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FROM VERB TO ADVERB: CONTEMPORARY PAINTING FROM WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SELF

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FROM VERB TO ADVERB: CONTEMPORARY PAINTING FROM WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SELF

Sam Loe

> If I have thought of painting as a verb, now it needs an adverb. Paintings like emotions are always situated, sited. Potentially new emotions can arise from new situations; meaning arises from conditions. Accidentally, awkwardly, blindly, dramatically, madly, wildly, hungrily.[1]
>
> (Judy Millar, 2024)

Judy Millar articulates the importance not only of action in contemporary painting but of manner, meaning the degree of intentionality and the temporal conditions under which a painting is made. "The adverb is our situation. The verb is the action. Together they can give a new insight, both to ourselves and to others."[2] For Millar, our actions are determined by culturally situated conditions, yet within that exists the possibility for a particular embodied perspective. Millar's sense of being "situated, sited" is not a matter of physical place but of the how rather than the where, the emotional and temporal conditions under which an act of painting occurs. Whilst she embraces embodiment in the making, she also seeks to make herself scarce, exploring the paradox where the painter's particular perspective on the world can be most profound when giving up the notion of 'self.' This seemingly absurd contradiction of being both fully present in the act of painting, while resisting subjectivity or a definitive hand, resonates deeply within my own practice. Her quote is not necessarily intended as an authoritative statement about painting, but I keep returning to it when thinking through questions of self-expression and abstraction, and how painting continues to be relevant, or worth questioning, in the contemporary context. It also offers a way for me to retell some of the history of how women engaged with abstract expressionism and to move on from the patriarchal associations of action painting.

I make large-scale, unstretched paintings, often on found blanket substrates, layering multiple processes that record my felt experience through shape, line, colour and gesture.[3] These distinctive subjective qualities of felt experience are known in philosophy and neuroscience as qualia or the "raw feels of consciousness."[4] They can arguably only be measured through direct or subjective experience. My work moves between structure and spontaneity, deliberate choice and chance, questioning where expression arises from and how painting might accommodate both subjective experience and objective materiality. My resulting paintings appear somewhat biomorphic; they evoke the figural, meaning that they gesture toward imagery that goes beyond the figurative and representation, resisting codification whilst maintaining bodily sensation. I will discuss and expand upon the figural in more depth later in this essay.

My studio and contextual research focuses on how I can set up the conditions for embodied making to allow meaning to emerge for myself and the viewer. I prioritise a pre-reflective space before words and narratives take hold—a bodily awareness on the cusp of recognisability. Such

phenomenological concerns connect to a field of contemporary painting where abstraction and representation merge, embracing what I see as a feminist approach that accepts paradox and emphasises unknowability, rather than pursuing mastery or power. Millar's work and thinking are key to my research as she articulates a contemporary approach to painting that can hold multiple states simultaneously, including embodied action and critical distance.

I ask how I can contribute to the embodied type of large abstraction that has been made by women in recent years, both in New Zealand and internationally, extending and re-thinking the possibility of the figural within abstract painting as a feminist act.

Contemporary American painter Amy Sillman describes painting as a series of decisions where you are editing with the body—spilling, cutting, pulling, covering, scraping and many more verbs that are involved in the act of making a painting. She says, "You don't have a voice when you are making a painting—you have a body."[5] My own works embrace an indexical relationship to my body, meaning that I lie on, wrap, drag and pull the enveloping substrates around the studio floors and walls throughout the process of making. Indexicality, as defined by Isabelle Graw, evokes a sense of the artist's presence or "enhanced physicality,"[6] something I am interested in making explicit within my final works whilst keeping personal narrative at bay. For me the intentionality and conditions of the adverb add to this indexicality, giving subjective meaning that could be experienced as "a highly personalized semiotic activity."[7] I ask which adverbs can welcome a process that maintains my bodily experience whilst making myself scarce. Examples I embrace include, but are not limited to: sleepily, sensorially, somatically, unknowingly, blindly, freely and presently.

Beginning the process, from rested states with eyes closed, I encounter and initially record the qualia of my interoceptive landscape through layers of loose, non-compositional, charcoal drawings that feel somewhat automated, without conscious direction. The drawings are then mediated through masking, cutting and tracing—all ways of isolating certain gestural forms as semiotic icons that become stencils for my paintings. These modes are also a way to deepen my understanding of the free choreography in the drawings by more consciously learning the original automated shapes and moves, allowing for the next iterations of the work to develop new meaning or context. The cut shapes serve to cover the substrate in preparation for a layer of airbrushing and keep me 'working blindly' and lingering in an inchoate space so that I do not plan the end result. Spray-paint allows a soft landing of paint through air and gravity, evoking the movement of breath. As I work with my airbrush, I feel a bodily connection to something quite fundamental and even ancient, knowing that the earliest artists blew pigment through hollowed out bones to make hand silhouettes in caves.[8]

Stencils provide guides that build up the figural and abstracted dimensions of the painting. Sometimes I work on the floor, where I lightly place the stencils down, and sometimes I work on the wall, stapling the stencils onto the substrates. In both cases, the edges of the card stencil can peel away from the blanket in some areas, producing moments of diffuseness which contrast with the sharpness of areas where the cut-out has been firmly placed. These differences of pressure enable a sense of touch to be present in the work without my hand being directly in contact with the substrate; simultaneously present and removed. This also sets up conditions for painting so that I cannot fully know or see what I am doing. Planning or being in control of the outcome is difficult with these methods and conditions, which allows me to invite the unknown in as an operative part of my practice. What I have found is that drawing from an inchoate or rested mind state does not necessarily create peaceful imagery, but rather something dynamic and energetic that is somewhat familiar and somewhat alien.



Figure 1. Judy Millar, *Waking at Dawn*, 2023,
acrylic and oil on canvas, 1400x950mm.

In works on canvas such as *Digesting Anomalies* (fig. 2), there is an illusion between what appears to be on the surface as figure or form and what appears to be ground and depth. The repetitive shapes become gestural motifs that appear to be stuck on as collaged pieces but are in fact the background or first marks that were made on the canvas. The depth and surface only becomes apparent in the final reveal of the painting when all masking tape is removed from the canvas. My methodology continues to prioritise process, material and body over planning or controlling the image, allowing the painting to surprise me so that it becomes a document that is edited with my body. The painting emerges through a rhythm of conceal—reveal—conceal—reveal—conceal—reveal, allowing multi-layered generative processes that explore non-composition through both choice and chance.

My interest in embodiment and somatics comes from many years of teaching and practising Yoga and meditation. Somatics, defined by philosopher Thomas Hanna, studies the body as perceived from within through embodied anatomy and movement modalities, where first person perception challenges the third person view prevalent in the Cartesian thinking of medicine, science and art history.[9] This approach is influenced by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology, which lays down the notion of a "lived body"[10] as our primary organ of perception; a dynamic and unified self, rather than an object. "By this remaking contact with the body, and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self, and as it is the subject of perception."[11] Rediscovery here points to finding meaning and a relationship to the self through fully inhabiting the body. This is not to diminish the role of our minds and cognition, but to consider the primary role of the body in the act of perception. This recovery of the body as the primary site of perception also speaks to a feminist reframing of perception itself, one that resists the supposedly neutral, disembodied perceiving subject inherited from Cartesian thought—a subject historically coded as objective, universal and implicitly male. Merleau-Ponty eventually developed a conceptual framework that combined the third-person (objective/external) and the first-person (subjective/reflective) perspectives on the body and human experience in his last, unfinished text *The Visible and the Invisible*.[12] This movement beyond the duality of body and brain was highly influenced by Martin Heidegger's notion of 'dasein,'[13] referring to the state of simply existing, as neither subjective nor objective but at the intersection of both and adopting a caring attitude for the world. These Western philosophers of phenomenology share conceptual ground with yoga, meditation and ancient Eastern traditions in which my own direct embodied practices are based. In particular, the non-dualistic tantric texts of Kashmir Shaivism articulate this merging of subject and object through the body itself. In the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (7th to 8th century), the body is described as the gateway:

> Attend to the skin
> As a subtle boundary
> Containing vastness.
> Enter that pulsing immensity.
> Discover that you are not separate
> From anything there.
> There is no inside, There is no outside, There is no other —
> No object to meditate upon that is not you.[14]

My painting process often begins with this type of sensory meditation, lying on blankets and pillows in a practice known as Yoga Nidra. One meaning of the word 'Yoga' is to be awake in a



Figure 2. Sam Loe, *Digesting Anomalies*, 2025,
canvas, compressed charcoal, acrylic spray paint, 3500x2160mm.

spiritual way, and the translation of 'Nidra' is to be asleep. Therefore, Yoga Nidra embraces the juxtaposition of two opposing modes, opening up a liminal state where the body is physically asleep whilst the mind is awake to its own consciousness. Part of the practice is to map and track interoception and felt sensation throughout the body, to stay with feeling rather than thinking. Our brains naturally want to jump to recognition and labelling, pulling us away from the moment. Sensing the body keeps me present to a pre-noetic bearing—an open and spacious place of pure-perception, matter and rhythm from which to make marks. These practices release tension, create more ease in the body, a sense of spaciousness in the mind. Working directly with the somatic markers in the body can offer a new perspective or what is popularly claimed as healing from stress and trauma.[15]

My own stresses and trauma come from many years of mothering a child with rare and complex medical needs involving chronic pain and hundreds of hospital visits, some life-threatening. I have had to find tools that settle my own nervous system and have found these grounding practices vital in order to be with the unknown. From this perspective, these grounding practices are not simply private repair; I see them as part of a wider cultural feminist reframing of self-care as an act of claiming time, space and agency amidst systems that make such claiming difficult. When I am drawing and painting, I am not interested in purely therapeutic or cathartic self-expression, yet I acknowledge and even honour my particular and unique embodied perspective. I come back to my body as it is in the moment, and the way it has marked and scored all my experiences physically and biologically over time. Through resting the body, attending to sensation and inviting meditative mind states, what emerges in the work comes more from the qualities of sensation in my body rather than from narrative or personal story. Despite wanting privacy, I have come to understand that anti-subjectivity is impossible when making anything with my hands and from my body, and yet it offers some distance from personal life challenges. Amy Sillman recognises this paradox when painting, stating that "at the heart of trying to say what something means you need the person's personal story and at the same time you can't rely on it."[16] This acknowledges the inherent indexicality of painting as well as a need to step back from it.

Art historian Gregory Minissale asks a question that resonates with my own research: "how far is it possible to 'lose oneself' in contemporary art?"[17] He discusses the role of matter, sensation and activating particular mind states in relation to creative interpretation both in making and viewing art. His research speaks to my ongoing fascination with the space and relationship that exists via the artwork as a third body of sensation between the maker and the viewer. His research invites us to consider that pure-perception or mind without memory is really part of matter and that it is art that helps us to intuit this. Minissale examines how brain networks, and in particular how the Default Mode Network (DMN), the part of the brain that allows for daydreams and reminiscing, contrasts with the Central Executive Network's analytical and more ordered and decisive thinking, which is useful for checking spontaneous and abstract ideas. Mind wandering is part of the DMN and can be seen as "a state that is non-goal directed behaviour and decoupling from processes of vigilance."[18] It plays a vital role in creative interpretation, where one slips in and out of self-awareness.

In my own embodied practice and yoga research I have come to understand that DMN activation is only the first stage of entering into more relaxed brain wave states. Even though it allows for restful or "dampened attention,"[19] the autobiographical "I, me, mine" references remain prominent.[20] In meditation practices, we seek to go beyond the personal self by activating the Present Centred Default Brain Network, which may open to a spacious, non-dualistic experience

of 'Awareness' or impersonal 'Self,'[21] a state that is perhaps impossible to give words to but absolutely perceptible and known through direct experience of aliveness itself.[22] This openness to rested mind-states and mind wandering means not restricting oneself to rehearsing old ideas and not being limited to situational types or scripts, but rather allowing these moments to build on chance encounters and connections.

Minissale's research indicates that to be truly open to the encounter of art, whether as artist or viewer, one needs to embrace perceptual ambiguity and let go of rigorous cognitive control. Both making and viewing, for him, involve a perceptual and interpretive engagement with matter and sensation, which is why the same research on rested mind states applies to each. This allows access to what he refers to as vibrant materiality, or what I see as receptive encounters with matter and sensation. In particular, Minissale explores Gilles Deleuze's ideas on art, sensation, rhythm and matter in the work of Francis Bacon. He turns to Bacon's portraits, notably the *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953), because they break with figuration in a way that invites a relationship to sensation and the act of painting. Deleuze responds to the raw impasto physicality of the paint with its forces of pressure, dilation, contraction and elongation alongside the perception of the face, allowing the interior forces that climb through the flesh to become perceptible.[23]

For Deleuze, the visual organ of perception, the eye, becomes interwoven and distributed across the whole body: "Painting gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs (the painting breathes)."[24] Through Bacon's work, Deleuze observes a merging of subject and object that is neither about the artist's inner experience being expressed nor about the viewer's interpretation, but a relational and direct encounter between the painter, the painting and the viewer. "I *become* in the sensation *and* something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other,"[25] the unity of sensing and the sensed. For him, sensation occupies a liminal zone between disorder (raw physical matter) and order (perception). Sensation, therefore, is not about knowing the world as it is represented, but about feeling the passage of sensation as a force of matter and the transformation it causes in the body, specifically in the nervous system. The 'figure' in Bacon's paintings then becomes the 'figural,'[26] which is not about resemblance, reflection or representation of a body, but a body as pure form through sensation and abstraction.[27]

Learning about rested mind states and sensation as matter has led me to question how my choice of materials, process and techniques might enhance and embody these concepts. As mentioned above, I often begin my work through body sensing meditations lying on blankets, which invite a safe and softening state of rest. I wanted to offer this sensation to the viewer and initially began to include blankets in my installations by simply placing a folded blanket on the ground in front of the paintings as a residue that referenced the making of the painting. The presence of the blanket brought with it a somatic awareness for the viewer, which excited me but needed resolving as an element within installation. The blanket becoming a painting substrate was a significant development in my methodology. It occurred in my studio as a result of completing and sending off a series of my canvas works to exhibit in Auckland. What remained on the ground after spray painting were the shapes, stencils and blankets from my rested modes of making. In an 'a-ha' moment, I realised that I was sitting on the perfect substrate for making further paintings that embraced a more haptic or sensorially inviting quality.

Mostly sourced from my restorative Yoga practice, the blankets provide a coloured ground, contributing to a sense of the painting's warmth, and a soft territory for the spray paint to

land upon. As found objects, they carry references to personal and cultural history (sleep, rest, rescue, care), yet what compels me most is how their physical and textural qualities activate both making and viewing. The woollen surface in combination with spray paint shifts me from the direct application of gestural mark-making with charcoal and paint on canvas, toward a more observational, hands-off mode, whilst maintaining a gestural presence. This shift also disrupted my established process and sequence. In the canvas works, the gestural motifs remain materially present on the surface via charcoal marks that are visible beneath the spray paint. In the blanket pieces, however, these marks are incorporated into the outlines of the stencilled shapes themselves. This opened up questions about my process: could I eliminate the canvas stage entirely, cutting stencils directly from pattern-making paper? Or are the canvas pieces an essential investment that makes the blanket paintings work? I continue to consider whether removing this shape-making phase would gain efficiency but lose something vital in the final outcome.

The blanket piece *Woozy Glitches* (2025, fig. 3) is built up through overlays of many shapes, offering random rhythms and pathways through what appears as a somewhat organic and biomorphic picture field. The tongue pink and fleshy maroons reinforce the bodily quality of figural forms, whilst raw parts of the blanket substrate, where stencils have kept the paint away, allow an ongoing return to the haptic. This is also why I allow the creases from the making and transporting of the work to remain visible. The painting invites a somatic response whilst remaining behind the gallery protocol barrier of 'please do not touch,' unlike a photograph or painting on canvas, where the material support typically recedes in service of the illusion it carries.



Fig 3. Sam Loe, *Woozy Glitches*, 2025, woollen blanket and acrylic spray paint, 1940x1540mm.

Millar calls this intrinsic quality of painting—simultaneously an illusionistic image and material object—the "double world."[28] This embodiment of painting is something that, as writer Jarrett Earnest points out, we desperately need in contemporary times to overcome an oversaturation of immaterial images that are unstable and transient: "we now need painting differently than we have before."[29] Unlike the mass-reproducible, screen-based images that dominate contemporary visual culture, a painting remains a singular material body, one that cannot be infinitely copied or dematerialised without ceasing to be itself. It is this insistence on singular, unrepeatable materiality, rather than the object/illusion combination alone, that I want to hold onto and extend in my own work. Rather than resolving tensions between binaries, such as the mental and physical, or our inner and outer worlds, many contemporary painters seek a third way, meditating on and inhabiting these dualities as a key part of their methodologies without trying to resolve them. I am interested in how such approaches have developed over time as a response to gesture and abstract expressionism.

Millar's statement about painting as a verb that now needs an adverb could be seen as both a celebration and a critique of abstract expressionism. As David Joselit notes, after Jackson Pollock and the abstract expressionists, the gestural stroke shifted from internal to external expression, marking a shift from focusing on the result, the mark itself, to the conditions of its making by expanding painting's definition to what he describes as "a kind of scoring or recording of physical space and temporality."[30]

After the apparent endpoint of painting in the late 1960s and the conceptual concerns of the 1970s, there was a renewed interest in medium-specific practices. I particularly admire the feminist painters who continued pushing paint around into the 1980s and 90s, finding ways to engage with a gesture that was less bombastic and more nuanced than that of the abstract expressionists: Elizabeth Murray, Joan Snyder and Mary Heilmann in the 1980s, then Jacqueline Humphries, Laura Owens, Amy Sillman and Charline von Heyl through the 1990s to the present moment. This is where the shift from the verb to the adverb becomes particularly relevant as painters considered that specific states, conditions and contexts, such as gender, race and culture, matter a lot. The assumption that one person's (usually white male) subjective experience could stand in for a universal human experience moved towards an acknowledgement that there are multiple, different experiences that are all valid and need to be present in painting.

Anthony Byrt, in his essay "How to Paint Backwards," draws on Clement Greenberg's role as the great theorist and defender of abstract expressionism to characterise the movement's ethos as one in which gesture is essentially "an expressive act of self."[31] For Millar, this is not the case; instead, her gesture is, as Byrt puts it, "an act of expressive self."[32] This marks a small but significant shift, achieved through the removal of paint on smooth gessoed canvas, leading to a mimicking of the paintbrush gesture in a way that can be seen as a vitally, confirming feminist act. In an interview Millar says:

> When I first started painting, it's a European male tradition, essentially. And I really felt like to find a way in there, I had to dismantle it for myself. So I started to take it apart. And so I started to even copy other artists' work and then wipe it away. I really felt like I had to somehow dismantle it in order to find my own way into it.[33]

Millar and Sillman both evade the use of paintbrushes as their primary tool for applying paint. They use everything but traditional tools and actions to inhabit the verbs of painting and in doing so affect adverbial conditions. Millar, for example, is always finding new kinds of things to use to

move the paint, including rags and tools that she invents, such as a dirty bag full of sand that she pulls using the full length of her limbs, including her fingers and feet, without directly touching or controlling the mark. There is a removal of the self when the artist relinquishes direct control over how the mark forms, and yet the paradox plays out where one's own subjectivity and choice become embedded in the final works. It is this same distance between hand and substrate that has made the airbrush and blanket substrates key tools in my own practice.

Sillman has found similar "anti-heroic"[34] ways to reclaim abstract expressionism's heritage whilst finding new meaning and relevance for the painted gesture. She advocates for "re-doing" rather than "un-doing" abstract expressionism, and describes that style's feminist legacy in her essay "AbEx and Disco Balls: In Defence of Abstract Expressionism II":

> It left us with a very nice plot of foreclosed real estate that, several generations later, younger artists could make use of—especially those who were supposedly barred from the place to begin with, as if we were squatters in Peggy Guggenheim's house.[35]

Charlene Von Heyl, one of these 'squatters,' and a contemporary of Sillman, simply says that it is what the painted picture does that she is interested in, not what it is. She employs chance-based techniques and non-composition to be with the unknown, and describes reaching a space of no-knowledge, of absence of text, where a painting says everything and nothing to open space in the mind.[36] For her, painting offers an ineffable language that enables the work to exist without explanation or opinion, and yet she hopes that the beholder activates new meaning when viewing the work to find "their specific non-word ideas in it."[37] Von Heyl spends a lot of time lounging around in her studio in order to inhabit this state; solitude is vital she says.[38] This deeply resonates with my own experiences of finding spaciousness in order to paint.

Millar, Sillman, Von Heyl and many of their contemporaries harness unknowability and de-skilling as an essential part of making, while maintaining profound knowledge and skill of how to make marks on a canvas. Von Heyl allows her process to reach a point where the painting seems to make demands of her rather than the other way round: "I don't want to make the painting, I want the painting to invent itself and surprise me."[39] But the paradox remains: the painting cannot paint itself, it needs the painter's body. This combination of embracing the unknown while navigating the histories and associations of marks allows the painting to develop its own apparent agency and vitality. Graw claims that a painting has its own discourse and subjectivity, or what she terms "vitalist projections,"[40] due to its intrinsic indexicality, pointing to an absent author who remains somewhat physically present in them, creating a distributed rather than singular subjectivity.

Ultimately, I believe that leaning into the unknown and embodied practice supports a feminist approach to abstraction. Curator Helen Molesworth speaks directly to this when she says "For me, feminism is a critique of power and mastery, and most of all, it's a warning about how the combination of mastery and power has, historically, led to violence. One result of this questioning of power is that unknowability emerges as a kind of virtue."[41] In accord with this underlying feminist philosophy, the painters I have discussed here invite the viewer into a moment, outside of art history or the hierarchy of knowledge needed to read a painting, and without even an image to take away—a generous experience that one cannot quite put a finger on yet wants to return to again and again.

Reflecting on my own process and work, I see that consciously invoking rested brain states allows me to open to the unconscious and maintain a pre-noetic bearing, creating an empowering place



Figure 4. Sam Loe, Felt Matter, 2025,
woollen blanket and acrylic spray paint, 1940x1540mm
(installed at Sanderson Contemporary gallery in the *Emerging Artists* exhibition, 2026).

in my practice where unknowability is a feminist virtue. The inchoate becomes generative, leading to new understanding in my work such as the 'a-ha' moment in the use of the blanket. My shift from canvas to blanket substrates allows for a synthesis of the resting processes that feed into the painting. Figural abstraction within the picture frame builds on this, approaching representation but holding it at bay, and acknowledging the dynamic and non-linear process of perception that interweaves body and brain. Through these strategies, I hope to offer what Deleuze points out as the possibility of engaging with and shifting the nervous system. I see this as an act of care, creating a relational proposition, distributing agency between myself, the material, and whoever encounters the work by inviting viewers into their own experience of qualia, the raw feels of sensation that resist language yet are absolutely present.

Through both my studio practice and contextual research, I feel grateful and excited to discover the history, approaches and philosophies that contemporary women painters making large abstract work inhabit. I bring my own history of self-inquiry, somatic and meditative practice as a lens through which to join the conversation on how expression and abstraction can continue to extend and re-think painting as a feminist act.

Millar's proposition that new insight arises when the adverb is present in the action of painting has become a useful way for me to attend to the how—the manner and the conditions of my own making— rather than only the actions themselves. I acknowledge that there is a certain irony in using the semantics of language structure to speak to paintings where I want to keep words and narratives at bay. Yet what the verb and adverb framework opens up is an intuitive, rhythmic, visual vocabulary that is punctuated with repetition and variance, or what Von Heyl might describe as "language without words," resisting linear syntax or narrative structure.[42] As Millar suggests, when paintings arise from adverbial conditions, each encounter unfolds while engaging this central paradox: a place from within and beyond the self. The verb anchors me in painting's actions whilst the adverb shifts how meaning emerges—not through mastery, but through the collapse of boundaries I once thought were distinct.

Sam Loe completed an MFA in painting at Whitecliffe College, Auckland, with first class honours under the supervision of Anoushka Akel and Noel Ivanoff. She was included in the *Emerging Artists* exhibition at Sanderson Contemporary and has a solo show scheduled there in October 2026. Her practice continues to explore the interplay between embodied presence and visual expression, where somatic and meditative practice act as a lens through which to investigate sensation and the figural in contemporary painting.



Figure 5. Sam Loe, *Soft Belly*, 2025.
Woollen blanket and acrylic spray paint, 2460x2510mm.
(installed at Whitecliffe final MFA graduation exhibition).



Fig 6. Sam Loe, *It's on the Tip of my Tongue*, 2025.
Woollen blanket with satin edges and acrylic spray paint, 2460x2510mm (plus detail).

1 Judy Millar, "If I have thought of painting as a verb, now it needs an adverb …"11 July 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C9QReb9s2Vu/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

2 From an email exchange with Judy Millar, July 2025.

3 This article is based on my Postgraduate Diploma research and studio practice at Whitecliffe College of Fine Arts, Auckland.

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6 Isabelle Graw, "The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy," in *Painting Beyond Itself: The Medium in the Post-Medium Condition*, ed. Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth (Sternberg Press, 2016), 81.

7 Ibid.

8 See Jarrett Earnest, "Judy Millar Brushstrokes, Document 16: Judy Millar in conversation with Jarrett Earnest," *Michael Lett Documents 2021–2023* (Michael Lett Publishing, 2023), 326–352.

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11 Ibid.

12 Jan Halák, "Merleau-Ponty on Embodied Subjectivity from the Perspective of Subject-Object Circularity," *Acta Universtitatis Carolinae Kinanthropologica* 52, no. 2 (2016): 30, https://philarchive.org/rec/HALMOE.

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16 Amy Sillman, "Amy Sillman."

17 Gregory Minissale, *The Psychology of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 240.

18 Ibid.

19 Minissale, "Will Robots Daydream?" Faculty of Arts, University of Auckland, 2022, accessed 1 October 2025, https://youtu.be/G0EgSPgSQaI?si=zQN4Q4lqHoh6Pkt6.

20 Hong Ji Kim, Jeong In Lee and Choong-Wan Woo, "Embodying the Default Mode Network: Self-Related Processing from an Embodied Perspective," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 66 (December 2025), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352154625001263.

21 The personal self is often denoted with a small 's,' but self as a higher form of Awareness if often referred to with a capital 'S' in yoga texts.

22 Richard Miller, "Your Present-Centered Default Mode Network", 17 October 2025, https://shop.irest.org/blogs/news/your-present-centered-default-mode-network-pcdmn?srsltid=AfmBOorycehZ_MKPP3NmVrnBqtOwY667iBp9c3TcxxkfWVKBPb1psBcy.

23 Minissale, *Rhythm in Art*, 63.

24 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans., Daniel W.Smith (Continuum: London-New York, 2003), 52, https://monoskop.org/images/1/1f/Deleuze_Gilles_Francis_Bacon_The_Logic_of_Sensation.pdf

25 Minissale, *Rhythm in Art*, 63.

26 The term 'figural,' originally used by Jean-François Lyotard, is discussed by Gilles Deleuze in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1981). The figural resists systemisation and remains a disruptive force.

27 Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 52.

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