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Testing, Testing

Dialogue

Testing, Testing

Dialogue

vol. 2

writing :
imagi
image

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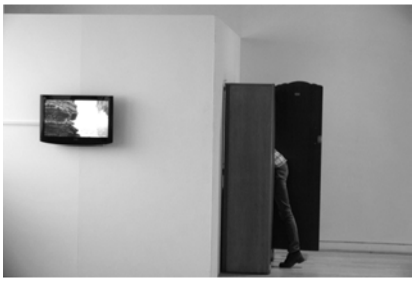


Introduction

Jo Ray and Michael Day

This is the second of two publications produced as part of *Testing, Testing*, a project that aims to explore the process of artistic production as research methodology. Initiated and produced by practice-based Ph.D. researchers in the fine art subject area at Sheffield Hallam University, the project takes the form of an exhibition at SIA Gallery, a symposium event, and two publications.

The first publication introduced a framework of ideas, parameters and concerns that set the scene for the group exhibition at SIA Gallery. Each exhibiting artist produced a text that responded to their artwork in the process of its production, making some predictions, exploring intentions, or generating loose hypotheses about how the works might function. As artist-researchers, we each have a willingness to expose our artistic practice to public discussion and critique, and the symposium set out to open up our methods, practices and approaches to public scrutiny and to generate critical dialogue around them. At the symposium, some of the works were discussed through group critiques, while some of the artists made more formal presentations of their findings so far. These modes of dialogue produced insights that we have attempted to capture and represent in this publication. We hope that through the variety of strategies used here to expose and relate our findings, it might be possible for the reader to access the parts of the process of artistic research that might not usually be seen.

The duplication in the title of this project could denote the repetition of double-checking, or an utterance made to find out if one's voice is decipherable, perhaps even an echo. It also suggests an intention to test the act of testing itself. If the production and exhibition of artwork can be considered a research method, we need to properly interrogate our assumptions about experimentation and how we think it works for us. This generates dialogue that crosses disciplinary boundaries and presents new opportunities for understanding. Having now encountered the work as both process and as exhibit, and from the perspective of both author and viewer, what has been learned, and how?

Mallarmé Me Marcel

Bernadette O'Toole

> … the point may be compared to an instant of time, and the line may be likened to the length of a certain quantity of time, and just as line begins and terminates in a point, so such a space of time begins and terminates in an instant.[1]
>
> —Leonardo Da Vinci

MVI_3810.MOV

I place one foot in front of me then the other, each step moves me closer to the horizon line. My eye traces the curvature of the earth, anticipating a point directly in front of me. My body vertical to the horizon line forms a cross signalling a point of intersection, a centre, a place of origin.[2] Your words circle me like an incantation, 'you just tear off a blank white page and, according to your mood, start writing'.[3]

I begin by writing these words drawn from your critical poem *Music and Letters* and now I sound out the words casting them into the wind like a spell.[4] It sounds simple, one word then another forming a line, each line approaching its end, its dot, full stop. But it isn't this simple. 'The line has in itself neither matter nor substance and may rather be called an imaginary idea than a real object; and this being its nature it occupies no space.'[5] These are Leonardo Da Vinci's words, words that give way to paradox for line is both present and absent conceived in the mind as an idea, embodied first in the imagination as a concept and given form in an act that signals an encounter with time and space. Da Vinci's concept of the line has its roots in Euclidean geometry, in linear perspective and in an account of representation that privileges vision.[6] In Leon Battista Alberti's treatise *De Pictura*, linear perspective provides a model for depicting objects in space; Alberti's *window on the world* is a construct based on numerical values.[7]

I feel my foot press into the soft ground, each step moving me forward. I picture Alberti's pyramid, a line connecting me to a point directly in front of me that does not exist.[8] I consider line, its relation to time to space and how such a construct can be used to shed light on the differences and similarities in writing, painting and music.

Bernadette O’Toole: *Mallarmé Me Marcel*

I begin at the centre of your poem.

AS IF | A simple insinuation | in the silence inrolled ironically | or | the mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of hilarity and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling it | or escaping | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign | AS IF.

…

---

[1] *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, originally published as *The Literary Works of Leonardo Da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter 1883, Vol. II, XV. Astronomy, Of time and its divisions, pp. 916–918.

[2] This is an excerpt from *Dialogue I: Mallarmé Me Marcel*. Two films corresponding to this dialogue show a performative reading of Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem *Un Coup De Dés*, exhibited at Sheffield Institute of the Arts in 2016.

[3] Stéphan Mallarmés; *Divagations*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 191. [Divagations, Paris: Bibliotecque-Charpentier, 1897].

[4] Ibid. pp. 173–198.

[5] *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol II. Linear Perspective, Definition of the Nature of the Line, pp. 47–48.

[6] See *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol II. Linear Perspective, Definition of Perspective, p. 50. ‘Drawing is based upon perspective, which is nothing else than a thorough knowledge of the function of the eye. And this function simply consists in receiving in a pyramid the forms and colours of all the objects placed before it. I say in a pyramid, because there is no object so small that it will not be larger than the spot where these pyramids are received into the eye. Therefore, if you extend the lines from the edges of each body as they converge you will bring them to a single point, and necessarily the said lines must form a pyramid.’ Da Vinci describes painting as the more noble art because it is based on vision and vision is scientifically measurable. Da Vinci makes a distinction between painting and poetry: while both in his account seek to imitate nature, he privileges the eye over the ear. In his account the eye is closer to truth.

[7] See Joel Snyder’s excellent account of Alberti’s application of linear perspective in his essay Picturing Vision, included in *The Languages of Images*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell, pp. 219–246. Snyder singles out Alberti’s ability to conceive of the mental construct, the image as a picture. The genius of Alberti he goes on to say was not simply in conceiving of a visual image as a picture; he also provided a method by means of which that image could be projected and copied by art (p. 240).

[8] For a full account of Leon Battista Alberti's treatise see, *On Painting and on Sculpture* The Latin Texts of ‘De Pictua’ and ‘De Statua’, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London, 1972). Interesting to compare with Da Vinci who was influenced by the ideas of Alberti, see Vol I, II. Linear Perspective and IV. Perspective of Disappearance in *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*.

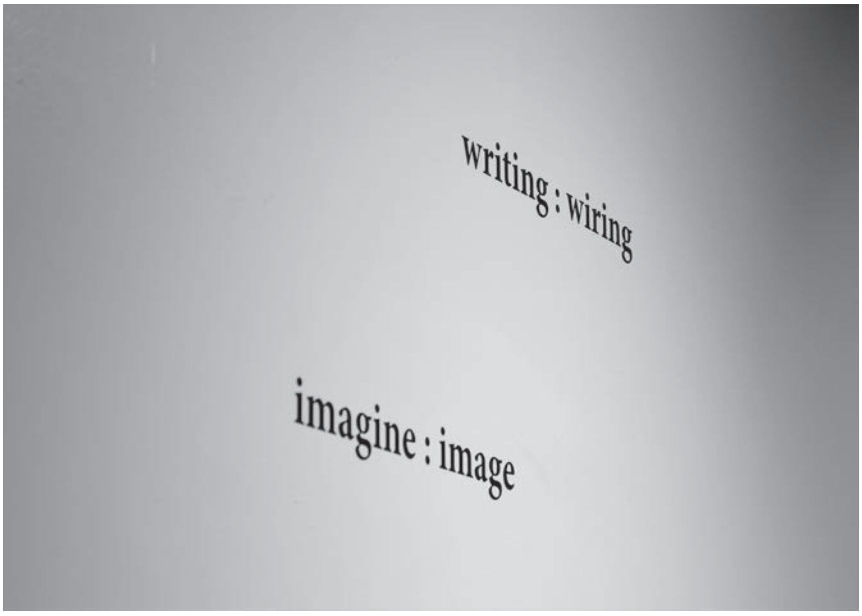
[9] For translation of Un Coup De Dés I refer to *Stéphane Mallarmé, Collected Poems and Other Verse* translated by E. H. and A. H. Blackmore, my preferred translation of the poem.

Content : Context

Rachel Smith

In considering ways of theoretically framing my practice I find myself repeatedly reaching for the words of Roland Barthes. In recognising this action it has become necessary to investigate the *punctum* moments I have experienced in reading his texts and to analyse their importance. The two works shown in the *Testing, Testing* exhibition use practice as a way of thinking through some of Barthes' ideas about reading, writing, and thinking. In making these works I have endeavoured to have a dialogue with Barthes, through his writing, in order to advance my own thinking via practice. This dialogue begins with the process of annotating his texts and thinking about the ways in which his words specifically connect to my practice. Re-reading allows for making notes in a variety of ways: in an academic manner, making connections to other theorists, and exploring the aims of my research. The notes also include free association; allowing my mind to follow a less specific path making connections which may only reveal their relevance at a later date, as well as forming ideas which directly feed the making process. The next stage of the dialogue is to make an artwork as a way of physically thinking through Barthes, in this manner his ideas become embedded in the work.

Find and Replace



Find and Replace, 2016, vinyl lettering, various sizes

Rachel Smith: Content : Context

Barthes writes:

> The mistakes that can be made in typing a manuscript are so many *meaningful incidents*, […] the erroneous (mistyped) word, without being the word I wanted to write, is a word which the lexicon permits […] the new word exists — the phrase keeps a meaning, however eccentric; […] there is a *skid within the codes*: meaning subsists, but pluralised, faked, without law of content, of message, of truth.[1]

While writing on a computer, my mind frequently moves faster than my fingers (or is it the other way around?). The result is that words get typed with either their letters in the wrong order or an adjacent key is pressed. Either way, the auto-correct function in my word processing software takes over at that point, regularly obliterating my original intention. This sleight of hand happens at such speed that it is often only noticed later, at which point it can be problematic to remember the original word and I am left searching for a credible meaning in order to re-correct the alteration. This work presents both words — intention and correction, exploring the ‘skid within the codes’.

Ubiquitous technological systems frequently offer automatic alternatives in various guises. These generalised auto-thinking suggestions can easily become adopted as though they were the original objective. Intention meets correction. In this way the machine looks for an outcome that makes the most sense as the human operative is sidelined — as an impatient parent who snatches the pen from the hand of a child to correct their repeated mistakes.

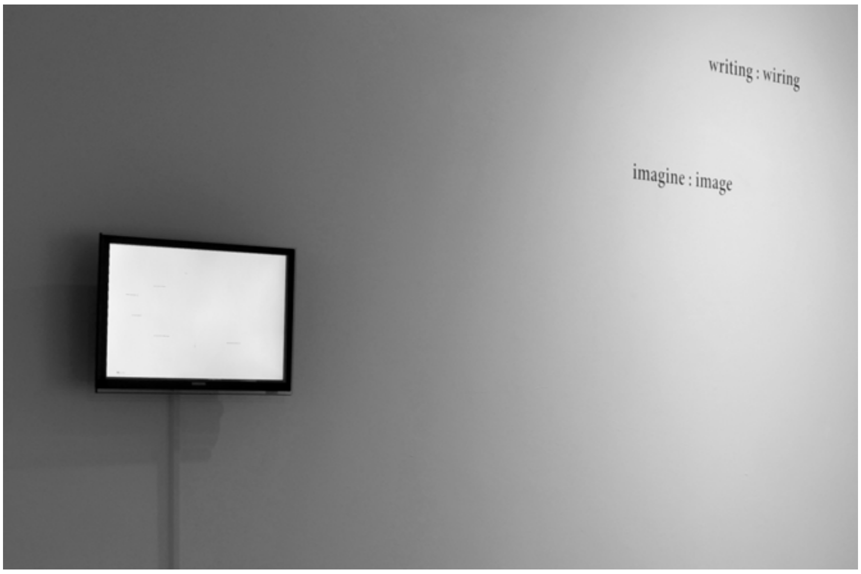
For the purpose of the *Testing, Testing* exhibition this concept was materialised as several pairs of words, intention and correction symmetrically spaced either side of a colon. The gaps either side of the colon are significant and correlate with a term used by Deleuze: ‘vacuoles of non-communication’.[2] Though they contain no visible language they are not empty, and possess a potential energy. They are the spaces inhabited by the other, the unwritten, the unheard, or as yet the unspoken.

In considering the scale and font of the text in the space I began to look at the white walls of the gallery as an equivalent of the page surface. Derrida’s assertion that everything in the world is a text and can be read in that manner re-emerged, pushing me to consider the function of the text in the territory between the other artists’ work and loading a further layer of significance to these spaces between the text and around the works. Expanses that are waiting to be read, but yet to be categorised. At the time of writing there are discussions around the possibility of utilising the work in the publication as a connective and dialogic device.

To Write—intransitive verb

Barthes writes:

> For a long time I thought there was a *Wanting-to-Write* in itself: *To Write*, intransitive verb — now I’m less sure. Perhaps to want to write = to want to write something ⟶To Want-to-Write+Object.[3]



To Write—intransitive verb, 2016, moving image

Materiality is a substantial method of my practice and the idea of writing as an intransitive verb struck me while reading this Barthes text. Intransitive verbs do not allow for an object as opposed to transitive verbs which are applied to an object, for example: I want to write, as opposed to I want to write a book. This has led to thinking about what it might mean to write without producing an object. The act of making has led me to consider the change in state between wanting-to-write and actually writing. I want to explore the period of time that exists between the fantasy of writing, which Barthes writes about, and the reality of writing and whether that transitional state can be expanded. This provisional state feels generative as it retains its potentiality, everything is yet to be fixed, anything remains possible.

In constructing this work I have of course failed. An object has inevitably been produced, but one that never fully reveals itself. Here the meaning continues to be denied even after the process of typing is activated. The content is omitted from the digital page and as Craig Dworkin writes ‘omissions within a system permit other elements to appear more clearly’.[4] When faced with the seemingly blank digital screen other details rise to the surface. The pulsing cursor is demanding, even as the writing movement seems to hesitate, the blinking continues pushing for further action with no sympathy for uncertainty. The word counter steadily keeps score though nothing ever materialises to correspond with its tally. The red underscoring of unreadable mistakes scar the white surface, while the autocorrect function flickers varied suggestions for the words it algorithmically is able to read as errors, while the writing process continues below the visible surface.

imagine :

…

[1] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986). [*Le Bruissement de la langue*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1984] pp. 323–324. [emphasis added]

[2] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, no. 3, (1992).

[3] Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Course and Seminars at the College de France (1978–1979 and 1979–1980)*, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). [*La préparation du roman I et II. Cours et séminaires au Collège de France 1978–1979 et 1979–1980*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003] p. 10 [original emphasis]

[4] Craig Dworkin, *No Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 9.

understanding :

image

Post-*Mock Objects*

Michael Day

The *Testing, Testing* symposium was staged to open a discussion about the potential for interdisciplinary dialogue that can be generated by practical art research. My Ph.D. is concerned with attention and distraction in the context of compulsive internet and device usage, and so references the strongly interdisciplinary field of critical attention studies.[1] It also involves study into areas such as user interface and user experience design; human computer interaction; behavioural addiction; as well as media studies, sociology and cultural studies. The symposium offered an opportunity to see a range of perspectives on an approach that is central to my research.

The range of disciplines that my research interacts with has required me to think carefully about how to plan my study, as it would be impossible to reach a doctoral level of expertise in all of these seemingly unrelated areas. In my symposium presentation, I compared artistic and scientific research using an analogy with oil prospecting. The generation of knowledge through scientific research can be thought of as analogous to *drilling for oil*. First, a survey is done to identify likely locations where oil might be found (literature review); an apparatus, such an oil platform, is constructed to drill for oil (hypothesis), and if the location and apparatus are right, oil is found (new knowledge). The practice of ‘drilling down’, or gradually focusing in on an area of knowledge, also provides a way of conceptualising how knowledge is generated through scientific research. By comparison, artistic research is more like *cleaning up an oil spill*. After an oil spill, the leakage is corralled and scooped up by ships over a wide area of the surface of the sea. This resembles the way in which artistic research gathers material from wide-ranging and disparate sources, as if ‘leaked’ from other disciplines, and generates new knowledge by using new aggregations of this material as a context for the production of artwork. While this isn’t a perfect analogy and has plenty of inconsistencies — how are ‘knowledge leaks’ identified and located, for example? — it has proved a useful way to begin to consider the way that interdisciplinarity operates in my study.

The starting points for *Mock Objects*, my piece in the exhibition, are drawn from a number of disciplinary perspectives. In my contribution to the previous volume, I wrote about gamification and the permeability of the border between online and offline experience that informed the production of the piece. Here, I want to look at the insights that the exhibition process has generated, and how they might feed back into my research enquiry.

understating

The piece consists of augmented reality software that I have modified to highlight certain of its characteristics. The software operates by locating geometric markers in a video frame and then calculating their orientation in 3D space, in order to then insert virtual augmentations into the video scene.[2] The software analyses a frame of video and calculates two alternative best guesses for the orientation of the marker, which are represented as two planes in 3D space. For each plane, the software gives a numerical estimate of the amount of error in its calculation. Since this process is repeated on every frame of video, the orientation of the planes changes from frame to frame, resulting in a flickering, restless image that reflects the uncertainty of the software’s algorithms.

The piece was shown on an unframed monitor and installed high on the wall of the upper space at SIA Gallery. The wall chosen is perhaps the least compelling wall in the gallery for the exhibition of artwork, since as well as being physically behind the viewer as they enter the gallery, it is also the site of a large air vent, several metres of cable trunking, the security alarm's passive infra-red sensor and control console, and the entrance door to the space. This visual clutter is supposed to be ignored by the viewer as they go about the business of attending to the artwork.

While positioning *Mock Objects* on this wall was an instinctive decision in response to curatorial constraints, doing so placed the work at a nexus of the play of attention involved in gallery attendance. Most of the visual clutter on the wall can be considered to be infrastructural: it supplies lighting, air or electricity, supports the security of the artworks, or provides physical access to the space. As John Durham Peters has written, 'the bigger the infrastructure, the more likely it is to drift out of awareness'. He goes on to suggest that since the prefix *infra* means below, the presence of infrastructure should prompt the question of what it is intended to be *infra* to.[3] In this case, by its retreat into the background, the 'invisible' infrastructure foregrounds the white-walled institutional gallery space, with its established structures of engagement, expectations of behaviour and attentional norms. The siting of the piece allows the work to oscillate between its status as a focus for the viewer's attention and as potentially ignorable infrastructure.

The piece's onscreen image further complicates matters. The flickering planes invite the viewer to make a comparison between their two possible orientations. The viewer here is installed as an empowered overseer, and is given the opportunity to apply conscious scrutiny to the output of a visual processing algorithm. This contrasts with the power relations enacted by user interfaces that invite compulsive usage, in which design tricks are often used to invoke unthinking, habitual interactions. The colour and orientation of the planes is unmodified from their appearance in the debugging view of the original software, but the background has been changed from a static colour to a slowly shifting cycle of colour. This allows attention and distraction to alternate between the visual elements within the work. If the viewer is focusing on the movement of the planes, they might not notice the background changing until after the change has taken place.

The method I used to produce the work — tinkering with an existing open source software library and reflecting on the results as if they were an artwork — allowed something akin to insight to emerge via a forced transition between disciplines. The debugging interface of the augmented reality software library was designed by its author to be entirely utilitarian. Reading it instead as an artwork defamiliarises it, creating the potential for new understandings. This strategy of defamiliarisation is one of the methodological strengths of artistic practice-as-research.[4]

The piece was produced with questions about compulsive usage in mind, but it has prompted additional questions about the veracity of computational representations of reality as enacted by software in a broader sense. If even simple algorithms like this one are prone to error, why are computerised outputs so often deferred to in other situations? In this piece, the algorithm's uncertainty is presented as a binary choice — this plane or that plane — but computerised modelling of reality is often much more sophisticated than this, and the consequences more significant. For example, when using social media, multiple data points are passively generated and gathered to produce profiles of the user which are then used to push precisely targeted, attention-capturing advertising. Facebook identifies almost a hundred separate data points to categorise users based on the data they generate through their use of the service.[5] Algorithms model the viewer, and shape the view of reality that they are then presented with.

These interpretations of the work and the questions they raise might not be straightforward for a casual viewer to access. While a viewer might read the work only on its visual appearance, having the dual perspective of both viewer and author has enhanced my analysis. With prior knowledge that the piece is made of modified software, and knowing the extent of the modification and its functioning, questions about algorithmic interpretations of reality present themselves more readily. Conversely, by reading the image solely on its appearance, a viewer might come up with a very different set of interpretations and questions.[6] Exhibiting the work in a gallery context has revealed that the meaning and the research content of this particular work are best uncovered not by asking what it looks like, but by asking *how it works*.

This raises a further question, one that was hinted at above: if the white-walled institutional gallery is a highly structured context in which visual appearance is normally the first point of encounter with an artwork, is staging work in this context the best way of exploring computational questions? Are there other ways of understanding the work, or more viable contexts for its presentation?

A parallel but relevant set of ideas can be found in Louise Amoore's work on the geopolitical consequences of cloud computing.[7] Writing about Trevor Paglen's work, which consists of photographs of National Security Agency data centres taken with astronomical telescopes from great distances, Amoore locates such artistic approaches 'within and alongside the paradigm of observation'.[8] She argues that observation alone is an inadequate way of understanding the computational cloud, partly because so much algorithmic processing takes place at speeds that are beyond the human capacity to observe. She instead proposes a distinction between mimetic and analytical scientific instruments, and argues that the observable physical characteristics of the cloud, such as its territorial location or the buildings used to house it, are less important than the cloud's capacity to analyse and extract patterns from data.

Following this reasoning helps develop a more nuanced understanding of *Mock Objects*. The piece asks to be attended to as art, invoking the established forms of attention that the gallery context demands, even though these are problematized by the work's location alongside 'invisible' infrastructure and by the behaviour of the onscreen image. Since the gallery context favours the observable characteristics of an algorithmic system over its analytical capacities, the power dialogues inherent in data modelling remain obscured: *infra* to the the display of work and difficult for the viewer to access. As a research activity, 'exhibition-as-method' has therefore framed a new set of questions to do with exhibition context and the accessibility of meaning that can be explored in future work.

…

[1] See Rogers (2014) for a thorough review of the field.

[2] The AR library I used is called *js-aruco*, and has been developed by Juan Mellado.

[3] See Peters (2015), p. 36.

[4] See Nelson (2013), p. 28.

[5] Caitlin Dewey, ‘98 Personal Data Points That Facebook Uses to Target Ads to You’, *The Washington Post*, 19 August 2016 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/08/19/98-personal-data-points-that-facebook-uses-to-target-ads-to-you/?hpid=hp_hp-more-top-stories-2_intersect-701am%3Ahomepage%2Fstory> [accessed 21 August 2016].

[6] One symposium attendee described the work as ‘almost Greenbergian’, noting its visual similarity to twentieth century abstract painting.

[7] Louise Amoore, ‘Cloud Geographies Computing, Data, Sovereignty’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 2016, 309132516662147 <http://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516662147>.

[8] Amoore, p. 10.

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A Constructed Fiction

Debbie Michaels

Stage

/steɪdʒ/
'A point, period, or step in a process or development.'
'A raised floor or platform, typically in a theatre, on which actors, entertainers, or speakers perform.'

Construction

Raised platform: 345 × 150 cm, comprising: 3 × 1.8 cm medium density fibreboard (MDF) sheets, cut to size, screwed to 5 × 5 cm softwood battens, leaving shadow gap of approximately 5 cm around the edges. Drill 5 cm diameter hole, centrally positioned 25 cm in from one end of platform to allow for power and headphone extension cable. At the opposite end of the platform, drill 1 cm hole 40 cm in from the end 60 cm in from the side, to allow for headphone extension cable.
Monitor housing: 100 × 45 × 135 cm in 1.2 cm MDF, with removable top for access to technical equipment, and aperture cut-out for monitor screen, 47.5 × 26.7 cm, positioned centrally at a height of 100 cm to centre of aperture. Drill a 0.9 cm hole 2.5 cm below and to left side of aperture when facing, to allow access to monitor sensor.

Surface Finishes

Top surface and edges of platform painted two coats light grey floor paint.
Exterior surface of monitor housing painted two coats matt white emulsion.

Physical Objects and Materials (supplied by artist)

2 × tub chairs, 57 × 66 × 61 cm, synthetic black leather with black cylindrical wooden legs
Jute woven mat: 92.5 × 153 cm
Square MDF plinth, 30 × 30 × 30 cm with 50 cm diameter top, painted white matt emulsion.

Deconstructed 'Art Therapy Object':

Hand-built core object 17 × 16 × 3 cm, Model Magic
1 × length of string, 460 × 0.2 cm (brown)
1 × length of string, 301.5 × 0.15 cm (natural)
3 × individual lengths of yellow wool knotted together to form a length of 130 cm.
Lengths of distressed loose weave hessian scrim: 1 × 58 cm, 1 × 75 cm, 1 × 210 cm.
Small coloured craft feathers: 2 × red, 2 × pink, 2 × blue, 2 × white, 1 × orange
Sparkly Pipe Cleaners: 30 cm, 2 × sparkly gold, 3 × sparkly silver, 3 × sparkly red

Debbie Michaels: A Constructed Fiction

1 × Chenille Pipe Cleaner: 30 cm – orange
Chenille Pipe Cleaners with bump stem: 30 cm, 1 × yellow, 1 × pink, 1 × red
1 × Length of red ribbon: 105 × 0.88 cm, 1 × Length of purple ribbon:
103.5 x 0.8 cm,
Black plastic wire: 1 × length 89 cm, 2 × lengths 92.5 cm

Technical Equipment

22 inch Monitor screen, Media Player, HDMI lead, USB stick loaded
with MP3 video/audio, 1 set headphones, 5m headphone extension lead,
power extension lead, operating instruction sheet.

Dialogue

/ˈdʌɪəlɒɡ/

'A discussion between two or more people, especially one directed towards exploration of a particular subject'
'A conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film'

Carry out Risk Assessment prior to installation. Position platform with 150 cm width placed centrally against pillar, with length extending beneath double height ceiling, and over two of the floor services outlets. Run headphone extension lead under platform and up through prepared holes at either end (larger hole at pillar end). Plug power extension cable into floor outlet and pass up through hole in platform.

D The clock on the video screen is on the hour. There is no-one else here and yet I feel the presence of so much more. I sit in the chair with the object opposite … its constituent parts laid out before me … scattered, trailing threads. I feel an expectation, as if the object is staring back … reaching out … asking something of me … asking what? A part of me wants to reach forward, to touch a hanging thread … I resist the impulse.

J The first thing looking at it just now is that it's quite different. When I looked at the video it was a very ordered process of dismantling the object … everything you did very carefully … you took the pieces apart and put them in little piles, sorted them out, straightened things out … and then looking at it now, they are very much strewn around … it's not got that order. The pieces are sort of scattered, trailing from one place to another and hanging off the table. This looks like the debris that's been left behind.

Fix monitor tight to inside front of housing with screen aligned to aperture and clear perspex sheet in front. Position monitor housing on the platform, placed centrally with back face slightly away from pillar.

Testing,
Testing
13th August - 4th September

D A camera watches, two in fact … one directly in front, and another further away, watching from a distance. I feel other eyes around looking, even though no-one is there. The eyes of the children whose portraits hang in the corner behind me … they seem to look down at me accusingly, as if to ask 'why did you abandon me?'[1] Their names chime out in the space on the quarter hour, reminding me that I must not forget they are there. More eyes, different eyes … disembodied … staring, and that heavy breathing sound … muffled with the headphones on, but lurking in the corners of my mind.[2]

J Watching the video originally, it looked like an investigative procedure, almost scientific … straightening things out and putting rulers against them, measuring them … a careful sorting.

Plug in power and HDMI connector between monitor and media player. Fix media player to inside front of housing with sensor facing up. Insert USB stick into media player. Set up video playing on repeated loop. Correct timing to the hour as per instruction sheet fixed to inside of monitor housing. Place remote controls in plastic bag taped to inside of monitor housing and place top in position.

D My awareness shifts to the wall on the screen to my left … a row of people are standing peering through its restrictive openings.[3] Barriers and resistances come to mind … what may be hidden or blocked from view … shut out or defensively walled off. 'What am I hoping to gain from this?' I want to fidget … my eyes are closing … struggling to remain open. 'What will the camera show?'

J It makes me think of physics and the fundamental building blocks of nature and the idea that … at what point does something stop becoming recognisable as what it is … and you started off with this object and the object was made up of various components, but once you've separated them out into ribbons and feathers and string and so on, then there's nothing left of what that object was … only the components of it … and if you then take them further apart then the ribbon is made up of lots of threads … if you break those threads up you are left with nothing of the ribbon-ness of it. Each layer of dismantling you are finding something out about the component, but in the process you are dismantling the whole.

Position chair 1 centrally on the platform with its back against the monitor housing. Position chair 2 centrally on the platform with the back of the chair at a distance of 280 cm from the back of chair 1. Fix chairs to stage with 8 × 90º right angle 4 × 4 cm stainless steel brackets and 32 screws. Plug in headphones, tape excess lead to underside of chair, and hang over right arm of chair 2.

D My eyes close finally … relief … guilt. 'What is this about? Am I just tired or is there something I don't want to see … to know about?' Forcing them open again I catch sight of the small figures on the sand … being washed over by the sea, continually, repeatedly … naked figures, they writhe about … in vain it seems, as if unable to shift their position.[4] Earlier, half in and half out of the wardrobe, I peer through the holes voyeuristically … trying to see … see what?[5]

J Yes, it does seem to be saying something about losing track of the whole by looking at its components too closely … in dismantling something to find out what it's made of, it's also a destructive process … research … yes, this idea of … destructive … the analysis process … I wasn't thinking of psychological, I was thinking of the scientific analysis process which often requires the destruction of the thing that you are investigating.

Place jute mat centrally on the platform, between the two chairs. Place plinth centrally on the jute mat. Position the core object against the back of chair 1 at a 60° angle with the seat and the open section of the object facing down. Place/drape the component materials of deconstructed 'art therapy object' randomly on/over chair 1, extending onto floor and plinth.

D I watch the clock. Finally, the 50 minutes is up. I lean forward in the chair and reach out to touch the materials in front of me. I hold my head in my hands … a familiar feeling.

J Ah yes, the clock … the time ticking away.

…

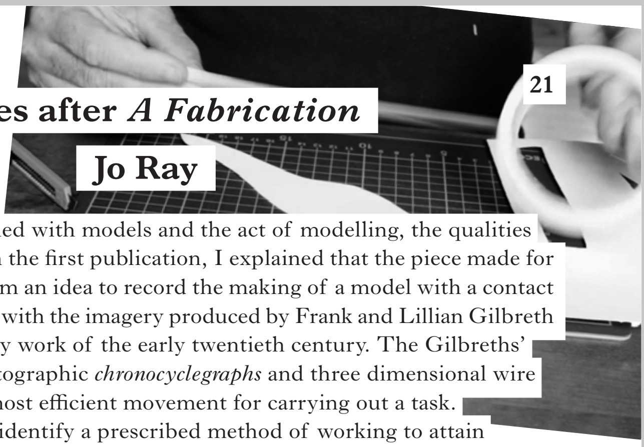
[1] Rachel Emily Taylor, *Finding Foundlings*, 2016, paintings and audio.

[2] Emma Bolland, *Some Thoughts on Interiors and a Conversation about Treatment*, 2016, installation with staging, video, drawing and other ephemera.

[3] Rose Butler, *Lines of Resistance*, 2014, video.

[4] Susannah Gent, *Shoreline*, 2016, moving image.

[5] Susannah Gent, *Wardrobe (War Machine)*, 2016, installation.



Notes after *A Fabrication*

Jo Ray

My Ph.D. research is concerned with models and the act of modelling, the qualities of both object and process. In the first publication, I explained that the piece made for *Testing, Testing* originated from an idea to record the making of a model with a contact microphone, and a fascination with the imagery produced by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth in their time and motion study work of the early twentieth century. The Gilbreths' produced visual models (photographic *chronocyclegraphs* and three dimensional wire models) to demonstrate the most efficient movement for carrying out a task.

The Gilbreths' aim was to identify a prescribed method of working to attain a predictable outcome time and again.[1] Our concern was to draw out the peculiar qualities of the making process when one is uncertain of an outcome. I wanted to consider what emulation and improvisation feel like, in order to inform broader questions in my research about the nature of models and modelling. What it is to follow a template, to plan, or to resist planning one's actions? How do we begin an action when we are unsure what is required, continue when uncertain, or conclude if we do not know what is expected?

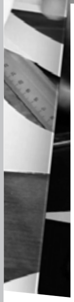
I was excited to share the Gilbreth images with my collaborator Rees Archibald. We were both somewhat seduced by the abstraction of the concrete presence of workers and their movements into glowing lines of light. The images acted as a navigational point from which we plotted a work which would use contact microphones as the means of capture and sound as a means of transmitting the making process as a kind of pattern or score to follow. Our method would (we imagined) result in unpredictable outcomes.

I had anticipated the dialogue present in this work to be a fairly straightforward comparison of the experience of making, as interpreted by one person who makes visual work and another who is more attuned to working with sound. Indeed, this has yielded some insights, but unexpected things have also been revealed, including new insights into my methodology, which will inform the next stages of my research. Each aspect of the project could be understood as a dialogue of sorts; from the process of making the recordings to installing the work; from the encounter with the work in the exhibition to the symposium, and of course the conversations between myself and Rees. Here I will attempt an account of some of the learning that has arisen through the different stages of the project.

In this text, I reference some of the ideas and literature that have been companions to the work. Some of my thoughts are inconclusive, or just the start of a line of questioning, but including them acknowledges how making art work allows me a new kind of access to literature.

Our initial plan was to each record the fabrication of an original object and a 'response', however, we quickly fell into the roles we were most familiar with. I, agreeing to make the first object, quickly became preoccupied with deciding what its form should be, and eventually took an intuitive decision to follow a template from a *Boys' Book of Model Boats*.[2]

Jo Ray: Notes After *A Fabrication*



I set up the shot and unexpectedly found myself rehearsing, making a paper model boat hull six times in total, documenting each attempt in one shot on video and audio recorder before sending the final file from Copenhagen to Vilnius. Here, without seeing what I had made, Rees listened closely and fabricated an object by improvising actions suggested by the sounds he heard. One way to think of this is as an attempt to 're-play' the sounds. He recorded this process with a contact microphone.[3] When we spoke via Skype a few weeks later we tried to put into words our experiences of making.

> RA: So I might have been cutting or sticking and another sound came in and I, I would finish it quickly ...but I wouldn't interrupt it in mid flow.
>
> JR: And it sort of explains…some of your movements started off …while your movements always seemed very confident even though umm…you were trying to follow something that was potentially quite difficult, it never felt like your movements were really tremulous or unsure or anything like that…
>
> RA: Yeah, no, I tried to make it a definite decision whatever it was and do it and then also not to, you know, plan it too much but at the same time…. yeah I don't know how to say

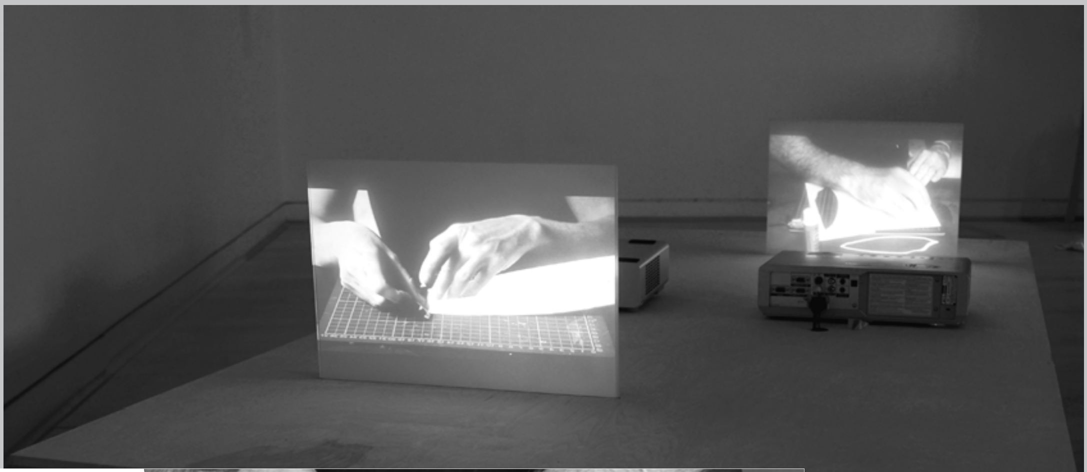
We had not anticipated the urge to repeat or the need to practice, but each of us did. I attempted to differentiate:

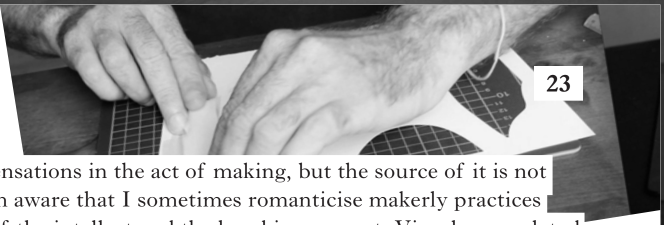
> JR:: practice, not rehearse, so like. its practicing to get yourself into a state rather than practicing to…get exactly the same lines time and again whereas I suppose…I was copying an 'image' so I did…

The definition of rehearsal given by the Oxford dictionary is 'To practise (a play, piece of music, or other work) for later public performance',[4] whereas practice is 'Repeated exercise in or performance of an activity or skill so as to acquire or maintain proficiency in it.'[5] So whilst *rehearsal* implies performing to an audience, *practice* focuses on the act itself, the concentration and precision arrived at through repetition. So one could rehearse a known movement with the eye of the audience in mind, but in practicing, the skills required to improvise a skilled action are most important and the act may be performed with or without an anticipated audience.

My own activity in making and re-making the paper model drifted between these two states. I certainly anticipated and made decisions about the visual appearance of our work as I reviewed the footage, tweaked the lighting, adjusted the framing of the shot, or re-positioned my hands in order to allow the camera as much access as possible to the action of my fingers on the paper. But the repetition inevitably also led to a greater fluidity and confidence. Rehearsal became practice, which allowed a genuine absorption in the task.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this state as 'flow', and the characteristics of this state of satisfying absorption have been an important reference point in Rees's work.[6] Our conversations prior to this collaborations often engaged with this, as well as Ingold's ideas of 'textility' in making.[7] Through my own practice, I have





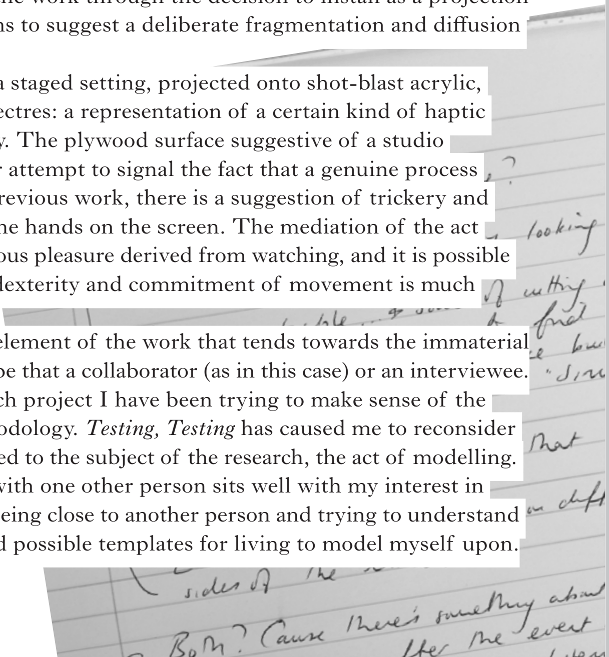
some experience of such sensations in the act of making, but the source of it is not easily represented, and I am aware that I sometimes romanticise makerly practices in which the combination of the intellect and the hand is apparent. Visual cues related to work that is done for its own sake, particularly enthusiast or amateur practices, recur throughout my research. In this respect, *A Fabrication* continues to inform a discussion of the qualities which set such activity apart from other kinds of labour, where and how those qualities might be found and why they matter.

The being ‘in the moment’ suggested by ‘flow’, the possibility of transcendence through absorption in a task called to mind Ernst Bloch’s ideas about the unrealised possibilities for the future, as well as the knowledge of the past, that exist in *the moment*. In making this connection, I began to understand the method used in *A Fabrication* as a practical means of working through Bloch’s thoughts. Levinas supports Bloch’s suggestion that Utopia can be found in diffuse actions and processes throughout human culture, that ‘Utopia does not require the imaginative construction of whole other worlds.’[8] Indeed she goes on to state that ‘it is evident that contemporary culture is saturated with utopianism, even (or especially) where there is no figurative representation of an alternative world.’[9] I see the action that occurs in *A Fabrication* as resonant with this idea. The first stage (performed by my hands) takes a pattern with a known, knowable outcome; the second action is a feat of disciplined attention, acute listening and an attempt to attain and maintain a state of ‘flow’.

Although the materiality of sound was a key component in the work, in visual and tactile terms there is a dematerialisation of the act of making and its product. The temporary removal of visual information during the making process, and the restraining of the physicality of the work through the decision to install as a projection rather than to perform live, begins to suggest a deliberate fragmentation and diffusion of a narrative about making.

The act of making appears in a staged setting, projected onto shot-blast acrylic, our hands glow like theatrical spectres: a representation of a certain kind of haptic experience that glows appealingly. The plywood surface suggestive of a studio workbench is a reserved but clear attempt to signal the fact that a genuine process happened here, but as with my previous work, there is a suggestion of trickery and magic in the aestheticisation of the hands on the screen. The mediation of the act perhaps even heightens the vicarious pleasure derived from watching, and it is possible that the skill suggested through dexterity and commitment of movement is much more convincing on screen.

Another (albeit more hidden) element of the work that tends towards the immaterial is the conversation with another, be that a collaborator (as in this case) or an interviewee. Since the inception of my research project I have been trying to make sense of the role of the interview in my methodology. *Testing, Testing* has caused me to reconsider the interview as intrinsically related to the subject of the research, the act of modelling. The intimacy of a conversation with one other person sits well with my interest in scale, and the idea that through being close to another person and trying to understand their methods, I am trying to find possible templates for living to model myself upon.


sides of the
Both? Cause there's something about
something after the event

Jo Ray: Notes After *A Fabrication*

The actions we carried out in *A Fabrication* unexpectedly brought the act of transcription to the forefront. The translation from audio recording into a physical object, caused me to draw a parallel to the transcription I had made earlier in the year which revealed to me the multiple levels on which this process can operate.

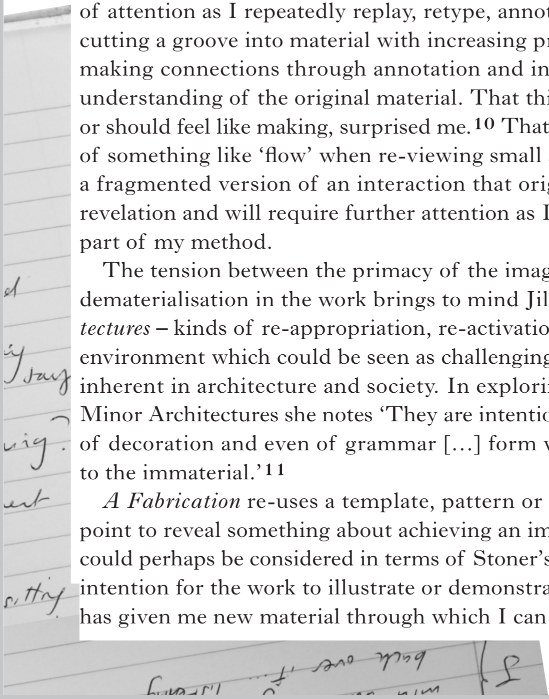
When I make a transcription, I am revisiting a conversation. I can recall an impression of the meeting, and of the quality of the interaction, but often will have forgotten much of the detail of actual content, or have an abbreviated set of ideas about what was said. As I listen to the recording, my expectations and my memory of the event are challenged.

I hear the event not as it happened, but in fragments of between two and ten seconds, replaying full sentences, phrases or single words once (if they flow in a predictable way and my brain manages to translate what I am hearing to accurate key strokes first time) or up to six times if I misinterpret a syllable, forget a longer phrase, or mistype. I take short cuts by guessing, filling in what I imagine might come next or what I thought I heard, but always return to correct my mistakes. I am often surprised to hear a quite different conversation to the one I imagined was had.

I hear my own voice, air-conducted from a recording, rather than vibrating through my bones as I usually hear it, and experience the usual discomfort that brings. I cringe at how audible my thoughts and attitudes are even if not overtly discussed. I hear my interviewee's voice and feel excited at how much they appear to reveal. I feel affection, curiosity and frustration. Listening repeatedly feels like uncovering something that lies beneath the apparent. I sometimes use video software to listen 'scrubbing' back and forth through the timeline of the conversation. The incremental acute focussing of attention as I repeatedly replay, retype, annotate and re-interpret, feels like slowly cutting a groove into material with increasing pressure. Noticing thematic threads, making connections through annotation and interpretation in turn generates new understanding of the original material. That this act should have a *textility* of sorts, or should feel like making, surprised me.[10] That I should find myself in the absorption of something like 'flow' when re-viewing small audio clips repeatedly, experiencing a fragmented version of an interaction that originally flowed, was an interesting revelation and will require further attention as I try to understand it as an integral part of my method.

The tension between the primacy of the image and the growing tendency towards dematerialisation in the work brings to mind Jill Stoner's thoughts on *Minor Architectures* – kinds of re-appropriation, re-activation and deconstruction, of the built environment which could be seen as challenging the power structures and the myths inherent in architecture and society. In exploring how we might begin to identify Minor Architectures she notes 'They are intentionally improvised, fractional, stripped of decoration and even of grammar [...] form will tend to dissipate to give way to the immaterial.'[11]

A Fabrication re-uses a template, pattern or 'master', and uses this as a starting point to reveal something about achieving an improvisational 'flow'. This structure could perhaps be considered in terms of Stoner's concepts. At the outset, there was no intention for the work to illustrate or demonstrate these ideas, but the act of making has given me new material through which I can converse with them.



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[1] Brian Price, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and the manufacture and marketing of motion study, 1908-1924 (Business and economic history, 1989), <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/TheGilbreths.pdf> [accessed 20 July 2016].

[2] Raymond Francis Yates, *Boys' Book of Model Boats* (New York: The Century Co., 1920), <https://ia802307.us.archive.org/9/items/boysbookofmodelb00yate2/boysbookofmodelb00yate2.pdf> [accessed 20 July 2016].
This choice of source material aligns with that used in past works. I often select material originating in the early twentieth century. Although not key to the function of the processes in this work, the material nevertheless has significance in the broader project. Nostalgia is important in my line of enquiry, and the social and political connotations of these source materials are a means to begin questioning what different languages of model-use imply, and what their status might be.

[3] As the name suggests, this picks up vibrations through contact with objects and surfaces rather than sounds transmitted through the air. My contact microphone was damaged in transit (I was in Copenhagen at the time, Rees lives in Vilnius), so for my part of the work, a standard microphone was used. Ultimately the use of two different recording methods seemed to suit the structure of the piece.

[4] Oxford Dictionaries online <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rehearsal> [accessed 17th September 2016].

[5] Oxford Dictionaries online <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practise> [accessed 17th September 2016].

[6] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

[7] Tim Ingold, ‘The Textility of Making’, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34 (1), (2010) 91–102. In this work, Ingold compares practice to weaving, and draws out the argument for understanding creativity as a process which progresses forwards as the practitioner senses their way through the material, improvising and responding to its particular qualities; as opposed to a ‘hylomorphic’ view of making in which we assume making is ‘the imposition of form upon the material world, by an agent with a design in mind.’ (p. 1.)

[8] Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 5.

[9] Levitas (2013), p. 5.

[10] Ingold (2010)

[11] Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), p. 2.

Testing,
Testing

INT.

Transcript of Discussion at *Testing, Testing*

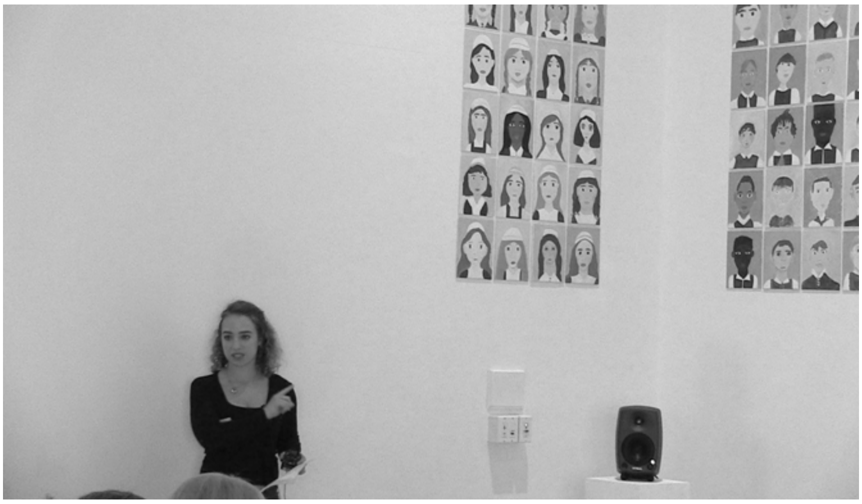
Rachel Emily Taylor

Rachel Emily Taylor: So I'm just going to have to check, can all of you hear me OK? If you can't, just wave, and I will try and speak a bit louder.

I'm Rachel and I'm doing a Ph.D. here, at Sheffield Hallam, and it's called *Heritage as Process: Constructing the Historical Child's Voice Through Art Practice*. This is my work in the corner. What I have been doing as part of the project, is working with the Foundling Museum in London. So I'm not sure if any of you have heard of it — I'm sure some of you have — but it is a museum about children who couldn't be looked after by their parents. It was a hospital set up in the 1700s.

So, while I was working in the archives, I noticed that the children didn't have a 'voice'. Often their voices were covered or masked by adults. In a sense, I felt that they were missing. They didn't have a presence either in the museum.

So what I have been doing as part of the residency in the museum — and as part of a way of trying to give a voice back to these children — I have been working with contemporary children.



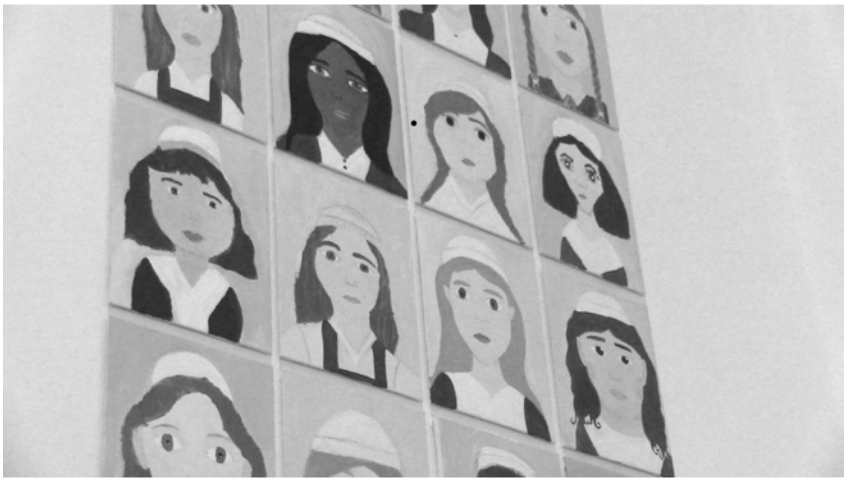
Now the theme of the exhibition is 'dialogue'. And that's where a lot of the dialogue has been occurring. It's been in these workshops when I've been working with the children. And as you can see there are these paintings on the wall. There are sixty-four that I have exhibited for this exhibition and each one is painted by a different child aged between five and fourteen. The reason why I picked this age group was … well, that was the age the children were. They were brought from the wet-nurse to the hospital at five and were there until the age of fourteen when they were apprenticed.

So I've worked with these children and we have tried to imagine what these other children were like. So there is quite a lot in that relationship that is hidden now, because of ethical restrictions I cannot show what happened in the workshop.

I also found that the children were having a lot of fun and there wasn't much empathy on the surface, but something was starting to happen in the paintings. So I've divided the boys and the girls and I've tried to work in the gallery space — this isn't where the work is intended, it is meant for the museum — so there is all of that, kind of, layers there.

All of the images look regimented, they're all similar, a bit like the foundling hospital. But that occurred through working with the children, each child had a mirror and they invented this 'character', but it is a self-portrait as well —

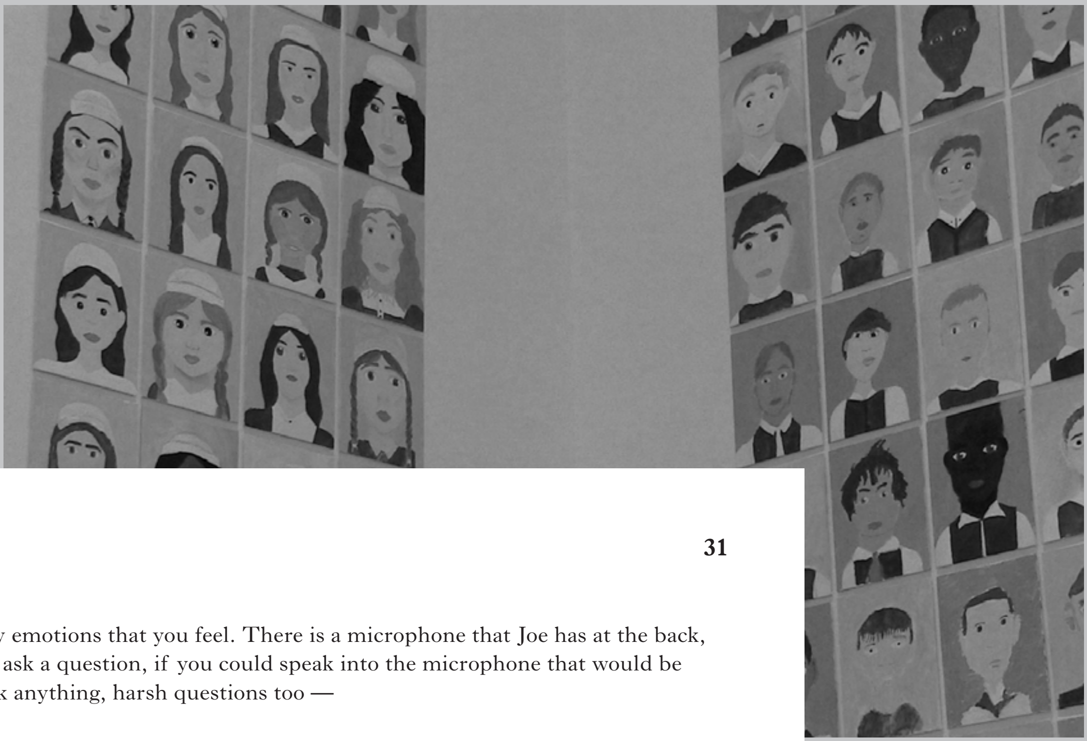
'William, Sally, James, Robert, Joanna, Emma, John, Mary, Thomas, Alice, Jenny, Edward'.



Rachel Emily Taylor: — So that's actually happened at a good time! The museum is actually full of clocks. Grandfather clocks. And when I was working in the museum, there was this sense of time. Time being out of joint. And every time the clocks chime, they're slowly wearing down the mechanism and breaking. They also remind me of classroom, registers, and their names are in lists. This piece chimes on the hour, quarter past, half past and quarter to. It's the children reciting the names of the first foundlings but also the names of the portraits of their 'characters'.

Testing, Testing has been really useful because it has given me ideas of how I will display the work. This is a test. I hadn't displayed the paintings before and a lot of ideas have come from this. For example, the way sound travels: high frequencies travel forward and this is at child height but the low frequencies bounce on the wall and collect in the top.

But what I am going to do now, I've given a brief introduction and I'm sure there is lots I've missed out. But I wanted to open it up to you as a 'crit' format. So any questions that you wanted to ask about the work — and I'm also interested in how you



read it or any emotions that you feel. There is a microphone that Joe has at the back, so when you ask a question, if you could speak into the microphone that would be fantastic. Ask anything, harsh questions too —

S.W.: I was just wondering, because you said this work was made for a museum, and when you put your work in a different context, and obviously a gallery is very different to a museum. It was made in the museum, and for the museum. Now you're seeing it in a different context. I was wondering how that affected your reading.

Rachel Emily Taylor: I found that quite a challenge. I felt almost as if I was up against a wall, it wasn't made for this space. And it was quite difficult because there are lots of different things — so at the minute, I am working towards an event at the museum where I can't display them on the wall to start with, they have to be on structures. But then working with the space and in the context, and you're working alongside other artists and considering what looks good, and you've got such high walls here. That changes the way you read and encounter the work. So many things I didn't think would be an issue until I saw it, for example, the height of the wall has changed the way the way you would read the work and I didn't expect it to have quite an impact. When you walk towards it, suddenly you're looking up and they're looking down and that changes it. It's not how it's meant to be viewed, but it has given me so many ideas for the next stage. So it is like a test. *Testing, Testing.*

A.M.: I am really intrigued, because when I came in, I assumed they were children's paintings and then I looked and them and thought 'no, no' they're faux-naïve paintings. Because these faces are just so … full of shock, horror, thought. There is an incredible amount of vulnerability within them. I'm reluctant to ask how you worked with them, because I feel like you can get distracted in the '*how did you do it?*' but I am really genuinely interested in how these pictures emerged.

Rachel Emily Taylor: Now, that is something that shocked me as well. I've been working with the children in a role-play environment. We have been performing and a lot of it turned out to be comical, and it was just when they started to paint — something in the expression — the wide-eyes and closed mouths as well, because I'm looking at 'voice' and they don't have a voice. They're silent. I actually used a few methods from performance, from Stanislavski in terms of trying to get them to imagine, empathise, and character building exercises. Each workshop is about three hours. So that's a long time with each child.

A.M.: With each child separately?

Rachel Emily Taylor: It was in groups of five. So me and five children. So even though it doesn't look like a lot of work on the wall here. It took up a lot of time.

A.M.: Well I think that reads, they're deeply engaged in their characters.

Rachel Emily Taylor: Transcript of Discussion at *Testing, Testing*

Rachel Emily Taylor: But also what is quite surprising, but none of them tried to do a different expression. But that is because of the set-up. They worked with a mirror and they're framed it like the mirror. So there is a sense of structure.

A.M.: So looking in the mirror might be why the eyes have that particular quality.

R.S.: — But as somebody who comes from teaching at a Secondary School, for me, they look very familiar. A lot of this seems to be about *our* projection. Because you're working with the students and creating these portraits, which in some respects are quite expected. But they provoke, by putting them in this setting with the background information about the Foundling Museum, it does something to us. There is an interesting dialogue that starts to happen in the way we project ourselves and our understanding on that. And I wanted to ask you, because it fascinates me, did you provide them with a limited colour palette, did it happen naturally, or did they copy each other?

Rachel Emily Taylor: The colour that I limited was the background. They also saw the paintings of the foundlings, so they've mixed the colours to match the uniform. So in a sense, it is limited, because they're copying the uniform that was available.

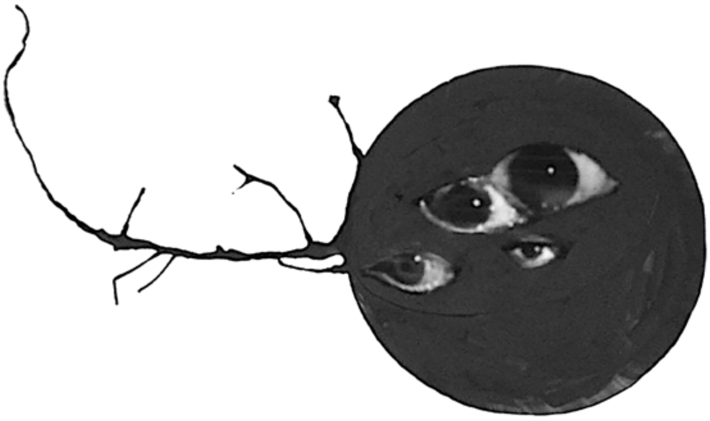
But what I thought was really interesting was your comment about — I don't necessarily think it's a criticism, because I'm looking at 'heritage' — so heritage is this idea that you're working with the past in the present. And there is this layering of 'it's happening *now*' and it's our interpretation of the past. We can never *really* access the past. But I thought that was useful, that idea that it is our feelings *now*. It is very much *now*. And this is a contemporary reading of these images, and it might not have this way back then. They might not have thought the same thing. Or done the same work.

Flashback, and the Treatment of the Dream

Emma Bolland with Jake Arnott

'That is the introduction. Writing one allows a writer to try to set the terms of what he will write about. Accounts, excuses, apologies designed to reframe what follows after them, designed to draw a line between deficiencies in what the author writes and deficiencies in himself, leaving him, he hopes, a little better defended than he might otherwise be.'[1]

I frame myself within the narrative. I position the reader in relation to the script.



September, 2016

My dear Jake,

I set out to engage in a dialogue about a document, about the words that come before a film. I was thinking about adaptation, and asked you to be my interlocutor because you are both a novelist and a screenwriter, and therefore aware of the gaps, the moments of change, the reformulation of frames that occur between literary text, screenplay, and film. You have been an actor, and undergone direction. You have experienced the transposing and mutation, the cutting and overwriting between one thing and another. The in-between space where multiple voices are visible; the space of adaptation that might be called the space of transition. *In The Intervals of Cinema* Jacques Rancière outlines one conflict of adaptation, by saying that 'literature is not simply the art of language that would need to be put into plastic images and cinematic movement. It is a practice of language that also carries a particular idea of "imageness" (imagéité) and of mobility'.[2] He is suggesting that literature itself can be cinematographic, and that, paradoxically, cinema has to 'reduce the excess of visual imagery that literature uses to project itself in imagination beyond its powers'.[3] Being an artist/writer I am delighted by the idea that a text may have more imagery than a picture, and that as I move between mediums, words may not always be where I think they are. But, being a writer/writer, you might experience the spaces between modes very differently.

When I asked you about this in front of an audience, you said that the most basic difference was a legal one. The novelist owns the novel and although a scriptwriter might own a 'spec' script, that is to say one they have created, as soon as they sell it they give up creative control; and credit often becomes an issue if a script is made, because it will have gone through so many hands, that no one will be quite sure who actually is the writer of this curious mutant thing.

This made me laugh, because your answer was so prosaic. When I had asked you about this in our previous correspondence, our dialogue had seemed, to me at least, much more expansive, dreamlike; a series of jump cuts as we emailed back and forth across space and time. We started by talking about the word 'treatment' from psychoanalytical and cinematic perspectives, and soon became caught up in a discussion of the dream sequence. I had been watching Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, with its dream sets designed by Salvador Dali.[4] I was slightly unhinged: working on the drawing that tracked the course of our emails; fretting and re-editing the short films. And throughout I was reading Rancière, who of dream sequences in general says that 'dream images always have to be signaled as dream images', so that 'the dream rhetoric destroys the dream'.[5] Your answers in that dialogue were lengthier, less guarded, and you spoke of your current screen adaptation of a playwright's teenage diaries, of the demand for a kind of 'biopic', and of your feeling that the only thing that cannot not be filmed is real life, which means that you can only treat these diaries as a dream. You said that the essential reality of a film exists only in the illusion it can create: it has to be a dream that we share in a darkened room. You said that we can only project images of life that work on an imaginary level, and so any notion of 'real life' becomes problematic. You talked of the difference between realism and naturalism, and (rather beautifully) pointed out that the function of the lens is to distort as much as it is to focus, that we see through the glass darkly, as it were.

It is indeed a dark business. Making work always disturbs me, it lends me a heightened awareness of both fearing and desiring the critical gaze of the other, burning under 'the solicitation of the gaze'.[6] I steal this phrase from Lacan, who perhaps means something slightly different: the split between the 'call and the reproach', the needy subject and the accusing object, both of which exist within us at the same time.[7] Close enough though, I think. The intangible spectres, the 'I' and the 'eye' for whom the work is made…

Working on the drawing was particularly unsettling. I used the paper to free-associatively respond to our conversation, to attempt a mapping of unconscious thought. I worked in scroll form, and began to think of it as a roll of film turning in a camera, and then, moving in both directions, like editing a digital timeline. I realized how much I was relying on memory: the marks being made were haunted by the marks concealed, these in turn being reworked in an overwriting of what had already occurred. It looked a mess, was uncontrolled, did not seem like ‘my work’. And what was on the paper was in a dialogue not just with our conversation, but with the film editing, and with Rancière. I had a half-formed memory of Bergson and his idea of La Dureé, the duration, and of memory and time being a scroll that simultaneously rolls and unrolls … and I hesitate as I am not sure that I am right about Bergson: perhaps the paper (the plane of the memory) is not a scroll, but is rolled into a cone, and I am falling through its funnel: I may even have created this memory of a memory of memory.[8] I think, my dear friend, that I have made a drawing that is enacting flashbacks, or indeed flash-forwards…

Maureen Turim describes the screenplay for Louis Delluc’s 1921 modernist film *Le Silence* as ‘a dramatic transformation of memory images beyond their representation as a unitary event or a coherent linear narration… [a] montage of different temporalities with minimal cues to guide the viewer.[9] The film has not survived, so she, and we, know it only from Delluc’s scene notes.[10] I imagine these montages as having a chaotic pathology, like the carnival scene flashbacks in Kinugasa’s 1926 film *Page of Madness (Kuretta Ippei)*, which signify for me, the terrible, exuberant chaos of psychosis.[11] Why am I interested only in films and their documents that no longer exist, or were written and made before a consolidated orthodoxy of film making?

The flashback, not just as a cinematic device but also as a pathological phenomenon of trauma, can operate in at least two ways. It can fulfill an informative, clarifying function: filling in gaps, explaining anomalies, shoring up a history. But equally, it might add to ambiguity, heighten a sense of narrative fragmentation and disorientation. In many screenplay writing manuals, there are often dire warnings about the overreliance on the voiceover (the acousmatic), and the flashback (the atemporal), the two devices to which I am most drawn. I asked you how used flashbacks; how you have approached the problem of memory, and I was pleased that you answered that the film acts as a kind of recovered memory, and that there should always be an element of uncertainty as to what we recall. You wrote an adaptation of your fourth novel, *Johnny Come Home*, which was really a series of flashbacks, and even flashbacks within flashbacks, and tried to establish a rhythm that worked with different timelines that the audience could instinctively follow.[12] You asserted that for the script, structure is the most important thing. As an artist I might disagree, or at least have a different idea of what structure is, or does, but I am on your side when you say that you don’t think that confusion is a problem, that it just has to have some sort of consistency to it. A dream logic, you said, that’s what we want from a film.

Your Imaginary Friend,

Emma X

Emma Bolland: Flashback, and the Treatment of the Dream

…

[1] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 1986) [London: Harper and Row, 1974] p. 16.

[2] Jacques Rancière, *The Intervals of Cinema*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2014) [Les écarts du cinéma, Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2011] p. 43.

[3] Jacques Rancière, ibid. p. 46.

[4] *Spellbound*, dir. by Alfred Hitchcock (USA: Selznick International Pictures, 1945).

[5] Jacques Rancière, ibid. p. 27.

[6] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI 1964*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans, by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton 1998) [Le séminaire, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, 1964, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller Paris: Éditions du Seuil,1973], p. 70.

[7] Lacan, ibid. p.70.

[8] Alia Al-Saji, 'The memory of another past: Bergson, Deleuze and a new theory of time', *Continental Philosophy Review*, June 2004, Volume 37, Issue 2, 203–239. This paper was my encounter with Bergson, and there is no scroll, only a cone. My memory had superimposed a different kind of furling…

[9] Maureen Turim, *Flashback in Film: memory and history* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 69.

[10] Louis Delluc, *Ecrit cinématographiques III: Drames de Cinéma* (Paris: Cinématèque Française Cahier du Cinéma, 1990), [Paris: Editions du Monde nouveau, 1923] pp. 45–50.

[11] *A Page of Madness* (*Kuretta Ippei*), dir. by Teinosuke Kinugasa, Japan, 1926.

[12] Jake Arnott, *Johnny Come Home* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006).

Coordinates - *removed*

Rose Butler

The following dialogue took place between Rose Butler and artist Michelle Atherton whose paper *Submersive Aesthetics*, formed a starting point for a dialogue about ambiguous states and removed coordinates in thinking through what might be involved in a resistant image praxis.

Michelle's paper accompanies the video *ARP*, which presents an actual tourist trip taken in a deep sea submersible to a depth of two thousand feet below sea level off the coast of Roatan, Honduras. The artwork and essay present differing encounters with a state of submersion predicated on the view through the submersible's thirty-inch porthole. Rose has responded in reference to a fictional account of a prisoner in the historical novel *The First Circle* by Solzhenitsyn. In this account an inmate in one of Stalin's special prisons transforms from the status of prison guard to that of prisoner.

Michelle Atherton: My first reference from the paper begins with tourism. *It has been argued by, amongst others, the German essayist Hans Magnus Enzensberg (1958) and more recently reiterated by the art historian Marcus Verhagen that tourism evolved out of the French Revolution and advanced in step with industrial capitalism. Verhagan comments 'that tourism springs from a utopian impulse that is directed along a spatial axis rather than a temporal one, and that as a pattern of consumption, it unavoidably defeats that impulse.'*[1] *The tourist trip combines the desire for freedom at the same time that it undoes the possibility of finding it, and as a result speaks to many of the contradictions of our time and complexity of our experience.*

The second quote, in a more meandering mode, relates to materiality, perception, fluidity and alterity, in describing the experience of being in the ocean. Perhaps what is pertinent here is a certain set of coordinates that allow a displacement to occur through alterity, that situates us in a relatively permanently, uncoordinated position. One that is ambiguous, where we have a view, we see and as result believe we feel, the ocean manifest in remaining forever withdrawn, to paraphrase the Harman quote below, *a presentation through constant withdrawal.*[2] This is not for me a sublime state, but rather the realm of being confounded, a confusion that is not ambiguous. There is perhaps a question here about what we mean by the purchase of ambiguity, as perhaps it is now too often a problematic paradigm? For me the dynamic within the ocean's alterity necessities registering the full force of a non-relational encounter, structured as a drifting radical negative rupture. I have to be really careful here not to instrumentalise the ocean for aesthetic and political ends, and not to make experiences synonymous, but the potentiality of negative ruptures within praxis opens up the space of resistance, presenting less grounded forms of knowledge. This in turn of course refers to older avant-garde traditions that still holds potency for me, even though it needs particular reconfiguration in early twenty-first century context, (thinking back to the contradictions explicit in the tourist position) … but back to the ocean…

All around, out there, is a dark liquid expanse, but we fail to register it on any level. We are not even sure we can see it; it denies me, a solid liquid deflector thrusting us back *onto ourselves and intensifying the confinement of the space as we travel forward. This is the total blackness of the Mesopelagic zone in which we are descending, totally unmoored from the terrestrial.*

… Our position in the hydrosphere is maintained by a finely tuned manipulation of the laws of physics that equals a slight negative buoyancy. We are held surrounded on all sides by a different state — a liquid, fluid, yet solid in its pressure. We are out of our element, sitting suspended between what is solid and what is gaseous — no land, no air, in a space where molecules move freely from one state to another but do not fly apart. How is it to be submerged — to be set into an unfixed state? Can we register we are undone down here? The space of the deep sea comprises, by volume 78.5 per cent of the planet's habitat compared with only 21 per cent of the rest of the sea and 0.5 per cent of land habitats.[3]

The fan was turned off long ago and the walls are running with condensation. The ocean subtracts; the further down we go the greater the limits set on our modes of perception and centrality. In our protracted confinement the black continuous expanse grows. In the repetition of apparent nothingness, of sameness so complete it becomes a consummate space of alterity, an excited anticipation grows in us that anything could lie outside.

Then the headlights are turned on, a dipped setting produces an oscillating form of succulent midnight blue. It jumps around before us in perfect synchronicity, as if its weight shifts under the contracting, expanding darkness above. This blue is thick with its own liquid mass, a dynamic materiality that penetrates us, that appears palpable with its own material substance. The further we travel the more it sinks into us, commensurate with the increasing cold, signalling depth.

The submersible's lighting rig is said to be equivalent to that of a small photographic studio. As all the lights are turned on the scene from the dome is flooded with ultramarine blue, an aquatic immensity with no end. Our orientation is scrambled; we have lost all sense of perspective. This is the view that holds claustrophobia at bay, that overwhelms pathological fears and placates our immobility through an absorption into what unfolds on the other side of the window. This relation is sold as 'that portal to another world', the space that we think we can feel but never touch. By now we are infected by this liquid environment, this blue, held outside by only ever seeing inside out.

In this space of perpetual wet darkness, time is, for us, delimited only by the technical supports, there is no physical means to mark time. In the rebuttal of the sun, day does not follow night, there are no circadian rhythms, no seasons, only the space of inky blackness, bioluminescence and the occasional touring battery-pack beam. Wherever we go on terra firma we are caught in an endeavour to place ourselves in a spatial and time-bounded relationship. In the deep, the day-to-day markers of space and time fall away, the passage of time usurped by the time of space. Time is spatialised, destabilising teleological end points and sublimating linear trajectories. The oceans recycle themselves over millennia, in a time-scale outside human comprehension. We might encounter creatures older than the dinosaurs — but this is only a momentary respite, a marker that swims by. This watery ecology refuses expectations and experience. For us, as passengers, the restrictions of fuel and oxygen are displaced by an oceanic immensity. From inside, the ocean view disjoints time. In this other space of the liquid we can recognise the primordial, but the primordial does not recognise us. We lose time, lose ourselves to a state of temporal drift.

Our collective encounter followed a pattern, as we registered its inaccessibility in its

retreat ‘beyond our grasp.’[4] The encounter seeped into us, but remained as presenting an absolute outside. It was as if the ocean had its own ‘transcendence and futurity’, and we did not, we could not look back at ourselves. There is no space for us here. The more we moved through it the more it receded, and the greater we felt its presence. In this dynamic of submersion an encounter is felt both, to again use Harman’s phrasing, ‘as a bursting forth and slipping away, a presentation through a constant withdrawal.’[6]

Rose Butler: I have just finished reading Solzhenitsyn’s historical novel *The First Circle* and will refer to chapters towards the end of the book, which presents authoritative oppression experienced through the eyes of a prisoner.

As I read your experience of being within the submersible this prisoner’s account stayed with me, and as I go through this process of reflection, I am trying to make sense of why your experience feels so evocative in relation to this fictional account. The book is set in one of Stalin’s ‘special prisons’, a technological research establishment which houses highly qualified political prisoners arrested during Stalin's purges. While most are aware of how much better off they are than regular gulag prisoners, some are also conscious of the overwhelming moral dilemma of working to aid a system that is the cause of so much suffering. Inmates are working on technology that will allow the state agencies to identify the voice in a recorded phone call. Towards the end of the book one of the senior free workers of the prison is caught after warning a family friend by telephone that he was under surveillance. This quote is part of the description detailing his transition from one of rank within the Diplomatic Services, to that of a prisoner.

‘No sound came from the corridor except, once or twice, the unlocking and the locking of a nearby door. Every minute the shield of the glazed peep-hole rose and a solitary, searching eye looked in. The door was four inches thick and the space of the peep-hole was cone shaped, widening towards the room. He guessed why it was this shape; so that nowhere in this torture chamber could the prisoner find cover from the eye of the warden.

He felt cramped and hot. He took off his winter overcoat and looked sadly at the lining of the tunic, sticking out where the epaulettes had been ripped off. There was no nail or projection on the walls, where he could hang his hat and coat, so he put them on the table. Now that lightning had struck — he had been arrested — he was no longer afraid. His mind started to work, pinpointing his mistakes.’[7]

The space the prisoner inhabits is claustrophobic, initially too hot and suffocating and then, as he is moved from cell to cell within the prison, he is left in a cell that is too cold. He is isolated and prevented from catching sight of other prisoners. The strange noises intimidate him, he is terrified that the vents are releasing poisonous gases but eventually relieved to discover it is the hum of a lift within the prison. In the first few hours as he is taken through a process of transformation — from guard to prisoner he is effectively ‘broken down’ by stripping him of any of his coordinates. This process of ‘breaking down’ a prisoner ensures compliance ‘so that the full force of the whole vast, ramified apparatus is felt to be bearing down on him and on him alone’.[8]

The removal of the prisoner's coordinates goes through several stages of transition.

Initially his personal possessions are removed and his clothes damaged or replaced. He is moved from cell to cell and told to strip naked then asked to re-clothe and to confirm his name repeatedly during many separate points of questioning. On one of these occasions his head is shaved. The cells do not have windows and are referred to as ‘boxes’; the prisoner cannot see out and so does not have an external fixed point of visual or temporal orientation. The cells are flooded with bright lights in order to expose the prisoner further and deprive him of sleep. Confusion and disorientation ensue as days and nights begin to merge and there is no indication of the circadian rhythm, or the seasons. Through the peep-hole the prisoner is looked in upon, subject to his own destiny. Totally exposed, he is controlled and powerless within this divided, uncertain space of transition.

As you descended in the submersible and described the loss of your external coordinates the internal space becomes one of confinement and submission. Once submerged you are locked in by the water which surrounds you, situated within a space of displacement and division, on the inside looking out into a space of uncertainty and ambiguity in flux.

I have become to think of this space of flux, the space of transition or ambiguity as the space of potential or the space of resistance. The prisoner Innokenty reflects upon the fantasy of his arrest:

‘Thinking about his arrest before it happened, Innokenty had pictured to himself a duel of wits to the death. For this he was ready, prepared for a high-principled defence of his life and his convictions. Never had he imagined anything so simple, so dull and so irresistible as the reality. The people who had received him were petty minded, low-grade officials, as uninterested in his personality as in what he had done, but alert and watchful in matters to which he was unprepared and which offered him no chance to resist. What, indeed, would resistance mean and what good would it do him? Every time on a different pretext, concessions were required of him, so trifling compared to the battle ahead that there was no point in making a fuss — yet taken as a whole, the minute thoroughness of the procedure effectively broke the prisoner’s will.’[9]

In the passage above Innokenty is dismayed by the dull and irresistible nature of his arrest. There are no grand moments of oppression or opportunity for dramatic resistance or highly principled defence. Instead he describes a slowly advancing procedure, a creep of subjugation, uncertainty and exposure that gradually breaks him down.

The panoramic image, introduced in the previous text discussing the border between former East and West Berlin, represents a tipping point. A once managed and thoroughly controlled border with clear defined boundaries and coordinates activated through the dynamics of surveillance, now was in disarray and broken down. During the period of the Cold War these sites were temporarily spaces of division and oppression. They now represented the space of reunification and of potential; ambiguous and in transition. It is perhaps ironic that the building being constructed on the right of the image is the new German Federal Intelligence Service. This image spans the old and new materials of state surveillance. Both of which are in flux, the remnants of historical state-surveillance and the potential of the new.

…

[1] Marcus Verhagen, ‘Art Tourism’, *Art Monthly*, 358, (Jul–Aug 2012), p. 9.

[2] Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), p. 144.

[3] William J. Broad, *The Universe Below: Discovering the Secrets of the Deep Sea* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 44.

[4] Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 53.

[5] Ibid., p. 40.

[6] Harman (2005), p. 144.

[7] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 635.

[8] Solzhenitsyn (1965), p. 657.

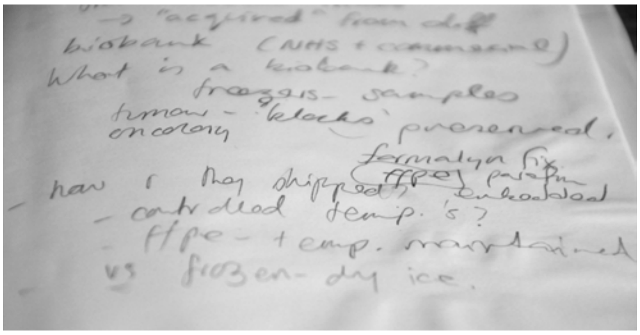
[9] Solzhenitsyn (1965), p. 642.

38
Testing,
Testing

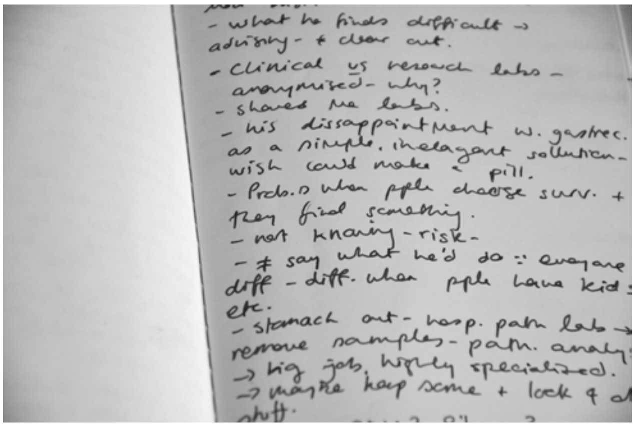
Traces, as Evidence That Conversation Happens

Emma O'Connor

Out of the seventeen black A5 notebooks, I reach for one in particular: Conversations with doctors, geneticists, pathologists, and research nurses. My material. Sketches of conversations, filed in a notebook; contingent on the non-appearance of recording devices clipped to lapels and sat on tables. Field notes. After the event, on a train or tram or bus, I write everything I can remember. Transport notes. I look through the notebook and remember all of the work that preceded the conversations, behind the scenes — lists, itineraries, payments, emails, and scheduling.



→ "acquired" from diff
biobank (NHS + commercial)
What is a biobank?
freezers - samples
tumour - 'blocks' preserved,
oncology
formalyn fix
how r they shipped? (FFPE) paraffin embedded
- controlled temp.'s?
- ffpe - temp. maintained
vs frozen - dry ice.

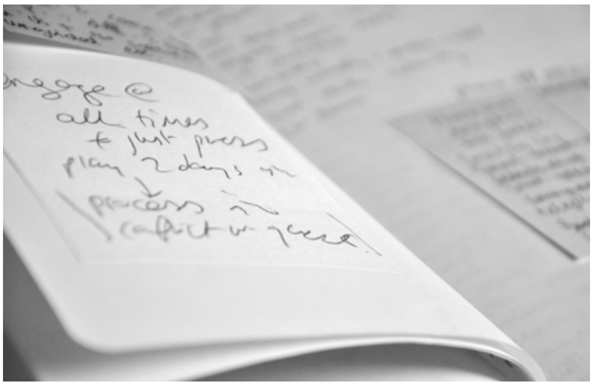


- what he finds difficult →
advising - + clear cut.
- clinical vs research labs -
anonymised - why?
- showed me labs.
- his dissappointment w. gastrec.
as a simple, inelegant solution -
wish could make a pill.
- Probs. when pple choose surv. +
they find something.
- not knowing - risk -
- ≠ say what he'd do ∵ everyone
diff - diff. when pple have kid
etc.
- stomach out - hosp. path lab →
remove samples - path. analy
→ big job, highly specialized.
→ maybe keep some + lock
stuff.

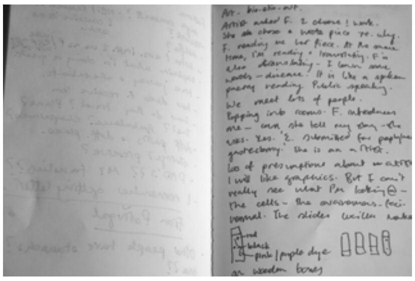
A telephone conversation from the bath to a friend who works in a lab leaves a watermark. Given that I already knew that you didn't know what I was looking for, we were aimless. Aimlessness: a necessary condition for our conversation to proceed as it did. I relay how the geneticist told me that he felt he was failing in his quest for an elegant answer — the inelegance of a gastrectomy. I hadn't thought like this before.

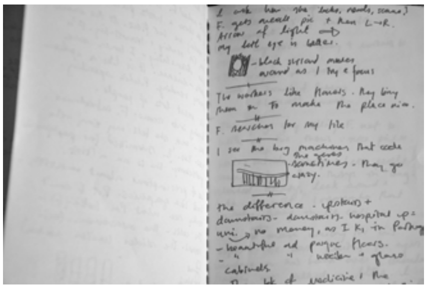
Emma O'Connor: Traces, as Evidence Conversation Happens

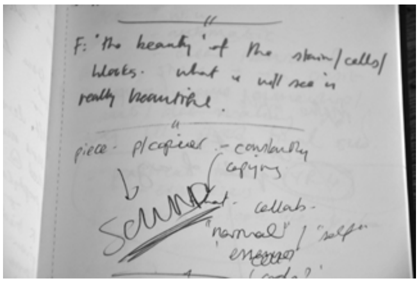
Next come handwritten notes on texts read. Under the heading Joseph Campbell: ‘the path of a hero is well trodden, you don’t have to think’. The third point is a Q&A: ‘why does the hero remain? It’s what’s worth writing about’. I comment: ‘And what’s worth doing?’ This is my quest notebook. What follows are lists of things to do in preparation for my quest to Porto to find my stomach.



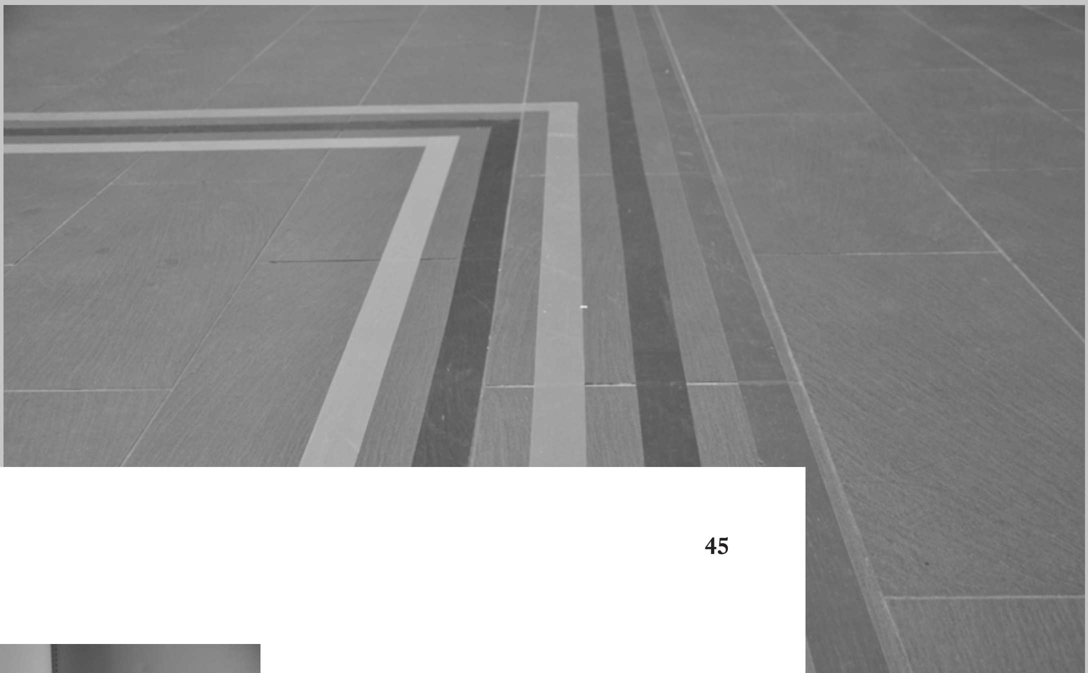
A diary entry: Quest Day One: 29 March 2016 22:42 — Promising lists and disappointing realities. 7 April 2016 16:00 —
Conversations with the pathologist.
I read notes about ideas for works.

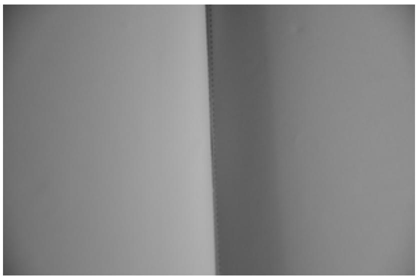


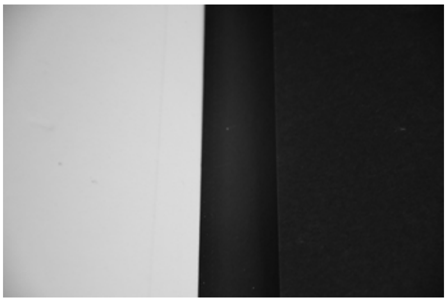




A few blank pages and the book ends.

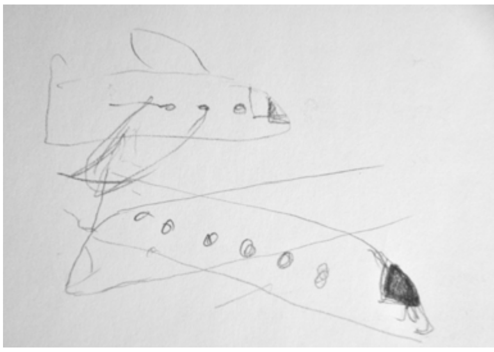


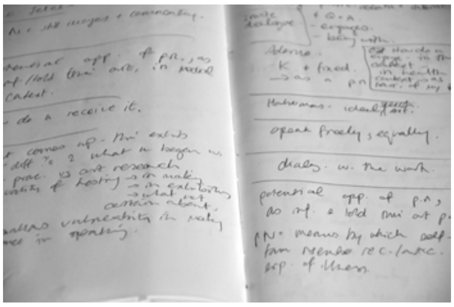




Traces, as Evidence That Conversation Happens.

Voice recordings and video footage, thanks to Joe and Michael, documenting the *Testing, Testing* symposium and dialogue about works in the exhibition. These recordings can become transcripts — see Rachel Taylor's entry. Some exist previously as texts — See Susannah Gent's entry. Out of the seventeen black A5 notebooks, I reach for one in particular: The hardback. On the first page are two efforts, in pencil, to draw an aeroplane.

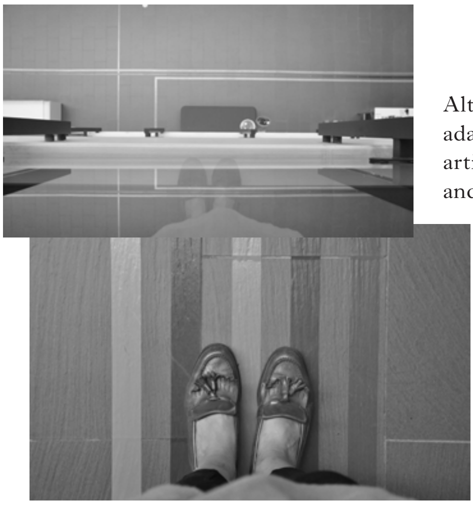




After pages of notes on various talks I've attended, I come to the pages relating to *Testing, Testing*.

Emma O'Connor: Traces, as Evidence Conversation Happens

I, like other exhibiting artists, invited a crit of my work. This was scheduled to last twenty minutes and presented an opportunity to test my work with an audience.



Although the format of a crit is absolutely adaptable it often takes a form where the artist speaks very little and the audience share and discuss their thoughts about the work.

I didn't want to speak; I wanted the audience to respond to the work. In educational art institutions, the crit is a common format for discussing work.

Talk of time, institutional languages, and the management of people, embodied power relations, absurdity, deadendedness, and frustration. A Kafkaesque quality:
one institutional language within another. A promise and denial of direction. Mostly though, curiosity about why I didn't speak — I see this is another mixed up institutional expectation. Hard to escape, really.

Towards Dialogue

Susannah Gent

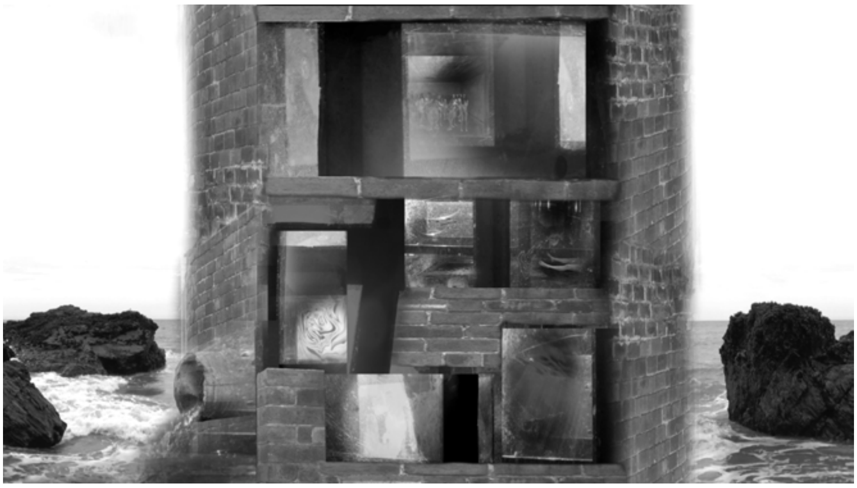
J. G. Ballard's short story *Billennium*, from the *Terminal Beach* anthology, is set in the future at a time when the allocated living space for people is about to be changed from four meters square to three meters square. In Ballard's over populated world he describes people getting into pedestrian jams where they become stuck in the midst of crowds moving in different directions. Sometimes people are stuck for days, being fed by others as they skirt the jam. There is no traffic in this world; vehicles became redundant long ago as there was not space for them to move. Yet in Ballard's *Billennium* there is still an incentive to breed as a family cubicle has a slightly higher space ratio than a single person's allowance.

Prof. Albert Bartlett tells us that by the year 2600, at the current population growth rate, there would be enough room for everyone to have a square metre each.[1] Bartlett says that before that state is reached clearly *something will have to be done*. I am struck by the seemingly innocent but chilling statement — *something will have to be done*. China imposed a single child policy in 1978 until last year. It is highly controversial as population control is against human instinct and basic human rights. It is also disputed as to whether it was effective since neighbouring countries also saw a birth rate decline ostensibly due to economic factors. The inherent sexism of the preference for boys over girls with the alleged killing of girl babies is cited as a reason for the failure of this policy. Yet the imbalance in the sexes that was created by this is now contributing to slower growth rate. China now faces what is referred to as the 4:2:1 problem, one child supporting two parents and four grandparents.

It's possible that the population is self-controlling, but this isn't known. During a bout of post-concussive syndrome following a head injury in 2012, a condition that manifested in episodes of fixation and anxiety, I was concerned that war was a natural and inevitable consequence of population growth and the devastating losses in the two world wars last century were phenomena following expansion since the industrial revolution.

I'm still not sure this isn't the case. Capitalism promotes growth. Capitalism is arguably a system that exposes humankind's tendency to expand and consume. The more people, the bigger the workforce and the bigger the consumer population. The question remains whether anything can be done about this, whether humankind has the capacity to change, which amounts to an issue of agency versus automaticity. My research explores the uncanny and hauntology. In the briefest terms, the uncanny is an emotional state, a class of fear, where the source of the fear is not apparent. It implies that there is something veiled and hidden coming into view. Freud cited the castration complex as causing the uncanny sensation in his 1919 article *'Das "Unheimlich"'* but also suggests that it is more generally the return of the repressed that produces uncanniness.[2] Freud's two major complexes, the castration and the Oedipal complexes, refer to the inclination both to breed and to kill, and it is these the individual represses. This requirement for social co-existence is not solely a feature of human behaviour.

Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, that combines haunting and ontology, is a critical figuration concerned with the nature of being but with added spectres, whose first visit is always a return, a haunting, like the return of the repressed. Both hauntology and the uncanny include the idea of repetition as well as something hidden from view. This rather pessimistically suggests that the only thing we learn from our mistakes is that we will repeat them.



Since the pioneering work of Benjamin Libet in 1985 implied that agency was merely post-hoc confabulation, the question as to whether consciousness also amounts to an ability to instigate change, or whether it offers the capacity to reflect upon the instinctual mechanisms that drive humankind, without the ability to effectively act, remains unanswered.[3] The contemporary relevance of the uncanny and hauntology converges around the question of agency, instinct, and the anthropocene, the geological term for the current era beginning with the industrial revolution defined as the point from which humankind began to have a major impact on the planet.

The uncanny describes the feeling associated with the return of *that which we would rather not know*. Hauntology describes our times, characterised by *that which we would rather not know* pushing forward by the sheer weight of its needing to be addressed.

Mark Fisher in *Ghosts of my Life,* from 2014, sees hauntology as a descriptor of these times, characterised by a plethora of mental illness and anxiety for the future. It is undeniable that the digital age has given us access to information not previously so easy to come by. The foundation of Fisher's interpretation of hauntology is the suggestion of a collective anxiety resulting from the unavoidable awareness of impending global crises, coupled with a reluctance to address these issues and a sense of hopelessness.

The film *Unhomely Street* begins with a statement from political activist Stephen Bollom suggesting that current times are characterised by people being so frightened by the enormity of what's going on around them that they don't want to talk about things.[4] If this is the case, given that it is difficult not to know about the current state of the world, the outcome will be one of collective anxiety. There could be an argument

for not discussing these contemporary issues if our action is underpinned by instinct and not subject to our conscious will, but this question of automaticity versus agency remains unanswered.

This sentiment is shared by *The Dark Mountain Project*, a network of writers, artists and thinkers who see that the world is entering an age of ecological collapse, material contraction, and social, and political unravelling. Their manifesto states an intention to see cultural responses reflect this reality rather than denying it.

> Creativity remains the most uncontrollable of human forces: without it, the project of civilisation is inconceivable, yet no part of life remains so untamed and undomesticated. Words and images can change minds, hearts, even the course of history.[5]

My intention here of contributing to a difficult dialogue that already grows in YouTube lectures, artist manifestos and conference calls, through the two installation projects, *Wardrobe (War Machine)* and *Shore,* stems from a conviction that art promotes a form of communication that is innate, pluralistic in meaning, and capable of revealing hidden dimensions of thought. Whether what is at stake is our action or our ability to deal with outcomes, a human, or species centred viewpoint borne of dialogue must be seen as a deterritorialising approach.[6]

…

[1] Albert Bartlett, *Arithmetic, Population, and Energy* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sI1C9DyIi_8> [accessed 13 December 2015].

[2] Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, trans. and ed. by James Strachey *et al*., (London: Hogarth, 1955).

[3] Benjamin Libet demonstrated that unconscious processes initiate volitional acts. He used an electroencephalogram (EEG) to record neuronal activity alongside an electromyograph (EMG) to record muscle movement in a button pressing experiment that showed muscle activity preceded conscious intension. Libet's experiment has been variously interpreted and criticised but, as described by Patrick Haggard at *The New Scientist Live: Consciousness* conference, London: (the British Library, 12th September 2015) further research has shown that rather than consciousness being post-hoc confabulation, the decrease in discrepancy between response time and perceived action when choice is introduced into the experiment point to a more likely account that free-will and conscious intention are a part of human behaviour but the degree to which our actions are largely unconscious motor responses shouldn't be underestimated. See B. Libet, 'Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 8, 529–566, (1985), and John A. Bargh and Melissa J. Ferguson, 'Beyond Behaviourism: On the Automaticity of Higher Mental Processes', *Psychological Bulletin*, (2000), Vol. 126, No. 6, 925–945.

[4] *Unhomely Street*, dir. Susannah Gent, 2016.

[5] Paul Kingsnorth, *Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto* <http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto> [accessed 24 September 2016].

[6] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) [*L'Anti-Oedipe,* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1972].

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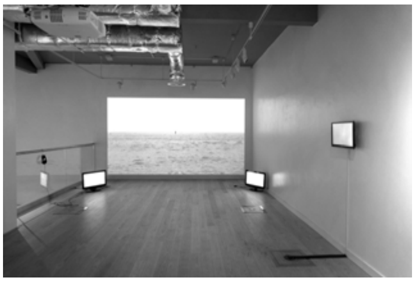

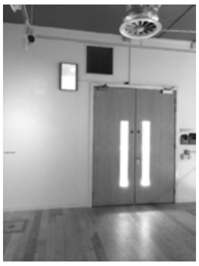

Afterword

Becky Shaw

We have walked, looked, listened and read our way through an exhibition, a symposium and two books. As the project is the work of practice-based art research students, it might be expected that what is being tested are hypotheses, or the answers to research questions. There is this, but this sits within a spectrum of other processes of testing. The title of the project invokes the filmic stereotype of the performer checking sound equipment to ensure effective transmission. Within an audible amplified sound lie many variable qualities including volume, clarity, tone, echo, reverb, and feedback. What 'being heard' is depends on all these factors, inseparable in, and dependent upon, the receiver.

All sorts of testing is going on here. The process of making art is always testing. For some, making is a test to find the right way to do something planned, for others the process involves dismantling initial thoughts through making. For other artists making is used to find out what is being tested or noticed in the first place. Here, the space of display is also being employed as a research 'condition'. We often expect the 'cold light' of the gallery to enable us to see works afresh, but no context is neutral, not the studio, the gallery or the lab. In this case the test conditions—the University gallery—enables us to see the works through the lens of art and education.

Testing, Testing also asks whether it is possible to make both the process and the end point of research communicable. It's arguable whether any end point can ever be considered research, as research is an act, a practice, not 'results'. The works are experienced in the present, in real space, but they are made as part of a research inquiry that operates in moving time in many spaces. The symposium and the dialogues presented seek to get in between these different timescales and draw them together in dialogue, but they send us into different times and spaces too.

The relationship between the exhibition, texts and symposium elements is also being tested and it's hard to describe how they work together. Jerome Harrington describes these as 'points of visibility': the way multiple different elements give us access into a wider body of work or social phenomenon.[1] *Testing, Testing* explores what the relationship between the parts and wholes can be.

…

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[1] Jerome Harrington, 'Research Degree - Process Made Visible: In and Outside the Object | Sheffield Hallam University', 2012 <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/specialisms/cultural-communication-and-computing-research-institute/what-we-do/projects/fine-art/research-degree-process-made-visible-in-and-outside-the-object> [accessed 11 October 2016].

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