***Temporarily Accessioned- Freud’s Coat Revisited***

In 1996, through a contact made by Professor Eileen Hogan (Dean at Camberwell College of Arts), I met with Erica Davies (the then director of the Freud Museum London) who invited me to stage a solo exhibition of new work made in response to the museum. This was the first time I had worked with a collection and initially found it difficult to find a way to begin. During one of the many conversations with Erica, I mentioned that I had recently made a set of prints entitled *My Father’s Coat* which explored the associations between a coat and the identity of it’s owner and this in turn led to her telling me that she had Sigmund Freud’s overcoat stored in a cupboard in the museum.

The coat was a grey, thin, unlined, woollen overcoat, rather modest and reminiscent of Joseph Beuys’ *Felt Suit* in texture and colour. In one pocket was a note from Mana Friedman stating that *This coat was professor Freud’s, bought for the emigration to England. Anna Freud often wore it here* and in the other pocket, Anna Freud’s plastic pleated rain hat. Together with the coat, these provided me an entry into how I might approach the project. I imagined the coat as a representation of the body, the skin of the occupant and I further imagined Anna gardening, after her father had died, wrapped in this coat with her plastic rain hat on.

The work I made for that exhibition consisted of three distinct pieces, an artists book entitled *Freud’s coat*, a sculpture entitled *The Arrival* consisting of lattice cases in the shape of everyday objects and a series of objects in the shape of books with plastic moulds suggesting concealed items.

Now twenty years on, following an invitation from the current director Carol Seigel, I have made a new body of work which re-visits these earlier themes with one significant difference. In this instance I wanted to work with both the Freud Museum in London and the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna as the two points of a journey. I am very pleased that this has been possible and my project represents the first collaboration between the two museums. In addition, it has given me the pleasure of working with both directors, Carol in London and Monika Pessler in Vienna.

There is a poignancy that the Museum in Vienna, housed in the apartments in which Freud developed his theory of Psychoanalysis, wrote numerous books and papers and practiced for almost fifty years is now relatively bare, in direct contrast to 20 Maresfield Gardens where he only lived for the last year of his life but which which contains a large number of his antiquities, his objects, his desk, his chair and the famous couch.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The work I have made addresses the themes of absence and presence, of objects and loss and I hope touches on what it means to have to flee one’s home and through this imagine what it might be to be a migrant. When seen together, the two Freud museums in both what they contain and what is missing, represents a salutary reminder of the effect of history and the consequences of actions and ideologies upon individual lives.

The work has been presented in two contexts, the first, a two-person exhibition at the Sigmund Freud Museum Vienna *Setting Memory* curated by Monika Pessler, featuring my work alongside Bettina von Zwehl, (7th Oct 2016 - 21st Jan 2017) , the second, this solo exhibition *Temporarily accessioned; Freud’s Coat Revisited* ( 22nd Feb - 7th May 2017) at the Freud Museum London which includes the work shown in Vienna alongside additional works.

***Precious objects.***

Common to all migrants is that unenviable question of what possessions it is possible to take. As is well documented, Freud in 1938 was faced with such a dilemma and it was only through influential friends and considerable financial cost, was he able pack and transport a significant number of his collection of antiquities and other possessions and transport these to London. My intention was to make an action that highlighted this issue and focused on the precarious nature of migration. I worked with pupils from year 2 CL, Business Academy, Donaustadt Vienna and invited each to send me a photograph of their most precious object. These photographs I then used in combination with images of objects from Freud’s desk to make a series of 20 postcards. Freud’s objects, including figurines and antiquities, were amongst the many he managed to transport when he emigrated to London in 1938 and are now housed and on display at the Freud Museum, 20 Maresfield Gardens, London. The postcards juxtaposed the pupil’s precious objects, a necklace, a favourite mug, a soft toy, etc., each set in colour against Freud’s objects set in grey.

On 28th June 2016, to commemorate Freud’s emigration from Vienna to London, the students and I gathered in Sigmund Freud Park close to Berggasse 19 where we attached 100 of these postcards to white helium filled balloons and released them. Each postcard carried a message asking that if found, the postcard be forwarded to the Freud Museum London. Three days before the balloon launch, the UK had voted in a referendum to withdraw from the European Union and despite the fact that we had the most perfect blue sky for our event, the anxieties for what this decision might mean for the stability and peace within Europe clouded the proceedings and were a timely reminder that history is continuously in the making. As of 23rd September (the anniversary of Freud’s death) only two postcards had been returned to London, providing a metaphor, if needed, of the risk involved in emigration and of the unknown fate of so many migrants. These two postcards are presented in a letter rack alongside a photograph of the balloons and a statement outlining the event.

***A Ghostly Return - Freud’s Desk I & II***

Whilst postcards can be seen as one of the most direct means of creating a multiple print, print technology has moved on a pace and now the 3D print is already becoming commonplace. Faced with the problem of wanting to recreate the objects on Freud’s desk as something akin to an apparition, this technology seemed ideal. Furthermore, since the process is non contact, it met all the requirements of working within a collection and ensuring that there was no risk of damage to the precious objects. The process, put simply, involved 3D scanning each object using mobile scanners much like those used to read bar codes in supermarket checkouts and from this data, 3D prints made by printing thin layers of nylon, one upon the other until the object is realised.[[2]](#footnote-2) I had been further drawn to this process by the translucent quality of the nylon itself and the fact that once scanned, I could alter the scale. I always imaged making this piece smaller than its original in reference in part to the observation by Gaston Bachelard ‘*the cleverer I am at minaturising the world, the better I possess it. But in doing this, it must be understood that values become condensed and enriched in miniature.* ‘[[3]](#footnote-3)

So my intention was to recreate all the objects on Freud’s desk reduced to 2/3rd actual size and glowing white. Through this I also wanted to evoke the idea of the uncanny as something both familiar and different and produce a piece that would appear as a ghostly return when shown in the rooms in Vienna but also work as a bleached mirror reflection when shown in London set against the rich colours of the consulting room.

I worked with Holly Shaw [[4]](#footnote-4) and together we 3D scanned all the objects on the desk over a period of a week, 60 items in total. [[5]](#footnote-5) These were the objects Freud must have looked at everyday while working and appear as a literal regiment of gods, deities and curiosities through which one imagines him filtering his imagination and thoughts. They are arranged in lines, like a formation and together as a collective group, they face or confront their owner. Once scanned they were then 3D printed professionally at Digits2Widgets, London in white nylon, 2/3rds of their original size and through this act of miniaturisation to suggest a sense of objects remembered. Also once assembled together, stripped of colour and texture they form what I hoped would appear as a white cloud. [[6]](#footnote-6)

3D printing is in essence like an evocation; the original image, once scanned is configured as data which in turn is used to print out the objects. It is conjured out of this binary code and given a physical presence, untouched by the artist’s hand.

***Temporarily Accessioned-X-Ray***

A further sense of evocation is evidenced in *Temporarily accessioned- X-Ray*, a full size digital print from multiple x-rays made directly from Freud’s coat. As previously mentioned, Freud’s coat had been my entry point 20 years ago in my first exhibition at the Museum. At that time it was not on display, as it is now. It has become a culturally important object, including being featured in Sophie Calle’s exhibition ‘Appointment' 1999 where Calle is pictured wearing the coat in the doorway of the Museum. In order to reflect this changed status I obtained permission for the National Gallery in London to temporarily accession the coat and x-ray it as if it were an old master painting.[[7]](#footnote-7) I was particularly interested in the process of what was needed to be put in place for such an action to happen. This included prior to the event, a valuation, a condition report, and the assistance of the curatorial staff to pack the coat for transport. On the day itself, Bryony Davies, (Assistant Curator at the Freud Museum) and myself accompanied the coat on its journey to and from the National Gallery. At the National gallery, the coat was assigned an accession number and a further condition report conducted before the coat could be laid out and prepared for being x-rayed.[[8]](#footnote-8) The final x-rays were scanned and then digitally stitched together and a full size inkjet print made at the Centre for Fine Print Research (UWE) under the supervision of Dr Paul Laidler.

**Travelling Cases**

**Cabinet 1-Freud’s Desk**

**Cabinet II-Freud’s Coat**

**Cabinet III-Personal Objects**

As the whole project evolved, the theme of the journey and of what it means to emigrate became key motifs. I was struck by the efforts and logistics of transporting Freud’s collection of antiquities from Vienna to London and as a means of mirroring that and embedding the fact that my work itself would travel to Vienna and London, I made a set of travelling cases which both appeared functional as well as objects in their own right.

***Cabinet I*** contains paper casts of all the 3D printed objects from Freud’s desk. They are laid out formally as if in a visual inventory. My intention, through the cast, is to suggest the absence of the objects themselves. On the opposite side of the case, a paper cast of the figure of the Soothsayer, which sat on a separate small table next to his desk.. Here the figure is present and set into the cast. The Soothsayer was apparently one of Freud’s favourite objects, posed in the act of listening, a constant reminder of Freud’s elevation of the role of listening within psychoanalysis.

***Cabinet II*** includes an empty lattice cage in the shape of a coat, with just a hanger remaining inside, like a cage where the bird has flown. Opposite, the bookwork T*emporarily Accessioned* which includes the documentation of the action leading to the x-raying of the coat is presented.

***Cabinet III,***, like a suitcase, contains more personal objects that I imagined Freud might have gathered together for his journey, a kind of overnight bag which includes amongst other things, a shirt, toothbrush, a book, one of his antiquities and a boiled egg which I learnt he had eaten along with a glass of vermouth for breakfast on the morning before leaving Vienna for good. All the objects are cast in either white plaster or resin.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Additional works**

*Thoughts at Night* Bronze 2010

Upon hearing Different Trains Bronze 2012

Single bed (Daydreaming) Bronze & Rubber 2008

These three small bronzes are shown in Anna Freud’s Room. While not made directly for this exhibition, I felt their reference to dreaming gave them an added poignancy when seen in this context. S*ingle Bed (Daydreaming)* was originally made for my exhibition ‘I called while you were out’ 2008 at Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge while *Thoughts at Night* was first shown in an exhibition “Lost & Found’ at Chelsea College of Art 2010. *Upon Hearing Different Trains* was made as an intuitive response after hearing the composition ‘Different Trains’ by Steve Reich which was a compelling evocation of the sounds of trains set against voices.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In 2014 I contributed to a London wide festival on the subject of Anxiety. [[11]](#footnote-11) I made a series of works which considered our relationship towards objects and these were shown in a pop up exhibition at the Freud Museum entitled *Charms and other anxious objects.* A number of these pieces referenced charm bracelets and by greatly enlarging their scale and casting them in aluminium, my intention was to transform what were originally objects of comfort and solace, into objects of anxiety.[[12]](#footnote-12)

To further complete the exhibition, I have included a number of prints*, Desk, Uncanny Flowers & Uncanny Suitcase* as well as small works and postcard pieces which I show in the display cabinet alongside other documentation. These include two variations on the Soothsayer figurine. In one version I have added a small inspection mirror to capture the figure watching himself, in the act of listening. In the second version, I have built up the base to suggest a pile of ruins or a rocky outcrop so the figure now looks down from above.

Presenting work in a Museum such as the Freud Museum is the antithesis of presenting work in the proverbial white cube, that space stripped of all meaning other than its function as a gallery. The Freud Museum is both an Aladdin’s cave and a cross section of historical time. In addition, it has been a home and its former occupants, both Sigmund and Anna, are amongst that small number of people that have radically changed the way we think. It is both a privilege and a challenge to have the opportunity to act as an interloper into this space and see what conversations, both intended and surprising can result.

Paul Coldwell

………..

1. The fact that Freud was able to reconstruct his consulting room in London is partly due to the photographs taken by Edmund Engelman in the apartment in 1938 just days before Freud’s escape from Vienna to London. These photographs can be seen in the excellent book, Sigmund Freud Berggasse 19, Vienna, photographs and epilogue Edmund Engelman, introduction by Monika Pessler (translated by Martin Kesley. Furthermore, how Freud managed to leave Vienna and transport over 1000 objects is documented in David Cohen’s excellent book “The Escape of Sigmund Freud’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.digits2widgets.com/3d-printing/nylon-sls_3d_printing/>

   for a full description of 3D printing process. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. p150 poetics of space [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 3D Scan, Print and Design Technician, London College of Fashion, UAL. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For further information on these objects I would recommend [**Ro Spankie, *Sigmund Freud's Desk*; An Anecodated Guide**](http://www.freud.org.uk/shop/info%2d9783892958344%2ehtml)  published by the Freud Museum. This is an invaluable reference on the objects and their history. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In making this work I am indebted to the help and support of Jonathan Rowley, Director Digits2Widgets Ltd. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Following discussions with Denise King (Photography and Imaging Manager) and Samantha Saward (Collections Registrar) at the National Gallery, we arranged a date for the coat to be brought to the museum to be x-rayed on 23rd Feb. 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Throughout the whole process, the photographer Peter Abrahams recorded the event and these photographs were later used by me to reconstructed the narrative of the day’s events through layering and multi exposure photographic images which formed the basis for the artist’s book made with the designer Roger Walton. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I made the cabinets in the workshops at Chelsea College of Art with Phil Rutter (technician). I was grateful to Phil’s previous experience of making art cases for transport and his attention to detail was invaluable. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Different_Trains> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <http://www.anxietyartsfestival.org/programme/visual-arts/charms-and-other-anxious-objects> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. It was as a result of this work, that Carol Seigel invited me to produce a more comprehensive exhibition, Temporarily Accessioned – Freud’s Coat Revisited, being the result. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)