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A Line is an Edge, is a Colour, is a Shadow: Towards a Posthuman Account of Painting

by Maegan Harbridge



Abstract

A line is simultaneously a colour, a texture, and a tone: It is the abutting edge of positive and negative; the touching point of autonomous bodies. Following posthumanist scholars such as Sylvia Wynter, Karen Barad, and Cary Wolfe this essay employs a series of aesthetic insights on form, gathered in an abstract painter's studio, and applies them towards a methodology of care/full looking. Care/full looking traces the contingency of formal relationships so that a more robust ethico-onto-epistemology emerges: One that displays the entanglement of matter as it materializes and intra-acts with other bodies.

Keywords: posthuman, decentred human, painting, abstraction, relational, ethico-onto epistemology



About the Author

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Introduction

A line is simultaneously a colour, a texture, and a tone: it is the abutting edge of positive and negative, the breaking up and adjoining of two planes, the touching point of autonomous bodies.¹ To see form as relational is an undoing of the human—no longer at the centre, or with a centre, from which to establish single stories of origin that articulate and mark the stakes of (human and non-human) freedoms (McKittrick and Wynter 2015, 12), a fraying of peripheries, an unravelling of mind, a suspension of perspectival lines of sight for the extension of multidirectional lines of flight. Following posthumanist scholars such as Sylvia Wynter, Karen Barad, and Cary Wolfe, this essay proposes a collection of aesthetic insights on composition (line, colour, texture, shape, and subject matter), gathered in an abstract painter's studio as fieldwork towards a posthuman conception of abstract painting. In contrast to much creative and scholarly work since 1960's, this conception affirms the importance of formalism in painting, though it does so through a methodology of *care/full* looking, which traces the contingency of formal relationships so that a more robust ethico-onto-epistemology emerges (Barad and Kleinmann 2012, 77). In *posthuman painting*, form is considered relationally and iteratively, so that it axiomatically establishes an ethical entanglement between being and knowing. Developed through practices of critical perception, a posthuman account of abstract painting decentres notions of human exception through reflection on the relational, rather than fixed, quality of form.

To look with care is to observe the dissolving line between independent things—figure and ground. It is to witness the peculiarity of form as it erodes an idea of autonomous bodies.² These formal observations decentre subjects from the very form that they appear comprised of. Stable representations are destabilized as single “agential cuts” (Barad 2003, 815) where the observer necessitates the observed and not the other

way around.³ A studio practice of care/full looking revives abstract painting from the reductive and essentializing tendencies evoked throughout modernism to attend to the fluctuation of heterogenous forces that manifest a composition—acknowledging the queerness of form itself as a non-conforming shapeshifter (Barad 2011, 147).⁴ “Can we really afford not to think about composition now,” contemporary painter Amy Sillman asks, “when we seem surrounded by the decomposition and deformation of bodies and social structures” (2020, 51)? Line is the architecture of form that makes shapes both positive and void, simultaneously corporeal and implied: a theatre of relations that form and inform on a knot of topography in formation.

In a posthuman context, abstract painting is retheorized as a practice of radical care that, through critical perception, disrupts normative conceptions and reproductions of Western constitutions of bodies and being. It is a reimagination of the “purity” of Greenbergian formalism from static manifestation to shimmering contamination, an ethico-onto-epistemological position on matter that illuminates not only a relational conception of composition, but, likewise, the relationality within and between social, political, and ecological bodies (Barad 2011, 147).⁵ Ethico-onto-epistemology is an ethics of indeterminacy—a body of knowledge that acknowledges the dissolution of the body for relations in flux. There is reparation at the foundation of such observations. Care/full looking dispenses with exceptions of autonomous bodies, the ascetics of borders and barricades, to acknowledge bodies as variegated, heterogenous, configurations. To tell a story of composition as an interlinking extension of seemingly independent forms is a Copernican leap of centres to peripheries (McKittrick and Wynter 2015, 46).⁶

Composition: Fieldwork Towards a Posthuman Conception of Abstract Painting

I. Line

A line is a punctuation between light and shadow, the division between wake and sleep, an expanse of fracturing planes, an uneven topology of exterior façades, the flow of water, a break in the ice, an advancing coast, an intersection of decomposition and regeneration. Line is the delicate containment of life, a registering pulse, a walking path for bodies, eyes, and hands in the dark, the bones of drawing,⁷ the architecture of thought—a habit, a direction, a pattern of behaviour.

A line is a sentence, a circumference, a shifting cartography of imperial control. Animated by elation and fatigue, lines are the expansion and contraction of skin—a scratch, a stretchmark, a tear, the folding of inside and out, a mobius strip. A line is the crossing of territories, and personal boundaries, the persistent impression of things unsettled yet bound together in an uneven distribution of form. It encloses possibilities

of perception, a subjectivity that refines an object of attention to a singular position of fact, but this line of thought is porous—malleable and inconclusive. It is a sociogenic trace of enclosure that is historically drawn (Erasmus 2020, 9),⁸ a fiction systemic yet radically contingent to differentiation, mutation, and dissent.



Figure 1. Arp, Hans. *Untitled (dessin déchiré [torn paper])*, 1934. ©Hans Arp Bildkunst (Copyright Visual Arts-CARCC, 2023). Collage with paper, ink, pencil. Image courtesy of Stiftung Arp e.V.

Line evokes the impossibility of two forms touching; it is an edge between bodies that marks a contoured shape of relation—of love, or hate, or reciprocity. Line is a carving out of space, a reversal of ground, a break between forms that does not solidify separation but illuminates an entanglement of interrelation. On one scale a line is a border, but on another scale a line is a field—open to vast microbial networks, chemicals, UV rays, words, and shadows. A line is never only a line, it is a manifold event—a ripple of relations across a field in flux.

II. Colour

Colour is relational, and these relationships, these fluctuations of form that illuminate a shape's surface, are primary sources for re-storying the world (McKittrick 2015, 4). Formalist theory—seemingly esoteric, enigmatic, historically coded, disciplinary

knowledge—is a toolkit for a posthumanist paradigm, an attentional prosthetics for critical perception, a sharpening of senses as the arming of oneself against a brutally insensitive present (Weber 2013, xi). Colour is biologically and socially constituting: a matter of perspective—stable and symbolic, concrete, associative, and transparent. It is a mirage of micro-expressions and macro-aggressions—a social construction of stop and go, the crushing tone of watching an oil spill grow. Colour defines the shifts between nuance and void. It is an economy of taste—both toxic and intoxicating, a resource for capital and control, light and dark, cool and warm, a division of boundaries that both disrupts and integrates wholes.

Colour is the advancing and receding of atmospheric lines of sight and its ever-increasing absence is the technophilic capture of all the wavelengths of light. It maintains implicit and explicit relationships, simultaneously translucent and opaque. Hue is an “existence without standing” (Moten 2013, 738): wavering between loud and nuanced, tangible and sensed. It is the oscillation, absorption, and differentiation of light.

Two pieces of paper overlap—one Cobalt blue, the other a Cerulean hue. Two bodies touching, their boundaries of colour inform one another. The attraction and repulsion of analogous blues, of varying temperatures and intensities, imply depth and distance. This “push-pull” of pictorial space (Sillman 2020, 48), a founding tenet of modernist abstraction, is not a modernist reduction but a metaphysics of interconnectedness that produces emergent forms (Bignall and Rigney 2018, 164)⁹—of intensity and calm, illusion and fact. A discrepancy of value, temperature, and tone, two blues together relay depth perception and fluctuate as a performance of their own.



Figure 2. Harbridge, Maegan. *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 2023.

III. Texture

Texture is both corporeal and implied, solid and unstable. It is an index of temporality, a collection of beats, an uneven topography of cracks and crevices, a pocked surface of ridges and ravines. Texture is a lattice-like skin, a barrier and a sponge: soft and sinuous as silk, stucco and porcelain-like paint that stirs the intangible, inequitable, experience of embodied understanding (Rancière and Gage 2019, 11).¹⁰ Texture is a legibility, a proof of both the witnessed and sublime; it is both the impression of a tightly fitting watch and the striations of liquid as it sets to solid over centuries of otherwise unmarked time.

Texture, a perceptual phenomenon, is sensed as a haptic event with affective power (Graw 2018, 20). We touch it like a wool blanket, with “fingery eyes” (Haraway 2008, 249), and its many associations live in our body. In painting, it moves us to its surface and substance, its silhouette and swell. Painting recalls texture so vividly that it is an actant, a thing, that contains its own vibrancy, its own liveness, “enmeshed in a fortuitous assemblage of other (especially nontext) bodies” (Bennett 2012, 232). Flat and voluminous, attractive and repulsive, texture is everything and nothing—solid and space. Texture becomes line, becomes shape, becomes shadow, within an iterative effect appearance is fixed (as a single, fragmented cut).

IV. Shape

Speaking is the domain of figuration, but the shape of shape is a silence (Sillman 2020, 76), an abstract painter’s punctuation for reflection: stiff, solid, delicate, and indefinite—an offering of space for unarticulated bodies of historically underrepresented forms. A synchronous occupation of multiple terrains, shape is full with “quantized indeterminacies” (Barad 2018)—emptiness, and void. Shape is an ever-expanding inconsistency of associations, a simultaneity of faces and spheres—a singular yet archetypical gesture of emotion, a contour, and a dimension in motion. A shape radiates exquisite rage and fear, disquiet and delight. It is the face of chaos, a virtual trace. Stoic, yet never fixed, shape is a transfiguration; a protrusion and collapsing of configuration; a constellation of colour, planes, and positionality; a chimera of absolute definition in an ever-unfolding state of variation.

Shape is the holding of tension between friend and foe, a temporal surface and substance of ebb and flow—non-talk, “unthought” (Hayles 2017, 1), a contesting of the logic of chronological time (Braidotti 2019, 126). Shape flattens observation into a plane of smooth space, animating the possibilities of an excess of form, an accumulation of forces, a strange topology in flux. Everything that exceeds representation is a shape and a shape is the delineation of everything representable. It is a border line of difference,

texture, colour, and tone that is a surface façade of the most enigmatic matter, an active ambiguity of anchored physicality. Shape is a carrier of opinions and feelings, indifferent of their texture, colour, and tone. It is a suspension of stance to hold space for exception, mutation, and change. Shape flickers the unresolved emergence of matter, an architectural intensity of internal and external fluctuations, a reaction of the intra-action of objects in space.



Figure 3. Harbridge, Maegan. *Untitled (Wintergarten)*, acrylic on paper, 2018. Photo by Laura Findlay.

V. *Subject(s) Matter*

Whose eyes were the original meditators of taste, of bodies, of boundaries, and the natural world? Icons of a Western humanism proliferate as Cartesian cuts where representations, “words and things” (Barad 2003, 812), systematize all. Eden and evolution conflate into a single story of origin, a massive narrating apparatus, as a doctrinal view: a weapon of a mass destruction in the expansion of a two-dimensional Man, a program always primed to enact a hierarchy of truth.

In painting, abstraction is a space unique unto itself. It is present and full with pictorial and sensorial content but is simultaneously empty and relays no concrete information. It is a battleground of subject matter where matters of subject become matters of sovereignty. A hotly contested concern in the history of abstract painting, subjects’ matter only as actors of creation and consumption—for their transactions of cognitive exchange. Bodies of representation make up bodies of information, institutions

in their international stakes. They are the manifestation, the machination, of capital and control—of Man1 and Man2 that breed and actualize as the becoming of intentions, ideas, and effects (McKittrick and Wynter 2015, 10).¹¹ Subject matter moves as an infection of ideas. These embodied epistemologies are resolutions of bodies of knowledge that emerge in micro and macro effects.

A subject is a formulation of form conforming to the force of human will. An intention made manifest through plastic materiality that sculpts the plasticity of the human brain. Subject matter is built up as surface on/to support as a text within the human imaginary; it infiltrates bodies as concentrations of collected and recollected thoughts, as contagions—the concatenations of human will.

Perspectival space seems a “deep fake past” (Chun 2021),¹² where the colouring of history translates as a linear lens of volumetric MAN—an autonomous view, an aggression of form—reproducing conceptions and receptions of human exception. What would dissolve if linear perception unravelled? If representations of God, Evolution, and Capital ceased to exist could figures of authority still authorize force in the dark? A grand fracturing of an enlightened eye is a mutation of perspective that unsettles the definition between volume and void.

Can abstract painting be the technology that undoes an underlying philosophy of representation in the circulation of global consumptions and control? This undoing might work at the incongruencies of our molecular machinery, wriggling into our genetic code, infecting and affecting knots of knowledge formations, modes of linear perception—disrupting normative thinking that might give way to heterogeneous, intersectional, modalities of being; new cosmologies of seeing. Can abstract painting be an “unthought” that interrupts the linearity of conscious causality—a narrative of human exceptional actors? Can it be a technology to address, with a viral pervasivity, the carelessness of a technological Metaverse in its ever-advancing capture and capitalizing of attention? Can an unravelling of representation become a stop in the circulation and flow of *homo oeconomicus* (McKittrick and Wynter 2015, 10)? A counter emergence of ontological in/determinacy?¹³

Working from the understanding that we are always, first technological beings, I imagine abstract painting as a piece of technology that is a culturally-constructed tool for critical perception, a prosthetic for looking that enables access to the relational quality of form. *Care/full* looking is a practice that develops a posthuman conception of abstract painting as a “first-aid kit” to address the carelessness of “our current technocultural way of being” (O’Gorman 2015, 25). It is a practice of looking that attends to the intra-action between formal relationships within a composition in order to

reconnect self and other through a focused attention to the troubled matter of subjects and how they matter (materialize) as migrations of form. This act of care—a political act of repair (Odell 2019, 23)—disarms our current foothold of representational perception, so that one might discover an ethics of entanglement embedded within a performative conception.

Care/full Looking



Figure 4. Klee, Paul (1879 – 1940). *Teppich [Carpet]*, 1927 (48), pen on paper on cardboard, 23x30cm. Private Collection USA. Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Bildarchiv.

Art history aside but inside the vectors of Western abstraction is an “epistemicide” of peripheral thought (Santos 2014, 92) —line, colour, texture, and shapes pillaged from “philosophical terrain[s] already occupied by indigenous epistemologies” (Braidotti 2019, 160). To reconceive abstraction as a becoming across boundaries, as a becoming with many, is to confront the colonial legacy of practices of appropriations; it is to repatriate stories of form, once sworn to the galleries of the European avant-garde, back to the worlds that originally brought them into being (Sundberg 2021, 35).¹⁴ To trace the lineage of abstraction is to surrender stories of Western autonomy, authorship, and innovation for a prehistory of abstract lines of sight that were always already “radically quiet” yet radically full (Sillman 2020, 88), teeming with a spaciousness for something else to arise.

To hone the “situated knowledges” of a painter’s studio is to expand on formalist concerns of composition and embrace making kin of all kinds (Haraway 2008, 389). To,

in fact, become “oddkin” with the animate materiality of edges, colours, and shadows (Haraway 2016, 4). Looking with care illuminates an ethics embedded within line, colour, texture, and shape as the iterative motion of a world manifesting. It is an ethical practice that is its own call towards stewardship and reciprocity. *Care/full looking* is to see the secrets that a painting gives away on the surface of its support: it is a posthuman pedagogical tool that articulates, through differentiation, how the form of an abstract painting reveals the flatness of representational philosophy—an epistemological system of knowledge that is both linear and exceptionalist, developed from “cartesian habit[s] of mind” (Barad 2003, 807). To depict the world through representation is a mode of classification that cuts up and divides entities through “the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on” (Wolfe 2010, xxv). It is a philosophy that emerges from Descartes theory of evolution where Man is the sole inheritor of the world and whom, through his capacity to form rational thought, contains the soul of the world. These are the “fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy inherited from humanism” (Wolfe 2010, 48). An epistemology of *relata* severed from relations, a taxonomy of individual entities, an origin story that crowns the human exceptional, which seems a rather dangerous position to proceed from, one might conclude, in our rapidly ascending conclusion.

These accumulations of insights are an accelerating force; a gestation of marks, time, pigments, and horse hair; comprised of tempers of varying intensity that mutate from subject matter to matters of subjecthood that “uncouples from itself, shades or snaps into something else” (Helmreich 2011, 694). Human flesh, tea cups, trees, independent bodies of autonomous things are sets of assumptions in play—performing an ethics of bodies, the touching of territories, the violation of boundaries, a differentiation of form where the edge of darkness dissolves into patterns of diffracted light; cartographic distinctions of figure and ground dissolve.

“Why do we think that the existence of relations requires *relata*?” asks physicist Karen Barad (2003, 812). The erosion of independent bodies’ “epistemological ruptures” wear at the strongholds of a humanist exceptionalism (McKittrick 2015, 1), giving way to an ethics woven into the interactivity of lines and planes, shapes and their shadows. To observe with care is to enquire into the relational nature of bodies that affect and effect one another, that are the result of their ongoing autopoietic manifestations. Without *relata*, the independence of exceptional bodies natur/ally disappear, where qualities are the allies of configuration. To pause and be critical of aesthetic relationships is a practice of *care/full looking* that can be applied to more complex situations.



Figure 5. Harbridge, Maegan. *Fountainhead*, 2019. Photo by Laura Findlay.

Divisions are concepts, but I still have to navigate sharp edges in the dark. The contours of property are drawn between self and other, policed in institutions of love and war. The curve of my body is a border contingent to the chemical, biological, social, architectural, political, and poetic context that it touches. We are bodies closed off only at a meter-scale reality (Dicaglio 2021, 26). Seduced by the idea of possessive individualism, bodies are translated into the division of boundaries: private property, state- and nationhood, subject and object, land and sea, earth and sky. As if what pollutes the land cannot touch the sea or what is buried in the earth will not infiltrate the sky. As if my fence line seals off my plot of land, the worms and birds and everything that falls between. As if somehow a cartographic distinction can be made while crossing through a rocky mountain ridge or trails of Swiss and Italian Alp terrains.

To see with care is to register the mercurial quality of appearances as they shimmer, an entanglement of figure and ground. To render with care is to attend to this oscillation, addressing with equal attention both the continuation between positive and negative, light and dark (iteratively this informs what things are composed of). The warmth of skin curves into space via a palette of shadowy violet. An edge is articulated only through its abutting plane. To see a still-life with *care/full looking* is to observe the relationship from vessel to table, table to wall, wall to shadow—a methodology for critical analysis that can be extrapolated outside of the exercise.



Figure 6. Harbridge, Maegan. *In Texts*, acrylic on paper. 2018. Photo by Laura Findlay.

The shadow of a tree informs (performs) the quality of the soil—a shape and its shadow cannot be divided. What grows in the shade of the tree effects the ecology of the tree and this shape is contingent to the rotation and spinning of the earth, the volatility of the wind, the cycle and the labyrinthine nature of mycelium networks knotted within its roots. The representation of a tree speaks only of a single, fragmented, cut—a momentary fractured snapshot of an enigmatic web of constituents.

In attuning ourselves to the compositional attributes of form, as they flicker between the concrete and the indeterminate, bodies are revealed as variegated, uneven, and speculative topologies. But what is gained through this honing of critical perception? And how can practices of looking play a role in a yet unrealized egalitarian future? Perhaps, simply, formal analysis through care/full looking reveals bodies as non-singular entities “contiguous and co-constructed” (Braidotti 2019, 127), situated within and in relation to other bodies. This is an insight that erodes the anthropocentric perspective of possessive individualism, which divides and conquers, privileges and paves over, everything outside its purview.

To show meaning as relational, to link between hand and shadow, self and other is to hone in on “the rich multiplicities and topologies of a heterogeneously and non-teleologically connected world” (Haraway 2008, 27). Learning to look with care is “a non-linear [re]making” (Erasmus 2020, 2), where what might seem fugitive to matters of subjects are discursive not in their separability but in their relationality. To observe actively through *care/full looking* is to account for nomadic relationships on the periphery of a single field of vision. Chiaroscuro is but one of many ways that visual artists see and teach others to see relationally, however there are multiple ways that abstract painting makes this legible.

To see form as a multiplicity is to widen the scope of engagement with the world around us, where singular perspectives and normative attitudes butt against the performative materiality of stable ground. This is an investigation not only essential to practices of looking but also practices of representation, where “rendering is a practice of ‘worlding’” that collapse “metaphor and materiality” (Myers 2015, 181). The crucial acknowledgment here being that those representations “secure some kinds of objects, meanings, and forms of life, to the exclusion of others” (Myers 2015, 181) and are seductive enough to illuminate entire fields of knowledge while extinguishing the possibility of others.

To divide the world into relata is to rely on habits of representational determination that focus on individual entities such as atoms, Man, nations, and corporations, as single matters of concern. For Barad, representationalism occupies a disproportional amount of importance in our determination of meaning, where an emphasis on “words and things” do not account for the motion of “material-discursive forces,” shaping and reshaping an evanescence of being (Barad 2003, 810). To hone in on materiality as an interwoven phenomenon is an insight that erodes the pathology of an “autonomous self-possessed subject” (O’Gorman 2015, 16). It quantifies the generative aspect of difference through illuminating the diffractive capacity of composition. Shaping through difference is the touching of autonomous forms, a delicate dance between virus and host—a liveliness of mycelium and trees, an overlapping of boundaries, an unravelling of form, a queer unfolding of a scalar field where every difference is an iterative shifting of shapes between line, colour, and the texture of form.

Being pressed to visualize the contours of an ethico-onto-epistemology is to live and tell a story of living as a set of relations. This is a story that interrupts the narrative of my own exceptionalism. It is a story that emerges by way of lines to paper, paint to canvas: an exodus of the everyday that is not an escape but a concentration of care. To reinstate form as a formulation of “interactive ecologies,” “process orientated ontologies” (Bignall

and Rigney 2018, 160),¹⁵ is an act, a critical resource, that inspects the “overrepresented” conditions and reproductions of Western constitutions of bodies and being (Ferreira da Silva 2015, 101); it is but one aesthetic possibility for “how we might give humanness a different future” (McKittrick and Wynter 2015, 9).

Conclusion

Abstract painting matters as a socially constructed tool for seeing. It is a technology for looking at the relational qualities of a mercurial world. Care/full looking is a way of thinking with Barad’s exploration of the indeterminacy and queerness of quantum scale reality and is about putting language to the indeterminate and intra-active nature of a painter’s studio and beyond. Like line, the colour, texture, and shape of an abstract composition exist not as independent bodies but inform as a compilation of relationships: the coming together of component parts, as the materialization of emerging matter. But this topology is not fixed. As a line wavers between contour and edge it displays the indeterminate nature of its body. Learning to see relationally, through a posthuman practice of care/full looking, decentres representational modes of passive possessivity that have been integral to the sustainment of the “profitable brutalities” of Man2 at the expense of everything else (McKittrick 2015, 7). To see form as relational is an emergence from a haze of representational narration. It is to acknowledge a radical otherness—yet interconnectedness—of all things, simultaneously fashioning and refashioning a temporal present.

Care/full looking entails a realignment of perception from habits of subject/object differentiation to an attentiveness towards the allied nature of form, which is to observe a continuation, an integration, between bodies as they manifest an entanglement of being. This is a cultivation of ethics through perception where a sensing body is confronted with the stakes of its own contingency. To see form as iterative, connected, and in relationship to everything else, reveals the instability of autonomous bodies and illuminates their alliance. Practices of care/full looking stimulate response/ability towards a critical awareness of the entanglement of being—a self-consciousness that is, in itself, a response to Barad’s call for matter’s ability to respond. To see the companionship of form is to see connections between animate and inanimate materiality. The simplicity of a line within an abstract painting mobilizes a simultaneity of sight, where a line is always itself and other: an edge, a colour, a shape, or a shadow. This is not a modernist reduction but a fluctuation of form, the wavering of visual perception as it advances and recedes, expands and contracts. To see the contingent quality of composition through care/full looking is a learning to learn (Sundberg 2014, 40)¹⁶ the companionship of form, where interdependent kin of all kinds animate the multiplicity

and entangled topology of a heterogenous world: a process-orientated ontology that can't help but evade the possibility of representation. Posthuman painting rethinks a modernist, formal sensibility of purity to contamination, activating an alternative lens for perception that reverses a display of disparate forces mixing, and manifesting as a continuous performance of relations.

Notes

Thank you to Zentrum Paul Klee for permission to reproduce Klee's *Carpet* (1927) and to Copyright Visual Arts (Canada) for permission to reproduce Arp's *Untitled [torn paper]* (1934).

¹ An earlier version of these ideas is explored in a previously published piece under a different name. See Harbridge, Maegan, 2022, "A Shadow is a Colour, a Body is a Shape, an Edge is a Line: Towards a Posthuman Account of Painting," Parts 1 & 2, *Borderland*, 14 November. <https://espaciofronterizo.com/borderland/a-shadow-is-a-colour-1/>.

² Bodies is used here in the broadest sense to include all human and non-human, animate and inanimate, form and formless bodies.

³ An "agential cut" is distinguished from "cartesian cut" in that the former infers *relata* are the ongoing result of particular relations where the latter infers the inherent separability between subject and object.

⁴ Following Barad, "queerness"—in the context of posthuman painting—refers to the unfixed quality, or appearance, of formal attributes within composition. A line "gives empirical evidence that identity is not fixed and apparent, but performative" as it wavers between an edge, border, colour, shadow, and back again (147).

⁵ This point is further articulated in Barad's investigation of "queer quantum ontological performances" of "macroscopic entities" to develop an appreciation of queerness "across divisions of scale and familiarity" (2011, 147).

⁶ This reference to a Copernican leap thinks with Wynter in her exploration Frantz Fanon's "new Copernican leap" instigated through the "self-reflexive" conception of W.E.B. Dubois' "double consciousness" (2015, 46). To see form as relational and not independently constituted, I argue, is a "self-reflexive" consciousness of the doubling of form as both solid and unstable, particle and wave.

⁷ Line as the bones of drawing is an idea building on Amy Sillman's investigation of Abstract Expressionism where she likens drawing to "the bones of thinking itself" (2020, 91).

⁸ The idea of a line as the refinement of fact thinks with Fanon and Wynter's concept of "sociogeny" where lines of experience, thought, and sight impress into the psyche of the colonised and colonizer as "psychopathologies" ("ways of knowing and seeing") that are precarious and can be interrupted (Erasmus 2020, 9).

⁹ Following Simone Bignall and Daryle Rigney, formalism accounts for the fluctuation of heterogenous forces that manifest as matter rather than the reductive or essentializing tendency evoked throughout modernism (2018, 164).

¹⁰ Embodied understanding, suggested here as inequitably experienced, builds upon Jacques Rancière notion of the "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière and Gage 2019, 11). Rancière's distribution of the sensible refers to the opportunity an individual has for sense experience and the correlation of that capacity to their assigned class. He illuminates this correlation by referring to Plato and the worker's role in politics. Rancière questions who can participate in politics if the worker does not have the time. He determines that politics is actualized in taking time that

is otherwise not available to take. In an interview with Rancière where these ideas are discussed in the context of art, Mark Foster Gage terms the moment where there is a disassociation of the eyes from the working body and the worker reclaims agency over sensory experience as the “retribution of the sensible” (2019, 11). This is a pivotal moment in emancipation for Rancière, where sensory equality precedes social equality, suggesting that an aesthetic revolution would proceed a social revolution.

¹¹ McKittrick discusses Wynter’s use the figure of Man1 and Man2 as the embodiments of Western foundational origin stories, narratives deeply embedded within contemporary conceptions of the human. Man1 first develops out of a pre-Renaissance theological order derived from medieval Europe’s Latin-Christian knowledge systems later evolves into the figure of Man2—an eponymous figuration of the Western bourgeoisie’s *homo oeconomicus*.

¹² In her talk “Discriminating Data,” Chun refers to the digital archive of algorithmic “histories” as a “deep fake past” that by virtue of its over representational capacity has the potential to erase peripheral and alternative versions of history and epistemologies (Chun 2021, 11:08 min.).

¹³ The notion of counter emergence builds off Wynter’s idea of the “Third Emergence” where there lays in waiting the possibility of a reconstitution of origins of human life and the world as non-linear (Erasmus 2020, 2). In/determinacy refers to Karen Barad’s conception of matter iteratively manifesting as a process of determinations in flux—never fully fixing (2020, 1).

¹⁴ Sundberg thinks with the notion of performance in order to account for how knowledge is produced. She says, “I identify two performances enacted in posthumanist theories that work to constitute posthumanist geographies as Eurocentric: silence about location and silence about Indigenous epistemes” (2021, 35). This essay acknowledges the appropriation of abstract form by early European modernist artists to locate a formalist investigation first in the relational ontologies of indigenous epistemologies rather than becoming an account of only the Western canon of abstraction.

¹⁵ Bignall and Rigney question the extent to which the “new Humanities” include long pre-established Indigenous conceptions of interconnectivity between human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate materiality within a “new” materialist ethics (2018, 160). Through a becoming aware of form as relational, this essay attempts to resituate humans as form and in relation to form—entangled within a process orientated ontology.

¹⁶ Sundberg distinguishes learning to learn from simply learning as the gathering of knowledge from being in the world, as a *walking with* or “participatory reciprocity, which frames knowledge as a social activity and entails learning to perceive and receive Indigenous epistemes as part of the geopolitical present” (2014, 40).

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