

Frameworks

Framing always supports and contains that which, by itself, collapses forthwith.
(Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*)

It would seem that the theoretical frame of reference... is a constitutive element in the blindness of any interpretive insight... the reader [viewer] is framed by his own frame... the author of any critique is framed by his own frame of the other, no matter how guilty or innocent the other may be.
(Barbara Johnson, 'The Frame of Reference')



fig. 197. Hanging the title piece, *Chance and inevitability*

There is one strikingly novel element of *Chance and inevitability* which I have not mentioned yet, though it surprised viewers accustomed to Killeen's previous work -- the 'three dimensional', or 'illusionistic' pieces.¹ These pieces, in seeming to break free from the wall or picture plane, broke too from the high modernist, Greenbergian rule of flatness -- a rule habitually obeyed by Killeen since the *Combs* of 1974. The title and signature piece of *Chance and inevitability*, for instance, might seem positively to soar out from the wall. [fig. 197] Streaks of white palette-knifed paint exacerbate the sensation of its outward sweep -- the perspectival effect is, one might say, 'overdetermined'.

¹ I put the claws of doubt around the word 'illusionistic', since 'illusion' in paint tends to be more spectacular than convincing.

In most of the 'three-dimensional' pieces of *Chance and inevitability*, as in that title piece, the effect of three dimensionality is achieved by heightening one plane with white, so that it might read as if it were bathed in light, while the remaining planes might seem in shadow. More exactly, the effect is achieved by conjoining the space-suggesting possibilities of two tones -- a dark and a light -- with such space-suggesting devices of linear perspective as foreshortening. On several of the pieces, however, three dimensionality is implied by *modelling* -- a continuous gradation of tone from dark to light. [plate. 88] (Killeen's notations speak of 'blending' and 'grading'.) It seems no device of illusion is improper for Killeen -- there is none now which may not be grist to his mill.

Of course, from a high modernist, Greenbergian point of view, continuous gradation is particularly reprehensible -- a regressive and debased device. Admittedly, it is a function of the same principle of light reception as the conjunction of two flat tones, differing only in that it is applied to curved rather than to flat bodies. Nevertheless, the use of two flat colour planes is less reprehensible from the high modernist point of view, because it more easily allows an alternative reading of flatness, and more nearly echoes the flat picture plane, than does a continuous gradation. (Symptomatically, those Sol le Witt's wall works which represent geometrical bodies happily use combined flat coloured planes to suggest 3d -- but they never use continuous modelling; and the same is so of Ellsworth Kelly's perspectival cubes.) [fig. 198]

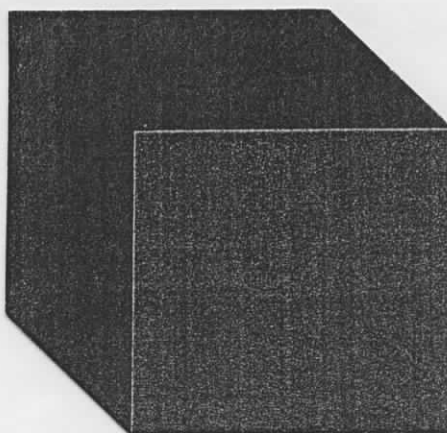


fig. 198. Ellsworth Kelly, *Blue Green*, 1966

Surprising and sudden though Killeen's thrust into three-dimensionality seemed at the time, nevertheless, in the calm of hindsight, we may easily establish its preconditions in preceding cut-outs...

Living for today no. 1, July 1981, [plate 67] completed some twelve months before *Chance and inevitability*, July 1982, is the first cut-out where two tones appear in a single piece. In several of its pieces, the base tone is modified with white. But these two-toned pieces, and those which appear in seventeen of the twenty cut-outs made between *Living for today no. 1*, July 1981, and *Chance and inevitability*, July 1982, do not have such outlines as might additionally provoke a three-dimensional reading.² In all these works, the two-toning is not treated as shading -- that is, it is not used illusionistically, but appears simply as a division of a flat area. Yet *Living for today no. 1*, of July 1981, in breaking with the established Killeenian rule of one flat colour piece, in seeming to live for today as it does without care for the future or past, has already opened that possibility of illusion which *Chance and inevitability* so determinedly grasps.

Frameworks, September 1982, [plate 89] the first cut-out after *Chance and Inevitability*, again juxtaposes 'three-dimensional' pieces with flat. In fact, the title 'Frameworks' has to do precisely with such three-dimensionality. Provoked by his introduction of baroque perspectival effects to cut-outs like *Chance and Inevitability*, and the shock experienced by various viewers accustomed to his canonically high modernist flatness of form, and considering yet again the relative roles of artist and viewer, Killeen speaks of style as a 'framework'.

Frameworks

the process of looking at art

not an either or situation, the viewer brings

experience & meaning but the artist also provides

these....

The artist provides a framework

We look at everything through a framework.

perspective & illusion is a framework

we reject certain things because they do not

fit our framework

² Two-toned, non 3d pieces also occur in *Living for today, no. 2*, July 1981; *Living for today, no. 3*, August 1981; *Island mentality no. 2*, July 1981 and *Island mentality no. 3*, August 1981; *Maze no. 1*, August 1981; *Maze no. 2*, September 1981; *Maze no. 3*, October 1981; *Left, right*, October 1981; *Left, right*, November 1981; *Black, white, left, right*, November 1981; *Black, white, left, right. no. 2*, December 1981; *Black, white, left, right. no. 3*, December 1981; *Black, white, left, right. no. 4*, December 1981; *Concretionary structures no. 1*, March 1982; *Concretionary structures no. 2*, March 1982; and *Concretionary structures no. 3*, September 1982. In the period between *Living for today, no. 1* and *Chance and inevitability*, only *Black, white no. 1* and *Black, white no. 2*, both of November 1981, and *Island mentality no. 4*, August 1981, have no two-toned pieces. That the fourth version of *Island mentality* has only one tone per piece is doubtless influenced by the fact that it is a variant of *Island mentality no. 1*, made before the introduction of two-toning in *Living for today, no. 1*.

(Killeen, *the black notebook*)³

Killeen further noted that a number of his peers among painters and critics rejected those forms and marks which broke up the picture plane because 'they do not fit within the framework' of their 'style genre'.⁴ That is, those painters and critics who at that time favoured 'post-painterly abstraction', paintings of an uninflected and unexceptionable flatness, were troubled by marks which did not unempeachably answer to that genre or style. Framed by their own critical and theoretical frame, they had some difficulty in framing Killeen's new frame as positively as they might otherwise wish. They were initially troubled by the dizzying sweep into space of some of Killeen's recent effects: they were 'unsure or unsettled by illusion being brought into my work because it does not fit'.⁵

It is perhaps hard to imagine it now, but a perspectival sweep might then easily seem a heresy and a dereliction. For some previously loyal viewers and painter peers, Killeen's work had come now to seem no more than 'a sideshow' -- such were the mutterings in the wings. If for the present writer, and doubtless for many viewers, Killeen's perspective effects offered at once the exhilaration of the vertiginous, and the pleasures of surprise, such viewers had no investment in a style of the radically flat, as had those painters and critics with whom Killeen tended to be identified.⁶ Style, as painters are in the best position to know, is not simply itself: it is a declaration of allegiance. It is an almost theological or doctrinal matter -- the site of professions and lapses of faith, of profanations, invectives and maledictions, of anathema and excommunication.

³ Killeen, *the black notebook*, p. 136.

⁴ Killeen, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 - 137.

⁵ Killeen, *op. cit.*, p. 137. Killeen's situation here was not dissimilar to that of Philip Guston, who, when he abandoned abstraction for figuration in the late 1960s, lost the approval of his painter and critic peers. It is suggestive, therefore, that many references should appear to Guston's 'heretical' figuration in Killeen's later series *Italo's fish painting*, 1989.

⁶ An artist-curated show by Gretchen Albrecht, Stephen Bambury, Max Gimblett, Richard Killeen, James Ross, Ian Scott and Mervyn Williams, *Seven Painters/The Eighties*, first mounted by the Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 1982, and toured to the Robert McDougall Gallery, Christchurch, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the National Art Gallery, and the Auckland City Art Gallery, had the effect of publicly framing Killeen within a group 'loosely described as abstract painters', a group working in opposition to the prevailing New Zealand regionalist or expressionist figurative mode, all of whose work stressed the flat, and so constituted a strong rejection of illusionism. It is symptomatic of the hostility provoked by the opposition of these artists to the prevailing figurative modes, that an Auckland City Art Gallery panel discussion by the artists of *Seven Painters/The Eighties* was, in Killeen's words, 'Boycotted by artists of other persuasions. Not one artist in the audience apart from students.' (Killeen, *the black notebook*, note dated 24 . 7 . 83, p. 161.)

The reviewers, too, were aware that Killeen now sat somewhat awkwardly in relation to his peers. A review, for instance, of *Seven Painters/The Eighties*, a self-curated exhibition by Gretchen Albrecht, Stephen Bambury, Max Gimblett, Richard Killeen, James Ross, Ian Scott and Mervyn Williams, mounted by the Sarjeant Gallery in 1982, saw Killeen as a 'heretic' in this context:

These artists work in the field of 'pure' painting. Colour and shape, as manipulated for their own sake, here address the viewer on a directly sensual basis... the 'heretic' in this case is Richard Killeen, whose pictographic cut-outs freely include representational signs.⁷

Likewise, reviewer Ian Wedde remarked: A literal snake infected the abstract heart of the *Seven Painters* show.⁸ Killeen was 'the artist everyone wanted in their show', but he seemed an 'anomalous inclusion' in 'a somewhat academic show of lets call it post-abstract art'.⁹ (Earlier, as we have seen, another reviewer had thought much the same when responding to Killeen's introduction of figurative elements to the abstract grids: he saw it as a 'snook-cocking' attack on the 'rules', 'shibboleths' and 'dogmatic conventions' of formal abstraction.)¹⁰

Killeen, in this context, seemed at the very least a *lapsed* modernist, and, at worst, a heresiarch or schismatic. He realised, however, that the canonically modernist demand for stylistic purity was increasingly being abjured in contemporary art -- an abjuration which was essentially that of the post-modern.

What a lot of new work is doing is breaking the old frameworks & introducing 2 or 3 at the same time.
(Killeen, *the black notebook*, p. 137)

⁷ Unidentified newspaper clipping in the artist's possession.

⁸ Ian Wedde, 'Killeen -- Signs that Matter', *Evening Post*, 13 August 1987. Wedde's phrase 'a literal snake' is no doubt a reference to the snake piece in one of Killeen's cut-outs in that show, *Island mentality*, no. 2, July 1981.

⁹ Ian Wedde, 'Long overdue farewell to mystic provincialism', *Evening Post*, 6 November 1984. (Wedde's reference to Killeen as 'the artist everyone wanted in their show in 1983' is doubtless a reference to the fact that Killeen appeared in both the 'abstract' show, *The Grid*, and in the 'figurative' show, *New Image*, both mounted by the Auckland City Art Gallery as parts of its *Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art* series. Killeen seemed to fit nowhere -- or everywhere.

¹⁰ Neil Rowe, 'Killeen goes from strength to strength', *Evening Post*, 20 October, 1980.

Hence the unrepentant and perversely paradoxical note:

*The illusionistic pieces have been put into
'Chance and Inevitability' because of the presence
of flat pieces.*

(Killeen, the black notebook, p. 139)

'It does not fit', says Killeen.¹¹ The 'not fitting', the 'breaking the old frameworks', is exactly what Killeen is now after. Hence the introduction of perspective to paintings which elsewhere refuse the perspectival: hence the disintegration, the breaking down, even of the unities of style itself.

Killeen's title metaphor of 'frames' was, as the saying goes, in the air -- that is, it was to be seen and heard at the time in a number of New Zealand mouths and texts. I quote again from Roger Horrocks:

If 'roots' is one of the key words for the 1930s writers such as [Allen] Curnow, 'frames' seems to have a corresponding importance today... 'Frame' refers both to the painting as a tangible object and to the painter's or viewer's frame of mind.

(Roger Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', 1983) 13

Of Killeen's *Frameworks No. 1*, [plate 89] *Frameworks No. 2*, [plate 91] both of September 1982, and *Frameworks No. 3*, December 1982, [plate 94] much the same might be said as Horrocks said of that currently 'key' figure of the frame: their title's reference is at once to the painting as a tangible object, to style as a framework, and to the painter's or viewer's frame of mind.

¹¹ Killeen, the black notebook, p. 137.

¹³ Roger Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', *And* 1, October 1983, p. 20. Horrocks' remarks on this usage of the frame were prefaced and provoked by a mention of my *Frames on the Land: Early Landscape Painting in New Zealand*, Collins, Auckland, 1983, which scandalised Nationalist reviewers by rejecting the Nationalist concept of an innocent eye which might see New Zealand's truth, and instead treated genres and styles as mental 'frames'. Perhaps Killeen's remarks too of the 'frameworks of style genre' were provoked by this notorious little book's stress on the intersection of style and genre. Killeen had read an m.s. copy of *Frames*.

Concretionary structures

agglomerate *v.t. & i.* Collect into a mass; accumulate in a disorderly way; hence **-ATION** *n.*, **-ative** *a.* [f. L *AGglomerare* (*glomus* -- *meris* ball) + *ATE*].

concretion *n.* Coalescence; concreted mass, esp (Path.) morbid formation in the body, stone; (Geol.) mass formed of solid particles, whence **-ARY** *a.*

conglomerate *a. & n.* Gathered into a round mass; (Geol.) (pudding stone, water-worn fragments of rock) cemented into a mass (cf. **AGGLOMERATE**); heterogeneous mixture; group or corporation formed by merging of unrelated firms. [f. l. *conglomeratus* p.p. of **CON** (*glomerare* f. *glomus* -- *meris* ball)]

conglomerate *v.t. & i.* Collect into a coherent mass (lit. or fig.); so **-ATION** *n.* [f. as prec. + *-ATE*]

coalesce *v.i.* Come together and form one whole; combine in coalition; so **-ENCE** *n.*, **-** [f. L *co* (*alescere* *alit*-- grow f. *alere* nourish)]

The dream of every cell is to become two cells.

(Killeen, *the black notebook*, p. 130)

In several pieces of the three versions of the cut-out *Concretionary structures* (No. 1 and No. 2, of March, and No. 3, of September, 1982), [plates] 84, 85, 90] it seems as if two like shapes had conjoined and partially coalesced, or as if one shape were in the process of duplicating itself and splitting. As so often with Killeen, we seem to be in a world of cell replication and reproduction -- in biology's ultimately protoplasmic element. It is as if we see a cellular binary fission -- or fusion. (Fission or fusion? Which? We shall come back to this uncertainty, which Killeen makes so problematically fertile.) Let us say, for the moment, that there is here a fusion or partial fusion of various duplicated, nearly duplicated or partly duplicated structures. Dissimilars too may coalesce -- that square is like a morbid formation in the body of the oval.

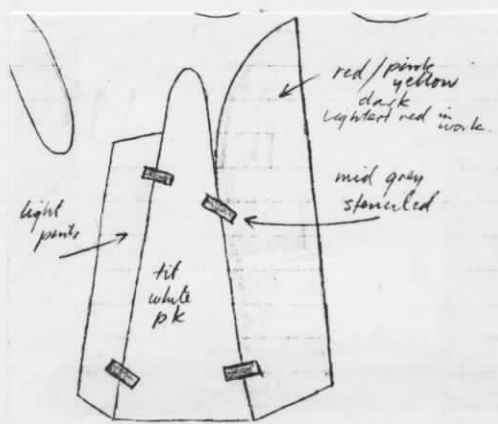


fig. 199. Record book (detail)

Perhaps the cardboard template for one of each of the coalescing pairs has been flipped to make the template of the other? Even the square in the half oval might be one template inserted into another. If this is not materially so, it is at least notionally possible. One piece of *Concretionary structures no 3* has what might recall bits of tape joining its three separate parts. [fig. 199] You could think it reminiscent of the jointings in armour; but you might equally imagine such jointing as reflecting a making procedure, where different cardboard templates are taped together.¹ What counts, in any case, is that in this piece the cut-out makes the joining of parts a matter of self-representation -- that is, the jointing of separate parts is thematised by the cut-out itself.

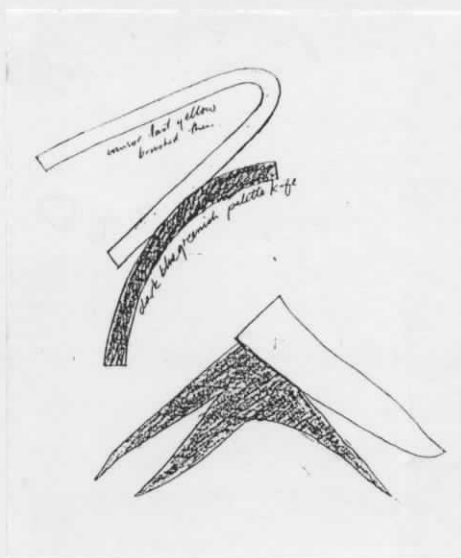


fig. 200. Record book (detail)

In the cut-outs made shortly after *Concretionary structures*, as in *Concretionary structures* itself, the partial mergings or the adjoinments of parts were not always of exactly like to like. There was often a conjoining of similars. The blue arc and yellow loop piece of *Frameworks*, September 1982, [plate 89] and the blade and the triple spiked piece, [fig. 200] for example, both suggest a conjoining of two similar but not exactly alike parts, their unalike-ness emphasised by the fact that each adjoined part is of a different colour and texture, the one smooth and thinly brushed, the other corrugated with the knife. There was also often a conjoining of dissimilars, as in the partial overlapping of a dark brown triangle by an ochre loop in *Chance and inevitability*. [fig. 201] In all these cases of concretion, coalescence, abutment or overlap -- and perhaps particularly

¹ In fact, so the artist informs me, when cardboard templates for the cut-outs were joined, they were joined by stapling.

when each adjoined part is a different colour -- it seems possible that two separate templates have been conjoined.

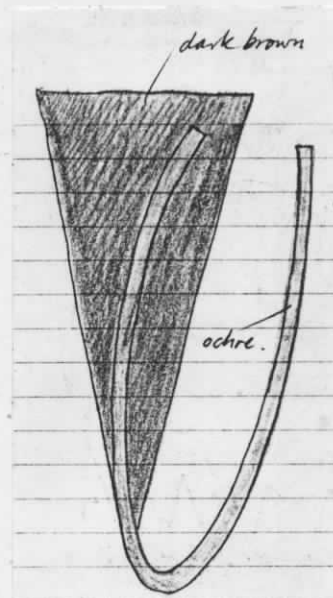


fig. 201. Record book (detail)

...You might note, too, as a further suggestion of the effects of the template, that Killeen has the habit in his record books of calling the ochre pieces of the cut-outs 'cardboard colour': it is as if the naked colour of the templates is allowed to expose itself, in some part, in the fully dressed work...

I suggested earlier that since the heaps of templates were available in the studio some time after the departure of the work for which they were a full-scale sketch, they encouraged the possibility of their further recombination and use. [fig. 196] If, as I have claimed, the templates had already encouraged the migration of the parts of one *cut-out* into another, now perhaps, lying in overlapped heaps at the artist's feet as they did, they encouraged the migration of one *part* into another -- they incited an abutment, coalescence, or overlapping of parts, an incitement which was markedly to affect all the cut-outs until the end of 1985.

It is not that the template protocol provides imperatives to which Killeen is obliged or inclined to submit. Rather, he is open to such of its possibilities as answer to his needs. Or rather, he opens these possibilities of the template. And he opens them -- as we will see -- one after the other.

I do not mean to approve the clipped wings of a technological determinism. Already, well before the arrival of the template in March 1981, the cut-outs were moving towards a greater complexity of both the part and the whole -- in as much as the cut-outs may *be* a whole. And Killeen had, in any case, as early as 1980 considered the possibility of somehow -- as he said -- 'attaching' one piece to another.

5.4.80

cut out and rivet shapes onto other shapes.

The same large shape could be the support for one of the same shapes cut smaller plus others.

problem of relation between shapes.

(Killeen, the black notebook, p.94)

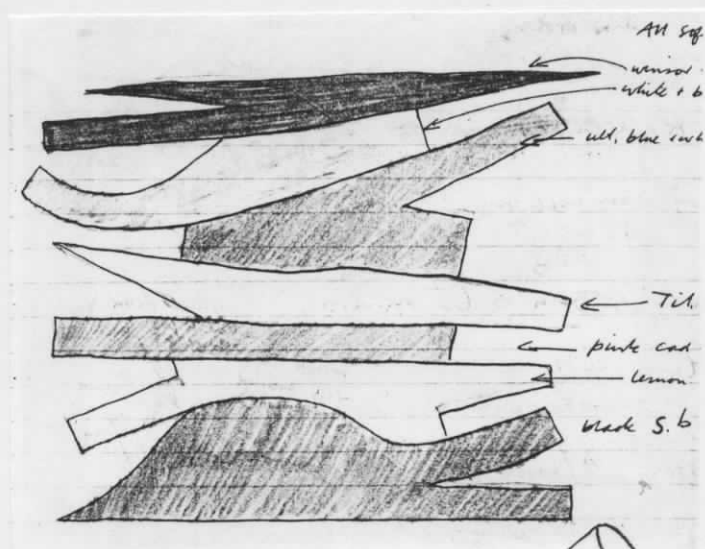


fig. 202. Record book (detail)

As it happens, it was not until January 1985, nearly five years after writing the above note, that Killeen would begin to rivet pieces of the cut-out together. So he would make clear by a technical procedure -- by making a technique *signify* -- that what we are seeing is indeed a conjoining of separate pieces. He would even playfully thematise the riveting together of parts, as in *Tracing the lines of my*

face, May 1985, [plate 134] where, in the piece with the black bird, he juxtaposes painted dots with the dots of the rivets which attach the parts of the piece.²

Killeen's starting to rivet pieces together, with *Looking is not seeing*, in January 1985, [plate 129] coincides with his abandoning the cardboard template system, in favour of directly drawing on aluminium and directly cutting out -- a direct cutting out made possible by his beginning to use aluminium sheet of a lighter, more paper-like, gauge. Once there were no cardboard templates to join at the preparatory stage of the cut-out, Killeen would instead join the aluminium pieces themselves. So the technological, the procedural and the aesthetic intertwine.

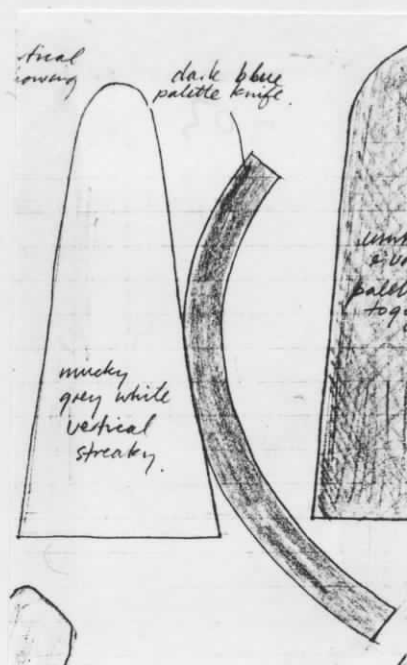


fig. 203. Record book (detail)

Though Killeen did not begin actually to rivet the pieces together until 1985, already, by 1982, with the three versions of *Concretionary structures*, two of March and one of September 1982, and with some pieces of *Chance and inevitability*, July 1982, and of *Frameworks*, September 1982, there is the beginning of a coalescence of parts. A generalised chronological sequence can be established for such concretions. It is as if the templates had suggested first, coalescence and abutments; then agglomerations overlapped -- at least notionally -- into depth; and then conglomerates stacked vertically one upon the other and

² All of the ten cut-outs between *Looking is not seeing*, January 1985, the first which used rivets, and *Born in New Zealand - for Samuel*, 31 October 1985, the last which did, have the parts of their conglomerate pieces riveted together.

interlocked. (Killeen's word for the last structural type is 'jigsaw'.)³ [fig. 202] And the development, furthermore, seems to be towards an ever greater complexity in each kind of concretion.

Such a description of a developmental sequence, while perhaps accurate enough to serve as a generalised account, is not strictly true, however, since each device of concretion -- coalescence, abutment, overlap, stacking -- once introduced, is never abandoned, but continues to be used in company with the more recently introduced concretionary forms. In *Chance and inevitability*, for instance, of July 1982, we may see a piece in which two parts simply abut in the same way as in the double-lobed piece of the earlier *Concretionary structures*, March 1982; and the same simple abutment appears in the later *Frameworks*, September 1982. [fig. 203] And 'earlier' and 'later' types of concretionary forms may even combine even in the one piece, as in the flame, lobe and tortoise piece of *Everything and nothing*, September 1983, where the flame abuts the lobe while the lobe is overlapped by the tortoise; [fig. 204] or as in the stack piece, overlapped by two birds, of *Pooled memory and some empty fish*, April 1984. [plate 121]

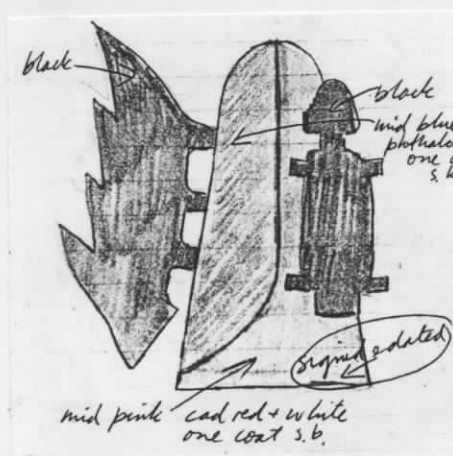


fig. 204. Record book (detail)

Also: concretion precedes and is continuous with Killeen's use of the devices of two-toned or fully modelled three-dimensionality, devices which first appeared in *Chance and inevitability*, July 1982; [plate 88] and its introduction follows upon that initial introduction of two-toning, in *Living for today no. 1*, July 1981, which was without 3d effects. [plate 67] The development of concretion is intertwined with the constant introduction of new and apparently unrelated or

³ Killeen, title above a sketch of the vertically stacked and interlocked type, the black notebook, p. 145.

even opposed stylistic moves, such as that, for instance, towards a greater 'realism' of representation in some parts, or, for another instance, that move in some pieces I will call 'amputation: the presentation of sliced off pieces of things -- fishheads or fingers, say. What I here separate and frame off for the convenience of analysis and exposition, what for the sake of clarity I enclose in the membranes of my little chapters, was for Killeen a complicatedly intermixed and often simultaneous process. His stylistic development, that is to say, is *itself* concretionary, the product at once of fusions and fissions.

But let us continue.

At the moment I feel like making the work more complex by adding to each image rather than the number of images. Making each image much more complex and strange within itself so that the relationship between the different pieces is more complex.. On the other hand you could end up with images that relate to each other on the basis that they are all unreadable & complex.

*When two or three images are attached to each other do they make another image? or do they read as two or three images that are closer together than to the other images in the work?
(Killeen, the black notebook, p. 164) ⁴*

Does the concretionary or conglomerate piece, formed as it is of heterogeneous parts, proffer a unity or a disparity, Killeen wonders. Is it a sign or the conjunction of several signs? Does it become an image or merely a particularly close conjunction of images? Does such a conjunction proffer a *fission* or a *fusion* (an uncertainty already touched upon -- and doubtless too prematurely decided -- in my first paragraph in this chapter).

And if the heterogeneous piece is part of a 'whole' cut-out formed only in part of such pieces, while the remainder of the cut-out consists of pieces which

⁴ Note dated 8 . 83.

are each homogenous and unified, does the heterogeneous piece propose a new unity in the cut-out, or a new, still further disparity? Is to have only *some* parts of the cut-out heterogenous and complex, while the rest are homogenous and simple, to take a still more severe risk to the integrity of the cut-out as an object itself? (There is a tendency from 1982 to 1985, as if to answer to this risk, towards making an ever larger proportion of the pieces concretionary.) Is...

The very questions are fissuring. But we might perhaps venture an answer. Or some answers. The structural principle of Killeen's concretionary pieces is at once that of the fusion of separate pieces into the one, and of fission within the concretionary piece so formed; and out of the fission of the conglomerate piece from itself comes a further fission: that of the piece from the rest of the cut-out, which is formed of non-concretionary or 'simple' pieces.

If the piece itself is now a group formed by the conjunction of unrelated forms, so already was the cut-out. In this sense, the concretionary (or heterogeneous) piece of the cut-out becomes an instance of the whole cut-out -- it represents the cut-out *en abyme*. It becomes, too, a miniaturised instance of the whole oeuvre, which is *itself* a conglomeration of disparate parts. That, we may suppose, is a unity of a sort. But it is a unity whose only unity is its constant proffering of a dis-unity; it is a homogeneity whose only homogenous quality is to proffer a heterogeneity.

It may be objected that I am here reducing to near silence the obvious *difference* between the conglomerate piece and the cut-out as a 'whole'. This difference: in the conglomerate the various pieces are fixed in relation to each other, whereas the other pieces of the cut-out are not. A difference with this (important) consequence: that the *readings* produced by the conjunctions within the conglomerate are 'fixed' to a greater degree than where the conjunctions are 'merely' the result of one particular hanging. Doubtless this difference tells -- indeed, the time will come, we will see, in late 1985, when the fixedness of its relations will constitute for Killeen a fatal objection to any further use of the conglomerate part.

Perhaps we may best think of the non-conglomerate pieces of the cut-out as like words, potentially open to any conjunction with each other, and of the conglomerates as like compound words, whose conjunctions are fixed in advance. What we have here, then, is 'Agglutination, or that junction analogous to what

juxtaposes two Compound Words among themselves or adds Affixes to the Body of a Word almost without alteration.⁸ Though Killeen (rightly) speaks of the 'strangeness' his compounds produce -- a cow/house/shell, for instance, in *Looking is not seeinno*. 2, February 1985 [plate 129] -- they do not become, as he fears, 'unreadable'. As Mallarmé might say, they are a 'copulation of several words whose meanings are still discernible'.⁹

We might say, too, that this development of the piece towards a greater heterogeneity echoes the whole development of the cut-outs themselves, from August 1978 until now. Such too is perhaps a unity of a kind. But it is a unity which makes simultaneous what in the oeuvre were differences spread and separated in a chronological array; and thus it makes of that array a disarray.

If before there had been an ever-increasing diversification of one part from another in the cut-outs, so now there is an ever-increasing diversification too of the part from itself. (Doubtless, 'an ever-increasing diversification *within* itself' would be the more normal way of putting it. But less telling, I think, of the sheer *weirdness*, the 'strangeness' and near 'unreadability', in Killeen's words, of some of the conjunctions.

These conglomerate pieces, like the cut-out as a 'whole', test the proposition that there is no such thing as a finally unreadable image conjunction, though the readings they provoke or accept must be understood as open-ended not closed. Cow/house/shell, or tower/flame/axehead/fishtail: such conglomerations can produce meaning, or meaning can be produced in reading them -- as my later chapters will show.¹⁰

If before, in the relation of the part to the 'whole' cut-out, separation was played against submergence, the idiosyncratic against the generalised, now the same is true too *within* the part, in the relation of the part to the whole of itself. This too, doubtless, might be called -- if I may borrow and mis-apply to the piece a phrase Killeen once applied to the cut-out as a 'whole' -- an introduction of the 'many... while maintaining alloverness'. And now, doubtless, one might say as justly of the piece as of the complete cut-out that there is a concretion of disparate

⁸ Mallarmé, cited Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 279.

⁹ Mallarmé, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

¹⁰ For a reading of the tower/flame/axehead/fishtail, for instance, see the chapter, 'Feminist cut-outs'.

particles, whose disparity tells -- a fusion which strikingly speaks as fission, a bringing together which, by the very closeness of its conjunctions, serves still more to stress difference.

So the 'the disintegration or partialising of surface' is carried to the part itself. Again, here with the piece, as with the complete cut-out, the 'challenge' is, in the face of disintegration, to maintain an integration sufficient for the piece still to be sensed as a whole in itself. Just how far may one go -- how far one *can* one go -- with disintegration before the piece ceases to be seen as a piece, and not as a *mere* collection? Killeen's various concretionary structures may be called a long, constantly challenging and changing answer to this question, an answer which risks an ever-increasing disintegration.

There is less and less endeavour to smooth over the cracks between the disparate parts of the part. Rather, there is an increasingly positive flaunting of difference. We might call this the principle of the partialisation of the part. Or the principle of the differentiation of the part from itself.

Nor are there any longer such contrary and compensatory devices as Killeen used to maintain...

The parts are not of a single colour, as they were in the earliest cut-outs. One cannot say here, in Leech's phrase, that 'the colour identity' of the piece overcomes the marked separation of its parts: there is no longer any 'collusion of colour and surface form'. Nor even is there necessarily a single texture, density and sheen. The palette knifed part abuts the brushed, thick paint is pitted against thin, the stippled opposes the smooth.

Nor is the 'subject' of each separate part of the piece now in any clearly generic sense necessarily the same as the whole.¹¹ An axe blade and a slinking, doglike creature; the same blade and a camel; a tower, a flame, an axehead, and a fish. [plate 128] Nor even can we any longer easily subsume the parts of the piece into the reassuring code of the antithesis, which, like the simile, serves to establish relations between the dissimilar.¹² In 'subject', too, the parts have now gone from similitude to dissimilitude, as earlier had the cut-outs themselves.

¹¹ As clearly, for instance, the insects of *Black crawlers*, 1980 partook of a generic whole.

¹² Doubtless one could say the tower, flame and axe are malic and warlike symbols, and the fish is female: but such an antithetical structure is far less immediately obvious than that of say the insects and 'primitive'

Where before a device for obtaining a new multiplicity was the amplification of the number of parts in each cut-out, now there is an amplification of the number of parts in the part itself. (If one may speak any longer of the part having a 'self'.) Here too, in the part as previously in the whole, the point is not so much to increase the number, as it is to increase the sheer multiplicity. And if earlier, in an infinitely fertile device of disorder, Killeen had introduced a variety or even disparity of styles to the single cut-out, now he does the same with the single piece.

What before Killeen had said in relation to a 'whole' cut-out, might now as well be said of the piece:

*What a lot of new work is doing is breaking the
old frameworks & introducing 2 or 3 at
the same time.*

(Killeen, the black notebook, p. 137)

Now the border of the piece is undone, just as much as the frame of the painting as a whole. The same is so with the stylistic frame or border: the piece as much as the whole cut-out is now a concreted mass of differences, an accumulation of disparities. The perspectival may be introduced to a piece which otherwise refuses perspective, the figurative to a piece which elsewhere refuses figuration: even within the single piece, there is a dis-integration, a breaking down of the unities of style. If before the disparity was that of one piece with another, now the piece is disparate even from itself.

In December 1985, after completing *Born alive in New Zealand -- for Samuel*, October 1985, [plate 140] where all but two of the pieces are coagulates, Killeen abandons the coagulation of parts. 'Joining the pieces together' seems too much to have brought him back to traditional composition, with its unavoidable hierarchies, to 'a mechanical-formal direction', the aesthetic balancing of part with part -- the very thing the cut-outs were invented to avoid. The cut-outs have come to something like a cluster of little traditional paintings -- each with its own composition. He wishes to return, instead, to the 'original concept' of the cut-outs -- that is, to the relating of separate, perpetually movable pieces, according to an a-

artifacts of *Black insects, red primitives*, November 1980, or that of the triangles and insects of *Red insects, blue triangles*, April 1980.

compositional mode. Here, finally, it is the *difference* of the concretionary parts from the unconcreted parts which most forcibly and annoyingly strikes Killeen:

24 . 10. 85

Change back to cutting out each image instead of trying to combine them as I have been doing over the last few years.

Beginning to annoy me that I am getting into problems that I wanted to avoid by cutting out the images originally.

The images are able to relate to each other in a normal way instead of through some formal device. It brings me back to the original concept.

Joining images together is a mechanical-formal direction.

The subject-images and their relationships as subject are what I find important.

(Killeen, the black notebook, p. 233)