearance of colour and surface can procure contemplation and prompt the viewer to take on a decentred and unfixed viewing position. A variety of glossy colours and surface effects are created to actively engage and manipulate the viewer to experience disorientation and become acutely attuned to the unfolding perceptual and phenomenological encounter.

Disparate colours and surface qualities are juxtaposed to effectively maximise fluctuating optical and spatial effects. For instance, matte surfaces and/or dim tones,
including black, grey and brown absorb the light and take in the viewer, whilst gloss surfaces, including metallic colours such as silver and gold reflect the light and repel the viewer. Reductive high-key warm/cool colour schemes and/or strong light/dark tonal contrasts are used to create vibrating optical effects, including the illusion of depth and movement, whereas subtle colour and/or tonal variations are employed to prompt attentive viewing (slow looking).

Scintillating colour mixtures and delicate surfaces are created to investigate varying visual effects that encourage meditation. The surfaces alter from opaque (matte) to reflective (metallic and glossy) to transparent (translucent), and the perceptibility of these subtle surface transitions is dependant on the viewer’s stance. During engagement with the work, the viewer becomes attuned to the way changes in the surrounding environment, including their own physical appearance influence surface and colour, and how their own physical behaviour is manipulated to move in front of the work to activate colour and surface change.

Reflective paint materials are explored as a strategy to create colour and surface movement, spatial projection and variation. I experiment with a wide range of metallic, iridescent, interference and micaceous paints and pigments and high-gloss mediums to create reflective surface finishes that explore new optical effects and perceptual experiences in contemporary abstract painting. A mixture of reflective commercial materials is used as a formal device to heighten contemplation and the viewer’s physical engagement with the work. An array of colour and surface shifts are activated in relation to the intensity of light and the movement and/or physical positioning of the viewer in relation to the artwork. Reflective paint materials mimics light and reflection, and are also literal reflections of light.

I contend that issues of reflection and spatial deformation in contemporary architecture and urban space are relevant to current abstraction. This research project responds to existing trends in contemporary architecture and how the current use of reflective commercial materials, oblique structures and asymmetric forms can generate new pictorial spatial experiences in abstract painting. I suggest that the development of reflective industrial materials and finishes in architecture has impacted on the current manufacture of reflective commercial paints and mediums,
which has led me to develop new optical effects and perceptual experiences in
contemporary painting. I also posit that current glossy materials impact on our
experience of surface and space, including the sensation of reflection and light.

This research project is pertinent at this time, when the perceptual and bodily
navigation of acute angles and irregular spaces in contemporary architecture is a
relatively new phenomenon and the experience of perceiving space and movement
through a series of multiple, fleeting reflections is frequently evidenced by humans
through high-gloss glass and mirrored surfaces in contemporary architecture. Today
speedy and unrelenting changes form the core of contemporary societal activities and
we often perceive space through a series of illusions including perceived movements
in reflections.

Research Questions

The research questions that govern this project are:

1. In what ways can I use abstract painting to explore recent architectural
   projects concerning illusory spaces based on irregular structuring and
   fragmented modular formats?

To answer this question the research examined the relationship between abstract
pictorial practice and architectural practice in existing art and architectural examples.
In particular, selected architects and artists practices were identified and critically
analysed to demonstrate conceptual similarities and differences between modern and
contemporary architecture and abstract painting.

In responding to this question, the project identified and explored recent trends in
contemporary architecture utilising oblique structuring and splintered geometric
forms as a psychological “structural condition”. The research examined how these
“spatial situations” can be explored in contemporary painting practice to create new
perceptual and physiological experiences for the viewing subject. The outcomes
highlight my research argument that irregular structuring and asymmetric form can
elicit unnerving experiences from the viewer, and led to new structural possibilities and opportunities in abstract painting practice being discovered and utilised.

2. How can I emphasise perceived and actual movement of light in abstract painting practice, in particular through light reflection and refraction?

The latest reflective paint materials and synthetic colours available today were sourced and a wide range of iridescent, metallic, interference and micaceous pigments, acrylic paints and high gloss mediums were experimented with to achieve different reflection and refraction effects. Practice-led studio-based art research was undertaken to create scintillating colour combinations and unstable surface qualities that maximise perceived and actual movement on a static, two-dimensional surface.

The theoretical research identifies and explores how modern and contemporary abstract artists utilise reflective materials in their particular practices and to what effect. This provided a critical context for my own use of reflective materials with the work of others in the field.

Additionally, new possibilities and opportunities concerning the materiality of paint and paint technology to develop innovative optical effects, which engage and manipulate a perceptual and physiological response from the viewer, were generated through the application of this research.

3. How can ideas and principles of spatial distortion and ambiguity by architects, gestalt psychologists and art theorists be applied to the making of contemporary abstract painting?

This question focused on the theoretical background for the project. The research identifies a modern principle for spatial deformation across the fields of abstract art, architecture and perceptual psychology. A core argument framing this research is abstract art is not “simply formalistic or decorative; its premise is psychological” (Vidler, 2001, p.109).
In addressing this question, I investigated the significance of structure and form in modern and contemporary abstract art and architecture, including Gestalt psychology, to develop novel compositional strategies that create paradoxical pictorial spatial readings and generate disorientating visual experiences for the viewer. The art outcomes of this research demonstrate the affective and expressive role and function of structure.

**Practice-led Research**

*Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces* is a practice-led studio-based creative arts research project. The creation of new abstract artworks was developed in connection with analytical research to contribute to the field of new knowledge (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.3). During the project I used a variety of interrelated research methodologies and approaches to contextualise my art practice. For example, through the gathering of information, reading, identifying and examining key artists, architects, theories and issues, and critically analysing and evaluating theoretical ideas led me to articulate my thoughts, ideas and arguments and, in turn, examine the cyclical and generative relationship between practice and theory (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.11). The research was also conducted through sourcing materials, making observations, undertaking field trips, being reflective, and exploring and experimenting with materials and processes. Theory and practice simultaneously generated this investigation. Through conducting systematic theoretical and practical research, I created a range of exploratory, transitional and refined abstract artworks.

**Summary of Exegesis**

Chapter 1 – *Thresholds for disorientation* investigates the meaning of structure and form in my own work and locates this in comparison to the work of artists Kazimir Malevich, Liubov Popova, El Lissitzky, Piet Mondrian and Sarah Morris, and architects Zaha Hadid, Frank O. Gehry and Daniel Libeskind. Conceptual analysis into the use of Western pictorial compositions is discussed to focus on issues of spatial distortion, including gestalt principles addressing key issues of spatial disorientation and figure-ground ambiguity in order to draw out alternate perceptual and phenomenological responses from the viewing subject.
Chapter 2 – *On the surface and beyond* discusses the role and function of reflective materials, colours and finishes in my own work and places this in connection to the practices of artists Liubov Popova, Frank Stella, Julie Mehretu, Sarah Morris, Peter Halley, among others, and architects Gehry, Jean Nouvel, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Theoretical discourse examining the significance of commercial materials and technologies, in particular recently developed reflective paint colours, pigments and mediums are critically analysed to investigate paradoxical optical effects pertaining to reflection, movement, distortion and transformation in geometric abstract painting.

This chapter explores glossy colours and shiny surfaces qualities as strategies to engage and manipulate the viewer through the reflection and refraction of light in abstract painting practice. Scintillating visual effects are significantly discussed, including the creation of new optical experiences, colour effects and surface illusions as a means to procure active contemplation.

Chapter 3 – *Including the kitchen sink* investigates the materials, processes and conceptual underpinnings of this practice-led art research project. The creation of preliminary works and major projects are chronologically analysed and documented. In particular, a range of research methodologies are used to produce several series’ of works that explore and generate new possibilities and potentialities in contemporary abstract painting concerning issues of disorientation and instability. The strengths and limitations of each body of work as a research project is discussed, as well as further questions that compelled me to make other series and/or multiple versions.

This chapter on specific research approaches critically assesses the significance of scale, format, installation structure, form, colour and surface quality in my work. It also discusses how and why particular compositional structures were selected, and explains the ways in which the various series of works informed the final series of large-scale abstract paintings made for the examination exhibition.

And finally, the *Outcomes and Conclusions* outlines the key project results and contributions to the field, as well as future research possibilities. It reinforces the core
contribution of *Reflecting on Pictorial Surfaces* on the development of new perceptual and physiological conditions in contemporary abstract painting. The ways in which this research project has opened up new opportunities and directions to be pursued in my practice is also discussed.

**Appropriate Durable Record**

The Appropriate Durable Record (ADR) is a supporting visual document that details the projects and final paintings discussed in this exegesis. It chronologically charts the various phases of this practice-led studio-based art research project, including material investigations, processes and experiments. Preliminary and transitional works, works-in-progress, refined series of works and spatial installations are sequentially documented. This ADR has been developed in connection with the structure of Chapter 3 – *Including the kitchen sink*.

**Examination Exhibition**

The exhibition *Thresholds for Disorientation*, at Langford 120, in Melbourne, Australia from 27 April – 26 May 2013 marks the conclusion of this research project. This solo exhibition comprises ten large-scale paintings and several medium-sized paintings based on theoretical and practice-led research undertaken during this research project. The gallery space was chosen because of its excellent natural light and large modular proportions that effectively mirror the pictorial spatial concerns of my paintings. This spatial context encourages the audience to encounter the paintings from multiple viewing positions and activate delicate colour and surface change. Additionally, the spatial installation of the paintings emphasises reflection and spatial deformation in order to destabilise the viewer.

**List of Projects**

This research project culminates in a body of works using installation, drawing, painting, collage and construction methods. Various research methodologies were investigated to emphasise ambiguous spatial readings and to generate experiences of disorientation, instability and tension for the viewer. Transitional works were also
produced throughout the project, which shaped particular series and led to further questions.

The sequential projects were:

- *Metallic Reflective* series, 2009 – 2010
- *Iridescence* series, 2010
- *Sky-rise* series, 2011 –

Each project focused on the creation of ambiguous “structural conditions” through the arrangement of scale, format, structure, form, colour, surface qualities and spatial installation. Within these projects multiple series of works were made, including multiple version and mirror images to maximise pictorial spatial ambiguity and paradoxical readings.

This project reveals the ways in which abstract painting can reinvent itself through its relationship to the physical world, in particular the portrayal of incessant movement, and highly ambiguous and deformed spatial experiences evidenced in contemporary architecture and urban space. Through creating new perceptual and phenomenological encounters for the viewer I contribute original research to the field of abstract painting. Skewed structures and irregular forms in current architecture can be examined in my abstract painting to produce a new series of warped and fragmented abstract forms that generate unsettling and destabilising perceptual conditions for the viewer.
Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation

Structures and forms for expressing movement, fracture and instability in geometric abstract painting

In this chapter I discuss the significance of form and structure in my own practice and position this in relation to the work of other artists and architects. Theoretical discourse concerning the use and meaning of pictorial systems in Western geometric abstract painting is critically analysed to uncover issues of spatial paradox and contradiction. Gestalt principles relating to spatial deformation and figure-ground reversal are examined and applied through the creation of my new abstract works in order to elicit divergent cognitive and physiological reactions from the viewer.

To explore ambiguous pictorial spatial readings in my work a variety of compositional devices were investigated during this project, including:

- Figure-ground reversal
- Diagonal structures and/or asymmetric forms
- Elongated and/or compressed configurations
- Simplified and/or silhouetted formations
- Multiple or several viewpoints, including oblique and aerial views
- Unfixed orientations and/or inverted perspectives
- Off-centred or asymmetric placement of structures and forms
- Fragmented structures and forms achieved through cropping, segmenting and close-up devices
- Mirror images, including multiple versions and variations in scales

The above compositional structures were investigated and effectively utilised during this project in order to create theatrical abstract paintings that express dynamic movement, fracture and spatial unease, and in turn affect the viewing subject perceptually and phenomenologically. Theoretical research informed by key theorists and their texts addressing the historical relationship between geometric abstract painting, architecture, urban space and the viewing encounter enlightens the paintings.
I focus on identifying and analysing lineages that explore the tension between abstract art and physical world, including the portrayal of spatial unease and disorientation in contemporary urban space, and its transformation through the making of abstract paintings emphasising distortion and fragmentation. At the core of the project is the manifestation of movement, deformation, fracture and instability aiming to disorientate the viewer. This project is concerned with issues of sensorial perception and the construction of psychological “structural condition[s]” that cause disorientation, tension and instability (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.17). These particular “structural situations” are related to key gestalt principles.

Rudolf Arnheim and Anthony Vidler both point out that in the dissertation *Abstraction and Empathy*, (1906), art historian, Wilhelm Worringer contends that we perceive geometric and organic forms symbolically. Similarly, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, (1912), artist, Wassily Kandinsky associated expressive effects with particular colours and forms. Research suggests that particular abstract shapes and patterns express distinct feelings and/or psychological underpinnings (Arnheim, 1986, p.60).

Recent architectural projects and buildings concerning illusory spaces based on irregular structuring and fragmented modular formats are investigated to identify structural strategies for procuring disorientation and ambiguity. I argue that these issues of extreme spatial deformation and movement can be applied to contemporary abstract painting to further extend the field. Oblique structural concerns and asymmetric forms produce unlimited formal and conceptual opportunities that generate new perceptual and physiological experiences for the viewer.

**Gestalt theory**

In his classic text *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, (1974) Arnheim claims that the human eye arranges visual information in psychological ways. He outlines particular gestalt principles and urges visual artists and architects alike to adeptly use these premises to maximise alternate expressive effects and optical illusions in their individual practices. Arnheim asserts,
… every aspect of a visual experience has its physiological counterpart in the nervous system, we can anticipate, in a general way, the nature of the brain processes (Arnheim, 1974, p.17).

This relates to how I conducted my research into pictorial spatial ambiguity. In particular, I concentrate on Arnheim’s principles concerning disequilibrium and visual paradox, including the illusion of movement and figure-ground reversal to create dynamic compositions that draw out unnerving and precarious visual experiences from the viewer. He claims that repeatable, fragmented, oblique forms can be arranged to create unstable pictorial configurations that can trigger a variety of divergent perceptual responses (Arnheim, 1974, p.48). I experimented with and build upon these gestalt principles in my paintings to express extreme imbalance, instability and ambiguity in my work (see Figure 3). Gestalt psychology provides a framework to elicit perceptual and physiological disturbances from the viewer in an open-ended way in order to procure temporal visual awareness, and to further develop sensation of movement and deformation.

Figure 3
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Off-kilter*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation

The illusion of movement and spatial deformation on a static, two-dimensional, planar space is maximised through the use of irregular and/or segmented shapes, and obliqueness (Arnheim, 1974, p.48). To create the sensation of disequilibrium and instability, I utilised sharpening, asymmetry, obliqueness and off-centring in my compositions (Arnheim, 1974, p.67). I avoided leveling, symmetry and regularity, as these types of compositional structures are classically associated with equilibrium, harmony and balance. In leveling, structures and forms are repeated and/or ordered to decrease tension and increase feelings of unity (Arnheim, 1974, p.67). Arnheim explains:

Leveling is characterized by such devices as unification, enhancement of symmetry, reduction of structural features, repetition, dropping of non-fitting detail, elimination of obliqueness. Sharpening enhances differences, stresses obliqueness (Arnheim, 1974, p.67).

He adds,

Sharpening increases that tension (Arnheim, 1974, p.67).

Through this research I experimented with oblique linear structures, in particular multiple viewpoints and isometric perspectives. Several perspectives were used in a single composition to enhance spatial ambivalence. Because there is no fixed or solid perspective on offer, the viewer is encouraged to take on a changing and decentred viewing position. Generally speaking, oblique structures, including discontinuous perspectives and irregular forms encourage the viewing subject to experience an artwork from shifting peripheral angles in order to activate alternative spatial readings. Additionally, multiple perspectives potentially disorientate and destabilise the viewing subject.

Irregular forms were arranged in an asymmetrical or decentred position to maximise the illusion of movement, in particular the sensation of elevation and/or descent (see Figure 4). The impression of simultaneously moving forwards and backwards, or from side-to-side, is also examined, as well as off-centring to create the sensation of
unbalance and instability (Arnheim, 1974, pp.10-11). For example, forms are placed close to the top parameters of a picture plane appear to float or raise upwards, whereas configurations placed close to the bottom edge of the picture plane appear to descend.

Figure 4
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Far-flung*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist

Factors, such as the viewer’s physical positioning in relation to a work of art, effect the perceptual encounter and understanding of a spatial arrangement (Fer, 1997, p.138). Issues of scale and proportion also impact on the viewing encounter and influence the effectiveness of the compositional structure. For instance, large-scale compositions relate to the viewer’s body and architectural space, which in turn can

Fragmentation is suggested through segmented forms and structures (Arnheim, 1974, p.76). Splintered shapes produce the illusion of fracture and enhance figure-ground ambiguity, including the sensation of push-pull. In general, irregular forms appear energetic and their asymmetry encourages paradoxical pictorial spatial readings, including the illusion of depth, such as void forms and/or abyss-like spaces. Contradictory pictorial spatial effects are maximised through the use of figure-ground reversal (Arnheim, 1974, p.236). Figure-ground blurring was examined to draw out unnerving perceptual and physiological experiences from the viewer. Acute angles and/or angular forms also appear to push forward (Arnheim, 1974, p.232).

My experience of architecture and urban space influences the making of deceptive compositional structures. I focus on creating illusive pictorial spatial encounters for the viewer (Fried, 1998, p.94). For instance, I use oblique structures, irregular forms, multiple perspectives, figure-ground reversal and fragmentation to create paradoxical pictorial spatial readings that prompt the viewer to become disoriented. These gestalt principles inform the final paintings presented in the examination exhibition.

Gestalt principles pertaining to precariousness and distortion have been explored in modern and contemporary abstract art and architecture to express tension. For instance, principles of sharpening are maximised in avant-garde art, including early European abstract painting. In Cubism and Constructivism, multiple viewpoints, aerial views, tilted forms, irregular structures and figure-ground ambiguity is utilised to emphasise the illusion of fracture, energetic movement and spatial dynamism.

Since the late 1980s, architects including, Zaha Hadid (b. 1950) and Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946) have reinvestigated early twentieth century art and the sharpening principle to construct their extremely warped buildings (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.7). Through their varied investigations into the symbolic and expressive use of oblique structuring they have developed “structural problems” that address issues of tension, imbalance, asymmetry and instability (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.11). Collectively, the function of their buildings is to create challenging bodily experiences for the
public and to elicit feelings of extreme disorientation and uncertainty (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, pp.10-11).

Contemporary artists, Sarah Morris (b. 1967), Julie Mehretu (b. 1970), and Stephen Bram (b.1961), have transformed pictorial systems developed in early European abstract art to create highly expressive and theatrical structures that appear to pulsate in spatially ambiguous ways. Collectively, they create large-scale abstract paintings depicting multiple perspectives that represent their shared spatial experiences of complexity, ambiguity and warping in urban environments. Their idiosyncratic works are designed to perceptually engage and physically overwhelm and disorientate the viewer.

In his book *Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, (2001) Anthony Vidler discusses ideas of spatial deformation and instability. He claims that issues of fragmentation, spatial distortion and dynamism in early European abstract art have been revived in post-modern and/or contemporary art and architecture (Vidler, 2001, p.7). In this project I am interested in how modern avant-garde art has influenced contemporary abstract painting and architecture, and how the development of new digital technologies and contemporary architecture can impact on contemporary abstract painting.

These spatial situations prompted me to investigate recent trends in contemporary architecture, which became the source material for particular projects. In Chapter 3 – *New possibilities and potentialities in contemporary abstract painting* I discuss some of these visual references beside particular projects within this PhD. Through critically analysing my work in relation to current architectural practices I have created new perceptual and physiological experiences for the viewer and expanded the field of contemporary abstract painting.

**Spatial distortion in abstract painting**

Arnheim’s writings clearly demonstrate that within avant-garde art there is a preoccupation with obliqueness, splintering and decentring creating the sensation of dynamic movement, tension and dislocation. Arnheim discusses the complex
relationship between modernity, modern experiences and modern art; in particular how the advents of nineteenth century technologies, including the aeroplane, motorcar, electric lamp and film impacted on painting practice. He points out, “modern experiences may have contributed to this attitude, for instance, the experience of flying through the air and the upsetting of visual conventions in photographs taken from above” (Arnheim, 1974, p.31).

Arnheim contends that modern art is primarily concerned “with the artist’s desire to liberate himself [sic] from the imitation of reality” (Arnheim, 1974, p.31). These ideas relate to art historian Erwin Panofsky’s writings on the rejection of classical or rational representations of physical space in modern art. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, (1924-1925), Panofsky contrasts Renaissance representations of space with avant-garde depictions of space. Panofsky (as cited in Bishop, 2005, p.11) asserts that the function of Renaissance perspective was to position the viewing subject in the middle of an illusory and idealised space or “world” portrayed in the painting. The role of a horizon line with a single vanishing point within the picture deliberately met the viewer’s eye line or “gaze” (from a standing retinal orientation), and encourages the spectator’s to contemplate the picture from a predominately static, frontal and centralised position (Bishop, 2005, p.11).

In contrast, during Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Suprematism and Russian Constructivism there was a strong desire to disrupt and overturn Cartesian rationalism in order to portray spatial unease and disorientation via the development of new pictorial systems that stressed visual paradox and ambiguity (Bishop, 2005, p.13). In modern art, an unsettled and fractured world is represented via the use of multiple perspectives, pan-geometry, shallow space, splintered structures and/or deformed forms. These disjointed pictorial systems encourage the viewer to experience pictorial space in new ways that are analogous to modern spatial/temporal experiences, and are potentially perceptually undermining/unsettling and physiologically challenging. Panofsky writes,

Either it has in a sense exploded the entire space by ‘dispersing the centre of vision’ (‘Futurism’), or it has sought no longer to represent depth intervals ‘extensively’ by means of foreshortenings, but rather, in accord with most
modern insights of psychology, only to create an illusion ‘intensively’ by playing colour surfaces off against each other, each differently placed, differently shaded, and only in this way furnished with different spatial values (Mondrian and in particular Malevich’s ‘Suprematism’) (Panofsky cited in Vidler, 2001, p.107-108).

These ideas relate to Walter Benjamin’s writings on the psychology of modern urban space and architecture, including the immersive and absorptive affects of overbuilding and overcrowding on city-dwellers. In his seminal essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (1936), Benjamin investigates the significance of “distraction” and the phenomenological encounter of navigating one’s way through congested labyrinthine city spaces (Vidler, 2001, p.83). In discussing the “art of loosing one’s way” through taking “city walks” he emphasises the importance of experiencing “optical” and “tactile” tensions that “activate a deeper understanding of urban topography” (Vidler, 2001, pp.83-84). He asserts, “The first and most important thing you need to do, is feel your way through a city” (Vidler, 2001, p.84).

In his essay, *One-way Street*, (1928), Benjamin discusses the “collapse of perspective distance” and the unstable relationship between foreground and background, as well as the morphing of figure and ground that generates endless spatial ambiguities (Vidler, 2001, pp.85-86). On the confusion of modern urban space he writes,

Now things press too closely on human society. The advertisement . . . abolishes the space where contemplation moved and all but hits us between the eyes with things as a car, growing to gigantic proportions, careens at us out of a film screen. And just as the film does not present furniture and facades in completed forms for critical inspection, their insistent, jerky nearness alone being sensational, the genuine hurtles things at us with the tempo of a good film (Benjamin cited in Vidler, 2001, p.86).

This immersive and phenomenological experience of space is also at the core of Minimalist Art. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a trend to engage, activate and ambulate the viewer, and encourage them to actively participate in the contemplation of a work of art by taking on non-static and decentred viewing position. These ideas
were interlinked with philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s essay *The Phenomenology of Perception*, (1962), which emphasised “the viewer’s heightened bodily experience” during the spatial encounter of an artwork (Bishop, 2005, p.10). Similarly, in the essay *Art and Objecthood*, (1967), art theorist, Michael Fried, examines the theatrical nature of perception and the significance of the viewing experience, including the notion that an art object interacts and/or is responsive to the surrounding physical environment (Fried, 1998, p.149).

These phenomenological ideas were further investigated in post-structuralist theory in the 1970s, which maintained that the viewing/spatial experience was highly complex, “intrinsically dislocated and divided” (Bishop, 2005, p.13). For instance, Rosalind Krauss discusses particular strategies used in 1970s art practices that stress “pluralism” and “multiplicity”. She asserts, within postmodernist practices “multiple options [are] now open to individual choice or will, whereas before these things were closed off through a restrictive notion of historical style” (Krauss, 1986, p.196). In postmodernist practices, including conceptual art, the viewing subject is encouraged to experience a work of art in “fragmented, multiple and decentred” ways (Bishop, 2005, p.13).

These spatial theories influenced how I approached this in my paintings. During the early stages of the project I focussed on exploring the optical effects of structure and colour. As the project developed I realised that this approach was limiting and I became increasingly concerned with activating the relationship between the viewing subject, the art object and spatial context. The final paintings and their spatial installation at Langford 120 for the examination exhibition were designed as a “structural situations” that engage the viewer in perceptual and phenomenological ways, and heightened interactive and contemplative viewing experiences. Similar to Fried and Krauss’ analysis on the significance of the viewing encounter and the participatory aspects of experiencing conceptual works of art, my abstract paintings and their spatial arrangement encourage the viewer to move in front of the work and interact with a sequence of works from a decentred and unfixed position. Additionally, the viewer is prompted to encounter the work from alternate distances, including close-up.
Form and structure in early European abstract painting

In the 1910s and 1920s, Russian Suprematist and Constructivist artists, Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935), Liubov Popova (1889-1924), and El Lissitzky (1890-1941), among others, developed diagonal pictorial structures to create feelings of instability and floatation in their geometric abstract paintings. Their diverse practices investigate the organisation of “pure” geometric forms, such as squares, rectangles, triangles and trapezoids into symbolic pictorial spatial arrangements connected with architecture and urban space. By positioning architectonic motifs at alternating angles and/or depicting urban space from multiple perspectives their paintings maximise the unsettled sensation of dynamic movement and fragmentation.

This research project is grounded within the tradition of modernism: early twentieth century Western European abstraction. Like the Suprematists and Constructivists, I use oblique perspectives, diagonal structures and fragmented abstract forms to create the illusion of spatial instability and ambiguity in my work. But unlike the work of Malevich, Popova and Lissitzky highly asymmetric forms and irregular structures are deployed in my paintings to emphasise accelerated movement and extreme spatial deformation, which can affect the viewing subject by eliciting unnerving perceptual and physiological experiences. Highly contorted abstract forms and paradoxical perspectives are utilised to represent severe spatial warping and confusion that is analogous with contemporary optical and spatial experiences.

These spatial ideas informed the making of the Instability series, (2010-2013). Within this project a variety of oblique angles, off-centred positions and/or unfixed orientations were utilised to maximise ambiguous spatial readings and unstable optical effects. For instance, in Ghost shadows, (2010), (Figure 5), and Cornered, (2010), (Figure 6), I explore skewed geometry to create highly warped spatial readings. These two paintings are mirror images of one another and investigate figure-ground ambiguity via the use of oblique structures and colour/tonal reversals.
Figure 5
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Ghost shadows*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm
Private collection

Figure 6
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Cornered*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm
Collection of the Artist
In *Ghost shadows* and *Cornered*, I use irregular geometric motifs that evoke fracture and tension. Oblique pictorial spatial structures are carefully created as a strategy for communicating and procuring disorientation, uncertainty and instability. I destabilise and tilt modular architectonic forms to create the illusion of spatial depth. Feelings of disorientation are procured from the meticulous arrangement of intersecting and interpenetrating sloping forms. Through the use of zigzagging configurations forms appear to zoom in and out of deep, shallow space. The asymmetry of shape evokes fragmentation, whilst the off-centred motifs imply imbalance and tension.

In the *Instability* series I created severely contorted forms and cropped compositions that reference up-close views of corner spaces, windows, doorways and grids from a wide range of oblique perspectives. Through depicting multiple viewpoints of architectural thresholds I investigated the sensation of spatial unease, warping and irregularity in my practice. Each composition was designed to actively engage the viewer and elicit the experience of spatial confusion and complexity during their careful contemplation of the obliqueness and irregularity in my formations. The skewed geometry encourages the viewer to move in front of the work and take on a decentred and unfixed viewing position. This decentring and continuous movement is analogous to the experience of traversing through city centres and encountering space from shifting viewpoints.

In regards to this type of shape perception, Arnheim contends that specific geometric forms emit divergent “psychological and physical forces” (Arnheim, 1974, p.16). He observes that particular forms and structures generate different directional readings of push and pull, including the sensation of moving forwards and backwards, upwards and downwards, or sideways (Arnheim, 1974, p.16). For instance, he claims that diagonal forms, including triangles, trapezoids, wedges and arrows generally appear more dynamic, aggressive and defensive, in contrast to modular structures such as squares and rectangles that seem much more passive, stable and heavy (Arnheim, 1974, pp.25-26).

To further explore these ideas of dynamic movement and weightlessness I created asymmetric shapes with acute and obtuse angles in order to emit strong feelings of tension, fracture and agitated movement in my compositions. For instance, in
Polywarp, (2010), (Figure 7), the irregularity of the zigzagging form evokes splintering and deformation, whilst its subtle off-centred position close to the bottom edge of the frame maximises feelings of imbalance and tension.

Figure 7
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Polywarp*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm
Collection of the artist

Skewed geometry was also examined in *Inclination*, (2011), (Figure 8), and *Forward bend*, (2011), (Figure 9) to create the illusion of dynamic movement and three-dimensional architectonic space. These two mirror images feature intersecting modular forms that appear to pop-out and project toward the viewer. Paradoxical spatial readings are maximised through the arrangement of high-key colour contrasts and strong tonal shifts emphasise the sensation of pulsating forwards and backwards in deep shallow space.²

² Deep space refers to the illusion of spatial depth on a two-dimensional support surface. In contrast, shallow space affirms the flatness of a two-dimensional planar surface.
Figure 8
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Inclination, 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation
Private collection

Figure 9
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Forward bend, 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
Malevich also explored movement and skewed geometry in his geometric abstract paintings. These focus on aerial views of modern buildings, including factories and warehouses (Milner, 1996, p.160 and p.197). His architectonic forms are rooted in the physical world, however he attributes spirituality and symbolic meaning to his compositions and their spatial installation. Malevich’s paintings explore experiences and emotions, for instance equilibrium, harmony and calm (Volsik, 1985, p.123). During the contemplation of his paintings it was intended that the viewing subject would undergo a spiritual/utopian transformation.

In *Suprematism (With Eight Rectangles)*, (1915)\(^3\), Malevich arranges eight variously sized and shaped red rectangles at an angle on a modulated off-white ground. Through meticulously layering the stretched out motifs next to one another he creates the illusion of shallow depth, as well as distance and advance, on a two-dimensional planar surface. Malevich’s harmonious off-centred, tilted sequencing of symmetrical forms generates the illusion of subtle movement, floatation, rotation and deformation (Fer, 1997, p.14; Milner, 1996, p.123).

Arnheim asserts that when geometric shapes are placed on an angle the sensation of movement and floatation is emphasised. He explains that in a tilted orientation most forms appear “more dynamic, [and] less stably rooted” and that this weightlessness occurs as a result of the forms slanting away from the stability of the vertical-horizontal axis of picture frame (Arnheim, 1974, p.99). Arnheim also contends that rectilinear configurations reaffirm the verticality of the human body and the horizontality of the landscape, whereas obliqueness enhances the sensation of weightlessness and instability (Houston, 2007, p.139). Thus Arnheim emphasises the embodied process of visual perception.

Similarly, in her book *On abstract art*, (1997) art theorist, Briony Fer points out that Malevich’s use of the diagonal spatialises the grid and creates the illusion of space and movement on a two-dimensional surface (Fer, 1997, p.14). She notes that his flexible pictorial systems explore spatial distortion and permutation (Fer, 1997, p.12).

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\(^3\) Fer, B. (1997). *On abstract art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, Figure 6, p.15.
For instance, his compositions investigate various elongations and deformations of the square, which is further reinforced by subtle changes in scale so that forms appear to advance or recede in shallow space (Milner, 1996, p.133). Sometimes distant vanishing points feature in his work, as well as slight and/or steep perspectives (Milner, 1996, pp.130-131).

Malevich explores unfixed and inverted orientations in his paintings and spatial installations. For instance, in *The Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10*, (1915), and *Installation view featuring a vertical series of Suprematist paintings*, (1915), he investigates multiple orientations, spatial deformation and permutation. Art theorist, John Milner observes, “Malevich often hung his paintings one way up or another in different exhibitions” (Milner, 1996, p.137). He also points out that Malevich made multiple versions of geometric motifs and configurations, and continually arranged his paintings in different sequences and constellations to suggest deformation, permutation and dislocation (Milner, 1996, p.133). Similarly, Fer discusses the symbolic ordering of his compositions and notes that he “permits himself to turn the format upside down if it fits better the movements played out within the sequence” (Fer, 1997, p.14).

Malevich’s use of unfixed orientations and multiple groupings produce unlimited pictorial spatial readings. His resistance towards representing form and structure in a fixed or static view demonstrates his preoccupation with testing paradoxic pictorial spatial effects. It also highlights that there is no right way or wrong way to view his abstract motifs, which is emphasised through the hanging of his work at different vantage points along the gallery wall, such as above and below eye-level. He was concerned with creating flexible orientations, structures and spatial installations that depended on the symbolic pictorial spatial readings he wished to communicate in a given exhibition.

Arnheim has also discussed the significance of inverted orientations in modern abstract art, and their potential psychological impact on the viewing subject. He

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claims different orientations influence pictorial spatial readings and expressive effects. He asserts,

A turn of ninety degrees tends to interfere with the character of visual shapes more drastically by causing the vertical and horizontal to exchange places… Even more radical is the change when the object is turned upside-down (Arnheim, 1974, p.102).

Similarly, in my work I created multiple spatial installations and photographically documented these sequences from alternate angles to explore variable spatial readings (See Figure 10). Like Malevich, I experiment with displaying my paintings in unfixed orientations and groupings. The expressive effects and spatial readings I wish to create determine the orientation and spatial installation of the paintings. My paintings and their spatial arrangement are designed with the viewer directly in mind. Distinct orientations and constellations are used to trigger particular perceptual and physiological responses. My readings on multiple spatial orientations and directional changes led me to turn my compositions upside down and sideways to emphasize “dynamic expression” (Arnheim, 1974, p.103). I found that I could maximise feelings of movement, instability and deformation through experimenting with multiple orientations.
Likewise Popova’s series *Painterly Architectonics*, (1915-1918), explores various architectonic motifs and structures that reference architecture and urban space, but she arranges these modular forms on several contradictory angles so that her configurations appear highly dynamic, dislocated, deformed and fractured. In *Painterly Architectonic*, (1917)\(^6\), Popova strategically uses tapered and/or narrowed forms, including a collection of interleaving triangles, trapezoids and converging lines that tilt and shift in varying directions and multiple perspectives. In the painting, she

utilises cropping devices, decentering and strong colour and tonal contrasts to render pictorial space extremely illusory, expressive and unsettling.

On close inspection of her work, the viewer might notice that she subtly adjusts the structure of her modular forms by slightly modifying the width of the inclined edges, which emphasises spatial deformation and alternating directional readings. Popova’s work also has a functionality and industrial design angle that is not explored in my work.

In *Painterly Architectonics*, Popova creates diverse expressive effects and emotional qualities. Art writer and curator, Magdalena Dabrowski, observes:

> The floating planes are positioned along intersecting diagonal axes, and the interplay of these diagonals gives the composition a great sense of dynamic movement and energy (Dabrowski, 1991, pp.18-19).

She adds,

> Although most of the forms are contained within the pictorial field, others are cut off by the edge of the canvas, thus conveying the sense of a composition extending beyond the confines of the picture plane (Dabrowski, 1991, pp.18-19).

In *Space-Force Construction*, (1921)\(^7\), structural disorder and instability is emphasised through the arrangement of several diagonal lines that alter in length and width and intersec at the centre of the composition creating a fragmented ‘X’ structure. The striated black lines arranged at shifting angles creates the illusion of dynamic movement and fracture, whilst the repetition of contrasting red semi-circular lines that curl around the centre of the composition suggest spiralling. Fer argues that Popova’s compositions “suggest a structure, but it consistently defeats the viewer to make the structure work logically” (Fer, 1990, p.79). These ideas of rendering pictorial space irrational and unstable through the utilisation of spiral or vortex effects

are revised by some contemporary painters. For instance, Tomma Abts (b. 1967), Morris, Mehretu and Bram, among others, create incessantly dynamic and unstable compositions that reflect an “ultra-dynamic world” (Godfrey, 2009, p.127).

This resonates with how I investigated dynamic movement and spatial deformation, and informed my thinking about how to represent architecture and urban space through creating dynamic and unsettling pictorial spatial systems. *Lead feather*, (2011), (Figure 11), and *Glide*, (2011), (Figure 12), are mirror images, but I chose to display *Glide* upside down. As the title suggests, the inverted formation communicates flight and weightlessness. The reductive colour palette of vibrant blue, lilac and grey further accentuates the configurations buoyancy that is comparable to a paper plane being cast into the air and piercing through space.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 11**
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Lead feather*, 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
In contrast, *Lead feather* communicates weight via its dark tonal scheme. The multiple acute angles that point down towards the edge of the frame further reinforce the sensation of descent. Speed and unsettled movement were examined through creating irregular motifs and oblique structures in order to maximise the illusion of dynamic movement, instability, fracture and spatial deformation in my practice.

Lissitzky’s series *Proun*, (1919-1927), focuses on the dynamic portrayal of unsettled architectonic forms. He often arranges his modular forms asymmetrically and close to the edge or frame and severely segments and slices up his geometric configurations so that they appear highly fragmented and cut-off by the parameters of the picture frame. Another distinctive feature of the work is his invention of pan-geometry, which involved the simultaneous flattening of space combined with the abrupt juxtaposition of oblique and aerial perspectives of architectonic motifs that appear to defy gravity (Bishop, 2005, p.81). Lissitzky’s calculated use of projective geometry (axonometric geometry) stresses the illusion of three-dimensional space, spatial dynamism, and the push-pull tension of depth-flatness.
In *Proun 19D*, (1922)\(^8\), Lissitzky arranges a selection of variously scaled three-dimensional forms, including elongated box and rod shapes, on a variety of angles to produce illogical spatial/perspective readings that appear to soar and twist dynamically in pictorial space (Milner, 1996, p.178). By rejecting traditional perspective in favour of a combination of oblique and aerial viewpoints he simultaneously represents the sensation of “peering down from above, [and] investigating from below” (Lissitzky quoted in Lissitzky-Küppers, 1980, p.347).

The measured spatial tensions depicted in the *Proun* series are intended to engage, activate and ambulate the viewer (Bishop, 2005, p.81). Lissitzky claims “we must circle *Proun*, looking at it from all sides” (Lissitzky-Küppers, 1980, p.347). In *Installation art: a critical history*, (2005), Bishop asserts that Lissitzky’s use of pan-geometry “was intended to supplant the structural limitations of perspective, which bound the spectator to a single point of view, at a specified distance, before a painting” (Bishop, 2005, p.81). Lissitzky’s writings emphasise an activated and decentred viewing experience. He proposes the *Proun* paintings and drawings are “diagrams for action, operational charts for a strategy to adopt in order to transform society and go beyond the picture plane” (Lissitzky quoted in Bishop, 2005, p.81).

Similarly, in my own work I created the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface via the use of axonometric and isometric perspective (Figure 8 and Figure 9). Angular forms that appear to project outwards and away from the two-dimensional picture plane were deliberately used. The impression of spatial depth, movement, pulsation and ambiguity were reinforced through the considered arrangement of oblique and acute angles, and the effective juxtaposition of colour and/or tonal contrasts.

To explore this further, some of my compositions feature shadow forms that render pictorial space deformed and paradoxical. For example, dramatic tonal contrasts of light and dark are deployed, as well as elongated and compressed shadow forms that are reminiscent of the theatrical character of cinematic effects used in film noir. The oblique and asymmetric forms suggest warped shadows that are cast and/or morph

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figure and ground readings together to express the uncanny and to maximise feelings of dynamic movement, instability, fracture and spatial deformation in my practice. Throughout the project I have investigated obliqueness to create the illusion of spatial depth, warping and dynamic movement (Arnheim, 1974, p.275). My skewed forms are arranged in fragmented and off-centred ways to produce unsettled visual effects. I focus on tilted views of architectonic motifs to imply a change or digression in shape and structure. Arnheim notes:

Deformation is the key factor in depth perception because it decreases simplicity and increases tension in the visual field (Arnheim, 1974, p.259).

He adds,

A deformation always conveys the impression that some mechanical push or pull has been applied to the object, as though it had been stretched or compressed, twisted or bent. In other words, the shape of the object (or of part of the object) as a whole has undergone a change in its spatial framework (Arnheim, 1974, p.259).

In response to Arnheim’s writings, my compositions experiment with ambiguous and unstable spatial readings. Extended forms and cropping devices are investigated to portray digression, deformation and fracture. For example, in Slither, (2011), (Figure 13), I create elongated and compressed forms derived from shadows cast on a series of spatial painting installations arranged in my studio. A slightly stretched rectangular format was used to compliment the stretched out character of the horizontal design. In this work I am concerned with depicting illusory spatial effects of push-pull and distortion that is analogous with the flux, disorder and complexity of major contemporary cities. I investigate obliqueness and distortion to deliberately upset logical spatial readings. Some of the forms were cropped by the parameters of the frame to heighten spatial tension.
According to Arnheim, “Deformation always involves a comparison of what is with what ought to be” (Arnheim, 1974, p.259). He adds, “The deformed object is seen as a digression of something else” (Arnheim, 1974, p.259). In order to further explore deformation in my own work, I often depicted three-dimensional modular forms as a silhouette from above or below, which results in the simplification of form and foreshortening. At other times, I alternate between separating and morphing together forms and cast shadows in relation to the governing shape in order generate uncanny and ambiguous spatial effects. These devices were experimented with in Swoop, (2010), (Figure 14) and Far-flung, (2012), (Figure 15).
Swoop and Far-flung feature a similar configuration adapted to two different formats, orientations, scales and colour schemes to create alternate spatial readings. Spatial tension is expressed through the severely warped formations that emit a strong sensation of push and pull and incessant thrusting back-and-forth in deep and shallow space. The large-scale square format of Far-flung addresses the viewer’s bodily proportions and the use of axonometric and isometric geometry and off-centring is physically overwhelming, confronting and theatrical.
Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation

Figure 15
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Far-flung, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist

Figure-ground reversal, asymmetry and rotation in early European abstract painting

Figure-ground reversal

De Stijl artist, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) created geometric grid paintings to explore the relationship between abstraction and representation. For instance, his early Paris series, (1914-1918), focuses on depicting the gridded facades of apartment housing designed by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Vidler argues that Mondrian used
architectural space “as a literal framework for the working out of an abstract grid of flatter and flatter space” and that this is a reversal of classical representations of urban space in painting practice (Vidler, 2001, p.157). Art historian and theorist, Yve-Alain Bois also points out that Mondrian was concerned with uniting “figure and ground into an inseparable entity” through consistently developing and refining distinct structural principles that rejected symmetry and centring to explore spatial ambiguity, including movement, floatation, interchange and variation (Bois, 1993, p.105).

In Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue and Grey, (1920)\(^9\), the first Neo-Plastic artwork, Mondrian arranges his compositions into a series of highly segmented asymmetric grids through carefully arranging off-centred vertical and horizontal black lines that fall short or extend towards the picture frame to maximize readings of figure-ground interchange (Fer, 1999, p.36). Bois and Fer, among others, have asserted that Mondrian’s flexible use of Neo-Plasticist principles generates unlimited pictorial possibilities, contradictions and permutations (Fer, 1999, p.36). For instance, by arranging the three primary colours of red, yellow and blue in combination with the non-colours of blacks, greys and whites, and changing the format and scale of his compositions “a permanent state of differentiation” is reinforced (Fer, 1999, p.37).

Similarly, in my own work figure and ground reversal was emphasised through making multiple versions and experimenting with contradictory colour schemes to explore instability and reversibility (Figure 5 and Figure 6). Compositionally, I seek to create ambiguous architectural/spatial effects that encourage the viewer to actively participate and contemplate compositional structures from decentred and unfixed viewing positions. Unlike Mondrian, my compositions are designed to confront and destabilise the viewer. I explore asymmetry and off-centring to procure feeling of disequilibrium, imbalance and instability. In contrast to Mondrian’s practice, I use a much more diverse colour palette, and I am not seeking the harmony portrayed in his work.

Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation

_Asymmetry and fragmented abstract form_

In his essay *The New Plastic in Painting*, (1917), Mondrian wrote that his reductive geometric abstract paintings are concerned with creating a “new structure” through “reducing the corporeality of objects to a composition of planes that give the illusion of lying in one plane” (Fer, 1997, p.40). His writings highlight the significance of his pictorial systems and the symbolic role of ordering form and structure to activate figure-ground reversal.⁹ Mondrian was primarily interested in the portrayal of equilibrium through creating a “different harmony” that was resultant on the use of asymmetry and off-centring his compositions (Mondrian quoted in Fer, 1997, p.40). His compositional structures rejected ideas of classical harmony and symmetry.

Fer asserts the “distinct facture and presence” of Mondrian’s paintings encourage “inwardness and a contemplative mode of looking” (Fer, 1997, p.36). In his essay *On the Humanity of Abstract Painting*, (1960), art historian, Meyer Schapiro also discusses these ideas of “touch” and the tangible qualities of the handmade in activating “serious looking and judging” (Schapiro, 1960, pp.14-16). On close inspection of his work, I became increasingly aware that his asymmetric and off-centred compositions reveal paradoxical spatial effects created through the arrangement of plane, line, colour and surface quality. For instance, in *Composition II with Red, blue, Black and Yellow*, (1929)¹¹, and *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, (1930)¹², the compositions are repeated with slight changes in the width or thickness of the lines or bands. At other times, almost identical compositional structures feature colour-plane changes, which alter the spatial readings between pictures. These subtle structural changes encourage active looking, contemplation and participation.

Fer argues that divergent structural qualities, including variations in format and scale encourage the viewer to carefully contemplate the work, and consider ambiguous optical effects and spatial readings such as spatial depth, movement and fracture (Fer, 1997, p.36). In his compositions of 1920, 1922 and 1923, Mondrian integrates

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⁹ Mondrian was ultimately interested in social harmony through universal forms.


centrifugal and centripetal readings by carefully arranging the black bands to fall short and lengthen toward the picture frame (Fer, 1997, p.40). Fer explains this decentring “of the asymmetric grid increasingly forces attention away from a central point to the margins of the composition” (Fer, 1997, p.40). She adds, to prevent his grids being read “as a fragment of a larger design, one that could be construed as decorative, that he sometimes painted over the edge of the grid in white to cut it short, or left a gap to terminate and contain it” (Fer, 1997, p.40). This deliberate cropping of structure suggests that the work of art is a fragment of a larger whole, and that the form is a part of the physical world. At other points in the composition, the black lines fall short of the canvas edge and this device pulls the viewer’s eye toward the thin gaps. In other words, via strategic compositional devices the spectators viewing experiences is decentred.

Likewise Krauss discusses centrifugal readings and the elimination of the “frame” in relation to Mondrian’s asymmetric grids. In her book *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, (1986), she asserts,

> Logically speaking, the grid extends in all directions, to infinity … By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is present as a mere fragment, a tiny piece of arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame (Krauss, 1986, p.18).

According to Krauss, centrifugal readings suggest “fragmentation”. She argues that structures and forms that extend “beyond the frame” promote the work of art as an object within “the world”, a part of architectural or urban space, “the landscape” and “perceptual field[s]” (Krauss, 1986, p.21). Krauss states that,

> [It is] as though we are looking at a landscape through a window, the frame of the window arbitrarily truncating our view but never shaking the certainty that the landscape continues beyond the limits of what we can, at that moment, see (Krauss, 1986, pp.21-22).
Like Mondrian, in this project I experimented with amalgamating centrifugal and centripetal readings. For example, in *Lead feather*, (Figure 11) and *Glide*, (Figure 12), I deliberately place acute angles close to the edge of the picture frame to enhance feelings of tension and precariousness. Whereas in *Slither*, (Figure 13), among other works, I also use cropping devices to increase the sensation of fracture and deformation in my work, and emphasise “The beyond-the-frame attitude, in addressing the world and its structure” as Krauss argues (Krauss, 1986, p.21).

**Rotation**

Mondrian intermittently produced a series of sixteen lozenge paintings throughout his career. In 2011, the Centre Pompidou held the major survey exhibition *Mondrian/De Stijl*. Throughout the exhibition several diamond-shaped pictures were displayed amid particular streams or bodies of works. Krauss has commented that Mondrian’s lozenge paintings are “overwhelmingly centrifugal” (Krauss, 1986, p.19). For instance, *Tableau 1: Lozenge Composition with Four Lines and Grey*, (1926)\(^{13}\), communicates a dynamic abruptness that is created through “the contrast between frame and grid”, including the ways in which the impending intersections of the vertical-horizontal bands are unexpectedly cut-off by the parameters of the lozenge-shaped frame “enforcing a sense of fragmentation” (Krauss, 1986, p.19).

Movement and spatial deformation is communicated in the lozenge paintings. Fer discusses that the diagonal format/structure of the pictures reveals “a form of distortion, a turning or twisting of the picture” (Fer, 1997, p.50). She notes, that “the word ‘distortion’ derives from the Latin *torquere*, to twist or turn” and adds the entire “orientation of spectator to work is altered by this act, and the grid which is gradually reasserted emerges relative to a reorientation which literally skews the work” (Fer, 1997, p.50).

Fer cleverly points out that the structure of the lozenge compositions “dramatically condenses two orientations at once, the lozenge and the grid, the one superimposed on the other, whilst neither takes precedence over the other” (Fer, 1997, p.50). In the lozenges, Mondrian continually experimented with the process of rotation as a

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strategy for deformation (Fer, 1997, p.50). This deliberate change in format structure (from square to diamond shape) emphasises the effect of dynamic movement, including the unstable sensation of vertigo. For example, on close inspection of the lozenge pictures, the viewer may experience spatial unease as they contemplate the complex relationship between the twisted orientation of the picture frame and the “superimposed” vertical-horizontal grid (Fer, 1997, p.50).

Mondrian’s preoccupation with testing and trialling various compositional structures stresses his flexible and non-mechanical approach. Like Fer, in his essay *Mondrian: Order and Randomness in Abstract Painting*, (1978), Schapiro explains Mondrian’s abstract compositions feature “an astonishing range of qualities, a continuous growth” (Schapiro, 1978, p.25). His reductive geometric visual vocabulary is not applied in a resolute or fixed way instead his pictorial spatial systems imply “variation” and “openness” (Schapiro, 1978, p.26 and p.33). Schapiro further points out that Mondrian’s continuous reworking and rearranging of his compositions suggest, “these constant elements, through carefully pondered variation of length, thickness, and interval, compose a scale of forces that he deploys in always individual combinations” (Schapiro, 1960, p.26). For instance, in *Tableau 1 Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, (1930) the width of the lines is doubled.

**Corporeality and phenomenology**

Movement, dance and music are analogous to the structure and title of Mondrian’s paintings. For instance, he titled one of his later lozenge paintings *Foxtrot A*, (1929); and his final paintings were dynamically titled *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, (1942-43), and *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, (1942-44), (Shapiro, 1960, p.67; Fer, 1997, p.36). Fer has noted that on the verso of *Foxtrot A*, (1929), Mondrian wrote detailed instructions concerning the display of his work, including the installation height and orientation, which are factors that address the viewer’s field of vision and their bodily positioning (Fer, 1997, pp.52-53). Fer argues,

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The diamond pictures intensify the problem of phenomenal presence and distortion. The act of rotation gets intermittently but almost ritually rehearsed as if to reassert the question of reorientation (Fer, 1997, p.52).

Fer claims the horizontal-vertical axis of the interweaving structures, as well as the physical position, orientation and format of his pictures is significant (Fer, 1997, p.53). She observes that these structural conditions affect the viewer’s cognitive and physiological experience and understanding of a pictorial spatial formation (Fer, 1997, p.137). Fer astutely points out that Mondrian’s works emphasise the corporeal and that “paintings are phenomenal objects which, like it or not, we experience bodily” (Fer, 1997, p.53). The emphasis on “bodily” experience in contemporary works of art is heightened through the creation of distinct “structural situations” including the vertical-horizontal axis of the grid, its scale, format and orientation, as well as the spatial installation of the work.

In 1924, Mondrian abruptly left the De Stijl movement and ended his friendship and colleagueship with Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931), after van Doesburg introduced the oblique into his configurations. Mondrian regarded the inclusion of the diagonal as a complete misunderstanding of De Stijl’s principles of “elementarization”\footnote{Elementarization refers to “the analysis of each practice into discrete components and the reduction of these components to a few irreducible elements” (Bois, 1993, p.103).} and “integration”.\footnote{Integration involves “the exhaustive articulation of these elements into a syntactically indivisible, nonhierarchical whole” (Bois, 1993, p.103).} In a letter addressed to van Doesburg, Mondrian wrote: “After your arbitrary correction of Neo-Plasticism, any collaboration, of no matter what kind has become impossible for me” (Schapiro, 1960, p.25).

In his treatise *Home-Street-City,* (1926), Mondrian discusses the unstable character of diagonal lines. He writes, “The oblique is naturally relative and depends upon our position or the position of things. But despite all relativism, man’s eye is not yet free from his body; vision is inherently bound to our normal position” (Fer, 1997, p.53). He further asserts that Neo-Plasticism is “the true and pure manifestation of cosmic equilibrium from which, as human beings, we cannot separate ourselves” (Bois, 1993, p.181).
Similarly, in his text *Painting as Model*, (1993), Bois explains that Mondrian vehemently rejected van Doesburg’s variable “improvement”:

… not so much because it disregarded the formal rule of orthogonality (which he himself had broken in his own “lozangique” canvases, as he called them) but because in a single stroke it destroyed all the movements efforts to achieve a total integration of all the elements of the painting. For as they glide over the surface of the canvas, van Doesburg’s diagonals re-establish a distance between the imaginary moving surface they inhabit and the picture plane (Bois, 1993, p.110).

Bois comments that Mondrian was preoccupied with the Neo-Plasticism principle of “static equilibrium”\(^\text{17}\) that “depended entirely on gravitational sentiment, on man’s upright position on earth” (Bois, 1993, p.180). His determination to achieve this aesthetic philosophy pertaining to absolute compositional harmony or balance is linked to social and metaphysical concerns. Mondrian’s diamond-shaped paintings demonstrate his unswerving commitment to the representation of the vertical-horizontal planes, in particular its structural suggestion of stability and stasis. Like Bois, Krauss and Schapiro, Fer also further asserts that the rift between Mondrian and van Doesburg was resultant on the phenomenological readings of particular structures and forms. She claims,

For van Doesburg, Mondrian’s work was too dependant in the end on the corporeal because of the dominance of the vertical-horizontal axis. For Mondrian, on the other hand, the oblique, or the diagonal line, was too much a relativistic idea, too much an expression of external movement” (Fer, 1997, p.53).

According to Fer, “The vertical-horizontal axis corresponds with the spectator’s bodily orientation; the spectator is both bound by the body and aspires to overcome it” (Fer, 1997, p.53). She adds, “The problem which the lozenge paintings intensify is the

\(^{17}\) Static equilibrium refers to the compositional or pictorial arrangement of visual harmony and stability. Mondrian carefully attuned his formats, configurations and colours to avoid the optical experience of instability, destabilisation and imbalance.
problem of bodily experience” (Fer, 1997, p.54). On encountering the work of Mondrian the sensitive viewer becomes increasingly aware of his or her own physical relationship to compositional structure. Vertical and horizontal structures are deliberately designed to heighten the sensation of “static equilibrium” in particular harmonious movement, which address “bodily” and perceptual issues of active engagement and participatory interaction and involvement.

Inverted orientations and multiple perspectives in contemporary architecture and abstract painting

In The Optical Unconscious, (1993), Krauss discusses issues of environmental orientation and retinal orientation. She points out that the physical world is predominately upright or vertical, which connects with the laws of gravity and a standing human bodily position. Krauss explains from a vertical viewing position human perception is active, objective and logical, whereas a reclining orientation undermines our understanding of space and our experience of space becomes somewhat warped or deformed. She claims alterations to orientation or “reorientation” throws spatial understandings into chaos (Krauss, 1993, p.246). On critiquing the conventions of painting and how it is encountered on the wall, Krauss asserts,

The vertical is not, then just a neutral axis, a dimension. It is a pledge. A promise, a momentum, a narrative. To stand upright is to attain to a peculiar form of vision: the optical; and to gain this vision is to sublimate, to raise up, to purify (Krauss, 1993, p.246).

These ideas of phenomenology, spatial warping and paradox led me to experiment with multiple orientations, including vertical and horizontal formats. To explore this further I explored displaying my work in multiple orientations to determine the most dynamic, theatrical and engaging pictorial spatial readings that might undermine or destabilise the viewer. For example, I examined Flying Buttress, (2011), (Figure 16a and Figure 16b), in several orientations, and discovered that in its original orientation or “upright” position (Figure 16a) the composition appeared more restful and stable than an inverted upside down orientation (Figure 16b) that seemed much more
dynamic, unstable and ambiguous. These ideas of spatial disorientation were confirmed on several occasions when different viewing subjects commented to me that painting was upside down when the work was displayed in the Figure 16b formation. This demonstrates how the position of the work effects spectator’s perceptions and prompted them to become disorientated.

To further explore these ideas, I investigated multiple orientations and vertical and horizontal formats in *Off-kilter*, (2011), (Figure 17a and Figure 17b). Rotating the original configuration on a ninety-degree clockwise angle (Figure 17a) generated very different pictorial spatial effects. For instance, in this position precariousness was suggested as the white tip of a triangular form points towards the bottom edge implying descent. The top-heavy character of the configuration further implicates this downward pull. The vertical format of the painting addresses the viewing subjects vertical bodily positioning, and further stresses the expression of gravitation and descent.

In contrast, in *Off-kilter* (Figure 17b) the original configuration has been reoriented on a one hundred and eighty degree angle to maximise the sensation of flight that is reinforced by the upward pointing angle of the irregular formation. This horizontal format suggests a more balanced and centred landscape-like reading. The reductive colour scheme of yellow-gold, silver, white gesso and mica grey is highly reflective.
and responsive to changes in the lighting conditions and the surrounding environment. The severely angular forms and iridescent metallic surfaces are designed to engage and activate the viewer by encouraging them to view the painting from unfixed and decentred positions.

Through changing the orientation of my compositions I realised that very different spatial readings were created and that I could further explore the sensation of instability and paradox in the work. Through inverting perspective and trialling multiple orientations I developed illogical and unnerving spatial effects.

Figure 17a
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Off-kilter*, 2011
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
Bois points out that there is a “difference in value of horizontal and vertical lines” and that horizontal formats imply landscape readings (Bois, 1993, p.181). This relates to my interest in vertical architecture and these ideas of elongated forms and oblique perspectives were developed in the *Sky-rise series*, (2011-2012). This project involved classifying and photographically recording high-rise architecture and emphasised a phenomenological approach to conducting research. Through undertaking several international research trips I walked through major urban centres to identify, experience, document and respond to “horizontal/vertical topologies”.

For instance, on a field trip to Hong Kong City in 2011, I photographed monolithic architecture from oblique views and off-centred positions. I focussed on recording buildings from threatening angles so that the architectonic forms appeared extremely unsteady and as though they were about to collapse. Through making photographic recordings, I documented the spatial unease and disorientation I experienced whilst
encountering vertical structures. I then created a series of drawings that explored spatial readings that emphasised a coiling vortex-like movement of unremitting rotation and flux (Figure 18).

![Figure 18](image)

Similar to my own work, Russian Suprematism and Constructivism art and architecture, including Gestalt psychology and issues of phenomenology, inform the practice of Zaha Hadid (b.1950). Her practice is concerned with representing spatial paradox and dislocation. For instance, she often combines multiple perspectives and aerial views in her designs and buildings to create extremely warped spatial situations. In *Blue and Green Scrapers*, Leicester Square, London, England, (1990)\(^\text{18}\), a collection of vertical towers are represented upside down. The inverted skyscrapers are extremely elongated and splintered, which generates the impression of shard-like forms hovering and slicing through space (Betsky, 2009, p.49). Spatial tension and confusion is created through altering traditional orientation readings and upsetting the “gravitational pull” of the structures so that they appear to float, tilt, turn and rotate dynamically in space. Arnheim explains “dynamic changes” occur when directional

readings of top and bottom are reversed (Arnheim, 1974, p.102). In this instance, spatial stability and balance is overturned and inverted.

Similarly, Sarah Morris explores unstable spatial effects by turning her compositions upside down. Her large-scale abstract geometric paintings feature up-close views of skewed grids. These modular structures reference the facades of modern and contemporary corporate architecture from multiple views at street level. In Midtown – Penn Plaza (lobby), (1999)19, she inverts classical perspective by turning the composition on a one hundred and eighty degree angle, which generates bewildering and unnerving pictorial spatial conditions for the viewer to contemplate. By changing the orientation of her composition Morris designs radical, dynamic and ambiguous pictorial spatial effects. On close inspection of her highly warped compositions, the fractured inverted perspectives affect the viewing subject in perceptually disturbing and undermining ways.

On the psychology of architecture and the experience of spatial unease, Morris claims: “Architecture … uses every trick in the book to manipulate you” (Nesbitt and Watkins, 2005, p.17). She adds, “I became interested in looking at these strategies – not just as subject matter, but also as issues of distraction, dislocation and intoxication in my art” (Nesbitt and Watkins, 2005, p.17).

**Oblique structures in contemporary installation art and architecture**

Feelings of instability have also been explored in the works of installation artists Richard Serra (b. 1939), Richard Wilson (b. 1953), and Bruce Nauman (b. 1941). Individually, they have explored the psychological effects associated with traversing through inclined narrow spaces, as well as potential “blind spot[s] in perception” through constructing dimly lit contorted passageways (Bishop, 2005, p.71). In order to procure confusing and contradictory directional readings, these artists create warped corridors that twist and turn unexpectedly via sloping floors, ceilings and walls. Their use of oblique angles and corner spaces draw out unnerving and uncertain

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experiences from the viewer, including feelings of spatial unease, claustrophobia and vertigo.

Vidler asserts that the representation of spatial deformation in early European abstract art has profoundly influenced the aesthetics and psychology of contemporary architecture (Vidler, 2001, p.7). For instance, the *Guggenheim Museum*, Bilbao, Spain, (1997)\(^{20}\), designed by Frank Gehry (b.1929), references Marcel Duchamp’s Cubist painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, (1912), (Puglisi, 1999, p.27). Modern spatial concerns and conditions explored in Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism and Constructivism are rigorously examined and further developed by Hadid and Gehry. Collectively, they have built on spatial preoccupations of modern avant-garde art through the use of multiple perspectives, aerial views, spatial warping and fragmented form.

In the exhibition catalogue, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, (1988), Mark Wigley observes that Hadid, Gehry, Daniel Libeskind (b.1946) and Peter Eisenman (b. 1932) “locate inherent dilemmas within building” and challenge classical “values of harmony, unity and stability” by “proposing a different view of structure; the view that flaws are intrinsic to structure” (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.11). He explains,

> In each project, the traditional structure of parallel planes – stacked up horizontally from the ground plane within a regular form – is twisted. The frame is warped. Even the ground is warped” (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.19).

Wigley adds,

> The structure is shaken but it does not collapse; it is just pushed to where it becomes unsettling. The work produces a sense of unease when floors and walls move disconcertingly, tempting us to trust something close to the edge (Johnson and Wigley, 1988, p.19).

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Hadid’s monochromatic and polychromatic architecture features slanting abstract forms made from both transparent and opaque materials that appear to defy gravity and suggest dynamic tension. She purposefully creates challenging spatial experiences for the public through the use of theatrical juxtapositions, intersections, splintering, distortions, voids and uncanny projections that are intended to act as metaphors of imperfection, loss and conflict that critique contemporary life (Blackwood, 2004, Video recording).

Hadid’s practice investigates Gestalt psychology, specifically how distinct spatial structures or patterns might affect the viewer psychologically. Her particular use of twisted and folded geometry featuring acute angles or sharp gradients stress directional movement and are intended to destabilise the viewer (Betsky, 2009, p.110). Hadid’s diagonal structures generate feelings of floatation, as well as spatial ambiguity and unease, including the sensation of claustrophobia and vertigo. The dramatic and explosive nature of her designs makes some of her buildings perceptually and physically difficult to navigate.

In Vitra Fire Station, Weil am Rhein, Germany, (1990-1994)21, Hadid combines multiple views and inverted perspectives to render space chaotic, unstable and gravity-free. She also experiments with narrowness, augmentation and deformation in order to engage and undermine the viewer’s navigation of space. Architectural theorist, Luigi Prestinenza Puglisi notes, “traditional perspective views are replaced by elaborate drawings of quivering forms and overlaid planes seen from unusual and antinaturalistic viewpoints” (Puglisi, 1999, p.26).

Similarly, in the new Jewish Museum Berlin, Germany, (2001)22, Libeskind uses splintered geometry, multiple perspectives, gaps and voids to create optical tricks and illusions that render space fragmented, chaotic and irregular. Fragmentation, distortion, deformation, intersection and movement are also implied in the metal-clad,

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zigzagging configurations designed by Libeskind (Schneider, 1999, p.36). He often uses diagonal, broken and fragmented lines that cut, fracture and scar both the exterior and the interior of a building. The psychology of the building’s spatial configuration means the physical experience of navigating the spaces results in feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and disorientation (Schneider, 1999, pp.50-51).

On a field trip to the Jewish Museum Berlin, I investigated how Libeskind uses structure, colour, surface and light to unsettle the viewer. For instance, I experienced the ways he carefully constructs skewed geometry and multiple oblique viewpoints in connection with an austere monochromatic tonal palette of black, white and grey to produce disquieting spatial situations for the public. On the ground floor of the museum, a series of dark stretched out bunker-like passageways with inclined floors extend and criss-cross at diagonal intersections. These slim corridors appear to lead into a series of dead ends, voids or gaps. As I traversed through the thunderbolt construction, the structure, colour, surface qualities and lighting situations continually shifted in dramatic and paradoxical ways, which rendered this architectural space unstable and frightening.

The interior and exterior of the Jewish Museum Berlin, twists, turns and convulses unexpectedly in order procure anxiety and uncertainty. Libeskind sets up phenomenological situations for the viewer to navigate and, in turn, become disorientated. Spatial tension, deformation and morphing are deployed through the use of multiple conflicting perspectives represented in the different rooms and levels of the building. For instance, on the upper levels of the museum, thin diagonal windows that are reminiscent of strobe-lighting let in punctured light.

Vidler discusses Libeskind’s deployment of gestalt principles, including figure-ground reversal and sharpening to effectively constructs “dizzying” structural and phenomenological conditions in architecture (Vidler, 2001, p.240). He also points out that Libeskind’s tortuous buildings are informed by the writings of Benjamin. For instance, like Benjamin, Libeskind abolishes classical perspective in the Jewish Museum by warping perspective, flattening space and obscuring figure-ground readings (Vidler, 2001, pp.239-240). Vidler asserts, “when confronted by the withdrawn exteriors and disturbing interiors of the Jewish Museum or the Victoria
and Albert extension, we find ourselves in a phenomenological world” and “in bodily and mental crisis” (Vidler, 2001, p.238). He claims,

classical homologies between the body and the building upset by unstable axes, walls and skins torn, ripped and dangerously slashed, rooms empty of content and with uncertain or no exits or entrances (Vidler, 2001, p.238).

Libeskind’s skewed corridors and rooms are designed to elicit unnerving experiences of disorientation and vertigo, and they trial the public’s capabilities of tolerating the experience of instability and disorder whilst navigating labyrinthine and warped spaces that reference modern urban space (Vidler, 2001, p.241).

Walking around the inside of the Jewish Museum Berlin, I experienced anxiety and disorientation first-hand. For example, as I walked up and down extremely twisted flights of stairs I felt vertigo, whilst inside the dimly lit tunnel and void spaces I became claustrophobic and agitated. As I made my way through the museum’s splintered interior I realised that the unforeseen changes in spatial structure severely impacted on how I felt. I also found it difficult to determine my whereabouts in the building, which led me to get lost and unexpectedly walk in circles.

Each level and room within the museum functions as an uncomfortable pressure zone that encourages the viewer to keep moving. Awkward void spaces and gaps are strategically positioned throughout the museum. The primary function of the building’s contorted structure is to draw out the experience of spatial uncertainty and unease.

It is evident that these particular contemporary architects and installation artists are engaged with eliciting strong emotions of anxiety and tension from the spectator. Similarly, in my work On edge, (Black Void), (2010), (Figure 19), I strived to create precarious cognitive and phenomenological experiences for the viewer through arranging oblique structures, fragmented formats and reflective materials to elicit a variety of perceptual responses, such as dislocation. In this painting the highly illusory irregular black chasm appears to awkwardly twist in deep space and was designed to draw the viewer in, to peer into darkness.
For instance, I use multiple perspectives, including aerial and oblique views in my abstract compositions, as well as projective geometry and fractured modular forms that reference and analyse the complexity and ambiguity of contemporary spatial environments, much like Libeskind’s work (Vidler, 2001, p.11).
Chapter Two: On the surface and beyond

Reflective colour schemes and paradoxical surface effects in geometric abstract painting

In this chapter I investigate the role and function of reflective materials, colours and surface qualities in my own practice and situate this in comparison to the work of other artists and architects. Theoretical discourse regarding the purpose of industrial materials and the use of commercial paint colours and surfaces is critically discussed to uncover contradictory visual effects relating to issues of reflection, movement, changeability, spatial ambiguity and deformation. Strategies to engage and activate a perceptual and physiological response from the viewer are examined through maximising perceived and actual movement of light in abstract painting practice, in particular through light reflection and refraction to create scintillating optical effects.

New cognitive experiences were created through systematically experimenting with and investigating the use of recently developed paint materials, pigments, colours and mediums to produce new chromatic and surface possibilities. In order to create ambiguous visual effects in my work a wide variety of reflective materials, colours and surface qualities were identified, collected and explored to procure contemplation and construct theatrical and dynamic phenomenological experiences for the spectator. The formal strategies and conceptual concerns I focus on include:

- Reductive colour palette
- Optical effects, including movement, light reflection, depth and spatial deformation
- Colour and surface change, including variation and reversal
- High-key colour contrasts and tonal shifts
- Juxtaposition of different materials, including paints, pigments and mediums
- Variations in surface qualities and paint layers
- Facture – surface texture, including paint handling
- Relationship between colour, structure, format and scale
- Expressive role of colour and surface texture
- Symbolic readings
Through these investigations, I explore how the use of commercial materials within the tradition of Western abstract painting informed my practical research, in particular the ways contemporary paint materials are utilised to create new optical effects that are analogous with contemporary architecture and urban space. I focus on the innovative uses of reflective painting materials and new synthetic colours influenced by digital technologies and high-gloss surface qualities to extend the possibilities and potentialities of contemporary abstract painting practice.

*On the surface and beyond,* the title of this chapter, suggests a reflection or mirroring of the physical world, including the implication of the viewer and the surrounding environment. Surface also points to the materiality and facture of a work of art as a strategy to engage and immerse the viewer, and maximise the complex interconnection between the reflective surface of a painting, the viewing experience and the spatial context.

My use of metallic colour schemes, reflective surface qualities and geometric forms is related to early European abstract art, design and architecture of the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s, in particular Russian Constructivism, De Stijl and the Bauhaus. Like the Constructivists, I explore issues of materiality, surface quality, form, colour, light, space, time and movement in my own work.

My concern for using a wide range of reflective commercial paints is a strategy to create colour change, surface flux, spatial projection and variation. The glossy metallic colours and surface textures I construct are connected with industrial aesthetics and optical illusions of movement, reflection and deformation evidenced in works by Constructivist artists, Popova, Lissitzky, Valadimir Tatlin (1885-1953) and Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956), as well as modernist artist Frank Stella (b. 1936). Stella, and to a certain extent the Constructivists, developed new cognitive and phenomenological situations for the viewer through the depiction of pictorial spatial geometric configurations intended to elicit a variety of perceptual responses. Like, Stella I use reflective materials and repeated geometric motifs to communicate technological metaphors concerning architecture and urban space.
In contrast to Stella, I use “special pigments” and professional artist’s paints, including acrylic or synthetic polymer mixtures, and traditional artist’s paintbrushes in order to attune colours and make chromatic variations (Rose, 2006, p.162). To communicate industrial meanings and metaphors in my own work, metallic colours, glossy surface finishes and geometric forms are deployed in ways that suggest the mechanical, technical or scientific. In other words, I create the illusion of graphic, industrial and architectural design in my work through the use of particular materials, methods and processes.

The use of contemporary materials and technologies is a significant aspect of this project. Important trends and developments in the manufacture of current paint materials for usage in contemporary painting have directly influenced my practice. I have investigated different types of reflective materials because they are characteristically unstable and interactive. For instance, glossy paint colours are highly responsive to physical changes in the surrounding environment, including atmospheric shifts, which can severely adjust the appearance of an artwork in paradoxical ways. Through combining and/or juxtaposing different paint materials, colours and surface qualities I create lustrous23 and opalescent24 works that explore the activation of reflection and surface movement to attain temporal visual awareness towards the instability and changeability of reflective colour and surface.

Through this project I experimented with the latest reflective materials available and explored new synthetic pigments influenced by current technologies in the contemporary world to create luminous optical effects. For instance, gesso, acrylic, metallic, iridescent25, interference26 and micaceous pigments, as well as gloss and matte mediums are juxtaposed, combined and meticulously layered and built up to

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23 Lustre refers to “a sheen or surface light such as that reflected from polished metallic surfaces” (RMIT University, *Colour in Western Art and Thought*, 1999, Glossary of technical and art terms, course notes).
24 Opalescence involves “the reflection of an iridescent play of colors as from the gemstone opal” (RMIT University, *Colour in Western Art and Thought*, 1999, Glossary of technical and art terms, course notes).
25 Iridescent (or metallic) pigments, as well as interference paints are made from combining mica flakes with paints. Iridescent and/or metallic colours “reflect light with the luster of semi polished metal” (Willard, 2003, p.10).
26 “Interference paints reflect the light from one viewing angle and its complementary from another angle – an effect that is commonly called color flip” (Willard, 2003, p.10).
produce a wide variety of different paint layers and densities, surface qualities and finishes in my work. Reflective materials are combined with oblique linear structures and fragmented abstract formats to investigate and create illusory spatial readings devised to disorientate and unsettle the viewer.

Colour and form is utilised as an organising tool for generating spatial ambiguity and tension in my practice. Through exploring reflective and reductive colour schemes and surface qualities I create pulsating visual effects that are comparable to the reflection and refraction of changing light on modern and contemporary buildings made from high-gloss glass and polished metals. The arrangement of high-key colour combinations and strong tonal contrasts emphasises the sensation of movement, spatiality and theatricality in my work. I anticipate that the attentive viewer on encountering my paintings will be encouraged to move in front of the work and view a painting from multiple angles to activate subtle colour and surface shifts.

Historical and conceptual antecedents that have directly influenced my work include Constructivism, Colour Field Painting and Minimalism. Like the Constructivists, I use quasi-industrial materials, methods and processes associated with the tradition of abstract painting, graphic design and architecture, including colours and forms associated with urban space. Whilst the work aesthetically references these historical antecedents, it is also concerned with the significance of personal experience (narrative) and expression (mood, emotion, expressiveness, individual touch) (Schapiro, 1978, p.12). The work reveals my own way of seeing and perceiving (subjectivity), including particular sensibilities and tastes, highlighted through material selection and modes of construction. The particular colours and abstract motifs I create operate as visual symbols that reference the physical world in which I live.

**Surface texture in early geometric abstract painting**

In *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*, (1993), art historian, John Gage, points out that the development of mass-produced paint colours, including the invention of new synthetic pigments in the nineteenth century impacted on modern painting practice (Gage, 1993, p.214 and p.221). He discusses
how these particular technological developments influenced the role of surface texture (or “faktura”) in Russian avant-garde art, in particular the significance of material properties and paint handling (Gage, 1993, p.225).

As a consequence of modern technology and industrialisation faktura became increasingly important in early European abstract art. Faktura refers to the physical virtues of a painting’s construction, in particular the use of different materials, paints and textures, and how these relate to other elements, including colour and surface (TATE, 2009, *Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism: explore the exhibition, room 1, para. 2*). Faktura was considered a primary element in modern abstract painting, and many modern artists experimented with material properties and the construction of paint surfaces (Gage, 1993, p.267). For instance, in Russian Constructivism, and related Constructivist movements, a wide range of mass-produced materials are used in the making of two-dimensional abstract paintings and three-dimensional constructions, including plywood, glass, metal sheeting and metallic paint. Similarly, in my own work I experiment with faktura, but I also consider the materiality of paint and paint technology to explore innovative material, structural and expressive effects.

Art critic, Nikolai Tarabukin wrote in his treatise ‘Towards a Theory of Painting’, (1923):

> [Material] colours themselves have an autonomous aesthetic value which is not exhausted by hue. They have a specific aesthetic potential which is an element in the sum of colouring . . . it is clear that the same art-object affects us differently according to whether it is painted in oil, watercolour or distemper (Gage, 1993, p.225).

In his earlier essay of 1916-23, he asserts:

> We have seen in respect of colour that the modern painter is distinguished by the very special reverence he has for his materials, to the point that even when he is working with colours he gives through them the feeling of material as
such, parallel to the effect produced by coloured sensations (Gage, 1993, p.267).

Tarabukin’s writings highlight the significance of material qualities and properties in early Western abstract painting, including medium specificity and methods of construction. He claims that the materials of a painting influence its timbre and expressiveness, and that brushwork and paint handling became exceedingly pertinent in drawing one’s attention to the material substance of painting (Gage, 1993, p.225). His writings also pre-empt modernist and post-modernist painting practices material preoccupations.

Surface texture is related to the ideology of Institute of Artistic Culture (Inkhuk) that was established in May 1920 to reflect the communist governments involvement in technology, industrialisation and utilitarianism. The primary aim of Inkhuk was to “establish a scientific basis for the creation of art and find objective criteria defining artistic creation” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.21). Laboratory research was conducted into modern materials and reductive forms that could be developed into functional everyday goods. The Constructivist artists used a shared geometric language made from linear tracings of a setsquare, ruler and compass. These drawing processes were analogous to scientific and technical drawing utilised in science, architecture and design, and involved an objective analysis of the physical world and industrial production (Fer, 1990, p.81).

Similarly, in Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today, (2008), art writer and curator, Ann Temkin observes that during the 1910s and 1920s art was integrated into everyday life and the environment (Temkin, 2008, p.22). She explains art was made for society and that functional and mass-produced objects were created for the general public. Temkin also stresses that modern art’s association with new technology reflects an “anxiety that — art had to keep up with technological advances” (Temkin, 2008, p.23). For example, Tatlin and Rodchenko used metal paints, metal sheeting, lacquers, varnishes, wire, glass and plywood in their three-dimensional constructions to stress material variation, as well as structural and technological functions (Milner, 1983, p.132 and p.154).
Modern preoccupations with material substance were further reiterated in De Stijl, Unism and at the Bauhaus. For instance, Mondrian, van Doesburg and Caesar Domela (1900-1992), all regarded colour as material. For instance, during teaching duties at the Bauhaus, van Doesburg compared the colour contrasts of blue and yellow to the tension between wood and concrete (Gage, 1993, p.296). Whilst a close study of Domela’s reliefs reveal his preoccupation with harmoniously arranging unusual combinations of modern materials including Perspex, shagreen (sharkskin), plywood and palm tree wood, as well as precious materials including silver, copper and ivory (Derouet, 1984, p.128).

These material preoccupations informed the related projects conducted within this PhD. For instance, in the Metallic Reflective series, (2009-2010), I experimented with using metallic and iridescent oil colours on aluminium sheeting, as well as different types of metallic papers and cardboards to explore the reflection and refraction of light on industrial commercial materials. In contrast, the Iridescence series, (2010), focused on the use of acrylic interference pigments on mass-produced plywood panels to further develop changeable and ambiguous pictorial spatial readings that reinforce unstable colour effects and figure-ground confusion. Surface movement and reflection was also explored in the Instability series, (2010-2013), through the use of glossy synthetic paint colours and mediums on hot and cold press paper and fine-grained canvas to maximise the viewers reflection and incidents of spatial blurring and deformation.

Popova’s abstract paintings offer space for further exploration of surface texture and architecture, in particular the reflection of light through the use of new reflective materials and technologies. As discussed in Chapter One: Thresholds for Disorientation, Popova’s paintings are concerned with architecture, urban space and spatial deformation. These building metaphors are also reinforced in her titles, material usage and methods of construction (application of paint). In the Space-Force Construction series, (1921-1922), she uses modern manufactured materials, for example, plywood and marble dust, to build up diagonal linear structures. Industrial metaphors, including machine aesthetics and a sense of utopianism are communicated in her pictures. An important aspect of the series that has influenced this project is the play of light on thickly textured surfaces that result in the sensation of “vibrating
space and shimmering light” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.20). Similarly, in my own work I create gleaming industrial surface qualities by layering reflective pigments and surfaces in ways that are comparable to contemporary architectural facades. This is discussed further in Chapter 3 – Including the kitchen sink on pages 108-109.

Popova’s geometric abstract paintings investigate spatial deformation, and her depiction of warped architectonic motifs, combined with the use of quasi-industrial materials has influenced my own practice. Dabrowski has discussed that Popova’s use of architectonic motifs is significant to her travels to Samarkand and Birsk in 1916 to study ancient architecture. She asserts that Popova “was stimulated by Islamic architecture and struck by the unusual and complex play of light reflected from different surfaces of the buildings” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.17). On having examined some of Popova’s work firsthand, I would argue that her material preoccupations, for example, wood, metal and marble dust, and the construction of coarse paint layers is analogous to the complexities of different surface textures in urban space and architecture. Critical analysis of her work reveals her material preoccupations and the significance of facture, including processes of construction and paint handling.

In Space-Force Construction, (1921)27, various sections of the plywood support surface are left unpainted in order to reveal and incorporate the wood grain texture as an important formal element of the work. The composition comprises a series of crisscrossing white lines that vary in width, length and direction, some of which are tapered in alternating positions and are cropped by the picture frame to create pictorial spatial unease and dynamism. Dabrowski points out that the oblique angles “creates the impression of representing fragments of industrial structure held together by tensile cables” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.24). The white diagonal lines feature a thickly encrusted surface that is applied using a palette knife. The irregularity of the dense surface texture maximises the reflection and refraction of light, whilst the adjacent black-brown “feathery shadows” absorb the light to create the illusion of spatial recession that is analogous to the sensation of light and shadow cast on different architectural surfaces (Dabrowski, 1991, p.24).

Popova’s Constructivist paintings focus primarily on faktura. Within the *Space-Force Construction* series, she alternates between mixing wood, marble, copper and bronze powder into her oil colours to create shimmering surface textures. Another distinctive feature of the series is the idiosyncratic construction of paint layers and paint handling, in particular she uses a range of stippling techniques made from applying thick, opaque paint with a palette knife to compose encrusted surfaces contrasted with feathered brushstrokes that create a relief-like surface texture built up “away from the picture plane” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.17). In these paintings Popova stresses the materiality of ground (plywood or paper) and the gritty pigments through exposing and juxtaposing different surface textures and varying paint application, for instance, she repeatedly leaves areas of the plywood, canvas or paper support untreated or unpainted. These textural strategies result in the construction of contradictory surface effects and pictorial spatial illusions (Milner, 1996, p.130).

Analysis of Popova’s paintings reveals her obsession with faktura and the virtues of dissimilar material substances. For example, she creates her paintings by intermixing and layering a wide range of paints, pigments and surfaces, including oil paint, iron oxide, aluminium silicates, calcite, wood shavings, metal flakes, marble dust, lacquer and varnish on assorted support surfaces, such as woven paper, cardboard, plywood, board, fibreboard and canvas. Close inspection of the paint surfaces reveals her sensitivity to material properties and surface qualities, in particular the innovative juxtaposition of different materials, paints, pigments and mediums, and the complex construction of mixed paint layers and paint handling. Popova’s multidirectional brushstrokes are thick and painterly, and in *Space-Force Construction*, the painterly brushmarks interchange from opaque and encrusted to semi-transparent and feathery to demonstrate variations in surface qualities and paint layers. Her grounds and mottled paint handling creates divergent surface textures that encourage the viewer to contemplate coarse, pitted, stippled and variegated surface accretions (Dabrowski, 1991, p.113).

Popova’s paint colours and surface textures are highly complex and irregular. It is significant to point out that during the making of her paintings multiple colour alterations are detected and she continuously reworks her surface textures to construct a wide range of colour modulations and a variety of brushwork. These colour and
surface shifts lead to rewarding and contemplative visual experiences. In her *Painterly Architectonic* series, colour intensity is heightened through her technique of overlapping different shades of a similar hue (for example, different reds) and/or dramatically changing colours (for example, overlaying inky blues over strong yellows and browns, yellows over oranges, and whites over yellows over whites) (Dabrowski, 1991, pp.114-115).

Popova’s dynamic colour palette was “worked out and refined as the painting progressed” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.115). She astutely orchestrated her colours and surface textures to create pulsating harmonies in the work, as well as deviating expressive effects. Conservator, Eugena Ordonez explains,

> Her sensitivity to color is also evident in her methods for combining pigments. Popova appears to have a preference for the color of certain pigments for example, some blues are consistently made from one pigment, where other pigments are usually combined in complex mixtures … Popova’s characteristic manipulation of the paint materials, (the pigments, extenders, and binders) and her awareness of each pigment’s nuance of color suggest that she was also very involved with raw materials from which the formal element of color was created (Dabrowski, 1991, p.115).

In her *Painterly Architectonics* and *Space-Force Construction* series, the elements of painting (composition, colour, form, line and surface texture) are treated as though they are physical materials. Popova’s exceptionally coarse paint layers and uneven surface accretions create a three-dimensional quality (and an object-like reading) to her two-dimensional works. Her desire to change the consistency of her paints through adding extenders, powders and gloss varnish resulted in the production of dynamic surface tensions (Dabrowski, 1991, p.116).

Popova’s predilection for using various materials to explore different surface qualities, expressive effects and ambiguous spatial readings is reflected in her commitment to making multiple versions of similar compositional structures, but deploying different supports, grounds, paints, pigments, formats and scales, which stress her role as a modern designer and quasi-builder, engineer or architect (Temkin,
2008, p.23). Within the *Space-Force Construction* series, scientific laboratory work is emphasized by Popova’s production of multiple versions of linear structures with similar titles. For instance, the skewed grid-like configuration in *Space-Force Construction*, (1921), is very similar to the one in *Space-Force Construction*, (1921)28, however the reductive black and white colour scheme is inverted to create contradictory spatial readings. Through carefully comparing and critically contrasting the two related works the sensitive viewer will identify that different materials have been used, which result in distinct surface textures and accretions. There is also a discrepancy in scale and format. These colour reversals and changes in scale, format, material usage and paint application are repeatedly explored through throughout the series.

Like in the work of Popova, I make multiple versions of compositional structures that vary in scale, format, material, colour, ground (support) and formation. Unlike Popova, I frequently invert my configurations to create ambiguous and paradoxical spatial readings through the investigation of mirror images. As in Popova’s paintings, my compositions regularly undergo a slight structural change between related works, which is determined by a shift in scale and/or format. At other times, I significantly alter the configuration to create a different spatial reading between works that are structurally similar (for instance, mirror images and composition reversal and/or rotation).

Dabrowski comments that the colour changes in Popova’s work appear much more dynamic than the structural changes, which she describes as “static” (Dabrowski, 1991, p.21). On comparing my work with Popova’s practice, I would argue that despite using a reductive colour palette as Popova does, I explore contradictory spatial readings further by investigating dynamic compositional changes and colour shifts between related works. This also encourages the viewer to spot the repeated image that might be blurred by significant colour changes and or structural reversals and/or multiple orientations. On the other hand, in the *Space-Force Construction* series Popova repeats her reductive colour palette across related works, which makes recognizing repeated structures and/or versions fairly obvious.

For instance, *Green slide*, (2012), (Figure 20), and *Topsy-turvy*, (2012), (Figure 21), are mirror images. On close contemplation of the related works, the viewer might notice that slight changes have been made to the structural formation. In particular, the black triangle in the lower right hand corner of *Green slide*, is edited out of *Topsy-turvy* version. The structural reversals and significant colour changes between the related works generate very different spatial readings. Through repeating, reversing and adjusting structures, and varying colour schemes, tones and surface qualities, contradictory spatial readings and expressive effects are produced.

Figure 20
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Green slide*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Popova’s symbolic and expressive use of particular materials (colours and surfaces textures) and architectonic structures has influenced my PhD work. Analysis of her abstract paintings reveals complexity in meaning and methods of construction. Her use of different grounds (including, absorbent and non-absorbent supports) and dissimilar paint materials and innovative paint emulsions heightens the viewer’s attention to the material construction of a painting, including new reflective surface textures that are “more physical and tangible” and maximise the materiality of painting (Dabrowski, 1999, p.24). These distinct surface textures also provide the viewer with clues that reveal how the work has been made. Her distinctive working methods and materials, including her use of textural supports, underdrawing, alternate
paint layers, glazing techniques and different types of varnishes are strategies that enhance contemplation and active engagement on encountering a work of art.

Similar to the work of Popova, I use a range of supports, including aluminium sheeting, plywood, hot press and cold press papers, and fine-grained canvas in my practice to explore a variety of textural and material virtues. Next, drawing processes are carried out through making tracings of a ruler using grey lead pencil on plywood or canvas, and scoring the aluminium or paper with a scalpel. These faint surface markings and incisions heighten close inspection. Likewise, a variety of paint layers and mediums are meticulously layered through smooth and mottled brushwork to procure meditation. For instance, I combine iridescent and/or metallic pigments with regular paint colours to compose an array of reflective colours and surface qualities, such as interference magenta-gold. The polychromatic lustre of the carefully sequenced and attuned metallic and interference hues procures contemplation, active participation and engagement with the work. The factual nature of my paintings prompts a close-up view in addition to seizing the whole. For example, I deploy a combination of fine and/or coarse pigments that reflect the light in dissimilar and irregular ways to obtain optical scrutiny. Additionally, the directional brushwork, the juxtaposition of divergent paint surface qualities, including the construction of glossy semi-transparent accretions, emphasise colour luminosity and surface reflectivity.

Similar to Popova’s paintings, I alternate between using high-key and/or warm-cool colour contrasts, and strong and/or subtle colour and surface effects. For instance, in Unstable colours, 2012, (Figure 22), I juxtaposed similar hues of grey and silver in analogous tones, but with different surface textures of matte and metallic-glossy to create scintillating colour variations and delicately subtle surfaces that pulsate in connection with the light and the viewers bodily positioning. In contrast, Instability, (2012), (Figure 23), investigates strong colour, tonal and surface contrasts, discords and clashes to maximise spatial dynamism and tension. Strong and slight colour collisions were further explored in Red stripe, (2012), (Figure 24), through the strange juxtaposition of glossy warm oxide red and cool magenta versus matte black and shiny chocolate brown. In contrast to Popova’s practice, I use a wider range of reflective materials, colours and surface qualities as a strategy to manipulate the viewer to interact with the work from an off-centred and unfixed position.
Chapter Two: On the surface and beyond

Figure 22
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Unstable colours, 2012*
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 23
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Instability, 2011-2012*
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Contemporary abstract painting and architecture

Popova’s mixed media geometric abstract paintings highlight some of the ways in which artists today can utilise current commercial materials and paint technologies in their practices, and be influenced by recent innovations in architecture and urban space. I see Popova’s work as further extending the formal and conceptual possibilities, opportunities and potentialities of contemporary painting practice.

For example, Julie Mehretu combines a wide range of commercial acrylic paints and air brush paints in her work, including Guerra, Liquitex and Golden, as well as a variety of different inks, such as Sennelier, India ink, Sumi ink and shellac-based colour inks. She explains,

I use ink, paint, acrylic paint, different kinds of acrylic paint, different air brush paints, it really depends on what part of the painting (Fig, 2009, p.133).
Mehretu adds,

I am brand loyal for particular processes. I find Golden brand paints too plastic for use with masking tape or to get a solid opaque colour – I prefer using Liquitex brand for those processes. But then when I’m airbrushing or using transparent colours, I prefer Golden paints. I also really like to use Golden material [mediums] for different kinds of texturing with the paint (Fig, 2009, p.133).

Mehretu’s insightful comments reveal the multitude of commercial paints available for use today by professional artists and shows that she uses a complex emulsion of different types of acrylic paints and inks, which emphasises her material preoccupations for combining “a mixture of gloss paint and silica based paint” (Fig, 2009, p.133). Her statement, “We spray the material on the painting and then sand it to create the smooth, transparent surface. I use a HVLP [high-volume/low-pressure spray system] to do that” reinforces her industrial commercial approach (Fig, 2009, p.133). These assertions also reveal that Mehretu has a team of assistants and that she uses mechanical devices to make her paintings. On having seen some of Mehretu’s large-scale paintings in situ, I can confirm that her surfaces are immaculately smooth.

As discussed by Mehretu, today there are a multitude of industrial commercial materials available for usage by contemporary artists and that different brands with inherently different qualities are readily available for purchase from hardware, building and art suppliers.

Contemporary architecture and rapid industrial changes in urban environments generate new spatial situations and visual experiences for the public. New perspectives in architecture, as well as contemporary experiences of congested city spaces has led me to investigate these physical conditions in abstract painting practice. Technological developments are explored in my work with a focus on investigating high-gloss glass and patina metal finishes to explore new surface effects and optical illusions in abstract painting. Variations in surface qualities and properties; shadow effects and the play of light on glossy architectural facades, including shifting shadows, reflections and spatial deformations are examined through
painting practice. For instance, the reflective colours and surfaces depicted in my work are influenced by Frank Gehry’s use of titanium panels and high-gloss glass in his contemporary architectural facades. The impact of current architectural surfaces on my practice is further discussed in Chapter 3 – *Including the kitchen sink* on page 125.

The facture of my paintings is comparable to the polished metal and high-gloss glass surface textures of contemporary high-rise and low-rise corporate and residential buildings. For instance, I use a range of metallic and iridescent colours, including gold, silver, copper, bronze and pearl, as well as gloss mediums in my work to reflect the viewer and the surrounding environment in mimetic and deforming ways. These shimmering colours and illusory surface effects enhance slow looking. Through investigating industrial finishes and coatings used in contemporary architecture and, in turn, making several series of works based on my astute observations I explore the connection between contemporary abstract painting and contemporary architecture. In particular, how contemporary paint materials can be used to emulate current architectural surface textures to create new optical effects, and perceptual and phenomenological experiences in abstract painting practice.

**Reflective materials, colours and surface qualities in American and European abstract painting in mid-1950s and 1960s**

American and European geometric abstract art in the mid-1950s and 1960s is deeply embedded within the Constructivist traditions of the 1910s and 1920s (Temkin, 2008, p.23). Malevich and Rodchenko, including the founder of Polish Unism,²⁹ Władysław Strzemiński (1893-1952) produced the first monochrome paintings that investigated the painterly construction of singly coloured grounds to create scintillating colour effects and surface qualities. These early optical works influenced the reflective monochrome paintings produced by Frank Stella (b. 1936), Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), Ellsworth Kelly (b.1923), Robert Ryman (b.1930), Yayoi Kasuma (b. 1929), Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), and Yves Klein (1928-1962), among others, in the mid-1950s and 1960s. Malevich focussed on making luminous white on white.

²⁹ Unism is a scientific theory based on the physiology of vision. The movement integrated optical laws (of divisionism and simultaneous contrast) and “the phenomenology of perception” (Rose, 2006, p.93).
paintings, whilst Strzeminski created pale monochromes with flecks of light blue and yellow tones that reflected the light in shimmering and vibrating ways.

Strezminski was especially concerned with constructing innovative surface textures to create moiré effects (or after-images) and the optical illusion of incessant movement on a monochromatic surface (Rose, 2006, p.96). He explored pulsating optical effects of colour vibration and surface radiance through carefully layering mottled and stippled brushstrokes on canvas to produce highly encrusted and patterned surfaces, including ribbed, honeycombed and granulated textural effects that form highly ambiguous and blurred patterns of intermixed “zones of pale colors” (Rose, 2006, p.99). On the significance of procuring temporal visual consciousness, Strzeminski writes,

> Perception is the interaction between the eye and the mind, which prompts visual awareness or consciousness and movement of the eye” (Rose, 2006, p.93).

In *Monochromes from Malevich to the present*, (2006), art historian and critic, Barbara Rose asserts that the “revolutionary” Constructivist monochromes,

exploited optical and physical laws as “poetic”: sometimes the monochrome constructed from a surface dappled or stippled with coloured dots became a virtual monochrome in its perception as a retinal after-image; sometimes the absence of color or the monochromatic aspect of a translucent or reflective material created a kind of polychromy of ephemeral reflections (Rose, 2006, p.89).

In contrast to the early Constructivist monochromes, Rose points out, American and European geometric abstract art of the mid-1950s and 1960s focused on exploring a wide range of commercial materials to create innovative colours and surface qualities as a means of actively engaging the spectator’s perceptual and physiological response to a work of art. She claims that this interest in phenomenology coincided with the production and use of new reflective industrial materials, including metallic house paints, metal sheeting, metal tubing, acrylic sheeting, transparent plastics, electric
lighting and recycled matter (Rose, 2006, p.103). At the time Colour Field and Minimalist artists, Stella, Kelly, Sol Lewitt (1929-2007), Robert Morris (b.1931), Donald Judd (1928-1994), John Chamberlain (1928-2011), and founder of the German ZERO movement Heinz Mack (b.1931), among others, combined reflective materials with rectilinear forms in modular repeated compositions to create new visual and perceptual experiences for the viewer (Rose, 2006, p.22). Potential interruptions and variations to the surface structure and colour encouraged the viewer to consider the transient nature of visual perception. Rose asserts, “In this sense the viewer’s perception becomes a chance element, a kind of noise troubling the visual order” (Rose, 2006, p.108).

These ideas relate to art theorist and critic Michael Fried’s writings on the significance of the viewing encounter in Literalist or Minimalist Art. In his classic essay, *Art and Objecthood*, (1967), Fried discusses particular strategies used by artists to address the viewer, and in turn, encourage them to actively participate with the work. He clearly explains how the use of reflective industrial materials heightened the viewer’s awareness of the works “objecthood”, in particular its materiality, surface quality, shape, scale, and its relationship to the viewer’s body and (changes in) the surrounding space (Fried, 1998, p.155). Fried contends, these formal devices prompt the “ beholder” to encounter an artwork from “an indeterminate, open-ended—and unexacting—relation as subject to the impassive object on the wall or floor” (Fried, 1996, p.155).

On the theatrical and temporal nature of the viewing experience, Fried claims, the beholder is made aware of the endless and inexhaustibility if not of the object itself at any rate of his experience of it. This awareness is further exacerbated by what might be called the inclusiveness of his situation, that is, by the fact, remarked earlier, that everything he observes counts as part of that situation and hence is felt to bear in some way that remains undefined on his experience of the object (Fried, 1998, p.166).

These comments by Fried stress issues of time and space in relation to the viewing encounter. They explain how spatial context and/or the surrounding environment,
including changing light conditions and the audience’s appearance are implicated in the work of art, and affect the viewing experience. Fried identifies the need to encounter works physically or in situ and not through media reproductions. He was responding to the growing popularity of print, television and film technologies in the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise, it is essential that my work be experienced in situ, as it is difficult to photograph and/or reproduce in print.

Similar to Minimalist practices, in my own work I have used the latest reflective paint materials and technologies to explore issues of light reflection, colour and movement in order to engage and activate a perceptual and phenomenological response from the viewer. Reflective materials are used to create optical illusions that mirror the viewer and the surrounding environment in fragmented and distorted ways. The facture of my paintings, including the distinctive surfaces qualities are ploys to encourage the viewer to comprehend the work from an unfixed and decentred viewing position.


On the use of readymade reflective materials in the 1960s Krauss explains that industrial metaphors and machine aesthetics are strongly communicated. She asserts that Minimalist artists, such as Judd, were preoccupied with industrial surface finishes and material qualities that stress an anti-gestural position. Krauss’ writings draw attention to the immaculate fabrication of objects. She asserts that pristinely polished surfaces were investigated to address the “terrain of industrial culture, which Minimalism had been exploring from the outset, … but with its logic, which is that of serialization, the multiple, and replication” (Bois and Krauss, 1997, p.217).
Bois similarly argues that the tendency to use reflective industrial commercial materials, colours and surface qualities in modern painting, sculpture and installation art, led artists to explore ideas of imitation, mirroring and repetition, as well as kitsch aesthetics and fakeness (Bois and Krauss, 1997, p.120). For instance, he observes that Fontana obsessively creates “gleaming” and “agitated” surface finishes and effects through his meticulous use of gold leaf on canvas that is violently interrupted and aggressively defaced by using slashing and/or perforating techniques. Bois observes that Fontana’s reflective monochromes are “kitsch” and “gessoed with a repulsive icing before being punctured” (Bois and Krauss, 1997, p.58). He further asserts that Fontana’s practice accentuates,

kitsch, culture of the gutter, of trash, is itself scatological … (the quack of bad taste) in the pictorial register: by means of fake gems glued to his canvases (1951-1956), sparkles of acidic colors … in the Fine di Dio series (1963-64), gold grounds in certain punctured paintings, and, the culinary accent placed on creamy pigment, treated like frosting on a cake (Bois and Krauss, 1997, p.120).

Bois’ writing highlights modernist distaste for the ‘decorative’ (or additive) to the form – and against which abstraction had to defend itself. Together Bois and Krauss stress that modern abstract art was beyond pattern (and surface).

In contrast, Op artists, including Rakuko Naito (b. 1935), Julian Stanczak (b. 1928), Lorser Feitelson (1898-1978), and Victor Vasarely (1906-1997) also experimented with commercial metallic paints in their work during the 1960s, but they rely on a systemic approach to compositional structure and use optical colour fusion and contour rivalry to create retinal and spatial disturbances (Houston, 2008, p.77). Geometric patterns and reflective metallic colours and surface textures were combined to communicate the aesthetics of technology and progress and “futuristic connotations” (Houston, 2008, p.60).
Reflective commercial paint materials

Commercial paint developments post-World War II profoundly influenced the industrial appearance and meaning of modernist painting (Gage, 1993, p.267). Reflecting on colour as a readymade commercial product, Stella said in a radio interview in 1964:

The artist’s tools or the traditional artist’s brush and maybe even oil paint are all disappearing very quickly. We use mostly commercial paint, and we generally tend toward larger brushes. … I didn’t want to make variations; I didn’t want to record a path. I wanted to get the paint out of the can and onto the canvas. … I tried to keep the paint as good as it was in the can (Gage, 1993, p.268).

Stella’s groundbreaking comments reflect his objective, impersonal and systematic methods to making abstract paintings. Temkin and Fer claim the commoditisation (or mass-production) of colour resulted in artists taking on a “mater-of-fact approach to color… without symbolic and expressive baggage” (Temkin, 2008, p.29). Collectively they argue that Stella, Kelly, LeWitt, Chamberlain and Judd, among others, explored a “colour chart” sensibility rather than traditional physiological colour theories, and that industrial and mechanical metaphors were increasingly communicated in their work through the use of machine-produced colours, for example the highly glossy qualities of automobile enamel manufactured by Ditzler and Harley Davidson (Temkin, 2008, p.30).

Fer explains these modernist artists investigated “the color chart [that] locates color in commerce, links it irreversibly to trade, to the workshop, to the car sales-room, to the hardware store” (Temkin, 2008, p.33). Similarly, in my own work I have focused on using the latest reflective paint materials and technologies available today from art suppliers and hardware stores. Stella’s practice in particular explores colour as a store-bought industrially produced commodity, which is emphasised through his use of discontinued and/or “out-of-fashion” decorator colours to address issues concerning “modern consumption” and “objectiveness” (Temkin, 2008, p.33).
Stella’s distinct use of glossy commercial paint colours applied with housepainter’s tools, such as brushes and masking tape was highly innovative. For example, in his large-scale Black paintings, (1959-1960), he explored spatial-temporal issues via the use of black enamel paints, repeated modular structures and rectilinear formats that refer to his own experience of modern urban space and architecture (Rubin, 1970, p.10). On close inspection of these reflective reductive monochrome paintings slight irregularities and glitches are perceptible. The uneven application of shiny black paint and the irregular widths of the hand painted consecutive bands produce blurred reflections of the viewer and the surrounding space.

The monumental size of the paintings combined with the use of serial architectonic patterns and structures, and vertical (bodily) and horizontal (landscape) formats, stress the significance of phenomenology and the experiential in his work. In the Black painting series, the configurations are symmetrical, and sometimes the regular formations are repeated or doubled vertically or horizontally to explore “bilateral symmetry” (or mirror images). These formal and conceptual strategies are utilised to explore “the way in which the work of art imposes itself on the perception and experience of the viewer” (Rubin, 1970, p.37).

The facture and surface qualities of Stella’s early Black paintings are irregular and painterly, which generate ambiguous optical effects. In her book Machine in the Studio, (1996), art writer, Caroline A. Jones observes that the saturated application of glossy black enamel on unprimed cotton duct was “erratic”. She explains,

Some layers of Stella’s dutiful overpainting are soaked into a matte texture of dark canvas; other layers are repelled, as the impervious lacquer began to dry and build a soft sheen. As one moves laterally in relation to the painting, light is reflected, refracted, and absorbed in varying degrees (Jones, 1996, p.149).

Jones’ writings draw attention to the physical experience of standing in front, and moving past the Black paintings. She points out that the use of glossy black surfaces combined with the irregular paint handling heightens the viewer’s perception of facture, reflection and surface change. Each paintings shimmering surface accretions and labyrinthine or box-like structure procures contemplation, interaction and
decentralised viewing positions. The series’ “blackness” (or darkness) also presents an “eerie presence” in particular the illusion of spatial recession or depth and void (Jones, 1996, p.149).

Stella’s reflective monochromes of the late 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s were designed to engage and implicate the viewing subject. Experiencing the work of Stella firsthand has led me to further explore issues of perceived and actual movement of light and colour in abstract painting practice. In particular, I focus on the creation of shiny blurred surfaces that maximise reflection and spatial deformation as a means to procure active contemplation, engagement and physical participation in response to a work of art. Critical analysis of Stella’s distinct use of reflective commercial materials, large-scale canvases, rectilinear formats and repeated modular structures place emphasis on affecting the viewer’s perceptual/spatial encounter. For instance, his glossy surfaces simultaneously reflect and deform the viewer and the surrounding environment. Significantly during the visual experience of his work the viewer becomes aware as to how their own physical appearance and changing light conditions implicates and alters the work.

Stella’s use of reflective commercial paints and materials in his practice is prolific. Since the late 1950s, he has systematically and inexhaustibly explored a wide range of commercial paint colours and surface effects, for example, epoxy enamels, polymer and alkyd emulsions, aluminium and copper paint, metallic colours, Day-Glo pigments and fluorescent hues to explore gleaming industrial surface finishes and ambiguous reflections. He also experimented with painting on a range of different supports, including corrugated cardboard, cardboard, canvas, wood and steel to express materiality and industrial readings. Glossy colours and a variety of surface qualities were deliberately used by Stella to create optical effects and perceptual experiences analogous with modern architecture and urban space.

His systematic approach is emphasised through the use of commercial paints and tools. For instance, in the manufacture of the Aluminum, (1960-1964), Copper, (1960-1961), and Benjamin Moore, (1961), series’ he uses alkyd and polymer, masking tape and large paintbrushes to ensure the smooth application of paint, which purposely conceals handmade qualities, such as brushstrokes and glitches. Stella’s methodology
changes his role as an artist into something that is also quasi-housepainter and tradesman (Temkin, 2008, p.17).

Stella’s Aluminum paintings operate very differently from the Black paintings. For instance, he uses reflective aluminium paint to create “repellent” surface sheen that produces “projective” spatial readings (Jones, 1996, p.165). The metallic gleam affects the eye and casts highly ambiguous optical illusions that generate nauseating spatial experiences. The quality of these surface reflections is not that of a polished mirror, but a confusing blur synonymous with the flashing surfaces of industrial objects. Stella was concerned with the “repellency” of aluminium paint. He says,

The aluminium surface had a quality of repelling the eye in the sense you couldn’t penetrate it very well. It was a kind of surface that wouldn’t give in, and would have less soft, landscape-like or naturalistic space in it. I felt that it had the character of being slightly more abstract. But there was also a lot of ambiguity in it. It identifies with its own surface, yet it does have a slightly mysterious quality in one sense. You know it’s on the surface, but it catches just enough light to shimmer. That shimmering surface has very much its own kind of surface illusionism. It’s own self-contained space. You can’t quite go into it. And it holds itself in a nice way on the surface as far as painting problems are concerned (Stella quoted in Rubin, 1970, p.60).

Art writer and critic, William S. Rubin also identifies the “abstractness” and “objectiveness” of commercial metallic paint. He asserts:

metallic colors are not the colors one sees in nature. To an extent they carry associations, these are associations to the world of man-made objects, particular industrial products and machinery (Rubin, 1970, p.60).

Rubin also points out that the facture and surface quality of the Aluminum paintings was sharp and even. He explains, “The bands… were applied in a way that left far fewer traces of the artist’s hand” and that the “the edges were cut sharply ‘as with a sash tool’ (a small angled brush which house painters use to cut around the molding of windows)” (Rubin, 1970, p.63). This pictorial crispness and flatness is undermined
by the faint seepage “of the oily binding agent in the aluminium paint” (Rubin, 1970, p.63). As in my own paintings, traced pencil marks are perceptible through the transparent paint layers and/or unpainted areas. Like Stella, I use masking tape but I remove any evidence of paint leakage to produce immaculate surfaces.

*Newstead Abbey*, (1970)\(^{30}\), is a good example of the *Aluminum* paintings. Its large-scale, vertical format and predominately vertical linear pattern are shrewd formal strategies set up to address the viewer’s upright or standing bodily positioning. The successive jogs in the composition echo the irregular shape of the canvas and the light reflects off the metallic painted surface especially along the corners to create pulsating rippling effects that extend in diagonal directions (Rubin, 1970, p.63). These optical effects encourage the viewer to move in front of the work, including moving backwards and forwards, and from side-to-side in order to experience flickering and erratic surface changes. Stella strategically uses commercial metallic pigments as a device to engage the viewer phenomenologically.

The *Aluminum* paintings are highly optical and illusory, and were made for the opening exhibition of the new Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, (1960)\(^{31}\). The scale, format and structure of the paintings were designed in connection with the gallery space, including their site-specific spatial installation inside the gallery and the reflective surface qualities stressed mass-production. The paintings literally mirror one another across the adjacent walls. Jones similarly observes, “The paintings looked more like one another than anything else” and she claims that their installation “present the unified visual aspect of sequentially produced industrial objects” (Jones, 1996, p.162-164). She adds,

> Stella aimed to create a perfect series of logically varied objects within a harmonious space, installed in a measured display like icons within a church, or new cars in a showroom. This was Stella’s expanded studio—the incorporation of the space of viewing into the design and configuration of the works of art” (Jones, 1996, p.171).

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In *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space*, (1999), art writer, Brian O’Doherty similarly observes,

> There is something splendidly luxurious about the way the pictures and the gallery reside in a context that is fully sanctioned socially. We are aware we are witnessing a triumph of high seriousness and hand-tooled production, like a Rolls Royce in a showroom” (O’Doherty, 1999, p.34).

The *Aluminum* series emphasise commercial production and machine aesthetics. During the making of the work Stella used “masking tape and [a number of] assistants” that contributed to the industrial nature and “impersonal facture” of the series (Jones, 1996, p.158). Stella’s use of repeated modular patterns also highlights his commercial approach to making abstract paintings. Additionally, these crisp emblematic structures are comparable to “simplified graphic icons” and function as commercial logos and trademarks (Jones, 1996, p.164).

Prior to the making of the *Aluminum, Copper* and *Benjamin Moore* paintings Stella produced a collection of preliminary sketches (some on graph paper) using engineering equipment such as a setsquare, ruler and compass. These diagrammatic designs were developed into large-scale paintings with extra thick stretcher bars that stress their object-like presence and status. In order to enhance readings of mass production and prefabrication, Stella made several versions of a configuration and produced these in different scales (or sizes), materials and pigments (or colours) (Jones, 1996, p.162). Stella’s desire to make multiple versions emphasises his commercial “production-line” approach.

Similar to Stella’s practice, I make preliminary linear studies on paper, which are then developed into series of paintings in disparate sizes and grounds. I also create multiple versions of selected geometric configurations that alter in scale, format, material, colour and support. My compositions are regularly repeated, inverted and/or reversed in order to explore and experiment with generating paradoxical pictorial spatial readings. Unlike the work of Stella, I am not concerned with using assistants or expressing a “purely” commercial and objective approach.
My own research into reflective commercial materials has led me to explore surface reflection and colour variation in my paintings. My thinking is to juxtapose a wide range of contrasting surface qualities within my work to engage and affect the viewer perceptually and physiologically. For instance, in the *Instability* series, (2010-2013), I experimented with black and/or grey gesso surfaces to draw in the viewer. These dark matte surfaces were positioned next to metallic, iridescent, interference and/or micaceous surfaces that are projective and repel and reflect the viewer and the surrounding space in fragmenting and deforming ways. Similarly, artist and art theorist, David Batchelor claims,

> The other way to deform and dislocate is with something that reflects, or in some way projects light or colour (Batchelor, 2000, p.107).

These divergent spatial readings are explored to activate viewer participation and manipulate their bodily positioning in relation to the work. Reductive colour palettes are used to procure contemplation and integrate “chance, environmental interaction, time, and the participation of the viewer” in my work (Rose, 2006, p.117). For example, in *On edge (Black Void)*, (2010), (Figure 25) and *Lead feather*, (2011), (Figure 26), I juxtapose black gesso with iridescent and interference paint colours to create paradoxical spatial readings, including figure-ground reversal. Through carefully composing strong colour/tonal contrasts and disparate surface textures the irregular forms appear to project and fracture with dynamism in pictorial space. Upon prolonged looking, the segmented motifs appear to advance, recede, float and splinter in space.
Chapter Two: On the surface and beyond

Figure 25
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
_On edge (Black Void)_ , 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 26
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
_Lead feather_ , 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
My aim is to create paintings and installation formats that encourage the viewer to carefully reflect on the act of perception, including the ways in which visual experiences unfold and alter over time. Reflective colours and surfaces are employed as a strategy to heighten visual awareness and consideration of the work, including the viewer’s attentiveness towards their temporary insertion in the work via reflection. Such reflective qualities are intended to prompt unfixed and decentralised viewing positions to experience sensory immediacy (Bishop, 2005, p.60).

In his exegesis *Chromophobia*, (2000), Batchelor contends that the use of readymade reflective materials in the 1960s (and today) is,

> Flat and shiny: this is one of the paradoxical attractions of commercial paints and materials: the double quality of the dead and the dynamic, the bland and the brilliant” (Batchelor, 2000, p.106).

He adds,

> A shiny surface also reflects not an imaginary inner world but an actual external space, the contingencies of the environment in which the work is situated: the viewer’s space” (Batchelor, 2000, p.107).

Similarly, in my own work I use and experiment with reflective paint materials because they are inherently unstable and fluctuate between being “bland” and “brilliant” (Batchelor, 2000, p.107). I focus on exploring incessant colour and surface oscillations that alternate between lustre (reflection) and lacklustre (refraction) to investigate movement, reflection, spatial deformation and ambiguity. For instance, in *Off-Kilter*, (2011), (Figure 27), the gold and silver metallic paint and interference blue shimmers erratically to produce unstable colour shifts that stress spatial ambiguity. The severe forms and changeable surface effects induce spatial unease.
In my own work I utilise projective colours and surface finishes to actively engage the viewer and procure contemplation. For instance, in *Afterglow*, (2011), (Figure 28), optical restlessness is produced via the arrangement of matte, glossy, metallic and interference pigments, as well as smooth, coarse and patterned surface textures. Depending on the viewer’s bodily positioning in relation to the work the gritty interference green flips or shifts to interference orange. Likewise, in *Flying planes*, (2010), (Figure 29), and *Second skin*, (2010), (Figure 30), the varying surface qualities produce the sensation of alternating movements and contradictory directional readings, such as folding forwards, backwards and sideways to stimulate the experience of pictorial spatial uncertainty.
Figure 28
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Afterglow*, 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 29
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Flying planes*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5 cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
Like Stella, I use a variety of metallic colours and reflective surface finishes in my work to explore deformed reflections that paradoxically repel the viewer at the same time encourage contemplation and active engagement on experiencing the work. In contrast to Stella’s practice, a wider range of reflective materials and colours are deployed to explore colour variation and permutation. While Stella used commercial paint colours straight out of the can, my primary concern is to create an endless array of metallic, iridescent and interference colour combinations, and surface fluctuations and possibilities through colour mixing and attuning, including the use of different mediums (Rubin, 1970, p.75). These specific colour and surface qualities are utilised as a strategy to prompt the viewer to interact with the work from a decentred and variable position. Additionally, Stella’s paintings feature highly irregular surface textures, which are not explored in my work, because my paintings are primarily concerned with creating immaculate surface effects.
Reflective materials, colours and surface qualities in contemporary abstract painting

In contrast to the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, today there are an unlimited and unrestricted range of synthetic paints available for use by artists, designers and architects. Building on the advances of Stella, contemporary art theorists have observed that the use of commercial paint material (colours and mediums), grounds (support surfaces) and tools (masking tape, paint rollers and synthetic paintbrushes) have become increasingly pertinent and prevalent in the construction of contemporary painting. The current development of commercial paint materials and their availability in art supply and hardware stores and online sites has profoundly impacted on the tradition of painting and has prompted some artists to extend the possibilities of painting through experimenting with new chromatic and surface effects.

Throughout this project I have observed a trend for metallic colours and reflective surface textures in painting, fashion (cosmetics and textiles), design, architecture and urban space. I have also noticed that many commercial paint manufacturers have significantly expanded their colour collections to meet the desire and demand made by artists to use reflective colours and surface qualities in contemporary painting. For instance, Winsor and Newton, Lefranc, Lukas, Williamsburg handmade oil colors and Art Spectrum, all produce a metallic oil paint colour range, whilst Golden Artist Colors, Liquitex, Guerra, Jo Sonja, Schmincke, Sennelier, Langridge Artist Colours and Pearl Ex Pigments, among others, produce iridescent (metallic) and interference acrylic paint colours and pigments, which I have experimented with during this project. Moreover, my use of particular reflective materials, pigments, colours and surface qualities is related to its use, function and prevalence in urban everyday life.

Through this project intermittent colour changes and/or surface shifts are exploited. I am concerned with how my paintings change depending on varying light sources and unfixed viewing positions. Unstable colour and surface effects are explored to maximise erratic optical flickers and oscillating spatial readings. These erratic colour and surface fluctuations are strategies to engage and manipulate the viewer.
Reflective pigments shimmer, shine and glow in dynamic and unpredictable ways. During the project I investigated colour luminosity and the transient nature of reflective paint technologies. In order to maximise surface movement and light reflection a mixture of fine and coarse lightfast pigments were used in conjunction with high-gloss, gloss, satin and matte mediums. Surface transformation was explored through identifying and trialling different lighting conditions. For instance, under natural light conditions (or in daylight) iridescent and interference colours appear highly luminous and are much more changeable. Whereas, under artificial or diffused lighting (such as fluorescent strobes and incandescent globes) the metallic colours appear more opaque and are less likely to change. The viewer’s physical appearance and bodily positioning in relation to the work also influence colour and surface variations that is subject to change during the viewing experience and spatial context. Under these conditions the viewer might consider the ways in which their own physical appearance implicates and alters a work of art.

Contemporary artists have also explored a variety of reflective pigments and mediums in order to procure contemplation, interaction and spatial-temporal awareness. Within their individual practices they use various combinations of reflective properties to produce diverse visual experiences and spatial effects. Practitioners exploring these methods include, Mehretu, Batchelor, Sarah Morris, Peter Halley, Angela Bulloch (b.1966), Jim Lambie (b.1964), Richard Wright (b. 1960), Anish Kapoor (b. 1954), Spencer Finch (b. 1962), Liam Gillick (b. 1964), Martin Boyce (b.1967), Rosslynd Piggott (b. 1958), Wilma Tabacco (b. 1953), and Virginia Coventry (b. 1942), among others.

**Colour theory**

In *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, (1986), Krauss points out that significant developments in physiological optics in the nineteenth-century impacted on the aesthetics and meaning of early European geometric abstract painting. Krauss explains that the colour theories of Michel-Eugène Chevreul, Charles Blanc, Ogden N. Rood, Herman von Helmholtz and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe “were illustrated with grids. Because it was a matter of demonstrating the interaction of specific particles throughout a continuous field, that field was analyzed into the
modular repetitive structure of the grids” (Krauss, 1986, p.15). She asserts that the role and function of the grid (such as, periodic structures or tables) profoundly influenced the pictorial structure of modern and modernist abstract painting (Krauss, 1986, pp.14-15).

In connection with Krauss’ writings, Batchelor, Temkin and Fer point out that new scientific developments in the commercial manufacture of colour influenced the industrial metaphors communicated in post-1950s modernist abstract painting. Temkin states,

colour itself had undergone a rapid transformation during the course of the nineteenth century from handmade product to synthetically manufactured standardized and commercially packaged commodity (Temkin, 2008, p.17).

Temkin and Fer contend that the new availability of commercial and industrial paint colours from art suppliers and hardware stores profoundly influenced artists’ use of colour. They also argue that the advertisement of commercial colours via contemporary colour charts and swatches impacted on the Constructivists desire to link the role of the artist with quasi-tradesman, engineer or architect. Moreover, such scientific and commercial developments underpin the “integration of art, everyday life and the environment” in contemporary art practice (Temkin, 2008, p.23).

**Digital colour**

Developments in digital technology have also impacted on the use of colour in contemporary painting. Temkin and Fer, among others, have pointed out that there is an “off-the-shelf” colour approach in painting post-1950 (Temkin, 2008, p.21). They argue that many contemporary artists are no longer interested in using traditional oil paint colours, tools and techniques, nor are they concerned with scientific colour theories such as Chevreul’s theory *On the Laws of Simultaneous Contrast and the Harmony of Coloured Objects* (1839). Instead current practices are preoccupied with using contemporary commercial paint colours in a “ready-made” “store bought” “matter-of-fact” way (Temkin, 2008, p.17), as in the case of Morris, whose practice is
builds on Stella’s approach of using household gloss, and industrial tools such as masking tape and large synthetic paintbrushes used for house painting.

Temkin claims the mass production of colour, including its illustration in the colour chart (or Pantone) impacted on the aesthetics and meaning of colour in contemporary painting practice (Temkin, 2008, p.25). She asserts,

The color chart has largely supplanted the color wheel, which for three centuries embodied the attempt to organize color meaningfully and hierarchically according to spiritual or scientific theories (Temkin, 2008, p.17).

Temkin and Fer point out that since the mid-1950s artists including Kelly, Stella, Josef Albers (1888-1976), Gerhard Richter (b. 1932), Damien Hirst (b.1965), among others, investigate a systematic and diagrammatic colour approach that is comparable to commercial colour swatches available from hardware shops and paint stores. Collectively, their “ready made” use of colour is programmatic, highly structured and analogous with modular and diagrammatic geometries that resemble periodic tables or charts, which is related advertisement and consumerism (such as diagrams, cards, brochures, catalogues) (Temkin, 2008, p.16). Undoubtedly, this organisation of unmixed and prefabricated colours into regulated patterns reflects an impersonal and mass-produced colour sensibility in abstract painting.

In Chromophobia Batchelor asserts that the colour chart is connected to and represents or advertises commercial colour. He claims that there is a significant difference between “the colour that comes out of a can and the colour that comes out of a tube” (Batchelor, 2000, p.104), and that during the 1950s and 1960s artists became less interested in traditional artists colours and tools that are related to colour theory and the colour wheel (Batchelor, 2000, p.105). Batchelor states there was a preoccupation and anxiety surrounding commercial paint colours, which were effectively advertised through colour charts (or grids) at hardware stores. He asserts, “the colour chart offers an escape” from the past (from colour theory, the colour wheel and colour mixing). On the independence and brashness of digital colour, he adds:
In the colour chart, every colour is equivalent to and independent of every other colour. There are no hierarchies, only random colour events. The colour chart divorces colour from conventional colour theory and turns every colour into a readymade. It promises autonomy for colour (Batchelor, 2000, p.105).

Digital colour (computer screen colour) is made up of red, green and blue (RGB) phosphorescent dots projected inside the computer screen (Temkin, 2009, p.17). Printed colour is cyan, magenta, yellow and key (black) pigment (CMYK). Digital and commercial colours are “standardized” and “mass-produced” (Temkin, 2009, p.21). On the immediacy and multitude of digital colours available today, and its potential threat and possible impact on and extension of contemporary painting, Batchelor states,

an artist who uses commercial or industrial paints is bound to notice the vast range of other colours which are on offer at the touch of a button – there are about two thousand available in the standard computerized mixing systems (Batchelor, 2000, p.104).

He adds,

Digital colour is individuated; it comes in discreet units; there is no mergence or modulations; there are only boundaries, steps and edges. Analogical colour is colour; digital colour is colours (Batchelor, 2000, p.105).

My research focuses on how digital technologies, including high-gloss surface qualities and industrial finishes, such as powder coating can impact on contemporary painting practice. New pigments are experimented with in order to push the material concerns of my paintings in innovative directions. I am not concerned with the push of a button to obtain digital colours, but rather interested in how newly developed synthetic acrylic paints and materials (mediums) produced by commercial paint manufacturers are comparable to computer-based technologies and contemporary facades in architecture and urban space. A new challenge around how to explore the materiality of paint and paint technology is explored in my art practice.
Commercial colours and industrial surface finishes are a reflection of the time and popular culture, that is of what is in fashion or on trend, and I am involved with exploring these issues in my work. For instance, during the project I became increasingly aware of the new pigments available, but also the colours that became obsolete and were no longer available or produced by particular paint brands. Golden Artists Colors have asserted that current pigments are made in connection with industrial finishes, such as house paints, automobile paints and commercial appliances. Pigments are regularly replaced and updated by new alternatives that are “cleaner, more lightfast” which results in older pigments becoming redundant or no longer used or in demand (Golden, Hayes, Townsend and Gavett, 1998, para. 15).

Similarly, Batchelor claims the contemporary world, in particular popular culture, mass production and digital technologies have impacted on current colour usage and shiny surface finishes in art practice (Batchelor, 2000, p.100). He asserts contemporary pigments are interlinked with technological developments in the physical world. Batchelor points out,

But it may be true that digitalised colours have a stronger relationship with works of art that refer, directly or indirectly, to the experience of modernity. The colours are more the colour of things than atmospheres. More urban colours than the colours of nature. Artificial colours, city colours, industrial colours. Colours that are consistent with the images, materials and forms of an urban art, industrial art (Batchelor, 2000, p.106).

I am concerned with appropriating and/or using digital colours and creating glossy synthetic plastic-like surfaces. I use these colours because they are analogous with architecture, urban space, design and fashion. LED display boards, Apple’s new retina display and computer screens are highly polished and are illuminated by electric light when switched on. Digital technologies shininess and reflectivity is addressed in my art practice. Similarly, Batchelor points out that the surface reflections projected on super glossy computer screens are complex and paradoxical. He poetically writes, “shiny begins to delocalize colour it picks up other colours and redistributes it as its own” (Batchelor, 200, p.108). As in his installations using recyclable readymade commercial objects, such as dollies, I too am preoccupied with creating fragmented
and warped or blurred reflections and “sharp [industrial] finishes” that are ubiquitous with contemporary urban space, but through painting practice (Batchelor, 2000, p.110).

The commercial colour schemes and surface qualities explored by some contemporary artists are distinctly flashy, brash, garish, kitsch and perceptually unsettling, as in the work of Batchelor, Mehretu, Halley, Morris, Takashi Murakami (b. 1962), John Armleder (b. 1948), Mark Dagley (b. 1957). These artists, among others, experiment with the glossy, artificial, synthetic and plastic surface finishes achievable through the use of commercial materials, including acrylic paint, which is far removed from the luxurious chromatics and surface qualities of traditional oil paint colours (Temkin, 2008, p.20-21). These artists create monumental paintings that investigate geometric patterns and/or reflective materials, paint colours and surface finishes to produce optical effects that are spatially unsettling.

Co-curators, Barry Blinderman and Tom Moody of the group exhibition Post-hypnotic, (1999), at the University Galleries, Illinois State University, contend that there is a current trend in contemporary abstract painting to re-examine and build on the investigation into disorientating perceptual experiences and unsettling optical illusions and effects previously explored by Op artists in the 1960s. Blinderman argues that the artists selected for this exhibition are concerned with procuring feelings of spatial unease from the viewer through their use of vibrating patterns, afterimages, scintillating surface qualities and pulsating illusionistic space (Blinderman, 1999, p.4). But, unlike in Op Art, he observes that these new works are much larger in scale in order to perceptually and physiologically overwhelm the viewer and, in turn, focus on issues concerning the body (bodily experience) and urban space.

Blinderman claims that digital technologies, including new visual experiences that address “aspects of daily life such as corporate architecture, TV commercials and cartoons, domestic furnishing, and computer generated design” have impacted on these contemporary practices (Blinderman, 1999, p.5). He explains that the optical effects being re-explored by artists now are more consciously related to screen-based technology and digital media. On the impact of virtual space and “screen-based
thinking” he asserts, that Op artists and post-hypnotic artists “choose to create a space situated neither through the canvas nor on its surface, but one that projects outwards into the viewers realm” (Blinderman, 1999, p.6).

Blinderman notes that these contemporary artists address issues of visual perception, corporeality, phenomenology, temporality and the experiential, including the unfolding experience of colour variation, movement, perspective, balance and repetition (Blinderman, 1999, p.6 and p.9). He says, the artists in post-hypnotic are influenced by digital technology and activating the space between the viewer and the work of art to explore issues of movement, instability and flux. These artists are preoccupied with creating potentially disorientating and vertiginous geometric patterns (such as grids or modular forms), which are analogous with city maps, architecture, urban space, design and the Internet. These complex geometric structures are arranged to procure spatial unease that relates to the experience of contemporary city environments, and that despite an increasingly sped up world, these contemporary artists like the Op artists and Minimalists are interested in slowing down the act of looking (Blinderman, 1999, p.8).

Blinderman states,

Painting is a distinct mark in time, a marking of time. It is an experience by the artist of movement and additive processes through time, which in turn unfolds before the viewer who encounters it at a later time. Painting is a pathway created through the registering of a trace (Blinderman, 1999, p.8).

But by building on Minimalism and Op Art, these contemporary artists use the latest reflective materials to create new optical effects and spatial readings that relate to contemporary architecture, urban space and design.

In Holiday Inn (Capital), (2001)32, Sarah Morris uses household gloss paint on fine canvas to explore optical effects associated with industrial sheen and the high-gloss surfaces of contemporary corporate architecture. Her creation of reflective surfaces

and complex geometric structures replicate the warped sensation of looking at highly polished gridded glass and steel architecture in major cities. The large-scale of her paintings and effective use of reductive high-key colour contrasts are shrewd strategies employed to overwhelm and disorientate the viewer.

Morris’ paintings have informed this project, particularly the way in which her grids become disorientating “with layered internal space and vortex like structure shifting the picture beyond the reality of the canvas as a two-dimensional object” (White Cube, 2010, *Sarah Morris*, para. 2). Through creating prismatic and fractured structures that simulate the perceptual experience of looking into a glass cube and these mirrored multiple reflections critique urban space, and social and bureaucratic topologies (Art-Agenda, 2009, *Friedrich Petzel Gallery presents Sarah Morris*, para. 2).

Immaculate facture and surface finish are significant to Morris’ paintings. She creates buff surface coatings by using taping techniques that produce a slightly raised crisp edge where fractured forms intersect. She uses commercial acrylic gloss and industrial large-size paintbrushes to ensure that her surfaces layers are immaculately smooth and polished without leaving any traces of the artist’s hand. Morris’ surfaces are brash, severe and impenetrable. Close inspection of her flawless paint surfaces reveals very little about the ways in which her work is made; however studio snapshots (taken for reproduction in glossy magazines) reveal a multitude of industrial materials and tools are used. Similarly, work-in-progress documentation shows her paintings being made by assistants, which reflect her impersonal, “production-line” attitude, which builds on the industrial concerns investigated during Minimalism, including Stella’s art practice.

Morris’ high-gloss surfaces reflect the viewer and the surrounding environment, which in turn prompts the audience to view the surface accretions closely and possibly gaze into their own reflection, cast on the paintings surface. These unfolding visual experiences relating to surface transformations are significant to the work being experienced in situ and “completed” by the viewer. Such surface shifts stress the materiality of paint and procure temporal visual awareness from the viewer.
There is something very important about the fact that these works are created for direct, not reproduced, experience. In an era of extreme reproduction of artworks, for example, in books, magazines and online these paintings address issues concerning the relationship between the viewer and the work of art, and the intimacy of viewing experiences. These issues of experiencing paintings physically or in situ are connected to Fried’s writings. Similarly in my own work, I explore and experiment with issues of facture and surface change to procure contemplation and engagement with a painting from an unfixed and decentred position.

Halley’s gigantic geometric abstract paintings, wall paintings and installations focus on the psychology of cells, conduits and cities. His use of repeated modular structures function as metaphors for urban existence and are analogous to modern architecture for example, grid forms that refer to interior rooms and exterior spaces of residential building blocks, which he likens to prisons or cells, as well as computer screens and/or chips, cables, road signs and flow charts (Blinderman, 1999, p.39).

In Powder, (1995) Halley uses acrylic, Day-Glo acrylic, metallic acrylic and Roll-a-Tex on canvas. The massive scale of the painting, including the large-size of the asymmetric modular forms, industrial grilles and streamline patterns are formal strategies designed to physically confront and perceptually overwhelm the viewer “on a material and experiential level” (Blinderman, 1999, p.39). The pulsating warm-cool colour combinations, projective surface finishes and bold overlapping geometric patterns vibrate to paradoxically block out the viewer at the same time encourage them look through the multiple interleaving planes.

Like Stella and Morris, Halley works with a team of assistants and technicians to create distinct surface textures and effects. Despite Halley’s use of commercial acrylic paints, large-size brushes, paint-rollers and masking tape his surface textures are slightly irregular and much more related to the uneven surface qualities of Stella’s Irregular Polygon series, (1965-1966), than Morris’ pristine surface coatings. Halley’s surfaces textures are painterly, however these particular handmade qualities are often lost in the photographic documentation and reproduction of his work. His

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use of Roll-a-Tex (an industrial paint substance that is highly dense and granular) produces extreme surface oscillations, which encourage the viewer to closely inspect the surfaces of his painting. Similar to the work of Stella, Halley uses metallic and pearlescent acrylic paints that erratically shimmer in response to the ebb-and-flow of light and the viewer’s physical position in relation to the artwork. These irregular surface fluctuations and handmade qualities (subtle imperfections or glitches) draw attention to the importance of experiencing the work in situ.

Contemporary Australia artists, Rosslynd Piggott, Wilma Tabacco and Virginia Coventry’s practices are concerned with issues of facture and illusory visual experiences associated with reflective surface qualities. Piggott and Tabacco have reinvestigated the medieval practice of gold and silver leafing in their abstract paintings and installations to procure perceptual attentiveness and the sensation of light cast on polishes surfaces to explore reflection and transient optical effects, including shimmering surface fluctuations. Piggott integrates palladium, gold and silver leaf and double-walled mirrored glass to create highly deformed reflections that explore issues of movement, spatial warping and unease. Whilst Tabacco explores paradoxical optical experiences through the use of gold leaf on paper and canvas, or heavy bodied metallic acrylic paint colours on thickly textured handmade papers. She focuses mixing vibrant gold hues that are carefully layered over jewel coloured grounds that reflect and refract the light, the viewing subject and the surrounding environment in captivating/mesmerising ways. Tabacco’s surface finishes incorporate slight surface glitches such as wobbles of the hand in order to further elicit the audiences full attention.

Similarly, Coventry uses various combinations of acrylic, vinyl, interference and metallic pigments on different grounds, such as Belgium linen and marine plywood. But Coventry often incorporates a frame or border around her compositions that are sometimes left unpainted to reveal the untreated texture of raw linen or wood grain. She uses reflective mica pigments and high-gloss mediums to create shimmering aural effects that explore light reflection and refraction. By juxtaposing divergent materials (pigments and mediums) and painting on absorbent and non-absorbent grounds (supports) Coventry investigates subtle optical experiences of colour and surface change. On close inspection of her sumptuous paintings the viewer becomes closely
attuned to the delicate metallic flecks that sprinkle across the surface, but also aware that the carefully controlled/adjusted colour palette and barely perceptible brushstrokes intensify contemplation.

Similar to my own practice, Piggott, Tabacco and Coventry’s idiosyncratic and discerning material selections and careful manipulation or construction thereof lead to highly rewarding viewing experiences. Careful inspection of their work reveals the significance of facture and materiality, in particular an unwavering commitment to the creation of perfect surfaces, “craftsmanship” and the use of the finest materials. Unlike Piggott and Tabacco, I am not concerned with the reinvestigation of traditional methods and processes of gold and silver leafing; rather my interest lies in the use of the latest acrylic paint materials to create new optical effects and visual encounters. Their meticulous use of reflective materials produce ambiguous spatial effects pertaining to the perception of movement, mirroring and deformation, which relates to my own work.

**Reflective surfaces in architecture**

The tendency in some contemporary architecture is to use highly reflective commercial and industrial materials such as polished metal and mirrored glass. This is evidenced in the metal architecture of Gehry and Jean Nouvel (b. 1945), as well as Jacques Herzog (b. 1950) and Pierre de Meuron’s (b. 1950) iridescent constructions made from polychromatic and pearlescent acrylic panels. These architects, among others, are preoccupied with the utilisation of the latest reflective industrial developments and take full advantage of gleaming properties to explore dynamic surface reflections.

Metal and glass is often used to exploit scenic and reflective possibilities. For instance, Gehry’s constructs massive buildings clad with titanium and glass to emphasize reflection, distortion, deformation and movement. His recent architectural projects reflect, distort and deform the body and the environment in ways, which provide mimetic and illusory visual experiences. For instance, the industrial gleam of
the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1997, produces anamorphic deformations that are comparable to the unsettling experience of looking in fun park mirrors (Miller, 1999, p.43). In this instance environmental and bodily deviations appear extremely warped, irregular, elongated and compressed. His shimmering poly-metallic facades maximise the dramatic interplay of the reflection of light and space (Meyhöfer, 2008, p.52). The museum was also designed to feature “perfect” surfaces and it was a costly production to achieve.

As discussed in this exegesis, there is a historical relationship between architecture, the physical world and abstract painting practice. This project is concerned with the ways in which current reflective materials and technologies being used and developed for architecture practice can affect contemporary abstract painting through the creation of new colours, surface qualities, optical effects and phenomenological situations designed to engage and manipulate the viewer perceptually and physiologically. Through this project I have identified and examined a wide range of the latest lustrous materials available today such as, tinted titanium, polycarbonate steel, fibreglass sheeting, emulsion paint, epoxy resin coating, mineral and polymer composite, lacquer, high-gloss glazing, colour tinted glass, colour lamination and pigmented rendering.

Gehry, Nouvel, and Herzog and de Meuron are interested in reflective materials to explore issues of surface reflection. They use “materials arising out of new possibilities of manufacture and technology” (Leatherbarrow and Mostafavi, 2002, p.24). In my own work, I have created a variety of projective surfaces and varying or intermittent colours and surface finishes to activate the observer to contemplate and experience the work from an unfixed and decentralised position. Reflective colour and surfaces are investigated to stress movement and the transience of time and space, and encourage attentive looking.

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34 Anamorphic deformation refers to a curvilinear reflection via a convex mirror, which results in the distortion and warping of the reflected imagery or scene. (Miller, 1999, pp.42-43).
Chapter Three: Including the kitchen sink

New possibilities and potentialities in contemporary abstract painting

This chapter is a critical analysis on the four main projects produced during this PhD:

- *Iridescence*, 2010
- *Sky-rise*, 2011 –

The aim of this project was to create a new body of abstract works that investigated ambiguous pictorial spatial configurations and perceived and actual movement in order to engage and manipulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space. Through making the four series’ of works I investigated the relationship between contemporary geometric abstract painting, contemporary architecture and the physical world. Architectural practices that utilise skewed or oblique geometric structures and/or reflective materials were identified and analysed to enlighten the visual research and build on abstract painting practice.

International travel to major urban cities including, New York, London, Berlin and Hong Kong was undertaken to experience key contemporary buildings and to document examples of spatial warping and unease firsthand. I used a range of methodologies including critical analysis, reflection (reflective journal writing), photography, drawing, collage, installation (including wall and floor formations) and painting. The practice-led component of the research was informed by an examination of relevant theory and art and architectural practices, which address the particular problems identified and outlined in the Research Questions.

The four projects are extensively documented in the ADR in photographic documentation, installation views, exhibition catalogues and exhibition lists. The research demonstrates ambiguous pictorial spatial effects can be created through a wide range of approaches taken towards the use of reflective commercial materials,
fragmented abstract forms and oblique structures to engage and elicit experiences of instability and tension from the viewer.

Table 1. Chronological series within the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ground</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metallic Reflective</td>
<td>2009 – 2010</td>
<td>Aluminium</td>
<td>Oil on aluminium</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iridescence *</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Acrylic on wood</td>
<td>30 x 25cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Acrylic on paper</td>
<td>57.5 x 76.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2*</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Acrylic on paper</td>
<td>57.5 x 76.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3*</td>
<td>2011 – 2012</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Acrylic on paper</td>
<td>66 x 102cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4*</td>
<td>2011 – 2013</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>Acrylic on canvas</td>
<td>183 x 183cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky-rise*</td>
<td>2011 –</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Pencil on paper</td>
<td>29.5 x 21cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Orientation unfixed

Strategies for procuring contemplation, interaction and disorientation

This chapter examines three core methods I have used to examine movement, reflection, fragmentation, spatial ambiguity and distortion. The four projects are presented and discussed sequentially and I critically analyse and evaluate the strengths and limitations of each series, including further questions that arose and compelled me to make other works and/or versions. I also examine key contemporary architecture that impacted on the projects produced during this PhD.

I. Material selection

Throughout this project I have collected, sourced, experimented with, investigated and refined my use of reflective commercial art materials, including pigments and mediums to generate a perceptual and physiological response from the viewer. The industrial materials I meticulously selected, manipulated and constructed are analogous with shiny architectural surfaces such as, high-gloss glass, lacquer and powder coat finishes. For instance, in the Metallic Reflective series, I used gold
powder coated aluminium sheeting and metallic oil colours (including, silver, copper and iridescent white) that reference the luminous titanium panels effectively used in the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, designed by Frank Gehry.

Similarly, in the Iridescence series, interference acrylic pigments on multiple plywood panels were investigated to create luminous surfaces that shimmered intermittently in relation to changing light conditions and the viewer’s physical relationship to the works. The interference colour palette was comparable to the iridescent polycarbonate panels used in the Laban Dance Company, New Cross, South East London, 2003, designed by Herzog and de Meuron. Interference pigments in red, yellow, blue, green, violet and orange were paired together and applied in thin transparent glazes over coloured gesso grounds to create scintillating colour changes. For instance, the interference hues flip to their complementary colour (for example, interference red changes to interference green) or a particular interference colour appears pearlescent or luminescent.

As discussed in Chapter Two: On the surface and beyond, a wide range of recently developed commercials reflective paint materials and technologies were examined, for instance, gesso, oil, acrylic, metallic, iridescent, interference and micaceous pigments, and gloss, satin and matte mediums on assorted absorbent and non-absorbent grounds such as, aluminium sheeting (Metallic Reflective series), plywood (Iridescence series), hot press and cold press watercolour paper (Instability series) and fine-grained canvas (Instability series) to explore contradictory optical effects pertaining to perceived and actual movement, light reflection and refraction, projection, variation, instability, and spatial depth, ambiguity and deformation.

These material, colour and surface selections were utilised to engage, activate and maximise the viewer’s reflection. In other words, these works were created for an audience and particular pictorial spatial strategies were explored to heighten visual awareness, the viewing encounter and spatial context. It is essential that the works are experienced firsthand or in situ as critical analysis via reproduction technology including, photography, print or online is very difficult, if not impossible because of surface reflection and changing light, which erratically changes, projects and flattens. The paintings are designed to paradoxically draw in and push out the viewer as a
means to increase contemplation, alter perception and manipulate physical behaviour in connection with a work of art.

Reflective commercial materials are used as perceptual cues that signify reflection, transformation and instability. Shiny materials, colours and surface qualities are cultivated for their flashing, erratic and unsteady properties, and function as visual devices that activate the viewer’s mental and physical engagement with the work (Bishop, 2005, p.48). These intermittent reflective colours and surfaces are used as a fitting metaphor for the contemporary physical world being in a constant state of flux (Zevelansky, 2004, p.59).

Reflective grounds, paint colours and mediums were used to construct divergent mirror effects such as, diffused surface reflections that reflect and refract the viewer and the surrounding environment in deforming ways. These blurred surface effects are analogous to the unclear reflections cast on industrial buildings and objects made from metal materials including, aluminium, steel, stainless steel, bronze, brass, copper and zinc. For example, in the Metallic Reflective series I created high-gloss surface effects using lacquer finishes (including marine varnish) on aluminium sheeting, as well as diffused sheen by leaving parts of the aluminium ground untreated to maximise specular and anamorphic reflections. These contradictory reflective surface effects and finishes were further developed in the Iridescence and Instability series and contrasted with matte or opaque gesso-based colours that absorb the light to further stress pictorial spatial ambiguity. For instance, in Instability, 2011-2012, thin glaze layers of acrylic paint were built up to produce the high-gloss semi-transparent structures, including the asymmetric apple green form. This surface texture is comparable to an LED screen and clearly reflects the surrounding space when encountered from a peripheral viewpoint. In contrast, the dense matte black and beige shapes feature a non-reflective and slightly gritty surface.

II. Methods and processes

To create two-dimensional compositional structures exploring irregular forms, oblique structures, fragmented abstract formats, figure and ground reversal, elongation and compression a variety of reflective materials and methodologies were
used, including drawing, collage, construction, installation formats, photography and painting.

Compositional studies for each project began by making a series of small-scale diagrammatic line drawings exploring oblique structures and asymmetric forms to create figure and ground ambiguity. These preliminary works were then developed into a series of paintings on aluminium sheeting (Metallic Reflective series) and plywood panels (Iridescence series). Next, the paintings were arranged spatially and/or three-dimensionally on the wall, floor or table and were then photographically documented from multiple viewpoints including, oblique and aerial perspectives to record incidents of compression and/or elongation in order to explore spatial warping and unease. I also focused on close-up views of folded or intersecting geometry, including corner spaces, and cropped forms to investigate issues of fragmentation. Installation practices enabled me to explore how architectural or three-dimensional modular forms can be dynamically explored in abstract painting practice.

It is important to point out that I consider the spatial (three-dimensional) installations to be experimental processes or transitional works-in-progress, and not finished outcomes. This methodology yielded several groups of two-dimensional preliminary drawings and the final paintings on canvas. My methods and processes move between the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional and then back into the two-dimensional.

From this photographic documentation, I selected the most spatially dynamic and/or ambiguous configurations, which were then developed into another series of small-scale line drawings on paper. Multiple versions and/or linear variations were made of a particular composition to investigate a variety of paradoxical spatial readings. For instance, I made one hundred and twenty-one line drawings based on the photographic documentation of the spatial installation of the Iridescence series (see Figure 31 and 32). Selected formations were then developed into a new set of finished paintings on paper and canvas (the Instability series) (see Figure 34 and 35). As discussed in Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation, to further analyse spatial ambiguity I experimented with displaying my finished paintings in multiple or inverted orientations.
My methodology is a complex undertaking of manipulating tilted forms, asymmetric structures and gleaming colours and surfaces to produce illusory effects, such as flux and mirroring. Under these self-imposed constraints I attempt to create a range of reflective colours, asymmetric forms and irregular structures to communicate instability. I meticulously build layer upon layer of paint through using a mixture of painting and printmaking techniques (for instance, transparent and stippled brushwork and relief printing) until the composition is attuned to communicate spatial unease and tension.

My concern for creating the experience of disorientation and unease has prompted me to devise an abstract visual language concerning irregularity, off-centeredness, repetition and reversal. I investigate warped structures and irregular forms to create spatially confusing works intended to destabilise and dislocate the viewer.

III. Facture

Meyer Schapiro observes that within Western abstract painting “humanity” (for example, temperament, feeling and expressiveness) is communicated via the use of colour, form, structure and brushwork (Schapiro, 1978, p.9). He asserts that the physical construction of an artwork is significant and that distinct surface qualities
(such as, smoothness, roughness, thickness) are important to the particular mood of an artwork, which invariably guides the viewer’s experience.

Similarly, in my own work facture (surface texture and paint handling) is used to direct and affect the viewing encounter. For example, in *Off-kilter*, (2012), (Figure 33a-b), a black gesso ground is overlayed with an irregular architectural configuration placed on a steep angle. Next, thin layers of cobalt teal, copper, bronze and graphite grey acrylic paint were slowly built up to create different paint surfaces featuring smooth brushstrokes. The vertical, horizontal and diagonal brushmarks alternate depending on the orientation of the artwork. The matte black gesso surface features smooth streaky brushstrokes, which contrast to the glossy cobalt teal, metallic copper and bronze, and two tones of gritty graphite grey gesso. These colours, tones and surface qualities were fine-tuned during the final stages of completing a painting so that they operate in absolute dynamic tension. The reductive colour palette and subtle surface shifts encourage close inspection of the work, and prompt the viewer to engage with the painting from an unfixed and decentred position.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 33a
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Off-kilter*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
In Group 2 and Group 3 of the *Instability* series 2011, I intertwined painting and relief printing process together to procure contemplation. Distinct embossed textures, such as corrugated lines and lizard-print patterns were fitted to particular forms or structures. The relief printing process in particular is laden with imperfections or malfunctions, including smudges, glitches and permutations all associated with the irregularities of the handmade, which I exploit to prompt the observer to engage in attentive looking.

I aim to draw the viewer’s attention to particular surface properties, qualities or characters, such as reflectivity, plasticity, transparency, grittiness and glossiness. For instance, in *Flying planes,* (2011), (Figure 34), subtle glitches, including small flecks of paint and irregular surface patterns are utilised. Shiny metallic and interference colours are printed and painted over a matte black gesso ground to create
illusory surface qualities that flicker or project intermittently to heighten slow looking. These scintillating surface accretions reflect subtle visual experience in the physical world such as the observation of raindrops accumulating on high-gloss glass surfaces, which erratically mirror changing light conditions and generate blurred perceptual experiences. Other paradoxical surface qualities explored in my work include melting effects, or the pulsation of light from a grill inside a hot oven or heater. Depth effects are also created through the use of dark matte forms or surfaces that absorb the light.

Figure 34
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
_Flying planes_, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5 cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist

In _Second skin_, (2011), (Figure 35), which is a mirror image of _Flying planes_, very different spatial readings are created through the use of subtle colour variations and contradictory surface textures. Slight colour and surface shifts occur in response to changing light conditions that encourage the viewer to experience this medium-scale painting from an unfixed and decentred position, and in turn activate transformation.
Close observation of these works on paper reveals the process of its manufacture, including the meticulous construction of colour overlays that oscillate between shiny, transparent, opaque and grainy. Painterly incidents, such as the use of smooth and slightly streaky directional brushstrokes, the unexpected glitches of relief printing processes and the juxtaposition of contradictory surface qualities are all deliberate strategies used to engage the viewer and draw them in to examine the work.

Each painting is made meticulously by hand. Some works are painted freehand, for instance the Metallic Reflective series, whilst the Iridescence and Instability series was made with the aid of different types of masking tape, which produce dissimilar edges. Painted either way, the process is labour-intensive and methodical. Thin layers of oil and/or acrylic paint are gradually worked up so that colour and form is austerely arranged to encourage slow looking and contemplation. Distinct colours and surface textures interchange intermittently in relation to the light and fluctuate from glossy to sheer to matte to produce fractured and pulsating rhythms. These finely attuned
colours and surface qualities within a work encourage the viewer to come up close to the work to inspect the particularities of the painted surface.

**Reflections on the titles of my work**


Whilst some of my titles reference a particular place or space, for instance *New York City Line Drawings*, (2011), and *Hong Kong City Line Drawings*, (2011), other titles suggest psychological experiences associated with architecture and urban space including, *Cornered*, (2010), and *Polywarp*, (2012). At other times, aspects of my personal and cultural background are referenced for example, *Metallic Reflective*, (2009), *Iridescence*, (2010), and *Lead feather*, (2011). The title *Lead feather* is narrative based and refers to the Yiddish word ‘bleau fader’ which means quill or lead pencil. I thought this to be somewhat humorous and appropriate title because lead stresses weight or heaviness, while feathers are light and suggest flight. In relation to the composition, graphite grey acrylic paint was used and the off-centred origami-like form appears to pierce through space like a paper aeroplane on descent. Therefore paradoxical pictorial spatial readings are communicated in the *Lead feather*.

**Metalwork**

My decision to use metal paint colours, aluminium sheeting, interference pigments and reflective surface qualities is motivated by personal and cultural experiences. The paintings represent a significant aspect of my personal family history or identity, and in this sense my abstractions function beyond formalism or purely formal readings.
For instance, the luminous colours and surface textures may be read as a metaphor for my grandparents’ optimism for a new life in Australia post-World War II.

During the early phases of the project, I examined a wide range of metal colours and surfaces sourced from Elgin Scrap Metals (a family business). I also photographically documented shattered and misshapen industrial forms, as well as the repellent surfaces of domestic objects, such as kitchen sinks and laundry troughs. Lead pencil rubbings or frottages on paper were also made to record commercial surface textures, including corrugated, perforated, embossed and woven metal patterns.

In the Metallic Reflective series, I employed metal support surfaces (aluminium sheeting) and metal paint colours (such as, gold, silver, copper and iridescent white). My use of metal materials, colours and surfaces, grid formats or structures, and industrial patterns was subjective, emblematic and indicative of Elgin Scrap Metal. In this sense, these abstract works operate as visual metaphors for a particular place that has continued to play an important aspect in my family history and everyday life.

As survivors of the Holocaust my grandparents emigrated from Poland to Australia in 1947. They fled war torn Europe to start a brand new life. Together they were optimistic about their new future. Like many migrants they were very determined to turn their life around and make good in the lucky country. In the early years my Zaide (Grandfather) worked as a rag and bones man, whilst my Buba (Grandmother) worked in a sewing factory.

It is poignant to me that on entry to Australia one of my grandparents’ few belongings was a simple aluminium pot. Together they had lugged this large container with them all the way from Europe. Why bother carrying this light vessel such a long way? My mother explains that Zaide had been very wise to purchase the cooking pot during their displacement in Paris, France. It meant that instead of relying on food from a soup kitchen he would buy vegetables for my Buba to cook. This simple aluminium pot enabled my Buba to make vegetable soup that nurtured and restored their strength, as well as the will of other survivors.
The simple aluminium pot is now in my mother’s kitchen. It is stored in a cupboard amid a large collection of stainless steel pots. My mother takes great comfort in her parents’ story of survival. She also experiences so much pleasure in holding the “warmth” of the pot in her strong hands. To someone outside my immediate family the old aluminium pot might bear a semblance to scrap metal, but to us it is golden.

My grandparents established Elgin Scrap Metal in the late 1950s. At the yard, a wide range of metal objects in various states of condition are sorted and recycled. As luck would have it, my Buba found great beauty in some of the scrap metal ornaments and consequently brought selected pieces home. Buba had a refined eye for luxury items. Perhaps her predilection for silverware in mint condition was symptomatic of being born into a wealthy family who had once owned similar goods. In contrast, my Zaide had a strong taste for new or modern things and wished to leave remnants of the past behind. Needless to say he was unsupportive of my Buba’s decorating decisions.

On immigration to Australia Buba had a modern aluminium pot. She had no home, no gold nor silver. The Nazi regime had stolen her family heirlooms, including Judaica, silverware and jewellery. I suspect that her acquisition of silverware was a substitute for her missing history and inheritance. It is also perhaps meaningful (if not a little kitsch) that the furnishings in her bedroom (the curtains, bedspread and stool) were tailor-made in two-toned gold brocade in a diamond shaped pattern. Ironically, some of her dresses bought in the 1960s and 1970s featured gold and silver Lurex. Early on, my Buba had a penchant for metal and realised that one person’s trash might be her treasure.

Today, my parents continue to run Elgin Scrap Metal. My mother, in particular, takes much pleasure in classifying metal objects. Her knowledge of metal is great. She is proud of her ability to look at a pile of metal and innately know if precious metals lie beneath. On a daily basis she sorts and recycles a range of non-ferrous metals (including, aluminium, lead, steel, iron, copper, brass, bronze, pewter, zinc, tin,
nickel, gunmetal, magnesium and stainless steel). Now and then, precious metals are also graded (for example, silver, mercury and platinum).

Reflecting on my personal family history, I realise that it is no coincidence that I preference metallic, iridescent and interference colours and surface qualities. It is also no surprise that I use geometric motifs that are jagged or irregular, as a symbol of loss and fragmentation. Undoubtedly, the gleaming metal objects at Elgin Scrap Metal continue to stimulate my abstract visual vocabulary, especially my use of distinctive colour schemes and surface textures.

During the making of the early metal-based works I was interested in the historical use of gold and silver leaf within the tradition of Western painting in particular, its prevalence in medieval icon painting and illuminated manuscripts, as well as its contemporary usage by artists including, Piggott and Tabacco. As discussed in Chapter One: Thresholds for disorientation and Chapter Two: On the surface and beyond, the development of machine aesthetics in modern and contemporary abstract painting was a initial concern, including the tendency to use metal materials, industrial properties and architectonic forms. Historical and contemporary influences on my art practice were identified and analysed, including works by Popova, Stella and Halley whose paintings explore metallic paints and pigments, such as copper and bronze dust, aluminium and copper paint, metallic paint and Roll-a-Tex, and geometric structures.

1. **METALLIC REFLECTIVE SERIES, 2009 – 2010**

*Metallic Reflective, (2009),* (Figure 36), marks the first painting I made during the early stages of the PhD. The work focuses on key structural, spatial and colour ideas concerning movement, figure-ground reversal, installation format and scale, colour variation and surface transformation. The work consists of twelve hand painted aluminium panels with collage elements. Each panel measure 45 x 34.5cm and is deliberately arranged in a four-by-three vertical formation to create a grid structure.
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featuring three elongated diamond forms. The total scale of the painting measures 216 x 132cm.

Figure 36
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Metallic Reflective, 2009
Oil on aluminium
216 x 132cm
Collection of the artist
The individual panels or fragments that make up the whole (or gestalt) comprise a series of collaged triangles or polygons that are positioned in a repeated sequence and on a slight angle to create the illusion of movement. The diagonal (or diamond) configuration maximises figure-ground ambiguity, which is further emphasised by the arrangement of warm and cool colour (and tonal) juxtapositions and inversions, and reflective materials to create rippling or projective colour/surface effects and shallow spatial depth.

Material presence is an important aspect of Metallic Reflective. Some areas of the painting feature gold film, while other sections were finely burnished to create scintillating warm and cool colour tensions and reflective surface effects. Sometimes these aluminium supports were left untreated, at other times they were superimposed with extremely thin washes of oil paint and Liquin to create translucent paint layers that paradoxically reveal and conceal the lustrous character of the metal ground. Additionally, speckled or mottled impasto-based surface patterns were created to produce the illusion of corrosion or faux oxidisation. These contradictory colour and surface effects, as well as facture were deliberate strategies used to engage and activate the viewer and to procure contemplation. Contrary to Frank Stella’s noxious Aluminium paintings, Metallic Reflective surfaces are subtle and fragile.

On a personal and cultural note, the reductive colour scheme explored in Metallic Reflective relates to aspects of my family history. Here colour is explored in subjective, symbolic and expressive or formal ways. In particular, I associate the colour emerald green with my Buba because it was her favourite colour. She had green eyes, and often wore various tones of the colour green, (and it is consequently no coincidence that the truck and crane at Elgin Scrap Metal are green). In contrast to my Buba, I possess a strong preference for vibrant red hues. I decided to work with green and red because of these personal family links, but it is also significant that they are complementary colours, which means that they stand out when placed next to one another. These symbolic and formal ideas prompted the juxtaposition of an array of different reds and greens to create colour/surface vibrations and variations.
Additionally, the capricious character of shiny metal materials used heightens this pulsating and projective effect. The deliberate combination of warm and cool colour contrasts in gold and silver or aluminium, and green and red also enhances the sensation of dynamic movement. Throughout the composition I subtly interwove iridescent pearl, iridescent silver and black paint to further maximize the impression of spatial depth and energetic movement. Through combining a mixture of equal parts viridian green and crimson red I created a warm charcoal-black.

*Metallic Reflective* was created for the group exhibition *The Opposite of Forgetting: an exhibition of memory and identity*, Helen Gory Gallery, Melbourne, 31 March – 6 April 2009. On the work, curator, Leah Crossman writes:

> Samara’s unique technique of painting on aluminium sheeting represents a significant aspect of her personal family history. The artist’s late grandparents established Elgin Scrap Metal in Carlton in 1947 after migrating from Poland, and the industrial shapes, textures and metallic colours of this medium influence Samara as an artist and evoke the memories of an important facet of her identity (Crossman, 2009).

Significantly, the aluminium plates used in *Metallic Reflective*, and other works in the *Metallic Reflective* series, were given to me by my mother. These very thin and fragile sheets were precisely wrapped in brown paper coated with aluminium foil. To further ensure that the metal pieces were preserved in mint condition and prevent scratching, each delicate plate was layered between pieces of absorbent tissue paper. Initially, the reflectivity and delicateness of the metal surface intrigued me. I quickly discovered that when the sheeting was exposed to light or left untreated the gold lacquer surface dissolved and was forever lost. In order to restore or lock in the golden coating I applied a thin layer of light yellow sealant.

The stippled brushwork used in *Metallic Reflective* implies faux corrosion and portends to my unique knowledge about the oxidisation of non-ferrous metals. The methodologies used in the construction of the painting, including reuse, cutting, layering, arranging and reconfiguring is indicative of recycling. Through overlapping planes I create the illusion of shallow depth or recession and movement. The
deliberate arrangement of crisp origami-like forms suggests flux and directional change, including the impression of opening and closing, folding and unfolding, revealing and concealing, and reflecting and refracting.

On reflection, I see *Metallic Reflective* as a beginning or opening in my research. Many of the key pictorial spatial ideas that make up this project were present, in particular issues of movement, figure-ground reversal, diagonal structuring, light reflection, colour variation and surface transformation. *Metallic Reflective* effectively emphasises perceived and actual movement of light through light reflection and refraction on the hand painted aluminium panels. Intimate looking or close inspection was prompted by the use of metallic oil colours and the creation of transparent and/or speckled paint layers. The intermittent reflection and refraction of light on the surface of the painting, and the resulting colour variations and surface transformations engaged and ambulated the viewer.

On critical evaluation of *Metallic Reflective*, I realised that painting on metal grounds (or supports) with oil paint was a longstanding tradition within Western painting (and not new) and that in order to explore contemporary issues of colour perception and surface reflection I needed to extend my material usage and to use recently produced reflective pigments and mediums. I also recognised that that the grid-like installation format of the painting and repeated forms and regular structures were predominately symmetrical, balanced and harmonious. Additionally, the triangle, polygon and diamond shapes were not particularly spatial (or projective) or architectural, and to further explore spatial warping, figure-ground ambiguity and fracture in my art practice it was essential to investigate irregular structuring and cropping devices more thoroughly to communicate issues of tension, instability and imbalance.

In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to experiment with displaying the individual panels in different spatial sequences, configurations or formations. This may have generated alternate pictorial spatial readings, including irregular structuring, multiple and/or contradictory installation formats and orientations to further examine visual paradox. These limitations led me to produce the *Iridescence* series, which explored new pictorial spatial possibilities and potentialities, including spatial installations and directional effects that activate and ambulate the audience.
2. IRIDESCENCE SERIES, 2010

Contemporary architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron utilise semi-transparent polychromatic iridescent panels in the Laban Dance Company, New Cross, South East London, (2003)\textsuperscript{35}. Their architectural use of modern technology encouraged me to extend my reflective colour palette beyond metallic colours and metal sheeting. I was preoccupied with the lustre of the building’s façade that features an “ethereal” rainbow-like surface that gradually shifts from iridescent pearl to pink to pearl to green to pearl to blue (Puglisi, 2008, pp.199-200). Additionally, the iridescent exterior or skin undergoes luminescent colour/surface transformations in accordance with varying natural light conditions.

The potentialities and possibilities of using newly available industrial iridescent materials and technologies initially inspired the making of the \textit{Iridescence} series, (2010), (Figure 37). I deliberated used novel commercial interference acrylic paint colours in this series to investigate how iridescent colours and surfaces oscillate under changing light situations, this intermittent shimmering effect was used as a strategy for prompting the viewer to engage with a work of art and manipulate them to contemplate scintillating colour and surface fluctuations from a decentred and ambulant the viewing position.

Iridescence comprises twenty-two small paintings on prefabricated wooden panels. Each work is vertically orientated and measures 30 x 25cm. Figure 37, is an installation view of sixteen works from the series. The dimension of this large-scale installation format is 150 x 175cm. The colour system and spatial arrangement of the works interconnect the paintings, and maximise horizontal and vertical readings that guide or direct the viewer in perceptual and physiological ways. These spatial ideas are further discussed in Chapter One: Thresholds for Disorientation on pages 24 and 32.

This series explored oblique and/or irregular structuring, fragmented formats and reductive colour schemes. These organising principles were used to create unlimited optical effects and spatial anomalies. Through making tracings of a ruler and setsquare I devised a range of diagonal structures (including, oblique lines or bars, inclined bends, zigzag motifs and tapered forms) that appear to float and/or twist dynamically across the picture plane. The pictorial spatial dynamics of the series was
emphasised by my decision to purposely use diagonal structures and interference colour schemes, which resulted in the construction of illusory compositions. Off-centred and cropped oblique structures were created to emphasise figure-ground reversibility and to promote the expression of restlessness, dynamism and spatial tension (Arnheim, 1974, p.11).

The *Iridescence* paintings marked a pivotal moment in the project. Through structural, compositional and colour restrictions I increased the sensation of dynamic movement and spatial ambiguity in my art practice. The series was divided into to three distinct colour groups that feature different coloured gesso grounds, including ultramarine blue, magenta red and pale interference hues to explore divergent optical effects concerning colour vibration, variation, movement and change.

The vibrant ultramarine blue and magenta red works investigated cool and warm colour contrasts and/or harmonies (or analogous colours) to create colour pulsation, including vivid iridescent effects. For example, in *Iridescence 3*, (2010), (Figure 38), I juxtaposed complementary (or contrasting) colours of interference green and interference red over matte ultramarine blue to explore lively warm and cool colour contrasts and paradoxical surface qualities that project or reflect and/or recede or refract in shallow space. Chromatic discords were also explored in *Iridescence 9*, (2010), (Figure 39), but the similar colour scheme is explored on a warm ground to create alternate colour effects and spatial readings. In *Iridescent 9*, interference red and interference green were layered over matte magenta red.
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The ultramarine blue and magenta red works are vivid, whilst the pallid interference works are subtle and subdued. Unlike the strongly coloured pictures, which vibrantly shimmer and pulsate, the pale works containing contrasting colour schemes operate quite differently. In particular, the subtle colour combinations require the viewer to look more intensely at colour and surface so that they can observe the delicacy of the tints and colour contrasts, as well as activating interference colour flips or shifts. If the viewer does not look carefully at these works they might appear insipid or lacklustre, furthermore the subtle interference colour shifts will go unnoticed.

These ashen works feature two complementary interference colours over an interference gesso ground. Changing light conditions and the viewer’s physical movement in front of the artwork activates colour flips or reversals, which significantly alters the appearance of the work. For instance, in *Iridescent 6*, (2010), (Figure 40), the interference red changes to interference green, while the interference green shifts to interference red in response to the surrounding light and the viewers position. Complementary colour reversals or flips are similarly explored in *Iridescent 13*, (2010), (Figure 41), here interference gold switches to interference violet, and the interference violet swaps to interference gold. These colour changes are slight, but
once they are discovered the viewer is encouraged to experience the work from unfixed and decentralised viewing position to experience and activate colour transformation.

Figure 40
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Iridescence 6, 2010
Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood
30 x 25cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 41
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Iridescence 13, 2010
Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood
30 x 25cm
Collection of the artist

Iridescence explores the luminous and reflective possibilities and consequences of lightfast interference pigments. The pale works in the series explore the unstable nature or character of interference colour schemes that subtly flip to a complementary colour. The ashen and unstable surfaces I create are comparable to theorist, Georges Meusnier (‘Karl Robert’) observation that, “A white wall in full sunlight is never white: it is pinkish white, yellowish white, greenish white, according to the reflections which it receives” (Gage, 1993, p.223). These paintings explore ideas about the transience of light, time and movement, in particular issues of reflection, transformation and changeability through the deliberate creation of unstable colour and surface effects. Reflective colour and surface shifts operate as a metaphor for a changing and unstable contemporary world.

My reductive, systematic and commercial colour approach enabled me to further extend my reflective colour palette and surface qualities. The small-scale of the
wooden panels combined with the delicate paint handling, which reveals faint graphite marks and slight brushstrokes emphasise the handmade qualities and facture of the work. Utilising subtle colour contrasts and incorporating faint traces of the artist’s hand created luminous paint surfaces for procuring up-close looking. Fragmented formats and cropped structures also mimic and maximise this close-up device or effect.

The series was designed to prompt the viewer to take on a decentred viewing position when contemplating the work. Colour changes activate the attentive viewer to move in front of the work and view its surface from various angles so that they activate colour shifts and experience colour reversals. Another important aspect of the series was my decision to paint around the edges of each panel so that the colour ground and composition wraps around the support to affirm the works status as an object, and in turn procure contemplation. By extending the design along the stretcher frame I intend to further destabilise the viewer’s physical positioning in relation to the series.

The *Iridescence* series is a collection of highly interactive and optical works that flash and fade intermittently to create unstable and ambiguous pictorial spatial readings that explore the affective role of reflective colour and oblique geometric structuring, which encourages the viewer to move in response to the work and activate subtle colour and surface changes. Colour and geometry is used to heighten changeable pictorial spatial readings. For instance, the vibrant colour contrasts and slight colour fluctuations combined with skewed geometric structures result in visual sensations that affect the viewer’s mind and body. Visual disorientation arises from the interference complementary colour flips that invert planar space.

Colour flipping or inversion occurs when a particular colour changes into another hue. In the *Iridescence* paintings interference complementary colour shifts, including interference red to interference green and/or interference green to interference red were explored to generate contrasting colour inversions, and divergent optical and spatial effects. In particular, when a warm colour such as interference red turns to cool interference green the contrasting chromatic spatial impression flips. In other words warm colour forms that appear to advance are inverted into cool colour structures that
Iridescence investigates the affective role of colour and surface. On close inspection of the work the observer is prompted to encounter the work from an off-centred and unfixed position in order to activate shiny flashes, colour flips and shifts. The viewer can also become aware that changing light conditions and the surrounding environment influence the reflective properties of the work.

**Installation formats**

Different constellations of *Iridescence* were tested and trialled in my studio and in curated group exhibitions in Taiwan and Melbourne to explore alternate and ambiguous pictorial spatial readings. Through arranging and reconfiguring the paintings in various repeated modular formats distinctive installation structures and rhythms were created. The construction of different spatial arrangements, clusters and patterns investigated the colour, compositional and structural relationships between the pictures, which would emerge during the viewer’s perception of the work.

For instance, sixteen works were closely arranged in a predominately horizontal format that zigzagged erratically up and down the wall (See Figure 42). This irregular spatial formation was intended to prompt the viewer to walk in front of the work. Through taking on a decentred and unfixed viewing position the observer might be guided to contemplate strong and subtle iridescent and interference colour and surface shifts. They might also consider the impression of dynamic movement as the polychromatic panels rise up and down on the wall.
The works were also arranged in an elongated, vertical format for the exhibition *My Australia*, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei University of Fine Arts, Taiwan, 1 July – 7 August 2011, (Figure 44). The curators, Shiau-Peng Chen and Meng Shu-You, selected this spatial structure. The four-by-four format and colour arrangement suited me well, as it was reminiscent of high-rise architecture. Each vertical panel may be perceived as a window or grid. Importantly, the magenta red panels were place in a horizontal format at the bottom of the composition, which might suggest land, landscape or a horizon line, whilst the ultramarine blue panels were placed on the top row of the installation implying a sky or skyline. These particular landscape readings or orientations were similarly investigated in Figure 43.
This led me to adopt this format in other work, and experiment with inverting spatial readings to create the sensation of tension and unease. For instance, curator Wilma Tabacco arranged four pale panels in a closely spaced vertical formation in the group exhibition *Frames of Reference*, Langford 120, Melbourne, 16 June – 8 July 2012, (Figure 44). This significantly smaller installation format encourages an intimate viewing experience and the vertical format echoes the viewers standing bodily positioning. It is important to point out that this spatial arrangement is comparable to Kazimir Malevich’s vertical sequence of four *Suprematist paintings*, (1915)\(^{36}\), but these abstract works are placed much higher up the wall to communicate cosmological and spiritual ideas rather than the bodily or phenomenological encounter and site specific ideas.

Figure 44
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Installation view of *Iridescence Frames of Reference*, Langford 120, Melbourne
16 June – 8 July 2012
Chapter Three: Including the kitchen sink

My intention was to experiment with displaying the pieces in various clusters and sequences along the vertical-horizontal axis of the wall in order to test out different spatial readings and to explore formal interrelationships between the works. Through configuring and rearranging the paintings at varying spatial intervals and heights I predicted that the viewing subject might experience and become actively engaged with their shimmering colours and surface qualities.

3. INSTABILITY SERIES, 2010 – 2013

The flexible display of the *Iridescence* series prompted me to experiment with installing the work in three-dimensional spatial arrangements (on the floor and table) to further address architectural space and ambiguous spatial concerns (Figure 45). This compelled me to make a series of one hundred and twenty-one line drawings based on selected photographic documentation of particular installation views (Figure 46). Next, chosen drawings were made into paintings on paper (Figure 47) and later canvas (Figure 48). To focus on issues of spatial deformation, ambiguity and tension I created multiple versions of drawings and paintings that investigate colour changes and/or reversals, mirror images and multiple orientations to construct pictorial spatial structures or situations that draw out unnerving perceptual and physiological encounters from the viewer.

Figure 45
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Installation view
Melbourne, May 2010
Dimensions variable
Collection of the artist
Chapter Three: Including the kitchen sink

Figure 46
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Instability Line Drawing*, 2010
Pencil on paper
21 x 29.5cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 47
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Flying Buttress*, 2011
Acrylic on paper 57 x 76.5cm,
Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
During the making of the three-dimensional spatial installations (Figure 31 and Figure 45), I began testing out different spatial arrangements and relationships to create alternate viewing experiences and readings of *Iridescence*. As the installation experiments progressed I became increasingly aware of the possibilities and potentialities of inventively documenting the spatial installation from multiple perspectives including, peripheral angles and aerial views, as well as incorporating and maximising shadow projections to create warped compositional effects of elongation and compression. Additionally, the shadow forms emphasised theatricality.
through strong colour or tonal contrasts of light and dark (chiaroscuro), which were later explored in the reductive high-key colour contrasts composed in selected paintings on paper and canvas. On reflection, the interference colours and diagonal linear structures utilised in the *Iridescence* series prompted me to view and install the paintings from multiple angles.

During the structural analysis of the spatial installations I noticed that strong oblique shadows were cast onto the three-dimensional configurations (see Figure 45). I responded to the shadows and maximised them in my new works to enhance the impression of spatial depth. The incorporation of shadows produced compositional complexities, fluctuations and deformations. The instability of the shadows operated as another apt metaphor for constant movement and flux in everyday life. This methodology yielded a group of preliminary line drawings (Figure 31 and 45) and final abstract paintings (Figure 48).

In the *Instability* drawings (Figure 32 and 46) I use line to both delineate and obscure space and form in order to create a variety of ambiguous spatial readings, including figure-ground reversal, elongation and compression, irregularity and asymmetry, the simplification of three-dimensional forms via silhouetting, organising forms upside down or on an angle are a range of tactics I deploy to procure disorientation and make the familiar abstract and unrecognisable.

Each composition in this large series comprises warped modular forms that are comparable to architectural thresholds in particular windows, doorways and corners. The various skewed shapes and oblique perspectives, including the subtle off-centred positioning of motifs encourage the viewer to move in front of the work and take on a decentred viewing position. This decentring is analogous to traversing through city centres and experiencing shifting and multiple viewpoints.

The *Instability* series, (2010 – 2013), features four distinct chronological groups:

Each group addressed specific compositional, structural and colour/surface issues, which were adjusted and refined during the making of multiple versions and/or series to maximise pictorial spatial deformation and unease, and alternate or contradictory spatial readings.

**INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 1**

Group 1 marked the beginning of the *Instability* series. This group of work consists of nine medium-sized acrylic paintings on hot press or cold press watercolour paper. Each work is horizontally orientated and measures 57.5 x 76.5cm. The fixed horizontal format encourages a landscape reading, while the fragility of the paper ground (or support surface) and the dimensions encourage close or intimate viewing. In contrast to the *Iridescence* series, I avoided vibrantly coloured grounds and chose to work on achromatic gesso grounds in white, grey and black to explore an austere colour palette that emphasised spatial depth and/or figure-ground reversal. For instance, iridescent, metallic, interference, micaceous and gesso colours were painted over neural colour grounds to create paradoxical spatial readings designed to engage a variety of alternate perceptual experiences (See Figure 49 and Figure 50). Through combining reflective and matte colours with projective geometry I further activated the pictorial spatial relationship between the viewer, the work of art and the surrounding environment. For example, the metallic, iridescent, interference, micaceous and high-gloss colours and surfaces reflected the light, whilst the matte gesso tones absorbed the light, and were deliberately arranged to create contradictory pictorial spatial and surface readings.
Figure 49
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Ghost shadows*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm
Private collection

Figure 50
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Cornered*, 2010
Acrylic on paper
57.5 x 76.5cm
Collection of the artist
In Group 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the *Instability* series, configurations were tripled or doubled. For instance, Group 1 comprised one duplicate and two mirror images, whilst Group 2 consisted of mirror images. Inquiry into mirror images and colour reversal enabled me to create figure-ground reversal. For instance, in *Ghost shadows* (Figure 49) and *Cornered* (Figure 50) spatial reversibility was effectively investigated, including the perceptual effects of strong tonal contrasts and reflective colours and surfaces to create spatial tension and projection. Devising reductive colour schemes and reversing them in composite works or mirror images resulted in the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional pictorial support, and pictorial spatial variations and reversals. This research demonstrates that that spatial tension can be created through the used of oblique structure, fragmented formats and reflective colours and surfaces.

In the composite paintings I reversed the dark-figure and light-ground spatial readings, which resulted in the figure appearing spot lit against an ominous ground. Through experimenting with figure-ground reversals through reductive colour schemes I was able to enhance spatial ambiguity and confusion. In addition, by making multiple versions, including mirror images I was able to create contradictory spatial readings that were intended to confuse the viewer.

**INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 2**

Group 2 of the *Instability* series comprises six medium-sized acrylic paintings on hot press or cold press watercolour paper. The initial format, structure and scale of the works were similar to Group 1, but in order to further explore issues of spatial disorientation I began testing my compositions out it multiple orientations, such as a ninety-degree angle, or upside down (that is, turning compositional structures on a one hundred and eighty degree angle). Unfixed formats led to multiple spatial readings, including the experience of precarious, and I discovered that I could further engage and manipulate a perceptual and physiological response from the audience. For an earlier discussion on issues of spatial deformation and ambiguity see Introduction pages 3-5 and Chapter One: *Thresholds for disorientation* pages 35-44.
Chapter Three: Including the kitchen sink

In Group 2 (and Group 3 and Group 4), I more fully explored the ways in which formal elements, including scale, format, composition, colour, form, line and surface quality can be arranged and adjusted to prompt shifts in perception (Akakçe, 2005, p.3). The Group 2 paintings were produced after my field trip to New York, Berlin, London and Paris to examine contemporary surface architecture firsthand, in particular the reflection and refraction of light and warped reflections cast on the high-gloss glazed glass and polished metal facades of shiny corporate high-rise buildings. Whilst analysing and photographically documenting new industrial materials, colours, patterns and surface qualities, I also began studying the reflective properties of modern iridescent glass in major art museums including, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, as well as Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris and the Bröhan Museum, Berlin.

There I observed and recorded the luxuriousness of reflective iridescent glass, including the use of sumptuous ornamental motifs, organic patterns and variegated surface textures. This experience prompted me to experiment with combining painting and relief printing processes in Group 2 and Group 3 of the Instability painting series to further investigate the subtlety of reflectivity, translucency, opacity and surface pattern/texture to enhance tactility or tangibility and procure contemplation and intimate viewing.

This methodology presented an opportunity to further experiment with and extend my use of colour and surface to explore illusory visual effects and alternate pictorial spatial readings. For instance, my inquiry into slight and/or strong colour juxtapositions and disparate surface textures such as, glossy, gritty and matte resulted in paradoxical pictorial spatial expressive effects.

In Group 2 and Group 3 of the Instability series, I combined painting and printmaking techniques to create a wide range of illusory surface textures (for example, faux lizard, crocodile and corrugated prints) and spatial effects emphasising perceived and actual movement of light through light reflection. The metallic, iridescent, interference and micaceous colour schemes irregularly gleam in response to the quantity of light. On contact with light the reflective colours appear disconnected from the paper support surface, which results in the asymmetric forms unexpectedly
pulsating forward like a lightning strike. These slight colour/surface vibrations are also comparable to the faint markings of snail trails on concrete, which similarly flash and fade depending on the flow of light. Subtly erratic colour schemes and surface qualities were used to maximise changeable spatial effects designed to engage and manipulate the viewer to move in front of the composition (Akakçe, 2005, p.41).

The printed details and facture of the work effectively draw in and direct or guide the viewer to participate in intimate looking. The medium-scale of the works and the fragility of paper support also enhance the closeness of the viewing encounter. During the making of Group 2 and Group 3, I became increasingly aware of the tension between scale and intimacy, including different responses. In particular, small or medium-sized works featuring complex surface textures encourage close looking, and delicate surface patterns operate as parts rather than whole (an aspect of Islamic architectural surfaces, and the opposite of gestalt). For instance, Islamic architecture and design features highly intricate and interlaced ornamental patterning to emphasise fragmentation and the division of parts, which reflect spiritual and symbolic ideas concerning infinity. In contrast, Gestalt theory stresses the significance and conceptualisation of the overall structure or whole.

In Second skin, (2011), (Figure 51), the iridescent gold speckled pattern is deliberately placed over pale gesso grey in a similar tone so that the pattern seems to appear and disappear in accordance with on the changing light and the viewer’s alternating point of view. Within these series, irregular textural patterns were printed in iridescent, metallic, interference and micaceous colours so that they subtly reflected the light. These cunning surface textures vibrate forwards and backwards in connection to the changing light conditions and the viewer’s physical appearance and positioning in relation to the work.
The Instability paintings were painstakingly painted and printed by hand in order to emphasise “the material itself and the physical processes of making are of equal importance to the context of the work” (Akakçe, 2005, p.42). These particular methodologies are used to get the viewer to move in front on the work to procure active participation in unfolding “sensorial reactions” (Bishop, 2005, p.55).

**INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 3**

Group 3 consists eight medium-sized paintings on hot press and cold press watercolour paper. This series is a little larger than Group 1 and Group 2, and utilises a slightly elongated rectangle format to echo the internal compositional structures that comprise stretched-out oblique structures and forms. Similar to Group 2, unfixed compositional formats were tested and trialled to procure spatial ambiguity and disorientation.

In this body of work, I emphasised the sensation of dynamic movement through astutely organizing diagonal forms and high-key colour contrasts, which bring tension to the different compositions. For instance, in *Slide,* (2011), *Afterglow,* (2011-2012),
Glide, (2011), Lead feather, (2011), Inclination, (2011), and Forward bend, (2011), diagonal divisions and dissections were investigated to warp pictorial space. The irregular and splintered subsections result in the appearance of fragmented, shallow and deep space. By constructing graceful origami-like forms with awkward angles or corners pictorial space became highly warped, elongated, drawn out, tightly folded, squeezed, squashed and twisted. Additionally, diagonal forms were deliberately cropped by the parameters of the picture plane to suggest fragmentation and the edges of some structures were arranged so that they did not meet up. These cropping devices and calculated mismatching heighten spatial tension.

Through creating warped compositional structures and unsteady surface qualities the viewer is encouraged to experience the work from multiple angles, including unfixed and decentralized viewing positions. In physically moving in front of a painting the viewer actively participates in triggering surface movement. Shifting viewing positions and changing light conditions significantly affect the appearance of the work. Consequently, the use of reflective colours and surface qualities emphasise the importance of the viewer, the viewing experience and light reflection in relation to the work. In other words, the viewer and the surrounding environment are connected to the appearance of the work, and the reflective properties stress the transience and immediacy of visual experience (Bishop, 2005, p.11).

In Afterglow, (Figure 52), and Glide, (Figure 53), I used newly available interference acrylic paints I bought in New York. Similar to the complementary colour flips explored in the Iridescence paintings, the gritty green fragmented irregular forms in Afterglow change to orange, while in Glide the glossy violet triangle and tapered rectangle flip to green in response to the viewer’s physical interaction and movement in front of the work. These colour and surface changes are also analogous to Heliolit glass that changes from green to orange-yellow, or from blue to purple-crimson or Alexandrite glass, which switches from purple to crimson. This Art Deco glassware is coloured with special oxides so that colour alters in relation to changing light conditions.
Figure 52
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Afterglow*, 2011-2012
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 53
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Glide*, 2011
Acrylic on paper
66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation
Collection of the artist
Groups 1, 2 and 3 of the Instability paintings were made as a series of tests and trials that lay the foundation for Group 4: the final paintings displayed in the examination exhibition at Langford 120. Since December 2011, I have been working on a collection of large-scale works that will mark the conclusion of this PhD. Some of these works have been exhibited in group exhibitions for instance, Red stripe, (2012), and Far-flung, (2012), were exhibited in Frames of Reference, Langford 120, 16 June – 8 July 2012 (See Figure 54).

In the group exhibition, Frames of Reference, the large-scale paintings Far-flung and Red stripe were displayed on adjacent walls in the main gallery space (Figure 54). This spatial installation heightens peripheral visual experiences and encouraged the viewer to encounter the paintings from several viewing positions to activate delicate colour and surface change. Additionally, the spatial arrangement of the paintings emphasised mirroring and spatial distortion in order to destabilise the viewer.

Figure 54
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Installation view
Frames of Reference, Langford 120, Melbourne
16 June – 8 July 2012
The examination paintings focus on similar pictorial spatial issues addressed in the earlier exploratory works, and many of the initial formats, compositions, colours, surface qualities and supports were adjusted and refined with confidence and conviction. The final paintings on canvas explore repeated large-scale square formats that measure 183 x 183cm, with the exception of five smaller works measuring 98 x 98cm.

**Thresholds for Disorientation**

The Exhibition
Langford 120, Melbourne
27 April – 26 May 2013

**List of Exhibition Paintings**

2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Red stripe*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Far-flung*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Green slide*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Off-kilter*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Golden streak*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Unstable colours*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
9. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Silver flux*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
10. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Strange values (Disequilibrium)*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
11. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Spearmint)*, 2012 Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Collection of the artist

12. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Pink)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Private collection

13. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Magenta)*, 2013 Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Private collection

14. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Greyscale)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Collection of the artist

15. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Peppermint)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100cm, Collection of the artist
Figure 55
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Instability*, 2011-2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Figure 56
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Red stripe, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
Figure 57
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Far-flung*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Figure 58
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Green slide*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Figure 59
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Off-kilter*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
Figure 60
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Topsy-turvy*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
Figure 61
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Golden streak, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of the artist
Figure 62
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Unstable colours, 2012*
Acrylic on canvas
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Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Silver flux*, 2013
Acrylic on canvas
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Collection of the artist
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Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Strange values (Disequilibrium), 2013
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Private collection
Figure 65
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Energetics (Spearmint)*, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
98 x 98cm
Collection of the artist
Figure 66
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Energetics (Pink)*, 2012-2013
Acrylic on canvas
98 x 98cm
Private collection
Figure 67
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
Energetics (Magenta), 2013
Acrylic on canvas
98 x 98cm
Private collection
Figure 68
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
_Energetics (Greyscale)_ (2012-2013)
Acrylic on canvas
98 x 98cm
Collection of the artist
Chapter Three: Including the kitchen sink

Figure 69
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
*Energetics (Peppermint)*, 2012-2013
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 100cm
Collection of the artist
In Group 4 of the *Instability* paintings I deliberately chose to work on a large-scale square format to heighten the viewer’s bodily spatial experience of a work of art. The height and width of the painting is predominately domestic and addresses the audience’s physical stature (from a standing position). The regular square format emphasises stability or balance, in particular the harmonious nexus of the vertical and horizontal frame. By using oblique structures within a square format I discovered that spatial tension was maximised, as the compositional structure appeared to move, spiral and rotate away from the steadiness of the picture frame.

In contrast to the balance communicated in vertical-horizontal grid configurations or representations of classical perspective, which encourage fixed and centred viewing position, I compose diagonal structures that prompt the viewer to contemplate the work from a decentralised standpoint. Whilst my work deals with and follows painting conventions of displaying or hanging pictures vertically on the wall with the viewer standing in front, these traditions are challenged and undermined through the construction of large-scale warped compositions that trigger the viewer to move around (but not through) the work, and experience the abstract paintings as objects in space from a variety of angles and/or distances. Scale, format, structure, form, colour and surface texture are meticulously composed to encourage optical contemplation and physical interaction (or active participation) while encountering a work of art. Decentred viewing encounters emphasise peripheral vision, in particular the experience of reflected light or the sensation of movement that catches the eye and provokes the viewer to turn and look.

*Instability*, (2011-2012), (Figure 55), was the first large-size painting made for examination. In contrast to the following final paintings, the stretcher bar profile was thin (and measured 2.2cm), and similar to the *Iridescence* paintings the diagonal configuration wrapped around the edge of the support. To maximise an object-like reading of my work I consequently used a thicker stretcher bar profile in the next paintings (these measured 3.2cm), which strengthened the pictorial spatial impact of the series.

In *Instability*, I used size, format, composition, colour and surface to create pictorial spatial tension or unease and ambiguity. A discordant colour scheme was devised to
generate physical unease. For instance, I juxtaposed shiny apple green, dark sap green and different tints and tones of red oxide with matte beige and black gesso to create a noxious or nauseating colour combination. The high-gloss colours reflected and refracted the light, including the viewer and surrounding environment in blurred and deformed ways on the surface of the painting. The large-scale of these reflective surfaces that were meticulously layered and built up on extra fine-weave canvas emphasised the viewer’s bodily relationship to the painting.

In *Instability*, and other final paintings, I created an amalgamation of reflective surface qualities to present different optical pictorial spatial effects. For example, some of my gloss surfaces distort, deform and dissolve the viewer and the surrounding environment on the paintings shiny surface. By building transparent layers of metallic and iridescent paint on canvas I created glossy, reflective and translucent surfaces that are comparable to the high-gloss glass glazed windows and walls of corporate architecture that alternate between being transparent and non-transparent depending the lighting conditions. Additionally, on the surface of my paintings the viewer’s appearance is reflected, including the surrounding space or environment, which produce a strong suggestion of peering through space and spatial warping.

The new work may be perceived as uncanny and unstable. These sensations are encouraged through the juxtaposition of matte colours/surfaces and glossy colours/surfaces that reflect the viewer and the surrounding space in ways that are fragmentary and deforming. Diffused reflections are explored for their ambiguous and dislocating character. I use glossy surfaces to dislocate and warp our sense of self-presence by undermining our physical orientation in relation to the work (Bishop, 2005, p.92). Shiny surfaces are intended to implicate and activate the viewer, and raise their awareness of instability and fragmentation in daily life.

In the medium-sized paintings on paper, the absorbency and texture of the support surfaces meant that the acrylic colours were deeply embedded in the ground (another strategy used to draw in the viewer). This contrasts to the final paintings whereby the acrylic colours sit on top of the canvas surface, which eject the viewer and emphasise the projective qualities of colour and composition, with the exception to this being the
matte colours, which absorb the light and the viewer. Metallic colours were avoided in *Instability*, (2011-2012), (Figure 55) but were referred to in the tone of lacklustre light brown.

In the large-scale pictures I deliberately avoided using relief-printing processes, as these minute details would not be transferable at this size. Working at this scale and format encouraged me to focus on issues of proportion. During the preliminary stages of making these paintings I used an overhead projector or light box to project my linear compositions, which were then slightly adjusted or modified to maximise the expression of spatial warping and unease. These subtle changes were made to enhance vertiginous angles that appear to confront or plunge towards the viewer and paradoxically draw them in and/or push them out of pictorial space.

The final paintings focussed on the creation of ambiguous pictorial spatial conditions intended to destabilise or undermine the viewer via the deliberate arrangement of scale, format, composition, colour and surface. For instance, in *Far-flung*, (2012), (Figure 57), and *Golden streak*, (2012), (Figure 61), spatial tension is maximised by the use of highly irregular forms that are positioned slightly off-centre and are severely cropped to create the strong sensation of push-and-pull. Spatial dynamism is heightened through the use of zigzagging or tortuousness forms that dip and slide off in multiple directions and on awkward angles. On encountering these diagonal compositional structures the viewer is manipulated to take on an unfixed and decentred position.

Colour and surface texture (or facture) also engage and stimulate the viewer to experience the work from peripheral angles and un-static viewpoints. For example, *Far-flung*, investigates a range of subtle colour and surface qualities that are not transferable or discernable in digital or print reproduction. In situ, the viewer becomes attuned to the meticulous juxtaposition of disparate acrylic paint materials, pigments and mediums, which produce contradictory colour and surface changes that maximise the sensation of push-and-pull. The different paint layers, some thin and some thick, procure contemplation or close examination, and the slight colour variations and surface changes from grey to silver to gritty graphite grey add to this push-pull or back-forth sensibility. Similarly, the slightly streaky directional brushstrokes.
emphasise movement, pattern and surface texture, including multiple directional readings, while the glossy, transparent and opaque surfaces further contribute to paradoxical pictorial spatial effects that procure contemplation. These delicate surface changes are comparable to the detailed textural patterns and surfaces depicted in Islamic architecture and design.

In *Golden streak*, glossy, matte and metallic colours and surfaces qualities are similarly juxtaposed to create disparate surfaces that prompt close looking and encourage prolonged viewing experiences. For instance, the glossy silver and gold-green forms reflects the light and surrounding environment in intermittent ways, whilst the circuitousness matte black gesso motifs create the illusion of spatial depth or recession, void and fracture. Surreal architectural spatial readings that challenge the viewers perception of space is similarly explore in *Red stripe*, (2012), (Figure 56). In this painting pictorial space becomes illogical, paradoxical and unsettling via the shrewd arrangement of a reductive colour palette featuring high-key colour contrasts, discordant tones and extremely subtle colour variations.

In *Red stripe*, I simplified my compositional structures through using cropping devices and limiting the number of colours and tones in my work. Translucent magenta was juxtaposed with shiny red oxide, glossy chocolate brown and opaque black to explore lively and subtle colour/tone contrasts. Through carefully attuning conflicting colours/tones and/or surface qualities that alternate between transparent, reflective and dense, disparate surface accretions were investigated to procure close observation. For instance, the juxtaposition of oxide red and magenta is dynamic, whilst the arrangement close or similar tones of dark brown and black with contrasting surface qualities is exceptionally subtle, and these slight and careful observations unfold during the viewer’s perceptual experience of the work. Dark colours or tones affect the viewer perceptually and physiologically. Dark colours or tones, especially dark matte tones absorb the light and engulf the viewer. Consequently, in my work I use darkness as a strategy to draw the viewer in more closely.

Strong spatial and architectural readings are suggested in *Green slide*, (2012), (Figure 58), and *Topsy-turvy*, (2012), (Figure 60). Similar to *Red stripe*, balance and tension is
created through the use of vertical and/or horizontal elements that are contrasted with diagonal angles. The large-scale of the fragmented forms is physically confronting and highly dynamic. The warm/cool and light/dark colour contrasts pulsate in deep pictorial space, and the inclined modular forms emphasise architectonic readings. The diagonal axes function as pictorial spatial vortexes that create the sensation of dynamic movement and the illusion of deep space.

*Green slide, Topsy-turvy and Off-kilter,* (2012), (Figure 59), feature upside down and/or inverted configurations designed to reinforce spatial ambiguity and disorientation. *Off-kilter* comprises a bottom heavy configuration, which emphasises imbalance and unease. The severely cropped and tilted forms segment or fracture pictorial space, and the upward pointing triangle structure penetrates the vivid cobalt teal space or form that is comparable to a twisted or diagonal skyline and reinforces strong architectural readings and analogies with urban space. The asymmetric and off-balanced formation combined with the discordant and pulsating colour scheme emphasises pictorial spatial instability to elicit a perceptual and physiological reaction from the viewer.

*Unstable colours,* (2012), (Figure 62), emphasises a new colour/tone direction in my work. The hazy colour combination of salmon pink gesso, grey gesso tints and iridescent metallic silver maximises colour and surface variation. The subtle or slight tonal distinctions of pale greys and silver encourages intimate viewing, which is further encouraged by the irregular reflection of light along the silver zigzagging asymmetric form, which contrasts to the refractive and light absorbing colour/surface of the modular warm grey motifs. The subtle colour contrasts and disparate surface textures generate glowing, shimmering optical effects and illusory experiences that are forever changing in an animated perpetual state of flux. The similar or close tones result in forms and/or spaces dissolving or merging and appearing or disappearing as the viewer experiences *Unstable colours* from a shifting viewing position. These delicate scintillating colours and surface qualities engage and ambulate the viewer.

*Unstable colours,* heighten expressive, theatrical and dynamic viewing encounters for the audience. The irregular structuring, diffused colour scheme and vertical brushstrokes were used to harmonise the composition and maximise figure and
ground reversibility. For instance, I deliberately arranged the warm salmon pink in a ground position or negative space so that this ground or negative shape projects forward and, in turn, may be read as figure. In contrast, the cropped and off-centred figure shape or positive space is painted grey and silver, which results in the figure form receding in space to become ground. Highly ambiguous spatial experiences unfold during the viewing encounter, and are resultant on the lighting conditions and the viewers bodily relationship to the picture plane, which effect the pictorial spatial reading of grey and silver, which oscillate or fluctuate to change the appearance of the painting.

In the final exhibition paintings I deliberately held off using strong tonal contrasts. I created a different perceptual encounter that maximised an obscure pictorial spatial encounter that was cognitively challenging and highly interactive to emphasise the phenomenological experience.

4. **SKY-RISE SERIES, 2011 –**

During the making of the *Instability* paintings, I travelled to New York, London, Paris and Berlin, and then Hong Kong and Taipei to study contemporary architecture. In New York and Hong Kong I photographically recorded skyscrapers and focused on incidents of mirroring, spatial distortion and splintering (see Figure 70). In both cities I recorded warped reflections cast on highly polished glass-and-metal gridded facades, as well as structural recordings of architecture from oblique and off-centred viewpoints. This photographic documentation was used as source material for the *Sky-rise* series: a collection of preliminary line drawings on paper.
Spatial deformation and distortion was investigated through making two-dimensional drawings that examined elongated structures and warped geometry to further explore spatial unease and figure-ground ambiguity in my art practice. The experience of walking through highly congested urban sprawls prompted me to investigate vertical structures and formats, stretched-out and inclined modular motifs, and irregular void forms or spaces between high-rise buildings to create awkward shapes and figure-ground anomalies (See Figures 71-73).
In the *Hong Kong Line Drawings*, I concentrated on simplifying, distorting, cropping and reversing spatial readings. Compositionally multiple versions of elongated structures were created to explore a range of architectural distortions. The vertical and oblique compositions evoke the sensation of tilting one’s head backwards to look up at the skyscrapers, and the multiple drawings of several views of duplicated buildings suggests the experience of spinning around in urban space and becoming disorientated. The slightly misaligned mirror structures were deliberately selected and examined to create skewed, plunging and thrusting directional readings that imply a coiling vortex-like movement, and unremitting flux.

On completion of this PhD, I intend to develop the *Sky-rise* drawings into a series of large-scale wall paintings and paintings on canvas. The vertically orientated canvas works will measure approximately 220 x 80cm, whilst the dimensions of the wall paintings will respond to the proportions of the site-specific space. The elongated rectangle format will correspond with the internal configuration depicting high-rise architecture. I intend to utilise stretched-out skyscraper motifs to emphasise pictorial
spatial dynamism, unease and warping. Architectural structures are to be depicted from oblique perspectives to create vertiginous depths and dizzying formations. These paintings will feature glossy acrylic paint surfaces and pulsating colour schemes designed to disorientate the viewer.

Through depicting vertiginous perspectives in the *Sky-rise* drawings, I portrayed experiences of spatial unease and disorientation. The impression of dizziness was heightened through altering the orientation of the works so that the viewpoints were flipped upside down to enhance feelings of vertigo and instability. I focused on maximising instability via the use of inverted angles and figure-ground ambiguity in order to render pictorial space illusory, unstable and in perpetual flux.

During my PhD I have worked within and challenged the conventions of painting, by encouraging the viewer to engage with abstract artworks from an off-centred and unfixed position. In my post-doctoral work, I anticipate making wall paintings and spatial installations that encourage the viewer to physically enter, move through or around and, in turn, become part of the work, and essentially encounter abstract art in more bodily ways. I intend to further explore issues of decentring and activating viewer involvement through creating spatial constructions that stress immediate sensory experiences and bodily participation. This is not possible with abstract paintings on a two-dimensional support surfaces, because they can enforce a fundamentally frontal standing retinal position that can be described as “passive” or “detached” (Bishop, 2005, p.11).
Outcomes and Conclusions

Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces was a practice-led studio-based art research project examining the historical and contemporary relationship between architecture and abstract painting. The outcome of the project was an exhibition of geometric abstract paintings that investigated oblique structures, fragmented formats, and reflective materials, colours and surfaces that are analogous with contemporary architecture in order to engage and manipulate a perceptual and physiological response from the audience.

At the core of this research was the claim that recent structural and material trends in contemporary architecture and urban space can significantly impact on and advance contemporary abstract painting practice. The project focused on examining ambiguous and unsettling spatial experiences. Issues of reflection and spatial deformation evidenced in contemporary buildings and city spaces were investigated to demonstrate how disorientating optical and bodily encounters could be explored in contemporary abstract painting to generate new formal and conceptual opportunities and possibilities.

The project identified that we are currently living in an increasingly unstable world and that changeability and instability is frequently experienced on a daily basis in major contemporary cities. We often perceive the physical world in fragmented ways and warped reflections, and our heightened sensory experience of urban space is exceedingly dynamic, disorientating and unnerving. These splintered spatial effects were explored through making a new body of geometric abstract works. Highly paradoxical pictorial spatial effects were created through the deliberate arrangement of oblique linear structures, fragmented abstract forms and reflective materials. Through conducting this research I was able to make original, innovative contributions to the field of abstract painting. By creating divergent push-pull surfaces tensions I created new optical effects and pictorial spatial encounters for the viewing subject.
Particular compositional structures were designed in connection to contemporary architecture. Oblique and irregular configurations were investigated to generate ambiguous and contradictory pictorial spatial effects. Structural strategies, including figure-ground reversal, fragmentation, splintering, compression and elongation were used to destabilise and disorientate the viewer. Through deploying multiple perspectives and reversing viewpoints the illusory sensation of push-pull, movement and flux was created to draw out feelings of uncertainty within the viewing subject. In order to absorb and eject the viewer diagonal angles, including steep and peripheral viewpoints were juxtaposed in dynamic ways to engage and manipulate the viewer. Ambiguous perceptual and physiological experiences were also devised through simplifying compositions and/or silhouetting forms to generate obscurity.

A variety of reflective materials were employed to produce luminous optical effects comparable to the lustrous facades of contemporary architecture constructed from the latest reflective material technologies. Through using the newest reflective paint materials, pigments and mediums in innovative ways I extended the use of colour and surface in contemporary abstract painting practice. Metallic, iridescent, interference and micaceous pigments were used, and high-gloss, gloss and matte surface effects were created to explore push-pull surface tensions. Glossy materials and surfaces were deployed to explore issues of instability, changeability and flux in contemporary life and city surroundings. The unstable character of glossy paint materials were deliberately utilised to create capricious colours and surfaces, including the sensation of movement on a static, two-dimensional planar surface. Scintillating colours and shifting surface effects were designed to produce bewildering, illusory spaces that elicit perceptual and psychological responses from the viewer analogous to those encountered within the splintered, reflective and warped spaces of contemporary architecture.

Through undertaking this research I have developed new cognitive and phenomenological structures, and novel optical effects and experiences for the viewing subject by making original, innovative pictorial spatial compositions. On encountering the work, the viewer becomes aware that transformations in the surrounding environment affect surface and colour, including the ways their bodily
appearance, positioning and movement in front of the work activate colour and surface change, fluctuation and projection.

The main aim of this project was to create a series of new geometric abstract paintings that explore ambiguous pictorial spatial configurations and perceived and actual movement in order to engage and manipulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space.

The project addressed three particular research questions:

1. In what ways can I use abstract painting to explore recent architectural projects concerning illusory spaces based on irregular structuring and fragmented modular formats?

2. How can I emphasise perceived and actual movement of light in abstract painting practice, in particular through light reflection and refraction?

3. How can ideas and principles of spatial distortion and ambiguity by architects, gestalt psychologists and art theorists be applied to the making of contemporary abstract painting?

Question One investigated the relationship between abstract painting practice and architectural practice through identifying and analysing pertinent art and architectural works. In responding to the link between geometric pictorial systems and architectural structures selected artists and architects practices were critically discussed to reveal formal and conceptual affinities and distinctions between modern and contemporary abstract painting and architecture.

This question examined new directions in contemporary architecture; in particular recent buildings featuring skewed structures and fractured geometric forms that were designed as psychological “structural situations”. The research investigated how these “structural conditions” can be examined in contemporary painting to create novel cognitive and psychological experiences for the viewer. The outcomes demonstrate my research argument that oblique structures and irregular forms trigger unsettling
and disorientating encounters from the viewing subject, and that new structural opportunities and potentialities in contemporary abstract painting are being explored.

Question Two investigated the practical use of current commercial reflective paint materials and synthetic colours. The research identified that there is a variety of iridescent, metallic, interference and micaceous pigments and glossy mediums obtainable today from art suppliers and hardware stores for use by professional artists. Reflective materials were experimented with in innovative ways to achieve divergent reflective and refractive effects. Shimmering colour emulsions and unstable surface tensions were utilised to emphasise perceived and actual movement on a static, two-dimension support.

From the position of being a contemporary abstract painter, practice-led studio-based art research was conducted to investigate new possibilities and potentialities regarding the material aspects of paint and paint technologies to create original visual effects that engage and manipulate a cognitive and physiological reaction from the viewing subject. Additionally, the theoretical research identified and explored how contemporary abstract painters use a range of reflective commercial paint materials in their work and to what result. This question provided a critical context for my own use of glossy materials in relation to the work of others in the field.

Question Three focused on the theoretical context for the research. At the heart of the research was the assertion that the role and function of abstract art is expressive and psychological, and not purely formal or ornamental. This question identified a modern and contemporary premise for spatial warping across the related fields of abstract art, architecture and perceptual psychology.

The research investigated the meaning of structure and form in modern and contemporary abstract art, architecture and Gestalt psychology, to demonstrate new compositional devises that produce ambiguous pictorial spatial effects and create unnerving optical encounters for the viewing subject. The practical results of this research project show that the primary role and function of structure and form is affective and expressive.
The scale, structure, colour and surface qualities of the final paintings in the examination exhibition emphasise the significance of sensory and bodily experience, including the complex and dynamic relationship between the art object, viewer and spatial encounter. Disorientating “structural conditions” were created to engage and manipulate the viewer to experience the work from decentered and unfixed viewing positions.

This project has contributed original research to the field of contemporary abstract painting practice. In particular, it has extended the connection between contemporary abstract painting and contemporary architecture. Newly available reflective commercial acrylic paint materials have been used to create new sensory, cognitive and phenomenological experiences for the viewer (in the two-dimensional) comparable to contemporary architecture. A variety of reflective, mobile and spatially ambiguous effects in abstract painting have been produced.

My research contributes significant new knowledge to pictorial spatial configuration in the field of contemporary painting. New perceptual and physiological conditions in contemporary abstract painting have been created, by using newly developed pigments; these are markedly different from twentieth century painting, such as Frank Stella’s use of commercial metallic reflective paint colours. The new commercial acrylic paints, pigments and mediums are extremely glossy and influenced by digital colour and screen technology, as well as commercial paint colours and materials available at the hardware store.

Today there are unlimited colour and surface opportunities, possibilities and potentialities in contemporary painting practice. Unlike the paint materials and surfaces of artworks produced in the 1920s and 1960s, which were highly textural and painterly to stress tactility, humanness and handmade qualities, my paintings emphasise “manual dexterity” and labour-intensiveness through meticulous or pristine paint handling. Evidence of methods or processes of construction are intentionally obscured in order to procure contemplation and meditation. For example, the paint surfaces and planar edges of my final paintings are precise, clear and clean; faint and smooth directional brushstrokes are perceptible during the viewing encounter. These particular sorts of surface accretions reference technological, social and economic
developments in the physical world, including the manufacture of shiny magazines, the iconic and crisp character of design, advertisement and logo, the shininess, brightness and brashness of digital screen-based technology, and the high-gloss surfaces finishes of contemporary architecture. The work also addresses a new audience who look at abstract painting very differently because they bring new knowledge of technology to the works, and new perspectives based on contemporary experiences of surfaces.

I intend to continue the research, beyond the PhD, into the use of continually evolving paint materials and technologies to further develop new colour effects and surface finishes. This will enable me to investigate the shifting appearance of current paint materials, colours and surfaces, which influence the changeable and flexible face of abstract painting. These types of surface finishes, and their influence on the viewing encounter, have prompted me to anticipate working directly on the wall. In particular, I have fore grounded the spatial context of exhibition, including the viewing encounter, and how this interacts with the work to move beyond the modernist white cube form of exhibition with emphasis being solely on the work itself.

Through this practical and theoretical research I have extended the conceptual core of my painting practice. I have created new perceptual and physiological conditions for the audience, and new structures, colours and surface effects to engage and manipulate the viewer to take on a decentred and unfixed viewing position. I have also expanded my methodology through innovatively exploring new commercial acrylic paint materials and technologies to further develop the facture of my paintings. For instance, unlike earlier usage of irregular edges in geometric abstract paintings, which were a consequence of paint thinners eroding masking tape barriers, my taped edges are immaculate and sharp, in reference to the aesthetics of current digital technologies. I have further developed and strengthened my ideas, knowledge, processes and techniques to create refined works of art that build on the tradition of geometric abstract paintings in the 1920s and 1960s, including Constructivist, Colour Field Painting and Minimalist conventions and modes.

This project has opened up new opportunities and directions to be pursued in my art practice. For instance, Stephen Bram’s “built constructions” led me to consider site
specificity and the experience of geometric structures and forms beyond the two-dimensional pictorial spatial conventions of abstract painting practice. For example, *Untitled (three-point perspective)*, (2009), the Ian Potter Museum of Art, south gallery and *Tracking shot*, (2012), 12th Adelaide Biennial of Australia Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, north wing are “constructed environments” made from everyday building materials that address the space of the exhibition. Through making highly skewed white rooms within the exhibition spaces of museums/galleries he explores the function and possibilities of three-dimensional “spatial conditions” that engage the viewer “in the round” (Harding and Cramer, 2009, p.238). In other words, his “spatial situations” engulf the viewer to maximise architectural and spatial experiences.

The possibility to work at a new scale in architectural space, and to create site-specific works that respond to particular interior and/or exterior architectural structures and features is one area I will continue to explore, which was beyond the scope of the PhD project. Rather than making experimental or transitional spatial installations in my studio, future works will involve creating refined site-specific spatial installations or constructions and wall paintings in galleries and other public venues, in order to become even more responsive to the structure, scale, proportion, materials and potentialities of architectural and urban space. In my post-doctoral research, I intend to work on a monumental scale and to explore installation practices to address ideas of contemporary architecture and urban space being physically overwhelming or threatening.

As a result of my research, working in larger scale would further address issues of spatial unease in contemporary urban space, phenomenology, bodily interaction and engagement with the work, building stronger links to architecture and city space. For instance, I would like to develop the *Sky-rise* drawings into large-scale wall paintings that extend over ten metres height and four metres in length. Oblique structures, fragmented forms and glossy colours and surfaces will be deployed to overwhelm the viewer and generate new pictorial spatial effects.

My research demonstrates that significant trends are occurring in contemporary abstract painting. Revolutionary artists are creating innovative colour and surface
effects in their practices to generate new visual experiences for the viewer through using current paint materials and technologies. I have become concerned with the space of exhibition, including the importance of making site-specific works that address urban space, buildings and landscape. In my own work, scale and site (architecture and urban space) has become increasingly significant, and I intend to further respond to this abstract painting and site/place synergy.

It is essential that contemporary art practice, including current geometric abstract painting involves or activates the viewer/public. By creating engaging and interactive structural conditions the viewer is encouraged to actively contemplate and participate with a work of art and, in turn, elicit a psychological reaction and phenomenological response. I now see the work as not finished until the viewer/public sees and experiences the work in situ.

*Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces* is a practice-led studio based art project that strengthens and synergises theories and practices on architecture, geometric abstract painting and visual perception. The examination exhibition, *Thresholds for Disorientation*, comprises ten large-scale and several medium-sized geometric abstract paintings that demonstrate ambiguous spatial effects can be created through the use of reflective materials, fragmented abstract form and oblique linear structures, and in turn engage and manipulate the viewing subject.
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Figure 2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City*, 2011, Photograph, Collection of the artist

Figure 3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Off-kilter*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection

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**Bibliography**


Bibliography


Samara Sonia Adamson-Pinczewski

Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces:
An investigation into ambiguous spatial effects created through the use of reflective materials, fragmented abstract form and oblique linear structures.

Volume 2: Appropriate Durable Record
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski

PhD Proposal

3. THE RESEARCH PROGRAM:

3.1 Title:

Reflecting on Pictorial Spaces: An investigation into ambiguous spatial effects created through the use of fragmented abstract form, reflective materials and oblique linear structures.

3.2 Brief Description:

Gestalt\textsuperscript{37} psychologist and theorist Rudolf Arnheim contends that pictorial optical and spatial illusions can be effectively achieved through the organisation of abstract, geometric forms and that deformation\textsuperscript{38} of pictorial space is enhanced through use of irregular and asymmetric shapes, fragmentation\textsuperscript{39} and obliqueness.\textsuperscript{40} Arnheim asserts that rectilinear configurations reaffirm the verticality of the human body and the horizontality of the landscape, whereas obliqueness enhances the sensation of weightlessness and instability.\textsuperscript{41} Arnheim notes that repeatable, fragmented, oblique forms can be arranged to create unstable pictorial spatial configurations that can trigger a variety of alternate perceptual responses. Factors such as the viewer’s physical positioning in relationship to a work of art affect the perceptual encounter and understanding of a spatial arrangement.\textsuperscript{42}

Through this research project I will research the use of stretched, compressed, twisted, warped, skewed, fragmented and sliced shapes to create a variety of spatial readings that engage and modulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space. I will also research ways to maximise perceived and actual movement (on a static, two-dimensional, planar surface) through the use of reflective and metallic materials.

I will develop two-dimensional abstract works, using a variety of painting techniques and newly developed metallic materials, in order to create disorientating, illusory spaces that elicit perceptual and physiological responses from the viewer similar to those experienced within the fragmented, reflective and distorted spaces of contemporary architecture.

The project stems from my ongoing preoccupation with forward tilting spatial configurations that imply movement on a static two-dimensional plane and the ways in which perceived oscillations might evoke perceptual and physiological responses from the viewer and simultaneously allude to futuristic or utopian metaphors derived

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Fragmentation refers to “the process or an instance of breaking into fragments.” Ibid., p.466.
\item Rudolf Arnheim, op. cit., p.48.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
from current architectural concerns. My interest lies in activating surface movement in order to procure temporal visual awareness.

**Review of literature and current practice:**

This research seeks to evaluate my own work within the context of works by contemporary artists who have attempted to develop new cognitive and phenomenological situations for the viewer through the depiction of pictorial and spatial geometric configurations intended to elicit a variety of perceptual responses.

American and European geometric abstract art of the 1950s and 1960s was concerned with engaging the spectator’s perceptual and physiological response to a work of art. This interest in phenomenology coincided with the production and use of new reflective industrial materials such as metallic house paints, metal sheeting, acrylic sheeting, transparent plastics and recycled matter. At the time many artists combined reflective materials with rectilinear forms in modular repeated compositions to create new visual and perceptual experiences for the viewer. Potential interruptions and variations to the surface structure and colour encouraged the viewer to consider the transient nature of visual perception. Barbara Rose notes, “In this sense the viewer’s perception becomes a chance element, a kind of noise troubling the visual order.”

Works by Frank Stella, and more particularly, the works of Op Artists, for instance, Bridget Riley, Victor Vasarely, Larry Poons and Richard Anuszkiewicz rely on a systemic approach to compositional structure and use optical colour fusion and contour rivalry to create retinal and spatial disturbances. My interest in spatial variation and surface flux is more aligned with the spatial movements evidenced in works by Russian Constructivist artists.

On the use of readymade reflective materials in the 1960s and today David Batchelor contends “Flat and shiny: this is one of the paradoxical attractions of commercial paints and materials: the double quality of the dead and the dynamic, the bland and the brilliant.” Batchelor also observes “A shiny surface also reflects not an imaginary inner world but an actual external space, the contingencies of the environment in which the work is situated: the viewer’s space.”

Rosalind E Krauss has critically analysed the pictorial structures and their symbolic referents found in Western modern art. Krauss contends that the ubiquitous use of the grid in early twentieth century European abstract painting is the signifying emblem of modernism. Krauss observes that the formation of the grid is modular and repeated,

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44 Barbara Rose, Op Cit., p.22.
and that spatially it is "flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimemetic, antireal."\(^{50}\)

The tendency in some contemporary architecture is to now displace the vertical-horizontal dominance of the grid with obliqueness and skewed geometric structures.\(^{51}\) This is evidenced in the constructions of Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind. These architects, among others, are interested in the utilisation of oblique geometry as a psychological "structural condition" with its suggestion of instability, disruption, distortion and dislocation.\(^{52}\)

Hadid’s polychromatic architecture features slanting abstract forms made from both transparent and opaque materials that appear to defy gravity and suggest dynamic tensions. Hadid purposefully creates challenging spatial experiences for the public through the use of dramatic juxtapositions, intersections, separations, structures, voids or gaps and uncanny projections that are intended to act as metaphors of imperfection, loss and conflict.\(^{53}\)

Fragmentation, distortion, deformation, intersection and movement are also implied in the metal-clad, zigzagging configurations designed by Libeskind.\(^{54}\) Libeskind often uses diagonal, broken and fragmented lines that cut, fracture and scar both the exterior and the interior of a building. The psychology of the building’s spatial configuration means the physical experience of navigating the spaces results in feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and disorientation.\(^{55}\)

Shiny surfaces and oblique structures in contemporary architecture reflect, distort and fragment the human body and the environment in ways which provide mimetic and illusory visual experiences that contrast to Krauss’ analysis of the “antinatural” nature of the grid. Contemporary architecture now features polished and patina metals (e.g. aluminium, copper and zinc) and high-gloss glass, as a means to maximise the vivid interplay of the reflection of light, shadow and space.\(^{56}\)

Similar concerns are evident in works by artists working within sculptural and installation based practices.

Heinz Mack’s mid 1960s optical light reliefs explore the physical reflection and refraction of light which reflects viewer or environmental movement external to the work itself.\(^{57}\) Mack’s careful utilisation of prefabricated materials and their embossed grid-like patterns results in the viewer experiencing surprising optical changes depending on the viewing position.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{50}\) Ibid., p.9.


\(^{57}\) See Heinz Mack, *Sun of Antarctica,* 1965, Wood, glass and motor, 147.3 x 147.3 x 35.6cm.

Creating surface reflections of actual, fleeting movement expressed through a range of changing light is a key element in my own work. I intend to explore similar sensory effects to those of Mack in relationship to painting. Material usage is also an integral of my research. Metal sheeting used in the building and printing industries will provide a support structure for reflective metallic paint and pigment.

Liam Gillick’s three-dimensional, modular works, Spencer Finch’s light installations and Anish Kapoor’s recent highly reflective stainless steel structures will also inform the development of this project.

Works by painters Al Held, Sarah Morris and Peter Halley will be referenced to establish an historical relationship between abstract pictorial practices and architectural practices. Although their intentions diverge from my own their works will inform the development of this project.

Held’s considered utilisation of multiple perspectives and angular modular forms reference the built environment.\(^{59}\)

Contemporary artist Sarah Morris’ abstract paintings also focus on complex geometric configurations that reference architectural space and contemporary urban environments.\(^{60}\) Morris’ work will inform my research, particularly the way in which her grids become disorientating “with layered internal space and vortex like structure shifting the picture beyond the reality of the canvas as a two-dimensional object.”\(^{61}\)

Although much of Morris’ work depicts prismatic, fractured, multiple reflections that simulate the perceptual experience of looking into a glass cube her paintings are intended to critique urban, social and bureaucratic topographies.\(^{62}\)

Peter Halley’s fluorescent and metallic paintings feature repeated modular forms that explore the relationship between abstract painting and modernist architecture, in particular, frames or windows and grids.\(^{63}\) For example, *Day Glo Prison*, (1982) is an intensely chromatic work whose arrangement comprises a succession of vertical and horizontal bars that prompt the viewer to look through the multiple planes and contemplate an empty ground.

Lesley Dumbrell and Virginia Coventry’s paintings provide examples of fragmented spatial arrangements that imply the perception of movement and, in the case of Coventry, use of metallic pigments to create shimmering aural effects that explore light reflection and refraction. Dumbrell’s use of linear grids, webs, broken lines, triangular shards and zigzagging patterns engage visual perception through optical illusions and colour vibration reminiscent of the works of 60s Op Art.

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\(^{63}\) Joe Houston, op. cit., p.158.
Rosslynd Piggott’s abstract paintings and installations that incorporate palladium, gold and silver leaf and double-walled mirrored glass explore mirroring and the sensation of light on reflective metallic surfaces. Although my material usage might seem to approximate Piggott’s our pictorial structures and intentions diverge significantly. Piggott work will provide further substantiation that reflective and metallic surfaces are of significance to contemporary artists.

**Proposed Project:**

The focus of this project is to investigate pictorial spatial distortion and contradiction through the making of two-dimensional abstract works that experiment with the use of geometric forms, irregular structuring, fragmented configurations and reflective metallic and translucent surfaces. The project will draw on Gestalt psychology (Arnheim, Schmarsow\(^64\) and Vidler\(^65\)) and contemporary architecture to create spatial paradoxes through figure-ground ambiguity and implied and actual movement. Combinations of oblique constructions, repeated modular formats, fragmented forms and metallic pigments and support structures will be employed to create a variety of spatial readings that engage and modulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space.

During the first stage of the research I will photographically document selected metallic objects and surfaces to record and ascertain reflective qualities and light refraction. I will also visually record examples of contemporary architecture that features irregular, oblique structures, reflective surfaces and spatial incongruities. This source material will be used to aid experimentation with compositional structuring and surface quality. I will also begin to compile a wide range of newly produced reflective materials sourced from art, hardware and building suppliers. This will be followed by an exploration of support surfaces and formats in drawings, collages and paintings using metal sheeting, metallic and iridescent paint, transparent high-gloss enamel paint and reflective metallic paper.

The research will also include experimental spatial wall and floor installations of oblique forms and structures (for example, irregular triangles and trapezoids). The project will culminate in a body works using installation, drawing, painting, collage and construction methods that will maximize ambiguous spatial readings.

An exegesis will contextualise the research within relevant art and gestalt theories and art practices.

**Main objective:**

The main objective of this project is to produce a body of abstract works that explore pictorial spatial configurations and perceived and actual movement in order to engage

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\(^64\) August Schmarsow’s theory of Raumgestaltung explores the idea that “architectural space was an active bodily creation and perception” and how the human mind and body contributes to understandings about space. Cited in Anthony Vidler. Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture. The MIT Press, Cambridge, p.4.

\(^65\) Vidler investigates the psychological distortion and warping space and phobias such as claustrophobia and acrophobia. See Anthony Vidler. Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture. The MIT Press, Cambridge.
and modulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space and that allude to the skewed geometric structures found in contemporary architecture.

**Aims:**

- To explore the ways in which arrangements of irregular forms, oblique structures, fragmented formats, figure-ground reversals and reflective metallic and translucent surfaces may be used to create variety of spatial readings that engage and modulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space.
- To investigate the relationship between contemporary abstract painting and contemporary architecture, in particular, the use of forward tilting motifs, asymmetric structuring and reflective metallic and translucent materials.
- To investigate various materials and methods for making new abstract paintings that maximise the viewer’s reflection.
- To make a series of compositional studies (for example, photographs, drawings, collages, paintings and installations) that experiment with perceived movement, pictorial depth, fragmentation, distortion, reflection and mirroring on a two-dimensional surface.
- To produce a series of resolved two-dimensional abstract works based on my research over the four proceeding years.
- To examine relevant theories and practices which explore pictorial spatial distortion and actual and implied movement.

**Research Questions:**

4. In what ways can I use abstract painting to explore recent architectural projects concerning illusory spaces based on irregular structuring and fragmented modular formats?

5. How can I emphasise perceived and actual movement of light in abstract painting practice, in particular through light reflection and refraction?

3. How can ideas and principles of spatial distortion and ambiguity by architects, gestalt psychologists and art theorists be applied to the making of contemporary abstract painting?

3.3 **Rationale for program:**

Through undertaking this studio-based research project I will contribute to the field of contemporary painting by producing a body of new abstract works that investigate new pictorial spatial configurations and perceived and actual movement that engage and modulate the viewer’s perceptions of illusory space. Several leading installation artists are currently using highly polished metal and plastic surfaces as a means to experiment with destabilising visual perception through the deformation, fragmentation and reflection of the viewer and the surrounding physical environment. My observation is that contemporary painters have not yet fully explored similar sensory effects and perceptual experiences in their work despite newly available reflective metallic and translucent materials.
This research project is pertinent at this time, when the perceptual and bodily navigation of acute angles and irregular spaces in contemporary architecture is a relatively new phenomenon and the experience of perceiving space and movement through a series of multiple, fleeting reflections is frequently evidenced by humans through high-gloss glass and mirrored surfaces in contemporary architecture. Today speedy and unrelenting changes form the core of contemporary societal activities and we often perceive space through a series of illusions including perceived movements in reflections. These fragmentary, contradictory and illusory spaces have not yet been fully explored in contemporary painting.
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski

Curriculum Vitae

Born Melbourne, Australia

教育

2003  Master of Fine Art (Research), Victorian College of the Arts
2001  Graduate Diploma in Education (Visual Art), University of Melbourne
1999  Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) (Honours), RMIT University
1998  Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art), Monash University

Solo Exhibitions

2013  Thresholds for Disorientation, Langford 120, Melbourne
2008  Aspects, Gross Gallery, Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne
2007  Aspects, Gadens Lawyers, Melbourne
       Aspects, Span Galleries, Melbourne
2005  Iridescent Atmosphere, Span Galleries, Melbourne
2003  New Order, Span Galleries, Melbourne
2000  Fragments, Bulle Galleries, Melbourne

Selected Group Exhibitions

2012  Redland Art Award 2012, Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland
       Frames of Reference, Langford 120, Melbourne
2011  Stan & Maureen Duke Art Prize, Gold Coast City Art Prize, Gold Coast
       Agendo, St Helliers Gallery, Melbourne
       My Australia, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei National University of Fine Arts, Taiwan
       Prometheus Visual Arts Award, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast
       Linden Postcard Show 2011, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne
2010  The Secret Life of the City Art Prize, 69 Smith Street, Melbourne
2009  City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne
The Opposite of Forgetting: an exhibition of memory and identity, Helen Gory Galerie, Melbourne
Artworkers Alliance Art Leasing, Carter Newell Lawyers, Brisbane
2008 Churchie Emerging Art Exhibition, Anglican Church Grammar School, East Brisbane
2007 MLC Acquisitive Art Exhibition, Methodist Ladies College, Melbourne
Prometheus Art Exhibition, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast
New Days, Toyota Community Spirit Emerging Artist Award, Toyota Community Spirit Gallery, Melbourne
2006 Summer Exhibition, Span Galleries, Melbourne
Willoughby Art Prize, Willoughby Civic Centre, Sydney
R & M McGivern Art Prize, Maroondah Art Gallery, Melbourne
Churchie Emerging Art Exhibition, Anglican Church Grammar School, East Brisbane
2005 Summer Exhibition, Span Galleries, Melbourne
Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship, Brett Whiteley Studio, Sydney
City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne
Williamstown Festival – Tattersall’s Contemporary Art Prize, Melbourne
2004 Summer Exhibition, Span Galleries, Melbourne
Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship, Brett Whiteley Studio, Sydney
2003 Summer Exhibition, Span Galleries, Melbourne
ANZ Visual Arts Fellowship Award, ANZ Bank Melbourne
2002 Mirá Fine Art, Melbourne
Proud, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
2001 Williamstown Festival – Smorgon Steel Contemporary Art Prize, Melbourne
Mirá Fine Art, Melbourne
2000 Bulle Galleries, Melbourne
1999 Fin, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
Emerging Artist Program 1999, Bulle Galleries, Melbourne
RMIT Fine Art at Yuan Ze University, Yuan Ze University Arts Centre, Taiwan
Selected Bibliography

2012 Dr. Wilma Tabacco, *Frames of Reference*, Exhibition Catalogue, Langford 120, Melbourne

2011 Phillipa Lean, *Stan & Maureen Duke Art Prize*, Gold Coast City Art Prize, Gold Coast
Shiau-Peng Chen and Meng-Shu You, *My Australia*, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei National University of Fine Arts, Taiwan 2011

*City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize ’09*, Exhibition Catalogue, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne, 2009


2005 *City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize ’05*, Exhibition Catalogue, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne, 2005

Awards

2009 *Australian Postgraduate Award*, Commonwealth Government of Australia

2007 *Victorian Artist Award*, Going Public Art Award, Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne

2002 *Australian Education Union Excellence in Teaching Award*, University of Melbourne

Residencies

2013 The Sam & Adele Golden FoundationSM Residency Program, New Berlin, New York (October 20 – November 16 2013)

2011 Taipei Artist Village, Taiwan

Professional Appointments

2009 – Town Hall Gallery Acquisition Advisory Committee, Melbourne

2007 Lecturing Experience, RMIT University

2006 – Teaching Experience
Collections
Private collections in Australia, New York
Design Works (Architects), Melbourne
Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne
List of Exhibitions

Curated Group Exhibitions

2009  *The Opposite of Forgetting: an exhibition of memory and identity*
Curator: Leah Crossman
Helen Gory Galerie, Melbourne, Australia
March 31 – April 6 2009
Involving: Samara Admson-Pinczewski, David Brook, Ayelet Brookes, Jacki Bloustien, Tamar Dolev, Elie Esakoff and Paul Joffe, Antony Kraus, Shelley Krycer, Alana Kushnir, Ilana Payes, Rebecca Szwarcbard, Lauren Treiser
Nadine Treister, Jeremy Rosenbaum

2011  *My Australia*
Curators: Shiau-Peng Chen and Meng-Shu You
Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei National University of Fine Arts, Taiwan
July 1 – August 7 2011
Involving: Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Juma Adi, Daniel Argyle, Clara Chow, Jayne Dyer, Joy Hirst, Shoshanna Jordan, Polixeni Papapetrou, Laurens Tan, David Thomas, Stephen Wickham

2012  *Frames of Reference*
Curator: Dr Wilma Tabacco
Langford 120, Melbourne
June 16 – July 8 2012
Involving: Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Raphael Buttonshaw, Wayne Conduit, Craig Easton, Jennifer Goodman, Peter Kartsounis, Emma Langridge, Anne Mestitz, Suzanne Moss, Hayley Scilini and Antonia Sellbach
Relevant Art Prizes

2009  *City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize*
      Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne
      June 26 – August 1 2009

2010  *The Secret Life of the City Art Prize*
      69 Smith Street, Melbourne
      November 24 – December 19 2010

2011  *Stan & Maureen Duke Art Prize*
      Gold Coast City Art Prize, Gold Coast
      December 10 2011 – February 5 2012

2011  *Agendo*
      St Helliers Gallery, Melbourne
      August 3 – 7 2011

2011  *Prometheus Visual Arts Award*
      All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast
      May 28 – June 1 2011

2011  *Linden Postcard Show*
      Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts
      February 5 – March 26 2011

2012  *Redland Art Award 2012*
      Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland
      November 3 – December 2 2012
Exhibition Documentation
13.03.2009

*The Opposite of Forgetting: An exhibition of memory and identity* by Leah Crossman, Exhibition Catalogue, Helen Gory Galerie, Melbourne.

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**Samara Adamson-Pinczewska**

Metallic Reflective

Oil paint on aluminium sheeting

216cm x 132cm

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Samara’s unique technique of painting on aluminium sheeting represents a significant aspect of her personal family history. The artist’s late grandparents established Elgin Scrap Metal in Carlton in 1947 after migrating from Poland, and the industrial shapes, textures and metallic colours of this medium influence Samara as an artist and evoke the memories of an important facet of her identity.
26.6.2009

*City of Darebin La Trobe University Acquisitive Art Prize, Exhibition Catalogue*, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne.

Samara ADAMSON-PINCEWSKI
Australia b. 1977
*Metallic Reflective 2009*
oil on aluminium sheeting
184.0 x 108.0cm

My current work is an exploration into metallic and reflective surfaces, geometric forms and abstraction. I make paintings using metallic and iridescent oil paint on aluminium sheeting. Creating quality surfaces is integral to the work. Each layer of colour is built up using thin and/or thick layers of oil paint and impasto to create variation, luminosity and painterly brush strokes.
27.5.2010

Prometheus Visual Arts Award, Exhibition Catalogue, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast.

![Image of artwork]

1. **Artist:** Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
   **Title:** "SA"
   **Medium:** Acrylic on paper
   **Size:** 57.5 cm x 76.5 cm
   **Price:** $1,200
01.07.2011

My Australia by Shiau-Peng Chen and Meng-Shu You, Exhibition Catalogue, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan.

Samara Adamson-Pinczewski
莎蔓莉．亞當森品克辛斯基

燦爛的光輝系列 2010. 塗料, 鉛筆, 木板, 十六件—組, 每件30 x 25公分
Iridescence Series. 2010, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 16 pieces, 30 x 25 cm each

My paintings represent a significant aspect of my identity and my personal family history. These abstractions are my interpretation of a piece of the world my grandparents created. The glimmering colours and surfaces may be read as a metaphor for my grandparents’ optimism for a new life in Australia.
10.12.2011

Stan & Maureen Duke Gold Coast Art Prize 2011 by Phillipa Lean, Gold Coast City Gallery, Gold Coast.

Judge of the 2011 Stan and Maureen Duke Gold Coast Art Prize, artist Davida Allen, has selected 69 finalists for this year’s prestigious exhibition. From a field of almost 350, the selected entries offer a diverse sampling of contemporary Australian art practice. The Prize exhibition will feature at the Gold Coast City Gallery from 10th December 2011 to 5th February 2012, with the official opening on Saturday 10th December.

There is a strong focus on the relationship between man-made and natural structures, as well as the future of the Australian environment. Wasteland by Gold Coast artist Steve Tyerman is an imagined landscape littered with colourful debris. Jason Nelson, another Gold Coast artist employs new technology in video art to highlight the tenuous and fragile nature of Australia’s east coast.

The traditional genre of landscape has been modified by several artists. Edward Niznik’s painting is an abstract rendering of the relationship between agricultural fields and man-made structures. Nick Muir paints broad flat planes of colour which give the landscape a different sense of reality, and the work hums with the title New Blue Jeans.

Over half of the works selected are paintings. Nic Plowman brutally subverts the delicacy of watercolour through his investigations into masculine relations via violence. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski relies on the interaction of modular forms in space to create a dizzying and disorienting image. She translates these to two-dimensional imagery which shares a resonance with architectural forms. Dean Brown voyeuristically records human interaction in time and space from an unusual perspective in his painting In passing.

A spectrum of sculptural, fabric and paper materials will be on display.

Through a scaled down wooden carving of London’s Tower Bridge, Alan Jones explores the uneasy tension between his own pride as a descendant of a first fleet convict and the shameful treatment of Indigenous Australians during the colonial period to the present day. Sherrie Knife’s plywood Bagushka compares the meditative and simple world of sculpture with the excessive consumerism of the everyday. Gold Coast based artist Erica Gray’s entry is a soft sculpture which refers to her childhood. Sarah Boetson, another Gold Coast artist has entered a giant digitally printed, hand painted embellished quilt, which is the product of an investigation into her obsession with film and the effect this has on her dreams.

This year sees the inaugural $5,000 People’s Choice Award sponsored by 19 Karen Contemporary Artspace, Gold Coast. Director Terri Lew explained that her motivation for the generous cash prize was ‘to attract more emerging artists to participate (in the exhibition) and to boost their confidence that they deserve to win or at least become finalists.’

With 13 Gold Coast artists, in addition to emerging, mid-career and established artists from all over the country who range in age from early twenties to septuagenarians, working in photography, painting, sculpture, works on paper and video art this exhibition is truly an all encompassing representation of contemporary Australian art.

2011 Prize Judge Davida Allen is an Archibald prize-winning artist. She is represented in the National Gallery of Australia, most major Australian state galleries and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Apart from being a published author, Allen has also received awards for her film writing and directing. With over thirty years experience in the art industry, Allen brings a wealth of knowledge to her role as judge.
Superficial resemblance to artworks made during the last century inevitably 'frames' contemporary abstraction within an historical context that, while relevant, ignores that adaptability and versatility are at the core of abstraction's longevity as a means of personal expression. Abstraction's ready application to contemporary concerns and circumstances, to usage of new materials and methods of construction provides continued fascination and engagement for many contemporary artists.

The exhibition, Frames of Reference, demonstrates the breadth of symbolic approaches and the apparently inexhaustible motivational impulses that compel contemporary artists to create imaginative geometric abstract fictions. The selected works in this exhibition might fit neatly into one or several of the categories Bob Nickas has devised for analysing current abstract painting practices: hybrid pictures – rhythm and opticality, colour and structure, found/eccentric abstraction, form/shape/size and the performative act of painting itself. 1

These broad groupings certainly assist in locating a generic intentionality but the specifics of each work is accessible only through up-close experiencing. The external referents the artist uses as a source of inspiration and the content framed by the image itself have been formulated within each artist's own personal frames of reference and these, while often deliberately concealed by the artist, are none-the-less intrinsic to the work's evolution and ultimately to it's capacity to intrigue the attentive spectator.

Wilma Tabacco
2012

29.5.2012


Frames of reference

THE group exhibition Frames of Reference is currently showing at the Langford 120 gallery in North Melbourne. Among the 11 artists taking part are Samara Adamson-Pinczewski and Jennifer Goodman. The exhibition has been curated by Dr Wilma Tabacco.

Frames of Reference is at Langford 120, 120 Langford Street, North Melbourne until July 8.
List of Works
METALLIC REFLECTIVE SERIES, 2009 – 2010

Preliminary Works

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Metallic Reflective, 2009, Oil on aluminium, 216 x 132cm, Collection of the artist
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Metallic Reflective 3, 2009-2010, Oil and acrylic on aluminium, 184 x 48cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Metallic Reflective*, 2009, (detail), Oil on aluminium, 216 x 132cm, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Metallic Reflective*, 2009, (detail), Oil on aluminium, 216 x 132cm, Collection of the artist
7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Irregular Configuration 3*, 2009, Mixed media, 190 x 165cm, Collection of the artist
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Irregular Configuration 1*, 2009, Mixed media, 150 x 90cm, Collection of the artist
IRIDESCEENCE SERIES, 2010

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16.
List of Works

*Iridescence* Series: Installation Views

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 1*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 3*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 5*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 4*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 2*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 6*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 16*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
9. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 7*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
10. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 11*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
11. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 13*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
13. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 10*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
15. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Iridescence 14*, 2010, Gesso, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 30 x 25cm, Collection of the artist
17. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *My Australia*, Installation view, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
20. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Frames of Reference*, Installation view, Langford 120, Melbourne
List of Works

**INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 1, 2010**

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Ghost shadows*, 2010. Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Private collection
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Cornered*, 2010. Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Collection of the artist
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *On edge (Black void)*, 2010. Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *On edge*, 2010. Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Polywarp*, 2010. Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Collection of the artist
INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 2, 2011

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Flying Buttress*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist

2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Off-kilter*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Flying planes*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist

4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Second skin*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 57.5 x 76.5cm, Unfixed orientation
Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Swoop*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 76.5 x 57.5 cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist
**INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 3, 2011 – 2012**

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Forward bend*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Inclination*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation, Private collection
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Glide*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Lead feather*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Unfixed orientation, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Slither*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Collection of the artist
7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Slope*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Collection of the artist
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Silver flux*, 2011 Acrylic on paper, 66 x 102cm, Collection of the artist
INSTABILITY SERIES – GROUP 4, 2011 – 2013

Thresholds for Disorientation: List of Exhibition Paintings

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Instability, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Red stripe, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Far-flung, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Green slide. Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
List of Works

5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Off-kilter*, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
6. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Topsy-turvy*, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Golden streak*, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Unstable colours*, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
9. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Silver flux*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Collection of the artist
10. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Strange values (Disequilibrium)*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183cm, Private collection
11. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Spearmint)*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Collection of the artist
12. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Pink)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Private collection
13. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Magenta)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Private collection
14. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Greyscale)*, 2012-2013, Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 98cm, Collection of the artist
15. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Energetics (Peppermint)*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100cm, Collection of the artist
Thresholds for Disorientation: Installation Views

**SKY-RISE SERIES, 2011 – 2012**

_Sky-rise New York City, 2011_

1. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *New York City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
2. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *New York City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
3. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *New York City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
4. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *New York City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
5. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *New York City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
**Sky-rise Hong Kong City, 2011**

7. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
8. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
9. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
10. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
11. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist
12. Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, *Hong Kong City Line Drawing*, 2011, Pencil on paper, 29.5 x 21cm, Collection of the artist