

The Photographic Representation of Light and Space as Medium and Metaphor

Eleanor Ray BFA (Hons)

This exegesis is presented in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania

Signed statement of originality

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Ray'.

Eleanor Ray

Copyright Eleanor Ray

No part of this exegesis is to be used or reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopy or any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the artist.

Acknowledgements

I extend my gratitude to the following people for their assistance and advice:

David Stephenson, Jonothon Holmes, Geoff Parr and the library staff at the School of Art, Hobart.

I would like to thank my family for their support and encouragement, particularly my daughter Georgia and son Thomas.

I am deeply indebted to David Martin for his continuous support, constructive advice and interest in this project.

This exegesis is dedicated to the memory of my dear father, Captain George Alexander Hunt who navigated by the stars.

Abstract

This project has investigated the photographic representation of light and space, as medium and metaphor.

Cognitive and emotional phenomena are normally regarded as related to, or occurring within the mind. But what is the mind? Whenever we say “within” the mind, we give our mental faculties a space or place of existence, even though we cannot “picture” this site. In other words we describe the mind in terms of metaphorical associations that are connected to a contained space. Architecture is a much used metaphor for the mind, but the mind may also be analogically suggestive of architecture, hence the photographic images created in this research project represent a “non-specific” site that may incite interpretations related to the duality and/or multiplicity of the metaphoric exchange.

The photographic work produced throughout this research represents an investigation into manifestations of light as the ethereal counterpart of thoughts, objects and emotions. Placing the camera in a central position before the constructed light receptacle, I have created a series of images that are associated with the symbolic equivalent of consciousness; the self as centred. Light has been manipulated in such a way as to represent the analogous “spirit” of the self.

Repeatedly photographing the same space, from a central position, light is recorded as both the subject within the boundaries of the constructed space, and the subject that appears to extend outward, blurring or dissolving the boundaries of representation. Hence the project, rather than replicating reality, or representing a convincing illusion of reality, the project has explored ways of representing a mediation between the physical and the metaphysical – between inner and outer realities.

INTRODUCTION

The Research Project

This research project has explored the representation of light and space within minimal sites set before the camera.

As a way of investigating the synthesis of experience, memory and thought within abstract concepts of containment, a series of images derived from photographing the same, minimal, “light-space” container have been produced. The minimal constructions, whilst devoid of objects and literal signs, may be regarded as receptacles for light. Light is utilised and explored within contained space for its potential emotive power as a medium, and for its potential metaphorical associations to thoughts and feelings that occur both in the mind and in the world. The project explores the relationship of light to space through a variety of representations that in turn create a range of interpretations, from the phenomenological to the metaphorical.

Representations of containment in the form of interior spaces have been created by artists over a variety of disciplines. This project has explored the constant return to, and use of the architectural analogue in both art and everyday life, and the possible effects that contained and bounded space has on our sense of being. This has culminated in working with a minimal space, where the focus of attention resides in the presence of light and the way it is formed through colour, perspective, apertures and screens. Integral to the investigation has been the study of light both as a medium and as a metaphor for the mind, within and “beyond” the contained space.

The Exegesis

This exegesis provides an overview of the research project. Following a brief discussion of the background to my current art practice, Chapter 1

discusses issues related to aspects of our external and internal world of being, and how these issues relate to mental, physical and metaphoric notions of containment. The first section of the chapter, 'Metaphors of mind, body and architecture', looks at the relationship of mind and body to architecture and basic orientation, and considers how our experiences in the world are conceptualised in terms of metaphors of containment. This leads into a discussion of the nature of the ambiguous image, which I describe as related to both experience and memory. There follows an account of how the photographing of a recessive objectless space sets up a perspectival order; hence I will cover some of the formal and metaphorical aspects of perspective by looking into its controversial history and its possible use in contemporary representation as a device that links the contemplation of real, imaginative and metaphorical associations. Light is both the object and subject represented within the walled spaces. This prompts a consideration of how light has been revered throughout the ages with its mythological and metaphorical associations. Its function within my work as both a medium and metaphor emerges from the discussion on perspective. The final section of Chapter 1 looks at how staged photography has evolved and been explored in contemporary art.

In the second chapter, I discuss my work in its context, initially looking at the history of photography and how the metaphor has been explored both in "straight" photography, and in photograms and staged photography. This chapter also discusses the way light has been utilised to express emotional and spatial associations, specifically in the work of artist James Turrell and scenographer Josef Svoboda.

The third chapter is devoted to a discussion of the conceptual, technical and aesthetic considerations involved throughout this research, and how these considerations were put into practice in both experimental and exhibition work, and the photographic imagery resolved and selected for examination. In the conclusion I summarise the outcome of the project.

Background

An involvement in the performing arts as a stage, lighting and costume designer, prior to undertaking a fine arts degree has been influential in certain aspects of my photographic work.



Figure 1. Design for Edward Bond's play *Tin Can People*, University Studio Theatre, University of Tasmania. Designer: Eleanor Ray, 1988.

While I was still involved in the performing arts, there came a point where I wanted to explore and realise my ideas in other ways. Rather than interpreting other people's ideas and narrative scripts, I was beginning to think about the narratives of my own life, and how these experiences had influenced the way I thought and felt about my own existence. I enrolled in Fine Arts and eventually discovered that the medium of photography fulfilled a desire to investigate narratives in two-dimensional, image form. This I achieved by making photographs in a "found", vacant old house that was going to be demolished. I went to the house on a regular basis, armed with camera, tripod, torches, candles and a case full of my belongings. After exorcising feelings of guilt about trespassing on private property, I became absorbed in creating and re-creating scenes from my past that mingled with present bringing thoughts and sensations. The house represented a kind of neutral ground; a space I could inhabit and leave at will. After a while I stopped taking my belongings to the house, and simply painted the

inside of the dark building with the light of the torch and candles. This would prove to be the beginning of a journey into “lighting space”.

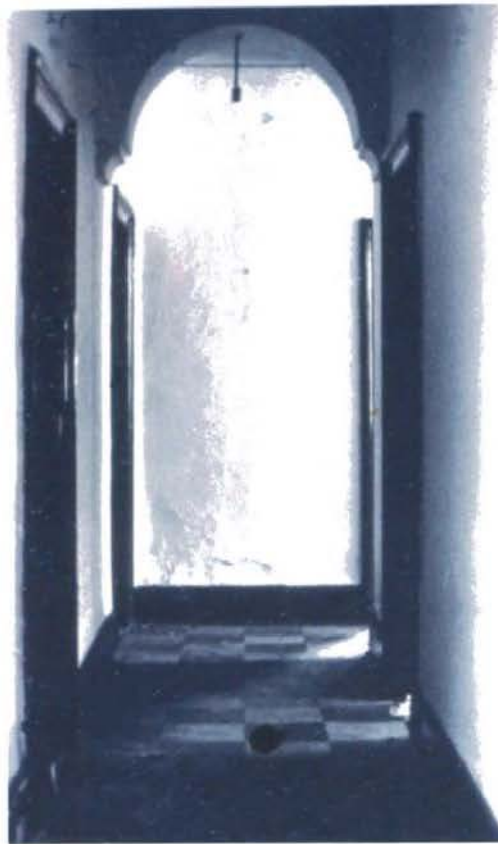


Figure 2. Eleanor Ray, *Hallway*, black and white photograph, 8" x 6", 1991.

The influential movement of constructed photography from the early 1970s onwards, became a focus of investigation in my BFA Honours work. I was particularly interested in the “people-less” constructed rooms and buildings of the American photographer James Casebere and the German photographer Thomas Demand. Both artists were representing very different spaces, but at the core of their practice were two dominant, uniting, elements – the lack of human presence and the “constructed” photographic image. In my Honours work the elements of absence, interior space, and photographic construction were combined with an emphasis on artificial light. The light was represented as a presence, that hovered outside and within the empty, constructed domestic interior.



Figure 3 & 4. Eleanor Ray, *Memory House*, 1997, C Type photographs, 60cm x 70cm.

Focusing on photographing the movement and shifts of light within various constructed rooms, the work represented associations with time, memory, the body and architecture. The light either illuminated an object in the constructed room, or illuminated a wall that revealed a fragment of the past, in the suggestion of ageing through marks or cracks on its surface. A tension was set up between the light, its source as external to the rooms, and the interior space itself; the light and reflections appeared as a present illumination that was at odds with the aging interior. The work was also an attempt to represent not only how these rooms had appeared in the past, but how they appeared in the process of imaginative recollection which is possibly influenced by psycho-physical factors; thus the room as interior became a metaphor for the mind and/or body.

When embarking on the doctoral research, I wanted to continue exploring the metaphor through the use of a model construction or constructions, but without the support or presence of objects within the space represented. I also wanted to further investigate the interaction of light with surface, and light within space, and how light and colour may influence the way we respond emotively to the photographic image.

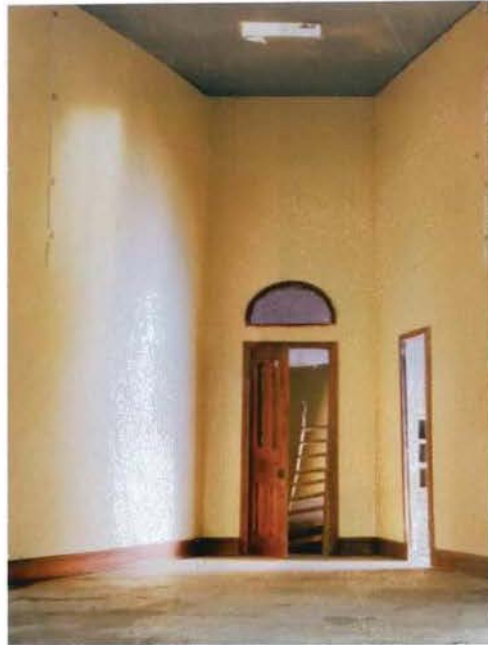


Figure 5. Eleanor Ray, *Memory House*, 1997, C Type photograph, 60cm x 70cm.

When embarking on the doctoral research, I wanted to continue exploring the metaphor through the use of a model construction or constructions, but without the support or presence of objects within the space represented. I also wanted to further investigate the interaction of light with surface, and light within space, and how light and colour may influence the way we respond emotively to the photographic image. Rather than creating actual models, my initial research involved the use of two-dimensional materials placed in different configurations, configurations that “affected” a sense of material space. Other materials such as lightweight fabric and semi-transparent paper were also used, in a similar way.

Individually, some of the images were successful, but I found that the impermanence of the structures inhibited a consistency that was necessary for a focused exploration of the subject matter. I eventually resolved the problem by creating and working with structures of the



Figure 6. & Figure 7. *Work Prints*, 1998, C Type photographs, 18cm x 20cm.

same or similar dimensions, made from some of the materials I had been working with in particular, foam-board and perspex. The structures not only served as a concrete space to work with, but also acted as a container for light and enabled a continual inquiry into the effects of light within material space, and potential metaphorical associations.¹

¹

Throughout this exegesis I refer to these constructions as "light-space" containers.

CHAPTER 1

METAPHORS OF MIND, BODY AND ARCHITECTURE

The mind like liquid poured into a container, assumes the rooms shape.²

Actual experience in the world, the way we perceive, react to, and navigate through a field of space, may be regarded as an ongoing accumulation of knowledge that informs our concepts of being. Our sense of being is also influenced by conceptions of containment. Our own body, the physical shell that houses the movement of bodily fluids and mental processes, is a container. Our bodies are also contained within other containers, such as walls, rooms, buildings and fenced areas. In fact much of the space of the modern world is made up of a multitude of containers that we move in and out of daily. As Mark Johnson and George Larkoff observed, "We conceptualise our visual field as a container, and conceptualise what we see as being inside it."³ The mind thus becomes, "a spatially extended container-object; ideas and memories are metaphorical objects stored in a mind space; and we search for and retrieve these idea-objects via procedures analogous to physical search and retrieval."⁴

The metaphorical concept of containment may also be applied to the actual process of making and creating art. Applied to my own practice, the constant return to, and photographing of, different configurations of light within the same constructed space in my studio may be likened to the process of identifying with spaces that exist outside the body, both interior and exterior, and reconfiguring them into spaces within the mind. At the same time, the inverse is also possible, where expressions

² Ellen Frank, *Literary Architecture*, University of California Press, London, 1979, p. 137.

³ George Larkoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1980, p. 31.

of internalised consciousness are projected within a constructed space in the form of light.⁵ The reductive space may also be likened to the process of thinking which involves clearing an empty space, and the process of recollection, which involves retrieval both within and beyond the borders of mind-containment.⁶ Hence the ambiguous shapes that appear as either imagined objects in the form of reflections, or cryptic forms of light within the photographic imagery, have associations both with external objects, and with those that are reconfigured within the mind. Is there a relationship between the way we perceive objects and space and metaphorical associations? The architect Herb Greene observed that metaphorical associations help us to make sense of the transaction between a perceived object and our mental experience:

In order to understand the role of metaphor in apprehending or creating an image, we must remember that for the scanning mechanism of the mind, an object is not a mere name with a single meaning. Instead it is a disposition of many cues. Cues for a table, for instance, may include flatness, color, a glossy reflection, generously rounded corners and edges, and so forth. Each of these cues, grasped in some unifying gestalt, is capable of initiating a metaphoric response.⁷

Most of the time we are not consciously aware of this process; it is also possible that we do not always make these associations. Yet concepts and feelings elicited by certain images are often the result of the observer's connection to metaphorical cues. In our society, the constant interaction with architectural space, the built spaces of work, home, and leisure, combined with the human body's own "architecture", influence

⁴ Mark Johnson, "The Imaginative Basis of Meaning and Cognition" in *Images of Memory on Remembering and Representation*, eds., Susanne Kuchler and Walter Melion, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, 1991, p.76. (Johnson quotes from Henry L. Roediger, "Memory, Metaphors in Cognitive Psychology", in *Memory and Cognition*, vol. 8, no 3, 1980, pp. 231-46.)

⁵ Ellen Frank (p. 272) remarks on "the various relationships the mind assumes with respect to room", in her notes on Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

⁶ We often refer to the symbiotic relationship of mind and place in verbal metaphors, for instance, the mind may be likened to an attic or library, or we may "close doors on the past".

⁷ Herb Greene. *Mind & Image*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1976, p.110. It is worth noting here, that whilst we tend to communicate our ideas about objects and images in a language that is not obviously associated with metaphors, advertising material consistently relies upon our ability to unconsciously associate visual cues with objects and experiences.

the way we perceive and understand our existence in terms of metaphors. Architecture is a much-used metaphor for the mind, but the mind may also be analogically suggestive of architecture: the cognitive process of building and recording mental concepts may be likened to architectural constructs.



Figure 8. Jean Roubier 'La madelaine'. Vézelay.⁸

The nineteenth-century aesthete, Walter Pater likened his active writing process to the sensory perception of moving through architectural space. In an essay on Pater, Ellen Frank discusses an anonymous short piece of writing, probably written by a student of Pater after his death, which describes the student's interpretation of Pater's space of thought and space of work. In Frank's words,

to Pater rooms were the externalised configurations of internal consciousness, descriptive not only of the quality and structure of minds but filled with a metaphoric furniture of thought derived from particular sensuous experience of an outside world as it intruded through windows and doors, making its impress felt.⁹

As a second example, Frank notes a similarity between Pater's writing and the earlier tradition of the 'Ars Memoria' in Augustine's time, which

⁸ This photograph by Jean Roubier appears in Ellen Frank's book *Literary Architecture* on page 29. Frank used several photographic examples of buildings, including the work of photographer, Frederick H. Evans to illustrate the connection of architectural building and image to the creative, literary mind.

involved the collection of mental imagery associated with place. But she also sees a distinction between the way the Ars Memoria tradition utilised this imagery by summoning it up at will, whereas Pater's fictional characters "more often passively yield themselves to the influences of place and to the memories there associated."¹⁰

As a process of building up ideas and metaphorical links, place association, whether used in literature, oration or the fine arts, provides a framework, a design that establishes an interior, whilst also providing links associated with memory and imaginative constructs.¹¹

Although our human range of movement is limited there is a kind of dialogue between the body and space. We unconsciously learn this dialogue, which is conditioned through our relationship with and recognition of the external environment. This environment, in a sense, is an extension of the self, a being that is contained and therefore relates to containment in the world in the form of boundaries and demarcations. For Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, the

landscape of the human inner world of landmarks, coordinates, hierarchies, and especially boundaries serves, we believe, as the only humane starting point for the organisation of the space around us, which, more than being perceived, is inhabited by us.¹²

⁹ Frank, p.18.

¹⁰ Frank, p. 32.

¹¹ It is possible to imagine the mind assuming any number of shapes, in fact artists have represented the mind in a multitude of different ways; likewise an architectural site could be represented in a number of ways. The point to be made here is that the minimal square and rectangular "light-containers" created for this project are the outcome of finding a way to suggest either architecture and/or mind through an *interior framework*. Taking the work further in one direction or another, that is either more suggestive of a particular architectural space, or more suggestive of an internal site within the body would imply a descriptive model rather than a vista of interpretive possibilities.

¹² Bloomer and Moore, *Body, Memory and Architecture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1997, p.77. Bloomer and Moore also noted that our body image is formed by unconsciously locating the body inside a three-dimensional boundary, and that this boundary "surrounds the entire body and demarcates our "inside" personal space from our "outside" exrapersonal space." Bloomer and Moore, p.37.

Bloomer and Moore see these conceptual boundaries as existing in the individual body, and progressing to the house and on further into the shared community – these inner orders necessarily extend outward. The phenomenology of space as centred and symmetrical has become a strong focus in the photographic work of this project, particularly in the work produced in the latter part of it. This “centredness” may be regarded as a process that enables psychological stability and basic orientation.¹³ Gestalt psychology has shown us that the mechanisms of perception enable us to manage complicated patterns and structures in space by reducing them to a recognisable and simple order. They also discovered that individuals simplify these patterns toward vertical and horizontal organisations, and toward symmetry rather than asymmetry. But at times this dialogue of order between the body, space and external boundaries breaks down; movement becomes inhibited, or certain places have an effect on our emotions, creating a sense of disorientation. Or it may be that the “mind’s eye” alters, producing a conflict between mind and body, and this enigma of alteration creates a sense of vertigo.¹⁴

Hence it would appear that emotional security is aligned with orientation, and once orientation is challenged the emotions become confused. In his book, *The Concept of Dwelling*, Christian-Norberg Shulz describes “a general phenomenology of orientation that aims at defining the meaning of center, path and domain, independently of the

¹³ When I started photographing the rectangular structure, I became more aware of this “centredness” – as the camera was placed centrally before the structure in order to record all the details of light, surface, and space within it. This “centredness” was also reinforced by aligning and viewing the image before me, in the square view-finder of my Hassleblad camera.

¹⁴ Bloomer and Moore cite Bernini’s forecourt at St. Peter’s in Rome as a powerfully unsettling experience:
 “Here the eye sees one thing (a certain grand intimacy) while the feet feel another (unexpectedly great distances) the side colonnades and the statues are longer near the facade of the cathedral than near the main elliptical space...This is much more than a perspectival trick to make the facade seem closer, it pits one sense against another for a powerfully unsettling experience.”, Bloomer and Moore, p.92.

circumstantial "content" of the three terms. The goal or center is the basic constituent of existential space."¹⁵

Whilst orientation enables us to recognise and navigate through our surroundings, the impressions that leave their mark on us, in the form of a memory or memories, often take the form of a colour, shape or scent rather than a mental image or illustration of the event: the image itself may be less significant than, for example, the sensation of texture, shape or colour. Within my own memory system, colour has a lingering and emotive effect and often takes precedence over details such as objects or people, yet a particular colour or hue may be symbolic of a particular object, person or event. Colours also appear within the mind in relation to certain ideas or emotions. The question that arises through the use of particular colours in combination with light and the reductive space is whether the viewer will respond to a photograph that is *symbolic* of experience (and therefore ambiguous), as opposed to a photograph that is made directly from a particular experience. This question is explored by examining some of the ambiguities existing in our world of lived experience and our world of remembered experience, and by considering some of the possible interpretations related to viewing the "ambiguous" image.

Ambiguity in abstract representation

Distance, location, size, and shape are, . . . both in the mind and in the world.¹⁶

The process of constructing imagery before the camera allowed an exploration and mediation between experiences that are both in the world and in the mind. In representing mind and matter symbolically,

¹⁵ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: On the way to figurative architecture*, Electra/Rizzoli, New York, 1985, p.20. It should be noted that these concepts are formed from Western Optics. The "de-centering" of the self has been, and continues to be the subject of much philosophical debate, both in Western and Eastern Philosophy. This project has investigated both the representation of physical and psychological boundaries and the representation of a break from the boundaries that surround the centre, (rather than in representations of a breaking down of the central motif.)

¹⁶ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes, The Noblest of the Senses*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1993, p.77.

there appeared to be a meeting or fusion of the two at the boundary line or threshold. Light either delineated this edge or obscured it and this seemed to connect in a symbolic way to the boundaries of our experiences in the world, the limitations existing as a result of these boundaries and the way we react to and think about structures and our place within them. The very nature of constructing and setting the image before the camera created ambiguous readings in which depth of field, and lighting were not always proportionate to the constructed space. In finding expression through the presence of light in its many forms and colours, within the stability of a contained space, the photographic work represents, metaphorically, the duality of human existence, which is both tenacious and fragile; hence ambiguity and metaphor seem to be connected.¹⁷ To describe reality as “complete” is to imagine an unreal place, where there are no collisions of thought, emotions or experiences. Thus, the traditional principle of the mimetic nature of art as a reflection of reality fails to take into account the sensory experience of emotions and the ever- changing and fleeting moments of reality. An emotional response may also be a cumulative one, and is often compounded by events that remind us of a past experience, challenging our known or past perceptions of the world. Further, memories in the form of images become vulnerable to imaginative constructs in the present. Sir Frederick Bartlett observed that these imaginative constructs make up an essential part of the memory process:

Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable, fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience It is thus hardly ever really exact, even in the most rudimentary cases of rote-recapitulation, and it is not at all important that it should be so.¹⁸

¹⁷ I became more aware of this connection when my father lost his peripheral vision. I also began to question my own assumptions regarding the symbiosis of mind and visual perception – these questions were addressed in the production of a series of photographs that form a large part of the exhibited work for examination. The details of this experience, and the ensuing work are given in the final part of Chapter Three.

¹⁸ Quoted in Greene, p.1.

Reality, it appears, is more than what “really appears”. When discussing the role of constructed photography, in our contemporary world, Michael Kohler suggests that:

We are slowly losing the sense of what the “real” and “reality” are. To a significant degree, the “new” technical, visual media have made a significant contribution to this kind of insecurity. . . . For the increasingly massive presence of technical images in all areas of life has meanwhile forced the world of images of the camera media, including photography, film, television and video, to assume the character of a secondary reality.¹⁹

Kohler goes on to surmise that – in some cases the world of images has replaced empirical reality “as the frame of reference through which we find orientation in the world.”²⁰ What does this tell us about our individual and collective memories; can we rely on photographic images as representations of reality, or as triggers for our memory of reality? Is it possible to represent “truth” in a “constructed reality” devoid of human presence? Roy Exley observed that the phenomenon of the empty scene as subject,

is first encountered in the 1840s in the work of William Henry Fox Talbot, whose still lifes, staged scenes and urban vistas in the series ‘The Pencil of Nature’ were devoid of the human figure. Then a technical necessity, the lengthy exposure times ensured that all human movement – the activities of passers-by, the physical traces of the pedestrians – simply melted away. Real time was at odds with photographic time, and never the twain could meet.²¹

The Poetry of Perspective

Is real space at odds with photographic space? In photographing a space that could be representative of an actual place or a “non-place”, the photographic work for this project presents not only “sites of ambiguity”, but also through the optics of the camera and the use of a

¹⁹ Michael Kohler. *Constructed Realities: The Art of Staged Photography*, Zurich, Edition stemmle Ag, 1989/1995, p22.

²⁰ Kohler, p.22.

²¹ Roy Exley, “Sites of Absence”, *Contemporary Visual Arts*, issue 20, 1998, p. 64.

recessive space, a perspectival order. In light of the controversies surrounding perspectival images, I have questioned whether a recessive space, devoid of objects, operates on the same or similar hierarchical order as does a perspectival representation of objects within a space. Hence an investigation into the relationship of perspective to our basic concepts of orientation and paths to a centre, along with its connection to the imagination, has formed an important part of this research.

Is it light, perspective or a combination of the two that creates a “metaphorical extension” – an imaginative engagement beyond the boundaries of the work? Utilising a basic perspectival order in combination with light, the appearance of line and depth was either enhanced or exaggerated or disrupted. The orthogonal lines that create a sense of distance or depth also symbolise a path or axis to a centre; the centre representing either outside or inside, arrival or departure. The major consideration in combining the re-presentation of non-solid form (light), with the solidity and rationality of perspectival space was to set up a tension representative of that which exists between the logical structures of our existence, and the striving for homogeneous, dimensionless space. The light in the distance may also be representative of other aspects of existence: the distance that is behind us, in the past, becomes a projection of imaginative memory in the present.

Within selected imagery, the project has investigated the potential to represent the co-existence of a basic perspectival order with light configurations that oscillate between outward and inward apparent movement. When appearing to travel inward, light within the constructed site seemed to encroach on the space, altering or dissolving the perspectival order. The stability of the verticals and horizontals within the site were enhanced or challenged by the sometimes oblique, reflected angles created through the refraction of light.

In his book *The Poetics of Perspective*, James Elkins notes that, in writing about perspective, researchers on the subject usually take only one

viewpoint, either the formal, mathematical stance or the less empirical, metaphorical viewpoint. In the final chapter of the book, Elkins concedes that it is extremely difficult to “step back” and say something “outside of perspective’s regimes.” He concludes,

the best way to end may be to acknowledge the persistent pull of perspective... Among reductive metaphors for perspective, Andre Chastel’s web is the most apposite, because writing about perspective is like struggling in a spider web.²²

What may be the cause of this “persistent pull”? It seems to be a combination of two elements: one is the formal arrangement of perspective and the other is the philosophical way we view perspective in terms of our own being. In acknowledging the existence of both a formal and an abstract concept, is it possible to unite the two? Elkins cites Erwin Panofsky as coming close to an informal analysis of how the mathematical and the optical are apparently united, in that perspective appears to order pictures “as wholes and not just isolated objects”. Panofsky relies on the representation of objects within pictorial space to support his argument of unity.

Within our material environment we are surrounded by boundaries, yet modern scientific conceptions of space, inform us that space is boundless. How do we reconcile the seen and the unseen? If we look into the night sky and see no boundaries, we can also imagine the unseen space beyond as boundless. Yet the ground space we occupy at that moment may be illuminated with boundaries that define and contain inhabited space. Space is also defined and contained within objects such as the computer and television. These often cubic-shaped objects are composed of a screen surrounded by a frame. These new technologies have evolved over time from earlier optical devices. Pierre Descargues made an interesting connection between old and new technologies:

television screens are in a sense the electronic descendants of the lattice or glass screen used by the authors of perspective treatises to teach people how to view life in an orderly way. No way of looking at the world has gained as widespread acceptance as the one shaped by linear perspective.²³

The perspective era that began more than five hundred years ago, relied on rational science and thinking, which incorporated the eye, brain, and measurements of three-dimensional space into two dimensional representation. After the initial enthusiasm for line and clear definition, artists such as Leonardo gradually turned their attention to light, new angles, and less sharply defined edges. Thus, through perspective, the artist merged light and space into something less finite, creating a meditation on that which was beyond pictorial representation, yet triggered by viewing the representation. F.G. Winter observed this aspect of perspective, which has often been overlooked – when he stated:

the seemingly rational invention of perspective, mentally aiming at the secular aspect of life, so often serves the pupose of striving for infinity, beyond all material barriers, to shift the center of gravity of pictorial composition into the perspective distance and to conquer the atmosphere and space with colors fading into twilight.²⁴

Perspective can create a sense of distance, and, as Winter observes, imaginatively guides the observer into a space that is not represented pictorially. Distance also conjures up other images and metaphors – distance related to absence and death, and distance related to thoughts about the past. There is also the space of meditation that is like a distant beacon, accessible only through a series of passages – passages cluttered with thoughts and images that must be emptied out before reaching the space of solitude.

Making use of perspective opens doors in several directions: it enables the observer to see not only what is,

²³ Pierre Descargues, *Perspective*, Translated by I. Mark Pais, Harry n. Abrams publication, NY., 1977, p.25.

²⁴ F.G. Winter, *Linear Perspective*, Postscript: Willie A. Bartschi, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1981, p249.

but also what was and what might be. Perspective states the facts, but it also stimulates the imagination; it shows the past and future as well as the present.²⁵

The colour of light

Physicists tell us that we live on borrowed light. The light that brightens the sky is sent through a dark universe to a dark earth from the sun over a distance of ninety-three million miles. Very little of this agrees with our perception.²⁶

Light also defines and stimulates the paths of our existence, which are both logical and imaginative. Light not only brings images to us through visual perception, but also has the power to incite imaginative images and thoughts that are metaphorical in nature: the potency of light's power to touch the senses is often created through the soft or vibrant hues of colour. This research project has explored the potential to re-create these colourful illuminations within the light-space containers. The specific nature of the sensation we experience through colour perception is complex, involving the length of light waves, the eye, brain and nervous system. Colour is a product of light. Without light, in total darkness, we cannot see colour. This does not mean that the colour still exists in darkness; it simply means that, in darkness, it does not exist. We know that objects exist in these circumstances; we can feel them or detect them by other means, but their colour is not visible because without light, colour is non-existent. Colour is not a property of matter (although it is affected by properties of matter it is reflected from), but is a psychophysical phenomenon induced by light. The quality of colour is subject to the light in which we see it. Individuals react to colours in different ways and this may be associated with differences in biological and emotional structures. Further, the reanimation of past experiences may influence the way we react to certain colours. Our first experiences of colour are unconscious yet like forms and language, over time they

²⁵ Descargues, p25.

²⁶ Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, Faber and Faber Limited, 1956, p246.

begin to take on meaning. Whilst some colours are associated with symbols, these meanings vary across different cultures.

Regardless of what individual colours may represent, or how individuals react to certain colours, it is a fact that colours of different types and intensity do have a direct effect on the nervous system and therefore on the emotions. Rather than investigating colour theory (which is a complex and often controversial area of research) I explored the emotive quality of colour in photographic imagery and my own response to specific colours. I found it interesting to observe other people's reactions to colours: some people relate a certain colour to spatial form, or a specific type of space, whilst others connect the same colour to an inner, non-spatial emotion. This inner emotion is described by René Huyghe when discussing the effects of colour in paintings, as inner duration. He notes that:

[C]olour works upon us by occupying a succession of moments spaced out in time, ranging from the initial sensation, to the nervous excitation, to the emotions that follow the affective states. These are progressively realised moments; they unfold and thus occupy inner duration.²⁷

In the Renaissance, colour was used in pictorial representation as an adjunct to form, and usually described the contours of a form or object. Bolder explorations of colour were put into practice after the Renaissance. Delacroix, whose work was studied and admired by some of the Impressionists, including Renoir and Seurat, broke away from tradition (more so in style than subject matter) and explored colour, as not merely a complement to form, but as playing an autonomous role of its own. Whilst colour may enhance form, it also participates in creating

atmosphere, and this in turn gives both harmonic and emotional values to the image.²⁸

It goes without saying that without light we cannot see. Both natural and artificial light bring the world to us through vision – the images of this world are formed on the retina through the action of light. Our eyes process this information at a rapid rate, in combination with other mental and physical processes. Due to the rapidity of this process, and even our reliance on vision to deliver consistent pictures before us, rarely do we stop to consider the complexity of this fascinating mechanism that combines both external and internal stimuli. This mechanism of sight, which gives us the perception of luminosity, also recognises and interprets the characteristics of light; its intensity, wavelength and distribution in space. In reacting to a luminous flux, the eye and the brain recognise and interpret these characteristics. When images are brought to us on the retina, they are reversed and inverted. In order to “see” images the right way up and the right way around, we instinctively utilise a rapid form of psycho-physical reaction.

Our visual powers also have their limitations: we see some things clearly at varying distances, others are blurred or barely visible; the light waves visible to human vision comprise less than 1 per cent of the total light spectrum. Yet in perceiving light we may “feel” sensations such as pleasure, pain, desire or fear. Light has an emotive quality that touches the senses.

Looking at the various ways in which light “presents” itself to us may give an indication of how we react to its “presence”. An obvious example is our system of traffic lights – it is not only the light we read, but also the colour of light. Our movements are controlled by our perception of a construct that has been integrated into modern society, and is universally accepted. Although this is an explicit observation, it

has prompted me to question the effect these everyday experiences have on the way we read photographic imagery. Is it possible that the colour of light represented in the imagery will elicit a response that is connected to what we are conditioned to, in our constructed environment?

The sudden or brief appearance of a beam of light may incite an alert response either to the light or (less directly) as a stimulus to action, whereas the slow movement of light into darkness or vice versa may incite a more meditative response to its presence and to the objects we see, or lose sight of. Thus light not only stimulates our sense of sight, but also has various effects on our moods, and on the atmospherics of a place.

See how many hidden causes there are . . . hidden from the comprehension of human beings . . . There are lights upon lights, one more clear than another, each one dark by comparison with the one above it from which it receives its light. As for the Supreme Cause, all lights are dark in its presence.²⁹

This quotation from The Zohar in Jewish scripture represents one of many ways in which light has been viewed, interpreted and revered through the ages and the connection between light and religious and spiritual beliefs is evident in many different cultures throughout history. Our first introduction to light in the book of Genesis is a message of morality – light is good as opposed to the evil of darkness. The Old and New Testaments contain a myriad solar metaphors. The rising sun symbolised the becoming of Christ, with Christ later proclaiming “I am the Light”. Absolute Truth in the Middle Ages focused solely on light. Light was considered the most “noble” of natural phenomena. In its pure form it was considered weightless and beautiful; beauty being interpreted as the “radiance of truth”. Plato also regarded light as beautiful: in his *Republic*, it was the light from the sun that was equated with the idea of Beauty and Truth.

The indigenous people of Australia have moulded their lives and myths around the natural light of the sun, moon and stars. The sun is symbolised as woman and the moon as man; they are viewed as guiding bodies that inform growth, movement and sleep on earth. Aboriginal myths associated with the creation of the universe purport to be revelations of absolute truth. These myths encompass not only what is seen in the sky, but also what appears on earth through the energy and movement from above.

In the visual arts, light is used and represented in such a variety of ways and across so many disciplines that it seems to have endless potential as both a metaphor and a physical reality. Jonathan Crary observed that the analysis of Turner's suns as self-portraits may rest on the proposition that if the circular structure of some of his paintings of a particular period, mimic the shape of the sun:

they also correspond with the pupil of the eye and the retinal field on which the temporal experience of an afterimage unfolds. Through the afterimage the sun is made to belong to the body, and the body in fact takes over as the source of its effects.³⁰

We carry light with us in the residual after-image and the light absorbed through the porous regions of the body, and although this is a meeting of body and light, the two are, in a physical sense, the antitheses of each other. Unlike the weightless, luminous body of light, the human body is solid and our thoughts operate within the solidity of the mind's labyrinth. Perhaps the only way to liberate oneself from weight is to imagine lightness, to paint the sun as the self?

Constructed photography

The definition of photography comes from the Greek, *photos* or *photo* (light) and *graphos* (drawing). Within my own practice the manipulation of light is in a very real sense painting or drawing with light: light is

moved around, and directed through the space, the patterns and forms leaving their mark on the “receptive” materials – the walls of the construction, the negative or positive film and the photographic paper. Whether it be in the creation or manipulation of the model, the light, or a combination of the two, this hands-on approach is essential to the practice of constructed photography.

Staged or constructed photography does not necessarily connote the use of a model or models, although photographers who use models are staging their images before the camera.³¹ In terms of a constructed model one normally thinks of a three-dimensional structure that represents either an existing, a proposed, or possibly an imagined, structure. Models may be constructed with great attention to detail, or put together in a less rigid fashion to represent an idea about an object or scene, rather than illustrating or replicating the same. An ongoing concern with my work produced in the studio has been to find ways of using the model as a space or vista of interpretative possibilities rather than a descriptive formalist model; that is, questions relating to the nature of visual reality are important, but just as important is the finding of ways to represent a mediation between inner and outer realities. As we no longer expect or believe that photography can only deliver indivisible pictures of reality (accepting that photography operates on many levels), I have sought to represent, with the studio-constructed photograph, a mediation between inner and outer realities, rather than attempting to replicate reality through a convincing illusion.

With the advent of digital imaging, Vic Muniz observed:

Whenever a powerful new technology has been introduced in the past, it has forced the re-examination of existing technologies and their power and purpose within society. In the nineteenth century, the advent of photography allowed painters to move away from “factual” representation, and to develop a more

31

In the preface to the catalogue for the exhibition *Constructed Realities, The Art of Staged Photography*, (p7-8), it is noted that the early constructed photographs were made as allegorical pictures that imitated painting, and one of the earliest examples of constructed and arranged photography in the history of the medium, can be seen in the living tableaux made by the Swedish-born Oscar G. Rejlander (1813-1875).

conspicuous style of execution. In a similar way, digital imaging has exposed long overlooked aspects of photography, forcing the medium to abandon all ambition toward either absolute truth or persuasive illusion, and to assume a more critical position.³²

A definitive move toward constructed photography emerged in the 1980s. What was new about this work was not the fact that it was created or staged before the camera (for some of the earliest photographs had been created in this way) but the fact that artists were less inclined to conceal the staging process.³³



Figure 9. David Laundy, from the series, *How the West was Won*.

³² Vic Muniz, *Making it Real*, catalogue text, Aldrich museum of Contemporary Art, Connecticut:Ridgefield 1997, (unpaginated). I should also mention here, the influential work of the twentieth century English photographer Henry Peach Robinson. Robinson also wrote texts on theoretical and practical applications in photography, which included techniques for “combination printing”. This print manipulation technique anticipated photomontage, collage and photo-construction in the twentieth century.

³³ Having said that, photographers working in advertising for example, were by this stage, highly skilled in the art of staging scenes and objects before the camera and were concealing or revealing aspects of the model or models before the camera by way of light manipulation, different lenses and other techniques. Using similar techniques, or those acquired through working in this area, visual artists were able to explore new and different modes of representation, which broke away from traditional art photography.

David Levinthal, who has been working with toy models and photography for over twenty years now, sums up the combination of model and camera by saying:

nothing would seem a more perfect instrument with which to probe the depths of the subconscious than to merge the iconography depicted by the amorphous plastic figures with the apparent reality brought to an image by means of the photographic process.³⁴

In a similar way, Jorge Ribalta uses miniatures to create model settings, and he observes that “if the function of the model is to provide raw material for the imagination, then its ideal, utopian function is to ‘come to life’.”³⁵ Yet it is perhaps in the words of the Czech “photoconstructionist” Tom Drahos that the description of staged photography comes closest to the approach I have taken to my own work:

The photographer is no longer content to supply evidence; he wants to interpret the world, or perhaps even create it. And it is precisely in this approach, where the photographer insists upon intervening in the complex process which generates the image, that the medium will find its total freedom and its real fulfillment.³⁶

This concludes my discussion of the parameters of the investigation. In the following chapter I will review some of the approaches that other artists have taken to the subject of light and space, both in photography and in the art of installed, and staged light-space work, that form the specific context for this research project.

³⁴ *Making it Real*, artist statement, p50.

³⁵ *Making it Real*, artist statement, p62.

³⁶ *Constructed Realities*, p145.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF THE WORK

The contextual aspects addressed in this chapter have arisen as a result of investigating the photographic metaphor, the presence and use of light in photography and installation, and the constructed space represented within the photograph. In the context of my own work, the following discussion is confined to photographers and artists who create “light-projection” work.

The following discussion looks at the different approaches that four prominent, early twentieth century photographers took to the subject of the photographic metaphor. Two photographers who were exploring this theme in the early to mid-twentieth century were Frederick H. Evans, who observed a connection between certain architectural constructions and images in nature, and Alfred Stieglitz, who observed a metaphorical connection between his cloud photographs and human emotions. At around the same time, Francis Bruguière was creating abstract photographic images using light as the representation for inner emotions, and in the same period, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy created abstract forms in photograms that also expressed emotive qualities.

Evans, Stieglitz and Bruguière

Frederick Evans took up photography in the early 1880s, creating photomicrographs and landscape photographs.³⁷ Yet he is best

37

Evans made his negatives of microscopic subjects with a quarter-plate camera which accommodated lenses with a range of focus from three to twelve inches. The negatives were then made into positive lantern-slides.

known for his photographs of the interiors of cathedrals in England and France.

Prior to making his final photograph at Wells Cathedral, titled “A sea of Steps”, Frederick Evans made two photographs of the same subject: the first occasion was in 1899 and the second in 1900.³⁸

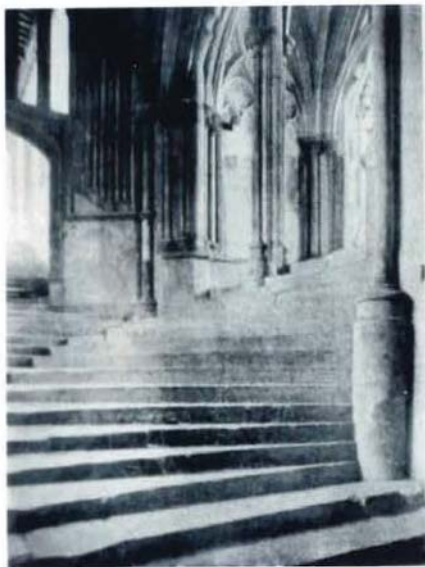


Figure 10a. Frederick H. Evans.
Wells Cathedral:
Stairs to Chapter House, c. 1899.



Figure 10b. Frederick H. Evans.
Wells Cathedral:
Stairs and Entrance to Chapter House, c. 1900.

The final version of the stairs at Wells Cathedral was made in 1903. Unlike the two earlier photographs, the 1903 version, is “cropped in”, placing emphasis on the light and undulations on the steps. Evans achieved this by placing his tripod on the steps and using a nineteen-inch lens, which created a “flattening” effect of the stairs. He regarded his black and white photograph of Wells Cathedral as a metaphor for the sea: “the beautiful curve of the steps on the right is for all the world like the

38

In light of my own practice — repeatedly photographing the same site under different lighting conditions, I found it interesting that Evan’s returned to the same site in an attempt to capture the quality of light, within architectural space.

surge of a great wave that will presently break and subside into smaller ones like those at the top of the picture." The thin lines of light that appear to follow the wave-like undulations of the steps, (which have been worn away by worshippers who have knelt on them)



Figure 11. Frederick H. Evans. *The Sea of Steps*,
Wells Cathedral (Stairs to Chapter House and Bridge to Vicar's Close), 1903.

combined with a low camera angle trigger a connection to waves. In contrast to the stairs as a metaphor for nature, Evans' photographs of the interiors of Cathedrals, in Anne Hammond's words "lead the viewer on a visual pilgrimage toward interior illumination."³⁹

When Evans photographed the interior of Ely Cathedral, he asked the Dean of the church to remove the seats – the space became a receptacle for light, which highlighted the stonework and created a sensuous mood.

³⁹

Anne Hammond, *Frederick H. Evans. The Soul of Architecture*, England, Clio Press, 1992, p.16.



Figure 12. Frederick H. Evans.
A Fifteenth Century Doorway, 1903.



Figure 13. Frederick H. Evans.
Sunlight in the North Aisle: Ely, 1904.

When Evans was photographing the interiors of the English parish churches, he wrote to Alfred Stieglitz and in a later correspondence he offered to send some of his photographic studies to Stieglitz.⁴⁰ No doubt Stieglitz admired Evans' work, for he exhibited his photographs on a couple of occasions in his Galleries. It is probable Stieglitz responded not only to the quality of Evans' images, but also to the sensuous light that illuminated the architectural space devoid of visible human presence, while at the same time highlighting metaphorical associations to the solitary space of the mind.

In December 1925 at the Intimate Gallery, Room 303, a conversation took place between the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and the painter David Burliuk. Stieglitz was showing his cloud photographs, which he named *Equivalents*, to Burliuk. Burliuk remarked that he had "climbed Fujiyama in Japan, fifteen thousand feet, and Stieglitz seemed to get height and the

40

Evans also contributed frequently to Stieglitz's magazine, *Camera Work*.

feeling of space in clouds without climbing” he also noted the simplicity of Stieglitz’s work, which created a sense of the mystical.⁴¹



Figure 14 Alfred Stieglitz.
Equivalent. date B/W photograph



Figure 15. Alfred Stieglitz..
Equivalent. date B/W photograph

He showed the cloud photographs to many people who entered the gallery, both as a way of expressing his thoughts on the correspondence of image to feelings, and as a way of gauging the reaction people had to the photographs. The beholder’s reaction to the works was important to Stieglitz in that it confirmed his belief that the photograph was subjective and expressive, and not just a record of reality, or even an imitation of reality; the subject of the photograph was expressive of the artist’s feelings or thoughts.

Although Francis Bruguière was a member of the “Photo-Secession”, set up by Alfred Stieglitz, which protested against the accepted idea of the photograph and its role in the art world, he exhibited with the group only once - at the Albright-Knox exhibition in Buffalo in 1910. Disdainful of social and intellectual affectations, Bruguière tended to work in a more solitary fashion. He was a painter, photographer and musician who was

⁴¹ Herbert J. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, New Haven, Yale University Library, 1996, p.2.

interested in Eastern philosophies and Jungian ideas. When not working in theatre as a photographer documenting stage sets and actors, Bruguière experimented with photographing the action of light on paper surfaces. His method of photographing light was initially influenced by his work in the theatre, and later by photographing a series of light compositions from the “colour organ” of Thomas Wilfred.⁴²

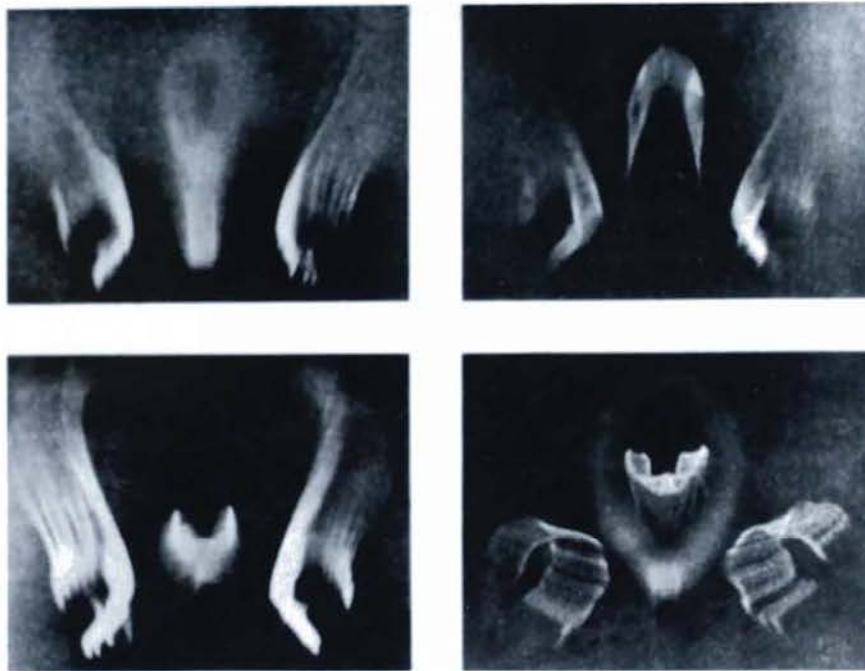


Figure 16. Thomas Wilfred's colour organ projections, photographed by Bruguière.

Bruguière titled many of his black and white works “abstractions”, and this, in James Enyeart's words, “was an attempt to free photography from its role as purveyor of reality.”⁴³ The two “abstractions” illustrated below, and overleaf, radiate the same ubiquitous quality of light as is evident in much of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's black and white photograms.

⁴² The organ was called “the clavilux”, and instead of the normal wind chest there are a number of sources of white light. As the organ is played, pre-selected colours and shapes appear on a screen above the organ.

⁴³ James Enyeart, *Bruguière His Photographs and His Life*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1977, p.52.



Figure 17. Francis Bruguière. *Cut-paper abstraction*, c1927, B/W photograph.



Figure 18. Francis Bruguière. *Light Abstraction*, c.1925-1927, B/W photograph

The expression of inner emotions is also the subject of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's camera-less photographs. Moholy-Nagy, who included Bruguière's work in his lectures on abstractionism, achieved similar aesthetic results to those of Bruguière with his photograms.

Moholy-Nagy and Fabian Miller

Moholy-Nagy's creative photography was produced both with, and without a camera. As an abstract painter, he became interested in photography as a powerful tool of expression, and sought to discover its essence and significance, particularly with regard to the vision of light and space. His research encompassed both the practical and the theoretical, which he recorded in numerous texts on painting and photography. He experimented with a variety of materials under different lighting situations, the most basic of these being paper. In a 1940's article for *Minicam*, he described how light modulators could be constructed and manipulated. He observed the reflective, refractive and absorptive qualities of objects, and when describing ways of bending and altering the shape of paper he proposed that the photographer should not only observe the differences in light quality and shape of the object, but should also observe their own emotional response to the effects of light on the object. He concluded that:

The camera and finishing equipment, together constitute merely the typewriter of picture-making mechanically. The quality and power of the finished product depends mainly on the operator, not the mechanism itself. Instead of words he works with light values – highlights and shadows – and if he modulates and uses them properly he can produce the desired optical impressions of space relationships.⁴⁴

Moholy-Nagy also experimented at length with camera-less techniques through which he sought to represent aspects of space and light by using the action of direct light on photographic paper. He saw the direct placement of objects on photographic paper as a point of departure for

44

Richard Kostelanetz, editor, *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy*, Penguin, London, p.104.

the photographic record. Through the photogram he also made a connection with the placement of objects, light and architecture. He made textual records of these observations and of possible ways of conceiving and creating architecture that was in harmony with surrounding space, buildings and light. Aside from this rational approach, Moholy-Nagy's photograms reflect the evocative nature of light – an effect produced from a personal response to his subject matter.



Figure 19. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy
Photogram, 1925.



Figure 20. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy
Photogram, 1926.

Although abstract in appearance, the light and form of the photograms inspires associations with images of external and internal realities. Similarly, these associations can be seen in the colour photograms of the contemporary British artist, Gary Fabian Miller.

Fabian Miller has explored the potential of the photogram to produce emotionally charged work through the use of colour, viscous materials, light and the central motif. Fabian Miller's practice has, until recent times

been concerned with botanical subject matter and the relationships between nature and science. Yet more recently, the artist has explored the potential metaphysical connections of photography. This exploration has taken the form of experimenting with a combination of coloured light and oil placed on glass or between layers of glass. The light and oil give the images a silky and highly luminous appearance. Another striking element is the use of rich colour that appears to vibrate within the image. The subject matter is somewhat obscure and abstract, and tends to hover between symbols from reality, and the after-image. In these more recent works, Fabian Miller represents the luminous quality of light with the viscous quality of oil, in a central motif. The images are quite small and thus have a “gem-like” appearance.



Figure 21. Gary Fabian Miller, *Light-Water*, colour photogram, 1994.



Figure 22. Gary Fabian Miller, *His Room*, colour photogram, 1994.

The central motif glows like a bright sun, star, or colourful fluorescent sign. James Enyeart noted that analogies to light symbols and motifs were expressed by Abbot Suger (minister and adviser of Louis VI and Louis VII of France) when he “referred to the ‘analogical’ function of stained-

glass windows, which he introduced into church architecture in the twelfth century.”⁴⁵ Enyeart notes that :

According to Jose and Miriam Arguelles in *Mandala*, a study of its history and symbolism, Suger meant by analogical, “that which leads the senses through contemplation to a state beyond the senses.” Stieglitz’s equivalents and Bruguière’s light abstractions aspired to this same ideal.⁴⁶

This “ideal” may also be applied to Fabian Miller’s colour photo-grams. Likewise, the photographer David Stephenson in his photographs of domes, explores the central motif and its power to elicit contemplation of that which lies “beyond” the image.

Stephenson’s colour photographs, made with a square-format camera placed centrally below the dome, record the decorative and usually symmetrical patterns and illustrations that appear to emanate from the centre of the dome. In this way the images have a parallel symbolism to the mandala. The mandala form exists in natural elements such as stones, plants and astronomy, and has also been widely used in illustration. Jung noted a connection between the symbol of the mandala through illustration and its existence in life as having its source in the unconscious and the conscious mind:

The unconscious can only be reached and expressed by the symbol, which is the reason why the process of individuation can never do without the symbol. The symbol is, on the one hand, the primitive expression of the

⁴⁵ Enyeart, p150.

⁴⁶ Enyeart, p150.

unconscious, while on the other hand, it is an idea corresponding to the highest intuition produced by consciousness.⁴⁷

This symbolic effect, or connection to a mandala-like symbol, is one I have experienced when observing Stephenson's *Dome* photographs. An example of this effect can be seen in the photograph, of the *Cathedral (crossing tower 1328) Ely, England*, (overleaf).

Christian Norberg-Schulz noted that the morphology of the dome, its exterior shape, "is experienced as a volume which contains an interior. The dome therefore does not only define a center, but also acts as a condensed image of the surrounding world."⁴⁸ He goes on to say that "here we can experience the possibilities of visualizing the relationship of earth and sky and man's being in the 'between'."⁴⁹

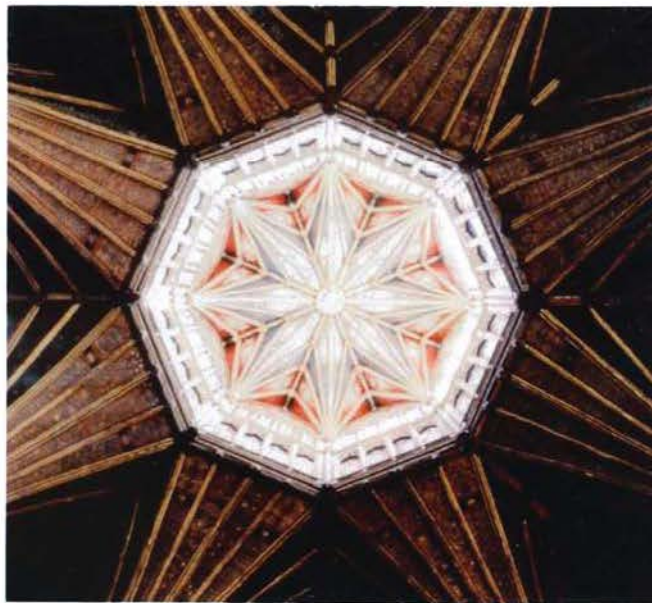


Figure 23. David Stephenson, *Cathedral (crossing tower 1328) Ely, England*.
C Type photograph.

⁴⁷ C.J. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London, 1942 p.99.
⁴⁸ Norberg-Schulz p 37.
⁴⁹ Norberg-Schulz, p.41.

Norberg-Schulz describes being in the world in terms of a containment schema that is associated with inside and outside, and the metaphoric exchange of the shape of the dome with that of the globe. But is our understanding of the world shaped only by visible, material landmarks – are there other ways of knowing and understanding what it means to dwell on earth?

In the following discussion I look at how the light-space artist James Turrell and the scenographer Josef Svoboda have worked with air and light in an attempt to represent non-solid images of our world – images that may incite the contemplation of existence both within the intimate space of a gallery or theatre, and beyond the boundaries of representation into the world space of lived experience.

Turrell and Svoboda

Light, as object and subject, is the focus of the space-light artist James Turrell and of the scenographer Josef Svoboda. Although the two artists work in different disciplines, specific works seem related in the context of the creation of “light environments”. This discussion focuses on the way these two artists have worked with light and space – Turrell’s Projection Pieces within the contained space of the gallery, and Svoboda’s light constructions within the confines of the theatrical stage.

In discussing James Turrell’s work, it should be noted that I have not observed his projection pieces “in the flesh”, and my familiarity with the work is based solely on viewing reproductions of the work in the form of images in books. Therefore, I have relied to a great extent on what the artist and his critics have stated about the work.

James Turrell is concerned with the interconnectedness of light and space within the complexity of visual perception. Turrell does not use physical objects rather, light takes on its own substance, presence and power, while still retaining a connection with physicality. Turrell uses both brilliant, intense light and soft, subtle light to create different

atmospheres. Light is used in a direct way so that its presence is the atmosphere, both seen and felt. Turrell views this constructed light-space as analogous to the space he flies in when up in a plane or his glider. This space is one that he penetrates both physically through the action of flight, and visually and perceptually through the senses, and in creating light spaces he hopes to entice □ the viewer into sensing a similar experience through the action of moving through a space constructed in a specific setting. Richard Andrews described this “setting” as a process by which :

Turrell’s works begin with the creation of space that then becomes inhabited by light. The control of that light dematerialises the architectural space and redefines it as a perceptual space which appears limitless to the eye, despite the mind’s efforts to confirm the physical boundaries of the architecture.⁵⁰

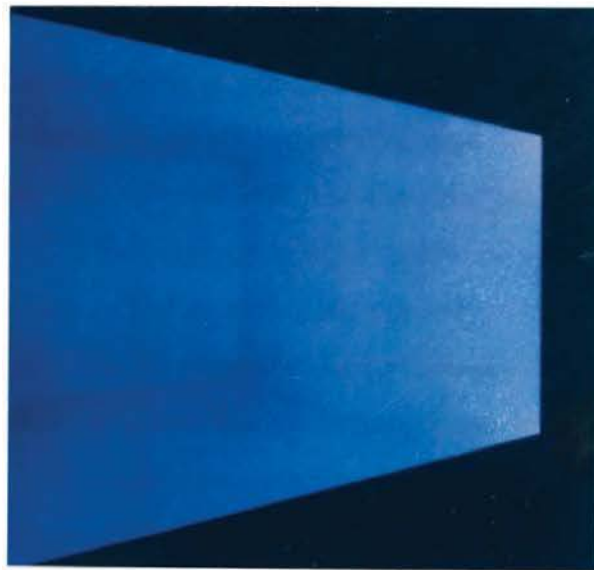


Figure 24. James Turrell, *Trace elements, Orca 1984*,

A fascinating aspect of the Projection Pieces is the choice of colour which has been influenced by James Turrell’s earlier studies in perceptual psychology. The many permutations of colour, and the varied reactions

50

Richard Andrews, *Sensing Space*, Seattle, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1992. P.12.

to individual and mixed colour are an important consideration in the production of Turrell's light structures. When light is reflected off different coloured surfaces it takes on the hue of each surface; in addition it is affected by atmospheric and seasonal changes, and the time of day. The predominant colour of the day, and of the season, in turn influences not only our perception of the outside world but also our moods.

Yet another aspect of Turrell's work, which is perhaps less apparent, is the energy of light which is both contained and dispersed into the surrounding space. This energy is also light's "presence" – a recurrent effect that is brought to the viewer's attention when held within the projection, and emanating into the surrounding space. By setting the work up in this way – bringing light to the viewer's attention – its unique ambient quality is not just "seen" but "felt". James Turrell observed that light:

is a powerful substance. We have a primal connection to it. But, for something so powerful, situations for its felt presence are fragile. I form it as much as the material allows. I like to work with it so that you feel it physically, so you feel the presence of light inhabiting a space. I like the quality of feeling that is felt not only with the eyes. It's always a little bit suspect to look at something really beautiful like an experience in nature and to make it into art. My desire is to set up a situation to which I take you and let you see. It becomes your experience.⁵¹

The viewer's experience is, as Richard Andrews describes it, "an essential part of the success of Turrell's work, for without the cognitive and perceptual space inside the mind of the viewer, these works would not exist."⁵²

⁵¹ James Turrell, in "Shimmering deep-blue purple", Jean-Christophe Ammann, *Parkett*, Zurich, Switzerland, no 25, 1990, p.81.

⁵² Andrews, p.17.

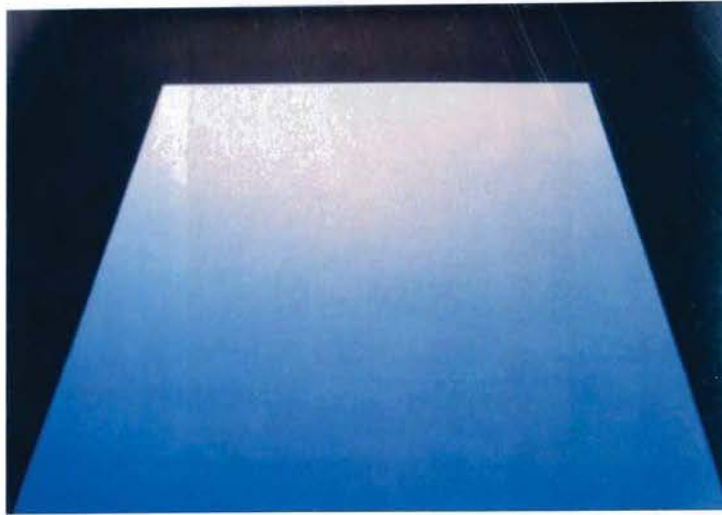


Figure 25. James Turrell, *Airmass*, 1993.

The scenographer Josef Svoboda also worked with light on a large scale. Rather than creating an illusionistic setting, he prompted the viewing audience's imagination, through the suggestion of space by using light. An interesting parallel can be made in the way Svoboda has used the creation of space through light in his scenography, and the way James Turrell has explored light structures and projections; both artists have examined the potential of inviting the beholder into a visual experience of sensing space. Svoboda's use of light, whilst creating different perceptual experiences, also explored the potential to create the appearance of material space. The more minimal, and possibly more successful designs were executed in the productions of *The Sicilian Vespers*, *The Seagull* and *Tristan und Isolde*.

The following discussion looks at the way in which Svoboda achieved an ambient atmosphere through technical design in the production of *The Sicilian Vespers* for which he created a curtain or wall of light to affect the appearance of material space.

In achieving this non-solid space, Svoboda used low-voltage units, where each light had its own transformer, and therefore a smaller lamp filament. The resultant beam of light is more intense and whiter and also more controllable than one cast by traditional units. Two variants of the



Figure 26. Joseph Svoboda, Scene from *The Sicilian Vespers*.

unit are what Svoboda calls the low-voltage lighting “thread”, and low voltage sector-lamps. The thread is a unit with a lens, and it casts a beam of light that remains essentially parallel and highly efficient (whereas most lighting units throw a cone-shaped beam). The sector-lamps are similar to the thread lighting but their beams have a slight spread, and instead of being equipped with a lens, they have parabolic mirrors and are placed in units of six or nine. The effect of these lights is the curtain or wall of light across the stage. Svoboda set the sector-lamps from a high position at the rear of the stage and aimed them down towards the stage-front. In this way the light passes through a greater distance of air, thus creating the maximum effect of light-as-substance.⁵³

Within this production Svoboda heightened the effect by combining the low-voltage units with an aerosol spray which made the air much denser. He described the result as approaching the paradox of insubstantial solidity. The formation of visible yet incorporeal forms in space not only enabled the actors to walk around and through these “forms”, but allowed the audience to be transported on a visual journey, sensing space and movement that was unlike the reception to a more traditional, or even contemporary, expressionistic stage design.

53

Information related to Svoboda’s lighting techniques was obtained from Jarka Burian’s book: *The Scenography of Josef Svoboda*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1971.

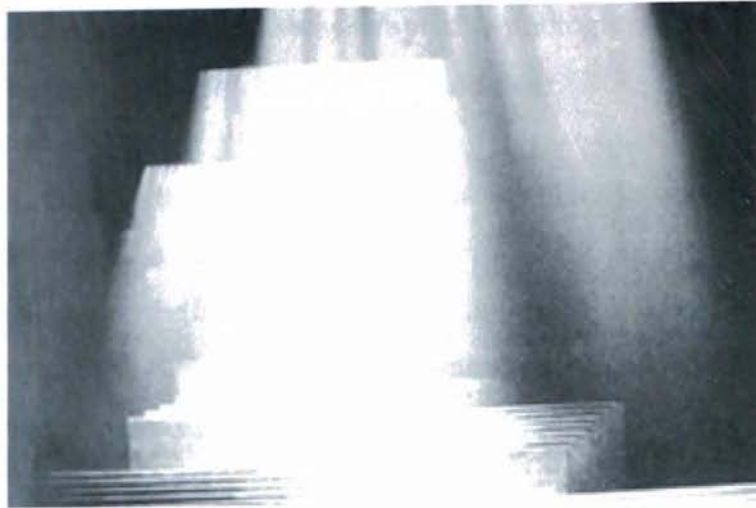


Figure 27. Joseph Svoboda, Scene from *Tristan and Isolde*.

Casebere, Demand, Haxton

Some of the techniques of stage design have also been applied to the staging of photographs. The contemporary artists James Casebere, Thomas Demand and David Haxton are among a number of recent photographers working with “people-less” constructions before the camera, and have been influential in the way I have thought about and constructed my images.

My initial interest in James Casebere’s work (several years ago) was based on issues surrounding the model in relation to photography, and on construction techniques. As my own work has evolved over the last few years into the representation of imagery that mediates between inner and outer realities, and does not attempt to represent these images as replications of actually-existing “witnessed” realities, I am now viewing Casebere’s work from a different perspective. This perspective is one that focuses on his use of light and the emotive power of his imagery, rather than his use of the model. Having said that, in more recent times, Casebere has been employing a reductive process, and has become interested in what the photograph may communicate in terms of a minimal amount of information. In a conversation with Steven Jenkins

Casebere commented that he was tempted to photograph “the same jail cell for the rest of my life”.⁵⁴ Jenkins replied that:

Your desire to strip away all but the essentials in your photographs adheres to Minimalist stylistics, yet you’re able to use the look of Minimalism to usurp what is considered the movement’s anti-emotional content. I think your images can be very emotional.⁵⁵

Over a span of thirty years, Casebere has worked through light and spatial issues refining both the subject and the photographic image to a point where the work appears bathed in a ghostly silence. This process of refinement has involved the removal or reduction of objects (such as chairs and desks) whilst still adhering to a focus on the representation of public buildings and institutions. The ambiguous nature of his more recent work is of particular interest to me, for it is through these highly



Figure 28. James Casebere, *Prison Cell with skylight*, 1993.

simplified spaces that our perceptions of reality seem to be challenged in a number of ways. In the image *Arena*, this challenge is set up as a kind of “split” – what appears to be a beautiful and tranquil setting is

⁵⁴ James Casebere, in conversation with Steve Jenkins, in *James Casebere Model Culture, photographs 1975-1976*, Foreword by Andy Grundberg, essay by Maurice Berger, The Friends of Photography, San Francisco, 1996, p. 85.

⁵⁵ Jenkins, p. 85.

combined with a chilling sense of solitude that somehow upsets the “calm”. The use of pastel colours and soft-focus lighting portrays an atmosphere of serenity: one is drawn toward the image yet deeply aware of the lack of human presence and this creates a sense of isolation. Casebere enhances the mood of the image with dramatic yet subtle lighting, which also accentuates this sense of isolation.



Figure 29. James Casebere, *Arena*, 1997.

Casebere’s models are table-top size, and are created from different types of papers and cardboard, styrofoam and plaster. His earlier models created in the 1960s and 1970s were all made out of paper and cardboard and a few “real” objects.

Paper and cardboard are also the materials that Thomas Demand chooses to work with when creating his life-size, or almost life-size constructions of buildings and rooms, within the confines of a studio setting. The inspiration comes from a personal archive of souvenirs and newspaper cuttings. At the heart of Demand’s concerns are problems related to newsworthy and historical events, isolation within modern architecture, and the role of personal and collective memory. Demand begins with an idea which combines these memories; he then reconstitutes the idea in the form of a life-size, yet flimsy, paper and cardboard construction. The marks from cutting and bending paper may be seen in the final photographic print.



Figure 30. Thomas Demand, *Corridor*, 1996.

The writer Regis Durand observed a connection between the technique of Demand's photographic work, and that of a painting, in that Demand rejects the perfect illusion which could be obtained using digitised images, in favour of,

a discreet but visible indication of the work's fabrication.

In this sense one could say that this work is close to painting, insofar as it requires a special attention to the way in which its medium is used. This would be a kind of "painting" that questioned the relation between the thing represented and its (pictorial) representation, and did so in an offbeat way, using new tools.⁵⁶

Durand goes on to say that "the constructed set does not really play the role of the 'model' to be pictorially represented by the photograph according to its specific resources." It is perhaps Demand's way of photographing the staged construction (Demand does not like to refer to his work in terms of models) in its finished, yet slightly flawed state that makes Simon Morrissey believe that the photographs are metaphors for the processes of memory. Morrissey observes:

⁵⁶ Regis Durand, "Thomas Demand, Un Monde de Papier, A World of Paper", *Photographie, Art Press*, no. 21 February 1997, p.44.

These flaws are pivotal to Demand's intentions because they can be seen as analogous to the imperfections that occur in the workings of both the collective and the personal memory. In this way Demand's photographs could function as metaphors for the processes of memory.⁵⁷

This analogy to memory may also be applied to the initial selection of subject matter collected from newspaper clippings.

Like Thomas Demand, David Haxton leaves traces of his construction's fabrication, only in Haxton's imagery these traces are more easily discernible and in fact are an integral component of the composition. Haxton's background is in experimental film making, so the staging of his photographs has been strongly influenced by work in film. Just as Francis Bruguière used light in combination with paper to create and define space, so too does Haxton when creating his photographs, but he leaves the remnants of the creative process – such as scraps of paper and tools, in the picture. In the image, *Black Front & Behind Magenta*, Haxton creates areas of soft lighting in red and white.



Figure 31. David Haxton, *Black Front & Behind Magenta*, 1979. Ektachrome print.

On first viewing the image, one's eye is drawn to a black sheet of paper with a red light, which stands before a slightly lighter backdrop. The eye then shifts to the lighted areas of the image, first to a white roll of paper and then to areas where small objects, bits of electrical cord and paper create curves on the ground-stage before the camera. A very different effect is achieved in the image, *Torn Orange Front & Near*. Haxton uses bright yellow and red in the image to create a dramatic effect. The image is divided in the middle by a screen of white paper and this also separates the suspended red coloured paper from the yellow. Cords run along either side of the screen in a diagonal direction leading to, and connected to what are presumably the lights in the background.

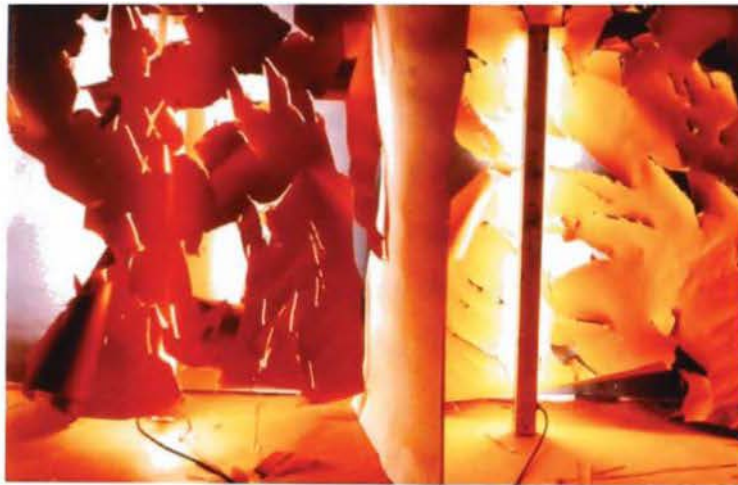


Figure 32. David Haxton, *Torn Orange Front & near*, 1979, Ektachrome print.

Summary

My interest in the photograph as a construction and representation of reality, that exists both in the mind and in the world, has drawn me to the work of earlier photographers who were exploring similar themes, and to more contemporary photographers who construct and stage their work before the camera. Hence the work of the artists discussed in this chapter form the background to my practice, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

HOW THE PROJECT HAS BEEN PURSUED

In order to communicate my ideas in photographic representation, yet in a way that is not necessarily bound to the established codes of photography, I have experimented with creating my “photo-constructions” in the studio where I have been able to manipulate artificial light within constructed and contained space. These experiments and technical considerations encompass a vast portion of this project, and form the criteria for the final body of photographic work. In Part One of this chapter I discuss how these experiments and technical manipulations have been pursued; in Part Two I discuss the process of creating and presenting work made for the exhibitions I have been involved in over the course of this project; and in Part Three I discuss how the process of experimentation and exhibiting the works has influenced the way I produced and selected the final body of work for examination.

PART ONE: EXPERIMENTS WITH MATERIALS AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In reality, an emotive experience is often difficult to capture on film – that “special moment” when the light is just right and the photographer’s mood is affected by the image we see before us. In some circumstances we may prefer to hold, or at least attempt to hold, the image in our memory, for so often the photograph is disappointing (what we “see” in the photograph may not express how we “felt” at the time.) Thus, asking questions such as, “What was it about the atmosphere of a place that remains strong in my memory?” and trying to find answers or bring back to life an essence of such experiences, has prompted me to work in a studio- based way, which combines expressions of experience, memory and imagination.

Initially the major concern of this project was to construct small-scale “sites” in the studio, sites that held an element of mystery and ambiguity, connected with the shifts in the memory of “place”, and memory images. However, not long after pursuing this project I discovered that these memories were being replaced by more recent events and observations, and what I was really creating was an interpretation of sensory perceptions from the world around me – recent experiences – yet often in combination with fleeting memories and imaginative constructs. I also realised that some of the choices made in the creation of the work were influenced by the past yet were not perceptible to me until the work had been completed. This was particularly the case with choices in colour and form.

In order to create spaces that implied an “interiority”, and internal sensations, I not only had to devise the “right” spaces/sites, but I also had to find the most suitable materials to create them. The materials I used in the first year of the project were those I was familiar with – foam-board, wood, paint and glue. I continued to work on a small scale, within the dimensions of roughly one to two metres in length and a metre in height and width. The work was usually photographed on a table top, although I used other structures to cradle or suspend pieces when I wanted the light to shine from below the constructed site.



Figure 33. *Work table and lights, studio-workshop, Neika, 1999.*

1998

I combined household light with studio lights, and started to experiment with projected light and projected images. However, the projected images of architectural sites, such as archways and corridors, only served to replace the objects I had removed – yet without the projections the constructions appeared lifeless. Further trials in the studio consisted of trying out a range of new materials, such as metal, glass and mirrors. The resulting photographs were studies for future work, in which I made some important observations about the materials used and how to maximise the effects of light, and whilst these results were useful for future work, I was still unable to create a space or site that hovered somewhere between the real and the imagined; a space that could be metaphorically suggestive of architecture and/or the mind.

In order to refresh my memory, and as a stimulus for future work, I took my camera and tripod out of the studio and went to an area in town that had caught my eye on numerous occasions. The area is a foyer on the ground floor of the ANZ centre, that acts as a thoroughfare connecting the main street front at one end, and a shopping square at the other end. The foyer is circular in shape, and is lit by fluorescent light, and creates an image of artificiality – a space that appears more like a set from a science-fiction movie. Movement through the foyer is constant, as people pass to and fro like ants on a mission. Stopping within the circle gave me a chance to observe the light and reflections, as well as the constant movement through the space. The overhead fluorescent lights are diffused by opaque coverings, and by following the line of the circular passage, they take on the appearance of a model UFO.

I set my camera up close to the centre of the space and photographed sections of the upper space. I also photographed the highly polished and reflective surfaces below, and around the space. The feeling of this place was one of alienation; more like something I would expect to feel in a much larger city.

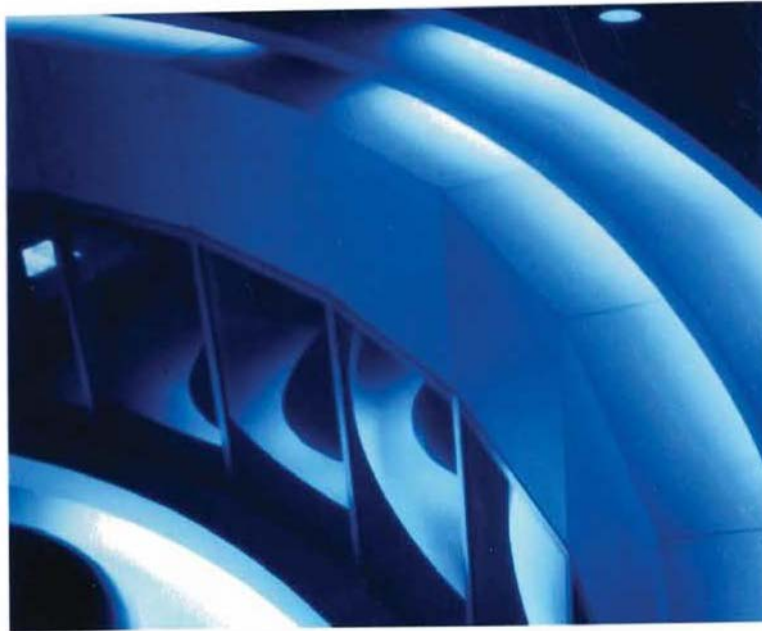


Figure 34. *ANZ Centre, C Type photograph, 1998.*



Figure 35. *ANZ Centre, C Type photograph, 1998.*

It occurred to me that it might be possible to combine these images with my constructed photographs, but I was concerned that this might turn into a “spot the difference” project. As I was taken by the light and reflections within this space (which seemed to be ignored or taken for granted in the daily bustle and movement through the foyer), I decided

to construct some work using metal and reflective surfaces, based on these observations.



Figure 36. *Experimental work: metal and reflective surface*, C Type photograph, 1998.

The results proved to be another important step in working with different materials and lighting set-ups, but I was still not satisfied that the images conveyed the atmosphere I was seeking, which combined sensations of being present in a space but also feeling a sense of alienation – a kind of presence/absence. Creating images that communicated this dichotomy became an ongoing concern. Focusing on the appearance of light within a space, and its effect on one's emotions, temporarily alleviated my obsessive search for communicating the double idea of a presence/absence.

1999

After producing work for the exhibition *Glow*, (discussed in Part Two of this chapter) I stepped outside the studio once again and photographed the large house my friend was vacating. I had spent a lot of time in the house over the preceding five years, and was familiar with the architecture, the play of light, and the sounds within the various parts of the house, which was divided into three flats. When the house was

emptied of its contents (furniture, belongings and tenants) new sensations were experienced within its walls.

Moving through the rooms one sensed the age and character of the building more strongly, and yet, as is often the case with vacated buildings, there was an overwhelming sense of solitude. Even though the light appeared much brighter, it did not paint the same reflections; with the objects and people absent, the light shone into the building, highlighting the space as a large, empty shell. Perhaps these sensations were also influenced by my own feelings at the time – letting go of the “familiar” and the secure.



Figure 37. *Barrack St.* C Type photograph, 1999.

Photographing the house was an important step in a return to the idea of a space that awaits occupancy but appears as an “empty shell”. I realised that this also connected with the space of grieving; essentially a “mind space” that is drained of emotions related to pleasure and freedom. It is only through the passage of time that more pleasurable emotions return. Having experienced the sense of freedom that comes with forgetting, and having also experienced the state of emptiness that often accompanies different stages of grieving, I began to see the empty house as akin to the empty shell of loss. The stages of “forgetting” and hence gaining “freedom” (as opposed to forgetting in order not to remember) are not states of ignoring the past, but rather a way of confronting the past through narrative disclosure, and hence liberating

oneself from the stricture that envelopes us in the many stages of grieving. Narrative forgetting also ensures the dissolving of desire for that which is lost, even though in representing this loss, whether symbolically or otherwise, it may appear that desire has not been fulfilled. I wanted to describe this narrative in a way that was symbolic and yet accessible to the viewer – hence I found comfort in Roy Exley’s words: “The empty space is a stage onto which viewers can project their own eidetic shows in an attempt to staunch the sense of loss and heal the ache that absence brings.”⁵⁸

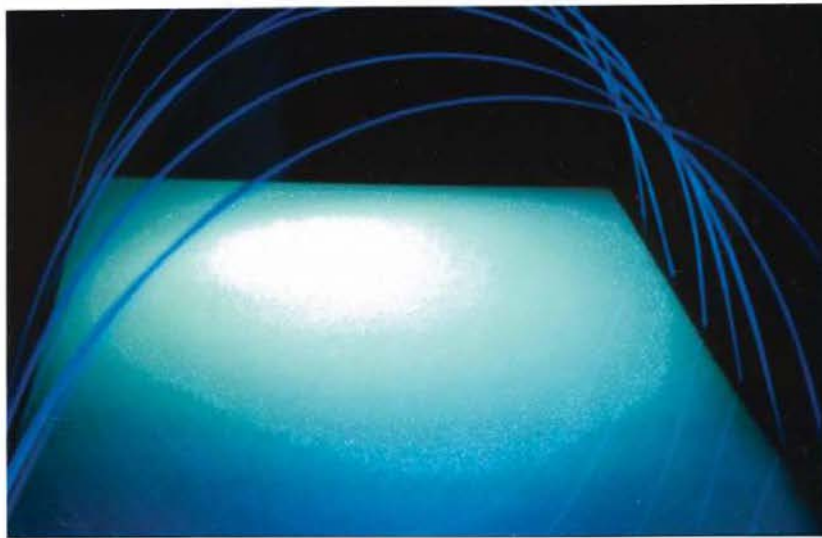


Figure 38. *Light-spaces*, C Type photograph, 1999

How would this empty stage take shape? My first attempts, before coming up with the idea of the bounded, cubic space consisted of spaces that were both contained by a framework of plastic, wood, or fabric, or a combination of these three materials, or spaces that were “unbounded”, and created on a screen of perspex, either within a painted frame or without any visible boundaries. The light-spaces created with the framework were illuminated from the base of the structure, which was made of perspex.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Exley, p.64.

⁵⁹ The lighting effects that resulted from this experimental work, influenced my decision to work with a perspex light-container, in the latter stages of the project.

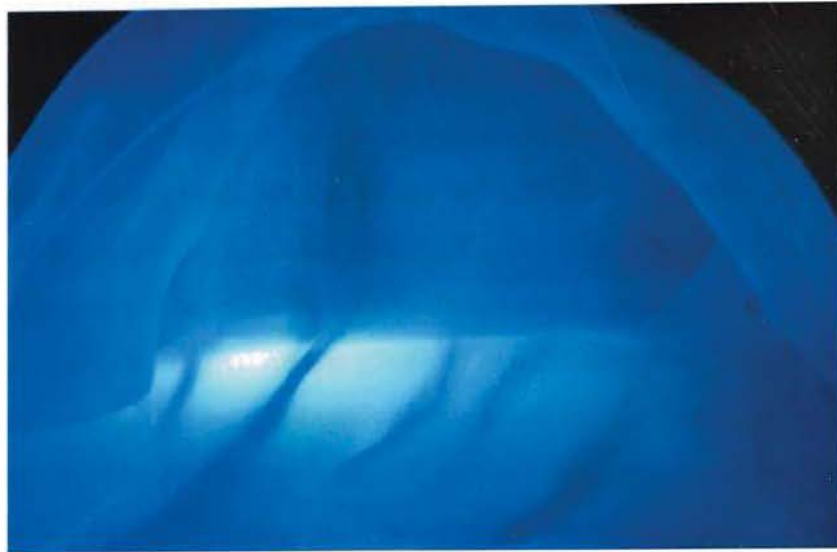


Figure 39. *Light-spaces*, C Type photograph, 1999

The “screen”, 1999-2000

When I began working with the perspex screen, rather than depicting a narrative through the projection of recognisable images I was primarily interested in the way images are conveyed through the action of light, and in the role of light in the visual impact of a narrative. Apart from the necessity of light to project the image onto a screen, I was interested in how a sense of spatial depth was created through the use of light, as separate from, or in combination with, the use of pictorialism in the narrative. One of the questions I began asking myself was, “Could the images on the screen relay a narrative in an abstract form?” In other

words, would light alone, and the traces or patterns of light, transport the viewer into a contemplative space, where their own, individual narratives would unfold? Perhaps such images would also tell a story about light – the way we see all objects in space, whether in the virtual world of the cinema or in the real world. Whilst I was aware that the emotive effect of the “moving” picture operated on a different level from that of the still photographic image, there seemed to be some underlying similarities.

When I was a child, my parents used to project slide images taken on our holidays, onto the living-room wall. I was fascinated by the rectangular expanse of light in the room, and by the fact that it was unlike the television screen, because we could interact with the projected light. We would play silly games in front of the light, while waiting for the next series of images to be loaded into the slide container. Sometimes the projector would play up – slides would get stuck, or the focusing mechanism would give up the ghost. When constructing some of the “screen” images I used old family slides taken on our holidays. In recalling the family slide evenings, it seemed appropriate to put the images out of focus. Seeing the figures in the image as blurred, abstract shapes also related to the change in sibling numbers and dynamics, as one of my brothers is no longer alive.



Figure 40. *Screen, Bruny Island. C Type photograph, 1999.*

Although not in focus, the blue of the water and sky are more easily discernible. The projected light on what appears to be a wall (the small-scale set), and the projected, abstract shapes of light on the layered small-scale screens in my work, show remnants of narratives that pass

and alter with time. Trace impressions of objects are marks of light that flicker in patterns or appear as reflections. Perhaps the rectangle or the square as framed and illuminated speaks about containment as much as it does about our desire to be transported into another reality.⁶⁰

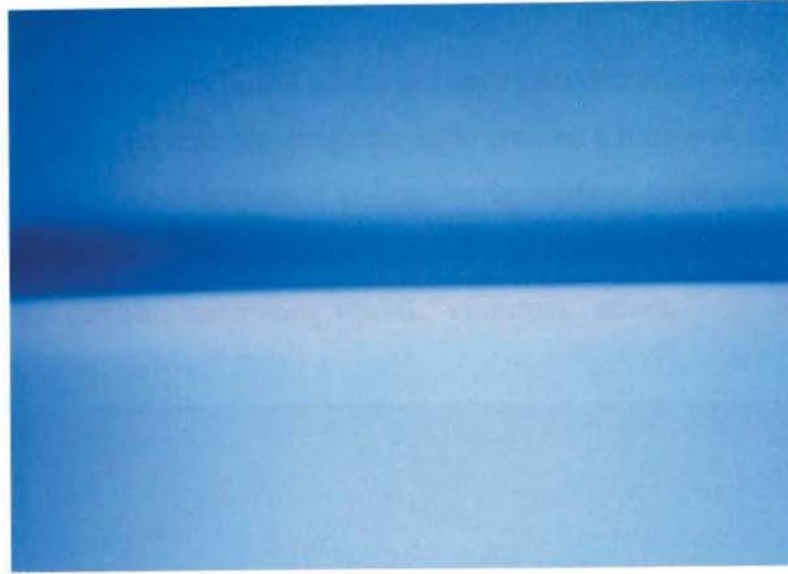


Figure 41. *Screen*, C Type photograph, 2000.



Figure 42. *Screen*, C Type photograph, 2000.

⁶⁰ The photography of Sugimoto alerts us to the duration of cinema viewing and the essence of film and screen, as “light”. In conveying this idea Sugimoto takes black and white photographs of illuminated cinema screens that hold only the light. The photographs are made within the space of the cinema theatre that is devoid of any signs of human presence.

Other images created through the use of the perspex screen consisted of imaginary horizon lines and shapes that seemed to float on the other side of the screen. By moulding the light in the images I gave it a kind of presence that is visible yet fluctuating; it can be perceived both by the senses and by the mind.

For some of the images I used a blue gel over part of the projector lens and this, combined with the projector light created a blue and aqua mix of colour. Pure colour appeared to float on the surface, unhindered by barriers or descriptive frames, and I found that the combination of the two colours gave an interesting visual, “vibratory” effect.



Figure 43. *Boundless Space*, C Type photograph, 2000.

Through this process the images lost a certain degree of sharpness, which also added to the “vibratory” effect. The colour and soft focus reminded me of the “view to infinity”, the sea and horizon I view every day from my home.

The colour also reminded me of the beach-spaces connected with my childhood and interaction with my siblings, and the memorable holiday periods spent sailing around the south of Tasmania with my father and other family members. At these times the world really did appear to be boundless, and infinite. My father was an extremely competent



Figure 44. View from Neika, evening

Figure 45. View from Neika, morning.

navigator and on clear evenings he would steer by the stars. In another sense the sea holds other memories – that of the ashes of my brother scattered in the Bass Strait, and more recently my father’s ashes. My surviving brother and I took our father’s yacht out into the Bass Strait last year. The weather was somewhat dull, but when we decided on the place to scatter my father’s ashes, the sun magically appeared and shot a beam of light into the water. Grey turned to green as we watched the ashes float and submerge in water and light.

Following on from this work, I began working on some images related to “fire”. These were based on the memory of the 1967 bush fires in Tasmania, which occurred when I was on holiday with my family on Bruny Island. My reason for pursuing this work came about as a result of reminiscing on the effect the bush fires had on my family, friends, and the environment. I was also trying to piece together my own thoughts as a child at the time, and how I often recall impressions of that time in terms of colour. On the eve of the bush fires I was sailing in the yacht with my parents, and the next day we spent most of our time gathering up the family (including family pets), and the holiday equipment, and then waiting long hours in the heat and smoke-filled sky for a ferry to take us off the Island. Throughout the ordeal we were not sure if our house would still be standing.⁶¹

61

These yellow images are not included in the exhibited work for examination, however I created a series of “red” images on the same theme, which I have included in the work for examination.

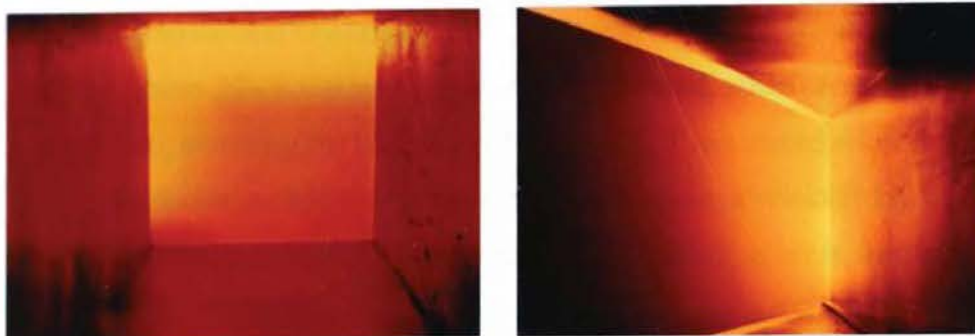


Figure 46. & Figure 47. *Fire light*. C Type photograph, 2000.

In contrast to the photographed boundless spaces, the work in which the space is defined by outlines of light plays on sentiments of enclosures and on our apparent need to define our surroundings. This work also relates to the idea of containment which I focused on in the initial work on cubic space. In constructing these new images, I wanted to exaggerate or heighten the desire to see the edges, to know not only the boundaries but how they may appear in a kind of foundation form; for example, what it was that held the walls and ceiling together, or what lay behind these structures. I was also playing on the idea of protective boundaries or barriers that we may imaginatively “draw” around us. Using light to describe this foundation meant that the corners and edges of the space were all one could see: the walls had been blacked out, and hence made invisible, and all that remained was the light, like a line drawing in space – of a space.

This work also gave me a more acute awareness of the way I negotiate space in the dark, and what it was I desired to see as opposed to what I actually did see. It was the zone in front of me that I was most concerned about, rather than the periphery. What was not so clear to me was why this occurred, and whether it was an individual trait, or something common to all of us when we negotiate space in the dark. My musings on this problem – or phenomenon – were later brought back to me when my father became ill and lost almost all of his peripheral vision. It was at this time, when I attended to my father at night, that I realised how much we rely on peripheral vision to negotiate space in the dark. My father developed a kind of shuffle when he walked, which was his way

of sensing space and ensuring he “felt” his surroundings where he could not “see” them. His aural sense was also heightened, which was another way of compensating for his diminished vision. I wondered what it was he wanted to see, or tried to sense, when his peripheral vision had almost vanished. I observed him trying to pick up an object in front of him with great difficulty. This seemed odd to me, as his so-called normal or central vision had at this stage not been affected, yet somehow it was impaired by his loss of peripheral vision.

Bounded Space: From cube to rectangle, a light-space container, 2000 - 2002

What endurance, perfection, symmetry, and order it commands, the Cube. Surfaces, frames, environments, landscapes, even figures and faces, are all made over in its image.⁶²

The modernist cube seems to have diminished in importance, yet its form still persists both in objects and in architecture. Even after its disappearance from the gallery, the ghost of the cube remains, for what is the interior of the gallery space, if not a White Cube? Or as John Welchman refers to it: “The White Cube is the zero economy of the space of display.”⁶³

Initially my reason for constructing the cubic shape was born out of an idea to create a set, or standard site, that whilst being permanent could also be manipulated by light, and hence would appear altered. After making the first cube, I became interested in its common shape within the environment and also a shape commonly used in viewing apparatus. The objects I have utilised the most in recent times, have of course been the computer and the medium format camera. The viewing space of both these objects echoes the shape of the cube. I was also interested in its use by artists, not only (prolifically) in the modernist period, but much

⁶² John Welchman, “From the white cube to the rainbow net”, *Art+Text*, no. 53, 1996, p. 59.

⁶³ Welchman, p. 61.

earlier, as is evident in the viewing boxes used by artists and architects as early as the 15th century.⁶⁴

The first cubic space I constructed was made from a piece of cardboard. When lighting this space I found some of the effects were extremely emotive, yet when I photographed the illuminated space I was unable to capture all the detail because of problems with depth of field.

Giving the construction more depth resulted in the rectangular shape, (it was no longer strictly a cube), and this enabled me to record more accurately the details of light and reflections.

These photographed images were far more successful, and began to represent a site that connected both the architectural and the mind/body space. Within this space, I worked on the possibility of encapsulating sense impressions through light, form and colour.

The light-space containers function as both model and idea: the model I have in mind is one that represents ideas and phenomena that exist within contained space that is both perceived as external space and perceived internally through the senses. The different arrangements and selection of light within the same space became a strategy that emphasised change or altered conditions within the same space; a condition that is part of our phenomenological world of being. By confining my photographic work to the light-space container, I was also seeking to explore and unfold the inner dimensions of existence.⁶⁵

These constructions can never be, and were never intended to be, presented "in the flesh", because they are little more than three or four-sided containers, open at both ends. In some instances the side or sides of the container have been moved to narrow, or in some other way

⁶⁴ When producing work for the exhibition 'Counter-space', I was inspired by Leon Baptista Alberti's "peep show" boxes – I describe this work in the following section.

⁶⁵ The dimensions of the foam-board and perspex "light-space container" are, 20cmx20cmx100cm. The distant aperture, in the perspex space that narrows at one end, measures 6cmx6cm.

slightly alter, the shape of the space. Lighting is also manipulated, and is only set in place for each individual photograph.⁶⁶

Light-space containers: materials

Apart from the different materials used in experiments such as plastic, metal, paper, wood and fabric, the final light-space containers were made from foam-board and perspex. Although I created a multitude of images in photographing this single space, I was concerned about limiting myself to the use of one particular material. I wanted to stay with some of the structures I had put in place, in particular the space as illuminated and contained, as this related in a personal way to the "shell of my own existence", yet I also wanted to explore other ways of representing feeling and emotion within the same space. With this in mind, I began working with a rectangular space of the same dimension as the foam board construction, but made from perspex.

When lighting the perspex space, I found the light and the various colours used were more vibrant than those used within the foam board construction, as the perspex surface did not absorb the light in the same way as the foam board. The light patterns were also more exaggerated, and this also emphasised the symmetry of the construction. There was also an interesting play of depth within the perspex space, which depended on the intensity of light and the way it was projected into the space: at times the space appeared very deep, at other times shallow as the patterns of light appeared to be moving toward the camera, or the observer. The light was altering the "appearance" of the space, yet the space remained the same.

After completing this work, I decided to try photographing a perspex space that might further exaggerate the light-space relationship. While adhering to the same depth measurement as the other constructions, this

66

In the final editing process, I made a decision not to include the photographs that were made from physically altering the actual shape of the construction, thus confining the work for examination to those images that have been manipulated only by light or shapes at the distant aperture of the light-space container.

space differed in the size of the distant aperture, which was much smaller.

Due to the sloping, exaggerated orthogonals the space resembled a vortex, particularly when the light appeared to rotate within the space.⁶⁷ This perspex space was used as the container for ideas in the form of light, in the final stage of the project: fourteen of the twenty five photographs exhibited for examination were created within this perspex space.

Apertures:

Apertures within the space are necessarily required in order to illuminate it. Yet I have tried to combine different elements at the aperture site to give it more meaning. The site where light is let into a space, either real or imaginary, can provoke multiple readings – associated with windows, the aperture represents a potential view, or opening – metaphorically, it may be likened to skin or the eye, both of which absorb light, or it may be likened to the exchange of light from exterior to interior and vice versa – a metaphor for our own existence; we are at once interior and exterior.

Reflections

What is the secret of the delight we take in reflections, if it is not similar to that we take in hearing the repetition of a sound, or in seeing the echoed sympathy of one part of a picture with another? To many the reflection is more beautiful than the reality.⁶⁸

Symbolically, light may represent both the spontaneous effect of experience and the residual effects of experience, that are housed in the

⁶⁷ Orthogonal pertains to right-angles. Interestingly, in biology, the term orthogenesis refers to the evolutionary change in one direction, especially as supposedly caused by internal tendency rather than external factors.

⁶⁸ Henry Peach Robinson, *Pictorial Effect in Photography, being Hints on Composition and Chiaroscuro for Photographers*, Helios, New York, 1971, p.123.

memory or imaginative process. Reflections, as a product of light, are also linked to the emotional impact of experience and memory.

How do we know something is a "reflected object" as opposed to a "real object"? We know that when light strikes the surface of an object it may be reflected onto another shiny surface, for example a window. If we are familiar with our surroundings we know where the solid objects are situated, and observe the reflected images of these objects without question. But if the surroundings are unfamiliar to us, or if we encounter reflections at night when our senses have not assimilated all objects within a space, then the appearance of reflections may have an ambiguous, or disorientating effect on us.

When producing work based on issues surrounding the reflected image, I concentrated on working with the enclosed space made of perspex, and attempted to recreate a sense of objects floating within and around this space.

In some of the images I placed an object within the perspex space, such as a small cube made of a more solid material, and set up the lights around and behind the outer perspex cube. The different angles and position of the lights picked up the edges of the inner cube and reflected them onto the interior side walls of the outer perspex cube/ space, and the resulting images portrayed the sense of ambiguity one may experience when confronted with a multitude of perceptual information.

A strong symbol that emerged as an outcome of using the four-sided space was the cross. The right-angled cross represents stability, and this stability is particularly evident when it is framed within a circle or square. Within the square, the intersection of vertical and horizontal create an even division: four smaller squares surround the "extremities" of the cross. This was particularly evident when the site was lit from a central position at either the rear or front of the structure, the reflected light leaving its mark on the four interior surfaces. In the printing process, I found that the potency of the cross shape was stronger when I

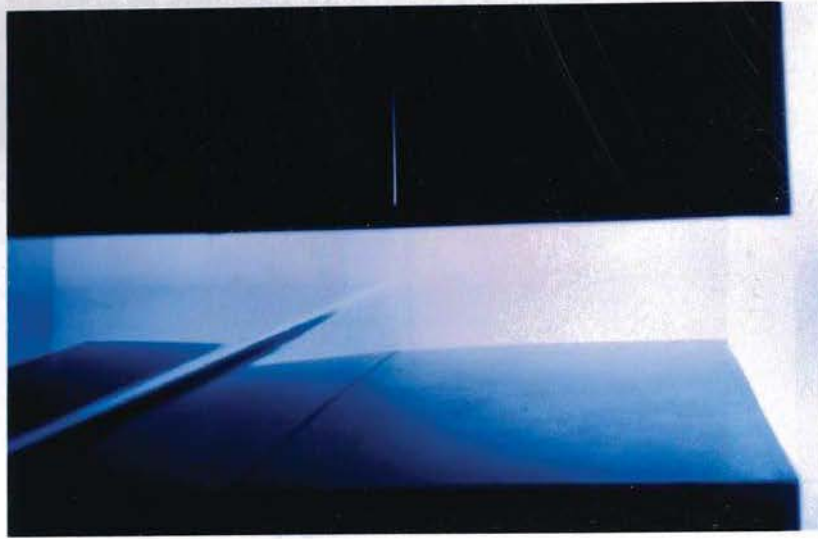


Figure 49. *Reflections, 2nd cube*. C Type photograph, 2001

printed the image “down” – that is, I made a longer exposure which darkened the areas with less reflected light.⁶⁹

The use of colour in the photographs, is a combination of both colour negative or positive film, coloured lights and filters, and the selection of certain colours in the printing process. The colours used in the final prints have been deliberately chosen in order to enhance or subdue the space and atmosphere. Using different coloured lights and filters in the creation of the images has played an important role in alluding to a variety of sensations.⁷⁰

Within the studio, I have not limited myself to standard colour filters for lights, although I have made use of them from time to time. Some of the most effective filters have been the cheapest – sometimes consisting of

⁶⁹ The cross is a universal symbol that is often associated with Christianity. It is not surprising that in the early Christian era it was not fully accepted as a symbol, considering it was the instrument of Christ's death. Its full recognition and hence acceptance as a symbol of the victory over death, only became apparent in the Romanesque period. In various African traditions, cross-roads symbolise points of intersection between the path of the living and the dead. The cross also represents a basic spatial orientation of up, down, and side to side.

⁷⁰ Although somewhat wary of the claims made about the effects of certain colours on the psyche, I wanted to test out the potential for communicating “sensations” derived from certain colours, particularly saturated colour. I was surprised to learn that more than seven million cones in each eye enable us to distinguish among more than one million combinations of colours. It seems clear that colour, along with shape, form and texture, enables us to identify different objects in space; but why do we need to distinguish between so many different shades and nuances of colour? (Perhaps these subtleties in colour and hue enable us to relate to objects in ways that are appropriate to particular situations.)

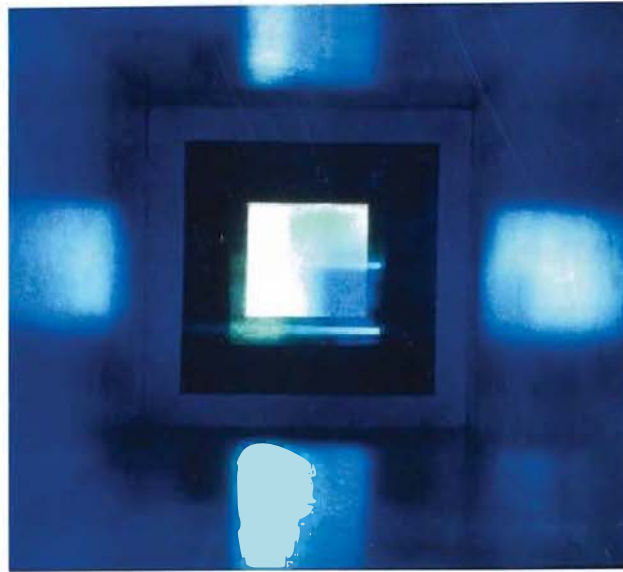


Figure 50. Cross. C Type Photograph, 2001.

the most unlikely pieces of material – colour plastic and glass objects and utensils. Pieces of metal, mirrors and magnifying glasses have also been used in combination with the colour filters to intensify the light. In the latter stages of studio production, I began using water as a filter. Initially, I was experimenting with the water and light before making a decision about sealing off one of the rectangular perspex boxes and photographing it filled with water. Once I started investigating the combination of light and water, I realised it required either movement or colour in order to be seen in the photograph, so I decided to set up a series of clear jars filled with water and drop different colour inks into each jar. When lit from behind, the coloured water made wonderful light filters – the only problem was the danger of working with water and electricity!

When creating small work prints, the process of obtaining the desired colour is extremely important, for it is usually at this stage that decisions are made about the colour and density of the larger, final print. Whilst some of my images are printed close to the original colours used in the studio, others are altered according to the mood I wish to portray. One of the colours I found powerful in creating an emotive response was a

blue-green or aqua. It seemed to possess a quality of serenity.⁷¹ The opposite effect seemed to occur with the play of red light, coupled with deeper tones of red to black on and through the rectangular structure, where the colours set up a tension within the pictorial space. I have also experimented with the use of yellow and orange lights filtered through opaque perspex to effect a warmer sensation, which naturally has other associations with fire, daybreak or sunset.

Other technical considerations:

Two types of film have been used throughout the project. A negative tungsten film was used to photograph the perspex constructions, and a positive (slide) film was used to photograph the foam board construction. The positive film was cross-processed, (processed in chemicals used for the development of negative film), which gave the images a grainy quality and in some cases enhanced the colour. The final prints were made in the darkroom with both types of film, and were printed onto colour photographic paper pinned to the wall.

71

For quite some time blue was a dominant colour in my work and there have been times in the studio, when I have had to make a conscious effort not to use a blue filter, as it is one of the most pleasing colours to work with in that environment.

PART TWO: EXHIBITIONS

'Glow', Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 1999

Towards the end of the first year of the project, I began working on a series of photographs based on the emotive aspects of light and space for the emerging artists' exhibition, *Glow*, which took place at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art in March of the following year. When producing this work I wanted to focus on interior settings and a *sense* of interiority, and through the use of limited colours expand the play of light within these spaces.

The first image (within a series of nine) began as a result of posing the question, what is light, and what is darkness, and can they exist in both the material and an inner, emotional world? In attempting to answer this question, I began by tracing back experiences of "darkness". My memory of dark places, combined with sensations of darkness, would form the foundation of the work, but the series would also describe a kind of narrative journey from darkness to light.

This first image was composed by projecting an image of a model door on a piece of spray-painted foam board. There was an elliptical glow of light emanating from behind the door. The door would be the "entrance" to the work.⁷²

The spaces within the other images were minimal, both in the use of colour and in the depiction of architectural form. Rather than creating images that "glowed", I wanted to create images that referred to light as internal, either as memory or a metaphor for the mind and/or body moving through space – the body as "light", as energy.



Figure 51. *Inscape, 'Glow', 1999*, C Type photograph, 70cmx80cm.

In another image in the series I created a site that was divided into three sections. Each section was created from cardboard and then spray-painted. I projected an image of light which took on the same shape as the light that shone through the door in the first photograph. The light was only picked up on the painted "flats", and the space between the



Figure 52. *Inscape, 'Glow', 1999*, C Type photograph, 70cm x 80cm.

flats was in darkness. The foreground appeared as an empty floor space. In this image I wanted to represent both the space and the light as distorted, in the same way one may wake up in darkness and before the eyes adjust to low levels of light, familiar objects within the room and the space itself initially appear unfamiliar and obscure.

There were two images in this series, (the last to be constructed and photographed), that I felt were the most successful. The space in both images is divided almost halfway by a vertical column of gold light. The divided space in both images consists of an intense dark blue, creating a sense of mystery and darkness. The light is also intense, almost vibrating in a space that appears too narrow to inhabit, and yet at first glance seemingly real.

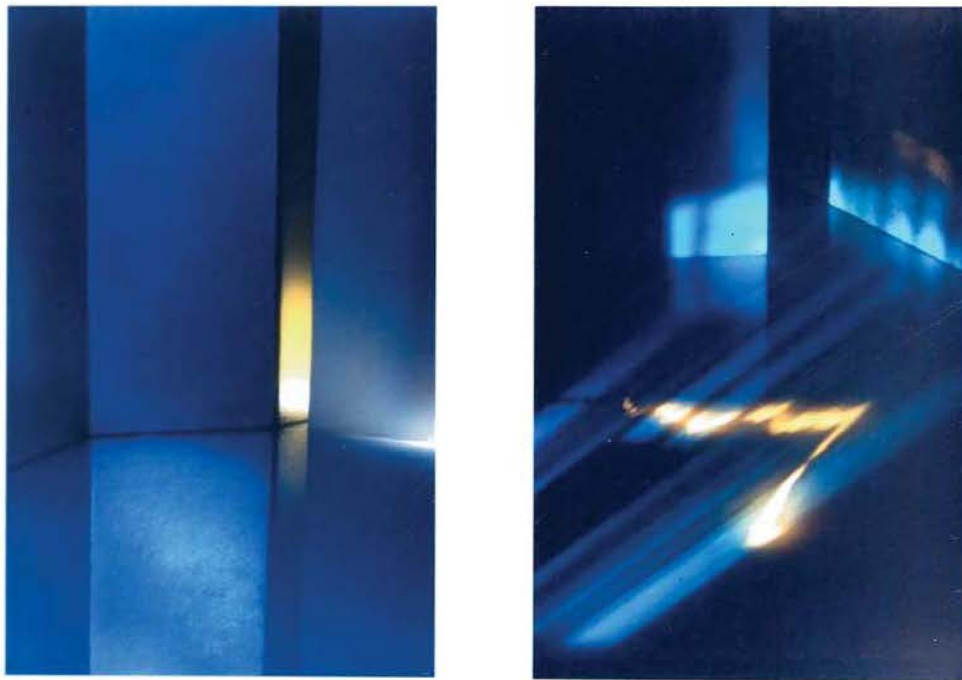


Figure 53. & Figure 54. *Inscape, 'Glow', 1999, C Type photographs, 70cm x 80cm.*

After exhibiting at PICA I decided I wanted to explore ways of describing light and space that were not totally reliant on the architectural paradigm. I was interested in how objects and space are seen through the action of light, and that it is the light we see and not the object, because our eyes are equipped to receive only light, and

therefore when we “see” an object we are in fact “seeing” the light. Combined with an interest in abstract expressionism and constructivism in painting, where one entered a space that was described through abstract shapes, colour and movement, I began working with lightweight, finely woven fabric. I drilled several holes on either side of a large piece of craft wood, and placed a piece of dowel in each hole.⁷³



Figure 55. Studio view



Figure 56. Fabric and perspex, C Type photograph, 1999.

⁷³

Before creating, and working with the light-space containers, I found that my ideas oscillated between representing space as contained and un-contained – therefore it was important that I experimented with a variety of materials and arranged them in different ways, in order to locate that “sense” of space that expressed a mediation between inner and outer realities.

I attached the fabric to the dowel with nylon string, creating layers of fabric, one in front of the other. Behind some of the pieces of fabric I placed either pieces of cardboard or foam board, which had small rectangular shapes cut out of them. When back-lit, the light shone through these portals, but was diffused by the layers of fabric. I also explored the use of opaque plastics and plastic blinds combined with the layered fabric. In order to create a sense of movement, of both light and material, I placed a fan behind the constructed space, and photographed the site "in motion".

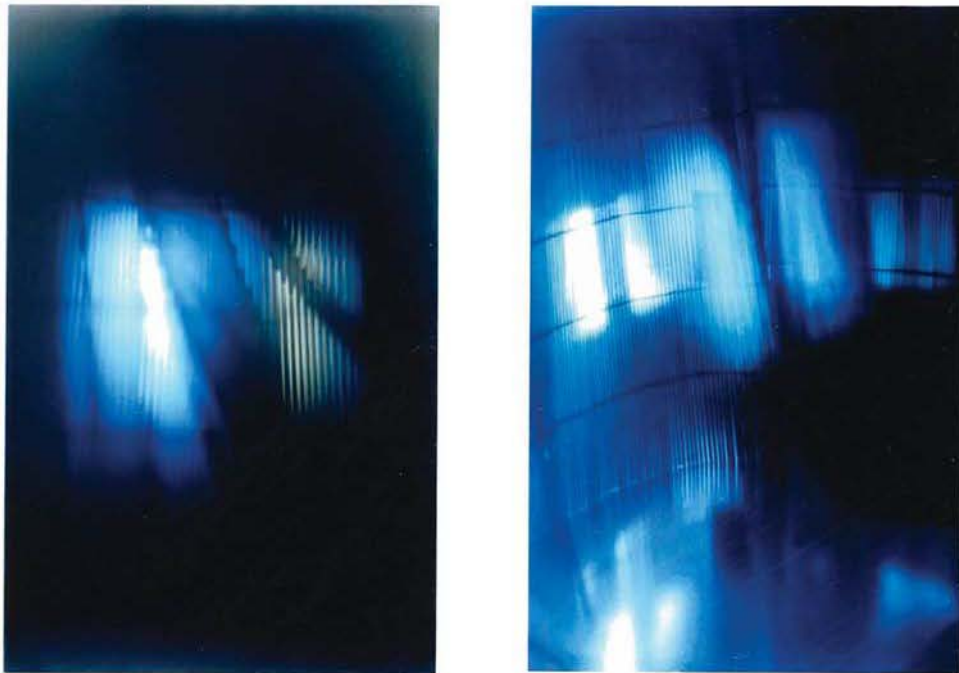


Figure 57 and Figure 58. *Traces*, 1999, C Type photographs, 50cm x 60cm.

'Traces', Devonport Regional Gallery, December, 1999

I continued to explore these techniques creating a sense movement within the image, through the use of the fan and light-weight materials, and produced a body of work for an exhibition at the Devonport Regional Gallery at the end of my second year of the course.

The show entitled *Traces*, was exhibited with Kylie Johnson, then a Masters candidate, who produced a series of line drawings on clear

plastic, accompanied by two books with dialogue, and a sound-piece. While Kylie Johnson's work focused on the traces of image and sound in public places, my work represented aspects of the traces or residue seen through the action of light within a space, or retained momentarily in the after-image.

All the photographic images in this series were printed in shades of blue and white. I used a minimal palette of colour as a way of describing light and space as almost out of reach, simply a trace. I was interested in how a space may remain the same, but when the light returns, it can appear – literally in a different light – to have altered. Seasonal changes, the position of the sun, different hues, and so on contribute to these altered appearances.

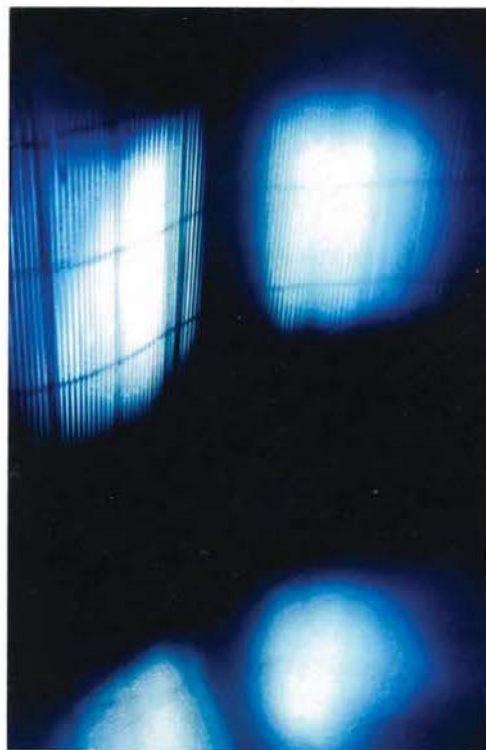


Figure 59. *Traces*, 1999, C Type photograph, 50cm x 60cm.

One of the problems I encountered with the *Traces* exhibition was that I was unaware of the influence the "present" had on my work, and was looking at the trace as remaining in the present but having its roots in the distant past. While in my mind I was locating the trace in the past, I was in fact representing traces of light within sites that were either from

the present, or were spaces yet to be explored in reality. Hence my observations of light and space were being formed in the present, but combined with the thoughts of past experiences and future projections.

In assessing the work after the exhibition I realised that in taking the work away from the architectural paradigm I was alluding to ideas that were perhaps more of a metaphysical nature; a world of "becoming" rather than "being". Locating the "right" place, or the point where a reductive space retained a sense of mystery while still offering a "point of entry," was problematic.

After the *Traces* exhibition, I was to attempt to consolidate my ideas and create the next series of work for a solo exhibition at CCP in Melbourne. I was hoping to exhibit this body of work towards the end of the year 2000, and thought this would give me ample time to resolve the problems I had encountered with the two previous exhibitions. However, due to a change in schedule CCP asked me to exhibit earlier in the year, in March. As I had only just started some new work, I decided to try combining work from the two previous exhibitions with some of the new work.

'Counter-space', CCP, Melbourne, March 2000

The title of this exhibition was inspired by Raoul Ubac's definition of the correlation between three-dimensional space and an inner non-dimensional space of memory and imagination. Ubac referred to this connection as a "counter-space". I exhibited eleven photographic images (six large and five small photographs), and three small-scale illuminated sites that were encased in rectangular boxes and seen through a lens at the front of the boxes. The large images were comprised of four photographs from the two previous exhibitions, *Glow* and *Traces*, and two new images produced to tie in with this work. The five small images were new pieces, which focused on passages of light and illuminated corners. These smaller images were more 'reductive' in their

representation of architectural space than the larger images. Due to the minimal amount of information within these images I decided I wanted to retain a certain amount of intimacy and therefore resolved to print the work on a smaller scale.



Figure 60. *Counter-space*, 2000, C Type photograph, 28cm x 22cm.

I printed three of these small prints in a deep red. In contrast, the two other small prints were white and pale blue, and were constructed to represent the idea of a passage, a kind of freeing-up of the space, again contrasting with the other small images, which reflected a sense of claustrophobia. It was interesting to note the effect the colour of the print had on the way the images were “read”. The red prints seemed to suggest danger or fear (as the colour red seems to come towards us). Yet they also gave off the sense of a warm glow, thus creating conflicting readings (security/insecurity). A sense of freedom and peace seemed to be indicated by the pale, soft hues of blue and white in the other two images. Unlike the “advancing” red, soft blues recede and create form from without.

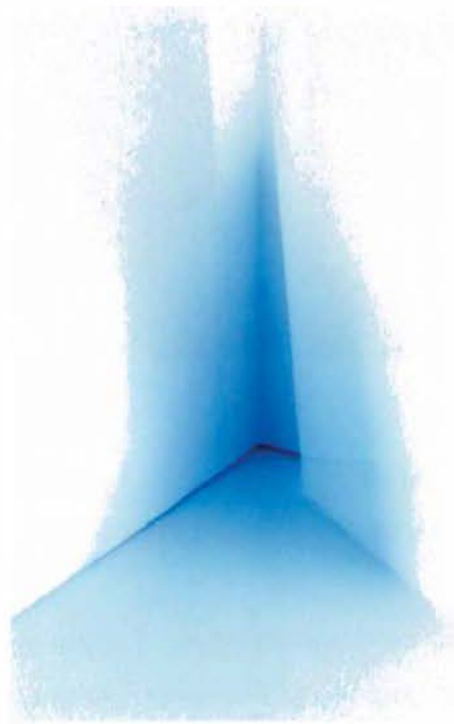


Figure 61. *Counter-space*, 2000, C Type photographs, 28cm x 22cm.

The small images were all constructed from perspex and foam board, and lit from behind, with a low level of front lighting. I was beginning to take an interest in the ways we may respond to colour, and due to the minimal architectural information within the image, I hoped the viewer would respond to the colour of the light and space. The larger prints in the exhibition referred to both the movement of light and the visual effects this movement has on walls, floors and reflective surfaces, and also the effects of light described in the more successful images exhibited in the *Glow* exhibition.

Counter-space also included three rectangular boxes. The boxes were made from craft wood and painted white. At the viewing end of each box I inserted a fish-eye lens, and inside the boxes I constructed minimal spaces that appeared as a passage of gold light in the first viewing box; a space with several portals where a whiter light glowed into the space of the second viewing box; and in the third, a space that appeared as a kind of cell with a bright blue light. I used low-wattage lights (12 watts) and mounted them on wooden brackets at the far end of each box

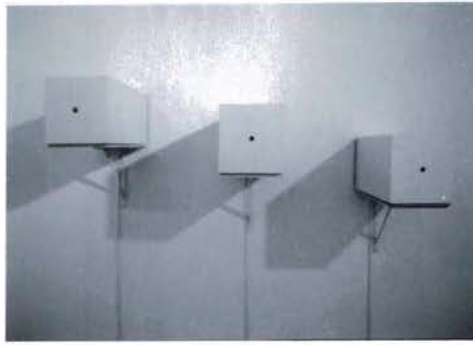


Figure 62. *Counter-space*,
Viewing boxes 20.5cmx20.5cmx46cm



Figure 63. *Counter-space*,
Installation View, C.C.P.

Initially I had intended placing photographs within the boxes and back-lighting the images, but I was not happy with the results: looking into the boxes at the photographs was simply a different way of viewing the images on the wall, and this was not my intention. I wanted to set up a tension between what was depicted within the gallery space on the walls, and what was seen through the looking glass in the boxes. At the same time, it was important that the constructions paralleled the mood I

was trying to create within the exhibition space. Unfortunately these pieces were not entirely successful, and even with further changes to the interiors at a later date, I found the work lacked the tension, mood and resolve I was hoping to obtain.⁷⁴

74

Peep show boxes appeared as early as the 15th century in the work of Leon Baptista Alberti. As Alberti was an architect and humanist I imagine these boxes would have been based on architectural scenes, and possibly constructed as an aid to viewing his designs. Interestingly, the designs I constructed within the boxes, were on a much smaller scale than the model-sites I created in the studio and photographed, and yet the shape of the viewing boxes, and the way the light was “held” within them, would prove to be an inspiration for future work in the studio.

PART THREE: THE RESOLVED WORK



Figure 64. *Light Narrative*. C Type photograph, 2000. 74 x 78cm

The resolved work displayed for examination consists of images made in the light-containers. Some of the images were made in the foam-board light-container whilst the others were made in the perspex light-containers. The images were created as a separate series of works that have evolved from the experiments and exhibitions undertaken throughout this research project. Apart from two images created in the foam-board light-container, these other images have not been exhibited before.

The images created in the narrower, perspex light-container were made, on the one hand, out of a desire to explore the pictorial effects created from the reflection and refraction of light, and on the other, as a response to my father's deteriorating vision. This body of work was commenced just prior to my father's illness, and is partly a reaction to, and partly

symbolically representative of, his altered and deteriorating vision, which he constantly remarked on throughout his short illness. He spoke of "strange shapes and images before me", and later "a black hole before me, that I feel I am falling into".⁷⁵ My father first lost his peripheral vision but in the latter part of the illness his "normal" vision was also affected. This was due to a rapidly spreading brain tumour, called a "butterfly glioma" which started in the midbrain, resembling the body of a butterfly, then moved across the right side of the brain resembling the wing of a butterfly, and in the latter stage of the illness it spread across the left side of the brain. While my father remained conscious and aware, his sight deteriorated, resulting in a narrow tunnel of vision and a reduction in visible light. In the context of a philosophy of vision, I questioned the reliance on vision as a way of understanding the world and our being within this world. Within the perspex light-space container, I began playing with different shapes of light, narrowing and darkening the field of vision to the point where the space was only just discernible, and the strange configurations of light appeared to explode and expand into the contained space.

From the time the family was informed about my father's illness, to the time of his death (ten weeks later), there was a strange energy surrounding us all. It was a very emotional time, hence the work I produced after my father's death, is symbolic of the energy, the fear and the joys we experienced in that short, intense period. I also created some images within this space, in which I covered the distant aperture with black paper, while still illuminating the container from the outside – my father's words about the "black hole" haunted me, and indeed still resonate, even after his death. When viewing this work, the patterns of energy – a rhythmic "bursting forth" or a receding into the distance reminds me of the final times spent with my father, a time where the depths of the emotions mingle pleasure and radiance with melancholy and contemplation. Space contracted for my father, narrowing as his

75

It is probable, due to nerve damage my father could "see" the blind spot which we all possess, but our binocular vision compensates for, and prevents us from actually visualising it.

vision deteriorated, and became strange and insecure for those of us who survive him.

While I view this particular body of work as capturing some of the emotive and experiential aspects of that particular time, the work also represents a very small number of configurations that make up a minute portion of the seemingly unlimited patterns and sensations of our internal, and external, world of light and space. The most significant outcome of this work was in observing the way these symmetrical patterns dominated the images and how these patterns evoked a variety of associations, thoughts, feelings and imaginings.

“In images, as in nature, rhythm occurs most obviously as the expression of a change of function... The rhythmic articulation of change of function alone, however, does not satisfy our urge to seek some sense of guiding purpose.⁷⁶

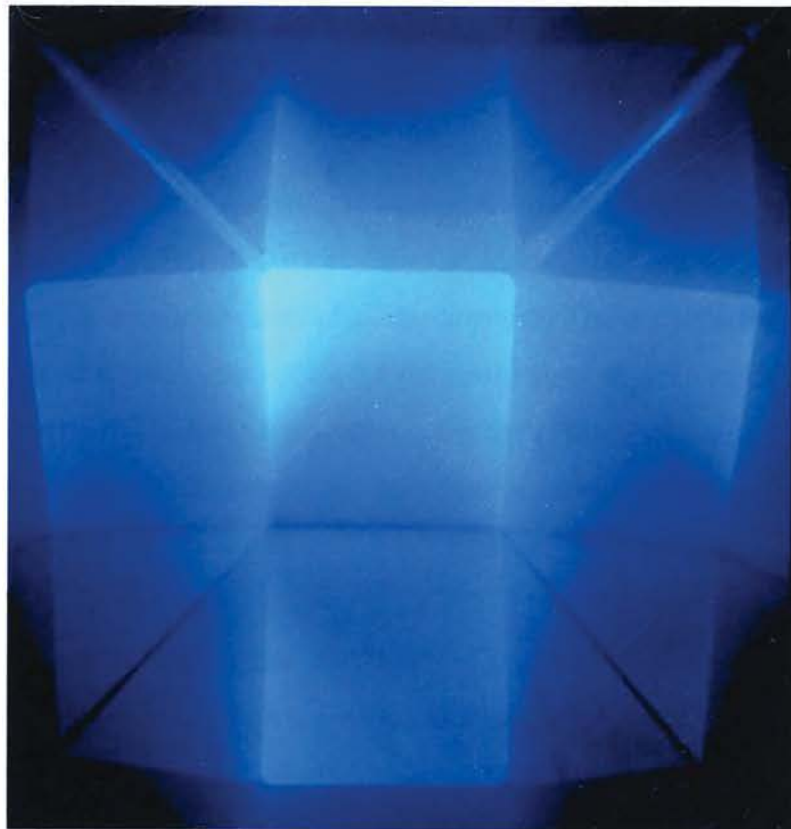


Figure 65. *Navigator*, 2001, C Type photograph, 74cm x 78cm.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This project has considered, through a series of questions and experiments, how we perceive light and space, how it affects our thoughts, memories and feelings. The project explored metaphorical connections of light and space to the mind, and through photo-constructions, investigated potential symbiotic relationships between images of light, space, and the mind.

The photographic images that have resulted from this investigation are symbolic of a personal, and emotional response to my own reality. Looking at different stages and states of being – experienced, recollected and imagined – the project acknowledges the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory nature of existence: freedom, fluidity and fragility are metaphorically represented through configurations of light within a contained space. The photographed space itself represents different aspects of containment that may range from security, to confinement, or to the possibility of “extended” space beyond that which is represented.

The constant experimentation undertaken throughout this research has been an attempt to find technical, theoretical and aesthetic solutions to the problems posed at the outset of the research. The constructions provided a contained space where light could be observed, manipulated and represented. Creating the work before the camera was also a way of focusing on the unique properties of light that are often only visible in close-up or contained space.

The repetitive photographing of altered light conditions within the contained space has been an attempt to create connections to other dualities and discrepancies that exist within reality. The representations, rather than being replications of reality, are abstract impressions of reality. The abstract embodies and expresses a multitude of meanings and contradictions prevalent within existence, whereas the subjective,

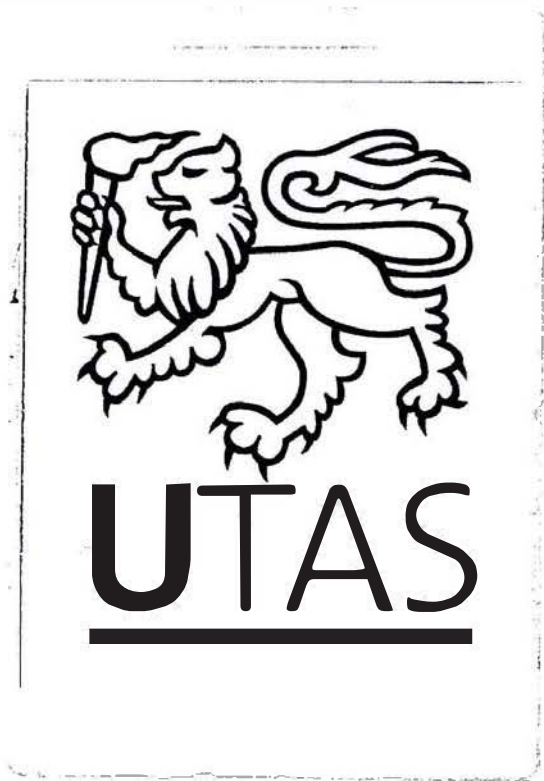
the personal response to experience, reaches into the thoughts and emotions that try to make sense of it all.

The decision to work exclusively with the light-space containers was made as a way of exploring the physical, mental and metaphorical aspects of containment in abstract representations. In an analogy to thoughts, memories and emotions that are constantly evolving through the process of experience within the same bodily structure, I have attempted, throughout this project, to construct images that represent abstracts of the evolution of thought and emotion in the form of light configurations within the same space. The process of constructing and staging the image before the camera seemed an appropriate metaphor for the "construction" and "reconstruction" of thoughts and memories, while the evocative power of light and colour coincided with metaphors for the emotions.

One unanticipated outcome of the project was the discoveries made through working with the reflective, perspex space. The energy and apparent sense of movement in these images seemed analogous to the movements of mind and spirit. Some images appeared to represent light as a forceful element, thrusting forward towards the observer in multiple, symmetrical reflections, whilst others seemed to peter out and fade into whiteness, or hover somewhere on the threshold of real and imaginary space. The space appeared altered through the dynamics, harmony or stillness of light.

As an original contribution to the field of art, the work represents a "photography" that combines aspects of staged photography with abstract imagery. I have attempted to reduce the work to the abstract and minimal, whilst adhering to the power of form, colour and light to create photographs that are expressive, impressionistic and metaphoric – images that I hope will trigger in the observer, either imaginings of past or future projections, or meditations on being within a world of light and space: it is through a reliance on the evocative power of light, that I have attempted to bring to life the staged photograph.

How I imagine my being in the world, and how I understand this existence in terms of the spaces I occupy both in the mind and in the world, has been investigated by means of photo-construction. That process of interpretation and creation, I believe, brings these issues into question and contemplation rather than supplying direct or logical answers.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adcock, Craig. *James Turrell, The Art of Light and Space*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990.
- Adcock, Craig. "Light and space at the Mendota Hotel": the early work of James Turrell", *Arts magazine* (USA). vol. 61. pt. 7 (March 1987), pp 48-55.
- Adcock, Craig. "The total visual field: James Turrell", *Tema Celeste* (Italy), no. 25 (April-June 1990), p. 44-6.
- Ammann, Jean-Christophe. "Shimmering deep-blue purple", *Parkett*, Zurich, Switzerland, no. 25, 1990, pp 78 - 83.
- Andrews, Richard. *Sensing Space*, Seattle, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1992.
- Antliff, Mark. *Inventing Bergson*, Princeton, N.J Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Arendt, Hannah, ed. Walter Benjamin: *Illuminations*, London, Fontana, 1992.
- Arnheim, Rudolph. *Art and Visual Perception*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1956.
- Arnheim, Rudolph. *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas Boston, Beacon Press, 1994.
- Bartshi, Willy, A. *Linear Perspective*, trans Fred Bradley, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold & Library of Congress, 1981.
- Batchen, Geoffrey. *Burning With Desire, The Conception of Photography*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1997.
- Berger, Sheila. *Thomas Hardy and Visual Structure: Framing, Disruption, Process*, New York, New York University Press, 1990.
- Bloomer, Kent C., and Moore, Charles W. *Body, Memory and Architecture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997.
- Bohme, Hartmut. "The Philosophical Light and the Light of Art", *Parkett*, no.38, pp 8-21, 1993.

- Boundas, Constantin V, ed. *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, New York, Routledge, 1994.
- Brennan, Teresa. *Vision in Context, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, New York, Routledge, 1996.
- Bronowski, Jacob. *The Origins of Knowledge and The Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978.
- Bryson, Norman, Holly, Michael Ann and Moxey, Keith, eds. *Visual Culture: images and interpretations*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991.
- Burian, Jarka, *The Scenography of Josef Svoboda*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan university Press, 1971.
- Carra, Massimo. *Metaphysical Art*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1971.
- Clegg, Brian. *Light Years, An Exploration of Mankind's Enduring Fascination with Light*, London, Piatkus, 2001.
- Crarey, Jonothan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1990.
- Descargues, Pierre. *Perspective*, (translated by I. Mark Pais), New York, Harry N. Abrams Publication, 1977.
- Durand, Regis. "Thomas Demand, Un Monde de Papier, A World of Paper", *Photographie, Art Press*, no. 21, 1997.
- Elkins, James. *The Poetics of Perspective*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Ellin, Nan, ed. *Architecture of Fear*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1997.
- Embler, Weller. *Metaphor and Meaning*, Deland, Fa., Everett -Edwards, 1966.
- Enyeart, James. *Bruguère: His Photographs and His Life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.
- Exley, Roy. "Art of the Luminous", *Contemporary Visual Arts*, Issue 25, pp. 29 -33, 1999.
- Exley, Roy. "Sites of Absence", *Contemporary Visual Arts*, Issue 20, p. 64, 1998.
- Faber, Birren. *Light, Colour and Environment*, West Chester, Pa, Schiffer, 1988.
- Ferguson, Russel, ed. *Robert Irwin, Museum of Contemporary Art, LA*, Exhibition Publication for "Robert Irwin" Los Angeles, Rizzoli International, 1993.

- Foster, Hal, ed. *Vision and Visuality*, Seattle, Bay Press, 1988.
- Frank, Ellen. *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979.
- Goffen, Rona, ed. *Masaccio's Trinity: Time and the Timeless in Quattrocento Painting*, Yves Bonnefoy. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Greene, Herbe. *Mind & Image, An Essay on Art & Architecture*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1976.
- Hammond, Anne, ed. *Frederick H. Evans: Selected Texts and Bibliography*, Oxford, England, Clio Press, 1992.
- Haus, Andreas. *Moholy-Nagy, Photographs and Photograms*, trans by Frederic Samson, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Hess, Thomas B. and Ashberry, John. *Light in Art, from Atom to Laser: Essays on Concepts of Light as Idea and Medium*, New York, Collier Books, 1971.
- Holborn, Mark. ed. *James Turrell, Air Mass*, London, The South Bank Centre, 1978.
- Hoy, David Couzens. *The Critical Circle: Literature, History, and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978.
- Huyghe, René. *Colour Symbolism: Six Excerpts from the Eranos Yearbook*, 1972, Spring Publications, 1977.
- Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993.
- Jenkins, Steven, ed. *James Casebere: Model Culture: Photographs 1975 - 1996*, San Francisco, The Friends of Photography, 1996.
- Jung, C.J. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, London, Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1942.
- Kelley, J. "Light Years", *Artforum*, (USA), vol. 24, pt.3, (Nov.1985), pp.73-5.
- Knight, Christopher. "The perceptual dramas of James Turrell", *Artspace*, (USA). Vol. 10, Pt. 2, (Spring 1986), p. 8 -10.
- Kohler, Michael. ed. *Constructed Realities: The Art of Staged Photography*, Zurich, Kunstverein Munchen e. V. / Dr. Zdenek Felix and Edition Stemmle AG, 1989 - 1995.
- Kostelanetz, Richard ed. *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 1895-1946*, New York, Praeger, 1970.

Kuchler, Susanne and Melion, Walter eds. *Images of Memory, On Remembering and Representation*, Washington DC, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Larkoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Larson, K. "Dividing the Light from the Darkness", *Artforum*, (USA), vol.19, pt.5, (Jan 1981), pp. 30-3.

Lijn, Liliane. *Beyond Light*, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976.

Lister, Martin. *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Mahnke, Frank H. and Mahnke, Rudolf. *Colour and Light in Man-Made Environments*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987.

Marchand-Kiss, Christophe. "James Turrell: theatricality, sensation and the senses", *Opus International* (France), no. 126 (Autumn 1991), p. 54-5.

McEvilley, T. "Negative Presences in Secret Spaces: The Art of Eric Orr". *Artforum* (USA), vol. 20, pt. 10 (June 1982), pp.58-66.

Meiss, Millard. "Light as Form and Symbol in some 15C Paintings". *Art Bulletin*, vol. 27, no.3, (September 1945), pp. 175-81.

Miller, Jonathan. *On Reflection*, London, National Gallery Publications, 1988.

Mogelan, Alex and Laliberté, Norman. *Art in Boxes*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1974.

Morrissey, Simon. "Outside the Real", *Creative Camera*, London, no. 346, June/July, 1997, p. 31.

Muniz, Vic, "Making it Real", Catalogue, Ridgefield, Ct., Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art (19 Jan to 20 April, 1977) and Reykjavik, Reykjavik Museum (18 Oct to 23 Jan, 1977).

Norberg-Shulz, Christian. *The Concept of Dwelling: On the way to figurative Architecture*, New York, Electa/Rizzoli, 1985.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans Christopher S.Wood, New York, Zone Books, 1997.

Paulson, Ronald. *Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978.

Pirenne, M.H. *Optics, Painting and Photography*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Potok, Chaim. *The Book of Lights*, U.K., Penguin Books, 1984.

- Price, Mary. *The Photograph: A Strange Confined Space*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Riley, Terence. *Light Construction*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1996.
- Roberts, Ainslee. *The First Sunrise: Australian Aboriginal Myths in Paintings*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1971.
- Robinson, Henry Peach. *Pictorial Effect in Photography, being Hints on Composition and Chiaroscuro for Photographers*, Helios, New York, 1971.
- Rotzler, Willy. *Constructive Concepts, A History of Constructive Art from Cubism to the Present*. Zurich, ABC edition, 1997.
- Searle, Adrian. "Blue heaven: James Turrell's indoor weather", *Artscribe International*, (UK), no. 79 (Jan - Feb 1990), p. 48-9.
- Seligmann, Herbert. J. *Alfred Stieglitz Talking: Notes on some of His Conversations, 1925 - 1931*, New Haven: Yale University Library, 1966.
- Taylor, Lucien. ed. *Visualizing Theory, Selected essays from V.A.R. 1990-1994*, New York, Routledge, 1994.
- Taylor, Richard. *Metaphysics*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1974.
- Temple, Robert. *The Crystal Sun: Rediscovering A Lost Technology Of The ancient World*, U.K., Arrow Press, 2000.
- Turbayne, Colin Murray. *The Myth of the Metaphor*, Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970.
- Welchman, John. "From the white cube to the rainbow net", *Art + Text*, no. 53, 1996, p. 59.
- Wheelwright, Philip. *Metaphor and Reality*, Bloomington and London, Indiana University Press, 1962.
- Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Winter, F.G. *Linear Perspective*, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1981.
- Yi-futan. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis, University Minnesota Press, 1977.
- Zeki, Semir. *Inner Vision: An exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

APPENDIX 2

Selection of images from the *Navigator* series. C Type photographs

