

Sleep . Oil on Canvas. 120 cm x 120 cm

Falling. Oil on Canvas. 120 cm x 120 cm

# A Certain State of Absence

or how to listen to a painting: A Process Reflexive Experience.

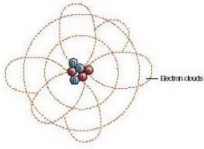
1st year Master Review Paper for the Interfaculty ArtScience Dept. KABK & KONCON. Alexander Zaklynsky

## Part I. The Process Reflexive Experience

The process of exploration and research in art is one that can be likened to the characteristics of a building wave. The shores are the boundary. The prevailing winds push waves into various directions to combine with other waves, bounce off embankments, and diverge into a final disembodiment, the final transference of energy. Art has always been a way for transferring knowledge and ideas. If Human experience is the ocean then the wave is the condition of integrality. The condition that human consciousness is linked to the greater whole. In the historical discourse on art, ideas of transference and the sub-conscious have been often discussed. Directions of practice in the arts dealing with ideas of synesthesia and the gestalt experience stem from the realms of theater and symphony. These productions were the first to mechanize the aesthetic experience in a flexible modality for the public. Art until this age of theater had been static and representational, even a matter of religious ritual. Over time the enlightenment brought with it a maturing science which began to peer deeper into the details and mechanisms of experience. As the biology and physiology of our human condition became more objectively

## Erwin Schrodinger

- Schrödinger model describes the probability that an electron can be found in a given region of space at a given time. This model no longer tells us where the electron is; it only tells us where it might be.
- Introduced “wave mechanics” as a mathematical model.



understood, the subjective experience continued into its non physical arena of 'qualia'. Difficulties and limitations in our understanding of the objective processes in our mechanisms of sensation can and may never correlate to the subjective experience we have in our minds. This is the proverbial divide artists have been building bridges across since early time.

Schrödinger famously contended that “The sensation of color cannot be accounted for by the physicist's objective picture of light-waves. Could the physiologist account for it, if he had fuller knowledge than he has of the processes in the retina and the nervous processes set up by them in the optical nerve bundles and in the brain? I do not think so.” What Schrödinger is pointing to is that the sensation of a feeling is not equal for every person so the divide between understanding the mechanism and understanding the sensation is reflexive. A quantitative specificity of sensation is not possible as it is with the mechanism of nerve cells or rods and cones. This descriptive divide is where the reflexivity of art lies. The absence of the mechanism is the medium we infer our experience from. The activation of the **mechanism** is the “sensation” or inherent symbolism of the concept. Maybe this sensation is a hardwired state of oscillating questioning, A spatio dynamic reasoning system that considers the current state of an experience while reflexively promoting possible/impossible futures. When we speak of “What do we see” in a qualitative language, our quantitative actions and thoughts procured in our creative processes and investigations as artists become a residue of the product, intention or theory. In a visual experience the context is “transferred” to the viewer through a particular language which is a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative understandings symbolized in the thing, experience or phenomenon presented. In the associated concept of Ideasthesia this problem of reflexive experience lies in the process of activating the “concepts” of that stimulus. Rather than mixing senses as in synesthesia, ideasthesia is the activation of concepts and stimuli prewired or deduced from our association with the experience. As Sensory experience is determined by the translation of stimuli and the meanings attributed to them so too is our relation to an art work determined by our translation of its characteristics and the meanings attributed to them. The bridge over the reflexive divide between artist and Artwork is only as successful as the clarity and economy in which the employed stimuli is structured or composed which in turn determines the general clarity of concept transferred to the viewer.



Scene 1 of Das Rheingold from the first Bayreuth Festival production of the Bühnenfestspiel in 1876. Richard Wagner

## Part 2. The Reflexive Divide

In this context what do I mean by “the Reflexive divide?” Reflexivity infers an automatic response, it is the inherent relation of the subject/object to the viewer, the first impression or stimulus. The reflexive divide is what happens to the impression/stimulus of the concept or work in the viewer over time. The ‘process reflexive experience’ is the active consideration, conceptualization and envisioning of the various modalities involved both in the experience itself and that which is being experienced. As has been said, the act of observation changes that which is being observed. This self referential feedback loop can be likened to a state of hyper sensitive mining of stimuli for a quantum state referencing system otherwise known as free association.

How has this divide been bridged by artists in the past and which artists and works resonate with my own interests and directions with art. Starting with Prometheus and the theatrical dalliances of ancient Greece when ritual and politics evolved into open air theater, the open and collective engagement in the spectacle began. As Aeschylus wrote Prometheus Bound he was writing of the burden of knowledge and the responsibility that comes with wisdom. Prometheus transferred wisdom by way of fire to the mortals and for this is chained to a rock for eternity. Aeschylus himself is rumored to have divulged secrets, punishable by death, through his plays relating to his association with the Eleusinian Mysteries, a cult to Demeter. This act of telling fantastical stories, or rather, conceptualizations of a belief system turned Aeschylus himself into a medium disseminating ideas through stories and theater. Less than 10 percent of his opus survives today which may be retribution from the gods for his success in transferring knowledge, possibly bound to the same rock as Prometheus. Richard Wagner continued the traditions set by Aeschylus and his era, inspired to the point of developing his own concepts on Gesamtkunstwerk and citing the ancient greek tragedies as an ideal. Wagner may be the symbolic artist of his era to entertain ideas or intentions to synthesis the arts into multi modal experiences. He was a visionary who called for a reunification of the arts and society, he occupied this reflexive divide and developed new formats and systems in attempts to refine the outcome and overall experience. As a composer Wagner brought ideas of time into the aesthetic realm. Experience developed over time as do ideals of art. In a more contemporary setting, contemporary artists who differ as much as possible yet orbit the same ideals as Wagner and whom I will write about shortly are James Turrell and Roy Ascott.



Change Painting, Roy Ascott

### Part 3. Contemporary Systems & Perception

Roy Ascott can be seen as a technologist and theorist through his practice in Art. Embracing technological systems in his interactive art work, he stepped further than Wagner did into the ideals of synesthetic work. He called for full audience participation in the artwork itself, often themselves generating the work itself. Nearly 20 years before the world wide web was accessible to the greater public, Ascott was discussing ideas of “distributed authorship” through the organization of networked collaborative projects. His work with telematics can be seen as a precursor to interactive viewer participation in today's mass media. Viewer polls and participatory voting for contestants on reality shows can be seen as a form of telematic art and this modality of consumer application merged with visual media has been termed “Transmedia”. Transmedia is a term used to characterize a contemporary condition where media is propagated through multiple platforms which permeate our daily lives. Ascott was a pioneer of technological systems in art and used the broadening impact of technology in our daily lives as a medium for developing interconnected and participatory authorship. He bridged the “Reflexive Divide” by giving up artistic autonomy and turning the creative process into a collective endeavor and experience. Ascott saw the power of immediacy developing during his time in the technological sphere and used the developing forms of communication to unhinge the modality of experiencing art to allow for a more thorough inclusion than that of mere spectator.

James Turrell is possibly on the farthest side of the creative spectrum from Roy Ascott but both have similar demands of the participator. Turrell speaks of the work he makes as demanding time as it is the direct perception of the work which is the work itself. The viewer is enveloped by a modified light either natural or artificial and is forced to be simply in the experience itself. As Mayatte Patrick-Hughes wrote on Turrell in her dissertation for Northbrook college in

Art critic, Susan Sontag wrote that the very distinction between form and content is, ultimately, an illusion.

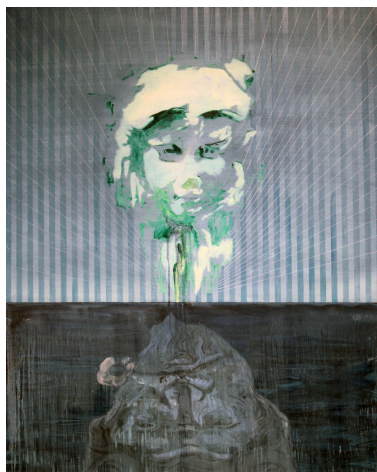
'Against interpretation', 1966.

2013, "As a viewer, you are encouraged to allow yourself to surrender to the experience as there is no form or surface to look at or content to interpret. As Turrell says, "you can see yourself see." It is almost as if you can touch the light with your eyes. His art is about perception, a subjective mental representation of our visual sensory input." Turrell actively populates this "reflexive divide" with his viewers calling for them to meditate on the very act of seeing. His minimalist approach to the medium of light strips away any material subject while exaggerating and fine tuning the materiality of light itself. Turrell speaks of the active participation of his work as opening up of a new perception. "This is a new kind of perception. It's no different than say, if you become a diver and go into the sea, and experience that. You get rapture of the deep. You get rapture of the heights. It's something that does occur. And it is a joy – this opening up of perception." Turrell.

Between artist , artwork and viewer there is this dynamic field of association undertaken. The Reflexive divide can now be defined as the moment art stops being a reflection of light off of surfaces of material and starts being the cumulative awareness/perception of the mechanism itself. When confronted with descriptions by viewers that his installations draw them into a religious experience or dream state he says that he has no responsibility for this. the viewer brings these associations and responses. We simply stand before and within the light that defines this particular space in the visual world. In this sense Turrell's work is the medium rather than the signifier. Signifier in the sense that a painting signals us its information via lightwaves and we compute these stimuli, his use of medium triggers the stimuli directly and is reflexive by nature. When you step into a Turrell work you step into the reflexive divide.



Breathing Light, James Turrell



Kaos & Okean  
100 cm x 150 cm  
Oil on Canvas

## Part 4. Saga of the Satellite: Origins & Potential Trajectories

Turrell's scientific exactness of his medium, light, and Ascott's engagement of the unknown by way of distributed authorship are examples of artistic interventions which in some degree speak of unification, Where Wagner spoke of the unification of the arts in theater , Turrell unifies the viewer with the medium, Ascott unifies the medium with the viewer. Ascott's work simply activates extroversion to Turrell's' spaces for introversion. These two artists are the two sides of the theoretical coin from which I draw much of my inspiration for my own work. In the following paragraphs I will write about my current works under development and how I theoretically manage / engage this reflexive divide between Artist and viewer. I will diagram a few of the systems I will employ in my art production and write a bit about the significance of the reflexive divide in my current work. Since 2012 my work has been distancing from abstracted representational / figurative studies while moving into a more systematic process driven exploration. I have tried to work with painting on an atmospheric level. thinking about the 2d medium as a 3d space instigating a 4d experience. I employ patterning and layering with mixed color fields to invoke a cerebral or perceptual vibration. As a blue line on a red background seems to shiver and jump I find a foot hold to experiment with the visual system through a systematic approach to the use of color and line in the process of painting. The process I have been operating with over the last years has been that of additive layering mixed with linear patterning. The patterns are generated intuitively from a start to end process. Starting with one decision of placement then radiating from that position, with the rule of slight variance, a pattern is developed. This patterning is now done with a very manual application of tape or, when regarding the perspective grid structures representing the horizon in a few examples above, with a modified drafting apparatus like an enlarged architectural drafting table.

The primary drive in my work right now is to develop new processes for the creation of patterns as well as exploring the grid through a hyper analytical process looking at the variance of line in accurate representations of wave fields. (a wave field in this sense is simply a gridded line structure represented in perspective)Fig.1-4 I am currently developing a series of painting works in 180 cm squared size that are a layered system of patterned color. These works will be



The Jury & Defendant  
150 cm x 100 cm  
Oil on Canvas

associated with smaller framed drawing works on paper and wood that resemble engineering blue prints for the works on display. These works will be a stepping stone to a newer series of paintings, again 180 cm squared, that will be diverging from the manually layered pattern paintings by way of machine aided grid patterning. This new series is tied to the production of a modified plotting machine and in collaboration with this plotter I will construct new and more accurate representations of both space and process.

## Part 5. Conclusion:

At this stage a broad research has been enacted to aid in the development of a theoretical and contemporary context for my work. Through investigations into the processes of artists like M.C. Escher, Ellsworth Kelly and Chuck Close to the fields of optical and cognitive science coupled with media theory and philosophies of aesthetics, I have woven a fabric or grid of associations which I inform my work. Central questions I ask through this whole process are :

How do I transfer this broad fabric into symbols or experiences?  
How , through a modified creative process, aided by technology to varying degrees, do I synthesis my research with a visual language that efficiently symbolizes the whole? How can I activate the sum of these many parts into an efficiently impactful experience? What is the general message or method am I bridging or activating the reflexive divide with?

Over the next months and year I will be exploring different methods and systems for producing new work both static and ephemeral. I have started to modify some programs and code of an XY plotter for generating sketches and studies which will develop into a large modular hanging plotter system which will aid me in the production of large scale painting works. I will make different “contraptions” that will be semi autonomous. One plan is a tuning fork sculpture that is placed before the painting ‘contraption”, The audience is provided a mallet, or button with which to activate one, to hit the fork thus initiating the machine to draw a corresponding sine wave over the canvas. When done over many repetitions you may find different patterns emerge from different frequencies or forks. This will be simulated with animation and rendering software cinema 4d.....

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North Wind at Dawn.  
380 cm x 250 cm  
Oil on Wood.

Vertigo.  
180 cm x 180 cm  
Oil on Canvas.

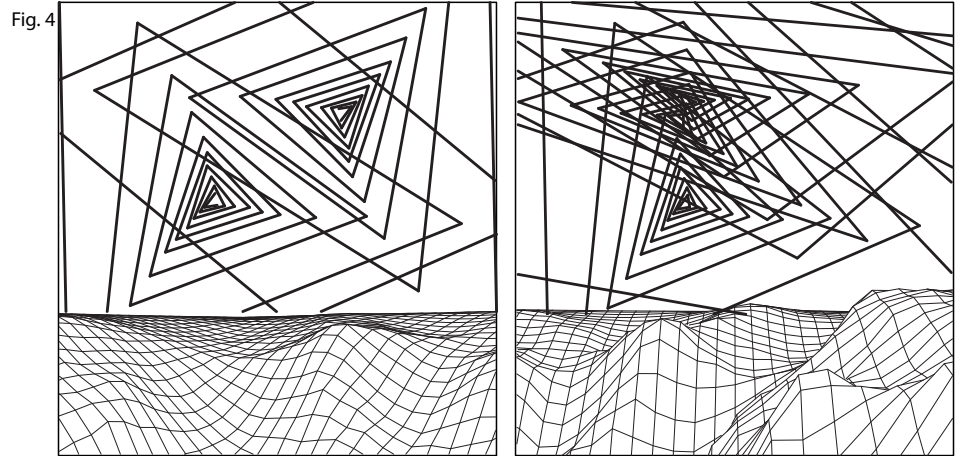
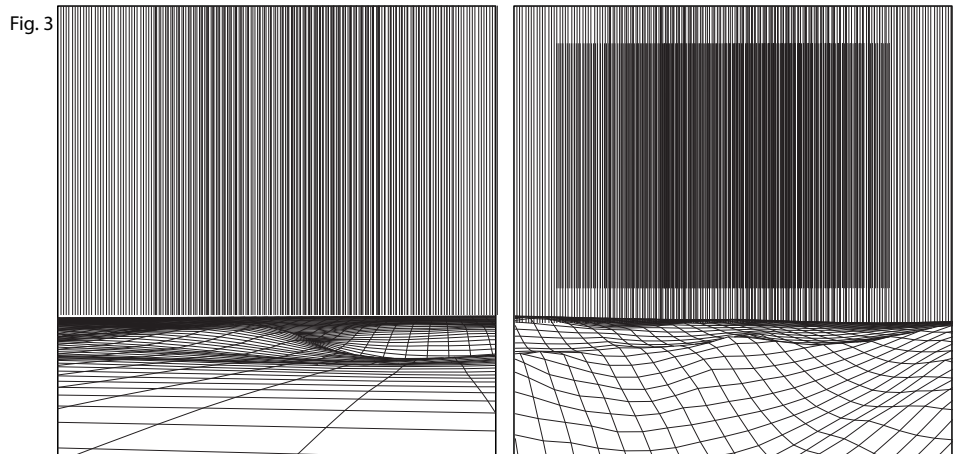
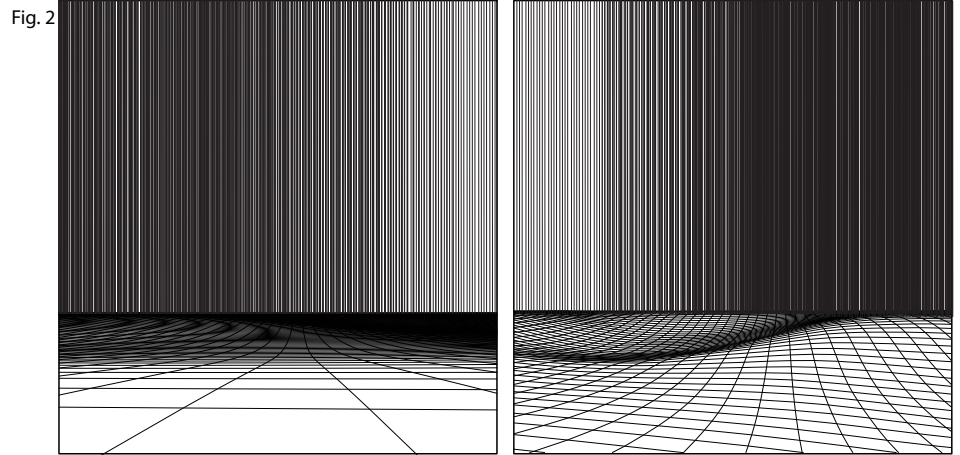
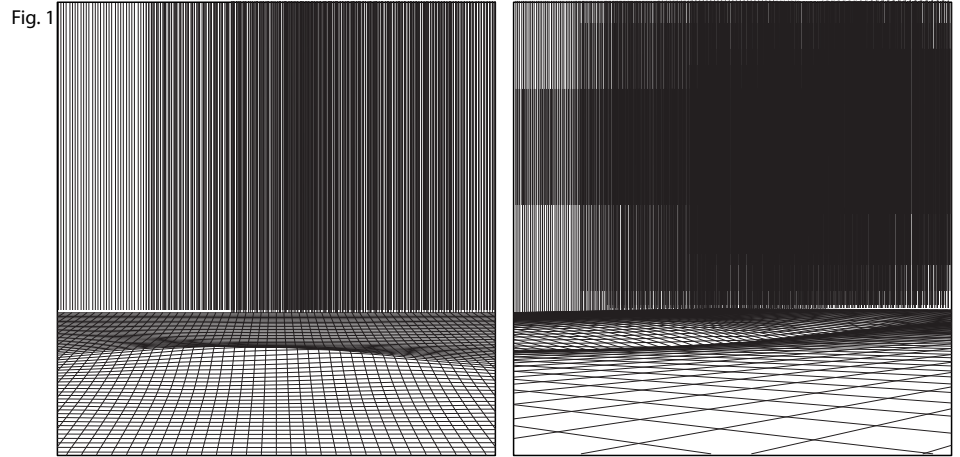
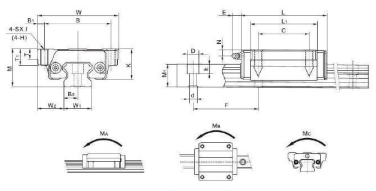
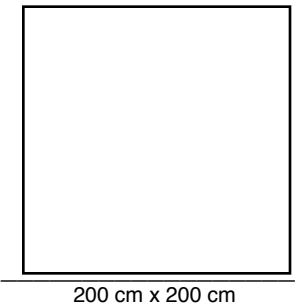
Tectonic Symphony.  
250 cm x 120 cm  
Oil on Wood.

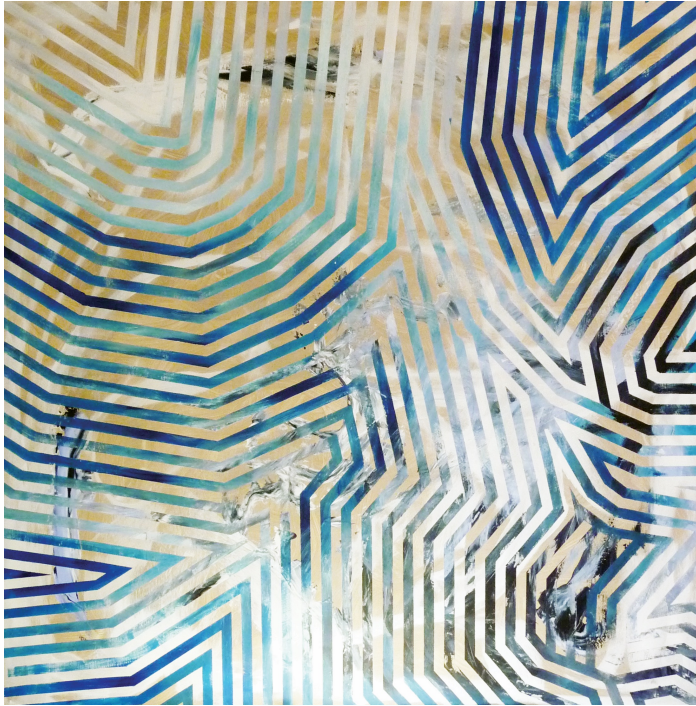


# Grid Study for Horizon Paintings with XY plotter:

**Grid Study #1:**  
 Variations on the Grid Horizon format for plotter. I would paint into the surface with color as the plot is in process as well as managing overall production. These works will be on painted pinewood structures 180 cm x 180 cm x 6 cm and smaller.

A modified hanging plotter will be designed to operate a vertical X Y plane of 200 cm x 200 cm. I will attempt to design this plotter to be scalable and fitted with an extruder and laser.





Neu1 (in progress)  
180 cm x 180 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas.



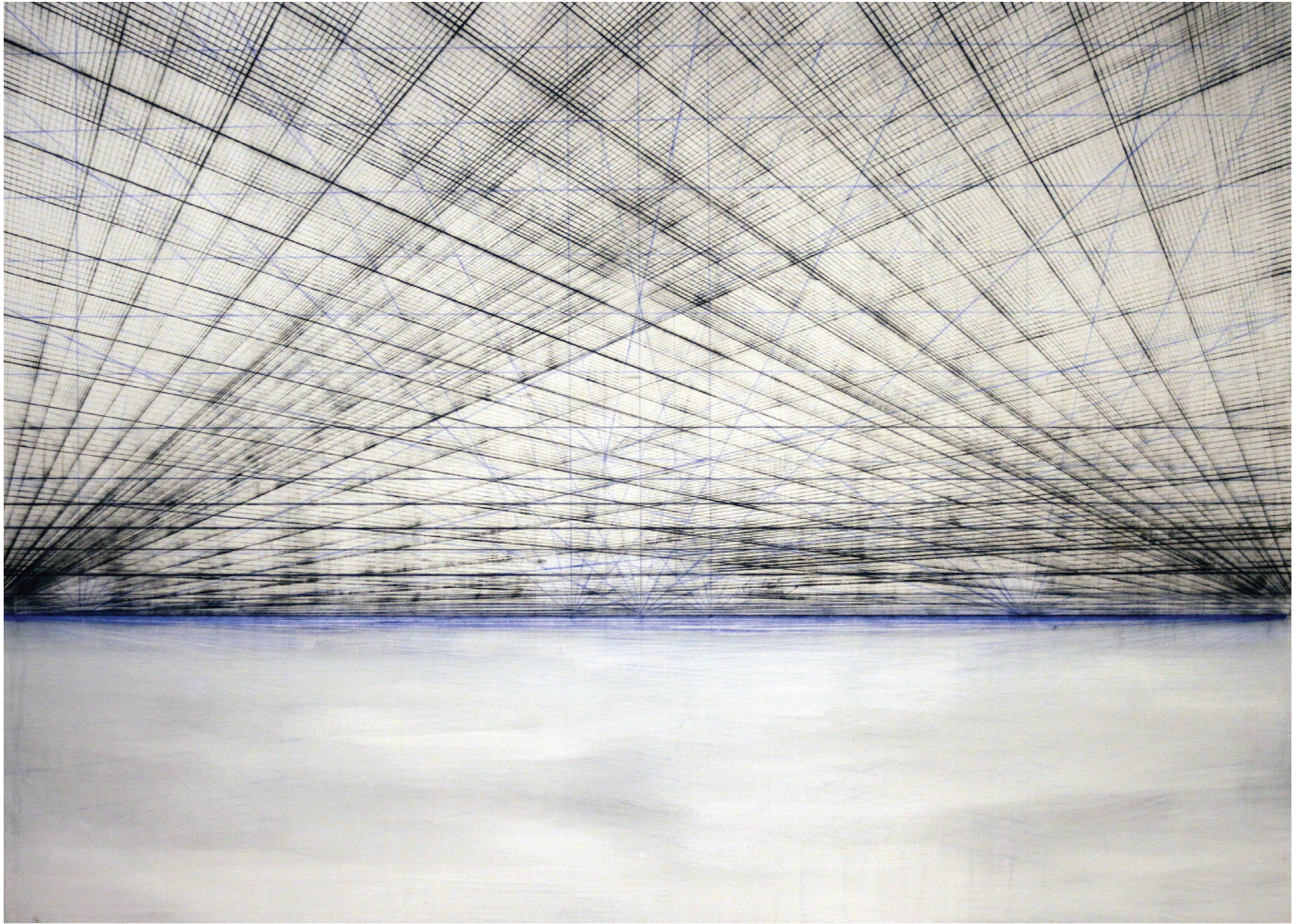
Neu2 (in progress)  
180 cm x 180 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas.



Neu3 (in progress)  
180 cm x 180 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas.



Studio View



Silence  
245 cm x 180 cm  
Oil on Canvas.



SunRa  
200 cm x 300 cm  
Oil on Canvas.

