Collecting Rooms:
Objects, Identities and Domestic Spaces

Acknowledgements

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List of Illustrations

This research project into interview-based narrative is produced through examining the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice. In light of this, the preferred method for reading this research project is through a digital PDF, as it presents the practical outcomes in the context of the overall investigation.

0.01 Abstract

This practice-based enquiry into United Kingdom based collecting rooms reveals five participants' motivations, frustrations and satisfactions manifested in the creation of their spaces. Through the examination of theorists and commentators in the distinct but related fields of cultural theory, sociology and art, the thesis proposes that a collector's past can be witnessed through memories generated by and within the space. The thesis also advances the idea that part of the experience of the space takes place in the present but simultaneously imagines the future. I have constructed spatial portraits using semi-structured interviews, photography and video, which explore the environment of each collector thus gaining insights into individual circumstances and personal situations.

Narrative within this enquiry takes three intersecting forms: firstly the *account* of the construction of each collecting room, which divests objects of their historical origins, replacing these with personal associations or meanings devised by each collector. Secondly, each participants' *re-telling* of their narratives and thirdly through the *re-presentation* of the collectors' narratives to an audience. The latter brings my agency as an artist into focus. Uniting all three narrative forms, the creative practice intends to produce a meta-narrative of each collecting room that further investigates the temporality of the space through the combined use of still photography, video and sound.

Constructed from a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice, the research uses a methodology that combines Sensory Ethnography with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. This methodology explores the idiosyncrasies of each collector, engendering an extensive investigation of the individual collecting spaces.
This detailed approach formed and eventually determined the number of participants, resulting in the production of a developmental case study and four original re-presentations that respond to ideas and debates on collecting, material culture and domestic space. These artworks that have been informed by combining existing research methods and constitute my contribution to new knowledge, disclosing ideas and observations which combine narrative and experience not necessarily discernable from theoretical arguments alone.

0.02 Introduction

Historically the collecting room has been given numerous descriptive or allegorical names, in various locations throughout Europe. Each of these different names has proposed possible motivations for the room; for example, the *Cabinet of Wonder* (Wunderkammer in German) expresses the contemplation and awe discernable in some collections, while the German name *Kunstkammer (*art-room) communicates the creative process embedded within the room. Philosopher Giulio Camillo (1480 – 1544) created the term *Theatre of Memory,* to describe the French King Francis I's collecting room, which was designed for the King to contemplate the history and meaning of the world through the objects it housed. The most recognisable term in the United Kingdom is the *Cabinet of Curiosity*, which suggests the intrigue and mystery surrounding collections (Evans and Marr, 2006; MacGregor, 2007). Each incarnation of the collecting space contributes some understanding of the aspirations and purposes that lead to creating a dedicated collecting space.

The principal aim of my research was to produce a series of artworks that reveal the motivations, frustrations and satisfactions that lead to the formation of this private space. Constructed from comprehensive investigations in the form of five case studies, this written thesis explores the context of the investigation and the methods utilised to convey the research findings to a gallery audience.

This research intends to not only to communicate the signification of private space, but also to interpret some of the various performances that are manifest in the relationships that collectors have with these rooms. My enquiry was initially influenced by phenomenology (Bachelard et al., 1994; Tilley, 1994; Reid et al., 2005) and focused on personal experiences of having a collecting space and the opportunities that this presents to collectors. Experience of domestic space is a highly personal encounter that, because of its intimate nature, is seldom communicated to others (Tuan, 1977). People invest different qualities, attributes and significance into the collecting space, creating an intimate encounter that may make it difficult to articulate (Tuan, 1977; Miller, 2001).

The analysis of cultural theorist Susan M. Pearce is important to this investigation, as she has written prolifically on both public and private collections, examining the central concerns that affect collectors. In *On Collecting: An investigation into collecting in the European tradition (*1995), Pearce writes: 'We tend to take much about the spatial nature of collections for granted' (Pearce, 1995, p.256). Spatial investigation of collections often focus on the aspects of display and arrangement, as opposed to considering the motivations for creating a collecting space, or the phenomenological dimensions to owning and using a collecting room. Concentrating on five case studies, I set out to bridge some of these oversights and to generate greater understanding of collections and their connections to the owners of domestic interiors. In doing so, I aimed to demonstrate that space could be a significant factor in collecting, impacting on the collector's experience and collection. Working collaboratively with five collectors, each of the case studies has developed through

an extended period of interaction with my research participants, leading to the production of artworks that disclose intimate details about their relationship to the collection and the collecting room.

Each case study was constructed around semi-structured interviews, which form the basis of the narratives that are explored within my creative practice and accompanying written thesis and the accompanying artworks. I argue that these narratives take three interrelated forms; the *account*, the *re-telling* and the *re-presentation*. The first of these narratives is the *account* of the collection, which dissociates objects from their original context and reconfigures them under a scheme or idea devised by the collector. In this reassignment of meaning, the objects in the collection become self-referential, creating new links and associations with each other. For example, a collection of objects may be used as a form of re-memorialisation that recalls different periods of time in the collector's life. I postulate that in some cases the participant's biography becomes embedded in the objects own history, creating a unified narrative. This account of the collection reveals the motivations and concepts that underpin its importance to the collector.

The second narrative form is the *re-telling*, which considers the manner in which narratives are shared with the researcher. The context of the interview and the manner in which the narratives are re-told, affects the testimonies that are gathered. Regarding this, my investigation considers the agency of the researcher in interviews and how the interlocutor impacts on the findings. Furthermore, my enquiry explores both the narratives that the participant shared and insights obtained through other lines of enquiry, such as my observations of the collecting room.

In order to achieve a broader perspective, I developed a methodology that combined elements of two existing techniques of evaluation: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Sensory Ethnography. The first of these methods, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (I.P.A.) allowed me to investigate each oral testimony and gain insight into the collector's experience of their collecting room. The second method, Sensory Ethnography, enabled me to explore non-verbal forms of communication to enable comprehension of the usage of the space and how this denotes importance. This methodology assisted me in developing a system to explore documentary material that simultaneously considers the experiential and sensory qualities imbued in the space.

The final narrative form is the *re-presentation* (or meta-narrative) of the analytical interpretations, which are formulated into intertextual artworks that combine different documentary practices, aiming to convey the knowledge gained to a gallery audience. These artworks are constructed to combine both my sensory ethnographic findings and my oral testimony materials, to create an overarching interpretation of each space. Yet in combining the material the final outcomes are more complex than the separate components, creating a more nuanced account of the collecting room and the participant. Every individual

artwork produced from this research is specific to a collector and his or her collecting room, telling a unique set of narratives about that particular person and space. Further to this, the number of participants in this study was deliberately kept small, allowing my research to comprehensively investigate the material and experiences of each collector, which is often the case with studies that utilise Interpretative Phenomenological Analytical methods. Working closely with five participants over an extended period of time enabled me to gain each collector's trust, which allowed me to explore intimate territories that may not otherwise have been accessed in less extensive research.

I propose that the collecting room encompasses more than just personal testimonies of experience, but additionally represents memories and fantasies that are embedded within the space and the objects it contains. Inspired by the writing of cultural theorist and philosopher Walter Benjamin, I suggest that each collecting room constitutes a map of the owner's life, presenting his or her past, present and future within one space. Benjamin recognised that it was possible to consign memories to specific places, as evidenced in his essays: *Berlin Childhood Around 1900 (2006)*, *One-way Street and Other Writings* (1979) and *A Berlin Chronicle (1979)*. Yet, he also noted that space could be a site of reverie, where one could invest in one's own fantasies, which is a marked theme of Benjamin's posthumously published work *The Arcades Project* (2001). Benjamin embraced detours: he recognised that displacement activities gave one freedom of thought and space to forget other pressing concerns, which is apparent in his writing on interiors, where he addresses the idea that within private space an individual is free from the interruptions and trivialities that may inhibit the creative flow (Benjamin et al., 1999). Because each biographical recollection featured in this research is conceived spatially, it is not linear nor constrained by the continuum of time. Instead, it is composed of fragmented moments that relate to different temporalities. This is evident in the resulting accounts, which juxtapose different fantasies and memories, fashioning connections that may not be accessible in a chronological investigation.

Writing on creative freedom and space, essayist Susan Sontag advocated spatial thinking as an imaginative expression of fantasy and longing. Reflecting on the key themes of Walter Benjamin, her introduction to *One Way Street and Other Writings* (1979), alludes to the freedom of Benjamin's spatial investigations that permit him to think independently from other schools of thought. Sontag (1979) writes:

> Time is the medium of constraint, inadequacy, repetition and mere
> fulfilment. In time, one is only what one is: what one has always been.
> In space, one can be another person. (Sontag, 1979 p.13)

Concentrating on the concept of having a space to practice the process of reflection, this study draws from ideas that have been explored in several contexts, not least by author Virginia Woolf in her extended essay, *A Room Of One's Own (1929)*. Woolf asserts that a (female) writer cannot produce works of great merit, unless she has an independent income

and a room to herself (Woolf, 1929). My investigation applies Woolf's assertions to the collecting room, proposing that this space might contribute to an individual's identity through the creative freedom it allows. I suggest that the space of the collecting room can nurture creative ideas and thinking, helping collectors to construct identities that bring together the past, present and future in one room.

Each case study presented here, is a spatial portrait of a collector. Not a portrait in the form of a superficial representation of the face, but one that draws more from literary tradition, offering insight and biographical details of the character portrayed. These re-presentations are intended to encompass the complexity of each participant, establishing different performances that are encountered through investigations of memory, fantasy and experience simultaneously. Delivered in fragments within the artworks, these separate narratives amalgamate to offer a comprehensive embodiment of each collector that conveys the multiple roles they undertake in the performance of everyday life (Goffman, 1956).

0.03 Thesis Structure

This written thesis is divided into five chapters that explain the creative process that underpins the artistic outcomes of this research. The first two of these chapters consist of a *Literature Review* and *Practice Review*, which provide a critical and creative context for the investigation. *Chapter 1.00: Literature Review*, determines the critical framework of the investigation, outlining the project's aims and the academic territories on which it draws. This review identifies key areas that are significant to the investigation, such as the layers of narrative that are discernable in this research. In addition to this, it identifies the arguments from a range of disciplines that have come to shape the methodological approach of the project. In *Chapter 2.00: Practice Review*, the creative context for the research is considered. Influenced by numerous sources, this overview considers the creative works that have been initial reference points for the final outcomes of my investigation.

The third chapter relays my methodology, which is constructed in relation to both the Literature and Practice Reviews. *Chapter 3.00: Methodology* outlines this original methodological approach, which combines techniques from Sensory Ethnography and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to produce an examination of the primary material gathered on each collecting room. In addition, this section details how the research participants were recruited, selected and anonymised.

Chapter 4.00, applies the methodology to five case studies, producing insight into the experiences and motivations of the collectors featured within this study. Responding directly to the material acquired from each participant, this research aims to re-present the findings in the form of a body of creative practice and complementary written thesis. These two concluding outcomes can be viewed independently, yet the intention of this practice-based methodology is to demonstrate an inflection between art practice and theory.

Chapter 4.01: Developmental Research Case Study – Making A Killing, interprets the space of a *one-in-six* scale model collector. Using a method which draws on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Sensory Ethnography, this case study explores the display and space of the collection in conjunction with the oral testimony of the collector, suggesting that his collection may reveal further insights into the participant than the initial interview alone.

Chapter 4.02: Unobtainable Dreams analyses one particular collector's nostalgia, which is evident in the objects he has acquired since his childhood. The investigation considers how the collecting room is imbued with memory and sentimentality to ease current tensions. Further to this, the personal connections to these individual objects allow him to reinforce his own identity, in his own private space.

Chapter 4.03: Hook, Line and Sinker focuses on the space of a collector of Disney artefacts. This case study compares the interview of the collector with that of her daughter. These two different interviews offer slightly different perspectives on the same collecting room. Furthermore, this case study examines the affects of living with a collector and the impact these may have on family life.

Chapter 4.04: It's Not All Roses explores a greenhouse (a particular kind of domestic room) that contains a collection of orchids. Connected to the collector's memories of his father, the greenhouse becomes a memorial that aims to improve on his father's legacy. The space is a very controlled environment that may be seen as a resistance to inevitable mortality. Touching on areas of family loss, the greenhouse becomes not just a site of memory, but also a place to forget the concerns of work.

Chapter 4.05: Mastering Time explores a collection that has helped to form the personal identity of a collector of electric clocks. This narrative considers how the discernment and development of the collection may affect the collector and his own sense of self.

Chapter 5.00: Conclusions reflects on the research and outlines my contribution to knowledge. In particular, this chapter considers the methodology as an integral part of developing new documentary practices. Reflecting on the investigation as a whole, this final chapter also outlines possible areas for future research arising from the study.

1.00 Literature Review

While there are many ways to uncover the intimate affiliations between people and objects, this Literature Review concentrates on objects and their relationship to narrative, memory and experience, which are the central themes of my research. This Literature Review is divided into three subsections, examining the three intersecting narrative forms on which this research study rests. The first of these subsections explores the narrative of the collecting room, which is produced by the collector and his or her relationship to objects. This subsection investigates the context around objects, spaces and collecting to produce a theoretical overview of the field of study. The second subsection examines the narratives of the collection as conveyed through semi-structured interviews. In reviewing this process, I consider my own agency as a researcher and the influence I may have on the narratives told during the interview process. The third and final subsection investigates methods of relating the narrative research findings back to an audience, using a range of media and devices, such as intertextuality and dialectical images. These narrative forms are closely related to Sensory Ethnography and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which underpin the research methods. This is because the three narrative strands are all sensory and experiential.

1.01 Objects as Triggers to Narrative

Increasingly through the 20th and 21st centuries, theoretical studies of material objects have recognised that objects and their owners have a mutually signifying relationship (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Belk, 1988; Miller, 2008). In particular, cultural theorists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood have argued that objects can be used to construct meaning, creating visual traces of the owners' notions of culture, value and experience. By forming markers, Douglas and Baron propose that objects can communicate notions of identity and relationships to others (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). These insights have been extended by subsequent theorists within related areas of investigation, who also claim that the selection and ownership of objects can be used to construct identities (Belk, 1988; Pearce, 1994a; Marcus, 1995; Attfield, 2000; Marcoux, 2001; Shelton, 2001; Benjamin, 2009;).

The associations between material culture and narrative have been firmly established through the last few decades. An increasing number of academic studies highlight the value of objects as social and cultural indicators (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; González, 1995; Hoskins, 1998; Clarke, 2001; Hecht, 2001; Makovicky, 2007; Miller, 2008). One of the most influential of these studies is anthropologist Arjun Appuradai's *The Social Life of Things* (1986), which highlights the social trajectories and narratives that objects might communicate. This important study paved the way for a range of research in a variety of academic fields including sociology, anthropology and cultural theory (Pink, 2004a; Teyssot, 2005; Hurdley, 2006; Makovicky, 2007). In particular, Pearce argues that objects can tell stories of the past, conveying historical tales to the patrons of museums through their association with specific events and people (Pearce, 1994a). Pearce's technique

establishes personal connections between the objects on display in a museum and the observable activities of museum visitors. It uses spoken narratives to stimulate audiences, allowing them to invest significance in the materiality of the museum pieces (Pearce, 1994b). Pearce concludes that history survives by three means: material culture (or objects), physical landscape and narrative in the form of written account, oral history or film. (Pearce, 1994b). One way that narrative is achieved in museums is through showing specific items with expository captions.

Analysing the practice of display (or expository discourse) in museums, cultural theorist Mieke Bal argues that the presence of an object generates a connection between current discourses and the item's history. Bal writes:

> The very fact of exposing the object – presenting it while informing about it – impels the subject to connect the 'present' of the objects to the 'past' of their making, functioning and meaning. This is one of the levels in which exposition is narrative. The other level on which narrative occurs is the necessarily sequential nature of the visit. (Bal, 1996 p. 4)

Furthermore, Bal notes that objects also have a relationship to each other, and through connecting ideas and narratives associated with items, their display begins to propose new configurations of intention and experience.Bal suggests that the connections are 'syntactical' and that 'exposition as display is a particular kind of speech act' (Bal, 1996). She asserts that in examining the display of objects within the museum it is possible to expose ideas that are present through the arrangement and design of the exhibits. She argues that the 'first person', which in this case is the museum, becomes concealed through the intertextual relationship.

> The invisible but authoritative 'first person' narrator can be called the subject of such speech acts. This subject's 'speech' shapes the viewer's experience to a considerable extent. Therefore, it seems imperative to learn the lessons that museum displays have to offer, so as to understand the implication of such diverse acts of exposition as showing and showing off, pointing out and pointing at, praising and trashing and taking for granted, explaining and persuading. In other words, I suggest that we read the writing on the wall. (Bal, 1996 p.88)

Bal's ideas about museum display is not exclusive to museology; displays of objects in the home can function in similar ways. In my research, I use the term hierarchy of display to investigate associations between the objects displayed and their connection to the past through narrative. In both the context of the museum and the home, the object's narrative makes it significant and important. Building upon related studies into domestic display and material culture, by Hecht (2001), Marcoux (2001) and Hurdley (2006), I suggest that exploring the tension between these objects can uncover insights into the collector and his or her connection to objects. For example, one of my participants has a model of a fairground displayed in a glass cabinet. This model is a replica of the collector's local fairground and reminds him of his childhood experiences. Furthermore, in purchasing this and other pieces, the participant had to save money over an extended

period of time, buying one model a month. Considering this in relation to other models and collectibles in the room, the placement of the fairground models in a glass case might indicate the idea that these items are personally and financially valuable to the collector. It is important to establish that objects are not stories or memories in their own right but rather a trigger or cue that can be employed by an individual to aid the practice of reminiscing. While possessions can be employed by people or institutions to represent a memory or storied account, they cannot testify independently. Instead, objects act as catalysts for narratives and receptacles in which memories can be invested. This has led to the practice of using objects or photographs to engender and encompass narratives. This technique for eliciting narratives has been increasingly recognised by academic researchers as a successful method of obtaining interview-based narratives (Hoskins, 1998; Marcoux, 2001; Harrison, 2002; Pink, 2004a; Pink et al., 2004; Rose, 2004; Makovicky, 2007; Pink, 2009). Related studies have examined the narratives inscribed in objects, as a tool to understanding the owner (Hoskins, 1998; Teyssot, 2005; Digby, 2006; Hurdley, 2006; Makovicky, 2007). One particularly influential example of this type of narrative technique is the research of ethnographer Janet Hoskins. Her book, *Biographical Objects: How things tell the stories of people's lives* (1998) demonstrates a particular method of interview that uses objects as cues to generate narratives. This technique allowed Hoskins to gain rich accounts from the Kodi people of India, who related their biographies triggered by significant possessions. Rather than asking directly about individuals' histories, she allowed the tribespeople to reveal their biographies indirectly through the objects they were discussing. These constructed narrative interviews offered Hoskins a wealth of insights into the person, enabling her to determine the social aspects of each subject's identity and make inferences about how they wished to portray themselves to an audience.

Hoskins example of using objects as prompts for memorisation has not only been employed by academics, but is also used more broadly through the common custom of keeping souvenirs to recall personal memories (Stewart, 1993; Pearce, 1994a; Miller, 2001; Miller, 2008). Academic studies by Belk (1995), Pearce (1995), Attfield (2000) and Boym (2001) recognise cultural theorist Susan Stewart as being the most prominent authority on the use of objects as souvenirs (Belk, 1995; Pearce, 1995; Attfield, 2000; Boym, 2001). Stewart's book, *On Longing* (1993), identifies souvenirs as tangible metaphors or reminders of a specific person, place or event. The acquisitor uses the object to replay their memory at will. Stewart asserts that there are two different types of souvenir. The first is a 'mass produced,' object that is typically used to represent a trip overseas. The second is a 'souvenir of individual experience,' which stands as a memento to a specific memory (Stewart, 1993). Stewart continues:

> The souvenir of the second type is intimately mapped against the life
> history of an individual; it tends to be found in connection with the rites
> of passage (birth, initiation, marriage and death) as the material sign of an
> abstract referent: transformation of status. Such souvenirs are rarely kept
> singularly; instead they form a compendium which is an autobiography
> (Stewart, 1993 p.139).

My investigation concurs with Stewart, claiming that a group of objects that are heavily associated with memory can act as a form of biography by creating a visual stimulus from which a life story can be formed and might be told.

1.02 Object Displays as Biography

Developing Stewart's idea, art historian Jennifer A. González has adopted the term *autotopography*, to represent the displays of personal souvenirs often found in the home. This term, derived from auto (meaning 'self') and topography (meaning 'to map'), charts an individual's life, by presenting objects imbued with significant memories. González suggests that the arrangement of these objects can be used to discern an individual's social interactions, imagination and self-identity through the hierarchies and relationships employed within the display of items (González, 1995).

The objects within these displays become visual and tactile prompters that allow the possessor to revisit the memory or related experience at will. This repeated form of recollection could be called 'regressive nostalgia', where the owner uses a moment from their past to overcome a current situation (Boym, 2001). Studies by González (1995) and Boym (2001) have shown that individuals could use a longing for the past as an antidote to suppress present tensions or to recollect a more ideal version of events or even a past that never really occurred (González, 1995). Yet, when this type of nostalgia is used, the past is often seen through rose-tinted spectacles. Furthermore, a need to reminisce could be recognised as a longing to adjust past situations, or to create a different set of events documenting an alternate perspective on history. Therefore, the presentation of objects in an autotopographical display can create new connections between memories by using the hierarchical values of objects.

Investigations by Pearce (1995), Baudrillard (1996), Hastie (2007) and Makovicky (2007) demonstrate that the association of domestic space with displays of objects can be an important factor in creating self-image. Displays of objects can encompass the acquisitor's imagination, with the items displayed acting as a form of idealisation, or embedding notions of personal fantasy (Pearce, 1995; Baudrillard, 1996; Hastie, 2007; Makovicky, 2007). For example, anthropologist Jean-Sébastien Marcoux demonstrates that displays of objects can be selected to form an idealistic representation of past events showing positive memory associations (Marcoux, 2001). Similarly in *Home Sweet Home: Tangible memories of an uprooted childhood* (2001), ethnographer Anat Hecht demonstrates that designing a home and selecting precise objects can enable a biographic account that represents a form of reverie or a projected or ideal self. By using display to evolve their ideas the owner concerns his or herself with how one wishes to be seen now and in the future, rather than looking to the past (Hecht, 2001). Both Marcoux (2001) and Hecht (2001) recognise that by presenting a selection of objects that relate specifically to positive memories the owner is re-writing his or her past through the autotopographical display. These accumulations of objects might be an idealised projection of the self to others visiting the home, or the

autotopography could be a re-presentation of the self, allowing the owner to create a reinvented personal history.

1.03 Collection, Objects and Memory

Studies by Stewart (1993), Bal (1994), Belk (1994), Baudrillard (1994), and Schor (1994), claim that objects in collections are divested of their original associations and take on new meaning through the act of being collected. In cultural theorist Naomi Schor's essay *Collecting Paris* (1994), she defines the difference between collections and souvenirs. Schor writes:

> What distinguishes the collection from the souvenir is that the collection is composed of objects wrenched out of their contexts of origins and reconfigured into the self-contained, self-referential context of the collection itself, and this context destroys the context of origin. (Schor, 1994 p. 256)

Seminally, cultural theorist Russell Belk argues that collectors invest significance into objects that are considered consumer goods, creating an alternative value system that differs from normal consumption.[*] Further to this Belk describes this process as transforming 'ordinary profane commodities into sacred objects… personally and socially' meaningful for the collector, overcoming the objects original function and use (Belk, 1994). The findings within Belk's research have shown that this reconstitution can be a transcendent experience or phenomenon that allows the collector to create meaning, generating signification through narratives attached to the objects in the collection.

Furthermore, in his essay *Possessions and the Extended Self* (1998), Belk recognised that narratives in collections are not just limited to the individual objects themselves, but the whole collection becomes a form of extended self where the accounts of the collection and the personal stories of the collector are merged (Stewart, 1993; Baudrillard, 1994). Together, individuals and their objects embody a greater sense of personal identity, which is demonstrated in the process of selection and control asserted by the owner. He suggests: 'we may impose our identities on possessions and possessions may impose their identities on us' (Belk 1988). This signifying relationship is heightened in the collection where we see carefully considered reasons behind the selection and acquisition of each object (Baudrillard, 1994; Muensterberger, 1994; Pearce, 1995). Belk uses a selection of interview accounts where the participants acknowledge personal development as a motivation behind their collections (Belk, 1994). Belk says:

> Collections are used not only to express aspects of one's direct experience; they are also used to express fantasies about the self… Since these fantasy aspects of the self aren't lived on an everyday basis, they are experienced through the collection. (Belk, 1994 p. 322)

Belk suggests that objects act as 'packages of memory' in which a collector can access the

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[*] This closely relates to cultural theorist, Walter Benjamin's essay: Unpacking My Library (2009) in which he notes that the relationship between the collector and object "does not emphasise their functional utilitarian value… but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage of their fate."

past through association with a particular item or trigger (Belk, 1988). Using objects from a personal collection as a method to access memory is a key theme in cultural theorist and philosopher Walter Benjamin's essay, *Unpacking My Library* (2009). Benjamin was a collector and this enabled him to understand the material attributes of objects. Throughout the essay his interaction with his books brings 'a spring tide of memories' that overwhelm him (Benjamin, 2009). Describing the process of acquisition as a binding loop, or 'magic circle,' Benjamin asserts that the fate of the object and the collector are bound together (Benjamin, 2009). In particular, he emphasises that the anticipation of securing the object creates significance and these associated recollections are sealed through the act of acquisition:

> Everything remembered and thought, everything conscious becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, and the lock of his property. …The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are frozen as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them. (Benjamin, 2009 p. 258)

These related episodes could be recalled through the object's tactile qualities, which act as a prompt or reminder to the collector.* In contrast, Susan Stewart argues that through the act of collecting, the object looses its associative memories. Rather, the collector's act of reclassification dissolves separate personal stories into the greater narrative of the collection. Stewart claims:

> Each element within the collection is representative and works in combination toward the creation of a new whole that is the context of the collection itself. The spatial whole of the collection supersedes the individual narratives that lie behind it. (Stewart, 1993 pp. 152 - 153).

Similarly, Baudrillard (1994) and González (1995) concur that the inscribed meaning is replaced by the collector's fantasy and imagination. Challenging this notion, film theorist Amelie Hastie (2007), contends that collections of objects can retain many of the historical and personal attributes assigned to them prior to being collected, even though the objects become reclassified. Hastie contends:

> I do not see the souvenir and the collections as opposites or mutually exclusive; rather, I contest that they not only can coexist but can inform one another. Each gives the other a new context – through memory, through narrative, through history – rather than destroys or erases the context of the other. (Hastie, 2007 p. 27)

Furthermore, Hastie does not regard objects as having one inscribed meaning, but rather items can have multiple associations dependant to the object's context. The context and interpretation of the object is dependant on a whole manner of factors. An object may signify a particular idea or fantasy one day but an alternative encounter with the same object could trigger a memory of a specific occasion. Similarly, cultural theorist Susan Digby suggests that her grandfather's collection of curious objects is inscribed more than once (Digby, 2006).

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* Collectors are the physiognomists of the world of objects [and in this they] turn into interpreters of fate. One has only to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired…' Benjamin, W. (2009) Unpacking My Library: a talk about book collecting. In: Candlin, F. & Guins, R. (eds.) The object reader. London: Routledge

The first context is as a trigger to a narrative performance, while the second is engendered by writing down the accounts of the performances. In agreement with Digby's notion that objects can have more than one inscription, I suggest that collected objects can have multiple inscriptions, aligning to different circumstances. I propose that although the purpose and aspirations of the collection are a significant part of the narrative of the accumulated objects, the individual objects retain their own associations and personal stories. I regard collections to have several layers of narrative interpretation, fusing together the ideal or extended self with memories and associated episodes from the past. To investigate the different narrative strands discernable in the collection, it is important to acknowledge the different purposes that can underpin collections. I suggest that a collector's perception of an object elicits varied responses and emotions at different times, depending on his or her current context and inclination. Rather than suppressing the individual narratives inherent within the objects, my enquiry argues that a collector merges personal accounts pertaining to individual objects with the overall collecting narrative, developing a new meta-narrative. This intricate pulling together of different memories and experiences blends the fantasy of the reclassified object with the item's historical memory, creating complex narratives that blur the boundaries of recollection and desire.

1.04 Collecting Motivations: Narratives of the Past, Present and Future

Various motivations for collecting are highlighted by theorists operating in fields from psychology to ethnography (Pomian, 1990; Baudrillard, 1994; Muensterberger, 1994; Belk, 1995). I consider Pearce's analysis of collecting incentives to be particularly comprehensive. Divided into sixteen different types, her list of motivations are then divided more broadly into three modes, systematic, fetishistic and souvenir collecting (Pearce, 1992).[*] The first method of collecting is systematic collecting, the process of classifying objects in a series or order (Pearce, 1992). Often the whole system will be displayed in a way to communicate the relationship between the objects. One primary example of this method is the collection of the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707 -1778), who systematically collected and registered the differences and similarities between plants, ordering them into a taxonomy (Linne, 1735; Pearce, 1992). Before the Enlightenment, collecting rooms had been sites of wonder and spectacle, but during the nineteenth century collecting became a more intellectual pursuit and was used as a method of classifying and conserving art objects and specimens from the natural world. This much more systematic and methodological approach gave collections more cultural validity, both as a pastime and a way of considering objects. The nineteenth century saw a significant increase in the numbers of individuals carrying out systematic collecting at home, creating displays such as butterfly cabinets or volumes of pressed flowers. Some of these have subsequently made their way into museums and archives. This rise in popularity made collecting and archiving more prominent activities, which was further spurred on by The Great Exhibition of 1851, a potent symbol of the Victorian Age. The passion for collecting and archiving also manifested itself in the formation of museums, new archival resources and other intellectual spaces such as The

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[*] Pearce's 16 motivations are prestige, risk, leisure, fantasy, aesthetics, competition, social gratification, domination, sexual foreplay, desire to reframe objects, achieving immortality, extending the self, a sense of community, the pleasing rhythm of sameness and difference and reaffirming the body.

Natural History Museum, London, which had its own purpose built building in 1881; The Nationaal Archief, The Hague, which was founded in 1802, one of many public record archives which began in European cities during the nineteenth century; The Imperial National Library which opened in 1868 in Paris and which brought together unique documents that were acquired much earlier together with more recent acquisitions (Pearce, 1992; Blom, 2002).

Still one of the more popular types of collecting, systematic collecting, is stimulated by curiosity as well as a desire for order, using collecting techniques to investigate objects' relationships to one another. Often the display of these collections is a method for contemplating the objects and their connections, as items in this type of collection are similar, with subtle differences. The collector uses objects and their physical relationship to each other to comprehend the world and his or her connection to it (Pearce, 1992).

The second type of collecting, *fetishistic*, is where a collector acquires objects as a form of extension of the self, using the objects and their connotations to construct the collector's identity, social standing, or sense of being (Pearce, 1992). Pearce asserts that this practice is the most popular motivation behind a collection built out of aspiration to improve and endorse the self. The collector associates the collected objects with a schema that relates specifically to his or her own sense of the world and how it is ordered. Additionally, Pearce suggests that because it lacks 'an intellectual rationale' behind its acquisition, this type of collecting is the most obsessive kind (Pearce, 1992). Finally she notes that fetishistic collections are commonly arranged in a haphazard manner that has significance to the collector, rather than organised to demonstrate a system or classification.

The third of these modes is collecting *souvenirs*, acquiring objects that relate to the past and act as a signifier for a person, place or event (Pearce, 1992). Pearce argues that fetishistic and souvenir collections are at opposite ends of the collecting spectrum. Although both the fetish and souvenir collection share the common trait of the object being removed from its original functionality, they represent different ideas and motivations. In the case of the souvenir, the object's original function is purposefully changed to allow the owner to recall certain events or experiences, while the fetishised object's function is superseded by its unique relationship or personal attachment to the collector or the identity they aim to create (Pearce, 1994a). Pearce, supported by Elsner, (1994), Belk (1995), and Shelton (2001) suggests that collecting motivations can change through the course of time, and collections can be made in more than one mode. This idea is further explored by Hastie, who considers that the presentation of the objects may reveal different past narratives that may relate to more than one mode of collecting. Hastie writes:

> The materiality of these collectibles comments on the historicizing function of objects: they embody both history and fantasy. Thus explicitly set in relationship to one another through the structure of the collection, the narrative they tell becomes richer as it builds between objects…I maintain a slightly more chaotic reading that instead allows for multiple interpretations and histories to be produced. (Hastie, 2007 p. 27)

Regarding Hastie's interpretation of collecting, I consider collections can demonstrate more than one mode. Some objects within a collection may act as souvenirs, allowing the owner to recall specific events. While other acquired objects might be displayed to illustrate an idea or purpose. In using the collection and specific objects to trigger narratives, I propose that a range of different collecting activities can be evidenced. These subjective motivations relate to different aspects and periods of the collector's life, showing their personal evolution and the development of their collection. To reveal these different narratives and histories, I propose that discussing different aspects of the collection such as individual items or groups of objects can elicit a range of responses.

The fragmentation of memory within a collection has been explored in several cultural theorists' work (Stewart, 1993; Benjamin et al., 1999; Benjamin et al., 2005; Hastie, 2007; Rice, 2007; Benjamin, 2009) but is particularly important in the work of Walter Benjamin, where he describes memory as a 'fantastic' series of illusive images or real forms, specifically but not exclusively evident in the manner in which Benjamin's reminiscences are triggered by the books in his own collection. The memories prompted by the books he handles, enable him to recall places that are still vivid to him, not just as memories but as sensory experiences. These recollections relay the emotional attachment to the locations where the books were housed, and the isolation felt at certain situations. The memories imbued within his books transcend his circumstances:

> Other thoughts fill me than the ones I am talking about—not thoughts but images, memories. Memories… of Rosenthal's sumptuous rooms in Munich …of Sussengut's musty book cellar in North Berlin. (Benjamin, 2009 p. 261 - 262)

Benjamin appears to have had some strained relationships with the people who surrounded him, but found refuge in his collection (Sontag, 1979; Buck-Morss, 1989). At the time of writing his essay, he was moving into his own apartment after separating from his wife two years earlier. It is clear that Benjamin's experiences simultaneously encompass both reverie and memory. Yet, there is a third strand of narrative present in Benjamin's text: experience, which is expressed in his discussion of how the objects affect him:

> Nothing highlights the fascination of unpacking more clearly than the difficulty of stopping this activity. I had started at noon, and it was midnight before I had worked my way through the last cases. Now I put my hands on two volumes bounded in faded boards, which, strictly speaking, do not belong to the case at all. (Benjamin, 2009 p. 261)

Clearly Benjamin's experiences reveal the emotive qualities of being carried away, engrossed in the task of unpacking his books. Yet, we also can note how the tactile properties of the book evoke sensory experiences in Benjamin. Collecting is about material objects and correspondingly it is an activity that privileges the sense of touch. Frequently it is about experiencing touch, feeling things first hand and reacting to sensation. Consequently, the last narrative aspect gained from using the collecting room as a catalyst for interviews, is that of experience, relaying the sensations of being in the room and reacting in a sensory way to

space and the objects in it. My investigation regards this final strand as an important factor in obtaining historical memories and aspirational fantasies, as it communicates the qualities of how the collecting room can enrich a collector's life.

Focused on notions of memory and fantasy, this enquiry argues that collecting is not just a method for retaining memory, but that it is also a means to suppress tensions and to allow the collector to forget external realities. Hence, the collecting room could be construed as a location to elude anxieties, or a place of escape. In Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), the domestic space is a site of creative potential where one can assert one's imagination away from the influence of others, which affords the owner the luxury of musing over past events or creating new fantasies as a way of reaffirming identity or creating an idealised self. Thus, the collecting room could be argued to shape the collector.

My investigation considers the collecting room not just as a place to house collected material, but as a site of imagination and memory. The motivations behind a collection may vary, as emphasised throughout this Literature Review, but I maintain that there are essentially three areas of narratives that can be evidenced in the collections under consideration in this research and possibly in most collections. These are *memory* (past), triggered by recalling an episode connected to an object, *experience* (present), denoted through discussing the sensations of being in the room, and *aspirations* (future) that are discernable in discussing the objectives behind the gathering of the collection.

By extrapolating some of the stories intrinsically linked to the contemporary collecting room, my research uses narrative methods to gain qualitative data, a technique that has been increasingly used by academics across a range of social discourses. The narrative enquiries of Hoskins (1998), Marcoux (2001), Pink (2004b), Hurdley (2006) and Miller (2008) are all concerned with participants' recollections and how significance can be gained from the manner in which events or perceptions are conveyed in the form of narratives. This interpretive technique is a tool for deducing an individual's understanding of a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009). Psychologist Jerome Bruner, has particularly linked the cognitive issues of memory with narrative theory. He asserts that through analysing stories recounted by others, it is possible to gain an understanding of the links between memory and the construction of narrative. (Bruner, 1990). In forming a story, the subject expresses the important points of the narrative and builds connections and meaning between these threads. Considering how these ideas are related allows the researcher valuable insight into how participants perceive the experience, memory and its connection to temporality (Bruner, 1990). Bruner considers narrative to be specifically important in the storage, retrieval and relaying of memory, as it influences the way in which accounts are interpreted, placing emphasis on key motifs and ideas (Bruner, 1990). In particular, Bruner's approach uses narrative to interpret the individual's experience of time, as opposed to sequential time. In recounting memories, time is recalled contemporaneously, creating a connection between the present and the past.

This same relationship between memory and the present is communicated by historian Fawn Brodie in her biography of Joseph Smith Junior, *No Man Knows my History* (1945). Brodie regards memory and narrative to be affected by current experiences. Brodie writes:

> A man's memory is bound to be a distortion of his past in accordance with his present interests, and the most faithful autobiography is likely to mirror less what a man was than what he has become. (Brodie, 1945 ch.19)

My research builds upon Bruner and Brodie's theses, by exploring the relationship between memories of the past and the present, but also considering ambitions for the future. Drawing together these three narrative components, I argue that a more complex re-presentation can be produced that connects different temporalities. These narratives show connections between memory and experience, such as future or present realities which have been affected by past circumstances. Using the space and objects of the collecting room as catalysts to memory, this research proposes that the collecting room delineates time in a particular way, making the past, present and future connected through its spatial containment.

1.05 Space as Framework for a Narrative Enquiry

In my enquiry, I use space as a framework to explore the narratives gathered herein about collecting rooms. Influenced by Walter Benjamin's writing, my thesis uses spatial cues to overcome the sequential rigidity of time. Drawing on the principles of Benjamin's autobiographical works *A Berlin Chronicle* (Benjamin et al., 1979), *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (Benjamin et al., 1996) and *The Arcades Project (Benjamin et al., 1999)*, this investigation utilises space as a method to consider the experiences of collectors. Benjamin uses spatial frameworks to create intricate connections between different periods of his life and the streets of his beloved city, Berlin. He claims that this fragmented approach to narrative prevents the recollections from being autobiographical: rather they are momentary examples of memory. Benjamin asserts:

> Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography… For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking about space, of moments and discontinuities. For even if months and years appear here, it is in the form they have in the moment of recollection. This strange form – it may be called fleeting or eternal – is in neither case the stuff that life is made of.(Benjamin et al., 1979 p.612)

Developing this concept, my research proposes that the spatial framing of memory and experience allows for a much more complex, intricate narrative that does not conform to the expected chronology of a story. Rather, as collectors recall narratives from their collection they weave back and forth between memory and experience, past and present. This allows consideration of the effects of past events on current experiences. Past failures become future ambitions, acts undertaken now become antidotes to troubles of the past, fond memories become coping strategies to overcome difficulties in the present. My enquiry

considers that the temporality of the collection and its occupied space becomes visible through discussing the significance of objects and spaces to the collector. Connections begin to form between memories and experiences, which this research suggests may offer insight into different collectors' motivations for creating a collecting room. These life episodes are not a full biography of the collector, detailing the whole life history. Instead, they are portraits of the collector at a specific time. Reflections on the past are coloured by their present understanding of them. Therefore the collecting room is not entirely biographical; it simply reveals some aspects of the participant's life, whose complete story may be infinitely more complex than the insights provided in this research.

It is important to assert that not only does space act as a framework for the exploration, but the design of the room in question also influences the investigation and the perception of the items within it. Mieke Bal, highlights the importance of considering the attributes of space in her examination of expository discourses. Bal uses a brochure on the Metropolitan Museum of Art by curator Gary Tinterow to illustrate her point. Tinterow writes:

> We think it is misleading to hang nineteenth-century paintings in modern-style rooms. A modern room, no matter how simple or elegant, is not invisible; it colours our perception of the things within it. Tinterow (1993 cited in Bal, 1996, pp.98)

Although Bal's enquiry is specifically about the exhibition of objects in museums, the same principles apply to that of research on the home. The space that houses the objects generates a narrative layer that can affect the way objects are perceived by their owner, the researcher and potential audience. Hence, it is an important part of my enquiry to consider not just the objects in the space, but also the room itself, in generating influence and meaning. Therefore, space is not just a way of unifying narratives, but also a layer of influence on the narratives obtained.

Traditionally in philosophical studies, the concept of space has been side-lined for the more common concerns of sociology and history (Soja, 1996). In this thesis, spatial explorations can deliver new contexts for research, which may contribute fresh ideas which to move on from studies already in the public domain. By focusing this enquiry on the space of the collecting room, it aims to create a new framework for narrative study that demonstrates how an individual uses the experience of space as a site of memory, contemplation and fantasy.

The framework of space overcomes the restraints of time by juxtaposing accounts that are connected spatially rather than chronologically, allowing alternative narratives to manifest, presenting new ideas that may be less obvious in sequential explorations (Bal, 1996). Space may overcome some of the difficulties and limitations imposed by time, but they are not separate entities; they are connected. This concept is examined by philospher Michel Foucault in his essay *Of Other Spaces (1967)*. Foucault writes:

> Yet it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space.(Foucault, 2009 p. 60)

This assertion is extended by political geographer, Edward Soja's, *Trialectics of Being (Soja, 1996)*. In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (1996) Soja describes an ontological triangle between history, society and space that affects all areas of knowledge and theory. Soja contends that historicity, spatiality and sociality exist in a prism of influence continually affecting one another. Further to this, he suggests that it is difficult to examine one of these frameworks without encountering the other two. Specifically, an investigation into space will include information on the social and historical context of that space.

Drawing on concepts outlined by Soja and Foucault, my case study interviews focus on discussing the collectors' spaces but indirectly comments on other areas affected by collecting, such as the social relationships between collectors and their families. As this research explores domestic space, it inevitably considers the rapport between family members and the potential tensions involved in cohabiting. Sharing domestic space comprises a complex political arena, where everyone negotiates invisible barriers and intimate conflicts (Cieraad, 2006). The collecting room is no exception to the politics of home; this may even be one of the fundamental reasons that it is constructed. Collecting rooms are so heavily etched with the presence of the collector that entering the space without the collector may feel like an intrusion. The space becomes a site where the collector can assert his or her identity free from the negotiations that permeate other shared domestic spaces.

1.06 Collecting Rooms and Temporality

I consider that by using the collecting room as a trigger to narrative, one can identify the collector's, past, present and future from the fragments that the collector discloses. The past is often marked in the history of the space and the narrative objects that are associated with particular moments in the collector's life. The present is discernible in experiential accounts, where personal details and current domestic arrangements are frequently discussed. Future aspirations and aims, negotiations or changes that the collector intends to implement are disclosed while talking about the collection.

I propose that rather than being linear or chronological accounts, the narratives gained from the collected items and room may be kaleidoscopic, creating a complex representation of the collector and the relationship to the objects. Each layer of narrative relates backwards and forwards in time, allowing an audience to identify how ideas develop and the different factors that have shaped both the collector and the collection. These stories show multiple accounts of one person which relate to a variety of roles performed in relation to other people and offer up different perceptions of the self.

Thus, the structure of each case study presented in this research is designed to fragment the past, present and future in a manner that creates new connections not necessarily gathered

from presenting the accounts in a chronological order. My intention of using this approach is to reveal how spaces and particularly collecting rooms are repeatedly re-inscribed with experience and temporality. Investigating these complex weavings of narrative has enabled the research to reconsider the biographical sequence of the collector as not being linear and progressive as might be expected in a traditional chronological biography. As Mieke Bal has argued, the narrative of a collection is more complex than this, it does not fit the traditional narrative structure of beginning, middle and end. Exploring the narrative of the collection, Bal asserts that collections rarely have conscious beginnings, rather that they are 'arbitrary, contingent, accidental,' as they are conceived unconsciously rather than as a significant event. Bal writes:

> Only retrospectively, through a narrative manipulation of the sequence of events, can the accidental acquisition of the first object become the beginning of a collection… collecting comes to mean collecting precisely when a series of haphazard purchases or gifts becomes a meaningful sequence. (Bal, 1994 p.101)

While collections are often regarded as personal endeavours triggered by all manner of incentives and motivations, they are seldom acts of consciousness. Rather they come into being without realisation. This vague beginning is coupled with the elusive ending, of rarely being completed. Several academic studies suggest that collections are never completed but the rules and design of the collection are reconfigured to ensure its endurance (Baudrillard, 1994; Muensterberger, 1994; Pearce, 1995). The signification that the collector and the collection are one, implies that the completion of a collection would represent the collector's death (Baudrillard, 1994). In real terms, the activity would lose its meaning and hold over the collector, becoming void of interest and therefore being a waste of time and effort. To this end, the collector forgets, denies or reconfigures his or her goals to enable him or her to sustain importance in this relationship. Therefore research by Bal (1994), Baudrillard (1994), Muensterberger (1994) and Pearce (1995) has discerned that collecting may be difficult to define without a firm beginning or end; instead, it can be a perpetual cycle of narrative. These ideas have been interesting to think through. However, my research findings contradict this idea as different case studies featured in this research variously demonstrate both clear beginnings. (*Making a Killing*, page 75; *Unobtainable Dreams*, page 91; *Hook, Line and Sinker*, page 107 and *It's Not All Roses*, page 123) and ends (*Making a Killing*, page 75).

1.07 Narratology and Performance

This section contemplates the second narrative form established within my research: recorded oral testimonies which are delivered through semi-structured interviews. In this part of my written manuscript, I consider my own agency in the context of the investigation and the influence that researchers can have on the narratives that they collect. As previously noted in this Literature Review, narrative enquiry can provide insight into the participant's collecting life, understanding of themselves and ways in which they relate to others. Using interviews to gain comprehension of experience offers a wealth of insight into the person, demonstrating the subject's relationships to other people and how the person would wish to be regarded by others. Storytelling itself allows a person to create a '*self for public*

consumption' (Hoskins, 1998). The narrative self is not a true reflection of the person, but merges the storyteller's idealised sense of self with the real version of events, creating a representation that is affected by the intended narrative audience. Storytelling must be considered a performance, rather than a simple account of events as they were actually experienced. Hoskins asserts:

> Anthropologists distinguish between a life as lived, a life as experienced, and a life as told. The first refers to what happens to a person; the second to images, feelings, sentiments, desires and meanings the person may ascribe to these events; and the third to narrative, influenced by the context in which it is told, the audience and the cultural notions of storytelling. (Hoskins, 1998 p. 6)

In order to construct an engaging narrative, one strategy is to embellish a personal story or series of events and restructure the details and chronology to make a more compelling account. The dynamic of the interview process is a key aspect here, as the participant may conduct him or herself in an insincere manner, trying to please the researcher (Williams, 1984; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Cortazzi, 2001; Rose, 2001; Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Hurdley, 2006; Smith, 2009). Sociologist Rachel Hurdley argues that narrative accounts are performances aimed at a particular audience:

> The social character of these stories must be recognised, since in *the interview society*, it is recognised that interview narratives are not transparent reflections of lived experience or the self, but are interactive performances. (Hurdley, 2006 p. 720)

Moreover, the context of the narration can affect the story, because it is performed for an intended audience. A particular recollection of events may be considerably different if recounted to a different group of people. In the case studies for this enquiry, I have noted that this appears to have had significant impact on some of the recorded interviews. While some recollections are presented in what appears to be an unaffected manner, other interviews are performed in a way that might be construed to have a particular type of person in mind. In particular, some of the participants' interviews and comments were perceived to be projected towards other collectors, rather than a more general audience. These accounts seek sympathy or an understanding from the person listening, relaying the inconvenience suffered as a result of being surrounded by non-collectors. In her work on interviews sociologist Catherine Kohler Reissman, discussed such re-negotiations of the self, in relation to a narrative audience:

> [Individuals] negotiate how they want to be known in the stories they develop collaboratively with their audiences in interview situations. Social actors shape their lives retrospectively for particular audiences, constructing what we call 'memories' in storied accounts that serve strategic purposes. Illness narratives do not reveal an essential self as much as the preferred one, selected from the multiplicity of selves or persona that we all switch between as we go about our lives. (Riessman, 2003 p. 8)

I contend that this variation of roles is not only found in narrative retelling, but is also evident in a range of stories obtained from one person. By attaining a set of narratives

from one collector, specifically relating to a selection of objects, I consider that it is possible to provide an indication of the multiple roles a collector may perform. Implemented in different social interactions, these presentations vary from individual to individual, and may include performances as a parent, a friend, a child or a marital partner.

As stories are a series of connected thoughts and ideas that form narratives, these details may seem unrelated in the sequence of events. However, through the act of narrating, the storyteller pulls the separate threads of the story together, weaving a complete account. One can discern a distinct difference between the logical events that take place in a narrative and the final presentation of the story. This difference offers a constructed memory, a further focus of this research. Not only do the participants reveal their perception of events, but they are also re-constructing these memories in their narrative accounts. More succinctly, Janet Hoskins explains: 'A coherent narrative constructs a unified self out of the disparate fragments of daily experience' (Hoskins, 1998).

I argue that employing space as a structure to organise and connect these individual narratives can enable a more accomplished re-presentation of the collector, one that reveals his or her daily interactions and different social encounters. People take on and perform multiple identities as they interact with others, performing various versions of the self (Goffman, 1956). In discussing a range of objects and experiences, the narratives recall different roles a collector might perform. In the previous section, I suggested that the collection could trigger narratives that represent the collectors' past, present and future, but the accounts reveal a much more diverse spread of narratives that convey insights into all manner aspects of the participants' lives. For example, they also demonstrate the relationships that each collector has with other people both in terms of the collection and domestic space. I argue that these accounts and identity related performances are amalgamated within the collecting room and consolidated by the possession of a private space.

While the focus up to this point in this written thesis has been on the private self and notions of personal narratives, some collectors do have aspirations towards a more public performance of self. This is evidenced in collections where the display is orientated towards exhibition. In certain examples, the objects can be presented with the intention of being shown to other collectors, or designed to become a museum in the future. In particular, these types of collection reveal the collectors social aspirations. One such instance is the model room designed by Sir John Soane, which he frequently redesigned aiming to produce the best possible display. Cultural theorist John Elsner, notes that Soane constantly sought to refine the presentation of his model collecting room. Elsner writes:

> The model room, more than any other aspect of the collection, bore witness to the collector's relentless dissatisfaction with a final display, his continuous urge to try again. (Elsner, 1994 p. 159 - 160)

The sense of purpose and development of the objects within this and many other historical collections denotes that they were destined for public display. One explanation for the dissatisfaction Soane felt in the exhibition of his collection could be that he considered the space to be a self-portrait or legacy with which to be remembered. Historian David Watkin proposes the idea that Soane regarded the space as a re-presentation in the first of the annual lectures held in conjunction with the Soane Museum. Watkin writes:

> Soane claimed in a manuscript note of 1819 that 'architecture speaks a language of its own and above all a building, like a historical picture must tell its own tale.' That a building could be a portrait, a self-portrait, echoes the obsession with self-analysis that Soane had found in Rousseau's *Confessions*… That the Soane Museum and Pitzhanger Manor were in some sense intended as self-portraits is suggested in the surviving lecture notes in which he considered showing a picture of Pitzhanger Manor to his students and inviting them to guess what its function was. (Watkin, 1996)

Whether the collecting room is consciously perceived (as suggested with Soane) to be a re-presentation of the collector, my investigation suggests that the collecting room and its design can be used to communicate information about the way the character being portrayed wishes to be perceived. The displays become idealistic versions of the self, whether they are intended for a public audience or a private projection of the imagined self. The relationship between public and private display is not a straightforward idea within collecting, as collectors can struggle with the need for privacy and an overwhelming pride in the objects they have acquired (Pearce, 1992). The participants who have agreed to take part in my research, show an openness to sharing their space with myself as a researcher and the potential audience I wish to communicate this with. In doing this, it would suggest that the collectors involved with this study are proud of their collections and gain some satisfaction from revealing their collection to others. This generates a particular set of responses, which may be entirely different from working with collectors who were more secretive about their collection and collecting practice.

By considering objects and their displays, I regard the design of the collection to be a form of communication that may allude to some of the performances of self, which may not be apparent in the interviews. To this end I suggest that through examining the manner in which the collection is displayed, further insight may be gathered that communicates the ideas and motivations underpinning the collection process and the tensions that may not be communicated by the interview alone.

1.08 Alternative Techniques for Interpreting Narrative

In this written thesis, I argue that by visually exploring the display of objects in the collecting room it is possible to gain a sense of understanding about the collector who created the space. As previous research by Pearce (1992), Elsner (1994), Belk (1995), and Blom (2002) has shown, the arrangement of a personal collection can show the intention or idea behind the collecting practice. This is particularly evident in collections which may

have a system in place as the collector is using the spatial arrangement of the objects to make sense of an idea. This idea of mapping a collection in space as a method of relating objects to an idea has also been applied by Pearce to the fetishistic object collector, who arranges the objects to make sense of the reason behind their collecting. She writes:

> The [fetishistic] collections are usually organised and stored according to a clear rationale, which relates in part to resources but in part to individual ideas about what goes with what, which would not necessarily be those which would occur to museum workers: relationship to events in the owner's life seems to be a favourite ordering principle… (Pearce, 1992 p.78)

I propose that by exploring the space visually it is possible to trace some of the importance that the objects have to collectors. For instance, objects kept in glass cases may be more intrinsically precious or highly valued than objects kept in a drawer. Alternatively, a more prized possession may be hidden in a drawer or cupboard, away from the eyes of visitors. In considering these notions of display, the research aims to reveal ideas about the collection that may not be transparent from the interview material alone.

This approach has previously been employed in academic studies examining domestic space, but not in creative practice. In particular, studies into the display of objects on mantle pieces (Teyssot, 2005), display cabinets (Marcoux, 2001; Makovicky, 2007) and the placement of family photographs in the home (Hirsch, 1997; Rose, 2003) have indicated that hierarchies are formed to show the relationships between different objects. The location and arrangement of these items can reveal some of the significance that is perhaps less evident in the narratives, revealing the participants' relationship with the object.

In her investigation of Slovakian cupboards, cultural theorist Nicolette Markovicky adopted a partially similar approach. Markovicky identifies a process of looking at the elaborate displays of her participants as a method to understand non-verbal techniques in relation to interviews. She asserts that the narratives obtained from objects are enriched by an examination of the items displayed within the home. Moreover, these recollections embody a social history which acts as an 'element of commemoration of family heritage and memorisation of family members alike' (Markovicky, 2007). In particular, Markovicky emphasises the notion that both objects and memory are not only complex but also layered. Specific items can contribute simultaneously singular narratives about specific events and more generalised memories relating to different periods within their owner's life.

The environmental factors that shape our notions of 'home' have also become a recognised area of investigation. Researchers have employed a variety of sensory-based methods to enrich and extend theoretical experiences of the home (Rose, 2001; Pink, 2004a). In particular, ethnographer Sarah Pink suggests that it is possible to enrich interview-based narratives with observations of the environment being studied. Her early study, *Home Truths: Gender, domestic objects and everyday life* (2001), concentrated on domestic chores and drew observations from discussions of scent and their

associations with cleaning. She has researched extensively in fields related to sensory ethnography, producing several investigations into combining ethnography and images (Pink, 1996; Pink, 1997; Pink, 2007), and with video (Pink, 2004b).

In contrast to this, sociological theorist Anthony Giddens argues that sensory observations are not dependable forms of enquiry for academic research and should be avoided. In his book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990*)*, Giddens writes:

> Although most regarded the evidence of our senses as the most dependable information we can obtain, even the early Enlightenment thinkers were well aware that such "evidence" is always in principle suspect. Sense data could never provide a wholly secure base for knowledge claims.(Giddens, 1990 p. 49)

While Giddens's assertion may be pertinent in relation to scientific studies, I regard the ideas of Sensory Ethnography to be applicable particularly in trying to understand ideas of personal space and how it is perceived. This earlier text might indicate a shift in academic opinions about cultural and social research, however Giddens's conclusions are relevant in considering notions of experience, as the researcher cannot necessarily appreciate this subjective understanding. This important factor is also considered by Pink in her analysis of Sensory Ethnography, where she acknowledges that the experience the researcher observes is not necessarily 'the truth', but a perception of this:

> [Visual ethnography] does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which knowledge was produced. (Pink, 2009 p. 8)

Pink acknowledges, communicating other people's experiences would be an unmanageable task due to its subjectivity, and can only be comprehended by individuals. Therefore, visual ethnography as an investigative method can only offer observations, and not fully communicate ideas of experience.

My research attempts to overcome the limitation of communicating experience by further considering the use of sound. The above discussion relays some of the important factors that a visual exploration of collecting rooms can offer; yet, my research also considers sound to be a significant part of the sensory exploration of space. Often investigations prioritise the visual, overlooking the importance of other senses (Dean and Millar, 2005; Pink, 2009; Crook, 2012). Yet, sound is a particularly effective medium in recreating the experience of place.

Although one is not always aware of it, spaces are never entirely silent; every location has its own unique sound in which we immerse ourselves (Crook, 2012). The notion of sound as a form of place was a preoccupation for the artist Max Neuhaus, who created sound installations that change our sense of space and place. He worked predominantly with

locations to create site-specific pieces that could be subtle or intrusive. His online biography draws our attention to the intrinsic link between sound and place:

> Starting from the premise that our sense of place depends on what we hear, as well as on what we see, he utilized a given social and aural context as a foundation to build a new perception of place with sound. (ANON, 2009)

Neuhaus's installations heighten the listener's awareness of the location he is exploring, imbuing these locations with new narratives and reverie that challenge the viewers' perception of space. This evocative use of sound shapes our sense of place beyond just the visual representation. Sound then becomes an integral part of replicating the experience of the collecting room. Audio is recognised as a *constant* sense, but rather than being directional as with vision (where one can chose where to look,) sound is immersive (Crook, 2012).Considering this, my creative practice uses sound as a sensory tool for relaying experience.

Nevertheless, as Pink (2009) asserts, experiences are highly subjective and even by recreating the experience of the collecting room, the viewer may not appreciate the same qualities that the space offers the collector. Therefore to understand the importance of the collecting room, my research draws from another analytical method that is aimed at interpreting notions of experience, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In combining these two methodologies my research aims to relay some of the distinct qualities of each space as observed by the researcher using a Sensory Ethnographic approach, but also communicate a sense of the collecting room and the experiences it offers the collector by using case study interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. More on Sensory Ethnography and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis will follow in section 2 Methodology.

1.09 Communicating Research Findings to an Audience

This final section of the Literature Review discusses the third narrative form evident in my practice, the re-presentation of my research findings to an audience. Within my analysis of this process, I examine my agency as an artist by considering my role in crystallising my research findings and re-presenting them as narratives to an audience. Intertextuality is a means for communicating ideas to the viewer of artworks. In her book of research methods, *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, Gillian Rose explains this concept:

> Intertextuality refers to the way that meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts. (Rose, 2001 p. 142)

Therefore, the manner in which images or texts are translated is dependent on the reader's (or viewer's) experience of other images and texts. Initially derived from theories on literature, it is the concept that a text is never original, but the reading of it affected by other texts and sources that may have been experienced prior or concurrently to the text in question (Rose, 2001; Allen, 2012). Its central proponent, cultural theorist Roland Barthes,

claimed that texts consist of multiple interpretations, and place much more emphasis on the reader then the author. Barthes argued:

> [A] text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (Barthes, 1977 p. 148)

In my investigation, the audience and their perception of the collecting room is reliant on their intertextual response to my creative practice. It supports Barthes notion that the audience and their imagination is a key factor in interpretation. In order to communicate the analysis and interpretation of the collecting room, my enquiry uses narrative structures that encourage the audience to make connections between the different components of my creative practice. The audience may be made up of people with different ideas of the themes of this enquiry, such as domestic space, objects and memory and collecting. The artworks produced in conjunction with the research findings aim to complement the viewers' prior engagement with the themes of the work and construct frameworks that allow them to make their own connections between the images and sounds presented to them.Photography and sound are traditionally indexical, making reference to signs and symbols. Both media create meaning through a system of associations, which is dependant on the viewer or audiences prior knowledge of experience. Examining the qualities of sound in particular, cultural theorist Andrew Crisell writes in his book *Understanding Radio* (1994).

> Sound is *natural* – a form of signification which exists out there in the real world. It seems never to exist as an isolated phenomenon, always to manifest the presence of something else. Consequently we can say that sounds, whether in the world or on the radio, are generally indexical… Thus sounds such as the ringing of a doorbell or the grating of a key in the lock are indexical in signifying someone's presence. (Crisell, 1994 p. 144)

The relationship between medium and index has been applied to photography most notably in the writing of art theorist Rosalind Krauss. In her essay *Notes on an Index* (1977). Krauss argues:

> The photograph is thus a type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object. (Krauss, 1977 p. 203)

Therefore, the viewer or listener has to connect the icon or index back to its source. The creative practice I have produced out of this research connects these references to each other, but in a non-direct manner. For example, the ringing of a telephone would not be shown against the image of a telephone: the sound and images do not have a straightforward connection to one another but rather ask the audience to relate through their own interpretative process. In doing so, the audience can draw on other pre-existing experiences to create significance.

The spatial frameworks that underpin the narratives also create juxtapositions of time through the narrative, placing accounts from different temporalities together. This invites the viewer to make intertextual connections between the temporalities and create an overview or connection between the collector's past, present and future. The frameworks used within this research borrow ideas germinated from Benjamin's concept of *dialectical images*, a method for interrogating and exploring temporality and history, which he utilised through all his work, from his exploration of his childhood in Berlin through to his work on Paris. This relentless ability to question the significance of temporality has its foundations in his habits as a collector. In particular, Benjamin uses the 'dialectical image' as a method of connecting the past with the contemporary experience (Pensky, 1992; Lindroos, 1998; Leslie, 1999). Benjamin realised that the historical object could interrupt the present, enabling the collector to reconsider the relationship between history and the present moment. The traditional and most common perception of time is as a linear, chronological progression of events occurring one after another. Benjamin's various theses question this continuum and allow the reader to understand temporality not just as a direct sequence: but as discursive and fragmented (Benjamin et al., 1979; Benjamin et al., 1999; Benjamin, 2009).The aim of the intertextual context of dialectical images is to allow the reader to connect images and make associations independently. Susan Buck-Morss compares dialectical images to a stereoscope, which produces a three-dimensional image from two separate pictures (Buck- Morss, 1989). Simply, she suggests that a third meaning or interpretation can be found through piecing together two distinct sets of information.

Further to this, my thesis considers the viewer's relationship to dialectical images. By juxtaposing the past and present in expressive ways, an artist can produce meaning that allows audiences to create interpretations through the images' relationship with each other. As the viewer learns new information about the participant, it changes the conception of the individual and allows the viewer to generate a more complex understanding of the person who is being re-presented.

These intertextual responses create narratives that enable viewers to engage with the material, whilst also applying their own rationale and imagination to the story. This concept of allowing viewers space to interpret and bring their own significance to the text is one of the key ideas outlined in Susan Buck-Morss's reading of *dialectical images*. Buck-Morss proposes that Benjamin deliberately embedded these contrasting ideas throughout his texts to empower readers, allowing them to create intertextual responses that are informed by their own reading and understanding, as well as the objectives designed by Benjamin as the author. Buck-Morss writes:

> He compels us to search for images of social historical reality that are
> the key to unlocking the meaning of his commentary – just as that
> commentary is the key to their significance. But in the process, our
> attention has been redirected: Benjamin has surreptitiously left the
> spotlight, which now shines brightly on the socio-historical phenomena

themselves. Moreover (and this is the mark of his pedagogical success), he allows us the experience of feeling that we are discovering the political meaning of these phenomena on our own. (Buck-Morss, 1989, p. preface x)

Buck-Morss proposes that Benjamin intended *The Arcades Project* to only be half of the text, which would be juxtaposed with the readers *fleeting* images of his or her lived experience (Buck-Morss, 1989). The montage of Benjamin's text allows the reader to invest a personal significance into the work and to create his or her own revelations informed by the literary structure. I would like to compare Walter Benjamin's absence in his dialectical images with Mieke Bal's ideas of expository discourse. Bal's analysis of museology focuses on the agency that an institution or museum has by means of the displays it creates. She argues that the 'first person' (the museum or institution), speaks with authority to the 'second person' (the viewer or visitor) about the 'third person' (the object). In doing so, the influence of the institution is concealed from viewers by the presence of the object, which reinforces the institutional arguments and convinces them that their position or opinion is 'true' (Bal, 1996). In one of Bal's examples, the first person (or museum voice) is displaced through the presentation of the objects, as the darkened room conceals the subject. Bal writes:

> The obscurity is obviously necessary for preservation; at the same time, it sustains the effect of 'third-person' narrative that highlights the object while obscuring the subject. (Bal, 1996 p. 20)

In principle, this has the same affect that Buck-Morss discusses in Benjamin's writing. For his text connects ideas, but through the creative process of making these connections the viewer (or in this case reader) forgets Benjamin's agency. The difference between the rhetoric imposed by the museum in Bal's investigation and the writing of Benjamin, is the creative process asked of the audience. Benjamin's writing invites readers to make connections themselves and to reach their own conclusions about the subject of his exposition. Bal recommends that by placing some creative power with the viewer, museums can address some of the issues that are inherent in expository discourse:

> The expository agent proposes, not imposes, but by the nature of expository discourse the 'you' is not in a position to speak back… The important moment in which the discursive view of exposing 'works' is when the addressee becomes aware that the 'I' needs her to act as 'I'. (Bal, 1996 p. 162)

In light of this, it is important to note the agency inherent in producing works of an expository nature. The narratives that are constructed from my research, propose ideas about the collector's own narratives but are open to interpretation by the viewer. The audience is extended an open invitation to generate connections and conclusions to the material provided. In doing this, it is hoped that the members of the audience would have the opportunity to learn more about themselves through inferences about their own private spaces.

Finally, within this research I have continually reflected on my agency and the effects that I may have on the research and the participants. Recognising the imprint of the researcher

on an investigation has been an increasingly documented concept within all areas of academic study, but is particularly evident in sociological studies (Giddens, 1984; Giddens, 1990; May, 1998; May, 1999; Hughes, 2006). Studies by May (1999) and Hughes (2006) have demonstrated that biographical elements such as personal status, values, political ideas, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality can have an impact on research findings. One of the main methods employed by sociological investigations to overcome the agency of the researcher is through personal reflection. This is achieved by a conscious and consistent contemplation by the researcher of how efficient the investigation is, the affects that the enquiry has had on the subjects and how different aspects of their own upbringing, values and culture can influence the research. In his analysis of the reflective practitioner, sociologist Tim May has observed that in some cases reflection on all processes of an enquiry can lead to a sterile investigation (May, 1999). He argues that reflexivity should be used as a tool for informing the researcher of their agency in the enquiry and not dismissing information that may give perspective on the findings. May argues:

> To take reflexive questioning too far is to introduce a sterility on the part of those who hesitate at the impasse they create or, alternatively, a reaction in those whose prejudices they ought to challenge. As a check against self-referential indulgence and scholastic slumber, whilst engaging with the social world, we need two senses of reflexivity: endogenous and referential. (May, 1999)

In all areas of investigation, be it sociological or artistic practice, the importance of reflection is a key consideration to development and awareness. Regarding this, May has identified that through being overly critical of the nature of the study can steer the research off track. Further to this, May observes that the rigor of sociological investigations can dwell on the 'spectacle' of the social world, which can result in overlooking the nuances of everyday activities (May, 1999). One of the main factors for this oversight might be the format of the traditional research paper, which has strict forms and does not leave much room for the conveyance of indirect enquiry. Yet, in this investigation theory and art practice come together, allowing more subtle approaches of communication than conventional methods of enquiry.

In my research, I consider these related subtleties and interactions to be integral, generating a much more complete image of the participants than their collecting practices alone. For example, Allan's relationship to his wife in the case study *Unobtainable Dreams*, possibly reveals one of his key motivations for having a private space for his collection. While Allan never articulates that his collecting room is a space free from the interruptions of his wife, it is implied through discussion around the collection.

In order to achieve this balance between rigour and openness to the more intricate areas of the investigation, my reflection has allowed my study to uncover different methods of enquiry, bringing together a variety of approaches to social research. Further to this, I consistently analyse the effects and agency that these methods may have on the investigation. This idea of the reflective practitioner has been a fundamental aspect within my research, specifically in relation to conducting and analysing the interviews. Yet, this

heightened self-awareness has also impacted on my practice, enabling me to develop my ideas and artworks in order to communicate the research findings to an audience.

2.00 Practice Review

This practice review concentrates on creative works that have been influential on my research because of their intertextual nature which informs explorations of spaces, narratives or objects. Many of the works cited here are autotopographical in their nature, revealing personal details and stories that can be situated within displays of objects. In the first instance, this review considers the representation of collectors in popular and journalistic media, before exploring the context of artworks that have had significant influence over my research, particularly in its early stages. By concentrating on the artists who have used similar methods to mine from the last fifteen years, this practice review explains the thought processes and concepts that underpin my project, rather than making reference to all the artists who have produced work which resonates with my practice in some way.

Collecting was recognised as one of the most popular pastimes at the turn of the last Millennium. Estimates made by cultural theorists at the time considered that as many as one third of adults regularly partook in some form of collecting activity (Belk, 1995; Pearce, 1995). Collecting still remains a popular recreational activity within the UK, with continued interest in antiques and collectibles being observable through staple daytime television programmes such as the BBC's *The Antiques Road Show* and *Cash in the Attic*. The demand for retro, nostalgic and second hand objects has also been triggered further by the use of the internet, with particular sites such as eBay bringing the thrill of the auction into everybody's home (Hillis, Petit and Epley 2006).

Yet within popular culture, collectors have been portrayed as being obsessive characters (Shuker 2010). In recent novels such as A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover* (1992) and James Gunn's *The Toy Collector* (2000), collecting protagonists will go to exceptional lengths to acquire objects. These fictional portrayals of collectors often concentrate on extreme forms of collecting, rather than representing the more commonplace perhaps more casual collecting that is a popular pastime. This stereotype is highlighted in cultural theorist Roy Shuker's book *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasure: Record Collecting as a Social Practice* (2010). Shuker uses the central character of Rob Fleming from Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995), as a key figure in the depiction of record collectors. Fleming's character demonstrates obsessive tendencies towards collecting records, which often impact on his personal relationships. Drawing from a range of fictional characters Shuker concludes that the media representation of record collectors is primarily limited to stereotypes. Shuker writes:

> The popular image of contemporary record collectors is of obsessive males whose 'trainspotting' passion for collecting is often a substitute for 'real' social relationships. (Shuker 2010)

However, this one-dimensional representation is not, in my view, an accurate portrayal of collecting which I have found to often be far more subtle and rich than the stereotype. The complexity of collecting practice can be observed in the film *I Never Promised You A*

Rose Garden (2008) by artists Guy-Marc Hinant and Dominique Lohlé. Their film explores the extensive collection of sound recordings owned by author and composer David Toop. Using an interview format, Hinant and Lohlé detail the significance of the music Toop has collected, whilst offering some intriguing recollections from his personal life. The film brings together sections of Toop's sound recordings (which include Buddhist devotional chants, bird song from Venezuela and rock and roll by Hasil Adkins) overlaid with his own narratives, simultaneously documenting his life and collecting history at the same time. The visual accompaniment contrasts film portraits of Toop listening and discussing his records, with a black screen that gives the viewer an opportunity to engage solely with the sound. Hinant and Lohlé's work reveals both the important historical development of various sound recordings, whilst simultaneously detailing Toop's own biographical accounts. This representation of Toop is more nuanced and complex than a limited stereotypical record collector.

However, Shuker's observation about popular stereotypes is not limited to the representation of record collectors, but can be applied to the representation of collectors more generally. For example, in John Fowles' novel *The Collector* (1963), the central character Frederick Clegg obsessively collects butterflies, but seems incapable of relating to others. This notion is also evident in the novels by Byatt (1990), Sontag (1992) and Gunn (2000), who all demonstrate central characters who have fractured personal relationships. Yet these exaggerated literary portrayals seem limited in their representation and seldom display an accurate or realistic portrayal of collectors. Instead they focus on the negative or fanatical aspects of collecting, rather than looking at the collecting practice as a complex and individual practice that entwines biographical details of the collector with a highly engaged history of the objects collected.

This restrictive representation is also evident in television programmes such as BBC Two's *Collectaholics*, or the Canadian television show *Extreme Collectors*. Both of these television programmes concentrate on the problems that arise from collecting and how this can impact on the social relationships of different collectors. Focused on sensationalism, these depictions of collectors are narrow in their representation of collecting as a complex and varied pastime. Furthermore, this limited portrayal of collecting is also echoed in the national newspapers, where articles in *The Times*, *Metro* and *The Daily Mail* all frequently feature personal collections. These articles are often found in the 'Historical', 'General Interest' or 'Weird' section of the tabloids and often depict the collector surrounded by his or her objects. Articles of this nature are typically humorous in their context, revealing one particular aspect of the collection, whether it has become recognised as the largest of its kind or someone is selling their objects. Although these articles hint at the most amazing narratives, they tend to be limited to a few facts and are superficial in nature, failing to establish any significant information or insight into the individual portrayed. One example of this type of story is the article filed under 'Weird' in *Metro*, about a male collector who acquired a large collection of beer glasses, despite being teetotal (Figure1). The article and portrait hint at many intriguing details, which are not resolved in the written text or the image. It may be assumed that as a commercial endeavour, newspapers can only supply limited

narrative and information due to their strict allocations of space. Further to this, the images produced to accompany these articles aim to tell the whole narrative in a single image. In my opinion, these formulaic photographs do not convey the complexity that may be found within the collection and the space in which it is housed. In light of these ideas, it has been the intention of my research to embrace some of these complexities and produce creative practice that encompasses a broader interpretation of the collection and its significance to the collector.

2.01 Photography and Autotopographical Displays

One of the main photographic influences on my creative practice is the Finnish photographer Veli Granö's body of work *Tangible Cosmologies* (1997). His photographs depict a succession of collectors taken in their private spaces. These spatial portraits detail collectors' rooms filled with objects, indicating the significant connection between objects and collectors and identifying the richness of the collection (Figure 2). In considering Granö's photographs, there are distinct differences between his work and the photographs produced for newspapers, which come from his use of light and shade within his images. In my opinion Granö's photographs communicate the enigmatic qualities of collections, using composition and light to create atmosphere and intrigue that is not present in the journalistic images commonly published. In particular, Granö's work conveys the collection as a site of intrigue that documents a new position on consumer behaviour, or a more individualised history that is specific to the collector. In comments that reflect Benjamin's notion of the historical materialist, Granö notes the traits of the collector:

> Today's collector is of a new kind: a historian, a restorer of meaning. This figure, the expert collector, shows us where our past is hidden and how we can rediscover it. Such collectors give meaning and historical perspective to everyday objects and convey this meaning to the millions of consumers who use the same objects… Collectors shed light on objects that have been there all the time: they make visible part of our past. (Granö, 1997)

Granö's images show the subjects immersed in a history that is simultaneously their own as well as that of their collected objects. The items in the collection become significant through their connection to the owner, transforming everyday consumer goods into meaningful displays. Therefore the photographs reveal the merging of the object and the collector's biography, charting their symbiotic relationship. These spatial representations poetically hint at the stories that are embedded in these rooms, yet leave the viewer to make their own interpretations of the collectors' relationship to their objects. This idea of narrative is also evident in his photographic series *Masters*, which depicts different model makers in their homes. As with the series *Tangible Cosmologies*, *Masters* is a visual representation of the relationship between objects and people, uncovering the entanglement between the biographies of people and their objects. Granö identifies that the models become signifiers for their makers' past and present and possibly for the dreams of the creator. In his introduction to the work Granö says:

> A scale model of a real object is always an image of the past. It never
> represents the present, but, like a photograph, stirs sentimental and
> nostalgic feelings within the observer. Smallness makes the encounter
> an intimate, private occasion. It is not surprising that the motif of a scale
> model often relates to the personal memories or dreams of its assembler.
> (Granö, 2006)

It is also one of the objectives of my own practice-based research to embody this sentiment and build upon these inherent histories by including narrative accounts that demonstrate the nuances of each collection. Echoing Granö's observations of the model makers, I consider that by exploring the space of the collection, the resulting artworks can reveal the collectors' past, present and future, revealing the various temporalities entwined in the collections. While Granö's photographs relate directly to collecting, other photographic influences

on this project concentrate on autotopographical displays and explore the placement of personal objects as a signifier to identity, memory and aspiration. The first of these influential photographers is Edmund Clark, who has produced three related series of photographs, *Killing Time* (2007), *Guantanamo: If The Light Goes Out* (2011) and *Control Order House* (2011). Each of these bodies of work examines notions of home and the possessions of subjects who have been incarcerated. In *Killing Time*, Clark traces the biography of prisoners serving life sentences (Figure 3) through their possessions.

Figure 3: Inmate's Table, from the series *Killing Time* (2007), by Edmund Clark, taken from,

http://www.edmundclark.com/

Clark's work concentrates the viewer's attention on the few precious objects that prisoners are allowed, his large format photographs focused on the displays of objects within the participants' cells. These still life photographs create a visual reference to the character and nature of the prisoner. Viewing these images one compares the different items, choices of reading material and the organisation of objects, hoping to gain some insight into the owner and by extension some sense of their crimes. Effectively mirroring the idea of autotopographies, as examined in the Literature Review (Page 12), Clark draws attention to the significance of objects from the manner in which they are displayed. Considering the layout and hierarchy within these images, the viewer can gain insight into the importance each object has and its relationship to the prisoner. Clark's work generates insightful narratives with sensitivity, creating a body of work that offers a glimpse into the private lives of prison inmates, through the objects that are retained and displayed.

This same method of exploring objects that act as signifiers for home and identity are also central ideas in Clark's series *Guantanamo: If The Light Goes Out*. This body of work examines three ideas of home in the American naval base Guantanamo Bay. It questions the different but related lives of the people working and living on the base. In his summary of the work Clark writes:

Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out illustrates three experiences of home: at Guantanamo naval base, home to the American community; in the camp complex where the detainees have been held; and in the homes where former detainees, never charged with any crime, find themselves trying to rebuild lives. These notions of home are brought together in an unsettling narrative, which evokes the process of disorientation central to the Guantanamo interrogation and incarceration techniques. It also explores the legacy of disturbance that such experiences have in the minds and memories of these men. (Clark 2010)

In bringing together images of the naval base, homes and autotopographical displays, Clark questions notion of home and the significance of objects as creating displays of meaning. These complex intertextual juxtapositions allow the viewer to contemplate the difficult ideas that are imbued in these complex sites and the different levels of comfort that can be found through transforming a space into a home. In particular, the still life images of objects reveal personal narratives that can be linked to memory and aspiration, which sit uneasily alongside photographs of the base. It is this contrast between the two types of images that humanises the environment and reinforces the tensions that arise from his exploration of this difficult and politically charged space.

This same methodology is evident in Clark's third series, *Control Order House*. In this body of work, Clark investigates the temporary house of a male suspect involved in terrorist-related activity. The controlled environment is an impermanent arrangement in which strict rules and guidelines are enforced. These include: an imposed curfew, restriction on communication and the authority to relocate him within the UK. Due to the restrictions that were placed on Clark by the Home Office, the photographs have a different aesthetic from his other series, showing a much less constructed approach to the project. In an interview for Photoworks Clark says:

I wanted to 'look' in a different way to my Guantanamo work and to Still Life Killing Time, which were about looking for meaning in the (arrangement of) objects and spaces. After visiting the house, I knew it would be a challenge to represent it visually in the way I had worked before. For that reason, I wanted to concentrate on a type of video diary of the life of the controlled person in the house but without his presence, and to use photographs in a very unmediated, unedited, uncomposed way, and to use this imagery to reflect how we see/visualise space through forms associated with commercial and consumer choice, how we exercise control and choice in our houses and homes. (Clark 2012)

The resulting work reveals a generic home in which objects become symbols of normality and constancy in a site of displacement. These images are interspersed with photographs that remind the viewer of the restrictions placed on the subject. Again the still life images humanise the environment, enabling the audience to construct complex narratives that give insight into the space and the circumstances that the detainee is placed under. Clark's use of photographic explorations of home and the objects within it, enable the viewer to question notions of identity and domestic space in charged circumstances where memory becomes a form of consolation. Clark's method of bringing photographs together, to place emphasis on different aspects of these complex home environments, creates meaningful juxtapositions. This

intertextual method is dependant on the viewer making connections between the images and while it stimulates the audience to think about the situations that Clark portrays it does not bring to light the narratives embedded in the spaces presented. Developed out of extensive research, Clark's work does indicate the lives that are being represented, however being significantly based on images, the narratives that are underpinning the stories cannot be fully voiced. In using interviews to accompany my visual presentations I aim to make the individual stories of the participants more explicit to the audience.

In relation to Clark's work, photographer Marjolaine Ryley's photographic series *Villa Mona* (2006), *Noon* (2006), *Résidence Astral* (2007), and *Growing Up in the New Age* (2012) are a more personal inquiry into domestic space. Each of these projects explores notions of home, family and the narrative traces left within domestic space, evident in the objects displays. More particularly her project *Villa Mona* explores her Grandmother's family home in Belgium, using photography to document the objects that have meaning and significance in the creation of a home (Figure 4). The objects displayed indicate the historical development of the domestic space from past to current occupants. Here, as in Clark's work, the arrangement of the personal mementoes is significant, offering the viewer an appreciation of the importance of personal items. Ryley's work creates a biography of the current owner, while simultaneously allowing the viewer to trace the narratives of the previous inhabitants through images of spaces and architectural details. Discussing the project, curator Camilla Brown notes:

Figure 4: Image from the series *Villa Mona* (2006), by Marjolaine Ryley, taken from,

http://www.marjolaineryley.co.uk/

The series of photographs here create a portrait of the house and its current and previous occupants, quietly observing the traces of human presence - the residues of past lives - that have accrued there. (Brown, 2006)

Ryley's photographs reflect (perhaps unknowingly) Benjamin's idea of the historical materialist, using the objects to chart the development and history of the house. Through her photographic images, Ryley explores the remnants of memories from different periods of the house, effectively considering the delineation of history through a spatial exploration and visualising one of the key ideas embedded in the Literature Review: Space as Framework for a Narrative Enquiry (page 19). Ryley's methodology is to create dialogues between images, juxtaposing photographs, in pairs and grids to create connections between the past and present. Applying this method to each of her projects, the temporality of domestic space is apparent in all her projects. In Noon, she photographs the domestic interiors of her female relatives. These images compare and contrast the houses of her family, exploring the different spaces of her relations. The series *Résidence Astral* investigates her grandmother's third floor apartment in Brussels. Finally her most recent work *Growing Up in the New Age*, explores the counterculture of a commune living in southern France. In each of these separate but related series, Ryley uses the same intertextual approach to documenting domestic space and creating relationships between images that allows the viewer to imagine narratives through the images' interrelationship with each other. Further to this, each set of images includes the residues that are left within domestic space by those who have resided in the space, showing both a personal approach to history/memory that is specific to the artist but relevant in a broader context. Ryley's approach to juxtaposition and the choice of images that she produces has had significant influence on my own practice. Yet, my own methodological approach purposefully uses Sensory Ethnography to examine the domestic space, which directs my observations of collecting rooms to significant objects that have meaning for the collectors I am representing. Further to this, like the work of Edmund Clark, the personal narratives are poetically implied through Ryley's use of the visual, as opposed to using interview based research that allows the participants to voice their own ideas and stories.

Figure 5: Image from the installation, *The Places We Live,* by Jonas Bendiksen, taken from,

http://www.theplaceswelive.com/

The last photographer I would like to draw on for this section is Magnum agency photographer Jonas Bendiksen who also examines notions of autotopographical displays of objects within the home. In his installation, *The Places We Live* (2008), he explores the object displays in houses situated in slums of India, Kenya, Venezuela and Indonesia (Figure 5). Using four distinct sites, he investigates the variety of housing in impoverished areas from around the world, showing how people from different geographical and political backgrounds imbue domestic space with meaning by using objects. Within different houses, certain objects become important due to the way that they are displayed and where they are placed. For example where houses have a television, it is often placed in the middle of the room decorated with fabric, or placed on a decorative material showing its importance as a valuable object to the household. Bendiksen's panoramic photographs cleverly show the hierarchy of objects in each house, allowing viewers to see what items are significant or have more status in the different family homes he documents.

These photographs are shown projected onto the walls of life-sized rooms, depicting the interiors of the slums. This manner of exhibiting the images resonates with Michel Foucault's paper on heterotopia, which was developed from his lecture *Of Other Spaces* (1967). In this paper Foucault uses cinemas and theatres to represent a location where incompatible narratives come together enacted in one space. Mirroring Benjamin's writing, Foucault notes that theatres are dislocated from temporality, creating juxtapositions of events, locations and time. Collecting rooms are like memory theatres: sites that diminish time, creating a space where the chaotic memories of the collector are represented in the inanimate objects on display. In recognising heterotopias' ability to draw several fragmented sights together, Foucault states:

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus, it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another. (Foucault, 2009 p. 65)

Bendiksen's large static images engage the viewer immersively on four sides, creating a sense of being physically present within the image. As the viewer remains in the space, the images change to a new location, again transforming the sense of place. In this installation, Bendiksen creates work that displaces the viewer to different locations as in Foucault's notion of the theatre. This is mirrored by the photographs, which are changed from two-dimensional images into an all-encompassing three-dimensional experience within the exhibition. It is this sudden transition from one image to another that makes the viewer become aware of the static photograph. As such, the traditional association of photography as a medium changes,when presented alongside other media. In presenting the work as an installation, Bendiksen creates an immersive space that offers the audience a different kind of sensory experience to seeing photographs on a gallery wall. Writing on the transformative qualities of art installations, photography theorist Helen Westgeest suggests that the context in which an artwork is viewed can affect its interpretation. Her book *Take Place: Photography and place from*

multiple perspectives (2009) particularly reflects on the transformation of the photograph in an installation context. She asserts:

> Only through their physical presence spectators can observe and experience not just the complex heterotopia-like concept of place – fragmented, real and unreal, neither here not there, social space and the subversion of it – but also place as a process of transformation in the photographs, as produced by the multimedia context. (Westgeest and Crow, 2009 p. 118)

Extending Westgeest's idea that an audience's perceptions of a medium are affected by context, I propose that integrating photography and sound together can transform the traditionally associated attributes of the separate media. This idea can also be evidenced in the work of Bendiksen, as the still photographic images are accompanied by fragmented interviews made with the inhabitants of the interiors that are being projected. These dynamic descriptions work together with the photographs, animating them, possibly altering the viewer's perception of the static images.

2.02 Photography and Sound

This next section examines artworks that have had important influence on my research through their exploration of still photography and sound. In particular, the films by John Smith (*Worst Case Scenario*; 2001 – 2003), Chris Marker (*La Jetée*; 1962) and John Wynne and Tim Wainwright (*Transplant*; 2008) reveal different but related attributes that arise from

Figure 6: Still from film *Transplant,* by John Wynne and Tim Wainwright, taken from,

http://www.timwainwright.com/Transplant

combining photography with sound and which have had an effect on my own practice. The most recent of these explorative films is John Wynne and Tim Wainwright's film, *Transplant* (2008), which uses interviews and diegetic sound created from working with heart and lung transplant patients from Harefield Hospital (Figure 6). The film merges different narrative accounts of patients' experiences with sounds taken from the hospital machines and operating equipment. The film also combines photographs of fragmented views of the equipment, portraits of the patients and representations of hospital spaces. These images fade in and out of white backgrounds, offering the viewer a sense of lucidness. The success of this particular piece lies with the combination of images and sound, which heightens tension, conveying sensitive narratives, and creates a sense of experience that the imagery alone would not transmit. In his essay on the project, *Depths and Clamour; inside and outside* (2008) David Toop articulates:

> Vanishing, into illness and transformation (either through transplant or death, or a vanishing into the medical environment) is a central issue of the work: the sound work, the voices, the photographs. The disorientating impression of envelopment in a confused web of sound is very strong, but this is repeatedly pulled back to specifics by recordings of the patients themselves. Feelings of fragility are pervasive and clearly audible in these bedside recordings: every tremor and lapse; the halting and wheezing of breath; the breaks in which speech is overwhelmed by tears; the pain of what is said; the grain of how it is said. (Toop, 2008)

Sound and imagery within *Transplant* create an engaging account, which transcends the separate fragments, producing an artwork that is richer than sound or image alone. Each contributing medium creates a new layer to the film that together strengthens the experiential notion of the narratives told by the participants. Yet, the intertextual relationship between sound and image is a difficult balance to achieve and needs to be explored more comprehensively. Recognising that the relationship between visual and sonic art is complex, Professor in Music, Technology and Innovation, Simon Emmerson encourages exploration. In his article *Aural Landscape: Musical space*, Emmerson suggests:

> Having been separated for at least two thousand years, the arts of sight and sound cannot arbitrarily be flung together again. I am suggesting that sound has the power to create its own visual response in – one, which is sometimes not accounted for by visual artists – a sense of place, of aural, landscape. For a real relationship to develop there is a need for each artist in a collaboration to understand the inherent 'crossover' nature of each art independently: the visual as suggested by the aural alone and vice versa. This will involve experimenting and working together with mutual respect, accentuating the craft of the work over the romantic egotism of its 'art'. (Emmerson, 1998 p. 139)

I consider Emmerson's comments to be an important pointer in producing work that combines visual and sound material. By infusing the two media, intertextual qualities can add richness to narratives by offering a multi sensory interpretation of the subject, as they do in the work of Wynne and Wainwright. The connection between the two media can bring new connotations and sensations that independently may not be achievable. I would suggest that using these media in a dialogical way, rather than investigating their direct relationship,

can create tensions and experiences that allow the viewer an opportunity to re-evaluate their understanding of the circumstances being presented.

This transformation of the static image through its association with sound is also a feature of John Smith's film *Worst Case Scenario*, which is composed entirely of still photographs taken from a hotel in Vienna. Smith's images of the street and people passing are montaged together, creating intertextual work that allows the audience to imagine possible accidents. Further to this, the photographs are animated by the soundtrack that amalgamates ambient sound into a composed score that combines and contrasts with the images being shown on screen. In Mark Webber's introduction to the film he writes:

> Constructed from hundreds of still images, it presents situations in a stilted motion, often with sinister undertones. Through this technique we're made aware of out intrinsic capacity for creating continuity, and fragments of narrative, from potentially (no doubt actually) unconnected events. (Webber 2003)

The strength of Smith's film is not necessarily to be found in the images presented on screen, but in the imagination of the viewer, brought into focus by connecting the individual images and sounds. In effect the images and sound transcend their literal limitations and allow the viewer to envision an idea that is implied rather than evidenced in the film. Smith's work in particular demonstrates the power of allowing the viewer to connect ideas through the juxtaposition of sound and image. It is this same method of intertextuality that underpins Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* (1962). Constructed almost exclusively of still photographs, the story is animated by the use of diegetic sound and a narrative told via a voiceover. The science fiction story tells a circular narrative that brings together events from the past, present and future. In particular, the voiceover of narrator and the use of ambient sound together create movement in the film, producing an intertextual experience that transforms the still images. This enables the viewer to connect separate images and produce a narrative from the order in which the photographs are sequenced.

The photograph is commonly viewed as a static image that acts as a record of the past, capturing light in a single frame, a snapshot of a moment. The instant the frame is exposed, the photograph is indexical to something that has already taken place (Sontag, 1977; Barthes, 1982). This connection makes it closely connected to memory, an understanding of which has been explored in the writing of several photography theorists, most notably Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag. Photographs (both digital and analogue) are aide memoires, they act as cues that allow people to recall the past (Sontag, 1977; Barthes 1982). Yet in combining the images within a sequence Marker unburdens the static image from the weight of witness, allowing it to transcend the traditional associations of time. Discussing the transformation of photography in the film *La Jetée*, film theorist Janet Harbord writes:

> Whilst there are demands made on photographs to serve the written text, to be illustrative or evidential, photographs ultimately float free of

these impositions. They belong neither to a time nor a place, but to a way of imagining and making the world as a scene, a range of different textures, memories and fantasises that resist temporal classification… The imposition of a past, present and future tense of a range of disparate photographs reveals two things: that the photograph will lend itself to the spoken word and obey an order, and also that the photograph is pliable, lending itself to many different positions in many stories without belonging to any one. (Harbord, 2009 p. 26)

This transformation of the temporal associations of the photograph is pertinent within my own research, as my practice examines melding the past, present and future within the space of the collecting room. By exploring the transformation of the photograph within a mixed media context, my practice investigates how photographic images can be structured into a narrative that dissolves the inscription of the past and allows the viewer to imagine the past, present or future. Further to this, the photograph is re-shaped by the context of the spoken word, allowing the photography to transform or be transformed within a narrative context. This idea is a significant factor within the creative outputs produced from my research, where I aim to make visible different temporalities found within the context of the collecting room. Further to this, *La Jetée* does something else extraordinary; it allows the viewer to consider photography through the context of film, allowing us to re-evaluate media. In order to discuss this in more detail, the difference between the media must be examined first. In his book *Photography and Cinema* (2008), art theorist David Campany considers the differences and similarities between the two media at length. But in a summary of the different qualities of each medium he writes:

> [The] photograph belongs inextricably to the past, while film always seems to unfold in the present tense as we watch. Film is virtual, immaterial projection, while the photograph is a fixed image and a fixed object. (Campany, 2008 p.11)

This is echoed in photography theorist, David Green's observation that the static nature of the photograph creates distance, a separation from time and its engagements that allow a sense of reflection and memory. The temporal qualities offered to us by film have a sense of unfolding that relay a sense of experience, rather than static moments. In his book, *Stillness and Time: Photography and the moving image* (2006) Green writes:

> Film overcomes this limitation and presents us with an impression of reality, which is so much more vivid. The movie spectator is absorbed, not by a has-been-there, but the sense of there it is. And the reason that film is able to convince us of the actual presence of something… We might assume that, rather as the photograph can only offer a trace of what has been, so the film can only be a trace of a past motion, nonetheless the spectator always sees movement as being present. (Green, 2006 p. 16)

Green argues that film gives an audience a notion of a moment happening, offering the viewer imagery with a sense of the present as opposed to the past. This notion however is an illusion, as film, like photography, is a pre-recorded moment of something that has already

occurred. Green suggests that because film demonstrates movement, the audience is deceived into believing that the events of the film are happening in real time (Green, 2006). As I have already asserted, the film *La Jetée* challenges these preconceptions through presenting still photographs projected as film. As the viewer watches the film, they are aware of the photographic stasis of the images that are being presented. In this process the viewer is aware of the motionless nature of the photograph but may question the temporal shift that prevents the moment from being fixed. The photographs begin to produce action, blurring the relationship between stillness and movement in this alternative method of presentation. Discussing this transformation Harbord writes:

> The still photograph evokes remembrance, the memory of this place on this day. But the movement across its still surface creates an anxiety about what we are moving towards. This is not a film that is composed of still images, where both cinema and photography remain distinct. This is a film that finds qualities of movement and stillness in each, that braids together remembering and forgetting, that points us in conflicting directions. (Harbord, 2009 p. 2)

By showing still images in the manner in which film is normally viewed, the viewer begins to make connections between the media and question each medium's traditional associations. Yet these shifting boundaries are not only revealed in *La Jetée*, they are present in the extremes of the film. The viewer is also reminded of the photographic image when moving image is montaged within film. Campany asserts:

> Montage sees the photograph as a partial fragment, as we have seen. The long take sees the photograph as a unified whole. The shorter a film's shot the more like a photograph it gets, until one ends up with a single frame. The longer the shot the more like a photograph it gets too, the continuous 'stare' of the lens giving us a moving picture. (Campany, 2008 p.36)

While photography has been associated with permanence and memory, film has been traditionally defined by duration. When viewing a film the audience will often surrender themselves to duration expecting to be engaged for a prescribed amount of time. Yet, within film, the director or artist can manipulate temporality by stretching time, constricting it, cutting it or presenting stillness. While time can be shaped at the hands of the filmmaker, cinema was generally concerned with movement, until Andy Warhol began making films that were about duration, with little happening on screen. The first of these, *Sleep* (1963) is an observation of John Giorno while he is asleep, more akin to a static image than the narrative sequences that popularised cinema previously. Warhol continued to investigate temporality and duration through many of his other films such as *Eat* (1964), *Blow Job* (1964) and *Empire* (1964). This new approach to cinema and film making, gained influence, with film makers taking a slower more deliberate look at the world. David Campany proposes that these changes were brought about as a reaction to the saturation of popular culture. Campany writes:

> The 'society of the spectacle' diagnosed by Guy Debord in 1967 but intimated much earlier, relied upon the breathless turnover of popular

culture with [its] ephemeral advertising, commodified news and droning television. Speed and montage were degenerating from a promise of mass mobilisation and mass distraction. The accelerated image world began to feel dehumanizing, repetitive and monotonous. In this context slowness, the deliberate refusal of speed, became central in vanguard art and culture and we can see this change of pace both in photography and film. (Campany, 2008 p.36)

This change is evident in many mainstream films by Stanley Kubrick, Wim Wenders, Ingmar Bergman, Chantal Akerman, Roberto Rossellini and Terence Davies, all of whom have used slow long takes and tracking shots within their work. This approach has also been influential to fine art filmmakers such as Patrick Keiller, John Smith, Tacita Dean, Zarina Bhimji, Suki Chan and Fiona Tan, who all have developed a practice that emerges out of documentary film.

2.03 Documentary Film and Fine Art Practice

Before discussing the fine art filmmakers who have had influence over my research, this section examines the progression of documentary film and how artist films have materialised from the this particular genre of filmmaking. Documentary film is often described as telling a narrative that tries to convey something about real life (Ellis and McLane 2005). Generally, documentary film can be characterised and differentiated from fictional film by its investigation into specific subjects, and its sense of purpose or viewpoint. In essence documentary film aims to inform audiences about a particular topic, drawing from aspects of real life as a resource to tell a narrative. While documentary film aims to represent factual content, it is worth noting that as with all other art forms, it has a particular standpoint that is controlled by the artist or filmmaker. One instance is Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922), often considered to be the first documentary film produced, which aims to raise audiences awareness of the different cultures of the Inuit people from North America. However, ever since the early film recordings made at Edison's studio, moving image has been used to record real life events. For example the Lumière brothers recorded scenic views such as the Eiffel Tower and Moscow for their news based films showing newsworthy events like ceremonies and visiting dignitaries. Yet, *Nanook of the North*, was the first film that fully explored the idea of documentary and like many of Flaherty's films draws attention to the customs and cultural differences of the subjects being represented. In *Moana* (1926) he examined Samoan customs, while *Man of Aran* (1934) looked at the hardships of life on the Aran islands in Ireland. Although these films are classed as documentary, they were heavily staged, primarily due to the limitations of technology and were often produced with these concerns in mind. It is this artifice that has led to claims that documentary film is a process of manipulation by the filmmaker. This idea that documentary form is shaped by the artist making the film was defined by pioneering documentary filmmaker John Grierson when he called documentary, 'the creative treatment of actuality'. His definition demonstrates the idea that documentary film is not a transparent process but is manipulated by the filmmaker to reveal their ideas and perspectives on the subject they are representing.

Influenced by Flaherty, John Grierson made his first and only documentary film *Drifters* (1928), which examined the herring fishing industry in the North Sea. However, this one film shows the contrast with Flaherty's films, which were designed to expose less well-known cultures and places, whereas Grierson wanted to inform people about industrialised society. Grierson saw documentary film as a way of educating people and as an opportunity to raise awareness about issues or ideas. Initially an employee of the Empire Marketing Board and later a member of General Post Office Film Unit, Grierson enthusiastically promoted film as an educational tool which could promote social change. Encouraged by Grierson, British documentary filmakers produced over a hundred films in a ten year period from 1929 to 1939. The highlights from this period of documentary film include *Night Mail* (1936), which was directed by Basil Wright and Harry Watt and *Coal Face* (1936) directed by Alberto Cavalcanti. Both of these films explored industrial employment, *Night Mail* looking at how the post was delivered by rail and *Coal Face* documenting work in mines. Together these films showed a creative approach to documentary, featuring poems by W.H. Auden and musical scores composed by Benjamin Britten. At this time, English documentary film was well known for its creative use of sound, using complex scores and narrated information that was informative and engaging. These films were noted for their well-composed images and poetic sense of Great Britain, but as the Second World War approached, British films would become more journalistic and would report on growing sociological issues.

In contrast to the more progressively political topics that British documentary film covered, American Documentary of the period was, from the outset, politically charged, examining poverty and unemployment brought about during the Depression. Films were produced by government bodies such as the Farm Security Administration and were used to raise awareness of the drought that had caused the Dust Bowl in the Southwest of America and the plea for flood control. These films such as *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), *The River* (1937) and *The Land* (1941) deliberately moved away from the educational stance that was made popular by Grierson and the British documentary filmmakers, employing well regarded photographers such as Paul Strand and Ralph Steiner, in order to create epically beautiful moving scenes that were used to raise money and support for these political concerns. Essentially the documentary films made in America were more romantic and poetic, due to their appeals for support, while the British films were educational, primarily vehicles for informing the public (Ellis and McLane 2005).

After the films of the 1930s, documentary film concentrated on the Second World War and its repercussions, educating audiences about the upheavals and news events that were taking place. Furthermore, this period saw a great increase in audience numbers, due to interest in current affairs documentary film and its related education film counterparts. This prompted greater investment in film production, which led to an increase in the number of documentary films being produced. After this peak

in viewing numbers during the war and its subsequent aftermath, documentary film became conservative, producing films that were almost complacent in their subject matter. Whereas film previously concentrated on social issues that were more general, the films of this period began to centre on individuals (Ellis and McLane 2005). For example, Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948), Sidney Meyers', *The Quiet One* (1948), and Fred Zinnemann's *Benjy* (1951) all featured a central individual character, but used scenes that were fictionalised to create entertainment value. This interest in individuals would become a characteristic that continues to develop within documentary filmmaking.

During the 1950s, technology began to improve and the technological restrictions that dictated film locations began to dissipate. In a reaction to the conservatism of the time a group of filmmakers began to make social realist films that represented working class subjects as opposed to the more mainstream themes that were represented in fictional film. Films like Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson's *Momma Don't Allow* (1955), Lindsay Anderson's *O Dreamland* (1953) and *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957), explored waged people at leisure and at work. Investigating the world outside the conventions of the studio, their social documentaries are much more visually experimental, using hand held cameras to produce a candid aesthetic, demonstrating a move away from the informative films that had been the staple of UK documentary film until this point in time. They aim to inspire emotion in the viewer as opposed to educating the public. This trend in the opening up of documentary possibilities continued as technology continued to improve, with the invention of 16mm film and synchronised sound. Documentary film broke with the traditions of planning, scripting and staging scenes and began to focus on ordinary life. This new approach to documentary film was called Cinéma-Vérité in France and Direct Cinema in America and sustained an interest in the narratives of individuals. These films looked at exceptional stories that effected participants such as Robert Drew's film *Primary* (1960), which followed the election of John F. Kennedy in the Wisconsin Primary election; Drew Associates film *The Chair* (1962) featuring footage of Paul Crump's last five days on death row and Richard Leacock's *Happy Mother's Day* (1963) exploring the birth of quintuplets. Other directors began to examine institutions that were not accessible prior to these technological advances: Canadian Filmmaker Fred Wiseman investigated different institutions such as a mental asylum (*Titicut Follies*, 1967), a hospital (*Hospital*,1970) and a zoo, (*Primate*, 1974).

Simultaneously, French filmmaker Chris Marker began making his own unique form of documentary films, that brought together different media to produce films that were politically charged and poetic, exploring a range of themes from socialism (*Le Joli Mai*, 1963), colonialism (*Statues Also Die*, 1953) and most notably countries that are undergoing political change (*Sunday in Peking*, 1955; *Letter from Siberia*, 1958; *Description of a struggle*; 1960; *Cuba Si*, 1961). Working intertextually Marker combined interviews, found footage, photography, moving images and text to make salient

films that caused audiences to think about the ideas he aimed to communicate. For example, in the film *Sunday in Peking*, Marker brought together images and text in a revolutionary form of montage that compared footage from China with material shot in Europe. This approach to documentary would be influential on new generations of filmmakers, demonstrating an experimental approach to documentary that expanded over fifty years of filmmaking.

Through the mid 1960s and into the 1970s documentary filmmaking continued to explore the political ideas that emerged in the previous decade. Now film was used to explore ideas of race, sexuality, gender, youth culture and to protest against the Vietnam War. Documentary film was still relatively expensive and required a good technical knowledge of cameras, lighting, editing and sound, but was becoming an outlet for people to discuss social issues on a much broader scale. This allowed more individual voices to come to the fore, but at the same time it allowed more creativity and experimental filmmaking. Furthermore, this made film as a medium more readily available to different artists within the field of fine art, increasing its popularity as a medium with artists such as the aforementioned Andy Warhol. Another example is the avant-garde filmmaker John Smith, who practices as a fine artist but has used documentary aspects within his films. His film *The Girl Chewing Gum* (1976) uses documentary footage of everyday life in Hackney, however a narrator gives directions to the people being filmed. Yet in Smith's other films he uses different ideas formed from documentary film, in order to challenge viewer's expectations of film. In particular his later films *Blight* (1994 – 1996), *Flag Mountain* (2010) and the film series *Hotel Diaries* (2001 – 2007) all explore documentary film as a form of communication, using camera formats and film footage to enable the viewer to question what is being shown on screen. Importantly though, Smith's work developed out of the more open and individual approaches that were arising in the 1970s, offering him the opportunity to use film to question social and political ideas.

Documentary film would continue to become more widespread with the introduction of video, which was invented in 1956, but not widely available until the 1980s. This development in technology allowed film to be made, shared and accessed more easily. In comparison to film, video was inexpensive and this enabled non-filmmakers the opportunity to make personal film essays. This allowed documentary film to become more intimate and personal, with filmmakers demonstrating clear authorship of the material that they produced. This practice was also adopted by professional filmmakers such as American documentary filmmakers Ross McElwee (*Sherman's March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love In the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation*, 1986; *Something to Do with the Wall*, 1990; *Time Indefinite*, 1993; *Six O'Clock News*, 1997) and John Smith (*Hotel Diaries* 2001 – 2007). This latter film explores political events and emotional responses to them, while documenting the bland hotels in which Smith was staying at the time. His personal narration contrasts with the film footage offering the viewer a sense of unease and displacement during these periods of turmoil.

Over the last twenty years, a profound change has made documentary film possible, both to the filmmaker and the viewer. Advances in technology from VHS to digital have widely extended the potential for making films. This has led to a more diverse approach to documentary film, enabling individuals to express their personal voices and visions and creating an inclusive and nuanced practice that explores the subjects, people and places of postmodern society. Further to this the internet has made documentary material much more available to audiences, who can now stream films at home. This has opened up documentary practices to both filmmakers and audiences alike, placing a fresh emphasis on documentary films made by artists, which are predominantly shown in gallery spaces. This creative practice is heavily influenced by the characteristics of documentary film making, but is a more experimental and innovative approach, often employing intertextual ideas to make comment on the subjects that they explore. While there are numerous filmmakers who have influenced this research, the works of Patrick Keiller, John Smith, Tacita Dean, Zarina Bhimji, Suki Chan and Fiona Tan have particular significance to my own creative practice due to their explorations of time, space and intertextuality. By examining their work in more detail, I aim to demonstrate the context in which my creative practice is situated.

The first filmaker I would like to examine is the artist Tacita Dean, who has produced a series of film portraits examining creative practitioners including Merce Cunningham, Mario Merz, Claes Oldenburg, Julie Mehretu, Leo Steinberg, Cy Twombly and Michael Hamburger. Each of these individual films is a sympathetic and poetic representation of the subject, highlighting their artistic process and creative thinking. For example, in her portrait of Claes Oldenburg, *Manhattan Mouse Museum* (2011), Dean represents Oldenburg's creative process of converting everyday objects into sculpture by filming the artist dusting the objects on display in his studio. Oldenberg is methodological in his cleaning, taking each object from the shelf cleaning it meticulously before sliding along the floor and placing the object in another alcove. The slow film sequences are meditative and almost repetitive, revealing the consideration and attention to detail that the artist invests in each object.

Similarly, in Dean's film about Merce Cunningham, *Craneway Event* (2009), her slow observations of Cunningham reveal the choreographer's quiet yet measured scrutiny of dancers as they perform. Filmed in a factory overlooking the San Francisco Bay, the choreography is danced without music. Instead the soundtrack is moderated by the soft sound of dancers using the protective matting laid down. Filmed in continuous long takes, *Craneway Event* is slow, methodical and evenly paced, which highlights the work of the choreographer and in particular his attention to detail. Slowness is a characteristic of all of the film portraits; frequently the camera remains still focusing on one particular detail. In her interview with curator and writer Hans Ulrich Obrist, Dean says:

> I film with incredibly long takes and I wait. It's extremely expensive, but
> I wait for something to happen within the frame because I don't like
> zooming or panning. I'll wait for that bird to fly through the frame. (Obst
> and Dean 2013)

Reflecting on Dean's film making process, curator Achim Hochdörfer observes:

> [Dean] does not make any auctorial movements, but instead leaves matters up to the situation itself and only seeks to set the frame within which events can be registered. The conceptual benchmarks are set in such a manner that allow for the unpredicted to appear, to find their way into the film, and to develop. In short things are allowed to come to pass. (Hochdörfer 2011)

This open method of filming, encourages reflection on the passing of time, which draws attention to the subject's creative process, but also allows the audience space in which to notice microscopic details by focusing the viewer's attention on the subject for longer than is usual. This extended observation offers the audience a space of reflection that enables reverie and contemplation of the person being portrayed. These slow observations are combined with film sequences of the space in which the artist is working. These beautiful observations offer insight into the interaction between creativity and space, whilst offering the viewer a sense of the individual being portrayed through their interaction and presence within the space. In combining this extended period of observation with sequences revealing the space, Dean's portraits offer insight into the characters that she examines.

Dean begins each project with an extensive period of research, where she examines historical documents and visual references, in order to make connections between the themes she is exploring and her creative ideas. After this investigative period, Dean then selects one aspect of the research and begins to produce a final outcome. In her interviews, Dean notes that often the subject of the film will be at a tangent to the area that was initially researched and that frequently the researched area may not even be evident in the final outcome. For example, after her extensive period of research in to W.G. Seabald, Dean made the film *Michael Hamburger* (2007), who is the poet and translator that Seabald meets in his semi-biographical novel *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). Dean was researching Seabald and East Anglia, when she kept returning to the section where Seabald meets Michael Hamburger. She then managed to meet and interview Hamburger, choosing to make the film about him. Hamburger is a translator and poet who created an expansive orchard nurtured from pips that he had been given of old varieties of apples. The film is another example of Dean's long still shots, focusing on Hamburger's orchard, apple trees, his storage room and the study in which he works. After creating the footage for the films Dean then edits the material to draw out themes and ideas from her material. In Hochdörfer analysis of Dean's films he notes:

> Editing is at the heart of Dean's process, where she makes fundamental decisions that shape the character of the film… She edits alone, working manually on a cutting table, splicing together the images, and one can see the artist's hand in the final result. It is almost as if the tactile nature of the editing process and the physical cuts between the strips of film are visible, in the completed work, for all to see. (Hochdörfer 2011)

In the process of editing, Dean highlights key aspects of the documentary material, creating a response to the subject that reveals insight through the amalgamation of audio and visual

Figure 7: Still from *Michael Hamburger* by Tacita Dean, taken from,

http://www.frithstreetgallery.com

footage. For example, in Dean's film portrait of Michael Hamburger she draws on his life as a poet, using metaphors of the garden and his house to create a haunting film (Figure 7). Working with interview material, she creates a sense of pathos that considers not just the narratives told, but also the things that were left unsaid. In his overview of Dean's film Jeremy Millar examines the layers of information that it communicates. Millar notes:

> Unwilling, perhaps unable, to talk of his past and his migrations, most especially fleeing Nazism in 1933, he talks poignantly, instead, of his apple trees, of where they have come from, and of their careful cross-breeding. Purity is dismissed, and one senses with an awkward pathos that the poet is translating himself. (Millar, 2007)

Dean produces a poetic response to the limited information she has collected, creating a sense of Michael Hamburger through his private orchard, his home and his commentary on apples. I would like to suggest it is Hamburger's sense of place and the personal qualities identified in the interview that enable Dean to do this effectively, creating characterisation through Hamburger's orchard and his discussion of poetry. Dean's ability to create work that communicates a sense of a person through material objects is an important influence on my work. In combining images and narrative sequences, she creates a sensitive portrait of Hamburger, employing a quietness that emphasises tension through the absence of spoken narrative in some of the sequences.

Working with an intuitive methodology, Dean responds to individual ideas and themes that arise out of the documentary material. However, her use of extended observation is evident in all her films, which suggests that this process is a significant part of her creative practice. While producing my own documentary material, I incorporated Dean's practice of extended takes to examine the space and environment of the collecting room. However, my films have been produced from a particular method of working that explores the sensory aspect of the collecting space in conjunction with interpretative analysis of the interview material.

Working with these particular techniques, my approach creates a specific framework for
the films, making the resulting films arguably more methodical and planned than Dean's
intuitive approach.

The intuitive approach to filmmaking used by Dean, is also a fundamental methodology
used by artist Fiona Tan, who uses an intertextual approach to film, employing temporality
to make an audience aware of space. In her films *Disorient* (2009), *Cloud Island* (2010) and
Inventory (2012) Tan combines film sequences with sound, in order to make viewers aware
of different properties of the subjects she explores. In particular, the slow and meditative
film *Cloud Island* (2010), explores space poetically, revealing intimate narratives in a
measured and devised manner. The film studies the Japanese Island, Inujima, which was
a former mining community. Following the collapse of industry on the island, the future
generations have vacated the island to find work. This leaves the ageing population with
little else to do but attend their gardens and houses. Between ordered and well-maintained
houses, plots and gardens are in ruins as the former owners are now deceased, allowing these
former houses to fall in to disrepair.

Measured and nostalgic, this film uses themes of waiting and watching, tradition and values
that, it can be argued, are being lost in the modern world (Figure 8). Observations of the
island, and the life that is to be found there, create an earnest yet prosaic film, weaving
together several narratives of the island's inhabitants. Produced to reveal the unhurried pace
of life and the endless routine of the island, the film uses stillness and movement carefully
to show the passage of time, particularly devoting time to the subjects and the spaces of the
island. Tan's meandering observations are influential on the creative practice produced in
relation to my own research, setting a pace that allows the audience to contemplate space,
human occupation and its temporality.

In *Disorient* (2009), Tan marries readings of Marco Polo's diaries with film sequences
that examine modern day Asia and a visual exploration of the orientalist collecting
room at Rietveld Pavilion, which brings together objects acquired from Far Eastern
countries. This marrying of history (through the museum space) and contemporary

images of Afghanistan, China and Japan produces connections that transcend and dislocate distinctive time periods. A similar approach is used in her installation *Inventory* (2012). Filmed on five different cameras, the work examines John Soane's Museum using a range of different camera formats trained on fragments of objects in the collection. Showing a mixture of fragmented perspectives, some of which are still, others that move slowly, the installation creates juxtapositions through a range of viewpoints. In effect, the work explores notions of originality, copy, repetition as well as motivations for collecting. The work demonstrates the themes within her work of time and place, using the intertextual relationship between these to construct concepts, which the viewer can piece together. The film has a musical soundtrack that is contemplative and melancholy drawing together the screens without using a voiceover or narrative to bring them together.

In her methods for *Disorient* and *Inventory*, Tan brings together film and sound, exploring objects and museum space. Both these films have a direct correlation to the processes and techniques used in my own practice. Like Tan my own practice assembles sequences that combine both still and moving images focused on objects and the space that contains them. Yet Tan demonstrates a wide range of approaches to the different work she produces, suggesting that she works with intuition, rather than using a more systematic approach to constructing the work. Further to this, my work centres on personal narratives, revealing less public narratives than those discovered in the institutions that Tan worked with.

Using a similar method to Tan, artist Suki Chan explores space and temporality using an intertextual approach to filmmaking. In her film *Still Point* (2012), the multimedia artist explores sites of pilgrimage. In depicting these spaces, Chan invites the audience to consider the psychological and physical experience of space, which is imbued with layers of history and cultural significance. Examining sites in Jerusalem, Syria and Northumberland in the UK, the film combines time-lapse images and film sequences that document light changes in these significant and spiritual places. Temporality in the

Figure 9: Still from *Sleep Walk Sleep Talk,* by Suki Chan, taken from,

http://www.sukichan.co.uk/sleepwalk
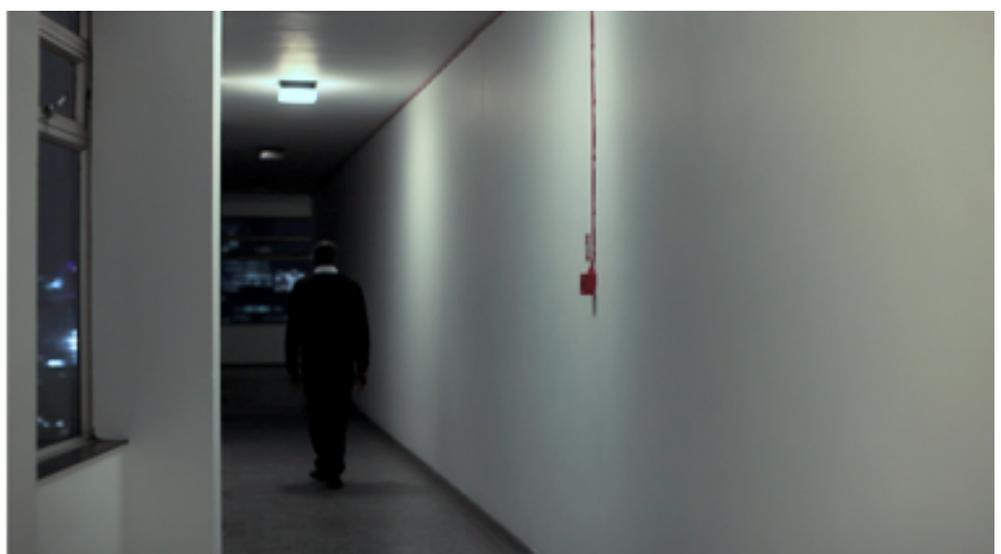
film shifts, using a static camera to show movement, yet during the film's long panning shots the viewer experiences stillness. Discussing her work in an interview with Francesca Brooks, Chan discusses the film and its temporality. Chan says:

> The installations are immersive because one significant intention of my work is to transport the viewer to an elsewhere, one step removed from reality. However, the work is not about escape, the work and its concerns are from and related to reality. Although I might have changed the pacing of the images by using time-lapse techniques to accentuate movements that you would not be able to see in reality, what we see in the films is 'real' – in that it actually happened – physical light really did pass through the optical lens and the recording is consistent with what you see in the work… The camera lens 'sees' the world in a very different way to our eyes and then there is the editing, which of course, is not the way we see the world at all: more like our memory of the world, where the final cut has forgotten all that was removed. (Chan, 2011)

Chan's work considers the meditative qualities of spaces that are connected to spirituality, using the camera and different approaches to media to enable an audience to reconsider these sites. In the process of creating work that combines stillness and movement, she encourages the viewer to think about the dichotomies that arise from these polemic locations. This same approach to oppositions and space is also evident in Chan's work film, *Sleep Walk, Sleep Talk*, which explores a range of activities that people in London use as a form of escape from work and their working life (Figure 9). This busy two-screen film juxtaposes various images of people travelling to and from work with interviews with a range of different people discussing their recreational habits. We see portraits of people using activities as a distraction from the grind of work, creating moments of calm amongst the scenes of rushing traffic. In her artist statement, Chan explains:

> In *Sleep Walk, Sleep Talk*, Chan finds freedom in the marginal flashpoints of the city and in the internal psychological spaces of the conscious and sub-conscious where solace is sought. She mediates between public and private, investigating the underlying social, cultural and political structures. (Chan, 2011)

Using points of difference, Chan creates contrast both in the images that she uses, but also in her combinations of media. For example, in Sleep Walk Sleep Talk, the interviews and narratives about recreation contrast with more frenetic images, as the film tries to emulate a sense of reflection and calm. This intertextual approach of montaging different media, creates a poetic approach to the subjects she explores, allowing viewers to connect ideas and consider the dichotomies presented within her work. In reflecting on her methods of producing work Chan says:

> Much of my process of making art is intuitive though I enjoy looking for patterns of thought. I often ask myself why I am drawn to this and not that? Why do certain things resonate with me more than others? Sometimes, ideas and thoughts that seem to be separate will come together later on as I build up the work. Often, it is the contrast between ideas and materials that allows me to draw attention to it or imbue it with new narratives. (Chan 2011)

Even though Chan describes her process as intuitive, her work explores dualistic ideas, using different media to articulate her ideas. By considering the different connotations and temporality imbued in separate media, Chan creates a method to approach her material that allows her to construct meaning and narrative. In contrast to this technique, my own method considers the material using IPA and Sensory Ethnography. This allows me to construct narratives that concentrate on demonstrating different aspects of the collecting room, creating similar connections to Chan through a more concentrated approach.

Stillness and static images are also a central feature of the work of filmmaker Patrick Keiller, who has produced three different but connected films: *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). Each of these films uses a similar methodology that combines highly composed static film sequences with a fictionalised narrative delivered through a voiceover. Infused with the narrator's dialogue are essayistic observations on politics, history and critical theory, which enrich and inform the main narrative, making a considered commentary on England. Combining this with images of contemporary England, the films bring together the past, present and future of the country, represented through moving stills and a narrative voiceover. Keiller focuses his static lens on the locations, leaving the camera observing sites that relate or demonstrate a relationship to the fictional narrative. This approach to filming becomes like a passive recording, allowing things to happen before the lens, without the constraints of focusing on action. As David Campany suggests, the long but static shots become closer to photography through their duration. Discussing the relationship between photograph and film in Patrick Keiller's work, film theorist Jon Hegglund writes quoting Keiller:

> Keiller, fittingly, describes his own cinematic practice as evolving from an epistemological dialectic between photography and film. "I began to look at places," Keiller writes, "as potential photographs, or better still, film images, and even the still photographs took on the character of film stills. This visual material deliberately depicts places that are nearly or altogether devoid of human presence and activity, but which because of this absence, are suggestive of what could happen, or what might have happened". The "still film" or " photographic shot," as Keiller describes it, opens up a space for the projection of narrative; where a photograph would communicate a certain impenetrability— the image is closed to movement and change— the " photographic shot" draws close attention to any and all movement. The image thus quivers with the suggestion of activity, possible narratives that might unfold within the slumbering stasis of the shot. (Hegglund 2013)

Keiller directs his camera towards sites that would normally be used as locations for action, yet these scenes merely show spaces in which the viewer can imagine the story taking place. The viewer becomes immersed in spaces that orientate the narrative, without them contributing to or taking the traditional role of locations in film. This allows the viewer a space to imagine, to consider the locations and create their own connection to the voiceover accompaniment. Hegglund continues:

On the other hand, the presence of the narrative voiceover and the narrator's episodic recounting of his and Robinson's travels—as meandering and uneventful as they seem to be—presses down just enough to keep the visual register of the film as background, as the empty stage onto which we imaginatively project the actions of the narrator and Robinson. This peculiar effect of a space that quivers between figure and ground makes us evermore conscious of space and spatiality. (Hegglund 2013)

The sound design in Keiler's films is minimal, combining the narrated story and ambient sounds that relate to the film sequences being presented on screen. While the more obvious use of sound is the voiceover, the complete soundtrack includes noises that could be likened to background. However within the work, the ambient sound is given equal weighting to the voiceover, placing significant emphasis on these environmental sounds. In doing this, the noises produced from the locations featured in the films come clearly into the consciousness of viewer. In his discussion of ambient sound in film, sound theorist Michel Chion writes:

[Ambient] sound that envelopes a scene and inhabits its space, without raising the question of identification or visual embodiment of its source: birds singing, church bells ringing. We might also call them territory sounds, because they serve to identify a particular locale through their pervasive and continuous presence. (Chion 1994 p. 75)

Sound, differs from visual media as it is regarded to be more immersive (LaBelle, 2006; Crook, 2012). While the immediate presence of sound may not be consciously noticed, it affects the viewer and creates sensory based memory that can work as an additional text within an artwork. Yet sound can be difficult to describe, as artist and writer Brandon LaBelle (2006), claims in his book *Background Noise: Perspectives on sound art*. LaBelle writes:

Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. It seemingly eludes definition, while having profound effect. (LaBelle, 2006 p. 6)

This all encompassing sense has qualities that are immediate, affecting the viewer and offering them an experience that the visual cannot. The line of vision is restricted in visual media, such as film and photography; the image is directed by the artist or photographer to reveal what he or she chooses to show. Sound, however, surrounds the viewer, creating atmosphere, which is evocative and inescapable, sometimes operating on a subconscious level.

With this self-conscious environmentalizing of sound, the film's meaning cannot be fully separated from its sensory existence; that is, sound, as a medium that exceeds the strict limits of the visual frame, immersing the viewer in an environment that cannot simply be detached from the embodied experience of film as a transparent signifier of events happening onscreen. It is precisely this interplay between the soundtrack and the image that advances the dynamic of ambient narrative in *Robinson in Space*. (Hegglund 2013)

In effect, Keiller's films draw together the two sensory fields of vision and sound, using them to intersect but tell slightly different narratives. Combined, these two media produce a dialogue that can be linked or entwined by the viewer. This interplay between images and sound breaks the medium specificity of sound and film, creating an intertextual relationship between the two. In my own creative practice, I bring together images and sound to inflect the viewer's perception of the collecting rooms I investigate. Deliberately selecting images that either relate to or contrast with the words that are being recounted by the collector. Further to this, the static approach to filming that is important within Keiller's work is an important approach to representing the collecting rooms in this research. However, my practice combines photography and moving image, examining temporality through the media selected in the representation of the spaces I investigate. Keiller's moving image sequences are essentially about stasis, but I have combined static and moving images to enable and encourage audiences to think about time in relation to the collecting room.

Sound is also an integral component in the films of artist Zarina Bhimji who uses sound and images to produce political and emotional investigations into place. Generally, her films *Out of the Blue* (2002) *Waiting* (2007) and *Yellow Patch* (2011) explore the effects of diasporic migration and more specifically the traces of colonialism. The films are pieced together from landscapes and atmospheric details of decaying buildings that hint at the past. Particularly, in *Yellow Patch*, which explores the history of migration paths from Africa to India, the film sequences examine the traces of the colonial past and how this historical background affects the present. Her work considers the traces of history in buildings, revealing the multifaceted narratives that are layered in the building's past (Figure 10).

Collocated with these beautiful and atmospheric visuals, the film has a complex soundtrack that brings together singing, chanting, birdsong, ambient noises of wind and sea, and domestic sounds such as typewriters and washing machines. Bhimji creates a soundtrack that brings together ambient sound and music, creating an alternative layer

Figure 10: Still from film *Yellow Patch* by Zarina Bhimji , taken from,

http://www.zarinabhimji.com/

of narrative that entwines with her film sequences. In the catalogue for Bhimji's show at the Whitechapel Gallery, writer TJ Demos asserts:

> In Yellow Patch, the focus on the materiality of specific locations (for example the focus on architectural details, atmospheric conditions and interior spaces) comes without information that might otherwise tell us what we are looking at. Similarly disjuctive is the aforementioned soundtrack to Bhimji's films, which characteristically offers a montage of ambient sounds, such as whispering voices, the buzzing of insects, peacock calls and distant human cries, all suggestively metaphorical and emotionally provocative, but without interpretative direction or specific contextualisation. Slow-paced and meditative, the camera glides through locations, as if making a ghostly visitation to places haunted by unresolved past experiences. (Demos 2012 p.13)

Bhimji's methodology is developed out of in-depth research, constructing connections between locations, history and the narratives that she aims to tell. Using this insight she begins to create a series of ideas that will eventually build up to make the film. TJ Demos continues:

> Her research is extensive, typically involving significant time spent in libraries reviewing historical documents and scholarship regarding the periods and places that her projects explore, as well as site visits, which then lead to her construction of treatments and storyboards (including storyboards for the audio track), and finally the production of her films. For this reason, it is all the more noteworthy that she withholds this historical research from the actual films. (Demos 2012 p.15)

In a conversation with Achim Borchardt-Hume and Kathleen Bühler, Bhimji disccuses how the research then enables her to formulate ideas and think about the resolutions that might be made from her extensive investigations. Bhimji says:

> Research gives me time to think about ideas of gestures, shapes and light. After this process, a structure for the work develops. I search instinctively for how to form a narrative through aesthetics. The process is like having a toolbox to carefully examine sounds, light, fictional possibilities and what I think of as camera presence. (Bhimji 2012 p.33)

After producing and editing the visual footage of the film, Bhimji, then develops the soundtrack separately. She pieces together a number of different recordings made whilst on location, intuitively bringing them together for the soundtrack. Bhimji continues:

> I recorded mosquitos without knowing why, just because the sound they made was beautiful. When you hear it really loud, it is like a musical score. By removing a particular sound from its context and taking it elsewhere it almost becomes an inverted sculpture. (Bhimji 2012 p.42)

However, Bhimji's practice uses complex combinations of sounds, which are not just ambient recordings of the places that we see, but additional layers of sound that she has woven into the piece, and which haunt the film's narrative. The sensual immediacy of the audio sends the viewer back and forth to different times, allowing the audience to trace the narratives inherent in the different locations. Bhimji's political investigations hint at the

different emotions that are layered into the colonial history of the places she investigates and brings back to life through the soundtrack. Her film effectively conveys the past and present through the tiers of sensual material that she works with. In particular, her sympathetic response to space and its history creates an evocative relationship between sound and image. It is this suggestive connection between sound and image that underpins my own creative practice, combining images with an independent soundtrack, allowing them to intersect and work together to create meaning for the viewer.

Although Bhimji's approach to filmmaking is produced from a process of extensive research, her selection of footage and sounds is formed instinctively, rather than using a more formal methodological approach. In my own practice, I have devised a method for investigating the spaces that I explore, which uses aspects of Sensory Ethnography and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in order to channel my investigation towards ideas and objects that are particularly significant to the participants being portrayed. This difference is also observable in the approach to subjects: while Bhimji explores non-specific ideas related to diaspora, my own research centres on the testament of individuals and their personal experiences, aiming to reveal the personal experience of owning a collecting room.

2.04 Film in the Gallery Context

As I stated above, within contemporary culture the way that films are being watched is changing: viewing films and sequences has become a much more fragmented process, viewers will watch multiple screens and will engage with film on a number of different devices such as computers and phones on a continual basis. This fragmented process has enabled people to be empowered to piece together ideas from fragments to create meaning. This process is also present in seeing film in the gallery context. In an installation, viewers can reflect on space and time, enabling them to creatively think about film in a less linear fashion. Considering the changes that film undergoes when shown within the gallery, filmmaker and academic Babette Mangolte writes:

> The linkage between space and time is key to the movie theatre but it disappears when you put film in the white cube of the gallery space with an audience who is passing by, not knowing the point at which they are entering the unfolding narrative. I use the word narrative here in its metaphorical sense of structuring an order and synchronicity of image and sound, the intent of which is to communicate the film's meaning. (Mangolte 2013 p. 187)

Gallery spaces allow the audience full control of their interaction with film, choosing what to watch and how long to give their attention to the screens. This places emphasis on the sound, as this becomes a key feature in attracting viewers' attention to the film, and encourages them to spend time watching. Further to this, as sound is immersive it can continue to engage an audience once they have disengaged with the screen. Yet, as the viewer is in control of the duration of time that they spend with the film, linear narratives become arguably less effective as the audience may enter the space near the end of a sequence or may not watch the film for its entire length. By extension therefore, films

shown within exhibitions and installations can be stronger if they are assembled from fragments, allowing the viewer to interpret the material that is being presented to them. In producing films that are intertextual, the artist or filmmaker places the interpretation in the hands of the audience, asking them to connect the material through their own imagination.

> The most fundamental difference between experiencing a film in a theatre and in a gallery space is the viewers ability to make choices: to control the time spent looking at the work, to engage with multiple images about the same work at any given time, and to select the moment when to become engaged or disengaged. The artist- filmmaker creates an architectural space that guides the viewer towards a specific relationship, either visual or aural, to privilege one over the other. In an installation, the time of the film is open ended, and it is assumed that the viewer is not looking at the totality of the work but just picking and choosing. Thus the viewer creates his or her own version of what the work signifies. In a multicultural context the installation format encourages personal self reflexivity and recognises cultural displacement. (Mangolte 2013 p. 197)

My own artworks develop this idea, asking audiences to question their concepts of space by connecting their own experiences to the material that is presented. They aim to use ideas of intertextuality to allow viewers to create their own interpretations of the personal spaces presented. The re-presentations juxtapose different narratives that are coloured by the viewer's personal experiences, aiming to create artworks that communicate the poetics of space. This intertextual approach is well articulated in Helen Westgeest's review of Claire Bishop's writing on art installations. She asserts:

> An installation calls for the presence of a self aware viewing subject precisely in order to subject him/her to the process of fragmentation, which according to poststructuralist theory marks the postmodern, intrinsically dislocated and divided individual, at odds with the self. (Westgeest and Crow, 2009 p. 113)

All five of the final case study outcomes produced from my research, re-present their findings, making new narratives from my investigations into collecting rooms. Although each film is produced using my methodology, every space featured herein is individual and the motivations and experiences that underpin it are unique. Responding to this, each case study uses a slightly different method and combination of media to re-present the collecting room. Constructed to convey my analytical findings of the space, the artworks re-present the material used in this analysis, aiming to communicate my understanding of the motivations, satisfactions and frustrations that arise from each particular collecting room.

3.00 Collecting Rooms: Methodology

In this research, practice and theory are symbiotic, each inflecting the progress of the other. This means that at some points the investigation was led by theoretical arguments, while at other times, the practice shaped the enquiry. This was particularly evident during the case studies, where I responded to the oral testimony by examining theories that related to the participants' interviews. In turn this would highlight other perspectives on collecting, which were then included in the practical outcomes.

Mapping out the development of the enquiry, this chapter shows how the methods used have been adapted and developed to enhance both the practical and theoretical components. The theory and practice come together to shape a new methodology that unifies the observational research (through close attention to imagery and sound) with analytical examination of the experience of owning a collecting room. Charting the progress of the research communicates the journey that my investigation has undergone, with every stage adding some crucial element to the outcomes of the project. This section begins by relaying how the participants were approached and selected to take part in this research.

3.01 Recruiting, Selecting and Anonymising Participants

The participants for this research were found through internet-forums discussing the topics of collecting and collections. On many internet sites about collecting, there is a platform for collectors to discuss collections, find valuations and swap information about their objects. The main site I used was *Collectors Club of Great Britain*, which also originally produced a monthly journal [*]. Initial contact was made through email probes, which invited people to take part in the research. This open method of sourcing participants generated an interest from a wide variety of collectors who acquire a diverse range of objects. Using this preliminary communication, a snowball approach was used, where the initial contacts referred details about the project to other collectors. Although a large number of possible participants were approached in connection with this study, the final selections were made through a series of specific criteria that has enabled this enquiry to focus closely.

In the initial call for participants, the collectors were self-selecting, putting their name forward to take part in the research. This is a significant factor in analysing the results that were produced from the research, as each collector was willing to share their private space with myself as a researcher and the potential gallery audience I wished to communicate with. In relation to this, the collecting rooms covered by this research are private spaces, but the participants involved were demonstrably keen to show their collecting rooms and take part in the investigation. However, I should note that alternative methods of sourcing collectors might have produced a different set of participants who may have been more guarded about their collection and collecting room. Therefore, through their own self-selection the collectors engaged in this research were open about their collecting habits, demonstrating an element of satisfaction in sharing their collecting room with others. This

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[*] The journal produced by the *Collectors Club of Great Britain*, has since ceased publishing (November 2010), yet the internet presence remains.

willingness to reveal their space may have affected the results produced from my research and the resulting artworks, which is further discussed in the Conclusion.

Every collection in this study is well established, with each collector in the final selection having more than ten years experience of collecting. This important criterion was one of the key areas of this investigation is memory and how it becomes embedded in space and objects. Further to this, my research is particularly interested in collectors who have sourced their objects in a more opportunistic style of collecting rather than those who acquired their objects solely on digital sites such as eBay. Sourcing objects for collections has changed significantly in the last few decades with the advancement of technology and the internet. This has led many collectors to use internet sites such as eBay to buy material for their collections (Hillis et al., 2006).

In considering this, I decided to focus on collectors who used a range of methods to acquire objects, rather than those who only used the internet to buy collectibles. In the Literature Review, I asserted that the acquisition of an object could be a key factor in how the collector connects it to memory (Page 12). By seeking collectors who use a range of acquisition techniques such as bidding on objects at auction, purchasing objects one at a time through auction or charity shops, or inheritance, the collector would be likely to have more memories attached to the objects. Therefore this diverse way of accumulating objects has a richer collecting history that those who sourced their collections in one specific way. It is important to note that this research does not consider internet purchases to be any less valid or satisfying than other methods of acquisition, but rather that the range of stories produced as a result of alternative methods of collecting may offer more variety and depth than those solely purchased through online methods.

Every collector in my final sample collects in the manner that Pearce describes as the *fetishistic* mode of collecting: This is important as their collections are underlined by personal stimulation that defines their collecting practice through a central theme or personal reason (Pearce, 1992).

Overall, I conducted eleven extended semi-structured interviews during the first three years of the research period. From these participants two collected orchids and three collected clocks. Subsequently I specifically chose not to represent one type of object, such as clocks more than once, to give the investigation variation and clearly mark the difference between the five eventual artworks. One of the original participants was my grandfather, who I discounted due to the personal connection, as I considered this might adversely affect the results of the research or, indeed, the familial relationship. The final selections were made by considering the participant's narratives and their relationship to the overarching themes of memory and forgetting. Each collector featured here in the case studies used the collection as either a site of memory or a distraction that allows them to forget issues or tensions. In selecting these collectors, I was able to shape the investigation around their perception

of the space and its connection to the past, present and future. Further to this, additional themes arose of family, the division of domestic space, and interaction with the collection - all of which are covered in more depth in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

It should be noted that a larger number of participants might have produced different results that would engender more generalised points on collecting. Yet, my research was concentrated on extended interviews that involved multiple interactions with participants over a three-year period, creating very specific and detailed research into the individual's experiences and spaces. This follows the typical pattern of I. P. A. studies, where the numbers are kept low to ensure focus on the individuals and their perceptions, creating idiographic studies that involve detailed accounts (Reid et al., 2005). Furthermore, the research findings were then recreated in the form of detailed artworks, which resulted in working with the gathered material for an extensive period of time. This detailed method of relaying the information was a time consuming activity, which has limited the number of case studies to five.

Finally, in accordance with the University of the Arts London ethical guidelines, all the participants selected a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each of these assumed identities was a personal choice that either related to a significant person or an aspect of his or her collecting practice.

3.02 Photographic Stitches (2009)

Initial experiments with documenting collecting rooms focused on the spectacle of having a room filled with objects, which was inspired by reading about the early and complex space of *wunderkammer*. Using the camera as a way of recording the first collecting rooms, the practice took the form of stitched panoramic images (Figure 11 and 12 overleaf). The main purpose of these documents was to demonstrate the scale, and the notion of being overwhelmed in an environment that is filled with objects relating to one person's collection. Around this time, I noted that the presence of the collector was discernable from the space that the collector created and the objects that were displayed.

Early experiments with recording the space, were not informed by interviews which had not yet begun, but functioned to enable contemplation of the space as a microscopic world, with the collector at its centre. These images in particular enabled the consideration of how different collectors used objects within their individual spaces as an expression of his or her ideas. My photographs were produced in conjunction with theoretical considerations of curiosity and spectacle, aiming to reveal the way in which collectors use space to deliberate ideas and develop a sense of memory. More of a document than a creative communication, these photographic montages comment on the position of the researcher trying to make sense of a private space and the phenomena that surround it. These early trials do not offer the privileged perspective which the research ultimately aimed to communicate, but do offer a perspective on the space and how it was designed.

Figure 11: The Orchid Conservatory Stitch

Figure 12: The Clock Room Stitch

After the initial documentation of the collecting space through photographic images, my investigation began exploratory use of using interactive media and website design. Contemplating the *Journey to the Collecting Room* as a theme, or inspiration, these experiments took the form of a simple website (Figure 12 and 13). This work explored one collector's house, revealing his domestic arrangements and the location of the collecting room. This website navigsted like a simple maze, or game that was constructed of a number of photographic stills, which created a sense of a pathway or journey. The aim of the piece was to navigate the collector's space and to locate the collecting room, which was represented as a slow paced animation of the room, made up of a slow moving panoramic of the space.

This method of exploration in the end became less important in relation to other more developed approaches and works, but it did allow consideration of the connections between moving and still images. Essentially constructed of fragmented images the connections can be pieced together by the viewer, creating a sense of space. This became significant in my

Figure 13: The Clock Room Website

consideration of different ideas about time-related media, and how different mediums could be manipulated to effect their reference to temporality. Further to this, this experiment underlined the importance of allowing the viewer to become an active part of the artwork, offering the audience some degree of control or manipulation of arguably the research material re-presented. This experimentation achieves this in a more obvious manner than the final artworks, highlighting the potentiality of this theme within my project.

Figure 14: The Clock Room
Website

3.04 Audio interviews (2010)

These early artworks did not create an emotional engagement between the participant and viewer, although they explored themes that were important to the development of the research, they did not engage with the purpose behind the collecting room or the experiential qualities imbued within it. To add more substance and richness to my research, I became focused on interviews and narratives that would produce an awareness of the motivations intrinsic in the collection that was being investigated.

I then began recording semi-structured interviews with participants, using their objects and spaces as catalysts to reveal specific memories and to illicit accounts about the formation of their collecting spaces. To enable the participant the opportunity to make direct connections between the collecting room and objects, the interviews took place in the collecting rooms themselves. As I argued in my Literature Review, (page 14) the relationship between collectors and touch had been one of the themes explored by writers such as Walter Benjamin. Benjamin suggests that the collector may handle the object as a method of connecting the past with the present (Benjamin et al., 1999a). In conducting the interviews in the space, I made a deliberate attempt to enable the collector to have the opportunity to handle objects, should he or she wish. My intention in doing this was that the collector might use the objects directly to recall a specific time or event, thus enabling the interview to access different temporalities of the collector's life.[*]

[*] It is worth noting at this stage that only the participant featured in *Unobtainable Dreams* did handle objects in the interview. His collection particularly relates to his own childhood, and this ability to connect memories with the act of handling the object may well have been a significant factor in the accounts recalled in the interviews.

Due to their flexible approach to questioning, semi-structured interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to express their opinions and narratives in a more dialogical fashion than a more formal structured interview. I found this technique to be particularly useful in accessing intimate observations and experiences from the participants. Yet, this open approach to interviews is digressive in its nature and comparisons are not as easily uncovered as in the more formalised technique of structured questioning. To overcome the idiosyncrasies within the material obtained, I created themes that allowed me to draw comparisons and differences from the audio recordings. These themes form the central concerns of each narrative, communicating different ideas about the collecting rooms and the importance of the space to the collector. From this point forth in the enquiry, practice and theory were underpinned by the interviews, allowing richness in the investigation.

3.05 Developmental Case Study – *Making a Killing* (2010)

The first semi-structured interview conducted in this research was with the one-in-six model soldier collector.[*] The interview gave the investigation of this particular space more insight than the work produced previously to this, but due to the fact that this was my first interview, the material constructed does not have the depth found in the later case studies. Yet, this interview and exploration was a significant development in the research and the methods of enquiry that followed.

Previously to this case study I had used a mixture of 35mm and medium format cameras with wide-angle lenses to gain the optimum representation of the space. Yet, in relation to this interview, I chose to photographically document the space using a Hasselblad-camera and portrait lens. The medium format camera allowed me to produce good quality images, without having to use the somewhat cumbersome large format equipment in a restricted space. The selection of the portrait lens enabled me to construct photographs that gave emphasis to the objects, which was further exaggerated through selective focusing. In deliberately highlighting aspects of the room, and allowing other areas to resist focus, the photographs became enigmatic, not revealing the whole space as in the earlier experiments but hinting at ideas and details (Figure 15). This direction in the photography created a more poetic re-presentation of the space, appropriate for a room of curiosities. Finally, the restriction of the square format allowed the images greater potential to communicate the spectacular and cramped conditions of the spaces.

The images and interview transcriptions were then considered in relation to one another. This juxtaposition between the participant's accounts and the photographs of the collecting room produced a creative tension, which enabled me to consider the collecting room in a more informed manner. The differences between the accounts made by the collector and the display of objects became an increasingly important consideration for the research and

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[*] 'One-in-six' refers to the scale that the model soldiers are produced under. This is the scale of 'Action Man', G.I. Joe and Barbie. Collecting this size of model is sometimes referred to as 'playscale miniaturism' and within the forums online there is a division between collectors (who solely acquire the objects) and miniaturism (in which hobbyists create scaled accessories and sets for the models.)

allowed me to develop the project and practice methodology further. The final arrangement of this case study took the form of a book that aimed to create a dialogical relationship between the static images produced of the space and transcription of the interview.

In presenting the images alongside the transcripts, the artwork aims to invite the viewer to question the connections between the two different media, making the audience an active agent within the artwork. In my review of intertextuality (page 28), I asserted that the perception of a particular piece of art is coloured by the audiences' previous experiences

Figure 15: Example of Selective Focusing from *Making a Killing*

and knowledge of related texts (Barthes, 1977; Rose, 2001; Allen, 2012). Affected by multiple texts the design of this work aims to harness this potential with the intention that the viewer will lend his or her association to the subject matter of home, space, collections, objects as miniatures, and in this case militaria, producing their own conclusions and ideas about the material provided (Barthes, 1977; Rose, 2001). Thus, the material supplies a framework for the audience to creatively draw his or her own conclusions from the investigation.

This intertextual approach formed the basis of all the subsequent investigations, but developed over the next case study to also include video and sound, as well as photographs and interview material. Due to the amount of time between this first case study and the completion of the second, the decision was made to keep this work as it was originally conceived - as an artist's book, rather than develop it into a film as is the case with the remaining investigations.

Throughout my creative practice I built upon the experience and ideas of the previous case study, developing the artwork and approaches to the material I gathered. In relation this, the case study *Unobtainable Dreams* began in the same manner as the previous one, by recording an extended interview with the participant and documenting the space photographically. Yet, it became apparent that the second case study was much richer in narrative and autobiographical detail than the preceding investigation because the collection had significant associations to personal memories. These personal accounts moved backwards and forwards through the collector's life, shifting the temporality of the biographical details between different periods of time. This new research connected more directly to Walter Benjamin's writing on space, and the manner in which temporality is reconfigured by a spatial examination. In conjunction with this, my early experiments with this new source of material explored the fragmented recollections of the collector, and their connections to space through the displays of objects within the collecting room.

After examining the range of preliminary material and observing the different connections to time, it seemed a natural progression to explore the collecting room with other time based media, such as video. After making extensive notes about the interview and the objects that were discussed, I returned to the collector and began making a number of test films that focused on the inanimate objects in the collection. Filming through a digital SLR camera, the film tests were shot with a shallow depth of field which established a connection to the photographs taken during the first visit.

Additionally while I was producing the film clips during the second visit, the collector suggested that there were several questions he had thought about since the last time we had spoken and asked if I would like to do a second interview. This new recording offered more detail about some of the narratives and ideas mentioned at in the first interview and made explicit references to the objects that he considered most important from his collection. Throughout this new interview, I became aware of the sounds coming from the garden, such as the birdsong and the cars passing the house. This prompted me to make a recording of the ambient sound, to consider alongside the new interview and film clips that I had made.

Watching the test videos back, it became discernable that although the objects were static, the videos hinted at the passing of time, through the shifts in light, the trees in the background moving in the breeze, and occasionally the shadow of the collector entering the frame. Although I had not previously worked with film, I realised that this medium could communicate the different temporalities evidenced in the interview material and the notion that the objects were not inactive but animated (brought to life) through the collector's narratives and stories.

Working with the film, photographs and sound recordings, I began to make experiments that brought together these separate elements, working with the grid system that juxtaposed the

images revealing different aspects of the collecting space simultaneously. These experimental films were conceived with the notion that these artworks would allow the viewer to consider the connections between objects and spaces within the participant's collecting room. In a similar method to the earlier book piece, the artworks produced were intertextual, which encouraged the audience to interpret the relationships between the interview and images within the artwork. In this experiment, the research began to create associations between the interview, photography and moving images pieces, giving the viewer an opportunity to contemplate the connections between the documentary evidence (Figure 16 and 17). At this particular time, the photographs and films did not consider the theoretical relationship between the interview and the works produced, but was a more intuitive response to the visual and audio recordings. Although these

Figure 16: Experiment for *Unobtainable Dreams*

works facilitated the creative process of exploring intertextual ideas, the multiple images were more complex than they needed to be, and the subtle movements of the film sequences became lost by showing three images on screen at once. Analysing my intertextual experiments it became clear that a simpler framework would be needed to lead the viewer through the piece, so the connections between the moving image and photographs would be more prominent, enabling the viewer to reflect upon them.

Figure 17: Experiment for *Unobtainable Dreams*
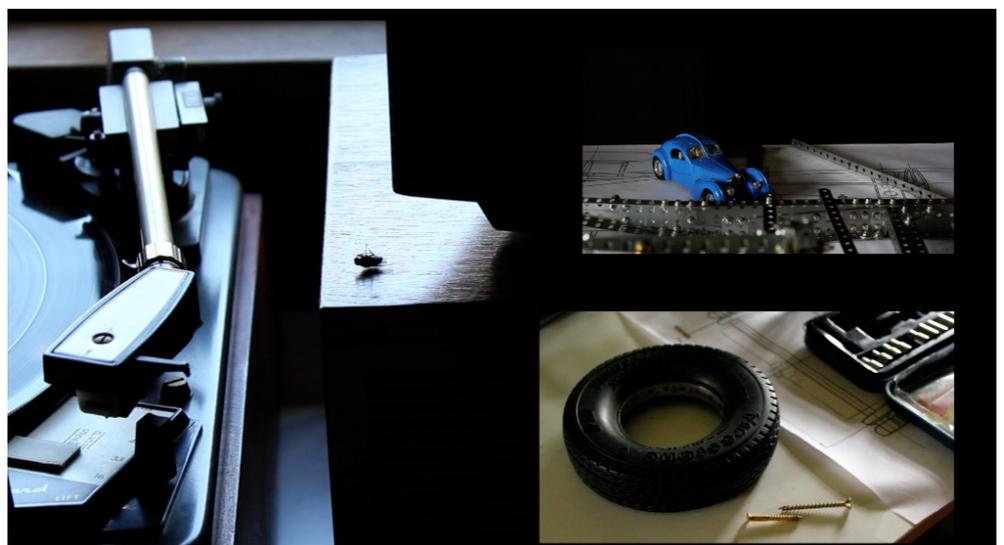
Nevertheless, this early film was a milestone in that it presented several images at once, producing dialogical connections between the visual materials and forging links between the photographs and video. Up to and including this point, the research was still concerned with the spectacle of the collecting room, yet this made the films visually complex and overlooked some of the more subtle assertions made by the collector, about how they experienced their collecting space and the objects within it.

3.07 Four-Channel Projection of *Unobtainable Dreams* (2011)

The comprehension of space is a significant aspect of this research; in light of this, the practice began to explore multiple screen projections inspired by the works of Jonas Bendiksen, who recreates the one-room dwellings of people living in slums around the world (Bendiksen, 2008). In the practice review, Bendiksen's work was considered alongside the notion of heterotopia, and the recreation of a home in a gallery context. This experiment with four screens, continued the exploration of juxtaposing images, yet as the images unfolded on four walls, the viewer had to physically move through the space, changing their viewpoint to view screens at different times. These trials with space were particularly effective in recreating the sense of awe discernable in some collecting rooms, as the complexity of the space makes it difficult to contemplate every aspect of the space at one particular time. In this work, the viewer had to decide which screen to watch, as they could not see all four screens at any one time, which aimed to create the idea that the viewer is missing some connection or insight into the space being re-presented. This four-channel film communicated some of the aspects that my research aims to address, such as the fragmented connection between objects, but also detracted the focus from being specific, by offering the viewer too many areas to direct their attention. Further to this, I considered that the documentary material required more reflection and analysis to generate a more concentrated and attentive re-presentation of the collector.

3.08 Confirmation Presentation as Research Focus

Focus to the enquiry was initially produced from the consideration of Sensual Ethnography (Pink, 2009). In my literature review (page 26), I argued that by contemplating the sensory aspects of the collecting room it could be possible to generate knowledge and analysis about the collector's relationship to space. In order to do this effectively, I considered the different methods of display observed in this case study, such as the placement of specific items in glass cabinets and the sounds that could be heard in the collecting room. Further focus was found by writing a paper on the case study for my confirmation process. Through this writing process, I systematically examined different visual aspects of the collecting room in relation to the interview, producing analytical points about the space and the collector. This procedure enabled me to note direct connections between the items photographed and the assertions made by the collector.

Writing this paper allowed me to see ways that the photographs and film sequences challenged or reinforced the interviews and could create insight through their relationship

to one another. In light of this, I became aware that the visual narratives and selections revealed a slightly different perspective to that of the interview. At times, the images would connect directly to the verbal accounts, while at other times the images would produce tension or contradiction with the collector's testimony. Therefore, the visual story of the collection is telling a slightly different but related account of the narrative. These intricate and rich re-presentations disclose the complex relationship that the participants have with their collection and private space. With this in mind, I continued developing my practice by exploring the intertextual relationship between sound and image.

3.09 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

In addition to the sensory aspects of the collection I wanted to explore the personal experiences that the collecting room presents. To achieve this my enquiry draws on the analytical techniques used in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (I.P.A.). I selected this method because I.P.A. investigations are primarily concerned with an individual's perception of a specific phenomenon. For example, this enquiry aims to give insight into a collector's experience of a collecting room, and their collection contained within it. This methodological approach adds the collector's experience to the sensory considerations of the collecting room, conveying the importance of the space to the collector, as well the analytical insight the interpretation of the space offers. This qualitative methodology works extensively with interviews and narratives to examine participant's experiences of a given phenomenon. Developed by three psychologists: Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin, I.P.A combines theories of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography to create an approach that looks to narrative interviews to construct meaning and understanding. Each collecting room is produced out of individual experience, and draws on a particular set of circumstances. In recognising this, I.P.A. advocates an idiographic approach, suggesting each set of interview data should be analysed individually. Only when the knowledge is produced for each case study can similarities and differences be recognised. This allowed me to consider each narrative and collecting room independently, creating a personal response to each case study. After all the case studies were complete, I then explored the research outputs and information in its entirety, examining the similarities and differences between each collection.

As with other methods of narrative enquiry, I.P.A. uses semi-structured interviews to explore the formation of storied accounts as an approach to contemplate how the participant understands an event or circumstance. The analysis regards the key incidents in the narrative and how they are portrayed to look for meaning in the recollections. Because of its detailed approach, typical I.P.A. investigations are limited to a few case studies, which are then analysed meticulously to produce research findings. This is particularly important in my own research, as I wanted to ensure that each case study presented the individuality of each participant, allowing his or her unique narratives to come to the fore. By using a larger sample of participants, the analysis of each collector would have been diluted and the distinctive characteristics of each subject may have been overlooked.

I.P.A. has influenced my methodology by providing several techniques and methods, such as starting the enquiry with a fixed hypothesis. This open approach to research draws directly on the information gathered rather than having a preconceived idea about the results. Responding to each participant individually allows the personal narratives to take centre stage, as opposed to making the research fit an expectation. Further to this, the line of questioning is curious and facilitative allowing the participants to discuss their ideas over time, rather than challenging them to discuss or interpret one particular area or subject.[*] This creates a richer archive of material, from which the researcher can draw. Furthermore, studies made using I.P.A. regard each case study individually, which has enabled me to effectively analyse the research material in detail. In particular, I.P.A. has brought the research a particular method of conducting interviews and analysing the research to champion the individual accounts. It is from these very detailed and personal accounts triggered from the space and objects that I have created artworks. Using the idiographic approach that I.P.A. holds central to its investigations, I have responded to each interview independently, producing an original outcome for each collecting room.

However, my enquiry also considers alternative methods to gaining insight, such as the visual display of the collection, to create a hybrid method that extends beyond the recorded testimonies, aiming to create a more dimensional sense of experience than by using I.P.A. alone. As both Sensory Ethnography and I.P.A. are centred on original experiences and the interpretation of these, the two methods work well in collaboration, exploring specific attributes of each space, and the narratives that are created in relation to this. Finally, in bringing together these two interpretative methods of analysis my research creates a methodology that examines both the space of collections and the experience that it offers the collectors who construct these spaces.

3.10 *Unobtainable Dreams* **(2011)**
The analytical observations produced out of my sensory-based phenomenological analysis methodology were then re-presented in the form of a one-channel film. These insights into the collecting room required a method or framework to connect them to make a coherent artwork that would relay the research findings to an audience. To produce this structure I returned to the literature of Walter Benjamin and particularly his concept of dialectical images (Buck-Morss, 1989; Benjamin et al., 1999b). Benjamin's realised that images could interrupt the present, enabling the viewer to reconsider the relationship between history and the present moment (Buck-Morss, 1989; Benjamin et al., 1999a). Regarding this, I began to construct narratives that would collocate different accounts from the collector's life, looking for connections between the participant's childhood memories and his present collecting practices. In focusing the narratives on spatial frameworks, the continuum of time is shattered, replaced by fragmented memories and discursive recollections. These sequences shift between memories, experiences and aspirations; connecting different narrative threads

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[*] The interview process that I.P.A. prefers might be considered as the way that artists work, however this method is rarely associated with art based research. By using I.P.A. as a methodology I could reflect more accurately on the interview process and critically analyse my artistic process more thoroughly.

and producing a portrait that considers the effects of history on the collector's present and hopes for the future. As with the previous case study, the work aimed to be intertextual, asking the viewer to make his or her own associations from the material provided, actively encouraging the viewer to think about the space and collector's experience of the room. The resulting film brings together all these separate elements to make a portrait of the collector by the exploration of their private space and the objects contained within it.

3.11 Exhibition: *Citing Reverie* **(2011)**

Following the confirmation process I was invited to take part in a two-person show at the Minories in Colchester. This exhibition offered me the opportunity to test the two works that had been produced to date and to gauge how the audience related to the two different presentation methods of photographs and text (*Making a Killing*), and film (*Unobtainable Dreams*).

Figure 18: Image of the exhibition *Citing Reverie*

In the first room, *Making a Killing* (2010) was exhibited as five images and two quotations from the interview. By discussing the exhibition with visitors to the gallery, I established that the audience were intrigued by the subject matter and curious to read the text. Overall, the viewers of this body of work were most attracted to the photographs and found the subject matter engaging, while others said that they found the soldiers menacing. In the second room, the film *Unobtainable Dreams* (2011) was projected on an endless loop above a Victorian fireplace. Spending a significant amount of time at the gallery during the show, I asked the viewers their opinions on the two pieces of work. Generally, the audience found the film more engaging, responding directly to hearing the collector talk directly about his collection. One particular visitor commented that the film felt 'quite confessional' and that it made him consider his own relationship to objects. While another said that the film 'navigated time in a fascinating way.'

The feedback from the exhibition was a good way of reflecting on the progression of the project. In particular, I realised that the first person narration was more engaging than reading the text of an interview. Through questioning the viewers it was established that the time based media created a number of different responses that visitors found both appealing and curious. A number of viewers asked if the imagery was constructed solely of video based work. When I responded that it combined both still and moving image, they asked which scenes were still photographs. In relation to these observations from the exhibition, I decided to produce video pieces for the remaining three participants.

3.12 Methodology: Building on Earlier Experiments

To create a method of investigation for my project, I have brought together two different lines of enquiry, Sensory Ethnography and I.P.A. which inflect with the narratives of each space to produce the creative outcomes and the accompanying manuscript. In my research into methodological approaches, I have not come across any other research that has combined these two interpretative approaches; therefore I consider this methodology to be original to my research.

The first of these intersecting methodological approaches is Sensory Ethnography, which examines different sensory aspects of a space (Pink, 2009). In order to consider the diverse sensory aspects of each collecting room, I visually documented the display and layout of objects within the space, using both photography and moving image, and made sound recordings of the ambient noise of the space. In particular, I concentrated on different modes of display within the space such as the placement of specific items in glass cabinets, or how objects were arranged for display. I systematically examined the visual aspects of the collecting room against the interview, producing analytical points about the space and the collector. This procedure enabled me to note direct connections between the items photographed and the assertions made by the collector.

Working with Sensory Ethnography made me acutely aware of the visual importance of the collection and how the arrangement could convey narratives about the collector that the oral testimony did not express. Considering the significance of sound in the space enriched my sensory investigations further. The ambient sound recordings of each room reveal additional insights and narratives about the collection and how the rooms are manifest. For example in the Meccano Room, the quiet sounds from outside the room create a space for reverie. Whereas in the Clock Room, the loud continual presence of ticking is less appealing to its owner and so the room encloses the sound from the rest of his home. These sensory observations contribute to the understanding of the collecting room and the narratives that are inherent in each individual space. These sensory based observations and narratives revealed a slightly different perspective to that of the interview. At times, the material from the sensory exploration would connect directly to the verbal accounts, while at other times the images or sounds would produce tension or contradiction with the collector's testimony. Through my creative practice I use these different perspectives in the same space to combine and create a more complex account of the collector. The creative outcomes weave together a visual story through the photographs and film, creating a sound based narrative that combines the oral testimony with other sound recordings taken in the space. While these sensory aspects offer the audience some understanding of the room, they do not communicate how the collector relates to the space and the collection. In terms of research methods, Sensory Ethnography is effective in examining the space of the collection, but there was another aspect that I wanted to gain from the research, which was the motivations and experiential qualities of having a collecting room. As Sensory Ethnography can only be performed as a secondary experience, I needed to investigate further methods that would allow me to interpret how the collector experienced their private collecting space.

To produce a more comprehensive understanding of how the collector perceives and uses the collecting room my research utilises Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This ideographic method employs personal testimonies of participants to develop a personal understanding of a given experience. In my research, the interviews reveal how each collector identifies with and utilises the personal space of the collecting room. By including I.P.A. within the method my research can make observations directly of the collecting space and provide, through the use of oral testimony, an indication of how the collector experiences his or her own collecting room.

My final research method was to visit the participants and produce a range of documentary material that would include an oral testimony, photographs and film sequences of the collecting room and additional sound recordings. I then transcribed the interviews verbatim in order to deeply familiarise myself with each participant's interview. Examining these transcripts using I.P.A. allowed me to see how the collector experienced the collecting room and the collection within this. Analysing the interview allowed me to note the areas that enriched the collector's life, understand motivations for collecting and begin to note the other factors that may contribute to the collecting habits. These testimonies that revealed

the collectors' personal experiences were then considered in relation to the sensory material, looking at the connections and contradictions that these two different sets of data presented.

At this stage I then created an over-arching narrative structure, which would allow me to communicate the findings of my research. Each work was presented in a manner that considers the different temporalities of space, using media that allow the viewer to consider how the space is perceived by the collector but also how the different forms of interaction the participant has with the space.

Both I.P.A. and Sensory Ethnography are used to analyse how the participant uses and understands the space of the collecting room. I.P.A. investigates the participant's different assertions and answers that relate to questions posed directly by the researcher. The analytical process looks to relay their ideas about the phenomenon and uses the interviewee's own words to understand how he or she is affected by the circumstances arising from the experience. I.P.A concentrates particularly on language and the opinions voiced by the participant to create its form of interpretation. These re-presentations reflect and consider both narrative accounts of the collecting room, producing a cohesive account of the space. By bringing together the two distinct research methods, my creative outcomes create an overview of the collector's experience of the collecting room and the different attributes that can be encountered in each space.

These two research methods compliment each other by offering slightly different interpretations of the same space. I.P.A. contributes the narrative and experiences of the space as told by the collector. Sensory Ethnography reveals other factors about the collection, such as information gained from examining the visual aspects of the space and the affects that sound may have on the collector. The narratives derived from sensory research are less obvious, creating a different perspective of the room, one that the collector may not have initially wished to communicate. In bringing the different methods together I have created a significantly more rich interpretation of the space and the narratives imbued within it.

3.13 Research Methods Employed for the Remaining Case Studies (2011)

After making initial contact with the participants, the remaining interviews were conducted in the same manner as my second case study. During the first visit to the participant, I would audio record a semi-structured interview and photograph the collecting room and the objects that collectors had particularly mentioned. As with the previous two case studies I did this using a medium format camera that allowed me to use selective focusing with the aim that this would enable me to communicate the enigmatic qualities of place. These photographs emphasised key items while still offering further information about the space, which may not be revealed in the narrative sequences.

Following the first interview, a review was made of the material gathered from each collecting room. This was particularly reflected upon during the transcription process.

All the interviews were transcribed personally to ensure that all the material was fully understood and considered for the enquiry. In the course of the transcription significant areas were highlighted, such as financial and personal value, private space, recreational pursuit, memory and loss. These identified key areas were then analysed in more detail within the writing that was consequently produced on each study. During the second visit to the participants, they were shown a full transcription of the interview. This allowed the participant to censor any of the material that caused them concern. After they had checked the transcription, participants were given a release form to sign that gave me permission to publish the interviews in the thesis and to use the material in the practice-based dissemination of my research.

During the second visit, I also recorded film sequences of the space, and offered the participants the opportunity to add to their original interview. Three of the participants made additional recordings, with one collector suggesting that an interview with her daughter might offer a further perspective on her collection. In every case study, the narrative material is formed from the complete set of data regarding both the first and second visit and any additional material that participants supplied. In two cases participants wanted to discuss points they had not answered comprehensively during the first interview. For example, one collector stated in his original interview that he did not have any single item that was more important than the others. He had reconsidered this by my second visit and wanted a chance to discuss in detail the item that he had decided was most important. This period of time was not only important for myself, as the researcher, to reflect on the interviews gathered, but also allowed for a cooling off period, whereby the collectors could reflect on the interview process. Further to this, the second visit allowed me to make ambient sound recordings of the spaces, which became an integral part of creating the resulting films.

3.14 Final Film Narratives (2011 – 2012)

The final narratives were constructed as a method for communicating the experiences and purposes of the collecting room, re-presenting the interview material and enabling the extended narratives of the collection to be communicated. As with the case study *Unobtainable Dreams* (2011), links were made between the collectors' memories, present experiences and future aspirations.

These pieces are aimed at communicating the motivations frustrations and satisfactions that the space affords each individual collector. Each film has been approached ideographically, contemplating the analysis of the interview material and documentary footage of the collecting space, using the methodology outlined above. Each space was then interpreted in relation to the documentary material, using time-based media in different ways with the aim of communicating ideas about the collecting space and the motivations that underpin it. Only after all the films were completed were themes that are more general devised. This enabled each case study to be faithful to the information I had gathered, rather than creating a hypothesis about collecting spaces and then formulating the films to fit previously identified criteria.

The final arrangement of the case studies demonstrates the symbiotic process between theory and practice. Rather than exhibiting these investigations separately, the written thesis presents the theoretical interpretations alongside visual material that was used in their construction. The interrelationship between theory and practice is further established by concluding each case study with extracts from the artwork that was produced as a result of using this method. As I asserted in the opening of this chapter, theory and practice have developed together. I deem it to be important that these interlaced disciplines are not singled out in the production of this thesis; consequently, the final presentation allows the reader to note the links in the practice and theory, creating a document that is in itself intertextual.

4.00 Case Studies

4.01
Developmental Case Study
Making a Killing

4.01 Developmental Case Study - Making a Killing

This first case study concentrates on the visual display room of a one-in-six scale model soldier collector. Contrasting the interview material with photographs of the space, this investigation suggests that there are motivations and pleasures discernable in the collection that the collector does not necessarily acknowledge. In considering the methods of display and the fantasy aspect that is connected to miniature objects, this exploration suggests that there are further attachments to the objects than those identified by the collector. Finally, because there are many questions unresolved in this case study, this enquiry considers the mystery and intrigue that surrounds the collection and the manner in which these enigmatic qualities might be communicated to an audience.

Tom is a divorced father in his mid-forties, who works in the creative industries. He lives alone in a bedsit on the outskirts of London. This bedsit is one of a series of purpose built flats in a small modern block, situated a few miles inside the M25 to the south of London. My initial impression of the room was one of wonder, as there are over two hundred one-in-six scale model soldiers displayed within the space. Even though the main room is approximately twelve foot square and has two large windows, the space feels quite claustrophobic and dark, due to amount of items in the room. Immediately off this main space is an open-plan kitchenette of about eight foot square. On closer inspection, the decoration is neutral, with light brown carpet and walls that are painted magnolia. The room contains a single bed, several large dressers, a desk and foldaway chair. Spreading before one of the cupboards is a structured display made of newspapers, boxes and planks of wood, which form a stand for six regimented lines of one-in-six model soldiers, each row at a slightly different height to the one behind it. This display protrudes from the back wall into roughly a third of the space. These models are interspersed with other personal objects, such as memorabilia, souvenirs and gifts from his family. In spite of the room's visual busyness, there are no obvious noises other than the road outside. The main focus in this investigation is on the soldier collections, yet a number of other smaller collections are visible in the space, such as books and DVD's, which are more often than not connected to his interest in The Second World War.

One of the main themes to emerge in the interview is Tom's consistent references to the monetary value and investment tied up in his collection. He stated clearly on a number of occasions that he had no other sentimental attachment to the objects, other than the soldiers' value as an investment for the future. This was particularly evident in a number of questions that related directly to the purpose behind the collection and Tom's motivations. Tom explains:

> It is money mainly. It is an investment, long term. Better than money in the bank. It is visually nice, the fun of collecting it, finding rare things at a good price. I never pay, well, very rarely pay full price for anything. Always make sure there is a profit in it if I decide to sell it. That way I can justify spending the money as it is making me more money than if the money was sitting in the bank. Tom (2009)

Furthermore Tom stated:

> It is only a few years until I retire, so they'll be going then anyway. It is better than money in the bank at the moment, collecting. I noticed that at the shows, a lot of people spend a lot of money on quality items. Tom (2009)

In the Literature Review (page 16) it was established that it was possible to have more than one reason to collect, and a number of academic texts have revealed that investment is a common incentive for collecting, but is seldom one of the primary motivations (Pearce, 1992; Muensterberger, 1994; Blom, 2002). I would like to propose that the economic rewards are not the sole motivations of his collecting practice and that Tom may receive other pleasures than those he asserts in the interview. These alternative satisfactions are not presented through Tom's testimony but are denoted in the visual exploration of the space and in the displays he creates.

In order to make claims about the display of objects it is important to recognise the academic studies which reflect on the positioning of objects within domestic space. These investigations propose that a hierarchy of display is discernable in homes and that by considering the placing of items on display a researcher can reveal personal significance about the participant's affection for that object (Hurdley, 2006; Hastie, 2007; Makovicky, 2007). In her enquiry into objects placed on mantelpieces, sociologist Rachel Hurdley reveals that the assignment of items to such a central position in the home gives the objects prominence. These ideas are similar to academic considerations about the placement and framing of family photographs, which have recognised that the relationships of the owner to the people within the image can be distinguished through the ways in which images are treated (Hirsch, 1997; Rose, 2003; Rose, 2010). In light of this, it can by suggested that the collection and its presentation would reveal some of the significance that the objects have to Tom through the manner in which they are displayed and stored.

The exhibition of a personal collection is a creative idiosyncratic act, designed by the collector (Pearce, 1992; Belk, 1994). Ultimately it is the collector's imaginative process that connects the items, creating a specific order from the chaos of opportunity. Therefore, every displayed private collection has a sequence and design to it, even if the items connectivity might appear to be obscure. Pearce (1992) asserts that the most formally displayed collections are systematic collections, which use serial relationships to convey information and progress through the series. This type of collection is dependant on the manner in which it is laid out to enable it to express the purpose and idea behind its accumulation (Pearce, 1992).

While Pearce suggests that there may be an idea or scheme devised by the collector as a method of display, Tom himself recounts that his display is about the spatial design of his bedsit. Therefore, the display is not produced in relation to a system, or a specific idea about the collection, but is a response to the living space available. Tom notes:

It's really about trying to cram as much into a small place as possible. I have got to reach the stage now that if I buy anything new, something else has to go up in the loft… because now I think I have reached saturation point; where I don't think there is barely more than a couple of square inches where you can put anything. I keep on meaning to put some shelves up, but, it's something I have been meaning to do for years and it hasn't really happened yet. Tom (2009)

Although there are marked patterns in Tom's collections of soldiers, these are not regimented and serial configurations, but embrace a different purpose in their display. Tom's accumulation of figures aligns itself more with Pearce's definition of a fetishistic collection (Pearce, 1992). This category of collection is often displayed to disclose personal aspects that relate directly to the owner, mapping their past through the objects (González, 1995; Pearce, 1995; Hastie, 2007). In her analysis of fetishistic collections, Pearce identifies characteristics that are present goldsmith and antiquary Joseph Mayer's collection of drawings and engravings. She notes:

The collection is not organised, merely arranged by its owner in what seemed to be its best advantage… This kind of collection is made by people whose imaginations identify with the objects, which they desire. Powerful emotions are aroused by the objects which the objects seem to return, stimulating a need to gather more and more of the same kind. (Pearce, 1992 p. 81)

Tom's collection is laid out in a particularly elaborate manner, which may initially suggest that it was intended for public display. One could assume from the photographs of the space that this is an exhibitionist space, designed by someone that wanted to attract attention (Figure 20). Pearce notes that this is often a trait of the fetishistic collector:

This uncovers more of the nature of fetishistic collections and collection making. Such collections are often very private, or rather; sometimes the owner suffers from a degree of tension between the urge for privacy and the desire to exhibit his private universe to others. (Pearce, 1992 p. 82 - 83)

The friction between public and private becomes clear in Tom's interview, which reveals a different perspective. Tom states that he rarely invites people back to this bedsit, rather the display is a way for him to survey the objects he has amassed. Looking for the connections between his individual objects, Tom states:

It's not showing off, it's a bit sad really in some respects. But its just a bit of, I don't know how you would describe it really. I just enjoy collecting things. I think also I am one of these terribly nerdy people that if it's a set, I can't rest until I have got the whole set. If there are ten, having nine is not enough. You have got to have ten, even if I don't like them. If you like eight out of the set of ten, you have got to have the ten even if you don't like the other two. 'Cause without being a set, it's not a set is it? So, I am a bit anal about that. Tom (2009)

My investigation proposes that Tom's collection has many similar attributes to Pearce's description of Joseph Mayer's collection. The displays are filled with imagination and importance, which surround the collector, in effect creating a type of grotto from

Figure 20 : Image from the series,
Making A Killing (2010)

Figure 21 : Image from the series,
Making A Killing (2010)

his model soldiers. Research into this creation of space suggests that these displays are immersive and comforting for Tom, a place where he can manipulate objects and create a space that is uniquely built around himself and his ideas.

In order to determine some of the other less realised, yet still prominent functions of Tom's collection, it is important to chart the chronology of the progress of his collecting. His enthusiasm began with enquiry and reading, which is highly evident in the displays of books that are stacked up on the shelves throughout his living space (Figure 21). In the Literature Review (page 16), it was noted that collectors often accumulated more than one collection, as their interests change and develop. One can assume that Tom's collecting habits were formed in acquiring books detailing information about the Second World War. Spurred on by the historical imagination, Tom has read extensively around the subject. This creative process set in place a fascination with militaria, which was the point of origin for the collection of soldiers. When asked about his books, Tom reveals research and reading have always been important to him and his ideas. He said:

> I have always had an interest in the Second World War even from when I
> was a kid. Reference is important; you need to understand what you have
> got in terms of originality 'cause there are a lot of fakes in everything; toys,
> militaria, hell of a lot because of the value of the stuff. Also putting it into
> the context of what it was used for; how it was used, who used it, where
> it would have been used. Just giving a historical background to what you
> have got, you know, especially. That's one of the hobbies, the hobby of
> understanding how things worked and how they were used. And what they
> were like to use, or the items cannot be valued correctly. Tom (2009)

In the discussion about Tom's collection, he identifies that research is a significant part of his recreational pursuit. In order to decide a genuine find or investment amongst the items that he considers less interesting or valuable, Tom studies the subject matter in detail. In particular, he regards the legitimacy and historical providence to be an important factor in determining each object's value. This concern with authenticity is another common trait of collectors. Tom obviously enjoys this process but, significantly, it is a contributing factor in seeking out items for profit.

Collectors of militaria are often concerned with the authenticity of the object, Items that have a proven historical record often fetch a much higher price than replica items (Kingsepp, 2006). A collector has to be sure that they are buying the genuine historical object, and not a reproduction or copy. This idea about authenticity is explored in literary theorist Stephen Greenblatt essay *Resonance and Wonder* (1990). Greenblatt surmises that *resonance* and *wonder* are the main arresting factors in displaying art; each of these individual characteristics creates significance through a series of sensual qualities. Greenblatt writes:

> By resonance I mean the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond
> its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex,
> dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which – as
> metaphor or, more simply as metonymy – it may be taken by a viewer to
> stand. By wonder, I mean the power of the object displayed to stop the

viewer in his tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke
the exalted attention. (Greenblatt, 1990 p. 43)

Although Greenblatt is writing about displaying works of art, it has been suggested by Pearce that these features are also applicable to collections (Pearce, 1995). She extends this idea to suggest that both of these qualities can be found in some collections concurrently. Considering these qualities in relation to Tom's collection it is possible to observe wonder in the overwhelming displays, while the resonance can be evidenced through the complex relationships between different objects.

These two characteristics are not solely methods of display but can additionally become reasons for collecting. The gratification of seeking out objects that have resonance, or historical materiality embedded in them, has been acknowledged in a number of essays as a key motivation for collecting (Rheims, 1961; Baudrillard, 1994; Belk, 1994). Essentially collectors seek objects that convey meaning to them and this material connection to the past is just one of the ways that an item can gain satisfaction.

These attributes were particularly marked with his earlier collections of militaria, where Tom would acquire objects that have historical significance, such as military uniforms and service paraphernalia. This early collection was inspired by his research on the Second World War, and a few items that were presents given to him by his father, such as medals and ration books. Around this time, Tom was also involved in re-enactments and other first hand military exercises, which demonstrates his pleasure in seeking authenticity and experience. Yet, notably some of the early militaria collectibles are not on visible display any more, the uniforms are tucked inside his wardrobe and the medals are kept in a safe place, out of sight (Figure 22). This suggests that Tom did not have the same affection for the militaria objects, after he began his collection of scaled models. I propose that Tom's consideration of resonance was superseded when he saw his first scaled model. This first encounter was to generate a new collecting practice which is much more visible in Tom's collecting room. Tom recalls:

> I can still remember the first one, it's knocking about in the cupboard somewhere, it's one I saw at a militaria show and it was the first one I had seen. It was a special limited edition one, and I just liked the detail. 'Cause I was collecting the real thing at the time and when I looked at this, little model and I saw the detail. Everything the real one had was on the little model, and I thought it was absolutely fantastic. So, I bought that and then thought about buying a second one. And then it just snowballed. Then I got involved with a few people that collect them and a few shows and whatever. It just ballooned and the next thing you got five, and then you got twenty and I looked round one day and I thought I would stop at a hundred and now I am up to over two hundred. But again what you can see here is only about half of what I have got, two thirds of what I got anyway. Tom (2009)

This change in collection, from utilitarianistically authentic objects such as the military uniforms, to the scaled models demonstrates a very different motivation for collecting. The scaled models' accuracy captured Tom's imagination influencing a change in his collecting

practices. Tom admits himself that he was completely fascinated by the model figures when he first saw them, in awe of their fine intricacies. The spectacle of the miniature caught his imagination and it is this that I intended would resonate in my photographs of the room. Tom asserts that the fine level of detail is still an important factor in the selection of his objects and that the *wonder* element continues to be a fascination for him.

> I like… everything has got to be as finely detailed and accurate, to the real thing as possible. I like intricate things, especially if they work. But you know you got the guns here, they got little things, and the hammers and the bolts, magazines work just like the real things. You know its fantastic. Tom (2009)

Captivated by the wonder of these miniature items, Tom began acquiring models at a faster rate than he had with the collection of his militaria. Further to this, Tom ceased to go to the battle re-enactments, but engaged much more heavily with the modelling community, which demonstrates an enhanced invested interest in the items and the culture that surrounds them. Susan Stewart's *On Longing (1993)* decodes the miniature object, suggesting that the remarkable attraction to scaled objects is their resemblance to recognisable life-sized items. This correspondence between reality and fantasy is the main attraction and wonder transposed by the miniature. Since the objects are too small to be experienced through touch in the same way that the historical objects were, Tom can only use the visual appearance of the soldiers as a cue to engage his knowledge and awareness (Stewart, 1993). This suggests that the miniature is a visual stimulant for Tom's imagination,

rather than objects that he could experience first hand through the battle re-enactments. Considering the dollhouse in regards to experience and the visual Stewart writes:

> The miniature, linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, present a diminutive, and therefore a manipulatable, version of experience, a version of which is domesticated and protected from contamination. (Stewart, 1993 p. 69)

I propose that Tom's transformation from first hand involvement, to observer of his own private battlefield, details a change of functionality of the collection where he would have more control and involvement. It would like to suggest that Tom uses the fantasy of the displays to transcend issues that might trouble him, such as his divorce. This correlates with the timing of the collection as in the interview, Tom identifies that he began acquiring his model soldiers shortly after he was divorced and moved into his new bedsit. It could be surmised that this change of circumstances could have been a trigger for his new collecting habits. I would like to consider this idea in relation to Walter Benjamin's assertions in his essay *Old Toys* (2005), where he connects escapism with play in adults:

> When the urge to play overcomes an adult, this is not simply a regression to childhood. To be sure, play is always liberating. Surrounded by a world of giants, children use play to create a world appropriate to their size. But the adult, who finds himself threatened by the real world and can find no escape, removes its sting by playing with its image in reduced form. The desire to make light of an unbearable life has been a major factor in the growing interest in children's games and children's books since the end of the war. (Benjamin et al., 2005 p. 100)

I propose that Tom finds comfort in his displays of soldiers; he enjoys being immersed in an environment where his personal possessions, which signify both his memories and aspirations, enclose him. For this reason, Tom creates displays that are encompassing, inhabiting every piece of available space. Admitting this in part, Tom says:

> I am out a lot 'cause of work and that, but it's nice to come home and be surrounded by your things. When people first come in, they think they walked into a toyshop. But that's it, it's a hobby but it is something I do to make money from. It sort of subsidises it a little bit. Its not all money going out, there is a little bit coming back in. Tom (2009)

Considering this, Tom's display may simply be a way to enjoy the items he has purchased and by having them all on show, he is reminded of each investment that he has made. I would like to suggest that these vivid presentations could offer comfort in another way, through choosing the manner in which they are displayed Tom can change and effect the display at any time, as the design is subject to his control. He can create a fantasy world, which is internalised and closed off from others. Creating a microcosm offers one the feeling of being divine, wielding the ultimate power of selection and presiding over the objects. But this interior world also performs the role of haven, away from the troubles of the outside world, the harsh realism of day-to-day routines. Tom's private space continues to draw parallels with Stewart's investigation of the miniature. Stewart notes:

> The dollhouse… represents a particular interiority, an interiority which the subject experiences as its sanctuary (fantasy) and prison (the boundaries or limits of otherness, the inaccessibility of what cannot be lived experience.) (Stewart, 1993 p. 65)

It is possible to see how the internal world of the model becomes a fantasy and escape from experience by comparing Stewarts writing on the dollhouse with Tom's collecting room.

In the way that he displays the soldiers Tom is in control of how the objects are seen and experienced. This however differs greatly from the organised meetings at the re-enactments, where he would follow a role and would not be able to exhibit power. I consider that this form of control, this safe overseeing of his display is another value that the collection affords Tom, but one that he does not necessarily acknowledge or even possibly realise. It should be considered that if Tom's assertions about the value of the collection were entirely true, he would perhaps keep his collection boxed up in the loft. However, he chooses to display the objects in elaborate exhibits throughout his home. Tom reveals:

> There is a constant battle with dust. Fixing anything I might trip over, drop, I tend to be a bit clumsy sometimes. I am a bit heavy handed, you know constantly never far from my hand is the super glue. But not really, I tend to get the enjoyment of finding something, actual finding it. Once I have opened it and looked at it, that's it. I put it up on the display and forget about it. Tom (2009)

The one-in-six scale soldiers are scattered all over his bedsit, and damage would compromise the return made on the investment. By choosing to adorn his domestic space with displays, Tom must find some satisfaction in the arranging and positioning of the soldiers or they simply would not be exhibited in elaborate displays. Further to this, Tom's bedsit only offers limited space, so the daily activities and chores must be affected by the sheer volume and space that the collection requires.

Tom continually maintains a casual attitude to the displays throughout the interview, which suggests that they are temporary arrangements, designed for disassembly at a moments notice, should he be compelled to sell them. Yet, the photographs of Tom's home suggest that rather than having a cavalier attitude to the display of objects, he has formulated the exhibition of soldiers with great care. These elaborate presentations contradict the dismissive attitude that he demonstrates in the interview, revealing what could be considered to be a significantly more involved relationship to his collection. In summary, I regard the care revealed in Tom's visual displays illustrates a personal investment that goes beyond that of financial value, to using these objects as figures of reverie.

Through using the ideas of autotopography that are highlighted in the Literature Review, my enquiry proposes that the fantasy imbued in the collection is further appropriated in Tom's juxtapositions of objects. In suggesting that the photographs reveal other aspects of Tom's collecting practice, such as the inclusion of personal souvenirs in the displays, I assert that sensory approaches to research can produce further insight than interviews alone.

In the interview, Tom identifies the objects that particularly relate to his family as being his most significant possessions. These items are laced between the soldiers rather than taking a pride of place, or secreted away somewhere secure. I regard these mixed displays of militaria and personal objects could create an idea of ambivalence to the personal objects. Although in considering notions of autotopography my research suggest that actually this close proximity between these different types of items validates the scale models importance to the collector as being more significant than he would have us believe. Tom articulates:

> I have a medal that my Dad brought back from the war, but I don't really
> consider that part of the collection, more family heirlooms. As far as…
> I have some nice things that I like but there is not one thing that stands
> out above anything else. There are a few things that I will probably find
> very difficult to get rid of, to sell. Mainly stuff I have had since I was a kid
> or something that has got some sort of family connection. Anything else is
> up for sale at the right price. Not cheap. Tom (2009)

There is certain amount of sentimentality that is not immediately apparent from the interview alone, but is revealed in the photographs of the collecting room. One can clearly see items that relate to Tom's relationship with his daughter, as these objects jar with the visuality of the space, creating their own dialectical relationship to the other objects. These objects, like the souvenir of a Greek house (Figure 23) and the cat ornament in the image of the CD tower (Figure 24) and the 'Dad' card reveal sentimentality that was not present in the interview (Figure 25). These images show a much more complex figure than the money orientated man

Figure 23 : Image from the series,
Making A Killing (2010)

that Tom projects in interview. The photographs disclose the intimate relationships he has with his loved ones, both from the past and the present.

Furthermore, the soldiers are so intrinsically linked to the collector's imagination that the interaction between the significant personal objects and the display could be understood as a powerful example of transcendent objects, as I outlined in my *Literature Review* (page 10). These objects use the imagination of the collector to create a connection between loved ones and the objects. The juxtapositions between the collection and items associated with 'happy memories' and family members produce a transcendent space conjured up by the object. This space is only discernable by studying the interview and the photographs together.

The scaled models are so lifelike in their appearance that en masse they look like a snapshot of the trenches taken in the Second World War (Figure 26). These re-enactments are tied to the imagination and fancy that is embedded in film depictions of war. Furthermore, designing these scenes is another performance of the omnipotent pleasure that was mentioned earlier regarding miniatures. The figures are frozen in time, illustrating Stewart's assertions about the miniature and time. They embody a permanent state of possibility, which can only be manipulated by the collector. This fixed relationship to temporality is important; it is in the space of imagination where connections can be made between good memories represented by the souvenirs and the present. Performing a role of being a fixed

Figure 24 : Image from the series,
Making A Killing (2010)

Figure 26 : Image from the series,
Making A Killing (2010)

catalyst for a particular set of memories, it can be returned to without change occurring from the last time it was experienced. Stewart recognises that the miniature world is timeless, and as such acts as a space for the imagination to take flight. She asserts:

> The miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time. Unlike the metonymic world of realism, which attempts to erase the break between the time of everyday life and the time of narrative by mapping one perfectly upon the other, the metaphoric world of the miniature makes everyday life absolutely anterior and exterior to itself. The reduction in scale, which the miniature presents, skews the time and space relations of the everyday life-world, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its 'use value' transformed into the infinite time of reverie. (Stewart, 1993 p. 65)

Reflecting on this it can be considered that Tom's collecting room is a static environment. He asserted earlier in the interviews that once a model is placed it is seldom moved.

Each figure becomes a piece in the jigsaw of Tom's imagination, building a picture that draws good memories and future aspirations close to him, while helping him to ward off events that he may wish to ignore. The entire space feels like it is on a threshold of movement. At any moment the scenes, which are frozen in time, might begin to unfold naturally. This inactivity is fundamental to the room's narrative. It features in the lack of progress that one can see throughout the interview as the potential that is never quite realised: such as the shelves that have never been built, or the organisation of the books into themes that is never completed. Tom's domestic space is not just a living space - it is


Figure 27 : Image from the series, *Making A Killing* (2010)

a site of imagination that puts aside the monotonous ideas of work and is a sanctuary in which to dream. This boundary between what is real and what is fantasy is particularly evident in the photographs produced of the space, through selectively focusing on the soldiers and allowing other domestic objects to become blurred or distant. My photographs create a relationship between the fantastical objects and the banal domestic space, hinting at the reverie that is imbued within the collection and its display. One particularly effective example of this is a tank, where domestic appliances are noted, but out of focus in the background (Figure 27). I would argue that this representation is much more complex than the interview would suggest, demonstrating tensions and imagination that might be overlooked from an analysis of the interview alone. Finally, it must be considered that my role as a researcher may have been one of the contributing factors to Tom's continual references to investment. Although he may not recognise his personal connections to the soldiers, it is more likely that he did not want to admit an attachment to a stranger, even one who was researching collecting rooms.

The presentation of this case study is in the form of a book. This 30cm square book consists of extracts from Tom's interview with photographic illustrations of the collection. This combination allows viewers to create their own connections between the two different media. In doing this, the artwork directs the audiences' attention to the tension between the two different types of information. Yet, this final arrangement is open to interpretation and allows the reader to create his or her own understanding of Tom's collecting room and collection. As I explained in the methodology (page 59) the final re-presentation of this case study remains a book, as the amount of time between this first case study and the completion of the second. In reviewing this I felt that my work the participant had reached a climax and further interview research would not have developed the narratives about the collecting space beyond the material I had already gathered. Yet, this final outcome does simultaneously represent the relationship between his collection and domestic space. I subsequently progressed to making films using material gathered during the course of my research.

In conclusion, I suggest that Tom's motivations and his pleasures derived from the collection are not just financial, but they also improve the quality of his home life. What is unclear is whether he makes a conscious effort to conceal his fondness for the objects within the interview, or if he is not aware of the additional value the collection offers him. It is this significance that I wanted to highlight through the collocation of the images and text in the resulting book made from this investigation. Aiming to convey these tensions and hidden satisfactions that are not clearly defined in the interview, my interpretation aspires to communicate a level of mystery and attachment not acknowledged by Tom but still evident in my observations of the collecting room.
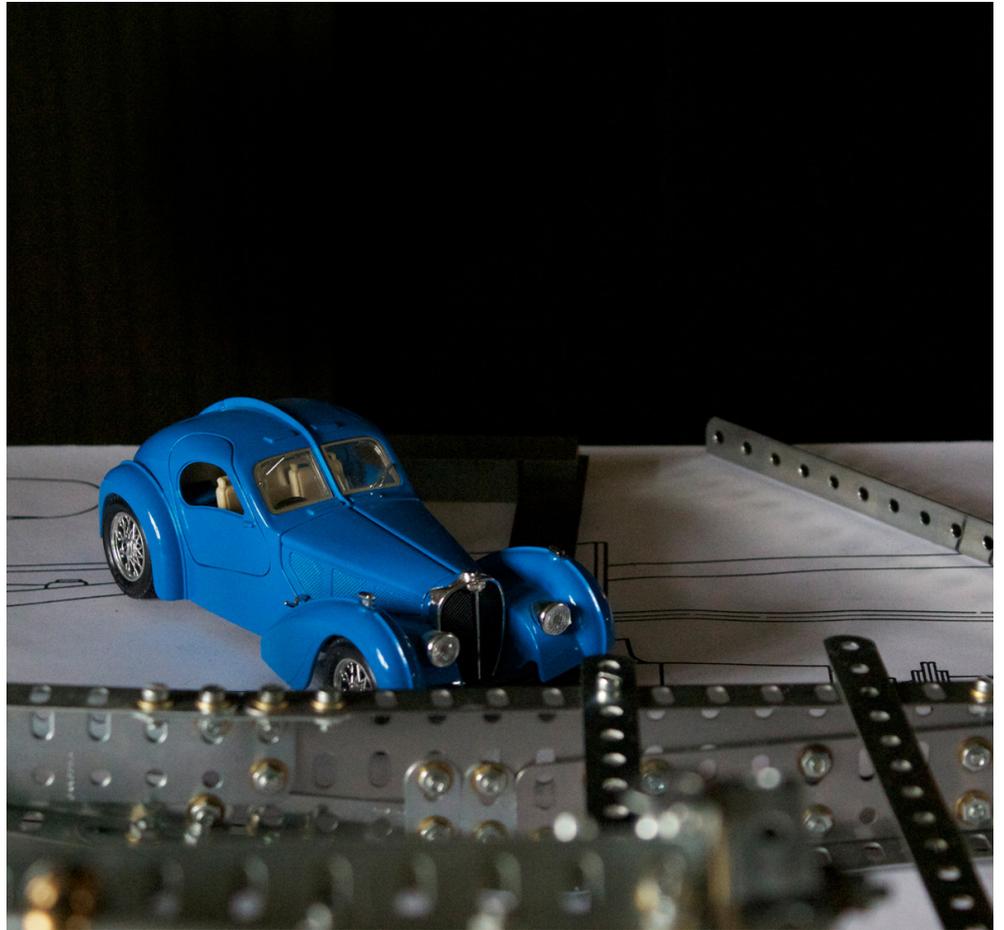
4.02 Unobtainable Dreams

4.02 Unobtainable Dreams

This case study further explores ideas of autotopography, using objects to act as catalysts to the past. As with the previous case study, I claim that the collecting room can be used as a technique for constructing an identity through the accumulation of objects. Aligned to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own (1929)*, the collector uses the space as a form of reflection and site of imagination. The collecting room featured here is free from pressures of performance and offers a space where the collector can assert his identity and reflect on his relationship to the world. In relation to this sense of freedom that the space affords, the collector undertakes a number of different displacement activities that suppress his anxieties and allow him to revel in his connection to the past.

The subject of this case study is Allan, who has acquired a series of small collections that relate to his childhood. Allan lives with his wife in a converted 15ᵗʰ Century barn on the border of England and Wales. The retired couple are afforded the luxury of space, with Allan having a dedicated room for his many different hobbies that, amongst others things, include collecting. Allan and his family affectionately refer to this room as the *Meccano Room*, for it houses his modelling equipment, as well as numerous smaller collections which include Meccano kits and paraphernalia, vinyl records, Eagle annuals, fairground toys, model military vehicles and books. These collections of objects are clustered together to make displays that are exhibited on the shelves and in glass cabinets throughout the room (figure 28).

Figure 28 : Image from the series, *Unobtainable Dreams* (2010)

At the top of the stairs, the *Meccano Room* is approximately 10 feet by 14 feet, with a window on each side. The room has many period features including wooden beams on the ceiling, original windows frames and doors made of oak. In terms of decoration, the space is painted cream and it has a beige carpet providing a blank canvas for the collections it contains. There are two pictures on the wall, an old portrait of Lord Nelson and a seascape, and two graphic posters of Citroen cars. The sound you can hear in the collecting room is mainly from the garden, such as birds singing and the occasional rumble of cars or tractors passing the lane next to the house. The furniture in the room is mismatched from different styles and periods, featuring three glass display cabinets, one large bureau, and a sizeable bookshelf. Further to this, it contains three desks, one under each window and one that takes centre stage in middle of the room. Currently laid out on the desk is the plan for Allan's latest model, which is surrounded by Meccano pieces and test models. In front of the second window is another desk, which displays a blueprint for the model that is currently on hold, a vintage Meccano sales stand and a record player. Underneath the desk are several crates of vinyl records. The collections are grouped in small complete sets located in the cabinets, bookshelf or bureau.

The first impression on entering Allan's *Meccano Room*, is one of order. The collections that are presented throughout the space are categorised and displayed in neat arrangements. More than any other of the collecting rooms explored in this research, Allan's collections of paraphernalia demonstrates Belk's idea of a 'museum of the self' in which his memories of childhood can be easily discovered (Belk, 1988). This orderly space is a far cry away from Allan's favourite childhood haunt: his father's garage in Sussex, yet many of the items located here make reference to this time and place.

The *Meccano Room* is a textbook example of an autotopographical space, charting Allan's childhood, adolescence and married life simultaneously. Concurring with González (1995), I aimed to demonstrate that objects collected to form displays of this type reveal intimate traces of the owner. Typically, the objects selected for inclusion in autotopographical displays are not representative of an entire autobiography, rather they relate to selected memories that the acquisitor wishes to retain. The objects then become visual and tactile prompters that allow the possessor to revisit the memory or related experience at will. Thus an object acts as a trigger for recollection, seen through the prism of the here and now. Moreover, this regressional experience can be repeated at will, allowing the possessor to repeatedly relive the associated memory (González, 1995).

Allan's collecting room is filled with objects that have pertinent memories he has ascribed to them. On initial inspection of the room, the collections may seem haphazard and unconnected, but these disparate collections become meaningful in the interview, as each item relates specifically to Allan's childhood, subsequent experiences and memories. One particular example is the Meccano set that was purchased for Allan by his grandfather. The Meccano set is in pride of place, sitting on top of a vintage display case that catches your attention as you enter the room. When I inquired about the set, Allan recalled the episodic memory noting some specific details about the occasion:

When I was six years old, my Grandfather bought me a number six Meccano set. I went with him to Haslemere on the bus to a shop called *Knobs*, which is still in existence. We went to the counter and the shopkeeper got out all the different Meccano sets, and my Grandfather chose the one he thought was most suitable for me. It was wrapped up and we walked back across Haslemere High-Street to the bus stop and went home. Allan (2010)

Allan identifies this Meccano set as the most significant object in the room, as it was where he began his interest in model building. Displayed prominently, the set is key to enabling him to create an air of nostalgia in the room, remembering his childhood in Surrey. I postulate that Allan may use the objects and their interrelated memories as a way of changing his mood, or stimulating good memories. This repeated form of recollection could be called *regressive nostalgia*, in which the owner of the objects constantly returns to a moment from the past as a coping strategy to deal with current issues and problems (Boym, 2001). This perpetual withdrawal to memories may be construed as avoiding the contemporary experience, and the past is recalled to satisfy a longing in the present (González, 1995). Furthermore, a need to reminisce could arise from a longing to amend past situations, or an alternative perspective on the owner's history. Therefore, the presentation of the autotopography may privilege an ideal self that never was.

Preserving only objects that recall positive associations allows an owner to focus on positive memories, effectively allowing the owner to re-write his or her own past. This process of selecting affirmative recollections is not a true reflection of the past and in creating this type of collection, it could be said that the collector is fashioning a more idealised self. The objects then come to symbolise a fantasy of what the owner may wish to be, while the space housing these objects becomes a refuge that represses experiences that the acquisitor may best wish consigned to the past. Through analysing Allan's relationship to the display within the *Meccano Room* this investigation explores whether the reverie derived from these displays facilitates a romanticised notion of the past, or if he maintains a different perspective that is knowingly less regressive, perhaps more reflective than the ideas observed in González's research (González, 1995).

Although the concept of autotopography suggests a method to comprehend Allan's relationship to his objects, investigations into the space propose that Allan's bond with his objects may be more complex than the *regressive nostalgia* identified by González. I would like to suggest there is a romantic level of consciousness to Allan's collecting habits, which demonstrates playfulness (through the way objects are grouped) not associated with autotopography to date. Cultural theorist Svetlana Boym investigates nostalgic behaviour further in her book, *The Future of Nostalgia (2001)*. She notes that it is evident from the word's linguistic make-up that it describes a wish to return home (nóstos) and the anxiety and pain (álgos) that being unable to do so brings about. Boym ascertains that nostalgia is not a longing for the place of home, but rather the temporal space of childhood (the one we could call home). Boym connects the notion of nostalgia with a desire to return repeatedly

to a particular time as if it were a space that could be revisited. It is a longing to overcome the continual progressive nature of time and preserve memories as pristine static moments (Boym, 2001). Boym isolates two types of nostalgia, demonstrating different characteristics of emotional attachment to the past. The first, restorative nostalgia is a desire for a bygone age, or a longing to go back to the time faithfully as it was, with no patina of age. Nostalgia of this kind takes itself very seriously, earnestly trying to recreate a moment that has passed. Allan's sentimentality for the past is not elegiac in its tone, but looks back fondly. Therefore, this enquiry aligns Allan's longing with Boym's second classification of nostalgia; reflective nostalgia. Differentiating the two, Boym writes:

> Nostalgia of the second type [Reflective] is more oriented toward an individual narrative that savours details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself. If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space. Restorative nostalgia takes itself deadly seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement or critical reflection. (Boym, 2001 p. 49)

In considering Allan's nostalgic objects I suggest that they are not gathered together to restore the past in an accurate way, but instead act as catalysts. He uses episodic memories connected with the items to reconsider himself as an adult. This type of nostalgia is reflective, pieced together from a critical perspective that allows Allan to ruminate on past events and take comfort from them. Consequently, Allan's collecting room and practice demonstrate that the individual memories that are imbued in the objects retain their individual recollections. In using the objects in his collecting room to elicit memories, Allan reinforces my claim that particular items could preserve their distinct associations in addition to being part of the greater narrative of the collection.

Many of the events and objects that Allan recalls are associated with his father, who seems to have been a very significant figure in his life. This is not just evidenced in the stories that Allan recounts, but also in the models he builds and how he displays the objects. One significant example that Allan communicates is about steam engines that he saw while during a summer holiday. Allan narrates:

> As a child, we used to go on our summer holidays in the *Austin Seven* to Suffolk to see my Mother's family. In the very early days, it must have been just after the war, I remember seeing a long line of traction engines, which obviously were all reaching the end of their life and they were waiting to be broken up; as they all were. They had had a return of lease of life during the war, because fuel was in short supply they got out the traction engines and used them for the things they use traction engines for. After the war, the development of the diesel lorry, they just weren't practical anymore. My father once told me that during the war he caught a lift on a steam lorry from Sussex to Liverpool and that it was the longest journey of his life. They could do ten miles an hour. I would quite enjoy that but most probably only once. Allan (2010)
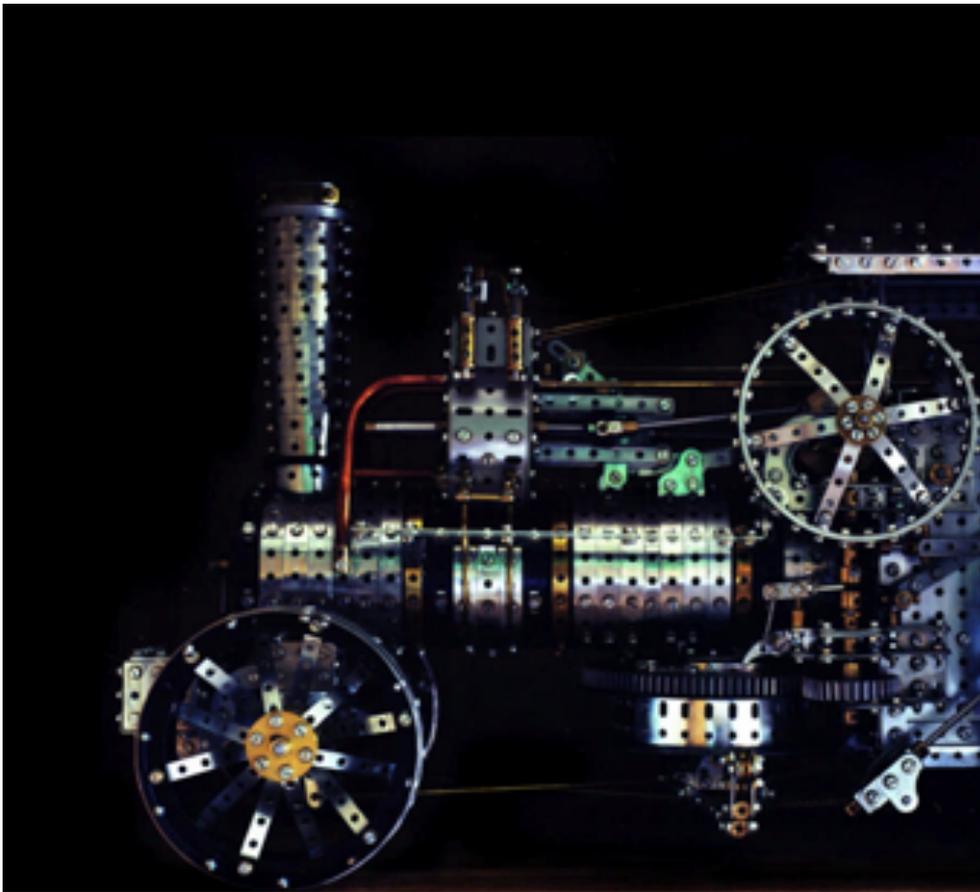
This narrative is triggered by a model that Allan has built over a two-year period, which sits behind his desk in a glass cabinet (Figure 29). As with the one-in-six soldiers in the previous case study, the miniaturisation of the model protects it from contamination by making the only way of engaging with it through the visual realm (Stewart, 1993). Yet, rather than being bought (like the figures of the previous collector), this model is a testament to Allan's dedication and commitment to creating a reminder of the events. The personal narrative relating to his father could be seen here as objectified, preserved in the model, creating a visual stimulus for this particular memory. Additionally by placing the steam engine model in a glass cabinet, Allan reinforces its position as a precious object safeguarding it further from the interference of others. This glass barrier not only creates a physical barrier, but also a metaphysical obstruction between the present and the past. In separating the objects from other items in the room, it isolates the associated event, while its visual presence allows him to recall it at will.

As with the previous case study *Making a Killing*, exploration of the displays highlights ideas about the importance of the collection that may be overlooked by considering the interview alone. In both of these case studies, my observations relate to ideas that the collector did not disclose directly in the interview. Rather, my photographs of the room reveal further insights into the collectors' relationships with objects. Unlike the previous collector, Allan does admit the personal significance of the objects, but does not talk directly about the relationship between himself and his father, instead discussing his fond memories of his childhood.

By presenting objects that show the positive associations with his father, Allan is creating what could be seen as an idealised version of their actual relationship. In principle, this is the same idea as the autotopographical arrangements explored by cultural theorist Nicolette Makovicky. She asserts that displaying photographs and objects together enables the present and past to be identified in one space, creating a synergy between life history and the projection of the self (Makovicky, 2007). In her study of Slovakian domestic displays, the participants often created displays that connected positive memories with their family. Presenting images of the family with precious and valuable items, the participants improved their sense of family and heritage by using their own associative discourse. Drawing from an earlier essay by cultural theorist Daniel Miller, Makovicky uses the term *transcendent identity* to identify the relationship between objects and photographs. She asserts:

> The relation between the individual and lineage as *transcendent identity* was made through the collection, storage, and display of artifacts in the space behind the glass doors…Furthermore, the relation between the past and the present is topographical, rather than simply temporal: while the displays may at times be used as props for the verbal narration of family history, in everyday life they bring the past into the present through the permanent presence of their displays—in the living rooms of my respondents the past and present come to occupy the same dimension. (Makovicky, 2007 p. 296)

In effect, the exhibitions of objects overcome temporality through their spatial displays; this enables the possessor to create a more pleasing correlation between their past and present, constructing a more ideal version of their biography. While Allan does have photographs of his family members within his displays of objects, I also propose that by selecting specific objects that allow him to retain a positive impression of his relationship with his father, the collector is creating his own fictionalised version of the past, or an ideal past. Yet , other stories obtained in relation to Allan's collections hint that the paternal relationship was not entirely straightforward. For instance, one memory that Allan recalls about his career decision, discloses that although his father asserted that he would never make a career from drawing, he rebelled against his father and became an architect. This account offers up a different perspective of his relationship to his father. Allan remembers:

> At school, I always came top in metalwork [and] woodwork…. I was quite good at maths; English I was hopeless at. My father always said to me as a child, when I spent my whole time drawing, 'You'll never earn your living drawing'. I don't know whether I chose what I chose in opposition to what he said, but I had an uncle who was a civil engineer who gave me old drawings, tracing paper and drawing instruments and I used to trace these drawings and I quite enjoyed it. In fact, I used the tracings to go for my first interview. I was interested in engineering and almost became an engineer. But an engineer, generally in my days started off working in a workshop, for two years. I had experienced an army workshop; it was dark and it was dirty, and I thought I don't want to spend two years in a workshop learning the practical side; I want to go into a drawing office and be clean and have drawing boards and I am turned on by drawing boards and drawing equipment. So, my childhood friend's father had been approached by an architectural practice; would his son be interested in going into a drawing office, but he definitely wasn't. So he asked 'would I be interested?' (Over the years, he had got some architectural books for me to look at, and I found them a bit uninteresting.) So I went along and

showed them my drawings, these seemed to be ok, and I was offered a job
at five pounds a week and I accepted. Allan (2010)

This particular narrative was triggered by an old drawing board that was folded in the
corner of the space. This object is not deliberately on show like other items, but tucked
away out of view. I consider the difference in display here further demonstrates the
manner in which the hierarchy of display in Allan's collecting room is used for the positive
reinforcement of 'happy family' memories. This narrative is quite different in tone to the
other stories where he holds his father in high regard. In his aspiration to prove his father
wrong, Allan also mentions cleanliness as key factor in his career decisions. Allan chose to
work for an architectural practice, as the workspace was cleaner than his father's garage. The
creativity and order that is presented throughout the collecting room is complimented by
Allan's description of an ideal working environment. This shows a relationship between the
recollections Allan is making and the spaces he chooses to create.

Allan's room is not fixed, but the design of the room developed throughout the duration
of this three-year research project, with cabinets being acquired to show various items. It
could be said that Allan is asserting himself through placing items, formulating an identity
through the space that is specific to him. In relation to this, it is important to note that
Allan's wife has the final decision on the rest of the rooms in the house, but in his collecting
room, he has the final say. Having a dedicated room was not a simple decision, but the result
of a series of complex negotiations about domestic space. Talking about the experiences of
moving into his new home, Allan relays the experience of his daily life during retirement
and some of the issues that have enabled him to have a dedicated space for his interests.
This narrative shows the complexities of sharing a domestic space with a marital partner
and contributes some indication to the circumstances that may have led to Allan wanting a
collecting room to relax in. Allan explains:

> One of the items of choosing a house to retire to was having enough
> room to do my hobbies. Not having a house specifically designed for those
> occupations has its limitations, because you've got to have what's there,
> what's available and what you as a couple agree is going to be available.
> So the rooms are chosen on what's available, and what would be least
> disruptive for the rest of the household, basis. The *Meccano room* was
> chosen; we have two bedrooms up here and the smaller bedroom, which
> was where I was originally going to go. Carol decided that (it wasn't my
> decision, this was a diplomatic decision,) she didn't want me spilling out
> onto the landing, which was the original intention; I was having these
> cabinets on the landing. That we would sacrifice our guests, and give
> them the small room, so I could be contained in this room and not under
> the pain of death spill out onto the landing. So, the decisions were a
> compromise. Allan (2010)

It is clear that Alan's wife is not always sympathetic to Allan's hobbies and that his
collections can be the cause of tension between him and his wife. It could be considered
that one of the many reasons that the collector enjoys the space and time within his
collecting room is that it is entirely under his control and away from the more complex
negotiations found in other domestic arrangements in the house. Here the interview implies

Figure 30 : Image from the series,
Unobtainable Dreams (2010)

that the collector is disorderly in his space and the collection needs to be contained within one room. Meanwhile the photographs and video obtained from the collecting room do not depict an untidy person, but an organised and neat collector (Figure 30). The juxtaposition between sound and image is essentially telling two separate sets of information, which individually do not convey a full representation of Allan's circumstances.

The distinction between the audio interview and the visual imagery suggests that Allan and his wife do not always share the same opinions about his collection. This is true of many collectors, and studies into collecting have revealed that collectors' often transform or mute their passion to appease partners, who do not fully understand their enthusiasm for collecting (Muensterberger, 1994; Gelber, 1999; Shelton, 2001). I would like to propose that the story here is played out for an intended audience, which could be myself as researcher or more likely other collectors. In doing this, Allan is aiming to create sympathy for his collecting habits. In using humour in this excerpt, Allan could be masking more deep-rooted tension, than it initially implies. The comedic role partially conceals his annoyance, while still relaying some of the difficulties that have arisen from dividing up the domestic space. Alternatively, this amusing accent could be used to cover up his own guilt in taking a more desirable space for his own private use. In either case, the performance aspect reveals that Allan is aware of his audience, and that the interview is more self-aware than it may initially seem.

This performative aspect is found again in another section of the interview, where Allan describes the freedom he gains from the room. He asserts that the collecting room is free from the pressure of time, which is identified when he acknowledges that the pace of life is slower in the *Meccano Room*. He enjoys the activities within the *Meccano Room* as they are not negated by the restraints of time, and he has the control to decide the amount of time he spends on any task. Allan explains:

> I like them because it's the one thing in my life that doesn't have a time limit. I make the decisions on how long I take, how I sort the problems out and when I decide it's finished. Because a model reaches a point where you think, 'I don't need to do any more to that, I think that is complete.' No one else makes that decision for you, no-one says: 'Shouldn't you go up and get on with your with your modelling?' or: 'Haven't you finished that yet?' It's not like being at work, deadlines etc. The only deadlines are self-imposed ones. I never work to deadlines if I can possibly help it. I never say I am going to have this model finished for this particular exhibition. If it's finished it's finished, if it's not it will be ready for the next exhibition and so on. Because the projects take a period of years, you can't give yourself that sort of thing; it's meant to be pleasurable. So, you should not give yourself deadlines. Allan (2010)

The voice that Allan adopts for the lines 'Shouldn't you go up and get on with your with your modelling?' and 'Haven't you finished that yet?' has a humour to it, that has connotations of being nagged. From this humour it becomes clear that Allan's main comfort found within his *Meccano Room* is freedom to engage in the activities he wishes, and to be free from the stresses and restraints of time, whether these outside factors come from work, or as suggested through the audio material, his family life. Throughout the interview, he continually asserts the calming influence of his hobbies, most clearly in the opening line of the film, where he says that he uses his recreational pursuits to overcome stress. He articulates:

> I have always managed to switch unpleasant things - to pleasant things. In times of stress, or whatever, I am able to switch to think about something that is pleasant. I now have so many subjects I can switch to - it's wonderful, 'cause you can become totally absorbed in that, rather than anything that's going on around you; you don't want to be involved in. Allan (2010)

This statement is crucial to the ideas of Allan's collecting room, as he clearly defines the purpose of the space. It is a place of refuge, where he can escape from other aspects of his life. The room of his own is where he can let his imagination overcome the interference he encounters in other aspects of his life. This private sanctuary is filled with many different distractions that provide opportunities for short bursts of activity within a wide range of topics, but the variety is key to never getting bored or frustrated. These are private reveries or aspirations from the past that could not be realised at the time, but can be enjoyed now as an adult. The stimulation is about achievement and having something that was denied in the past. Reflecting on these objects, Allan says:

> I suppose they were on the wish list that, as a child, you couldn't have, and as an adult, you can. I have found this to be so with lots of adults that

collect toys. They were childhood unobtainable dreams. So as an adult, you can obtain them. What is interesting I think is that instead of buying modern unobtainable dreams, you have to collect the ones you could not get hold of as a child. Allan (2010)

In effect, Allan's contemporaneous pleasures compensate him for what he was denied as a child. His current indulgences recompense not only his current situations but also enable him to indulge in reverie of the past. The objects and collection are not just nostalgic, they allow him to accomplish ambitions that had been forgotten and create a playful link between his past and present self. Yet the objects also present another type of distraction, problem solving. This engagement with puzzles allows Allan to forget his anxieties, as his concentration is displaced through the activity. Allan uses the all-encompassing interactions with these activities as a way of switching off his emotional stresses and reprogramming them into a more positive activity. In particular, the stimulus of thinking about a puzzle or problem enables him to engage with the task at hand and forget about his worries.

> When I start on a model I am so involved in it that you cannot stop, it's your life. And you're onto the next problem, the next problem, and the next sequence and, ah, it's like a drug. It becomes all consuming and takes all of your time, you forget about work stresses and the troubles going on. Allan (2010)

Even Allan's displacement activities are imbibed with nostalgia, demonstrating his fondness for the past. It seems every aspect of the room is an assertion of Allan's identity and the defining moments that make him the person he is today. His refuge is in the past, which he views as being a significant factor in shaping the man he would become. Memory and forgetting are tied together here in this space and in the activities Allan undertakes. This research has continually asserted that memory and collecting are connected but here as with the previous case study, collecting has also become a displacement activity. In searching out items from his childhood, Allan reconnects his present with his past. For example on the bookshelf, there is a collection of Eagle annuals, which are gathered into a numerical sequence. When asked about the annuals, Allan reminisces:

> Our local newsagent used to come and buy petrol from my father, who had a garage. He used to bring our newspapers and things and suggested to my father that there was a new comic coming out, and it was very good and he ought to buy it for me. So, my father told me this and said I could have it. It was four pence and halfpenny a week. After school, I used to run down to the garage to collect my comic and avidly read it. After the first year, they started producing an annual. This was 1950. I had the first annual bought for me, but subsequent years, for some reason or another, I had lost interest. Although I had the comic, I never had the annual. So as an adult, I decided that it would be nice to have a complete collection of Eagle annuals, the best years - which are from one to ten. After that the editor changed and Eagle was never quite the same as it was in the early years. Allan (2010)

Allan's memory recounts his enthusiasm, both in the past and present for the annuals, through his description of running to collect it from his father and his descriptive use of words such as 'avidly'. Yet, we can see a different type of hobby here from just reading the

comics. In addition to this, Allan uses the act of collecting as a stimulating pastime. This is reinforced by a visual exploration of the collecting room, where one can note clues to Allan's enthusiasm for collecting. The room is filled with small collections of objects and lists of objects that are sought, such as the one cataloguing his Eagle annuals which denotes the volume number and the condition of that particular book. In the interview, Allan indicated that the main intention here was to retain the best years of the comic, and through noting the conditional value of each annual it may appear that Allan has strived to recreate a mint condition collection. However, the image of his annuals reveals his actual collection is far from perfectly preserved (figure 31).

Further clues within the display denote that the annuals may represent a different activity, such as the row of Matchbox cars displayed on the shelf with the books. This succession of vehicles demonstrates the change in one particular toy through the duration of Allan's life. The manner in which the cars are exhibited, suggests that Allan is proud of this small, complete collection. Furthermore that the patina of age displayed on the various model cars is part of the nostalgic appeal. Allan enjoys the traces of history and process of time to be discoverable on the objects he collects. In considering the quality of the items it could be advocated that Allan is more involved in the thrill of collecting and seeking out the objects, than the final items themselves.

The joy of seeking out objects has been identified by several cultural theorists as one of the main appeals behind collecting (Baudrillard, 1994; Muensterberger, 1994; Gelber, 1999).

Figure 31 : Image from the series, *Unobtainable Dreams* (2010)

Discussing the pleasure of hunting objects out for collections, cultural theorist Steven M. Gelber asserts:

> Almost without exception, collectors embrace the hunting metaphor and acknowledge that pursuit is as important, and sometimes more important than possession… The joy of the hunt is based on the emotional response elicited by the process of search and discovery. (Gelber, 1999 p. 81)

Allan, like all the collectors in this study, is enamoured with the thrill of searching for objects and the list indicated in the imagery has enabled Allan to find annuals he had not yet discovered and to avoid duplication. The placement of the list atop the books may signify the completion of the puzzle or a careful record for the order and organisation that is evident elsewhere in the room.

The Meccano Room essentially presents two different types of objects: the nostalgic triggers to the past and the toys that present him with a puzzle to solve. As Allan asserts, he continuously switches between these different activities according to different moods or whims at the time. The collecting room, being a separate private space, allows Allan to place aside one of his hobbies, until he is ready to commence interacting with it again. Therefore, the items are static, there as permanent reminders waiting upon their owner to animate them with his short bursts of interaction. In effect, each item moves in and out of time through its relationship to Allan. This interesting and rather special relationship to time was a key factor in designing the artwork that depicts the collecting room. In the resulting artwork of the room, the time-based media are interweaved, shifting between photographs and moving images. These changes are subtle, which allow the viewer to question the relevance of time to Allan's collection and the room in which they are housed. My construction of a narrative framework consolidates Allan's accounts, allowing his narration and memories to bring the static space to life.

Depicting the sanctuary of the nostalgic space, the film embodies the chopping and changing between objects and activities, moving between interest and stillness, back and forth in time. It creates narratives that are disjointed and told in relevant bursts, drawing on the different objects and timelines that Allan relayed through the interview. The film is an observation of Allan's microcosm, wherein he can reflect on different aspects of his life. It presents his memories, experiences and aspirations that are imbued in his ambitious models and objects. The space like my re-presentation of it, is layered with nostalgia, fantasy and reverie, and through their juxtapositions aims to create connections that the audience can piece together about the man who fully inhabits this space.

The film *Unobtainable Dreams* is intended to be shown looped, projected large on a gallery wall. The ideal size of the projected image would be 2.40 m by 1.35m. As I stated in the Practice Review (page 63), films presented in galleries can be more effective if they are not strongly sequential. This allows audiences to choose how they engage with the film and the duration that they watch for. In light of this, the film is designed to create connections

between different temporalities from Allan's biography, this kaleidoscopic presentation of the film allows viewers to either watch the film in full or just sections that engage their interest. Ideally, to this end, the soundtrack will be played in to the gallery space through speakers, engaging audiences and attracting them to spend time looking at the visual aspects of the film. Finally seating should be arranged to allow viewers to spend time with Allan's collecting room, allowing them time reflect on the film.

DVD : *Unobtainable Dreams* (2010)

4.03 Hook, Line and Sinker

4.03 Hook, Line and Sinker

This case study explores the effects that collecting has on one family, using interviews with the collector and her daughter to gain insight into the various tensions that arise from collections in cohabited spaces. In particular, this enquiry looks to the different manner in which objects are displayed throughout the home to suggest that the emotional attachment to these objects differs, depending on where the item is located. Finally, I consider that these object displays are transcendental, designed to inject an element of fantasy into the domestic space.

Trigg,[*] the subject of this case study, is a female collector who lives in a semi-detached house in the Home Counties. She works full-time in retail management and lives in a four-bedroom house, which she shares with her husband. Trigg has two adult children, who have left home, but both return regularly to visit. Unlike the two previous case studies where the collection was contained within one space, Trigg's Disney collection is in every room in the house. During initial contact with Trigg, she mentioned that her collection was large but that she had a collecting room that was formerly her son's bedroom. Decorated with dark navy blue wallpaper the room is quite claustrophobic, a feeling which is also produced from the amount of objects in the space. Roughly ten foot by twelve foot, the space contains a bed, some fitted wardrobes, a desk and several chests of drawers, which are placed on either side of the room making a sort of aisle through the middle of the space to the window. Piled up on every surface in the room are toys, broken pieces of furniture, books and objects that are still in plastic bags. This room feels more like jumble sale, rather than being a place of pride and presentation as with the collecting rooms discussed in the two previous case studies. The house is in a small cul-de-sac and it is very quiet in the room, with no obvious noises other than the television that is on downstairs at the time of my visits.

As with the previous case studies Trigg's testimony concentrates on the positive aspects of the collection, such as objects she particularly likes or her aspirations for future display. I would like to propose that one of the possible reasons for this might be connected to the fantasy that is imbued in collections. As I have already asserted, I consider collecting to be, an activity that displaces the collector's anxieties allowing him or her to forget issues that in part may be affecting them. Since the collecting activity is a key strategy in repressing concerns, collectors may not wish to raise these issues within their interviews. Therefore, the interviews gained tend to convey the more positive aspects of collecting and rely on an interpretation of the space to reveal some of the more complex underlying motivations.

In this case study, Trigg suggested that I should interview her daughter, who had shown an interest in the investigation. Unlike her mother's testimony, Ellie reflects on the psychological impacts and motivations for the collection, making suggestions about the cause and effect that the collecting practice has had on the family, and more specifically her

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[*] As stated in my Methodology section, every collector in this research chose a pseudonym. It is worth noting that Trigg selected her name, as it was a nickname that she was given by her children.

mother. Through using the two interviews in conjunction with one another, I was able to not only consider the experience of the collector, but also the impact that the collection has on her family and the living space that Trigg shares with her husband.

Trigg identifies that she made several small collections of different paraphernalia, such as ornaments and plates previous to her Disney collection, but not in a committed way. Trigg's hobby began with a memorable occasion that stands out for the family: their first holiday to America. Inspired by the enjoyment of this vacation, the family purchased several pieces of memorabilia to remember the wonderful time that they all had together. Aspiring to retain a strong memory of the holiday, Trigg continued purchasing Disney paraphernalia on her return to the United Kingdom. She recollects:

> Our first trip to Walt Disney World in Florida was when the interest first started. It was something that I had never really been interested in at all, in actual fact, even when my children were little. They didn't really used to watch Walt Disney Films, or anything. And we actually took the two children to Walt Disney World in Florida and I just then became hooked. It just went on from there really. I would collect anything that was to do with Walt Disney: snow globes, cuddly toys, books, ornaments, teapots...
> Trigg (2011)

Prompted by a specific event, Trigg's consumer behaviour changed and she found herself acquiring more targeted objects. *The Literature Review* (page 21) highlights the idea that collections rarely have specific beginnings or ends, but in this example, there is a clear event that signifies the beginning of her collecting practice (Bal, 1994). In order to suggest possible reasons for this sudden interest in the Disney, it is important to consider events that led up to the holiday and the formation of the collection. While Trigg does not discuss these events in her interview at all, Ellie notes that the family holiday took place immediately after the death of Trigg's parents. Ellie recalls:

> So the Disney stuff really started to evolve and grow, I think, since the death of my Nana and Granddad and the family holidays… which we used the… my mum and dad used that money for us to have a family holiday.
> Ellie (2011)

As Ellie describes, the vacation took place as a result of the family bereavement. I would like to consider that this trauma might have been one of the motivations for the collection. Trauma is not one of the sixteen motivations identified by Pearce (page 15), nevertheless, psychologist Werner Muensterberger proposes it may be a catalyst for collecting. In his observations, Muensterberger makes a connection between traumatic events and investing in objects, writing:

> Observing dedicated collectors… one has here and there a chance to recognise a kind of persistence which seems to lie a compulsive preoccupation, and like all compulsive action is moulded by irrational impulses. [These] may range from such concrete incidents as physical hurt or emotional trauma or actual neglect, to more or less tangible states of alarm and anxiety, particularly when no real help and comfort was forthcoming. (Muensterberger, 1994 p. 8)

Muensterberger goes on to explain that an investment in objects can 'keep feelings of anxiety or uncertainty under control' (Muensterberger, 1994). In these circumstances, the subject invests in objects that are predictable and enduring rather than relying on other people for emotional support. In relation to Muensterberger's observations, I would like to suggest that the trauma of losing her parents might have acted as a cue for Trigg's collecting habits. As the interviews with Trigg and Ellie imply, the collection was very pronounced from this point forth. I would like to propose that the trip to Disney World might have also had some impact on Trigg's surge in collecting activity.

Cultural theorist Janet Wasko has written the book, *Understanding Disney (2001),* to relay some of the complex and intricate ideas that surround the brand and marketing of Disney. Identifying the characteristics that have been culturally formed around our notion of the Disney World Parks, Wasko notes:

> Certainly, this is an attractive fantasy – to be able to escape without any effort from one's current life or world for another more appealing one. The fantasy and escapist themes are stressed in the emphasis on magic, for example the magic kingdom. But this is not a world of fantasy or magic run amok. Fantasy is carefully controlled, and little is left to the imagination… (Wasko, 2001 p. 118)

Disney's brand of homogenised fun is carefully constructed to enable the family to rest assured that their stay would entail magic and fantasy, which are synonymous with the brand. This comforting mirage is achieved by placing current time on standstill, as the focus is on either the future or the nostalgic past (Bryman, 1995; Tuan, 1998). In this new temporal location the family could forget about the recent trauma and be immersed in other worlds and other times, escaping the trivialities of daily life.

The suppression of the present has the effect of making visitors feel better about the world in which they currently live in. By presenting rosy pictures of the past and the future, the problems of the present can be played down.' (Bryman, 2004)

Visitors to Disney World are completely immersed in wonderful and exciting experiences that have no relation to everyday life. Research into souvenirs would argue that through purchasing ready-made souvenirs Trigg and her family aspire to take this experience home with them (Stewart, 1993). Aiming to use the mass-marketed items, the family acquired an assortment of paraphernalia as a pre-emptive attempt to remember the vacation. Both Trigg and her daughter identified that during the trip they purchased several pieces of memorabilia each. When asked about her reasons for buying the objects Trigg answered:

> Possibly trying to recreate that form of the wonderful holidays that we have had, because it is, you go away on the holiday and you forget all your worries at home, your job, you're away from home for two weeks, you don't have to worry about work, you don't have to worry about anything at home, and possibly to recreate that and bring that back into your own life, when you actually return to your own country. Trigg (2011)

I argue that in creating displays of the souvenirs in the home, Trigg is creating transcendental objects, that allow her to recall the holiday and the wonderful time the family had. This is evident in images of the home that show the Disney paraphernalia exhibited in small-scale displays. For example the collection of primary coloured bowls and tiles, kept on the side in the kitchen (Figure 32). These bright objects create a lively backdrop, hiding the more mundane household correspondence, which is filed behind a bright red Mickey Mouse bowl with ears. While a further example is the photograph taken

Figure 32 : Image from the series, *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011)

of Trigg's dressing table, revealing her reading glasses case and make-up bag mixed in with Pinocchio and a Fantasia snow globe (Figure 33).

When asked about the display of the objects, Trigg notes that the objects are set out so the family can enjoy the objects that she has acquired. Each display mixes everyday objects with those acquired from Disney World, creating interesting and complex layers of fantasy and triviality in one space. It may be a consequence of living with a collection, but I consider the connections between the objects to be more purposefully created, aiming to recreate the fantasy ascribed to the holiday when at home. These souvenirs then become indexical to the vacation, signifying an escape from work worries and everyday life. While this is true of any souvenir, there is a recognisable difference between purposefully selecting one item to represent the whole holiday and the acquisition of multiple objects. In order to consider why Trigg purchased so many items I would like to return to some of the analytical studies of Disney World Parks.

The whole environment in Disney World is carefully constructed and planned to enable opportunities to purchase souvenirs, or invest in memories of this wonderful time. Even regular 'Kodak Moment' photographic opportunities are made available, so the family can relish the wonderful time it is having (Tuan, 1998). Unpicking these intricate fabrications of the truth, philosopher Umberto Eco has specifically noted that the construction of the park emphasises consumption. He writes:

> The Main Street facades are presented to us as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disguised supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing that you are still playing. (Eco and Eco, 1986 p. 43)

It is conceivable that the design of the Walt Disney Parks had some effect on Trigg and that this increase in purchasing may have been the result of being under the influence of Disney's clever and strategic merchandising. At the same time, Ellie notes in the interview that her mother did have a tendency to purchase above her needs, prior to the family holiday. Ellie asserts:

> Mum started collecting, like I say it became more obvious with the Disney when we went on the holidays as children to Disney. In terms of her habits, I would say that the compulsive spending has been a habit that she has had certainly since she married my Dad. Obviously as you grow older, you become more perceptive to what is going on around you, don't you? So I distinctly remember when we were children she would collect lots of things, she would always have more, of everything. She wouldn't be happy with just having one or two things. Ellie (2011)

This would suggest that Trigg already had a heightened relationship to consumption previously to going to Disney World. Yet combining this, with the marketing strategies of Disney and the possible effects of the family bereavement, Trigg began to purchase a large number of Disney based products that would form the basis of her collections.

The manner in which Trigg acquires her objects is also an area that needs investigation in order to understand the collection and its display. I would like to draw from a study into gender and collecting by cultural theorists Russell Belk and Melanie Wallendorf. Belk's and Wallendorf's essay *Of Mice and Men: Gender identity in collection (1997)*, identifies that males collect in a more austere and rigid manner, while females are more likely to casually acquire items singularly and over time (Belk and Wallendorf, 1994). Further to this, Belk and Wallendorf claim that male collectors in the main create ordered displays, while female collectors create visual arrangements that act as a form of decoration rather than a systematic response to the objects themselves.

I would like to propose that Trigg's aggressive acquisition challenges this notion, as she purchases objects in a directed fashion. This is particularly evident in her teapot collection where she has acquired every design in all of the available sizes of small, medium and large (Figure 34). Nevertheless, in the reception rooms of her home Trigg displays her objects in arrangements that are more akin to the female model of collecting. My photography of these arrangements show a sense of pride in the placement and display of the objects, which seem almost contradictory to the photographs and films made of her collecting room. Considering

Figure 34 : Image from the series, *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011)

collectors and gender, art historian Sarah Cheang argues that female collectors challenge the preconceived ideas of masculinised pastimes. She asserts that rather than fitting into gender categories, female collectors oppose them. Cheang writes:

> [The] acknowledgement of women as collectors not only has the power to unseat gender identities and even… to threaten male control of capital and power through an undisguised unity of production and consumption. The female collector… has fractured the masculine and feminine identities rooted in dichotomy. (Cheang, 2001 p. 60)

In effect, Trigg's collecting practice crosses both gender types, neither being exclusively masculine or feminine. One explanation for this might be that Trigg is conscious of sharing the space with her family, and as such wants to display the items in a fashion that is pleasing to visitors. Yet in one section of the interview Trigg asserts that she does not really mind that the objects may not go with the decoration of the house. Trigg says:

> I have to actually say that they are possibly not in keeping with the décor of the room. They definitely really don't go with the style of the décor that we have in the living room, but unfortunately I like them so that's all that matters (laughs). Trigg (2011)

This statement makes me think that rather than considering others, the manner in which she displays objects is more to do with a sense of pride rather than a need for external validation. For example, the Swarovski Crystal ornaments are presented in an elaborate arrangement behind the glass doors in a bureau in the dining room. While other ornaments are cluttered together on shelves, that also contain books and DVDs. This pride is particularly evident in the manner in which Trigg's most prized objects, her teapots, are displayed. Each of these pieces has a lace doily, to ensure that it is clearly evident that these are prized pieces and they are presented to their best advantage (Figure 35). Discussing the teapots, Trigg notes:

> I do really, really like the actual teapots, the way that they are made, the style of them, they depict your more original type Mickey Mouse when Walt Disney first created him, when it was more Steamboat Willy, the black and white. That is probably why I do find those more appealing than modern day Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck. etc. Trigg (2011)

In her description, the collector identifies that she likes the teapots because they depict a nostalgic version of her beloved cartoon characters. These particular figures are an objectification of the fair weather sentimental past, which were identified above as being features of the Disney Parks. In creating a history that may have never existed, Disney have created evocative objects that act as souvenirs of an idealised past. Differing from the two forms of nostalgia discussed in the previous case study, this particular type is employed by marketing executives and has been called *armchair nostalgia* or *ersatz nostalgia*, linking it to consumption and merchandising (Appadurai, 1996; Boym, 2001). This type of longing relies on the creativity of the consumer to invent a fantasy past, not one that was not experienced, one that was only imagined. Cultural theorist Appadurai explains:

Figure 35 : Image from the series,
Hook, Line and Sinker (2011)

> This inculcated sentiment, calculated to intensify the tempo of purchasing by toying with the merchandiser's version of the end of history, is the latest twist in the compact between nostalgia and fantasy in modern merchandising. Rather than expecting the consumer to supply memories while the merchandiser supplies the lubricant of nostalgia, now the viewer need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she never suffered. This relationship might be called armchair nostalgia, nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory. (Appadurai, 1996 p. 37)

This type of backwards or faked nostalgia causes a longing for a period of time that could not have existed, an idealistic fantasy of the past. It can be surmised that the atmosphere of Disney World induced this wistfulness and this experience created a romanticised sense of the past. Yet, Trigg does demonstrate a genuine attachment to Disney World, because it holds memories of the wonderful family holiday they had together. Considering the differences between the family memories and ersatz nostalgia, it becomes evident that Disney has infiltrated not just the house, but also the family's whole life. Disney has weaved a spell of magic, entwining honest recollections with marketable memories, covering the house with a web of enchanted consumerism. Disney has become so embedded in their lives that it is incorporated into every room in the house, from the kitchen to the bedroom. Trigg herself asserts that the objects could 'very possibly take over the whole house' (2011). Even the family bathroom evidences a display of Mickey Mouse based ornaments: a toothbrush holder and a soap dispenser (Figure 36). In trying to describe her parent's house Ellie discusses the displays in the upstairs rooms. Ellie says:

Then upstairs in the house in my Mum and Dad's bedroom, Mum has snow-globes, and some of the stuffed toys and then in my brother's old bedroom, there are more stuffed toys and most of the Disney books and memorabilia and then she has got some of the other teapots… and that has kind of over spilled into what we call the spare bedroom. Where there are more stuffed toys, then as it has grown and since my brother and I have left home. It's kind of developed. Most of the upstairs, actually in my old bedroom, there is quite a lot of stuffed toys and pieces, as well now. So, it is kind of growing, throughout Mum and Dad's house really. Ellie (2011)

As the collection has escalated it has taken over the newly vacated rooms, which may suggest that the collection is a replacement for the family members who have moved away. This would connect to Muensterberger's study, where he argues that collecting objects is often compensatory, offering the subject control where he or she may have experienced loss (Muensterberger, 1994). This case study presents similarities to Allan's collection of objects that relate to his father. In comparing the two, both Trigg and Allan retain objects that have a connection to their parents. Allan's objects, however, are directly linked to memories of his father, while Trigg's collection seems to be a result of the loss of parents. This idea is evident in Ellie's interview, where she also considers that the collection may be related to losing family members. Ellie asserts:

I do, I kind of step back from it and think and I do think that she is doing it to make herself feel happier or to compensate herself because she has lost my Nana and Granddad. And she was an only, the only child for so long because when my Mum was younger she lost her brother Bryan. Who was quite, well physically and mentally disabled. So I know they went through quite a traumatic time, when she was younger, much younger when she was six. So I don't know, she doesn't deal with loss very well. So
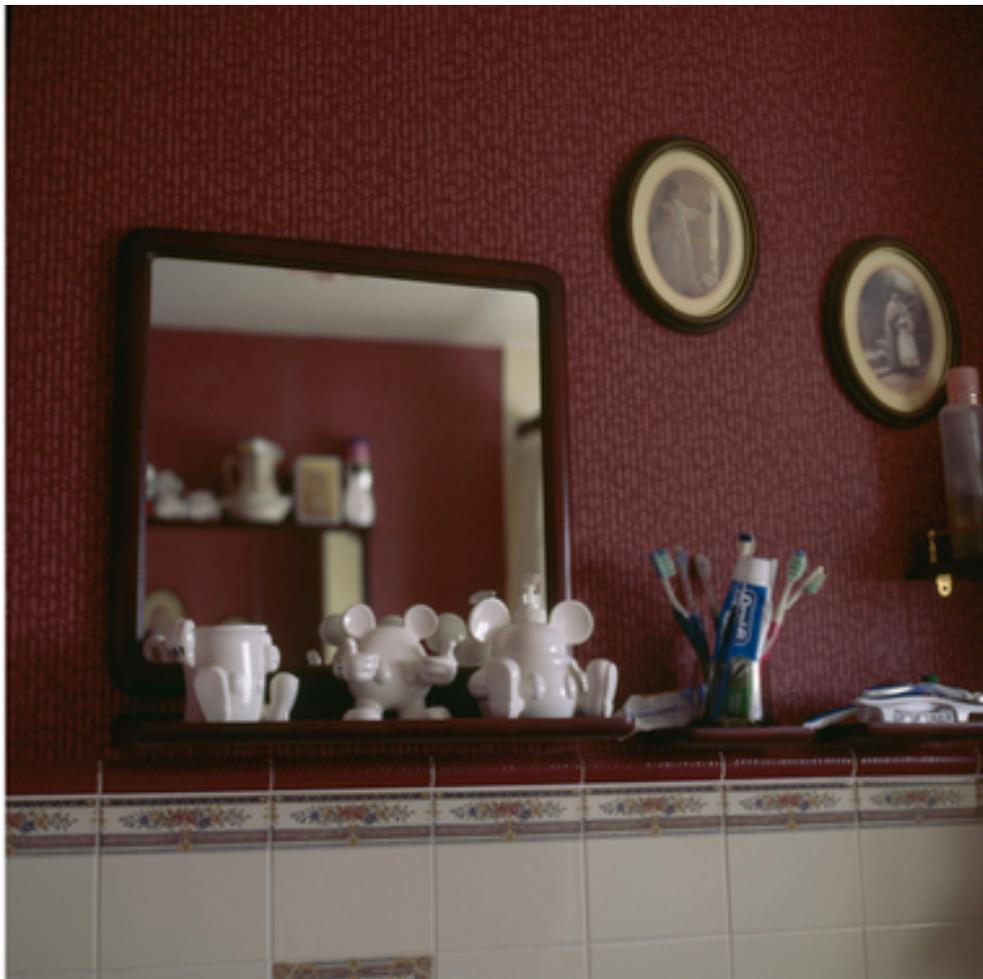
Figure 36 : Image from the series, *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011)

the loss of my you know Bryan, who would have been my Uncle, the loss of dealing with my Nana and Granddad, and then obviously in a sense losing my brother and I as we have grown up and moved out the house as well, and I think that she is collecting because maybe she feels a little bit lonely, or it is something to keep her entertained. It's a hobby but maybe I think it is beyond a hobby, I think there is a deeper underlying reason to why she is doing it and I think it is an obsession, to make herself feel happy, but I don't think it necessarily is, actually. Ellie (2011)

This perpetual cycle of acquisition that has been discernable from the beginning of this case study might be a celebration of a past holiday or it may be triggered by unhappiness. It could even be produced from the tensions built up from the habitual spending and consumption. Trigg does not necessarily realise that her collection itself might be the cause of many of the family's tensions and apprehensions.

I regard that the narratives derived from this collection are more complex than just notions of replacement, as they may also hint at other tensions such as compulsion and shame relating to the clutter. In contrast to the previous case studies which explored spaces that allowed the collector creative freedom, I consider Trigg's collecting room as fundamentally a storage space for the objects that are no longer prized. This idea is echoed in the photographs taken in the collecting room where it is possible to note new toys remain in the bags in which they were purchased, numerous objects retain their price tags, and new books are placed on the shelf in their plastic covers (Figure 37). These objects feel as though they have been forgotten or abandoned.

Figure 37 : Image from the series, *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011)

I propose that this space serves the purpose of providing somewhere to hide some of the objects that Trigg has accumulated, possibly allowing her to overlook the fact that she even purchased them. When I enquired if Trigg spent much time in the collecting room, she replied that none of the family really used the room. Trigg says:

> In all honesty, not that often these days, now we have a laptop. Our original PC is upstairs, so if we needed to use the internet we would go into the room. Now we have a laptop… we don't spend an awful lot of time in there at all, anymore. Trigg (2011)

I consider this to be a key piece of evidence in understanding the creation of Trigg's collecting room. Susan Pearce's research *Collecting in Contemporary Practice (1998),* states that collectors who share their space with families, commonly have smaller collections or that they are contained in one space (Pearce, 1998). Trigg's collection however, is not only large, but it also infiltrates the whole house. This makes Trigg's collecting practice quite contentious for the family. In discussing this Ellie highlights some of the frustrations she feels towards her mother's collection. Ellie says:

> From my point of view, and my family's point of view when I go to their house I get frustrated because it's just like oh my God there is so much stuff, everywhere. This is ridiculous, you are a middle aged woman grow out of it. Why do you need to have this stuff? Its just stuff. It's not really making you happy it's just there, it's more to clean, but as you get older you start thinking about all these little niggly things and I get frustrated. I know it frustrates my Dad. And it also frustrates me from a point of view because I know they can't afford to buy the stuff. So I go through a feeling of mixed emotions, sometimes, I am just like frustrated and I get angry and then I do speak my mind. I do say: 'Why are you buying this stuff - this is silly!' Ellie (2011)

The pressure on the family to live with these objects has become consuming, having serious consequences on family relationships. The frustrations described by Trigg's daughter are just one of the many contributing factors that make this collection difficult to live with. The collection physically interrupts family life, becoming both a burden on space and finance. Ellie regards her mother's habit as being an 'obsession' fuelled by the Disney brand and fantasy that it markets itself on. Ellie's reflections come full circle to the start, where Trigg asserted that she became 'hooked' by the fantasy of their first holiday.

> As far as the collections go, I don't think it moves; people have to work around it (laughs.) Rather than her moving the stuff out the way, apart from the cuddly toys, everything stays where it is. I don't think she cares about it; she says she doesn't care about what people think. I don't think she does, about the teapots and various bit and pieces, I don't think she genuinely cares. That's her thing, that is what she enjoys doing. But I think that family find it a slight embarrassment. Like I said, why is a fifty-year-old woman collecting Disney toys? It is a bit of a strange obsession. But then again maybe it is linking to the whole escapism and fantasy of Disney, you know that Disney, all of the brand of Disney that everything is supposed to be cuddly and beautiful and lovely. And she has bought into that; she has been hook, line and sinker bought into that. Ellie (2011)

The frustrations of her family may have had some affect on Trigg and her collections. For although Ellie says that her mother does not care what people think about the collection, Trigg does admit that the cuddly toys embarrass her. Trigg says:

> I must admit, sometimes now I do get quite embarrassed, I think only specifically because other people put so much emphasis on it, it tends to be the butt of peoples jokes like the children, my husband, possibly some of my work colleagues. It tends to be a source of entertainment. So I suppose sometimes I do tend to get a bit embarrassed by, not so much the ornaments, but the cuddly toys. Trigg (2011)

I contend that Trigg's embarrassment may be one of the reasons that the collecting room came into existence. Rather than being a place to go and escape frustrations as we have seen in the previous case studies, such as with Allan's *Meccano Room*, Trigg's collecting room is a place to hide the Disney merchandise that is a source of discomfiture. Rather than selling the items on, or giving them away she holds onto the items even though she is no longer attached to them. This would suggest that the act of possession is a key incentive to Trigg's collecting practice, which is further confirmed through an analysis of her collecting room.

The practice that developed from this case study consists of two different but purposeful outcomes. The first is a series of images, used throughout this case study to show Trigg's displays of objects combining the Disney objects and the domestic paraphernalia. This idea contemplates Trigg's displays that try to transpose the idea of Disney into the everyday household items, the whole domestic setting seems to desire an escape from drudgery with its association to fantasy.

My film about Trigg's collecting room draws on the frustrations and motivations formed from discussions of domestic space. It illustrates the potentially difficult relationships that are built around this collection that might otherwise be seen as superficial due to its subject matter. This change from superficiality and fun into a more ominous mood is created through the changes of light that occur in the film, and as the subject matter and revelations of the mother and daughter reveal more tension, the collection changes too. In considering the interaction between the interviews of the mother and daughter, the film highlights the family connections that are fundamental to this narrative. In particular, the film highlights the lack of interaction the collector has with the objects in this space, which is represented through the objects' stasis. Originally intended to be animated, the cuddly toys that cause Trigg embarrassment, sit in constant state of potential; their expressions fixed. The video intends to communicate to the audience that the collection is static, not developing or changing, but just watching time pass behind closed doors. The film presents a sense of expectancy, but the only change in the film is the timeline that moves every increasingly towards darkness. The room is dead space, storage for things that are best forgotten. In contrast, we gather tension and narrative from the dialogue between the mother and daughter.

The sound contains one more essential element that relays some of the tensions evident in this case study, a recording of a wind up toy playing the tune, *Little April Showers*. This

sound piece contributes to the atmosphere of the piece through its constant presence. Initially the song is upbeat and uplifting, complementing the seemingly lightweight subject matter. However, its repetition and constancy over the interviews is intended to annoy, to grate with the viewer. Finally, the sound that was light and exhilarating becomes a heavy burden, as the interview takes a darker turn into the realms of obsession and loss, mirroring the fading light on the toys.

Resembling the cultural and social investigations into the unrealistic world Walt Disney created, this story weighs heavily on the conception of a carefully manipulated brand. One that promises fantasy and escape, but in reality is a purposefully constructed consumer confidence trick, aimed at generating money. Throughout the whole interview, Ellie's perceptions of her mother, and the reflections that she gave on her mother's collecting habits provide insight into the collecting that would not be obtainable from her mother's interview alone.

The film *Hook, Line and Sinker* is to be shown on a continuous loop in a small dark gallery space. The optimum size of this space would be 2m square. The film gradually dissolves to black over time and should preferably be projected on one wall at 1.8 m by 1m. Ideally, the audio should be played through loudspeakers, placing emphasis on the continual sound of the tune *Little April Showers,* which is part of the soundtrack. While the song might initially attract viewers to the film, in the confines of the dark gallery space this repetition has the potential to become claustrophobic. Designed to contrast Trigg's observations of her own collection with Ellie's insights into her mother's habits, the film creates a tense dialogue that reveals some of the complexities and contradictions that arise from collecting. The film can be watched from any point in its sequence, due to its fragmented narrative and continual projection.

DVD : *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011)

4.04 It's Not All Roses

4.04 It's Not All Roses

The collecting room in this case study is not part of the traditional home, but is a greenhouse which functions as a gateway between the home and the garden. This exploration of an orchid house looks at the hobby aspect of collecting, as a displacement activity from the frustrations of work. Of all the spaces that are investigated in this thesis, the orchid house typifies the control that is performed in collections. My study looks into the motivations that underpin this sense of control, and how collections could possibly act as a form of atonement for past mistakes.

Originally, from the North of England, Potts has moved continually around the world for his career, but has found more stability in Mid-Wales. Potts works in the manufacturing industry and is in his late fifties. Even though Potts is in a relationship, he does not co-habit and lives alone in his three-bedroom house. In the back garden of this house, he has set up a greenhouse that houses over a hundred and sixty orchids, which are being cultivated in the less than ideal climate of the United Kingdom. The construction of his traditional six foot by nine foot greenhouse is concerned with achieving the best possible conditions to grow these exotic plants, which require considerable effort and care to cultivate them perfectly. Inside, the space has a narrow gangway that allows access to the orchids from the centre. The space is completely filled with plants, and because of the humid atmosphere, the conditions are claustrophobic. The majority of the orchids are on benches that are at waist height, and below these worktops, one can see the mechanics and equipment that create the controlled temperature and atmosphere the orchids require. The sound of the space is the buzz of the fans and equipment, but also other noises from the garden such as birdsong and trees rustling can be heard. Principally assembled to reconstruct their natural habitat, the general feeling is of a simulated rainforest, where it is difficult to find a space to stand. This collecting room is a hothouse of aspiration, aiming to grow better plants and achieve some degree of success in the difficult and competitive sphere of the orchid enthusiast.

During the interview Potts revealed that he was proud of the orchid house, and suggested that by viewing his greenhouse it would be possible to gain some understanding about his motivations and drives. Potts says:

> Most people come into my greenhouse and they learn a lot about me, perhaps quicker than knowing me. Because they can see a lot more dimension to my character by going round the greenhouse. And seeing what work I put into it. So, it opens peoples' eyes to go round the greenhouse. It is a very private space. It's a shop window as it were; a shop window of the character involved in growing them. Potts (2011)

In this statement, Potts is aware that the greenhouse conveys aspects of his character to the people that visit his greenhouse, such as the hard work he has applied to his pastime. I suggest that Potts consciousness in the presentation of the orchid house might indicate that the space is designed with visitors in mind. When asked if he minded having people in his collecting room, Potts said that he 'encourage[s] them going in.' (Potts 2011). In this approach to showing his collection to others, Potts demonstrates a different attitude

to personal space from the three previous case studies. Tom, Allan, and Trigg, rarely entertained visitors in their spaces, which I would suggest made their displays more about personal decisions about their relationships to the objects. However, I consider Potts' orchid house conveys a certain amount of showmanship and that his display of plants are not purely for his own satisfactions but may also have aspirations to be shown to others. This notion is evident in the types of plants that Potts selects for the greenhouse. He says:

> I don't really go for small flowering orchids or these miniature orchids. I like to have things fairly dramatic I think… So yes there is an air of character there… I don't… I think I like things to be showy, to some extent showy… but they can be showy for various reasons… they have got to merit the place in the orchid house. I do not put tiny and insignificant things in there like some people. Potts (2011)

In creating displays that are dramatic, Potts is representing himself and his character through his plants. While, there are certain characteristics that are clearly visible from observing the space, there are other narratives that underpin the space that can only be accessed through Potts' narration, such as the importance Potts places on the social aspects of his hobby. Again, a notable difference between Potts' collecting habits and the previous case studies is his active involvement with societies and social groups. The social aspects of hobbies and collecting are key areas of investigation in essays by Susan Pearce (1992), Russell Belk (1994) and Stalp and Winge (2008) who all agree that interaction between collectors is often about sharing knowledge and proving your prowess to fellow enthusiasts (Pearce, 1992; Belk, 1994; Stalp and Winge, 2008). This social aspect is particularly common in the orchid societies, where they will regularly host advisory clinics, or take in plants to discuss treatment and nurture. Potts mentions this social side to the hobby in numerous sections of the interview, relaying the importance of this aspect of his pastime. He notes:

> It's a very sociable hobby orchid growing. You learn a lot by discussion with fellow orchid growers. I am a member of a club and I think that the benefit I get from airing a problem in the open with the others, who may have had similar experiences is, is, is very, very, very beneficial, a problem shared is… a problem solved really. I don't think that you can gain a full benefit unless you also exchange knowledge with the society people; I think that's important. The exchange of growing experiences is vital. Visits to the countries where they are growing naturally is also beneficial, it adds another dimension of appeal in growing in orchids and another dimension to your hobby. Not just the science but it's the holiday aspect and the social aspect as well, meeting people with similar interests to yourselves. Potts (2011)

The objective here is not solely about the social aspect of meeting people, it is about demonstrating mastery; learning new ways to improve the skill set the enthusiasts have already acquired. It also offers reflection, as one can consider one's own abilities in comparison to other members of the group. The mastery provided by the orchid house surfaces in the interview in the sections where Potts offers advice and guidance on orchid care. These lessons in cultivation also present Potts' character. Advising his narrative audience on different aspects of the space and its maintenance, Potts allows his personality

to come across, as well as the great level of skill he has acquired through his years of growing. This is particularly pertinent in Potts' discussion of pests, where one can see his passion and excitement compliment his rigour in the growing environment. Orchid growing is not purely about the flowers. It is hard work, yet Potts seems to delight in every aspect of orchid care, even the extermination of insects. Potts reveals:

> I also have to keep an eye open for insects, the principal culprits I have to watch are for scale, and for mealybugs and with the modern move towards banning chemicals one has to find increasingly intuitive ways and imaginative ways of getting rid of these blighters. So, methylated sprit on a paintbrush is good for dislodging a scale insect… Added to that the other hindrance I have, is when flowers are spiking and coming out and the old slugs come along and nick them. They have an absolutely wondrous way of finding out when that most delectable flower is opening and then along they come and it does not matter how many slug pellets you put down how many things you put, they just get them. How do I cope with that? I go out at two o'clock in the morning, 6 o'clock in the morning (laughs) 10 o'clock at night, and I pick them off the glass, pick them off the leaves and I crush them under foot with great glee. Potts (2011)

This discussion of pests is very entertaining; it is a narrative performance that brings action to something that may be considered normally rather uninteresting. His intention is to passionately communicate to the audience his enthusiasm, which is tied to the history and mystique of orchids. However, this performative retelling may also hint at the one of Potts' motivations for partaking in the research, to encourage other people to take up orchid growing. In effect, he could be using the platform of the research to recruit new enthusiasts, which may account for the detail and instruction in his advice. At one point in the interview, he actively encourages younger people to take up orchid growing. Potts says:

> So it's getting now down to a younger audience as it were, but still the societies they are still older people who discover the passion near retirement. It is a good hobby for near retirement but its even better if you can develop the hobby at twenty…twenty five. I would recommend that people would begin growing them much younger than they have traditionally done so. Its not… It may seem to be an old person's hobby but it's not… Its very much… you need to get in at an earlier. Those are the people that do really well, are the ones that get in at a young age. Potts (2011)

This early connection to orchids mirrors Potts' own experience. He was introduced to orchids at an early age, accompanying his father to Yorkshire to buy their first plants. This first experience is still etched in the collector's memory and he can recall not only the plants that they acquired but also the name of the shop.

> My first orchid were orchids that I shared with my father and I can remember very vividly the first four orchids that we brought in 1967, from Ansell Hatcher in Leeds / Harrogate. Now defunct. And we brought a *odontoglossum*, which is an Orchid from Columbia, beautiful white with crimson markings… I was then only about 14 or 15, and I was so inspired by what I saw that I took an instant desire to that which was to inspire me to grow them. I knew to start with that father had the hobby. I didn't have the money but we shared the passion together; we were members of the local orchid society together, we exhibited together, we went on purchasing sprees together and we went to congresses together. Overnight congresses,

which were as much an orchid experience and a social experience as anything else, it's a very sociable hobby orchid growing. Potts (2011)

As with the previous case studies, Potts can pinpoint the first items of his collection and the trip with his father that sowed the seeds for his interest in orchids. In being able to recall their first experiences of collecting, my practice offers a partial counter argument to the assertions made by Bal, that collections seldom have defined beginnings. In recalling the items that triggered their collecting habits, my five participants demonstrate an awareness of how their activity came into being. However, my research also regards that these may not be consciously conceived as collections in these early stages, but these initial acquisitions were significant moments in the collectors' object based histories.

In particular, Potts' recollections demonstrate a similarity to the case study *Unobtainable Dreams*, where Allan also remembers buying the first pieces of his collection. In both of these collections, there is a close association between objects and memories relating to their fathers. I would like to suggest that both Potts and Allan use their collections as a form of memorial, using the objects as catalysts of memory. The difference between these two case studies is that Potts' father was also a fellow collector and the pastime was something Potts and his father shared. This narrative reveals closeness between father and son, a recreational pursuit that they could share and bond over. Developed from their shared experiences, Potts' relationship to his father becomes closely linked to their shared passion for orchids. This connection means certain orchids trigger specific memories about his father. This continued affection is evident in the story where his father takes a difficult plant to grow from seed, and cultivates it successfully. Once again, the personal narrative is triggered in relation to a specific plant. Potts recollects:

> Another Orchid I must mention… because [it was] an inspiration for the family… because… orchids are very difficult to grow from seed. I don't grow orchids from seed now… I grow them from flasks and have had really good success. My father… went out to South Africa quite a few times… He got involved with a doctor Virgil Pool in South Africa. Who gave him a source of Disa seed. And my father actually managed to grow Disa from seed… So my father… did a very nice job raising an initial batch; flowered them from seed and then managed to make his own crosses. So he took it to the next stage… [he] selected the best; tried to predict what he would get from what; cross them; sow[ed] the seed and had a field of plants come up. So, for the next four - five years he was a distributor of Disa, all around the societies. All of a sudden, this came to a sticky end; as I fear, we lost the quality of the water. Once things go wrong with orchids, they go wrong very quickly. Potts (2011)

In the account of this orchid, Potts indicates the fragility of the plants. Unlike the objects collected by the other participants in my research, Potts' orchids are alive and the investment in them is not assured, as it would be with an inanimate object. The plants need regular care, which they get from the creation of a space that offers them the best conditions for growth. To achieve this Potts created a complex space, where all the conditions are controllable enabling him to develop the right habitat for the plants. Pearce (1992) and Baudrillard (1994) have argued that control is one of the recognised traits found in collectors (Pearce,

1992). Baudrillard in particular claims that often because they feel they have lost control of one aspect of their life, asserting power over objects allows them to compensate for this (Baudrillard, 1994). I propose that the success and emphasis of the orchid house are the climatic areas that have been set up to regulate temperature and the control the atmosphere. It is possible that Potts' care for the plants is an act of atonement, for the circumstances in which his father's orchids were lost. In the interview, Potts recalls rather painfully the loss of his father's collection.

> I think my father was quite pleased that I inherited his passion for orchids, although I didn't take the plants. I think he realised that, that we could not take the plants because they were too riddled with pests at the time... There was so much time trying to rid them of the pests and there would be mixing with new plants, they would just contaminate them, and they would be a tremendous waste of money. And it would be leading nowhere. Heart of heartaches. So I think we had to do what we did. But it was very, very sad and other people would have liked the plants but I think knowing the conditions they got into, I am afraid it was not possible. I tried to recover some, but I just could not do it. Potts (2011)

In my analysis of this collecting room, I consider the loss of Potts Father's plants as a key moment in the development of the room. Constructed specifically to overcome the issues that may lead to the death of plants, the whole space becomes a site of control and mastery. It has been developed to create an ideal environment to cultivate new plants, which may be a significant reminder of his father and the experiences they shared. While the compensatory aspects of the objects, may show some similar attributes to Trigg's collecting habits in *Hook, Line and Sinker,* the main similarities are to Allan's collection, where preservation may be seen as an aspiration to resist death, and preserve memories. I would consider that both Allan and Potts are not just collectors but that they are also hobbyists, using related aspects of their collections as recreational pursuits.

Historian and cultural theorist Steven Gelber's investigation into *Hobbies: Leisure and the culture of work in America* (1999) exemplifies this. Gelber suggests that recreational pastimes cannot be inactive undertakings, such as watching the television or reading a book, but should ideally be activity led, as this enables a sense of accomplishment (Gelber, 1999). Potts' sense of achievement is derived from watching the flowers that he so patiently cultivates throughout the year come into bloom. The orchid house is a stimulant that offers Potts a distraction from his work life. Potts says:

> I think the relaxation aspect is… being able to do something completely different from [what] I would normally be doing at work. And so, I can forget work and get [involved with] another interest that is totally different. [One] I can influence and I can see the benefits of what I am doing. So, it's a change of stress. It's wrong to say there is no emotion in orchid growing… cause you can go in and you can see some disastrous things happen. You can get some very sad things happen very quickly… you get very upset, and you can get demoralised. So, it's not necessarily always all roses. For me… I get quite passionate about it. [It is]very upsetting sometimes and [I] get some disasters in there. But at least it means I get a complete change from what I do in the day. And that's the relaxation. That's what helps to bring my blood pressure down. Potts (2011)

Gelber asserts that recreational pursuits may often develop key skills that were not fully explored in the hobbyist's employment, or compensate for experiences that an individual is lacking in the work life. In relation to this Gelber identifies these balancing characteristics to be pride, achievement, importance, rivalry, governance, exercise and creativity (Gelber, 1999). These traits are exemplified in Walter Benjamin's writings on the world of the interior. Benjamin recognises that personal space offers the private individual an opportunity to assert their own mastery and control, enabling them to forget his or her anxieties. Benjamin writes:

> The private individual, who in the office has to deal with realities, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions. This necessity is all the more pressing since he has no intention of grafting onto his business interests a clear perception of his social function. In the arrangement of his private surroundings, he suppresses both these concerns. From this derives the phantasmagoria of the interior - for the private individual, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together remote locales and memories of the past. His living room is a box in the theatre of the world. (Benjamin et al., 1999a p. 19)

Potts' interview reinforces both Gelber's research and Benjamin's reflections, as he realises that the greenhouse allows him to have an outlet for creativity. I would like to suggest that Potts' hobby is not solely a compensation for his mundane work, but it allows him to assert control. In doing this Potts can manipulate aspects of the world at large and reconsider his relationship to the cosmos. Furthermore, this pastime and its carefully composed space may offer Potts a feeling of omnipotence, in addition to the creativity and change from his employment in the steel industry. This sense of imaginative fulfilment and 'play' can also be discerned in several other case studies, particularly through the arrangement and display demonstrated by the participants' featured in *Making a Killing* and *Unobtainable Dreams*. Drawing on the writing of Muensterberger (1994), my investigation considers that this method of control and reflection is a key characteristic of collecting rooms, as it may compensate for loss of influence in other areas of the collector's life.

In his construction of an all-encompassing environment, Potts aspires to create an idealistic space with three climatic zones, which suits the needs of cool, intermediate and tropical orchids. One could note the utopian ideas presented in the orchid greenhouse, through its attempt to bridge the physical world and create an ideal space that embodies the world in a microcosm (Tuan, 1998; Foucault, 2009). In bringing together these vastly different qualities in one space, Potts is able to establish his mastery in botany through creating model conditions for his plants. Like many botanical gardens, Potts' greenhouse brings together different areas of the world and in relation to this Potts could gain a feeling of mastery. Examining similar aspects, Russell Belk indicates that private collections act as a cosmological representation in which the collector is the principal character, or commander of space. Using language to equate his point with power, Belk writes:

> If there is an allusion to playing God here, perhaps it is apt. The collector as the curator of the collection assumes the role of possessor, controller

and sometimes saviour of the objects collected. For while consumers can almost always control what they own and posses, collectors who posses an interrelated set of objects control a little world. (Belk, 1994 p. 70)

The difference in this case study is that Potts cannot control the plants; he can only manipulate the space. Even though the traits of control may be an important aspect of the collecting, Potts has no direct control over the plants, only the collecting room. I consider that Potts does overcome his anxieties through notions of control, but rather than achieving this through his manipulation of objects, it is an attribute of the space. What makes Potts' greenhouse more intriguing is its ability to traverse interior and exterior worlds concurrently. The greenhouse adjacent to the house is an internal space that is only separated from the garden by glass, situating itself between inside and outside space. I consider that this space offers the freedom of being outside and yet its containment makes it a manageable and easily controllable space, where Potts can assert his influence.

At one stage Potts, notes that the greenhouse is constructed 'Learning very much from the problems my father had, [and trying] to avoid his mistakes (Potts 2011). Working alongside his brother, Potts created an intricate and complex space. Discussing some of the features of the orchid house, Potts says:

> I have overhead foggers, which operate in the summer for several hours a day. I importantly have controlled temperature conditions, regulated by night and day thermostats. I also cool the green house, 'cause cooling the greenhouse is as important as heating in the winter. I cool with an *Xpelair* extractor fan, which is linked to an inlet fan on the opposite door so we get a nice current of air rushes through. In addition to that, when the summer gets really hot well it does not necessarily be very hot to trigger it, we have a wax-actuating vent in the roof, which opens and closes at a set temperature. There are a lot of issues in terms of temperature, humidity, and light and also very much so on the movement of air, all plays a part in growing orchids successfully. Potts (2011)

In spite of these concerns for the well-being of the plants, I do not regard the space to be a sterile environment. The display of the plants reveals Potts creativity and aspires to re-create the 'jungle' look (Potts 2011). This is achieved through the manner of display and the large number of plants that are present within the greenhouse. Potts notes:

> I have chosen to grow in a very natural growing condition, so I have got some experiments there with growing some plants on a trunk of a simulated tree branch, we have got plants where we have tried very hard to find the ideal location for them within the growing conditions. Potts (2011)

This trialling of materials shows that Potts has a very open attitude to experimentation and making minimal changes to enable the orchids to have the best possible start in life. He has made several different experiments with different materials, including wine corks and tree bark. These unusual materials and his crammed aesthetic enable him to create a wild appearance within this controlled space. The photograph of Potts' experiment with a simulated tree branch covered in moss communicates the 'jungle' qualities that the participant established as being significant (Figure 38). Yet, the image also presents the nuts

Figure 38 : Image from the series,
It's Not All Roses (2011)

and bolts that hold the branch in place and the protective plastic walls in the background, potentially reminding the viewer of the constructed nature of the space.

The fantasy of the jungle also connects to the historical associations of orchid growing. Orchids have been always associated with exploration, and certainly early orchid hunters were men of great voyages, travelling unknown territories (Tibbs, 2004). Even though this history is embedded in the collection of the modern day orchid, it is quite removed from the collecting room. Yet, I propose that the enthusiasm and thrill inherent in orchid hunting may be one of Potts' motivations. In discussing the history, Potts conveys fantasy, imagining the adventures of those early orchid enthusiasts. Potts says:

> Orchids have been a very male dominated hobby, and I think [this was] one of the main things that attract[ed] me… Certainly in the early days [orchids] were associated with adventure going into jungles tackling nature, fending off wild animals [sic], watching out for people with poison blow darts behind your back and being kidnapped. I think the adventure of seeking out orchids [was] very much a male dominated hobby initially. I still think it's associated with fairly masculine abilities to climb rock faces and go into adverse climatic conditions. A lot of research is required, it's a very useful to go out and see these plants where they are actually growing in the wild, you get a much better appreciation of their requirements. Potts (2011)

Examining my other photographs of the space, I deem the visual layers of control, aspiration, history and fantasy become apparent in the chaotic space. For example, another image shows two fairly established orchids hanging beside a thermostat, while in the

background of the image the protective plastic of the roof is covered in fine layers of fungus or mildew (Figure 38). In this photograph, the plant represents the aspiration of growing orchids successfully, while the thermostat denotes the control that Potts must assert to achieve his aspirations. Finally, the layers of fungus have an association with temporality, as it would take time for these parasites to establish themselves. In the consideration of this photograph, I propose that the different attributes of the space are re-presented through a single image.

Similarly, I assert that the discussion in the interview does the same thing, swapping between the past, present and future through a range of considerations. Triggered by different objects and discussions of space, Potts' recollections resist linear time and produce different connections between events and ideas. For example one genus of orchid, Cattleya, reminds Potts of the three years he spent in Paris. Here the orchids perform a similar function to the books in Walter Benjamin's library, allowing Potts to negate spatial memories that delineate temporality. Potts uses one particular type of orchid to recall his time in Paris.

> I spent 3 years in Paris and I visited a lot of the local orchid nurseries there… and their specialties were the Cattleya… I think going to see the displays of Cattleya at Vacherot & Lecoufle particularly in Paris and their growing region… set-up in Boissy-Saint-Léger, south of Paris was a remarkable inspiration. And definitely incorporated for me… set in place the passion to grow Cattleya and I think… one of the most showy plants you can grow, [as the] variety of colours [is] immense, and a variety of shapes and sizes. Potts (2011)

It is the tangible qualities of Benjamin's books that evoke memories, which was also discernible from Potts' interview. For him the sensory connection to the plants acts as a memory prompt in the same way as inanimate objects would to a collector. Yet these species have life force in them, they have an added emotional attachment that permeates beyond the traditional object / collector relationship. Potts says:

> I think that they are living and that comes over when you get to know them, you realise that they are living and you can get a lot from looking at them and feeling them. Feeling leaves is [sic] very tactile. They are very tactile and you can get a lot from that. Looking at them; the colour of the leaves. Marks on the leaves, obviously; activity at the roots. Activity at the roots is very important, particularly the ones that root from above the compost… because you suddenly see [sic] roots coming and they come very quickly and you know that plant's leaping into action. It's almost like the blood is running in its veins. Things can happen very quickly in the orchid greenhouse…they really can. It's getting to know them. So yes they are almost like people. I don't go in there and talk to them. Do I talk to them? I might swear at them sometimes (laughs) Potts (2011)

Potts clearly gains a lot from the plants, and the interaction that he regularly has with them. His list of sensual qualities refers back to the practice of sensory ethnography that was identified in the *Literature Review* (page 26). Pink (2009) argues that the different sensory qualities can elicit different experiences, and while my research has concentrated on sound and vision, the tactile qualities of collections can also be an important prompt to narrative (Pink, 2009). Being a collector this was one of the qualities that Walter Benjamin particularly noted. Benjamin writes:

> Collectors are the physiognomists of the world of objects [and in this they] turn into interpreters of fate. One has only to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired…
> (Benjamin, 2009 p. 258)

Regarding Benjamin's idea, perhaps it is the tactile qualities of the plants that elicit the memories connected to the orchids. Raising orchids requires touch at regular intervals for example to ascertain moisture levels. To communicate the tactile qualities that I consider to be inherent in the greenhouse, my photographs aim to convey the different textures in the space. For instance, the shiny surface of the leaves in one photograph is represented with hints of other textures; such as the bubble wrap protection (figure 39). Each of these different materials may connect Potts with memories that have been repressed over time.

Sound may also be an evocative reminder. During my time in the space two very important sounds were heard; the first of these was rain beating against the roof. This raised my awareness to the protective nature of the space, contrasting with the interior, which remained clement despite the conditions outside. This distinction between the visual and the sonic created an impact, which I aimed to replicate in my representation of the space. In using the sound of the rain, I intend to make the viewer question the construction of the space. Essentially the differentiation between the sounds and images aims to communicate the idea that this greenhouse remains protected and controlled; a constant haven set against the unpredictability of the natural environment. The second sound was the interior buzz of

Figure 39 : Image from the series, *It's Not All Roses* (2011)

the fan that controlled the movement of air in the space. Unlike the rain that had no effect inside the greenhouse, the fan creates movement and visually changes the inside of the greenhouse.

The air movement is a key feature of the greenhouse. It is not a static space, but full of subtle movements and activity. The plants are living things and as such, they are changing, adapting, reacting to light and their conditions. This movement is a principal factor in my decision to present my interpretations of Potts' collecting room as a sequence of moving images. This constitutes the main difference between this case study and the previous ones, where the items were immovable and fixed. The greenhouse is in a constant state of flux, with the air movement, growth, and adaptation to light intending to communicate the life force in the plants as well as the continuous fluctuation.

My resulting film complexly weaves the past, present and future together by juxtaposing memories imbued in the orchids, experiences gained through the plant maintenance and Potts' aspirations for future projects in the greenhouse. In making connections between these incidental moments, the spatial portrait surreptitiously interlaces Potts' focused discussion of the space and his orchids. This provides the film with a confessional quality, which aims to allow the viewer to construct a more complete picture of Potts from the shards and pieces of information that they have been given. Rather than creating a definitive and complete portrait of the greenhouse owner, my interpretation aims to relay his poetic performance, framed through the space of the collecting room.

The film *It's Not All Roses i*s designed to be shown as a looped projection in a gallery space. Ideally this will be shown in a small room that has the same dimensions as Potts' own greenhouse, which is 2m by 2.7 m. It is my intention, from showing the film in a confined space, to demonstrate the size of this important collecting room. As I have asserted, the greenhouse is rich in narrative potential, brought alive through Potts' discussion of his plants and his personal history that is enmeshed within the space. The film's sound should be played through speakers within the small constructed gallery space to make the film an intimate viewing experience. As the film is made from different fragments, the audience may choose to watch the film for its whole duration, or from any point in the narrative, engaging with a shorter section of the film.

DVD : *It's Not All Roses* (2012)

4.05 Mastering Time

4.05 Mastering Time

This concluding case study continues my investigation into collecting. Building on the previous case studies it considers how collecting rooms can transcend the chronology of time, through juxtaposing items that relate to different periods of the collector's life. Symbolically the clocks collected in this case study embody time-based ideas, representing not just the metaphysical ideas woven into the fabric of this space, but also the personal memories and interactions with the collector's friends and family.

This case study investigates the space of electric clock collector John, who has acquired more than 150 electric clocks in the spare bedroom of his flat in London. John is in his early thirties and lives alone in a two-bedroom apartment block, which was originally built in the 1930's. Although currently single, the interview does make references to previous partners. John's time pieces are located throughout the living space of his flat, but this enquiry concentrates on the clocks that are housed in the space that John's friends have titled *The Clock Room*, as the rooms sole purpose is to house the collection of clocks. The majority of clocks in his collection date from 1920's to the 1960's, which is the period of time before the modern Quartz system was employed by clockmakers to keep their products on time.

It has been noted by Mieke Bal (1994), that collecting is not a continuous activity, but is sporadic; taking place over a suspended period of time. Concurring with Bal, Susan Pearce (1995) and Russell Belk argue that a collection can be plotted against different social engagements and personal narratives to reveal psychological connections between the act of collecting and emotional engagement with objects (Pearce, 1992; Bal, 1994; Belk, 1994; Pearce, 1995). Through looking at the personal and specific events against the broader scheme of time, one may be able to estimate how the collection can be comforting, or a distraction from difficult or troubling circumstances. This has been exemplified in the previous case studies, through connection to the past (*Unobtainable Dreams*), by the acquiring of objects (*Hook, Line and Sinker)* and through the displacement activity and control (*It's Not All Roses*). In particular, this case study has a broad period of time, where we map the development and discernment of John as a collector against his social engagement and interaction with other people. The clocks become not just a metaphor for time, but also a sensual experience where one can take comfort from the continual rhythms of ticking. Social scientist Megan Doolittle draws on the historical emotional aspect of the clock and its connotations in her essay, *Time, Space and Memories (2011)*. She aligns the tickling of clocks as a meter for measuring life experiences. Doolittle writes:

> The sound of clocks underpinned the bringing together of industrial time, separating leisure and work for those at school or employment away from home, and at the same time conveying the cyclical nature of family life and its everyday routines from day to day, year to year, and generation to generation. (Doolittle, 2011 p. 246)

This continual reminder of time derived from the constant sounds of clocks is fundamental to the experience and communication embedded in my investigation of John's collecting

room. As a reflection of the sound that is constant and fundamentally important to the construction of this dedicated collecting space, my research foregrounds the noise of the clocks. In using the sound, I aim to communicate to my audience the experiential qualities of the room, but also convey to the viewer the connotations of history, cycles of behaviour of time and the differences between work and leisure time.

John mainly collects two types of wall-mounted clocks. The first type are the principal timekeepers and are known as *master clocks*. The second category of clocks is their electrical disciples which are termed s*lave clocks*. John describes the differences between these two types of clocks, clarifying the specific differences:

> A master clock is like a central clock that you might have in a station or a school or hospital... The master clock sends out a signal every half a minute or a minute, which makes all the hands jump forward. So all the clocks in the same building will show the same time. You can still see a lot of these examples on like London underground and British Rail if you look at a clock and the hands suddenly jumps it is probably because there is a master clock controlling it. Although the ones I collect, are the early ones that are driven by pendulum. They still make them now, but obviously, the master clocks are now little quartz digital thing, but I can control traditional analogue clocks. That's the main interest that I have fallen into. John (2011)

The electrical current that is the main source of energy for these clocks travels from one to another, bonding each separate item through its cables and electrical supplies. This special connection acts as a physical representation of the affiliation between the clocks. As with the previous case study *Unobtainable Dreams,* each item has been specifically selected to be included in John's series for individual personal reasons. While some collections are about classification and creating a series, using display to make connections between objects and draw similarities and differences between different objects, John's selection has less strict boundaries. Although some of the clocks are grouped into sets, John collection is more akin to the fetishistic collector described by Pearce (Pearce, 1992) as he admits that there are numerous explanations for selecting objects to collect, all of these are personal to him, rather than schematic. John says:

> Attractiveness is only important if I am buying it for the aesthetical look of the clock like domestic clocks, you know they might just have a very basic movement, which has no interest to me at all. But if it looks nice, that is why I would buy it. You know the same reason as why you might buy a vase or a picture frame, which is totally different to why I would buy a power station clock which might have the original records with it or it might do some extra timing or something. It is not important if it has got another feature, such as it's unusual or it does more than tells the time, like it might have some switching facility or timing facility. John (2011)

John notes that the clocks that have particular resonance for him are not selected for one specific reason, but there are multiple criteria for his selection. This is perhaps observable in the photographs of the space, as there are many different types of clock in the room (Figure 39). In particular, John notes that the mechanics, the aesthetics or the historical prominence of the piece all contribute to whether he decides to invest in an item or not.

This discernment was not an instinctive occurrence, but became more sophisticated over a period of time. John has learnt to improve his searches, knowing specific qualities that he would attribute to a clock suitable for his collection, while an alternative set of criteria would allow him to reject another. In the interview, John charted his interest in clocks and the chronology of the collection's progress by discussing the various spaces that the clocks had inhabited prior to their final location in the clock room.

John has been collecting since a teenager, inhabiting a series of different rooms, and the collection has had a number of reincarnations. By considering the previous spaces that the collection has occupied, it is possible to record John's growing knowledge of clocks and what he deems important. Especially when discussing his bedroom as a teenager, John is quite scathing about the clocks that he had acquired at that time. In these early days, it seems John was less concerned with his set of ideas about what makes a good clock, but instead acquired indiscriminately.

> When I look at old photographs, I cringe now, because it had this awful flowery wallpaper that my Mum chose. As a child you don't want horrible flowery wall paper you want Superman or something fun and then there were just clocks absolutely everywhere, there was a desk, a piano, a book case, every inch of wall, clocks everywhere. But yeah it was just totally random. There was a grandfather clock in there; there were master clocks in there, slave clocks. All the cheap ones from my childhood that I kept at that point; a great big double sided jewellers clock that I rescued from the local dump. It was just complete chaos and looked horrific I should

imagine. It obviously was still a collection, but it was a rubbish collection. It had, it sort of didn't follow anything structurally and nothing was of value… it was a collection but it wasn't a good collection, like my collecting friends that I know now would have just laughed at what it was back then. And I couldn't blame them. John (2011)

This recollection accomplishes several complex things at once. It demonstrates the increasing refinement in John's taste, whilst it also reveals some of the relationships he has with his family and fellow clock collectors. The richness of the oral history is delivered indirectly in John's dialogue about the space and how it was designed. Often this secondary information is as important in creating an impression of the collector as the information that is foregrounded in the conversation, because this insight creates a more complete picture of the participant. For example, the participant may hint at their relationships to other people by talking about the collection in relation to that person or persons, or a participant may convey information about personal finances through mentioning having to save for a particular item. All of this additional material then helps to build a much more rounded impression of the collector and their space.

John has a lot of admiration for his fellow clock collectors, who he holds in high regard. John's statement is brief but sufficient enough to highlight his rapport with other collectors, and his own shame at not having a more recognisable scheme to his acquisition. Analysing the relationships between fellow collectors, Susan Pearce asserts that they are filled with ambivalence, as they are fraught with a desire for respect, thirst for knowledge and an intense competitiveness (Pearce, 1995).

This connection to the social aspects of collecting was also discernable in the previous case study, as Potts noted that a key aspect to his collecting was the interaction with other enthusiasts. Here in this case study, John joined social collecting groups in order to learn more about the objects of interest. John's personal development is a matter of pride for him, as he learnt to distinguish between clocks he considers valuable and those that he now deems insignificant. This idea is expanded on later in the interview when John recounts his collecting maturity. He asserts:

> When I was younger, [I] waste[d] all my pocket money on any old clock that I could afford, which usually involved trips to charity shops, car boot sales and jumble sales. I didn't have anything in particular that I collected, like any particular style or age. It was more what my pocket money would stretch to…As I have got older, obviously I have had more money to be able to buy clocks that are a bit nicer, [or] that are a bit more valuable. I have also branched more into electrical clocks, which is where my main interest lies now…I have kept a few for sentimental reasons. And there is like a set of clocks on my wall, which are brightly coloured and sort of kitsch from the sixties and seventies, because I couldn't part with those. But generally, it is all older electrical things that I collect now. John (2011)

Pearce (1995) claims that collections generally are not instantaneous, but slow prevailing accumulations of objects (Bal, 1994; Pearce, 1995). While Bal (1994) argues that collections

seldom have a definite beginning, coming into being after a period of time but rarely being consciously conceived (Bal, 1994). This is contrary in part to my findings in all the previous case studies, where collectors identified their initial objects. John's collection, however does fit more into the practices described by Bal, where initial random objects begin to develop meaning to their owner, who begins to perceive them as a set and as they obtain more, the collection acquires significance. Collections are temporal; gathering importance and gravitas through duration, rather than being assigned these traits at the outset. John's development is traceable through these connected sequences of narrative, where clearly we can note his progression as a collector. From narrowing his choice of objects to clocks, we then see his interest in the mechanical aspect begin to formulate a more precise type of object to collect. Represented through a slow but progressive refinement, John learns to distinguish between objects that hold value for him and the objects that he no longer considers significant.

I suggest that the difference between John's description of his earlier clock room and the current display epitomises John's personal development and a sense of importance, which is evidenced in my photographs (figure 41). In effect, the time that is presented through the discussions about the collecting room is discursive; it shows John's discernment as a series of chronological events, but also specific narratives show very precise periods of time and disclose detailed events and intimate insights.

Often these more precise pieces of information come from object narratives, where the collector has inscribed part of their life in the accounts that they construct around an object. In trying to demonstrate how his collection became focused on the electric clocks, John identifies one specific piece as being the most significant in his collection. He asserts that it shaped the collection's present state, as it prompted him to learn skills and acquire knowledge on particular types of clocks. This significant clock was one that he found at his school, originally it was in the caretakers office but after obsessing over it for many years it went missing.

> Then I think the following day I was looking out my classroom window and I saw it leaning against the skip, which was in the corner of the playground as they were doing some work. So at that point, I thought I have to rescue it. So, I called my Mum from the pay phone. And I was like Mum: pick me up. We have got to rescue this clock. And I checked with the caretaker and he said it was fine… I didn't really know how it worked and I assumed it worked off the mains, which is lucky I found out it didn't as I would have completely damaged it and possibly burnt the house down, if I plugged it into the mains. But gradually I sort of found things out, and this was all pre-internet. So it was a longer process and it probably took me about three years to get it working properly. Just from speaking to people at car boot sales and I think there was a clock fair in Uxbridge I used to go to. John (2011)

As a narrative object this is a fundamental piece in John's collection. It not only charts a significant point in his progression as a collector, but it also reveals many insightful details about his relationship to other people and some of John's character traits at that time. I regard the language he uses about the clock to be significant, as it conveys the emotional

Figure 41 : Image from the series, *Mastering Time* (2011)

attachments he ascribes to it, describing the act of acquiring as a 'rescue.' The magnitude of this operation demonstrates further the extent that this teenager goes to in order to obtain the clock. John contacted his mother to transport the clock home and overcame his nervousness of speaking to strangers, by asking permission of the caretaker. The strength that John acquires is only motivated through the object that holds particular interest for him, and enables him to overcome obstacles. Once the clock is home, John continues to exhibit resourcefulness, learning to repair and maintain the clock through an ever-extending network of contacts. John describes the repair of the clock:

> I think the first thing I did was I took the glass door out, cause someone had smashed the glass meanwhile. So, I had to get a new glass fitted. Then I had to sand it all down 'cause the case was all covered in paint and varnish it. All of which I did in my Mum's kitchen, which wasn't a very popular move. But she put up with a lot did my Mum, so that was all right. Then the suspension was broken so that's like the flexible metal that holds the pendulum, so it swings back and forth. That was broken and I didn't really know where to get that. My Dad tried a contact at the British Legion. I think he might have been a gun-maker and he supplied some suspensions… eventually found someone that supplied the right suspension and I think that must have taken about three years to get it up and running. I was really, really pleased, cause my Dad at the time was like oh, load of old rubbish you should have left it the skip. But now they are worth about five hundred pounds so I think he is eating his words now.
> John (2011)

It is possible to trace through the narrative the list of skills that John acquires to mend the clock, and also the extension of his social interaction as he requires new skills that involve contacting new people. One can also perceive the relationships John has with both his parents, who seem to have endured a lot at the hands of John's collecting practice. This narrative reveals insight into his maternal relationship, as John notes that his mother tolerated his lack of concern for her kitchen. Here the collection evidences some of the tensions that large accumulations of objects can bring to family relationships. In *Hook, Line and Sinker*, friction is caused in the relationship by the Mother's collecting habits, but here the tensions are reversed in that it is the child, not the mother's collecting that creates the difficulty. Typical of the tensions found between any teenager and their parents, the family discord is duplicated with his father. John identifies that his father thought the clock was worthless and a waste of his time. However, he still assisted John through asking his acquaintances to aid John with its restoration. Continually his parents support their son, even though his collection is beyond their comprehension and outside of their own interests, which suggests a supportive and loving family environment.

Nevertheless, it appears that it was not solely his parents that were subject to John's collecting habits. Another object generates an account about a trip that he made with an ex-partner. Once again, one can learn several important factors about John's character based on this account that is derived from one particular clock. John recalls the trip:

> I must admit I have dragged my ex on a few picking up clock adventures. Normally I have to bribe him with a curry at the end, and that kind of did the trick. One that we picked up was this huge double-sided thing it's all made steel. Its two faces all illuminated so it's got glass and stuff as well. I brought it in a complete state for two hundred pound. I made him drive to Herne Bay in Kent to pick it up. We went by to see my in-laws on the way. And they were like why have you brought this rusty bit of old rubbish. But I knew it could look really nice. Which it does now it has had a lot of work, doing to it. My ex's brother in-law is a welder as well, so some of the parts that had rusted away to nothing, he managed to repair or make replacements for me, so it was worth while seeing the in-laws there. But I have made my long-suffering ex struggle here, there and everywhere to pick up clocks. John (2011)

John uses humour to reveal details about the relationship, such as using curry as an instrument of enticement. This clock like many others in the collection is intimately connected to a series of recollections that chronicle John's biography. These individual episodes are stepping stones along the progression of the overall grand narrative. As with the previous case studies these accounts are not necessarily sequential, but move forward and backward in time filtered through the prism of the present. Drawing from Benjamin's idea that narrating the past, conveys less about the past and more about the person's present and who they have become (Benjamin et al., 1979). I surmise that John's current social and cultural understanding effects the narratives as he recounts them, as the knowledge he has gained colours how he remembers and narrates his stories.

As with all the previous case studies, the memories are focused on affirmative events and memories, which are often distorted through nostalgia. This positive reinforcement demonstrates particular things that John enjoyed, small triumphs in his life and things that he held dear or

important. The clocks represent specifically selected memories, but rather than being directed by the chronological order that is common in biographical writing, these memories are directed by their spatial relationships, and their layout in the domestic space. For example, the cuckoo clocks that are squeezed in one corner not only act as triggers to recount memories of holidays when John was younger, but also disclose the idea that these are not particularly to John's developed taste (Figure 42). John notes:

> Where I have had little inches of space again remnants of my childhood. In one tiny, tiny corner there is a little row of miniature cuckoo clocks, which I originally started buying when I used to go to the Isle of Wight on holiday with my parents and there was a tacky gift shop, which had one wall just covered with probably about a hundred different cuckoo clocks. So there was the normal big sized ones, and little tiny ones, which are about six inches tall and again it was all the pocket money that I could afford, and I used to really like them so I would buy a little one as a souvenir and then much later maybe three or four years ago, I went to Frankfurt and saw another little shop that had these sort of clocks so for old times sake I brought another one but I kind of feel sorry for them, stuck in a corner and I might put them somewhere else in the house one day but they are fine where they are for now. John (2011)

The themes that are present in the overall narratives are also present in the stories about individual objects. As an example, the development of a personal preference in clocks is notable in the above quotation. While other clocks demonstrate the 'rescue' theme that was present in the narrative of the school clock. This trait is also clear in the account of a clock acquired in Russia while on holiday. John recalls:

Figure 42 : Image from the series, *Mastering Time* (2011)

The one, which I probably shouldn't mention (laughs). It was kind of borrowed, from the apartment we stayed in in Russia in St Petersburg. It was in a cupboard full of junk, and I am just assuming that they replaced it with another clock which now hangs in the kitchen, and they just shoved it in the cupboard. And when they have a clear-out they were probably going to throw it away, because there was a loose connection and it wasn't working properly. So I kind of think, that I was saving it rather than stealing it. But that now hangs in my clock room. But you know its a souvenir from the holiday, as a clock collector and for anyone to have really. John (2011)

It appears that John justifies his acquisition through the idea that the clock would need saving or it would be scrapped or thrown out. He is fully aware of the immoral behaviour he commits in obtaining the clock, but justifies this with the idea that he can mend the clock and restore it to its former state. This rationalisation allows John to obtain the clock and avoid guilt. The clock is then inscribed with several stories, the history of the clock being abandoned, its repair and its narrative as a souvenir of this trip to Russia (Figure 43). This process of multiple accounts inscribed in the objects is a contributing factor to each item in the collection. They have historical references to the past, through the object's authenticity. Yet, each clock also has an acquisition narrative, which details John's bond with the clock and how their life stories become entwined. His use of the objects to trigger memories is further confirmation that objects can preserve their distinctive narratives even as the items are placed within the greater context of the collection. These narratives, etched in the collected objects, demonstrate a deep and pertinent bond between the collection and the collector. John breathes life into the clocks and creates meaning through his recollections; these memories are only animated by the collector, and would usually dissipate with the demise of the collector.

In a similar manner to Allan in *Unobtainable Dreams* and Potts in *It's Not All Roses*, John uses individual clocks to triggers specific accounts related to that clock. Each of these separate narratives combine in the collection room to complete a detailed impression of John, which is enriched not just by the episodes he recounts, but also the biographical details that we learn coincidentally through his narration. For example, talking about his cuckoo clock, the viewer learns that John's family would always visit the Isle of White and he would pick a clock as souvenir. This reveals in part some of the social background of his family, they could afford to vacation annually, but either preferred to remain in the United Kingdom, or could not afford to travel further afield. The wealth of these recollections is placed in its relationship to the past, where the memories are inscribed in the clocks. Each individual piece in the collection has a history that pre-dates its relationship to John, however by acquiring the object, John produces a new narrative that intertwines his life with the objects. The objects become references to events in the past, attaching John's personal narratives to the history of the object.

Mirroring the ideas presented in the Literature Review, acquiring his clocks as memory triggers, John is constructing a *museum of the self*, where the objects are cues to his memories.

Figure 43 : Image from the series,
Mastering Time (2011)

John presents a difference here from the previous case studies, as the objects in *Unobtainable Dreams* and *It's Not All Roses* are associated with memories of other people they hold dear. In contrast to these, John is collecting objects that relate to his own personal development and history. His objects do make reference to people he holds dear, but more generally; the objects chart his own positive memories. This presents a difference from Allan and Potts's collections, where the objects could be seen as re-memorialisation, as the collection embodies a much more closely associated with their relationships to their fathers.

In displaying the objects in one place, John, like all the other collectors in my case studies, is creating a sanctuary that displaces the traditional ravages of time. This space then becomes a refuge in which the collector can return to, should he or she need comfort from the past. Therefore, the collected objects overcome their traditional temporal trajectory, acting as a window between the present and past.

Moreover, studies by Bal (1994) and Pearce (1995) claim the way that a collector structures their life can be seen in relationship to the collection (Bal, 1994; Pearce, 1995). For instance, they may interact with the collection once a week, or look for items every Saturday. This marker allows the collector to build habits of behaviour that they may find comforting. Considering this against the other case studies, all of the other participants interact with their collections fairly frequently, with the exception of Trigg's objects in her collecting room. However, Trigg, Tom, Allan and Potts all spend time with their collections, through

maintenance or cleaning. Often cycles of behaviour are part of the routine, attended to like clockwork. John is no exception to these rigorous cycles of behaviour, and he acknowledges that he used to adjust the time on his clocks weekly, assessing any repairs or maintenance that he would need to undertake. Although, this is set against the idea that John spends less time in the space because of other commitments.

> It is quite nice when I have got the time to set them all to the exact time, well I used to once a week I would set every clock to the exact right time so they were spot on. But that seems to happen once a month now, so that standard has slipped quite a bit. Like last year, I was decorating my hallway, and all the stuff from my hallway was stuffed in the clock-room. So, it was kind of, out of action for about ten months, when I was decorating. And again, earlier this year I was doing some painting in my kitchen and clearing out cupboards, so again it was virtually inaccessible in my clock-room, and the contents of my kitchen and paint pots and God knows what else was in there. But I am hoping once other projects have died down, that I finish all the clocks I want to sell, my kitchen is done and dusted. I can actually spend time in there. John (2011)

Pearce also asserts that they are often a discontinuous activity, where the collector will have periods of interest, and will intermittently acquire objects depending on what is happening in the collector's life (Pearce, 1995). I would like to assert that because other aspects of John's life have become more engaging, the emotional attachment to clocks has become less rigid as he is focused on other aspects of his life. In fact, the space and how it is used charts a huge difference between John in his early collecting days and now, where his social life takes priority over the collection. The rituals of the past have been neglected in favour of interacting with friends and his escalating social life.

> The last few years I have also found my social life is a lot busier than it used to be, so I am out quite a lot, rather than [having] the time in the evening to be [do] repairs. Particularly as a child I didn't have that many friends at school and I didn't really do a lot other than collect clocks, watch telly, and play computer games. So back then I could just mess about with clocks, and take it apart and I had a lot more free time. Whereas now, sometimes I have to even write in my diary, repair this clock so I don't agree to go out with someone or do something else. So, it's kind of like booking in time with myself, which is a bit ridiculous, really. John (2011)

The narrative here, not only charts John's growing confidence in the objects he chooses for his collection, but also the development from the shy teenager to the socially assured adult he has become. My investigation considers that John's emotional need for the comfort he found in his collection has dissipated. As this has happened his interaction with the collection has become less frequent. Perhaps John needs to invest less in objects, as he has more stable relationships with people, or maybe with his contemporaneous social engagements, he devotes less thought to memories and the past. Either way, the collecting room has now become a storehouse for memories, which awaits his return.

The noise of the clocks has become a paramount reason for the collecting room. While it may be surmised that John has confined the clocks to one room because the sound is intrusive, I suggest that the containment allows him to forget about their presence. John

asserts several times in the interview that he is not particularly fond of the ticking, and clunking the clocks make. Rather the sound is a constant reminder of his collection, which John has begun to invest less time in. So, the clock room allows him to build a physical barrier between the noise and his day-to-day domestic arrangements, enabling him to escape the presence of the past in his every day life. John reveals:

> The sound is just a by-product of the clock for me. Apart from maybe like, the slow tick of a grandfather clock, I don't actually like the sound of a clock ticking. It doesn't irritate me, cause I have had it all my life. It is just background noise to me. They are not quiet little clocks that just tick away, a lot of them clunk and make a noise every thirty seconds. It's not pleasant, so it is quite nice to put as many in there (the clock room), so the rest of the flat is a bit more peaceful. Also, they do take up quite a lot of room, they are quite big and I think it would make the flat look really cluttered if they were spread out throughout the flat. If I do ever find a partner that can put up with them, I think it would be a lot better if they were in one room rather than absolutely everywhere. John (2011)

Clearly separating himself from the objects he has collected, shows that John has entered a different phase of his life. The emotional support that the objects offered him in the past, may have become an annoyance. I would speculate that perhaps on some level the clocks have become a reminder of a past that John would rather disassociate with most of the time. Therefore, the collecting room enables John to overlook the collection while keeping it safe for when he is willing to return. His narratives are on hold ready to be reanimated at a moments notice. John explains:

> Yeah I think I touched on this earlier. It kind of feels like my social life and other peoples clocks and the constant DIY projects on my property have kind of pushed my clock room on the back burner which I have little peaks where I do get time to do my own stuff, which is quite satisfying but on the whole, yeah it does get neglected a bit. Its kind of sad really I have spent all this time and effort setting everything up and I don't get the time to enjoy being in there, which is a bit ironic. So it is kind of like everything is on hold, kind of frozen in time waiting for me to have the freedom to go back in there and kick things off again. Restore what I have started restoring, get things on the wall, which are just sitting on the carpet waiting to be repaired. It's a long process but I will get there eventually. John (2011)

In particular, it seems that John interacts with other collectors on a social level, often mending things for friends, or visiting places in a recreational context. The collecting room and the narratives obtained seem to imply to me that John has outgrown his collection, and does not want to really admit this to himself. This ambiguousness is metaphorically represented by the door that stands ajar, not quite separating the collection from the rest of the house. This key image is the focus of my re-presentation of John's collecting room. The film aims to keep the viewer on the threshold of the space, watching time slowly pass. However, the stasis of this image is accompanied by a complex soundtrack, which continually changes in relation to the different clocks that John discusses. As with the previous practical outcomes, time in this film is transcendent, moving from different memories and recollections triggered by examining individual items in the collection. Yet,

rather than seeing the focus of each narrative, the audience can only hear the noise of the prompting object. Thus by placing emphasis on the sound of the space, my spatial portrait highlights the idea that the continuous noise is not just a by-product of the collection, but the reason for the collecting room's existence.

When exhibiting *Mastering Time*, the film is to be displayed in a room approximately the same size as the clock room, which is 3m by 2.5m. The image is to be projected on one wall, while the audio should be played through three distinct speakers, located in different positions within the room. The film's soundtrack consists of a series of audio channels that combine the different noises of specific clocks with biographical details gained from interviews conducted within the collecting space. In displaying the film within a gallery, these sound channels are separated into three sections, played through three speakers located in different areas of the small gallery space. The purpose of this installation is to allow the viewer to gain a sense of the sonic qualities of John's collecting room, whilst also incorporating the distinctive intertwined narratives that have been produced within the space. As with all the films produced from this research, the film should be looped, as the narrative is composed from a series of fragmented sections and this allows the viewer to either listen to a shorter section of the film or to its entirety.

DVD : *MasteringTime* (2012)

5.00 Conclusion

5.01 A Summary of Research Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

The principal aim of this research was to produce a body of creative practice that conveys the motivations, satisfactions and frustrations inherent in the formation and development of the collecting room. These artworks have been created as an outcome of participant-based research with the five collectors, re-presenting their narratives to reveal their interactions and emotional responses to the sites that house their collections. Constructed to be intertextual, the resulting works collocate statements extracted from interviews with images and sounds gained from the spaces, aiming to produce juxtapositions that allow audiences to produce their own interpretations of the space.

The book *Making a Killing*, presents photographs of Tom's space alongside his testimony in written form. The narrative that is re-presented here is one of monetary value as he asserts that the objects only offer him financial investment. Yet, the photographs of the room tell slightly different stories about this collecting space. This was further identified in my analysis of the documentary material, which led me to suggest that the collected objects offer alternative comforts that the collector may not recognise or wish to admit to myself as a researcher. My final interpretation of his narrative juxtaposes the images and testimony, in order to create an artwork that aims to direct the viewer in questioning the value of the space and its importance to the participant. In doing this, the past, present and future are connected and relayed for the consideration of an audience. The book *Making a Killing* represents a developmental part of this research and predates the subsequent focus on making films as a method to communicate the research findings.

The film *Unobtainable Dreams* details Allan's relationship to nostalgia and the past through the examination of his numerous small collections. In my interpretation of the interview and accompanying images, I consider that Allan's presentation of the collection produces an ideal version of the past, which allows him a sanctuary from other tensions he may experience. In combining Allan's oral testimony with photographs and videos to create a fragmented film, I aimed to encourage the viewer to question notions of time in relationship to the objects and spaces. In particular, this film moves between moving and static images, inviting the audience to become aware of the medium being used and question the temporality of the space.

The film *Hook, Line and Sinker*, investigates Trigg's collection of Disney memorabilia. Trigg regards the collection as a reminder of a special family holiday. In my exploration of her collecting room I use two different interviews, the collector's own testimony, which is contrasted with her daughter's speculation about the motivations that underpin her collection. By analysing these two separate testimonies in conjunction with my own photographic images, I suggest that the manner in which Trigg displays her collection questions academic understandings of gender stereotypes in collectors (Belk and Wallendorf, 1994; Cheang, 2001). Further to this, I propose that Trigg's retention of objects

could be a form of compensation for the loss of her mother, who passed away shortly before the family vacation. The two narrative interviews in the film allow the audience to consider the events that lead up to the onset of collecting, the collection itself and the effect it has on the family. The visual material metaphorically demonstrates the idea that the subject matter (that may seem initially superficial) takes on different and perhaps darker connotations through the interview and discussion of the collecting room.

It's Not All Roses is a film which continues the theme of parental loss, discussing Potts' collection of orchids. The narrative of the collection details different times within Potts' life history, paying particular attention to his relationship with his father and their shared passion for the plants. In my enquiry, I propose that Potts creates an aspirational space that enables him to ensure the plants have the right conditions for growth. This notion of the controlled environment is embodied by sound recordings of the space, such as the fan that cools the temperature and the sound of rain falling on the greenhouse. These audio cues are intended to remind the viewer of the lengths that Potts goes to in order to keep his orchids thriving. Further to this, I consider that the care and attention he lavishes on the plants may be an act of atonement, compensating for the loss of his father and his father's plants. Again, this film uses the interview footage as one text, which is accompanied by moving image sequences that at times connect to the oral narrative, while at other times create distinct narratives that do not correlate in a literal sense. In creating an intertextual piece that brings together the three stands of documentary material, my film invites viewers to consider the space and the significance of the stories Potts relays.

Finally, *Mastering Time* considers John's collection of clocks which reveal his growth and development as a collector. My interpretation of John's accounts and images produced of his collecting room suggest that John's collecting practice has become less prominent due to other commitments. In analysing the material, my observations propose that although he appears to have outgrown his collection, he keeps the objects as a form of comfort or security that he can return to if and when required. My re-presentation of this collection in film form brings together the sounds of the collecting space, and individual clocks from within this, with the collector's different narratives about the development of the room and the collection. These individual accounts aim to build a compendium of stories that construct a portrait of the collector. In this film, the intention is to allow the audience to question the role of the collection today and the importance of sound as a cue to memory.

My research explored the context of space as a framework for investigating collecting rooms, drawing on particular objects that the rooms housed and the experiences that each private space offered. I proposed that collecting rooms are autotopographical spaces, charting aspects of the life history of the owner, bringing together accounts of his or her past (in the form of memory,) present (in the accounts of experience) and future (in the participant's aspirations.) Amalgamated, these narrative segments form a portrait of the collector, allowing insight into their lives. Drawing from the ideas of a range of theorists, and in

particular Walter Benjamin, I postulated that exploring the collection spatially would delineate the chronology and associative values of the collection. This allowed the research to explore alternative aspects to collecting such as the participants' personal relationships with family members and the purpose of having a private space in which to collect. Central to this investigation was the idea of having a space in which collectors could assert themselves free from the influence of others. Produced from an idea referenced in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, this enquiry considered the collecting room as one such location, which may be shaped to form an identity or realise ambitions in an independent environment. Each collecting room analysed in the written part of this thesis exemplifies this idea, as the space is used to represent the collector. While the purpose and motivations underpinning collecting differ greatly, each space provides their collector with a location to display objects they hold dear. Free from the pressures evidenced in other domestic spaces, the collecting room becomes a location in which collectors can assert their creativity, through their selection and displays of their collections. In all the collections portrayed in this research, the participants drew satisfaction from displaying their collections in a manner that was specific to them, creating a dialogue between their spatial arrangement and the ideas that underpin their collecting process. In this research, this process has been appropriated in a number of ways, such as a refuge in memories from the past (*Unobtainable Dreams*), a visual reminder of a special occasion, both through the collected objects (*Hook, Line and Sinker*) and other mementoes displayed in conjunction to the collection (*Making a Killing*). Furthermore the objects represented other fulfilments for example, a chronology of personal development (*Mastering Time*) and as an outlet for creative potential (*It's Not All Roses.*)

Within the Literature Review, I proposed that collectors could have a difficult relationship between publicly showing their collection and a desire to keep their collection to themselves (page 24). Regarding this, I hypothesised that collecting rooms might be intensely private spaces and access to these spaces would be difficult. Yet, within my research all the participants have been open to showing and discussing their collecting rooms, revealing many different aspects of collecting through my extended study. Furthermore, four out of five of the collectors featured within my research were active members of collecting societies, combining their interest in collecting with other forms of social engagement.

This may have been affected by the manner in which I recruited the participants. The initial invitation to take part in my research was through an online open call, which was then relayed through the social networks of collecting groups. As active members of the social groups, the collectors who responded were used to discussing their collections with fellow collectors and more familiar with showing their spaces to others. If I had employed other methods to recruit participants, I might have gained access to collecting rooms that were in essence much more private spaces only inhabited by their own collector.

Moreover, I would suggest that the participants' willingness to contribute to my project reveals a certain amount of pride and confidence in their collection. Additionally, each

collector featured herein has produced something that is creative and durable through the longevity of his or her collecting habits. In partaking in the research, the collectors were given an opportunity to celebrate this, through sharing their experiences with myself as a researcher. Further, through creating the artworks, I present their collection to a wider audience to comprehend and appreciate their achievements. I would like to suggest that this relationship became mutually beneficial, with the majority of the participants commenting on enjoying the process after the initial interview.

Focused on memory and forgetting, the interviews not only explored the reminiscences that were preserved in the spaces and objects of collecting rooms, they also discovered that collections and their rooms were in some cases an activity to displace experiences that the collector might wish to forget. This is particularly evident in the collections that made a direct connection between the objects accumulated and memories of the collector's parents (*Unobtainable Dreams* and *It's Not All Roses*.) Yet, this correlation between objects and memory is also discernable in the case study *Hook, Line and Sinker*, where the collection may act as compensation for loss. Triggered by the objects on display, these narratives tell personal stories that are specific to the individuals concerned, presenting a specific interrogation of the value of collections and how the objects are imbued with meaning.

Throughout my research, narrative has taken three related but distinct forms. The first of these is the *account* of the collection and its formation by the collector. Within my five case studies, this maps the progress and history of the collector, partially divesting the object of its origins and constructing a new narrative that amalgamates the collector's and object's biographies.

The second narrative form is the *re-telling* of the narratives by the participant to myself as researcher. In reflecting upon this in my interpretative process, my research considers my own agency as interlocutor and the effect that the interview has on the accounts that are told. Working with semi-structured interviews, my research questioned the participants about their objects and spaces in order to gain some understanding about the meaning and function of the space, and the collection to each of them. In all my case studies, the participants concentrated on relaying positive memories and associations about the collection. It is possible that this result may have been affected by the initial questions that I used in the interviews, or alternatively this may have been caused by the manner in which the collectors wanted to portray themselves in the research. However, I argue that the collectors featured in my research only retained objects that relate to 'happy' memories, because objects associated with less affirmative ideas may be passed on, thrown out, or are simply not on display. Yet, as the case study *Hook, Line and Sinker* showed the collector's relationship to objects might change over time, which is represented by Trigg's embarrassment with her collection of soft toys.

The third and final narrative form explored in my research is my *re-presentation* of the findings to an audience through the production of photography, film and sound pieces.

In producing these works of art, my practice brings the separate narrative forms together, combining different insights into each collection and space in order to produce a portrait of the collector. This re-presentation simultaneously reveals the narrative of the collection, the retelling of this account under the agency of the researcher and the artistic exposition. In doing this, the narratives are multifaceted interpretations of the collecting room, revealing a complex relationship to private space and objects. However, the final body of creative practice is richer than just combining the three narrative strands, it presents nuanced and subtle portraits of the participants that reveal the complex relationships between collectors and their objects.

In order to achieve this, the investigation considered the display of each collection and room to gain further insight into the interview material incorporating ideas developed from Sensory Ethnography. In examining the observations and testimonies together, the enquiry aimed to reveal some of the personal investment and importance of the collection that may not have been apparent from the oral testimony alone. By analysing the sensory aspect of the collection, the research aimed to reveal not just the narratives that were willingly told, but also those that were only hinted at through the space and observations of the collector. This revealed alternative narratives that focused on less positive aspects of the collection, such as family bereavement, issues with self-confidence and tensions between the collector and his or her family.

Furthermore, I was interested in the experiential qualities that the space offered the participant, which Sensory Ethnography could not convey. To overcome this, I incorporated techniques from the method of I. P. A., which is concerned with examining the experiences of others.

I.P.A. investigations do not create templates, but consider each case study separately. The researcher does not create a hypothesis prior to meeting the subject, but responds directly to the participant's testimony. Furthermore, the method allows the interviewee to take a central role in directing the ideas and concepts discussed. This creates participant-centered research, which responds directly to each individual rather than producing a more didactic enquiry. This holistic approach allows for nuances and individual characteristics to come to the fore, constructing an idiographic investigation. While this process is derived from a theoretical idea, I have applied it to my practice, producing each outcome as a direct response to each participant. Another attribute of I.P.A. is the structure of building the enquiry, by considering the previous case study to develop the current one throughout the research. Again, I used this theoretical idea within my practice, developing each re-presentation in relation to the previously produced outcomes. This allowed the practice to continue to develop and expand the enquiry through the course of the research.

These approaches to interviewing are then combined with examining the sensory aspects of the experience. For example, my examination considers both the visual displays and the

sound of the space, as being key areas to comprehending the importance of a collecting room. In combining the two separate approaches of Sensory Ethnography and I.P.A., I created a methodology that enabled me to consider the sensory qualities of the collecting room and the experience it offers the collector. By incorporating photography and video into this exploration, my research generates a more open enquiry than other types of interview based research. The body of practice that has been informed by adaptations of existing methodological approaches constitutes my contribution to new knowledge, merging the strengths of these separate lines of investigation.

Each artwork is a direct response to the material that was gathered, producing an original re-presentation of the collecting rooms. While there are overarching themes in the research, each of the five case studies constitutes a specific response to the collector and his or her space. The artworks in their nature are expository, revealing personal insights through the collectors' testimonies. However, I made the decision to partially conceal my intervention in the final outcomes by editing the interviews to sound like monologues. In doing this, my aim was to highlight the intimacy of the space and create a direct relationship between the participant and audience. This type of expository discourse is similar to Walter Benjamin's intervention in *The Arcades Project* (2001), where he allows audiences to deduce their own understanding of his collected materials.

The main purpose of the creative practice is to create dialectical images, making past memories present, through the temporal media used in the construction of the work. In using these media, my intention is to make connections between different moments in time and to produce artworks that allow the audience to speculate about the affects of the past on the collector's present. The relationship between temporality and the collecting room differed greatly between each case study. Yet, by using media that were specific to communicating these different notions of time, my creative practice conveys these different temporalities. Using different combinations of sound, photography and film, the artworks deliberately emphasise and shift between media with the intention of provoking the viewer to contemplate the collecting room's relationship to time. Utilising the different media's connotations, each spatial re-presentation invites the audience to question notions of time and space, in regard to the individual being presented.

Produced from in-depth case studies, this exploration creates a discourse between theory and practice that overcomes the limitations of considering these related methods of investigation separately. In creating a dialogue between these two types of enquiry, I have been able to re-examine prior research into collecting and create an alternative perspective that concentrates on the participants' individual experiences and ideas. Generated out of personal testimonies, these insights challenge previous concepts about collecting, such as Trigg's collection which contests earlier arguments about gender stereotypes and collecting (page 113). This is further evident where four out of the five participants recalled the first object they purchased and the origins of the collection. Though my number of participants

was quite low and therefore further research would need to replicate this finding, it does challenge theorist Mieke Bal's idea that collections infrequently have distinct beginnings or endings (Bal, 1994). In my research findings, I discovered that although the collection may not have been consciously conceived as a collection, the initial object held significance for the collector as the trigger for their fascination with the items he or she collects. Additionally the case study, *Making a Killing*, also suggests a defined ending, as the collector aims to sell the collection when he retires (or at least this is what Tom stated in the interview). These findings show an inflection between theory and practice, that question ideas established by theorists, highlighting differences from solely theoretical perceptions of collections.

Each outcome of my practice allows audiences to reconsider these private collecting spaces. In combining theoretical concepts with artistic methods of delivery, my practice enables the research to extend beyond the audience of traditional academic writing. This highlights the significance of my contribution to knowledge. By creating a body of practice that coalesced I.P.A. and Sensory Ethnography, I was able to reveal some of the intimate experiences that underpin owning a collecting room and present these to a gallery audience. Furthermore, it is important to this investigation that the two integrated outputs of theory and art practice are shown in their related context. In presenting this thesis, the artworks act as a conclusion to each chapter, reinforcing this relationship between the two and communicating to the viewer the method of the enquiry and how the artworks were formed. This final presentation reveals that collecting rooms enrich collectors' lives greatly, offering comfort and privacy away from the frustrations and tensions of other aspects of their lives.

5.02 Related Future Research

The methodology identified in my thesis can be applied to further investigations of domestic space, allowing research through practice to consider both sensory perceptions and experiential qualities that the space offers. Testing this idea further, would reveal if this approach was suitable for a wide range of participants, or if the techniques relate specifically to characteristics of collectors.

One of the main sensory experiences I expected to observe in my case studies was the tangible relationship between collectors and objects. Highlighted in Walter Benjamin's writing, collectors often enjoy the tactile quality of objects and the act of handling them can provoke memories (Benjamin, 2009). Yet, in my research findings, the participants rarely mentioned the tangible aspects of objects, prioritising pleasure in the aesthetic qualities of the collection. Every collector in my research sample created displays and thought about the visual presentation of the collection. However, only the orchid collector mentioned pleasure in touching his plants. This may be specific to the participants who were selected for the study, and a different group of collectors may produce distinctive qualities that concentrate on the tangible qualities of the objects collected. Furthermore, the results may have been affected by my initial position as a photographic researcher, with my participants focusing on the visuality of their collection over other aspects in order to help me with my enquiry.

Regarding this result, I propose that further consideration of the handling of objects and their ability to stimulate memories would be likely to generate even greater understanding of the collector's interactions with their objects and may present different results from the findings of my investigation.

Finally I surmise that a larger number of participants might have generated different conclusions, revealing different motivations and satisfactions imbued in collecting rooms. Yet, these case studies are representative of the specific participants of this project, and while the research concentrates on these individuals, it should be noted that there are further motivations in collecting that were not part of this sample, such as participants collecting the same thing (e.g. first day cover postage stamps or a particular plant genus, which could be developed into future studies.) Furthermore, there are several themes that have arisen from the research that could have been examined further through a different selection of participants. For example, two of my case studies concentrate on ideas of national identity and British objects. As collecting is a universal pastime, selecting collectors who concentrated on objects that related to England or another country or area could have made an alternative study, generating different findings from those presented in this research.

The methodology of combining Sensory Ethnography and I.P.A. in order to generate artistic practice needs further examination. I would like to suggest that it could be employed by artists and practitioners as a means to facilitate supplementary research into domestic space. In the introduction to the written component of this thesis I asserted that spatial enquiries were highly individual, subsequently the experience of personal space is seldom communicated to others. By employing a methodology that combines the analytical techniques highligted by I.P.A and Sensory Ethnography, it could be possible to gain further insight into the satisfactions, motivation and frustrations of a range of domestic spaces, thus increasing our understanding of how space is experienced. Even though the outcomes for this type of investigation are highly personal, the narratives that are produced do enable a comprehension of the personal significance of the phenomena under investigation.

My interest in collecting and space remains and I will carry on the series carefully selecting participants who offer new insights and engaging narratives that develop the project. In addition to this I have begun a new project that expands my research into space, traces and memories. This latest project explores a cherry orchard that has been left abandoned for over ten years. These images are juxtaposed with oral testimony of a number of participants who spent their summer holiday fruit picking. This new work moves my research from individual re-presentations to a new context of collective memory, but it continues to explore the relationship between narrative and image.

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