2022

PAINTING, PLAYING, PERSONAS: INSERTING CHANGE IN AN ESTABLISHED PAINTING PRACTICE

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http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/19676

http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/618
University of Plymouth

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**PAINTING, PLAYING, PERSONAS:
INSERTING CHANGE IN AN ESTABLISHED
PAINTING PRACTICE**

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
In partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Society and Culture

October 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Word count of main body of thesis: 55,483

Signed ………………………………………………….

Date ……4. October 2022……………………….

ABSTRACT

Robyn Jean Thomas

PAINTING, PLAYING, PERSONAS: INSERTING CHANGE IN AN ESTABLISHED PAINTING PRACTICE

This doctoral research project explores the impact and changes alternative identities —personas— and a play-based method have on my established painting practice while disentangling it from the belief that a single identity authentically makes a painting art. Its methodology provides a path to answering how using personas with 'play' within a painting practice form strategies meeting this project's aims.

Three personas were created and applied across the first two stages of the studio inquiry using my painting practice's methods, including reiteration. In the third stage, continuing to paint independent of the personas, their impact and that of the infinite play method used and developed with them in this inquiry were assessed. Scholarly research on alternative identities, authenticity, naming, 'self-talk', and play was combined with phenomenological-based research methods of observation, reflection, and conversation and applied to the practices and paintings of other artists and mine.

Information on how painters use alternative identities in their practices is fortified by this studio inquiry and the examples of contemporary visual artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent. These artists demonstrate how alternative identities function uniquely in painters' practices and illuminate the benefits they bring while situating and differentiating my use of the personas in this project.

Alternative identities enable painters via storytelling to occupy fictive spaces that grant freedom and expand their practices by shifting and changing modes of making and thought. The naming of alternative identities is significant in determining their stories, existence, function, and authenticity and situating them in the artist's practice. Painting with personas demands surrendering control, increased cognition of the artists' diverse roles, and awareness of the unseen. The connections made between the topics explored and the insight and findings revealed relative to scholarly and critical discourse and other artists' practices are its contribution to new knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

This doctoral research project turns away from believing that painting relies upon a single, firm artistic identity perceived as authentic. In particular, through the use of alternative identities or personas, it aims to reject that belief and, in doing so, to explore the artistic value of authenticity comprised of multiple intentions, perceptions, and knowledge. These elements form paintings' authenticity in spaces where alternative identities can be experienced without being publicly performed or pictured in the resulting artworks. This project aims to utilise alternative identities —personas— to bring changes to my established painting practice through a method of play, exploring their impact and rejecting the notion that a single authentic identity makes painting art. Further, this project's intention extends generally to the field of painting to reveal new knowledge concerning how and why alternative identities are used by painters in their practices, the types of changes personas and play offer, and how these are related to the intentional insertion of change into established painting practices.

I am a painter; my practice consists of spreading emulsions of various liquids and pigments whose common appellation is 'paint' onto a variety of support surfaces to create objects called paintings, locating my practice in the field of 'Painting'. The aims, research questions, and methods contributing to the methodology of this doctoral research project (described below) are derived from those of my painting practice. Succinctly, this research project's aims relate to painting. I intend to reveal more about painting through research led by my practice and search to elicit change in it by using atypical methods and personas, which contribute new, original knowledge to the disciplines in which it is located: painting and artistic research.

My practice employs a painterly language grounded in non-objective abstraction. Although shapes emerging in my paintings could be deemed character-like participants

in an abstract narrative, characters are not the subjects of the paintings. Instead, the material and how it is applied is my subject, driven by the history and ideas of the field of painting embedded in it, forming a story told through the language of paint. Like in most languages, there are instances when what is said in paint remains untranslatable in other languages, for instance, words. In this research project, 'untranslatable' corresponds to 'unseen'. Meaning is not negated by the inability to translate across media. However incomprehensible it may be in the moment, acknowledging meanings' presence in the original text and its potential to be someday understood, translatable, or seen is critical to understanding this research and addressing the project's aims and questions.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 - 1951) stated, 'What can be shown cannot be said' ([1922] 1999: 53) and 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' ([1922] 1999: 108). Whether a picture, an object, a symbol, a sign, or a logical equation, each means of expression differs from our spoken and written languages. Similarly, Gerhard Richter (b. 1932) said that talking 'about painting is not only difficult but perhaps pointless' (2011). I do not believe Wittgenstein or Richter implied that it is better to say nothing and walk away. Instead, they recognised what can be conveyed only by specific means and the necessity to carry on conveying only by those means. Talking about painting is difficult and pointless at times for me as a painter; painting itself is not. To express something about painting or what I am researching by continuing to paint is not remaining silent. Just as bits cannot be spoken about, aspects of my research led by painting cannot be shown in the paintings, and vice versa. This written element of my thesis is about what cannot be shown in my paintings. Namely, it presents *in words* my research methods and an analysis of their impact on my painting practice, revealed to a great extent in the paintings in ways visible only to myself, leading to the findings and

contribution of new and original knowledge this doctoral practice-led artistic research project offers. While the paintings themselves hold the tacit knowledge of the changes imparted by the incorporation of personas and play in this research project, by looking at the paintings, this knowledge remains inaccessible to spectators other than the artist or others intimately familiar with the painting practice to which they were applied. The purpose of this thesis text is to impart this non-tacit knowledge, knowledge of *how* these methods impart change is accessible to the reader through this thesis text.

Paintings may or may not gain meaning via the words that become attached to them, but the meaning of those words becomes more significant when the shape they take relates to what is said via the paint or when 'form follows function' (Sullivan, 1896). The paintings pictured in this thesis text are not illustrations of this research project. Instead, their documentation and inclusion here are another way of telling about it complementary to these words. Likewise, this text does not illustrate the research or explain the paintings beyond the technical aspects of their making. This text read in isolation from any of the work produced in this research project would lack something for the reader, namely, the indication of the tacit knowledge present in the paintings. Likewise, a box of paintings viewed in isolation from this text will also be missing a puzzle piece. Reader-viewers must consider the two together, fitting the pieces to complete the puzzle for themselves. Comparable to the equal recognition of artistic research to research of other academic disciplines, words and paint must be recognised as equal in what they convey uniquely. Otherwise, they are equally superfluous to express the findings and contributions of practice-led artistic research.

Expressing thoughts in words or painting requires deliberation, or, as Per Kirkeby (1938 - 2018) explained, to paint is an alternation between choices made with advanced thought and actions taken at the moment (2014). To begin to paint involves choosing to act on an idea to paint; to pick up a brush and load it with paint sets the action in motion. Like Per Kirkeby, 'I cannot start by painting the top layer' (2014). Action and ideas together begin my painting and writing and, with deliberate interventions, form the layers of an ever-evolving system of my explorations —my practice-led artistic research.

Prompted by a postcard of a study of clouds by John Constable (1776 - 1837) hanging on my studio wall, I would like to look up to the clouds to describe metaphorically the process underlying my actions —painting, writing, researching— in still another way. Blown by the wind, clouds have a wide range of momentary meanings generated as they transition between states. Clouds do not begin with the top layer but form around a core of merging water droplets, slipping and sliding around, like my actions around my thoughts. Moreover, they depend on environmental conditions that interrupt the present state by changing it to create a new existence.

Paintings are as ephemeral as clouds; and like paint and painting, paintings are slippery.

> For some of us, one of the seductions of painting is how slippery it is, how spoken or written descriptions can never quite pin it down. We may talk endlessly and eloquently about and around the work. In the end, though, painting always seems to trump language. It needs to be seen in person to be really understood. (Moyer, 2010: 166)

This slipperiness, inherent to the material and also understood metaphorically, makes talking about painting a challenge. It is like describing what is seen in the shape of clouds as they rapidly slip away, at times, futile. Instead of an intention-filled action,

staring up at clouds dreamingly and, perhaps painting, is a superfluous, unproductive activity unless you are the one doing it. Engaging in any action with intent, and like the untranslatable, the unspeakable, and the unseen, carries potentially productive meaning to be recognised in the activity's moments.

Since Marcel Duchamp (1887 - 1968) designated a bottle rack (1914) 'art', material and methodological boundaries defining an object have been supplemented but not supplanted by physical and conceptual intentions realised through the object and recognised in the experiencing of it (discussed in Chapter Two). Optimising the experience of 'painting' as an action is a component of this research project manifested through inserting alternative identities in my painting practice to facilitate the achievement of 'flow'. Flow, a state of optimal experience identified by psychologist Mihályi Csíkszentmihályi, is 'when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is something we make happen' (1990: 3). Flow can also happen under conditions that appear far from optimal, for example, correlating to the appearance of the second persona (presented in Chapter Three, *Petra Nimm*).

When painting, flow happens at the intersection of ideas and materials; when my mind is stretched to its limits, painting becomes an optimal experience. Pushing these limits does not always involve holding a pencil or a brush; it can require grasping hold of mental constructs, less evident but as essential as those physical objects. Achieving flow is not always guaranteed for me when painting, and it can be impeded mentally or physically. Mihályi Csíkszentmihályi writes that it is necessary to 'become independent of the social environment' and learn to reward oneself by drastically changing what one

believes is important and what is not (1990: 16).[1] Creating and applying alternative identities in my painting practice is a means to facilitate flow in pursuit of independence from these controls and gaining freedom from what has become conventional in my painting practice to evoke change in it.

The pop song, 'Changes' (1971) is an anthem for David Jones (1947 - 2016), aka 'David Bowie', its writer and performer. Known as a master of creative reinvention via his many alter egos, Jones/Bowie is an artist who has figured prominently in my early scholarly research as a model of how a performer used alternative identities to insert change into his creative practice (Auslander, 2006: 106 - 146). The ability to shift and change is the hallmark of Bowie as an artist. Aside from being a catchy tune by a stellar performer, the longevity and popularity of this song are indicative of awareness of the role change plays in human lives. The song's lyrics address the struggles we face when confronted by change, and its chorus states what is required of us by change — turning and facing the strange, confronting the unknown as a means of progressing.

'Change is inevitable, but progress depends on what we do with that change' (Wheelan, 2012: 111). Answering a critical question about why I seek to change anything in my established painting practice with this project, and an answer with possible resonance for others in positions similar to myself —should they also be seeking change— is that change cannot be avoided. It means advancement in any capacity depends on how we

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[1] To add the following on a similar impediment to achieving 'flow' in practice-led artistic research: Research on the supervision of practice-based research projects in the arts (Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2000; Hockey 2003) has shown that one difficulty experienced by both PhD candidates and their supervisors lies in the distrust and skepticism of those around them – individuals in their own institutions as well as those in wider circles – with respect to research of this type. Those involved in art research often have to 'sell' their research as a credible endeavour, and to consume much time and energy in having to repeatedly explain to all sorts of individuals and authorities what the research involves and what the rationale of this type of research is. Overcoming institutional barriers and persuading other people claim a disproportionate amount of time, quite apart from the fact that this usually has little to do with the actual topic of research. And the burden of proof always rests with the 'novices',whereas the legitimacy of mainstream academic research is seldom fundamentally challenged (Borgdorff, 2012: 53).

meet the challenges set before us by change. Developing skills supporting the ability to respond to change becomes crucial to progressing (McGonigal, 2022: 15) and not becoming stagnant or regressing but moving a creative practice forward, a desire expressed by painter Caroline Kent (2022) in Chapter Four. The strangeness I faced beginning this project lay in turning away from the idea that my painting practice is firmly and authentically bound to my hand and mind. For other artists, the issue of change and how it relates to authenticity can be found in the ways change is discouraged (see Chapter Two) or impacts continued acceptance by established art world relationships, exemplified by the experience of Philip Guston.

Changing one's style too much can disrupt the established marketplace, upsetting dealers and collectors equally (Storr, 2020: 103). The example of Philip Guston (1913 - 1980) shows how a sudden turning away from the abstract expressionist paintings for which he became known in the 1950s caused immense personal hardship (Mayer, 2016) but led to greater artistic freedom and fulfilment in the studio (Storr 2020: 101-233).

> What if I had died? I'm in the history books. What would I paint if I came back? You know, you have to die for a rebirth. And so that released me. And not just released me, it gave me a beautiful extravagant sense of irresponsibility. But that's what I wanted … (Storr, 2020: 103)

Further, Guston's change is linked to events external to his practice —personal crises, the conflicts of the late-1960s— which led to the artist concluding a need to articulate his experience of these through his practice in ways he could not previously (Storr, 2020: 110). The changes Guston undertook in his painting practice at the time appeared extreme relative to what preceded them visually and to spectators viewing the work. A half-century later, after the shock of the change has worn off, the strangeness that seemed to emerge through Guston's 'turning away' appears less strange. The changes he

made are traceable to the early days of his practice, now lending the work the authenticity [and acceptance] it was once accused of lacking (Storr, 2020: 120 -126).

Seeing the changes in the late paintings (1966 - 1980) of Philip Guston is very apparent; they are visibly present on the surface in the paint's handling. Contrastingly, the changes imparted by the application of personas and play in my painting practice will not be as readily visible to viewers of the paintings. Looking for the changes will be difficult and, to some viewers, may appear slighter than to myself and people with more extensive knowledge of my painting practice over a period more lengthy than encompassed by this project. The origins of the changes visible in Guston's paintings are now more easily traced retrospectively by scholars using researched knowledge of the artist's life and practice, which, in words, reveal his intentions expressed in paint. Likewise, the changes imparted by the methods in this project are traceable to its elements and my practice described in this thesis text. Changes not readily visible in the paintings do not mean the experiment has failed or that change is not present. Instead, returning to my earlier statement that although all aspects of my practice-led artistic research cannot be shown in the paintings or articulated in words, they are present and, when taken together, form a more if not entirely complete picture.

Timotheus Vermeulen, to whom I will return in Chapter Two, explains that authenticity is —like clouds and paint— slippery. It is a concept derived from two opposing notions: first, the more common (non-academic) and existentialist understanding that 'authenticity is the decision to act as oneself, according to one's own intellectual, spiritual and bodily inclinations as opposed to the pressures of the outside world' and second, a subjective (literary circles preferred) response that the world is 'all we have

got left after the disintegration of the genre, or school, of realism,' which assumes the world can be represented objectively, as a whole (Vermeulen, 2017: 20-22). Within this first idea is the structuralist/post-structuralist notion that we are mirrors reflecting and playing back inside our echo-chamber all that happens to us externally — past and present— which we spew back out to negate authenticity's existence, or, at least, our vision of it (Vermeulen, 2017: 21). Following this second idea, to act authentically means 'to share what something feels like to you, as opposed to presuming to explain how it works as a general matter' (Vermeulen, 2017: 22).

Another seemingly superfluous and slippery activity I partake in while painting is 'self-talk' (see Chapter Three), more aptly described by the protagonist in the film *Alice in the Cities*: 'Actually, it's more like listening than talking' (Wenders, 1974). Like staring at clouds to see their shapes, I listen for the shape of the ideas these conversations generate inside my head. 'Self-talk' is the location from which the narrative of my paintings and practice, their subjects, and my practice's shape emerge through telling their stories to myself. In *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative* (2019), Jane Alison advocates for a structure of designs and patterns corresponding to the writer's theme in place of an Aristotelian approach to narrative form. Here, I seek to show the alignment of form in the shape of my research and my writing and painting processes' narrative through a less representational shape of the doctoral thesis text. This project and the knowledge it produces of how change can be imparted through methods incorporating personas and play are directed toward painters and their practices as part of an expanded research community which is defined in the coming section on practice-led artistic research. Thus, in this text, I have given more weight to artists' words (and actions) over those of theoreticians, i.e., philosophers, critics and historians, who find their place here, too, blended within the practical

workings of this project its chapters like in my painting practice. My reason for selecting the artists and theoreticians I have cited is two-fold; first, they are chosen for relevance to this research project's questions, aims, and methods; and second, they are relevant to my understanding of my painting practice. Together, artists and theoreticians supply the building blocks for the language of my research practice. In identifying what more is needed to define artistic research, Cramer and Terpsma (2021) cite the Swiss art researcher Michael Hiltbrunner's 2019 reflection on Serge Stauffer's (1929 - 1989) 'Kunst als Forschung' [Art as Research] ([1976] 2013) that the 'problems lie in the fact that a language of art pedagogy and curatorship is used. [...] What is needed is a vocabulary founded in the researching practices of artists themselves.'[2]

Persona

Many appellations exist for alternative identities, with alter ego commonly being one and persona another. Conceiving this project necessitated understanding how applying alternative identities in my painting practice is a performative act. 'Persona' has been chosen instead of 'alter ego' to describe the alternative identities developed for this project. The reasons for using the term 'persona' are addressed in the following paragraphs as it is apophatically defined in this project relative to definitions of 'alter ego' and other forms of alternative identities, including the use of the term 'persona' in other fields. While 'alter egos' and personas share qualities, such as being performed, the standard definition of persona is more explicit in the word's relationship to the performance of alternative identities. The Latin origin of persona refers to a theatre mask to be put on or taken off, here understood as an action occurring at the performer's will. Masks change the recognition of an identity by physically covering it with another

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[2]Stauffer was a contemporary of Marcel Duchamp and wrote in the manifesto Kunst als Forschung' [Art as Research] (2013 [1976]) 'art-research [...] has to avoid serving those in power' and 'requires its own methodology; it cannot use the scientific methodology but let itself inspire from it' (Cramer and Terpsma, 2021).

identity; they are devices that transform identity (Schechner, 2013: 203 - 204). In short, like a mask, a persona is an object or accessory external to the self, enabling the wearer to achieve something —change. For this reason, and stemming from my previous research on identity and self-portrayal, personas struck me as logical means to insert change into my practice.

Alter egos can, like personas, be publicly or privately performed at the will of the creator. Contrastingly, based on what Freud ([1923] 1962) laid out defining 'ego', an 'alter' ego contains connotations of a modified extension —alternative— self, which is not necessarily the case with a persona. A persona can be somewhat or significantly separate from its creator's or performer's 'self' while alter ego is bound to a specific self —the creator's ego. It is a highly customised creation, not 'off the shelf' like a mask or character to be worn or performed by anyone. Contemporary visual artists Grayson Perry (b. 1960) and Richard Prince (b. 1969) exemplify this difference. Often referred to as an alter ego and a persona, Perry's alternative identity, 'Claire Perry', is an inherent part of his self. It pre-dates self-awareness of his identity as an artist, present since his teenage years and, from its beginnings, an integral part of Perry's artistic practice (Wilson, 2020). Through Claire, Grayson Perry publicly expresses a part of who he is privately, and she is part of his subject consisting of ideas about identity, culture, and society (Jones, 2020: 51). 'Claire is who Perry is, just as his art is him and not just something that he does' (Wilson, 2020: 31). No one else can be Claire Perry except Grayson. Contrastingly, 'John Dogg' was created as a pseudonym by conceptual artist Richard Prince with gallerist Colin de Land under which to exhibit conceptual artworks by Prince but attributed to Dogg (Venus Over Manhattan Gallery, 2017). In the catalogue to Laura Owens' retrospective exhibition discussed in Chapter One, Rachel

Kushner is quoted referring to Dogg as Prince's 'alter ego'; however, based on her description of what follows, in a way unsuitable to the term as defined above:

> Richard Prince considered playing his own alter ego, John Dogg, but could not make it. Alex Israel was John Dogg with full Warholian gusto, to pose a real oxymoron. He played it flat and affectless, in a black turtleneck and sunglasses. (Rothkopf, 2017: 534)

Occasionally, Prince has used 'John Dogg' as a pseudonym, another alternative identity analogous to *nom de plume*, to attribute conceptual artworks and writings thematically different from his own. Still, other artists could assume the identity and perform 'John Dogg', indicating it is more than a pseudonym, which is typically not much more developed beyond a name. The paucity of information on who is 'John Dogg' signals it is less than an alter ego but more than a pseudonym; 'John Dogg' is a persona. Beyond both being direct descendants of alternative identities created by Marcel Duchamp (discussed in Chapter Two), 'Claire' and 'John Dogg' are both intended for public use, which differs from my use of the personas in this research project. This difference is addressed further in Chapter Four through the examples of other contemporary visual artists employing alternative identities and with practices closer to mine.

Alter egos carry certain limitations that personas do not; their performance is limited to their creator. Claire is bound to Grayson Perry, the only person who can perform her. Whether the alternative identity is an alter ego or persona, constancy of identity is crucial in separating alternative identities stemming from creative endeavours and those that result from disordered mental states, whether they result from illness or are chemically induced. The constancy of identity allows aspects of the performer's identity to remain unceasing (i.e. the 'self' or the person behind the mask) but changed by the alternative identities as they are performed. This constancy is reciprocal in alter egos tied to a distinct identity. Maintaining constancy of identity when working with the

personas in this project is addressed through the impact painting with them had on my understanding of myself and their changes to my painting practice (see Chapter Five).

Using the term persona does not exclude all psychological identity elements carried by the ego and alter egos. Although both plural forms are correct, in this project, I elect to use 'personas' rather than personae when speaking and writing about them collectively because it is more natural to me and my painting and research practice vocabulary. Importantly, as the research progressed and the personas' personalities developed, I could not imagine them referring to themselves collectively as 'personae'. In this research project, the plural 'personas' intends to emphasise the distinctness of each as alternative identities created and performed only by me, making them more than characters in theatre or literary work for anyone to perform. Nevertheless, they are still related to characters from these other creative fields. They are fictional creations possessing specific attributes that assist the story's progression (see Chapter Five).

Integral to the creative methods and the resulting artworks of their practices, writers and performers construct and apply narrative and character; yet, when narratives and characters are tied to alternative identities, they do not always appear as part of the artwork's subject as Claire does in Perry's. Pseudonyms and *nom de plumes* are not intended by their adoptees as the artwork or its subject, although they can become so. Reasons writers employ these may be personal (such as seeking anonymity), for example Elena Ferrante; or creative, as an opportunity to expand stylistically into other genres, for example J.K. Rowling, aka 'Robert Galbraith'; and, historically, to evade limits placed by gender or class, for example, George Eliot and George Sand. Richard Prince has used Dogg as a pseudonym for no more significant reason than he did not want to exhibit or publish particular work under his name (Venus Over Manhattan

Gallery, 2017). Moreover, for an artist whose conceptual art practice is founded on appropriation, to employ a pseudonym linked to him despite Prince not conceiving his name —Colin de Land did— provides fertile ground for exploring or exploiting the greater significance of Dogg in Prince's practice. However, based on the scarcity of literature on Dogg and the artist's infrequency of employing him in his practice, there appears to be little current interest in discussing or developing him further as either a pseudonym or persona.

My research on alternative identities and writers began with Fernando Pessoa (1888 - 1935). Current research on Pessoa identifies at least 136 'heteronyms' —Pessoa's term for his aliases— which the writer described in 1928:

> They are beings with a sort-of-life-of-their-own, with feelings I do not have, and opinions I do not accept. While their writings are not mine, they do also happen to be mine. (Costa, 2020: viii)

Pessoa chose this term over pseudonym 'because it more accurately described their stylistic and intellectual independence from him, their creator, and from each other' (Costa, 2020: ix). The extent to which heteronyms were crucial to creating the author's art and works of art themselves are signified by this 'life-of-their-own' quality, similar to that of a painting after leaving the painter's studio is no longer subjected to the artist's life but has a subjecthood of its own. Another example of this shift and separation of the identity of subject/object is Elina Brotherus (b. 1972), who frequently uses herself as a model in her photographs and videos. Blurring lines between being the subject and the subject that is the object, Brotherus states: 'It's not me, it's a photograph' (2012). Like the body that is a subject in Brotherus' photographs and the heteronyms of Pessoa, the personas are both a part of and separate from me in this research project (addressed further in Chapters Three and Five).

Focusing on the impact of a specific component of a persona such as gender, race, or culture (or their inter-relationship) is certainly conceivable and of current interest; however, that is not the intent of this specific research project or the subject of my practice. Instead, this research project focuses on the impact of personas on my painting practice and what knowledge this produces for painting and artistic research. Identity, the physical, spatio-temporal, and psychological criteria that comprise individuals and by which they are known and judged (Rorty, 1976), is an essential element of the personas; who they are and how they function depends on intersectional identifiers. Not focusing on gender, race, or culture is not denying their significance; yet, focusing on any of them vis a vis the personas would be a different project from the one conceived and conducted here. Nevertheless, knowledge of how these identity components are used with alternative identities is necessary to developing and working with the personas.

My prior research on exploring identity through self-portraiture referred to earlier led me to alternative identities. As I sought other ways of picturing the 'self' in my painting practice, which employs a language of non-representational abstraction, I found several visual artists whose exploration of identity through the vernacular of self-portraiture led to portraits of alternative selves. These artists picturing alternative selves is the impetus for my development of the personas for this research project.

A historical exploration of identity's representation via the self-portrait reveals the variety of ways in which alternatives to existing or specific aspects of identity were addressed by visual artists. Examples include the numerous self-portraits of Rembrandt (1606 - 1669) and the photographs and literary work of Claude Cahun (1894 - 1954). By assuming a gender-ambiguous name and appearance, Lucy Schwob became 'Claude

Cahun' in photographic self-portraits, while Rembrandt always remained identifiably the painter, no matter his clothing or facial expression. Another example, Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), continually creates pictures of new identities via costumes, makeup, prosthesis, and, more recently, Instagram filters. Like Elina Brotherus, despite Sherman being her primary model, none of the identities she pictures is alternative to her own, and she is never present herself (Tomkins, 2008). Sherman utilises her body as an object to construct an identity separate from herself, and the images resulting are not alter egos or personas but simply 'pictures'. Bodily present, Sherman disengages herself from who she is in the artwork through the 'masks' she puts on physically (i.e. makeup, etcetera) or digitally (social media application filters). Moreover, the viewer could not mistakenly understand Sherman's presence as 'herself', the problem Brotherus faces. Viewers know it *is*, and it is *not* Sherman, but ultimately, what matters is that *it is a picture*. None of the identities Sherman creates supplants her identity; it remains constant, unlike Cahun did Schwob's (Doy, 2006: 75).

Like these three artists, multi-media and performance artist Eleanor Antin (b. 1935) builds alternative identities with her body (Liebert, 2013: 13-25). However, her identity and experiences inform these in ways that place them more in the category of alter egos than personas. Specifically in terms of gender and race, identity politics is present in Antin's artwork in ways that are dissimilar to how it is manifested in Sherman's pictures or the photographs of Cahun/Schwob. While Cahun/Schwob was addressing her rejection of binary gender roles (Von Oehsen, 2006: 12) and notions of a fixed identity (Doy, 2006: 77), it is crucial to note that the artist was not working from the same paradigm as the one from which we view the photographs today (Doy, 2006: 78 -79). Symbolism and Surrealism were the impetus to Cahun's examination of identity via self-portraiture and were strongly coupled with left-wing European politics of the 1920s

-1940s (Doy, 2006: 76), while Second-wave feminism is the driving force behind Antin's work.

Further, Antin's methods are derived substantially from Marcel Duchamp, while Cahun emerged from Symbolism's influence, and she was loosely, but never formally, aligned with Surrealism, like her contemporary Duchamp. Duchamp lived as several different 'Marcel Duchamps' and his influence on many artists' practices, including mine and my development of the personas, is more significant than Cahun's in this research project because the subject of his questions was not human identity, but the identity of art. This difference in the artists' subjects is critical in that, like Duchamp, the subject, denoted by the word's position in the title of this research project, is *Painting*, while the objects or means through which the subject is addressed are *Playing* and *Personas*.

The etymology of 'persona' places its origins in the arts. In the early twentieth century, it gained further significance in psychology through the work of Carl Jung ([1957] 1970), denoting the 'mask' humans don to conceal the 'anima' or true inner self. The current use of the term to indicate a method applied in information technology, manufacturing, communications, product development, and service design stems from Alan Cooper's *The Inmates are Running the Asylum* (1999), in which the persona was conceptualised for the IT industry. While commonly understood to describe a fictitious person, it lacks clarity in defining what comprises the methods or their benefits when applied to the design process (Nielsen, 2013). Closing this sub-section, I will briefly address the definition and use of personas in these other disciplines and the similarities and differences between their use there and in this research project.

The discord Nielsen (2013) mentions surrounding the term's usage to describe a method via four different perspectives, its benefits, and what it entails (i.e. ten steps to creating engaging personas) is akin to that encircling artistic research and the use of alternative identities in the arts. No specific definition or method is attached because of variables found in each practice. In these other fields, personas are not analogous to archetypes or people. Instead, 'the special aspect of a persona description is that you do not look at the entire person but use the area of focus or domain you are working within as a lens to highlight the relevant attitudes and the specific context associated with the area of work' (Nielsen, 2013). Nevertheless, personas share a purpose across all these fields, including in this project, that is, to communicate knowledge.

The divergence points most relevant to the personas described by Nielsen and those applied in this practice-led artistic research project lie in who is designing the persona, who is applying the persona, whom the person applying the persona is applying it for, and what type of knowledge is being communicated. In this research project, the designer or definer of the persona and the person applying it is the artist. Furthermore, the artist is applying it for herself, and the knowledge communicated by the persona is aimed at the artist. Notably, the knowledge communicated by the persona towards the artist is the tacit knowledge they impart on the paintings to evoke change, which, as stated previously, is not the same as the new knowledge generated by this research project. The new knowledge generated by this research is the knowledge of *how* the personas as part of this project's methods impart change. In the abovementioned fields, companies commission personas developed by designers and applied by others using various methods with the purpose of the knowledge they generate as being the new knowledge of the research. Data often drives the characteristics of the personas'

designed to generate different types of knowledge from various perspectives, including 'goal-directed design', 'role-based', 'engaging', and 'fiction-based' (Nielsen, 2013).

Even when overtly fictive and different from alter egos, the persona is linked to the artists' identity as an alternative created and applied by them in their practice. In the case of John Dogg, despite being put on and performed by others, by his inception he remains an alternative identity associated explicitly with a primary identity, Richard Prince. Contrastingly, a persona developed for a corporation by a designer using data fragments that are both factual and fictitious to describe several identities is not creating an alternative identity but what I would term an *artificial* identity. That type of persona is an ersatz constructed to simulate something real. Sweeteners and cane sugar offer a simile to describe alternative and artificial identities: alternative identities are honey while artificial identities are saccharine. Both achieve the same result of sweetening the pot, but by different means and from opposite ends.

There is criticism that no matter how well designed a persona used in a business, or industrial setting is, there remain deficits in its ability as a method to describe actual people (Nielsen, 2013). However, when applied by artists publicly or privately in their practices, a persona becomes 'real', at times taking on a life of its own. This phenomenon described by Plinio Avila (2022) occurred with his alternative identity, Humberto Márquez (see APPENDIX D) and is demonstrated in this project in Chapter Five. There are some similarities between these two types of personas, such as their shared purpose to communicate knowledge and specific aspects of their construction —i.e. body, psyche, background, emotions, attitudes and personal traits (Nielsen, 2007)— and application —i.e. 'the engaging' and 'the fiction-based perspectives (Nielsen, 2013). Overall, as defined and applied in this practice-led artistic research

project, the 'persona' as it is created and applied in this project is significantly different from the ways personas are developed and used in information technology, manufacturing, communications, and product development and service design. They should not be understood as synonymous.

Playing

Play is significant to this thesis as a method to explore other possibilities for being or doing as artists by initiating change to established or 'comfortable' approaches from within oneself. Deliberately inserting change means honing skills necessary for the progress that depends on what we do when encountering the inevitable and unanticipated changes in creative processes. Essential to note is that training for change is unlike an athlete training for a specific competition with a customised training programme for the known challenges they will face. The specific challenges of change remain primarily unknown. Instead, training for change is more like the type of training people engage in to support their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing today with the knowledge that these undertakings will help them face the challenges brought by age-related changes tomorrow. This type of training focuses on being physically active and maintaining a healthy diet and social life to develop the resilience, stamina, and agility needed as humans age. This analogy illustrates why I chose to address the issue of change in my painting practice today rather than twenty years ago, in its early years. Experience has altered my understanding of my practice and what I need to do to make it more resilient in the long run. Similarly, how I exercise, socialise, and nourish myself is different from what I did in early adulthood due to the age-related changes I have already experienced and witnessing them in people surrounding me. Identifying a need in both cases, I have chosen to alter my approach through play to make it more enjoyable and sustainable. The term 'play' is more fully defined in the first section of

Chapter Five; this sub-section reflects on observations of play which spurred this project and its methods.

Play's potential is epistemic to the human condition, and still, considering the value of play as a method for exploring identity and change in my painting practice did not become apparent to me until connecting observations made a few years earlier of my young children playing to my previous research on self-portrayal. These observations undertaken from a parental perspective differ from objectively researching a subject. However, as memories, they are reconsidered here through the lens of this practice-led artistic research project. Comparable to Jean Piaget's (1952) observations of his children, I collected vast amounts of information on identity development by witnessing my children's growth, which I then combined with my scholarly research on play (presented in Chapter Five) and making methods for this project. My recollections of the differences between each of my sons' playing with imaginary friends connect the elements of personas and play significant to this research project.

Briefly, around age four, my older son, whose preferred ways of playing gravitated toward cars and building blocks, had two imaginary friends, a couple who lived and travelled in the cities and buildings he drew. I realised that he based his playing on what he had experienced, namely, the people, places, and inanimate objects that fed his imagination. My younger son typically played with dolls, costumes, and stuffed animals, and he always had a story to tell verbally. At age 4, he hit that same milestone, but he had more than imaginary friends; he had a whole fictitious family. He did not make drawings of them; his imaginary family existed only in his telling, an aspect of incorporating alternative identities into visual arts practices discussed in Chapter Four. I encouraged their play by asking a simple question: And then what happened?

The question led to short responses from my older son, and he seemed to be answering them only for himself — much like talking to himself out loud while playing and not too different from 'self-talk' (discussed in Chapter Three). After a few months, his imaginary friends disappeared, and when I inquired where they had gone, he replied: 'They moved'. My younger son's imaginary family stuck around for years, and his way of playing indicated there was something different. Eventually, I understood this difference in the two types of play I had witnessed, which led to the method of play employed with the personas in this project presented in Chapter Five. Based on my younger son's responses and his imaginary family's longevity, as I reconsidered the value of play through practice-led artistic research, I realised he was playing for the pleasure of playing. A simple question, 'And then what happened?' would lead him (and his listeners) down the most incredible paths, allowing him to indulge and impress (himself and others) with the knowledge he had acquired of the world. When I begin not just to paint but to play when painting, I head down similar infinite paths of pleasure.

Connecting these memories of my observations of play in action to my artistic research practice led me to consider how (and why) performers and writers create imaginary characters —identities they temporarily inhabit— described in the previous sub-section. Further, I related this to how the artists working with self-portraiture had been led to make portraits of alternative selves, also addressed earlier. My older son's imaginary friends were separate from him. He played with them like he played toy cars, as objects external to himself, possessing characteristics found in reality but themselves unreal; they were 'artificial', like a persona used in non-artistic fields. Contrastingly, my younger son's reference to his imaginary friends as 'family' gave him an alternative identity as a member of that family. They were not objects with realistic traits but

authentic subjects belonging to him and to which he belonged. According to Csíkszentmihályi, the ego falls away when we enter a state of 'flow' (1990: 62-65). As he played, his ego, defined by his membership in our family externally, dissipated, becoming internalised in his playing.

Playing is understood culturally by developmental theorists through how language is used. For Lev Vygotsky, this meant the power of language to alter thought (Vygotsky, [1934] 2012: 223-271); with Jean Piaget, language can reflect but not determine thought (Vygotsky, [1934] 2012: 13-61; Cole and Wertsch, 1996), and according to Sigmund Freud, language was the game by which we externalise our inner life (Bruner, 1986: 143-144). For writers and performers, playing with alternative identities and using language tends to occur on or lead to a more external, public platform than a child playing with an imaginary friend, typically an internal, private encounter. Playing with personas in my painting practice is external because it occurs in tandem with physical objects in physical spaces and internal as it happens in my studio, a private physical space, and private conceptual space in my head. These are the spaces alternatives identities, the personas of this research project, can be experienced without being publicly performed or pictured. They are the spaces where the personas remain 'unseen'. I never saw my younger son's imaginary family; recollecting on them, and being aware of my ability to enter a state of 'flow' while creating and initiating this research project, I concluded it is possible to assume another 'unseen' identity and question the impact this could have on my painting practice when playing under similar circumstances.

The idea of personas and 'unseen' identities and incorporating these through play into my painting practice were the starting point of this project's research questions. Understanding more about play and how it benefits change became a crucial component

forming this practice-led research project through a method of observation and

reflection, which, in turn, became critical methods in its methodology.

Research Questions

Situated within the context outlined above, the three research questions of this doctoral

research project are:

1. How do personas applied within the framework of a self-reflective methodology, based on a psychological understanding of play, and as a tool in my painting practice, impact paintings' form and content?
2. How might a visual artist employ play to accommodate the artist-object-spectator relationship model's multiple perspectives within a painting practice?
3. How can tools and methods atypical to my painting practice and stemming from non-object making creative practices aid in constructing a playful self-reflective methodology in which identity consistency is preserved?

In retrospect, I recognise that the use of the word 'tool' can lead to misunderstanding the

aims of this artistic research project, and therefore, I refrain from using it elsewhere in

this thesis text wherever possible. However, for clarification, when I do use 'tool', it is

as a common way to describe physical or conceptual assistance implements, at times

corresponding to clear methods, i.e. paint brushes or diagrams. In short, any item that

aids me in my practice is called a tool in the language of my painting practice. For this

reason, I consider and refer to the personas as such because their intended function is to

aid me in achieving the aims of this research project corresponding to its artistic

methods.

Practice-led Artistic Research

In 2020, the Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research defined artistic research in this way:

> Artistic Research (AR) is practice-based, practice-led research in the arts which has developed rapidly in the last twenty years globally and is a key knowledge base for art education in Higher Arts Education Institutions (HAEIs). (Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research, 2020)

Further, it identifies the following critical features of artistic research:

- happening through high-level artistic practice and reflection;
- an epistemic inquiry to increase knowledge, insight, understanding and skills;
- transpiring through topics and problems stemming from and relevant to artistic practice,
- addressing critical issues of a broader cultural, social and economic significance;
- occurring in all art practice disciplines and achieving results both within those disciplines, frequently in a transdisciplinary setting;
- and combining artistic research methods with methods from other research traditions (2020).

These features describe the critical elements of this doctoral research project.[3] The first bullet point, 'happening through high-level artistic practice and reflection,' denotes the paintings created in this research project by myself alone and with the personas exemplified and reflected on in Chapters One, Three and Five. The second bullet point, 'an epistemic inquiry to increase knowledge, insight, understanding and skills', transpired through methods of scholarly research into the information presented in Chapter Two on *Painting and the Problem of Authenticity*; in Chapter Four on the use of alternative identities in the practices of contemporary visual artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent in comparison to mine in this project; in Chapter Three on naming, background to forming the identities of each persona, conversation and self-talk; in Chapter Five on 'play' leading to the method of infinite play; and, also in

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[3] The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research was published in April 2020, less than a month after the World Health Organization [WHO] declared a global pandemic of COVID-19 on 11 March , which delayed public discussion of it. The full impact of the pandemic on arts and academia, the continued growth in programmes, scholarly support, and overall funding and how these will contribute to the discussion of the declaration specifically and artistic research generally remains unseen at the time of my writing.

Chapter One by using methods of observation and reflection in personal encounters with the work of Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson. The third bullet point, 'transpiring through topics and problems stemming from and relevant to artistic practice,' is addressed by the aims of this project, referenced throughout this thesis text, and specifically in the following section of the Introduction, the Literature Review. Bullet point four, 'addressing critical issues of a broader cultural, social and economic significance', is less pronounced than other critical features of artistic research in this project. Nevertheless, the idea of preparing for change by developing skills to apply in its inevitability has a broader cultural, social and economic significance outside the field of painting.

The issue of authenticity and alternative identities examined in Chapter Two, the value of play in Chapter Five, and the new knowledge this project contributes to painting could, to specific readers and in various contexts, have a broader cultural, social and economic significance, as this project's findings will show. The use of alternative identities as 'occurring in all art practice disciplines and achieving results both within those disciplines, frequently in a transdisciplinary setting (bullet point five) is exemplified primarily by the content of Chapter Four and the use of alternative identities in other painting and image-making based visual arts practices. However, it is also found in the practices of visual artists who are not making paintings, writers, and performers cited in the opening section of the Introduction (i.e. Duchamp, Bowie, Perry, Prince, Pessoa, Cahun, Brotherus, Sherman, Antin). Alternative identities are transdisciplinary because they are separate from the objects typically resulting from these practices or methods otherwise commonly employed in them. Finally, the sixth bullet point, 'combining artistic research methods with methods from other research traditions', is addressed by this project's combination of the practical methods of

painting, embodiment, and reiteration with theoretical methods of observation, reflection, and conversation, and play.

Also defining artistic research, Henk Borgdorff states that the practice is 'research in and through the arts, reducing the distance to the object of research to such a degree that the work of art, the creative process, and the signifying context themselves all become constituent parts of the research' (2012: 24). Artistic research through the medium of the practice forms, re-shapes, and reveals perspectives to articulate new perceptions; it is both cognitive and artistic in articulating the norms, affect, and expressions that drive the moral, psychological, and social aspects of life (Borgdorff, 2012: 24).

However, while the discourse surrounding artistic research, particularly for Borgdorff, has been for arguing for its equal place in academia, I would like to expand upon what constitutes a *research community* vis a vis this practice-led artistic research project. The artistic research community exists beyond academia in its language and concepts; therefore, my research must be accessible to it. This broader research community consists of artist-researchers outside academic institutions recognising artistic research as a discipline but conducting practice-led artistic research as defined in the previous paragraphs, including the artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent, discussed in Chapter Four. Further, it encompasses those artist-researchers who do not remain in academia after completing doctoral studies or opt to not publish their practice-led artistic research in specialised journals but persist in continuing their research and finding new or different venues for its dissemination which may be directed towards artists or the commercial world. Finally, this expanded community holds space for artists who might not consider their practices as leading artistic research, but their curiosity drives them to explore practice-led artistic research or this project as

an entry into the field. Notably, this community includes artists I have interacted with in critical discussion groups or collegial friendships with other artists for the past thirty years; it is the backbone supporting my painting and practice-led artistic research practices, which transpire primarily outside the boundaries of academia. In this community, ideas are tested, theories of practice, current writings of philosophers, critics and theorists, practical methods and the application of all these and their outcomes in our practices and various means of dissemination are debated, shared, and discussed. Our conversations happen formally and informally, in-person and online, both globally and locally.

Despite embarking on this research project within the structure of an academic institution, my painting and artistic research practice is situated more in the group I have identified outside that where the discussion on practice-led artistic research resides. Awareness of my position relative to that discussion is essential as it influences my approach to this project and the language and structure I employ in its dissemination. Repeatedly, it has been stated during my research training that the purpose of undertaking doctoral studies is to develop a sustainable research practice by providing researchers with the skill set to access funding for future research, with the caveat that the research funding is based on the political and institutional location where this training transpires. This approach is sensible if *all* researchers undergoing this training are embedded in or will become so in their post-graduate career; however, this is unlikely. Therefore, brushing aside the issue of training for that purpose *for myself*, I focused on producing artistic research accessible to anyone curious to know more about this research project's topic, particularly painters. Concurring with Cramer and Terpsma (2021) and the immense opportunity, benefits, institutional support, and as a means to rethink and revise the standards and research culture for the interests of all while

remaining in line with those standards by using language reflective of my practice-led artistic research I present the thesis content in a form that follows the function of this research project: to insert change.

Sincerely addressing Borgdorff's (2013) fundamental question of the epistemological status of artworks and art practices as research in light of their elusive nature and how new knowledge stemming from these can be established and communicated to others is the point for my undertaking this research project. Although my research methods are intended for private use rather than public display, the new knowledge of *how* these methods impart change is meant to be shared, as I will discuss in Chapters Four and Five. This knowledge is not shared via the paintings (where the tacit knowledge is located) but primarily through the words of this doctoral research thesis text, which is one way of making this possible. Other ways of sharing this knowledge beyond the thesis text would be its dissemination in a variety of contexts beyond academic journals (i.e. online or guerilla publishing). Pursuing this practice-led artistic research project within the structure of this academic program is tied ultimately to my curiosity and the opportunity to formally explore the practice of practice-led artistic research as it arose as a means of expanding mine.

Literature Review

The following section offers a general picture of existing knowledge on the topic of this research project, situating this inquiry within a selection of relevant literature to provide context for it and its contribution to new knowledge in the visual arts, specifically the

field of painting. Initial searches[4] for painting, playing, persona, change, and painting

practice disclosed minimal pertinent results and were followed by additional searches,

expanding the keywords to include visual artists, alternative artists, alternative

identities, and authenticity. Both searches revealed a lack of an existing study on the use

of alternative identities (personas) to initiate change through methods of play in painting

practices. Visual artists employing alternative identities in their practices were shown by

these searches to commonly use photography-based media, not painting.

Further, search results show that visual artists regularly use alternative identities to

address identity issues relating to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and political/social

identity, often tied to the artist's identity, which is not the topic of this inquiry (see

opening section of this Introduction). For example, UK-based French artist Shäny Vilo

in his project AFRO + PUNK, explores the identity of members of the Black

Alternative community to which he belongs and the issues they face as they are caught

in the middle of two opposing identities (Gueye, 2020). Moreover, the earliest result in

the full context of this search which included the keyword 'painting' (Barrett, 1982) is a

commentary on the Abstract Expressionists (see Chapter Two). After identity issues, the

second most common result type was for performance-based or performance or

performer-related artworks and practices, particularly concerning many famous

musicians and cultural icons.

More germane to this research is *Death of the Artist: Art World Dissidents and Their*

Alternative Identities (McCartney, 2018). Through case studies, the author addresses the

use of pseudonyms, anonymity, collective identities and a variety of other forms of

alternative identities by visual artists, primarily since (and including) Duchamp. While

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[4] Primary academic databases searched were through the University of Plymouth Library's Primo search engine and the catalogue of the Rhode Island School of Design Library.

touching on authenticity, the crux of this study reveals how hiding identity through the use of anonymity, collectivity, or other alternative identities is problematic in the visual arts because it complicates and questions the meaning of authorship. As it relates to authorship, authenticity is problematic in the visual arts today because of the dominance of the commercial art world and its emphasis on the value of the artwork in direct relationship to the artist's identity. McCartney clarifies that this link between the artist's identity and the artwork's value is related to a fandom culture (i.e. 'art stardom'), intellectual property, and monetary value. Regarding alternative identities, the author states, 'This facet of artistic practice is not well documented because the artists in question problematise the economy that would otherwise benefit from writing their 'biography' (McCartney, 2018: 1).'

Another related topic to using alternative identities in visual arts practices is identity construction. It follows that employing an alternative identity requires the identity first to be constructed. Creating alternative identities necessitates confronting questions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and political/social identity, and a reason they are frequently used as vehicles to explore related issues. In a master's thesis on arts-based research, Susan J. Dowling (2011) examined how the process of constructing identity could be analysed and reflected on through a sculpture-making practice. Dowling defines constructing identity as 'involving life experiences, relationships and connections, a solid mental or emotional stamp on a human' (2011: 1).

Moreover, the author states that the need to explore identity's construction through the visual arts is related directly to generating a greater understanding of the aforementioned identity issues (2011: 2). Dowling's description is similar to how and why artists have employed self-portraiture in their practices (see opening section this

Introduction). The research is guided by constructing the author's identity in the artwork, and it questions how to develop that identity more deeply through the act of construction. It assesses the insight the act and artwork provided to the author and their impact on relationships with others (i.e. family, friends, students, colleagues) (2011: 39). The author stated that the most impactful finding was how metaphor, used when constructing identity, enabled access to what was otherwise complex or inexpressible in words (Dowling, 2011: 40). Finally, the study concluded that the benefit of constructing identity in a visual arts practice via object-making is the increased self-awareness it brings to the maker (Dowling, 2011: 43).

The exhibition 'Role Play' [19 February - 27 June 2022, Fondazione Prada, Observatorio, Milan/Italy] features artworks from image-based artists using film, video and performance to construct alternative identities. Its premise, according to curator Melissa Harris:

> From its inception, photography has examined the notion of self, of being, of "other"—whether through portraiture, self-portraiture, reportage, narrative, or a more conceptual approach. Since the early 20th century, projects engaging role play have further contemplated identity, liberating artists to gender-bend and time-travel and envision their selves in myriad ways, in turn reflecting on their very is-ness—even when that is in flux. An alter ego, persona, or avatar may be aspirational; it may relate to one's personal and cultural history and sense of otherness; it may be a form of activism, or a means of maneuvering through entrenched, even polarised positions, toward empathy: putting oneself in another's shoes. That remaking of the self is a theme that continues to beckon, and the medium has evolved in a way commensurate with this fascination, embracing video, online gaming, social media platforms such as Instagram, and other innovative contexts for role play, all reinforcing our selves-obsession. (2022)

It is clear from this statement how and why visual artists using film and performance-based media have and continue to use alternative identities in their practices. However, it only relates partially to how the personas are conceived to function in this painting-based project. Nonetheless, in the exhibition's prospectus are questions that need to be asked to understand and form an identity, alternative or

otherwise, and that were also asked when developing the personas. Moreover, these

questions include the question of authenticity:

> *Who am I? Who would I like to be? How do people see me? Whose life would I like to inhabit, understand more deeply, if only for a moment? Am I being authentic to my true self?* (Harris, 2022)

Furthermore, this exhibition raises an exciting proposition that alternative identities can

be applied to non-human subjects, like a gallery space or an art exhibition.[5]

> Content. Context. Authenticity. You will find yourself suffused in blue—a light installation conceived by Random Studio to subdue the visual "white noise" of architectural influences and intensify the viewer's connection to each project. This creates an alter ego for the Osservatorio that is inescapably present yet entirely about absence, in its obscuring of the particulars intrinsic to the space—its identity. (Harris, 2022)

The idea that non-living things can possess, acquire, or create alternative identities is

also expressed in the Master of Philosophy thesis of Frances Elizabeth Urquhart (2011).

The author proposes that the intention of the artistic movement Dada was to create a

new and alternative identity for art and culture based on 'the Dada gesture as

representative of artistic suicide or alternative identity (Urquhart, 2011: 5)'. Creating an

alternative identity out of the (self-inflicted) death of the artist ties back to the first

source in this review. In that book, referencing 'death of the artist' is drawn from ideas

of authorship and authenticity promulgated under the guise of 'death of the author' by

Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980) and Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984) (McCartney, 2018: 3),

essential issues Dada also addressed in playful ways. Moreover, Urquhart's theory of

Dadaism as an alternative identity connects this source to the final sources of the review

on Marcel Duchamp, a Dada aligned artist. Duchamp's application of alternative

identities to everyday objects, transforming them into art objects 'Readymades',

questioned authorship and authenticity (see Chapter Two). His playful exploration of

identity via alternative identities is the subject of the next four sources presented in this

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[5] This exhibition has an 'alter ego' exhibition at Prada Aoyama Tokyo including works from some of the same and different artists 11 March - 20 June 2022.

literature review; they have served as critical provocations of this research project since its inception.

The first book, *Marcel Duchamp at the Age of 85*, addresses the likewise titled 1945 photograph Duchamp made (at age 58). The photo was published like a passport photo alongside a photographic portrait of the artist at age 35 by Alfred Stieglitz at the very end of the "Marcel Duchamp Number" of the magazine *View* [March 1945], which featured a dozen articles on his work (Molderings, 2013: 10). In a critical reflection of the work, the author describes it as a conceptual self-portrait of the artist imagining himself twenty-seven years into the future but questions its meaning in the magazine and Duchamp's practice (Molderings, 2013: 11 - 12). Lacking attributes typically associated with objects defined 'as art', Molderings queries if it is a work of art. According to the author, no evidence documenting it 'as art' by the artist, the photographer, or another person exists, it was published without attributing authorship to the photographer or a copyright claim, and it remained questionable for many years if it was a self-portrait or a portrait by a photographer (Molderings, 2013: 13). The photograph was not included in any writings, monographs, or exhibitions of Duchamp until 1991 (Molderings, 2013: 16). It has puzzled Duchamp scholars, and, Molderings states, the questions were only non-speculatively answered after a draft article written by Duchamp's friend and, perhaps, collaborator, Frederick Kiesler, who was present at the photo session, was discovered and published in this book (Molderings, 2013: 17 - 18). For the author, Kiesler's description of that day in the photography studio clarifies the photograph's identity:

> "Marcel Duchamp at the Age of 85" is a staged, fictional photograph. My use of the term "fiction" places this kind of photographic image very close to the genres of literature and poetry. Unlike the everyday and scientific use of language, the fictional use of language in a literary work does not presuppose the actual existence of the subject matter. (Molderings, 2013: 67).

Despite viewers (and the readers of *View* when it was published) knowing the photograph is staged, according to Molderings, it still has a confusing effect due to the 'fiction' residing in the photographic process as much as in Duchamp's staging (2013: 68). Moreover, the question of fact or fiction, truth or untruth, cannot be answered by the photograph but 'verified or clarified only by non-photographic means' (Molderings, 2013: 69) —Kiesler's words. Molderings states that Duchamp plays a deliberate visual and textual game of confusion with this photograph, opening the medium of photography 'to the world of fantasy and ambiguity' —here, the ambiguity of age and in the self-portraits (produced with Man Ray) of Rrose Sélavy (c. 1920 - 1921) gender ambiguity (2013: 69 - 70).

Duchamp's Last Day (Shambroom, 2018) is a fictive re-imagining of Duchamp's last hours and the portrait by Man Ray *Marcel Duchamp on His Deathbed* (1968). It is based on factual recollections of others woven together with the researched musings of artist Donald Shambroom. In contrast to Moldering's more traditional, critical inquiry, Shambroom's book is a creative, critical (re)construction via storytelling (see Chapter Four) that also inquires into the identity of a Duchamp photograph. One part of this story, based on Robert Lebel's account of the evening, is Duchamp's amusing over a word invented by Alphonse Allais, 'anthumous', the opposite of 'posthumous':

> "These are only the anthumous works," Duchamp said, "the posthumous works will follow, *but who will publish the others?*" [...] The "*others*" were works published neither before nor after, but at the moment of death itself. (Shambroom, 2018: 20)

That space between anthumous and posthumous is, in Duchampian terms, the 'infra-mince', the space of 'others' which Duchamp explored with his work.

Although Man Ray's account of Duchamp's death was published the following year, similar to Kiesler's article and the photo in Moldering's book, the photograph was not

publicised until, in this book, fifty years later (Shambroom, 2018: 24). From the picture and Ray's words, Shambroom questions if Duchamp's death (and its documentation) was itself a 'Readymade', a rendezvous or final collaborative performance between Duchamp and Ray akin to the photographs they made of Rrose Sélavy (c. 1920 -1921); an instance of publishing the 'others' (2018: 23 - 24). If this is the case, Shambroom suggests a different title for the photograph: 'Besides, it is always the others who die (2018: 25).'[6] Furthermore, the author suggests, 'Look at Man Ray's photograph of Duchamp on his deathbed and try to slip this thought into the mind of the deceased: "It is always the others who die." It can't be done. (Shambroom, 2018: 25).'

Shambroom's book is about identity, collaboration and storytelling and what transpires as 'real' and imagined for these and the 'others' occupying the 'infra-mince'. Moreover, like Moldering, Shambroom asks (as Duchamp always asked) and, citing the artist's theory that 'anything can be art that is seen and treated as art', after fifty years tucked in an archive *unseen*, is the final photograph art (2018: 26)? Moreover, if this photograph of Duchamp's death were a collaborative artwork, he would have relinquished control at death to Ray, the 'other', who, as the artist, has the 'right to banish one of his works from the realm of art' (2018: 39). 'If an object remains in darkness, removed by its maker, absent from the world and the "art world," it is not art (Shambroom, 2018: 39)'.

The final two books on Duchamp are collections of essays about identity and his practice, both co-edited by Anne Collins Goodyear and James W. McManus. The first, *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture* (2009), is the catalogue accompanying the likewise titled exhibition [27 March - 2 August 2009, National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C./USA]; the second, *aka Marcel Duchamp: Meditations on the Identities of an Artist* (2014) and is the follow-up publication to the

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[6] The epitaph on Duchamp's gravestone (Shambroom, 2018: 25).

symposium and conversation panel held in conjunction with the 2009 exhibition's opening. Both volumes contain significant amounts of insight related to this research project on incorporating personas with methods of play to provoke change, too much to cover here. Instead, a brief look at an essay in each.

The focus of the essay '#4 not seen and/or less seen: Hiding in Front of the Camera' (McManus, 2009: 58 - 79), in *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture* (Collins Goodyear and McManus, 2009). The author addresses Duchamp's use of language, deemed an oppressive force, and play within a bricolage methodology to invent (construct) identity and undermine stability through ambiguity; the interplay of word and image with his alternative identity, Rrose Sélavy, and artworks, namely, the 'Tonsure' photographs of Duchamp, 'the célibat' (bachelor), and in notes and correspondences, the idea of the 'infra-mince' (McManus, 2009: 58 - 79). Further, in the essay Duchamp's inventing, recasting, and shuffling of identities (his included) with words, images and objects to draw us into confrontations with our notions of meaning and identity and constructs a sense of mystery to keep us off track and off-balance is conveyed (McManus, 2009: 60). Moreover, this destabilising is also a means of distancing and indifference, essential to the creative operations of 'an-artist' (a word-play on 'anarchist' Duchamp used to describe himself) and undertaken with a 'deliberately destabilised self' (McManus, 2009: 60 - 62). Additional recasting of identity noted by the author essential to understanding the Readymades is the change in the function they underwent between their inception in 1913 and the first public display in 1916; initially, they were intended as a private exercise (McManus, 2009: 66).The Readymades shifted from being an ordinary object to art *and* they shifted from being 'unseen' to 'seen', similar to the photographs in the previous two books.

The second essay, 'Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Identities in the Career of Marcel

Duchamp, Anti-Bergonist "Algebraicist of Ideas"' (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 76 -

94) in *aka Marcel Duchamp: Meditations on the Identities of an Artist* (Collins

Goodyear and McManus, 2014) addresses Duchamp's shifting of identities in the

context of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century changes to scientific knowledge

and philosophies surrounding space-time of the (then) unseen "fourth dimension";

precisely, Duchamp's exploration of these in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors,*

Even [*The Large Glass*] (1915 -1923) (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 76 - 94). Pertinent

to this research project is the author's recount of the scientific and philosophical

concepts which precipitated Duchamp's shift from painting with brush and paints to

alternative modes of making that were more 'depersonalised' (Dalrymple Henderson,

2014: 78). Moreover of interest is the discussion around Duchamp's description of the

idea of *The Large Glass* and its notes as being his attempt at a "Playful Physics"

through language and non-painterly but highly imaginative ways to address these ideas

in the *Green Box* (1934) (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 79). 'As a result, *The Large*

Glass is a remarkable compendium of early twentieth-century thought —from the

spatial fourth dimension to the popular science and technology in which Duchamp was

more thoroughly grounded than any other modern artist (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014:

83).' Duchamp held back some of these notes until the 1960s. He kept them 'unseen'

until renewed interest in the spatial and temporal indicated it was time to offer: 'a new

identity that could be projected in the *White Box* [*A l'infinitif*] (1966) as another verbal

self-portrait (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 84).'

Furthermore, Dalrymple Henderson notes Duchamp's other shifts. These shifts include

abruptly ending *The Large Glass* and taking up chess, Rrose Sélavy, the expansion of

space demonstrated by the *Rotoreliefs* (1935), and the infra-mince, and with them,

Duchamp never left the ideas of the fourth dimension behind; they were a means of its progression (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 85 - 90). Finally, this essay ends with a brief look at two artists Dalrymple Henderson describes as Duchamp's "spectators", Robert Smithson and Hollis Frampton and how they carried forward the ideas they observed Duchamp dealing with in his practice in the first half of the century into the concerns of their practices in the second (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014: 90 - 93).

Unlike the previous sources, the final source mentioned in this literature review does not relate directly to alternative identities, play, or the visual arts. It is related to developing skills to address future needs, making it germane to the topic of change. *Imaginable: How To See The Future Coming And Feel Ready For Anything* (2022) by game designer and Future Forecaster Jane McGonigal follows up on a study she led titled 'Superstruct' (2008 - 2010). The premise of that six-week future forecasting stimulation was to map out the full range of economic, political, social, and emotional effects of global effects, like pandemics. Specifically, she designed a game set eleven years in the future —2019— in which ten thousand global participants simulated living through five different threats, including a fictional respiratory virus (McGonigal, 2022: 10). Game players were asked to imagine a situation and then tell their stories about it using the framework the designers provided. The author states, 'Our simulation was low on algorithms but high on social and emotional intelligence (McGonigal, 2022: 12).' Through playing, participants predicted their feelings and actions, the changes they would make in their daily lives and social interactions (i.e. what they might avoid, working from home, quarantine/self-quarantine), and their reasons and duration for doing them (McGonigal, 2022: 11). They were asked how they would respond to mandatory government quarantines, what problems might arise, the types of support required, and how they might support others (McGonigal, 2022: 11 -12). Jump ahead

ten years to February 2020 and indications that the game was becoming real. McGonigal and colleague Vanessa Mason at the Institute for the Future held a webinar offering recommendations on preparing for what appeared inevitable based on the study's findings: including cancelling large gatherings and events the simulation had indicated would become 'superspreader' situations, which proved to be accurate and masking, which the simulation indicated people would be uncomfortable doing and find difficult to adapt to, also true; moreover, they discussed the impact on working moms, schools, and childcare, and how difficult it would be to get people to follow public health guidelines but that they were more likely to cooperate when offered cash incentives or significant economic support, which also proved to be true (McGonigal, 2022: 12 - 14). While the author states that she is proud the games' predictions proved to be considerably accurate, she also is concerned by the slow pace by which people and governments responded and no longer believes that accurate predictions are the work of large scale simulations (McGonigal, 2022: 14). 'Instead, the most important work of a future simulation is to prepare our minds and stretch our collective imagination, so we are flexible, adaptable, agile, and resilient when the "unthinkable" happens (McGonigal, 2022: 14).' As economist Charles Wheelan states (see opening section of this Introduction), progression depends on what we do with change when confronted with it (2012: 111).

Further, McGonigal reports the positive effects of participating for the games' players when confronted with the simulated in the real world. As early as January 2020, former players began contacting the author: 'Simulation participants kept telling me, in their own way, that pre-feeling the future helped them pre-process the anxiety, the overwhelming uncertainty, and the sense of helplessness, so they could move more rapidly to adapt and act resiliently when the future actually arrived (McGonigal, 2022:

14).' The book's most remarkable insight offered to this research project is that 'A deep immersion into a possible future creates lasting mental habits, especially when it comes to watching the real world for evidence that the simulated possibility is becoming more likely (McGonigal, 2022: 15).'

Research Methodology

This project ensued in three stages and following three simple rules (addressed further in Chapter Five). The rules were to be open, follow the personas where they lead, and document as much as possible. Stage 1 consisted of developing personas as tools, learning how they functioned and what they could bring to my practice by working with them individually. At the same time, I continued to research play and alternative identities. Stage 2 focused on creating new work with the personas. Lastly, in Stage 3, I returned to creating without the personas while assessing the impact their presence had on my paintings and practice post-personas.

The core of this artistic research project is the action and discipline of painting. It employs qualitative practice-led research methods focused primarily on how my painting practice is augmented by the inclusion and use of personas. Additionally, qualitative research methods are employed to examine the work of other artists and their practices (discussed in Chapters One and Four). The first chapter selects four visual artists who do not work with alternative identities. Nevertheless, these artists and their exhibitions provide a starting point for this research project by necessitating observation and reflection, methods critical in my research methodology to assess the impact of the personas on my practice. Revisiting my observations and reflecting on these exhibitions

provided training in the skills called upon in this project. For instance, in Chapter Five these observation and reflection methods include direct comparison of my painting with and without personas, before and after they were introduced, to qualitatively reflect on the nature and extent of change to my practice. As a spectator of other artists' work, these methods increased my understanding of their questions about painting via objects and presentation and sparked applying the same methods to my work. The purpose of applying these methods to others was to become more aware of the questions of painting I address in my practice and myself as both an artist and a spectator of it. Together, these methods lead to my consideration of the relationship between authenticity and the use of alternative identities in painting practices which forms the theoretical framework of this project (discussed in Chapter Two).

The fourth chapter examines the image-making practices of three artists —Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent— working with alternative identities using a method of conversation (Richardsdóttir and Bang Henningsen, 2017).[7] Although each artist has extensive exhibition histories and professional recognition through grants, awards, fellowships, and pedagogical practices,[8] due to a lack of academic publications on them and their work to date, the basis of conversations between myself and the artists in January 2022 is culled from information on the artists' and gallery websites, exhibition reviews, catalogues, and talks given by each. Moreover, in our conversation and these other sources, each described their practice incorporating alternative identities in terms equivalent to those given in this Introduction for practice-led artistic research and included the use of 'tools' and 'play' as part of the vocabulary of their practices. These three artists were chosen as examples because they have visual arts practices

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[7] For more information on this method see research website posting in APPENDIX A: Ása Richardsdóttir and Lene Bang Henningsen, 'It starts with a conversation. Question your knowledge by sharing. 2017. 03 JUL 2017'.
[8] Rubens Ghenov is Assistant Professor in the School of Art at the University of Tennessee Knoxville/USA; Caroline Kent is Assistant Professor in the School of Art, Theory, Practice at Northwestern University Chicago/USA; Plinio Avila has taught in various programs in Mexico and internationally.

similar to mine; their practices are founded on two-dimensional image-making, and incorporate alternative identities in ways that are not performance-based. Finally, and crucially, I have had the opportunity to view their work or hear them speak about it in person prior to our conversations.

Furthermore, as discussed previously, theories and understandings of the concept and practice of 'play' emanating from developmental psychology and pedagogic research contribute to this project. Pertinent to understanding 'play' in this project's methodology is its function as the leading source of development in pre-school children (Vygotsky, [1933] 1967: 1), its value as one source of pleasure that is not only pleasurable, making it necessary to motivate the child via needs and incentives to develop to the next stage of development (Vygotsky, [1933] 1967: 2-3). In children, 'play is invented at the point when unrealisable tendencies appear in development' and 'it must always be that it is the imaginary, illusory realisation of unrealisable desires' (Vygotsky, [1933] 1967: 110). Nevertheless, in adults, unlike children, imagination is tied to conscious activity —in children, play is imagination in action; in adults, imagination is play without action (Vygotsky, [1933] 1967: 4-5). My awareness of my motives for playing and how I approach it with action in this doctoral research project differentiates my pretend play version from children and adults.

In particular, the role of 'play' in forming identities is analysed as the basis for forming alternative identities in a visual arts practices. Further considered is their application in other non-imaging-making and non-visual creative practices, i.e. theatre, performance art, and writing. An existing part of my painting methodology are methods of observation and reflection, incorporated in this research project's methodology directed towards other artists' work and artistic movements, and includes how they incorporate

play and alternative identities into their practices (see Chapter Four). Neither last nor

least, the philosophical discourses surrounding these three themes are reviewed *in situ*

to painting, personas, and playing as they shape the context of this research project.

The key practical method of image-making used in this research project is 'reiteration'.

The artworks in this project are made in series, each derived from previous stages or

works and infinitely expandable (Coplans, 1996: 77). Whether as myself or with the

personas, each painting originates by taking bits and pieces of existing artworks,

quoting shapes found in prior paintings, or using copying methods to paraphrase the

original and launch subsequent iterations. This process includes:

- scanning and printing with an inkjet printer
- cutting apart and re-configuring to create a sketchbook lexicon of new shapes or collages on which new paintings are built
- graphite stick frottage-rubbings re-worked with pencil and erasers
- gridded, scaled-up projections of photographed paintings traced or drawn free-hand for subsequently larger paintings on paper
- free-hand and mechanically assisted scaling down shapes for smaller paintings

This method creates a vocabulary of shapes, images, textures, colours, and ways of

drawing and applying paint with its various reproduction techniques. When applied

together with the personas, they are essential to making the paintings at the centre of

this project's methodology. As a method utilised with the personas, I also observe and

reflect on them and the resulting artworks, which is critical to answering the research

questions (see Chapter Three and Chapter Five).

Adopting and adapting from other fields as a method for research is a method of

reiteration. For instance, American composer and visual artist John Cage (1912 - 1992)

appropriated a process of divination originating in the oldest of classic Chinese texts,

the *I Ching* (*The Book of Changes*); taking the ideas and modifying the process by

which it was traditionally applied to provide a means to compose based purely on

chance but controlled by an underlying system (Tomkins, 1968: 108-112). With this re-purposed approach, Cage changed how he composed and altered existing avant-garde composition processes, how musicians performed, and, finally, further transformed how we hear new music (Tomkins, 1968:70). Embracing atypical methods to initiate change in one's creative practise instead of maintaining or re-establishing the status quo is analogous to a rock dropped in a still pool; ripples ring out. A method's potential to be employed in unintended ways brings change to it and the work in which it is implemented. A method's potential to be employed in unintended ways brings change to it and the work in which it is implemented. Adopting methods and concepts from other fields and re-shaping them to suit the aims of this research project and form a methodology conducive to answering the questions posed, is a defining element of practice-led artistic research (Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research, 2020). Artists alter and re-shape objects, methods, and ideas to suit their purposes, and doing so generates new objects, methods, and ideas, but also new knowledge of the potential contained in the source to which others led back may begin the process again.

Unlike a paintbrush which can be seen with the eyes and held in hand, the personas are intangible objects. Nevertheless, either intentionally or accidentally, both contain the potential to provoke change in the artworks created with them. To create physical objects —paintings— and for change to occur through working with the personas necessitates methods for making them tangible. Answering this doctoral project's research questions requires methods to envision the personas as I work with them, making them 'real' for me. It also requires observing how they and I are working by seeing them at work through the documentation. If seeing and observing are synonymous, I would like to differentiate between the two words by defining 'seeing'

—looking with the eyes— as a method that, when intentionally applied, enables various other methods of observation (Smit and Onwuegbuzie, 2018).

Observation is a phenomenological method involving a combination of senses to perceive the materials and methods of creating, including reiteration (Coplans, 1996: 77) and reflection (Schön, 1983). The phenomenological leads to imparting critical significance to what I discern as evolving through their interaction. Coupled with actions —painting, reading, viewing, writing, and conversing— observation, reiteration, and reflection on these at the moment and delayed via documentation processes are intertwined methods shaping my practice-led artistic research methodology. While painting, my thoughts generated by observation and reiteration are pursued later through reflection after stepping away from the artwork, mixing the knowledge collected back into the materials as I return to the painting or begin the next. This action-heavy way of gathering and processing knowledge through methods of observation, reiteration, and reflection sounds tangled and messy; however, this methodology enables me to grasp my research and answer the questions it poses.

Additionally, these methods are a crucial component of my painting practice and the artistic research it leads by activating conceptual mechanisms such as memory and the analysis and synthesis of knowledge derived from my thesis. Sometimes, the results of these methods are analysed and applied immediately; other times, they are stored away in my imagination for future use. As Michel Foucault pointed out, 'without imagination, there would be no resemblance between things' (1970: 69). In this practice-led artistic research project and its methodology, the resemblance between these 'things' promulgate what I do —paint— and what I want to do —bring change into my painting via the personas— and both are connected via imagining play.

The knowledge generated by the methods and outcomes of their application throughout this project is documented and digitally archived on my research website [see APPENDIX A for full list of postings]. Writing reflectively about my research for website postings is a means to put my thoughts and actions into a form other than painting. Rather than only writing to fulfil a need by tacking it on as the thesis text at the end of this project, writing is a method I engage in throughout as part of its methodology. Subsequently, the words and the images located on my research website provide material to reflect on as I move forward, becoming source material and binding the two methods, reiteration and reflection, together. Reflection, not only applied towards the work of other artists but towards my practice and this research project via the images and videos of the paintings as they were being made and again while reviewing and selecting which to post and write about, is an essential method in this doctoral project's research methodology.

Thesis Structure

This thesis text consists of five chapters organised around the theoretical, the practical, and the analytical aspects of this practice-led artistic research project. A chronological introduction to each chapter follows.

Chapter One

Seeing Painting/Seeing the Artist presents the methods of observation and reflection applied in this project and leading to this doctoral research project developed from ideas encountered by looking at other painters' practices relative to mine. The arising concepts and ideas go on to inform the structure and execution of this project and form

the philosophical fundament on which my painting practice is built (i.e. my relationship to painting, the practices of other artists, and the issues of painting arising through my practice and this research project). This chapters' examples of my experience viewing exhibitions of four artists: Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson, considering how paintings as objects are seen and what in their fabrication and presentation is visible and driven by my research questions, leads to reconsidering authenticity in Chapter Two, Subsequently, those same considerations are applied to examples of my painting before this research project began compared with one painting which was completed with personas, in order to denote how my relationship to those considerations has changed.

Chapter Two

Building upon the experiences of viewing relayed in Chapter One, this chapter addresses authenticity as it is imparted phenomenologically and as an artistic value which makes an object 'art' by qualities that exemplify what makes an artwork 'real' and how spectators experience this realness through the artwork.

Chapter Three

Personas, presents the practical research of this doctoral project incorporating alternative identities termed 'personas' into my painting practice. Developing personas first required naming them, and the significance of names opens this chapter. The arrival of the first persona triggered the development of this research project, which is the focus of the second section. Each persona possessed a personal narrative, the background story of their identity, which continued to develop while working with them. The third section presents the personas and their stories individually, disclosing how they function in my painting practice practically by providing examples of work

done with each, describing the space they occupy in it conceptually, and where this leads in this research project as a means of invoking change which is the focal point of Chapter Five.

Notable to this chapter is my experience presenting the early stages of my research when listeners expressed curiosity in each persona's story —wanting to know more about them and not their function in this research project. However, as exciting or entertaining as their stories might be, their stories are not the project's subject. It has never been my intention to perform the personas for others publicly. Instead, my embodiment of the personas is utterly internal to my practice and located physically in my studio and conceptually in my practice. The personas are an intimate performance with myself that results in artworks of which they are not the subject, which makes them (for instance) unlike Lynn Hershman Leeson's fictional character 'Roberta Breitmore' (1973 - 1979), an intimate performance leading to a body of work centred on the character and her creative interactions with the public (2016). My work with a third persona, not a painter and most appealing to others, primarily took the form of an internal conversation (see APPENDIX E), a form of 'self-talk' examined in this chapter's closing section.

Chapter Four

Alternative Identities in Contemporary Visual Arts Practices presents the work of Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent who each employ alternative identities in their practices. This chapter compares and contrasts their usage to contextualise my incorporation of the personas into my painting practice for this research project.

Chapter Five

The purpose of this chapter, *Playing*, is to synthesise the information in the previous chapters and analyse the artwork produced and the impact of the personas on my painting practice in the three stages of this PhD project relative to a method defined in the chapter as 'infinite play'. It begins by presenting 'play' and the different ways it has been defined to reveal how 'infinite play' served as a method for developing and applying personas. The second section analyses the impact on my painting before and after, contextualised by paintings from Petra and Franz. Finally, this chapter concludes by examining the overall impact of this research consisting of play and personas on my artistic practice as set forth by this project's aims and questions.

CHAPTER ONE: Seeing Painting/Seeing the Artist

This chapter introduces my painting practice as a material practice from which my artistic research practice and the methods I apply in it are led. Developing the skills for the qualitative research methods required to address my first two research questions steered me to begin this thesis by employing methods of observation and reflection on the paintings of other artists and their practices (see Introduction opening and 'Research Methodology'). These methods help me determine the personas' impact on my painting practice and how 'play' is employed relative to the artist, object, and spectator (discussed in Chapter Two). Moreover, they provide a means to reconsider how paintings as objects are seen and what in their making and presentation by artists is visible. Seeing —involuntary— and looking —with intent— are critical components of observation forming the methodology of my practice and this doctoral research project. Seeing what appears before my eyes and looking at it is the space where my research begins. In the first section of this chapter, I offer my experience viewing retrospective exhibitions of Frank Stella (b. 1936), Carolee Schneemann (1939 - 2019), Laura Owens (b. 1970), and Dona Nelson (b. 1947). In contrast, as a comparison in the second section, I employ these same methods to look at two of my paintings, the first from an exhibition pre-dating this research and the second created with personas in Stage 2 (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology'). My findings from my looking at painting presented in both sections led to my consideration of the relationship between authenticity and the use of alternative identities in painting practices which forms the theoretical framework of this project discussed in Chapter Two.

Seeing Painting Through Other Artists

Frank Stella

The painter Barnett Newman (1905 - 1970) identified the experience of looking at abstract painting as one able to provoke a sublime 'terror of the unknowable' and required a new way of seeing (Joselit, 2003: 27). This new way of seeing required a new way of talking and writing about abstract painting to ease that terror, which Frank Stella did, declaiming that paintings are objects with his statement that 'what you see is what you see' (1966). Looking at a painting in an exhibition, I see an object that is a painting; looking at a reproduction of a painting —in a book, magazine, or online—I see a copy. A copy is an object too, but not the same object as the painting. Each has its own story and requires a unique set of words to describe it.

Viewing *Frank Stella: A Retrospective* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (30 October 2015 - 7 February 2016), the artist's renowned remark 'what you see is what you see' seeded my thoughts as they coalesced to form this doctoral research project; what is visible in paintings, I asked myself. Specifically, looking at so many of Stella's paintings made over fifty years together in one space led me to consider how much remains unseeable when looking at paintings in general. Acknowledging that paintings are objects like the walls they hang on enabled Stella to reconsider the materials that 'make' the object more freely and allow the material qualities that are the object to become the subject rather than ideas or motifs separate from it. This way of seeing painting as an object is not too far removed from how Porbus and Poussin saw Frenhofer's painting in *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1832) as not art but a failure (see Chapter Two). Nonetheless, for Stella, through materials, the illusionary space of

pictures possesses a reality that guides us to see paintings as concrete objects and illusions.

Not unique in reaching outside the realm of traditional 'fine art' materials by choosing house painters' brushes and paints in his early paintings, Stella is discussed here in the context of this research project because, by doing so, he married the practical and theoretical sides of his practice, supporting his statement on the objecthood of painting and challenging the viewers' established ways of seeing, much like Duchamp. Contrastingly, Stella maintained the object's integrity of being made by the artist's hand even as he eventually moved away from rectangular pictures hung on the wall. In his essay 'Art and Objecthood' (1967), Michael Fried deemed the practitioners of Minimalism 'literalists' —including Stella in this group— because these artists did not hold their experimental approach to the materials and pushed boundaries by challenging the conventional format and shape as a medium in painting; I would add, as Duchamp had done with all the work he made after 1913. Further, Fried wrote that:

> What is at stake in this conflict is whether the paintings or objects in question are experienced as paintings or as objects: and what decides their identity as painting is their confronting of the demand that they hold as shape. Otherwise, they are experienced as nothing more than objects. ([1967] 1993: 824)

Fried describes the opposite of Duchamp taking an object and calling it art. Based on his later work, I believe this was not Stella's intention with his words or early painting. However, on the heels of the first generation New York School painters and their spokespeople, Stella's paintings (and words) were challenging. Fried goes on:

> This can be summed up by saying that modernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood, and that the crucial factor in this making is 'shape,' but 'shape' that must belong to painting – it must be pictorial, not, or not merely, literal. ([1967] 1993: 824)

For Stella, the solution appears to be to fill the chasm he had opened between the pictorial and the literal with loosely, colourful, and variously painted shapes on shapes

constructed of numerous aluminum parts and exploding off the wall. Shape is as meaningful as the material making it to Stella and to the paintings produced in this project, which I write more about in Chapter Five. This infill of shape I see standing before Stella's paintings reminds me of Gerhard Richter's statement (see opening section of Introduction) that there is much about 'painting' that remains 'unsayable' (2011). Similarly, much remains unseeable.

Carolee Schneemann

Seeing *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting* (22 October 2017 - 11 March 2018, MoMA/P.S. 1 New York City/USA), I noticed how by incorporating herself as material physically into her painting practice, Schneemann, like Stella, merged her process's practical and theoretical components to address, in general, how we see paintings, and in them, our mutual presence in the space depicted and occupied. Further, Kristine Stiles wrote:

> During the very same period of time that Schneemann fractured painted surfaces and placed her actual body into the pictorial frame, forever confusing the problem of similitude, Stella struggled with 'relational painting'. As he attempted to abandon figure-ground relationships from the late 1950s through the 1960s —all the while producing titles for these works that insisted on relational associations— his work progressively became more sculptural in the 1970s. Eventually, it encroached into the very same space of the spectator that Schneemann had been 'working' since the 1950s and fully inhabited by the early 1960s. (2003: 8)

The pictorial shape, described by Fried ([1967] 1993: 824), belonging to the painting moved further off the wall in Carolee Schneemann's artworks before Stella's. Stella questions what we see, while Schneemann addresses how we see it: the viewers' process. Relative to the artist-object-spectator relationship discussed in the previous section, Stella's paintings' authenticity is found in what they are. Contrastingly, the authenticity of Schneemann's paintings resides in how they are perceived. This difference derived from Schneemann's realisation that as a female abstract-figurative painter, she was simultaneously the shaper and the shape and thus part of this 'how'

paintings are seen, and led her to a desire '... to learn how to see' and to the question, 'Can I be both image and image-maker?' (Breitwieser, 2015: 7).

Stella eradicated the illusionary pictorial space with flat house paints and exposed the raw canvas. Schneemann slathered on thick layers of oil paint and then scraped and sliced through them to show viewers the layers beneath. It is the difference between showing that the space of paintings consists of so little and a lot, and both are correct. Schneemann, like Stella, was led by her questions and desire to know more about this space to methods and materials found outside the conventional realm of painting —film, photography, performance, and installation— to create shapes in the space painting occupies beyond the wall by unconventional means to confer her presence in the artwork.

These different ways of making paintings incorporate the painter 'performing' in the studio alone, accompanied by a documentary device, or before a live audience, which Schneemann termed 'kinetic theatre' and, eventually, the more encompassing term 'kinetic painting' (Stiles, 2003: 4). Even alone in the studio, Schneemann was always aware of the spectators' presence shaping the artwork. The circumstances in which Schneemann and spectators encounter her work are akin to what Fried described as the Minimalists' literal presentation of objects 'in a situation —one that, virtually by definition, included the beholder' ([1967] 1993: 825). However, Schneemann's objects were otherwise far removed from Minimalism; they possess a richness in materials that aligns with a maximalist aesthetic. Still, close inspection reveals not chaos or randomness but a carefully structured organisation in which the shape and the shapers merge, and the non-art becomes art.

Previously, the (female) artist's dual-presence was received as either impossible or inauthentic, a form of possession by 'a stray male principle'. Schneemann was, in this way, a challenge and a threat to the established understanding of authenticity; and she stated: 'in the early sixties, this notion was used to blot out, denigrate, deflect the coherence, necessity, and personal integrity of what I made and how I made it' (Schneemann, 2015: 116). Stepping out from behind the easel, Schneemann filled a protracted space and time with movement, capturing her dual presence within it as shape and shaper with a camera. Schneemann transformed notions of authenticity through her decision to include her own body in her paintings, establishing it 'as visual territory' and thus discovering her 'creative female will' (Schneemann, 2015: 116). The artist's explanation for using this terminology in response to others' reactions to her artwork conveys the painter's body and identity as a sphere alternative to the given within the artwork's space —pertinent to my research on alternative identities in painting.

Laura Owens

Like Stella and Schneemann, Laura Owens addresses how we see paintings and perceive physical and illusionary space by incorporating various materials, styles, and subject matter. However, unlike the other two artists, Owens has neither a 'signature style' (see Chapter Two) nor does she create work in classic series —it tends to be quirky but interrelated in a slightly unsuspecting way (Rothkopf, 2017: 8). At first glance, I often perceive her paintings as conventional, simplistic, and a bit dull but upon closer examination, they reveal a conceptual complexity and complicatedness that is more technical than painterly; but there is *something* about Owens's paintings that makes me look again.

Visiting the mid-career retrospective exhibition [*Laura Owens*, 10 November 2017 - 26 February 2018, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City/USA], taking in a more considerable amount of the artist's work, was intended to confirm what I had begun to suspect that the something drawing me to look again was her playfulness with painting ideas reflected in how they look.[9] She pulls me in by catching me off guard; somewhat amused, like getting the joke told by a precocious 10-year-old, it is still funny because it is fun. Owens bridges a gap using curiosity —hers and the viewer's— to bring a child-like play into her paintings. Through the personas addressed in Chapter Three, I attempted to bring a different and hopefully more playful approach for me to my painting practice with this PhD project. However, in contrast to Owens, I did not intend 'play' to impact the paintings by creating a whimsy appearance.

Owen's employment of play is seen in two interrelated paintings (ca. 1997), pictured here at the Whitney exhibition [Figure 1] and, from a slight distance, they are pretty innocuous. Almost the same size and proportion, the lighter picture could be a standard, hard-edge abstraction, while the darker would not be out of place in a graphic novel or animated film. Moving closer to the lighter painting reveals an almost square warm white field in the centre [Figure 2]. The right and left edges are divided lengthwise equally by two stripes of slightly different shades of white. The stripe nearest the white area on each side contains what, on even closer inspection, proves to be two smaller-scale paintings receding into space towards the blue-grey outer edge, revealing that it is not an abstract painting. Harking back to Stella, it is what it is; however, in this case, the subject is not the object itself but the paintings and how the viewer encounters them in the space in which they are (or might be) exhibited. This painting could be

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[9]Owens does not title her work, and much is created for a specific location, making the creation date and location crucial to identifying individual pieces. Context is lost when the work is moved elsewhere, and this is something to consider when looking at her work in various settings (Rothkopf, 2017: 8).

understood in the tradition of historical paintings depicting the 18th and 19th century

Paris Salon if it were not for the painting to its right.

Figure 1: 'Laura Owens',*Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

Figure 2: 'Laura Owens',*Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

A glance towards the large darker painting [Figure 3] discloses a familiar sight — it is the small dark painting depicted on the lighter painting's right side [Figure 4]. Owens has created an *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)[10] moment for viewers by throwing off their perception of size, scale, and space while divulging her trick and actual subject through the installation, showing what is seen and how it is seen. The initial insipid approach to the paintings Owens has taken catches viewers off guard, unaware of her game. Once discovered, it is up to viewers to decide whether or not to play along. Given the skilful and subtle way she has drawn me into it, it is hard to walk away; I am enticed to play along.

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[10] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll [pseudonym of Charles Dodgson], this book and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found* (1871) figured prominently in my earlier research on identity and self-portrayal.

Figure 3: 'Laura Owens', *Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

Figure 4: 'Laura Owens', *Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

To play along requires asking what move is next. If the darker painting is the same, then the small picture on the left side of the lighter painting [Figure 5] —an abstract-floral motif— must hang somewhere to the left of the lighter painting. Owens has structured this game as a mix of 'peek-a-boo' and a treasure hunt. After giving viewers a glimpse of one painting, she sends them off seeking the other. In this case, the game's prize is the ability to view the other painting in its entirety, just like the still life to the right.

Figure 5: 'Laura Owens',*Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

Logically, viewers look to the left, and of course, it is not there. Instead, hangs a seascape with a couple of birds casting shadows *on the sky* [Figure 6].

Figure 6: 'Laura Owens', *Whitney Museum of Art, 16 December 2017.*
Photo by the author.

In the end, the other painting was nowhere to be found. If it had been located, viewers

could look at it straight on like the still life on the right, and that would seem like a 'win'

for them because it is the standard way to look at paintings and conforms to rules they

know. However, that is not the point Owens appears to be making. There are no fixed

rules or winners and losers to this perception game. Instead, the artist invites viewers

just to play. Specifically, Owens invites viewers to play a non-ending game; the point of

the game is to continue playing (see Chapter Five). Further, I believe the point Owens

makes is that looking at art is an ongoing experience, and she provokes viewers to

change how they look and to continue looking continually. What is essential to this

painting and my experience seeing it was not that I found the other painting pictured on

the left but that I went looking for it —searching for a painting, as a painter, is an

infinite quest I understand exceedingly well— and discovered Owens' point.

Following the premise that the spectator completes the artwork (see Chapter Two), looking at a painting *is* making a painting. Like a painter searching to bring forth the painting with paint, the spectator hunts with eyes and mind to see what is not readily visible and complete it. The pursuit constructed by Owens feeds my curiosity and desire to play along and engage with the questions and themes this playing raises in my painting practice. Viewing Owens' artwork with the second question of this PhD project in mind (see Introduction, 'Research Questions'), I was struck by how she draws viewers into playing this game by revealing that this is what painting can do depending upon how you look at it —and that play is essential to this looking.

Another example of Owens' playing is *Untitled* (2015), created for an exhibition at Capitain Petzel Gallery[11] in Berlin, Germany (2015), where I first viewed it before seeing it again at the Whitney exhibition. Walking into the gallery space that first time I felt like standing on the sidelines of an unfamiliar game. The players were five large canvases —paintings or sculptures?— standing upright in the field's centre with a Pop Art-like whimsical motif of pages from a young child's school workbook covered in doodles (Owens, 2017: 574-575). Alone and uncertain how I was meant to approach the work, I stood awhile at each end, staring from fixed locations. I remember slowly circling the perimeter, which, when I saw the work again in New York City, I learned from the plan reproduced in the exhibition catalogue was marked 'buffer' (Owens, 2017: 575). I was unsure how close I could or wanted to go to the enormous paintings because they appeared ready to tumble like a row of dominos —although I knew they had to be secured. After moving around, I discovered the silkscreened text on the workbook side is meant to be read from a distance and by shifting position, moving closer and around up close, and incrementally the story's and the words' meanings change [Figure 7]. It is

[11]A space built in the early 1960s in the socialist-modernist style to display applied arts from the Eastern Bloc, the main gallery space is street level with a glass storefront with lots of natural light; quite the opposite of the enclosed eighth-floor space in which the piece was exhibited at the Whitney.

another game playing with perception. The other 'backside' of the canvases contains fewer words and more images (also taken from her son's drawings) scanned, refined, and pixelated in PhotoShop, then screened onto the linen and the aluminum bracing, and the game is less about how and more about what is seen [Figure 8].

At the Whitney on a Friday evening, the crowd of viewers were not hesitant to walk into the spaces between the canvases and closely study each [Figures 7 and 8], like one might study the brushstrokes in a traditional painting. A behaviour I found odd as there was nothing painterly to be revealed on close examination. Because the materiality of paint matters, most paintings cannot be experienced fully at too great a distance or in a photograph on a page or a screen. This artwork cannot be experienced fully in reproduction either but for a different reason. Viewers need to be present with these objects and experience them as such in order to recognise Owens's point about perceiving painting conceptually.

Even though the scale and physical process of making increased in magnitude between these two artworks, Owens' game had not changed since the mid-1990s. The earlier paintings hung on the wall, but the five panels are 'paintings' too, and they stand on their own, dammit, which is the defiant attitude I feel the artist is expressing via these objects with their child-like facade.

Aside from her whimsical ways, what strikes me as a critical difference between Owens, Stella, and Schneeman is the resolve with which she tackles the question: how does the viewers' perception make the painting? It is clear what painting is and not just what it can be for Owens, and perhaps it is a generational difference. Stella and Schneemann had already answered the 'what', and now it is Owens' turn to pursue the

Figure 7: *Untitled* (2015), 'Laura Owens', *Whitney Museum of Art,* 16 December 2017.
Photos by the author.

Figure 8: *Untitled* (2015), 'Laura Owens' *Whitney Museum of Art,* 16 December 2017.
Photos by the author.

'hows'. In this respect, by taking the traditions of painting and combining them with new approaches, Owens is walking a path previously trodden by Schneemann (Breitwieser, 2015: 13-14) to elicit change not just in how painters paint but how 'painting' is seen. Owens' paintings demand viewers to move around and consider what they see and what remains unseeable. Like Stella, there is no mystery about how Owens' paintings are made physically, but there is more to see beyond the object, which she points out directly but playfully.

Dona Nelson

Dona Nelson also urges viewers to move around her paintings, reminding them they are three-dimensional objects containing visual information on all sides. While visiting the exhibition *Stand Alone Paintings* [12 May - 12 August 2018, Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, NY/USA] late in Stage 2 (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology') of this PhD project (June 2018), I was deeply immersed in the practical research of making paintings together with two personas and my thoughts on what this means visually. Considering how Nelson addresses the physical 'two sides' of paintings as objects, recto and verso led to pondering ways this could relate to seeing the multifacetedness imparted by the personas on the paintings conceptually. Much smaller in scale than the other three artists' exhibitions, the walls of a single gallery were filled salon-style with earlier paintings and large charcoal drawings, emphasising the difference between art hung on a wall or standing alone. Milling around in the centre of the room at random angles were large canvases securely positioned on fabricated steel legs or suspended and bolted with store-bought steel pipes onto solidly constructed wooden structures and resting informally on plastic milk crates or concrete blocks for additional but likely unnecessary, support.

Coinciding with that exhibition, on her website, Nelson writes:

> [E]ver since Frank Stella's black paintings, the objecthood of abstract paintings has been highlighted. His stripes and wide stretchers got rid of painterly illusion. My two-sided paintings emphasise objecthood even more. However, the illusion intrinsic to painting is also emphasised. The steel stands on which the paintings sit are obviously heavy, more objects than the painting can ever be. Painting space circulates in contradiction to the stands. (2018)

Like Owens' *Untitled* (2015), Nelson grants viewers easy access to both sides, but they are also very different in that, more like Schneemann, the materiality of the paintings matters. It makes more sense to walk up to Nelson's for a closer look because these are actual paintings with tactile, painterly surfaces and not just screen printed conceptual constructs intended to be viewed, albeit also from different angles, but at a slight distance. The two-sidedness of Nelson's paintings forces us to confront how we look at paintings in general without casting aside the material aspects of what makes *a painting* —specifically, the material, paint. Owens' five large canvases are installed objects reminiscent of paintings —simulacra— while Nelson reminds viewers that painting is a distinct form of artwork perceived by the materials and the concepts.

I believe Stella that what I see is what I see, and, like Schneemann, I know that buried in the layers of what I am seeing remains more to be seen. I do not use visual puns or whimsy like Owens. Still, I find how she uses these to challenge conventional ways of looking at paintings by emphasising the game the artist engages in with viewers through the artwork intriguing. Likewise, Nelson's assertions on painting's objecthood and the demand she places on viewers to step back, walk around taking in the whole, *and* move in closer to engage with their materiality appeals to me as a painter and my interest in how viewers physically and conceptually perceive to complete and make my paintings art. Nonetheless, in work I present to viewers, the materials remain more critical than the concepts behind them, so I paint.

Beyond contributing to the development of the methods of observation and reflection, the significance of my experience viewing retrospective exhibitions of Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson lies in their questioning of what and how paintings are seen and making visible that which remains otherwise unseeable. When their practices are viewed cumulatively, they bolster my premise that the change-bringing tacit knowledge imparted by personas and play on my painting practice can remain unseeable while spectators still recognise its presence. Questioning how a painting and 'painting' are seen requires the artist to see them as the spectator sees (discussed in Chapter Two), generating knowledge brought by the spectator that informs the objects and their exhibition. In the second section of this chapter, using the same methods of observation and reflection, I followed these examples with two examples of my exploration as an artist of what and how a painting and 'painting' are perceived. The first example is a painting created prior to the personas, while the second painting was created with the personas.

Seeing Painting Through My Practice

Previously, I had worked with mirrors to challenge the notion of paintings as objects with a single surface fixed viewpoint, analogous to a non-changing and singular identity. However, those works were about expanding the space of the painting's surface, making it, like identity, multifaceted. By extending the illusionary space outward and bringing viewers into that space via glimpses of their reflection, I sought to instigate a change in viewers' perception. By making their image physically part of the painting, I played with the spectators' experience of the object and its illusionary space as a metaphor for their identity and presence in 'making the painting art' (Wollheim,

1987: 43-100). In this doctoral research project, I employed reflective surfaces to emphasise the painting's two sides by making one not easily or entirely seen, much like the personas and the tacit knowledge imparted by them and play upon my painting practice. To differentiate between these two approaches, I will first revisit a painting incorporating mirrors from my exhibition, *Fractal Edge* (June 2015), pre-dating this PhD project.

A man stands under a 12-inch square painting hung high on a wall and looks up [Figure 9, right]; it is too high for him to see it as he would typically. Nevertheless, the equally-sized mirror jutting out from the top edge of the canvas provides a different vantage point. In the photograph, the man appears caught in its semi-shadow as the light shining down from the ceiling reflects off and back up onto the white gallery wall to create an inverted shadow —a projection of light rather than darkness. However, daylight streams in from the left, lighting up the painting and mirror [Figure 9, left] for the man to see the painting doubled along with his reflection in the mirror. Painted with very flat, brushstroke free fluid acrylic paints, uniform lines of acrylic and oil-based paint markers define the shapes and provide a glossy, commercial graphic-like contrast to the otherwise matte surface of this painting. How the paint is handled and the uniformity and commerciality make this painting much less painterly than the paintings that would emerge a couple of years later, working with the personas. An increase in the quality of 'painterly-ness' is one of the personas' changes to my practice (discussed in Chapter Five). Like Owens' *Untitled* (2015), looking from a closer vantage point is superfluous. It is not a painting about the paint; it is about looking at paintings.
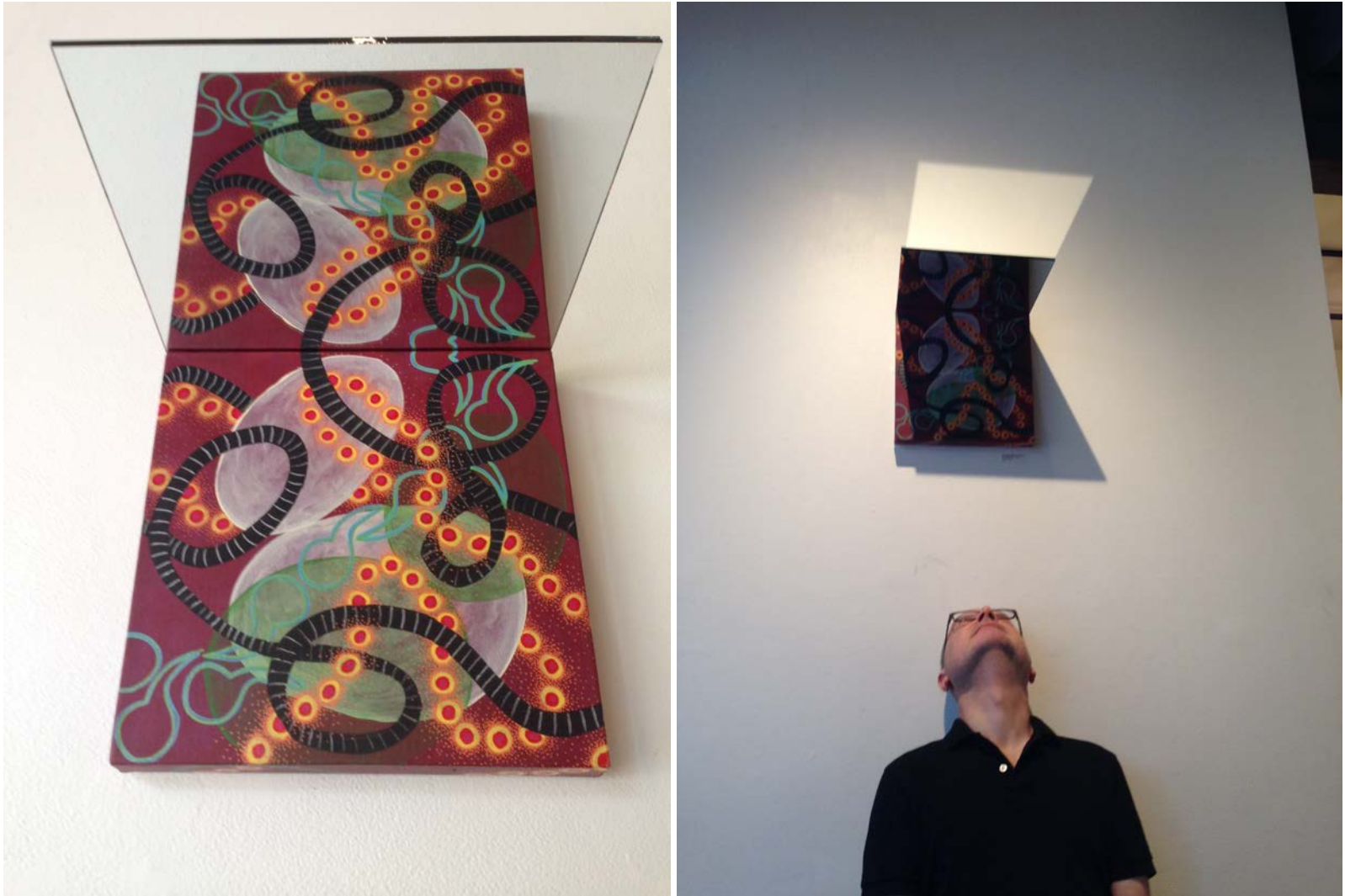
Figure 9: (Left) A painting incorporating mirror. (Right) Installed in my solo exhibition, *Fractal Edge*, June 2015, Main Gallery, AS220, Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photos by the author.

Working with the personas two years later, I created *Concertinaed* (2017), a long, drawn-out two-sided mixed media painting on small sheets of hot press watercolour paper hinged with cotton vellum paper and acrylic matte medium and reminiscent of an accordion bound sketchbook [Figures 10 and 11]. Unfolded to its full length, it measures 10 inches x 84 inches [25 x 210 cm]; but to look at it is like the notes emanating from a squeezebox which, as it expands and contracts, makes listeners travel aurally with them, demands the eye travel the length of the painting over the bumpy folds. There is much more to see here than in the *Fractal Edge* paintings, and they are intended to be looked at closely. How to look at the painting was not considered at its start, but as it neared completion, the question of how both sides could be viewed simultaneously arose. Putting it on a shelf for months, I did not return to the idea of mirrors until after seeing Dona Nelson's solution to her double-sided paintings and reading her observations of how people view two-sided paintings in photographs and person:

> Two-sided paintings cannot be photographed as you would experience them in an exhibition, walking around them. One usually stands closer to the paintings than you would to a painting on the wall, and you often look at them from an angle. … People don't look at the backs of two-sided paintings in the same way that they look at the fronts. They look at the backs close up and often take a few steps back when looking at the fronts. (2018)

For this doctoral project, seeing both sides of the painting is not about making the unseen visible; it is about acknowledging the 'unseen' and its presence which cannot and might never be visible in the painting. In this case, it is how each of the personas participated in the painting's making (see Chapter Three). Returning to how people moved in for a closer look at Owens' *Untitled* (2015) at the Whitney mentioned earlier, that is likely a conditioned way of looking at a painting, while I seek to create new conditions for looking as I toyed with new conditions for making paintings with personas. Exploring how *Concertinaed* (2017) might be displayed may appear a detour

in this research, but it was a fruitful diversion in clarifying the relationship between

seeing, the personas, and the artist-object-spectator model.

Figure 10: One side of *Concertinaed* (2017), a two-sided painting on paper created with the personas. Photo by the author.

Figure 11: Another side of *Concertinaed* (2017), a two-sided painting on paper created with the personas. Photo by the author.

Seeing the personas in the paintings is similar to Nelson's description of looking at photographs of a two-sided painting; outside their context, they cannot be seen in the same way or even at all. The context in which the personas exist is not the paintings but my studio practice. In this research project, the personas are never meant to be viewed by spectators subjectively as part of the paintings (see Introduction). They are intended for me, the artist, to employ objectively in order to think about and approach painting differently —to change. Just as viewers have been conditioned to look at paintings a certain way, I seek to cultivate another way for myself as the artist to look at painting while painting, to see the presence of what is otherwise 'unseeable' in it. Following the artist-object-spectator model to be presented in Chapter Two, to do this requires seeing the painting as the spectator, which means stepping aside momentarily to explore how the paintings might be seen (Wollheim, 1987). Viewing each side separately, like in a photograph, I trust that what is presented to me as both sides of a single painting is precisely that, and my trust is essential to the painting's authenticity, also discussed in Chapter Two. It is essential not to confuse making visible both sides of the painting with making the personas themselves seeable or the subject; they are never pictured as the subject of the paintings or performed for spectators. Practically, the unseen side of the painting is analogous to the presence of these unseeable alternative identities at work in this project. By indicators such as paint along the edges or the logical conclusion that if a painting has a 'recto', it must also have a 'verso' (even if it remains unpainted). As spectators, we know that there is a side to the painting hanging on a wall we cannot see despite looking. Likewise, we must trust that the personas are present via other indications of their unseeable presence. One such indicator is found on a mirrored shelf [Figure 12].

Observing viewers examining the artworks in *Fractal Edge* yielded knowledge similar to Nelson's observations of how spectators view her two-sided paintings: people stand

closer, look at them from an angle, and do not look at the backs in the same way that they look at the fronts (2018). Knowing that if the painting appeared not to be flat or flush to the wall, viewers would move in for a closer look. I constructed a mirrored shelf matching the length and height of *Concertinaed* (2017) that revealed just enough to indicate the spaces behind and below the painting resting on it and allow reflected light to project up onto the wall and the painting [Figure 13].

Difficult to photograph, in person, it is possible to see what is on the painting's other side, although not in an 'undisrupted' manner. Spectators can peek over the top edge and the gap between the painting and the wall [Figure 14] or peer around the side and see all visible surfaces simultaneously [Figure 15]. However, unlike the *Fractal Edge* paintings, neither the viewer's reflection is visible nor is the illusionary space of the painting expanded significantly by the mirror. The mirror, the reflected light, and the cast shadows direct the viewer inward to see the painting rather than become part of the object and expand it outward, and still, viewers are aware of their presence as they look into the mirror and are slightly frustrated when they cannot find themselves in it.

Seeing both sides of a two-sided painting is possible with effort. Likewise, it remains critical to acknowledge and trust the presence of what can never be seen, despite the frustrations this brings. For *Concertinaed* (2017), thanks to mirrors, it is possible to see both sides of the painting and still keep facets that complete it out of sight, in this case, the spectator (discussed in Chapter Two). Addressing the fact that paintings, like identity, are multifaceted and contain much more than what meets the eye is imperative for me as I emphasise that what is unseen is crucial to their authenticity, even when creating them with alternative identities in this research project.

The examples of paintings presented in both sections of this chapter are essential to this research project to demonstrate how experiential research methods of viewing and reflecting on artworks and exhibitions by others contribute to my painting practice and practice-led artistic research methodologies. By contemplating the technical and conceptual approaches of other artists vis a vis my practice, these methods generate additional questions, leading me to pursue answers through both approaches in my painting and research practices. Specifically, the discussion of these paintings exemplifies how I arrived via contemplating the unseeable in painting to the idea of painting and the problem of authenticity, which is critical to the theoretical framework of this research project and addressed in Chapter Two. Viewing the retrospective exhibitions of Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson, the question of the unseeable and authenticity manifested for me as a spectator. Their shared intention to question what and how 'painting' (subject) is perceived through the artwork (object) by the spectator led to defining 'painting' and its authenticity. Re-applying these methods to my artwork revealed how I address the 'unseen', which is crucial to the authenticity of identity, via the artwork in the studio inquiry. The insight produced by looking at painting presented in both sections of this chapter provoked my consideration of the relationship between authenticity and the use of alternative identities in painting practices, forming an essential part of the theoretical framework of this project discussed in Chapter Two.

Figure 12: *Concertinaed* (2017) on a mirrored shelf. Photo by the author.

Figure 13: Detail, *Concertinaed* (2017) on a mirrored shelf. Photo by the author.

Figure 14: Detail, *Concertinaed* (2017) on a mirrored shelf. Photo by author.

Figure 15: Detail, *Concertinaed* (2017) on a mirrored shelf.
Photo by the author.

CHAPTER TWO: Painting and the Problem of Authenticity

This chapter presents the concept of authenticity as a critical component of this research project's theoretical framework, developed from ideas I encountered by looking at other painters' practices relative to mine (see Chapter One). From its inception, the personas' impact is intended for them to become conceptual marks in my paintings as their working methods become integrated into my practice (see Introduction). They were not intended to become like brushstrokes remaining visible parts of the painting process for viewers. In this project, authenticity is understood as an artistic value through which spectators experience 'realness' through the artwork. 'Realness' implies that what is expressed is truthful, accurate, and of shared validity for the spectator, the object, and the artist. Authenticity is what personas leave behind —traces— and how I work with these in my paintings and practice make it a crucial support for the other key concepts of this project's theoretical framework —change, personas and play.

Contemplating why painters' use of alternative identities in their practices is less frequently recognised in the same way as musicians, performers and writers, and visual artists with non-painting-based practices launched this research (see Introduction). Changing the style or elements of creative practices by employing alternative identities, while likely not without constraints (that is not the subject of this research and will not be discussed here), appears to a painter like myself more accepted for artists in those fields than for painters. In our conversations, Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent (see Chapter Four) expressed the same sentiment regarding alternative identities in other creative practices and part of their motivation for working with alternative identities. I share their sentiment and motivation that if these other artists can work with alternative identities, why can I not work with them? Asking myself why I considered alternative identities off-limits to abstract painters forced me to direct my thoughts back to the earliest days of my education as an artist and the stories I was

being fed. Namely, these stories revolved around the idea of authenticity and painting promulgated by the Abstract Expressionists and the critics who promoted them, such as Clement Greenberg ([1940] 1993) or Harold Rosenberg ([1952] 1993), which ultimately discouraged change once the artist's style is established.

The idea they cultivated that art, particularly painting, and the authenticity of the artists and artwork presents the viewer with an object whose origins cannot be disputed as these are grounded in the direct and authentic expression of the painter's 'genuine' identity via a signature 'mark' or style determined not by the material but how the painter handles it. However, this notion stood in opposition to that found in Dada and expressed by Duchamp through Readymades —everyday objects slightly altered by the artist or presented 'as is' as an artwork— and his alter ego, Rrose Sélavy, around which my previous research on identity and self-portrayal was centred (see Introduction, 'Literature Review'). Regardless of the artist or object's other identities, for the Dadaists and Duchamp, authenticity meant the artist identifying the object as art (Mileaf, 2010).

In the spin-off publication to the Impakt Festival 2016 'Authenticity?' Barbara Cueto and Bas Hendrikx write that:

> Authenticity has become the ultimate asset. Originally, it was linked to the idea of a core of a thing —its essence. … The longing to be true to oneself has become a cliché. The Internet is deeply embedded in our day-to-day lives, transforming our routines and allowing us to multiply ourselves in avatars and profiles. (2017: 10)

According to Cueto and Hendrikx, authenticity's standards are relatively simple: 'original, real and pure: they are what they claim to be, and their origins are known and can be verified: essence and appearance are one (2017: 14)'. For me, authenticity is trusting what is presented, how it is presented, and how I perceive it. It is not trite but necessary to seek and provide authenticity precisely because, in today's complex,

digitally entwined web, we can see or virtually experience practically anything or be as many different people as we want to be —like that man with his many aliases pictured on the wanted poster [Figure 16].

Figure 16: A screenshot of *WANTED/$2,000 REWARD* (Original Version 1923), Marcel Duchamp. Rectified Readymade featuring two photographs of the artist and humorous text naming, among others, Duchamp's alter ego, Rrose Sélavy as an alias. 19 ½ inches x 14 inches (49.5 x 35.3 cm)

Staring coldly at the camera, that wanted man was no criminal; he was an artist. Marcel Duchamp's importance in altering our understanding of authenticity, particularly regarding the identity of art objects via the Readymade, is indisputable. The poster is a 'Readymade' challenge to our understanding of authenticity concerning the artist's identity as bound to a singular, 'genuine' identity. This challenge makes this artwork significant to this research project as it directly addresses the part of its aim to reject the notion that a single authentic identity makes painting art (see Introduction).

Understanding the authenticity of our own identity raises questions: Who am I? What are my beliefs? Do I embody what I believe, and how is this carried through to the objects I make if I am an artist? Who or what we identify with motivates our answers and changes over time, from theistic faith to atheistic beliefs, from externally to internally driven forces (Cueto and Hendrikx, 2017:12). As was a century ago for Duchamp, there is no single or fixed answer to who we are 'authentically' because our identity is multifaceted and fleeting. Today, we operate with a mix of Romantic, Modern and Postmodern ideas of authenticity, which, jumbled together, tell us that to be authentic, we need to become introspective and know who we are inside while projecting a sellable surface. If we consider authenticity a commodity, it is attained by buying things and buying into ideas. In this way, the authenticity of the self is dominated by the market economy, mass media, and social media platforms, driving our thoughts and actions to assume, discover or create the authenticity we seek. Nevertheless, artists using alternative identities poses a problem for the marketplace (see Introduction, 'Literature Review', (McCartney, 2018)). Once we become internally complicit in these external shaping forces, the 'authentic self' discovered, purchased or created 'online' is performed for whoever might be watching. Performance is key to this 'self' becoming authentic; likewise, it is key to authentic alternative identities. 'Authenticity is performed and requires an audience. … Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder (Cueto and Hendrikx, 2017:12)'. In short, someone has to witness or see the performance for the identity to become authentic.

When performing, boredom or uncertainty can lead us to ask if this guise is who we are *really*. We can stop performing or repeat the performance repeatedly until it becomes either believable or unbelievable for both the performer and the observer. Authenticity is slippery (like clouds and paint), and its existence is transient, which I value. Its

slippery and transient qualities are a reason I seek to play with it via personas in this research project because slipperiness provides a way for change to slip into my painting practice from other directions (see Introduction). However, to begin, it is essential to introduce and frame the authenticity issue with Duchamp and how, beyond the Readymade, he addressed the slipperiness of the artist's identity surreptitiously through aliases, alter egos and questionable collaborations. Duchamp, disclaiming an artist's identity for himself, reduced his identity to simply 'a breather' — 'I'm a respirateur, isn't that enough? (Tomkins, 2013: 3)'. He achieved this not only through his words —by telling and performing the story of 'Marcel Duchamp: respirateur' to the world— and by not doing what he had previously done, paint. Instead, as a 'breather', Duchamp's practice included curation, graphic design, art dealing, what we now describe as 'networking' —activities not typically definitive of an artist's identity then— and many hours of playing chess.

Moreover, Duchamp played with the object maker's identity by openly incorporating alternatives in ways not previously seen in the visual art world, such as claiming or attributing others' authorship for specific artworks —i.e. Rrose Sélavy and Richard Mutt. In the short text, 'The Richard Mutt Case,' Duchamp hints at the artistic value of authenticity via his point that *Fountain* (1917) was rejected on the grounds it was 'immoral, vulgar' and 'plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing (Duchamp, [1917] 1993: 248)'. Making the point that objects cannot be these first two and that by choosing to call it a fountain and submit it as an artwork, regardless of whether or not Mutt made it with his own hands, it is neither plagiarised nor a plumbing fixture anymore: 'its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view — created a new thought for that object (Duchamp, [1917] 1993: 248)'. Tauntingly, Duchamp writes this because no one knows who R. Mutt is.

Curator Matthew Affron made clear in the wall text for *Marcel Duchamp and the Fountain Scandal* [3 April 2017- 3 December 2017 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Phildadelphia/USA] [12] that it is generally agreed upon that the artwork's submission intended to challenge the degree to which the society and its members were committed to new artistic ideas, or in this case, values, by being rejected and generating discussion. Without a doubt, the former iconoclast has become an icon and changed how we look at objects as art. Moreover, it moved the discussion beyond the object into one questioning the identity of its maker or makers. Namely, who else in the circle of New York Dadaists created *Fountain*; to which I add, to what degree were any or all aware of the challenge to authenticity vis a vis the artist also being made. The official narrative of the artwork remains with Duchamp.

Nonetheless, paying closer attention to how Duchamp explored and perhaps exploited his own identity and the research of his relationships with the other artists in his milieu (Goodyear and McManus, 2014; Cros, 2006) suggests that these questions remain to challenge our understanding of authenticity and the artist as much as authenticity and the object. Like Duchamp, and most artists since the Renaissance, painters freely incorporated multiple, new or atypical technologies and reproduction methods into their practices that present challenges to what is previously believed to be accurate. For example, despite being artificial and scientifically inaccurate, Filippo Brunelleschi's linear perspective was considered authentic, not just by the person holding the brush or stylus, and we still teach it today as a foundation for becoming a visual artist. Authenticity is more than facts; it is what is believed to be in some way genuine, at least when it comes to painting.

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[12] The exhibition held in recognition of the century of endless questions and theories of who R. Mutt was held 3 April 2017- 3 December 2017 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from their collection and installed in the Anne d'Harnoncourt Gallery, home to a significant collection of the work of Marcel Duchamp. I viewed the exhibition on 9 April 2017.

Contrary to Cueto and Hendrikx's definition stated earlier (2017: 12), as the next example makes clear, authenticity is not simply in the eye of the beholder —it is also in the thoughts and beliefs of both the performer —or maker, i.e. painter or artist— and the observer. An older literary example of this phenomenon, referred to briefly in Chapter One, is found in *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1832), in which Honoré de Balzac's iconic character, the painter Frenhofer —the 'old man'— shows the reader how the authenticity of the artwork is not only in the painter's eye but must also believed to be seen by the beholder:

> 'Well, here it is,' the old man announced, his hair dishevelled, his face inflamed by a preternatural exaltation, his eyes sparkling and panting like a lovesick swain. 'Aha! You weren't expecting such perfection, were you? You're in the presence of a woman, and you're still looking for a picture. There's such depth on this canvas; the air is so real you can no longer distinguish it from the air around yourselves. Where's the art? Gone, vanished! Here's true form — the very form of a girl. Haven't I captured the colour, the energy of the line that seems to bound her body? Is not this just the phenomenon presented by objects that live in air as fish live in water? Notice how the contours are silhouetted against the background! That back! Does not it look as if you could run your hand down that? It took me seven years' study to achieve such effects, the conjugation of objects with daylight! And that hair! You see how the light glows through it … But I do believe she's breathing … You see that breast? Ah! Who could fail to worship her on his knees? The flesh throbs, she's about to stand up, wait a moment …' ([1832] 2001: 39-40)

Unfortunately for Frenhofer, who is convinced of his ability to capture his *subject* in paint, his studio guests fail to see what he sees on the canvas and describes in words. For Poussin and Porbus, there is no question of the *object*'s authenticity —it is a painting. Still, following the criteria by which paintings were then judged, a painting of what?

> 'The old fraud's pulling our leg,' Poussin murmured, returning to face the so-called painting. 'All I see are colours daubed one on top of the other and contained by a mass of strange lines forming a wall of paint'.
> 'We must be missing something,' Porbus insisted. (Balzac, [1832] 2001: 40)

The canvas as an object covered in paint does not qualify as a work of art for the younger men because it lacks the authenticity imparted by a subject until they discover

a lady's foot painted in the corner of the canvas and the subject of which Frenhofer speaks becomes visible. Nevertheless, his colleagues see how he killed his subject and the painting's authenticity by overworking it (Balzac, [1832] 2001: 41). Frenhofer is held captive by his belief of what should be seen; therefore, he cannot see the destruction —and the younger painters are slow to understand his blindness. Eventually, Porbus speaks out: 'He means it,' and Frenhofer, still imprisoned, replies: 'you must have faith, faith in art, and you must live a long time with your work to produce a creation like this (Balzac, [1832] 2001: 41)'.

Factors establishing authenticity extend beyond the material and include a variety of conceptual components, including the artist's intentions for one. Frenhofer remains convinced that he fulfilled his intentions to capture with paint her essence and bring his beloved back to life. Poussin and Porbus believe his story until they see the painting and find it irreconcilable with what they heard. Today, the old painter's conviction could lend the painting authenticity following what Duchamp said eighty years after Balzac wrote his tale (see above). Whether paint or concept, the artwork's authenticity must be transmissible to others. Today, what makes a painting 'authentic' is not how a painting's subject or its existence as an object appears to our eyes but how they also appear in our minds.

Authenticity is present only when both the artist and the viewer see it and believe it to be. Referring to the 'unseeable' in painting (discussed in Chapter One), this statement that both artist and viewer must see authenticity is problematic. It is relevant to this project and my questions about employing personas and play as a means of inserting change into my painting practice because these are primarily visible only to the artist. When Frenhofer saw the painting as his visitors had, he could no longer believe what *he*

thought he had seen in it and grew doubtful. A shared sense of authenticity between the painter and the viewer is essential to this research project, not because the spectators see the personas or their presence manifested in the artwork, but rather because they believe they are palpable despite being unseeable. The personas are not the subject of my paintings or my painting practice, and they are not intended for those spectators but for me, the artist, and, most importantly, I must see and believe in them and what they bring to my practice, accepting their authenticity for myself so that I can move forward with them and change based on what they offer.

British philosopher Richard Wollheim presented a model for the relationship formed between the artist-object-spectator, which he deemed necessary for a painting to be identified 'as art' ([1984] 1987). The premise is that, while painting, the artist must see the painting (object) as a 'spectator' (Wollheim's term for the viewer) sees it (1987). Relevant to the thesis of this doctoral research project, I propose that Wollheim's paradigm resolves the exclusion of other identities present in a painting as it is made and put forth by critics such as Greenberg and Rosenberg (Hopkins, 2000: 37-64). I already possess more than a single identity when painting — I am both artist and spectator. Wollheim's model demands that artists place themselves in the position of an identity alternative to theirs. Seeing the object as another sees it while painting allows the artist to 'see-in' —Wollheim's term for the artist's process of looking at the object as the spectator would while painting it (1987: 43-100). This positioning is similar to the alternative insight Frenhofer gained when seeing his painting as Porbus and Poussin saw it; before their visit, he was unable to 'see' as the spectator. He lacked the model to do so. I offer a visualisation of the relationship Wollheim describes with the following diagram [Figure 17].
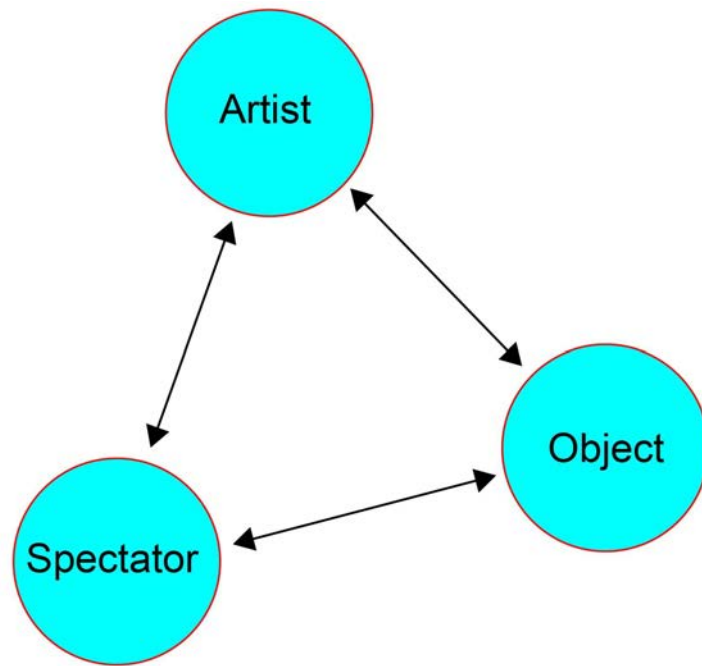
Figure 17: Artist-Object-Spectator Relationship per Wollheim.
Diagram by the author.

Each vertex represents an objective identity; the artist and spectator also have a subjective existence, a 'self' (see Introduction). Although identity and self are commonly understood as synonymous, within the parameters of this project, the self is a synonym for identity only when referring to a person's awareness of their identity; or, as Jerrold Seigel writes: 'we are what our attention to ourselves makes us be (1997: 6)'. This coupling of the self to our attention in a reflective manner imparts ambiguity and multi-dimensionality, which can conflict with authenticity (1997: 9-10). Ambiguity and multi-dimensionality through self-reflection are fundamental to working with the personas and a method of play in this research project. They provide the critical distance between me and my practice necessary to impart change in how I approach thinking and making when painting (discussed in Chapter Five). However, I offer that conflict with authenticity is not a given. It can be maintained when understood as not singular but multifaceted and when authorship is straightforward, or when questioning a given notion of authenticity is the intention of their use, as was the case with Duchamp (see Introduction, 'Literature Review').

Further, it is a question of who is experiencing the conflict. In this project, the issue is less likely to arise for spectators than me because the personas do not function publicly. The personas' presence challenged my idea of authenticity because I experienced them directly and opposingly to established ideas of authenticity in my painting practice. Because they are not intended to function for or be seen by spectators who are not also the artist, the issue of authenticity embedded in authorship or what the spectator sees should not ensue. Nevertheless, because it arose for me relative to this project and my practice which leads this research, it is crucial to address here in this thesis text.

In the case of Frenhofer, the painter's 'failure' was not necessarily a failure of the painting but of the artist's inability to see it as his visitors saw it. Only seeing the object through a personal lens of attention inhibited Frenhofer's ability to share his subject's authenticity as he saw it with those who see it only as an object that failed to become *art* through overwork. Standing back and reflecting leads to focusing less on the object or its place in the surrounding world and more on our relation to it (Seigel, 2005: 12), which Wollheim proposes and Frenhofer failed to do.

For artists to effectively communicate the artwork's authenticity (not only to the viewer but to themselves) from their vantage point requires directing our attention inward to the subject and outward towards the object. Per Wollheim, 'what makes a painting a painting is what the artist does, not what he says (1987: 15)', exemplified by Balzac. The artist must step away and view the object as the spectator, filling that role while standing before and looking at the work while making it (Wollheim, 1987: 43); again, Frenhofer, seeing the painting as Poussin and Porbus, sees past his words to *see* the painting. Therefore, authenticity is as much of an essence externally applied by the spectator as internally by the artist. Authenticity is 'a slippery something, a gruellingly

glib old thing, hard to get a hold of, and exhausting to hold on to once you do (Vermeulen, 2017: 20)' —and both artist and spectator are tasked with grasping hold of the object's authenticity tightly. However, the object's authenticity should not have such a tight hold on the artist or the spectator that it prohibits their authenticity or ability to change, which is relevant to the whole of this project.

Taking the spectator's position, the artist can avoid Frenhofer's fate, trapped by the Romantic image of the artist espoused by Balzac (Danto, 2001: xv) and the idea of authenticity existing only internal to the self. Nevertheless, looking as the spectator looks as one paints requires the coolness of a Duchampian gaze and the ability to play with and lay claim to identities alternative to one's primary identity or self. Duchamp's independence not only from himself and his identity as a painter —having 'given up' painting to become a breather (respirateur)— and from the spectator, and his association with, but willingness to challenge and never totally commit to various art movements provided a necessary critical distance to play with the object and the artist's identity (Dalrymple Henderson, 2014). His 'coolness' supports an idea of authenticity in which the artist's only responsibility to the spectator is to precisely express a way of existing in the world through the object (Vermeulen, 2017: 22). By placing oneself in the spectator's position, the artist can scrutinise what is being expressed and how this corresponds to what the spectator might see in the work, increasing its authenticity as it is perceived.

Still, Duchampian coolness is not the only way the artist can gain the critical distance needed to foster authenticity in the artwork. For example, Rauschenberg, Johns, and other second-generation 'New York School' painters, the Pop and Conceptual artists who followed the Abstract Expressionists took a somewhat Duchampian approach in

their art-making, assuming a coolness in opposition to their subject while maintaining warmth to the materials and methods through which they chose to embody the object (Tomkins, 1968).[13] Embracing Duchamp's mode of questioning, nevertheless, these artists maintained signature style, a hallmark of the preceding generation's idea of what manifested authenticity in the artwork, while moving on from the Abstract Expressionists' notion of 'authentic' expression (Hopkins, 2000: 37-64), a defining singular identity imposed upon them more by critics' words than through their actions with brush and paint. As much as Andy Warhol's artworks are 'factory-made', there is no doubt, thanks to Warhol's iconic style of their authenticity as 'Warhols'.

Marcel Duchamp's revelation that authenticity is neither internal nor external to the object but can be both suggests that the issue of authenticity in the face of reproducibility and replication (see the opening section of this chapter) is resolved. However, his final artwork, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage* [*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*] (1946-1966) subverts this by exemplifying how artists could put decades of physical effort into making artwork to the same end. Duchamp's installation is a painstakingly handmade space, and its essence is unreproducible and unsellable, which might otherwise lend official stamps to its authenticity. Nevertheless, sitting steps away on a plinth is a 1964 reproduction of the urinal signed 'R.Mutt' —*Fountain* (1917)— with its questionable authorship and industrial origins but possessing an equal degree of authenticity as not only a work of art but a 'Duchamp' thanks to the artist's disposition as well as that of spectators.[14]

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[13] Artist biographer Calvin Tomkins has written multiple books and articles on this generation of artists, their relationship to Duchamp and his methods, and authenticity. I reference no singular one here but include five in the List of Sources: Tomkins, 1968, 1996, 2005, 2008, and 2013.
[14] The exact authorship of the original 1917 urinal, since lost, and the identity of 'R.Mutt' remains disputed. However, the 1964 reproduction was authorized by Duchamp.

In his essay 'American Action Painters' critic Harold Rosenberg (see the opening

section of this chapter) cites the space of painting contained within the canvas'

boundaries as having shifted with Jackson Pollock (1912 - 1956) from a space in which

to picture things to an arena in which to act ([1952] 1993: 581-584). Thus, for the

Abstract Expressionists, the making process became the content of paintings filled with

personal expressions of the artist for the public space (Joselit, 2003: 9) and the artwork's

authenticity was the unseen actions that formed it. Manifested through the painter's

actions, it becomes a matter of 'picturing' the authenticity —seeing the unseeable —

internal to the painter's identity for the spectator. Similar to Balzac's Frenhofer, the first

generation 'New York School' artists believed this new way of seeing —individually—

could collectively be meaningful to the general public (Joselit, 2003: 10). That

generation of painters responded by not self-consciously or programmatically adapting

the ideologies of individualism in the United States during the immediate post-war

period, which had become a public act as consumer culture and the art market grew, but

by occupying them. By enacting heroic personae [sic] within and outside their

paintings, they emphasised developing an individually distinctive and recognisable

formal vocabulary (Joselit, 2003: 12-14); 'saying' in paint and the arena in which they

were acting what could otherwise not be seen.

This vocabulary is 'signature style'[15] and understood as authenticity in mid-twentieth

century post-war modernist painting. None of this was original to American painters of

that generation but can be traced back through the history of European modernism and

is visible in Marcel Duchamp's statements about his non-(painting-)practice since 1913.

Further, Joselit asserts that combining these notions with the growth of an 'American'

echo chamber of consumerism, media culture, and the art marketplace amplified this to

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[15]Signature style is not heroic but became so with the myth of 'a painter's difficult and even tortured
attempt to arrive at and represent self-knowledge (Joselit, 2003: 14)'.

the degree that it has significantly impacted how a painting is seen, looked at by artists and spectator (2003: 14). Like the cause of the authenticity's slipperiness described by Vermeulen (2017), signature style and the 'unseen', both critical to the authenticity of painting for Abstract Expressionism (Joselit, 2017: 9-14), are two opposing notions beneficial to this research project, as they enable me to change how I think about painting, particularly abstraction and my painting practice, making room for the personas in it. Authenticity is not about how the artist feels or the spectators feel but about the cognitive contingency that feelings are possible and that 'authenticity may not be rooted in a ground, but it is an act of grounding (Vermeulen, 2017: 23)'. My education and (continuing) development as a painter are seeded with the ideas of Greenberg and Rosenberg, 'Signature Style', Duchamp and what artists choose to call 'art', and the appropriation of objects and images. The ideas about authenticity these generated are found as traces in the authenticity that grounds my painting practice and this research project.

On these grounds, I believe a painting's work is 'to be'. Its 'being' is as an object constructed of materials consisting of paint-like substances applied to a support, and these contribute to its authenticity physically. Nevertheless, part of a painting's being is ambiguous (see Introduction, 'Literature Review', Duchamp), and its authenticity is in how we perceive its ambiguity (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 299-345). Painting's ambiguity stems from its conceptual identity as an object made not by a single subject but two —the painter and the spectator— through their perception of it. Navigating the greyscale of ambiguity is part of the painting's work of being and the result of a collaboration between it and its makers, as is its authenticity. Essential to this research project is that multiple makers do not invalidate or lessen the authenticity of the painting.

Painting is both a 'hands-on' and mental activity; each has a specific temporality and space informing its authenticity. Together, with the traces of ideas on painting and authenticity mentioned in the previous paragraphs, they ground my process and guide the work of the paintings I make and how I undertake this research with the personas and a play-based method (discussed in Chapters Three and Five). Physically making paintings is inseparable from my thoughts about painting. There is a constant shifting and, at times, struggle between these two activities — painting and thinking, which is challenging. Gerhard Richter states, and I agree, that painting is challenging; ... painting is 'another form of thinking (2011)'. I think through the paint, my marks, and my actions. In turn, my thoughts shape the materials and the painting's authenticity through the traces they leave in the paint. Furthermore, when the painting has left my studio space and is no longer in my thoughts, viewers' thoughts and perceptions continue to make the painting, adding to its authenticity, in the spaces where they engage with it experientially (i.e. galleries and museums) and conceptually (i.e their thoughts). Connecting this idea of authenticity back to the methods of his project's studio inquiry, when I apply the reiteration method (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology') to making paintings with or without the personas, it is also a process of 're-thinking', and part of this is re-thinking the painting's authenticity.

Walter Benjamin stated that film and cheaper printing processes made ideas and artistic expression available to a larger population without destroying previous forms of creative thinking and making; and that the sphere of authenticity exists outside mechanical reproducibility (Benjamin, [1936] 1993: 219-53). I believe this remains steadfast in our digital, online era. These new methods of mechanical reproduction transformed perception and increased their accessibility to a broader community. Likewise, the consequences of digital reproduction on exhibitions and painting

transform my experience of the artworks of others and how I make and present

paintings for others to experience in-person or online. The method of reiteration applied

with the personas and play to painting in this project allows images to be altered quickly

and non-committedly. They enable changing the work rapidly and, if posted online, the

space in which it is seen; the method also adds further fuel to the fire for the field of

painting by complicating the identity of the original work and its authenticity.

When viewed online, even the most accurate reproductions of non-digital artworks such

as paintings essentially lack experientially unseeable elements, such as those dependent

upon conditions of time and space relative to the intended experience. Looking at

reproductions of paintings, in print or online, means acknowledging the presence in the

original of parts we do not see in the copy. An artwork's unique existence is where it

and not its facsimile happens to be. The traces of the original's history, where it has

been, and how the artwork has changed since it left the artist's studio —the 'tradition'

the original carries with it, often as stamps and labels on the reverse side— are absent in

the reproduction. Nevertheless, through the story of its history, the artwork can become

its authenticity. For example, artist Vik Muniz's series *Verso* (2002-) challenges this

form of authenticity through his photographs of the (generally unseen) reversed sides of

famous paintings, turning their authentication into his artwork. Prerequisites for the

artwork's authenticity, these telling traces of the famous painting on the front's

authenticity are the essence of the artwork, more than the image itself. According to

Benjamin, technical reproduction can put the original's copy into situations that would

be out of reach for the original itself ([1936] 1993: 219). Likewise, the methods of

reiteration lead the subsequent works into spaces the original is unable to go, adding to

the authenticity of the original as 'the original' and, through the traces it leaves, in all

versions to come.

This connection between methods of reiteration and authenticity relates further to the third research question on the preservation of identity consistency (see opening section of Introduction). In the examples of this chapter, this connection is significant to the artist's identity consistency relative to the personas and the original object's identity consistency to subsequent iterations. When forming the research questions for this project, preserving identity consistency seemed critical to its framework when applying personas and play to my painting practice. However, by inquiring why alternative identities are used less frequently by painters than other artists and arriving at the authenticity problem, I found that preserving identity consistency was less critical but still pertinent to constructing and applying personas. Moreover, it is authenticity, and its traces, which is of greater significance to this research. Similarly, authenticity is a more significant contributing factor to well-being than personality (identity) consistency (Sutton, 2018: 117 - 130), indicating its increased value beyond the artistic.

The concept of authenticity developed from ideas I encountered by looking at other painters' practices relative to mine (see Chapter One. This chapter on authenticity and the problem of painting provided a critical component establishing this research project's theoretical framework by leading to the understanding that authenticity is an artistic value created and shared with validity by the spectator, the object, and the artist. Like the artist and spectator, personas leave behind authenticity as traces. How I work with these in my paintings and practice makes this understanding of authenticity crucial for change, personas and play, grounding my painting practice and this research project. For me, authenticity is trusting what is presented, how it is presented, and how I perceive it. Chapter Three presents what and how the personas were developed and applied. How I perceive the impact of the personas will be discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE: Personas

This chapter presents the practical research of this doctoral project incorporating alternative identities termed 'personas' into my painting practice. Developing personas required naming them, and the significance of names opens this chapter. The arrival of the first persona triggered the development of this research project, which is the focus of the second section. Each persona possessed a personal narrative, the background story of their identity; the third section tells about the personas individually, disclosing how they function in my painting practice practically and the space they occupy conceptually. This chapter ends by looking at theories of 'self-talk' and the playful conversations occurring in my practice and this inquiry.

Naming

Names are beginnings. How we introduce ourselves and are introduced to the world depends on our names. *Rrose Sélavy* would be less meaningful and poignant if Duchamp had chosen the name 'Mary Smith' or 'Louise Martin' for his most famous alter ego. The philosophical questions of names—such as name-calling, how apt or inept, appropriate or inappropriate they are, their origins and references, what they evoke, their entanglement with the thing they name— are traceable to Plato (Dolar 2014: 6). Before we are given a proper name, our existence as individuals is precarious. Once named, we become someone specific with a place and time of birth and a 'given' name that possesses additional meanings (Dolar, 2014: 35-40, 58-59). Thanks to the common names we also carry, our identity is generally understood and assigned meaning that may change as it develops. Konstantina Georgelou and Janez Janša write: 'Names are performative – they can 'stand' for what or whom they indicate in the same way that they can destabilise them (2017: 1)', such as the case with *Rrose Sélavy* (Eros

c'est la vie). We add and subtract previously held meanings to our name by existing, transforming its meaning for others and ourselves.

Changing a name, even informally via a nickname, alters the carrier's relationship to the name but does not negate it. 'Names are 'eternal', we are not; names last, we pass away (Dolar, 2014: 42-43)'. Whether by death or legal initiative, our names will outlive us. 'Once you become a name, once you become at the first place your name, once your name performs you more than you can perform yourself, then it is hard to step out of your name (Janša, 2017: 52)'. It is possible to have many different names, and it is not uncommon to replace the name or names we have been given. Changing a name can be ceremonial, a right of passage from one life stage to the next, or driven by the need to distance or escape a former name. Taking on a new name does not mean the previous someone never existed; the identity of that someone is maintained and changed by what is added to or taken from its name. At our core, we remain the person previously known as X who has grown into XY and Z. Germane to this research project, names are both constant and changing.

Primarily, we exist as the names others have given us, building on them as we grow, becoming the person whom that name will continue to signify long after we are dead. Names are containers *for* and *of* identity. Whether a symbol or word, a name guides us in understanding who or what something is. Unless the artist is naming to obfuscate, a painting's title helps viewers navigate the work. However, titling works of art is a recent phenomenon, a by-product of the art marketplace. Titles given to older artworks may not have been given to them by the artist but by someone else (Janša, 2017: 52-53).

Often my paintings are untitled, either out of an obliqueness of the painting itself that makes it 'un-nameable' or, more often, because I have not gotten around to naming them rather than trying to bewilder spectators. If talking about painting is difficult (Richter, 2011), then the difficulty in finding the right title logically follows. More than describing the picture for viewers, titles serve to differentiate artworks — in which case, a numbering system or dating, such as the case with Laura Owens' artworks discussed in the previous chapter, can suffice but also carries with it the potential to obscure. Like any given name, titles are not always unique and can be un-precise. Just as if every child in a family were named John or Mary, if Owens makes more than one *Untitled* work in any given year, it becomes confusing which child or artwork is being discussed. Nevertheless, some of the paintings created in this research project are untitled; crucially, the personas have names.

The personas were named because they are modelled on people, and people are identified by their names. Naming helps me —and readers of this thesis— navigate this project's narrative and track the personas' roles by giving each a distinct identity. Naming them was also significant to their inception; their names form conceptual containers for each persona to occupy and fill as their identities developed. The stories attached to their names contained attributes that make them authentic, and this authenticity imparted through narratives gives personas the power to impact my painting practice (Dolar, 2014: 46-51). The personas' impact will be addressed in Chapter Five, but how they function starts with their story, which began with their arrival.

The Arrival

Unexpectedly, the first persona arrived while I was writing an email, leading to the conception of this research project. Eventually, I created two other personas with psychological makeups and personal experiences that echoed yet differed from mine. Instilling kernels of myself in each persona made them accessible to me, which was their primary intention. By over-or-under-amplifying elements and characteristics, I formed the personas as exaggerations and contrasting characteristics of self-knowledge gained with my previous research on identity and self-portrayal. This amplification expanded beyond a name, the conceptual container in which I developed the personas and separated them from me so that when working with the personas, I would ask myself, 'Why am I or is he or she doing this?' (see Introduction, 'Literature Review', 'Role Play').

Developing identities dissimilar to mine is possible by working within specific parameters for personal comfort and practicalities of time, effort, and focus. Lacking skills as a performance-maker and straying too far from the familiar could potentially distract from the research, so I developed three personas with origins close to mine that still provided unfamiliar spaces for questions. For instance, despite a long history of female artists and writers adopting male identities or nom de plumes to create (see the opening of Introduction), I opted for one male and two female personas. Notwithstanding the public context of doctoral research, my adoption and application of the personas, including the male, was done privately; it is not a public performance, and gender, racial, or cultural identity are not the subject of my art or this doctoral research project. Regardless of these identity factors, each persona brought their sensibilities impacting the work, to be addressed in further detail in Chapter Five.

There are still many more identifiers —common names— that I chose not to further investigate or incorporate into the personas' stories. That level of complexity is not necessary for the core inquiry of this research. Here, the focus is on how they performed as individuals rather than group members. Personas similar enough to me to intuitively respond when working with them were needed. Familiarity enabled me to focus on how they navigated situations. However, enough discernable difference was critical to question why and where specific responses emerged when working with them to assess their impact. The following section presents each persona individually and their work in this research project.

The Personas

Melusine Van Der Weyden

The first persona is named Melusine Van Der Weyden. Over time, I learned 'Mel' was born in a small village in Germany on 5 December 1970. Truthfully, she only has a birthplace and birthdate because of the requirements to create email and social media accounts. Not knowing where the personas would lead, giving them these trendy identity markers prepared for whatever might transpire in the physical or digital realm. All three personas have email addresses, but not all have social media accounts. Each used their accounts differently, and some used them more than others.

Working with a persona requires a unique communication form between myself and the alternative identity, but common forms of communication are needed if they are to interact with others, which they did for a very short time in Stage 1 (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology'). Although they are not intended to function publicly, providing them with the means to communicate with others privy to this research

project in its early stages afforded me another opportunity to observe who they were and how they might behave outside and inside the studio. Even when interacting with others was limited, which it was after realising their purpose, the more knowledge I could attain of a persona's intricacies —the anomalies in its functioning, such as how it might communicate with others beyond myself— the better skilled I hoped to become in working with them and understanding the changes that followed.

Returning to the concept of authenticity (see Chapter Two) and what naming does, stated in the opening section of this chapter, establishing a persona's authenticity requires knowing its story, above and below the surface. Like a name, a facade is encountered first when seeing people or objects, and with time and effort, what is beneath becomes visible and known to the see-er. Melusine is a persona who can easily steal time and more when getting to know and work with her. Moreover, as I discovered her to be proudly complex, she is also the type who would take offence at being associated with simplicity.

Naughty, playful, and a bit of a temptress, Melusine is a free and more than slightly ephemeral spirit. She is 'not me' in every way, making Melusine exciting to explore. After Melusine's initial appearance and disappearance, months went by with a memory of her brief visit in the back of my mind. The scant material she provided on that first visit guided my thoughts on the significance of her debut while I was concerned with identity and self-portrayal. Her story and this research project's parameters emerged slowly; learning her name was the first step.

Albeit quick to arrive and seemingly out of the blue, the formation of Melusine's character and her naming —what made her somebody— took the longest. Originating

as a thought, I had nothing visual to connect to her. Despite being a painter, with Melusine, words came first, and I began writing to discover more about this apparition. Finding her story in words required other forms of research, primarily literary. Unlike the other two personas, uncoincidentally both painters, a decision I will discuss later in this section, I knew from the attention I paid to characters in books and dramatic sources that this first persona is a 'Lebenskünstlerin' and a storyteller through the thoughts she generated and I wrote down. To find a suitable name for her, I looked at names that sounded soft and sensuous, gravitating towards those beginning with 'M'. Wanting a name whose origins are not too quickly known, a name somewhat but not too exotic, it took me a minute or two of scanning a list of Googled names to find 'Melusine'. Although it was unfamiliar to me, I knew that it was her.

Melusine is a mythical figure —a spirit described as a freshwater mermaid, half-human, half serpent or fish, and half dragon— in French folklore (Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, 2012) written down by Jean d'Arras as *The Romance of Melusine* (1392 or 1393). Being three halves —one half too many— only adds to Melusine's over-dimensionality. Two- and three-dimensional depictions of Melusine and her story are found throughout the art and architecture of west-central France —Poitiers' vicinity. She is said to be seen flying across the top of the 'March' page of *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* [Figure 18], which depicts the home she supposedly built, the Château de Lusignan (Knight, 2013: 5-12).
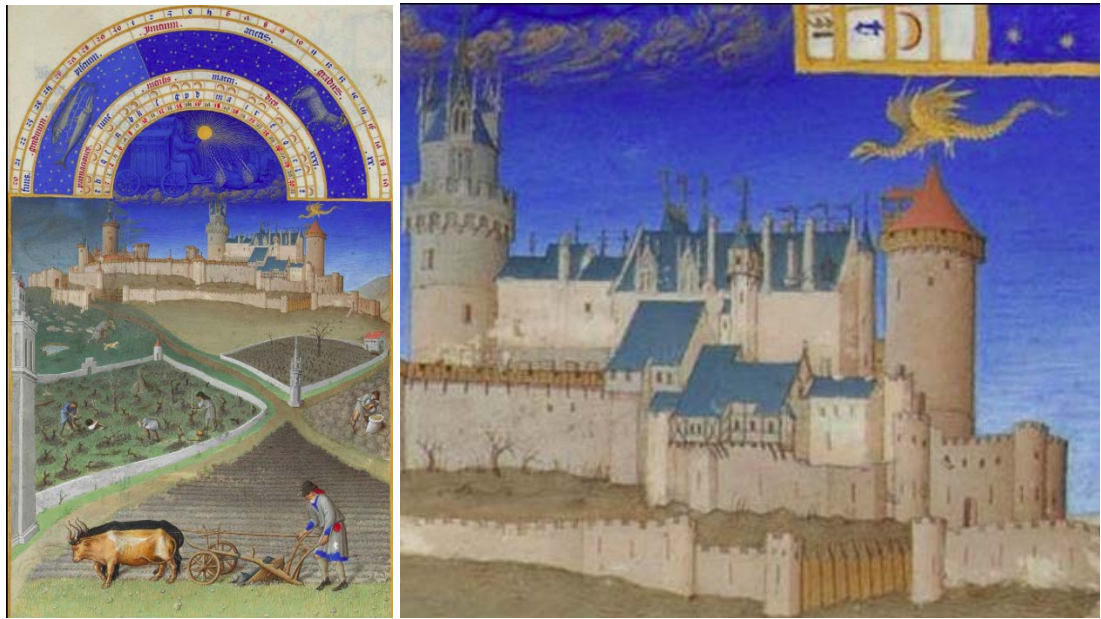
Figure 18: (Left) *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, 'Mars'*.(c. 1412-1416) attributed to Paul de Limbourg and Jean Colombe. Museé Condé, Chantilly, France. (Right) Detail showing Melusine flying above the castle tower.

'Mononymity', being primarily known by or possessing only one name, is common for some, but my Melusine needed a surname that could augment her identity by indicating her origins. Keeping to the art historical reference, I wanted a connection to painting rather than just folklore. Likewise, I was motivated to pay homage to Marcel Duchamp, connecting Melusine to the challenges he presented to art and identity and his contributions to my thoughts that shaped this doctoral research project. 'Duchamp' means 'of the field or plain' in French. Enjoying wordplay and thinking around corners, I connected 'Duchamp' and the Flemish painter Rogier Van der Weyden (~1400 - 1464) — Van der Weyden corresponds to the German word 'Weide,' which in English is pasture —a type of field. The connection was amusing to me and playful, exemplifying a sense of humour binding Melusine and me. In writing, Melusine could say things that generally I could or would not. She behaved in a slightly more risqué manner, which could be difficult but offered insight, not only of her or myself but others through their response when given a glimpse of her.

For example, a workshop I participated in on 'seduction'[16] lent itself to Melusine's temperament quite well. For a workshop exercise, Melusine used her skills as a seductress to write a personal email or letter to each participant, trying to beguile them. A consensus of workshop participants was that people could only be seduced if they desired to be seduced. Each recipient self-reported the extent of their being enticed by Melusine's words. Because the results were self-reported and followed by a group discussion, I can only say that it seemed to work, mostly. In fact, in one case, her seduction skills earned her an invitation to compose an introit for a colleague's performance the following weekend at the Project Space Festival Berlin 2018, which she did —and, sticking to the premise that I did not publicly perform the personas, I recited in Melusine's place.[17]

Unlike the other two personas, there is no photographic or video documentation of her in action; my performance of Melusine occurred internally. I never physically embodied her but worked with her through personal writing and internal conversations, addressed in the final section of this chapter. Melusine remained an ephemeral spirit, serving as a sounding board for ideas and information contemplated through my painting practice and this PhD project with the other two personas, and she was never shy about expressing her thoughts or opinions.

Petra Nimm

Over a year passed before the second persona arrived. My doctoral research project was conceived, and, outlining it, I realised someone needed to join me in the studio not just to write or talk with, like Melusine, but to make paintings. Nevertheless, no one turned

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[16]'Seducer or Seduced?' 8-9 August 2018 as part of a Summer Residency at Uferstudios, Berlin, Germany.
[17]As part of the performance of George Angelovski during LEGS NINE at grüntaler9 Saturday, 11 August 2018, Berlin, Germany.

up. Finally, while sitting in a very stuffy dance studio in Berlin expounding on my proposal to other postgraduate researchers, the next persona arrived. Although I was not in my studio painting, and the physical conditions that day were not optimal, presenting my thoughts had cracked open the door, allowing the next persona to slip in while I was in a state of 'flow' described by Mihályi Csíkszentmihályi (1990: 3) (see opening of Introduction). A pleasant and neatly packaged theoretically-based explanation of Petra's emergence. Hot, tired, and recovering from a virus, I struggled to stay focused on my story; perhaps the key to entering that state. The poor acoustics in the former Berlin streetcar repair shop turned dance studio and mishearing when I used the term 'heteronym' to describe the alternative identities of Fernando Pessoa (see opening of Introduction), and thinking I had already mentioned another persona in addition to Melusine, the person next to me snapped: 'Who is Petra Nimm?'

Petra Nimm arrived, fully formed with a relatively common proper name and a surname, 'Nimm,' the imperative singular of the German verb 'nehmen' or 'take' in English. Petra's name made me wonder what she wanted me to take from her. Melusine offered her slightly subversive and seductive way with words, but Petra, also a bit of a free spirit and a seductress, is more esoteric than 'straightforward' Melusine. Petra painted in watercolours and gouache, analogous to her fluid nature. A familiarity with paint and hesitancy with words is something she and I share. Nevertheless, there was a difference in our painting style, (see Chapter Five, 'Before and After').

In this research project, painting with personas requires physically embodying them in my studio. Because I would be doing this, after returning from Berlin, I took Petra shopping and purchased second-hand items she (I) would wear while working with (as) her. I will return to the issue of dressing the personas in Chapter Five; however, I raise it

here as it denotes the difficulty of the correct words or grammar to speak or write about the personas, regardless of their embodiment. In the first sentence of this paragraph, the conundrum is apparent — she or I, together or with her. Used alone, working 'with' or 'as' a persona is insufficient, and when written 'with/as' is confusing. Logically, even performed, I must work with their independent identities, and my solution is to use 'with' rather than 'as'. I have listed that persona as the author of the work for paintings produced with a single persona. If the painting is made with more than one persona and I am one of the acknowledged makers, authorship is retained for myself, as with *Concertinaed* (2017) (see Chapter One, Figure 17).

Nonetheless, the language I have opted to employ emphasises a separation from myself extending beyond the costuming. Using 'as' implies a necessity to attribute authorship of artworks created with Petra, Franzi, or Melusine to myself, which, as stated above, is incorrect and could prove problematic (see Introduction, 'Literature Review' (McCartney, 2018)). However, in this research project, the reason I chose 'with' instead of 'as' is that upon achieving a state of flow the personas became active participants in 'creating' the work as I worked *with* them internally. I was not the only presence in a painting's production any more than I was the only one present at my computer writing with Melusine's voice. However, unlike Fernando Pessoa and his heteronyms, after their arrival and laying out the scope of this doctoral research project, I acted intentionally and not as a conduit which the personas took over by an almost mystical means. Nor were the personas collaborators deserving of co-authorship credit in a creative undertaking, addressed further in Chapters Four and Five.

Returning to working with Petra Nimm, the first two years in the studio were focused on learning who she was, how she functioned, and how I could work with her. Video

documentation of embodying Petra, impossible with Melusine, aided the process. Repeated watching and editing of the videos to shorter versions to post on my research website (see APPENDIX B for links to all videos) revealed how physically different I was when working with Petra. Devising this PhD project, I considered what challenges working with painting personas might bring to my painting practice other than those offered by using another type of paint. For example, Petra is holding the brush in her left hand, although I am right-handed (see https://youtu.be/t39qXdr6q_M). Not ambidextrous, working with my non-dominant hand suggested a place to begin; forcing me to hold the brush and my body differently.

Additional to video documentation, photo-documentation of the paintings and drawings made with her, edited and posted on my research website, offered another layer of observation. Unlike videos, photos show less 'how' and more 'what', the resulting paintings. Following are some examples, including a description of Petra's process. The second section of Chapter Five, 'Before and After', presents a single painting and her process alongside a painting I made before she arrived and with an analysis of her impact corresponding to a painting I made after her departure. The first example [Figure 19] is from a group of ten 7 inches x 10 inches [17.5 x 25 cm] mixed media collage paintings on 300 gram Arches hot press watercolour paper, which began as part of the painting series that launched my painting with the personas —*Good Witches of the Between* (2016-2017).[18] Originating from scaled-down inkjet prints of shapes I collected in a sketchbook a few months before working with personas, these were painted mid-project. This project's practical method of cutting apart, reassembling and copying work to create new paintings through mechanical reproduction processes had solidified

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[18] The development of that work can be viewed on my research website through links found in the guide and given in APPENDIX A. APPENDIX C contains details on this and other series created in this PhD research project.

then, enabling me to explore a vocabulary of shapes and ideas by multiple means with each persona.[19]

Petra's brushing water on the inkjet print caused the colours to become fugitive, running and changing across the paper. Scraps of found paper scattered around the studio are then collaged on top of the printed shapes. Some of the papers offered connections between the personas. For instance, prints of Melusine's writing in Sütterlin script[20] (see Chapter Five, Figure 46) provided a means to join her in the visual work. Other bits of paper had spots and drips of blue paint from the third persona, Franzi, who will be introduced in the following sub-section. The top layer consists of paints, matte acrylic medium, acrylic gesso, enamel paint markers, and oil-based coloured pencils.

The finished paintings were photographed and scanned. One of two sets of the photos was printed on the same watercolour paper as the originals and left 'as is'. The second set was printed on standard weight, bright white printer paper, cut up and reassembled, mixing the shapes to create new paintings on larger Bristol paper sheets [Figure 20]. These collages became the basis for two trajectories of work with Petra. The first trajectory is a group of drawings with graphite pencil, and the second is another series of paintings. Petra took the lead in both until, at a point, I ceased working with her and continued them independently (see Chapter Five).

An example of the first trajectory [Figure 21] shows one of the drawings and a detail that began with Petra using graphite sticks to create frottages (rubbings) of the collages; the link to the third video cited earlier in this section documents this activity. Frottage is

[19]Photography, scanning, and printing
[20]A form of handwriting commonly used between the late Prussian Empire and the National Socialist Party's rise to power in 1930s Germany she wrote in as a connection back to her childhood when she was taught it by the older relatives who raised her. Notwithstanding teaching myself to write this script freehand with Melusine, it was still more efficient for me to use a computer font and trace the words with a fountain pen and blue ink, which corresponds to the reproduction processes used throughout by Petra and myself.

not a precise medium, and there was much excess graphite on the slightly cream-coloured, student-grade drawing paper chosen for its lightweight quality. After the rubbing stage was complete, the drawing was hung on my studio wall. Using an eraser, Petra removed the excess marks, defining the shapes.

The contrast between the higher and lower layers of the collage resulted in variations in value and led Petra to select specific pencil hardnesses for overdrawing and erasing. Making these drawings was very slow, with numerous stops and starts over two years. After the first two drawings were complete, I stopped working on the series with Petra and set it aside for the winter. The following spring, I resumed working on the drawings alone —without Petra— and completed about half before storing them in the flat file. Picking them up a year later, I completed the final drawing alone in June (2020). Figure 22 shows the shift in 'touch' between the first drawing by Petra playing and the last by me; I will return to this example when discussing impacts in the final section of Chapter Five.

Figure 19: *Untitled* (2018), mixed media paintings made working as myself and with the persona, Petra Nimm. Photos by the author.

Figure 20: The next version of the paintings shown in Figure 19. Photos by the author.
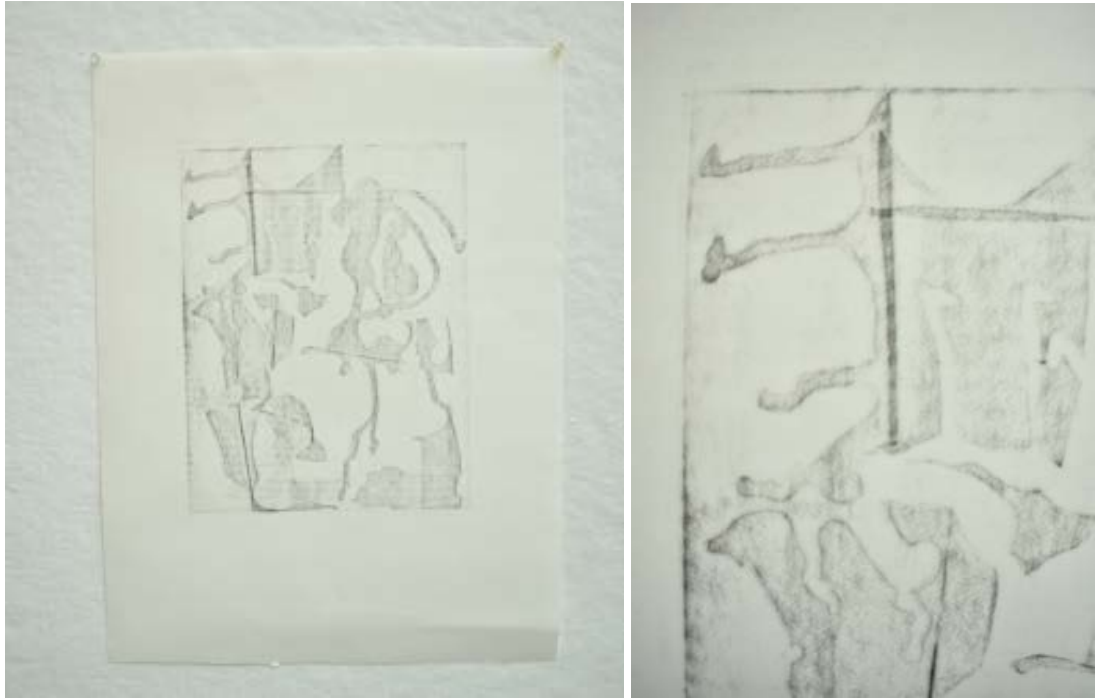
Figure 21: (Left) A frottage-drawing in the early stage of erasing. (Right) Detail.
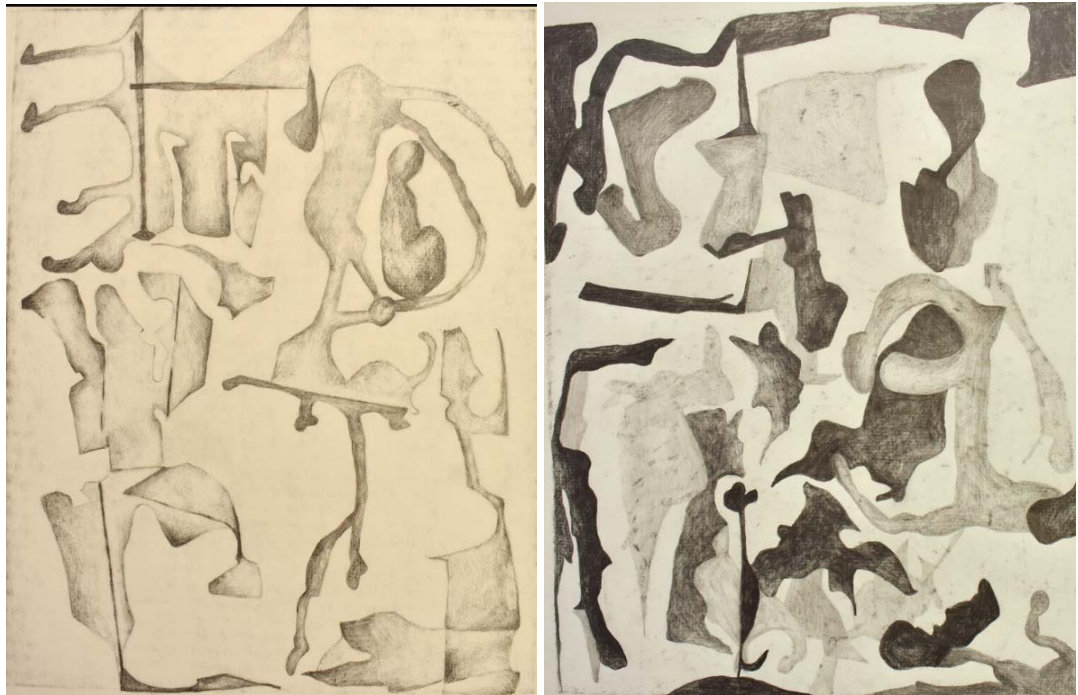Photos by the author.

Figure 22: (Left) First and (Right) last-frottage drawings in this series (2018-2020).
Photos by the author.

The transformation of collages into paintings consisted of sealing the paper with acrylic medium followed by various shades of blue acrylic paint applied by the third persona, Franzi, who is discussed in the following sub-section. Out of the blue —literally— and working without a persona, I drew out other shapes from the edges of the blue shapes with a layer of thinned acrylic gesso which pooled and feathered out from the collaged paper's raised edges. Petra returned, adding watercolour.[21] Finally, once more working alone, I added layers of black and white oil paint glazes, sanding between coats to create the shapes forming the paint's uppermost surface [Figure 24],[22] and titling it *One in Three* (2018). The painting's formal subject, 'figure-ground reversal', alludes to the constant shift between its makers. The black and white theme reverts to the first joint painting venture with the two personas [Figure 23], *One Painting Three* (March 2017), which also leans formally and conceptually on figure-ground reversal and the triune configuration of its makers.[23]

Figure 23: *One Painting Three* (2017). Left painting, acrylic with Franzi. Centre painting, oil without personas. Right painting, watercolour with Petra. Photo by the author.

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[21] A video link showing this step is available in APPENDIX B.
[22] The paintings were later mounted onto 11 x 14 inch [27.5 x 35 cm] canvas wrapped MDF painting boards for their rigidity.
[23]Documentation of that painting's making can be viewed on my research website, see APPENDIX A: https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/3/12/one-painting-three

Figure 24: (Left, Upper and Lower) Two paintings from the series of mixed media paintings *One in Three* (2018). (Right, Upper and Lower) Detail. Photos by the author.

One iteration does not flow directly into the next in this PhD project's painting process. Instead —as in life— a single step is traceable to a previous step to become another point in the series or launching a new set of paintings in which the process then repeats. After *One in Three* (2018), I returned to working with Petra on a series of miniature collage paintings [Figure 25] mounted with acrylic medium onto 8 inches x 10 inches [20 x 25 cm] canvas-covered panels. Similar to *One in Three* (2018) [Figure 24], a brushstroke texture on the paper's surface to mask its inherent smoothness with a fluid and painterly gesture was applied. The third persona (Franzi) added his trademark blue as graphic bands framing these picture's edges.

Integrating the knowledge gained embodying the painting personas and intuitively applying what I had learned and stored in my mind, remembering how it felt physically to move, wield the brush, mix the paint, and direct air across it as Petra or Franzi, I worked less with them and more as myself. This shift signaled the transition between Stage 2 and Stage 3 which will be discussed in Chapter Five. Comparable to the paintings in Figure 24, I added thin glazes of black and white oil paint to these 'late Stage 2' paintings, alternating between making very loose marks and masking off with the painter's tape, creating sharper geometric shapes that floated in and across the picture plane rather than being guided by the cut edges of the underlying shapes to create new organic shapes. I played with the paint's surface qualities by mixing in marble dust, damar and additional oils, lifting off with tracing paper pieces or sanding. Finally, the paintings' orientation shifted from portrait [Figure 19] to landscape [Figure 25] and back to portrait [Figure 26].
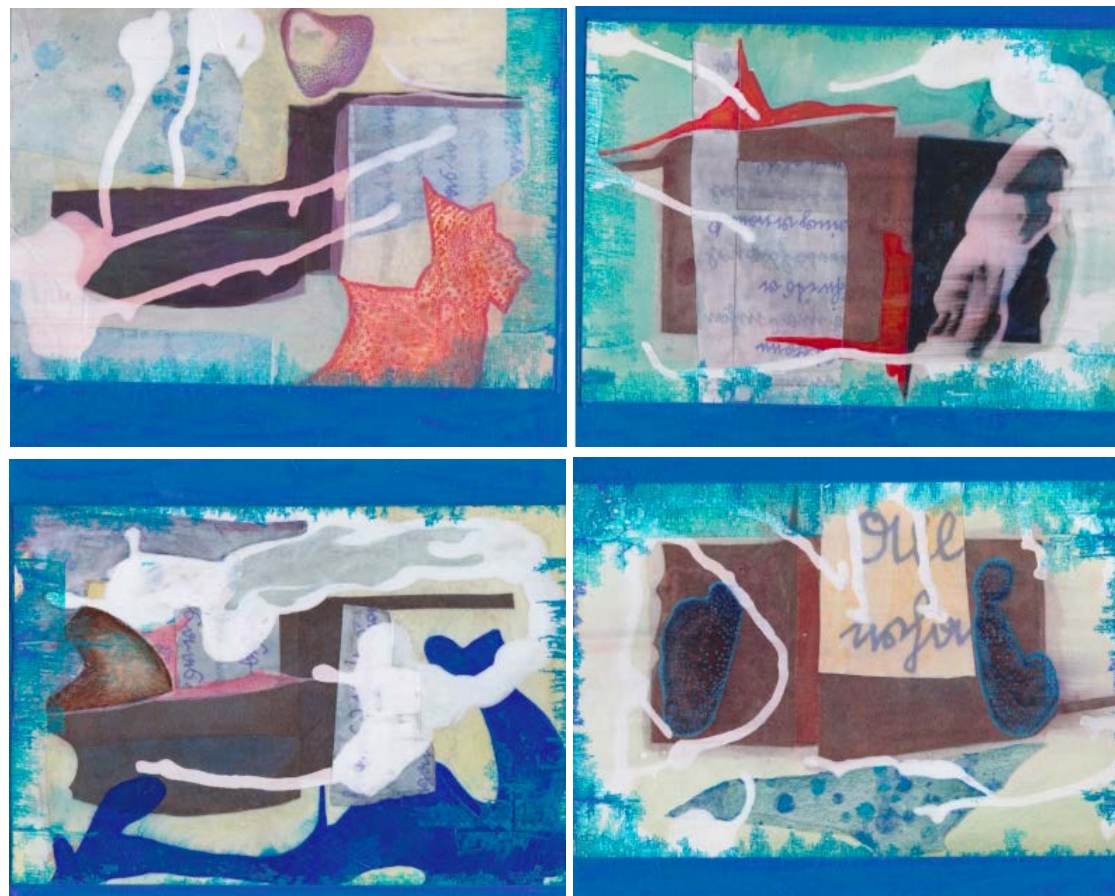
Figure 25: Continuation of the *Untitled* mixed media paintings working as
myself and together with the two painting persona shown in Figure 19.
Photos by the author.

Figure 26: Final version of the *Untitled* (2019) mixed media paintings shown in
Figures 19 and 25. Photos by the author.

Commensurate to the frottage drawings, these ten paintings required more time to make than the earlier series. Uncertain if this slowing down was precipitated solely by the personas or other factors and which will be addressed further in the Conclusion, it is essential to note that there was a noticeable change in time spent on the work. Momentarily stopping did not seem to end the work as the methods of reiteration, and at times it led to new starts using other materials and formal devices such as orientation and scale. While writing this section on Petra (late Stage 3 —see Introduction, 'Research Methodology'), I produced another group of nineteen paintings originating from the frottage drawings [Figure 27]. This most recent series of 5 inches x 7 inches [12.5 x 17.5 cm] paintings on repurposed blank postcards consist of watercolour and gouache on inkjet prints of photos taken of the finished frottage drawings shown [Figures 21 and 22].

Working with Petra entailed using a wide variety of highly fluid media for painting and more common and dry yet slippery media —graphite pencils— for drawing to approach shape and other formal aspects of painting. The second of the painting personas, introduced in the subsequent sub-section, offered another approach to painting that, unlike Petra, was not only formal but contained psychological and conceptual elements —playful humour— à la Melusine.

Figure 27: Four of nineteen *Untitled* (2020) watercolour and gouache paintings derived from the frottage drawings shown in Figures 21 and 22. Photos by the author

Franz Ignatius Walsh

The third persona, Franz Ignatius Walsh, is a painter of sorts. Filled with the self-doubt many artists face, Franzi does not always see himself as one, but he is. As an artist's assistant, Franzi's life purpose is to help others make their creative visions real —and that is how he sees himself; a helper rather than a maker. With age I think how wonderful it might be to have a studio assistant, so having Franzi as my imaginary assistant fulfilled this little wish. He makes paintings from discarded works and the leftover materials of the artists he works for. Unlike Melusine, who just appeared, and Petra, who arrived by chance, Franzi showed up when I needed help.

This project evolved from two personas, Melusine and Petra, and I was unsure if it would have more. Looking for additional and flexible income sources, I posted an advertisement offering my services as an artist's assistant. The first response came from a man and began, 'If you're a woman …' and proceeded to request assistance in his studio of a sexual nature, offering to buy me a coffee or a meal first. Extremely offended, my instinct was to ignore it. Nevertheless, I thought, why not play with it —humour myself— and along came Franzi. Because the email writer specifically made his request conditional to my being a woman, Franzi —a seasoned studio assistant— became a male. Writing back on my behalf, saying if he was given a chance, he was very eager to do the job despite his gender. To his dismay Franzi received no reply. With his voice leading the writing like Melusine's, I took down a response that clarified that the request was not okay in a slightly saucy way. I might not have found work as an artist's assistant, but I gained an assistant for myself —Franz Ignatius Walsh.

Franzi's naming is meaningful because, in my mind, Franzi looked like what I envisioned Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whose films I had been watching might have

become had he lived into his senior years. Franzi received a biography, personality, and name fitting a minor Fassbinder character, whom the filmmaker often portrayed in his film and theatre works where incongruity enables comedy to emerge, even if indeterminant (Bird, 2010). Not a significant player, Franzi is the type who could and possibly would do anything, a character who questions, misunderstands or ignores boundaries, resulting in sometimes humorous situations. Thus, Franzi exists for me as a collision of identities, an 'odd fit' between cultures and situations, able to find resolution by being himself —no matter how awkward. Occasionally, when Fassbinder appeared in his films or took on production roles beyond writing and directing, he listed himself in the closing credits by a pseudonym (Bird, 2010). For instance, he frequently used a particular name, the minor character he portrayed in *Der Amerikanische Soldat* (1970) and the leading character portrayed by Harry Baer in *Götter der Pest* (1970) is named 'Franz Walsch' (Bird, 2010).[24] My 'Franz Ignatius Walsh' could play a minor or supporting role in this artistic research project, or he could be the lead; in any case, he would help produce this project.

Although Franzi is past his prime and pudgy, unaware of how others see him, he knows his small and sensitive, always helpful internal self well. This misalignment between the external —what others see— and internal —knowledge of the self— is the sign of a confused identity. As I worked with Franzi, this confusion led to surprising and somewhat oddly comedic experiences and revelations with paint. My movements were an awkward, heavy, painful shuffling when embodying Franzi. Everything was an effort requiring my entire being; Franzi's massive body haphazardly poured or slapped on with a house painter's brush paint. Then the hair dryer would come out.

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[24]Fassbinder listed himself as Franz Walsch in the role of editor on *Spiel der Verlierer* (1978). The name 'Franz' was taken in homage to the protagonist Franz Bieberkopf in Alfred Döblins novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), which the director filmed for German television (1980) (Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation, 2017). At the same time, the last name 'Walsh' (sometimes 'Walsh') is a homage to director Raoul Walsh, whose film *White Heat* (1949) served as inspiration for the ending of Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979) (BFI —British Film Institute, 2018).

Moreover, in an equally rough manner, thinned paint would be blown into and across puddles, forming filigree tracings of strokes across the painting's surface, landing with almost rude gestures and transformed by the hot air into intricate networks. Franzi quickly added many layers to a painting that appeared relatively stable and flat from a distance. On closer examination, the solidity dissipates through the complexity of the layering into lightness and depth. He brings to paint the combination of strength, weight, and vulnerability with a splash —literally— of humour, dropping or knocking over a paint container frequently due to his lumbering, clumsy movements. If it were me and my painting, I would have been distraught and frustrated, but with Franzi, those moments became a mixture of 'oh well' and slapstick. He would mop up the paint and move on, often without even wiping his hands off.

Franzi and his paintings are a paradox between the outer surface and the internal layers forming it. The minimal, simple blue rectangle or square paintings are highly worked and intricately elaborate. Hot air from the blow dryer yields multiple results:

1. It moves the paint thinned with water and vast amounts of acrylic mediums to increase plasticity.
2. It speeds up drying.
3. It causes the pigment and binder to separate and produce an opulent effect.
4. The paint reticulates from the heat.

Surface skins form and quickly peel away as they separate from the wet paint beneath, often making a skipping trail of wet paint as they bounce along the surface, transforming what should produce flatness into bumpy, scabby surfaces as they dry. Not so much a signature style as a signature colour, the many shades of blue Franzi wields are always a mixture, often only optically through his layering process. Franzi belongs to the generation of artists inspired by the Abstract Expressionists and influenced by Situationists International, notably Yves Klein (1928 - 1962), and his blue is a play on Klein and his trademarked International Klein Blue (IKB), itself in the

lineage of Duchamp by declaring atypical objects or items art and using non-artistic means to create artworks. However, he is far from sharing Klein's ideology, confidence or daring. Franzi does not leap into the void; he might shuffle or fall into it half-wittingly. His blue paintings are not a single trademarked pigment, but a composite of different blues on widely varied scavenged surfaces underscoring the disparateness of what might be seen and what is seen when looking closer.

Franzi's first paintings were on recycled cardboard which I will address in Chapter Five as they provide more insight relative to the impact of his methods on my paintings' post personas. Later, paintings were made on recycled canvases. Another example from Stage 2 [Figure 28] of this project shows how the paint layers became thinner and more refined, with less emphasis on the skins that formed and more on the reticulation of the pigments, now including metallic acrylic paints, and the lines of blown paint coalescing to a field of blue. Like with Petra, Franzi at work is documented in videos.[25] Using various colours to start his paintings (see Chapter Five, 'Before and After'), but with a stockpile of blues in my studio, Franzi utilised what might not be missed to make the 'bluish-field' his own. Like Melusine's acerbic wit and Petra's fluidity, these composite blues served as a visual foothold for Franzi. Even where the blue appears to be painted 'fat and flat', it is pretty lean, much like the paint in Figure 25. The blue paint around the edge was so thin that it bled under the tape and onto the picture's paper portion. Like Franzi, the paint's application contradicts how it is perceived.

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[25]See APPENDIX B for a list of links available for viewing, including the making of Figure 41: https://youtu.be/Y2dsMX_0H7Q. Two shorter videos that show Franzi's process are: https://youtu.be/nTQHTrb5-f4 and https://youtu.be/7cYhNIkNpbc.
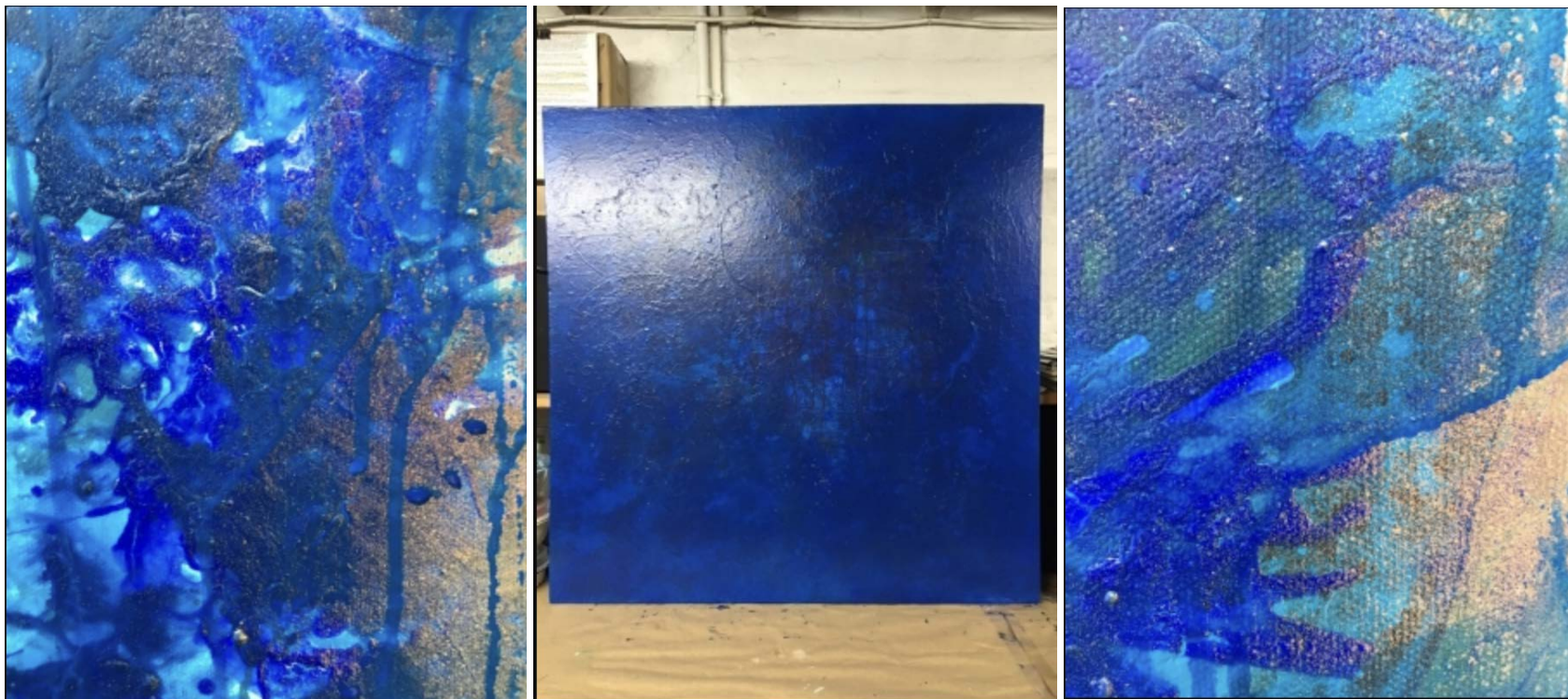
Figure 28: *Franzi's Painting* (2017). Acrylic paint on a 36 inch square canvas (centre, details left and right). Photos by author.

Playful Conversation and Self-Talk

Through play, the personas became integral parts of my conversation with painting. This conversation's topics explicitly address authenticity and how a painting is presented and perceived (see Chapters One and Two). Elements of this conversation, the thoughts and knowledge informing it appear as parts of each persona's story and influenced how they functioned as tools within my practice and this doctoral research project it leads. With Petra and Franzi, this conversation happens through the material and in the paintings and drawings they produced. Likewise, with Melusine, the conversation occurred through her medium, words. A conversation between Melusine and myself, *Inamorata Non Autentica: Marcel Duchamp, Rrose Sélavy, Melusine and Me* (2018) is, like Petra's and Franzi's paintings, an example of her creative function within this project, and it illustrates the playful means through which my research and thoughts on Duchamp, 'David Bowie' and persons with a persona are synthesised. This lengthy conversation, included as APPENDIX E, is essential to this project as it combines both the practical studio inquiry with scholarly research. For this reason, concluding this chapter, and as a segue to the next on playing and its impact, is a critical examination of internal conversation —self-talk— as a device uniting my research.

Self-talk, or 'talking to oneself' silently (internally) or out loud (externally), is considered normal conduct (Mari-Beffa, 2017); has proven benefits to human behaviour, cognition, and learning progress (Lepadatu, 2012: 283-287); serves as a tool to provide an objective means of self-reflection to improve physical performance (Boroujeni and Shahbazi, 2011: 3113-3117); or as a means to self distance for an effective, productive and positive ruminative process (Kross et al., 2014: 304-324).

From a viewpoint of cognitive science, conversations are 'a joint activity' where 'two or more participants use linguistic forms and nonverbal signals to communicate interactively' and 'not simply a sequence of messages expressed as speaking turns, produced by speakers, and received decoded by addressees. Conversations are structured into adjacency pairs' (Brennan, 2010: 1). In the conversational analysis, *adjacency pairs* are units of conversation, utterances both verbal and non-verbal, dividing the turn of exchange —turn-taking— between speakers in a conversation (Brennan, 2010: 1). This turn-taking is exemplified by Melusine and me (see APPENDIX E) as follows:

Myself: I haven't seen you since Berlin. Where have you been?

[first turn]

Melusine: No place you would know or have been.

[first adjacency pair]

[second turn]

Myself: Must you always be so snide?

[second adjacency pair]

[third turn]

Melusine: Am I being snide? Apologies.

[third adjacency pair]

Understanding the meaning of utterances in conversation depends on each utterance and the context in which they occur (Brennan, 2010: 1). Relationship conditions and how we communicate are established by words and turns taken in the opening lines of Melusine and my conversation. The second turn precipitates the third turn, signifying

this is not a submissive relationship but of dominant personalities. The turn-taking adds context to the utterances lending meaning to the relationship between the conversation participants. Similarly, working with the personas is grounded in turn-taking of this sort.

When a conversation is simply between two participants, 'dialogue' is often used interchangeably with 'conversation' (Brennan, 2010: 1). David W. Angel (2016) defines *dialogue* as having a two-way cooperation style, exchanging information, and building relationships. Angel's dialogue is a conversation but hardly what Melusine and I appear to be having. Conversation participants are not 'speaking at' but 'speaking with' each other; they hear and respond to what others contribute. They are not competitively promoting their agenda but are interested in other perspectives. Angel's definition differs somewhat from dialogue as understood in the Socratic tradition, where Plato's retelling of Socrates' dialogues takes a form more akin to 'speaking at' than a 'speaking with' (Wortel and Verweij, 2008: 54-72). However, these Socratic dialogues provide us with a method grounded in questioning (Munns, 2001). Throughout our conversation, Melusine and I shift between 'speaking at' not only as competitors but also in a Socratic manner and 'speaking with' —having a conversation.

Erving Goffman (1976: 257-313) defined *conversation* as casual and taking place in everyday settings where people get together to give equal attention to shared focus. Goffman's sociological definition sounds similar to Angel's definition of dialogue and what Brennan describes as 'real conversation,' by which she declares it 'shaped by the coordinated behaviours of speakers and addressees' neither pre-written nor edited (2010: 2). Summarising the differences between conversation and dialogue, the former is more informal, based on speaking with rather than speaking at —non-hierarchical— the latter occurs with a more cooperative spirit. The conversation between Melusine and

me takes place in an informal setting, my studio, my practice and my mind, and moves between conversation and dialogue, with me aiming for the latter as Melusine insists upon for the former.

Before starting this PhD project, my conversations were not simple self-talk or rumination; they were with an unknown and variable 'someone' other than myself. Perhaps this someone was a composite of others I have chatted with about painting in the past or, potentially, my inner critic. The conversation was not a monologue, and it always consisted of two voices conversing in a casual, natural manner. Melusine evolved through a process of storytelling: short narratives, poems, and email exchanges. As the first persona to arrive, she became that unidentifiable someone I conversed with within my studio, not a painter but a writer —or even more: just a talker. Without a doubt, she is someone who plays.

This chapter presented this project's practical research —the studio inquiry— and how 'personas' were developed and incorporated into my painting practice. One of these ways of working with the non-painter persona, Melusine, was through a conversation method related to the 'self-talk' that is a natural part of my painting practice. The scholarly research on conversations and self-talk provided insight into that part of my painting practice, revealing that my self-talk is part of the conversation I have with the field of painting in my practice occurring separately from the material. In this research project, I applied the conversation method to the non-practical research in chats I had with artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent on how they incorporate alternative identities into their practices. The following chapter, Chapter Four, focuses on the information imparted by those conversations. Subsequently, in Chapter Five, I will analyse the use and impact of the personas described in this chapter.

**CHAPTER FOUR: Alternative Identities in Contemporary
Visual Arts Practices**

As described in Chapter Three, personas exemplify how I used alternative identities in this doctoral research project. This chapter presents three visual artists utilising another form of alternative identities in their practices in other ways. Here, in place of 'alternative', I will use 'fictive' as a prefix describing these identities, which is the term adopted by Rubens Ghenov and accepted by Plinio Avila and Caroline Kent in our conversations as fitting to the identities with which they also work. 'Fictive' denotes the identity's origin in storytelling, a fiction with independent roots instead of merely an alternative to the artist's identity. There are similarities and differences between Plinio Avila's, Rubens Ghenov's, and Caroline Kent's intentions and use of fictive identities in their practices and their impact, which are addressed in this chapter relative to mine with the personas in this project.

The creative practices of Avila, Kent and Ghenov, are founded on two-dimensional image-making —for Avila, printmaking and painting, and painting for Ghenov and Kent. Common to all three is that their incorporation of alternative identities is not performance-based. Caroline Kent (b. 1975, Illinois/USA) describes her practice as an 'expanded painting practice' that, along with paintings on canvas and linen, includes sculptural objects, installations, text-based drawings, and writing to explore language, translation, and abstraction (Kent, 2022). Plinio Avila (b. 1977, Zacatecas/Mexico) trained as a painter in Antwerp/Belgium and the United States as a collaborative master printmaker for artists' prints. In conjunction with his art practice, Avila directs a printmaking studio and a museum and is co-founder and co-director of an art production studio in Mexico City, where he is based. When asked to define his practice, Avila notes that it is 'difficult to define anything; when I define, I end up doing something else' (Avila, 2022). Rubens Ghenov (b. 1975, São Paulo/Brazil) characterises his practice as 'triadic', comprised of painting, storytelling, and sound (Ghenov, 2020).

I first encountered the paintings of Rubens Ghenov in his second solo exhibition of traditional, smaller-scale abstract paintings.[26] The splendidly painted acrylic on canvas or linen collage-like paintings were complex constructions of geometric and organic shapes in a mixture of moody, solid, rough, and fluid colours; some applied to create an ombre effect. Barely legible, Dada-Esque words in varying fonts seemingly snipped from the pages of unknown historical sources were now housed in these pictures' flat yet deep architectural spaces. Ghenov's evocation of the span of twentieth-century abstraction was apparent. However, I was unsure if I saw the deceased fictive poet he created, Angelico Morandá, who was purported to be their inspiration in reviews or the press release (Olda, 2016). The titles and the words in some of the paintings —a mixture of English, Portuguese and invented language could be the contents of Morandá's poems; however, the paintings offered little clue to the poet's presence visually. If I had not read of his existence, Morandá would have remained hidden from me. Naming him in the press release made his existence appear crucial to the work. Nonetheless, because I found it difficult to see him, mentioning Morandá left me questioning if referring to him in words accompanying the paintings mattered. After viewing the exhibition, I searched for more information about the painter and poet but found little additional information.

In January 2018, I attended an artist's talk by Plinio Avila on his fictive identity, Humberto Márquez, the core element of his solo exhibition *El Traidor/The Traitor*.[27] The exhibition's premise was that Avila would curate a retrospective of the work of his late maternal great-uncle, a forgotten Mexican artist. The latter had recently passed away and left his archive to Avila. The archive consists of a trove of old photographs

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[26] *Accoutrements in Marwa, an Interlude in Sliver*, 19 May - 18 June 2016 Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York City/USA. This exhibition featured a selection of paintings predominantly 20 x 16 inches with a few in the four by five-foot range.
[27] September 2013, Polyforum Siqueiros, Mexico City/Mexico.

and films documenting Márquez's activities as an assistant to the prominent Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896 - 1974), painting the Polyform's mural, *La Marcha de la Humanidad* (1967 - 1971), along with writings, drawings, and plans for unrealised or lost artworks. Alongside the artworks from Márquez re-created by Avila, the exhibition included the photographs and silent film footage, with additional audio recordings of Márquez recollecting on the construction of the cultural venue. Avila invited his mother, Márquez's niece, to speak about her uncle at the opening reception. The snapshots, some black and white and others faded Kodachrome, and the Super8 film footage depicted a younger man, purportedly Humberto Márquez, bearing a striking resemblance to Avila in conversation with Siqueiros. The young man was Avila photoshopped into the pictures and film footage.[28] Humberto Márquez's story was fascinating.[29] However, I realised certain elements and motivating factors for Avila, which I will address shortly, differed from my intentions of implementing personas in my painting practice.

Scanning *The New York Times* online (16 November 2020), I stumbled upon 'The Artist Questionnaire' featuring Caroline Kent, a painter unknown to me, who confronts 'the modernist canon of abstraction'; she had recently exhibited an installation set around fictional telepathic twins and their cryptic means of communicating, which loosely relate to the shapes in her paintings (Pelley, 2020).[30] Unfortunately, there was no more information on the twins in that article. The online press release for Kent's exhibition stated: that this was the first version of an ongoing project; the fictional twin sisters were named after the artist's mother, communicate intimately across a divide of space

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[28]The voice on the recordings is Avila's father.

[29]Lack of recognition, a falling out with Siqueiros, and the political turmoil of October 1968 had driven Humberto Márquez away from Mexico to Berlin/Germany, where he established himself as an architect and his artistic activities were forgotten, not only by the Mexican art world but also by his family.

[30]*Victoria/Veronica: The figment between us.*13 September - 24 October 2020, Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Chicago/USA. Tiger Strikes Asteroid is a non-profit network of independently programmed, artist-run exhibition spaces with locations throughout the United States. Kent's exhibition took place in the Chicago location. Rubens Ghenov has also exhibited at Tiger Strikes Asteroid in their Philadelphia and Brooklyn,NY locations.

and time via drawings, paintings, and hand-made objects by employing a vocabulary of abstract shapes and forms found in Kent's paintings, sculptures and the space in which their communication devices are installed (Tiger Strikes Asteroid Chicago, 2020). The following year, Kent's second installation, created under the influence of Victoria and Veronica,[31] along with a solo exhibition of her recent paintings minus the twins,[32] to be discussed later in this section, provided no additional information.

Storytelling

These three artists' practices share the significance of storytelling through fictive identities. Equally important are the words each chooses to describe them, comparable to the naming of alternative identities (see Chapter Three). Along with their names, whose origins I will address later in this chapter, these descriptors are how viewers first encounter the fictive identities, typically through press releases, which connect them to the exhibition. For instance, none uses the term 'alter ego' (see opening of Introduction), a clear distinction between the artist and the fictive identity who is not an alternative to the artist's identity. Further, employing the term 'fictive' to describe the identities denotes a fictional narrative driving the artists' practice. Finally, a sequence of words characterising the identity, emphasising who they are and how they might be understood, is common to each: Angelico Morandá is a fictional *deceased unpublished Spanish poet* (Olda, 2016); Humberto Márquez is the fictional *late maternal great-uncle forgotten Mexican artist* (Avila, 2018); Victoria and Veronica are a fictional set of *telepathic identical twins separated by time and space and communicating through drawings, paintings and hand-made objects* (Tiger Strikes Asteroid Gallery Chicago, 2020).

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[31] *Chicago Works: Caroline Kent.* 3 August 2021 - 12 June 2022, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago/USA.
[32] *Proclamations From The Deep: Caroline Kent*. 9 September - 23 October 2022, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York City/USA.

Identifying the differences in each artist's storytelling approach requires a deeper awareness of how they describe what they do. Painting is vital in Ghenov's and Kent's practices, and both are generally classified as 'abstract' painters in press releases and reviews. However, Ghenov does not consider himself an abstract painter, at least not in a non-representational sense akin to the German idea of an object-less (Gegenstandslosigkeit) abstraction, and no matter how abstract they appear, his paintings are representational, more akin to still life painting (Ghenov, 2022).

Contrastingly, Kent's paintings are straightforwardly abstract, acrylic paintings on large unstretched canvases of colourful solid and transparent shapes emerging from a black gesso ground with no recognisable external references. Avila also paints, but his practice is conceptual, not painting. Humberto Márquez and his story provide Avila with a way to make conceptual artworks he felt he could not otherwise make (Avila, 2022). For Kent, the story of the twins enabled her to create a different context for viewing her artwork in installations Kent, 2022). Finally, Angelico Morandá's story lends Ghenov a framework to speak about his triadic practice (Ghenov, 2022).

The roots of Ghenov's triadic practice lay in literature, where fact and fiction co-mingle, and stories are freely told. Due to the difficulties of discerning fact from fiction in their writing, three writers frequently cited by Ghenov are Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821 - 1881), Jorge Luis Borges (1899 - 1986), and Fernando Pessoa (1888 - 1935); the location of their writing is where Ghenov seeks to situate his painting practice (Ghenov, 2022). 'Art is the ultimate absorber. Why can it not absorb conditions that are part of the literary world or simply invented things we humans partake of?' (Ghenov, 2022). Further, as Ghenov asserted:

> [In *Crime and Punishment* (1866)] Dostoevsky is not Raskolnikov. There is Dostoevsky in Raskolnikov … Why are literary figures allowed such a pass in that fictive space, but we visual artists are constantly being told to speak of our own reality solely through the lens of what I have experienced. That has always been problematic to me. (Ghenov, 2022)

The artist's first incorporation of identities other than his own in his practice, a body of work titled 'The Three MCs' (2003-2008), included 'real people' —Dostoevsky, John Coltrane, and the artist's late father— whom he created fictional stories around. Ghenov revealed that during that period, while showing students a video of the work of contemporary American artist Trenton Doyle Hancock (b. 1974), he had the revelation that, like Hancock, storytelling is what he was already doing (Ghenov, 2022).[33]

Hancock's unabashed incorporation of a purely fictive narrative drives his visual art-making practice and inspired Rubens Ghenov to develop a fully cohesive fictive narrative around fictive identities to lead his practice. Succinctly, visual artists, like writers, occupy fictive spaces through various storytelling forms in their practices. Hancock is one of these visual artists. However, Caroline Kent also cited Hancock as an example of a direction she did not want her work with the twins to develop. Kent conveyed that, in her opinion, Hancock has become known as the 'Mounds guy', a singular visual identity (Kent, 2022). Kent feels that close identification with fictive characters narrows the potential expansion that working with fictive identities can bring to visual art practices. She does not want her work to become only associated with Victoria and Veronica, nor does she want her work to become their work, as with Plinio Avila and Humberto Márquez. In our conversation, Avila remarked that as much as he enjoys creating the work of Humberto Márquez, he harbours animosity towards his fictional great-uncle, which has cast a long shadow over making art as himself as he has

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[33] Ghenov and Hancock met at Temple University's Tyler School of Art while Ghenov was an undergraduate and Hancock was pursuing his Master of Fine Arts degree.

become identified with a single concept and way of working (Avila, 2022). For Avila, the question is where to go next, to continue telling or end the story.

Due to Ghenov and Kent differing on Hancock's use of fictive identities, it is essential to distinguish Hancock's intentions for the 'Mounds' creatures and the intended function of fictional identities for the artists I interviewed. First, although mythical, they represent his story and serve as filters for his thoughts and experiences; they are tied to his identity (Hancock, 2019).[34] Nevertheless, because of their quantity, they lend themselves to continually developing the narrative by repeated telling from various vantage points (Hancock, 2019). Second, as Ghenov pointed out, Hancock's approach is tied to the freedom to tell a complex, continuous tale that co-mingles fact and fiction in ways similar to literary traditions; Kent spoke not to his use of a sustained narrative but to the visual aspects of his work in her remarks on Hancock. Significantly, how Hancock tells this story visually via the characters differs from Ghenov and Kent. Hancock draws from the tradition of comics, animation, graphic novels and the iconography of popular culture so that the Mounds illustrate the story as much as they are the story. Like the personas in this project, the fictive identities employed by Ghenov and Kent never illustrate or serve as the primary imagery of artworks.

Unlike Ghenov and Kent, Humberto Márquez appears embodied by Avila in snapshots and films of the fictional artist's performances. Avila's conjuring of 'historic' images of Márquez could be understood as nearing Hancock's approach in that the character is more than a conceptual background to the story; he is visually situated in its foreground. Further, as the story of Humberto Márquez began to develop, Avila said: 'it started to look like my own career' (Avila, 2022). Embodying Márquez was accompanied by

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[34]Information from the exhibition *Trenton Doyle Hancock, Mind of the Mound: Critical Mass,* MASSMOCA, North Adams, MA/USA 9 March - 3 November 2019. I viewed the exhibition on 15 March 2019 during a general visit to the museum.

thoughts about what it would be like to be once-promising but now forgotten; rehearsing worst-case scenario thoughts of never being recognised as an artist but only as a printer or fabricator for other artists and then asking himself how bad can that be (Avila, 2022).

However, unlike the Mounds for Hancock, Márquez does not represent or function solely as a filter for Avila's life, thoughts, and experiences. Avila asserted that because Avila is not Humberto Márquez, Humberto Márquez is not exclusive to Plinio Avila; therefore, anyone could take over and 'become' Humberto Márquez, creating or re-creating conceptual artworks in the same manner and attributing them to the late fictive artist (Avila, 2022). Ghenov is not Morandá, and Kent is not Veronica and Victoria. Although neither artist has used autobiographical elements as similar to Avila's in their stories or embodies their fictional identities, it is not easy to imagine someone else taking over their characters as Avila proposes is possible with Humberto Márquez. Because the fictional identities were explicitly created for each artist's practice, Ghenov to communicate what he does, and Kent to expand what and how she exhibits, they and their story would not function elsewhere. Of the three artists interviewed, Plinio Avila is the only one to collaborate with the fictive identity he has devised by making artworks attributed to Humberto Márquez. However, as a master printmaker and director of an art production studio, collaboration is inherent to Avila's creation process, making the possibility for others to become Humberto Márquez a logical part of his story.

Inspiration and Growth

Meditative rituals and mantras are generative means within Ghenov's practice and part of Morandá's story. Morandá, his meditative rituals and their paraphernalia serve as a conceptual focal point for Ghenov, representing ways of thinking and being. Although

the items associated with Morandá's rituals are objects, not concepts, Ghenov has chosen to term these 'mantras' because they are used, like words or sounds, to aid the poet's concentration by their representation of ritual concepts. In 'Ten mantras for Rubens Ghenov' (2012), the artist wrote that his mantras are the repetitive instruments of thought hovering over his creative process, the objects, sounds, and tasks he surrounds himself with daily in the studio. The tenth mantra Ghenov listed was Algia Adamus, a fictive identity and the string that ties the bundle of Ghenov's mantras together before Morandá. I propose the tenth mantra is not Adamus per se; it is the notion of a fictive identity that serves as the narrative source framing the items of Ghenov's interests, the inspirations of his practice. Just as the story of Humberto Márquez began to resemble the career of Plinio Avila (Avila, 2022), the story of Algia Adamus morphed into the story of Angelico Morandá and the rituals of his poetic practice, his mantras, which also resembled those of Ghenov.

Caroline Kent's adoption of fictive identities is more recent than Ghenov's and Avila's, and, accordingly, the narrative and its expression in and relationship to her practice is less advanced, which is not to be understood negatively. From our conversation, I believe there is great potential for growth in the story of Victoria and Veronica and what they bring to Kent's practice. Kent explained that although she had been considering working with fictional identities for quite a while, the idea of the twins only began to coalesce after a 2018 visit to her maternal family in Mexico (Kent, 2022). The artist pointed out that it is a slow process; '… it took me time to create the thread between them, and I think this can be an issue for a lot of artists, but I have found that all these decisions were really in service to me enjoying my practice (Kent, 2022)'. Kent also attributed a hesitancy to work with fictive identities sooner to feeling that doing so, such

as Theaster Gates had done in the early 2000s, was now passé (Kent, 2022).[35] Another

two years passed before Victoria and Veronica became part of her artwork when Tiger

Strikes Asteroid Chicago provided the space to try something different. Eventually, the

artist decided her goal was to make the right kind of conceptual connections so that she

could do what she wanted without it being so disparate:

> I wanted to do something that was inventive. I wanted something that was more
> Sci-fi. I used to wrack my brain thinking how do I get abstract painting to
> engage these subjects of science fiction, the literary, writing, um… different
> personalities. I think I realized that language, this abstract language, could then
> fit into these different frameworks … and if I shift the framework, then the
> framework can change, but the language can stay the same … and how we
> understand the work can then shift and change. (Kent, 2022)

Corresponding to Ghenov, for Kent, the fictive identities function as part of the

framework of her practice. The shift of the framework rather than the language Kent

refers to is a shift in the conceptual substrate that is not readily visible to the viewer in

the language of abstraction the artist employs. Kent has not veered into making objects

that differ visually from the paintings and sculptures she was making prior to the twins'

creation. In contrast, via Humberto Márquez, Plinio Avila created different artwork

from what he made prior, which was his intention.

Victoria and Veronica are, as yet, not integral to it in the same way as Morandá to

Ghenov or even Márquez to Avila. Ghenov began working with identities other than his

own in the early 2000s. Moreover, he has worked with Angelico Morandá for over a

decade. Morandá is not a project or an artwork of Ghenov's practice; he is a critical

component of his practice. Contrastingly, Humberto Márquez is a project, but one that

has also lasted for nearly a decade. So far, Victoria and Veronica have only manifested

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[35]Kent was referring to Gates' exhibition *Plate Convergence* at the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago/USA [9
September - 2 November 2007] in which he created an elaborate narrative for the works featured in the
exhibition involving their creation by a fictional identity. The narrative carried over into the exhibition's
reception functioning as a performance with hired actors (Gates, 2019—). The approach Avila took with *El
Traidor/The Traitor* (2013) is very similar to Gates' in *Plate Convergence* (2007).

as inspirational elements in two specific projects,[36] and my understanding of Kent's intention for the twins is that they are not to be viewed as either an all-encompassing project or themselves specific artworks.

Further, they are intended to become integral to her practice while not becoming her practice, such as how she views Hancock and his Mounds. As mentioned previously, concurrent to the second installation utilising the twins in Chicago, Kent's solo exhibition in New York City of her paintings featured artwork that the artist classifies as separate from the twins. Albeit at a great physical distance from each other and despite clear statements from the artist on the separateness of the two bodies of work, a brief mention of the twins in the gallery's press release led to confusion by reviewers who wanted to read the twins into the New York City show, which Kent stated in our conversation was frustrating (Kent, 2022).

Having only seen Kent's 2021 solo exhibition in person and the installation incorporating the twins in photographs, I am sympathetic to the reviewers and others who conflated the two different approaches due to how I experienced Ghenov's exhibition in 2016, mentioned at the beginning of this section. There is a dearth of obvious visual cues differentiating the objects displayed in both environments, which can be confusing. The installation incorporating the twins is more involved, signifying the artist has intended more meaning to be contained within that museum exhibition space than accompanying the paintings and lone sculpture in the white box commercial gallery space. Additionally, the sizable unstretched acrylic paintings of colourful solid and transparent shapes emerging from a black ground hanging in each exhibition are similar, appearing from the same hand and the same state of mind. Kent's twins function

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[36]The installations at Tiger Strikes Asteroid Chicago (2020) and Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2021-2022).

more like Ghenov's poet in that collaboration between the artist and the fictive identities in producing the spaces or objects within them is not a part of their relationship, which is purely conceptual. When queried about the twins' relationship to the objects and installations, Kent stated that while she physically makes the objects, she prefers to think of the twins making them for each other (Kent, 2022). Nevertheless, I believe that the twins have the potential to grow and become more visible in the installations without embodiment, like Humberto Márquez in Avila's, or, despite their similar enigmatic nature to Angelico Morandá, becoming the sole framework structuring her practice, such as in Ghenov's. To do this will require time and embracing the freedom storytelling offers.

Freedom

Avila's and Ghenov's practices are profoundly entwined in their fictive identities. Notwithstanding, the purpose for which they were created and incorporated into each artist's practice differs significantly yet ultimately provides each with the same state of mind they seek as they engage in their practices: freedom. For Plinio Avila, freedom was found by playing with ideas and creating artworks that belonged to another time and place. Avila continues engaging in his day job as the assistant to another artist while possessing the creative control reserved for the signature artist because Humberto Márquez also happens to be his creation. As Avila asserted in our conversation, his job assisting other artists has boundaries, whereas his practice, the work he does with Humberto Márquez, 'has no boundaries, I can do whatever I want, it was so refreshing' (Avila, 2022). However, as desired as freedom is, a lack of boundaries can become less invigorating. As mentioned in the sub-section '*Storytelling*', as the fictive identity began to overshadow Avila's own, he was left questioning where to go in making artworks attributed only to himself, Plinio Avila. Despite the benefits and his statement that

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anyone could become 'Humberto Márquez', taking over the project and creating work attributed to the late forgotten Mexican Conceptualist, Avila is considering abandoning this project (Avila, 2022).

Returning to Ghenov's question mentioned earlier on the inability of visual art as the ultimate absorber to not absorb the fictional in ways similar to the literary and performance worlds or inhabit that same fictive space, Kent and Avila echoed this sentiment. It is vexing and limiting to be held to these expectations when the facts are inexplicable or boring. Truth and authenticity have expandable boundaries and can be expressed in many ways visually (see Chapter Two), so it is up to artists to find ways which only we can determine as suitable to our own practices. Trenton Doyle Hancock found his way by adopting a visual language based on popular culture to create characters populating the story he is telling. Angelico Morandá's story provides Ghenov with the means to a narrative uniting the numerous seemingly disparate elements that inspire and inform his creative practice, allowing him to tell of his practice without explaining it, which Ghenov declared that he does not like doing (2020). Considering the ineffability of many elements constituting visual arts practices, particularly abstract painting, this sentiment makes sense. After all, if words suffice, there would be no need to paint. Still, in the twenty-first century, there is an expectation for artists or their designates —curators and gallerists— to tell what they do and what the spectators need to know when they encounter their artworks; and to do so factually (see Chapter One) in written statements and artist talks. Devising a fable for his practice and using the freedom found in words, constructing diagrams, and, like Avila, editing photographs, the narrative of Angelico Morandá emerges from Ghenov's interests. It helps him define his painting practice for himself while providing a creative way to meet and circumvent external expectations, maintaining the enigma inherent to his paintings and their

abstract elements by mirroring their complexity in the inscrutability and complexity of the little known, unpublished and dead *fictional* poet.

Like Ghenov's, Kent's fictive identities share origins in literature and film genres attractive to their creator, including her enthusiasm for science fiction, her experience as an identical twin, and her curiosity about her Mexican heritage. The twins are distinct from Angelico Morandá and Humberto Márquez, who, even fictive, were people populating a specific space and time because they are *science fictive*, and it is unclear if Victoria and Veronica are even human. Much remains unknown about the sisters; however, Kent is committed to the time and work necessary to discover these and advance their story (Kent, 2022). While significantly more developed, the story of Angelico Morandá continues to offer Ghenov the freedom to be advanced through additional discoveries due to its mystical nature. Humberto Márquez's story emerges from Avila's contemplation on power, politics and artistic identity through a conceptualist lens. While its beginnings appeared to offer the artist freedom from certain boundaries, the story has developed into one that, quite possibly, has reached its conclusion due to the constraints Avila now faces and which makes it dissimilar to Ghenov's and Kent's stories. Finiteness was imbued in Humberto Márquez's story, which had the artist leaving Mexico and his career as an artist in the early 1970s to become an architect in Berlin. Nevertheless, there remains the possibility that Avila or other artists or even architects might find and complete additional artworks or architectural plans attributable to Márquez. However, the trajectory is quite distinct from the direction of the other two artists' fictive identities and their stories.

Through various forms of storytelling in their practices, visual artists, like writers and performers, occupy fictive spaces. Their impact varies due to the artist's practice,

intentions, and the stories through which they are created and applied. Rubens Ghenov, Plinio Avila, and Caroline Kent were motivated by what they understand as limitations placed on visual artists by outside expectations and the freedom found in the co-mingling of fact and fiction via alternative identities and storytelling in other forms of creative practice. All three expressed that working with fictive identities has offered them the freedom to follow their practices in other directions and further their development. This section has offered a glance at each artist's use of fictive identities and how these compare and contrast. The concluding sub-section will address the similarities and differences between these artists and my usage of alternative identities, the personas, in this project.

Avila, Ghenov, Kent and I

Commencing once more with the act of naming (see Chapter Three), like the personas, the names of the fictive identities tie them to their stories. Further, the names of the fictive identities denote their purpose and relationship to the artists. 'Humberto Márquez' is a synthesis of the second names of Plinio *Humberto* Avila *Márquez*, strengthening the familial connection of the story (Avila, 2018). The name 'Angelico Morandá' is a triadic construction from the names of painters Fra Angelico (1395 - 1455) and Giorgio Morandi (1890 - 1964) and the bossa nova song 'Borandá' (1966) and links the fictive identity's purpose as a mechanism for Ghenov to speak of his triadic practice described earlier in this chapter (for more on Angelico Morandá see APPENDIX D). Referencing the idea of the twins taking shape while visiting her maternal family, Caroline Kent named Victoria and Veronica after her mother (2022). While this information is significant to the story the artist is telling herself as she works, it adds little to the twins' story for the spectators' understanding of their purpose in her practice or the artwork. The personas' names do not denote their purpose in this doctoral

research project. However, their names are important to developing their stories, enabling them to function within my research practice. Their names' significance to me is similar to Ghenov's and Kent's fictive identities; however, more like Kent's, the names contribute little to spectators' understanding. Specifically, concerning storytelling, this difference in naming indicates my intentions for the personas compared to Avila and Ghenov.

The differences between my creative practice and Plinio Avila's are substantial and contribute to how our conception and use of alternative identities differs. Avila's practice is rooted in Conceptualism, and it is the language he employs to create Humberto Márquez and his artworks. Although only Avila's work directly references Conceptualism, the role of fictive identities and their narratives provides a conceptual basis or framework for each artist, myself included. However, unlike Ghenov and Kent, Avila and I use embodiment to bring fictive identities into our practices but to different ends. As the main character of Avila's story, Humberto Márquez has a public presence in photographs and film footage; he is both the story and artwork and is meant to be seen by spectators (for further examples of Humberto Márquez see APPENDIX D). My embodiment of the personas is private, not meant to be observed by others as artworks in themselves. While each persona has a story and occupies a place in the story of my practice, they are not *the* story; instead, they are a part of the fictive space temporarily occupied by it.

Rubens Ghenov and Caroline Kent share practices relying heavily on the language of abstract painting, as does mine. Each referenced their fictive identities in tandem with exhibitions, which led to similar challenges in how their fictive identities are 'seen' or their role in their practices understood. As stated in this section's opening, reading about

Angelico Morandá and seeing Rubens Ghenov's paintings, I could not connect the two in a way that the fictive poet mattered to me as a viewer, which signalled a difficulty in incorporating alternative identities into an abstract painting practice before my research began. Moreover, it raised the question of my intentions for the personas and my research: are the personas for me to use privately in my practice, or do they exist publicly for spectators? My answer is found in how I framed my research questions (see Introduction), that the personas are for me and my practice, not spectators of the artworks produced working with them. My research aims (see opening of Introduction) included using the personas to systematically challenge established processes by creating and assuming alternative identities to engage in my painting practice and identifying this research's impact, addressed in Chapter Five.

By mentioning Angelico Morandá, it seemed Ghenov meant for the fictive poet to have a public role in his practice. Curiously, Ghenov had one other exhibition at the New York gallery[37] and, unlike the press releases for the previous two, which refer to Angelico Morandá as a 'heteronym' (2014), 'fictional poet' and 'the invented nature of the artist's inspiration' (2016), the third exhibit's press release, while focusing heavily on Morandá and his interests as the painting's subject, makes no mention of his fictitious nature (2018). Leaving out this one piece resolves the issue I had with the information given by the gallery for the second exhibition. Further, my recent research on Ghenov clarifies that Angelico Morandá is not found in gallery exhibitions of Ghenov's paintings but in his artist talks (2020).

Caroline Kent's public communication about the twins' place in the installations specifically and her painting practice generally can be confusing, and she was frustrated by their frequent mention in conjunction with her New York City exhibition —in which

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[37]*Aft Key*, 6 September - 6 October 2018, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York City/USA.

they had no part— due to their inclusion in its press release (Kent, 2022). Although she views them as critical components of the installations for spectators in the story she is seeking to tell, the difference between that story and the story of her paintings and practice is unclear. From what Kent has said, she wants the twins to function like Angelico Morandá, inspiring and uniting disparate elements of her practice (Kent, 2022). Successfully doing this requires clarifying who they are for and addressing how and where she shares their story as it develops.

A fictive or alternative identity becomes known only through the artist's revealing. Ultimately, the artist is the narrator and decides what parts of the story are relevant or critical to understanding the artwork, for instance, in the work of Plinio Avila or, in Ghenov's case, the artist's practice. Knowing that Angelico Morandá is a fictional construct is meaningful because, with him, Ghenov offers a model for merging fact and fiction to tell the story of any visual arts practice. Contrastingly, Kent has yet to arrive at the place where it is clear what knowledge the twins offer spectators or the artist beyond inspiration for her two ventures into installations. Like Ghenov, the knowledge my research offers is another way to systematically challenge established processes in one's practice by developing and incorporating alternative identities, i.e. personas (see opening of Introduction), occupying the physical and conceptual spaces of the artist's practice and embracing the freedom they bring. The following chapter, Chapter Five, analyses the ways personas and a play-based method challenged my practice as I worked with and without them in this project, leading to the insight, findings and contribution of knowledge presented in the Conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE: Playing

This doctoral research project proceeded in three stages (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology'). In the first stage, Melusine, Petra, and Franzi were developed as personas to be applied in my painting practice. Each had a specific function that became apparent through working with them in the second stage and setting them aside in the third stage. As the title of this thesis suggests, personas are one of three critical elements comprising this doctoral research project, and together with painting, they bracket the third element: *playing*. Chapters One and Two presented my practical and theoretical engagement with *painting* through my practice relative to this project. Chapter Three described how the *personas* were created and applied in my practice. Chapter Four demonstrated the incorporation of alternative identities into the practices of three other artists with my use of the personas in this project. This chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of the remaining critical element, *playing*, and a method of infinite play through its evolution and utilisation with the personas and concludes by addressing their combined impact in two sections. 'Before and After' includes painting examples made before and during this project with and without the personas. The final section, 'Impact', evaluates each persona's impact on my painting practice by identifying the characteristics or traits defining them and their roles in the infinite play method presented in the chapter's opening.

Playing Infinitely

Defining Play

According to Johan Huizinga, play is a cultural phenomenon older than culture and not limited to humans (1949: 1). To 'play' seems simple because it is something living things do and have always done, yet when we stop and consider play, it becomes complex for those same reasons. Scott G. Eberle identifies the following five qualities

that define play: 'purposeless, voluntary, outside the ordinary, fun, and focused by rules' (2014: 215). These qualities appear to be negated by the act of thinking about playing. However, for Mihályi Csíkszentmihályi, play is as follows: for both children and adults and not defined by a singular characteristic; composed of multiple features centred around the players' motivation and mental attitude; and play itself is not an outward manifestation of behaviour, although playful behaviour at times blends with motivations and attitudes which have nothing to do with playing (1990: 72-77). This broader approach to thinking about play enables it to be engaged in and considered within the context of this project.

Children engage in play while adults bring a 'playful spirit' to what they do by blending feelings of play with adult responsibilities (Gray, 2008); playing may be valued less than a playful spirit, or vice versa. The combined theoretical consideration and practical engagement with play may appear as pointing towards a 'playful spirit' in this research project; however, this is not the case. Instead, it is directed towards playing as children play. It is necessary to distinguish these two types of play further to arrive at a full understanding of what this type of play means and the impact it has had in this project. James P. Carse (1986) identifies the difference as the playing being finite or infinite; the first is a game played by rules to win, the second is 'free or infinite play' with no hard-and-fast rules and is played with the purpose of continuation. Game players agree to play by the rules —in the spirit of play. Infinite players may play without knowing what or that they are playing. Games can be played within 'infinite play' but not the reverse (Carse, 1986: 3-33). It is critical to note this difference, as this is what I have done in this project.

Revisiting the three-stage structure with its three rules I formed to foster play and implement personas into my painting practice, these include:

- Stage 1: development of personas
- Stage 2: direct application of personas in my painting practice
- Stage 3: resume painting post-personas and assess their impact.

And the rules were:

- Be open.
- Follow the personas where they lead.
- Document as much as possible along the way.

The structure's and rules' sole purpose is to provide a flexible framework enabling me to continue playing until the project comes to its 'natural' end; in this case, submitting the doctoral dissertation. Nevertheless, the impact of practice-led research such as this is ongoing; the bell cannot be unrung. Elements of this doctoral research project imparted on my practice remain part of it —traces— beyond its conclusion, buttressing the quality of 'infinite play' that defines and stands as the proper name chosen (see Chapter Three, 'Naming') for the method I employed in it: *infinite play*.

Infinite Play

Infinite play is a meandering process of 'making up the rules as you go'; how children engage with 'pretend play' (Russ, 2003: 292). Contrastingly, games have a straight path; solutions are limited and grounded in convergent rather than divergent approaches; winning the game comes down to playing by the rules. Incorporating personas to inject change is like a child playing with imaginary friends (see opening of Introduction), playing out the story as they tell it and vice versa. Although this method incorporating personas encompasses a game-like structure with corresponding rules, the playing that happens does not correlate to a game that can be won or lost. Despite their shared resemblance to 'pretend play', this project is not a game designed to simulate future scenarios (see Introduction, 'Literature Review' (McGonigal, 2022)). It is more like

Duchamp's game with the Readymade, 'a little game between I and me' (Tomkins, 1996: 160), playing to distance oneself from what one knows and does. Still, the infinite possibilities offered by Duchamp's game, which led to him to imposing restrictions on how often he played it (Tomkins, 1968: 26 -27), like the simulated future scenarios, inform cognitive process development allowing new ideas to emerge through its playing, forging conditions essential to creative acts and skills to handle change (McGonigal, 2022: 15). The divergent quality linking pretend play to creativity is intentionally disruptive. Disruption is harmful, but it can also be favourably productive —for example, it contributes to achieving 'flow' (see opening of Introduction). Moreover, play that achieves 'flow', for example, simulated future scenario games, helps prepare the mind for change because it stretches the mind and body to their limits, necessary according to McGonigal (2022: 15). Personas and infinite play led to thinking divergently and disrupting ingrained working habits by requiring active and alert playing and achieving 'flow' to impart change.

For poet and essayist Diane Ackerman, play is to risk, and risk is a form of playing (1999: 7). The exceptional degree adults play for the same reasons as children Ackerman terms 'transcendent play' (1999: 12). Beyond transcendent play, Ackerman identifies and defines another form of play adults engage in, an ecstatic form called 'deep play', which describes how one is playing rather than what one is playing (1999: 12). Deep play 'leads to transcendence, creativity, and a need for the sacred' and 'it is our passion for deep play that makes us the puzzling and at times resplendent beings we are' (Ackerman, 1999: 26). Infinite play involves divergence, disruption, and the risk associated with deep play, and I propose it is a form of deep play.

Although they work together in creative processes, riskily playing with paint and personas requires engaging both sides of my brain. The right cerebral hemisphere is fundamental to divergent thinking and creativity, while the left cerebral hemisphere is focused on hierarchical structures and fixed rules; by exposing either side to stimulating activities —priming— its function increases (Shobe et al., 2009: 204-205). Here, the right hemisphere is primed by working with alternative identities in unfamiliar ways but with familiar materials, like paint. Knowing how the materials can respond but not what might result from unaccustomed conditions feels risky and necessitates slowing down the process, stopping and thinking about what I want and considering steps usually taken from those being taken now. It requires looking closely at what is happening, determining how it is happening, and then using that information to decide how to achieve what is desired and assessing the risks involved.

Painting always contains a certain degree of risk, but the more familiar I become with my painting practice, the less risky it feels. Engaging with painting through infinite play increases the risk level due to the method's unknown and unanticipated changes. Like playing, painting or thinking about painting places me in a state where my mind is active and alert. If a painting is going well, it pushes me forward; when it is not going well, the possibility that things could take a turn and suddenly become better than hoped for keeps me painting. In this practice-led artistic research project, the iterative process of making paintings increased the risk by increasing the possibilities, precipitating its continuation. Comparable to the structure and rules of this project's playing and personas, loose rules for painting exist, but no rule determines when a painting or series is finished. That decision stems from my practice's tacit knowledge and remains active even as I navigate the unfamiliar.

Playing with paint reveals something new about what it can do each time in response to environmental conditions and general context. Following what happens when choosing to break the rules of painting can also yield valuable insight. Similarly, working with the personas reveals something new each time. For instance, Franzi wielding his hair dryer (see Chapter Three) revealed how the paint's different colours and consistencies intermingled and responded as they were blown across the canvas. Blowing paint with hot air instead of brushing at room temperature created additional surface texture through optically deep but physically lean layers, even over thicker, fatter areas of oil paint in my post-persona paintings (discussed later in this chapter). Bending the rules and learning to go with the (paint) flow is risky but rewarding because it demands divergence from familiar paths and disrupts day-to-day processes.

Diverging from rules or conventions, like 'fat-over-lean', is not only risky but disturbing. Forgetting what is known can be the most direct way to enter new and different spaces, but it requires distancing oneself from what one knows. Distancing himself from what he knew was what Duchamp did playing his 'little game', and it is what I needed to do with the ingrained ideas of authenticity to work with the personas (see Chapter Two). Nevertheless, similar to the knowledge gained through this research project, ingrained knowledge cannot be unknown; it remains present as a trace and must still be acknowledged; the tacit knowledge of my painting practice continually confronts me (Schön, 1983: 49-69). And in the end, Duchamp's final work *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage* [*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*] (1946 - 1966) contains traces of the entirety of knowledge produced through his practice. Divergence requires identifying the known as it appears and then working against that knowledge by doing something less familiar, and sometimes circling back. For example, 'fat-over-lean' pertains to oil and not water-based paints.

Franzi used acrylic paint with his hair dryer, so the rule was a moot point. Carrying the knowledge of what acrylic paint did when hot air was applied to Stage 3 and my painting with oils, that rule mattered if I wanted the paint to adhere correctly. However, proper adherence was not my primary concern. Ignoring it, I took the risk of what Franzi's blowdryer technique offered —a rapidly drying surface—to hopefully achieve similar or unknown results without sacrificing the oil paint's adhesion. After all, I still wanted my efforts to produce a painting that can be displayed for viewers in ways typical to painting (i.e. hung on or propped against a wall or other vertical surface, or even laid out horizontally) without the materials sliding off the support or disintegrating at a rapid pace before their eyes. As stated repeatedly throughout and emphasised in Chapter Four with the work of Plinio Avila, I am not a Conceptual artist. I am a painter. The 'conceptual' is essential in providing theoretical grounding from other disciplines, particularly informing the areas of my research led by my painting practice. However, painting's materials and physical traditions are of even greater significance because they are my practice. The risks taken when painting need not be grand. Following the first two rules of infinite play requires risk-taking by following the paint —and personas— into the spaces they lead, no matter how close by or small they might appear.

Through thinking and acting divergently, disruptively, and riskily infinite play expands the depth of the space for painting and playing, which, in this project, meant profoundly cultivating my mind as much as my physical workspace. Like a child engaging in pretend play, embodying the personas required costuming. From my experience of dressing myself in the studio, considering what style of clothing and accessories Petra and Franzi might wear and their physical needs when painting indicated their desired outcome for the work. Shopping for them, I was physically alone, but mentally, they guided my purchases [Figure 29]. I never physically embodied Melusine, so dressing up

was unnecessary and fortunate. Melusine was tricky to work with due to the challenges she presented existing solely in the space of discourse and ideas, not objects. Her 'unseeable' quality made Melusine more desirable to people given access to her primarily through telling her story, which I speak more about later in this chapter.

The expansion brought forth by infinite play requires revisiting and revising the diagram depicting how a painting is looked at in Wollheim's Artist-Object-Spectator Relationship from Chapter Two [Figure 17] relative to this project. Engaging in a method of infinite play fills the triangular space between the three points of the relationship, the space of physical and mental engagement, with 'PLAY' [Figure 30].

Figure 29: (Top Left) Petra's blouse, ring and bangles. (Top Right) Franzi's shirts and cap.
(Bottom Left) Franzi's slippers and Petra's clogs.(Bottom Right) Franzi's and Petra's jewellery.
Photos by the author.
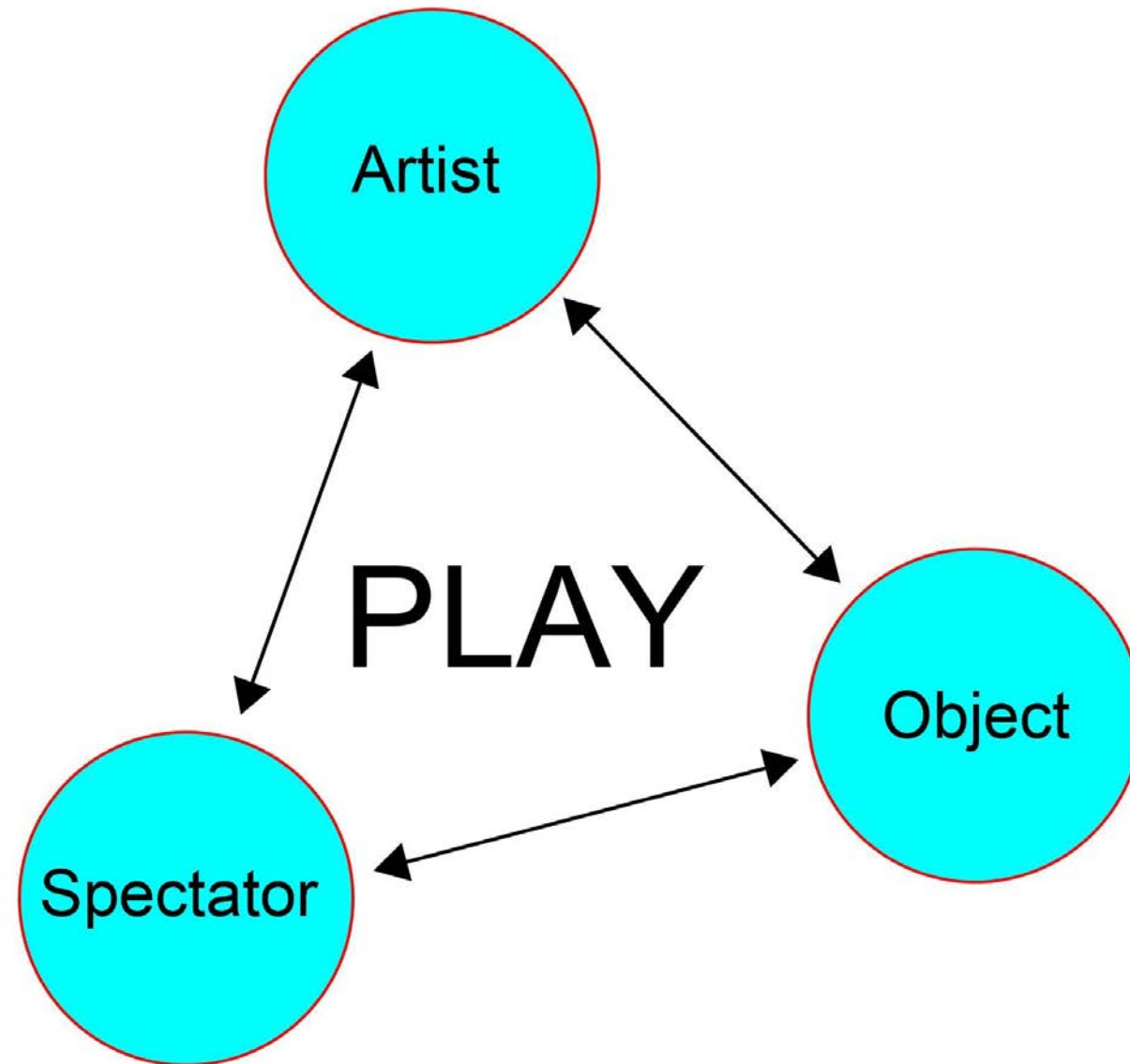
Figure 30: Artist-Object-Spectator Relationship per Wollheim, play-space included.
Diagram by the author.

Playing with Petra and Franzi in this doctoral research project is observably manifested in that space, bounded by the artist (me) and spectators (viewers) and the objects (paintings). Seeing Melusine in this space with no visible or direct connection to the objects, like Petra and Franzi, is problematic; nevertheless, the curiosity of spectators who heard me tell of her indicates they were convinced of her presence and activity in it enough to express a desire to see her. Despite the spectators' interest, as the artist, I found she did not fit into my research model like the embodied personas, which I will address in the final section of this chapter. As the embodied personas developed traits that defined them individually, their actions caused their distinct characteristics to cross-pollinate. Franzi poured and blew around paint with a hair dryer, which led Petra to pour and blow watercolour droplets. Later in Stage 2, Franzi, Petra, and I worked together creating paintings (see Chapter Three) as a precursor to my painting without them, after they had become subsumed in my practice in Stage 3; both are discussed in the final two sections of this chapter. Melusine was more of a problem; she did not play well with the others.

Before and After

Through the example of artworks, this section addresses the personas' impact on my paintings' form and content as posed in my first research question (see Introduction, 'Research Questions'). Except for the first painting, an example of my painting 'before' the personas and this project, the remaining paintings in this section were created throughout all three stages using the three rules mentioned earlier. Whether painting with the personas individually (Stages 1 and 2) or as myself after they had been subsumed into my practice (Stage 3), the first two rules, be open and follow the personas where they lead, explicitly foster the application of the method of infinite play.

Like infinite play, painting as a practice requires responding openly (and readily) to the paint and ideas and following them where they lead, making it infinitely sustainable. These rules of this project and the method of infinite play also align with Charles Wheelan's statement about change and the progression it can bring depending upon how we respond to it (see opening of Introduction, (2012: 111)).

Furthermore, by applying infinite play as a method when painting with the personas, responding to what transpired in the painting by the actions taken and the decisions they made was possible and, coupled with my position as the spectator per the model in Figure 30, enclosed the space for play to happen. Infinite play also allowed me to apply *reflection in action* (Schön, 1983) to learn as I observed and reflected in the moment of making with the personas different ways of responding to the paint, internalising them to achieve similar outcomes in the future. The final rule, document as much as possible, is essential to painting with the personas using the method of infinite play by augmenting reflection in action, enabling me to re-observe and repeatedly reflect on what I was learning as I was painting. Doing this brings that knowledge more profoundly into my painting practice. It facilitates assessing the impact of the personas and infinite play to answer this project's research questions, forming the analysis of the examples, which is the focus of this section's end. Finally, understanding the impact and how it transpired through the personas and infinite play in my painting practice allows for the continual reapplication of that knowledge and the method of infinite play post-personas, represented by the final group of example paintings, reflecting my current practice.

Painting Before Petra and Franzi

The first example, *Motherboard* (2015), is a painting about identity and irritations felt when sorting out who or what one is based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to what one does [Figure 33]. The painting originated with frustrations sparked by Melusine's first appearance in my writing the previous spring, which led to questioning aspects of my painting practice and led to this research project (see Chapter Three). Primarily working with fluid acrylics for a decade-plus, I felt bored and constrained by the materials, the scale of the work and the processes I had developed. I wanted to increase the scale, return to oils, handle the paint and approach the support and abstraction differently. Feeling the need to stretch my practice and internal pressure to do so quickly, I spent the summer experimenting with images and materials and imagining how alone I might do this with what Melusine offered.

By September, I had a plan to use commercially printed canvases with photographic details of a recent painting as a new starting point, bypassing several steps in my existing process. Working on a section at a time and joining the canvases together post-painting made a more significant scale possible; time and technical limitations became minor issues. I referred to the physical support as 'bad hotel' art due to its similarities to the generic reproductions one might find in those locations and the abstract motif that, minus paint, had little identity beyond a decorative object. This attitude reflected my grievance with how the abstract paintings I was making might easily slip into that category in specific contexts or when left without the support of a text. Like Rubens Ghenov (see Chapter Four), I did not want to be dependent upon explanations. My task, I thought, was through the paint to bring these canvases back from a generic, non-threatening, potentially mass-produced abstract painting-like decoration too, in the words of Wollheim, 'painting as art' (see Chapter Two).

The first example, a painting made before this project, is part of my previous research project exploring identity through self-portraiture (see opening of Introduction). The multiplicity found in identity has begun to be scrutinised with the images that launched this painting. Based on a digitally altered image from a series of photographs titled *Twinning* (2014) [Figure 31], four detailed images from the painting, *Untitled* (2015) [Figures 32], were selected. Sealing the canvas with a thickly applied acrylic medium to preserve and protect the print from oil paint solvents and give the smooth surface substance and texture, I next made 'gestural' and 'painterly' marks of acrylic paint, followed by flat, semi-opaque squares and rectangles in flesh tones to mimic the 'pixelation' of the photographs shown in Figure 31. As I switched to thin glazes of oil paint, sanding down built-up paint revealed the textures and forms beneath and retained the squares and rectangles and the photos' colour palette. Still, I found the squares dominated, pushing the canvases more towards the 'bad hotel art' than pulling them away from it. Glazing larger areas of the canvases solidified the image, maintained translucency, and led to the emergence of a loud and artificial structure of blues and greens planted on top [Figure 33].
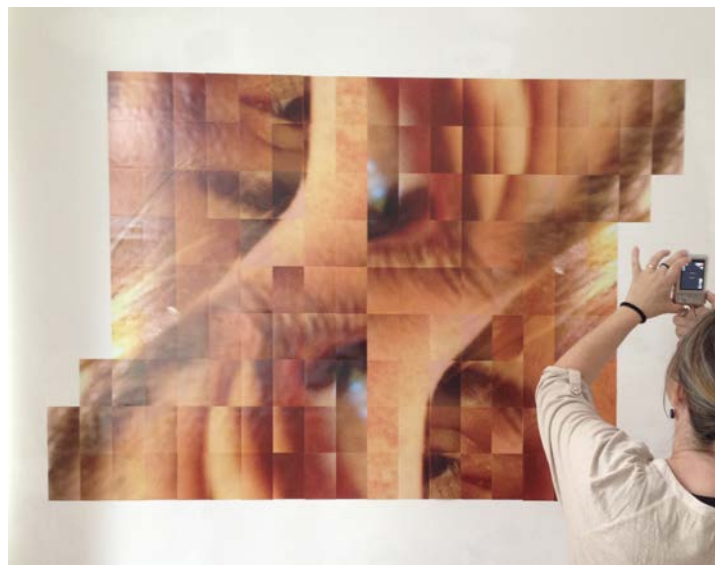
Figure 31: Top, from the series *Twinning* (2015), digital photograph by the author.
Bottom, Enlarged and abstracted photograph, Somos Gallery, Berlin/Germany August 2015.

Figure 32 : Top, *Untitled* (2015) acrylic on 18 inches x 24 inches Bristol paper.
Bottom, one of four detail photographs printed on the canvases.
Photographs by the author.
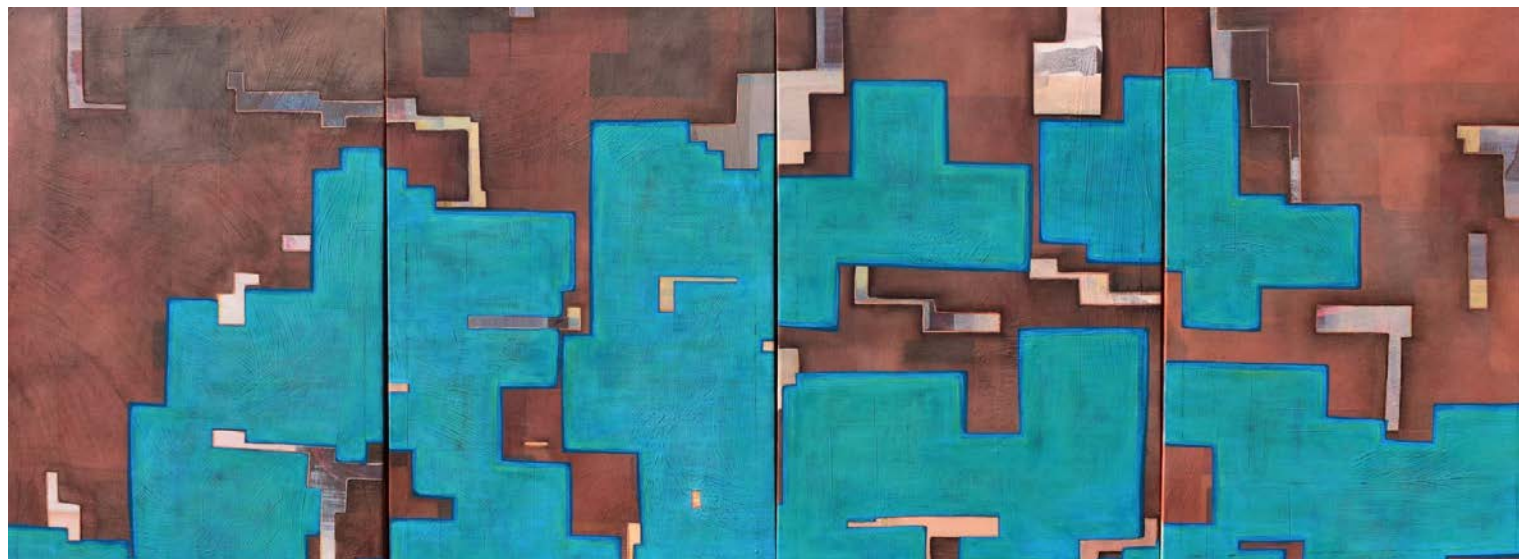
Figure 33: *Motherboard* (2015), acrylic and oil on four 24 inches x 36 inches photo printed canvases,
96 inches wide x 36 inches high x 1.5 inches deep.
Photograph by the author

One of Petra's Many Untitled (2017) *Paintings*

The second example from the transition period between stages one and two begins with

a photo of a shadow cast across a paper in a display case at the Morgan Library [Figure

34].[38]
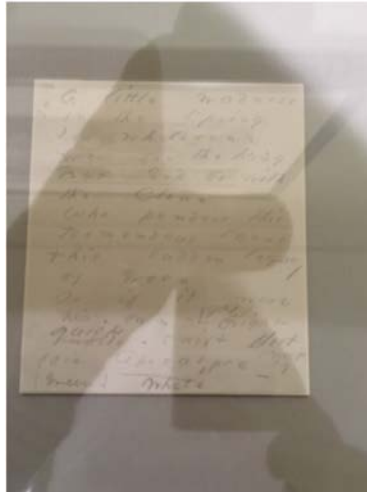
Figure 34: Manuscript of the poem by Emily Dickinson with shadow. Photograph by the author.

Sixteen sheets of Arches Hot Pressed watercolour paper [5 inches x 7 inches] were run

through an inkjet printer, leaving an off-white border framing the photo. A set of

smaller prints on [4 inches x 6 inches] glossy photo paper was also produced, eventually

becoming part of a hanging garden of double-sided paintings by Petra inspired by the

Emily Dickinson poem in the photograph — *A Little Madness In The Spring* (2017).

Here I will focus on one painting derived from that first set of prints which became a

group of untitled and unframed paintings wrapped up in glassine and tucked away in the

flat file, waiting like seeds to be planted elsewhere. In this seed, the first stage of its

painting, Petra responds to the inkjet print of the photo with fluidity, the shape flowing

from her brush as she follows the shadow cast across the page. The rivulets of water and

weakly mixed Prussian Blue watercolour interact with the dye-based ink, staining the

paper and becoming embedded in its fibres [Figure 35].
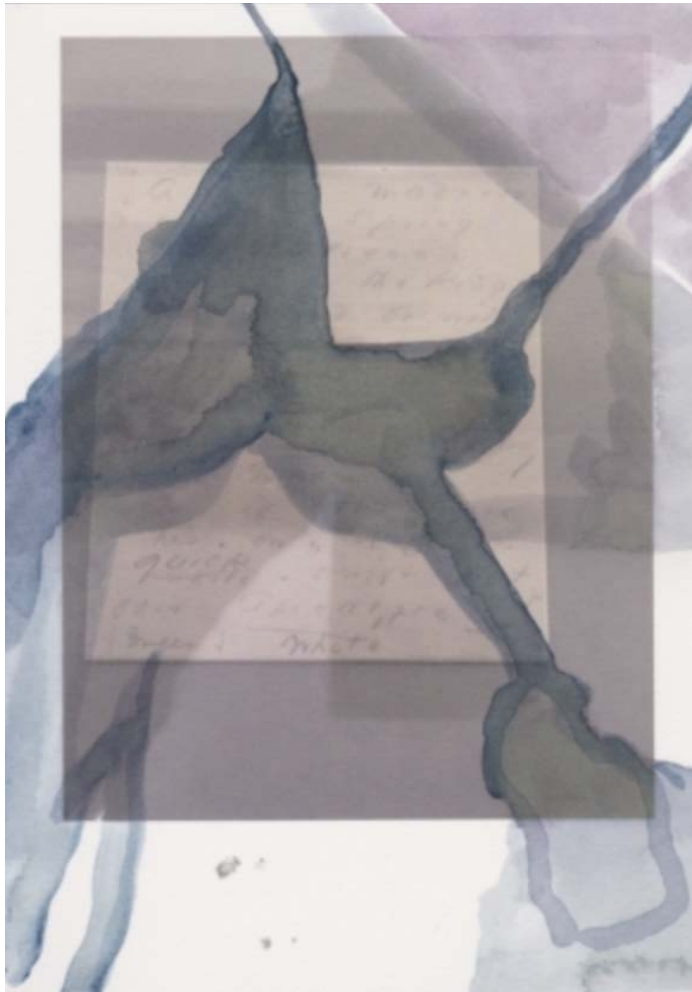
Figure 35: Stage one, *Untitled* (2017), Petra Nimm.
Photograph by the author.

Slightly off-centre, a puddle of highly diluted acrylic matte medium poured in the second stage precipitated a reaction between the water, the paint, the medium, and the printer ink; colours previously invisible emerged. Surprisingly, a chemically tinged turquoise splays out like a neuron ringed by a thin russet line flowing from a deep red nucleus, where the medium pooled as it dried. Unlike the watercolour, which has implanted itself deep into the paper, meeting the ink on its level, the new shape floats on the surface, not in the plasticky way acrylic tends to do; it is thin, transparent with a satiny and slightly crystalline surface. The photographed shadow also becomes this new shape's shadow [Figure 36].

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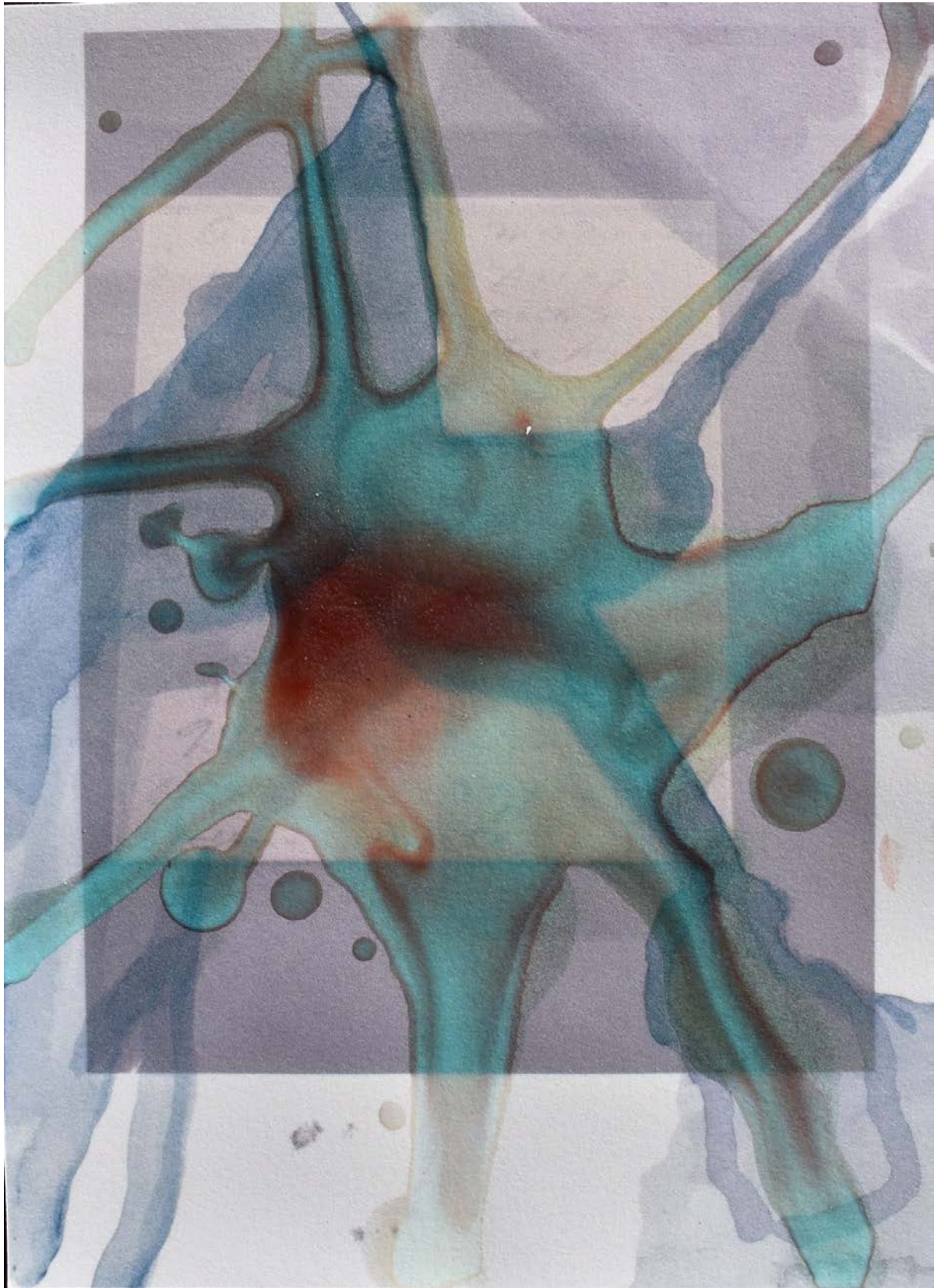
Figure 36: *Untitled* (2017) by Petra Nimm.
Acrylic, watercolour, inkjet print on 5 inches x 7 inches Arches 300 gram hotpress watercolour paper. Photograph by the author.

Not Quite Three Paintings by Franzi

Not Quite (2017) is a series of three paintings whose making is matter-of-factly reported in Franzi's STUDIO DIARY. These paintings are Franz's first paintings in my studio, and he made them in Stage 1. His words, written in all caps and incorporated the same way here, provide insight into who he is and how he and the paintings came to be.

Blasting tunes from his DAILY MIX 3, 25 JANUARY 2017, 30 JANUARY 2017, and 24 - 28 FEBRUARY 2017, Franzi stakes his claim to THE DAY —STARTING NOW— TIME FOR ME, and the existence of himself and his art. Physically charged with his determination, the paintings' vivid colours and scabby plastic texture stand in contrast to the satin fluidity of Petra's paintings [Figure 37].

Bright, bold, and basic lumps of opaque, primal coloured fluid acrylics—TURQUOISE, BURNT UMBER, CAD YELLOW MED, CHARCOAL GRAY, VERMILION, CERULEAN, INDIAN YELLOW— augmented by additional measures of GLOSS MEDIUM VARNISH; with MOORE [sic] NEEDED [Figure 38]. Rapid heating with a hair dryer blows freshly formed paint skins into piles, wetting and re-wetting, sprayed water, and more paint poured, scraped, dripped and splattered onto the crusty, reticulating surface, building up thicker, heavier, and sturdier than the supports the paint adheres to — CARDBOARD, THE BACK AND THE COVER OF BRISTOL BOARD PAD— [11 inches x 14 inches] pulled from the recycling bin [Figure 39]. THREE PAINTINGS BEGAN. NOT QUITE RED. NOT QUITE BLUE. DEFINITELY YELLOW. Franzi FINISHED 3 PAINTINGS.

Figure 37: *Not Quite: Red* (2017) by Franz I. Walsh. Acrylic on found paper,
11 inches x 14 inches. Photograph by the author.

Figure 38: *Not Quite: Blue* (2017) by Franz I. Walsh. Acrylic on found paper,
11 inches x 14 inches. Photograph by the author.
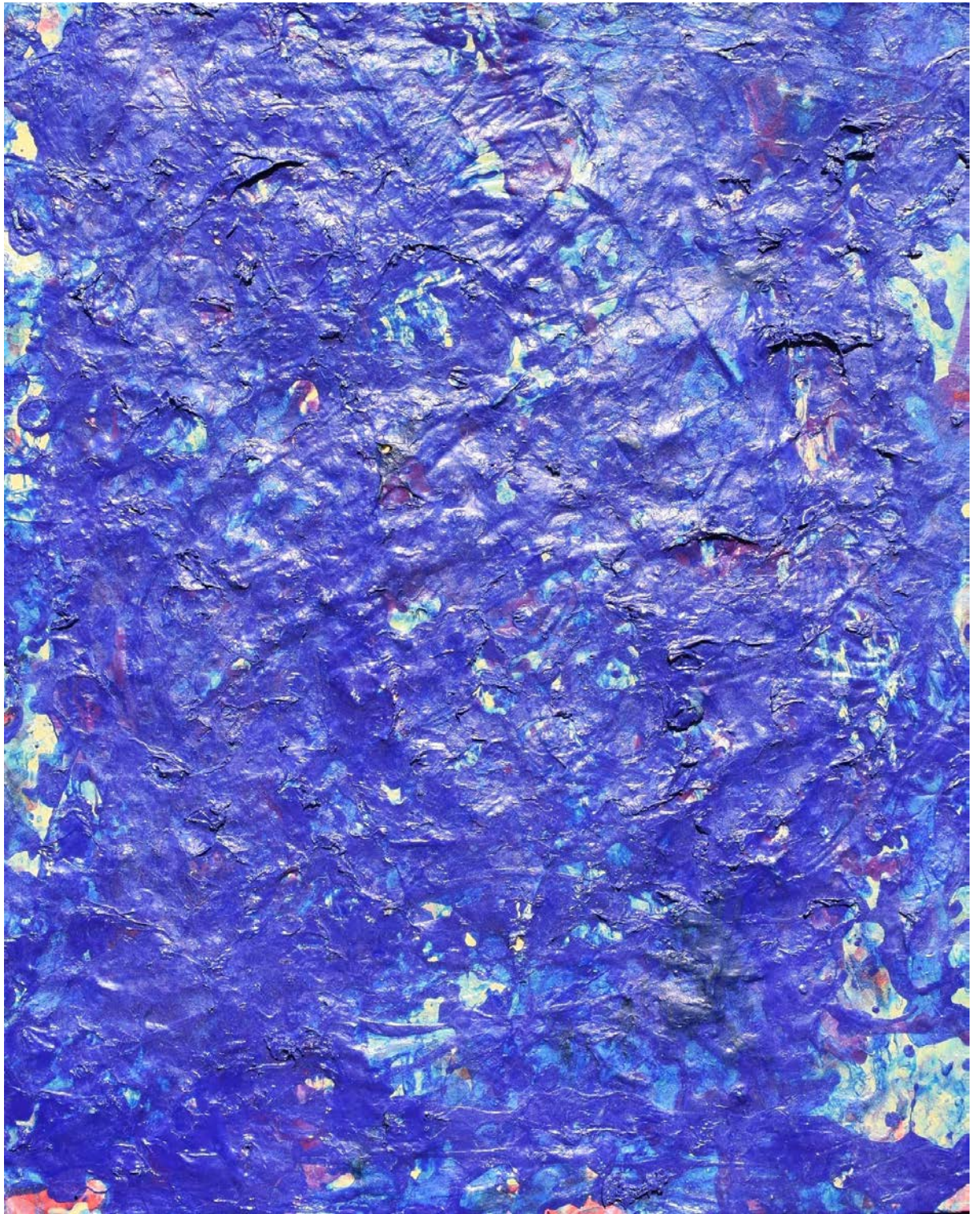
Figure 39: *Not Quite: Definitely Yellow* (2017) by Franz I. Walsh. Acrylic on found paper, 11 inches x 14 inches. Photograph by the author.

After Personas, Paintings Big and Small

The final six examples presented and discussed here stem from Stage 3 and constitute a selection of my paintings post-personas. The examples include three paintings from an ongoing series (2019 —) of larger-scale works on paper [26 inches x 40 inches] and three from a finite series (2021) of thirty-six tinier paintings [5 inches x 7 inches], also on paper and mounted on double layers of 8-ply cotton rag board. I no longer work with Petra, Franzi, or Melusine; as Petra would say, they have been cultivated and tilled into the soil of my practice. Nonetheless, traces of their previous existence continues to nourish my painting practice as it grows; I reap what I sow.

Generally working on three or four paintings simultaneously, the large paintings [Figures 40, 41, and 42] begin by projecting a previous painting onto heavy, commercial-grade printing paper, similar to the painting example before the personas, using the same base image for each set. However, the start of these paintings is more like the paintings discussed in Chapter Three [Figures 19 through 27]. The images vary across the series, with each series generating new images through the method of reiteration (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology'). Initially, these paintings are very similar, becoming unique through the painting process. After establishing the composition, the shapes are filled with bold fluid acrylic colours and then sealed with a few layers of undiluted matte acrylic medium to add texture to the otherwise slick surface. Switching to a range of white and black oil paints, dry metallic pigments and inert filler, alkyd, wax, damar and linseed oil mediums purchased or mixed up in my studio and applied with brushes and pouring, blown around with a hair dryer or gently tilted in various directions, the layers distance the paintings from the original image further.

The smaller paintings [Figures 43, 44, and 45] also began by reproducing from previous work. A single pre-existing shape is sourced from a series of small paintings —similar but not the same as the paintings from the series pictured in Figure 27— based on the frottage drawings [Figures 21 and 22], which differ in each. Rather than projecting, inkjet printing or tracing, the shapes are hand-copied onto heavy matte cardstock and then filled in with brushed on coloured drawing ink, pens, and paint markers. To not impart texture to the painting's surface, they are sealed with thinned matte medium. Finally, the same oil-based materials and application techniques as the larger paintings were utilised to complete the painting by adding additional layers of oil paints in blacks, whites, and metallics in response to the shapes below.

The most significant distinction beyond scale found in these two series is how they are intended to be viewed. The large paintings hang on walls, while the thirty-six small paintings are divided into groups of nine paintings that reside in four customised grey archival boxes. The smaller paintings, mentioned earlier as mounted onto a double layer of cotton rag boards, have a substantialness, rigidity and the ability to cast a shadow when photographed, as seen in Figures 43 through 45. The large paintings with their paper-thin edges chewed up with visible pinholes in the corners of the paintings in Figures 40 through 42) curl around in every direction from exposure to the paint's fluidity when pinned to the wall. Moreover, the rag board backs and edges are sanded to enhance their velvet tactility when held. Unlike these large paintings, *Motherboard* (2015) or even Franzi's *Not Quite* (2017) series, these small paintings are not meant to be viewed at a distance only by the eyes; they are to be picked up, held, and touched too. Like Petra's painting *Untitled* (2017), which are modestly sized, unframed groups on paper, the small paintings are designed for closer examination and an experience that

is visual and tactile. This way of engaging with the smaller paintings is how I engaged with and learned from Petra's paintings.

After the *Not Quite* (2017) series, Franzi painted primarily on mid-sized canvases, which required me to step back and ponder perpendicularly. Despite not altering his approach to layering paint, his later paintings (see Chapter Three, Figure 28) are less physically tactile. I trace this to two things: a change of support from cardboard and heavy paper to stretched canvas and a change of format and scale. Likewise, the layers of both the smaller and the larger paintings are not as physically tactile as Franzi's *Not Quite* (2017) series. Nevertheless, they are still visually tactile due to the profusion of semi-transparent layers and various blacks, whites, and grainy-metallic pigments. My initial desire was to increase the scale of my paintings on the larger sheets of paper and present them less formally (i.e. unframed and pinned to the wall). Experiencing Petra's and Franzi's paintings as a spectator per Wollheim (see Chapter Two and previous section of this chapter) led me to realise the different knowledge to be gained through the variety of viewing options applying methods of infinite play to diversify scales and supports offered. 'Impact' will address these differences further in the following section. In short, this realisation reduced the frustrations I have experienced over the years of working across various scales and supports, making different options equal in value to me in my painting practice and leading to looser and more comfortable handling of the paint.

Starting an abstract painting via existing images and multiple iterations is an approach Petra and I shared, but not Franzi. Franzi poured paint freely with loose and informal results without responding to or preserving what was already present because he did not craft images but expanses. Still, Franzi experienced visible frustration and struggle with

the materials —TRYING TO DRIP, IT'S HARD, ONLY DROPS— with the time it takes — TOO LONG—and its scarcity —TOO LONG AWAY— necessitating WAITING MY TURN PATIENTLY; and physical pain —MY FEET HURT. CHEAP SLIPPERS. In contrast, there is no frustration in Petra's paintings; they are fluid, ephemeral, and, sometimes, explosively energetic. Petra responded to what was present with consideration, maintaining qualities inherent to the media and her style without a preciousness to preserve either. In these 'after' paintings, I sought to apply paint responsively to create an abstract painting respectful of the materials, the images —figure— and the expanse —ground— from which they arise, a mixture of Petra's considerate and Franzi's free flinging styles and their openness to chance occurrence. In doing so, I felt less frustrated, which resulted in a lack of tightness found visually in *Motherboard* (2015). Both series of paintings post-personas still contain distinct shapes, but they now emerge from a base image and layers with edges softened by the paint poured, dripped and blown.

Figure 40: Mixed media painting from the ongoing *Untitled* (2019 —) series on
26 inches x 40 inches paper. Photograph by the author.

Figure 41: Mixed media painting from the ongoing *Untitled* (2019 —) series on
26 inches x 40 inches paper. Photograph by the author.

Figure 42: Mixed media painting from the ongoing *Untitled* (2019 —) series on
26 inches x 40 inches paper. Photograph by the author.

Figure 43: One of thirty-six *Untitled* (2021) mixed media paintings on 5 inches x 7 inches paper, mounted on a 16 ply rag board. Photograph by the author.

Figure 44: One of thirty-six *Untitled* (2021) mixed media paintings on 5 inches x 7 inches paper, mounted on a 16 ply rag board. Photograph by the author.

Figure 45: One of thirty-six *Untitled* (2021) mixed media paintings on 5 inches x 7 inches paper, mounted on a 16 ply rag board. Photograph by the author.

Impact

Building on the examples of paintings in the previous section, the final section of this analytical chapter evaluates each persona's impact on my painting practice by identifying the characteristics or traits defining them and their roles in my infinite play method presented in the opening section of this chapter.

Disruption

Fashioning each persona as a mechanism for imparting change forced divergence from conventional patterns of thought and actions in my painting practice. However, Melusine was the most disruptive of the three, and 'disruptiveness' is her defining trait. Her story began as an agitation (see Chapter Three, 'The Arrival'), launching this project. As it progressed and the personas developed, Melusine became more disruptive, destabilising me and the other personas; she became a threat to the project's sustainability. The words she wrote and her negative actions were uncontrollable —control being a critical component discussed in the next paragraph. So, halfway through the second stage (December 2017), I killed her off.

In hindsight, although not envisioned at the project's start, killing off a persona was playing infinitely. After all, it was divergent, disruptive, and risky to the project and appeared to go against the pre-determined rules that gave the project its structure, but it also helped sustain it. Killing Melusine fulfils some but not all of Eberle's five qualities defining play: it was voluntary, outside the ordinary, and focused on the rules established for this project; but it was not purposeless and, at that time to me, did not feel fun (2014: 215). Instead, the action was an attempt to push what felt threatening into a zone of play. In retrospect, my motivation for killing Melusine was to regain

control of this project. Reflecting on the personas and how they performed, an awareness of how control, or lack thereof, related to change in its inevitability, and the traits defining each persona emerged. Melusine did not lack control as much as she was uncontrollable. Petra possessed the most control within the personas while Franzi appeared to lack it, yet he proved to be the most balanced between the two extremes, a beneficial trait to creating. The traits of both painter personas and the importance of controllability will be addressed later in this section.

Melusine's no longer active presence proved to be a positive disruption by momentarily slowing the project down, which proved critical to my working with alternative identities and unfamiliar ways. Although dead, she was not immediately buried. Instead, shortly after killing her (January-February 2018), I wrote *Inamorata Non Autentica: Marcel Duchamp, Rrose Sélavy, Melusine and Me* (see APPENDIX E), mentioned together with play and self-talk at the end of Chapter Three. Her death enabled me to concentrate and focus on capturing Melusine and our conversation style, hear my 'self' talk and unite it with thoughts on my research without her 'disrupting' the internal conversation by adding to it further. With that experimental writing complete and Melusine under control, I could dive deeper into my work with Franzi and Petra. Although I knew of Rubens Ghenov's dead fictive identity before killing off Melusine and soon after her demise learned of Plinio Avila's dead fictive great-uncle, their alternative identities were dead before they began working with them, something I never considered in the beginning for the personas. However, by summer (July 2018), her lively presence and wit and verbal acumen were missed. Following the rules of this project (see Introduction, 'Research Methodology') and the method of infinite play, I decided that personas as alternative identities are not strictly speaking alive; therefore,

they cannot die, and Melusine was resurrected in conjunction with the workshop on seduction discussed in Chapter Three.

Before her death, Melusine's utterances were unproductive and disabling. She said what I found for me would be unsayable because doing so would prohibit playing infinitely. Not being 'real', Melusine could say anything, so she thought. After writing our conversation, and up to the time of her resurrection, I wrote very little, keeping words at a distance and focusing on painting, which was necessary for the remaining personas and this project's development. During those months, I tried to reconnect to the words she left behind by collaging scraps of paper with them into paintings made with Petra and Franzi [Figure 46]. These paintings serve more as monuments to the dead than living artworks.
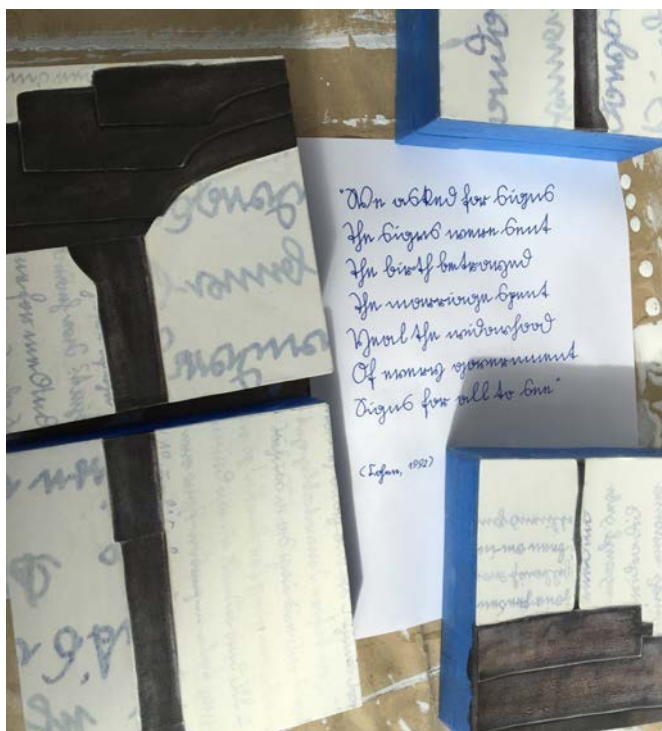
Figure 46: Four-panel two-sided painting created with Petra and Franzi (April 2018), incorporating photocopies of Melusine's writing. Photo by the author.

Resurrecting Melusine coincided with a need to work with words again when I found myself far from my studio in a situation calling for a creative act not involving paint. I

ran back to Melusine and her words with a bit of goading from others. Knowing what her words could do drove me to keep a tighter rein on writing with Melusine, finding a balance to the disruption by judiciously employing words, as I needed them to work for me just like paint.

Fluidity

'Fluidity' is the trait representing Petra, and the styles and materials selected for dressing her exemplify this quality. My lack of ambidexterity combined with Petra's left-handedness would seem an impediment to achieving 'flow' (see Chapter Three); however, studies suggest that using the left hand is another way of 'priming' the right cerebral hemisphere (Shobe et al., 2009: 205-206); and it had the opposite effect making my work with her more fluid mentally if not physically. It stretched both my mind and body, providing the optimal conditions leading to 'flow' and change as stated earlier in this chapter and the Introduction.

Video documentation allowed me to maintain flow critical to this project by stepping outside the role to reflexively engage with what was happening (Schechner, 2013: 28). The camera's presence was a distraction to doing something different from what comes naturally, reminding me that Petra wielded the brush and I was performing her. 'A performance is a dialectic of "flow," that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and "reflexivity," in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen "in action," as they shape and explain behaviour' (Turner, [1980] 2013: 20). Both video documentation and understanding of the relationship between performance and flow offered another way to observe me in my practice.

Petra's fluidity was not chaotic or uncontrollable; in the videos of her working, control flowed from Petra and, even sped up, she displayed fluid precision as she forged new shapes when painting in the videos (see APPENDIX B). Petra's shapes became part of the vocabulary I drew from in Stage 3 [Figures 27 and 40 through 45]. Revealing how she utilised control of a mercurial medium to create abstract shapes led to how I produced shapes in my paintings post-personas (see 'Before and After'). In the series *One in Three* (2018) [Figure 24], discussed in Chapter Three, figure/ground reversal is maximised, and the picture plane is bounded by the balanced relationship between the three vacillating coloured shapes. My previous approach was to achieve balance by beginning with larger shapes, and in that painting, this changed, and the balance came through the method of re-iteration to create smaller shapes from Petra's fluid drips, tilts, and blows.

For example, a small white shape on an indeterminate ground, one crowded among many in Figure 19, takes on a slightly different role in subsequent paintings. In Figure 20, an intermediate step to *One in Three* (2018), the scanned, enlarged, printed, cut apart shape floats above the ground, visibly separated from the others. In the final painting [Figure 24], the edges and points of the many smaller shapes connect to form the larger black, white and blue shapes, both figure and ground. Amy Sillman states that 'shapes are how you make distinctions, get the lay of the land' (2020: 78). Like the example above, learning a new topography with Petra was about making distinctions in composition, witnessing and documenting how shapes evolve and expanding my painting practice's vocabulary of shapes. Moreover, it required drawing.

Sillman mused that painters work from the big picture towards the details of the image or idea, while 'draw-ers' begin with the particulars and maybe never arrive at the bigger

picture (2020: 80-81). I call Petra a painter, yet, she creates shapes like Sillman's 'draw-er'. According to Sillman, drawing is a way to look inward and outward; it is a tool for stripping down … for getting into shape (2020: 91-92), like Petra's frottage drawing (see Chapter Three). When I picked up these drawings without Petra in Stage 3 [Figure 22], I continued her process unaltered. Looking inward and outward is a form of figure/ground reversal where, if functioning, we see both simultaneously, noticing the similarities and the differences to achieve balanced knowledge.

Playing with this understanding of achieving balanced knowledge by shifting between Petra and myself in these drawings carried the risk of uncontrolled disruption or a form of stasis leading nowhere, but it also possessed the possibility of infinite continuation as seen in the paintings of Figure 27 and the re-use of shapes in the smaller paintings of Figures 43 through 45. Petra had a lighter, less assertive, and quieter touch, and I drew out the shapes louder, with more contrasts and motion. While maintaining Petra's process and what she brought to it, I no longer distanced myself from the work but re-inserted and asserted who I am in it. Her shapes continue to evolve, shifting and changing through similar processes she inspired in my paintings' post-personas. Likewise, Melusine's disruptive but subsequently controlled, freewheeling way with words stimulates my thoughts and gives external shape to my internal conversations in writing. I readily adopted Petra's intentionally divergent but controlled re-iteration processes as my own —albeit as my right-handed self.

Guileless

Of the three, Franzi is the most unaffected persona, and guilelessness is the trait describing him. He can be nothing but truthful to who and what he is. Nonetheless, Franzi is scopious; he is about the surface but not superficiality. Following Amy

Sillman's differentiation between 'draw-ers' and painters (2020: 80-81), Franzi is a painter, while I have discovered I am both. Although he is not too concerned with details, he works from the idea towards them. More significantly than this inattention to detail is his guilelessness and disinterest in control and their impact on my creative practice.

On the surface, Franzi is an unwieldy figure and appears to be the epitome of chaos, yet he is the least dominant persona. Fitting in where he could and slipping into the background, Melusine and Petra called the shots. Franzi makes an absolute mess blowing and spilling paint across the studio when he paints. For him to do this necessitated my relinquishing control and allowing the studio to become messier than is comfortable. Further, it required less concern for conserving materials and not crying over spilt paint. Finally, he showed me that chaos need not breed chaos but has an order of its own, which I can choose to embrace.

Looking closer at his paintings reveals that these blue fields result from more than happenstance; they result from an equal yet very different level of intention. Using more than just blue pigments to build up to the blues, the surface blue of a finished painting depends on the order, amount, and areas of the canvas-covered by a mix of other colours, revealing knowledge of colour theory and optical mixing present in his process. The acrylic paint's response to the hair dryer's heat requires knowing what different consistencies and mixtures can do and how they react chemically to the conditions. Despite what appears to be a wild spooning, squeezing, and slopping around of paint in the videos of Franzi working (see APPENDIX B), his know-how is displayed by the confidence with which he performs his tasks and the resulting paintings.

Franzi's assurance reveals not a lack of control; he is not concerned with it. Melusine did not lack control of herself before her death, but she and her words were uncontrollable to me. Petra maintains tight control over what she does by responding to the fluidity in kind. Franzi is neither uncontrollable nor needs to be controlled or controlling because he knows and, like Petra, trusts the paint. The difference between Petra and Franzi and their relationship to control is slight, but it is visible in their stories' distinctness, demeanour, and how they handle paint. Petra applies slightly more control for the paint to do what she desires in ways that suit it. Franzi demonstrates an equilibrium that prevents the paint from becoming a muddy mess. Petra and her painting are more complex than Franzi and his. Nevertheless, his straightforwardness and simplicity in his painting have been impactful in what led me to relinquish control, which is far from an insignificant change to my established painting practice.

Subtracting to Add

Described so far, Petra and Franzi have handled paint additively. However, subtractive processes —taking away materials or elements to reduce and serve as a means to further creation— were present and proved impactful by generating and expanding space visually in the paintings produced and conceptually in thoughts of my practice. Subtraction manifests in the painting processes primarily by removing paint layers, such as a sheet of paper or cloth. By removing materials, I sought to intentionally draw out what was in the layers beneath, like Petra with her eraser. For example, one of the techniques employed in the re-iterative method is a monoprint lifting off paint and a shape for later use. Stemming from the transition between Stage 2 and Stage 3, that process is how the mixed media works in Figure 47 began.

Sitting on Melusine's stationery paper, a blob of black oil paint and a visible canvas texture is lifted from the top layer of the painting shown in Figure 42, then topped by graphite frottage to become *Drawing After the Fact* (2019) [Figure 47, left]. Much looser than the drawings shown in Figure 21 and 22, it is responsive, and the gesture set in motion by the blob of paint creates shape. Similarly, the series *Sumac VI: A Journey thru Thunderwood* (2018) [Figure 47, right] is centred around another monoprint shape of black paint from the paintings *Untitled* (2019) [Figure 26].

In these transitional works (between stages two and three), the two personas' styles and ways of working began to blend effortlessly and in ways atypical to previously. The drawing [Figure 47, left] comprises layers that merge to form a whole, like in Franzi's blue paintings. The energetic gesture of the graphite mark lends a feeling of chaos, but the layers and materials are limited, and now there is only one maker in this drawing: me. The mixed-media painting [Figure 47, right] is a composite of clearly distinct and traceable layers showing that each step of its making has been undertaken separately, imparting a feeling of solemnity, but the process of becoming so was chaotic. Franzi is present with blue paint but minus the hair dryer and working with Petra's chosen medium —a very liquid, translucent watercolour— while Petra grabbed hold of a stiff-bristled brush dipped in acrylic gesso and created a dry and wispy mark to frame the torn monoprint fragment on which Melusine's writing appears reversed in red roller-gel ink that I had collaged on top of Franzi's painting. Both artworks show the impact of materials and ways of working the personas had on me and, notably, on each other, and Franzi's lesson to embrace chaos —at times akin to inevitable change— in whatever form.

Figure 47: (Left) *Drawing After the Fact* (2019), one of thirty-three graphite/monoprint drawings,100% cotton stationery paper, 8.5 inches x 11 inches.
(Right)*Sumac VI: A Journey thru Thunderwood* (2018), one of eight mixed media paintings featuring a collaged monoprint fragment on yellow drafting paper, Stonehenge Aqua Hotpress paper, 10 inches x 14 inches.
Photos by the author.

Beginning this chapter, I stated that there is a difference between playing a game and infinite play; the first can be contained in the second but not the reverse. I played a game with the personas outlined by the rules of this doctoral research project, which, unlike my painting or practice-led artistic research, is finite. The game consisted of first adding the personas to my practice, then following them where they led, and eventually removing them from it to assess what they added to my practice. These additions —changes— are infinite in that they continue to impact and themselves are altered beyond the research project's conclusion. Ultimately, what the personas added to my practice was a means to distance myself from the risks I was taking, observing my practice and what I do in it from afar, learning its story as both a listener and its teller. As masks I could put on while I engaged in my painting practice, Melusine, Petra, and Franzi formed protective devices to explore other ways to paint and think. Personas can protect from what is and is not known while cultivating the conditions conducive to play and leading to the optimal experience —that is, flow. They revealed that the knowledge each brought to the work I performed with them became embedded within the tacit knowledge of my painting practice. Implementing this project's structure and rules made this knowledge visible and accessible to me. After all, painting is only a game, but a game that can be played within an infinite practice in which I am highly vested.

Within this doctoral research project's methodology, the purpose of Melusine, Petra and Franzi, expressed in the phrase 'personas as a means to insert change', implies a diversion from customary pathways; the established routes of my painting practice. 'Divergent thinking' is central to both play and creativity (Russ, 2003: 291); it is how problems are solved through testing a theoretically limitless number of solutions to find the best one. As stated in the Introduction and expanded upon in this chapter and

Chapter Three, the approach to making paintings used with personas and after their subsummation into my practice has been iterative, replicating and reproducing paintings at various points in their creation launching subsequent artworks. Mixing the methods of reiteration and infinite play inserts change into image-making through openly testing an unlimited number of solutions and following any given result repeatedly. Simultaneously, the singularity of the image made is maintained through documentation (an archive of the image's various states, see APPENDIX C) and negated at any point in the process by using that documentation to launch new images. Each solution is a diversion, prohibiting the way forward in one instance while proposing endless other ways in the next.

Similarly, each persona brings its solutions to this infinite process, and these remain as traces in subsequent iterations (post-personas) where the personas are no longer actively applied. 'Diversion' is risk-taking, enabling and instigating further risk. Moreover, these traces are the insight and findings of this practice-led artistic research project discussed and presented, leading to its contribution of knowledge in the final section, this text's Conclusion.

CONCLUSION

This doctoral research project utilised alternative identities —personas— with a play-based method to refresh my decades-old painting practice and explore their impact through the changes they brought to it. Its foundation lay in turning away from believing that a single identity firmly and authentically makes 'painting'. In the Introduction, I presented three research questions; however, shortly after beginning the practical portion of my research, I found working daily with three questions unwieldy. Nevertheless, they were essential to my project aims. Maintaining the essence of each, I formulated a single concise question to serve as my primary research question and work with daily in my studio inquiry:

- How might the use/application of personas in conjunction with developmental concepts of play within a painting practice contribute as a tool or a method to forming playful and playful painting strategies relative to this project's aims?

It is critical to note that my use of the word 'tool' does not pertain to the aims of this artistic research project (see Introduction, 'Research Questions'). Moreover, I direct back to the quote (see opening of Introduction) from Swiss art researcher Michael Hiltbrunner on practice-led artistic research and its methodology that '[...] What is needed is a vocabulary founded in the researching practices of artists themselves' (Cramer and Terpsma, 2021). Using the word in this project's research questions is one example of constructing a vocabulary from the vocabulary of my painting practice-led artistic research practice.

Further, revisiting the use of the term persona versus alter ego to describe the type of alternative identities of this project (see opening of Introduction), persona appeared at its start to be the more generic offering with the potential to develop as the project progressed. However, addressing the personas' impact in Chapter Five, my thoughts have shifted as I discovered that the qualities associated with the alternative identities that emerged through this research are more specific to me than I initially conceived.

Nonetheless, they are far still from alter egos per the examples given in the Introduction. I have opted to continue using the term persona/personas in this doctoral research project because they are frequently used interchangeably and can be synonymous, although here they are not. Relatedly is the example of the term 'persona', which appears to be synonymous with its use in other fields. Closer examination reveals marked differences in purpose and approach, making the word in different research contexts nonsynonymous (see opening of Introduction, (Nielsen, 2013)). The significance of these slight but critical differences to the terminology of this research project becomes evident in the 'Contribution to Knowledge' section of this Conclusion.

The coming section discusses how the above research question has been answered. Subsequently, the insight and findings of this research project are tied together by the research presented in the preceding chapters, leading to the contribution of new knowledge to the field of painting this project offers cumulatively.

Discussion

Arriving at the answer to my research question relative to this project's aims required addressing what provoked it by first reflecting on my painting practice, the first part of the self-reflective portion of my research methodology. Beginning with ideas collected in the early years of my education as a painter and progressing through to my practice-led research project on identity and self-portraiture, how I think about painting and the results of these thoughts on my painting practice are addressed (see opening Introduction). My painting practice is a material practice and, as such, leads my artistic research practice (see Introduction, 'Practice-led Artistic Research'). Bringing change to an established painting practice raised the question of why change and what/how to

change. After all, if 'change is inevitable' (Wheelan, 2012:111), then it will happen whether we seek it or not (see opening of Introduction). However, it is the second half of Wheelan's statement —'[...] but progress depends on what we do with that change'—which, motivates me to seek change as a means of developing skills necessary for progressing when facing it (see Introduction, 'Literature Review' (McGonigal, 2022)). Still, the quandary thinking about seeking change for my established painting practice was all the trouble and anxiety changing one's established practice might bring, exemplified by painter Philip Guston (see opening of Introduction). The message conveyed early in my education as a painter was that whatever your practice is, find a style —any style— and stick to it. This directive did not mean sticking to the same media. Transposing one's practice across media without changing its signature style or conceptual concerns is acceptable, thanks to Duchamp (see Introduction, 'Literature Review'). However, I was not seeking to transpose my practice to other media or change my concerns.

Furthermore, I was not seeking to change my style as Guston did drastically. I still wanted to make abstract paintings. The change I sought was in how I approach my making from a different point of view and see what changes this shift might invoke in the artworks and my practice. Previously researching the different ways artists portrayed themselves led to the discovery that many artists who made self-portraits were making them of alternative selves, which further fed the premise of this project. However, the ways of implementing change are innumerable and can be tackled physically, materially, technically, conceptually, or any combination of these, as this research has shown in the preceding chapters. Duchamp and how he incorporated shifts (change), 'play', and alternative identities into his practice provided the existing knowledge situating the topic of this practice-led artistic research inquiry per the

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examples given in the Literature Review. By picturing the identity of both art objects and artists differently and 'playing' with his identity as an artist and alter egos, Duchamp sparked my curiosity and contradicted notions on identity, authenticity, and painters I had been carrying with me in my practice. Once this project was situated in the knowledge offered by studies of Duchamp and the personas were chosen as the mode to invoke change with a method of play, one more questioning thought arose. That question was why painters do not employ alternative identities in ways similar to those frequently observed in the practices of writers or performers, for example, Fernando Pessoa and David Bowie (see opening of Introduction). As my conversations with artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent show in Chapter Four, I am not the only artist incorporating alternative identities into her practice with that same thought.

Provoked by the questions and thoughts outlined above, the theoretical framework of this research project begins by confronting the opposing definitions of Abstract Expressionism and the example set by Marcel Duchamp for the artistic value of 'authenticity' (see Chapter Two). Richard Wollheim's model of the artist-object-spectator relationship provided the bridge between the two by showing that an object's authenticity is not tied to that of a single identity but 'made' through the intentions of the artist and the perceptions of those viewing it (1987: 45-100). Further, authenticity as an artistic value arrived at through viewers' perceptions and knowledge prompted by the artwork's appearance and the artist's intentions or knowledge imparted on its essence corresponds to the standards stated by Cueto and Hendrikx (2017: 14). Succinctly, reconciling notions of paintings' authenticity through this scholarly research facilitated the use of personas in my painting practice, the studio inquiry of this doctoral research

project. Reconciliation of the problem of authenticity and painting is one instance of change provoked in my practice by this research project.

The studio inquiry began by exemplifying how I apply methods of observation and reflection to the work of other artists through my experience viewing retrospective exhibitions of painters Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson in Chapter One. These methods are essential parts of this project's research methodology and critical to answering how the personas and play-based method contribute to changes in my practice and meet this project's aims. Observing and reflecting on the work of other artists, I collect knowledge and skills which I bring back and apply to my painting and practice, as demonstrated in the second section of this chapter, 'Seeing Painting Through My Practice'. By directing these methods toward other artists' artworks and practices, I better understand my position as a spectator when looking at my paintings. Moreover, in this research project, the personas are other artists, and I assess them with these same methods.

Applying these two methods to the exhibitions of Stella, Schneemann, Owens, and Nelson is meaningful to this research project due to their shared intention to question what and how 'painting' (subject) is perceived by the spectator by tying it to the discussion of authenticity through Wollheim's model in Chapter Two [Figure 17]. The insight that was imparted by applying these phenomenological-based methods to the work of artists outside my studio contributed to the change in my understanding of authenticity in my practice as a spectator of it by providing practical support to the theoretical underpinnings excavated with scholarly research methods. Seeing and reflecting on the concerns these artists share but uniquely expressed confirmed that what an artist reveals about 'painting' does not negate what others divulge; paintings'

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authenticity is not destroyed or destabilised by a continuous replacement of declared facts with new knowledge. Instead, authenticity expands through what is brought to it by multiple parties, signifying that paintings' authenticity is established cumulatively, discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

Seeing the paintings as the spectator sees is the artist observing from another position like I do when painting with the personas (see Chapter Three). Looking as the spectator generates knowledge about the painting different from the tacit knowledge imparted by the artist's making on it. Nevertheless, these two types of knowledge combine to inform the objects and their exhibition and form the artwork's authenticity, the artist's practice, and its definition in painting. I applied the knowledge I gained observing and reflecting on these artists' exhibitions in the first section to two examples of my painting in the second section of Chapter One.

The examples of my paintings in Chapter One [Figures 9 through 15] are essential to this research project for three reasons:

1. They are vehicles for demonstrating how the phenomenologically-based research method of observing contributes to my practice and research; viewing artworks and exhibitions lead to contemplating other artists' technical and conceptual approaches. They generated additional questions, leading me to pursue answers by applying the same methods and knowledge to my practice.
2. These methods and examples supply additional context for my painting practice prior to this research and during it via the theoretical and practical parameters set with the artists discussed.
3. The discussion of these paintings differs from those shown in Chapter Five because they exemplify where other methods in this project's methodology, i.e. the observation method, led my practice when combined with the scholarly research on authenticity.

These combined methods made space conceptually in my practice for both the personas and playful painting strategies previously unavailable. While the latter examples [Figures 31 through 45] demonstrate and answer my research question from a more practical, physically manifested viewpoint on how the use of personas in my painting

practice contributes in conjunction with methods of play to forming playful painting strategies relative to this project's aims. Nonetheless, both sets of examples contribute answers to my main research question.

By uniting my research and practice methods through my experience as both artist and spectator in experiential spaces —galleries, museums, and my studio— the examples in Chapter One are tied to the theoretical discussion in Chapter Two on painting and the problem of authenticity. These spaces are the physical locations where I employed both methods to comprehend how authenticity is theoretically embedded and practically expressed in my painting practice. The insight they provided not only created space in my practice for the personas and a play-based method, they assisted in determining the role of personas in this research project (see Chapter Three). Notably, if the artist must become the spectator while painting, the personas must, too, and in doing so, become part of (the) painting's authenticity (see Chapter Two). As an example of a painting produced with the personas, *Concertinaed* (2017) provides one answer to my research question stated at the opening of this Conclusion. Like viewers, who, despite knowing they are present but unable to see themselves in the mirror while viewing *Concertinaed* (2017) [Figures 12 through 15], the personas, despite being 'unseen', are present and known as both artist and spectator in the works made with them. Analogous to the mirror employed as a metacognitive prompt for viewers, the personas used in conjunction with a play-based method served as conceptual prompts for me to theoretically consider the unseeable parts of 'painting', such as authenticity. Moreover, they changed how I used mirrors in my practice to convey this with a painting.

Chapters One and Four are linked by their research methods, examining the practices and work of other artists and comparing what is revealed to mine and this project. For

comparison, contemporary visual artists Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent are valuable examples that partially address my research question by demonstrating how and why other artists incorporate alternative identities into their practices. Furthermore, they assist in situating and differentiating my use of the personas. Integral to these artists' use is 'telling' instead of 'showing' through alternative identities the themes of their visual art-making practices to viewers. Of these three artists, only Plinio Avila shows his alternative identity, Humberto Márquez, by embodying him in videos and photographs that tell his concerns of creative and political hierarchies, collaboration, and identity in his artworks. Never shown, Caroline Kent's alternative identities, Victoria and Veronica, are presently for viewers the least palpable in telling for reasons stated in Chapter Four. In contrast, Rubens Ghenov's application of alternative or *fictive* identities is most apparent as a means of telling. They provide the artist with a method to create a context partially outside himself —distancing— for publicly telling in artist talks and statements the story of his creative practice and what shapes it separate from his paintings or their exhibition.

Commensurate to the four artists cited in Chapter One, the personas showed me through the artworks made with them through a method of *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983) and, via documentation of working with them, further reflection, another way to accommodate the artist-object-spectator relationship model within my painting practice. Telling and showing have a similar symbiotic relationship as observation and reflection; their showing elicited telling their story and integrating it deeper into mine, and telling their story enabled more to be shown in the making process. Moreover, this relationship contributed to expanding conceptual space in my painting practice, like the different understanding of authenticity resulting from the research presented in Chapter Two. In turn, the expansion changed my approach conceptually, and it cleared paths for other

practical methods with which to make a painting. Specifically, it resulted in my

handling of paint, layering, and shape more loosely and lightly and is visible in the shift

from the painting *Motherboard* (2015) [Figure 33] to the six paintings (2019 —) of the

two untitled series shown in 'Before and After' [Figures 40 through 45] in Chapter Five.

As discussed in the Introduction and opening of this Conclusion, the motivation of this

project stems from notions of authenticity and painting and the query why painters do

not employ alternative identities in ways similar to those frequently observed in the

practices of writers or performers is echoed in the practices of Avila's, Ghenov's, and

Kent's. However, unlike these artists, when I began this research project, I was not

(cognitively) searching for greater freedom in my painting practice because I did not

understand the relationship between freedom and change. However, as I pursued change

by using the personas and the infinite play method, I understood that conceptual and

practical shifts resulted in increased freedom in how I approached painting and my

practice. Manifested in my painting process and exemplified by my paintings in Chapter

Five, this is another way of how personas and a method of play contributed to meeting

this project's aims. Increasing freedom is a form of change. This 'shift and change'

aligns with the motivation Caroline Kent cited for her use of alternative identities. Kent

and I share the desire for shifts and changes in our practices. The difference between us

is that Kent is looking to shift the framework while maintaining the language of her

practice. Meanwhile, I sought to maintain the framework while increasing the

vocabulary of my painting and research practices and their methodology (see opening of

Introduction).

How I use the personas is distinctive and can be differentiated from these three artists'

use of fictive identities, primarily by my intention not to use the personas publicly, i.e.

aside from this doctoral research project. Foremost, the personas are for showing and telling me what I seek to know from within my practice. Otherwise, they remain to viewers essentially 'unseen', and therefore, not art (see Introduction, 'Literature Review' (Shambroom, 2018: 39)). Following Stella's statement that what you see is what you see, for some artists, it is essential to the authenticity of the artwork to show spectators how the work is technically produced, or the materials or concepts are the artist's subject (see Chapter Two). However, in my practice, the personas are not the subject matter. They are devices assisting me in my research led by my painting practice. Removing the personas from their intended context by displaying them as the 'subject' in artworks or exhibitions would transform them into artefacts of my practice and my research, addressed as a finding of this research project in the next section.

The space of Rubens Ghenov's artist's talks is where Angelico Morandá fulfils his function and where his authenticity resides; the fictive dead poet becomes alive and 'real' for the listener and the artist there, not in the words of a press release or Ghenov's paintings. Similarly, Humberto Márquez lives (again) for the artist and spectators in the photos and films in which Plinio Avila embodies him and in the artworks Avila re-creates. His function and authenticity are in the artworks of which he is a part. Working with the personas in the physical space of my studio and the conceptual space of my practice is where they function and become alive for me; it is where their authenticity resides. Making them alive and authentic for others is problematic because, with the slight exception of Melusine, they do not exist outside that space. Examining how alternative identities functioned in the practices of Avila, Ghenov and Kent and comparing it to how personas function in mine provided another answer to my research question and led to another finding discussed in the next section on the suitability of alternative identities to their intended function.

The practical inquiry of this research project is tied to theoretical inquiries, such as naming and 'self-talk' (see Chapter Three). Like authenticity, names are cumulative, changing as they are added to and subtracted from but remain what they are: infinite signifiers of an identity that outlasts those who carried them. Researching the three artists working with alternative identities, the names they gave their fictive identities were equally significant and personally meaningful to the artists. When an alternative identity is public, naming them makes them recognisable to others, which supports its function in that context. Relative to my research question and this project's aims, the names I chose for the personas, which are not intended to function publicly, are based on what they evoked for me. As containers for identity, their names provided an additional context to develop who they were and determine how they acted or behaved as identities separate from mine. Naming them was part of forming the playful strategies relative to their function to bring changes to my practice.

Through stories derived from their names and reflection methods, familiarity with how the personas navigated situations emerged. Familiarity enabled me to intuitively respond as I worked with them, which is another way personas and the infinite play method contributed to forming strategies relative to this project's aims. In the third stage of this project, although they had become subsumed into my practice, they continued to impact the work outcome through the essence and means of making familiarity each had brought into it (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, these conceptual and physical traces left by each persona in the paintings and my practice continue fulfiling this project's aims beyond its completion. However, they also indicate the predicament found in authenticity if the painting is understood as having a singular source, a predicament which they and this project resolved for me and my practice (see Chapter

Two). The resolution came through the insight scholarly research on 'self-talk' revealed when applied with the personas and infinite play (see Chapter Three).

'Self-talk' exemplified in my conversation with Melusine (see APPENDIX E) is another example that answers the research question. Contemplating my practice through interactions with her notes and emails and my research website postings (see APPENDIX A) aided in recognising the hallmarks of the method of infinite play as it happened before I knew what it was. Finally, killing off Melusine when her uncontrollability became detrimental to this project and resurrecting her when she was needed displays the benefits and playful strategies brought by the infinite play method when applied together with alternative identities (see Chapter Five).

Strategically absorbing my existing painting methodology into this project in playful and trackable ways occurred two ways. One object-making strategy was producing multiple iterations of a single work as the basis for new paintings while working with Petra and Franzi, described in Chapter Three. Another strategy based on 'play' emerged from my research on theories of play and the making-based method of reiteration to become the method of infinite play. As a method, infinite play lent to further developing and embodying the personas through repeatedly working with the processes each brought across the various painting iterations to see what emerged in each new work practically and conceptually, *ad infinitum*.

Infinite play allowed me to surrender control of the painting to the personas and then to the process. It contributed to an increased sense of freedom in developing a new and ever-morphing vocabulary of shapes and material possibilities, informing my painting and research practices. The examples included for Petra and Franzi in Chapters Three

and Five demonstrate reiteration and infinite play's contributions to this project and my practice, providing another answer to my research question. When painting as myself or with the personas and applying the method of infinite play, I still engaged in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) —without conscious contemplation, like a child playing 'make-believe' (see opening of Introduction). Taking different approaches to each iteration, observing the personas during and knowing unlimited directions to take a painting and options for reflecting on it were available to me 'after the fact' via documentation increased my ability to achieve 'flow' (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990: 3). Because they offered a means to critically distance me from my practice, observing from a place within it, whether painted or conversed with, personas served as the ideal means to incorporate a method of infinite play to elicit change in my established painting practice.

Research Insights and Findings

This research provided insight on *authenticity* (see Chapter Two) as a cumulative artistic value comprising the artist and spectator's intentions and perceptions, which was coupled with an increased awareness of paintings' authenticity as uncompromised by the continual replacement of one artist's or spectator's truths for another's. As discussed in the previous section, the increased awareness of paintings' authenticity as uncompromised was arrived at through observing and reflecting on the paintings of Frank Stella, Carolee Schneemann, Laura Owens, and Dona Nelson (see Chapter One). That insight served as the starting point for this research project's findings emergence. The first finding is that paintings' authenticity is formed and experienced in experiential spaces where alternative identities can likewise be experienced without being publicly

revealed. It was attained by applying the same observation and reflection methods used with the artists in the first section of Chapter One on an earlier body of my work, using mirrors to look at paintings in the second section of that chapter. The application of those methods led to devising the mirrored shelf as the mechanism for presenting the double-sided painting *Concertinaed* (2017) [Figures 12 through 15].

Observing and reflecting on the work and practices of other artists and then using the insight gained by those methods and reapplying them in a similar context to my practice, exemplified in Chapters One and Four, is directly tied to the personas in that they too are artists. While using reiteration and infinite play methods as I worked with them (see Chapter Three), I observed and reflected on their practices and the work they produce. Then, I incorporate those same methods of making, observation and reflection into my practice, as I work without the personas, to assess their impact and methods and the changes they have brought to my painting practice (see Chapter Five). Addressing the question, 'What did the studio enquiry reveal that may not have been revealed through other modes of enquiry? (Barrett and Bolt, 2007/2010)', this cycling through these methods —observing, reflecting, reiteration, infinite playing— is one example of what could only be revealed in the studio. Furthermore, the methods of reiteration and infinite playing along with the personas themselves and their application to make paintings (see Chapter Three) enabling these discoveries were developed through the studio production.

Likewise, the infinite play method (see Chapter Five) was developed through my research on playing and its application with the personas in the studio. Combined with the other methods mentioned in the previous paragraphs, it established conditions for creating work with (and without) alternative identities. Applying this method through

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painting with the personas revealed that, similar to being open and letting the personas do what they do and following them where they went, it requires surrendering control to the painting process. Further, by surrendering control, the freedom to develop a new and ever-morphing vocabulary of shapes and material possibilities increased as it was applied with reiteration. The results of the increased freedom with its expanding and continually changeable vocabulary of shapes and materials is evident in the examples of paintings primarily presented with Petra Nimm in Chapter Three [Figures 19 through 22 and Figures 24 through 27] and the paintings in the section 'Before and After' in Chapter Five. Specifically, the six 'after' paintings [Figures 40 through 45], viewed with the 'before' painting [Figures 31 through 33], demonstrate the new knowledge of increased freedom in image-making gained through the studio process (Barrett and Bolt, 2007/2010) in the following ways: the development of shapes across the various iterations, the profusion of layers ranging from opaque to transparent, and the variety of blacks, whites, and grainy-metallic pigments.

Exploring the practical application of alternative identities (see Chapter Four) led to an array of practice-based findings that inform a theory of their use in visual artmaking practices (Barrett and Bolt, 2007/2010). The first of these findings, stemming from my conversations with Avila, Ghenov, and Kent, is that, like writers, visual artists occupy fictive spaces through various forms of storytelling. Telling the story of the methods and the concerns addressed within one's practice —a fictive space— transpires or is communicated through alternative identities included in it. The imagination creates fictive spaces, which have an actual existence that can be experienced directly by the artist or others. Fictive spaces are different from fictional spaces, which are created to be 'unreal', a fiction that can only be experienced vicariously. Experiencing the fictive spaces directly with the alternative identities is essential to this thesis by relating

directly to my subsequent findings that, as one example of alternative or fictive identities, personas can occupy the distinct fictive space of my painting practice. Their presence in the space of my practice expands it by the changes they bring to it practically and conceptually in the methods of making and playing discussed in the previous paragraphs and section. Expansion is one form of change.

Through the practical application of personas and play-based methods of this research project and its conceptual expansion, the problem once posed by theories of authenticity and painting presented in Chapter Two was resolved for me in my practice. Resolving the authenticity issue and investigating alternative identities in other visual artists and my practices found that alternative identities must be suitable for their intended function (see Chapters Two and Four). Only artists can determine the alternative identity's function relative to their practice, and their authenticity is tied to the context of their functioning. Through traces of the alternative identity's authenticity (seen or unseen) in the artist's practice and work, the authenticity of the alternative identity informs the authenticity of the painting and the practice (see Chapter Two).

Working with all three personas confirmed that they function as set out by my research questions, not as the subject of my paintings or practice but rather as objects in it. As objects, they assist in acquiring knowledge and initiating change, unlike the alternative identities of artists like Grayson Perry and Lynn Herschman Leeson (see Introduction) or Plinio Avila (see Chapter Four) as subjects in their practice and artworks. I realised that the personas as objects meant publicly displaying or performing them as 'art objects' would remove them from the context of their functioning and their authenticity in this project, transforming them into something they are not (see the previous section, 'Discussion'). Moreover, it is crucial that they maintain their function as objects, and not

become 'art objects', because that function positions them on each node in the model of Wollheim's artist-object-spectator relationship (see Chapter Two, Figure 17). Finding their position in each node is essential to this project as they connect to form the boundary for the space in which play transpires (see Chapter Five, Figure 30). Lastly, vis a vis authenticity and the artist-object-spectator relationship per Wollheim (see Chapter Two), painting with the personas in each position, I found that although I gain critical distance, I am no less removed from the process than when looking as the spectator. Looking as the spectator looks or painting with the personas, I do not stop looking at the painting as the artist. .

As elements through which storytelling in artists' practices transpires, I found naming alternative identities is significant to their stories, existence and function (see Chapters Three and Four) and critical to their authenticity (see Chapter Two). A further realisation, specifically in my work with Melusine, who was not a painting persona, was that the 'self-talk' I engage in my studio practice is a conversation between painting and me. It is essential to my research practice because I am re-telling the story of 'painting' from my viewpoint through this conversation.

The final three findings are specifically directed towards the aims of this project (see Introduction) and were cumulatively arrived out through the entirety of this research project. The first is that through the cognition of my diverse roles in my painting practice —artist, spectator, and with the personas' object—, my awareness of the choices I make and how I respond to what happens in the paintings that are beyond my control grows (see Chapter Five). My painting practice remains firmly and authentically bound to my hand and mind, whatever role I perform. Combined with the theoretical framework of this practice-led research project, the practical framework of personas and

infinite play proved ideal to elicit change in my established painting practice, exemplified in the paintings presented and discussed in Chapter Five. As a whole, the final finding of this project revealed that a multi-part project aims, multiple research questions (see Introduction) coupled with open-ended methods —reiteration and infinite play— and multiple and diversely significant personas increased the following observable qualities in my painting practice, as presented in Chapter Five: flexibility, responsiveness, divergency, disruptiveness, and the willingness to take risks, playing freely and infinitely. Moreover, this combination of aims, questions, and open-ended-ness proved beneficial in shaping the variety of practical and theoretical research methods (see Introduction) integral to this project's execution and discussed in the opening section of this Conclusion.

Contribution to Knowledge

Initial searches for existing research on the topics explored in this research project produced no single result linking them to each other (see Literature Review). The lack of existing studies on alternative identities (personas) in painting practices stood out in a field otherwise populated by their use with photography and performance-based media. The exhibition 'Role Play' [19 February - 27 June 2022, Fondazione Prada, Observatorio, Milan/Italy] shows that the topic of 'identity' and alternative identities (personas) is of current interest (see Introduction). However, exemplified by the work in that exhibition, alternative identities are more commonly found in the practices above to address identity issues such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and political/social identity issues frequently tied to the artist's identity. Still, searches also revealed that visual artists not working in photography or performance-based media, such as Dowling

(2011), are interested in exploring identity through the material objects produced in other media. As shown by the artists interviewed in Chapter Four, this includes painters.

Plinio Avila, Rubens Ghenov, and Caroline Kent demonstrate that visual artists, including painters, use alternative identities uniquely to their practices and not only to explore the identity issues mentioned earlier overtly. One of the different ways shown by Avila, Ghenov, and Kent is that visual artists work with alternative identities through storytelling to occupy the fictive spaces of their practices. As examples, these artists show that the presence of alternative identities in these spaces does not compromise the authenticity of the artwork or practice. Instead, the alternative identities' existence expands their practices. Here, these artists served to situate this research, placing my incorporation of personas into my practice with this project alongside their use of alternative identities in their practices. Moreover, these examples demonstrate who, why, and how alternative identities are employed in contemporary visual arts practices in other ways; disclosing their practices is one small contribution to the new knowledge of this thesis by expanding the knowledge base.

Furthermore, the lack of documentation and research on alternative identities in image-making practices is supported by McCartney's (2018: 1) assertion that artists using them in their practices raise problems [tied to authorship and authenticity] for the economy that benefits otherwise from the artists and their artworks. In this research project, I added that for painters with established practices, authenticity and its problem for painting are also linked to ideas promulgated in the artist's education and can be resolved through a self-reflective methodology that includes the artist-object-spectator relationship model per Wollheim (see Chapter Two).

The endless supply of exhibitions and new publications on Marcel Duchamp and his explorations of identity (including alternative identities) related to the object and the artist shows that the topic of this practice-led artistic research has a long and unexhausted history. Duchamp began as a painter, and this research project builds on the conversation he began with painting over a century ago. Duchamp shaped this conversation about painting, art, language, and identity through dramatic shifts in method and media using alternative identities and play-based methods, including the Readymade, *The Large Glass*, and Rrose Sélavy in his 'an-artist' practice. Throughout the conversation, inspired by the questions Duchamp raised and continues to raise a half-century after his death, other artists and scholars have added to it, for instance, artist Donald Shambroom (2018), whose practice is painting and sculpture-based. The conversation has veered off in many directions as topics of other pertinence —the identity issues mentioned previously— enter into it. However, it also veers towards auxiliary topics that proved essential to it through this studio inquiry —i.e. authorship/authenticity, the 'unseen', storytelling, ambiguity, freedom, collaboration, and the various ways identity functions are less related to today's interests. This research project brings to this conversation a re-direction back towards the topic from which it began, painting and addressing those side-topics important to art's identity from the viewpoint of painting.

For instance, redirecting the conversation back toward painting revealed the insight and findings of the previous sections added to it. Including that alternative identities can remain 'unseen's or be revealed publicly as the subject of the artwork or as an object tied to its making. For whatever reasons or ways visual artists —painters— choose to work with alternative identities, naming is significant to their stories to describe the fictive spaces of their existence and function. Utilising alternative identities in ways suitable to

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their intended function increases freedom through a shift in understanding and precipitates a change in visual art-making practices. However, only the artist can determine what change has transpired and where freedom has increased because it happens from within their practice. The alternative identities and their authenticity are tied to the context of their functioning, partially shaped by the artist. These insights and findings are tied to the methods employed in the studio inquiry. They led to answering how applying personas in conjunction with play-based methods and painting strategies can bring changes to an established painting practice and reject the notion that a single authentic identity makes painting art. The answers to that question have been added to the conversation begun by Duchamp and continued by Stella, Schneemann, Ownes, Nelson, Avila, Ghenov, Kent, and myself.

What this research project brings to the conversation regarding change is addressed by the related question of why inserting change into an established painting practice is needed. Acknowledging that some artists will never need to bring change into what they do, others, like Duchamp, may repeatedly seek it for reasons and in ways unique to their practice. My reason for seeking to insert change into my painting practice is supported by Wheelan's statement indicating the need to prepare for inevitable changes as a means to progression (2012: 111) and the findings of future forecasters showing that preparing our minds for the "unthinkable" by creating mental habits that stretch our imagination [expand our fictive spaces] makes us more flexible, adaptable, agile, and resilient when the inevitable happens (McGonigal, 2022: 14 - 15). These are the conditions created and imparted when achieving 'flow' (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990: 3). The personas and the infinite play method were explicitly created for my painting practice, and this project's methodology grew out of its methodology. Nevertheless, the connections made between the understandings of this inquiry are brought cumulatively to the conversation and can

be applied both within the field of painting and other creative arts disciplines as one example of preparing for change (Barrett and Bolt, 2007/2010). Overall, the contribution to new knowledge on the use of alternative identities —personas— and play-based methods to insert change into an established painting practice is the connections between the topics explored, and the insight and findings revealed relative to the scholarly and critical discourse, and other artists' practices.

Future Research

This research project was stimulated by previous insight projects provided that led to other avenues of questioning, and it follows that this project will beget other projects. While the personas have been absorbed into my painting practice (and this project is complete), they will continue to play an essential and integral role in impacting and contributing as unseen elements when I paint. Likewise, whether subtly or prominently contributing to it, the knowledge produced through the findings mentioned earlier remains as part of my re-telling of the story of 'painting', which I continue to re-tell each time I go into my studio, attend an exhibition, or think about 'painting'.

Repeating this project exactly as it was done, either by myself or others, would most likely yield additional and slightly different findings and impact, a reason for repeating it. However, I would be unlikely to repeat it exactly as it was done; instead, I would approach it with a reiteration method, preserving this version and using a copy for the next. Musing on what future versions of this research project might arise for me or others who wish to pursue a similar inquiry leads to many possibilities. The first thought to emerge is to use personas different from the three originals, questioning how dependent are the new and previous revelations on the personas themselves. Another

thought is, what would a project in which the personas are 'seen' look like, and what might I learn about painting and my practice when I share or perform them for others.

Personas are neither the only example of alternative identities nor the only example of 'personas' (see the opening of the Introduction). Because of the variety of alternative identities, possible future research would be to re-stage this project using another type of alternative identity or persona, assigning a different function. For example, what might a similar project using the type of 'personas' described by Lene Nielsen (2013) look like and reveal about painting? However, for reasons given in the Introduction, based on their intended function, it would likely require more significant changes to practices in advance of the research and a very different line of questioning.

Rubens Ghenov and Caroline Kent are painters working in the language of abstraction and are stylistically closer to me than Plinio Avila. Although he also makes paintings, his practice is that of a Conceptual artist. Avila's work appealed to me for his Duchampian humour and critique. As this research project has shown, other visual artists with different practices work with alternative identities of various ilks, which, based on suitability, intention and function, and future research might incorporate these different artists and their practices as models. What might a project be modelled directly on Ghenov's use of Morandá and some of the other fictive identities he has employed in his practice applied to someone else's practice, including mine? What might be revealed for Avila repeating what he has done with Humberto Márquez but using a different identity set in a different location or making a different type of artwork, i.e. not Conceptual? Similarly, I ask myself, how will Caroline Kent's practice continue to progress with Veronica and Victoria, and what type of research might it inspire?

Moreover, how could this research project contribute to the further development of her work with Victoria and Veronica?

Another potential future exploration would be to keep the same personas or types of alternative identities but change the type of practice, such as painting to ceramic sculpture, or move away from object-making practices entirely. For instance, what would be revealed by inserting personas and the infinite play method into social practice, musical composition, or choreography? As stated in this Conclusion, the alternative identity's function is determined by the practice and its methods which indicates that change to any of these would shift the theoretical and practical framework and lead to different ways to test the result or findings suitable to that specific research practice. Moreover, it is also possible to keep the same project but shift the theoretical framework by asking different questions based on other methodologies. For instance, what might less phenomenological and more ontological inquiries reveal? How would this shift impact the shape of the research and the function of the alternative identities and methods?

Finally, just as these musings show many side roads to this research project that, through shifts and changes both slight and grand, remain open for exploration, there are many ways to bring change into any creative practice beyond alternative identities and infinite play. Creative practices consist of many variables. I could have changed my style, materials, and exploration topics, and any of these would have brought changes to my making. I could have even left behind the making and become 'an-artist' like Duchamp. And maybe, someday, I will.

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APPENDIX A

A chronological list of postings on www.robynthomas-explorations.com, the author's research-blog-website pertaining to this doctoral research project. Dates shown are website posting dates, not the date the work and information presented in the posting was conducted.

Refreshed, Refocused and Reconfigured 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2016/8/24/refreshed-refocused-and-reconfigured

Documentation- Forms of Reflection Merete Røstad 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/documentation

PhD Workshop "Live Writing" Geoff Cox 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-workshop-live-writing-with-geoff-cox/

Introduction to the PhD Viva Voce Examination at Transart Institute 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/introduction-to-the-phd-viva-voce-examination-at-transart-institute

Subjectivity and the Mirror: Framing the Self Ruth Novaczek 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/subjectivity-and-the-mirror-framing-the-self/

Tools of Engaging Conflict Dorit Cypis 24 AUG 2016 [09 JUL 2016]
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/tools-of-engaging-conflict

Revised PhD Proposal Questions 10 SEP 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2016/9/10/revised-phd-proposal-questions

Double Portrait: Self and Franz Walsh 03 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/3/double-portrait-self-and-franz-walsh

Double Portrait: Self and Petra Nimm 04 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/4/double-portrait-self-and-petra-nimm

Double Portrait: Self and Melusine Van der Weyden 05 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/5/double-portrait-self-and-melusine-van-der-weyden

Franz Walsh 10 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/10/franz-walsh

Melusine Van der Weyden 12 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/12/melusine-van-der-weyden

Petra Nimm 13 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2016/10/13/petra-nimm

October 15, 2016 Update 14 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2016/10/14/october-15-2016-update

GERHARD RICHTER I 18 OCT 2016
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2016/10/18/gerhard-richter-i

Franz Painting, Part One 12 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/3/12/franz-painting-part-one

Petra Painting, Part One 13 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/3/12/petra-painting-part-one

One Painting Three 13 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/3/12/one-painting-three

March 15, 2017 Update 13 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/3/13/march-15-2017-update

The trick of replication 25 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/25/the-trick-of-replication

A path to Vygotsky 25 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/25/a-path-to-vygotsky

Mary, Mary quite contrary 26 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/26/mary-mary-quite-contrary

Voices of a Nomadic Soul 26 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/26/voices-of-a-nomadic-soul

Thoughts on Pessoa and Duchamp 27 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/27/thoughts-on-pessoa-and-duchamp

Slant 28 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/28/slant

Boxes and Bins 28 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/28/boxes-and-bins

Joe Fig's Questions, Part One 28 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/28/sie21b1u6jwnmcu94qluii8701e0k8

A child's solution to the limits of space 28 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/28/a-childs-solution-to-the-limits-of-space

Codes of Dressing Up, Part One 29 MAR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/3/29/codes-of-dressing-up-part-one

A little madness in the Spring, Part One 13 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/13/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-one

Good Witches of the Between, Part Four 13 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/13/good-witches-of-the-between-part-four

April 15, 2017 Update 14 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/4/14/april-15-2017-update

A little madness in the Spring, Part One- part two 18 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/18/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-one-part-two

A little madness in the Spring, Part Two 18 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/18/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-two

A little madness in the Spring, Part Three 21 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/21/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-three

A little madness in the Spring, Part Two -part two 21 APR 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/4/21/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-two-part-two

Philip Guston, Part One 12 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/12/philip-guston-part-one

Good Witches of the Between, Part Five- Franz's Intervention 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/15/good-witches-of-the-between-part-five-franzs-intervention

A little madness in the Spring, Part Two -part three 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/15/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-two-part-three

A little madness in the Spring, Part Three -part two 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/15/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-three-part-two

Franzi blue 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/15/franzs-big-blue

Three small asides 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/15/three-small-asides

May 15, 2017 Update 15 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/5/15/may-15-2017-update

Preliminary thoughts on the written exegesis 22 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/22/preliminary-thoughts-on-the-written-exegesis

Petra's Statement 23 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/23/petras-statement

Quotes and Notes on Performance Studies: An introduction 24 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/24/quotes-and-notes-on-performance-studies-an-introduction

Schjeldahl on Rauschenberg 24 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/24/schjeldahl-on-rauschenberg

Important? 25 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/25/important

Good Witches of the Between, Part Six- applying Petra 26 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/5/26/good-witches-of-the-between-part-six-applying-petra

Authentic Drips and Ziggy Stardust 26 MAY 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/5/27/authentic-drips-and-ziggy-stardust

First, very rough, draft 05 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/5/first-very-rough-draft

Gestures of CillaVee -Gestures of Petra Nimm 08 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/6/8/gestural-studies-of-cillavee-by-petra-nimm

Notes and Quotes from Serial Imagery: Definition by John Coplans 12 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/12/notes-and-quotes-from-serial-imagery-definition-by-john-coplans

The pleasure of The Pleasure of the Text 12 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/12/the-pleasure-of-the-pleasure-of-the-text

From Death to Birth 13 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/13/from-death-to-birth

Three more small asides 14 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/6/14/three-more-small-asides

A little madness in the Spring, Part three - part three 14 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/6/14/a-little-madness-in-the-spring-part-three-part-three

Good Witches of the Between, Part Seven - another start 14 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/6/14/good-witches-of-the-between-part-seven-another-start

Bibliography as a tool for reflection 15 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/15/bibliography-as-a-tool-for-reflection

June 15, 2017 Update 15 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/6/15/june-15-2017-update

Meeting the Universe Halfway, Chapter Two: Diffractions: Differences, Contingencies, and Entanglements That Matter 17 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-summer-residency-workshops-reading-diary/2017/6/17/meeting-the-universe-halfway-chapter-two-diffractions-differences-contingencies-and-entanglements-that-matter

Henk Borgdorff, Artistic Practices and Epistemic Things in Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research 19 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-summer-residency-workshops-reading-diary/2017/6/19/henk-borgdorff-artistic-practices-and-epistemic-things-in-experimental-systems-future-knowledge-in-artistic-research

A short visit in the between 20 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/6/20/a-short-visit-in-the-between

Petra responds to Melusine 27 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/27/petra-responds-to-melusine

Franz responds to Melusine 28 JUN 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/6/28/franz-responds-to-melusine

Ása Richardsdóttir and Lene Bang Henningsen, It starts with a conversation. Question your knowledge by sharing. 2017. 03 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-summer-residency-workshops-reading-diary/2017/7/3/asa-richardsdottir-and-lene-bang-henningsen-it-starts-with-a-conversation-question-your-knowledge-by-sharing-2017

Guy Debord, Theory of the Dérive (1958) 05 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-summer-residency-workshops-reading-diary/2017/7/5/guy-debord-theory-of-the-drive-1958

Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm, Image One Part One 05 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/7/5/momentary-messages-of-truths-as-told-by-petra-nimm-image-one-part-one

Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity (2000) 08 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/phd-summer-residency-workshops-reading-diary/2017/7/8/zygmunt-bauman-liquid-modernity-2000

Summer Residency 2017 workshops schedule with links to reading diaries 08 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/7/8/summer-residency-2017-links-to-workshop-reading-diaries

Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm, Image One Part Two 09 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/7/9/momentary-messages-of-truths-as-told-by-petra-nimm-image-one-part-two

Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm with Interruptions by Robyn Thomas, Image Two 09 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/7/9/momentary-messages-of-truths-as-told-by-petra-nimm-with-interruptions-by-robyn-thomas-image-two

Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm with Interruptions by Robyn Thomas, Image Three 09 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/7/9/momentary-messages-of-truths-as-told-by-petra-nimm-with-interuptions-by-robyn-thomas-image-three

July 15, 2017 Update 12 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/7/12/july-15-2017-update

Notes: Important sentences from my Summer 2017 residency presentation and how my understanding of what I am doing has developed through the process of preparing it. 31 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/7/31/notes-important-sentences-from-my-summer-2017-residency-presentation-and-how-my-understanding-of-what-i-am-doing-has-developed-through-the-process-of-preparing-it

Summer Residency Presentation 31 JUL 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/7/31/summer-residency-presentation

Melusine's correspondences and other writings (until August 1, 2017) 04 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/8/4/melusines-correspondences-and-other-writings-until-august-1-2017

I am Melusine -Sütterlin 07 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/8/7/i-am-melusine-stterlin

Some words from some words I. 21 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/8/21/some-words-from-some-words-i

Good Witches of the Between, Part 7 -enter Franz 22 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/8/22/good-witches-of-the-between-part-7-enter-franz

Good Witches of the Between, Part 8 -Petra returns 22 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/8/22/good-witches-of-the-between-part-8-petra-returns

Good Witches of the Between, Part 9 -another layer of paper 27 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/8/27/good-witches-of-the-between-part-9-another-layer-of-paper

Good Witches of the Between, Part 10 -Petra, watercolor, thinned gesso and acrylic 30 AUG 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/8/30/good-witches-of-the-between-part-10-petra-watercolor-thinned-gesso-and-acrylic

Good Witches of the Between, Part 11 - Robyn and oil 12 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/9/12/good-witches-of-the-between-part-11-robyn-and-oil

Trans-scribed 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/9/14/trans-scribed

Melusine Sütterlin 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/9/14/melusine-stterlin

Boxing Shadows with the beginning of (mainly) Melusine's interruptions 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/9/14/boxing-shadows-with-the-beginning-of-mainly-melusines-interruptions

Odds and (non) Ends, August and September 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/9/14/odds-and-non-ends-august-and-september

Photos: subject/object 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/9/14/photos-subjectobject

Berlin sketches and Melusine writing 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/9/14/berlin-sketches-and-melusine-writing

Ufer Studios Berlin, Germany July 31, 2017 Transart Institute Summer Residency 2017 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/summer-residenct-2017

September 15, 2017 Update 14 SEP 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/9/14/september-15-2017-update

Poems by Melusine van der Weyden 8 OCT 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/10/8/poems-by-melusine-van-der-weyden

Another Point of View 11 OCT 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/10/11/another-point-of-view

Happenings in the Between: Subtext Part 12 11 OCT 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/10/11/happenings-in-the-between-subtext-and-part-12

October 15, 2017 Update 14 OCT 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/10/11/october-15-2017-update

zigging and zagging posted postal posting 21 OCT 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/10/21/zigging-and-zagging-posted-postal-posting

On Display 11 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/11/11/on-display

Window Shopping 13 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/11/13/window-shopping

On Display 14 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/11/14/on-display

Eight by Ten by Twelve by Four 14 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/11/14/eight-by-ten-by-twelve-by-four

November 15, 2017 Update 15 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/11/7/november-15-2017-update

Painting: a Treacherous Image 17 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/11/17/the-treacherous-image

Petra Frottage 21 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/11/20/petra-frottage

For all intent and purpose 28 NOV 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/11/28/for-all-intent-and-purpose

Concertinaed 12 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/12/11/concertinaed

Nonefficacious Emorhinoplasti 13 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2017/12/13/vjur59gptv1z1kenu06o568a3k4g8x

December 15, 2017 Update 15 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2017/12/12/december-15-2017-update

Clarifications in a Storm 18 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/18/clarifications-in-a-storm

Obituary 18 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/18/a-sad-announcement

Condolences 19 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/19/condolences

Petra thinking of Melusine 19 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/19/petra-thinking-of-melusine

Life, Death and the Persona 20 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/20/life-death-and-the-persona
The Relevancy of a Death in Writing 21 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/21/the-relevancy-of-a-death-in-writing

Two quotes on identity and its reception by others by a couple of recently deceased artists 22 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/22/two-quotes-on-identity-and-its-reception-by-others-by-a-couple-of-recently-deceased-artists

Petra thinking of a friend while painting 22 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/22/petra-thinking-of-a-friend-while-painting

19 by One 24 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/24/19-by-one

This increasingly fragmented pixel 24 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/24/this-increasingly-fragmented-pixel

Another Way of Telling My Practice 26 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/26/another-way-of-telling-my-practice

John Dogg 28 DEC 2017
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2017/12/28/john-dogg

Playing Concertinaed 04 JAN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/1/4/playing-concertinaed

Eight by Ten by Twelve by Four: Elegy 05 JAN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/1/5/eight-by-ten-by-twelve-by-four-elegy

Elegy 05 JAN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/1/5/elegy

Playing Elegy 05 JAN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/1/5/playing-elegy

January 5, 2018 Quick Navigation Links 05 JAN 2018 *J*
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/1/5/janaury-5-2017-quick-navigation-links

Presentation at Winter Residency 2018 Mexico City, Mexico: Raw Notes and Reflection for myself and others. 05 JAN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/presentation-winter-2018

Preachiness, Proselytizing and Conversion 09 FEB 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/2/9/preachiness-proselytizing-and-conversion

February 15, 2018 Update 15 FEB 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/2/5/february-15-2018-update

March 15, 2018 Update 15 MAR 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/3/14/march-15-2018-update

The Curator 26 MAR 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/3/26/the-curator

April 15, 2018 Update 15 APR 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/4/15/april-15-2018-update

Plinth 22 APR 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/4/22/plinth

Deciphering Elegy 09 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/9/deciphering-elegy

Moving On: Signs Left Behind 10 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/9/moving-on-signs-left-behind

Franzi blue, Part Two 11 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/franzi-blue-part-two

Spring Tide: Petra returns 11 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/spring-tide-petra-returns

Origins of the work yet to be titled 11 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/origins-of-the-work-yet-to-be-titled

Still no title but the next steps 11 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/still-no-title-but-the-next-steps

Petra's Interlude 11 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/petras-interlude

The now of the work yet to be titled 13 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/the-now-of-the-work-yet-to-be-titled

The future of the work yet to be titled 13 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/11/the-future-of-the-work-yet-to-be-titled

Shelving Concertinaed 13 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/12/shelving-concertinaed

What Petra and I are working on 13 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/5/13/what-petra-and-i-are-working-on

May 15, 2018 Update 15 MAY 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/5/11/may-15-2018-update

What Petra and I are working on, Part 2 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/what-petra-and-i-are-working-on-part-2

Petra Frottage to Drawing 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/petra-frottage-to-drawing

Sealed (Part 3) 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/sealed

Franzi steps into: what Petra and I are working on, Part 4 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/franzi-steps-into-what-petra-and-i-were-working-on-part-4

I give some definition to: what Petra and I (and Franzi, too) are working on, Part 5 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/i-give-some-definition-to-what-petra-and-i-and-franzi-too-are-working-on-part-5

Petra comes back to: what Petra and I and now Franzi are working on, Part 6 12 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/petra-comes-back-to-what-petra-and-i-and-now-franzi-are-working-on-part-6
It's finally time for me to take over: what Petra and I (and Franzi, too) were working on, Part 7
13 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/12/its-finally-time-for-me-to-take-over-what-petra-and-i-and-franzi-too-were-working-on-part-7

Black, White and Blue : what Petra, Franzi and I were working on, Part 8 13 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/13/black-white-and-blue-what-petra-franzi-and-i-were-working-on-part-8

June 15, 2018 Update 15 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/6/13/june-15-2018-update

Crura 21 JUN 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/6/21/crura

Summer 2018 Reading Diaries 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/7/6/summer-2018-reading-diaries

Infinite Play Kim Schoen July 23 -24, 2018 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/infinite-play

Diagramming Research Geoff Cox July 27 -28, 2018 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/diagramming-research

Making Writing: The Poetics of the Dissertation Anna Gibbs July 30 - 31, 2018 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making-writing-the-poetics-of-the-dissertation

Art As Affective Encounter Sarah Bennett August 6 - 7, 2018 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/art-as-affective-encounter

Seducer or Seduced? Andrew Cooks August 8 - 9, 2018 06 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/seducer-or-seduced

Summer Residency 2018 Presentation Preparation Post 11 JUL 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/7/11/summer-residency-2018-presentation-preparation-post

September 15, 2018 Update 15 SEP 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/9/15/september-15-2018-update

October 15, 2018 Update 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/10/15/october-15-2018-update

Creative Playing Just Around the Corner 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/creative-playing-just-around-the-corner

Invocation for the journey / thru the sacred space 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/invocation-for-the-journey-thru-the-sacred-space

Letters of (Intro)Seduction from Melusine Van der Weyden 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/letters-of-introseduction-from-melusine-van-der-weyden

Dead-end drafty draft 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/dead-end-drafty-draft

Greetings From Beyond the Grave 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/greetings-from-beyond-the-grave

Fragment of an email exchange on "studio is sanctuary" 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/fragment-of-an-email-exchange-on-studio-is-sanctuary

Fragment: A Persona is Born 15 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/10/15/fragment-a-persona-is-born

Franzi joins in 18 OCT 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/10/18/franzi-joins-in

My turn to add some oil 03 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/3/my-turn-to-add-some-oil

Legs 10 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/10/legs

Collaboration Fragment 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/14/collaboration-fragment

Fragment: Why? Part One DRAFT 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/14/fragment-why-part-one-draft

Fragment: Why? Part Two DRAFT 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/14/fragment-why-part-two-draft

Fragment: Reality and Authenticity after Camus' 'Create Dangerously' 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/14/fragment-reality-and-authenticity-after-camus-create-dangerously

Fragment from: 'WHITEOUT: THE NOT-INFLUENCE NEWMAN EFFECT' by Richard Schiff. (Temkin et al. 2002, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Yale University Press, pp. 76-111) and a conversation thereabouts 14 NOV 2018

https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/14/fragment-from-whiteout-the-not-influence-newman-effect-by-richard-shiff-temkin-et-al-2002-philadelphia-museum-of-art-yale-university-press-pp-76-111-and-a-conversation-thereabouts

Two Sides to the Story 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/14/two-sides-to-the-story

Sumac: A Journey thru Thunderwood 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/14/sumac-a-journey-thru-thunderwood

November 15, 2018 Update 14 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/11/14/november-15-2018-update

See Thru 19 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/19/seeing-both-sides

Backstory, v.1 19 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/11/19/backstory-v1

A quote on identity 20 NOV 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/11/20/a-quote-on-identity

December: Petra Nimm 04 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/4/december-petra-nimm

If only in black and white 04 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/4/if-only-in-black-and-white

Controlled Burn by MvdW 07 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/12/7/controlled-burn-melusine-van-der-weyden

December Scanned 11 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/11/december-scanned

Scanned Print Print Scanned 11 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/11/scanned-print-print-scanned

Melusine's Refrain Not Fade Away 13 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/13/melusines-refrain-not-fade-away

Both Sides Side By Side 14 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/making/2018/12/14/both-sides-side-by-side

Fragment: Duchamp's Last Day by Donald Shambroom 14 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/12/14/fragment-duchamps-last-day-by-donald-shambroom

Fragment: Duty of Care 14 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/12/14/fragment-duty-of-care

December 15, 2018 Update 14 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/blog-1/2018/12/14/december-15-2018-update

Highlights from Camera Lucida 19 DEC 2018
https://www.robynthomas-explorations.com/misc-writing/2018/12/19/highlights-from-camera-lucida

APPENDIX B

Videos and video fragments made in conjunction with this doctoral research project. Each image and title is hyperlinked to the video's location on YouTube or Vimeo at the time of this writing. Videos fall into two major categories, **Persona** or **General**, and sub-categories shown in ***bold italics*** with additional categories in [brackets]. Additional information is provided between *title* and date in [brackets]. Dates shown reflect posting dates. All links are publicly accessible with no password needed as of this writing.

Personas

Melusine [Creative]

Transitions Intersections [Berlin Residency Workshop] 02 AUG 2016
https://youtu.be/mFZhcv4f30w

Franzi [Documentation]

IMG_3485. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208055738

IMG_3547. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056307

IMG_3548. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056525

IMG_3549. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056591

IMG_3550. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056690

IMG_3552. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056774

IMG_3554. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056810

IMG_3556. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208056921

IMG_3568. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208057252

IMG_3569. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208057305

IMG_3574. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208057367

IMG_3576. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208057472
IMG_3577. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208158258

IMG_3579. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208057412

IMG_3584. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208158824

IMG_3599. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208158947

IMG_3606. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208159017

IMG_3607. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208159146

IMG_3609. [Mixing Paint, Franzi, *One Painting Three* (2017)] JAN 2017
https://vimeo.com/208159531

Franzi 2.24.17. 24 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/205791224

Franzi 2.24.17 III. 24 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/205797945

Franzi 2.24.17 IV. 24 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/205798201

Franzi 2.27.17 1. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206062572

Franzi 2.27.17 2. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206063539

Franzi 2.27.17 3. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206063759

Franzi 2.27.17 4. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206066147

Franzi 2.27.17 5. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206067787

Franzi 2.27.17 6. 27 FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206068178

Franzi SLB. MAR 2018   https://vimeo.com/268848273

Franz intervenes (edited). 15 MAY 2017   https://youtu.be/SroL63LXgAc

Franz assists. 15 MAY 2017   https://youtu.be/LR9CtL-fw5g

Franzi Blue (edited). 15 MAY 2017   https://youtu.be/Y2dsMX_0H7Q

Franzi starts. 10 MAY 2018   https://youtu.be/nTQHTrb5-f4

Franzi oil paints. 11 MAY 2018   https://youtu.be/wFrUGIlhVhw

Franzi works on untitled painting. 11 MAY 2018 https://youtu.be/7cYhNIkNpbc

Franzi May Blue. 12 JUN 2018   https://youtu.be/T8OWHF_AQak

Petra [Documentation]
Untitled. [Petra] JAN 2017   https://vimeo.com/202939571

Petra at table I. JAN 2017   https://vimeo.com/202951694

Petra Between I. JAN 2017   https://vimeo.com/202940507

Petra watercolor and collage. 24 FEB 2017

                                                    https://vimeo.com/205797346

Petra watercolor and collage II. 24 FEB 2017

                                                    https://vimeo.com/205797436

Petra's paintings. 15 MAY 2017   https://youtu.be/REw1VrJv9gM

Petra Painting (edited). 15 MAY 2017   https://youtu.be/t39qXdr6q_M

Petra Frottage. [Beginning *Concertinaed*] 19 NOV 2017
                                                    https://vimeo.com/243687220

Concertinaed. [1] 12 DEC 2017   https://youtu.be/FqcM8OcrXH0

Concertinaed. [2] 12 DEC 2017   https://youtu.be/w6Fmdw6P1sk

Petra Frottage. 12 JUN 2018   https://youtu.be/qjznBwHXToA

Petra May Watercolor. 12 JUN 2018   https://youtu.be/rVdmMZxApNk

General

Creative

A leaf falls. Studio November 11, 2016. [Reflective] 14 NOV 2016
                                                    https://youtu.be/GYKk0sJB_xA

Salt Pond. [Reflective] 13 DEC 2016   https://youtu.be/S1yS5Jph0HA

Ocean. [Reflective] 13 DEC 2016   https://youtu.be/3zivDLTS5xo

Brushes. [Reflective] FEB 2017   https://vimeo.com/206064278

Documentation

Chamber - long version. 20 JUL 2018   https://youtu.be/tIO9SIArnJ8

Chamber. 21 JUL 2018   https://youtu.be/ifYrsF-K_MQ

Test Leg. 10 NOV 2018   https://youtu.be/jmFi-9vQsS0

Presentation

Presentation Winter Residency 2017. [New York City] 18 JAN 2017

https://youtu.be/dBv73wnPzPg

Playing Painting Personas. [Three-Minute Thesis Workshop] 14 JUL 2017

https://youtu.be/F4X3gibNXpE

Presentation Summer Residency 2017. [Berlin] 31 JUL 2017

https://youtu.be/Hg7mWDPNSLQ

Presentation Winter Residency 2018. [Mexico D.F.] 09 JAN 2018

https://youtu.be/OE8Q3AWipzI

Creative, Documentation, and Presentation

Fresh Widow. [Berlin Residency Presentation] 27 JUL 2017

https://youtu.be/WLNaaGsFAKA

Chamber Presentation. [Summer Residency 2018, Berlin] 21 JUL 2018

https://youtu.be/v1YgiLrjitY

Watching Brice Marden (1976), January 2020. 07 JAN 2020

https://youtu.be/BfGP53U4sFE

APPENDIX C

This appendix documents the series of artworks created during this doctoral research project. Information includes the title and sub-series titles, where applicable, the approximate date range of the series and project stage, and the personas involved. Please see APPENDIX A for links to blog postings of titles for closer information on materials, size, and the work process.

The practical work created in this project evolved through a process in which one work leads to the next. Therefore, the transition between series is often not fixed points but a sliding of one into the next. At times work attributed to Stage 2 falls in the middle of Stage 1, and vice versa. Some series coincide. However, Stage 3 was distinct from Stages 1 and 2, and no work was created directly with a persona in that stage. Little of the work completed in Stage 3 is documented on the research blog-website.

All series involved objects as well as digital images that served as both documentation of various periods in a work's development and as source material/starting points for future work, making the total number of works indeterminant and the continuation of the series with future, additional works adding to any number a possibility. Therefore I have opted to not include numbers of works —see blog-/website for additional information and approximate size at the time of postings. Furthermore, some objects created in one series, sub-series or part of a series have been destroyed or significantly altered to create other works in the same or different series.

Persona Portraits — (SEP -OCT 2016) Stage 1. Working without personas. Four (4) sub-series.
- *Double Portrait: Self and Franz Walsh.* (SEP 2016)
- *Double Portrait: Self and Petra Nimm.* (SEP 2016)
- *Double Portrait: Self and Melusine Van der Weyden.* (SEP 2016)
- *Dissecting Double Portrait: Self and Petra Nimm.* (OCT 2016)

Good Witches of the Between (OCT 2016 - SEP 2017) Stage 1. I began working without personas, transitioning to working with personas throughout the series.
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part One.* (OCT- NOV 2016)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Two.* (DEC 2016 - FEB 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Three.* (FEB 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Four.* (FEB - APR 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Five- Franz's Intervention.* (APR - MAY 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Six- applying Petra.* (MAY 2017) Images used in video *Fresh Widow* (2017).
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part Seven - another start.* [a] (MAY - JUN 2017) Images used in video *Fresh Widow* (2017).
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 7 -enter Franz.* [b] (JUN - AUG 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 8 -Petra returns.* (JUN - AUG 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 9 -another layer of paper.* (AUG 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 10 - Petra, watercolour, thinned gesso and acrylic.* (AUG 2017)
- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 11 - Robyn and oil.* (SEP 2017)

One In Three (MAR 2017) Stage 1. A finite series of three paintings, one each from myself, Franzi, and Petra. Completed in the first months of the project, I intended to replicate a single painting by me with each of the two painter personas.
- *Franz Painting, Part One.*
- *Petra Painting, Part One.*
- *One Painting Three.*

A Little Madness in the Spring (APR-JUN 2017) Stage 2. A mixed media work created working solely with Petra consisting of sixteen (16) 4 x 6 inch cradled birch-wood panels incorporating mirrors on the interior cradle. The panels are intended to be installed hanging from above by filament. Each panel was scanned, leaving the possibility open for future work. Simultaneously, the base image was used for other paintings on paper, and various stages of these were scanned, reprinted, and painted. This work and paintings from the series are featured in the video *Fresh Widow* (2017).

- *A little madness in the Spring, Part One.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part One -part two.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part Two.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part Three.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part Two -part two.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part Two -part three.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part Three -part two.*
- *A little madness in the Spring, Part three -part three.*

Franzi's Blue Paintings (FEB 2017 - SEP 2018) Stage 2. Franzi painted approximately one dozen blue paintings using acrylic paints in this period. Most were on square canvases ranging from 12 inches square to 36 inches square. One painting is featured in *Fresh Widow* (2017). While these paintings are self-contained artworks, unlike much of the other artworks in this project, the method (and colour) they were made was applied in other series.

- *Franzi blue.*
- *Franzi blue, Part Two.*
- *Residuals.* (MAR 2019 during the 'pause' setting Franzi's Blue Paintings with 'pause paintings'.)

Three Small Asides/Three More Small Asides (MAY-JUN 2017) Stage 1. Six small paintings were made without the personas. They appear in *Fresh Widow* (2017) but were painted over during the pause and in Stage 3.

- *Three small asides.*
- *Three more small asides.*

Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm (JUN-JUL 2017), Stage 2. An off-shoot of *Good Witches of the Between* (OCT 2016-SEP 2017) and *A Little Madness in the Spring* (APR-MAY 2017), consisting of four parts. These paintings are featured in *Fresh Widow* (2017).

- *Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm, Image One Part One.*
- *Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm, Image One Part Two.*
- *Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm with Interruptions by Robyn Thomas.*
- *Momentary Messages of Truths as told by Petra Nimm with Interruptions by Robyn Thomas, Image Three.*

I am Melusine -Sütterlin (AUG-DEC 2017) Stage 2. Although not quite a series like the paintings, Melusine's writing in Sütterlin font is included here, some of which became part of other artworks and series. The total number of pages of writing by hand, using a computer font, and in sketches and drawings is undetermined.

- *I am Melusine -Sütterlin.*
- *Melusine Sütterlin.*
- *Berlin sketches and Melusine writing.*
- *Poems by Melusine van der Weyden.*

Twelve Poems From The Between (OCT 2017) Stage 1. Another offshoot of *Good Witches of the Between* (OCT 2016-SEP 2017), continuing where *Part 11* (SEP 2017) left off, and including twelve poems from Melusine in Sütterlin in the cradled side of the panels.

- *Good Witches of the Between, Part 11.*

- *Poems by Melusine van der Weyden.*
- *Another Point of View.*

Elegy (OCT 2017-MAY 2018) Stage 2. Also derived from *Good Witches of the Between* (OCT 2016-SEP 2017) this series began with prints of scans and digital photos taken *Part 7 (a & b)* and *Part 8*. This series, like the one launching it, involved myself working with all three personas at different steps in its making. What places it in Stage 2 instead of Stage 1 is the extent to which each persona was present during a particular step, and what was brought into the work from the other artworks being created exclusively with a single persona.
- *Happenings in the Between: Subtext Part 12.*
- *Eight by Ten by Twelve by Four.*
- *Petra Frottage.* —The start of the Concertinaed series.
- *Eight by Ten by Twelve by Four: Elegy.*
- *Elegy.*
- *Playing Elegy.*
- *Deciphering Elegy.* —This became a sketchbook of shapes that would feed *Concertinaed* and all subsequent series through Stage 3.
- *Spring Tide: Petra returns.* —This group of paintings derived from *Elegy* launched *The work yet to be titled.*

Concertinaed (NOV 2017-JUL 2018) Stage 2. A single, double sided artwork began with Petra's frottages of the panels that would become *Elegy* (OCT 2017-JAN 2018).
- *Petra Frottage.* —From *Elegy.*
- *Concertinaed.*
- *Playing Concertinaed.*
- *Shelving Concertinaed.*

Moving On: Signs Left Behind (MAR-MAY 2018) Stage 2. A series of four small paintings that could be displayed individually or as a group and in multiple configurations. It was completed working with Petra and Franzi after Melusine's death, and was intended as a memorial.
- *Deciphering Elegy.*
- *Poems by Melusine van der Weyden.*
- *Moving On: Signs Left Behind.*

'The work yet to be titled' (Untitled) (APR-SEP 2018) Stage 2. This series is where the transitions between stages and series become muddy. Began late in Stage 2, it pushed into the work that comprises Stage 3, and launched a number of subsequent series and artworks. Scans and inkjet prints of *Deciphering Elegy and Elegy* were the starting points for this series. This series is discussed in part in Chapter II and Chapter III.
- *Spring Tide: Petra returns.* (APR - MAY 2018) ~20 paintings on paper plus scans.
- *Origins of the work yet to be titled.* (APR - MAY 2018) —This painting would become the basis for the paintings forming *Chamber.*
- *What Petra and I are working on.* (APR - MAY 2018).
- *What Petra and I are working on, Part 2.* (MAY - JUN 2018). —This is the beginning of the series titled *Three in One* aka 'Black, White, & Blue'.
- *Franzi joins in.* (JUN 2018)
- *My turn to add some oil.* (JUN 2018)
- *Two Sides to the Story.* (AUG 2018)
- *See Thru.* (SEP 2018)
- *Backstory, v.1.* (SEP 2018)
- *Both Sides Side By Side.* (SEP 2018)
- *A Side Aside.* (SEP 2018)
- *If only in black and white.* (SEP 2018) —A sub-series consisting of 10 digital scans from Petra's drawings based on frottages of the panels in this series. I returned to them in the 'pause' working on them myself *December Scanned, Scanned Print Print Scanned, Melusine's Refrain Not Fade Away.*

- *Sumac: A Journey thru Thunderwood.* (SEP 2018) —This is a sub-series of the series. It consists of 8 mixed media works on paper working with all three personas. It is the last work produced working with the personas and the end of Stage 2.

Chamber (MAY-JUL 2018) Stage 2. Launched by *'The work yet to be titled'* (Untitled) this piece is also descended from *Moving On: Signs Left Behind.* The surface side of the 20 5 inch square panels began as a painting with Petra. The interior of the cradled side was painted with Franzi. Finally, I added the shapes, culled from *Deciphering Elegy* to the front side and worked on the installment/configuration using the *Crura,* which are also incorporated in subsequent work.
- *Origins of the work yet to be titled.* (APR - MAY 2018) —This painting would become the basis for the paintings forming *Chamber.*
- *Still no title but the next steps.*
- *Petra's Interlude.*
- *The now of the work yet to be titled.*
- *The future of the work yet to be titled.*
- *Crura.*

Three in One [aka 'Black, White & Blue] (MAY-JUN 2018) Stage 2. These paintings are discussed in Chapter I and Chapter III.
- *What Petra and I are working on, Part 2.* (MAY - JUN 2018).
- *Sealed (Part 3).* (JUN 2018)
- *Franzi steps into: what Petra and I are working on, Part 4.* (JUN 2018)
- *I give some definition to: what Petra and I (and Franzi, too) are working on, Part 5.* (JUN 2018)
- *Petra comes back to: what Petra and I and now Franzi are working on, Part 6.* (JUN 2018)
- *It's finally time for me to take over: what Petra and I (and Franzi, too) were working on, Part 7.* (JUN 2018)
- *Black, White and Blue : what Petra, Franzi and I were working on, Part 8.* (JUN 2018)

Frottage-Drawings (MAY 2018-JUN 2020) Stage 2/Stage 3. These drawings are discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III.
- *Petra Frottage to Drawing.*
- *Addendum: Frottage-Drawing 2018-2020.*

What comes next (MAY 2019 -) Stage 3.These paintings and drawings were derived from work in Stage 2 but began during the 'pause' and continued as I resumed this project and therefore, they belong to Stage 3. There is no work with personas but their impact is felt in my working methods.
- *Residuals.*
- *What comes next.*
- *Drawing After the Fact .* (SEP 2018 - JUN 2019)
- *Water-downed Facts.* (JUN 2019)
- *A New Playing Field.* (JUL 2019 -)
- *Untitled.* (SEP 2019 -)
- *Addendum: Paintings on Paper, pt 1.* (JUN 2020 -)

APPENDIX D

Writing Chapter Four, 'Alternative Identities in Contemporary Visual Arts Practices', it became apparent that sharing more information about Rubens Ghenov's and Plinio Avila's incorporation of alternative identities into their practices would be meaningful to this research project. They have used them differently and more extensively than Caroline Kent and were able to speak more about the history of their use and impact on their visual art-making practices due to an increased opportunity for reflection. The following two sub-sections were removed from the chapter and included as an appendix to contextualise further the use of alternative identities in visual arts practices and support my findings how visual artists occupy fictive spaces through various forms of storytelling inclusive of alternative identities.

Constructing Angelico Morandá

Rubens Ghenov describes his creative practice as a triad consisting of painting, sound and storytelling (2020). In a diagram of his practice created for artist talks, the perpendicular leg labelled 'storytelling' emerges, spine-like, from a right-angle junction with the base, tagged 'painting'. At the same time, the hypotenuse connecting the two is designated as 'sound'. This junction is the intersection of fact and fiction, and the space created between this junction and bordered by 'sound' is where fact and fiction are free to co-mingle. This space is where Ghenov locates his practice (2020).

The right scalene triangle is more than just a shape diagramming his creative practice; it has appeared prominently in Ghenov's paintings since 2011, shortly before Angelico Morandá's emergence. The fastidiousness, complexity of composition and simplicity of colour and shape of the painting *After Angelico Morandá* (2012) reflects the painter's interest in the composition techniques of Fra Angelico and Giorgio Morandi and

triangular relationships (Ghenov, 2015). In this painting, the only solid shape, two white triangles joined together on their shortest side and running along the right edge of the central figure at a slight angle to a blue-grey plane, seems to serve as a light source shining dimly onto the planes' junction. The light does not penetrate far into the picture; instead, it looks to project outward, reflected on the surfaces opposite. Below the top and slightly less than a quarter of the distance inwards from the left edge runs a thin white line indicating the boundaries of a room or an open book propped on a shelf. The artist has spoken extensively about the significance of shelves as places for displaying objects for research and contemplation, and the 'shelf' motif, inspired by Korean Mungbangdo painting, was often used by Ghenov in his paintings prior to and in the early days of Angelico Morandá (2015; 2020). Somewhat reminiscent of a portrait, the central figure comprises colourful brush marks contained within otherwise hard-edged geometric shapes and floating in a dark, boxy, semi-bounded field are three similar white lines. If extended downward, the lines would meet to form a triangle with its apex at the bottom edge in the centre of the canvas. Elsewhere thin lines of varying thickness and tone indicate additional triangles, some fully formed and others incomplete.

Like the solid white shape, numerous other geometric shapes imply the possibility of the right scalene triangle's presence in them. However, only one complete and definitive triangle appears in this painting. A brownish-grey triangle attached to the top left of the central figure juts awkwardly into the contradicting deep and shallow space so that its apex meets the top white line at the centre of the picture plane. In contrast to the angular shapes, the swirls of the brushstrokes add a circular element to the painting and edges of the central figure. The circle appears on a smaller scale as yellow-orange ombre beads of a necklace, an accoutrement wrapping in front and snaking behind the head-like figure, slightly off-centre to tie the composition together. Accoutrement —the

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decorative accessory— is another motif frequently cited by Ghenov in his paintings. Specifically, signified by the triangle ending in a semi-circular, rounded shape such as dropped earrings worn on the ear close to the mouth and denoting a connection between sounds/listening and storytelling/speaking (2020).

After Angelico Morandá (2012) is not a representative image of the fictional poet, it is like a shiny object that catches the viewer's eye, drawing it into the emerging idea of Angelico Morandá. In his talk' Abtruse Accoutrements', Ghenov presented the conjuring of the relationship between Angelico Morandá, the triangle, sound, and motifs and mantras of his painting practice by opening with the video *pg. 53/To π - ê* (2013), a collage of words, fragments of Morandá's unpublished poems (2015). The video begins with the only known photograph of the unpublished Spanish poet, followed by a quote on the sounds of particular vocals from the notes he has left behind. The video is akin to the story of Angelico Morandá, revealing little about the unpublished poet beyond his complexity and similar to how Ghenov frames his practice, where opposites— fact and fiction— co-exist in murkiness.

Prior to the emergence of Angelico Morandá, around 2003, Rubens Ghenov had worked briefly with three other identities based on real people. A few years later, in 2008 and 2009, Ghenov devised a DJ named Chico Tubby —a sound artist described by Ghenov as deaf and mute. This first purely fictive identity was denoted by Ghenov in multimedia, sculptural installations incorporating record album covers and sleeves, smashed guitars, deflated soccer balls, wood, paint, milk crates, and other found objects (Ghenov, 2018). At the time, Ghenov was also still painting, and, on the whole, the Chico Tubby series is quite different from the artworks Ghenov would go on to make in conjunction with the Morandá narrative. Chico Tubby did not remain in Ghenov's

practice for long. However, the idea of a purely fictive identity did, and in 2012 another fictive identity emerged —Algia Adamus.

The story of Algia Adamus is significant as it leads directly to the advent of Angelico Morandá. Her story begins with *The Silent H* (2012), a fictional documentary about an obscure Brazilian poet and sound artist (Ghenov, 2015). Along with paintings from Ghenov, including *After Angelico Morandá* (2012) discussed previously, the video was shown as part of his likewise titled exhibition at the Tiger Strikes Asteroid Philadelphia location [September 2012]. Comparable to Ghenov's paintings, the story of Adamus and the documentary is labyrinthine. Purportedly, still-images were added to audio from the final episode of a UK radio documentary on female electronic musicians of the mid-twentieth century that was never broadcast for unknown reasons. Algia Adamus only became recognised as an artist after her disappearance when she was no longer 'seeable'.

Moreover, she was no longer creating poems and sounds and therefore silent but present —like the (non-)sound made by the letter 'h' at the beginning of words in Portuguese, the language of Adamus and the first language of Ghenov (Schwartz, 2012). As the story of Algia Adamus goes, she was hired as a housekeeper and companion by a sought-after Brazilian record producer for his wife to convince her to follow him for his work abroad. One day the wife heard peculiar sounds coming from Algia's room. She discovered the housekeeper engaging in a strange ritual involving recording equipment and a favela-like hut that she had constructed in her quarters. The shape of the favela in Adamus' room resembles the space in which the central figure floats in *After Angelico Morandá* (2012). Both are products of Ghenov's imagining of ritual spaces that generate mystical, creative thoughts and sounds. A further inclusion in the exhibition was an

essay provided by Ghenov purportedly written by the untraceable Ana Monique Abe, a significance I will return to shortly.

Adamus and Morandá share the identity of unknown poets, an interest in sounds, and producing their art through processes involving mysterious rituals. Crucial to both of these fictive identities, and notable among the artists mentioned here, is how Ghenov has creatively cultivated their narratives. Both backstories include lesser developed fictive identities as research resources for the unknown artists and Ghenov as he seeks to learn more about their practices. Examples include the record producer Perceu Munchen and his wife Antonieta, who discovered Adamus. In this regard, Ghenov's process recalls that of Fernando Pessoa and the varying degrees to which his many minor heteronyms, which often support the major ones who were poets and writers, were developed (Zenith, 2001). For both Adamus and Morandá, the artist has culled from authentic sources based on his interests and altered these to bolster the fictive elements of their narratives: such as the writings of Jorge Luis Borges, experimental music and sound art, poetry, graphic design found in the mid-twentieth century record album covers and paperback books he appropriates, the paintings of Fra Angelico, Giorgio Morandi, Korean Mungbangdo and Moghul Miniature painting (Ghenov, 2020).

Similar to his intention for *The Silent H* (2012) to appear legitimate, affirming the existence of Algia Adamus, Ghenov has shown in presentations slides of cited sources —scholarly journals, old paperback books, and photographs— to provide evidence and theoretical underpinnings to Morandá (2015; 2020). These fictional sources are products of Ghenov's creative practice but also sustain his artistic research as sources that could be genuine. Nevertheless, despite the visual record the artist provides, they

are untraceable: for example, the essayist Ana Monique Abe mentioned in the previous

paragraph, the philosopher Cornelius Björklund (Ghenov, 2015), the June 2008 issue of

the Portuguese poetry journal 'OratÓrio 152' with articles on Pessoa, Proust, and

Morandá, or the book 'Anécdotas de las Vidas Poéticas' by the Uruguayan journalist

turned writer Alfreda Aguilar and its English translation by Noricema Washington,

'Anecdotes of a Poetic Life' (Ghenov, 2020). The images are not falsification or trickery

but a murky blend of facts (the sources exist) and fiction (but they are inventions of the

artist), resulting from Ghenov's collaging images and objects from his interests to

generate the story told through and about his practice. The development of lesser fictive

identities and research sources to continue changing it as a means of continuation and

progression is another example of the freedom storytelling offers to artists working with

alternative identities.

Seamlessly piecing together disparate images and information is critical to forming the

fictive identities and the narrative driving Ghenov's practice and conceptual basis.

'Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven

when we are shown a photograph of it' (Sontag, [1973] 2005 : 3). Photographic

evidence appearing to possess the patina of time is fabricated by Ghenov and shown as

projections to earn our acceptance and allay our doubts as to their authenticity as

sources of factual information.

According to Ghenov, there is only one known photograph of the unpublished poet; it

accompanied Morandá's obituary that led to his discovery of the poet (2015; 2020).

When introducing Morandá in his artist talks, Ghenov shares a slide of the newspaper

clipping as he carries us through the connections between the unknown poet and his

triadic practice of painting, storytelling, and sound. Towards the end, Ghenov reveals

that the man shown in the photograph is also a triadic construction from photographs of the painter Giorgio Morandi, the writer Jorge Luis Borges, and the composer Igor Stravinsky (Ghenov, 2020).

Constructing Humberto Márquez

In contrast to Ghenov and Kent, who shared no images of the twins with the public, Humberto Márquez appears in Plinio Avila's artwork. Avila embodied Humberto Márquez to insert him into snapshots and films of the fictional artist's performances, such as *2 de Octubre no se limpia/2. October is not cleaned* (1969/n.d.) in which the artist mops up the blood spilt by student protesters on the Plaza de las Tres Culturas/Mexico City on that day (Avila, 2018). Avila's conjuring of 'historic' images of Márquez could be understood as nearing Hancock's approach because the character is more than a conceptual background to the story; he is visually situated in its foreground.

Embodying Márquez was driven by thoughts of what it would be like to be a once-promising young Mexican artist now forgotten and dying in Berlin; and rehearsing worst-case scenario thoughts of never being recognised as an artist, only a printer for other artists (Avila, 2022). By telling Márquez's story and showing Márquez's artworks, the artist felt relieved of the burden of the upcoming exhibition and started for the first time in his career to feel: 'I was playing' (Avila, 2022). Nevertheless, Márquez does not represent or serve as a filter for Avila's life, thoughts, and experiences like the Mounds do for Hancock —even when the artist embodies him.

Plinio Avila cited Susan Sontag's stance on the authority of the photograph (2005 [1973]) as the impetus for his approach to altering old photographs to create new facts that support the Humberto Márquez narrative (2022). Sontag explicated that when

looking at a photograph, we deduce if a photo exists, so too must the people, the person, the object or event pictured in it ([1973] 2005: 3). Spectators accept that the photographs in which the artist appears as Humberto Márquez are authentic because they are photographs. Due to the patina of time they carry with them, they become even more believable as genuine documents —despite knowing how easily photographs and films can be seamlessly altered through digital technologies (Avila, 2022). Although he paints, Avila does not speak of or emphasise painting as a defining element in his artistic practice like Ghenov and Kent. Of the three artists whose use of alternative identities was examined for this research project, only Avila's practice, specifically his work with Humberto Márquez, could be described as falling most readily into the Conceptualism rubric. Nevertheless, a key reason for why —and indicative of how — Avila makes the art he makes lies in his statement that thinking of doing something, drawing and trying to map out conceptually allows him to think about his life and deal with things differently (2022). It provides him freedom.

Preceding Avila's conceptualisation of Humberto Márquez is a series of photographs, *The qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences* (2010). Avila had replicated old photographs of his father by picturing himself as his father before he became his father. These photographs were never intended for public viewing; Avila meant to give the photographs as a personal gift he made while thinking about their father-son relationship after his father experienced an unexpected health crisis while the artist was living in Europe (2022). 'With the photos, I started to imagine what it would be like to be his friend, not his son' (Avila, 2022).

These thoughts led to Avila no longer replicating his father but, with the help of a photographer friend, embedding himself into the photos of his father's life as another

figure —an unknown friend (Avila, 2022). Technically, recreating the photographs was easy. However, describing the experience of seeing himself in the photographs, and more importantly, Avila said: 'it felt so real to me, and I became someone else in the pictures … I felt like a mixture of two ideas, this person is someone else, but I also want to believe in the future that I will remember these moments that did not exist (2022). Paraphrasing Pascal Quignard on how memory is shaped and reinforced by the images we have, Avila went on: … 'maybe by the time I am ninety, I will look at the photographs and remember I am a friend of my father' (2022).

Plinio Avila took an old photograph and inserted another figure into it. In doing so, Avila, discovered a conceptual process, which led him to the unknown fictitious Mexican artist, Humberto Márquez:

> Right after the project on my father, this guy I created had no name, but then the invitation to exhibit at the Polyforum came … so this guy, me, came about … by doing them I started to realise this guy, who he was, what was happening at the time, what kind of work he would be doing … Siquieros hated abstract painters, so I started doing abstract drawings and thought he would have hated it more if he was a conceptual artist. (Avila, 2022)

Of the three artists interviewed, Plinio Avila is the only one to not not only embody but to collaborate with the fictive identity in creating artworks Márquez devised. However, as a master printmaker and director of an art production studio, collaboration is inherent to Avila's creation, making it a logical part of the story and the relationship between Avila and Márquez. Nonetheless, the images of Avila-as-Márquez are only a fraction of the work he has created with the fictive forgotten artist and, while they are significant to establishing and facilitating the narrative, the artworks in which the artist does not appear as Márquez are equally significant to Avila's intentions. These other artworks are the objects he has rediscovered or remade from sketches and notes left to him that are attributed to Humberto Márquez, for example, *CANADA* (1964/n.d.) and *Urinario* (1967/n.d.) (Avila, 2018).

Urinario (1967/n.d.) alludes to the influence of Duchamp with an Oaxacan spin. Attributing artworks to Márquez and dating them to the 1960s gave the artist the freedom to have fun —to play— as he stated, to create conceptual artworks that would otherwise appear if he were making them under his name today derivative (Avila, 2022). Significantly, Avila described the sculpture *CANADA* (1964/n.d.), a shoe box, as allowing him to go back and beat other artists to the punch creating a work that 'references but also works by itself in a contemporary context' —commenting on the Mexican consumer's fascination for goods from their neighbours to the north while settling for homemade imitations (Avila, 2018)— which, Avila stated, 'feels good' (2022). However, when Avila fabricates or re-makes objects attributed to Humberto Márquez, he acts in the manner he has been trained, assisting other artists in the fabrication of their artworks. Returning to the example of Duchamp, Avila appears not only to be paying homage to his fictive late great-uncle by re-creating his artworks and shedding light on the contributions made to the Mexican art scene of the 1960s by forgotten Latin American conceptual artists but also to Richard Hamilton's mid-1950s and early 1960s homage to, at that time, the 'forgotten father' of the nascent Conceptual Art movement by his re-creations of Duchamp's artworks.

Collaboration —with the assistant or the craftsperson— is the crux around Humberto Márquez's construction. In the text accompanying *The Traitor/El Traidor* (2013), Avila recognises the credit due to assistants for the manifestation of the finished artwork:

> While it is true that a work of art is the result of years of the artist's work, conceptualisation, management and direction; it is the skilful hands of the assistants who finish the material work … the phenomenon of the assistant who questions the authorship of the work of art in which he works is accentuated in contemporary art, where the physical work is sometimes not even touched by the artist: It is the sculptor who develops the three-dimensional work from the artist's sketches, it is the printer who engraves the plates and prints the edition, and it is the photographer who makes decisions about lighting, depth of field and

framing to record the artist's performance.[39] (2019)

Unlike Márquez, who dared to step beyond the boundaries of Siquieros' assistant by asking for recognition and questioning the decisions of the master, Avila stated in our conversation that 'as a printer, I am questioned how much of the artwork I make for the artist, I never ask for recognition from the artists I collaborate with' (2022).

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[39] Author's translation from the original Spanish: *El fenómeno del asistente quien se cuestiona la autoría de la obra de arte en la que trabaja se acentúa en el arte contemporáneo, donde la obra física en ocasiones ni siquiera es tocada por el artista: Es el escultor el que desarrolla la obra tridimensional a partir de bocetos del artista, es el impresor que graba las placas e imprime la edición y es el fotógrafo quien con toma decisiones de iluminación, profundidad de campo y encuadre para registrar el performance del artista.*(https://www.fundacionmarquez.com/traidor-archivo-fotografico)

Inamorata Non Autentica: Marcel Duchamp, Rrose Sélavy, Melusine and Me

To your left you
will find not
necessarily the
voice of reason,
but my voice -
Robyn -
also called I.

To your right is she - Melusine.

In between are images, quotes, sources, citations and thoughts that are present yet remain unspoken

Non authentic inamorati -inauthentic lovers- float across all three spaces.

This morning I went down to the studio to find my laptop not in its usual place.

A clear sign she had returned.

In its place a bright orange vintage handbag had been casually dropped. Further down the table sat an empty bottle. Black pumps with lipstick red soles kicked a few strides apart led to the greenhouse door. She is in there, I can smell her perfume. It is the same scent as mine, Shalimar. *She wears it to seduce, I to keep the mosquitoes and other lecherous insects away.*

Funny how the same thing serving similar purposes can lead to opposing outcomes.

Another example of the ambiguity of objects, I suppose. A perfume simultaneously seductive and repulsive draws me closer to the door.

I duck my head into the space.

A lounging Odalisque-like, her legs stretched out to maximum length and crossed across the two-seats of the futon sofa. Propping her torso up on her elbow which slowly sinks into the dusty, sun faded red pillow she chews on the cuticle of her right index finger as lost in thought she wraps a strand of hair around her left index finger. She is fixated on my computer resting in front of her on the small painting table. She must have been back a few hours I surmise by the charging cable. A video plays on the screen.

No room for me on the futon I climb the two steps up into the greenhouse, making my way to the Windsor-back kitchen chair in front of the palette table, kicking the empty glass on the floor next to the sofa. Fortunately the glass, a gift from a real friend, does not break as it falls against the concrete floor.

You're back.

No response.

When did you get in?

Not looking up she answers as she stares at the screen.

One.

I haven't seen you since Berlin.

Where have you been?

No place you would know or have been.

Must you always be so snide?

Am I being snide?

Apologies.

What are you watching?

More importantly, how did you login to my computer?

We all know your passwords.

Passwords!

Replying ever so nonchalantly

All of them.

I need to change them all?

Why do I suspect that wouldn't make too much difference?

Yes.

It would be pointless, but then, you do enjoy meaningless tasks.

Get out of my head! I need to think of my next credit card statement!

You asked what I am watching?

Now that I'm all worked up she's back on topic!

I wasn't ready to sleep, so I thought I'd peruse your laptop, see what you've been looking at since I last saw you.

Your bookmarks are always better than an Ambien.

Ignore.

There are a few items on Marcel Duchamp I haven't seen before. Amazing how that millstone never stops turning!

For a bachelor he left us with a lot of seeds to grind.

You seem to think you possess something akin to wit?

I wasn't able to resist. Why should you have all the good lines?

Hmm, this is new.

She turns the laptop towards me to show what she has pulled up on the screen:
"Remembering David Bowie."
Charlie Rose, PBS, 11 Jan. 2016.

Figure 1

Is that what you were watching?

What is with all these bookmarks and files on David Bowie?

Broadening your interests?

Remember, I mentioned this to you in Berlin.
I am not just looking at Marcel Duchamp...

Why not just Duchamp?

I seem to recall hearing this question before.

Wait, haven't we had this conversation before?
Everything I say to you goes in one ear and out the other!
You're attention span is shorter than

I stop myself.

Maybe.

You know when you go off on tangents your bore me.
It's self presevation when I tune you out.

Don't you notice me smiling and nodding my head?

I need to remember this for myself.

Why do you think Franzi always has a broom close at hand?

I stare at her in disbelief.

Why do you keep turning up here again and again?

Who would you have to talk to if not me?

Petra has the best solution; she just stays put on her shelf and reads.

You still haven't answered *my* question.

Why are you not just looking at Marcel Duchamp?

Well, for one thing most of Marcel Duchamp's work is about one hundred years old and he died almost fifty years ago.
Much has changed in that time

Thanks to him.

and the many other artists who have employed alter egos in their practice

inspired by him

No need to continue if you're going to keep interrupting me.

Continue.

But then she does.

So, you're addressing how artists might employee alter egos -or as you call us 'personas'- as tools in their creative practices?

Marcel Duchamp had an 'alter ego', now didn't he?

Back on track once more.

Yes.

Why do I feel like I am wallking into a trap?

I remember she had such a beautiful name ... indicative of my own *Lebensphilosophie ...*

Eros c'est la vie!

Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy were only a start and inspiration to the exploration of identity by late twentieth and early twenty-first century artists. He, she, or they are the seed that grew into a tree which produced a multitude of seedlings in the ground we call culture and have grown into a forest...

Producing an infinite supply of nuts.

Eye roll.

Somewhat surprisingly (not) she contiues in a more serious tone.

You were saying that your reason for not using Marcel Duchamp as the only case study of an artist who hasemployed alter egos or as you call them 'personas' is because he has been dead so long and, following in his footsteps, so many other

artist these in their practices.

That's a pretty weak reason.

Not in terms of

but she doesn't let me continue

If so many others have and are using personas, then why are you?

If you had let me continue; Duchamp's explorations were the rupture that led to the identity crisis of painting and the painter. It wasn't just Rrose, though she played her part, at times sticking her finger into the wound and, later inviting us all to pick at the scab.

Yuck.

Then tell me again, why are you using personas if it is not just about Marcel and Rrose?

What makes how you are doing it so different or so special to all the other artists who've fostered alter egos or personas as you call them?

I'd rather not get into answering your questions here and now.

She's not the only one who can be snide and evasive!

Now she is glaring at me.

Applying personas as a tool in my practice is important, not special.

I never said 'special'.

I glare back at her.

Yes, you did.

However, I will say it is precisely because others *since Duchamp* and *because of Duchamp* have and continue to employ alter egos or 'personas' as part of their practices that I find it necessary to present these dossiers in addition to that of Marcel and Rrose.

I can't wait to see who you pull out of your hat.

But tell me, why Bowie?

I see you were watching him and Julian Schnabel on the *Charlie Rose* show when they were promoting the film 'Basquiat'.

"Basquiat." Charlie Rose, PBS, 9 Aug. 1996.

Bowie nailed Warhol!

Yes, and he made a very interesting statement near the end of the interview I'd like to show you.

I open YouTube instead of the show's website she'd been watching and move the cursor to 42:10. We watch and listen as Bowie says:

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Figure 2

David Bowie and Julian Schnabel interview on "Basquiat" (1996)

62,605 views

607   21   SHARE

If anybody has told many critics in the fifties and sixties that in fact not, Picasso wasn't going to be the only great god of the twentieth century but Duchamp was actually going to be THE GOD at the end of the twentieth century I think they probably would and did balk and then did push and struggle that it wouldn't be Duchamp, ya know. But the artists made up their mind that they were going to be incredibly influenced by him and they worked, a lot of them, in that manner and it produced the Bruce Naumans and the Rebecca Horns and whatever. And in music it happens the same way. However much critics write the other musicians decide who they are going to be influenced by and the history, the story of the music will come through the artists, all the time.

Mr. Jones worshiped at the altar of Monsieur Duchamp?

I might not go so far as to say that myself. Certainly, he lit a candle or two over the years.

Ha! See, I can be witty, too!

No, you can't.

Duchamp has been dead for almost as long as he was a living figure in the art world. Most of that time he was not considered as influential as so many of his colleagues - at least by the collectors and critics.

The market.

Yes.

What interests me and is important to how I am dissecting and examining
Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy is their incredibly active post-mortem life.

Their life after death?

Yes.

As we see, Duchamp and Rrose live on not only through the practices of other artists but in the volumes of research on Duchamp that is in turn regurgitated by the scholars and critics from what they are fed by these artist-progeny of the bachelor and his bride.

Nodding her head she gets up from the sofa and glides into the basement side of the studio.

Depositing herself into the nearest desk chair she sends it rolling across the space, landing next to a table covered in books.   Saying as she goes

So, how does this connect to what you're doing?

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In part, it is how I as a visual artist contextualize my use of the personas as a tool in my playful painting practice.

Now she is the one rolling her eyes.

You have quite the piles of books on Duchamp stacked here on your tables.

Smiling, I decide to continue goading her with a bit more of a Duchampian trivia lesson.

Please, don't.
There is never a need for you to attempt to try and impress me.

Ditto. But that's not going to stop me.

Incidentally, Duchamp said in reference to *The Box in a Valise* that everything important he had done could fit into a little suitcase but the same could not be said about the amount of research the work has generated since he made it in the 1940s.

The Box in a Valise?

She wasn't ignoring me!
I jump back up and grab the laptop from the other room and open the browser to YouTube.

Duchamp worked on this side project to his chess game during his last extended stay in Paris, shortly before and in the early days of the second world war. He brought the components with him to New York City and completed the work there, in part with Joesph Cornell assembling the boxes for him.

1935 - 1941

For someone who'd given up making art Duchamp sure had a lot of side projects.

Solomon, Deborah. (1997) *Utopia Parkway: the Life and Work of Joseph Cornell*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. pp. 135-136.

How fitting, boxes fitted by Cornell.

Figure 3

"From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy / The Box in a Valise."
YouTube, Staatliches Museum Schwerin / Ludwigslust / Güstrow, 5 June 2014.

He wanted to create a portable museum of his artworks. He began working on it while in Paris just before and in the early days of the war; assembling photographs, color reproductions, and he even had small models made of three of the Readymades -I think these were *Air de Paris*, *Traveler's Folding Item*, and *Fountain*.

Fountain? Does this mean he did claim it as his own?

You're not dragging me into that controversy.

As I said, he brought them with him to New York City when he was finally able to leave France.

Didn't he hide this stuff in wheels of cheese? *Brie de Paris!*

Yes, he traveled between Occupied France and Vichy France disguised as a cheese seller.

Obviously, she knows all this and is humoring me.

A salty cheese seller, *Marchand du sel,* selling his wares.

Quite.

Worse than a mixed metaphor is a bilingual word game.

We'll talk about Duchamp's many boxes and his propensity for replicating his work is a whole other conversation we should have sometime, but not now.

Or better, let's not and say we did!

Anyway, I've already read what you wrote about this in chapter seven. Do we have any crackers?

Why?

All this talk of cheese has made me hungry.

Too bad, Franzi ate them all last night.

I should have known. Impossible to keep anything in stock with him around.

Could you be nice? He always comes to your defence, despite how you treat him.

This causes her to change the subject, returning to an earlier thread of the conversation, but none the nicer.

So, let me get this straight, because he is physically dead, Duchamp is more interesting to you?

That comment I really will ignore.

I guess the leap from an interest in history to necrophilia isn't too great.

Is this what also draws you to David Bowie?

I guess he is so much fresher than the salty cheese seller.

Yes, the fact that both Duchamp and Bowie are no longer physically alive is part of what makes them both good case studies for my research.

The dead cannot defend themselves.

Not against you!

It's you they have to worry about!

Nor do the dead tell tales.

I am getting quicker at matching you in this game!

That sounds like a challenge to me!

Or not.

Definitely not.

That could mean one of two things; first, regarding this game and second, regarding any post-humous tales you may someday tell.

I guess you'll just have to wait and see which one it is ... might be both!

We need to get back on topic.

Of course, it's your topic.

Bowie's life and death are more recent; so, there is an active awareness of his creative practice that we no longer have of Duchamp's.

A few people are still around who personally knew Duchamp. However, most, if not all, are now as old or if not older than Duchamp was when they knew, or better said, had contact with him.

I used to think Duchamp had died much earlier.

You would not have been the first.

When I look at all you have here i realize he wasn't entirely the chess playing recluse he presented himself to be.

Presentation is everything.

The role David Bowie played as a pop star and the evolution of his artistic identity runs parallel to late twentieth and early twenty-first century developments in multimedia technology.

Bowie, David. (1972) *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*. Album.

Bowie existed in his own *Moonage Daydream*?

If so, a daydream driven by and driving the global popular culture of his time.

Bowie, David. (1973) *Aladdin Sane*. Album.

Aladdin Sane?

Stop!

In short, what influenced Bowie and his influence on his contemporaries is known to us in ways different to how we interpret somewhat similar knowledge we have of Marcel Duchamp.

"Time may change me, but you can't trace time."

For all you do or think you do well singing is not on the list. Only one line and it's the worst rendition of 'Changes' *I have ever heard!*

Bowie, David. (1971) *Hunky Dory* Album. Released as a single January 7, 1972 with the B-side 'Andy Warhol'

Time and its traces is something we should talk about later.

Just please don't sing anymore.

This critique of her singing caused her to direct the subject back to Duchamp.

Not to mention, people who did have contact with Duchamp during his lifetime, if they are still alive today, would have known him as the former artist-cum-cheese player.

Chess player.
He pretended to sell cheese, but he played chess.

Excuse me. I misspoke.

I realize you're playing me and I should ignore you.

You can't.

cheese chess pretend play ...

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They would have known Duchamp as the *respirateur* -not the painter, not the artist, but the *breather*, which is how he began describe himself.

"Je suis un respirateur".

Inhale.   *Exhale.*   *Inhale.*   *Exhale.*   *Inhale.*

They would not have known Marcel Duchamp but *Marcel Duchamp* presented by Marcel Duchamp.

Exactly!

Can one ever really know an artist?
As often as I have tried

I must interrupt her.

Marcel Duchamp: respirateur was only one of the many masks Marcel Duchamp wore. It is easy to get caught up thinking that Rrose was Duchamp's only alter ego, when in fact the artist played with his identity in the form of multiple personas, most named 'Marcel Duchamp' throughout his lifetime.

Ok. Tell me what you *really* mean.

Numerous scholars have written about Duchamp and his multiple Duchamps. Three recent volumes on this are right here on the table.
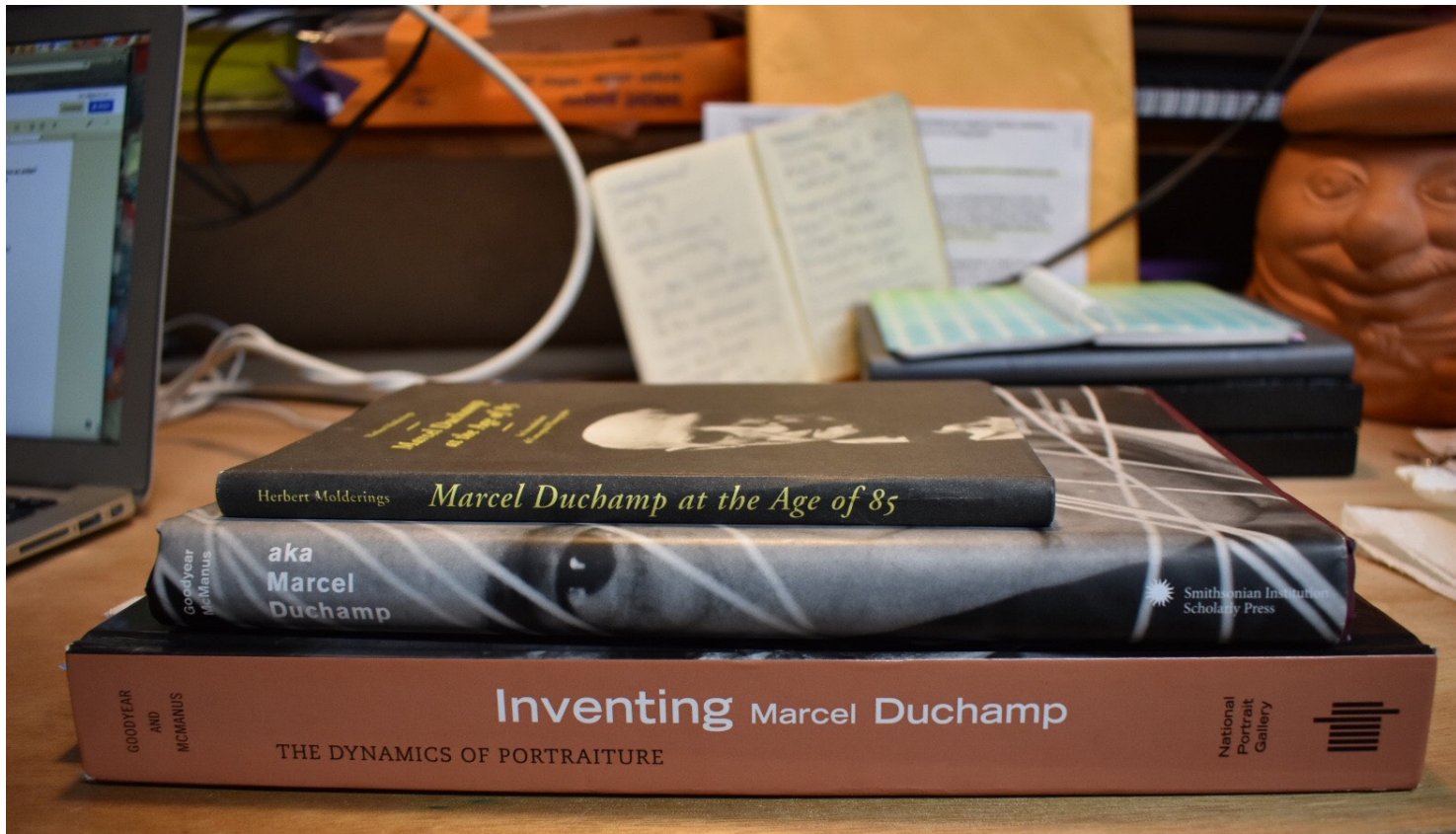
Figure 4

Top: Molderings, Herbert. (2013) *Marcel Duchamp at the Age of 85: An Incunabulum of Conceptual Photography.*
Translated by John Brogden, with a text by Frederick Kiesler, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König.

Middle: Goodyear, Anne Collins and James W. McManus, editors. (2014) *AKA Marcel Duchamp: Meditations on the Identities of an Artist*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press.

Bottom: Goodyear, Anne Collins, et al., (2009) *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture*.
Washington D.C. and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and The MIT Press.

Familiar names. Duchamp appreciated
having his photo taken?

We'll talk about Duchamp and the many photos taken of him later. Now, back to what I was trying to say.

Of course.
Don't let me interrupt you.

Smile.

As a young *painter*, Marcel Duchamp, became increasingly versed in the tenets of Cubism and how the multiplicity of viewpoints of a three-dimensional object and the multifacetedness of its physical identity could be expressed on the two-dimensional surface of the picture plane, he carried these thoughts a step further, away from the canvas, away from the object, to the identity of the artist himself.

Too long ... she is spinning around on the office chair and muttering to herself.

Or herself.

Stop spinning and muttering! And yes, "or herself".

One second, you say "away from the object" but wasn't Duchamp all about the object, the 'Readymade'?

You do realize by now I know all this?

Yes.

Humor me like I do you.

And no.

Duchamp was not just all about the Readymade. Like Rrose, the Readymade is a part of the total oeuvre which, when viewed as a whole, provides greater insight to the questions Duchamp was asking.

Question, what questions?

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Ok, maybe it was less the questions he was asking and more the way he was instigating the act of questioning.

Questioning the questions of identity.

In which case *how* he was asking questions through his alter egos, personas or multiple identities is important to the way artists might consider utilizing personas when exploring issues of identity in a creative practice.

She looks really excited.

Are we at the end yet?

No.

And now deflated.

I want to go back to the paintings of Duchamp, namely *Nude (Study), Sad young man on a train* begun in late 1911 and completed in early 1912.

I pull the laptop closer towards me.

Flashback Friday Art History departmental lectures from eleven til one!

Oh that's right. That's where we met ... in the Aula. You weren't enrolled.

No one ever asked to see my ticket.

As if that mattered. If they did, you'd have forged one like your passport.

Why are you showing me this early work from Duchamp?

As I recall, there is a more important painting from the same time that is *the example* of the work that set him on the pathway to infamy.

Mel, I would not go so far as to using the term *infamous* in conjunction with Marcel Duchamp. Yes, he did shake the art world up enough to make painting post-Duchamp difficult in ways we had not previously experienced. However, a bit of shaking is necessary if one wants to separate the wheat from the chaff; or at least to separate the useful grains from those that are less suitable to providing the nourishment needed to sustain growth. That is what I believe Duchamp did, he asked questions that were not really asked in art before, using a finer mesh sieve to filter out the plumpest grains, those with the most potential for feeding his curiosity. The finer mesh of the sieve is analogous to the technological and theoretical developments during Duchamp's lifetime which enabled him

Look at me. I'm smiling and nodding ...

I don't care!

Time to get back to your lecturing me on that painting of the sad young man on train.

Ugh! Why do you do this?

Because I can.

Here!

It does bear a striking resemblance to that other painting.

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Figure 5

Duchamp, Marcel.
Nude (study), Sad Young Man on a Train, 1911-12.
Oil on cardboard, mounted on Masonite. 100 x 73 cm.
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation,
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy.

I trust you will eventually get to the other painting I was asking about?

Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)?

Yes. I will get to that *other* painting.

I have chosen to begin with *Nude (study), Sad Young Man on a Train* is because I want to show the development of Duchamp's painting leading to the *other* painting and its initial rejection by his colleagues in Paris and subsequent positive reception in New York City made clear to Duchamp the rules of the art game.

Ah, games!
I enjoy playing games.
Wasn't Duchamp an avid player of games?

My turn to smile and nod.

Yes, he was.

Chess, wasn't it?
Or was it Par*cheesi*?

I'm not taking her bait.

Chess.

The case can equally be made he was a player of the game of art.

Not to completely change the subject again

but you will

Duchamp started painting before 1911, didn't he?

Yes.

His earliest paintings date to 1902. He was 15 - nine years before he painted either *Nude*.

The smearings of youth!

He probably had a lot of material to work with, painting portraits and landscapes.

If I ignore her she will stop going where she is headed.

Didn't scientists recently confirm he continued these youthful smearings at least until 1946; going so far as to incorporate a genetic sample in an adulterated landscape - cum - self portrait? He gave us a model of his DNA seven years before Crick and Watson showed us the molecular structure.

Ignoring her was a faulty tactic.

Go ahead. I know you want to show me the painting he made for Maria Martins.

Figure 6

Duchamp, Marcel.
Paysage fautif [Faulty Landscape], 1946.
Seminal fluid on Astralon backed with black satin. Museum of Modern Art Toyama, Japan.

An interesting thing about Duchamp is he didn't just have a finger on the pulse of his own time but seemed to anticipate the future by presenting questions that he knew technology and human beings might someday catch up to, maybe find an answer to, or at least lead to the asking of another question.

Bowie seemed to have that gift for placing his finger on the pulse of his time and then playing with the ambiguity he discovered there. Do you think he also had the knack to anticipate the future that Duchamp appears to have had?

I'm not sure it is right to say either of them had that knack.

They both seemed to anticipate and play with the ambiguities we continually face.

They did have similarities such as their

Humor.

For example.

But they also had clear differences and with Bowie only time will tell if or how

Time!

I am getting tired.

Then we should get back to Duchamp before you fall asleep.

You think he'll keep me awake?

We've gone off the track again.
Back to the young man on the train.

You know Duchamp did not have formal training? He was not a product of the Academy.

Yes. I seem to recall something about that.

He went to Paris where his older brothers were artists, hanging out with them he breathed in the *Air de Paris*:

Got you!

No, you didn't. That was rather dumb.

Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism...

Just get on with it. I *am* getting sleepy.

He played with them all. But that's all Duchamp did, play. He wasn't one to committee to a style, or a doctrinaire for what it matters.

So he captured all those doctrines in l'air de Paris and sealed them up in an ampule like a vaccine or antidote!
That's how it's done!

If you insist ...

Let me show you Duchamp's first playful encounter with Cubism.

1911, in the summer while on vacation with his family in Normandy.

Computer back in my power I pull up the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#)website.

Another painting?
When did he do this one?

Figure 7

Duchamp, Marcel.
Yvonne and Magdeleine Torn in Tatters, 1911.
Oil on canvas. 60.3 cm x 73.3 cm.
The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection,
Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.

By the profile I'd say they must be relatives of the painter.

Yes, they are Duchamp's sisters.

It doesn't look very 'cubist' to me, at least in terms of analytical cubism. And it predates synthetic cubism by a good year; yet with the lighter colors and textured application of paint in isolated areas it points in that direction.

Of course, maybe this is another example of Duchamp's putting his finger on the pulse of his time and anticipating through his questioning derived via the ambiguities he found in both the medium and methods he was working with future directions and questions?

I know you can do it but I am always taken aback when you ask a valid question,

That's why I ask them now and again.

One of the more superficial, purely personal, enjoyments I find in this painting is how the profile on the right anticipates the two late self-portraits.

I open wikiart.org.

Isn't it great how you can pull up any image you think of in the blink of an eye!

A blessing and a curse; and as long as the image isn't confused with the art ...

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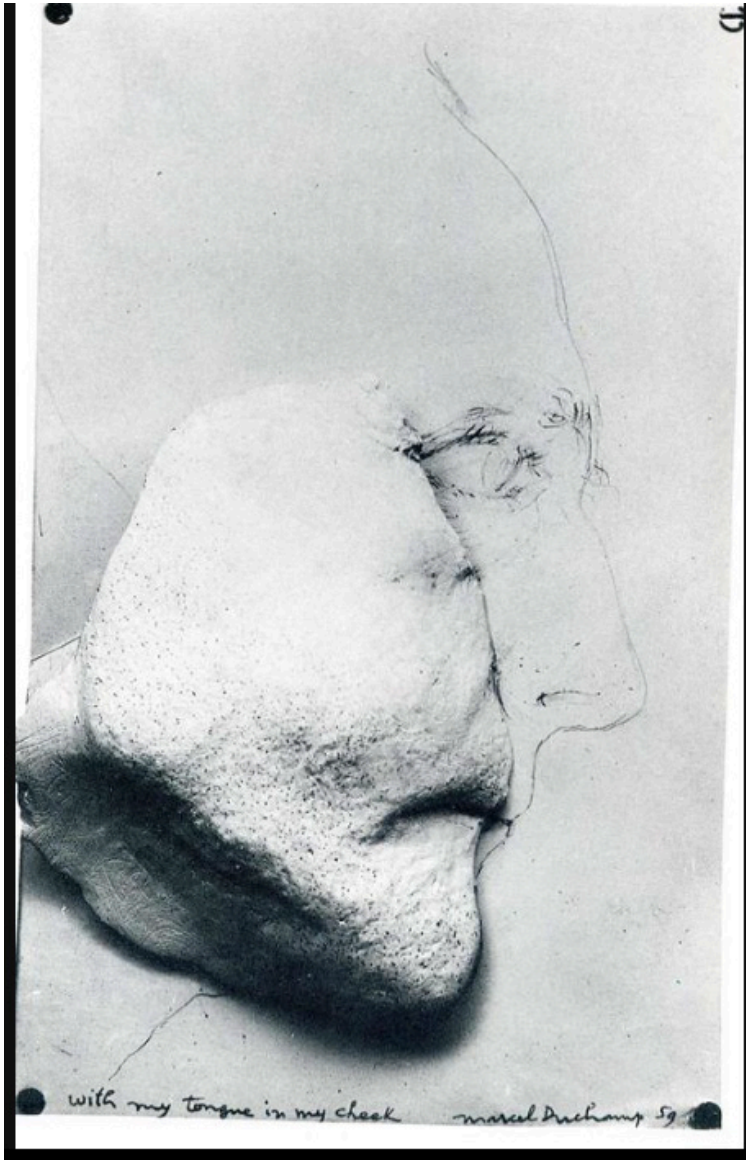
Figure 8

Duchamp, Marcel.
With My Tongue in My Cheek, 1959.
Pencil on paper. 15 x 24.8 cm.
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

I recognize the blue nose.

And look at the curve of the cheek just above the mouth in the center of the picture plane. Look here, there is also this 'non - artwork' Duchamp made a few years earlier which the designers of the National Portrait Gallery exhibition catalogue incorporated so nicely on the end-sheets and outer edges of the book's pages.

Figure 9

Duchamp had the metal template fabricated and then he used it to tear his profile from paper which was then mounted onto the cover of Robert Lebel's *Sur Marcel Duchamp* book - all 137 deluxe copies had an 'original Duchamp non-artwork' accompanying it!

Let me show you the version in The Met's collection.

Figure 10

Back to the computer I begin another search.

Ummm. Familiar.

For an artist who made so little he seems to have left a lot of crumbs trailing behind him.
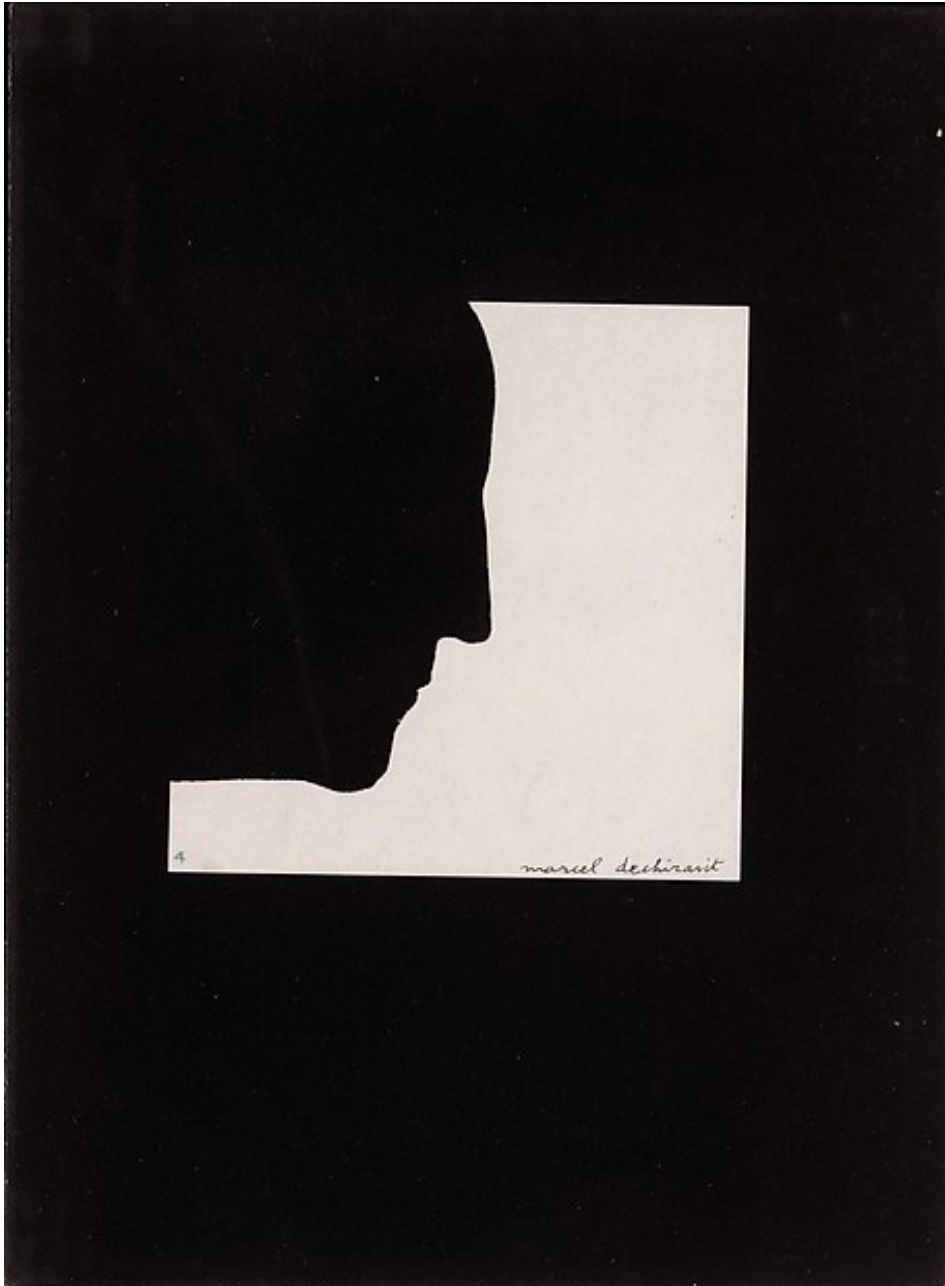
Figure 11

Duchamp, Marcel.
Self-Portrait in Profile, 1957.
Torn paper pasted on velvet covered
paperboard. 33.7 x 24.4 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, USA

*Melusine has pulled the
computer closer to her
and is reading the text
accompanying the image
on The Met's website.*

This is interesting. It's inscribed
"Marcel déchiravit", meaning
"Marcel tore this quickly".
In 1911 he tore apart his sisters, in 1957 he
tore apart himself! He really hadn't taken
his basic thoughts that much further in the
forty-six years between the two!

*"I watch the ripples change their size/ but never
leave the stream/ of warm impermanence and/so
the days float through my eyes/but still the days
seem the same…"*

STOP!

Can we agree for once, neither of us should sing?

Achilles heel located …

Sure.

You did make a good point. There was no great shift between the questions Duchamp was asking and even how he was asking them in that half century.

Other than the media he was using.

Yes.

But then for Duchamp it was never the medium that was the message but the same message was carried by whatever medium he happened to be or not to be working with.

Now you're trying to bring Hamlet into this? Duchamp wasn't a melancholic prince; so, leave the soliloquy for another day.

Let's get back to the torn and tattered sisters. You're probably dying to lecture me some more on this.

I don't like the way she said it but admit o myself she's right.
You'll be the death of me …

… more likely the other way around.

Ok.

Duchamp, by playing with the cubist ideas of multiple viewpoints of the same subject through the doubling of each sister's profile, takes a humerous poke at the cubists' use of collage by *tearing* apart their profiles and repositioning the parts elsewhere in the composition simultane-oously tearing apart Cubism's doctrine.

I get the humor and the play with the word 'tear'. In fact, it is so funny I am tearing up for laughter.

Stop.

I reach across the table and pick up another book.

Here is what Duchamp had to say about the painting in a slide lecture he gave on his work titled "Apropos of Myself".

Yvonne and Magdeleine were and still are my two younger sisters. Introducing humor for the first time in my painting, I, so to speak,tore up their profiles and placed them at random on the canvas. You can see four profiles floating in mid-air.
        There again we have a very loose interpretation of the cubist theories -two profiles of each sister of a different scale and scattered about the canvas;in other words, I was trying very hard to get away from any traditional or even cubistic composition (D'Harnoncourt et al., 1989: 251).

What is important to note is Duchamp's acknowledgment of his use of humor,
both in the approach to the image but also in the title 'torn in tatters'.
Additionally, we should consider the way in which Duchamp began playing with
and not by the rules in his attempt to get away from 'even cubistic composition'.

Always the iconoclast.
A person after my own art.

With that she spins the chair across the room and leaps back into the greenhouse, landing upon the futon with her legs folded beneath her.

Slowly I walk into the other room, asking

Did you watch the film I have bookmarked on UbuWeb Film?

Of course I haven't watched it yet -it's three hours long!

If you're going to stick around a while you should. With the film they posted the full interviews with various Duchamp scholars. For instance, among other notable remarks, in the interview with the former Director of Modern Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Michael R. Taylor, you will hear echoed David Bowie's statement from the 1996 Charlie Rose Show I showed you earlier...

... the change in our reception of Duchamp and his approach to art has come through the artists who've followed him.

You were listening, or understood this all along. It doesn't matter either way, but it does remind me of another book in the basement ...

Please don't show me another book!

Yes!

In that regard it is plausible to propose the greatest researchers of Duchamp have not been the Duchampian scholars but rather the artists who have and continue to take apart Duchamp's work, his ideas, and his questions, or at least his mode of questioning, in their own work.

You're not that far away, no need to shout. I hear what you are saying.

Sorry.

You are certainly no Duchampian scholar!

Sigh.

Questions.

Duchamp was certainly more interested in asking questions than answering them.

At the mention of the book I grab it from the table along with the post card beside it.

I remember reading in the Introduction to Calvin Tomkins' book *The Afternoon Interviews* the author's recounting a colleague's reaction to the first interview Tomkins did with Duchamp published in Newsweek in 1959. The colleague remarked how strange the interview was and how he'd never read an interview in which the person being interviewed didn't really answer any of the questions asked.

This book?

Yes.

That's the one.
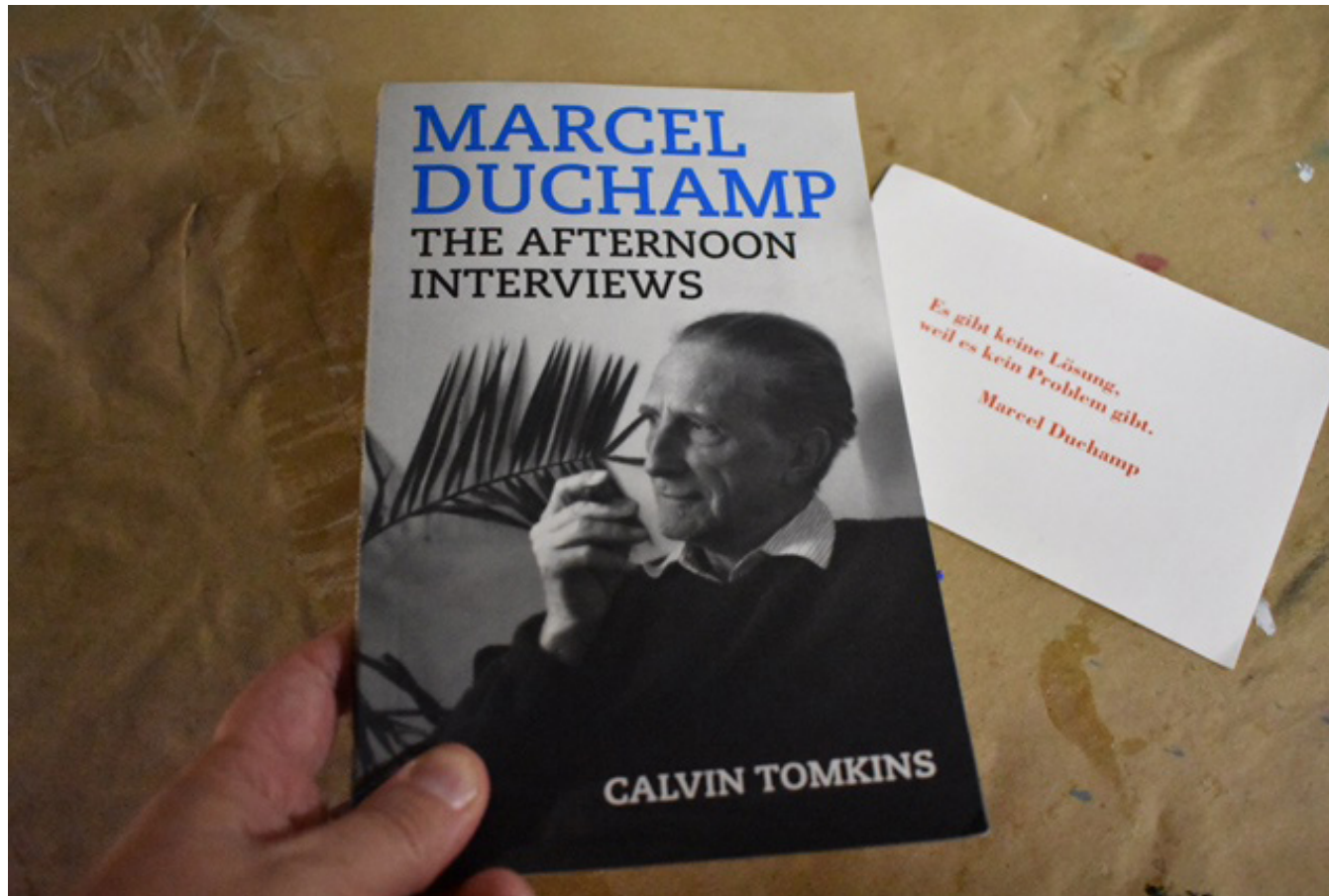
Here it is on page 4.

Ah, I see you have the postcard with
Duchamp's famous quote but in German.

"Es gibt keine Lösung, weil es kein Problem gibt."

"There are no solutions because there are no problems."

I bought it in Germany.

What I like about this quote is how clear it expresses Duchamp's view of questions and answers.

For Duchamp there are no solutions because there are no problems because problems are not the same as questions but solutions are answers to problems so there can be no answers to questions because there are no problems, no?

My head has begun to spin. It is clear to me she knows what she is talking about, at least I think she does. I could stop this conversation here, but then I am driven to continue. Who else do I have to talk about these things which I spend so much time ruminating on as I smear paint around with if not Melusine?

As crazy and convoluted as it sounds, yes, I believe that is it.

Admittedly, I can never understand why when one asks questions people so often assume that this means there is a problem. Questions are just questions and not necessarily problems. At the same time, I do not entirely agree with Duchamp. Sometimes questions can point to the existence of a problem for which a solution might be sought and there are times when questions do have answers but this does not mean they are solutions to a problem.

An endless game like those played by children. You know, the type of game where the rules are changed throughout so no one ever wins and the game will never end

Sounds like a game to me.

until the players stop playing.

I see where she is going but I don't want our game to end just yet so I steer us back to where we were.

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What you said earlier reminded me of another catalogue I have here.

Figure 14

Goodyear, Anne Collins, et al. (2009) *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture*. Washington D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.
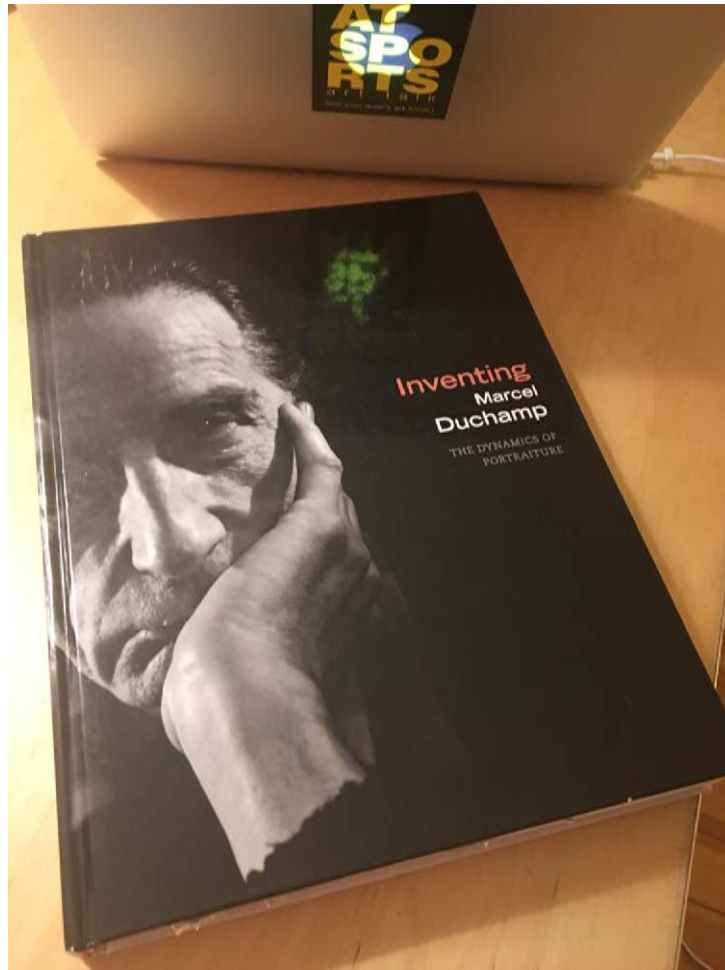
Right here Michael R. Taylor points out how in his youth Duchamp was interested in experimenting with the avant-garde styles of the day; saying of his

'#6 Marcel Duchamp and Portraiture' by Michael R. Taylor. (Goodyear et al., 2009: 100 -125)

... restless curiosity and refusal to conform to accepted tastes ensured that he did not remain loyal to one signature style for long, and it is interesting to note that the shift from one style to another usually took place within the realm of portraiture (Goodyear et al., 2009: 105).

On a similar note Taylor states in the filmed interview how Duchamp hated the idea of conforming to his own taste and thus made work to challenge himself and his conformity to his own taste and not just that of the viewer.

Maybe.

I wanted to mention earlier, you know, when we were talking about the contributions that artists as opposed to scholars make to our understanding of Duchamp that work from the Turkish artist, Serkan Özkaya, that is getting all the press lately.

You mean the one where he re-constructed *Étant donnés* in Duchamp's studio on East Eleventh Street to prove his hypothesis that the work was one big camera obscura built by Duchamp to project a portrait of Rrose Sélavy through the eye holes in the door onto the wall behind the viewer?

Has Duchamp's Final Work Harbored a Secret for Five Decades? This Artist Says Yes. Brian Boucher. artnet news. October 3, 2017.

Yes, that's the one. Here, you have a review of the work in your bookmarks. *We Will Wait (*2017) is the title Özkaya gave his piece.
I like the idea of Rrose staring over the shoulder of the person peeking through the holes in the door. Well, I guess once the viewer blocks the holes Rrose disappears from the wall. But where did she go? If she was there she still must be somewhere ... projected into the back of the viewer's brain through the eyes perhaps?

Melusine pauses, looking at the image I've pulled up on the screen.

When I stop and think of all I know about Duchamp, his interests, his humor, it really is not that far fetched.

Yet it could also be a bunch of speculative nonsense.

Exactly!

This is what makes it so Duchampian. Özkaya's question: is *Étant donnés* a camera obscura constructed in secret by Duchamp as a means to project himself for all eternity via his alter ego Rrose into the room with the work; only to have his presence blocked by the viewer's gaze? It's a great question!

And completely unanswerable!

End-game.

Check-mate!

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Which in Duchampian terms makes it a true question; spurring the artist to seek an answer or solution to a question that is no problem and therefore has no solution!

You know, we should take a road trip to New York City and see *We Will Wait* while it is on exhibit.

I stare at her, astonished she is making such a suggestion.

After last time?

No charges were pressed.

Time to get this train back on the track.

Can we talk about the sad young man on the train now?

Go on.

But she does the talking.

It is a portrait and this explains why you chose to talk about *Nude (study), Sad Young Man on a Train*. Couldn't the same be said for *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2),* it is a portrait too?

In a way, yes. Although Nude Descending a Staircase will always be viewed as the work that changed the direction of Duchamp's artmaking

And through non-artmaking.

and non-artmaking.

Duchamp was grappling with the questions or rather, the act of questioning, he asked throughout his lifetime long before he painted *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*. It was not the painting but what he experienced with how that painting was perceived **received** which jetted him into questioning in other, simultaneously overt and ambiguous -at least to most of the world- ways.

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So, this experience you're referring to was the rejection of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* by the Parisian cubists and its later success at the 1913 Armory Show in New York?

She leans her head back on a pillow and closes her eyes. I think she really is ready to sleep.

Yes. But I'll come back to that in a moment. What makes Nude (study), Sad Young Man on a Train more interesting for my purposes is that it is a self portrait; and this might be why it was overlooked when it was exhibited alongside *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2* at the Armory Show in New York.

Head up and eyes open now.

Interesting, the sad young man on the train is Duchamp?
How can you tell?

Oh.

He said it himself.

Head back down and eyes are closed, but this time I know she is faking, I think.

According to Taylor the rejection of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* by the gatekeepers of Cubism and the 1912 Salon des Indépendants, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger was more than the paintings stylistic resemblance to Futurism, which according to Duchamp in his St. Louis talk, he learned about through the Futurist exhibition in Paris in January 1912, after he had already begun the *Sad Young Man on a Train*.

Wait, is that snoring?

Wake up!

What?!

Okay, okay, I'm awake.

Compared to his sisters' portrait, *Yvonne and Magdeleine Torn in Tatters,* this painting despite being only slightly later appears to have reached a state where recognizing a human form -face or body- has become quite difficult.

What happened?

Some say Duchamp saw the future.

You're not very good at this.

Seriously, many have said it was Duchamp's introduction to Futurism, but as I was explaining to you when you were asleep he had already begun the painting when he saw the first exhibition of Futurism in Paris.

So, you don't think this is what caused the shift?

No, I don't. It was not Futurism anymore than it was any of the other 'isms' of modernism. It was internal more than external shifting.

In between the two paintings Duchamp did a
number of other cubist-inspired paintings. As he
worked through the basic tenets of cubism
Duchamp's palette grew less bright, more
neutral, or as he stated about the painting
Portrait of Chess Players in his talk in St. Lou-
is:
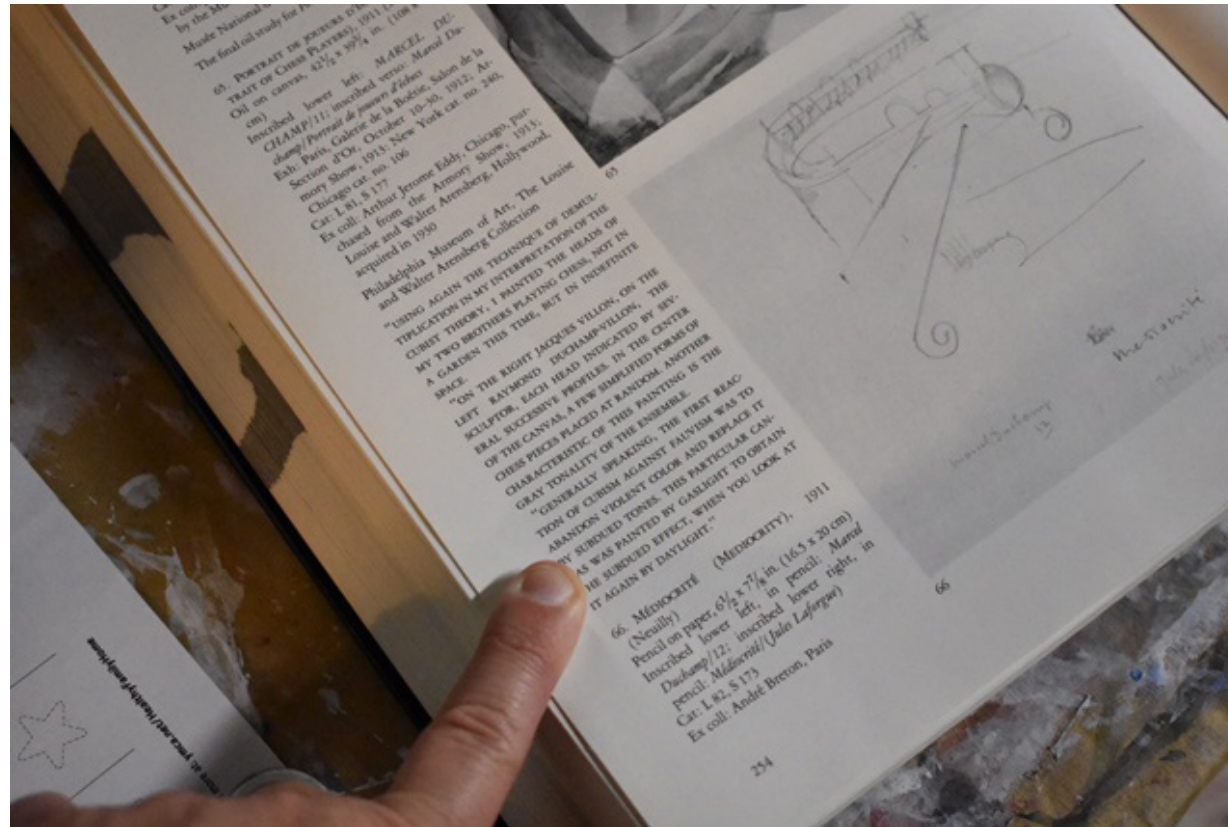
Figure 16

Generally speaking, the first reaction of cubism against fauvism was to abandon violent color and replace it by subdued tones. This particular canvas was painted by gaslight to obtain the subdued effect, when you look at it again by daylight (D'Harnoncourt et al., 1989: 254).

A gaslight?

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Don't get ahead of yourself, Melusine.

I was just thinking of the significance of this object in Duchamp's oeuvre.

Yes, but let's keep to the early work for now. You keep taking us down winding paths when we need to stick to the straight and narrow.

She has laid back down on the sofa, this time with her backside towards me.

Here on page 109 Michael Taylor describes how the "delay" between painting at night by the gas light and the artist seeing the results of his previous night's work the next morning by daylight impacted the conceptual approach Duchamp took to his work; he identifies this as leading to Duchamp's "open-ended approach to the work that deliberately put off closure into an ever distant future" which began to play out in New York City in 1915 as the artist worked on *The Large Glass*.
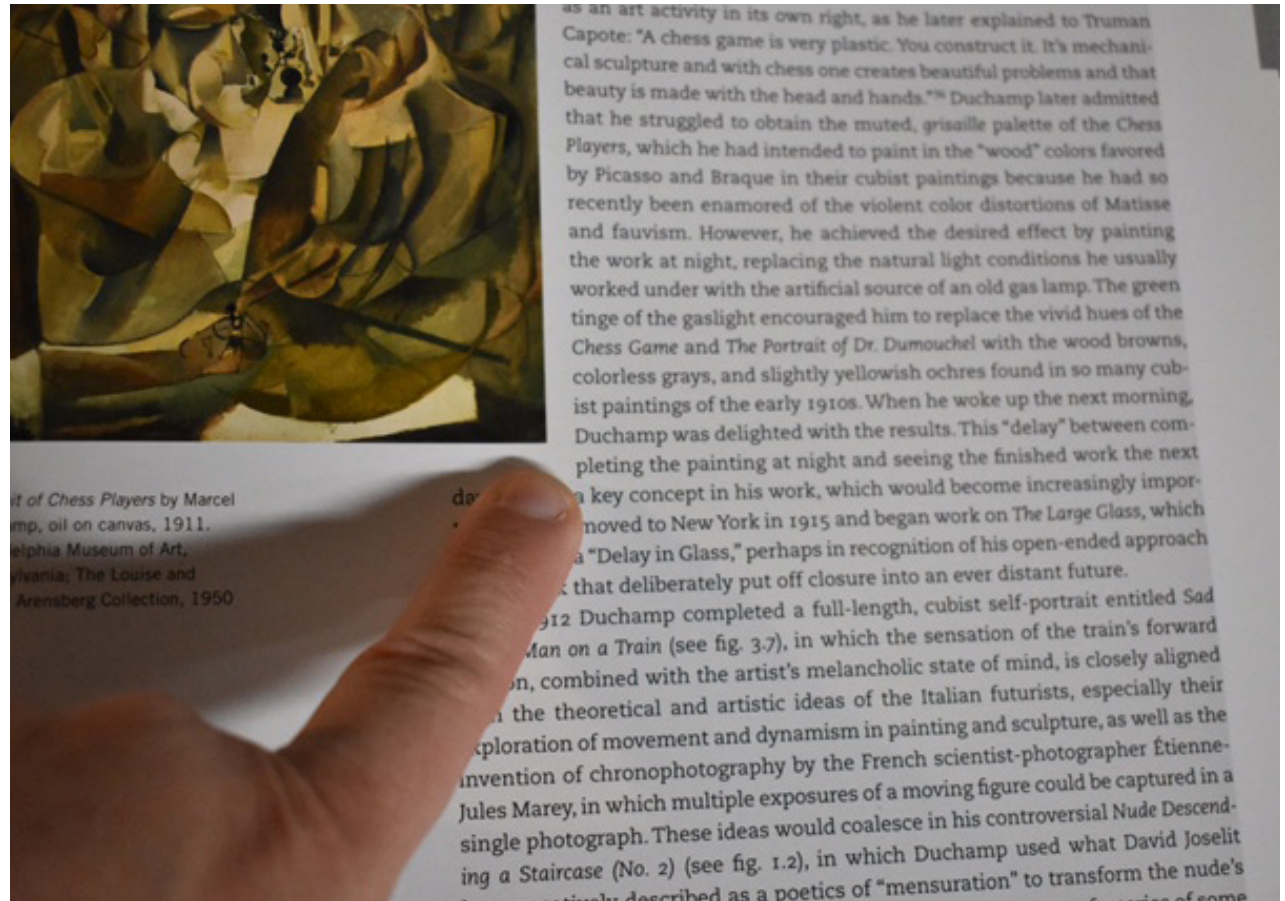
Figure 17   (Goodyear et al., 2009: 109)

She realizes I am not ready to end the conversation just yet and rolls over to face me again.

Sitting up she grabs the book from my hand.

If this will keep her in the conversation I'll play along.

*Having picked up the catalogue from the Philadelphia/
New York exhibition and leafing through it, she asks*

It says here Duchamp subtitled The Large Glass "Delay in Glass", even.

Even.

Could you show me online both *Portrait of Chess Players* and *The Large Glass*?

I open another window.

The reproductions in this catalogue are horrible...not that those online will be much better, even.
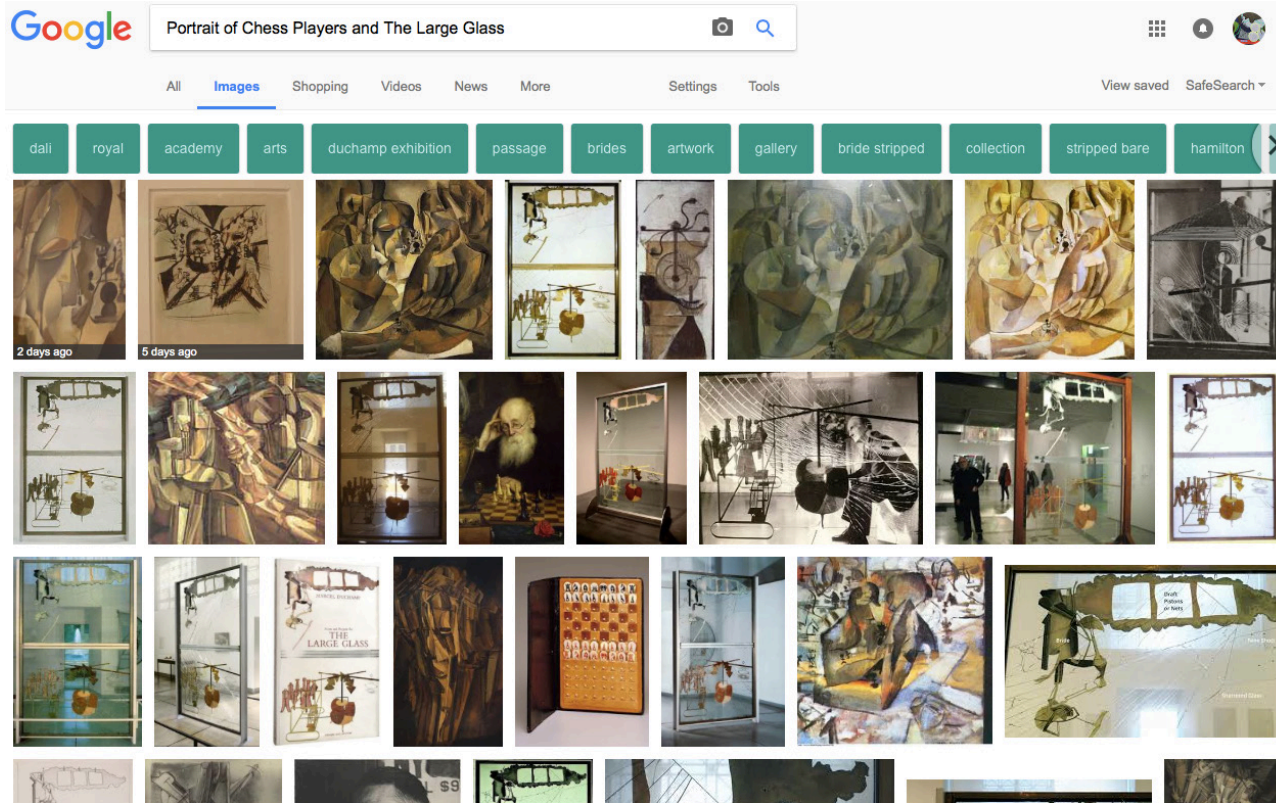
And while you're at it a photo of Rrose as well.

Figure 18

A youthful Rrose in the first portrait taken by
Man Ray in 1920 or 1921.

Dewey.

With that cap she looks like she just got back from
a worker's parade in Petrograd. I always think of
her more elegant, bourgeoisie looks.
You know the photos I am referring to?

Figure 19

Duchamp, Marcel.
Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy, 1921.
Photo: Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray.

At this she grabs the computer table and pulls it closer towards her to
search for those other photos of Rrose.

Hey! Careful! The computer just about slid off the table.

Ignoring me she pulls up the photo of Rrose with the hands of Germaine
Everling, also taken by Man Ray around the same time.

This one! I just love the patterned hat band, fox-fur collar, and
the hands! So *Germainic*, so romantic! *C'est la vie!*

Figure 20

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Once more, as she is wanton to do, Melusine has hijacked the conversation. Again, I play along so our little game will continue. I re-take possession of the computer and pull up another image.

Ah yes. The first work signed 'copyright 1920. Rrose Sélavy' ... *Fresh Widow.*

How perfectly fitting of a pun for Rrose.

Figure 21

Duchamp, Marcel. *Fresh Widow*, 1920. Miniature French window, painted wood frame, and panes of glass covered with black leather. 77.5 x 44.8 cm, on wood sill 1.9 x 53.4 x 10.2 cm. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, USA.

```
Constructed by a carpenter in accordance with
Duchamp's instructions, Fresh Widow is a
reduced scale version of the traditional floor-
length French window. Duchamp covered the glass
panes with panels of black leather,
obstructing the metaphorical view through the
window that is associated with illusionistic
painting. With the change of three letters,
Duchamp transforms "French window" into the title
"Fresh Widow," a pun that points to the recent war
and the bawdy tradition of amorous (or "fresh")
widows of soldiers. The inscription at the base,
"COPYRIGHT ROSE SELAVY 1920," is the first time the
name of Duchamp's female alter ego appears on one
of his works (MoMA Learning).
```

Thank you for reading that description to me from the MoMA collection website.

You're welcome.

How did we get off track and ahead of ourselves again?

You are a bit of a train wreck.

Stop ... breathe ...

Back to Duchamp's cubist foray.

Hey! I wasn't finished with Rrose. Anyway, you're the one who opened the widow in 1920. Heedy times. The age of greatness, Gatsby and Co.

With a sudden, faraway look in her eyes she begins reciting

```
Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an un-
affected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of
successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous
about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of
life, as if he were related to one of those intricate ma-
chines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away.
...
```

After the intricate machines and quaking earth of the first World War, and the dust had settled on the desks at Versaille.

At the word 'dust' she interrupts me, continuing

```
No- Gatsby turned out alright in the
end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what
foul dust floated in the wake of his
dreams that temporarily closed out my
interest in the abortive sorrows and
short winded elations of men
(Fitzgerald, 1925: 2).
```

Time to snap her back to Duchamp.

A novel of its time, *The Great Gatsby*.

Your recitation definitely picks up on many of the themes of Marcel and Rrose; the 'intricate machines' being only one.

Have you considered the dust?

With this I move back to the computer and pull up another 1920 photo-based work by Duchamp produced through the lens of Man Ray.

Hmm, nice aerial photograph of a battlefield, trenches and a small village on the Western Front.

Here on artsy.net this is credited to Man Ray. But in the Philadelphia/New York catalogue *Elevage de Poussiére (Dust Breeding)*, 1920 (New York) is listed as Duchamp's "photographed by Man Ray" and "An edition of ten prints, signed by Man Ray and Duchamp, was issued by the Galeria Schwarz, Milan, in 1964." (D'Harnoncourt et al., 1989: 293 -294)

Figure 22

Duchamp, Marcel. *Dust Breeding (Dust over work of Marcel Duchamp)*, 1920.
Gelatin silver print. 9.2 x 12 cm. Photo: Man Ray

So, who's work is it?

Ray's or Duchamp's?

Or is it a collaboration?
Is the work the dust on *The Large Glass*?
Or is it the photograph?

I smile.

Or is it just dust?

Mel, I know you know where I am headed with this.

Be nice!

Man Ray was not a Rrose to Duchamp, he was more of a bicycle wheel.

A chess-playing bicycle wheel.

What did you think I was going to say?

Man Ray was a urinal?!

One can never tell.

and you just did.

Yes, that is where *I* was going ... not comparing Man Ray to a porcelain lavatory fixture but that he was a commercial photographer *by trade* and he did write in his autobiography he viewed his photographs of the work of other artists as being in that vein, commercial photography, not part of his own artistic endeavors or collabora- tions. In this sense Ray, together with his cam- era, functioned as a Readymade in Duchamp's process.

Ray, Man. (1963) *Self Portrait*.
New York: Penguin Modern Classics.

And Rrose?

Rrose might appear to have arrived ready-made, but she was no Readymade.

Anotherthing we can agree on?
I have always understood Rrose as a collaborator of Duchamp's. Like any successful, collaborative partnership the parties must be simultaneously of one mind and opposite bodies, like us.

She smoothes her hair and languidly stretches her legs out in front of her.

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Rrose and you certainly have a lot in common.

Yes, I also understand Rrose, and Duchamp's other 'selves' as collaborators while the flesh and blood artists he worked with to physically produce exhibitions, film, and the other non-art-works of his retirement were more like the objects he employed for the Readymades.

We've gotten even further away from his paintings.

We will get back there.

Rrose was one mind with Duchamp in her play with language and humor. In a way these puns are Readymades

and the Readymades are often puns.

Or shifted over into that realm by Rrose Sélavy & Co.

Duchamp, Marcel, et al. (1989)"Rrose Sélavy & Co" *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds. New York: DaCapo Press. pp.103 -120 Originally published as *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*. (1973) Oxford University Press.

Puns can reveal certain truths.

Here is one of my personal favorites: "Avoir de l'haleine en dessous." (Duchamp et al., 1989: 109)

Yes, *Belle Haleine*; another Duchamp work with a photograph of Rrose by Man Ray.

Figure 23

Duchamp, Marcel. *Belle Haleine -Eau de voilette*; signed and dated Rrose Sélavy 1921. Violet box and green perfume bottle, 16.5 x 11.2 cm.

According to the description on the [Christie's website](#) from which this image was taken this work was done in collaboration with Man Ray in 1921. This work was auctioned as part of the collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bérge February 23 - 29, 2009. The estimated value was Euro 1,000,000 to Euro 1,500,000 and the work sold for Euro 8,913,000.

Nothing woolly there.

Rrose's pun makes it clear that Man takes the photos and she wears the underpants.

Er, yes.

Suspicious smells were part and parcel ...

Really Melusine, we've gone off track.

Where were we?

Give me the computer.

I've no choice, she's already grabbed it from the table
and is opening another widow.
I mean window.
She's really beginning to make me feel like Alice falling
down the rabbit hole.

Faces and chess figures are still recognizable.

Figure 24

Duchamp, Marcel.
Portrait of Chess Players, 1911.
Oil on Canvas. 100.6 x 100.5 cm.
The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection,
Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.

Oh yes, Duchamp and cubism.

You asked to see *The Large Glass*, too?

I say as I snatch the computer back from her.

This time without the coating of dust, please.

Only a little bit was preserved by some varnish,
there in the upper panel.

Figure 25

Duchamp, Marcel.
The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915-1923.
Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, and dust on two glass panels.
277.5 × 177.8 × 8.6 cm Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.

What time is it? I am getting sleepy.

It isn't even Noon. But I see you have had a long night.
So back to the sad young man on the train.

If we must.

Now I'm doing this just to aggravate you.

But I am not letting you ...

Wait, there was one more small painting I wanted to show you.

Yes, I am curious. Please continue.

It is *Coffee Mill*, painted in 1911 for his brother
Raymond Duchamp-Villon's kitchen.

How original.
A painting of a kitchen appliance in your kitchen.

It was 1911, Mel.

I am tired and I know what you are going to say because it looks like it could be in *The Large Glass.*

It is a precursor to the machines and their movements Duchamp depicted in *The Large Glass*.

Machines and motion were about to merge with the figure in Duchamp's painting. In *Nude (study), Sad Young Man on a Train* it is the forward movement of the train combined with the swaying of the figure, the artist smoking his pipe as he moves through the corridor, that Duchamp sought to capture.

Like the painting *Yvonne and Magdeleine Torn in Tatters* Duchamp also used the title of the sad young man painting to exercise his sense of humor and fondness for word-play as well comment and amplify the conceptual content of the work.

The title of the painting in French is *Jeune homme triste dans un train*; according to Michael R. Taylor in his essay the alliteration of the 'tr' in triste and train serves to connect the movement and the emotional state of the young man.

My emotional sate is 'tired' and I want to move towards sleep.

Soon, I promise.

Figure 27
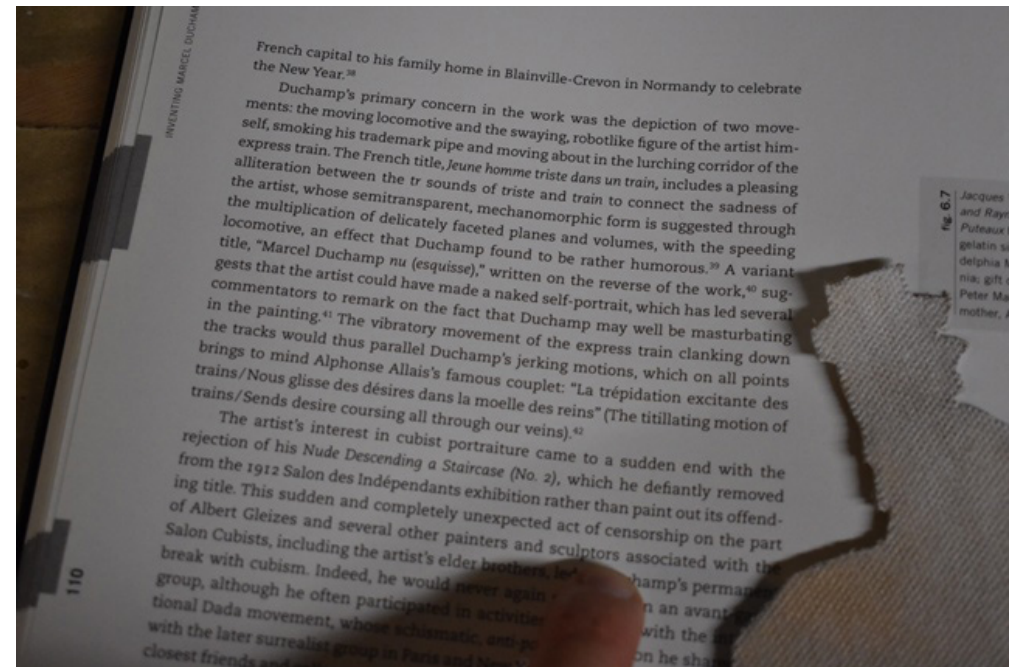
Tapping her finger on the page as she reads.

Hmm... this is interesting; here Taylor writes:

A variant title, "Marcel Duchamp nu (esquisse)," written on the reverse of the work, suggests that the artist could have made a naked self-portrait, which has led several commentators to remark on the fact that Duchamp may well be masturbating in the painting (Goodyear et al., 2009: 110).

You would pick up on that bit.

It appears that Duchamp really was a painter. Taylor does mention in the end-notes that the painting was first publicly exhibited in the 1913 New York Armory show under the title *Nu (sketch)* and the reading of the painting as a masturbation scene comes from Joseph Masheck on page five in his introduction to *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective* published by Prentice-Hall in 1975.

What I am starting to pick up on is Duchamp's sense of humor and how he found pleasure in playfully connecting the image and titles, building or maybe even tearing apart any meaning through word-play.

Bringing us back to Rrose.

Yes, and Duchamp's humor.

Taylor does go on to point out that it is a very literal reading and that probably Duchamp intended the work to be a sketch for *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2,* which was his next painting. Oh, I like how he, I assume humorously, reasons against the literal reading:

```
It is also extremely doubtful that the artist would have simultaneously masturbated and smoked a
pipe in the public corridor of an intercity train, thus risking physical injury with every jolt of
the moving train!(Goodyear, et al., 2009: 124).
```

Is it less doubtful the artist would do this in a private compartment on the train or if the risk of physical injury was less?

I think that is a topic for another conversation.
Besides, I thought you were sleepy?

I'm waking up again.

I could use a nap.

It seems to me in order to begin to appreciate Duchamp's work - I don't think one can understand it - one needs to posses a certain sense of humor.

Again, that is a topic for another conversation. But I do want to point out in the 'Interviews' included with *Marcel Duchamp: Iconoclaste et Inoxydable* writer Monique Fong recalls John Cage recollecting on a conversation he had had with Duchamp's wife, Alexina "Teeny" Duchamp in which Cage stated he did not really understand Marcel's work to which she replied:

"It doesn't matter, neither do I."

Melusine, you're correct, it is not about understanding the work, that's not possible.

It is more about understanding what drove the work, the playfulness, the desire to not conform to the given parameters - convention -, challenging and pushing beyond the established boundaries of an identity.

Looking down at the computer resting once more on her lap she smiles and nods.

I stop.

Look, here they are performing Cage's piece *Reunion* in Toronto in March of 1968.

Yes, Cage was inspired by Duchamp even if he did not understand him; but then can anyone understand him?
I'm not sure he ever wanted to be 'understood'. Maybe it was just about him understanding something?
I think this is what makes him so interesting - the ambiguity he radiates even today.

Humor. Ambiguity. This is growing long and I want to know how you are connecting Bowie to Duchamp.

Summing up your incredibly long presentation, Duchamp wasn't interested in making cubists or futurist paintings for the sake of Cubism and Futurism; and the rejection and later 'acceptance' of *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* led him to realize ...?

You say that with such matter-of- factness.

The rules of the art game.

Perhaps.

I don't mean to lessen the value of art by this statement, merely point out what became obvious to Duchamp, who was an avid *player* of games.

Chess.

And art.

Her short attention span has gotten the best of her; once more her face buried in the computer.

Look how many great photos there are of Duchamp playing chess, or at least pretending to play chess.

She holds the computer up, facing the screen towards me so I can see her the results of her Google Image search for 'Marcel Duchamp playing chess'.

We're both tired. No more Google image searches!

Okay.

Starts right off with the staged photo of Duchamp and a nude Eve Babitz 'playing' chess amongst the many Duchamps in the middle of the Pasadena Museum of Art.
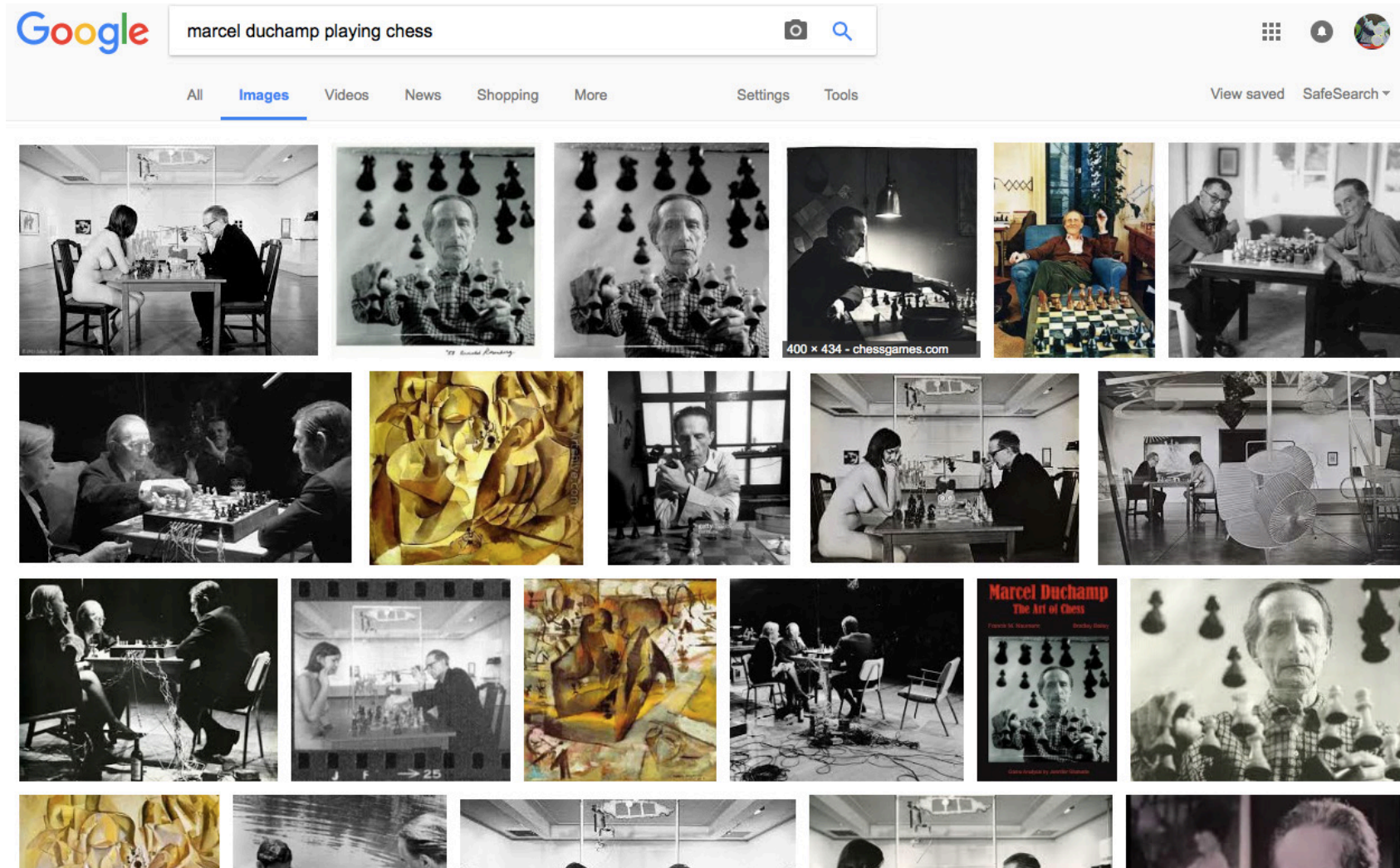
Figure 29

Yes, the first major Duchamp retrospective organized by Walter Hopps in 1963. Have you read the oral history interview Eve Babitz gave to the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art project on how that particular photo came about?

Oral History Interview with Eve Babitz, 2000 June 14

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Look, here is the photo of the Duchamps and Cage performing *Reunion;* and another of Duchamp and Man Ray. the painting of his brothers playing chess. And look, someone has written a book, how surprising, titled *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Chess* (2009).

Yes, Duchamp scholar Francis M. Naumann contextualizes Duchamp's life and art - the chronology of his making and being - through the structure of the game of chess.
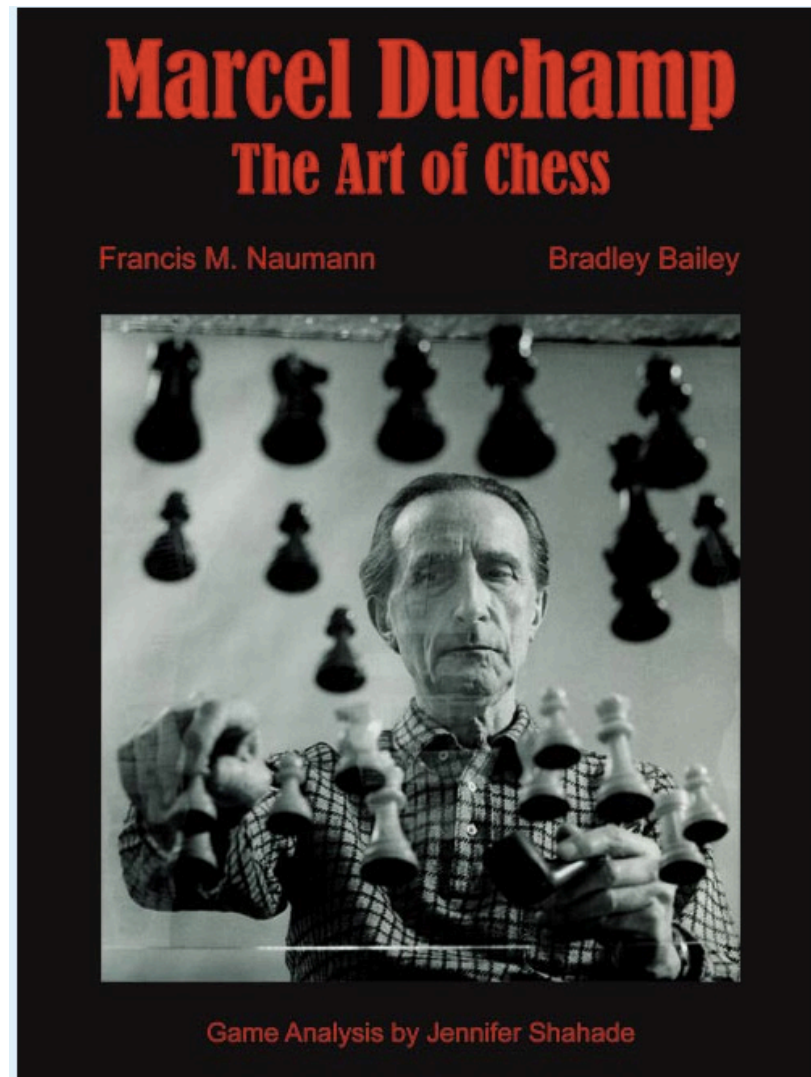
Figure 30

Mel ...

It says here on the website, Bradley Bailey in his essay argues that Duchamp's identities as an artist and as a chess player are inseparable and to understand one one must understand the other.

No, it isn't.

"Writer and gamesplayer" Jennifer Shahade analyzed fifteen chess games played by Duchamp.

However, there is something we must acknowledge about play and games, and how the rules are applied.

For instance, when playing a game, let's say chess, there are certain rules we follow. The direction each figure may move is determined by the rules of the game -convention.

Beginning, middle, and end are not limited to the game of chess.

I see there are two other parts to the book.

That doesn't sound too far fetched based on what you propose on the multifaceted nature of identity.

And there is another part.

Oh, and they've illustrated them using a font based on the chess pieces Duchamp designed.

As an avid player of games one would think Duchamp would be interested in playing by the rules.

Didn't Viktor Shklovsky use same analogy of the movement of the chess figure to express the conventionality of art -the knight, wasn't it? I think I might have seen the book on your shelf and picked it up in one of those boring moments waiting for you to wait for the paint to dry.

You've been rummaging in the
bookshelves?
I thought that was Petra.

Shklovsky, Viktor. (2005) *Knight's Move*.
Richard Sheldon, translator. McLean,IL:
Dalkey Archive Press.

Knight's Move. I do have an English
translation on my bookshelf.
I'm surprised you read it.

I only read the First Preface, 'Knight's
Move' and 'The Tsar's Kitchen'.

Tell me then, what do you recall of the knight's
move?

The rules -convention- dictates the knight
can *only* move in an L- shaped manner.
The figure is not free to move any other
way. Shklovsky likens this to the conven-
tions of art imposed upon the artist, for-
bidding the artist to follow a straight path
forward in favor of the path he is assigned
to follow. Hold on, I want to grab the book
and read you something.

She unfolds her legs, hops up and flies out of the green-
house. I hear her running through the houseabove me, up
and down stairs, and before I have blinked twice she is
back in front of me with book in hand on the futon. How
tired can she be?

Did you notice the 'L' movement is both linear
and lateral? Perpindicular thoughts, not parallel
but colliding and contradicting each other.

That's true.

The Knight is the contrarian.

Lewis Carroll got him right in Chapter Eight!

Carroll, Lewis. (1871) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
and *Through the Looking Glass*. New York: Barnes &
Noble Classics Series. pp.237 - 251.

Here it is. Shklovsky is using the knight and his restricted movement as an analogy to show that in spite of the restrictions placed upon him by the rules of the game the knight is not a coward and can play the game by its rules and on his terms. I like how Shklovsky wrote this:

Our tortuous road is the road of the brave, but what are we to do if we see with our own two eyes more than honest pawns and dutiful kings (2005:4).

You're implying, Duchamp, upon seeing with his own two eyes that the art world was inhabited by "more than honest pawns and dutiful kings" didn't just give up playing the game as he often said he did, instead he played the game by its rules and on his terms.

Child-like.

Yes.

But I also want to point a few things out about play and games. If one searches for information on how adults play most of the examples given for play and adults are structured 'games', sport/fitness, or creative hobby-like activities and classes -play that conforms to rules or convention. There seems to be a focus more toward playing by the 'rules' than 'playing' by the rules when it comes to adult play.

Are there never exceptions?

The exception might be in sex clubs raising its own question of why only in this situation is 'pretend play'acceptable?

Well

That is not where I am going with this, Mel.

I understand, you want to talk about rules.

Artists might be another exception.
They always like to imagine themselves as unbound by rules.

They're not?

Nope.

Like all games, there are plenty of rules to be followed if you want to win.

Didn't you write about all this earlier?

Don't take this as all negative. Play contributes to human development and it comes in a variety of forms. Children play differently than adults, but rules are involved in both. Rules provide a structure to the game being played as well as how the playing will proceed.

I guess I should go back and re-read Chapter 2 ...

The fun begins when the players know the rules and can begin bending them to prolong the game.

In a game like chess the rules determine not only how the pieces might be moved by the player but also when the game will finally, eventually, end.

Check-mate!

And with that she lays back down on the futon, curling on her side with her back towards me she pulls the blue blanket from the back of the sofa onto her and up over her head.

We never did get to Bowie and there is still much more to be said about playing games and personas but these will have to wait until she is ready to have another conversation, or two.

I think it is safe to say this one is over for now.

How did it end?

Did she really checkmate me as usual?

Or was it a draw?

Or maybe, just maybe, this time, relevant to Duchamp and the art of games, she simply resigned?

Then again, that move would be highly doubtful, Melusine never resigns.

I guess I will just have to bide my time until I find her here again in this space ready to converse.

APPENDIX E FIGURES & SOURCES

Following the layout of this experimental text, the figures and sources below are in order of their appearance and as they appear in the text with page number to the right.

Figure 1:   Screenshot from: "Remembering David Bowie." Charlie Rose, PBS, 11 Jan. 2016.
https://youtu.be/IrHiO-gg_eM   **291**

Source: "Basquiat." Charlie Rose, PBS, 9 Aug. 1996. https://youtu.be/fK-u5vm4DzI   **296**

Figure 2:   Screenshot from: "Basquiat." Charlie Rose, PBS, 9 Aug. 1996. See: 42min 10 sec.   **297**

Source: Solomon, Deborah. (1997) Utopia Parkway: the Life and Work of Joseph Cornell. New York: **299**
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. pp. 135-136.

Figure 3:   "From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy / The Box in a Valise." YouTube, Staatliches Museum   **300**
Schwerin / Ludwigslust / Güstrow, 5 June 2014. https://youtu.be/zGobxRbN2QA

Source: Bowie, David. (1972) 'Moonage Daydream',*The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars.*   **303**
Album.

Source: Bowie, David. (1973) *Aladdin Sane.* Album.   **304**

Source: Bowie, David. (1971) 'Changes', *Hunky Dory.* Album.   **304**
Released as a single January 7, 1972 with the B-side 'Andy Warhol'

Figure 4:   Top: Molderings, Herbert. (2013) *Marcel Duchamp at the Age of 85: An Incunabulum of Conceptual Photography.*
Translated by John Brogden, with a text by Frederick Kiesler, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König.
Middle: Goodyear, Anne Collins and James W. McManus, editors. (2014) *AKA Marcel Duchamp: Meditations
on the Identities of an Artist.* Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press.
Bottom: Goodyear, Anne Collins, et al., (2009) *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture.*
Washington D.C. and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and
The MIT Press.   **306**