

# From the Void, the Night: A Drawing-Writing Correspondence

Jen Archer-Martin and Lisa Munnelly : Massey University, New Zealand

## PREFACE

*From the void, the night* presents an unfolding encounter via a series of letters between two artist/designer/academics as they explore symbioses between their practices and thinking. The correspondence traverses topics that resonate with ideas of darkness, light, time, space, and sensation. Confronting spatial and epistemological boundaries, it begins to carve out a space of practice that embraces dark knowledge, material agency, and the unknown. The conversation begins with the discovery of an already-existing dialogue between bodies of work and thought stretching back to 2003-4, when, in separate efforts to transcend binary oppositions of figure/ground, inside/outside, nothingness/everything, two women made drawings on walls.<sup>1</sup> Unknown to one another at the time, both researchers were employing similar strategies to explore the embodied spatio-temporal performances of drawing and inhabitation – rhythm, repetition, sensation, and the field. These wall-drawings and the texts that accompanied them set up divergent practices that converged again in early 2017 at the *Performing, Writing* symposium.<sup>2</sup> Here, both undertook performance works<sup>3</sup> that employed drawing-as-writing, and sought to capture the spatial, temporal, material and affective unfoldings of durational practices. While the two works took very different forms, they shared parallel methods, establishing simple parameters for embracing the unknown of live practice.

The six letters of the enclosed drawing-writing correspondence look to further this encounter, and explore how the two practices might rub against one another, approaching Tony Godfrey's definition of a 'drawing' as 'two objects or materials touch[ing] and evidence of their meeting [being] left behind.'<sup>4</sup> The form of a 'letter' was taken loosely, considered as an assemblage that might contain writing, images, and other materials – a mode of 'letter-writing' that sits somewhere between writing, drawing and performance. Written over the course of two weeks in which they were the only form of communication between the pair, the letters are the raw product of an intensive creative exchange. While the authors are colleagues at the same College of Creative Arts, the correspondence presents a genuine temporal journey of getting to know one another's creative thinking process, carving out a dynamic space of speculation about future practice. They reveal this process to be embodied and situated, with references to cultural events and indigenous understandings particular to Aotearoa New Zealand being entangled in the process of thinking-in-place. Intentionally presented here in their unrefined state, the letters are themselves a statement about resisting the pull of the light (of light-as-clarity). They are not writing-as-explanation but writing-as-drawing; a live material process of thinking-through and drawing-out. Gleefully inhabiting the dark space of not-knowing, they remain a dark, cloudy, lively mass of potential energy and material.

## NOTES

1. Lisa Munnelly, *The Motherboard*, Melbourne, Wellington, 2003; Jennifer Archer-Martin, *Suburban Horizons*, Wellington, 2004.
2. *Performing, Writing*, March 2017, Wellington, New Zealand.
3. Jennifer Archer-Martin, *taking note(s)\_performing care* (durational documentation performance), presented online and at The Performance Arcade, 2017; Lisa Munnelly, *Dirty Edges, Clean Lines* (drawing performance), presented at Bats Theatre, 2017.
4. T. Godfrey, *Drawing Today* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1990), 9.

## BIOGRAPHIES

Wellington based artist Lisa Munnelly works within the context of critically engaged drawing. In devising and adhering to strict frameworks in her work, Munnelly strives to eliminate arbitrary aesthetics. This restraint in mark, movement and material is designed to highlight the physicality of mark making, and to enact, celebrate and analyse materials' capacity to both perform and transform. Positioned at the boundary of drawing and performance, recent research highlights include 'Dirty Edges and Clean Lines,' a drawing performance for the *Performing, Writing Symposium* (NZ), and her paper 'Being In-Between' presented at *Drawing||Phenomenology: tracing lived experience through drawing* (UK).

Jen Archer-Martin (of Pākehā and Ngā Puhi descent) is a spatial designer, researcher and educator. Her creative practice draws on design, writing and performance to explore how spatial and material agents contribute to wellbeing through facilitating and performing care. Caring human-nonhuman relationships are positioned as the foundation of healthy ecologies – interconnected networks of diverse agents that look after one other. Care is thus explored as a radically collaborative and open-ended creative practice that challenges ontological and epistemological boundaries. Recent work includes 'taking note(s)\_performing care' (*Performing, Writing*, Wellington, 2017) and collaborations 'Make/Use' (*Objectspace*, Auckland, 2015) and 'bit-u-men-at-work' (*Performing Mobilities*, Melbourne, 2015).

7 June 2017

Dear Lisa,

I was moved by your performance at *Performing, Writing*.<sup>1</sup> Dark, dirty, smudgy charcoal lines delineating clean white space. Detritus of the performance leaving black traces, not only on a tired sheet of folded, marked paper, but accumulated on white linen, creased palms and under fingernails.

If you remember, I spoke to you afterward about your work, and you told me about some of your earlier pieces - About how your process-based drawing practice emerged from your postgraduate research, and the moment when your work shifted from drawing charcoal figures on white ground, to drawing the 'ground' itself.

I went and looked up your work. *The Motherboard*.<sup>2</sup> A deep, dark, visceral field of small, black charcoal marks. I could almost feel the physical resonance of this void, or this *place* - not an emptiness, but a tangible darkness. I was compelled forward through space, immersed in its rhythmic materiality.

I went and read what you had written about your work.<sup>3</sup> Another dimension was added to the resonance that I had felt. Did you know that we were doing our postgraduate research at almost the same time, same place? And the connections don't stop there. The more I read, the more uncanny it became.

Did you know we were both writing about sensation and rhythm - the embodied spatial experience of the field, or ground, made tangible in the surface of the artwork? Externalising the internal; internalising the external; becoming-material. Did you know that we both wrote about a fish, and about paper becoming-water?<sup>4</sup>

For me, it was about dissolving the wall - the architectural barrier - and redefining dwelling as a temporal becoming-interior through embodied rhythms and rituals.<sup>4</sup> I have enclosed an image for you of a work I made.<sup>6</sup> It is also a drawing on a wall, also a field of lines.

I wonder if this resonance, this already-existing dialogue, is perhaps a ground that might be materialised through further correspondence. I feel as though there is a rich field of darkness and light, line and shadow that connects our practices, thinking and the way we *feel* space and materiality. I am curious as to what new thoughts might emerge in this space between.

I see this exchange as in itself a kind of drawing, or drawing-together, through (dark) time and space, similarly to how we both explored drawing-as-writing/writing-as-drawing in our *Performing, Writing* works. We could explore how our practices might rub up against one another, creating a drawing through whatever evidence is left behind.<sup>7</sup>

In anticipation,

Jen



1 Lisa Munnelly, *Dirty Edges, Clean Lines*, 2017, performance work at *Performing, Writing: A Symposium in Four Turns*, Wellington, New Zealand.

2 Lisa Munnelly, *The Motherboard*, Melbourne, 2010. The original *Motherboard* work was created in Wellington, 2003.



3 Lisa Munnelly, "The aesthetics of immersion: time, process and performance in practice" (Masters thesis, Massey University, 2003); Lisa Munnelly, "Drawing upon the aesthetics of immersion," in *Performance Design*, ed. Dorita Hannah and Olav Harsløf (2008), 63-80.

4 Jennifer Archer-Martin, "Becoming-interior: toward a nondual philosophy of design for dwelling-in-the-world" (Masters thesis, Massey University, 2005).

5 Archer-Martin, "Becoming-interior", p.62.

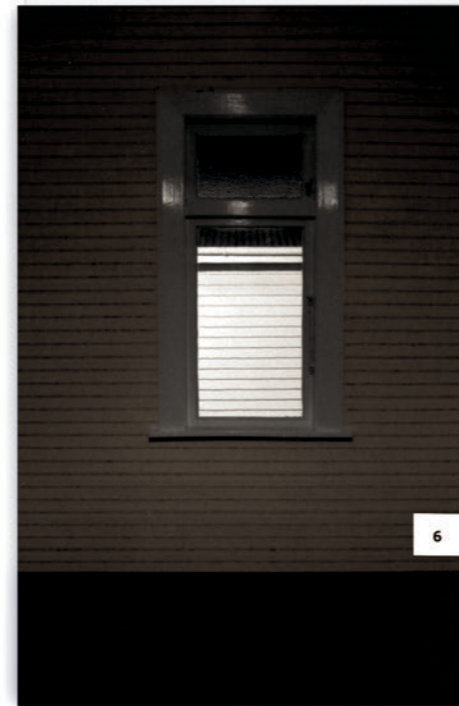
In this painting of a fish, executed in ink on an album leaf, an oscillation between the figure and ground occurs. The *field* of the blank page, which is at once nothingness, yet also the space of potentiality for an infinite number of future outcomes, is identified as water through no other technique than the painting of the fish. The fish emerges from the meeting of ink, brush, and field, and through its becoming-fish, it engenders a becoming-water of the page.



John Berger, cited in Munnelly, "Drawing upon the aesthetics of immersion", p.77.

I now began to see the white surface of the paper on which I was going to draw in a different way. From being a clean flat page it became an empty space. Its whiteness became an area of limitless opaque light, possible to move through but not to see through. I knew that when I drew a line on it - or through it - I should have to control the line, not like the driver of a car, on one plane: but like a pilot in the air, movement in all three dimensions being possible. Yet when I made a mark, the nature of the page changed again, the area of opaque light suddenly ceased to be limitless. The whole page was changed by what I had just drawn just as the water in a tank is changed immediately you put a fish in it. It is then only the fish you look at, the water merely becomes the condition of its life and the area in which it can swim.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> John Berger, "Drawing," in *Selected Essays and Articles: The Look of Things* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 167.



6 Jennifer Archer-Martin, *Suburban Horizons*, Wellington, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> As you cite in "Drawing upon the aesthetics of immersion", Tony Godfrey (in his 1990 book *Drawing Today*, p.9) defines drawing as occurring when "two objects or materials touch and evidence of their meeting is left behind."

12 June 2017

Dear Jen

Thankyou for your letter, and invitation for further exchange.

I agree that there are many correlations between our practices...and I too am interested to explore these crossovers in our work further, particularly with respect to how they may resonate with the idea of darkness.

Re your enclosed image entitled 'Suburban Horizons'. Viewing your photograph of the darkened interior it dawned on me that I had personally viewed this installation (intervention?) of yours; had stood in that room thirteen years ago and looked through the window as described. For the record here, I note how easy it is to resort to light and its emergence (dawn) as a metaphor for perception. Perhaps through this dialogue we will develop a lexicon for the attributes of darkness, be able to offer an alternative to the now well worn coupling of light and knowledge.

The second impression I had from your letter was how similar our work looks. The image of your work 'Suburban Horizons' is nearly an inversion of my 'Motherboard' wall drawing. I've enclosed a still from my recent Performing Writing work that points out how this similitude between our practice continues. The darkened space in the image I attach you will recognise as the black box of the Propeller Stage in Bats Theatre Wellington.

With the call from Performing Writing to challenge the relationship between written text and live-ness, I proposed to make use of some of my favourite passages on drawing. To perform a scavenged collection of quotes and terms, sticky sentences and magnetized words, all coagulating around the act of mark making. A fuliginous formless mass - yes fuliginous, one such word amongst a collection that I've stowed away for future use- having the colour or consistency of soot or smoke; like soot in cloudiness or obscurity.

You may recall how in the performance a number of voices read these selected excerpts, alongside the drawing performance that presented the fold physically, metaphorically, and as a working process. One of the quotes by Jean Fisher read; 'this strange quality of simultaneous oblivion and visibility is the internal dynamic of artistic vision; possessing an overwhelming depth, it is felt in the subject as the desire of blindness...'<sup>1</sup> Fisher's words on the operations of thought captured what I was attempting to show through the drawing developing as a play of folds; folding/unfolding, enfolding/withholding. The rhythm of fold as a procedural and perceptual movement of expansion and contraction that at once reveals and conceals speaks, I think, to the experiential rhythms you emphasise in your letter; a to and fro-ing between the externalisation of the internal and the internalisation of the external.

Your letter gave me the opportunity to reflect upon the experience of performing in a theatre. It was a first for me. Yes, my drawing practice has been labelled performative for its tendency to engage both the gallery space and the body and because I often install drawings over the exhibition period. However, having people come and go through the gallery and witness a drawing in progress is, I discovered, completely different from 'performing' a drawing to an audience. I've attempted to capture the slightly terrifying experience in a poem attached here. Obviously the black box of the theatre is the inverse to the white cube of the gallery, and standing in the dark at the beginning of the performance was the most intense moment of the whole piece for me. The dark interior increased my somatic sensitivity to the surrounding audience; I could sense their bodies relax into their seats, and then tense through a delay to their expectation of when the work would begin. The anonymity of darkness felt luxurious; the contrast of shifting from one of many in the dark, to one alone in the light, and from being a watcher to the watched felt nearly too stark to bear.

Perhaps no more than a mere account of stage fright, but as an experience the affect of darkness here was palpable, tangible and very real to me.

Lisa

<sup>1</sup> Fisher, Jean. "On Drawing." In *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act Selected from the Tate Collection* by Avis Newman, ed. Catherine De Zegher. (Tate Publishing and The Drawing Center, 2003), p.224.

BATS

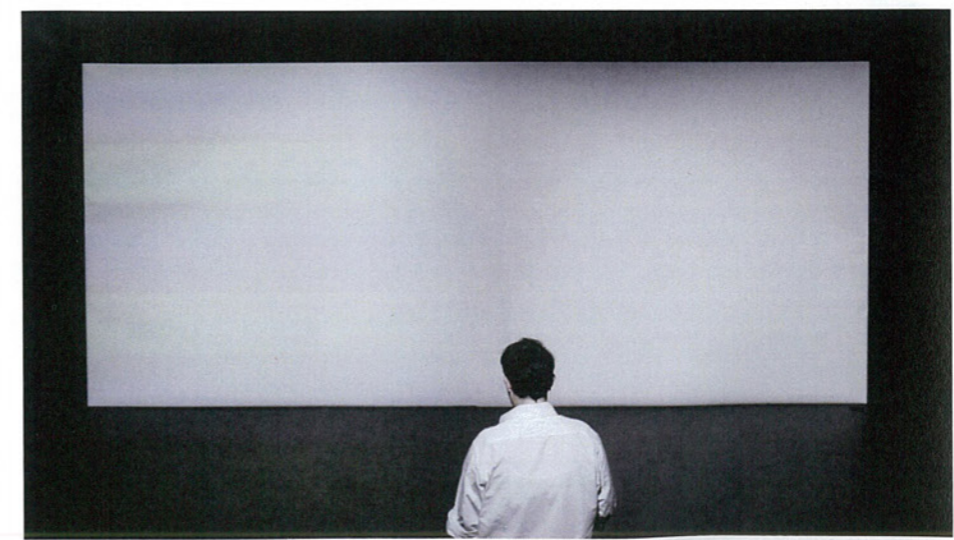
Not in the wings but at the back,  
waiting  
blackness  
adrenaline  
and the audience

settling  
settled set  
silent

a shift now  
an expectation  
and now  
now is the time  
enveloping protective anonymous darkness  
to leave that space  
propelled by silence  
onto the Propeller Stage

1. Approach plane
  2. Pinpoint startpoint and pin paper
  3. Trace perimeter of paper
  4. Fold paper
  5. Repeat steps 3 & 4 for 25 min
- A script - of sorts  
A framework to eliminate the arbitrary  
parameters put into place  
materials called upon to act, to perform and transform  
choreographed contingencies of time movement and matter

but  
unscripted upon approach  
this blindness,  
eyes trained upon my back  
mine rake the brilliant surface,  
whiteout  
my point has come adrift  
impossible  
I see myself searching  
and now (really it needs to be)  
finally  
now  
I spot  
my



Lisa Munnelly, *Dirty Edges Clean Lines*, 2017, The Propeller Stage, Bats Theatre | Image credit: Josh Lewis

19 June 2017

Dear Lisa,

Your letter has enticed me down such a warren of rabbit-holes that my mind has got all tied up in knots. Fragments of sticky sentences mark the muddy entrances - 'a lexicon for the attributes of darkness'; 'a fuliginous formless mass...like soot in cloudiness or obscurity'; 'the desire of blindness'; 'the affect of darkness'; 'a framework to eliminate the arbitrary'; 'materials called upon to [en]act...choreographed contingencies' - and so I have been prompted to do some scavenging of my own, some of which I hope will coagulate or become magnetic. Here is my attempt to follow these threads into the dark...

Night slowly falls, conjuring colours from the lights.



between-ness is nothingness, and it is also everything. The in-between is the space between things in which they may interact, in which various becomings-other may occur. It is the space of *interrelation*. So being, it may be said that the in-between is both a void, an empty space of potentiality, but also the totality of all possible relations between things. This space is a *field*, comprised of forces and movements. It is the virtuality from which all actuality emerges. It is imperceptible, yet it is the source and repository of all perception. The field exists as a background to all life, as the virtuality of the natural world. It is the living force, or living movement that flows through all things that can be considered to be alive.

It is within this very field of virtual forces that we live in the world. The field is the natural world, thus, our dwelling-in-the-world hinges on our awareness of the field and our interconnection with it. The field is Heidegger's "outside," and it is only through the act of *dwelling* that it becomes an inhabitable "inside." This becoming-interior, or interiorisation, of the field, is the key to *dwelling*. To "make a home in the world" is not about imposing artificial order on nature; it is not about conquering nature, rather, it is about the interiorisation of nature. But what is this interiorisation and how does one go about making it happen? *Dwelling* is an act; it is also an *actualisation*. The world becomes an "inside" at such times as the virtuality of the field becomes actual. In other words, the interiorisation of the field is coincident with its becoming-perceptible. The primary condition for this event is a dynamic interconnection between the inhabiting self and the natural world.

Jennifer Archer-Martin, "Becoming-Interior: Toward a Foundational Philosophy of Design for Dwelling-in-the-world" (Masters thesis, Massey University, 2005).

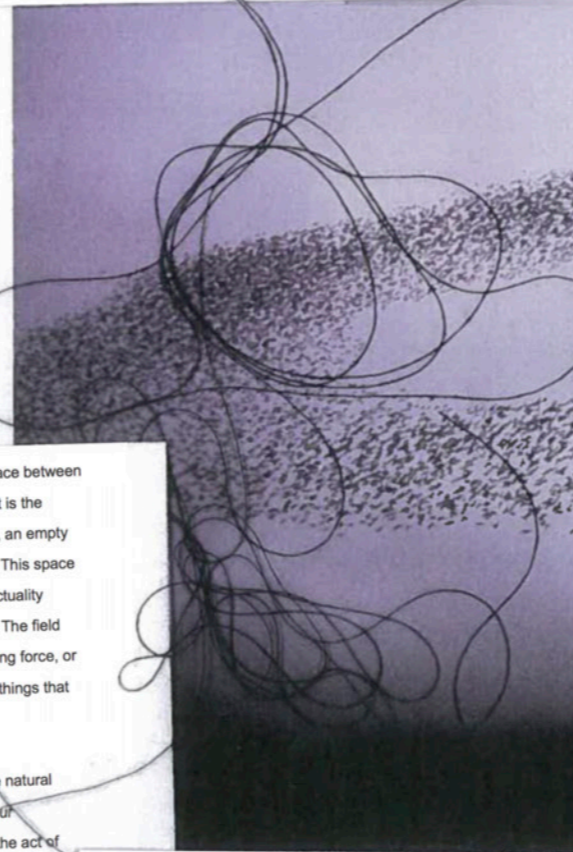
I also had a framework for eliminating the arbitrary.

1. Immerse yourself in the experience, noticing what you notice. Be particularly attuned to small acts of care performed by people, places, things and materials.
2. Take note of what you notice, using whatever is to hand.
3. Select three moments of note and archive each one as a note - one page of Size 1 lined notepaper per note.
4. Perform actions 1-3 on each day of activity leading up to the event, and on each day of the event (3 notes/day).

I noticed a couple of ways in which darkness performs care; in particular, it seems to care for light, and for colour. It has a kind of affective magnetic pull that, on the one hand, draws out intensity of light and colour, and on the other, consumes, ingests or inhales it, sometimes absolutely.

Sometimes a word is sticky;  
it gets in everywhere  
and its traces  
conjure your thoughts.

Auklet flock, Shunagins 1986  
By D. J. Bibenski. Images.fws.gov ([1]), Public Domain,  
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3448966



Toward a lexicon of darkness...  
(some scavenged words and concepts):

- Timothy Morton's *dark ecology*: ecological awareness, dark-depressing, dark-uncanny and, the third darkness, dark-sweet.

- *ecognosis* (Morton again): that which thinks dark ecology - a weird knowing that knows itself; more like letting be known.

Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Columbia University Press, 2016. p.5.

- *dark knowledge*: 'knowledge which may exist, and may be relevant, but has not been discovered because the boundaries of the topic under analysis have not been identified'

scavenged from AI research into deep neural networks; term coined by Geoff Hinton in a keynote lecture at the 2014 Bay Area Machine Learning Symposium; cited definition from Collins online dictionary - a new word suggestion from Jeremy Warhurst (Oct. 2016) that is yet to be approved.  
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/18087/dark+knowledge>

- *fuzzy logic*: dealing in partial truths and 'classes of objects with unsharp boundaries in which membership is a matter of degree'

<https://au.mathworks.com/help/fuzzy/what-is-fuzzy-logic>

The void-space of pure potential; the beauty of not-yet-knowing

Ko Te Kore (the void, energy, nothingness, potential)  
Te Kore-te-whiwhia (the void in which nothing is possessed)  
Te Kore-te-rawea (the void in which nothing is felt)  
Te Kore-i-ai (the void with nothing in union)  
Te Kore-te-wiwhia (the space without boundaries)

From the void comes intensity and sensation - can we sense time itself?

Nā Te Kore Te Pō (from the void the night)  
Te Pō-nui (the great night)  
Te Pō-roa (the long night)  
Te Pō-uriuri (the deep night)  
Te Pō-kerekere (the intense night)  
Te Pō-tiwatiwha (the dark night)  
Te Pō-te-kitea (the night in which nothing is seen)  
Te Pō-tangotango (the intensely dark night)  
Te Pō-whāwhā (the night of feeling)

But still blind, before-life, before-emergence, before-identity

How do we anticipate - take action before - to carve the night from the void?

<http://maori.com/whakapapa/creation.htm>

I am starting to wonder at some things bubbling up from these black depths...

- a (posthuman, materialist, ecological) understanding of dark knowledge
- a way of practicing that allows for the emergence of the unknowable
- a way of drawing that facilitates this practice

Awaiting further rabbit holes, I remain

Wandering in delightful obscurity,

Jen

P.s. It is a scary thing, isn't it, to publicly think through thoughts that are still becoming - to make thought; to anticipate knowledge - in that dark space of not-knowing but without the darkness of anonymity. What were we thinking? But maybe it is okay if we embrace the *fuliginousness* of it - the sooty smudgy untidiness of emergent understanding. Letters are like that, aren't they? Peppered with partial thoughts, ragged edges, raw articulations. Leave the highly edited clean lines to others and we will weave our sooty threads around them...

25 June 2017

Dear Jen,

'the creator is the one who agrees to venture forth with no certainty and follow this thread unwinding ahead of him like Ariadne's thread and falling behind him like a spiders web.'<sup>1</sup>

threads  
lines  
leads  
leading lines  
lead lines

casting out  
marking  
measuring  
reading  
dark  
fathoms  
deep

With all that you offered in your last letter, which thread to pick up and follow? Which line to cast out into the deep?

Te Pō...these words I read...voiced...sounded...dark rounded forms...reverberate and repeat

Te Pō...through these words I learnt...a lexicon on the affect of darkness exists

Te Pō-namunamu-ki-taiao (the night of seeking the passage to the world)

Te Pō-tahuri-atu (the night of restless turning)

Te Pō-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao (the night of turning towards the revealed world)<sup>2</sup>

Te Pō...imagine! No less than eleven kinds of darkness

In contrast

our terminology of day and night- a binarism,

a reduction, of dark space, dark time, by this light

more on than off, 24 /7, burns in the name of productivity

blinds us to the nuances of night.

As I write this letter, Sunday afternoon is leaching into Sunday evening, the day has been overcast and the light is fading quickly.

Today the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, marks the start of Matariki\*, not much hope for stargazing tonight however with this low cloud cover.

Alongside your letter, my laptop, a cold cup of coffee and plate recently relieved of cake, I have in front of me a book entitled 'Space Time Narrative'.

Pages held open by the fork that ate the cake reveal lines underscored, points connected, a constellation of sorts emerging. A thin line of graphite encircles an introduction entitled 'dark matter', and its subheading: 'whose existence is postulated to account for the dynamic behaviour of galaxies, but which has not been detected'. In it author Frank den Oudsten describes narrative as having 'an enigmatic dimension' as being 'moody and meteorological, unstable like the weather'.

Narrative environments, whether staged or not, function a bit like that. They are like clusters of stars.

There is always more than we observe and an unknown poetic potential holds the elements together, waiting to let a thousand and one tales flow.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed even the narrative that has unfolded in this short letter has delivered me to a place I didn't know /foresee at the outset.

Well, from the void and through eleven degrees of night, guided by seven sisters on a swell of a thousand and one tales, may this night take us!

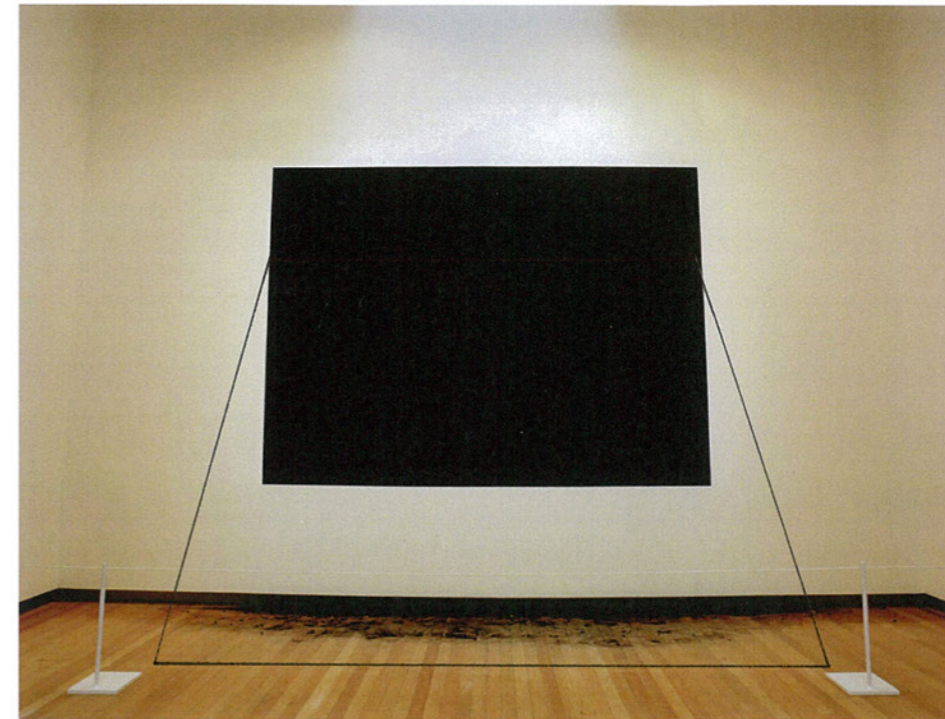
Lisa.

\* Matariki is the Māori name for Pleiades, an internationally recognised galactic cluster which can be viewed from anywhere in the world. The rise of the Matariki star cluster is an important time in the Māori calendar as it signifies the Māori New Year.  
"Matariki" accessed June 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, <http://www.matarikifestival.org.nz/about-matariki/>

<sup>1</sup> Serge Tisseron, "All Writing is Drawing : The Spatial Development of the Manuscript," *Boundaries : Writing and Drawing*, Yale French Studies No.84 (1994): 37.

<sup>2</sup>"Creation" accessed June 25, 2017, <http://maaori.com/whakapapa/creation.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Frank den Oudsten, *Space. Time. Narrative. The exhibition as post-spectacular stage* (Ashgate, 2011),104.



Lisa Munnely, *Drawing Upon Mother* (2017)

Image credit : Andrew Beck

26 June

Dear Lisa,

I feel Ariadne taunting me from her dark web -  
 'Can you not find the thread? Where is the narrative?'  
 The very notion of the singular narrative or thread feels too close, to me,  
 to an ideal of a pure truth or utopian destination.  
 I don't think we're going to reach one, however long our correspondence continues.

There are many stories of Te Kore and Te Pō, the void and the night,  
 and many of Matariki - the Māori new year named for the cluster of seven stars.  
 These are narratives that have unfolded through time,  
 along the lines of generations of whakapapa,  
 the lines forking, the stories embedded in plural lines, multiple but no less true.

None of these stories are mine to tell,  
 in that they have not been passed down to me,  
 the thread of my whakapapa being broken as it is  
 by time, colonization and geographic dislocation from the place of my ancestors.  
 So I am searching for my story to carve out from the void.

This is a personal search that I did not anticipate coming up in this conversation,  
 however it is all, obviously, interconnected, entangled, enmeshed -  
 the desire to reach back through time, through bloodlines, to follow the threads  
 that lead back to homelands - to places of belonging,  
 where the dark ecological knowledge of the land and the people were one.

To draw upon the mother - Papatūānuku - the earth,  
 not an inert resource but a life force - *the* life force that was once enmeshed  
 in such a close, dark, embrace with Ranginui - the sky.  
 The world we inhabit - the world of light - te ao marama,  
 is merely a pocket of space in the mesh - an inside carved from the dark.

Your 'Drawing Upon Mother' again draws me in, much like the first Motherboard,  
 but this time it tells me the story of another space, carved out,  
 the space delineated by the inclined frame, reaching  
 at once down to, and up from, the horizontal plane of the ground.  
 I am drawn in but kept out - this space is no longer for people to inhabit.

This is the space of material, of the dark detritus of the ritual labours  
 performed by woman-body-charcoal-ground-wall in the process of drawing the field.  
 Floor-standing woman-body and wall-clinging ground-paint met  
 through the agentic medium of charcoal, and this is what was left behind:  
 a fuliginous, sooty, dust-cloud of carbon - embodied memory of long-dead life.

This vision of a possible future work is compelling.  
 Yet it frustrates - this sense of being held back from stepping in,  
 From allowing one's field of vision to be completely filled  
 by the dynamic, rhythmic, liveness of the black field.  
 But maybe holding back is what is required...

...to stand back and let dark, perhaps non-human, knowledge be known  
 ...to stop talking and instead listen to what materials have to say  
 ...to not always try to see the figure but instead pay attention to the field  
 ...to carve an interior of darkness from the void so that we may sense it,  
 but to know that we might never, should never, really *know* it

I am not sure when I will next be able to write, but I remain

Unknowing, yet grateful for your thoughtful correspondence,

Jen

Words emerging from te pō  
 An inversion of enlightenment binaries of light=knowledge, dark=ignorance  
 A different kind of knowledge - a dark knowledge  
 Barely-perceptible but real, nonetheless  
 That knowledge is always there in the background  
 Making sense of the noise  
 Manifesting a field of perception from the void  
 Before becoming-something is becoming-field  
 Before becoming-field is becoming-nothing  
 From nothing - the unknowable - comes the dark, deep field of the unknown - that which is yet to be known  
 The field of the unknown is constantly shifting  
 Not a homogeneous mass, but richly textured with the variegated qualities of not-knowing  
 The dark knowing that is not-knowing is a mood; a sensation  
 A vibration; a shiver  
 A deep pulsing or a hum, harmonic or dissonant  
 Te pō-whāwhā - the night of feeling  
 Before te pō, te kore-te-rawea - the void in which nothing is felt  
 Te kore-te-wiwia - the space without boundaries  
 To move from the void to the dark that is night is to introduce boundaries,  
 To carve out a space of sensation  
 Not by erecting walls  
 But by becoming-temporal - the birth of the moment  
 A thing that is distinct through its very intensity and resonance in time  
 Rather than its discrete delineation in space  
 The boundaries are fuzzy - limits emerge through the accumulated density of instances that almost reach them  
 Or through being at such a distance from a centre of intensity that it is no longer perceptible  
 Multiple truths are possible in this not-knowing  
 A labyrinth - a garden of forking paths - in which truth is not binary  
 Only a thread of narrative can draw a singular linear truth from the field  
 But there are other ways to find one's way than to follow the thread of the architect-spider  
 Ways that embrace the plurality of partial truths - of different intensities of not-knowing  
 In order to experience these intensities as sensation we must immerse ourselves in the darkness  
 Must attempt to sense the time beyond space  
 But in order to avoid the void beyond the dark  
 perhaps we need a framework to sense the field  
 A way to act - to move through not-knowing, rather than succumb to its depths completely  
 Through ritual action we build our human web - a field of our own  
 A dwelling-place through which the darkness becomes an inside  
 A set of choreographed instructions, a nightly looking to the stars; a practice, an orientation  
 Creating a safe space for not-knowing, for the sensation of dark knowledge, dark perception  
 From which all other knowledge and perception emerges  
 That comprises the phenomenological field  
 And sets the mood

28 June 2017

Dear Jen

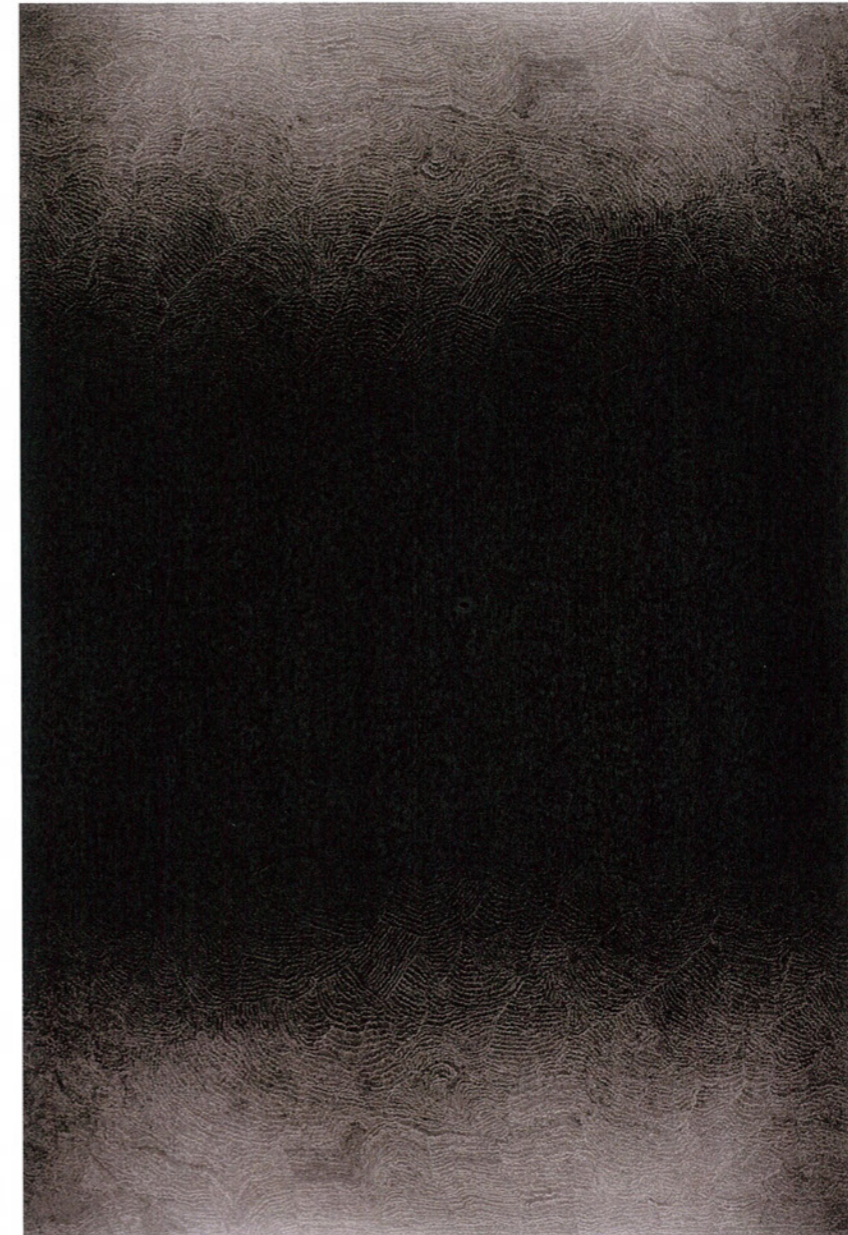
Until our next correspondence ...

...some words and an image .

-lisa

'[When] the world of clear and articulate objects is abolished,  
our perceptual being, cut off from its world, evolves a spatiality without things.  
This is what happens in the night.  
Night is not an object before me; it enwraps me and infiltrates through all my senses,  
stifling my recollections and almost destroying my identity.  
I am no longer withdrawn into my perceptual look-out  
from which I watch the outlines of objects moving by at a distance.  
Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me and its unity is the mystical unity of the 'mana'.  
It is pure depth without foreground or background,  
without surfaces and without any distance separating it from me.'

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology of Perception" in  
*Human Space*, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, (London: Hyphen Press, 2011), 214.



Lisa Munnely, *Mother Mirrored*. (2017)