



Blomlaok

An Inquiry into Audio-visual Performance

Vilde Marie Føllvik Eskedal
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VILDE MARIE FØLLVIK ESKEDAL

THANKS TO

HELENE ILLERIS

TOM LID

LEE MICHAEL SHULTS

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Faculty of Fine Arts

Department of Visual and Performing Arts

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Prologue – thoughts on painting

Throughout my project, I have chosen to view a painting not as something decorative to be hung on a wall, but as a living practice – as an action or an event. The main focus is not the canvas itself, but the way that it is painted, the movement, and the dynamic. The encounter between the movement, flow, colours, and in the case of my project, the music, produces a total experience that should not be reduced to its individual elements.

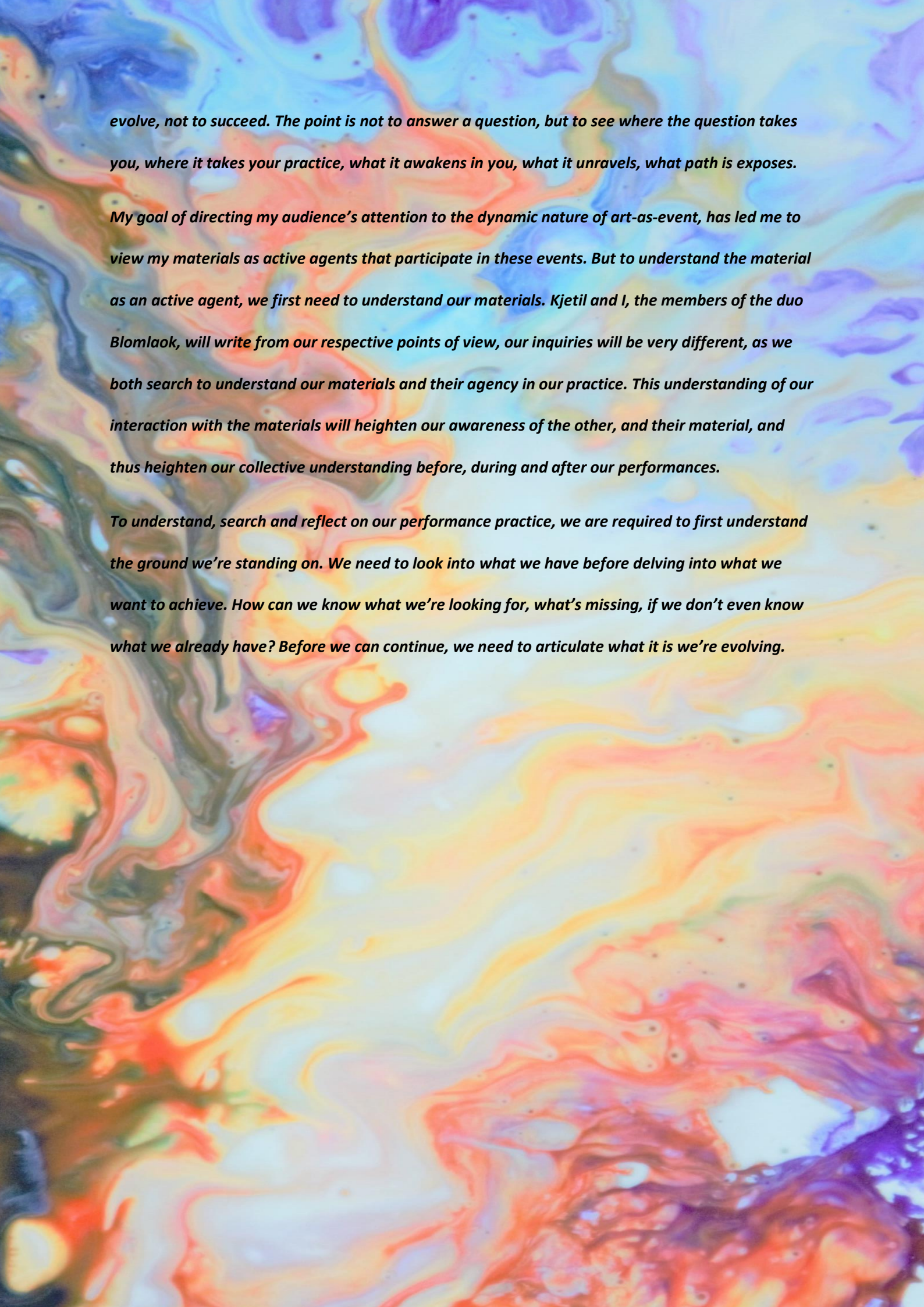
The method of artistic expression that I have chosen for this project, as well as my choice of materials, allows my paint to spill over the edges of the canvas. I've made this choice to encourage the viewer to move her focus off of the canvas, continuing the lines and the movement in her mind. The canvas is only one factor among many in a multimodal artistic event.

Painting on glass, however, only exaggerated the 'liveness' of the act of painting. Once I removed myself from the canvas, the expectation of it drying only to be hung on a wall drifted away. My combined method and materials invite associations with the organic. The paint is presented like live cultures on a glass petri-dish – an organic development to be examined under a microscope.

The goal of our inquiry is to find the framework and rules from which we'll be working, and not the performance in itself. This would force us out of our comfort zone, we're not just 'doing our thing' next to each other, we're working as a duo. Either communicate constantly or not at all.

Out of tune, both the guitar and the paint, as a tool to reach a level of true improvisation and avoid certain connotations towards specific genres. The guitar is deliberately untuned, and the paint mixed to be unpredictable. What can be accomplished by focusing less on the synaesthesia and more on the action of painting? Work physically more in rhythm with the music instead of striving to create an exact visualisation of it?

So what's the point? The point is not to orient our practice towards a final goal of static representation. The point is the movement itself, the art, the practice. The point is to grow, to



evolve, not to succeed. The point is not to answer a question, but to see where the question takes you, where it takes your practice, what it awakens in you, what it unravels, what path it exposes.

My goal of directing my audience's attention to the dynamic nature of art-as-event, has led me to view my materials as active agents that participate in these events. But to understand the material as an active agent, we first need to understand our materials. Kjetil and I, the members of the duo Blomlaok, will write from our respective points of view, our inquiries will be very different, as we both search to understand our materials and their agency in our practice. This understanding of our interaction with the materials will heighten our awareness of the other, and their material, and thus heighten our collective understanding before, during and after our performances.

To understand, search and reflect on our performance practice, we are required to first understand the ground we're standing on. We need to look into what we have before delving into what we want to achieve. How can we know what we're looking for, what's missing, if we don't even know what we already have? Before we can continue, we need to articulate what it is we're evolving.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My thesis is about Blomlaok, an audio-visual duo consisting of the musician, Kjetil Lund, and myself. We conduct performances where I paint and Kjetil plays the guitar. Throughout this past year we've been working towards a common set of 'rules', a conceptual 'framework', that can apply to both our mediums, or materials – my paints and his guitar – to further develop our performance practice. We will be delving into our own separate parts of our practice and will each be writing a separate thesis. However, we will conduct our final performance together as a duo.



Blomlaok promo-picture

My thesis will primarily deal with my perspective on this joint effort and will also connect to both research and studio work that I have conducted on my own. Kjetil will be writing his own thesis on his personal experiences and discoveries, from a musician's point of view, mainly focused on improvisation. As is natural in any interdisciplinary project, his experiences and conclusions are sure to vary from my own. To clarify what my fascination, my 'urgency' is, I'll explain below what my practice mostly revolves around.

I'm fascinated by the organic. Texture, flow, structures, growth, corrosion. Observing and documenting has always been something that I enjoy, especially in the studio. This manifests itself in many different forms: photography, both analogue and digital; film; journals and sketchbooks;

performative pieces that in themselves become journals; long term (chemical) experiments with logged entries etc.

What I do generally is called fluid painting. I use acrylic paints and thin them out with water so they're very runny. I like adding different chemicals like silicone oil, bleach, turpentine etc. to create more unpredictable reactions as I work with the materials. I use my hands and my breath mostly when painting, as I don't want any brushstrokes to show when the painting dries, and because I really enjoy the physical interaction with the material. I place the canvas, pate, glass – or whatever surface I'm working on – horizontally so the paint can flow slowly. Especially when adding things like bleach, the process in the paint takes a long time, so I might spend between six and ten hours just interacting, observing, and documenting the life of the paint. Instead of making something with the materials, I encourage them to work on their own. I love watching it unfold as I touch it, the different reactions are almost mirroring larger and smaller phenomenon in nature: like bacterial or fungal growth, or the shaping of a river delta. If I have the time to properly immerse myself, I'll bring a looking glass and just observe all the small details. I'll work my way around the painting, and when I'm back where I started, everything has changed. Slowly but surely.

I need the paint to be alive and flowing, and when it dries it's almost like it dies. I call these paintings fossils.

Another thing that affects my practice is my synaesthesia. It is a condition where a person experiences multisensory experiences while only stimulating on sense – some people, like me, can see



music. The last five years, I've devoted large parts of my studio time to finding ways to visualise it, and discovered that fluid painting was the medium most like my experiences. This was my main inquiry when I started working with Kjetil, and during my semester at York St. John as well.

Synaesthesia and how it has shaped my practice

Synaesthesia is a neurological phenomenon in which the stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to an automatic, involuntary experience in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. My experience of this condition is that whenever I hear certain sounds or music, whenever I smell something, taste something or there's a change in temperature, I see colours. Bright, waving colours in detailed colourscapes, like a second layer on top of reality.



Intense sound-, smell- or taste-experiences produce vivid images of floating colours that can momentarily seem more vibrant than 'reality'.

To paint you a picture, not literally, I'll explain to you how I experience my morning coffee:

The smell of coffee is white bubbles or cells emerging from a black background. They widen out and their edges transform into a bright orange that dulls out the black. Then I take a sip, and slow waves of dark, but semi-translucent blue overtake the previous image, though I know the orange and white cells are still there, behind the blue. The sound of me drinking and swallowing the coffee creates white streaks in the blue waves, but they're not really white, they are pure light. The second between

swallowing and putting the cup down is my favourite; I can both smell and taste the coffee, and the white and orange cells burst through the blue for a second before they slowly take over and the blue fades.

Sometimes I make coffee just to enjoy the colours of the smell.

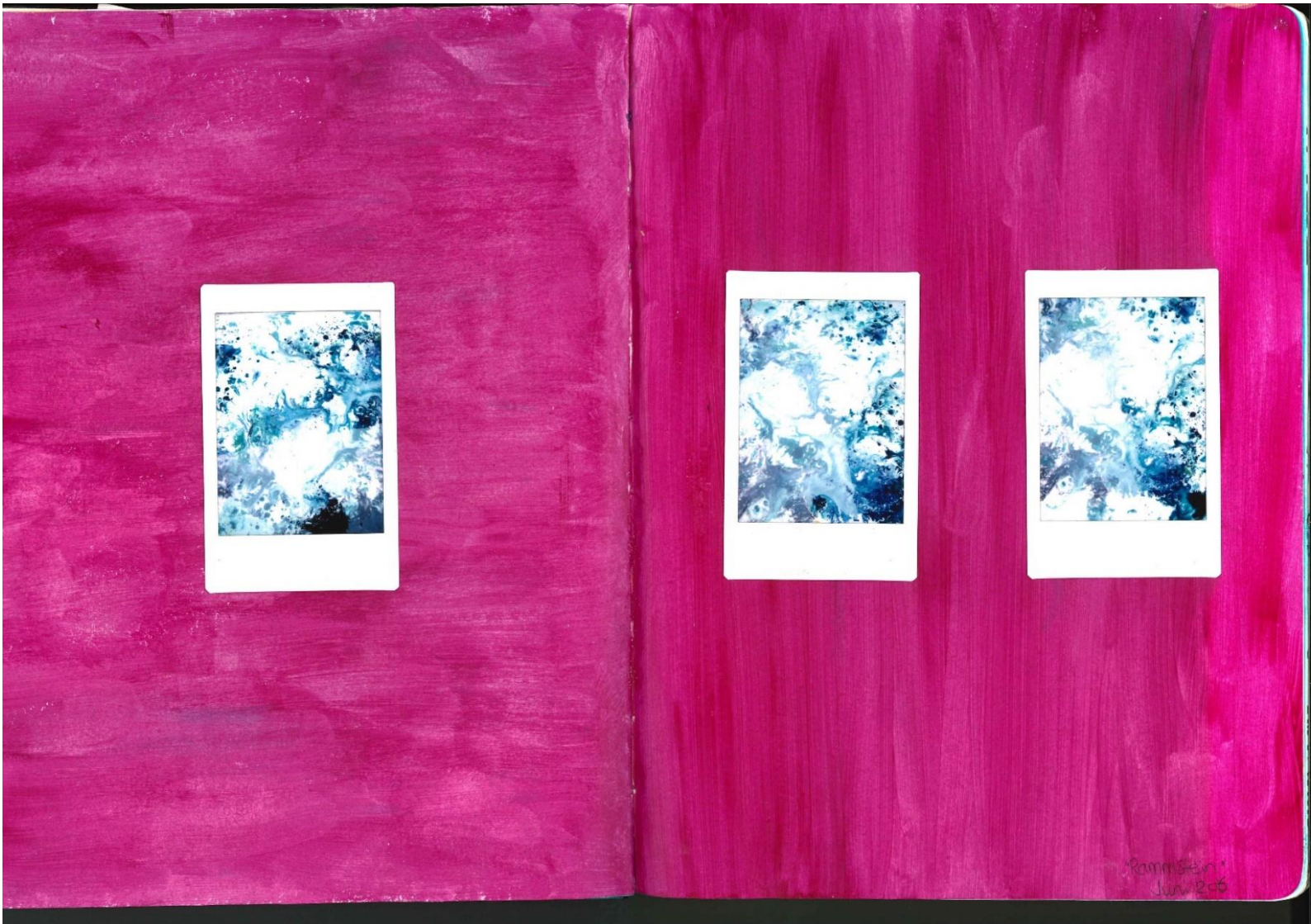
As a child, I thought this was completely normal, and that everyone had the same colourful experiences that I did. I remember watching Pocahontas, and that I loved the song *Colours of the wind*, because in my mind it gave me a sort of confirmation that other people also could see colours the way I do. Of course, no one understood what I was talking about whenever I would say something like: «This apple tastes really pink! ». It wasn't until one of my friends took me aside one day and told me to stop talking about colours so much that I understood I was different. She said people thought I was weird. I remember feeling surprised, but also sad for everyone who missed out on so much colour and brightness.

After that I kept quiet about it for many years, and just enjoyed my experiences in silence.

This seems to be the story of many synesthetes. We are surprised to hear that others do not perceive the world the way we do. Even though we can recall having these multisensory experiences for as long as we can remember, any mention of them at an early age often ends in ridicule and disbelief. I've heard similar stories from nearly all the synesthetes I've talked to and such experiences are also mentioned in several studies. (Cytowich, 1995, p. 2)

So, I stopped mentioning the synaesthesia and started writing journals. I would try to describe with words the colours of my day, or specific experiences. It's easier for me to remember situations through the synaesthesia rather than through 'normal' descriptions. Over the years I went from descriptions to streams of consciousness and further experimenting with the different ways to best get my experiences down on paper. I started drawing and painting the days in different colours and shapes.

This turned into sketchbooks full of colours, but it wasn't until I started actively exploring different painting techniques that I cracked the code on how to best visualize my synaesthesia. My journals went from actual journals to stacks of canvases. These journals combined with the documentation of my experiments -photography and film- built the foundation for my practice today.



Scanned pages from one of my journals. The smell of the sun on the asphalt outside was bright pink, but the music I listened to was pale blue.

Synaesthesia has been known to medicine for almost three hundred years. After interest peaked between 1860 and 1930 only to recede again, it was almost forgotten and remained unexplained. Psychological theory was mainly focused on associations from early childhood. Because of the variation in the different types of synaesthesia, and the difficulty of proving anything, synesthetes were mostly dismissed as just being poetic. (Cytowic, 1995, p. 7)

When interest was highest, the synesthetic phenomena had intrigued an art movement that explored sensory fusion. Concerts featuring light projections and sometimes odour became very popular. Often, they featured colour organs or keyboards that controlled coloured lights as well as musical notes. A Russian composer, Alexander Scriabin, wanted to express his synaesthesia in his 1910 symphony Prometheus, the poem of fire. It included, as well as orchestra, piano, organ and choir, a mute keyboard. A Clavier a lumieres, which controlled coloured lights and shapes. Vasily Kandinsky explored the relationship between sound and colour and also used musical terms to describe his paintings. He called them compositions and improvisations. (Cytowich, 1995, p. 4-6) Other artists like Paul Klee and Francis Kupka both worked in the early 1900s, in their own, separate practices, on categorizing what shapes and colours coincide with which musical notes. Kupka would paint the shapes and colours of symphonies as the notes came along, in lines left to right, like an alphabet. Arthur Dove devoted his whole practice to find the link between his synesthetic visualizations of sound and how to paint them. He did, amongst other things, a series of jazz paintings in which he started composing his paintings in a way that the most protruding sounds were the dominant figures in his paintings. (Brougher, Strick, Wiseman & Zilczer, 2005. p. 61-70) In contemporary art, I've found very little on synesthetic painting. Though there are many who use words like synaesthesia to describe Multisensory art pieces, they are not necessarily based upon, or taken from an actual synesthetic experience.

Synaesthesia as a tool

In my thesis, I will use my synaesthesia as a tool rather as my main object of inquiry. I will use it as a guide for my intuition, but, instead of working to visualize it specifically, I will use it to set a base of what to express at the same time as I let the materials work on their own, in their own - sometimes - unpredictable way. The randomness and unpredictability is something Blomlaok actively works with as a way to enter a new flow, to truly improvise. The materials as active agents have their own 'say' in directing the development of each performance.

Research interest statement

Kjetil and I have already created an audio-visual performance duo, but how do we go about establishing a practice through which we can work as artist-researchers? We needed to limit our search field. Our method has been to hold on to what Blomlaok was when we first started and develop from there: I will paint, and Kjetil will play. However, we wanted to narrow down what it was that made us special. What is *our thing*? What makes us *different* from any other painter/musician duo? As we would discuss and write logs after our performances, I began noticing the words that were repeated more than others: organic, dynamic, symbiosis. This lead us towards focusing *on what*

is happening between us as we perform. So, my research interests have been centred around the questions: how can we research this phenomenon, how can we develop it, and how are our materials implemented in this?

How can we develop a performative rhizomatic practice working with music and colours, space and audience? How can we explore the intra-action between ourselves and the materials we use?

What kind of art can be generated through this?

By rhizomatic practice I mean the philosophical concept used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, describing a structure without hierarchy, consisting of connecting branches constantly growing from the middle and outwards. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25) The rhizome consists of several dimensions, all connected: a living network of interconnected ideas. A rhizome can be cut at any given point, and a new rhizome will sprout from the broken lines. When a rhizome ruptures, it follows a line of flight, a sort of jump, but it can always be traced back through its connections. A rhizome is a three-dimensional map. I have found it useful to conceptualize all my discoveries, ideas, thoughts, reflections, data, as connected in this rhizomatic way. They are dimensions in the structure. As more connections are made between the dimensions, the rhizome grows.

My reference to 'intra-action' stems from philosopher and feminist, Karen Barad's, use of the term. Barad's focus on the elements of action that occur 'intra', or within, rather than 'inter', or between, emphasizes context and highlights the action-as-event rather than portraying action an intermediary between subject and object. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 14)

I've kept this research interest statement fairly open because this means that I can invite unpredictability to our process. The point of writing about Blomlaok is to see what can become of us if we have the chance work on this full-time. By exploring what happens between us as performers, we also explore our materials and how they affect us as well as the other person. This is a big part of the research I've conducted this year: the way I interact with the paint, my synesthetic experience of the music, what physically happens in the material. Also, how to do research through my practice has been one of my main inquiries this last year, and I've whole-heartedly tried to keep my practice at the core of this thesis without getting lost in the theory.

After a few months, I realised that the synesthetic experiences seemed to be less important as we strived to become as *equal* as possible in our performances. The need to accurately visualise the synaesthesia seemed to take up too much space, which threw off the balance.

Thesis structure

I want to clarify the way I've gone about writing this thesis. Because this is written about my artistic practice, my part of a performance duo, and my findings, there are times I felt it necessary to write more personally to give better insight in my process. The bits of text written in cursive are my personal experiences, descriptions, musings and logs. Some reflections are intertwined with the theory and methods, as I've viewed the writing as part of my artistic practice and not a separate endeavour. I wanted the text to be able to live its own life as it came to be.

In Chapter two I'll discuss the story of how Blomlaok came to be, how we decided on the name and how we started working together. I'll also explain how we work when we perform, and how this has changed. I'll also discuss two artist-duos that have inspired us with their performances.

In Chapter three I'll write about my methods throughout this project and my unique form of practice-based research. I'll mainly be referencing James Daichendt's book *Artist scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research* which I felt was the most inspiring book that I read on the subject. And I'll discuss *A/r/tography* as a method presented by Springgay, Irwin and Kind.

Then, in Chapter four, I'll show what theories and philosophies I've applied as I've worked in the studio, and through these how I discovered different things about my material. I'll be writing about the rhizome-theory as introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* and how it relates to the way I view my practice and research. After this, I'll introduce new materialism. This theory changed the way I interact with my materials and pushed Blomlaok and our performances in a new direction.

Then I'll move back to Blomlaok in Chapter five, starting with a reflection on the collaboration between human and material, on how new materialism changed our sense of immersion as we perform. After this, I'll go through how we've been working in the studio over the past year, important moments and how our practice has evolved. This chapter includes logs from my journals on different performances throughout the past year, and reflections. Discussing relevant theories within the context of these journals will help to show chronologically how the discovery of each individual theory influenced Blomlaok's practice. These bits of theory will be in light blue text-boxes to set them apart from the rest. Here, I'll also include direct links to videos of the performances in our online archive.

Chapter six consists of my reflections on the process so far, and connects back to the research interest statement.

In Chapter seven, I'll write about what we will show at Sørlandsutstillingen, our final exam and what we might do in the future. This is written as a journal, it consists of musings, ideas and concerns. As we do not yet know what will happen at our performance at Sørlandsutstillingen or our final exam, I hope it will still give some insight into the process of planning the performances and an indication of what to expect.

Pictures that are not credited are taken by me or are still-frames from the video I've taken to document my work and our performances. Because I've chosen to view this thesis as part of my art-practice, I wanted to include pictures and colour-boxes throughout the text. Parts of the text are highlighted in a light blue to follow a train of thought or theory, or reference without breaking the flow of the text.

Chapter 2: Blomlaok

In this chapter I will explain what Blomlaok is, how we work, the origin of the group's name, and the story of how everything started.

What is Blomlaok – background and how we work

Blomlaok is not a project created for this thesis, but something that existed before and will continue to exist after. Blomlaok is our artistic practice and it is a big part of what Kjetil and I do as artists. Here I will show our progress as we explore different possibilities for our practice. This has taken us all the way from performing in a literally freezing studio to opening Sørlandsutstillingen in Flekkefjord.



Blomlaok performance 30.10.2017

Our performances are built up of four elements: myself, Kjetil, painting, and sound. All of our performances are improvised, both the music and the painting. I use watered down acrylic paint on a flat surface, using my hands, with random amounts of added chemicals so I have little to no control over how the paint will react when mixed. Kjetils material is sound, and he untunes his guitar so he has no idea of how it will sound once he starts playing. With these elements clarified, what we *do* in our performances is finding a flow, immersing ourselves in our own and the other person's materials. The paint follows the music and the music follows the paint. We work with abstract expressions,

there are no figurative compositions being painted, and the music is more like soundscapes, avoiding any connotations with any specific musical genre.

At first, we only worked privately, but we realised that our work could not be represented as a painting on a wall and a sound-recording. This realisation is what made us start taking our work more seriously, as we realised we had something special that needed to get a chance to evolve. I follow the sound with my body, the way I pour the paint on the surface, with what colours I use, by splashing and pushing the paint around. Kjetil reads the painting as if it were a sheet of musical notes, only organic and alive, and plays the untuned guitar to follow my movements, the flow of the paint, the colours. My synaesthesia and how it makes me experience the music is a tool I utilize as much as Kjetil uses his musical ear to find a 'harmony' on the untuned instrument. I 'translate' the music, and he 'translates' the paint. This is the embodiment of the intra-action between ourselves and the materials. Intra-action, as a concept, captures the spontaneity and reactivity that Kjetil and I aim for in our performances. Our goal is to draw our viewers' attention to the total artistic event by blurring the lines between individual agents.

The dynamic that has evolved is a push-pull dynamic, which in essence means that we switch between pushing and pulling during the performance, between who's in 'power'. These switches can last seconds or minutes, or however long they need to take. We choose to follow or lead, but these decisions are subtle, almost subconscious. This does not necessarily mean that something has to happen all the time, sometimes we need to observe each other by not doing anything ourselves. Our performance ends when we agree that the flow is over. We lock eyes and give a subtle nod of the head, which is our cue to drop our materials. Sometimes one finishes before the other, but that in itself breaks the flow, and the performance is over. Usually, we can both feel when the end is close, and we're both prepared for it. Our performances have been timed to last anywhere between ten minutes to one and a half hours.

Through our performances, we want the audience to be drawn in by their curiosity, to be fascinated – we want them to feel what we feel. The audience and the space we perform in are also elements of our practice, but for the sake of narrowing down our search-field as we're working on this thesis, we have chosen to not include them as active participants. Of course they affect us as we work, but they have no direct power over how we or our materials will perform. We are not granting them agency over the way we are with our materials and our bodies.

What I've described here is what we've arrived at, through trial and error and massive amounts of work in the studio, and it wasn't always like this. It has taken time to develop our practice to what it is today, and I will explain where our journey started two years ago in the following section.

The beginning of Blomlaok

We were in Berlin. It was fairly cold, in the beginning of October, which is why all the flowers and vegetables stood out so much when we saw them on the street. We were on our way from the pub to a gallery, I can't recall which one, but I remember feeling excited. I welcomed the inspiration. I'd known Kjetil for about five weeks, but we'd already gotten together a few times to jam in the studio, me painting and him on the guitar. He was already working on improvisation, on how to play something without the connotations of any specific genre or artist, and I was working on visualising what I saw in his music from my synesthetic point of view. I'd started to focus more on my body and the 'story' I told as I painted, and less on producing an accurate 'illustration' of the music. With this in mind, imagine the two of us, a couple of metres behind the rest of the group, slightly buzzed and stopping for a second to look at the strange vegetables outside the small shop.

"Look at this onion," He said, and pointed. "It looks super unappetizing."

"Because it's not for eating," I laughed. "It's a bulb for planting! But I'm sure the flowers will be pretty."

The bulbs did look strange though, they had a bright orange hue to them.

"Aha..."

Now, it's important to mention that our accents are very different. Where I would say Blomst for flower, Kjetil will say Blom; where I would say Løk for bulb/onion, he will say Laok. I've made fun of his accent a lot, but I think it's absolutely beautiful – one of the most poetic accents in Norway if you ask me. But I could not help but laugh at the way he said flower-onion. At first, he said flower the same way that I do, but then he said it the way he usually does. And then we looked at each other and knew that this was the name of our artistic duo.

"Blom-laok. Blom-laok. Blom-laok."

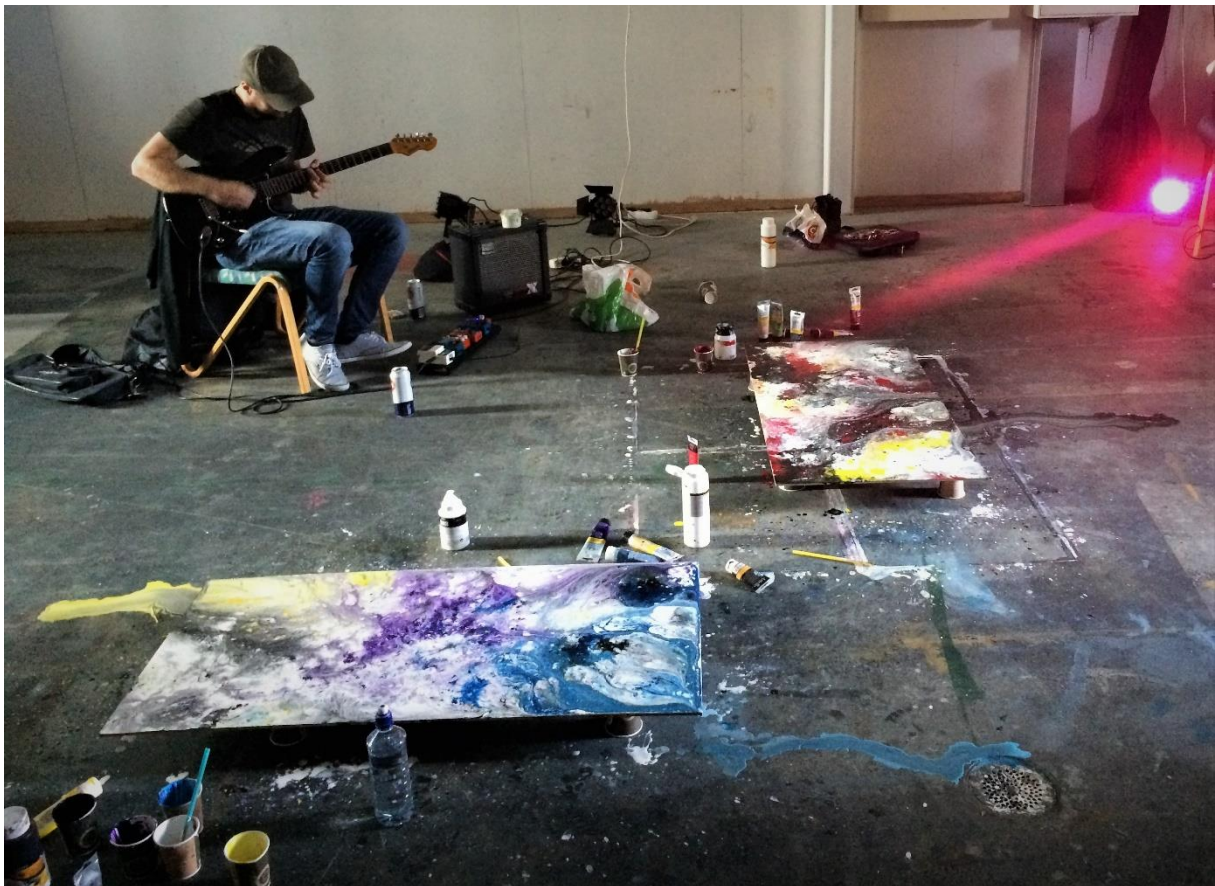
"Blomlaok."

As we walked on to catch up with the rest of the group, we said it out loud as if to test the word, to taste it, and each time we said it, it became more and more familiar. We had absolutely no doubts that this was perfect.

Our first jam

It was early september 2016, and we'd just finished up the day after a lecture. I'd found some decent sized plywood boards that I was prepping to paint when Kjetil came over to me, his guitar on his back. In our first week of the course we were asked to do a presentation on our 'urgency', on what we were

passionate about, and I did my presentation on how I'm working on visualizing my synesthetic experience of music (I'd made a film of the flowing paint and paired it with the music it was supposed to represent). Kjetil did his presentation on improvisation on the electric guitar, and I loved what he played – a dark, gloomy soundscape with long-drawn tones that echoed between the concrete floor and the steel walls. This was what sparked the idea of us jamming together that afternoon. He'd play something, try to work with the acoustics in the workshop-hall, and I'd paint his music. There was just something about the acoustics, the sound bouncing off the concrete walls, that had an electric purple hue. After this painting was finished, we had a beer and decided to open the doors and let the sunshine in. Kjetil started playing again, darker than before, and I made another painting to show him the red explosions that I saw. We had so much fun that we ended up doing two pieces instead of one, and when we were done for the day we immediately started planning the next time we could meet and do it again.



Our first jam, 10.09.2016

The Duo

Over the months we worked together, we started to discuss why this was so important to us. Fun isn't the right word, passion maybe. We were driven, inspired, and almost aggressive. This audio-visual duo became our main focus. It was something artistic that we did only for ourselves. After each

session we would sit down and discuss what we liked and didn't like, what worked and what didn't. After a while, our discussions became more and more detailed. We started looking at other artists, performers and duos for inspiration.

Ekblad & Bech

Ida Ekblad and Nils Bech are two contemporary Norwegian artists who work together as a duo from time to time. I first discovered Ekblad when I was writing my BA thesis, and fell in love with her work. She works as a visual artist with her base in material oriented expressionism with performative elements. Her practice is mostly process based, with visible references to popular culture, poetry, music, and things she stumbles upon on the internet. Because of the great variation in her works, they are difficult to place within a specific -ism or discipline. (Astrup Fearnley Museet, 20xx)

Ekblad and Bech first met in when they were both in their early twenties, and have stayed close friends ever since. Nils Bech works as a musician and has performed at almost every exhibition held by Ekblad, where he sings, plays music or they do performances together. (Gartenfield, 2009) They have stated that the way they work together always has been on the basis of common interests, or things that fascinate them and resonate with both of their artistic practices, and their friendship only made it 'only natural'. (Hannah, 2014)

Bech and Ekblad's description of their dynamic is similar to what I experience with Blomlaok. The reason we started working together in the first place was because of our friendship and our common curiosity as to what we could discover in the meeting between our respective practices. The obvious similarities are our roles and our genders, she's a visual artist as am I, while he's a musician, like Kjetil. Their performances are mostly improvised, and they explore their 'materials' together. At the 26th of August 2010, on the vernissage of Ekblad's exhibition in Stockholm, they held a performance where she used an iron rod to strike her sculptures while Bech sang opera and pushed an iron rod of his own across the floor. (Smith, 2010) It seems to me like they were pushing the materials to see how much they could endure, and how big of a contrast they could make between Bechs beautiful singing and the clashing of metal against metal. The way I see it, their exploration of their materials parallels the way we are working, but instead of looking for contrasts (like in this particular performance) we are searching for a flow. While their work in itself is very different from ours, I wanted to focus on the similarities in the nature of our duos instead of the specific pieces of art.

Gilje & Bennet

Another artist duo I would like to mention is H. C. Gilje and Justin Bennet, and their performance MIKRO that they performed at PUNKT-festivalen in Kristiansand in 2016. It is a site-specific, improvised performance consisting of soundscapes created by Bennet and visuals by Gilje. This performance was based on different materials the artists collected from the site, which were

explored through a microscope by Gilje and fed into a video loop of still images, focusing on the different textures. Simultaneously, Bennet explored the materials through several microphones, and through this, he built up a soundscape that worked dynamically with the images. (Kristiansand Kunsthall, 2016)

They use similar techniques in the way they sample, manipulate and enhance different textures and qualities in the materials and objects – the microscopes and projectors and the amplifying microphones, ultrasonic detectors and feedback loops, both the audio and the visual. (Dark Ecology, 2016) Similarly to Blomlaok, they worked with the same set of ‘rules’, meaning the same ground of exploration through their separate mediums. As we work with the same rules/principles to enhance the instability and unpredictability, they worked with same pieces of material in their own way.

With this example, in contrast to the previous (Ekblad & Bech) I want to look at the nature of their dynamic as they perform rather than the basis of their cooperation as artists. Their improvisation was based on the objects and materials they had gathered, and through the performance they fall in and out of rhythm as the audio or the visuals dominate the pace. Here, the focus is on the qualities of the objects and how they can be enhanced, not necessarily the artists body in the meeting with the objects.

As we looked for opportunities to combine our performances and installations, we thought about both the site-specific qualities that different arenas might bring to our work and how we might best record the qualities of each individual performance. We kept log books and wrote down our thoughts and ideas, and it was only natural that we would both write our master theses on Blomlaok. We discussed whether we should write it together or not, but agreed that we would each write from our own point of view. Our sources of inspiration and our research methods are very different, although we have a few overlaps.

Blomlaok is turning out to be more and more like a lifetime project, but this version of it has turned out to be more interesting than I first thought. When we worked earlier, before we officially started on our master project, we couldn’t quite seem to put into words what made us special, what our goal was. Sometimes we felt like we were working on our own things and just happened to be in the same room – which is another interesting angle – but we decided we wanted to focus more on the dynamic between the two of us.

[Blomlaok – an ongoing rhizomatic practice](#)

To invite chaos and unpredictability into our practice, we follow the lines of flight. As a rhizome constantly grows, some lines of the rhizome will burst down a line of flight, causing a rupture. A rhizome can be cut or broken, but new lines will sprout from the ruptured lines. (Deleuze & Guattari,

1987, P. 30) These lines are our ideas, knowledge and intuition, whichever direction they may go. This rupture the rhizome and new ideas, sources of inspiration, and new knowledge will sprout from the ruptures. If we follow these lines, we are sure to uncover something new. It is scary and has the potential to fail, but it is part of the way we grow and evolve as artists. We are in state of becoming. We will never be finished, just different.

When we discuss Blomlaok we will sometimes talk over each other, spew out ideas, and then we'll try the one that scares us the most. If it makes your heart race – do it. These are some of the lines of flight we will follow, to ensure our continued growth, *our becoming*, as artists.

Let go of control.

Let go of control.

Let go.

Letting go of my urge to control everything was a big part of learning to understand the theory of the rhizome. If I want to control everything I'll subconsciously rank things in a hierarchy, and try to categorize different things (techniques, art works, literature, etc) in a structure, and then from that ranking I'll decide what is important enough to pursue further. However, if I see my entire practice as something flat, a web where nothing is more important than anything else, I can follow my intuition and discover significantly more of the 'happy accidents' that lead me to pursue this kind of art in the first place. Nothing is more *important*, just *more interesting at that specific time*, until I double back and follow the other directions that are put on hold.

A very significant discovery for me in this process so far has been the *push-pull dynamic* that came about after a few months. This dynamic creates a level of equality between Kjetil and me, where we can both *take control* or *follow* the other. The subtle shifts between who is steering and who is following took us months just to put into words, and we're still working on it. In the beginning, I was more of a follower as I was working on visualising the music from a synesthetic point of view. I had no way of steering Kjetil and the way that he played before our dynamic changed. A new form of communication between us was established when Kjetil let the paint lead the music and not just the other way around. This change led us down a path of more unpredictability and instability – which is exactly what we wanted. There's a reason we chose to write our theses on Blomlaok, and that reason is because we wanted to develop. We wanted to see if we could find a new dynamic, and to see what would happen if we devoted a year working on this project full time. I'm very curious to see what direction it will take over the next few years. Especially now that we will be opening

Sørlandsutstillingen in Flekkefjord, there will be more opportunities for us to perform, and we will continue to explore different variations of what we've discovered here.

I applied to participate at Sørlandsutstillingen as a solo artist, hoping to do a performance painting. One of the reasons I applied was to have another motivation to evolve my practice outside of the university. I managed to get Kjetil in as well, and changed the application to a duo instead when they showed interest in having us there. The exhibition is in three parts, each in a different location. The first was Mennesket (Human) in Arendal in March, the second, Naturen (Nature), in Flekkefjord in May. The third part, Materialet & Sanselighet (The Material & The Senses), is in Skien in September.

We were asked to open part two of the exhibition in Flekkefjord with a performance, which we are very excited about. (The way this project has evolved, it would almost make more sense to perform at part three rather than part two. But when we applied we had not yet developed to what we are now, with our focus on the material as partners.)

Chapter 3: Methods – Practice-based Research and A/r/tography

Providing an academic description of a project that prioritizes art-as-event, and attempts to avoid rigid or hierarchical applications of theory, is a unique challenge. Ironically, in the earlier phases of my work, it was tempting to spend a large amount of my time writing about the importance of not allowing writing to replace studio work. However, once I got back in the studio, having reflected through writing what I was searching for, I felt much more goal-oriented and motivated. Being able to articulate what I'm doing and why, has started to influence what I do physically in the studio. Because of this, I want to keep writing as thoroughly in my journals as I have while working on this thesis.

«Every artist does research as she works, as she tries to find the right material, the right subject, as she looks for information and techniques to use in her studio or atelier, or when she encounters something or begins anew in the course of her work. » (Borgdorff, 2010, p. 1)

This process has been long and difficult to put into words. I've been researching my own practice, through my practice, without knowing what exactly I was looking for. I decided to go about this inductively: to start working and see what reveals itself. Making art is a process of reflecting, testing, re-thinking, creating, writing. Through this, an artistic practice might very well generate research-knowledge as well as practical knowledge and artwork – but it is not an easy task to put an artistic practice in a traditional research structure. Very few artists approach their studio with a specific research question or hypothesis, start testing the hypothesis and then write a conclusion. The data generated through practice can be very subjective and difficult to reproduce under different circumstances. I agree with professor of art history, G. James Daichendt, that the danger in forcing artists/art students to position themselves in a very specific research context is that it can remove them from the actual art-making. It can take away studio time to read and write about research theory that is practically irrelevant to the practice or is very difficult to apply. Ironically, I've let myself get so absorbed in the theories I've found that I went months without doing any studio work. While writing about how much I disagree with this exact approach!

Rather than aiming towards making a ground-breaking contribution to formal knowledge, the primary goal of my thesis is to make explicit the process of discovery and growth that I have undergone during my work in Blomlaok. However, I believe my research can also contribute to an expanded pool of knowledge for artistic research. My paintings might not necessarily show what I've read about the Rayleigh-Taylor instability for example, or the research I've done on synaesthesia, but it is certainly an important influence on my practice and how I reflect upon my work. Writing this

thesis has been another way for me to become more aware of the lines I draw between different themes and how I link things together. Learning this about myself has made me more conscious of these connections and how they contribute directly to my studio practice and vice versa. The parallel processes of writing and producing art have mutually informed each other, and allowed me to become increasingly self-aware throughout my entire artistic process.

Writing should be used as a tool to reflect upon and deepen the understanding of one's practice, not as a chore that's completely unrelated to the studio work. For me as an artist-researcher, writing is a tool for reflection as much as a way of making the knowledge



generated explicit, not just something to justify what you're doing in the studio.

In this chapter, I will be engaging the book *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research* by G. James Daichendt and the article *A/r/tography as Living Inquiry Through Art and Text* by Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin and Sylvia Wilson Kind. I've chosen these two texts as they both present methods of how to do research through your own artistic practice, and has lead me to argue how I as an artist can benefit from viewing my practice as a form of research. To discover, write, reflect, and create is to generate different forms of knowledge which can be presented in a text, such as this thesis. I believe that the knowledge generated through action is valuable, and I need to present my discoveries to be able to contribute to expanding the field in which I'm inquiring into.

Practice-based research

Practice-based research and arts-based research are some of the terms used to describe the methods where the production of art and research come together. Other terms used are for example practice-led research and research-through-practice. Henk Borgdorff writes that, in artistic research,

the practice of creating and performing is central to the process of research. Not only is the significance derived from the insights and contributions to the discourse on art, but also from the works of art and experiences that result from this process. (Borgdorff, 2010, p. 46) In practice-based research, the art practice is the objective and not the object of study.

I'll mainly be using G. James Daichendt's book *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research* as my main source when writing about practice-based research. I found it truly inspiring, and it has helped me position myself and my artistic practice within a research context. G. James Daichendt is an art critic and journalist, and chief editor of the academic journal *Visual Inquiry: Learning and Teaching Art*. He is currently a professor of art history at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. (PLNU, 2018) The book *Artist Scholar* consists of a series of essays that argue for better writing for art students in the pursuit of improving as artists, and by situating art practice in a university setting it works as an invitation to artist scholars to push their work further.

“Rather than understanding art as a cultural phenomenon and aesthetic product, I invite you to see art production as a type of inquiry, reflection, interpretation, commentary, and thinking process that has transformed the way we understand the world and ourselves.”
(Daichendt, G. J. 2012, p. 5)

Much of Daichendt's message throughout his book is more about inquiry and understanding rather than research in a formal sense, as an artist understands their subject because they ponder, rethink and challenge traditional ways of thinking. “This challenge is often where the genius is in art making and where new insight or knowledge is gained.” (Daichendt, G. J. 2012, p. 14) The accumulation of knowledge in the studio can come in small pieces or huge leaps, and it is a process that potentially never ends as artists continue to work throughout their life.

Practice-based research, or arts-based research, is not like other research methods, and this difference needs to be embraced! I've been trying to establish a practice where I write and reflect as I work, and expand my horizon with different theories and ways of thinking. Writing and research can be used to improve art practices, as long as it does not replace the art. Daichendt uses the word 'scholarship' as a descriptor of the inquiries, reflections, ways of thinking and interpretations that take place as the artist works with their different subjects. (Daichendt, 2012, p. 21) It must also be said that artists can (of course) conduct research *about* their work rather than *through* it or in other subjects related to their practice or without this research being based on what they're doing in the studio.

Often, I feel that it is easier to write in a more artistic way when I'm presenting my ideas and thoughts in the form of text. A well written essay can sometimes better convey a complex idea than a

formal research study, especially if the person presenting that idea is an artist researcher and not a traditional researcher. According to Daichendt, the danger of travelling too far into academia is forgetting about the art practice in itself (Daichendt, 2012, p. 2-5) – about the physical work, the smell and feel of the material, and the tacit embodied knowledge that is generated in the studio. In addition to studying to get a degree, there is an added expectation for artists to validate their work as a form of research or to become researchers.

A major obstacle in art education has been the tendency to adopt scientific models by arts-researchers and teachers' response to academic demands put on arts institutions. The need to satisfy the institutions' research agenda and produce something measurable and testable can suffocate the production of art. Students are forced to create artwork based on theory rather than finding theory related to, or through, their practice. A written paper is expected to accompany the work of art to explain, document or defend different aspects of the research that is undertaken or the process of thought that went into the piece.

Daichendt writes about times when he's seen arts-based research presentations and started to wonder 'where's the art?' – while the methods and findings are interesting, it can easily seem like artists can get lost beneath the layers of theory. (Daichendt, 2012, p.2) The proper role of theory suggested in the book, is that reflective writing works as a form of self-critique. Writing down thoughts and experiences, or 'thinking through words', will ultimately reward the artistic process and the art product.

Daichendt writes that research generally is seen as a type of investigation that involves collecting information which leads to the eventual discovery of new or revised knowledge. "It involves asking questions, discovering, interpreting, and organizing data. A description that sounds a lot like art making." (Daichendt, 2012, p. 11) He further writes that the scientific method is a set of techniques that are used in the collection of evidence that can be measured or observed. Typically, there is a problem statement, followed by a hypothesis, a testing of the hypothesis and lastly the results.

The inductive method is based on observations which we use to formulate theories and laws about the world. This seems to be the easiest method to apply to an artistic practice or arts-based research as the artist-researcher can work in their studio and observe and collect data through *doing*, and *then* formulate theories. (Daichendt, 2012, p. 11) With a subject such as art, it's not always easy to know what you're really looking for before you're halfway through the process and have enough data to take a step back and see the bigger picture. This is certainly the case for Kjetil and me, as we struggled to articulate what our 'goal' was other than establishing a practice. (*What kind of practice? We can't know until we know!*)

“Artists refer to their work as research but when asked about their data, they often provide a list of secondary sources, texts from a number of disciplines, and a host of artists and concepts. It is often a jumble of influences that may vary widely and may not make much sense to an outsider.” (Daichendt, 2012, p.12)

This particular quote resonated with me deeply. *Yes, that’s exactly how I often end up during the course of my practice!* It’s hard to explain to anyone who has not been present during the thought process, and even then it’s difficult to put into words. Also, the difference between collecting inspiration and references can be totally different from the process of collecting texts, videos or other forms of data that can teach me more about a specific material or medium. The feeling that I need to defend my practice rather than presenting it is a self-sabotaging pit. But once I accepted that my process is rhizomatic rather than jumbled, it made it easier not only to write and reflect on my work, but also easier to present it in a way that satisfies me. I feel like it is easier to do the artwork justice. As long as I let the text live and flow as I do with the paint, it will all come together in the end.

In chapter one of his book, Daichendt presents three types of research that are relevant for the artist: pure research (where the researcher wants to learn something by studying a subject, not necessarily with a structured plan), original research (where the artist is searching for information no-one has discovered before), and secondary research (where the researcher compares and discusses findings from other studies which possibly can result in new insight as well as a clearer understanding of the material). (Daichendt, 2012, p.11)

I would say that the different parts of this project fall under all the different types of research. It all started with pure research, just yearning to know more about the material without any specific goal of an outcome other than more knowledge; then entered into the category of original research when Kjetil and I decided to write our thesis on Blomlaok, searching for a specific way to form our practice and create something new, also with a foot on the academic side. And then, as part of the original research, I perform secondary research while looking for information, theory, methods and inspiration to back up and improve my own work. I need to recognise what I’m doing as an artist to be able to see what kind of knowledge I’m producing, and, because I’ve been working inductively, it’s been hard to tell until nearly the end of the year what I’ve actually accomplished.

[A/r/tography](#)

A(artist)/ r(researcher)/ t(teacher)ography

The other method I’m using is a/r/tography, and I’ll mainly be referring to the article *A/r/tography as Living Inquiry Through Art and Text* by Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin and Sylvia Wilson Kind.

All three of them are from Canada. Springgay is an associate professor at the University of Toronto, and her research interests are, among other things, new materialism and contemporary art. (Stephanie Springgay/about, 2015) Irwin is an artist and professor at UBC (University of British Columbia) and is the current President of International Society for Education Through Art. (UBC, n.d) Both Irwin and Springgay have also published a book on this subject, *Being with A/r/tography* (2007), consisting of a series of essays. Kind holds a PhD from UBC and works as an artist as well as an educator at Capilano University. (Capilano University, n.d.)

Like Daichendt, they argue that if arts-based research is to be taken seriously as an emerging field within research, it needs to be seen as a methodology in its own right and not as an extension of qualitative research. This means moving away from the existing criteria applied to qualitative research and rather than viewing the interdisciplinarity as a patchwork of methodologies and disciplines, seeing it as “a loss, a shift, or a rupture where in absence, new courses of action unfold.” (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 898) This rhizomatic way of looking at arts-based research seems to correspond very well with the way I perform my own research and studio work. It is a research methodology that entangles and grows, folds over and expands, in a constant flow, very much like Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7-21) In the article, they propose an understanding of arts-based research through six renderings of a/r/tography. They are as follows: contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess.

What I've taken from this is the notion that my artistic practice is never-ending, it is a life-time project that will keep on evolving. I'm not sure I want to completely immerse myself in these renderings of a/r/tography, but I do agree with the principle that if arts-based research is to be taken seriously, there needs to be a framework or a manifest that can be followed, at least to get recognition from the institutions. *A/r/tography* seems more like a philosophy to me, a way of life as they themselves say, than a research method, but I can recognize the lifestyle as a method on its own.

What resonates with me the most are the contiguity, living inquiry and excess. Contiguity is an important principle in artistic practice, as the artist, the artistic process, and the artwork are not separate, but merged as one. If the process (of becoming) is what's important to me (read: new materialism, the rhizome) then my practice will only be alive as it is *becoming*. Living practice as a lifestyle is important as a shift, a changed point of view, to realize that I am never done researching, making, changing, discovering, finding out. This needs to be documented, reflected upon, and taken into account as it changes me as a person both intellectually and emotionally. Embracing the living

process *as* my process has given me a new outlook on what it means to be an artist-researcher. Lastly, excess, as I understand it, means that we also need to acknowledge and reflect upon our personal experiences during this process, how we change and grow, and how our subjectivity can open up to great discoveries as long as we recognise it for what it is. My personal experience of the way coffee smells, of how the paint flows over my hand, is what eventually lead me here, writing my thesis. It is personal and it is subjective, but I'm making it visible through writing and presentation of findings and reflections through my art.

Contiguity

A/r/tography is the merging of art and graphy, image and words. The coupling of the two is important when conceiving a methodology that consists of both visual and written process and products as part of the research. This doubling of text and the visual is not meant to keep the two separate or distinct from each other, it is "in the contiguous and the movement *between* art and graphy that research becomes a lived endeavour." (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 900) Contiguity is accentuated through our understanding of the roles of artist/researcher/teacher. With the intention of drawing attention to these roles, we're also seeing their interrelatedness, the spaces *in between* these roles and the activities inherent in playing these roles. We need to be aware of what unfolds *between* the process and the product, the artwork and the text, the teacher and the student, the artist and the audience. Artists, researchers and teachers that are living in inquiry are constantly in a process of not-knowing, searching for answers, meaning and knowledge. (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 900-902)

Living inquiry

Visual, written and performative processes are executed as a living practice of art-making, researching and teaching. It is an embodied encounter, that comes to show as *visual and textual experiences*, rather than *visual and textual representations*. By living inquiry, we acknowledge that answers to complex questions are not simple and linear, but may manifest themselves as embodied, emotional, intuitive and spiritual ways of knowing. (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 902)

"A/r/tography is a living practice; a life writing, life creating experience into the personal, political, and professional aspects of one's life." (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 903)

Excess

To write beyond simply expressing yourself is writing to become, to write from within the body is writing of excess: writing without necessarily trying to insert facts or figures, but to create an opening where regulation and control vanishes. Excess becomes a movement towards *anything*, a momentum in constant state of change. (Springgay, Irwin & Kind. 2005, p. 907-908)

The way I've applied these methods is by working in the studio first, taking notes, documenting and reflecting. Then I review these notes and reflections alongside the artwork and pick out words or expressions that I use to search for literature, for inspiration on how to write, perform and position myself. While reading and taking notes, I've kept on working in the studio, letting the things I read that I find useful bleed into the physical work. This leads to new reflections and new discoveries, that results in both references in literature and pieces of art. This circle has been going continuously since the start, and all the while I've been writing reflective journals to try and make sense of the connections and directions our practice has taken. There have been jumps and leaps along the way, which I will describe in greater detail in Chapter five. There, I will also present different bits of theory and literature as it was discovered and how it's connected to our studio work.

I've been writing to express myself and to understand myself and my practice. This writing of excess is what has shaped this thesis. Because I consider my documentation as part of my artistic practice (journals, photos, video, samples) I've chosen to include it here – pieces of text from my journals, unedited, as well as pictures and still-frames from videos. The pictures included are lines connecting this written piece to the studio-work, connecting it to the fossils, the experiments and performances that also shaped this process and the thesis. These are lines in the rhizome.

Chapter 4: Theories – The rhizome and new materialism

In this chapter I'll present the theory utilised in this project and thesis. I'll start with the rhizome, which is my main theory and connects everything I've done. Second, I'll introduce new materialism, which changed the way I view the interaction/intra-action between human and material as we perform.

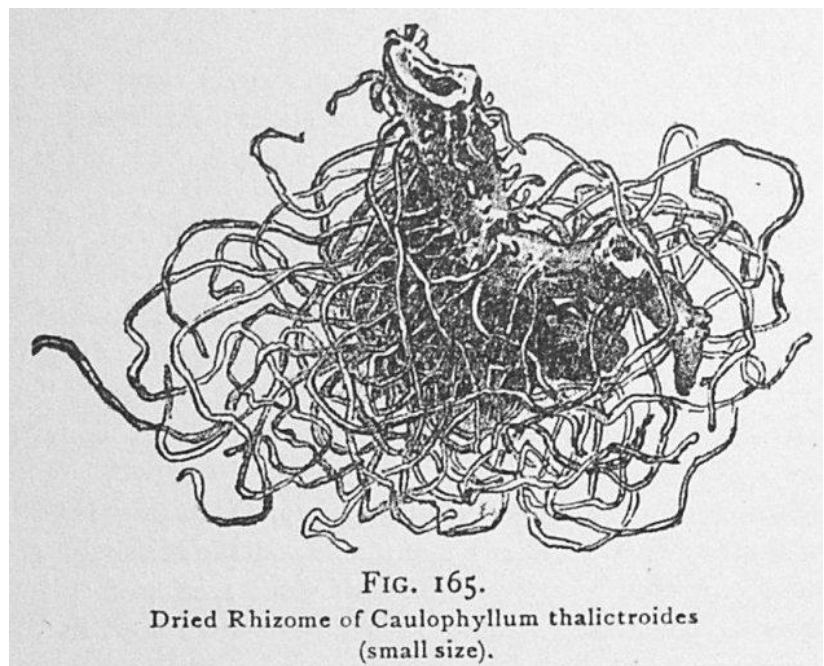
Rhizome

In this thesis, I'll be using post-structural theory, or more exactly Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the rhizome.

In biology, a rhizome is a subterranean stem, commonly positioned horizontally, that produces a network of roots and potentially sends up shoots from any given point of the root system.

(Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.) It differs from trees and roots in that any point of a rhizome can be connected, and if points break off, a new rhizome can spring from it or start anew. Deleuze and Guattari write about the rhizome in their book *A thousand plateaus*. The book itself is, according to

them, a rhizome consisting of different plateaus connected by strings of words. Here, a rhizome is a non-hierarchical, organisational structure that provides different entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. It assumes diverse forms. Some examples are an ant colony, rat burrows, the city of Amsterdam, the internet, mapping of sexual encounters and other social structures.



Lloyd & Lloyd, 1884. Illustration of a Dried rhizome.

A quick summary of this theory: a rhizome is a non-hierarchical structure stretching over several dimensions, which increase simultaneously as the number of connections to the different dimensions. The rhizome is not reducible to the One or to the multiple, and is composed of dimensions, directions of motion rather than units. It has no subject or object, but consists of linear multiplicities; it has no beginning or end, but always a middle. It's between things, interbeing, intermezzo. It's difficult to see things from the middle, it's a completely different way of looking. We usually view things from below or above, from left or right, but here we are supposed to travel through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing. "Between things does not

designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P. 25) A rhizome is always ‘becoming’ rather than just ‘being’.

Deleuze and Guattari

Gilles Deleuze was a philosopher and Félix Guattari was a psychiatrist. They were both French, and became friends in the 60’s. Triggered by the students’ and factory workers’ dawning revolution in France in 1968, Deleuze discovered Guattari’s work, and wrote an essay on his book “Machine and structure”. He sent this directly to Guattari, and they started a routine of Deleuze writing texts, and without editing sending them to Guattari who would ‘polish’ them. (Thornton, 2018) They would meet every Tuesday to discuss and dissect the texts, and in this way collaborated to write, among other things, the book *A thousand plateaus* of which I’ll be writing about the introductory chapter, where they describe the idea of the rhizome.

In my practice

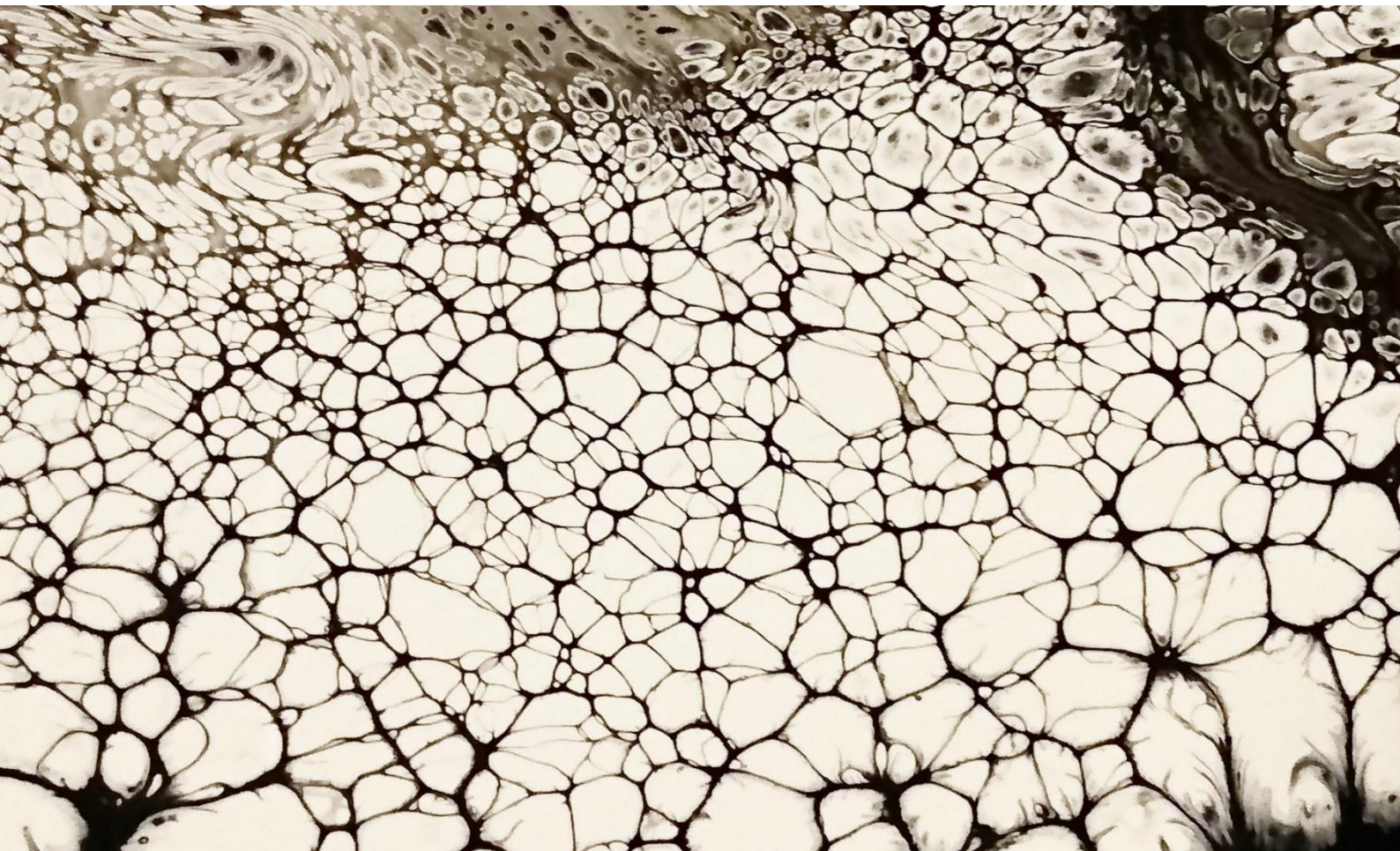
This theory has forced me to think in a completely different way. I used to think that my practice and research were unstructured, messy and unsystematic, but the rhizome put everything in place for me. It can seem unstructured compared to a tree-like structure with a clear start (roots) a progression (the trunk) and a result (branches). Not because it’s not thorough – it’s simply rhizomatic. This realisation was as if something fell in place and I could start respecting my own artistic practice for what it is, and not excusing myself to my peers for being chaotic or unorganized.

I was attracted to this theory because it seemed to correspond to the way I think, the way my mind jumps from one thought to another, suddenly inspired – these are my lines of flight. By positioning myself within this theory I could view both my practice and my research as something ‘flat’, where there is no hierarchy organizing the data produced and discovered through the process. Everything is connected, even the separate dimensions. I view the different topics, books, paintings, techniques, inspirations, etc. as different dimensions, connected in my mind by strings of thought. This thesis is my way of making those thoughts visible and is, in a way, another dimension to add to this rhizomatic practice.

-my paintings – my performed paintings – my performed paintings with Kjetil – Blomlaok – performance painting – action painting – Jackson Pollock – rhythm and drama – Pollock attended a workshop with the painter David Siqueiros – Siqueiros and his accidental painting – the Rayleigh-Taylor Instability – the physics behind painting – repetition – music – synaesthesia - experiments – details looks like naturally occurring phenomenon - material – new materialism – materials as active

agents – chaos theory – fractal patterns in nature – fracturing in the paint as it dries – the paintings are fossils – organic – symbiosis – duo – artist duos – Ekblad & Bech/ Gilje & Bennet – Blomlaok – dynamic – interconnectedness – rhizome – structured/unstructured – practice-based research – practice – performance – Blomlaok -

This is a rough sketch of the dimensions I'm currently working on expanding, connecting and explaining. The more I learn, the more data I collect, the more dimensions I end up with. *The dimensions of the plane of multiplicities will increase with the number of connections that are made to it.* Here I'm referring to the Principle of Multiplicities, which is, alongside with the Principles of Connection and Heterogeneity, the most relevant principles to my practice. I will explain these principles below. Everything is connected, everything I read, every gesture I make in the paint, every musical note I hear from Kjetil – to the crab nebula (which is another example of the Rayleigh-Taylor Instability. Exploding stars expel gasses of varying densities, which push heavier gasses and dust, leading to bubble-like plumes or 'cells'. (Jacobsmeier, B. n.d.) (I will explain this phenomenon in more detail in chapter 5.)



An example of the Rayleigh-Taylor Instability, and visualisation of a rhizome.

I must admit that one of the main reasons I was drawn to this theory is the visual component, of how I imagine it looks. There's a similarity between the rhizome and my paintings that I cannot ignore: the way the cells are held together by a web, the way the cells appear and grow from the middle, pushing outwards. The webbing is a rhizome, and the cells are smaller rhizomes, or multiplicities, all connected.

Because a rhizome is always growing from the middle, I exclude the data that grows too far out from Blomlaok and our practice, and follow the lines that connect to as many dimensions as possible, as this seems to be the most relevant. Fractal patterns – the patterns between dimensions – seem like another rhizome to me. The wrinkles and patterns left after the passing of time, after disasters, interference. It's a physical representation of in-betweenness. The patterns are the result of the world yielding to a force of one kind or another, whether it's a storm, a car, waves, a child digging in the sand. It's similar but not identical, like the different examples of the rhizome – a rat burrow, an ant colony etc. The word *Instability* also seems to repeat itself in the different dimensions, both in the Rayleigh-Taylor Instability, chaos theory and also as a way to describe the dynamic between me and Kjetil as we perform.

To let go of control in this way is one of the most difficult things I've had to teach myself, or rather to 'unlearn' my need to control the outcome. My whole life, and my whole academic career, I've been studying how to control the materials and my body to get the desired result. But now that the 'result' is the process, I must think from the middle rather from start to finish. This thinking from the middle is something that I connect directly with the rhizome, both in how I learn, and how I view my practice/project.

Principles of the Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari clarified six principles of the rhizome, which I'll summarize below:

1. and 2. Principles of Connection and Heterogeneity: "Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P. 7) It has no beginning or end, but always grows from the middle and overflows. Any point can be connected to any other point, and the connections are not necessarily connected to things or traits of the same nature. In human life, it "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P.7)

3. Principle of Multiplicity: A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations and dimensions which, when changed, also change the nature of the multiplicity. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P.8) It has no relation to the One, which is always subtracted (n-1). The multiple must be made not by adding a higher dimension, but with dimensions (n) one already has available. "Subtract the

unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n - 1$ dimensions.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P.6) The book gives an example of puppet strings as a multiplicity or rhizome, and how it is not connected to the will of the puppeteer, but to the multiplicity of nerve fibres in the puppeteer’s hands, which again form another puppet in another dimension connected to the first. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P.8) Multiplicities fill their dimensions and are essentially flat, which is why Deleuze and Guattari speaks of a plane of consistency or a plane of multiplicities; the dimensions of this plane will increase with the number of connections that are made to it. “There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P.8) In other words, a rhizome consists of multiple multiplicities without any specific structure.

4. Principle of asignifying Rupture: A rhizome may be cut or broken at any given point, but will sprout again from either (or both) the old lines or new lines. This, they claim, is why you can never get rid of ants, as they form an animal rhizome that can grow back again even after most of the colony has been destroyed. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P. 9) Every rhizome contains segmentary lines and deterritorializational lines. The first are according to “which it is stratified, territorialized, organised, signified, attributed, etc.” The lines of deterritorialization are where the rhizome constantly flees, as a segmentary line explodes into a line of flight and causes a rupture. This is all part of the rhizome, and these lines can always be traced back to or tied to each other. Think of the surface of a body of water, stretching out to fill all available spaces, nooks and crannies, trickling through fissures and eroding its way through earth, sand and stone.

As I understand this, Deleuze and Guattari want us to follow these lines of flight, as they will lead us to the pure, abstract connections between everything.

5. & 6. Principles of Cartography and Decalcomania: A rhizome is not compliant to any structural model, it is a map that connects between all of its dimensions: it can be picked apart, modified, reversed. It’s adaptable to any kind of representation, it can be cut, torn, reworked by an individual or group of people. It can be drawn on the wall, presented as a work of art, a book, a political action, a virtual image. The most important characteristic of the rhizome is that it has multiple entry points. A map also has multiple entry points, unlike a tracing that is a corresponding image to what it’s been traced of. A tracing is flat and non-evolving. Think about it, is there really a starting point to reading a map?

New materialism

Here, I will be referencing the introduction to the book *New materialisms: Ontology, Agency & Politics* by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, and chapters 5 and 6 of the book *New materialism: Interviews and Cartography* by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin. The introduction chapter by Coole and Frost was given to me as part of a compendium on Practice-based research during my semester at York St. John University. In this text, they introduce the new materialism philosophy and position it within the context of quantum physics and chaos theory, and later in biopolitics and political economy. Dolphijn and van der Tuin's book is split into two parts where the first consists of interviews and the second situates new materialism in contemporary thought and the mark it has left on fields such as feminism, science studies, philosophy and the arts.

New materialism is a monist ontology that views matter as the main substance in nature. Monism, in this context, is the view that everything exists as one substance and that all divisions between things are artificial. Things like the mind and our consciousness are results of material processes, like the biochemistry of the human brain and nervous system, and not divided. It is a cultural theory that, by not favouring culture over nature or matter over meaning, explores a perspective that evades the dualisms that have dominated the humanities and sciences until today. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 86)

An interesting term from Karen Barad is frequently used in Dolphijn and van der Tuin's book: intra-action. It is described like this: "[q]ualitatively shifting any atomic metaphysics, intra-action conceptualizes that it is the action between (and not *in-between*) that matters." (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 14) This seems to correspond with the way I interact (or intra-act) with my material as I work. It has been, and still is, hard to put away the dualist mindset that separates me from the material, my mind from my body, intellectual knowledge and bodily knowledge. "For Barad (1998), 'what is being described by our theories is not nature itself, but our participation *within* nature.' She theorises the intra-action of the observer, the observed, and observing instruments, all of which are 'agential'." (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 108) It seems to me that she views agency as a relationship rather than something one has or doesn't have. The intra-action, the process of being, is what gives one agency.

Daniel Belgrad, in his book *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation in the Arts in Postwar America*, wrote about Helen Frankenthaler: "Perhaps, in her dialogue with the paint, she listened more than she spoke. Certainly, she understood her painting as a synecdoche of her bodily experience. [...] 'Since the painting is made by me, it is my echo, or mirror, or Gestalt.'" (Belgrad, 1991. p. 118) Helen

Frankenthaler painted on huge rolls of un-primed canvas laid out on the floor, and poured pools of paint and pigment onto it. These pools slowly soaked up in the canvas and stained it. She let the material work and evolve on its own. The way her paintings are her echo, my paintings are my fossils. Fossilised memories, a visual journal that only I can read, but others can enjoy. The way she listened to her material is similar to the way I do, only I let the material show me how to interact with it as well as observing it – that is our intra-action.

“Behind or, better said perhaps, beneath every object, every representation, every physical or metaphysical ideality lies a phenomenon, which is the flesh and blood of the world, the life that continues to live in and through being as it is represented in itself. This is being as it is lived.” (de Beistegui, 2014, p. 110)

The new materialist perspective on artwork directs our attention to how the form of content and the form of expression are being produced in one another, and the materials, the material condition of the work, and the sensations as the work is experienced. This means that the material and the discursive dimensions are not treated as two separate things, but viewed as a whole. New materialism lets us study the two dimensions intertwined and tangled, as the experience of an artwork consists of both matter and meaning. “The material dimension creates *and* gives form to the discursive, and vice versa.” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 91) New materialism allows us to write the metamorphosis – entanglement of materiality and meaning – by not excluding parts of it beforehand and being open to the process of its manifestation. Dolphijn and van der Tuin argue that we need new materialism “because, whether it concerns earthquakes, art, social revolutions, or simply thinking, the material and the discursive are only taken apart in the authoritative gesture of the scholar or by the common-sensical thinker; while in the event, in life itself, the two seeming layers are by all means indiscernible.” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 91-92)

Reflections

Art is both the name of an art-object and the event that is the meeting between the object and the individual. As we perform, the audience view us as a multiplicity, all the different elements connected to form an art-piece. We are a multiplicity, we are part of the rhizome that is our practice. And it is our interaction/intra-action with the materials, and the materials’ interaction/intra-action with us, that creates both the work of art and our growth. Through every intra-action, we evolve, we learn. The new materialistic viewpoint is so well connected with the rhizome as there is no hierarchy, only connections. Our encounter with the world is what creates connections and lines, our lives are not linear as we think and feel things that are connected to multiplicities of other things. Our practice is not linear either, as we started without a specific question, but a very open statement. This allows our practice to grow in multiple directions, and as we followed several of them we realised what we

wanted to pursue further. We followed the new materialistic philosophy which turned our performance practice into something very different from what we started doing, where our egos would control the materials and try to bend them to our will. Playing with our materials and exploring is what led us this far, and it is what will continue to drive us forward. Every time one of us has said “Wait, I want to try something...” it has led to something new. Not necessarily useful to the current version of Blomlaok, but certainly exciting (and often scary).

Chapter 5: Practice and process

In this chapter I'll reflect on the collaboration between human and material, and how it has changed my(/our) sense of immersion as we perform. Then I will write about the moments that I have deemed the most important for the growth of our practice towards what it is today. This is presented chronologically, and is meant to tell the story of our growth. Here I will also pull in bits of theory as they were discovered while we worked, to give a more coherent picture of our process. These bits of theory will be presented in blue boxes.

Collaboration – humans and material

Here, I'll present some of the reflections done on how this collaboration has changed the way I work, and the way Blomlaok performs.

To see our practice as a collaboration between humans and material, I've had to change the way I think about myself and the world. When it comes to new materialism, I've never had any particularly strong opinions as to whether or not there's a hierarchy of mind over matter, but I noticed that there were certain dualist ideas in me once I tried to let the material be a partner rather than a tool. Maybe it was the idea of admitting that not everything I do is on purpose, that it hurt my sense of pride or integrity somehow. But admitting to myself (and to Tony and Helene, Kjetil's mentor and mine) that I can't really control the way the paint moves allowed for me to actively make it even more unpredictable, to make this part of what my practice is – and it has certainly led me down an interesting road.

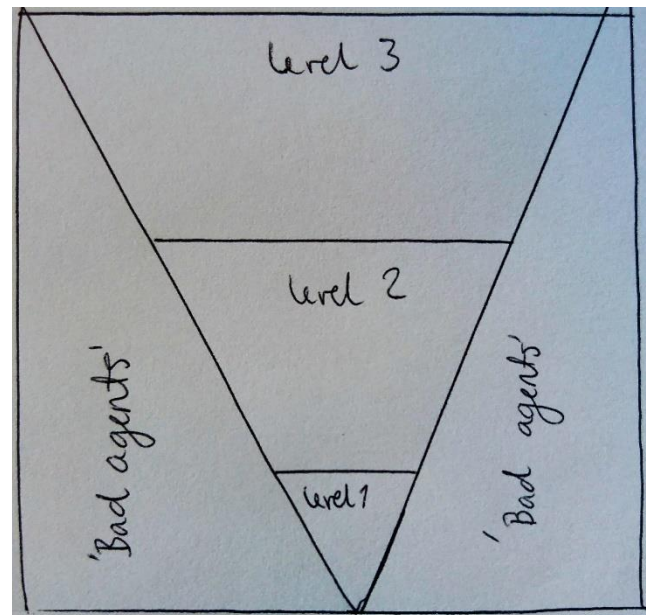
Viewing the materials as partners has forced me to also view other factors as affecting our performances (audience, temperature, etc), but I've chosen not to grant them any agency in this process as this text is about exploring what happens between Kjetil/sound, sound/me, me/visuals, visuals/Kjetil, and sound/visuals, Kjetil/me.

Through our practice I've come up with a way of categorising my/our level of immersion as we perform, where I've felt it necessary to first split everything up in 'good agents' and 'bad agents' as to show what affects us. 'Good agents' are us and our materials, we as a group are the artists, the performers, and we are the rock stars in this scenario. The 'bad agents' are everything that can/will disturb our flow as we work – too cold, too hot, a draft, dust in the air, audience, background noise. It could be like during our performance on the 15.03.2018 where we struggled to get into our flow because of the audience we had present (only staying on level 2 of immersion), or on the 22.03.2018 when somebody's phone started ringing ten minutes into our performance.

I've boiled our work process down to three levels of immersion:

- Level 1: Entering work mode, putting our minds to what we're about to do.
- Level 2: Immersion in the materials, following their flow, me listening to the music, and Kjetil reading the painting.
- Level 3: Immersion of the body, where the materials and the body are indistinguishable. Our flow also follows the other person's body language as well as the material. The sounds and the visuals are the same, we no longer notice who is pushing and who is pulling, we just act.

Notice that on level one of immersion, the 'bad agents' are occupying more space, which is proportional to how disturbing they are to our flow. On level two they have less power, and on level three they are barely present to us. Usually in our performances, we float between level two and level three for the most part, and only enter through level one when we start and when we finish. Level three is the most interesting to me, as it was only achievable after we learned to recognise our materials as collaborators, because we can let them control us as much we control them. Before this realisation, we were only ever able to reach level two.



How has the project evolved? Important moments and insights

During the last two years, Blomlaok has been working in the old Agder Teater in the hall out back where the master students have been allowed to work. When we started working on our thesis, our studio space was in the backstage room behind the old main stage. The walls, floor and ceiling were all painted black, and it was really cold, but it made a fantastic workspace. I taped off a section of the floor with duct tape to mark where our space started and the rest of the room ended, and this worked really well when people walked through. (You had to walk through the backstage room to get to the toilet, so there was a lot of foot-traffic whenever someone else was working in the theatre.) They never crossed the line without asking, and I felt very comfortable with the way other students and the people working in the theatre respected our work and never touched or moved anything. We worked there for a few months, but in November we had to move spaces as they were setting up a bar there. This proved frustrating as some of the pieces were not dry yet but had to be moved on the day, and the only warning I'd gotten was a phone call a few hours earlier. Sadly, one of the pieces

didn't make it, but the rest was moved into the large workshop-hall in the back of the theatre. There we were allowed to use one of the corners that's cut off by the elevator and functions as a room of its own. This has come to be like a second home for me, all of my experiments and fossils are there, vintage lamps, speakers, pillows... that's mostly where I sit and write, as it puts me in a creative flow just being surrounded by our work.

Here I will take you through the most important moments in our practice over the last year. Ideally, I would write about every single moment as it all felt important and significant in shaping the way we work now, but I've been able to pick six moments in our studio that I feel are the most important. Here I will show my log entries that I wrote right before or after the performances as well as my thoughts and reflections. I will also put links to the videos I have of the performances in our online archive on OneDrive.

The first three performances I'll write about here were done in the backstage studio, the next two in our studio space in the hall and the last one was performed in the exhibition space in the big hall.



Blomlaok performance 05.10.2017



Video-still from performance

Testing of new silicone oil

I'm painting on a plate of glass, around 100x150 cm. (it has a chip in the corner and was going to be thrown away, so we commandeered it)

The blue paint is expired and unusable, I have to work with a limited colour palette as a result. This means that it will not be a true synesthetic painting as I do not have all the complimentary colours available. Still, this proves to be an interesting way to let go of control.

We start the session with a laugh, and Kjetil slaps the guitar. I finish stirring the white paint, and add two drops of silicone oil. As the sounds build up, I pour water on the glass surface. The sounds all have a very deep, purple look, but without the blue paint I'll just have to make do. I add four drops of silicone oil in the red paint, as I want to see more movement from the red as it's closer to the purple I see than the yellow, white and black paint.

I add white paint to the glass, and I try to follow the strokes on the guitar as I pour. Then I pick up an empty cup and continue to pour white, black and red paint into it before I upend it over the old window glass. The silicone oil in the red paint makes it aggressive, hungry even. It blooms and waves and takes over the white. Cells appear and boil away; long, pink branches start growing, rapidly climbing over the glass.

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Au7iDgOXDv6qlii7fMTDWNou08pA> 15.55 minutes

Kjetil sits on a chair against the wall, about two meters from where I'm crouching over the glass, my back mostly turned. The glass is lying flat on the floor, with tape around the edges to prevent too much spillage. For some reason we were both wearing caps, so when we lower our heads we can't see each other at all, but right before we start he removes his and puts it on the floor. Kjetil cradles his guitar in his lap, his head lowered, and my eyes never really leave the paint at all. I listen to the music and try to visualise what I'm seeing with the wrong colour palette.

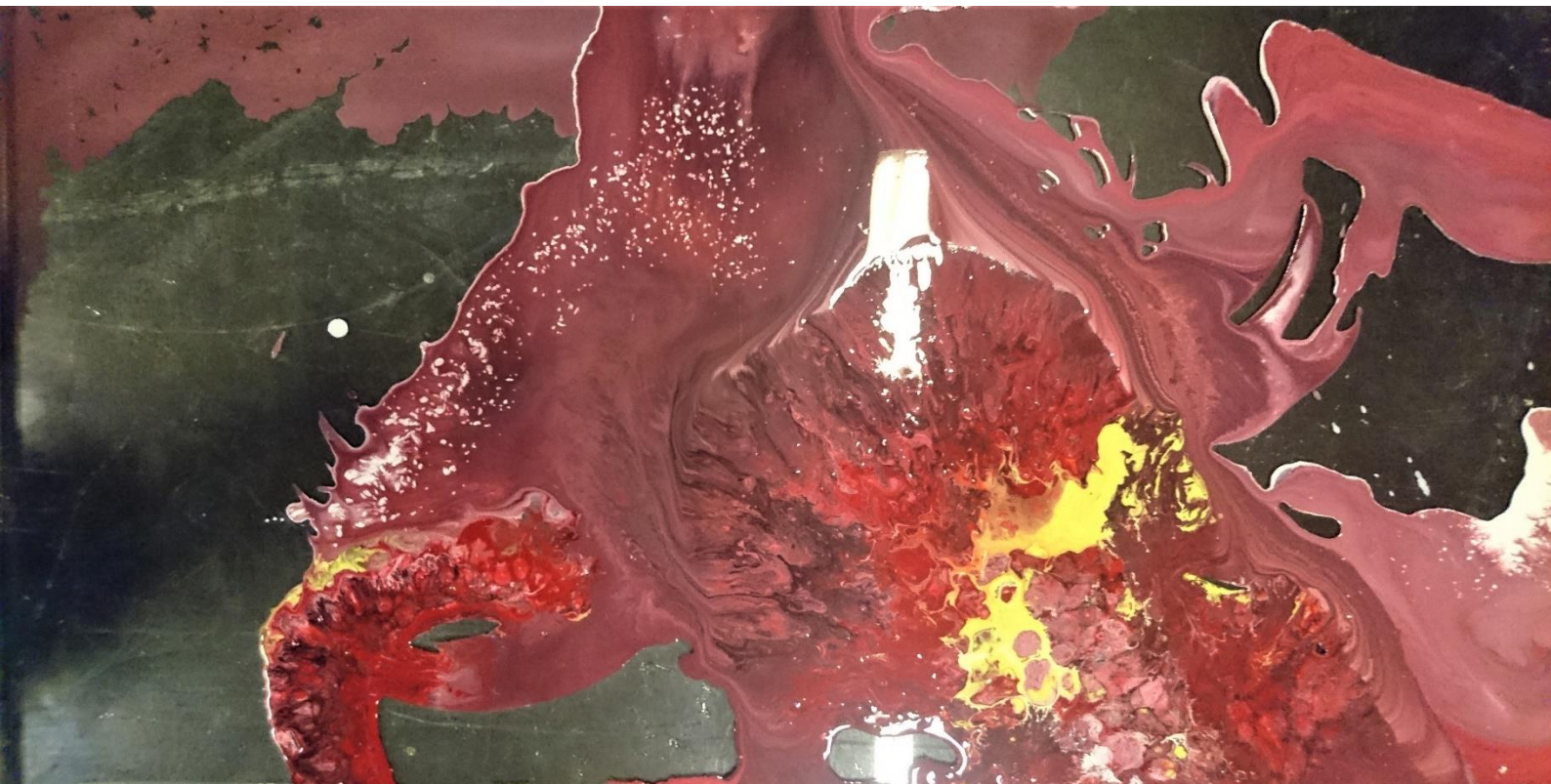
This was my first time painting with this silicone oil mixed in the paint, and the first time Kjetil untuned his guitar. We had talked about letting go of control, but I think we were both a bit reluctant to do it in case it failed miserably. At least when I'm alone I can hide my failures, but we'd both be witnesses to each other if it happened with Blomlaok. But stepping out of our comfort zone was something we'd agreed on to drive us forward, so we took baby steps. When I look at the film of this particular performance it's easy to see how far we've come as performers: we are both in our own zone, we don't communicate, we never make eye contact. But this was the point from where we started actively doing something different every time we went in the studio, however small of a change it may be.

I was amazed at how intense the effect of the silicone oil was. The silicone oil allowed for me to let that material work more on its own instead of being shaped by me. It felt like I was following it (her, them) as much as it was following me. And I remember feeling... not sad or annoyed, but at least not happy, knowing that Kjetil never saw it. I was painting his music, but he never saw what it looked like! Not while it was alive anyway. The way the music flowed was so different from before, now that he deliberately untuned his guitar, it was rougher and less pretty, and to me that correlated so well with the lumps of red paint that I never managed to stir out properly. They were lying there obstructing the flow of the rest of the paint and water, just as the flaws in the music made it into a soundscape and not a song.

At this point in the process I was still working with video installations and projections, and we were constantly discussing the idea of doing live-projections of the paint as Kjetil played. However, this would mean that the balance would shift in our duo; I would be working with more mediums than him, and that also meant that we would have to force the audience to choose where to look – at us or the projections. If we'd project it back on ourselves it would be difficult to film the paint without a lot of preparations. This led to further discussions of whether we should be visible to an audience at all, or if we should work towards installation instead of performance. These discussions remained mere discussions though, and will be something that we will look into over the summer to test out.

We agreed that what made us special, *our urgency*, was the liveness, improvisation and unpredictability. We wanted to focus on our similarities rather than differences: we are both improvising, putting away our thoughts of composition and harmony; we both have something that makes our materials unpredictable – me mixing chemicals in the paint, and pouring them together in one cup before pouring it on the glass and Kjetil untuning his guitar and playing a piece with no indication of what sounds will come. Me not controlling the colours would be the equal of Kjetil not controlling his guitar, so we agreed that I would put away my thoughts of visualising my synaesthesia for now and instead use it as a form of intuition to guide me rather than a goal to work towards. The adoption of this anti-representationalist attitude was an important step in prioritizing art-as-event. While one could argue that I am representing Kjetil's music with my painting and he is representing my painting with his music, I find that the reactivity and unpredictability of our process makes it better described as a joint exploration than as a strict representation. Without the representation of synesthetic experience as a rigid goal, I found myself able to live more freely within the process itself. I would also focus more on my body and how my movement can be a way for me to communicate with Kjetil.

What I loved about this performance though, was how the fossil turned out. It looks like intestines preserved and suspended on glass; it looks like an alien creature without skin; it looks like a petri dish, magnified; it looks like red mycelium, stretching out and reaching; it looks like something decaying; it looks like something growing.





The Rayleigh-Taylor Instability

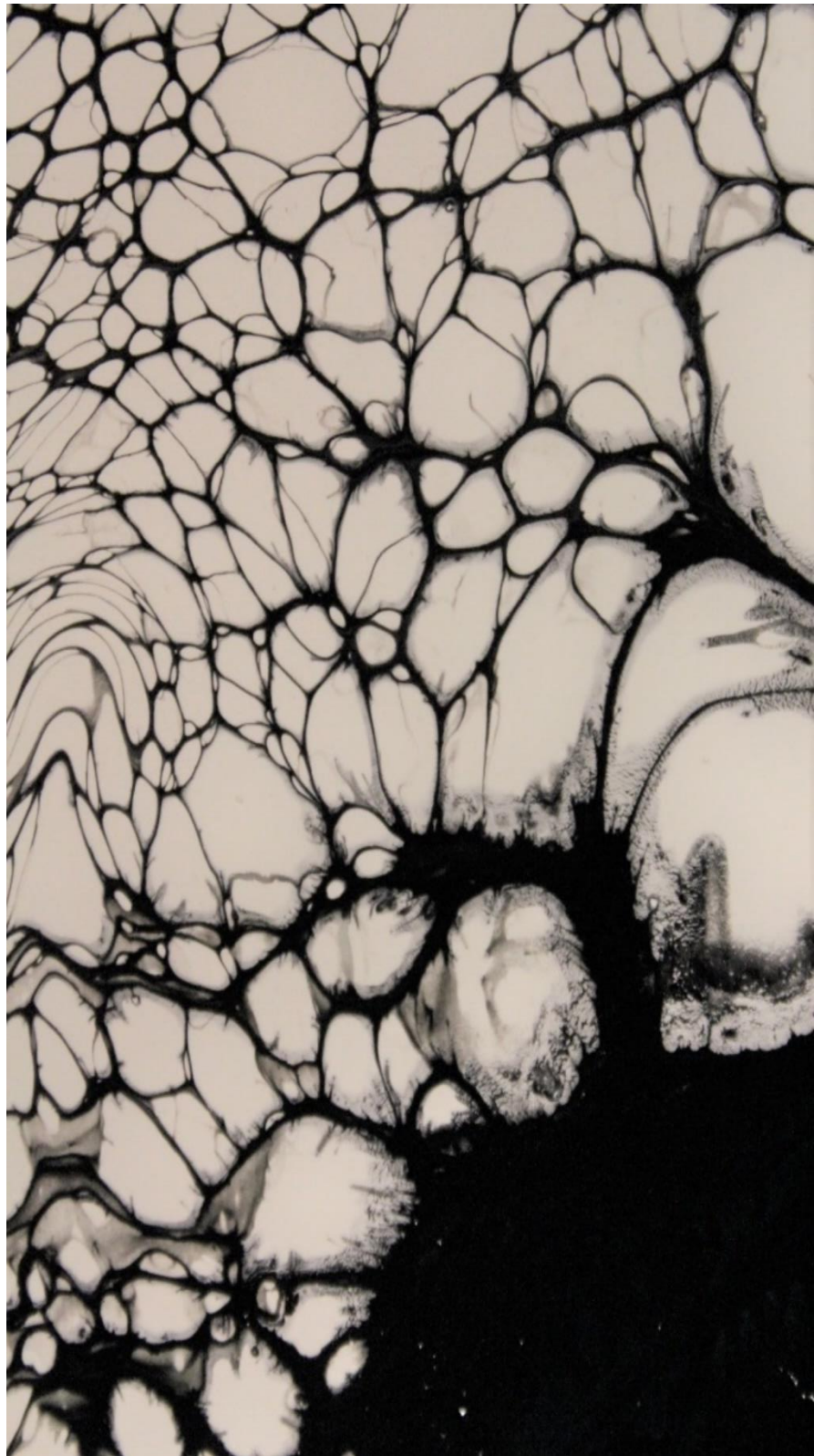
This phenomenon was something I discovered early on without quite understanding it and what it was. I noticed that when the fluid paint was layered in certain ways, 'cells' would appear. Bubbles of different colours would sometimes poke through the top layer of paint without mixing. I noticed that if I used my breath to 'push' the paint around, I could conjure up this reaction. As a result of this, I started experimenting and searching for ways to both explain and enhance this technique, which eventually led me to an article called 'Siqueiros accidental painting technique: A fluid mechanics point of view' written by Sandra Zetina and Roberto Zenit. Here they explain the physics behind what the Mexican artist David Siqueiros in the 40's called 'accidental painting' as the phenomenon known in physics as the Rayleigh-Taylor Instability. (Zetina & Zenit, 2012, p.1-3) To sum it up, different paints of different densities and viscosity will become unstable when the heavier fluid is suspended on top of the less dense fluid. What happens is that the instability (the Rayleigh- Taylor

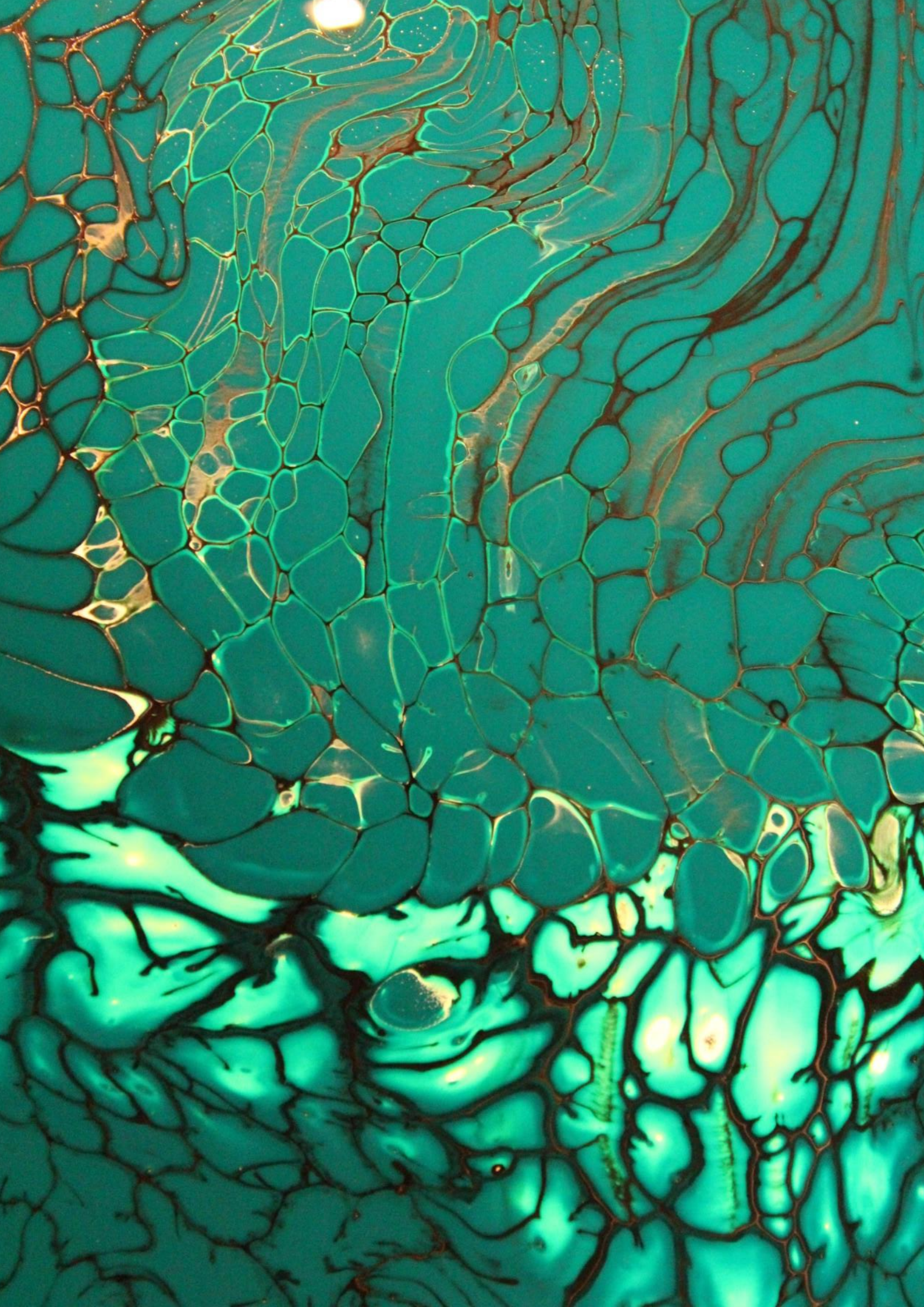


Instability) will cause the surface tension to break at certain points and the heavier fluid will sink through the bottom layer in separate pockets, or bubble-like plumes. From above, it will look like cells are appearing on the surface, as a small layer of pigment from the heavier paint still will reside on the surface.

These cells, or rather, the web-looking effect around them is reminiscent of the rhizome theory, and how the rhizome is between everything, it is what connects things. These cells are like a metaphor for all the empirical and theoretical data, each in its own little bubble, connected by a web of a different coloured pigment. There are also physical similarities to fungi and mycelium, which are rhizomes found in nature.

So, when I use silicone oil mixed in some of the paint, it enhances this phenomenon and gives a bigger momentum in the creation of cells. Because the cells are growing bigger and faster, they're easier to see from far away, which is excellent as it is more visible to an audience as we're performing.





Invite the Chaos (26.10.2017)



Between our last performance and this one, winter had kicked in for real. It was so cold in our studio that my hands and feet would go numb after 20 minutes, and Kjetil couldn't feel his fingers if he played more than half an hour. That didn't stop us though, we had a huge canvas waiting to be painted and we expected to keep going for as long as we had to. This time, Kjetil's mentor Tony Valberg would be there to watch how we worked and give some feedback. (I put my camera up to document the performance, but unfortunately it turned off before we'd really started. I think the cold depleted the battery very quickly.)

I was feeling very self-conscious, which always happens when I'm performing in front of musicians. Especially now that we decided that Blomlaok is an equal duo, not just a painter and a musician working at the same time, but we hadn't quite figured out the dynamic yet. Which is exactly the reason for Tony being there – to give us some pointers and to be critical.

This time, the canvas was lying flat on top of a low table, approximately 70cm above the floor. The table was placed right in the middle of the studio, and Kjetil had his pedals and the speaker right in front of it. We were facing each other this time, and he was standing up, looking down on the canvas.

We'd told Tony that he could stand or sit as he chose, so in the beginning of the performance he was sitting in a chair and watching. About halfway in he stood up and came closer. He walked around, leaned in to see, watched us from the other side of the room, came back... It never felt disruptive,

the way he moved around, I was in a very good flow with Kjetil. A few times when I leaned over the canvas to pour paint, he played long tones that followed my movement – instead of only me following him and the music. It felt so liberating and empowering, and I was so happy that he was able to see all the reactions in the paint while he played. He kept watching the canvas and hardly looked at the guitar at all. It changed the nature of our flow, it felt lighter and happier – it reminded me of the feeling I had when me and my brother discovered a pond teeming with tadpoles and just watched them in amazement for what felt like hours. As soon as we were working closer it got less serious, we made frequent eye contact and really worked on keeping the ‘conversation’ going between the paint and the guitar.

I focused less on composition, more on movement and flow

Could have blended the magenta more thoroughly, it reacted less than I hoped it would.

Ran out of black paint

As I poured white over an area covered in pink and purple, small cells started to emerge, first slowly then growing faster, and Kjetil played the cells.

The curiosity took over, our flow had hit a circle: I was painting based on Kjetil's music, but he was playing based on my painting. Our materials were feeding the other person in a loop, we had stumbled upon something magical. (We had discussed previously how maybe we could place the speaker directly under the surface that was being painted so that the soundwaves could directly influence the paint, or if I'd get my hands on a huge roll of canvas he could walk around on it too and literally leave footprints. This however, meant that our materials would have an equal say in the process, we would affect each other in a similar manner though our different mediums. It would become a new form of symbiosis.)

We ended the performance when I was completely out of paint. It was such a good flow, none of us wanted to end it!

When the audience stands up, they will view it in a completely different way. You're not sitting like a judging crowd, but become a curious participant. You become a part of the performance.

Here's a short piece of the transcript from our conversation with Tony after the performance:

Tony: "Vilde, you have to say with your actions and your body 'look at this Kjetil' and you can both witness the material live its life."

Vilde: "Yes, I was almost about to say that! 'Look at this Kjetil!' with the red paint, when it went all 'whoosh'"

Kjetil: "Yeah, but I saw it! I was in that kind of zone, and I saw it and... I haven't done that before. It wasn't until [this performance] that I saw it as a creature, I didn't have to try to pay attention, it just happened. Now that I saw it from above it sort of pulled me in."

Tony: "Think about it, look at her like 'what is she doing now? What is she up to?' Not Vilde, but the painting! Like 'holy shit'."

[...]

Tony: "These chemical reactions, they're out of your control"

Vilde: "I can push them in a certain direction, but there's never any guarantee to know what's going to happen"

Tony: "But she affects you too, she tells you what to do through your emotions, she controls how you try to control her (the paint) Because these reactions are happening here and here, it makes you want to do this rather than this. There's a correspondence between you. And Kjetil, you are listening to the paint."

There are four 'actors' not just two. It's not just me, Kjetil, playing the guitar or just me, Vilde, painting. I'm listening to the sounds as well as listening to the paint, AND Kjetil.

Tony also introduced us to a term which we took to heart: Mickey Mousing. This is when the sound directly corresponds with the visual or the other way around. For example, when I start dripping paint, Kjetil can pluck short notes on his guitar – or the other way around: when I hear him plucking short notes I will start to drip paint.

This (Mickey Mousing) seems to be a way for me to steer him and the way he plays, this is definitely something to work on. And let the paint take its time, don't try to rush it for 'entertainment's sake'. If I rush it, I'm not letting it speak. Just remember that from now on, the audience needs to stand up and watch, so they can be drawn in too.

It was because of this performance and the discussion we had after that I started to look into new materialism. Through this, I was introduced to chaos theory.

New materialism and Chaos theory

As an artist, *matter*, or *the material*, is the most important part of my practice. As I work, I have come to view matter in the posthuman sense, that it has its own agency. From a new materialist point of view, everything which has volume and mass is considered matter: for instance, humans are made of matter, as are rocks, trees, water, etc. Looking at matter in larger scales might be misleading; nothing is completely fixed or static on a subatomic level, where it's constantly vibrating. Nothing is reducible

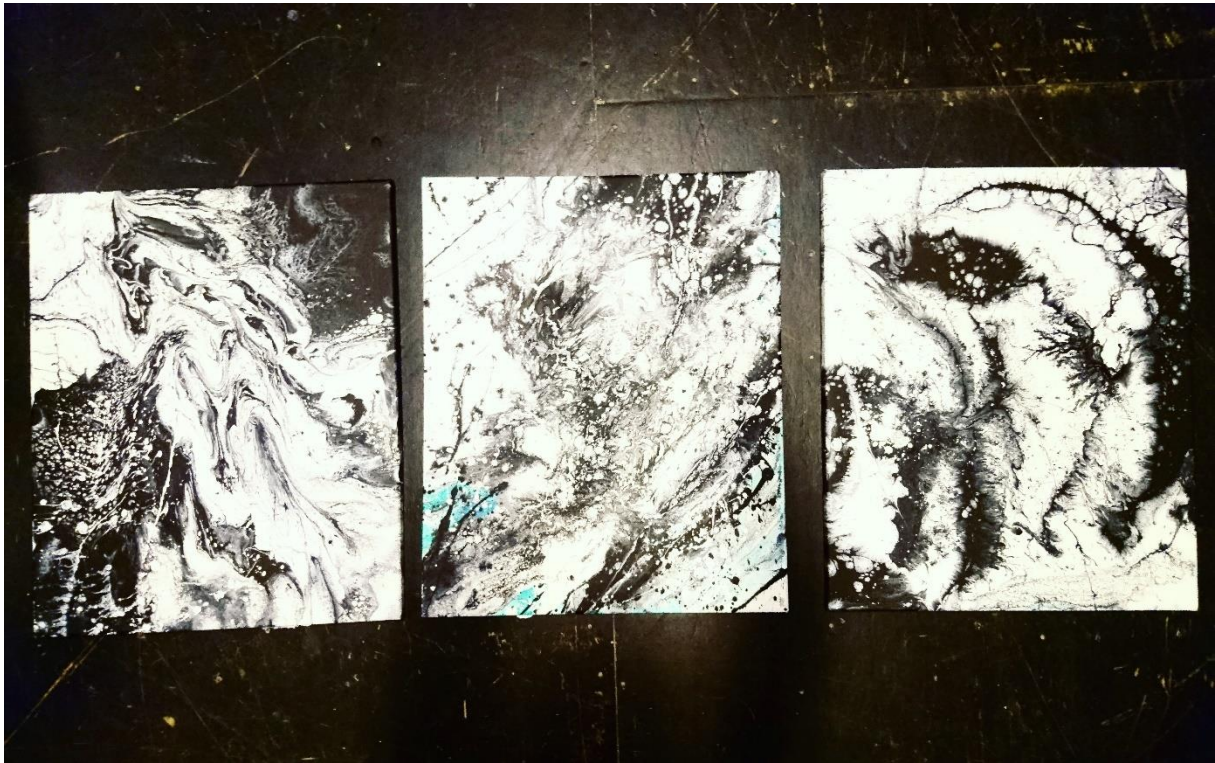
to a single, determined entity. In other words, the world is not as stable and solid as we used to think, and by *not* separating human agency from the agency of matter, a whole new way of looking at the world is created. “For materiality is always something more than ‘mere’ matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that render matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable.” (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 9) This should in no way suggest that we should view matter as something conscious, but that we should avoid a hierarchy that holds mind over matter, as the mind is just the idea of the body. “An object is no longer passive matter that has to be re-represented; meaning-making takes place on a two-way track.” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p.110) Our intra-action with matter is what gives it meaning.

We are in a state of becoming, rather than a state of being. “It is in these choreographies of becoming that we find cosmic forces assembling and disintegrating to forge more or less enduring patterns that may provisionally exhibit internally coherent, efficacious organization. [...] there is no definite break between sentient and nonsentient entities and material and spiritual phenomena.” (Coole & Frost, 2010, P. 10) There is no clear separation between matter and the mind, only our interaction/intra-action with our surroundings and how we experience it. This state of becoming is also what intrigued me so about the rhizome, and how it is always becoming. It is the same way I feel about my practice and my research.

As James Gleick remarks on chaos theory, ‘fractals and bifurcations, intermittencies and periodicities... are the new elements of motion, just as, in traditional physics, quarks and gluons are the new elements of matter. To some physicists’ chaos is a science of process rather than state; of *becoming* rather than being.’” (Coole & Frost, 2010, P. 13)

The reason I’ve written about chaos-theory is the parallel to the ‘chaos’ in the way we perform. As we perform, we are *becoming* artists. Our work is all about following the flow that we follow in an artistic improvisation where we let the material lead the way as much as ourselves. We fall in and out of it, as it changes and grows and disappears again. We pull each other back and forth, sometimes I paint to mimic the sounds, sometimes he plays to mimic the painting. Other times we don’t mimic each other at all, but try to follow each other directly, we use our body language to steer the other person in one direction or the other, and not the material. The other person can choose to listen or to pull in the complete opposite direction. This shift in dynamic is to me parallel to the superficial chaos that has patterns and repetitions under the surface that emerges suddenly only to disappear again. This *Instability* is what we actively seek to maintain throughout our performances.





Blomlaok session with several small tests.

Long tones- small painting using swiping technique.

Short tones, plucking- black and white, fluid but forceful. Splatting. Dramatic movements and mimicking the music.

Black and white is more expressive, more dramatic and easier for an audience to react to.

For the first painting, I tried to hold back a tiny bit as to not overdo it. Second one, I tried to work more with blowing and tilting the canvas, which filled it up very quickly. I then moved on to a wooden plate (Still in the second session) and worked a bit with undiluted paint, it was gooey and hung on to the brush like strings. Less drama from the movement as it clung more and could only flow in one specific manner. (I will definitely not be doing this during our performances, maybe in another project.)

Over the course of these two days we had several short sessions, and made around three paintings each day. We were specifically practicing on Mickey Mousing, on Kjetil following my movements, then shifting control and me taking it back again. We worked on specific expressions, like rough noises needs forceful application, dripping as plucking, slow swipes in the paint as long notes, tilting

the canvas as slowly building rumblings of sound. The push-pull dynamic really made itself clear during these two days, and it was like an epiphany for the both of us. Now that we could discuss it and express it we could experiment and find out where exactly these shifts occurred, and how we could communicate this through our materials.

The first day we worked with colours like usual, but after two paintings we decided to only use black and white as we practiced. This proved to be both economic for me and very effective and dramatic. It was easier for Kjetil to follow, and it was a great way for me to finally put away my focus on synaesthesia. I'd tried for a long time, but I think it was hard to let go of because that was our starting point, and we built the whole concept of Blomlaok around it. To be free of it properly was very liberating. It left me room to focus on the communication, on the qualities of the material and the encounter between it and my body – with no expectation of what I needed it to look like, which meant I couldn't really be disappointed by any outcome. He's simply playing the painting while I'm just painting the music.

I feel that in many ways, these were two of the most important days for us. We usually never sit down and practice like this, and the amount of mind blowing realisations we had was ridiculous. We learned how to communicate, how to shift the 'control' between the two of us, how to stay in our flow in spite of bad conditions and many interruptions. I learned how to remove myself from my synaesthesia, Kjetil discovered how to view the paint as notes to be read, and most importantly we've never had more fun or a stronger drive. We finally knew what we were looking for.

Because of this, we continued only using black and white paint in our performances for the next two months. When I no longer felt compelled to let the synaesthesia take control over how I painted, I went back to using colour.

Self-similar fractal patterns

I also discovered that when I poured paint that was much more diluted than the rest, it would form rivers and cracks and it would create branches that grew slowly over in the different coloured paint. These branches have similarities to things like roots or lightning bolts. While reading Frost and Coole's *New materialisms: Ontology, Agency & Politics* they mention, amongst other things, chaos theory and fractal patterns. Fractal patterns in nature are not perfect repetitions of a patterns in smaller and smaller scales but very similar to the patterns occurring in the paint when the density of the materials is so very different.

Non-identical fractal patterns are called self-similar patterns. This specifically is what I mean when I say fractal patterns, as the repetition of the materials never will be the same, and the patterns are not, in this case, endless.

Fractal geometry focuses mainly on broken, wrinkled and uneven shapes. It describes the tracks and marks left by the passage of dynamical (chaos) activity.

“Chaos theory tells the story of the wild things that happen to dynamical systems as they evolve over time; fractal geometry records the images of their movement in space” (Briggs, p. 22) I felt like I was watching a film from a satellite of a planet’s surface, or watching something grow, in fast motion as the ‘branches’ crept over the canvas. The patterns that appear in the paint as I work are those like lightning, river deltas, ragged coastlines, bubbles frozen in ice, cracks and wrinkles as those in the bark of a tree, lines like those of minerals cut in half and polished. It is organic, flowing and changing. It evolves as it goes through different stages of fluidity, density and resistance.



“In the fractal world, dimensions are tangled up like a ball of twine, and objects are neither two dimensions nor three, but somewhere in between. In fact, fractal geometry has come to be known as geometry between dimensions. Depending on its wrinkling or fragmentation, a fractal object may be any one of an infinite number of possible fractional dimensions.” (Briggs, P. 25)

To me, there is also a coherence between fractal patterns and the Rhizome. If we switch out the words fractal and fractal geometry with multiplicity and the word object with rhizome, it sounds very similar to what Deleuze and Guattari writes: “In the *multiplicity* world, dimensions are tangled up like a ball of twine, and rhizomes are neither two dimensions nor three, but somewhere in between.” If

the fractals are multiplicities and the objects are rhizomatic structures, the likeness is very strong in my opinion.

“Depending on its wrinkling or fragmentation, a *multiplicity* may be any one of an infinite number of possible *rhizomatic* dimensions.”

Our practice would be, in this context, a fractal of the art world, the world, the universe. Where the smaller part is similar to the whole, whether you choose to zoom in or out. What happens on the canvas/surface can be seen in a bathtub with soap and oils, in a volcanic eruption, in the atmosphere of a planet, a nebula. The same goes for the music and its superficial randomness; sounds cannot go on forever without repeating in the same manner somewhere. Repetition is bound to happen, but by avoiding it as best we can from performance to performance, we follow the line of the chaos rather than trying to sort it out. We let the chaos decide.







Video-still from performance

Between this session and the last we'd moved our studio space from the black room behind the main stage to a secluded area in the big hall behind the old theatre. By this time, we had fixed the problems with the heating, so the cold wasn't a problem anymore.

I'd found a huge wooden board to paint on, so instead of propping it up on cups or on a table, I placed it flat on the floor with some paper underneath to soak up the excess paint.

When we started, I took my time smearing out the water on the wood, making sure it soaked in properly. With these movements, I tried to steer Kjetil into a repetitive build-up of sound. By using water on the surface before the paint, I ensure that the paint will swell and spread over the wet surface with much more momentum than on a dry surface. Because of this, the drama starts the second the paint touches the surface and not after I start mixing the paints together. This also ensures different textures – flow, fractal patterns and cells. After pouring paint and rubbing it into the wood, I took the nearly empty cup and sprinkled white drops of paint over the black areas, which Kjetil started to play at once. Now, it was up to him to decide when I would stop dripping by changing the 'theme'. I swayed over the surface as I poured, using my whole body to follow the paint.

Because we had such a big surface to work on, we knew we could both take our time on each 'theme' (colour, sound variation, rhythm etc). This led to a slow-shifting flow, where the push-pull came naturally, almost unnoticeable.

The big red space

I was less selfish than I've ever been, but once I 'took control' I led it in very specific ways. We held our flow for such a long time – usually we finish once the canvas is filled up, or even before then, if I feel like it will be too much to add anything more. But we were so immersed, so in sync, that it was hard to stop. Once one of us is done, we're both done.

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Au7iDgOXDv6qlis6jFZv8gPRg3J7> 33.52 minutes

Immersion

As I searched for literature on the subject of immersion, I came across the book *Multimedia Performance* by Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer. This book mainly focuses on theatre and how the performing of plays has evolved since the turn of the century, and the way the audience immerses themselves in the situation or story. It touches on the subject of immersion in installation art, and I found two of the chapters, chapters 7 and 8, to be relevant as we focus on different levels of immersion both in the audience as they view a performance or navigate an installation-space. What the audience experiences is impossible to measure, but some of this is applicable to what we experience ourselves as we perform.

Cognitive immersion and sensory immersion

Immersion can be seen as a process of disembodiment, of projecting oneself onto an alternate world or experience. It cuts across all aspects of performance art: musical concerts, theatre, visual or time-based art performances, video installations, and so on.

Cognitive immersion might be best described in the context of the dramatic theatre, where the audience must transcend the limitations of their physical presence to believe the fiction and project themselves into the fantasy. This process requires you to forget your physical location, and through imagination and empathy, enter the universe you're there not only to observe, but to experience.

Oliver Grau articulates the concept of immersion as being when 'a work of art and image apparatus converge, or when the message and the medium form an almost inseparable unit' (Klich & Scheer, 2012. p. 129) If I'm to speak of the immersion/feel in the process of making art, it's almost like there is no other meaning than being immersed.

Media and literacy theorist, Marie-Laure Ryan, developed a typology of manifestations of immersion in art. "She identifies three forms of immersion – spatial, temporal and emotional – which are

specifically associated with the narrative elements of setting, plot and character.” (Klich & Scheer, 2012, p.130) This form of immersion might not be as easy to relate to Blomlaok’s performance practice as it has neither a plot or characters in a dramatic plot setting. However, the performances are abstract stories that unfold as the music and the paint flows, and as we enter ‘work mode’ we do take on the role as our performance ‘characters’

Performance art has the potential to immerse an audience sensorily, not necessarily in a fictional universe, but in the presence of the artist, the materials, the action, the immediate space of the performance. The ‘realness’ of being present during an artistic performance is in itself something to trigger the process of being more alert, to let the sensory experiences register on a sharper, more dominating level than in everyday life. To view something through the lens of art rather than simply acknowledging one’s surroundings as we go through our day, is a trigger towards immersion – Immersion in the spatial ‘here and now’, the enhanced state of relation to the surrounding space and immediate stimuli. What I mean by immersion here, is the audience’s level of sensory stimulation and their awareness of being in the present, *with* the performance, and the performance’s capacity to engage the audience both emotionally and physically (heart racing, hair standing on end, etc). (Klich & Scheer, 2012. p. 131)

The distinction between sensory and cognitive immersion is not absolute, of course, but recognises two potential forms of audience immersion. Sensory immersion does not require a sense of disembodiment or a forgetting of the self, but instead creates a sensory experience that builds on the moment, the ‘here and now’. The sense of immersion can originate from the corporeal and material dimension of art, whereas cognitive immersion is established through the presence of an alternate or fictional world. (Klich & Scheer, 2012. p.131)

Responding to the Audience (15.03.2018)



Video-still from performance

I painted on a piece of plexiglass, 80x120 cm, balanced on top of up-ended plastic cups. Because of the small format, I only mixed a small amount of paint from the different colours.

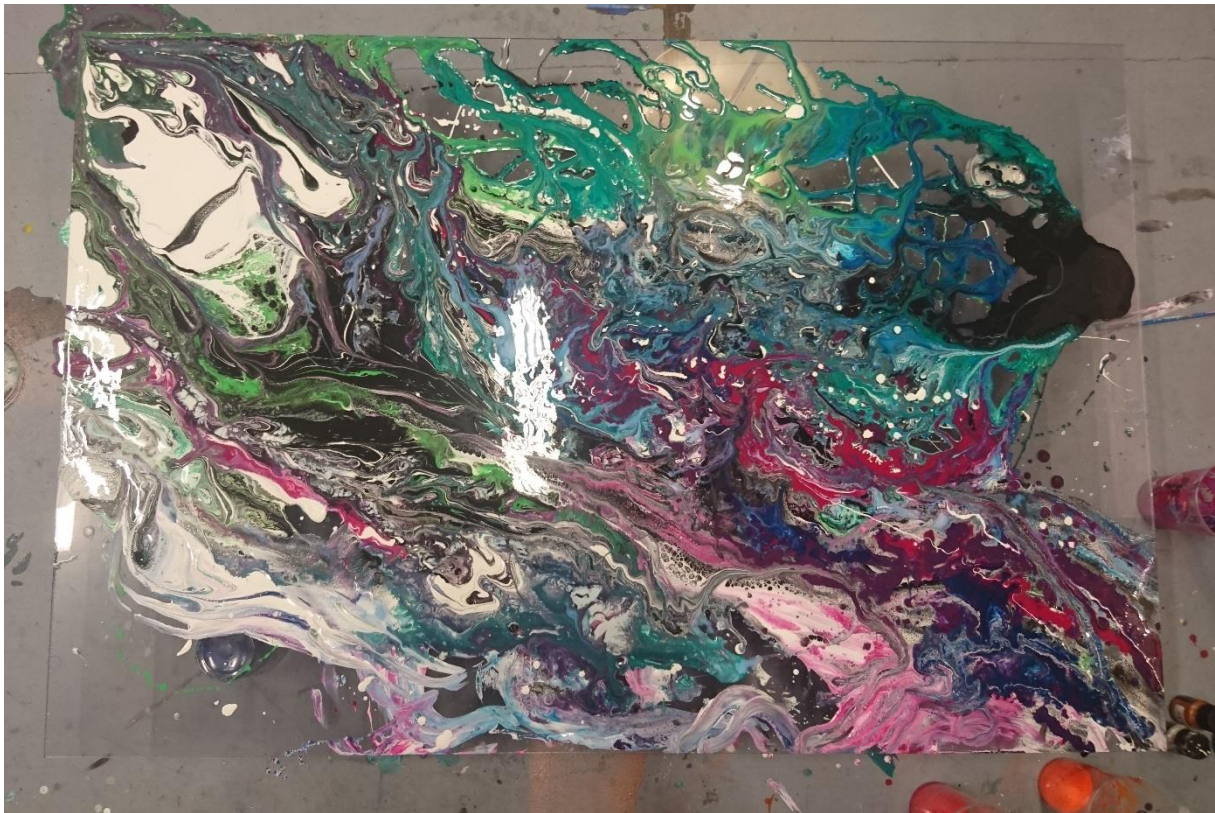
Our audience for this particular performance is a group of Kjetil's friends who are all musicians. This puts pressure on Kjetil as they expect him to blow their minds, and pressure on me to prove that my visual expression is just as powerful as music can be. This and the fact that it has been a long while since we had a session last because of my sick leave, made it difficult to find a calm flow. Usually I forget that people are watching after a little while, because I get so absorbed in the paint and the sounds, but today it was difficult to keep my mind in the state of that flow.

Even though I told them specifically to move around and come close to look before we started, everyone but one of the audience members sat down on some pillows almost two meters away. Because of this I felt like they were prioritising the music and not really respecting my efforts as a visual artist by not following my instructions to really see what was going on with the paint. Had they at least been standing upright they would've been able to see the surface of the glass. This annoyance was probably one of the biggest factors that caused my difficulty of finding a flow. I kept having this thought popping up in my head that I should make it interesting for them to watch me, that I should do dramatic movements and colour-combinations to make them want to get up and come over and take a look.

We were pulling and pushing too fast, which led to a piece that neither of us were happy with. I used too much paint, which meant that I smothered the reactions in the paint before they could evolve fully. This also meant that I filled up almost all the space on the glass so there was no *air*, which defeats the purpose of painting on glass in the first place. It felt rushed and awkward, and not like a deep and profound meditation like other times. I was exhausted.

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Au7iDgOXDv6qlinskR9gMPnf-3xj> 18.44 minutes

it's strange, because as I've watched the video I can't really tell the difference from this performance to others that well. I can tell that we are rushing more, jumping between different themes a bit quicker, but our stress and frustration doesn't really show. *I guess this is a good thing. At least it means if we keep having bad performances, people won't be able to tell that we're struggling.*



Forms of interactivity in performance spaces

Steve Dixon is cited in the book *Multimedia Performance* as describing four different forms of audience interactivity: navigation; participation; conversation, and collaboration. I will only be addressing the first two forms of interactivity as the latter two are not relevant to Blomlaok's performances.

Navigation occurs when spectators are invited to conduct their own navigation of the artwork or environment, individually controlling their speed and path through and/or around the work.

This often provides the basis for more sophisticated forms of interaction, and is established when the boundary between the space of the performance and the exterior space of the audience becomes fluid. This new physical relationship with the artwork, performance environment, or performers then has an impact on an audience member's engagement with a work, affective or interpretive. Of course, for the relationship of the viewer to remain purely navigational they must not have an impact on the work itself. If the work reacts to the viewer's presence in any way, then an interactive relationship between the work and the viewer is established. Navigation only offers agency to the audience in the form of control over movement and direction. (Klich & Scheer, 2012. p. 153-160)

Response-based interaction/participation can be used to describe interaction where the audience has agency and engages in a process of action-reaction with a responsive environment, object or agent. (Klich & Scheer, 2012. p. 153-160)

Blomlaak lies somewhere between these two as the viewer has an impact on us as performers but not on the materials that we use. And because we have chosen to see the materials as active agents in our performances, the audience's impact will be on only two of the four agents in our work. They will, in other words, have an impact on how we work as we need to focus more to stay 'in the zone', however their impact is not enough to trigger any reactions in the materials themselves as they are not allowed to touch or step over the line we have put up beforehand. There is no direct response to their presence other than it obviously being someone watching, and they need to stay passive in the sense that they can expect no action-reaction relationship as you would in a response-based interaction setting. Except for this particular performance, we've managed to keep the audience's interaction with our flow at a minimum.

However, immersion is impossible to measure, it is only our intention that the audience is as fascinated as we are by the materials and the intra-action between the four of us (Kjetil, me, the paint, the guitar/sound). The urgency that compels us to be artists, the indescribable urge to touch and observe, the obsession that has driven us this far – we want the audience to feel at least a shred of that as they watch us perform.

Bigger Audience, Bigger Space (22.03.2018)



Video-still from performance

Master Thursday

Oh god, I am so nervous, why am I even doing this? Why would I want people watching me? I want to dig a hole and disappear, but I want to paint! Why am I so nervous?

Do I look fat in this? Is my hair okay? Should I make it look pretty or should I protect it from paint?

Should I get a glass of wine to calm my nerves?

I feel like I'm wasting time just writing this log!

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Au7iDgOXDv6qInDrTI-7Pk6ZlkVg> 15.50 minutes

I had two plates of plexiglass (80x120cm each), lined up next to each other, suspended on clear plastic cups in the corners to lift them off the ground. This was twice the size of the last performance. The glass worked very well with the lighting, and it almost looked like the glass was floating in the air, about 15cm off the floor. I mixed up 9 different cups of colours (white, black, magenta, navy blue, Prussian blue, dark green, purple, and yellow) not knowing if I'd use all of them or not, and I ended up not using the navy or the yellow.

Kjetil played longer notes, we held the flow at a slow pace to allow ourselves to explore the changes. We wanted to avoid the disaster of the all too quick changes that we experienced last time. The parts

I enjoyed the most was when I tilted the glass to let the paint flow and stretching the cells towards Kjetil, and he played long dark (purple) tones the echoed around the room. The end result gave me a similar feeling as the first red painting on glass, I felt like it was an organism growing on the glass. A wild bacterial culture, a gigantic petri dish, full of mould and fungus.



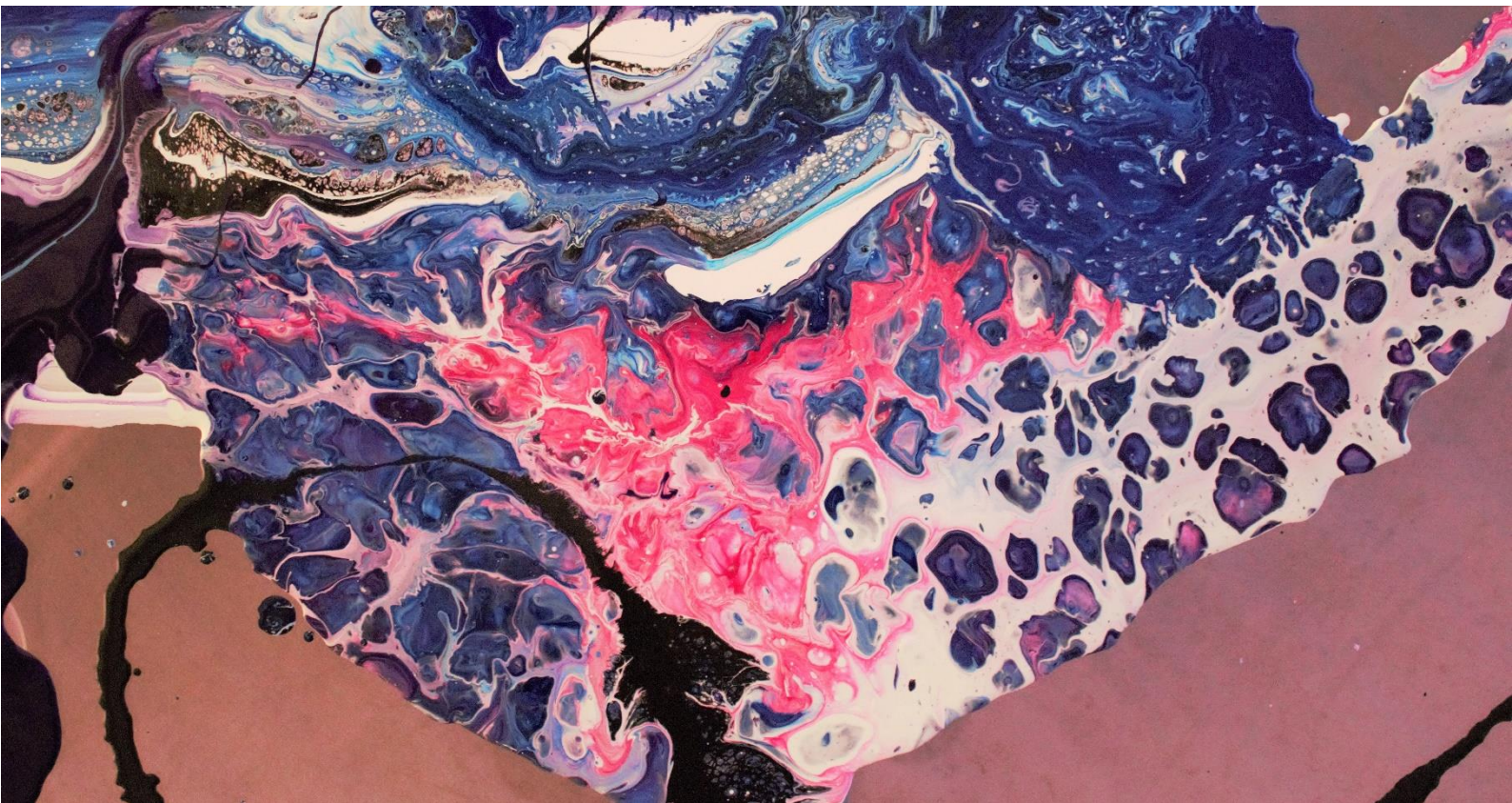
This time we had someone introduce us and to instruct the audience to walk around and come closer to look instead of sitting down and watching from far away. Still, as I watch the video, I can see that people barely move, standing against the wall far away. Some people even sat down, even though they were three or four metres away! It seems that the bigger the audience, the bigger the space between them and our performance. They form a circle far away. The people I talked to after we were finished told me that they wished they had come closer, but for some reason felt embarrassed to be the first, that it felt *impolite* to move closer. On our next performances we definitely need to make it clear to people that they *have* to come close, if not just to be able to see the colours I'm using. Even though the format is 160x120cm it's still hard to see the cells forming and the reactions when I'm touching the paint if you're standing far away. *Either give clear instructions or try to find a way of marking up a space that people have to stand within, like we did when closing a small area around us with tape on the floor when performing the first few months. As I've become less aggressive with the paint because of the big surfaces to paint on we're using, there's no need to think about protecting people's clothes and shoes from paint-splatter. Also, because I'm painting on a transparent surface, I feel no need to fill it up completely and let the paint run over the edges – on the*

contrary! I want the organism to float in the air, slightly above the floor, like bacteria enlarged to ridiculous proportions.

I understand that people think they are respecting the art piece and trying not to disrupt the flow by moving around, but we need to make it clear what it is exactly what we want – for them to see.

I had an interesting discussion with a few of the audience members who stood close enough to see more of the paint, and they said similar things to what I've heard before over the last few years I've been working with performance painting: that they feel attached to one specific piece, or cluster of cells or colour, and spend the rest of the performance almost anxious to see if it will survive or not. One of them described it like watching a TV-show where you spend your time anxious to see whether your favourite character will get killed or not. They feel a form of empathy towards certain parts of the paint. This, to me, is a huge compliment! This is the kind of interest I want people to have, to be drawn in by the curiosity of what will happen next, what will the paint do, *what will I do?* The excitement is like a parallel to my fascination with the material and how it lives.





Chapter 6: Reflections

In this chapter I will reflect on our process, how we have developed and whether this process has answered my research questions.

My research interest statement has been, and still is:

How can we develop a performative rhizomatic practice working with music and colours, space and audience? How can we explore the intra-action between ourselves and the materials we use? What kind of art can be generated through this?

The way we developed our performance practice was following our intuition, documenting our thoughts and findings in a non-hierarchical manner and letting the materials take a stand as active partners in our performance.

To let go of control in this way is one of the most difficult things I've had to teach myself. I had to 'unlearn' my need to know about the outcome, the only thing I know is that there will be *something*. The process is the result, I must think from the middle rather from start to finish. This rhizomatic way of thinking has taught me a new way to approach my work in the studio, as there no longer are any 'bad' results. The process is the goal, and when it's done, the work is a fossil.

When we started working on this thesis with Blomlaok as our project, we weren't sure what would come out of it. We knew we wanted to establish a performance practice, but not what road we would take to get there or what we might end up doing. By performing and working in the studio on a daily basis and by writing logs and discussions, we started generating enough data to try and analyse what we were looking for that we couldn't seem to put into words. However, in my journals, I noticed some words that kept coming up in my reflections after each performance – words like interaction, fascination, immersion, symbiosis. Based on these words, I started looking for literature and other artists that might inspire me and point me in one direction or the other based on these words (this is how I discovered Gilje & Bennet, for example). I think the fact that I discovered the rhizome-theory early on, allowed me to let me thrive in my process of searching and finding, searching based on those finds, on and on, without losing hope for the potential lack of results or structure. I let the rhizome grow, followed my intuition, and documented that growth. In retrospect, I think that (other than the rhizome) the introduction to new materialism is what really set us in motion. It meant we had a new way of 'looking' to explore, as well as learning to let the materials speak without us trying to tell them better. Because we decided to let the materials in as partners rather than *materials*, I was forced to try to understand the physical qualities and reactions that makes it *react, live*. I've been able to understand the paint better because of this philosophy, as my research has let me see phenomenon in nature reflected in the reactions of the paint – or is it the

other way around? The Rayleigh-Taylor Instability is an example of one of the discoveries that has allowed me to enable the paint to live on its own, knowing how to let *it* perform. We've developed a confidence as performers as we're no longer lost without knowing what we're looking for. Now we know the 'ground rules' for each of our performances, and improvise based on that. These 'ground rules' are of course the material's agency, our immersion, and our chosen separation from the audience as participants. This may seem vague, and it may change after this project is done and Blomlaok grows further in this or in a completely different direction. But that was the point of such an open research interest to begin with. I wanted to start a process of growing, becoming, that will take us far – also after this thesis is finished and after our final exam is done.

We've learned to communicate *through our* materials, *with* the materials. It's a language that is shy and vulnerable, and it cannot be forced. Once we force something, we're silencing the material and its voice, but if we are too passive, the communication between us ceases.

Like I said in the introduction of my method-chapter: the goal of my practice is not necessarily to generate ground breaking, formal knowledge, but to make what I discover explicit both through my art and through writing. This thesis is an insight into my artistic process and to the connections made between literature, philosophy, text, visuals and physical work. I've allowed myself to become an observer in my own head, I work in the studio, I see the likeness between the rhizome and the paint. The connections made in my head are based on the visuals of the different themes – rhizome, chaos theory, fractals – as much as the content. New materialism also accentuates the observer-role as I let the material act on its own. I observe the interaction between my skin and the paint so I can let it guide me, so I can experience the intra-action between myself and the material. This, as a living inquiry, will stay with me as I'm never done exploring, never done asking questions, looking, searching, reflecting, and discovering.

Chapter 7: Future perspectives

Performance at Sørlandsutstillingen



Poster for Sørlandsutstillingen del 2, 2018.

We will be using the same plexiglass as in the performance we held on the 22.03.2018, as it was easy to work with and easy to get in the back of the car without any particular problems. I'll also be using clear plastic cups to suspend the plexiglass over the floor, and I'll be looking for white plastic to cover the floor beneath us, as Flekkefjord Kunstforening was specific about me not spilling any paint on their floors. I'm excited to see how the acoustics will work in a smaller space, especially in an old wooden building, and how that will affect the way I experience the sound.

I'll admit that I'm a bit nervous to see what our flow will be like, and if it'll be a bad performance or not. We need to make sure to take our time, to allow for breaks and pauses, and to not shift the control too fast.

Concerning appearance, we will both be wearing dark jeans and black t-shirts as we work, and I'll be wearing my black painting shoes instead of the blue ones I've been using in the studio. This will serve as our uniform here, and at our performance(s) at the UiArt festival.

One thing I'm excited to see by performing in a smaller space is how this will affect the audience and how close they will be getting to the work. I'm used to seeing people get *way too close* after we're done performing, as if I don't care about my work because I'm so rough with the materials. I've seen people touching it, pointing over the canvas or plate with their *feet*, so close to touching the surface that it makes my blood boil. *I don't understand how people in the audience can be that shy while we're performing, but once we're done, they act as if they're entitled to touch the work. They would never dare touch Kjetils guitar without permission, but my painting is fine?* The painting will be left there to dry, and will be laying there for the remainder of the exhibition as a fossil. Kjetil and I have discussed recording the audio from the performance and playing it back in headphones next to the

fossil so the audience can listen as well as watch after the performance and until the exhibition is taken down. That way, both the painting and the sound will be present for the audience who were not there during the performance. We are still undecided though, because we like the idea of people having to be there to truly experience it.

One thing we've agreed to keep in mind is *to take our time*, to not rush anything for the sake of 'entertainment' or let that anxiety kill our flow. We should not worry about being boring or exciting, slow or fast. We will take our time, listen, observe, and talk back through the materials.

I was unsure if I would get the time to write about this, but here is what I've written my journal that right after our performance in Flekkefjord:

I prepped the floor with sheer plastic sheets as I wasn't able to find white ones. I taped it down in a square which we would be working in, and this seemed like a good way to make people approach us as we performed, because there is a visible line that they don't want to cross but can come very close to. We positioned ourselves in the middle of the room, with paintings of trees on plexiglass on one side and landscape photography on the other side. It was a great space for our performance, the art on the walls displaying trees and mountains, and our fossil that will be reminiscent of fungal growth or corals.

This time, we went real slow. The acoustics were fantastic, lots of echo. Kjetil was playing more minimalistic than before, and I was working slowly and repetitive as a response to this. I ended up using earth tones such as yellow, greens, brown, black and white, and the process of the cells and branches crawling over the glass made it seem alive and growing. I'd used a lot of silicone oil and turpentine mixed with the paint, which gave very dramatic effects. There were two little girls sitting next to me, and I could hear them whisper every time I did something that they found exciting. 'Wow, look at that!' 'What is she doing?' 'Oh, look at that right there!' 'Did you see? She wiped paint on her jeans!'

Their excitement and fascination for the reactions in the paint is exactly what I've been wishing for in an audience, it was almost contagious. It felt like it reinforced my immersion in the music and the colours.

Because of the amount of silicone oil I added, the cells grew very large, large enough to be seen from across the room. Depending on the layers of the paint, the cells would change colours as they grew and other paints came to the surface. This allowed for most of the audience to see how the materials live their own life, and in response to each other (music and paint). In this performance however, I

had less physical contact with the paint. I poured the different colours into a cup and poured it onto the glass in different ways, but I only touched it to drag lines of paint across the empty spaces. I feel like this was a good way to respond to the way Kjetil was playing, because he played such long tones and let them fade very slowly before starting on the next one. With the intensity and volume of the music I poured small or large amounts of paint, and let the last drops of paint drip down as the tones started to vibrate.

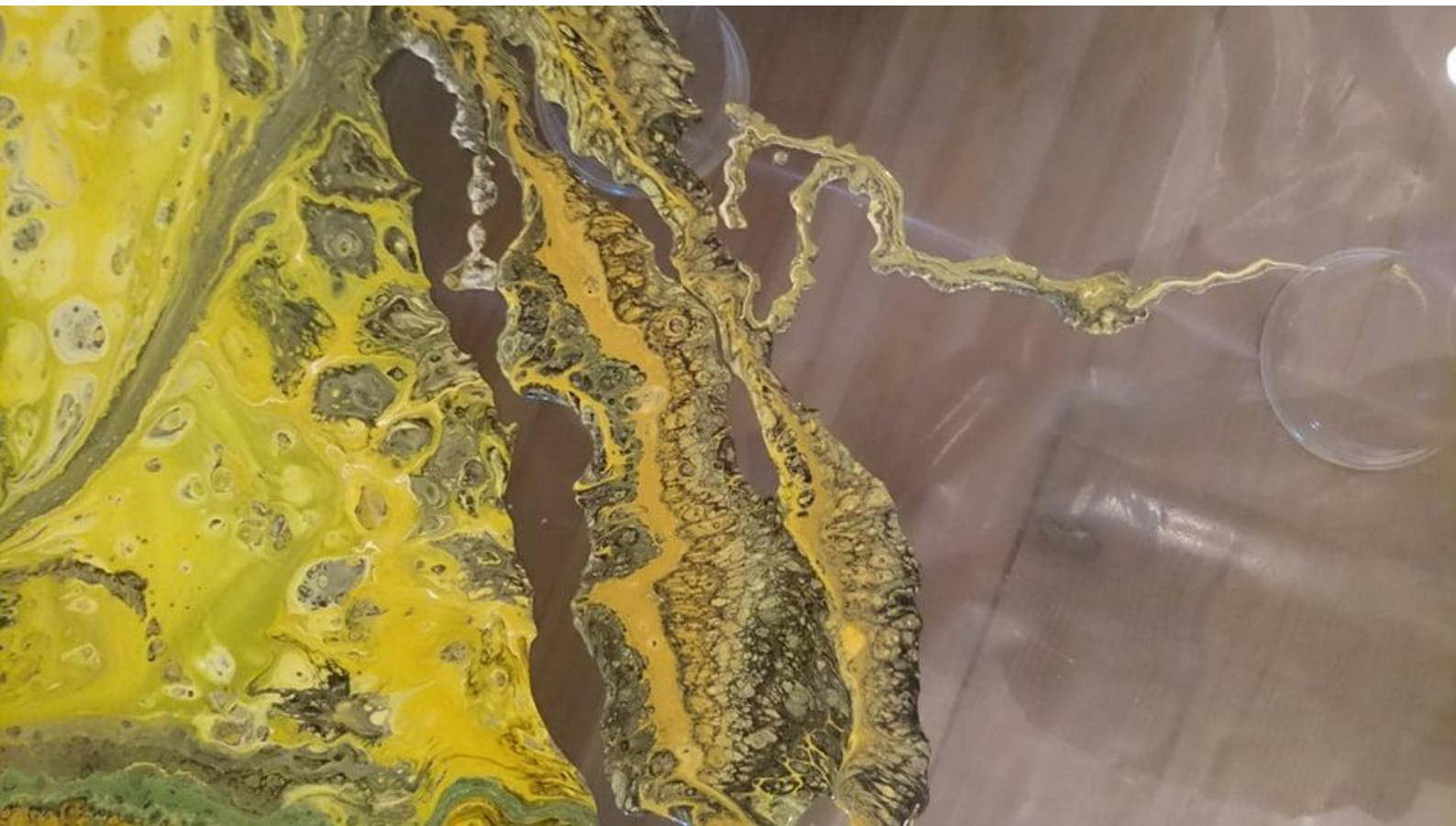
*I'm not sure how long we were performing, but I must say that I've never felt this good about our work before. We were the opening act of the exhibition and so many people came just to see **us**. It was absolutely exhausting, inspiring, and fantastic.*

We were approached by one of the other artists after the performance who loved the way Kjetil played. He said that when he heard the music and looked at his own pictures, it just 'felt right'. Because of this, we agreed with him and the second artist that we would play the recording of the performance on loop in the room for the remainder of the exhibition!

The painting will be left to fossilise right where we left it as the music from the performance plays until the end of the exhibition, and because the floor is slightly angled, it will continue to evolve until it dries completely.



Photo by Sigrid Lund



What will we show at the exam?

I've been so lucky as to get my hands on two huge plates of glass, I think they used to be walls in an office. They're both approximately 220x170 cm, so hopefully we'll be able to do two performances during the UiArt festival – one at the vernissage and the performance for the examination. They have wooden frames around them which I'll keep right up until the performances, to keep the glass stable and prevent breaking (they seem pretty easy to unscrew). Because this is regular glass and not Plexiglass, they are very heavy, and I would need something stronger than plastic cups to lift them off the floor. I would like to find something that would give the same aesthetic though, so I think I have to get my hands on some sturdy jam jars, or something that is also glass, but strong enough to suspend the weight of the plates without breaking. A small problem I can predict already now will be the tilting – I'm not sure I'll be strong enough to do it, or if it will be possible without the plates bending and breaking in my hands. Maybe I should keep the glass closer to the floor in case it slides off the 'legs' and breaks so the damage will be smaller. I'll have to consider wearing cut-proof gloves as I paint just in case, even if this may interrupt my physical interaction with the materials. On the other hand, it means I can use larger amounts of chemicals without hurting the skin.

We will continue to work in the studio right up until the date of the exam, and will probably do a process-exhibition in addition to the performance. It will be like showing a journal, only in a really big format, painted on glass. When the fossils are viewed together, it's easy to see the different moods and tempos in the performances they were produced during, as well as my exploration of the material. If we do this (I have yet to decide) it will work as a show of progress. Especially with our performance at the opening of the exhibition as well as the exam, the audience will see how we work, and then view the fossils in a new light – not just as paintings. This change of perception is very interesting, as it lets the material tell a story even when it's not 'acting'(/alive). Suddenly, they're imagining the paint flowing and the music, as if the fossils are coming back to life for a split second.

Tom Lid suggested something that both scares me and intrigues me: right when I'm done painting and the performance ends, I smudge it all out. I mush it all together, so there will be no 'pretty picture' left, and if you weren't present to see the performance, you won't see the painting either. This would accentuate the liveness of the performance, and it might alter the audience's relationship towards the work as it won't be possible for them to hang back while we're working and *then* take a look after we're done. This scares me for two reasons: I can't help but get attached to the paintings, as they are like journals to me, floating and beautiful memories, and I enjoy keeping them; and I'm scared of not leaving a result behind that can be evaluated by a sensor.

Future performances

In the future, however, I would like to focus more on the liveness of our performances – no recordings, no video, no pictures. I'll wash the paint off the glass and leave no trace behind. But it is a transition that needs to take its time, I have to learn how to detach myself from the paintings in this scenario. I'm deeply fascinated by the idea of the *temporary* and the idea of not leaving any trace behind, and I think the reason I'm so intrigued is because it scares me so much.

When working on my own as well, I love the idea of the whole 'you had to be there'. It creates a bond between me and the work and the audience – it's our secret.

Both Kjetil and I are very happy with how well Sørlandsutstillingen went, and we both want to continue to work in a more minimalistic manner. When we take our time, the materials can really speak. We've learned that there is nothing wrong with silence, it only creates more tension and curiosity.

Another *direction* we would like to pick up again at some point, is using live-projections of the paint projected out into the space we are working in to create a more literal immersive atmosphere. This way, the visuals will envelop the viewer more in the same way as the music does. This is also something that goes back to the synesthetic experience, as my experiences feel like they are being projected around me. In this version of Blomlaok, we can branch out in two different ways that we have already planned, which are as follows: we are hidden, behind curtains or walls, and performing *away* from the audience and projecting the visuals and the sound out in the space where the audience is. The other way is to project the visuals back on ourselves as we work, so that we are part of the canvas on which the paint is displayed. *I must admit that I fancy the idea of implementing technology in our performances as long as I can still get my hands dirty.* This folding and doubling back is what is described in a/r/tography, which I have really taken to heart as my way to work.



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