

LOLA FROST



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Reflections on the art of Lola Frost

by Andries Gouws

These reflections on Lola Frost's paintings arose more or less inductively – I looked at separate paintings, made notes of what I seemed to be seeing, looked at the paintings again, made more notes and kept on iterating this process. There were notes about intricate, proliferating organic shapes; about intimations of the sublime; about the strange spatiality of these images, which seem to privilege complex, convoluted surfaces and inner spaces over substance shaped into simple volumes, and undermine notions of inside and outside, top and bottom. The more I looked, wrote and rewrote, the more convinced I became of the deep cohesion and unity in Frost's oeuvre at the levels of her visual language, its morphology and what seems to be its conceptual content.

In what follows I will move to and fro between fairly concrete, low level descriptions of the visual features of specific paintings, attempts to generalise such descriptions, and attempts to interpret what such features signify.

Let me start by giving a preview of the conclusions I reach by the end of my reading: Frost creates *a world that is radically opposed to our everyday 'life world'*¹ – its scale, its human-centeredness, its temporality, our confident distinctions between inside and outside, up and down. This world is characterized by an extremely *original, surprisingly consistent morphology*. The sort of simple *Euclidean* shapes, surfaces and boundaries found especially in our artefacts, but also approximated by the macroscopic features of our bodies, and those of other large animals, are conspicuous by their absence. In their stead, there is a consistent morphology of *'fractal'* surfaces and shapes: rough, irregular, complex, 'formless' (if form is conceived traditionally, in Euclidean terms), aggregations of proliferating detail which never resolve themselves into smooth, seamless wholes, bounded in such a way that inside and outside are always neatly distinguishable. In its transcendence of a human scale, eschewal of any conventionally

beautiful subject matter, and embrace of the irregular and formless, Frost's work insistently gestures towards the sublime. Partly because of the aforementioned features, it presents a powerful, surprisingly direct visual analogue of certain ideas found in various feminisms and versions of recent French theory, specifically: their critiques of oversimplified conceptual binaries.

Despite the consistency and clarity of Frost's work at the morphological level, and at the conceptual level corresponding to this morphology, at other levels it leaves even the simplest questions about what is going on, unanswered. The work is deeply suggestive or evocative, usually without any 'literal' level undergirding it. We can't answer questions like: How should we name that which these images depict; what is its identity? Often we don't know its scale, relative to us. Frost's paintings thus *couple an extraordinary determinacy and consistency at the morphological level, with extreme uncertainty, the preservation of impenetrable mystery, at other levels.*



Confronted with a painting by Lola Frost, what does one see?

Something *strange*, not locatable in terms of standard genre terms: still life, nude, portrait, interior. Sometimes perhaps a landscape of sorts. But even then, no pleasant surge of recognition of what is familiar. Nothing to evoke or satisfy a sense of nostalgia, of an environment conducive to human habitation.

These aren't abstract paintings, neither of the hard edge nor the abstract expressionist variety. They are very much representational paintings, even though there are no names that could serve as straightforward label for what is represented. When we want to describe them, we struggle to find appropriate words. Recourse to the sort of words that serve well for other paintings does not seem to help.

¹ Phenomenologists use this expression to refer to the world as we experience it in everyday life in the light of our everyday concerns, rather than as it would be described from a scientific or theoretical point of view.

Applying words to images is problematic at the best of times.² In Francis Bacon's words: "It is always hopeless talking about painting – one never does anything but talk around it."³

With Lola Frost's paintings this is doubly so, as her work seems to aim expressly at creating a world beyond the reach of the words and narratives which shape the contours of our everyday life world.

Let us thus follow the example of negative theology and try to say, rather, what these paintings are not. Mostly they do not show humans, nor the human: that which fits a human scale, part of a world in which we feel at home because it because it offers us a congenial arena in which to pursue and achieve our human purposes. Nowhere is the light a sunny one. For all that, this reality is indifferent to humanity rather than inimical to it.

The paintings seem to call up different parts of a single, varied but interconnected world, one which seems to follow, quite strictly, laws of its own (rather than the whim of an artist at play, or an artist trying to create an aesthetic world completely immanent in the materiality of paint, or the distribution of patches of colour on a two dimensional surface).

To begin with, we don't find the subjects or agents – presumably unitary, gendered – whose aims, goals, projects, actions, struggles form the lifeblood of the archetypal stories that we narrate, which narrate themselves, by which we are narrated. Once these narratives go, any sense of time on a human or personal scale is lost as well. (Instead, the title of one of Frost's paintings speaks of "deep" time). Nor do we find human artefacts – furniture, tools, machines, weapons, books, houses and other buildings, roads – except perhaps a suggestion of textiles, clothing ("Bodice"), and rudimentary doorways ("Whose unconscious", "Mairangi").

Some images are clearly anthropomorphic (Figure 1). However, these do not suggest subjectivity or agency, and seem to have lost their smooth outer skin in the process of being (re-?) absorbed into a mineral, vegetal realm (or to a sub-personal form of flayed flesh). Normally, the skin (with the fascia) integrates and simplifies that which lies under it into large, smooth masses. Frost's paintings do not proclaim the attractiveness, dignity or integrity of the subject, the way portraits, or

paintings of religious and mythological subjects, typically do. In Frost, as in the sublime generally, the object of the exercise is not beauty (in the sense in which the beauty of a painting is located in, or conserves, the beauty, in conventional terms, of that which it depicts).

The bodies or heads suggested in these anthropomorphic images lack not only the skin, but also two other aspects which are central to the academic or traditional Western nude, and to the 'beauty' striven for – muscles arranged into large, relatively smooth macroscopic masses, and a rigid skeleton (or skull) helping to articulate the body into macroscopic units like the limbs.⁴ The rich surfaces shown in these paintings invite us to discover a variety of images in them – a process in which it is hard to distinguish between what has been planted there intentionally by the artist and what we as viewers project onto it. Nevertheless it is clear that a 'literal' reading of them is either impossible or out of place.

The underlying 'stuff' out of which the body or head seems to be composed, varies. In "Venus", perhaps the most compelling of these images, the swelling macroscopic shape evokes prehistoric carvings like the Venus of Willendorf, but then, as already indicated, a Venus who has been flayed, revealing a proliferation of processes, all teeming with life and generative potential. One sees thighs, a mount of Venus (*mons veneris*) with cleft, a truncated arm, intimations of breasts. No part of the flesh is spared the turbulence by which the whole is traversed. Because the hollows surrounding the protuberances are often so deep, centripetal forces threaten to tear the loose ensemble of substructures apart. I have referred to 'flesh' here, but the substance here could also be vegetal or mineral (to me there are resonances in Venus's 'flesh' with the rocks in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*). In "Rückenfigur", the effect is primarily vegetal – also because of the dirty green which predominates – although it is also as if the skin and skull having been removed, the inside of this figure is revealed to be brain, or brain-like, all the way through. (The same could be said of the head-apparition in "Mobius").

² See Derrida, Jacques. "Restitutions: Of the truth in shoe size", in: *The truth in painting*. University of Chicago Press, London and Chicago, 1987, pp. 255–382. Stellardi, Giuseppe. 'The Truth in the Shoe: Deconstruction and the Work of Art', *Pretexes* (Cape Town), 2, 1990, pp. 39–51. Gombrich, E.H. 'The Visual Image.' *Scientific American*, 227, (3), September 1972, pp. 82–97.

³ Sylvester, David. *Interviews with Francis Bacon*. London, Thames and Hudson, 1975, p. 100.

⁴ We can add that the shapes of Frost's anthropomorphic images are not the shapes of youth – smooth, convex images of plenitude. They thus also invoke the aging body, which chimes with the feeling we get with some paintings (such as "Taking risks," Figure 1) that we are viewing ruins.

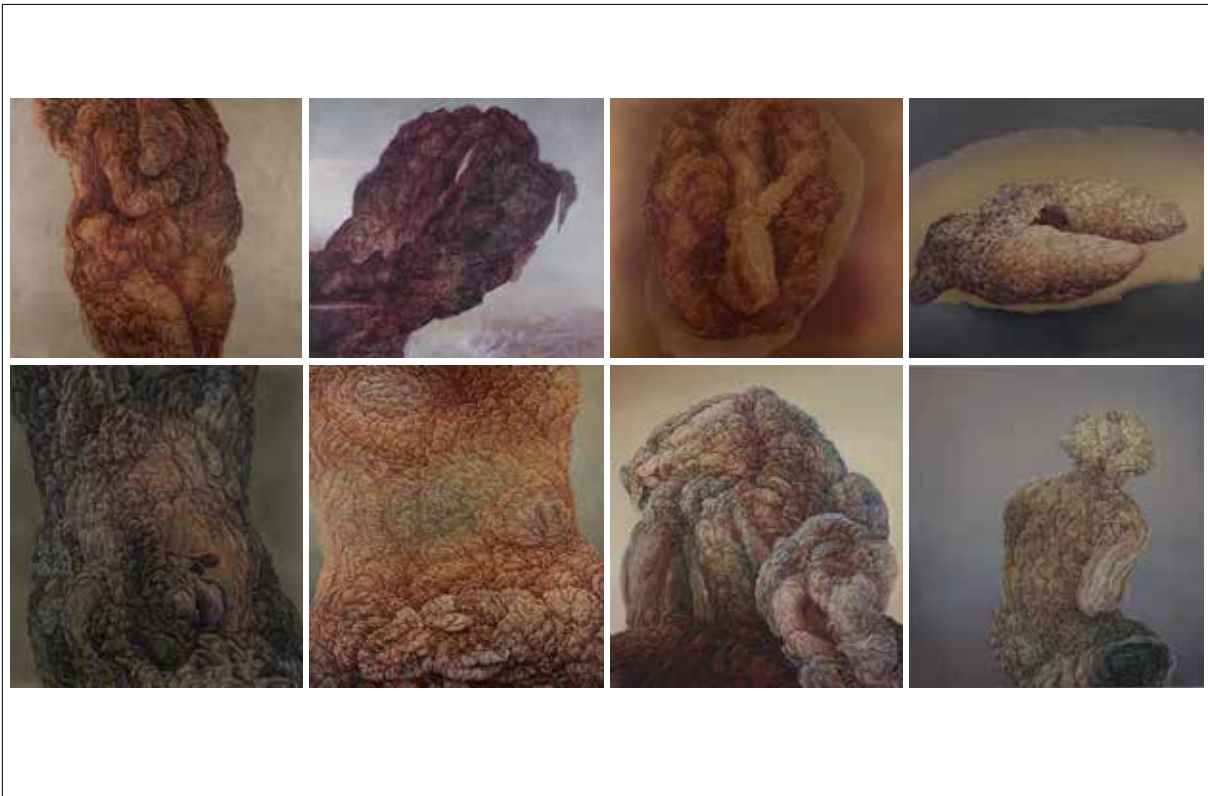


Figure 1 (top row) Venus (catalogue number 3), Taking Risks (34), Mobius (4), Over the Edge (21) (bottom row) Blue Torso (8), Bodice (7), Whose Unconscious? (no copy), Rückenfigur (no copy)

Thus, even the most anthropomorphic of Frost's images do not show persons, with subjectivity⁵ and agency – in fact even the ability to locomote or grasp things is absent – as limbs, legs and hands are lacking.

If there are no persons, then of course there cannot be sociality, human relations of love, hatred, attraction, repulsion, conflict or cooperation either. Even (larger) animals are absent in Frost's world – we have water or watery fluids, suggestions of clouds, of rocky formations, of foliage, colonies of things reminiscent of lichen, oyster mushrooms, sea anemones, overgrown coral. If there is any trace of animal life, it is primitive – something like the soft flesh of molluscs, or encrustations of dead molluscs. As argued above, the bodies of larger animals, including humans, present smooth surfaces (skins

drawn taut over convex fascia, larger muscles, skulls), which are foreign to the fragmented morphology of Frost's world. (Such bodies also fit the spectrum of the emotions that are so constitutive of the human world – from fear, at the one end, to attraction, or the fuzzy warm feelings evoked by babies, cute animals and pretty 'babes' at the other. Had Frost's work included such bodies they would have drawn the paintings back into the human scale, and away from the sublime).



Content-wise, Frost's paintings thus resist the words and stories with which we generally make sense of our world. But they also resist *formal* accounts in terms of the distribution of self-referential patches

⁵ An alternative reading of the images I have labelled 'anthropomorphic' would make them registrations of the inner experience of the body, such as happens during a meditative exploration of bodily sensations. Such an exploration famously does not yield any experience of a self, let alone a substantial, unitary, permanent self. Instead one finds no more than a multiplicity of transient sensations moving through, or distributed over, various parts of the body. The meditative experience differs not only from any notion of a unitary, substantial self, but also from the [related] outside perspective on the self, where the unitary body (and through it the self) is presented to the outside observer. (Usually in the hope of appearing in a favourable light). During meditation one moves the focus from the self acting on the physical world and in the social world to one's 'passive', receptive awareness of the goings-on of the moment in their suchness. As in the reading given in the main text above, according to this reading the paintings would thus also not evoke the sense of an agent acting in the world.

of lines, shapes, colours, light and dark.⁶ They seem to depict or describe or create, meticulously, a whole world, with its own laws, and a distinctive, consistent morphology. It is a world of enormous complexity, but rendered so mistressfully that the spatial topology of this complexity is entirely legible. In this it reminds one of the landscapes in some of Dalí's paintings, especially those of the 1930s, even though the feel of the two artists' paintings is so very different – although they are also similar in the fact that both evoke a sense of abjection, and are likely to repulse many a viewer.

This morphology seems to obey strict laws, so that the notion of 'distortion,' with its suggestions of whimsy, wilfulness, and the arbitrary never seems to apply to Frost's unusual shapes, in the way it often does to Dalí. (To be able to apply the notion of distortion we would also have to be able to identify what a particular painting 'represents', and then to interpret her image of it as a distortion of a normal, canonical or photographic way of rendering same.)



"Treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone," Cezanne wrote to Claude Bernard. In a venerable tradition stretching back to Plato (and beyond him to at least the Pythagoreans) the real was equated with the intelligible, and mathematics, especially geometry, was taken to be the key to intelligibility. What did not adhere to this was 'formless' (or 'ugly', ugliness being equated to formlessness by Augustine, among others; the modern Greek word for "ugly," *άσχημος*, is composed of two parts, 'without' + 'form'). The geometry of the time, Euclidean geometry, was (limiting ourselves to two dimensions) one of straight lines, circles, triangles, squares, etc., and (moving on to three dimensions) one of spheres, pyramids, cubes plus the further series of regular polyhedrons or 'Platonic solids'. As one moves along the outline or surface of any of these shapes, its behaviour is simple to predict – more of the same, or a predictable change of direction at a corner or edge. This also means that it is easy to determine whether anything lies inside or outside any particular boundary.

Now suppose this is one's model of intelligibility, of the nature of distinctions and how they should

be understood. Suppose also that one applies this model to distinctions like self/other, us/them, male/female etc. Then one will be inclined to think of the two sides of the distinction as non-overlapping, not intertwined, not mixed, of the boundary as sharp rather than smudged or fuzzy, and of what lies on each side of the boundary as uniform and unitary – monolithic. The simplicity of these relations is expressed by the simplicity of the spatial schemas with which one can map them. This is also a morphology that is highly amenable to a representation in terms of linear perspective, which has long been conspicuous by its absence in Frost's work.

As will become clearer later on, the morphology of the world created in Frost's paintings provides a systematic alternative to this traditional model of intelligibility. Not by fudging things – for instance in an impressionist or expressionist manner – nor by renouncing intelligibility in the name of disorder or formlessness. On the contrary – in its three dimensional shape and disposition Frost's imagery is highly determinate, a model of legibility and intelligibility, even if what seems to be depicted in the paintings is usually mysterious and impossible to name with any confidence. (I keep on being surprised that there are no lapses in Frost's chosen morphology; nowhere is her rendition of it less than convincing. This requires that as an artist her sensibility, skill and judgement be utterly reliable).

It is seldom clear, and sometimes completely unclear, how the viewer is to conceive of the substance underlying this morphology. The most recognisable substance is water, or watery fluids, in various states ranging from calm, with just the tiniest bit of rippling, to raging cascades. But the substance underlying other, firmer parts of the image is ambiguous. The one moment it seems closer to rock; the next to something vegetal – sea anemones, foliage. In some cases we seem to be in the presence of an on-going process in flux, in others such a process seems to have coagulated into something hard. Sometimes the underlying substance is closer to parts or colonies of primitive animals like molluscs or tubeworms; at others to the scallops, folds and whorls of a vulva⁷ or vagina, or to structures typical for other organs or types of tissue, like the milk glands inside the female breast.

⁶ Diagrams intended to reveal such 'formal' qualities (the butt of a series of late works by Lichtenstein) have tended to discover in the complexity of paintings simple Euclidean shapes. The fact that Frost eschews such shapes and opts (from both a two-dimensional and a three-dimensional point of view) for various types of 'irregular', 'formless', 'rough' fractal shapes and surfaces makes her work especially resistant to this standard mode of formal analysis.

⁷ In choosing for the sublime, an artist like Frost almost per definition chooses to forsake the conventionally beautiful. Freud notes the paradox that beauty is related to sexual attraction, but that the genitals, which are most sexually attractive, are not beautiful. This doubtlessly relates to the irregular, wrinkled, fractal nature of the skin and other shapes involved.

Frost's morphology is utterly opposed to the world of Platonic/Euclidean forms commended by Cezanne in his famous advice. Rather it embodies or resembles the fractal geometry⁸ governing the formation of irregular (rough) surfaces, like fissures in eroded rock, the protrusions and valleys in the shape of the human brain, the complex outlines of foam on waves lapping the coast, the cascades of water where a river encounters rapids, billowing smoke or clouds, the irregular way cold milk behaves when poured into hot tea. Fractal geometry also covers everything described by fluid dynamics, from the behaviour of gases to that of fluids to that of interstellar nebulae. (Each of these examples of fractal structures is found or suggested in some or other of Frost's paintings). Benoit Mandelbrot, the pioneer of fractal geometry, opens his 1977 book *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* as follows:

Why is geometry often described as "cold" and dry?" One reason lies in its inability to describe the shape of a cloud, a mountain, a coastline, or a tree. Clouds are not spheres, mountains are not cones, coastlines are not circles, and bark is not smooth, nor does lightning travel in a straight line. [Could it be that with these words, explicitly referring to spheres and cones, Mandelbrot is addressing or reproaching Cezanne directly? – AG]

More generally, I claim that many patterns of Nature are so irregular and fragmented, that, compared with Euclid—a term used in this work to denote all of standard geometry—Nature exhibits not simply a higher degree but an altogether different level of complexity. The number of distinct scales of length of natural patterns is for all practical purposes infinite. The existence of these patterns challenges us to study those forms that Euclid leaves aside as being "formless," to investigate the morphology of the "amorphous." Mathematicians have disdained this challenge, however [...]

Responding to this challenge, I conceived and developed a new geometry of nature [...] It describes many of the irregular and fragmented patterns around us.

Long before Mandelbrot's mathematical account, fractal forms had been utilized and given pride of place in a contrasting artistic tradition, or traditions. To name just a few examples:

The organic shapes and textures found in the rocks, mountains and foliage⁹ of Chinese brush drawings (Figure 2) and in Chinese characters themselves, as well as the very practice of painting on absorbent paper or silk, where the edges of the mark are themselves fractal. Leonardo's drawings of cataclysmic floods and his studies of water in motion. Ruysdael's landscapes. The rocky wastelands depicted in some of Seeghers' etchings. Caspar David Friedrich's rocks and trees. Max Ernst's use of frottage to suggest landscape. (Friedrich and Ernst are the artists to whose landscapes Frost's are perhaps more closely related than to anything else in the Western canon – though even here only as second or third cousins). In science there were the drawings of the fractal structure of brain cells – neurons – with their axons and dendrites, by the great Spanish neurologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal.¹⁰ Since the 1970s when Mandelbrot published the first books on fractals for a wide public it has become common knowledge that there is method in the madness of what are now called fractal structures – that they have an intelligibility that can be expressed in mathematical form: the field known as fractal geometry. Here is Mandelbrot again: "Scientists will (I am sure) be surprised and delighted to find that not a few shapes they had to call grainy, hydralike, in between, pimply, pocky, ramified, seaweedy, strange, tangled, tortuous, wiggly, wispy, wrinkled, and the like, can henceforth be approached in rigorous and vigorous quantitative fashion." I am fairly sure Frost has not occupied herself with the mathematics of fractals, but her own approach to such shapes and surfaces suggests that she has intuitively grasped that they behave in any case as if they are governed by rigorous underlying laws. Further down, I discuss how the fractal morphology governing Frost's imagery ties up with a particular theme in feminism and recent French theory. But before we get there, let us examine some further features of Frost's morphology – her language of forms.

Frost's paintings tend to cluster into different (overlapping and interrelated) series, each focusing

⁸ The following URL provides a useful non-technical introduction to fractals: <https://science.howstuffworks.com/math-concepts/fractals.htm>.

⁹ These 'natural' elements will often be combined with pavilions or buildings rendered in terms of straight lines and flat planes, in 'Chinese' (axonommetrical) perspective, and sometimes dwarfed by the non-Euclidean elements surrounding them. As in Western art, fractal geometry is associated with organic, 'natural' elements, and Euclidean geometry with human artefacts. (Most natural objects and surfaces are fractal, at least at some scales).

¹⁰ See the review of a New York exhibition of these drawings at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/18/arts/design/brain-neuroscience-santiago-ramon-y-cajal-grey-gallery.html>.

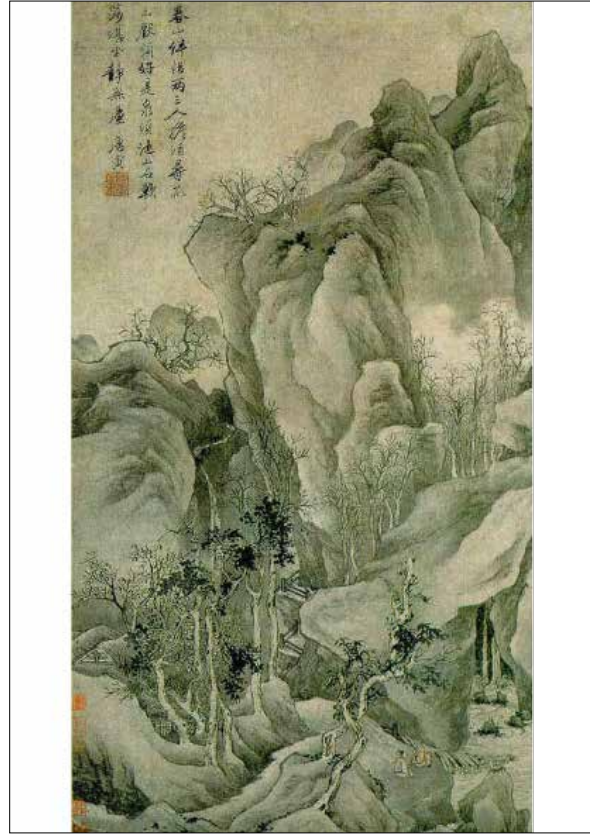
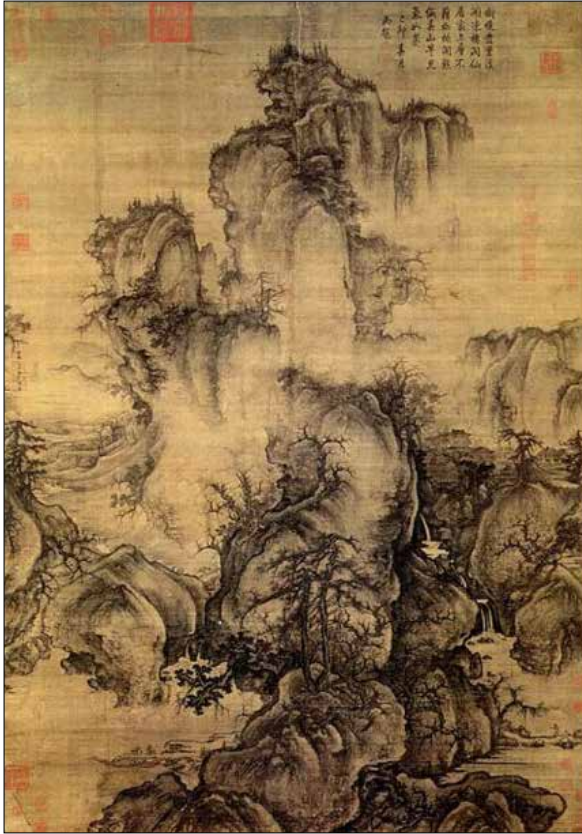


Figure 2 (left) 'Early Spring' by Guo Xi, 1072 (right) 'Conversation by the River' by Tan Yin 1470–1524

on a different subset of possible fractal shapes, with similar connotations for each subset – mountain-like, water-like, crag-like, foliage-like, strand-like, wrinkled like a vulva or scrotum. So the different series seem to show diverse corners, ecosystems, of the same world, linked to each other by family resemblances. There are also distinctions seeming to pertain to differences in scale – mountains have a different scale than the series of paintings showing structures composed of complex intertwined structures. In what follows I will discuss a number of such – overlapping and interrelated – series.

Each of the paintings shown in Figure 3 shows an aggregate composed out of repeated billowing, looping strands that mingle, intertwine, tie themselves into knots or mare's nests. They sometimes constitute vast assemblages of what seem to be iterated umbilical cords (or intestines, perhaps), then again rope, string or skeins of embroidery thread, or ribbons that glisten like silk. Often, fractal style, the larger strands are composed of twirled smaller strands. Varying degrees of rigidity are suggested, of smoothness or roughness and finer structure. Some of the rough surfaces have a rocky feel suggesting that you would cut yourself if you clambered over them. Others, despite their irregular surface, promise to be smooth as silk to

the touch. (It is worth noting how Frost's paintings mobilise, and appeal to, our sense of touch).

The foliage elements in the paintings (for instance those evoking lichen or oyster mushrooms) tend to stick closely to the surface they cover – in this sometimes evoking pubic hair. A reason for avoiding trees could be that they would come over as personages and thus take us back to the world of persons. (Psychologists often read people's drawings of trees as keys to their self-image, and in my own experience a tree can have a presence, weight and dignity recalling that of a person). The conglomerations Frost prefers also seem like accretions governed by chance – with their long, tubular, branching trunks or branches, trees would have given a larger, non-chance macroscopic structure.



In some paintings (Figure 4) bits of the fractal-like natural world seem to be taken out of context, framed and foregrounded for our attention and delectation. The focus of a painting is then a single agglomeration; Frost seems to avoid introducing multiple discrete aggregations (e.g. clouds). The clustered components she typically depicts

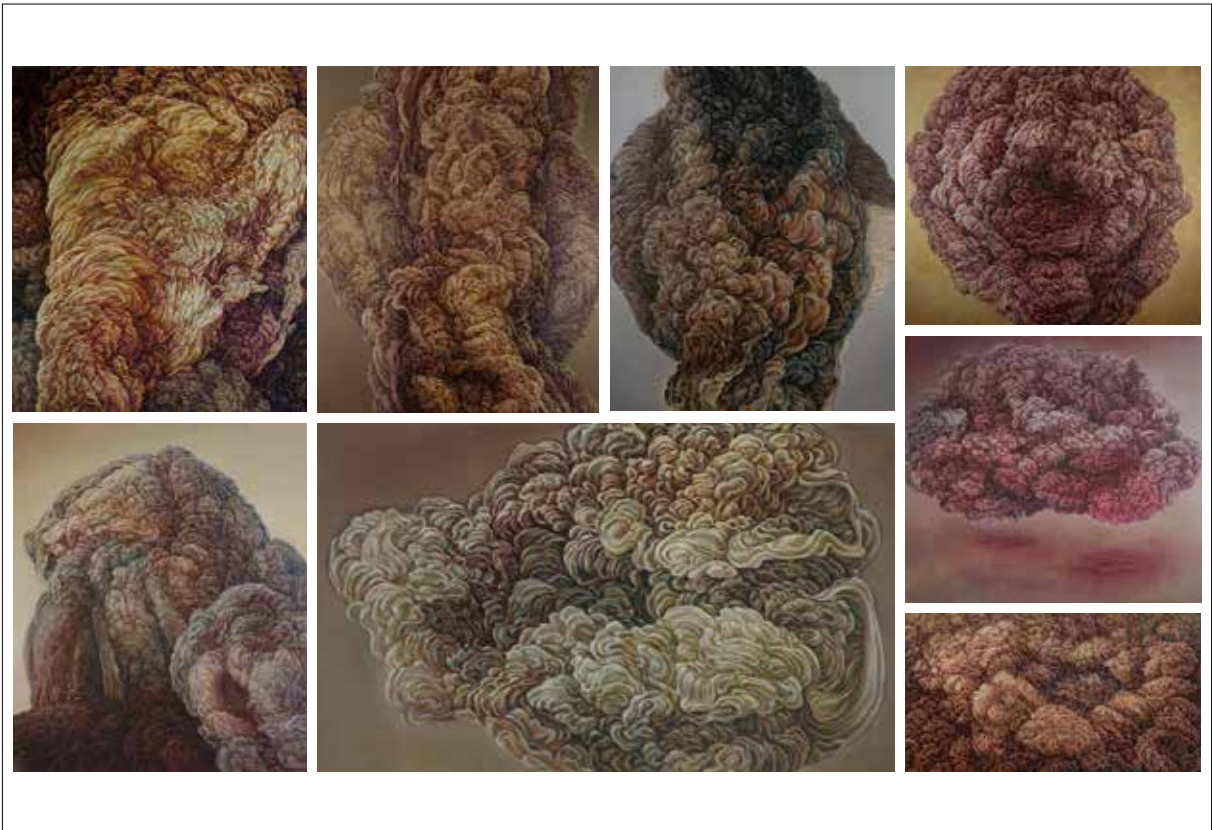


Figure 3 Series “Billowing strands” (clockwise) Sonoma (14), Coming Alive (16), Headspace (26), Gathering Mercury (9), The Dance (no copy), Line Work (10), Coil (no copy), Whose Unconscious? (no copy)

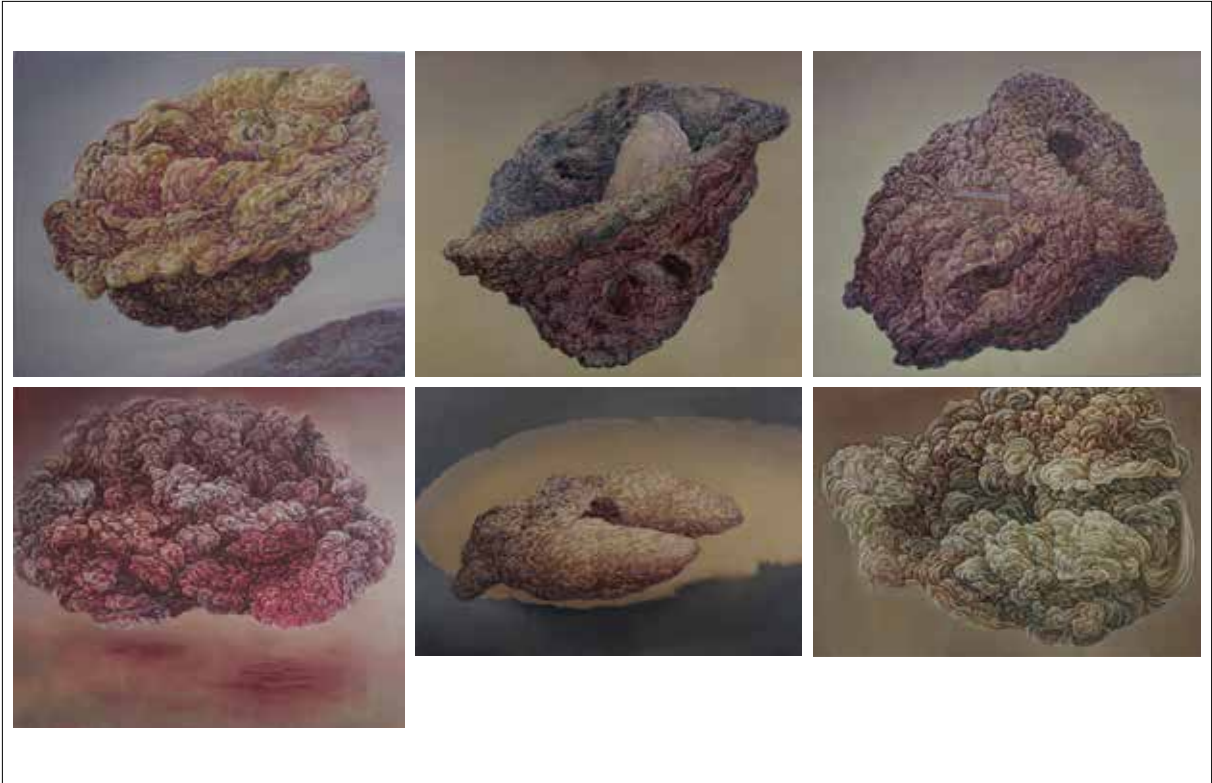


Figure 4 Series “Foregrounded specimens” (top row) Down South (no copy), Going South (17), Off the Map (no copy), (bottom row) The Dance (no copy), Over the Edge (21), Coil (no copy)



Figure 5 Series: Enclosed inner spaces (clockwise) *The Flesh of the World* (20), *The Opening* (12), *Streaming* (23), *Coast* (13)

collectively constitute some form of a structure, but one that does not seem to be an integral whole. Instead, it is something contingent and incomplete – the residue of something bigger from which an unknown amount has been broken off, or something which was never going to constitute a whole in the first place. (Admittedly some of the larger structures are brain-like, and this does suggest organic unity – but one which may be belied by our knowledge that the brain is hyper complex). In some images such an agglomeration is opposed to a ‘world’ above which it floats freely.

Frost’s paintings often show an inner space, enclosed but for one opening into the environment. Sometimes this takes the form of a semi-enclosed pool, river or cascade of water. Frost’s own glosses on them confirm my impression that they refer to female internal body spaces – the uterus and/or female genitals. Compare these images with the similar iconography of two Ruysdael landscapes (the one in the Rijksmuseum, the other in the Hermitage).

I recently saw the one from the Rijksmuseum in Sydney, more than thirty years after seeing the Hermitage one in Rotterdam, and in both cases a sexual reading seemed to force itself upon me. (Not something which I experience often when

confronted with a landscape). What is interesting in the two Ruysdaels is the repetition of the phallic tree trunks which in both paintings have their top end submerged in the cascading water below the waterfall. (Is this an image of castration? of sexual impotence? Or simply of a phallus penetrating fluid-filled female sexual spaces? With the waterfall itself referring to orgasm?). That the trees are so phallic reinforces the reading of the space between the banks of the river as that of a vagina or uterus.

In contrast, trees are absent not only from Frost’s four paintings shown in Figure 5, but they stopped featuring in her landscapes a long time ago. Why would this be so? Trees are absent at high altitudes, at very high and very low latitudes, and in deserts – the sorts of environments that aren’t congenial to human settlement or human life, a mainstay of the sublime ever since artists and writers suddenly started finding the Alps aesthetically *interesting* in the 18th Century. But I think a more important reason for the absence of trees lies in Frost’s general striving to develop an anti-phallicentric morphology. As we will see in what immediately follows, the topology or morphology of female reproductive organs – vulva, vagina and uterus – plays a central role in Frost’s strategy against phallicism, while tree trunks would



Figure 6 Two Ruysdael landscapes with waterfalls

reintroduce the phallic element that she avoids. This despite the fact that branching trees, branches and twigs have an archetypically fractal shape, and as such tend to play an important role in the work of other artists focusing on fractals.

In other paintings (Figures 7 & 8), the reference to female genitals seems even clearer – though as always in Frost the images avoid being literal. (This preoccupation is prefigured in the 1994 painting “On the Other Side” – Figure 7). Vulva-like or vagina-like openings or clefts are presented without being part of a larger body or person. This is one variant in Frost’s work of the point where inside and outside communicate or the boundary between inside and outside becomes indefinite. “Between Here and There” and “Gathering Mercury” both have vagina-like central cavities encircled by richly folded, intricately detailed vulvar structures; in the former a bright light is leaking out from the vaginal space itself. In “Inside Out” and “Towards Deep and Radiant Time”, the cleft seems to divide a geological structure vertically.

In “Taking Risks” (Figure 8) there is a water/fluid-filled vulva-like gash running down the back (or is it front?) of the suggested rocky/vegetal head. In “Mobius” the top, looped part of the lighter structure superimposed on the other structures, seems vulva-

like, and gives access to a vagina-like inner space behind it. “Going South” suggests a disembodied vulvar structure nestling a shape whose location and protrusion suggest a clitoris. A number of further cavities also evoke the female genitals. The principal orifices as well as the smaller ones in “Off the Map” have similar associations. In “Whose Unconscious” (Figure 7) the same could be said of the cavity at the bottom front of each ‘personage’.

The volcanic mountains found in some of the paintings from the Going South exhibition (“Towards Deep and Radiant Time” (Figure 7) “Living the Fold”, (Figure 9)) are also points at which the boundary normally separating the realms of the Earth’s hot, molten inside and its cold, hardened crust is breached. Moreover, the morphology of the crust itself makes it far from solid or monolithic.

Regardless of which of these readings force themselves onto the viewer at any particular moment, there are similarities in how smaller structures are arranged into larger aggregates. Unbroken wholes, monoliths bounded by smooth, simple surfaces, are practically absent. Multiplicity – a teeming, fecund multiplicity – is everywhere. There is never an integrated whole to which parts become subordinated; instead, smaller structures retain their semi-independent status. One of the



Figure 7 Vulva- or vagina-like openings or hollows (1) (clockwise) Towards Deep and Radiant Time (18), Between Here and There (1), On the Other Side (no copy), Gathering Mercury (9), Whose Unconscious? (no copy), Inside Out (5)



Figure 8 Vulva- or vagina-like openings or hollows (2) (clockwise) Taking Risks (34), Mobius (4), Off the Map (no copy), Going South (17)



Figure 9 Living the Fold (19)

most striking things is the insistence with which the distinction between inside and outside is made problematic.

Around and between the multiple protrusions at multiple scales are cavities leading into the depths or interior of the manifold or aggregate. Many of the paintings privilege a single opening into the interior (Figure 10) – obviously or vaguely reminiscent of a vulva giving access to a vagina, or the opening of a cave, or the ruins of a primitive door or portal giving access to ... to what? The ruins of a tomb? Of a dwelling?

In Frost's world the distinction between inside and outside is always moot.¹¹ The highly permeable structures in many of her paintings seem designed to problematize this distinction. This is illustrated by the three examples in Figure 11 – "The Dance," "Between Here and There", and "Coming Alive". The crevices, fissures or cavities between the protrusions in "The Dance" and "Coming Alive" are so deep that the protrusions do not form a

continuous barrier sealing off an inside from an outside. In "Between Here and There" it is not even clear that the bulbous shapes encircling and lining the tunnel going down are continuous or contiguous with each other. In such paintings the inside is visible from the outside in a way it isn't supposed to, if it is to be inside; the inside can suddenly become, or turn out to be, the outside. And we often don't know whether it is even possible to distinguish between inside and outside.



The features of fractal textures or structures that we discussed above as typical of Frost's work link to a recurrent conceptual issue foregrounded in some recent forms of feminism and French theory. Regarding this theme, Derrida is the philosopher I am most conversant with, but he has influenced many feminist theorists and other philosophers, including Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Luce

¹¹ The title of one painting, "Inside Out," foregrounds this. Another title, "Möbius," denotes a similar dislocation of our normal certainties and expectations about space.



Figure 10 Whose Unconscious? (no copy) Mairangi (24)

Irigaray, Sarah Kofman and Julia Kristeva.¹² (Apart from influence, these authors doubtless inhabit an intellectual moment in which such notions were already 'in the air').

It is widely recognized that religious and political fundamentalisms harden, simplify and polarize distinctions like self/other, us/them, male/female, straight/queer, into a mandatory either/or, rather than varying degrees of both/and, neither (quite)/nor (quite), partly/partly, sometimes more the one/sometimes more the other, or an emphasis on commonalities, fluidity, interchange, interdependence, context-dependence, etc. (These features of fundamentalism are much in evidence in these days of Trumpism, Brexit and the widespread resurgence of authoritarian and xenophobic

political movements across the globe).

The various feminisms and French or French-leaning theories with which Frost has occupied herself extensively, and been inspired by, have made a point of investigating the complexities of such conceptual distinctions and suggesting alternative ways of theorising and mapping them.¹³

According to my reading Frost has attempted to, and succeeded in, finding visual analogues for the way such theorists have problematized these distinctions. In the morphology that she has developed, she engages with these issues at a highly general, abstract level (part of my reason for using the term 'morphology,' with its formal emphasis). At this level of abstraction, that which distinguishes one conceptual distinction from another is

¹² There are also parallels with the later Wittgenstein's emphasis that our concepts do not have clear boundaries, with as corollary that the boundaries between apparently opposed terms will also not be sharp. The later Wittgenstein explored how much more complex and irregular our concepts – our use of words – are than he himself had thought at the time of his earlier book, the Tractatus. His conclusions in this regard are also complementary to the ideas described here, because such complexity and irregularity cannot be captured in any "Euclidean" schematic representation of concepts.

¹³ Compared to the complexities such theorists find we are all, at least in our everyday lives, fundamentalists, treating such boundaries as if they were smooth, taking the distinctions in question as unproblematic, hardening them, and simplifying them.

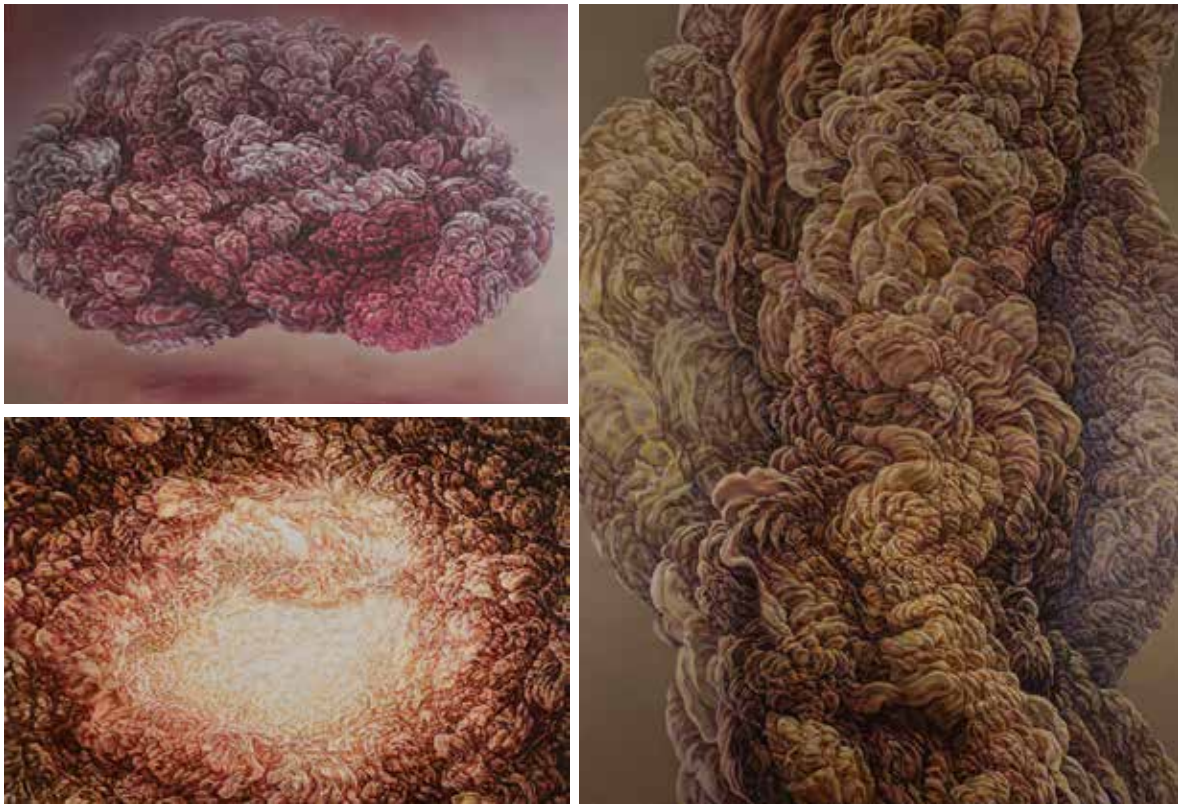


Figure 11 The Dance (no copy), Coming Alive (16), Between Here and There (1)

bracketed.¹⁴ This does not preclude her from also engaging with other, less abstract aspects of these theories, as will be clear from her own comments regarding specific paintings. However, in the reading I give here I limit myself to this one aspect where the link to me is independent of her own statement of intentions, and compelling purely on the evidence of my own eyes.

Now over the past decades many talented and intelligent artists have occupied themselves with 'theory' of this sort. How strange, then, that Frost's work is so very original! Offhand, I know of no other artists of whom I would say that they, like Frost, have succeeded in finding a visual analogue for any aspect of these theories. Why would this be? Perhaps very few artists have the requisite skills for this type of enterprise. Doubtless there is here, as always, more than one way to skin a cat. There is never a one to one relation between a particular set of concepts (or propositions, or story) and a particular image or visual language.

The visual image or language has to emerge from a series of creative steps which require trial and error and which can never be dictated by any concept, propositions, story or theory formulated in language. (Nor by any extra-linguistic reality, for that matter). Gombrich's mantra that making always comes before matching still seems convincing to me.

So Frost has had to devise these images and this language; there is no source from which she could simply have read them off. But having done so, how successful this product of her own devising is – successful to a point of having an air of necessity or inevitability.

As for Frost's morphology being one of fractals: though fractals have been quite the rage since the seventies, this hasn't led anybody else to produce images reminiscent of – let alone very similar to – hers. Nor a series of artworks as convincingly resolved as these.

The 'art' inspired by fractals has been almost exclusively two-dimensional in conception, brightly

¹⁴ When I write on art I always tend to focus on the visual. In reading Frost's art as a visual analogue for certain theoretical moves in feminism and (other) French-oriented theory, I do not wish to suggest that it would have been uninteresting if something similar had not been the case. In fact, I found her work enchanting and compelling long before I recently started seeing it as a visual analogue of these theoretical notions.

coloured, and poster-like. This is a far cry from the look, feel, and emotional resonances, as well as the cornucopia of visual delights found in Frost's work.

A use of fractals and an affinity for feminist or recent Continental theory completely underdetermines what goes on in a painting. The success of Frost's work is predicated on her artistic invention, her artistic sensibility and her artistic choices.

One of the tasks of art, perhaps its central task, is to make our jaded eyes see again, see afresh – to raise them from their dogmatic slumbers, one could say, to use a Kantian turn of phrase. (To me, one of the greatest challenges of life itself, is to keep seeing, hearing, feeling afresh. Because only then are the senses fully alive). The novel world Frost has created is one we see afresh, one we “gaze at ... with eyes [we've] not used yet”. Its forms are not unrelated to those found in our world, but it is distinctive, and lacks countless features of the everyday world we take for granted, find self-evident, and have – thereby? stopped seeing (both 'features' and a 'world' we take for granted, etc.). And one of the lures of 'the sublime' has doubtless been the promise it holds of moving us out of the mode of taking-for-granted, finding self-evident, feeling comfortably at home – even more, this promise has been central to how 'the sublime' was conceived of. Shaftesbury, one of the pioneers in formulating the idea of the sublime, referred to the earth, the setting of our life-world, as a “mansion-globe” and “man-container” – that is: unacceptably constrained and human-centred – remarking “how narrow then must it appear compar'd with the capacious system of its own sun”.¹⁵ Partly because of all the “sublime” characteristics we have enumerated, Frost's paintings distance us from the life world in which we are otherwise so comfortably ensconced. By pulling the carpet of what we take for granted from under our feet, her paintings unjade our eyes and make us see afresh. After we have dwelt in the world of her creation, we find the everyday world less everyday, less familiar. It has lost its self-evidence and we see it afresh.

Andries Gouws
Stellenbosch, November 2020

¹⁵ Cooper, Anthony Ashley, Third Earl of Shaftesbury. *The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody*, 1709, part iii, sec. 1, 373.

Life-Force

Lola Frost

Andries Gouws brings a painter's eye and a philosophical curiosity to his account of the value of an anti-Euclidean fractal morphology that structures my painting practice. These paintings he argues *"couple an extraordinary determinacy and consistency at the morphological level, with extreme uncertainty, the preservation of impenetrable mystery, at other levels"*. For Gouws such mysterious uncertainty is intimately tied up with the grammars of these fractal morphologies whose radical estrangements offer an alternative model of intelligibility to the Euclidean optics of western painting.

The political value of such a non-Euclidean fractal morphology resides in its refusal of a foundational narrative, originally delivered by Renaissance fixed point perspective, which even today, as Ned Lebow has argued, continues to underpin the masteries of the autonomous individual and the territorial sovereignty of the state. (Lebow, R.N. *Constructing Cause in International Relations*. Chapter 4, *The European reconceptualization of space*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2014, pp. 99–135).

My artist's commentary below touches on such a visual politics but focuses more on my understanding of the ethical and critical commitments, as well as the significance of the titles and geographical locatedness of this painting practice. In so doing I offer some clues on how its non-Euclidean fractal grammars and its improper and anonymous substitute selves, are shaped by an oscillating and pluralising logic to disaggregate the masteries of the self.

Insofar as such self-disaggregation is a leitmotif that runs through these footnote commentaries to my painting practice – so too is my ongoing reference to its life-force. Life-force is the name I give to a life-enhancing and generative matrix that undergirds the fractal grammars and the pluralising logic of this painting practice. Such unrepresentable life-force – suffice to say – folds and flows between us.



1

Between Here and There, 2008

78 x 68cm

A threshold between 'here' and a radiantly expanding 'there' – like Dante's *Inferno* – this painting is something of a portal to a life-enhancing quest. Inspired by the tree-tunnels of the Kentish countryside, these unfolding colour-tone lines carry a life-force energy that refuses stasis or containment by logos and the Euclidean gaze. But unlike Dante's odyssey, the impropriety of this painting practice makes its way through an otherworld by undoing the masteries of the self – to take up and delight in – the generative excess of life-force.



2

Plunge, 1999

125 x 190cm

Unlike Odysseus, circumscribed by being lashed to a mast, my response to a dark clearing in the tropical bush of Durban was to take up its siren calls and plunge into the risky politics of becoming undone. Giving over to these shimmering and proliferating tone/mark energies, that in this painting gyrate towards a dark centre, has also been part of a political and ethical quest to be-in-common-with the negativity of those who – like the sirens – contest the often hidden exclusions and regulations the phallogocentric order.



3

Venus, 2013

148 x 139cm

Unlike those archaic fertility figurines, also reduced to torso, belly, crotch and breasts, this Venus' naked and vulnerable impropriety is offset by those fecund life-force fractal folds and flows that subliminally pulse below.



4

Mobius, 2013

137 x 152cm

Resembling an unfolding and refolding Möbius strip – a spatial figure whose sublime, or infinitely recursive and mathematical structure evades linguistic representation, this vagina-brain-body assemblage opens back into itself. This seemingly abject figure pulls against those power plays which patrol the boundary between the proper and improper – by unsettling the distinctions between inside and outside, brains and bodies – to lay claim to the life-force of its accumulating fractals, slow energies and radiant tones.



5

Inside Out, 2001

130 x 184cm

Without containment by those horizontal and transparent 'veils' of colour, the discomfort of seeing that vulval and vertical fissure, flanked by two fleshy and hedge-like 'thighs' might have been a docking station for knowing and naming that which, for some, should remain unspoken. Instead, these inside-out exchanges, both vertical and horizontal, reprise such impropriety to invite a reconsideration of the life-enhancing potencies of that threshold.



6

Horror Vacui, 1997

84 x 44cm

The pulsing fullness of this all-over colour-field drawing – intersected by an almost illegible and incomprehensible trace of automatic writing offsets this title's 'fear of emptiness' – to contest the consignment of such plentitude to the negativity of the void.



7

Bodice, 2010

125 x 137cm

Insofar as these paintings, as Gouws claims “*create a world that is radically opposed to our everyday, “life-world”*” they do so via a set of visual tropes and signifying procedures that conspire to deliver an ethically motivated undoing of those power plays that sustain the hegemony of the individualising, cognitively mastering self. Perhaps one of the most consistent of those visual tropes is that of the substitute-self. Sometimes delivered as a Rückenfigur (a view of the back of an anonymous head or figure), or as in this *Bodice* painting, this forward-facing self-substitute appears as an anonymous, headless, limbless carapace that bristles with its own life-force.



8

Blue Torso, 2013

90 x 85cm

The virile voluptuousness of this blue torso makes claims to the classical order of those archetypal and archaic Kouros figures that gave rise to the figurative sculptural traditions of western art. The anonymous life-force of this substitute-self side-steps the idealising or expressive outcomes of that subjectifying trajectory, to invite instead the dissolution of the self. Such self-overcoming is one of the most sought-after, if risky, ethical destinations of western art. The fractal grammars, deconstructive processes, improper tropes, pluralising substitutional assemblages, unconscious screens, other-worldliness and the unrepresentable and interconnecting life-force energies of this painting practice – all conspire towards that destination.



9

Gathering Mercury, 2009

140 x 130cm

An unruly and toxic metal-fluid, mercury is impossible to gather. A similar challenge frames my struggle to ride what sometimes feels like a tiger of a painting practice – ethically committed to undoing those hierarchies which secure the knowing and bounded self – via an unconscious expenditure of life-force drive – to register (with difficulty) that intersection as form.



10

Line Work, 2007

86 x 46cm

Line/tone modelling is itself a chiasmic and chancy practice that crosses between the fractal-building regulations of vision and the life-force energies of my hand. Drawn from a photograph of a set of bushes at the edge of the Groot River Lagoon on the Tzitzikamma coast in the Western Cape in South Africa, these deformations delivered a form that has lost its referent –designating instead a needle-point-like ‘collar’ – itself a substitutional, anonymous and empty self.



11

Mons, 2011

60 x 140cm

For a practice attuned to landscapes that fold and multiply, to deliver adaptable motifs that invite a celebration of the psycho-sexual body, *Mons*, as the title suggests, fits both bills. Derived from photographs of the crevices of the Swartberg Mountains in the Karoo in South Africa, the fractal accumulations of this painting deliver a curiously iridescent three-dimensionality, as if this is an underwater coral scene – or a substitutional screen – awaiting disclosure.



12

The Opening, 2016

77 x 73cm

An emptying gulley opening out into the sea at the end of the Otter Trail on the Tzitzikamma Coast in South Africa made its call to my always ready imagination. Responding to that experiential call is usually the beginning of a consciousness dethroning and cognitively decentring process which taps into the multiplicities of a life-force field that seems to have no beginning or end.



13

Coast, 2009

135 x 270cm

Perhaps an anti-representational title like 'Edging the Bodies of Earth and Water' would do a better job of framing the life-force energies of this refiguration of a rocky Californian coastal foreground which contains that numinous and shifting body of water. Those fractal energies fold and flow through every mark to side-step identity and touch the connectedness of everything.



14

Sonoma, 2010

135 x 140cm

As we slid down through the Sonoma Forest toward the Napa Valley, north of San Francisco, even in 2009, this forest's glorious and ancient Redwoods seemed to be saying something about the risks of fire and logging, or so I (presciently) thought. In a clearing, a little rock-phallus caught my eye, whose aspirant vulnerability shaped this Adamic, headless, limbless and skinless figure with an expanded chest, stumbling forward.



15

Double Desire, 2018

110 x 125cm

A strange hesitation to our gaze: we see a soft, silky, vertical and radiant shaft of light, sliding through, or being contained in, a dark torso, whilst being offset by these strangely syncopated 'growths'. That interruption invites a vulnerable and potent life-force – located in the reversible doublings of this ecstatically disaggregated body and framed by that other doubled landscape view.



16

Coming Alive, 2010

140 x 166cm

These umbilical, generative and fractal energies rise vertically, like raging sap, through this visceral and improper figure to claim its/their ecstatic rebirthing.



17

Going South, 2015

94 x 78cm

Going South is the title for a more conscious and discursively located project to find alternatives to the Eurocentric, phallogocentric and territorialising legacies of western traditions of sublime landscape painting – which I had inadvertently found myself a part of. Inspired by the rocky outcrops that frame the southern edge of False Bay and the mountains surrounding Ceres in the Western Cape, this improper clitoral cornucopia joyously slides down south.



18

Towards Deep and Radiant Time, 2017

110 x 140cm

Infinite visual expansion is a standard trope of the western tradition of sublime landscape painting, sometimes shaping a sense of being at one with the cosmos, or legitimating colonial expansion into unoccupied territories. The dark and improper 'clarion-call' of this visceral uterine container interrupts those individualising and territorial assumptions, to make claims for a different kind of pluralising infinity; oscillating between inside and outside, body and landscape, micro and macro, past and future time.



19

Living the Fold, 2017

76 x 51cm

Inspired by an active volcano near Puerta Varas in Chile, and unlike those colonial landscape paintings which presume a hierarchical divide between the agentic viewing subject and an empty landscape space that is being viewed, this *Living the Fold* painting mimics the fractal correspondences of newly laid volcanic lava with its fresh sprinkling of snow. Here the flows and folds of a fractal geometry deliver an embodied and interstitial life-force that slips both ways, between the viewer and the viewed.



20

The Flesh of the World, 2017

97 x 106 cm

This painting is a response to the magnificent and massive Torres Del Paine – the endpoint of the last ice sheet of the Andes before the Magellan Straits – where small and dying glaciers hide in the crevices of its volcanic rock. A doubled vulnerability is coded here in that improper and fleshy crotch.



21

Over the Edge, 2018

92 x 63cm

A headless and limbless Venus precariously and ecstatically falling 'over the edge' metaphorically shakes off the shackles of those wounds that have left her so disfigured. Her bushy bush and electric skin, which lay buried in a stone I saw at the edge of a lagoon along the Tzitzikamma coast in South Africa, offer a tactile and self-contained wholeness that belies the riskiness of such an endeavour.



22

Ring Dance, 2019

118 x 123cm

The ecstatic dance of these two merging but incommensurable 'rings' also carries something of the carnivalesque and Dionysian improprieties that animate Max Ernst's *lollipop* paintings – but in this case, to pulse against the regulations of the heterosexual order, the grip of consciousness and the will to power.



23

Streaming, 2014

117 x 150cm

Called forth by our ecstatic responses to an encounter with a barreling stream funneling its storm waters under the road we crossed in the alps of South Island, New Zealand, these desiring and streaming fractal fluids pulsing through a narrow portal, inhabit a subliminal substrate that makes one feel alive.



24

Mairangi, 2019

140 x 160cm

The trees edging the cliffs of Mairangi Bay in Auckland, New Zealand, consistently call to my unconscious eye – entranced by the sultry oceanic edge-of-the-world light that animates these radiant cliffs and agentic trees, whose body-bush cascades offer themselves as intersectional portals for the appearance of psychic life-force and the celebration of desire.



25

Wild Being, 2015

101 x 70cm

Andries Gouws suggests that this painting practice's estrangements are not locatable in any artistic genre and go beyond the words and narratives of our human and everyday life worlds. These insights are particularly apt for this Medusa-like, otherworldly assemblage with its own life-force. The generative rules that governed the spooling of energies across the differences between my hand and eye were, I thought, put to good use in this painting, whose 'monstrosity' I can recognise, but whose wild, life-enhancing fractal-plays I was entranced by.



26

Headspace, 2012

99 x 104cm

Drawn from a set of photographs of the sandstone mountains in Rio de Janeiro, the carnivalesque impropriety of this head-like assemblage is amplified by those life-force fractal energies that fold and flow through this hyper-visual – or camp, self-substitute. That deconstruction mocks those drives to ocular-centric mastery that also infect our desires for capitalist consumption, pornography, racial-othering and the male gaze.



27

Seen Otherwise, 2018

81 x 85cm

This painting emerged from a field trip to the island of Rugen and Dresden in Germany to see the landscapes that informed the wonderful work of C.D. Friedrich, and the three 'shrines' to his work in the National Galleries of Hamburg, Berlin and Dresden. The title of this painting registers a visual politics attentive to the effects of the distancing and disembodied uncertainties of Friedrich's sublime landscape paintings and the corporeal and psychic inwardness of mine. Also inspired by the fractal rock cliffs along the Elbe River, east of Dresden, this pulsing, playful 'wreath-ring' shapes an inside-out exchange – whose fleshy forms and contiguous edges invite a different kind of uncertainty by troubling the boundaries and distinctions between body and landscape, inside and out.



28

The Edge of the Skirt of the World, 2014

104 x 130cm

An imagined line curving around the southern tips of Australasia, Africa and South America would designate something of a skirt-edge for a world-body whose head is up north. This collection of skirted, squat and hatted substitute selves (fractal-like reconfigurations of the Seven Sisters rocks on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, south of Melbourne in Australia) inserted into a re-presentation of the lake of Milford Sound in South Island, New Zealand, take a pot shot at the usual north-western subject of sublime contemplation. Such lonely self-overcoming has often been achieved by symbolically becoming-one-with-the-cosmos. These decolonial and anti-anthropocentric plays celebrate the collective ecstasy of these non-human female self-substitutes and a new kind of post-human tourism in which parts of the world look back on themselves.



29

Her Master's Voice, 1992

51 x 61cm

A fractal palimpsest – something of a mistress-text, for a practice still to come.



30

Saam in die Woestyn , 1992

88 x 104cm

Translated from Afrikaans this title reads in English as 'together in the desert'. As South Africa transitioned towards democracy in the early 1990's, with a brutal civil war being waged in Kwa-Zulu Natal, this painting with its hybrid self-substitute and violated scene, captures something of the anguish of those who had to witness this futile and vindictive war.



31

Out There, 1985

55 x 80cm

Apartheid life in the 1980's in Grahamstown was, in part, marked by conflict between our communist/liberal and white cohort of academics and activists and the South African Bureau of Security Services (BOSS) who arrested, tortured and killed many black activists, including Steve Biko. Living in that fortress town in the middle of the parched veld throughout the 1980's, it felt as if we were – to quote J.M. Coetzee – 'waiting for the barbarians' – who in this case, were white. Here a wary gaze looks out from a defensive structure towards that empty but radiant expanse – out there.



32

At the Limit, 2017

67 x 36cm

This small painting belies the spatial immensity of its end-of-the-world referent: the glacier and lake of Lago Grey, an enormous catchment for the melt waters of the southern end of the Patagonian Ice sheets. The life-force of that sheet folds over the back of the end of the Torres Del Paine massif, whose endpoint glacier in this painting peeps in under the seemingly suspended landmass of those last Andean peaks, before South America flattens out into the Magellan straits. The increasing flow and collection of that melting ice sheet also marks the onset of irreversible climate change, a limit many of us know we have already crossed.



33

More than Two, 2018

81 x 102cm

As we wound our way north through Chile and Argentina, we were alive to the sublime ecstasies of becoming undone by the life-force calls of the Andean peaks and empty spaces. This visceral but ecstatic assemblage is the synthesis of two mountainous referents: the two-kilometre high Mount Fitzroy in Chile, and Top Balloch in the Drakensberg in South Africa – whose avowedly pluralising and improper figuration unsettles our ability to know, name or identify with, what we see. Such self-disaggregation is implicated in what Elizabeth Grosz identifies as a life-force ethos, whose “excesses of creativity, intensity, sexuality, and force that produces life as more than itself” ... deliver a form of self-overcoming that ... “is the condition for the emergence of art, for the eruption of collective life and for the creation of new forms of politics, new modes of living” (Grosz, E. *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics and Art*. Duke University Press. Durham and London. 2011, pp. 7–8).



34

Taking Risks, 2014

117 x 124cm

Revisiting that trope of the anonymous Rückenfigur – life-force here is figured as a fluid loop that streams from this improper vagina/head to collect in the vegetal topography of this other-worldly substitute-self, uncertainly poised against that vista. For Gouws, that deconstructive and sublime nexus frames the life-enhancing potential of these paintings to see our everyday world afresh. Seen as a visual analogue to critical theory which problematises hierarchies and distinctions, that interface also invites us to take the risk of transforming those power plays that would keep us unequal, alienated and repressed.



35

In it Together, 2020

120 x 85cm

Painted to assuage the almost biblical miseries and ethical failures that stalked the several crises of 2020: the Covid-19 epidemic; racist and misogynist backlashes; libertarian assaults on democracies; and the floods, storms, fires, droughts and displacements delivered by climate change. This blind and doubled self-substitute's riposte is to claim a conjoined but non-identical sociality. Such an ecstatic and vulnerable 'being in it together' I suggest, is a version of what Fiona Jenkins names as a "being-in-common-without-identity" (Jenkins, F. A Sensate Critique: Vulnerability and the Image in Judith Butler's Frames of War. Sub-Stance. Vol 42, no 3. p 28. 2013) that courses through this unsettling and life-enhancing painting practice.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Dr Lola Frost

Personal Information

Nationality: British

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Qualifications

PhD Visual Arts, Goldsmiths College, University of London, United Kingdom, 2007

MFA Painting, Rhodes University, South Africa, 1985

BA Graphic Art, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, 1971

Teaching Posts

Visiting lecturer, Historical Context of Art and Design, Working Men's College, London, 2007–12

Part time Art Theory Senior Lecturer, Fine Art Department, Technikon Natal, 1995–2002

Art History and Art Theory lecturer, Fine Art Department, Technikon Natal, 1990–95

Drawing Tutor, Architecture Department, University of Natal, 1987–89

Art History Lecturer, Fine Art Department, Rhodes University, 1986

Residencies & Fellowships

Visiting Fellow: Department of War Studies, King's College London, 2016–20

Visiting Fellow: Centre for Law, Art and Humanities, Law School, Australian National University Canberra, 2019

Visiting Fellow: Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 2019

Leverhulme Artist in Residence, Department of War Studies, King's College London, September 2014 to June 2015

Exhibitions

Solo

Towards Deep and Radiant Time. The Arcade at Bush House: King's College London Cultural Programming, Strand, London, 2018

Living the Fold. Cappe, Adriana Cavarero Conference, Edward Street Gallery, University of Brighton, 2017

A Dilating Gaze. Clement House, London School of Economics, 2015

Going South. Somerset House East Wing, King's College London, 2015

Taking Risks. Somerset House East Wing, King's College London, 2014

Coming Alive. Frameless Gallery. London, 2013

PhD Degree Show. Goldsmiths College, Visual Art Department, University of London, 2007

Keynes College Art Gallery. University of Kent at Canterbury, 2000

NSA Gallery. Durban, 1996

Rhodes University Art School Gallery, Grahamstown, 1996

Technikon Natal Art Gallery. Durban, 1993

Thompson Gallery. Johannesburg, 1993

Natal Society of the Arts. Durban, 1987

1820 Settlers Museum. Grahamstown, 1981

Group

Reconciliations: Knapp Gallery, Regents Park University, London, 2018/19

Carnivale: curate-a-space. Durban Art Gallery, 2017

Geohumanities online exhibition. 2016. geohumanities.net/2016/06/08/lola-frost

LGBT Art Trail. Keynes College, University of Kent at Canterbury. 2015

1910–2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective. Iziko South African National Gallery. Cape Town, 2010

Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. London, 1997

Cape Town Triennale. Cape Town, 1991

Sud del Mundo. Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1990

Collections

Durban Art Gallery; Johannesburg Art Gallery; Tatham Art Gallery; Pietermaritzburg; King George V Art Gallery; Port Elizabeth; Newcastle Carnegie Art Gallery; Kwa-Zulu Natal; Rhodes University Alumni Collection; University of Stellenbosch Collection; University of Natal Collection

Commissions

Portrait of Archbishop Hurley: Vice Chancellor of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1995

Portrait of Tex Harris: US Consul, 1992

Publications

Going South: Traversal and Attunement in Painting. *GeoHumanities* Journal, Taylor and Francis, London and New York. 2015

Compassion as Risk in *The Politics of Compassion*. eds. Michael Ure and Mervyn Frost, Routledge, London, 2014

Aesthetics and Politics. *Global Society*, Vol.24, No 3, Routledge, London. July 2010

Negativity in Painting, PhD thesis, Senate House Library, University of London. London 2007

Jeremy Wafer Artist's Book. David Krut Publishing. Johannesburg 2001

Checking one another's credentials in *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South Africa*. eds. Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz, Chalkham Hill Press. Johannesburg, 1999

Papers and Public Lectures

Sexual Freedom in Aesthetic life. The Sexual Politics of Freedom Conference: Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway. 17–18 September 2020

Towards a Sensate Critique of Violence: CRIPT Interdisciplinary Perspectives on War and Violence, University of St Andrews. November 2019

Dream Painting and De-Territorialising Democratic Politics. ANU Centre for Law the Arts and Humanities: Workshop 22 August 2019

Dream Painting and De-Territorialising Democratic Politics. University of Queensland: Visual Politics seminar. 26th August 2019

Substitute-selves and Trauma. Australian Defence Force Academy Canberra: War and Art workshop, 29 August 2019

An ethics of difference: from de-territorialising the sublime to contesting drone warfare? BISA conference paper, London. June 2019

Lab Talks KZNSA: *Masterclass Lola Frost*. April 2019

The Flesh of the World. Dr Anna Marazuela Kim in conversation with Lola Frost and Edmund Clark for the 2017/18 IAS Vulnerability Series at UCL. April 2018

Cognitive failures in art. Failure and Denial in World Politics: Millennium Conference, London School of Economics. 18 October 2015

Resilience in painting: Gender Recalled Workshop. Department of Media, Culture and Creative Industries, King's College London. 30 June 2015

Aesthetic Risk: an artist's perspective. Values of Art Conference: Humanities Research Centre. Department of Philosophy, Sheffield University. 20 June 2015

Going South: traversal and attunement in painting. Spaces of Attunement: Life, Matter and the Dance of Encounters. Cardiff University. 30 March 2015

The Sublime South: feminist identities and aesthetic reflexivity in contemporary South African art. ISA Presidential Panel: Global IR and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Feminist IR Today. New Orleans. 19 February 2015

Risk, Sexuality and Politics: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Marysia Zalewski, Department of War Studies, King's College London. 11 February 2015

Labial Politics: Risk, Sexuality and Politics in Art. LGBT Art trail, Keynes College, University of Kent at Canterbury. 9 February 2015

Underrating Risks? Piano performance by Gareth Owen of Schubert's Sonata in a minor D784 and Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Ned Lebow, Department of Music, King's College London. 3 December 2014

Drones, Ethics, Aesthetics and Risk. Artist in Residence and panel discussion for Technological Innovation and Challenges to International Law

Safra Lecture Theatre, King's College London. 24 November 2014

Cybernetic Risk and Aesthetic Free Play: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Thomas Rid. Department of War Studies, King's College London. 3 November 2014

Aesthetic Risk and Security Risks: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Dr Claudia Aradau. Somerset House East Wing, King's College London. 22 October 2014

Whose Sublime: Aesthetics and the International. What does the aesthetic want from us and IR? BISA Art & Politics Working Group Workshop. Warwick University. 1 September 2014

Aesthetic Free Play and Becoming. Toward New Global Imaginaries: Feminist Thinking on Creativity and Imagination as Social Resources. ISA Conference, Montreal, Canada, March 2011 and also at the Critical Political Theory Conference, Essex University, June 2011

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Andries Gouws

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