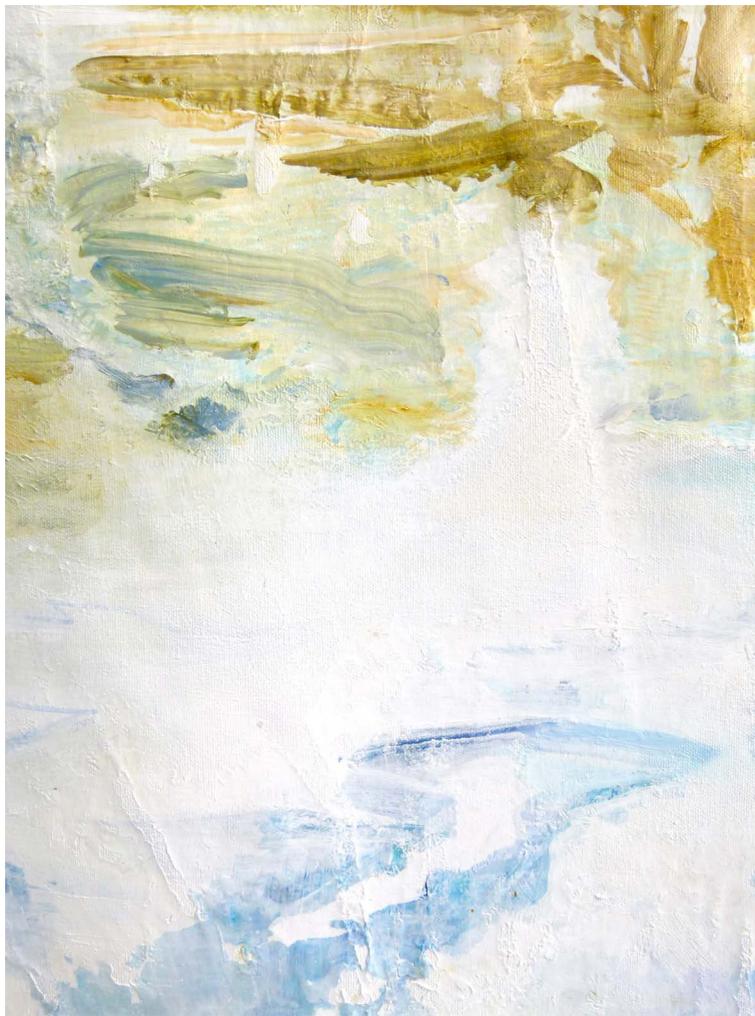


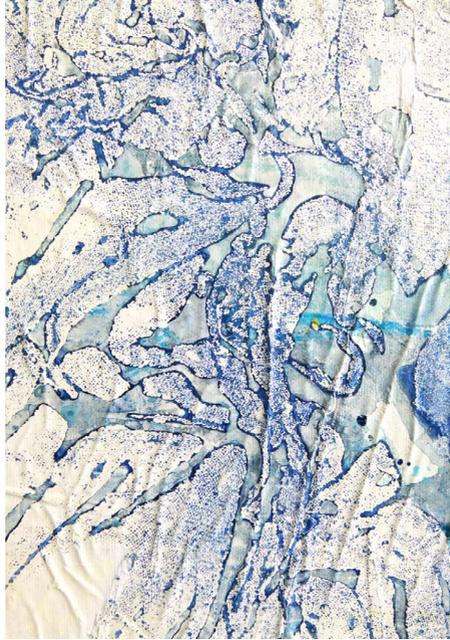
# Winsome Spiller

## Archaeology of practice

10 September to 9 October, 2016    Langford 120 gallery



Detail from "*Unforeseen territories*", 2016. oil on acrylic on unstretched canvas, 1.8m H x 5.3m W



Other downloadable versions of this brochure are available on the artist's website at [www.winsomespiller.com/exhibitions](http://www.winsomespiller.com/exhibitions)

Further information about the artist:  
web [www.winsomespiller.com](http://www.winsomespiller.com)

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## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Marcus Spiller, for his unselfish support over many years; to Julian Spiller, for his helpful collaboration, and for kindly writing a reflection on this body of work; and to Wilma Tabacco, for her advice on selecting and presenting these works in the gallery.

I dedicate this exhibition to my late mother Elizabeth Nicholson (nee Bliss) who did so much to develop my creative abilities, and who would have loved to see my work in a gallery.

Winsome Spiller

# Art, archaeology, practice.

Notes to  
accompany  
the  
exhibition,  
by Winsome  
Spiller

*“Archaeology of practice”* groups some works that have taken shape slowly over the last 6 years, sometimes changing radically from their original state. They include a large painting on unstretched canvas which started its life as marks on a dropsheet, a smaller painting that reimagines a landscape from an old map, a re-assembled linocut, paper-mache objects, and a cabinet of small experimental objects which I make as a vital part of my everyday studio practice.

I liken this sort of making to archaeology, in that I collected objects, fragments and traces of artefacts I had collected in my past practice, considering their materials, colours and forms, reinterpreting, reassembling or connecting their parts to make new visual meanings, and displaying the new objects in a gallery.

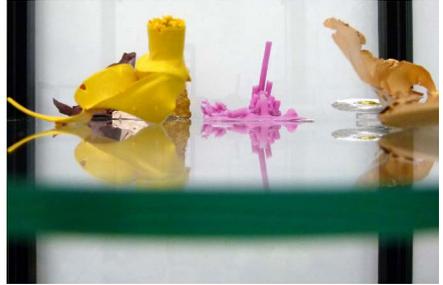
This body of work was also influenced by my fascination with the fragmentary and the ruin, the material properties of paint, plaster, and paper, the works of Piranesi, and my travels in Italy where the forms and materials of past are revealed, clearly embedded amongst the contemporary built fabric.

# Experimental objects

While maintaining a constant studio practice, experimenting with substances and processes has become a central part of my working method. It is my default when I can't think of what to do next: it is a sort of mind and hand exercise, it allows me to test colours and processes; grants a continual sense of anticipation and surprise. I contemplate and document these objects and their materials and forms, hoping they might build new aspects of my art-making.

Often the objects have involved paint in combination with plaster – engaging its the traditional yet ever-fascinating properties of changing from powder, to liquid, to solid. Most recently, I have been experimenting with just paint, and its containers.

I have arranged a selection of experimental objects made since 2010 in a display cabinet, in order of making. I pay tribute to philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who thought deeply (amongst other topics) on the power of materials and the hand of the maker.



“In the depths of matter  
there grows an obscure  
vegetation; black flowers  
bloom in matter’s darkness.  
They already possess a  
velvety touch, a formula for  
perfume.”

- *Gaston Bachelard*

(*Water and Dreams: An Essay on the  
Imagination of Matter*, 1983. The Pegasus  
Foundation, Dallas.)



# Unforeseen territories

The largest painting in the exhibition reveals several aspects of its making. It reflects the size of my (then) studio where it began – a large space whose floor stretched almost twice as long as the finished canvas. Indeed, the painting started as a floor protection dropsheet.

It also reveals a previous process – a print made on a horizontal surface (the floor) resulting in some marks that remain resolutely flat on the surface of the canvas. That is, unless obscured by later overpainting, or obliterated by the next process: a transfer from its original surface onto canvas nailed flat to a wall. Fragments of transferred paint left areas of white space between – some suggesting forms that could be re-assembled or connected into other forms: others that made interesting negative spaces woven between the areas of colour and visual weight.

It presented me with an interesting challenge, to remake the original marks and forms into something else, something more visually interesting and that might evoke other meanings in the eyes of a viewer. I call the painting “Unforeseen territories” because I had no predetermined design in mind, and in the end it seemed to evoke an imagined record of travels through landforms, maps and habitations.



Details from “Unforeseen territories”, 2016, oil and acrylic on unstretched canvas, 1.8m H x 5.3m L



*Dune terrain*, 2016. Collaged linocut over watercolour. 37 cm x 37 cm

## Dune terrain

In 2002, while making a reduction linocut of a coastal landscape, I experimented by printing the plate in its half-completed state, over a watercolour. When I re-examined this work during 2016, I decided to cut the print into pieces and collage them into a more ambiguous, less illustrative image that abandoned its previous conventional perspectival view.

## Morphology

This painting re-interprets or re-imagines the topography shown in a geological map of the 1850's, using paint in a way that tries to evoke the forces which continually shape the landform.



Detail from "*Morphology*", 2016. Oil on canvas, 92 cm x 92 cm

## RSVP

Printed exhibition invitations have assumed another more timeless form in the two *RSVP* works (side 1 and side 2). A lengthy process of soaking, peeling, tearing, sorting, mixing, draining, pressing and drying, formed slabs of paper-mache with only vestiges of the former printed surface appearing like stone chips in terrazzo.



"*RSVP (side 1)*", 2016. Paper-mache made from exhibition invitations, PVA, epoxy resin, acrylic paint, 26 cm x 25cm

# Art over time

We shouldn't be confused about where a work of art starts and finishes: paintings have borders, films go until they stop. A sculpture is made out of some stuff and when it isn't any more, it ceases to be a sculpture – so on and so forth. An artwork succeeds when it is modest about its own purview – with the exception, maybe, of some Russian novels and epic poems – and prefers to concern itself solely with the subjects of its composition, or coyly subverts our preferences with the intimation of, rather than an intrusion of, some interesting things that take place outside the work. For example, the mysteries of Velasquez' Las Meninas are broader and deeper when its satire is pointed out to us, but no amount thereof solves it as an artwork – but from it, we can ascertain various markers.

From them, we can begin to appreciate the context of the artwork: the age, the weight and the colour of the air that it was produced in, even if it would be ingenuous to think that these things are the only interesting contributors to the aesthetic complex that emerges. Causes and symptoms are different things, even though one of the pivots of postmodernity is a recognition that the two are more of a description than they are an institution. Since we stopped being ashamed of self-reference and reverence, we discovered that cause and symptom run together identically as often as they file into convenient lanes: now, maybe, the cause of an artwork (to this very minute) is itself, albeit in some earlier form.

Sometimes this is subtle, and other times it is dramatic – which leads me to the works of the present exhibition, which are (to various extents) an exploration of artwork (and artworking practice) in the context of time. As demure abstraction demands, we'll scarcely find paintings and sculptures of futuristic watches or reality-bending wormholes, but instead an array of things that politely testify to a sequence of events that would almost certainly pass invisibly absent the occasional curatorial note. There are things here which are older than they appear and things that appear older than they are; there are works here which time and indignation have transformed beyond recognition into new things, and might well do again in the future.

It is hard for me to imagine what it would be like to see these pieces entirely originally, so acquainted with them as I am. Perhaps I appreciate them only as forensic puzzles, the secrets to whose improbable solution I can barely resist revealing, and perhaps for all my contextual handwringing I yearn only to see them abstracted from their chequered, rehearsed history.

Julian T. Spiller

[www.tabula.net.au](http://www.tabula.net.au)



Installation view, "*RSVP, side 1*", 2016. Paper mache made from exhibition invitations, PVA, epoxy resin, acrylic paint.