

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.

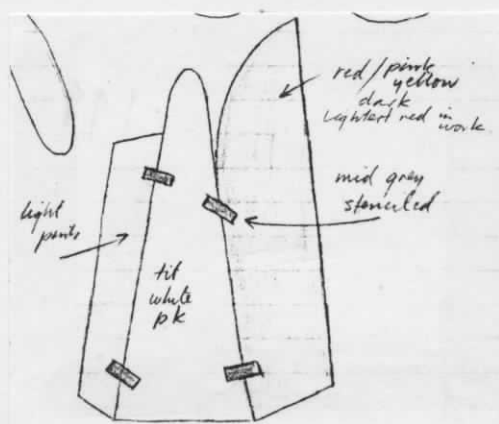


fig. 199. Record book (detail)

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.

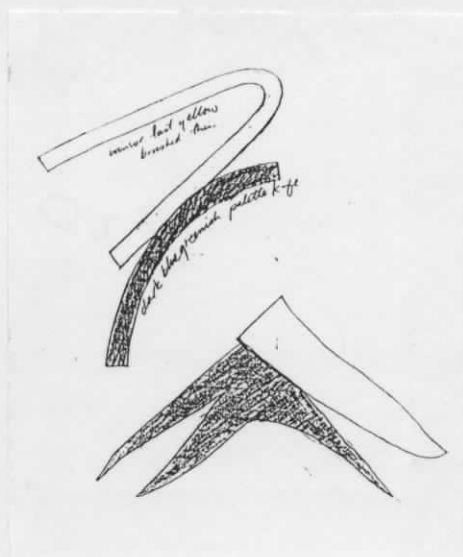


fig. 200. Record book (detail)

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 unalikehood 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.

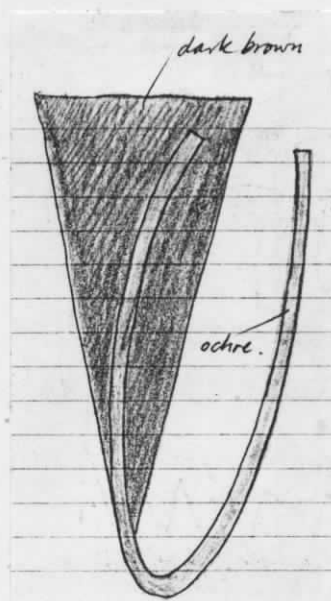


fig. 201. Record book (detail)

...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)

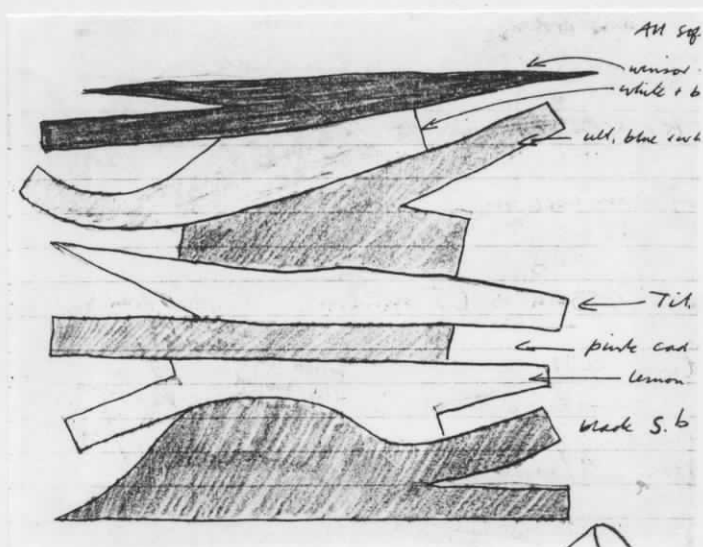


fig. 202. Record book (detail)

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.

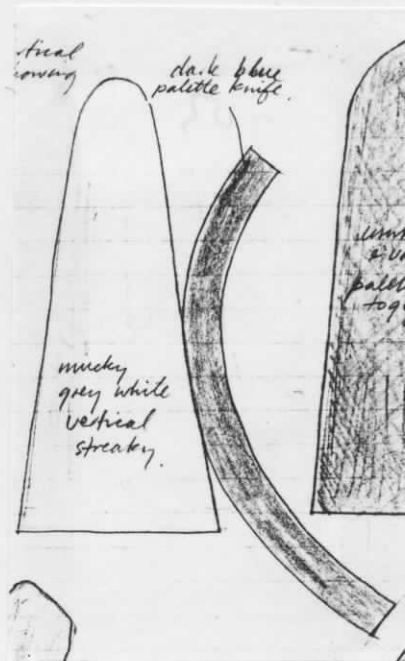


fig. 203. Record book (detail)

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]

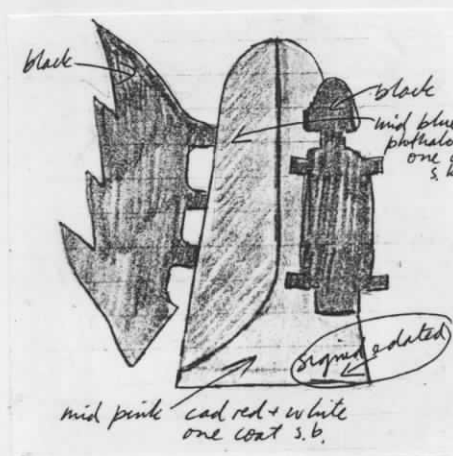


fig. 204. Record book (detail)

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)