MATTER & SPIRIT: The Syncretic Drawing

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Abstract

_Afloat_ comprises a series of drawings, installation and video that explore the correlative ideas of the body as the medium of incarnation and drawing as the medium to articulate existence. The research is a collection of poetic rules for the action of being in the studio. _Afloat_ is constructed according to these rules which then investigates general principles for the poetics of the artwork. The poetics are thought of in this case articulated through what I have termed operational systems.

The most significant operational systems involves the individual Spirit-Body relationship and the way spirit and body operate syncretically, following the definition of Spirit offered by Wilson Solon in *Inigma Iberico* (2005). The research investigates the striving for a harmonious equilibrium within these operational systems when taken into the studio and therefore explores how the systems translate into the process of production and the art objects.

A syncretic process of production explores and reflects the same kind of interdependent relationship that exists between matter and spirit. The language resulting from the impulse to equilibrium found in the interaction between the operational system spirit and matter raises the question of truth in art. What makes for creation of, what IS, a truthful artwork?

The correlation that this research intends to establish between art and existence is translated by the metaphorical sensation of being afloat, which is also where the work finds its title. It is through this psychological and physical state that the parallel will be understood, using the specific studio scenario of the space of drawing and its extensions as it unfolds into other mediums in its syncretic _ekstasis_
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the masters.
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
(iii) the thesis is 10125 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Catarina Mil-Homens
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INTRODUCTION

Starting from the premise that matter and non-matter are the two components of the incarnated being, respectively the body and Spirit, it is the spirit of the individual being that shapes all things contained in its existence that is the contention of the research. This relation is the condition we exist in and translated into art articulates a striving for harmony, for equilibrium, for the creation of an embodied vision that reflects this parallel correlative predicament.

By understanding the devices of the spirit and their components and methodical ways, here called operational systems, we can trace a set of rules and laws that reflect the way the spirit operates as the ground for the rules of the studio and its embodiments. The aim of this set of rules is to understand an intangible group of elements that take place when these operational systems are transferred there, to explore how drawing unfolds into other mediums which reflects the same binding dynamics of the spirit and body.

This correlative parallel, the operational systems of the individual with the studio practice, operates according to a set of rules that function as guides. Imperceptible doors of perception, Aldous Huxley like, which presents us with a path to the required equilibrium for the understanding of the whole that happens apart from time and space. A path covered in the ways of William Blake’s performative work process that according to Claire Colebrook,¹ was an analogical language, immanent and transcendent in nature, the non material in the material a reincarnative actuality by analogy.

The rules that binds these correlative systems together is based on a syncretic routine where different elements working together do not absorb each other but add and it is

¹ Clair Colebrook. Blake, Deleuzian aesthetics and the digital. (London: Continuum
Fig. 1.
Ad Reinhardt
Abstract Painting, 1963
Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm

Fig. 2.
Gutai Group, Murakami Saburo
Laceration of Paper, 1955
Performance held on the first Gutai Group Art Exhibition in Tokyo 1955.
in the union of the parts that the whole can be found. The whole that is here translated into the final body of artwork presented lives off numerous different types of syncretic connections reminiscent of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa created a world populated by his own personas, over 80 heteronyms, which had different and very specific details that kept them apart from each other. However it is only by the multiplicity of their existence that we know the poet that created them, or at least the worlds he dissipated himself in.

The set of rules that provide a method to the creative process reveal themselves in the studio layer after layer, these explores the question of time, the marks we leave, the rhythm at which we leave them and what we take from it: in ways not always as subtle as the dark layers of Ad Reinhardt paintings (Fig.1), which are at first silent surfaces that take time to be understood, and not always as abrupt as the Gutai Group performance of crossing a sequence of paper frames (Fig.2).

For if time is thought without numbers and space as an infinity flow of engaged repetitions and possibilities we will understand how we can find novelty in repetition, a la Deleuze, and therefore explore the syncretic dynamics of spirit and matter through their embodiment in the studio work.

The resulting artwork from the rules can be regarded as the outcome of instinctive impulses of transcendental visions that are intangible in their nature. Therefore the research, following the established rules of the operational systems, aims to find an a-temporal language that translates these visions. Given the characteristic of the studio process, which involves a detachment from the outside world in what is an original,

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3 In Gilles Deleuze book Difference and Repetition (New York: Continuum, 2004) the author explores the two concepts in relation to each other showing how repetition unfolds by difference.
Plotinus’s concept of *Ekstasis*, an exercise of alienation from the world and the self, it is imperative to understand if the language created, and the syncretism produced as its result, can form pathways to some sort of truth or truths.

The final section of this dissertation, "Geology of the Artwork’s Laws", explores the hypotheses of the artwork’s embodiment as translation of a universal linguistic striving for the equilibrium found in the interaction between the operational systems of the spirit through the process of *ekstasis*, through a tangible object, the project *Afloat*, where embodiment is also proposed as a suspension between worlds. This hypothesis exposes the grasping quest for the equilibrium of the systems, once again underlining the truth of the artwork through the sensation of a rhythmic floating experience that mirrors the layers of the production process involving the projected shadows of the artist and the cast shadows of the viewer. At the same time as each shadowed individual leaves a momentary mark of its one presence, that individual becomes part of the ethereal memory of the artwork.
Note from graphic diary, 2015:

*There is a necessary vulnerability in of the emotional state for the transition of emotional information from the spirit to the body.*
I.

RULES OF PASSION

The first section of this paper aims to facilitate the understanding of the two core elements that make for the system that produces balance or unbalance in the human spirit: emotion and reason. Instead of exploring specific emotion, enumerating feeling or explaining reason by its fundamental logic, the intention of this section is to understand emotion and reason as core elements of the human spiritual operational system, and how they operate in the intrinsic relation to freewill.

This understanding starts by finding in childhood the original source of questioning toward individual truth. By questioning the subject of the human spirit we can witness the development of the results from that questioning throughout life, therefore showing how emotion and reason operate in relation to free will and particularly in relation to the work produced in the studio. However it is first necessary to understand what these two systems operate on and that is the human Spirit and the physical matter that precedes it.

There is no scientific proof or definition for spirit or soul. Science only vouches for energy. It is what it is left after splitting the atom: “atomic matter”, the energetic force that acts on matter. In the absence of a scientific definition for the term we could look into religion for a definition given the frequent associations the term has with spiritual matters. But religions, in general, assume the existence of a divine higher court responsible for creation or guidance. The believer is therefore governed by one

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For a brief understanding on splitting the atom please refer to: “Nuclear fission”, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_fission (last modified: 2 October 2015)
or multiple entities that somehow have the muscle to eliminate the power of choice. Even the ones that leave choice up to the believer only allow that freedom as long as the choice is in tune with what these entities preach. Religion carries the weight of moral judgment and allows a transfer of responsibilities to a divine entity.

Free will is one of the most relevant characteristics of the Spirit, the definitions provided by both parties: the followers of matter or the supporter of exacerbated emotions, are the reflection of two extreme opposite worlds narrowed in each of their visions. Only philosophy has the freedom to pick from different sources providing suitable understanding on the subject.

Therefore in lack of a suitable scientific or religious delineation for the term Spirit I will use the definition by Wilson Solon⁵ found after vast research on the matters of life and death, history and existence. Spirit, or as WS also calls it “personal energy”, is defined by a group of elements comprised of emotion, reason and free will. This definition provides a frame for our understanding of an abstract idea of a nonmaterial part of our selves that is an integral part of our condition and that characterizes us throughout existence as individuals, targeting the things that make us individual.

The combination of these components talks loudly about who we are, our preferences, beliefs, value system, ethics and they must work at ease, with balance between all parts, a balance they strive for. This is the better version of our selves, when the equilibrium of all parts, free of any louder voice of the ego, is able to choose in perfect balance within reason and emotion. These operational systems and the way they behave identify the individual. They are the same throughout time and can be observed, like a cosmic nickname that will repeatedly speak of who we are regardless of the different physiognomy of the human bodies.

The understanding of the soul is a research that started in childhood. As an escapist child in a religious institution, I always found questionable the information given to us by old ladies dressed in white. I would often find myself wandering in a conscious state but distant from the surroundings, and all the rest, mathematics, history, science, visual and physical education, at least seemed more reasonable than their questionable religious opinions.

At the age of nine a child is considered an adult for Christian purposes, so I underwent an intense one-year brainwashing to be baptized. On the day, I was unable to speak for myself, experiencing anguishing and extreme emotional paralyses during the celebration. Ultimately it was something my spirit could not reason with, so the reason for words or the ability to read out loud vanished from my body. This was for me a clear example of what an unbalanced moment looked like. I was emotionally overcharged and could not find a reason for the whole situation. So for an obsessive-compulsive brain exposed to an overcharged emotional experience that resulted in a total lack of equilibrium, the reaction was total scepticism in a form of a compensation mechanism in order to find logical explanations.

The revolting sea of misunderstanding, the questions and the numerous signs of discomfort, made this early experience a source of early questioning about the purpose of religion, the world and its order. The encounter with the first “ism” came across as a legitimately questionable one, so everything that followed suffered the same kind of approach: complete questionability and an obsessive need for reason.

The truth found only to the eyes of emotion is an unbalanced one, as truth only answers to reason. Reason is, however, one of the operational systems of a balanced choice. It does not work on its own, since ethics without emotions are prone to become dictatorship. An answer pondered by both sides is the most desired, since it is the reflection of equilibrium. Although this might not be reachable, nonetheless any
choice will speak of our essence, each line, each stroke on the paper will be a reflection of one's spirit. Therefore, if balance between emotion and reason speaks of our spirit and the work speaks of balance when emotion is deluded or reason is blind the lines will be crooked.

Nonetheless, crooked lines are as exquisite as straight ones. Free will is the spirit's faculty to choose and is responsible for the decision to act or for the passiveness of being led. Again the virtue resides in the ability for both, given the worthiness of each. If we in fact have the option to choose, this also means we can reject that option, we have the right to all, to be selfish and/or ignorant, although we will not be able to escape the consequences that derive from our choices. By understanding that each choice is a cause for every result, we can find reason in every crooked line and appreciate them for what they represent.

It is now clear that the passionate choice resulting from emotion can be as exalted as the ruthlessness resulting from blind reasoning. Both will definitively produce crooked lines and both are exacerbated visions of a distorted truth or an unbalanced spirit. There is no dishonesty in crooked lines. If we see them for what they are we can understand why they are not part of this book of rules.

In life, as in the studio, each creative mind has the need to find its one particular way of understanding and exploring the question that in the end will define him or her. The best way to understand the constant need for dialogue between elements of the operational systems that rule balance was to put myself in an impartial situation were I could see and interact with both parts in a way that neither one of them could be dispensable. So I imagine my body afloat. Afloat means to rest on the surface of a fluid without sinking, therefore it can be assumed that if the body is floating it is in-between two substances like air and water
Fig. 4.
Catarina Mil-Homens
Study for Tension - Action - Consequence, 2015
(detail) Cotton rope, Charcoal, paper
281 x 21 x 13 cm

Note from graphic diary, 2014
An echoed voice as if it was a dream.
The waves were colossal and transparent dark green, as emerald, in the back.
Giant jelly like, crystals rising up from under everything.
and drifts on or through it gently. Floating is commonly associated with a gentle or peaceful state. A body drifting on the top of the water along the horizon is a relaxing and comforting idea. However it is also an unforgiving condition and in that sense speaks about truth. You are breathing or you are sinking and therefore it holds us in a constant pursuit for equilibrium. This clear opposition of the floating condition makes it a sharp metaphor that can be used to describe the core elements of the work: a constant pursuit of balance with truth as the result, since when the balance between emotion and reason is found it is as rigorous as the horizon line on a clear day.

The sensation of being afloat, if used to describe the arguments of the Spirit between emotion and reason, can be metamorphosed into a platform on a peaceful lingering chaos in an infinite surface. This platform crosses the cosmos at its own pace. The haste of the body and the rhythm of the soul is a multidimensional platform that extends through time and space and lets submerge in numbness the alienation of madness and that resolves into the peak of clairvoyance and consciousness.

It allows entry into a state of ekstasis\(^6\): an ekstasis, which throws us into being in itself, being outside of everything including our one predicament of embodied existence. According to Plotinus it is a process that firstly requires the removal of all that has been an addition to the soul by its descent into a body and secondly, a rigorous intellectual purification of thought in relation to the One.\(^7\) This platform that spirals

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\(^6\) Ecstasy or Ekstasis; from the Ancient Greek "to be or stand outside oneself."

\(^7\) Daniel Jugrin. "Negation and Mystical Union in Plotinus.” (Transylvanian Journal Of Multidisciplinary Research In Humanities 20, no. 1, 2015), 94.


According to Deck, ” (f)or Plotinus, the doctrine of the One appears to be susceptible of proof. Thus, in the treatise on contemplation, he argues [...] that any multitude is posterior to a one. But the Nous [i.e. intellect] [...] is a two, a duality of intelligence and intelligible. Therefore, the Nous is posterior to another principle, which is the One [... The] argument proceeds from the lower principle, the Nous; the nature of the Nous is seen to demand the One. T he doctrine of the One appears in Plotinus’ philosophy by rational exigency. Therefore, for a philosophic treatment of his doctrines, Plotinus’ “mystical” or para-mystical experience of the One may safely be left to one side. [...] The One, or Good, was
along and with the surface is in constant forward motion, it occasionally submerges into a state that at times can be mistaken for madness in its surreal dimensions, but it also emerges and leaps over the surface of the water and the platform itself loses its shape and we are able to see clearly.

The process of letting everything out in a course of submersion is a numb ekstasis that allows an emerging conscious ecstasy of awareness and visions. It is in the shift from submersion to emersion that the dialogue happens and both parts understand each other and see balance. The objective is to stay float and find equilibrium but it is only in the ability to go under, come back and break through that this dialogue is able to happen. The utopian constant of the balance between the two sides of the platform is the goal for the creation of the work.

A parallel can be made between the duality of the spirit characterized by free will and the need for art to use different mediums to express ideas. They both need to find their internal equilibriums in order to produce good choices. Therefore this duality speaks more of wholeness, characterized by a balanced choice, than of parallel opposite sides. In fact the two flanks of this parallel correlation are undividable as there is no art without a body and no body without a soul.

We can understand these rules as something that is multiple as a whole, as a unit, where one side is never hidden from the other, where there is no darker or a brighter side to the same thing. There is only the thing, multiple and absolute in its both or several sides. It is a syncretic action that takes every part into consideration in an inclusive movement where no medium should speak lauder than the other, as no emotion should cloud reason. The focus is on equilibrium and this why balance is the next rule of passion.

demonstrated by the need of the Nous for a principle and a good.
Note from graphic diary 2015:

Existence through time is a transversal path line defied by essence, were the track left reflects the struggle through the extremes to find the equilibrium. It is only by moving along a path and leaving a track we evolve, we exist to the full of our essence.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

William Blake
II.

RULES OF BALANCE

Floating is a physical action that requires from the body a constant need for equilibrium. The strength to choose balance derives from a will, an internal desire, a motivation that leads to act in a certain way. If we have the ability to feel, think, and produce effects on physical matter, it does not matter the source of the strength, mystical, scientific, social technological, political as long as it is a result of a balanced choice. Theoretically, if emotion and reason are the operative systems in the equation of choice, what is lacking on one side should be sought on the opposite in order to reach equilibrium.

Those who are mostly guided by the exaltation of emotions in the search for answers are lacking precisely what they are forbidden to see: the healthy understanding of their alleged exaltations. On the other hand, those who pursue knowledge through reason, but remain unsatisfied, have in their own needs what they do not allow themselves. They feel what is beyond their views. What the two sides could miss is not to identify what seems to be obviously missing. But the decision to go and get it is to achieve the pleasure to move forward and contribute to increase our admiration for the intelligent creations.\(^8\)

Emotion and reason are two necessarily complementary concepts. Matter and spirit, by the same logic, can also be understood as complementary concepts since they make for the incarnated individual. The internal balance between emotion and reason is as imperative as the one between matter and spirit for the final, intelligent, truthful discovery as this final discovery is that equilibrium in art form.

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As there is in the human predicament an interrelationship between the operational systems that govern their balance and the validity of their choices, in art, and by the same logic of complementarity, different mediums working in harmony enabling the production of intelligent objects. The parallel between complementarity and balance is reflected in the act of materialization of the spirit through the body in the exercise of free will, and the production of intelligent balanced art.

There are endless interdependency relationships resulting from multidisciplinary art production and no medium is expendable, since they all have their place in the operational system of art research. They all serve a purpose because no drawing needs to end on the limits of the paper and no installation should end on the limits of the room - they can be transformed into another medium in order to have continuation since they all speak the same language. This relying on multidisciplinary resources results in a syncretic practice in the studio, an amalgamation of mediums into one single idea that produces a reflection of the individual Spirit.

Multiplying oneself by the use of several mediums eases the reach of conclusions and the better understanding of the visions. The poet Fernando Pessoa (1888 - 1935) made use of one medium alone, although he multiplied it more than 80 times. He existed as a multiple artist that unfolded his creation through different pseudonyms and heteronyms with distinct complex lives, and very detailed characteristics. These personas had specific dates and locations of birth and some of death, astrological maps, accurately elaborated by Fernando Pessoa himself, and accordingly, particular temperaments and traumas, appearances and writing styles.

By multiplying his voice through several different personas Fernando Pessoa kept the essence of his spirit cohesive and multiple at the same time. All these characters and their struggling battles help refine the poet’s essence and defined his existence. Fernando Pessoa's multiple personality order is a reminder of the constant battle for
equilibrium, silencing the voices that speak lauder and searching for the ones that stay dormant, refusing to act either out of lethargy or just pure terror.

The architecture of the character of each individual is a construction made by multiple voices: physics, geometry, beauty, purpose, hope, time, etc.; and it is, again the equilibrium found in the dialogue of emotion with reason which then determines the swings of this multiple syncretic relationship. The unique scale constructed, composed by multiple elements or several plates, is very distant in shape to what we know of a scale. It can be a cosmic scale balanced by the plumb line of the individual spirit revealing the individual essence through time. Essence is the intrinsic nature of something abstract, which determines character. It is what distinguishes us from the rest and it is something we can hardly escape from. It crosses all time and space. It is a line that follows repetition and all the multiple dualities that we are made of: it is our timeless character, as complex and multiple as the charcoal shadows of Helena Almeida. (Fig.6)

If essence works like a cosmic nickname for our spirit across time and if the essence shapes us and makes us shape matter, we are bigger than our physical bodies, bigger than the matter it is made of. By understanding that we are more than our material limits we can glimpse a reflection of our immaterial self, a constant fleeting shadow that is only graspable at times.

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.⁹

We exist through time in a transversal path line defied by essence, where the track left reflects choice and knowledge. It is only by moving along a path and leaving a track we evolve, we exist to the full extent of our essence. This path is non linear because the

scale is not always in harmony since we are unbalanced beings in the quest for truth. Knowledge is what is added to our essence as we go. In the exercise of adding, we prolong our existence and define the very blurry and almost unknown edges of our essence. Balance will materialize itself in a cathartic process that is the studio investigation in art since the act of creation enables the translation and understanding of the spirit's volatility and vices.

Fig. 6.
Helena Almeida
*Untitled, 1996*
Photography, Gelatin silver print on paper
Polyptych consisting of seven photographs
126 x 179 cm
Note from graphic diary 2014:

*The process is tortuous*

*You are sure of it as of a dream.*

*As real as you know it to be as fantastic as it can become.*
III.

RULES OF THE STUDIO

If we recognize the rules that guide the relationship to the material world and its infinite desires, it will be possible for a drawing to speak of something more than its material contingency, but it remains to be understood how we can balance the relation with the physical world without being taken over by it. Although the human relation to physical matter is fundamental the laws that rule it have been utterly deformed through time. The human spirit was crushed by the era of high technologies and stripped as never before of their abilities to choose. The monopoly of what we call culture ended up being shaped according to the rule of physical matter and started to be mistaken for it and what we can actually take from it. ¹⁰

The world is ruthlessly crowded with empty noise and it is almost impossible to distinguish anything in the middle of such fog. Artists, not concerned with their “own feelings but with the penetration into the world of mystery [...] imagination is therefore attempting to dig into metaphysical secrets”¹¹ which should be free “from the stifling control of an outmoded politics.” ¹² Their militancy should not be subordinated to any prevailing trends since the “ethics and aesthetics of the arts exist before and after any political parties perhaps in power - rationalist, capitalist, religious or mystical.”¹³ Art is concerned with the sublime.

¹⁰ “The artists, in their particular limbo, realize better what is this schizophrenia when they voluntarily hand over their emotions as raw matter to the capitalist savagery. While they would like to convince us of the contrary, the artist’s strength lays primarily in what appears to be its weakness ... No one will be guiltier than the artist who does not fulfill his duty to avoid extremes and to pursue the balance. Otherwise his sentence will not be better than watching on television the slow agony, the eternal suicide of its own spirit”. Wilson Solon, Portugal O Enigma Iberico, (Lisboa: Quidnovi, 2005), 236.
¹² Ibid, 140
¹³ Wilson Solon, Portugal O Enigma Iberico, 235.
Even if the artist presents a solution by the suggestion of an alternative, the art they produced is directly involved with what they wish to steer away from and therefore its value is unavoidably partial. In order to be able to speak freely, the artist must detach himself from it all by detaching himself from his one ego. Only then will the artist have freedom of thought that will enable him to speak with total impartiality and balance.

This detachment from the social world and the vices that are left digging within the human mind are erased in the studio by the means of ekstasis. From this separation of the exterior and the interior world arises a nothingness that is caused by a consciousness act of creating distance from the objects that surround us and distance from our own selves. According to Jean Paul Sartre, consciousness itself is “a hole of being at the heart of Being.” Human consciousness, therefore, exists only by virtue of its incompleteness, its separation from Being-in-itself. Alienated from Being, consciousness can then be considered a “privation” or a form of nothing.

The ability to separate consciousness and the self from the rest is an intrinsic characteristic of the human spirit that repeatedly transports the self into a space of hyperconsciousness. This is a place of non-temporal and non-spatial references and, because so, at this point the individual essence of the spirit can be observed throughout existence. The temporal ekstasis is a rupture in time and it is through this gap that existence reveals itself in a rapture path of ecstatic temporalization explained by the philosopher Martin Heidegger in the following way:

The ecstasy mentioned here, stepping out of itself (ekstasis) is to some extent a

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14 Originally an Ancient Greek term for "to be or stand outside oneself, a removal to elsewhere"
16 Ibid, 3.
17 Ibid, 3.
raptus (rapture). This means Dasein\textsuperscript{18} does not become gradually expectant by traveling serially the beings that factually approach it as things in the future, but this traversing rather goes gradually through the open path made way by the raptus of temporality itself. Now this is true, in a corresponding manner of retention and making-present. And we therefore call these three basic phenomena the ecstasies of temporality. Temporality is itself the self-unifying ecstatic unity in ecstatic temporalization.\textsuperscript{19}

What is here called hyperconsciousness can be understood as an enlargement of the consciousness perceiving of the world, as if the brain is able to reinforce all its wiring and see clearly the shapes that organize existence and understand its layers. It could be compared to the neo-platonic rendering of ekstasis:

According to the teaching of Plotinus the Soul attains the ekstasis by a process of purification involving two distinct steps. The Soul is united to the Intellectual-Principle by first pursuing, later abandoning Virtue and Self-knowledge, and by studying dialectic. The study of philosophy brings it to the One but involves ultimately the rejection of the intellectual act. The Soul itself is affected, and the process has a positive as well as a negative aspect.\textsuperscript{20}

That speaks of a vision, or union with, some ethereal entity through the means of a trancelike experience that contrasts the emanation from the One with return back to the One.

This idea transported into the studio produces a transcendent transformative experience that is emphasized by the confinement and privacy of the immediate surroundings, characteristic of the studio space. The mind is transported into a place

\textsuperscript{18} Dasein is used by Heidegger to designate specifically human existence and translates literally as "being there".


of awareness different form its “normal” state, which could be described as an active meditation that to some extent is unlinked from the body. If there is a material part and a non-material one to our existence - the body and the spirit - it is in this moment on the studio that they come together in a balance, in harmonious combination, and the language of this syncretic relationship is drawing. Only to some degree is the link to the material world that allows a translation of the wonders of the spirit onto the paper. By returning from this distant state of hyperconsciousness the body is able to transform and add layers of information to the space.

This cathartic moment or epiphanic happening, which the Hindus call Turiya, the experience of pure consciousness, is an intuitive understanding of, or insight into, reality as a moment of illusion, that is, of a clear vision of everything. In the studio this method becomes an instinctive practice for the reach of an unrestrained consciousness to touch unrestrained visions. And this possibility repeats itself endlessly.

On the aseptic place that is the studio the discovery and understanding, by the means of ekstasis, of how the world works before and after the present is unveiled with as little interference from the ego as possible. It is a schizophrenia-free space, since no internal voice is to be neglected, a space of true escape enabling doors into a wider arena of consciousness. Therefore if several entities are in room, it is not a personality disorder situation but a collaboration process, where past lives and past traumas take place in an internal monologue and the spirit expands through space and materializes itself into ethereal art substance, waiting and bending, reaching over the edge until it touches reality.

When consciousness becomes imagination and imagination becomes matter, all the components of the process are essential and no part is dispensable. In this moment the visions are shapes that try to apprehend something transcendental, non-material and consequently the spirit behaves in an emotional and rational overcharge: the brain overanalyses through schemas and the heart purges by hysterical emotional. The operational system is pushed to the limit of its faculties. Nevertheless, these moments of disequilibrium and interference precipitate a transcendence in which all shapes assume clear limits.

In the studio drawings, the language issuing from what Heidegger described as a temporal gap through ekstasis where time does not stand still but is actually nihilated, is but a translation into image that we can use to communicate with or to, informing the following step of the process. Shapes of the unknown, these spatial drawings are boundless, in excess of the laws that rule physical matter. The vision that is transformed to following the motion of the “drawing” and transferred to the stain in the paper is a hasty sketch. What binds it to reality is the gesture, the repetition of the gesture, the paper and the layers that are an overlapping map of the whole process. In their sense they escape perspective, gravity and time.

There is no concern with the shapes and forms per se. At this point the shapes on the paper are abstract and so is the content they carry. They originate from what at that point was still the unknown. It is the act of discovery that engages the motion to create new shapes. They become easily reachable materialized information as the hand reveals them on the paper. We can simply focus on the action and observe its consequence. The bases of the process is being laid by going back and forth from matter to spirit and collecting information. Going back and forth from matter to spirit has an unavoidable toll on the body. The harmony in the production has to find balance between both parts, as one does not work without the other. And the balance between reason and emotion influences the way spirit and physical matter interacts.
Fig. 8.
Catarina Mil-Homens
Studio sketch, 2015
Indian ink on paper, 81x56 cm

Fig. 9
Catarina Mil-Homens
Studio sketch, 2015
Indian ink on paper, 81x56 cm
The extension of one self into physical matter is a process of repetition, in order to do a complete report from the hyperconsciousness and discover the balance in the process. The attempts in the studio are the same as the attempts at life. They both aim to reach balance. All the aspects of the practice work as mirrors and therefore reflect all unbalanced elements or reveal operative malfunctions. Reason/emotion and matter/spirit all work at the same level of dialogue. Therefore the process speaks the truth because if it does not it is uncomfortably interrupted by questioning. Only after the malfunction is identified does it proceed in harmony. The days in the studio when the paper keeps ripping apart are days of unbalanced decisions. It is not a result of any kind of superstition, it is the recognition of the unbalance in the operational systems that regulate free will. The artwork and the rules are the same thing: the artwork is composed of the rules and of the process, so it will mirror the truth of these elements therefore exposing the operational system dynamics of the individual spirit. This consequently makes truth an unavoidable rule of the studio.
Fig. 10.
Catarina Mil-Homens
Detail of the drawing process for Afloat, 2015
Charcoal on rice paper

Note from graphic diary 2014:

* A shifting colossal wave,
  * gullying resolution
  * of something that has always persisted

* If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man
  * as it is, infinite

William Blake
RULE OF TRUTH

Art is bigger than all political parties, bigger than any geographic situation and any social crisis, bigger than gender and if it is true it is universal. It offers far more than just a better answer to a current problem, it speaks, or it can speak of, the human kind of all times. Instead of being a response to a slight fragment of history, it can become a universal statement. Through the clarity of its particularity, its clear limits, without ever becoming dated or spatially contrived, it talks about today, but will also talk about yesterday and the future, and in that sense it connects with the world and all its unresolved issues in general.

Science, one of the most universal languages, states that any scientific discovery is, until proven in contrary, truth. “First scientists thought the world was flat, then they discovered it was round and then understood that that round shape was not a perfect sphere but a more flattened sphere”. 22 Art has the ability of speaking the truth regardless; in art any finding is just true. The findings of a “true” artist are true, for any expression of the world produced by a true artist, even those that are a reflection of mistaken scientific finding, are the truth since they exists as a manifestation of the artist’s spirit in the physical world. By connecting to the world without the interference of its organizational problems, art becomes a free and clear surface or a utopian organized and balanced chaos - the artistic truth.

Like a radicant 23 that finds its origin on constant moving roots, artists speak a global language that has little to do with modern globalization. The idea of radicant implies

that by having roots in constant movement the origin disappears and therefore the radicant will never be able to fully understand its identity. But what if the fact of its roots being in constant movement makes for its true identity, and not its origin? Origin and Identity are nowhere near the same thing. The time and space of the spirit is a non-material one and therefore it is up to artists to define themselves by the ways they see physical matter not by the way physical matter determines them.

Still following from Bourriaud's *Radicant* idea, there is no modernity or no post-modern era, only globalization and standardization. Thus, how can the *radicant* that abolishes all the rules imposed by the normalized modernity of globalization find space to write something in time, particularly if it is regarding time's timelessness? Can the alienation process of the *radicant* not work as a way to find its global a-temporal essence and its particular vocabulary that allows it to be part of that same world without being ping ponged by it? If one's roots are in constant movement, references can be timeless and nothing speaks louder of truth than a universal shape that persists through time, as it stands as an object in the present. Since the language of the art work is the mirror of ones spirit and all its layers, the artist that finds his particular vocabulary in a timeless alienated arena of conciseness will find true shapes and true words that speak of him and the cosmos at the same time.

Language enables the vision to overcome the limitations of physical matter through the process of creation, connecting with the material world, creating shapes that talk about something that is not reasoned by matter but that in some way matter could translate. The process of materializing any vision is at first a rhetorical exercise. All parts talk at the same time, all parts are translated and transformed into points, lines and planes. The dialogue between these translated realities only starts after the event, slightly overlapping the prior and on going rhetoric, the persistence of language over matter.
I cannot take myself out of this equation in order to understand it with distance. I am not impartial to the process therefore I cannot retract myself in order to make reason out of it, while it is happening. I am the agent of choice and therefore the process of revelation is inalienable from my moving roots, my language and therefore from me.

The channel of creation crafted in the studio embodied by the artist, physical action is the material truth. It is the translation of the ethereal art substance into physical matter and the toll on the body is the proof. It remains as the most intense part of the research work development since it is were the artist faces his demons, as it is were all dualities come together and are checked for balance in the action of the drawing. Despite the distance from the outside temptations and the gibbering of the ego it is still impossible to analyze the process from an outside perspective. Being the process is of such importance that a way to see it had to be found in order to ponder on it from an outside not from within its performance. That is, later.

It is only after it is set and the “paint is dry” that I’m able to put it together, make sense of it and in some way pin down the intangible. So regardless of all the “evil” that the era of technologies has sucked us into in the past decades, they are a wonderful and powerful tool, as it is any material object, if the motivation for its usage comes from the spirit and not the other way around.

I placed my cell phone to record the trancelike motion involved on the making of the drawing.
Documenting the process in video is a way of finding an external source to the practice that keeps informing it, by giving back knowledge that is not attainable during the process itself. What the video adds is in a sense comparable to the *ekstasis* by return from an exterior source.
Fig. 11. Catarina Mil-Homens, Stills from the first video. Documentation of movement of drawing being made in the studio. 2014
This resource of information gathering triggers a circular process which eventually becomes a spiral one, as the information is added to the practice. This is how the studio work unfolds, in a spiral, since it keeps adding the discovered information as it unfolds.

What the documentation reveals is that all the rules are mirrored by the process and present in the artwork, the artwork is the process, the rules and all the elements that make up those same rules. The documentation made the truth become real since the motion of the body is bound to reason in such a way that only emotion can explain because of the obsessive compulsiveness characteristics of the repetition involved in making each drawing present in Afloat. Furthermore the video documentation reveals the importance of the process though the raw aesthetics of the video that talk about an exterior ekstasis that, as with the former, needs to be translated into a medium that supports the information and makes for the artwork what the documentation did for me: bind together the immaterial world of the visions with the possibilities of its embodiment in the physical matter.

By creating a distance between the process and me I become aware of the information gathered during it. The information captured in the video is looking into the information that results from the ekstasis time gap and its embodiment in objects from an exterior point of view. This point of view is the distance the documentation is able to provide allowing the necessary impartiality for a critical look into the creation of a new object, which aesthetics correlates to the idea that originated the need for its creation.

Parallel to the drawing, the new object starts being developed using the same medium of the object it originates from: the first documentation in the studio, a video, generates another. The video of a video then drives to the content of both, made of motion, memory and numbed body pain. It registers my own divine print;
demonstrates the union of body and soul; and facilitates the understanding of what matter is, and how we relate to it, since spirit also “borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds and restores them to matter in the form of movements, which it has stamped with its own freedom”\textsuperscript{24} and it does this back and forth, over and over, like the motion of making the drawing.

The motion of adding layers of substance, that gradually sticks to the paper telling about the double and multiple parts we are made of, work in an unstable equilibrium that is constantly shifting and the quest to find this equilibrium is a process made of repetitive attempts. This gradual print along time is the print of the spirit, a bodily manifestation into matter, transforming substance layer after layer until the page is full and then follows another new semi white one, semi-white since it has been in the studio and the substance of the cosmos is very fine, absolute and unforgiving. There are marks in that semi-white paper as there are marks in me, as there is in every new beginning, these marks, even if merely superficial stains, will be revealed by time and repetition.

The repetitive bodily manifestation of the spirit along time, along lifetimes, is a repetition that lets reveal an essence, is the engine that provides flowing continuation until saturation and then a new semi white page follows onto the floating platform where all the action takes place - the studio, the world. The quest to find the equilibrium of that essence is a process made of repetitive attempts to achieve a balanced interaction, in the studio as in life, and “its true effect is to decompose and then to recompose, and thus appeal to the intelligence of the body.”\textsuperscript{25} It is in the differences that occur in this process of repetition that new finding and interaction take place. In life, or lives, depending on how long one sees existence, the way we do the same thing over and over defines us, each one has one way of doing things again.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid,137.
and again until utopian perfection or something new comes out of it.

“Does not the paradox of repetition lie in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change of difference that is introduced into the mind which contemplates it?” If it is in the differences that occur in the process that discoveries take place, repetition is essential for the evolution of the whole. Therefore repetition cannot be regarded as a tedious concept, it is in fact the opposite. It eliminates the tediousness by finding the difference, something new at each attempt. According to Gilles Deleuze, repetition changes nothing in the object or the state of affairs. The change is produced in the mind, which contemplates: a difference.

Repetition unfolds by difference pointing out the different components involved in the process, the interactions of these differentiated parts resulting in a syncretic operation of the medium. Every part is added to another, not replaced, every new element is added to the ones already registered in the work. Each medium is empowered by the other that surrounds it, working as a multidimensional work front that speaks the same language. Together they make for the whole, creating a prolonged vision, in constant movement, that hold the surface cohesive, allowing floating continuation and the possibility of infinity.

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26 Gilles Deleuze Difference and Repetition, (New York: Continuum, 2004) 90
27 Ibid, 90
Fig. 12.
Catarina Mil-Homens
*Afloat*, 2015
Charcoal, rice paper, wood, Video.
Drawings 9x (133x 69x 10) cm, video 10x Variable dimensions
200x 7950x 8000cm
V

GEOLOGY OF THE ARTWORK’S LAWS

Spirit and matter work together to find balance in a circular mode of interacting with the world and each other, and so do the different mediums. The embodiment of a floating balance is created by the syncretic combination of mediums. In this syncretic relationship no medium speaks louder than another, or says something about the unnecessary. The unnecessary is easily identified since it is often echoed by an exacerbation of physical matter, which results in pointless ostentation.

Once again the balance of the mediums is found within the dialogue between parts. Spirit informs matter of its motivations and the physical world will be shaped accordingly, giving back to the spirit a materialized vision that talks about the original motivation with the addition of a new dimension, the material one. This materialized vision says the strictly necessary in order to be the utmost effective, since every single object in art has a purpose. They cannot be a vanity or decorative because if they are, they become superfluous.

The exercise of freeing the objects from all impurities works for the achievement of depuration, this maxim, determines that the resources to be used in the artwork are minimal and free from the superfluous. In the best of all possible worlds, these material resources are most effective when translating the visions of the spirit; they answer to the possibilities of physical matter and its limits and finally they liberate me, the artist, from the technical demands of space.

Afloat is composed of motion and light, a disembodied light that has its reference in the motions of the body but through an exercise of depuration lost its material shape to allow new shadows to be added to it. Therefore in the video the body pain disappears, the motion is integrated and the connection between each drawing
becomes a memory of the continuous process, made of soft repetitions, as soft as they are different. The light and the motion are edited according to the speed of the spirit, referencing the memories from the original studio documentation where these different rhythms were observed. It lets go of the superficial and therefore the physical pain, which only endures as a memory in the body, since the video needs to express the necessity of transcendence more than the link to the body as this is present in the drawing.

The syncretic relationship of the mediums as well as the union of body and soul can be demonstrated by memory and its divine print, shadows ethereal memories of multiple presences. The layers on each drawing are also accumulated memories under the surface, layers and layers full of substance and no shadow or reflection on or from them. In the drawings only one reference keeps us anchored, a line as high as the body to keep us afloat. There is no shadow in the drawings, there is no more space to be printed on. It is my print along time, a physical manifestation of my body in matter, transforming substance layer after layer until the page is full and then turned. All the layers of memories in the drawing manifest the connection of the spirit to the body and the marks one leaves on the other: this divine print of memory tells about the body as well as the spirit.

The work retains all this information, a bank of memories where every single person prints its own stamp (or divine print) and leaves an ephemeral mark that keeps being added to other memories and other marks. In this sense the installation has a memory of its own, an unknown memory that reports all the time that it exists. It discloses the possibility of an infinite multiplication of events that, although very close and similar to each other, always adds and allows a glimpse into the infinity ahead and before, showing a line that crosses all time and space preserving a floating balanced continuation.

The artwork is finite in its material dimension but the process is continuous, while the video that keeps turning pages mirrors the process. We add our presence to it by printing shadows and consequently becoming another layer of the process. Like a floating Narcissus reflection, the shadows are an evident element of self-reference and operate as constant reminder of the physical laws that bind time and space, which makes them gain a nearly tactile quality. We see ourselves adding to the process of the work. Multiplied by the shadows we become conscious that we are participating agents of that process in a Fernando Pessoa multidimensional existence mode.

This disembodied experience talks about the union of body and soul, since there are two components coming together in the space: our body and our reflection. As we identify ourselves in them we also become aware of the presence of the other. “[...] a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things.” 29 We become aware of our one presence by seeing other reflections that do not belong to us, and understand that all these reflections make part of the same process. They are adding memories of presence and experience to the space and time being shared. It is a multiplicity that makes for the whole, like all Fernando Pessoa’s heteronyms combined make the poet.

The multiple reflections voice the presence of the body as well as the hypotheses to get lost in them in a floating sense of reality, aware of an unrestrained space and a lost track of time. It is the fruition and transcendence of the observer. It is a private moment that can be paired with the private studio ekstasis, except now a public ekstasis, one that talks about the interior and ulterior universe of each individual, allowing an entrance into a private world of wonder and understanding of the inner and outer limits of the individual.

Fig. 13.
Catarina Mil-Homens
*Afloat*, 2015
Imaged captured during the first installation of *Afloat* at the VCA
Afloat explores a spatial concept that goes beyond its material dimension, the tangible limits of the object and the body, like the holes punched through Lucio Fontana's canvases which break through the surface of the work so that the viewer could perceive the space that lies beyond them. The installation Afloat features a less aggressive gesture but perhaps a more violent invitation. Afloat is not cutting into anything. Instead, it offers a passage, it is up to the viewer to “punch himself” into a slow, art-perceiving process that allows engagement with the work and its processes by engaging with himself.

It is a universal language in a form of a silent mirror that reflects cosmic shapes and rhythms that we cannot touch, talk about or see, but know exist, an inner truth of the spirit. The private moment in the studio refers to a personal space of art that can hardly be translated. However it can be paired with the truth of the moment of fruition where we are able to let go of reality and enter in the personal space of art. It is a private experience that can only be transmitted, never transferred.

This silent private activity can be a moment of perfect syncretism with existence as a whole, even knowing we are not able to grasp it all at all times. There is the awareness of a totality and at the same time the impossibility to grasp it. There is a desire to see it all, to show it all and there are also the limits of the physical matter that only allow for a minimal representation of what that all could be.

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Fig. 14
Lucio Fontana
_Spatial Concept: Expectations_, 1959
Synthetic polymer paint on slashed burlap
100 x 81.5 cm
The amalgam of mediums is to see through chaos, which reflects in the process of the studio the crossing through the flotation platform unceasingly from one side to the other. We can see through this chaos and know it its unavoidable that is what multiple bodies do shadowed by the light. For a moment we can see it organized and grasp it all, just in a brief moment and then we have to keep moving to break from it and to grasp something new, if not with our bodies at least with our minds. The idea and gesture, the matter and spirit, the drawing and installation, the fruition and the work comprise a mirror of the existence of the spirit through time, the ungraspable whole that keeps adding, suggesting the possibilities of unlimited existence.
Bibliography


## Work Presented For Examination

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Appendix.

**Fernando Pessoa** Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, regarding the genesis of the heteronyms.31

**HETERONOMY**

“...I shall begin with the psychiatric aspect. My heteronyms have their origin in a deep-seated form of hysteria. I don’t know if I’m afflicted by simple hysteria or, more specifically, by hysterical neurasthenia. I suspect it’s the latter, for I have symptoms of aboulia that mere hysteria would not explain. Whatever the case, the mental origin of my heteronyms lies in my relentless, organic tendency to depersonalization and simulation. Fortunately for me and for others, these phenomena have been mentally internalized, such that they don’t show up in my outer, everyday life among people; they erupt inside me, where only I experience them. If I were a woman (hysterical phenomena in women erupt externality, through attacks and the like), each poem of Álvaro de Campos (the most hysterically hysterical part of me) would be a general alarm to the neighbourhood. But I’m a man, and in men hysteria affects mainly the inner psyche; so it all ends in silence and poetry This explains, as well as I can, the organic origin of my heteronyms. Now I will recount their actual history, beginning with the heteronyms that have died and with some of the ones I no longer remember—those that are forever lost in the distant past of my almost forgotten childhood. Ever since I was a child, it has been my tendency to create around me a fictitious world, to surround myself with friends and acquaintances that never existed. (I can’t be sure, of course, if they really never existed, or if it’s me who doesn’t exist. In this matter, as in any other, we shouldn’t be dogmatic.) Ever since I’ve known myself as “me,” I can remember envisioning the shape, motions, character and life...”

story of various unreal figures who were as visible and as close to me as the manifestations of what we call, perhaps too hastily, real life. This tendency, which goes back as far as I can remember being an I, has always accompanied me, changing somewhat the music it enchants me with, but never the way in which it enchants me. Thus I can remember what I believe was my first heteronym, or rather, my first nonexistent acquaintance—a certain Chevalier de Pas—through whom I wrote letters from him to myself when I was six years old, and whose not entirely hazy figure still has a claim on the part of my affections that borders on nostalgia. I have a less vivid memory of another figure who also had a foreign name, which I can no longer recall, and who was a kind of rival to the Chevalier de Pas. Such things occur to all children? Undoubtedly—or perhaps. But I lived them so intensely that I live them still; their memory is so strong that I have to remind myself that they weren't real. This tendency to create around me another world, just like this one but with other people, has never left my imagination. It has gone through various phases, including the one that began in me as a young adult, when a witty remark that was completely out of keeping with who I am or think I am would sometimes and for some unknown reason occur to me, and I would immediately, spontaneously say it as if it came from some friend of mine, whose name I would invent, along with biographical details, and whose figure—physiognomy, stature, dress and gestures—I would immediately see before me. Thus I elaborated, and propagated, various friends and acquaintances who never existed but whom I feel, hear and see even today, almost thirty years later. I repeat: I feel, hear and see them. And I miss them.”

In Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, about the genesis of the heteronyms
Author/s:
Mil-Homens, Catarina

Title:
Matter & spirit: the syncretic drawing

Date:
2015

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