

# STATION

## ***Afterburner***

*Afterburner* is an attitude. Fuelled by excess power after ignition, the attitude takes flight after the fire is lit. It shapes, destroys and forms. These metamorphic capacities allow *Afterburner* to appear unpredictable – and often it is – owing to the fact it manifests as what it interprets at once. *Afterburner* is an intentionally creative attitude and as a consciousness it is akin to the acute thinking of acting in an emergency – “I can...” rather than “I think that...”. Resourcefully promiscuous and capable of obliging multiplicities, *Afterburner* is characterised by the possibility of transformation without being destroyed. Plastically traversing mediums, taking form as sculpture, painting and sound, the outcomes of *Afterburner* are the form of *change* itself. In this way, *Afterburner* represents practice embodied theory. Performing practice embodied theory, I made responsive drawings to words describing *Afterburner's* behaviour. Words such as: inversion, way around, upside down and inside out, and sideless, which all encompass gestural movement. These drawings were reversed, fragmented and distorted. Smudged details became a whole composition – plastically forming the sketch as the final work.

In 2019, I made the decision to undertake further study to research *plasticity* with the philosopher Catherine Malabou. In *Changing Difference*, Malabou refers to woman's *burning plastic remains*, which I believe is Malabou's attempt to describe the sensation of an attitude tethered to an ontological feminine situation. While the feminine is not gender specific, it does have a specific behavioural style that is recognisable. It can be recognised in the literary style of Luce Irigaray, whose philosophical writing developed in response to woman's negative subjective existence. Also in response to this negative subjective existence from which woman begins, Malabou developed her trans-philosophical style that includes the *burned language* of Maurice Blanchot's writing. This behavioural style of burning together languages is characterised by a bodily mode of being creative that I call *Afterburner*. Once recognised as a creative style and understood as an attitude, I began to wonder what the attitude of *Afterburner* might look and sound like.

As artist-in-residence at West Dean College, I identified *Afterburner's* attitude in Leonora Carrington's writings to the Surrealist patron Edward James. James writes to Carrington complaining of his aristocratic life struggles in Britain – a situation from which Carrington had fled to Mexico to escape – to which Carrington promptly responded ‘stop crying for your nanny’, followed by a request for money to finish a painting. Struck by the attitude that I related to, I looked for its shape in Carrington's painted sinuous and bulbous forms. I found it in the indirect activity performed by the flower-faced creature of *And then we saw the Minoraur's daughter*. This activity is described – by Carrington's friend and peer, the surrealist painter Remidos Varo, in *Letter 6* – as ‘moving domestic objects around as a solar system, which has consequences’. I imagined these objects if made into musical instruments might share with me the sound of Carrington's *Afterburner*. Burning together the languages of ceramic, painting and sound, these forms decided their own shapes and destruction. Some choose to remain silent while others scream.

— Michelle Ussher, 2022