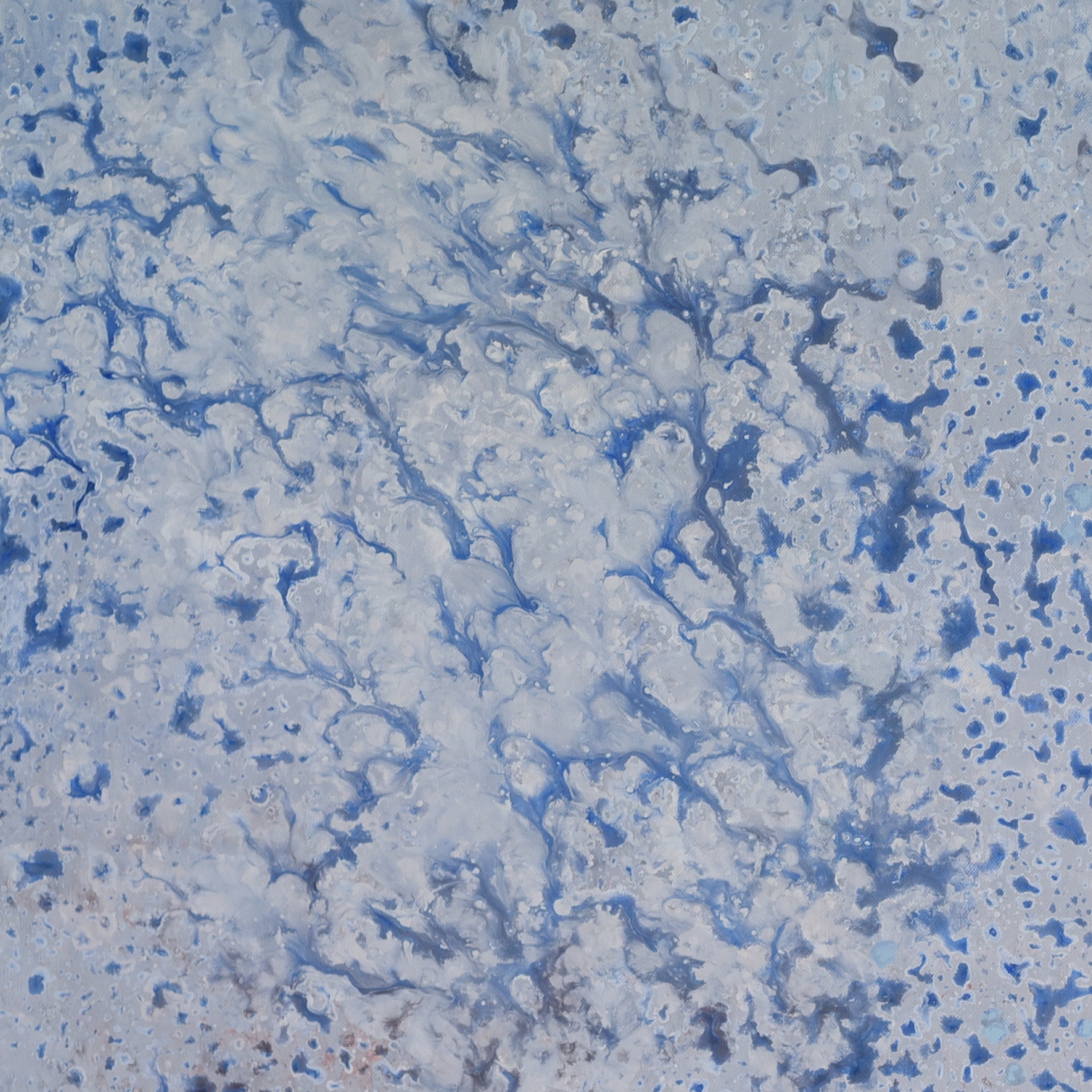




Anne Morrison

Preservation
and
Loss



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6 February – 13 March 2016



Introduction

Ellie Ray, Curator

Visiting Anne Morrison's studio over the past twelve months has been a fascinating process, both in terms of the visual stimuli and the conversations that have taken place. To set the scene, paintings adorn the walls in various stages of completion while studies on smaller pieces of paper lie in piles on the floor and the table. Over a dozen containers with varying shades of blue paint cover a small table which is connected to a larger work table. The large table is completely covered in paint tubes, brushes, acrylic paint, clean-up rags, paper and cling wrap. Research books lie exposed, yet unmarked by paint, in amongst this 'ordered chaos'. Classical music is often playing in the background and myriad notes and photocopies are spread out on another work table.

Perusing the artist's studio, one is submerged in eddies of blues and sparkling greens. There is a drowning sensation that is not at all unpleasant – fragments of partially recognisable forms seem to drift and float by while twisted and knotted shapes signal a return to the surface where these tumultuous, yet beautiful voids can be observed from a seemingly different aspect. A sense of calm is then restored as the eye is drawn to recognisable shapes such as two halves of a fossilised coral rendered in delicate patterns on paper. Analogous to the structure of our lungs, these shapes are repeated in several small working drawings spread across the studio floor.

Morrison's methodology includes outdoor excursions to source and contemplate objects; extensive research and study drawings; and a painting process that incorporates building up, eliminating, re-making and at times rejecting or putting a work aside for later consideration.

In leaving Morrison's studio to write some notes for this exhibition, I ponder the space within which I have been submerged. There seem to be two main threads running through the artist's work – one connecting opposites, the other connecting similarities. Together, these threads weave an intriguing play of urgency and calm, of recognition and loss. It is as though the artist turns the mirror on herself and her world, to reveal multiple connections in the coextensive space of death and being.

Preservation and Loss

Patrick Sutzak

Life is fragile, and the circumstances in which alignments occur often display a type of serendipity. How is it that at times we move through the world oblivious to the entanglement and complexity of nature, while in another instance we become paralysed by an emotional wonderment of it? I suspect that many of us have found ourselves, in moments of solitude, staring up at the stars or standing on the shore looking toward the horizon internalising bewilderment and fascination at the splendour and intricacy of the world around us. There is a vastness that is obvious in the skies and in the seas, yet there is also a fabric of dense molecular complexity that binds all things together.

Anne Morrison's work is rich in detail, and profoundly informed by the fundamental systems of nature. For Morrison, as an artist, the natural environment inspires, entices and compels her to create. Observations and interactions with organic and non-organic forms, particularly those found along the shoreline of waterways and beaches, are catalysts for an imaginative and speculative approach to her compositions. She sees that people are inevitably intertwined with the natural world and, as a result, are able to harvest its rewards, reshape its materials, and introduce new 'artificial' matter and objects. Morrison seems especially attuned to the possibilities of forms, fantastical structures of DNA, colours, and patterns that could exist under the microscope if the organic and synthetic were combined. Through her deftness with the brush, Morrison explores the literal through the abstract – her unique technique bringing about a hybridisation of the real and the conceptual, a twist of organic and fabricated matter.

For Morrison, a walk on the beach may result in a spark between the physical encounter with an object and the ideas that radiate from that experience. An object that has been washed up could just as quickly be washed away, and it is in that brief period of being bound to the land where the artist might locate the beginnings of a new work. The result of this connection is a blurring of the edges – a loss of distinction between the tangible and the abstract. It also encourages viewers to be drawn into her work, to seek out the source of inspiration.

Morrison's paintings are the sum of many parts and, while complex in their beauty, her work also offers a deeper insight into the process of being and doing – where chancing upon a tiny tangle of kelp is merely the seed of greater thought. While the found object, kelp in this example, can be regarded as identifiable and tangible, Morrison draws upon a philosophy of 'lightness' to explore that which may otherwise be hidden.

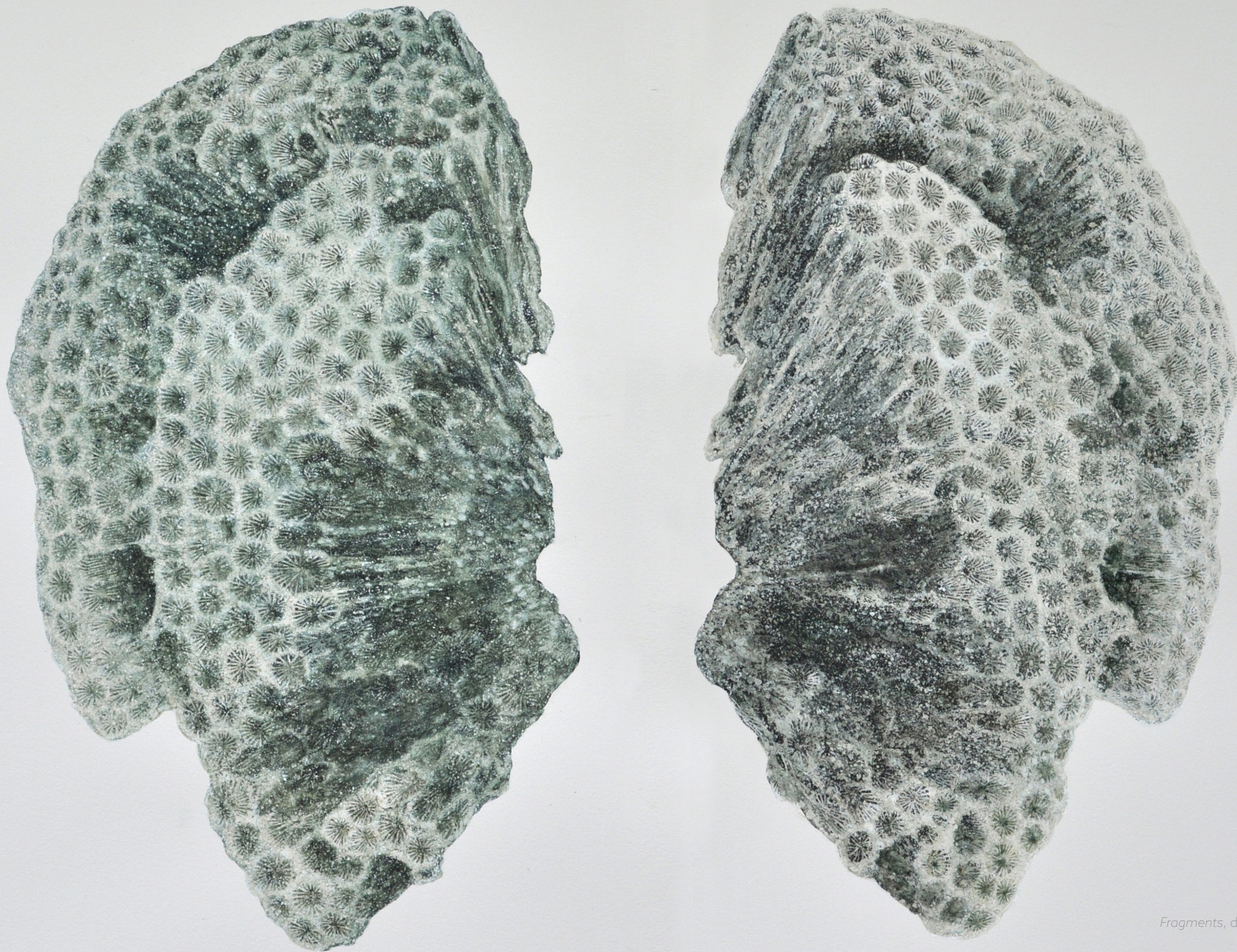
The concept of lightness, explored at length in Italo Calvino's *Six memos for the next millennium* (1988), talks of the 'search for lightness as a reaction to the weight of living' (1988:26). While Calvino's ideas refer specifically to literature, it is no surprise that Morrison draws upon this philosophy in her work as she navigates notions of minuscule environments and tiny worlds. There, in the lightness of the unseen, is where Morrison creates her visual poetry and finds her inspiration, yet it is also where she defines her process.

Like the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi who, according to Calvino, 'takes the weight out of language, to the point that it resembles moonlight' (1988:24) Morrison seems to react to the weight of paint, taking an approach that is fluid and intuitive. Her actions are repetitive, rhythmic and tuned. The layers of paint are plentiful yet thin – delicate veils of 'intent' combine with the unexpected forms that result from the process of adding and removing. There is an opportunity to find the microcosmic possibilities of her subject matter as each layer is painted in and subsequently worked away. In this way, the meticulous process accords the viewer depth and detail, yet lightness of being.

Preservation and Loss is a title that speaks not only of organic and constructed materials, but also of nature and culture, histories and change, and Morrison's very own sensitivities as an artist. In her work, the act of preserving or removing paint is about making choices, gaining knowledge, and revealing the seemingly invisible – exploring and creating dense visual networks of colour, shape and pattern, all of which can be found at a molecular level – the foundations of nature.

With a deep appreciation of her European heritage, Morrison is a gifted painter who understands distance, separation, longing, and love of place – both near and far. Perhaps this connection to place is why the oceans, seas and waterways call to her – representing the dichotomy between global connection and severance. Furthermore, they are places of wonder and an endless resource for an artist so fond of, and so open to the world around her in all its elaborate detail.

Calvino, I. (1988). *Six memos for the next millennium*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.



Fragments, diptych 154 x 240cm (120 x 154cm each), acrylic on paper, 2014



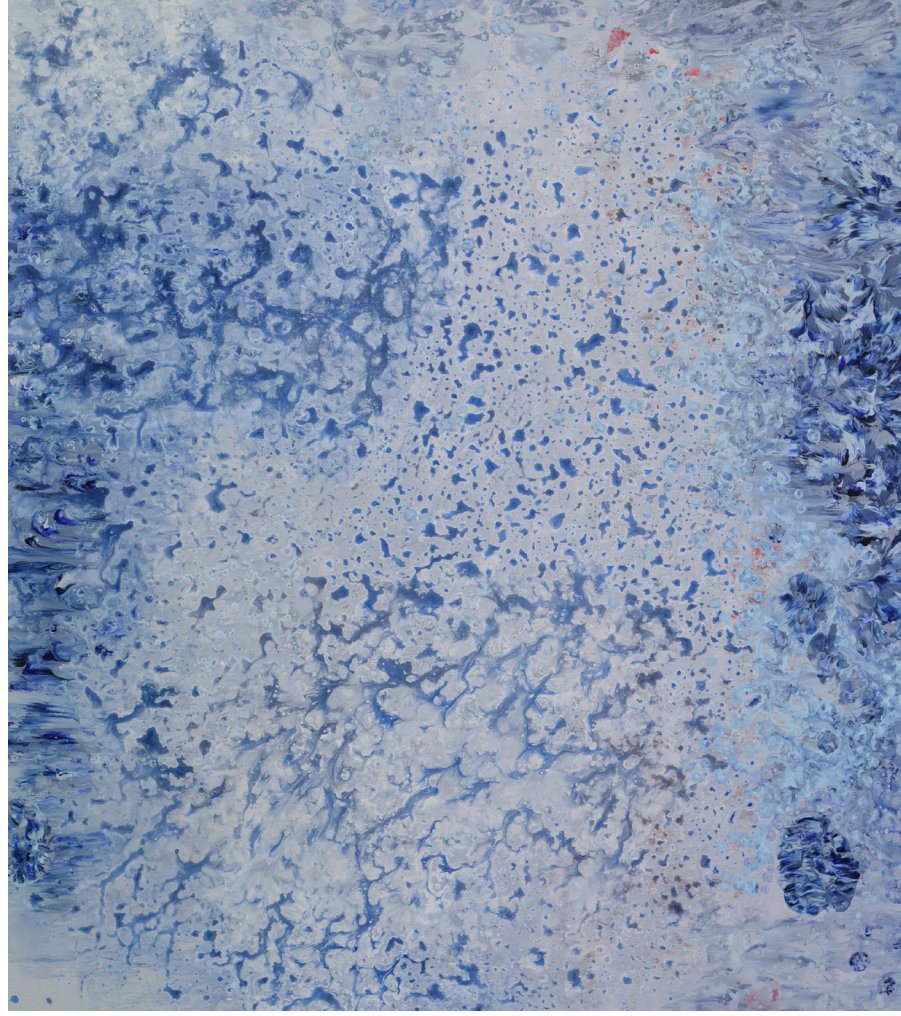
Maelstrom, 137 x 122cm, acrylic on linen, 2015



Boundless, 137 x 122cm, acrylic on linen, 2015



Colony, 137 x 122cm, acrylic on linen, 2015



Salt Rain, 137 x 122cm, acrylic on linen, 2015



Surfacing, 137 x 122cm, acrylic on linen, 2015



Remnant from the Flood, 120 x 154cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



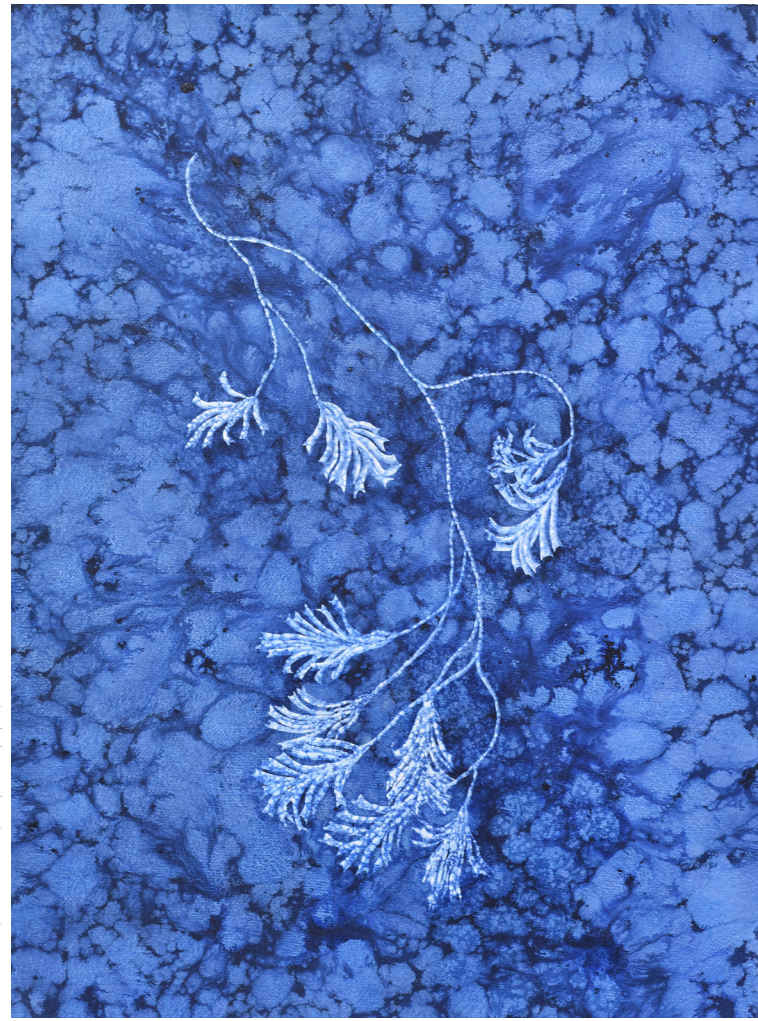
Waterline #1, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



Waterline #2, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



Waterline #3, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



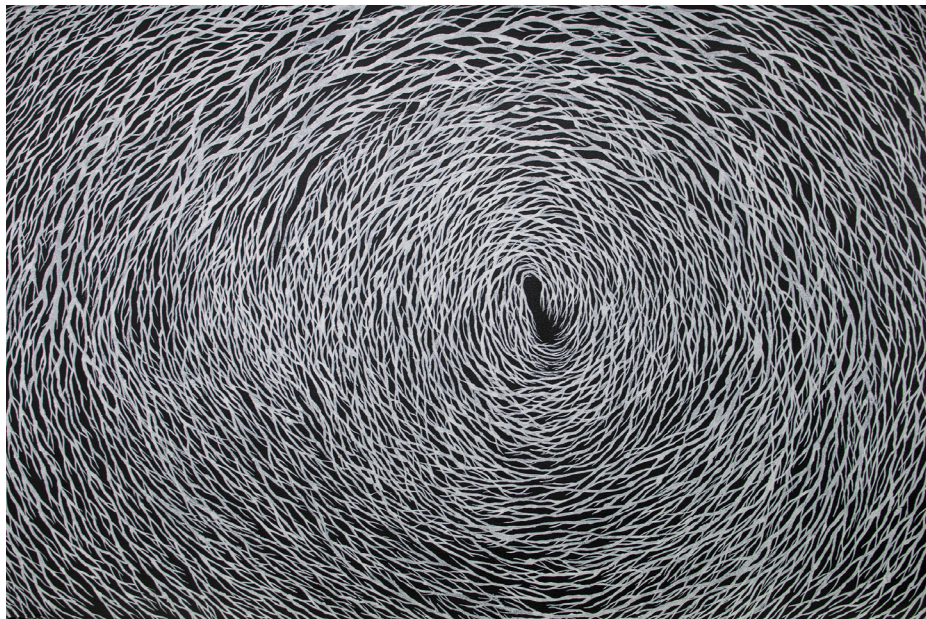
Waterline #4, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



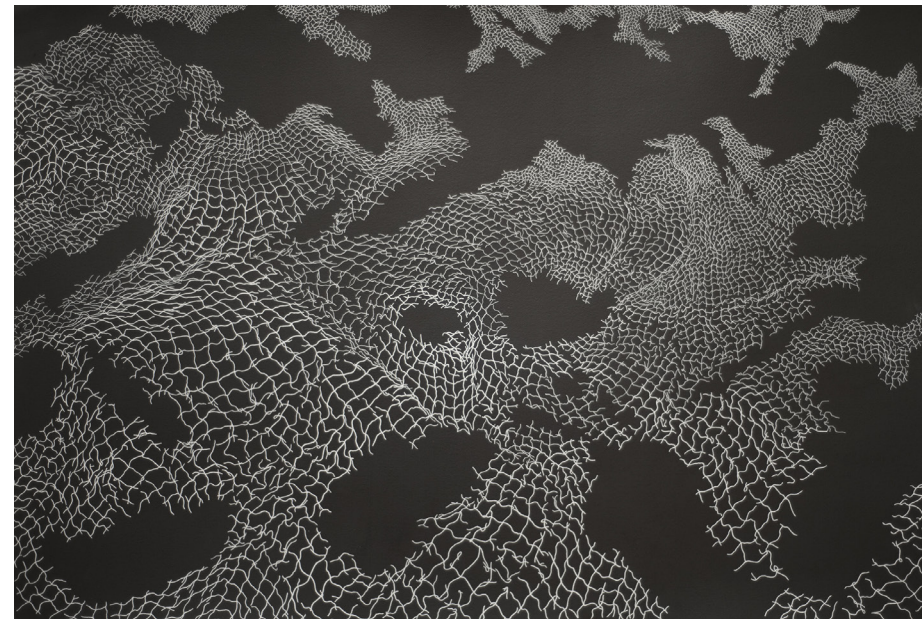
Waterline #5, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



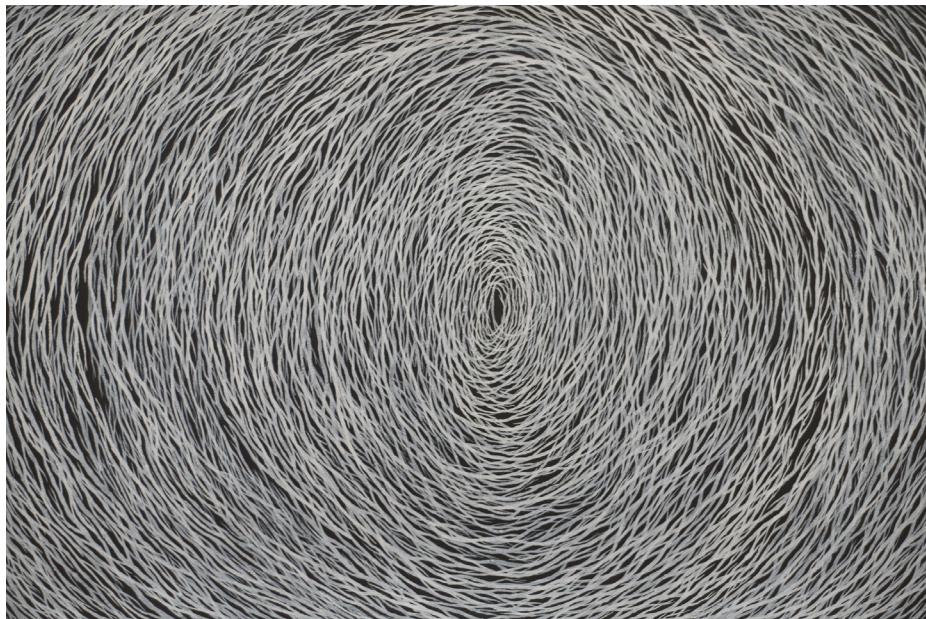
Waterline #6, 75 x 56.5cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



Network I, 120 x 154cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



Broken Threads, 120 x 154cm, acrylic on paper, 2015



Network II, 120 x 154cm, acrylic on paper, 2015

Biography

Anne Morrison was born in 1966 in Glasgow, Scotland. She now lives and works in Tasmania, Australia. Morrison completed her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from Glasgow School of Art in 1988, a Master of Arts from the Royal College of Art London in 1990, and a PhD from the School of Art, University of Tasmania in 1999.

Morrison has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in various galleries and art spaces in Australia, United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Singapore. She has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including the Elizabeth Greenshields Award, Canada (1988), The John Minton Travel Award, Royal College of Art London (1989), and the Association of Commonwealth Universities Scholarships 1994. She was the recipient of a twelve month residency in Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia in 2003 and her works are held in the Derwent Art Collection Tasmania, Artbank Australia, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Devonport Regional Gallery, the Royal College of Art London, Scottish Art Council, University of Tasmania, and many private collections regionally and internationally.

Anne Morrison is represented by Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and Despard Gallery, Hobart.



Acknowledgements

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Ellie Ray would like to thank Anne Morrison for the opportunity to work with her and learn more about her practice and ideas. Ray would also like to thank her team at DRG and acknowledge support from Despard Gallery, the Devonport City Council and the State Government through Arts Tasmania.

Anne Morrison is represented by Despard Gallery Hobart. All works courtesy of Artist and Despard Gallery Hobart.

annemorrison.net despard-gallery.com.au

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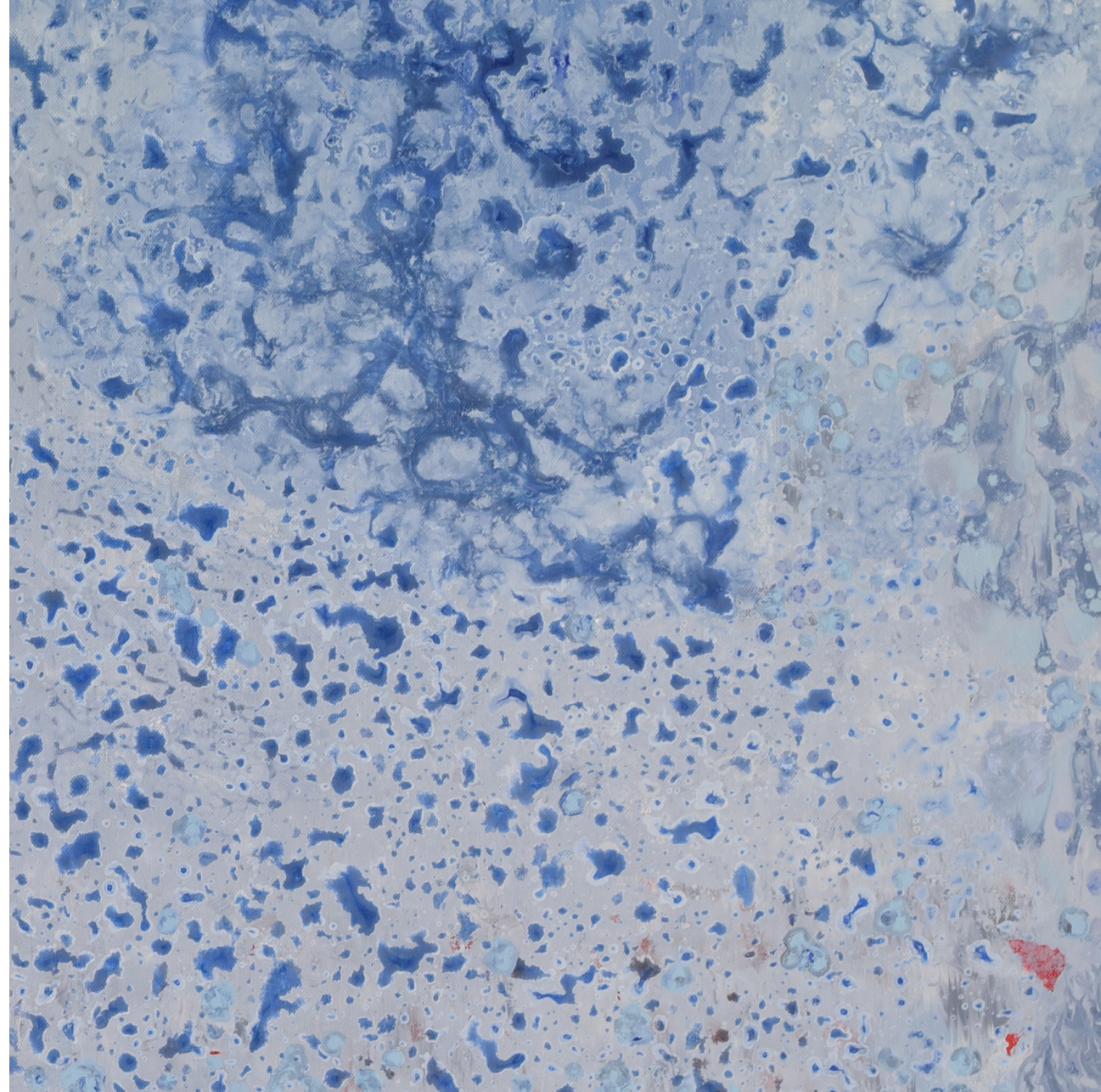
Cover Image: Salt Rain (*detail, rotated and mirrored*)

45–47 Stewart Street Devonport 03 6424 8296

Mon–Fri 10–5 Sat 12–5 Sun & Public Holidays 1–5

devonportgallery.com artgallery@devonport.tas.gov.au

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