

Master of Fine Art Thesis

Vanessa Murray
Thesis Show: *Uncertain Becomings*

Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

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Approved by: Mario Marzan (chair), Yun-Dong Nam, Roxana Perez Mendez, Becky Brown

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Vanessa Murray - Artist Statement

I'm interested in the physical presence of painting. The surfaces of the work are important because they intend to reward close examination and interpretation. I see my painting process as a reverse or positive excavation process. By this I'm referring to how accumulative processes of material determine the formation of negative spaces. When cavities or caves form over time, an effect is created in which the relationship between inside and outside, positive and negative, even past and present begin to compete for attention. Negative spaces, which I refer to as "cavities" are formed from accumulative applications of paint through repetitive strokes of a palette knife. This single choice of tool focuses me on the steadfastness of my process. Having one primary application method emphasizes the complexities that occur from a singular process over time. Moments of "deep space", or darker contrasted receding layers, can be found between areas of thick, solid, smooth expanses of paint. Further layers reveal fragments of "geologic time" and stratification. At other times the surface forms dominate and conceal each other through a process that drifts between certain dualities: vacant yet solid, ethereal yet earthly, weightless yet topographical. The amassing of layers become suggestive of geologic formations; cavernous and corporeal forms. Both suggest a feeling of anticipation, of being in flux.

To achieve optimal physical presence in a painting I become fully aware of each and every layer that is applied to the panel as a processual and dispositive decision. By presence, I'm referring to work that has the ability to stare back at the viewer. Every material decision that is applied is a response to the surface that comes before it. I'm interested in creating paintings that attest their own state of *becoming*, asking the viewer to participate. This state of *becoming* is understood to the viewer in that my paintings ask to slow down the process of looking through subtle visual differences and exchanges of color, texture and layering. By carefully building upon layers of material while attempting to keep them simultaneously exposed, I am promoting a certain sense of time unfolding in the work. This sense of time is a very slow one, a compressed time similar to the long periods of a glacial movement. My work engages with a slowness of process, but also with the slowness of perception.

My paintings are meant to evoke a liminal state of sensory experience. The state of *becoming* also responds to our own threshold of certainty. A muted and pale color palette also means to exist just below a threshold of their full potential. By potential, I mean the colors are either not fully realized in their saturation or resemble the fading of time and their histories. The interplay of their subtle manifestations amidst a ground of whites create an anticipation of slow emergence and dissolution.

For Gilles Deleuze, everything is defined as its potential for *becoming*. There are certain principles in his philosophy regarding this idea that I feel like I can interpret through my work. When he uses the term 'bodies' to describe composites of thoughts, matter, and singularities, I think about the moments in my work where colors, edges and textures merge and then reappear. He claims that all *bodies* exist in the same way but are differentiated by speed and rhythm. This makes me think of how my compositions are determined by the rhythm of their surface topographies and the speed of application by my own hand. The manner in which something in the world materializes is determined by this same energy. Speed (or slowness in my case) and rhythm are important factors in my work. According to Deleuze this energy is the materialism of his notion of *becomings*. A *becoming* always exists between singularities, there is no stasis, only perpetual change and therefore pure potential. My work advocates that "a painting" is not a static image or object. My paintings are meant to be viewed from a multitude of perspectives; up close, far away, from the side or at an angle. Every vantage point offers something different and unique. I wouldn't claim any one to be more important than another.

My drawing process is in close conversation with my paintings, but through a decidedly different approach in which forms emerge from discrete meticulous pen lines. I think about them as peculiar growths that are perpetually in transition. They are forms constructed out of potential, rhythm and quiet anticipation, respondent of an accumulative outcome; a build-up of forms through individual meticulous marks over time. Their spatial depth and subtle relationships to the surface of the paper or to the applications of polymer are acquired only through close examination and spending time in the moment.

Vanessa Murray

MFA Thesis Presentation

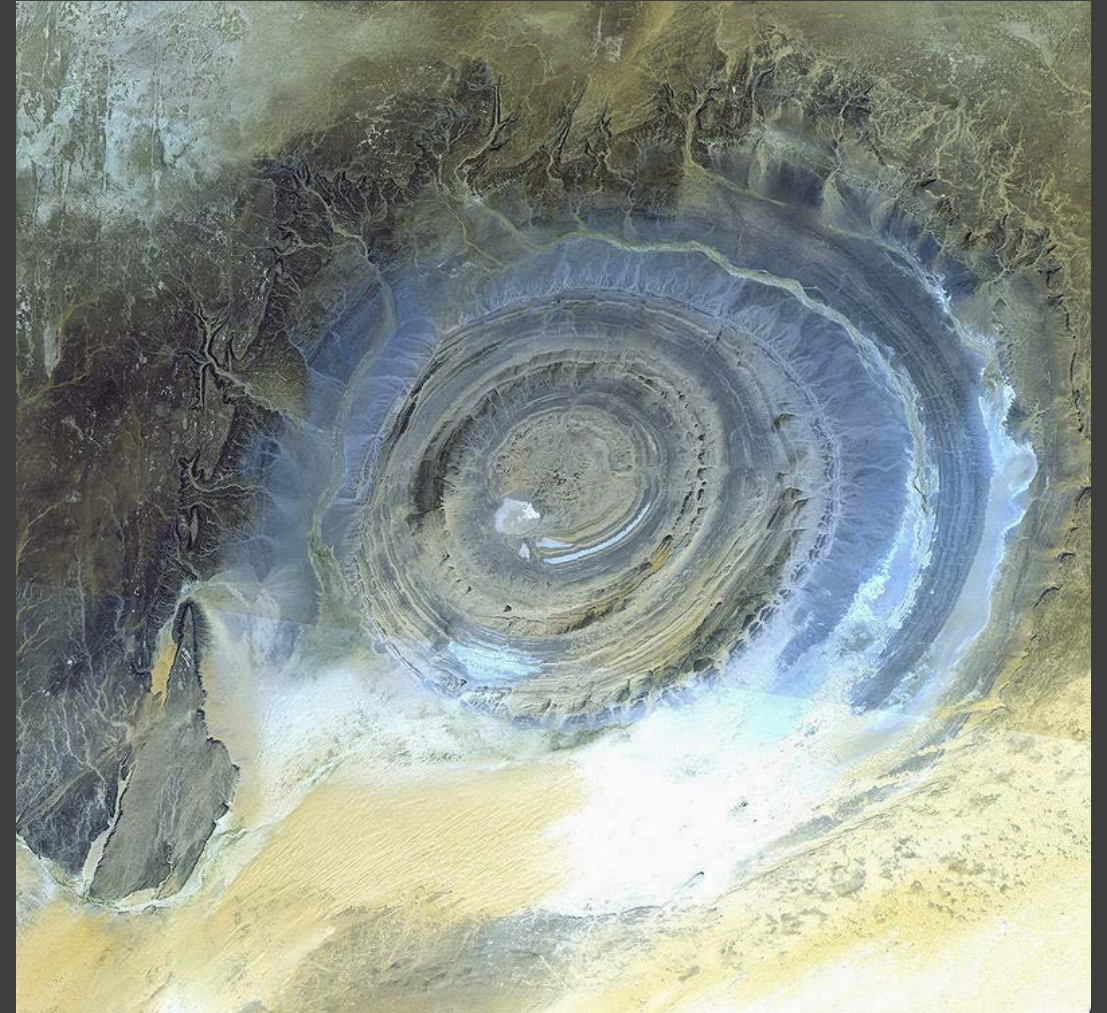
Spring 2017







Geologic Dome
Sheep Mountain Anticline in Wyoming
Photograph by Michael Collier



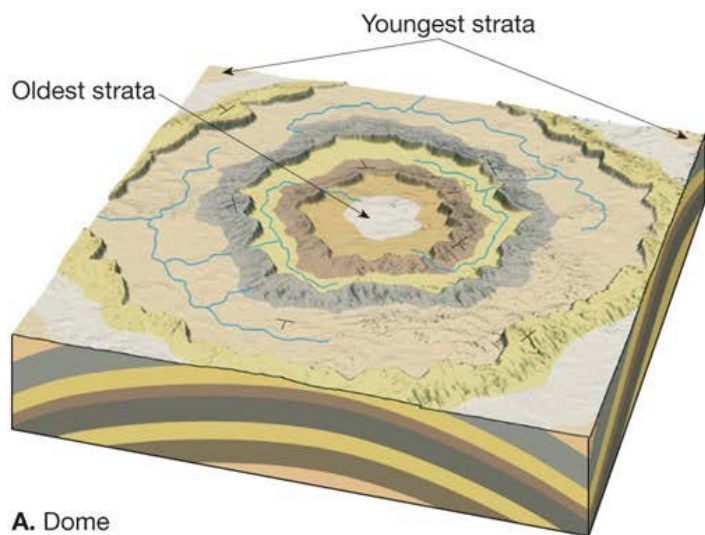
The Richat Structure
Desert of Mauritania
Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richat_Structure



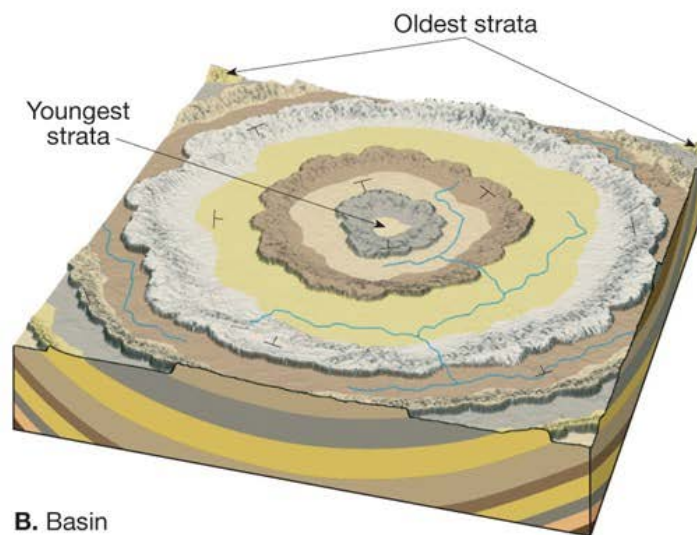
Zabriskie Point in Death Valley National Park
Image: <http://www.myosemitepark.com/death-valley/>



Coral Atolls



A. Dome



B. Basin





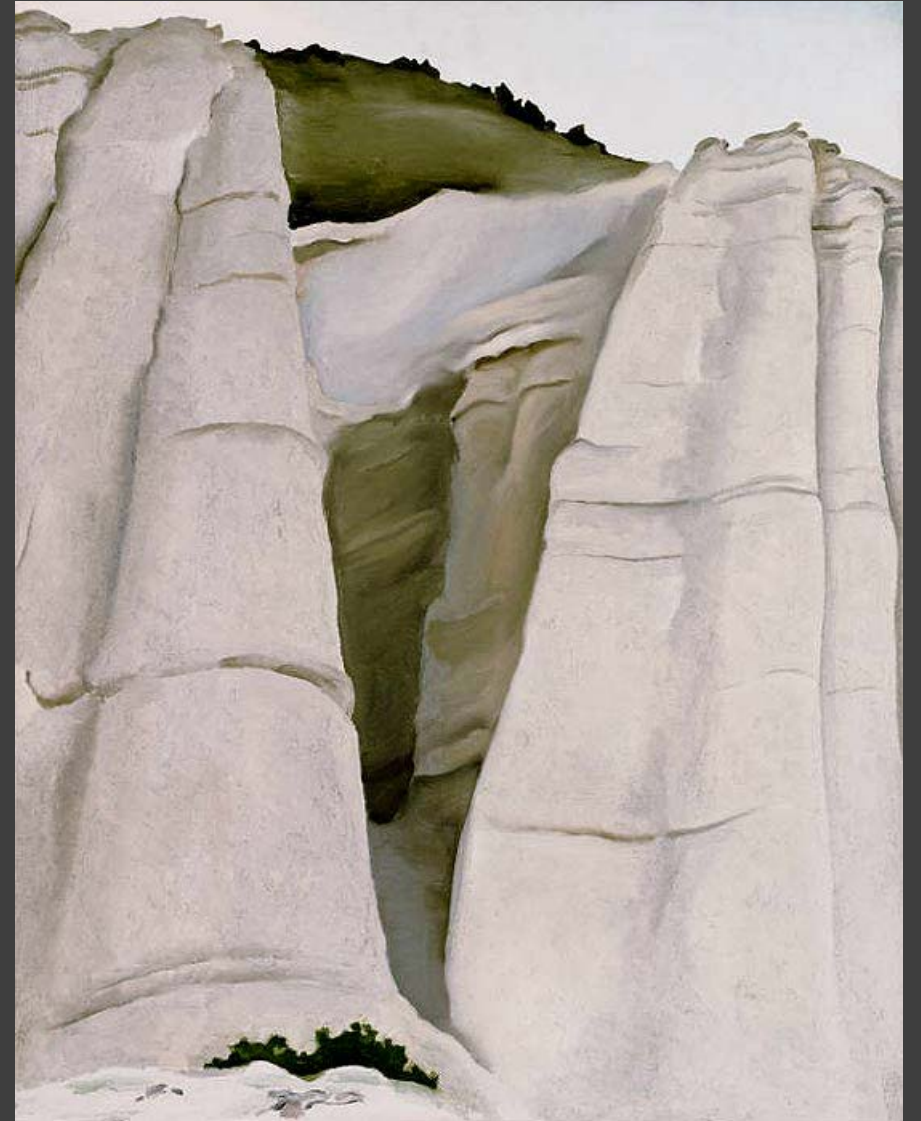








Georgia O'Keeffe
The White Place in Sun, 1943



From the White Place, 1940



Georgia O'Keeffe
Black Place I, 1945



Georgia O'Keeffe
The Black Place, 1943



Jessica Dickinson, *Are.*, 2015-16, oil on limestone polymer on pane



Hilary Harnischfeger, *Saltwater*, 2013, porcelain, plaster, pigment, mica, pyrite



A crack in the Larsen C Antarctic ice shelf

<http://www.geologyin.com/2017/05/huge-100-mile-crack-appears-on-one-of.html>

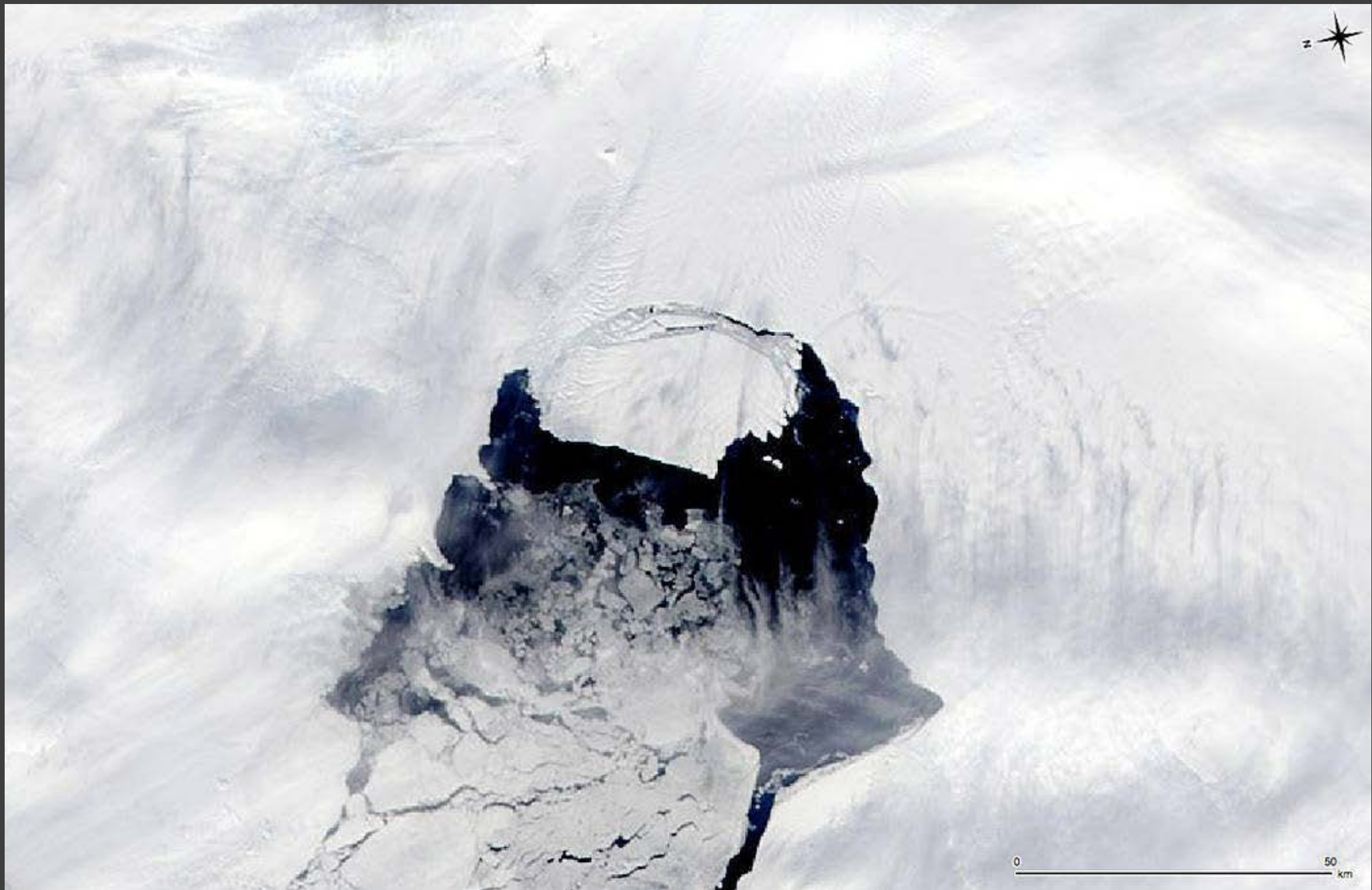


Image: <https://www.nasa.gov/content/goddard/pine-island-glacier-2013-nov-10>

















Installation View 1, Left to Right:

Cavity II, 2016

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Tectonic I, 2017

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Cavity I, 2016

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Tectonic II, 2017

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"



Installation View 2, Left to Right:

Tectonic I, 2017

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Cavity I, 2016

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Tectonic II, 2017

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"

Emerge, 2017

Oil and polymer on wood panel
35" x 28"





























































Previous Slide Left to Right:

Untitled (Swell), 2017

Pen and polymer on paper
32" x 22"

Untitled (Slew), 2017

Pen and polymer on paper
32" x 22"

Untitled (Surge), 2017

Pen and polymer on paper
32" x 22"







