

I

Dialogue between the existing strands of an artist's opus can be as important an attribute as the singular status of the individual works, something which is built over time and commitment, forged and harnessed in equal measure. Indeed it might not be an intended consequence, but it is the sign of a developing strength when connecting strata and symbolic indices are speaking to one another, responding by reflection. Strands of voice, strands of nature, these may be thought of as the rudiments of artistic expression from ancient cave paintings onwards; art, to quote Edmund Burke, is man's nature. Strands weave and cross their myriad way in different readings of David Murphy's artistic practice, where through painting and sculpture he has balanced the notion that nature can be considered in the abstract as well as truthfully replicated. This is not to say that it is not reflexive, critical work. His connecting orbs (*Heavy Intruder* series) which give the appearance of conjoined molecular cells, or microorganisms from the depths of a mountain tarn, meander and cross in long trails, drawing ecological resonance with his enlarged leaf sculptures. As if to demonstrate that surface, represented by these sylvan giants, exists by way of complex underlying mechanisms, something we cannot always see, nor necessarily understand. His paintings, a set of finely rendered textural abstractions, are less that and more poetic reminders of the industrial woollen looms which worked deep in the heart of nineteenth century England. The same bucolic countryside the artist has taken considered, not to say, gradual inspiration. Of corollary import, however, is that it was spread over these same shires (again in the nineteenth century) that the Luddites, fearing their livelihoods were to be usurped by the industrial looms, rose up to sabotage the monstrous machines - and from which event Mary Shelley drew inspiration for her literary masterpiece of scientific invention, *Frankenstein*. Here the Promethean dilemma is forcefully foregrounded, and the dangling question put. How far do we wish to weave? And like with Ariadne's thread, can we know where we are heading?

II

This is indeed a natural and intuitive aspect of human exploratory appetite, but with obvious problems; the excitement of discovery, the ability to see closer and understand better brings with it fascination, exhilaration and at the same time anxiety. It was a philosophical preoccupation of thinkers such as Edmund Burke who believed that our experience of the *sublime* is not completely divorced from our experience or reception of violence, social or natural. This compulsion to awe and be awed reaches its zenith in recent times with the scientific development of particle physics and the subsequent invention of nuclear weapons. Integral to this ingenuity is the understanding of the sun's workings and its life giving force, light. On a microphysical level it is photons from the sun, critical to ecological growth, that also act as a slow denuding force; the solar energy which brings luminance to a richly crafted tapestry will over time take it away. In point of fact, conservators of medieval and renaissance tapestries have found that when turning around faded works they reveal perfectly preserved colouration and image, and thus the three-dimensionality of textiles is here born out, front and back, above and below. David's most complex painted works, the X series, comprising up to 80 thinned layers of paint, simultaneously refers to both the three dimensional nature of textile weaving and the deep focus netherworld of microscopic imaging. Our world, we must consistently acknowledge, plays a balancing act between the natural and artificial, the supposedly real and the abstract. As if to subtly and delicately corroborate this, the rich and varied pigments employed to give both form and content to these weaving paintings are crafted with casein - originally a natural milk based paint, its current commercial guise is a synthetic composite - some of which are monochrome renditions that affect the spectral beauty of micro-imaging. This hinting of scientific process, which historically developed as it did with the emergence of lens technology, reads elegantly alongside his convex glass sculptures, and therefore serves to underwrite further schema.

III

Memory, connection and influence, precedent and history, provide us with the interpretative tools to build knowledge, and as a consequence complex systems emerge and develop; social, legal or otherwise. Analogous to this is the grander, all-encompassing idea of relational theory as defined by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, where matter precedes space rather than the obverse, and, accordingly, no single entity can exist independently of the network within which it exists, particle physics or otherwise. With this in mind, the warp and weft, the intertwining elements in David's work give a magical, lyrical credence to peoples creative ability, the ability to interpret by reflecting on relationships within given environments. The polymorphic play in his work drives reminders, sparks the imagination, of wanderings; connecting and growing with equilibrium of purpose into a brilliant whole. The dialogue between his conjoined molecular sculptures and his sylvan leaves is therefore not only a dialogue about the natural/biological world, but can importantly be read as underscoring the very human, primordial need for narrative. The necessity to make sense by connection, the evolutionary coping mechanism to reason the revelatory horrors of consciousness. Possibly the most poetic literary example of this is Molly Bloom's eidetic dance in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, when she lyrically unfurls the skeins of her inner thoughts in order to physically render herself free from a suffocating Catholic Ireland. Reflecting on her experiences she reveals the comparative phenomena of the unrestrained, non-conformist mind; an instinctive spirit, she rejects a spiritless situation in preference for her own natural sensitivity. Fiction is a style, a text, history is textually woven. So it is with the line in art, making its way from one point to another it is carefully threaded, a fabrication, and as with an espaliered vine, an ordering of reality.

