

Threads of Independent World-lines

“Chance... is the intersection of independent casual chains. Each is deterministic on its own, but the intersections create unthinkable complexity and inevitable unpredictability. In this view the world comes into existence as ‘threads of independent world-lines’ – a term describing how subatomic particles move through space time – whose intersections create the warp and woof of the universe.”

Katherine Hayles, “Chance operations: Cagean Paradox and Contemporary Science”¹

This quote just about sums up what I have been exploring with these works in bleach:

Chance – The chance, haptic and aleatorical nature of the marks, the materiality of the bleach’s reaction with the cardboard. The exploration of where I exercise control or deliberation and where that control is wrested from me.

Intersection – the intersection of ideas and materials and their resulting interaction.

Complexity – Creation, destruction, fate, inevitability, layers of meaning, layers of materials.

Paradox – The continual search for understanding of the paradox of beauty in toxicity. Even while investigating an idea abhorrent to me, an allegory for impending doom, yet being seduced by the marks, unable to resist them.

James Gleeson states:

“The aim of Art is to approach the unknowable; and the only approach is by way of the known, to use it as a springboard.”²

My ‘known’ is concept. For this work I started with the metaphor Dr David Suzuki presented about the 59th minute. He suggests we imagine a test tube full of food with one bacterium in it. Every minute the number of bacteria increases exponentially, that is it doubles, so after two minutes there are two bacteria, three minutes four bacteria, four minutes eight bacteria and so on. In the 59th minute the test tube is half full of bacteria, the other half is still full of food, but in just one minute more the tube will be full of bacteria and the food all gone. Dr Suzuki is suggesting that the test tube is the earth and the bacteria are humankind, and that we are in the 59th minute. Whilst I was initially drawn emotionally to this image, I was also drawn to the mathematical beauty of it. I find science, mathematics, fascinating and beautiful, and I wanted to explore the mathematical qualities of it further. My other ‘known’ was drawing with bleach; again the marks the bleach makes are both fascinating and beautiful and hold a world of visual possibilities for me.

“A condition of suspended confusion through which “I” may shift under observation. Or a means for viewing thoughts which might pass between “I” and “me”. So, from irregular or parallel intentions, something is slowly forming”³

Arakawa caption

¹ in Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman (eds) *John Cage: Composed in America*, Uni of Chicago Press, 1994, p227

² *Signals from the Perimeter*, James Gleeson Drawings and Texts, The Beagle Press, Sydney, 1993

³ Wystan Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the ‘Book of power’*, Sydney: Craftsman House, 1998 pg

My irregular and parallel intentions were to develop the original idea using the media of bleach, but the idea was slowly becoming superseded by my investigations with the bleach; the idea became a sort of place to hang my hat on.

For a while I was developing three realisations of the idea, a sort of triptych, the large bleach drawings, text and some ink and pigment drawings. The large bleach drawings grew quickly, spontaneously, evolving rapidly out of the very process of making them. Once again, the surprise of creation occurred in the alchemical reaction of plastic netting with bleach and card and this act of creation led me to choose my text. Genesis. But I did not want the text to be too easily accessible, so I toyed with the idea of using Hebrew or Latin (in homage to my catholic upbringing). Cuneiform would have been marvellous but unattainable at this stage, so I landed on old English, Anglo Saxon, again from my heritage. The words have a lyrical poetry to them but are generally unintelligible. As I wrote I started to recognise words and phrases and with a translation I was able to identify certain phrases. It was with this knowledge I could identify the moment when God commands Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply, to increase, 'incre cynne'.

The third set of drawings with ink, water and pigment had their genesis in counting as the marks on the papers increased one by one. I find them an intriguing set, but I could not 'place' them or connect them with the other drawings, they were two different beasts. I also came to realise that the first set of drawings had emerged not as the Omega as in Dr Suzuki's metaphor, but rather as the Alpha. In order to balance the work the 60 minutes were needed. From this came the 60 black cards drawn with bleach and then 'annotated' and embellished with white marks. The images gradually increasing until they fill the 60th card.

The installation of the works evolved as the two groups separated. They contain opposing yet linked narratives and so face each other across the room, a never ending cycle of creation and destruction. The bleach continues to work on the card, the process is never-ending as the works persist to both create and destroy.

Could it also be that I am drawn to Braco Dimitrijevic's view which allows one to view history not as a logical succession of facts, to which end we will tie ourselves, but as an unlimited field of the possible, where for our consciousness opens an abyss of forgotten knowledge... and where intricate paths of interpretations, multiple and contradictory present themselves.⁴

For Anthony Gormley drawing isn't about making pictures, it is about testing ideas and testing materials.⁵ For me the testing is certainly true, however, the image and the testing go hand in hand. The development of the image comes out of the accidents and discoveries of the tests and further tests are determined by the image revealed.

So now I have come full circle and reached this point and reflected on where the play with bleach has brought me, the title for this work is **threads of independent world-lines**. For I feel I have travelled through space and time with these particles, weaving the ideas and materials together to this moment in time, whilst always cognoscente of the fact that so many of the marks represent a complete independence from me or my ideas.

⁴ Catherine Millet, The Part of Risk, <http://bracodimitrijevic.com/index.php?p+pages&title+The-Part-of-Risk> 13.8.11

⁵ Anthony Gormley, *Drawing*, British Museum Press, London, 2002