Immersed in paint: understanding painting installations through art practice

By

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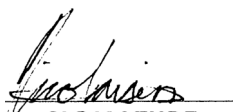

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ABSTRACT

Title of mini-dissertation: **Immersed in paint: understanding painting installations through art practice.**

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This study explores a practice-led methodology regarding the possibilities of painting installations in contemporary art practice. In this mini-dissertation, I – as both an artist and researcher – consider painting installations in the studio for a final exhibition that will lead to the conclusion of the study. In the studio, I am the producer where a 'behind the scenes' understanding towards painting installations is probed by investigating the creative potential of canvas and painting. This investigation is furthermore a rehearsal of experiments with painting components in the studio space in order to present the work in a suitable exhibition space. Different elements are explored by means of expanding my practice, such as using a sewing machine to stitch canvas to produce large-scale pieces or using a broom to apply PVA paint to the large canvases. The painting installations produced in the studio are adapted to the exhibition environment, where components of motion and the scale of the work are utilised to provoke particular experiences in the viewer. I consider my work to be site-responsive and thus, an open window or a high ceiling creates the opportunity for enhanced experiences that were not presented in the studio environment. I follow a phenomenological approach to investigate the manner in which site-responsive painting can heighten a viewer-participant's awareness of their embodiment within the exhibition space. I wish to explore how viewers become active participants within painting installation environments. The artworks in the exhibition space are created to direct experiences in the space. The experiences I explore in this study endeavour to evoke emotional responses such as surprise, anticipation, angst or a sense of discomfort in the audience. As an artist, I use these elements within the studio and the exhibition environment to understand what art installations with a focus on painting entail. I

accordingly discuss the above elements in depth by means of the philosophy of phenomenology and as a narrative to unpack my practice from the studio aimed at the audience in the exhibition environment and my own experience within the space.

KEY TERMS:

art audience, canvas as a medium, contemporary South African painting, embodiment, immersion, large-scale artwork, lived experiences, movement, painting installations, phenomenology, practice-led research, site-responsive artwork, visual art.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This practice-led study investigates the possibility that painting installations[1] have the capacity to engage with exhibition audiences as embodied and immersed participants in a viewing experience. The study considers the expansion of painting towards an installation art practice. When painting extends beyond the frame, it becomes a spatial practice. Therefore, the elements that are usually associated with painting as art practice such as canvas and paint are utilised to expand on more conventional painting practices. I create sculptural forms with canvas and paint that impose demands on the viewer: to move around, to squeeze through and to interact with the physical presence of the artworks. The resulting painting installations are site-responsive and provide the impetus for a multi-sensorial[2] aesthetic experience.

The term 'installation art' refers to a site-specific, three-dimensional work or environment made from mixed mediums, where the viewer experiences the work by moving through the space (Lack & Wilson 2008:106). The artwork consequently forms a relationship with the space within which it is constructed. By viewing and indeed experiencing painting installations, the audience can participate in the spatial experience of the work. Theatricality, performance and motion are essential components of embodiment and the spatial experience in this particular study. Gavin Butt (2005:8-9) addresses a 'theatrical turn',[3] which includes spatiality and the lived experience. This theatrical turn seeks to employ the hybridity of contemporary art and performance in such a manner in order to encourage an embodied experience (Butt 2005:8-9) for the viewer of painting installations. In terms of the theatrical turn, the audience can become embodied within or anticipate happenings or events in the exhibition environment by means of spontaneous participation orchestrated by the artist.

[1] For this study, painting installations is the preferred term for paintings extended from the frame and the way that the work is placed in the particular space, as is usually found in installation art.
[2] When multiple senses are used for examining, for example, an artwork, or when an experience appeals to multiple senses.
[3] According to Butt (2005:7), the 'theatrical turn' was in accordance to the performativity of Modern Art movements (such as Abstract Expressionism), Happenings and Environments.

There are many South African art galleries that dedicate exhibitions to South African painting, such as the SMAC Art Gallery's *PAINT I: Contemporary South African Painting 2002-2012* (2012) exhibition and Stevenson Art Gallery's *A Painting Today* (2017), which explores contemporary painting and painting through unconventional methods such as social media.[4] South African artists are broadening the frame concerning what painting is, to include more experimental and immersive modes. For example, performance artist Robin Rhode used a car as a paintbrush on a 2000 -square meter canvas for a commercial project for BMW (Heuer 2009a:23-25). He used his body, mixed mediums and paint to explore and create performance art or street art (Heuer 2009b:43). Virginia MacKenny (2013:28) explored notions of painting by walking 700 km in the French Camino to engage with the environment whilst creating works dedicated to the earth. Faith47 paints large-scale murals in site-specific places in various cities to comment on the social and cultural context provided by spaces (Faith47 Biography 2017:[sp]). It is this heightened awareness and spatial involvement that I want to convey in this practice-led study.

As an artist, I find the international platforms of art biennales, museums and the numerous galleries fascinating. Many of these platforms are colossal and have both the funding and capacities to work with artists' expectations in manipulating the space to the artwork's full potential. Such spaces intrigue me and heighten my experience when engaging with an artwork. In my personal production of a body of artworks, I took into account my own experience of large-scale installations, my viewing experience of painting in general, as well as the performative aspects of artworks. My visit to the Venice Biennale and World Event Young Artists has allowed me to interpret the notion of lived experiences in art as both a spectator and an artist. It is these experiences that I include and share in my studio practice.

1.1 Background to the study

In the discipline of fine arts, painting as installation falls within the framework of contemporary painting practices. The process of art making and the presentation thereof forms the context and

[4] Social media creates ways for users to share content (for example images or videos of one's own interest) through the Internet with methods or web applications such as *Instagram*. Social media's relevance here refers to the exhibition *A Painting a Day*, which was shared through *Instagram.* The aim accordingly was for social media to keep the audience interested in the exhibition event; however, such notions could also be a means to reach a wider and 'remote' audience for these exhibitions.

background to my practice-led study. I argue that painting installations enhance the viewer's experience by appealing to multiple senses. As such, the viewer becomes aware of her own body in relation to the artwork, and her own corporeal presence within the space. I argue that this leads to an embodied experience, where the viewer-participant becomes attuned to the work through body and mind. In these types of painting installations, the distance between painting and audience collapses – with this I mean that in this spatial experience of painting, the viewer-participant responds to the total situation and not, as with more conventional painting, to the pictorial quality of the painting. Large-scale artworks may furthermore be seen as invasive in the space, because they restrict the movement and sight of the viewer. I am also invested in the artist's embodiment within the space during the stages of creation in the studio and installation within the space, as some of the artworks have to be completed *in situ*.[5] The audience's and artist's experiences are evaluated in this study by means of a phenomenological approach. I will consider immersion, embodiment, space, site-responsive art, large-scale artwork, movement and the lived experience in relation to painting installations to inform my particular focus.

Working on a large-scale artwork creates a dynamic space, wherein an artist becomes immersed and embodied when making the artwork or painting installations. This may occur because the artist's entire body takes part in applying paint and moving around in the space. Artist Deborah Poynton (Stevenson 2003:[sp]) argues that large-scale paintings create a power relationship where intimacy can be forced or denied between the work of art and the audience. When the audience is embodied within painting installations and is surrounded by artworks intruding into their physical space, they undergo a heightened sensorial experience. The term 'embodiment' can be further defined as an interchange between one's body and feelings and the surrounding physical space (Rohrer 2007:345) of the painting installation, which is experienced by what is perceived through the audience's senses in the exhibition environment.

Immersion, on the other hand, can be explained as a situation where one merges with a space by being within it or by being invested in it with one's mind. The audience does not only make use of their body in the space, but they also become mentally absorbed through intellectual and

[5] The phrase *in situ* refers to an artwork assembled on the site of presentation.

stimulating processes that are happening in the space (Palmer 2007:1; Grau 2003:13), such as looking at artworks by moving and bending or stretching to see the work or details thereof. The term 'immersive' is used in this study to describe the way the viewer is absorbed into the painted installation space or within the activity of viewing an artwork. When people become immersed in a space, they merge with the medium and the visual quality of the artwork (Palmer 2007:1-2) or painting installation. My interest in a combination of large-scale site-responsive painting and installation art is based on the idea that painting not only becomes part of space, but also produces its own space.

Essentially, for centuries (even millennia) many paintings have been site-responsive, large-scale and immersive. This includes the cave paintings of the Palaeolithic age (40000 BC), Renaissance frescoes (1400s-1600s), cathedral paintings (1400s-1600s) and Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* series (1914-1926). This study motivates for the contributing effect of large-scale painting installations to enable embodied experiences for its audiences.[6] The study also challenges painting to extend beyond the frame into painting installations.

In the broader history of painting installations, one can argue that painting installations have been explored extensively, as caves and large murals have been used and filled with artworks.[7] In Western art practices, artists have explored numerous ways to challenge the constraints of framed paintings and create immersive experiences for audiences. The French Impressionist movement around the mid-1870s challenged the way paintings were framed and exhibited by painting the frames white to create a merging between the wall and the frame, thereby enhancing the paintings' colours against the wall (Tuffelli 2004:53). Between 1914 and 1926, Monet painted a series of large-scale water lilies, displayed in an oval room where the audience would become

[6] This study does not argue that two-dimensional and small-scale paintings cannot lead to notions of immersion and embodiment, as they undoubtedly can.

[7] Although these historical paintings can also be seen as painting installations, this study focuses on painting since the mid-twentieth century. One could, for example, mention stage art for its painted backdrops and props in sculptural and painted forms as an influence on painting installations. Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg both participated in stage productions during the second half of the twentieth century by creating painted props for their sets (Geldzahler 1966:582, 584-585; Sandford 2005:xvi). Such stage-like events can furthermore be linked to the theatrical turn because these productions may also have created embodied and lived-experiences for the audience. Accordingly, both historical art and stage art may be associated with or have influenced ideas of painting as installations.

immersed in the space. His aim was for the audience to disregard all thoughts of the outer world whilst observing the paintings (Musée de l'Orangerie [sa]:[sp]).

Since the 1950s, artists such as Robert Rauschenberg[8] and Daniel Buren had realised the flexibility of painting by merging the medium with other mediums such as sculpture, installation art and architecture. Soon after, artists showcased painting exhibitions that appeared similar to installation exhibitions. By the 1960s, artists had experimented with new mediums, resulting in a 'post-medium condition'[9] (Petersen 2010:123). According to this post-medium condition, the boundaries of traditional mediums, for example painting and sculpture, were replaced by New Media hybrids,[10] such as digital photography and performance art (Petersen 2010:123). Throughout the 1970s, sculpture rather than painting seemed like a better option to allow greater freedom of location and space through the 'expanded field' (Krauss 1979:41), influencing not only sculpture but also painting. This expansion led to the formation of a new attitude towards painting towards the 1980s, leading to further exploration of space within painting in the 1990s, impacting on site-specificity and searching for new ways to present the medium of painting (Petersen 2010:123-124, 126). Regardless of the pressure for new mediums, painting thus progressed as an explorative medium through the extension of the range of locations and spaces in which to exhibit paintings. This transformed painting into painting installations. As a result, contemporary painting may fill entire rooms and envelops everything within the constructed exhibition space.

Viewing painting installations and engaging in the viewing process thereof affects the audience in various ways. According to Erica Doss (2009:9), affect means "to afflict or to touch" and is mostly an "expressed emotion, or feeling". Simon O'Sullivan (2001:126) mentions that one perceives affect only through experience or feeling; it is thus not something that can be made up. As an artist, I am interested in how painting installations may affect the audience (by producing feelings or emotions when viewing the artwork). These affects may differ from viewer to viewer.

[8] In the 1950s, Rauschenberg used and integrated a variety of found objects in his paintings. He termed this way of painting "Combine Painting" (Ferrier & Le Pichon 2002:964); the more familiar term is Assemblage, wherein everyday objects are incorporated in a relief-like painting (Krauss 1995:120).

[9] According to Peter Weibel (2012:[sp]), a post-medium condition refers to the current state of art, where different art mediums (whether New Media or traditional mediums) influence and complement one another in a work of art.

[10] New Media hybrids are a combination of new and existing mediums, for example, digital photography (Petersen 2010:125).

I use the term site-responsive art rather than site-specific art. Site-specific art can relate to artworks where the very position and location of the work contribute to the overall social and historical context, meaning and affect created by the artwork in the space (Kaye 2000:1). The term 'site-responsive' is used by artists such as Katharina Grosse and Tara Donovan to define the way the materiality of their artworks respond to or engage with the architectural surroundings of the space, and not necessarily the social and historical context of that specific space (McCoy 2010:[sp]; Art daily 2016:[sp]).

Donald Kuspit (2000:1) argues that painting is the "primary" medium in the visual arts, where new potential is continuously being created. Petersen (2010:126) claims that artists have questioned paintings' associations with space by repositioning the medium as physical objects in a space.[11] These expansions of painting have changed the way the artist considers the viewer within the exhibition space. Arguably, the viewer is enveloped by the painting installations because of their size and use of space (Bishop 2005:6), thus leading to the notion of an immersed participatory audience. My own investigation of people moving in different landscapes is a topic I rendered on a flat and framed canvas on a wall, which I have 'removed' from the wall and transformed into larger works. The people I used to paint on a canvas are now rather the audience who physically move in the painted spaces.

1.2 Research question

For the purposes of this practice-led research, a body of work in the form of large-scale painting installations was produced to expand painting beyond the framed canvas and to create site-responsive artworks for an embodied and mobile audience. This leads to the primary research question: How can site-responsive painting installations heighten a viewer-participant's awareness of their embodiment and to what effect? The secondary research questions are: Could the directives of an artist be understood as a means to encourage a lively audience engagement with the work? and, What does the notion of 'immersed in paint' imply for the artistic process?

[11] This idea of physical objects in space relates to Michael Fried's (1998:152) notion of objecthood. The artworks of Minimalist artists occupied the exhibition space as large objects, resulting in a mobile audience activating the space (Fried 1998:154).

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

To investigate the research questions, I explore painting installations by making use of canvas fabric to expand painting into a borderless experience. In order to contextualise how painting installation is a spin-off from installation art, large-scale site-responsive paintings were produced. I explore immersive painting installations in my own practice-led endeavour and created a body of painting installations within the interior and the exterior of an exhibition environment at the historical Anton van Wouw House[12] in Pretoria. (Such notions extend toward a multi-sensorial experience, where the audience may experience the entire space. The audience may, however, experience the artwork differently from how I may want them to or they may be disengaged when viewing the artwork, as each subjective experience may differ).

1.4 Research methodology

This study follows a practice-led research format, which can be defined as the engagement of existing knowledge and new creative processes through investigation (Rust, Mottram & Till 2007:11). There is a reciprocal relationship between the theoretical and practical components in this study. The research methodology is qualitative throughout and forms part of an experimental, practice-led and phenomenological method of research. The research method for the study consists of visually analysing the works of a number of South African and international artists who experiment with contemporary painting installations. The analysis of such painting installation artworks informed my creative research. Literature relevant to this study was obtained from books, journals, articles, conference papers and Internet sources. In addition to the literature, my studio processes and experiences thereof were documented in a visual diary of creative work, written texts and photographic footage.

Practice-led research involves a "pro-active research model", where the artist-researcher reflects on and reacts to her studio practice (Malins & Gray 2005:3). Such reflections include the artist's creation of painting installations within her studio where the artworks are experienced, rejected

[12] I am not concerned with site-responsive art in its political and cultural context, but rather in how it responds to the exhibition environment and to the physical attributes of the space. The Department of Visual Arts of the University of Pretoria uses the Anton van Wouw House as a gallery and events space, and I accordingly chose to respond to the physical attributes of the space.

and salvaged during their creation. The experimental processes of the possibilities of painting and canvas as painting installations are reflected on during closer observation to understand what painting installations entail. I assessed the outcome of the artworks towards the site-responsive exhibition where I furthered these thoughts *in situ* for a greater consideration of painting installations. I refer to Graeme Sullivan's (2009:49-50) consideration of practice-led research as "dialectic" or "conceptual practice". Sullivan explains dialectic practice as encounters created through experiences produced through artworks, such as lived or embodied experiences. Conceptual practice deals with the exploration of mediums where the artist realises the artwork in the research and processes of making (Sullivan 2009:49-50).

I evaluated the audience's experiences in response to my works in an informal manner during group exhibitions hosted by the University of Pretoria, as well as during scheduled peer review critiques. I documented viewers' movement in the spaces, as well as their comments to inform my own understanding of the work's impact. The artwork was finally exhibited at the Anton van Wouw House where it had been completed *in situ* to respond to the architectural structure of the space. This line of reasoning is investigated through the production of a number of large-scale canvases, thus exploring the particularity of multi-sensorial experiences of space through painting installations. The final exhibition was photographed and documented in a catalogue to accompany this mini-dissertation.

1.5 Review of the literature and visual sources

This review of literature and visual texts contextualises the notion of painting installations in my own practice-led endeavour and thus contemporary painting. There is a paucity of information on the subject of painting installations in South Africa. However, many South African artists are currently exploring various mediums and ways of immersing and embodying the audience in art.

In terms of the way painting was liberated from the frame, I refer to Rosalind Krauss's (1979) notion of the expanded field. Krauss (1979:31) argues that a sculpture can define a space by simply being in a particular place; by extension, the same could apply to painting installations. Artists exploring the expanded field have also investigated the "architectural experience", and have responded to the spatial challenges of the environments in which they exhibited (Krauss 1979:41).

Krauss (1979:30) furthermore identifies the problem of the limited flexibility of art in the expanded field. However, the artist still has the opportunity to explore different mediums in different spaces (Krauss 1979:42).

In terms of the spatiality of painting, I refer to art critic Michael Fried (1998), who outlined a conflict between Literalist[13] notions of painting through the work of Minimalist artists Donald Judd and Robert Morris. Fried (1998:152) is opposed to the literal presentation of an art object; he argues that painting must remain pictorial. Fried (1998:152) refers to the "Objecthood" as art that is "neither painting nor sculpture" – it is kin to non-art.[14] Greenberg (in Fried 1998:152) explains that a Minimalist artwork could be any medium or any object, for example a chair. The true materiality of the artwork is therefore important, however, Minimalist art is about the viewer-participant's encounter with artwork because of the way the materiality of the artwork is treated and exhibited (Fried 1998:153). The 'theatricality' of the art of Judd and Morris includes the audience in their encounter with the Minimalist Art in the exhibition environment (Fried 1998:153). Fried (1998:152) further claims that the scale of the artwork could influence its presence in a certain space and consequently influence the way the viewer is drawn to the work inside the space. The exhibition space becomes activated since viewers are involved with the entire environment – the space in which the artworks are situated (Fried 1998:154-155). Literalist art is situated as theatrical by Fried (1998:153), since it focuses on the situation in which the viewer-participant encounters the artwork. My own creative work and ideas of painting inhabiting space and also the notion of the viewer-participant in the situation of the artwork, draws me to side with a Literalist point of view. The theatricality in artwork and this viewing approach of the audience that Fried was against, is now an accepted practice in contemporary art.

To investigate contemporary painting and painting installations, I refer to Petersen (2010:10), who considers the "social, visual and cultural" discourses of the presentation and transformation of contemporary paintings as an experiential artform. Petersen's focus is on whether painting becomes more exposed to the viewer through a painting installation as in the 'expanded field', or

[13] Literalist art is the term Fried (1998:148) prefers for Minimal art. Minimalist art is a response to the truth of the materials and how the materials are treated in the artworks (Wilson & Lack 128-129).
[14] Found objects can also be considered to be non-art.

in site-specific installation-based paintings, or rather in other contained or painted spaces that embody the viewer. Contemporary painting is further investigated by Barry Schwabsky (2002:009), who argues that some artists are making works in the medium of painting "... that should not necessarily be called a painting".

Art historian and critic Claire Bishop (2005:10-11) contributes to my study in terms of her interpretation of installation art and the participation of the audience in artworks. She categorises the viewer's experience through notions of "activating" and "decentering" the viewing subject. It is believed that installation art causes viewers to have greater awareness of space and their personal senses by entering a work, which enables the likelihood of embodiment (Bishop 2005:6-11). This might be true since the audience becomes immersed within the installation artwork whilst experiencing it, rather than merely observing it from a distance (Bishop 2005:6). Bishop (2005:6) argues that with installation art the viewer, whose senses are heightened, is a "literal presence" in the space. The viewer thus becomes embodied within installation art.

Nick Kaye (2000:1-3) defines the interactions between a work of art and the place where it is exhibited. He links visual art and architecture through site and location in order to place art and site into "practice of site-specificity". According to Kaye (2000:5), space is subject to transformation. He examines the link with site-specificity in the visual arts where art practices and architecture can be experienced and become more of a "performance" in the constructed space. Time and space emphasise the short-lived duration of site-specific work, such as art in the expanded field (Kaye 2000:3). Erica Suderburg (2000:2) explains that "… the work of installation and site-specificity engages the aural, spatial, visual, and environmental planes of perception and interpretation". According to Miwon Kwon (1997:86), site-specific art is to be experienced "in a sensorial immediacy" by the viewer when entering the art environment. Seeing an installation space and being in it is essential, as the space itself becomes an element of the artwork (Fares 2004:484; Guggenheim & Kiesler 2004:205).

The theoretical position of this study investigates the audience's experience of art. I therefore refer to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2014[1945]), specifically his theory of phenomenology in order to understand how painting installations can enhance the viewer-

participant's experience. Further, I explore Henri Lefebvre's (1991) ideas of spatiality and the lived space. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) is furthermore situated in this study for her insights regarding the corporeal body within art.

The research of American artist Nathaniel Stern (2013) explores artistic practice and audience interaction. Stern focuses on the body and sight whilst applying notions of technology. Moreover, he draws attention to contemporary phenomenology and performative art. "Moving, thinking and feeling" contextualises Stern's (2013:2) ideas of the corporeal body in interactive art environments where a person may have an embodied experience.

I also refer to Arnold Berleant (2013), who investigates aesthetic engagement where a relationship is produced between the artwork (or body of work) and the audience and – most often – the artist, as the artist creates potential situations in the showcased space.

Practice-led research in this study aims to "visualise, interrelate and communicate" (Gray 1996:2) the artist-researcher's views and processes during the making of painting installations. Sullivan (2006:19-20) argues that practice as research includes strategies of creative practice and methods by observation and experiential validation to combine practice with theory. In other words, through creative practice, theories may develop and resolve ideas within one's practice and research. Mafe and Brown (in Combrink & Marley 2009:187-188) argue that creative production can be seen as embodied insight; that is, the viewer gains knowledge by viewing the work. Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds (2011) investigate creative practice through interactive art, curatorial practice and artistic engagement. Their views on practice and reflection have helped me in writing about my own creative practice.

Both international and South African contemporary artists inspire the visual sources for this exploration of painting installations. The means of creating art is of importance to notions surrounding painting installations. The terms space, *in situ*, and architecture are used repeatedly in Daniel Buren's and Jessica Stockholder's work. Buren acknowledges the space when he starts planning an artwork, thereby making the work for a specific space (Von Hantelmann 2010:71). He therefore merges the artwork with the space and makes it a painting installation, such as in *Les*

Deux Plateaux (1986). Buren's works are generally meant for a broader audience as he makes artworks that function outside of the gallery space and within the public arena (Von Hantelmann 2010:76).

In Katharina Grosse's (2010:110) works, the entire space within which her artwork is produced becomes the painting. The space and the painting are not separate from each other; however, they are both mediums in the final work, interwoven with each other. Grosse (2010:116) thus expects the viewer to experience painting through the spaces she creates. German artist Franz Ackermann suggests that the viewer must be able to move through the large painted exhibition space which forms part of the artwork's concept (Belle 2009:10). Jessica Stockholder engenders painting in a spatial and architectural format that immerses the viewer in an environment. Petersen (2010:131) notes that "Stockholder uses the spatiality of installation art to transfer, or translate, painting from plane to space [...]". In Stockholder's work *Peer Out to See* (2010), the architecture of the Crystal Palace in London plays an important role. By exhibiting in alternative public spaces, Stockholder's painting installations challenge the norms of the traditional exhibition space. In contrast to Stockholder, Katharina Grosse expands painting by using a spray gun on a range of surfaces, from large canvases to walls and even entire rooms (De Chassey 2002:130). In Grosse's (2010:110) painting installations, environments are painted by activating the built environment, such as her *Double Floor Painting* (2004), where the painting fills the floors and the walls of a large room.

South African artist Zander Blom also approaches painting as installation in the various ways that the artworks are presented and exhibited. Blom creates painted spaces in his home and studio space (Smith 2008:[sp]), although the audience never sees this. The artwork is documented through photographs,[15] and the viewer sees only the documented detail of the work. One can argue that this style allows the artist, in his own personal space, to be immersed and embodied in the creation of the artwork.

South African artist Penny Siopis is known for her diverse approaches to painting, by which she aims to evoke emotions in the audience (Nuttall 2011:297). Through her use of colour, often

[15] This study is, however, not interested in his works as photographs, but rather in the idea of the painting installations.

depicting ideas of flesh, blood and eroticism, Siopis may help the audience to undergo an embodied experience (Richards 2005:8-9, 15). These so-called 'haptic' notions can be seen in Siopis's paintings, as the audience is tempted by the thick paint that represents, for example, flesh (Richards 2005:15). The 'haptic' which Colin Richards (2005:15) refers to in Siopis's paintings, is linked to "tactility and embodiment, and is distinct from opticality, which foregrounds representation and disembodied vision." The term haptic is concerned with the sense of touch and includes the sense perceptions of "pressure, temperature, pain and position" (Marks 2014:[sp]). Siopis's paintings trigger the haptic notions visually, and may entice the audience to want to touch or feel the painted texture. According to Richards (2005:14-15), haptic sensations are somewhat intertwined with embodiment, as the audience is induced to move closer to the work. One can therefore surmise that Siopis wants the audience to be embodied in her work.

Dorothee Kreutzfeldt engages in painting within urban settings, for example, the central business district (CBD) of Johannesburg. The city often serves as Kreutzfeldt's canvas as she collaborates with city workers and communities to engage in the space in order to comment on representations of African and urban spaces (Williamson 2009:293). By exploring narratives in the city, her paintings merge with themes of space by engaging the everyday person in the city in collective practices (Room Gallery 2016:[sp]). Rory Bester (2002:8) states that this exploration takes effect as Kreutzfeldt further seeks "the potential of painting to narrate itself in aesthetics, cultural and political spaces".

1.6 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 introduced the background to my research, which is supported by a literature review. The chapter outlined the aim of the study, namely to create painting installations through practice-led research. The review looked at South African and international artists who practice a similar approach in their artworks.

In Chapter 2, the phenomenological approach to painting is explored, where painting as spatial practice produces notions of site-responsive space, immersion and embodiment in painting installations. In this chapter, I argue that there are different ways in which the audience and the

artist may become immersed and embodied in artworks by means of painting installations. The chapter addresses the embodied audience in painting and the expansion of painting towards installations. Discussions of installation art and components of immersive spaces, embodiment and the human sensorium form part of this chapter. Within these aspects, the role of the audience in the space becomes significant.

Chapter 3 is a practice-led investigation of my own creative production of painting installations. I explore how the artist becomes immersed in the studio and in the exhibition environment through art making. I further investigate the artwork created for this study and discuss my intentions, inspiration and processes behind the work. Accordingly, the previous chapter's theoretical approach is integrated in this chapter so that a conclusion may be reached in this practice-led study regarding immersive and embodied painting installations.

Chapter 4 serves as a conclusion to this study, where I reflect on the findings in Chapters 2 and 3. This chapter further considers the practice-led research component in relation to the outcome of this study.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND PAINTING INSTALLATIONS

In this chapter, the heightened awareness of a viewer-participant's embodiment within site-responsive painting installations is explored. In order to do so, I investigate aspects of the theory of phenomenology as a means to understand to what effect the audience may become embodied and achieve a lived experience within painting installations. The components of phenomenology that I probe in this section are the corporeal body, affect, immersion, embodiment and spatiality. All of these components are vital to understand the art experience that I hope to convey in the following chapter by means of my own creative production. To understand these notions, a basic explanation of phenomenology should first be attempted. Phenomenology's significance for this study involves the notion of audience experience, and therefore contributes to the outcome of this exploration. I explore these elements of experience by engaging with the work of other artists who create painting installations and also engage with their choice of scale, types of installations, and space. I therefore investigate notions of spatiality and site-responsive art. Furthermore I probe whether the directives of an artist could be understood as a means to engage in a lively engagement with the artwork. I consider some contemporary artists' painting installations that reflect components of phenomenology in the process of viewing art and what the artist's directives entail. I also investigate what movement entails for a viewer-participant and the art environment. I further explore a mobile and directed audience in the exhibition environment who engage in a lived experience. This chapter provides the theoretical underpinnings for a critical reflection and discussion of my practice-led body of work, discussed in Chapter 3 – where I question what the notion of immersed in paint imply for the artistic process.

2.1 Contextualising phenomenology within contemporary art

This study focuses on the audience's subjective experience of painting installations. The study investigates a phenomenological approach to the research as to consider how site-responsive painting installations might heighten a viewer-participants awareness of their embodiment and to what effect. By means to understand embodiment as an experience within contemporary art, I investigate the *Phenomenology of perception* (2014[1945]) through the premises of Merleau-

Ponty. Phenomenology as a research method in this endeavour aims to understand and describe the embodied experience of the viewer-participant in painting installations, and investigates how an artist's directives can activate the audience in an exhibition environment. My approach is subjective towards my investigation of sensorial experiences, thus keeping an open mind that the viewer-participant may engage and perceive experiences different from each other in different artworks or situations.

The phenomenological position aims to examine the audience in the act of looking at, or participating in installation art. The audience in the broader sense not only view the artwork, but also become the viewed in a participatory position. The phenomenological position furthermore looks at installation art as a spatial phenomenon and includes the audience's temporary function in the artwork. The significance of a phenomenological approach is that it focuses on the meaning that objects and events have within one's perception (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxx-lxxi), for example of an installation artwork. Meaning may furthermore be constructed through one's direct surroundings, where the audience's background, social and cultural contexts, language, mood or memories may influence the meaning the artwork evokes for them. I make use of qualitative research to enquire about experiencing artwork. I observe and take note of the audience in the exhibition space, the progress of the artworks in the studio towards the exhibition space, as well as my own experiences and processes of creating the artworks in the studio and *in situ* in the exhibition space. The qualitative approach of the study consequently contributes to the thoughts and understanding of experience in art by means of observation. For example, I observe the audience in the exhibition environment to analyse their response to the artwork, thereby being able to create new scenarios for an embodied and activated audience. I will now attempt to contextualise phenomenology within this study.

My investigation of the philosophy of phenomenology is grounded in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception* (2014 [1945]). In my endeavour to grasp what the lived-experience means to the viewer-participant and the immersed artist, I investigate the concept of 'life-world'. The life-world or "natural concept of the world" is a concept first explored by the twentieth-century philosopher Edmund Husserl by means of transcendental phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxx-lxxi). However, I follow Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on this subject of life-world (Merleau-

Ponty 2014:lxx). One of the main focuses of phenomenology is that it does not aim to explain or analyse things or events, but rather to describe them. It is this method of 'describing' an object or event that I probe in my creative processes and link to the experiences of painting installations. Part of the purpose of this study is to describe my immediate, immersive, embodied experience (my current life-world) of the process of painting and creating painting installations. It is my intentions, actions and bodily movements and perceptions which I present as I describe my experiences and life-world. Phenomenology is fundamental to understand and experience the world and how we understand ourselves within the world and our perception thereof. Phenomenology is furthermore inseparable from subjectivity. Meaning that phenomenology relies on the first person point of view.

"Phenomenology is a study of essence", it attempts to locate and define essence within concepts such as consciousness, perception and knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxx). Phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy, investigating human relations with the world, for example what it takes to be embodied and what leads to such embodiment (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxxx). Furthermore, phenomenology aims to describe our 'being in the world', how we think, and move, sense and engage in the world full of things and occurrences. The significance of phenomenology for me is that it also attempts to reflect on the art experience by means of both the artist's engagement with the artwork and the audience's engagement in viewing the work. According to Taylor Carman (2014:vii), phenomenology is a return to things or objects themselves. For example how one relate, engage and experience these things. Carman (2014:vii) refers to Husserl's ideas, where the 'things' referred to are "… ideal (abstract) forms and contents of experience as we live them, not as we have learned to conceive and describe them according to categories of science and received opinion." Phenomenology thus aims to describe these human experiences and the understanding thereof directly from the perceiver, rather than a narrated understanding of the same experience from a third person point of view.

According to Dermot Moran (2002:4), phenomenology is a philosophy concerned with consciousness and human experience. In this manner, phenomenology is also a way of measuring events or situations through a person's experience. The idea behind phenomenology is that a

person first grasps the meaning of what they perceive through the experience of objects, events or collective situations, describing the experiences of what they observe in order of appearance. The approach in which one perceives these objects or events becomes part of the lived experience (Moran 2002:4-6; Marković 2012:1-2). Moran (2002:6-7) further states that the lived experience is a way for one to engage "… directly with the world". Phenomenology becomes a mode to investigate experiences by means of one's awareness of time, space and the world, and how these engage with one another. Thus, phenomenology is a mode of experiencing the immediacy of one's environment, with all its constituent entities, including cultural artefacts.

Although many philosophers have studied phenomenology, I choose to investigate the thoughts of Merleau-Ponty.[16] The idea of being aware of time, space and the world stems from Merleau-Ponty's approach to phenomenology. According to Merleau-Ponty (2014:xx), phenomenology refers to how one perceives the world and how it makes use of time and space through concepts of the embodied and the sensorial. These concepts contribute to how one experiences objects and events by moving in and through certain spaces. Merleau-Ponty (2014:254) defines these spaces as positions where people's bodies move. The spaces are connected to the surrounding spaces and objects associated within it. Merleau-Ponty (2014:334) argues that for someone to perceive something, the body and senses are actively involved. Consequently, the object (or artwork) is not an entity separated from the audience who perceives and experiences it (Merleau-Ponty 2014:334). Therefore, a person needs to move around objects or artworks that involve their senses through sensorial attitudes, enabling them to experience the situation.

According to Jennifer Lauwrens (2012:26), in disciplines such as visual studies and art history vision is the most researched of all the senses. Consequently, the concept of ocularcentrism may be described as "the everyday practice of seeing" (Lauwrens 2012:28). The idea of ocularcentrism, according to Martin Jay[17] (in Lauwrens 2012:28; Grau 2003:13), was realised after Western culture's dependence on sight became more prevalent than on the other senses during "modernist and postmodern societies". Such thoughts may, moreover, be associated with notions

[16] Merleau-Ponty followed the ideas of the philosophers Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre regarding their notions of phenomenology (Landes 2014:vii).

[17] Martin Jay (1988:4-5) explores models of vision after Modernism, investigating Cartesian perspectivalism and the historical influences of vision in Western thought.

of the spectacle in ways of viewing art. Viewing painting is also mainly ocular since painting is generally two-dimensional and displayed against a wall. However, haptic visuality is evident in the work of some artists, such as Penny Siopis. Her work encourages the viewer to feel the painted textures with one's eyes rather than physically touching the painting with one's hands.

In an interview with Brian Massumi (2011:55), the *V2_Institute for the Unstable Media* questions vision as the principal sense of the "tactile" or the "haptic". Massumi's (2011:55) response to *V2* was that ocularcentrism is an intertwined field, where senses other than sight are incorporated with vision's presence. The senses populate one another in different situations as they never function independently (Massumi 2011:144-176). Massumi (2011:55) further states that a visual experience articulates the other senses in movement and materiality. In other words, through seeing one may feel, hear, taste and smell with one's eyes, having an indirect experience by means of one's other senses or perhaps tempting one to make use of the other senses.

In the foreword to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, Carman (2014:xiii) explains perception as the foundation of "subjectivity and objectivity of experience …". A subjective experience is from one's own understanding and influences that contributes to how one perceives the world and thus experience it. Such influences may come from one's social and historical background or one's world view. Carman (2014:xiv) continues that "[p]erception is not a mental event, for we experience our own sensory states not merely as states of mind, but as states of our bodies and our bodily behaviours". By means of Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception,[18] the subjective experience consists of sensorial attitudes that prompt one's personal understandings of the "perceptual object" (Carman 2014:xiv). These sensorial attitudes contribute to the broader framework of phenomenology to enable embodiment, immersion, and multi-sensorial experiences and ideas surrounding artworks and bodily engagement. Phenomenology, hence, deals with a lived experience the moment an audience perceives an object or situation. It is because of these sensorial attitudes that an audience might experience an object or situation by being in the space in the moment.

[18] Perception may simply be explained as a "conscious understanding" of one's feelings towards something (Stern 2013:36).

Sensorial states, or as I prefer to call it 'sensorial attitudes' of phenomenology are important as this refers to the way one absorbs the meanings of objects or events through one's senses through mind and body. It is also the link between sensory (sense experience) and motor (bodily skills) skills that merge into the sensory and the motor dimensions of perceptions (Merleau-Ponty 2014:217). According to Merleau-Ponty, 'sense experience' is the way a person's senses engage with the significance and the context of the spaces in which they move. Furthermore, sense experience is the way one's senses absorb the value, sight and meaning of the space in which they are present (Merleau-Ponty 2014:53-54). Through sense experience, one may also become embodied. One's senses are not separated from one's body and mind; this allows a person to perceive the space in its entirety, causing one to become embodied. Merleau-Ponty (1996:123) further declares that vision and the body's movement are connected as one moves through spaces. This idea of visuality works in contrast with the notion of Cartesian dualism. The Cartesian model stems from the philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650), who argued that the mind and body are separate entities. However, Merleau-Ponty believes that the mind and body are connected and therefore form an embodied subject. Phenomenology is thus not only a visual experience, but also an embodied experience where one's senses are involved by participating in a space, such as an art installation, for example.

2.2 The art experience

I argue for an active audience engagement in a space, as it may heighten the audience's awareness in the moment of a lived experience. In my endeavour to understand how an audience engage and become embodied, I explore notions of the corporeal body, lived experience, space and viewer participation. When viewing artworks, the viewer's entire body moves, with all their senses involved, resulting in a lived experience. In Henri Lefebvre's well-known work, *The Production of Space* (1991), he investigates the lived experience as being envisaged through representational spaces. Representational space is lived directly through images, symbols, imagination and corporeal space (Lefebvre 1991:39). Lefebvre claims that the body subsists on the level of reciprocal movement between materiality and abstraction; the difference is that it is a lived and not a thought experience (Lefebvre 1991:203). Thus the audience in their engagement within the space not only perceive the space by looking at the objects surrounding them, but also

participates through sensorial and bodily movement, leading toward a lived experience of the space.

The concept of phenomenology in the visual arts contributes to the directives of the artist-researcher, by means of how she aims to create a lively engagement in the art environment. This might be by means of mechanical motion or forcing the audience to walk over an artwork. For instance, Suzan Kozel incorporates phenomenology in interactive dancing and artworks. According to Kozel (2007:5), phenomenology is concerned with a lived experience, and she expands on this important concept of phenomenology as follows:

> … it [phenomenology] calls for a return again and again, to the lived experience; that it takes as its starting point a position prior to, or beyond, the subject-object divide; that it shapes a reflective process that opens itself to the richness of pre-reflective experience; that it provides a variety of experiences and not bound to a narrow and abstracted notion of truth; that it provides scope for the many dimensions of what we are as human beings to contribute to the expansion of knowledge and creation of cultural artefacts. Bodies, thought, imagination, memories, material conditions of life, and affect find a voice through phenomenology.

Kozel (2007:5,7) describes phenomenology as an expansive influence to investigate notions of experience in the visual arts, including one's corporeal experiences, sensorium and understandings of the world.

In this study, the significance of the body in space, especially that of the artist, interrelates with corporeality since it refers to the physical presence of the body. Corporeality can be explored through the complexities of the subjective framework of body and mind. In the social sciences, bodies are understood according to their social concepts and relation to gender (Grosz 1994:x). Elizabeth Grosz (1994:x) maintains that the body is a "social constitution of nature itself" and should be understood not only as being "ahistorical", "pre-cultural" and a "natural object[s]". Grosz (in Kozel 2007:137) states that:

> The limits of possible spaces are the limits of possible modes of corporeality: the body's infinite pliability is a measure of the infinite plasticity of the spatiotemporal universe in which it is housed and through which bodies become real, are lived, and have effects.

According to Grosz (1994:86), the body is always connected with the mind and therefore embodied through both its "corporeal" and "sensory" connotations. In art, the corporeal body accordingly inhabits the space and the artwork, enabling a lived experience in the exhibition environment.

A person cannot be a viewer-participant of painting installations if she is not physically present in the exhibition space. One's actual body needs to be there and one must be able to be in relation with the objects and space in the moment. Grosz (1994:87) argues that the body and mind relationship affects the way objects are perceived in space. By referring to Merleau-Ponty, Grosz (1994:90) considers the relations between space, the body and senses as intertwined. Grosz (1994:90) argues that the body is intertwined within space and time when viewing objects, since space is perceived by one's corporeal position. Since the body is able to perceive objects in a space and time, it does not only grasp space through the senses, but also through a corporeal position (Grosz 1994:87). A body is not part of space, but rather inhabits space; it also inhabits its body and mind. Accordingly, notions of corporeality in mind and body enable the relationship between one's body and objects.

In this study the body is a method for the audience to engage in the exhibition environment and for my own artistic processes in the studio. The body according to Merleau-Ponty (in Grosz 1994:86-87) is "a lived reality"; it is a physical body (a corporeal body) in the moment in time and the position in the space it is occupying in its act of viewing or painting. The corporeal body is not static, it is active for it explores reality and its surroundings with body and in mind (Merleau-Ponty in Grosz 1994:91). There is a fusion, or a relationship between mind and body, affecting them into a single corporeal body (Grosz 1994:91). It is because of this relationship of the corporeal body that allows one to investigate objects with one's body and kinaesthetic or proprioceptive movement. For Merleau-Ponty (in Grosz 1994:90-91) mind is always embodied,[19] always based on corporeal and sensory relations, whereas the body is the condition of our access of space. The corporeal body is therefore our connection to the world and our relationship to the art experience and therefore embodies us within it.

[19] I will discuss embodiment in the next section of this chapter.

In this study, embodiment refers to the lived experience of a subject or a viewer-participant within an exhibition space. According to Grosz (1994:90), "It is as an embodied subject that the subject occupies a perspective on objects". Accordingly when one is engaged in an exhibition space, one is 'thinking' and 'feeling' the things one perceives. There is a realisation of one's experience in the space (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxxvi-lxxvii). According to Merleau-Ponty (2014:lxxv-lxxvii), the body is not a container that controls the mind however, the mind is fully aware of itself through the body. For example, being in the exhibition space surrounded by various objects and sensorial elements, enhances the viewer-participant's awareness of herself in the space. Through her senses, she is able to feel the sensations associated with the space, feeling and reflecting what is happening to her, as she perceives everything around her. Embodiment is associated with Husserl's notion of "being in the world", where one's thinking and feelings within the 'life world' is what makes one realise one's position within the world (Merleau-Ponty 2014:lxxvi-lxxvii). Accordingly this realisation of "being in the world" signifies an embodied experience.

Where corporeality is associated with the physical body as a lived body in the exhibition environment, embodiment refers to the realisation of one's experience (as one realises one's self and one's senses) within the moment of experience. 'Flesh' is another component relating to embodiment. Grosz (1994:100) explains the flesh through notions of Merleau-Ponty, where he labels flesh as 'being'. Flesh according to Merleau-Ponty, produces a double sensation, of "feeling" and being "felt." Flesh becomes the element that enables connections between subject and object: "… touching and being touched …" and "… seeing and being seen …" are models of perception (Grosz 1994:100).

Marković (2012:1, 12) describes aesthetic experience as the relation the audience has with an object that is visually fascinating. The object may be either pleasant or unpleasant to look at, but in both instances the viewer may become aroused, stimulated or captivated in the viewing process and in the presence of the art object (Marković 2012:12). The viewing process and viewer's experiences are infused by the different emotions and affects produced by artworks; for example, anticipation, surprise, admiration, and pleasure may construct the aesthetic experience. The audience's relation to the art object is furthermore influenced by their "ecological and social

context," meaning that the artwork is experienced in different ways by different people (Marković 2012:13). Thus the viewer-participant may not experience artworks or art installations in exactly the same way as the person before her.

According to Berleant (2013:[sp]), aesthetics[20] may be explained as "perception by senses". Berleant (2005:151) explains that perception is predominant in aesthetic appreciation because it is evident in all kinds of experience,[21] including the unpleasant experiences Marković addresses. In agreement with Berleant's notion of aesthetics, I argue that artists can evoke pleasant or unpleasant emotions through their artworks by focussing on certain sensorial elements included in exhibition environments. Berleant (2013:[sp]) furthermore explores notions of aesthetic engagement, where there are no boundaries between the artwork and the audience or the artist and the audience through the primacy of sense perception. This might lead to a more enhanced aesthetic appreciation by the audience, especially at art installations. According to Berleant (2013:[sp]):

> They [the audience] become aspects of the aesthetic process rather than discrete objects or actions, and the appreciative experience becomes perceptually active, direct, and intimate. Aesthetic engagement recognizes that beauty, or aesthetic value more generally, inheres not in the object or in the perceiver but is rather the leading feature of the reciprocal process of perceptual participation between appreciator and object.

For Berleant, in terms of aesthetic engagement, the participation of the viewer is of equal importance to the object. I align with the reciprocal process of Berleant, since the artworks in my painting installation exhibition environment are not the only focus. In my painting installations, the audience are not only viewers; their physical presence in the space can sometimes even

[20] Immanuel Kant, an eighteenth-century philosopher of phenomenology and known mainly for his contribution to ideas of aesthetics, explored notions of beauty and 'taste' within aesthetics (Crawford 2013:46-47). Kantian aesthetics is concerned with understanding the significance of human experience (Mouriki 2008:162; Hobart & Kapferer 2005:2). Kant argues that there is an immediate feeling of pleasure when a person perceives something as beautiful or pleasing to look at, thus creating an aesthetic experience (Crawford 2013:48). This is consistent with Shimamura's (2013:6) views that people respond to beauty in an emotional way, such as when viewing artworks.

[21] Eighteenth-century philosopher Alexander Baumgarten was the first to define aesthetics at that time (Berleant 2013: [sp]). Baumgarten argues that an aesthetic experience is common when a person appreciates beauty (whether in art or nature), and is therefore based on the beautiful attributes when the audience appreciates an artwork, for example. Science has attempted to evaluate the audience's experience of art by exploring the audience's brain in order to view the active regions thereof (Shimamura 2013:6, 15). Hence, aesthetic experience creates opportunities for artists and scientists alike to measure the audience's response to artworks (Shimamura 2013:15).

activate and trigger movement in some of the artworks. It was also my intention as an artist to think of the audience in the planning of the artworks. Thus the audience and the art object are both of importance in the exhibition.

Moving through installation art or painting installations becomes a way of perceiving and participating in the artwork. The audience's movement within and around artworks in site-specific spaces has generally been accepted without questioning the significance thereof (Hällsten 2005:3). Moving in and around artworks can create opportunities where the audience has to search for and find hidden aspects of a work. Movement also supports the audience's apprehension of the spaces in which they are active, and therefore creates a relationship between them and the space where the artwork is situated. The audience's movement is not what causes the experiences in a space; however, movement becomes a method to comprehend and perceive art installations or environments. Hällsten (2005:1) contends that art installation consists of the experience of the audience through their interaction with the space and their involvement in it by being mobile viewers and participants. The viewer-participant's experience unfolds over time as they walk through the space (Hällsten 2005:1). In my work, mobility indicates participation as the audience responds to my directives in the space. I view this as a conversational mode that is initiated between the artwork and the audience when the work is experienced phenomenologically. The conversational mode furthermore relates to the manner in which the audience interprets my directives in their engagement in the space. Hällsten's notion of a mobile audience may, moreover, be related to notions of kinaesthetic sensations.

Aesthetic experience and aesthetic response in art installations engage in kinaesthetics and proprioception, where one's bodily movement is responsive to the objects and positions in the surrounding environment. Setting an exhibition up in a particular way triggers a phenomenological experience of audience engagement and their bodily response in the space. Kinaesthetics may be explained as the way one's body foresees its final position in an action. Kozel (2011:212) further defines kinaesthetics (or Kinept, as she coined it) as relating to "… corporeal movement, and proprioception". Thus, kinaesthetics relates to one's body and how it moves in order to experience or perceive objects or spaces.

Artist directives or dictates can encourage the audience not only to participate in the viewing process, but also to force them to undertake certain actions, such as requiring them to bend, stretch or look closer. Proprioception is defined by Barbara Montero (2006:231) as "… the sense by which we acquire information about the positions and movements of our own bodies, via receptors in the joints, tendons, ligaments, muscles and skin". Montero (2006:231) claims "… proprioception is an aesthetic sense …" that allows one to make decisions based on how one interacts with objects by means of one's bodily positions and movements. The artist can manipulate the situation and make the audience change their bodily positions, adding to the total experience. According to David Prall (in Montero 2006:232), "experience is genuinely characteristically aesthetic only as it occurs in transactions with external objects of sense", such as vision and sound. The objects perceived are closer to the body in the case of proprioception (Montero 2006:233). Thus, this engenders the idea that proprioception as an aesthetic response can be defined in relation to the body's position itself, or in its movement to perceive objects; for example, by bending down to view a small sculpture.

In this section I investigated the art experience as through concepts of corporeality, embodiment and the lived body in space. I argue that the audience is more alert in installation art spaces, since the artist directs and creates different sensorial opportunities for them to explore. It is also necessary to consider the audience's function in the space. For the audience to experience an artwork, they may be required to physically enter the space. They can simply become immersed by engaging with the installation space through moving and looking. One may, however, participate in an installation artwork without physically engaging with the artwork or the space (Rinaldi 2012:[sp]). Participation in art can occur in many forms of interaction in installation art (Rinaldi 2012:[sp]). For example, one can participate by viewing the installation from a distance, as in the paintings of Penny Siopis, or one may be entertained by sensory elements, such as in the *Tate Sensorium* exhibition.[22] However, looking is also participating and does not always include having the audience physically participating in the artwork or in the space.

[22] I investigate the artwork of Siopis and the *Tate Sensorium* exhibition later in this chapter.

2.3 Embodiment and affect in art

In this section I investigate what it entails for a viewer-participant to become embodied and affected by art. By wandering through an exhibition space, the audience might be affected by the ambience of the surrounding properties of the space, which forms part of the spatiality of the artwork. Accordingly, the audience become participants of art installations. Judith Butler (1988:521) argues that the body carries many "possibilities" containing affected meanings through the materiality of things. One's historical and cultural background become familiar aspects in the way one engages with the immediate surroundings, objects or events. These contextual feelings are part of what embodied situations elicit, thereby moving one towards a subjective experience. German artist Katharina Grosse's *Double Floor Painting* (2004) (Figure 6) serves as an example of this. Painting installations consider space in the realised work, and therefore have the potential to be site-responsive. Both the audience and the artist may participate with their corporeal body, through which they experience the environment in site-responsive artworks. A whole-bodied aesthetic experience happens the moment the audience encounters the artwork and their sensorial responses are activated. Their senses tend to induce them to engage with objects that may be pleasant or unpleasant to look at, or in situations that are satisfying or unresponsive to be involved in. Unpleasant artworks can still be affective, since the negative connotations still signify a response.

I believe the audience becomes embodied when they least expect it. It is these 'surprises' that create the most memorable experiences in a work of art. The sensorial elements and the affects produced in the space may be unexpected, since the installation may hold many surprises for the audience, especially when art installations are produced as once-off events or Happenings. The artist often creates environments intended to startle the audience with unusual situations (Ward 2014:74). The audience must therefore keep an open mind when confronted by works of art, whether spectacular or mundane, in the exhibition space or in public, to get the most out of these potential experiences (Ward 2014:84-85). The directives of an artist is aptly situated in the exhibition environment, where she has to think how the artwork and the space would satisfy each other for the desired audience experience.

I argue that the environment surrounding an artwork and its connotations may enhance the overall experience of the audience and embody the audience within the space. Sensory experience is the way one's senses engage with the significance and context of the spaces in which they move. There are distinct and sometimes unforeseen smells, noises, tastes and textures in every space (Lauwrens 2014:205). These sensorial properties may be introduced by the artist or may already be in the space, and become more evident during the course of the event. The artist does not point toward the sensorial qualities in the background, since they are already merged with the artwork in the space. I refer to Grosse's painting installations, for her large-scale painting mostly inhabits entire spaces. The large-scale works create opportunities for the audience to explore the space and accordingly discover different aspects of the work.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the objective body as a physical body with its flesh, muscles and bones (De Vignemont 2015:[sp]; Carman 2014:xv-xii; McDermott 1999:258). The subjective body is the "lived body," the body that experiences objects in its surrounding environment (De Vignemont 2015:[sp]). The objective body is therefore a functioning and tangible object, and the subjective body is the "phenomenal body" that may experience objects or things (McDermott 1999:258). However, the objective body can experience itself in processes and activities it engages in as it physically touches or feels things, thus making use of its own "motor capacities" (McDermott 1999:258). However Merleau-Ponty conceives of the objective body and subjective body as interrelated; "… It is never simply object nor simply subject" (Grosz 1994:87). These considerations contribute to how the audience's sensory perception becomes heightened in an art environment.

David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese (2007:199) argue that research on the function of "sensorimotor activities" has been neglected in the visual arts. Freedberg and Gallese (2007:197) investigates the mechanisms of mirror and canonical neurons, and the neural structures of empathy and embodiment. They propose that the body responds to images and gestures in works of art, as evidenced by the study of motor-neurons. Thus the audience of artworks may perceive emotional responses to the representation depicted in the artwork or, to the gestural traces of the artist in the artwork. Freedberg and Gallese (2007:197) further propose that embodiment, as a method to experience art, is common in the way it comprises "the simulation of actions, emotions and corporeal sensation" and should be considered along with cognitive

responses to art. For example, touching tangible objects, such as artefacts, may activate both visual and motor regions of the brain (Freedberg & Gallese 2007:200). Embodiment thus affects the subjective body and how it contributes to the way one experiences objects (McDermott 1999:258), artefacts or art environments such as painting installations.

To understand what it means to be affected by art, relevant artworks by South African artist Penny Siopis is considered briefly. When viewing or participating in the art environment, the audience is affected by the artwork in the moment of encounter. Massumi (2002:15) reasons that this affect is the audience's response to sensation, perception and memory. Being affected by the artwork is further influenced by one's cultural and historical framework or context at a particular time and space. The experience perceived by the audience is therefore influenced by the affect realised by the artwork. Simon O'Sullivan (quoted in Hemmings 2005:548-549) argues that "[T]here is no denying, or deferring, affects. They are what make up life, and art … Affects are … the stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, even parallel to signification […]. You cannot read affects, you can only experience them" (Hemmings 2005: 548-549). Accordingly, I argue that affect is a form of experience, where one's personal feelings contribute to the outcome of what was perceived.

According to Clare Hemmings (2015:551), affect suggests a state of being, rather than their manifestation or interpretation as emotions. Kozel (2011:212) defines affect as "pertaining to a corporeal state encompassing emotion, spirit, vitality, imagination, and memory". Kosofky Sedgwick (2003:19) reasons that affects are linked to objects such as "relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects". Sedgwick (2003:19) maintains that "… one can be excited by anger, disgusted ... by shame, or surprised by joy". Affect can be associated with many emotions, where it is a residue or trace of a person's background. Affect consequently refers to the 'state of being' one experiences when viewing artworks.

I describe the painting installations of South African artists Penny Siopis and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt in relation to the embodied, enticed and immersed audience. I am intrigued by the way Siopis creates embodiment and affect in her paintings by means of colour and painterly techniques. According to Sue Williamson (2009:218), Siopis "… chooses to paint because painting is such an

extraordinary medium, offering an intimate experience with surface not available through photography or video". In an interview with Sarah Nuttall, Siopis states that painting is constantly expanding "… as a practice of invention involving many forms: painterly installations, parts of sculpture, performance, [and] marks on the body" (Williamson 2009:218). Siopis engages in the medium of painting to stimulate emotions in the audience through painterly qualities and her use of colour. She paints in various shades of red and pinks appropriate to the context of her work. Siopis further explores mediums of ink, glue and water in her paintings; the stickiness of the glue, the ink and a small amount of water create a spontaneous flow on the canvas (Nuttall 2011:289, 294). In *Late and Soon* (2015) (Figure 1), the triptych made up of large-scale paintings shows the outcome of her exploration of mediums. Siopis may at times intervene, creating recognisable figures in her work, and at other times she works with chance as the combination of the different mediums creates spontaneous effects (Nuttall 2011:294). The spontaneous effects and experiential impetus in Siopis' work are comparable to my own endeavours as an artist (see Chapter 3).

Figure 1: Penny Siopis, *Late and Soon*, 2015.
Pigment, ink and glue, newspaper cuttings on canvas
2500 x 1680 mm each.
Installation view.
(Stevenson 2017:[sp]).

As an art medium, painting absorbs the complex feelings Siopis aims to convey to her audiences by means of her use of colour and the scale of the work, whether large-scale or small. Siopis explores multifarious emotions of trauma and violence experienced in a post-apartheid South Africa (Nuttall 2011:289). I am not interested in the concepts of Siopis's paintings but rather in her aim to entice, affect and embody the audience through complex feelings. Siopis invited the audience into an immersive experience at her 2015 exhibition, *Still and Moving*, at the Stevenson gallery in Cape Town (Stevenson 2017:[sp]). In the film *Note* (2015), amongst other works on paper, Siopis reveals the process of making, including how unplanned effects, such as pencil shavings dropping onto the glue and ink, are incorporated into the final work. Siopis refers to these elements as ideas or happenings where the medium becomes performative (Stevenson 2017:[sp]). She is concerned with the medium and how painting may be a lived experience for viewers (Mbembe 2005:128); these notions also intrigue me. She expresses that her painting creates traces of its creative production rather than the "romance of painting" (Smith 2005:3). Hence the artist's intentions may become a form to affect or even immerse the artist in the viewing process.

In my opinion, audiences of painting installations should explore the spatiality of the environments, including their sensorial properties and aesthetics, in order to become immersed and embodied in these spaces. Immersion and embodiment overlap in effects and have one slight difference. Being embodied is to become aware of one's corporeal and situated presence, whereas immersion involves a merging with the artwork or art environment. Immersive spaces are mainly interactive spaces dependent on audience interaction (Palmer 2007:1; Grau 2003:13). Both immersion and embodiment connect the audience with different sensory approaches and participation in the space. The space and scale of artworks meant for audience experience is of significance to my study. Notions of scale and site may differ in various artworks and artist intentions, and can accordingly affect the outcome of embodiment and immersion.

2.4 Immersion in art

In art, the notion of immersion implies being mentally and emotionally involved in the space; for example, installation and interactive art seeks to establish immersive art experiences for the viewer. Although immersion in contemporary art is often tied to virtual environments and computer-based art, in this study I am concerned with immersion more as a state where the

audience and the artist are involved in the art environment. Grau (2003:13) notes that immersion is a mental process "characterized by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement in what is happening". Thus, in installation art, the audience becomes actively and mentally engaged in the space by moving through it, either by participating in or by viewing the work from a distance as one would a two-dimensional painting.

According to Bishop (2005:6), art installations or environments not only create opportunities for immersion, but can also be theatrical and experiential as the viewer may enter into and participate in the artwork. The audience's "senses of touch, smell and sound" are enhanced through installation art to perceive the entire exhibition space (Bishop 2005:6). Immersive spaces may be created to initiate experiences by heightening different senses in the audience, creating a sense experience. Sensory and embodied qualities are situated in the essence of what one experiences; hence, there are different ways to experience an object or an event. Small artworks or objects can also be immersive as they may prompt the audience to zoom in and to seek details not visible from a distance.

Installation art creates various opportunities for the audience to enter the exhibition space, where they can either look from a distance or engage with the spatial experience. *HERE WE* (2016) (Figure 2) by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt comprises a continuous arrangement of the gallery's spaces in the form of painting installations, walks and social situations (Room gallery 2016[sp]). The artwork is performative in the sense that it is constructed during the exhibition. Accordingly, Kreutzfeldt invites the audience to a subjective experience where they are mobile and can move freely in the space, and constantly see new elements of the artwork. Such elements of the mobile audience and the *in situ* component of art inspired what I wanted to express in my painting installations.

Installation art in its contemporary form engages in 'cultural practice' and theoretical notions of phenomenology and aesthetics (Van de Vall 2003:1). South African artist Dorothee Kreutzfeldt expands painting towards public art by making experimental and collaborative art (Williamson 2009:219). Her exhibition *HERE WE* (2016) at the *ROOM gallery* in Johannesburg was an event where the audience could inhabit and collaborate in the space by thinking and engaging in conditions of context, "temporality" and collectives created in the production of her painting installations (Room gallery 2016:[sp]). With regard to installation art's contextual explorations, the

audience might be more absorbed in the viewing process and the concepts the artist considers in her work. Kreutzfeldt also works *in situ* in the production of her painting installations. The artwork in the space is constantly changing as the artist and the collaborating artists fill the space with paintings made at Ellis House and with found objects from the surrounding environment (Room gallery 2016:[sp]). According to Van de Vall (2003:4), the "practices of looking" create ways for the audience to participate in art on an analytical level, as they become involved in the viewing process in a "corporeal and subjective" manner. The audience accordingly might want to participate in a reciprocal engagement with the art objects in an exhibition space.

Figure 2: Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, *HERE WE*, 2016.
Installation-view painting installation and found objects.
(Room gallery 2016:[sp]).

Kreutzfeldt, for example, creates a multi-sensorial exhibition environment where the audience is confronted by an active space in which to participate and experience. In her painting installations, the audience does not only look at her work, but also participates in the situation or event in the space produced by her. She therefore creates a multi-sensorial experience rather than only a visual experience. Both the artist and the audience are a part of the process with their presence in

the production of the installation space, making both entities aware of one another and their impact on each other in the process. Kreutzfeldt's painting installations are produced in the moment of experience, leading to a heightened awareness within the audience, as they perceive everything that is happening around them.

The elements of phenomenology involve the participatory audience and the artwork's affect. Participation reflects a level of engagement, which could still be absent even when the audience moves precisely as directed. It also refers to how the work is 'completed' by the audience, and how the artist directs or prompts participation (Bishop 2005:6, 10-11). There are many different ways to encourage or force the audience to respond to art installations; for example, by luring them into the space or by completely blocking their entry. The artist can choose to antagonise, enrich or entertain the audience.

When the audience is immersed in an art installation, they are enveloped by the context and the sensorial qualities of the artwork, thinking and feeling[23] in the art environment. According to Kozel (2007:145), "… immersion viewed from a human stance point is achieved once our physiological, creative, intuitive, intellectual, and imaginative functions are engaged", which can be achieved without the use of technologies. Kozel (2007:145) argues that such immersion comprises both internal and external dimensions of human experience. Palmer (2007:1) states that immersion conveys "intellectual" engagement as well as "a spatial experience, in the sense of enveloping the audience in a discrete and often panoramic zone".[24] Therefore, immersion enhances the kinaesthetic experience of audiences whilst exploring the art environment.

Many contemporary artists anticipate the bodily presence of the viewer-participant in their artworks. It may be that certain elements provided by the artist during the event might intrigue or deceive the audience. Artists often make use of surprising, theatrical elements, such as spaces the audience cannot reach or pass. Artist Carsten Höller (in Bishop 2005:48) argues that artworks

[23] When physical and emotional responses to an artwork merge, the audience becomes embodied. Ellen Esrock (2001:234-236) argues that, when the audience is immersed in an artwork, the boundaries between viewer-participant and the artwork merge, which derives from a somatosensory experience. For example, when one sees texture, one's eyes interpret the physical feeling thereof, accordingly touching and feeling with one's eyes because of the neuroscientific influence of the somatosensory system.

[24] The panoramic zone can date back to 1789 as the notion to paint illusionistic space (Grau 2003:5). The panorama is often used in new media art (such as in virtual realities or video art) to extend the viewer's field of vision (Grau 2003:13).

consisting of machines or devices are intended to synchronise with the audience in order to collaborate and produce new meaning as a whole. The meaning of the artwork is dependent on the audience's active participation (Bishop 2005:48). Such presence in the work can likewise be valid in viewing paintings or installation art. The audience becomes more aware of their bodies and how they engage in the space of the artwork. Hence, the space is more memorable because of the overall experience of the art installation.

There is also a connection between immersive art and theatricality, since immersive art is also a space where one's senses and bodily awareness are exposed to different elements in an installation environment. Theatrical installations and performative artworks create bodily awareness in both the artist and the audience. It could be argued that the viewer of contemporary art searches for the theatricality in art, for the climax often not found in static artworks. Such performances influence "phenomenological engagements" with the audience's corporeal body being more attuned to the space. Ellegood (2014:9-10) argues that the connection to the physical body in these theatrical events questions notions of "sexuality, gender and identity" since there is an instinctual link to the corporeal qualities of the body in the artwork and the surrounding environment. The audience thus becomes more aware of their bodily connection to the immersive artworks and environments.

Immersion is a popular pursuit in contemporary art exhibitions and is used as a means to draw visitors in. For example, the exhibition *Tate Sensorium*[25] at Tate Britain in 2015 aimed to immerse the viewer in the senses of taste, smell, touch and hearing (Tate 2015:[sp]). Four British paintings from the twentieth century were chosen for their abstraction, subject matter, the elements of art[26] and imaginative possibilities (Tate 2015:[sp]). The paintings were paired with sensory elements that the viewer could interact with, for example, Francis Bacon's *Figure in a Landscape* (1945) that was accompanied with sound, smell and taste (Figure 3). The visitors' experiences of elements were tested with wristbands that measured their electrodermal activity and perspiration to indicate how calm or excited they were (Tate 2015:[sp]). Electrodermal testing is a way to determine a person's emotional responses through the electrical conductivity of their skin (Tate

[25] The *Tate Sensorium* was the winner of the 2015 IK Prize for art and digital innovations.
[26] The elements of art are the formalist component of the artwork and include shape, form, colour, line and texture.

2015:[sp]). Immersive artworks such as those exhibited at the *Tate Sensorium* tempt the public to participate in events that would supposedly engender new significant memories associated with prominent artworks. Such forced immersion is, however, somewhat gimmicky as painting in itself has the potential to immerse the audience without all the additional paraphernalia. One can further argue that ideas surrounding exhibition practices have become visitor-centred and shifts in pedagogies have taken place, whereby curators seek themes to sell experiences.[27] I question whether the contemporary contenders frame these British modern artists' paintings in a light of digitalised innovations and visitor-centred events that may commercialise the original artworks used in this competition-inspired exhibition. I argue, however, that the experiential aspects of artwork, even when more visitor-centred, create opportunities for embodiment and immersion in the artwork. My own experiential practice may be distinguished from these commercialised artworks as I explore painting installations with the aim of not only embodying the audience, but also of immersing myself in the production of the artworks.

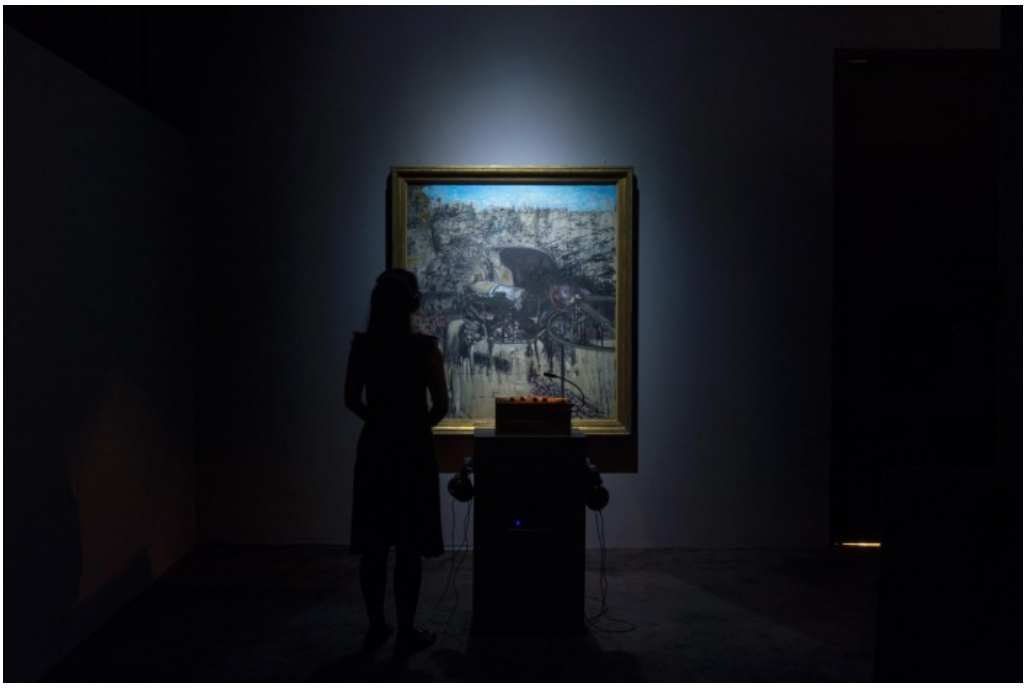

Figure 3: *Tate Sensorium* exhibition, 2015.
Sound, smell and taste experience with Francis Bacon's
Figure in a Landscape, 1945. Installation view.
(Tate 2015:[sp]).

[27] According to Judith Matsai (2007:175), exhibition practices have to incorporate components to market museums for both educational and enticing purposes in order to reach a wider audience that wants to be entertained by art.

Immersive art creates opportunities for the audience to merge with art installations through intellectual and physical engagement. The role of immersion in this study is for painting installations to envelop the audience in the installation space by expanding painting past the frame and to heighten their audiences' awareness of their physical engagement in relation to the artwork in the space. It is my intention to create painting installations in order to enclose the audience in a concentration of painting and colour. In the making of these painting installations, I likewise become immersed, as my entire body is part of the process, constructing and painting in the studio and in the exhibition environment. [28]

2.5 Space, site-responsive art and scale

In this section, I argue that site-responsive space creates opportunities for an embodied and an activated audience. The discourses associated with space are rather broad; for example, artists use space to comment on social, economic and gender issues, politics, and culture frameworks (Kwon 1997:87-88). The discourse of space creates opportunities where the audience can become involved in the broader context of the space or environment. Since the 1960s, artists have been producing works against the norms of art institutions such as museums and galleries, producing site-specific installations outside of the confines of the gallery (Reiss 1999:70, 75). Artists such as Allan Kaprow – for social and political reasons – boycotted the static art gallery setting and created art environments outside gallery spaces (Reiss 1999:70, 23). Hence, the public could view or participate in the temporal space of Happenings or art environments. In some instances, artists created private events for a selected few people only. In contemporary art, there is a tendency towards the spectacle and entertainment, especially in biennales and international exhibitions.

Artists often create certain pathways for the audience to move through an installation environment. Site-responsive artwork can be created in spaces with the intention to surprise the audience when stumbling upon the artwork or art installation. For Hällsten (2005:3), site-specific art is more successful when:

[28] This notion of the immersed artist is further discussed in Chapter 3 where I investigate how the artist becomes immersed in processes of making artwork.

> … there is no specific way in which the participant is supposed to encounter the art work. There is no start or finish to the walks around the places; the journey taken is personal and constantly changing.

In this way, the audience experiences the artwork first-hand and by surprise, as there is no one to show the way. According to Hällsten (2005:4), artworks exists only in relation to the audience's movement in the space, since the audience can make use of their entire body and all their senses for a more heightened viewing experience. The artist might direct the audience to walk through the space in order to encourage an embodied experience of the space. Artists such as Daniel Buren (*Les Deux Plateaux,* 1986) (Figure 4) and Jessica Stockholder (*Flooded Chamber Maid, 2009*) (Figure 5) produce painting installations for site-specific spaces (Kwon 1997:87). These painting installations may even be functional, as they invite the audience (or everyday bystanders) to sit or play on the artworks without them necessarily knowing it is an art installation.

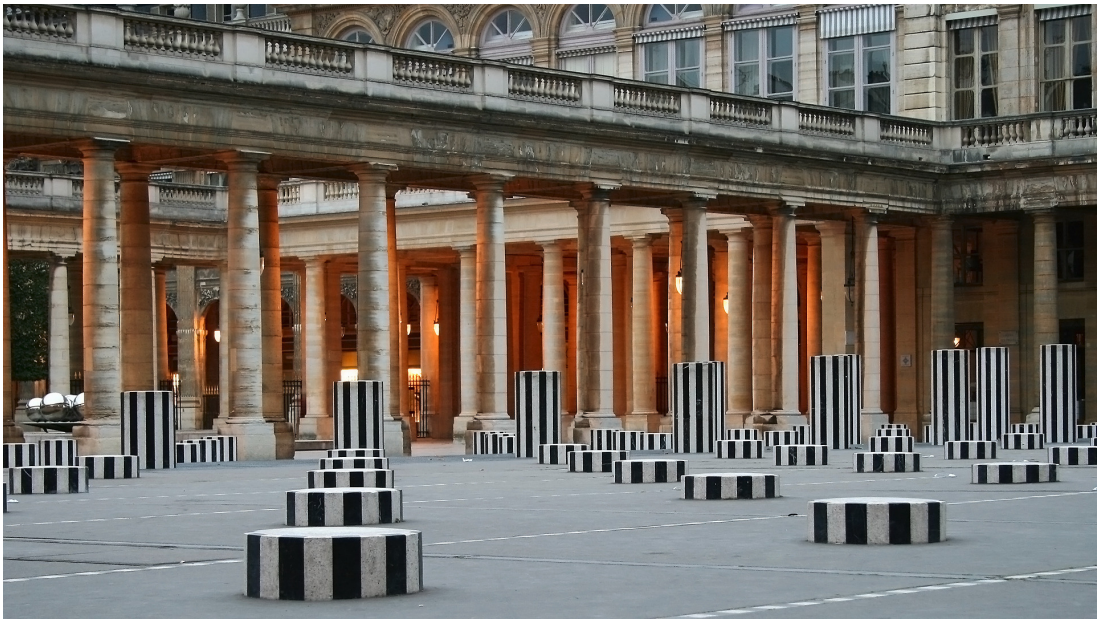

Figure 4: Daniel Buren, *Les Deux Plateaux,* 1986.
Site-specific installation at Palais Royale, Paris, France. Installation view.
(Stevens 2012:[sp]).

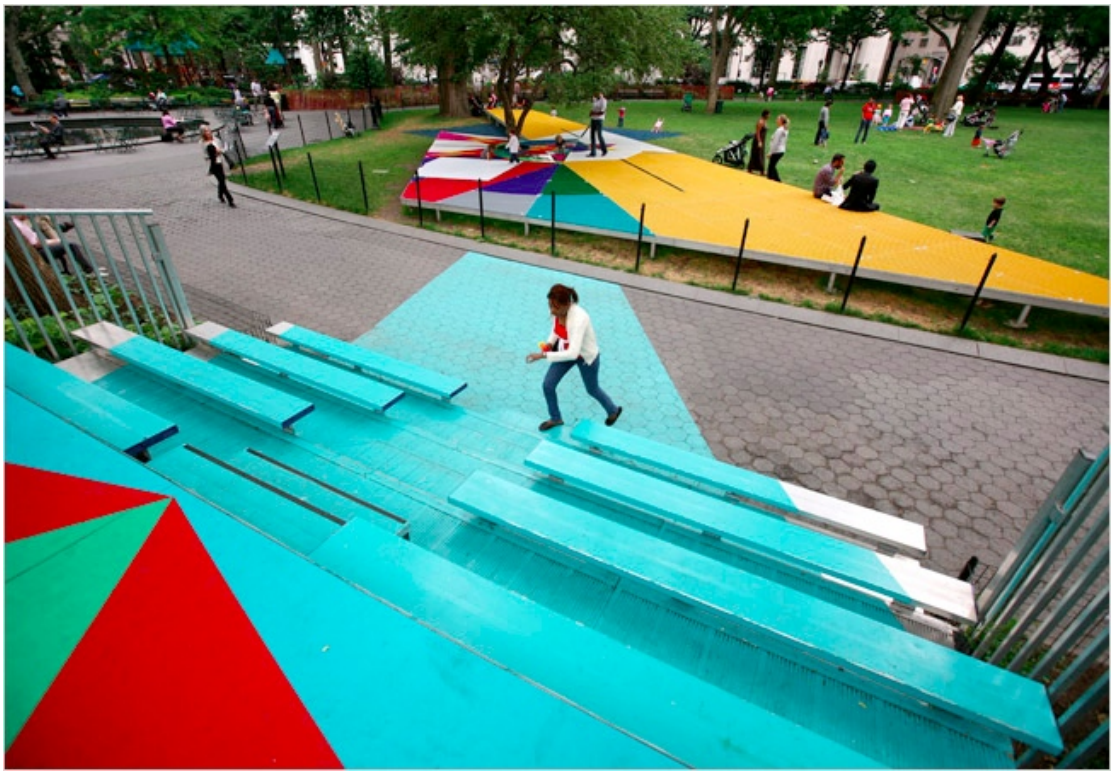

Figure 5: Jessica Stockholder, *Flooded chamber maid*, 2009.
Installation view. Coloured plywood platforms and metal bleachers.
(Cenicola 2009:[sp]).

According to Kwon (1997:88), site-specific art such as that by Buren and Stockholder has explored the architectural and physical elements of a particular space after Minimalism. The aesthetic and material components of the artwork are altered by the artist for the ultimate audience experience. The ways the audience experiences contemporary art is significant owing to the artist's desire to create spectacular works of art, which can be either aesthetically pleasing or big and bold to invite and immerse the audience in the art environment, leading back to the notion of spectacle. Ward (2014:127) mentions that the audience wants to be overwhelmed by contemporary art:

> So much of contemporary art is spectacular: it moves, it lights up, it astounds; it envelops us, it suck us in or simply dwarfs us. We expect to be seduced, enthralled and even overwhelmed by creations of ever-greater size, value, ambition and extravagance, with artists scaling up and pushing their work further …

In the above statement, Ward argues that the contemporary audience has a desire to experience

the artwork whilst viewing it. The audience seeks to be enveloped by installation art, interactive art, art environments or any space they can connect with and move in. This may signify the concept of spectacle, referring to spectacular and anti-spectacular artworks (Debord 2006:99-100; Bishop 2006:13, 26). The notion of spectacle and commodity is therefore constituted in the framework of space, site-specificity and scale in artworks. The spectacle of the painting installations created in this study is by virtue of space, site-responsive artworks, the poetic quality of the painting, and the unfolding of viewing artworks as a lived experience. The spectacle, as defined by Dennis Kennedy (2009:5), is when someone is present and observing a performance or life event. Being central to "all vision and all consciousness", the spectacle is expressed through mediated images of entertainment and art (Debord 1967:7). The spectacle of contemporary art since the turn to globalisation was for art to be enormous or daring, and to create immersive environments through scale and technology (Ward 2014:127). Such spectacular works of art have taken over art biennales and fairs all over the world, satisfying the audience with an experience of the artwork in the moment.

The scale of artworks, big or small, affects how much awareness of the work is created and its materiality in the exhibition environment. With larger artworks, the audience's corporeal body is active in the space. Contemporary art and painting installations create awareness of space in artworks, except that such artworks are influenced by the spectacle and the idea of participation in a globalised art world by competing with other interactive and new media art. Jonathan Harris (2010:26) investigates where painting is placed in the contemporary art world:

> The contemporary art world is a boiling, capacious, polyvocal, pluralistic engine of global productivity: Biennial-isation has happened, a kind of mega-cultural fusion spitting and splitting new forms and formations, new funding and support agencies, new intermediaries and professional types, new kinds of celebrity art and artist, locked into capitalist globalization and its shadow statist cultural policy incarnation, swallowing up the radicals, the dissidents, and the discontent, along with the rest – offering them space, place, to create and relate, engage and enrage, to explain and disdain, within a new political-economy of contemporary art.

Harris (2010:26) accordingly argues that painting is still striving to represent itself as an experiential medium within the many traditional, new mediums and spectacular artworks or performative events in contemporary art and global exhibitions. Through my own explorations of

viewing art at international exhibitions, I have come to believe the audience of contemporary art seeks to be entertained or moved by art. In my opinion, painting is still a medium with a great deal of potential to explore and may be exhibited in many ways, including site-specific.[29] Painting installations, such as by Katharina Grosse, form part of this competing contemporary art world.

Von Hantelmann (2010:9) investigates how art creates social and political awareness by manipulating art conventions, for instance, in the work of Daniel Buren. His work explores the "spatial exhibition situation" by expanding painting beyond its material and formal qualities towards a different form of viewing painting. Buren (in Von Hantelmann 2010:76) argues that "any production, any work of art is social, [and] has political significance". In Buren's earlier work (1960s and 1970s), the artwork is merged with the exhibition space or the presentation of his artwork merges with the environment the work is displayed in, for example, in *Les Deux Plateaux* (Figure 4) (Von Hantelmann 2010: 76). The exhibition installation space as a whole and not the painting only is Buren's medium and consequently his artwork (Von Hantelmann 2010:13, 74). Similarly, in my own work, spatiality also becomes a medium of my painting installations, therefore all the artworks merge with the exhibition space as a whole. However, where my work remains site responsive, Buren's site-specific work draws attention to the social and cultural context of the site. According to Von Hantelmann (2010:13), Buren's recent artwork explores how the experience in the exhibition space affects the audience; the artist wants to change how one perceives and experiences the traditional art museum. Buren thus aims to engage the audience in a spatial experience. His work is often temporal in its location and occasionally permanent in the space.

Viewers who frequent art environments become more attuned to phenomenological experiences. Accordingly, Van de Vall (2003:5) argues: "One needs a phenomenological vocabulary to describe concrete and specific experiential situations and compare them with each other, both in terms of their sensuous, affective and perceptual contents and in their structures". Van de Vall (2003:11) states that the audience expects to be affected when entering an installation art space. They want

[29] Site-specific painting has evolved since the 1960s, where painted environments became immersive and embodied spaces for audience participation.

to engage with the artwork's meaning to reflect upon the work's concepts (Van de Vall 2003:11). Van de Vall emphasises a reflective engagement with the artwork whereas the spectacle often seeks to entertain, effectively discouraging critical reflection. Therefore, one can argue that the location and the thought of entering an installation artwork advance the concept of the experience of artworks.

My interest in people moving whilst viewing artwork steered me towards exploring site-responsive artworks. To understand site-responsive art, I investigated notions of site-specific artworks. The painting installations I created are, however, site-responsive rather than site-specific, since site-specific art explores the social and political relation in the position it occupies, whereas the site-responsive artworks I created respond to the spatial features of the exhibition environment to enhance audience participation. Kaye (2000:1) defines site-specificity through the qualities of an "object" or "event" in its relation toward "political", "geographical", "aesthetic" or a particular "discourse". Kaye (2000:1) further posits that site-specific artwork is a combination of the art object or event and its location. There is a unique relationship between embodiment, immersion and site-specificity in artworks, as these components become entwined in the viewing process of art environments. I argue that site-responsive artwork contributes to an immersed and embodied audience. Site-responsive art is also created *in situ* or altered for the space in which it is exhibited.

The audience participating in installation art and site-responsive artworks often hope to engage in artworks that would enhance their experience of the artwork to an embodied experience. Their movement and the artist's directives in the space affect the audience. As previously noted, the audience perceives the artwork in the space through their senses; the artwork lures them into a more subjective experience of the artwork. In such a way, the artwork becomes a performer. It performs for the artist in the process of its creation and for the audience at its presentation. Kaye (2000:3) is interested in site-specificity as a "performance of place", arguing that the artwork engages in the specific location to activate the space through context and the work's presence. In site-responsive art, a performance of place can be described as an artwork that activates the sensorial properties of the space for the viewer. Additionally, it is an artwork that involves and attracts the audience into a multi-sensorial experience by means of how the artwork is presented, or the capacity to see the space through the artist's eyes. Performance of place can also be

explained as the activities or movement occurring in a space and how objects present themselves or are presented in that space.

2.6 Painting as installation art and spatial practice

An installation art space is created for the audience to be more involved in an exhibition space by means of movement and sensorial experiences. In this section, I investigate painting as installation art and the relationship between the artwork and the viewer-participant in the exhibition space. Installation art is different to object-based mediums such as painting and sculpture, where one can view the artwork in various spaces because it is portable (Bishop 2005:6). The installation artist creates singular site-specific or site-responsive artworks where the audience can only experience the work for the duration of the exhibition (Bishop 2005:6). The experience of most site-specific installations can thus not always be recreated. I do, however, believe that installation art may be able to be exhibited in an extensive array of spaces. I thus argue that the exhibition space is an event with artworks participating in the space. The works can be either large-scale, a single small artwork or merely an empty space, depending on what the artist wants the audience to perceive and experience in the installation space. Accordingly, the exhibition space is an important attribute of the installation artwork.

The significance of installation art is the spatial consideration in which the artworks are arranged in the space (Bishop 2005:6). As previously stated, a relationship is formed between the artwork, the space and the audience when one engages in an installation artwork. I argue that the audience is more invested in an installation artwork since they experience the space first hand as intended by the artist. The audience experiences the installation artwork in its immediacy and accordingly experiences the scale and the affects provided by the artist and the artwork in the moment. Most large-scale installation artworks are difficult or expensive to reproduce. A secondary experience of installation environments may also not be as affective as a first hand experience thereof, for the viewer cannot perceive the sensorial elements or perhaps realise the actual scale of the work. Photographing the artwork does not always do justice to the scale and the effects the artworks produce in the audience. Therefore, the audience needs to be physically present and involved in the space for a whole-bodied experience of the work.

Artists such as I want the audience to perceive a lived experience of the painting installations in the same way that artists of Happenings and Environments envisioned their artworks. Creating paintings as installations produces opportunities for the audience to become mobile and at the same time enveloped in the features of the space and in the context of the artwork by repositioning painting in contemporary understandings of space (Petersen 2010:126). It is not an exhibition of paintings on a wall anymore, however, it is a space filled with paint and/ or painted objects in an installation art format. Petersen (2010:128) notes the multifarious format of painting installations, considering that the entire body becomes part of an installation. The audience does not focus on only one space anymore but moves around an entire environment, noticing different elements in the artwork at different times.

In my view, a multi-sensorial experience of a space may well be more memorable than looking at a large number of individual paintings, because of the kinaesthetic aspects involved. This might be the case as the audience becomes immersed within the installation artwork, experiencing and moving through it. One could also view installation artworks from a distance, as one would a two-dimensional painting. The audience of installation artworks might decide at the entrance of the exhibition environment whether or not to enter the space, or the artist may want to surprise or entice the audience into the space. According to Petersen (2010:128, 131), the multi-tasking of the audience in painting installations transforms painting to become "inter-textual", opposing and spatial in practice as the audience explores landscapes and cityscapes within painted objects and environments. Consequently, the audience now views painting not only as a singular object, but rather as an entire environment as one would see a landscape in nature.

I believe the audience's physical movement during their engagement with the installation contributes to their viewing experience. Their mobility in the viewing process accordingly animates them, merging them with the artwork in the installation. Warren (2012:84) describes participatory art as a dialogue between the audience and the artwork. It should be noted, however, that traditional artworks also require the audience to respond to them. Therefore, when the audience becomes immersed in artworks, they contribute to the durational whole of the work. Their physical presence, as well as their movement within installation art, is accordingly more significant

because of the enhanced experiences in the space. Grosse (2010:110) explains the experience of being in the space of *Double Floor Painting* (Figure 6) and other painting installations as follows:

> Looking at the wall and standing on the painted floor at the same time you would discover yourself in the work and on top of it triggering off a sensation of being above it or distanced from it. The contrasts of being wrapped and separated seemed to dissolve into each other and generate another state of being.

Figure 6: Katharina Grosse, *Double Floor Painting*, 2004.
Acrylic on canvas, bookshelves, wall and floor, 680 x 3800 x 1100 cm.
Kunsthalen Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense.
(Grosse 2010:101).

Grosse's paintings envelop the audience whilst they are surrounded by the work and standing on the painted floor area, making the entire installation space the artwork. According to De Chassey (2002:130), Grosse wants to provoke seduction and disgust with her overwhelming use of bright colours and large surfaces covered by paint. By using these bright colours in a painting, large rooms or sculptures, such as *Faux Rocks* (2006), the artist makes the viewer curious to experience the space. Volume also becomes an important aspect of Grosse's (2010:101, 110) painting installations; similarly, in my painting installations, volume creates opportunities for the audience to become aware of their embodiment.

Installation art in its contemporary form engages with the many possible spaces one can exhibit in, whether in public spaces or an art gallery. Art institutions or large art biennales go to extreme lengths to construct spaces that suit the artists' needs for the work in the space. For example, for Katharina Grosse's *Untitled Trumpet* (2015) (Figure 7) painting installation at the 56th Venice Biennale, soil was transported and brought into both the Giardini and Arsenale venues so that she could paint the work *in situ*.[30] The significance of the soil Grosse uses in her painting installations is to signify pigment, which is the fundamental ingredient for paint or, as Grosse (2010:113) refers to it, "coloured earth". Grosse (2010:120) coined the phrase "earth works" for her 'soiled' works. For Grosse, the soil also acts to reflect the light from the coloured walls.

Figure 7: Katharina Grosse, *Untitled Trumpet*, 2015.
Paint on soil.
Installation view at the international exhibition of the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015.
(Buist 2015:[sp]).

Grosse creates installation spaces to be occupied and perceived by the audience. They may step on the artwork and perceive it from a different vantage point. Rather than creating figurative images, Grosse plays with colour and form to depict space in her work. Her work can be said to embody the audience through space, their senses and the large scale of the environment. The audience is forced to move through her work of painted soil and fabric.

Suderburg (2000:4) argues that the exhibition space of installation art reconfigures the specifications of the artwork to overcome the limitations of a particular site. According to

[30] *Untitled Trumpet* was commissioned to be part of the curated group exhibition *All the world's futures* by Nigerian curator and art critic Okwui Enwezor (Buist 2015:[sp]).

Suderburg (2000:5-6), installation art is not only about the placement of an artwork in an exhibition; it also forms part of a larger context of site-specificity and art practice. Hence, with installation art, the institution (such as the Tate Modern in London or the Museum of Modern Art in New York) changes the art environment to adapt to the artist's needs for the artwork, or for the space to become the artwork or part of it. However, the scale and exuberance of such large-scale paintings as those by Grosse are not often found in the art scene of South Africa. This may be because such large-scale painting installations are expensive to produce and are accordingly difficult to sell to collectors.

The audience is often a participant in the installation art space because of their role and viewing of the space; however, they may very often only move through the installation environment to get to the next work. This notion is often associated with international exhibitions, such as the Venice Biennale or even the Musée du Louvre, where from my own experience it is impossible to see, never mind experience, all the artworks within one or two days, and accordingly one has to be selective or have plenty of time. As previously noted, the audience must be present in the artwork's space or in the position the artist insists the audience must occupy to experience the work as an embodied and immersed participant. According to Kwon (1997:96-97), a first-hand experience of the audience contributes to the completion of the work.

Often when viewing artworks or an installation, it may be too crowded to experience the work. It is not activated or completed unless it is viewed and experienced by the audience, especially in painting installations where the audience's involvement in the space is essential. The audience completes the work, although each interaction may differ owing to the different approaches and subjectivities of each participant. According to Palmer (2007:1-2), immersive art requires the active involvement of the audience to engage their senses in the space. Some art installations are created for intimate embodied experiences for a small audience or a lone viewer. Accordingly, artists create specific installation spaces for specific affects of audience experience and immersion. Within these painting installations, opportunities are created for any number of emotional responses that the artist may wish to elicit. The audience is in an unknown environment, which thus challenges their responses within the space.

This chapter situated phenomenology within this study as a means to explore the experience in art and to emphasise my approach to this practice-led investigation of painting installations. I explored the relevant theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology and the components that lead towards concepts of affect, corporeality, embodiment, immersion and site-responsive art by means of engaging with art exhibitions. This philosophy of phenomenology contributes to one's understanding of viewing and describing the experience of artworks, and accordingly painting installations. Further I investigated how painting installations creates awareness of a viewer-participant's embodiment in the exhibition environment, by means of site-responsive art. I found that the artist's directives contribute to the audience's experience in the exhibition space. In my investigation of contemporary South African and international artists, I looked at how these artists encourage the spectator to engage in the exhibition environments through their bodily movements such as kinaesthetic, proprioception and their mobility in the space. I found that artworks could be a mode to enhance audience experience, having the capacity to entertain and move the audience when exhibited in the right spaces. The body's senses and participation in an art installation is important for these experiences to be realised, leading towards the lived experience of phenomenology. The theory in this chapter is applied to a consideration of my creative production in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: BEYOND PAINTING: IMMERSED IN PRACTICE-LED PAINTING INSTALLATIONS

This chapter explores the motivation and ideas behind my creative practice. I consider what the notion of 'immersed in paint' implies for the artistic process. In this study, my own creative practice is positioned in the framework of practice-led research, as it allows the unfolding of new understandings toward creative practice. According to Nelson (2013:3, 8), making is central to practice-led research in order to generate insights into the artist's processes. I describe and reflect on my own artistic practice both in the studio and *in situ* at the exhibition spaces. This chapter further serves as an analysis of the resultant painting installations created for the exhibition *Beyond Painting*. Lastly, I explain, in terms of the theory discussed in Chapter 2, how the audience may participate, contribute to and experience the painting installations I created. The artworks created and discussed in this chapter will develop the arguments pursued in the second chapter. As such the painting installations are intended to heighten the viewer-participant's experience and spatial awareness and to encourage an active audience engagement.

3.1 Painting installations through art practice

In my exploration to understand painting installations through art practice and to bring the components of audience, artwork and artist together, I made use of the mediums of canvas and paint. New processes were used for the paintings in order to explore the capabilities of these mediums. Investigating canvas and painting beyond the frame is another way to expand and challenge what I can do as an artist. To explore how the artist becomes immersed in painting, I engaged with painting installations in my own studio practice and through my *in situ* experience at the Anton van Wouw House. Moreover, my research is a process of understanding and extending the boundaries of site-responsive and large-scale artworks through painting. The artworks that I exhibited were first made in my studio, after which they became site-responsive painting installations that had to respond to the architectural elements provided by the space. The artworks furthermore expand on various components and engage in practical and theoretical discourses. I also explored the modernist notion of painting and resolved to engage in methods of using paints and fabrics when creating painting installations. The intention behind my work is that

I would become immersed in the painting process, to a point where the aesthetic perception of my painting seduces the audience into an immersive and embodied experience.

Lizzie Muller (2011:94) states in her engagement with curatorial practice-led research that a curator may be inspired by their own experience as an audience member to better understand what the audience expects when viewing artworks. In the same way that Muller makes use of her own experiences in viewing artworks, I accordingly reflected on my own subjective and embodied experiences as a spectator of painting, installation art, large-scale artworks and site-responsive artworks. Viewing art installations is a lived experience, something that the audience undergoes in the art environment (Moran 2002:6; Carman 2014:viii).

I had one such experience in the large room of the French Pavilion at Giardini, where Christian Boltanski's *Wheel of Fortune* (2011) (Figure 8) filled an entire room with a moving production line of photographic portraits of new-born babies. Most intriguing was the sensorial experience of sound and sight, accompanied by feelings of uncertainty which emanated from the installation. A sense of expectation followed when the work came to rest every now and then for a few seconds before continuing the run of photographs through the space filled with perfectly-fitted scaffolding. This encounter with such an immersive artwork has led to my own investigation of embodied and multi-sensorial immersive experiences in artworks.

Figure 8: Christian Boltanski, *Wheel of Fortune*, 2011.
20 tons of scaffolding, photos of newborn babies, clock and counter.
Installation view. 52nd Venice Biennale.
Photograph by the author.

For this study, I researched the relevant theory and artworks of artists who inspired me to equip myself with ways of steering my artwork in a direction that would enhance, realise and extend the possibilities of painting installations. I was challenged by the mediums of painting and canvas and how I could expand them beyond my own creative barriers. My own existing creative practice, processes and skills are further relevant in the successes or failures of several of the artworks in my endeavour towards painting installations. I also experimented with different ways of making painting installations with paint and canvas. The flexibility of the canvas creates opportunities to produce spatial features different from those of painted spaces, such as landscape paintings. Accordingly, the visual plane shifts from an ocularcentric view of painting towards a sensorial experience, where painting is approached as a spatial practice.

In considering painting as installations, I reflected on relevant ideas of Merleau-Ponty, as discussed in Chapter 2. A person's vision and their body become entwined into the exhibition space

(Merleau-Ponty 2014:254). The art objects, or painting installations in this study, become connected with the audience in the exhibition environment as the audience moves and experiences the painting installations through their senses. This idea further connects to the audience's function of being mobile rather than passive in viewing artworks. The spaces I created were intended to entice the audience with paint and canvas until they felt immersed and embodied. My aim was to direct the audience in the space in order for them to experience a range of emotions such as angst and anticipation. As I investigated the immersed artist in the making of large-scale painting installations, I 'removed' the borders between the studio and the exhibition space in order to respond to the exhibition environment. Accordingly, whilst thinking and moving in the making of the artworks, I become immersed in the exhibition space.

Creating large-scale paintings has given me opportunities to be enveloped by paint. In the same way that Siopis creates opportunities to embody the audience in her large-scale paintings, I wish to do so through painting installations. The large-scale artworks I created provide a space where one can walk around and over them, smell the paint and the canvas and touch it, thereby becoming aware of the artwork and its presence in the exhibition environment through a heightened perception. In the same way that the audience needs to be actively involved with their bodies in the art environment to perceive the work (Merleau-Ponty 2014:354), the artist too may make use of her entire body in the making of painting installations. The artist is first of all actively involved with her body, since the work is large in scale and she needs to move around the space to reach the entire work. She has to physically engage in the making of the artwork by bending and stretching. This, too, relates to Hällsten's (2005:1) statement that movement is the way to perceive the environment; the artist accordingly moves in and around the artwork to participate in its making. The artist thus also has to choose where to apply paint by moving and looking in and around the space, just as the audience needs to do the same to perceive what the artist has done.

There is a constant dialogue and physical interaction between me and the work I create. Such interaction forms part of my subjective experience, where subconscious notions involving constant relocation and change the in environment influence my work. Moreover, people moving and walking around in spaces intrigue me and I explore this in my work. This relates to Merleau-Ponty's (2014:284) notion of phenomenology, where the audience is connected to the space and

the object while viewing the artwork. The notion of people moving through my own creative work is a strategy to seduce the audience into an embodied experience. These methods range from large-scale paintings as fixed objects to paintings with performative characteristics. The audience is accordingly activated in their role in my painting installations.

I am engaged in my own subjective and immersive experiences in the making of artworks. I become embodied in the creative production when I paint and engage with the qualities and possibilities of the canvas within my studio or *in situ*. All my senses are involved in my engagement with the materials of paint and canvas. I smell paint, touch paint, the paintbrush and often the canvas. The paint often splashes on my skin. I step on the paint, I hear the brushstrokes as they touch the canvas; I look at what I am painting, the colours I want to use and how to approach my process. I am affected by the experience, the immersive feeling of being enveloped in paint and canvas. The artist therefore enters into a physical and mental dialogue with the artwork during its creation. According to Dewey (1934:48), the spontaneous activities in art making embody the artist in the moments of making. For me, painting is a bodily act where I may express myself through brushstrokes, colour and splashing paint over a large canvas. It is also an intimate space where I can indulge in little details or large areas of colour.

The creative act of painting, according to Betterton (1996:4-5), is realised within the lived experience of the embodied artist in the application of different methods and expression. The creative act of painting or making art may be understood as a direct cerebral expression explained through the corporeal acts of an embodied artist (Betterton 1996:4-5). Betterton (1996:96) argues that painting by a female artist may be an indication of 'femininity', by which she explores the broader context of the body in the artwork "in terms of women's diverse historical embodiment". Such historical embodiment is a reflection of one's background and the inspiration of one's creative practice. Therefore, the artist's corporeal body points towards a broader framework that becomes materialised in paint. Elkins (2000:179-180) writes about the processes of painting and "painterliness" by means of his views as an artist and an art historian. He argues that the act of painting "entrances" the artist:

> It is no wonder that painters can be so entranced by paint. Substances occupy the mind profoundly, tethering moods to thoughts, tangling stray feelings with the movements of the body, engaging the full capacity of response and concentrating it on unpromising lumps of paint and color. There is no meaning that cannot seem to flow from the paint itself (Elkins 2000:179-180).

I believe the choices the artist makes in colour, size and technique contribute towards the overall experience of the audience. To paint creates sensorial experiences; it immerses the artist through the materials used in the process. The act of painting for Elkins (2000:5-6) is "hypnotic" and "overwhelming". Painting immerses the mind through smells and colour and the recurring motions made by the paintbrush. Audiences of paintings can even be enticed by the acts of painting in the background processes that they do not experience. Elkins (2000:180) argues that when the viewer looks at the completed painting, the paint marks may become "records of the painter's body", which may also render the "feelings and moods" of the artist. Elkins (2000:180) continues:

> Paint incites motions, or the thought of motions, and through them it implies emotions and other wordless experiences. That is why painting is a fine art: not merely because it gives us trees and faces and lovely things to see, but because paint is a finely tuned antenna, reacting to every unnoticed movement of the painter's hand, fixing the faintest shadow of a thought in color and texture.

By means of the ideas of Betterton and Elkins, the corporeal and immersed artist is not only visible in the studio, but also in the traces of the completed artworks. The audience may not experience the materials in the same way that the artist would have; they may, however, pick up on traces of what the artist might have felt or experienced in the brushstrokes and colours used. The artist's background and influences can also change the outcome of the direction she works in. The concepts and experiences the artist would like to create may also be transferred by subconscious notions.

From a personal perspective, my background in fashion design is reflected in my fascination with canvas as a malleable and sculptural medium. My constant moving from place to place with my parents as a child, has also influenced me subconsciously, and may perhaps be the reason why I want to engage a passive audience in an activated or mobile process.

The constructed works I create are mostly large in scale in order to blur the boundaries between the artwork, the audience and myself. I believe that if artworks are large-scale, they intrude into the audience's space, encouraging them to move. The context of my artwork generally consists of people moving within spaces and notions of removing borders or creating borderless spaces in the studio and in the exhibition space. I always consider the audience in the space in the planning sketches in my visual diary. I envisage the audience engaging in the space and becoming activated within the realised work. As can be seen in Figure 9, I made a planning sketch for an artwork where the viewers are bending or stretching to see different layers of the work, as I hope they would do when in the actual exhibition space. For *Impending Forest* (2015-2017), I sketched an aerial view of the audience in the installation space (Figure 10). The sketches indicate how I consider space and audience participation in the viewing of the artwork in the installation environments.

Figure 9: Lelani Nicolaisen, Sketch for a possible painting installation (front view), installation 4, 2016. Photograph by the author.

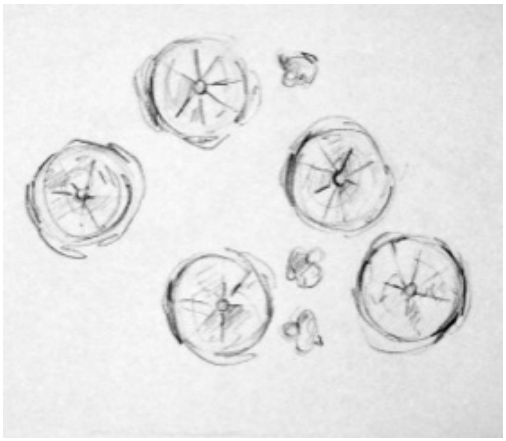

Figure 10: Lelani Nicolaisen, Sketch for *Impending forest* (aerial view), 2015. Photograph by the author.

The practice-led component for this study is accordingly planned around the possibilities of artist and audience engagement. The borders between the audience, the artist and the artwork in the exhibition environment are challenged. The audience's role in the artwork is to participate in an aesthetic engagement (Berleant 2013:[sp]). The artist may become immersed in the creation of the large-scale artwork through a sensorial experience involved in making and painting, including smelling, touching and stepping on wet paint, crawling over the work to paint it, as well as the action of painting. The artist therefore becomes immersed in the making of artworks, whereas the audience becomes immersed in the physical presence when viewing the artwork.

3.2 Process, materials and context

I find the art medium of painting both seductive and expressive through the potentials of colour and brushstroke. Another medium that intrigues me is canvas, with its flexibility to stretch over a wooden frame with ease. The stitching and construction of the fabric inspired my curiosity to expand painting beyond the wooden frame. This may take place in the same way one would create a garment – from a pattern towards something tangible and wearable. My impression is that such expansion past the frame causes painting to become a spin-off of installation art, which further extends towards painting installations.

The materials I use in my painting installations are mainly fabric, acrylic paint and PVA.[31] The PVA paint has a latex binder that makes it more elastic, preventing the paint from cracking easily. The paint still cracks, though, when the paintings are handled too roughly or folded. The PVA creates the foundation that shapes the fabric into its desired form. However, it is also the priming base to the fabric of the painting installations created. A primer is applied to the stretched canvas as a base before attempting to paint it; PVA is used in the same way to prime the fabric for the creative work in the study. PVA is used to fill larger areas of colour of the painting installations, as it is a cheaper alternative to acrylic paint. Nonetheless, acrylic paint is mixed with PVA to create mature[32] colours, but is, however, used on its own to paint detail in the painting installations, such as in *Paint on Canvas I* and *II* (2014) (Figures 11 and 12). Specially-mixed colour PVA is required for larger coloured areas, such as in *Fields of Colour* (2016) (Figure 20). Accordingly, PVA is a substitute for acrylic paint where necessary to fill large areas of the artworks.

Figure 11: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Paint on canvas I*, 2014.
Canvas, acrylic and PVA.
Photograph by Shenaz Mahomed.

[31] PVA stands for polyvinyl acetate. It is mostly used as interior or exterior house paint and has a poly (vinyl acetate) latex binder.

[32] The term mature is used to describe mixed colours rather than making use of colours directly from the tube.

Figure 12: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Paint on canvas II*, 2014.
Canvas, acrylic and PVA.
Photograph by Shenaz Mahomed.

I mainly use canvas as a foundation for the shapes I create, but sometimes use other fabric varieties, such as calico or bull denim. These variations give the body of work different weights, weaves and tones in colour. The different fabrics are also woven in different densities, influencing the amount of paint absorbed by the fabric. As a result, the pressure I had to exert to apply paint on the fabric differed in many instances from fabric to fabric.

The paint used for my work, such as acrylic paint and PVA, is quick drying. As the work is large in scale and therefore takes a lot of studio space and time to dry, this was an important consideration. Because of the abstract and experiential nature of the work, I generally used colours intuitively. I am intrigued by the notion of the expressiveness of colour. In other words, although I do predetermine what colours I want to use, as I paint, I use and change colours spontaneously as the process continues. I usually start my paintings with transparent washes of colours such as Payne's grey or Burnt Sienna to direct the colours that would follow. When I mix these transparent layers, I add a lot of water to the colours for the outcome to be light and natural, as it is absorbed by the canvas.

I apply large areas of coloured washes, often splattering and letting paint run or drip from the works in order to create unique patterns on the raw and primed canvas. The washes of colours are the foundation from which I work and build on. It is important to give the canvas time to absorb the paint and dry before layering more colours. When adding too many wet layers, the colours may become messy and dull, especially if there are puddles of coloured water on the canvas waiting to be absorbed and dry. The first two or three layers create spontaneous patterns according to the fold and weave of the fabric. At this stage the layers of paint remind me of a

colouring book, and I seek out interesting shapes and overlaps of colour to paint. The shapes formed by the running paint and random splashes are the patterns that I follow with the subsequent layers. This process of searching for areas to paint is connected with the concepts of proprioception and kinaesthetic. This means that I walk around the work to find interesting areas, look closer, bend or stretch to find better or more seductive details to follow. Hence there is a relationship between my body and the way I choose to apply the paint to the canvas.

The paint marks on the unprimed canvas differ from those on the primed areas. The paint on the unprimed areas is absorbed and stains the canvas in the process. The stains are natural and organic in shape, with finer details such as splatters and different tones of the same paint. I often pour water into a jar, then add the acrylic paint and shake it to mix with the water – I then open the jar and paint with a large brush or just throw it over the canvas. The acrylic paint does not always mix perfectly with the water, and therefore leaves solid pieces of the acrylic in the water-based mixture. When I paint over these areas, acrylic pieces are picked up by the brush and spread unevenly between the water-based strokes and the solid paint on the canvas. Other times, when I spill the paint onto the canvas, these acrylic pieces are displayed in a spontaneous and splattered manner as their pigment distributes into the water-based areas.

The brushes I paint with vary from basic acrylic paintbrushes or craft brushes to watercolour brushes, varnish brushes, house painting brushes, and a broom. The brushes differ in sizes and widths to cover smaller or larger areas, but also to create different types of mark making. The manner in which I paint is abstract, hence giving the canvas the opportunity to direct me where to paint. The paint flows in different directions depending on the shapes I create with the canvas during the painting process. The marks created and the distribution of paint on the canvas are therefore dependent on the three-dimensional shape of the canvas.

With regard to the shapes I created for the painting installations, I started to build the supporting structures in my studio. These objects were often from random things in my studio, for example 20-litre PVA buckets or a ladder, and the flexibility of the canvas itself. I roughly primed areas of the stretched-out canvas on the floor before I shaped it. The priming of the PVA helped the mark making when I started to add colours. I then splashed paint and afterwards I searched for patterns

to take the painting further. I often created new structures with the same canvas to create new shapes and paint patterns. Most of the final painted shapes were created *in situ*.

Similar to the manner in which paint has the ability to flow in its own direction, the audience may move in any direction that the installation allows. In my works, I aim for the audience to become corporeal and mobile subjects in the viewing of this body of work. The painted subjects, which were the figures I painted, are now corporeal bodies participating in the installation space. One may also argue that the audience becomes performative participants within the work, completing the painting installations.

My use of canvas as a flexible medium is inspired by landscapes. Most of the works created are sewn with a sewing machine to enlarge the canvas surface. Consequently, the works become much heavier and are difficult to 'confine'. In many cultures and countries, and for many centuries, cloth and needlework has been women's household craft (Leslie 2007:xi). In contemporary art, cloth is explored in many art movements, for example, land art, installation art and textile art. For example, the artist Ann Hamilton suspends cloth in all sorts of forms to create art environments in which the cloth creates a dialogue with the audience (Moszynska 2013:171). Hamilton (Ann Hamilton studio 2017:[sp]) describes cloth as follows:

> Cloth is the body's first architecture; it protects, conceals and reveals; it carries a body's weight, swaddles at birth, covers in sleep and in death. A patterned cloth symbolizes state or organization; a red cross stitched onto a white field is the universal sign of aid. A white cloth can be a ghost, a monster or a truce. John Constable described the sky in his paintings as a 'white sheet drawn behind the objects.' When we speak of its qualities, we speak of a cloth's hand: we know it through touch. Cloth is the hand that is always touching. Its felt experience is evoked and described by the other hand that we always inhabit, that of language.

Cloth, as Hamilton explains, has many meanings and may create different feelings in its audience as it inhabits space and is tangible. In the same way that Hamilton explores cloth as an installation medium, I explore cloth in my creative practice as a medium entwined with painting. Thus, I do not separate the canvas as fabric from the medium of painting.

The audience, who was immobile in my two-dimensional artworks, has now become activated. The audience and the artworks in this study participate in performative encounters with one another. The performance is by chance and the audience is perhaps unaware of their role or performance in the work. As noted by Kaye (2000:3), the artwork becomes a performance space and consequently influences the spatial experience of the viewer. I use electrical motors and motion detectors in *Impending Forest* (Figure 13) to activate and perform on the audience's unintentional demand. The audience becomes part of the work in context so that they form part of a larger engagement with the painting installations. The audience's physical interaction, movement and viewing activate them in the work and immerse them in the painting installations.

3.3 *Beyond painting*

The intention behind *Beyond Painting* (2017), the body of artworks I created for this study, was to trigger an embodied experience for the viewer-participant. In this section, I unpack the various artworks in the *Beyond Painting* exhibition: *Impending Forest, Closer, Inhabit, Sprawling, Fields of Colour, Impede, Bolting,* and *A Chair on a Painting.* Viewing art from various perspectives, as explored by Merleau-Ponty (1996:124-125), is greatly influenced through bodily acts, for the body is interwoven in its movement and senses. My own bodily act of making art engaged me in a subjective experience whilst making the artwork and completing some of the work *in situ*. The performativity of artworks in a theatrical art installation may engage the corporeal presence of the audience, thus creating a sensorial embodiment. It was my intention to express the notion of theatricality in artworks, whereby the audience is visually fascinated whilst being in an environment of painting installations. My aim here was to explore to what end a painting installation heightens viewer-participants' awareness of their embodiment when viewing painting installations in the exhibition environment. The audience's movement in the space is not disregarded, for they activate various spaces in the exhibition environment. From this point on, I move towards creating painting installations for immersive and heightened purposes within my studio or in site-responsive spaces. I also regard my own immersive experience as important in the making of the artworks.

3.3.1 *Impending forest*

Impending Forest (2015-2016) (Figure 13) comprises a cluster of seven painted canvas cylinders hanging from the six-meter-high ceiling to the floor of the historical studio of the artist Anton van Wouw; the canvases therefore respond to the architectural proportions of the studio.[33] The cylinders were tall and their presence in the space they occupied was phenomenal. Their radiuses varied from 21 to 57 cm. All the cylinders were five meters tall and had slits that created openings in the works, big enough to envelop a person. These slits exposed the raw inside of the canvas cylinders. The painting on the cylinders also varied in intensity, and on some of the cylinders much of the raw canvas was still visible. There was a 'feminine' quality in these cylinders owing to the dominant use of reds and pinks, but also the softness in how these colours flow into each other. This feminine quality is also evident in the manner the cylinders move, by means of how the fabric opens up and twists as a result of the stitched slits in the canvas. The canvases were spread out lengthwise and stitched into their cylindrical forms using a sewing machine. The work was made to respond to the specifics of the room, where the cylinders intruded into and became an essential part of the space. Some of the canvas cylinders are light in weight and move slightly when the audience passes by them or when there is a breeze moving through the space, giving the works a presence of their own.

[33] Anton van Wouw (1862 – 1962) was a prominent twentieth-century Dutch sculptor who resided in South Africa.

Figure 13: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Impending forest*, 2016.
Installation view.
Anton van Wouw House, Pretoria.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

Two motion sensors were placed in the room, hidden from the audience. These sensors, with power supplies attached to electrical car window motors, were connected to three of the works. The motors generate different sounds, depending on the type of motion performed by the work. Some of the cylinders provide a surprise element because of their sudden movement when an audience member triggers a sensor in selected areas of the space. It almost seems as if something or someone is hidden in the cylinder. The works begin to perform 'on demand' and the audience's presence is essential in activating sensors at several points in the space. There were three 'moving' cylinders, one with its own motion sensor and the other two connected to a second motion sensor. These sensors could detect more than one participant's bodily movement at a time, and caused the cylinders to perform accordingly. The initial position of the painted cylinders changed during the exhibition as the shape of each canvas changes after a sequence of movements. The

cylinders move in different directions and at different speeds; for example, one moves very slowly and calmly, whereas another performs in a boisterous manner.

In *Impending Forest,* I engaged in the performative and theatrical aspects of painting installations and how these factors provoke audience interaction, indicating experiences such as anticipation, angst, excitement or surprise. The title further refers to something looming or approaching, thus to a response created in the space. The work accordingly called for the audience to move between the artworks in order to activate its performance. Multiple audience members could activate the work at the same time, and the immediacy of the artwork's responses created lived experiences for the audience.

The cylinders become 'alive' to perform for an audience within the space in an un-orchestrated manner. Moving through the space, the audience is now involved in unconscious participation, their senses heightened. The audience, not knowing when the cylinders would move again or which ones would become activated next, becomes anticipatory viewers, immersed in the space as they themselves become activated. The motion detector surveys the audience's presence in the space, watching and waiting for their bodies to move. A role reversal takes place between the artwork and the viewer, as the viewer is now the one gazed upon. The artwork, now animated, creates an embodied experience for the audience, since they perceive the space through their senses. The artwork achieves this, for example, through the wind created by the movement of the cylinders, the sounds of the different mobile artworks, and the visual experience from the artworks moving.

Owing to its scale and animated character, *Impending Forest* creates a presence in the space. The picture plane constantly changes as the audience moves freely and randomly through the space. The art installation represents itself in the space and does not merely become an object in the space; rather, it becomes part of the meaning and the representation of the space. Active involvement with the body contributes to the audience's perception of the entire viewing space and thus becoming embodied in the space (Merleau-Ponty 2014:330-331). Each audience member has their own subjective experience in the art installation; however, it may be that they are not affected by the artwork at all.

This artwork forces the audience to move around, towards and away from the installation space. Multiple viewers can activate different cylinders simultaneously, forming a dialogue with the artwork and other participants, colluding for the work to perform again. The audience is now responsible for the sound made by the work twisting and sweeping across the floor, becoming more powerful, thus forcing one away from the cylinders. When viewers enter the room, they tend to stand still for a moment, unsure, and then proceed to find that the work moves. As the works provide the audience with anticipation and satisfaction, their experience may become more exhilarating.

Independent (2015) (Figure 14) is an isolated cylinder from one of the *Impending Forest* cylinders. The painting on this work was directed by the canvas in my studio; the patterns of the paint moved spontaneously in various directions for me to follow with many layers of paint. The work viewed separately from *Impending Forest* is also mechanically induced. It becomes a body on its own as it entices the audience into a performative dialogue.

Figure 14: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Independent,* 2016. Canvas, Acrylic paint and PVA. 500 cm Photograph by Carla Crafford.

Besides the interaction between the artwork and the audience, a dialogue further emerged between the artwork and the artist. In the making of these cylinders, I hung them from a ceiling as they would appear in the exhibition space. The upstretched canvas draped lightly from the roof to the floor; however, it was much taller than my studio space, and I had to paint sections of a cylinder at a time. I primed the work in specific areas where the canvas would allow me. As the canvas did not have a solid structure to give resistance to the paint and was thus pliable, it directed me where to paint. The loose-hanging canvas rejected some of the paint, making the work decide where it wanted to be painted. The cylinders were then painted according to the movement of the canvases, or by force where I really wanted to add some paint (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Lelani Nicolaisen, Studio photo, 2016.
Painting cylinders for *Impending forest*.
Photograph by Ian van den Berg.

3.3.2 *Closer*

Closer (2017) (Figure 16) is a performative artwork inspired by *Impending Forest.* The process of my engagement in a dialogue of painting on an animated canvas was filmed (Figure 16). Like *Impending Forest*, the canvas was shaped into a cylindrical form. In the video still below, I am painting a cylinder-shaped canvas hanging from my studio ceiling to the floor. The canvas cylinder was coupled with a motion detector and an electrical motor. With each of my movements in a certain range, my body's motion was detected and the work started to spin. I am wearing a clean white overall with no paint marks thus far. As I started painting, the canvas started to spin, moving faster and more boisterously and creating gusts of wind. I tried to paint the work, but the lively canvas made the task difficult.

The video presents my conversation with the canvas cylinder I stitched and created, a conversation not with words but rather bodily gestures. I painted the canvas in its animated state. I started by adding white PVA to the raw canvas, the same process I followed with *Impending Forest* (Figure 13). The work was very lively and I was adamant to paint this animated body of

fabric. It was stubborn and fast and showed resistance, making my movements unplanned and tempting me to add colour to the work. My arms were too short to reach the top of the work, forcing me to climb onto a ladder to do so.

Figure 16: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Closer*, 2017.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
Video still.

The work once again became the mediator, resisting my paintbrush and directing me where to paint. I spontaneously chose the colours I wanted to apply. I pressed acrylic paint out of the tubes before I started, but it was used up quickly as I needed to add more paint to the brush whilst struggling to add paint to the spinning work. My body was in constant defence to keep up with the speed of the work. As I moved out of the sensor's sight every now and then, the work stood still and I had time to force the paint onto the work, waiting in anticipation for the work to start moving again. I experienced angst as I could not paint. I tried very hard to keep up, moving around the work, whilst also being surveyed by the three cameras recording the conversation. At times, I wanted to laugh out of the frustration of not being able to get much done. At the point where both the work and I seemed to have had enough of the situation, the painting stopped. I was immersed in the space by the wind, the smell of paint, the splattering on me and the sounds

created by the moving work as it swept across the floor. Like the cylinders of *Impending Forest*, the cylinder for *Closer* is not over-painted and the canvas has some breathing space.

3.3.3 *Inhabit*

Inhabit (2017) (Figure 17) is a painting installation produced to create immersive and embodied outdoor experiences for the audience in the exhibition environment. The artwork was created *in situ* for the Nirox Winter Sculpture Fair in 2017. I took the opportunity to create a painting installation within the sublime setting of the Nirox Sculpture Park, where the mediums of canvas and painting steered me towards a multi-sensorial experience in the space. The work consisted of approximately thirty-five meters of canvas woven into four smaller sections between forest trees in the park (Figure 17). This natural setting and the idea of a landscape as setting intrigued me; I became entwined in this work as the painting installation was in the landscape and the landscape in the painting.

In the landscape environment with its sensorial attributes, the painting creates a space where the audience can become embodied. Sounds of water flowing, birds singing, the crackling of dry leaves when stepped on and the smell of wet grass and trees in the environment create an embodied artist and audience. Malcolm Andrews (1999:201) argues that artists paint landscapes outside of the studio confines in order to be immersed in the environment they portray in their painting. Andrews (1999:201-202) maintains that “open-air” painting has been done by landscape painters since the late eighteenth century as a way of creating a more truthful depiction of the space being painted.

Figure 17: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Inhabit*, Nirox Sculpture Park, 2017.
Canvas, PVA and Acrylic paint.
Sizes vary, approximately 35000 mm in length.
Nirox Winter Sculpture Fair 2017 at Nirox Sculpture Park, Krugersdorp.
Photograph by the author.

In the abstract nature of the work for *Inhabit*, I chose to let the shadows cast by the trees direct my painting. The shadows constantly changed, creating layers of distorted painting. This style of painting created opportunities for me as artist to be immersed by the process of painting, as I had to engage physically and mentally with the environment in which I painted. Painting in the space also left unintentional traces of paint on leaves and branches as I worked. These traces, in effect, became smaller canvases, probably noticed by only a few audience members.

A section of *Inhabit* was recreated *in situ* at the Anton van Wouw House (Figure 18) to fit into the features of the natural elements of the exterior of the space. This work was stretched between three trees in the direction of *Fields of Colour* (see Figure 20), creating a visual dialogue in the space. It was painted only with white PVA by responding to the shadows casted on the canvas. The morning of the exhibition I painted some fresh areas of paint to create the idea that the painting inhabits the space visually, by touch and by the smell of wet paint. Accordingly, these elements competed with the natural elements of the surrounding space.

Figure 18: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Inhabit*, Anton van Wouw House, 2017.
Canvas and PVA paint.
700 cm x 150 cm
Anton van Wouw House, Pretoria.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

3.3.4 *Sprawling*

'Sprawling' means to expand or spread. *Sprawling* (2015-2017) (Figure 19) consisted of folded and crumpled pieces of canvas of assorted sizes spread over walls and in different spaces, such as between the plants or in little holes and nooks in the exhibition environment. The small painted objects, which emerge in various places, surprise the audience as they move through the exhibition space. The work is perceived as lightweight and tangible and was painted only with white paint, not with colour. These shapes are delicate although not breakable, as they are soft and pliable fabric. I stitched and pinned a few of the sprawling paintings onto a section of the interior walls of the Anton van Wouw House. Others were plastered into the walls in areas so that it seemed as if the paintings were trying to climb out of the wall. The use of sandpaper to flatten the crack filler on the walls created dust beneath the objects, contributing to the idea that the paintings were 'escaping' out of the wall.

Figure 19: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Sprawling*, 2015-2017.
Canvas, PVA and crack filler, detail view.
Sizes vary.
Photograph by the Carla Crafford.

For this exhibition, the audience is once again mobile. The audience may still smell the wet paint and the sanded dust when entering the space, and may be embodied in the space where these sensory elements are present. The audience has to look and move around to see the layers of sprawling canvases creating layers between the paint, the canvas and the wall. One can look up or down to view these layers or view them from the side. There were a few of the *Sprawling* canvases on the floor, compelling the audience to walk around them or step over them. Furthermore, it may seem that the painting installation responds to the neglected interior areas of the Anton van Wouw House. Some of the wood had been eaten away or had rotted, and there were also badly repaired nail cavities where the paint differed from that of the wall. In the same way, the *Sprawling* objects in the space seem to contribute to such neglect. This idea can heighten the subjective experience perceived in the space. The audience might have considered these artworks to be playful as if they were lying in wait in nooks and crannies. However, the works may also have created a sense of surveillance, watching the audience as they explore the exhibition space.

3.3.5 *Fields of colour*

Fields of Colour (2016) (Figure 20) consisted of three sheets of canvas fabric, each ranging in dimensions of approximately one-and-a-half meter wide and fifteen meters in length. This work was exhibited in the garden of the Anton van Wouw House. Each sheet of fabric was painted on one side with solid colours: cadmium red hue, Payne's grey and light blue. On the other side, the canvas fabric was kept raw, referring to the materiality of the canvas. These colours were chosen for their ability to draw colours from the surrounding environment, yet without being absorbed in the space. The colours of the architecture and garden responded to the colours of the painted canvas, and vice versa. The artworks were positioned in such a way so as to influence the audience's movement through the garden.

Figure 20: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Fields of colour*, 2017.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
150 mm x 1500 mm.
Photograph by Carla Crafford, 2017.

The long rectangular fabric sheets of *Fields of Colour* engage with the space by being flexible in their material form. The Payne's grey canvas was positioned at the entrance of the exhibition

environment, spreading out of the fishpond, with a similar colour painted on the bottom end of the pond. The canvas spreads from the pond into the audience's walkway, forcing them to walk over the work (Figure 21). Some audience members may not even have been aware that it is an artwork. The cadmium red canvas was spread and placed on the paving in the garden area, where it moved down the stairs towards the old garden refuse dump. The refuse dump was covered with fabric with a texture similar to some of the canvases I had used in my painting installations. The colour of the work reflected in the colour of the red paving and the red and orange flowers of the aloes in the garden. The light blue canvas was placed on a part of the fabric of the refuse dump where large rocks were placed to pin the fabric to the ground. I also placed some of the large rocks onto the blue canvas in the same pattern that was used on the refuse dump's fabric. Accordingly, I created *Fields of Colour* to respond to and to intrude into the exterior and architectural elements of the exhibition space.

Figure 21: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Fields of colour*, Payne's grey canvas, 2016.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
150 mm x 1500 mm.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

3.3.6 *Impede*

Impede (2017) (Figure 22) consisted of one large-scale painting installation; its title originated because it unfolded on the floor and covered almost the entire walking space of the installation environment. The work was painted with different colours; however, pinks and reds prevailed to produce an overpowering 'feminine' impression. The shape of the painting installation almost resembles a mountain; what contributes to this notion is that one cannot reach the top of the artwork. It was higher towards the middle of the room, making it difficult to paint as I had to reach the top of the work from the side. The artwork occupies a large area, which includes the floor, and obliges the audience to walk past and on the work. The entrance door is closed so tightly that members of the audience need to squeeze it to enter the space. Once they are in the space, they can move past the work in two ways, one path being extremely narrow and the other having just enough space to pass. Many details are painted between the drapes and wherever the canvas allowed me to paint.

Figure 22: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Impede,* 2017.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
Installation view.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

Impede involves the audience in a subjective experience that is activated by their movement and provision of different vantage points. The colours used were fresh and inviting, with the pinks and whites enticing the audience into the space and seducing them to take a closer look. However, it was my intention with the narrow walking area and the overwhelming scale of the artwork to create an immersive space with a claustrophobic effect.

3.3.7 *Bolting*

The painting installation *Bolting* (2016) (Figure 23) is related to the *Sprawling* paintings, as it too is almost like a body spreading out in the space. *Bolting* is exhibited at a window of the Anton van Wouw House from where it tries to 'escape' the exhibition room. The painting on the work was directed by the canvas in the way the paint flowed on the work. The colours coincidentally respond to the fire hose (Figure 24) and the exterior elements of the exhibition space. The work almost seems to have an awkward sense of presence as it is moving out of the space, and the audience does not know where it is going. *Bolting* may accordingly elicit curiosity in the audience when they encounter it. The work was furthermore also in a dialogue with *Sprawling* on the opposite side of the room. Traces of *Sprawling* (Figure 24) were placed beneath the window where *Bolting* was looming out on the exterior of the site.

Figure 23: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Bolting,* 2016.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
Installation view: interior.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

Figure 24: Lelani Nicolaisen, *Bolting,* 2016.
Canvas, PVA and acrylic paint.
Installation view: exterior.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

3.3.8 *A chair on a painting*

In *A Chair on a Painting* (2013) (Figure 25), I depict Pretoria as seen from a bird's eye view. The work is placed on the grass for the audience to view from above in a standing position. In addition, it impedes the audience's walking space. I placed a chair on the canvas as integrated in the painting; the chair was painted and displayed on its back. Being on its back, the chair is in an awkward position and cannot function as a chair. When the chair is removed from the work, an empty space remains, creating an awkward and confusing space. The work depicts Pretoria and some of its landmarks, and the chair adds a disposition to the space by serving a new function. Placing the painted chair in its truthful position in an art exhibition is still a strange concept as the audience may question its function, as chair or as an artwork.

Figure 25: Lelani Nicolaisen, *A chair on a painting*, 2013.
Canvas, Acrylic, PVA and a chair.
Anton van Wouw House.
2800 x 4000 mm.
Photograph by Carla Crafford.

The nature of the abovementioned painting installations is experiential and spontaneous in their production. In most of the work, however, the audience can experience the space subjectively. I

believe my *in situ* and site-responsive artworks have contributed to the immersion and embodiment of the audience in the exhibition environment. As artist, I provided many sensory elements in the space in addition to those existing in the surrounding spaces. Because the audience engaged, moved in and participated in the viewing of the artworks, I believe they also changed from a passive to an activated audience in this context. During the exhibition, I decided not to add labels to the artworks in the space so that the audience would have a chance to think about the meaning of the work. In this way, they could also choose their own direction to move through the exhibition and discover art along the way. Accordingly, the audience may also have felt a sense of uncertainty whilst negotiating the painting installation. Lastly, as artist, I also became immersed in the making of large scale painting installations as the work created a corporeal engagement in the space where my senses could be absorbed. All these elements provided in the space thus entice the audience to explore the installation according to their own interests and pace, thus contributing to a lived experience.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

In this practice-led study, I explored painting installations for the purpose of expanding painting beyond the frame and creating lived experiences in both the audience and the artist. I also investigated the importance of audience mobility for these experiences to be realised. Practice showed me that the audience participates in the exhibition space by being in the exhibition space; accordingly, a once passive audience becomes activated in the course of their explorations. The research component of this study engaged in the philosophy of phenomenology by means of the embodied and immersed audience when viewing artworks. These components helped me realise and understand the extent to which I had to produce painting installations that would merge with the research questions posed in this study.

My aim for this study was to create painting installations by making use of canvas to expand painting into a borderless experience in the exhibition environment. The canvas became the director in the creation of the end product, as it guided both me and the audience in the space. Large-scale site-responsive paintings were produced and formed a resultant body of painting installations within the interior and the exterior of an exhibition environment at the historical Anton van Wouw House. My aim was to expand the idea of a multi-sensorial experience through painting installations by means of a number of strategies. These included creating spaces too small to squeeze through; mechanical motion; surprise; interior and exterior artworks that created an explorative space for the audience; paint quality marks that the audience had to follow with their eyes; or through kinaesthetic and proprioceptive movements towards the quality of paint, to name only a few. The audience may engage in an activated exhibition environment and attain an heightened awareness of their embodiment when the directives of the artists encourage lively audience engagement, which is enhanced through the site-responsive artworks in the exhibition space. The audience, however, might have experienced the artwork differently than was intended or they might have found it candid or dreary, as each subjective experience may differ.

I discovered, by reviewing other artists, as detailed in Chapter 2, that painting installations might lead to an embodied audience. The audience, whilst viewing an art installation, is surrounded by the sensorial elements of the artwork and the surrounding environment. As noted previously,

immersion and embodiment create opportunities for sensory approaches and participation in the art environment. The space and scale of the artworks meant for audience experience is of significance to the study, since painting installations produce opportunities for embodiment. Notions of scale and site may further enhance human experience by means of what the artist's intentions are and how the artwork contributes to the affect and the outcome of embodiment and immersion. In this study, the significance of the body in space, both of that of the audience and the artist, interrelates with corporeality since it refers to the physical presence of the body. Corporeality is studied through the complexities of the subjective context of body and mind (Grosz 1994:x), especially when viewing artworks, as explored in this study.

Chapter 2 also suggested that painting as installations may engender site-specificity and embodiment. These elements in installation art involve an active audience in the art environment. Painting installations are fittingly intertwined with installation art since painting installations are also part of spatial practice. I explored each aspect of the phenomenological elements separately in order to make sense of what produces embodied experiences. I found that when viewing an artwork, one perceives a heightened experience since all the senses are involved in the viewing process, causing a multi-sensorial experience. Audiences of painting installations require a first-hand experience of the artwork, similarly termed a lived experience in art environments. A lived experience accordingly occurs when the audience of painting installations is enveloped by the sensory qualities of the installation space. The lived experience is further enhanced by the elements created by the artist in order to draw attention to the artwork, which the audience experiences in its immediacy. The sensory qualities of the surrounding environment produce subjective experiences for audiences within the space (Merleau-Ponty 2014:53). Thus, the audience experiences the space through their senses, being embodied and connecting to all the affects and feelings one may experience when involved in a painting installation.

When referring to painting installations, both painting and installation art are of concern in order to understand this approach to creating immersive and embodied artworks. Today, painting installations are inspired by site-specificity or site-responsiveness, such as the work of Katharina Grosse and Jessica Stockholder. Whether these installations are in galleries, at international

exhibitions or in public spaces, the artist works with the space in which the installation is to be exhibited, mostly *in situ* for large-scale installations. The artist of site-responsive painting installations is also the curator of the installations in the exhibition, and accordingly creates art environments for the audience to explore. According to Foster (2006:192), the contemporary artist often has a twofold position as both artist and curator in these large galleries and at international exhibitions. I believe this is also true for the artist creating painting installations. The "curator-as-artist" and the "artist-as-curator" becomes an expert in the area of creating situations for participation (Foster 2006:192) and the resultant experiences. The participatory element of painting installations and all installation artworks thus exist as a result of the artist's wishes, although it may not always turn out accordingly.

The audience who participates in a painting installation becomes activated through their movement and in the act of viewing the artwork in the space. When the audience engages with the space, they duly experience it. There is a distinctive ambience in an installation environment created by the smells and sounds of the specific environment, which connects the audience to a multi-sensorial experience of a painting installation. The corporeal body in painting installations contributes to the experience of the work of artists such as Siopis and Kreutzfeldt, since the artworks demand that the audience be in the space.

From my own experience, the corporeal body in the exhibition environment seeks to experience the immediacy of art. Curator Susanne Jaschko (2010:[sp]) argues that there is a universal demand for performativity and presence in contemporary exhibitions in order for people to perceive art as a lived experience. I argued that the audience experiences a performance of space not only when they are within mechanical or computer-induced artworks, but also in any installation artwork or painting installation. The exhibition environment becomes a performative space with a mobile audience.

In Chapter 3, I investigated painting installations through my own practice. By exploring a combination of paint and canvas as mediums in their own right, I identified the possibilities of the canvas as a site-responsive art medium. In this manner, I produced painting installations in my studio and *in situ* at the exhibition environment, the Anton van Wouw House. I discovered the

extensive possibilities of canvas as a medium both inside and outside the exhibition space. Furthermore, with the practice-led research methodology, I had the opportunity to expand my own practice from two-dimensional painting toward experiential and large-scale painting installations. The canvas removed from the frame, became pliable and responsive to my brush strokes. Thus the canvas become an active participant in the painting process, guiding me as to where to apply paint. Once the work was installed, the canvas, as physical material guided the movement of the audience.

My experience in the creation of painting installations unfolded from within my studio practice. In the studio, I became aware of the possibilities of painting and canvas when I created paintings that would become part of the space, and where the audience would be able to view the artwork from more than one angle. The painting installations I created evolved by means of motion, scale and being site-responsive. The artworks I produced in my studio progressed from being fragmented because my studio was too small, towards large painting installations in the exhibition environment. The painting installations not only intruded into my physical space, but also lured me into a dialogue in my engagement with them. I found that the artwork became the director, directing me to where I would be able to paint and according to what the canvas would hold and what it would resist. The artworks in my studio, and later in the exhibition space, thus became bodies I could communicate with whilst completing them. My work further evolved to being mobile performers in an exhibition space and in the garden, such as my expansive painting installations, *Impede* and *Impending Forest*. My creative work evolved by means of exploring the tangible three-dimensional painting by shaping and painting objects, such as in *A Chair on a Painting* and *Painting on Canvas I* and *II*.

To explore the embodied audience in the exhibition space, I created artworks that I believed would have enticed me at an exhibition. This notion refers back to that of Muller (2011:94), where one's own experiences in the art environment help one to know what the audience would want to see or experience. I found that my own experiences are accordingly what have drawn me towards ideas of an embodied audience and an immersed artist. I explored these experiences in the studio from the viewpoint of an audience viewing my work. I therefore intended for the artworks to

evoke different types of experiences in the audience. To achieve this, in some instances, I made use of motion detectors and other strategies such as surprise elements; for example, the *Sprawling* artworks that were spread over the exhibition environment to attract the audience. This led to notions of kinaesthetic and proprioception, where the audience's bodies move into positions to view and interact with the artwork (Merleau-Ponty 2014:96; Montero 2006:231-233). I gave the audience the chance to explore the space on their own, where they would then stumble upon surprising components of the exhibition. In the same way that the artist creates opportunities for lived experiences, the artwork becomes a performer within the exhibition space. I therefore found that painting installations become 'lived spaces', with the artwork performing in the space.

In my creative endeavour, I became immersed in the space and the making of artworks. Working in the Anton van Wouw House made me realise the possibilities for an immersive artist, not only in the studio, but also in the exhibition space. The artist produces experiences and also experiences the work herself during the set-up of the exhibition. This relates to Merleau-Ponty's (1996:123-124) comments on the artist's experience in the production of an artwork. Painting seduces the artist's eyes, hands and body simultaneously through vision and movement through what she sees and thinks, and thus ultimately depicts. Therefore, the artist may become immersed in the process of art making. As I was immersed in the exhibition space whilst setting up the work, I had time to experience the space visually as I moved through it each day, thinking of how to exhibit the works to achieve the desired impact or to maximise the opportunities offered by the space.

The practice-led research component of the study provided me with various opportunities to become more familiar with the chosen mediums for this study. I became aware that even though I experience the making of art and the artworks I create in a certain way, the audience might experience the art in an entirely different way, or even not at all. The many preliminary works I created were not a waste, since it helped steer the way towards a better understanding of the mediums and their possibilities, impressing on me a better understanding of painting installations. There were many obstacles to this study; for instance, the art installation *Impending Forest*, which I think is one of my most successful artworks, made me stagnate for a long time. Since the work had such a strong presence and demanded much engagement as a painting installation, I struggled

to move beyond it. The motion and the sensorial qualities the art installation produced accordingly challenged me. Another obstacle I faced was to let the artworks participate in the space and not let my pre-imagined concepts of what I intended the artwork to do affect its outcome. This is important, since for works to be truly site-responsive, one has to work with the possibilities of the space. Therefore, all the works were adapted *in situ* for the exhibition spaces, and some changed significantly as a result.

The most important aspect of this practice-led study was for me to find new possibilities in how I make art and how I can further and mature my practice. I enjoy exploring large-scale artworks and how they challenge my capabilities as an artist. However, I think South African artists who create large-scale artworks that may need require the space to be altered accordingly are challenged by the financial implications and other constraints when they exhibit at most galleries and museums. This might mean that artists of painting installations might have to explore other unconventional spaces to exhibit in, such as public spaces. I came to realise through practice that many artists explore immersive and heightened experiences in the production of their artwork, but few of these experiences become available to the public, such as Zander Blom's painting installations in his home. I wish to further explore painting installations in public areas where I could expand my practice to reach an audience beyond just the 'elite' art enthusiasts.

Therefore, by way of furthering this study, I have thought of ways to attract and challenge a mobile audience who do not necessarily intend to go to an exhibition to view art, since only a small percentage of South Africans visit galleries or museums. I am accordingly thinking of ways to take painting to the point where it would intrigue passers-by. I hope to create a performative space where the audience can view art in the exhibition environment whilst I am still in the space busy producing the artwork. This can potentially create different ways of aesthetic engagement in future practice, where all the elements are in place – the artist, the audience and the artwork. This would also intrude into my own intimate space of making artworks.

I think the final *in situ* practice in the preparation for the exhibition *Beyond Painting* was a productive exercise. I believe that by working in the exhibition environment I was in a direct dialogue with the artworks. The artworks further directed me how to establish their presence in

the space. I could also engage for longer periods of time in the space to become embodied by it. Creating is a personal experience where I am immersed in my thoughts and the artwork's challenges. I came to realise that I needed to let the artwork be. I do not always have to decide beforehand what it should look like, such as with many of my two-dimensional paintings and some of the artworks produced for this study. In making art, I am embodied by the sensorial qualities the artwork allows me to experience, creating a space where the artwork and I are merged in the processes and outcomes thereof. The exploration in the exhibition space advanced or changed the nature of the project, which differed from setting up an exhibition with mobile artworks that had been completed in the studio. I explored painting installations to better understand how spatial and multi-sensorial experiences within the studio and *in situ* enriched my creative practice.

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