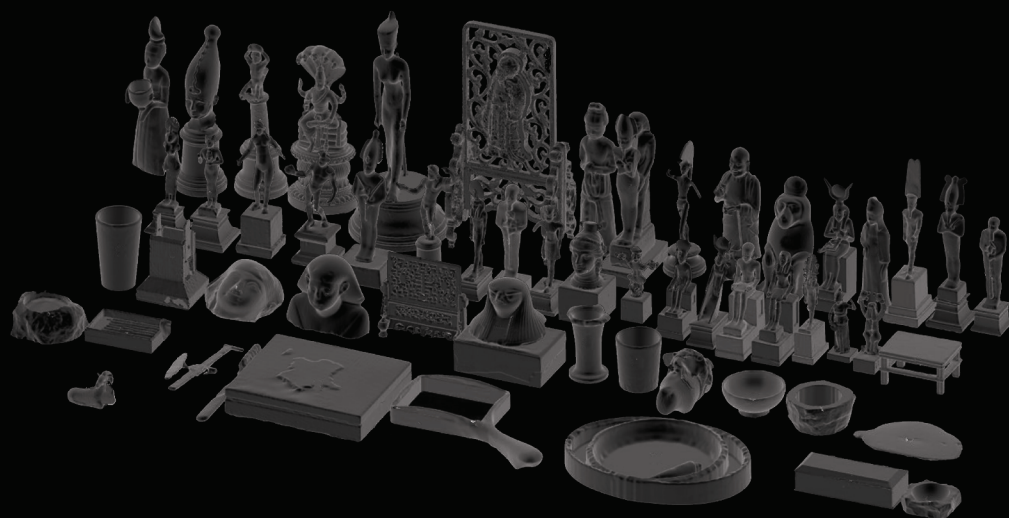
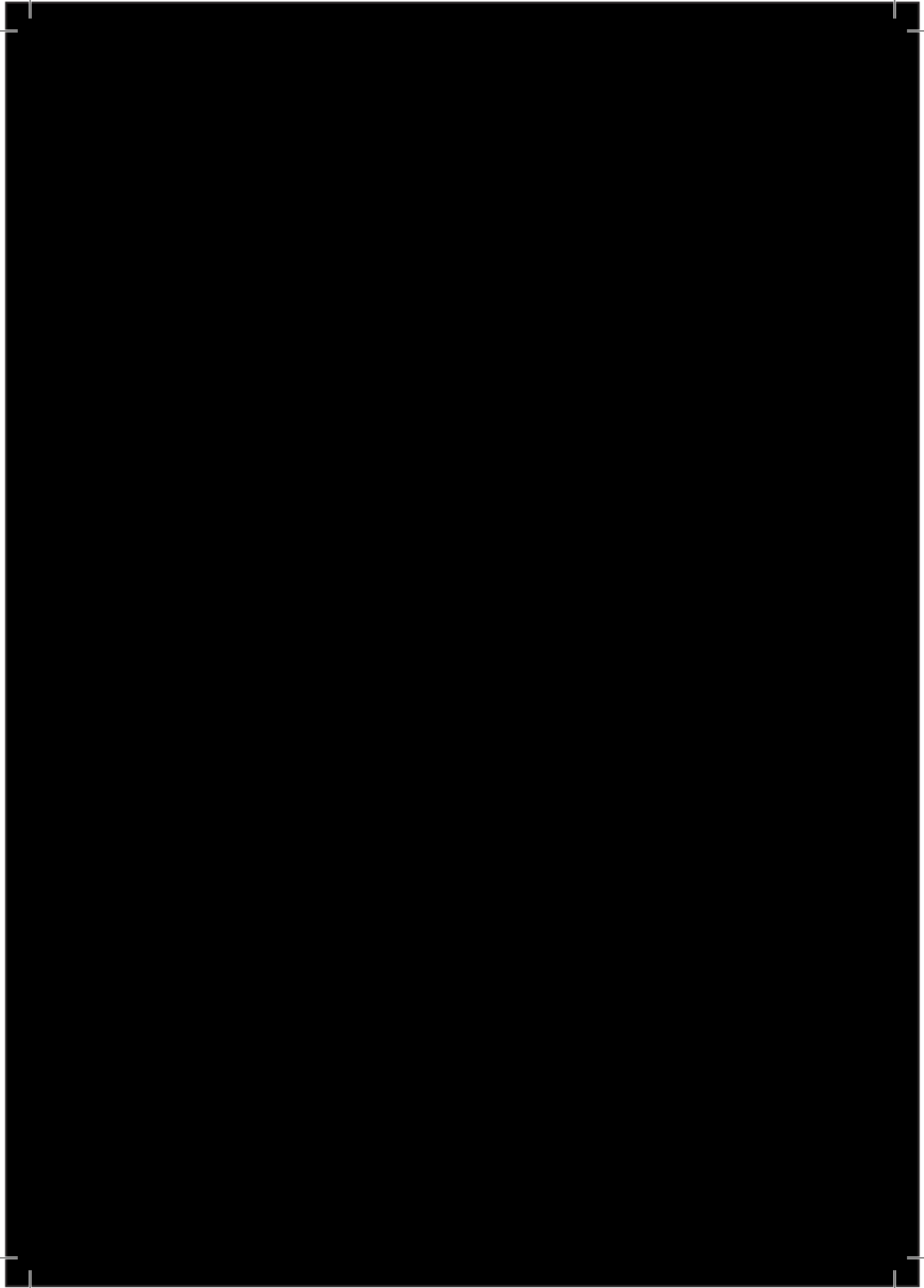


A Research Journey through Pictures, Postcards, Objects and Words.



Paul Coldwell



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Paul Coldwell

Chelsea Libraries.
16th November – 14th December
Chelsea College of Arts
University of the Arts London



A Research Journey through Pictures, Postcards, Objects and Words.

This small selection of works represents some of the material evidence from a series of research projects that I have engaged in over the last fifteen years. Each project has had as its starting point, a particular site or collection. These have included the house at Kettle's Yard and the Scott Polar Research Institute, both located in Cambridge, the Freud Museums in both Vienna and London, the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art and the Sir John Soane's Museum both in London and the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. They have been characterised by what Dr. Joanne Morra described as a site-responsive approach 'whereby the artworks animate a site by activating potential narratives that are perhaps not fully present within it, thereby enabling us to understand the site differently.' In each case my working method has been to immerse myself through numerous study visits and material research to engage both with the collections and the communities of curators and staff that are its guardians. The conclusion of each project has been a public exhibition of the resulting artworks accompanied by a publication and a series of public engagement events in the form of live conversations, talks and gallery tours.

These projects have been funded through a variety of sources. *I called while you were out* (Kettle's Yard) was supported by a grant from the

AHRC, *Re-Imaging Scott* was funded by the Scott Polar Research Institute and the University of Cambridge while *Setting Memory* and *Temporarily Accessioned- Freud's Coat Revisited* (Freud Museums) were supported from a grant from Arts Council England. My work with the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo was part of a wider AHRC funded project *Art & Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community* led by Kings College London while *Picturing the Invisible* at the Sir John Soane's Museum was my contribution to a yearlong project of the same name, supported by an AHRC Network Grant led by myself and my co-investigator Professor Ruth Morgan from University College London.

Overall, the work reflects my belief in the potential for practice to substantially contribute to what it is to research and in particular what this means within an arts-based university such as UAL. Whilst each project has been clearly defined and the work made and exhibited within and for specific locations, there are common themes and threads that I hope the viewer will discover. Throughout the work, I hope there is evidence of a strong element of play and trial and error, methodologies that are commonplace in the studio but can sometimes be overshadowed when we talk about research.

I called while you were out Kettle's Yard

In 2008, I was invited to respond to the house at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge by its late director Michael Harrison. The house can be understood as the masterwork of its originator, Jim Ede and is a celebration of a poetic relationship between life and art. Each object, each picture, each piece of furniture has its designated place, setting up a series of juxtapositions and readings between the objects themselves and the space they inhabit. Following numerous study visits during which I drew, made notes, took photographs, held conversations with the curators and staff, as well as simply being in the house observing, I produced a series of works, each for a specific location in the house. My intention was to partially conceal these works so that the viewer might have a sense of having discovered them for themselves.

Under the title, *I called while you were out*, I wanted to imagine that Jim Ede was absent from the house but might return at any moment. Kettle's Yard felt to me like a dream, a place fixed in a moment of time but where the evidence of mundane daily life had been removed in favour of a more aesthetic experience. I sought to reflect this in this small bronze entitled *This house shelters daydreaming*, the title taken from a line in

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, a book that I have often returned to. This sculpture is also a reference to the rather monastic single beds for Jim and his wife, Helen. I further developed this idea in a bronze sculpture *Hot water bottle* which when displayed in Kettle's Yard, was placed on Helen Ede's bed, positioned where her chest would have been. I wanted to reference the absent body but also the need for warmth.

These sculptures, along with many subsequent bronzes, were made in the foundry at Chelsea College of Art. In 2008 as a way of generating more interest in the foundry, Sally Tiffin (Technical manager) and John Nicoll (Senior foundry technician) instigated a fellowship scheme, and I was appointed as the first Foundry Fellow. This gave me the opportunity to work in the foundry alongside the students and technical staff and have a direct involvement in every aspect of the casting process. This opportunity has been life changing for me and I have been a regular user of the foundry ever since.



Paul Coldwell & John Nicoll in the foundry at Chelsea



This house shelters daydreaming,
Painted bronze and rubber 12 x 24 x 15 cms



Hot water bottle
Bronze 32 x 22 x 10cm

Re-Imagining Scott

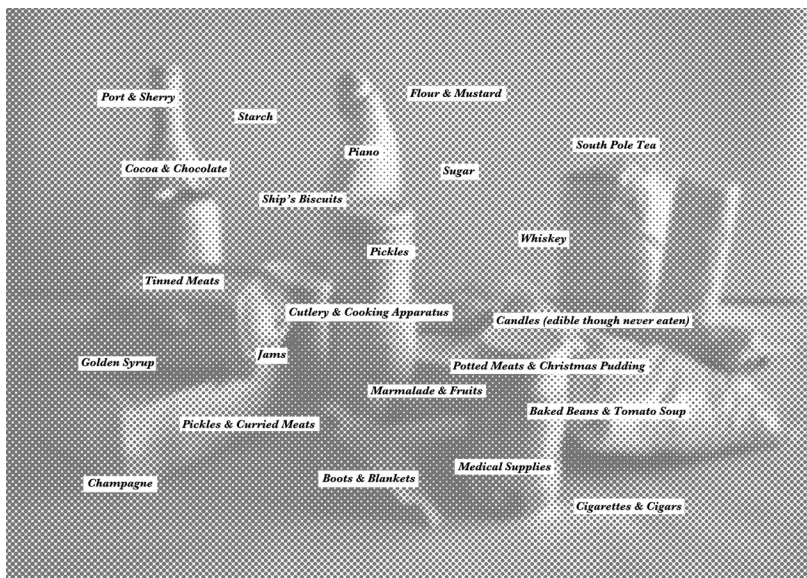
Scott Polar Research Institute

On my numerous study visits to Kettle's Yard, I would pass the building that housed the Scott Polar Research Institute and the Polar Museum. Captain Scott and his attempt to be the first to reach the South Pole was a memorable story from my childhood. Then, Scott was held as the personification of what it might mean to be a gentleman and adventurer. Having visited the Polar Museum several times to view their exhibitions, I eventually plucked up the courage to arrange a meeting with the then director, Heather Lane, to propose that I research in their archives and from this, make new work leading to an exhibition in their gallery. To my delight, she agreed and following the example of Kettle's Yard, over a period of six months, I visited regularly, researching in their library and material archives as well as engaging with staff and other researchers.

I became particularly interested in Scott's final expedition to the South Pole in 1910 and how it was funded and organised. Maybe this was in part a reflection of how, in my own practice, funding projects have always been an issue as well as having to negotiate practical considerations when working with collections and institutions. There is also a conflict that arises between the spontaneity and chance happenings that are a feature of studio

studio practice and the need to present a clear explanation in advance in order to meet funder's requirements. Scott however had the added problem of funding a scientific expedition to the South Pole where every requirement had to be foreseen and everything from the ponies, dogs and sleeping bags needed to be sponsored. His sponsors included various institutions and charities as well as donations from schools, youth clubs, factories and individuals. In addition, he managed to get equipment, as well as food and supplies, donated.

In its time, Scott's expedition seemed to capture the collective imagination, as would the moon landing some fifty years later. Rewards for sponsorship included naming a dog or pony or the knowledge that it provided a sleeping bag for a particular member of the expedition. There was also considerable personal investment and Scott and others would have hoped on their return to recoup this from lectures, talks and other events. Again, this seemed to mirror my own experience as an artist and academic and the need to disseminate.



The Expedition: Supplies

From series of six screen-prints 49 x 69cms

Supplies is a print from a set of six screen-prints entitled *The Expedition*, in which I attempted to give a flavour of the range of supplies taken on the expedition. With the exception of ice that could be thawed to provide water and the occasional seal, everything else for the two-year expedition had to be brought with them on their ship, The Terra Nova.

A further aspect of the story that emerged from my research was the intense feeling of comradery between the men, and I would challenge anyone not to be moved by reading Scott's expedition diaries, now held for posterity in the British Library. In them, he expresses his admiration and affection for his four colleagues, Oates, Bowers, Wilson and Evans who accompanied him on their ill-fated final dash to the Pole. In this small sculpture, *Five objects pointing South* I endeavoured to touch on these feelings by using items meant for sharing, chocolate, cigarettes, etc. while also alluding to the five adventurers in their sleeping bags with a common shared sense of direction.



Five objects pointing South

Bronze and compasses largest object 19 c 10 x 5 cms

As an indication of the bureaucracy and the rigidity of an Edwardian society, I became aware that Scott had been made Honorary Postmaster General in order to frank and receive the post from Antarctica. In our digital culture of instant communication, its sometimes easy to forget both the importance of letters and how the delay between sending a letter and receiving a reply, might have been months. I imagined Scott in his role as Honorary Postmaster General and made an object as a representation of him entitled *Triptych*, consisting of a shaving set, with either side, sets of rubber stamps. One set reads *We must reach the pole this time*, a quote from Scott just before leaving England, the other *For God's sake look after our people*, the last entry in Scott's diary. The glass works were made for me at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland from the drawings that I supplied.



Triptych

Glass acrylic and rubber stamps 60 x 24 x 30 cms



South
Set of Postcards

I also made a set of postcards from set ups in my studio, where I imagined arctic weather conditions. I sent these to postmasters/mistresses at seven ports of call by the Terra Nova enroute from England to Antarctica and asked them to stamp, frank and return them to me. My intention was that the postcards retraced the expedition's perilous journey and when returned and assembled, completed the messages.

Finally, Scott was in the habit of including inspirational quotes in his diaries. In one there is a quote from Thomas Huxley which, by re-setting, I let it reveal the words *South Pole*, as if a subconscious obsessive thought.

SO FAR AS I CAN VENTURE
TO OFFER AN OPINION ON SUCH
MATTER, THE PURPOSE OF OUR BEING
IN EXISTENCE. THE HIGHEST OBJECT
THAT HUMAN BEINGS
CAN SET BEFORE THEMSELVES IS NOT
THE PURSUIT OF ANY CHIMERA
AS THE ANNIHILATION OF THE UNKNOWN:
BUT IT IS SIMPLY THE UNWEARIED
ENDEAVOUR TO REMOVE ITS BOUNDARIES
A LITTLE FURTHER FROM OUR LITTLE
SPHERE OF ACTION.

(THOMAS HUXLEY)

Message
Inkjet 30 x 45cms

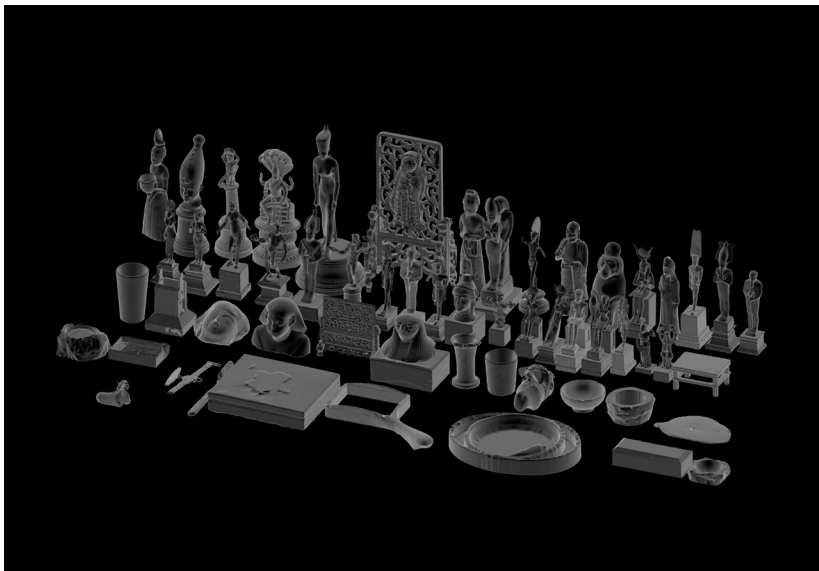
Setting Memory and Temporarily Accessioned- Freud's Coat Revisited Freud Museums

My interest in the subconscious, naturally led me to the Freud Museum, a place that I have had a long association with, beginning with a bookwork I made in 1996 entitled *Freud's Coat*. In 2017, I was invited to re-visit this earlier project and produce a new body of work in response to their collection. The result was *Temporarily accessioned- Freud's coat revisited*, an exhibition which represented the first collaboration between the Freud Museums in London and Vienna. Amongst the work I made was a 3D printed replica of all the objects on Freud's desk, his 'old and grubby Gods' entitled *A Ghostly Return*. By using the data from the 3D scanning, I was also able to assemble the virtual objects to form the digital print *Desk*.

I also managed to persuade the National Gallery in London to x-ray the coat that Freud had worn for his journey from Vienna to London in 1938. From these scans I produced a life size digital print of the coat, *Temporarily Accessioned-Freud's Coat*, which I wanted to reference the nature of psychoanalysis in its quest to reveal hidden truths. I also wanted to make a visual reference to the Turin Shroud and the nature of relics and the traces we leave behind. The ritual of taking the coat from the Museum to the National Gallery, it being x-rayed and returned was fully documented and the material used in the limited-edition artists' book, *Temporarily Accessioned*.



A Ghostly return
Nylon 109 x 55 x 28cms



Desk
Inkjet 60 x 45cms



X-raying Freud's coat at the National Gallery, London.



*Temporarily Accessioned-Freud's Coat,
Inkjet 115 x 152cms*

Amongst the other works I produced for the exhibition were some charm bracelets *Charms* through which I wanted to suggest how anxiety might turn pleasures into burdens. The bracelet, by virtue of its reconstituted size and weight, becomes more like prisoner's chains than a piece of innocent jewellery. Anxiety is further addressed through a series of postcards that play on the titles of popular songs in *Soundtrack to an Anxious Life*.



Charms
Aluminium and steel 55 x 45 x 20 cms



Soundtrack to an anxious life
Set of postcards

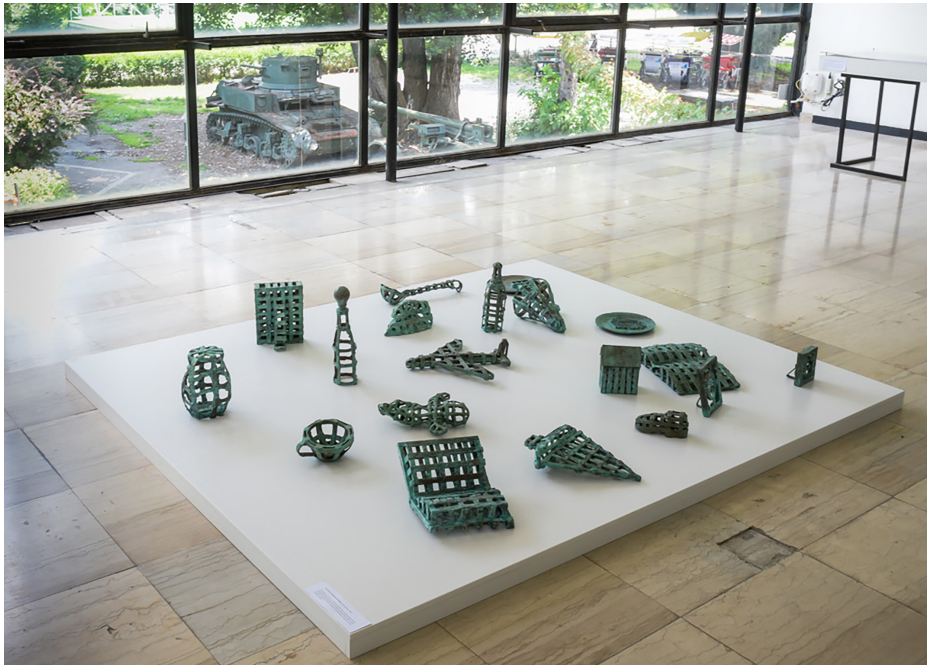
Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community

History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

My invitation to be involved in this project led by King's College London, was the result of work I had made in 1998 in response to Martin Bell's final radio broadcast as BBC War Correspondent reporting on the Bosnian war. The work I had made consisted of an artist's book, *With the Melting of the Snows* alongside an installation of small bronzes, entitled *Abandoned Landscape* consisting of skeletal bronzes of everyday objects. Twenty years later it was reinstalled in the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo for the exhibition *Re Conciliations* along with a new work, *A Life Measured: Seven Sweaters for Nermin Divović* which was subsequently acquired by the Museum for their permanent collection.

We often think of the impact of research in short term cycles, determined by REF and the need to be accountable. Here was an example of work that began over twenty years ago as an emotional response to a radio broadcast. This began a journey that took me to the House of Commons to meet with Martin Bell who had then famously become an independent Member of Parliament, on to my studio in Hackney with a year of making wax objects and then to the foundry at Chelsea to cast them. These then both

served as elements in the final installation, *Abandoned landscape*, but also, once photographed, these sculptures provided material for the bookwork *With the Melting of the Snows*. Together with the installation, this body of work was exhibited in London, Dublin and Bradford before being exhibited again in 2018, this time in Sarajevo, the original inspiration for the work. The bookwork has also journeyed, acquired by several collections including the Tate and the New York Public library and was digitalised for an exhibition, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War at Imperial War Museum North* in 2013.



Abandoned Landscape
Bronze

Picturing the Invisible

The Sir John Soane's Museum

Most recently, in 2019, supported by a Network grant from the AHRC and along with my co-investigator, Professor Ruth Morgan, I spent a year with a group of leading academics exploring how we picture the invisible or unknown within our respective disciplines. This is a question that has resonated throughout my research and continues to engage me. The Sir John Soane's Museum was one of our partners in the project and as part of my contribution, I began researching the house and its collection. The museum had previously been the house of the renowned architect Sir John Soane and contained his idiosyncratic collection including a substantial number of Hogarth's paintings, portfolios of Piranesi's engravings, an Egyptian sarcophagus as well as architectural models that he used for teaching.

I began to imagine how the house might have been seen from below the stairs, from the perspective of the cooks and servants. I tried to picture how those below the stairs might have reacted and responded to the wealth of architectural models that form the basis of the collection. I speculated

on what materials they might have at hand to shape their thoughts and I settled on a range of foodstuffs such as sugar cubes, pasta, biscuits and cut vegetables. The result was an exhibition in the Museum's kitchen comprising an installation of plates on the kitchen dresser, a series of architectural models from foodstuffs and a series of woodcuts *Ruins*.



Ruins I & II
Woodcut 56 x 76 cms

I also produced a film, *First Orders; scenes from the kitchen*. This film is a slightly comic attempt at making classical features from random materials, as a response to the beautiful architectural models in the collection. The film is about failure and the need to try again. It is also about how we use what is around us in order to shape ideas and give form to our thoughts. Dr Ben Thomas articulates this in his perceptive review of the exhibition in which he declared that the exhibition was an *example of 'serious play' (the Renaissance concept of serio ludere, as Edgar Wind explained, involves the discovery of profound truths through a playful investigation of commonplace experience)*.



Still from *First Orders; scenes from the kitchen*.



Printed ceramic from installation 'Scenes from the kitchen'



Scenes from the Kitchens - Columns
Bronze, brass and wood.

In 2021, as we all began to emerge from lockdown, the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art reopened with an exhibition entitled *Uncut*. I have had a long association with the Estorick collection and was invited as part of this reopening to rehang their collection of work by Giorgio Morandi and place his work alongside my own, made in lockdown. The result was *A Still Life. Paul Coldwell in Dialogue with Giorgio Morandi* which included new prints *The Studio* and sculptures made in response to Morandi's still lives. To accompany the exhibition, the Estorick published a boxed set of photographs of my small sculptures and a selection of poems that I had written in lockdown. This represented the first occasion that I had placed my creative writing in the public domain.



A Still Life Boxed set of Sculptures and Poems

I complete this journey through some of my research projects with my poem, *Remember Me* 2022, in which I draw from a range of personal and collective memories. In keeping with the imperative of research to share and exchange ideas, I produced two versions, one text only, the second an annotated version in which I have endeavoured to show sources, references and relevant associations that might provide the reader with some additional insights. This drew inspiration from T S Eliot's notes to accompany his poem *The Waste Land* and Richard Hamilton's typographical version of *Marcel Duchamp's Green Box*. In producing *Remember me*, I am indebted to the designer Roger Walton with whom I worked with over many months to find a graphic solution to presenting the poem.

Paul Coldwell

24/08/2023

Paul Coldwell

Paul Coldwell is a Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Arts London. As an artist, his practice includes prints, book works, sculptures and installations, focusing on themes of journey, absence and loss. He has exhibited widely both in the UK and abroad and his work is included in numerous public collections, including Tate, V&A, British Museum, the Arts Council of England, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva and MoMA (New York).

Much of his work has involved researching within collections including at Kettle's Yard Cambridge, the Scot Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, the Freud Museums in both Vienna (2016) and London (2017) and the Sir John Soane's Museum (2019). In addition to his studio practice, he has curated a number of exhibitions including *Digital Responses*, (V&A 2001), *Morandi's Legacy; Influences on British Art* (Estorick Collection London 2006) and *The Artists Folio*, (Cartwright Hall, Bradford 2014); has published writings on many artists including Giorgio Morandi, Michael Craig-Martin, Christiane Baumgartner, Paula Rego, Jim Dine & William Kentridge and contributed to a range of publications including *Printmaking Today*, *Art in Print* and the international journal *Print Quarterly* on which he is a member of the editorial board

He has been a keynote speaker at a number of international research fora including *Impact 7 International Printmaking Conference*, Melbourne, Australia 2011, *SNAP 3 Third International Print Symposium*, Bentlage, Germany 2015 and *Why remember? Ruins, Remains & reconstruction in Times of War and its aftermath*. Sarajevo 2018 for which he also participated in the exhibition, *Reconciliations* at the Museum of History, Sarajevo 2018.

Published books include *Printmaking; A Contemporary Perspective* (Black Dog Publishing in 2010) and *Picturing the Invisible*, co-edited with Professor Ruth Morgan published by UCL Press in Jan 2022. He has been commissioned to author a major book on woodcut ready for publication in 2025.

www.paulcoldwell.org

Projects

I called while you were out

September 2008 - January 2009

Kettle's Yard Cambridge

Supported by AHRC and Arts Council England

Conversation between Professor Roger Wilson and Professor Paul Coldwell

<https://sms.csx.cam.ac.uk/media/19941>

Re-imagining Scott- Objects and journeys

May 2013 - July 2013

The Polar Museum Cambridge

Supported by Scott Polar Research Institute

<https://paulcoldwell.org/portfolio-item/re-imagining-scott-objects-and-journeys/>

Setting memory

October 2016 - January 2017

Sigmund Freud Museum Vienna

&

Temporarily accessioned- Freud's coat revisited

February 2017 - May 2017

Freud Museum London

Supported by Arts Council England

The Hope film by Susan Steinberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzsQ3fQFQ5c>

Interview between Janet McKenzie and Paul Coldwell

<https://www.studiointernational.com/paul-coldwell-interview>

ReConciliations

History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

June 2018 - August 2018

&

Bush House London

November 2018 - December 2018

Supported by AHRC

<https://artreconciliation.org/paul-coldwell-writes-on-reconciliations/>

Picturing the Invisible - The House seen from below

July 2019 - September 2019

Sir John Soane's Museum

Supported by AHRC

<https://cfpr.uwe.ac.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Ben-Thomas-.pdf>

A Still Life. Paul Coldwell in Dialogue with Giorgio Morandi.

October - December 2021

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art

Paul Coldwell in conversation with Roberta Cremoncini

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbAMwdvAg_I

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“A Ghostly Return” and “Temporarily Accessioned - Freud’s Coat,”
for which the photographs are copyright © Oliver Ottenschläger.

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Finally, I would also like to thank Roger Walton for designing *Remember me*, John Nicoll and Rebecca Stevenson for their assistance in the foundry at Chelsea and Kristina Pulejkova for her work on the film *First Orders*.