

**Thesis Title: *The Vital Space of Painting:*
Changing perceptual and material conditions of space, place and viewer in
contemporary European Abstract painting**
(Linda Khatir, PhD., Bath School of Art & Design)

In my own practice (and the practices discussed throughout the written thesis), painting is seen as difficulty at work. Traces and effects are captured, and folds, holes, cuts, shadows, and spaces partially revealed, repeated and re-formed. These almost forgotten elements touch upon, then immediately discard, what is always-and-already absent, alluding to things, moments and meanings beyond painting, the smallest fragment taking on a significance that it would not have in any other situation. Yet, the fragment doesn't 'do' anything except act as another trigger for meaning. It is the viewer who comes to the work, and makes the work do-its-work, who re-invents relationships for the work via combinations of memory, instinct, sensory response and language.

So in loosely drawing attention to what is no longer a 'given' in painting (the fixed, flat, frontal and bordered image), I work with abandonment and difficulty - at the fringes, and in the hinges of painting; making absence present through allusion and metaphor rather than overt signs. This takes us towards Jacques Derrida's reading between the lines and his attention to punctuation, margins and wordplay. Within these texts nothing is taken at face value, truths and meanings flexible and fragmented. Throughout the thesis and in my ongoing research, painting is approached with a sense of play, of theatre and pseudo-concepts; its meaning(s) unrestrained by politics, trends or medium, but emerging as fragile and temporary possibilities - nomadic, always open to change.

And so I continue to wrestle with the idea of painting, wary of it, engaging in a long process of *de-monstration* (and I say it this way because for me painting is monstrous). I engage in uncompromising and eccentric activities, building structures, only to deconstruct them and begin again differently, making layers, only to unpeel them to see how the underneath is changed. Once the underneath and outside is opened up and revealed I find myself doubting painting: demanding how, why, where and when is, or isn't a thing or action 'painting'? Painting (in its contentious state between verb and noun, flatness and thickness, image and object) always offering more questions than it or I can answer.

And so I read and re-read what already exists, trying to understand how this thing can 'do its being', and how it might do that being differently; its doing and being occurring somewhere at its own hinges, seams, edges and other spaces, the spaces and activities coming together to supplement the work's doubtful condition as Painting.