

*Inventory for a Reverse Journey*

**Photographic Image and Found Object – An investigation of travel and material transformation as a paradigm of artist's practice: Ed Ruscha, Douglas Huebler, Bas jan Ader, Jimmie Durham, Gustav Metzger, Kurt Schwitters & Cian Quayle.**

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## Abstract

*Inventory for Reverse Journey* is the title of a collection of photographic artefacts and found objects, which I have collected over the last twenty years. The title refers to one specific type of artist's journey, which is applicable to the 'chronotope' of my archive, as a 'metaphorical journey in space and time' (Bakhtin 1981, p.81). The 'city', 'provincial town', 'road', 'threshold' and 'interior' are recurrent motifs, which Bakhtin fused together to describe the historical evolution of the novel in relation to its different genres. Bakhtin's motifs are expanded as the basis of an evolutionary nomenclature of the artist's-journey, as a form of spatial mapping and identity formation. Alongside other sources from literature (Alain Robbe-Grillet), cinema (Michelangelo Antonioni), psychoanalysis (Kierkegaard) and critical theory (Walter Benjamin) I have developed a theoretical framework, which initially originated in an empirical process, that is reflected in the antecedents of this project. The research process, as a journey itself, has concretised this approach within a systems-based practice. This is mirrored in the work of the artists under investigation, as their differences and similarities are highlighted within a broad contextual analysis. Accordingly the tone of the writing shifts its register at different points in the thesis.

My journey is just one example of several paradigmatic formations of 'travel' as a strategy, which investigates the work of six different artists, as a voluntary or involuntary form of exile. A deskilled use of the photographic image is examined in the work of Ed Ruscha, Douglas Huebler and Bas Jan Ader in the spatial mapping of their chosen locations. The work of these artists manifests travel, as a strategy, in a benign form of regional and expatriate exile. The investigation shifts its focus from the New World to Europe, where the work of Jimmie Durham, Gustav Metzger and Kurt Schwitters is analysed in relation to their transformation of found objects and materials, and their relationship with a former 'home'. Their position registers different degrees of the 'impossibility of return' to a point of origin, which exists in the mind rather than as a physical location. The transience of their work, and use of disparate materials, is counterbalanced by their physical presence in the work. Conversely Ader, Huebler and Ruscha are linked by a scale of decreasing visibility, as they are sublimated within their work in the formation of, what is now construed as, a unique photographic presence. The starting point for which is a return to the formative years of conceptualism in the 1960's, which set the scene for Durham and Metzger from the 1970's onwards. The spectre of Schwitters practice of forming (*Formung*) and unforming (*Entformung*) is significant for my analysis of the dematerialisation of the art-work and artist, by processes of series and repetition, distance and proximity, movement and stasis. Although 'travel' is a ubiquitous term, I continue to use it as a *portmanteau*, which carries with it the themes and 'salient' features of a typology of artist's journeys. In a moment of perceived obsolescence as digital information systems engender a culture of 'selective-amnesia', these thoughts have informed my work, which runs parallel to the artist case-studies, and the material transformation of the photographic image and found object.



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## Introduction

### Retrospective Points of Departure

The origin of this project is outlined in the following account of its antecedents, as ‘artist-travel’ has emerged as the focus of my research. As an autobiographical account it is the background layer upon which other layers of meaning and interpretation have been constructed. I was born and raised in the Isle of Man and an acute awareness of place and absence stems from my formative experience of travelling to and from the island. During this time I made landscape paintings which investigated what Matthew Barney (2000, p.6) has described as the ‘psychological imprint’ of landscape in terms of autobiography and artwork. These paintings (fig.1) depicted the vertical weight of the topography – the sky and hilly terrain – in contrast with the open, horizontal aspect and surround of an open expanse of sea, a setting where vision is orchestrated by the elements. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.382) describe the loss of ‘intermediate distance’ in this way, as the division between earth and sky dissolves and the horizon disappears. Sudden changes in the weather extends or diminishes vision, as space is stretched to the horizon, where the sea and sky appear to meet in optimum clarity. As an expanded concept I am still concerned with landscape, the city and nature and how the boundaries between these delineations dissolve as a result of the impact of civilisation, technology and industry. The formulation of these ideas ran parallel to my undergraduate dissertation entitled *Tourism and Landscape Art* (Quayle, 1991).<sup>1</sup>

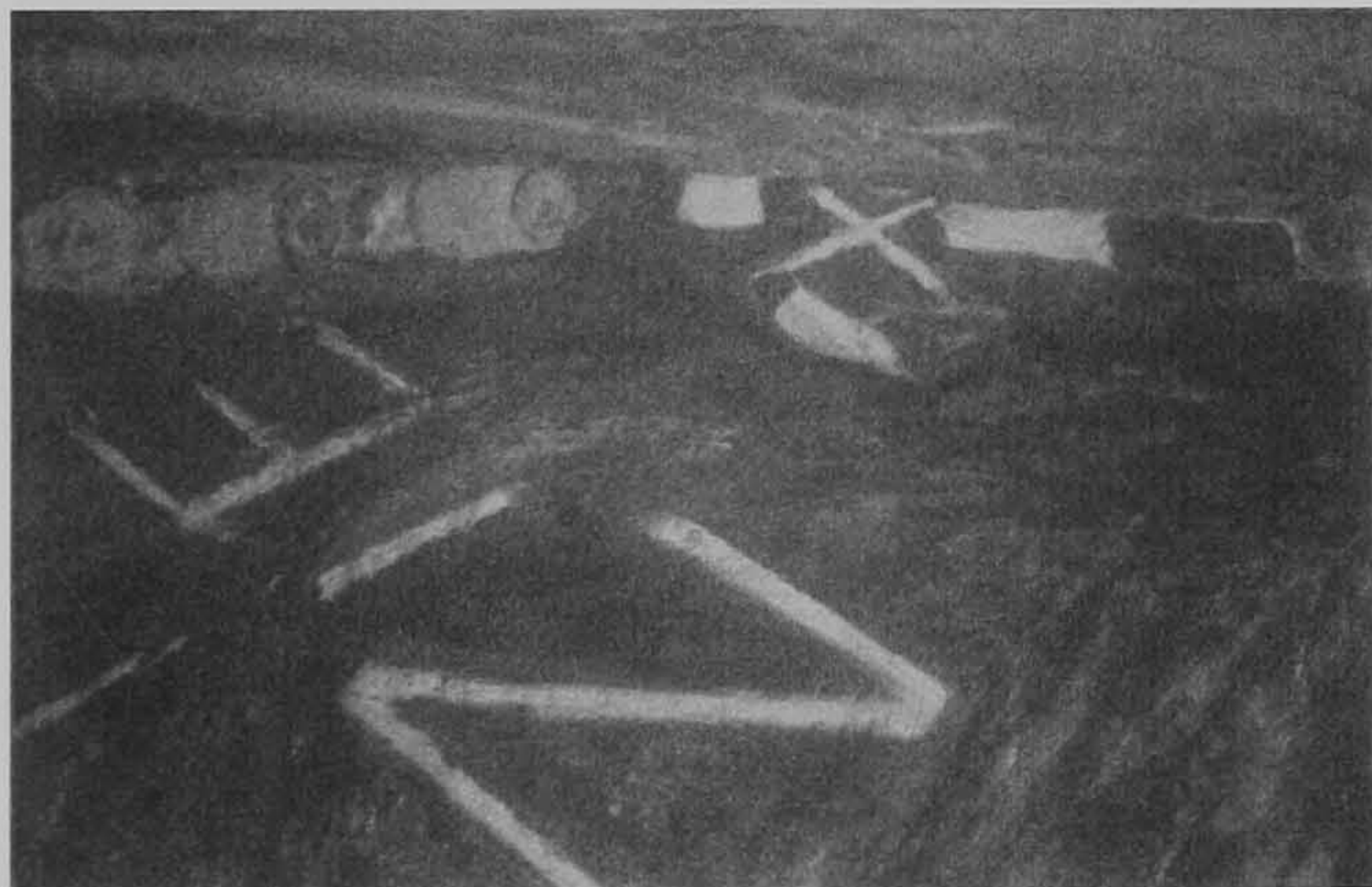
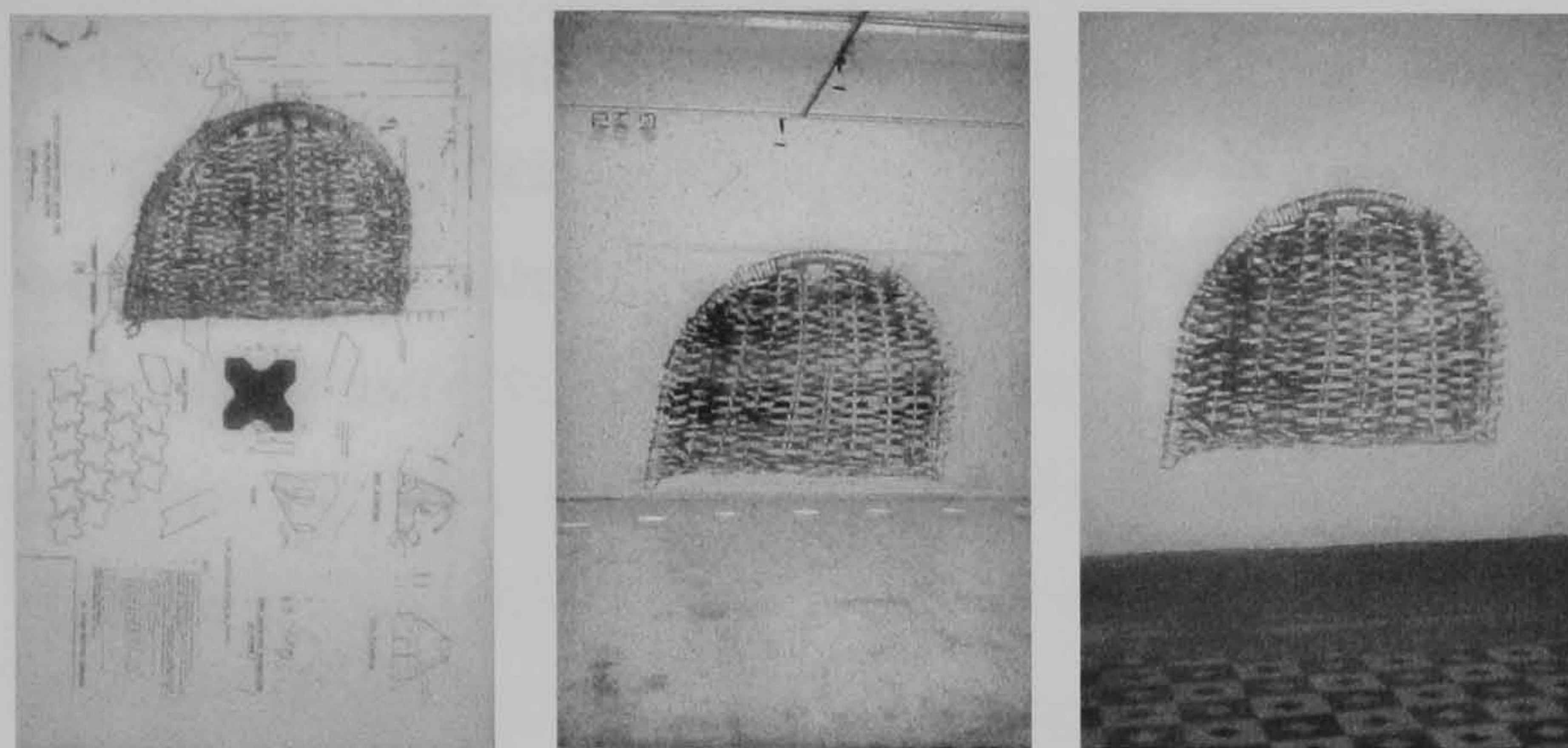


Fig.1 Cian Quayle, *Zie*, 1991. Oil on canvas, 122 x 183 cm.

After 1991 my work moved away from painting towards printmaking. Mechanical reproduction effects a distance of the artist’s hand in the work as objects are similarly distanced from their original source. I used printmaking as a way of transporting specific objects and motifs between one place and another. During nine months study in Barcelona<sup>2</sup> I developed strategies of alteration and juxtaposition in mixed media work, which incorporated a wide range of collected materials and found objects as well as photographs appropriated from elsewhere. An atavistic sense of place with which one is unfamiliar found its denouement in the uprooting of found materials from their original context in works where disparate elements were juxtaposed. An object found outside my studio in Barcelona was laid on top of architectural plans for the reconstruction of



Douglas Harbour's breakwater in *Basket-case* (1992, fig.2). The work was concerned with an experience of the city as a porous entity by which one is effectively absorbed.<sup>3</sup>



Figs.2-4 (Left to right).  
Cian Quayle  
*Basket-case*, 1992, lithograph, 78 x 53 cm.  
*Espiritu de la Colmena*, 1993.  
Xerox copy, 504 x 640 cm.  
Winchester School of Art.  
*Relocations*, 1995. Dagmar de Pooter Gallery, Antwerp.  
Installation view.

Upon my return to the U.K. I experimented with commercial forms of photo-mechanical reproduction outside established printmaking processes. These incorporated the use of xerographic or photocopy processes to create large-scale images. Prior to this time large-format printing was the preserve of commercial sign-writers and printers. The appearance of high street bureaus in the early 1990's, with Xerox copiers capable of handling large, roll-fed media, transformed the printing industry. A large Xerox print *Espiritu de la Colmena* (1993, fig.3) was at once graphic and photographic, whilst strictly being neither, possessing the autographic qualities of drawing in a distribution of toner fused to the surface of the paper.



Figs.5 (left to right) Cian Quayle, *Relocations*, installation-view, Dagmar de Pooter Gallery, Antwerp, 1995. Glazed blocks and black and white photographs of found objects.

Following my studies in Spain and subsequent return to the U.K. I moved to Belgium for eight months. In Belgium, two exhibitions were pivotal for my notion of artist-travel and material displacement. In 1995 I exhibited *Relocations* (figs.4 & 5) at the Dagmar de Pooter Gallery in Antwerp. In this work I repositioned motifs and images collected in Spain alongside motifs from the Isle of Man. A newspaper article in *Le Soir* reported the retirement of the Walloon professional cyclist Michel Dernies (Deblander & Lauwens, 1995). In this article Dernies commented on the effects of the linguistic-divide<sup>4</sup>, as a factor in terms of national selection procedures, which had negatively affected his career as a racing cyclist. The random experience of being somewhere else and reading this article, as a form of 'chance-encounter', triggered further thoughts around issues of identity, place, mobility, physical strain, the cult of personality and the multiplication and



reproducibility of media images. These observations formed the basis for *Eraser-Ed* (1995) installed at the Beeld Fotografiecollectief. The work was a part-homage to 1970's Tour de France winner Eddy Merckx, an iconic figure in Belgian culture. This installation comprised images from magazines and other publications, which were bought in local flea-markets and second hand shops. In Belgium images of Merckx are widely disseminated in books and magazines – already distanced from their origin or 'home' as copies. These images were subject to processes of rephotography and printmaking. In a series of 5 lithographs, titled *Heroes* (1995), photocopy-transfer was utilised in the production of images, which reside between printmaking and photography. The processes by which these images passed through different stages, at each step removed from their origin, was key to my developing a concept of travel and transmutability. The repetition and relocation of motifs away from their original source raises the question as to where the ideal encounter with the image actually lies.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1985-1995 (fig.6) I competed internationally as a racing cyclist in the U.K. Ireland and Europe. Throughout modernist iconography cycling has been a recurrent theme, related to dynamism and is found as such in the work of Picasso, Metzinger, Picabia, Hopper, the ready-mades of Duchamp and the writing of Ernest Hemingway, in his short story *The Pursuit Race* (1956). Lance Armstrong, like Merckx, is a multiple winner of the Tour de France. In the introduction to his autobiography *Every Second Counts* Armstrong describes the unbridled mobility of riding a bicycle:

A bicycle is the long sought after means of transportation for all of us who have runaway hearts. Our first bike is a matter of kerb-jumping, puddle-splashing liberation: it's freedom from supervision, from car-pools and curfews. It's a merciful release from reliance on parents, one's own way to the movies or a friend's house. More plainly it's the first chance we have to choose our own direction.

Lance Armstrong incisively articulates a childhood recollection of mobility and travel, at once personal and universal, as a way of describing how we move through space and how the course of life is steered as such. Rosalind Krauss (1999, pp.58-59) discusses a passage from *Being and Nothingness* (1956) by Jean Paul Sartre, who intellectualises the athlete's movement through space. Krauss (1999, pp.58-59) explains how Sartre extends this idea, by submitting the formation of space, and the athlete or artist's movement through it into the realm of creativity, which is directly related to my concept of artist-travel:

In analysing the lines of intention that connects a subject to his world, Sartre speaks not only of the reciprocity of points of view – the vector that connects my body as my point of view on things with that aspect which marks out the point of view of those things on my body – but also of those movements through the world which are my form of appropriating it, through play for example. "Sport" he writes, "is a free transformation of the worldly environment into the supporting element of the action. This fact makes it creative like art. The environment may be a field of snow ... to see it is already to possess it. It represents pure exteriority, radical spatiality; its undifferentiation, its monotony and its whiteness manifest the absolute nudity of substance; it is the in-itself which is only in-itself.... What I wish is that this in-itself. One wants to 'do something out of snow' – to



impose a form on it which adheres so deeply to the matter that the matter appears to exist for the sake of the form.... To ski, is beyond skill, rapidity, play, a way of possessing this field. I am doing something to it. By my activity I am changing the matter and meaning of snow.

In the same way my experience as a racing-cyclist was later distilled in my work, a series of photographs taken near to my 'home' in Douglas for a school project formed the basis for an archive titled *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*, and what Philippe Dubois has described as 'travelled-photographic images' (Green 2004, unpaginated). These photographs eventually emerged at the centre of my archive, as part of an evolving concern with travel as a medium, which alters the materiality of photographs and found objects taken, collected and assembled on-route. These reflections are the basis upon which I formulated my original proposal for this project.



Fig.6 Cian Quayle, *Willaston Handicap International Road Race, Douglas, 1988*. Colour press photograph, 18 x 12.5 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Family-snapshots\_19. Printed by Linda Grundy.

## The Aesthetics of Distance

*In the Balearic Isles. Last summer,*

What gives value to travel is fear. It is the fact that, at a certain moment, when we are so far from our own country (a French newspaper acquires incalculable value. And those evenings when in cafes you try to get closer to other men just to touch them with your elbow), we are seized by a vague fear, and an instinctive desire to go back to old habits. This is the most obvious benefit of travel. At that moment we are febrile but also porous. The slightest touch makes us quiver to the depths of our being. We come across a cascade of light, and there is eternity. This is why we should not say that we travel for pleasure. There is no pleasure in travelling. It is more an occasion for spiritual testing. If we understand by culture the exercise of our most intimate sense - that of eternity - then we travel for culture. Pleasure takes us away from ourselves in the same way as distraction, in Pascal's use of the word, takes us away from God. Travel, which is like a greater and graver science, brings us back to ourselves.

Albert Camus, May 1935

Camus (1979, p.23) defines travel as a largely precarious activity at the beginning of the century. At the end of the 20th Century travel as a phenomenon and signifier of movement in all its forms has changed considerably. Place and landscape have become significant beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of the *genius-loci* or spirit of place, to which my inventory of photographs initially appertains. As an artist-strategy 'travel' is a ubiquitous theme, which has been the premise of many recent exhibitions and writings. These include *Cities on the Move* (Hayward Gallery, 1999), *En Route* (Serpentine



Gallery, 2002) and *Overnight to Many Cities -Tourism and Travel at Home and Away* (The Photographers Gallery, 2002).<sup>6</sup> Of the numerous articles and books published on this subject Peter D. Osborne's *Travelling Light: Photography and Visual Culture* (2000) deals specifically with photography's unique relationship with travel, whilst Alain de Botton's *The Art of Travel* (2002) analyses 'artist-travel' within a broad historical context, whilst questioning the validity of photography as the primary representational practice in this area. The proliferation of these exhibitions and literature reflects the zeitgeist and position from which this project departs. Travel as a cultural phenomenon has thus become part of ongoing scholarship in relation to issues of identity formation. Although 'travel' is an overused term, I continue to use it as an *portmanteau* throughout this thesis, as a nomenclature of the artist's journeys is developed.

In Part I 'Travel Photography' I introduce the work of the 1960's photoconceptualists as a precursor of the prevalence of photography as a register of 'artist-travel' in contemporary practice. In an essay titled *Nomads* Meyer (1997) distinguishes two types of nomadism. The first, 'lyrical nomadism' is aligned with Dada and Surrealist strategies of: "random and poetic interactions with the objects and spaces of everyday life." These experiences are transformed into works of art, whilst the mechanisms of mobility remain invisible. This is exemplified by Ed Ruscha's use of photography in Chapter 1. Between 1962 and 1970 Ruscha produced a collection of books, which document a series of 'car-journeys' between his former 'home' and Los Angeles. Each book is framed by the car-driver's point of view, which develops a roadside iconography, photographically documented in the form of a travelogue. Ruscha's inventories include gas stations, apartment buildings, empty car parks, vacant plots of land and deserted swimming pools. Their repetition is expanded as series of 'readymades in photographic form', which were dematerialised by their dissemination in books (Phillpot 1999, p.63).

In Chapter 2 Ruscha's initial irreverence for the photographic image was extended as a strategy in Douglas Huebler's dematerialised path from sculpture to a photography-based practice. Just as Ruscha was based in Los Angeles, Huebler chose to distance himself from the institutions of the New York art-scene and the object of art itself. His approach appears erratic yet he harnessed the random contingency of everyday experience in a set of systems-based, spatio-temporal explorations. Huebler's work is defined by a series of journeys where he travels by car, flies and even hitch-hikes between his 'home' and elsewhere, as he moved in and out of an emergent conceptual art scene. This approach was based within a structuralist discourse, which sought to decentre the artist, whilst emphasising the structural formation of art-works and the implication of the viewer. Ruscha and Huebler both utilised photography to document what I have termed as a 'travel-event' – a set of operations which describe the artist's journey.

Bas jan Ader (Chapter 3) moved from Holland to Los Angeles at the beginning of the 1960's. As an expatriate artist abroad, Ader documented his work photographically as he



travelled back and forth between Los Angeles and Europe. The visibility of the artist as a traveller increases exponentially as this thesis unfolds. Although Ader is present in the work, his use of the still photography and film establish a distance between the artist and the viewer's reception of the work, which centres on the frailty of the human body, as the artist stages a series of 'falls'. Ader's vulnerability is exacerbated as he sets forth on a 'pedestrian-journey' across the city and finally embarks upon a 'sea-journey'. Ruscha and Huebler's asceticism contrasts with Ader's Conceptualism, which hinges on a formal and theoretical 'balance' between his leanings towards Romanticism. What emerges from their work is a unique photographic presence which transcends their stated intentions and art historical milieu.

My initial concept of *The Artist as Nomad* was too narrow a definition of 'artist-travel'. Nomadism is just one of many forms of travel, which includes exile, escape, evacuation, migration, displacement and tourism.<sup>7</sup> To refer back to Meyer's definitions as a point of departure – 'critical nomadism' encompasses the historical and institutional framework within which 'artist-travel' takes place. Meyer discusses the work of artists for whom this project's case-studies have set a precedent: he cites Gabriel Orozco, Renée Green and Christian Phillip Mueller, who stage a "dramatisation of the artist's peripatetic existence, its suggestion of a vectored and continuous mobility occurring between countries and institutional settings" (Meyer 1997, p.206). This statement implies a seamless trajectory but fails to account for the rupture of the involuntary and erratic movement of exile, which the artists in Part II profoundly embody. Meyer identifies the shared experience of these artists in their work's allegorical content and its formal disjointedness. This project identifies exile as the principal factor by which travel as an artist-strategy is gauged, either as a voluntary decision (Part I) symptomatic of a historical crisis (Part II) and tentatively as a synthesis of the two in my work (Part III). At the same time Meyer's 'critical' and 'lyrical' formulations are conjoined in my work, as they are seen to over-lap in the artist case-studies. The photoconceptualists adopted photography as a 'critical' tool owing to its objective function as data, yet their images possess an unintentional 'lyrical' or aesthetic value, as a result of this 'critical-distance':

Exile is perceived not just as an experience of physical displacement but it is also linked to the semantic raptures in representation. Exile is inserted as a conceptual process that heightens the metaphorical mode of carrying difference into critical thinking. [...] The exilic perspective is the product of shuttling from one position to another; if it appears loose and open ended, this is not because it is unstructured but because it is structured without centre.

Papastergiadis (1994, p.23) amongst others, including Osborne (2000), has identified the link between exile and representational practice. Jerry Zaslove (1990, p.66) also explains the cultural and post-colonial implications of technology for the current state of affairs in Europe. These factors open up a discourse based upon distance and proximity, centre and periphery and the typology of the different art works, which arise from travel and exile:



The grotesque as the signature of modernism thrives where surplus controls consciousness, or where material conditions are controlled by centralised authorities, as for example in Central Europe today where the migration of people and the leaping of traditional nation-state political borders release material for thought and consciousness about human rights and what, in reality, can be said about where 'inner' and 'outer' really are. Where the fundamental connection of images to history has been broken, or shoved to the periphery of voicelessness, the forms of distantiation, passivity inducing, objectless-looking and state sponsored spectacles in collusion with business, control and dictate the surfaces and their technically reproducible directions.

Zaslove identifies the return of the grotesque, carnival and other practices at the core of modernism, from outside the mainstream concerns of the art world, as a result of the alienating effects of technological hegemony upon displaced communities and individuals. Edward Said (2000, p. 181) has described three different registers of exile: The status of the 'refugee' refers to the political upheaval and dispersal of large groups of people to which Zaslove refers. Ruscha and Huebler's regional-displacement represents a benign form of solitary 'exile', rather than the forced exit from one country to another. Said's 'expatriate' formation is relevant to Ader, who voluntarily moved to Los Angeles, whilst retaining a longing for the Romantic tradition embodied in the figure of the solitary wanderer.

In Part II: 'Lost and Found Object' the forced movement of exile is the basis for an analysis of travel in the work of Jimmie Durham, Gustav Metzger and Kurt Schwitters. Faced with varied degrees of an 'impossibility of return', they are isolated figures distanced from their point of origin or 'home' as a result of a historical crisis. In Chapter 4 Durham's travels are located within the 'critical' domain of his status as a Native American concerned with human-rights, boundaries and displaced identity. Durham initially worked as a representative of the *American Indian Movement* (AIM) in Geneva and New York during the 1970's. In 1983 he resumed his activities as an artist working with other minority artists in New York, who sought to establish their visibility. Like Ader, Durham is visible and also heard within his work. After leaving America in 1980, his migratory practice followed the itinerant path of Said's 'émigré' status. The impossibility of returning to a 'home' becomes both a physical and intellectual construct. Although Durham can return to America at any time, it is impossible to return to land, from which Native American peoples have been dispossessed. Durham's work proposes a complex discourse of dispute with the art-world and its institutions. During a period of postmodern appropriation in the early 1980's, Durham collected found objects, which were juxtaposed with industrial materials. These works possess a 'lyrical' quality from which Durham has distanced himself in his recent work.

Gustav Metzger (Chapter 5) arrived in England as a displaced Polish-Jew from Germany at the beginning of World War II. Metzger's experience is characteristic of the lives of other émigré artists and exiles. It should be noted that the expatriate experience of Ader was perhaps prompted by his father's death at the hands of the Nazis (Saunders 2004, p.54). Metzger's 'impossibility of return', in the sense that it is Holocaust induced, is



altogether different but nevertheless close to Durham's experience. It is seen how the similarities of their work attests to this. Metzger harnesses the destructive and creative forces of nature and materials in his work. In Durham and Metzger's work the dematerialisation of the object of art, presaged in the work of the photoconceptualists, assumes different values of weightlessness. Recent work by these two artists demonstrates this, in their use of paper and stone, which as values of weight, are shown to be dynamic and interchangeable material forms.

The loss of a place of origin and 'home' manifest in the transport and transformation of found objects and materials finds its basis in the final case-study. Chapter 6 follows Kurt Schwitters' escape from his native Hanover and subsequent internment in the Isle of Man. Once it was no longer safe to remain in Germany, Schwitters fled to Norway, which had been a favourite holiday retreat of the Schwitters family since the early 1930's. This phase of Schwitters' exile marks the beginning of a shift from an urban to a rural aesthetic. After his release from internment in 1941 Schwitters lived as an exile in London before taking up residence in Ambleside. In his collages and *Merzbau* constructions, Schwitters dematerialised the detritus of everyday life within an overall schema, within which the identity of objects were at once present and absent. At each hiatus during his exile Schwitters attempted to rebuild what he had left behind. Schwitters' use of the photographic image is also analysed as a precursor of the work of the 1960's photoconceptualists. Travel per se is not the stated intention of these artists, as a process, however it is sublimated within their work. As the artist moves from one place to another, images and objects are transformed by their relocation in what are often unfamiliar locations.

The concept of 'distantiation', to which Zaslove refers above, has also been adopted by Nigerian born curator Okwui Enwezor. In his catalogue essay *Outside the Black Box*, which accompanied *Documental 11* in 2002.<sup>8</sup> Enwezor addressed the breaking of boundaries and the crossing of borders reflected in his selection of artists, as well as convening five *Platforms* for discussion across the globe. Gibbs (2002, p.1) has observed that whereas previous *Documenta* exhibitions have taken the 1960's as their main reference, *Documental 11* addressed art as just one part of global culture alongside other means of producing knowledge. Enwezor selected artists whose work addresses socio-political, aesthetic and multicultural discourses, whilst highlighting the prevalence of photography, video and the internet as the primary media of global and local dislocation. In *ID: A Journey Through a Solid Sea*, Milan based Multiplicity chart the sinking of a ship full of Sinhalese immigrants off the Sicilian coast.<sup>9</sup> There were also many examples of works where new technology was fused with found materials. The legacy of the photoconceptualists continues in the documentary strategies of Allan Sekulla, who tracks global displacement. Conversely Lorna Simpson's documentation of the everyday lives of two New York women offered a localised perspective. These examples set up an endless set of identity relationships between distance and proximity, land and sea, urban and rural, interior and exterior as the indices of *The Aesthetics of Distance*.



Against this contextual background it is possible to retrace the origin of a discourse related to 'artist-travel'. These strategies have evolved since 1960's conceptualism opened the way for feminism and psychoanalysis as fields of interpretation, and the emergence of the human sciences in theoretical practice, alongside political issues with which artists engaged during the 1970's and early 1980's. The *Documenta II* catalogue also featured an essay entitled *Can Places Travel?* In this essay Sverker Sörlin (Enwezor 2002, p.142) discussed the changing definition of landscape and its art-historical relation to painting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>10</sup> In contemporary terms landscape can no longer be separated from the urban environment as the topography of towns and cities continually encroach on nature. The upheaval of that which is static is emphasised in Sörlin's discussion of Ingrid Pollard's "landscape of memory in the form of a photo-album":

Sometimes distance creates greater intimacy than does proximity. Places are footholds for the soul's fleeting terrestrial detour. *Intimate Distance* is the well-found title for one of her works. Perhaps places are indeed able to travel

The differences and similarities highlighted in each artist's work are drawn together in the documentation and writing of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* in Part III. As an archive of photographic images, which I have collected over the last twenty years, it includes family snapshots, found photographs, photographic postcards and my own photographs. The fixed point of reference of these particular photographs is Douglas in the Isle of Man. At an early stage of the research the decision was made to test the plausibility of manifesting a 'photographic-journey' with the 'archival-chronotope' as its metaphorical formation. In order to unhinge the constituent elements of the archive I adopted Bakhtin's (1981, p.84) 'chronotope' where "spatial and temporal indicators fuse into one carefully thought out whole." Russian formalist and literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin was interested in a number of recurrent motifs as the forming material of the 'chronotope': 'biographical time', 'the provincial town', 'the road' and 'threshold', each one with its own specific space-time co-ordinates. He used these in his life-long study of narrative and genre in relation to the novel. The inter-relationship of Bakhtin's motifs are traced throughout the artist case-studies and my own work, in an investigation of the materiality of the different photographic variants listed above. Individual works and series of works, as 'travelled photographic images', manifest a journey within a journey, as each photographic-variant is dematerialised in multiple points of view of Douglas at different points in time. Their repetition of motif and serial juxtaposition within installation works generates movement across space. Examples of these works are illustrated in the plates which follow the introduction, as a record of the *Research Project* (2004) installation, which formed part of my viva-voce examination at Camberwell College of Arts. These works coexist alongside an autobiographical account of the origin and dematerialisation of the original print artefacts, as they are reconfigured outside the overall schema of the archive. This project tests the efficacy of a 'metaphorical-journey'



and the significance of photographic images and found objects, where no one medium or position is accorded precedence over another.

Artist-travel is defined by distance and absence rather than by a fixed connection to place. East German born artist Gerhard Richter started his *Atlas* of over 500 panels of photographs and drawings in 1962, at the same time as he moved from East to West Germany. In turn Richter was influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's use of photography, rather than the collage and photomontage work of the German Dadaists: Heartfield and Scwhitters. Whilst Rauschenberg worked extensively with photography in New York, in 1963 Ed Ruscha produced his first photographic book in Los Angeles.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In my BA dissertation *Tourism and Landscape Art* I investigated Turner's pursuit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic package-holiday, the Grand Tour. Turner followed tourism and an increasingly mobile bourgeoisie across Europe to the popular holiday destinations of the time. Turner travelled to these locations, where he made detailed topographical sketches and notes, upon which he based watercolour paintings. Thus it was tourism, which determined the subject matter Turner chose for etchings, which he transcribed from his watercolours. These were editioned and bound in order to be sold, as fine art souvenirs, to aristocratic tourists upon their return home. My dissertation also analysed the work of artists and designers during the 1920/30's such as Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland, who were commissioned to produce posters for the London Underground, railway companies and petrol companies such as Shell. The work of these artist-designers signals an era where travel became synonymous with the leisure time activities of the population at large.

<sup>2</sup> The MA European Fine Art, Winchester School of Art was divided between nine months living and working in Barcelona and three months in Winchester.

<sup>3</sup> On walking through the city one Sunday afternoon I came across a professional cycle race, which I photographed in progress. The 'Escalada Montjuic' (Escalada translates as hill-climb: an explosive up-hill endurance event). In this end of season event, world-famous Irish professional cyclists, Sean Kelly and Stephen Roche, were seen racing within a dominantly European milieu. As a cultural phenomenon this incident formed the basis for a seminar presentation related to the displacement of persons, objects and the chance encounter. Language as the driving force of identity politics also featured as part of this discourse.

<sup>4</sup> These works allude to the linguistic divide common to both Catalonia and Belgium. In Belgium Flemish and Walloon speakers define invisible geographic boundaries, the effects of which permeate all walks of life. Historically French was the language of the ruling classes and the working classes spoke Flemish. A parallel situation exists in Catalonia in Spain between the speaking of Catalan and Spanish outside of the region. This is rooted in the history of Catalan opposition to General Franco and Fascism during the Spanish Civil War. These tensions eased after the death of Franco in 1974 and the rise of Catalonia and Barcelona as a thriving industrial centre

<sup>5</sup> Burgin, V., 2001, *Photography in the Post Medium Age*, London: Tate Modern. In his discussion of the photographic image Burgin raises the question as to where the photographic image resides due to its forms of multiple dissemination.

<sup>6</sup> I wrote a review of *Overnight to Many Cities* titled 'Home and Away' for *Source* (Summer 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Formative theoretical influences on my thinking of artist-travel began to broaden the field of research possibilities, as different modes of travel manifested separate typological entities. An essay by Zygmunt Bauman titled, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity' in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1991 identifies the pilgrim's successors as a selection of post-modern life strategies, and the notion of the, "identity building journey". Bauman's metaphorical figures: 'Pilgrim', 'Stroller', 'Vagabond', 'Tourist' and 'Player' were useful personages from which my own typological analysis has evolved in the form of biographical artist case studies.

<sup>8</sup> Documenta was the first of its kind and is perhaps the most important international survey of



contemporary art in the world. The first Documenta was held in 1955 in Kassel in Germany and the exhibition has since been curated every four years in the same location by a different individual.

<sup>9</sup> Multiplicity (Enwezor 2002, u.p.) trace 'identity trajectories' in their proposition that the Mediterranean is no longer the smooth romantic plane of nomadic projection, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, as it has become a: "hard space, solid, ploughed by precise routes that move between points that are equally well defined: from Valora to Brindisi, from Malta to Portopalo, from Algiers to Marseille, from Suez to Gibraltar."

<sup>10</sup> In the hierarchical tradition of Western painting: history, portrait, still life and landscape. The latter was regarded as the lowest form of painting, treated merely as background or setting for other grand narratives. Genre as a term used to describe the depiction of everyday life in painting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards is seen in the work of the Dutch Masters, de Hooch and Vermeer, is relevant to my photographic discourse.

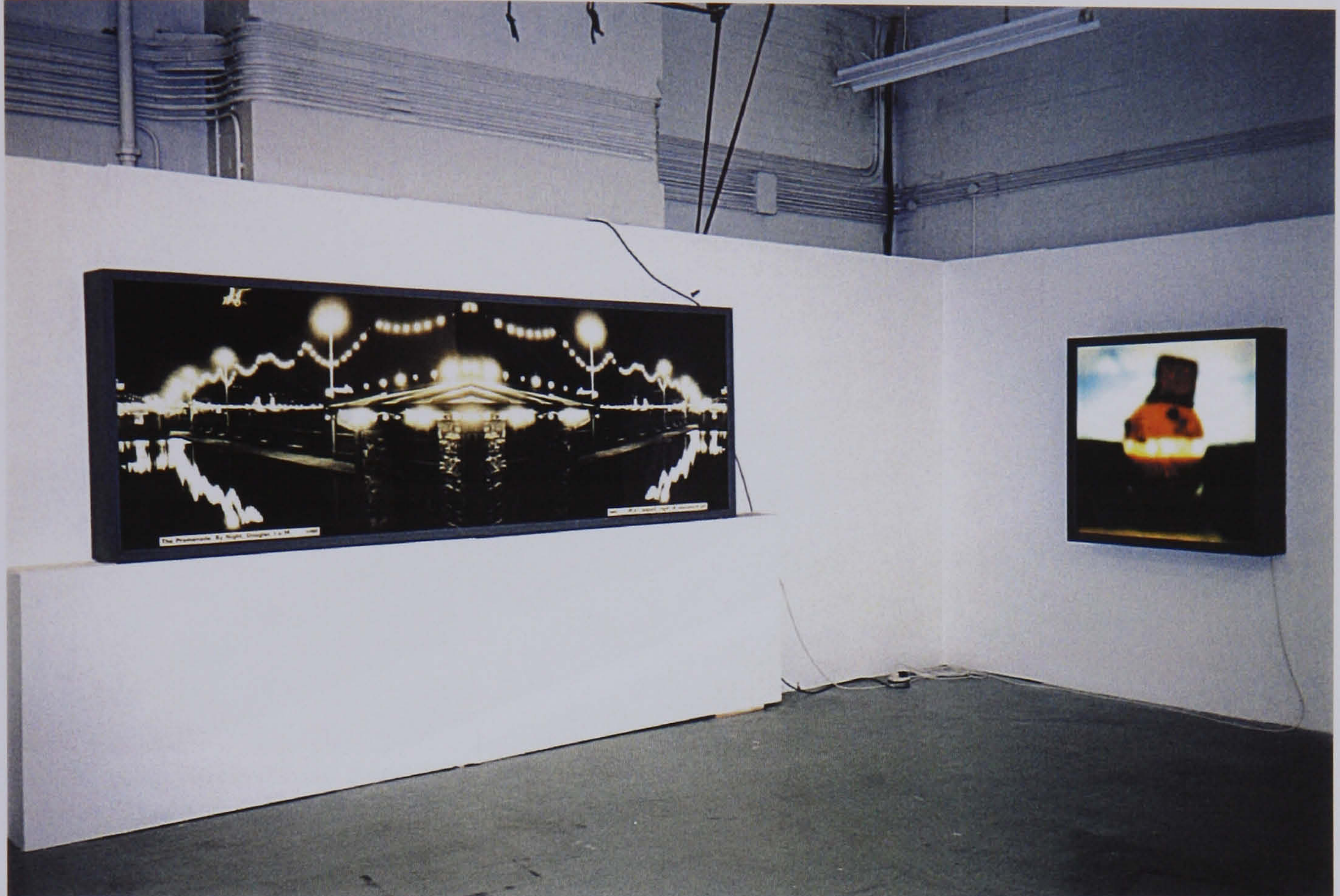


*Return Ticket*, 20, 6 x 8 feet photographs. Boundary wall of the Derby Castle Depot. May 2003 installation in progress. CD\_Archive (2004): Return-ticket\_14.

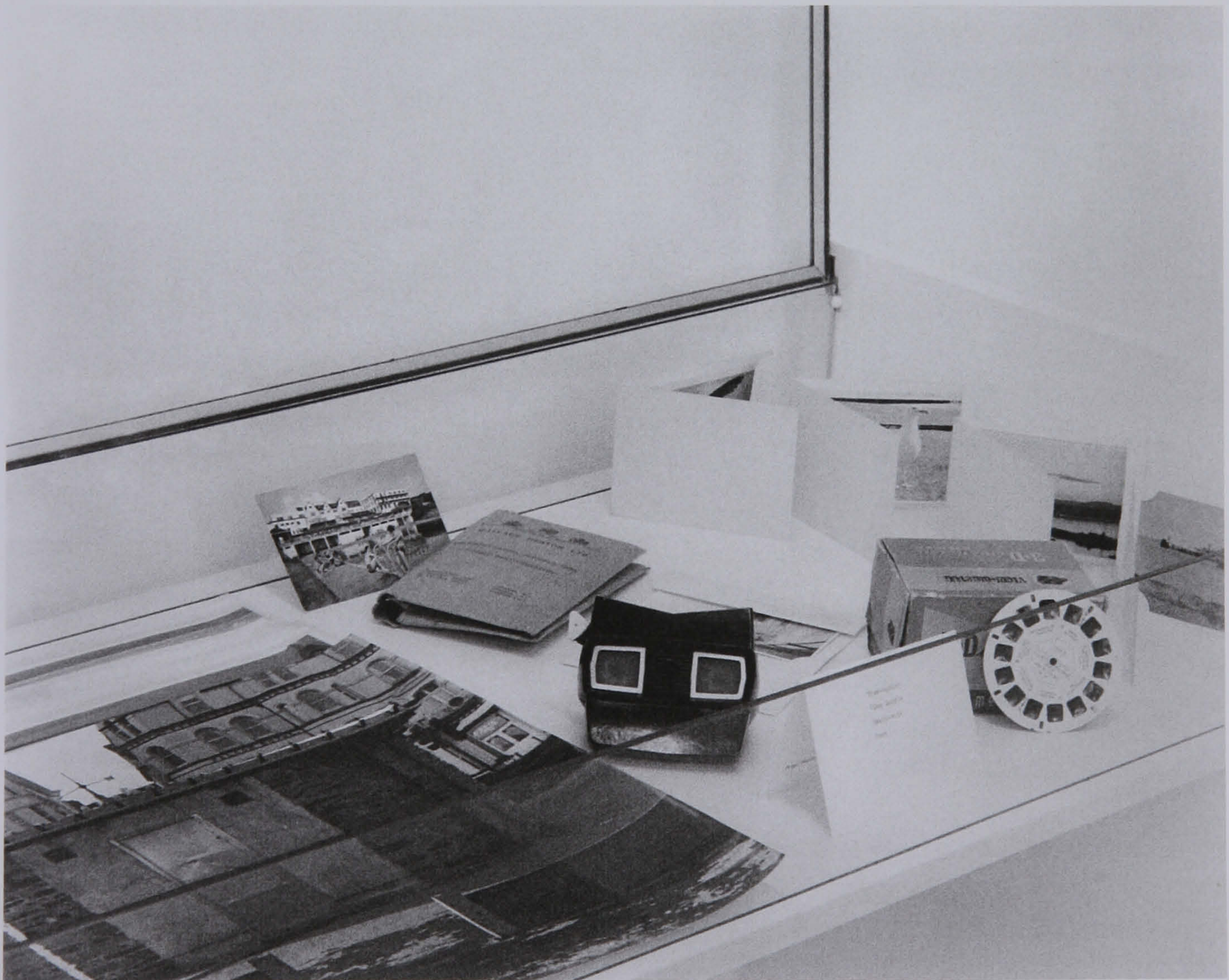


## Research Project

Eight installation-views of work exhibited for the PhD Viva-Voce Examination.  
Camberwell College of Arts: 6th July - 23rd July 2004.

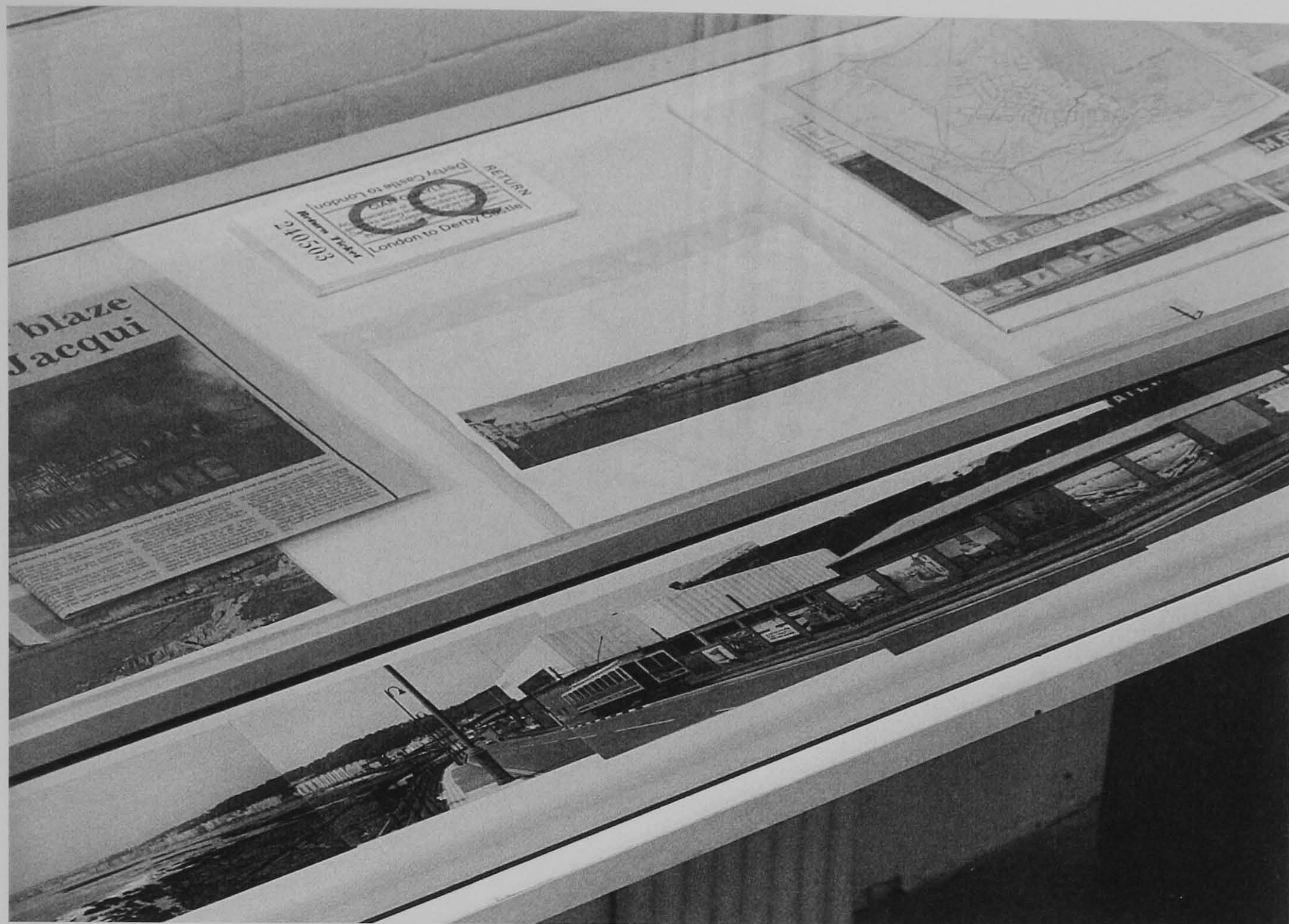


*Prom-split II (Overview) night* (2001) & *Sea-mine* (2004). Each lightbox and transparency.



*Shelters N-S, E-W.* (2002), 8 Black and white photographs. *Viewmaster* (2000), found object. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* (2002), postcard and letterpress. *Majestic Hotel Archive* (1998), photographs with archival display folders.



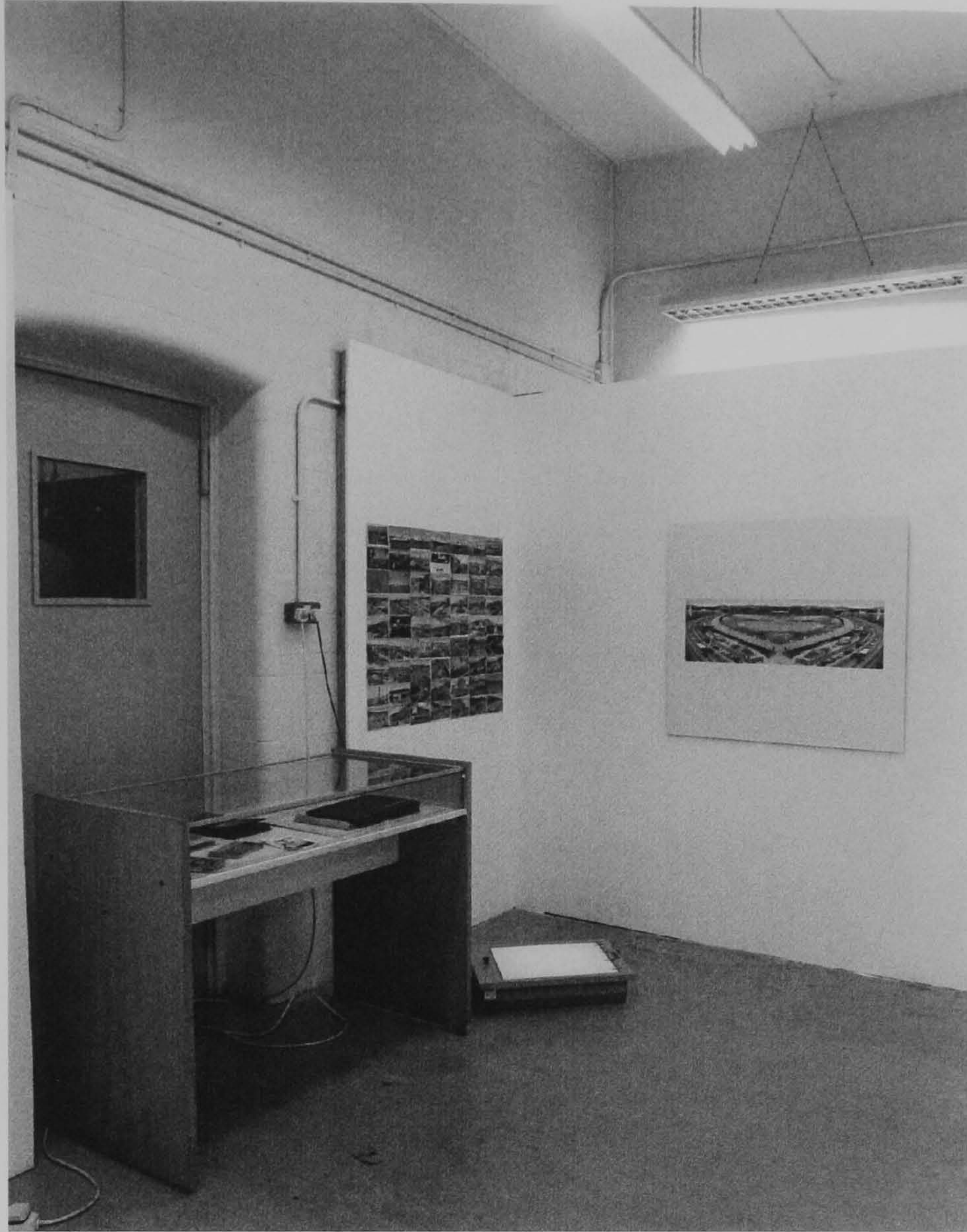


Left to right: *Summerland Fire*, 2003, newspaper photograph. *Return Ticket* 2003, panoramic photo-montage. *Loch Prom, Douglas*, 2003. Rephotographed *Heeps Panorama*, MNH Library Archive. *Ward Lock & Co. Guide Book*. Howell-Robinson Boundary wall Poster Display, circa 1970, documentary photograph.

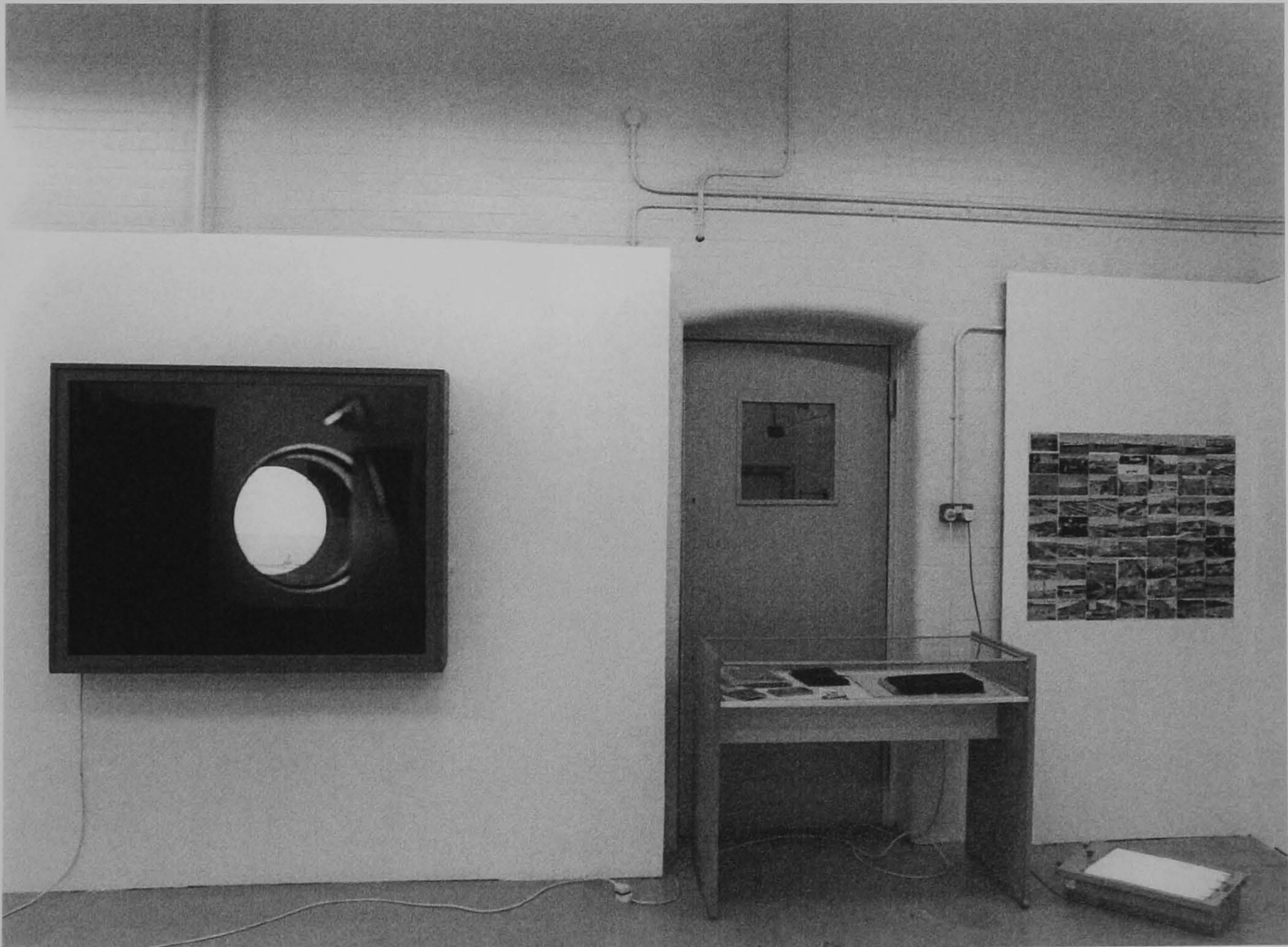


*Family-snapshots*, Kodak Wallet & letreset. *The Manx Arms (1999-In Process)*, photographs, ring binder & Letreset. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* (2002), postcard & letterpress, (Edition: 38). *23 Colour Photographs* (1970) photographs, vintage album, Letreset & index cards. *35 b&w Photographs* (1984/2001), photographic postcards, unlimited edition.



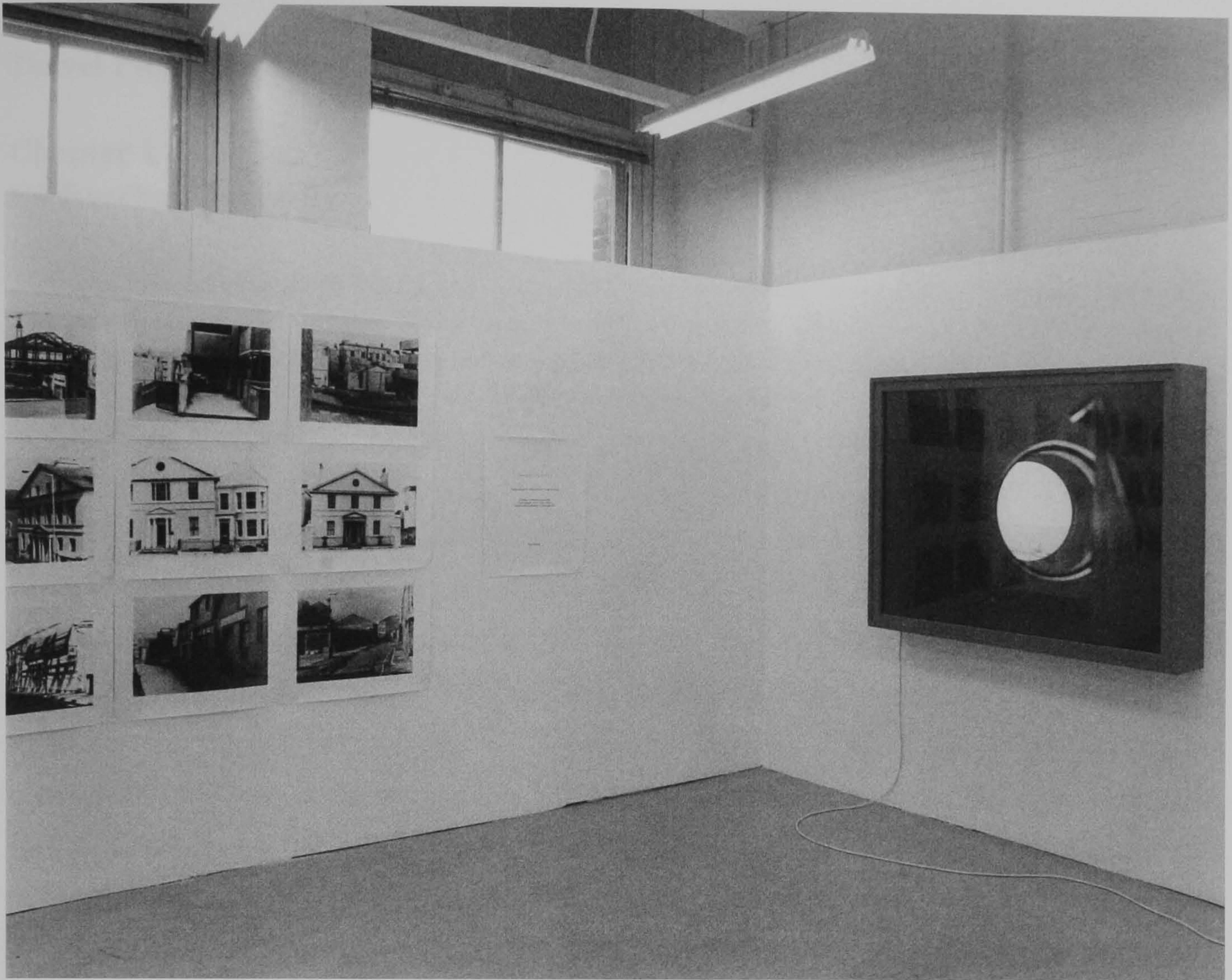


Display cabinet. Floor based lightbox. 63 of 76 *Postcard Views – A Pedestrian Journey* (2004), photographic postcards. *Prom-split I (close-up) day* (1999), colour ink-jet print on aluminium.



*Ocular-view* (2004). Colour transparency and lightbox. Display cabinet. Floor based lightbox. 63 of 76 *Postcard Views – A Pedestrian Journey*, (2004), photographic postcards.





35 b&w Photographs and title page (1984/2001), partial view. *Ocular-view* (2004), colour transparency and lightbox.



*Sea (Flotsam & jetsam)* (2003), framed colour ink jet print. 35 b&w Photographs (1984/2001), partial view.



## Part I Travel Photography

### Chapter 1 Ed Ruscha's Drive-By

I was into making those books and doing photographs without being a photographer – sort of medium fucking – and that really inspired me [...] It starts very early [...] I heard that Kurt Schwitters spent his life collecting subway tickets and trolley tokens; I just pictured this guy out on the street doing this – making art out of this – and it sort of sealed it for me.

Ed Ruscha, 1988.<sup>1</sup>

In 1955 at the age of eighteen Ed Ruscha moved from his home in Oklahoma to live in Los Angeles. Ruscha studied art at the Chouinard Institute and subsequently made regular, return-journeys home to visit his family (Phillpot 2000, p.59). As he travelled back and forth, between Los Angeles and Oklahoma City, it occurred to Ruscha that what was a monotonous journey could form the basis for a new kind of artwork. In this chapter Ruscha's revolutionary use of photography is identified with this and subsequent journeys in a series of books produced between 1963 and 1972. The first of these was entitled *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963, fig.7). Ruscha (2004, p.49) has described these works as a 'so called mapping of space'. As a collection of travelogues, each book alternates between series and structure, movement and stasis, distance and proximity, memory and repetition. Whilst a sense of loss or displacement permeates all of Ruscha's books, something is also gained in their sense of an uncanny absence. The assertive pictorial materiality of Ruscha's photographic sensibility signals the emergence of a unique photographic-presence, which we recognise today.

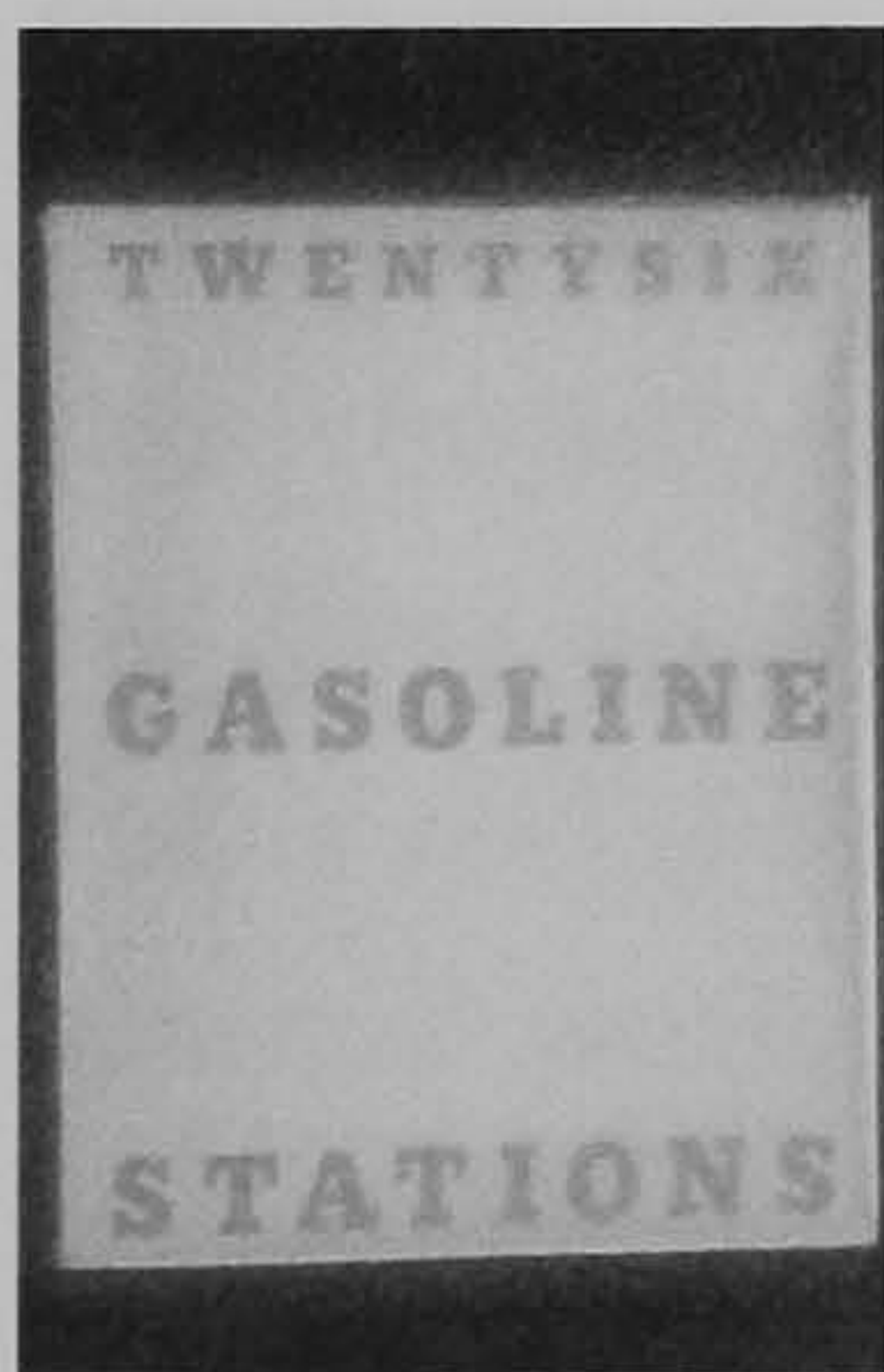


Fig.7 Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963. 17.9 x 14 cm. (Closed dimensions). Title printed red ink on white paper with glassine jacket.

In contrast to New York as an art centre Ruscha (Bickers 2002, p.4) has referred, on more than one occasion, to the 'territorial purgatory' of Los Angeles:

Things are changing, communication is changing so fast that people can live in Kansas, or anywhere in England, and make a statement as an artist, they can know everything that is going on in London and New York but still they are kind of lost because they are not in the scene.

Phillpot (1999, p.59) has cited the importance of Ruscha's relationship with Los Angeles but equally acknowledges the significance of his former home as well as the space in-between both cities:



Many commentators have emphasised the relevance of Los Angeles to Ruscha's work and vice versa but it seems equally significant that he was an 'Okie', who had transplanted himself to the 'Garden of Eden' that was Los Angeles.

For Ruscha and Bas Jan Ader, the historical and geographical significance of Los Angeles cannot be understated in terms of their identity as in-comers or outsiders. Peter Plagens (1982, p.32) has referred to the Los Angeles populace as a hybrid entity, as the city becomes 'home' in the specific way "it evades the rooted insight of the native because it is a city where outsiders come to get away from something else." In Los Angeles Ruscha mirrored this experience, as he incorporated objects and materials from the mass culture of his immediate surroundings in paintings such as *Noise*, *Broken Pencil*, *Cheap Western* (1963, fig.8).<sup>2</sup>

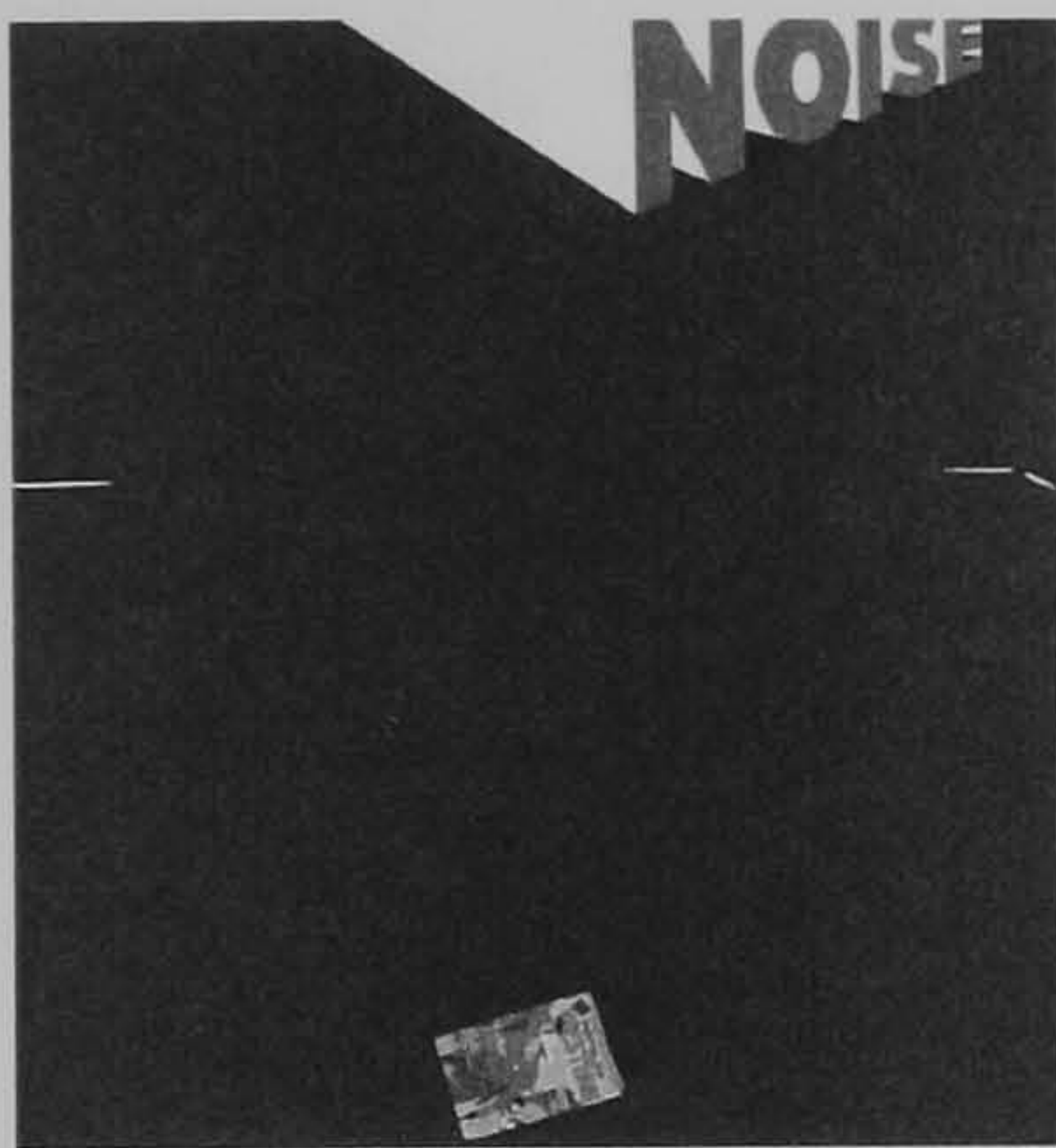


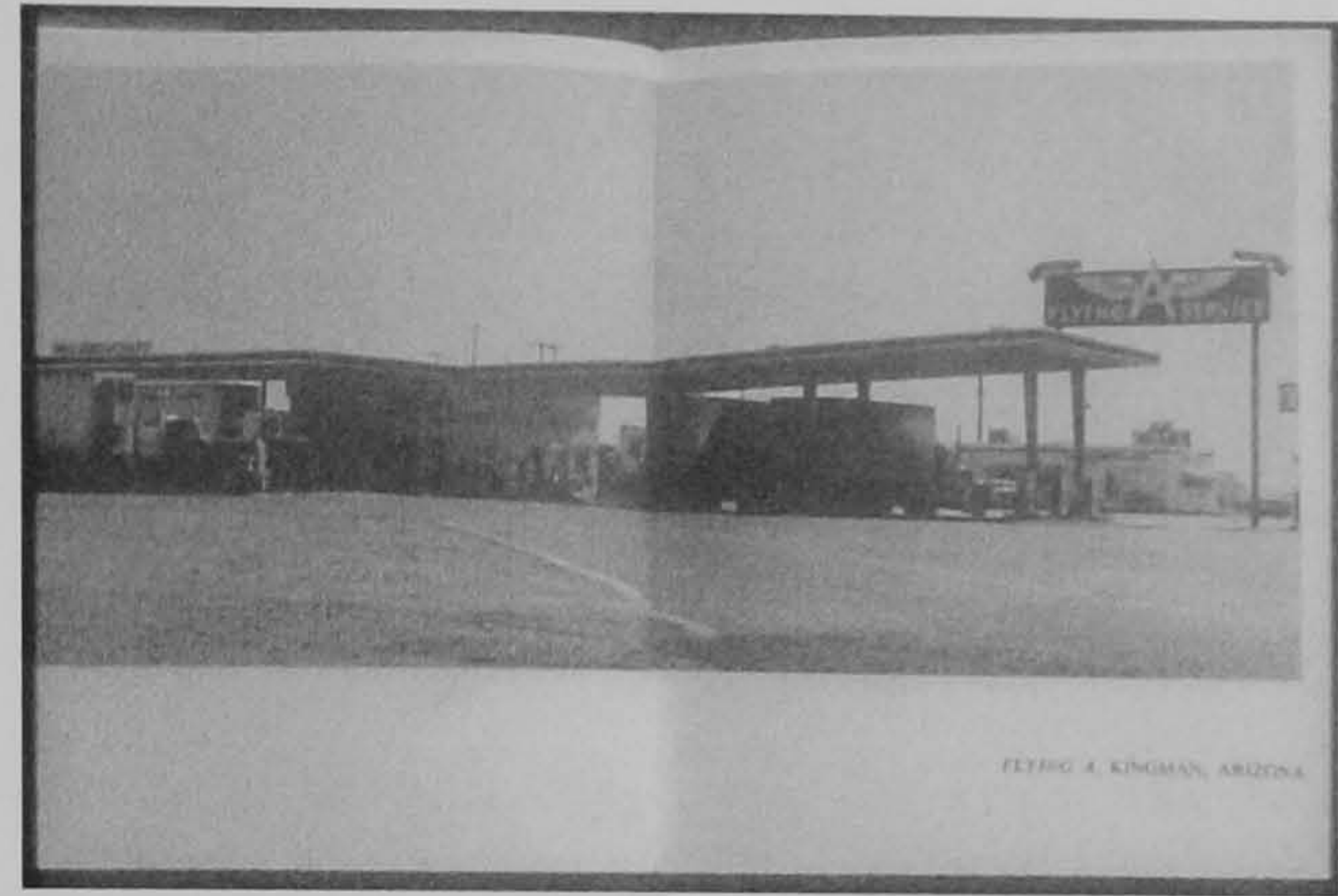
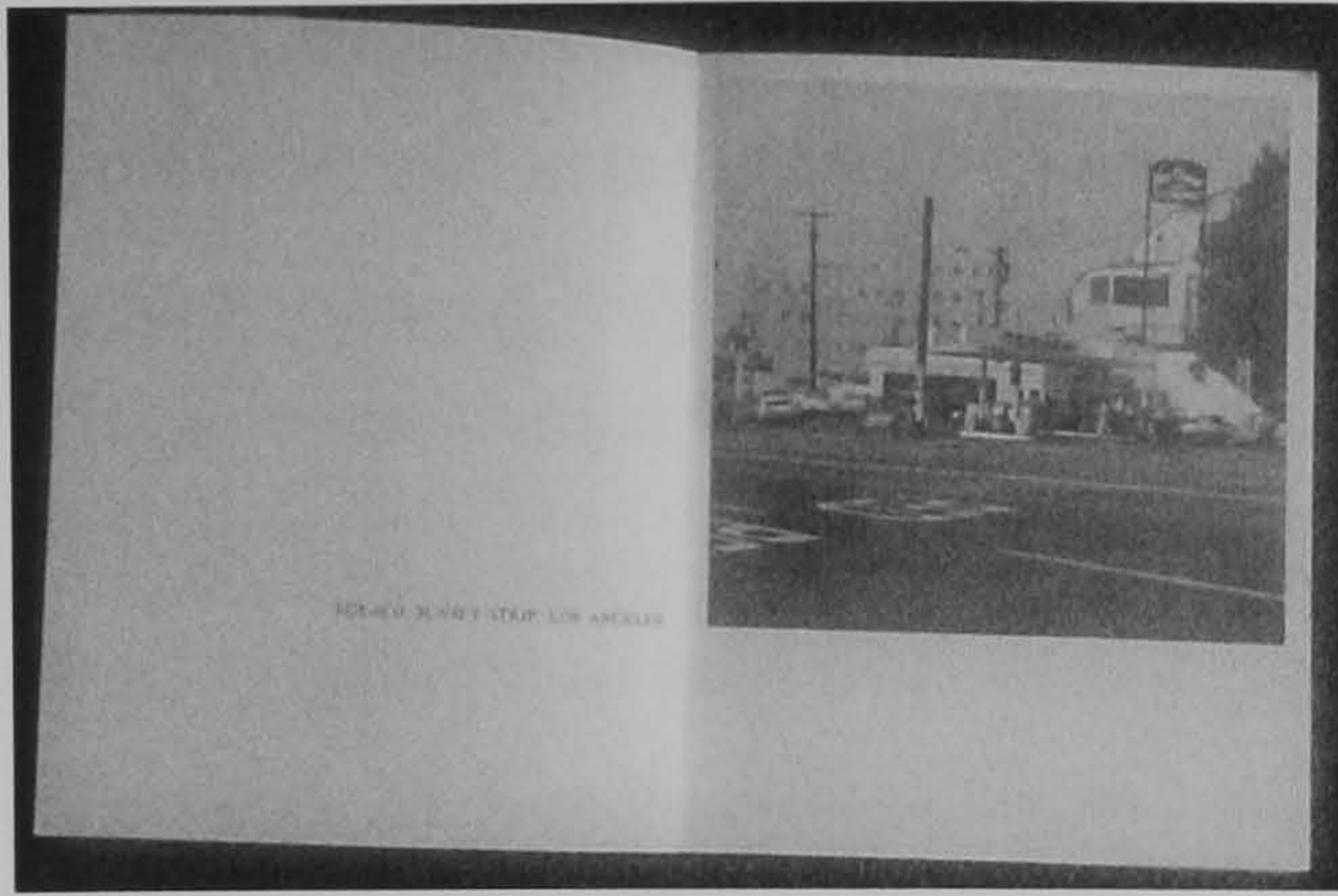
Fig.8 Ed Ruscha, *Noise, Broken Pencil, Cheap Western*, 1963. Oil and collage on canvas, 181 x 170 cm.

### ***Twentysix Gasoline Stations***

As an artist associated with Pop Art Ruscha was fascinated with the pulp-fiction of mass-produced American comics as well as the novellas, which he'd seen during a seven month car-trip through Europe in 1961 (Rothkopf 2004, p.229). Ruscha regards his books as his most important work and *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (fig.9) is the focus of this chapter, although I also refer to *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* (1967), *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968) and *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970). Elsewhere this seminal work, along with Ruscha's other books, has been widely cited for their unique use of the photographic image. Their continuing relevance warrants further analysis in relation to my notion of the artist-traveller. This is underscored by the simple but critical fact that every photograph in Ruscha's books have been taken, on-route, during a car-journey, with the exception of *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, which is a book of aerial-photographs. The sprawling expanse of Los Angeles is characterised as a city dependent on the car and Ruscha drives through the landscape accumulating a photographic collection of places. Richard Marshall (1990, p.5), like Phillipot, makes the connection between the city as an 'adopted-home' and a 'home' left behind:

The car, in fact, is central to the development of Ruscha's work. His love of driving around Los Angeles exploring the city and absorbing its character coupled with frequent trips along Route 66 to visit Oklahoma, gave him a visual perspective defined by the driver's windshield and curbside.





Figs.9 & 10 Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations, Texaco Sunset Strip, Los Angeles. Flying A, Kingsman, Arizona*, 1963. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper.

The psychological impasse of a 'double-bind' is particularly relevant in Part II, where exile is the register of a loss of, or impossibility of return to, a former home. In Part I artist-travel is manifest as a voluntary experience of expedient (re)location or expatriation. Ruscha's temporary loss of 'home' is punctuated by the gas stations, as spatio-temporal markers of an unseen landscape, passed on-route between one place and another. This can also be said for the landscape of the city seen in the anonymous apartments of Los Angeles, the distanced aerial shots of empty car parking spaces and the vacant plots of undeveloped real-estate. Phillipot (2000) and Dave Hickey (1997) have both commented on the autobiographical significance of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. The latter has even suggested the redemptive significance of the gas stations in their religious connotations of the Stations of the Cross and Ruscha's Catholic upbringing:

Ruscha had nailed the road through realms of absence – that exquisite, iterative progress through the domain of names and places, through vacant places of windblown, ephemeral language (Hickey 1998, p.24).

Ruscha's initial intention appears to have been the production of multiple art-works and specifically books. Alongside painting, Ruscha has worked extensively as a printmaker, producing hand-made prints in limited editions. By contrast the books were mass-produced and although carefully designed they have an ephemeral quality. Ruscha was also attracted to the transportability of the format as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (fig.10) only measured 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>6</sub> x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches and could easily be carried from place to place and shown to anyone at random. Their format also facilitated a wider distribution

in New York, in Los Angeles, and a couple of places in Europe. The books were just placed in these bookstores and they would sell very slowly but that was fine with me. I felt that the books were a pure form of my art. I liked them because I was making something out of something that was non-art and that appealed to me. (Ruscha 1998, p.60).

Ruscha's books are closely linked with the work of Huebler and Ader as specific instances of artist-travel, as well as the development of what has come to be known as 'photoconceptualism' (Wall 1995, p.266). Their work also marks the changed materiality



of the photographic image towards a dematerialisation of the object of art. In contemporary terms it is the photograph which has emerged as the salient element of these works, as it passed through the systems-based procedures and critical analysis by which its aesthetics and function have been transformed.

### **Pop, Minimalism and Photoconceptualism**

The work of Ruscha, Huebler and Ader and their contemporaries, appeared during the aftermath of Pop Art's reaction to Abstract Expressionism and the emergence in the 1960's of Minimalism and Conceptualism. The confluence of these movements and their collision with the medium of photography opens the way for processes of signification beyond those artist's stated intentions. These intentions were principally concerned with the placing of meaning and the position of the artist. In Part I the physical presence of the artist-traveller is progressively embedded in each artist's work. Ruscha is absent in contrast to Ader's visibility, in work where a narrative undertow, structured by travel, surfaces despite their attempts to avert meaning. Between them, Huebler is both present and absent whilst suspect of any interpretation beyond the explicit, structural formation of the work itself, and its reception by the viewer. As Pop, Minimalism and Conceptualism coalesced, Ruscha's 'self-differential' use of photography coincided with the exponential growth, acceleration and mobility of environment, industry and market. The correlation of analogue photography with these systems duly exploded definitions of medium and materiality beyond their previous realm of specificity and the unaltered material support of the autonomous art-object.<sup>4</sup>

Ruscha's pointless gas stations or Los Angeles apartment buildings or Huebler's utterly artless duration pieces exploit the amateur's zero-point of style to move photography to the centre of conceptual art (Krauss 1999, p.295).

To locate Ruscha's work within the limitations of art historical definitions such as Minimalism or Conceptual Art is unsatisfactory. Although Ruscha's work is historically rooted in Pop Art, the opportunity to participate in any of the major shows of the time eluded him due to the relative isolation of the West Coast art scene (Fehlau 1988, p.70). Ruscha's Pop Art credentials are located in his continued fascination with images in relation to the disengaged language of advertising, signage and the semantic disjointedness of broken-copy. He was also preoccupied with the banal aesthetics of everyday life, the road travelled and habitation in the city. Ruscha's choice of the gas station was certainly influenced by Robert Frank's iconic photograph of the same subject *Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1955*, which appeared in *The Americans* (1958), itself a travelogue of the Swiss photographer's journey across America.

As in many of Frank's pictures the photographs in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (fig.11) are unpopulated with only a metonymic relationship with humanity in the anonymous architecture pictured. In a 1946 review of Edward Weston's photographs titled 'The Camera's Glass Eye'<sup>5</sup> Clement Greenberg (1986, p.63) refers to the pursuit of the



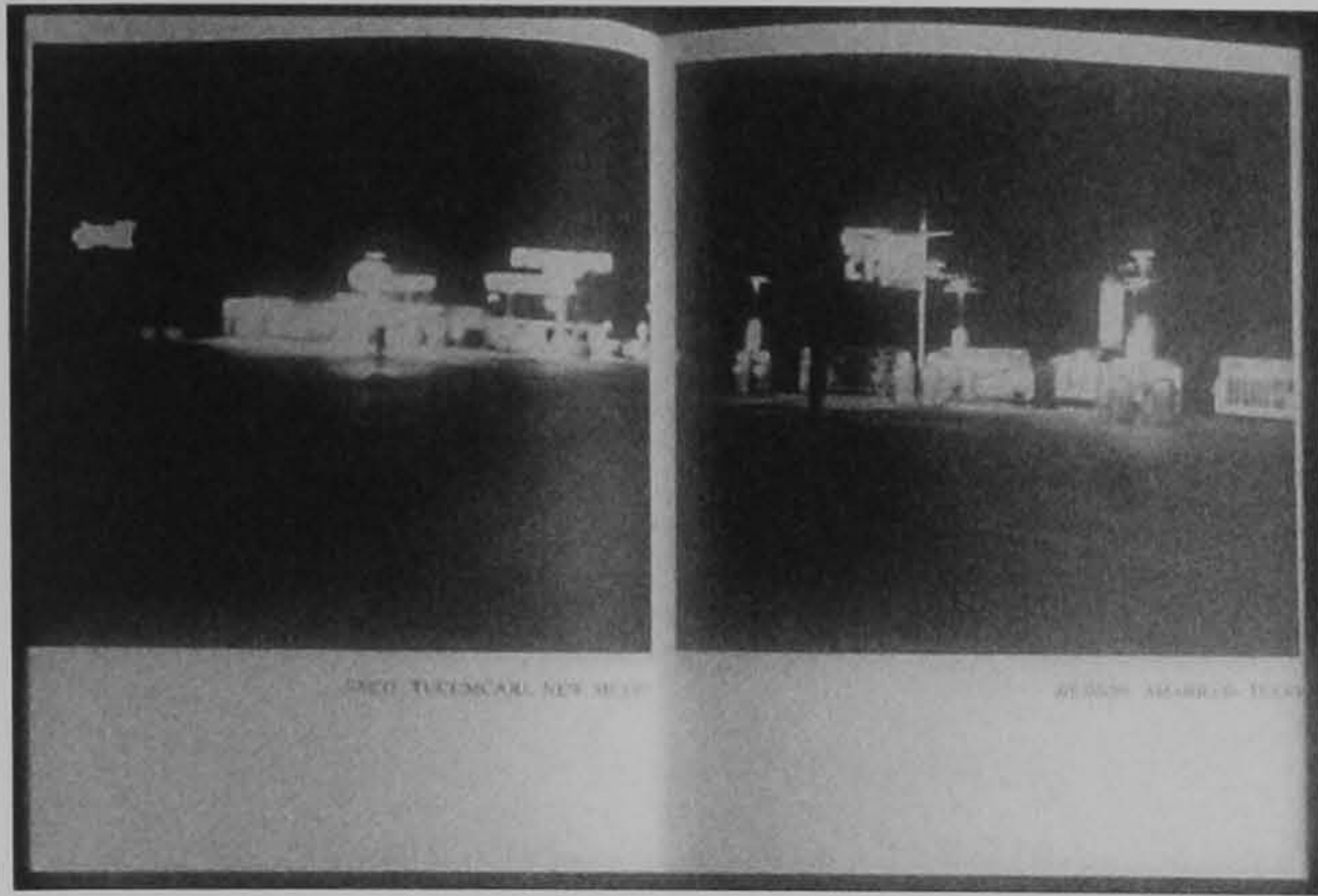


Fig.11 Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations, Enco, Tucumcari, New Mexico. Hudson, Amarillo Texas*, 1963 Artist's book.. Black offset printing on white paper.

'anecdote' and the 'literary' quality in Walker Evans' photographs, rather than what he regarded as the stilted clarity of Weston's pictures. Greenberg surmised that painting for reasons inherent to itself, was thus driven towards abstraction:

Therefore it would seem that photography today could take over the field that used to belong to genre and historical painting, and that it does not have to follow painting into the areas which the latter has been driven by the force of historical development.

By the 1970's Ruscha, Huebler and Ader combined the seemingly opposed aspects of photography, which Greenberg criticised for 'the anonymous or inanimate nature of the object photographed' as characteristic traits of 'art photography', and what he praised as the 'naturalism' of the snapshot aesthetic in the work of Atget and Evans. Greenberg's prophecy was readressed fifty years later by Thomas Crow (1996). Crow analyses the work of Manet and Seurat and their representation of what was the new phenomenon of leisure time and their identification of an oppositional audience in the working class and lower middle classes. In conclusion Crow believes the

construction of a visual language of now takes on the used-up vestiges of leisure time, landscape, architecture and the impoverishment of these areas at the end of the twentieth century, as the elements of a new visual language for the next century.

Ruscha and his contemporaries presented the obverse of their turn of the century counterparts in their depiction of a rapidly expanding consumer society. Ruscha, in his reductive use of the camera's documentary facility, uprooted unsemiotised objects from the vernacular landscape and constructed previously undocumented visual-schemas. The ubiquitous banality of the gas station, as a subject for photography, rendered it meaningless, and therefore suitable as anti-aesthetic subject matter, which he used to fill the pages of his book. In determining the choice of subject matter Ruscha has described the work with reference to Marcel Duchamp as

a 'ready-made' in photographic form [...] The photograph by itself doesn't mean anything to me, it's the gas station that's the important thing (Phillpot, p.63).<sup>6</sup>

In an essay, which accompanied a Tate Gallery exhibition of Minimalist art, Jeremy Lewison (1984, p.2) argues that the viewer's perception is not dependent on the literal interpretation of subject matter but instead of the work's 'attributes' or materiality:



The meaning of such work, therefore, does not reside in the emotional and experiential paraphernalia the spectator brings to the viewing of it but in the attributes of the work itself.

It is now difficult to ignore the literary and aesthetic content of these 'travel-photographs', which depict a specific time and place and their transcendence of art historical and theoretical models. The distanced aesthetic of Ruscha's pictures surface as a symptom of what Greenberg (1985, pp.61-62) ascribes to photography's 'estranging coldness'. This distance is counterbalanced by their 'decorative unity' in their avoidance of those qualities of sharp focus and mannered composition for which Greenberg was critical of Weston. In effect Greenberg and Crow bracket both ends of Ruscha's oeuvre in terms of his attitude to the photographic image from the early 1960's to the end of the 1990's.

### **Series, Repetition and Materiality**

Ruscha's books are non-literary with an economic use of caption. They suggest an emptying out of language and meaning in their use of photographs as a form of non-art. Page by page, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* places one gas station after another, as a series of images, which trace the route travelled. Narrative flow is negated, as the separate moment or pause, at each gas station photographed, forms new modes of non communicative language. Their status, as a collection of images, lies somewhere between inventory and archive. All the photographs have been taken under similar conditions, and each one purportedly possesses no greater significance to those which come before or after. As a book it is formally read from left to right and time is introduced into the work as the static, isolated spaces are mobilised (Lewison 1984, p.5). The format attempts to divert literal and aesthetic interpretation, as sequential directionality is disrupted, as Ruscha geographically mis-syncs certain images. This forms a dislocated time-frame as the identity of each gas station is seemingly interchangeable. The journey begins in Los Angeles and follows the route backwards to Oklahoma, in what Phillpot (2000, p.63) has described as a 'reverse-journey'. As Ruscha has said: "It was like going out in a certain direction and then backtracking [...] I wanted something to appear kind of awkward there, almost like a coda" (Phillpot 2000, p.53). In Ruscha's other books there is no obvious autobiographical relationship with the subject matter, whereas *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* also has a metaphorical relation to the territory between his former home and Los Angeles, mediated by the journey between the two.

The conceptual processes at work in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* are reflected in how the work evolved. For Ruscha the photograph was not the primary element of this book. The photographs were selected from a larger group of pictures whereas in his later books a specific number of photographs were designated at the outset of each project. The overall design of the cover, captions and interleaved blank-white pages are carefully incorporated as part of a conceptual whole.<sup>7</sup> All of these factors were worked out prior



to production, and Phillipot (2000, p.60) has described how Ruscha thought of the title first in terms of the typographical layout of the book as a concept:

The title came first Ruscha said before he even thought about the pictures. "I like the word 'gasoline' and I like the specific quality of 'twentysix.' If you look at the book you will see how well the typography works – I worked on all that before I took the photographs. Not that I had an important message about photographs or gasoline, or anything like that – I merely wanted a cohesive thing" (Phillipot 2000, p.60).

Repetition is the key structural element in the monotonous return of the same motif. This repetition mobilises the static, serial layout as the viewer is propelled from a spatial into a temporal dimension. This accentuates the sensation of movement from one place to another. The repetition of these images, as purely formal elements, suppresses any emotive content but this is inevitably usurped by the photograph's simultaneous status as both subjective and objective. The semiotic resonance of the repeated motif invites closer scrutiny and thus multiplies their 'meaning-potential' (van Leeuwen 1998). They are not art-photographs in the Modernist tradition of classical composition and fine printing. Instead Ruscha's photographs have been taken casually, hurriedly perhaps, between the passing of other vehicles. Their roadside point of view suggests the driver-photographer has stepped from the car and without recourse to composition – snapped the scene in its direct immediacy, with no attention to the effects of light or any of the other conventions, to which a professional-photographer might adhere. The de-skilled, or non-art manner, in which Ruscha has taken these photographs retains its impact today, even after the motif of banality has become a cliché. It is the repetition of this banality which draws their difference to the surface. The 'banal-motif'<sup>8</sup> of the gas station has been further estranged from its setting in the darkroom. The photographs were closely cropped in order to eliminate any extraneous, peripheral detail. Ruscha included photographs which were out of focus, over exposed, under exposed etc. As the photographs appear in the book, they could be described as 'bad-photographs', as they lack the fully-toned gradation normally associated with the deep aesthetic qualities of black and white art photography, where a full range of grey tones are expressed in a fine print.<sup>9</sup>

The metaphor of the journey is difficult to avoid in the repetition and serial extension of each gas-station passed between Los Angeles and Oklahoma. The multi-valent, seriality of Ruscha's work contrasts with Huebler's structural inquiry, which seeks to overstate the formation of the artwork as a fundamental process. The interdependency of series and structure expands the potential of photographic meaning, as both artist's works are ultimately liberated in their identity as travel-photographs.<sup>10</sup> In the 1990's Ruscha reprised these works as a series of selected photographs, which were editioned and presented in solander boxes. In their pictorial return they rematerialise as images, which transcend the dematerialised trajectory of the photographic object in the 1960/70's.



## On the Road

The metaphor of the journey, the hard road or river is the most trite, overused banal metaphor imaginable for the way we move forward through time and yet it is also worth remembering the power of this metaphor as a focus for collective as well as personal identification in an always unfinished story of historical loss and redemption, as a lens through which the past is given shape and direction, hence redeemed as it delivers us here, now in front of a future which is pulled sharply into focus as a virtual space - blank, colourless, shapeless, a space where everything is still to be won, where everything is still to be made over.

Dick Hebdige (1996, p.170) asserts the continuing relevance of the road and journey as enduring metaphorical and mnemonic aids by which to interpret the past, present and future. He cites the banality of 'the road' as a metaphor but asserts its continued use in the same way as I continue to use 'travel' as a *portmanteau* term. In 1937 Russian formalist and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin analysed the evolution of the modern novel from its historical antecedents to its modern form. Bakhtin (1981, p.84) defined a number of chronotopes, each with their own specific space-time co-ordinates and differing modes of genre and narrative. A selection of Bakhtin's motifs are found in the work of the artist case-studies in this thesis. As a set of inter-related-constructions they assist in the formation of a 'mobile-semiosis' as a theory of artist-travel. Bakhtin also identifies a series of recurrent motifs which befall "the road": proximity and distance, meeting and parting, loss and acquisition, search and discovery, recognition and non-recognition. As the forming material of Bakhtin's chronotope they also recur throughout this thesis in a comparative analysis of artist- travel. The photographs in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (fig.12) primarily adopt the chronotope of the 'road' – the iconic Route 66 – along which the gas stations are located. Bakhtin defines this most powerful chronotope in terms of its significance for the development of the novel:

On the road ('the high road'), the spatial and temporal paths of most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point (Bakhtin 1981, p. 243).

As a metaphorical distinction between movement and stasis each intersection represents what Bakhtin (1981, p.91) has defined as the "extratemporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time", as each location appears frozen in a vertical stasis which counteracts movement along the horizontal linearity of their layout:

Two adjacent moments, one of biographical life, one of biographical time, are directly conjoined. The gap, the pause, the hiatus that appears between these two strictly adjacent biographical moments and in which, as it were the entire (novel) is constructed is not contained in the biographical time-sequence, it lies outside biographical time.

Briony Fer (2001) has referred to the 'deathly stasis'<sup>11</sup> of Ruscha's 'photo-lists'. These are composed of horizontal and vertical visual elements, which also have a metaphorical



relationship to travel. With reference to Dante's 'architectonics' Bakhtin (1981, pp.157-158) describes the "pure simultaneity" of the whole gathered up in an archive of space and time along a vertical axis, which "compresses itself within the horizontal, which powerfully thrusts itself forward". In Ruscha's work, Bakhtin's "extratemporal vision" of the landscape generates a tension between these axes, as Ruscha inadvertently introduced a formal and conceptual oblique, which breaks the horizontal and vertical axes of form and meaning. This is found in the diagonal elevation of each gas station's roof structure, which he accentuated in his paintings of the same subject matter.

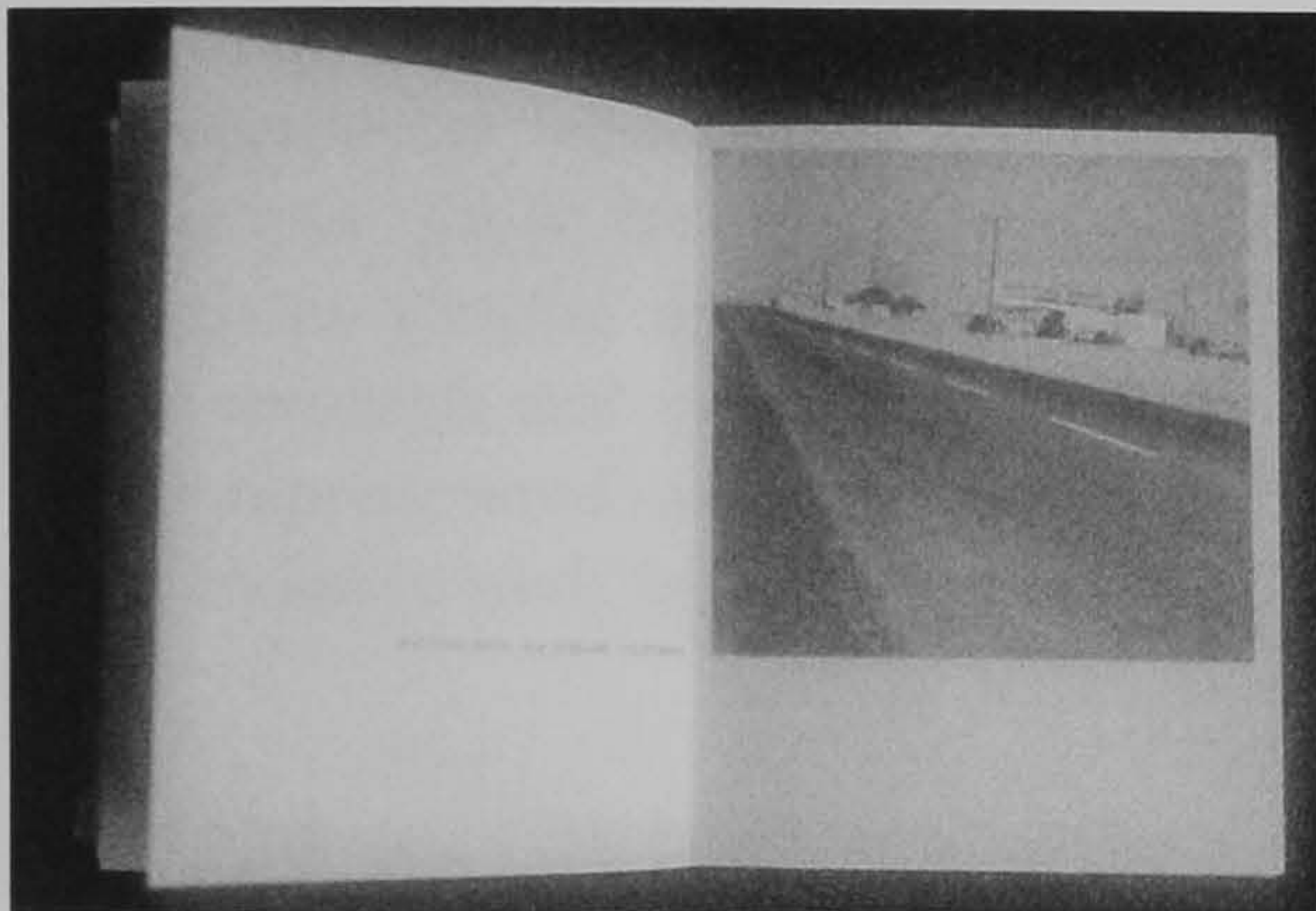


Fig.12 Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations, Whiting Bros. near Ludlow, Arizona*, 1963. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper.

Ruscha's journeys are dislocated in a 'mnemonic condensation' of time and space as he names otherwise unrecognisable locations by his use of caption as a mere address label. This book is not the travelogue of a place-to-place journey, but a composite-reality of repeated journeys. It represents a literal pulling backwards and forwards along a linear plane between dual concepts of home and away, inside and outside but ultimately neither as its format continually diverts interpretation. In Bakhtin the road is host to attendant sub-genres such as those of *chance* and *meeting*. Yet in Ruscha's distanced images these meetings lead nowhere, although we are brought into close contact with *materials* and *place*. Up until 1970 Ruscha continued his spatial-explorations and the plotting of his adopted urban environment in four other publications, which are analysed here in terms of their relevance to my notion of artist-travel. Many of the observations I have made in relation to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* can be applied to Ruscha's use of photography in his subsequent publications.

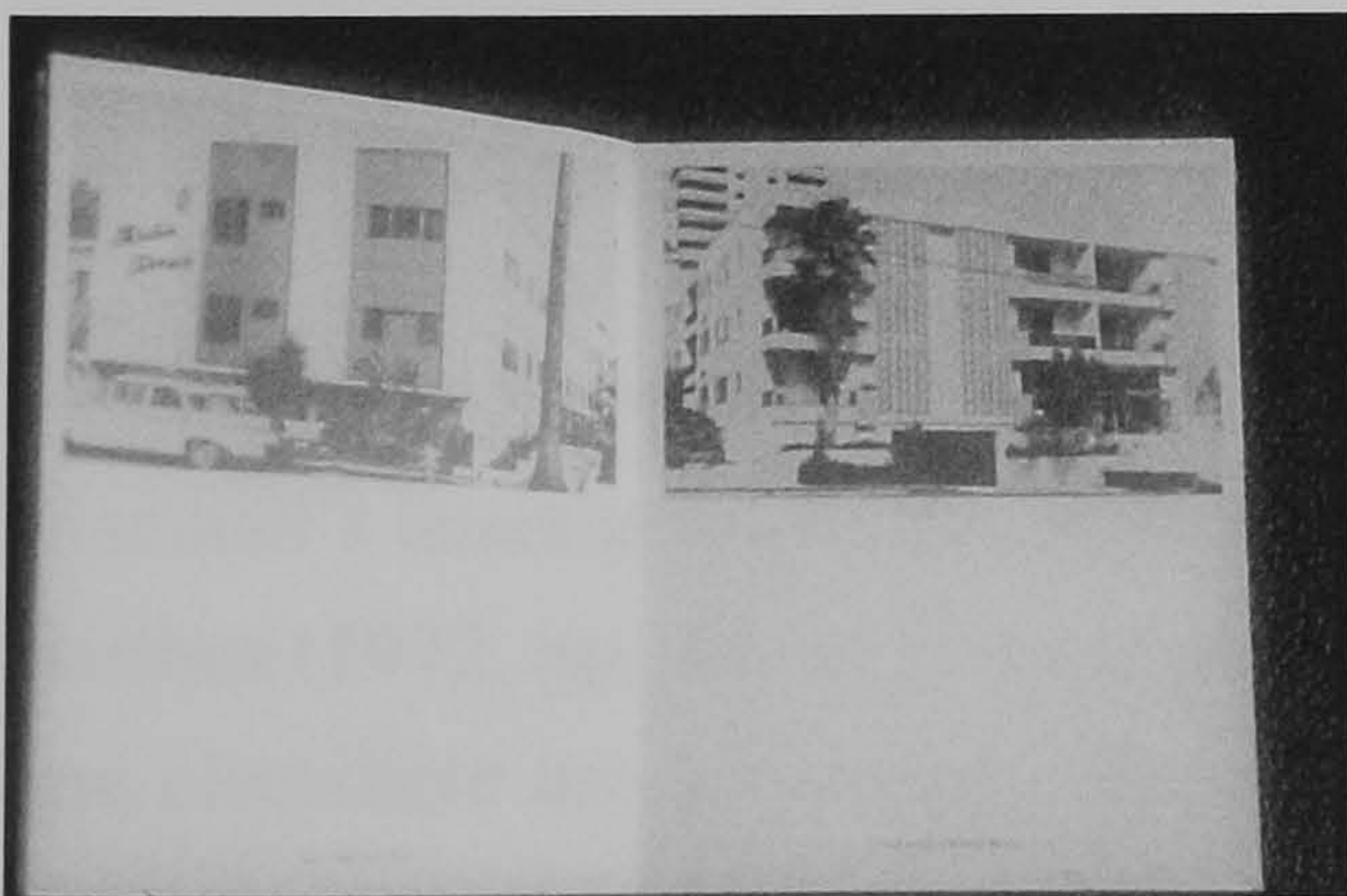


Fig.13 Ed Ruscha, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, 1965. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper.

*Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965, fig.13) adopts a similar layout to its predecessor. It adopts a disengaged photographic point of view. The captions are specific yet



anonymous to the outsider: *5947 Carlton Way, 3505 Artesia Blvd., 6051 Romaine*. Every apartment has been randomly photographed from the kerb-side with no obvious sequential unity. After his first book Ruscha designated a specific number of photographs for each book, relative to personal choice and design issues. *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (fig.14) depicts an overall dispersal of low-rent, residential buildings, which display the aberration of various architectural styles. Richard Marshall (1990, p. 11) has described the formation of this hybrid vernacular, which reflects the life of the city as a locus of cross-cultural diversity and accelerated population expansion:

The spread of the freeways criss-crossing the LA basin and the subsequent development of properties at interchanges and off-ramps, along with a population density too high to allow spacious, single family residences and garden apartments spawned the appearance of the Los Angeles 'dingbat' apartment – a word of unknown origin used to describe a typographical symbol or ornament that calls attention to an opening sentence or a break between paragraphs is an appropriate word to describe architecture that displays superficial ornamentation and signage to call attention to itself in order to distinguish itself from a similarly plain apartment building next door.

Marshall goes on to describe the modernist roots of these 1960's apartments, which in their use of cheap materials randomly mixed Colonial, Tudor and Spanish architectural features:

Ding bats – two-storey walk-up structures with a side loaded exterior corridor and exterior circulation. Usually a box rectangle of wood construction with stucco exterior walls, these 1960's apartments display an eccentric embellished, cheap and often ridiculous version of the pure modern style exemplified by R.M. Schindler and Richard Neutra, born and trained in Vienna and came to Los Angeles in the 1920's. Frank Lloyd Wright machine-precisionist aesthetic adapted to the Southern California environment. Cost effective, built to fill the entire lot from the side walk property line to the back, car parking tucked underneath in car-ports. They retain none of the privacy, cross lighting, ventilation, flowering gardens or architectural originality that they hope to announce by their decorated facade. However they were of great interest, not necessarily to the people that lived in them but to Ruscha, precisely because they expressed the freedom, diversity, newness and irony of the visual experience of Los Angeles.



Fig.14 Ed Ruscha, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, 1965. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper.

Marshall's description of the evolution of the city's urban sprawl is mirrored in Roland Barthes (1972, pp.142-145) account of 'myth' and how the semiotic geography of home and elsewhere are addressed. Ruscha's visual recognition of a place to which he has grown accustomed to is governed by that which seems out-of-place. Similarly, the dingbat apartment became the focus of Ruscha's attention, in their de-historicised, anonymity. They nevertheless act as random moments of interpellation as they have called to the artist's sense of place as he travels through the urban landscape:



Myth has an imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical concept, directly springing from contingency (a Latin class, a threatened Empire) it is *I* whom it has come to seek. It is turned towards me, I am subjected to its intentional force, it summons me to receive its expansive ambiguity. If, for instance, I take a walk in Spain, in the Basque country, I may notice in the houses an architectural unity, a common style, which leads me to acknowledge the Basque house as a definite ethnic product. However, I do not feel personally concerned, nor, so to speak, attacked by this unitary style: I see only too well that it was here before me, without me. It is a complex product that has its determinations at the level of a very wide history: it does not call out to me, it does not provoke me into naming it, except if I think of inserting it into a vast rural habitat. But if I am in a Paris region and I catch a glimpse, at the end of the Rue Gambetta or the Rue Jean-Jaures, of a natty white chalet with red tiles, dark brown half-timbering, an asymmetrical roof and a wattle-and-daub front, I feel as if I were personally receiving an imperious injunction to name this object a Basque chalet: or to see it as the very essence of *Basquity*. This is because the concept appears to me in all its appropriative nature: it comes and seeks me out in order to oblige me to acknowledge the body of intentions which have motivated it and arranged it there as a signal of an individual history, as a confidence and a complicity it is a real call that the owners of the chalet send out to me. And this call in order to appear more imperious, has agreed to all manner of impoverishments: all that justified the Basque house on the plane of technology – the barn, the outside stairs, the dove-cote etc. – has been dropped; there remains only a brief order not to be disputed. And the adomination is so frank that I feel this chalet has been created on the spot, *for me*, like a magical object springing up in my present life without any trace of the history that has caused it.

Ruscha's close attention to caption and address, as a form of reference-point, locates the artist and viewer by a strategy of 'photo-cartography'.<sup>12</sup> Ruscha developed this work further when he photographed each side of Sunset Boulevard in one continuous take for *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966-ongoing, fig.15). This was done from a moving vehicle rather than the stationary car-side point of view as seen in the previous books. This photographic project has been subsequently repeated on the Sunset Strip over the course of the intervening years as an unpublished private archive.

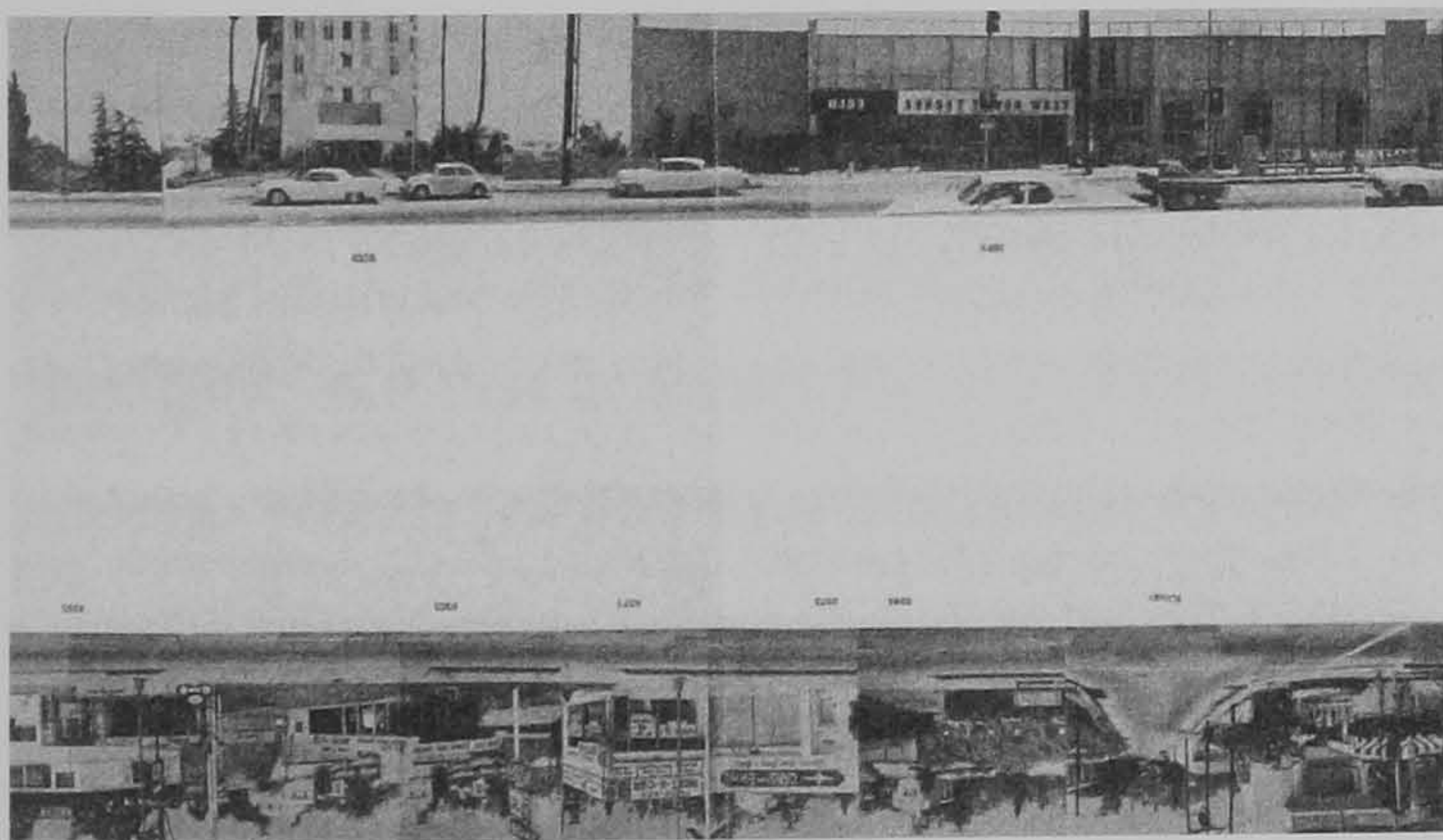


Fig.15 Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper, folded and glued.

The proximity and information-load of Ruscha's ground level, drive-by is distanced in *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967, fig.16) for which he employed an aerial photographer (Phillpot 2000, p.67). This work elevates the viewer's perspective above the striated uniformity of the empty parking spaces below, but vision is pulled back to ground-level details, which is graphically visible in all its stark clarity.<sup>13</sup>

In *Some Los Angeles Apartments* Ruscha searched for the rupture between absence and presence within the city landscape. He locates this in *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970) as his photographic point of view is directed towards vacant plots of undeveloped land,



seen through the evanescent-blur of car-generated smog. These heat-seared spaces are punctuated by an array of verticals: fences, telegraph poles, trees, as well as overhead pylons. They are temporarily abandoned spaces at the periphery of the city where conventional building development has stopped before the desert. These locations represent the inhospitable spaces of the city, where the sky and ground seem conjoined at a point of motionless-alienation. These images intimate a foreboding crisis as property developers draw the lines of future social-demarcation, as every available space in the city is accounted for.

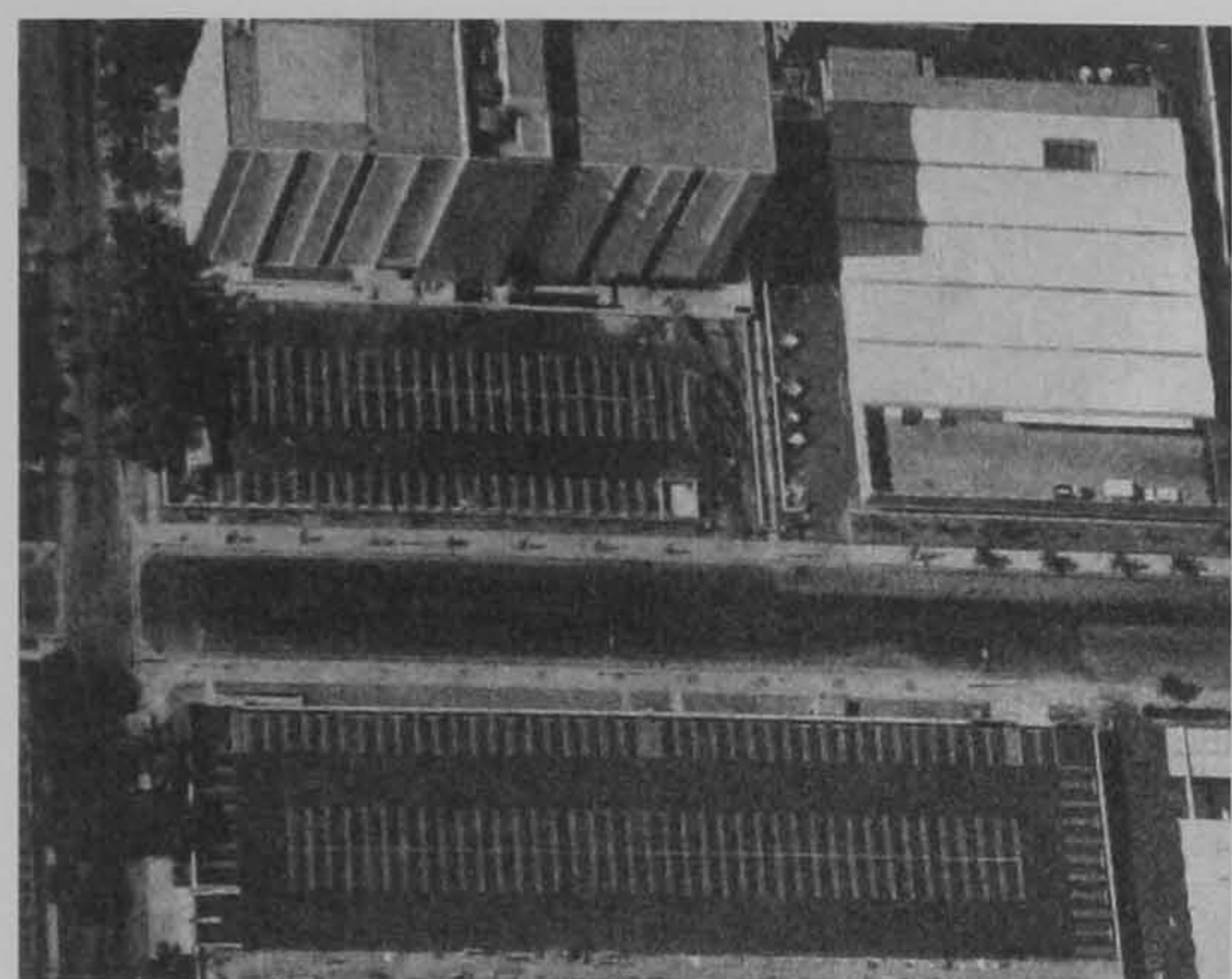


Fig.16 Ed Ruscha, *34 Parking Lots in Los Angeles*, 1967. Artist's book. Black offset printing on white paper.

### Against the Grain

Ruscha's initial ambivalence and distance to the medium of photography as a form of "non-art" has shifted during the last thirty years. Ruscha now acknowledges the books as "a pure form of my art" (Ruscha 1998, p.60). Ruscha's attitude to photography has changed with the printing of unique gelatin-silver prints, individually selected from photographs, which were used for four of his previous books. These photographs have been editioned and presented in solander boxes. Ruscha's return to these images in 1995 marks a changed relationship with the photographic image. This relationship is not as straightforward as it might first seem. This has led to strategies of photographic-strategies, which have enabled Ruscha to maintain both a distance and proximity to the medium, not just in terms of still photography but also film. This has a distinctly material aspect, which relates to a historical moment of the medium's potential obsolescence:

I've done a series of paintings like this where the flicker of a projector causes the image to split. I've always remembered that – it's a peculiar phenomenon of films that I like. If someone seventy-five years from now looks at this painting they won't understand it at all. It's depicting a kind of mechanical defect, which will not even be a part of our language (Coutts, 1998, p.60).

Ruscha has modified the images of the *Sunset Strip* series by scratching the surface of the negatives as seen in *Schwabbs Pharmacy* (1976/95, fig.17). This affectation of the movement of film bears comparison with the photo-collages of El Lissitzky's *fotopsis* or 'photo-writing' (Tupitsyn 2002, p.15). In *Runner in the City* (1926) Lissitzky introduced a sense of dynamism by creating a geometrical fracture across the surface of photograph which was striated vertically with narrow white bands.<sup>14</sup> As the original



negatives were lost, the images in *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968, fig.18) were rephotographed from the book itself and subsequently reprinted. Ruscha's statement in the third issue of *Art Forum* in 1963 is in marked contrast to how he later described his affinity for the photographic medium and film in an interview in 2002:

I think photography is dead as a fine art; it's only place is in the commercial world, for technical or information purposes. I don't mean cinema photography, but still photography, that is, limited editions, individual hand processed photos. Thus it is not a book to house a collection of art photographs – they are technical data like industrial photography (Ruscha 1965, p.25).

I would not be abandoning any technique that I was still in love with, but I do love photographs, I love photographs that come from negatives. I don't like digital photographs – and I still like silver gelatin prints (Bickers 2002, p.5).

Bluntly stating his dislike of digital prints Ruscha makes reference to the materiality of film, which he feels has been lost due to the effacement of digital information systems, where specific material attributes of grain, colour and tone are lost in their replication by the filter effects of Adobe Photoshop software. In revisiting these images Ruscha continues to work with the 'transparency' of the medium, and its spatio-temporal presence, as images of the past in the present. Ruscha's books, viewed together as a series, define a specific form of travel. As a photographic archive of spatio-temporal markers: photographs of gas stations and low-rent apartments have become 'travelled photographic images' as Ruscha continues to explore the medium.



Fig.17 Ed Ruscha, *Schwabs Pharmacy*, 1976/1995. Black and white photograph from altered negative, 51.1 x 75.1 cm.

The conceptual impetus for Ruscha in the 1960's was his interest in the book as a medium of mass-reproducibility, served by photography's banal objectivity. Stefan Gronert (1999, p.15) has cited Ruscha's use of photography in terms of the "purely reproductive moment of the medium." At the time this was current with issues around the dematerialised artwork and artist-photography, which Ruscha's books instigated. By the 1990's Ruscha had conceded to the pictorial and material value of his photographs in a way which had previously not been viable. Ruscha's radical experiments with books paved the way for the work of Huebler and Ader, who followed Ruscha's journeys, with their own travel-orientated, spatio-temporal explorations. Alongside the work of Dan Graham and Robert Smtihson, these artists re-invented the medium, as its utilisation and function as art was irrevocably transformed. Following Greenberg's commentary, Jeff





Fig.18 Ed Ruscha, *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*, 1968. Artist's book 4 colour offset litho printing.

Wall (1995, p.250) has defined the realm of this transformation into art via the confluence of amateur aestheticism and reportage. The photographic-journeys represented in their work also traces the journey of the photographic image towards a return of the 'Picture' as a mode of pictorial depiction, which was temporarily lost to painting:

Thus art-photography was compelled to be both anti-aestheticist but aesthetically significant albeit in a new 'negative' sense at the same moment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> ( Fehlau 1988, p.72).

<sup>2</sup> An early painting from 1963, *Noise, Pencil, Broken Pencil, Cheap Western*, incorporates the stated elements in a subtle interplay of surface, image and object. Ruscha's interest in ephemeral forms is shown as he has physically attached an illustrated paperback to the surface of the painted canvas. Ruscha's paintings often deploy a single word or phrase depicted in a graphic stylisation bearing a material dissociation with something other than its semantic meaning or background image. It is also important to note that Ruscha studied commercial art and worked as a 'printer's devil' (Coutts 1998, p.60). A familiarity with commercial applications of typography and text in advertising permeates all his work.

<sup>3</sup> I tentatively introduce this loaded term early on in this thesis as its significance increases in terms of the work of Bas Jan Ader and particularly in Part II for Jimmie Durham, Gustav Metzger and Kurt Schwitters. The term is cited in an essay by Jerry Zaslove, *Faking Nature and Reading History, The Mindfulness Toward Reality in the Dialogical World of Jeff Wall's Pictures*, Vancouver Art Gallery, (p.101, footnote 34). Zaslove discusses a "double-binded homelessness" in relation to the way exile changes artistic behaviour and the, "attempt to recover a culture-bearing tradition outside of Germany both during and after the war, and the current international reception of German art and film, which has attempted to build a critical present on a tradition broken and then lost." It is nevertheless relevant here as it expresses a benign form of exile or expatriation, which Ruscha's move to Los Angeles represents.

<sup>4</sup> Ruscha's "non-art" use of photography redefines medium in terms of a loss (absence) of specificity, whilst remaining visual (presence). In a layering of other mediums art-photography becomes: travelogue, documentary photography and documentation, a moment which breaks the surface and foretells photography's own obsolescence, as it passes into mass-reproducibility and the equivalence of all art forms. This situation is exacerbated by the development of new visual technologies at the end of the century.

<sup>5</sup> Greenberg reviewed an exhibition of photographs by Edward Weston, whom he criticised for his preoccupation with the medium, rather than its documentary aspect, which he identifies with the pictures of Walker Evans. It is also worth noting that Robert Frank worked with Evans early on in his career and Greenberg's observations are also applicable to his work.



<sup>6</sup> From an interview with Henri Man Barendse (1981, p.10). Ruscha asserts the reproducibility of the photographic image as a medium or site for collecting. He refers to Marcel Duchamp's appropriation of mass produced banal objects, which he termed ready-mades. Duchamp made these available to galleries as bronze-casts from the original objects. The suggestion implies, that the gas station exists as a readymade object for appropriation, in the same way as Duchamp's urinal, bottle-rack or bicycle wheel.

<sup>7</sup> I suspect that the blank pages were included to achieve sufficient thickness in order that the book could be bound with a spine of adequate width, along which a title could be printed.

<sup>8</sup> Ruscha's selection of the gas station is a precursor of Bernd and Hilla Becher's typological series of photographs featuring apparatus and machinery from industrial sites across Europe and America, which are not only deserted but often dysfunctional. The Bechers accentuated the banality of their subject matter, which echoes Ruscha's photographs of gas stations, with which they were not familiar when they started their work in the 1970's. They systematised an anti-stylistic photographic technique of reductive singularity with their formal through-the-lens cropping of any extraneous peripheral detail. Their work involves meticulous preparation so as any expressionistic photographic qualities are avoided as careful attention is paid to the time of day and season in which the photographs are made. They worked with Douglas Huebler and Robert Smithson and their work and teaching at the Düsseldorf Academy has influenced a generation of some of the most important contemporary photographers including Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth.

<sup>9</sup> This type of hand-crafted, print-excellence is characteristic of Ansel Adams' use of the 'zone-system', where legible detail is retained in both the darkest and lightest areas of the negative image and therefore reproducible in the print. In cheap commercial printing this detail can be lost in shadow and white-out areas, either due to a combination of inaccurate exposure and/or 'bad-printing' as well as inferior preparation of plates for the printing press. Adams' photographs, as many art books are, were printed by photogravure, which ensures a faithful reproduction of the fine qualities of darkroom printing of which Adams was a master.

<sup>10</sup> Early on in the research I made an exhaustive survey which detailed the semiotic and literary content of each photograph in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

<sup>11</sup> Fer referred to Ruscha's work as such in her talk 'Liquid Index: Ed Ruscha's Photo-Lists' given as part of the symposium *Photography in the Post Medium Age* at Tate Modern, London, 29th June 2001.

<sup>12</sup> These books are a precursor of the work of Robert Smithson's *400 Seattle Horizons* (1969) and Robert Flick's *Manhattan Beach Looking North* (1980-81). These works were exhibited in series, arranged in a grid formation. A work by Christos Dikeakos *Instant Photo Information* (1970) was undoubtedly influenced by Ruscha's fourth book *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), as Dikeakos photographed Vancouver from a moving car (Sobieszek 1993, p.27).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Smithson later takes his cue from Ruscha with his own extensive research of the possibilities of aerial photography in still and film form, finding their zenith in his seminal 1970 film *Spiral Jetty*.

<sup>14</sup> This technique of striating the surface was later put to three dimensional effect in *The Abstract Cabinet* (1930), a reconstruction of which can be seen in the Sprengel Museum in Hanover. Lissitzky created an installation of paintings and sculptures. On entering and walking around the room, the black, grey and white alternate relief of the walls flicker as they are passed creating a dynamic optical effect, which changes as the viewer alters their position.



## Chapter 2 Douglas Huebler – Representing Time

The world is full of objects more or less interesting: I do not wish to add any more. I prefer simply to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas Huebler has gained recognition as an innovator of photoconceptualism, a strand of systems-based photographic practice of which Ruscha's books are a pre-cursor. Huebler sealed photography's dematerialised fate as both documentation and art. He distinguished its pure informational content from the emotive documentary photograph, whilst he denied the literal and aesthetic content of his pictures. This was achieved by juxtaposing photographs with other informational artefacts, in order to de-centre the authorial presence of the artist. The intertextuality of each element: photograph, text, map and/or drawing was delineated according to three categories: *Location*, *Duration* and *Variable*. This interdependency counteracts the primacy of a singular, autonomous art-object as he emphasised the structural formation of the work as a fundamental process. Various works inadvertently document his shifting relationship with the artworld and his everyday personal life, as he commuted from his home in Truro to New York and Europe. Huebler's structural approach and material dissemination of photography extended Ruscha's intuitive serial approach. The photographic lineage of Huebler and Ruscha marks a working through of structural and serial oppositions. Their mutual distance to the photographic image has negated that which, at the time, seemed irreconcilable. This has opened up the possibility for a return to those questions of aesthetic and literal content in their work, as forms of artist-travel.

A geographical tension permeates Huebler's work as a result of the political and economic decisions, which he made in relation to his position in the art world. An insightful interview with Huebler by Frédéric Paul (1992, pp.124-126) casts light on his early years as he moved from one place to another. The biographical detail of these years lies outside of the work but nevertheless demonstrates how these experiences shaped his ideas and how chance and circumstance determined the course of his life and thinking as an artist. Huebler was born into a poor farming family in Michigan in 1924. During the Second World War he served as a relief sergeant before studying art at the University of Michigan, a Mid West school heavily influenced by the work of Picasso, Dufy and Matisse. With the benefit of an army scholarship he moved to Paris and study at the Académie Julian. After leaving Paris for New York Huebler pursued a career in commercial art, whilst developing his skills as an illustrator. Huebler's stay in New York was cut short by the advent of the Korean War and a subsequent draft notice. Reluctant to go to war again, Huebler enrolled and gained a degree at the University of Michigan, amidst a climate hostile to contemporary developments of the abstract expressionists. Huebler became familiar with the work of the abstract expressionists due to working nearby to the galleries where their work was exhibited. Initially Huebler was drawn to



Europe in order to study. The outbreak of war, in both instances, had a significant effect on the direction of his career. Huebler's formative work is marked by a move from figuration to abstraction. A tension between the two eventually leads to the dematerialisation of his artworks, where the constituent elements are configured in "a seamless field" (Paul 1992, p.127).<sup>2</sup> Just as Ruscha had worked as a 'printer's devil', Huebler also developed a graphic sensibility gained through advertising and commercial work-experience. As visual signs these skills were distilled in his work through the use of maps, drawings and instructions. Huebler later moved to Paris, which was an inexpensive place to live in 1953. During the sea voyage he met his wife, which resulted in his stay in Paris being only a few months. Huebler returned to America for a teaching post at Ohio, Miami University. Three years later he moved to Bradford, Massachusetts. It was here, with aid of a grant from a former student's father, that Huebler was able to upgrade the photographic darkroom facilities, where he began to instigate a shift towards photographic practice. Huebler's lifelong commitment to teaching enabled him to sustain an independent financial position, which permitted a certain degree of economic and geographical independence. Huebler accounts for the empirical nature of the development of his work, unfettered in terms of its successful resolution, as a result of his distance from New York and infrequent exposure to what was current:

[...] I had an important kind of freedom in not feeling obliged to know if my own work was on the right track. I feel the same freedom today living here in Truro. I know that there's a lot I miss, and I'm certain I could have pushed my career a lot more effectively if I weren't so removed from the 'scene' but on the other hand I'd rather have this 'space' to sort things over. (Huebler 1992, p.126)

### **Paris, New York, Truro**

Huebler's relationship with New York based curator Seth Siegelau was a critical factor in the dissemination of his work, at a time when modes of distribution and the viewer's reception of the work were of paramount importance. The manner in which artists were able to travel from one place to another undergoes a profound change around the beginning of the 1970's; the availability of cheap airfares enabled American conceptual artists to travel to Europe on a regular basis. This was important as the reception of their work in America was limited, apart from the interest of maverick entrepreneurs such as Siegelau.<sup>3</sup> At the invitation of sympathetic curators Huebler and his contemporaries began to work in Europe, making short city-visits to make work on-site or in galleries, before returning home. These factors may seem inconsequential by the standards of today's travel-charged economy. However they illustrate the impact of travel as a changing cultural phenomenon, which reflects a technological age of speed and the growth of the "information society", which coincided with conceptualism (Alberro 2003, p.2). The confluence of these events is no accident as they were integral in the development of Huebler and other conceptual artist's work during the years 1966-1971.<sup>4</sup> Seth Siegelau's account of Huebler's life is invaluable as he has described the climate within which he worked with Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner amongst



others.<sup>5</sup> Huebler's relationship with these artists contributes to his characterisation as a marginal figure, and not just geographically. Huebler had set himself apart but he was also older than his New York contemporaries. He also faced criticism from Kosuth.<sup>6</sup>

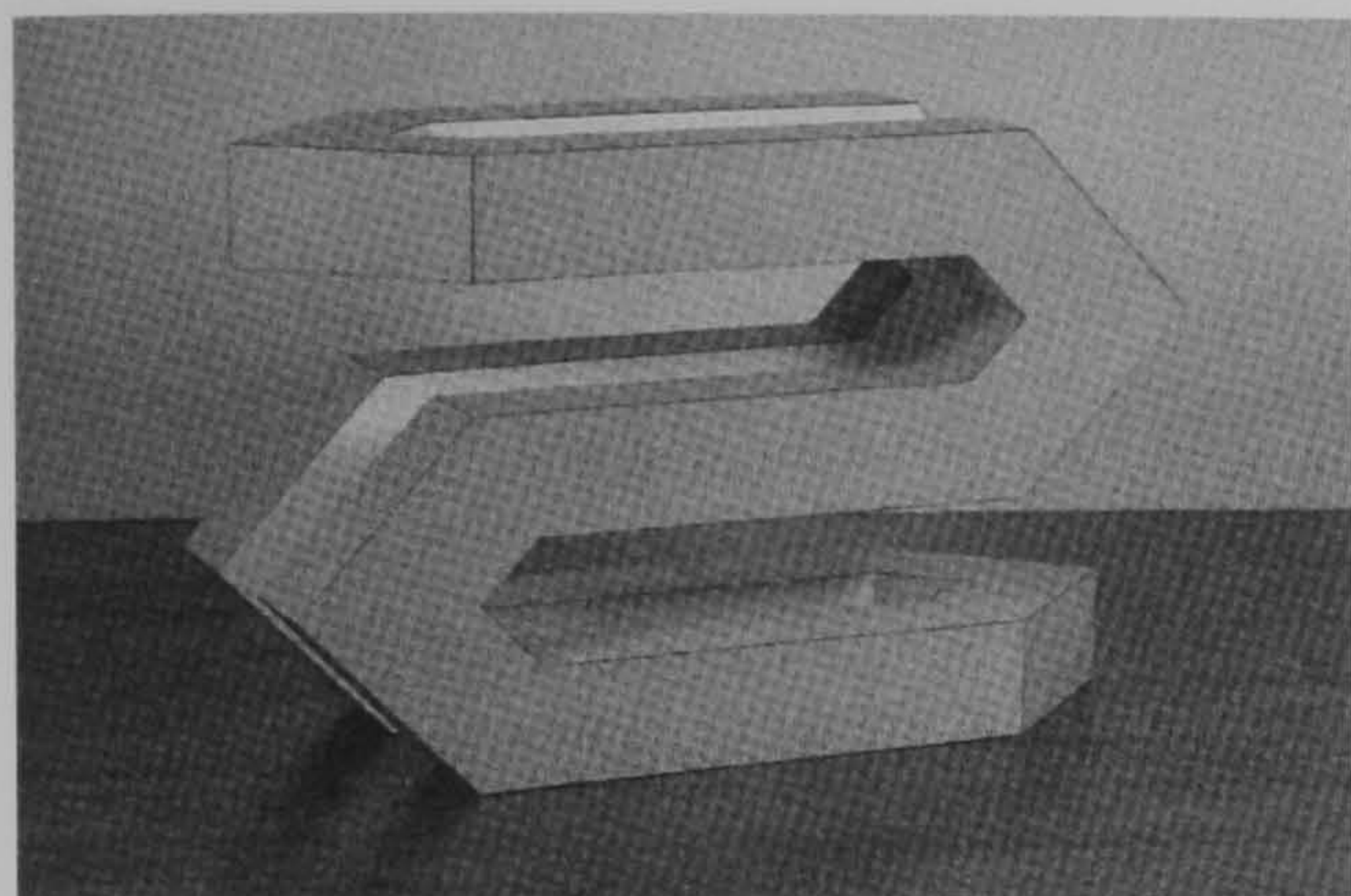


Fig.19 Douglas Huebler, *Truro Series*, 1966. Formica on plywood. Installation view.

Siegelaub worked in New York between 1964-1972 as an “independent arts organiser”.<sup>7</sup> From 1964 there was a climate of change as processes of art production and distribution were challenged by Siegelaub and the artists with whom he worked. In 1965 at the suggestion of Dore Ashton, an artist and lecturer, Huebler visited New York and began to work with Siegelaub (Paul 1992, p.32). In 1965 Siegelaub closed his gallery to become a private dealer, and by 1968 had begun to investigate alternative forms of exhibition and distribution. Siegelaub is still a maverick character, and at the time was mindful of Huebler's reticence. Consequently he travelled to Bradford to meet the artist in person. At the time Huebler was teaching at Bradford Union College. Siegelaub has characterised Huebler as a farm-boy, keen football player, an imposing presence and heavy drinker. He contrasts these aspects of Huebler's persona with the artist's naive, childlike and playful character, which all formed part of a deeply serious approach to art. Huebler at once wanted to be in the art world but distanced from it at the same time. This fact accounts for Huebler's commitment to teaching as a profession, as it was not just a way of earning a living but enabled him to make work without an overriding concern for its currency in the art market, both financially and in terms of its critical reception. Huebler established a regional centre of discourse by instigating a prestigious programme of invited artists and critics, who travelled to Bradford to lecture at the college (Huebler 1995, p.126). Despite the geographical distance the art world was nevertheless interested in Huebler. Leo Castelli worked with Huebler from 1970 to 1991. During this time Huebler followed a peripatetic path, as he moved from Bradford Union College in 1973, via Harvard University, to Massachusetts and settling at the California Institute of Arts from 1976 to 1988 (Paul 1992, p.31).

Between my analysis of Ruscha and Ader, Huebler's work confounds art-historical definitions of minimalism and conceptualism, the latter term of which Huebler and his contemporaries were antagonistic (Paul 1993, p.39). Huebler had already exhibited minimalist sculpture in formica (*Truro Series*, 1966, fig.19) and concrete (*Bradford Series*, 1967), whilst also taking part in important minimalist shows such as *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum, New York in 1966 (Allington 2002, p.82).<sup>8</sup>



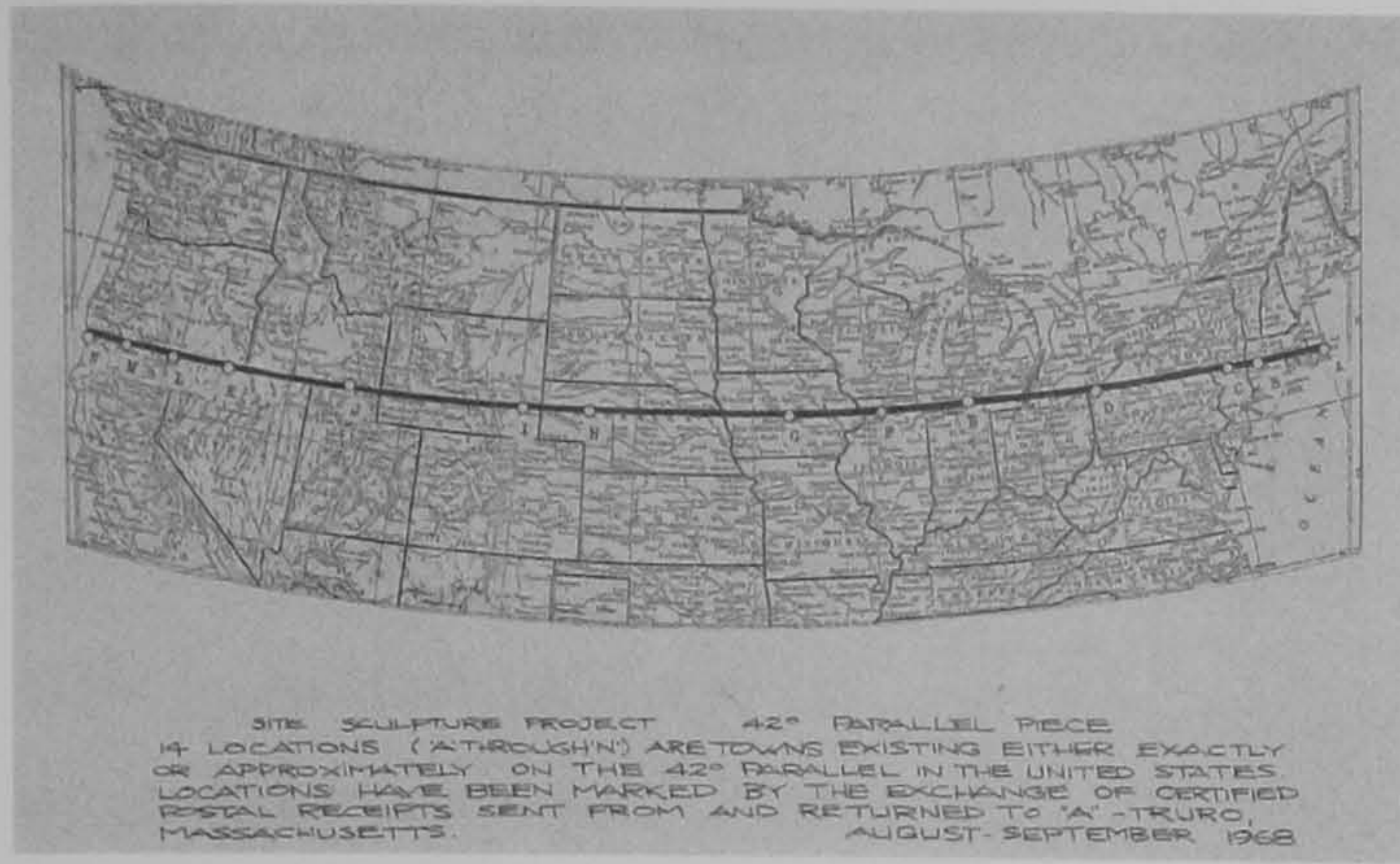


Fig.20 Douglas Huebler, *Site Sculpture Project: 42° Parallel Piece*, (August-September 1968), Map and hand-written text.

### Travel-Events: Photography, Maps, Drawings and other Documents

By late 1967 Huebler's work adopted a dematerialised trajectory, which involved the structuring of documents: maps, descriptive text and photographs as “devices of suggestion and absence” (Alberro 2003, p.65). The dematerialisation of the art object as a singular physical form takes place as Huebler replaces it with an event in real-social space. The event is documented and this information is subject to processes of transmutation, as it becomes secondary information as the travel-event is left behind. Then the secondary information is inverted, as it is transformed into the primary information of work itself (Alberro 2003, p.69). Thus a complex inter-play of individual elements *constitute* the work, which were set in motion by the *percipient*.<sup>9</sup> These strategies repeatedly decentre Huebler's presence in the work, and its commodification as object, in order to expose the underlying structure of artworks (Huebler 1995, p.128). At the same time they engender specific instances of artist-travel, which warrant further analysis as an unacknowledged aspect of the work. An early example, as such, is *Site Sculpture Project: 42° Parallel Piece, (August-September 1968)* (fig.20), which emanates from the regional New England town of Truro. The following text was accompanied by a map:

14 locations from Truro, Massachusetts (A) to Smith River (N) existing either exactly or approximately on the 42° parallel in the United States have been marked by the exchange of certified postal receipts connected with letters to the Chamber of Commerce of each selected town. (The letters were for maps of the immediate area).

This work anticipates the *Air-mail Paintings* of Eugenio Dittborn in the 1990's. Huebler (1973, p.62) outlines the potential movement of this work as it leaves the artist and moves to the viewer, who may or may not complete the work, during a period of time wherein Huebler stated: “I eat, sleep or play, the work is moving towards its completion.” Frédéric Paul (1993 p.32) has written an excellent synopsis of this work, in terms of a “real journey” as one of Huebler's first pieces which incorporated mapping and descriptive-instructions, prior to his use of photography:

The piece takes as its point of departure an imaginary line we all learned about in school and uses it to construct a real journey, though carried out here by proxy. The work could be described as the tracing out of a line, akin to drawing or geometry. It concerns more than the simple undertaking of



a voyage, for another important aspect is involved: that of the project or programme which Huebler sets himself and at the same time offers to the spectator. *Materially* speaking, the work comprises a set of documents which themselves only constitute a part of the whole work. (My italics)<sup>10</sup>

After the *Site Sculptures* Huebler introduced three categories as follows: *Duration* as an investigation of time-based photography, *Location* in relation to place, and *Variable* which proposed relative structures (In Chapter 6 Kurt Schwitters designates his photographs by four categories). In 1968 Siegelauub suggested a collaboration between himself and Huebler for a catalogue-as-exhibition *November 1968, Seth Siegelauub, New York* (fig. 20). For this work Huebler made repeated trips between Truro and New York, where upon arrival he made works in the city's streets (Paul 1993, p.127). The catalogue also contained documentation of Huebler's minimalist sculpture to date, and photographic work based on a system of representation where the knowledge or perception of phenomena are defined by a text and specific forms or 'visual signs', such as architectural drawings, graphs and charts. (Paul 1993, pp.126-127). In Siegelauub's hands, as facilitator, these elements underwent alternative forms of reproduction and distribution, which redefined the position of the curator in the movement or travel of the work as information within the art world.<sup>11</sup>



Fig.21 Douglas Huebler, *November 1968, Seth Siegelauub Fine Arts, 1968*. Manila folders, photographs and typed documents. Installation-view.

In his second major conceptual show with Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner, *January 5-31 1969* at Seth Siegelauub Fine Arts, Huebler contributed 'a photo-essay'. This work pictured whatever phenomena appeared along the side of the highway, at fifty mile intervals, during the journey to New York immediately preceding the exhibition. As Huebler stated: "I mean the drive from my home in Bradford, to New York" (Paul 1993, p.128). As a series of travel-photographs this work immediately recalls Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, from six years earlier, but in a very different way. Huebler's structural photographic documentation depends on a system of random contingency in the choice of subject photographed on route. Unlike Ruscha's subject-specificity, in isolating the gas stations, Huebler's choice of road-side phenomena is varied and can be anywhere or anything at all. In a 1982 essay which reflected upon the legacy of conceptual art, Huebler (1982, p.76) denies the aesthetic value of these photographs, in terms of their pictorial value, as he reiterates the importance of the viewer and art's objective connection with the real social space



through which he travels:

To locate anything is to locate everything else and thus is also to locate the self. The perceiving self: cross-referencing with the 'world' – with natural systems, social systems, with time, place, appearance – without taking possession of anything through 'esthetic' use, a tack that would have assigned the viewer the traditional role of witness.

### **The Dematerialisation of the Artwork and the De-centering of the Artist**

Huebler and Ruscha share a desire to disrupt the temporal perception of their work by placing images out of sequence. They obviously differ in their chosen mode of presentation, as Ruscha made photographs specifically for books. Both their strategies affirm a dematerialisation of the photographic image but the complexity of this process is extended in Huebler's photographic installations. Huebler's description of another work describes the role of the *percipient*, the decentering of the artist and the utilitarian function of the photographic document, its materiality and presentation:

I laid out a seven feet square of sawdust in front of the entrance to one of the gallery space. As people walked in and out the sawdust was naturally scuffed, its appearance constantly changed and those changes photographed periodically with a Polaroid camera. [...] an assistant made the photographs, and because they were immediately printed by the Polaroid process, they were attached to the wall at once: the one thing that I had specified was that I wanted the photographs placed on the wall in a random manner in order to avoid any kind of scientific 'inference' of the arrangement. I have always scrambled my photographic presentations so that 'time' would not be read through a series of sequential events but rather as an all-over field (a 'seamless' field as I have already said) which translates the particular into unity. (Huebler 1993, p.128)

Just as Ruscha collaborated with professional photographers, Huebler continually devised ways of distancing his authorial presence. On this occasion, he enlisted an assistant to take the photographs of anyone entering the gallery and specified their arrangement according to a given set of instructions. The instantaneous and ephemeral facility of the Polaroid process emphasises Huebler's intention to deprive the viewer of image and quality.<sup>12</sup> The participation of the surprised visitor and the gallery, in the forming of this work, is also significant as the decision making processes normally associated with the installation of artworks are reduced to a set of instructions. Huebler implicates the viewer within these works in order to stress the fundamental processes of art production. The viewer's presence activates the work as the work is constituted within the space. The changing material conditions of the photographic image in terms of materiality, presentation and content now seem commonplace, given the widespread applications and procedures of contemporary photographic practice.<sup>13</sup>

As with Ruscha the chronotope of 'the road' is a powerful motif, where a chance encounter in the mind of the artist leads to a denouement, which emerges from the close scrutiny of the contact sheet, as a form of data, from which a specific image is selected.<sup>14</sup> The majority of Huebler's photographs have been photographed on the road, either on route between one place and another, in the city, at a crossroads, or on a street corner. In



*Variable Piece #17 Turin, Italy* (fig.22) Huebler perceives a facial similarity between himself and another individual, who appears to return the photographer's gaze. This work evokes motifs of *recognition* and *non-recognition*, *meeting* and *parting*, *search* and *discovery* in a *loss* and *acquisition* of place, which intimate a fear of being lost (Bakhtin 1981, p.97). These motifs are sublimated in Ruscha's work but in Huebler, and later Ader's work, the import of these motifs takes on greater significance. Throughout Part I they manifest voluntary forms of artist-travel, whereas in Part II artist-travel is an involuntary movement shaped by exile.



Fig.22 Douglas Huebler, *Variable Piece #17 Turin, Italy*, 1968. Black and white photographs.

These motifs are framed by alternate modes of space and time, absence and presence, distance and proximity, as Huebler is visible in these pictures as *meeting* takes the form of contact with materials, people and place. This visibility is countered by structures which adhere to absence, which becomes presence, as the artist self-consciously removes himself from its centre. At the same time the work is propelled by a humour and playfulness. As a set of procedures driven by repetition Huebler provides a template for a future photographic theory and practice, which resists the photographic drive of memory and death, which is prevalent in current photographic theory. The universal aspiration and sheer absurdity<sup>15</sup> of a proposition such as *Variable Piece #70 (In Process) Global* (1971) attests to this, in its affirmation of life and sense of existential existence:

Throughout the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner.

The investiture of meaning is displaced by Huebler's multiple use of photographic images, seemingly absent of any symbolic content; they are not representations but instances of represented time. Huebler's anaesthetic treatment of the photographic image, by processes of repetition, is reiterated in their accompanying typed instructions and maps. These strategies initially rejected the presence of myth.<sup>16</sup> In his foresight Huebler was sceptical of an emerging academia where so many art-works are burdened by the

irresponsible use of signifying. We have come to a point where things are very accessible and the more they get stacked up with myth, the more easily they're consumed and the more bullshit they become.<sup>17</sup>



## **The Return of the Picture – Literal and Aesthetic Meaning**

A reconsideration of Huebler's photographic prescription is apt at a moment in time when the systematic procedures, which Huebler implemented have been rendered obsolete. Effectively the instantaneity of digital photography has effaced the delay associated with darkroom printing. The time-frame of these procedures progress from the taking of the pictures, the printing of a series of contact sheets, the arrangement and selection of a specific image, and their structural alignment with other documents. The implementation of these procedures opened the way for a deconstruction of the photographic image, where its identity was split asunder by debates around feminism, psychoanalysis and the cultural criticism of the 1970/80's. Previously many writers on Huebler's work have passed over its aesthetic value as pictorial image and specific relationship with the artist's subjective experience. Faced with the technical transformation of photographic practice, where film is likely to disappear, a material analysis of the photographic image is increasingly relevant. Alison Green (2002, p.8) has commented to this effect as follows:

Huebler's work continually provokes close reading of images, even as he tells us his pictures are taken mechanically. To others, Huebler's work seemed too varied and haphazard, less philosophically programmatic. Huebler's work seems to be of the hippie, cosmic order of the 60's, bound up in self examination, personal relationships – even emotion at the same time that he continually makes cogent statements and works demonstrating the need to separate perception from aesthetics.

Huebler (Fischer & Strelow, p.26), like Ruscha, was drawn to the camera because it could be used objectively as a documentary tool:

I use the camera as a dumb copying device that only serves to document whatever phenomena appear before it through the conditions set by a system. No 'aesthetic choices are possible. Other people often make the photographs it makes no difference.

At the same time it is possible to construe 'personal facture' in both their work in relation to a materiality and subjectivity of the photographic image (Lewison, p.4).<sup>18</sup> Lippard (1975, p.29) in a self-confessed departure of opinion identified these qualities in 1972 when she wrote:

There is a lyrical quality to Huebler's work which moves me the way memories move me, not through sentiment, but through the intoxication of sensing another time or place, in all the associative richness of an indirectly experienced reality.

A recognition of the prosaic qualities of the documents is diverted by strategies of seriality, structure and repetition in an attempt to suppress the poetic resonance to which Lippard alludes. Huebler continually denied the potential of these pictures as the locus of intense feeling or personal thought and reflection.<sup>19</sup> As a result of their position, Huebler and Ruscha's photographic agenda, has permitted the working through of these ideas prompting what has already been referred to as the return of the 'picture'. In this context it is possible to reconsider Huebler's photographs and their importance in terms of a wider definition of contemporary photographic practice.<sup>20</sup>





Fig.23 Douglas Huebler, *Site Sculpture Project Boston - New York Exchange Shape Sept. 1968*. Black and white photographs.

Huebler's empirical approach to everyday experience as the basis of his art was framed by structure, as he incorporated all aspects of his personal life in order to negate them. His approach to photography inadvertently created what Bakhtin terms a "supergenre", composed of different photographic genres, which have become the currency of contemporary photographic practice. These include portrait photography, family snapshots, landscape photography, rephotography of appropriated materials, and street photography (populated and unpopulated). Of the latter, *Site Sculpture Project Boston - New York Exchange Shape Sept 1968* (fig.23) consists of six locations and their respective street names. Sticking-paper was placed randomly at each of these sites as "markers" of each location: at the base of a lamppost, on the kerb, at the edge of a brick wall etc. Six photographs have then been made at each location, "with no attempt made for a more, or less, interesting or picturesque representation of the location". They eschew formal composition in a flattening of renaissance perspective in their accidental snapshot "anaesthetic" (my italics). In his influential essay *Marks of Indifference* Jeff Wall (Lippard 1995, p.261) cites what I would humourously call the 'indecisive-moment', as opposed to Cartier-Bresson's maxim. Under this aegis, the snapshot freezes the most ordinary of everyday scenes, as the non-aesthetic is repositioned within a new aesthetic of banality.<sup>21</sup>

In the exhibition *Douglas Huebler* at the Camden Arts Centre, the framing and mounting of the works reveals the implications of curatorial intervention by museums and galleries. Huebler has admitted that the traditional framing and display of his work was inevitable, after the wear and tear of being handled during their exhibition, in manila folders, at Seth Siegelau's gallery for example (Paul 1993, p.128). Inspecting the work on display, the documents which had been by framed by New York's Guggenheim Museum, such as *Variable Piece #4, November 1968*, contrast with the works framed by Huebler or under his direction. The latter differ in their disregard for issues of museological conservation, as they have been taped, glued or pinned to their supports in a manner conducive to their ephemeral assemblage.

Siegelau's collaboration with Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry flourished for a short period of time between 1964 and 1971, after which Siegelau distanced himself from the art-world. After his early work with Siegelau, Huebler worked with Leo Castelli between 1970 and 1991 (Paul 1993, p.32). A 1971



work *Variable Piece, 48, As Far as the Eye Can See* documents a drive from Massachusetts to New York to deliver the work, which was the journey itself, to Castelli. This work typifies Huebler's relationship with New York as an art centre in relation to notions of periphery and centre, distance and proximity. The work features textual and photographic documentation of Huebler's departure, car-journey and the artist's arrival at the gallery. The photographs have been taken at the furthest distance from the vanishing point, with the next image photographed at the same point as it is reached during the course of the journey. This 'travel-event' took place on the 13th March 1971 and comprises 650 photographs, which were displayed as 24 contact sheets. The contact sheets are presented as a series; out of sequence they are not a complete record of time but an illusion of time. They work in the same way that Ruscha registers the intervals of his journeys. Unlike Ruscha, Huebler recruits an unnamed party who, in the text that accompanies the work, has selected the "most aesthetic view". This image was printed as a 10 x 8 inch photograph, which was also included as part of the final work. The work essentially begins on the doorstep of Huebler's home, and concludes with Huebler's arrival in the gallery. The final photograph shows Huebler's meeting with Castelli. Lippard (1968, p.31) has identified the potential of serial techniques to initiate a sense of movement in the work, and what I refer to as a 'travel-event', a "time-motion without anything actually moving".

The economic climate which facilitated affordable air-travel between America and Europe also coincided with the cross-current reception of Conceptual Art by curators on both sides of the Atlantic. Frédéric Paul, who worked closely with Huebler until the end of his life, has reflected upon the unique relationship developed by American conceptual artists and European galleries:

The art world in New York was largely conservative in its tastes however and interest in conceptual art tended mostly to come from the enthusiasm of European dealers such as Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, Gian Enzo Sperone in Turin, Yvon Lambert in Paris, and Jack Wendler in London. Hence from 1970, onwards, Huebler frequently found himself abroad in Europe, a fact reflected in many of his works (Paul 1993, p.32).

It is worth reproducing the text of one of Huebler's *Variable* work Düsseldorf, Germany - Turin, Italy. A simultaneous exhibition with Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf and Galleria Sperone, Turin:

*"December 25, 1970 - December 31, 1970*

At 10 a.m. Christmas morning near Selestat, France (located approximately at the middle point between Düsseldorf and Turin) the artist will flip a coin which will determine the direction towards which he will begin to 'hitch-hike' towards one or the other gallery: 'heads', North, 'tails', South. At the conclusion of that ride (and each subsequent ride) another flip will be made to determine the direction towards which the artist will next hitch-hike; he will either continue in the same direction or reverse it according to 'chance'. (Each days travel will cease either after a continuous ride to Düsseldorf or Turin: or after approximately seven hours have passed at which time the artist will find lodging in the general area where he finds himself.) In either case the artist will begin the next day's travels at 10:00 a.m. ... if he has arrived at Düsseldorf or Turin he has no other choice than to hitch-hike toward the other. After the first ride he will again resort to chance... and so on: each subsequent ride determined by the coin."



“January 6 - January 12 1971

The ‘documentation’ of each of the first seven days of the exhibition will be in view in each of the two galleries: all documentation of travel to the North will be at Konrad Fischer, travel to the South will be at the Galleria Sperone, and will consist of maps, Polaroids, names, time, direction and distances, etc.”



Fig.24 Douglas Huebler, *Self Portrait as a Hitchhiker, Strasbourg, Christmas Day, 1970*. Map and black and white photograph.

### The Viewer as Fellow Traveller

All of these works include a set of co-ordinates or instructions, which reveal Bakhtin-like motifs. In the previous example the *search* and *discovery* for a document of ownership, referenced an artwork exhibited in a nearby gallery. Another set of co-ordinates, direct the Traveller towards a store of fresh water buried in the desert in *Location Piece #13*. The movement of sand from one beach to another in *Duration Piece #12*, 1969. A journey undertaken by car from the artist’s provincial home to the gallery in an art world centre. The tragi-comic, absurdity of the artist as hitch-hiker deciding upon his direction by the flip of a coin, and then having to take the train as seen in *Self Portrait as a Hitchhiker, Strasbourg, Christmas Day, 1970* (fig.24). A real journey is deferred – as Frédéric Paul has observed – the work becomes more than a voyage, as it emerges as a concept, which travels from the artist to the *percipient*.

And because the artist sets himself such tasks, both proposing and submitting himself to them, the works take on a peculiar quality which manage to integrate or at least implicate the past, present and future. (This explains why the projects must actually be carried out – successfully or unsuccessfully - in order to attain a state of temporal fusion) (Paul 1995, p. 33).

The anthropological nature of these projects also intimates questions of identity in a vague, non-determinist manner. Presented as a closed structural system, they also subvert the validity of maps, drawings and photography as information systems and signifiers of fundamental truths. These are redolent of the type of documents which accompany archeological site-excavation. An explanatory text suggests an excavation of meaning, where a specimen-sample has been isolated as evidence, in order to shed light on an assumption or as supportive material for a particular proposal. These propositions eventually break down as the viewer intercedes. This analysis seeks to expose the significance of the materials used in these works, via their interpretation as instances of ‘artist-travel’, which as a conceptual strategy becomes a mediumistic category in itself. Siegelau has defined Huebler’s work as a “system of spatio-temporal relationships [...]



a magic moment”, and as such the work reveals a specific instance of ‘artist-travel’ synonymous with Huebler’s everyday life. It was also a transformative moment in terms of the emergence of a unique photographic presence, following what Siegelaub has termed Ruscha’s “serious project of publishing”. Huebler’s work stresses the dematerialised form of the art object, and in the case of both artist’s work, a fluidity of form and distribution. Huebler used the camera as a way of looking at a world of social relations, which were likewise delineated by other forms of documentation. As an archive of space and time continually “in process”, each work alternates between structure and series, as the work travels between new modes of interpretation. The artist and viewer are complicit in a conceptual journey, which redefines the processes of art within an expanded system of meaning. These assumptions were not founded on ideological truths, but on the grounds of ambiguous everyday experience, random contingency and uncertainty, and sometimes even the fiction of the traveller’s tale. Huebler’s works are structured, empirical journeys without destination, other than within the conceptual parameters of everyday life. In their serial expansion they are chronotopic, as they are located everywhere and anywhere, at one and the same time. Huebler became terminally ill in 1997 and much of the time up till this point he maintained a distance from the art world and dealers, in what was to be a bitter and negative time.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Huebler, catalogue statement *Jan 5-31, 1969*, Seth Siegelaub, New York City.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase refers to the overall facture and surface tension of Jackson Pollack’s paintings, where there is no foreground or background. Huebler uses this term to emphasise the loss of identity of the individual objects, photographs, maps, documents etc. within the work, as they are the forming material of an overall schema. Counter to perspectival notions of depth and space, Huebler’s denial of the work’s literary content reduces his photographs to pure surface in order to emphasise their anonymity.

<sup>3</sup> My use of the word entrepreneur is deliberate as the modes of distribution and commerce, which dominated the information culture of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s is crucial to an understanding of the status of conceptual art and its critical and ideological position of the artworld economy within which it existed.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Lippard (1973, p.5) designated these years as the time-frame, which marks an approach to art-production, that sought to dematerialise the work of art as an autonomous object, endowed with qualities of ‘uniqueness, permanence and decorative attributes’.

<sup>5</sup> Siegelaub discussed his collaboration with Huebler at the symposium *A Sense of Huebler* at the Camden Arts Centre on March 16th 2002. This event was held in conjunction with the exhibition *Douglas Huebler* curated by Mark Godfrey.

<sup>6</sup> In Part II Jimmie Durham and Gustav Metzger are discussed in terms of their liminal presence at the threshold of society and the art world. Whilst marginalised, either voluntarily through political or economic motives or by the crisis of exile, these artists strove to infiltrate that which is regarded as centre.

<sup>7</sup> Siegelaub uses the term organiser in order to make a critical distinction between his activities relative to those of museums, galleries, dealers, curators etc.

<sup>8</sup> Huebler’s sculpture at this time was concerned with orientation and directionality in space. When this work was situated outside the gallery Huebler was dissatisfied with its relative scale to the natural world (Alberro 2003, p.63).



<sup>9</sup> Throughout his work Huebler used these terms in order to describe the configuration of the forming of the materials in his work and their reception by the viewer.

<sup>10</sup> Paul refers to the materiality of the documents which constitute the work “Materially”. It is Huebler’s deferential use of photographic images as such, which facilitates their interpretation as signifiers of artist-travel. The artists discussed in Part II predominantly make use of found objects and materials but in the case of Metzger and Schwitters photography has also played an important role. Their relevance is cited within this thesis relative to my own photographic work, which investigates the relationship between travel, object and image, as Ruscha has it a “readymade in photographic form”.

<sup>11</sup> Siegelau also formulated “*Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement*, which defended artist’s interests in their work after it was sold (Osborne 2003, p.25).

<sup>12</sup> These comments were made by artist-film maker Adam Chodzko in his artist-response to the work of Huebler as part of the symposium *A Sense of Huebler* at the Camden Arts Centre, March 16th 2002.

<sup>13</sup> In the same way that Huebler comprehensively photographed the phenomena of everyday life, contemporary photographers such as Wolfgang Tillmans and Nan Goldin use the photographic medium in all its forms to photograph the minutiae of everyday existence, whilst employing random processes of display akin to Huebler and the magazine-layout-aesthetic of German photographer Hans Peter Feldman. The ubiquity of these material affects and modes of distribution and display are the strategies, which the practice and text, which constitutes this project recovers and reconstructs.

<sup>14</sup> This is a notion at odds for example with Henri Cartier Bresson’s reference to the contact sheet, where each successive frame reveals an epiphany between the artist and subject. In this way the work is a forerunner of many other generic variants taken up by recent contemporary photographers.

<sup>15</sup> Huebler’s artistic philosophy was rooted in structuralist thought and he was also influenced by the writings of Albert Camus and Alain Robbe-Grillet.

<sup>16</sup> This has been countered by Robert Morgan, who suggests that these structuring processes break down in Huebler’s work where he advocates the perception of resemblance and identity-traits in abstract forms, faces in walls or trees for example, *Variable Piece No. 90, Israel, 1973* etc. (1992, p.191) as Huebler’s work moves between structural and phenomenological processes of signification.

<sup>17</sup> (Alberro 2003, p.71, note 33 Michael Auping, ‘Talking with Douglas Huebler’, LAICA Journal, (July-August 1977) p.41) For Huebler signification was situated within the language of the work itself rather than outside of the work.

<sup>18</sup> In his discussion of the work of the paintings of Brice Marden and Robert Ryman, Lewison discusses the reinvestment of subjectivity as a response to the excessive disengagement of minimalist art. Whilst no perceptual change occurs an emotional change does (Shearer 1975).

<sup>19</sup> The practice based element of this research project proposes a serial, schema of images in the repetition of the same motifs across different photographic genres. The construction of this archive consists of personal photographs, which besides their use within the context of this project are underpinned by an autobiographical and psychological content.

<sup>20</sup> Ruscha has shown this in his reprinting of certain images from his books, however he has continued to maintain a distance or veil between himself and the work in terms of his modification of the image either by scratching the negative surface or rephotographing the work out of necessity due to the loss of the original negatives.

<sup>21</sup> In this essay Jeff Wall describes a de-skilled utilitarian function of photography by artists, stemming from reportage and photojournalism. In a discussion relating to *Home for America* Dan Graham has described his use of cheap cameras as an affordable means of reductive practice with the result that the pictures were not ‘good photographs’, as they were made with ‘cheap cameras’. However he didn’t regard them as ‘bad photographs’ either, as he acknowledges that he was able to realise a particular kind of image using colour slides, to picture the ‘banal colour code’ of the buildings which he was photographing (Graham 1999, pp.30-31).



## Chapter 3

### Bas Jan Ader's Shadowplay

To the centre of the city where all roads meet, waiting for you  
To the depths of the ocean where all hopes sank, searching for you ...  
... In the shadowplay acting out your own death knowing no more

Joy Division, 'Shadowplay' *Unknown Pleasures*, Manchester: Factory Records, 1979.

The lyrics quoted above by post-punk band Joy Division could have been written as a synopsis of the work of Bas Jan Ader. Indeed the refrain, "In the shadowplay acting out your own death knowing no more", eerily echoes a notebook entry by Bas Jan Ader which reads, "Whole series of photographs on dead in the ocean, being washed ashore. My body practicing being drowned" (Spence 1999, p.65). As an epitaph to Bas Jan Ader's films, photographs and slide-works the lyrics of Ian Curtis<sup>1</sup> embody the fragile and vulnerable position of the displaced self and artist as traveller.

Ader's work provides the geographical link as this thesis shifts its analysis from the photograph to the found object and from America to Europe. The theoretical framework and terminology introduced in the previous chapters are conflated in Ader's work to evolve paradigmatic forms of artist-travel, which each artist's use of the photographic image represents. A unique photographic presence emerged within the chronotope of Conceptualism, Minimalism and Pop Art and in Ader's case Romanticism, the legacy of which this thesis assesses. As Douglas Huebler was able to travel back and forth between America and Europe, Ader frequently returned to his native Europe, leaving his adopted home in Los Angeles to make works on site, which were then recorded as documents for subsequent exhibition. Like Ruscha, Ader moved to Los Angeles to further his studies in 1963, which coincidentally was the same year of publication as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Where Huebler's documentary use of maps, text and photographs sought to decentre the artist, Ader's documentary use of photographs and film appear to position the artist at the centre of the work. Distinctively Ader distances himself from the work by its presentation as documentation, in a departure from the activities of other performance artists with whom the work is often associated. Ader's use of film and still photography positions his work closer to the practice of Ruscha and Huebler. All three emerged at around the same time but it is perhaps Ader, who most effectively epitomises my concept of the artist-traveller. The precariousness which permeates his work found its tragic culmination in his disappearance at sea in 1975, whilst attempting to complete a solo voyage of the Atlantic. This was the final part of a three-part work entitled *In Search of the Miraculous* (1973, fig.25). Ader's boat was eventually discovered capsized off the coast of Ireland, six months after his departure.

Ader used his own body, as well as other objects, to manifest a dialogue with the natural and built environment. The artist's physical presence is mediated by the effects of gravity as the elemental principle of the work. The performed action of *falling*, as a repeated



metaphor, seems to intimate a sense of unease at the artist's own voluntary uprootedness and the frailty of the human body. This is accentuated by Ader's *falls*, precarious pedestrian and sea-born travels, which contrast with Ruscha and Huebler's car-journeys. Ader's early works are localised, micro-journeys in which the artist falls under the force of gravity. Their brevity is contradistinct to the time frame of *In Search of the Miraculous*. The gravitational force that pulls Ader back to Europe is of an altogether different temporal duration.



Fig.25 Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous*, Art and Project's Bulletin 89, July 1975. Black and white photograph, 50.8 x 61 cm.

Ader was born in Holland in 1942, growing up in the province of Groningen before moving from his birthplace to study in Amsterdam between 1960-61. In 1962, aged twenty-one he sailed from Morocco to Southern California (Bear & Sharp 1976, p.26). Ader attended The Otis Art Institute before studying and later teaching at the Claremont Graduate School (Hainley 1999, p.93). Ader settled on the West Coast, rather than placing himself in New York or in one of the art centres of Europe, due to his preference for the heat and geographical situation of the city by the sea (Bear & Sharp 1976, p.27). It was also a decisive time for contemporary art practice in Los Angeles. Thomas Crow (1996, u.p.) describes the significance of the location and time for Ader's work, which carries similar import for Ruscha and in a different context Huebler also:

[...] the importance of Los Angeles in the 1960's as a forcing house of advanced ideas and modes of practice. It's corollary is the by-passing of New York as an essential centre in post-war developments and the renewed importance of Europe [...] The environment he found cannot adequately be envisioned in cliches of Hollywood hedonism. If there is a single guiding fact about the conurbation of Los Angeles in the post-war decades it is the pervasive imprint of military life upon its inhabitants. The war in the Pacific and the high gear expansion of military aviation transformed a sleepy output into a major metropolis, but did so in the form of ruthless industrial development, with attendant schemes of mass-produced housing, that spread in lockstep over the coastal desert terrain. And that subordination of nature to technology, having begun in wartime emergency, was exponentially accelerated by the vast military expenditures of the Cold War.

Crow's poignant insight of the historical and geographical significance of Los Angeles describes the background against which a transition from the reductivist, machine-made, aesthetics of minimalism transmuted to the regimented, systems based practice of conceptualism. At this time when individual identity and politics were at odds with rapid technological development, the emergence of *body art* was inevitable, as the artist's physical being became categorised as a medium, subject to the same forces, which had brought other means of art production into question. Ader's work is linked with



performance art, whilst documented by emergent photoconceptual practices by which his work was distilled.<sup>2</sup> Whilst based in Los Angeles his dissociation from Europe sees his return to Holland as he regularly travelled in Europe from the late 1960's into the 1970's. The following account by Jan Tumlir (1996, p.25) highlights the essential themes found in Ader's work, *travel*, *gravity*, *time* and *space* and their relationship to the medium of photography:

In a pair of photographs made while on holiday in Sweden in 1971, the artist depicts himself standing in a forest of tall pines, and then in the accompanying image, fallen in a clearing where the trees have likewise been felled. It is here the absolute temporal incommensurability of these two terms which allows for their reconciliation within the photographic system.

It is the documentary function of photography as a medium, which allows the conceptual and formal potential for this work to exist as a correlation of travel and place. It also reveals Ader's trajectory as an art historical progression of the Northern European Romantic tradition.<sup>3</sup> *Chasseur in the Woods* (1814) by Caspar David Friedrich pictures a defeated French soldier isolated in a tall, wooded clearing. The painting is symbolic of a sublime awe and the enveloping aspect of nature and a symbol of the might of a victorious power. For Ader it is isolation, absence and loss that we see in these images as well as a tragi-comic pathos. As Ader used his own body as an object it is important to differentiate the specific emphasis he gave to this activity in terms of an exteriority of the self. As Brad Spence (1999, p.36) has observed it is this differentiation which separates Ader from his contemporaries:

He needed to draw a distinction between representations in which the body is an object denied interiority and his images of a body becoming an object by losing its interiority.

The performance works of Chris Burden and Dennis Oppenheim were sometimes staged before an audience where the focus of attention was directly concerned with the artist's physical presence in all its often-violent immediacy. Whilst the element of risk links Ader and these artists, this connection is incidental in terms of Ader's concept of gravity and *falling* as a means of projecting the body across space and time. Tumlir (1996, p.22) has suggested how Ader avoided imposing pre-emptive meaning, apart from the meaning of the work as a process, which bears comparison with Huebler was outspoken on these issues whereas Ader issued very few statements on his work:

The artist absented himself at every opportunity from the role of ultimate authority, summarily dismissing the explanation of others without offering any more accurate ones of his own, but he did this not so much to give up as to hold out on meaning, to withhold it and thereby project it forward into the future.

Ader's visible presence permeates all his work, which marks a progression from Ruscha's invisibility and Huebler's simultaneous presence and absence. Although he is at the centre of the work physically, he strove to side-step his presence as the focus of



attention in several ways. He achieved this by using props, art historical references and multiple forms of documentation in each piece. Gravity as the directional force of his travel through space exerts a subjective “exteriority”. In ‘Treatise on Nomadology’ Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.363) theorise exteriority as an act of individual and political will, as that which escapes “state apparatuses of identity”. They take their notion of “interiority” and “exteriority” and the de-subjectified self from Kleist:

[...] feelings become uprooted from the interiority of a ‘subject’, to be projected voluntarily outward into a milieu of pure exteriority, that lends them an incredible velocity, a catapulting force: love or hate they are no longer feelings but affects.

Travel and trajectory are ascribed a specific dimension in Ader’s work. A highly subjective, emotional force is at once present and absent in an alternation between mourning (loss and absence) and melancholy (sadness and lament).<sup>4</sup> Each work stages a moment’s hesitancy and vulnerability before a point of departure, which anticipates the rupture of the event which follows. The external forces of nature exert a tension between the body, object as prop and the built-environment. These elements correlate in a breaking of space causing a dislocation of the artist’s identity in a movement from stability, to fracture and finally stasis. The influential writings of Michel de Certeau (1984, p.123) are useful means by which to locate Ader’s work in spatial terms as a:

[...] distinction that separates a subject from its exteriority to the distinctions that localise objects from home (constituted on the basis of a wall) to the journey (constituted on the basis of a geographical ‘elsewhere’ or cosmological ‘beyond’).

## **The Fall**

Ader’s performances are suffused with a profound melancholy and dark humour. They were staged in the most banal of locations: the rooftop of a suburban Los Angeles dwelling, a garage, a tree over a stream, a path alongside a canal, a paved walkway. The first two locations are isolated and distinctly unheroic. The latter two are routes of travel and escape as Collier Schorr (1994, p.37) has observed. An inventory of these locations structures what de Certeau (1984, p.126) terms a “syntax” which are gathered together in a series of ‘travel-events’. These events are represented as the artist is seen or documents what Bakhtin described as the ‘extratemporal hiatus’ along a journey between two points punctuated by intermediary ‘spatio-temporal markers’. In the films, photographs and postcards, which document these events, the force of gravity and impending impact are the salient elements of the work. As with early installation works *Light Vulnerable Objects Threatened by Eight Cement Bricks* (1970). The viewer shares the artist’s sense of apprehension prior to an inevitable outcome, which materialises across the space between two points. The body or object is allowed to fall or drop in a passive way as the force of gravity directs the trajectory of the fall. *Fall I, Los Angeles* (1970) is a black and white of 16mm film of 24 secs. duration. Ader is seen sitting on a chair in a relaxed, if precarious fashion, on top of the roof of an ordinary looking single,



storey house, which significantly is also the artist's home. This moment is held tantalisingly until, ever-so-gently, he allows himself to be carried downwards in a vertiginous display of abandon. Ader rolls and falls with the aplomb of a stuntman down the roof and onto the ground below.

In an introductory essay for the exhibition *Pier and Ocean* at the Hayward Gallery in 1980, in which Ader's work was included, Gerhard van Graevenitz (1980, p.7) discusses the impact of Constructivism on recent contemporary practice. For Graevenitz art is a spatial construction allied with a conception of movement, which is critical for my concept of travel upon which this analysis of Ader's work stands and falls:

Human effort is not directed towards the work as such but seen as a dialogue with gravity: walking, throwing, carrying, falling. Movement does not mean the modification of form but the defeat of gravity: flying, hovering. The horizontal is no longer a direction in space but a limit: that of balance.

In Ader's work the limit of the horizon, as the keystone of perspectival balance, is ruptured in the physical and psychological tension between gravity and balance. This tension permeates the photographic documentation by which these events are mediated and perceived by the viewer. The optics of the camera lens, fixed by the perspectival laws of vision, are contravened. This occurs as the viewer's eye is drawn from the top of the frame to its base rather than through the picture into an experience of depth of space. In these works the specific action of 'falling' is repeated. Repetition is a subversion itself of the unique experience of performance art where a singular event is staged before an audience. Ader repeated his fall and its sense of loss and failure time and time again. Jan Tumlir (1996, p.23) has described the act of repetition as a force of resistance against nostalgia and myth, citing Søren Kirkegaard's *Fear and Trembling - Repetition* (1834):

[...] the point of repetition is not to affirm an unchanging order of things. To the contrary it serves to highlight every slight shift in context and every surrounding detail of time and place, so as to show it is not only the present, but our view of the past, and by extension, the future, as well.

The dissemination of Ader's works, after the event, reiterates their very staging. There is a solitary, private dimension to the enactment of Ader's travels of which the camera is the observer. The viewer's experience of Ader's work is mediated via film and photographs, which stretch the definition of documentation as these 'travel-events' are later reconstructed in carefully selected, individual works. The multiple procedures of documentation with which each event is recorded are commensurate with the ephemeral materiality of each medium. The fragile nature of the work is suspended in the equally delicate materiality of film's projection in the cinema. The films are short, the two described, no more than half a minute each. They open with their respective titles in Ader's characteristic hand-written script on a blank background and close abruptly in the grainy, black and white aftermath of the final moment of impact. *I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1970, fig.26) exists as two films, photographs and as a black and white postcard inscribed with the statement of the title. Ader left behind a notebook which contained



statements and ideas for further works with the same aphoristic quality, which reflect a shared desire for contingency found in the pronouncements of Douglas Huebler's descriptive tests and titles.

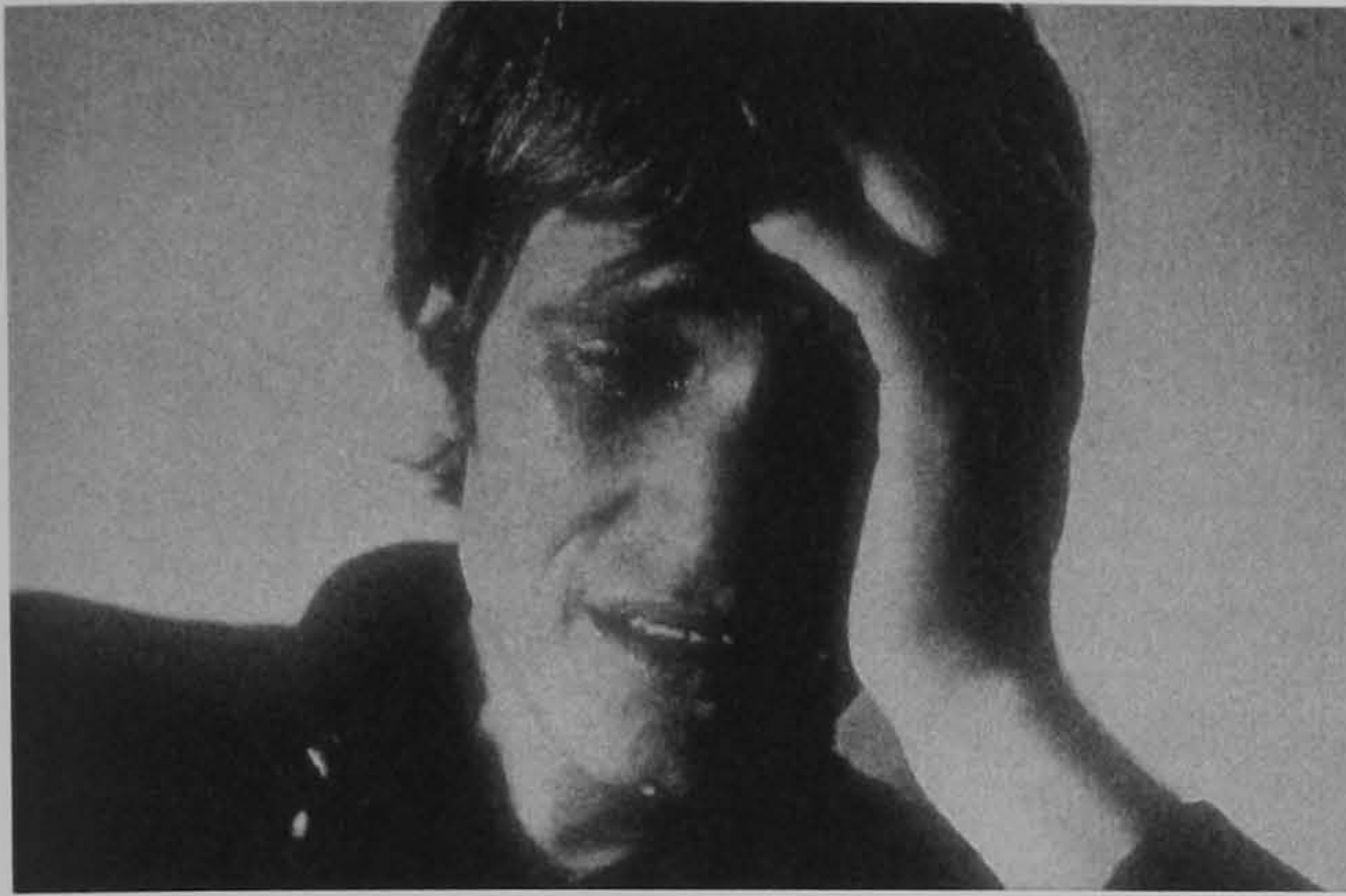


Fig.26 Bas jan Ader, *I'm Too Sad To Tell You*, 1971. Black and white postcard, 8.8 x 13.8 cm.

Ader's 'travel-events' stage a mobility, which is absent in other works where the artist is seen at ease in a state of contemplation such as *The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort* (1968). Melancholy pathos, romantic-irony and the use of lens-based media to disseminate the work point to a distancing of the subject as a doubled-self, 'falling' between apprehension and comprehension, dread and wonderment in sublime awe at the precipice of existence and subjectivity.



Fig.27 Bas jan Ader, *Broken Fall (Organic) Westkapelle, Holland*, 1971. Amsterdamse Bos, Holland. Black and white, silent, 16 mm film, 1 min. 44 secs.

As previously stated the repetitive nature of Ader's performances are a critical factor in the work. This is explicit in *Broken Fall (Organic) Westkapelle, Holland* (1971, fig.27) the focus of attention is on the artist at a moment of stasis where he hangs at arm's length, from a tree over a stream. When it seems that he can hold on no longer he drops into the water below.

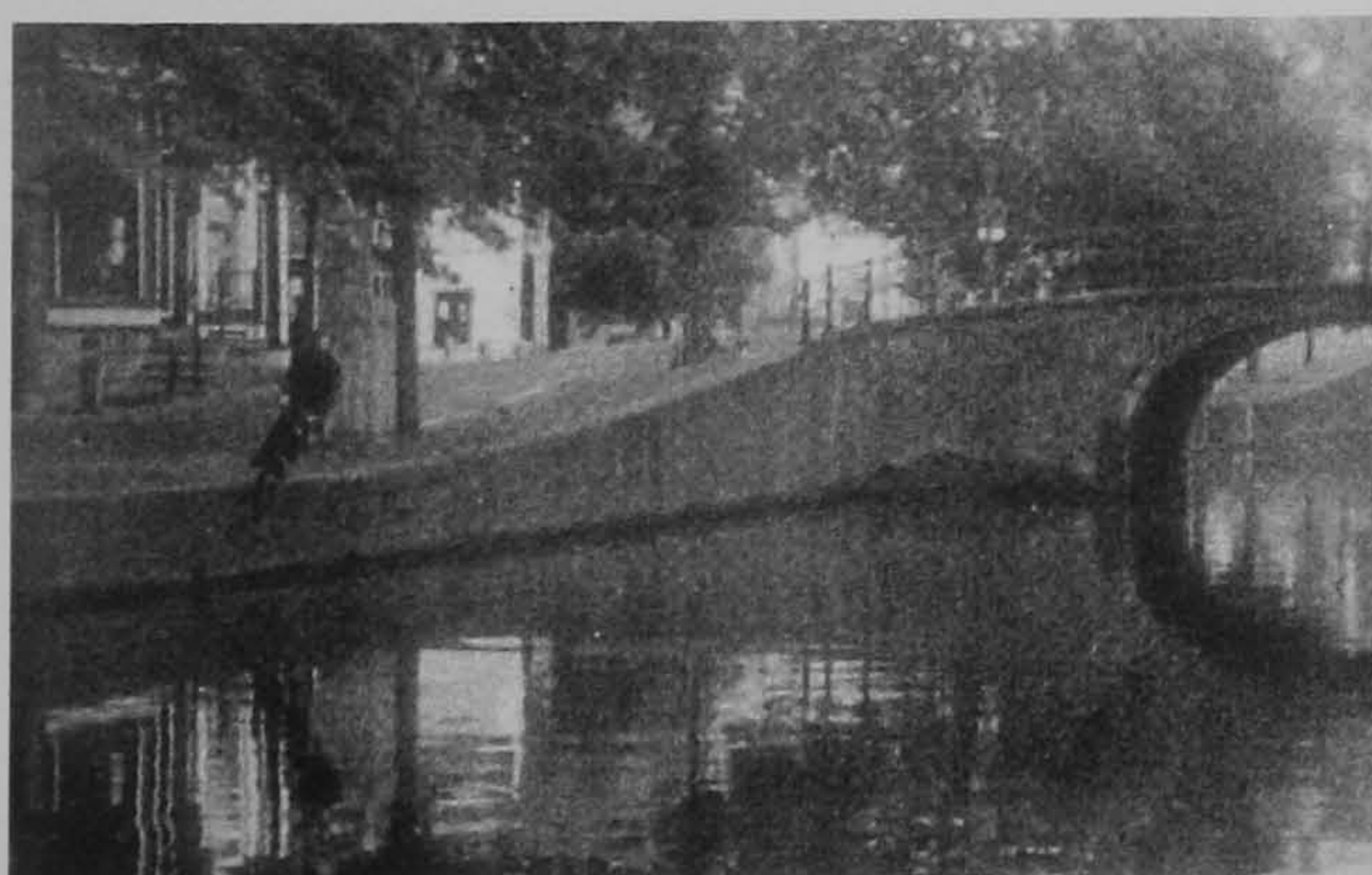


Fig.28 Bas jan Ader, *Fall II Amsterdam, Holland*, 1970. Black and white, silent, 16 mm. film. 19 secs.



In *Fall II Amsterdam, Holland*, (1971, fig.28) the artist cycles along a canal-side path on a typical, sit-up-and-beg bicycle, which are in common use throughout Holland and Belgium today. Ed Soja (1996, p.297) has identified the bicycle as having similar cultural significance as the car, “that assumes for the Amsterdammer, a similarly obsessive and potential role” in the experience of the city comparable to the car in Ruscha’s navigation of the sprawling space of Los Angeles. Ader’s choice of vehicle, the bicycle, is not only culturally and geographically significant but a political gesture as well. Later on, Ader’s pedestrian-journey across the city contravenes the notion of Los Angeles, as a city only navigable by car. This differentiates Ader’s modes of travel with Ruscha’s fascination with the motor car. Ader’s sea-journey represents a deceleration in keeping with environmental and material concerns of the 1970’s, which in Part II are of particular concern for Jimmie Durham and Gustav Metzger. Ader delays his arrival as he forefronts the paradigmatic modality of artist-travel by adopting those forms, which contradict the technological speed of the era, with the mounting proliferation of air-travel towards the end of the century.

Riding at speed in a manner of wanton disinterest his course weaves along the bank until he launches himself and his bicycle over the edge of the path and into the canal.<sup>5</sup> Ader placed himself within an art historical discourse which spans the work of Mondrian and De Stijl, Rembrandt and Caspar David Friedrich. Three works were played out in the midst of the Westkapelle Lighthouse,<sup>6</sup> which Mondrian repeatedly painted. *On the Way to a New Neoplasticism* (1971) shows four, colour photographs, where the artist lies in a mock-recovery position on top of a blue blanket. A yellow benzene can and a red box are introduced in each successive picture as a playful reference and homage to Mondrian’s abstraction.

### **In-Between Romanticism and Conceptualism, Europe and America**

For Ader a Dutch artist living in Los Angeles, the possibility of the European Romantic tradition with its focus on the individual was perhaps threatening to dissolve within the horizon of a new culture. Southern California as a territory of technological utility and order – producing a subjectivity thoroughly in concert with the mobility of images and goods was increasingly antithetical to aspects of the European literary heritage (Spence 1999, p.39).

Bas jan Ader, as an outsider upon his arrival in Los Angeles, maintained an isolated distance from his contemporaries, apart from contact with a small group of close friends and students (Bear & Sharp 1975, p.27). Ader’s situation presents a conceptual dilemma of the artist’s own design as he was torn between place and era. This sense of displacement runs throughout Ader’s work, the documentation of which stands as its dislocated testimony. Ader positioned himself as a witness for the demise of a tradition, which he had left behind, but to which he continually returned, through the vanguardism of performance art and photoconceptualism.<sup>7</sup>

Ader’s final project embodies an unfettered movement in space and time, a project of





Fig.29 Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous, (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. 18 Black and white photographs with hand-written text in white ink, each 20.3 x 25.2 cm.

heroic and sublime proportions in keeping with the European romantic tradition. The proposal was a journey of epic proportions. The first part of the work was set in the Clare Copley Gallery in Los Angeles, where a choir was assembled to sing a collection of piano-accompanied, “mournful sea shanties” (Spence 1999, p.39). A series of eighteen black and white photographs titled *One Night in Los Angeles* (1973) were also exhibited. A bulletin was issued, which consisted of a titled photograph showing the artist sat aloft the 12 ft. sail boat, *Ocean Wave*, that was to carry him on an estimated 60 day voyage from Cape Cod to Falmouth, on the south coast of England. The bulletin was accompanied by the sheet music for a nautical song called *Life on the Ocean Wave*. The proposed documentation was to take the form of film, photographs and tape recordings made whilst at sea. This documentation would have formed the final part of the work at the Groninger Museum in Holland alongside another series of photographs titled *One Night in Amsterdam* (Bear & Sharp 1976, p.26).

### **Narrative and Chronotopicity (*One Night in Los Angeles*)**

The first part of the triptych *One Night in Los Angeles* (1973) follows a solitary “dusk-to-dawn” journey, by foot, from an inland point of departure, to the seashore at the edge of the Pacific Ocean (Crow 1996, p.227). It consists of eighteen, 8 x 10 inch, black and white photographs inscribed with the lyrics of *Searchin’* (1957), which was written by Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller and originally performed by The Coasters. Each photograph is captioned with a hand written line from the song, which describes the pursuit of lost love, set against the foreboding gloom of each image. The rhythm and sentimental timbre of the lyrics instill a beat, as the eye is held long enough to read each line before it is drawn across to the next image. The gait of the artist in each photograph manifests a degree of uncertainty which pervades the search for lost love.

*One Night in Los Angeles* as a real-life, chronotopic travel-event comprises several chronotopic motifs, with the presence of attendant temporal and spatial markers: apartments, work-places, roads, thresholds and void. These are fused at one and the same time in one and the same place, to form a simultaneous whole. The concreteness of the chronotope as a representation in Ader’s films and photographs circumvents metaphorical interpretation, due to the narrative drive of the whole. As all these motifs overlap each other, the space across which this journey takes place are fluid. It is not an “unmoving or static setting” through which Ader travels as his mythical presence is



subsumed within the whole (Bakhtin 1981, p.209). A series of fragmented stills is thus unified as the order of constructed space is ruptured. This is what Bakhtin (1981, p.84) refers to as a fleshing out of time as it is propelled forward into the future in an irreversible breaking of cyclical time:

In the artistic literary chronotope spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought out whole. Time as it were thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible, like wise space becomes charged and becomes responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterises the artistic chronotope (Bakhtin 1981, p.84).

For both Ruscha and Ader, Los Angeles was a 'home-from-home'. In Ader's work, the sense of an adopted home is however of a different register. He is separated from his native homeland by land and sea, the modal value of that which is familiar and by degree a "social exotic" is stretched by distance (Bakhtin 1981, p.245). As Huebler decentres the artist's position within the work Ader's role is multiple as he participates in the event, both subjective and objective, in a "direct authorial discourse" which denies mythic presence (Bakhtin 1981, p.256).

In the first photograph (fig.29) we see Ader flouting the law in an act of delinquency by walking boldly along the hard shoulder of the freeway as cars speed by in an act of resistance to the speed of America's car-culture.<sup>8</sup> In the twilight a car passes him with its taillights illuminated. As he moves away from the viewer the vectors of the roadside foliage, the hard shoulder and the freeway itself speed towards the vanishing point of the Los Angeles skyline, which is hidden just below a flyover



Fig.30 Caspar David Friedrich, *The Wanderer Above a Sea of Mists*, 1818. Oil on canvas, 110 x 111.5 cm.

In the next image we are plunged into darkness where an arch or doorway is just visible. Next we see Ader crossing open ground as he approaches the lights of the city at its suburbs. He is now at a boundary, a void and threshold to be crossed as he catches a glimpse the edge of the city. As he passes through the suburbs the city is visible, motionless in the distance, at the edge of the desert. Then suddenly the viewer and artist are confronted by a brilliantly, illuminated, distanced overview. The lowly figure of the artist, at the edge of society, stands in a position of contemplative relation to the whole of the urban landscape. A pose which echoes Caspar David Friedrich's, *The Wanderer Above A Sea of Mists*, (1818, fig.30). What lies below appears indistinct, a seemingly impenetrable and unapproachable density. Ader's journey through the city obeys its own



logic as he moves through the urban landscape. Deleuze and Guattari (1989, p.380) delineate the architectonics of the city where:

[...] sedentary space is striated by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by “traits” that are effaced and displaced by the trajectory.

Ruscha’s survey of Los Angeles in *Some Los Angeles Apartments* revealed a clash of aberrant, low-rent architectural styles, which he photographed in the harsh light of day, in all their alienated isolation. They show the vernacular of everyday habitual spaces – a dislocated mapping dictated by the motorcar. Ader’s fluid path between these “enclosures”, which stand for a concept of ‘home’, disrupts the “sedentary spaces” through which he walks unhindered in the darkness. The viewer *shadows* Ader as, by the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition, he “sets forth dimly”. He appears as a ghostly apparition, disappearing and reappearing, amongst the shadows of the city. He isn’t anywhere particularly remarkable in any of these images, except at the end of the series when he arrives at the edge of the sea on the Pacific Ocean. This being the “relay” before the “horizon-less milieu that is smooth space, steppe, desert or sea” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.379).

Although this disorientating pedestrian-journey takes place over the course of one night it is not possible to ascertain where Ader is at any one time. There are no clues to the sequential veracity of the images. The photographs seem to follow a sequential pattern, as the series begins with Ader approaching the city limits and ends as he arrives at the shoreline below the distant horizon. In-between, Ader is present in each frame of these indeterminate spaces as the horizon vanishes amidst the built-up environment of the city. As noted *One Night in Los Angeles* contradicts the widely held belief that Los Angeles is a city only navigable by car. Ader wilfully subverts this notion in his ambulatory quest which draws comparison with Ruscha’s navigation of the same spaces by car. In Ruscha’s books, although the artist is distanced from the work, the viewer experiences the images at close proximity in their direct grainy immediacy. By contrast Ader is omnipresent as he moves across the city. The viewer is twice removed in the knowledge that Ader is followed by the photographer, who has taken these pictures.<sup>9</sup> Walking is the elementary way of experiencing the city and the staging points of these photographs have been apprehended by walking, either in the road or on the pavement. Michel de Certeau (1984, p.93) describes the “concept city” as a place of continual transformation subject to “interference” and “enriched by new attributes”, which the artist enables us to see anew. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* de Certeau (1984, p.106) devotes a chapter to walking entitled ‘Spatial Practices (Walking Practices)’. His commentary, which he identifies in terms of exile, is particularly poignant for Ader’s status as an expatriate of Holland living in Los Angeles:

What this walking exile produces is precisely the body of legends that is currently lacking in one’s own vicinity – it is a fiction which moreover has the double characteristic, like dreams or pedestrian rhetoric, of being the effect of displacements and condensations.



This distance collapses in the next image as an accumulated knowledge of back-doubles, short cuts and detours trace an illicit passage through the city. The artist is seen entering a deserted alley – perhaps a short cut between one street and the next. Ader’s presence is overwhelmed, as he is barely visible in the distance, at one point on the verge of invisibility, as some parts of the city disappear, and others loom into view (Fig.31).<sup>10</sup> The next frame in this fragmented storyboard is accompanied by the line “you know I’ll bring her home someday”. An evocative sentiment which plays on the noirish feel of what is seen. The illuminated, diagonal cross-section of a building is partially visible, one of the dingbat apartments seen in Ruscha’s *Some Los Angeles Apartments*.

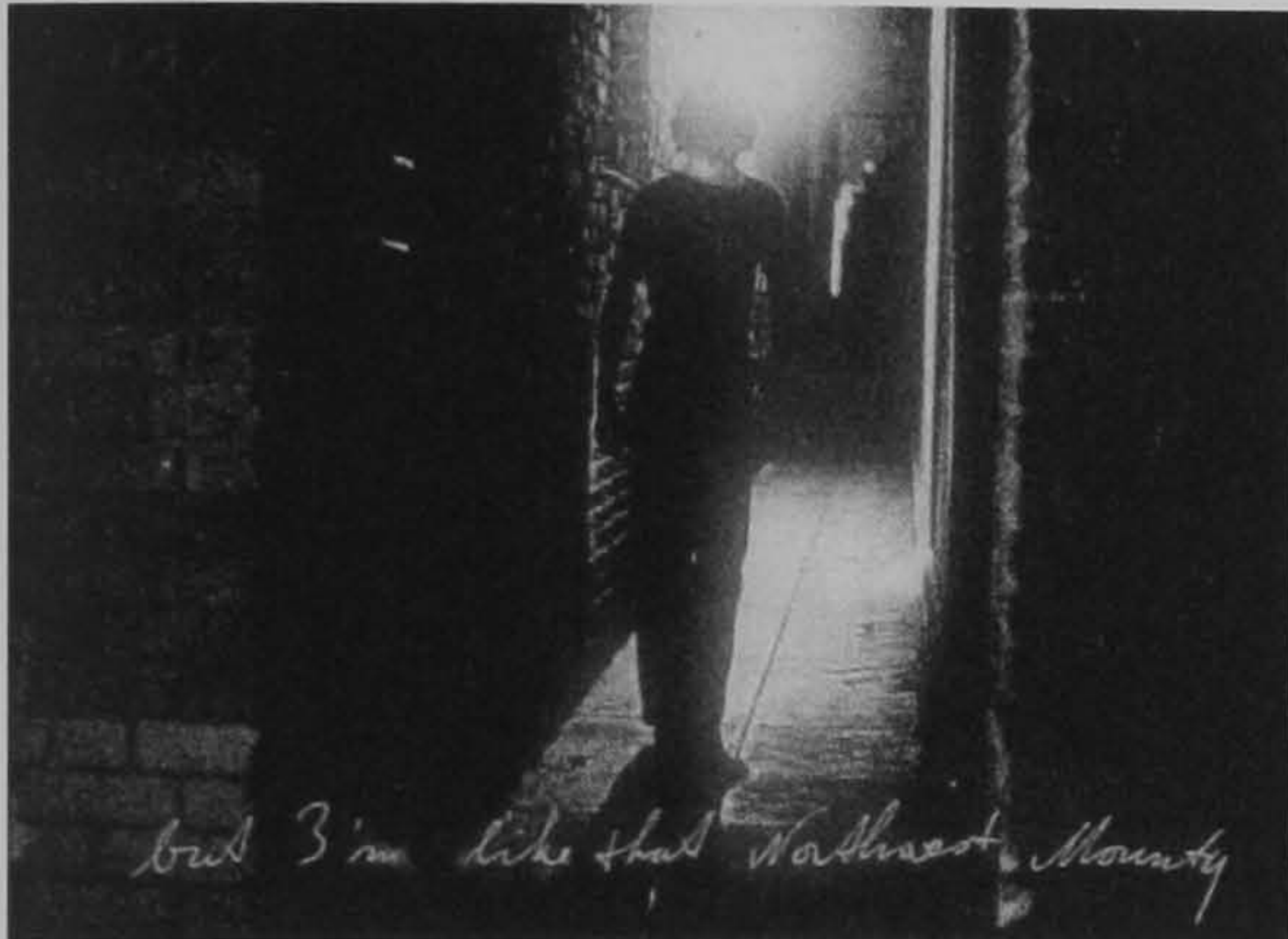


Fig.31 Bas Jan Ader, 1973. *In Search of the Miraculous, (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. 18 Black and white photographs with hand-written text in white ink, each 20.3 x 25.2 cm.

The sense of a “horizon-less milieu” resonates with Dave Hickey’s (1982, p.22) catalogue essay ‘Available Light’ where he conjures up the psycho-geography of Los Angeles in a description of the city which is appropriate to both Ruscha and Ader, as he describes images of distance and proximity by which I analyse artist-travel:

In my absence I had forgotten ‘LA space’ – its horizonless murk. Cropped off on the inland side by the crisp silhouette of mountains and dissolving in all other directions into the Pacific, it had no middle distance. There was only a gritty fly-specked near and a hazy enigmatic far.

In another image Ader is glimpsed at the end of a fluorescent-lit underpass, later he appears at the entrance of a tunnel. Michel de Certeau (1984, p.127) cites a changeover of these spaces in a “transformation of the void into a plenitude of the in-between into an established space.” This series constitutes a set of fused chronotopes: the approach to the city, buildings, office buildings, bars, back-streets, exits and entrances to tunnels, subways, freeways and the harbour, which are conjoined as they merge in and out of each other as ‘chameleon-spaces’. The ‘travel-event’ does not enter from outside but is unfolded in a dematerialised concrete reality. At the same time it is an indeterminate space where social distance has collapsed. It is almost impossible to make out any distinctive detail. The transition from twilight to night is marked by a noirish obscurity. The only illumination emanates from street lamps and the ambient interior lights visible in houses, tunnels and underpasses.

Just as Ader approached the expanse of the city he now approaches the harbour and sea, where the masts of ships are clearly visible. He drops the torch he has carried throughout this journey. In the penultimate frame Ader arrives at the water’s edge. An inland point



of view reveals the glare of haloed lights across the horizon of the harbour wall reflected in the water below. The final photograph shows the ever-diminishing figure of Ader, on the seashore at the edge of the ocean, as he walks away from the viewer. An auratic firmament hovers above the city, as a long-shot looking out to sea shows the disappearing edge of the city is visible at the left of the frame. It is possible to discern the speck of light that is the moon in a startling display of the displacement of nature by electricity. It is at this point that the accumulated knowledge of the city is dissipated at the void between sea, sky and land. Ader is at the threshold, which Bakhtin (1981, p.248) associates with a break or rupture where moments of decision or indecision, without duration fall outside of biographical time. The “opacity of the body” lies between familiarity and otherness, a “here” and “abroad” and a “near” and “far” (de Certeau 1982, p.130).<sup>11</sup>

This series of photographs parallel those featured in Ruscha’s books particularly *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and *Some Los Angeles Apartments*. Ader’s fusion of series and repetition goes a step further than Ruscha and Huebler, given the Conceptual-Romantic significance of these pictures as documentation of a theoretical and physical journey in a very real sense, which was only intimated in his predecessor’s work. The literary significance of Ader’s journey is explicitly manifest as the dematerialised status of photography has transformed in this analysis of their aesthetic content as “travelled photographic images”.



Fig.32 Bas jan Ader, *Farewell to Faraway Friends*, 1971. Colour photograph, 50.5 x 56.4 cm.

### **Miraculous Time (*In Search of the Miraculous*)**

The final part of *In Search of the Miraculous* was a sea voyage from Cape Cod to Falmouth in Britain. The last image of *One Night in Los Angeles* documents Ader’s arrival at the Pacific. The point of departure was switched from the East Coast to the West Coast of the Atlantic. The metaphor of the voyage carries with it notions of endurance and physical strain – the hero in the face of adversity. A photographic work entitled *Farewell to Faraway Friends* (1971, fig.31) anticipates the moment before a departure. A pose that echoes Caspar David Friedrich’s painting *The Monk* (1809, fig.32). In this painting a monk stands, in the distance, at the edge of the ocean. Friedrich positioned the solitary existence of the monk in place of the artist’s solitary pursuit of





Fig.33 Caspar David Friedrich, *The Monk*, 1809.  
Oil on canvas, 94.8 x 74.8 cm.

meaning. His position is viewed as a monumentalised expression of desolation at the edge of the abyss. The tension between foreground and background enacts a tangible transmutation of proximity into distance. This stretching-out of the moment of departure also characterises *All My Clothes* (1970), in which Ader has laid his clothes out across the roof of his home – an inventory of 1970's fashion. It is of course the same suburban dwelling which featured in *Fall I*.

Ader's photographic stills are in the same register as the few seconds of hesitation that feature in the films. The over-sentimentalised, kodachromatic colour of this photograph enhances an ironic sense of nostalgia. Similarly *I'm Too Sad To Tell You*, which exists as two films, a photograph and the ephemeral format of a postcard, depicts a scene, which anticipates a departure or loss. The fiction of staged repetition, the melancholy pathos, the romantic-irony and the uses of lens based media to disseminate this work all point to a distancing of the subject in Ader's work – a doubled-self which continually teeters on the brink of existence and subjectivity as a buffer against nostalgia. A parallel has already been noted with the work of Steve McQueen – similarly Collier Schorr (1994, p.37) has identified Ader's importance for the work of American sculptor and film-maker Matthew Barney.

One man fails and another dons high heels in an attempt to derail a certain brand of heroism. Unlike Barney in Ader's work no glorified image to counterbalance his failure is left behind.

The ritualistic nature of these events, as a series of tests destined to fail, found its resolution in the Romantic notion of failure as an end in itself, is only current as a result of Ader's death. This interpretation is flawed, as it was never Ader's intention to fail. I suggest that Ader did not perceive his own work in terms of success and failure – they simply demonstrated the effects of gravity. With hindsight the 'meaning potential' of Ader's work has shifted – as it has in Ruscha and Huebler's work. Just as Deleuze and Guattari have analysed the 'sedentary' and 'nomadic' space of the city and the sea, in these early works Ader was able to articulate a resolution of space and time, which found its denouement, in what Crow has similarly identified, as "the isolated stranded nomadism: a solo voyage across the Atlantic" (1996, u.p.).



On July 9th 1975 Ader set sail from Stage Harbour at Chatham, Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Cape Cod was chosen as it was the furthest point East and South from where he would be able to pick up the currents of the Gulf Stream. The journey was predicted to take between sixty to ninety days, with the expectation that he would arrive in sixty-seven days. Ader carried provisions of food and water, as well as fishing equipment, for 180 days. The boat was “a ready-made day sailor, store bought” in Los Angeles in June (Bear & Sharp 1976, p.26). It was necessary for Ader and his partner Mary-Sue to drive the boat across the country in the week prior to setting sail. Over the course of the month preceding Ader’s departure, he strengthened the boat making it water-tight with the addition of stronger line and rigging and heavy-duty sails. It has been suggested that the journey was a suicide bid, however Ader had considered making a solo voyage of an ocean since his arrival in Los Angeles in 1962. From September 1974 Ader had planned a single handed voyage of the Atlantic, purchasing the relevant maps and charts. Ader was convinced that he would make it and had scheduled the voyage with the intention of being able to return to America to start teaching at U.C. Irvine in October.

The final part of the work at the Groninger Museum would have involved the production of another series of photographs, as a sequel to *One Night in Los Angeles*, with a walking-journey through the streets of Amsterdam. In effect a return to the city in which he lived and studied as a young art student. The detail of the journey and preparation described above comes from an illuminating interview with Ader’s wife Mary-Sue by Liza Bear and Willoughby Sharp (1976, pp.26-27). Mary Sue speaks passionately about Ader’s determination, commenting on the romantic associations he had developed in his mind around the journey with the sea as *the* setting for a sublime journey. At the same time, it was at the back of his mind that a single-handed crossing might be eligible for a world record. Ader was aware of a previous attempt completed in a fourteen feet vessel in seventy-eight days. This knowledge perhaps influenced his ill-conceived choice of such a small craft.

Bas Jan Ader’s work is characterised by a condensation of meaning in the most economical of actions. The intensity and tangibility of this experience is estranged in the artist’s choice of medium – the dematerialised photograph and series thereof, photographic postcards, slide projection and short films. The impact of Ader’s work



Fig.34 Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 1973. Black and white photograph, 50.8 x 61 cm. Art and Project Bulletin.



builds through repetition – the repeated fall that is usually associated with failure in situations of accident, risk and duress. I see them as a postulation of the futility of transcendence in the romantic sense. Instead they occupy the banal settings of everyday life in the city. They suggest the impossibility of expressing anything, the failure of language, as well as the limitations of the body as a vehicle for communication. As Jon Thompson (1999, p.26) has it in his essay on the sublime:

[...] the uncapturable, the unknowable, the unthinkable and most important of all, the unspeakable, the vacant beyond of language, unrelieved by any form of transcendence.

Thompson discusses Lyotard's postmodern interpretation of the sublime as an "event" – of "absolute 'singularity', something without equivalence" – the body as "spatio-temporal presence". Lyotard developed his theory of the sublime in terms of the pure physicality of bodily experience, the spectacle and filmic "image events" in a time without history. Ader's work could be viewed as an example of Lyotard's criteria where repetition denies nostalgia, myth and the "perfect moment", which represents the persistence of individual will over space and time. As an artist abroad, in an era of rapid technological change, Ader evolved a contemporary manifestation of the sublime, in-between the city and the sea. This involved his positioning of a stable self in the face of imminent danger. This position of stability, albeit momentary, before the futility of resistance in the face of an overwhelming force. At first gravity but then tragically the ocean, which is not to eulogise Ader's death.

Ader's localised micro-journeys figure as sublime moments of everyday experience. The distance and duration of these journeys increased as Ader travelled across the city, as Ruscha had before him. Ader raised the stakes of his project further as he considered the most authentic way, given his Romantic inclinations, by which he could cross the ocean. A strategy was developed so as to make whole what had previously been staged as fragmented instances of experience. *In Search of the Miraculous* (fig.34) is an epic journey, between two cities across the sea, measured by expanded spatial and temporal dimensions. The co-ordinates of which are marked by the sublime tenets of wonderment and dread, the former apprehended after the latter experience. Ader's physical encounter with the sublime is that and the work of art or aesthetic experience itself.<sup>12</sup> Ader walked through the city to its edge at the ocean, where he stands in contemplative awe before the magnitude and limitless form of the sea. Ader's confrontation with forces of gravity and nature were symbolic as he genuinely believed and assured others that he would make the crossing successfully.

Bas Jan Ader was reported lost at sea on April 10th 1976. A Spanish fishing trawler discovered his boat about 150 nautical miles, west-south-west off the Irish coast. It was two thirds capsized with the bows pointing down. It was estimated by the degree of fouling that the boat had been floating in this position for six months. Tragically Ader's short, intermittent career was cut short by his death. It was a unique quest, a heroic journey, and an epic homecoming that sought to relinquish the identity of the artist as



hero. Instead of the effacement of the artist's identity at sea in a loss of space, time, direction and self, the opposite occurred. Ader's death has been imbued with a notoriety and fame, which has shifted emphasis away from the work, and what he intended as meaning.

The significance of Bas Jan Ader's work, as a whole, is not that he has achieved cult status through a perceived act of art-martyrdom. This would be a mis-reading of what was actually work-in-progress. Although Ader issued few statements about his work, its importance cannot be understated in terms of its position in relation to the emergence of a unique photographic presence. This presence is manifest in Ader's dematerialisation of the photographic image as a documentary artefact of artist-travel, realised via a series of events staged for the camera. The films display an economy of action and medium, their duration being anything from 30 seconds to a minute and a half of repeated fragmentary metaphors. 'Falling', by the force of gravity, transmutes into a horizontal gravitational pull across the city and the sea. The navigation of the city and uncompleted sea-voyage present an altogether different time-frame. His works are a continual test of balance. To return to Gravenitz the horizon is no longer only a 'direction' but a 'limit'. In their repetition Ader's journeys are gravity defying movements, which transcend failure. They present a coalescence of Conceptualism and the European Romantic tradition. The fusion of Kant's sublime and the postmodern sublime of Lyotard, in a pulling back and forth in 'miraculous' time and space, between Los Angeles and Europe with the Atlantic Ocean in-between.

To conclude Part I, Bakhtin (1981 pp.153-154) provides the link which connects Ader, as both a hero and outsider, with the sense of homelessness, which permeates the nomadic practice of Durham, Metzger and Schwitters, as my analysis of travel moves to Europe:

Finally the hero and the miraculous world in which he acts are of a piece, there is no separation between the two. This world is not, to be sure his national homeland, it is everywhere equally 'other' (but this otherness is not emphasised) – the hero moves from country to country, comes into contact with various masters, crosses various seas – but everywhere the world is one [...] In this world the hero is 'at home' (although he is not in his homeland).<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ian Curtis was the lead singer of Joy Division. Curtis who suffered epilepsy and depression committed suicide in 1980 just before the band were due to tour America.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Nauman's *Failing to Levitate in the Studio*, a black and white photograph from 1966, is an early example of a photographically documented performance work. It is important to reiterate that Ader distinguished his own practice from his contemporaries in this area. He did not consider his work as *body art* or *performance*, adamantly insisting that the work was solely the effect of forces of gravity. Yves Klein's modified photograph *Leap into the Void* (1960) is also worth noting here.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Cardinal (1975, p.28) has defined this tradition as follows: "Romanticism is rooted in a sense of the rift between the actual and the ideal. It's starting point is the desire for something other than what is immediately available, a desire for an alternative which will completely reverse what is."

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting the relevance of the heroic activities of Ader's father, a Dutch protestant reverend. Ader and his wife Johanna had hidden Jews, during the war, in their home near the German border in Groningen. Bastiaan was captured, tortured and later executed by the Germans (Saunders 2004, p.54).



<sup>5</sup> Ader's use of these cultural motifs operates in the realm of the vernacular rather than provincial or regional terms, akin to Rudi Füh's description of the work of another Dutch artist Jan Dibbets.

<sup>6</sup> Mondrian's paintings of the Westkappelle Lighthouse were a decisive turning point in the history of painting as a point of departure towards a reductive geometric abstraction.

<sup>7</sup> The work of Ader can be seen as a precursor of the way the body is used subjectively in contemporary art, such as in the work of Steve McQueen. In his film *Deadpan* (1997) the artist stands unflinchingly, still as the gable-end of a barn falls from behind and over his head. His position of stoic, immobility is such that the gable window of the barn passes over his head before hitting the floor in a plume of dust. This action, indebted as it is to Buster Keaton's stunt in *Steamboat Bill Jnr* (1928), is variedly repeated many times by way of editing and different camera angles. It has been noted how many of McQueen's work are also linked to journeys and movement. *Drum Roll* (1998) takes its basis from a device used by Ziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) for a spatially-disorientating journey through the streets of New York. *Exodus*, (1992/1997) follows two middle-aged, black men, carrying potted plants from Columbia Road flower market in the East End of London, before boarding a bus, which supposedly takes them home. These works in their use of 16 mm and Super 8 film are close to Ader's use of both film and props in relation to the body.

<sup>8</sup> 'Delinquent' behaviour here is not only a contravention of highway law but a reference to Michel de Certeau's narrative of delinquency: "If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is not to live on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces, if it is characterised by the tour over the state, then the story is delinquent" (1984, p.129).

<sup>9</sup> Wade Saunders (2004, p.57) has stressed the importance of Ader's collaborators, especially with regard to the posthumous handling of his estate. Ader was assisted in his work by his younger brother Erik, who photographed two of his projects and Ger van Elk an artist and friend from the age of 18.

<sup>10</sup> I am reminded of Orpheus in the 'Netherworld' from Jimmie Durham's poem *The Center of the World (The Direction of my Thought) <Direct from my New Home in Eurasia> Middleburg, The Netherlands, 1995*. At the beginning of which he celebrates the rhythm and comparative structures of the French 'visitée' 'and 'invisibilité'. A photocopy of the handwritten transcription of this poem was given to me by Durham in Antwerp in 1995.

<sup>11</sup> These photographs are a complement and sequel to the disturbing unease that builds at the finale of Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Eclisse* (1961) which features a montage of deserted street scenes. Michael Tarantino (2000, p.30) has pointed out that; "it seems like the end of the world, a splitting of objects and perspective that will never be joined again [...] The focal length of the shots varies (or the focal lengths of the shots vary) and, along with the combination of static images and a moving camera, lend an instability to the scene." The film ends with a close up of a streetlamp's glare as the scene is plunged into a suffocating darkness, evoking a psychological and social alienation. The end of *L'Eclisse* could double as the beginning of *One Night in Los Angeles*, as the tension builds at the end of the film and echoes throughout Ader's journey, which is punctuated by the intermittent flare of street lamps.

<sup>12</sup> J.M.W Turner repeatedly painted scenes of sublime magnitude. He concocted a story in which he claimed to have bound himself to the mast of a ship, in order to experience the scene that informed his painting for the Royal Academy of 1842. *Snow Storm - Steamboat off a harbour's mouth making signals in shallow water, and going by the lead. The author was in this storm on the night the Aerial left Harwich*. (Turner's title also echoes one of Huebler's proclamations). This experience was allegedly memorised and represented in the detached situation of the studio. Quoted in conversation with Rev. William Kingsley he said, "I did not paint it to be understood, but I wanted to show what such a scene was like; I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it; I was lashed for four hours, and I did not expect to escape, but I felt bound to record it if I did" (Ruskin, Works, Vol.12, p.500). Similarly Ader intended to record this event, in order to later recall, in a gallery-situated installation, what he too had experienced.

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin here distinguishes "miraculous time" from the real-time narrative of the Greek adventure novel. In the Chivalric Romance time is distorted as, "hours are dragged out, days compressed into moments". It could be said that Ader's films and photographs and the events within them are all in the realm of the "miraculous".



## Part II

### Lost and Found Object

#### Chapter 4

#### Where the Hell is Jimmie Durham?

This quirk of mine most likely comes from times in my youth, on the road, no money, no place. I would sometimes pass houses like that, and realise with an urgency that there was not much time left to find shelter for the night before darkness fell. And the smell of pork chops frying in the pan would break anyone's heart, on those evenings. Even in those days though and more so now, I didn't really want to be invited in. I wanted the purity of detached watching and yearning.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1970's Jimmie Durham worked as a representative in the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.)<sup>2</sup> before deciding to devote his energies to a discourse based in art production. There is an overlap of concerns in his respective roles, which are at once geographical and political. These are based upon his Native American Cherokee identity and his position as an artist seeking a discourse within the contemporary art-world. Durham is continually on-the-move; the above quotation orientates Durham's distanced psychic and physical position in relation to settlement and place. His migratory travels across Europe are determined by the economic necessity of finding opportunities to facilitate his work in order to earn a living. These opportunities include familiar means by which most artists support themselves: residencies, invitations to exhibit in galleries and museums, as well as biennial survey-exhibitions etc.

Durham's trajectory is characterised by the use of a pluralist<sup>3</sup> selection of collected materials and found objects. These are juxtaposed through processes of assemblage as the forming material for installation works, where they are carefully rearranged to form new meanings beyond the limitations of language, identity and the provenance of their respective materials. This loss of identity constitutes a dematerialisation of the found object, which corresponds with the dematerialisation of the photographic image in Part I. Jaki Irvine (1994, p.179) has referred to the "scatter aesthetic"<sup>4</sup> of Durham's exhibition *Original Re-runs* held at the ICA in 1993, where new configurations of materials were installed, including road-signs, hand-written statements and photography. In his work Durham makes no hierarchical distinction between the materials he collects from nature and in cities (Färnström and Gasterland 1997, p.25). The assemblage of these materials could be described as a transmogrification of readymade forms. This implies a magical-transformation of materials, which acknowledges the spirituality inherent in the materiality of all objects in the universe. His relationship with materials is highly subjective but interpretation is left open as the viewer is constantly misdirected at the level of meaning. The processes by which Durham stages these works are subject to a continual flux, hingeing on the artist's movement between one place and another. It is a mode of travel distinct what Färnström and Gasterland (1997, p.26) have described as a climate of commerce-dominated 'art tourism'.

In Part II the work of Durham and Metzger's is analysed through their exile-induced use



of found materials as a political and an-aesthetic act. Their work can be traced back to the legacy of Kurt Schwitters as my analysis of artist-travel comes full circle. Tracking Durham's movements across Eurasia<sup>5</sup> reveals the artist's close affinity with the materials, which he collects. As they are transformed into artworks, Durham has developed an intellectual distance, which places these materials at the centre of current discourses in art:

I left home when I was sixteen and then I started living in cities when I was in my twenties, and I think now that I would never leave the city. I love the city because it's where humans speak intellectually. And that is human nature I think: to be intellectual. And I like that very much. I think that's our only hope, is that we are intellectuals (Färnström and Gasterland 1997, p.25).

Durham's concept of 'home' is measured from a distance, where his "yearning" is not driven by a desire to return, but a position of resistance, from which there is perhaps no return. At first, the concept of 'home' was circumscribed by the battle for lost Native American land-rights. Durham's exile in Eurasia stems from his desire to be part of a discourse, as an artist ensconced within the art-world, where he is able to articulate what is, in reality, the fundamental loss of Native American people's lands. Durham's politicisation is a matter of birth, which as he realised his facility as a negotiator, writer, subversive and artist, were given outlet as a representative of the A.I.M. In this sense Durham's travels are in effect governed by the impossibility of returning to a 'home'.

### **Lost Identity and Perpetual Homelessness**

Personally I like it because I feel I can get lost and homeless here and I like being lost and homeless simply because otherwise I would have to tell the same old stories all the time instead of trying to think of new things that might happen to me. (Durham 2000, p.120)

When Durham relocates himself, he wilfully relinquishes or displaces his identity as it is perceived by everyone else, just as the materials he collects on-route are transformed by a strategy of 'homelessness'.<sup>6</sup> Geographical space, its boundaries and attendant notions of centre and periphery, with particular reference to Europe and the vast land-mass Eurasia, are constantly at odds in Durham's work:

[...] there is obviously no centre and all the old centres are so desperately trying to re-become the centre, like Paris, or maintain themselves as the centre like New York, and it's so obvious that there is no centre left. I think that we can be happy about this loss of a centre because it means that we can be lost in some reasonable way. And it's what the accusation against European Jewish culture was that it was cosmopolitan in that it was sophisticated, intellectual, going from city to city, and this is an accusation I want to be guilty of (Färnström and Gasterland, p.31).

In Durham's work notions of centre and periphery are irrelevant, as the centre happens to be anywhere at any given moment in time. He does not wish to completely disavow his origins, as this would involve, what he has described as the "separating of your intellect". Nevertheless his work shifts from issues of personal identity to a broader concept of displacement (Färnström and Gasterland 1997, p.30). In 1997, after a year spent in Scandinavia, Durham gave a lecture titled *Eurasia*.<sup>7</sup> In an elliptical excursion



Durham identifies four themes: Eurasia, Commerce, Art and Identity. Durham's thought-lines plot a course across contiguous continents, which he perceives as having no boundaries. Durham (2000, p.120) envisages being lost – randomly abroad with no point of departure or arrival. In Eurasia rather than Europe he feels released by the impossibility of knowing such a vast space. He has previously drawn a parallel with the Cherokee verb to go hunting, which translates as flying,

[...] just because they are going a lot of different places with nothing in mind except supper, except something to eat. So I don't want to have a point, I don't want to have a destination or a preconception of any sort. That's the sense in which I would like to be lost (Färnström and Gasterland 1997, p.25).

The division of land-masses is a historical and political construct, and Durham interprets his chosen terrain in terms of a nomadic wandering, even though and out of necessity, he travels by air. He says:

[...] it is especially in Scandinavia that you get a sense of Eurasia. Because it looks as though it is separated by water from Western Europe, and it also looks very well connected to Russia, and from there on south into China and back home to Paris through the southern route. In fact, I took the train from Helsinki to Moscow and then the airplane to Siberia. I could have taken a plane to India, going through Italy and then former Yugoslavia and on. You can walk from Portugal to China, or from India to Helsinki, if you like, except that there would be people bothering you along the way and it's an incredibly long way of doing it. (Durham 2000, p.120)

This may appear contradictory but Durham does not attempt to disguise his dependence on flight as a means of getting from one place to another, which enables him to maintain a mobility necessary for his work and the development of new 'stories'. It would be facile to criticise Durham because he does not traverse the continent by-foot, in an act of nomadic-martyrdom in order to satisfy notions of authenticity. Durham (2000, p.121) craves the non-identity and anonymity of living in a boundary-free Eurasia. Joseph Beuys, another artist known for his spiritual investment of objects, also utilised the concept of Eurasia during the time of the Cold War. Durham (2000, pp.122-123) despairs at a world population dependent on commerce and how the project of human-rights in the 1970's was supplanted by GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades). They instigated a policy of "fair play" between nations, albeit in terms of free-trade, rather than global interconnectedness. He envisages the global population as "tourists to humanity". Durham is incensed at the legacy of Hollywood and the 1990's Disney film *Pocahontas*, which represents the futility of everything the A.I.M. tried to achieve. This situation has reached a point of crisis where all forms of resistance have been debilitated. It is for these reasons that Durham decided to resume his work as an artist as he is accorded a position from which to address his concerns in an aesthetic domain focused on material transformation.

Durham views the art industry with the same disdain he holds Hollywood in its support of a network of academic institutions, museums, galleries, collectors and critics. This has led to a climate where the "intellectual endeavour of art" is inextricably intertwined with commerce in which the art biennial becomes an intolerable meeting of art, nation and



commerce:

There is an explosion of art biennials and artists have become nomads economically. Artists make money by making and selling art. I have to be on the road constantly. Like a Gypsy pot-maker, I have to go to a market, to a museum or gallery. Every two weeks basically, I'm in a new place, trying to sell some art in this big industry (Durham 2000, p.126)

His critique of the art-world extends to the multitude of market-orientated, post-Duchampian artists, who have arrived at a point of stalemate by their collective descent into cliché (Durham 2000, p.127-128). The complicity of multiculturalism within this system in order that it is visible for the purveyors of art-commerce introduces the 'Identity' part of the talk:

If I do art, I will do it with an aesthetics that is basically from all of my past and that at the same time tries to be equally a part of a current discourse. In other words, to put it simply, human beings continually try to speak to each other. That's a very simple statement, but it's a simple statement about identity (Durham 2000, p. 128).

In conclusion Durham (2000, p.128) returns to received notions of his own personal identity. Durham is all too aware of the criticism to which he is prone as he reverts to 'type', as he describes his own "inauthenticity" in terms of a colonised position as stereotypically: drunken, murderous and dumb (Durham 2000, p.128). Otherness is ultimately rendered as another commodity, made visible through globalisation and homogenisation via industries of art, commerce and tourism. Durham's complex presence within the art-world warrants further analysis of his work from the 1980's to the present. Durham and his contemporaries had already addressed many of the issues, which later emerged at the forefront of multicultural criticism in the late 1980's and 1990's, including displacement and boundaries, gender and politics, identity and Otherness

### **At the Edge – Intellectual Work and Self-Identity (New York)**

The journey of Durham's complex artistic-identity was set in motion following his departure from the A.I.M. in 1980, when he was based in New York. Durham was already aware of his reception as an outsider, not only within the contemporary art-world as a liminal figure, but as a result of his experience from birth as a working class, Native American. It was not until Durham left New York that his work was critically acknowledged. This in spite of a moment when Durham and his contemporaries sought to establish a discourse within the mainstream, contemporary art scene. A scene from which they were effectively excluded. The Kenkeleba Gallery situated in the East Village in New York was an important venue for discussion and exhibitions. These included African-American artists (Houston Connell), Cuban artists (Ricardo Brey) and Native American artists (Edgar Heap of Birds) (Fisher 1995, p.47). In 1982 Juan Sanchez, a Puerto Rican painter curated the exhibition *Beyond Aesthetics* (Snauwert 1995, p.13). It was a key exhibition prior to the advent of multiculturalism. In fact between 1980 and 1986 Durham was working with some one hundred artists involved in



four large group shows a year as well as solo shows (Färnström and Gasterland, 1997, p.25).

One of Durham's strategies of resistance is to adopt different voices akin to Bakhtin's "polyphony" – a mythic, interpellation of real-life repression. Bakhtin's "polyphony" was a syncretic<sup>9</sup> approach, which conveyed different schools of thought in the register of multiple voices through the unity of a single voice. Durham assumes multiple voices and identities in order to articulate a distanced, dematerialised identity, as a means of evading categorisation. In his work mannequin-like sculptures address the viewer via text or graffiti, which spell-out an alternative point of view. Durham's sculpture *Self Portrait* (1997, fig.35) is both a likeness and a caricature, which depicts the artist as an inarticulate Indian.



Fig.35 Jimmie Durham, *Self Portrait*, 1997.  
Mixed media. Installation-view.

In *Untitled (Caliban's Mask)* (1992, fig.36) Durham adopts Shakespeare's character from *The Tempest*. Durham places himself in what de Certeau terms the "inter-dict. The voice moves in a space between body and language." For Bakhtin (1981, pp.158-159) the 'masks' of the *Rogue, Clown and Fool* are complex figures from folklore, which he analyses in terms of their significance in the literature of the Middle Ages and their impact upon the development of the European novel:

Essential to these three figures is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege – the right to be 'other' in this world, the right to make common cause with any one of the existing categories that life makes available: none of these categories quite suits them, they use the underside and the falseness of every situation (Bakhtin 1981, p.159).

Durham is able to recognise the coloniser in Prospero and colonialism's tendency to rename everything as a reflection of itself.<sup>10</sup> A number of Durham's artworks address nomenclature. Caliban is one of the most powerful guises, which Durham has appropriated by the recovery of a 'voice' in a "parodic laughter"<sup>11</sup> of the repressed-native, 'grateful' and subservient before the colonising master:

Dear Mr Prospero,  
May I with great humility, please present to you, as an embarrassingly inadequate small token of my extreme gratitude for the constant encouragement, extreme patience and inspired friendship (I hope!) which you have so generously employed to show me a Better Way, this self-portrait? I hope you will always remember me. (But I still wish I knew what my nose looks like! ha, ha!)

Your grateful student,  
Caliban



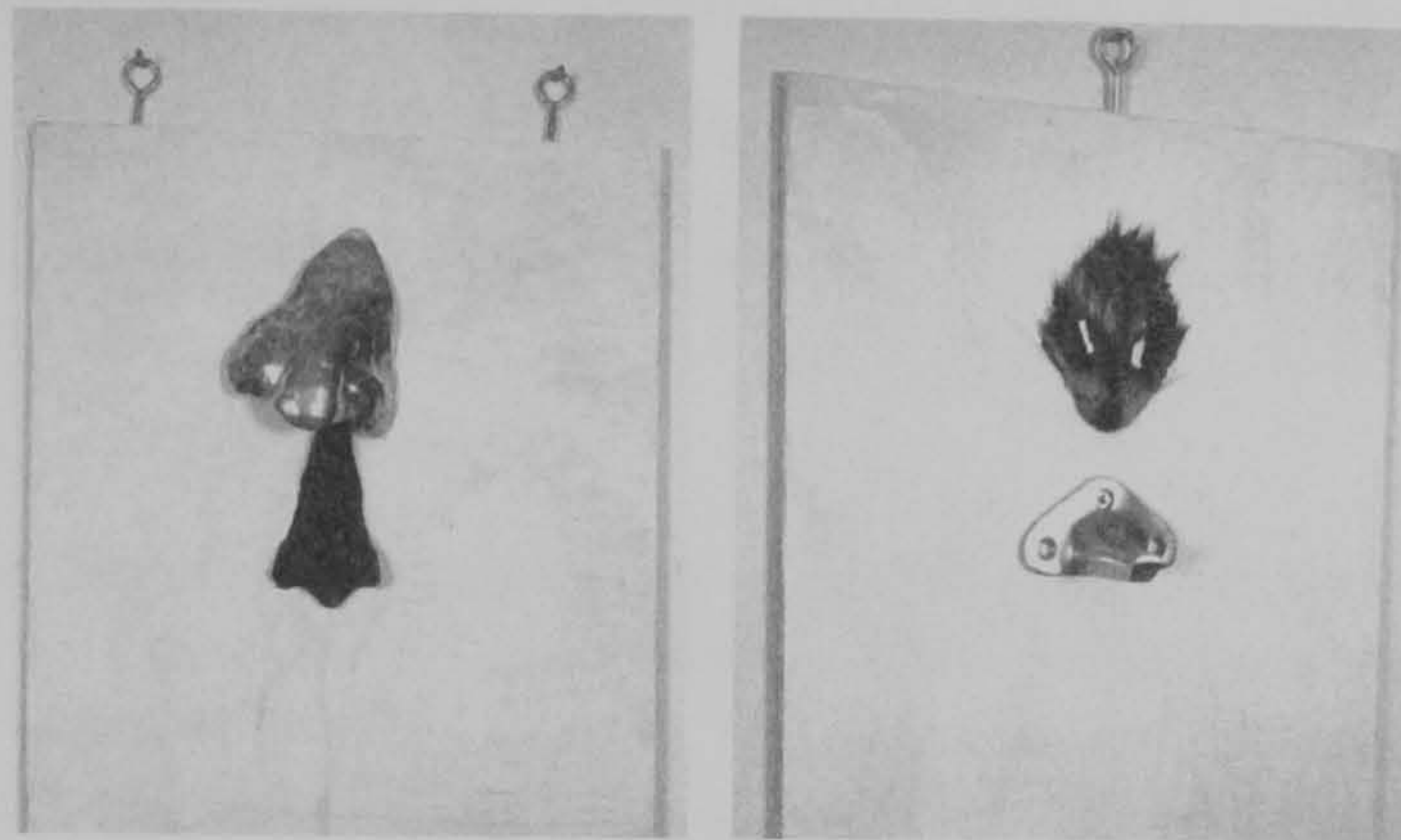


Fig.36 Jimmie Durham, *Untitled (Caliban's Mask)*, 1992. Mud, beads, buttons.

Fig.37 Jimmie Durham, *Untitled*, 1992. Brass, mud, glue, 49.2 x 38.4 x 6 cm. *Untitled* 1992. Raccoon skin, metal, wood, paint, 49 x 38.4 x 6 cm.

Caliban's masks are constructed from PVC, mud, and glue in hauntingly crude self-portraits. The mask is the starting point for a series of nose-sculptures where the artist once again assumes the position of Caliban, as he constructs a series of self-images from a wide selection of materials. Five works, each *Untitled* (1992, fig.37) are composed of the following respectively: Brass, mud, glue. Raccoon skin, metal, wood, paint. Pig-skin, leather, wood, paint and Root, paint wood. As a series they are joined with the statement "Sometimes I make myself look worse than I think I am. To see if Dr Prospero will correct me." In their formation each material carries a different connotation of beauty and value assembled from the redundant identity of found materials. Durham via Caliban in the hand-written letter which accompanies this piece, is articulate as he mocks the colonisers for imposing *their* language and religion upon him. But he has the last laugh. Caliban's masks and a series of associated nose-sculptures are an indictment of the appropriation and commodification of Native American culture by Hollywood, the art-world and the industries of heritage-tourism. It is an attack on power structures, which absorb living cultures, as if they were unknown to themselves, which are then represented in a sanitised fashion as a reflection of Otherness for entertainment. Durham identifies with Caliban as a literary-incarnation of the savage native. Durham is by turn a political activist, sculptor, writer and performance artist. He moves amongst these specialisms and different identity-registers in a refusal to be tied to any one of them. Jean Fisher, an early collaborator and writer on Durham, conjures up another mythical figure.

[...] trickster is too canny to dream the present-impossible. No what trickster means to re-claim is his 'e-state' is his right to difference, his right to map his identity according to a myriad of traces that have constituted him as the product of a historical process. Bewildered, he has seen his visions, and understands well the more he undermines and disseminates confusion in the language of the Other, the more he produces difference. And in difference he can dream other cartographies of the self ... More importantly, he seems to be a figure who refuses inertia; one who acts, not always to his own advantage, upon the circumstances in which he finds himself (Fisher 1989, p. 82).

Durham moves in and out of a host of aberrant literary and historical figures avoiding categorisation in his subversive transformation of materials. He thus avoids pigeon-holing as Indian, Native American, indigenous, Other or minority artist. Bakhtin (1981,



p.163) elaborates the significance of irony, whimsy, humour and jokes as inadequate and crude labels in terms of defining the strategies of 'difference' and subtlety, which are pertinent for Durham's work. The figure of the trickster is also found in Bakhtin (1981, p.163) in other guises:

In the struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all life-slots to fit an authentic human being, these masks take on an extraordinary significance. They grant the right not to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolise life, the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not 'to be oneself'; the right to live a life in the chronotope of the entr'acte, the chronotope of theatrical space, the right to act life as a comedy and to treat others as actors, the right to rip off masks, the right to rage at others with a primeval (almost cultic) rage [...]

The 'in-between' as a metaphor for these operations is found in Bakhtin's use of the term "entr'acte", a performance which takes place between the acts of a play. These narratives divert any sense of destination, in a confusion of their origin and presentation as collections of legitimate artefacts. They are collected within different mediums, which include: books, performance, photographs and installation works. Durham is also critical of museological display processes and homogenising archival systems. The agenda of which is normally associated with the documentation of lost-histories. Durham's attitude towards the Museum as an institution, historically and contemporaneously, is his dispute with a Modernist-centred, history of Western colonialism. It is Durham's tactic to appropriate the form of its discourse and retell it in his own terms from a position of resistance.

### **Physical Work (Eurasia)**

There is a nefarious tendency to consider material manifestations as traditions. If we accept such absurd criteria, then horses among the Plains Indians and Indian beadwork must be seen as untraditional. Traditions exist and are guarded by Indian communities. One of the most important of these is dynamism. Constant change - adaptability the inclusion of new ways and new materials - it is a tradition that our artists have particularly celebrated and have used to move and strengthen our societies. That was most obvious in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, every object, every material brought in from Europe was taken and transformed with great energy. A rifle in the hands of a soldier was not the same rifle that has undergone Duchampian changes in the hands of a defender, which often included changes in form by employment of feathers, leather and beadwork. We six (artists) feel that by participating in whatever modern dialogues are pertinent we are maintaining this tradition.<sup>12</sup>

In the above, Durham gives a unique insight into his working methods, subject as they are to processes of travel and transformation – a dynamism through strategies of resistance, which render notions of tradition redundant. This was problematic for the established art-scene of the 1980's, which initially disregarded this work. The dissemination of these objects generates confusion as to where different types of materials belong. The immediate connotation of that which has been discarded is poverty. Durham dodges those terms normally used to describe such works: "montage" (Mulvey 1995, p.39) collage and assemblage or Modernist precedents in Arte-povera, Surrealism and Duchamp's ready-mades although they are relevant to his work



(Snauwert 1995, p.12). The debate around these issues has reached a point of critical mass, which has led to a rupture in the work, as increasingly disparate materials are brought together, which test the limits of plausibility in the presentation of an unstable, threshold of 'meaning-potential'. This approach is especially significant within postmodern discourse, where so much mainstream art-work from the 1980's onwards is reliant on high production values, rather than the original ethos of postmodern practice as Snauwert (1995, p.25) described it during an interview with Durham:

You don't take advantage of the 'art as a means to an end' maxim but adopt the most interesting part of post-Modernism: the fragmentation and continuous reconstitution of the subject through the reading of signs.

What does it mean to constantly use an inventory of discarded materials, which includes car body-parts and other waste materials? In their correlation and distance to traditional, Native American skills they form what Durham (1995, p.17) has termed "stupid Indian artefacts, artefacts from the future I call them." Durham's work often has an unforgiving, crude and incomplete finish. It is this visceral quality, which propels them into the future. At the very least, it is not finitude which Durham seeks, but an 'utterance' or further still, a discourse that is at once political, aesthetic, and above all humanistic in the intellectual sense.

In an essay titled 'Changing Objects, Preserving Time' Laura Mulvey (1995) made a semiotic analysis of Durham's work, paying close attention to ideas and material form, their subsequent transformation and the possibility of new meaning. Mulvey (1995, p.34) defined these possibilities as the breaking of established hierarchical structures, which govern 'value' and rely on a system of opposites, which refute the possibility of hybrid forms. This includes the significance of text, its linguistic and physical meaning, as part of the overall structure of a particular art-work, where individual elements are dematerialised within an overall schema, similar to the arrangements of documentary artefacts, which constitute Huebler's art-works. In Durham's work there is a rejection and continuing love-hate relationship with traditional aesthetics. He ceaselessly questions what actually constitutes an art-work, with specific reference to the postmodernist discourse within which he is situated. Mulvey (1995, p.39.) couches this in terms of "a system that creates a conceptual space through displacement, with continuous shifts of meaning and resonance." There are three different levels of displacement: The artist travels from place to place, sometimes returning to a temporary 'home', staying in the same city anything from two to several years. The second value of displacement is the transport of material objects away from their point of origin, to different locations, where they lose their original identity or provenance. The third register is the changed materiality of these foreign-objects, as they are brought into contact with other elements. The inference is not only a separation of object, form, concept and meaning, but also a physical and conceptual dynamic, as the artist travels from one city to another.



The work of the photoconceptualists is posited as a blueprint or certainly a parallel set of relational strategies in these terms. Firstly, Durham moves in and out of art-world centres, just as Huebler and Ader made sorties within their respective localities, as well as between Europe and America. Durham physically removes objects from their place of origin, whereas his predecessors transport their activities as photographic signifiers of that experience. They share a dematerialised aesthetic, as the material and aesthetic 'value' of utilitarian photographic and physical image-objects are transformed in "multi-modal" schemas of text, pictures, objects installation works (van Leeuwen 1999, p.) .

### Portable Objects - From Bricolage to Dis-Assemblage

Mulvey's analysis is thorough but in the following I attempt to expand the analysis of these material transformations in terms of colour, weight, industrial, organic, native, post-modern, photograph and text. Durham has produced groups of works, which can be seen as series. There are early works where he uses 'skulls' collected on the road or at the roadside, such as those installed in the *Manhattan Day of the Dead* (1982, fig.38) exhibition at the Kenkeleba Gallery. Durham (1995, p.17) has described his appropriation of these skulls as something unique to his own culture, but also a postmodern strategy to introduce an alien system of objects to a contemporary art discourse.

In another series, free-standing sculptures have been constructed on a basic armature of off-cut timbers mounted on cross-braced timbers. Durham's recycling of this kind of detritus is stated in the opening line of the poem, *I Think We Will Have To Break Out*: "Search through the planks stacked/Outside the sawmill where the forest used to be." They are adorned with photographs, items of clothing, toy figures, kitchen implements and text (fig.39). They are given a living presence through faces and skulls, as their identity drifts between half-human and half-animal-like figures. The third series could be described as portable-objects (fig.40) where no more than four or five elements are fused together in each work.

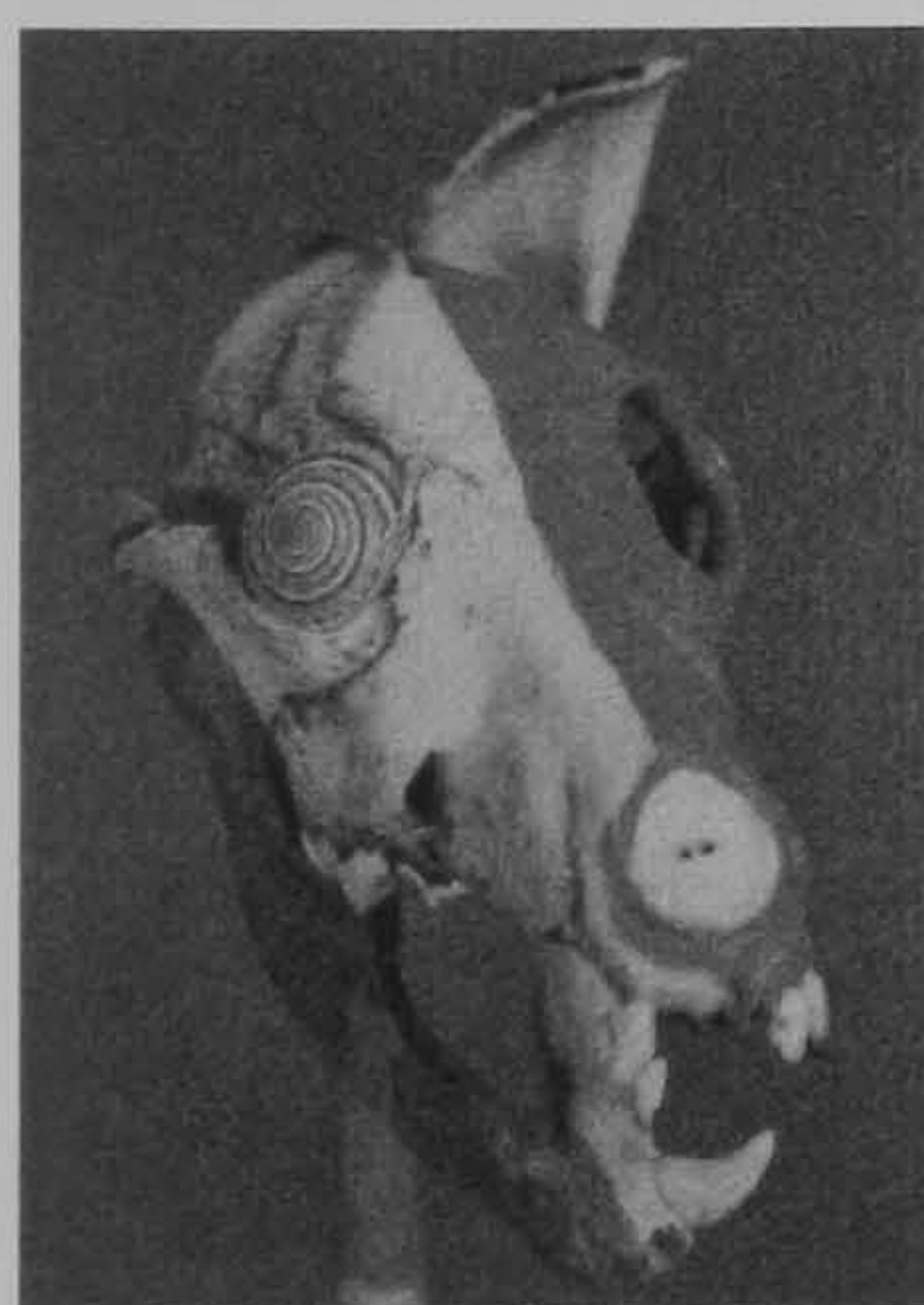


Fig.38 Jimmie Durham, *Manhattan Day of the Dead*, 1982. Mixed media, 31.2 x 8.4 x 14.4 cm. 33.6 x 16.8 x 31.2 cm. Installation-view, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.

These sculptures have a sense of weightlessness and mobility as if they could easily be packed away and transported elsewhere. By his minimum intervention in their construction, Durham deftly effects a transmogrification. There is also a repair-aesthetic



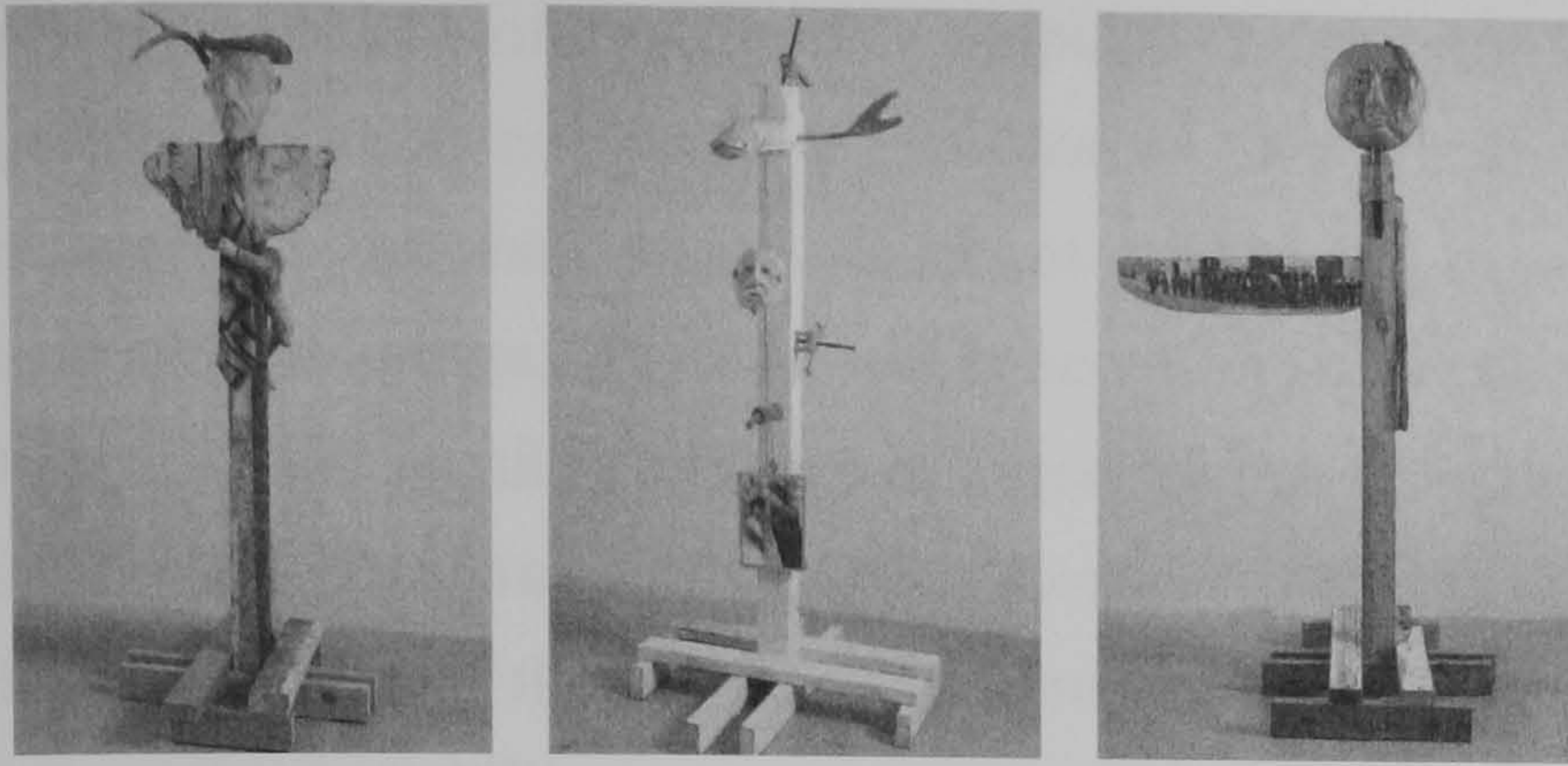


Fig.39 (left to right) Jimmie Durham, *Untitled/A Man Looking for a Place*, 1982. Wood, hair, black and white photograph, frying pan, 160.8 x 60 x 97.2 cm. Installation-view.

at work, as some elements are forced together, as the broken and discarded are made whole again but not quite in the same way as before.<sup>13</sup> A found object or off-cut of timber is sometimes left as it is found, with another object screwed or bound to it. Or in other cases Durham has carved, or whittled-away the timber, to alter its function whilst retaining a sense of the original's material identity. In one example, a spoon is bent over the end of a pine handle to form an implement for gouging or digging. Some have been painted in order to unify disparate elements and establish new systems of communication. The colour code of these works reflects a postmodern, hyper-chromatic, palette of mauves, cadmium reds, salmon pink and lilac. Durham's choice of colour has a mimetic basis in the nauseous, vivid, soft colours of real-world objects, which have been incorporated in his assemblages. The mimetic facility of these works is found in the disparity between something hard, which has in turn been replicated in a soft or lighter material. A lead template for dye-cast spoons for example, which have been punched-out, is mirrored in a corresponding leather copy.

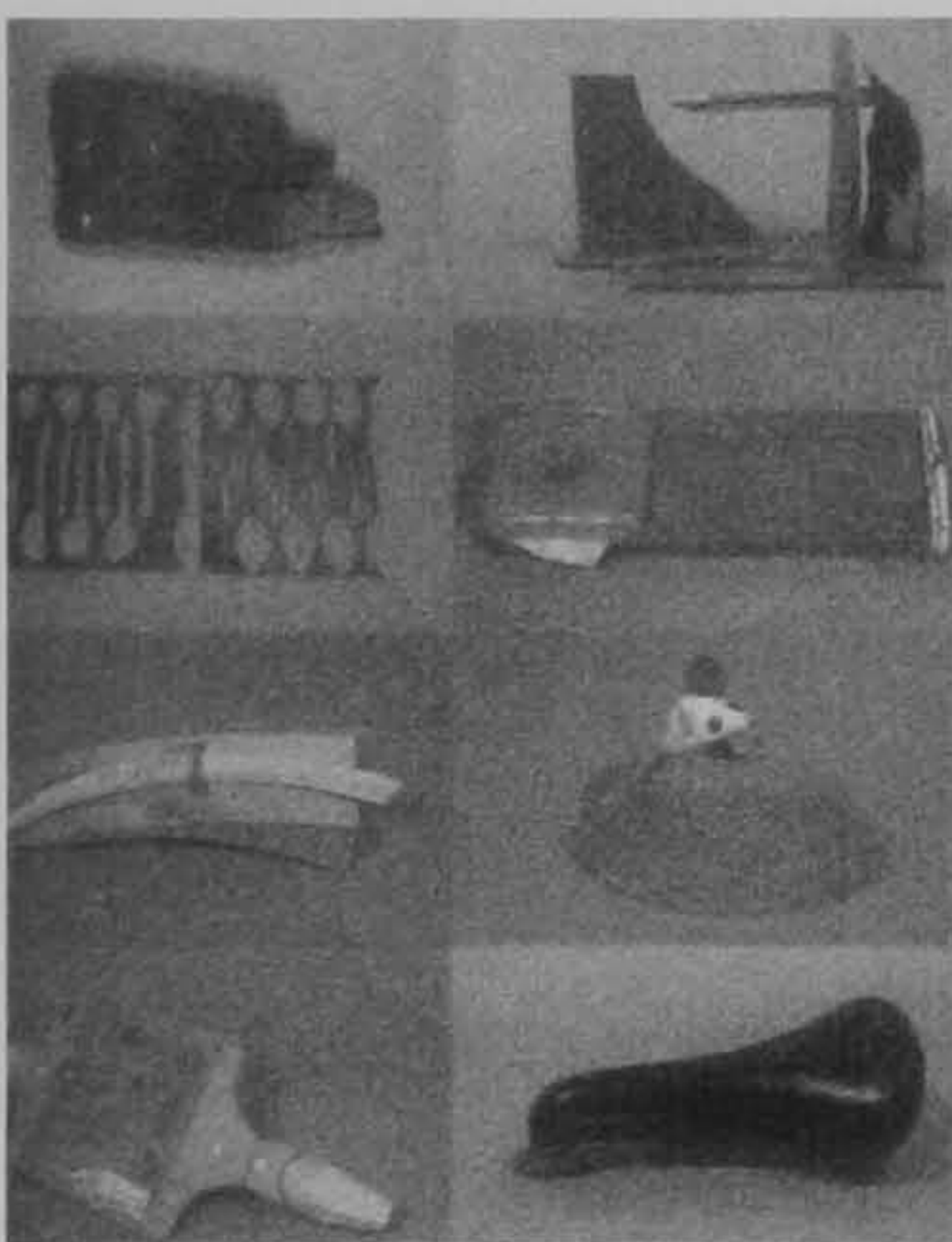


Fig.40 Jimmie Durham, *Rendez(-)vous*, Ghent, 1982. Mixed media, size variable.

Some pieces are dated *April 1993* as if to assert their identity as 'artefacts from the future', which have returned to the present as varied processes of transformation renew that which has been lost. Other objects are ritually ornamental. A transparent resin cast of a dish or bowl forms the base for a small, polished ceramic skull that has been embellished with brightly coloured beads. Beads, buttons, stones and drawn eyes are embedded in inanimate objects, in order to give them an 'embodied-sight', which returns the viewer's gaze. These transformative procedures are all part of Durham's process of renewal and belief in a spirituality or redemptive presence, common to all objects in the universe.

In the exhibition *Rendez(-)vous* in Ghent in 1993 the same objects were aligned in series to form a typological disunity. There is an unorthodox logic in these arrangements as



they are redolent of flea market displays throughout Belgium and Europe. Here the humblest of items compete for attention as they are laid out on blankets, in methodical arrangements by their sellers. Durham affirms his itinerant-identity and empathy with these market-sellers. Prior to his conception of art as a wholly intellectual endeavour Durham made small sculptures inspired by the fact that he was able to sell them for a few dollars (Durham 1995, p.10). 'Homelessness' is a position of uncertainty and the disjointed unity of these works, stemming from his early years as an artist and activist, reflects this instability.

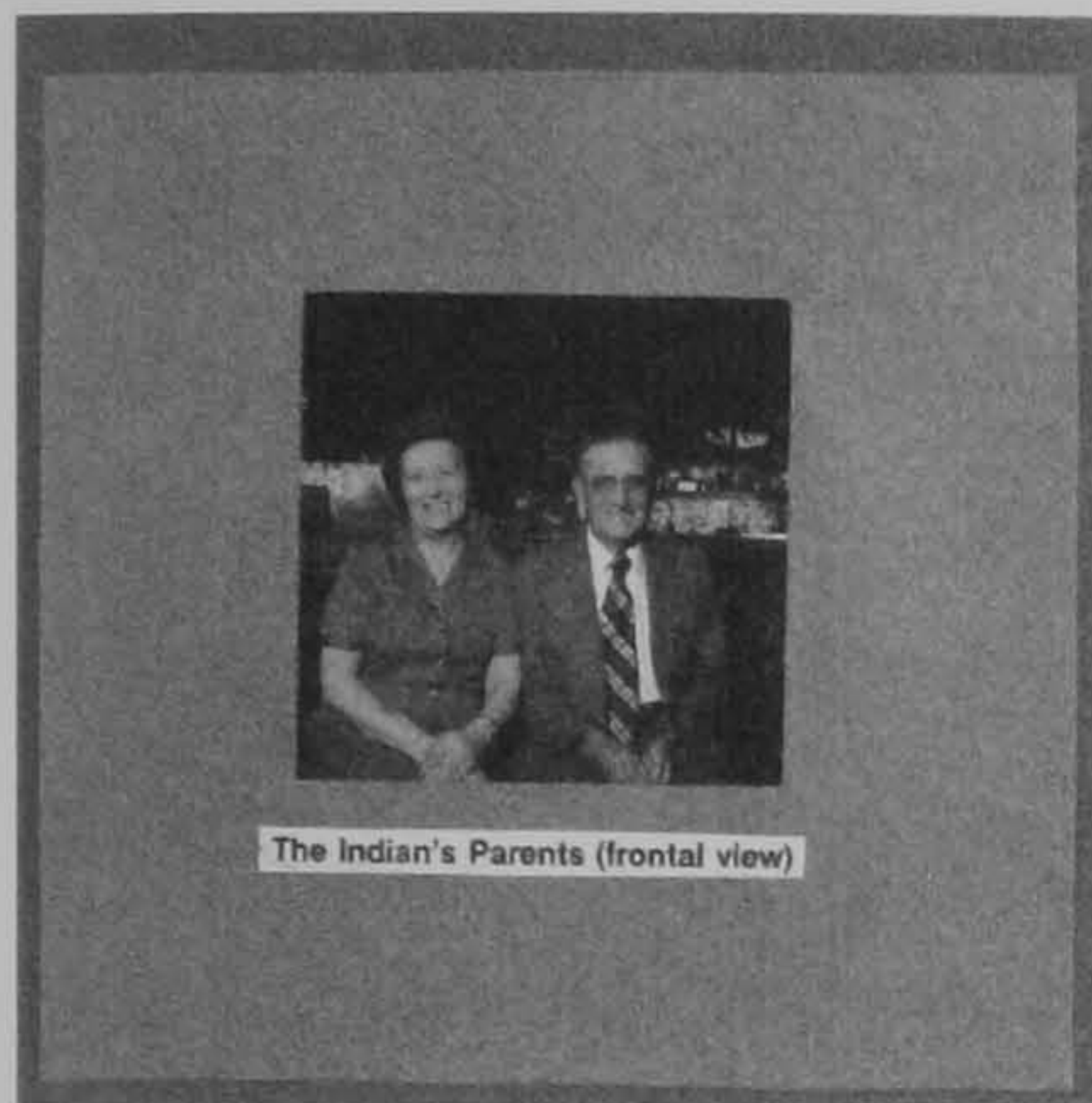


Fig.41 Jimmie Durham, *On Loan from the Museum of the American Indian (The Indian's Parents)*, 1991. Colour photograph on hessian board, 24 x 25 cm.

*On Loan from the Museum of the American Indian* (1991) is a subversive work, which addresses anthropological stereotypes of Indian identity and museological display identified by the following sub-headings. *Types of Arrows* shows three arrows mounted on a white board against a hessian background. The scale of the arrows are of variable proportions and labelled respectively as *Tiny*, *Wavy* and *Short and Fat*. The first is so small that it is rendered useless as a weapon. The second is perhaps the closest to a conventional arrow. Although its arrow-head and tail-flight look authentic, the warped shaft is ridiculously comic. The third is even more ludicrous, as it utilises a phallic-shaped pestle in place of a regular shaft. It is also adorned with pathetic, feather flights and an oversize arrow-head. Another work bears the sub-heading *The Indian's Parents (frontal view)* (1991, fig.41) which contains a snapshot photograph of a middle aged, formally-dressed couple, posing for a portrait snapshot. The objective impersonality of *frontal view* as the caption further parodies ethnographic classification. Other works, which constitute this installation, include *Pocahantas' Panties* (fig.43), *An Indian Leg Bone*, *Real Indian Blood* and *Before they Had Iron They Carved Machine Parts From Wood*.



Fig.42 Jimmie Durham, *On Loan from the Museum of the American Indian (Pocahantas' Underwear)* 1991. Mixed media, 33.6 x 33.6 cm.



*Untitled* (drill, enamel paint, feathers, pencil) (1970) expresses Durham's description of the modification of materials and their "Duchampian changes". Durham parodied the display of traditional weapons, as a household drill is transformed into a weapon of war, altering its original function as a piece of machinery used for construction. It is a commentary on the nature of work and specifically artworks. The drill in Durham's hands sprouted a rifle-butt type support, which has been decorated with feathers and beads. A pencil has replaced the drill-bit, which would normally be inserted in the chuck, in a declaration that art is mightier than the sword. The whole is painted predominantly red, mounted on a plywood, red ground and presented as a faux trophy-like relief. This work is typical of Durham's transmogrification of materials, rendered inoperative as their use-value is nullified relative to their original function .

The material changes in Durham's work reveals a shifting inventory of materials in a continual flux as they are dematerialised within the archive of a dislocated identity. Material change is registered in the appropriation, transportation and transformation of found objects alongside a so-called native stock-in-trade, which consists of skulls, beads, feathers and precious stones. From the early 1970's onwards Durham's works display a gradual refinement in their finish. Durham eventually sacrifices this kind of workmanship in order to pursue a febrile-aesthetic that is altogether raw. *Untitled*, (1971) (Beech wood, glass eye, metal buckle) is such a work. An elongated figure with a finely, carved fish-head and tail was used in a performance staged in Geneva in 1971 (fig.43).



Fig.43 Jimmie Durham, Street Performance, Geneva, 1971.

In photographic documentation the artist is seen on a walking-journey through the streets of Geneva pulling a carved tree trunk whilst carrying this talisman-like staff. Upon his arrival at a bridge the towed-trunk was ritually cast into the river. Durham abandoned this method of working on account of the seductive quality of these objects, which he has been making for a long time:

If I can stick things together that are physical histories and they didn't want to go together, but then something intellectual happens when they are together, I'm just very pleased, I'm very charmed by it. And of course I don't trust it and I see now I have to find a way out of it (Snauwert 1995, p.25).

By fusing disparate elements together Durham intends to provoke confusion and disorder but his subversive behaviour is based in intellectual strategies of displacement. Durham is preoccupied with an approach to art-making which involves both intellectual



thought and physical process in an attempt to change historical concepts of art production. This has led to a change in direction where the bricolage-based works have been left behind, as he has moved towards a de-skilled approach, which could be described as 'auto-destructive, dis-assemblage'. Durham's dematerialised approach links him with the *anaesthetic* work of the photoconceptualists in Part One, and his destructive tendencies make a direct connection with the nomadic work of the pioneer of auto-destructive art Gustav Metzger in Chapter 5. Durham's most recent work is a further dematerialisation of the art object. This is evident in his anti-architectural performances which utilise the destructive force of 'stones'. As a progression of the work of the photoconceptualists, these works emerged as a result of Durham's critique of the traditional links between art and architecture and the legacy of Minimalist and Conceptual art:

The conceptual artist, the minimal artist made so many monuments, and were still stuck with them. I would like to make art each individual art thing there is, there would not be a time when you had to decide to keep it or throw it away (Snauwert 1995, p.25).

Here Durham refers to the weight and solidity of monumental sculpture made by Donald Judd and Richard Serra. By contrast the work of Ruscha, Huebler and Bas Jan Ader and their transformation of the photographic image as dematerialised object is mobile and weightless.



Fig.44 Jimmie Durham, *Un Example*, 1994.  
Wood, stone, papier-mâché, glass, coal, epoxy resin. 46 x 65.5 x 11.5 cm.

### Stone Free

Stones are a force for movement and transformation in Durham's hands. 'Un-housed' they acquire a dynamism distinct from their usual architectural connotations of static solidity. These strategies are often aggressive. In an exhibition at the Micheline Szwajcer Gallery in Antwerp in 1994 Durham initiated a dialogue counter to the 1860's notion that art is inextricably linked with architecture. Durham's opinion of architecture is that it is restrictive to movement and propagates alienation within society (Snauwert 1995, p.24). *Un Example* (1994, fig.44) (Wood, stone, papier-mâché, glass, coal, epoxy resin) shows a miniature figure positioned underneath a glass jar, dwarfed by the proximity of a built-structure made from archetypal building materials: brick, stone and wood. As part of an installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Finland (1997) rocks were scattered inside the space, which Durham (1998, p.103) describes as follows: "I was trying with



these 'free' stones to free up the architecture itself, and its agenda for the museum." Instead of forming imaginary tools from found objects, Durham uses stone as a forming-material itself. His intention is to release stone from metaphor and the load of architecture with which it is bound. Durham also proposed a work where he would kick a stone all the way from Finland across Northern Russia to Siberia (Durham 1998, p.103).



Fig.45 Jimmie Durham, *St Frigo*, 1997. Performance.

Durham's use of stones also has anarchic connotations, as a weapon to combat institutional power structures. Historically cobbles and stones have been lifted from the streets of European cities and thrown in protest. Durham produced a multiple work at the Stella Lohaus Gallery in Antwerp in 1993, where he smashed the screens of twenty-five television sets using Belgian cobblestones. He has also used stones in performance and video works as a mode of transforming generic symbols of consumer society. Later the target-object changed as Durham decided that an audience might not have the same affinity for a refrigerator as they might have for a television set. In *St Frigo* (1997, fig.45) a refrigerator is assailed by a succession of hurled rocks. This action was repeated for nine days as 'work'. Durham spent several hours each day labouring on this work. Durham grew up in America in the 1950's when consumer products such as refrigerators, televisions and the motorcar were the archetypal symbols of domestic-consumerism (fig.46). The refrigerator and television-works are subject to the gravity-defying trajectory of hurled stones. In more recent 'stone-sculptures' various domestic and everyday objects have been collected and subject to attack by stones of boulder-size proportions. These include a bed, bicycle, mirror, jacket and chair. These works echo an early piece by Bas Jan Ader titled *Light Vulnerable Objects* (1970). Durham like Ader uses gravity as a directional force of transformation, as he uses the varied weight of stone as a facilitator of material change. In the exhibition the viewer was faced with the aftermath of the event instead of the moment of suspended-apprehension, with which the viewer was faced in Ader's installation. Each work displays the evidence of its own auto-destruction as the boulder or stone lies implacably beside or on top of each object. These events were also staged in the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Marseille, as a dissolving set of narratives, which form part of a retrospective entitled *From the West Coast to the East Atlantic* (2003-2004) in Marseille, The Hague and Gateshead, England (Colard 2003, p.180). The 'stone-work' reveals a lack of groundedness in a journey where the stones are set free. In these processes entropic forces are at work as energy is



lost as the artist physically expends energy in working the transformation of the molecular structure of the object. This transformation generates movement in an entropic transfer of energy. As Durham modifies the use-value of these materials, meaning and provenance are redirected in a multiplication of identities.

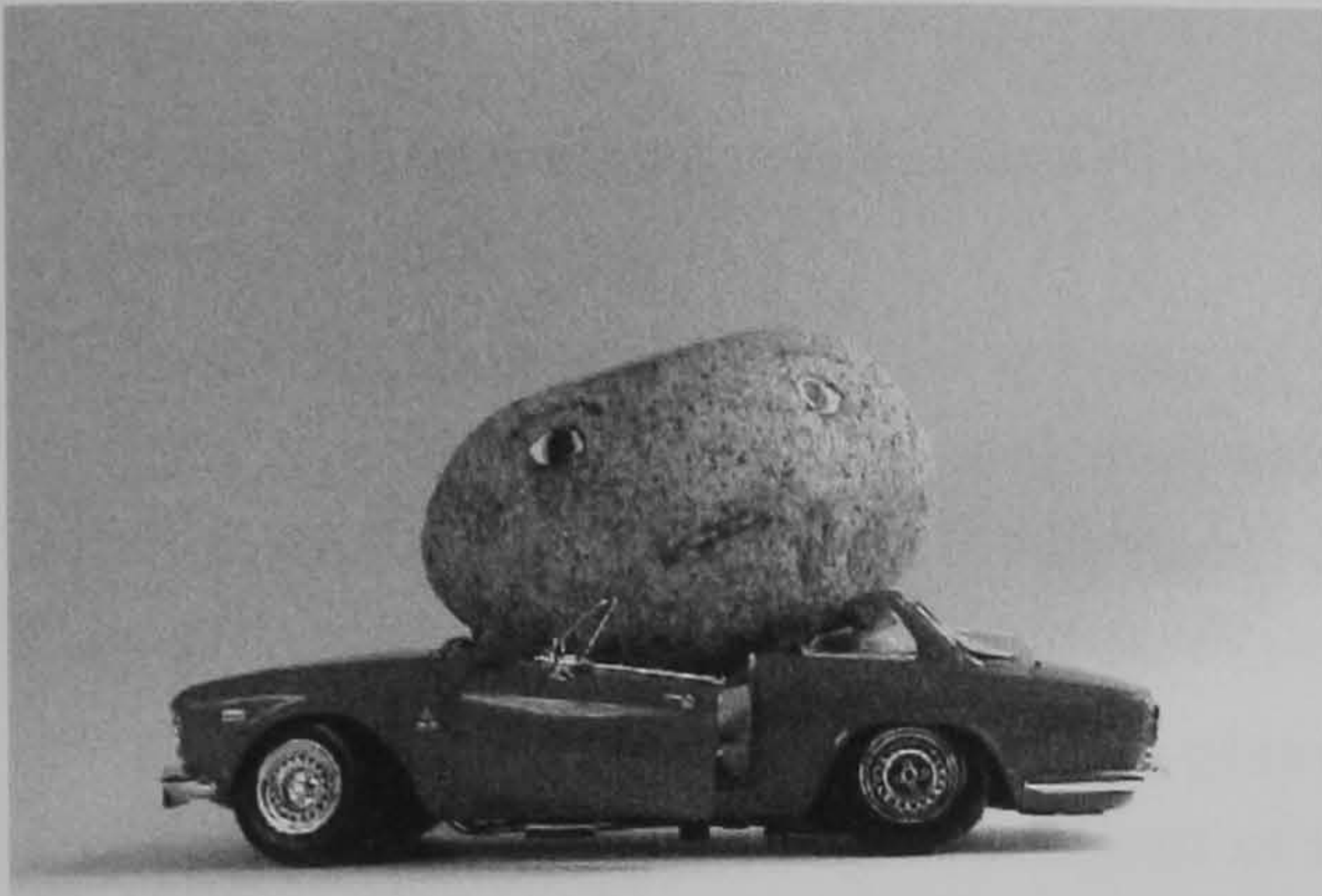


Fig.46 Jimmie Durham, *Still-life with Stone and Car*, car, granite boulder, (maquette), 2004.

Durham's continual movement from place to place is embedded in his work by the repeated transformation of a pluralist inventory of found materials. These are collected within a mobile archive where they are reconfigured as new schemas. In making this work meaning is dispersed across the material forms of which they are constituted both intellectually and physically. These strategies defer interpretational finitude, which might reside solely with issues of identity. These issues, which Durham campaigned for during his years in the American Indian Movement feature prominently in his early work. They are issues which have not gone away but are integrated within work of dematerialised complexity as Durham continues to get lost in the world.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Durham, J., 1998, *Between the Furniture and the Building (Between a Rock and a Hard Place)*, Cologne: Walter König, p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1973 and 1980 Jimmie Durham worked as a full-time representative in the *American Indian Movement* in Geneva and later New York campaigning for human rights, land-rights and against conditions of poverty found in the reservation communities where Indian peoples have been re-settled.

<sup>3</sup> Pluralism as a metaphysical theory of different types and numbers of entities in the universe is an important concept in relation to the identity, nomenclature and configuration of found objects and materials in this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> In 1995 I visited Durham in his Brussels apartment where a work-bench was piled-high with a host of materials and objects, which included hand-carved items, as well as other materials gathered on route during his time in Belgium and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> Jimmie Durham shares his concept of Eurasia, as a continuous spatial entity with Joseph Beuys. Ichiro Hariu (1991, p.74) describes Beuys' concept as follows: "The vast Eurasian continent unites both Europe and Asia. Beuys believed in joining things that had been split apart. For Beuys, Eurasia has always been an integrated continent. He chose, however, animals, not humans, as a means of understanding continental unity: in Eurasia the hare, in America the coyote. Durham has stated his kinship with Beuys in a sculpture entitled *Not Joseph Beuys's Coyote* (1980). Traditionally Europe as a geographical convention ends in the Urals in the East and the Caucasus in the South East. Historically Eurasianism is a concept concerned with Russian influence in Asia and Europe. It has recently found expression in the speeches of Vladimir Putin as a geo-economics buffer as a position against the naval powers of the West (Yasmann 2001, p.2).

<sup>6</sup> The notion of 'homelessness' also permeates Chapter 5 and Gustav Metzger's position as he carries a 'Stateless' passport.



<sup>7</sup> This lecture was given as part of *Pour une Nouvelle Géographique Artistique des Années 90*, organised by Virginia Garreta (2000, p.115) which was introduced as follows: “The lectures [...] focus on the new geographical configurations and the new institutional relations that characterise the international art scene for about ten years in the wake of the geo-economic and geo-political upheavals of the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s.”

<sup>8</sup> Durham was based in New York after he had been assigned there in his role as a representative of the A.I.M. (Färnström and Gasterland, 1997, p.3). Durham’s relationship with the New York art-scene as a marginal figure at its edge is in marked contrast to the attitudes of artists in New York as a centre discussed in Part One.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Fisher makes the distinction between ‘hybridity’ which, “...signifies two essences which come together to make a third entity, so at the back of the term there is always the notion of two originals...” rather than ‘syncretism’ which, “...does not imply any essentialist kind of origin, but maybe implies a play, more a tactical play amongst various possible entities.” (Fisher 1995, p.50).

<sup>10</sup> In the play *Translations* (1996) Irish playwright Brian Friel asserts a cultural resistance against the eradication of language instigated as part of the colonising change of place names.

<sup>11</sup> “[...] it is not their own being they externalise, but a reflected, alien being – however that is all they have. This creates that distinctive means for externalising a human being, via parodic laughter” (Bakhtin 1981, p.160).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Ni’ Go Tlunh A Doh Ka’ in *A Certain Lack of Coherence*, London: Kala Press, 1993, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> The use of the bike seat in one of these works recalls the osmotic transformation between the policeman and the bicycle in Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* (1967).



## Chapter 5

### Gustav Metzger: The Artist as Nomad

His very appearance is that of a latter day Old Testament Sage. His eyes shine with a piercing intensity as he addresses those he meets, a wanderer who roams the world, or rather the streets, carrying his whole life in bags almost as large as himself, full of books and papers. He appears to have no permanent home, although now he is based mainly in London. In recent years he has been on the move, around Europe, largely in Germany, Switzerland and Holland – almost completely removed from the community of the world of art.

Norman Rosenthal, 'Gustav Metzger The Artist as Wanderer'<sup>1</sup>

The destructive forces present in the work of Jimmie Durham find their parallel in the work of German-born artist Gustav Metzger. Both share common ground with Joseph Beuys in their nomadic strategies allied with the symbolic-load of the materials from which their works are formed. Symbolic-load is a term normally used to describe the import or signification, which different materials carry. A more appropriate term for the artist's work in this chapter would be 'symbolic-weight', where weightlessness and the dematerialised use of found objects are inextricably connected with mobility. Metzger recently defined his work in terms of "attitude",<sup>2</sup> in a critical standpoint which precedes the production of artworks. Just as it can be said of the Photoconceptualists and Jimmie Durham, Metzger's approach to art is intellectual, an idea in the mind as well as a physical activity. Metzger's nomadic trajectory, as an artist-traveller, is predicated in the escalating technological development of industrial societies and the negative consequences with which this development is associated. At first Metzger's "attitude" stems from a heightened sensibility to the possibility of Cold War annihilation. This uncertain climate persisted throughout the 1950's and 1960's as the catastrophe of the Holocaust and Hiroshima were still palpably proximate in time, especially for those whose lives had been uprooted and consequently lived with the anxiety of displacement. More recently his focus has broadened to issues of bio-technology and globalisation. Metzger arrived in Britain as part of the *Kindertransport* whereby children of Jewish families were relocated before the outbreak of war (Glew 1999, p.16).<sup>3</sup> Following the War the Cold War drive of Capitalism to annihilation was a pervasive fear as the U.S. and Soviet Governments invested millions in nuclear stockpiling. This situation led to Metzger's co-founding of the Committee of 100 and his involvement with C.N.D. in 1957. These events also engendered a set of dialectical relationships, which are at the core of Metzger's 'attitude' and work between 'nature' and 'environment', 'creativity' and 'destruction' (Metzger 1996a, pp.7-23). These definitions were explored in Metzger's essay, *Nature Demised Resurrects as Environment*. In this essay it is possible to follow a line from Ader as Metzger (1996b, p.7) evokes the Romantic-sublime in the vivid recollection of nature and the forest near to where he grew up. He describes a walking- journey, which sets forth from the settlement of a small village to the Castle of Neuschwanstein. Following the chronotope of a single road he is amidst nature as the road rises through the forest near his former home in Nuremburg. Metzger (1996b, p.7)



describes the unique “unmediated” experience, which exposes the contrast between ‘nature’ and ‘environment’ as concepts. In memory Metzger appropriates this European setting as the basis for an analogy, which elucidates the cultural bankruptcy symptomatic of a misuse of language and the moral disengagement of contemporary society. The purchase of produce from supermarkets is viewed as a “surrogate” experience of the way food was traditionally gathered whilst walking in the forests. Metzger’s narrative unfolds in a remarkably similar way to Durham’s stories of collecting and survival. Metzger inverts the romantic sublime as he ends with a lament, which projects the reader from the timeless setting of the forest to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Manhattan and the Cathedral of St John the Divine. It is there that plans for a bio-shelter bring his story full circle. Metzger’s sense of calm, in the midst of that which was known and is now lost, has been replaced with fear and anxiety. The story describes a metaphorical-journey of return to a lost home, where he identifies with the “shelter” of the forest in contrast to the man-made, bio-shelter in the city. Through a childhood recollection of place and the dialectical perception of memory and presence Metzger bridges the gap from his early years and in-between absence and loss, to his contemporary sense of dislocation at the end of the century. This essay partly explains Metzger’s nomadic tendencies during his early years after arriving in England:

If I were to return to the forests I knew as a child, in the environs of Nürnberg, the forests that I missed so much when I went to England as a refugee, I would react in a completely different way to my earlier experience. Instead of the profound calm that I knew then there would be feelings of unease and anxiety, fear even. [...] It is not just that Nature is wiped out: it is our memory that is overturned. It is our apprehension of a future, where people will not have that contact with forests where an englobing experience was given – shelter, verdancy. Not knowing is form of erasure. It is quite different to not having.

Metzger (1996b, p.11) articulates his anxiety as a “double-blow” and a “double-bind” in terms of the impossibility of a return to a former home or the hopelessness of “settling into a future”. This concept continually surfaces as a repeated motif in the work of Durham, Metzger and Schwitters in Chapter 6, as artists who have been involuntarily cast adrift as a result of circumstances beyond their control. In an essay on Jeff Wall, Jerry Zaslove (1995, p.101) addresses the notion of a double-binded homelessness in relation to changing “literate behaviour” or here artistic practice:

It needs to be discussed in terms of the huge academic industry in “exile” research which involves the attempt to recover a ‘culture bearing tradition outside of Britain both during and after the war, and the current international reception of German art and film, which has attempted to build a critical present on a tradition broken and then lost [...] I have cited the term ‘Double-bind’ in this context because it expresses the way exile immigration also implies “the guilt of the victim” in the eyes of conformist America.<sup>5</sup>

Upon his arrival in England Metzger was initially placed in a Butlins Holiday Camp (Cork 1998, p.33). During the war Metzger moved around Britain, taking successive jobs whilst absorbing influences that later emerged in his work as a mature artist. Adrian



Glew (Cole 1999, p.17) has observed how the upheavals experienced by Metzger and his brother were to be decisive for his development and “attitude”: “Their disturbed and disturbing childhoods manifested themselves in an interest in movement in all its forms”. This refers to the obvious crisis of their displacement but also how this unsettling experience is transmuted in art-works of dynamic material-transformation. Metzger’s experience has beset him with a peculiar sense of being an outsider.<sup>5</sup> This position was forced upon him as a result of historical crisis,<sup>6</sup> but it has become a deliberate strategy of resistance to artworld institutions, and what he perceives as the catastrophic effects of unchecked technological development in the service of multi-national corporations.

Metzger’s early years were itinerant following the war, but his early contact with the teachings of David Bomberg and Henry Moore influenced his work in relation to concepts of sculptural mass and monumentality (Metzger 1996b, p.85-86). In 1948 upon receiving a Stateless passport, Metzger embarked upon three months travel throughout Europe. He enrolled at the Fine Art Academy in Antwerp and after a year’s study he continued travelling in France before returning to Britain to begin intensive art production (Metzger 1996a, p.82-83). Clive Phillpot (Metzger 1996b, pp.82-97) has written a detailed chronology of Metzger’s early years, which reveal the confluence of all these formative experiences. Metzger even saw two Kurt Schwitters exhibitions at the Lords Gallery in 1958, only ten years after Schwitters died in 1948. It is pertinent that their paths should cross historically, as Schwitters and Metzger had to leave Germany at the outset of the war though for very different reasons. Metzger has cited Schwitters as an influence for his work and both used the detritus of everyday life in their art.<sup>7</sup> Metzger moved around for approximately twenty years before he began to settle in 1959, albeit in his own inimitable way (Metzger 1996b, p.86).

All these events have resulted in a life’s research dedicated to a dematerialisation of the work of art. Forces of transformation are manifest through contiguous processes of destruction and creation where modalities of weight and weightlessness recur time and time again. These extremes are counterpointed in works of immaterial suspension. In *Mica and Air Cube* (1968/98)<sup>8</sup> flakes of mica were held aloft inside a perspex box. By contrast this weightlessness is counterbalanced by the powerful force but precise pressure exerted by steel presses, and their possibility for making sculpture (Metzger 1996a, p.11). Ross Birrell (1999, p.5) has described Metzger as an “artist without works”, with reference to the perceived drive toward dematerialisation in his work. Birrell (1999, p.5) extends this notion owing to the fact that the work is subject to a “gradual flattening process as represented through its reliance on photographic documentation in books.” The documentary-aesthetic in the work of the photoconceptualists has added significance in Metzger’s work, as it becomes a metaphor for absence and loss. Robert Fleck (Cole 1999, p.48) inadvertently made a connection which links Douglas Huebler and Metzger when he made the following acknowledgment:



It's a very important principle to understand that an artist does not have to produce and add something to the world of objects but the artist has to make fewer things in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Metzger has made many proposals, which remain unrealised, but their importance lies in their significance as intellectual propositions, rather than whether or not they have ultimately been executed. On the occasion of the Norman Rosenthal curated exhibition *Art into Society – Society into Art, Seven German Artists* at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) in 1974, Metzger proposed an *Art Strike*. The manifesto called on all artists to cease producing artworks, with the aim that the art world network of galleries, dealers and buyers would crumble. Alternatively, Metzger proposed that during the “years without art” artists should devote their time to other forms of research and engage intellectually with issues, which concern the production of art works. He stated his intentions as follows:

To bring down the art system it is necessary to call for years without art, a period of three years – 1977 to 1980 – when artists will not produce work, sell work, permit work to go on exhibition, and refuse collaboration with any part of the publicity machinery of the art world. This withdrawal of labour is the most extreme collective challenge that artists can make to the state.

Metzger's ascetic dogmatism, unsurprisingly, saw his sole participation to this end. This manifesto also marked a hiatus where he remained invisible to the art-world, as well as a wider audience. Rosenthal (Brougher & Bowron 1998, p.82) has identified 1980, the year the *Art Strike* ended, as synonymous with the beginning of an era of art-commerce within the U.K. that was previously unknown with the emergence of the “*Sensation*” generation, which followed the Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party's election victory in 1979.<sup>10</sup>

### **Entropic Mass and Monuments to Decay**

In order to trace the origin of such an extreme statement as the *Art Strike* it is necessary to return to the seminal works, which precede it. Prior to 1959 Metzger studied under the tutelage of David Bomberg, whom he often cites as an important influence in how an artist should approach their work. Bomberg encouraged an approach to work as research in a search for “the spirit of the mass rather than its reduction into product”. In 1959 Metzger (1996a, p.34) described how he began to work directly onto sheets of mild steel with a palette knife to apply paint which was also used to incise the surface. This was an act of disillusion and frustration with painting, which he believed required dynamism and “speed” (Metzger 1996a, p.35). It also anticipates the resolution of this problem with the *Acid-Nylon Paintings* (1963, fig.47). This period also marks the “abandonment of any figurative scheme” within the work (Metzger 1996a p.66). This was the beginning of Metzger's preoccupation with processes of transformation, which accounts for the non-visibility of much of Metzger's work, where the dispersal of material force leaves the trace of its momentary formation and destruction, without the production of an art-



object. It is these processes of exploration and transformation, which dematerialise Metzger's work leaving it devoid of stylistic conventions, as well as distancing the artist's authorial presence.

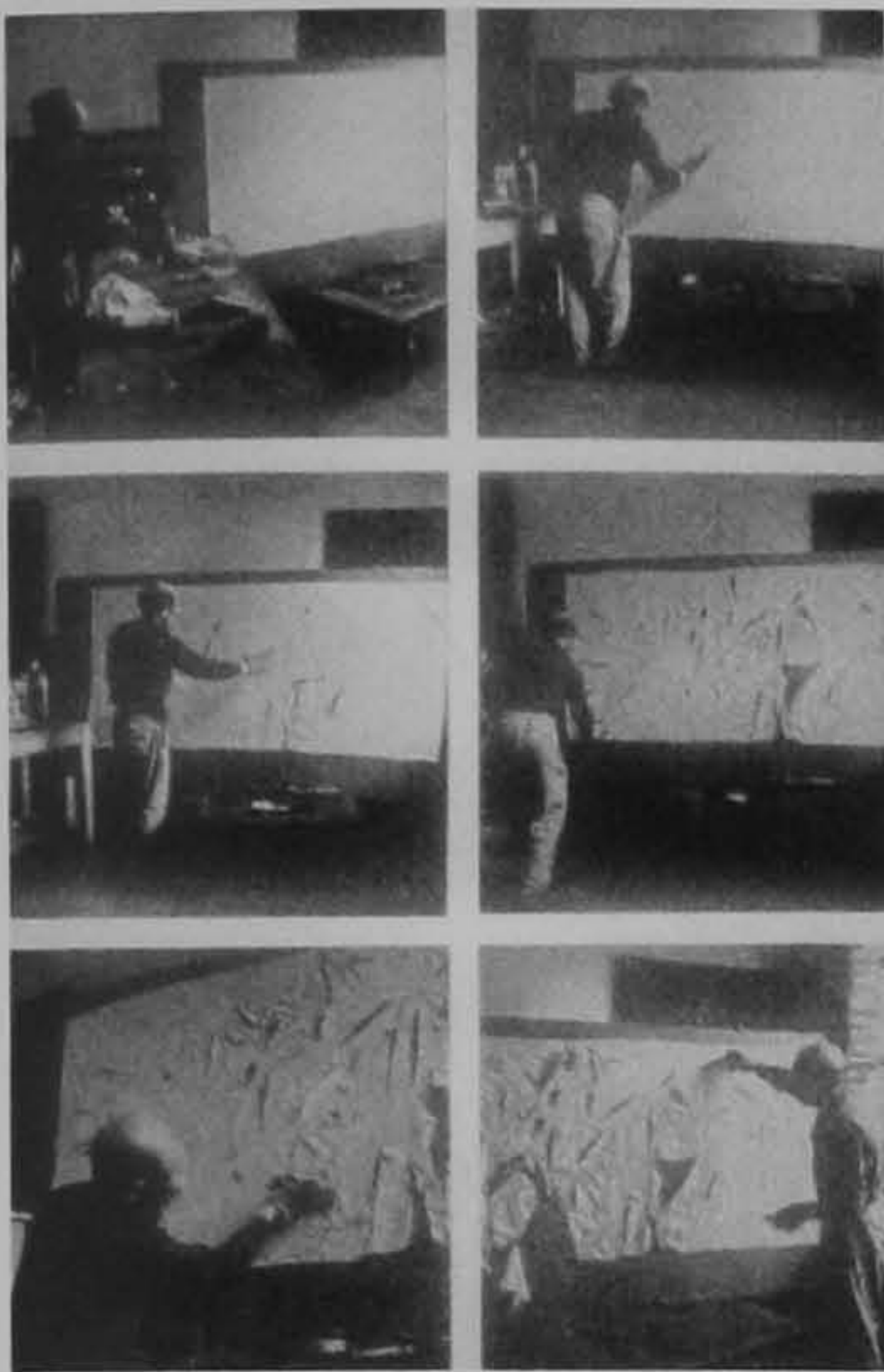


Fig.47 Gustav Metzger, *Acid-Nylon Painting/ Performance*, 1963.

### Cardboard Cities and Homelessness

In 1959 Metzger first came to the attention of the general public when he exhibited *Cardboards arranged by Gustav Metzger* (1959, fig.48) at Robin's Coffee House in 14 Monmouth Street.<sup>11</sup> Six discarded cardboard boxes for televisions found in the Fulham Road in London were displayed along the walls of the cafe alongside Metzger's paintings and *First Manifesto: Auto Destructive Art*. In an accompanying statement he aligned himself with the machine-made perfection of the *Cardboards* in a departure from Duchamp's ready-mades.<sup>12</sup> Metzger's presentation of the *Cardboards* challenged the commodity status of art-works. At the same time he claims their equal status with the highest forms of art practice: painting, sculpture and architecture, whilst stressing their ephemeral life-span as useful objects. In his manifesto Metzger lays out the founding principles of his work, which he expanded in later manifestoes during the last four decades:

#### Auto Destructive Art

Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies.

Auto-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process.

Auto-destructive art can be created with natural forces, traditional art techniques and technological techniques.

The artist may collaborate with scientists, engineers.

Auto-destructive paintings, sculptures and constructions have a lifetime varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete the work is to be removed from the site and scrapped.

The amplified sound of the auto-destructive process can be an integral part of the total conception.

London 4<sup>th</sup> November 1959<sup>13</sup>

These works alongside Metzger's first manifesto mark a turning point in the perception of the readymade and found object, as well as the site and destination of art-works in terms of their use and exchange value.



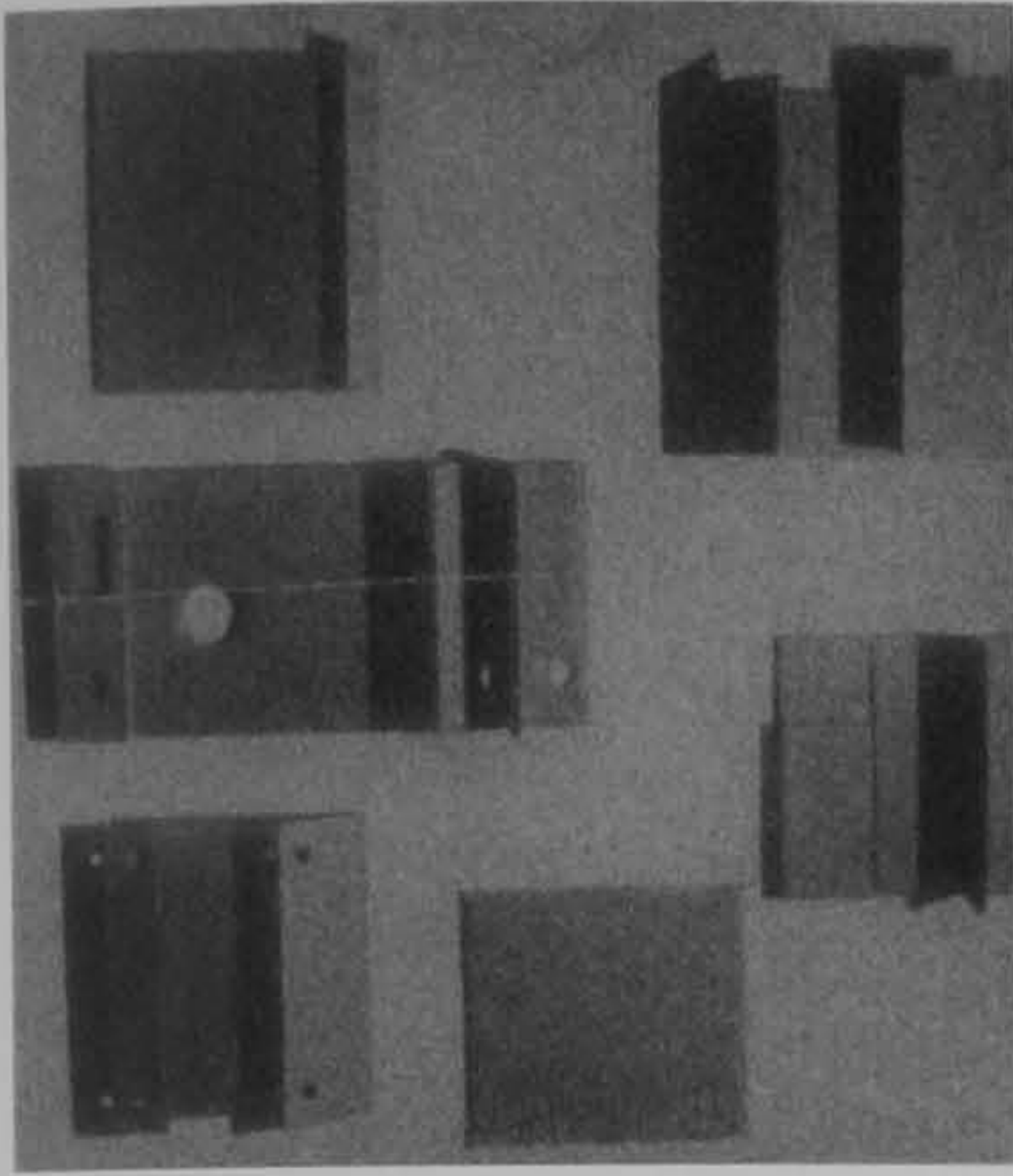


Fig.48 Gustav Metzger, *Cardboards*, 1959.  
Installation-view, Robin's Coffee House,  
London.

The *Cardboards* were gathered from the street in the same pristine condition as if they had just left the factory production line, an 'indexical-negative' of their respective products. The weightlessness of their material substance, and Metzger's anti-commodity approach asserts an ephemeral dynamic aesthetic, rather than the immobile solid mass characteristic of Judd and Richard Serra's later work.<sup>14</sup> This is critical for Metzger as he stresses the technological perfection of these works in their unmodified form rather than how they would be perceived today relative to Minimalism, the found object and Arte-Povera. This led Metzger to forego the possibility of re-presenting these works within the context of his retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1999 other than as documentation. Metzger has commented on his standpoint and he has stated that

[...] remaking that exhibition would be extremely difficult. The cardboards shown now fall within the aesthetic parameters as defined in the early sixties, in particular the, 'as found', character of the exhibits (Cole 1999, p. 99).

Although Metzger's careful selection of materials adheres to his own stringent definition of the role of art works, there are other metaphorical allusions at play around weight and weightlessness, which highlight the dilemma between presence and absence and concepts of dislocation. Ian Cole (1998) makes the following observation:

Cardboard, cardboard boxes, are for us now inextricably linked to fraught figures seeking shelter in cities. The present showing re-emphasises the social content of cardboards.

As a manifestation of the nomadic-shelter, they can be viewed as a symptom of the alienating effects of contemporary urban society. They are a ubiquitous feature of everyday life and the urban environment – a bi-product of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century consumerism, collected at the end of the day as they are found discarded outside supermarkets, shops or houses. They are often used by the city's homeless population as quasi-structures erected in empty niche spaces of buildings. The use-value and meaning of a humble material, such as cardboard, is transmuted in-between its ephemeral material quality as waste, and its pristine factory condition, as commodity packaging. This transformation of meaning is seen daily in the actions of the homeless population of cities, as well as the appropriative strategies of the artist subject to historical-homelessness.

Just as the *Cardboards* are analogous with architectural forms, Metzger has also carved



architectural-equivalents from polystyrene packaging – no doubt drawn to the same machine-made aesthetic of these ubiquitous forms, which characterised the *Cardboards*. The clean-lines of these materials appealed to Metzger in their utilitarian precision as metaphors of utopian perfection. These notions differentiate Metzger's use of the found object, which is usually associated with an aesthetic of decay, in the way that Kurt Schwitters noticed a flash of colour or the beauty in a partially decrepit scrap of paper in the street, which he would pick up whilst walking in the city.<sup>15</sup>

Following similar strategies to Durham, Metzger's approach to found materials establishes a discourse with the mechanisms of the art-world. Their intention to not repeat or return to the same motifs distances their work from the high production values, which have come to characterise much contemporary art. In the 1960's, an era of burgeoning consumerism, these materials represented an emergent affluence. Metzger is acutely aware of how these strategies have lost their political charge as they have become aestheticised by market orientated forces:

The distinction between highly finished forms then and now, reflects a deep change in my response to science, technology and the technological environment. I see the need to wind this down, and pare it, to a level that would be unacceptable to many people. (1999, p.99)<sup>16</sup>

This notion is the driving principle towards dematerialisation in the reductive processes of Metzger's work, which continually strain the boundaries of taste, value and aesthetics. The "aesthetic of revulsion" is a phrase, which Metzger (Wilson 1999, p.8) has used since the 1960's to describe the unsettling direction of his work quoted here in relation to his photographic work in the late 1990's:

The aesthetic of revulsion is the artist introducing materials and activities and images which most people don't want to know and don't want to see but the artist says, 'Look, I'm giving it to you in your face. Take it. This is a reflection of a horrible world.

The idea of revulsion is a strategy which establishes distance to the extent that it becomes abhorrent to remain within close proximity to that which is encountered in the work either as object or image. In Metzger and Durham's work auto-destructive forces are played-out between different groups of materials: vulnerable and powerful, light and heavy, manufactured and constructed. In Durham's case the release of stones, either lifted or pulled-away from their static domain in buildings, walls, roads and other spatial-delineations, are utilised as 'auto-transformative' projectile elements in works where readymade commodities are destroyed or radically transformed. Metzger had already made an inventory of the dynamic resources available to his work in order to reveal the technological basis upon which social life is constructed at all levels. On March 10<sup>th</sup> 1960 Metzger published his *Second Manifesto: Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art*, which included a pluralist A-Z inventory of objects and materials prior to their actualisation as art works:



Materials and techniques used in creating auto-destructive art include:

Acid, adhesives, Ballistics, Canvas, Casting, Clay, Combustion, Compression, Concrete, Corrosion, Cybernetics, Drop, Elasticity, Electricity, Electrolysis, Electronics, Explosives, Feedback, Glass, Heat, Human Energy, Ice, Jet, Light, Load, Mass-production, Metal, Motion, Motion Picture, Natural Forces, Nuclear energy, Paint, Paper, Photography, Plaster, Plastics, Pressure, Radiation, Sand, Solar energy, Sound, Steam, Stress, Terra-cotta, Vibration, Water, Welding, Wire, Wood.

London, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1960

In this comprehensive list the multiple possibilities of forces of transformation are outlined in different categories. The inventory traces a dematerialised path from solid mass to the immateriality of transformative destruction: 'Traditional' materials and processes available to the artist such as Clay, Paint etc. Those related to 'Movement': Elasticity, Ballistics Vibration. 'Immaterial' techniques such as Solar energy, Steam and Radiation and materials or techniques of 'Destructive' force: Explosives, Acid and Combustion. In 1960 Metzger exhibited his *Auto Destructive Monument* at the Temple Gallery. A work, which consisted of found objects, machine-made metal forms, cardboards, polythene bags filled with rubbish and rags installed in a space where the walls were covered with newspapers. Metzger's use of newspapers gradually evolves into a material repository of information and images collected systematically from 1972 to the present. Jasia Reichardt has described this material presence as a "Newspaper archive", an area of Metzger's work which becomes increasingly important towards the end of the century (Cole 1999, p.79).

### **Auto-Destruction and Acid-Nylon Painting**

A defining moment in the development of Metzger's work took place in 1961, on the South Bank of the River Thames, in London, outside the Royal Festival Hall. The location of this event was critical, as *The International Union of Architects Congress* was taking place at the same time, and Metzger's actions were seen as an affront (Cork 1998, p.33). This event represents the ultimate dematerialisation of the work of art in its multiple identity as an installation, a site-specific and public artwork, performance, painting and assemblage, and finally a work of photographic documentation. Metzger erected three, parallel nylon-screens in black, red and white. Each screen was the same size and proportionally relative in scale with the human figure. The nylon was hurriedly acquired from Berwick Street in Soho; it was Metzger's original intention to use parachute cloth, but this proved too flimsy and was not as conducive to stretching as the nylon (Cole 1999, p.19). Attired in protective clothing and a gas mask Metzger sprayed these virtual-canvases with acid. As Metzger circumnavigated his installation the material-ephemerality of this work was evident in its effervescent transformation, as highly corrosive acid dissolved the lightweight-surface of the nylon sheets. This work was an evolutionary progression of earlier work in the studio, whilst also reminiscent of the canvas slashes in the work of Italian arte-povera artist Lucio Fontana.<sup>17</sup> As the acid burned through each layer, the parallel layers were revealed. The background and





Fig.49 Gustav Metzger, *Acid-nylon*  
*painting/performance*, South Bank, London,  
1961.

foreground layer of this work also changed depending on the viewer's position in relation to the work. Prior to his conception of auto-destructive art Metzger (1996a, p.11) was fascinated by the implosive force of black holes. The acid-nylon paintings are a manifestation of his research in this area. Metzger (Wilson 1999, p.8) has reflected on this work, revealing his desire to distance the spectator by resorting to extreme working practices involving risk and danger with the hope of repelling the audience who see the work:

A sheet of nylon can itself be very beautiful and then you take material that will destroy it within seconds - tearing it to tatters which fall onto the floor. Well it's rather revolting isn't it? It's not what normal people do, it's only lunatics who might do it. And you cannot touch the pieces of nylon that have fallen to the floor - they are acid - you would burn yourself - you shrink from the smell of acid. The rust project was meant to fall apart within ten years by rust - it would have been a real mess but that is what I wanted. This was my aesthetic of revulsion which I tried to force onto society.

The climax of this work resounded in a sonic-crescendo as large suspended sheets of plate glass crashed onto the concrete floor. Upon impact there was a momentary-stasis before they shattered into thousands of fragmented shards. The documentary photographs of this event were taken by Metzger's brother Mendel; they show a somewhat bemused looking audience.<sup>18</sup> As this multi-layered work dematerialised before the eyes of the audience another unanticipated dimension presented itself. A background image of the city in the distance enters the work through the dissolved void of the nylon (fig.49). Metzger's negation of object and image is haunted by the photographic apparition by which it is replaced but it is a necessary reappearance in order for the work to remain within the discourse of art.

As an example of one of Metzger's many collaborations with scientists, Metzger staged another event of mobile transformation entitled *Extremes Touch: Material/Transforming Art* (1968) inside the filtration laboratory of Swansea University, which Adrian Glew (Cole 1999, p.23) has described as a 'kinetic ballet' in his account of its inter-related phenomena. The installation required the coordination of large amounts of water and compressed air around a central ceramic floor. Suspended air tubes and horizontal jets of air interacted with each other, as sheets of polystyrene were held aloft in mid-air. Mica flakes circulated inside a plastic box filled with compressed air. Heating elements were appropriated from a near-by kitchen and water tubes were suspended over hot-plates



rendering droplets of water motionless upon impact in an instant before their evaporation. This kinetic-event also included Metzger's *Liquid-Crystal* projections and a "liquid noise" of stroboscopic lights. Metzger first experimented with the *Liquid Crystal* (Fig.50) projections in 1966. Liquid crystals were placed between glass mounts for slide-projection, which were then alternately heated and cooled causing amoeba-like forms to flow in and out of each other in abstract configurations of colour. As an example of Metzger's *Auto-creative* output the significance of this naturally occurring phenomena transmuted via photographic projection lay in its endless permutations without repetition.<sup>19</sup>

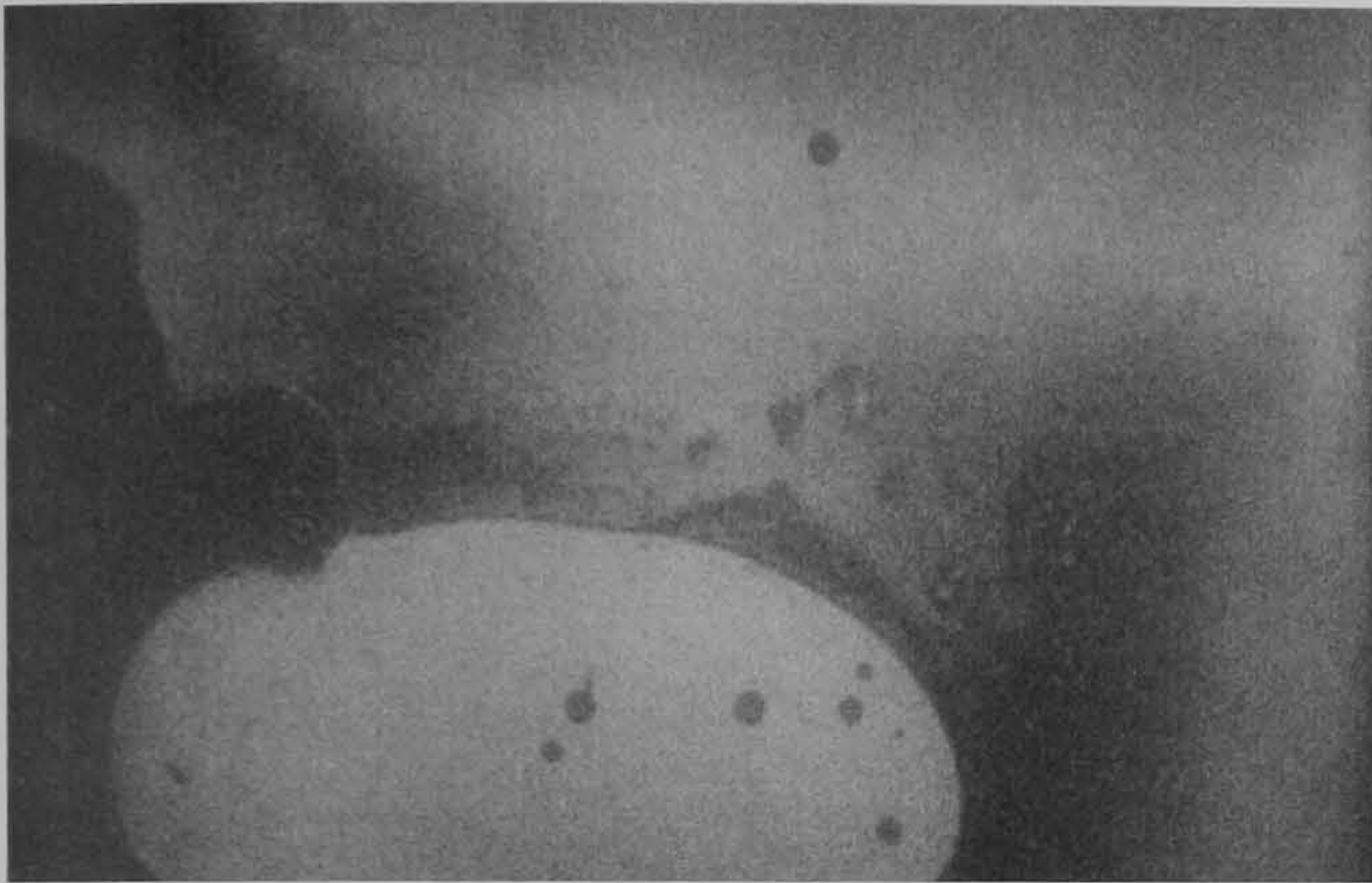


Fig.50 Gustav Metzger, *Liquid Crystal Projection*, 1966. Coloured liquid crystals and slide projectors. Projection size variable.

The Swansea event was complex and unique revealing a breaking of boundaries between art and science. Following this Metzger initiated the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS)<sup>20</sup>. As part of the exhibition *Kinetics* (1970) at the Hayward Gallery, London he produced a work entitled *Mobile*. A car was parked on Waterloo Bridge where its exhaust was covered with a clear polythene-cube attached to the exhaust. The accumulation of fumes were harnessed in a concentrated space, as a register of the levels of pollution emitted by the average car (Metzger 1996b, p.92). This work is an example of Metzger's adroit approach to making art works, where the movement and dynamism of materials are made visible in a systematic yet random manner. The latent invisibility of the fumes are rendered visible, albeit briefly before their release and disappearance. In his rejection of car-culture, Metzger claims common ground with Ader's walking journey across the city, as the antithesis of Ruscha's car-journeys. The mobile significance of the car was taken a step further as Metzger demonstrated the invisible damage to the atmosphere caused by car-exhaust emissions. Metzger's "attitude" to mobility and travel in all its forms is wedded to dematerialised forces present in nature and technology. In these works, Metzger a vegetarian since 1944, preceded the activism of Joseph Beuys with his views on nature and environment, which in the 1970's were prevalent concerns as Green Party issues (Wilson 1996, p.79).

## Historic Photographs

The *Historic Photographs* concern man's inhumanity to man and to nature aided and abetted by advanced science and technological power allied to inhuman social systems. The series *Historic Photographs* arises from many years facing the question. What is photography? What is its place in history? And how can we respond? Large-scale photographs in public places and in



advertisements overwhelm people. Hiding large photographs is one attempt to draw a new balance. Photographs of major events, seen repeatedly in print, on television or video are present in the mind: there is no need to permanently confront them in actuality. Clearly the choice and juxtaposition of images makes political statements as Picasso said, art is a weapon in the hands of the artist.

The auto-creative abstraction of the photographic medium in the projection of Metzger's *Liquid Crystal* works are a counterpoint to the unspeakable horror of the *Historic Photographs* series. Metzger has stressed the importance of newspapers as a source of information and how this information is received. This concern has led to a selection of iconic photographic images from which this series is comprised. In Metzger's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1996 the viewer is implicated within the work in a very particular way. The sight of these images is structured through modes of disappearance, as carefully selected images are distanced and muted by veiling processes appropriate to each image. As in Huebler and Durham's installations the viewer is complicit in a performative role which activates the work. The images were obscured but their mnemonic imprint is inescapable due to their traumatic content and their ubiquitous dissemination in books and newspapers. A state of eidetic recall, where a mental image is recollected as clearly as it was seen for the first time, is blunted by Metzger's alternate strategies of proximity, revulsion and distance. In these pieces Metzger orchestrates the mobile viewing range of the spectator as they navigate the series of works installed in the gallery.

The following observations are based on my visit to the exhibition in 1998. On entering the upper gallery space it was necessary to walk-up an inclined ramp parallel to a wall, which blocked entry to the gallery space. A massive composite photocopy image (330 x 630 cm) was pasted across this blocked threshold entitled *The Ramp at Auschwitz, Summer 1944*. The viewer was consequently forced into an overwhelming proximity with the crude mechanical reproduction of the image. With no space to manoeuvre, there was no possibility of stepping back to view the image from a distance. Moving into the space at the bottom right-hand corner of the gallery the rest of the works came into view. Along the right-hand wall there were three images related to Germany's invasion of Europe and the Holocaust: -

*Historic Photographs No.1: Hitler addressing the Reichstag in Berlin after the fall of France, July 1940* (1995, Bromide print, Formica cover, neon lights, galvanised steel channel stock). The formica cover of this piece and neon illumination proffered a bleached out glimpse of the image behind.

*Historic Photographs No1: Liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, April 19 (28 Days) 1943* (1995, Bromide print, wooden shuttering, galvanised steel channel stock). As Michael Archer (1999, p.107) has observed how the shuttering is redolent of the side panels of railway freight wagons, which the Nazis used to transport Jews to Auschwitz.

*Historic Photographs: Hitler Youth, Eingeschweisst* (1997/98, Bromide print, two cold-rolled steel sheets welded solid, fig.51). These works are apprehended in their





Fig.51 Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Hitler Youth, Eingeschweisst*, 1997/98. Bromide print, two cold-rolled steel sheets welded solid. Installation in progress.

suffocating obscurity and disappearance. The connotations of the materials used in this voiding of the photographic image are present, but the material transformation of the image from their origin in newspapers is transferred, or suspended between the material-weight of various dematerialised framing devices. Each of these extends the definition of frame and the realms of connotation. The clarity of the continuous tone photographic print without surface is disrupted, as Metzger superimposes varying degrees of weight and illumination by the use of strategies of obscuration.

Metzger's propagation of an "aesthetic of revulsion" is in direct proportion to his distance and horror, in both historical and personal terms, as he distances that which is historically proximate. The chronotope of the *threshold* as a barrier or block is evident in relation to historical and personal memory, as the images are simultaneously absent and present. Metzger's careful placement of the next two images are linked to his Jewish origins in the present age, as he is all too aware of the calamity of Arab and Israeli hostilities. The most emotive works were installed at the rear of the gallery. Both were accompanied by titles which issue an instruction. *To Walk Into, Massacre on the Mount, Jerusalem, 8 November 1990* (1996, Bromide print on vinyl, cloth cover) was hung along the far wall of the gallery. Adjacent to this image-screen and laid on the floor, *To Crawl Into – Anschluss, Vienna, March 1938* (1996-98, Bromide print on foamex). The viewer was encouraged to walk face-to-face with the atrocity pictured where the dead and wounded lie on the ground as soldiers walk amongst them. By contrast, installed close enough that their political correlation should not be lost, the spectator had to crawl on their hands and knees, just as persecuted Jews were forced to scrub the streets of Vienna. Metzger's fear of moral-disengagement as the century draws to a close, alerts us to the implication of this juxtaposition from the position of the spectator standing-by, anaesthetised in a world mediated by images. Metzger demands the "direct confrontation" of these works on two levels, at first physically in terms of their installation and the interaction of the spectator. Secondly, in relation to the memory of unseen images and for his own part as a warning from the artist, who as a Jew signals the danger of history repeating itself (Wilson 1998, p.9).

Further along *Historic Photographs: Fireman with Child, Oklahoma, 1995* (1998, Photographic Contravision dry-mounted on Perspex, breeze blocks, two neon lights, fig.52) and *Historic Photographs: Trang Bang, children fleeing, South Vietnam, April*

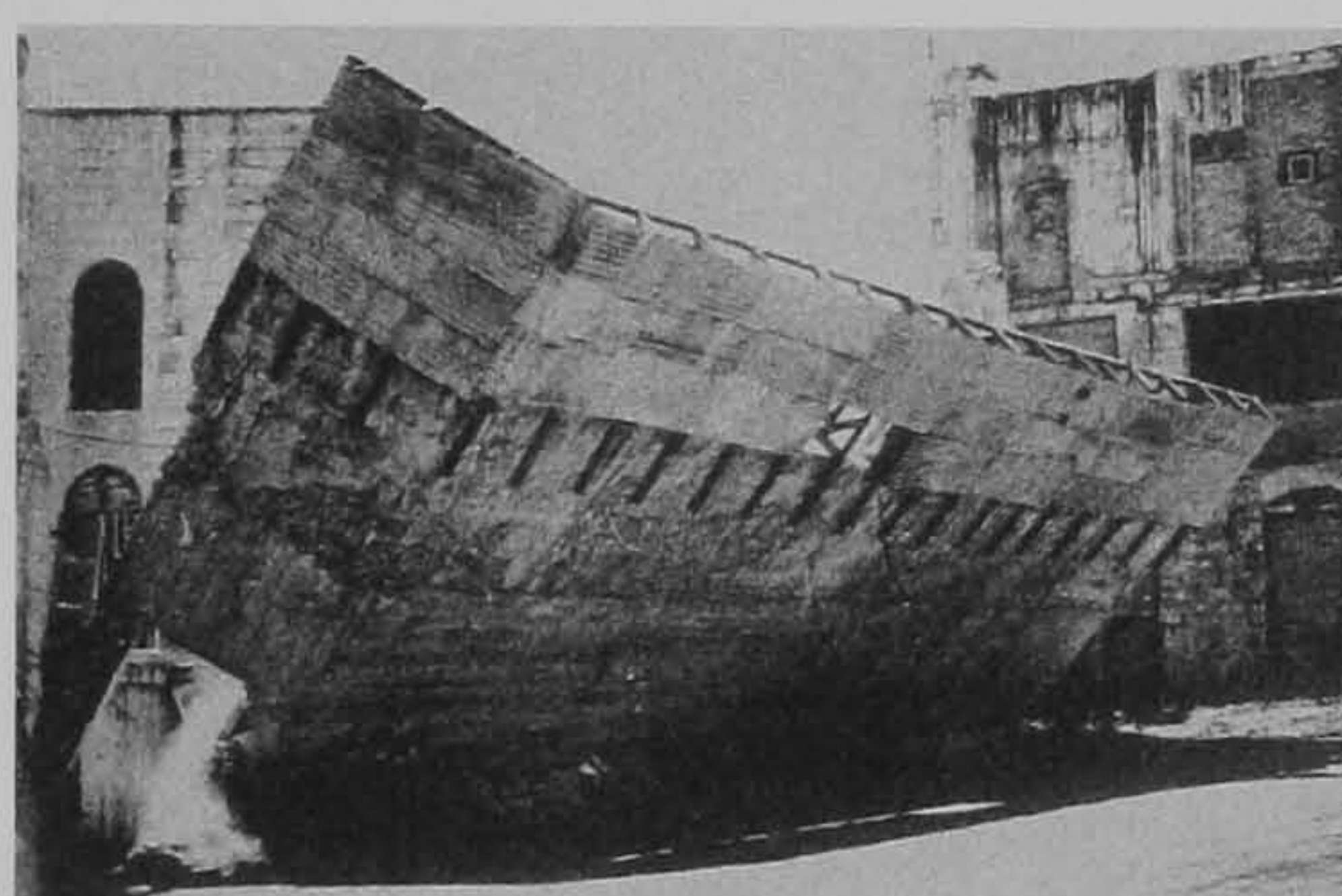




Fig.52 Gustav Metzger, *Historic photographs: Fireman with Child, Oklahoma*, 1998. Colour source images.

1972 (1998, Bromide print dry-mounted on aluminium, bamboo screen, lights with random generator). Once again Metzger sets up a close juxtaposition, literally highlighting these images with the use of artificial lighting, whilst accentuating the plight of children as victims of war and terrorism.

The end of this series is completed by the final two photographic images, which form this installation. *Historic Photographs, Jerusalem, Jerusalem* (1998, Two ink-jet mounted photographs dry-mounted on two PVC sheets, wooden framework, MDF boards, figs.53 & 54) sets up a double-exposure, which distorts the horror of the two events depicted as: “The first shows a crowd fleeing from a car bomb placed by an Arab at a Jewish Agency in Jerusalem on 1 March 1948. The second shows the Israeli Army forcing their way into the Arab quarters of Jerusalem during the 1967 war.”<sup>21</sup>



Figs.53 & 54 Gustav Metzger, *Historic photographs: Jerusalem*, 1998. Black and white source images.

With the respective transformation of each different photographic image Metzger evokes an historic journey in space and time, which traverses Europe. This photographic journey ends, as Metzger adopts William Blake’s poem *Jerusalem*<sup>22</sup>, with the return to England at the end of the series. Blake despaired at the destructive forces of the Industrial Revolution and the decline in moral and spiritual values. Similarly Metzger’s anxiety in relation to the accelerated developments of the modern technological era are also a prophetic warning represented by another image drawn from mass media. *Historic Photographs: Till we have built Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land* (1998, Cibachrome print dry-mounted on aluminium, two steel caterpillar treads, cast concrete slab, fig.55). The viewer is projected into the present with a contemporary image, which shows humanity’s decimation of nature. The viewer is confronted by a monumental image of Twyford Down, near Winchester in Hampshire, showing the construction of the M3 Motorway in 1998. Nature has literally been torn apart, as the gently undulating hills, which form the landscape, have been brutally incised. Metzger has encased the





Fig.55 Gustav Metzger, *Historic photographs: Till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land*, 1998. Colour source image

image with industrial materials: a concrete slab and the caterpillar tracks of heavy, earth-moving machinery which have been stood on their edge to form an enclosure around the image.

Proximity and distance are critical in the viewing-range of these works. The enlargement of the photographic process explodes the material photographic surface, which distorts the image, at close proximity, as it is crawled over or faced head-on; this 'shatter' is accentuated by the entombing of the images. In the white-out, illumination of over-lighting, they have been erased. Kerry Brougher (1998, p.12) has commented upon this veiling as they are revealed anew in all their horror:

Metzger has created a situation that opens the photograph back up, that removes the dust of history and the veil of the media that have long ago turned a living incident into a mere document. Metzger revives memory and once again makes it life. As we move past we become the people in the photograph, too much a part of the scene to understand it, too human to imagine the inhumanity coming. Time has been snatched away; we are back in 1944. Metzger's work is about memory and the merging of the present and past, death and life, life and art.

These works serve as a rejoinder to Birrell's notion of the photograph as part of a gradual flattening process. The materiality of images are given an additional dimension, as they disappear, in both light and weight, suspended as memory, yet propelled by their messianic intensity into a future-present.

### **Newspaper Archive 1960 - 2004 (ongoing)**

Bakhtin (1981, p.208) refers to the chronotopic motif of "cyclical time" where nature and environment are joined, events repeat themselves and the life of the individual is fully integrated within the cycle. This establishes the basis by which this thesis unfolds events in photographic images as: "The contingency that governs events is inseparably tied up with space, measured primarily by distance on the one hand and by proximity on the other (and varying degrees of both)."<sup>23</sup> For Metzger the breaking of "cyclical time", as the separation of nature from the life of the individual, is shown in his personal archive of media-images. Wilson (1998, p.10) challenged Metzger when he denied the "disposable" nature of images appropriated from newspapers, which are normally thrown-away at the end of each day. Metzger countered Wilson's suggestion that this might be contradictory in a refute of their disposability by their return in newspapers even though they are thrown away everyday. In his catalogue essay on the sublime,



Thompson (1999, p.27) has described how artists throughout history have returned to specific motifs, with which they have become fixated. He discusses the “image event” as defined in Jean-François Lyotard’s theory of the sublime. Lyotard defines “event” as a moment of absolute “singularity” where “entirely disparate occurrences ... are brought together by the concept of the ‘event’, to occupy a darkened, interior, imagined space bounded by the immemorial and the unspeakable. In its sublimity, its glory or its horror, a moral disengagement ‘the event’, Lyotard writes, ‘produces itself, of itself’.”<sup>24</sup> With reference to Metzger’s work this last line alludes to the repetition or rupture of Bakhtin’s “cyclical time”, manifest in the daily reproduction of images in newspapers. Metzger literally ‘blocks’ these images as they are obscured, in a suspension of both objective and subjective viewing (Thompson 1999, p.28). The first time they have been witnessed is already an atrocity - redoubled, as they reappear, before disappearing from sight but not from memory:

There is no contradiction. When you say that the newspaper is discarded and the ‘Historic Photographs’ recycle what has been discarded, that is exactly what makes it so relevant. You could say that it is always the same newspaper and it is always the same image. In that sense it is eternal. Every image is significant and always has the same significance. It is reality and newspapers come as close as anything to it. The other reason I am interested in newspapers is that it is information which I can use in my work and life. I need this sort of information in order to survive – biologically, economically and socially. It is through newspapers that issues are discussed. You cannot escape. We are now trapped in newspapers, we could dispense with television but we could not dispense with newspapers. You pick up and unravel reality and lies together (Wilson 1998, p.10).

Metzger’s recycling of the discarded newspaper image corresponds to Lyotard’s formulation of the postmodern artist as a new kind of spectator, the “critical watchman”. Thompson (1999, p.28) articulates Lyotard’s personage as “one who is born into the semiotic universe and can read all the signs”:

In his respect today’s artists engagement with the dynamics of sublimity is inescapably wedded to the present rather than ‘presence’ and in this they are radically different [...] In a world in which immediacy is everything, in which cathartic distance has been done away with we can no longer look at what presents itself but must wait endlessly upon events. The mere passing of time comes to define every kind of human experience. Held by such an entelechy – time without history – the artist can do little more than bear witness to the phantasmagorical parade of mediated images.

Metzger has referred to the impossibility of using images of war for this reason. Instead he focuses on issues such as climate change, genetic manipulation, atmospheric pollution, the proliferation of air travel and surveillance, as well as other political issues.<sup>25</sup> Metzger began working with newspapers as early as 1960 when he presented a lecture and demonstration at Trinity College, Cambridge for the Heretics Society where the walls of the lecture theatre were covered in the day’s Sunday newspapers (Metzger 1996b, p.86).

In May 2003 Metzger installed *100,000 Newspapers* at T1 & 2 Artspace, a basement location on the site of a former brewery, in London’s East End. In an exhibition



review Suchin (2003, p.14) wrote an elegiac description of this work, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

[...] one descended into a brightly lit chamber containing thousands of newspapers strewn across a cold concrete floor. Visitors were requested to cut from the newspapers anything they found interesting, an act later made use of by Metzger, who later mounted the individual cuttings under headings such as 'EXTINCTION' 'WORK' and 'BIOTECHNOLOGY'. In the second a dusty metallic structure of shelves and walkways was further loaded with further batches of newspapers, this time in a most orderly way. In the centre of this underground library a well of carefully crumpled newsprint formed a pool of discarded loose leaves, disrupting the righteous archival activity of the stack surrounding them. The ostensibly calm eye of the storm was itself, so to speak, enraged and out of control. The deathly coldness of this subterranean double space seemed more than appropriate after hearing Metzger's remark at the Tate that reality is, today, something most people find impossible to bear. Mutilations, murders and disasters of all kinds fill the papers, as do anxieties over genetic manipulation, increases in pollution and the arrogant expansion of corporations indifferent to the havoc they all too frequently wreak. These and other nightmare narratives are brought to our attention on a daily basis, only for us to turn a way in cowardly acts of distraction and self-deceit. Metzger's use of newspapers as exemplary form, both here and in earlier exhibitions, help to emphasize that even the official channels of information admit, more and more, that things are frighteningly close to chaos. Layers and layers of printed text, yesterdays news sinking under its own weight, may well be regarded as paralleling Walter Benjamin's influential account of historical change as an allegorical ruin. Metzger also echoes Benjamin in believing that we live, today, in a constant state of emergency and despair.

Suchin details the interactive nature of this archival work as it exists in states of both chaos and order. He conjures a vision of the tomb, as a repository for the information-load by which the world's population are subsumed. Metzger's archival sub-headings are a clue to his despair at society's moral disengagement, as the monotonous drudgery of work is sandwiched between death and mutation. A chronic situation of information overload is represented by the physical and psychological balance between weight and weightlessness transformed by mass. At the beginning of this chapter I made reference to the symbolic-weight and materiality of Metzger's work, which found its apotheosis in the sheer mass of this work. This rings true with Bomberg's quest for "the spirit of the mass". At the end of his account Suchin makes reference to German-Jewish, literary theorist Walter Benjamin. Suchin obviously alludes to Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Benjamin owned a hand-coloured ink drawing by Paul Klee, during the 1920's, entitled *Angelus Novus*, which he referenced in several essays. Benjamin (1970) was inspired by this drawing to write the text quoted below. It could have been written about Metzger as it offers a remarkable analogy, by which to parallel Metzger's trajectory, and key events, which have come to define the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The cataclysmic forces of progress, which Metzger closely scrutinises in his work, are the back-drop against which he travels forward. Behind, lies the decaying traces of his monuments to destruction, as he faces towards the technological redemption found in a future of *Auto-creative* possibility and potential. The dynamic materiality of his work and "attitude" as an artist moves ahead of the destruction, entropy and decay behind, whilst in front a fluid, free-form, 'anti-static' movement, generates an expansive space for meaning:



A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one perceives the angel of history. His face is towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (Benjamin 1970, p.249).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rosenthal (1998, p.80) adopts the idiom of the 'Wandering Jew' to describe Metzger's way in the world. However I prefer to describe Metzger as a nomad, a definition more appropriate to Metzger's stringent activities

<sup>2</sup> Metzger quoted during the lecture *Gustav Metzger: Ethics, Aesthetics and Biotechnology* given at Camberwell College of Arts January 15<sup>th</sup> 2004, in a seminar series organised by Dr. Claudia Wegener.

<sup>3</sup> Metzger's family were of Jewish-Polish origin. In 1939 Metzger and his brother Mendel arrived in England (Stateless) via the *Kindertransport* scheme prior to the outbreak of war. Their mother joined the rest of the family in Poland in 1944, after which there were no further replies to Red Cross letters. Metzger's Grandparents were killed in Strasbourg. His two sisters escaped from Poland to Britain and now live in Palestine. Mendel lives in France. In 1948 Metzger received a Stateless passport and began a three-month tour of Netherlands, Belgium and France.

<sup>4</sup> Zaslove also relates the notion of a double-binded homelessness to an essay by Sigmund Freud 'The Uncanny', which literally translates from the German as 'Unheimlich' meaning 'Unhomely'. The source of Zaslove's comment is a text by Ernst Federn, 'The Double Bind – Conflict and the Writer in Exile: Some Social Psychological Reflections' in *Das Exilerlebnis*, ed. Donald Daviau and Ludwig Fisher, Columbia, South Carolina, Camden House, 1982, pp.332-337.

<sup>5</sup> Metzger (1996, p.36) has described the position of contemporary artists in the following terms making reference to his own situation, "... unless he is prepared to become part of a dealer's 'stable', the living artist in England does not exist as far as the official art world is concerned."

<sup>6</sup> The biographical detail of Metzger's life is distanced in this chapter, as it has been well documented by Clive Phillpot (1996, pp.82-97). The identification of those moments and works, which are salient to the movement of the argument of this thesis are described as it enters what Bakhtin (1981, p.115) terms "the crisis type of portrayal". Bakhtin regards "biography" as the crucial organising principle for time. He says: "[...] we see only one or two moments that decide the fate of a man's life and determine its entire disposition."

<sup>7</sup> Metzger (1996a, pp.47-48) directly references Schwitters in relation to one of his unrealised monuments to decay: "The first project is based on the aesthetic potential of rust. There are a number of modern artists who have used rust as part of their technique. Schwitters used it in his collages."

<sup>8</sup> This work was originally conceived and produced for the exhibition *Extremes of Touch* and later re-made for the retrospective exhibition *Gustav Metzger* at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that Ader's output of works was restrained yet specific. Wade Saunders (2004, p.63) has discussed Ader's estate and the implications of printing posthumous photographs for sale and the reissue of films, as they have been reprinted to satisfy art-market demands.

<sup>10</sup> *Sensation* was an exhibition of artists of the so-called Saatchi generation curated by Norman Rosenthal and Max Wigram at the Royal Academy in London in 1997. Rosenthal (1998, p.84) makes a connection between the work of the artists in this exhibition and the unacknowledged influence of Metzger in their work.

<sup>11</sup> This work was brought to the attention of the public in an article written by John Rydon entitled *Its Pictures from Packing Cases* in the Daily Express, London, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Metzger's appropriated material required minimal intervention, whereas Duchamp's readymades were often modified, for example by the signing of the urinal, *R. Mutt*, or the juxtaposition of the bicycle wheel with the stool.

<sup>13</sup> This observation references a reproduction in the exhibition catalogue *Gustav Metzger*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth considering the pristine finish of Judd's work, and conversely the patination and rusting processes at work in Serra's untreated steel works. Metzger's awareness of different values of



materiality, either in terms a high-finish or in-decay, occur in his work in the same way, as his sensibility is tuned to notions of the found object and readymade.

<sup>15</sup> In his *Second Manifesto* Metzger categorically makes the distinction between a specific use of found objects, which have no relation to the elevation of objects whose erosion by the action of nature or general wear and tear becomes aestheticised. In the *Manifesto Auto Destructive Art* he categorically states: “Not interested in ruins (picturesque).”

<sup>16</sup> London-based artists, Tim Webster and Sue Noble use rubbish in their work, which bears comparison to Metzger’s acute sensibility to the use of materials, whether rubbish or found objects in contemporary artworks. In Noble and Webster’s highly stylised works, material detritus is carefully constructed and lit so as to cast a silhouetted image of the artist’s profiles against a background surface. The decaying repugnancy of the material is also pervasive within their work, which also has repulsive connotations.

<sup>17</sup> Metzger has referred to Fontana’s paintings with regard to the aesthetic of the slash as a motif. In the acid nylon paintings this aesthetic is distanced by the corrosive repugnancy of hydrochloric acid.

<sup>18</sup> Mendel Metzger’s photographs were originally published in *Signals* magazine (Bowron 1999, p.40).

<sup>19</sup> The concept of *Auto-creative* art was put forward in the *Third Manifesto: Auto-Destructive art, Machine Art, Auto Creative Art*, 1961, in which he declares: “Auto-creative art is art of change, growth movement. Auto-destructive art and Auto-creative art aim at the integration of art alongside advances in science and technology. The immediate objective is the creation with the aid of computers, of works of art whose movements are programmed and include ‘self regulation’.” Metzger realised this proposal when he exhibited the *Liquid Crystal Environment* and *Mica* and *Air Box* in the Piper Gallery as part of the retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1998. Here the *Liquid Crystals* were subject to fluctuation as the heating elements were computer regulated.

<sup>20</sup> In 1966 Metzger inaugurated *DIAS* a series of lectures and events where he brought together a group of international artists, working with new art forms and destructive transformation, which included John Latham, Hermann Nitsch and Yoko Ono amongst many others.

<sup>21</sup> This historical note and the technical details of each image are drawn from the pamphlet *Gustav Metzger artist, activist, Museum of Modern art Oxford Exhibition Guide*, 1998, which also contains a plan describing the installation of the works within the space.

<sup>22</sup> William Blake writer, poet and artist wrote *Jerusalem* in 1804-1820 as a preface to his prophetic book *Milton*. The poem was illustrated with 100 engravings.

<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin (1981 p.99).

<sup>24</sup> Thompson (1999, p.27) gives an account of the contemporary sublime as theorised by Jean-François Lyotard and his conception of ‘event’, as distinctly physical, even “libidinal”. Metzger (1996a, p.45) has also similarly stated: “The tension of forms in transformation acts directly on parts of the body. This can lead to feelings of liberation of intense pleasure.”

<sup>25</sup> Metzger made this assertion during a lecture *Gustav Metzger: Ethics, Aesthetics and Biotechnology* given at Camberwell College of Arts January 15<sup>th</sup> 2004, in a seminar series organised by Dr. Claudia Wegener.



## Chapter 6 Kurt Schwitters: Escape, Internment and Exile

The apparently superior categories, the elevated or edifying subjects – were to be replaced by the manifestations of daily customs, the most humble and trivial. I remember seeing Schwitters pick up in the streets, scraps of old iron, broken watch works, bizarre and absurd materials which even junk men would have discarded, to use them in the fabrication of works of art.<sup>1</sup>

Tristan Tzara, 1952

There is a strange irony in Schwitters contempt for Picasso's capriciousness. In the sixties there was an elated sense of art breaking out of its cocoon of high culture and entering the real world with the right to play anywhere and with anyone and anything it wanted, Schwitters was the patron saint [...] The tyranny of style had come to an end, and it was simply a matter of picking what you fancied. Picasso didn't really count. He was too much *Art*, and all his leaps were just changes of style, so it all remained within the institution. And Picasso was not rediscovered until much later. So with a somewhat vague sense of Schwitters as a figure, as the tear-away provincial Dadaist, he was the very person who was appointed lodestar for absolute artistic freedom of movement and apparent boundlessness.<sup>2</sup>

Per Kirkeby, 1995

This thesis opened with Ruscha's commentary which in turn references Tzara's observation of Schwitters' working methods. Per Kirkeby locates Kurt Schwitters' displacement within the history of modern art, placing him alongside Metzger and Durham, which brings my analysis of artist-travel full circle, back to Ruscha, Huebler and Ader. Although Schwitters' work is imprinted within the Modernist schema of art history, it appears problematic. Schwitters' crisis-born isolation, from his contemporaries, lasted for ten years till his premature death in 1948. Schwitters' marginal status, as a result of his forced exile, sets him aside from his contemporaries in a unique way.

The life and work of both Schwitters and Metzger, as German born exiles, is defined by the psychological impasse of a double-bind, and their shared experience of crisis. The effect of this was the fluid sense of movement and materials found in both their working strategies, although for very different reasons. This refers to a dilemma where the artist cannot return to a lost-home and alternatively the uncertainty of "settling into a future", as Metzger (1996b, p.11) has described it. Metzger arrived in England as a thirteen year old boy, with his life before him, whereas the middle-aged Schwitters arrived in England, with his son, initially to face internment. They both experienced the loss of family during the war years. After the war, Schwitters felt unable to return to Germany, as not only had he lost his wife to illness, but his home and major works were destroyed during the bombing of his native Hanover. The double-bind of Schwitters' escape from Germany was a virtual suspension, as he was caught in the limbo of the present, in-between points of arrival and departure, as well as the past and the future.

### **The Early Years Pre-Exile – The Origin of Merz**

Kurt Schwitters was born in 1887 to a wealthy property owning family, and in 1901 the family moved to Waldhausenstrasse 5, the location of his first *Merzbau* in 1923. Prior to



the outbreak of the First World War Schwitters studied art in Hanover and Dresden (Strauss 1985, u.p.). After the end of the war in 1918 he also undertook architectural training at the technical college in Hanover. The impact of the First World War with its legacy of destruction, economic and political chaos had a profound effect on the sensibility of Schwitters and his contemporaries. Echoing Benjamin's *Angelus Novus*, a close friend and apologist Kate Steinitz (1962, p.5) has commented:

It was said that the mental shock of the war years had caused the break. He found himself with the best and most sensitive artists of his generation on the rubbish pile of a cracked civilisation feeling the necessity and even the obligation to start a new.

In 1919 it was from this "pile of rubbish" that Schwitters invented *Merz*<sup>3</sup> derived from the fragmented syllable of an early work titled *Kommerz* (1919). Merz was not just a personal project but a totalising concept of art, which encompassed collage, painting, sculpture, typography and theatre. Schwitters was also a prolific writer and poet for which he utilised humour, nonsense and irony. Schwitters is close to Durham as both evade meaning in their respective playful and subversive use of language. The following commentary by Gamard (2000, p.38) provides a basis for this comparison:

Schwitters vacillates between and among wry humourisms, stalwart objectifications, homages to other artists, and diatribes, often times throwing his readers or viewers off the mark or in some cases setting them off on another path altogether.

As an artist-traveller in the 1920's Schwitters' propagation of *Merz*, as a transnational project, was already underway as he conducted lecture tours throughout Europe.<sup>4</sup> In 1923 Schwitters embarked upon the *Holland Dada Tour* with Theo van Doesburg, coinciding with the publication of the first issue of Schwitters' magazine titled *Merz I: Holland Dada*<sup>5</sup> (Gamard 2000, p.144-145). During this tour Schwitters also performed *Revolution in Revon* (1922). Of Schwitters' most well-known writings, this work stands alongside *Anna Blume* (1919) and his sound-poem the *Ursonate* (1932). Schwitters' coinage *Revon* is a fragment of *Revonnah*, which is the German language spelling of *Hannover* backwards. In his play, Schwitters created an imaginary vision based on his home city, with a specific play on language, to create a unique set of spatio-temporal relationships which he described as follows:

The difference between Hanover and Anna Blume is this: one can read Anna backward, whereas Hanover is best read forward. But if one reads Hanover backward, one gets the combination *re von nah*. The word *re* one can translate indifferently as 'backward' or 'back.' I suggest the translation 'backward.' Thus the translation of the word Hanover read backward would be 'backward from near.' And that is correct, for then the translation of the word Hanover read forward would be 'forward to far.' This means Hanover strives forward to infinity. Note, however, that Anna still remains the same whether read backward or forward (Schmalenbach 1970, p.12).

This unusual play of spatial adverbs elucidates notions of distance and proximity, which reveals the importance of these concepts for this analysis of Schwitters' work. The play



was staged as part of Schwitters' *Merzbühne* (Merz-theatre)<sup>6</sup> which Gamard (2000, p.145) defines as a "transportable spatial and temporal 'residence' for the production of Merz." Gamard (2000, p.172) further explains how

[...] the fabrication of a parallel Hanover 'lived in reverse'<sup>7</sup> was allegorical, a world that could be either read backwards or forward in a way that countered the nineteenth and early twentieth century norms of temporal progress.

*Revolution in Revon* was written during a settled time for Schwitters before his existence was irretrievably uprooted. The fragment and discarded object were already intrinsic elements of Schwitters' collage and assemblage works by the early 1920's. Schwitters' reflexive use of material cast aside as rubbish became a signifier of crisis-propelled displacement and exile. Despite the fact that Schwitters was forced to leave his family home to escape the Nazis, his propensity to work on-the-move was restricted but never curtailed.

When Schwitters arrived in Britain he was interned alongside British domiciled German emigrés and other mainly Jewish refugees from Europe.<sup>8</sup> After his internment Schwitters remained in England, where he was isolated from the art world and a network of contacts he had made over many years (Steinitz 1962, p.6). Separated from his friends Schwitters maintained his contacts through written correspondence. In a letter from 1940, Schwitters conveyed his desire to escape Norway and travel to America, where he believed he would be well-received as well as be able to join friends and colleagues (Steinitz 1965, p.11). These sentiments were recorded in a letter dated June 1946, two years before he died, to Raoul Hausmann, who was then based in Limoges (Wadley 1981, p.36). Schwitters also wrote regularly to fellow Hanover exile and lifelong friend Kate Steinitz. Between them they inadvertently developed an early form of mail-art.<sup>9</sup> During the 1920's Schwitters' regularly collaged postcards, which he sent to friends. Schwitters pioneered this form of travel-art by utilising the comics, labels and greetings cards which Steinitz sent him from America, which he then returned to her transformed into collages (Steinitz 1965, p.12).

In his essay 'Merz' published in *Der Ararat* (1921) Schwitters asserts the materiality of the work as it comes into being within the overall structure or schema of its constituent parts, in a repudiation of representational painting and the primacy of any particular medium or genre (Motherwell 1981, p.58):

The medium is as unimportant as myself. Essential is only the forming. Because the medium is unimportant I take any material whatsoever if the picture demands it. When I adjust materials of different kinds to one another, I have taken a step in advance of mere oil painting, for in addition to playing colour against colour, line against line, form against form, etc. I play off material against material, for example wood against sackcloth.

Cardinal (1995, p.16) identifies the significance of Schwitters' transformation of materials during the key phases of his artistic development. He also acknowledges the



geographical significance of where those materials were found, and how specific places not only availed new materials, but altered both his manipulation of them in a logistical sense, as well as their 'meaning potential' as "semiophores" (Cardinal 1994, p.69). The 'provenance' of found materials and objects has been the connecting thread throughout Part II of this thesis. John Elderfield's indepth scholarship of Schwitters' work forefronts his systems-based approach. The materials, although prominent in their autonomy, form the work as part of a complex interrelationship with other materials beyond their original function. The material conditions of the work emerge as the viewer searches for what Elderfield (1971, p.66) describes as a "common denominator between them in an emotional as well as structural sense", as their mode changes within the context of their selection, collection and transformation. Elderfield (1971, p.67) has defined the precise manner in which Schwitters' work alongside Durham and Metzger's can be compared to the 1960's photoconceptualists, in relation to travel and the removal of the artist's authorial presence:

The autobiographical iconography of the materials thus acts as a factual reminder of Schwitters' 'forms' of behaviour (while yet aware of the individual iconographic references). Schwitters' work – emphasising its procedures places an important responsibility on the viewer, demanding as it were, not only to be seen, but to be known to be seen. In this way, there is no hard and fast line between the art and the audience. These works are art (the objects are included); but by the precariousness of their inclusions (referring beyond their unique art contexts to earlier stylistic conventions and stealing from life) they function also as systems expediting the perception of art, as perceptual fields within which the viewer is encouraged to perform.

This is an important consideration for my delineation of artist-travel, in which found materials and photographic images are situated within an overall schema by which they are dematerialised. Schmalenbach (1970, p.94) draws attention to the complexity and nuance of meaning found in Schwitters' specific appropriation of language in relation to his systems-based approach to art. This manifested itself in Schwitters' work as 'Forming' (*Formung*) and 'deforming' (*Entformung*) – the latter term is one of Schwitters' many neologisms, which translates as "disassociation". In a footnote Schmalenbach (1970, p.247) emphasises the difficulty of translating these terms:

Through the use of the prefix *ent*, signifying abandonment of an old state and entry into a new state, he attempted to render the essence of the artistic process – the breaking up, or disassociation of familiar forms in order to reorder them under a different aspect.

I have used the term dislocation in place of disassociation in relation to artist-travel and Schwitters' exile in order to emphasise the simultaneous loss of and separation from a specific location, as well as the separation of object and image from its original function or use-value. In *Merz I: Holland Dada* (1923) he specifically uses the term 'dematerialised' in relation to the identity and origin of the materials and their integration as part of his work:



And so I began to construct pictures out of materials I happened to have at hand, such as street car tickets, cloakroom checks, bits of wood, wire, twine, bent wheels, tissue paper, tin cans, chips of glass, etc. These things are inserted into the picture either as they are or else modified in accordance with what the picture requires. They lose their individual character, their own special essence [*eigengift*], by being evaluated against one another; by being de-materialised [*entmaterialisiert*] they become material for the picture (Schmalenbach 1970, p.94).



Fig.56 Kurt Schwitters, *Construction for Noble Ladies*, 1919. Assemblage, 103 x 83.3 cm.

*Construction for Noble Ladies* (1919, fig.56) is an assemblage, which incorporates the materials cited above. These have been fused into a cohesive painterly whole. It is the forced condition of exile, which gives added significance to Schwitters' practice of amassing the detritus of everyday life. Schwitters transported an inventory of materials from place to place, adding and discarding materials when and where appropriate. Sarah Wilson (1999, u.p.) suggests that Schwitters' experience of exile should not be regarded as a purely negative experience. Gamard (2000, p.174) also observes how exile in Schwitters' case was a redemptive project: "a dialectics of exile: as a future which cuts off a past which lives on through it all the more intensely in memory, repetition, recreation." For Schwitters return was impossible, as everything he had left behind was destroyed. Wilson further suggests that Schwitters' '*Eigengift*', as a special essence or sense of place, did not negate the possibility of a "new 'genius loci' " elsewhere. Each time Schwitters settles, first during his flight from the Nazis, and then during his internment, he takes the opportunity to recover what he has left behind by the construction of subsequent *Merzbauten* (Merzbuildings).<sup>10</sup> Each of these contained groups of objects and sculptures, which can be interpreted as temporary nomadic shelters. They exist as punctuation points along a syntagmatic line of displacement and exile, where the relationship of the whole is constantly threatened by forces of dislocation, the fragments of which Schwitters gathers up each time, and rebuilds anew. Schwitters' double-bind was also a double-trauma, as the calamity of the First World War, and his endeavours to rebuild were shattered by another world war within his own life-time. By rebuilding, Schwitters resurrects the spectre of previous destruction and decay. Gamard (2000, p.170) proposes the messianic significance of his work, citing Hegel's theory of sublimation '*Aufhebung*', where the remnants of the past are momentarily illuminated, as they pass into obsolescence or disappearance:

Yet the momentary apprehension of the remnants of cultural production is not a nostalgic enterprise, but rather a search for the underlying connective tissue between the past and present, the primal continuum that flows through time.



Outside Schwitters' normal inventorial procedures, a modal evaluation of the selection, collection and transformation of materials during Schwitters' escape from Germany ascribes varied degrees of value according to the crisis of exile. Collecting found objects and materials was already embedded in Schwitters' practice, as his choice of materials altered from one place to another. These changes marked Schwitters' increasing pull toward a rural aesthetic away from the urban hermeticism of the Hanover *Merzbau*.

### **At Home in the *Merzbau***

#### **Rooms, Grottoes and Other Spaces of Intimate Reverie**

Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles: the circle of the day, the week, the month, of a person's entire life. A day is just a day, a year is just a year – a life is just a life. Day in, day out the same round of activities are repeated, the same topics of conversation, the same words and so forth. In this type of time people eat, drink, sleep, have wives, mistresses (casual affairs), involve themselves in petty intrigues, sit in their shops or offices, play cards, gossip. This is common place, philistine cyclical everyday time. It is familiar to us in many variants in Gogol, Turgenev, Gleb Uspensky, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Chekhov. The markers of this time are similar, crude, material, fused with the everyday details of specific locales, with the quaint little houses and rooms of the town, with the sleepy streets, the dust and the flies, the club, the billiards and so on and on. Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still. Here there are no 'meetings,' no 'partings.' It is a vicious and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space [...] it often serves as a contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 247-248).

Hanover is situated in Lower Saxony and is often referred to unfairly as a provincial city. This trait inspired Schwitters to write *Revolution in Revon* as a response to the social and political milieu within which he lived (Elderfield 1985, p.166). Previous commentators have referred to the provincial, conformist nature of Schwitters' strict upbringing (Webster 1997, p.2). This was not lost on Schwitters, who transformed the mundane into the realm of fantasy. In relation to Tillim's study of 'outsider' and 'provincial' artists" in the 1920's Elderfield (1985, p.170) has observed:

He nurtured his eclecticism as much as he did his provincialism. Indeed both were an important part of his originality, for they gave him a happy freedom of mobility, and permitted him to achieve a level of artistic quality well beyond that of his more polemical contemporaries.

Bakhtin's cyclical depiction in the chronotope of the 'provincial town' as 'a locus of action' is a fitting backdrop against which the *Merzbau* was situated as a project charged with 'energy and event'. When Schwitters was forced to leave Hanover in 1937 *Merz* travelled with him as a concept as well as a process and system.

The Sprengel Museum in Hanover houses a reconstruction of part of the *Merzbau* designed by the architect Peter Bisseger, who based his project on three surviving photographs made by Wilhelm Redemann in 1933 (fig.57). The reconstruction in the Sprengel Museum, although impressive, is a somewhat sanitised version, as it is impossible to convey the visceral content of the original. Nevertheless, photographic and textual documentation offers an invaluable insight of the development of the *Merzbau*. In the *Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Archive*<sup>11</sup> a series of early documentary photographs



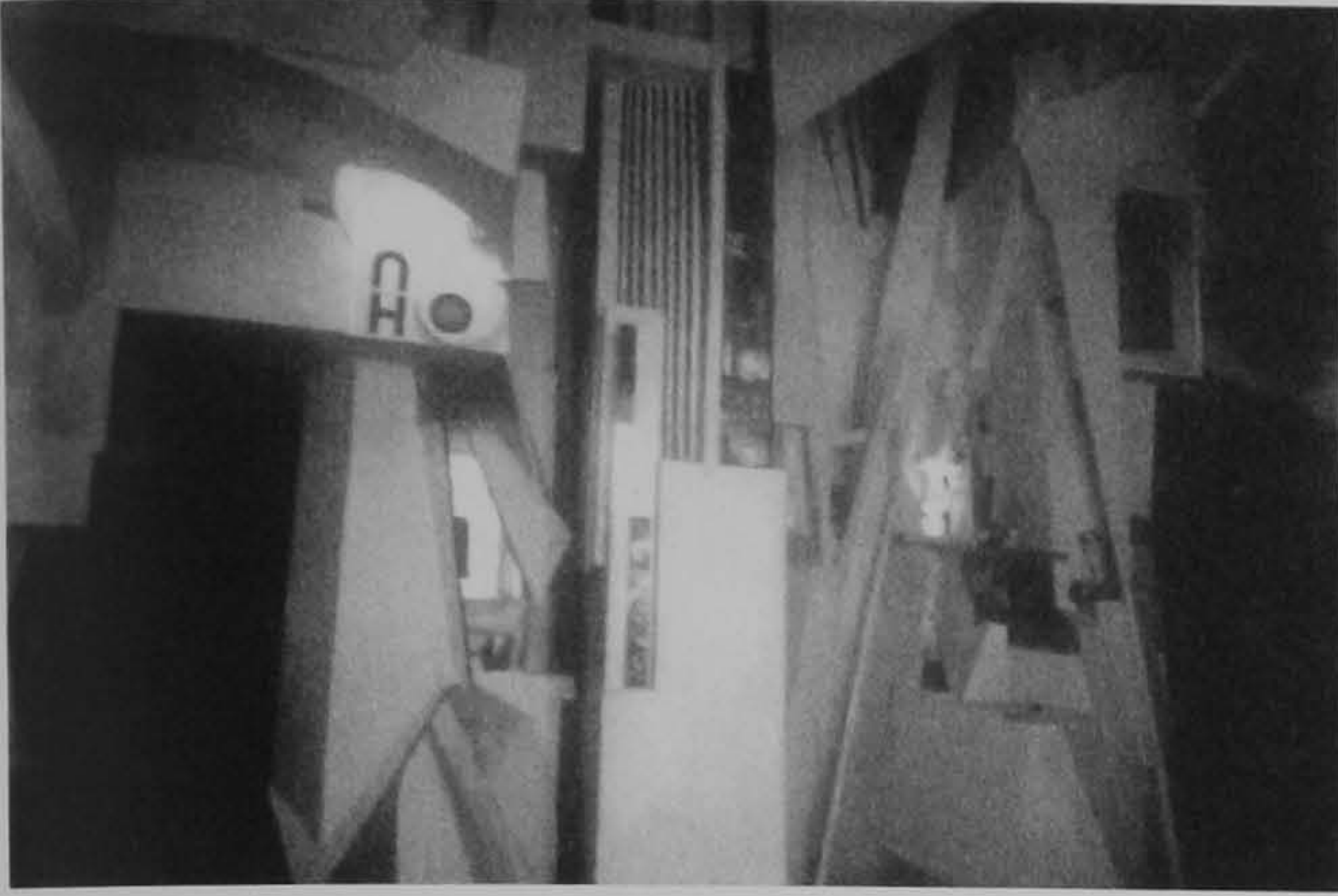


Fig.57 Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, Hanover, 1930. Mixed media, Installation-view.

shows the *Merzcolumn* and early stages of the *Merzbau's* development, which was initially titled *The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*. Later photographs show the more advanced stages of the *Merzbau*, after Schwitters worked on its exterior, which covered over the interior grottoes. These photographs form part of an archive of 8000 known works (Orchard & Schulz 2003, p.21). There are also photographs in the archive showing the glimpsed threshold to the *Stairway Entrance*, *side blue window* under different lighting conditions, and other close-up details of the interior grotto spaces such as *Detail of Grand Group corner above Golden Grotto*.<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to describe the exact nature of the *Merzbau* in its absence, except by its photographic documentation, Schwitters own sketched plans and contemporary recollections of those who were permitted to enter it.<sup>13</sup> Due to the loss of the artefact itself previous accounts have been partially stifled in their attempts to capture its essence. Even so the *Merzbau* warrants the continued analytical return to which it is subject, as it represents a critical phase of Schwitters' life and work. My analysis of the *Merzbau* and subsequent *Merzbuildings*, as chronotopic motifs of cyclical time, the provincial town, home and threshold, manifests notions of proximity and distance, intimacy and estrangement, inside and outside, shell and nest. I have adapted these psychic and spatial delineations, in particular the latter two categories, from the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in order to develop a phenomenological account of the *Merzbau* as the dream-time, phantasmagorical work of imagination which it most certainly was (Elderfield 1985, p.171). Bakhtin's chronotopic motifs are strengthened, as Bachelard unravels the psychological and poetic significance of these spaces. In *The Poetics of Space* Bachelard (1994, p.xxxiii) posits

[...] the house as a *tool for the analysis* of the human soul. With the help of this tool, can we not find within ourselves, while dreaming in our own modest homes, the consolations of the cave? Are the towers of our souls raised for all time?

Bachelard (1994, p.8) outlines his inquiry as a 'topoanalysis', dividing the house by its respective spaces 'From Cellar to Garret'. During this oneiric journey, Bachelard (1994, p.229) draws together a host of poetic references by which the house is located as a site of reverie, described in his poetic images or more precisely the reality-lapse of the day-dream, which overcomes what he perceives as the 'encumber' of 'composite memories'.<sup>14</sup>



In 1923 Schwitters began work on the *Merzbau* or *The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, as the *Merzbau* was also titled. It was not uncommon for Schwitters to alternate these terms as it suited him (Elderfield 1985, p.147). He continued its construction until 1936 prior to his escape from Germany. In the ground floor studio at the rear of his house the *Merzbau* found its initial growth in a Dadaist sculptural column *The Merzsäule* or *Merzcolumn*. Around the *Merzcolumn*, which was one of several, the *Merzbau* emanated from within itself, in the same way as a mollusk forms its shell, an appropriate analogy for Schwitters' 'Forming' of the *Merzbau*, as a "synthesis of house, shell and cave" (Bachelard 1994, p.131). Around the column Schwitters constructed a collage of collected ephemeral, tapering from the base of the column to the top where the cast of a baby's head, Schwitters' first son Gerd, was positioned (Gamard 2000, p.88). The verticality of the column as a form aspired to Schwitters' fascination with the cathedral as an absolute architectural entity, a structure which Gamard (2000, p.180) identifies as a site of "spiritual journeying" through its catacombs, labyrinthine passages and stations of the cross, with art as its salvation and "liberation".<sup>15</sup> Prior to the construction of the *Merzbau* Schwitters had already produced small sculptures with the cathedral as their inspiration, as well as a portfolio of lithographs titled *Die Kathedrale* (1920). Schwitters' preoccupation with the cathedral as a structuring principle was spatial rather than religious (Motherwell 1981, pp.61-62). From this central point Ernst Schwitters has described how surrounding collages and assemblages on the studio walls were connected to the column, and each other, by string, wire and then wood (Elderfield 1985, p.148). A complex network of designated spaces were devoted to different themes, places and people from within the emergent structure. Gamard (2000, pp.94-103) has drawn together an array of anecdotal references from various sources including Schwitters' writings on the *Merzbau*, which together reveal a systematic approach to the installation of its contents. The *Höhlen* (holes, caves) served as shrines to Schwitters' friends and close associates with materials and objects donated and sometimes surreptitiously procured by Schwitters (Elderfield 1985, p.175). The *Grotten* (grottoes) revealed characteristic aspects of the German psyche, history and culture (Gamard 2000, p.96). The *Merzbau* also contained references to specific geographical regions such as the Ruhr's industrial legacy represented by the inclusion of "authentic brown coal and authentic gas coke".<sup>16</sup> Each of Schwitters' specific designations corresponds to an overall construction of poetic meaning, in the same way that Bachelard replenishes the poetry quoted in *The Poetics of Space* (1994). Elderfield (1985, p.163) intuitively uses the 'shell' as a metaphor in his interpretation of the sometimes grotesque content of the *Merzbau*:

And while its architectural structure does cover, and therefore formalise, 'the darkest erotic caves' of the project's beginning, something of the original claustrophobic fantasy seems to have been projected outwards to give shape to the enclosing shell.



The development of the *Merzbau* was integrated as part of the interior of the Waldhausenstrasse residence, as it travelled from Schwitters' studio into another room through to the balcony. A connecting spiral staircase accessed a courtyard where a well was excavated. Schwitters also used an attic room with a sloping ceiling where another column emerged from a skylight, which extended onto a rooftop platform (Elderfield 1985, p.157). In Chapter 1 I referred to Bakhtin's analysis of 'Dante's architectonics', in relation to the orientation and directionality of Ruscha's photographs, as a metaphorical and physical convergence of horizontal and vertical axes. In the following Bachelard (1994, p.17) develops the metaphorical significance of these axes, which are applicable to Schwitters journey through what was an intimate, domestic environment rather than the exterior world:

Verticality is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attics, the marks of which are so deep that, in a way, they open up two very different perspectives for a phenomenology of the imagination.

The dynamism of the *Merzbau*, as a house within a house, was thus transformed into a unifying structure. Schwitters' *inside-out* habitation of the city (Bachelard's universe) developed as he transported materials from the outside streets into the interior space of the house. Bachelard (1994, p.27) describes the city dwelling as an experience devoid of 'cosmicity':

It is about the environment and Schwitters' living in it. It is made out of the environment, it is a picture of the environment and it is the environment. He collected such stuff from the streets of Hanover that heaps around his house began, almost independently, to form into a great construction. The construction grew into a work of art which, between the rubbish and the architecture, expresses much about the life of and in a city. At the same time its relationship to the larger environment is made into identity by Schwitters living in it, and it is that living in it which causes the stuff drawn from the environment to become the work of art about the environment (Wadley 1981, p...).

Schwitters continually states his disinterest in the origin of the discarded materials and rubbish, which he collected from the streets of Hanover for his collages and inclusion in the *Merzbau*. The inter-relationship between the city and its detritus and Schwitters work is doubtless as the project developed into what Gamard (2000, p.3) describes as a: "Wunderkammer – an archive of the time and space in which it was situated."

The spiral formation of the *Merzbau* as a series of interconnected hidden spaces ruptures the block of memory upon which its foundations were seated. Bachelard (1994, p.136) describes the immobility of the corner space as a "symbol of solitude for the imagination." Schwitters obliterated the stasis of the corner spaces with clustered, cube-like forms. The asymmetrical unity of perspectival space disappeared to form a fluid dynamic environment, where separate dream-spaces flow in and out of each other. The artist Rudolf Jahns describes a solitary journey, at Schwitters' suggestion, through the *Merzbau* in 1927. Jahns' account is followed by a passage from Bachelard, who expands Tristan Tzara's sense of "repose":<sup>17</sup>



[...] Schwitters asked me to go through the grotto alone. So I went into the construction which, with all its bends, resembled a snail-shell and a grotto at the same time. The path by which you reached the middle was very narrow because new structures and assemblages, as well as existing grottoes and Merz reliefs, hung over from all sides into the still unoccupied part of the room. Right at the back to the left of the entrance, hung a bottle containing Schwitters' urine, in which everlasting flowers were floating. Then there were grottoes of varying types and shapes, whose entrances were not always on the same level. If you walked all the way around, you finally reached the middle, where I found a place to sit and sat down. I then experienced a strange enrapturing feeling. This room had a very special life of its own. The sound of my footsteps faded away and there was an absolute silence. There was only the form of the grotto whirling around me and when I was able to find words to describe it they alluded to the absolute in art (Elderfield 1985, pp.153-154).

In order to derive benefit from the oneirism of such an image, one must no doubt first place oneself "in the palm of a repose," that is, withdraw into oneself and condense one self in the being of a repose, which is the asset one has most easily "at hand." Then the great stream of simple humility that is the silent room flows into ourselves. The intimacy of the room becomes our intimacy. And correlatively, intimate space has become so quiet, so simple, that all the quietude of the room is localised and centralised in it. The room is very deeply our room, it is in us. We no longer *see* it. It no longer *limits* us, because we are in the very ultimate depth of its repose, in the repose that is conferred upon us (Bachelard 1994, p.226).

The juxtaposition of these two passages parallel each other in their power to locate the *Merzbau* as the site of an interior-journey, where space and time fall away in the 'reality-lapse' of daydream reverie. The image of the shell is manifest as a spatial construction as Jahns approaches the centre of the *Merzbau*, where he experiences a temporary suspension within a weightless environment. It is appropriate that Tzara, a close friend of Schwitters, should provide the poetic image from which Bachelard develops the above passage, as it conjoins with Jahns' description so closely. Elderfield's incitement that Schwitters' Merzbuildings are "[...] not only to be seen, but to be known to be seen", as they exist with the perceptual realm of the viewer, is unequivocally demonstrated by Jahns' commentary. Past, present and future are condensed in a phenomenological apprehension of space. Notions of inside and outside, intimacy and void, movement and stasis are dissolved in the lived experience of the Waldhausenstrasse 5 as a 'surface':

Then, on the surface of being, in that region where 'being' *wants* to be both visible and hidden, the movements of opening and closing are so numerous, so frequently inverted, and so charged with hesitation, that we could conclude on the following formula: man is half-open being (Bachelard 1994, p.222).

The grottoes with their arrangements of votive objects were later covered over and rendered inaccessible, whilst others could be entered or viewed via moveable sculptures and sliding panels. The concealment of these spaces signals a phenomenological shift as each threshold doorway is at once open and closed to inspection, as meaning is either hidden or disclosed as desire, fear, security etc. are revealed:

The questions abound: how can secret rooms, rooms that have disappeared, become abodes for an unforgettable past [...] How is it that, at times, a provisional refuge or an occasional shelter is endowed with our intimate day-dreaming with virtues that have no objective foundation? (Bachelard 1994, p. xxxii).



Bachelard's question possesses a dual significance for the *Merzbau* as a repository of memory and melancholy, which reaches beyond memory to the immemorial, foretelling a double-loss, as the rooms eventually disappeared with their destruction. The movement or travel of Schwitters' *Merzbau* project, from place to place, is also anticipated as Bachelard's poetic analysis of the house signifies the uncertainty which permeates Schwitters' subsequent attempts to rebuild what he had to leave behind. For Bachelard (1994, p.139) "the first house" as a phenomenon of poetic reverie marks "a return to a childhood which has not been experienced" (Bachelard 1991, p.139).

The interior spaces were progressively covered over by panels of irregular shape and size. The *Merzbau* photographs (fig.58) from 1933 show the influence of Constructivism in the exterior curvi-linear surface of the whole structure, which was painted white with various details picked out in colour with isolated, collaged elements. Bachelard (1994, p.228) again, in the following, could have been describing the *Merzbau*:

It does not level itself to geometrical intuition, but is a solid framework for secret being. And secret being feels that it is guarded more by the whiteness of the limewash than by the strong walls [...] The whiteness of the walls, alone, protect the dreamer's cell. It is stronger than all geometry. It is part of the cell of intimacy.



Fig.58 Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbarn*, 1930. Mixed media. Installation view.

By bringing the outside inside Schwitters at once contradicts the dialectical position of these terms, which ascribe the intimacy of a known interior space, and the outside as an unknown void full of potential and limitless meaning. All the Merzbuildings present a "denegation" of inside and outside, which as adverbs of place Bachelard (1994, p.220) refutes on the grounds of their geometrical intuition as asymmetrical formations. Instead Bachelard posits notions of inside and outside as a conflict between claustrophobia and agoraphobia, as well as exile and home. The repetitive processes at work in the use of materials and a return to a former home by the rebuilding of his life's work becomes a circuitous process where Bachelard's discussion of the house as 'shell', and house as 'nest' become psychological, poetic images by which to analyse Schwitters' escape and exile:

This sign of 'return' marks an infinite number of daydreams, for the reason that human returning takes place in the great rhythm of life, a rhythm that reaches back across the years and, through the dream, combats all absence. An intimate component of faithful loyalty reacts upon the related images of nest and house (Bachelard 1994, p.99).



With the rise of Hitler Schwitters and his family felt increasingly threatened by the hostile political climate in Germany throughout the 1930's. Previous travels in Europe had been for the purpose of making contacts, lectures and performances. Schwitters now travelled as a respite from tensions at home, to southern Europe, Spain and Italy where he worked on revues and an opera. From 1929, following a voyage to Spitzbergen, Schwitters made regular trips to Norway (Orchard and Schulz 2003, p.547). Between 1932 and 1937, Schwitters began to spend between four and seven months in Norway each summer where, accompanied by Ernst, he made long bicycle rides exploring the landscape (Webster 1997, p.260). Schwitters even relocated materials from his adopted Molde for a grotto inside the *Merzbau*. Impressed by the scenic beauty of the Norwegian mountains and fjords Schwitters painted landscape and genre scenes, which featured the vernacular architecture of the local fishing community. His photographic albums also reveal a systematic exploration of the same subject matter through the medium of photography. Schwitters' return to figurative painting marks the beginning of a rural sensibility distinct from the urbanism of his life in Hanover. As his work in Hanover became increasingly confined to the Waldhausenstrasse residence, he continued to work on the *Merzbau*, sealed off from the outside world. In 1934 Schwitters isolation became a crisis, as works were seized from collections in Mannheim, Hanover, Berlin and Dresden to be included in Goebells' infamous *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich in 1935.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Photographic Albums of Kurt Schwitters (Family, Art & Travel)**

The end of the war coincided with the birth of Schwitters' son Ernst in 1918, who later studied photography in Norway, after which he followed a career as a professional photographer. During his teenage years, like so many amateur photographers, Ernst developed his prints at home in a converted bathroom with the help of his grandfather Eduard, who had bought him his first camera (Webster 1997, p.204). The impact of photography in the work of Kurt Schwitters has been largely disregarded. Schwitters first came into contact with photography at the Dresden Academy in 1909 (Webster 1997, p.15). Schwitters was profoundly affected by photography but wary of its seductive facility. Distrustful of what Greenberg (1985, p.62) was to later describe as the medium's 'estranging coldness', Schwitters realised it was necessary to advance the course of art in a direction, which was both introspective but distanced (Webster 1997, p.15).<sup>19</sup>

Schwitters' photomontage work stands alongside that of John Heartfield, George Grosz, Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausman. The latter claimed to have first introduced Schwitters to the technique (Elderfield 1987, p.78). Between 1918 and 1922 Schwitters produced several predominantly photographic collages such as *Die Handlung spielt in Theben* (1918-19) and *Wenzel Kind* (1921).<sup>20</sup> Between 1921-23 Schwitters also collaged photographic-postcards, including an edition of 'carte-de-visite', portraits of his own



image. By 1923 Schwitters increasingly incorporated photography as part of the layout of *Merz* magazine (Schmalenbach 1967, p.178). By 1927 Schwitters' hybrid approach encompassed the influence of his contemporaries such as Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky. In collaboration with the Dresden based photographer Genja Jonas, Schwitters produced a series of photographs, photograms and 'fototypographie', which were included in the Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart (1929) (Webster 1997, p.204). It was probably around this time that the *Zeichenheft I - IV* photoalbums were assembled. Eight complete photoalbums, plus two extant pages from a lost album survive in the *Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation*. Each reveals the progressive development towards a systematic approach to the photographic image.<sup>21</sup>

Schwitters' photoalbums fall into three categories. There are two loose pages from a conventional family photoalbum, a family photoalbum with an art deco-style cover, four sketch books of photographs with separate delineations of quality, and two further sketchbooks delineated by travel and place. There is also an album containing group portraits of contemporaries, collaborators, as well as individual portraits of admired friends and additional family snapshots. Each of these formats, and their respective layout of images, is important as it can be seen how Schwitters' approach to the photographic image evolved. A photographic presence emerges from a casual approach to the snapshot, via formalist typological experiments, to a system of spatio-temporal relationships, which can be seen as precursor of the photoconceptual practices of the 1960's.

### **Family Snapshots**

In the *Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation* there are two loose pages from a lost family photoalbum, which may have been put together by Schwitters' parents. These pages show the life of a well off family in Hanover at the beginning of the 20th c. There are small portrait snapshots of Schwitters' parents Henriette and Eduard, a photograph of the extended family enjoying a meal in a large garden. There is even a photograph of Schwitters' painting tutor Professor Bantzer from Dresden. A young Schwitters is seen pursuing typical bourgeois leisure time activities such as horse riding and shooting. Schwitters also appears in the uniform of the Wehrmacht during the First World War. There is a portrait of a surprised looking Schwitters, also in uniform, stood in front of Georgstrasse 19 in Hanover. Other recognisable locations include a photograph of Schwitters' home in Waldhausenstrasse, as well as the Döhrener Turm in the Eilenriede Park, which can still be seen today. Waldhausenstrasse like most of Hanover was destroyed during the war and has subsequently been rebuilt. Schwitters is also seen at ease with colleagues in the office, where he worked during the war. Schwitters appears again in uniform, standing in profile, holding a large sketching block upon which he is making a landscape study. There is also a photograph of a young girl which has had a grid drawn in pencil over it in preparation for a larger study as a painting perhaps. There



are other unidentified photographs of childhood friends, cousins and relatives of the kind found in any family album. All the photographs contained in these pages are informal, palm-sized images (even the portraits) which correspond to a snapshot aesthetic, none bigger than the size of a postcard. The overall layout of the album pages conforms to a tightly composed arrangement in order to maximise as many images per page as possible.

The second album of family photographs is a conventional bound volume. It differs as its layout follows a roughly typological design from page to page. These images are mounted in an A4 size, hard-back volume, which has a linear, abstract, art-deco cover design, with alternate bands in grey, white and brown. Throughout, there are transparent tissue leaves decorated with spider web motifs interleaved to protect the photographs. In this album Schwitters has arranged the photographs in a non sequential manner. The first page is unusual, in that it shows a typological series of photographs taken during a trip to the local zoo in Hanover. Each photograph shows a different animal: zebras, camels, peacocks etc. All the photographs throughout in this album are 3.4 x 4.4 cm. On each page up to twelve photographs are mounted in an ungridded, symmetrical manner to form a symmetrical configuration in most cases. The second page is noteworthy as it contains subject matter which appears in later *Zeichenheft* albums. One particular image, that of an eagle topped fountain, reappears in *Zeichenheft I*. Other subject matter, which Schwitters pursues later, includes the play of sunlight on natural forms, such as tree roots, rock formations, and the vertical forms of icicles in winter. The latter perhaps are of interest, given Schwitters' fascination with the cathedral as a vertical structure. Pages three and four show general city and countryside scenes of mixed subject matter, the locations of which doubtless held particular significance for Schwitters, who is known to have almost fetishised certain locations (Webster 1997, p.263).

Schwitters was fond of animals and page five is another typological foray of a personal nature into the world of animals. This time family pets are featured on this page with well known German pedigree dogs as Dachshunds and Alsatians. Page six and seven return to countryside scenes, with children swimming in a river, alongside other landscape images. A quarry study stands out as unusual subject matter. Page eight shows a series of six photographs of snow scenes around a river. The images on page nine have a personal and elegiac content, as there is a frontal photograph of a monument, bearing the legend 'Familie Fischer'. This was the family name of Schwitters' wife Helma. As Helma's parents were alive, it can be presumed that it is a monument to her grandparents. This page also includes images of pine trees and a snapshot of corn ears blowing across the frame by a cross wind against the sky. The final page shows the tributary of a river.

### **Hanover Artists Photoalbum – Fotos 1929 (Kasten I)**

This 1929 album is somewhat incomplete and follows a more erratic layout than those described already. The first page contains a portrait of Schwitters in profile, and below



this there is an archetypal artist-line-up 'Dada in Weimar 1922'. This photograph is a *who's who* of the time, as all Schwitters immediate avant-garde contemporaries are featured including Tzara, van Doesburg, Arp and Hans Richter. The photographs in this album are captioned in Schwitters' own hand with names, dates and locations as appropriate. In a playful reference to his own use of rubbish Schwitters is pictured holding a lid over a dustbin which has been inscribed with the word 'DaDa'.

Page two and three reveal two iconic images of the period circa 1925, which shows a group of Hanover artists posing humourously for the camera in the studio of the artist Hans Nitzchke. Also present are the Van Doesburgs, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Kate Steinitz, Schwitters and Nitzchke himself. Another snapshot on page one shows van Doesburg and Kolz stood in front of a municipal statue in a park. Page four, six and seven contain photographic portrait postcards: a studious looking van Doesburg and two glamorous portraits of friends: Nell Walden, the wife of Herwath Walden the influential Berlin based originator of Sturm, and Ingrid Lasser.

Page five has a selection of family photographs from 'Hannover' of different sizes, all captioned. A classic beach-photograph shows an athletic, if slightly portly, Schwitters clad in a swimming costume. He holds a beachball above his head, drawing the attention of three women, whom all face away from the camera towards him in admiration and amusement. There are other photographs of Schwitters and Helma respectively with a baby Ernst 'ca. 1919'.

### **Zeichenhefts I - IV – Artist's Photographs (Travel & Place)**

Each of these modest, soft-backed *Zeichenhefte* (sketchbooks) measures 23.5 x 18.2 cm, with white pages and violet sugar-paper covers. The same brand of sketchbook are used for each collection of photographs, with a consistent approach to each handwritten designation, as well as the numeric inscription on each cover's label. This suggests that they were assembled sometime between 1927/29 and 1931, which approximately corresponds to a time frame within which the photographs were probably taken.<sup>22</sup> It is also likely that Ernst printed all of these photographs to his father's specification and recommendations regarding cropping. Each book has been designated a specific value: *für Beste Fotos* (Best), *für Mittlere Fotos* (Inbetween), *für Schlechte* (Bad) and *für Fotocompositionen* (Photocompositions). Schwitters has carefully considered the selection of images and their respective layout on each page. In each book, series, sequence and repetition are the structuring principles, as well as other devices specific to the medium of photography.<sup>23</sup> All have been photographed on a 6 x 6 cm medium format negative. They can be viewed as snapshots rather than art-photographs. It may also be surmised that they were printed to a standard size, with the preconceived intention of their assemblage in the sketchbooks. With few exceptions they are all printed on glossy, high-contrast Agfa Lupex brovira paper, which gives each print a cold tonal quality.



## **Zeichenheft I 'Beste Fotos'**

The first part of this comprehensive selection focuses on the play of sunlight on flora and fauna, rocky outcrops and man-made stone structures. The first two images identify these concerns where two photographs are centred on the first page; one features a sidelong view of the chevron-like top of a stone built wall. The second image could be a close-up of the same area on a part of the wall, within which a facial profile is discernible.<sup>24</sup> These photographs have a white border and measure 5.6 x 5.3 cm. On the following pages, the same images are enlarged to 14 x 12 cm and the white borders of the original have been dispensed with. Rather than a collection of random snapshots, Schwitters inquiry deliberately emphasises the photographic image. The abstract image of a human face is mirrored on the opposite page, as a type of doppelganger. Standard-size images of similar subject matter follow on successive pages. The images are all sharply focused and tightly cropped, with no extraneous detail around their immediate subject-focus.

On page six test-strips of two and three exposure divisions have been placed in a vertical alignment, whereby the nebulous organic content of the image is further abstracted as it is read sideways. Schwitters seems to be concerned with the play of light and weight of his subject matter, between the airiness of foliage and the permanence of rock forms. On page eight verso (v), a series of photographs of a rubbish-dump would seem unusual as subject matter, except where Schwitters is the photographer. Here the encroachment of man-made materials in the natural environment is staged around a pool of putrid black water, which has collected in a roadside ditch.<sup>25</sup> Schwitters has taken a series of four photographs, which present various points of view of the broken pails, boxes and other detritus, which have gathered in this location. This unsentimental anti-aesthetic subject matter jolts beside the series presented on page nine. An arrangement of four photographs show scenes of travel. The main photograph shows a diagonal point-of-view across the unpopulated deck of a ship. The other three images are railway station scenes evocative of departure.

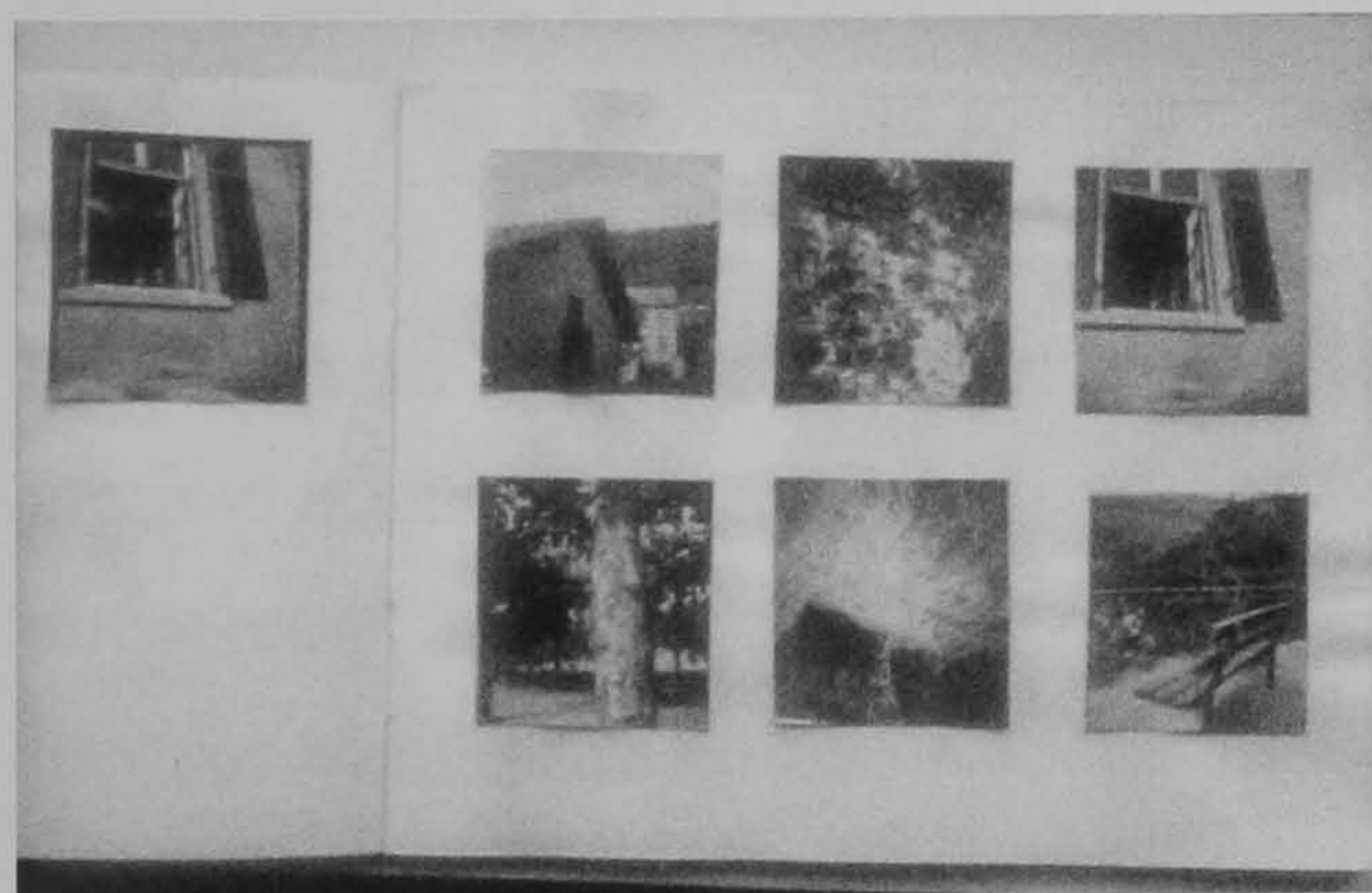
Further on there is a change of paper-stock, from the cold contrast of the bromide paper to the warm tone of an earthy chloride paper. Page nine (v) displays three pairs of photographs. Schwitters changes his point-of-view, with ground level close-up views of roadside ruts and hewn blocks of quarried stone. The edge of the city is also just visible at the top of the frame. There is a discernible sequence in the layout of these images as a progression is made to Hanover street scenes. Page ten returns to natural forms, with close-ups of gnarled tree roots and details of tree trunks. Schwitters has also photographed unpicturesque elements, such as graffiti-like initials carved into the bark of one of the trees. Schwitters' search for organic abstract forms is always tainted by human intervention.

Subsequent images lead out of the city into the suburbs as page ten (verso) opens with a medium close-up portrait of Helma Schwitters. Throughout this volume the only other



visible human presence are distanced, isolated figures in the railway and city pictures. Otherwise all the other images are unpopulated.<sup>26</sup> Moving away from an oblique-view of the outside of a rustic dwelling to scenes of local industry: a saw mill with stacked timber and a windmill feature. The sight-line of the viewer is guided by the linear vectors of felled tree trunks, and the blades of a windmill, which span the visual field of this layout. An image of sunlit tree-roots is repeated on the next page, in a sequence where diagonal vectors dominate, with the oblique-alignment of assembled phenomena: the side of a timber-framed house, the skew of an ornate iron gate, a hedgerow lined roadway and the perspectival disappearance of a dirt-track.

On page eleven (v) there are successive views of a windmill and telegraph pole situated at the fork in a roadway, as Schwitters approaches from the distance, to medium and near distance. As a rejoinder to these images the same windmill is brought into view at close-distance on page twelve (f). Scanning each series together establishes a narrative located between suburbia and the countryside, where there is no fixed demarcation between either. An innocuous brick-wall has been plastered with disintegrating posters pasted on top of one another, which bears the legend 'Hannoversches Tagesblatt'. A meandering shallow road-view is isolated at the end of the sequence, and then disappears towards an invisible horizon line. On the final page, Schwitters' walking-journey through the Hanover suburbs finds him near some mine workings. His over-the-fence, authorial presence is returned in his own shadow, as he captures multiple view points of the same subject, including a blurred distanced-view. The sequence and volume ends with two innocuous photographs of working horses in a field and an untethered goat.



Figs.58 Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft II 'Mittlere Fotos' Altenau 1931*. Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.

### **Zeichenheft II 'Mittlere Fotos' Altenau 1931**

The images on the opening pages of this volume, which Schwitters has designated as *mittlere* (inbetween), can be defined by what he considered his 'good' and 'bad photographs', in terms of their status as photographic images. Certain devices in the good pictures are repeated here, with the juxtaposition of disjointed series' of photographs, which also relate to travel. Each disparate series of images is punctuated by a single page-and-image layout throughout the volume. The first picture is a snapshot of 'Goldner Schlüssel' with a sign advertising rooms to rent, 'Zimmer zu vermieten'. On page one (v) a photograph, which recurs throughout this volume, an exterior view



through an unshuttered, open window where a birdcage sits on the window ledge of a darkened interior (fig.59).

This image is repeated on the following page amongst a series of non-sequential snapshots of various architectural and natural details alongside an overview of the town photographed from beside a bench. A series of unremarkable, banal snapshots follows, which feature the surrounding area he visited, with recurrent attention to the play of sunlight on natural and manmade forms and the repetition of specific images. This volume is of interest in its use of a double-page layout in the formal composition of its images. The first of these appears on page eight (v) and nine. A block of twelve images begins with a sidelong-view of some Modernist apartments. The bottom row of six show various stages of icicle formation around the timber support structure below a bridge. The bottom left images on each page have been rotated-left at 90°. The first image on page ten has been inverted. Schwitters seems to be exploiting the disorientating aspect of these natural forms in order to break the spatial dimension of the image. Pages ten (v) & eleven are mysteriously notated 'Altenau - No 203', remarkable only in their repetition of the fountain image, which first appeared in the family photoalbum (art-deco cover) and some other scenes of everyday life with some of the snow and icicle images repeated.

Page twelve is entitled 'Holland 1931 [204]'. This volume contains some of Schwitters' shorthand notations throughout, which include numerical delineations that may or may not refer to a particular roll of film or series of images. These holiday photographs are unpopulated. They show successive distanced images, as the photographer retreats up a beach, moving away from the incoming tide, which laps around the groynes at the shoreline. The horizon line eventually appears at a three-quarter frame view.<sup>27</sup> The final double-page layout follows a panoramic reading from left to right, across two rows of images with views of a boat house and harbour mouth, with pennants flying from moored boats.<sup>28</sup> In these photographs Schwitters' orientation circumnavigates the visual phenomena of the everyday, mediated through the vernacular landscape in which he travels, whether at home or abroad.

### **Zeichenheft III 'Schlechte Fotos'**

Schwitters designation of this final volume return to, but move away from the comments of Ruscha and Dan Graham in 1960/70's with regard to their de-skilled approach to the camera. Schwitters instinctively grasped the perceptual-distance inherent in the camera as an objective recording apparatus in his student days. By the late 1920's and early 1930's Schwitters seems to have embraced the snapshot aesthetic of the camera for this very reason, as he documents the banal and mundane features of his local, rural and urban environment, as well as those places to which he regularly travelled. His systems-based approach to these images is not organised relative to their aesthetic or material value, but by their relationship with place and travel. This is demonstrated by his



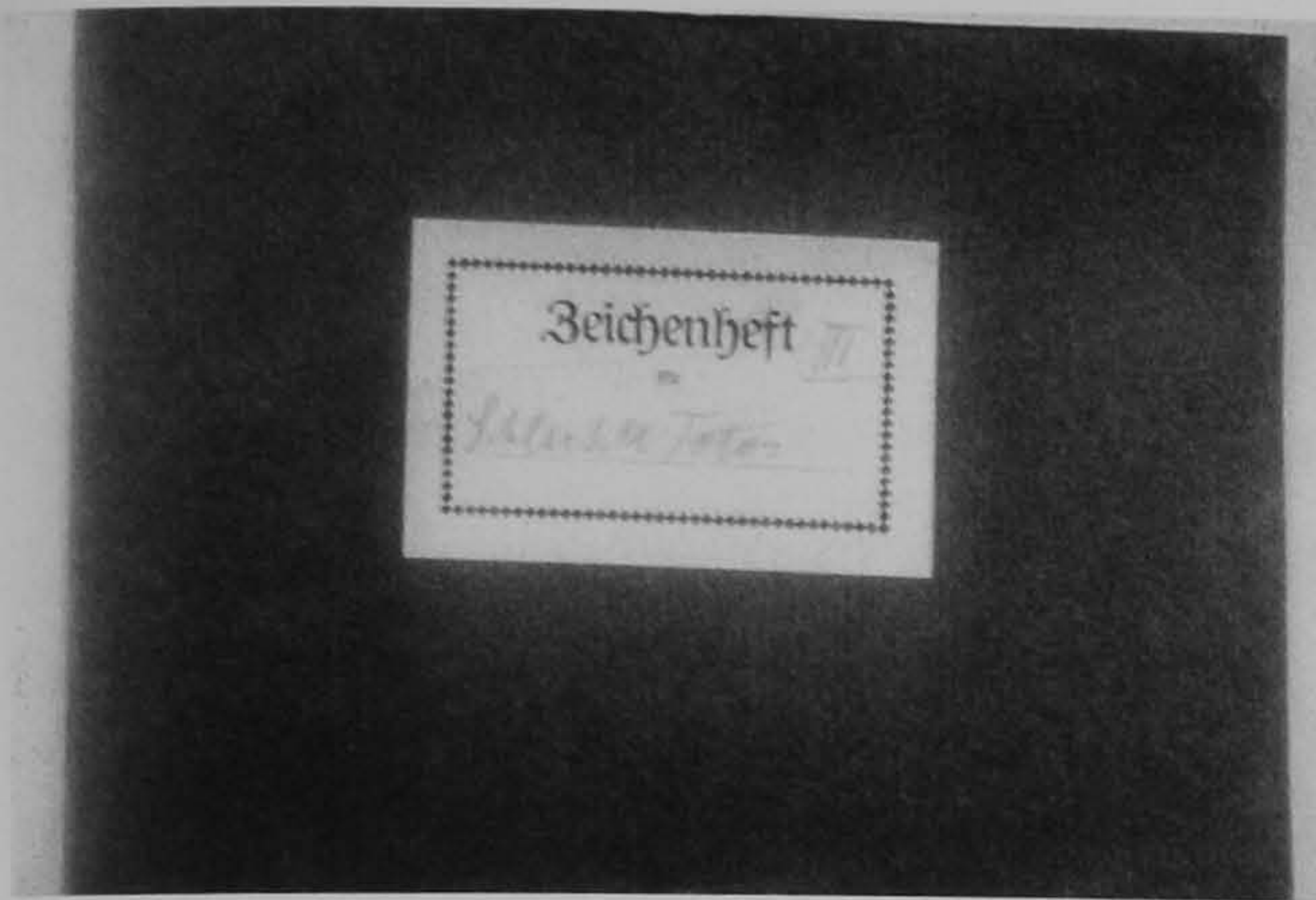


Fig.60 Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft III*, 'Schlechte Fotos'. Sketchbook with blue sugar-paper cover and adhesive printed label, with handwritten designation. Black and white photographs, 18.2 x 23.5 cm. (Closed dimensions).

inclusion of blurred images in the 'good', 'inbetween' and finally 'bad' sketchbooks (fig.60). Further still, this relationship is not that of a genius-loci, or sense of place, but rather how he sought to organise individual series of images. This follows a conceptual trajectory as he moves between the city and countryside via the suburbs. The merging of the thresholds of space are marked by Schwitters' careful attention to layout, where he feels that the rupture between inside and outside the city, industry and nature should be defined in a specific way using sequential and serial strategies, with the intermittent repetition of specific images.

*Zeichenheft III* features a random selection of remainder photographs from the previous two volumes. They include a filmic series of rapidly shot frames of Schwitters strolling along a Hanover street, with a tram and carriage passing in the background, as another pedestrian inquisitively turns to look-back at Schwitters and the photographer. In another image Schwitters has placed the camera on the ground, and set the self-timer in order take a humorous self-portrait stood on the brow of a rise, legs-astride hands clasped behind his back and bending forward. On page two (v) and three there are photographs of Schwitters, Helma and friends aboard the *Hamburg*, which may document the Schwitters family's first voyage to Norway in 1929. This image replicates the same point of view taken aboard the same ship which appears in *Zeichenheft I* (9a). Schwitters, Helma and another couple are shown looking out to sea, as Schwitters guides their view – he points to some unseen landmark. Other informal group portraits show the holidaymakers relaxed and at ease as they sit in deck chairs. Out of place but on the same page there are two photographs of Etruscan statuettes photographed in an unidentified museum perhaps.

Schwitters would often travel with Kate Steinitz (1962, p.7) and other friends on car-journeys around the surrounding countryside of Hanover. Page three switches to a series of photographs taken from a moving car on one such trip. All four are out of focus in a lateral motion-blur as the vehicle moves at speed. Two images on this page are photographed from either a stationary or slow moving vehicle. Each of the seven images of motion are spread across both pages and annotated as 'no. 91', with Schwitters' shorthand beneath. The stasis of the rocky outcrops in the following five pictures contrasts with the motion of the journey depicted in the preceding images. Schwitters' inclination to make photographs of this kind, and go to the trouble to carefully mount them, including the out-of-focus images, reveals his changed attitude to photography. An



analysis of the following and missing photoalbums when they are recovered will cast additional light on the systematic nature of his previously unresearched photographic practice.

Page five features a close-up of a bizarre detail taken from a photograph in *Zeichenheft I*. The photograph focuses on a flash of light which may emanate from a mirror or shiny object or conversely a square, painted negative stencil of the motif 'T'. It is almost impossible to tell either way what this unusual photograph shows, it appears to be some kind of intervention at the very least.



Fig.61 Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft IV* 'Fotocompositionen'. Black and white photographs.

#### **Zeichenheft IV 'Fotocompositionen'**

In the final volume Schwitters explores the effects of double-exposure as he experiments with spatial depth and photcollage technique. Schwitters photographic apprehension of camera's facility to present a perceptual point of view related to notions of distance and proximity are presented in an overview of the city, alongside a street-level view of Hanover. Schwitters images are vertically mounted as the three images have been overlaid and contact-printed directly onto the photographic paper. Also found loose inside this volume, a negative shows a domestic interior-view with right of frame, floor to ceiling drapes drawn at the side of a doorway or French windows, from which light falls across the floor of a darkened room (fig.61). The print from this negative shows that Schwitters and Ernst decided that almost half the frame should be cropped. The base of the drapes has been isolated and abstracted in an ethereal softness, as this detail has been enlarged in printing.

#### **Grey Photoalbum I 'Djupvand' (Eisenbahn)**

Schwitters and Helma first visited Norway on a holiday-cruise to Spitzbergen in 1929 (Webster 1997, p.29). By 1934 Schwitters had located various hotels on the west coast in which to base himself. He deliberately selected these on account of their location, but primarily chose those which were popular with tourists, to whom he hoped to sell the paintings he made (Webster 1997, p.258). In *Grey Photo Album I Djupvand* the *Djupvasshyta Hotel* is seen in two photographs, which shows the hotel situated by Lake Djupvand, with an oblique-viewpoint from across the front of the hotel, onto the lake and a gable-end view onto the same. Schwitters replicated these viewpoints in two paintings *Djupvand 2*, *Djupvand 3* (1931), and *Djupvand* (1937, fig.62) depicts the same hotel.



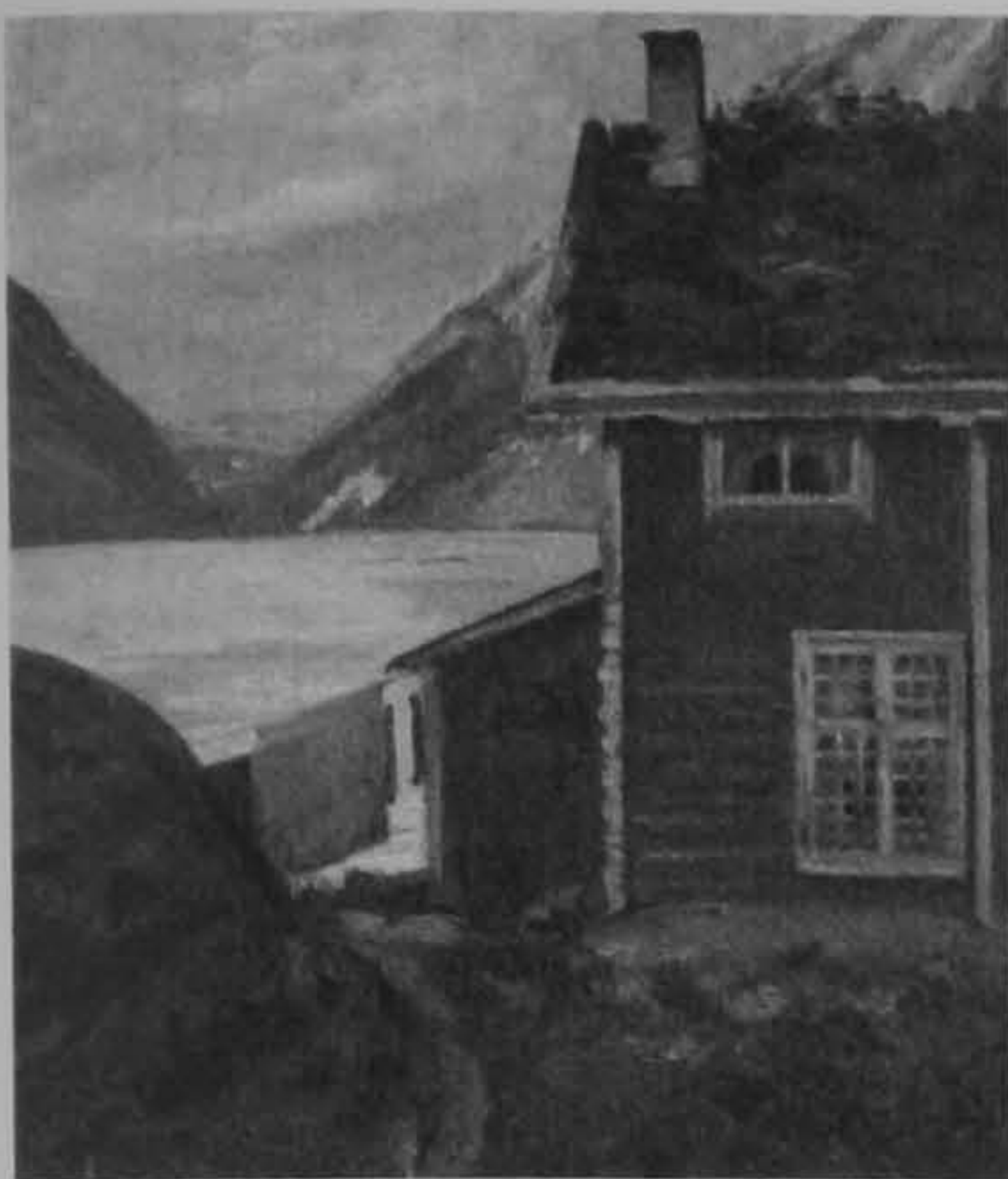


Fig.62 Kurt Schwitters, *Djupvand*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 57.5 x 49 cm.

These photographs are typical of Schwitters' later approach to photography. Schwitters and Ernst made long cycle and walking journeys through the Norwegian landscape, documenting their travels with photographs of wild flowers and rock formations, as well as the spectacular views of mountains and fjords. Here Schwitters has delineated this volume as a travelogue documented via railway journeys (*Eisenbahn*). On page four Schwitters, once again, arranges three pairs of photographs showing Ernst at the edge of a fjord drawing closer to the photographer, but absent in the last two images. On page fourteen, *Ranmabahn* shows a steam train winding its way through a valley. Page fifteen pictures four twilight views of a railway station orientated around a trackside arrow sign (fig.63). In each photograph Schwitters alters his point of view from an oblique position beside the track until the frame of the camera is aligned in parallel with the track and a line of silhouetted freight cars standing motionless against a darkening sky.



Fig.63 Kurt Schwitters, *Grey Photo Album I Djupvand*, 1931. Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.

### **Grey Photoalbum II 'Molde, Hjertoy, Andalsnes, Ranmadal'**

In 1934 Schwitters leased a hut from a fisherman named Hoel, on Hjertøy Island in Moldefjord. On the island he at first camped whilst working on the conversion of the hut in order to make it habitable. Page one has two adjacent photographs – an informal portrait of 'Frau Hoel', and another 'mit Dagny', who is perhaps her daughter as both figures are seen in profile. On Page two 'unser Zelt in Hjertøy' (fig.64) a tent is pitched in front of the hut, which was to become the Molde residence for Schwitters and his family. Schwitters was deeply superstitious and the horseshoes and broken rope-tackle, which were added later for luck, at the time of this photograph, had not been nailed above the door (Webster 1997, p.265).

Although the hut was never deemed a *Merzbau*, it underwent a crude conversion commensurate with its use as a living space. Documentary photographs of the hut, in the *Kurt Schwitters Archive*, show the walls and doorway collaged with mainly text-based, printed



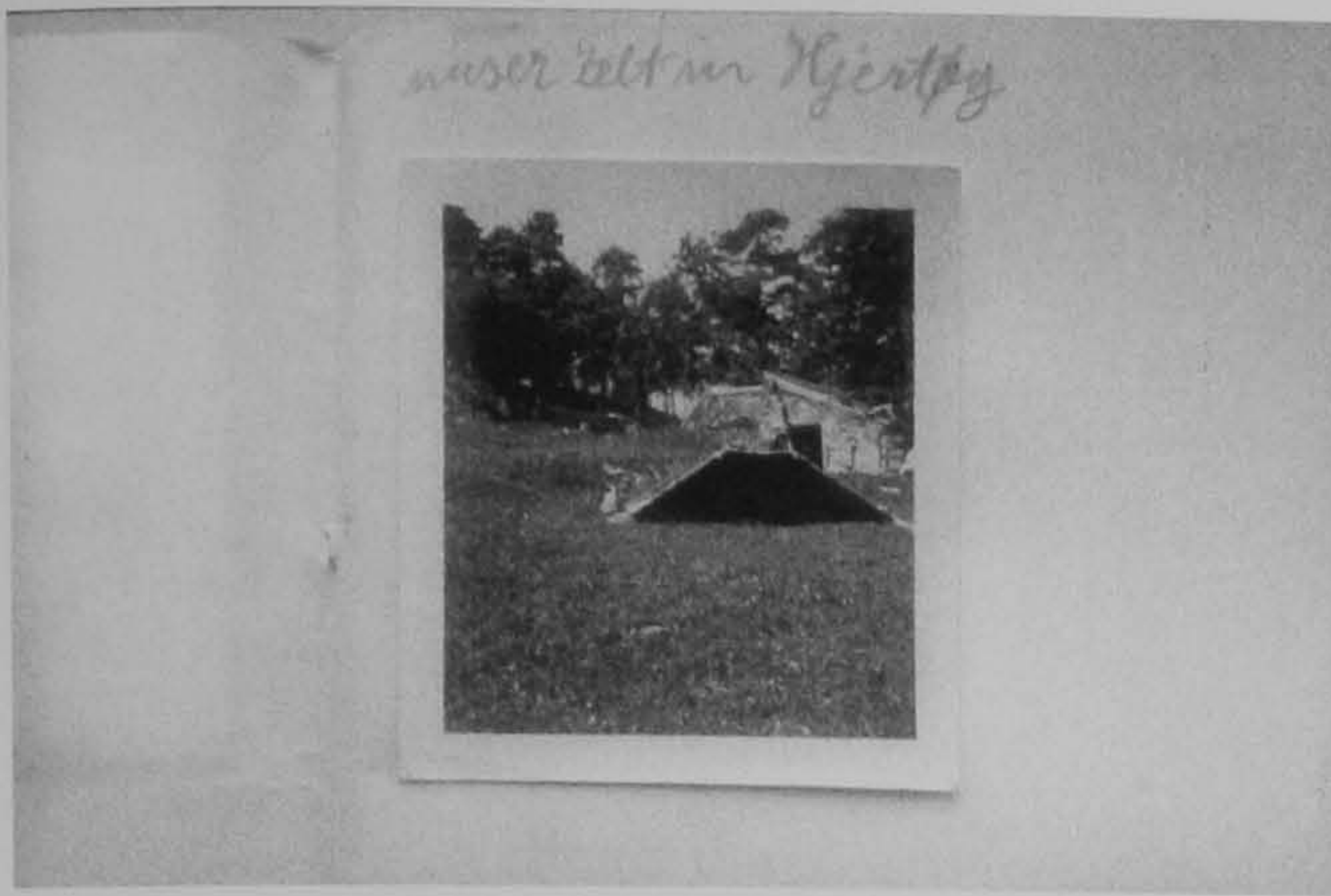


Fig.64 Kurt Schwitters, *Grey Photo Album II*, 'unser Zelt in Hjertøy', black and white photograph., 5.6 x 5.3 cm.

material of the kind first used to surround the *Merzcolumn*. Pages three to five are blank. Whether these were left for the inclusion of other images, or as an editorial device cannot be certain. On page five 'Andalsnes', Schwitters utilises the negative spaces of the architectural half-span forms of a bridge and the gap between two lakeside buildings, by which to orientate directed points of view in a visual interplay between the three images (fig.65).



Fig.65 Kurt Schwitters, *Grey Photo Album II*, Black and white photograph, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.

Pages six (v) and seven contain general landscape views of Ranmadal defined by the photographic documentation of spatial-markers in the landscape: bridges, a lakeside row boat, trees, river rapids and a road disappearing into the distance. Page eight is a series of sublime mountain-top views of the jagged summits of Isterdalim. These photographs document Schwitters' walking journeys through the Norwegian landscape. An unknown man is portrayed, who may be a friend or guide. Otherwise human presence is marked by a solitary telegraph mast or a mountain top rail cart at a cliff's edge. Page eight pictures sublime mountain-top views with precipitous crags. Two images draw the viewer away from the mountains, with the lone Ernst photographed in the distance. On page thirteen Schwitters assembles six analytical studies of a Norwegian house in which he focuses on those details, which call out to him as the interpellant signifiers of a regional Norwegian architectural vernacular. Schwitters highlights these features in the same way that Ruscha identifies the hybrid architectural vernacular of Los Angeles. He isolates the grassed roof, a feature known in Norway as *torvak* (fig.66). Other motifs include obelisk-like, stone chimney-stacks, and the carved circular motifs at the corners of the gable-end barge boards. The final two images arrive at another railway station and the final page has an endleaf quality, with two distanced landscape views over a lake. This volume, more than any of the others, stands out as a travelogue, not only by definition of Schwitters' handwritten detail of the places visited, but also in its overall design. And they are designed. If these books had been edited and printed as Ruscha's





Fig.66 Kurt Schwitters, *Grey Photo Album II*,  
Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.

they would possess a similar materiality, in their economic layout. It could be speculated, that given Schwitters' major accomplishments as a typographer and poet that he would have incorporated text and image, as he had with the *Merz* magazines. The size of the sketchbooks are also reminiscent of the pocket guidebooks or the cheap paperbacks with which Ruscha was fascinated.

### **Merzbauten as Temporary Shelters – From Shell to Nest**

Upon taking flight from Germany Schwitters entered a period of cultural and artistic isolation, which effectively lasted from 1937 until his death in 1948. He was estranged from the vast network of contacts he had developed throughout Europe in the 1920's, as most of his colleagues had fled either to Paris or America. On Hjertøy Schwitters lived in a single-storey, nest-like structure, the walls of which were insulated with a variety of found materials and pictures. These were mainly reminders of home alongside textual elements, and other ephemeral collected during his time in Norway. The doorway and window areas lost their corners, as Schwitters modified the frames by adding found timber, plaster and paint and cubed forms. In December 1936 Ernst felt increasingly in danger and fled to Norway. Schwitters soon followed his son in January and in February, after the arrest of the Spengemanns, it was too dangerous to stay in Germany, as notice had been given for Schwitters arrest by the Gestapo (Webster 2003, p.277-279). After Schwitters' departure Helma, who stayed behind in Hanover, began arranging the transport of some of his important works to Norway (Orchard & Schulz 2003, p.20).<sup>29</sup> Schwitters moved to Oslo where he took up residence in the suburb of Lysaker. Norway was perhaps an unusual choice as most of his contemporaries had fled to France, England and America (Webster 1997, p.273). Schwitters' destination was determined by his attraction to the Norwegian landscape, which he knew well from previous holidays. Nomad-like Schwitters alternated his time between Lysaker during the winter months and Molde in the summer, whilst spending some time in the mountains at Djupvasshytta.

### **Stealth House – Haus am Bakken**

In 1937 Schwitters was anguished at having had to leave the Hanover *Merzbau*. Ernst suggested that Schwitters start work on a second *Merzbau* in Lysaker, which was known as the *Haus am Bakken* (House on the Slope). Mindful of the potential fate of the Hanover *Merzbau* this work was designed from the outset as a transportable, two-storey



structure (Schmalenbach 1967, p.159). The *Lysaker Merzbau* was completed in three years as both a development and rebuilding of the Hanover *Merzbau*. The design of the *Lysaker Merzbau* and its interior were preplanned and transported from Hanover to Oslo.<sup>30</sup> The *Kurt Schwitters Archive* in Hanover contains a sub-archive of collected materials and objects recovered by Friedhelm Lach in 1981, after the *Merzbau* was destroyed by fire in 1951.<sup>31</sup> No photographic documentation of the *Lysaker Merzbau* exists, and documentary accounts of its construction come from Ernst and his father's correspondence. From these letters it is known that Schwitters camouflage painted and weathered the structure, which he built from scratch, with mud and pine needles. The orientation of the building was focused around a window facing south toward the sea.<sup>32</sup> When Germany invaded Norway in 1940 Schwitters was forced to escape north to Norway.

Almost half of Schwitters' output consists of landscape paintings which have been largely disregarded by the majority of critical appraisals of his oeuvre, with the exception of Cardinal, Kirkeby and Isabelle Ewig.<sup>33</sup> In these paintings Schwitters approached nature directly. Their impact led to the introduction of a painterly, Impressionistic background in his collages. The economy of the *Lysaker* collages, with their stippled over-painting reminiscent of Impressionism, have generally been dismissed as unimportant works. Cardinal (1995, p.20) has observed how several of these works such as *Lysaker* (fig.67) contain "oddments from the beach including driftwood, seaweed and remnants of rusted metal." He also refers to Schwitters' overtly Impressionistic paintings – "marking this as a period of uncertainty and unveiled nostalgia." Nostalgia is usually interpreted as a negative concept when applied to artworks. However Kirkeby (1995, p.30) identifies Schwitters' longing with an "ideology of freedom of movement". Schwitters spent three years in Norway and Wadley (1985, p.37) has outlined the distressing circumstances of exile which characterised this time:

There was a strong pressure from the state authorities on Schwitters, intermittently throughout the Norwegian period to leave the country. He had no work permit, no substantial income and Germans were not welcome in Norway at that time. He was in correspondence with Kate Steinitz and other friends in America, with a view to joining them. Arrangements for his American visa seem to have been virtually complete when events overtook him.



Fig.67 Kurt Schwitters, 1940. *Lysaker*, Collage,  
19.4 x 14.9 cm.

Schwitters was interned briefly by the Norwegian and British military when Germany invaded Norway in 1940. Kate Steinitz (1965, p.8) has observed how Schwitters



'escape' or mode of travel changed: "When he had to escape from his new home country, immigration became a serious project." On June 8th 1940 Kurt and Ernst made their escape from Norway at Tromsø, on the ice-breaker Fridtjof Nanssen and upon their arrival in Scotland, after ten days at sea, they were arrested and interned (Wadley 1981, p.37).

### **Internment: Manx-Merz**

From June 1940 to November 1941, Schwitters was moved between a succession of internment camps: Midlothian, Edinburgh, York and Manchester. Schwitters eventually arrived at the Hutchinson 'P' Camp in Douglas in the Isle of Man on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1940 after being transported by ferry from Liverpool. Hutchinson Square is situated off Broadway, which rises steeply from the Central Promenade. A quiet secluded square of Victorian boarding houses with glazed bricks remains unchanged today, as it overlooks a small park or gardens surrounded by trees. Fred Uhlmann (Elderfield 1987, p.205), a fellow internee, described the setting as follows, a scene which Schwitters painted from the top floor of the house in which he was interned:

Imagine a square in the middle of London consisting of some forty small and cheap lodging houses. Surround it with barbed wire and fill each with between thirty and forty men of all ages and professions. Imagine all windows painted blue and all electric light bulbs red (giving by day the light of an aquarium, at night that even more incongruous - of a brothel), and you have some notion of the Hutchinson Square Camp at Douglas.

Conditions of internment have been described by Klaus Hinrichsen and other internees as both protective, but also a situation where the fear of invasion via Ireland would have left the internees trapped. According to contemporary accounts, Schwitters' experience in the Hutchinson Camp was not as grim a prospect as it might first have seemed, or indeed was the experience for other internees held during the war.<sup>34</sup> The mutually supportive community of Hutchinson was undeniably a lively environment – a culture of resistance against fascism and the contradiction of their inalienable situation, as those who had been forced into exile. Schwitters was interned along with an array of German intellectuals and refugees, some of whom had already been domiciled in Britain for a number of years (Webster 1997, p.308). Schwitters was regarded in some quarters as an anachronism and the following commentary bears this out (Uhlmann 1960, p.21):

Much to his displeasure he was seen by many fellow inmates as a curious relic of a dead avant garde, with his nonsense poetry recitals and sculptures made from porridge and stale bread, and perhaps for the first time felt that he was not only an outsider but an irrelevant and comical one.

Uhlmann's unsympathetic commentary indicates Schwitters' isolation and an uninformed disdain for Schwitters' international reputation, which Hinrichsen informed me, was due to his inability to understand what Schwitters was doing. The camp commander Captain Daniel was more sympathetic to Schwitters' needs and was able to



provide him with a studio in the attic of a building outside the camp (Wadley 1981, p.37). Schwitters was also a financially astute businessman and he was careful to reserve his oil paints for the portrait commissions from which he profited owing to his prolific output. Wilson (1999, u.p.) has described how he continued to paint Norwegian landscapes from memory. He also painted two elevated views of Douglas from his top floor room. *Douglas Scenery I* (1941) and *Rooftops on the Isle of Man* (1941, fig.68) face onto a glimpsed view of the sea, discernible beyond the trees and houses inbetween. Both were painted on procured linoleum tiles cut from the floor of the house in which Schwitters was billeted.



Fig.68 Kurt Schwitters, *Rooftops on the Isle of Man*, 1941. Oil on linoleum, 36 x 43.5 cm.

Schwitters' articulation of *Merz* was taken to extreme limits as artist's materials were in short supply. Anecdotal reminiscences from the time by Uhlmann and Hinrichsen give an insight to the increasingly absurd materials which Schwitters incorporated in his work, as well as recounting the famous performances of his poems and stories. Schwitters produced few abstract works during internment, and he was reluctant to show, what were essentially private works, to his fellow internees as he was mindful of their criticism.

Wadley (1981, p.63) has questioned the validity of the argument, which accords Schwitters' resort to such materials due to his: "[...] victimisation by circumstance" as misleading. He cites a contemporary account of Schwitters' working methods in Hanover prior to his exile, by Georges Hugnet from 1932/34, who describes the grotesque materials, which were already part of Schwitters' inventory (Motherwell pp. 163-164):

He was able to create around himself an atmosphere into which he escaped, and it is in this that he truly was Dada. His house is said to have been very strange, and he apparently succeeded in evoking the impossible. Walking along the street, he would pick up a piece of string, a fragment of glass, the scattered pieces of the wasteland, the elements of these infinitely inspiring landscapes. At home, heaps of wooden junk tufts of horse-hair, old rags, broken and unrecognisable objects, provided him with clippings from life and poetry, and constituted his reserves. With these witnesses taken from the earth he constructed sculptures and objects which are among the most disturbing products of his time.

By contrast Wilson (1999, u.p.) views Schwitters' choice of materials as: "a dialectic between possession and dispossession"; she has also described the fractious nature of Schwitters' appropriative strategies as follows:



Firstly in internment conditions, circumstances created even baser forms of Merz; before materials arrived from Artists' International Association or island suppliers, crushed rocks were used for pigments; 'oil paint from crushed minerals and dyes extracted from food rations mixed with olive oil from sardine tins [...] gelatine from boiled out bones [mixed] with flowers and leaves to size newspapers', ceiling squares, dismantled tea chests and linoleum prized from the floor formed the crudest of supports for his art. While Schwitters preserved his precious oil paints for portraits, the visible degradation of Merz materials in camp conditions added a poignancy to his experimental work and its private status as a secret diary.



Fig.69 Kurt Schwitters, *Untitled*, 1940/41. Oil on asbestos tile, 15 x 16 cm.

It was upon one such asbestos ceiling square measuring 15 x 16 cm that Schwitters made a painting, which was recovered from the possessions of Walter Goldschmidt, another war-time internee. A crude painting with linear organic forms in green and yellow, around a central heart, and clover-like motif in red, on an ochre ground (fig.69). The free-form abstraction of this work is unusual, but heart and clover motifs are to be found in Schwitters' earlier works as talismans of luck and fortune, such as in the collage *Mz 33* (1920). The argument can be made that whilst Schwitters' anti-aesthetic inventory was already established, the conditions of estrangement under which he found himself lead him to extreme practices, which are not uncharacteristic given the knowledge of materials secreted within the Hanover *Merzbau*. Some works display a reductive aesthetic such as *Untitled (Picture with Film Spool)* (1940-41, fig.70). John Elderfield (2004) has described the way in which these works "hover on the edge of formalisation" in their resort to a minimum quota of disparate objects. In his room Schwitters also constructed, what may have been the beginning of an unsubstantiated third *Merzbau*. The only surviving documentation of this construction are the anecdotal reminiscences of those internees who saw it such as Hinrichsen, who described it as follows:

There, in the middle of the room stood, or rather shook three pyramid-like sculptures, studded with stamps, cigarette boxes, nails, pebbles and shells and covered with mould – the world's first abstract porridge sculptures (Webster 1997, p.313).



Fig.70 Kurt Schwitters, *Untitled, (Film spool and wire)*, 1940/41. Collage, 19.8 x 14.8 cm.



It was Schwitters' intention to exhibit the porridge sculpture in a group show to be held at Hutchinson Camp on 19th November 1940. As the curator Hinrichsen rejected the piece on the basis of logistical factors, and on a humorous note, for health-and-safety reasons. Photographic documentation shows Schwitters' alternative exhibit – a portrait of Rudolf Olden. Within the camp's community Schwitters emerged as a popular personality, even though Schwitters' work was generally dismissed as inappropriate. Whereas the expressionist depiction of internment, by other artists, was considered more appropriate to the political climate. Amongst the artistic community there was continual debate as to the role of the artist, with the general consensus being that abstraction was outmoded, and not appropriate to the urgency of the political climate. The revolutionary and political status of Schwitters' process of *Formung* and *Entformung* was lost on an academic elite, and their misguided belief in the narrative power of figurative expressionism, apart from the notable exceptions of perhaps Hinrichsen and Eric Kahn. The latter was one of the few artists whom Schwitters admired. As the porridge sculpture decayed – its colour transformed – as it seeped through the floor, to the quarters of the men living below (Hinrichsen 2004). Schwitters' extraordinary impulse to use porridge as a material was borne out of frustration and served as a substitute for the unavailability of the vast quantities of plaster with which Schwitters constructed the Hanover *Merzbau*, and would subsequently use for the Ambleside *Merzbarn*.

### **Exile: London and Ambleside (*Merzbarn*)**

On his release in November 1941 Schwitters moved to London to join his son Ernst in Bayswater. Although free and reunited with his son, Schwitters felt isolated, separated as he was from the vast array of contacts he had made in Europe, most of whom were displaced themselves. Despite this, his standing as a major figure of the avant-garde was acknowledged by the likes of Roland Penrose and Herbert Read. Consequently he was able to take part in several prominent group shows, including a one-man show at Jack Bilbo's Modern Art Gallery in 1944. Schwitters' feelings of isolation were prompted by incidents, such as when the BBC walked out of a performance of the *Ursonate*, after they deemed it unworthy of recording (Wadley 1981, p.40). It was at this time that he met Edith 'Wantee' Thomas, with whom he formed an intimate relationship that lasted the rest of his life. Schwitters was inspired by his arrival in London, and he found plenty of material amongst the vernacular signage of post-blitz London, which he rapidly assimilated into his collages. Schwitters' work has been credited as a forerunner of Pop art, and his work displays many of the traits, which appeared in the work of Richard Hamilton and Peter Blake some fifteen years later. Sarah Wilson (2000, u.p.) has linked Schwitters' personal life with a robust sense of location and Britishness, in contrast to the austerity and near formlessness of the Norwegian and Manx works:

Perhaps because of the Victoriana of street and pub, the artlessness of furnished lodgings with their cheap prints and anti macassars, the taste of a working class girl like Wantee in the era of Picture Post, Schwitters collages, in particular the series using reproductions of Franz Von Dreffefer's



'Galerie Moderner Meister' series, such as *Der Brautwerbung*, 1942 or *Merz 42, Like an Old Master* were full of tenderness in the traditional scenes they revealed. Weddings, motherhood, childhood, days of yore, jostled as in memory itself, contrasted with both the bus tickets of everyday life and the fantasy world of contemporary advertisements. While Dada had been obsessed with patriarchy and patricide, Schwitters here evokes a female world, and curiously anticipates the sentimentality of English pop.

Ernst Schwitters (1963, p.11) has also described the content of Schwitters poems, which absorbed a whole range of everyday sonic detritus:

London Symphony is a cacophony of advertising jingles, telephone jingles, small ads war slogans: 'Dig for Victory', ABC (Aerated Bread Company) and the evidential self-referential cry of the rag and bone man". Although Schwitters assimilated a wide range of material from everyday London life Ernst Schwitters has commented that he never developed a distinctive 'English style' but "ran instead in rapid succession through the earlier stages of his development, but with a clarity and perfection of form, not attained before.

Schwitters' new lease of life was devastated by the death of his wife, and later in 1943 what he had most feared – the destruction of the Hanover *Merzbau* during allied bombing. It is likely that the stress of these catastrophic events led to Schwitters' suffering a stroke. In 1944 Schwitters and Wantee took two weeks holiday in the Lake District to help relieve the distress of these events. As in Norway, Schwitters was enthralled with the scenic beauty of the Cumbrian landscape. Schwitters continually repressed the negative context of his experience as he continued to paint landscapes, not merely as a nostalgic enterprise or pass-time activity, but as an act of resistance. Schwitters often painted outside and the immediacy of his technique is evidenced in his continued use of stippled textures, and a move away from solid colour formations. This trip marked the end of Schwitters' renewed interest in the urban environment, which ushered in the rural aesthetic that was to drive the next phase of Schwitters' work and his imminent departure from London.

In June of 1945, Schwitters moved to Ambleside, where Wadley (1981, p.39) has described how "they were befriended by Harry Bickerstaff, a young school teacher, from whose nearby allotment Schwitters collected flowers for his still-life paintings; bones, stones, wood, sticks etc. for his collages and constructions." The respective dates of the collage *Fredlyst with Artificial Bone* (1941/45/47), which includes these elements, reflects the duration of its formation and transport during the itinerant passage of Schwitters' exile in Britain. In 1947 Schwitters met Harry Pierce and was offered the use of a derelict barn at Cylinders Farm. Enthusiastic at the prospect of starting work on the *Merzbarn* (fig.71) Schwitters wrote to The Museum of Modern Art in New York, who agreed to support the project with funding of a \$1000 grant. When the first installment arrived Schwitters hurriedly commenced work, in spite of his failing health, which was aggravated by the poor lighting and lack of heating in the barn. Schwitters' journey from the Hanover *Merzbau* to the Ambleside *Merzbarn* marks a period of transition, in terms of Schwitters choice of materials but importantly the impact of the location. This



was both formal and psychological as his work on the *Merzbarn* can be interpreted as a return to the reverie of a lost childhood playfulness and liberation revealed in the playful selection of found materials. In this respect Bachelard (1969, p.6) provides an analogy for the immemory of former houses relived in the day dreaming space of the temporary inertia of the present home or house:

And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are.



Fig.71 Kurt Schwitters, *Elterwater Merzbarn*, 1947. Wall relief, mixed media. Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.

The brick-built solidity of the Waldenhausenstrasse house was supplanted by the stone-built barn. Schwitters constructed the *Merzbarn* from materials collected in the place where it was situated – the landscape of Elterwater. These were secreted within the organic fluidity of the interior wall-relief, which in turn was fused with the architecture of the barn itself. Schwitters modelled the plaster forms in such a way as to give the impression of a living morphology, which was subjected to the uninvited entropic forces of nature. During the onset of the winter months the barn was waterlogged as rain-water flowed down the hill and through the barn, which lay over the path of a stream. The provenance of Schwitters' materials were preserved in the plaster, but at the same time they were dematerialised, as their edges dissolve within the painterly sublimation of the whole. Schwitters vacillates between the appearance and obscuration of the found objects used. These transformations form a history of 'mnemonic surfaces' and shifting identity, which extol a sense of place, as these materials are reassembled to form a sophisticated language of mobility. The *Merzbarn* manifests the apotheosis of *Merz*, as Schwitters regarded the *Merzbarn* as his most important work.<sup>35</sup> Schwitters' instinctive accumulation of found objects and materials never tired but their reconfiguration was informed by his parallel output of paintings and sculptures, which were influenced by the light and weather of the Cumbrian landscape. Elderfield (1969, p.62) attributes Schwitters' assertion of the non-identity of the materials within the painterly whole of the *Merzbarn*, as he was all too aware of his "precarious position between the abstract and nostalgic." Another passage from Bachelard (1994, p.143) serves as an analogy, which locates the precarious balance of Schwitters' work in-between, movement and stasis, exile and home:

Having crossed the countless little thresholds of the disorder of things that are reduced to dust, these souvenir objects set the past in order, associating condensed motionlessness with far distant voyages into a world that is no more.



The collage works and *Merzbildings* of Kurt Schwitters are full of the material detritus of the places in which he settled. The forced displacement of exile, the continual rebuilding and impossible return to what he had left behind, constitutes an aesthetics of distance, between his former home and adopted home. Inbetween, Schwitters' exile was mediated by the changed materiality of found materials, in the formation of a dislocated visual language. Cardinal (1994, p.93) accounts for the detritus collected during the distance-travelled in *Green and Red* (1947), which contains an envelope bearing the legend 'par avion'. Likewise *Liner Passenger* (1943-47) contains a ticket fragment from a sea journey 'Bergen Norge':

Such exotica evoke the journeys Schwitters could make in fantasy if not in fact (in reality he crossed neither the Mediterranean nor the Atlantic). They are emblems of that bitter-sweet yearning directed across space and time that we call nostalgia [...] It may be more plausible to see them as alluring emblems of a situation and a circumstance which, even in the pivotal gesture of recovery, as the collector bends down in the street, were themselves perceived as beyond redemption. Emblems are substitutions, not actualities: the ticket collected is no longer the ticket that can be used on a real journey. So it is that the notion of metonymic immediacy may, after all, be obliged to yield to one of metaphoric suggestivity, the colour of distance. [...] The poetic expressiveness of the collages is that of a creative subject whose imaginings blur chronology while purporting to invoke it. There is always a year mentioned 'under' the collage, but rarely one 'inside' it: the act of dreaming can be dated but dream content is timeless.

Cardinal alludes to Bachelard's reverie and the way in which the course of time becomes indistinct. Schwitters' use of materials was also indistinct. Elderfield (2004) has described this veiling of materials as an 'inscrutability', which strengthens their function as mnemonic-surfaces, as they manifest the different modalities of past, present and future. As a unified whole, they are not the product of nostalgia but move forward, as they flare into view before their disappearance, and re-emergence in the present as a redemptive projection of the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tzara, T., 1952, *Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948*, New York: Sidney Janis Gallery.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkeby, P., 1995 'The Tyranny of Style' in *Schwitters*, Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, p.29. A Danish painter and sculptor, Kirkeby's astute appraisal of Schwitters life and work was featured in this catalogue of landscape paintings, which Schwitters made in Norway, where he had holidayed with his family prior to his flight from Germany.

<sup>3</sup> His concept of rebuilding was a contradistinction to the nihilism and destructive anti-art and political impulses of Dada. As the basis of a nomenclature Merz was also a prefix attached to different categories of work eg. *Mz 33* (1920) and *Merzbild Einunddreissig* (1920), which translates as *Merzpicture 31*, *Merzdrawing*, *Merzrelief* etc. Prior to Merz, Schwitters inventorised his work alphabetically (Orchard and Schulz 2000, p.34).

<sup>4</sup> These tours brought Schwitters into contact with Dada and the Constructivism of De Stijl. Schwitters never identifies with any one of these groups. He was able to distil these experiences through *Merz*, as he progressively distanced himself from Dada. However his manifesto was not isolationist. Rather Schwitters' proclamation '*I am Merz*' existed beyond the identity of the individual, proposing instead the possibility of wider identities available through art. Schwitters identification with art, rather than politics, in the post-war Germany was antithetical to Richard Hühlsenbach and the Berlin Dadaists. This led to the



*husk and kernel* Dada splinter groups as Schwitters described them in his 1921 essay 'Merz' (Motherwell 1981, p.60).

<sup>5</sup> *Merz* ran for 26 issues ending in 1932. Each issue featured contributions and collaborations with the network of artists with whom Schwitters worked. These included Hans Arp, El Lissitzky, Vladimir Tatlin and Piet Mondrian. Subject matter was wide ranging, including poetry, typography, design and architecture (Strauss 1985, u.p.).

<sup>6</sup> Schwitters description of the *Merzbühne* in the essay 'Merz' published in *Der Ararat* (Motherwell 1981, pp.62-63) impresses as a multiple staging of simultaneous events not dissimilar to Metzger's *Extremes of Touch* at the Filtration Laboratory of Swansea University, itself a staged event or as Cole has described it, a "kinetic ballet".

<sup>7</sup> The rupture of medium, space and time, and consequent de-centering of the position of the artist, connects Schwitters' work with the other artists with which this project is concerned, as a segue way to Chapter 7, where I introduce the practice and theoretical analysis of my own work. "A life lived in reverse" finds its parallel in my introduction of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*, a metaphorical journey in space and time, which adopts the chronotope of Douglas as fixed point of reference. This is the setting for an investigation of the materiality of the photographic image, as a dematerialised form within an overall schema. In Schwitters' work Hanover is a chronotopic entity, where spatial and temporal events are fused and explored as a journey through a series of thresholds within the interior (*Merzbau*) and exterior (Hanover streets), from which the work was composed.

<sup>8</sup> Schwitters was interned in the Hutchinson Square Camp, in Douglas in the Isle of Man, which was predominantly occupied by German and Jewish intellectuals, as well as refugees of German origin living in Britain. The British Government effectively imprisoned 60,000 persons of German origin, as potential enemy aliens, sometimes irrespective or unsure of their political beliefs (Chappell 1986, p.25). Other camps on the island held Nazi sympathisers alongside anti-Nazi Germans, as well as Italians. This situation led to many tensions within the camps, including intermittent fighting, a riot and even murder. As the war progressed the Home Office eventually released many prisoners before the end of the war, including Schwitters.

<sup>9</sup> Mail-art is a mode of travel orientated art pioneered by Fluxus in the 1960's, where artists send their work by post work from one place to another, incorporating the act of its transport as an intrinsic part of the work. Chilean artist Eugenio Dittborn's *Airmail Paintings* are a contemporary example of this phenomenon, where the artist seeks to dissolve the distance between sender and receiver. Darren Almond's *Meantime* (2000) a freight-container-housed digital clock was transported by sea to New York, and can be seen as an extension of work where the mode of transport becomes part of the work itself, both physically and by its very documentation in transit.

<sup>10</sup> The *Merzbau* which is analysed later literally translates as Merzbuilding, the title Schwitters used for the interior construction within his home in Hanover at Wadhausenstrasse 5, which comprised hidden spaces, rooms and grottoes. A chronotopic entity with its own subset of inter-related chronotopes.

<sup>11</sup> Reproductions of these photographs can be seen in Orchard & Schulz, *Kurt Schwitters Catalogue Raisonné 1923 - 1936*, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2003, pp.86 - 95.

<sup>12</sup> Schwitters experimental use of lighting within the *Merzbau* could be seen as a precursor of lightbox technologies and the disorientating techniques of contemporary artists using light.

<sup>13</sup> Schwitters restricted access to the innermost spaces of the *Merzbau* to those he thought would fully appreciate the work. He personally led guided lecture tours, a journey itself often lasting four hours, where he would rebuff any dynamic interpretations of the contents, as they were revealed to his audiences (Webster 1997, p.222).

<sup>14</sup> As the *Merzbau* contained no natural light, it developed what Gamard (2000, p.182) has described as "[...] a sense of otherworldly weightlessness." It could be said that Schwitters' dissolving of time and space prefigures the dematerialised computer-generated technology of immersive, virtual environments. Gamard (2000, p.117) suggests how [...]the *Merzbau*, conditioned by a specific and peculiar *Rhythmus* (organic unity and flux) represents an immersive, mystical experience in which the artist (or initiate) is placed within a domain where the descriptive normative measures of space and time are missing.

<sup>15</sup> Elderfield (1985, p.169). The *Merzbau* as a liberating or redemptive project is taken up by Gamard (2000, p. 174) who references Richard Wolin's *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (1982).

<sup>16</sup> 'Ich und Meine Ziele' (1930) in *Das Litterische Werk* (1973), cit. Elderfield 1985, p.161.



<sup>17</sup> Bachelard quotes Tristan Tzara, *Où boivent les Loups* (1932): “A slow humility penetrates the room/That dwells in me in the palm of a repose.” cit. Bachelard 1994, p.226. Tzara a French-Romanian poet, and Zurich based Dadaist was one of Schwitters’ collaborators and apologists. He was also influential in terms of the development of Schwitters’ Dada sensibilities (Gamard 2000, p.64).

<sup>18</sup> The exhibition entitled *Entartete Kunst* (1933/1937) translates as *Degenerate Art*. The Nazis effectively seized all Avant Garde works of art within Germany, which they labelled according to what they alleged to be: degenerate, insane, Bolshevik or Jewish attributes. These included works by Paul Klee, Kandinsky and the Expressionists amongst others. 650 works were chosen from the thousands held for a purposefully crude exhibition with derogatory captions, which toured 11 cities throughout Germany in 1937.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to R. Schlösser, 2nd May 1909, Ernst Nündel, Kurt Schwitters, *Wir spielen bis der Tod uns abholt*, Frankfurt/M 1974, 19. cit. Webster 1997, pp.14-15.

<sup>20</sup> These collages are similar to Aby Warburg’s *Atlas* (1925) as a memory archive of time and place, but also in their formal arrangement which resembles the pasting of documents on a notice board.

<sup>21</sup> A photoalbum currently missing from the *Estate of Kurt and Ernst Schwitters* appeared as part of the exhibition and catalogue *Kurt Schwitters* at Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, 1978. I was able to view other photoalbums showing a similar layout at the Sprengel Museum in Hanover.

<sup>22</sup> These dates correspond to the dates of Schwitters’ first visit to Norway, and the date of his participation in *Film und Foto*, which marks the date that Schwitters interest in photography departs from his previous unremarkable experiments with photograms. 1931 is actually inscribed on the cover of *Zeichenheft II*.

<sup>23</sup> In this way it is not beyond reason to draw comparison between Schwitters’ books, which proportionally are only slightly larger than the books of Ed Ruscha. Their content as spatio-temporal travelogues is also plausible as evidenced by *Zeichenheft II* and the *Grey Photoalbum I*.

<sup>24</sup> This image echoes Douglas Huebler’s photographic excrescences where he seeks similarity and difference or facial images in abstract forms.

<sup>25</sup> Schwitters photographic perception of processes of decay and regeneration, stasis and movement in relation to the impact of humanity relate to Gustav Metzger’s concept of *Damaged Nature*.

<sup>26</sup> As a series of unpopulated images Schwitters photographs can be interpreted as something other than idle snapshots. Like Ruscha he has deliberately selected particular subject matter to photograph. This deliberation continued in the studio, where he has arranged the images with a specific spatio-temporal emphasis within the typological division of his chosen subject matter. Given Schwitters graphic sensibility this cannot be interpreted as accidental.

<sup>27</sup> Schwitters approach and retreat from the visual phenomena which he photographs pre-empts Ruscha’s approach to the vernacular architecture of Holland in his book *Dutch Details* (1971). In the same year Dutch artist Jan Dibbets made a photographic work entitled *Horizons* (1971) which documents a series of successive views out-to-sea, where the horizon-line gradually disappears during a prescribed time-frame.

<sup>28</sup> Drawing closer to the harbour also echoes Ader’s approach to the Pacific at the end of *One Night in Los Angeles*. Although it may seem like a far stretch to make these comparisons to the work of the photoconceptual artists, it also seems plausible, as there are too many corresponding parallels to ignore. Schwitters’ layout, use of series and repetition, multiple point of view and technical reproducibility of the photographic image are startlingly fresh and unparalleled for their time.

<sup>29</sup> Ernst Schwitters (1981, p.18) has noted his father’s attempts to preserve his works during his escape and exile as Schwitters’ own archival index became erratic: “As soon as a work was finished he generally wrapped it up at once, in brown paper, marked ‘store’, often even before managing to sign and date it. Naturally he never thought of anything like a comprehensive catalogue, and when he died, probably half his works were scattered all over the world.” The monumental task of archiving Schwitters’ work was later taken up by Ernst, who devised a system containing 2000 file cards and 1700 photographs, a system upon which the *Kurt Schwitters Archive* at the Sprengel Museum is based (Orchard & Schulz 2003, p.21).

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Ernst Schwitters to Werner Schmalenbach, 1964, cit. Schmalenbach 1967, p.160.

<sup>31</sup> This collection of 22 lost objects are archived, but not authenticated as genuine works by Schwitters in that they are a collected remnants that loosely resemble works or materials that Schwitters may have used. However none of the recovered items are certifiable as credible works by Schwitters. The objects and materials certainly belong to Schwitters’ inventory of materials, and some appear to have been worked on. These include Item 5 – a free standing bent wire piece with a deliberate form, and Item 6 – the fragment of a nailed wooden construction. These random assemblages in a variety of materials resemble minimal



sculptures where Schwitters used a single material or made juxtapositions of two or three elements such as *Block* (1944) and *Untitled - pyramid and wire* (1942/45).

<sup>32</sup> “Bogen für mein neues Atelier,” unpublished shorthand text of April 6, 1938, in the Schwitters papers (B.192, B.336). Letter to Mrs Annie Müller – Widmann (Basel), January 28, 1938) cit. Schmalenbach 1967, p.159.

<sup>33</sup> This estimation in terms of Schwitters overall oeuvre was related to the author in a conversation with Dr Karin Orchard at the Sprengel Museum; Ernst Schwitters worked tirelessly to propagate and protect his father’s estate after his death, but largely disregarded the landscape work fearful of their disparity in terms of Schwitters oeuvre and avantgarde status as a Modernist.

<sup>34</sup> In a conversation with the author, Eva Shrewsbury, whose father Walter Goldschmidt was also held at the same camp, described what was a bitter experience. Schwitters had befriended Goldschmidt and had given him some drawings and a small painting on an asbestos tile. Mrs Shrewsbury has kindly granted permission for the reproduction of this painting as part of this thesis.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Ludwig Hilberseimer (Chicago), October 25, 1947, cit. Scmalenbach 1967, p.168.



### Part III

#### Inventory for a Reverse Journey

#### A practice-based Investigation of Travelled Photographic Images and their Archival Formation.

In this part of the thesis I evaluate the relationship between my own methods of work, as an artist, and the work of the artists discussed in Parts I and II. As a practice-based investigation, my work is framed by the main themes set out in this thesis, which are relative to my interpretation of artist-travel: memory and repetition, distance and proximity, movement and stasis. In the preceding chapters I have highlighted the recurring differences and similarities in each artist's work. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*<sup>1</sup> comprises photographs and objects, which I have collected over the last twenty years. These include family snapshots, found photographs, photographic postcards and my own photographs of Douglas at different points in time. These material-variants have been reconfigured in the space between 'inventory' and 'archive'. Their disparate identities are concretised within an 'archival-chronotope' as a metaphorical journey in space and time: "where spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought out whole. Time as it were thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible, likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin 1981, p.84). The metaphorical proposition of a journey, in its mobilisation of the static-image, although contradictory, is activated by the real space-time correlation of the archive, as its contents are dematerialised in what Philippe Dubois has termed the "travelled-photographic image" (Green 2004, u.p.).<sup>2</sup> This notion also echoes the title of Sverker Sörlin's essay: *Can Places Travel?*, which was cited in the introduction.

This chapter describes the origin and formulation of my theory of travel: *The Aesthetics of Distance* draws together the 'salient' features of the preceding chapters. 'Artist-travel' is measured across different modalities of space and time, in relation to the the metaphorical and physical travel of the principal work, which constitutes the practice-based element of the research: *Return Ticket* was a site-specific, public artwork, the constituent elements of which were selected from the sub-genres of my archive. *Return Ticket* was installed on Douglas Promenade between 2003 and 2004. A 1998 essay entitled *Boat La - Boat Lad*<sup>3</sup> originated as a parallel text to the photographic series *The Manx Arms*.<sup>4</sup>

From the beginning this project has followed an empirical approach, whereby travel as a reflexive mode of analysis, has concretised into a systems-based practice. The journey of the research itself has systematically examined the phenomenon of 'travel' as an 'experiential metaphor' towards the formation of a theoretical framework. The written component of this chapter comprises a 'storyboard-treatment' of selected image-works for a film entitled *Terra Incognita*, which was also the title of my *Return Ticket* catalogue essay.<sup>5</sup> As a non-linear narrative this anticipates a further dematerialisation of the material variants of the archive. This thesis accompanied the *Research Project* exhibition illustrated at the beginning of the thesis, and a digital data-base of some 250 images: *Inventory for a Reverse Journey – CD\_Archive (2004) In process*.<sup>6</sup>



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Whilst *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* has been the main focus of my research activity. Other work, produced during the course of this project, also serve as examples of travel-related projects, which were made alongside the main body of work, which constitutes this project. These include: *motor : show* (2001), *Settings* (2001), *Interrogating the Surface* (2001), *Techniken des Vorueberziehens* (2002) and *Digital Responses* (2002). These exhibitions, were supplemented by critical writing, all of which are detailed in the *Travel Projects 2001 - 2004*.

<sup>2</sup>Dubois in Green is quoted from, 'Photography Mise-en-Film: Autobiographical (Hi)stories and Psychic Apparatuses,' trans. Lynne Kirby, in Patrice Pedro (ed.) *Fugitive Images: from photography to video*, Indiana University Press, 1995, p.167. Dubois describes how the photograph "inducing perpetual movement on the part of the spectator-subject we pass continually from the object's here-and-now to its elsewhere-in-the-past when looking at the image [...] The photograph acts as an instrument of travel in time and memory."

<sup>3</sup> *Boat La - Boat Lad* is adapted from a slide-presentation given at the London College of Printing, February 3rd 1999, as part of Professor Theo van Leeuwen's seminar series *Semiotics for Practice-based Research*.

<sup>4</sup> The photographs which constitute *The Manx Arms: Photographs of Almost Everyone I Have Ever Met with a Three Legs Tattoo In process* (1999) are inter-related with other works within the archive, as well as other key elements from which it is formed.

<sup>5</sup> *Terra Incognita* (2003) is a super-8 film of 12 minutes duration (rushes). In Chapter 7 a selection of the storyboard-stills, which form part of the film, reveal different aspects of the 'archival-chronotope', as well as documentary photographs of the *Return Ticket* installation.

<sup>6</sup> *Inventory for a Reverse Journey – CD\_Archive (2004) In process* is referenced in the text by the following system. Each constituent genre-type of the archive is classified by a specific folder-name, which corresponds to its content. Each item within the folders are identified by an accession number according to their formation as follows: Series: *The Manx Arms*. Chronology: *Family Snapshots*. Documentation: *Return Ticket*. Narrative Sequence: *35b&w Photographs*, *23 Colour Photographs*, *76 Postcard Views* and *Found Photographs*. Directionality/Orientation: *Spatio-temporal Markers*, *Prom-split*. The 20 images which comprised the *Return Ticket* installation are numbered as Colour Plates: RT\_1-19. As *Prom-split III* is a single mirrored image, it was naturally divided into two panels in order to span two hoarding spaces along the boundary wall of the Derby Castle Depot.



## Chapter 7

### Forward to Far – Backward from Near

#### Liverpool to Douglas

Leaving the great landing stage, overlooked by the colossal Cunard and Liver Buildings and the great Dock Board Offices, we put out into the Mersey, and begin a voyage which for wealth of interest cannot be equalled elsewhere in the kingdom, not even on the Thames. On the right, the Lancashire side, we have a broadside view of a series of magnificent docks extending in almost unbroken array for seven miles. These are succeeded by Bootle and Seaforth. On the left, or Cheshire, bank are Birkenhead, also with a long line of rocks, and the great borough of Wallasey, including Seacombe, Egremont and New Brighton, with its fine sands and isolated lighthouse. The river itself is of even greater interest than the objects on its banks. We pass stately liners, fussy tugs, ferries, colossal cargo boats, ocean tramps, trawlers, colliers and trim yachts, all hurrying to and from the busy port.

The steamer now threads its way between long lines of buoys, red to left, black to right, marking the treacherous sandbanks, which obstruct the mouth of the Mersey, and have to be subjected to a continuous and costly process of dredging. The C painted on the buoys stands for Crosby Channel. We are soon out of the river, and, looking back, have a view of the Wirral peninsula and the famous golf links at Hoylake. Along the low coast of Lancashire the view extends to Formby Point, and, when we are farther out, to Blackpool. If the weather be moderately clear North Wales, with its mountain peaks, will be well seen to the left. Not very long after the mainland has completely faded in the distance, a cloud looms ahead and gradually assumes definite shape as “The Island.”

*The Isle of Man - A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide (1929/30)*

The above extract is quoted from one of a series of mass produced, pocket-sized, Illustrated Guide Books, which were published by Ward Lock and Co in the 1930's. As a point of departure and arrival the grand-setting of the Landing Stage at the Pier Head in Liverpool is described, as the point of departure from which the ferries of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company set sail. *Liverpool to Douglas – The Approach to Douglas* was written at a time when tourism between the Isle of Man and the rest of Britain flourished, as it had done since its heyday in the Victorian era, and continued to do so until the late 1970's, prior to the advent of cheap package-holidays abroad. A picture of Great Britain's colonial and imperial legacy is reflected in the majesty of Liverpool's monumental, naval architecture juxtaposed alongside the industrial thoroughfare of the docks, which serviced the nation's worldwide dominance of the seas. The guide book (Ward Lock & Co. p.16, fig.72) describes *The Journey from London*, which departs from Euston as it does today:

From London an early morning train (Euston, \* 10.30) enables the passenger to catch the afternoon steamer (3.0) from Liverpool to Douglas. Thus one may breakfast comfortably in London, lunch on the train, and dine in Douglas.



Fig.72 Cian Quayle, *Ward Lock and Co. Illustrated Guide Book*, 1929/1930. Found object, 17.5 x 11 cm. (Closed dimensions).



The topographical detail of the docks and the boat's passage along the Mersey Estuary dissolves in the expanse of the Irish Sea, as land disappears and the time-travelled (approximately 4 hours) is suddenly compressed as 'The Island' comes into view. It is the duration and distance-travelled of the the sea-journey, to and from the Isle of Man, which is fixed foremost in my mind. As a romantic plane of projection sea-journeys are long established as the contemplative setting of the sublime, a fact which partly influenced Bas jan Ader's decision to cross the Atlantic. Kurt Schwitters arrived in, and departed from the Isle of Man via Liverpool, before he moved to London and finally settled in Ambleside, Cumbria.

The following account presents a broad geographical backgrounding and a summary of the socio-political climate of the last twenty years, during which my work has developed.<sup>1</sup> As a rejoinder to the autobiographical antecedents described in the introduction of this thesis, it represents the symbolic and physical distance, which connects the artist case-studies with my practice-based research. Against this contextual background the narrative development of my work and its documentation contains detailed descriptions of specific features of a wide ranging significance.

### **Boat La - Boat Lad: A Voyage on the Irish Sea (1999/2004)**

The Isle of Man (fig.73) is situated in the middle of the Irish Sea, with its own government and jurisdiction as a commonwealth dependency of the British Government. On an island an awareness of the spatial and psychological impact of an area of land surrounded by sea is acute. In the introduction to Chris Killip's exhibition of photographs *Isle of Man* (1980) Nigel Kneale muses on the spatial adverbs, which describe a geo-psychology of place:<sup>2</sup>

Should you say *On* an Island or *In* it? Seen from the nearest mainland the inhabitants of an Island can be thought of as clustered *On* it, but when you are there yourself you are undoubtedly *In* it, bounded by its edges, beaches and cliffs, embedded in its way of life, which is never quite like anywhere else.

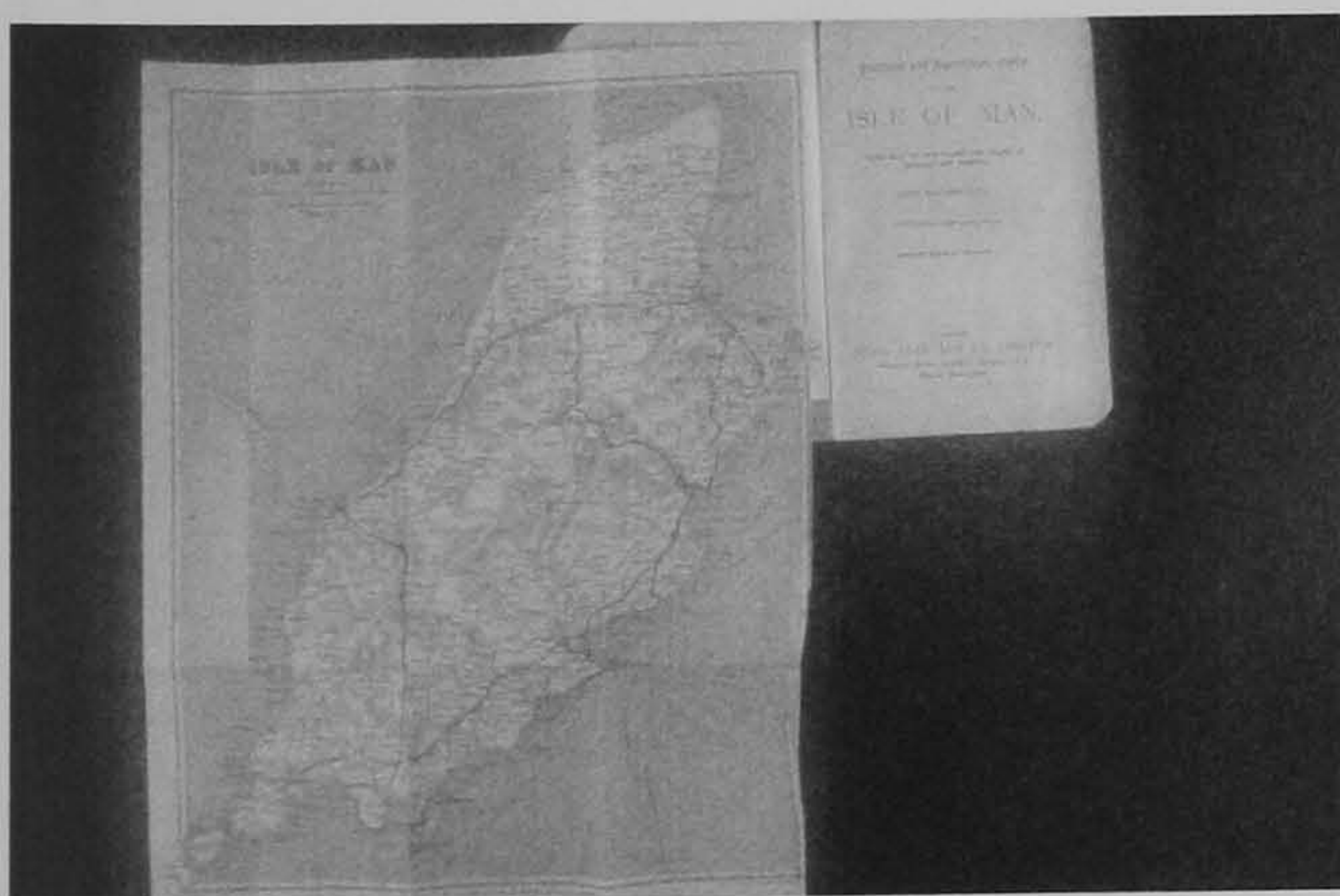


Fig.73 Cian Quayle, *Ward Lock and Co. Illustrated Guide Book*, 1929/1930. Found object, 36 x 28 cm. (Map dimensions).

The genius loci of the Isle of Man is partly defined by the island's distance to its geographical counterparts: Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England. The Isle of Man is often perceived as a hybrid amalgam of its neighbours, which to a certain degree it is.



My perception of identity, as an artist, is rooted in a sense of place where it is possible to feel out-of-place at 'home'. As such I adopt the "attenuated disorientation" of the tourist or outsider in relation to that which is already familiar (Bourdieu 1990, p.34); at the same time confounding anyone else's notion of 'difference', at any given opportunity, when elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> A confluence of varied factors has directly influenced my construction of an aesthetic-identity based on distance rather than a bond with a native blood and soil. To this end, *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* reconfigures family snapshots, found photographs, photographic postcards and my own photographs of Douglas, as a metaphorical journey in space and time. In Bakhtin (1981, p.85) the chronotope, of which my spatio-temporal convergence of photographic variants is an example, defines different genre types. The 'meaning-potential' of these vernacular forms of photography has been lost or displaced, as they have become historically frozen by their traditional function. At this juncture in time it seems likely that digital information systems will ultimately replace photographic film. As these forms enter a moment of valorised-obsolescence, a re-evaluation of the photographic image is possible as one medium is absorbed by another. This accounts for the simultaneous correlation of these objects within the archive, as phenomena from different points in time. As a chronotopic structure based in series, repetition and memory, the archive becomes the locus of a discourse, which addresses the medium of photography on every level. This collection has been subjected to a systems-based approach, via the transformative structures of archival practice, and their subsequent re-presentation as a dematerialisation of the photographic image.

Since 1974 the introduction of the island's tax-haven status led to a finance-based economy, which peaked during the boom period of the mid 1980's and early 1990's. The island benefited, as it escaped the recession experienced in the rest of the U.K. during the late 1970's and early 1980's, as unemployment was minimal. The flip-side of this prosperity has seen the unchecked redevelopment of Douglas in particular, as what was a residential centre has been transformed into a financial centre. This socio-economic-rupture coincided with a decline in tourism from the beginning of the 1980's. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* documents the social change evident in the changing vernacular architecture of the town. The fusion of different photographic variants, as Bakhtin (1981, p.97) describes the spatial and temporal markers of the novel, 'in one and the same place at one and the same time', are manifest within the simultaneity of an 'archival-chronotope'. The spatial markers are located in the "cyclical time" of the seaside town, from which they are extricated in their dematerialisation (Bakhtin 1981, p.247). Historically the summer months of the tourist-season afforded seasonal employment, which tapered off during the winter. In the 1950's and 1960's a migrant work force had to travel to the mainland to work on sugarbeet plantations, when jobs on the island were scarce. Conversely from the 1960's onwards the island saw a considerable influx of Irish tradesmen, who worked in the building trade, and later



seasonal workers arriving in the island from Dublin and Belfast. My Mother's family moved to the island from Ireland in the 1950's as my Grandfather worked as a newspaper editor in Ireland, on the island, and later in Lancaster.

The Isle of Man faces the Cumbrian coastline and on a clear day the mountains of the Lake District are clearly visible in the distance, as are the reactors of the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant.<sup>4</sup> Margaret Thatcher's election victory, as Prime Minister in 1979, heralded an era of rebranding and rationalisation. During the next eighteen years the Conservative Government systematically dismantled the British trade union movement, which stood in the way of its monetarist policies. This administration backed Ian McGregor, as Chairman of the National Coal Board, as he orchestrated the closure of coal mines across the U.K. The legacy of which is still felt today. This culminated in the defeat of the miners during the 1983/84 strike, as the coal industry and its communities were decimated. The actions of the Conservative Government accentuated the sense of a 'North-South divide'. At Sellafield, statistical data related to the level of emissions of radioactive waste pumped into the Irish Sea had been independently monitored by organisations such as Greenpeace; a palpable yet invisible danger to the Isle of Man, as well as the Cumbrian coastline. Sellafield needed to improve its public image as a result of adverse publicity and growing protest over beach contamination in 1983, as a result of high radioactive discharges into the Irish Sea, and the rising incidence of leukemia cases in the Cumbrian population. In 1981 Windscale, which was the scene of a potentially catastrophic fire in 1957, was rebranded as Sellafield. My generation matured at the end of an era when the activities of Greenpeace, C.N.D. and the World Nuclear Disarmament Campaign, had a major impact on public opinion, as the Irish Sea became the most radioactive sea in the world. At this time, the U.K. was still under threat from a sustained I.R.A. bombing campaign. The confluence of these events has formed my sense of place, position and attitude as an artist, initially relative to a notion of departure from the Isle of Man, as a place of origin and a place to which I have since returned. A place at once distanced from but at the centre of an axis surrounded by England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

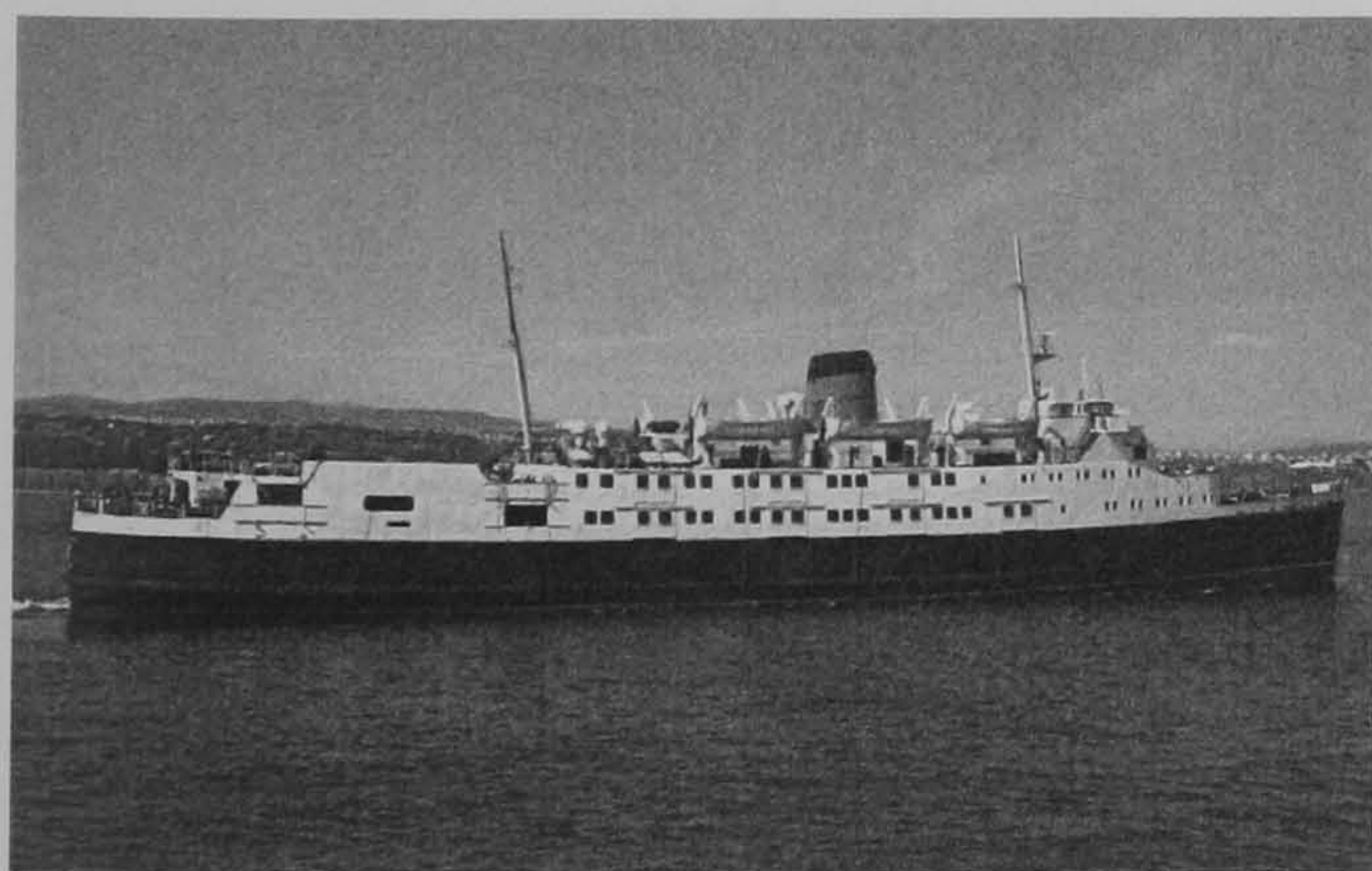


Fig.74 Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views*, (Liverpool to Douglas Ferry). Colour postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_74.

The traditional means of travelling to and from the Isle of Man is by sea. The original steamships have been replaced by ships from other ferry routes, such as the English Channel. However the names of the original steamers have been retained such as *Ben my*



*Chree, King Orry and Lady of Mann.* In its heyday the Steam Packet transported thousands of visitors during the height of tourism. Then as now, these ships carried all the freight to and from the island, supplying its local shops and industries. The advent of affordable package-holidays in the 1970's saw a decline in tourism, the full impact of which was felt between 1980 and 1983.<sup>5</sup> During the 1980's the Steam Packet Company continued to run under the same name when it was amalgamated with Sea Containers Ltd. As passenger numbers fell, management interests were increasingly orientated towards freight. The Port of Heysham, the nearest town to which is Lancaster, is also the site of another nuclear facility. The vast tract of space which comprises the Heysham Port area is ostensibly a freight-park for container lorries. Sea Containers Ltd duly shifted the bulk of their freight operation to this location. This move solved problems with work-to-rule, union-backed dockers in Liverpool. These events contributed in part to the Liverpool Dockers Strike in 1997, as the workforce fought privatisation and struggled to hold on to what was left of a declining shipping industry. It also signalled a cultural transformation of the sea-journey as an experience of place. The passenger service was increasingly sidelined, as freight was prioritised over and above the operation of a passenger service, which remained busy despite a comparative fall-off in tourism. These circumstances are not specific to this particular route but reflect a trend in the travel industry where maximum profit prevails at the expense of passenger comfort.

The Ward Lock & Co. guidebook account, which opens this chapter, describes the traditional point of departure for the Manx boats from the port of Liverpool and sea-journey to the Isle of Man (fig.74). The time travelled before arrival, of what can be an arduous journey, is almost four hours across a distance of approximately 90 miles. The sea-passenger's enjoyment of the journey can be gauged by the weather in the Irish Sea, the countenance of which ranges from mill-pond calm to gale-force severity on a scale of 1-10. The original steam-ships were designed and built for this crossing and were able to set sail in all but the worst conditions. The last half-hour of the island-bound leg during storm-force conditions, when the swell generated by the approaching land-mass in rough seas (fig.75) is such that the narrow harbour entrance at Douglas is rendered almost impassable. This situation occasionally leads to either a return-journey to Liverpool or the prospect of circumnavigating the island to Peel on the west coast.



Fig.75 Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views*. Hand-tinted postcard on Rajar Bromide card, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_75).



On boarding a ship there was a choice of three decks over which to roam and settle during the course of the journey. An oak-panelled restaurant decorated with brass nautical fittings offered a full silver-service menu, which was served throughout the day. Saloon-berths were situated below deck, where passengers could lie-down during a rough crossing, in order to avoid the unpleasant experience of sea-sickness. A separate area was also provided for the privacy of female passengers and children, as well as the provision of wool-woven blankets from the Laxey Woollen Mills, which were available for all passengers. Depending on the weather conditions it was possible to stand out on deck and contemplate the sweep of Victorian hotels, which John Betjeman christened “the Naples of the north”. Conversely at Liverpool, the vista of the imperial, maritime architecture of the Liver and Cunard buildings line the banks of the Mersey on one side, and the Giles Gilbert Scott building on the opposite bank. On the lower decks there was ample seating throughout, attended by the ship’s stewards, who were known colloquially as boat-la’s, as most came from Liverpool.<sup>6</sup> The crew itself consisted of Manx seamen, historically renowned for their seafaring skills (fig.76).<sup>7</sup>



Fig.76 Cian Quayle, *The Manx-arms: Benny's-Arm* (London 2002). Colour photograph, 50.8 x 61 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Manx-arms\_19.

In the first of what was to be a catalogue of ill-considered decisions, a *Ro-Ro* (*Roll-on, Roll-off*) service was introduced. These ships proved unsafe with the disastrous consequences of the Zeebrugge ferry disaster in 1987.<sup>8</sup> A *Sea-Cat* service was also introduced, which has been persistently hampered by mechanical problems. These fast-ships have shortened the duration of the crossing, as they operate on a hydrofoil system, which is not suited to the Irish Sea’s inclement conditions, which restricts this service to the summer months. The significance of this sea-journey is that it indefatigably marks a passage between one place and another, which is imperceptible if one were to fly between a London Airport and Ronaldsway Airport on the island. The sea-journey forms part of a formative socio-cultural, temporal experience, which is measured by distance. From an island perspective this can be perceived as a psychological, as well as a physical passage. An acute awareness of this in-between space has partly determined my concept of artist-travel and introduces the contextual background for the artworks which constitute this project.

### **Intermediate Distance – Identity and Dislocation**

In an island departure and return as ‘experiential metaphors’<sup>9</sup> have a heightened value as registers of place and travel. Departure brings with it different modalities of return:



the possibility of return, not returning or the impossibility of any return at all. Place, origin and identity thus lack fixity, as they are constituted by the duality and interplay of departure and return, and the space in-between. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.408) describe this position as: “intermediary to the extent that what is intermediary is autonomous, initially stretching itself between things, and between thoughts, to establish a whole new relation between thoughts and things, a *vague* identity between the two.” The notion of ‘Intermediate-distance’ facilitates a re-evaluation of home and place, and how these are thought in relation to travel and elsewhere. Randolph Quirk (1998, p.297) has discussed language as the key to identity in its many forms, he suggests the possibility of ‘wider identities’ beyond: “the local self, the family self and the national self [...] based upon his “ ‘one language – many nations’ model”. I have explored the possibility of wider-identities beyond language within the context of artist-travel, transport and transformation of images and motifs from one place to another.

The *Aesthetics of Distance* is derived from Edward Bullough’s essay ‘*Psychical distance*’ as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle. My notion of distance is concerned with distance and proximity to the photographic image and distance and proximity to the identity of place. I have already discussed distance as a physical and psychological motif of in-between space, which are condensed to form a zone of disjunctive temporalities. As Zaslove (1990, p.66) has observed in relation to Jeff Wall’s pictures:

The modern critical struggles are over distance. The school that certifies the object as the most distanced is the one least troubled by history or feelings in history, or by profound civilisational struggles, will win and will dominate. This criticism argues that it is free of myth, or that nature is constructed solely by a process solely limited to fiction making. But this criticism cannot sort out the carnival from the grotesque, the spectacle from the illuminated icon.

Distance, point of view, situation and experience are the founding principles upon which modern aesthetics are based. In this thesis the aesthetic is determined by the phenomenological analysis of a whole set of objects from a distance, which are likewise defined by their received proximity as photographic images of the past, present and future. Bakhtin’s chronotope has been implemented throughout this study as a formulative structure by which to analyse different modes of travel, where Douglas as a fixed point of reference becomes the locus of a metaphorical journey in space and time. Viewed through the optic of Bakhtin’s (1981, p.243) chronotope, Douglas is a repository of spatio-temporal markers which reveals the ‘social-exotic’ of familiar territory:

The graphically visible markers of historical time as well as of biographical and everyday time are concentrated and condensed; at the same time they are intertwined with each other in the tightest possible fashion, fused into unitary markers of the epoch. The epoch not only becomes graphically visible (space), but narratively visible (time) (Bakhtin 1981, p.247).

The archive houses a ‘polyphony’ of photographic materials in a ‘supergenre’, which ingests all other photographic genres. The journey is traced through the materiality of each photographic genre and their respective repetition of motif, as they resurface in



each image presenting a multiple and layered point of view. In Bakhtin (1981, p.248) the motif of the threshold as a boundary and liminal edge, is the limit which delineates the margin between the land and sea and the threshold or distance to an elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> In Bakhtin (1981, p.250) the configuration of different genres of the novel are transformed into a dynamic story rather than a static description: “Those things that are static in space cannot be statically described, but must rather be incorporated into the temporal sequence of represented events and into the story’s own representational field.” Green (2004, u.p.) has identified the locus of these parameters in “the fact of the palpable existence of the photographic print itself”, which is designated, within my inventory, by the family snapshot, found photograph, photographic postcard alongside images from different points in time. The paradigmatic separation of these categories, as mobilised units of artist-travel is elaborated by Dubois (Green 2004, u.p.):

This separation within the representation is what actually informs the effect of looking at a photograph, inducing perpetual movement on the part of the spectator-subject: we pass continually from the object’s here-and-now to its elsewhere-in-the-past when looking at the image [...] The photograph acts as an instrument of travel in time and memory. To see something that existed, somewhere, sometime, something that is much more present in our imagination now that we know that it has actually disappeared – to see it and not be able to touch, pick up or manipulate it – is to be frustrated by the metonymic substitute for the thing that is gone forever, now a simple trace on a piece of paper instead of a single palpable memory. The frustration is all the stronger for the indexical substitute signifies the absence of the referent, offering itself, qua representation, as a concrete object endowed with real, physical substance.

The photographic image is historically linked with the photographic print, as an artefact, that is collected, organised and stored. Walter Benjamin (1999, p.3) recognised the significance of this dilemma, as the technological advance of progress renders that which is left behind obsolete:

Technology consigns the outer image of things to a long farewell, like banknotes that are bound to lose their value. It is then that the hand retrieves the outer cast in dreams and, even as they are slipping away, makes contact with familiar contours. It takes hold of the object at their most threadbare and time worn point.

The archive as a collection of paradigmatic units, in this case different photographic genres, constitute an ‘aggregate’ medium, which Krauss (1999, p.7) has defined as a ‘recursive structure’, in which the potential obsolescence of photographic film exposes that which is about to disappear or has already passed out of view.<sup>11</sup> Benjamin has defined the “dialectical image” as that which flares into view momentarily, as it is simultaneously preserved, elevated and effaced, in terms of Hegel’s *Aufhebung*. As aberrant and outmoded forms of a dislocated medium they come into close-view, despite the ‘estranging coldness’ of the medium. The conceptual photographic strategies of the 1960’s are revisited via the medium of the “travelled photographic image”, as a reconstitution of the currency of ideas. In *The Predicament of Culture* Clifford (1988, p.167) analyses the surrealist strategies of Victor Segalen, which he describes as a search for the ethnographic self: “It cannot be a



heap of observations, notes, souvenirs – the pieces are displayed in sequences. A journey makes sense as a ‘coming to consciousness’; its story hardens around an identity”. Clifford follows a literary journey which encompasses the work of Segalen, Léiris and Aimé Césaire. The exploration of selfhood as a ‘semiotic resource’ is at the basis of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*, which scrutinises an individual history and the subsequent development of a personal ethnography, rather than an act of nostalgia. This approach is reinforced by the rigorous examination of the materiality of the artefacts. This is a strategy akin to the line of investigation developed by the *College de Sociologie*, who followed “a kind of ethnography, analytically rigorous and poetic, which focused not on the Other but on the self, its peculiar system of symbols, rituals and social topographies”. Clifford (1988, p.142) aligns their investigations with those of Humphrey Jennings’ *Mass Observation* projects in Britain, which began in the 1930’s, and “though subjective became objective because the subjectivity of the observer is one of the facts under observation.” Jean Jamin of the *College de Sociologie* explored this notion further, in what is described as an ethnology of the quotidian:

The notions of distantiation, exoticism, representation of the other and difference are inflected, reworked, readjusted as a function of criteria no longer geographical or cultural but methodological and even epistemological in nature: to make foreign what appears familiar; to study the rituals and sacred sites of contemporary institutions with the minute attention of an exotic ethnographer, and using his methods; to become observers and observing those others who are ourselves – and at the limit – this other who is oneself [...] The irruption of the sociologist in the field of his research, the interest devoted to his experience (Clifford 1988, p.145).

Throughout this project the culture of collecting objects and places, either physically or photographically, falls outside the parameters of institutionalised systems of classification and identity. The archive, as a system, is normally hidden from public view. The etymology of the word itself hides its own origin as a ‘shelter’ or ordered instrument of knowledge (Derrida 1996, p.2).<sup>12</sup> In the hands of the artist the form of the archive transmutes between its many dislocated forms as a ‘shelter’ for objects which include: artist-books (Ruscha & Durham), films (Ader, Ruscha & Durham) photo albums (Schwitters), framed display and contact-sheet (Huebler), slide-library, suitcase (Durham & Schwitters), manila folder (Ader, Huebler & Schwitters), box, envelope, grids (Huebler & Ader) or collections and piles of objects (Durham, Metzger & Schwitters). The potential obsolescence of these sheltering structures and photographic film itself is potentially displaced by digital information systems.

The digital data-base titled *Inventory for a Reverse Journey – CD\_Archive (2004)*, which accompanies this thesis, posits this dilemma in terms of the memory, storage and retrieval of ‘mnemonic-artefacts’. Given the remit of this thesis, this area is not fully discussed or expanded here. With an ever-expanding capacity to *virtually* store data digital technologies are developing at an ever-alarming rate. The facility and speed of instantaneous capture and erasure is also creating a culture of ‘selective-amnesia’, with the probability of an era without memory. The immaterial nature of digital information



storage, effectively effaces the artefact as it is *virtually* suspended in the pre-inscribed display of the computer monitor. Material artefacts are *imported* and stored as informational indices of binary code in a 'virtual-chronotope', at one and the same time in one and the same place. Then, any image, sound or other artefact can be acquired, stored, retrieved and output, as required, in any form other than its original source. Digital photography and cell phone capture creates the possibility of taking a picture and instantly e-mailing it to someone else, despite the insistence of Kodak advertising campaigns, that "prints are back". The industry is presently in crisis, despite the boom in digital camera sales, as its reliance on film and print sales has declined massively. A culture of imaging is emerging where 'saving' implies the temporary storage of data, rather than the display of images in frames and albums. The integrity or intrinsic-value of the image is lost, or certainly displaced, by the democratisation of the medium and its autonomous control by the user. Previously film was taken to a high-street retailer to be developed and processed, with a full-set of twenty-four or thirty-six printed pictures as the result. Until recently the amateur and professional photographer alike have taken photographs, which are often regarded as accidental or value-less at the time. Later on, as they languish in portfolios, albums, envelopes and drawers, they may accrue significance, whereas today they are easily deleted as 'bad-photographs': either unflattering, out of focus, over-exposed, under-exposed or mis-takes. The idea of 'saving' is no longer associated with heirloom, longevity or even souvenir, but instead, an ephemeral notion dependent on the storage space of a digital camera, phone or similar technological device.

In my work strategies of transformation emanate in the space between the inventory as a list, and the classification of the archive. Benjamin Buchloh (1998, p.58) cites the anti-compositional force of the archive's structures of series and repetition, and their perception as anti-dynamic or un-dramatic characteristics. Conversely for Kierkegaard (1983, p.131) repetition is a dynamic force and the founding principle of modern philosophy as 'recollection' or memory had been for the Ancient Greeks. Kierkegaard made this proposition on the almost casual basis that having already travelled and visited Berlin once that he could repeat this experience by returning there again:

Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward. Repetition, therefore, if it is possible makes a person happy, whereas repetition makes him unhappy - assuming, of course, that he gives himself time to live and does not promptly at birth find an excuse to sneak out of life again, for example, that he has forgotten something.

Repetition also intimates questions of 'meaning potential' in terms of photomechanical and digital reproduction. Benjamin (1970, pp.21-22) recognised the duality of photography's reproducible status, as both distant and proximate, unique and multiple. In its reproducibility the artwork's loss of aura, or here the dematerialisation of the photographic image at a juncture, where the medium is once again, at the threshold of a



transformation which Benjamin first envisaged:

Everyday the need grows more urgent to possess an object in the closest proximity, through a picture, or better a reproduction. And the reproduction, as the illustrated newspaper and weekly readily prove, distinguishes itself unmistakably from the picture. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely intertwined in the latter as transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. The prizing of the aura from its shell, the destruction of its aura is the mark that the sense of sameness of things in the world has grown to such an extent that by means of reproduction even the unique is made to yield up its uniqueness.

Benjamin described Atget's photographs of Paris, as the Parisian photographer passed by 'the grand views and the so-called landmarks'. It is an uncanny or estranged-dislocation to which I return in my inventory. The photographic artefacts are classified in series, which appertain to a nomenclature of their subject and material variation: family snapshots, photographic postcards etc. In each series the repetition of the photograph's attributes, motifs, objects and multiple points of view persistently propel them into the viewer's consciousness. No single photographic form takes precedence over another. Instead of a privileging of the individual sign or paradigm their intertextuality is revealed in the syntagmatic relationship of the whole. Installation as a strategy reconfigures the individual elements within an overall schema where the photograph and cult-status of the artwork are dematerialised (Buchloh 1998, p.58). These images are reactivated as they are transformed in a manner, which prompts the viewer to see through to their materiality, rather than a perception of an image based solely in the recognition of their pictoriality.

In his essay *The Photographic Message* Roland Barthes (1977, p.23) discusses the continuous message of the analogical photograph, he suggests the construction of an "inventory of effects" in order to activate meaning where none is thought to reside.<sup>13</sup> I have devised specific strategies in order to manifest the nature of the "travelled photographic image" as follows. The serial presentation of the work isolates a specific signifier or material characteristic of each photograph. Within the genre of the photographic-postcard there are sub-genres of Ektachrome, Kodachrome, photogravure, photoblue etc. The delineation of the postcards in a sequential, narrative-journey displaces these variations. Elsewhere the alignment of identical material or subject types within a particular series is revealed in *23 Colour Photographs (1970's)*, and *The Manx Arms* respectively. This identity is at once accentuated and distanced in *35 b&w Photographs (1984/2001)*. The transformation of the photographic print as a 'dialectical image' takes place via processes of what Barthes (1977, p.23) described as 'photogenia' and what I describe as a 'post-photographic, digital-distillation'. Processes of estrangement, which dematerialise the photographic print, as the basis of the archive, draw the viewer closer, whilst maintaining a distance. An example of this strategy is found in the digital modification of the *Sea-Mine* and the *Prom-split* works. This methodology relates to a history of photography, in terms of different values or weights of light, and the material dissemination of different modes of the photographic image.



This differentiation can be discerned in the following: The digitally manipulated panorama becomes a vertiginous virtual space. The luminescent projection of still and moving images. The lightbox transparency as a semi-dematerialised projection. The immersive experience of the of the camera obscura as a pseudo-virtual apparatus. The deep graphic and aesthetic qualities of black and white photography, or the genealogy of colour film and its impact on memory.

Photographic postcards, found photographs, snapshots and newspaper or documentary photographs have a low-value or non-identity as vernacular features of everyday life. All these experiences represent different modalities of the photographic image, and their specific relationship with mnemonic processes. The ideal-encounter with the image has fractured into multiple identities, which in turn are reflected in the multiple points of view of the same images and motifs, at different points in time, in my archive. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* centres on a specific moment of transmutation, where habitation and settlement, as social-structures, are identified in a changing vernacular architecture, commensurate with the materiality of their subjective and objective analogue depiction. The fixity of home, place and work, as the signifiers of identity formation has been lost, at the same moment that the modes of reproduction and depiction, which recorded these phenomena were also about to pass out of view. This position is counterposed by the burgeoning impact of digital information systems, which have simultaneously emerged as part of a globalised, technological economy, just as the invention of photography coincided with the onset of industrialisation.

### **Terra Incognita (reprise)**

As we are forgiving to those who are committing trespasses us against, said the Manx. Assuming that there they were, those enemies, and, right at that moment Cosnahan looking away from his table and down the via Veneto again, up which a huge new Cadillac the size of a conservatory was advancing soundlessly, should they recall all the the beautiful old cobbled streets and ancient houses of Douglas that were still being destroyed or pulled down and the countryside ruined to make a Liverpool holiday. Yet perhaps this kind of assumption was the great fault of the Manx. And his great fault to. The entire population of the Isle of Man seemed to be trespassing against him, for one thing, because nobody recognised him at home now that he had become so successful in America. By which he didn't mean merely on the plane of the Browsing Manxwoman. He hadn't even seen a familiar face in Douglas, unless you counted Illiam Dhone, a man, it was true so unique now he thought of it he might be considered a civil welcome himself.

Malcolm Lowry was born in Birkenhead and first visited the Isle of Man with his family as a child in 1905. Lowry often incorporated references to the island, as a place fixed in his memory from his early childhood holidays and return visits. The title of his 1961 novel *Hear Us Oh Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* is also the title of the *Manx Fishermen's Hymn*. In *Elephant and Colosseum* Lowry (1969, p.131) writes a humorous yet poignant eulogy to Douglas as he merges fact, fiction and autobiography. From Rome, Cosnahan, who is a writer, reflects on a place he has left behind, upon the occasion of his return to Europe from America. His reminiscence is from the position of



an exile. Not the exile of forced movement but the more gentle exile of the expatriate artist or author measured at a distance. He describes Douglas, from a distance bounded by memory and geography, in an identification of the town's vernacular architecture. The Ward, Lock & Co. guide book uses the term 'terra incognita' to describe unspoilt parts of the Island accessible to the tourist. With its connotation of the disregarded or overlooked I adopted this term, which literally translates as 'unknown-earth' as the title for the *Return Ticket* catalogue essay and an accompanying filmwork.

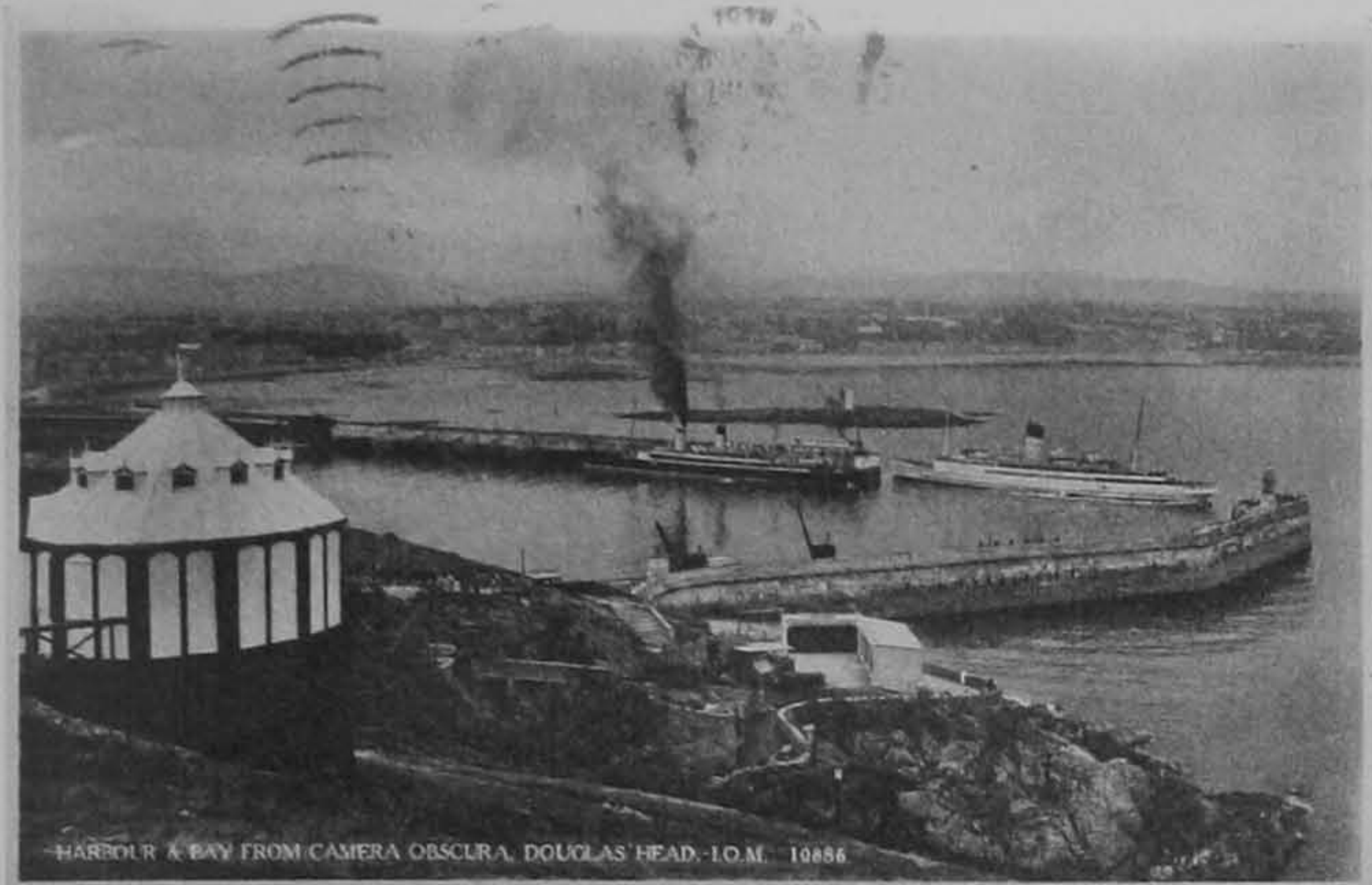


Fig.77 Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views (Camera Obscura)*. Black and white postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_66. Donated by Martin Hearne.

The Grand Union Camera Obscura (fig.77) situated on Douglas Head overlooks Douglas Bay. It is a Victorian, folly-like structure of wooden construction, which I first visited sometime during the 1970's. Owing to a decline in visitors and concern regarding its maintenance, it closed during the mid 1980's, and after long overdue refurbishment reopened in 2005. This world-famous optical device offers multiple points of view of Douglas and its environs. Its mechanical operation as an observational device is important for my articulation of *The Aesthetics of Distance*:

The lenses in the 'Great Union' camera are of different focal lengths, the lens-to-subject distances are all different but the lens-to-table distances are all the same. Lenses giving views of the sea and the east cliff are exactly at their focal length away from the table because the view is at infinity, but those lenses showing views of Douglas Head had to be of a slightly shorter focal length in order to give a sharp image of the closer view [...] the shallow, conical roof has eleven dormer windows, each containing a mirror and a lens projecting an image onto a table. The eleven tables were arranged in a circle in the centre of the room, separated from each other by a partition. As one walked around the group of tables, a complete panorama was presented of Douglas Head, the town, the east cliff and the sea (Hammond 1981, p.146).

Inside the camera obscura the viewer is enveloped in darkness, which accentuates the disengaged position of the viewer at a measure of intermediate-distance, from the landscape which it overlooks. In the distance of time and memory, the glimpsed-shimmer of the projected image of the beach and promenade is barely discernible. The distanced-image remains tangible in recollection, dislocated in time and disengaged from its representational materiality. It is the meeting of image and surface, rooted in my memory, which has provided the material and critical point of departure for an analysis of the modalities of distance and proximity, movement (travel) and stasis (place). Sara Kofman (1998) has analysed the ideological formation of the camera obscura as a critical metaphor, which blocks history and social relations, rooted in the identity between reality and the image. The development of perspective theory aligned the maker of the image with the represented



space and its inhabitants, experienced as a continuation of the viewer's own space (van Leeuwen & Kress 1990, p.31). In an essay on Gerhard Richter's paintings and the Monochrome, Michael Newman (2001) addressed the relationship between painting and photography. Koch (1992) has also observed that that which is "deficient of a reality external to itself" cannot be blurred. It is in this sense that I address the demateriality of the digitally-modified image. This transmutation occurs serially, sequentially, photographically, digitally and otherwise, as specific variants, suspended within the space-time continuum of the 'archival-chronotope', rather than as a nostalgic representation of place and 'home'. Repetition as the principle device of technical and philosophical construction in relation to a theory of 'artist-travel' holds nostalgia in abeyance, whilst the serial formation of images ruptures their structural fixity as mnemonic devices. Their materiality as images is continually reiterated as a system cast adrift from a 'home' or point of origin in search of wider identities in relation to both medium and place.

### **Return Ticket (2003-2004)**

In May 2003 I installed *Return Ticket*, a sequence of twenty 6 x 8 feet photographs, along the boundary wall of the Derby Castle Depot in Douglas, in the Isle of Man. The Derby Castle Depot is situated beneath a sheer cliff-face at the end of Queens Promenade, behind the Summerland entertainment complex. This disintegrating brutal edifice opened in 1972 on the site of the former Derby Castle, which was an entertainment centre during the Victorian and Edwardian era. In 1973 Summerland was the scene of a tragic fire which claimed fifty-three lives (fig.78).



Fig.78 Cian Quayle, *Summerland-fire I*, 2003.  
Newspaper photograph, Photographer: Terry Swanton. CD\_Archive (2004): 05-Return Ticket.

The depot services the trams of the Manx Electric Railway (MER) which run along the coast between Douglas and Ramsey in the north, and the highest point in the middle of the island Snaefell. Parallel to the road and the tramlines the boundary wall is approximately 200 feet long. The wall itself contains twenty recessed spaces, each measuring 6 x 8 feet. Between 1960 and 1980 the MER commissioned two firms, Howell Robinson and Co. and Chilcott and Son to produce hand-painted, illustrated posters advertising sights of interest visited by the trams of the MER.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of each tourist-season twenty, hand-painted, illustrated posters were pasted onto each of the hoarding spaces, where they remained for the duration of the summer. Posters continued to be displayed along the depot wall until the beginning of the 1980's, when tourism to the island, as it had been known, began to decline. I was born in 1966 and the years between which these posters were displayed – 1960 and 1980 – bracket the time-frame of my archive. In 1984, not long after the MER stopped displaying posters in this



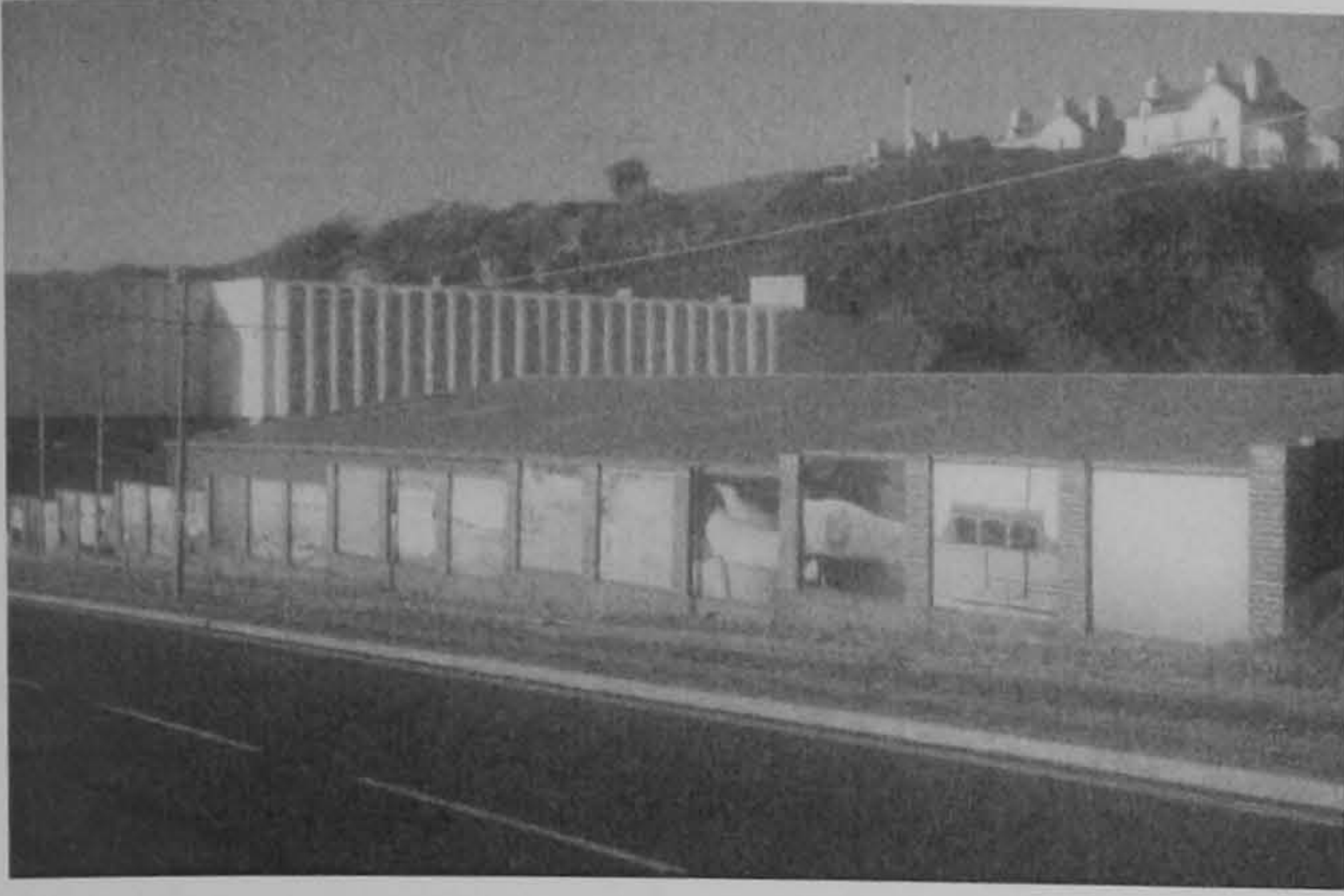


Fig.79 Cian Quayle, *Return Ticket* (Installation-view), December 2003. 35mm colour slide. CD-Archive (2004): 06-Return Ticket.

location, I shot a roll of 36 exposures for a school project, which later formed the basis of this project. The photographic images listed RT\_1-19, which constitute the *Return Ticket* installation (fig.79), mark a specific juncture where disparate images of the past are returned in the dislocated time of the present. In these pictures the used-up vestiges of landscape, and the redundant technologies of tourism and leisure, are collected in the obsolete material variants of the photographic medium. As images of the past, of that which is about to, or has already disappeared, they are irrecoverable as neither destination nor departure. The *Return Ticket* sequence is a site-specific work on several levels. The preparation of each image conformed to the scale of the hoarding spaces and requirements of the site and its seaward orientation.<sup>15</sup> *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* forms a coda of the setting from which its constituent parts have been photographically appropriated. The choice and sequence of the twenty images is a disjointed condensation of the topographical features of the landscape within which the work is situated. The following analysis of the respective images travels in multiple directions as the textual description meshes with the disjunctive unity of point of view and material form. In the *Return Ticket* catalogue Rob Flint (2003, u.p.) commented on the sequence of the images as such:

Their assembly creates a kind of anti-series which - instead of forming a narrative with some kind of resolution - mimics the continuous process of revaluation to which the gaze, promiscuous in all its attachments, subjects our optical experience. Sudden changes of depth and point of focus disrupt any attempt to view them as a coherent sequence, and their contrast of colouration, tone, and grain emphasise the disparity of their sources. [...] This approach owes something at times to the old Russian Constructivist technique of *ostranenie* or 'estrangement', by means of which the viewer was intended to be woken from the torpor of received ideas into a world charged with the possibility of change.<sup>16</sup>

The approach or return journey to the Isle of Man has been described earlier in terms of its geographical and socio-historical significance, relative to the physical and psychological distance travelled. What follows is a topographical description of the layout of Douglas relative to the selection of images and their sequential juxtaposition. The origin and transformation of the constituent elements and their inter-relationship within the archive are revealed through the medium of installation as their individual identity is at once present and lost.



## The Beach and Promenade

Alain Robbe-Grillet's short story *The Beach* (1962) describes the journey of three children as they walk along a beach – their movement relative to a flock of seagulls, moving parallel but in front of them – at the water's edge. By the repetition of accumulated detail Grillet draws the reader into the story. As a journey without destination, the children move towards the sound of church bells in the distance. The trajectory of my inventory implicates the viewer and reader in a similar way in that, it is itself a journey without destination, in terms of a beginning, middle and end, or even a future. The repetition and accumulation of differences and similarities, throughout the artist case-studies, are drawn together in the multiple resonances, metaphors and connotations condensed within *Return Ticket*. The trajectory of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*, as a metaphorical journey in space and time, traverses the intermediate distance between the horizon-line to the shoreline of Douglas Bay and the doorstep of my 'home'. The planar projection of the sea is broken by the layout of the town, which corresponds to the stepped geological retreat of the shoreline and the construction of the seawall, as it was extended to form successive promenade developments over the course of the last century. It is the immediate environs of the promenade and the landscape of the town behind and at its edge, which delineates the boundaries of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*.

A short walk takes the beachcomber from the sandy expanse of shoreline onto Central Promenade, across alternate strata of stones, seaweed and assorted beach debris. Although divided by name, the Promenade is of a piece, and arcs in a parabolic sweep parallel to the seawall, promenade and roadway. The promenade spans a mile and three quarters and follows the concave formation of the bay; in a northerly direction Harris Promenade and Queens Promenade, and in a southerly direction Loch Promenade.<sup>17</sup> The promenade surface itself is inlaid with geometric motifs, which are visible in an aerial photograph (RT\_04) of the town as well as the boating pool and promenade shelters.<sup>18</sup> Like Ruscha's aerial photographs of Los Angeles, this archive photograph from the Manx Museum Library exposes, in graphic detail, many of the features photographed at ground level. The facture of their monochromatic variation is highlighted in their ground-level depiction at close-quarters. *Prom-terracotta*, *Prom-green* and *Prom-asphalt* (RT\_09) when viewed from a distance appear as seamless fields of colour. Close inspection reveals the effects of time, visible in their respective surface textures, either where the asphalt has blistered or coloured surface has faded. These works activate the push and pull of the viewer's range, which at once draws close and distances simultaneously. As a series of *Spatio-temporal Markers* the viewer is intermittently positioned along the route of a journey with neither departure or arrival. The *Sea-mine*, *Promenade Shelters* and *Fountain* punctuate the seaside landscape, as they establish directional points of view by which the viewer is orientated. These are selected from the vernacular architectural features which line the promenade. The boating pool,



promenade shelter, the sunken gardens and fountain all appear in postcard images. The postcard photographer has taken these pictures during the height of the season in the summer months. They were usually photographed at an oblique angle or from above in order to afford most picturesque-view.

*76 Postcard Views – Douglas Promenade – A Pedestrian Journey* presents a series of postcards sequenced spatially in a grid, which begins with the arrival by ferry at the Sea Terminal in Douglas. The journey proceeds from Douglas Head, along the promenade to Onchan Head; or conversely, depending on their layout, they can be read in the opposite direction. The series includes turn-of-the-century postcard views through to the 1970's. The postcard series follows the historical materiality of a specific time and place, manifest in the material transformation of the postcard during the last one hundred years of its existence: photogravure, hand-tinted colour postcards, black and white photographs, Photoblue and Ektachrome colour photography. As the same features have been photographed year in, year out, they trace a intergenerational journey through each sub-generic transition, subordinate to their collection as a whole. The inventory includes features which are contained within the postcard photographer's viewfinder, but were not normally the focus of attention, as singular moments of seaside picturesque. I photographed these features from a frontal point of view, as they are reclaimed as trophies, which include a boating pool, sea-mine, pond and wishing-well.

These features and the Promenade are simultaneously mirrored and refracted in the multiple points of view contained within the separate genres viewed through the prism of the archive. A found photograph *Home* (RT\_7) from *The Majestic Hotel Archive*<sup>19</sup> contains a photograph which pictures 38 Finch Road, where I lived during my teenage years. *Bay-watch* (RT\_6) depicts the same point of view photographed from 8 Mona Terrace, with the Tower of Refuge visible in Douglas Bay, another *Spatio-temporal Marker*, which as a local landmark, reappears across all the genres of the inventory. The original seawall is still visible at the rear of the retail premises, which line Strand Street behind Loch Promenade. On the other side of Strand Street, Nelson Street runs into Chester Street. This area was originally the site of 131 properties before they were subject to compulsory government purchase (*Chester Street/Wellington Square - Inventory of Properties: 1962-1972*, fig.80).

No.	Address	Date	Remarks	Status
1	10 James Street	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
2	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
3	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
4	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
5	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
6	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
7	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
8	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
9	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
10	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
11	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
12	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
13	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
14	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
15	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
16	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
17	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
18	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
19	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
20	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
21	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
22	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962
23	"	11.04.1962	11.04.1962	11.04.1962

Fig.80 Cian Quayle, *Chester Street/Wellington Square Area – Inventory of Properties 1962-1972*. Found documents. CD-Archive (2004): 23 Colour photographs.

The aftermath of the redevelopment of this area features in the series *23 Colour Photographs* (1970's) and *35 Black and White Photographs* (1984/2001). This locality



is bounded in the north by Onchan Head towards which the boundary wall of the Derby Castle Depot rises to a deserted *Shelter* (RT\_18), which lies above the derelict site of the Howstrake Holiday Camp. In the south, on Douglas Head the *Amphitheatre* (RT\_02) faces inland from the sea. This structure is also pictured in a hand-tinted photographic postcard from around the turn of the century (fig.81).



Fig.81 Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views*, (*Amphitheatre at Douglas Head*). Hand-tinted postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD-Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_67. Donated by Martin Hearne.

This postcard and my own picture of the same subject have been photographed from the same oblique point of view, which is also the position of the audience and photographer. The stage of the amphitheatre has a metaphorical significance, as it symbolises the stage of action with which these pictures are concerned. It also indicates my position as the author and viewer of this work and its journey towards a future. The *Amphitheatre* signifies a simultaneous authorial presence and absence, where the division between performance and reality dissolves. The surrealist poet André Breton wrote *Nadja* in 1928, which partly describes a journey through the streets of Paris. The text was accompanied by photographs, and drawings by a former lover, whom Breton recalls throughout the journey. The images were interspersed throughout the text. Rosalind Krauss (1999, p.101) references the conclusions of Denis Hollier on the position of Breton, as the detached protagonist in his own story, which is relevant to my own position as author of this work:

And what this means is that the writer leaves the backstage of the novel to go sit in the theatre with the rest of the audience. Placing himself on the same side of the page as the reader, the writer not only casts his own shadow onto the field of the book, but allows the events unfolding in a future he cannot foresee to cast theirs onto the same place.

The traditional 19th century panorama spectacularised a view of the world, where what could be seen in the distance was unaffected in a disengaged overview, similar to the distanced-view of the camera obscura. The distanced-perspective of the camera obscura was the starting point for *Beach-boy* (RT\_13-15): a series of three from five 'blown-up' images derived from a found 35 mm slide, which forms part of *The Majestic Hotel Archive*. The digital-upscaling of the original transparency is *rendered* closer, as its material surface is transformed as a result of digital modification. A blurring of the image occurs, as the image-size is *upscaled*, resulting in a *smoothing* of the image as a dematerialised surface. This process compensates for the lack of information or resolution of the 'original' 35 mm slide (RT\_13) by the parasitic cloning of what, in



*Adobe Photoshop* software, is termed as *nearest-neighbour interpolation*. The nearest pixels in the image, or in this case, a detail thereof are replicated to fill the additional space created during *upscaling*. Richard Morphet (1970, p.72) has described the photo-mechanical origin of Richard Hamilton's seminal *Bathers* (1966-69), to which my series is indebted, in both their material and conceptual origin. Their enduring significance is also explored in relation to themes of proximity and distance as well as abstraction and figuration:

Both paintings employ devices which carry a scene in which minute figures instantly convey considerable distance right forward into the spectator's space. Vision seems to speed toward the viewer and without the introduction of any marks conflicting with the given facts, distance appears strangely stretched. At the same time examination of individual figures, so unnaturally isolated so as to appear to have been placed by collage rather than by a reverse process, paradoxically suggest a telescoping of space.

Hamilton took the 35mm colour photographs that he used for these works whilst on holiday in Greece in 1965 (Morphet 1970, p.71). Hamilton deliberately altered the colour combinations of the gelatin moulds, which were produced for a series of dye-transfer colour prints, contrary to their conventional processing. The *Bathers* paintings and prints extended the theme of tourism and processes of material estrangement, which he had explored in earlier works. At 'home' Hamilton had already rephotographed a colour postcard of Whitley Bay, in black and white, from which he derived two separate works: *Whitley Bay I* (1965) has painted additions, at actual size; conversely the enlarged, panel-mounted photograph of *Whitley Bay* (1965) exposes the moiré dot of the printed image. Hamilton added indeterminate dabs of paint, which mimic the distortion of the figures, as a result of their darkroom manipulation where "Ultimately the point is reached where enlargement takes us into unreadable clumps of silver halides" (Hamilton 1969, p.120). In the *Beach-boy* series interpolation compensates for the loss of image data, whereas in the analogue enlargement the 'break-down' of the image corresponds to the visibility of the silver halide crystals, as the image is enlarged in the dark room. For *Whitley Bay II* (1965) Hamilton took a photograph of the same beach and modified it in a similar way to the postcard version. A series of four photographs entitled *People* (1968-69) were further modified with the addition of silkscreen, airbrush and areas of painted colour, as well as collaged elements. These alterations introduced a tangible facture across the surface of the work, which counteracts the sense of a weightless photographic image. In a work which corresponds closely with the *Beach-boy* series, Hamilton used a sepia postcard of Whitley beach and promenade printed in photographic emulsion (these postcards were often designated on their reverse as 'real photographs'). The continuous tone of the 'real photograph' facilitated an enlargement of the image where the visibility of the half-tone dot of commercial lithographic printing, common to postcard production, was avoided. Distance disappears as the amoebic-like blur of the figures loom into view, but instead of the clarity of sharp focus, the figures hover



between figuration and abstraction. This amorphous quality compares to the smoothing of the image in the *Beach-boy* series, which equates with a long exposure. Hamilton alternates between the integrity of the photographic image, or indeed any image, and their relationship to painting and other media. In an exploration of illusory space, he exacerbates the artifice of photography, and the disengaged capture of distanced, uninvolved participants. For *People Multiple I/I* (1968) Hamilton attached a fold-out series of eight progressive ‘blow-ups’ made from a specific area of the original image of the sepia postcard. These plot a journey from the visibly distant whole, to the close-up distortion of the magnified-detail. In the *Beach-boy* series Hamilton’s abstract distortion of the figures has been replaced by a digitally *rendered* homogeneity, and loss of detail visible in the evanescent presence of the isolated figure at the water’s edge. The figure of a young boy, with his back to the camera, melds into the surroundings in a flattening of space in a seamless shimmer (RT\_15).

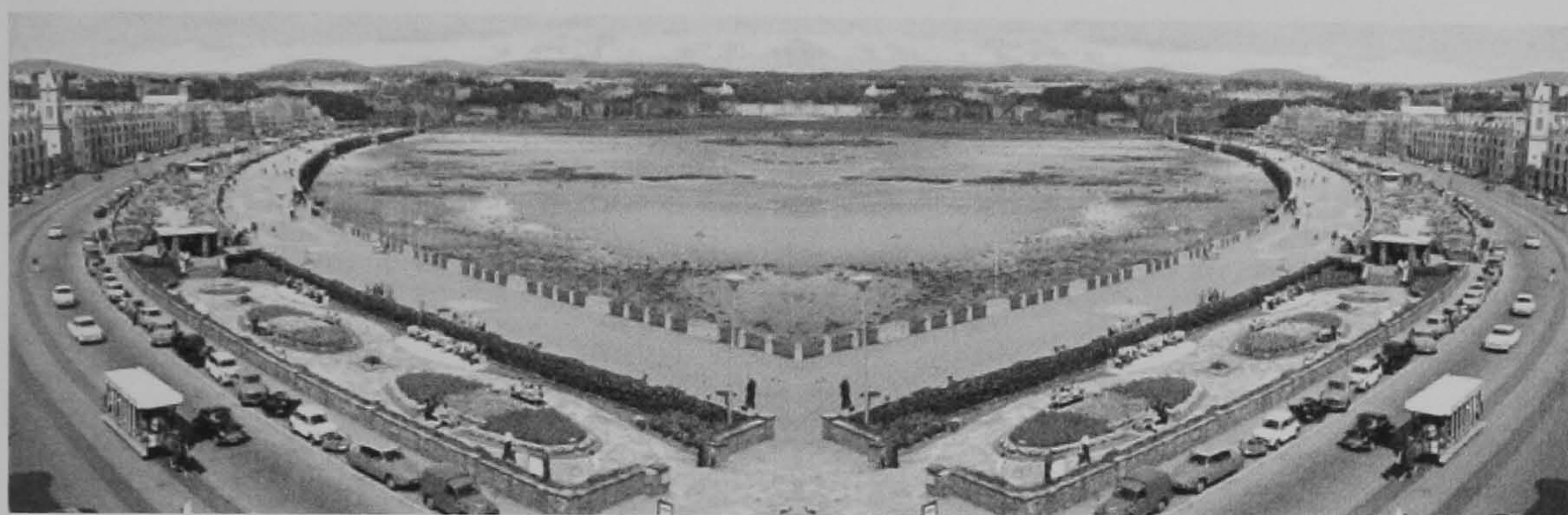


Fig.82 *Prom-split I (overview) Day*, 1999. Colour, ink-jet print on aluminium, 102 x 123 cm.

*76 Postcard Views – A Pedestrian Journey* presents a series of eight descending views from an almost identical position, which over the course of the century has been adopted by successive postcard photographers. The site of this point of view is situated opposite the Jubilee Clock, at the end of Victoria Street. They travel from a point of elevation to ground level. Of the three *Prom-split* works, two utilise postcard views as the basis for a digital, lateral inversion, which in turn, inverts alternate points of distance and proximity. In *Prom-split I (overview) Day* (1999, fig.82) the image is digitally mirrored to form a claustrophobic panoramic overview. The high oblique angle of the original image is mirrored to form a heart-motif, which unfolds whilst enclosing itself, in a disorientating illusion of collapsed space. The cinematic panorama of this image is accentuated in its isolation against a blank-white, screen-like ground. I photographed the same location from a near identical point of view as seen in the postcards in 2002. In *Prom-split III* (2002) (RT\_10) the warm, soft nostalgia-tinged tonality of the 1960’s postcard-view have been superseded by the heightened colour saturation and clarity of focus of transparency film. This particular film-stock has a similar colour temperature to the Ektachrome film used for postcard photography in the 1960/70’s. An identical setting, viewed from the point of ‘critical distance’ and close-up at ground level, engenders an image where the integrity of the picture plane has collapsed in a violation of what van Leeuwen and Kress (1990, p.31) have described as “the laws of naturalistic



depiction". Laws, which no longer hold the key to pictorial space or surface, and henceforth, no longer the key to a delineation of social space. These works also bear comparison to psychological morphology found in the mirror-image works of John Stezaker's *Garden* (1999) and another series entitled *Trees* (1994). The hybrid-panorama is also a device used by Victor Burgin in his films, in a dialectical tension between mirror and panorama, as a way of envisioning space, upon which Vider (2000, p.12) in a catalogue essay on Burgin's work has commented:

Lacan's mirror stage, itself developed as a paradigm of modernist subject-construction, operates ostensibly as a reflective picture. It's image of the subject distanced, reversed, scaled down - stands ever remote from an ego that calls for its interiorisation, a vision that forms the initial rift in a self that, at the first instance of social experience, has to be defined on the basis of paranoia, of schizophrenia, of anxiety. It stands at that point - the void - at which the subject is lost from view.



Fig.83 *Prom-split II (close-up) Night*, 2002. Lightbox and black and white transparency, 106 x 322 cm.

A photograph obtained from the Manx Museum Library, originally came from the studio of Douglas Photographer Harold Heaps, who was commissioned to take a panoramic photograph of the bay and promenade for a tourist brochure.<sup>20</sup> This black and white photograph shows a convex panoramic, ground-level view of Loch Promenade. *Prom Split II (close-up) night*<sup>21</sup> (2002, fig.83) utilises a black and white, ground-level view of the promenade at night, which shows an oblique view taken from the side of one of the promenade shelters. In the same way that Huebler assembled different forms of documentation, I have juxtaposed interrelated series of photographs of different material significance. In this way the *Prom-split* works and in particular *Prom-Split II (close-up) night* join with a series of gelatin silver photographs: *Shelters: North to South, East to West* (2000, fig.84). Five shelters face the sea – situated between the sunken gardens, as punctuation-points along Loch Promenade. I photographed each of these shelters from different angles, with alternate views out to sea and inland.<sup>22</sup> The shelters were built by



Fig.84 Cian Quayle, *Shelters N-S, E-W*, (5), 2000. 8 Black and white photographs, each 40.6 x 50.8 cm.



Creer Brothers Builders, except for the two situated at either end of the boating pool. These were built in 1934 by W.E. Hampton Connell with Ballajora quarry stone. The roofs are pitch and covered with sheet copper which, as it has oxidised, turned luminescent green. In *Prom-split II* the postcard image is horizontally mirrored once more, as the cubed structure of the shelter is virtually reformed in the foreground of the picture plane. This image exerts an exteriority, which pulls away from the picture plane, drawing the viewer's gaze in and along the divergent perspectival vectors, in an illusion of accessible ground-level space.

The sunken gardens through which the promenade pedestrian meanders, feature in *76 Postcard Views*. Once scrupulously maintained, these gardens contain a circular flower bed, in which flowers are planted every year to form a three-legs symbol, a photograph of which forms part of *The Manx Arms*. Following the passage of *76 Postcard Views* along Central Promenade the Falcon Cliff Hotel is omnipresent throughout as a spatio-temporal marker. The image is discernable as it draws closer in successive views. At first its form is indistinguishable in the distanced view of its side-long, L-shaped aspectual form, seen in the nocturnal ground view. It features in twenty-four of the individual postcard views. Closer views are seen in (CD-Archive: Family snapshot\_03), above the right hand shoulder of my mother, who sits on the beach.

## **The Town**

Beyond the picturesque setting of the promenade, the journey continues out of reach of the postcard photographer, whose focus is the beach and the denotive signifiers of the seaside holiday. This project originated in what can be described as its middle-ground in two series of photographs, which mark a period of social and material transition: *35b&w Photographs* is a series of pictures of the immediate area where I grew up. They were taken for a school Geography project with a 35 mm *Kodak Retinette*. By using this camera I was unwittingly predisposed to a 'de-skilled' aesthetic, as there was no facility to focus except by roughly estimating the measured distance from myself, as the photographer, to the subject and then adjusting the focus accordingly. In their "estranging coldness" they depict a hinterland, observed at a distance. At the same time they are replete with the hidden histories of the years during which I grew up. During the interim between first taking these pictures, and their presentation as the middle-ground of my archive, I lost the negatives. It was necessary for Ruscha to rephotograph the images directly from his book *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*. Similarly I rephotographed these images in 2000, in order to distance the work from its documentary origin, the original from the copy, in a destruction or negation of the original in place of the copy. What we see is a re-tracing of steps already taken. A re-embedding of transience, which is the transience of photography itself, where underneath one picture there is another. They return to the present from the past in a search for the rupture within the denotative structure, which is rooted in the everyday



detail of place that each of these photographs present. The production of connotative meaning emerges in the changing semiotic geography of a site of habitation, which has been displaced by a finance-based economy. These photographs document a period of transition. The Chester Street area was made up of residential, back-to-back housing. The residents of this area were relocated to the outskirts of Douglas prior to the regeneration of this area as part of an emergent finance sector. The buildings pictured in the Manx Museum Library photograph were demolished during the 1970's. *23 Colour Photographs* is a companion series to *35 b&w*. They were photographed in the late 1970's when the demolition of the inventoried properties was already well under way. The separate photographic genres which comprise *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* have determined my choice of subject matter as part of a series of strategies, which in part have taken their cue from the artist case studies. As an excavation of photographic materiality and identity, orientated within the limits of a specific locality at different points in time, nostalgia is suspended in a systems-based approach, which lies inbetween Romanticism and Conceptualism.

The Irish Sea is the source of the first and final images in the *Return Ticket* sequence. *Sea (flotsam and jetsam)* (RT\_01) is a close-up of water-born detritus, photographed where the sea meets the seawall at high tide. The sea and land are conjoined in a liminal suspension, as feathers, twigs, seaweed, sanitary towels, condoms and other waste matter, washed in and out with the advance and retreat of the tide, clings to the sea-wall. Conversely the final image, in a left to right reading of the sequence, *Sea-calm* (RT\_19) presents a sublime view of the intermediate distance across the sea to the horizon. Although the images can be read left to right, they can also be scanned from right to left. At the centre of the sequence *Prom-split III (overview, 2002)* comprises a double-image of the bay, mirrored to form a vertiginous whirlpool, into which the preceding images gravitate from either side, subsumed in the overview of its illusion of a panoramic vista. The images move away from their point of origin as they disperse, on either side, across the expanse of the depot wall. In this respect the work evokes Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope as a 'whirlpool', in which abstract elements of cause and effect are sucked in and through it, before they resurface as image. This is the representational significance of the chronotope as a tangibility lost or gained. Each change of scale and point of view dislocates a static apprehension of their flow and movement in space and time.

Fig.85 Cian Quayle, *Majestic Hotel Archive 1998 (storm)*. Found black and white photograph, 13.5 x 18.5 cm.





The *Return Ticket* series was installed in May 2003 and dismantled on June 18th 2004. Over the course of the year, these works were subject to a gradual, entropic deterioration as a result of vandalism and weather. Their material surface has been exposed to the corrosive forces of the elements: seawater, wind, rain and sunlight. During the winter gale-force storms cause giant waves to crash over the top of the promenade and boundary wall with devastating consequences (fig.85). The exterior facade of Summerland building is clad in a vertically, striated, stippled concrete, the underlying wire armature of its impregnable surface now exposed (fig.86). The documentation of this work demonstrates the site-specific nature of the location, as a palimpsest where one image is inscribed over another, as images of the past are written over the site and memory of their idealised poster-counterparts. Photographic illusion collapses as the material support of the landscape is visible in the fabric of the decaying brick work of the boundary wall (fig.87).



Fig.86 Cian Quayle, *Summerland*, December 2003, 35 mm colour slide.

Fig.87 Cian Quayle, *Return Ticket Installation*, December 2003, 35 mm colour slide.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My concern with the political and economic climate of this period echoes the activist stance identifiable in the work and attitude of Gustav Metzger, especially with regard to his support for the plight of the threatened community of Kings Lynne. As with Durham, it is Metzger's attitude with which I identify, as well as my affinities with the material processes of dynamism and travel which their works manifests

<sup>2</sup> During the 1960's, Manx born Killip, was based in London and abroad as a commercial photographer. He returned to the Isle of Man each winter between 1969 - 1973 to photograph for his book *Isle of Man* (1980) Newcastle: Side Gallery. Nigel Kneale's introduction appeared in a foldout book of postcards, which accompanied the exhibition. The book itself contained a foreword written by John Berger. In 1983 Killip and Graham Smith exhibited *Another Country* at the Serpentine Gallery. This was a landmark exhibition as it was the first time in Britain that a major exhibition of documentary photographic work appeared in an established art gallery.

<sup>3</sup> This is a tactic deployed by Durham in his work where he wilfully obfuscates meaning and diverts closure as to any reading of his personal identity.

<sup>4</sup> In the light of September 11 it was recently noted in the press that if one of these reactors happened to be the target of a terrorist attack it would be the equivalent of the Chernobyl fire.

<sup>5</sup> In early 2003 Norman Howell informed me that 1980 was the last time that his firm pasted posters on to the boundary wall of the Derby Castle Depot in Douglas. 1984 was the year that I took the pictures, which became *35 Black and White Photographs - Finch Road and Chester Street Environs* (1984/2001).

<sup>6</sup> The term 'boat-la' as opposed to 'boat-lad' was a descriptive term for young men employed as ship's stewards, who hailed from Liverpool. Hence the colloquial abbreviation of 'lad' to 'la' which inflects the



enunciation of the Liverpool dialect and accent.

<sup>7</sup> Historically Manx seamen were renowned for their superior distance-vision and navigational skills. Herman Melville picked up on this in *Moby Dick*. Many of the Manx crew members would be recognisable from their surnames and accent. It was common practice, as in other sea-faring communities, for some Manx seamen to be tattooed. Alongside the usual array of swallows, anchors etc. uniquely Manx seamen adopted the three-legs symbol. This motif is pictured on the Island's flag, as well its general use elsewhere. Today this symbol has passed into the iconographical store of the tattooist's stock-in-trade. It has become as popular as Celtic interlacing etc. as a decorative motif with young and old alike. Its sign as a form of identity branding specific to sailors has been displaced in the same way as its origin as a travelled-image from Ancient Greece via Sicily to the Isle of Man.

<sup>8</sup> In 1987 *The Herald of Free Enterprise* sank with the loss of 193 lives, when one of its bow doors was not secured properly before it set sail. The *RoRo* system (*Roll-on, Roll-off*) involves the raising of the bow of the ship in order to provide access for vehicles. P&O Ferries who operated the service managed to evade prosecution in what would have been a case of corporate negligence.

<sup>9</sup> The concepts of 'multi-modality', 'saliency', 'experiential metaphor', 'provenance', 'semiotic resource' and 'meaning potential' used in this thesis are drawn from a series of seminars in *Semiotics for Practice-based Research* given by Professor Theo van Leeuwen at the London College of Printing between 1998 and 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Newman (1994, unpaginated) has discussed the margin in relation to the work of Jeff Wall's depiction of his native Vancouver and the relationship of these spaces relative to the impact of a colonial or imperial legacy.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida (1996) analysed the function of memory and the archive in relation to Freud.

<sup>12</sup> Rosalind Krauss (1999, p.6) has described medium as an "aggregate" of its material conditions other than an unworked physical support. The now ubiquitous term 'installation' has lost its import as a system of 'pure equivalency', as every medium is available to site-specific, institutional critique, even of the "operating conditions of the site itself." In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* Benjamin described the loss of aura of the artwork as cult-image heralded by the reproducibility of photography.

<sup>13</sup> It is Barthes' notion of an 'inventory of effects' from which I have drawn the title of my work.

<sup>14</sup> Details regarding the M.E.R.'s commission of Howell Robinson Co. and Chilcott & Son were related to me in conversation with Norman Howell between 2002 and 2003.

<sup>15</sup> As a temporary installation concerns regarding the material lifespan of these works was not a priority.

<sup>16</sup> In his catalogue essay *Home and Away - Cian Quayle's Return Tickets*, Flint states that he has never visited the island. His response to the work was made purely in relation to its documentation. Thus he was not familiar with the work's sequential significance in term of its relationship to the vernacular topography of the locale. This points up their intentional dislocation and what Flint refers to as their impact in terms of estrangement.

<sup>17</sup> The construction of the Loch Promenade, built on land reclaimed from the sea, was a major part of the redevelopment of Douglas between 1876 and 1878. Just prior to this the massive seawalls and Harris Promenade were also built (Ward Lock & Co. 1931, p.39)

<sup>18</sup> These motifs also formed the basis for a series of 5 etchings titled *Promenade* (1997).

<sup>19</sup> In 1997 I entered the near derelict premises of The Majestic Hotel, at Lag Birragh. A building designed by Arts & Crafts designer Bailey Scott. The hotel overlooks Douglas Bay and is situated near to the site of the Howstrake Holiday Camp. I found a collection of photographs, slides and postcards of Douglas, and nearby Laxey from which I selected the pictures, which form a sub-genre within this archive. I discarded any photographs which contained people.

<sup>20</sup> The darkrooms of W.H. Heaps Ltd. were based in Senna Road - the signage of which is pictured in CD-Archive: Image 15 of *23 Colour Photographs (1970's)*. Heaps was commissioned by R. Popplewell to take this photograph. My Uncle John and mother worked for Heaps as seasonal photographers in the late 1970's and early 1980's. John printed the original prints of *35 b&w photographs* in the firm's darkrooms in 1984.

<sup>21</sup> *Prom-split II* was exhibited as part of the exhibition *Interrogating the Surface* at the London Institute Gallery Millbank in November 2001. This exhibition emanated from the joint research project *The Integration of Computers within Fine Art Practice* of Camberwell College of Arts and Chelsea College of Art and Design. This exhibition was curated by Paul Coldwell and Barbara Rauch.

<sup>22</sup> I photographed these shelters in 2000 prior to the removal of their interior wooden structures owing to their use by drunks and as an impromptu urinal by revellers on their way home at night.



## Conclusion

### A Means to an End

The extreme narrowness and the homogeneity of the space of life which means that one's adult life is spent in the same environment as one's childhood, excludes alienation, that attenuated disorientation that leads to the act of looking. The tourist or outsider can cause astonishment by photographing everyday objects or local people at their habitual occupations. The habitual environment is that which one has always seen but never looked at because it is 'taken for granted'. At a pinch one might take a picture of one's own house or have it photographed after tidying or decorating it (Bourdieu 1990, p.34).

This project has sought to investigate travel as a paradigm of artist's practice via a series of artist case-studies, parallel to my own work, which together constitute *The Aesthetics of Distance*. Although 'travel' is not the stated intention of these artists, it is nevertheless a formative aspect of their work, just as it is inherent in my work. The selection and analysis of the work of these artists reveals pre-postmodern, typological formations of the 'artist-traveller', which are currently abroad in contemporary art practice. Artists and curators, who correspond to this idiom were cited in the introduction. This project has dealt specifically with work which incorporates the photographic image and the found object. The dematerialisation of image and object has been analysed via different modes of exile, as paradigmatic instances of artist-travel. As a pervasive cultural phenomenon this has led to a burgeoning strand of writing, criticism and scholarship at the end of the twentieth century, which itself was foreshadowed in the work of Bakhtin, de Certeau and Deleuze & Guattari, and more recently has permeated mainstream academia with the ascent of cultural studies. This thesis has drawn together a plural range of source material in order to reflect this zeitgeist, and associated issues at stake for my concept of 'artist-travel'.

Throughout the thesis a series of artist case-study analyses are paralleled in the writing and practice of my work. As a critical reflection – a nascent approach to travel has evolved into a practice-based theoretical framework. For this project travel is perceived as a medium, enacted via the dialectical mediation of distance and proximity, movement and stasis, inventory and archive, memory and repetition. In *Reflections on Exile* Edward Said (2000, p.181) cites Lukács: “the novel, a literary form created out of the unreality of ambition and fantasy, is *the* form of ‘transcendental homelessness’”. This statement is significant in terms of Bakhtin's exhaustive research into the historical formation of the novel, which was censured during his lifetime, and for many years he was forced to write under different pseudonyms. The complexity of Bakhtin's chronotope is the principal theoretical strand with which I have connected the work, of what are a seemingly disparate selection of artists, spread across space and time. In the thesis I have highlighted the similarities of these artists, whilst their differences serve to demonstrate the typological distinctions or paradigmatic formations of the artist's-journey. The common theoretical and physical condition which links their work is almost a cliché but still valid, as Bakhtin's most powerful chronotopic motif 'the road' recurs throughout



this study. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* reveals the fabric or materiality of the built environment – its roads and streets – relative to ‘the sea’ are the most powerful motifs in this work.

In Part I the spatio-temporal journeys of the photoconceptualists and their revolutionary use of photography is balanced by the collection and transformation of found objects and materials in Part II. The emphasis in Parts I and II is primarily concerned with a dematerialisation of the image and object of art. Dematerialisation becomes a metaphor, as a sense of weightlessness becomes the modus-operandi of artist-travel. Ruscha and Huebler chose to distance themselves from New York, in a voluntary form of exile in relation to the artworld. Whereas Ader’s work is relocated in the ‘expatriate’ experience of the artist, who voluntarily chooses to move away from home to a foreign country. Durham, Metzger and Schwitters represent an experience of exile, in its real sense, as a crisis where a return to a former home is a physical and psychological impossibility. Their exile, as an extreme register of travel, is a dislocation measured by degrees of crisis and distance. As my work is predominantly based in the photography, it was necessary to balance my stake in the photographic image by examining the work of the artists discussed in Part II. As a parallel analysis I have been able to determine the valency of the photographic image as a pervasive coda of travel. At the same time this has facilitated an objective analysis of my own work as it has dematerialised in its photographic-trajectory over the last ten years.

The work of 1960’s photoconceptualists seems so irrevocably tied to travel, space and time, that it is impossible not to identify their ‘spatial mapping’ as an enactment of the typological delineation of the artist-traveller and its paradigmatic guises. The photographic image continually returns the viewer to those same places, which alongside other data and captions are mapped as a journey. Their work represents a unique moment, as the photographic image was transformed, in what has already been described by Jeff Wall as the ‘return of the Picture’, and the subsequent emergence of a unique photographic presence.

Following the initial formative moment of the medium’s invention Benjamin (1970, p.21) heralded the loss of aura and cult-value of the work of art, which presaged the work of Surrealist photographer Atget. Almost one hundred years later the photoconceptualists almost indifferently adopted the medium. Photography had already influenced the course of Modernism and it was liberated once more, except this time from the realm of the fine print and ‘artist’s book’. The transformation of the use-value of the photographic image was in turn a response to previous aesthetic uses of photography, as these artists explored the medium, mindful of the social-practices of photography in everyday life. These practices, of course, were and still are manifest in the amateur snapshot and the documentary photograph in all its forms, typified quintessentially by the holiday photograph and family snapshot as well as other forms of vernacular photography. Both perform an objective and subjective function, whilst the holiday photograph is singly the



most ubiquitous icon of travel above the souvenir object. The specific forms of pictorial materiality, which vernacular photography has assumed since the democratisation of the medium in the 1960's, such as the Polaroid photograph and Ektachrome postcard, were initiated by the widespread availability of good quality, inexpensive cameras, which were mainly imported from Japan. The economic liberation of the medium also coincided with the beginning of affordable 'air-travel'. This moment opened a space for a pan-European practice, which paved the way for the critical reception of the travel orientated work of the photoconceptualists. Although it is a simple observation, the photographic print and book are portable, and artists were able to travel, make work at a specific location and return 'home' unencumbered.

For Ruscha the genesis of his bookworks originated in a formative 'road-trip' as a young artist travelling in Europe. Ruscha's stated interest in the book, as an object, grew out of his perusal of bookstalls in Paris, which sold cheap, illustrated paperback-novels. Ruscha's outlook was framed, as he grew up in the provincial setting of Oklahoma in the 1950's – a generation exposed to the narrative of cheap, western comics both with their inherent disposability and portability. As an iconography of American car-culture – the format of each book lends a dynamic fluidity to the use of banal motifs. The gas station and ding-bat apartment, as static images, are uprooted from the semiotic landscape of Los Angeles, and along the route between his original and adopted homes during repeated car-journeys. The print-run of each of Ruscha's books facilitated a wide distribution as they were sold, at first, for just a few dollars. Their status has changed as they are now rare items in their own right, and Ruscha's attitude to photography has changed, as he has reprinted his photographs as fine prints. Ruscha's suspicion of the impact of digital imaging has repositioned his attitude, in terms of the aesthetic materiality of a medium which he at first disavowed, but now savours at the time of its potential disappearance.

As Ruscha continued to divide his time between the separate projects which form his oeuvre: painting, film and printmaking, Douglas Huebler relinquished the object of art, in its conventional sense, altogether. Until the mid-1960's Huebler produced highly-finished minimalist sculptures. Huebler has described the multi-directional aspect of these works as spatio-temporal objects, but was dissatisfied with their scale when they were situated outside in the landscape. Ruscha's journeys were anonymous in their choice of depopulated scenes and the absence of the artist as a physical presence or 'signature' in terms of style. They are simply identified by the artist's name and title printed on the cover of each book. They are defined by the 'car-journey', as his chosen mode of travel, where the meticulous documentation of street names and locations become the signatory and signifying structural element of their serial expansion. Huebler expands the repertoire of the photographic apparatus as a 'dumb recording instrument', as he incorporated other 'constituent' elements to delineate the spatio-temporal coordinates of the places, in which he located and often relocated himself, in order to



produce work. The transparency of the dematerialised photographic image alongside other documents including maps, drawings and instructions manifest the very processes of art production albeit via a journey, which were invariably by car and sometimes by foot. In the deconstruction of the structural processes of art and inadvertently photographic practice itself, Huebler created an all-encompassing photographic 'supergenre', despite his apparent disregard for the image. His ambivalence is upended, as their aesthetic dimension, as 'travelled photographic images', is accentuated by their very repetition beyond their function merely as documents. This fact in itself attests to the mnemonic valency of photography's an-aesthetic as it drives into the past via memory, only to advance into the future through repetition. Ruscha and Huebler construct an 'archival-chronotope' of the space and time through which they travel. Ruscha's detailed inventories of the urban landscape and the route to his former home suggest the 'travelogue' as their basis, in his investigation of the book as a material form of dissemination. Like Ruscha, Huebler is conscious of his distanced position from New York, which is latent in the archival description of places, or indeed any place, in a narrative of displacement and travel.

Ruscha's attitude to photography was underpinned by an intuitive sense that his books were "a pure form of my art"; this understatement belies his revolutionary use of photography and the book as a new kind of artwork (Ruscha 1998, p.60). Consequently his bookworks evoke a 'mobile-narrative' of the unobserved and overlooked. Huebler produced photographic images at 'home' and 'abroad', as the trajectory of conceptual art was played out at the behest of sympathetic European galleries and the collaboration of maverick independent arts-organiser Seth Siegelaub, who acted as Huebler's link with New York. Huebler maintained his own form of independence by teaching in order to give himself the freedom to incorporate his everyday experiences as part of a systems-based approach, which tests the veracity of the information with which the viewer is presented. Thus the journey from his home to Leo Castelli's gallery is as valid an artwork, as a game of table-tennis, hanging around on a street corner, or a date with a girlfriend.

Ruscha's 'car-journeys' across Los Angeles contrast with the aerial photographs and *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968), the latter recalls Burt Lancaster's journey across New York state in *The Swimmer* (1968), which was coincidentally released in the same year.<sup>1</sup> Ruscha's anonymity in his work differs from Huebler, who moves in and out of his work, as he moves in and out of the art-system. The viewer is visibly aware of the artist as a traveller, as he hitch-hikes, travels by car and flies between one destination and another. In these works it is always the distance between one place and another, which is offset by the proximity of these locations in their ubiquitous anonymity. For Huebler one place is pretty much like another, one person like another but this distance collapses as a result of its caption, which takes the form of a set of inclusive instructions, which draw the viewer into the work as a participant or as Huebler



has it a 'percipient'.

In Ader's work, the viewer follows the solitary quest of the artist's 'walking-journey' before he returns to Europe, torn conceptually and romantically between a former home and his resettlement in Los Angeles. Ader was not a loner, but he steadfastly maintained a distance from the emerging scene and what became known as performance art. This detachment from the artworld, whilst necessarily involved in it, is heightened by Ader's use of the medium of photography. Both still and moving images were used to record the repetition of a specific action, 'the fall', a form of travel underpinned by a conceptual melancholy and the frailty of the human body. There is double register to Ader's 'fall' – as a paradigm of 'artist-travel' – merely the result of the force of gravity. The vertical trajectory is replaced by a horizontal course, both however are limited by balance. The gravitational pull of his former home sees Ader travel, back and forth, between America and Europe, creating works in which a palpable sense of unease permeates the restlessness of his location in both Europe and America. Ader situated himself amidst the sublime setting of the sprawling metropolis, to which he had expatriated himself, on the basis that he was initially attracted to its geographical location as a city by the sea. Los Angeles became a testing-ground as Ader wilfully ignores the prevalent car-culture, within which Ruscha is ensconced, as he is seen walking across the city at night. As Ruscha's photography of Los Angeles' apartments are unpopulated, Ader's slight-frame is barely visible as he presents a solitary and vulnerable figure weaving his way between those same apartments, as he is drawn by an unseen, interpellant force. The 'vertical-arrest' of the images in Ruscha's books presses against their horizontal seriality as a journey. By contrast Ader shifts from the vertical-trajectory of a 'falling-journey' to the slower horizontal-trajectory of his final work. In what was to be a tragically uncompleted work Ader embarked upon a 'sea-journey', where previously he had travelled by plane. The pace of Ader's travels reveals a deceleration and delay, as he suspends his arrival by adopting slower modes of travel. Ader's choice of travel and medium were shaped by an isolated, conceptual self-sufficiency and romantic desire to reach his destination alone. The paths of Jimmie Durham and Ader cross each other within the geographical framework of this thesis as they exchange position and travel between America and Europe respectively. Durham as a former resident of New York has chosen to distance himself from America altogether. He instead traverses Eurasia in a mode of 'perpetual-homelessness'. The possibility of returning home is not an option, as his place of origin and concept of home, as a Native-American, has disappeared. With his nomadic tendencies Durham is rooted to the ground psychologically; his journeys are a means to an end as he restlessly traverses Eurasia without a fixed notion of 'home', which happens to be wherever he is at any one time. His resettlement in each respective destination, usually on a temporary basis, is always itinerant with the intention that it will avail the possibility of 'work', either in the form of an exhibition or an artist-residency. Durham is matter of fact about his travels, as he flies between the cities in which he makes his



work. His reliance on 'air-travel' does not undermine his nomadic premise. Durham's position is intellectualised as a metaphorical and historical construct, manifest in the daily necessity of 'physical-work', rather than the artist fulfilling a romantic notion of a nomadic Native-American, literally retracing his ancestor's steps. Durham's work has become increasingly concerned with weight. The ephemeral construction of his early work has dissipated, as he uproots the stones from beneath his feet and throws them at the readymade-world of commodity, and scatters them within institutions with which he seeks a discourse. Durham wants to be heard within institutional structures, which circumscribe his reception as an artist, at the same time as he remains outside.

Gustav Metzger has also chosen to remain outside of the same structures, but the impossibility of his return to a former 'home' is of an altogether different nature. As a result his work is not defined by the world of objects, but rather how material forces are harnessed and diverted to reveal the dynamism and flux of the universe. His work is disseminated through a wide range of media with his 'attitude' at its centre, rather than a geographical location. In this respect his work can be seen as a precursor of Durham's. Metzger work references, but also turns away from the Holocaust – by comparison the extermination of Native American populations and the loss of land-rights, is a an issue for which Durham campaigned for many years. In their work 'artist-travel' as a medium is dematerialised in a will to intellectualisation, in the transport of ideas from one place to another. Unlike Durham, Gustav Metzger rarely flies anywhere, although he flew to America to view the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. Invited, as he regularly is, to take part in conferences, which deal with issues of globalisation, science, media and technology, Metzger has recently chosen to send slide-works of images appropriated from newspapers, accompanied by a statement or text, on occasion when he is unable to travel himself. The work or instead his 'attitude' travels as he, like Durham, proposes a discourse that is political as well as aesthetic. Metzger's work recirculates the endless spectacle of a world mediated by images, which traverse the globe instantaneously via multiple forms of media. Huebler's desire to not add any further objects to the world is echoed in Durham's and Metzger's most recent works as their physical manifestation of artist-travel is dematerialised as a conceptual and metaphorical construct. This has been reflected in the dematerialisation inherent in their respective artworks. This is evident in Durham's 'stone' works and counterbalanced in Metzger's dissemination of the *Newspaper Archive*, as he extricates weightless images from their overpowering mass and volumetric weight.

As this project has progressed, Schwitters' involuntary exile and consequent transformation of materials has increased in significance, in terms of an evaluation of his work in relation to a concept of artist-travel. His relevance for the artists in Part I is evident through the examination of what is a considerable output of photographic work, with other lost-photoalbums yet to resurface. It would not be an overstatement to identify his use of photography as a blueprint for the work of the photoconceptualists. Indeed it can be seen how modes of series and repetition in the 1960's, are also found in



Schwitters' exclusive use of the photographic image outside the realm of collage and photomontage, albeit within a private archive. Schwitters' use of found objects and photographs were dematerialised through systems-based works of collage, assemblage, painting, poetry, sculpture and the photoalbum respectively. These were distilled via the transport of *Merz*, at first voluntarily as part of his travels, on tour, in Europe, and then forcibly by exile as he repeatedly rebuilt the *Merzbau*. Schwitters distanced himself from the literary interpretation of his work, as he stressed the 'forming' of his collected materials, as they were transformed by processes of series and repetition. It is possible to exaggerate the vagaries of exile in Schwitters' choice of materials even when mindful that this selection was determined by the necessity of conserving painting materials in scarce supply. Significantly though, key works present a materiality, which signifies the dematerialised reductivism of their estranged conditions as they hover on the edge of formalisation. At the same time all of the artist case-studies are contingent with Bakhtin's interchangeable chronotopic motifs: the road and threshold, loss and acquisition, search and discovery, meeting and parting. In turn they reveal archival strategies of 'artist-travel', where either a benign or forced exile, has formed an 'archival-chronotope' where space, time, materials and place are dematerialised within an overall schema, which are re-materialised in new forms or previously unknown alignments. The photographic image has continually resurfaced as an intrinsic object in relation to travel and the places in which the artist is (dis)located at any one time. Peter D. Osborne (2000, p.127) has cited the significance of 'metaphor' and its importance for my notion of exile as a form of travel:

With its origin in Greek words meaning carrying, transferring, transporting, the metaphor is clearly a sympathetic linguistic figure for exile. The metaphor uncovers the quality of one thing by shifting our attention to another. This displacement of meaning, this 'defamiliarisation', suggests a consonance between metaphor and migration's actual estrangements.

The return trajectory of this project's title also echoes the reverse chronology of the artist case-studies as paradigmatic formations along a syntagmatic trajectory. *Inventory for a Reverse Journey*, as an 'archival-chronotope', has adopted the construct of a 'metaphorical journey in space and time', where each of the material-variants in the archive have been collected together to formulate *The Aesthetics of Distance*, which faces the future at the same time as it pushes into the past. This formulation is based on the intensified experience of physical distance from, and proximity to, a place, object, person or photographic image, as they are estranged from a former 'home'. The 35 *b&w photographs* and 23 *Colour Photographs* series languished within my inventory of materials for almost twenty years before being placed at the centre of my archive. An extant series of *Sea-mine* photographs were left behind in a trunk in Barcelona, just as works from the *Relocations* exhibition, illustrated in the introduction, were left behind in my apartment in Antwerp. These anecdotal instances, which at first may seem irrelevant, are significant as they are the physical and autobiographical basis upon which the construction of a theoretical framework has developed in my mind to form a psychological construct. As autobiographical narratives, they have been influenced by



the gravitational push and pull of Ader's work. This thesis, as the outcome of an analysis of the research process itself, originated in a set of themes and a handful of pictures from which the interrelationship of my thoughts, travel, writing and art production has continually advanced.

An analysis of 'home', and what was proximate in a photographic print, yet physically distanced in space and time, subscribes to what Bourdieu (1990, p.34) has described as the "attenuated disorientation that leads to the act of looking". As in Ruscha's work the dematerialisation of the photographic artefact absorbs distance and memory, as the materiality of the original print is transformed via processes series and repetition, in a departure or shift of emphasis away from memory: the specific object person or place depicted as a nostalgic coda, instead draws attention to its material formation in the perspective shift and dislocation of materials during the the artist's-journey between one place and another. The specific viewing range within which each work 'crystallises' as a site of new or former settlement conveys different modes of proximity and distance. Specific motifs and phenomena are extracted from their sublimation within the whole, as they come into view within the landscape. These objects collected from the landscape as 'photographic readymades' are transformed with the minimum of intervention, whereby their manipulation hovers on the edge of formalisation. The negation of an autonomous work is replaced by 'attitudes' or concepts, which also travel, as seen in the work of Durham and Metzger. The collecting of found and photographic postcards facilitates a simultaneous proximity and distance by which the photography, rephotography or digital distillation of materials is distanced whilst held close. These works, in turn, mediate a systems-based photographic practice of what is already familiar and again that which is unfamiliar.

The photographic series entitled *The Manx Arms: Photographs of Everyone I Have Ever Met with a Three Legs Tattoo* is a proposition continually in flux, or as Huebler has it 'In process', in the propagation of a dislocated identity with a frail attachment, which is held in the surface of the skin rather than a native soil. *Return Ticket* and the works seen in the *Research Project* installation, documented on pages 18 - 21, are subject to the push and pull of the spectator's viewing range. The dematerialisation of these images are mediated via the breaking of archival strategies of series, and repetition and their interrelationship as multiple points of view. Consequently these images are separated from their point of origin, whilst retaining their significance as historical images of a specific locality. Propelled by the dialectical forces of memory and repetition, interrelated series of 'travelled-photographic images' articulate a sense of journey, which spans past and present, inventory and archive, origin and destination.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Swimmer* (1968) was adapted from a John Cheever story. The principal character played by Lancaster swims in the pools of friends and later public-pools plotting a psychological journey across the city to what is his former home.



## Documentation

### The Manx Arms

#### Photographs of Almost Everyone I Have Ever Met with a Three-legs Tattoo 1999

Variable output includes : -

35mm b&w & colour photographs/6 x 7 medium format photographs/ 6 x 6 cm medium format photographs/35mm slide/super 8 film.

Ring bound folder with 10 x 8 inches C-type photographs & additional gelatin silver photographs: *Dawsey Kewley Memorial, Sun-dial, Shelter, Sunken Gardens (Three-legs)*/ Manx Museum Library Archive: gelatin silver photograph *Villa Guila, Sicily (Three-legs)*/Mauro 'Momo' Borella correspondence & donated colour photographs. Portfolio edition: 20 x 24 inches on Fuji colour paper (gloss).

The sunken gardens through which the promenade pedestrian meanders their way is featured in *76 Postcard Views*. Once scrupulously maintained these gardens contain a rounded flower bed. Each year flowers are planted to form a three-legs symbol, which has been the island's national symbol since 1931, although it was circulated on coinage and used as heraldry prior to this date. The triskeles or three-legs originated in Roman Sicily, another island formed by three promontories.<sup>1</sup> This image is reputed to have travelled to the Isle of Man via the marriage of Alexander III to the daughter of Edmund of Sicily in 1255.<sup>2</sup> This bizarre yet enigmatic symbol has long been popular with seamen and the population in general as it has become a ubiquitous symbol of identity as part of the tattooist's stock-in-trade.

It has been practice for seafarers and often other native Manx overseas to be tattooed with the Manx three-legs symbol. In *The Predicament of Culture* James Clifford discusses Aimé Césaire's neologism of the French *marronage* from his poem *The Verb "Marroner" / For René Depestre, Haitian Poet* (1955). Clifford (1988, p.181) identifies Césaire's call to 'escape' in response to what he describes as the 'historical maroon experience', which becomes a metaphor for displaced identity. Césaire's poem was addressed to his friend and poet Depestre in Brazil:

shall we escape like slaves Depestre like slaves?  
Depestre I indict the bad manners of our blood  
is it our fault  
if the squall hits  
suddenly unteaching us to count on our fingers  
to circle three times and bow<sup>3</sup>

The historical precedent for *The Manx Arms* project is located in the maroon experience of the Bounty Mutiny of 1789, and the subsequent integration of the mutineers with the indigenous population upon their maroon and settlement in Otaheite and Pitcairn. Midshipman Heywood and Fletcher Christian lived in the Isle of Man. Christian, who was Manx by birth instigated the mutiny. Heywood was born in Cheshire and as a young



Midshipman was unwillingly caught up in the mutiny. Heywood returned to Britain to be tried after he was taken onto the HMS *Pandora* some two years later, but Christian stayed in the islands. Both were famously tattooed with the three-legs symbol upon their arrival in the islands of the Pacific, as part of a ritualised practice, which was customary of the native islanders. In an illuminating letter to his mother Heywood tells of this experience as he identifies the cultural status of this practice:

[...] and being dressed in the country manner, tanned as brown as themselves, and I tattooed like them in the most curious manner, I do not wonder at them taking us for natives. I was tattooed not at my own desire, but theirs; for it was my constant endeavour to acquiesce in any little custom which I thought would be agreeable to them, though painful in the process, provided I gained by it their friendship and esteem, which you may suppose no considerable object in an island where the natives are so numerous. The more a man and woman there is tattooed, the more respect is paid them; and a person who has none of these marks is looked upon as bearing a most indignant badge of disgrace, and considered a mere outcast of society. You may suppose, then, that my disposition would not suffer me to be long out of fashion. I always made it a maxim when I was in Rome to act as Rome did provided it did not interfere with my morals or religion.

Mr P. Heywood to Mrs Heywood, Hector, August 15, 1792.

Many of the persons I have photographed with this tattoo also had this bizarre yet enigmatic symbol written on their bodies whilst overseas.<sup>4</sup> I first started taking these photographs in 1999 and the subtitle of this project *Photographs of Everyone I Have Ever Met with A Three Legs Tattoo* recalls Huebler's *Variable Piece 70 (In process)* (1971) and its long term documentary aspiration to record "the existence of everyone alive". The similarity to Huebler's project also finds its parallel in the different ways the work might be presented at any one time. Fieldwork for this ethnographic project has involved visiting local pubs in Douglas, which include The Albert, where I photographed *Eddy's Arm* (1999, CD-Archive: Manx Arms-05), the Douglas Hotel for *Bo Diddley's Arm* (1999, CD-Archive: Manx Arms-02), and the Manx Legion Club, *Malcolm's Arm* (1999, CD-Archive: Manx Arms-18). In what were originally quayside public houses, a selection of current and old ship's hands spend time between work and home. This tattoo is unique, in that it has a specific connection to a place predicated by distance, rather than an identification with a native soil. This notion is based upon anecdotal accounts related to me by the subjects I have interviewed upon photographing their tattoos. In an account by a friend of my mother's Orry Williams for example, *Orry's Arm* (1999, RT\_17): Orry described his migration to Australia in the 1960's and having his arm tattooed quite soon after his arrival. At this time the British Government paid the passage of families, who decided to emigrate to Australia, who were also colloquially known in Australia as £10 poms). As a young man his experience of being uprooted from 'home' and resettling in Australia was not a successful transition. For two years he worked until he had saved enough money to pay for his return ticket to the Isle of Man, even leaving his family behind in the process. But not before he had the three-legs tattooed on his arm, which the commissioned tattooist copied from a bank-note. There are others however, who have left the island with no intention of immediate return. Kevin Atherton and Gavin Bennett both worked on the Steam Packet ships as Boat-lads in the 1960's, before



leaving the island to study art in the mid-1960's. Whilst at college both had the three-legs tattooed on their forearms. Atherton now lives in Ireland and Bennett in London. I have also come across subjects, who have identified themselves on one arm with the three-legs, whilst on the other arm have identified a town or place of habitation, whether Douglas or Peel, or in one case a particular housing estate, named Pulrose, built on the outskirts of Douglas in the 1930's<sup>6</sup>. This archive also contains persons who have visited the island and had the tattoo done, as a result of an affinity developed for the island, for reasons other than birth, or a sense of longing. Mauro 'Momo' Borella from Milan, a friend of the Nottingham based Manx-born journalist Mick Duckworth. The latter is also a tattooed, art-school contemporary of Bennett and Atherton.<sup>7</sup>

The tattooist *Sailor Jack* in Tuebrook in Liverpool was a regular stop for many seafarers on their way to and from further destinations, who wished to be branded as such, prior to their departure for far-flung corners of the globe. Many of the persons with this tattoo had them executed in Liverpool, as there wasn't a practising tattooist on the island at the time. Thus an indistinct identity unrecognised upon hearing a spoken accent, is defined by a three-legged figure in motion.<sup>8</sup> This mobility is reflected in the legend or motto, which is often inscribed around or under the symbol: *Quocunque Jessoris Stabit* "Whatever way you throw me I stand."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "[...] the ancient name for the island Trinacria (the Thrinakie of Homer), '(the land) of the three promontories', which found visual expression in the form of a female head (often a Medusa head) from which emerge three legs. The image first appears in archaic times, on painted pottery from Gela, and then it is repeated in a variety of media throughout antiquity; from later Hellenistic times three corn ears are usually shown attached to the head. For our period the symbol of the Trinacria occurs on gems, on local coinage, and is seen in a mosaic from the baths at Tindari of c. 200, as well as on another, now largely destroyed, in a house on Capo Boeo at Marsala. In later times a similar image was adopted by another island of sub-triangular shape, the Isle of Man (Wilson 1990, pp.2-3).

<sup>2</sup>These details are drawn from Francis Coakley's encyclopedic web site: [www.ee.surrey.ac.uk/Contrib/manx/manxsoc/msvol16/p017.htm#21](http://www.ee.surrey.ac.uk/Contrib/manx/manxsoc/msvol16/p017.htm#21).

<sup>3</sup> In Eshleman and Smith (1983, p.369).

<sup>4</sup> In the West it was only from the 1980's onwards that tattooing became a cultural norm, as it had previously been the preserve of sailors, hell's angels, skinheads and convicts and other outsider groups at the edge of society.

<sup>5</sup> I started this work before I was aware of a parallel project *Intimate Spaces - Chicago, August 1995* by Uti Weiss Leder. Leder photographed persons with tattoos and the kitchen space of each subject's home, where she has identified a correlation between the tattooed motif and a decorative aspect of the kitchen's interior. The work was presented as a grid of 28 framed images with the respective details of name, occupation, time, date and place.

<sup>6</sup> This housing estate, originally built as temporary post war accommodation, was recently redeveloped. The distinctive terracotta orange slates of the roofs of these houses appear in the film *Terra Incognita* and other photographic work.

<sup>7</sup> Borella informed me, by letter that owing to his passion for the island's T.T. motorcycle races he had his tattoo done because of his affinity for the Island. Mick Duckworth is an artist and motorsport journalist. Duckworth, who is Manx by birth and domiciled in Nottingham, passed Borella's contact details to me in 2003.

<sup>8</sup> This was the case with *Johnny's Arm* (2001), who told me that his Manx accent was often mistaken for a Liverpool accent, whilst he was in the army and stationed in Chatham during the 1960's.



## 35 Black & white photographs (1984)

*35 b&w Photographs* (2004)

Bound Volume, letterpress title-page and silkscreen printed cover-title.

*35 b&w Photographs – Photography Studio, Camberwell College of Arts* (2002)

3 installation-views: 20 x 24 inch Gelatin silver prints and 10, 6 x7 colour transparencies.

*Chester Street Car Park and Finch Road Environs*

*35 black and white photographs 1984/2001*

Rephotographed on a 6 x 7 copy negative.

Printed on 20 x 24 inches Ilford matte paper 2001.

*35 b&w 1984*

Original prints, each 6 x 8 inches (Printed by John Kenny).

Photograph album and Letraset text.

Additional images: Manx National Heritage and Manx Museum Library.



*35 Black and white Photographs, 1984/2001. 20 x 24 inches. CD\_Archive (2004): 35b&w\_15.*

The ‘social exotic’ of familiar territory as artificial or illusory where the road is both a point for new departures and a place for events to find their denouement (Bakhtin 1981, p.243).

Such an approach to locality and to history, their inseparable unity and interpenetrability, became possible only because the locality ceased to be part of the abstract nature, a part of an indefinite, interrupted, and only symbolically rounded out (supplemented) world, and the event ceased to be a segment of the same indefinite time that was always equal to itself, reversible, and symbolically embodied. The locality became an irreplaceable part of the geographically and historically determined world, of *that* completely real and essentially visible world of human history and the event became an essential and non transferable moment in this particular time of human history that occurred in this, geographically human world. The world and history did not become poorer or smaller as a result of this process of mutual concretisation and interpenetration. On the contrary, they were condensed, compacted, and filled with the creative possibilities of subsequent *real* emergence and development (Bakhtin 1996, pp.49-50).

In 1984 I photographed the area near my home, and the environs of Chester Street car park and Finch Road, situated behind and above Douglas Promenade. They were taken for a Geography project, at school, with my second camera a *Kodak Retinette*. This camera was a *spotmatic* – in order to focus it was necessary to estimate the distance from myself to the subject: road, building, threshold or crossroads photographed. The Geography project disappeared but I’ve kept these pictures during the intervening years.



At the outset of this research project I identified these pictures as the basis for an investigation of different kinds of narrative and genre in photography. The original photographs were printed by my Uncle John Kenny in the darkrooms of W.H. Heaps, located in Senna Road. This street falls within the viewfinder of these photographs as well as *23 Colour Photographs (1970's)*. I lost the negatives during the intervening years but as my work has shifted towards photography they have formed the middle-ground upon which this project is based. The re-collection of these pictures led to the formation of my inventory of images. Subsequent photographs of the same location have been mediated through the family snapshots, found photographs and photographic postcards, which have been drawn into the archive, as well as the original prints from this series. These photographs were stored and travelled elsewhere with me before I was able to envisage their use as artwork. My intention to see this series anew, but distance their original documentary function, was at once reflexive but led to their reconfiguration as a series of dematerialised images, rephotographed for another series of prints. They were rephotographed once more, as a series, in colour, as part of a studio-installation in London (RT\_04) prior to their return to Douglas, via the latter image as part of the *Return Ticket* installation in 2003, which was also documented with photographs and Super 8 mm film.

The decision to re-use this material was at first problematic. To present the original prints would only display a purely documentary exercise, akin to the early practices of the social sciences. Their transformation was effected, in the first instance, as I rephotographed thirty-four of the photographs onto a 6 x 7 cm medium-format negative, in order to retain the detail of the original 6 x 8 inches original print, one of the originals was accidentally overlooked. They were enlarged during printing on a matte paper. In the investigation of their materiality there was a literal and metaphorical expansion of surface and space. In these images the proximity of the sea, reflected in the blank diffuse-light of the sky, is visible throughout. A glimpse of the sea is occasionally caught inbetween the built environment, barely perceptible through the haze that is characteristic of this coast line. A heightened impression of the ambient light is reflected in the softness and porosity of the accentuated visibility of grain and contrast, as a material characteristic of their rephotography and enlargement from the original prints. They were printed on matte paper as an intentional strategy to suppress the range of grey tones characteristic of the continuous tone of the original prints. This material affect equalises the surface. The viewer's eye is diverted from the minutia of detail, as nuances of light and abstraction of detail are reduced in their representational capacity. This adds to an overall analogue softening of image clarity. They were rephotographed in colour once more in the photography department's Studio 1, at Camberwell College of Arts. They were installed in a grid-like formation to accentuate their perception as a seamless field, the connotation of the grid contingent with time, space and travel. In a similar manner to Ruscha or Huebler they present a disjointed series of images. Their sequential



layout follows the route I might have taken, as I photographed each location early one Sunday morning in 1984. In their arrangement, as with *76 Postcards*, the viewer is orientated through the correlation of multiple points of view, as the eye is able to scan the images, not only from left to right, and right to left, but also up and down, and across the whole series. A sub-set of syntactical motifs surface through the repetition of specific vernacular architectural features, forming a spatial-syntax. The pitch of the Georgian roofs are mirrored in the tops of the litter bins. The clash of architectural styles calls out to the viewer by the rupture of their juxtaposition. The negative voids of the car park spaces drain meaning. At a crossroads two roadside cones: one standing, points up the road ahead, whilst the other fallen, directs the pedestrian viewer to the right. The ocular window seen at the top of one of the Georgian houses on Finch Road, is mirrored in a new building on Mount Havelock situated opposite. Using the ocular window, as a framing device, I photographed the Tower of Refuge for the respective works entitled *Ocular View*. In the viva exhibition the lightbox version of this work was installed in order to establish a correspondence with the two ocular windows described. All of these images have been photographed from a disengaged, oblique point of view, even when I photographed Mount Pleasant where I, my father, mother and sister lived and where my grandfather and family had also lived, is only just included within the frame of the picture. My grandfather was a tailor with his brother and two sisters. The business premises were located on Prospect Hill. As I cannot remember taking these pictures I have permitted myself these observations as a series of reflections, which feature as a specific phase of my development as an artist to which I have returned. Twice-removed, as rephotographed images, their point of view is that of the artist-traveller, in a spatial mapping akin to Ader's journey through the empty streets of Los Angeles, whilst having a sense of detachment as seen in Ruscha's Los Angeles apartments. They intimate a reading of space, which equates with the following observation by Bakhtin (1981, p.248), as the trajectory outlined in the chronotope of the road, which dominates these pictures, is often blocked by other phenomena such as the headland cliffs of the Howe in South Douglas:

The idea of 'threshold' that always seems to be blocked. Scenes of the inter-individual, inter-subjective of the social entering art bypassing the individual memory of their creators and original source.

The studio installation of the twenty-seven landscape images (2002) were taped to the wall amidst the paraphernalia of the photography studio with its lights, roll-down backdrops and overhead power points. The intention was to integrate the setting as part of the picture, and material process of their transformation. In some of the photographs the edge of the frame bears evidence of the darkroom process, as the border edge of the original is visible as a result of a mis-alignment in the framing of the new print in the darkroom. Whilst this subtlety indicates the process of rephotography, it is purely



accidental. To have made this implicit-reflexivity explicit would have been a mannered gesture. The edge of the compositional frame is also loose in its structure, with the inclusion of incidental detail. As a series of images they are unedited and there has been no cropping to exclude extraneous detail, unlike in Ruscha's gasoline stations. What is presented is a re-tracing of steps already taken; a re-embedding of the transience which is the transience of photography itself, where underneath one picture there is another. They return to the present from the past, in a search for the rupture within the denotative structure, rooted in the everyday detail of the time and space, which these photographs depict. The production of connotative meaning emerges from a semiotic perspective, as we witness the evidence of changing social structures in the vernacular architecture relative to the other artefacts contained within the archive.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin (1970, p.229).



## 23 Colour Photographs (1970's)

C-type photographs, ea. 9 x 13 cm.

Vintage photoalbum, Letraset & typewriter text on index cards.

*Chester Street/Wellington Square Area – Inventory of Properties 1962-1972*



CD\_Archive (2004): 23 Colour\_02.

A handwritten inventory table titled "Properties - Chester Street/Wellington Square Area". The table has several columns: "Address", "Date", "Price", "Owner", and "Status". The entries are numbered 1 through 23. The handwriting is in black ink on a grid paper. The table is filled with detailed information for each property, including street names like "Chester Street" and "Wellington Square".

CD\_Archive (2004): 23 Colour Photographs  
(Inventory of Properties).

As a complementary series to *35 b&w Photographs*, these photographs were taken in the mid to late 1970's. As is the case with their black and white counterparts, they display a similar loose compositional structure, and both series represent the shooting of a single roll of film. They are mounted in a vintage photoalbum, with the original handwritten inscriptions on their reverse, transcribed as a series of typewritten index cards, which identifies their respective locations and street names. This album commensurate with modest scale of the pictures conjoins with other documents, which illuminate their subject, in terms of a specific time and place, and their material connotation as mnemonic devices. These include an aerial photograph from the archive of the Manx Museum Library taken in 1964, and an inventory of 131 properties as well as an archive aerial-photograph of the area, which is included in *35 b&w* series. *Inventory of Properties – Chester Street/Wellington Square Area 1962-1972* is a document of public record, which details the Manx Government's compulsory purchase of the properties, in what was a predominantly residential area of poor, back-to-back housing. Each of the three pages details the address, date of purchase, purchase price, owner and current status. In the *23 Colour Photographs* the depopulation and demolition of this area is already underway, as the dense habitation of communal living is replaced by an open rubble-strewn space, already given over to car parking, in a foreshadowing of its future redevelopment.

The warm, earthy saturation of the colour is characteristic of the Kodak film stock in circulation at the time, with the exception of those mis-prints with a cyan-cast due to bad printing. It is possible to assess the representational importance of the chronotope, as it is traced in the changing architectural legacy of the semiotic geography of a specific locale. The representability of events in the chronotope are transmitted into the present by the density and concreteness of its time markers, as that of human-historical time, which occurs within well delineated spatial areas. They proffer an anticipation of narrative in a condensed but concentrated setting where despite their emptiness they are a material register of time and space.



## Spatio-temporal Markers

### *Sea-mine I* (2000)

Ink-jet on Hewlett Packard heavyweight paper mounted on aluminium, 100 x 100 cm.  
Output from Hewlett Packard HP 3500.

### *Sea-mine II* (2004)

Durst Lambda transparency and lightbox, 108.5 x 109 cm.  
Origin: 35mm slide transfer from print file.

*Fountain I* (2003) Ink-jet on blue-backed paper, 6 x 8 feet (*Return Ticket* proof-print).

### *Fountain II* (2003)

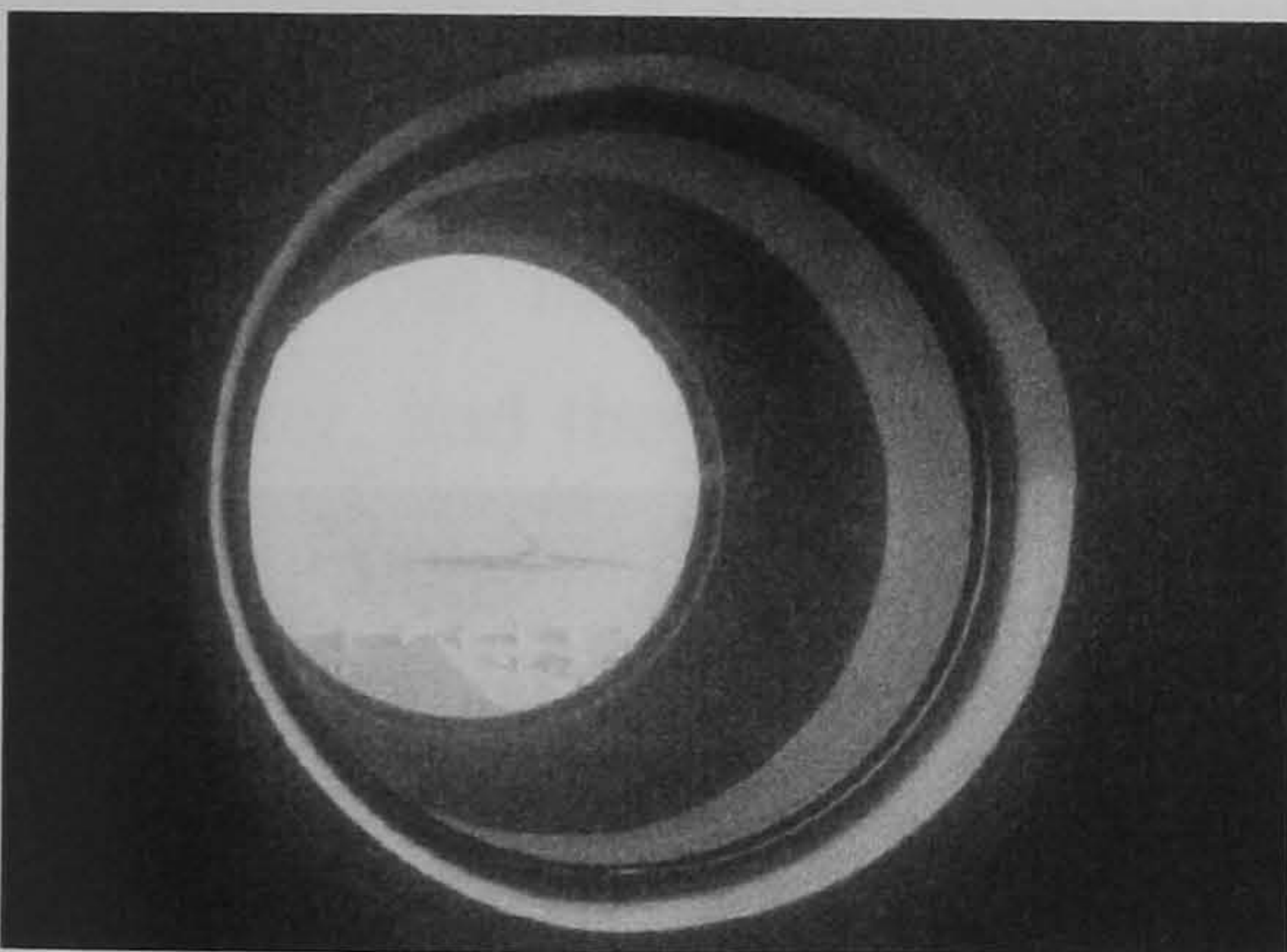
Output from Epson 9500 Printer. Ink-jet on Epson semi-gloss photopaper.

### *Shelter* (2003)

Output from Epson 9500 Printer. Ink-jet print on Epson semi-gloss photopaper.

### *Ocular-View* (2002)

Black and white photograph, 16 x 20 inches.



*Ocular View*, 2002. Black and white photograph, 16 x 20 inches. CD\_Archive (2004): Spatio-temporal Markers\_04.

In *Sea-mine* (RT\_08) a digital blurring or shimmering of the surface effects a disorientating illusion of space, where the eye struggles to focus the image at close range, but the viewer is drawn closer when the work is apprehended from a distance. Morphet (1970, p.72) has referred to this phenomenon as “a telescoping of space”. Optically the zone of sharp focus is known as depth of field. Focal length, in terms of the camera’s point of focus, is critical for depth of field, as well as the distance from which the object is photographed. As the camera’s aperture size decreases, more of the background and foreground appear in sharp focus. Alternately, with an increase in the size of the aperture, that which lies in front and behind this zone, is out of focus or blurred. Also the way in which rays of light converge on the lens at different points can result in chromatic aberration - whereby black and white and colour photographs display an overall softening or fuzziness and objects are outlined by a yellow or blue line. This distortion is compensated by multiple lens alignment. Camera shake, either deliberate or accidental, can also cause an overall blurring of the image. Motion blur is a term used to describe the movement of either the subject passing the camera, or when the camera



moves or pans relative to a moving subject, the background is thus rendered out of focus. The blurring associated with long exposure and darkroom enlargement has been discussed in relation to the *Beach-boy* series. The ideology of the camera obscura and blurring as ontological constructs have also been referenced in terms of their representational status and relationship with photography and painting. Shiff (2001) has differentiated ‘fuzz’ and ‘blur’ relative to space and time respectively. He identifies the indices of the analogue-blur described above, in terms of a disjunctive temporal movement. ‘Fuzz’ is dependent on factors proportionate to size of mark, frame size and resolution as spatialising properties and formulae. This is critical for any theory which seeks to clarify a nomenclature based on the identity and difference of analogue and digital technologies. These definitions are brought to bear in the following account of the *Sea-mine* series, as indicators of ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ space-time coordinates, which elucidate the materiality of particular works as ‘travelled photographic images’. In turn they are also analogous to the theme of artist-travel and a dematerialisation of object, image and medium.

The source-image of the *Sea-mine* series was photographed sometime in the 1980’s with a Kodak *Instamatic* camera on 126 film, which has a square negative. This film is now discontinued. In a dematerialisation of tactile matter and lens based optics, *Sea-mine I* (2000) was originally scanned at a low resolution. In this work the actions of the hand are invisible as there is no identification between the mechanical source, here a computer, and the working process which ‘automatically’ *renders* the image as visible data in a pre-inscribed state when it is viewed on-screen. The scanned image was then digitally-modified using an array of *Adobe Photoshop* filters and *actions*, based on the darkroom strategies already described in relation to Hamilton’s work, such as the *masking* of separation negatives etc. One such filter – the *Gaussian blur* – takes its name from the geometric formula of probability, which differentiates the points of identity along a bell-shaped curve. A *Gaussian blur* takes each pixel in an RGB (Red, Green, Blue) image, and mixes it with adjacent pixels with gaussian probability, so that the pixel has greatest effect nearest to its original location, and less effect further away from its original location. This effect produces a blurred flattening of surface as pictorial detail is eliminated. The expansion of space corresponds to an exponential porosity as it appears shot-through – creating a space which seems to contract and expand. This dematerialisation of the image is further enhanced in the lightbox version of the image, as it is lit from behind. The image is digitally-deterritorialised, as it loses its identity once more. The use-value of the sea-mine as an object has already been transformed. Following my conception of the found object and readymade, the reclaimed World War Two sea-mines were decommissioned and redeployed as monuments. They were situated in prominent seaside locations in order that members of the public could donate their spare change in a money-box slot on top of the mine, where a plaque proclaimed their function as a collection-box for *The Society for Shipwrecked Mariners*.



During printing the spread of ink-jet droplets onto the paper stock – sprayed from nozzles in the printer-heads – introduced a *feathering*, as the ink seeps into the uncoated printing paper. This material affect, or defect, accentuates the dematerialisation of the medium and object depicted, as its material surface has been altered by the correlation of several different factors. These introduce a sense of distance on multiple levels of formation. The status of the object changes both psychologically and geographically, with its photographic capture, in what Ruscha has described as a ‘ready-made in photographic form’. The disengaged nature of the work at the imperceptible level of data, and its digital modification corresponds to the relativity of gaussian curvature, which alludes to an invisible, mathematical relationship between pixel-proximity. Finally the output of the image, in multiple forms, is based on a tension between repetition and memory, and strategies of reproduction and installation, which implicate the viewer within the work. Shiff cites the apparition-like quality of Seurat’s drawings in terms of their distribution of drawn marks as spatial units, which disappear as they form a seamless field. In *Sea-mine* the chromatic consistency of the digitally rendered image has a similar effect. The push and pull of the optimum viewing range, moves the viewer back and forth in the space of exhibition, where the work is installed either as a monitor-projection, print or lightbox transparency.

Interiority and exteriority are critical in the symbolic directionality of the photographic point of view, which is both psychological and geographical. In the *Sea-mine* and *Fountain* works there are two opposing views, an interior ‘inland’ view and the exterior ‘outland’ to sea. An aura of emptiness permeates these inert images, as a way of pushing the emotional content to the surface of the picture plane. This stillness is reflected in the horizon-line as a point of balance, as both a physical and psychological limit, upon which the dialectics of distance are founded: near and far, here and there, outside and inside. In the digital image the notion of figure and ground or object and landscape are effaced, no longer the effect of light, reflected from objects, coalescing as silver halide crystals in the photographic print, but as indices of reconfigured digitised information. A making visible of the picture plane, at its Achilles heel, the vanishing point, is where the structure of the image is called into question. It is at this point that the potential for new meaning and identity is found. This has led to a pulling backwards and forwards, not only between the analogue and the digital, but also in space and time. The blurred image is no less precise than the focussed image. The picture surface dissolves at a point where our field of vision is no longer distracted by detail, but instead, as in memory, relationships with people, objects and places have been altered by the passage of time and space, and the distance and proximity between the two. It is at such a moment of potential loss that memories are reconstituted in the present, and that their facility to shape the future is realised. The discourse of a practice and theory, which supports such a proposition is thus, not only concerned with the content of that which is both distant and proximate, but the physical and technical resolution of the inbetween.



## Family Snapshots

*VMQ (2000) modified #1*

Ink-jet print mounted on aluminium.

*VMQ (2004) modified #2*

Durst Lambda transparency & lightbox.



CD\_Ar: Family snapshots\_07



CD\_Ar: Family snapshots\_03



CD\_Ar: Family snapshots\_12



CD\_Ar: Family snapshots\_09

The family photoalbum also depicts a journey where a selective arrangement of images formulates a series of spatio-temporal markers, which trace a genealogical journey. A palm sized black and white snapshot of my pregnant mother (CD\_Archive: Family-snapshots\_04 VMQ) was used as the source image for a painting titled *VMQ\_1966* (2004). The unity of its intimate surface as a black and white image is displaced by the colour photographs which follow in this series: The fuschia bush in the front-garden of No. 3 Mount Pleasant, a photograph of my mother wearing a 1960's Biba mack (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_05), my sister and mother outside my Aunt's house in Derby Square (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_12), a similar square of houses five minutes walk from Hutchinson Square where Kurt Schwitters was interned. In another photograph I, my father and Ange the dog are seen walking up Broadway, off Central Promenade between Hutchinson Square and Derby Square (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_09). The Falcon Cliff Hotel, which appears in eight of the postcard views looms behind, in a photograph of my mum sitting on Douglas beach (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_03). In a contact-sheet of photographs, circa 1970, by Chris Killip, I am seen running around Summerhill Glen, near to the Derby Castle Depot. A series of black and white photographs taken with my first camera a Kodak Instamatic 126 (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_13-17). The same camera was also used some years later to photograph *Sea-mine* circa 1991, and for a series of fourteen colour images of Douglas Promenade. The standard print size of this format was 4 x 4 inches. In these photographs, taken around Mount Pleasant, the architectural detail of St Andrews Church and the House of Keys are visible in the background. There is also an overview taken from the roof of Mount Pleasant looking towards the Grand Union camera obscura on Douglas Head (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_17). Each of the material variants, as a sub-genre within the archive draws



attention to the surface of the photographic image in a specific way, as pictorial recognition is displaced by a return to the materiality of the photograph's surface. The analogue continuity of the photographic image is manifest in between two photographs of my father, standing with some other cyclists for a group portrait, outside the Nook Cafe, at the Quarterbridge on the outskirts of Douglas circa 1956. One was in focus and the other was out of focus (extant at the time of this collection). They intimate a point of separation between a moment of recognition, and the literal and metaphorical transparency of their surface, in a denial of spatial depth and pictoriality.

Another family snapshot (CD\_Ar: Family-snapshots\_07) shows me standing on my mother's lap facing the plate-glass, window of a promenade cafe in summer, looking outside, and perhaps unaware that the picture is being taken (illustrated above far left). The surface-noise of an image ravaged by time has been digitally erased to reveal a multitude of suspended reflections, held within the frame of the window, in an uninterrupted, simultaneous view of inside and outside. The material transparency of this image is such that the viewer's attention is drawn to the surface of the image, which is bisected by a white panel. As part of *Inventory for a Reverse Journey* the systematic transformation of family snapshots, prised from their archival limitations, serves to reinscribe these images in a dual dematerialisation, which connotes both emotional distance and proximity. The inscription of image is distanced by what both Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes recognised respectively as the photographic 'shock' – as an alternative form of caption, which corresponds to their materiality.

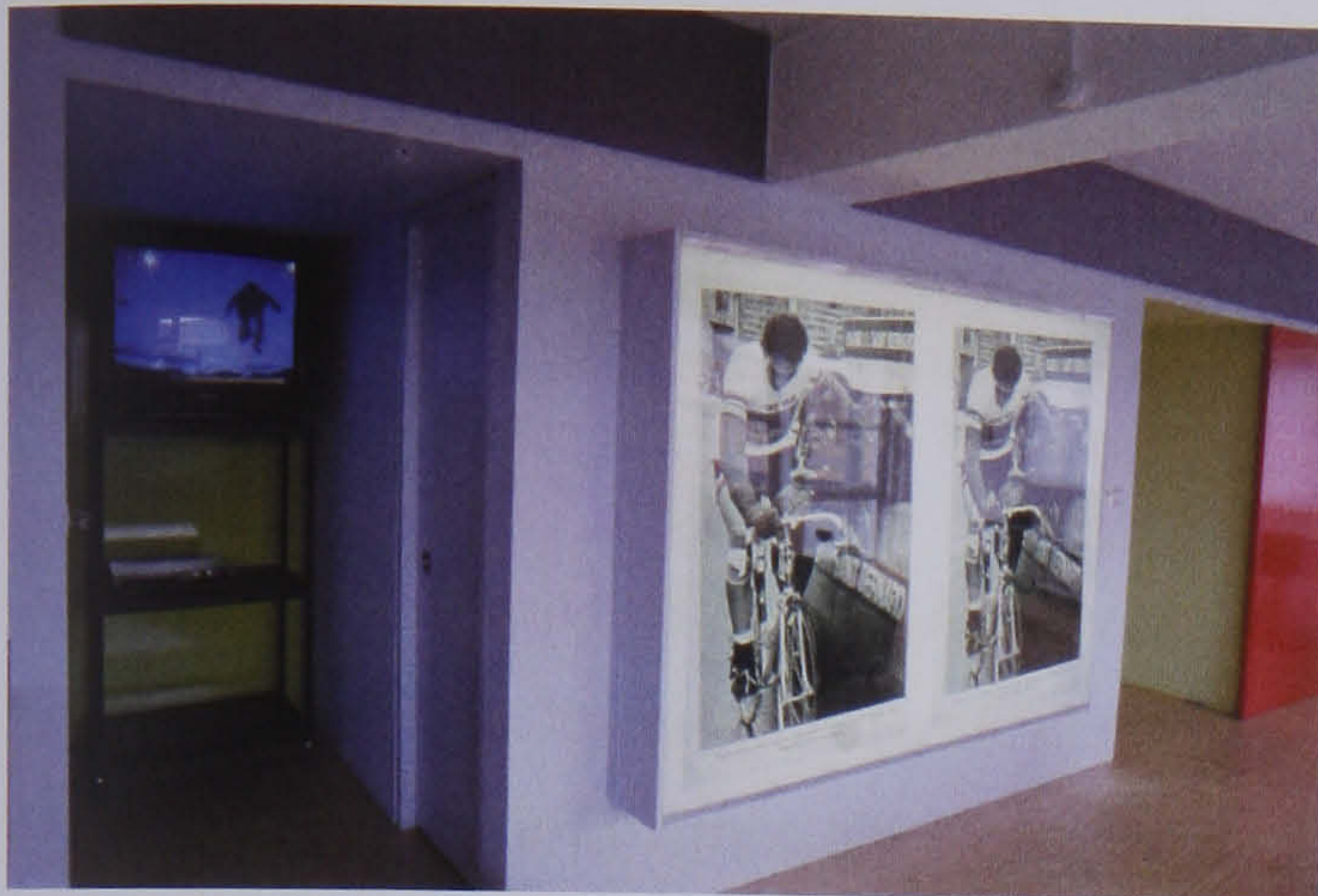
As images of the past they are arranged in chronological order – the logical order of social memory. In the same way that the vernacular features of Douglas promenade are monumentalised – the family snapshot is also a monument. Bourdieu (1965, p.30) catches the essence of what it means to take and keep such pictures: "To take photographs of one's children is to become the historiographer of their childhoods and to prepare for them as an heirloom the image of what they used to be."



## Travel Projects 2001 - 2004

### *motor : show*

Proof, London: 27th April - 20th May 2002 London.



*Eddy 34*, 2002. Lightbox and transparency, 150 x 200 cm. Installation view: *motor:show*, Proof, London.

In 2002 I installed *Eddy 34* as part of the group exhibition *motor:show* at Proof, a gallery/home, inhabited by Sue Withers and Andrew Moller, in Bermondsey, London. The premise for the exhibition was a concept of motion in all its guises as a ‘form of speech’ (Flint 2002, u.p.). During the summer of 1999 I digitally manipulated 160 images for a double carousel slide-work. The source of these images is an ongoing archive of materials, which were initially gathered for the exhibition *Eraser-Ed* (1996) in Niel, Belgium. Images of Belgian multiple Tour de France winner Eddy Merckx were collected from magazines, newspapers and books to form the *Eddy Merckx Archive* (1995/In process). The image which I utilised for the work *Eddy 34* (2002) was derived from this archive.

Following discussion with Flint & Renton image No.34 was selected. Images of Merckx are widely disseminated in the Belgian media, given his status as a national hero. As a collection, it was my intention to displace Merckx’s identity in order to suggest wider identities and ‘meaning potential’, relative to notions of masculinity, physical-strain and celebrity. As the most contentious image in the archive *Eddy 34* shows Merckx with his head bowed, at speed during the Paris-Nice stage race, whilst the Molteni team’s doctor leans out of a car window in order to administer an injection in the cyclist’s knee. In the exhibition catalogue Flint (2001) refers to the universality of Merckx’s identity as an athlete and its significance for the concept of movement upon which *motor : show* was based:

[...] the relative unfamiliarity of Merckx in this country gives his image a more generic identity as a symbol of the various values associated with sports of endurance – heroism, stamina, charisma, and that curious point where autonomy becomes automatism, where the body merges with the machine in a self destructive sacrifice, paralleled by the loss of identity that paradoxically appears when fame makes a face ubiquitous.

For the exhibition I was allocated an in-situ lightbox in which to install the work. Given



the proportions of the lightbox, the scale of the work was gauged accordingly and presented as a doubled image, in order to induce a double-take, whereupon the gaze searches for difference but finds none. This aspect of the work was commented upon by Stephen Bury in a review of the exhibition:

The doubling of the image suggests media propagation and exploitation of the cycling star but also the unique personality, just as, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare doubles up the sycophantic courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The inorganic syringe penetrating the cyclist's leg emphasises the mechanisation of the human body – the transmission of human and mechanical molecules from bicycle to rider and vice versa that worried Flann O'Brien's policeman. This image resonates against the bicycles in use by the household.

At first the contents of the *Eddy Merckx Archive* were collected as a response to place, as a form of spatio-temporal marker, during a sojourn in Belgium between 1995 and 1996. Initially my fascination with this material was born out of a subjective interest in cycling, given my own experience as a racing cyclist. As a series of images the archive has expanded to encompass many photographic variants. The connotation of this material has thus expanded, as the meaning potential of a collection cycling ephemeral and motifs has moved beyond aesthetic concerns with dynamism as a forming of space (Krauss 1999, pp.58-59).



## Settings

*18 b&w Photographs: Gillingham – Chatham – Rochester* (November 2001)  
Rochester Art Gallery: 3rd November - 6th January 2002.  
18, 16 x 20 inches gelatin silver photographs printed on Ilford Matte paper.



*Settings*, installation-view, Rochester, 2002



*Settings: Chatham, Pentagon Centre.*

The work presented in *Settings* manifests a collapsing of spatial, temporal and language based co-ordinates by three artists engaged in diverse practices, namely myself, Maria Mencia and Barbara Rauch. This collaboration originated as a result of our respective practice-based research projects at Camberwell College of Arts and Chelsea College of Art and Design, as part of the joint research project *The Integration of Computers within Fine Art Practice*. The theme of the exhibition was based in the way that text, sound and (moving) images are resituated or transformed relative to emergent digital technologies.

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring the commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities that run our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of a tenth of a second, so that now in the midst of its far-flung debris and ruins, we calmly and adventurously go travelling.

Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*<sup>1</sup>

The Medway basin is situated approximately one hour by train from London. I arrived in Gillingham having departed from Victoria Station on Saturday in November 2001. These photographs were taken during the course of a forty minute walk between Gillingham, Chatham and Rochester, which are orientated around the sweeping meander of the River Medway. During my reconnaissance I assumed the same 'attenuated disorientation' for this series as a rejoinder to *35 b&w Photographs*. These documentary photographs were taken instinctively, on what was my first visit to the area, whilst location scouting for the exhibition. The duration of the walking-journey between these three towns, forms the work, through a series of intermittent stills. My attention was drawn to the historical and social legacy of the area. Benjamin (1968, p.220) described Aget's photographs 'like scenes of crime', and their manner of 'establishing evidence'.



The inference in Benjamin suggests the impoverishment of the city by capitalism. The photographs in *Settings* document everyday life and changing social conditions reflected in snapshots of the vernacular architecture of this regional setting. The degeneration of this area was accelerated by the closure of the Chatham dock yards, by the Admiralty in 1984, with the loss of eight thousand jobs, as well as the closure of the Rugby Cement Works in Rochester. The civic delights of Rochester, as a tourist centre, are thus at odds with its neighbours: The carbuncle of the Pentagon Complex at the heart of Chatham and the ill-conceived, pedestrianised spaces of Gillingham contrast with cathedral-picturesque of Rochester.

The viewer is presented with views of the River Medway as a conduit of historical, political and social significance for the towns and cities of the Medway Basin. Point of view is often blocked on the opposite bank of the river. A sense of place emerges through the viewer's perception of aberrant incidental detail, which is glimpsed amidst the facades of constructed urban space; Examples of which include a swastika daubed on a garage door, reflecting the disturbing undercurrents, which permeate British society. This was nearby to a closed synagogue, with a Jewish cemetery at its rear. A rain-sodden, discarded cardboard box has a strange beauty. The military presence in its omnipresent visibility. A multitude of thresholds that are probably never trespassed, as they are passed-by without concern in the focus of life lived in the moment. These pictures are resolutely documentary, as spatially perceived phenomena encountered in the moment of their transition between redevelopment or degeneration.

These photographs were printed un-cropped and uniformly framed. Eighteen photographs were exhibited one year later in November 2002. They were displayed in an indomitable grid formation. As a portfolio series, they were later reconstituted with the addition of a title page, and the caption of each image with a hand-written designation of the journey-time at which each image was photographed. As a real-time walking-journey, the documentary function of *18 b&w Photographs* was staged as a series of disjointed stills, which were offset, by their juxtaposition in the gallery space, alongside the downloaded images of Barbara Rauch's work *Do Not Use as a Pillow* (2002). Rauch's work depicted a virtual-journey, by the artist-avatar, navigating her way through a computer generated virtual-landscape.



## Techniken des Vorueberziehens

### Postcards from Innsbruck - Journeys to Euroland

Fotoforum West, Innsbruck Austria, September 5th - October 12th 2002.

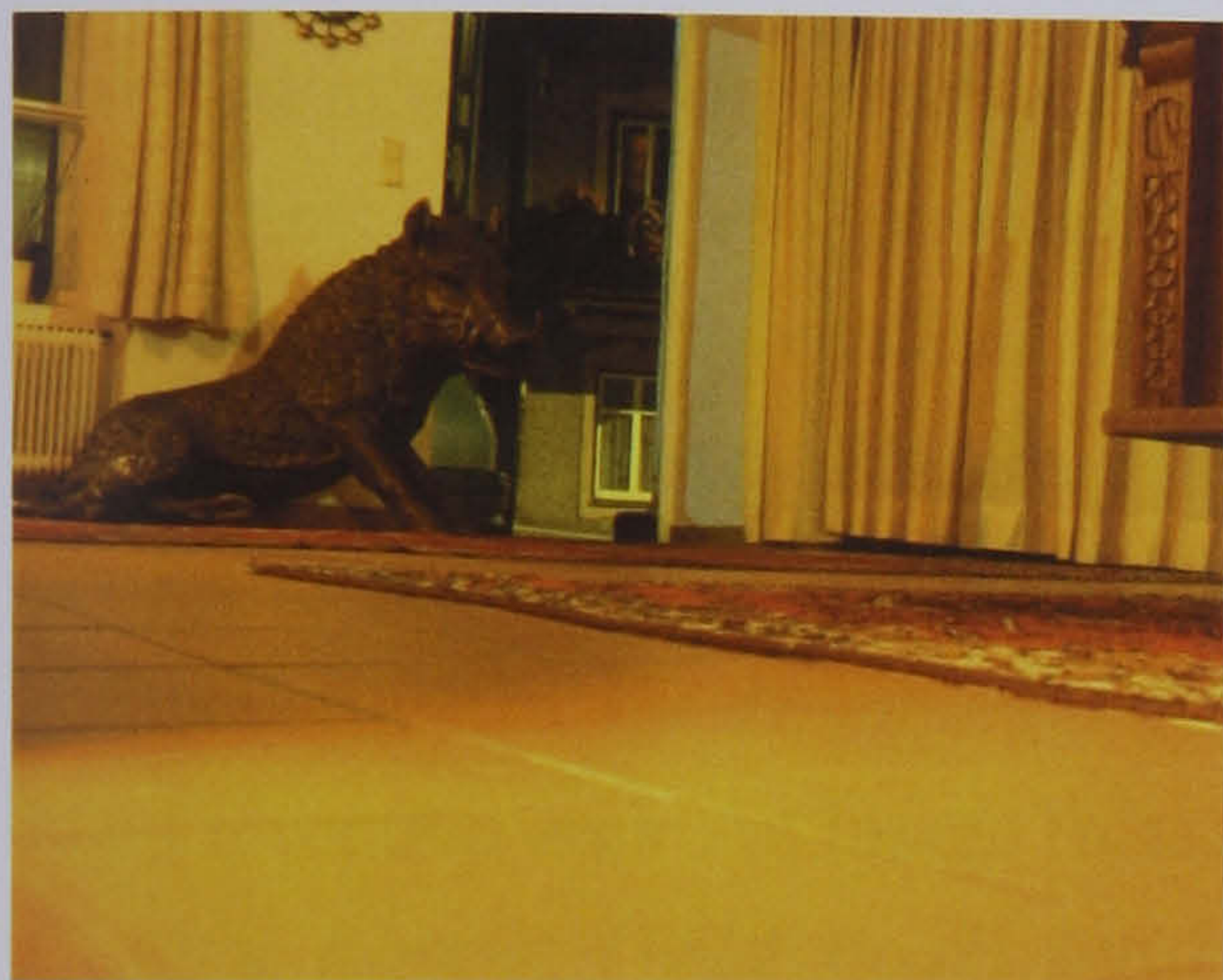
*Gasthof Koreth (Wild Boar) August 2002 (Innsbruck)*

Durst Lambda transparency and lightbox

*Wild Boar December 2002 (London)*

Durst Lambda transparency and lightbox & 5, 8 x 10 inch C-type photographs (framed).

Travel Archive: 6 x 7 and 35mm colour transparencies in transparency mounts and plastic sleeves.<sup>1</sup>



*Gasthof Koreth (Wild Boar), Innsbruck, 2002. Lightbox and transparency, 109 x 138 cm.*

*Techniken des Vorueberziehens* (Techniques of Transition) was the title of an exhibition of photography, video and installation work exhibited at Fotoforum West ([www.fotoforum.at](http://www.fotoforum.at) & [www.prairie.at](http://www.prairie.at)). The exhibition was curated, by London-based artist and curator Verena Gfader, as an examination of 'the cinematic effect of the street'.<sup>2</sup> Gfader selected artists whose work investigates the notion of travel, at home or elsewhere, and how their work activates the urban surroundings through which they move. The artists included Maria Moreira, Juan Cruz, Martyn Evans and Nils Norman. Prior to my departure for Innsbruck, in order to carry out location-scouting I issued a statement entitled *Journeys to Euroland*:

#### *Journeys to Euroland*

Whilst waiting for the arrival of a new passport for my journey to Austria, I began to wonder what I would see when I arrived. During this static time I bought some panniers for my bicycle, in order to be mobile during the course of my short stay. I had already decided to bring several different cameras to record my journey around Innsbruck. At the same time I received postcards from the curator and other images via e-mail as part of our preparatory communications for the exhibition. I began to work with these images for the gallery web-site to provide clues to the finished work. It is the dialectical relationship via images (postcards) of how we see places from a distance, in contrast to the proximity of actual experience of a place itself, which is the premise for the work exhibited in *Techniken des Vorueberziehens*.

*Cian Quayle, London, July 2002*

The above was written during a period of anticipation as I prepared my bike ready for the four day cycle-trip by which I navigated the environs of Innsbruck. As I travelled



with the Tyröller taxi service from Munich Airport to Innsbruck I heard reports of massive flooding, which preceded my arrival in Innsbruck. Subject to my inquiries regarding features in the landscape, around which I would structure my daily excursions, Verena informed me of the ever present threat of avalanche, to which the area is prone. as the mountains are buried in up to ten metres of snow each winter. The avalanches are held back by artificial wooden barriers which striate the mountains, as well as stone-built conical mounds called *lawinenkegel*.

I made daily journeys by bicycle through the Tyrol landscape and around the immediate environs of Innsbruck in search of alternative forms of ethnicity. My trip culminated in the climb of the Nordkette mountain, through the forests, in search of these features. The *serpentina* of the hair-pin bends, as I approached the summit, echoed the meander of the River Inn in the valley below. My interest in different photographic genres is revealed in a series of transparency photographs, which I separated into three different categories: 'Landscape photographs' which picture the psychological imprint of landscape in their topographical depiction and close attention to vernacular detail, highlighting the Hapsburg lineage and Catholicism of the city and countryside. 'Street photographs', which depict the exterior of a strip-bar by day, and the annual, week-long carnivalesque of the *Hamburger Fischmarkt* by night. 'Interiors': a deserted bar and hotel reception area. An image from the 'Interiors' was used for a lightbox work entitled *Gasthof Koreth, (Wild Boar) Innsbruck* (2002). This work was transported back to London where it was installed in the The Red Lion in London's East End. The relocation of the lightbox in the bar seemed strangely appropriate as it complimented the gaudy, ramshackle interior.

Cian Quayle London July 2002

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Each of these travel projects is accessed by a wider set of images in colour and black and white: 6 x 6 cm., 6 x 7 cm & 35 mm photographs and transparencies. These are stored in a variety of formats as constituent elements collected for the production of specific artworks. These extended archival strategies relate to other journeys: *Krackov/Przemysal/Krackow, Poland, June 2000. Herne Hill Cycle Track, London, November 2000, Maryon Park, November 2001* (7 @ 8 x 10 inches black and white photographs on Ilford Matte paper - from the *Film Stills* portfolio).

<sup>2</sup> Fold-out information sheet and invitation for *Techniken des Vorueberziehens* containing statement by Verena Gfader 2002.



## Digital Responses

### *Mnemonic Surfaces - Stone to Light*

Victoria and Albert Museum 17th October - 10th November 2002

Lightbox and transparency (Durst Lambda), 109 x 138 cm.

4 x C-type photographs, ea. 8 x 10 inches, matte-mounted.

*Gas Holder, South London, 2002*

*Serpentine Lake & Gardens, London, 2002*

*Kidbrooke Estate, South-East London, 2002*

*The Mount Pond, Clapham Common, London 2002*

Items selected from the Victoria and Albert Museum's Library of Prints Drawings and Photographs:-

J.McNeill Whistler, *Early Morning Battersea* (1861), drypoint etching. *Nocturne* (1878), lithograph. Joseph Powell, *Clapham Common*, lithograph. Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Gas Holder, London, Finchley, England* (1974), black and white photograph. Robert Frank, *London* (1950), black and white photograph. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *London suburbs* (1954), black and white photograph.



Left: *Light, dry, digital, transparency, inversion (Early Morning Battersea)*, 2002. Lightbox and transparency. Right: James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne*, 1878. Lithotint.

### *Mnemonic surfaces - Stone to Light*

This work stems from a year long series of exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum titled *Digital Responses*, where selected artists using new media were invited by Paul Coldwell and Barbara Rauch to use the museum's collections as a starting point for their own work. The idea was to produce a *trail* within the museum. My selection from the Library of Prints Drawings and Photographs included the work of iconic modernist and contemporary photographers (Robert Frank, Henri Cartier Bresson, Bernd and Hilla Becher), topographical artists (Joseph Powell) and the prints of James McNeill Whistler. In a reverse mapping of the library archive I produced contemporary photographic images of London, which referenced the same locations represented by those artists.



The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space and tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished spirit. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in the vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and greatest, town on earth.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899

Joseph Conrad's sublime evocation of the Thames in *Heart of Darkness* presents a dual perception of the city. The everyday reality of the 'interminable waterway', manifest in the working life of the river, is set against a metaphorical illusion of screen-like flatness where the sea meets sky in an evanescent stasis, frozen in the dislocated time of the present. This tension between motionlessness and movement, light and dark provides the backdrop to this work. Whistler's rigorous approach to the medium of printmaking was marked by a shift from realism to aestheticism and with it a changed sense of materiality. It is the medium specificity of printmaking processes and their effect of a dematerialisation of the image, which allows us to trace what art historian Richard Shiff (1998) refers to in contemporary terms as 'weightless images'.

I spent the early autumn of 2002 location scouting along the River Thames tracking Whistler's systematic exploration of the river as part of my research for the exhibition. I selected a point of view facing the location of Cremorne Gardens, the former 19<sup>th</sup>c. pleasure gardens, which Whistler also painted. Over the course of the next few weeks I returned to the same location everyday at dawn and dusk to produce a series of photographs. The chosen location has a strong symbolism. It is a nostalgic point of view, as the legacy of late 19<sup>th</sup>c. industrial optimism is juxtaposed with the failed project of contemporary urban living signified by the adjacent tower block flats. Recent urban regeneration at the end of the century has seen many of these flats across London demolished. Today the degeneration of the utopian vision of the 1960's is at odds with the new luxury riverside apartments.

In my work I relate a theoretical inquiry of photography to a contextual analysis outlined below. It is possible that digital imaging processes may ultimately replace photographic film. Thus a rupture between continuous analogue reality and digitally mediated images reveals a moment of perceived obsolescence where a re-evaluation of the photographic image is possible, as one medium is absorbed by another. Just as for Whistler lithography lost the stigma of commercialism, photographic practice is in a phase of transition in terms of its ontological formation. For the artist this opens medium-specific lines of investigation in order to reconfigure that which is already known and in particular here the notion of the weightless image. In his essay *Liquid Intelligence* (1989) Jeff Wall discusses photography's medium-specificity and anticipates this rupture. He distinguishes the "institution of photography" as definable by modalities of dry to wet. This metaphorical relation is set against the process of photography's inherent reflexivity



as a “memory trace”. He posits this against the displacement of water by “digital information systems” and suggests that “the historical consciousness of the medium is altered.”

In *The Two Authenticities of the Photographic Media* (1974) Rudolf Arnheim identifies photography’s authenticity in relation to realist and aesthetic practices of representation. He acknowledges photography’s “fortuitous” instantaneous capture and pictorial composition as the “programme” for both film and still photography. He references German film theorist Siegfried Kracauer’s reflections on the medium of film, alongside his own adherence to film and photography’s material and optical qualities. He suggests that digital input transforms photography’s authenticity in a manner beyond those techniques with which we are already familiar. Arnheim’s concerns establish a platform from which to explore the photographic image’s tension between artifice and authenticity.

The photographicness of Whistler’s dematerialisation of the image from *weight* to *light* finds its contemporary equivalence in my lightbox mounted photographic transparency. In a synthesis of both analogue and digital modes of the photographic image, documentary realism and aesthetic effects analogous to Whistler’s blur are combined. The procedures which led to the realisation of this work are described in terms of their perceptual effects determined by the correlation of analogue and digital and what these terms might mean.

This work hinges on the interplay between what we understand and perceive by *analogue reality*, as Richard Shiff has it (that which is continuous in space and time), *in-between transitional states* of being and *digital* (the representation of that reality by something which replaces a full range of values with something less) or the “distribution of discrete units”, as the basis of all representations. This can be dabs or strokes of paint on canvas, the incised line of etching, the grain of photographic emulsion or configurations of pixels. On this basis we are conditioned to accept that these marks as well as photographic grain, blurring or static are synonymous with the reception of images. Do fuzz and blurring signify our experience of reality better than razor sharp focus and clarity and what are the implications of the manner in which digital information systems ingest and transmit images?

The weightlessness of photography and works of art devoid of aura has been superseded by the disembodied world of the computer monitor. In an alchemical turn the auratic, illuminated function of the light box reanimates the dead soul of the digitally scanned photographic negative, reconstituting it as a back-lit transparency. The camera obscura’s projection of an inverted image of the world outside is returned in my work as a weightless, modified reflection carried in the river itself in place of a concrete reality. The image inversion sets up a spatial disjunction as the transition from near to far dissipates in a vanishing flatness, whilst the back-projection of light manifests the process of the medium itself. The photographic image is both object and deobjectified as it is unhinged from its support. The material value of image is thus profoundly changed. Space and time fall away as opticality increases; where touch and vision separate image and reality disappear.



This image is evidence of the implausibility of distinguishing notions of digital and analogue reality. The photograph like any other representation is a copy of an original source or model; digital scanning further removes the image from its source. The truth status of photography has been in question since the medium was invented. This status is at critical mass as electronically mediated images are no longer governed by the physical materiality of their formation. Previously, static, blurring, fuzz and other forms of 'noise'<sup>4</sup> were signs of the inherent material structure of images. Digital input and modification has conditioned our reception of images as constantly mediated. The authenticity of photography's decisive moment has been lost as reality is constantly questioned. Arnheim (1996) goes on to cite William J. Mitchell's notion of 'electrobricollage' as disbelief is further suspended by the artifice of "digitalisation". Material authenticity is disrupted by retouching in the elimination of imperfection in an uncanny clarity of vision or aestheticising of reality by its distortion or manipulation. Thus the distinction between analogue and digital reality is negated in the inter-play between artifice and authenticity but which is it?

Abridged version of an essay originally published in *Visual Communication*, Vol. 2 (3), London: Sage, 2002, pp. 363-373.



Cian Quayle, *Mnemonic Surfaces*, 2003. *Contemporary London Views* (4 @ 12 x 16 inches colour photographs). V&A Library Photographs, Drawings & Prints. Top: J.M. Whistler. Joseph Powell. Bottom: Bernd and Hilla Becher. Robert Frank, Henri Cartier Bresson. Installation view with lightbox reflection.



## Return Ticket (2003-2004)

20, 6 x 8 feet ink-jet prints on 5mm foamex panel. Output from a Zund ink-jet printer. Installed along the boundary wall of the Manx Electric Railway's Derby Castle Depot, Douglas, Isle of Man.

### 19 Colour Plates

RT\_01 *Sea-calm*

RT\_02 *Amphitheatre*

RT\_03 *35 b&w (Aerial)*

RT\_04 *35 b&w (Studio)*

RT\_05 *35 b&w (Well Road Hill)*

RT\_06 *Bay-watch*

RT\_07 *Home*

RT\_08 *Sea-mine*

RT\_09 *Prom-asphalt*

RT\_10 *Prom-split III (2002)*

RT\_11 *Prom-terracotta*

RT\_12 *Fountain*

RT\_13 *Beach-boy I*

RT\_14 *Beach-boy III*

RT\_15 *Beach-boy V*

RT\_16 *Malcolm's-arm*

RT\_17 *Orry's-arm*

RT\_18 *Shelter*

RT\_19 *Sea-calm*

The 20 images which form the *Return Ticket* series are numbered 1-19. As *Prom-split III* was a mirror image it was divided into two panels in order to fit two hoarding spaces, hence the number of the *Return Ticket* plates listed here as RT\_01-19.

RT\_01





RT\_02

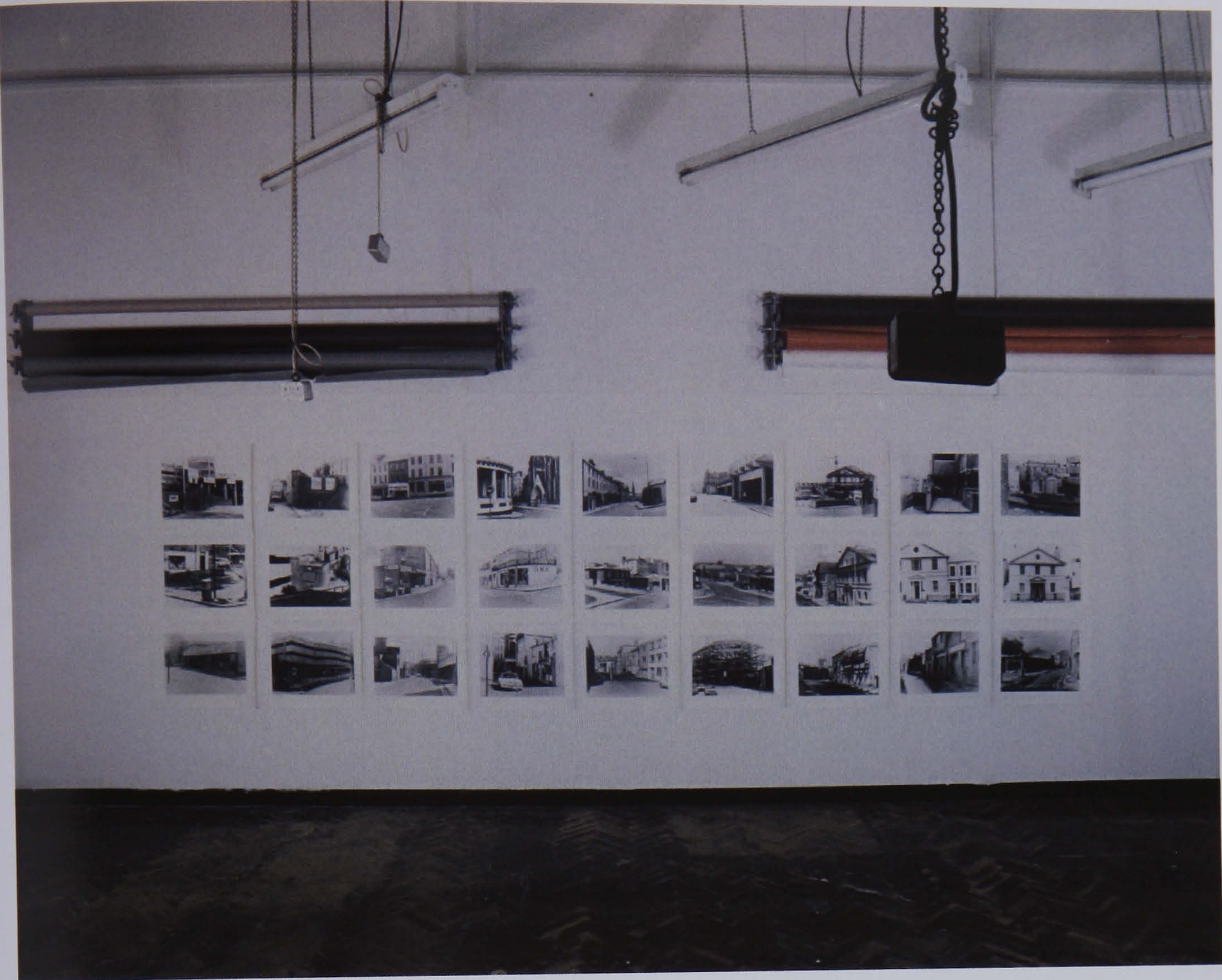


RT\_03

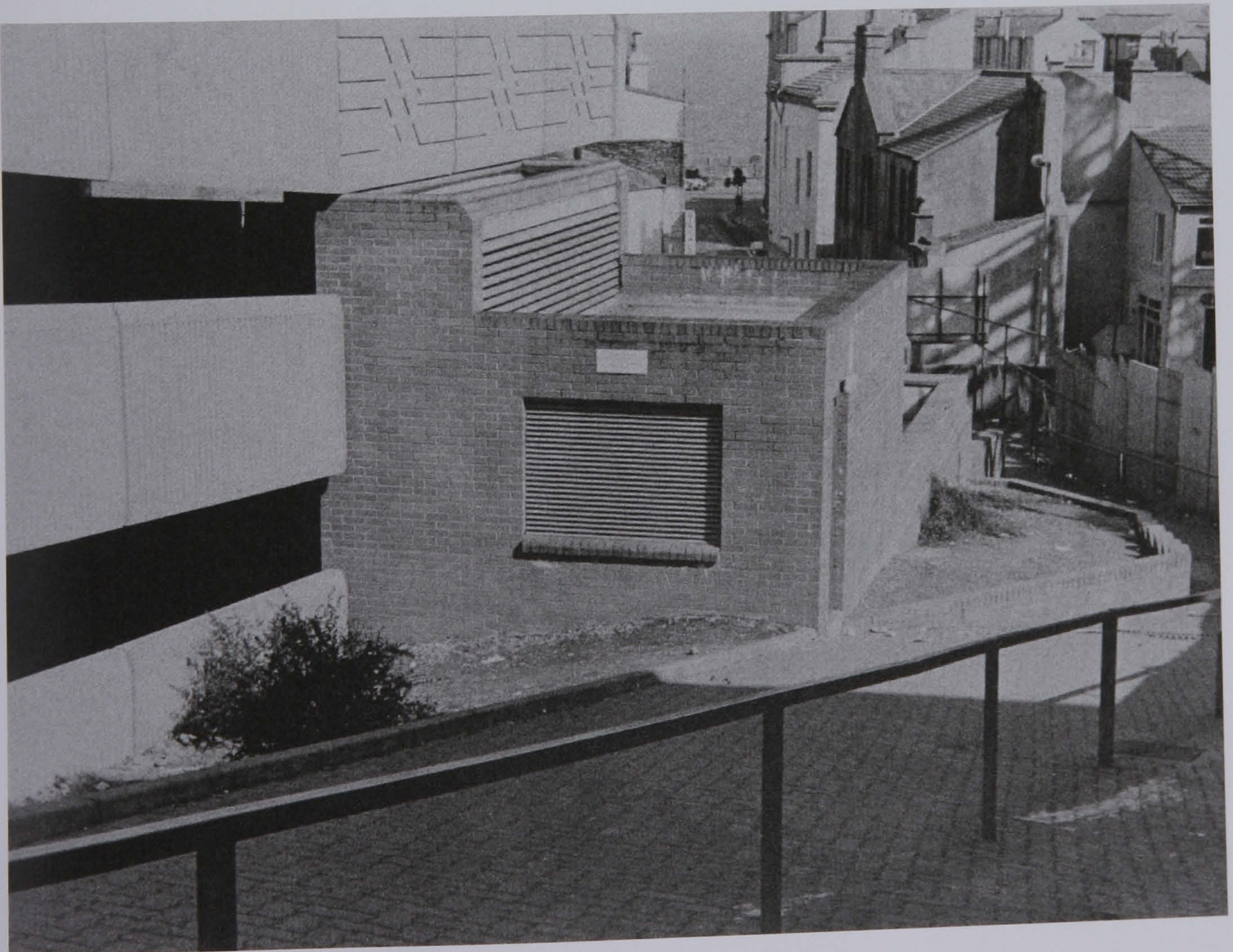




RT\_04



RT\_05





RT\_06

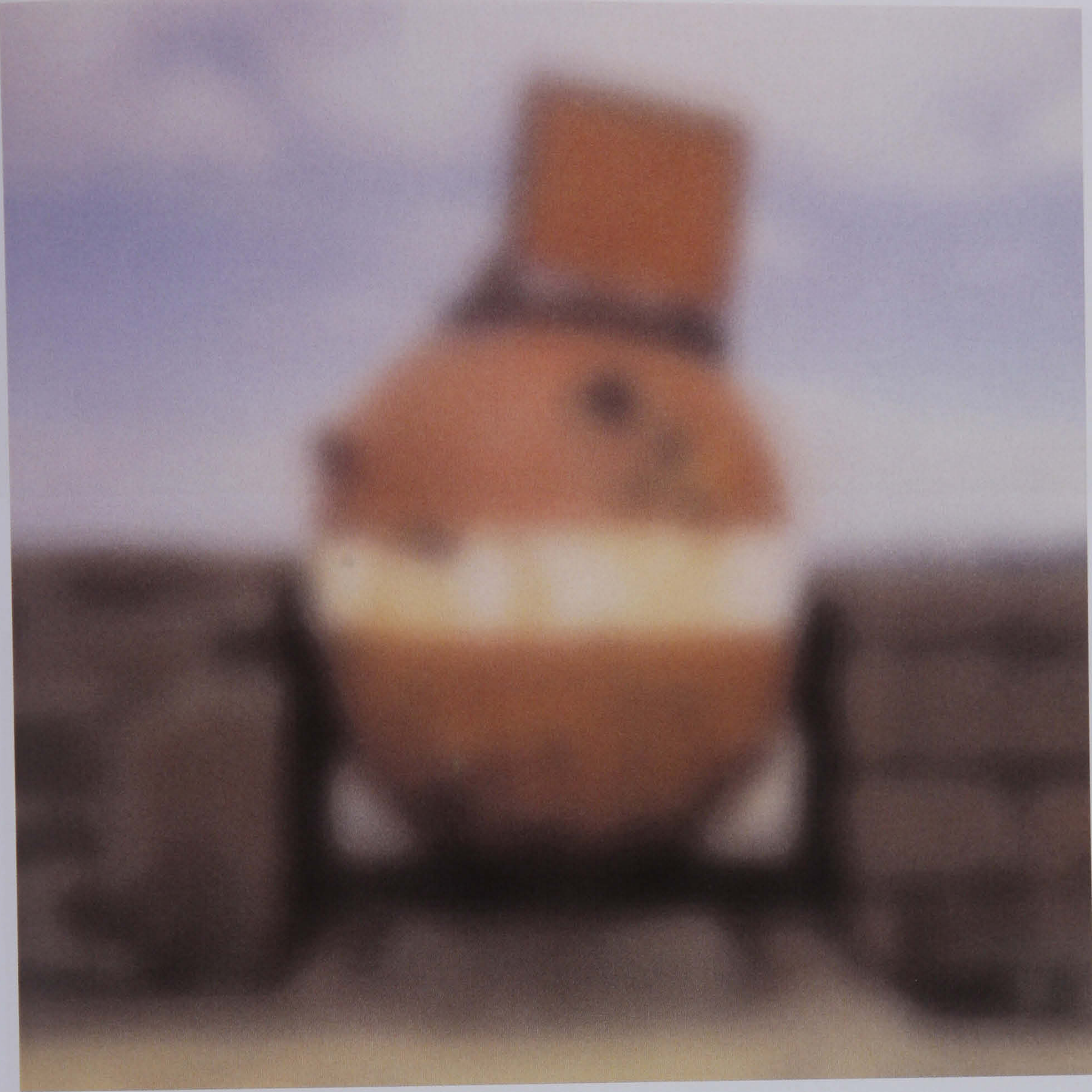


RT\_07





RT\_08

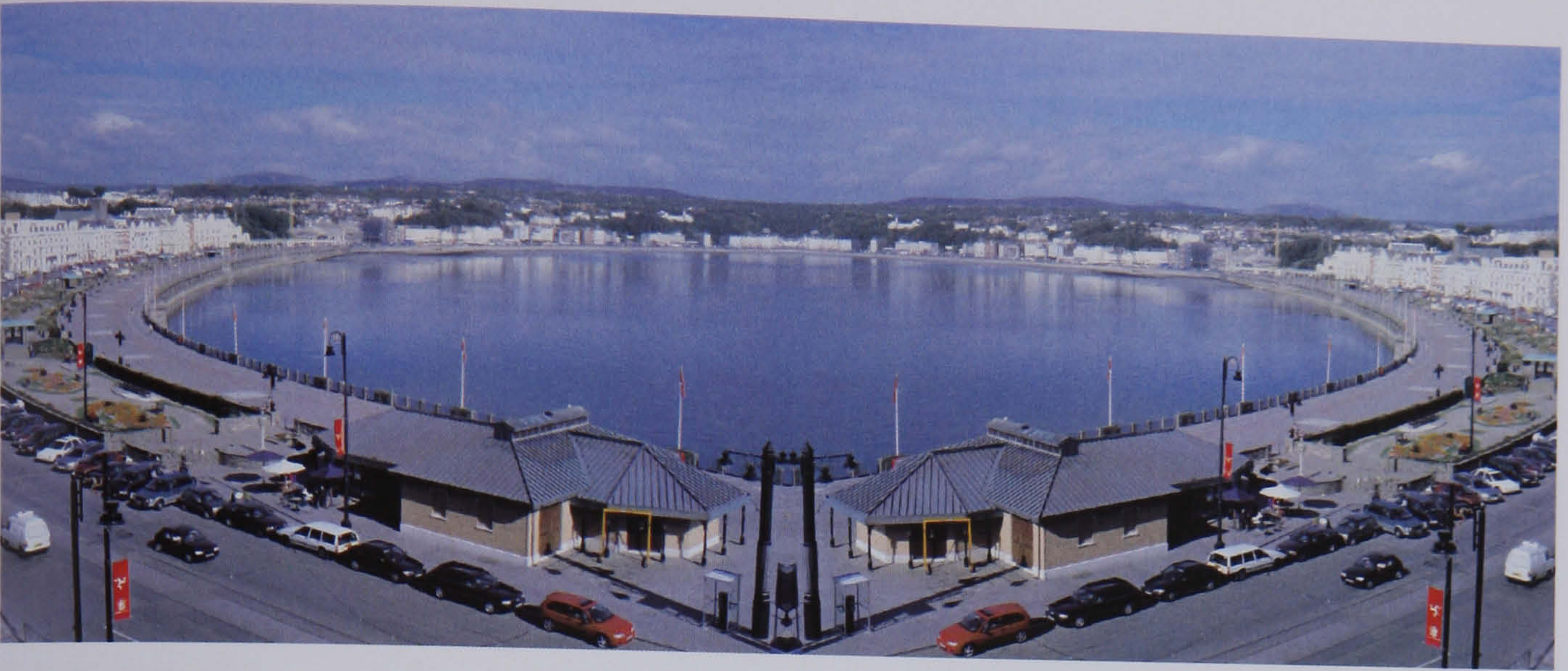


RT\_09





RT\_10



RT\_11





RT\_12



RT\_13





RT\_14



RT\_15





RT\_16





RT\_17





RT\_18



Ed Ruscha, *Tramway de Calcutta*, 1963. Photo. Courtesy of Ed Ruscha. Black ink on white paper.

RT\_19





## Illustrations

### Figs.

1. Cian Quayle, *Zie*, 1991. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 122 x 183 cm.
2. Cian Quayle, *Basket-case*, 1992. Lithograph, 78 x 53 cm.
3. Cian Quayle, *Espiritu de la Colmena*, 1993. Xerox copy on paper, 504 x 620 cm. Installation view: Winchester School of Art.
4. Cian Quayle, *Relocations*, 1995. *Basket-case II*, Xerox copy on paper. Installation-view: Dagmar de Pooter Gallery, Antwerp.
5. Cian Quayle, *Relocations*, 1995. Glazed blocks, black and white photographs, 20.4 x 25.4 cm. Installation-view: Dagmar de Pooter Gallery, Antwerp.
6. Cian Quayle, *Willaston Handicap International Road Race*, Douglas, 1988. Colour press photograph, 18 x 12.5 cm.
7. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963. Artist's book, 17.9 x 14 cm (closed dimensions). Red ink on white paper and glassine cover.
8. Ed Ruscha, *Noise, Broken Pencil, Cheap Western*, 1963. Oil and collage on canvas, 181 x 170 cm
9. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963. 'Texaco Sunset Strip, Los Angeles'. Black ink on white paper.
10. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963. 'Flying A, Kingsman, Arizona'. Black ink on white paper.
11. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963, 'Enco, Tucumcari, New Mexico' & 'Hudson, Amarillo Texas'. Black ink on white paper.
12. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 'Whiting Bros. near Ludlow, Arizona', 1963. Black ink on white paper.
13. Ed Ruscha, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, 1965. Artist's book, 18.1 x 14.3 cm. Black ink on white paper.
14. Ed Ruscha, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, 1965. Artist's book, 18.1 x 14.3 cm. Black ink on white paper.
15. Ed Ruscha, *Everybuilding on the Sunset Strip*, 1966. Artist's book, 17.8 x 14.3 cm (closed dimensions) 760.7 cm (extended). Black ink on white paper.
16. Ed Ruscha, *34 Parking Lots in Los Angeles*, 1967. Artist's book, 25.4 x 20.3 cm. Black ink on white paper.
17. Ed Ruscha, *Schwabs Pharmacy*, 1976/1995. Black and white photograph from altered negative, 51.1 x 75.1 cm.
18. Ed Ruscha, *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*, 1968. 4 colour offset lithographic printing. 18.1 x 14 cm.
19. Douglas Huebler, *Truro Series*, 1966. Formica and plywood. Installation view.
20. Douglas Huebler, *Site Sculpture Project: 42° Parallel Piece*, (August-September



- 1968), Map and handwritten text.
21. Douglas Huebler, *November 1968*, Seth Siegelaub Fine Arts. Installation view.
  22. Douglas Huebler, *Variable Piece #17 Turin, Italy, 1968*. Black and white photographs.
  23. Douglas Huebler, *Site Sculpture Project Boston New York Exchange Shape Sept 1968*. Black and white photographs.
  24. Douglas Huebler, *Self Portrait as a Hitchhiker, Strasbourg, Christmas Day, 1970*. Black and white photograph and map.
  25. Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous*, Art and Project Bulletin 89, July 1975.
  26. Bas jan Ader, *I'm Too Sad To Tell You*, 1970. Black and white postcard, 18.8 x 13.8 cm.
  27. Bas jan Ader, *Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland, 1971*. Black and white 16 mm. silent film, 1 minute 30 seconds.
  28. Bas jan Ader, *Fall II Amsterdam, Holland, 1971*. Black and white 16 mm. silent film, 34 seconds.
  29. Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous, (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. 18 Black and white photographs with handwritten text in white ink, each 20.3 x 25.2 cm.
  30. Caspar David Friedrich, *The Wanderer above a Sea of Mists*, 1818. Oil on canvas, 110 x 111.5 cm.
  31. Bas jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous, (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. 18 Black and white photographs with handwritten text in white ink, each 20.3 x 25.2 cm.
  32. Bas jan Ader, *Farewell to Faraway Friends*, 1971. Colour photograph, 50.5 x 56.4 cm.
  33. Caspar David Friedrich, *The Monk*, 1809. Oil on canvas, 94.8 x 74.8 cm.
  34. Bas jan Ader, *In search of the Miraculous*, 1975. Art and Project Bulletin. Black and white photograph and text.
  35. Jimmie Durham, *Self Portrait*, 1997. Mixed media. Installation view.
  36. Jimmie Durham, *Untitled (Caliban's Mask)*, 1992. Mud, buttons, beads.
  37. Jimmie Durham, *Untitled*, 1992. Brass, mud, glue, 49.2 x 38.4 x 6cm. *Untitled*, 1992. Raccoon skin, metal, wood, paint, 49 x 38.4 x 6 cm.
  38. Jimmie Durham, *Manhattan Day of the Dead*, 1982. Mixed media, 31.2 x 8.4 x 14.4 cm. 33.6 x 16.8 x 31.2 cm. Installation-view: Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.
  39. Jimmie Durham, *Untitled & A Man Looking for a Place* (far right, destroyed), 1982. Wood, hair, black and white photograph, paint, frying pan, 160.8 x 60 x 97.2 cm.
  40. Jimmie Durham, *Rendez(-)vous*, Ghent, 1982. Mixed media, size variable.
  41. Jimmie Durham, *On Loan from the Museum of the American Indian (The Indian's Parents)*, 1991. Colour photograph on hessian board, 24 x 25 cm.
  42. Jimmie Durham, *On Loan from the Museum of the American Indian (Pocahantas' Underwear)*, 1991. Mixed media, 33,6 x 33.6 cm.
  43. Jimmie Durham, *Street Performance*, Geneva, 1971.



44. Jimmie Durham, *Un Example*, 1994. Wood, stone, papier-mâché, glass, coal, epoxy resin, 46 x 65.5 x 11.5 cm.
45. Jimmie Durham, *St Frigo*, 1997. Street performance.
46. Jimmie Durham, *Still-life with Stone and Car*, 2004. Car, granite boulder, (maquette).
47. Gustav Metzger, Acid-nylon painting/performance, 1963.
48. Gustav Metzger, *Cardboards*, 1959. Found objects. Installation-view: Robin's Coffee House, London.
49. Gustav Metzger, Acid-nylon painting/performance, South Bank, London, 1961.
50. Gustav Metzger, *Liquid Crystal Projection*, 1966. Liquid crystals and slide projectors. Projection size variable.
51. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Hitler Youth, Eingeschweisst*, 1997/98. Bromide print, two cold-rolled steel sheets welded solid.
52. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Fireman with Child, Oklahoma*, 1998. (source image).
53. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Jerusalem*, 1998. (Source image).
54. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Jerusalem*, 1998. (Source image).
55. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: Till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land*, 1998. (source image).
56. Kurt Schwitters, *Construction for Noble Ladies*, 1919. Assemblage, 103 x 83.3 cm.
57. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbarn*, Hanover, 1930. Mixed media. Installation view.
58. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbarn*, Hanover, 1930. Mixed media. Installation view.
59. Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft III 'Mittelere Fotos' Altenan 1931*, Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
60. Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft IV 'Schlechte Fotos'*. Black and white photographs. (closed dimensions 18.2 x 23.5 cm).
61. Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichenheft IV 'Fotocompositionen'*, Black and white photographs, each, 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
62. Kurt Schwitters, *Djupvand*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 57.5 x 49 cm.
63. Kurt Schwitters, Grey Photo Album I, *Djupvand*. Black and white photographs, each, 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
64. Kurt Schwitters, Grey Photo Album II 'unser Zelt in Hjertøy'. Black and white photograph, 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
65. Kurt Schwitters, Grey Photo Album II. Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
66. Kurt Schwitters, Grey Photo Album II. Black and white photographs, each 5.6 x 5.3 cm.
67. Kurt Schwitters, *Lysaker*, 1937. Collage, 19.4 x 14.9 cm.
68. Kurt Schwitters, *Rooftops on the Isle of Man*, 1941. Oil on linoleum, 36 x 43.5 cm.
69. Kurt Schwitters, *Untitled*. Oil on asbestos tile, 15 x 16 cm, 1940/41.



70. Kurt Schwitters, *Untitled, (Film spool and wire)*, 1940/41. Collage, 19.8 x 14.8 cm.
71. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbarn*, Elterwater, 1947. Wall relief, mixed media, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.
72. Cian Quayle, *Ward Lock and Co. Illustrated Guide Book*, 1929/1930. Found object, 17.5 x 11 cm. (closed dimensions).
73. Cian Quayle, *Ward Lock and Co. Illustrated Guide Book*, 1929/1930. Found object, 36 x 28 cm. (map dimensions).
74. Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views. (Liverpool to Douglas Ferry)*. Colour postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_74.
75. Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views*. Hand-tinted postcard on Rajar Bromide card, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_75.
76. Cian Quayle, *The Manx-arms: Benny's-Arm (London 2002)*. Colour photograph. 50.8 x 61 cm. CD\_Archive 2004: Manx-arms\_19.
77. Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views (Camera Obscura)*. Black and white postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_66. Donated by Martin Hearne.
78. Cian Quayle, *Summerland-fire I*, 2003. Newspaper photograph: Terry Swanton. CD\_Archive (2004): 05-Return Ticket.
79. Cian Quayle, *Return Ticket Installation*, December 2003. 35mm colour slide. CD-Archive (2004): 06-Return Ticket.
80. Cian Quayle, *Chester Street/Wellington Square Area - Inventory of Properties 1962-1972*. Found documents. CD\_Archive (2004): 23 Colour photographs.
81. Cian Quayle, *76 Postcard Views, (Amphitheatre at Douglas Head)*. Hand-tinted postcard, 9 x 14 cm. CD\_Archive (2004): Photographic-postcard\_67. Donated by Martin Hearne.
82. Cian Quayle, *Prom-split I (overview) Day*, 1999. Colour ink-jet print on aluminium, 102 x 123 cm.
83. Cian Quayle, *Prom-split II (close-up) Night*, 2002. Lightbox and black and white transparency, 106 x 322 cm.
84. Cian Quayle, *Shelters N-S, E-W*, 2000. 8 Black and white photographs, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.
85. Cian Quayle, *Majestic Hotel Archive, 1998 (storm)*. Found black and white photograph, 13.5 x 18.5 cm.
86. Cian Quayle, *Summerland*, December 2003, 35 mm colour slide.
87. Cian Quayle, *Return Ticket Installation*, December 2003, 35 mm colour slide.







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