



**Window  
Space**



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Hiromi Nakatsugawa

### **Distrails**

September 2, 2022 - October 15, 2022

With each stroke of his arm the swimmer exchanges this din for the silence beneath, his sliding green kingdom of hungers, monotonies and empty penetrations. To open this treasury is not for one's father or brother or wife to decide. Oneself.

—Anne Carson, *Plainwater*<sup>1</sup>

Engulfed in the wasteland,  
whose shallowness kisses upon the surface of your hardened muscles. Exposed  
in the sonorous chamber, at the fore of the screen, I travelled  
in the midst of mist to find what is hard and harden to be an edge.

Like the swimmer, I dive  
into the sliding surface of fog, radiating sounds of collision/collusion. Thickness  
grows to build a fortress—with sweat—  
for water cannot be held. Bodies (made) of water: a dissuasive edge.

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Carson, *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 253.

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An edge makes tangible the efficacy of a surface, which is itself an ever-shifting ground where meanings slip in and out by way of appearance and disappearance. Or perhaps, an edge can be thought of in relation to the logic of secrets, oscillating between concealment and revelation. In such a way, we might consider a surface and the effect of a surface to be the ultimate treasure—the most profound—to the extent that Paul Valéry, the French poet and philosopher, proclaims what is deepest is the skin.<sup>2</sup> The moment of which sweat surfaces, it dispels the myth of the body as a contained whole, rendering the image of the body into nothing other than a hole. And such a hole is an awareness of an edge—a material matter not unlike a drawing: pencil on paper.

Like the swimmer who dips in and out of a sliding surface, Hiromi Nakatsugawa's distinctive gestures of care repeatedly mark the surface with washes of pencil crayons that orchestrate a process-driven dynamism. Through her repeated tracing, every edge anticipates nothing other than touch, for it remains open to the possibility of being traced furthermore: an incessant becoming of something incomprehensible.

Overlaying patches of yellow and grey onto the sky-blue labyrinth, the resulting form, *Distrails*, Nakatsugawa's window space installation, is a radiant mass whose movements—as soft spots of glow traversing on the pictorial surface—appear to be a dream-like scene. From the edge of the paper—swelling, creeping, spilling into the centre of which is not a centre—washes of colours form a network of biomorphic shapes. In a state of becoming, like a rhizome, each point of convergence forms an interaction, that is, a gestural and spatial retreat necessary to morph the form itself. In effect, the surface becomes a study of structures caught in the process of disappearance into the window and onto the sky. An edge that is aware of its removal.

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<sup>2</sup> « Ce qu'il y a de plus profond dans l'homme, c'est La peau ? C'est vrai. » « Je n'en doute pas. Et c'est pourquoi je complète ma formule : Ce qu'il y a de plus profond dans l'homme, c'est la peau, — en tant qu'il se connaît. » Paul Valéry, *L'idée fixe ou Deux hommes à la mer* (Paris : Les Laboratoires Martinet, 1932), 50-53.

Nakatsugawa describes her process of wash-layering coloured pencil to be akin to an application of gauze, that is, a tender softness loosely wrapped in order to create a surface that shields the wound. Yet, it is precisely through the translucency of the fabric and that of her drawing marks that disappearance is made visible as a surfacing act. This is perhaps why dissipation trails inform the title of this exhibition, for the opacity of the wound is here surfaced as a cut: a cutting away of the veil of clouds in the wake of an aeroplane already gone. Such an intrusion—an empty penetration—creates a split (*partage*) of what remains possible, for the tracing of the path is simultaneously an act of sharing (*partager*) and dividing (*partager*).

The drawing, in this sense, spills into the question of what remains on the surface. Drawing at the degree of distance and separation, *Distrails* depicts an architecture of a placeless place right at the surface through a structural interrogation. As such, we might be reminded of the cause of desire through the scrutiny of the body. “For desire,” as Carson writes, “is like the secret of the suffering of a work of art, dispersed over the surface of the beloved’s body, residing everywhere and nowhere at once.”<sup>3</sup> This is precisely the task of the paper’s edge and its surface. It is an attempt to untangle why skin is the most profound depth by way of repeated tracing: it troubles us. The efficacy of the surface troubles us in this work, insofar as our scrutiny cannot reveal the mechanism that punctures us.

To think with Nakatsugawa in *Distrails*: What if the sky was a hard surface? To this end, we might be reminded of Gilles Deleuze’s surface-depth opposition, as he writes:

In opposition to the deep earth, air and sky describe a pure surface, and the surveying of the field of this surface. The solipsist sky has no depth: “It is a strange prejudice which sets a higher value on depth than on breadth, and which accepts ‘superficial’ as meaning not ‘of wide extent’

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<sup>3</sup> Carson, 199.

but ‘of little depth,’ whereas ‘deep,’ on the other hand, signifies ‘of great depth’ and not ‘of small surface,’” *Yet it seems to me that a feeling such as love is better measured, if it can be measured at all, by the extent of its surface than by its degree of depth.* It is at the surface that doubles and ethereal Images first rise up; then the pure and free Elements arise in the celestial surveying of the field.<sup>4</sup>

Look again! Grey trails congregate amidst blue saturations, like smoke undoing boundaries—smudging edges by way of a kiss—that is, a fleeting assurance with a great reach of surface. What remains on the surface here is perhaps nothing other than illegible spots of interest, whose opacity leads the viewer to trace along the edge of Nakatsugawa’s hardened sky.

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Dive to the edge

Only to surface—oneself.

- Leon Hsu

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis added. Here, Deleuze’s close reading of Michel Tournier’s novel *Vendredi* suggests that Robinson’s re-positioning of planetary elements as the “elemental beyond” or the “otherwise-Other” (*de l’Autre qu’autrui*) in the world without others is a re-discovery of the surface of sense. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 315, 319.