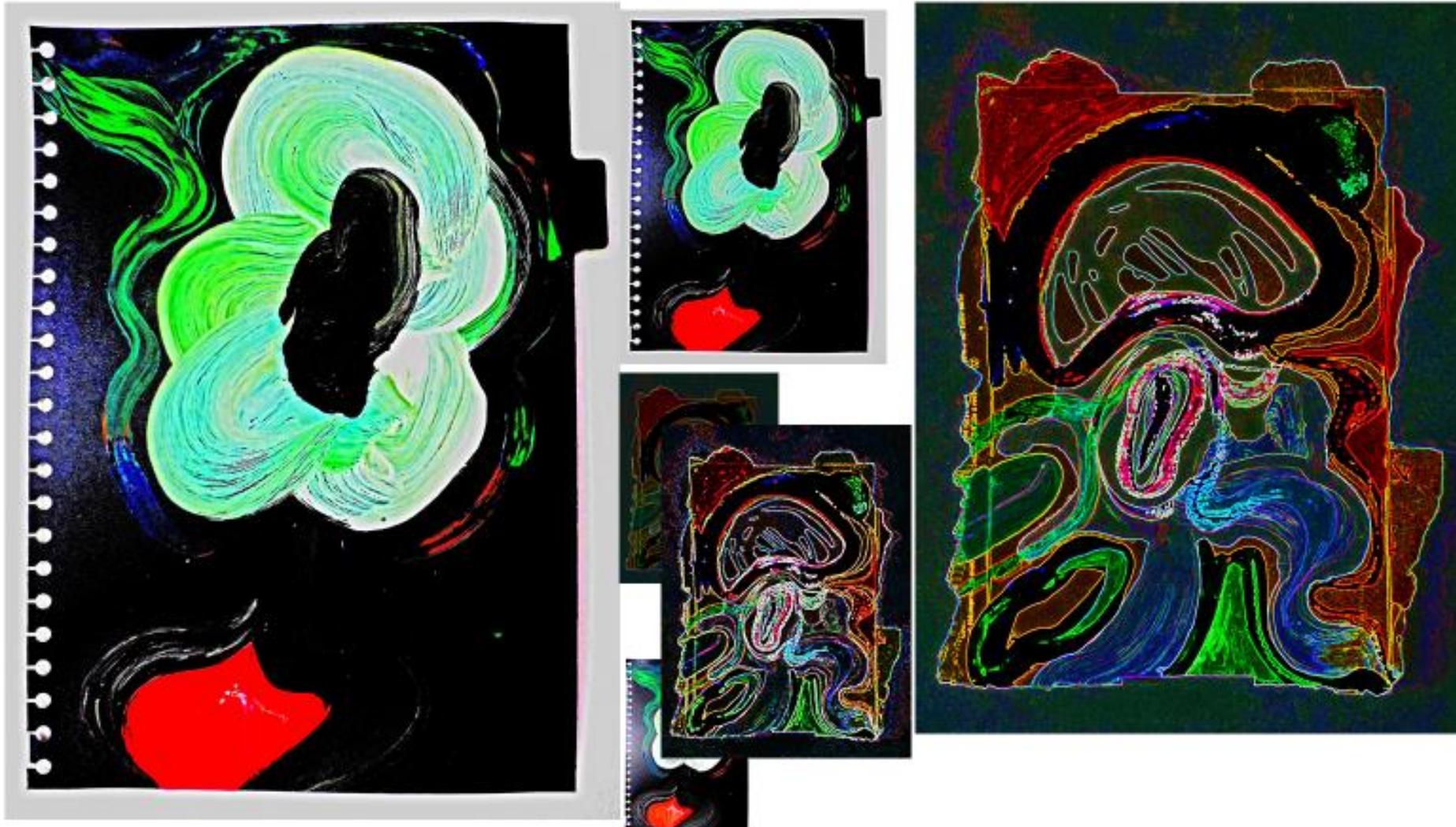


Breeding, bleeding (2021)
Digital collages made from
physical paintings
Each 54.2 x 54.2 cm

This slide depicts a pair of two digitally manipulated collages which began as hand-crafted paintings on paper. When producing these drawings, I was driven by the immense complexity of biological structures, and the systematic linkage between them. I am intrigued by porous, vacuous components, and how they can serve as sites of conception or drainage, relating to the womb. Although the cellular connection and the seeping of fluids is apparent, achieved by the flowing brushstrokes, the reference to the female reproductive system is too discreet here, and needs to be readdressed.

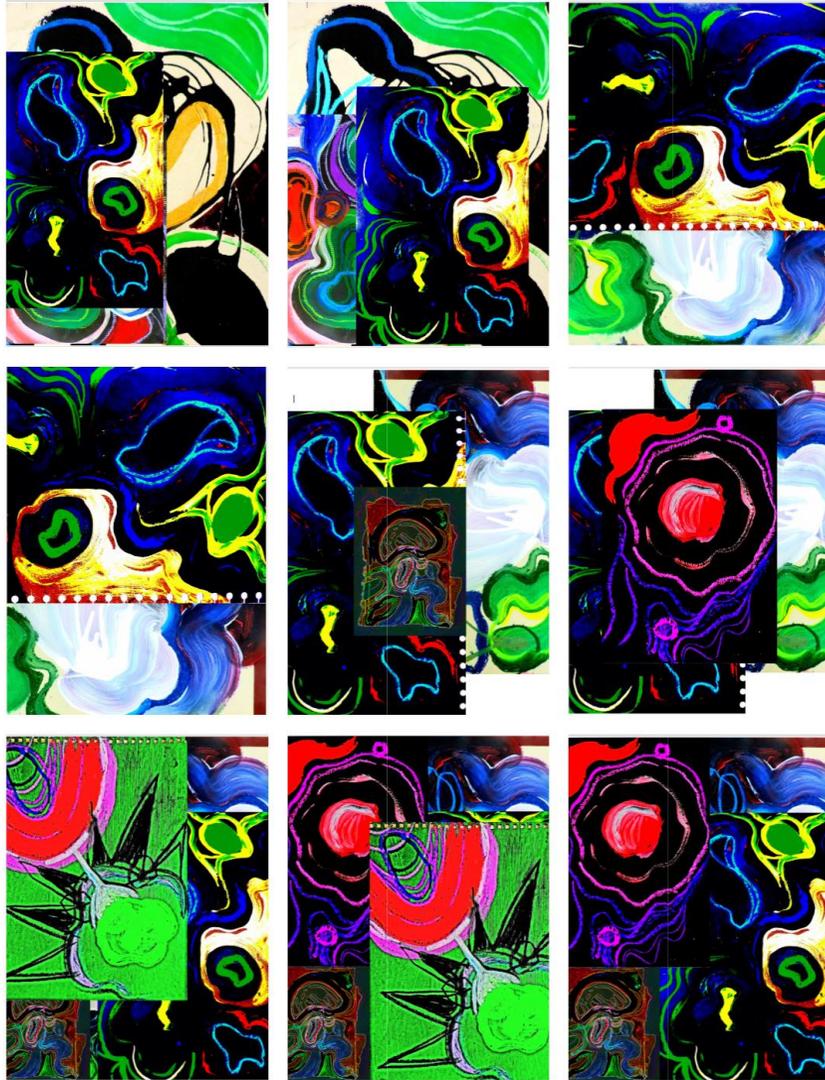


Cohabitation (2021)
Assemblage of digitally
edited paintings
28.6 x 51.0 cm

This assembly of images was initially made for the purpose of showing work efficiently in a few slides for the group crit. As I uploaded the imagery onto the screen, I realized that having the components in cohabitation, rather in isolation, was far more effective in conveying my interest in showing their mutualistic relationships. At this point, there is a weak cohesion and fluidity between the different fragments, an issue which I redirected my focus upon in future work.

I am intrigued by how organisms and their parts can mutualistically benefit one another and contribute to larger more complex structures. Systems thinker Mary Bateson observes that 'We chose marketable gadgets in preference to a deeper understanding of the world we live in' ¹, suggesting that we are focusing too much on developing manmade technological creations as opposed to exploring the complex relationships within the natural world. These digital assemblages, which act as storyboards comprised of a multitude of collages, aim to reflect how each part of a system is relational to and dependent upon everything else operating within it. In the process, each image harvested the next, and the finished works are made of its original contents.

1 Bateson, M., 2021. HOW TO BE A SYSTEMS THINKER | Edge.org. [online] Edge.org. Available at: <https://www.edge.org/conversation/mary_catherine_bateson-how-to-be-a-systems-thinker> [Accessed November 2021].

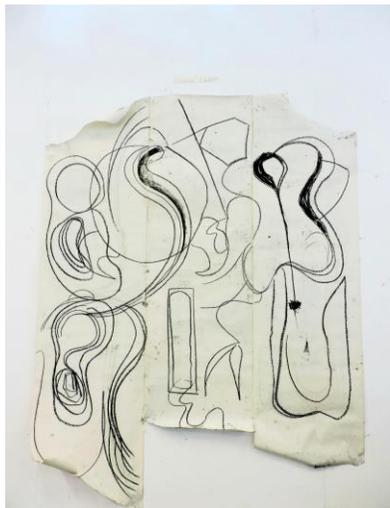


Compost System 1 (2021)
Assemblage of digital collages
28.0 x 21.6 cm



Compost System 2 (2021)
Assemblage of digital collages
28.0 x 21.6 cm

When I was finally able to reenter the studios, I began by quickly marking out expressive drawings with charcoal, fulfilling my need to work with urgency. One reflects an artificial womb system which is 'outside of woman' 1, and another is based upon historical fertility instruments which I came across in the Wellcome Collection. I then reassembled the drawn vessels and tubes, which felt like a laboratory experiment. Unfortunately, the feminist concerns of reproduction got lost in the process and are not conveyed to the viewer, which I attempted to resolve in later works.



Fertility Instruments (2021)
Charcoal on paper



Lab Experiment (2021)
Charcoal on paper



Two above:
Developing Reproduction (2021)
Charcoal, chalk and oil pastel on paper



External Womb System (2021)
Charcoal, chalk, oil pastel, paint and tape on paper

1 Prasad, A., 2017. How artificial wombs will change our ideas of gender, family and equality. [Blog] *Reproduction*, Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/01/artificial-womb-gender-family-equality-lamb>> [Accessed November 2021].



Bug Hotel: Fertility in the Afterlife (2021)
Studio photograph (left) and progress shot (right)
118.8 x 168.0 cm

During the time of making this painting I was influenced by a variety of sources, for instance: medieval fertility instruments such as fertility goddesses, *The Trotula* (2001), Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) and its encompassed idea of composting kin through animal symbionts, and artists' imaginative forms of reproduction, such as Paulina Peavy's in *The Story of My Life with a "UFO"* (mid 1980s). The title *Bug Hotel* refers to an eco-garden I came across, reflecting the ideas of multispecies cohabitation which are celebrated in the painting. There is no central focus in the painting which may be disorientating to the audience, but it aims to propose a non-human centric and non-hierarchical approach to taxonomy.



Bug Hotel: Fertility in the Afterlife (2021)
Charcoal, chalk, oil pastel and paint on paper
118.8 x 168.0 cm

I feel that *Bug Hotel* (2021) and its process evokes the *omni-relational*, (a term used in the recent *Cosmic Mothers* exhibition), with the painting referring to the connectivity of various elements through the flowing brushstrokes and kaleidoscopic colours. The painting is bodily, accentuated by the vulvic pictorial motifs it carries, but the feminist focused text which existed in the early drawing stages is lost in this later phase. I feel that the text is an integral foundation to the work and should be evidenced when presented to an audience as an access point.



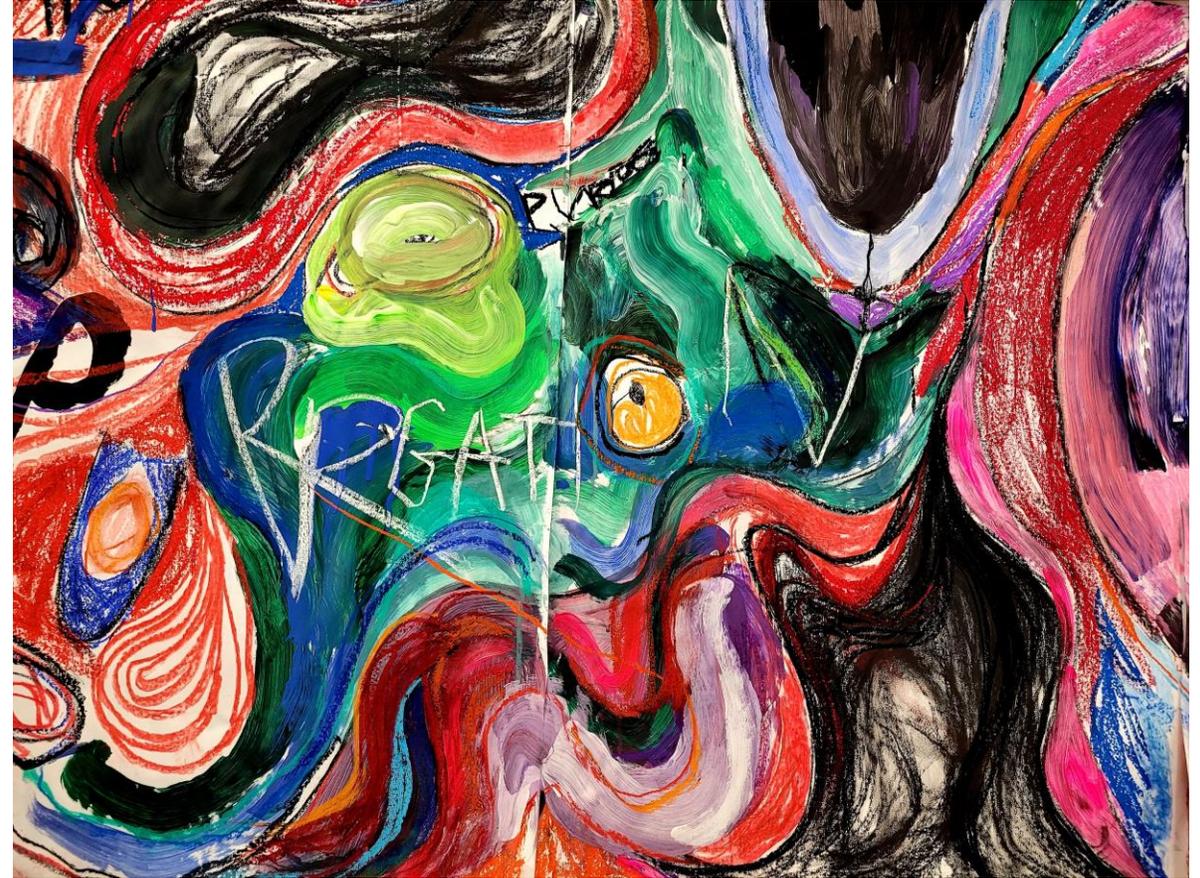
This painting was made on the back of *Bug Hotel* (2021) in a composting process of reusing pre-existing material to generate new life. This piece was influenced by organic egg-shaped pods, a revolutionary burial method which involves planting a tree on top of the burial ground, which eventually grows into a woodland as means to preserve the planet ¹. It was also influenced by Erik Davis's commentary on mushrooms as existing 'in worlds that lie between life and death, animal and plant' ². The notion of reincarnation as an alternative mode of reproduction whilst protecting the environment is of huge interest to me.



Reproduction (2021)
 Progress shot (left) and finished painting (right)
 Charcoal, chalk, oil pastel and paint on paper
 118.8 x 168.0 cm

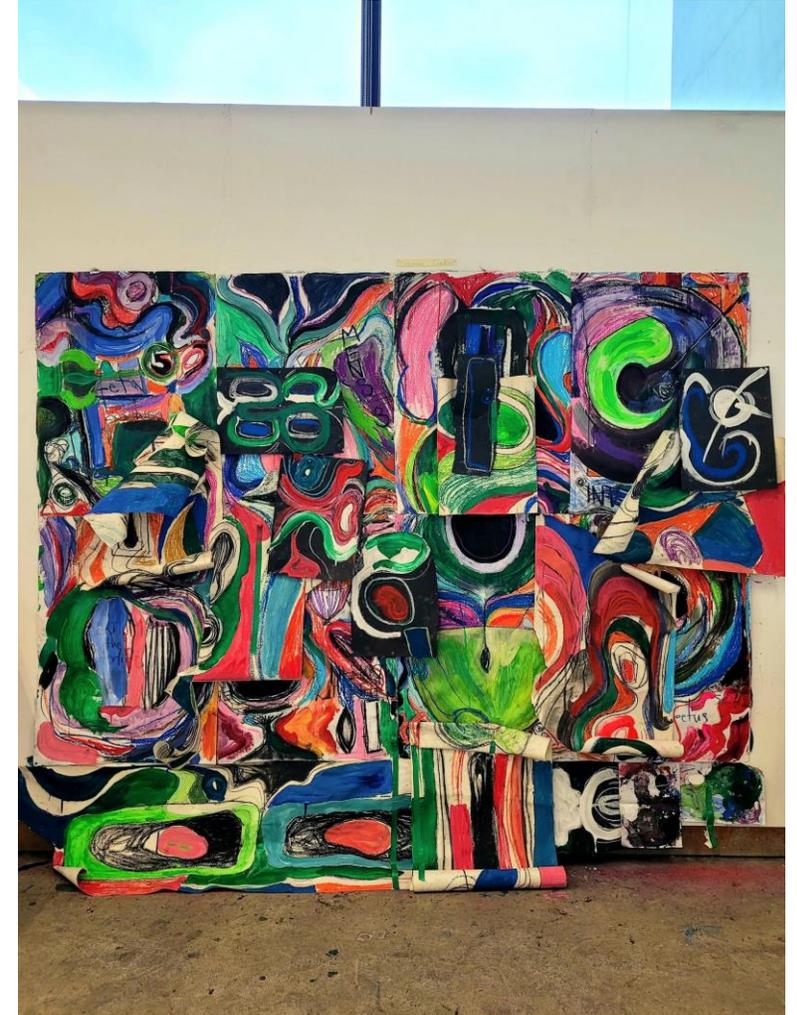
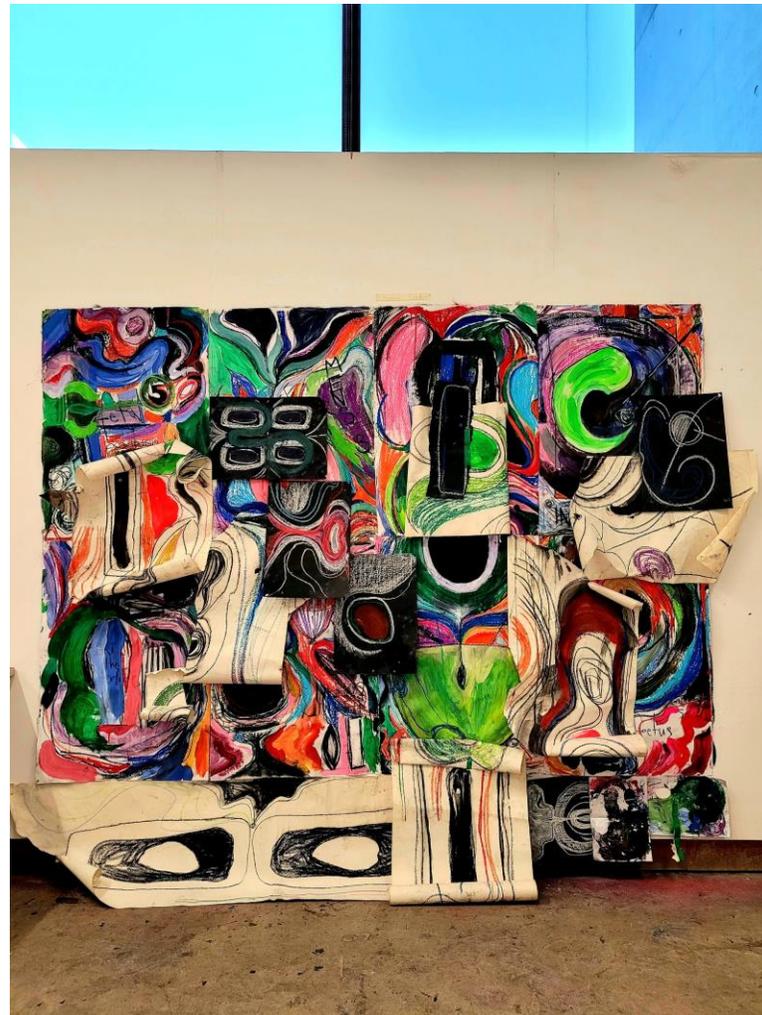
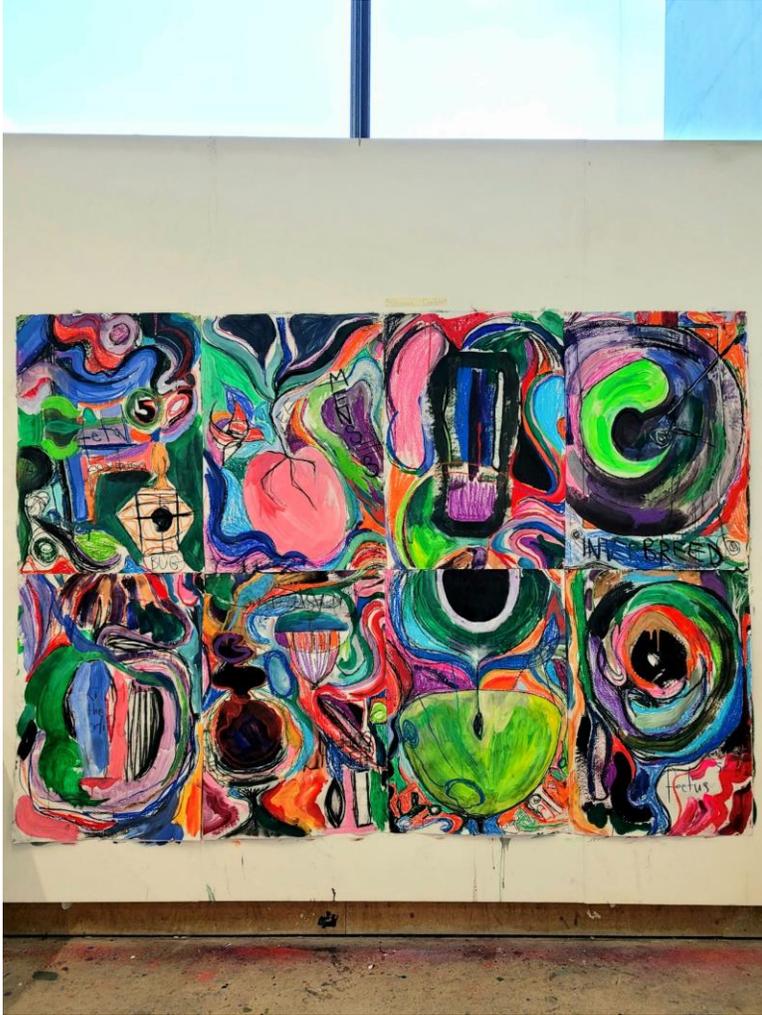
¹ Capsula Mundi. 2021. Capsula Mundi - The biodegradable urn to become a tree after death. [online] Available at: <<https://www.capsulamundi.it/en/>> [Accessed November 2021].
² Davis, E., 2009. Mushroom Magic - Techgnosis. [online] Techgnosis. Available at: <<https://techgnosis.com/mushroom-magic/>> [Accessed November 2021].

The audience experiencing the larger than human scale of my work is essential for them to acknowledge the complexity of the ecosystem they are components of which I felt recently when observing the huge structures of various species in the Natural History Museum. However, even though the use of close-ups here successfully directs the viewer's gaze onto two focal points in the fictionalised breeding ground, by not presenting the whole painting, important parts of the narrative are hidden, which conflicts with my desire to present each part of the system equally.



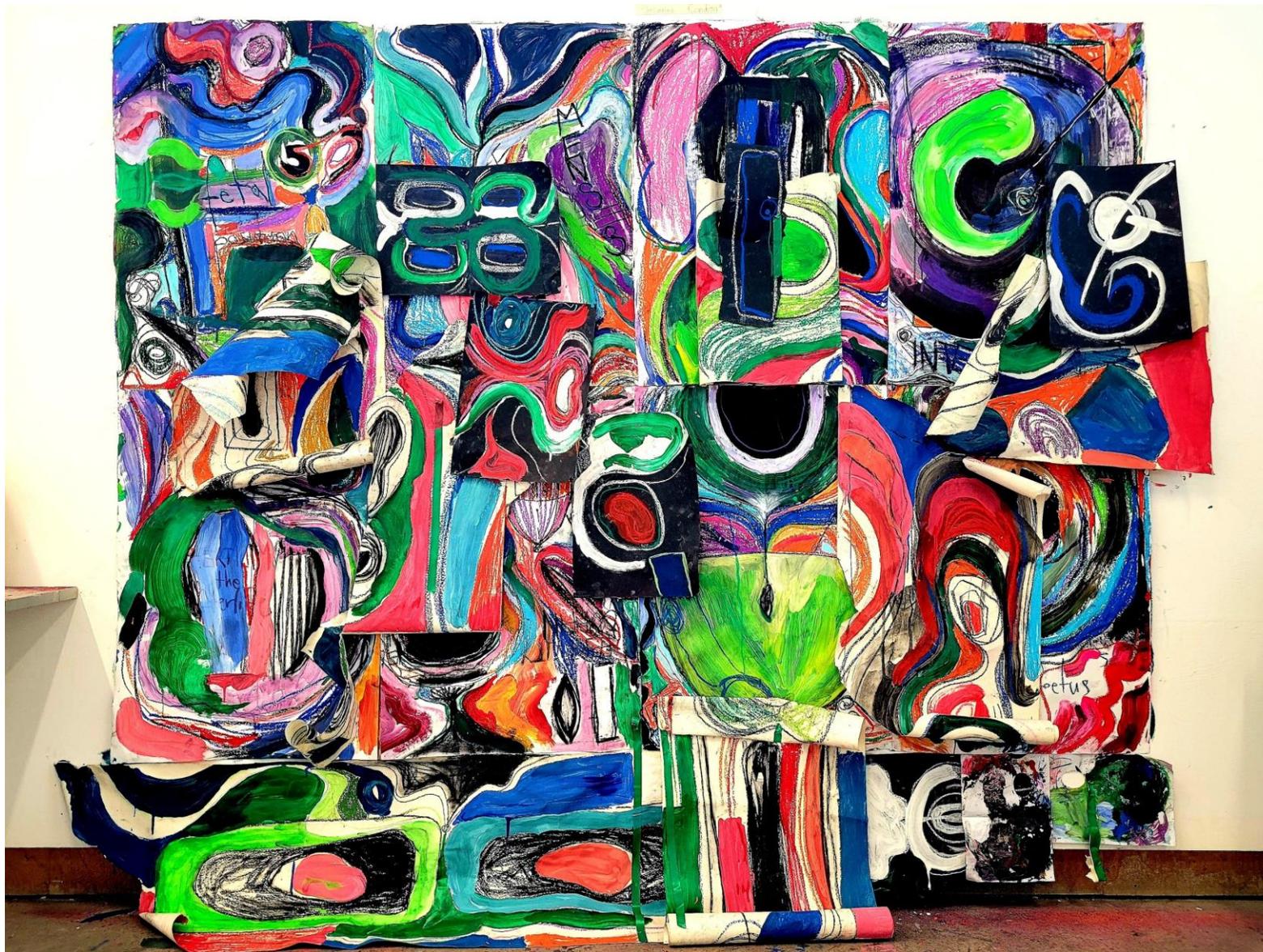
Breeding Pods 1 and 2 (2021)
Close-up photographs of original painting
Each 19.1 x 25.4 cm

Ecosystem (2021)
Progress shots taken in studio
118.8 x 168.0(+) cm



Here I selected the pods in *Reproduction* (2021) and *Bug Hotel* (2021) that I felt were strongest and rearranged them to produce a new compost creation. I then layered previous drawings from *External Womb System* (2021) onto the image surface, causing the painting to grow, mutate and sprawl out from its rectangular confinements. The painting becomes a breeding site, reusing parts of itself to reproduce and transform. I am interested by Oscar Murillo's process in which he leaves canvases on the ground, 'thinking about the floor as a disruption' 1. 'Disruption' 1 in the context of my practice makes me think about dismantling patriarchal structures, as well as the interference and intermingling of different life forms within a natural system.

Murillo, O. and Varagur, K., 2020. Interview with Oscar Murillo - The White Review. [online] The White Review. Available at: <<https://www.thewhiterreview.org/feature/interview-with-oscar-murillo/>> [Accessed November 2021].



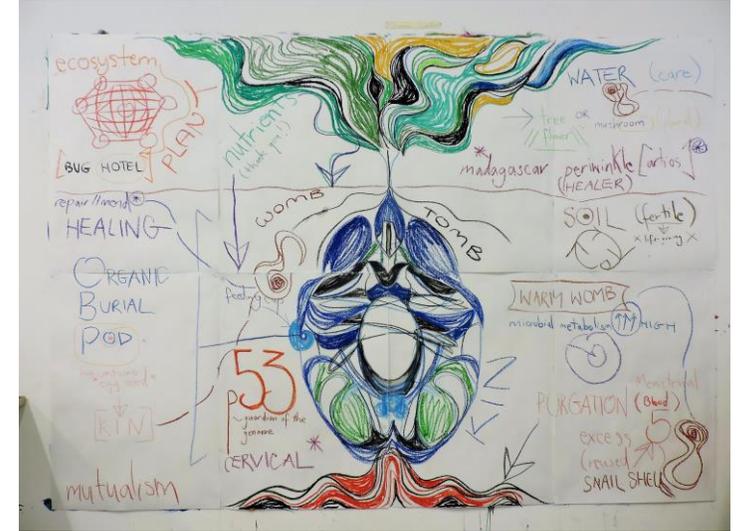
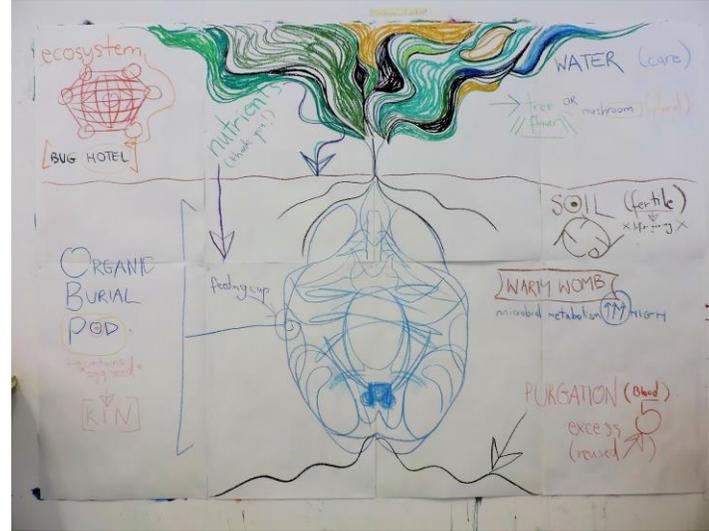
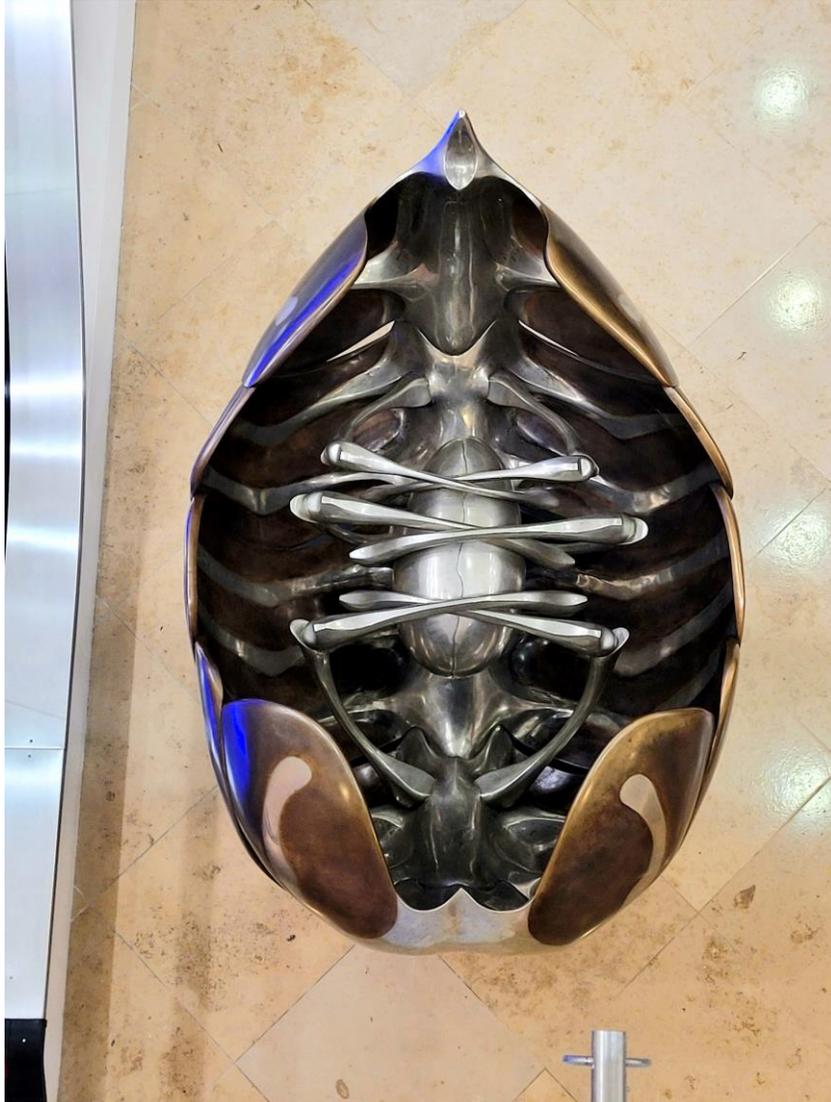
Ecosystem (2021)
Charcoal, chalk, oil pastel,
paint and tape on paper
118.8 x 168.0(+) cm

There is a loss of an ecofeminist focus on reproduction in this busy collage due to the concealment of imagery depicting ovarian and vulvic forms and the elimination of text. The work is lending itself more to the realm of the ecosystem, with the layering of material reflecting its various levels. Although biodiversity is a crucial part of my practice, I would like to reinforce my feminist concerns in future work, perhaps by maintaining the initial stages in a finished outcome.

Space is An Open Womb (2021) was inspired by a creature-like sculpture I came across in Pangolin London, which I have labelled in the drawing as *womb tomb*, *eggshell* and *organic burial pod*. The form of the painting was also influenced by the ecological pyramid which Steve Pollock refers to in *Ecology* (2005) as 'a hierarchy of complexity' 1, whereby an individual organism is shown at the bottom of the pyramid as part of a much larger whole. I also attended a lecture called *Tuning Into Soil*, which stressed how all life on land is dependent on soil, yet as humans we are disrupting instead of caring for it, and how the fertile nature of soil can relate it closely to the womb.

Left: Sculpture found in Pangolin London, photographed by me
Details unknown

Below: *Space Is an Open Womb* (2021)
Progress shots
118.8 x 168.0 cm





Space Is an Open Womb
(2021)
Charcoal, chalk, oil pastel and
ready mixed paint on paper
118.8 x 168.0 cm

The successful elements of this painting are the use of text which accentuates its ecofeminist focus and sense of narrative, and the central *womb tomb*, which I would like to reproduce in future compositions. Although the pyramidal form works conceptually, I feel that it has made the painting less flowing and connected than desirable. The heavy use of black is a little oppressive, and ought to be used more subtly to enhance rather than overpower other components of the painting, to highlight their equal value within my ecosystem. The colours are duller than my previous work, so I would like to return to using acrylic and neon paint to bring back its more celebratory dynamic effect.