My recent work is exploring two aspects of non-objective picture making which have preoccupied me for the last 15 years: the relationship between the automatic, instinctive mark and that which is more considered. While the pictorial concerns remain the same – representing layers of depth through glazes and scumbling, strong tonal relationships, manipulation of the picture plane – the articulation of those concerns has shifted slightly.

Piet Mondrian said, “I don’t want pictures; I just want to find things out.” This belief in transcending the specific object for the sake of the quest is at the root of all honest abstract painting. It requires the painter to understand that the resolution, the painting itself, is never as important as the journey. That journey is laden with risk and doubt, for the question, by its very nature open ended, is never truly resolved.

Throughout my career I have used these principles as the foundation of my practice. However, it would be disingenuous were I to deny the presence of calculated thought in the art making process. Abstraction requires the artist to employ line, colour and form. With the drawings I have to mix ink, apply the brush to the paper, rotate the image as it evolves; with the paintings I layer glazes, and choose stencils to apply over the top, mask borders. I must make decisions.

What is different about this work is that these decisions are more instinctive and less self conscious than previous work. After years of experience and a commitment to abstraction I am able to “forget myself” with greater ease. The pictures have begun to determine me instead of the other way around. In the process, a more cohesive body of work has evolved.

Just as organised chaos works with fractals in nature, I have been playing with permutations of this concept. Thus, while the works have an initial geometric appearance, it is the organic nature of the line, the regimented mistakes, which interest me. Ideally there should be a synthesis between the line, an inherently man made concept, and organic form. When successful, the paintings should evoke the elemental gravity of nature without an overt or debilitating reference.

Gordon Waters 2011