

Reflections (i)(o)n (o)f Water

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Confirmative Praxis Report

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Introduction

"... Enduring water, unchanging and reborn ... stamps its image with an indelible mark and is an organ of the world, the nourishment of flowing phenomena ... the embodiment of tears." (Bachelard, 1983 translation, p11)

Having lived on a peninsular surrounded by the sea for most of my life, water has had a strong and complex influence on my life, and been a source of fascination, respect and inspiration for my art. For six years I lived in Somerset, land locked and a great distance from any water - this experience showed me that I have an intrinsic connection to the sea so much so that I need to be close to it or at least some large body of water (lake or river), a feeling which is perfectly embodied in the words of Jacques-Yves Cousteau, ***"The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever."*** (Good Reads, Quotes, Jacques Yves Cousteau)

Exploring the phenomenological characteristics of water reveals that water stimulates multi-sensory experiences through sound, sight and touch: hearing the distant sound of waves heightens expectation of the sight of a restless, ever-changing body of water that is both beautiful and sublime, and by stepping into the sea, whether to swim, surf, snorkel, wade, jump through waves or simply float on its surface, the energy and sense of life that pervades your body and soul reveals the interconnectedness that humans have with this precious resource. In the words of Bachelard, ***"It is near water and on water that we learn to sail on clouds, to swim in the sky . . . Water invites us on an imaginary journey . . ."*** (Bachelard, 1983, p 132)

It is my own perspective of this unconscious connection that has inspired my praxis: my research has evolved and focused on attempting to understand the complexities of water, from its physical energies, to its reflective qualities that illustrate vibrancy of colour as well as evoke philosophical contemplation and introspection of the duality and paradox of water, namely, its beauty and sublimity as well as fragility and spirituality.

My praxis has been further influenced by a visit in 2022 to Iceland, an island of waterfalls, ice and fire. To experience the awesome power of the Icelandic waterfalls and the mesmerising quietude of the glaciers, together the explosive energy of the thermal geysers, was profoundly evocative and has left a lasting impression on me that inspires my art.

The fundamental questions that I have investigated are: What is water? What are its transformative properties? Why have artists been fascinated by this resource for centuries? By exploring water as both a subject matter and a medium, what symbioses can be revealed, illuminated, informed and whom can such art inspire?

“In the water mirror, secrets lie hidden, waiting to be discovered....

Water is a reflection of both the past and the future ...

Sometimes, the greatest beauty lies beneath the surface....

A single drop can create a ripple, just as a single action can change the world.” (Meyer, K: 2021)

The Transformative Resource that is Water

The chemical bond of two hydrogen atoms with one atom of oxygen produces the most abundant inorganic compound on Earth that is universally known as WATER. It covers approximately 70% of Earth's surface and is an essential nutrient for all life forms and forces.

Water is colourless, odourless, tasteless, transparent or translucent; it can be found in three different states of matter - solid, liquid and gas - taking on many different visual forms, namely precipitation (ice, snow, rain, mist, dew, clouds), and as bodies of water - sea, oceans, rivers, waterfalls, pools, ponds and lakes. It symbolises life, providing sustenance for growth and prosperity and yet it mirrors life's challenges as it reveals the in-between states of the intangible or invisible, symbolising resilience as illustrated through its power and dynamic force. (<https://www.delamora.life/blog/symbolism-of-water>). In the words of Maseru Emoto, a water scientist, ***‘Water is the mirror that has the ability to show us what we cannot see. It is a blueprint for our reality....’*** (Azquotes, Maseru Emoto)

When one considers the beauty, simplicity, sublimity and symbolism of this essential life-force of Nature, it is understandable why the materiality of water

has been as inspiration for many artists, including my own praxis. Water can be the theme, the subject, as well as the medium for diverse artistic creations, inspiring a creative energy that expresses a dynamic and poignant fluidity in ways of seeing, thinking and reflecting. One could even consider the human body or any other living entity which is at least 60% water to be the medium for artworks. Such artworks can challenge audiences to consider their inextricable symbiotic relationship with water and therefore Nature, to engender an awareness and understanding of the vulnerabilities facing Earth through water scarcity and the destructive power of water in a climate-in-crisis resulting from human disinterest, disregard and denial, and to provoke a commitment to preserving this elemental resource of life for future generations. Art that embodies the profound symbolisms of water (ever evolving and changing through cultural beliefs and demographics) can be a powerful tool to remind us to reconsider the importance of this essential element for existence and to reflect that its demise would be an existential threat to all life.

The aesthetic qualities of water have inspired great works of art for centuries: from the sublimity of Casper David Friedrich's *"The Monk by the Sea"* (1810), to the seminal symbolism of Katsushika Hokusai's *"The Great Wave off Kanagawa"* (1831), the ethereal images of Joseph Mallard William Turner depicted in his *"The Fighting Temeraire"* (1839), and the infamous painting by Claude Monet *"Impression, Sunrise"* (1872) which gave rise to the Impressionism Movement. Monet's works were inspired by the interaction and reflections of light on water,

capturing an emotional connection to, sensation or mood of, or fleetingness and restlessness of a moment within the landscape - he believed that ***“a slice of water (w)as a self-contained contemplative space”*** and dedicated his life to the representations of the ever-changing notions of water. In conversation with journalist François Thiébault-Sisson, Monet said that ***“The essence of the motif is the mirror of water, whose appearance alters at every moment because of the way bits of the sky are reflected in it, giving it life and movement.”*** (Wullschläger, J, 2023)

Influencers of my praxis include contemporary artists Bill Viola, Olafur Eliasson, David Hockney, Georgia O’Keeffe, Roni Horn, Dale Chihuly and Tim Prentice, each of whom connects with water in different ways, revealing their own autobiographical personal experiences of water and inviting the audience to share those feelings and emotions through sensory, experiential and immersive installations, and through paintings and collages. My praxis aims to capture the dynamism, fluidity and changeability of water using the mediums of painting, glass and installation, to express the poetic aesthetics, creative energy and emotions of water in its different states.

Water as the Subject:

Below the Surface - Submersion/Immersion

“To disappear into deep water or to disappear toward a far horizon, to become a part of depth or infinity, such is the destiny of man that finds its image in the destiny of water.” (Bachelard, G. translation 1983, p12)

In February 2019, I was fortunate to experience an immersive video installation by the acclaimed and pioneering artist **Bill Viola**, in The Royal Academy of Arts, London. It was a very moving experience and ever since then I have been intrigued by his works, especially with reference to his striking representations of otherworldliness through the element of water. Bill Viola became fascinated with water following a near-death experience by drowning when he was 6 years old. Having fallen into a lake whilst on a family holiday, Viola remembered ***“...every second. I felt like I was in another dimension. Everything was blue and green. I was weightless. I wasn’t scared. It was unbelievably beautiful. I didn’t think I’m dying’. I was marveling at what I was seeing. Some people are logical and rational, others, like me, are elusive and ethereal and an experience like that shaped my view of the world.”*** (Teeman, T: 2010)

It was this deeply spiritual experience with water together with the death of his mother (another profoundly spiritual event) that left an indelible mark in his memory, and which shaped his artistic career. Viola explored the phenomenon of sense perception, of human existence, transformation and change - the fragility of life and death and the state of 'in-between' - through the symbolism of water and sound. Using his camera as the 'mind's eye' he created experiential video installations that confront reality with images of the subconscious, revealing an unseen world, while conveying the sense of stillness and spiritual cleansing through the forces of nature - images that were designed to engage the viewer "intellectually, emotionally and perceptually," (Zacheta Art, 2007), inviting a sense of transcendence, reflection and contemplation.

Viola's artwork titled *The Dreamers*, 2013 comprises individual video 'portraits' of seven people of varying ages and ethnicities, in an eternal slumber submerged in deep water, between states of life and death. As the video progresses, only the occasional air bubble escaping from their noses and a fluttering of eyelids can be seen to disturb the stillness of the images. The impact on the viewer is to hold their own breath whilst waiting with unease for the people to breathe or awaken. The images look serene, but the video is full of jeopardy which is unsettling. A true representation of the paradox of water.



Figure 1: The Dreamers, 2013, Bill Viola

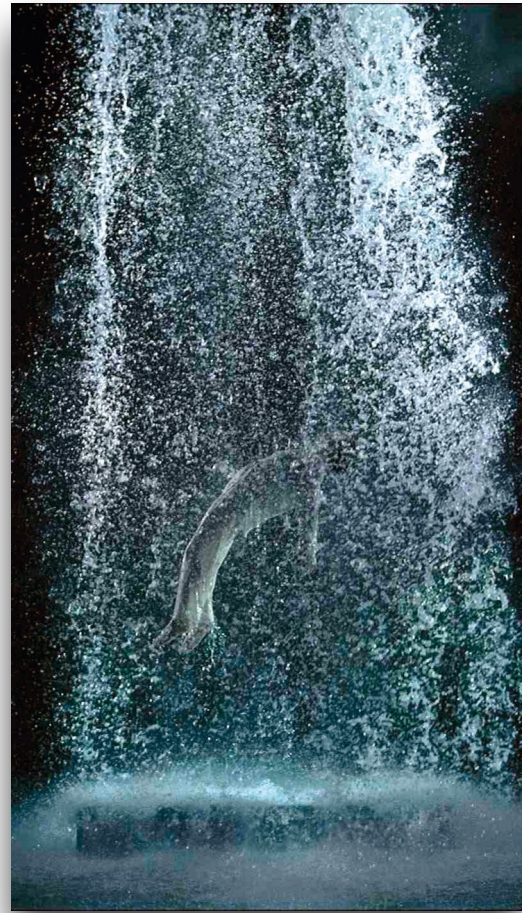
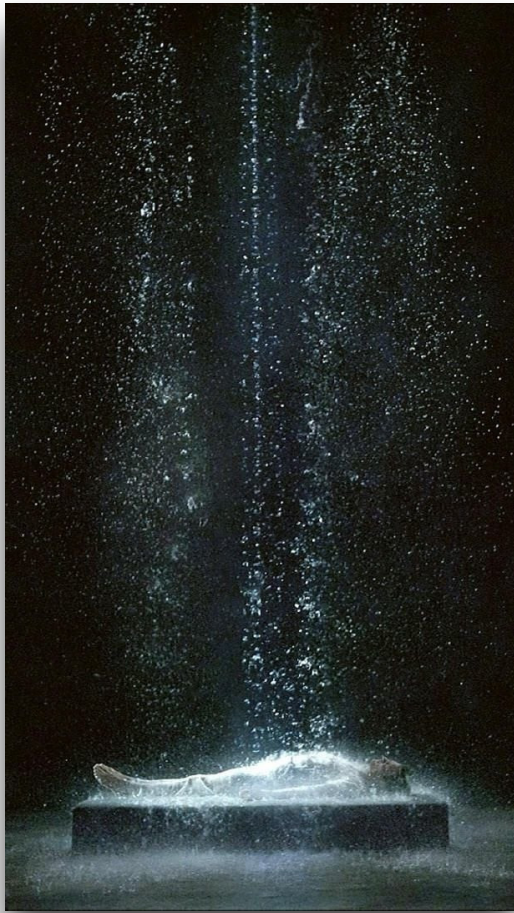


Figure 2: Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain under a Waterfall), 2005, Bill Viola

Viola evokes the sensation of peaceful calm of deep waters yet also reveals its duality. In his work *Tristan's Ascension*, the metaphorical power of water is evident. The transformation of life to death and rebirth is shrouded in water, first a trickle to nourish then to a cascade as the human form rises in resurrection to a new life before it disappears again from the screen.

I understand the connection that Viola feels to water. I have experienced similar emotions of its sublimity when immersing myself in the sea: scuba diving, snorkeling in the Celtic Deep and swimming underwater in a pool. A close encounter with a blue shark thrilled me equally with its beauty and with the danger of being so close to a predator of the oceans. But it was the transparency, silence and deep blue of the water that made it profoundly mysterious, enveloping and hypnotic.



*Figure 3: Celtic Deep Scuba dive,
2023, Katie Richards*

Immersion in water instills a sense of mystery, hints at what's hidden in its depths, gives a new perspective and a connectedness with water. This encourages me to explore deeper, to pause and contemplate, to gain a deeper understanding of myself, and this self-reflection has inspired me to consider different mediums to represent this elemental compound.

A common feature of my artworks to date has been the use of vibrant colour, especially in the blue spectrum. On reflection, I believe that it is because of this subconscious association with water that the hue of blue has been my preferred choice when painting. The scientific reason for water appearing to be blue is simple. When light reflects off still, deep waters the longer wavelengths of the colour spectrum of light (red, orange and yellow) are absorbed into water, with the shorter blue and violet light-waves being reflected and scattered back off the surface.

Reflection in both the physical sense and symbolically became an important aspect of my artworks: the theme of water 'flows' through all my works, as subject and as medium.

Water as the Subject:

At the Surface: Reflection and Refraction

“Water, by means of its reflections, doubles the world, doubles things.... Pure vision, solitary vision, this is the double gift of reflection.... It is water itself, in its mass, no longer its surface, which sends us the insistent message of its reflections.” (Bachelard, 1983, p48-50)

An important property of water is its ability to absorb light, and it is the interaction of light when it meets the surface of the water that creates reflections off it (whether mirror images when the body of water is still or merely glints and glares when the surface is disturbed or rippled), and refractions as it bends through it. The human eye sees into it, across it, reflections off its surface and what is distorted or refracted through it.

Reflections not only reveal perfectly inverted images of reality but also create a sense of the ambiance of a place. Hence water becomes a pure or true mirror of its surroundings. Many artists have been captivated by reflected imagery because of the self-reflection and contemplation that it evokes, and of particular interest to me are contemporary artists Georgia O’Keefe, David Hockney and Olafur Eliasson, each inspiring me in different ways.

Abstraction and Colour



*Figure 4: Lake George Reflection,
Georgia O'Keeffe, circa 1921-22*

Georgia O'Keeffe was a master at *"distilling the natural world into abstract compositions of lines that form shapes and contours while eliminating distracting details, a process of identifying the very essence of a given location or subject. This practice allowed her to achieve a composition that can be simultaneously abstract and true to the natural world."* (Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, 2015).

O'Keeffe's dramatic use of vibrant colour together with her simplistic use of lines in this painting (Fig.4) demonstrate the beauty of reflection of light on water, and the essence, sublimity and duality of Nature: water and earth, fluidity and solidity. The psychology of reflection in a lake of deep water *"doubles the world"* (Bachelard, 1983, p48) and its symbolism achieves a sense of purity, calmness,

deep contemplation and conveys an energy that has inspired my choice of colours in my artworks.

Similarly, David Hockney's contemporary approach to painting, associated with the Pop Art Movement, also explored the interplay of light on water using vibrant colours. His swimming pool series of paintings reveal his fascination with the luminosity and constant movement of water's surface, the distorted refractions in water and serenity of shimmering reflections off water. In these paintings, Hockney explored both the physicality of water and its symbolism, namely, of luxury, leisure and tranquility which instils in the viewer introspection and contemplation revealing water's transformative power: *"By remaining some time near the iridescent surface [of water], we shall understand the value of depth."* (Bachelard, 1983, p11)

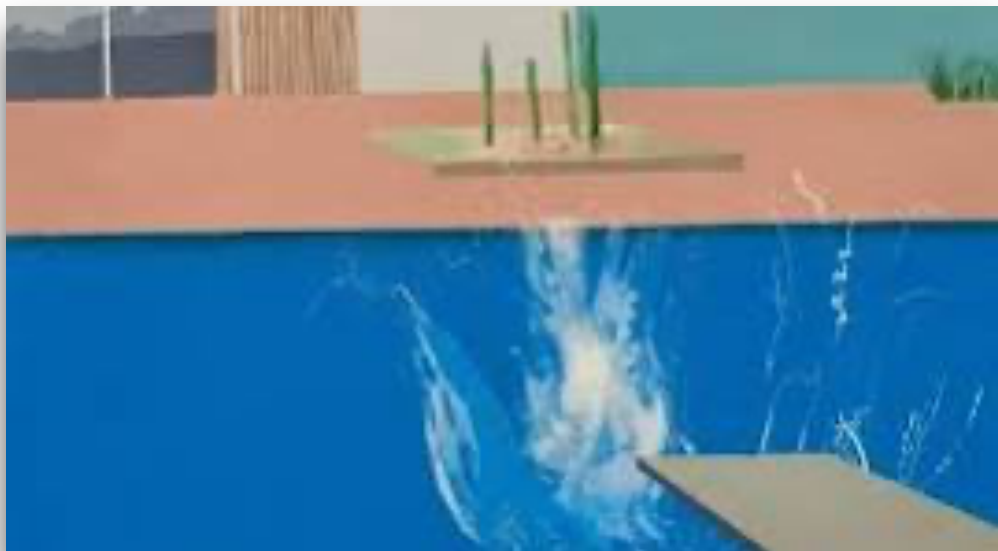


*Figure 5: A Bigger Splash,
David Hockney, 1967*

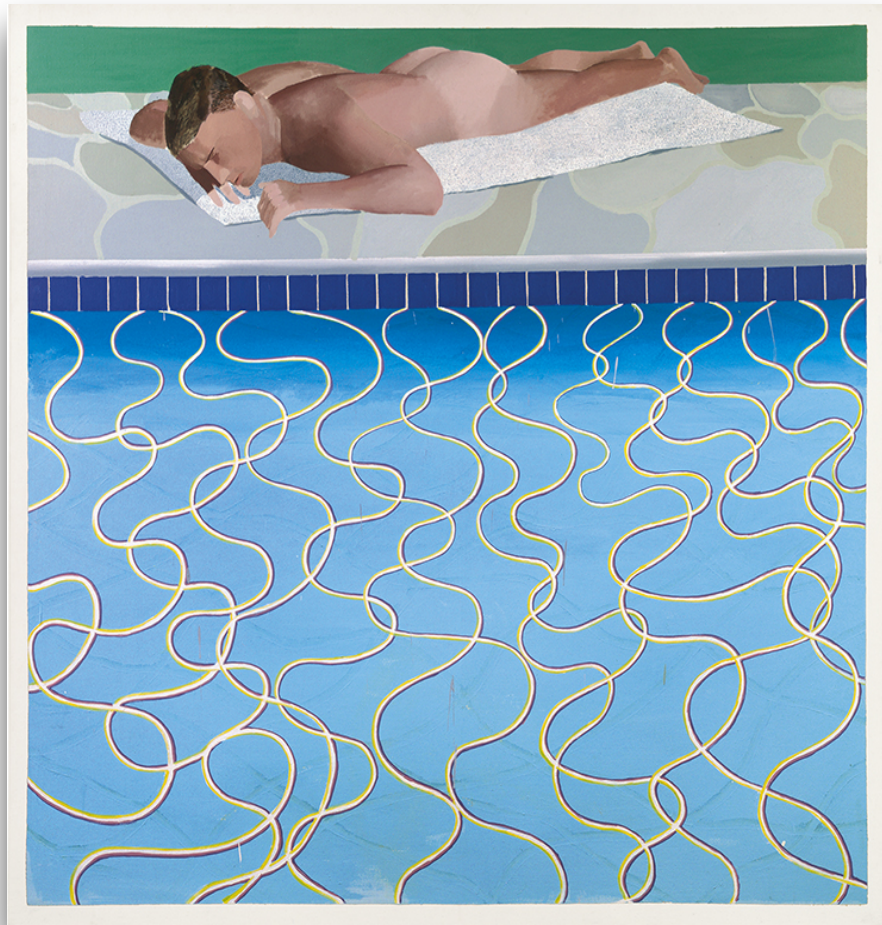


*Figure 6: The Sunbather,
David Hockney, 1966*

In Hockney's paintings, the interplay of light on water became 'the subject' and the challenge was, in his words, "...to represent water, to describe water, because it can be anything—it can be any colour, it's movable, it has no set visual description." (Hockney, D: 2021)

Reflection

Water as a subject matter is also important to Danish - Icelandic installation artist Olafur Eliasson. For Eliasson, *“Water is about life Water is a part of the [art]work, sometimes in reflections, bouncing off water ... very much borrowing the potential of water as it is often underestimated.”* (UBS Art, 2023). He experiments with natural phenomena like water within an exhibition space and outside of it, whether in the form of refracted light through mists of water, waterfalls or still pools connecting outdoor and indoors, creating a captivating experience that encourages the viewer to perceive and connect to the world around them. Again, vibrant colour is ever present. (Tate Modern, 2020)



Figure 7: LIFE, 2021, Olafur Eliasson



*Figure 8: Beauty, 1993,
Olafur Eliasson*

Eliasson's artworks are created as a response to the disturbing dynamics of the Anthropocene era and complexities and contradictions of contemporary life. By exploring the ontology and the unique characteristics of water (always there but never the same, forever flowing and yet always changing), his art challenges the audience to engage with the world, to become less disinterested and understand the fragility of all life... and water as the muse and subject for his practice perfectly captures and mirrors the essence of life in the Anthropocene.



Figure 9: Waterfall, Versailles, 2016, Olafur Eliasson

Although renowned for his large-scale public installations, Eliasson also uses different media to explore and inform perceptions, including painting, photography and films. It is the diversity of artistic practices used to create thought provoking experiences and highlight issues arising from climate change that has intrigued me most and as Eliasson says, *“By pushing the limits of the possible, art inspires people. It encourages them to form, express, and work towards their dreams and aspirations, by showing them that their actions matter and that they can change the world.”* (Royal Academy, 2017)

His photographic 'Waterfall Series' and 'Glacier Melt Series' of natural phenomena in Iceland highlight what Eliasson believes to be the *"discrepancy between the experience of seeing and the knowledge or expectation of what we are seeing."* (Guggenheim New York, 1999). In the words of Paul Crowther, *"it is through vision that we comprehend that which is most fundamental to something's existing - its occupancy of Space"* (Crowther, P. 2019, p119)

He uses photography to explore the disconnectedness between what is real and what is represented, between nature and artifice, documenting a vast landscape in flux, and these images, digitally altered by colour tinting to enhance atmosphere, are the foundations for his installations, although never exhibited together. His waterfall installations embody that fluidity and movement of water and together with sound, the senses are overwhelmed, and a deeper contemplation of and connection to water is evoked.

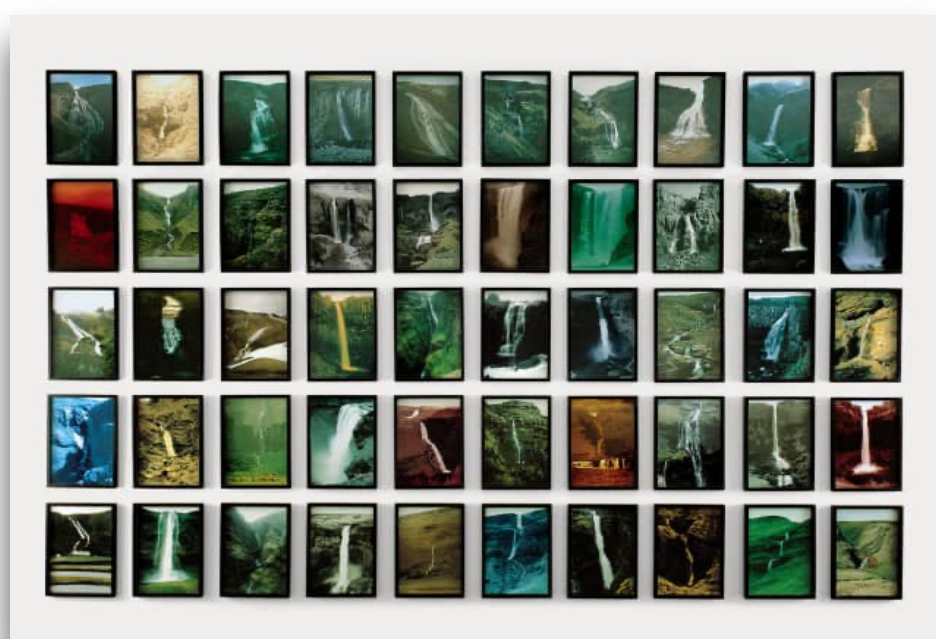


Figure 10: The Waterfall Series, 1999/2019,
Olafur Eliasson

The Glacier Melt Series documents the retreating glaciers in Iceland over a decade, making visual the consequence of global warming. Each individual photograph records “a spatial intervention on time ... a Moment snatched from a continuum of real events reaching before it.... Time is absorbed into the subject’s [the Glaciers] visible existence as a spatial entity” - (Crowther, 2019, p116) but the series captures **movement over time**.



Figure 11: The Glacier Melt Series, 1999/2019,
Olafur Eliasson

Water as the Subject and Medium:

In Solid State

Water in its solid state is Ice, and, like water, it reflects most sunlight off its surface back into space. However, global warming is causing land and sea ice to disappear at an alarming rate, diminishing their reflective effectiveness, the consequences of which are catastrophic weather events and rising sea levels globally. Olafur Eliasson's Ice Watch exhibition brought the reality of shrinking ice caps and glaciers to life, up close and personal ... he wanted to challenge the disbelievers and the disinterested that the concept of diminishing world ice sheets through global warming was a reality. He wanted them to physically experience glacial ice. (Ice Watch London, 2018)

In collaboration with Minsk Rosing, Eliasson harvested eighty tonnes of glacial ice blocks from the ocean that had broken away from Greenland, transported to and exhibited them in a circular configuration to represent a watch/clock in public spaces in London, Paris and Copenhagen. Once in situ, he invited the public to *"Put your hands on the ice, listen to it, smell it, look at it – and witness the ecological changes our world is undergoing. Feelings of distance and disconnect hold us back, make us grow numb and passive. I hope that Ice Watch arouses feelings of proximity, presence, and relevance, of narratives that you can identify with and that make us all engage. We must recognise that together we have the power to take individual actions and to push for systemic change."* (Tate

Modern, 2018). Over the course of several weeks, the Ice blocks melted - a simple metaphor for time running out - evaporated or flowed back to the water course... contributing to the impact of global warming, affecting the future.



*Figure 12: Ice Watch, London, 2014,
Olafur Eliasson*

Visitors to the installation were encouraged to interact with the ice - there were no barriers to hold them at a distance. They could 'access' these blocks by touching, hugging, climbing, sitting or lying down, or the visitor could simply choose to ignore them completely and walk on by. However, for Eliasson, he wanted to impart a much deeper meaning - *"inseparable from the work in all its perceptually accessible physical aspects"* (Crowther, 2009, p97). An encounter with this artwork was designed to provoke *"a dialogue with the [ancient] ice*

blocks, not a one-way human conversation in a mirror ... of ice." (Morton, 2021, p57). Not only did the audience 'access' or connect with this glacial ice, so too did the sun, the pavement and the atmosphere: but more importantly the ice was 'accessing' everything around it, chilling the air, chilling the bodies of those that engaged with it, soaking the pavement, so reinforcing the interconnectedness of all things, human and nonhuman. Eliasson's artwork is therefore an "*aesthetic experience [that] is about solidarity with what is given.... bring[ing] the nonhuman to the foreground.*" (Morton, 2021, p58).

Eliasson's words, "*feelings of distance and disconnect... of proximity, presence, and relevance*" embodies and aligns to Tomothy Morton's philosophical concept of 'Hyperobjects,' a term he used to describe the existence of "*things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans... [and] occupy a high-dimensional phase space that results in their being invisible to humans for stretches of time ...[they are] not a function of our knowledge.*" (Morton, 2013, p1-2).

This concept offers a new approach to ecological thinking away from human centrality towards 'Hyperobjects' that cannot be perceived or observed directly in their entirety "*across a distance*" but they can be felt "*in [human]social and experiential space ... their very nearness is what menaces.*" (Morton, 2013, p27). Morton suggests that the idea of 'distance' is an "*ideological construct designed to protect [humans] from the nearness of things*". (Morton, 2013, p27).

Through his artwork, Eliasson acknowledges humanity's coexistence with nonhuman entities, making visible these invisible, incomprehensible 'hyperobjects', and revealing that everything emits time and is interconnected. The experience of *Ice Watch* reveals the "*immediate, intimate symptoms of hyperobjects ...vivid and often painful, yet carry[ing] with them a trace of unreality ... [they are] all over [us] ... already here.*" (Morton, 2013, p28-29)

Illusions of Water

Conceptual artist and sculptor Roni Horn has been equally inspired by the geography, geology, landscape and unpredictability of the weather in Iceland. Horn focuses on the interconnectedness between Nature and humankind and her artworks examine recurring themes of interpretation, mirroring and repetition, using materials as diverse as powdered pigment, ink, charcoal and watercolour. Of particular interest to me is her post-minimalist containerised glass forms. Horn's use of glass as her medium of choice for these sculptures reveals her fascination with the essence of materials, particularly the ambiguity between appearance and reality: Glass appears solid but is in fact a super-cooled liquid. In her words, *"It's a pretty amazing thing that a material as ubiquitous as glass can masquerade like that. It's like having a mask but the mask is identical to the real thing."* (Hauser & Wirth, 2017)

Specifically sited to interact with light, these glass sculptures give the appearance of being water by emphasising the properties of reflection and refraction, highlighting "the notions of deception and mutability in a seemingly solid object," while imbuing an emotional and psychological dimension that evokes contemplation and "affective perception" - a force that motivates action. Horn explores the materiality of colour in these molten cast-glass artworks, infusing it all with a gentle fragility, contrary to their physical characteristics.

The artwork '*Pink Tons*,' exhibited in Tate Modern, London in 2009, is a large 3-dimensional cast glass cubic sculpture, manufactured in collaboration with the German glass company Schlott. Except for a clear fire-polished glass top (slightly bowed like liquid under tension), all the other faces of the cube comprise multiple layers of opaque pink glass marked with scratches and irregularities, evidencing the intricacies of an arduous casting process. In stark contrast to the cloudy appearance of the side views of the cube, the refined glass top introduces transparency giving the illusion of a rippled body of water, inviting the viewer to gaze into the depths of the 'water', as if seeing through an "aqueous oculus" (a flowing organ of sight or vision), eliciting a strong emotional response. "*They are ineffably beautiful,*" said Horn's artist friend Tacita Dean, "*And I just think they're unbelievably, sensually female, too.*" (New York Times, 2024)



Figure 13: Pink Tons, London, 2009, Roni Horn

Horn's glass sculptures are created to interact with external natural elements of light and weather, revealing the duality of her experimentations - the presence or absence of some feature in colour, or between weight and lightness, solidity and fluidity. Aptly named, '*Pink Tons*' weighs a massive 4.5 tons. Yet its colour suggests femininity and softness, again emphasising the duality of her art forms. Sited on the gallery floor at least 5 feet away from any of the gallery walls, but close to windows, the cube subtly and endlessly reflects the ever-changing transition from day to night, from sunshine to a dimly overcast day. The site specificity of her works creates an eternal state of mutability, with no fixed visual identity. Sculptures of solidity and singularity that change appearance invites one to discover meaning, connection and contemplation.



Figure 14: I am paralysed with hope, Spain, 2023
Roni Horn



Figure 15: Untitled ("Uncertainty is not chaos but ...") 2021-22, Roni Horn

The muse for Horn's artistic creations is Iceland's water and weather, and through her exhibit '*Library of Water*' (on permanent display in Sykkishólmur, Iceland), comprising 24 glass pillars with melted ice gathered from 24 of Iceland's glaciers, Horn created a sculpture to encourage contemplation and reflection - to remind the viewer of the human impact of climate change on the environment.



*Figure 16:
Vatnasafn/Library of
Water (2007), Iceland,*

Water not only absorbs light, reflecting its immediate environment like a mirror, because of its unique molecular structure it is also considered to be the ‘universal solvent’ capable of dissolving many different chemicals, nutrients and minerals essential for life. Water is therefore a valuable store of encoded, hidden information, held in suspension, reflecting the intricacies about present and past environmental conditions - as does this thawed glacial ice. This glacial ice, in its liquid form, can reveal current and ancient ecological information about the ecosystems of the natural world, evoking a sense of the interconnectedness with the past and raising the spectre of the ‘hyperobject’ that is global warming.

Horn constructed elegantly simple glass tubes to contain these glacial waters, and they softly glow in the natural light emanating from outside the exhibition space. The motif of glacial ice in glass tubes is repeated 24 times. This repetition challenges the viewer to contemplate what differences and similarities exist between each glass cylinder; how each interacts with light and shade; about what is hidden/encoded within each solution; what the water actually represents ***“Water, such an ubiquitous yet precious substance, is displayed at once like a combination of still life and rare object (which in many places of the world, it is, and in many more, is fast becoming)”***. (Higgie, J, 2007). As described by Horn herself, this permanent artwork, like its title “Library” suggests, is a place of reflection about planet Earth and the human connection to it, being ***“a lighthouse in which the viewer becomes the light.”*** (Higgie, J, 2007)

Fluidity and Motion

Water is formless, fluid, flexible and dynamic: the pressure of gravity forces it to always find its “level” so that it flows through and around things, adapting to whatever object or obstacle it encounters, eroding and carving even the hardest materials with a constant drip or continual voluminous flow, and equally can take on the form of whatever it is contained within. Paradoxically, water is gentle and calming when still, yet immensely powerful and sometimes destructive when in motion and flowing. The mysticism of water is metaphorically illustrative of adaptability, flexibility, and a capability with subtle strength and power to surmount any resistance.

It is these elements of water that inspire artists to create organic forms to emulate water, and the super-cooled liquid (glass) gives “*some semblance of permanence to many of water’s defining but ephemeral qualities: light transmission, transparency and translucency, and refraction and reflection.*” (Burgard, T A: 2008). An artist so inspired by water and glass is Dale Chihuly, and who has influenced my own praxis. He uses glass as his sculptural medium because of its imitative qualities of water and its fluidity. Glass as a medium also has complex duality - ephemeral and eternal, fragile and resilient - being a metaphor for the fragility of human life. Chihuly explores the dynamism and duality of water, its interaction with light, its transparency and reflective characteristics, all through glass “*to replicate [nature’s] processes and sensory*

effects,” transforming inanimate material forms into versions of non-human Nature. (Burgard, T A: 2008). Chihuly often sites his glass creations in water environments to emphasise reflection and contemplation, juxtaposing the colours of Nature to enhance the perception of glass “as a transformative medium for immaterial light, which in turn can reveal the metaphysical: And so when you’re working with transparent materials, when you’re looking at glass, plastic, ice, or water, you’re looking at light itself.”[Burgard, 2008, Chapter: The Breath of Life]



Figure 17: Koda Series, New York Botanical Gardens, 2017, Dale Chihuly

The water becomes a mirror for the artwork and is *“not subject to duration but is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections on the other hand, are fleeting instances that evade measure.”* (O’Sullivan, S. 2007, p109)

The intriguing idea of exploring the ‘colours of water’ by utilising glass has been a central theme for my praxis. I have used many different techniques to create glass tiles that are symbolic of water. But considering ways to introduce or give the impression of fluidity and motion in a static form, to distort perception, led my enquiries to kinetic artist Tim Prentice. Prentice’s artworks, while aesthetically balanced and intricate, present sculptures that create an interrelationship between time and space through the *“interplay of illumination, movement and interpretation providing a window into a realm where stillness transforms into vitality and the grace of motion is forever preserved in the observer’s gaze.”* (Dion Art Studio). His artworks of repeated forms, move with natural forces of the wind, spinning and glistening, *“shift[ing] but always return[ing] to their original form.”* (Dion Art Studio). Many of Prentice’s artworks incorporate Deleuze’s concept of *“repetition of the same”* being *“representation and resemblance”* but for my own praxis I have introduced Deleuze’s *“repetition of difference.”* (O’Sullivan, 2007, p133-4). In the words of Clare Colebrook, *“We need to repeat difference and thinking ... Repetition is not the recurrence of the same old thing over and over again; to repeat something is to begin again, to renew, to question, and to refuse remaining the same.”* (O’Sullivan, 2007, p134)



Figure 18: 'After the Mobile' (installation view), The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2021. Tim Prentice



Figure 19: Yellow Zingers, 2008, Atlanta Botanical Garden, USA, Tim Prentice



Figure 20: White Carpet, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2021, Tim Prentice

Colour appears incidental in Prentice's sculptures as he believes that reflections transform the pieces. In his words, *"I'm looking in the reflections. We use a lot of aluminium and stainless steel – you get reflections from whatever space you're in. If somebody walks by with a red shirt, the piece turns red. I haven't abandoned colour, it's just not the prime subject."* (Lloyd-Smith, H: 2022)

Conclusion

My research has explored many different creative approaches inspired by water: whether illustrative of beauty and sublimity or of illusion and fluidity, through abstract painting, sculpture or installation, or as a muse for raising environmental awareness of its vulnerability. Through this research, I have gained a deeper understanding of my own subconscious connection to water and how its indelible mark has become the driving force of my creativity. From the paradox of its physical energies to the contemplative introspection and profound symbolism of its reflective qualities, water naturally mirrors our world, making visible the invisible, an incomprehensible 'hyperobject' that eternally emits time, flowing, touching everything it encounters, so revealing the interconnectedness of all things, human and non-human. In the words of Leonardo da Vinci, *"When you put your hand in a flowing stream, you touch the last that has gone before and the first of what is still to come."* (Azquotes, Leonardo Da Vinci).

My artworks have explored the concept of water as a subject and a medium, expressing its fluidity, transparency and reflectiveness in visual forms through mixed-media of glass and paint, using colours of various water-inspired hues of blue, combined with arbitrary colours of the light spectrum. I have gained experience and confidence in utilising new techniques, pushing myself to

embrace, explore and experiment with different media which will continue to be an important aspect of my future practice.

Water will always be my creative instinct, my grounding and sense of calm.

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