

FOUR CORNERS GATEWAY  
An Installation Exhibition

by

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A thesis exhibition  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Studio Art

UWAG, Waterloo Canada, April 12<sup>th</sup> –April 28<sup>th</sup>

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

Though an installation, the exhibition *Four Corners Gateway*, examines how history and memory construct us as individuals and construct our national and personal identities and worldviews. All such constructions are ultimately fragmented and fictional. This body of work points at how ideologically formed, subjective narratives are made into ‘truths’. Connecting the personal with the public is my way of playing with history and its paradoxes. The resulting landscapes that I construct can be read as archives of fragments.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my professors Bojana Videkanic, Bruce Taylor and Doug Kirton, as well as the rest of the Fine Arts Department and my fellow MFA graduate colleagues for their support, guidance and friendship.

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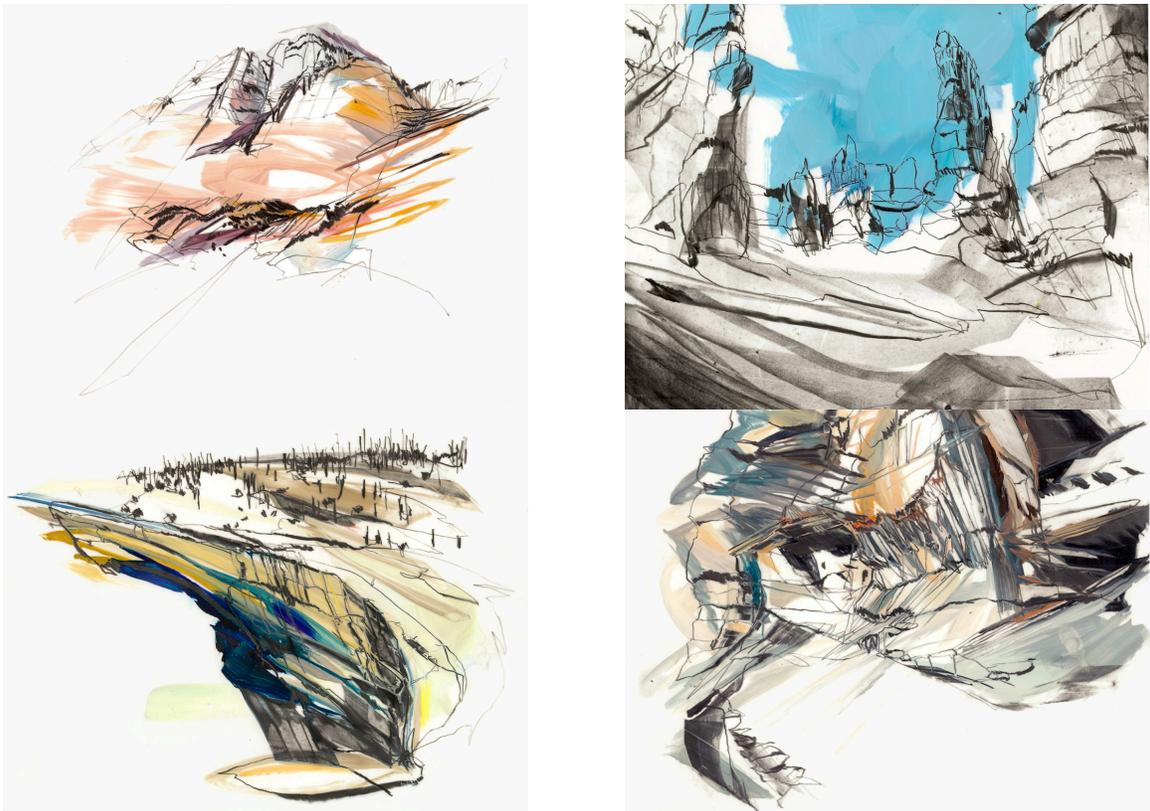
## Introduction

*What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it* – Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The *Four Corners Gateway* is the title of my thesis exhibition and represents the body of work that is equally indebted to the long trajectory of landscape art as it is to the fictitious and real histories of places that have inspired it. My landscapes are imbued with the dynamism of history, myth, and memory, embracing both the real and the illusionary. This work is based on personal recollections of recently visited ‘Four Corners’ area in the American Southwest. The landscapes are composites of my recollections and observations of geographic and geological details encountered on my three-week journey into the mountains, cliff crevices, and russet plateaus of the *Four Corners*. These details are an attempt to create centers of attraction, focal points to evoke a sense of familiarity in the viewer. As cues they serve to pull the viewer into recognizable and tempting shapes reminding them of stairways, caves, or lakes that they themselves might have seen somewhere. These embodied signs of familiarity, however, never quite come into focus to resolve as a whole, always staying outside of the reach of the recognizable. Switching sizes and scale of objects further complicates my landscapes composites and geological formations become invented rather than real places. Formal structures of shape and color converge while marks and gestures that I make on the surfaces linger to create a somewhat obscure sense of place and a disconnect between ‘objective’ knowledge and subjective work of one’s memory.

Within the landscapes I create is a personal sense of self, a deeply intimate position in space, time, and memory reflective of my own transient perception of beauty

and imagination. As an artist I employ a set of specific formal and conceptual strategies in which layers of drawing and painting on polyester film overlap, colliding with bodily experience, memory, and perception. While making the work I attempt to connect the immediate, here and now of being in the studio, to embodied recollection of the things I saw on my travels. While I am interpreting past experiences, I also allow the intuitive faculties to reshape and reconstruct the visual narrative. The *Four Corners Gateway* therefore, becomes a trace of personal memories, and proposes that the installations are a form of a fictitious visual archive.



(fig.1) Linda Martinello, *Southwest studies*, 2011 – 2012, each 8.5 x 11 inches, oil and graphite on polyester film.

## Memory and Identity

Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal, and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has a width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there (Lippard, 65.)

The memory charts every detail of our lives and shapes our identity. What is stored in the mind is far more than a collection of facts and figures. In effect, our experiences make up our lives. It all happens through an inexplicable process; simply by making new connections, the cells of the brain not only respond to our environment, they record it and change the physical make-up of our bodies. But how these connections represent an experience remains to be better understood. "The important thing about memory is that it allows you to have a past, a future, it allows us to solve problems, and it allows language" (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 261.) The ability to travel back in time in one's mind at will is perhaps the most remarkable ability of our memory apparatus and brings a profound meaning to human experience. In essence we are able to act like time travelers within the matrices of our lives. Recent findings in brain research show that recalling memory makes it malleable. When memory is brought back it becomes fluid, needing to be re-recorded as it shares the same properties as new memories. It is important to note that emotion affects the way we encode and retrieve our memories. The ability to engage in mental time travel relates to the title of my thesis *Four Corners Gateway*. 'Gateway' acts as an indexical sign, points to a portal, or an entrance granting the viewer access to both past and future. The installation invites the viewer to participate

in the body of work. Encouraging exploration and investigation into the places and fictional narratives depicted.

My personal encounter with memory and history is something that I have investigated for many years. Fiction of history was the key to how I constructed my own identity. As a first-generation Canadian with no other relatives in the country, I grew up with an obscure and guarded family history. Through attempts to understand my Mexican mother's and Italian father's past, I have come to understand that both personal and national identities are constructed through complex narratives that both hide and reveal history. This I find is both a personal and political choice. Having been brought up on limited family information, the few offered facts were combined with a much larger fabricated picture. Just over ten years ago I visited my father's homeland for the first time as an adult. His small hometown is nestled just outside of Venice; I accompanied my mother on the trip as the two of us went to attend the funeral of my paternal grandmother. Entering my grandmother's house, I was struck by the many photographs taken of my three brothers and I, all framed and carefully preserved in a glass cabinet prominently placed in her home. I knew very little about her and my relatives - I was immediately filled with feelings of yearning and ambiguity.

The surreal experience of meeting a family with whom I could hardly communicate, visiting a foreign cemetery filled with ancestors' graves, and experiencing a land in stark contrast to my Toronto suburb upbringing, introduced me to the desire for information and identity in the unfamiliar. It was here in this unfortunate, disturbing yet exhilarating circumstance, where I had my first encounter with what I would call the sublime. It was also the moment when I understood the intersections between identity,

history, and myth. Theorist Edward Saïd draws upon the work of Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's *Selections From the Prison Notebook* to explain that past events and experiences deposit and construct our family's, our nation's, and our tradition's histories. This transforms our consciousness and marks us through heredity, collective and individual experiences, family relations, and finally personal relationships between individuals. All of these histories are limitless fragments lacking inventory or orderly guide. Gramsci declares, "history has left us an infinity of traces," therefore "the task is to try to compile an inventory" (Saïd, 7.) In other words as Saïd argues we need to try to make sense of it, giving history some shape and substance.

The most interesting of the human tasks is to compile an inventory of the infinity of traces that history has left on us. This history includes our history from our nation, from our family, and from tradition (Saïd, 7.)

History and memory construct us as individuals, they construct our national and personal identities and worldviews. All such constructions are ultimately fictional and fragmented. Both Saïd and Gramsci point out that such ideologically formed, subjective, and fictional narratives are made into 'truths'. Connecting the personal with the public is my way of playing with history, pointing to its paradoxes. The landscapes that I construct can be read as archives of fragments, which have since become the central theme behind my work.

## Process

My practice is process-driven, based on meticulous data gathering, and recollections of places visited. As part of my research and studio work I often travel visiting historically or culturally significant sites. It is during my travels that the first phase of process begins – gathering physical, digital, and experiential source material. This time last year, I was researching ancient archaeological sites on the North and South American UNESCO World Heritage List. Because travel is one of the main components of my research I was looking for a place that would become the focus of my thesis in the following eight months. The initial site that I considered was in Southwest Colorado between the low desert plateaus and the Rocky Mountains, a place called *Mesa Verde*. This state park created in 1906, contains some of the best-preserved cliff dwellings in the world. Through further research I learned of the *Four Corners* site. This area situated in the Southwest United States is the quadripoint of Southwest Colorado, Northwest New Mexico, Northeast Arizona and Southeast Utah (fig.2). There are hundreds of cliff dwellings and thousands of archaeological sites across this ancient territory. The most prevalent culture in the area is the Anasazi and spans fourteen centuries of history (fig.3).

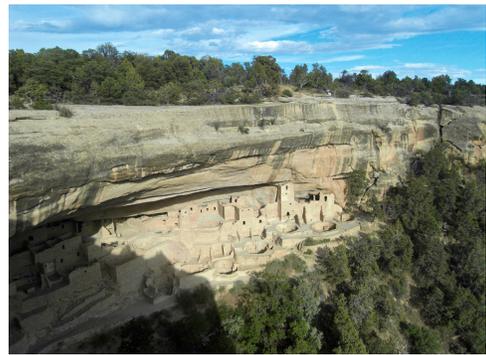
Upon my arrival it became evident that the *Four Corners* is a far too prosaic a name for the territory that respects no man-made boundaries. Long before surveyors drew straight perpendicular lines to create these Southwest states, the forces of time were occupied carving and drafting this desert into a much more amorphous pastiche of natural phenomena (fig.4). I witnessed landscapes that took thousands of years to create. Miles of

plains stretched into the horizon of golden hues in what felt like empty silence broken only by remnants of an explosive volcanic eruption that occurred 30 million years ago.

The images I create are not meant to be simple recreations of history, nor mere representations of the beauty of these ancient landscapes. My work proposes to, in fact, reckon and play with the landscape as fiction. The profound and majestic scenes I often find in my travels invoke theatre and demand an acuity of the mental faculty through which whims, visions, and fantasies are summoned up. As one is wandering through massive and often empty sites, hers/his tangible, material world becomes invaded by imagination. The senses are heightened and the 'real' and the 'illusionary' run in sync within the same stream of thought - rendering one's perception of the immediate environment and reality fragmented.



(fig.2) Four Corners Monument (detail), and map of the Four Corners area, United States.



(fig.3) *Four Corners*, travel documentation photos, 2011.



(fig.4) *Four Corners*, travel documentation photos, 2011.

## Stories of the Real and the Unreal: Aesthetic Precedents

The research and development in the studio has led me to the work of magic realists. This style includes several different artistic disciplines, most notably painting, literature, and film. Magic realist depictions and stories call upon myth to question the true nature of reality. It has become a ubiquitous term describing various contemporary works yet a certain ambiguity surrounds it. Characteristics of the style are an evolution of traditional mimesis initially exploring changing perceptions of the visual and the real, and culminating in a totalizing epic view of history based on the representation of the collective memory of a people (Duncan, 34.) German art critic, Franz Roh, first used the term in 1925 as a way to describe postexpressionist painting in northern Europe, also known as *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and to describe painting that demonstrated an altered reality. The term also appears independently in the Italian journal *Novecento*, edited by writer and critic Massimo Bontempelli (Guenther, 41.) According to Roh, important aspects of magical realist painting include: a juxtaposition of forward movement with a sense of distance, as opposed to Expressionism's tendency to foreshorten the subject and a use of miniature details even in expansive paintings, such as large landscapes. The term was later used to describe the unusual realism by American painters such as Ivan Albright, Paul Cadmus, and George Tooker and by other internationally known artists Otto Dix, George Grosz, Frida Kahlo, and Lucien Freud. These notions were adopted in the 1940's by Latin American writers who combined the theories of Roh and Bontempelli with French surrealist concepts of the marvelous, and incorporated indigenous mythologies



(fig. 5) Otto Dix, *Anna Berber*, 1925.

(fig. 6) George Grosz, *John Foerate*, *Man with Glass Eyes*, 1926.

(fig. 7) Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Monkey*, 1940.

within traditional mimetic conventions in their quest for the original Latin American novel (Duncan 35.) Although Roh made no reference to Latin America in his writings, his ideas resonated there because of his belief that reality could appear unreal when seen from unusual or unexpected perspectives, and that the surprises found beneath the surface of everyday life could form the basis for art. This kind of surprise of ‘reality appearing unreal,’ happens for me during travels abroad. When visiting new places, above all in ancient sites, stories of the past animate the land and flood the imagination, the ‘unexpected perspectives’ and the senses react.

From the 1960's to the present, there has been a strong current of magic realism within the general movement of postmodernism, especially in British and North American painting, literature, and film. Magic realism in the context of the arts appears to demonstrate a continuous presence in the twenty-first century, and presents an alternative to more established movements such as surrealism and postmodernism through its privileging of the mimetic function and its emphasis on the representation of history and

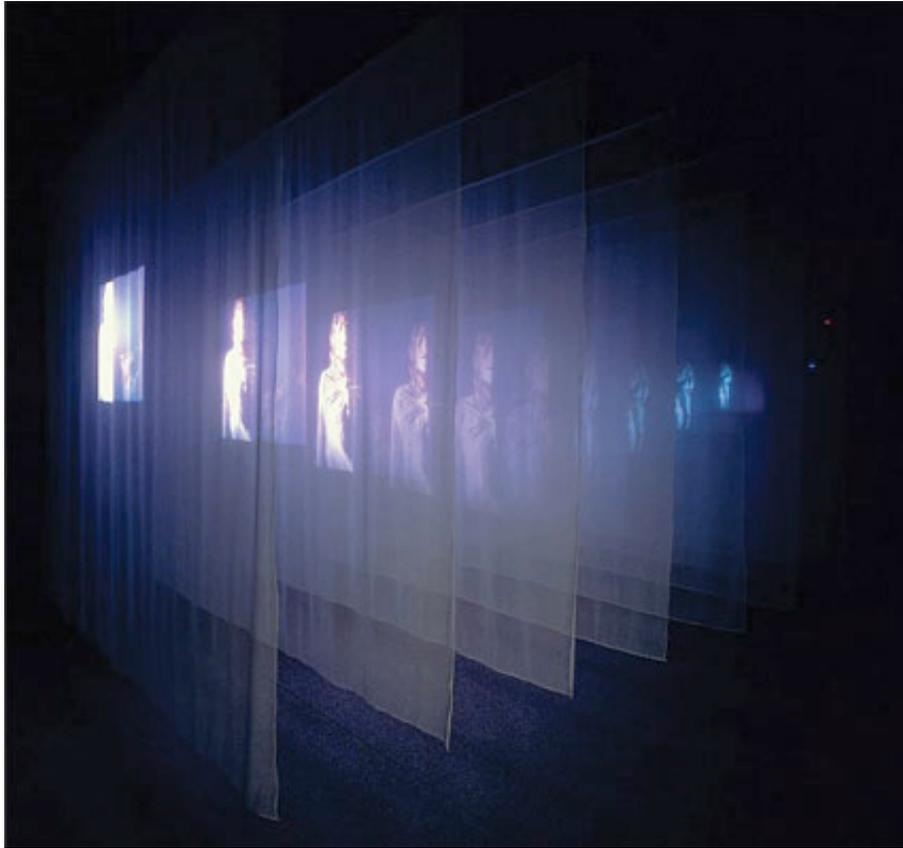
identity. Becoming a current mainstream form particularly in film, the term ‘magic realism’ itself is not well established within film theory, however many films can be said to follow its conventions especially in the work of American director David Lynch and in other widely released and commercially successful films. Further examples of these include American director Tim Burton’s *Big Fish*, where the entire story takes place fairly grounded in reality where memories and stories include magical elements that, most of the time, seem semi-plausible. Other films that have been called magical realist works include Mexican director Guillermo del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth*, and more recently Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris*, where again unexpected results occur and multiple planes and spaces are created simultaneously. I find that these aspects of fragmented time and space in magical realist films connects most fluently to my ideas of memory, history, fiction and reality.

Magic realist literature gained popularity with the rise of the literary movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Latin American Boom), most notably by Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez. More recent Latin American authors in this style include Isabel Allende’s *The House of Spirits* and Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*. The term has also been applied to earlier writers such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Ernst Junger and postcolonial and contemporary writers such as Salman Rushdie, Gunter Grass and Angela Carter. The main magic realist literary features combine the external factors of human existence with the internal personal ones. It is a fusion between scientific physical reality and psychological human reality, incorporating aspects of human existence such as thoughts, emotions, dreams and imagination (Duncan 38.) Similarly to the way magic realist plot lines characteristically employ hybrid multiple

planes, I develop elaborate dimensions in my landscapes through formalist structures of line, shape and colour, and by layering drawings to form large collage works. Such characteristic plot lines of multiple planes of reality in literary works take place in "inharmonious arenas of such opposites as urban and rural, and Western and indigenous". For example, as seen in Argentine writer Julio Cortázar's *La Noche Boca Arriba*, an individual experiences two realistic situations simultaneously in the same place but during two different time periods, centuries apart. His apparent 'dreamlike' states connect the two realities and this small bit of magic allows these multiple planes of reality possible (Duncan 108.) Not unlike the memory's remarkable ability for mental time travel.

From these examples of movement and emotion, and how that relationship is formed and made malleable in literary texts, in paintings, and especially on film screen, I call upon the work of American artist Bill Viola (fig.8). The magical realism he projects in his works stirs spectators as it does in the previous works mentioned. He is intent on engaging affect through a series of depictions that knowingly engage the unconscious history of affect, pulling on 'heart-strings' developed over centuries (Buschli and Lucas, 73.) Viola is able to show something about the elementary affective form of the modern world as they are produced on screens and then transmitted into urban bodies and other byways as a kind of visceral shorthand existing only in very small subliminal spaces and time (Thrift, 74.) Marcus (2002) writes: "When a movie has become part of the folklore of a nation, the borders between the movie and the nation cease to exist. The movie becomes a fable; then it becomes a metaphor." Viola shows us all the affective metaphors

that typify Western cultures but through slow motion restores them to their original nature so that we can see them at work.



(fig.8) Bill Viola, *The Veiling*, (detail), 1995. Video/sound installation. 22 Feb. 2012 < <http://asuartmuseum.asu.edu/1996/viola/vieling.php>>

In contemporary art place, location, and site, have acquired an endlessly proliferating set of meanings - real, imaginary, material, and conceptual. It defines 'site-specific' art works, which are constructed, and partly defined, by a particular location. This is the circumstance for *Triple Cave*, the 14 x 36 ft. wall-collage made specifically for the thesis show. The 'cinematic' quality of the gallery space with its tall black ceiling, large horizontal white walls and black floor inspired me to create an in between space which instantaneously simulates inside and outside of a cave. Other ambiguities of space

and place that I am addressing include strange intersections between geographical and psychological, real and imagined.



(fig.9) David Lynch, *Mulholland Drive* (video still), 2001. 22 Feb. 2012  
<[http://www.salon.com/2001/10/12/mulholland\\_drive/](http://www.salon.com/2001/10/12/mulholland_drive/)>

Drawing on the work of director David Lynch for representing a fictional ‘dual’ narrative I looked at the film *Mulholland Drive* (2001). The film, a non-linear narrative surrealist tale of the dark side of Hollywood proceeds through a labyrinth of Lynchian themes and motifs, signifying bifurcation of the world into two polarities. The film places characters in scenarios that have components and references to dreams, fantasies, and nightmares, and viewers are left to decide, between the extremes, what is reality (fig.9). Film theorist David Roche writes that Lynch films do not simply tell detective stories, but they force the audience into the role of becoming detectives themselves to make sense of the narratives. In Lynch's films, the spectator is always “one step behind narration” and

thus "narration prevails over diegesis" (Roche, 43.) Roche argues that Mulholland Drive is a mystery film not because it allows the audience to view the solution to a question, but the film itself is a mystery that is held together "by the spectator-detective's desire to make sense" of it (Roche, 43.) Much like the multiple planes of reality in magic realist literary works, Lynch offers his dynamic worldview that "we live in a world of opposites. It's that way here for a reason, but we have a hard time grasping what the reason is. In struggling to understand we learn about balance, and there's a mysterious door right at the balance point. We can go through that door any time we get it together" (Olson, 276).

Similarly in my own work, the viewer must interpret my landscapes like a 'detective', to uncover the mystery of these places presented. Aesthetic clues are offered to the viewer in the form of passageways, stairways, and trails. Other clues include rendered details of the landscape like forests, waterfalls, mountains, valleys, etc (fig.10). Further in the way of David Lynch, I also incorporate reappearing motifs. Gesture, marks, and exaggerated perspective that often stretch out from the anchors (clues) within my compositions, and then out into various directions (fig.11). It is in the magic realist style where visual art and stories can blur the edges between the real and the unreal, allowing us to find a new territory for telling our own stories. The pain, the honesty, the humor, the audacity, and the marvel of magical realism allows a way to acknowledge the self, while acknowledging the other, so that we can gain a better understanding of our history.



(fig.10) Linda Martinello, *Southwest study 114*, 2012, 8.5 x 11 inches, graphite on polyester film.



(fig.11) Linda Martinello, *Southwest study 79*, 2012, 8.5 x 11 inches, oil and graphite on polyester film.

## (Syn)aesthetics & Affect

The attempts to disrupt the boundaries between the real and the unreal led me further to Josephine Machon's text *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance*. In her text Machon offers a theory of an art-making style, describing a 'fusion' of art and science through the inclusion of the neurological condition known as 'Synaesthesia'. Synaesthesia is the subjective sensation of a sense other than the one being stimulated. For example, a sound may evoke sensations of colour. Machon adds the parentheses to the word to distinguish her theatre-based theory from the neurological term it echoes. She explains how the visceral experimental quality of the (syn)aesthetic style is emphasized within the interpretation of corporeal memory and embodied knowledge that refers human perception back to its own primordial, or *chthonic* (from the Greek, 'of, or to the earth') impulse (Machon, 5.) Culling extensively from the research of American neurologist Richard E. Cytowic and Soviet neuropsychologist and neurologist A.R Luria in particular, this condition is claimed to be present and active in all human perception from birth but only a minority of humans choose to retain this unusual perceptual ability (Cytowic, 15.) This proposes the potential that we are capable of retaining "synaesthetic memory and an ability to relocate this fused perceptual awareness with a given trigger, such as that offered by certain types of artwork" (Machon, 16.) It is therefore argued that this open and perspective-shapeshifting style offered with (syn)aesthetics, provides a creation/response/analysis vocabulary available to all visual art practices.

The term 'intuition' while commonly used by artists, has been somewhat marginalized within art theory and criticism. Whether sensed as a gut feeling or a flash of

insight, intuition is central to processes of ‘coming to know’ in aesthetic practice and experience (Fisher, 11.) In the book *Technologies of Intuition*, edited by Jennifer Fisher, an anthology of texts, interviews and artists' projects centre on the theme of intuition. Further explained is how many artists habitually rely on extra-rational means of understanding, either in the form of everyday instinct or uncanny cognition in the form of memory. A delicate balance, though, exists between clairvoyance and fantasy, foreknowledge and wishful thinking that requires cultivated perception. Set in continuity with the compelling history of the Spiritualist Movement and emancipatory feminism, this anthology elucidates intuitive agency as a psychic, somatic and social technology in art and culture from a wide range of perspectives, including those of visual, performance and new media art, cultural theory, art history, psychology, curating, and theatre (Fisher, 15.)

Simon O'Sullivan's *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond Representation*, is another book of case studies where the argument is made for a return to ‘an aesthetics of affect’, and for the theorization of art as an expanded and complex practice. Staging a series of encounters between specific Deleuzian concepts and the work of artists that position their work "outside" of representation, O'Sullivan allows these "possible worlds" to work back on philosophy. He begins with a distinction between representation and ‘the encounter’, bringing to our attention how with the former, our belief systems and the knowledge we may have accumulated about the world remain intact (O'Sullivan, 22.) From here he argues that if we follow the Deluzian sense of what it means to think, then with representation we do not actually think at all because we fall prey to habit. In contrast, the encounter in the way O'Sullivan intends it, is to

break our habitual ways of being and instead to act in the world to expose and affirm the new. This notion relates back to the cultivated perception previously mentioned in *Technologies of Intuition* and in the style of (syn)æaesthetics. Further, he defines art as a series of productive encounters that are best understood as a ‘meeting, or collision, between two fields of force, transitory but ultimately transformative,’ that force us to break with habit (O’Sullivan, 24.)

## Methodology

Upon return from travels and back in the studio, the second phase of the process takes place. I begin by creating a multi-sensory, multidimensional working environment. The studio is transformed into a laboratory-theatre-archive. A place where I am able to thoroughly examine data, a place that stimulates intuitive faculties for recall of various visceral embodied responses based on past experiences. The surrounding source materials, mostly in the form of post-it notes, maps, sketches, journals, digital images, and video, function as triggers to relocate my perceptual awareness and to heighten powers of recollection. It becomes a necessary tool to mentally and emotionally fix a particular place, a time, and an idea – similar to the way a map functions. It becomes



(fig.12) Linda Martinello, *Four Corners*, travel documentation videos (video stills), 2011.

a personal tool for getting from ‘here to there’ and back again and helps to enter a more expansive zone. These cartographic realities (notes, pamphlets maps) blanket large parts of my studio walls. Playfully reworking the history of the Four Corners territory, I have carefully categorized and inventoried the documentation and source materials into a sort of a personal archive. The data documentation is thousands of digital photographs and several sound and video recordings, all properly dated and filed in order of experience (fig.12). Sketchbooks and journals that detail perceptions and senses (smells, colour, texture, temperature, weather, and other specifics of the moment) are also filed for future reference. This elaborate gathering activity hearkens to a personal desire for information out of fear of forgetting. An almost obsessive building of a personal archive, as well as my recreations of narratives about the pasts that I encountered all become attempts to learn more about these places. It is however impossible to do so as all that I recreate at the end is fiction. In a sense, my work in the studio employs something that theater director/actor Lee Strasberg has called ‘method acting’ which summons past experience to inform present interpretations, an evocation of memory.



(fig.13) Linda Martinello, Studio wall Post-It notes (detail), 2011-2012.

I translate my own experiences of visited places into hundreds of quick document-size 8.5 x 11 inch studies using oil paint and graphite on polyester film sheets, which I favour for their slippery surface. The drafting film and my drawing implements allow for a continuous uninterrupted flow of gestural engagement with the work, as if it were a single breathe. Through a process of contemplation and controlled responses to my notes and documentation, the narrative, visual, textual and other information that I have gathered is filtered to create a world in my landscapes that is meticulous and at the same time chaotic. In this created world I reinvent the sites and places visited and ultimately re-enact memory.

The approach I take in my drawings/paintings is unpredictable with its exaggerated scale and perspective - it echoes automatist experiments. Constructed on memory, extremes between descriptive features and abstracted forms emerge and perceptions shift between realms: between the sensual and intellectual, between the literal and lateral. While my consciousness may have forgotten the details of the actual sites, this method of re-engagement and re-enactment enables psychological and emotional re-connections. By engaging the senses, memory, and studio practice, I intend to activate a particular quality of perception and feeling in the viewer. Both the viewer and I are engaged in affective work of perception and cognition in the immediate moment. The traces of my recollections, and possibly those of the viewers are recalled through the corporeal memory that is based on past experiences. Here the potential of the corporeal memory to influence interpretation becomes the paramount force that drives the work.

## Choice of Materials

My work generally ranges in the size from 8.5 x 11 inches, to 36 x 50 inches, to 108 x 156 inches. When working on large-scale works a new kind of multidimensional studio environment is necessary so that while ‘in-production mode’ I can shift between the sensual and intellectual, the somatic and the semantic. This was resolved by projecting videos of ‘walking trails’ on a nearby wall while I am working. Like a theatre set design, I am interested in immersing myself into a visceral experiential environment. This initiates past memory allowing for ease into mental time travel where I can re-track the land both cerebrally and corporeally. Physically stepping in and outside of the large works, while building them on the floor, extended arm gestures lead the work as they progress (fig.13). Once dry these large drawings/paintings have two options for existence. The first being to exist independently and whole and the second is to be broken down into several cut pieces and then later re-joined in union as a large collage. When building a collage, one large drawing is chosen as the main compositional anchor, then in the manner of a puzzle, cut pieces are brought together to create a more complex and dynamic composition. The semi-opaque quality of film allows for underneath layers to show through to the top layers, working together to form a new and intricate re-creation of history.

The installation for my thesis show comprises of four 9 x 13 ft. collages titled *Southwest I, Southwest II, Southwest III, Southwest IV*, one hundred 8.5 x 11 inch landscape studies, and the site-specific 14 x 26 ft. black and white wall-collage *Triple*



(fig.13) Linda Martinello, In-studio photos of collages in-progress, 2012.

*Cave*. The installation created for the thesis is an attempt to recreate and project my imagination onto the material world. Through scale and a reformulation of visual and kinesthetic experience; the four 9 x 13 ft. collages, and the 14 x 26 ft. wall-collage, offer a notion of sites from the Four Corners as an assemblage and fragments of personal memory, subjective fact, and seductive fictions. The work's large scale is a metaphor for my personal inability to place myself within the vastness of these majestic lands (fig.14). "Place is being defined through history and memory, site and space, geography and psychology – all confront the challenge of trying to render the real intangible" (Golden, 20.) It is my intention that large works encourage reflection through the body, affecting the viewer.



(fig.14) Linda Martinello, *Southwest II*, 2012, oil and graphite collage on polyester film, 9 x 13 ft.



(fig.16) Linda Martinello, *Southwest studies* (1 - 98), 2011-2012, oil and graphite on polyester film, each 8.5 x 11 inches.

## Conclusion

The circumstances of our current Western cultural political and social narrative demand that we question our perceptions of history, reality, and truth. There are many contemporary artists in the West who use concepts of history, myth, and memory in their work. Many of them do not engage history in a profound way, rather they treat it as subordinate to the here and now. Often, such engagements privilege particular Western narratives to exclude others. What my work is signaling is a critique of such exclusionary histories. In doing so, I play with memory in order to point out that in fact everything we know is fiction and is based on our identity constructions. On collecting the fragments of history and reshaping identity, in further translation of Gramsci theory, Edward Said explains that:

The task of interpretation is... to go beyond one's own individual experiences... to transform oneself from a unitary identity to an identity that includes the 'other' without suppressing the difference. That is the great goal, the notion of writing a historical inventory (Said, 9.)

So perhaps the intention of some contemporary artists gravitating towards aberrated states do so not in order to escape the frighteningly impersonal and the rational, as Clement Greenberg assumed of the modernists, but rather to reflect a social order that is itself aberrant. Nevertheless, artists often do define the conscious ability to engage intuitive insight and affective cognition to open themselves to extra-rational modes of thought and states of bodily awareness. With reference to my own practice, I subscribe to philosopher Immanuel Kant's thoughts on introspection:

For something to become an object of knowledge, it must be experienced, and experience is structured by our minds—both space and time being the forms of

our intuition or perception... We are never passive observers or knowers  
– *Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1781*

To explore ideas of the history, myth, memory, including faculties of intuition and the sublime, is to explore the schism between expectation and sensation, expanding the horizon between known territories of the real and our capacity to imagine other worlds. Even in the globalized technologies of today, we may still be taken by surprise by scenes of wonder. Aesthetic experience at the brink of our senses removes the familiar ground on which we know and experience the existential condition of being (Morley, 18.)

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