

*Dwelling and Disruption: How Art and DIY Practices Can Reconfigure Domestic Spaces to Reveal
New Meanings of Everyday Life?*

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ABSTRACT

Dwelling and Disruption: How Art and DIY Practices Can Reconfigure Domestic Spaces to Reveal New Meanings of Everyday Life

Dedicated to Simon Adams, AKA Paul Ritter (1966 – 2021)



Fig 1.

This practice-based PhD explores how art practice and Do It Yourself (DIY) methods can temporally disturb the material surfaces of everyday life to allow new readings of the nature of home to unfold.

Central to this work are investigations into how the development of the dimensions of reach, touch, vibration/sound and folding as embodied practice research methods, can provide new means of connection between the 'opaque interiority of the body and the exteriority of the world' (Pallasmaa 2012).

My research investigation involves an ongoing series of physical interventions into the fabric of my house. This has produced an ongoing, interconnected stream of artworks from 2014 to 2025. Due to their temporary nature, I think of the artworks as a series of "visitors" to my house. Visitors that are accommodated and tolerated during their stay.

The essentially site-based and ephemeral nature of the practice means that the main body of the work exists in recorded form. This consists of over 90 artworks, documented through still images, videos and audio and including moving, site specific and durational works, together with the parallel text based and audio work of *Brenchley*. All the work is accessible via my **website** and relevant links.

Together with artworks made for and situated in my house, several pieces have left home in different forms to be presented in galleries, museums, outdoor spaces, and festivals. These include sound and object installations for *Art in Romney Marsh* in 2014, *The Symposium for Acoustic Ecology* at Chatham Dockyard in 2014, *Curious*, South Norwood London in 2014 and

2015, *Portability: Art Moves*, at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2014 & 2015 *Portability: Art Moves* at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2014, *Uncommon Chemistry* at the Observer Building in Hastings 2017, Installation in Gulbenkian Theatre Canterbury in 2017, work and talk as part of *Sticky Thick* for the Whitstable Biennale in 2017, Installation and paper delivered at Goldsmiths University, London 2017, Paper delivered for *Large Objects Moving Air* as part of Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice at the London College of Communication in 2018 and work exhibited at the Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate in 2021 and 22 and at Hantverk & Found gallery in Margate in 2018.

My research considers the body of the house as a material extension of our own bodies, with dust as a central motif, medium and shared material. Through practice, the research explores the premise that the domestic spaces of home are emotionally and materially charged through habitation. Metaphorically, the envelope of the house, in its plasticity, folds around us as we live, constantly adjusting, stretching and refolding through habitation and the ongoing spatial fluidity of the quotidian.

This research project reaches back to my own childhood, extending out through my children, and reflecting on the gradual dismantling of my father's psyche through Alzheimer's dementia. My practice-based interventions explore how the constant folding and unfolding of our bodies and senses respond to the spaces and objects around us. Our own skin including our eyes, folding with the folds of space. DIY (do it yourself) and making good, processes by which the home is constantly being remade, form an ongoing process of material analysis and investigation, becoming an essential research method in this project.

The innate and compulsive trait of my Double Deficit Dyslexia (DDD), in feeling, finding and making new connections between seemingly disparate elements in everything I experience, is critical in shaping the conceptual underpinning, structure and form of my research process, thesis, art practice and methodology. This capacity opens up new possibilities for a material, conceptual and sensorial examination of the nature of home.



Fig 2

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My supervisors which, due to institutional changes, have been several. Firstly, Claudia Molitor for her critical help in forming the initial foundation for this study, particularly for giving me the confidence to write *Brenchley* after my assessment for dyslexia. Adam Chodzko for listening and for his interest in my writing and artwork. Professor Gordana Fontana-Giusti for her kindness and guidance. Last but not least, Professor Shona Illingworth for her infinite patience, guidance and manifold suggestions.

The House and its current, past (and future) occupants for letting me spend the last 10 years in intimate exchange.



Fig 3

Moss, my dog, for taking an interest in everything, and keeping me company during long days of writing.

Timeline of practice 2014 - 2025

This research project has evolved over 10 years, beginning with an exploration of the relationship between space, touch and listening in relation to domestic space and its fabric. At its core are artworks and writing that emanate from domestic dwelling and the ongoing restoration of the house.

Early works (2014 – 16) allowed me to reconnect with my art practice after 20 years of teaching through revisiting core themes of touch, reach, surface, movement and scale by producing kinetic devices, which measure and describe space.



Fig 4



Fig 5

The artworks use moving elastic belts through which a cat's whisker is threaded. These works include *The Cat's Whiskers*, 2014 (fig 4) and *Touch*, 2016 (fig 6). In these works, the whisker rotates as the belt moves, to touch, skim and disturb dust, liquid and other surfaces throughout the house, continually collecting and redistributing dust and other debris.

These artworks created a new temporary linear geometry as they traversed the house, taking it back to its origins as an architectural drawing. The works offered a brief period of connection to the architecture, through temporarily linking and allowing corners and skirting boards to reach and briefly lightly "touch" each other through the elastic. The rear window and the apple trees at the end of the garden, had a brief affair of mutual touch after 120 years of mutely facing each other (fig 6).



Fig 6

In addition to guiding the viewer's eye through the spaces they spanned and described, the works emitted a soft, sometimes rhythmic tapping as they touched the architecture of the rooms opening an auditory dimension directly related to the space - these pieces played the spaces.

Works such as *Venetian*, 2017 and *Touch*, 2016 were activated by Passive Infrared sensors, triggered by the viewer's own movement through the spaces - adding to and extending the human (and animal) measuring of space through everyday passage through corridors and rooms. Other pieces, such as *More Than This*, 2018 and *Untitled*, domestic installation 2015, interrupted the everyday flow of the house through being sited in transitional spaces of corridors and landings. The viewer was required to step over, around or duck under the work, the encounter leaving an embodied memory of the visiting works.

The works entered and communed with the often overlooked and miniature world of insects, spiders, dust bunnies, with which we share our homes. The work was born from eddies of time - domestic Lagrange points (*Lagrange points are positions in space where the gravitational forces of two planets cancel each other out, meaning objects can stay still perpetually*). Overlooked corners and edges where time is held in dust and fluff, are disturbed by the whisker and then released back into the quotidian flow. When the artworks stop and the brief period of fascination is over, the space draws back into stillness, the kind of stillness felt after releasing a trapped bee or at a railway station between trains.

Importantly the pieces somehow transgressed and opened a language of scale, simultaneously occupying worlds of both the minute and the monumental. Others moved hidden within the poche of walls and voids opened through DIY - to be captured photographically and then sealed up within the walls. The work, insect-like in its brief life and lightness of touch, activated and illuminated the normally dark unseen void of 100-year-old corners and the interior of lath &

plaster stud wall. Some of the work started to push at and reach through the accepted boundaries of the house, both outer and inner space reaching through windows and walls.

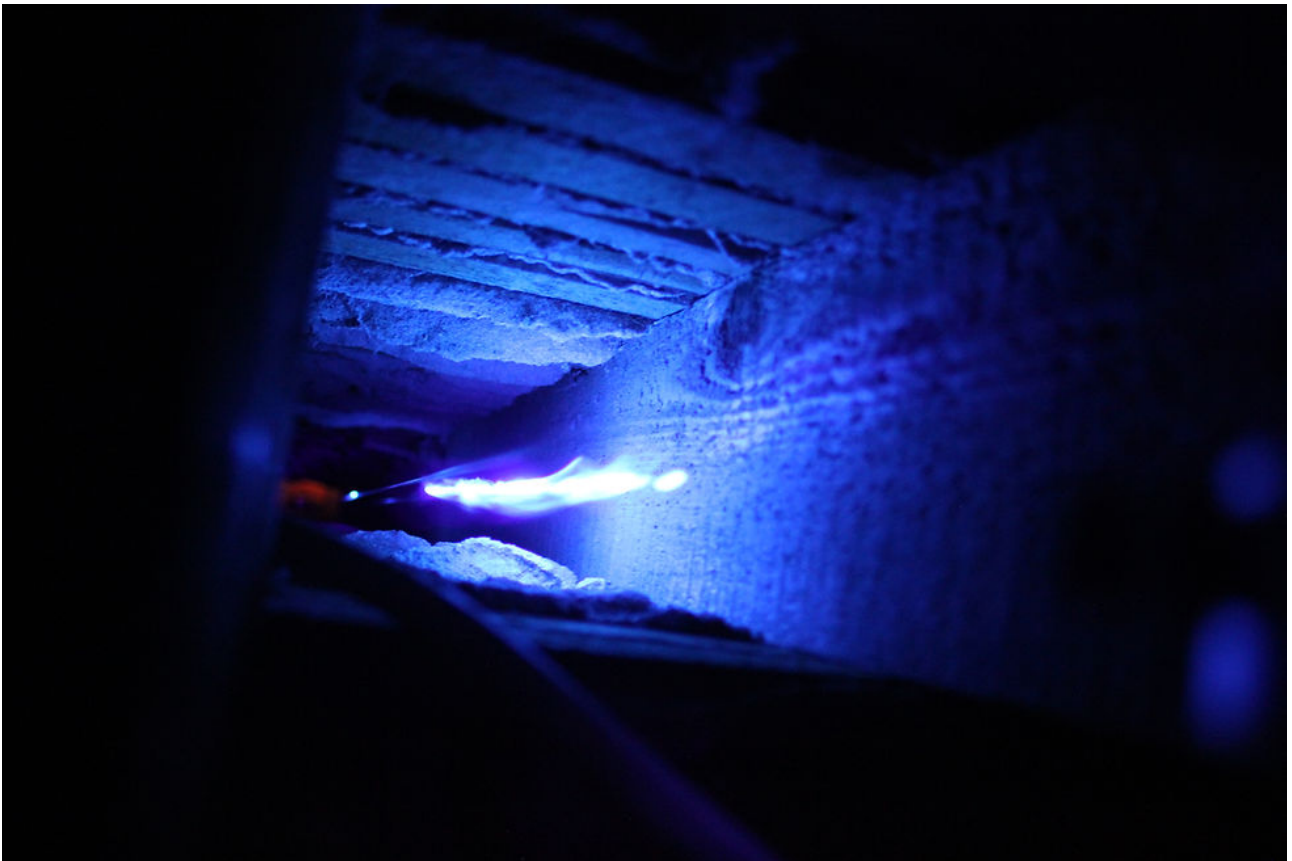


Fig 7

DIY and the artwork became interdependent on each other - one led to another. These works extended from existing architecture to reach and connect, offering a new, transient reading of the space.

These early works led to a focus on the relationship between hearing/listening and touch, and the cat's whisker (vibrissae) became a core motif, leading to further work involving sound and audible touch.

2017 - 2024

The work is an attempt to briefly hold (rather than capture) time, space and attention. It is as ephemeral as the moments that make up the vast part of domestic life that, unless held in memory or photograph, are lost and released back in time.

From this beginning the artwork developed the key spatial and conceptual themes of reach, touch and scale applied to domestic spaces.

INTRODUCTION

"All the senses, including vision, are extensions of the tactile sense; the senses are specialisations of skin tissue, and all sensory experiences are modes of touching, and thus related to tactility."

Juhani Pallasmaa *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 1996: p.12

"Over every surface was a layer of dust, sealing everything as Brenchley had left it, and confirming almost no activity since. Even after opening a window, the dust seemed to deaden sound in a similar manner to a layer of snow. It was as if the dust had somehow trapped and made time material."

Brenchley, (Meacham 2017)



Fig 8

Unfolding through Dwelling/Making Good explores how art practice and Do It Yourself methods (DIY) can temporally disturb the material surfaces of everyday life, to allow new readings of the nature of home to unfold.

This practice research project is centered in the house I have lived in with my family for the last twenty years. The house where my wife and I brought up our children who, now grown up, have left, leaving stillness. The house is an Edwardian semi-detached structure, built in 1910 and typical of the time. Its design and fabric mirror the optimism of the period leading up to the First World

War, in its high ceilings, large windows and welcoming hallway. For the last ten years this house has been both subject and site for a continuum of diverse art making, within and around the daily life and activities of home.

Researcher perspective and background - a note on Double Deficit Dyslexia

The inclusion of biographical background is key to this research project. In 2014, as part of undertaking a practice-based PhD, I was assessed for learning needs by the University. The assessment revealed that I have Double-Deficit Dyslexia, the most acute form of the neurodevelopmental disorder and I qualified for the disabled student's allowance.

The assessment also suggested that throughout my life at school, at university and as a lecturer, I had devised mechanisms to disguise and camouflage my condition in order to cope with what I was made to feel was a shameful disability.

The dyslexia assessment changed my entire conception of the condition, from that of a disability to another way of seeing and being in the world.

A common dyslexic trait is an intuitive feeling of connection in everything. It is a feeling of connection through all the senses simultaneously, free from any sensory hierarchy.

This compelling and sometimes overwhelming sense of connection, all of the time, is central to my research methodology and practice, allowing me to open new avenues for considering the interconnected and multifaceted material, sensory and temporal dimensions of home.

The artworks that I have made throughout this research project serve to fuse the gaps between the seemingly unconnected or overlooked elements of the house, working in the "buffer zones" – building bridges between subjects, spaces, senses and thoughts; filling and populating the empty voids in-between, with questions and new meaning.

Dyslexia has also meant that I have always extended my thoughts directly into the world through making. Some of my earliest memories are of looking up at the hands of a retired engineer in his shed as he used various tools on his workbench. My attempts to emulate Uncle Bill and engage in my "works" became a central part of my childhood. Importantly the "works" used materials found in the house, had no end point and were never finished. The works involved bringing pieces of unconnected domestic objects into some kind of new order. This constant flow of thought, making and following threads of connection, forms the theoretical and conceptual approach to these investigations.

The writing and artwork employ the dyslexic experience of thinking sensorially, of almost seeing too much: all is material – world, house, surface, space – through which a unique logic of connecting the seemingly unconnected emerges.

Practice & Thesis

How Can Art Practice & Do It Yourself (DIY) Methods Temporally Disturb the Material Surfaces of Everyday Life, to Allow New Readings of the Nature of Home to Unfold?

The question is addressed primarily through my art practice applied to the spaces of my home. This investigation involves an ongoing series of research interventions into the domestic interior and fabric of my house, which act collectively as an interconnected body of work produced over the last ten years. The production of the artworks provides a dynamic methodology for exploring and addressing the question at the centre of this research project.

The essential need for the house-based artwork to fit in and around everyday domestic rhythms, has meant that the bulk of the artwork is temporary and ephemeral in nature and thus exists in recorded form, either as photographs, video or audio which can all be accessed through my website: www.timmeacham.space

The practice is supported through a (written) thesis, which is structured around a series of narrative journeys, both actual and theoretical, that move through both actual and imagined space and time. The journeys are punctuated through encounters with and examinations of a series of my domestic art installations and architectural interventions which form the body of practical work.

This thesis is divided into two interconnected parts. Part one (*Brenchley*, Meacham 2017), is a narrative text that forms a central part of the research, serving to link the thesis and practice through a creative exploration of key themes. As such, the text should be regarded as an extension, and integral part, of the art practice. *Brenchley* was also developed as an audio script for radio, intended for broadcast on Resonance Extra (online radio station). The text was recorded and developed with the actor Paul Ritter, in 2021. The recording ended abruptly with his unexpected death on 5 April of that year but will be broadcast in 2025.

Part two, *House* (Meacham 2024) considers my 10-year exploration of the house as an extension of the body. It reflects on my investigation of multiple interconnections between interiority and exteriority through the production of the ongoing series of artworks and interventions undertaken within the architectural spaces of my own house. The imagined works created by *Brenchley* bear close resemblance the artworks and interventions I have made over the period of this research project.

Part One : *Brenchley*

The figure of *Brenchley* is a composite character made up of aspects of people I have met (particularly in academia). Drawing on autobiographical detail, the story of *Brenchley* was written when my mother died. When people die, they leave a vacuum, which is even deeper when the dead person was not known.

In providing a space to distil ideas as the work progressed, the development of *Brenchley* is core to the investigations undertaken throughout this research. The narrative of *Brenchley* is the medium that allows "I", the archivist, to discover, experience, interpret and reflect upon the sensorial

atmospheres created by the imagined figure of Brenchley, through the various 'works' discovered in his flat after his disappearance, collapsing the space between body and object. The character of Brenchley, and his flat, acts as metaphor for the skin or surface that we present to the world, below which is another. A skin that is initially pierced and extended (in and out) through Brenchley's interventions into the architectural spaces that he previously inhabited. The "skin" is then pierced a second time, through the actions of the Archivist, as he explores and reveals the works. Brenchley's own reaching and folding into these spaces is in turn mirrored by the archivist who, coming from the outside, folds himself metaphorically inwards to enter the space left by Brenchley's absence.

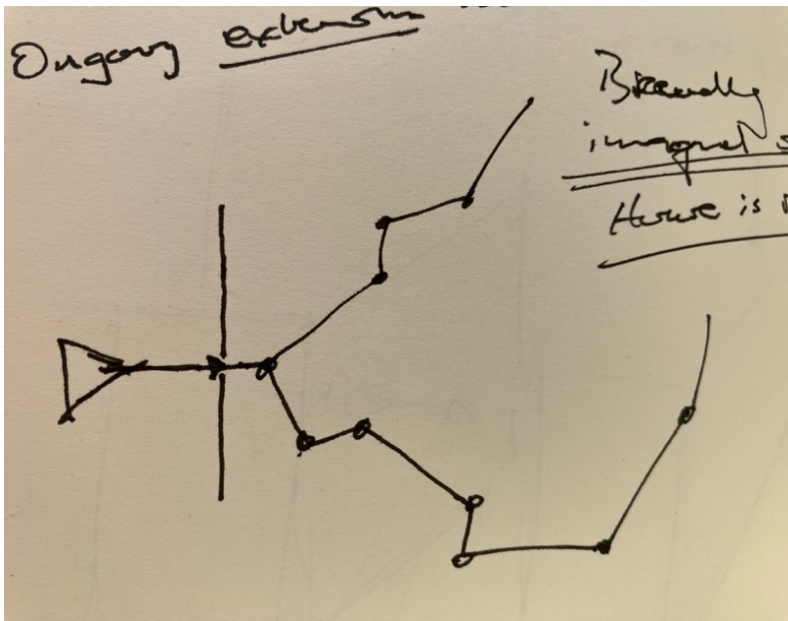


Fig 9

Once the archivist is in the flat, which at first appears empty, there is further unfolding, to reveal layer upon layer of physical intervention into the architectural spaces we don't normally see, filling and connecting the vacuums that Brenchley left behind, until we reach the final sealed room. In *Brenchley*, the unfolding connections between interiority and exteriority mirror and invert or reflect my interventions into the fabric, skin and spaces of the house, and offer another vantage point to expand and reflect on the work, exploring and making palpable the multiple connections between bodies, spaces and material. Though *Brenchley* is an imagined space, the house is real.



Fig 10

The Archivist

Central to these investigations is the figure of “I”, the *archivist*. The character of the archivist is part-autobiographical and a composite of individuals that I've met while working in museums over the last thirty years. Archiving practice, particularly in dealing with the estates of absent or deceased others, requires degrees of empathy and an ability and willingness to let go of the self, in order to project and enter the world of another. In *Brenchley*, I attempt to describe these qualities as so:

"On entering, stepping over unopened mail, there was a sense that I was seeing and touching only the surface of a life, while being enveloped by the skin of another".

Brenchley, Meacham 2017

The figure of the archivist is a device that allows me to enter the fictional world of *Brenchley*, to explore and experience my own ideas and work through another form of practice and material engagement. This allows me (the artist) a certain degree of distance to encounter and review my own work through the eyes of an imagined other, granting a degree of objectivity in making sense of what *Brenchley* has left behind (my own work).

The sometimes-solitary figure of an archivist, or "people of the stacks" as they are sometimes referred to, often spends long periods of time alone in libraries, museum vaults and the homes, spaces and collections of absent others, haunting storerooms and dusty spaces. As commented on by Arlene Schmuland, archivists are no strangers to dust, which is a core material and motif in my art practice and writing:

"Dust is the single most pervasive motif associated with archives, even outside of fiction".

The Archival Image in Fiction: Arlene Schmuland, 1999

The figure of an archivist has been used as a literary device by writers such as M. R. James, Susan Hill, Martha Cooley (in *The Archivist*, 1998) and in *Shooting the Past*, a BBC television drama by Stephen Poliakoff, broadcast in 1999. An archivist is also used by artists such as Rose Salane, who

collects and works with lost objects. She invites diverse specialists to identify, interpret and create various provenances, to create an imagined archive. At the core of Salane's practice is questioning the relative value of objects to different people in different contexts.

"How do we determine something is worth something, or of some importance to a place or a person"?

Rose Salane's Lost & Found - Art 21 <https://rosesalane.com>

For her 2006 work, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, Iris Haussler created the complete life and work of the fictitious artist Wagenbach. This complex art installation involved the creation of the contents of an entire house in Toronto, previously "occupied" by Wagenbach. This includes a lifetime of artefacts and photographs, and a large body of artwork, all made or collected by Haussler, for which she, amongst other roles, adopts the role of "Iris Haeussler: Senior Archivist for the Wagenbach assessment", appointed to enter the world and mind of Wagenbach in order to process and make public his "legacy". Haeussler lists amongst the trustee's decisions:

"...an Open Assessment for a limited time, in which visitors were allowed limited access to the site, to facilitate a first-hand atmospheric experience of this environment".

<https://haeussler.ca/projects/legacy-of-joseph-wagenbach.html>

Here the "archivist" moves from the normally quantifiable material archive to the importance of how the place feels - in a similar manner to the archivist in Brenchley, who is affected by lengths of time spent in the homes of absent others. Häussler also hints at the semi-autobiographical origin of the fictitious artist. In a similar manner to *Brenchley*, Wagenbach/Häussler also create alternative worlds as a means to escape (the past):

"My fictitious character, Joseph Wagenbach, shares some of this history with me. He immigrated to Canada the year I was born, and, like me, thought he could leave his past behind".

The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach. Iris Häussler

In *Brenchley*, the archivist acts as an informed researcher and diarist in possession of a particular atmospheric acuity, developed through considerable time spent in the homes of absent others. This experience has moved his sensibilities and ability to enter increasing levels of immersion, taking the reader on a journey through deep inner space (and time) of domestic habitation. Brenchley's work grants the archivist a new appreciation of, and level of engagement with, domestic interior architecture through stillness and movement, silence and sound, light and dark, reach, touch and memory. This is at the core of my creative methodology and practical research into domestic architectural space; the archivist acts as my alter-ego.

The vacuum left by the figure of Brenchley is the space in which the archivist operates. A space of apparent stillness, contemplation and slow time. A space of deep listening and observation in order to give voice and bring Brenchley's mute legacy and story back into the present, all be it as faint whispers and indistinct sounds. Archiving and my own practice are processes that both allow

and require a different type of slower, "thicker" time to be entered. Through a process of "sifting", uncovering and opening and closing of boxes and making connections between the previously unconnected, to develop deeper reflections on my practice-based investigations.

Touch

Archiving pre-digital material often involves physically touching and handling objects as a way of understanding them and allowing the objects to "tell" their story. There is a similarity in this aspect of archiving to restoration DIY, in the reading of the fabric of spaces, initially through touch. The tapping of walls, and uncovering and sifting of material, reveals traces of the history and the stories of objects and space.

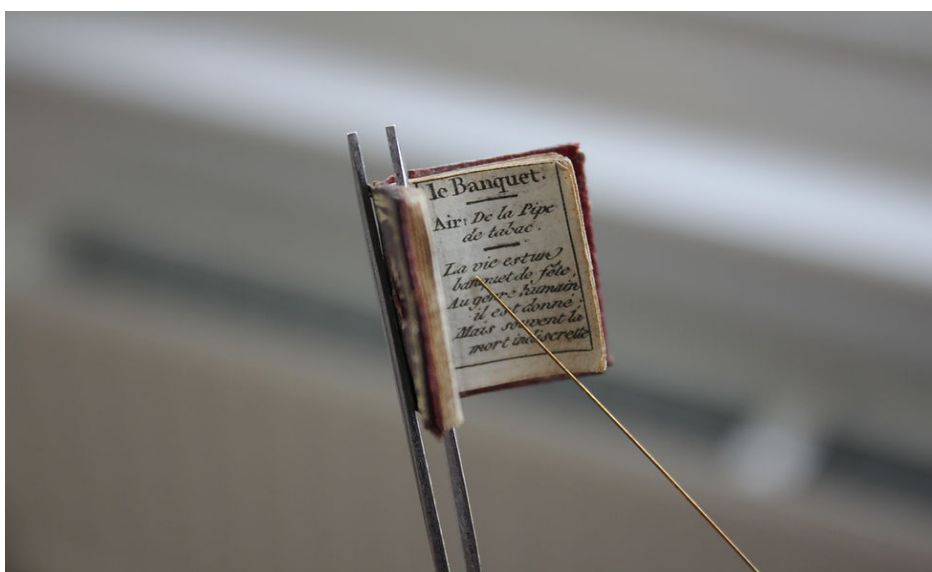


Fig 11

The archivist and the works

The moving works left behind by Brenchley are activated (and brought back into the present) by the movement of the living archivist. In this respect, the archivist re-activates the space through his physical presence and movements, as he moves through the flat, building a story of Brenchley from what he has left behind.

In this sense "I", the archivist, hears and feels the hidden works before he sees them. Drawn by sound, touching the walls to trace and feel.

"I made a paper cone to better hear the sounds as they traversed the space. I found myself following them, with the cat, from room to room, tracing their movement with my fingertips. The brushing of my fingers, adding to the existing tracery". Meacham, *Brenchley* 2024

This "listening" through touch allows the archivist to map the space both spatially and temporally, hearing through touch as a prelude to seeing.

The Relationship Between Brenchley Part 1, and the Audio Work

Brenchley was conceived both as a narrative text and an audio work. This decision was perhaps due my dyslexic sense of connection between everything. Sound is particularly important to me. I suffer from ongoing hearing problems after a burst eardrum as a child. I consider sound, together with light and movement (time), as another material dimension of my art practice. Using audio allows my ideas to expand through, and transgress, perceived media and sensory boundaries. As Jean-Luc Nancy notes in *Listening* (2007), form is initially grasped as visual and the dimension of sound expands the experience of space, to create an auditory space of expansion:

"The sonorous, on the other hand, outweighs form. It does not dissolve it but rather enlarges it".

Listening Jean-Luc Nancy

Audio was also chosen for its capacity to allow the listener to create and be transported to a limitless, inner space of the individual imagination. In his book *Orality and Literacy* (1982) Walter J. Ong discusses the potential of sound to immerse the listener and considers the difference between seeing and hearing:

"Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer... I am at the centre of my auditory world, which envelopes me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence... You can immerse yourself in hearing, in sound. There is no way to immerse yourself similarly in sight."

Orality and Literacy. Walter J. Ong

Although this statement perhaps obliquely supports the western hierarchy of the senses, with vision as our primary sense, in its ability to create images and spaces in the imagination of the listener, radio can be considered a "visual" media:

"...the listener is compelled to 'supply' the visual data for himself. The details are described, or they may suggest themselves through sound, but they are not 'pictured' for him"

Understanding Radio. Andrew Crisell, Routledge, London 1986, P7)

Sound is also, albeit mainly unconsciously, a part of our navigation of space as a form of auditory mapping. We associate particular sounds with particular places and times. Domestic sounds are part of our personal "home-scape", serving to connect and instil senses of security and interiority, for example, the sound of a key in a front door, or the sound of the central heating firing up. In *Brenchley* the archivist is first drawn by sound before he sees the interventions. Sound, perhaps more than the visual, also has the power to create a particular atmosphere, as felt by the archivist in *Brenchley*. Radio and audio occupy and activate space in a different way to video and its reliance on a screen. There is a sense that radio follows us round spaces.

There is a direct physical connection between the human body and sound. Sound is physical like the spaces it moves through. Sound as vibration physically enters our bodies.

Tim Ingold, in *Being Alive*, speaks of this connection to the world in reference to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962):

"... his conclusion was that since the living body is primordially and irrevocably stitched into the fabric of the world, our perception of the world is no more, and no less, than the world's perception of itself – in and through us."

Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description, Tim Ingold, 2011.

It is this direct connection to the world that I wanted to explore and incorporate through audio. Finally, the incomplete audio recording of *Brenchley* has become a sonic memorial to my friend, the late Simon Adams (AKA the actor Paul Ritter), who sadly died during this project.

Part Two: House

Part two, *House*, examines how my artworks and interventions into my own home seek to develop new forms of excavation and performative interaction that expand our understanding of scale and materiality and stretch the accepted boundaries of domestic architecture. These perceived boundaries are explored through a focus on the haptic: touch, reach and proprioception as key to our understanding and relationship with physical space. The works dwell on the porosity and the erosion of accepted physical boundaries of walls, windows and doors. The works examine and make visibly palpable, continual material transferences, particularly dust, its relationship with time and as a medium of constant exchange of "debris" between us and the spaces we occupy. The works are a result of continuous present occupation, which connect directly with the original structure (skin on skin) through presence and everyday life, but also physical engagement with the house through DIY. Hence, there is a forward movement – allowing thoughts to manifest. Where *Benchley* is a metaphorical journey, *House* examines and reflects on the practice research investigations in situ. Where *Brenchley* is also an imagined physical journey, the continual transitory interventions into the *House* are real, leaving their own material traces and atmospheres.

Practice context : An important note on my art practice

I was born in 1959, and my practice interests are rooted in the experiences, ideas, and social forces to which I was exposed as a child in the mid-1960s and 1970s.

Growing up in East Kent during this time, my friends and I frequently explored and played in local derelict buildings. We built dens on areas of waste ground that were still, at least in part, WW2 bombsites. I was fascinated by these once inhabited spaces, their state of dilapidation and traces of the lives of the people who had once lived there.

Often stripped of floorboards and roof coverings prior to demolition, a new temporary architecture was created. An architecture that was open to the elements, and importantly, with

the windows often boarded up, allowed light to pierce and enter the once opaque walls and roofs of the skeletal structures in new and memorable ways.

This early experience of exploring the deserted homes of absent others and building a possible narrative of explanation, is echoed in *Brenchley* where the archivist, a visitor from the outside, tries to make sense of the apparently empty flat.

As a cub scout, aged around 7, I remember working with my fellow pack members to build an adventure playground on one of these areas of rubble-strewn wasteland.



Fig 12

The *Junk* or adventure playground was an idea first developed by the Danish landscape architect Carl Theodor Marius Sorenson near Copenhagen in 1943. The playgrounds were intended as child-centred spaces of creative play, in a landscape devastated by war.

Later in the 1950s and into the 1980s, the *Junk* playground was developed by various groups and individuals across Europe and the UK. These new types of playground, made from found and discarded materials, were seen as progressive spaces, somehow helping to heal the collective trauma of WW2. Amongst the individuals to pick up on this idea in the UK was the architect and educator Simon Nicholson who, in 1971, developed his *Loose Parts Theory*:

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it."

How NOT to Cheat Children Simon Nicholson, 1971, – *The Theory of Loose Parts*, Landscape Architecture journal.

Nicholson's theory about the educational value of the bringing together of moveable and unrelated parts - as opposed to larger and fixed (immovable) elements - in order to imagine new narrative and form, bringing meaning into the present, is central to my current practice.

My memory of building the junk playground, is one of excitement, frantic hammering, sawing and importantly, physical and creative risk-taking. We built towers and connected walkways, reaching and stretching our bodies to their limits. If a structure didn't work, we simply altered it, until it did. There was no sense of failure and importantly, there was no sense of working towards a finished thing. The playground was in a constant state of "becoming".

On reflection, in this highly excited collective making, my pack and I were in what was later termed, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – in his 1975 paper *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* – a *flow state*. A constant exchange of ideas, improvisation, experiments, with one thing leading to another. In short, it felt like an extension of play.

"We have called this state the flow experience, because this is the term many of the people we interviewed had used in their descriptions of how it felt to be in top form: "I was carried on by the flow." *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990)

During the Cold War period we lived under the constant threat of nuclear oblivion. As a child I was aware of this and sensed my parents' anxiety. This was later confirmed in conversations with my father shortly before he died. This collective state of pre-third world war, reached into every area of life including toys. The *Space Age* promised both hope and destruction, through new technologies.

There was also a feeling of building from the ruins of a previous world in a post-apocalyptic landscape. A sense that we were preparing to survive in a post-nuclear war world, drawing on the innate human instinct to make shelter from available materials. Children's books such as *Star Man's Son 2250* (published in 1952, written by Alice Norton under the pen-name of Andre Norton, in which a lone boy crosses a post-apocalyptic landscape), and the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes* (directed by Franklin J. Schaffner), filled my imagination with visions of a landscape altered by war

The zeitgeist from which the adventure playground movement grew was echoed in the 1956 exhibition *This Is Tomorrow*, at the Whitechapel gallery in London. Amongst exhibitors were the architects Alison and Peter Smithson, and artists Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi. Exhibiting under the collective title *Group 6*, together they made *Patio & Pavilion*. The piece was an improvised shelter made from materials and objects scavenged from the streets around the gallery.

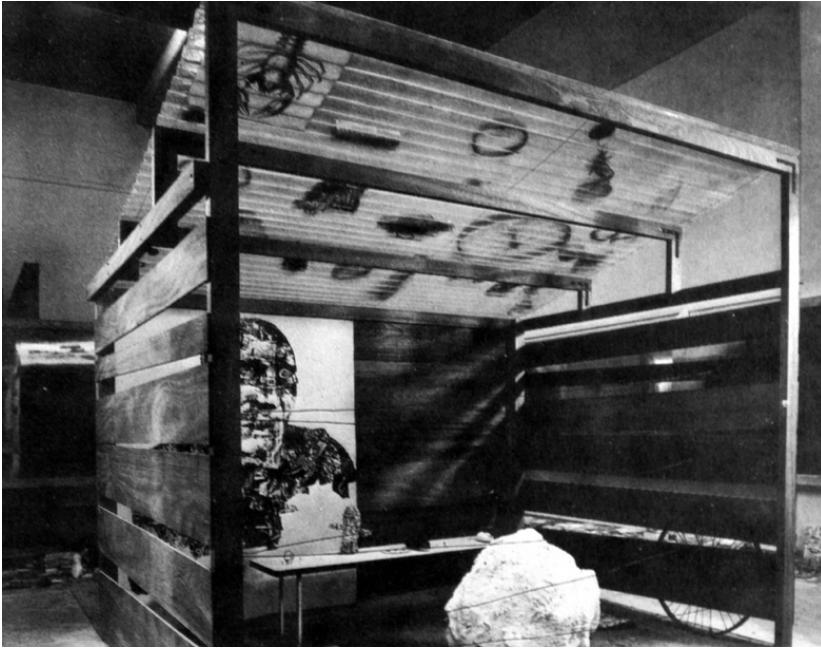


Fig 13

Visitors to the exhibition included a young JG Ballard, who was influenced by the collage element of the exhibition, and the use of everyday or found objects and the new meanings given to them through the exhibition. It is this history and social context that has shaped and continues to inform my practice-based research investigations.

Many other artists emerged from this time with similar concerns, amongst them Terry Smith. Born in London in 1957. In 1994 Smith created a series of works in condemned houses, by carefully cutting and removing layers of plaster to reveal brick or lathe work beneath.



Fig 14

The works were entitled *Site Unseen* as they were never seen by the public. To make the work Smith had broken into the condemned houses illegally, putting himself at some risk. Smith comments on this time:

"Fortunately, this was at a time when health and safety was not a huge concern. But it was very clear from the start that it would be impossible to invite an audience in to see the results of my interventions."

Terry Smith: *Site Unseen*

Smith's work was temporary by nature and later it was destroyed with the demolition of the houses. The work now mainly exists as recorded imagery, like my own, as archival photographs. Smith became interested in the possibility of using walls as material for domestic interventions whilst working on his own house. He, like myself, saw the potential of applying DIY processes, skills and materials to artmaking, in an ethos of contingency and through working with, and bringing out what is already there. In his focus on walls, there is an important difference between Smith's and my own practice. Although both practices involve a degree of physical cutting into, my "cutting into" is also metaphorical in terms of time and the history of the space.

"Smith's concern is surface and his approach a legacy of an education in the time of conceptualism."

Art from Scratch, Caroline Roux, Blueprint magazine, June 1996

In going below the surface through cutting, Smith is clear that his interest lies solely in the material of the walls through the removal, rather than seeing the surface itself as a means of understanding and bearing the history of the building and its habitation, as in my own practice. The role of surface as a means of understanding is commented on by Glenn Adamson in his book *Surface Tensions*, when considering surface in our understanding of the material world:

"Surface as not so much a barrier to content as a condition for its apprehension"

Surface Tensions, Glen Adamson, 2013.

In its application to the flat surface of a wall, Smith considers his work from this period as an extension of his drawing practice. In this sense, the work can be regarded as almost two-dimensional. In my own practice the object and three-dimensional material intervention into space is central, and a conscious bid to escape flatness through extending or adding additional dimensions. My use of sound, light and movement as materials are further extensions into, as opposed to onto, space. Focused beams of light reveal witness marks and traces of the physical making of the house and its material components. Finger marks in normally concealed render and plaster, traces of gas mantles and saw blade marks on timber, are revealed through light, like fossils.

Further dimensions added through my practice include excavating, reading and creating histories, and considering both the inside outside surfaces and skins of spaces. I also explore associations across scale and time. The narrative and audio work *Brenchley* threads through the materiality of my own home offering a new form of intellectual, theoretical dialogue as an intervention in the conventional representations of space and architecture – that exceeds physical material through sound as a radio play.

There is also an important difference in the nature of the spaces in which Smith, and I work. The space of my domestic practice is full, as the lived space of a home, which requires careful and constant negotiation with family life, as opposed to the empty condemned houses used by Smith. While the spaces that Smith uses are demolished, the spaces I use continue to be lived in and my art interventions become part of the history of the house.

A degree of the power of Smith's work for *Site Unseen* is in its ephemeral and transient nature, as a record of the brief, borrowed time he spent in the condemned houses. Although Smith does not allude to this, there is a sense that both Smith and I use spaces in "between" states, during pauses in their history, a temporal gap that offers an opportunity to share time with and for immersion into the space. Smith uses buildings that are in a pause between habitation and demolition - my work creates pauses in the continuum of quotidian life and seek out the in-between spaces that exist within that.

British sculptor Richard Wilson has also worked in buildings in in-between states to create temporary work. Wilson's *Jamming Gears* in 1996 (at the Serpentine gallery in London) intervened with the gallery building in the pause before it was refurbished. Wilson used the language of construction processes, materials and tools, particularly a reciprocating saw, to anticipate the rebuilding and changes the building was about to undergo.



Fig 15



Fig 16

Wilson's piece echo's the work of American sculptor Gordon Mata Clark – particularly *Conical Intersect* (1975), made for the Paris Biennale, in which he cut through walls of 17th century buildings due for demolition and redevelopment. All of his work was destroyed and exists as archival documents and drawings



Fig 17

Mata Clark's work, like Wilson and Smith's, reflects elements of my own and asks questions about permanence and materiality, working in a pause in which the building draws breath to inhale, before their future course is altered permanently. Pauses offer possibility in which accepted boundaries collapse and in which the building and the artist share the freedom to imagine and "unfold". It is important to note that whereas Smith, Wilson & Mata Clark often work with material pauses between habitation and demolition or material transformation, in my practice I sense, intuit, seek out, reveal and amplify pauses within the everyday and ongoing life of my house and home. The pauses I attempt to allow, occur in a live and lived space.

Flow/interruption

In its (temporary) disturbance of domestic space, combined with the use of subtle humour, my work can be related to the artist Fran Cottell's ongoing *House Projects*. Since 2001 Cottell has been mounting a series of art interventions in her own home. However, in opening up her home to public audiences, the spatial and formal languages of domestic and gallery space collide to temporarily coexist. Through this ongoing work Cottell asks: "how to show the ephemeral, live experiences that make up the quotidian within the fixed frame of the art institution?"

Fran Cottell : *Home* 2003



Fig 18

As part of her project *Still Life 2003-4*, Cottell applies the modernist gallery language of the white plinth to create an elevated walkway which runs through the house. Cottell describes this as "*part thoroughfare, part sculptural system*". Visitors view the sometimes-busy domestic interior and the occupants of her house, as the walkway carefully navigates furniture to interrupt while simultaneously creating a new elevated domestic route of viewing.



Fig 19

Rather my interest is in making new connections between different and normally unassociated spaces in the house itself. This can be seen in my work, *More Than This*, Meacham 2018, (Fig 19) which created a temporary threshold within the transitional space of the landing hallway. The walls of the two adjoining rooms (bathroom and bedroom) were pierced to allow the insertion of a clear tube linking the two spaces as a kind of internal “skyway”. The bathroom was then filled with vapour, which was drawn through the tube into the bedroom, allowing a temporary meeting of vapour and light between the two normally unconnected spaces.

While my work is available to the world through archival recordings, it is primarily “for the house”. The interruptions and spatial flows created reference the history of the house, and the repeated actions of physically connecting elements of the fabric through cutting and opening allowed the normally hidden, unfelt, overlooked or unwelcome internal air flows and material exchanges (dust) to briefly reach into the present.

Unlike Cottell, my work does not seek to overtly interrupt or disturb domestic space and rhythm but rather, to become part of, connect, extend and draw attention to what is already there. This process includes the nature of particular light at different times, surfaces, internal architecture and spaces, complementing and allowing communion and exchange through reach and touch, of the otherwise unconnected.

It is through becoming an activating, sensing and material part of the domestic life, flow and history of the house that my work can be distinguished from Cottell, Smith and Haussler.

In reference to the question of this thesis: *How Can Art Practice & Do It Yourself (DIY) Methods Temporally Disturb the Material Surfaces of Everyday Life, to Allow New Readings of the Nature of Home to Unfold?* – this is addressed in and through the continual interconnected feedback loop between my ongoing art interventions in the house, *Brenchley* and the research reflections in *House*.

My ideas coming out of and being part of DIY, domestic change, folding, atmosphere, the sensorial, connections between everything are fundamental to my work, and distinguish it from others.

My research practice sits at an intersection of both making and performance-architecture, being rooted in understanding built through the physically dynamic relationship between everyday dwelling and DIY. In its exploration of the normally hidden spaces of home, my work can also be seen in the context of the "hidden poche", as explored by the architect Clark Thenhaus in his exhibition, *Some Walls from Unbuilt Houses* (2020).



Fig 20

The poche (pocket), originally a French architectural term, is the normally unoccupied and hidden space within buildings; the void inside walls and between spaces represented in architectural drawings as solid black lines. The poche is defined by Sudipto Ghosh as "an interstitial space within a larger construct." (*Poche' Parisienne: The Interior Urbanity of Nineteenth Century Paris*, Sudipto Ghosh, University of Cincinnati)

Like the concealed interior of a pocket, the poche can also be regarded as a mysterious space, a space of dark stillness, open to speculation and the imagination, neither quite outside nor inside - an in-between space where anything can happen.

"The space itself is mysteriously enclosed like the insides of a glove or a pocket that cannot be objectified. Any effort to objectify the poche only results in the apprehension of the limits of the probing device (in the case of the gloves, our hands)"

Sudipto Ghosh, *Poche' Parisienne*

Ghosh also notes that the poche suggests an act of hiding or "sweeping under the carpet", pushing aside and containing what we can't fully control or understand and don't want to be reminded of (liquids, pipes, cabling, exchange, bodily functions, time, etc.). Whereas the work of Mata Clarke and Wilson reveals the poche, like a normally unseen internal organ exposed to light and air,

Thenhaus occupies it, posing questions about the accepted boundaries of lived space. Through a variety of soft seductive skins in place of hard walls, which the viewer is invited to lift, Thenhaus entices us to peer into and enter what is normally covered up in order to:

"...look behind, through and into the walls in search of more layers or spaces."

The normally opaque black line of the poche in plans and drawings, becomes transparent, to reveal and invite the viewer into a space of utilities, cavities and awkward residual nooks that become "new spaces of discovery and inhabitation" (Clark Thenhaus: The Architects Newspaper).

In relation to the poche, my work differs from Thenhaus's in that it further questions, pushes and explores the accepted borders of domestic architecture through using what is already there. The poches I use are part of my house, rather than constructed sets. As such, they are considered as integral to the pathology and history of the building. Particularly in their role as channels of air and a site of constant exchange, they are a breathing companion to the occupants through the sharing of the same air. It is this existing inner flow, suggesting connection and porosity, that questions architectural borders and the connection of spaces. The walls are read rather like the pages of a book, their faces touching when closed in a conversation of skin.

My work temporally activates the poche spaces revealed through DIY, through light, movement and sound. The normally hidden poche is allowed to temporally become part of and converse with the lived space, making transparent and collapsing the accepted opaque architectural built and drawn boundaries.

A consideration in both my own practice and that of the German artist Gregor Schneider, is the manner in which the divide between the work and the House (space) becomes progressively unclear as both exist together in the same space and time.

Schneider is best known for constructing rooms within rooms in existing structures, through which he examines domestic spaces, drawing on both national German history and his own personal history.

In his early work Schneider searched for spaces considered to be emotionally charged. Schneider then constructs spaces within the existing space, that aim to provoke a further emotional charge that exists in the social consciousness. My domestic work grows from the premise that the spaces of home are also emotionally charged, and continue to be so, through everyday life. The 'charging' is accreted through ongoing habitation as part of the continuum of the building rather than a wider social consciousness.

"I was registered as having a perceptual disorder and being mentally ill, but I only told them what I was doing at the time. I didn't lie. I told them that I build rooms"

INTERIORITY COMPLEX: GREGOR SCHNEIDER, Daniel Birnbaum, online article, Artforum.

Schneider seeks deeper and further disconnection from the house , inviting a societal emotional charge, while my work seeks deeper connection with the containing house. His creation of a new poche space serves to further disconnect, surrounding and separating his new room.

In both my work and Schneider's, the house subtly shifts from being a passive container or sheltering space that allows the work to be made, to being an active part of, or the work itself.

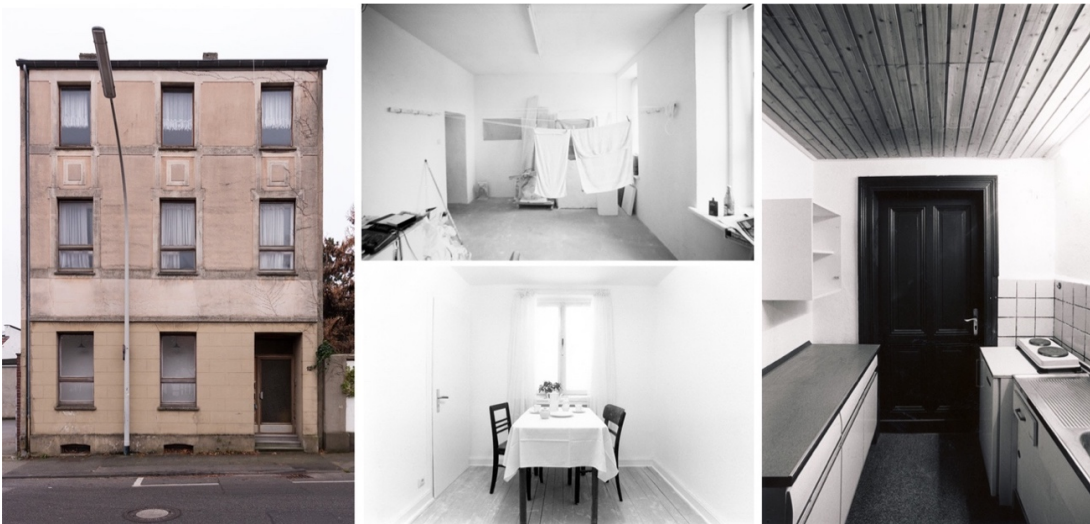


Fig 21

In the progressive breaching and folding into an inner space there are echoes here in Schneider's and my narrative work of *The Enormous Space*, a short story by JG Ballard in which a man decides never to leave his house. As his mind collapses, the interior of his house expands as the man journeys progressively psychologically inward. After a visit by a policeman, following reports of a break in, the man comments:

"Of course, a break-in had occurred, of a very special kind"

The Enormous Space JG Ballard

In Schneider's work, as his spaces become progressively smaller held by, but deliberately not touching the original structure, the work becomes progressively disconnected from both the containing house and the external world. Where Schneider's work seeks to disconnect, my own inward reaching is an attempt to engage with and deepen the connection with the house.

As the conventional borders of work and house dissipate the question of where one (house) begins and the other (work) starts (and vice-versa), it becomes increasingly difficult to answer definitively. In both cases the house becomes both a condition of and a way of seeing the work.

In relation to my work, its temporary nature as a series of "house guests" roots it in the present. Like music as sound passes through the space in the present, its memory remains as an archive.

Although not entirely made clear, unlike Schneider, my artwork in the house is a result of continuous occupation. But rather than create another space within the space, my practice connects more directly with the original structure (skin on skin) through presence and everyday life and physical engagement with the house through DIY and making good.

Schneider effectively makes the spaces he works in uninhabitable (returning them to their original state of being not fit for human habitation), he can no longer physically occupy the spaces, and he is replaced through the work.

My domestic work, as part of the continuum of the house, actually makes the spaces more habitable rather than less. Ironically, in the layering of spaces within spaces, each fitting inside the last like a Russian doll, as the space reduces, Schneider is effectively pushed out of the buildings he works in, through his own work. The implication is that he might eventually paint himself into a corner and be sealed in the final inner space permanently.

There is a sense here that Schneider is anticipating his own inevitable confinement in a cell of his own making. My work does the opposite – in making good, I return the space to habitable condition; my work is part of the process of making good – there is no physical trace of my work only in recording, the space remains habitable, my work part of the continuum of daily life.

Literature review

Throughout this study a wide range of writers and thinkers from both academia and literature have informed my art practice and writing. The many relationships formed and explored across diverse subjects, stem from my dyslexic sense of connection.

Multiple references to relevant texts are embedded throughout the thesis, implicit in both the writing (referenced throughout) and the artworks. Several texts have emerged as important in helping to underpin and develop core themes, I will attempt to break these down into key areas.

Touch

A multi-sensory reading of space that considers the house as an extension of the body or a second skin, with a particular focus on touch and reach, both optical and physical, is central to my *practice*. *The Eyes of The Skin* by Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, first published 1996, has been core to developing ideas around these themes. In his consideration of our experience of architecture as being multi-sensory, Pallasmaa explores the central role of touch in our relationship and experience of built space.

"Every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle."

The Eyes of the Skin. Juhani Pallasmaa, 1996.

As part of this essentially haptic relationship, Pallasmaa suggests that all the senses are extensions of the skin, including the ears and eyes. This epidermal relationship with the world, suggests a conversation of "skins" between our own extended sensory skins, and the skins of our environment.

For example, sound, as the physical movement of air through vibration, touches the skin of our eardrums. In turn, light as a stream of photons, bounces off surfaces to touch the surface skin of

our eyes. In the spaces in which we spend most of our lives, this dialogue of skins is more intimate and profound.

In this sense, touch – physical, optical and aural – plays a central role in forming our perception and memory of architecture, and our ongoing relationships with the spaces we inhabit.

In the womb before vision, touch is the first sense to develop. When first born, the baby, is unable to focus their eyes, feels its way to the mother's milk through touch and smell. As it develops and on being presented with new objects and materials, the baby's compulsion is to reach out and touch, often putting things in their mouth. Touch is a primary condition for our understanding of the world.

I also reference and draw on the work of Tim Ingold and his challenge to a perceived hierarchy of the senses. A view shared with Pallasmaa, both propose a shift of focus to an embodied total experience, one which considers the whole body as a sensory organ, rather than an imposed separation of the senses.

"Bathed in light, submerged in sound and rapt in feeling, the sentient body, at once both perceiver and producer, traces the paths of the world's becoming in the very course of contributing to its ongoing renewal."

Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description, Ingold, 2010.

Surface

The subject of surface as our primary interface with the world through tactile and optical "touch" is further considered through the writing of Giuliana Bruno" and her book *Surface* published in 2014. Of particular relevance to this study are Bruno's thoughts on skin as the "first surface" and her observations that until recently, in scientific thinking, surfaces were dismissed as simply a barrier to be cut & penetrated in order to explore that which lies below.

Glen Adamson echoes similar thoughts in the book *Surface Tensions: Surface, Finish and the Meaning of Objects* published in 2013:

"Surface as not so much a barrier to content as a condition for its apprehension."

Surface Tensions: Surface, Finish and the Meaning of Objects, Glen Adamson, 2013.

Thomas Leddy in *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, published in 2012 describes surface as containing and relaying:

"An entire class of neglected properties concerned not with underlying structure or substance of things."



Fig 22.

Scale

The Miniature: Scale, Stillness and Movement



Fig 23

In reference to the miniature, I draw on the work of several writers including Susan Stewart and her book *On Longing* published in 1984 – particularly her thoughts on interiority, spaces within spaces (dollhouses) together with the effect of reduced scale on time and the effect of the miniature when allowed to "bleed" into the full-sized world.

"The miniature always tends toward tableau rather than toward narrative, toward silence and spatial boundaries rather than toward expository closure. Whereas speech unfolds in time, the miniature unfolds in space." *On Longing*, Susan Stewart, 1984.

When working for an architect's practice, they liked to employ artists as they had a good eye and understanding of materials. The only drawback with artists, I was told, was their over-attention to often minute detail, which no one else would notice. Again, a possible dimension of dyslexia, my question was and still is, "why not"? Through my artwork and writing I have pursued this to ask what might happen if the miniature were to be released from the boundaries of the frozen tableau, to fuse with, and take root in the domestic – to pull the viewer into normally overlooked spaces and draw attention to existing architectural details through the rereading that the miniature offers.

In domestic contexts the miniature is often limited to ornaments, porcelain tableau and figurines, plastic models or mementos, displayed on mantelpieces or in display cases. They lie within but are not fused or integrated into the domestic space. My miniature work seeks to be released into and become part of the domestic rather than separate and encased in a vitrine, so entering a conversation that transcends scale, to question what we see and absorb in domestic spaces when the miniature is taken beyond the ornamental and decorative to become part of the architecture. My work also explores the role of scale and the miniature and its capacity to create a sense of stillness and frozen time or potential movement and its capacity to skew time.

In its use of scale my work explores the miniature and its relationship with perceived distance. Although considered mainly in relation to domestic space, here the work touches tentatively on Deleuze & Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) in the chapter *Smooth and the Striated* in the section on *The Aesthetic Model: Nomad Art*, which concerns thoughts on optical (distant) and haptic (near) space.

"First, 'close-range' vision, as distinguished from long-distance vision; second, 'tactile', or rather 'haptic' space, as distinguished from optical space."

A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze & Guattari, 1987.

Although not mentioned by Deleuze & Guattari, I suggest that the miniature somehow sits between these two spaces, like a bifocal lens between the two. On viewing the miniature, the eye is simultaneously positioned at a distance through scale and simultaneously drawn in close through detail (haptic). The naked eye is unable to focus on and enter the two worlds simultaneously. In this sense the miniature is rendered borderless, positioned between the two worlds of near and far.

This phenomenon is explored artificially through tilt-shift photography which uses a narrowed field of focus to blur the peripheral areas of images to create a model like effect – mimicking the human eye's inability to focus on more than one subject simultaneously.



Fig 24

The domestic miniature, when activated through movement, shifts further into this borderless space. For the viewer when confronted by unexpected miniature movement in domestic space, the only reference points are perhaps mice or insects, i.e. something that shouldn't be there, touching on the uncanny and often triggering a "double take" or startling the viewer to question what they've seen. This initial discomfort and pulling back, in turn often lead to fascination and

intrigue, drawing the viewer back into close space to examine and check that what they saw is actually there. The viewer physically moves between the two worlds of near and far.



Fig 25



Fig 26

The domestic model railway for example, sits between and straddles both distant and near space. The small scale implies distance, while simultaneously inviting the viewer to move closer, drawn in by miniature detail.

The “immersion” which making and looking in reduced scales offers is referenced in *Remaking the World: Modelling in Human Experience* (1996) by James Roy King. The effect of prolonged immersion in the miniature is referenced in HG Wells’ *The World of William Clissold* 1926. Gaston Bachelard’s *the Poetics of Space* 1958 has been important in my investigations into the space of home in his in-depth analysis and phenomenological reading of domestic space.

Methodology

I make my artwork from things which enter my life through everyday activity. The work itself is ephemeral, temporarily becoming part of and sometimes interrupting the domestic rhythm, briefly finding its place like a guest, to be accommodated, its presence recorded, and then allowed to leave, reabsorbed back into the home.

My work extends my thoughts into the immediate space of home. It emanates from a feeling of home and interiority, not as a retreat but as a reach, across, under, in and through real and metaphorical architectural boundaries.

I use sound, light and movement as materials to measure, survey, question and activate the everyday, attempting to form new relationships, connections and meanings to the familiar. I consider my practice as a kind of DIY in the sense that it has to be done and presents a series of problems that need to be solved.



Fig 27

Ariadne's thread

A key methodology underpinning the entire body of research, both practical and written, is the “unwinding” of a metaphorical “thread” as the work moves increasingly further and deeper into domestic space and architecture our relationship with it.

The thread is regarded as a reflective device, informing an increasingly deeper penetration and examination of personal space, looking for clues. The word *clue* is linked to the word *clew*, derived from an old English word *cliwen* or *cleowen*, meaning “ball of thread or yarn”. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

The thread provides a two-way link to the surface entry point. Like an air pipe to a diver, allowing aspiration. The oxygen of space and time is inhaled, and Co2 of objective critical reflection is exhaled and channelled back to the surface in the form of artwork. The thread also provides a means of dialogue between exterior and interior/surface and entry point, allowing for an exchange of ideas and material between both, as well providing a way back. The “thread” also serves to stitch and connect the practical and written work together into a single entity. This approach underpins the metaphorical narrative of *Brenchley* and the reflective analysis of *House*, the combination of art and writing contributing to an ongoing and accumulating reflective narrative.

The interactions between the art interventions into actual spaces of home and the fictional spaces of *Brenchley*, propose an approach to research within which the continuous process of making and thinking as a form of excavation – the thread unwinding and becoming longer as we dig deeper and deeper into the materiality of the domestic space of home.

As stated earlier, in *Brenchley*, the archivist acts as an informed researcher who guides the reader on a journey through Brenchley's work allowing a new appreciation of, and level of engagement with, the domestic interior architecture, through stillness and movement, silence and sound, light and dark, touch and memory. Brenchley challenged the impermeability of home by making the home porous. In *House* the porosity of home is examined through material intervention.

My work has become a condition of living, a kind of “contract” drawn up with my home and family through continual negotiation.

The residency was originally offered on the following contract conditions:

1. That I would safely and responsibly house my family, allowing them and my art to populate and activate the space, and flourish.
2. The residency was to understand and care for the fabric of the building through examination, immersion, analysis, restoration and intervention.
3. Allow my wife's work as a painter to mainly occupy horizontal wall surfaces.
4. The work, (as yet undefined), is to move amongst, under, behind, above and in-between the everyday spaces of the house and family.
5. The work is to grow from the premise that all (domestic) spaces emotionally charged through habitation.

Using my own home as a site of examination and excavation, these conditions are articulated through a series of art interventions encompassing temporary sculpture, performance, objects, sound, video and video projection.

The practice is linked to and grows from DIY and the restoration of the house. The relationship between the art, guests and DIY is symbiotic in the sense that one leads to the other, and without the other, neither would happen. Like DIY, the art presents a series of practical problems that are solved.

Over the last 10 years the restoration of the house has allowed me to develop an intimate relationship and knowledge of every part of the fabric of the structure, from front door to roof, freeing it by opening sealed windows after 100 years, allowing breath, uncovering obscured and lost detail, making good – sanding – skin on skin etc. The process has embedded a haptic bodily memory. The process often involves stretching my body to its limits, by reaching and physically folding into small spaces to allow access. The work also opens the house to scrutiny, not just to the artist, but to the other occupants, both human and non-human.

Like Mata Clark, Richard Wilson and Terry Smith, who made their work in spaces due for demolition or redevelopment, my work also occupies spatial pauses, which often require emptying rooms, in order to re-plaster or paint, as part of the ongoing, never-ending and more micro process of DIY in maintenance and making good. These pauses grant the spaces a chance to breath and briefly become about themselves again, before being reoccupied and re-entering the

quotidian flow. My work resides and exists in these pauses for breath – itself a condition of making good and allowing the house to progress in time, rather than demolition.

PART 1

BRENCHLEY

‘... a boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the ancient Greeks recognised, the peras is that from which something begins its essential unfolding.’¹

“To live means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated.” ²

Brenchley reached inside the wall cavity and extended the thin wire probe to its limit. Eyes straining and a torch held between his teeth, he attached the final loop of elastic, then slid back

onto the supporting rafters, folding his body into the envelope of the roof space for the last time. Light seeped between the slates, and a sparrow disturbed the late summer dust. Brenchley's simultaneous reach, into distant and inner space found balance, as a faint rhythmic tapping began.



Fig 28

Section 1. *The archivist ("I")*

I worked through an agency as a freelance archivist. The work often involved spending long periods of time in the homes of absent others. The time spent in each space varied, from a few days to several weeks and sometimes months. Rather than becoming accustomed to these periods spent alone in other people's homes, I became more affected by each. Something of the loneliness and dust stayed with me; I was still feeling the spaces remotely, when no longer there. The weight of the accreted memories bore increasingly upon me. I was uncertain if their growing mass pushed from the past, from below the surface of the present, on which I rode like a pond skater. Or, if they came from above, maintaining a surface tension that held me there, as if in a Lagrange Point³ of inner space.

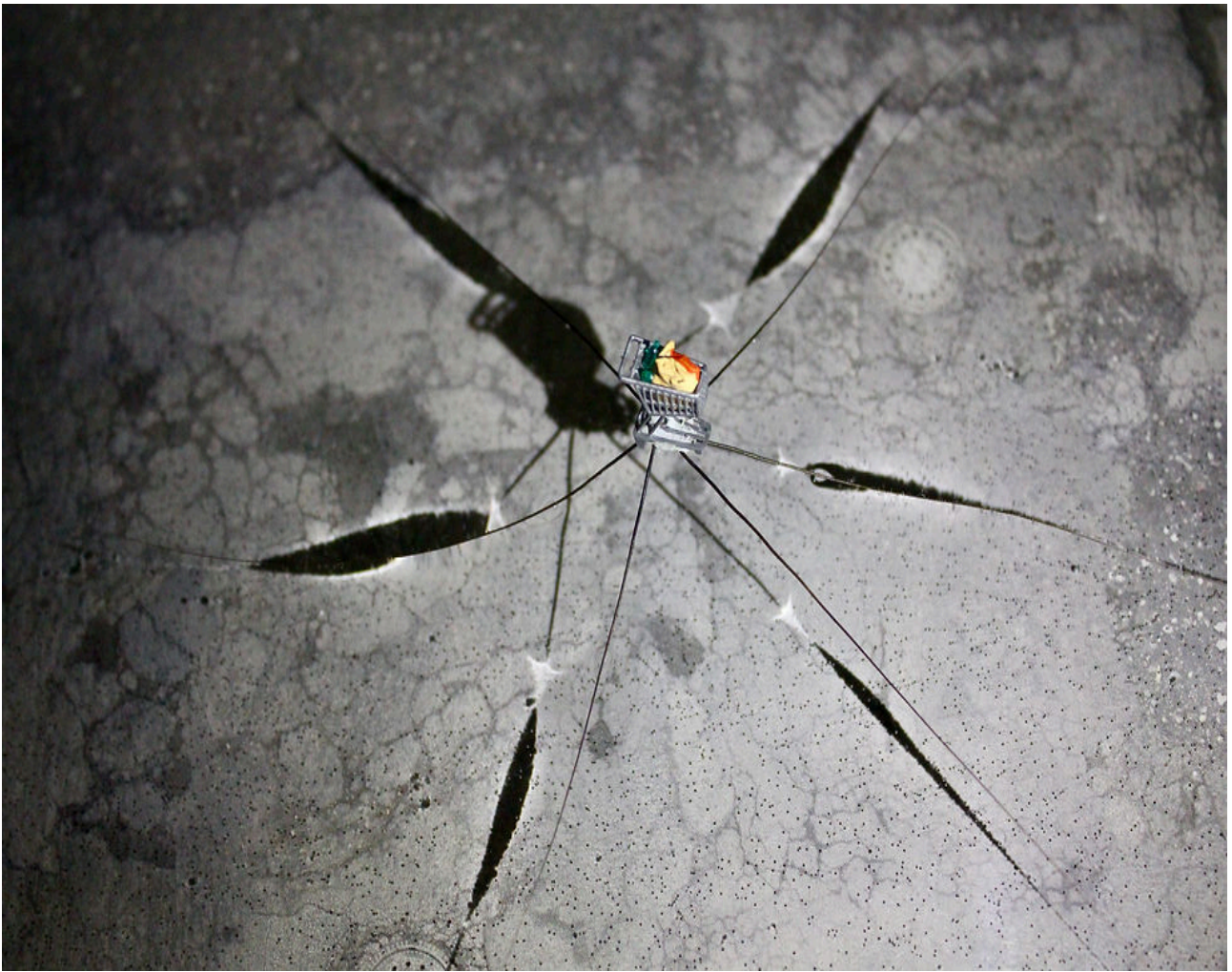


Fig 29

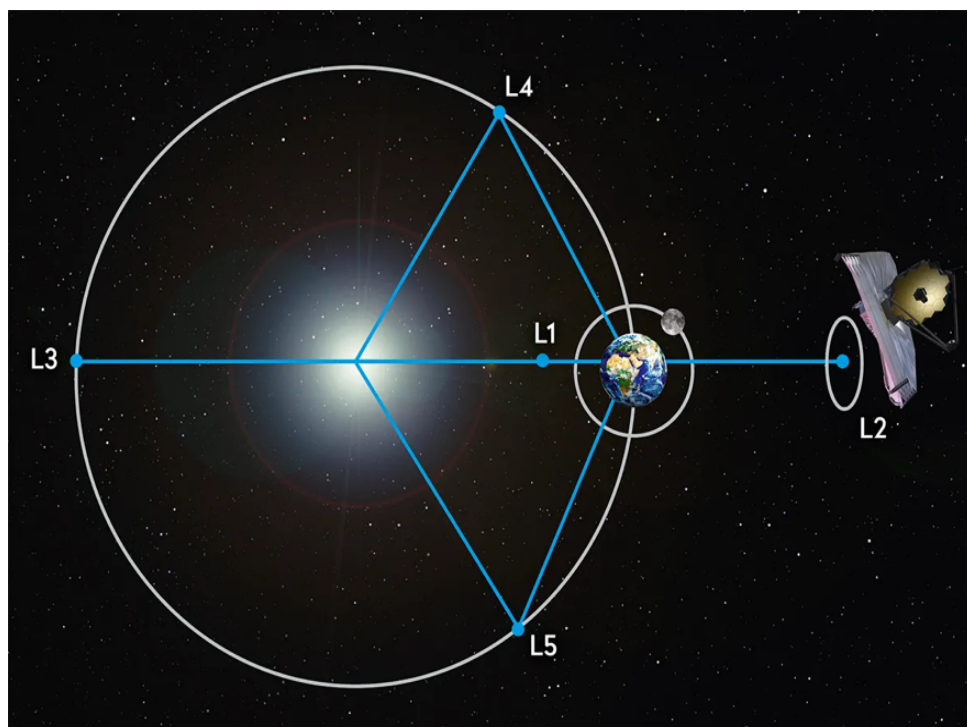


Fig 30

I'd become increasingly sensitised to the delicate thread that I felt connected these disparate spaces. I increasingly saw 'home' as both museum and theatre. All the spaces I visited, to varying extents, fell into one, or both of these categories. The empty family homes with ticking clocks and photos of children smiling from picture frames, spoke of arrested time, of looking back, and of *Dustsceawung*⁴ — the contemplation of dust rather than of the present or forward movement. Only the moving hands of the clocks remained in the present.



Fig 31

As part of my archiving work, I had started to keep a journal and to take photographs, in an attempt to capture what I sensed and felt in each space. In the hope, that through analysis as a form of holding⁵, they would somehow no longer haunt me.

Section 1.1. *My Father*

My father became ill with Alzheimer's/dementia, and through caring for him, I became more aware of this sense of home as theatre and museum. As his needs grew, I oversaw his movement into a succession of rooms in care homes.

In each space, my brother and I would attempt to reconstruct the set of his life from an ever-decreasing collection of artefacts or "props". We would search for a mantelpiece or an equivalent on which to construct a modest shrine from photographs of my mother as a young woman, my brothers and I as children, together with a few well-worn books.

This experience compelled me to look more deeply into the meanings and significance of mantelpieces and other parts of domestic architecture.⁶



Fig 32



Fig 33

Section 1.2. *Skirting the subject*

When we had to sell my father's house to pay for his care, my last lingering check through the still and empty rooms held me in hollow echoes. Leaving me with a memory of picture rails, bare mantle pieces, windowsills and skirting boards. In Italian the skirting board is the "battiscopa", which roughly translates as "where the broom hits".

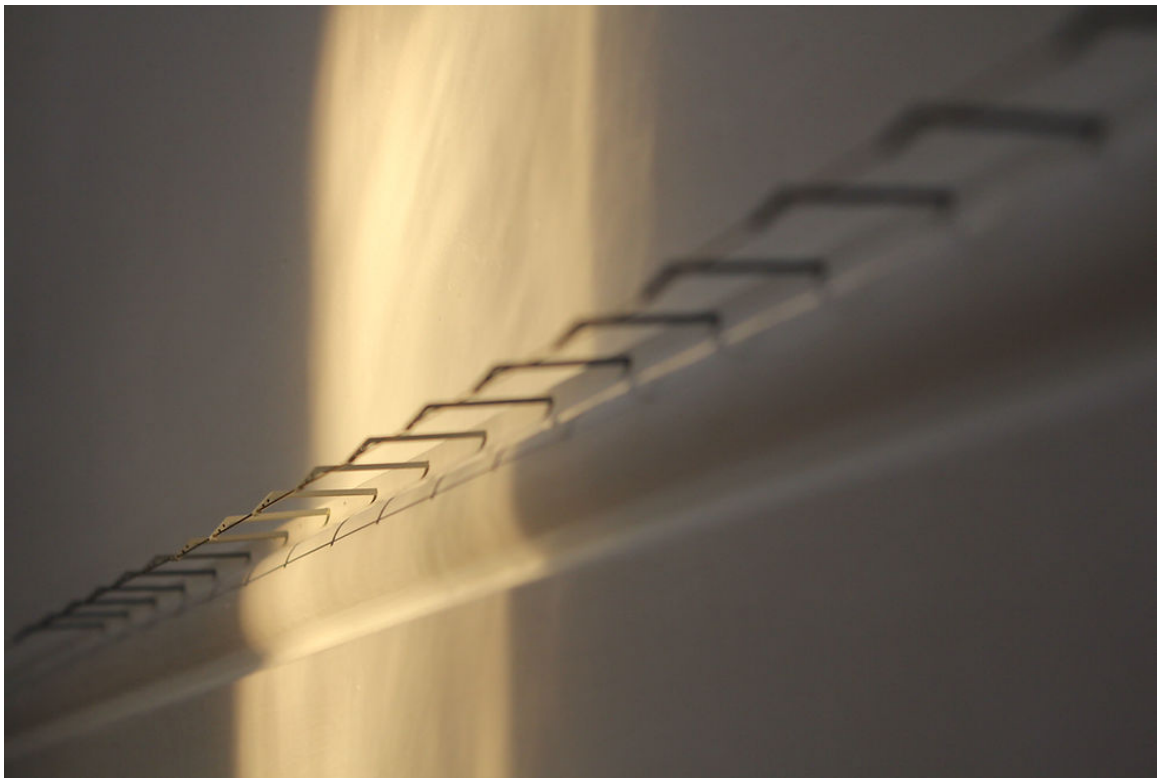


Fig 34

The skirting boards led my eye to and around the perimeter, to the edge of the memories that each room contained. The perimeter as an edgeland, to which the furniture was pushed, away from the centre of activity. The perimeter that, with the invention of central heating and radiators in the 19th century, had allowed occupants to move away from the focus of the room, or fireplace, to occupy the edges.

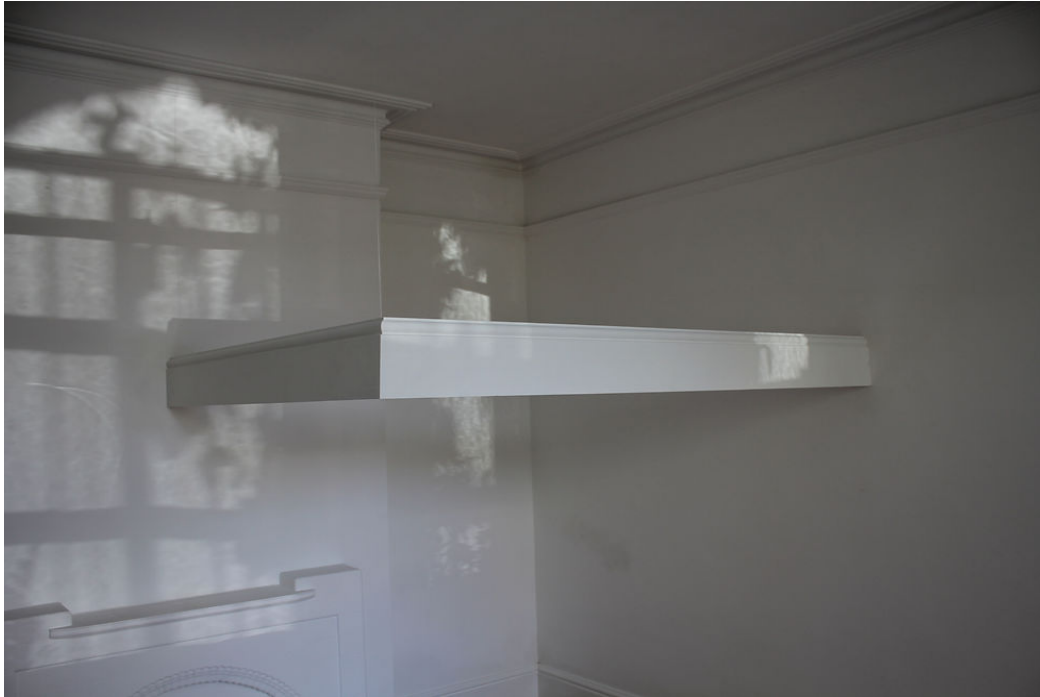


Fig 35

Originally a feature of wealthy houses, to protect against the spurs of gentlemen, who would gather at parties around the edges of rooms, the skirting board is a meeting of materials, plaster, and wood — mineral and organic. The skirting acts as a seam that marks and knits, or stitches, the internal horizon; it acts as marker of the edge of spaces, a meeting, fold, and junction between the horizontal planes of the floor and the vertical of the wall. The skirting conceals the necessary gap between wooden floorboards and plaster and masonry to prevent the transmission of damp, to allow the structure to aspirate, to allow expansion and contraction of the boards. Like the use of wood in electrical installations as a non-conductor and mediator.



Fig 36

As his dementia deepened, my father became less interested in the props of his life and their links with the home and family he and my mother had created over fifty years. With every move the objects were reduced in number, my father telling us not to bother. Until finally, only the photo of my mother as a girl, smiling into the camera, remained. I arrived to visit him one day towards the end, to find even this last prop dismissed, and lying face down on the small shelf next to an air freshener.

He increasingly spent his days looking at walls, as though communing with their surface. In one of the final rooms, on the ground floor, the single hermetically sealed window looked out onto the wall of a rarely used alleyway. On offering to help him move, he told me he enjoyed looking at the wall, in case someone passed by. In the many hours and days I spent sitting with him, trying to engage in conversation or reading, no one passed the window.

In the final room in the final home, with his back turned to the single window with its view over the sensory garden, and facing a barren magnolia painted wall, he died. His dosette box of repeat prescription medication by his side, his final gaze and breath absorbed into the woodchip wallpaper.

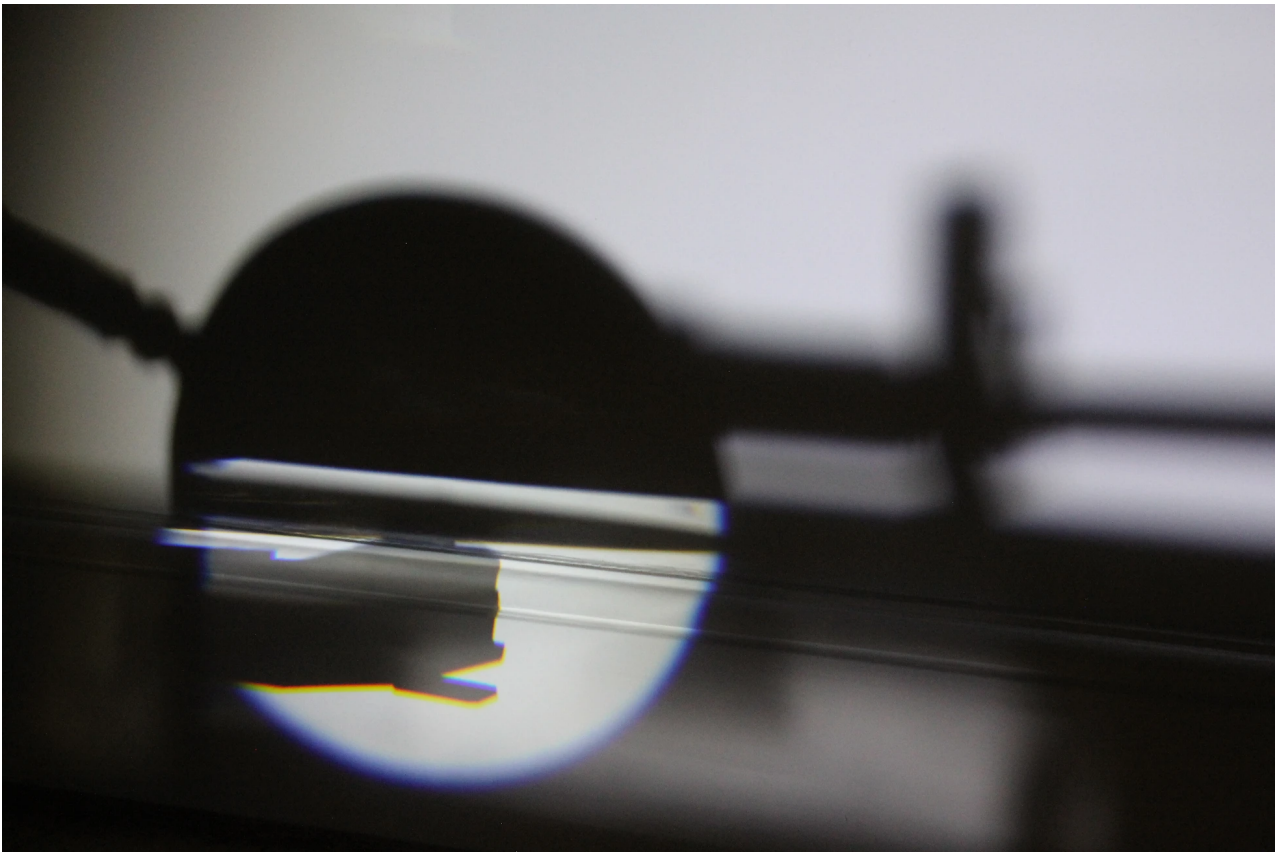


Fig 37

He died alone in a space that contained no sense of home, no fireplace, safe corner or table. He died in a space that obliterated domesticity and all the trappings of home, to facilitate processing — the processing of “end of life” and ultimately a denial of his individuality. This processing worked in tandem with the disease, to deconstruct and diminish a life of over 90 years.

Section 1.3. *The Great Hall*

The last 12 months, whilst dominated by caring for my father until his death, had been also spent undertaking a particularly arduous archiving contract for the Great Hall in their tomb-like building in central London.

The time I spent in the airless corridors and arid library of the Great Hall, with its over-polished surfaces, had left me chronically tired and bored. In the late morning I’d sometimes slip out of the building to watch an entire film at a nearby cinema, then return without my absence being noticed.

I visited a masonic widow in a spacious Art Deco flat behind the Albert Hall to collect her late husband’s books, papers, and regalia.

She had prepared a special tea for me, including homemade cake. Her husband's effects were laid out neatly on the bed in the (separate) bedroom. The empty rooms, her loneliness, and the feeling of slow wasted years, moved me.

Even when elsewhere, I found it hard to completely remove myself from the Great Hall. Part of me remained, anaesthetised by the torpid atmosphere and glimpses into an obscure netherworld.

Whilst there I often was asked if I was "on the square" and I received several invitations to join the "craft". One morning, in the marbled gentleman's cloakroom like something from a 1920's ocean liner, I met an employee, who insisted that the sink taps bore secret messages in their design and the manner in which they dispensed water. "Have you noticed" he said, "that the water from these taps rotates anti-clockwise as it goes down the plug hole?" I allowed the sound of the roller towel dispenser to be my reply.

Another employee, a clerk, like a character from Dickens, spent his days in a small dark office off the library. He always wore thick woollen socks, even in the summer. I later learnt that he had spent 30 years in a minor diplomatic post in India. He had never fully re-acclimatised to the British weather and was constantly cold, his feet still in India.

My experience at the Great Hall was the only time I have felt in the presence of a power that not only nourished the establishment but also that of another more obscure, deeper sub-state. On a couple of occasions, I caught a thin sense of it, a faint shift in gravity, just detectable, from groups of dark-suited men who strode, heels clicking, down the polished corridors, their passage disturbing the overlong net curtains which hung over dusty windows. I felt that I had been near the surface of the "establishment". War, Punk, love, recession, and other seismic social and political changes caused mere ripples on the surface of the deep ocean of the nation state, unnoticed in these vast interior depths. These men continued their rituals regardless of change in the outside world, claiming the roots of their craft could be traced to the masons who built king Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

The only moments I'd felt alive during my time at the Hall, was once when I smuggled my then girlfriend up a back staircase and into my office. The young woman oozed life, her vitality disturbed the shadows and challenged the dark wooden panelling of the predominately male space. "We're soul mates" she said, as we embraced on a traffic island under London Plane trees "we'll always be together". When she left, I was broken.

The other occasion sometime later, was one dark wet autumn afternoon on a landing in the museum when, on passing a painting of by *The Great Day of His Wrath* John Martin (Fig 11), to retrieve a document from a store, I was seized by an overwhelming sense that my life so far led to a single point of meaning in the vastness of what might have been. The moment under the picture, left me as if touched by a profound dream, one that affected my mood for days and weeks to follow.



Fig 38

That night, I dreamt I was moving through the empty rooms of my childhood home. In a drawer in my mother's bureau, I found a tiny homunculus gently writhing in a matchbox on a bed of cotton wool. I held the box in my hand and realised that the tiny creature was me.



Fig 39

"A memory is what is left when something happens and does not completely unhappen."⁷

Section 1.4. *Brenchley*

Shortly after finishing the job for the Great Hall, I was contacted by my agency offering me the task of archiving the life's work and papers of Alan Brenchley, a writer and academic in his mid-sixties from a *plate glass* city university. Brenchley had left his South London flat over two years ago on a motorcycle. He had not been seen since and was now presumed dead.



Fig 40

Due to the quantity and form of the material left by Brenchley, I was to archive it in situ. I declined the offer of an intern to aid me, for some reason feeling the need to undertake the task alone and find a quiet bay to shelter in from the storm of grief.

From the little information provided, I learnt that Brenchley had disappeared intestate. His numerous academic papers and other writings which he had left at the university were made available to me. On clearing his office, the university had also supplied me with the contents of his desk draws. I was given a cardboard box full of small objects constructed from stationary supplies. Paper clips, treasury tags and punch hole reinforcements had been fashioned into abstract structures that resembled a city grid seen from altitude.

Shortly before his disappearance he had received a series of summonses from a Romanian court, as the victim in a case of "informatics fraud". This coincided with him writing a final paper published in an obscure academic magazine, *The Journal of Control and Vibration*. Accompanying another paper in the same issue of TJCV (on the "*Effects of cocaine on honeybee dance behaviour*"), Brenchley's paper, entitled "Everything is vibration", drew heavily on Nikola Tesla's famous (but unverifiable) assertion "*If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.*"⁸ to argue that thought, time and space could never be accurately measured, and that our attempts to do so were hindering the advancement of humanity by creating a "veil" which obscured "truth". In his paper, Brenchley likened our efforts

to quantify dimensions, to using a ruler to measure the gaps between the branches of a tree in a high wind.

“These trees are magnificent, but even more magnificent is the sublime and moving space between them, as though with their growth it too increased.”⁹

In the paper, Brenchley explored his personal claim to be a “hummer”, part of a growing number of people worldwide who are plagued by hearing a constant low frequency hum. He stated that it was this relentless background noise, like a distant generator, that had pushed him into increasing isolation, frustrated like other sufferers, that others could not hear it. In his paper, Brenchley referred to the “hum” as a “hummadruz”— “a sourceless sound in a landscape; a faint hum, buzz or drone, the origin of which cannot be located.”¹⁰ He produced evidence linked to the *World Hum Map and Data Base Project* to which he contributed as an academic. (<https://thehum.info>)¹¹

Brenchley went on to maintain that the hum was linked to the constant movement and activity of billions of insects, much of which takes place at high altitude over our cities and towns, and that science was only just understanding the scale of this mainly invisible activity. We had learnt over time, to filter out this background buzzing and few were able to hear it.

The hum of insects was core to the essential vibration at the centre of all matter. He claimed that this vibration accounted for spontaneous combustion in both organic and non-organic material, including humans and buildings. To this end he urged that all humanity needed to search for the source of the vibration and the heat-generating friction in the core of their bodies and homes, to avoid being consumed. He also maintained that it was through deep understanding of our homes as spaces for the freeing of thought to establish truth, that answers would be found.

In a previous paper, published in the *International Journal of Control*, entitled *The Ever-Circling Automotive Family*¹², Brenchley railed against the “neurosis of movement” which he claimed obsessed 21st century western society to the extent that, unless people were in motion, they felt that they were somehow missing out, and if they were not moving “something would, eventually go wrong.”

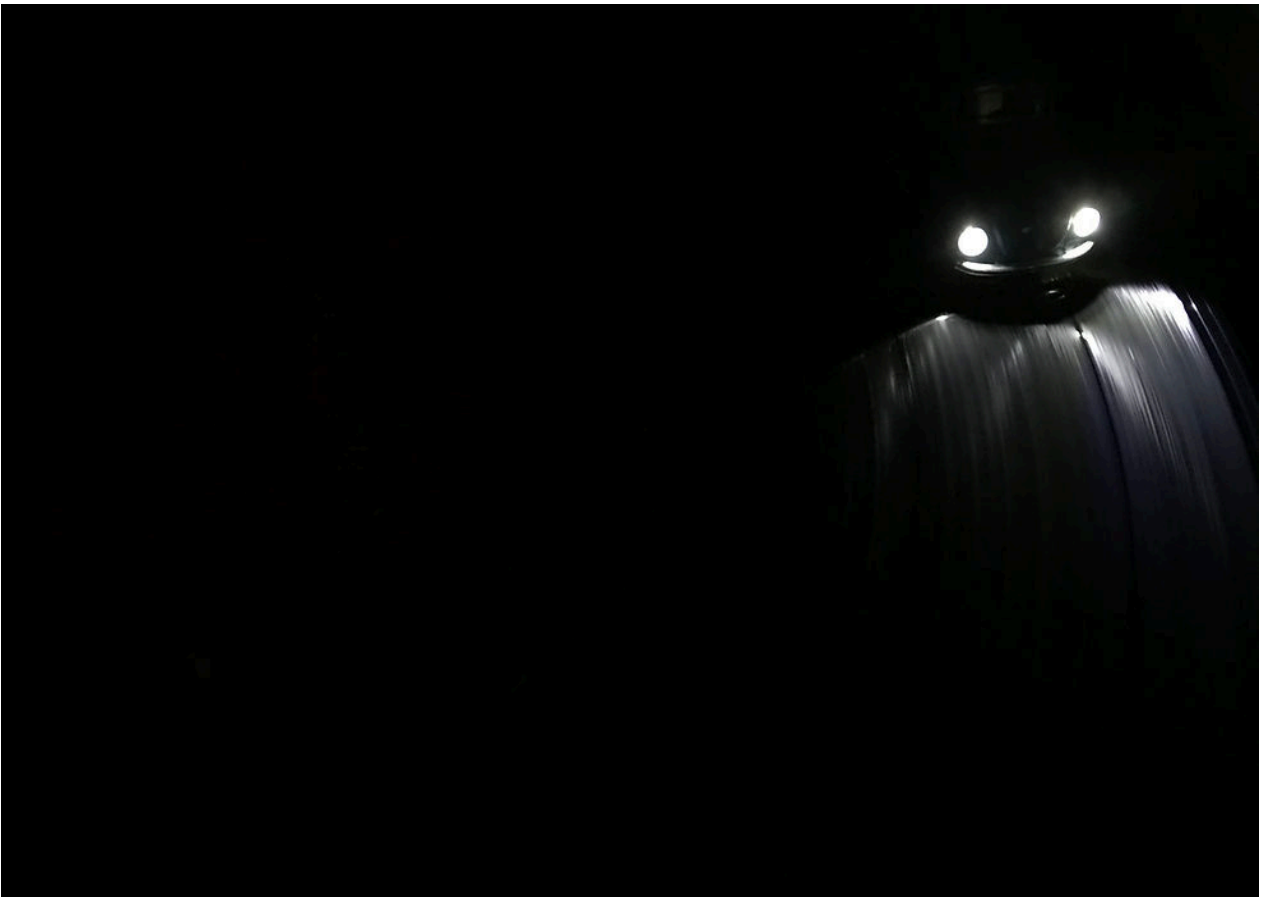


Fig 41

Part of his research for the paper — dating from 1986, soon after the opening of the M25 arterial motorway — was to gather data by interviewing drivers at service stations at different times throughout the day and night. The vast majority of drivers, 87% and interviewed at random, were male, between the ages of 27 and 68. Almost all the female drivers approached refused to be interviewed and those who did agree, refused to give their age. The interview data revealed that whilst 72% of drivers had a clear destination or reason for their journey, the remaining 28% could give no clear explanation other than the need to drive.

Brenchley's research led to his theory of the "ever circling automotive family", a community of motorists who constantly drove around the M25 without destination, each occupying a personal narrative that could only be achieved through driving. All listened to and seemed to revel in constant traffic bulletins of tailbacks, congestion and shed-loads, most delivered by Sally Traffic¹³ on BBC Radio 2, who several of the drivers claimed to have met and knew personally.

The drivers only left their cars for fuel and lived off service station food. He likened this community to people who never left the village or town in which they were born and had similar diets. Which is why, he said, people at service areas tended to look the same and, like the residents of H. P. Lovecraft's fictional town of Innsmouth, *"they had trouble walking and with social interaction."*¹⁴

He continued that, as car technology became more hermetic, in their airless sound-proofed cocoons, drivers were becoming oblivious to the brutalising effect and violence of the road. Instead, each driver was preoccupied by the performative dimension of being an actor in their “private mobile theatre.” Fuelled by the relentless advertising promises of car manufacturers, drivers increasingly inhabited their own fiction with individual laws and rules, to pursue increasingly vague personal aims in what was a public performance. Like the cinema, theatre, and art, motoring had shifting themes and trends. For example, the obsession with having large cars because they are safer, but simultaneously harder to manoeuvre and park, and increasingly out of scale with their environment.

“New research from Transport & Environment (T&E) has found that cars in the UK are getting too big for British roads.”¹⁵

Rule H2 of the (Pedestrians Crossing) highlights that at junctions, drivers should “give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross on a road into which they are turning.”¹⁶

The hierarchy of the road and the dominance of the car over pedestrians also animated Brenchley. He talked of the public space of the road as being spilt into two disconnected worlds, that of driver and that of pedestrian.

The inherent violence of the internal combustion engine, a technology based on repeated explosion, fire and the release of gas, further divided the two factions, in that the car manufacturers' focus was entirely on the driver and their experience inside the vehicle, mediated through metal, layers of controls and insulation from sound — disconnected from the space around them. No consideration was given to the passive consumer of their product outside the vehicle, the pedestrian, who experiences the vehicle as continuous explosive violent noise and gas.

Brenchley went on to suggest that pedestrians had been reduced to being the “prey of cars”. According to his paper, “the fast, and increasingly quiet movement of the cars touched a deep collective human fear memory of being hunted by swift and silent predators”, triggering nervous reactions and heightening stress levels. Pedestrians increasingly having to “check behind or along the edge of the horizon from where the ancient beast would attack.” He likened this to certain public information films from the 1970s aimed at children, which drew on elemental and ancient shared collective fears and anxieties.



Fig 42

Brenchley argued that in towns, cities and progressively more in rural areas, the increasing need for “horizontal vigilance” was an attack on the pedestrian’s freedom to look up and appreciate architecture and the sky, thus altering and reducing their relationship with place to one of growing

horizontality, where leaving the safety of the home was increasingly harder. In the final part of the paper Brenchley postulated that all roads, particularly motorways, were essentially about death. The fuels and materials that cars consume and are made from, are the fossil remains of creatures and plants that died millennia ago. Similarly, the roads on which motor vehicles travel are made from the fossil remains of ancient trees. The movement, gas and particulate emission of motor vehicles, brings death to pedestrians, the occupants of cars, people living near roads and wild animals.

In Britain the annual wild animal road casualties are estimated at 100,000 foxes, 100,000 hedgehogs, 50,000 badgers, 30,000 — 50,000 deer and 30,000,000 birds.¹⁷ These figures don't include the impact of the destruction of the natural environment caused by road building, which currently is inestimable. Many wild species in the UK are no longer able to maintain sustainable breeding colonies and will become extinct.

"I think that the 20th century reaches almost its purest expression on the highway. Here we see,



all Fig 43

too clearly, the speed and violence of our age, its strange love affair with the machine and, conceivably, with its own death and destruction."¹⁸

"...parking was well on the way to becoming the British population's greatest spiritual need."¹⁹

Rather mysteriously at several points in his various writings, Brenchley alluded to what he called his “works”, which appeared to be experiments to create connections to the built environment in various materials and media. Although unclear, the works appeared to be a series of devices, through which one could feel the essential vibration or hum of all matter and connect with it through thought and movement. His colleagues confirmed that as far as they knew, Brenchley was not a practical man. One individual joked about Brenchley being unable to use a tin-opener. They could offer no information concerning what his “works” could be.

Brenchley was secretive about owning a motorcycle in a similar way to how freemasons are about the “craft”, people only finding out by chance. One of the police statements from a colleague, taken after his disappearance, mentioned the “tell-tail mark of a motorcycle gear change on the leather upper of Brenchley’s left shoe”. Brenchley had never mentioned the large Honda motorcycle registered in his name, which like him had disappeared from all number plate recognition in the UK.

I was told little more about the man but received a briefing pack which included the address of the flat Brenchley had lived in since 1985, a blurred photograph from his university identity card and a set of keys to the newly changed locks of the flat and garage, together with a further box full of unlabelled keys of assorted types.

Section 2. *The Journey to Brenchley's flat*



Fig 44



Fig 45

I remember the first train journey to Brenchley's flat in some detail. Whenever possible I would take the overland train or bus to jobs outside the city centre. The train allowed me to think. It was where I had ideas and felt able to write, my narrative born through the unfolding story seen through the windows, and the movement of the train felt through the nib of my pen. The reassurance of being on rails and of scheduled journeys in the hands of others, offered me peace.

The journey was refreshing and welcome after my time in the Great Hall, my eyes awakened and keen. The stopping service from Waterloo followed the route of the old London Necropolis Railway or "dead line" to Brookwood cemetery.²⁰

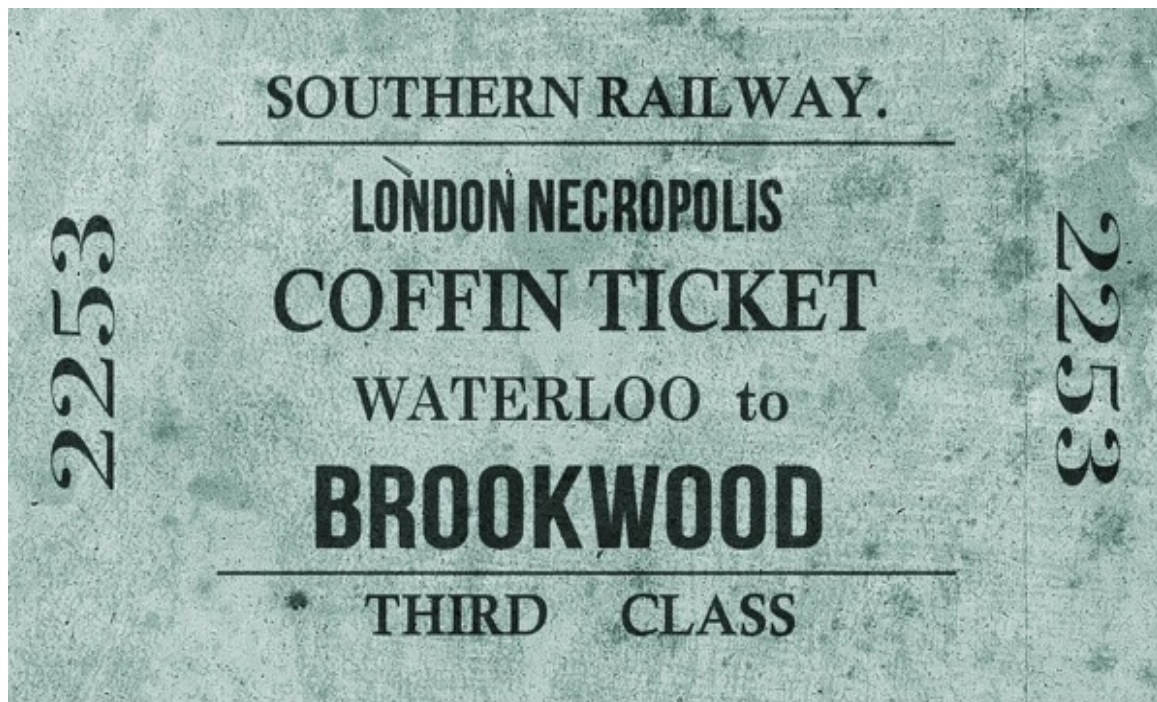


Fig 46

*The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name.
(Thomas 1917, n. p.).²¹*

The train paused at deserted stations with weed-strewn platforms and moss-covered walls like self-sown gardens. At most, there were no passengers and only the sound of pigeons. At one station the motionless train ticked quietly, watched by a fox looking into the softly lit interior of the carriages from its grass eyrie on the overgrown embankment. At another, I had a clear view into the large window of a double garage in which a man, only visible as silhouette, was working on a large model railway. He was standing in a hole at the centre of the diorama — his shadowy form like a giant, creating a landscape. I was too distant to make out any real detail but could discern a forest of miniature trees and occasional roof tops. I felt annoyed when the train jerked forward, wanting to see more of the interior (miniature) world-within-a-world.²²



Fig 47

In motion, the glimpses into gardens and living rooms granted by the train, unrolled like a cine film. Their frozen moments collecting in memory. My eyes were drawn by the detail, remembering the texture of brickwork, dappled sunlight, a magpie, garden furniture and discarded toys in the theatre set of each back garden. The number of trampolines, UPVC conservatories and sleeping cats, seemed to increase as I neared my destination.

At one point the railway bordered a vast, sprawling, semi-wild cemetery. Lines of graves through trees, their stillness intensified by the rhythmic brushing of tall grasses. On some, the moving stems had rubbed arcs of clean stone, the eyes of a teasing geometry, returning the gaze of the train passengers. A face-off between the moving living and the still dead. On one side the cemetery was bordered by a vast shed-like DIY store clad in awkward metal sheeting. The building, crammed into a space between the cemetery and a road, loomed over the wilderness, totally out of scale in its cladding of oblivion and decaying orange lettering.

The tracks were obscured by heavy late summer foliage, drawing ever deeper into the leafy south of the city. I imagined the track and railway workers that would have doffed their caps and stood still in respect, as the coffin trains²³ from Waterloo passed on this very line. I

was reminded of the images taken from the train carrying Robert Kennedy's body, in which people appear to stand frozen, like those from a model railway, or the figures on a clock. There, only to witness the passing train or the sweeping hands on their scheduled journeys, languishing in the still silence between passes.



Fig 48

For part of the journey an elderly woman sat opposite me, almost the only other passenger on the two-carriage “ghost service”. She informed me that she volunteered in a charity shop, that she had an allotment, and she stressed the importance of keeping one’s feet clean by daily washing. She seemed to think I was a “medical man”, and I allowed her to continue in this belief for the rest of her journey. She told me she could always tell a medical man by their hands and hair. At her stop I helped her off the train. Touching my hand lightly in farewell, she told me I was a good man and wished me luck. It occurred to me that she had possibly spent her entire life in this small corner of south London.

Section 2.1. *Approaching*

The house was a ten-minute walk from the small station, along a broad and leafy road in an area that, up to the 19th century, would have been considered almost rural, and outside the city.

As I approached the house an antique Bedford horse-box lorry slowly ground towards me. In the cab were three young women with dreadlocks and partly shaved heads, sitting in a row on the bench seat. They had the noble bearing and aura of Celtic goddesses, their shared gaze fixed on

some invisible distant horizon, like cats seeing elements invisible to us, oblivious to the world around them. Their still beauty filled the cab with an other-worldly serenity, as though suspended in a timeless compartment.



Fig 49

The incident reminded me of an occasion when travelling as a student in Italy, I'd stopped at a small rural bar to get a drink. A girl emerged from the shadowy cool interior behind the bar, like a figure from a renaissance painting, her face illuminated in perfect chiaroscuro — momentarily I was unable to speak, the words "Orangina, per favore" seemed inadequate, though, once uttered, restored me to the present. It was a moment both simultaneously ancient and present, out of time, but not out of place.

The ancient vehicle moved with equal nobility past me to the junction of the main road, leaving a light cloud of exhaust in its wake as if laying its own atmosphere. The cloud swirled around the parked cars and hung in the trees, as if somehow the mist from a mythical world from which the young women came, had momentarily seeped into this — they had brought their own atmosphere. The horsebox then slowly turned West and ground out of sight, the mist-like exhaust dissipated and the road was silent again.

Probably originally built for a Victorian merchant, the three-story detached house had, like many others in the area, been divided into flats sometime in the mid-20th century. A mass of ivy, creeping vine and passionflower grew rampant up the front of the property in a bid to reach the roof. On one side the structure was supported by large timber angle trusses also covered in ivy, and I noticed a large crack running through the door lintel up through the brickwork. Glass movement recorders had been fixed across the crack, some fractured. The once grand wall and gateway had been stripped of ironwork during the 2nd world war, and a rotting wooden gate lay in the long grass and weeds of the front garden.

An abandoned car (which I later found out belonged to Brenchley) stood wheel-less on rusting disc brakes outside the house, its paintwork heavily matted. Several small buddleia spikes drooped from the roof gutters, and lurid algae covered the windows, which were etched with grime and condensation. From what I was able to see, the car was packed with rotting boxes of papers, VHS tapes and clothes. All were sprouting vegetation and mould, and the windows felt warm from the microclimate within. I learnt later that Brenchley had abandoned the car after deciding, shortly before his disappearance, to only travel by motorcycle or rail. The box of mixed keys I had been supplied with did not contain any car keys.

I paused on the front path to look up at the first-floor windows of what I took to be Brenchley's flat. Through the climbing growth, all the windows appeared shuttered from the inside or had blinds drawn. One pane was boarded. The glass was almost opaque with dust; the once white UPVC frames were grey, in contrast to the windows of the other floors. As I climbed the steps of the house, I felt a slight vibration through the cracked stonework and turned to glimpse a train passing, through a twichel between the houses opposite. I knew in that instant that the intuitive decision to undertake the archiving of Brenchley's effects alone had been the right one.

Section 2.2. *On entering, touching, and opening*

The front door of the house led to an entrance hall with a staircase to the left. The door to the ground floor flat was in front of the staircase. A county court eviction notice was taped to the door together with another, informing that the locks had been changed. There was a door at the end of the passage to the right of the staircase, presumably to the cellar or what was once the kitchen area.

I closed the front door quietly, pausing to examine its irregular globular surface of paint accreted in layers over the decades. Above the tarnished handle, a small self-adhesive label of the type used in mini-cabs, clung to the surface, asking "*please don't slam the door*" — I complied.

With the door shut, there was only the sound of an occasional passing car to disturb the stillness. The original floorboards creaked as I moved across the worn imitation parquet Lino, which partially covered them. The Lino was blistered and patched in areas with gaffer tape, as if trying to prevent whatever was below from reaching air and light.

The hallway contained two bicycles, a folded baby buggy and an ancient wooden stepladder of lattice construction. On the right-hand wall above a yellowed radiator, were three wooden pigeonholes, one for each flat. I collected the handful of mainly brown envelopes from Brenchley's pigeonhole, and went up the broad, heavily carpeted staircase to the first floor.

Section 2.2.1. *Landing*

On the landing outside the flat was a small chair and table on which stood a plant pot containing an Araucaria. The perfectly straight small tree, clearly once cared for, now stood dry and withered. A small metal watering can sat empty behind the pot. The tree had died some time ago. Many of the withered leaves still clung to their branches holding the form of the living plant; others lay in a circle around the base of the pot. A metal label stuck in the hard, dry soil, displayed care information together with a price label.

The chair was of light construction with a woven wicker seat on which lay a yellowed copy of the local free-ad paper from the last year, and a large, dozing ginger cat. The landing was lit by a narrow window of frosted and stained glass. The top section of the window, originally a fanlight, was now permanently sealed shut by paint and secondary glazing.

In the ceiling a square lantern skylight provided a light well for the once elegant staircase. The fragile lantern was still intact but stained brown; I later learnt this was a result of dust from the iron brake shoes of the passing trains; it gave the landing an almost sepia light. Hints and traces of the original elegance and considered finish of the house were all around me.

The door to Brenchley's flat still bore the original finger plates and escutcheons, though heavily painted over. These shields from touch, once offering protection, now denied contact. The panelled door, unlike those downstairs, was not clad in hardboard. Although there were small screw holes along the edges where possibly a covering had been removed.



Fig 50

Section 2.2.2. Turning

I turned the key in the lock, but as I reached for the handle I paused, my hand somehow held by the still atmosphere of the landing, the dead tree and the chair. It was as though the air, and perhaps even time, was thickened around the door and slowed my advancing hand. I withdrew my hand and shook it, preparing like a diver to make my hand “like an arrow” to more easily penetrate the viscous air. My hand moved smoothly and, as my fingertips touched the round doorknob, I felt a very faint vibration like an almost imperceptible electric current. There was no passing train to explain the vibration, but in that moment, I sensed movement on the landing. Although I felt my ears tense, what I felt was felt through my whole body, my skin tingling as if the air temperature had changed.

The doorknob, original to the building, was made of turned hardwood with a brass ring at the base, its dark waxy surface polished to a dull sheen through a century of use. Through touch, my hand became the focus and centre of me, reduced in scale, but increased in intensity. The older the handle, the deeper the patina from thousands of reaching and turning hands.

“The door handle is the handshake of the building.”²⁴

A door handle extends the body — through a lever mechanism — into space. The touch of the handle is more significant than its appearance.

Using a door handle combines movement in two planes from the rotary or lever in two dimensions which in turn, allows pulling or pushing (opening/closing) or “folding” the door into three-dimensional space. Through initial touch, followed by grip and turning, the action engages the primary articulation of the arm and the prehensile grip that differentiates humans from the apes.

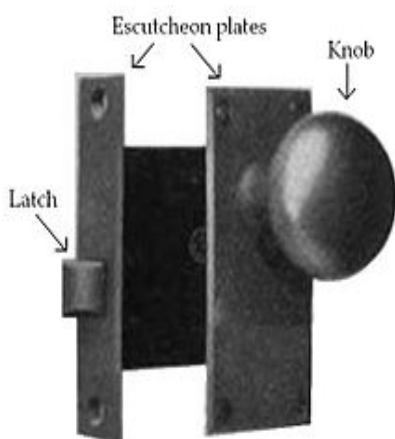


Fig 51

It is always the first stage or touch in moving from the small (action) to the immense; first reaching, touching, and then turning — the radial movement of some of the most complicated bones in the human body allow us to open doors. It is always the first door handle, the first step for a child moving from the first space to that beyond. It is always the focus, positioned within the

golden section of the door, drawing the eye before the hand. The scale is human; handle to the hand, as the door is to the body.

The older the handle, the more the touch of thousands of reaching hands. The forbidden room; the interview; the headteacher's study; the child sneaking downstairs at night trying to turn the handle quietly. My father's room in the nursing home and me, anxiously touching the handle, wondering what kind of mood he's in; the handle I touched before finding him dead; the door handle to be feared as holder of infection.

The sound of the handle turning and the latch operating, speak of an internal mechanism which in turn mimics the action of the hand, through levering and turning; the body sensing a mechanical movement that speaks to its own.

Metal front door handles conduct a dialogue between interior and exterior through temperature. In winter, touch can speak of the warmth of the interior or of an (elderly) occupant without heat. On leaving, tell-tale condensation on the metal surface tells us of the cold exterior conducted to the warm interior via the inner metal spindle of the handle.



Fig 52

"...on the other hand, a key closes more often than it opens, whereas the door-knob opens more often than it closes. And the gesture of closing is always sharper, firmer and briefer than that of opening."²⁵

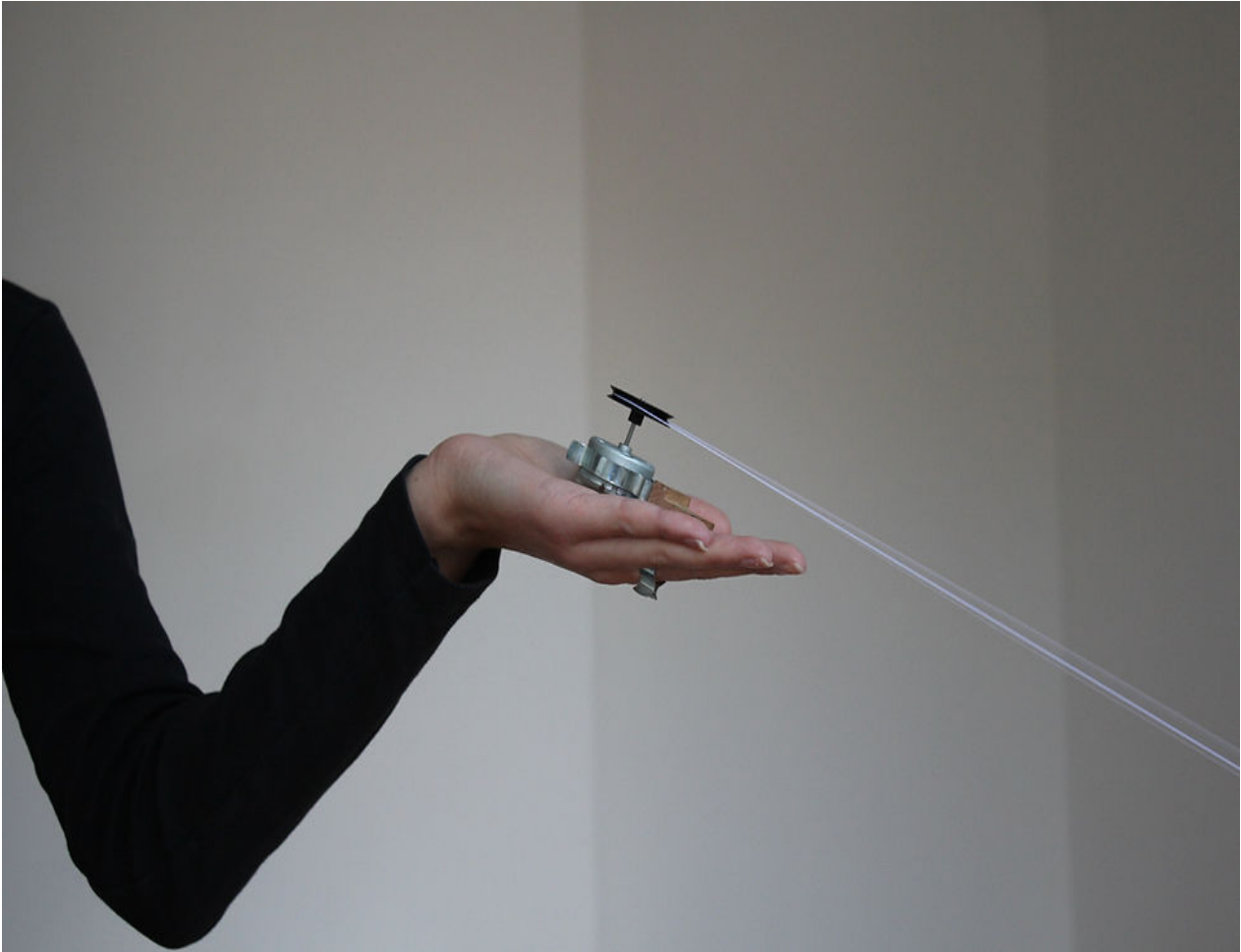


Fig 53

Like my father in the last few weeks of his life, touch — the first sense — released memory that was somehow contained in the object, like a needle touching a record. A touch delicate and tender but at the same time a sacrifice, both needle and record giving up something of themselves — the dust from a record, a release and a mutual exchange for the memory replayed.

With every “play” the object gives something of itself in exchange for a patina gathered over time. We give something of ourselves to everything and everyone — living and inanimate — people, places. My body somewhere held the memory of my father’s touch — the first touch like a first kiss — the touch of warm sun, a door handle, a familiar tool, a pistol grip, an electric toothbrush — in that moment, there was an exchange through the essence of life, pure vibration, a vibration so refined and delicate that it passed, unnoticed by the conscious mind, directly to the hippocampus.²⁶ Deep memory with the possibility of holding everything we’ve ever experienced, seen, heard and felt.

It was touch alone that allowed this connection through the purity of the exchange. The feelings evoked moved me to tears – an arc of connection through time and space through my father's simple touch. The gentler the touch, the stronger and more poignant the memory- skin on skin. The memory within old crown window glass which holds a hundred gazes over a hundred years, a lens memory within the glass itself, the bubbles trapped within, holding time and moments.

Section 2.2.3. Opening and entering

"It is precisely at this threshold, slightly off-stage that the actor/intruder is most vulnerable..."²⁷

As I slowly opened the door, I heard the soft impact of the cat jumping off the chair behind me. It slipped between my feet and went ahead, eager to enter the flat. As far as I knew, Brenchley had had no pets. I took a step inside and stood on the mat at the threshold, experiencing an "immobile intensity".²⁸ On entering, stepping over unopened mail, there was a sense that I was seeing and touching only the surface of a life, while being enveloped by the skin of another.

The flat was dark and silent. I was reluctant to turn on the hall light. There was a stillness in the trapped air that registered as a slight change of air pressure felt on the surface of my eardrums; like the pressure felt on entering a train tunnel, gone in an instant. I was still, but through stillness I felt had travelled to some internal geography through crossing a threshold. I was reminded of the widow's flat and of my father's house; their aloneness, how they were living an increasingly interior life, receding into an ever-expanding inner space of time and memories, the outside world, kept outside.

"These tropes of anonymity and isolation are transformed into a unique one-man land, an insular protective space in which to be."²⁹

For now, the only sound I could detect was the soft padding of the cat and gentle tapping of its claws on the parquet flooring of the hallway. For a moment though, I thought I heard another, softer sound, one that came from the gap in the stillness, deep in the background. I listened, still in the stillness, and dismissed the sound as distant external noise.

"Stillness presents a break or pause in the flow of habitual events, whilst illuminating temporal gaps and fissures within which alternative, even unexpected possibilities – for life might emerge."³⁰

There was also a faint odour, which I couldn't identify, though it spoke not of trapped interior air, but of open spaces, possibly the sea, grassland, or both. On inhaling, the smell seemed to be in me, created by my brain, like a scent experienced in an olfactory dream; a scent so real that you expect it to linger on waking, and for others to sense it too; but it vanishes, bottled and sealed with the dream. The smell receded (softly), partner to and part of the stillness.

I felt an almost gravitational tug into the flat as if being beckoned by a siren song, a soft pressure on my back, to enter. I turned, instinctively checking that the landing was still there as reference before shutting the front door behind me, taking a mental “photograph” as if entering a maze or unfamiliar forest, like an astronaut wondering what I’d bring back.

Although I saw and heard nothing, I felt that my arrival had somehow caught the flat off-guard and unprepared for visitors; a feeling that I was an interrupter. It was similar to feelings I’d sometimes experienced on entering remote natural spaces, not immediately apparent, but sensed on feeling compelled to pause, being still as if waiting for permission to enter and cross the threshold— a sense not of being watched, but of not being entirely welcome, as if my presence was a threat to the place. I was an intruder here.

“Atmospheric characteristics of spaces, places and settings are grasped before any conscious observation of details are made”³¹

I knew the flat to be empty but felt that I should wait for permission to proceed.

"Hello?" I called into the gloom. Only the cat responded with a dry call from the end of the hallway.

The stillness dissipated slightly as the trapped air of the flat was thinned on meeting the air from outside — like currents of hot and cold water, meeting and felt when mixing a bath by hand. I sensed on my skin occasional faint traces of the current of stillness, still not entirely diluted. I closed the front doorway behind me, the keys still in my hand.

Section 3. Brenchley's flat

At the core of the space was a stillness, essential and profound. Reached through deep immersion/meditation and familiarity with a place, through time spent understanding by looking, touching and breathing. Brenchley had grown up in the Forest of Dean and there was something of the deep stillness found at the centre of ancient forests, that permeated the space, his works and writing — the type of stillness felt at a station between trains, that descends and filters down. It was the stillness that is felt after or between rapid movement. A stillness felt when stopping on a motorcycle and looking down at the surface of the road to notice tiny details, the stillness felt on shifting from far (visual) to near (haptic). The stillness of an orb-weaver spider at the centre of a web.



Fig 54

Section 3.1. *Initial description of spaces*

The front door led onto a hallway from which rooms lay to both sides. Two pairs of shoes lay by the front door, and I felt obliged to remove my own. At the end of the hall was a curtain fixed on a bar at an angle between the doorframes. The curtain was attached with Velcro pads along the sides. I assumed the curtain was to allow Brenchley to move unobserved from one room to the next, only the movement of air disturbing the hem of the curtain. Unobserved by whom?

In the hallway on a shelf below a narrow small mirror (the only one I found in the flat) crouched a telephone, squatting like a buddha gently lit from above by a small window.

What I considered to be the living room lay immediately to the left with a bedroom opposite followed by a small bathroom, a separate toilet, a second back bedroom and a kitchen. There was another, more substantial, studded door to the end of the hall. The door was cold to the touch as if made of steel and heavily painted to match the others. The multiple locks, fixings, and bolts looked original to the building. The remains of a perished leather seal was visible around the door jamb. I was later to find that none of the keys supplied fitted the locks.

All the rooms, apart from the living room, were in darkness with white-backed blackout blinds pulled down. There were no curtains. All the rooms and spaces had been meticulously painted white including the doors, skirting boards, and fireplaces. There were no carpets or rugs. The floors in each space, like the walls, were painted white.

A feature shared by each room was the positioning of the few chairs and the single sofa: All were either placed to face the windows or the walls; all were facing away from the centre of the rooms.

There were no photographs, ornaments, pictures on the wall or personal mementos of any description in the flat. The usual sites and shrines of memento, mantelpieces and window cills were barren, save for the occasional dead insect, their death throes recorded in the dust like fossils.

Familiar with working in the homes of absent others, I felt a curious emptiness – almost a sense of loss, deprived of the usual reference points that homes include- a scaffolding around which we build a personal narrative of individuals and their lives.

I realised that apart from the pixelated and worn image on Brenchley's university ID card, I had no idea what he looked like. Images of his face and the man swirled and continually formed in my mind, reformed and surfaced momentarily only to sink again. Who was he, this stranger? It was as if he and I were in a perpetual state of passing in a corridor without the usual required time to focus — as if held like a Lagrange point in space and time³² (see also note 1).



Fig 55

The windows of the living or main room appeared to have been fitted with bespoke bi-folding plywood shutters, each one intricately made with various shaped apertures cut into them, some containing simple Perspex lenses. Through these, thin shafts of light entered the south-facing room, carefully aimed and positioned to graze the surfaces of the white walls, ceilings and certain pieces of furniture. The oblique angle of the light beams highlighted surface undulations, giving them an almost lunar quality.

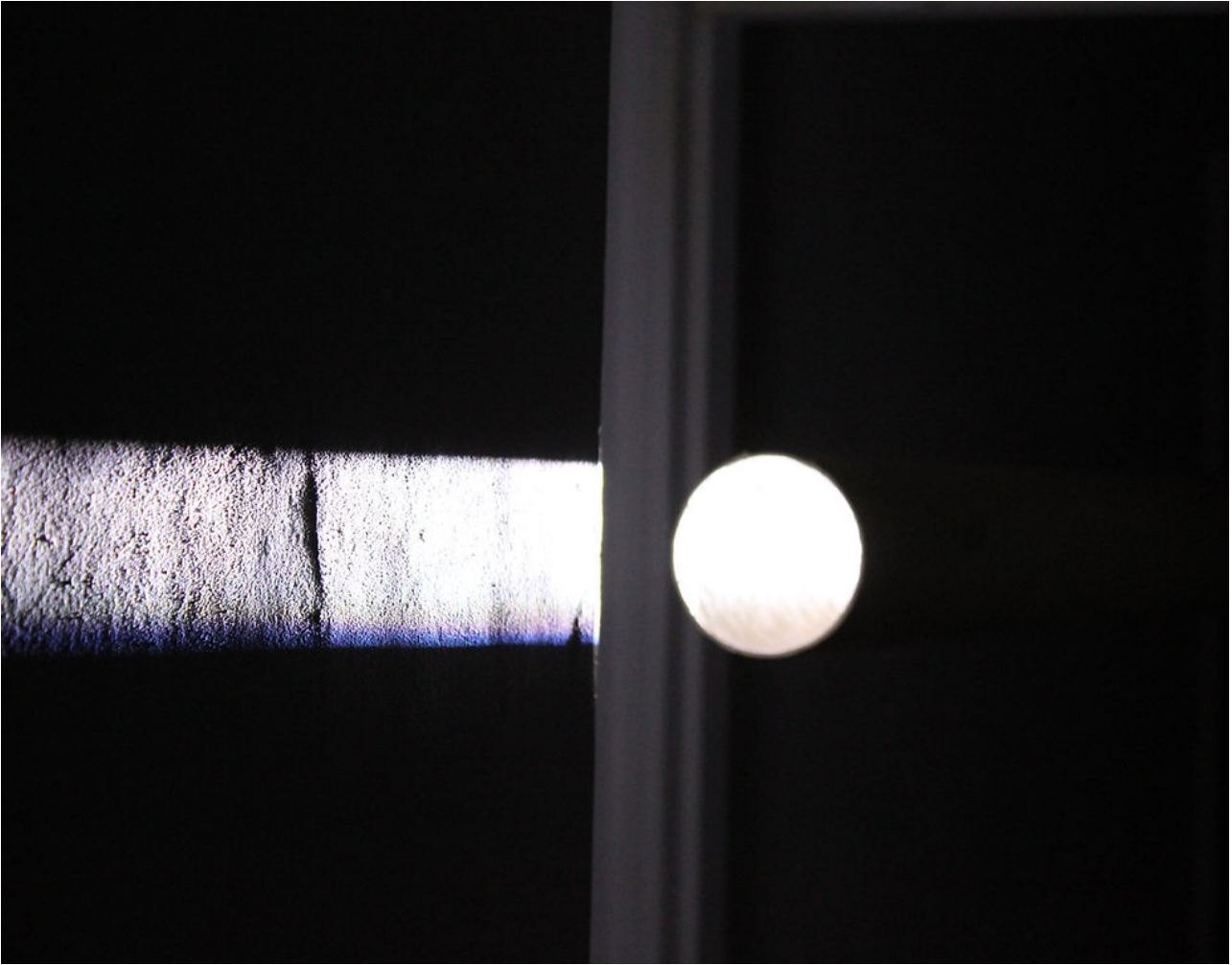


Fig 56

I noticed that the window frames in this room had been penetrated by hundreds of tiny holes the size of a pin shaft, almost invisible to the naked eye. Through these tiny holes, a forest of delicate tendrils of the creeper which covered the front of the house, had entered and reached into the room. Although some were withered and dry, others were new and tender. On the floor below the window was a dust covered atomiser for watering. Clearly this delicate plant's ingress had been invited.



Fig 57



Fig 58

Fig 59

Section 3.2. *Dust and vapour*

Over every surface was a layer of dust, sealing everything as Brenchley had left it, and confirming almost no activity since. Even after opening a window, the dust seemed to deaden sound in a similar manner to a layer of snow. It was as if the dust had somehow trapped and made time material.

The quietness here, had an agreement with dust; neither settled. The space had reasserted itself through the release and settlement of its dust. The dust, however, was not still. The shafts of light like searchlights, illuminated and trapped the constantly shifting motes disturbed, I assumed, by my movement and that of the air entering the space through the open windows. The dust appeared almost like a viscous fluid, in a constant state of surfacing and re-surfacing.

*"From the phenomena of dust, powder, and smoke, Homo faber learns to meditate upon the delicate structure and the mysterious power of the infinitely small; along this path lies the knowledge of the impalpable and the invisible."*³³

In areas untouched by the shafts of light, the layer dust seemed to have become one with the shadows – working together like a velvet photon-absorbing wave of uncertain depth – a new semi-fluid architecture, devouring light, and excreting shadow – its surface constantly moving. Like bacteria within self-healing concrete – the dust fed on light to excrete umbra which relentlessly filled and healed any fissures where light might enter – an epic and relentless microscopic struggle between bombarding photons and shadow, to stop the light from reaching the surface and allowing it to reflect.

*".... we might thus say that, through granulation, surface takes on an authentic substantial reality. It ceases to be geometric to become truly chemical."*³⁴

In a corner of the living room, I found evidence that a small amount of dust had been swept and lay in smooth ridges, like a fingerprint, or ripples left on sand by a receding tide. The dust had clearly been collected in this area, but not removed.

What I first took to be dust disturbed by my presence, in fact appeared to be a vapour, or a very fine mist which hung in the air, partially obscuring and blurring surfaces, clinging to the upper walls, and almost imperceptibly rolling across the ceiling like an ever-shifting internal cloud base. The result was of vaguely undefined spatial borders and edges. The weather outside was clear and bright, with no trace of the pollution-induced haze of the last few days, which made the internal mist even more puzzling.

Airing the space by opening further windows, only served to heighten the sense of surface. The early autumn air entering the rooms, gently raised small eddies of dust, and partially cleared the inner haze, making the surfaces of the space more distinct and crisp, and bringing my eyes into more direct contact with them.

I stood for some time absorbing this spectacle as the cat paced the perimeter of the room, pausing occasionally to study and apparently listen to the skirting board.

Section 3.3. *The spaces of the flat*

Pulling up the blind in the main bedroom revealed a modest and sparsely furnished room with a single perfectly made bed, a bedside table, a small chest of draws and a chair at the foot of the bed facing the wall. There was a built-in wardrobe to the right of the chimney breast. The only personal items in sight were a pair of slippers, an ancient digital alarm clock on the bedside table and a ballpoint pen. All the furniture had been painted or sprayed matt white.

The flat, particularly Brenchley's bedroom, spoke of absence. It reminded me of my uncle's room in my grandmother's house. He was an officer on transatlantic liners sometimes at sea for months. Although he'd left home and what was his room had become a spare bedroom, it still bore traces of him and his travels. As a child I only met my uncle a couple of times, and the room fascinated me with its traces of exotic countries in the form of postcards, objects and souvenirs sent to my grandmother.

I felt my uncle's presence through these few objects, and my grandmother's subtle longing for her son that she articulated through the display of them. There are no rules for when the room of an absent grown-up child stops being theirs.

I opened the shutters of the back bedroom, which Brenchley appeared to have used as a study. Light poured in, reflecting glare from the pristine white walls. I had to wait for my eyes to adjust.



Figs 60 & 61

The window looked out over a row of four garages one of which belonged to Brenchley. The faded green aluminium door of Brenchley's garage had been neatly tagged with the word "TOMER", a graffiti tag which I'd noticed repeated several times on walls and other structures during my train journey. The tag was very professional and looked like it had been re-sprayed recently. The three other garage doors bore no graffiti.

Beyond this were the remains of a rail-marshalling yard, which was in the process of being redeveloped as a retail park. The original buildings had been ground to hardcore for the

foundations of the new, and a solitary redbrick water tower stood among cone-shaped piles of pulverised masonry. Distant sounds of activity from the site occasionally drifted into the still room.

Papers were neatly piled on the surfaces of tables; books were arranged on the surfaces of shelves, just as the unopened letters had lain on the surface of the doormat prior to my arrival. Amongst them, further correspondence from the Romanian court, concerning the charge of Informatics Fraud, which had preceded Brenchley's disappearance.

The flat itself seemed to smell of trapped, tense surfaces, of walls, floors and ceilings. Although sparsely furnished, the space somehow felt full, with the numerous piles of papers and shelves lined with books giving it a particular acoustic that hovered between invitation and indifference. A sound not of an empty space, but at the same not of one that felt overly lived in; there was an absence of the personal items whose surfaces serve to absorb and refract sound. The acoustic was of the same nature in each room, almost as though material had been carefully added and subtracted until a balance was established. Piles of papers and books at the doorway to each room seemed to support my theory.

A volume of *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari, left on a table, revealed below its own surface, pressed between its pages, small sketches and plans on scraps of paper for what appeared to be sections of roads, towns and railways. Some were annotated but interestingly bore no reference to the volume within whose pages they were placed, instead, only vague hints of real or imagined spaces.

As far as I knew, Brenchley had good eyesight even though he was renowned for wearing more than one pair of glasses at a time. The flat bore witness to this, with several pairs of spectacles strategically placed at thresholds, on small purpose-made shelves positioned near the light switches. Brenchley sometimes arrived at the university wearing a magnifying headset like a hat; apparently having forgotten it was there. There were several such headsets positioned around the flat, equipped with different strengths of magnifying lenses.

A more detailed inspection of the flat (accompanied by the cat), revealed a tracery of faint marks on the walls, which extended throughout the entire space in every room. The marks appeared to be the result of a repeated tracing of distinct lines, and spoke not of idle brushing, but of a conscious and deliberate touching of the surface, suggesting a need to understand the space through connecting with its fabric. The marks were the result of repeated and sustained tracing over time, and the matt emulsion paint was worn to a smooth, almost gloss finish in several places. The effect was of a horizontal network of lines, serving to connect the rooms, and visible in a certain light, by stooping or tilting one's head.

Whilst crawling on all fours, checking the extent of the network of marks, I found several small areas on the skirting boards and lower parts of doors that had been meticulously cleaned, to the point where the paintwork was abraded, revealing layers of older paint below the surface. These areas stood in contrast to the rest of the flat. It was as though Brenchley had been trying to find

something below the surface of the quotidian. The odour of cleaning products still hung in the air around these areas.

As I left the flat it was getting dark — I could hear Rooks returning to a nearby Rookery, their shadows flitting over the landing skylight. Again I paused, as if needing to re-acclimatise to the world outside. Finally, I felt able to leave and opened the front door.

On the doorstep I found a small bunch of wildflowers, dandelions and buttercups tied with a thin thread of elastic. I picked up the tiny bouquet and placed it carefully on the wall beside the steps and went to catch my train.

Section 3.4. Sounds

A few days into the archiving, as my hearing adjusted to the particular acoustic properties of the flat, the feeling of surface over an inner space was heightened by a growing awareness of a multitude of faint sounds emanating from behind the skirting boards, walls and under the floors.

I thought initially of rodents, or perhaps a trapped bird, but the sounds, sometimes a gentle brushing, were not frantic or those made by a frightened creature. Indeed, whatever was making the sounds appeared to be at one with, and almost part of the building. Was this what the cat, now my daily companion, had been drawn by?

The sounds from the walls, and particularly the skirting boards, suggested intrusion. This “fold” of planes, normally the gathering area for dust and fluff, now also seemed to have collected sound.



Fig 62

The familiar surfaces and boundaries of the flat were rendered other by the sounds they emitted and held the threat of an infraction or breach of the normal boundaries of architectural domestic space. Like some children's stories,

*"...[it] was an old, old house, full of cupboards and passages. Some of the walls were four feet thick, and there used to be queer noises inside them, as if there might be a little secret staircase"*³⁵

I began to view the skirting boards in a manner I'd never previously imagined. This innocuous interior fixture had become an area of seepage, with its own edge effect. The meeting of the boundaries of two habitats. The skirting boards now read as threat. I became aware of the gap, the space that it concealed, my eye continually drawn to it like an animal scanning the line of under tree shadow at the edge of a forest. This was where the predators emerge from, this was where they broke cover. Fossil evidence reveals that early hominoids were once amongst the main prey of sabretooth and other large cats.

*"Approximately 6 percent to 10 percent of early humans were preyed upon, according to evidence such as teeth marks on bones, talon marks on skulls and holes in a fossil cranium into which sabretooth cat fangs fit."*³⁶

The genetic collective memory of this, is thought to possibly explain the dream that many children have of being hunted by a large and silent cat. As a result, we are edge seekers, genetically compelled to search for the horizon to position ourselves in space.

*".... Australopithecus afarensis was an edge species... Primates that are edge species, even today, are basically prey species, not predators."*³⁷

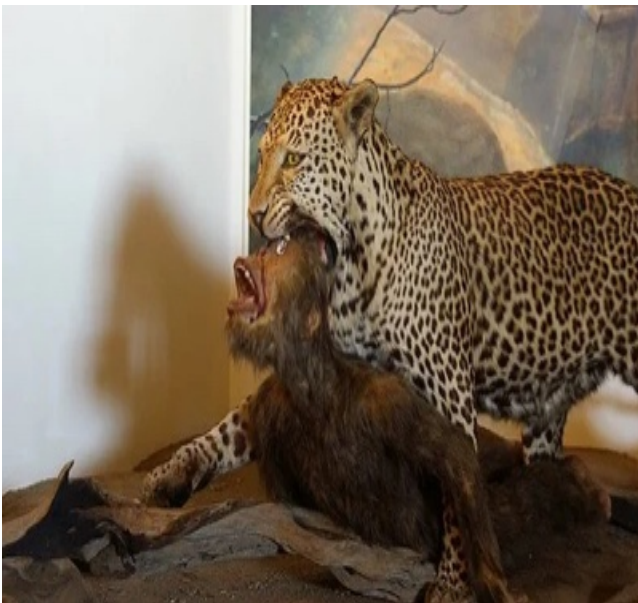


Fig 63



Fig 64

I found myself habitually circumnavigating the edges of the rooms, like a caged animal repeatedly patrolling the perimeter of its enclosure. On catching my reflection one day in the hall mirror, I realised I'd developed a 100 mm stare, constantly looking down, scanning the line of the skirting board as the sounds moved behind them.



Fig 65

The sounds were regular and rhythmic, and appeared to move around the flat —sometimes behind walls, sometimes under the floor or in the ceiling — and moved from space to space. Searches for clocks, electrical relays or heating controls proved fruitless. A quick check revealed the flat below to be unoccupied. During the long days in Brenchley's flat, the sounds had the effect of drawing my gaze, like the cat's, repeatedly into the corners, lingering on the cobwebs and dust.

I made paper cone to better hear the sounds as they traversed the space. I found myself following them, with the cat, from room to room, tracing their movement with my fingertips. The brushing of my fingers, adding to the existing tracery.



Fig 66

The effect of the sounds was like that of a ticking clock, not only a temporal measure but also a spatial one, a constant measuring and re-measuring and folding and unfolding of the architecture, an ongoing reminder of the dimensions and skin of the spaces which surrounded me. They also somehow activated the space, as if the building itself was in a constant state of motion — linked to my own, and the cat's physical tracking through eyes and body.

The sounds instilled in me a sense of continuous spatial expansion and contraction at the periphery that intensified the stillness at the centre. The traditional function of a built space as container for activity, had somehow been reversed — the space passive, the normally fixed edges active. It was the centre observing the edge.

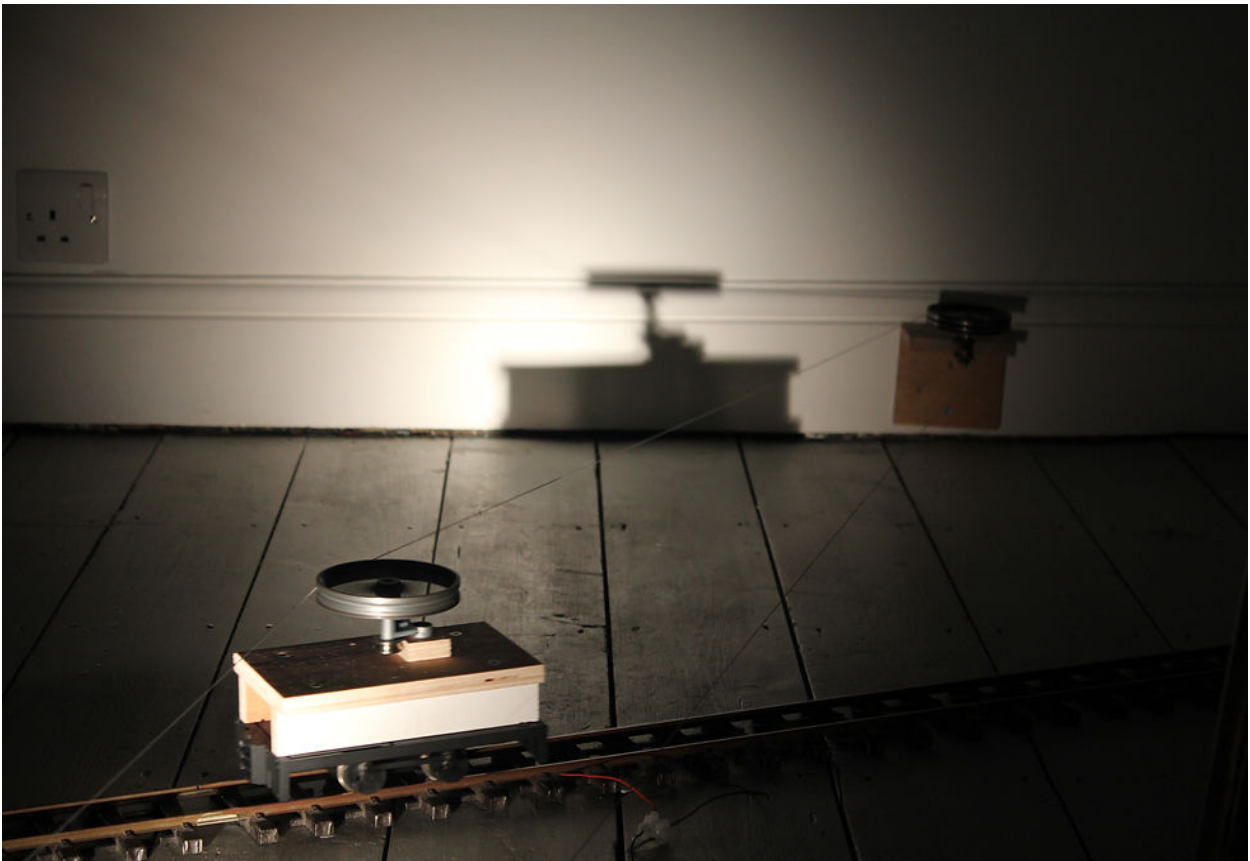


Fig 67

The movement of the sounds within the flat seemed linked to the exterior movement of the railway yards, which Brenchley must have watched through the rear window over the years, witnessing the slow decline of this once busy depot. It was as though the repeated movement and measuring of space by the marshalling of trains had somehow entered and permeated the flat.

This put me in mind of a book by David Leavitt, *The Lost Language of Cranes*, in which a small child is neglected in a high-rise apartment and starved of human interaction. The child learns to copy the movement of the tower cranes, which dominate the view from his cot. The child. developed an entire physical language, based on the slow, dance-like movement of the cranes.

The pauses and silences between the sounds were like the gaps between the coming and going of trains at a station. As I got used to the sounds they took on the reassuring quality of a train at night, as opposed to a busy road. The former is the sound of order, punctuated by pauses into which stillness descends, the latter is one of chaos. One can't set a watch by the sound of roads.



Fig 68

As I became more accustomed to the sounds, the overall affect was a heightening of my sense of interiority and an increased awareness of being encased in a material “envelope”, a second skin of plaster, brick, and glass. My senses merged, my whole body feeling the whole space and the life played out within. I had become immersed in the flat, attaining a state of spatial deliquescence. Like a biscuit dunked in tea which, if left too long, itself dissolves. The absorber, becoming the absorbed.

“The protagonist’s intimate relationship with the house culminates in his physical dissolution into it and psychological fusion with it”³⁹

Section 3.5. Scale intervention - *The miniature works*

During the third week in Brenchley’s flat, on removing a well-used copy of Vidler’s *The Architectural Uncanny* from a bookshelf, I discovered what appeared to be a small tree-like plant growing out of the wall. On closer inspection, using one of the magnifying headsets, the plant revealed itself to be a perfect miniature birch tree, crafted in great detail, and positioned carefully, so as to have space around it when the book was replaced. A small sliver of wood had been fixed to the shelf, acting as a stop to prevent the book from being fully slid back, thus protecting the tiny tree. Removing further books revealed more of these miniature constructions and spaces; the trees sometimes surrounded by miniature white plaster walls.



Fig 69

The trees represented hundreds of hours of painstaking work. Their tiny trunks had been seamlessly fused to the walls and to the sides and back of the shelves. Emptying the shelves of books completely revealed an entire forest of concealed miniature trees. The effect was semi-architectural, soft dressing the shelves. The small scale of the trees lent an almost monumental quality to the wooden structure.

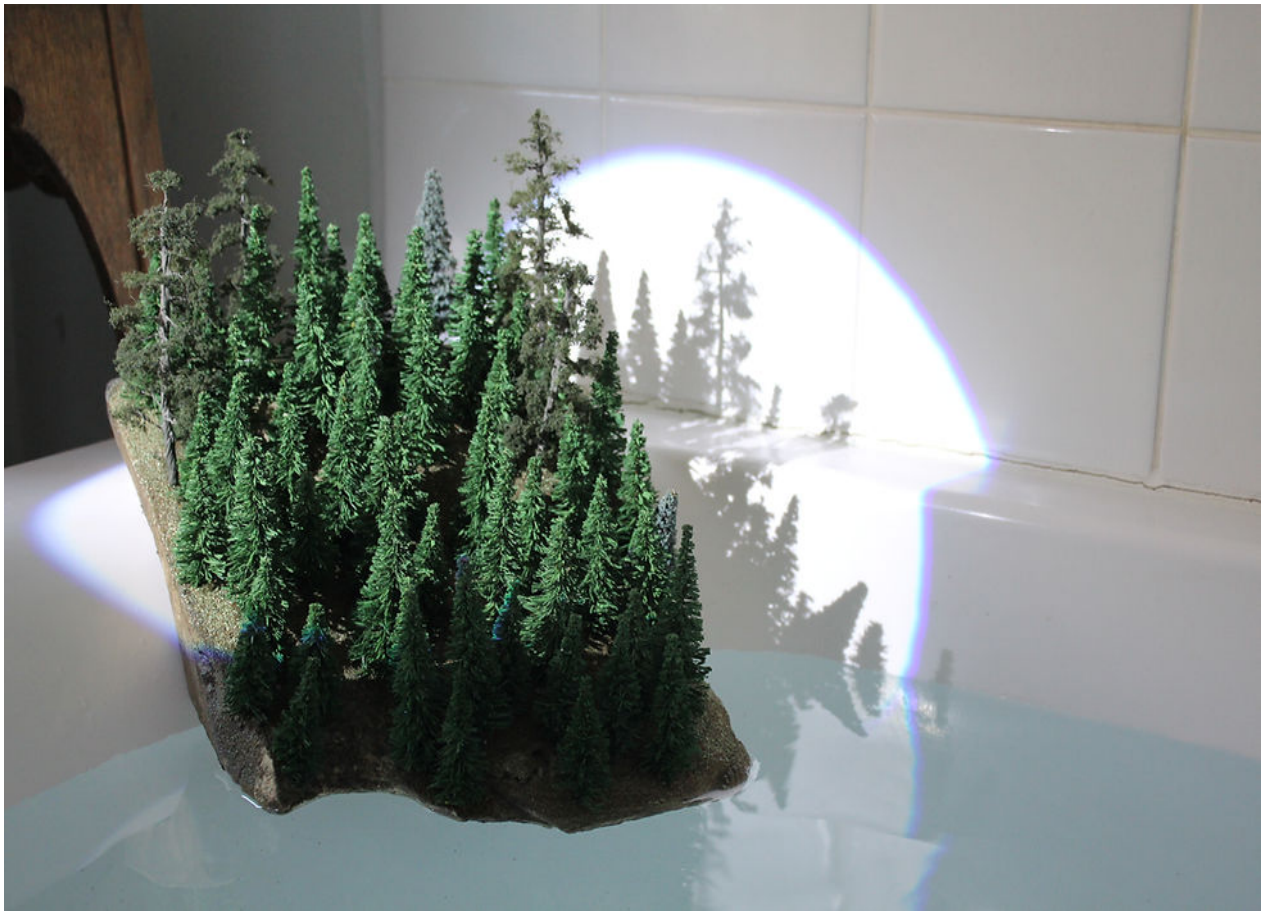


Fig 70

The archiving forgotten, and now routinely wearing the magnifiers, I went on to remove all the books from the shelves in the flat, revealing further miniature complexes.

I found a carefully drawn map of what appeared to be vast lakes or seas. It was in fact, an intricate topographical study of the small rainwater puddles that formed on the flat roof, which Brenchley had looked out on from his study window.

I continued my now obsessive search in other rooms. The bedroom wardrobe contained further tree vignettes carefully concealed under a shelf, made visible only by getting into the wardrobe or by using a mirror.

The descent into the small-scale world was compelling. Some of the deeper models (I now considered them so) were progressively more chaotic and sublime, playing with scale and including reference to soaring cliffs and huge architectural spaces.

I found further models concealed in every part of the flat — in cupboards, behind radiators, in the bathroom. The bathroom smelt of the sea and there was a crusted tidemark of salt around the bath and a puddle of salt along the bottom, as though the water had evaporated. The salt had eaten into the fibreglass, in some places penetrating completely. The bathroom cabinet contained several small bottles of what I assumed to be sea-salt and other white crystalline powders,

together with a sealed jar of hemp string, apparently pickled. In the space under the bath there extended a landscape of dust and hair illuminated by miniature lampposts. On the window ledge lay a disintegrating copy of *À Rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysmans.⁴⁰ Its pages stained and crumbling, the book itself becoming powder.



Fig 71

In Brenchley's bedroom, on looking under the bed which had been raised on blocks of wood under each foot. I removed the mattress and found a sheet of plywood beneath which, on pivoting in the frame, I was able to see a panoramic miniature diorama of what appeared to be a Mediterranean landscape, with small villages clustered amongst trees and rocky outcrops. As I leant in to inspect the detail, I heard the sound of cicadas from the bed frame. Brenchley, while sleeping, had the landscape to his back and would have fallen asleep to the sound of cicadas and a distant waterfall hidden in deep forest, which formed the bulk of the model. He was "wearing" the landscape in the same way we "wear" furniture — chairs or beds that are formed around the shape of our bodies.



Fig 72

To me now, the flat seemed to contain two worlds. One of human scale and the other, of reduced scale, below the surface. Due to the miniature nature of the constructions these worlds were at the same time both near (haptic) and far (optical). The viewer simultaneously distanced through scale but drawn close through detail. In their scale, the miniature elements spoke of objects and of landscapes seen at a distance. However, in their compelling detail, they demanded close inspection, drawing the eyes into them, entering a haptic, close world while remaining forever distant. Distant objects observed at close range; the viewer remaining ever without — only the eyes and imagination able to enter, “inhabit” and move through these miniature worlds. I became aware that I was mentally occupying these two worlds simultaneously, one of the surface or 'normal' world, and the other, a sub-surface and smaller scale inner world.

The space, in reaching in, simultaneously reached out. Increasingly on leaving, I felt that part of me was still there. I found myself mentally inhabiting and navigating the spaces while elsewhere. I began to notice that I was seeing the 'real' world in a different way, my eyes scanning constantly for possible micro and sub-surface spaces. I seemed to be experiencing a form of micropsia.

My immersion in the miniature and sub-surface world of Brenchley's flat caused me to see the outside world in a different scale. I was reminded of H. G. Wells' *The World of William Clissold*:

“The visible world, remaining just as bright and clear as ever it had been, would suddenly appear to be minute. People became midgets, the houses and the furniture, dolls'-houses and furniture, the

trees, mere moss-fronds. I myself did not seem to shrink to scale; it was only the universe about me that shrank. This effect would last for a few seconds or for a few minutes, and then it would pass away."⁴¹

During my "re-entry" into the full-scale world, which sometimes took several hours to fully achieve, like an early astronaut I began to question what I might bring back with me.

The discovery of Brenchley's collection of micro-books behind a skirting board pushed my eyesight to its limit. The books were tiny objects but still contained meaning below their surfaces that required more effort to extract. The extraction of meaning went beyond eyesight. Like cat's whiskers that move forward or whisk, in one of the fastest recorded mammalian movements, to touch their moving prey when too close for their eyes to focus. In the microsecond when creatures' eyes can no longer accurately gauge the proximity of the toy or prey to the mouth, senses shift and touch moves to the fore. The vibrissae – specially adapted sensory hairs – take over for the final moment of contact to feel the passage of the prey into the mouth.



Fig 73

Beside the books were a neatly folded pair of cotton gloves. On each fingertip was a whisker of wire attached to a miniature amplifying sensor, allowing the surface of each page to be felt and read through sound. The miniature books spoke of an elastic time and space, collapsed within minimum space once closed.



Fig 74

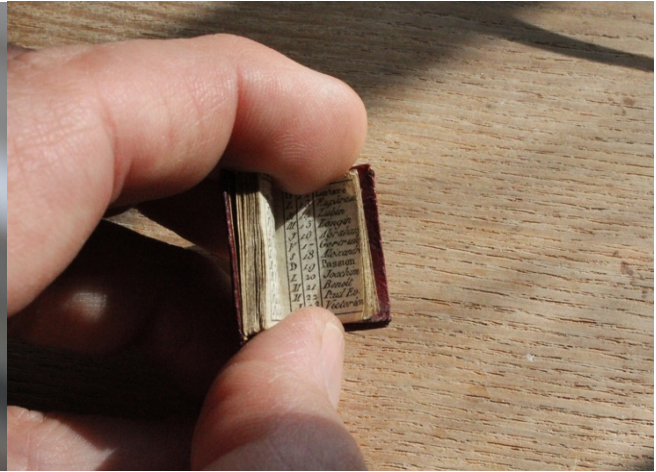


Fig 75

That evening, I took the decision to sleep in the flat rather than return home. I arranged a mattress against the living room wall and, joined by the cat, allowed the sounds of the space to enter my dreams.

Section 3.6. *The moving devices*

After revealing what I thought to be all the miniature installations, I still had not located the source of the sounds, which continued to haunt the flat and myself. Against my agency's protocols, I decided to look deeper into the space through the fabric of the building itself. With my paper cone hearing device, I located what I thought was the source of one of the sounds in a stud wall in the living room. The cat, my now almost constant companion, spent whole days intensely studying areas of the wall, softly pacing its length, close to the surface, allowing his whiskers to brush the painted plaster.

Often the cat would cat stretch and reach, with claws retracted, to pat and touch the surface, adding feline pad marks to the human finger tracery and crying in frustration or perhaps in an attempt to communicate. Occasionally the cat would freeze, ears pricked, to follow sounds — most inaudible to me — its head swivelling like a velvet radar dish and whiskers (vibrissae) reaching forward to touch as his eye's lost focus at close range.

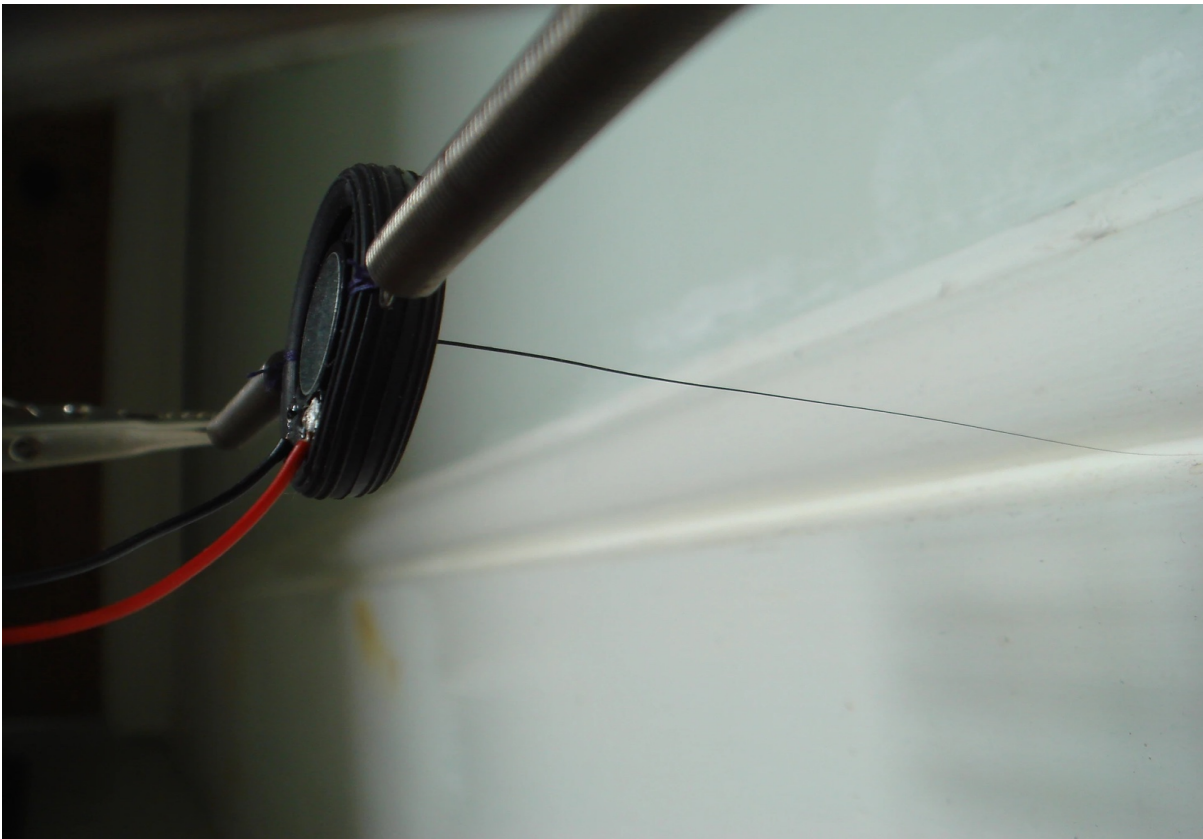


Fig 76

Using a bradawl, a dental mirror and various adapted kitchen implements, I started to carefully open the wall. After creating a hole large enough to look into, with the aid of a torch and the small mirror, I encountered the first of the devices.

Within the usually empty poche of the wall cavity, a small six-volt electric motor fitted with a pulley had been attached to one of the wooden studs. It drove a very thin loop of elastic, attached to a similar pulley several metres away, somewhere near the rear wall. Through each loop a whisker had been threaded. As the elastic moved, the whisker span round and gently brushed against the lathe and plaster of the interior void, for the entire width of the flat.

I went on to reveal dozens more of these intra-wall devices. They took various forms and spread to all areas of the flat, to the living room, bedrooms, bathroom, hallway, and kitchen.

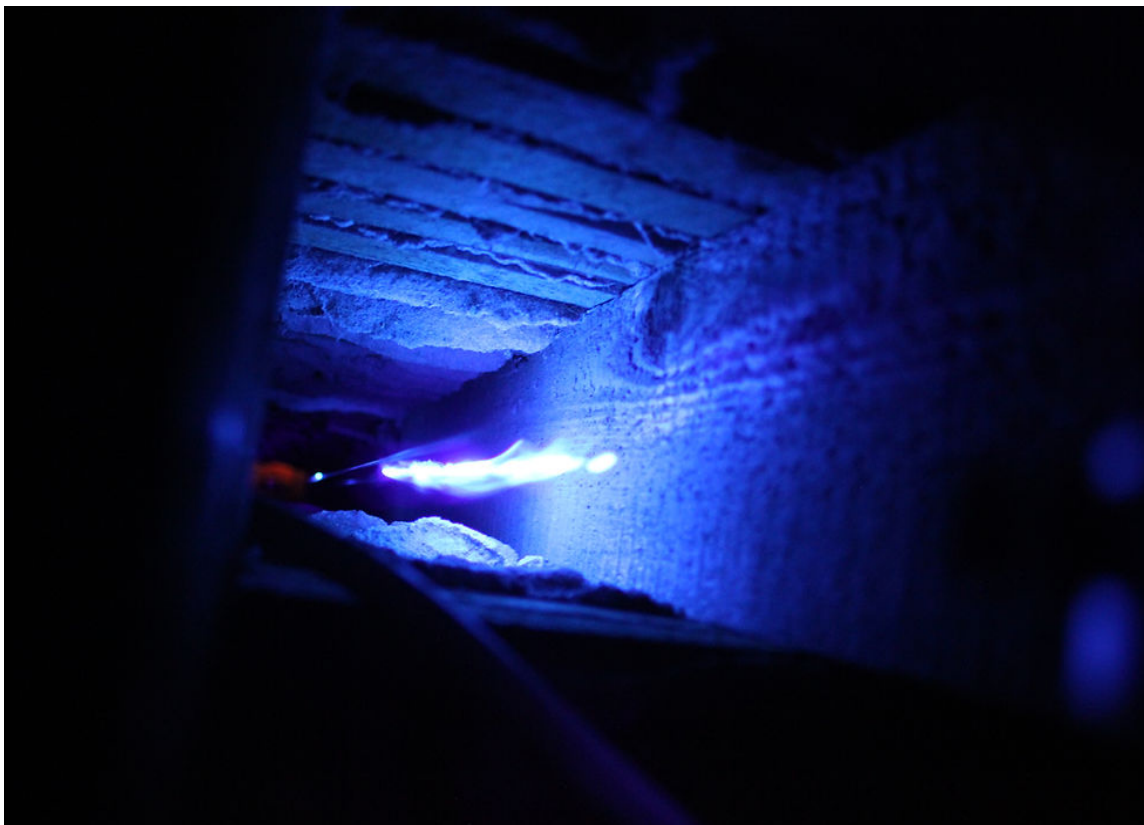


Fig 77



Fig 78

The devices became to me a sub-surface network or mycelium, in constant movement, their soft dialogue of touch forever unsettling the dust, perpetually rearranging an inner topography through an exchange of matter. Between the passes of the whirring whiskers, minute landscapes formed into valleys and escarpments, settling briefly only to be re-rendered and torn. Tendril-like towers of dust coalesced and reached for each other, forming a temporary architecture of buttresses, arches, and pillars, only to be atomised and rejoin the cloud.



Fig 79

The devices employed simple and often redundant technologies — sewing machine parts, food mixers, old record and tape player motors. Some were visible (i.e. above surfaces); others were only audible, built into voids and under floors, and only experienced through intense listening. Others were only revealed through light. Often, they were triggered by movement, deploying various simple sensors. On attempting to use them, I discovered that Brenchley's computer, CD player and bathroom extractor fan, had all had their drive motors removed.

Behind one wall I found neatly cut small sections of removed plaster and woodwork, stored in hundreds of plastic boxes. Like finds from an archaeological dig, each box was carefully labelled with the date and their original location. About two-thirds of the boxes were empty; I assumed their contents had been replaced in the wall or floor, to seal up the devices.

The works had a delicacy and lightness of touch that is distinguished from tenderness yet accords with it. The work was somehow polite, perhaps diffident. The work seemed at home in this home, as if it had grown from the dust and cobwebs that accumulated in the corners and along the skirting boards. This was its natural environment, the place from which it had grown and from where it drew nourishment. Insect life and dust seemed part of this environment and they too interacted with it. Spiders rode elastic threads adding their own silk, moths moved towards thin beams of light that traversed spaces to create new diurnal rhythms. I went without food, sometimes for days, using the hunger to heighten my acuties, my ears pricked and my eyes sharpened, my fingertips now so sensitive I had to wear gloves when out or I would be overcome.

Section 3.7. *Effect of works: the moving*

The cat and I were led through the rooms by our senses, through the sound and feel (touch) of the moving interventions — there was no reason beyond this; the stories of the house (Brenchley) and its structure being heard and felt before they were seen. Any idea of work was now forgotten as I allowed a faint vibration or fluttering to draw me to spend hours, days and weeks mesmerised by the delicate works.

In the classical world, as a hierarchy of senses was established, sight was classified as our primary sense; but, in navigating this interior space, it is no longer enough, it is no longer dominant. Sight was further challenged and stretched through Brenchley's use of the miniature. Some of his colleagues at the university reported that Brenchley often remarked that he “heard everything”; he had not learnt to filter out “noise”, whether visual or sonic. This led, perhaps, to his leaving, hearing, and seeing too much and never forgetting.

The result of the works was like the chapters of a compelling book: when one machine stopped, another started, opening another chapter. Brenchley's devices allowed me to go beyond the surface of the “cover”. Their movement and sound opening and closing the pages, opening, and collapsing space as one led to another.

The moving devices had the effect of making the entire flat read as one space, rather than as a series of rooms. Through the devices, the space was linked and integrated, constantly measuring, touching, checking, and reconfiguring itself, as if a clock had somehow spread tendrils, or a rhizome, into the entire structure extending the measuring of time into a simultaneous measurement of space.

The machines dissected and broke down the interior territories and boundaries of the domestic space. It was now impossible to spend time in one room without being aware of the others that made up the space. Shutting doors only amplified the sounds, the doors becoming again part of the walls, extending the resonating surface.

Brenchley seemed to have attempted to puncture the surface of the everyday through penetrating the walls and surfaces of the physical space. Dissecting the space was also a means of understanding it, taking the house back to a drawing, a plan or schematic composed of lines, the first manifestation of an idea of form and connection. The measuring action of the devices also

somehow took the structure back to its making. The works continued the lines and the house's journey — from two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional space and time. The first touch of the architect's pencil on paper was mirrored in the touch of the whirring whisker. This touch was then extended into lines, allowing connection.

In the making of the house, the line's journey continued through plumb lines and spirit levels, the placement of laths, measurements, pencil lines and other architectural acts. These lines were sometimes still there, buried under wallpaper and paint. I remembered my compulsion as a child, to build cable cars as moving lines of measurement to span, connect and bisect the spaces of my home.

The works took the house to when it was a skeleton; pure structure that had not yet grown a skin, the folds of walls and roof yet to be applied. Through his devices and installations, Brenchley seemed to be fighting against the perception of the permanence of architecture. His "works" allowed him to feel and be one with the flow of the building.

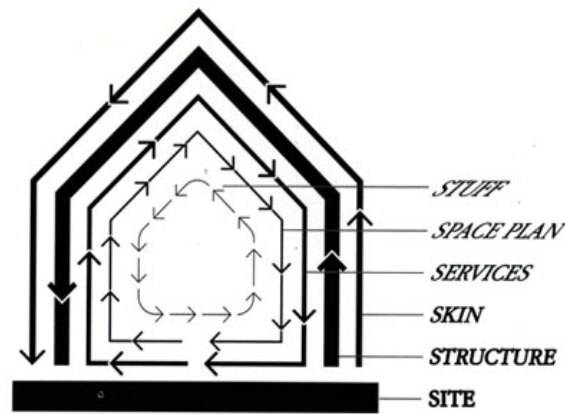
*"When we deal with decisions taken long ago for remote reasons"*⁴²

The spaces used by Brenchley were the spaces of DIY, phenomena that would be discovered when laying a carpet, rewiring a switch, or plastering. They were the spaces that were covered up again in order to resume and facilitate normal life. The spaces were other to that of everyday life but supported it. They were spaces that would be discovered anyway and once re-covered, they became part of the building again as an inner space, one that existed below and between the immediate space of everyday occupation, and the building itself.

The spaces were also other to that of everyday life, but they also supported it. The voids and gaps with which we share our lives are as important as the "occupied" parts in which we move, sleep and eat. Lifetimes are spent in spaces without knowing the truth of what constitutes "home". By using the *poche*, rendering the walls porous, the works also questioned where habitation begins and ends — the normal boundaries dissolved.

The interventions placed the flat in an immediate present, an irresistible present that had no digital lag. A present that was constantly changing the relationship with the space one is in. This was not a museum frozen in time, but a space through the interventions, constantly present and reaching into the future.

I began to feel that in some way, the interventions were a substitute for the person of Brenchley himself. Some of the devices sounded like heartbeats or breathing, in a sense allowing Brenchley to live on, in or as the building.



SHEARING LAYERS OF CHANGE. Because of the different rates of change of its components, a building is always tearing itself apart.

Fig 80

"I am free at last to think only of the essential elements of existence-the visual continuum around me, and the play of air and light. The house begins to resemble an advanced mathematical structure, a three-dimensional chessboard. The pieces have yet to be placed, but I feel them forming in my mind."⁴³

The building was late Victorian and had been divided into flats sometime in the mid-20th century. The house had been constructed as a space for a family to occupy. The subsequent conversion into flats happened during the height of late modernism's compulsion to create spaces not for occupation, but for human absence.⁴⁴

The house was full of sealed doorways and voids, which had once allowed human movement and life. Had Brenchley somehow become attuned to the buried (real) life of the structure, his works a search for the original core house? By compromising the walls in their function as barrier/seal, Brenchley had affected this feeling of security associated with the idea of the home as four walls and a roof. Instead, Brenchley had rendered the walls a semi-permeable membrane (perhaps as a comment on hermitically sealed UPVC homes). In his search for the "real", he was inviting a dialogue with the world. This erosion of the fixed boundary between inside and outside, which the walls represent, echoed Freud's use of a small mirror (psyche) on the window of his studio in Berggasse 19.

*"The placement of Freud's mirror on the boundary between interior and exterior undermines the status of the boundary as a fixed limit."*⁴⁵

The walls, now rendered "active" through the works, no longer function to clearly separate the inside from the outside, but now allow a two-way extension (dialogue) between exterior and interior spaces. Brenchley's use of sound (followed by touch and finally vision) to penetrate and continually expand and contract the spaces, further diluted the distinction between inside and

out. Brenchley challenged the impermeability of home by making the home porous. The home allows dreams in — as opposed to the internet, which lets dreams out.

*"My house is diaphanous but not of glass, it is more of the nature of vapour. Its walls contract and expand as I desire. At times I draw them close about me like protective amour ...but at others I let the walls of my house blossom out in their own space which is infinitely extensible"*⁴⁶

3.8. The Final Room

I decided to finally try and open the locked door to the only room in the flat I had not yet explored. The door was reinforced with steel and fitted with several antique and very strong locks that were not designed for domestic application. The surface mounted locks possibly predated the house and were similar to those fitted to 19th century vaults or used in churches that I'd seen on previous archiving assignments. The locks were a combination of different types and manufacturer, several were eastern European, possibly Romanian.

I went through the various keys I'd been given to check again if any fitted, without success. I purchased an SDS drill and several tungsten steel drill bits from a local DIY store. It took me almost two days and numerous drill bits to penetrate the first lock.

During my labours, I'd ignored the numerous messages from my agency and my phone now inert, battery drained, was embedded in a wall, but on the third day I had a visitor.

During a pause in the drilling to change bits, I heard the doorbell. On passing the mirror in the hall I caught my reflection — unshaven, my hair long, eyes sunken and a magnifying headset resting on my head. Like a pressure wave of time, that instant connected me with the moment of standing under the John Martin painting in the museum. I hurriedly removed the headset, opened the front door, and attempted a friendly smile.

Section 3.9. The Woman

I had noticed a woman sitting in a decrepit car outside the house, a couple of days earlier. The interior of the car was full of mist — I assumed from a vaping device — which had prevented me from seeing her face clearly.

As she now stood on the doorstep, I recognised her immediately as one of the three women from the horsebox I'd seen on my first visit to the house. It was hard to tell her age, her eyes were large and dark, her face slim with fine features, framed by a mass of dreadlocks held in place with a blue scarf. Behind her, tendrils of delicate mist were softly feeling their way out of the slightly open passenger window of her ancient but perfectly parked Hillman Avenger.

With a faint Eastern European accent, she introduced herself. "My name is Rheya, I'm a friend of Mr. Brenchley, may I come in?" Still a little dazed from having contact with another human being after what felt like years alone, I replied, "Yes of course," and I apologised for my appearance as I

opened the door fully. She moved silently across the threshold into the hallway, and we made our way up the stairs to the flat. On entering she removed her shoes as the cat rushed to greet her.

"I have my own keys "she said "but I didn't want to just appear and scare you." "Thank you "I said. "Are you finished now, have you found them all?" she asked. "Yes" I replied, "I think so, but there is one last room that I can't open"

She led the way to the still locked room at the end of the hall, carefully stepping around the various discarded tools and debris from my attempts to open the locks. From a small satchel, she produced a large bunch of old keys. She looked at me, smiled and said, "I've come to clean the whisker."



Fig 81

She knew which of the keys fitted the various locks and she asked me to stand back as she opened the sealed door. The door opened with a hiss, as the ancient seals gave way and I felt a breath of released stillness touch my skin and in that moment, life had never been more precious. For a spit second, we both saw the "craft" (I assumed that is what it was) hovering at eye level, seemingly held in a shaft of light.

The room was painted electric blue, and in the window was his chair, bearing signs of considerable wear. On the glass, the dust shadows of a thousand bird impacts veiled the Ash tree beyond.



Fig 82

Around the craft was an undulating cloud of tiny moths. On the air from outside entering the room, the craft drifted to the floor followed by the moth cloud, with a gentle swaying movement, like a flat stone sinking in water as if reluctant to leave the air. The woman turned slowly to me, put a finger to her lips and gestured to me to stay at the threshold.

Then, she and the cat — who had now joined us — padded gently towards the craft which shuddered like a cold insect waiting for the heat of the sun. She knelt down beside the craft and gently removed from her satchel a bottle of clear liquid and a tiny puffer brush. At the centre of the craft was a single cat's whisker attached to a transparent diaphragm. A single vibrissae its constant vibration held everything still and held everything ; time, space, thought and memory. "It's all there" she said.

The cat was now very close to the whisker, his own reaching forward. It started purring, rubbing against the woman's crouched form. As she started to carefully brush the whisker, the air began to fill with a soft vibration — as if the cat's purring had entered the air. The edges of the craft became blurred and indistinct, and the woman slowly stood up and joined me at the doorway.

"Touch it again" I said, "I saw something," for a moment visible, like a flickering candle flame. "I'm not sure what I'm looking at." Then it was gone, and we were alone in the silent blue room. "Don't you wonder sometimes?" she asked, breaking the silence. "About what?" I asked. "Pale blinds drawn all day — don't you see? — Whiskers continue to feel after the cat has shed them. This was found in the wall of a much older building by workmen when demolishing it. Together with the desiccated remains of the cat — the whiskers are from that cat. Whiskers do not decay."

She said goodbye and left, taking the cat with her. I watched her old car make its way to the end of the road; I never saw her again.

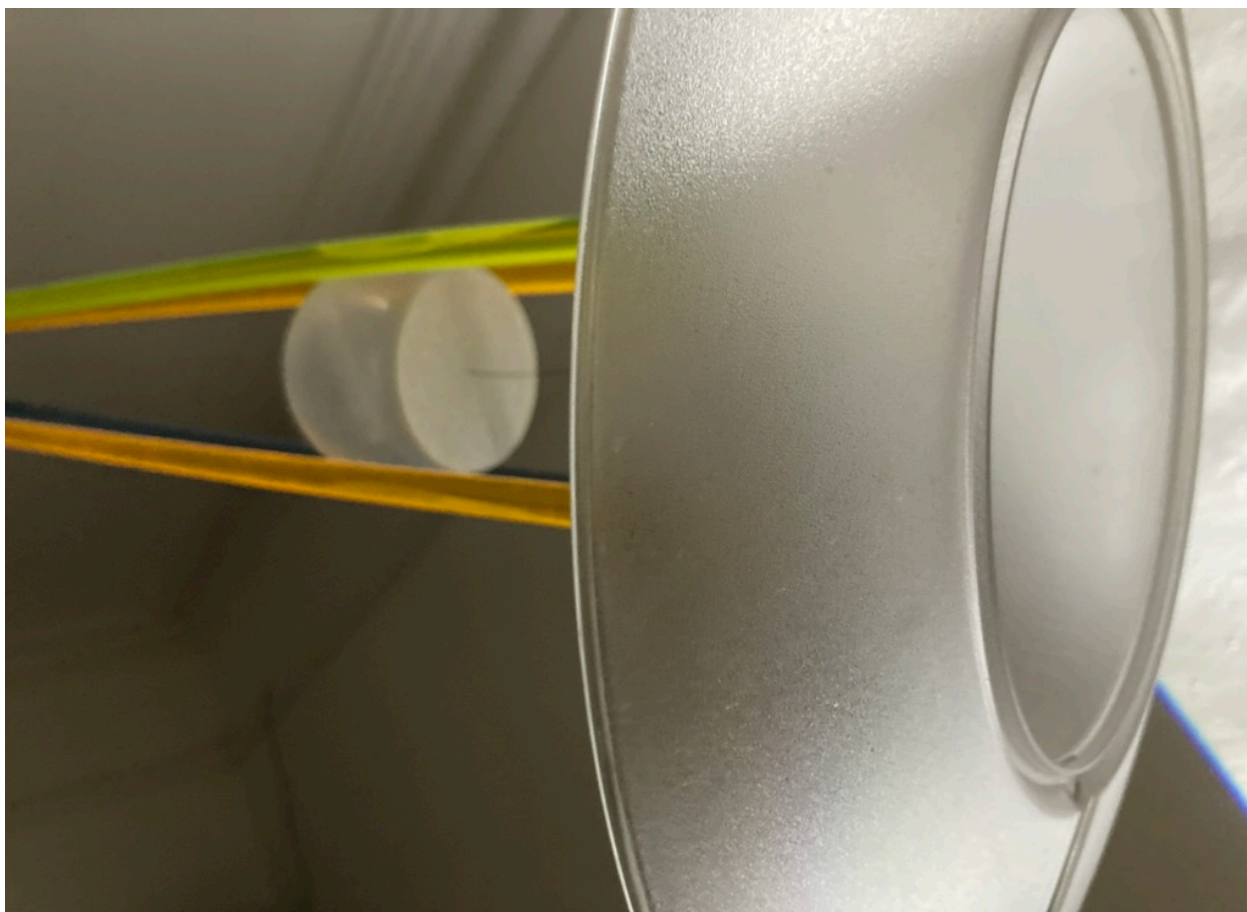


Fig 83

Section 3.10. Clearance

The space needed to be cleared, and my agency contacted a local charity that offered house clearance. As Brenchley had been missing for almost two years and was now assumed dead, the charity did not charge for the service.

I tried to make good the walls and ceilings that I'd opened before the clearance team arrived. This took me almost two weeks. The clearance took a day, and the team of four men, led by a gentleman in his sixties, seemed accustomed to chaotic spaces, but I did overhear them commenting, during a tea break, on odd sounds coming from the walls. The older man, who had informed me several times that he was an expert on woodworm, gave me a card for a pest control firm that appeared to be run by his wife.

Brenchley's papers, now archived and boxed, were removed by my agency. The large number of books on long-term loan from the university library were collected. His personal books, had been valued and removed by a specialist company, leaving the rows of shelves which lined his study empty.

The only volume which remained was a solitary bound copy of Brenchley's PhD thesis: *Both ends Burning: The Effects of LSD (Lysergic acid Diethylamide) on Wood Ants*. Clearly the black-bound tome had not been opened for years, and some pages remained uncut but hidden at the back was a collection of neatly folded motorcycle sales brochures. Each was well used with extensive annotation and footnotes analysing subjects ranging from technical specifications to speculation about where the photographs had been taken. This included research into visible architecture, road signs, flora, geography and other topics. Some extensive writing discussed whether the photographer had travelled by motorcycle to discover and photograph the locations, and there were analyses of some claims made in the text such as "Perfect in everyday life. A Dominator inspires with a powerful boost" and "Jump into the terrain. You do not have to be a champion to enjoy the fun".

It was at around this time that I discovered the deeds for the house, buried amongst tax and insurance documents. The deeds extended back to the building of the house in 1875, and they displayed the name of the architect and builder. On scanning the sheets of well-handled and dog-eared papers, the name Brenchley caught my eye. In 1956 the house had been bought and occupied by Mr. & Mrs. C. R. Brenchley and their family.

I was again left alone in the flat. I felt that I was seeing the space now as Brenchley intended: empty white rooms, flooded by early Autumn light. My gaze was drawn not into the space but towards the edges, where the planes of the walls, floors and ceilings met, to the skirting boards. The space had shed a layer of detritus that disguised its true form and nature. The furniture had been used to cover the traces of Brenchley's interventions, and I hadn't appreciated, until the spaces were clear, the full extent of them.

With the shelves empty and furniture removed and the "set" of Brenchley's life struck, I used a stepladder to examine the higher areas of the rooms. I discovered that some of the ceilings were false; several could be lowered on hidden pulleys to reveal a second skin of miniature landscape. The whole space read as a kind of theatrical set.

On looking again into one of the wall cavities using a torch, I found it continued, both up through the floor and wall of the flat above, and down through to the flat beneath. I used a small mirror to look up, where I could just see faint chinks of light between the roof tiles; turning on the torch illuminated the solid geometry of the rafters. Looking down with the mirror, I could see that the shaft did not end with the foundations of the building but continued down what I estimated to be several metres into the ground below.

Imagining the extent of the void below the building sent a slight chill down my spine. I imagined the tiny spinning knot of elastic as a creature of light, entering the darkness, momentarily touching, and darting back to the attic through the walls of the house, joining these two worlds. I thought of butterflies trapped in cellars and of legends of secret and long-forgotten tunnels connecting ancient cathedrals and castles with distant forests. I felt a "root" system extending below the building. The small pulley-driven elastic belt moved up and down, returning repeatedly

out of the gloom, carrying minute fragments of dust, and bringing with it faint odours from these opposed voids.

The device was a kinetic reminder of the essential verticality of the house, linking the dual vertical poles of the attic (light) with the cellar (dark). Fusing the confused murmurings of the below-ground with the pure, rarefied sounds of the attic. The insect-like flitting elastic belt granted the vertically opposed poles a dialogue of touch.

After the discovery of this shaft, I became concerned for the integrity of the entire house and arranged for a structural engineer to visit. Using a hand-held Ground Penetrating Radar device, the engineer revealed dozens of vertical narrow shafts extending from Brenchley's flat and connecting with the utilities below ground — gas, electricity, and data. It was as if simply knowing that these were in the space below and above was not enough, and somehow, through the machines, Brenchley needed to touch them.

Similarly, vertically, almost indiscernible holes in the ceiling allowed light and particle-like devices to travel upwards, some turning laterally to touch neighbouring rooftops, only to return with traces of dust and moss, which collected in tiny heaps below the pulleys.

It was after the discovery of the shafts, some of which hit the water table, that the entire building was condemned as structurally unsafe, and I was forced to leave. I learnt later that when the house was demolished.

Section 3.11. End



Fig 84

I learnt that no trace of Brenchley or his motorcycle was ever found, he had disappeared entirely. The only traces of him were the now archived papers, my notes and the few recordings made on my phone before I lost it. All traces of him had been deleted from the university website.

I searched the internet for signs of him. A faint possible whisper of Brenchley appeared in local a news story about a man in rural North Wales who had invented an optical headset device that combined metal detecting with bird watching by allowing the user to both look up and down at the same time, while walking. Like a chicken with independent eyes – one looking for food, the other looking up for predators. The man was apparently driven by a personal compulsion to unite the bird watching and metal detecting communities in a single body. Neighbours complained to the police about a man wearing “extra eyes” and about noises coming from his house at night. When the police eventually broke into the inventor’s house, they found him gone, and a large underground space containing unidentified machinery. This was the last suggestion of Brenchley I ever found.

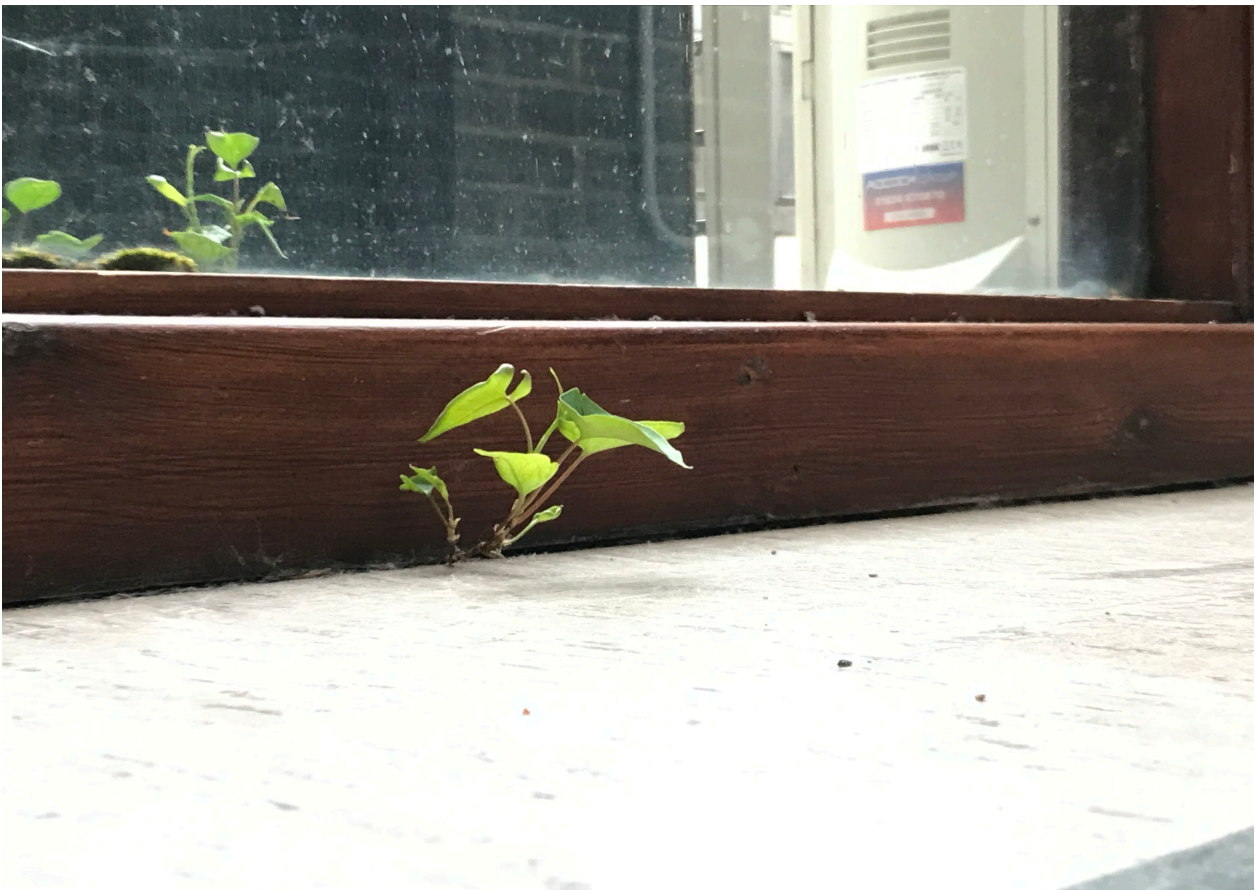


Fig 85

Brenchley's work came from a point where a decision had been made and a single action taken to stay in one place and be still, to escape the “neurosis of movement” To allow a new inner movement and exchange between internal and external spaces.

His interventions were all analogue; they reached into a physical world. A physical world of dust, grit and residual marks, scratches, stains, paint chips and dents that, in their meaning and depth offered a connection and record of life that challenged the digital.

One afternoon after the flat had been cleared, I rested my now dead replacement phone on the surface of an old table. My eyes were drawn to the many scratches and patina of the wood rather than the screen. I realised that, with each discovery in the space, I was using my mobile phone less and less until finally I stopped using it completely. The phone, as way of contacting the outside, had become unimportant. I was acutely aware that every conversation and movement had left a digital trace, just as the table bore traces of its own narrative of use- a narrative that I could feel.

What Brenchley offered was an effective communication with an inner space where one could not be tracked or monitored. Undigitised, not reduced to data or subject to algorithm. While in his flat, I was real, my every action heroic, with immediate consequence, changing the relationship with where I was.

On leaving the building for the final time, I looked back from the road up to what had been Brenchley's front window, now covered like the doors and the rest of the windows, with a white metal security panel offering a "24-hour service". In the same moment I realized that I couldn't remember where I lived. Something caught my eye through the slats of a drain cover, and a bird rested for a moment on a gatepost carrying a length of shirring elastic in its beak.

END

Unfolding through dwelling,

Making Good, 10 years of investigation- the relationship with a building explored through habitation, DIY and art,

Learning to live with dust, lost in the centre, deep in the heart of the room.

“Meanwhile the house continued its own mysterious life and from time-to-time sent feelers out from its darker corners...” (Parnell 2019, n. p.)

Section 1. Finding and the story of the house

My residency in this house is coming to an end. The building has served as both domestic and studio space. Many of the various acts of our lives, played out in successive internal and external sets, are now lost to time. My children have grown up and left.



Fig 86



Fig 87

The point at which a relationship with a house begins is hard to pinpoint — an image, a description, an idea, a model, a glimpsed view through trees, or coming across it by chance, (like the best exhibitions or museums). For some reason we remember different houses. When they become home is harder to establish.

This house, in which I now live and work, came from a need for my family to grow up safely, and because 10 years ago, we could no longer afford to live in London.

The Silver Birch tree I planted as a 7 ft sapling 10 years ago is now taller than the house and can be seen from the back garden. The tree now links the front and back of the house as a growing memory of shade and susurrations. Its roots and branches reach over to touch the house both above and below the surface we live on — a connection of soil and sky.

In this time the house has become, not so much a safe place to dream from, but a place to dream into and share ideas, time, experience and feelings with. As Bachelard says, the house and the sense of home it provides, allows and protects dreaming.

"... I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace." (Bachelard 1994, p. 6)

Through ongoing DIY and art, the house feeds my innate need to investigate and understand more the spaces in which we spend our lives, and the constant multi-sensory dialogue at the centre of this relationship. As noted by David Adjaye, we are profoundly affected by the nature and fabric of the spaces we inhabit and experience: "Buildings are deeply emotive structures which form our psyche. People think they're just things they manoeuvre through, but the makeup of a person is influenced by the nature of spaces" (Adjaye in Dyckhoff 2003, n. p.).

As Juhani Pallasmaa suggests, the body remembers architecture: "The body knows and remembers. Architectural meaning derives from archaic responses and reactions remembered by the body and the senses" (Pallasmaa 1996, n. p.). For me, the house, as an extension of the body, also holds memory. Spaces and objects are active rather than passive containers and props. They sit in a constant state of exchange with us and each other. A deep and primal exchange felt through all our senses.

In my imagination, the house, built in 1910, sits poised in a particular moment in time. In a pause composed of the type of stillness only found on the brink of catastrophe, that was the first world war.

In its use of light, air, and space the architecture of the house is hopeful and optimistic – but at the same time fragile in the face of a future that would have been unimaginable in the minds of the architects, builders and original occupants.

All eclipsed by the first world war and lost in clay. An extraction of earth to build, rearrange and return to the ground.

As Allen Powers notes there was a sense of “emotional numbness” (Powers 2014, n. p.) in some of the architecture built after the First World War, which spoke of collective shock, and difficulty in processing the meaning of what had happened to the world and society.

Houses, like people, get held in a moment of time. An idea of themselves at a certain time, held in a loop that they never leave. There is a sense that this house is stuck in a moment in time— do we feel its broken dream? Have we, the occupants, absorbed and felt the same?

The hundred-year gaze of the house is strong and sombre and speaks of the optimism and the hope of that period. The house reaches out for a future that never happened. In its large windows there is a sense of walls of glass, a clear but brittle skin unprepared for the immanent shock wave

that would shatter the Edwardian world. The glass of the windows is the same haunted glass that has been looked through by successive occupants as a lens on the world for more than a hundred years. Wide, trusting, and innocent eyes, their openness perhaps echoing the faith that led thousands to die and led thousands of others to spiritualism in the aftermath.

There is a sense in the design and fabric that it was built for a world and society that never had the chance to grow – its seeds lost in the churned mud of Northern France. This house, like thousands of other Edwardian houses, politely queuing in tree-lined rows, still waiting for permission to enter the promised time, and be left to dream.

First Visit

Our quest to find somewhere quiet and safe with a large garden, possibly echoing my own early childhood, was propelled by our three-year old daughter being hit by a car shortly after moving out of London. 'Push yourself', my mother advised, so we found 9 Ethelbert Road in Faversham, Kent.

Some weeks before we viewed the house, I spent time in the evenings parked across the road. After our daughter had been knocked down, I was anxious to find somewhere safe. There was little traffic, save the occasional learner driver.

I remember the first viewing in detail. In May 2005 I went with my wife and our two small children. The house had been on the market for some time and, on entering, we realised why.

The owner opened the wide black painted front door which led to an overwhelmingly brown interior, with worn, deep red, patterned carpets, and a stuffed eagle that glowered at visitors from the large, dark entrance hall. Even the early summer sunlight seemed held at the threshold, snagged on the dust and the ancient textured anaglypta wallpaper, which covered the walls and ceilings.

Though gloomy, the hall still held a sense of entrance and of being greeted — although not entirely welcome. I felt that somehow, we had disturbed the house.

There is a degree of super-awareness in the first visit, the first contact, the first sight and the anticipation that I shared with my children. What I absorbed and felt in those first few minutes is still in me. An initial momentary compression of time that engages and intensifies the senses — smell, sound, sight, atmosphere — and embeds the memory of crossing a threshold. Often a deep memory of detail, light, smell, and surface. On entering a particular space, there is a sense in which we are momentarily folded into and felt by its enveloping skin.

We didn't feel particularly welcome, sensing perhaps that the owner didn't want to sell — which was later to be proved correct. It was almost as if the vendor had deliberately made the house unappealing.

I immediately felt for the house, not only emotion but a sense of responsibility. This house felt repressed, sombre and ponderous, with pockets of deep stillness — which we and our more light-footed children, had temporarily disturbed.

The house reminded me of the house in which I grew up — full of dark spaces and empty rooms that I was not allowed in; spaces I would visit to spend time in their stillness, without my mother knowing. As a child I was very aware of the empty rooms around me, particularly the 'best room'. and the atmosphere of waiting held in its fitted green carpet, for the parties which my mother prepared for, parties that never happened. The space in a continual state of preparedness — I felt the weight of her hope on me and would regularly check, patrolling the rooms looking for any signs of the expected activity and change.



Fig 88

In *Glass Choir* 2019 (<https://www.timmeacham.space/glass-choir>) my mother's hearing aid collection plays part of her glass collection. Hearing aids listen and 'sing' to each other through feedback and the resonance of the glasses. The glasses, having spent years unused in a display case, are liberated and activated through the addition of hearing aids. The individual 'songs'

continually change, as the aids find the resonance of each glass, and pause, only to begin the search again.

The glass choir formed itself unnoticed and quietly, through the very act of being left. There were no auditions, there isn't a conductor and there are no rehearsals. The glasses slept for decades behind glass and accepted the hearing aids as the house was cleared, waiting for the moment when they would find their voice. The glasses felt their own substance through the soft vibration and purring of the hearing aids. Like homunculi, the hearing aids found their nests curled up in the base of each glass, trembling like newly born things.

The essential vibration at the heart of everything entered the glasses and they resonated, breaking their static autonomy calling to each other through vibration and sound., allowing them to enter the continuum of soundscape and material flow.

2. House

9 Ethelbert Road is a four-bedroom semi-detached house built in 1910, at the end of the Edwardian period. It has a total internal area of approximately 129 square meters (1,389 square feet). The house is oriented North/South, the front facing North. The front points to the sea, and the back to the once agricultural land beyond the A2. It presents its imposing flank to the town.

The house is one of a cluster of homes of the same period built in the south corner of Faversham on former apple orchards. This explains the numerous ant colonies that are still present in the area, attracted by the apple trees that once grew there.

Kent is derived from the Celtic word '*cant*', the meaning of which is edge. In the 1900's the area where the houses now sit was the edge of the town, then bordered by hop gardens and fields.

The houses are typical of the period and the then growing new middle classes, with their demand for larger, aspirational, light and airy homes. In their positioning away from the centre, the houses represented a move away from the tightly packed housing of the preceding Victorian era, and its associations with grime and a lack of light. Similar housing had sprung up around Britain, in the leafy outskirts of many towns and cities, reaching for the countryside and the then new railway network.

Architecture is way of reading the values of a society and, in design, materials, proportions, and the core consideration of light, air and movement, the house is a product the 'Belle Époque' — a period of optimism and confidence felt across Europe before the final embracing of the modernism that was WW1. Subsequent modernist architecture, of the 1920s and 30s, sets houses from this pre-war period apart, both in their design and in their historical and social significance — they embody the Edwardian dream of an architecture for a new age, a last breath of hopeful air

dispersing the shadows and dust of the Victorian age, as a new middle class reached out of the cities.

Its design and construction are a product of the introduction of full-time architectural education, together with the rapid development of building technology at the start of the 20th century. Rooms for servants were no longer needed, so the cellars and second floors of Victorian houses were no longer included. Edwardian building plots were also often wider and longer, allowing more expansive entrance halls and space for larger gardens at the front and back.

The floors of the living spaces are tongue and groove pitch pine. The ceilings are lofty, most just under nine foot high. The roof is pitched with a skin of Spanish slates. The exterior walls are a combination of red and gault bricks, made from gault — Jurassic and Pleistocene clays from the local area, which were coloured with chalk. This use of local materials is an echo of the then active Arts and Crafts movement and gives a sense of buildings springing from the soil. The house, at least in part, is made from the place, forming a material relationship and connection with the site. In common with many houses of the period, the front aspect is built from a more expensive red brick, while the sides and rear are clad with a cheaper brick, to save money.

The large airy Edwardian hallway was designed to instil a sense of arrival and pause in visitors — the stairway to the left swept down from the ethereal and coloured light of the landing window; dog leg stairs hinted at space and loftiness beyond.



Fig 89

The nine-foot-high ceilings of the house give a sense of the walls being stretched above the seven-foot picture rail to create an additional level that is outside and other to the everyday use of the spaces. The linear picture rail adds a sense of horizontal strata on a vertical plane — (human) life continues on or in the lower strata levels of the skirting board and floor.

One is conscious of the extra space above head level, although out of physical reach — the eyes are continually drawn to the higher level of spiders, air convection, dreams and memory. On climbing a ladder, the air of this higher section feels rarefied and perhaps each of the high-ceilinged rooms should have a step ladder or some other means of gaining altitude, to push the available 'envelope' of habitable space and allow us to touch the ceilings.



Fig 90

Our House

My wife and I bought the house and moved in with our two children on her birthday on 28th June 2005. The previous owner moved round the corner, and it still feels like she is waiting to move back in. Local people still refer to the house as hers — 'What have they done to your house?', they'd ask. 'It's not my home, it's their home' (Marr and Morrissey 1986) Mrs. F would answer.

We learnt from her that the house had been exorcised after her son had a problem with drugs. When we moved in his old room was still covered, walls and ceilings, in violent and gory images from heavy metal and satanist magazines. On moving in, my first job was to remove them.

The world around has changed in the last 100 years, but the house has resisted, remaining a space of dreaming and longing, but not quite home. Most of my efforts to understand, connect and even

commune with the various spaces have failed, with the exception of one intervention that the house now considered as part of it.



Fig 91

The wall sits on what is probably my favourite part of the house — the border between front and back — a curved wall corner at the top of the stairs which guides the eyes and hands. Like my other works, the wall arrived as a guest but has stayed to become absorbed into the house. The residents of the house no longer see it and it has become part of the wall at the top of the stairs, now only noticed by visitors.

The shadows in the hallway occasionally still catch my eye, an internal geometry of dark and memories, cold even in summer. A deep, subterranean cold, a cold that relieves in summer but gnaws in winter, a reminder of the shallow foundations. Below the tongue and groove floorboards is a twelve-inch air gap before the compacted earth on which the house sits. The smell of the earth beneath occasionally seeps into rooms during very wet or dry, hot periods, and acts as a reminder of what we live on and what is still there.

The walls are cavity which, in 1910, was a recent development and unusual for the time. The cavity offers a secondary inner space of air circulation and insulation. It acts as a space of exchange between the inner and outer skins of the house, allowing the house to 'breathe' and aiding the passage of moisture through porous masonry and lime mortar.

Though unseen, the cavity is felt as part of the pathology of the building, a breathing companion to the occupants through a sharing of the same air. During periods of high winds, the cavity 'speaks'. Air, entering through ceramic air bricks at the base of the exterior walls, rushes through the inner space, brushing and disturbing, like a trapped creature hunting for a way out through cracks and gaps under skirting boards.

Under a government insulation grant we recently had the cavity pumped with recycled textile matter. This space of breath was filled and choked after 100 years. During storms the cavity 'spits' out bits of insulation into the attic, like a geyser relieving pressure as air rushes vertically along the full height of the house, to find release.



Fig 92

A continuous loop of elastic driven by a small electric motor runs within the central vertical wall void of the house. Running for the entire height (25-30ft) from the ground floor into the attic- its connecting knot occasionally illuminated in a single vertical beam of focused light – continually touching, disturbing, collecting, and redistributing dust and debris within the lathe and plaster cavity. Built within and activating cavities temporally exposed during DIY the piece explores the possibility of the Poche or “inhabited wall”. Voids within planes: walls, floors & ceilings which make

a proportion of buildings volume- often shown in architectural drawings as solid – are in fact hollow void spaces in which pipes and cables are often hidden. Suggesting inner flow, exchange, connection, and porosity: asking where are the borders within domestic architecture? In its gentle whispering sound from within walls, the piece becomes part of the soundscape of the house's inner, hidden space of drafts and the breath of the building.

Flows

Importantly, the house is intact and unaltered and in its original configuration. All the original windows, doors and walls are in place with one exception: the larder or pantry, taking the space below the stairs and once accessed from the kitchen, is now cut to provide a ground-floor WC. This cool, dry, and well-ventilated room is built into the East side – the dark, shady side. There are no fireplaces or hot flues in any of the adjoining walls, and the thick slate shelving is still there — maintaining its temperature — cold, even in the summer, waiting to receive, preserve and store cheeses and other perishables.



Fig 93

Its unaltered configuration means the original paths of human flow, interior and exterior, are uninterrupted, intact, and still used daily. These flows, i.e. the route from the front door through the hallway into the interior and up the stairs, is the same route that has been used continually for a century. We are simply the latest to move within the channels of flow. Interior thresholds at doorways bear witness to this uninterrupted flow in their worn surfaces and rounded edges. These paths of human movement are part of the building, recorded in its fabric and 'felt' as

undulations under foot, and wear to the staircase newel posts as our hands are guided up the wooden banister rail.

The river of time which runs through the house, follows the channels of movement that have been established for a hundred and ten years. The river became more viscous and has flowed at different speeds during our occupancy. When the children were young the river was wide, in flood, and it moved slowly. The water full of life and ideas, lapping at the banks as we experienced the space through different times.

The house is not a modernised old property. There's an honesty to the way the house is now, with no sense of shoe-horned modernity, producing jarring, cold and echoey spaces that deny the building's past.

Skin of aircraft, skin of house

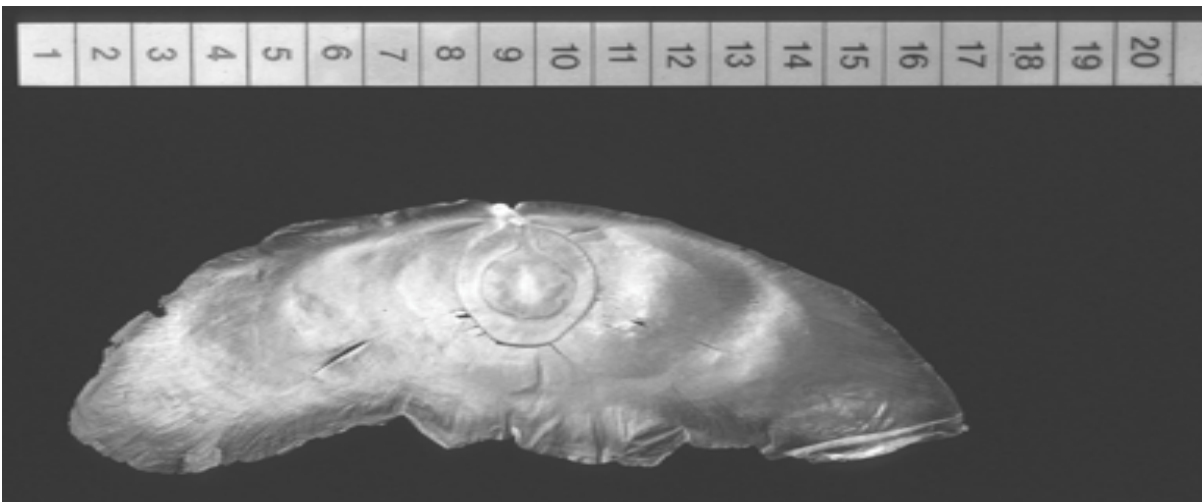


Fig 94

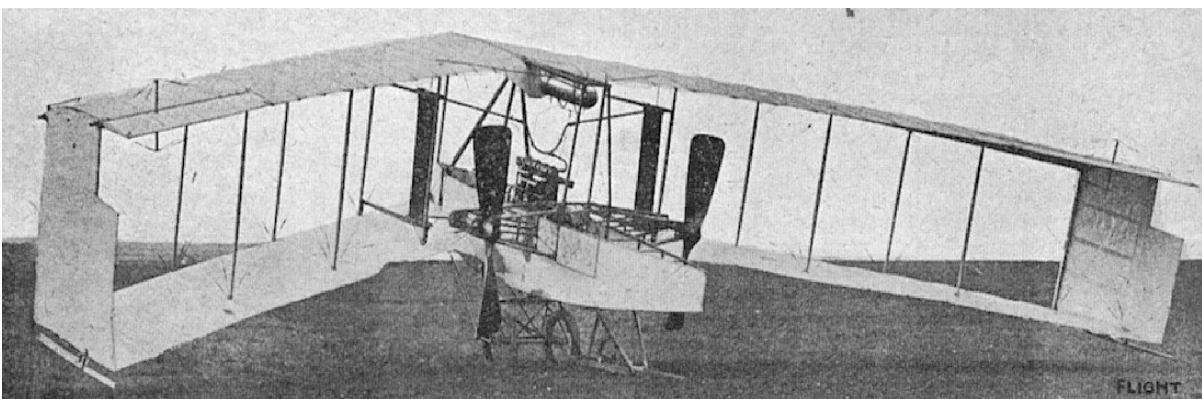


Fig 95



Fig 96

1910 was also the year that the aero engineer and philosopher J. W. Dunne first flew his tailless D5 biplane at Eastchurch, on the nearby isle of Sheppey. Inspired by the Zanonia tree seed, the tailless and inherently stable design of the D5 was dismissed by the military at the time, and development ended with WW1. Fifty years later, Dunne's visionary design ideas would go on to inspire a generation of jet planes, including the current B-2 Stealth bomber and Concorde, another arrow pointing to the future. The swept-back wings of the D5 backed away from the pilot's field of vision and, in Dunne's words:

"... the effect produced was that one was travelling through the void in a simple open canoe"
(Dunne 1927, n. p.)

The stability and effortless ability of the craft for level flight inspired Dunne's book 'An Experiment with Time'. He used the idea of variable planes or levels of flight as an analogy to challenge our reading and perception of time as linear. Dunne proposed that everything that had ever happened and would happen, already existed in higher planes or dimensions of time. The conscious mind, which Dunne termed 'observer 1', only reads time as sequential so as to make sense of it. Dunne used his theory to explain déjà vu — the experience of feeling one has been somewhere or experienced a moment before. He proposed that when we dream as 'observer 2', we access and travel in higher-dimensional and temporal realities.

"No, there was nothing unusual in any of these dreams as dreams. They were merely displaced in Time" (Dunne 1927, n. p.)

Children. Explorers, co-habitants and extensions of me

Children fill empty space with imagination, to help grow their developing neural. It is a part of the human, and particularly the dyslexic, compulsion (Burm, no date) to make sense of the world through building narratives to explain and fill gaps. Without empty spaces to fill, the development of child's capacity for imagination is hindered (Kodiak 2014).

My brothers and I would put on short plays for my parents. My main memory of them now is that they were performed in empty and transitional spaces, hallways and landings. The plays were mainly about waiting and nothing really happened in them. The audience made up of our mother and father and the cat, (perhaps being held against their wills), would politely clap at the end, as the players drifted off-stage, either into the downstairs cloakroom or out of the French window. The cast uncertain themselves, of how to end a play about waiting.

The Treatment



Fig 97

"Close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude" (Hemingway 2004, n. p.).

As a child, in a bid to span and connect the front and back of the house I grew up in, and to extend my garden world vertically, I invented 'the treatment'. The treatment involved throwing a Mars bar, still in its wrapper, in a graceful arc, over the roof of the house. The Mars bar was a treat that needed treating. My mother bought multi packs which, in my mind, were like strings of sausages.

The chosen bars would be launched repeatedly, from one side of the house to the other. My brothers, then very young, positioned themselves excitedly on the other side, waiting to see and

catch the bar — like children sent into the street when the chimney sweep visits, to watch the brush appear from the pot.

Only when satisfied that the bar had been fully treated, would my brothers and I regroup, usually on the receiving side, and ceremoniously unwrap the chocolate, inspect the damage, and then share and consume the mangled and shattered contents.

We hoped that, perhaps through some kind of sympathetic magic, we would absorb some of what the bar had felt and seen as it travelled across the roof tiles — like cannibals absorbing the strength and attributes of enemies through eating their flesh. We had extended our reach through airborne confectionary, as a dynamic alternative to dunking a biscuit in tea.

Of course, there were inevitably casualties of the treatment, and some bars never returned from their flight, perhaps snagged on the roof apex, or trapped in a gutter. Some returned to ground level months later, through downpipes or after a storm. Regular searches and patrols for lost bars around the perimeter of the house became one of my regular pastimes. The thrill and interest similar to the possibility of catching a glimpse of a fleeing mouse or lizard when lifting a stone.

I would go to sleep thinking of those lost bars somewhere overhead. The bleached and weathered wax paper wrappers and deformed contents of the 'returnees', spoke of time spent outdoors and exposure at altitude. I imagined them as chocolate test pilots, reported missing, only to mysteriously return months later, in an altered state like an alien abductee — there was no accounting for their time away.

I still think and dream of those trapped Mars bars which never returned and were perhaps carried off by a seagull or melted by the sun, fusing with the roof tiles forever. Were some discovered when the roof was replaced, or gutters cleaned years later? or might they have been recorded by a camera - drone? Like cosmic dust and micro meteorites, accumulating for decades on the roofs of old buildings and connecting us to the stars.

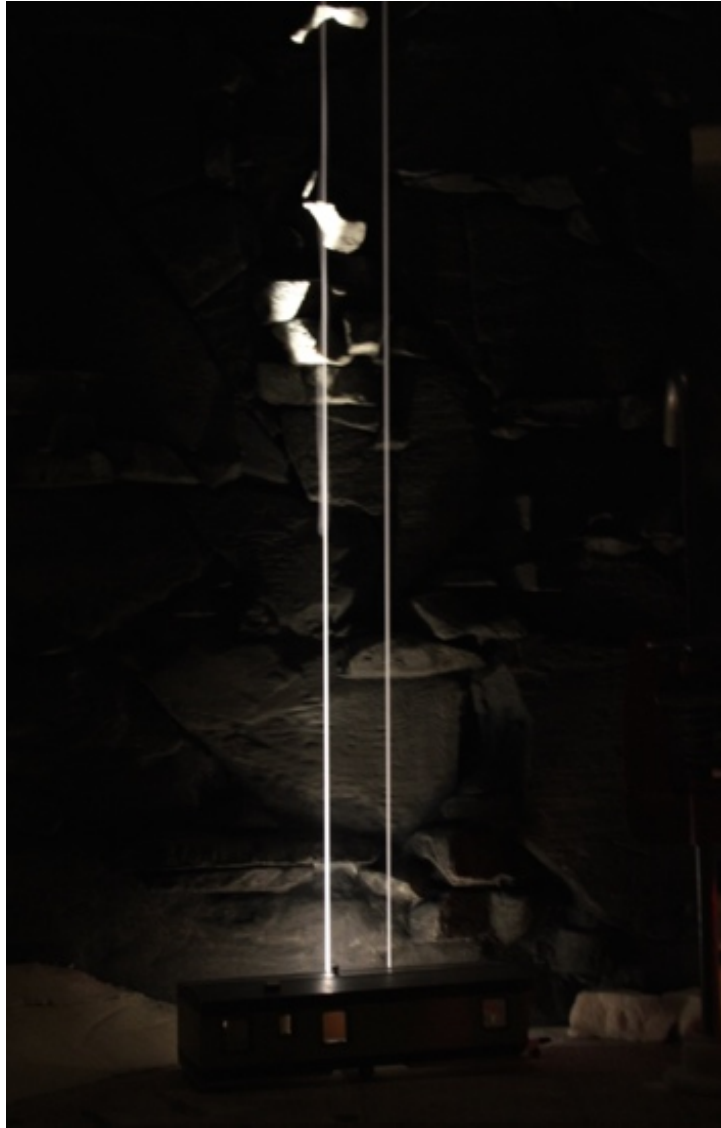


Fig 98

My own children helped me explore this house, adding their own narrative and imaginations to the structure. Often, they made sense of space in relation to their own physical size, finding hidden voids and gaps where adults couldn't fit, into which they were able to fold their small bodies.



Fig 99



Fig 100

Working with me on the floors and lifting boards which hadn't been touched for over a hundred years, became archaeological digs for my children. They were fascinated by the objects found in this normally overlooked and ignored space. They eagerly collected hair clips, cigarette cards and mouse bones and added their own 'time capsules' to these kingdoms of dust. Their offerings formed a new archaeology to be discovered in another hundred years, becoming part of the dream continuum of the house.

Hallways, passageways, stairs and landings are transitional spaces, not really appreciated by adults; it became theatrical sets for games, stories and even short films directed by my son. For *The Sound of the Whistle* — a story of a First World War soldier's last day — the alley to the side of the house became a trench, complete with sandbags and firing step. The last scene is the soldier (my son) giving the order to 'fix bayonets' and 'go over the top'. For some reason, possibly due to the school history curriculum, he chose to depict WW1.



Fig 101

During the last 10 years, my relationship with the house has changed through my children growing up and leaving. There is a cycle of the house that takes place as the occupants grow older, and the children leave — its skin absorbing their vitality, sounds and sights.

My children acted as sensory extensions of myself. As my senses dulled, so my childrens' developed, to allow a deeper sensing of space, time and place. "Olfactory identification performance seems to develop until the second decade of life, when it reaches the highest level, and it starts to deteriorate after the end of the fifth decade" (Oleszkiewicz et al 2016, n. p.). In the same way that pre-pubescent children can smell insects (particularly ants and formic acid), an ability which they start to lose at puberty, my children's sensory acuities grew.

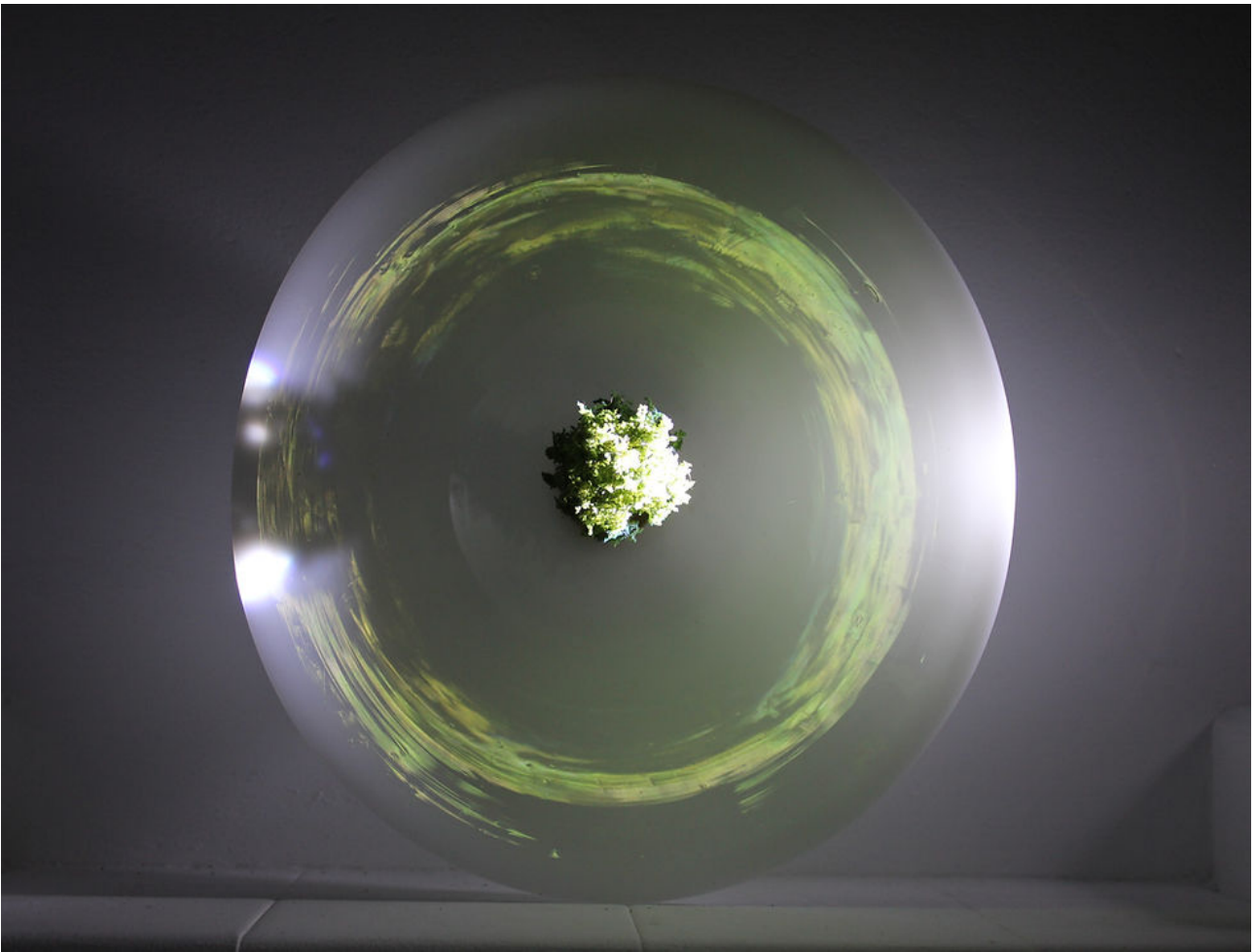


Fig 102 *Tree Dream* 2018

'Spin it again daddy' she said, 'I saw something'. As the glass disc rotated, for a moment a tree became visible like a flickering candle flame. 'I not sure what I'm looking at' I said reaching to touch. Then it was gone. 'Hard to believe it was ever here, but I saw it' she said. (Meacham 2018, n. p.).

With the aid of cat's whisker headphones, feelers, piezo fingers and various listening and measuring devices, we worked together to unfold and extend our own senses and bodies into the house. My children explained to me what the things that went beyond my senses, felt, sounded, and looked like.



Fig 103



Fig 104



Fig 105



Fig 106

The games and plays that the children continually created in the house came from an ongoing exchange and performative reaction to space - a way of understanding, making, and changing it.

In the first few years of their lives, children are deeply affected by the places and built spaces they experience. The space that has the most profound effect is the space of home - “in the stages of development, children are profoundly affected by their built environment. No more are these effects more strongly felt than in the home.” (Burkett no date, n. p.).

In the same way that young children see and hear things that adults no longer can, I felt that my children, with the acute senses of young animals, experienced and used space in a different way. They were more like a cat in their sensing and relationship with the house and their selection of spaces to simply spend time in.

'Why is there a chair on the landing?' my son regularly asked. 'No one ever sits in it.' 'Good question, I don't really know.' I would answer.

My children seemed somehow to detect these borders or domestic Lagrange points. Overlooked or ignored by adults my children used them to experience, navigate and use the physical space in a different way to adults, who seem to lose their 'Lagrange' radar.

“Place, space and objects are different for adults and children. A child’s imagination is tied to activity and physical entities, e.g., a box becomes a temporary adobe [sic] even a castle. A book of pictures can transfer to a land of fantasy. Children use their imagination to associate with the built environment and adults rely on their memories” (Das 2022, n. p.). Adult spaces and objects, furniture, particularly discarded objects have different meanings for children. Children’s imagination comes from action, play and “things”. Children use imagination and play to connect and give meaning to the built environment, while adults rely more on memory and function.

“Children... live and act in environments planned and monitored by adults. Adults, planners not excepted, describe and plan these environments through an adult and professional perspective using cognitive and physical classifications. However, children mostly describe the same environment in terms of activity and meaning” (Masiulonis 2017, n. p.). Often children perceive, interpret and use spaces designed by adults for adults (with a clear physical type and [adult] purpose), in entirely different ways to those intended by the (adult) architect. There is evidence that children describe and hinge meaning and memories of spaces around what they do, imagine, and feel in them.

In 1971, the architect Simon Nicholson, the son of painter Ben Nicholson and sculptor Barbara Hepworth, developed and published his Theory of Loose Parts How NOT to Cheat Children. In which he states: “In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it.” (Nicholson 1970 in Nicholson 1971, p. 30). Nicholson uses the term “variables” to describe Loose parts in relation to children’s play and the various elements they interact with and draw on in imaginative play and games. These variables include space, gravity, movement, sound, magnetism, fluids, smells, gases, and electricity (ibid.).

I observed that some of my children's imaginative play in relation to the spaces of the house were often linked to thresholds — i.e. a random gap becomes a portal into another world, the back door leads to a different world than the front and a cupboard a hidden cave.

Thresholds are particularly fascinating for children, and they often go through periods of being temporary doormen or gate keepers, intrigued by the meeting of inside and outside or one space and another. My own son went through a period of several weeks when about a year and a half old, obsessed by the cat flap fitted to the backdoor, until one day he eventually managed to exit the house via the cat flap and was shocked to tears on finding himself in the garden.

Thresholds are an important part of children's spatial mapping and also as portals to imagination and a common theme in children's literature, for example in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* or *Milo and the Phantom Tollbooth*. We live in a series of "in-betweens" or thresholds, for example, between being a child and an adult, between birth and death. The threshold is the place where these dichotomies meet.

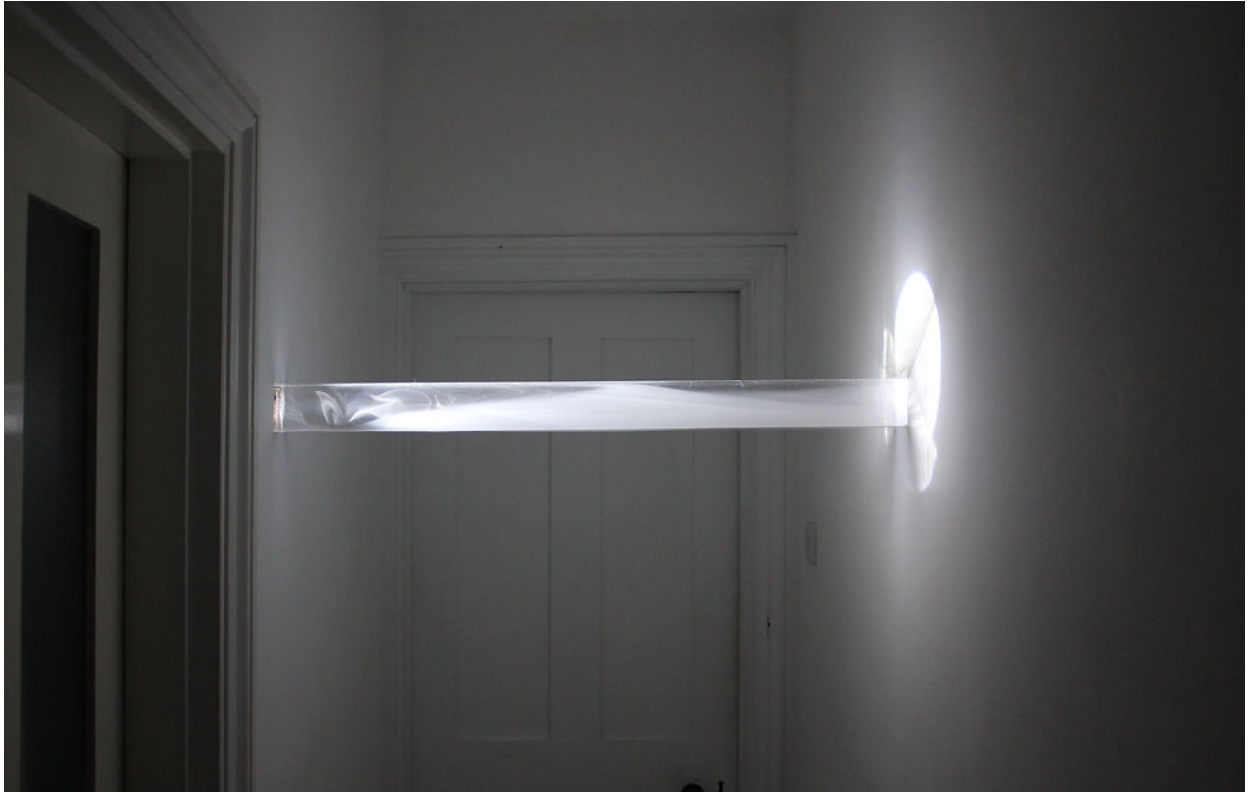


Fig 107 *More than This* 2018 Meacham. Vapour, light, square section plastic tubing.

In this piece I explored and created a new temporary threshold within the transitional space of the landing hallway in my house. The walls of the two adjoining rooms (bathroom & bedroom) were pierced to allow the insertion of a clear tube linking the two spaces as a kind of internal "Skyway". The bathroom was then filled with vapour which was drawn through the tube into the bedroom, allowing a temporary meeting and dialogue of vapour between the two normally unconnected spaces.



Fig 110

Practice (& DIY)

This house feeds my innate need to understand more of the spaces in which we spend most of our lives, through DIY and art. I regard DIY as a form of spatial practice, which informs and feeds my art practice. I consider my practice as like DIY in the sense that it has to be done. If I don't do it no one else will, it is a condition of living in the house.

I have a haptic connection to the house, fostered through the deeper understanding DIY provides and the sense of moving from macro to micro and from distance to surface. It is a series of problems that need to be solved. Like my practice it is never finished. DIY is an endless tussle with nature — the older the house, the more the forces of nature are felt and become part of the structure. DIY makes living in a space easier, through understanding. It allows the space, the rooms, to communicate.

The house/home is an existing subject to which I apply my art through a dialogue, an art strategy rather than architectural; in working with what is given, what is already there. My role is not to change or renew it but to draw attention to qualities and dimensions which exist already but go unnoticed. There are spaces I don't know about, or spend time in voids, hidden spaces, the possibility of other worlds, of other life.

DIY work is like archaeology, such as when I strip a room of wallpaper. All the physical dimensions of DIY — touch, smell, reach, balance, levelling, sound, measuring, borders/thresholds — are ways of reading, understanding, and entering a multi-sensory dialogue with physical space. This emanates from the general experience of everyday living in the space; the act of living which does not separate the senses. In the house's size, its scale, asperity, surface, tension, humidity, void,

depth, resistance; in its fabric that my hands, eyes and ears 'touch', there takes place a surface-to-surface, skin-to-skin, essentially haptic dialogue. Like the pages of a book, the surface of each page is felt through the fingertips and the eyes as the reader moves through the book. The lines of text on the page are like the lines we draw and trace as we move through space.

Emptying spaces, to facilitate DIY and in order to see them properly, frees up the space and allows it to be seen, felt and heard, as illustrated by the 'exfoliating' stripping of layers/skin, the keying of surfaces through sanding and the reskinning through filling and painting. The dust released through sanding redistributes the space, allowing it to travel (into space) and mingle with other dust (us). Abrading by sanding (of the skin or surface of space) also abrades the skin (fingers) of the sander's hands. A tactile skin. It is a skin-on-skin exchange.

The flow state attained in DIY through stripping, painting, filling, sanding and so forth, is extended into the artwork, itself a form of DIY, but working towards a yet undefined end point. The end is reached through process. Unlike DIY, the work, after being recorded, is dismantled and lost, as our domestic movements and interactions (often repeated) are lost to memory and the temporal current of domestic life. Throughout my practice there is repeated practical problem solving, sequential thinking and the use of materials and tools. The work feels as practical and necessary as putting up a shelf, in allowing me somehow to understand the space and to move on and allow the next piece to take form. The works feel not only like art, but also like practical solutions to meet a need. Is this the need of the space or of me? Or is it of the space *and* me? Perhaps there's a third entity: Me and space as one, through immersion.

Stripping the layers of wallpaper and exfoliating the walls gave a sense that the building was able to breath. Through the process, the fragile original plaster surface was revealed. Its pitted and irregular surface, some with original pencil notes, dates and calculations left by workmen, speaks of the history and accreted memories of each room, a palimpsest of time.

In one section of wall in a corner of a chimney breast, a fungus grew overnight and when I examined the wall the following morning, what resembled a small human ear had grown from the wall. A fungal spore, possibly breathed out by one of the men that built the house, had lain dormant in the plaster for a century, and was reactivated by the moisture from the paper stripping and exposure to air. The walls had ears.



Fig 111

I was advised to hack off the 'blown' plaster and 'board it out'. Instead, I decided to stabilise and preserve it. I developed a method which involved drilling dozens of small holes into the loose areas of plaster and then injecting diluted PVA with a syringe. As the PVA soaked in and dried, it pulled back and bonded the loose plaster – preserving the original wall surface.

The house has a sense of agency; it always asks what happens when we're not there. The building reasserts itself, marking space and time, and we are in constant dialogue with it. I work as visitor in a type of guest house for ideas.

As my work has developed it has extended my thoughts into the immediate space of home. It emanates from a feeling of the home and interiority. Not a retreat, but a metaphorical and physical reach into, across, under, and through the quotidian into an 'inner space'. An inner space in which the overlooked and banal material language of the everyday is unconsciously absorbed through the act of living through the senses of touch, sound, smell. A space that allows accreted, myriad associations, memories and objects to meet and fuse in a dream state resulting in a kind of time-sculpture, where temporal and spatial barriers and divides fall away. It is the very familiarity that allows me to go beyond their surface and to make an analysis of objects and space. Bachelard describes a similar state of analysis of the intimate spaces of our lives thus:

"I should like to give the name of topoanalysis to this auxiliary of psychoanalysis. Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (Bachelard 1994, p.8).

The topography and foundations of this inner space are perhaps formed through and built of early life experiences onto which subsequent experiences settle and find their place, like layers of sediment in a fossil seabed. Each layer of sediment contains key memories that allow a reading of events and evolution, sifted by the tide-like, liquid action of time, constantly graded and re-arranged. The bedrock of this inner space is carried with us always, defying chronological time.

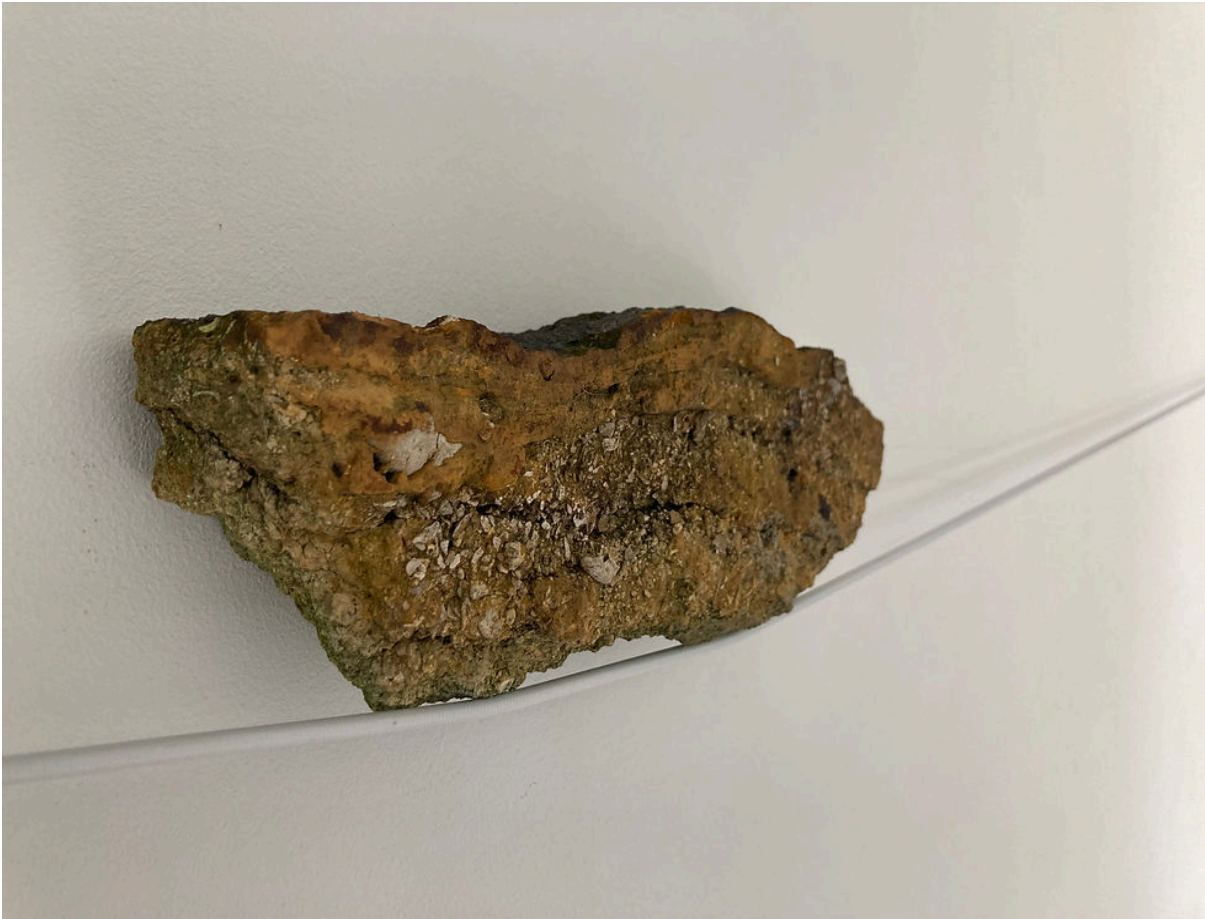


Fig 112. *Structural Survey 2021*

It was the extra time that it takes to charge an electric car that allowed me to find the 165-million-year-old Jurassic seabed behind a Holiday Inn on the M4 in Wiltshire. The seabed and its millions of fossil sea creatures was quarried and pulverised to form the foundations of the motorway, on which we ride and consume more fossil material. On returning home the collected fragment found its home in my home. Riding a net curtain high wire timeline on the upstairs hallway wall, leaving a new trace, itself an echo of one hundred and ten years of repeated human movement through the space.

Making good/connecting

With DIY, there is often a repeated cutting of the skin of the spaces, to reveal, fix, recover, and 'make good' an endless internal snagging list. My work extends the physical reach of windows, curtains, skirting boards.

Stripping the walls of paper and exfoliating them exposes pores of plaster, traces of fittings and shadows of history, revealed through the touch of light. The traces of gas light brackets and repeated craters where pictures had once hung, are revealed in a similar manner to which the liquid memory of the crown glass is projected through light.

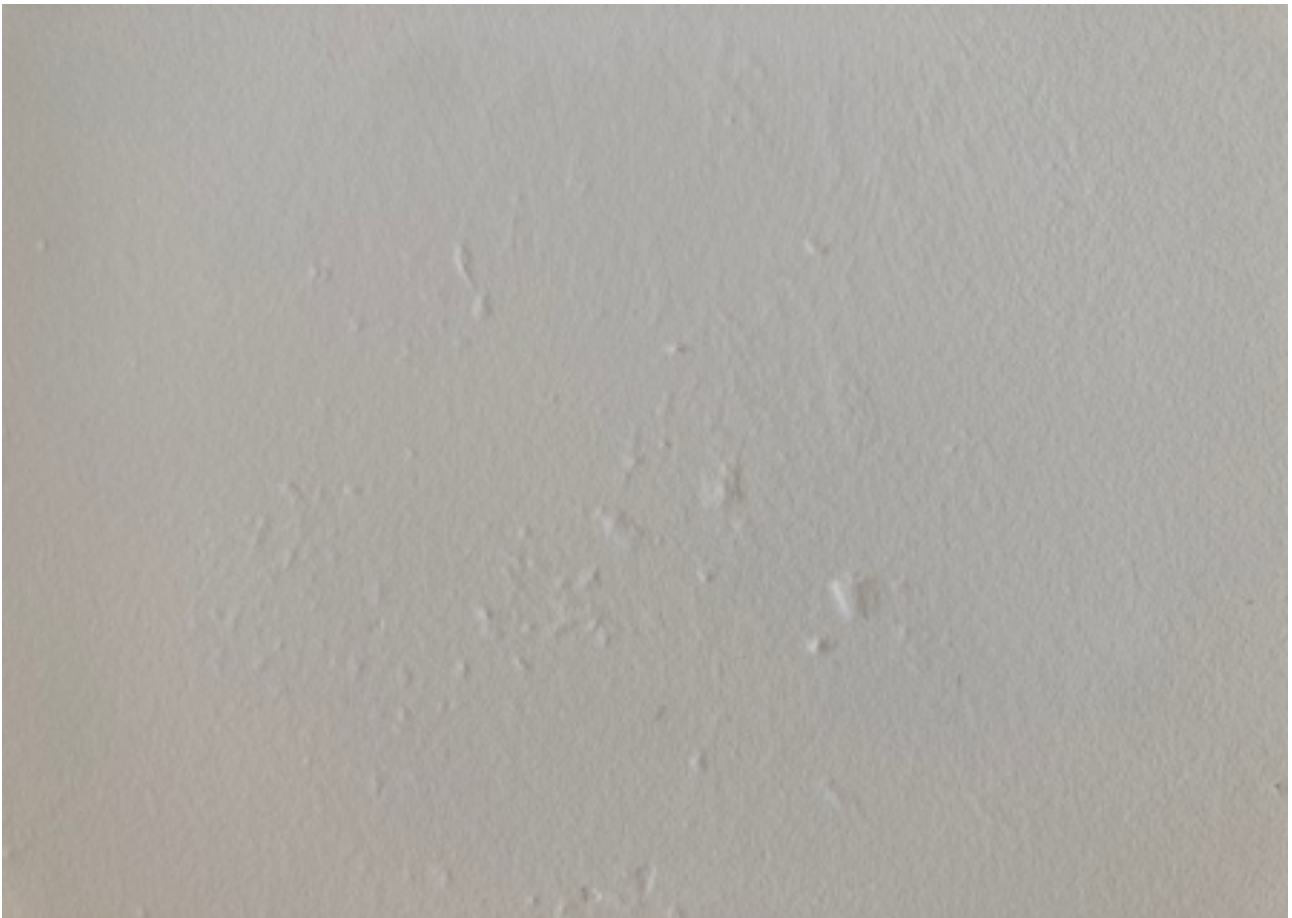


Fig 113

Through being left, random 'things' will form their own order, narrative, contrast, juxtaposition and pattern. The gathering of dust to create a uniform surface regardless of form or material- perhaps the first step in this new order through being left.

My role is as facilitator: To identify the apparently unconnected, disparate elements, and expedite and make easier their new relationships formed through union, touching, feeling, hearing.

I am a kind of liaison officer between these various pieces of unconnected matter which constitute my work. I find myself looking back on leaving, to check that the work hasn't changed or been added to when I turn my back, as if change is somehow expected.

Stillness

There is an essential and deep stillness to this house as if it were held in time. When we bought the house, it felt like it had been arrested in time, like a tomb or a museum. Are all houses tombs? The architecture sits paused, waiting for mobilisation, hovering over the flow of time, maintaining its position as an observer. Its fabric has aged and flexed, but its spirit and sense of longing and its gaze endure — its position in time is unchanged. The bucket that descended the well of 1910 society's unconscious, still contains liquid stillness; it is paused at the well lip, infusing the fabric of the house through gradual evaporation.

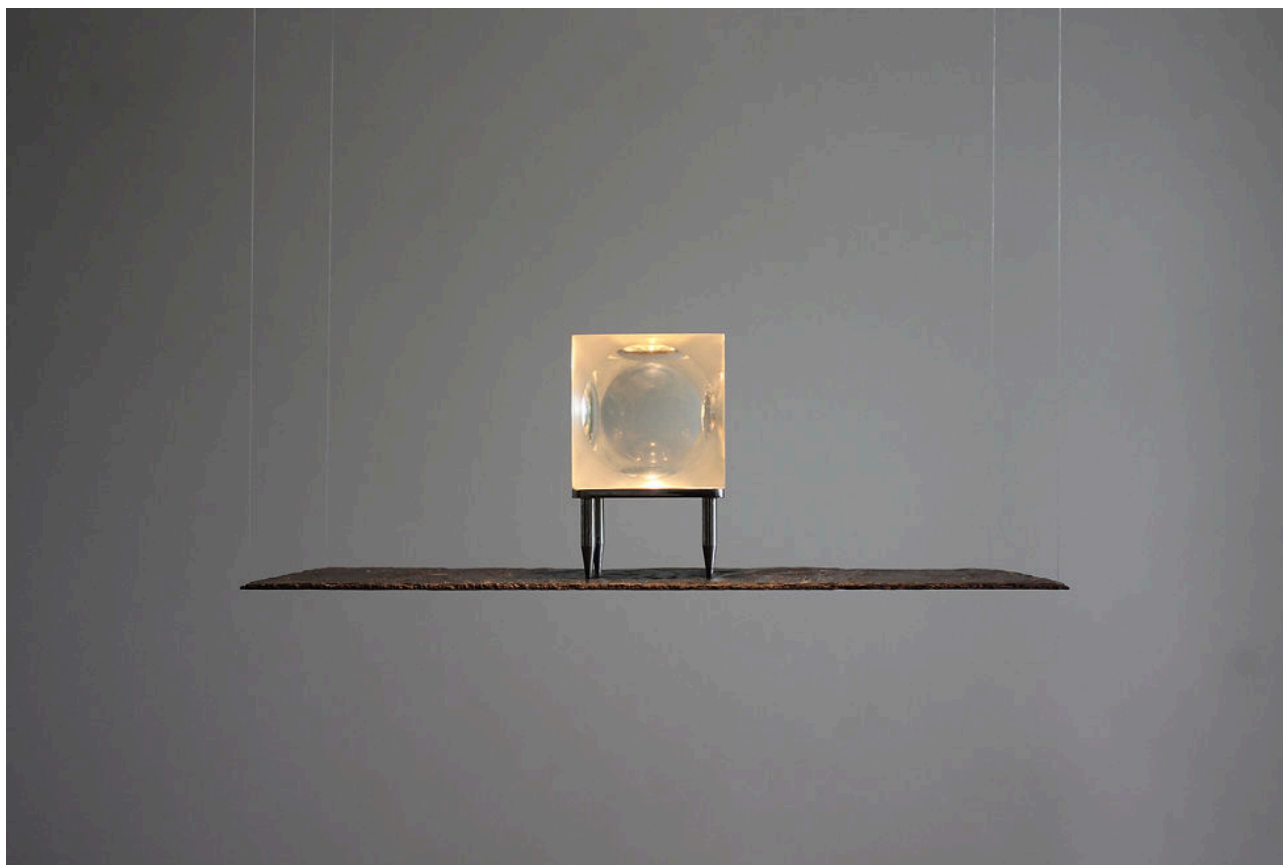


Fig 114 *Singing Slate* 2023. Meacham

Amongst the various pieces of my work which explore stillness is *Singing Slate* 2023. The piece was conceived as part of the narrative of Brenchley, exploring the possibility of stillness held at the centre of a sealed room. A roof slate (part of the house) on which a cuboid lens is paced suspended at eye level in the centre of a bare room (cleared for painting) and held in a beam of focused light. The piece echoes the sense of stillness of objects on a mantelpiece or altar.

Allowing this perceived stillness to hold me, renders the house a time craft, its spaces still waiting for a future that never happened. The spaces are temporarily activated by my work, which pulls the space into the present, suggesting a possible future in the new objects or “guests”.

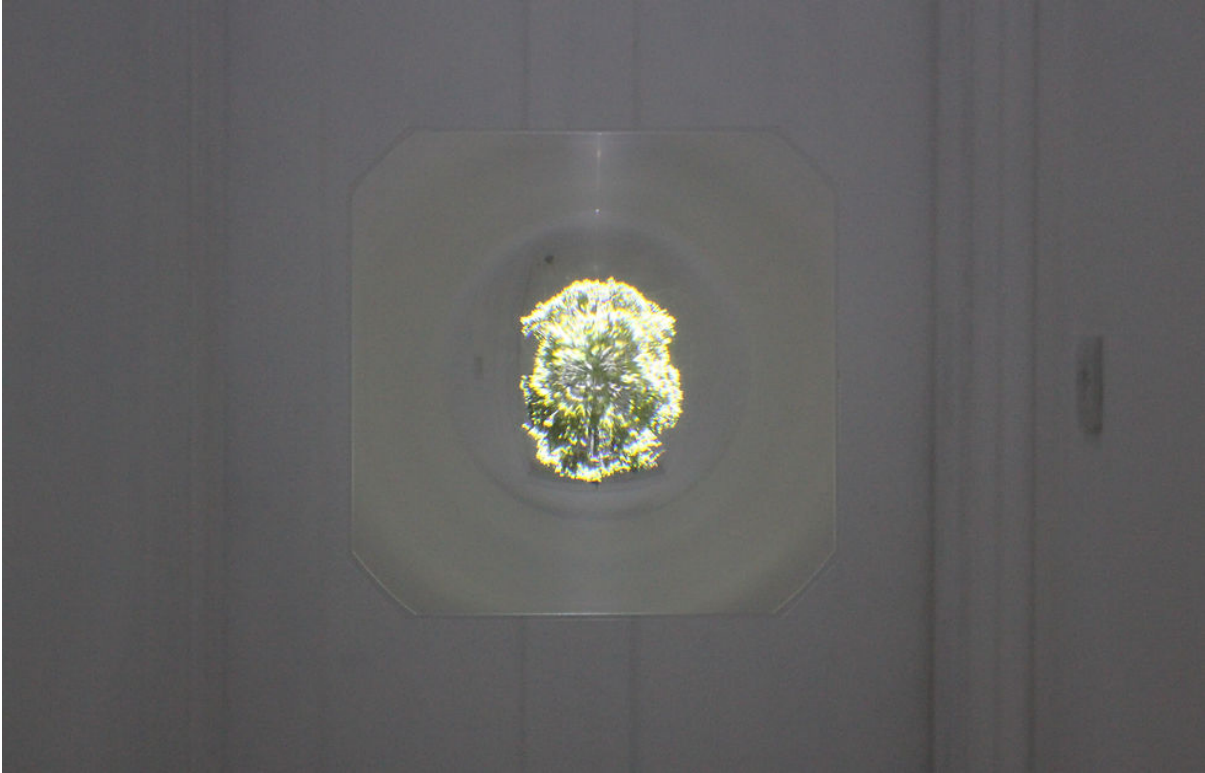


Fig 115. *Extremophile* 2017 Meacham

My work also adjusts established routes of internal flow in the house to create a new sense of stillness through offering a pause or still pool of focus. When the work is done, the essential stillness is left, that the work (and the house), sits in. The work temporarily passes through the space, like music which when gone leaves a stillness.

Centering: Lost in the centre, deep in the heart of the room



Fig 116

In *Blister Lens* 2019 (fig 116) a clear polythene blister filled with air collected from the space at night (while still & dreaming) is suspended by spring-tensioned threads leading from the four corners of the room, hovers, aligned with the skirting board, 20cm over the centre of the floor space. Its surface reflects its surroundings, and the convex form acts as both a magnifying and distorting lens. Its stillness at the centre of the room, intensified by the tension in the springs.

My work sometimes attempts to pinpoint, capture, or temporarily disturb the perceived stillness at the centre of spaces through a language of centering. This involves a geometry of imagined and physical lines of connection drawn from each of the extremities/corners of the space meeting in the centre to create a new focus for the rooms other than windows or fireplace.

The piece renders the room unusable for normal domestic life, instead the space is allowed to become about itself, with its own architecture of trapped air at the centre. The surfaces and features brought together in a dialogue of distorted reflection through the pressure of its own air.

Marking the centre of the space, the blister allows connection and exchange becoming the new focus of the room bringing its various aspects together; walls, windows, skirting boards, fireplace all converge to a single point of trapped air and time. The relationship with the skirting boards allows a connection of the edges and corners to the centre, through the touch of threads.



Fig 117. *Centre Piece* 2020



Fig 118. *Playing to the Edge* 2019.

Made in collaboration with Celeste Thesiger-Meacham. Small electric motors attached to the extremities of the space, drive elastic loops to pulleys held in the palm of the performer. The performer moves to maintain tension in the belts, offering and feeling temporary connection with the surrounding space. Periodically the belts "sing" as they find the resonance of the space through touch and vibration. Made with shirring elastic and electric motors.

Lagrange points

The idea of centering has been extended in the plotting of imagined and proposed internal Lagrange points. Part of my DIY/art practice is the understanding and defining of thresholds and borders of domestic space. For example, when considering the border between the front and the back of the house, I ask 'where does one end and the other begin?' I consider this a form of domestic dowsing, or divination, undertaken so as to locate a kind of internal or domestic Lagrange point.

Lagrange points are those interior points where the gravitational pulls of two spaces are equal and cancel each other out. In 'outer' space, these points also skew time. Objects trapped in them, such as asteroids, have been gravitationally trapped for billions of years. These points are used as sites

for space stations, and it has been speculated that thoughts could also be held eternally by Lagrange points. Are ideas and moments held at these points forever? Is the pull of these points sometimes felt on passing through? on leaving a room and entering a hallway, what is felt of the people who've passed through for a century?

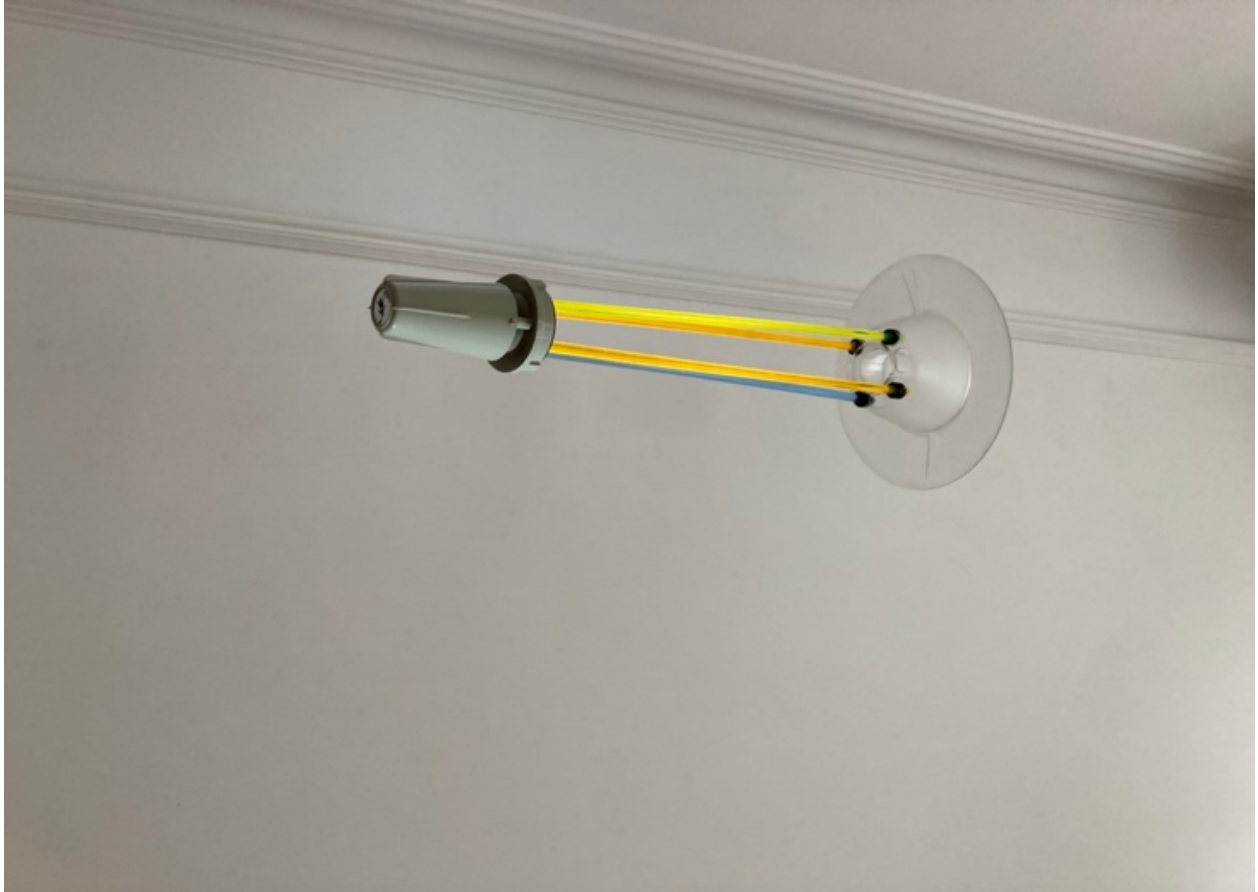


Fig 119. *Lagrange Craft* 2023 Meacham

Domestic Lagrange points tend to be in transitional spaces — landings, staircases, or corridors. The staircases, corridors, and landings are there to facilitate and allow passing rather than occupation/living. These spaces of passing are outside or 'other' to the time of lived-in spaces. They somehow hold and arrest time, and there is a sense that they were always in the same time.



Fig 120. *Internal Lagrange point* 2021 Meacham

The passage of natural light in these spaces means more, as it reveals that time is actually flowing and measured, through the movement of projected light and shadow. These spaces gather and hold dust in a particular way, as a record of movement through, rather than presence within. Continual through-movement pushes dust and fluff to the edges and corners, rather than to the centre as in a 'living' space.

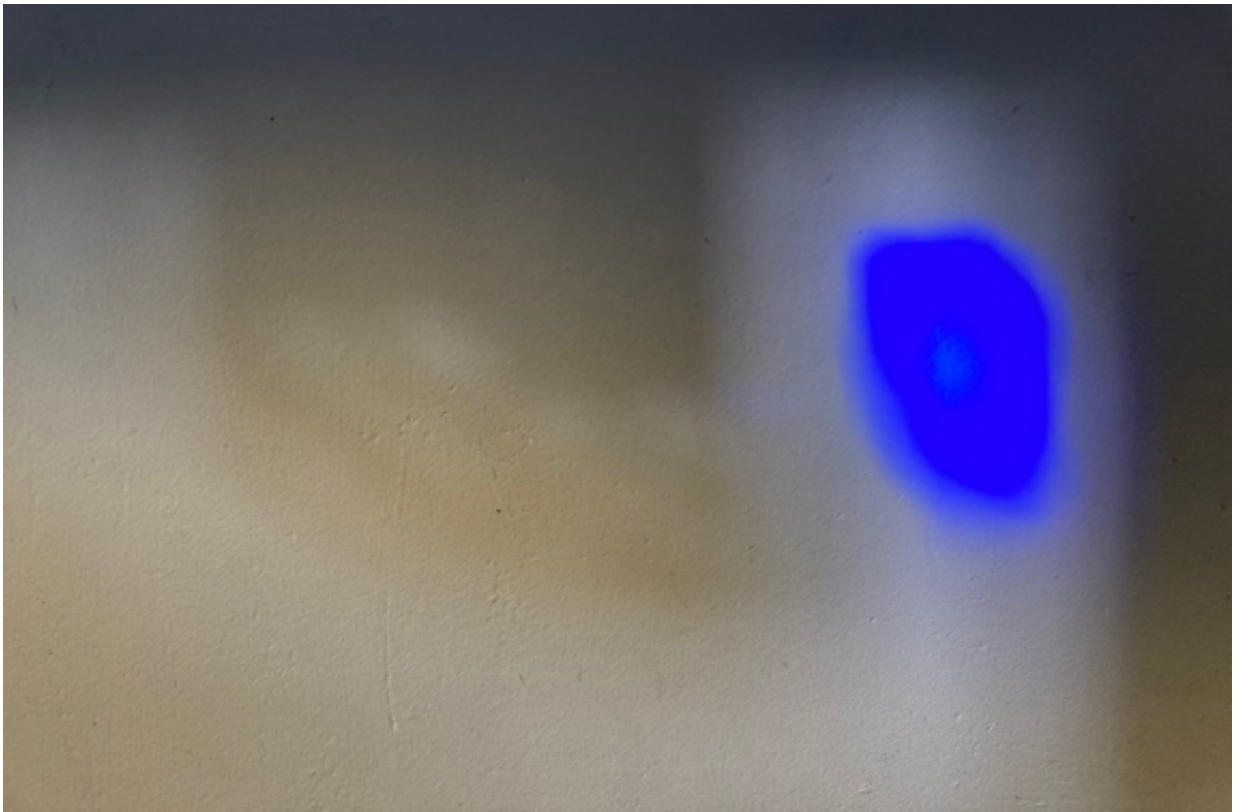


Fig 121

The following piece of writing came from asking myself and my children, where in the house a visitor from another dimension would choose to land. I regard my work as a series of visitors. The question put me in mind of the Dennis Potter play *Brimstone and Treacle*, written and paid for by the BBC in 1976, the play was “pulled” shortly before broadcast and not shown until 1987. In writing the play he asked himself: if Satan came to earth where would he choose? Potter decided on the (now) London suburb of Surbiton (herefordmsv 2013).

Set the controls for the heart of the House.

'If you were they, where would you choose?' he asked. I hadn't thought of this, but it made sense now, as so much time had been wasted looking and waiting in the wrong places. The cameras hadn't worked for whatever reason, and I had many days of recording nothing. 'Where do you spend the least time — where is time (and space) left least occupied and disturbed?' he asked. 'The hallway?' 'No, I don't think so, the hallway sees a lot of transitional exchange movement and materials coming and going.' 'The stairs? Perhaps. 'Of course, the landing!' 'Yes,' he replied, 'if you wanted to land here, you'd choose the landing and there are even landing lights to guide you in.'

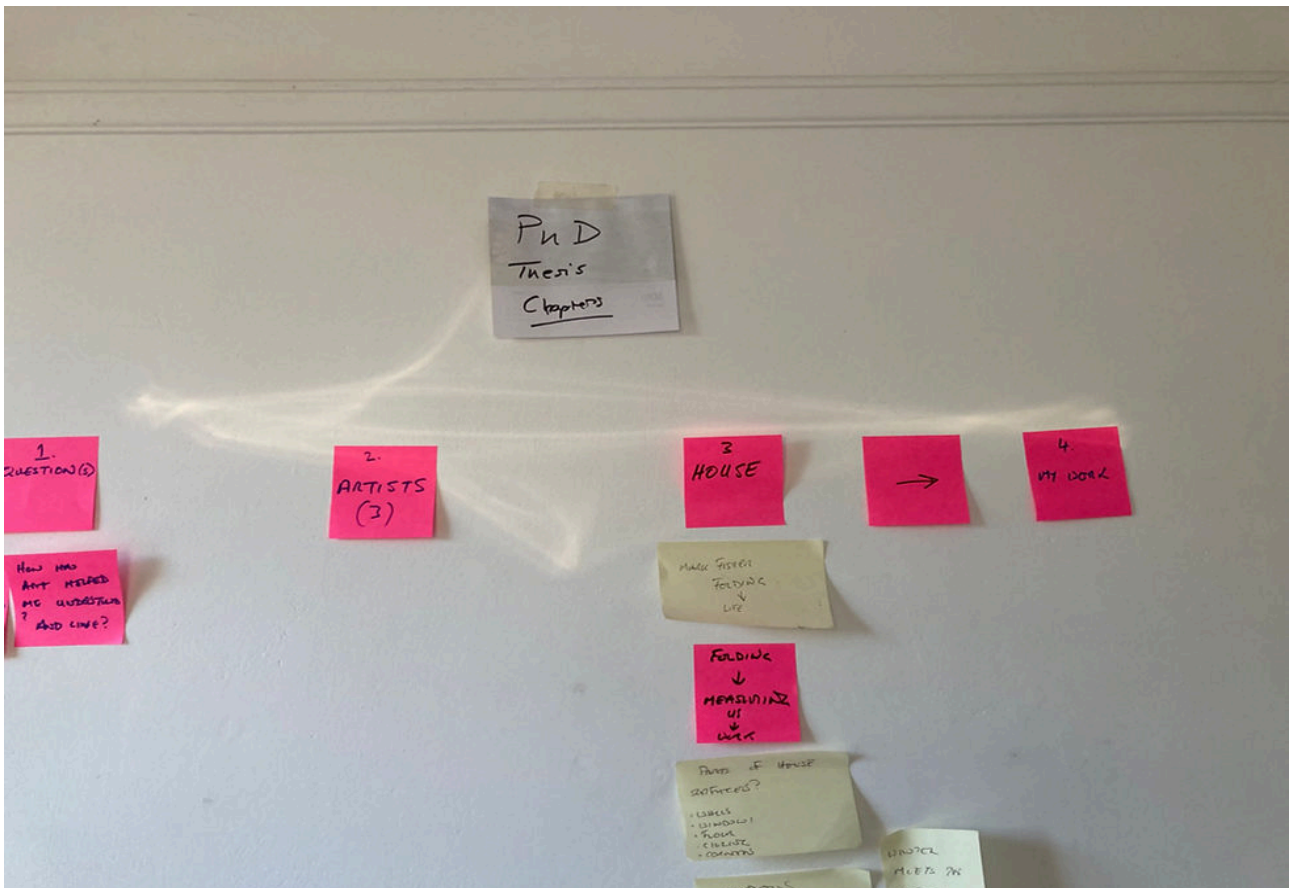


Fig 122. BOH (Back of House)

Threshold is a piece of writing to accompany an artwork which imagines an online (Teams) exchange about the possibility of objects materialising in Lagrange points sited in domestic thresholds <https://www.timmeacham.space/shark>

'Front and back should be clearly separated at all times, and not allowed to merge,' was the message of the online Teams' training provided by the local authority. 'What about the stairs?' a woman dressed as a druid repeatedly asked. 'I'll deal with the stairs in the chat after the session,' the facilitator answered. 'Are there any other questions?'

In the silence that followed I decided to speak. 'I've found something in between' I said, when eventually my raised hand was noticed. 'It seems to be some kind of craft made from parts of the house.' I paused to scan the tessellated grid of faces on my screen, all blank apart from the druid who nodded and smiled enthusiastically. I continued with a sense of urgency, as if time was running out. 'It has grown from the threshold and holds thoughts forever. I feel there is no time there and the Hoover doesn't work.' There was further silence, and the connection was lost.

The house as 'matter generator'. Material language of the house - learning to live with Dust

Dust is the beginning (and end) of everything. Our existence is measured through dust. The dust released from the Big Bang formed our universe, and the still active signals from the event are

measurements of dust. Dust is generally perceived as invasive, insidious, dirty, associated with death and something to be rid of. It is a relentless force, a silent, ever-accumulating barrier that obscures, muffles, veils, and prevents us from seeing the world clearly. In its grey, matt, light absorbing surface it “takes the edge of things” preventing shine, lustre, and crispness.

If thick enough, it can also blunt and absorb sound- Dust collecting on the stylus of a record player from the surface of a record will eventually stop the needle releasing sound. The very act of playing a record generates minute quantities of vinyl dust with each play.

“Dust obscures the neat and sharp line that separates self from world, house from universe, old from new.” (Nassar no date)

In a similar way to the 'soft machine' that is our body, the house generates and releases matter into the world, like skin or dust, moisture, sperm or mucus, faeces, and urine. This essential shedding is what simultaneously binds and repels, through a constant cleaning of the excretions which leave the body/house, through the elements — air and liquid through pipes which, at the same time, connect both the house, and the body to the world. In its quiet and relentless covering and surfacing dust connects us elementally to space and objects: *“Dust quietly exposes and brings into presence space and its elements: air, earth and water.”* (Nassar no date).

This elemental exchange of matter and material simultaneously connects and separates. It connects us bodily to places, architecture and to each other.

We shed as many as 70 million microorganisms per hour.... making our home dust as diverse as a jungle....as our leftovers attach to other life and non-life forms (BBC 2017)

At the same time, dust optically and physically obscures, dust as a surface skin that separates us from the world.

As well as obscure and separate, dust connects and reveals. Dust particles in a shaft of sunlight give light substance and reveal inner, normally unnoticed worlds of constant movement, change and the epic struggle between gravity and air.



Fig 123

These moments draw us into contemplative states and a microscopic world as Bachelard comments: *"But it is when we come to fine, light dust stirring and shimmering in a ray of sunlight that we really grasp the master intuition of naïve atomism. This is a spectacle we often contemplate in our reveries. It is capable of liberating our thoughts from the everyday laws. Reflections born of this spectacle immediately have a speculative tone. The speck of dust, in particular, departs from the general law of gravity... it follows its fancy"* (Bachelard 2019, n. p.). Our relationship with dust is embedded in our evolutionary journey from sea to land. The reflex action of blinking is shared by all limbed land-based vertebrates, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Blinking not only lubricates the eyes, it also wipes dust and other irritants from the surface.

The accommodation of dust is a condition for us and other animals, of living on land. Research on the eyes of fossil lungfish and mudskippers, the earliest limbed land-dwelling vertebrates has revealed that these creatures had evolved the ability to blink. "Osteological correlates of eye retraction are present in the earliest limbed vertebrates, suggesting blinking capability. In both mudskippers and tetrapods, therefore, the origin of this multifunctional innovation is likely explained by selection for increasingly terrestrial lifestyles" (Aiello et al. 2023, n. p.).

Dustsceawung (contemplation of dust)

One of my earliest memories is watching dust motes moving in shafts of sunlight with my father. The contemplation of dust, vapour and smoke allows reflection on the infinite. The infinitely small

in the size of dust particles, while at the same time the infinitely large in the endless invisible, ever-shifting universe that dust occupies, only made visible through light (Bachelard 2019)

Contemplating dust has been part of me for as long as I can remember. As a child, I haunted spaces of my house, in the quiescence and the elastic time that children inhabit. I spent hours being still in dusty corners, attics, cellars and corridors, absorbing the atmosphere, light and surface; absorbing time; examining, feeling, touching, listening, collecting and making.

I now understand that it was and still is, an attempt to reach the essential movement or vibration found at the heart of stillness, to achieve an '*immobile intensity*' as described by Deleuze. A condition of such internal contemplation and movement of thought while stationary listening to music or reading a book, that there is no need to physically move.

"I feel no need to move. All the intensities that I have are immobile intensities. Intensities distribute themselves in space or in other systems that aren't necessarily in exterior spaces. I can assure you that when I read a book that I admire, that I find beautiful, or when I hear music that I consider beautiful, I really get the feeling of passing into such states... Never could traveling inspire such emotions. So, why would I go seek emotions that don't suit me very well, since I have more beautiful ones for myself in immobile systems, like music, like philosophy? There is a geo-music, a geo-philosophy, I mean, they are profound countries, and these are more my countries, yes?" (Deleuze 1989, n. p.).

In relation to my work, I feel very occasionally that in bringing together and combining, particular normally unassociated material forms in particular contexts (spaces) I touch briefly on such immobile intensities- the new spatial focus created by the piece generates a stillness that almost slows down time.

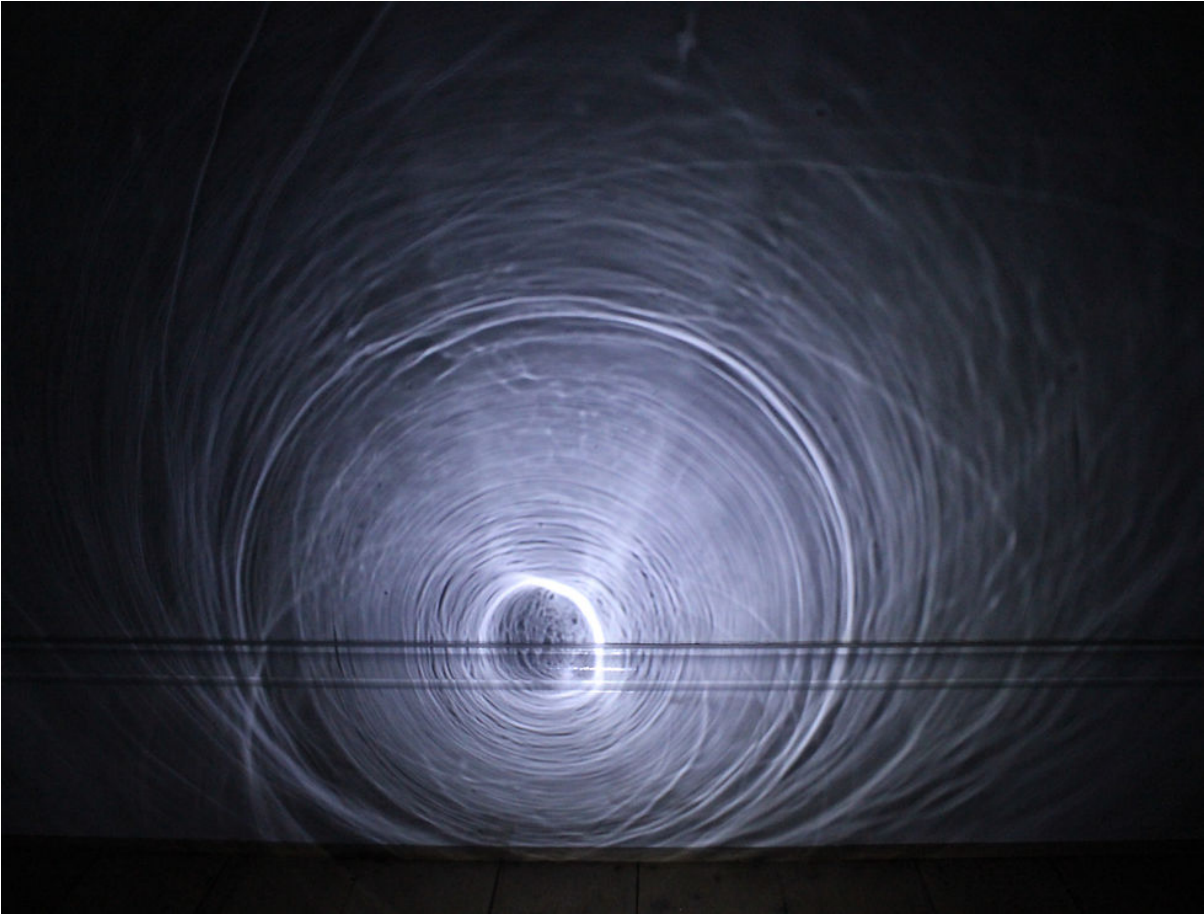


Fig 124.

Paradoxically it is often movement or movement “on” me/my surface ie showering, swimming, that allows ideas to come. Making, walking, moving allow inner flows of thought that are somehow outside the normal flow of time. If not captured in the moment, such thoughts and ideas are instantly caught in the present they are lost.

The expelling or flow of liquid — urine, tears, showering, — allow me to think and feel clearly. In this respect thoughts and ideas generated through this flow exchange have no time, they are outside time. Time is not important upon them and, like the snagged moments of their forming, once realised, are lost, and dissolved into the river.

The house also releases sounds and smells (heated soot on a summer morning), often at night or when rooms are empty. This generates an exchange between inner and outer, micro, and macro space, reaching in and out simultaneously.

Through my practice I have developed a material language that communes with the house through these flows. A language of exchange and reuse of matter; air, dust, and light together with a language of architecture and architectural features, windows, skirting board. A language that speaks directly to the house through its own material fabric and by-products. A language that combines form/morphology, material/substance, and context.



Fig 125. *Duster* 2016 <https://www.timmeacham.space/duster>

In the centre of a bay window a fine cascade of dust occasionally falls from the ceiling apparently linked to the passing of a distant train. Dust was collected from the room and placed in a tea strainer fitted with a small vibrating electric motor. The motor is triggered by a sound activated switch linked to a parabolic microphone placed outside the house directed at the nearby railway track. Tuned to the deepest rumble of the passing trains the sound causes a small amount of dust to be released through the tea strainer. Each cascade different in form, moved by internal convection. The piece ran for days unnoticed by the occupants of the house, silently releasing and redistributing their own dust to form tiny cones on the floor their dispersal patterns tracing the air movements. A material and sonic conversation between interior and exterior space, the passing of a distant heavy machine causing a gentle dust fall, unnoticed by both.

The bay window is considered a covered balcony, projecting from the face of the building, granting extended views on 3 planes. This architectural “reaching” of the house into the world outside beyond the glass is referenced in the dialogue granted through an exterior phenomena/cause of sound triggering an internal unnoticed (silent)/effect. The house speaks to the outside through the glass in its own material language by the release of some of it is fabric matter in the form of dust.



Fig 126. A similar sound induced dust releasing process was used for *"It was dust."* *Localism and Legacy*, 2016

This was a commissioned sound work about the town of Faversham during WW1, examining the effect of the conflict on the everyday life. I focused on a series of huge explosions, which occurred on 2nd April 1916 at a munitions factory at Uplees on the outskirts of Faversham. I was interested in the idea that the landscape of Uplees somehow still retained trauma from the event, and the possibility of "playing" the remains to release this sonic memory as part of the continual soundscape of the site. This acoustic memory allowing one to "hear the past" in the present, through the sounds of surviving material and artefacts. The idea was to attempt to recreate the sound of the 1916 explosions, using the sounds from the site in the present. The site itself as the material.

I'd earlier explored "haptic listening" and the relationship between touch and hearing by creating simple devices that played surface through touch using cat's whiskers (vibrissae) or needles connected to contact mics.

Working with my son, Milo, we employed similar methods at Uplees through touching and walking through the site, in effect playing it with our bodies. We also recorded and captured the ambient sounds of the site, wind noise, bird song, water and subterranean cavities with contact mics and hydrophones.

The piece is "made" from the place constructed from sounds gathered in the present at the Uplees site, both natural; grass, trees and human through touching or "playing" the remains of surfaces

and structures. These collected sound fragments were then digitally layered and mixed to reconstruct the sound of the 1916 explosions based on research into what was heard and felt on the day including the deep echoing rumble which followed the initial blasts. The piece uses a large Genelec 7060B subwoofer speaker.

I researched into eye and earwitness accounts of the explosions. Descriptions of explosions by their nature tend to be a matter of before and after, it proving difficult to inhabit the moment itself. Brian Dillon in his book *The Great Explosion*, examines attempts to describe the experience of explosions as “*the problem of the vanishing moment*” (Dillon 2015, n. p.). I focused on the phenomena of an immense explosion being rendered inaudible by distance, resulting in something slight, visual, and almost unnoticed. The distant massive destructive force manifest by a soft gentle cascade of dust. I made a sound activated Dust sprinkler using material collected from the site. The device is activated by the deepest rumblings of the piece, the sound becoming “visual” as it descends below the audible but still felt.

Dust Seeds

The seeds of ideas are ingested and inhaled while in the house; while sleeping, eating, washing, cleaning. They arrive unnoticed, like dust motes or spores from the ever-shifting universe of invisible vapour which we share our spaces with.

The seeds find purchase in my unconscious and take root, and when I’m away from the house, they find form and rise to the surface. Unless captured in that moment, they dissipate and are lost in the swirling dust cloud of time. On return to the house, they are gone unless grasped. It is as if the house itself has somehow moved on and is no longer interested, nor welcomes ideas that no longer have any meaning or relevance. This pattern of leaving and returning allows the ideas, though felt elsewhere, to be brought home and realised through a constant process of making and experiment.

My work grows from the premise that all (domestic) space/home is emotionally charged through habitation. Every movement, every conversation, every birth, and death that happened in the space, was there — present in powdered echoes of dust. My work is a result of continuous present occupation, but rather than create another space, it connects more directly with the original structure (skin-on-skin) through presence and everyday life, but also through a physical engagement with the house through DIY. Hence, there is a forward movement that allows thoughts to manifest and be lost to the flow of present time. Once brought into the stream of the present they are caught in the current and lost to time, to exist as a photograph, joining the memory stream of the house.

The fold

“A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (Bachelard 1994, p. 47)

The house was ready, already saturated with time and memory, approaching a state of deliquescence. Its walls were porous, the lime plaster separating from the lathe, its lime mortar dry, and feeding sparrows.

We were to add another layer through habitation and bringing children in. This in turn allows a further, longer and slower unfolding, as our relationship, our habitation with the space, begins, and the thread of our journey starts its unwinding. My own practice folds into the creases of the quotidian — an initial folding in, to allow unfolding. It has to initially compress into and fit around the physical and metaphorical rhythms and spaces of everyday life to first find root before unfolding into realised form.

This constant reconfiguration through folding and unfolding, is important to my work over the past ten years, as well as to my narrative practice text 'Brenchley'. This 'folding' continues through the interior to create rooms and endless sub, inner spaces of voids; gaps where air and dust constantly move in an exchange. Folding also continues through our habitation and the constant folding and unfolding of our bodies and senses in response to space, a metaphor for the constantly changing relationships with the spaces we live in.

It is through an immobile intensity that new readings, connections and understanding of spaces are made. The spaces remain part of me, and it is through folding into, while simultaneously being enfolded by the space, that a state of deliquescence is reached, and a work is both realised and released. Like an exhalation that, once released, allows the space to be re-inhaled. The space fills the space of me, to the point when I can no longer contain it and it is released back into itself.

“There is no inside, except as a folding of the outside” (Fisher 2016, n. p.).

Although an idea used by Fisher in the context of the eerie, the idea of 'folding' offers a useful (architectural metaphor) for the ever-changing relationship with the spaces we live in. Folding continues physically through the interior of the house, to create rooms and a sub, inner and temporary spatial geometry of fluid forms, voids, and gaps where we, air and dust constantly move, in an exchange.

Metaphorically, the envelope of the house, in its plasticity, folds around us as we live, constantly adjusting, stretching, and refolding through habitation and the ongoing spatial fluidity of the quotidian. Folding is a metaphor for the constantly changing relationships with the spaces we live in and the constant folding and unfolding of our bodies and senses in response to space. Our own skin including our eyes, folds with the folds of space.

Scale

Importantly, folding and unfolding should be considered a form of measuring, both reductive and expansive, both inward and outward in scale.

We fold ourselves into chairs and beds, and there is a measuring of the space and the objects we share the space with, of ourselves and the time that unfolds our lives as part of the history and the space-scape of the building.

“... the miniscule, a narrow gate, opens up an entire world. The details of a thing can be the sign of a new world which, like all worlds, contains the attributes of greatness” (Bachelard 1994, p. 155).

Due to the amount of time, we spend in it, the home offers scope for shifts in scale from the macro to the micro, examining a cobweb in corner while thinking for example. Watching TV or using a computer reduces the scale of the world to allow it to enter our homes in order to try and hold and digest immensity.

“The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it” (Bachelard 1994, p. 150).

On looking through the glass of a window, one’s gaze shifts between the space through and beyond the window, and the surface of the glass. “Still, it is by no means so large or so distant as you imagined it,- for the fact is that, as it wriggles its way up this thread, which some spider has wrought along the window-sash, I find it to be about the sixteenth of an inch in its extreme length, and also about the sixteenth of an inch distant from the pupil of my eye” (Poe 1846, n. p.). Here in *The Sphinx*, Edgar Allen Poe describes a “huge creature” seen through a window. The monster proves to be a moth on the inside of the glass. The tiny creature seen from close range appears gigantic against the reduced scale of the distant landscape. This imaginary projection allows the man to enter another world.



Fig 127



Fig 128

I explored this transposition and projection of scale and the window as threshold in *The Lost Language of Cranes* (2017) Model tower crane, electronics <https://www.timmeacham.space/the-lost-language-of-the-cranes>

The piece exploring outside/inside dialogue of windows as lens on the world. It was inspired by the story of a young child who was isolated for months in an urban high rise flat, the view from which was dominated by tower cranes. The child, deprived of human interaction, does not learn to speak but instead develops a complex physical language based on the slow balletic movement of the cranes, allowing him to communicate to the world outside the window.

"How wondrous, how grand those cranes must have seemed to Michel, compared to the small and clumsy creatures who surrounded him. For each, in his own way, she believed, finds what it is he must love, and loves it; the window becomes a mirror; whatever it is that we love, that is who we are" (Leavitt 1986, n. p.).

The work explores this outcome of isolation through an exchange which brings the outside in through the "borderline surface" of the window. The piece is also a conversation of scale, the model crane placed on the exterior windowsill appears distant because of its reduced scale, moving from optical, distant space to near - haptic space (Deleuze & Guattari) as it touches the glass threshold of the window. Its gentle tapping on the window reveals its proximity and size. The dialogue of scale (the tiny child and the huge, distant cranes) is reversed, as the toy crane, left outside at night, asks to come in. The red LED light a reference to the retro fitting of tower cranes with aircraft warning obstruction lights which has transformed the skyline of cities at night offering a new "dot- to-dot" constellation-like architecture of light.

"Outside and inside are both intimate spaces; they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a borderline surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides" (Bachelard 1994, pp. 217 - 218).

Bachelard's ideas of between or thresholds, and the "pain" of meeting are extended inwards and further explored in my proposal of possible interior domestic "Lagrange" points. Areas of meeting or interior points where the "pull" of each space is equal and they cancel each other out, and the effect of this upon the occupants i.e. when a thought is suddenly lost on leaving one space to enter another. Perhaps not an effect of pain, but one of feint shifts in gravity and a sense being momentarily "held" between spaces as the gravity of one relinquishes its hold to another.

Perhaps some this surface "pain" is time? Interior time meeting external time- both types of time simultaneously pushing against their respective surface to gain ingress, the threshold holds them in check. The change in time felt on shutting a door both on arriving and on leaving can be painful.

The metaphor of folding can be extended inward to consider dust as a material derived from both the home and inhabitants- a shedding by both of matter reduced in scale that allows us to ponder and enter a miniature world.

Dust in its continual microscopic cascading kiss, gently reveals and brings into presence space and its elements: air, earth and water in a quiet and unnoticed almost tender folding of the surface of objects and space.



Fig 129. *The Way Home* 2017. Cavity space revealed and lit with miniature streetlight.

"The interiority of the enclosed world tends to reify the interiority of the viewer"
(Stewart 1993, n. p.).

Here Stewart is writing about constructed miniature spaces – but the viewers *interiority* is equally *reified* through activating found and accidental spaces in the spaces in which we live; introducing a single feature that we can relate to in scale, suggests and opens a world of possible architecture and inner space, where “dust bunnies” become foliage and skirting boards are 30ft walls.

Painting a wall is an act of measuring through the body, similar to walking. Through folding, the spaces are inside us. Their intimacy, loneliness, sounds and smells fold inside us to loop endlessly, like the spaces of a film that enters us but is never fully digested, to become part of us.

The spaces of home are the ones we tend to remember, and they 'sit' with us throughout our lives, underpinning our ideas of subsequent homes, and in a sense still hold and contain us, as noted by Bachelard: *"These retreats have the value of a shell. And when we reach the very end of the labyrinths of sleep, when we attain to the regions of deep slumber, we may perhaps experience a type of repose that is pre-human..."* (Bachelard 1994, p. 10).

When we dream of home, it is often of the first home. The rooms we move through as we sleep, are often the first rooms we moved through. In this sense, they are both always in the past and the present.

The spaces of home are made to remember, unlike the eternal present of amnesiac retail spaces as commented on in *Junkspace* by the architect Rem Koolhaas: *"Junkspace cannot be remembered. It is flamboyant yet unmemorable, like a screensaver; its refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia"* (Koolhaas 2002, p. 177).

Koolhaas is describing what he feels is the forgettable nature of many modern spaces such as airports and retail sheds. Homogeneous spaces made not to be remembered, with often no meaning or material connection with place or site beyond function. Such buildings often are out of scale with their environment (and people) and speak a language of quick construction methods and use materials that age poorly.



Fig 130

The porous house

The ever-moving infinite universe of dust, of which we are part, speaks of a shared porosity, metaphorical and actual. Porosity as a measure of emptiness, of accessible voids and the constant giving of our own skin, breath, and movement to access the voids of the spaces we live in.

Even when sleeping, our breath moves this inner space of shared expiration. As we swallow the occasional spider in our sleep, we also inhale the spaces we occupy.

In this sense the house acts in psycho-physical and porous ways, a semi-permeable membrane, a second skin folded around our own as an absorber of and witness to sound, air, time, memory and life. Like our skin, the house skin simultaneously separates and connects. It both keeps out and lets in. It is porous in allowing the flow of ideas and thoughts from the outside to meet those of

internal spaces, psychological and actual. A metaphorical air brick without which flow would be denied and the house and its dwellers would atrophy.

"A particle is snatched from space, rhythmically modulated by membranes dividing it from surrounding chaos..." (Goldfinger et al 1956 cited in Gathercole 2006, p. 918)

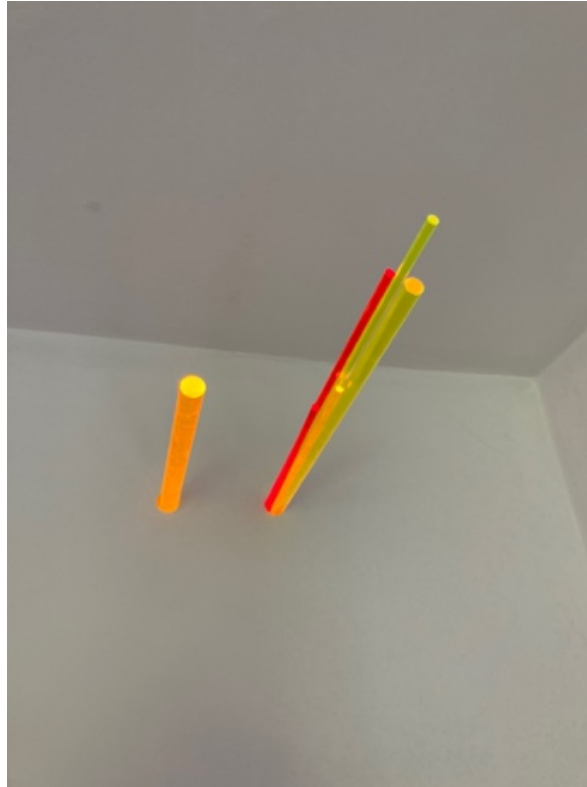


Fig 131

The neighbouring spaces

The house's relationship with green and sonic space has changed with the building of new houses on what had been agricultural land for hundreds of years, the historical edge of the town has been breached, pathways to the countryside severed, and there has been a large increase in traffic. Twenty years later, the fluid edge now gone (with the new housing) and the link with its countryside compromised, the house is still reaching out to 'touch' the promise of green space.



Fig 132

The new housing perimeter, in its pastiche architecture, perhaps in reference to older original houses, tries to mimic or reach the 'real' centre, in an attempt to fit in by wearing the right 'clothes'. The houses offer an insipid corona of bad reproduction that, in its lack of substance, in both design and materials (for example, its GRP-painted stick-on chimneys), feels more like a film-set of 2D facades encircling the town. A besieging army of particularly bad military re-enactors.

A hundred years later, this new edge development, breaking the historical borders, reaches for roads rather than trees or water. The new houses sit in the 'sweet spot' between the A2 and the M2, getting the best of both roads. In fields that once held bird song, now brick canyons echo to the sound of emptiness and cars, accompanied by the sound of 'Orc' destruction and the prospect of stopping at ALDI en-route (see Dickerson & Evans 2006: "Tolkien clearly associates Saruman with great harm to the environment and, more specifically, with technological progress that comes at the expense of life, nature, and the earth" p. 200).

The new housing was planned by drone. The large, insect-like machines flew in grid patterns, relentlessly scanning the site for two weeks before any ground was broken. For our four chickens, the dark and ominous presence of the drones registered as a threat from above and made them scuttle for cover and become broody. The drones' incessant high-pitched whining filled the summer air and became like a collective shared tinnitus. We could all now hear 'the drone'. The new houses' relationship with the place and site was formed from above, digitally and distant, like

a drone pilot in a shipping container in Texas, looking at a distant target, the houses came from above, imposed at altitude.



Fig 133



Fig 134

The drones were followed by helmeted workers, earth-moving tracked vehicles, pile drivers, drills and trucks, and the noise was like a war zone. The pile-drivers, although a quarter of a mile away, shook the ground and house with a rhythmic deep thumping, making the windows rattle and creating huge dust clouds that drifted across the town. Their sound was accompanied by a cacophony of piercing electronic voices and bleeping that announced 'caution, vehicle reversing'. The house was hearing and absorbing through vibration, the (distant) sounds of impact and violent destruction that we associate with war. Research has shown that high noise levels disturb the natural cycles of animals and reduces their usable habitat. "Wild animals suffer chronic stress, fertility problems and change their migration routes in response to noise" (Hansjoerg & Rouven 2019, n. p.). See also MOD's leaflet: "Birds, animals and aquatic life are also known to be effected by noise. However, response to noise differs greatly by species. Noise can disturb feeding and breeding patterns of some animals and has been identified as a contributing factor of the extinction of some species" (MOD 2010, n. p.).

Sound

The sounds of the house are seasonal. There is a sense in which the house breathes and has an active relationship with air and moisture. It is not hermetically sealed. The windows, open fireplaces and cavity walls all allow aspiration and a constant movement and exchange of air. This exchange is linked to the seasons, stretching to reach out and inhale the first warm air of spring — the house creaking and ticking as it adjusts; the sash windows opened to allow bird song and susurrations from the garden to reach in to help the house settle into summer. In the autumn and winter the house hunkers down, reaching for the cold of the expanding clay soil foundations. The winter song of the Wren echoes through the garden and shadows grow from the corners, fed by cold air which probes for gaps between floorboards, doors, and windows. The sash windows allow air to enter the rooms through their sounds — soft creaking in summer and rattling in autumn gales — we hear and feel the weather as the seasons change.



Fig 135

The house sits in contrast to the sound of the road and the constant rumble and clatter of Marks & Spencer trucks, their flanks promising that '*the adventure starts here*'. M&S are not aware that, for the house, the adventure started in 1910. In return, the house offers distant sighs and the sound of the unseen movement of its lime mortar, occasionally making its presence felt through cracks in the interior plaster, which are filled annually.



Fig 136

Windows

The large windows are one of the main features of the house. Like a ship, their steady gaze gives the structure an essential poise. A stillness emanates from the deep shadowy interior where it meets the glass. As a structure with over fifty percent of its surface pierced with apertures to allow the passage of light, air and time, the size and number of windows suggests an exchange and flow between inside and out of the house.

"Windows were originally used to create a partial opening in enclosures such as walls and serve as a means of disclosure for communication between the outside and the inside" (Tsukamoto 2012, n. p.)



Fig 137



Fig 138

The windows in every room are large, in some cases almost floor-to-ceiling. Their size reflects a new architectural interest at the time in opening up spaces, and an understanding of light and ventilation combined with the fact that large panes of glass were more economical.



Fig 139



Fig 140



Fig 141



Fig 142

The windows — glass and frames — are original to the house and each pane is at least a hundred years old. The glass is cylinder glass rather than the modern rolled or float glass. Each piece is made from a blown 'bottle' of glass, from which both ends are removed to make a cylinder. The cylinder is then cut along its length, reheated, and unrolled to make a flat pane of glass. Cylinder glass possesses a relatively consistent thickness but has ripples of distortion and bubbles trapped within it — an embedded memory of its liquid state and the origin of the sand from which glass is made. Each piece of glass has a unique fingerprint that is revealed through sunlight — no two pieces are the same.

Light floods the south-facing rear rooms through large windows. The 'rear window' effect offers a particularly intimate relationship to the sky, the garden and the movement of trees and birds.



Fig 143

Due to the process of manufacture, this type of glass has different properties that can be appreciated both externally and internally. From the outside, the reflective quality of cylinder glass produces a subtle shimmer and a gently distorted and fluid reflection, as opposed to the mirror-like surface and clinical optics of modern plate glass. From inside, the refractive qualities of cylinder glass allow a softly filtered and dispersed warm daylight to pass through. Its irregular and rippled form changes the external view from every angle.

Bubbles of air trapped for a century act as lenses. The ripples offer a distorted lens on the present of bent vapour trails and ballooning cars. The present mediated through the past – the gaze of the windows unchanged.

Most of the windows in the house are of the sash type, with the exception of the single French door (which I regard as a threshold window rather than a door), and two fanlights — one, a large fanlight above the front door, bearing the name of the house: the other, a smaller window above the single living-room French window. The mechanism of the sash window holds the two sliding frames in balance through cords, weights and pulleys hidden inside the sash box. This provides an infinitely adjustable system of ventilation and exchange between interior and exterior. The sash windows themselves are held in a state of physical balance. If not weighted correctly they will not stay open or closed but slide up or down to find their own state of equilibrium.

Sash windows are also designed so they can be removed and replaced from the inside for maintenance, rather than from the outside of the building, which requires the use of a ladder. This allows this part of the exterior skin to be brought, temporarily, into the house. Once maintained, the windows are offered up and replaced from the inside.



Fig 144



Fig 145

From the front sitting-room and front bedroom are two three-section bay windows. The bay windows project and so offer commanding views beyond the main walls of the house. They have the feeling of a kind of glazed balcony, a space that is beyond the main structure, like the cockpit or bridge of some kind of craft. They are a point of authority and control and give the house a sense of steered-forward movement and straight-and-level flight through time.

At the top of the first flight of the dogleg staircase, above a small landing, is the only remaining stained and etched glass window in the house. On entering through the front door, the window immediately draws the eye, as a point of brilliance. It offers an architectural pause on entering, and a license to linger in ascent. The window gives a sense of optical and physical reach along the vertical plane of the house, hinting at light upper spaces beyond. It creates, what is in effect, a central light well, connecting the floors and the core of the house through light. On sunny days, the window floods the space with areas of softly dissolving white and coloured light.

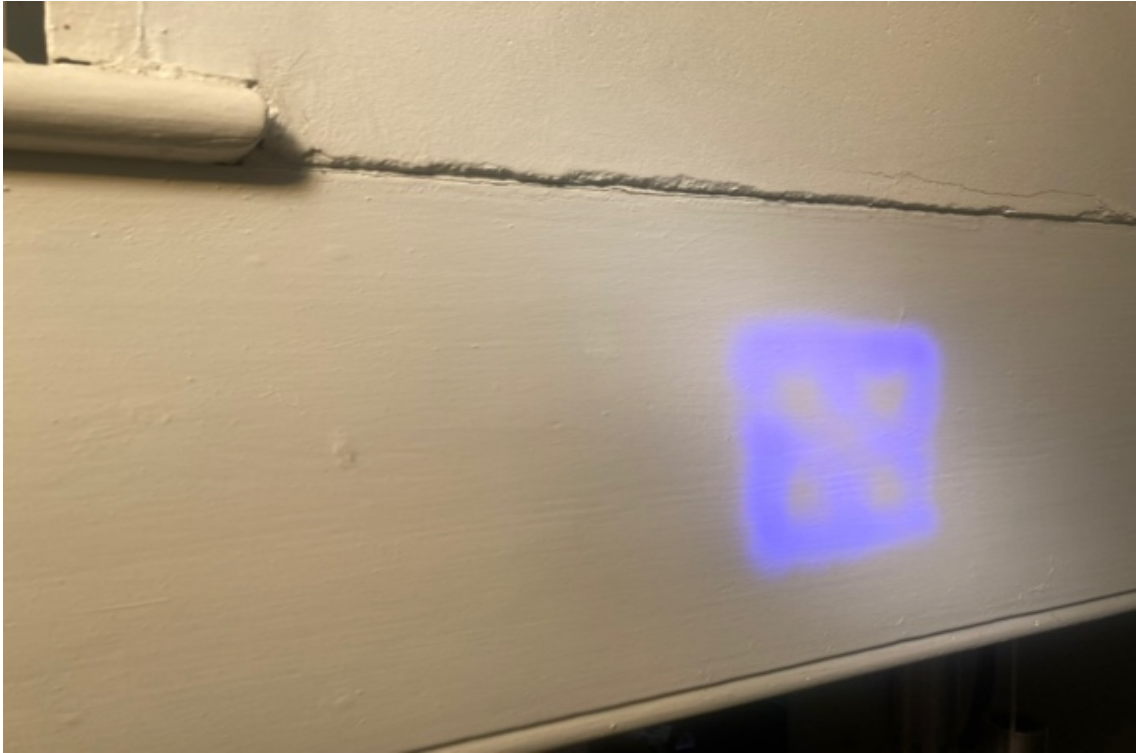


Fig 146

The sash window is a combination of two central large panes of lightly etched glass, surrounded by smaller sections of coloured and stained glass. The panels each offer different light-refracting properties and a combination of textures — smooth on the outside face and textured within. When the window is closed, the exterior view is obscured and distilled to pure light.

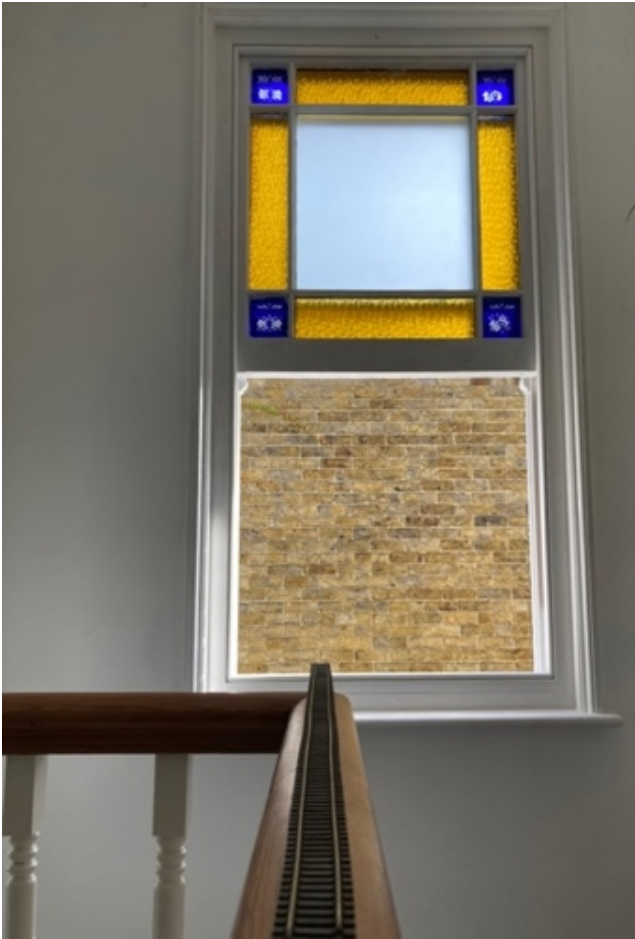


Fig 147



Fig 148

The East-facing window creates an ever-changing interplay and seasonal dialogue with the internal architecture through a projection of natural light through the stained glass. From the upstairs landing, the banister rail acts as a pointer to the source of light. Positioning allows pause in this transitional space of landing. On clear mornings, when the sun is high in the east, the window is illuminated and directly hits the bedroom door keyhole, forming a temporary camera obscura. The window and the outside world are projected inverted.



The windows are from a time of a different relationship with the heat, the light, and the weather. In 1910, periods of cold were calendrical markers and still something to endure. There were no expectations of being warm and 'airtight', and for most people heat involved the labour of making a fire. People still prepared and stock-piled for the winter. By comparison, we are the most over-heated and over-lit generations in history, both heat and light being only a switch away for us.

Nevertheless, the developments in heating technologies and the introduction of central heating in the early 20th century meant that occupants were increasingly able to move away from the fireplace – the 'focus' of rooms – and begin to occupy the edges — closer to the windows and the weather. The architecture of internal air within houses with central heating changed, moving away from the fireplace to become more centrifugal. The large windows gave rooms a new foci, now shared with the fireplace, particularly in winter.

The rattle of the sash windows in high winds and the ingress of drafts allows a constant relationship with the weather – which the original single-glazed windows still provide. You are left in no doubt of the cold outside when the winter meets the 3mm skin of glass.

The radiators installed in the 1970s still look slightly awkward and not entirely at home. Every winter they work hard to heat the voluminous hall and high-ceilinged rooms, while most of their heat is lost above the picture rail to heat the ceilings and lights.



Fig 150

Fireplaces and breath

The house still has intact and functioning fireplaces in each of the living spaces, including the bedroom. When we moved into the house the fireplaces in the house had been sealed with boards. From the newspapers stuffed up the chimneys, they seemed to have stopped being used in the early 1970s, when the central heating was installed.



Fig 151

There was a dusty, airless stillness in each room, a sense that the house had been slowly suffocating since the fireplaces had been choked, and I felt compelled to open up and unblock them.

Opening each hearth revealed a hidden world of dust and mummified birds that had become trapped in the chimneys over the decades. One fireplace still had a fire laid in it, with newspaper, kindling and coal, waiting to be lit for fifty years. As the last blockage was removed from each chimney, I could feel fresh air moving across my skin, like a miner finding an air source after being

trapped for days. We then had the chimneys swept and our children excitedly watched from the garden as the sweep's brush appeared from the long dormant pots. There was a physical sense, as

the fireplaces were unblocked, that the house could breathe again. The chimneys above our heads, the highest points of the structure, like the branches of a tree reaching for light, were again intimately connected — through reach and breath — to the interior, each room and by extension, us.

Open fireplaces are now considered hugely inefficient because most of the heat they generate escapes up the chimney. When unlit they also suck in large amounts of cold air through cracks and gaps in the building envelope, which cools the air indoors and causes drafts. Owing to this, fireplaces can even have negative efficiency as far as the air temperature is concerned; they can make the room colder instead of warmer. However, open fireplaces do allow spaces to breathe and the house to aspirate. Edwardian architects understood that the fireplaces were an integral part of the air circulation system of houses and part of the ongoing exchange of air between inside and out. For this reason, blocking fireplaces often causes damp and mould in spaces that were built to breathe rather than be airtight.

The chimneys and fireplaces offer a range of connections to the outside — from sighs and deeply resonating howls during storms, to birdsong carried down chimneys when the fire is not lit — making the fireplace an open mouth.

In hot weather the sun's heat on the soot in the chimneys releases the smell of resinous wood smoke into rooms on a summer's morning, an olfactory reminder of winter. When lit, the fireplaces once again become the focus of the room creating a sense of interiority through heat and light.

The drip and the attic

The drip was there when we moved in nearly twenty years ago and is still there now. It never really goes away. It might disappear for a while but still, it's always there. It may go for months at a time, but then it comes back. It returns with no warning — there is no pattern to the drip's appearances, although when there, its rhythm is compelling. My one good ear is now tuned to the sound of the drip — it wakes me early in the morning or disturbs me late at night; 'The drip is back' I whisper to myself.

Abating the drip requires ascending into the attic and folding my body into the tightest part of the roof space under the eaves, in order to access the overflow water cistern.

As I get older, it has become more difficult and requires increasingly more effort each time to fit into the small space. Although once folded, I'm always surprised by how comfortable it is as my body becomes one with the geometry of the house, and I sink into a world of dust, lagging and muffled sounds from below and above. When I am eventually folded, I clean the ball cock which has been replaced several times. The only constant original part of the cistern is the drip itself.

The attic has drip memory staining its fabric — skin, timbers and brick all speak of drips at some time. Has the original drip spawned and produced other drips? The drip is at the centre of its own world — a cycle of sound, rhythm, new plant life below and evaporation are all dependent on the drip.

Journey to the Centre of the House

The journey of the house itself began when the builders left 110 years ago. The journey to the centre of the house, perhaps began with the first inhabitants (Mr Abbot). Like the tone arm of a record player, we are centre seekers. We have been passed the baton/needle and continued the house's journey for the last 20 years — the needle still tracing the grooves as it feels for the centre.



Fig 152

Our journey through and to the centre of this house began with the journey to the house. We first saw the house at a distance, as a picture in an estate agents' window. A drive-by glimpse followed, and then the view of the roof from the railway bridge. A journey continued with the first visit when the stylus of our lives first touched the surface of the record as our hands touched the door handle. Our instinct as centre seekers is to move away from the edge and seek the centre.

Report from the centre of the house.

When the room was created, we can't be sure. What we are sure about however, is that the house has been continuously occupied for over a hundred years and in that time, the room had been sealed, along with the two fan lights above the front and the back doors, apparently screwed shut shortly after construction. The primer paint around the door of the concealed space is the same colour as the paint around the sealed windows. The screws used are exactly the same type, which led us to believe that the room had been sealed up probably at the same time as the windows, in the early part of the 20th century between 1910 and 1920.

The other interesting feature is that the Roman numerals that have been carved into what was a makeshift frame to seal the room, are very similar to the ones used on each of the sash window frames to identify the different components of each frame. This identification method is useful, and, on the door, the jointing and chisel marks were also the same.

This all explained perhaps, the date of the of the seal space but not its contents. What we seem to have discovered under the stairs is some kind of craft. It is not dissimilar to a coracle in its form and construction, with fabric stretched over a wooden frame of pitched canvas, thick cotton or some kind of sailcloth. But what we couldn't explain was that some of the fittings and fixtures that held it together, which were not only modern but unrecognisable, we've never seen before, we've never seen fittings on construction matters like this. What lay within the coracle or craft was even more mysterious. There seemed to be some kind of cockpit, with controls and various instruments. Each of the instruments had been made from available commercial electrical appliances, from the last one hundred years, as if this hidden space had somehow been built and worked on for a hundred years and then sealed up for most of that time. The seal around the door was airtight and when we opened the door, there was an audible hiss as the seal was broken. This is where we are at the moment with our investigations, we're examining the individual contents of the coracle.

The other interesting feature is that the staircase and space itself seemed to have been built around the coracle. It reminded me of stories of people who built kit boats in their backyards or in their gardens and then couldn't actually get them back through the house. In this case, the space has been built around the vessel — which suggests that the vessel itself predates the space and that is all I have to report for now.

END

Conclusion

Dwelling and Disruption: How Art and DIY Practices Can Reconfigure Domestic Spaces to Reveal New Meanings of Everyday Life?

The outcomes of this study have been various. In order to define them in relation to the question, I will divide the conclusion into sections which consider how the artwork, and the approaches developed through it, contribute to new knowledge in the field of fine art practice in relation to domestic architecture.

Artwork/practice

Over the last 10 years I have created a varied and unique body of artwork. Through which, I have developed a new multi-sensory understanding of domestic architecture which emanates from interventions made into the fabric of my home.

The domestic works are distinctive in originating from the fabric of the house itself, and in their temporary disturbance of the rhythm of everyday life. As such, the works are fused with the domestic, and ultimately feed back into its spaces, becoming part of the history and time-spatial continuum of the house.



Fig 153

Drone Strike 2020. Crashed drone & one-hundred years of dust gathered from the sash box cavity (poche) during window restoration. The dust covered drone was (gently) flown at the window from the garden, in a bid to return the dust to the room, like a bee carrying pollen back to the hive.

1. Dust: as (shared) material and invisible witness



Fig 154

Through developing an art practice as an extension of dwelling and DIY, I have attempted to develop a new sensory material and conceptual language. One which allows exploration of the constant interconnections between the body of the house and the bodies of its inhabitants. Central to this has been the use in my artwork and writing of dust as both as material and motif.

Airbourne and irresistible, dust acts as both disturber and connector and has become a bridge between my imagination, the physical world and the inhabitants of my house. As a transgressor of temporal and spatial boundaries, dust is all connecting- and as such, is an agent for my innate dyslexic sense of connection. Dust has served to bring together different dimensions of my practice to become a new medium of interconnection.

In its evanescent restlessness, dust sits between air and vapour-like properties, dust allows time to briefly settle and matter. Through its drifting deepen in accreted stratum. Several of my artworks use, examine and make visibly palpable the continual material transferences of dust, to examine its relationship with time and the constant exchange of matter between us, both in lived and poche (hidden) space.

In the use of dust as an untameable, moving element rather than a captured material, my work differs from other artists who use it. For example, Vic Muniz's 1962 Photograph of a drawing is made by fixing dust collected from the Whitney Museum to the surface of a canvas.

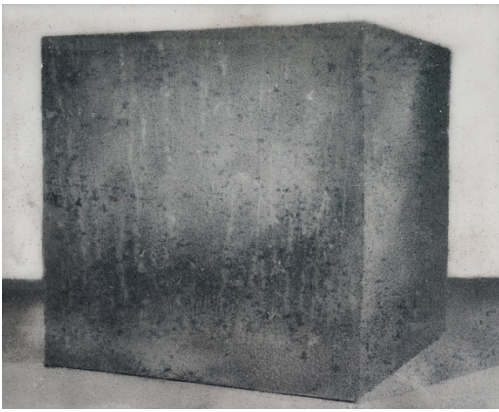


Fig 155



Fig 156

The piece *Duster*, (fig 156) referred to earlier in this thesis, uses the natural properties of dust to create ever-changing cascades of dust back into an empty room from which it was collected. Each release of dust is triggered by the sound of passing trains.

As it cascades, the dust released from the device makes empty space visible and then forms and folds an infinite stratum of skins through surface accretion. Dust simultaneously connects through its touch – and physically and visually disconnects through obscuring surface as it settles. Through the constant release of dead skin cells to maintain epidermal function and sensory connection, we ourselves reach out and fold into the world.

Spaces are materially and emotionally charged by dust created through human habitation. Current DNA science describes dust as:

"The invisible witness: air and dust as DNA evidence of human occupancy in indoor premises"

Fantinato, C., Fonnelløp, A.E., Bleka, Ø. *et al.* *The invisible witness: air and dust as DNA evidence of human occupancy in indoor premises. Sci Rep* **13**, 19059 (2023).

2. DIY: Time, Touch & Scale

Considering my art practice as an extension of domestic DIY recasts the process of art-making itself, offering a new relationship to the home. In a similar manner to architecture's function as an extension of humanity that allows us to function in the world, I see DIY as a form of embodied practice that allows me to function as an artist in my home. Ongoing DIY restoration directly informs my art practice and together, they extend and deepen my understanding of inner and outer (domestic) space.

With its roots in my early childhood experiences in the 1960s and 70s, my work differs from other post-war artists in that it does not require a space outside the house to exist. Rather, like DIY, it is something that happens in and is part of the domestic life and space – there is no divide. My dyslexia adds to this sense of everything being connected as extensions of us. The immediate audience for the artwork is the house and its occupants, and later, the world through an [online archive](#).

3. Time: Reading the Room

DIY restoration requires spending periods of time in often obscure and overlooked parts of the house. In this sense, DIY gives me permission and licence to spend time looking. This gift of time allows me to immerse myself deeply in the spaces. This initial immersion and subsequent time spent reading, and working on the fabric of spaces, directly informs my artwork. My work and ideas grow from this time. In turn, the artworks allow the viewer to spend time in spaces that are often overlooked, drawing the gaze to normally unseen and unnoticed details of the fabric of the house. The work also grants time to the normally transitional spaces of hallways and stairs as they become a temporary destination through the work.



Fig 157

Touch

The seeds of my ideas are often sown and absorbed through physical and visual "touch" and the deep "inhaling" of space that DIY offers. Touch, together with physical reach and folding, embed a multi-sensory memory in which ideas form. The process of making good gives time for these seeds to take root and grow and return to the physical spaces as artworks.

Both my art practice and DIY allow ideas to become real. There is also a sense in which both house and artworks are never finished, as the house requires constant maintenance with one task leading to another. Both remain in a constant state of becoming. Through my dyslexia, I see my artwork and writing as one interconnected, infinite whole that is never finished.

Scale - The Miniature, Movement



Fig 158

During DIY work my eyes are continually drawn to and snagged by detail. I notice often-overlooked minuscule aspects of the surfaces and structures that make up my home. This entry into a miniature world that is part of, but somehow below the everyday, poses questions about what we really see.

The common dyslexic trait of seeing too much and noticing every detail, often causes difficulty in defining what I'm actually meant to be looking at, as I'm constantly distracted by minutia. My attention to details, often unnoticed by others, can hinder DIY. However, this compulsive trait feeds directly into my art practice.

When applied to the domestic, the miniature draws the eye in a similar way to a model railway which fascinates. Model railways present a whole diorama of which the railway is part. When the model train moves, the eye is drawn back to, and guided through, this whole. Similarly, the overlooked small scale, sub world of the domestic can also be activated through the introduction of movement.



Fig 159

For example, the idea for the work *Overlooked Skirting Board Exploration Probe, (OSEP.)* took root and grew while fitting quadrant to a skirting board. The process required long periods of time kneeling to access the small gap between floor and skirting. As I worked, I was progressively drawn to the minute surface detail of the skirting board and felt compelled to share this overlooked world with the rest of the room before it was reoccupied. Taking advantage of the available time, I used a miniature wireless rail-mounted video camera to circumnavigate the perimeter of the room, transmitting a live projection back to the space. The viewer is taken on a scurrying journey into the overlooked recesses of the domestic space via the skirting board. Tiny surface details and occasional glimpses back into the room are projected on a huge scale, filling the walls. Designed to be viewed through exterior windows, the probe will stop if anyone enters the space. The exchange is one for the room alone and gives prominence to the humble skirting board in its often-overlooked role as a seam between the vertical and horizontal planes of wall and floor.

Guests: Artworks as Visitors

A unique dimension of my practice is its consideration of the artworks as a series of visitors or house guests. These visitors are accommodated and briefly become a part of the totality of the structure alongside, and sharing, the continuous language of floors, walls, doors and windows. Momentarily, they become a part of the architecture and support the other features, spaces, planes, and surfaces, as a reminder of their relationships with each other.

These visitors are not necessarily from the outside; rather, they emanate and materialise from the fabric of the house itself; from dust, discarded matter and materials and objects that enter the house naturally, without an invitation. Like insects and spiders, they find and grow in the spatial and temporal gaps created and provided through everyday domestic life, i.e. a room being cleared for decorating, a hole made while rewiring, or a shaft of light shining through a particular window.

In their very nature these temporal and spatial gaps are undetermined, and a degree of flexibility is required from both hosts and guests. In return, the visitors must fit around the everyday domestic movements and needs of both humans and animals. The guest's stay and brief existence is determined by domestic forces.

At the end of their stay, the guests are recorded through photography as a form of visitor's book. However, rather than leaving the house, the visitors are absorbed back into the domestic fabric whence they came. Like a ghost, the memory of each remains embedded in the part of the house it briefly occupied, forever linked and extended through my own, my family's and possibly the dog's memories.



Fig 160

Form: Writing as Part of Practice

Compelled by my dyslexic sense of connection when starting this study, I was anxious that the written element should be viewed as somehow separate from the art practice and not as an explanation for it. The central narrative texts of *Brenchley* and *House* grew from this need, and were created as companion dimensions, rooted in and integral to my practice.

The resulting narrative texts and audio work are the main strands of the thread running through this project. Through which I have endeavoured to foster a symbiotic relationship between my practice and written components as extensions of each other. The House section providing another space and process, through which to reflect on and discuss my practice and this research project.

The interactions between the art interventions into spaces of home and the fictional spaces of *Brenchley* propose a distinctive approach to practice research within which the continuous process of making and thinking is a form of excavation - the thread reaching forever deeper into the materiality of domestic space. The dimensions of folding and reaching that explore the connections between interiority and exteriority in the imagined spaces of *Brenchley* are expanded in my ongoing investigations of the house.

Brenchley and my ongoing practice have allowed new and unique artwork and connections to be made, and a sense of reach is made possible across ideas, experience, memory and time. I hope *Brenchley* is still in the world somewhere, deep in the centre of a room, behind the blinds.

Afterword

The thread of this work has wound its way through every aspect of my life, stitching new connecting seams. It has involved careful familial negotiation and folding around and between the flow and rhythm of the domestic quotidian. From DIY and household chores to motorcycling and my daughter's piano practice and gardening.



Fig 161

These arrangements have, in some senses, shaped the work. Making the work visible or overlooked, as a temporary part of the fabric house, comes from a collective agreement both with my family and dogs.

In 2014 at the age of 54, as part of my enrolment on this this PhD, I undertook a learning needs assessment and was diagnosed as having double deficit dyslexia. This diagnosis came after a lifetime of concealment, guilt, and some shame. Despite me not learning to read at school and suffering from “word blindness”, my father, an academic and clergyman, never conceded that there was anything “wrong” with me.

As a child I made sense of and communicated my ideas and thoughts through making. Thus, I established an essentially haptic and multisensory material language which has continued in various forms throughout my life. In 1980 I made the choice to go to Art College rather than university, because I wanted to make things.

After 50 years of suppression and camouflage, the dyslexia diagnosis has allowed an intuitive sense of a fundamental connection in everything to flow and freely thread into my life and art - for me everything is material.



Fig 162

My previously stifled sense of connection in everything has extended and reached into my family, house and my art practice – it is all part of the same interconnected world.

The freedom granted through the dyslexia diagnosis and the space to explore granted by this PhD, has allowed me to develop and extend my art practice into the body of the house in new and unexpected ways as an extension of myself and my family, and to investigate the house as an extension of us.

In this sense, a trace of the work is always present, in the present and moving forward. In a hundred years' time, if the area is not underwater – will the occupants imagine or sense what has happened here? The work's temporary nature also allows it to enter and to slip in and out of the endless stream of domestic happenings, a chance encounter on the stairs or an animated conversation. My daughter, who was 15 when this project started, commented:

"Your artwork was a little unsettling at times and made me feel like the house was rarely resting, or at least parts of it weren't, but then on the flip side, it was exciting to come home and find something would be different in the house; it was fun to find a hidden little installation somewhere by chance and just accept that as a new part of the house."

Personal correspondence with Celeste Thesiger-Meacham, 2025.

The dimensions of folding and reaching that explore the connections between interiority and exteriority in the imagined spaces of *Brenchley* are expanded in my ongoing investigations of the house.

As contemporary (site specific) sculpture, the meaning of the works reaches beyond the perceived material limits of the objects, to touch the spaces of the house through a shared material, sensorial and conceptual language, with dust as a central motif and medium. It forms a language that emanates from, enters and speaks back to the specific spaces, architectures and rhythms of the house. Through this shared language and entry, the work activates, disturbs and speaks to the spaces in a familiar language – one that is spoken by both the art and the house.

In this sense my art practice is essentially domestic as it emanates from living where I live, and from the overlapping and linked cycles and patterns of daily life in the house, from the present, the past and possible future, particularly through the use of air and dust as material time.



Fig 163

The work embeds and adds to the accreted memory of the house; it ensures forward movement, a dynamic ever-changing environment, echoing and articulating the changing relationships with the spaces we inhabit over time. Alongside and interwoven through lives lived in the building, will the artworks and interventions leave behind a presence? As we prepare to leave it, will this house be read differently as a result?

End

List of Images

Note: all photographs are by the author, taken between 2014-2024, unless otherwise stated.

Abstract

Fig 1. *Hut* 2016 A model stone-built hut (Merz barn) moves on track along a hallway wall. Its base touches the track, causing it to act as a sounding box- calling to the space. Its progress is viewed through an aperture cut in the adjoining bathroom wall during rewiring.

Fig 2. *BOH: threshold* 2020. timmeacham.space/shark. As I played the surface, a shark of light, its dorsal fin just below the picture rail, cruised the room linking the stray ideas and chapters of my chaotic thesis. As the fish flexed into the corner, the sound of waves and surging foam filled the space.

Acknowledgements

Fig 3. Moss the dog

Timeline of practice

Fig 4. *The Cat's Whiskers* 2014. Landscape of dust in constant state of surfacing disturbed by moving whiskers <https://www.timmeacham.space/the-cat-s-whiskers-1>

Fig 5. *Untitled*, domestic installation 2015. Water surface disturbed by moving, shirring elastic belt, spanning width of house <https://www.timmeacham.space/water-tray>

Fig 6. *Cast*, 2017. Elastic, electric motor <https://www.timmeacham.space/cast>

Fig 7. *Dandy in the Underworld* 2016. Installation within cavity wall or hidden poché of the house, traversing height of building and activating this normally unseen space

Introduction

Fig 8. *Vibrissae Headphones* 2014. My daughter Celeste listening to the 100-year-old wall surface of her room amplified through headphones using a cat's whisker inserted into a cellulosed paper diaphragm (Cats naturally shed their whiskers)

Fig 9. Meacham 2025. Diagram of piercing skin of space and subsequent unfolding

Fig 10. *Thimble* 2018. Seedling planted in thimble on a moving internal scaffolding track sited in window during roofing works. The small plant tracked the lines of the exterior scaffolding and was planted in the garden when the works were completed.

timmeacham.space/thimble

Fig 11. *Gloves for playing miniature books*, 2016 Page surface played through stylus, attached to miniature contact mics in glove fingers www.timmeacham.space/micrographia

Fig 12. Sittingbourne 9th Cub-Scouts annual Fete 1960's. Unidentified photographer

Fig 13 *This Is Tomorrow* exhibition, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1956. View of Patio and Pavilion by Group 6 ;Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi and Alison and Peter Smithson.

Fig 14 *Balance*. Terry Smith 1994 <https://www.terrysmith.studio/site-unseen-1994>

Fig 15. Jamming Gears, Richard Wilson, Serpentine Gallery, London © 1996 Richard Wilson

Fig 16. Tim Meacham artwork undertaken in cavities and roof spaces exposed during restoration works in Eastgate House, Rochester. 2016

Fig 17. Gordon Matta-Clark and Gerry Hovagimyan working on *Conical Intersect* 1975. Photo: Harry Gruyaert. © 2017 Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS)

Fig 18. *Still Life*. Fran Cottell live installation 2003/4 Photo Fran Cottell

Fig 19. *More Than This* Meacham 2018. Vapour, light, square section plastic tubing. Temporary threshold within the transitional space of the landing hallway. The walls of the two adjoining rooms (bathroom & bedroom) were pierced to allow the insertion of a clear tube linking the two spaces as a kind of internal "Skyway". The bathroom was then filled with vapour which was drawn through the tube into the bedroom, allowing a temporary meeting of vapour between the two normally unconnected spaces

Fig 20. Clark Thenhaus. *Some Walls from Unbuilt Houses*. Kent State University, College of Architecture and Environmental design in March 2020

Fig 21. Gregor Schneider. House U R, Rheydt, Germany, 1985 - present

Literature Review

Fig 22. *2001:A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick, MGM, 1968

Fig 23. *The Great God Pan is Dead*. Meacham 2018; cast model landscape, trees, water, light

Fig 24. Tilt- Shift photograph

Fig 25. *The Lost Language of Cranes*. Meacham 2017. Model tower crane, electronics

"How wondrous, how grand those cranes must have seemed to Michel, compared to the small and clumsy creatures who surrounded him. For each, in his own way, she believed, finds what it is he must love, and loves it; the window becomes a mirror; whatever it is that we love, that is who we are." *The Lost Language of Cranes*. 1986 – David Leavitt

Inspired by the story of a young child who was isolated for months in an urban high rise flat, the view from which was dominated by tower cranes. The child, deprived of human company, does

not learn to speak but instead develops a complex physical language based on the slow, balletic movement of the cranes, allowing him to communicate to the world outside the window. The work explores this outcome of isolation through a conversation of scale, viewed through a window. A model crane placed on the exterior windowsill appears distant. Its gentle tapping on the window reveals its proximity and size, the dialogue of scale (the tiny child and the huge distant cranes) is reversed as the toy crane left outside at night asks to come in. The red LED light a reference to the retro fitting of tower cranes with aircraft warning lights which has transformed the skyline of cities at night.

Fig 26. *Pushing the Envelope*. Meacham 2016 Domestic Installation. OHP lens, mounted on model railway track moving in and out of 1st floor window

Methodology

Fig 27. *Both Bars On*. Meacham 2018. Electric fire, electronics, model railway track
<https://www.timmeacham.space/both-bars-on>

Part One:

Fig 28. *Plume*. Meacham 2022. Light & Steam <https://www.timmeacham.space/plume>

Fig 29. *Shopping Trolley Pond Skater*. Meacham 2021. Model shopping trolley, cat's whiskers, water. <https://www.timmeacham.space/shopping-trolley>

Fig 30. Lagrange Point diagram NASA/WMAP Science Team

Fig 31. Detail of top of staircase in J.G. Ballard's former house, 38 Old Charlton Rd, Shepperton.
Photo: Tim Meacham 2018 *With permission of Fay Ballard (daughter)*

Fig 32. *Ophthalmosaurus* Meacham 2020. <https://www.timmeacham.space/ophthalmosaurus>

Fig 33. *Journey with my father* Meacham 2021 <https://www.timmeacham.space/journey-with-father>

Fig 34. *Perimeter Fence* Meacham 2022. Skirting board and miniature fencing
<https://www.timmeacham.space/perimeter-fence>

Fig 35. *VIP Area* Meacham 2019. Elevated skirting board corner
<https://www.timmeacham.space/vip-area>

Fig 36 *Overlooked Skirting board Exploration Probe, OSEP*. Meacham 2020. Miniature wireless video camera circumnavigates edge of space with live projection of journey
<https://www.timmeacham.space/osep>

Fig 37 *A Few Dollars More*. Meacham 2018 Record player, light & magnifying glass
<https://www.timmeacham.space/a-few-dollars-more>

Fig 38 John Martin: *The Great Day of His Wrath* 1851–1853

Fig 39 *Glass Choir* Meacham 2019 Hearing aids and drinking glasses. (My mother's hearing aid collection playing part of her glass collection) <https://www.timmeacham.space/glass-choir>

Fig 40 *High Speed Divination Device*. Meacham 2018 Motorcycle and Willow
<https://www.timmeacham.space/high-speed-divination-device>

Fig 41 *In the Same Car*. Meacham 2019 Vinyl LP, Record player, model car & light
<https://www.timmeacham.space/in-the-same-car>

Fig 42 The Grim Reaper from *Lonely Water* 1973. Central Office of Information film about the dangers of water and the number of child fatalities in drowning accidents in the UK.

Fig 43 *Structural Survey* Meacham 2021. Piece of 165-million-year-old fossil seabed-
<https://www.timmeacham.space/structural-survey>

Fig 44 Maidstone East Railway Station. Meacham 2017

Fig 45 Faversham Railway Station. Meacham 2023

Fig 46. 3rd class ticket from London Waterloo to Brookwood London Necropolis Railway 1854 - 1945

Fig 47 Detail of model railway. Meacham 2023

Fig 48 Paul Fusco, photo taken from the Robert Kennedy funeral train. USA. 1968

Fig 49 Bedford traveller's bus

Fig 50 *Exorcism* 2019 Meacham <https://www.timmeacham.space/exorcism>

Fig 51 Doorknob mechanism

Fig 52. *Touch* Meacham 2016. Bonsai tree and moving fine shirring elastic belts connected to surrounding space <https://www.timmeacham.space/bonsia>

Fig 53. *Playing to the Edge*. 2019 In collaboration with Celeste Thesiger-Meacham. Small electric motors attached to the extremities of the space, drive elastic loops to pulleys held in the palm of the performer. The performer moves to maintain tension in the belts, offering and feeling temporary connection with the surrounding space. Periodically the belts "sing" as they find the resonance of the space through touch and vibration. Shirring elastic and electric motors

<https://www.timmeacham.space/skirting-cast>

Fig 54. *Blister lens* Meacham 2019 Polythene blister, mixed media. *"At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability - a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to "suspend" its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for."* Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space*

A clear polythene blister filled with air collected from the space at night (while still & dreaming) is suspended by spring-tensioned threads leading from the 4 corners of the room, hovers, aligned with the skirting board, 20cm over the centre of the floor space. Its surface reflects its surroundings, and the convex form acts as both a magnifying and distorting lens. Its stillness at the centre of the room, intensified by the tension in the springs.

The piece renders the room unusable for normal domestic life, instead the space is allowed to become about itself, with its own architecture of trapped air at the centre. The surfaces and features brought together in a dialogue of distorted reflection through the pressure of its own air. Marking the centre of the space, the blister allows connection and exchange becoming the new focus of the room bringing its various aspects together; walls, windows, skirting boards, fireplace all converge to a single point of trapped air and time. The relationship with the skirting boards allows a connection of the edges and corners to the centre, through the touch of threads.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/blister-lens>

Fig 55 *Transitional Fossil*. Meacham Printing paper, plastic helicopter kit

<https://www.timmeacham.space/fossil-copter>

Fig 56 *Out of the Question* 2020 Meacham <https://www.timmeacham.space/out-of-the-question>

Fig 57 *Internal Lagrange point* 2018 Meacham. Point between back & front of house marked by miniature interior wall which interrupts flow of wall surface, draws the eye and offers pause.

Fig 58 *Light Flow*. Meacham 2020

There was no sound from the adjoining room, save the breathing of the house. Small holes had been drilled in the wall near the ceiling – light was channelled through acrylic rods allowing an exchange of light between the silent rooms.

Fig 59 *Track*. Meacham 2021 <https://www.timmeacham.space/track>

Fig 60 *Idea of England* Meacham 2018 1:72 Scale model & light

<https://www.timmeacham.space/house-paradox>

Fig 61 *Idea of England* Meacham 2018 1:72 Scale model & light

<https://www.timmeacham.space/house-paradox>

Fig 62 *The Sound Sweep* | after JG Ballard. Meacham 2020

<https://www.timmeacham.space/sound-sweep>

Fig 63 *Chasing Sabretooths* Mauricio Anton <https://chasingsabretooths.wordpress.com>

Fig 64 *Chasing Sabretooths* Mauricio Anton <https://chasingsabretooths.wordpress.com>

Fig 65 *Overlooked Skirting board Exploration Probe, OSEP* Meacham 2020. Miniature wireless video camera, ST projector, model railway track. A miniature wireless video camera circumnavigates a room with a live projection back to the space. Like a startled mouse looking for an escape hole, a small, powered probe mounted on rails takes the viewer on scurrying journey into the overlooked recesses of a domestic space via the skirting board. Tiny surface details and occasional glimpses back into the room are projected on a huge scale, filling the walls of the room. Designed to be viewed through exterior windows the probe will stop if anyone enters the space, the exchange one for the room alone and giving prominence to the humble skirting board in its often-overlooked role as seam between floor and wall. The skirting board serves to mark and knit/stitch the internal horizon the at edge of spaces managing the junction between the vertical & horizontal planes floor/wall. It is the barrier between interior space and external natural forces, temperature, draught etc.

Like the view from a moving train and its links to early cinema, as the landscape unfolds, the linear movement of the skirting board somehow facilitates the telling of stories, its unrolling drawing the eye in a journey around the edge of space. A journey punctuated by doors/tunnels like a line of text. Trains and skirting boards both skirt space giving a privileged view back into the centre.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/osep>

Fig 66 *Cone Headphones*, Meacham 2015. Device for hearing wall cavities

<https://www.timmeacham.space/cone-headphones>

Fig 67 *Skirting Board Tracer*. Meacham 2016 <https://www.timmeacham.space/skirting-board-measurer>

Fig 68 *The Lost Language of Cranes*. Meacham 2017. Model tower crane, electronics.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/the-lost-language-of-the-cranes>

Fig 69 *Silvopasture*. Meacham 2018. Miniature tree and kitchen fitting

<https://www.timmeacham.space/silvopasture>

Fig 70 *The Great God Pan is Dead*. Meacham 2018 Model trees, water, light

<https://www.timmeacham.space/the-great-god-pan-is-dead>

Fig 71 *The Way Home*, Meacham 2017 Installation in domestic void

<https://www.timmeacham.space/the-way-home>

Fig 72 *Lockdown*. Meacham 2021. *Model landscape with solitary watchtower & tree*

Made during the first lockdown in 2020, the model landscape fills the interior of the bay window considered as an indoor balcony in its projection from the front of the house and point of 2-way communication. The barren rocky landscape in the empty and curtainless window with a single tree and illuminated watchtower speaks of vigil and isolation, both from within and outside.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/lock-down>

Fig 73. *Vibrissae Headphones*, 2014. Meacham. Device for hearing surface & space through touch.

Cat's whiskers, doped tissue paper, headphone arms <https://www.timmeacham.space/whisker-headphones>

Fig 74 Gloves for playing miniature books. Meacham 2016. Page surface played through stylus, attached to miniature contact mics in glove fingers.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/micrographia>

Fig 75 Gloves for playing miniature books. Meacham 2016. Page surface played through stylus, attached to miniature contact mics in glove fingers.

Fig 76 *Vibrissae*, Meacham 2014-15. Rail mounted surface player.

<https://www.timmeacham.space/vibissae>

Fig 77 *Dandy in the Underworld* Meacham 2016 Installation within cavity wall of house traversing height of building <https://www.timmeacham.space/untitled-2016>

Fig 78 *The Cat's Whiskers* Meacham 2016. Whisker triggered dust redistribution.

Fig 79 *Cast* Meacham 2017. Elastic, electric motor <https://www.timmeacham.space/cast>

Fig 80 *Shearing Layers of Change: A building is always tearing itself apart How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built* 1994 Stewart Brand

Fig 81. 1972 Hillman Avenger 1500

Fig 82. *Eye of the Needle: Sound and Vision* Meacham 2018. Miniature wireless video camera attached to record player tone arm, live projection. <https://www.timmeacham.space/sound-vision>

Fig 83. *The Craft /The Whisker at the Heart* Meacham 2023

Fig 84. *Burn After Reading*. 2008 Cohen Brothers

Fig 85. *Porous University Architecture*. Meacham 2023. Windows at the University of Kent School of Architecture adapted to allow plants to grow into buildings. Research program facilitating an organic 2-way exchange with external space. Aimed to *relieve stress, and boost creativity, focus and staff and student wellbeing*.

Part 2

House

Fig 86. My desk

Fig 87. Silver Birch from rear garden

Fig 88. *Glass Choir* 2019 Hearing aids and drinking glasses. (My mother's hearing aid collection playing part of her glass collection) Hearing aids listening and "singing" to each other through feedback and the resonance of glasses. The glasses, having spent years unused in a display case (waiting for the party that never happened), are liberated and activated through the addition of hearing aids. Their individual "songs" continually change, as the aids find the resonance of each glass and pause, only to begin the search again.

Fig 89. *Left on the Stairs*, Meacham 2017 <https://www.timmeacham.space/left-on-the-stairs>

Fig 90. *Track*. Meacham 2019 <https://www.timmeacham.space/track>

Fig 91 *On Landing*, Meacham 2016 miniature plaster wall <https://www.timmeacham.space/wall>

Fig 92 *Dandy in the Underworld* Meacham 2016 Installation within cavity wall of house.
<https://www.timmeacham.space/untitled-2016>

Fig 93. Interior wooden threshold

Fig 94. Zanonía tree seed

Fig 95. Dunne D.5 *Flying Wing* 1910

Fig 96. B-2 Stealth bomber

Fig 97. Mars Bar

Fig 98. *Mobile Caravan/Vertical reach* Meacham 2017

Fig 99. My Children under a table

Fig.100. Children's offerings left under floorboards.

Fig 101. *The Sound of the Whistle*, Milo Thesiger–Meacham, 2005.

Fig 102 *Tree Dream* 2018 Meacham <https://www.timmeacham.space/dave-s-cupboard>

Fig 103 *Vibrissae Headphones*, 2014. Meacham. Device for hearing surface & space through touch. Cat's whiskers, doped tissue paper, headphone arms

Fig 104. Gloves for playing miniature books, 2016 Meacham. Page surface played through stylus, attached to miniature contact mics in glove fingers.

Fig 105 *Cone Headphones*, 2015. Meacham. Device for hearing wall cavities

Fig 106 *Tube Headphones*, 2016. Meacham. Listening device

Fig 107. *More than This* 2018. Meacham. Vapour, light, square section plastic tubing.

Fig 110. 31 *Playtime* 1967 Jacques Tati. Royal Garden restaurant scene in which part of the ceiling collapses to form a temporary VIP space. A drunk finds himself at the threshold of this space and appoints himself doorman and only lets people in who have the crown on their backs from the freshly painted chairs. Those admitted have no idea why.

Fig.111. *Fungal Listening*. 2023. Meacham

Fig 112. *Structural Survey* 2021. Meacham. <https://www.timmeacham.space/structural-survey>
The buyer asked for reduction in the price after having a structural survey done which revealed evidence of movement in the last 165 million years. We instructed our solicitor to inform the buyer of the immanent return of the sub-tropical sea, and to forward a list of the various creatures that were likely to live in it .

Fig 113. Plaster wall surface detail

Fig 114. *Singing Slate* 2023. Meacham *It took several hours to open the door to the last room. The space had been hermetically sealed and there was a slight hiss of air as I turned the door handle and broke the rubber seal. I felt a breath of released stillness touch my skin, and in that moment, life had never been more precious.*

Fig 115 *Extremophile* 2017. Meacham *Domestic installation with light & lens*

Fig 116 *Blister lens* 2019 Meacham *Polythene blister, air & light.*

Fig 117 *Centre Piece*. 2020 Meacham <https://www.timmeacham.space/centre-oiece>

Fig 118. *Playing to the Edge* 2019. <https://www.timmeacham.space/skirting-cast>

Fig 119. *Lagrange Craft* 2023 Meacham

Fig 120 *Internal Lagrange point* 2021 Meacham. Point between back & front of house marked by miniature interior wall which interrupts flow of wall surface, draws the eye and offers pause.

Fig 121. Projected light from landing window

Fig 122. *BOH (Back of House)*, Meacham, 2024.

Fig. 123. *The Cats Whiskers*, Meacham, 2019.

Fig. 124. *Still liquid cosmic vapour trails over the skirting* 2018 Meacham *Still liquid cosmic vapour trails over the skirting* 2018. Light reveals the liquid memory of a once poured and blown glass dome, as frozen flow. Hand blown glass dome and light projected on edge of skirting board. Each line a trace of a frozen breath of the glass blower. <https://www.timmeacham.space/over-the-skirting>

Fig. 125. *Duster*, 2016 Meacham. Dust fall activated by the exterior sound of passing trains. Dust collected from the room redistributed.

Fig. 126. My son Milo, helping me record the sounds of the site for *It was Dust* 2016 <https://www.timmeacham.space/uplees>

Fig 127. *The Lost Language of Cranes* 2017. Meacham. Model tower crane, electronics <https://www.timmeacham.space/the-lost-language-of-the-cranes>

Fig. 128. Tower cranes, London

Fig 129 *The Way Home* 2017. Meacham. Cavity space revealed and lit with miniature streetlight.

Fig 130. Warehouse, 2024, Harlowe, Essex.

Fig 131. *Light Flow* Meacham 2020 Perspex rods inserted in wall, linking rooms.

Fig 132. New housing development Faversham, Kent

Fig 133. Drone missile strike.

Fig 134. *Drone Strike* Meacham 2020. Dust, light & broken toy drone.

Fig 135. *The Sound Sweep /after JG Ballard* Meacham 2022

Fig 136. *Cone Headphones*, Meacham 2015. Device for hearing wall cavities

Fig 137. Restoring landing window

Fig 138. *Hollyhock communicating trumpet* Meacham 2023

Fig 139. Natural light projected on wall through original window glass

Fig 140. *Lockdown* Meacham 2021. Model landscape with solitary watchtower & tree. Made during the first lockdown in 2020, the model landscape fills the interior of the bay window considered as an indoor balcony in its projection from the front of the house and point of 2-way communication. The barren rocky landscape in the empty and curtainless window with a single tree and illuminated watchtower speaks of vigil and isolation, both from within and outside.

Fig 141. *Pushing the Envelope*, Meacham 2016. OHP lens, on model railway track moving in and out of 1st floor window <https://www.timmeacham.space/pushing-the-envelope>

Fig 142 Cylinder glass manufacture 1937 Bale, Edward Stewart Ref No RIBA23731

Fig 143. *Rear Window* Meacham 2019

Fig 144. DIY pause

Fig 145. DIY pause

Fig 146. Projected light

Fig 147. Landing window

Fig 148. *Girl Seated by a Window* Carl Holsøe 1863 - 1935

Fig 149. Window glass measured with micrometer

Fig 150. *Window Rattle Enhancer* 2023 Meacham

Fig 151. *Ophthalmosaurus* 2023 Meacham

Fig 152. *In the Same Car* 2021 Meacham

Conclusion

Fig 153. *Drone Strike Meacham* 2020. *Dust, light & broken toy drone.*

Fig 154. *Eye of the Needle*, Meacham, LP record played through accumulating layers of dust 2017

Fig 155. *Picture of Dust* (Tony Smith, Die, 1962, installed at the Whitney Museum in "From the Collection: Photography, Sculpture, and Painting," July 14, 1994-February 26, 1995) 2000

Fig 156. *Duster*, Meacham, 2016 <https://www.timmeacham.space/duster>

Fig 157. *The Way Home*, Meacham 2017 *Installation in domestic void*
<https://www.timmeacham.space/the-way-home>

Fig 158. *Perimeter Fence*, Meacham 2022. Skirting board and miniature fencing.

Fig 159. *Overlooked Skirting Board Exploration Probe*, (OSEP.), Meacham, 2020.
www.timmeacham.space/osep

Fig 160. *Breath Trap*, Meacham, 2024. www.timmeacham.space/breath-trap

Fig 161. *Bike and Piano*, Meacham, 2019. timmeacham.space/bike-piano

Fig 162. *Playing to the Edge*, Meacham, 2019. In collaboration with Celeste Thesiger Meacham.
timmeacham.space/skirting-cast

Fig 163. *Capsule*, Meacham, 2018. timmeacham.space/capsule

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Notes

1 Heidegger 1971, n. p.

2 Benjamin 2002, n. p.

3 A Lagrange point is a position in space where objects sent there tend to stay put. At Lagrange points, the gravitational pull of two large masses precisely equals the centripetal force required for a small object to move with them. NASA/WMAP Science Team

4 Dustsceawung /du:stfæ:awung/ Old English Noun - Contemplation of the dust; reflection on former civilizations and peoples, and on the constant state of change (Pinterest - <https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/846113848723417741/>). Contemplation of what has been lost and the transience of things (X -

<https://twitter.com/RobGMacfarlane/status/857836956000165888?lang=en>). A constant theme in the earliest old English writing i.e. Beowulf- of looking back to the past. Particularly the fascination experienced by looking at a ruin, a kind of daydream of dust, pondering that which has been lost.

5 An extension of Donald Winnicott's psychoanalytic concept 'holding 'applied to space, "What is needed is a form of holding, such as a mother gives to her distressed child. There are various ways in which one adult can offer to another this holding" (Casement 1985, p. 112)

6 The fireplace and mantelpiece as domestic monument/shrine focus of the room and performative area of display like a theatre "These were, for many generations, conventionally thought of as the focal point of the living room" (Lawrence, R. R. & Chris, T. 1996, n. p.) "Exploring the narratives about things emphasises what mantelpiece displays ...are accomplishing in the home. Their materiality is not bound by temporal and spatial limits, since they are the material with which people build stories of absent presences, a horizon beyond which the past and future, the otherworld and ideal self-dwell." (Didau 2001 in Hurdley 2006, p. 112).

7 de Bono 1969, n. p. In relation to my work, many of the pieces, once made, finding their place, installed and recorded, cease to exist and are reabsorbed back into the flow and fabric of everyday life. The pieces, whilst still existing as a memory are in a sense still happening, joining the other memories, held within the walls of the house as traces – a momentary disturbance of stillness.

8 <https://soundhealingforum.discussion.community/post/about-that-famous-tesla-quote-frequency-vibration-9959413>

9 Rilke in Bachelard, 1994, pg. 201

10 Macfarlane, R. 2015, n. p.

11 <https://thehum.info> The World Hum Map and Database Project Dr. Glen MacPherson.

12 The Ever-Circling Automotive Family is a reference to the song Big Brother/Chant of the Ever-Circling Skeletal Family from the 1974 album Diamond Dogs by David Bowie and references George Orwell's novel 1984

13 Sally Traffic is traffic news reporter on the UK national radio station BBC Radio 2

14 Lovecraft, H. P. 1936. n. p.

15 <https://www.transportenvironment.org/discover/cars-are-getting-too-big-for-british-roads-new-research-shows/>

16 <https://www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk/road-junctions.html> Rule 170

17 A minimum of 30 million birds are killed on Britain's roads every year. Depending on the

assumptions made in the statistical analysis, the death rate could be even higher: 70 million a year is not impossible. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/carnage-on-the-carriageway-millions-of-birds-and-animals-die-each-year-on-britain-s-roads-can-the-death-toll-be-reduced-malcolm-smith-on-the-wildlife-holocaust-1384964.html#>

18 Ballard 1971, p. 103

19 Ballard 2012, n. p.3

20 https://www.tbcs.org.uk/cemetery_railway.html

21 Edward Thomas: *Adlestrop* 24 June 1914. Thomas's poem written just before the outbreak of the first world war on 28th July 1914, captures a sense of the last summer of peace and the end of the Edwardian era. Thomas was killed at Arras on 9th April 1917

22 "A house within a house, the dollhouse not only presents the house's articulation of the tension between inner and outer spheres, of exteriority and interiority-it also represents the tension between two modes of interiority". Susan Stewart, 1993, *On longing*. The model railway layout is a model of an external space made and kept inside. The model trains exist within their own world

23 Coffin Trains was the name given to special funeral trains which carried the dead and mourners on the London Necropolis Railway from Waterloo to the Brookwood Cemetery station in Surrey from 1854- 1941

24 Pallasmaa 2012, pg. 56

25 Bachelard 1994, pg. 73

26 "...proposed that new memories are initially represented within the hippocampus, and that during the course of consolidation, they become interleaved into a network of existing related memories in the neocortex." (Preston, A. & Eichenbaum, H. 2013, R767)

27 Colomina 1992, p. 83

28 "...the power of immobile intensity, even *Vertigo*. Immobile intensities, as described by Deleuze,

are precisely the intensities that inhabit a zone of supposed emptiness... Deleuze says... that he... feels no need to move. All the incentives that he has are immobile intensities" (Murphie, 2011. p. 24)

29 Garcia, 2015, n. p. Inner Space is a term coined by JG Ballard in his 1962 manifesto published in *New Worlds Magazine* "Which Way to Inner Space?" In which he states, "the biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is inner space, not outer, that needs to be explored" (Ballard 1996, p. 197). He considers the exploration of inner space an increasing requirement of living and survival, rather than a retreat from the world. Space is core in much of his writing, see, for example, *The Enormous Space* 1989, and *Report from an Unidentified Space Station*, 1982. Space is active in his writing rather than a mere passive vessel for the action. J.G. Ballard takes existing (home) and imagined spaces and transforms them through imagination and projection.

"Space occupies a primordial position in Ballard's texts, in so far as it transcends its ordinary function as a "place of action" to become an "acting place" (Garcia 2015, n. p.)

30 Cocker 2011, pg. 87

31 Pallasmaa 2012, n. p.

32 Bachelard's ideas of between or thresholds, are extended inwards and further explored in my proposal of possible interior domestic "Lagrange" points. Areas of meeting or interior points where the "pull" of each space is equal and they cancel each other out, and the effect of this upon the occupants i.e. when a thought is suddenly lost on leaving one space to enter another. Perhaps not an effect of pain, but one of feint shifts in gravity and a sense being momentarily "held" between spaces as the gravity of one relinquishes its hold to another

33 Bachelard 2019, n. p.

34 Bachelard 2019, n. p.

35 Potter 1908, n. p.

36 Approximately 6 to 10 percent of early humans were preyed upon, according to evidence such as teeth marks on bones, talon marks on skulls and holes in a fossil cranium into which sabre-tooth cat fangs fit.

"It developed from a basic Judeo-Christian ideology of man being inherently evil, aggressive and a natural killer," he says. "In fact, when you really examine the fossil and living nonhuman primate evidence, that is just not the case." (Hart & Sussman 2005, n. p.)

37 Hart, D. & Sussman, R. 2005, n. p.

38 "He moved like a crane, made the noises of a crane, and although the doctors showed him many pictures and toys, he only responded to the pictures of cranes, only played with the toy cranes. Only cranes made him happy. He came to be known as the 'crane-child.'" (Leavitt 1986, n. p.)& quote; How wondrous, how grand those cranes must have seemed to Michel, compared to the small and clumsy creatures who surrounded him. For each, in his own way, she believed, finds what it is he must love, and loves it; the window becomes a mirror; whatever it is that we love, that is who we are." (Leavitt 1986, n. p.)

39 García 2015, n. p.

40 The protagonist, Des Esseintes, decides never to leave his house and becomes a "traveller of the Mind": "The pleasure of travel - existing as it largely does only in recollection and almost never in the present, at the actual moment when it is taking place..." (Huysmans 1998, p. 18) Besides, he considered travel to be pointless, believing that the imagination could easily compensate for the vulgar reality of actual experience

41 Wells 1926, n. p.

42 Brand 1995, n. p.

43 Ballard 2006, n. p.

44 "Modernist planners and architects lost the sense of building to the human scale. No profession was asked to look after this. Everything was done too big as if it was not for people anymore." (Gehl 2010, n. p.) We see its (modernism) demise in 1960s kitchens and bathrooms, white-tiled laboratories that are above all clean and aseptic, as if human beings were some kind of disease. We see its death in motorways and autobahns, stone dreams that will never awake, and in the turbine hall at that middle-class disco, Tate Modern - a vast totalitarian space that Albert Speer would have admired, so authoritarian that it overwhelms any work of art inside it." (Ballard 2006a, n. p.)

45 Colomina 1992, p. 86

46 Spyridaki in Bachelard 1994, p. 51

