NOT TO SCALE:

Exploring the edges of meaning-making through textilic writings

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts
of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

by
Aoife Mooney
December 2023

thesis written by

Aoife Mooney

B.A., Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland 2005
M.A., University of Reading, UK 2010
M.F.A., Kent State University, USA 2023

Approved by
ohn Paul Morabito M.F.A, Advisor
illian Sokso, M.F.A., Director, School of Art
Diane H. Petrella, D.M.A., Dean, College of the Arts

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my thesis committee: John Paul, Gianna, Eli, Andrew. I am grateful for each of your perspectives, patience, encouragement and good humor throughout my time chipping away at this degree.

Thank you to Janice Lessman-Moss, for introducing me to weaving, and helping me cross the threshold.

Thank you to my Dad, Dermot Mooney, for bringing me to the edges and giving me the opportunity to see the luminous in the grey.

Thank you to my Mum, Margaret Wadding, for teaching me to pay attention.

Thank you to my partner, Anderson Turner, who showed me how to put my feet on solid ground and remember myself.

Thank you to my son, Ruadhán Mac Tire Mooney Turner, for all the joy you have shown me, allowing me to pay attention, to not take anything for granted, or myself too seriously.

CHAPTER 01

Introduction

Returning/Revisiting

5am and the sun is already up
The ever-present sound of the road and the rustle of the trees in the wind
The occasional sound of a plane in the clear blue sky
Smell of salt in the bright air
This rock is steady

Wind as waves say life goes on
—out there
Here, like lichen, we quietly flourish
Vibrant greens and yellows in the grays and purples and
blue,
blue,
blue

Here, I am back to calling out to Santa in the wide open sky as a plane flits past Here, I am soft.

Lilies and roses and sweet peas

Solar lamps to soak up the days and share with the nights — 4 for 12 euro in Lidl

A sapling in deep rare aubergine, marks time

Apples in the morning air mark out safety, stored sweetness, in the gentle breeze

This rock is steady

And old

And no-one's.

I know why the sun lingers here. Kindness in twilight. Some things cannot be built, Only grown.

-Aoife Mooney 2021

Where I come from - Edges

I come from a place that is all edges. Ireland is the farthest west point in Europe. An island with over 5 million inhabitants in the republic, and nearly 2 million in Northern Ireland. I am from Dublin, in the Republic of Ireland, a post-colonial nation, with two official languages, English and Irish (Gaeilge). I grew up sailing

every weekend, traveling along the coasts of our bear-shaped island, which the Romans called 'Hibernia', or land of winter (and chose not to colonize, perhaps because of this...). From the top of the island to the bottom, the longest distance is 302mi, and from side to side, 170.9mi. It is a relatively small place, with a big footprint. The island is known for its musical and literary heritage, as well as having a kind of aura of mysticism, no doubt offset by the mists and clouds that hover over the first landfall the Gulf Stream makes on its way to Europe. Ireland is a place of contradictions. Small, but fierce, gregarious, but emotionally repressed. Warm people, cold climate. Modern, European, progressive, but old as time itself, with bogs and castles every few miles. The island's history is defined by emigration, as wave after wave left the island for England, or America, or Australia, to seek a better fortune. Motivated by famine, poverty, repressive cultural norms, or a lack of work, these people brought little pockets of memories with them across the globe and helped to create the nostalgic view of Ireland in the popular imagination. This is where I am from. I am made of this place. It shapes me, even as I reshape my understanding and relationship to it. It is written on me. The poet and philosopher John O'Donohue described this as the 'inner landscape', the place from which we are always becoming (O'Donohue, 2008). It is a place of rock and moss and lichen, of oak and salt and huge arcing sky. Of salt and vinegar chips, and dark velvety stout. Of wool and gorse and heather. Of peat and butter and tea. It is a place of textures, and time.

Irish is a lyrical, roundabout language. To say 'I love you' you say 'is gra liom thu' which translates roughly as 'it is love that I have with me, for you'. I have always loved the relationship between these two tongues, and how they interact in my head, and how the land feels like it is soaked in language. Lichens encrust every surface, layering to create a patina of markings which read to me as a kind of visual, visceral representation of the oral historical traditions of Ireland. I love language. I love how it shapeshifts, how it identifies, and how it bonds, or separates, how it operates in a single word, like an instance of ideas given form, and then left to encrust. The scholar and eco-feminist Donna Haraway says language encrusts like barnacles. This is how I relate to languages, both visual and literal. I like how these instances come together in the texture of a text, be it a sentence or a book, and bind together all kinds of signifiers, relationships, and snapshots of time. They leave traces of their author, as well as encoding for posterity the view of the audience that the author holds true. How we talk to people says something about how we see the world, as well as how we perceive our audience to see the world. I have always loved this Venn diagram that language represents. For this reason, I left Ireland in 2010, to study the making of letters, and learn how to make patterns of form, to offer as tools to communicate information, signal atmosphere, embody identity and voice, and express. I enjoy the push pull between the positive and negative, the interdependence of figure and ground, surface and structure, the idea that the whole is greater than any of the parts, the idea that it is only in the coherence, in the web of the many, that we can make any sense of form. Without pattern, there is no difference. Without difference, there is no meaning.

Lichens embody this idea of interdependence. They make marks, not as explicitly communicative code, and yet, as organisms in the same ecosystem, we can read their markings. The growth of different lichens tells a story for those who learn to read it, about the environmental conditions in that place. They respond to the surface they live on and create new ground for future life to flourish upon. Lichens, like language, grow, change, and bond. They break down boundaries and provide a lens to view the ecosystem from and in which they live.

This work explores ways we translate the internal and make it external and vice versa. How we connect, and string together meaning collectively and over time. How we reach across and decipher. How our edges blur, and we converge, in fleeting moments of mediated recognition. How we bridge the gap in between — "where I end and you begin" (Radiohead, 2003). Through the embodying process of weaving, I explore what it is like to be outside of parts of yourself and navigate your relationship to them over time, a stranger anew with each passing season, exploring a new terrain with transposed familiar elements, reassembled, and reconfigured into something that exists only in the mind, grounded in something that exists only in the body, deciphering memory as landscape. My work, as such, attempts to describe our connectedness to each other, as well as how we are tethered to parts of ourselves through time and place. I am interested in the

process of encoding. The way that we attempt to capture, encapsulate, and recapitulate for each other. The impetus to make oneself understood, to mark out meaning for each other. I am interested in how weaving captures time and action, becoming an instance of a movement, an intersection of materials, a tension, an idea. Like notches on a door frame marking out the growth pattern of a child over time, hand-weaving is idiosyncratic to the maker, the place, the materials.

For this reason, the works in this show harnesses process, and reshape it into content itself. The graphic language that I begin a weaving with is already the end result of a series of translations which are then transformed into gesture in the weaving process — forms become material in flux, now with a front and back, a top and bottom and dimensional edge. The graphic language is a fusion of the personal and the generalizable. Each piece pulls together markings which do not aim to be decipherable, but which nevertheless can be read as meaningful. They take existing texts and graphic notational systems and repurpose them as framing devices and lenses through which to see this inner landscape.

In these works, I consider how memory acts to amplify, distort or subsume features and feelings of place and belonging, and how certain forms, circumstances or events come to represent periods of time in the mind's eye — stretch, compress, or bleed together to mean something new — or change their weight and prominence over time. The phrase rose-tinted glasses comes to mind in considering how color plays a role in establishing place in the mind, and the

hyper-real quality of color as a marker of atmosphere in memory is something I have aimed to explore in these works.

Not to Scale

This thesis and the accompanying show are entitled 'Not to Scale'. This is a reference to the cartographic phrase, which indicates to the audience that the visual in front of them is not a real-life one-to-one equivalency. In doing so, it highlights the translatory act of representation itself, and brings the reader behind the curtain of communication.

There are two approaches to scale at work in the outcomes included in the show. The bird's eye view, and the close-up view, macro and micro. The piece on the floor acts as the bird's eye, 30,000 feet approximation of a landscape made of memory and meaning, of magnified details and repeating forms. The smaller wall-pieces are weavings of fragments of a larger image, and as such they become snapshots or investigations of this layered landscape of formal meaning-making. This reflects the new cartographic landscape of the zoomable screen, where we can tap and pinch to reframe our relationship to a geography and these weavings are a nod to that behavior, with a tip of the hat to the proportions of the phone screen. The pieces on the wall create a sense of inspection, of looking closer, of a shifting perspective and relationship to a terrain of memory and meaning. The large pieces, both on the floor and on the main wall, envelop the audience, and

change the mood and atmosphere of the space they occupy with their horizontal orientation and large scale respectively.

Scale is a powerful idea in the relationship to memory and place. When we think of someone having an outsize response to a given circumstance, we consider them to be making a 'mountain out of a molehill'. This work makes mountains out of molehills. In a very literal sense, I am aiming to make a terrain out of the emotional and shape it into undulating surfaces that an audience is asked to navigate both visually and physically.

The pieces are weavings of images which layer together language-like relationships, letter-like forms, and gestural marks which have been processed by extracting artifacts left by different reproduction tools and methods to create formal variation and celebrate a breadcrumb trail of remediation. The forms have been produced by translating initial digital renderings of shape and manual markmaking using ink and watercolor by scanning, printing, using the photocopier as a distorting tool, and resampling parts of the resulting rescanned images to isolate and amplify micro areas to make patterns of marks, celebrating fragmentary quality of the tactics used to render imagery in different media. Once the file is finished (figure 01) this process of production and reproduction, resampling, cropping and layering, it is translated once more through the magic of jacquard, wherein these visual relationships become tactile voluminous juxtapositions, to which I respond at the loom with color shifts and yarn choices, to further abstract

the representational quality of the content to become its own entity in three dimensions. This translatory process results in weavings that are gestural and painterly, the tactility of yarn and wire and the behaviors of the weaving structures working to amplify certain areas of the image, shift value contrasts and visual hierarchies, adding varying depths to the planes of color and form. Considered in the context of contemporary painting, this active processing of the visual and the surface is having resonance with the work of Gerhard Richter (figure 02), whose squeegee paintings undergo a process of translation from the initial mark-making to the effecting a kind of skin or screen quality onto the surface through the smearing/dragging process. The work of abstract expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler (figure 03), also, whose interest in allowing the materials agency in the content of the work, and celebration of process is something which gave me confidence in my approach to the foregrounding of method and consideration of the role of orientation to the author and reader. Her soak-stain works made by rolling out unprimed canvas and working on it horizontally on the floor and in the round, have parallels in how I approached leaving the edges of the weavings unfinished a allowing the weaving process to work on the materials using my visuals as a starting point.



figure 01: *Tentacular Ones* (structures file). Image file used in weaving on the digital loom. Pixels correspond to threads in warp and weft and colors approximate the combination/blend of the three yarns used in this 3-weft cloth. Source: Aoife Mooney



figure 02: Gerhard Richter working on one of his Cage paintings, Cologne, Germany, 2006.

Source: https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2021/02/22/interview-gerhard-richter/



figure 03: Helen Frankenthaler pouring paint onto a large unprimed canvas as part of her soak-stain technique of painting. Source: https://www.thoughtco.com/painting-technique-of-helen-frankenthaler-4118620

CHAPTER 02

Making Meaning — Materiality and Interpretation

Textilic Writings

In making these works, I have often described the textiles as texts. While this may be due in large part to my background as a typographer and the fact that the graphic material is based in word-like marks and markings, I believe it has more to do with my attachment to the idea of making as 'textilic' (Ingold, 2010) and language as 'world-making' (Haraway, 2016). I think of all works of expression and interpretation as kinds of text, and as such, the notion of a text embedded in its etymological origins helps to create a connection between text and textiles, which hinges on language itself. The word 'text' derives from the Latin 'texere' meaning to weave. Textiles have often served very literal roles as texts to be read in societies throughout history, however, the more nuanced idea being explored in this work is that textiles and text share a way of operating in the world. Going beyond their visual similarities — paragraphs of text have edges, made of lines of text, which cohere to make a pattern to be read and which travels in a particular direction because of convention — textiles and texts share this principle of textility, an idea expressed by anthropologist Tim Ingold to mean a kind of process of ongoing-ness. The absorbency of texts and textiles alike to adopt new values, meaning and importance over time, the relativity involved in a text to its maker, the reader, and the materials used to reproduce it. In his essay 'The Textility of

Making', Ingold pits the textilic against the architectonic. (Ingold 2010) Rather than imposing intention upon the world, in making, we are finding and working with "the grain of the world's becoming". Where 'textilic' means a wandering, itinerant 'conversation with materials' where traces of the maker moving ever closer to an idea in collaboration with medium and circumstance are evident in the outcome, where making itself is an act of weaving—a push pull of relations. 'Architectonic' is described as reading an outcome 'backwards' toward an initial idea, as though the form is finished, and all there is left in it, is to make sense of its prior path, thus limiting its agency and action in the world to the intention of the maker, merely an instantiation of the maker's will, rather than a outcome of which the maker's will plays just a part, along with the material itself, and shifting contexts in which the thing exists.

To weave on the jacquard loom is to occupy the space at the edge of digital and analog. The digital can often obscure the process of making — to present as a fait accompli — to hide the lumps and bumps of the becoming of any piece of work from the audiences such that the digital artefact appears to have manifested itself, independent of a maker or thinker. The meticulous craft that once bonded society around a visceral relationship to things (Hyde 2012), is lost in the digital workflow. Weaving digital content on a jacquard loom provides an opportunity to materialize a digitally conceived work in real time, with concrete materials, and in a way that is idiosyncratic to the weaver. In this way, digital weaving has the

capacity to bridge the gap between the making and the reading of a text, the textilic and the architectonic.

In harnessing Ingold's idea of the textilic and calling these works 'textilic writings', I am doubling down on the ongoingness of the works. They are textilic texts — weaverly weavings — and so they must also be writings — unfinished, fragmentary, personal, translatable, ongoing, mutable. They are handmade works, and thus according to Ingold they are by nature, weaverly, but they are also actual weavings, and self-consciously so — proclaiming their unwillingness to have their loose ends tied up, and fully resolved, read as fragments, with image continuing beyond the bounds of the woven plane, without clear starting or ending points as narrative tapestries. And yet, the graphic content of these works is rooted in the architectonic. The forms are elemental, made of building blocks which are formed digitally through bezier descriptions of relationships between points on lines. They exist ephemerally, in the ether, losslessly scaleable. Here, they are concretized through multiple processes of reproduction, and repeated (re)mediation, to tether their appearances to the earthly, the hand, the bodily. Tapestries are weft-faced weavings, often pictorial in nature, and historically used to depict narratives. Creating narratives where the weft becomes larger than life, leaping up into 2.5 dimensions, and creating visual content which intentionally defies easy reading, or a clear narrative, these works challenge the sacredness of the tapestry as the keeper of memories, and instead challenge the reader to

consider what is forgotten, left out, of our narratives and interactions — the gaps in between. Anthropologist Lewis Hyde, in his *A Primer for Forgetting*, makes an argument for a cultural reassessment of the importance of forgetting. Through an experimental fragmentary writing structure, Hyde takes us on a layered journey examining and juxtaposing observations and narratives to consider how forgetting might be more important, or at least as important, as remembering. He asks "What is the name of this double thing found at the seam of silence and speech, praise and blame, light and darkness? Call it imagination, call it poetry" (Hyde 2019, 42) It is this synthesis of ideas and memories held in tension in a state of becoming and unbecoming that I am aiming to capture in these works — "the uncanny coincidence of past and present that points to something exclusive to neither and therefore lying outside time". (Hyde 2019, 305).

Making with

The tentacular ones make attachments and detachments; they make cuts and knots; they make a difference; they weave paths and consequences but not determinisms; they are both open and knotted in some ways and not others. sf is storytelling and fact telling; it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come. I work with string figures as a theoretical trope, a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading, felting, tangling, tracking, and sorting.

 $-Staying \ with \ the \ Trouble: \ Making \ Kin \ in \ the \ Chthulucene, \ Haraway \ p. \ 31$

It is at the edges of meaning that our inner landscapes of associations take hold.

When we don't know what to look for, or what we are looking at, we are

confronted with the act of looking, and can find community in making meaning. These works are intended to be read as sympoeitic. In Staying with the Trouble, Haraway defines sympoiesis as "making-with... a word proper to complex; dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company." (Haraway 2016, p.58) Sympoeisis is contrasted with 'autopoeisis'. Where autopoeisis indicates an individualized self-propagation, 'sympoeisis' refers to the inextricable nature of our collective being. These two words share the root 'poeisis' meaning 'making' in Greek, which is the basis of the word 'poetry' in English. Poetry uses the aesthetics and rhythms of language to make meaning over and above that of the nominal. Following this etymological thread, *Not to Scale* then can be considered works of textile poetics, in working with the senses to create aesthetic experiences grounded in a kind of materialized intertext. Textile poetics was the subject of a 2023 conference organized by the International Society for Intermedial Studies, entitled 'Text & Techne". In the call for papers, the organizers framed the topic thus:

"Poetry is often referred to as a craft rooted in the making of a poem; similarly, textiles are often referred to as a form of language, one that disregards most of the elements that we are accustomed to in the way we understand and experience the written language of poetry: from ideas of linearity to a supposed superiority of sight over touch."

In moving from bezier to bitmap in the creation of the visual content of this work, and then letting the process of weaving substantially change the visuality of the outcome, giving equal, if not more weight, to the tactility of the objects, I am engaging with this challenge to the supposed superiority of sight over touch.

In his 2018 exhibition entitled *Symbiotic Seeing*, the artist Olafur Eliasson created spaces through which the exhibition-visitors moved, and in which lasers were projected onto oil-based fog making the micro-turbulent activity in the air visible and responsive to the audience as individuals. Communion around a shared experience of interpretation and meaning-making is something which Eliasson describes as the "making explicit [of] the construction of that shared space" — an embodied approach through which "art works against apathy." (Eliasson 2020, 57). This exposing of the making, and inclusion of the audience in the process, is a means to activate a sense of entanglement and connectedness.

Philosopher Roland Barthes described the reading of a text in a way that evokes an ongoing, relational, refiguring of meaning as follows:

"to read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming"... (Barthes 1972/2002, 11)

Abstraction

The works in Not to Scale explore the space between recognition and interpretation and are informed by research into both visual poetry and information design principles and in particular by the asemic writings of

Argentine artist Mirtha Dermisache (Owen & Pearson 2017) (figures 04 and 05) a proponent of visual poetry, and the cartographer Jacques Bertin's articulation of visual variables (figure 06).

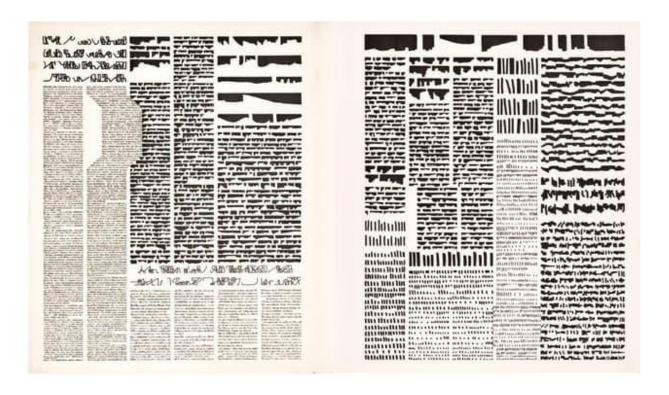


figure 04: *Diario 1 Ano 1*, Mirtha Dermisache 1972. Image of pieces of asemic text written and drawn by Mirtha Dermisache. Layouts consist of black marks in rows of lines organized in columns which reflect the grids used in newspaper layouts. Source: https://post.moma.org/on-language-and-its-limits-the-illegible-writings-of-mirtha-dermisache/

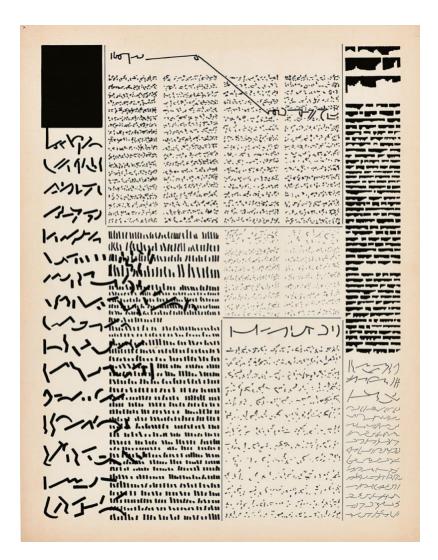


figure o5: *Diario 1 Ano 1*. Image of pieces of asemic text written and drawn by Mirtha Dermisache. Layouts consist of black marks in rows of lines organized in columns which reflect the grids used in newspaper layouts. Mirtha Dermisache. 1972. Source: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/01/30/mirtha-dermisache-limits-language/

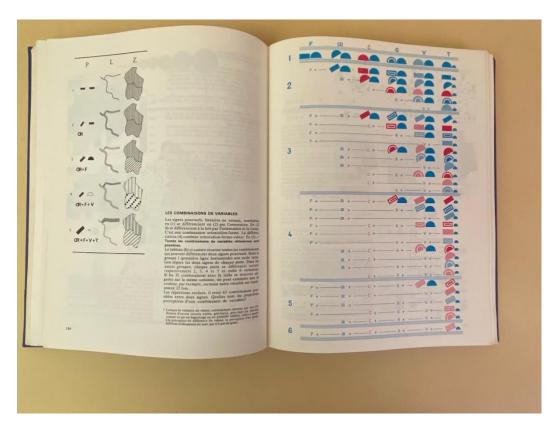


figure o6: Spread from the book *Sémiologie Graphique* entitled 'Les Combinations de Variables' wherein the author breaks down different visual variables in combinatory chart — shape, orientation, color etc. Jacques Bertin 1967/2010 Source: https://www.historyofinformation.com/image.php?id=6222

Where Dermisache was deliberately creating works that invite deciphering but which are inherently without meaning — a-semic — by contrast, in Bertin's *Sémiologie Graphique* (1967/2010), the cues by which we attempt to decipher (and encode) meaning in visual form — shape, orientation, color, texture, value and size — are made explicit and offered as tools for clarifying understanding. Hyde offers "Abstraction is oblivion by design" (Hyde 2019, 257) and "Forgetting is a formalist art". Abstraction drives at an essence, while eschewing the particular. Abstraction

allows an entry point, while seeming to encrypt. If the encryption has no specific meaning, the reader is left in a state of perpetual decryption, seeking particularity, mining their own experience for points of convergence.

To visualize the space between these two approaches — the indecipherable and the decipherable — the pieces use an alphabet of 'limbic' letterforms designed to occupy a space between legible and abstract form further translated through interpolation (figure 07), using a type design production process usually used to create the intermediate weights of a typeface from two or more axes as a generative tool. The forms amplify the reciprocal, symbiotic relationship of positive and negative found in any typeface and subvert the goal of legibility that their balance typically represents.

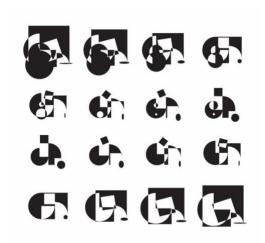


figure 07: Interpolated and extrapolated variants on letter 'a' from the Limbic alphabet. Black figures on a white background with formal relationships shifting through the interpolation process. Source: Aoife Mooney 2023.

They invoke the mutuality felt when one tries to decipher the scribes of the landscape — lichens. (figure 08) In Braiding Sweetgrass, the bryologist and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer describes lichens as:

"producers and decomposers, the light and the darkness, the givers and receivers wrapped in each other's arms, the warp and the weft of the same blanket so closely woven that it's impossible to discern the giving from the taking. Some of earth's oldest beings, lichens are born from reciprocity." (2013, p.251)



figure 08: Lichens in Ardglas, Northern Ireland. Source: Aoife Mooney 2021

The word lichen comes from the greek leichen meaning to lick, and in this sense, embedded in its name is its interdependence. A symbiotic relationship of a fungus

and an alga or bacterium, lichens flourish at the edges. They find a way to write themselves into existence against all odds, and in the most unlikely of places. They create space for communality and in doing so, provide us with valuable information about the environment around us — an asemic language of place.

CHAPTER 03

Traversing Memory — Threading Lacunae

Thresholds and traces

When I was about 14 or 15, I undertook a Yachtmaster training course. I was the only female in the room, and the only child, in a room full of men over 40. I was painfully shy, but I loved sailing, and something about the idea of going anywhere on your own steam was beguiling. I learned (and subsequently forgot) how to navigate, read charts, plot courses, and properly orient the boat to make the most of the wind. I learned about sailing etiquette, communication over radio, and the alphabet in code. I loved the shiny brass tools we had on the chart table, the feel of the chart as it opened up like a present and closed like a wallet. I loved the sound of the aluminium stays clanging in the wind at night, and the smell of salt in the dew. I loved the swinging of the compass in its little fisheye globe, and the drama of a tack. I went sailing on weekends with my dad, around the coast, on a boat called Striopach. I loved the seagulls and the heather, and the rocks, but most of

all, I loved being on the outside, on the edge, away, reading and steering, peering into the viscose green-blue of the water, a drizzly twilight. I spent summers in the sea, and liked my anxious overthinking self the most when I collapsed into bed, entire body aching from the effort of the day, skin crispy, hair straw, mind quiet. For some reason, these are my memories of home. The biggest ones. The brightest in spite of the often murky scenery. The works in this show explore the outsized importance of these experiences in my life, and how they have shaped me. The experience of occupying the space between, an interest in what lies at the border, not beyond, but at. What grows in the spaces between, at the edge?

In Hyde's *A Primer for Forgetting*, he exposes the societal emphasis we place on memory, while reminding us that our capacity to forget might be the actual force winnowing and shaping our perceptions of our own personal and collective narratives. In these works, I attempt to create a sense of mapping, navigating, to thread the holes in my memory and in doing so, expose a kind of shared forgetfulness, the feeling of something being on the tip of one's tongue, on the edge of consciousness, that marks us out as terrestrials making meaning together.

The Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue held a conception of beauty as the act of crossing 'worthily over a threshold'. He saw beauty not as an aesthetic complete but as the ongoing act of moving into a "more critical and challenging and worthy fullness..." (O'Donohue 2008). He described the inner landscape of a person as that which forms their interactions with others and

shapes the world. Recognizing these markings of experience in each other is what tethers us to our humanity, and each other. Ingold considers the threshold as a similar kind of ongoing becoming:

"there are lines in the landscape because every landscape is forged in movement, and because this movement leaves material traces along the manifold paths of its proceeding. To perceive these paths is not to see things as they are but to see the directions along which things are moving. It is to see their grains, textures and flows, not their layout or their formal envelopes." (Ingold 2021, 169)

Between the infinite landscape of digital vectors and the finite and concrete, embodied temporality of a woven artefact. It is this interconnectedness, and the fact that weaving can expose the story of its making, in fact, can never be anything but both structure and surface, that is harnessed in this work, which asks the audience to engage in lines of becoming, and cross the threshold together.

Before Language

"Colour is a given of our sensory experience since birth; it precedes our entry into language and for the most part remains outside our linguistic selves. We can't choose to be or not to be in colour, but at the same time we can barely know, measure or describe the colour we are in" (Batchelor 2014, 9)

The works in *Not to Scale* are made of a diversity of materials — acid-dyed wool, mohair, angora and wool blends, silver and copper-sheened rayon yarns, cotton

warp, bamboo, hemp, aluminum and copper wire and flagging tape. Because of this unlikely enmeshment of relations, the pieces have a multi-layered quality to them. The interactions of the colors and textures of the materials yield surprising effects. The wire sometimes changes the latent color of the yarn, the delicate kid mohair creates a mist or aura which amplifies or obliterates the form it describes. Each of these materials has been chosen carefully and used intuitively to create a palette of references ranging from tactile and visceral, to visual and codified. The density of the fibers of the weavings adds weight to their transient content and grounds them in the here and now.

Wool offers the weight and warmth of a bodily entity and absorbs color wholeheartedly. Mohair, similarly, feels distinctly of the body, and behaves in a way that is larger than the sum of its parts. There is something tender about its thin central filament and it's wispy, bouffant, voluminous mist, delicate but warm. Luxe but strong. These animal fibers create a hairy texture which inserts the animal, the humane, into the digital. These fibers were largely purpose-driven hand-dyed color gradients or found remnants from the studio shelves. Some were overdyed, starting with vibrant, almost neon hues, and then dyed again to tone down the brassiness and create a feeling of saturated depth. Some were braided or twined in the dying process to create a variegated color along the length of the ball of weft. Intermingling with these springy strands is industrially dyed silky cellulose bamboo — lending a solid, definite color and sinewy sheen, wrapping

itself around other yarns. There is also linen in some of the pieces in the Not to Scale series (not all included in the show), and hemp. These drier fibers feel like the relationship between crisp dry lichen and springy mosses to me.

Contrasting with the toothiness of these materials is flagging tape. Flagging tape is used by contractors, surveyors and ecologists alike to mark the earth or other parts of the natural landscape. It is made from chemicals, and though temporary it is nonetheless made to endure. The limited color range is used to signal different land uses or planned actions, to grab attention and to encode space and landscape, boundary, direction. These tapes annotate our landscapes. In using flagging tape, and embedding it in the weavings themselves, this annotation melds with the thing being described. The signifier becomes the signified as writer and reader distinctions collapse. (Barthes 1986, 63) As material, the tape is translucent and sheer in isolation, but opaque and densely pigmented in the aggregate. Naturalistic and artificial at once, the interactions of the hairy yarns and the smooth plastic taffeta creates a tension in between a sense of hyperreality and artificiality (figures o9 and 10).





figure 09: Not to Scale #07 Tether (2023) (left, detail) $26.5'' \times 17.5'' \times 1''$ wool, aluminum wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton, hemp. Full image and detail of weaving which incorporates predominantly olive, aubergine and mink colored wools and bamboo with orange-coral flagging tape wefts. Source: Aoife Mooney



figure 10: Not to Scale #08 Interference (2023) $26.5'' \times 17.5'' \times 1''$ wool, aluminum wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton. Full image of weaving which incorporates predominantly olive, aubergine and mink colored wools and bamboo with orange-coral flagging tape wefts. Source: Aoife Mooney

Bridging the gap between these materials is fine wire. Between the solid, constructed, stretched, and the diffuse, buoyant, bodily, wire tethers and forms. It emerges from the skin of the weaving like hair, glistening and growing and building to waves in response to the shifting weave structures used to describe the image. In the smaller pieces, aluminum is the active metal — made-made, lightweight, pliable, enduring, shiny, nautical. In the larger pieces (figure 11),

copper infuses the woven surface with a sense of the earth, mineral, hair-like, glowing, susceptible to change over time.

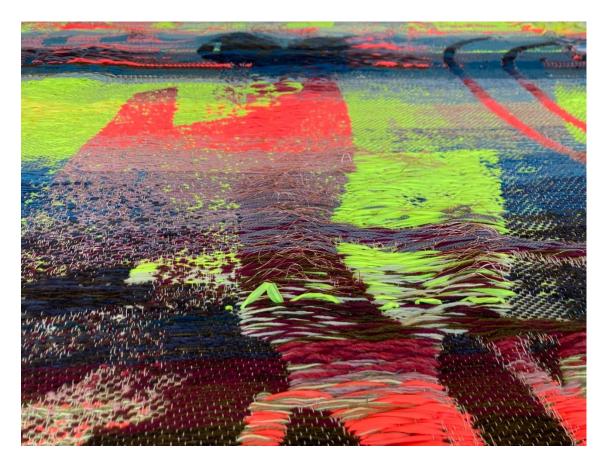


figure 11: *Tentacular Ones* (2023). Detail of weaving showing interaction of purple, brown and blue wools, pink and yellow flagging tape and copper wire wefts popping up from the plane. $101.5'' \times 80'' \times 2''$ wool, mohair, copper wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton. Source: Aoife Mooney

The wire lends a kind of conductive quality to the surface, as well as allowing a manipulation of the plane to respond to the behavior of the graphic form. Muted earthy tones collide with the neon flagging tape to create a kind of "transitory luminosity" where "the presence of color is experienced as an event." (Batchelor 2014, 52) The landscape of color and shimmer appears to shapeshift when the eye meanders around the field and homes in on one area or another. In

this way, the materials used activate an awareness of time and dimensional relationships. The naturalistic colors in the works reflect stone and sand (figure 11, Tentacular Ones), peat (*figures o9 and 10*) heathers, mosses (figure 14) and lichens (figures 12 and 13) their muted qualities offset or challenged by the larger-than-life quality of the flagging tape colors.



figure 12: Not to Scale #09 Approach (2023) 26.5" \times 17.5" \times 1" wool, aluminum wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton. Full image and detail of weaving which incorporates predominantly pink, purple, olive and brown wools with pink and green flagging tape wefts. Source: Aoife Mooney







figure 13: Not to Scale #10 Exchange (2023) $26.5'' \times 17.5'' \times 1''$ wool, aluminum wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton. Full image and two details of weaving which incorporates predominantly pink, and brown wools with

green flagging tape wefts. Details show aluminum wire popping out of the plane of the weaving. Source: Aoife Mooney

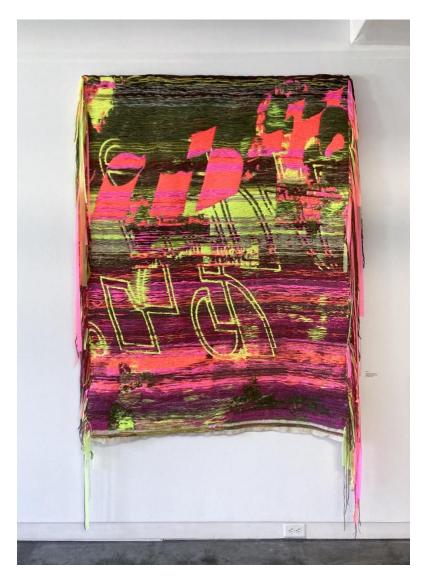


figure 14: Lacuna (2023) 75" × 80" × 2" wool, mohair, copper wire, flagging tape, bamboo, rayon, silk, angora, cotton. Full image of weaving which incorporates predominantly pinks and olive wools with yellow and pink flagging tape wefts. Source: Aoife Mooney

This relationship of luminous color with its surroundings, what the artist and writer David Batchelor describes as "this assertion of its autonomy and independence from the objects that lay claim to it, is momentous in a way, but also

momentary...if these colors appear alive, after all, then they can also drop dead... this color is brilliant in part because it is impermanent." (Batchelor 2014, 49-50)

CHAPTER 04

Orienting Time — In/conclusive

Looking at, moving with.

The pieces in this show are oriented to each other and the audience in two ways. There are the pieces on the walls, which are looked 'at', 'read' and interpreted as fragments. The piece on the floor is looked 'across', 'around' and 'through'. All of the works celebrate the edges of the weavings, the loose ends that result from the process of introducing new wefts horizontally through the warp. These ends tell a story about duration, scale, and spontaneous response. The wefts are wound on bobbins, and depending on the amount of yarns used together to create a single weft pass, the size of the bobbin and the tightness of the wind, more or less weft will be housed on each bobbin, causing it to run out at different intervals, and require a new insertion to maintain or change a color in the woven cloth. Similarly, the energy with which the shuttle in which the bobbin sits is thrown, will leave a longer or shorter end dangling from one side of the weaving. There is also a decision about which side to start from each time, left or right, and whether to incorporate the end into the next 'shed' or pass, or leave it loose. Choosing to expose this decision making, and the process involved in the making of the

weaving, I am essentially leaving the weaving unfinished. These artefacts of craft become part of the story being told. Meaning is malleable and shifts. Memory distorts and evolves. An audience can travel with these tendrils across the field of the weaving to see where they enter and exit and see them as distinct elements before their integration into the whole. Similarly, the wall-weavings are finished only at one end, with the bottoms left as raw hems, to evolve over time, fraying and curling. As we see the strengths in the interlacements of weft and warp binding together, we also see the vulnerability of fabric to come apart. I think of these ends as tentacles, per Donna Haraway, and her notion of 'tentacular thinking' and the idea that 'it matters what thoughts think thoughts'. Haraway considers, in Staying with the Trouble, the idea that all ideas are fundamentally connected to other ideas, and that no statement exists independent of those that went before it and will come after it. Always in a process of becoming, an ongoing recalibration to time and space and meaning. Tentacular Ones is presented on a low-lying plinth on the floor, horizontally (figure 15). Raised to the level that the eye can perceive the whole while looking always at an angle from the imagery. Across rather than at, the woven artefact becomes a terrain to be navigated visually and physically in the space. The artist Deborah Valoma, in her 2021 article 'Alluring Monotony + Luminous Grids', asserts that "a woven piece of cloth is democratic... each thread is suspended in an anti-individualistic grid" and goes on to describe the ability of cloth to subvert "the idea of a single point of reference... a supple model of multiplicity" (Valoma 2021). This piece amplifies this quality

through horizontal orientation, inviting viewers to walk around it, and to move with the lines of becoming they can see. In this way, the source graphic image is translated into topographic landscape, undulating and tactile in form, and demanding closer inspection. As such, it becomes an instance of the relationship between macro and micro, part to whole, one to many, allowing the viewer to become sensible to the non-hierarchical entanglements presented in a text. There is no top or bottom to the work, it exists in the round, as an object to be conversed with from all angles. The perception of undulation of the surface is caused both by the metal wire in the weft, which shimmers and bubbles through the skin of the weaving, physically creating peaks and valleys, but also through the shifting behavior of the relationships embedded in the text as the light and audience move around it. This reflects the process of making. While weaving, only about 10" of cloth is visible to the weaver, as the woven cloth moves around the front beam. The textile is produced much as a typewriter allows only a fragmentary view of the whole to the writer. The birds eye view must be kept in the mind's eye only, and color relationships and weft roles kept account of on the fly. While weaving, I am working through glimpses of memories, sensations, and ideas in material form. Relationships of weft that at first write into existence rock, and salt and sediment, with the replacement or addition of a single color thread, take on the hue of pale freckled skin, the copper wire glistening first as mineral, now moisture, now sunlight. Here, the bright yellow green of flagging tape is frenetic artificial awareness, here it is lichens waking up on wet bark or stone. Hyde

discusses Roland Barthes' explorations of the memory of his mother, wherein, in order to remember her essence, he needs to forget the societal categories 'mother' etc. which precede the particularities of the person. Remembering, then, is a tension between abstract eternals and unique particulars. (Hyde 2019, 41). We do not see in the aggregate, we do not remember the whole, but separate the grain from the husk, keeping fragments which speak to the particular, in order to not have them swept away from us with the general.



figure 15: $Tentacular\ Ones\ (2023)\ 101.5''\times 80''\times 2''$ wool, mohair, copper wire, flagging tape, bamboo, cotton. Full image from above at an angle of large-scale weaving mounted on a horizontal plinth. The plinth extends beyond the edges of the weaving and the weaving has long ends which curl and trail around the main picture plane. The weaving incorporates sandy beiges, salmon pinks, blues and navy wools with yellow and pink flagging tape wefts. Source: Aoife Mooney

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