



CLAUDIA CHASELING  
SILENT



## FOREWORD

Artist Claudia Chaseling's paintings challenge our conventional notions of form as they erupt from flat 2 dimensional walls spilling onto the floor and capturing the space in-between in organic swirls and bright fluorescent waves.

Although the work is at its core informed by conceptions of landscape the dizzyingly mutable perspectives employed in the paintings throws this easy association into ambiguous territory as the work propels the viewer into a maelstrom of multi-dimensional-unstable realities.

Claudia's paintings more akin to site specific installation occupy the unexpected space between the viewer and the anticipated gallery wall where traditionally paintings reside.

There is a tangible tension in the work questioning expectations of illusionism and representation as it sits somewhere between frenetic dynamism and a melodious lyricism. Above all Claudia's work embodies a quality that all artists strive for that elusive element of originality.

We would like to thank Claudia for bringing *Silent* to Wollongong Art Gallery and we hope that you are both surprised and engaged by this exhibition.

**John Monteleone**  
Program Director





## OUTDATED SYSTEM

We're in different parts of the world, you and me. You're in Australia and I'm in Europe — Berlin to be exact. That's where I met artist Claudia Chaseling, who moves between Berlin and Canberra while she finishes her PhD in Visual Arts at the Australian National University. My summer is coming to a close, green leaves becoming crisp, making way for the orange glow of Autumn. Snow will soon follow, reflecting white light into our eyes and wiping the ground clean, while the skies above are blanketed with grey. Between us — you and me — different states coexist. We're multidimensional. As my world begins to be drained of colour, yours will come to life, vibrant hues shimmering behind air that hums with heat, saturated with the scent of eucalyptus, dark shadows opposing bright sunshine — at least, that's how I imagine you.

It's fitting, because Chaseling's *Spatial Paintings* are multidimensional, too. You'll notice that her works expand over the floor, walls and ceiling, enveloping perpendicular surfaces so that they become one entity. Using colour and shape, she alters our perspective. As we walk around moving our bodies in space, at a certain point, three-dimensions fold into two. They flatten. A globular form or curved line traverses one plane and flows into another. It's moving away from you, so it should seem smaller, and yet it remains bright and bold. Incorporated into the scene are canvas panels, sometimes rectangular, sometimes oviform — autonomous objects also invited into the spatial dance. The ovals are larger at one end and taper at the other, gradually lessening; reverse perspective takes hold and, unusually, the shapes nearest to you are smaller than the ones in the distance, which loom large. Let the paintings enter your eyes and overpower you: discombobulate, mutate.

Let your mind drift. Today I went for a walk in a park called Tempelhofer Feld. It used to be an airport. Maybe you can imagine it — keep allowing yourself to slip from one space

into another. From afar, it seems incredibly flat, an uninterrupted horizon line into which you can walk. The flowers are still bursting with colour: oranges, yellows and pinks, so bright as to seem shocking. Envisage yourself walking with me; visualise these shades spreading, becoming larger and braver. Petals turn into nonconcrete forms, once recognisable but now something altogether different. An abandoned airplane's oviform body is discernable in the distance. We're walking in space, but everything around us is flat form and pure pigment, a figurative world blown up into the abstract.

The park has a back-story as you peel away its outer layers, a darker truth beyond the surface plane. Manifold multiple dimensions exist at once. It was the site of a concentration camp back in World War II. Sometimes things reveal themselves if you search hard enough, if you keep asking questions. It's easy to think that we're beyond the atrocities committed against humankind during those years. That we've learned from our mistakes. So how can we have created a present where the President of the United States will not denounce white supremacists? Where Britain is closing its borders, retreating into post-Brexit nationalism. When did we forget not to be complacent? When did empathy become an outmoded system? When did global politics slowly poison(us)?

Drift back into the space of Chaseling's paintings and you might see them in a new light, sense their undercurrent. Acid yellows, corrosive oranges, sulphurous greens that vibrate above electric blues and bloody reds. Radioactive. She's conjuring something, mutating your feelings as well as changing the space optically. Oviform bombs, jet plane engines, vibrating waves, explosions. Nine out of ten miss their targets. Depleted uranium (DU), or as they say in German, *du* (you).





What do you know about this invisible pollutant? Could it ever infect you? It is a weapon of warfare. First deployed by the US during the 1991 Gulf War, it has since been adopted by countries including France, Israel and the UK. It has been used in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza, Libya, Lebanon and on and on and on. Victims in conflict zones have described DU as the propellant of a "silent genocide": an unseen contaminant mutating DNA to cause birth defects, cancer and death. Now look back at Chaseling's painting, at that curve, which is morphing into new form upon another wall, licking itself into a sharp spike.

DU actually derives from sources of energy, the uranium being the by-product of nuclear reactors. Chaseling still remembers the 1986 explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear plant, which happened when she was a child. This was the first moment that she became aware of radiation being sent up into the atmosphere, into the clouds to travel the world and rain down when ready. Onlookers in the USSR saw a rainbow bursting upwards, a pulsating heat of multi-coloured greens, reds and pinks amid a dark night sky, strangely beautiful initially, though deathly in its destructive potential; surface splendour beneath which untold horrors simmer. Afterwards, as clouds of grey stretched into the distance, as mangled concrete and metal sat abandoned, surrounded by flat land and skeleton trees that screamed out for sunlight. Decontaminate the area.

*Spatial Paintings* transfer the emotion of this subject into space — that notion of fear or loss of balance, where you're not sure which way is up and which is down, where the top or bottom lie. You might notice lines of text that delineate URLs, leading you into yet another dimension. Type them into your device, find yourself transported into another space, this time a digital one that confirms the effects of DU, computer-screen pixels bringing these atrocities into filmic reality.

What might the *sound* of an explosion *look* like? What might the *colours* of chemical reactions *smell* like? Would your senses become confused in these moments, synaesthesia sending you into despair? Look away from your digital screen and see the bold swathes of Chaseling's colours being interrupted by tiny repeated lines that squiggle and wriggle, seemingly sliding off surfaces. Egg tempera and oil paint peel away to reveal layers beneath; they are dragged, splattered and flicked. Aluminium is used to create a mirrored effect that swallows its surroundings, aqueous pools reflecting the world as water might. But less pure, less cleansing, as nature and chemicals mingle and metamorphose to form mutant elements. Some summers are coming to a close. Some people are seeing things that no one should have to. This is a multidimensional world, to which we must keep our eyes open.

Louisa Elderton, 2017

All works in Australia courtesy Yuill Crowley Gallery, Sydney.

Cover: *inquisition* (detail), 2016, 290 x 800 x 310cm, aluminium, egg tempera and oil on wall, floor and canvas.

Photo: Beate Winter. Location: Dirk Halverscheid Galerie, Munich, Germany.

Inside left: *future told me she has a headache*, 2017, 270 x 350 x 500cm, silver leaf, egg tempera and oil on wall, floor and canvas. Photo: Anna Berry. Location: Art Omi International Artists Residency, New York, USA.

Inside right: *past is past an always present*, 2017, 148.5 x 100cm (oviform), silver leaf, egg tempera and oil on canvas.

Courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York.

This page: *devolution*, 2017, 325 x 665 x 450 cm, ink, aluminium and egg tempera on wall, floor and ceiling. Photo: mock-up, Magic Beans Gallery, Berlin, Germany

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