

Kristy Gorman, ***Cryptomnesia***



## Kristy Gorman, *Cryptomnesia*

**cryptomnesia:** the appearance in consciousness of memory images which are not recognised as such but which appear as original creations.

Kristy Gorman's recent work is the result of a series of operations; dilution, ink painting, blotting, pressing, cutting, layering and rearrangement of boards, glass and paper. The heavy-weight papers, already subjected to hot-pressing in their manufacture, are further excavated by cutting or embossing, or debossing as their volume is pushed up through a print-making press or forced to sink into themselves. Boards rest on wooden shelves with forms that disappear and recur elsewhere as shadows. Whole compositions might be precisely copied from an earlier iteration, only to be dissected.

Geometric shapes hover in the centre of the frame or rear up from beyond the edge; off-set in pairs, or groups. The forms suggest microscopic slides, cellular diagrams, litmus tests, or conversely the macroscopic scale of an architectural plan. They could be the visual notations of a knitting pattern, harlequin fabric or a distant echo of childhood play with cuisenaire rods. The forms are vaguely familiar, but we are not sure from where. They are an alphabet of 'non-propositional apprehensions' that trade on memory, introspection and intuition.

Shadows become duplicitous as the artist plays with the gap between the thing and the paper or glass as ground. There are false shadows and real shadows, edges and simulated edges and optical doubling or tripling. Actual shadows are encouraged beneath the curling watercolour paper or the leaning panels against the wall. These perceptual tricks catch us seeing ourselves seeing.

In this body of work there is elimination or 'negative prehension' where we sense the missing entities that have been excluded from display.<sup>2</sup> In the course of producing a series, one paper work might perish by cutting, to subsist only as datum for other entities to form, or to return as collage material.

Colour also reaches back into a place of memory and affect. Students were once taught to avoid the uncomfortable non-colour where red and green shapes overlap; yet an off-pink tinge recalls the homeliness of a grandmother's armchair, worn by use. Their fragility is a lure where the audience participates in 'a kind of communication without communion' and without consensus.<sup>3</sup> We can share an aesthetic experience without necessarily experiencing the same recollections.

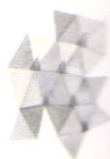
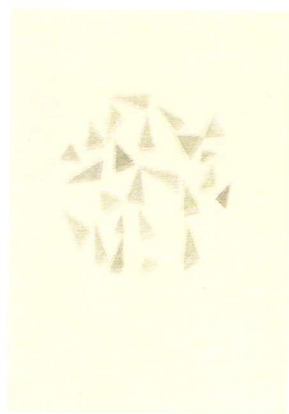
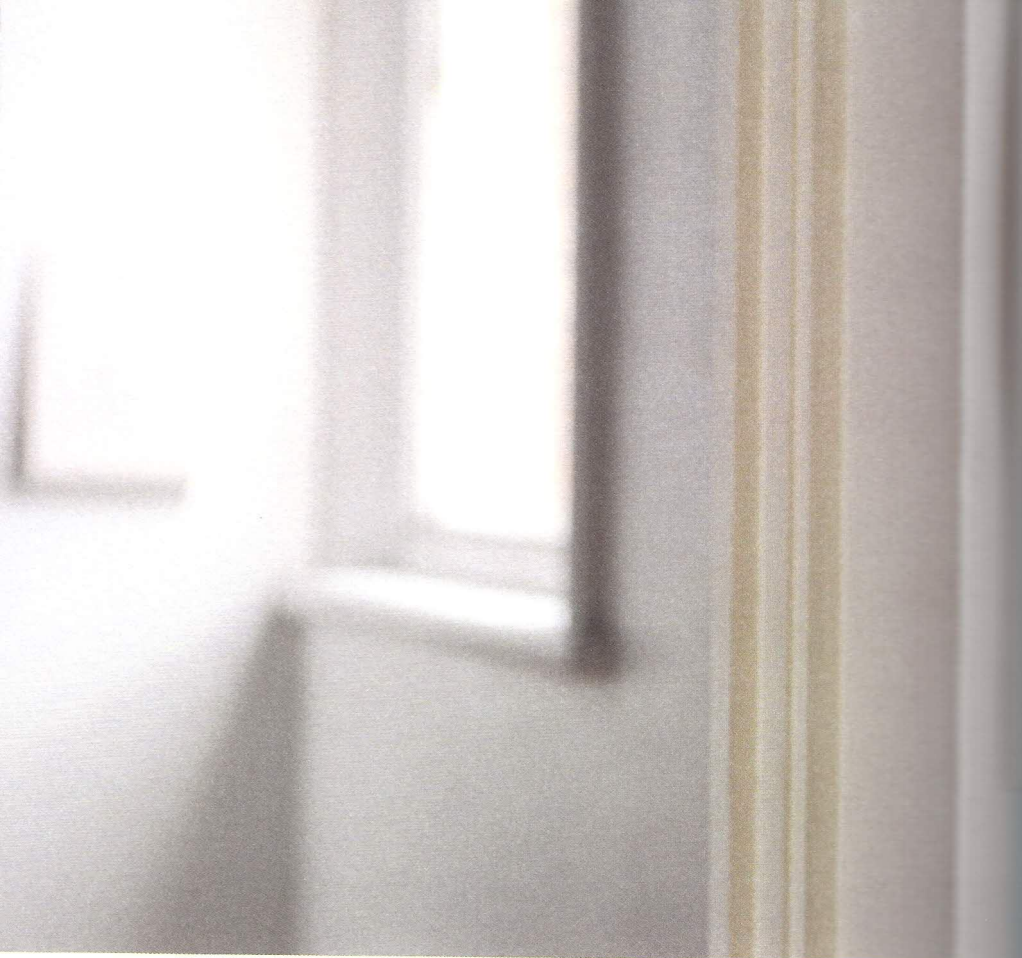
The recesses of the doorframe of Gorman's generous bungalow studio, or yellowy patches on the wall, somehow leak into the works themselves. The light-bathed room is punctured by fixing devices that reveal the brown fibres of scrim underlay. There are celestial clusters of pin marks and geometric incisions in the wall that mirror the shapes of the paper.

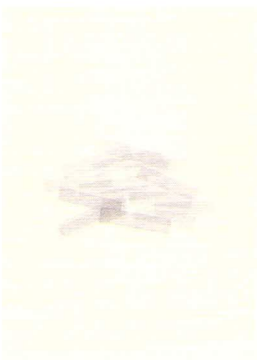
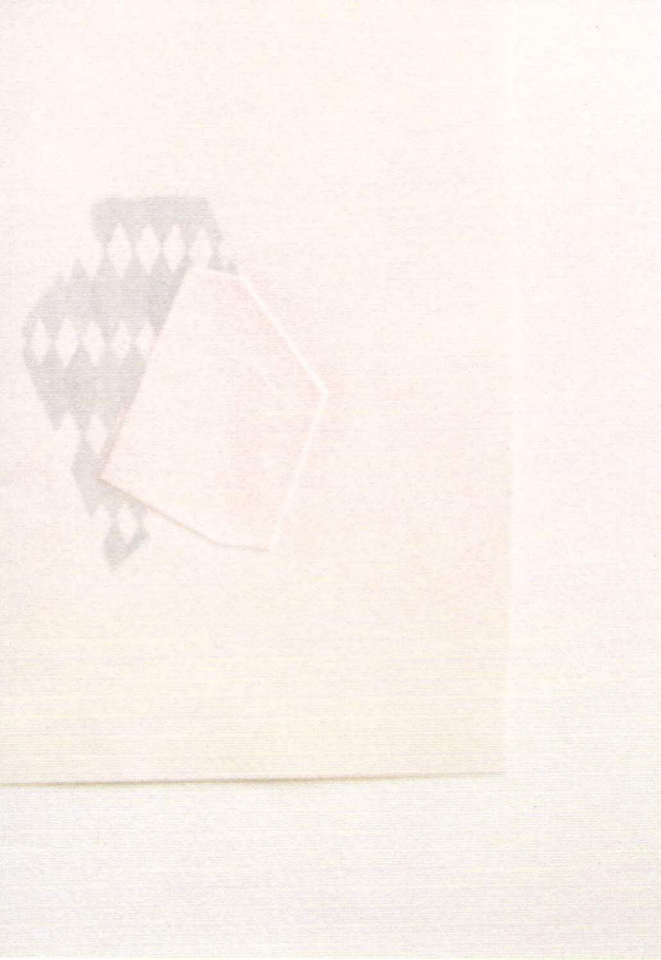
This series, as 'a group show of my own work,' to borrow Gorman's description, is more than the sum of material processes on individual pieces. The composition of the works as a collective arrangement consumes much of the studio time. Hours slide by in the studio where leaves of paper are pinned up, taken

1 Herbert Read. *The Forms of Things Unknown*. London: Faber and Faber. 1960. 17.

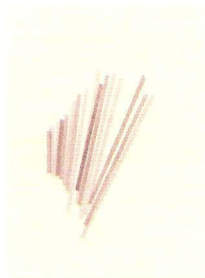
2 Steven Shaviro. (citing A. N. Whitehead's terminology). *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. 2009. 42.

3 *Ibid.* 6.





*Over and over II*, Ink on paper, 500x380mm, 2012



*Pitch*, Ink on paper, 420x297mm, 2012

down, pinned on top of each other, shuffled around a large wooden table or relegated to the drawers or file boxes again. This mode of hovering indecision is endlessly generative. Eventually a selection must be made amongst the differing potentialities.

After the works are brought together, the eye is invited to flit around the separate elements rather than committing to rest on one structure. Gradually the unruly pieces coalesce into a quiet argument with themselves. We sense that the paintings, as they hang now, are pausing for just a moment in their life cycle. The paper works could begin a new set of forms, or devolve into skeletal cut-outs; they might always become something more or less than what they are at present.

The cryptomnesic condition is the forgetting and recall of a pre-existing concept or idea as your own; a kind of unconscious plagiarism. At the turn of the twentieth century the Swiss psychiatrists Théodore Flournoy and Carl Jung noted that female spiritual mediums, and writers, sometimes have a power of recall that they attributed to latent memories. In the essay 'Cryptomnesia' (1905) Jung describes 'the tremendous automatism driving up from the unconscious' that 'fetches up these distant fragments in order to build them into a new and meaningful structure.'<sup>4</sup> An artist never starts from scratch but also fetches up fragments from all corners of the psyche to work in series. Or by extension, the 'medium' of ink itself might siphon forms from the brush.

Decryption is hinted in these works, as words are often their starting points,

but code-breaking attempts will be short-lived. If there is a system, Gorman moves away from the rules when she needs to. Her notebooks are full of lists: dovetail, splice, plumb, cuesta (a gentle lattice), striate. They are particular verbs that describe relationships and separations. The notebooks also contain found phrases such as;

'A series is a sequence without origin or destination  
simply occurrence'<sup>5</sup>

We are constantly losing our memories of things, but vestiges of what we perceive remain forever indented in our grey matter, to one day be released again. As Jung once wrote, 'The brain

4 Carl G. Jung. 'Cryptomnesia.' *The Collected Works Volume One: Psychiatric Studies*. Ed. Herbert Read. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul. 1970. 105.

5 Charles Bernstein. *Richard Tuttle: In Parts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania. 2002. 59.

6 Carl G. Jung. 'Cryptomnesia.' *The Collected Works Volume One: Psychiatric Studies*. Ed. Herbert Read. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul. 1970. 104.

never forgets any impression, no matter how slight; every impression leaves behind it some trace in the memory, no matter how fine.<sup>6</sup> The fine, the slight, the trace and the impression become the substance of this series of work. The shapes are little pieces of existence containing reminiscences, or perhaps intimations of things to come.

Janine Randerson, NOVEMBER 2012

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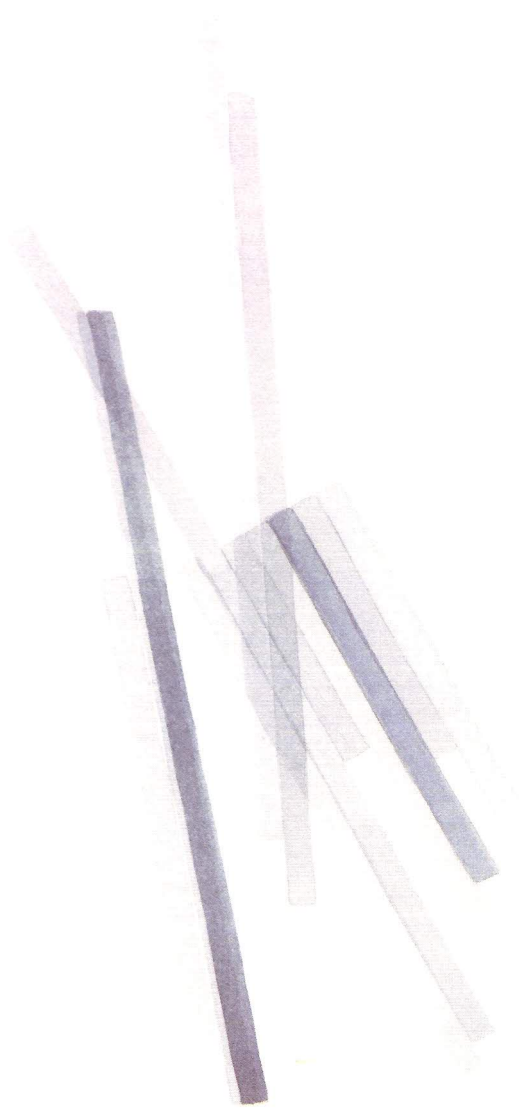
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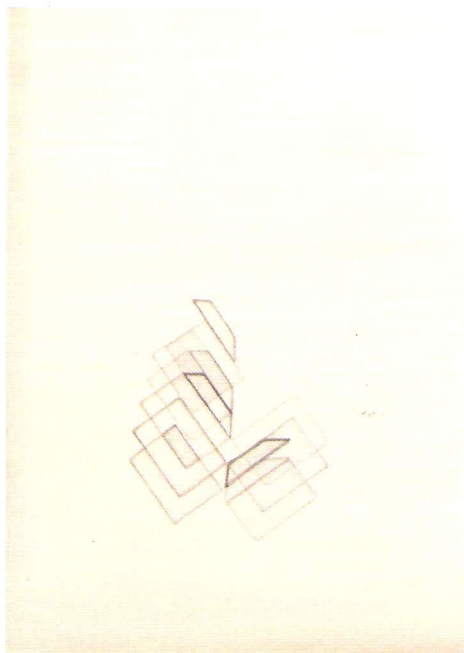
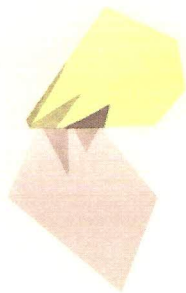
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Lapse, Ink on board, 297x210mm, 2012

Facet, Ink on paper, 297x210mm, 2012

