



FRAGMENTS: BEYOND THE OBJECT

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Abstract

The project is an investigation of processes that contrive to influence how visual objects are viewed and interpreted. I believe that all artworks are composed of a combination of physical and conceptual fragments, with the physical object constituting but a small yet important part of the viewer's perceptual experience. To me, the role of an art object is to be a specifically crafted initiator, setting in train a process that builds a vision of a whole that is more than the object itself.

I contend that a fragment of an artwork has a definite edge, a point where its physical being ceases, but also marking a transition where an ambiguity begins: there is an unseen continuation which surrounds all art objects. This is explored through an overview of the fragment, particularly in Western sculptural and light forms.

In a metaphoric sense, the undefined and ephemeral space beyond the object is inhabited by elements that fall in and out of focus: it is a place where cognition of them is always fleeting. It is these parts, not physically represented by the object, but merely inferred as a consequence of the object, that are the subject of investigation. The perceived space beyond the physical object is never completely decoded and never fully confirmed, yet is essential to the understanding of the art object.

Fragments: Beyond the Object sets out to portray this mind-projected space surrounding the art object, what Heidegger identifies as this 'nothingness'. I use two-dimensional manipulated images and the play of light to suggest both a fragment and its surrounding space. The installation tests the possibilities of the extension of human perception, seeking to find how little is physically needed for the mind to apprehend an object, to evolve for it an acceptable form, so that it is imagined and understood in three dimensions.

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Contents

List of figures		vi
Introduction		1
Chapter 1	How We Perceive	10
Chapter 2	The Clumsiness of Interpretation	23
Chapter 3	The Genesis of Contemporary Sculpture	43
Chapter 4	The Object as Precipitator	57
Chapter 5	Work Along the Way	69
Conclusion		87
References		89
Bibliography		92
Appendix	Exhibition Documentation	97

List of Figures

- 1-1 *Apollo 11 moon mission*, 1969, photo micrograph of moon rock sample, viewed 8 December 2009, <http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/publications/pages/rocks.html>.
- 1-2 Michael Downing, *Nebula – IC1396*, 2005, photograph, viewed 17 December 2009, <http://www.space.com/php/multimedia/imagegallery/igviewer.php?imgid=3843&gid=279>.
- 2-1 Rene Descartes, *Analogy for mental memory*, 1664, *Traité de l'homme*, in 1977, *Mechanics of the mind*, p. 106.
- 3-1 Kwoma Tribe, *Men's House*, 2005, wood and grass, Upper Sepik River, New Guinea, in *Tribal Art*, no 39, 2005.
- 3-2 Kwoma Tribe, *Men's House*, interior, 2005, wood and grass, Upper Sepik River, New Guinea, in *Tribal Art*, no 39, 2005.
- 3-3 Maker unknown, *Crystal skull*, date unknown, quartz, H 13 x W 12.5 x L18cm, British Museum, London.
- 3-4 Classical Roman, *Rondanini Faun*, marble, H 175cm, British Museum, London.
- 3-5 Hellenistic Greek, *Aphrodite of Melos (Venus de Milo)*, 130-120 BC, marble, H 203cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
- 3-6 *J. Paul Getty museum, villa*, Malibu, California, viewed 8 December 2009, <http://www.seeing-stars.com/museums/gettymuseum.shtml>.
- 3-7 Classical Greek, *Elgin Marbles*, frieze from east pediment, 438-432 BC, marble, removed by Lord Elgin from the Parthenon between 1801-1812, British Museum, London.
- 3-8 Classical Greek, *Elgin Marbles*, frieze from west pediment, 438-432 BC, marble, removed by Lord Elgin from the Parthenon between 1801-1812, British Museum, London.
- 3-9 Classical Greek, *Parthenon*, front (eastern view), 1998, marble, H 10.4 x W 30.9 x D 69.5m, showing missing frieze and metopes, Acropolis, Athens.
- 4-1 Apollonius, *Belvedere Torso*, Hellenistic Greek, 1st Century BC, marble, H 159cm, Vatican Museum. Rome.

- 4-2 Post 1960 restoration, *Laocoön*, 160 - 20 BC, marble, Hellenistic Greek, H 242cm Vatican Museum, Rome. This image incorporates the bent right arm discovered in 1902.
- 4-3 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Cross Legged Slave*, 1520-1530, marble, H 270cm, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.
- 4-4 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Atlas*, 1516-1519, marble, H 208cm, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.
- 4-5 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Figure sketch*, 1525, red pencil, H 36 x W 32cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
- 4-6 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *St Matthew*, 1503, marble, H 248.2cm, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.
- 4-7 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Victory Group (Samson and the Philistine)*, 1528, clay model, H 56cm, Casa Buonarroti, Florence.
- 4-8 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Rondanini Pietà*, 1564, marble, H 195cm, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.
- 4-9 Auguste Rodin, *Male Torso*, 1878 (cast 1979), bronze, H 53 x W 27 x D 15cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
- 4-10 Early Classical Greek, *Torso of Apollo from island of Miletos*, 480-470 BC, marble, H 132cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
- 4-11 Auguste Rodin, *Monument to Balzac*, 1891-1898, bronze, H 270 x W 110 x D 127cm, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington.
- 4-12 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Day*, 1520-34, marble, tomb of Guiliamo de Medici, Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.
- 4-13 Auguste Rodin, *Thought*, 1898, marble, H 74cm, Rodin Museum, Paris.
- 4-14 Auguste Rodin, *Walking Man*, 1899-1900, bronze, H 206 x W 155 x D 71cm, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington.
- 5-1 Walter De Maria, *Vertical Earth Kilometre*, 1977, brass rod, L1km down x 5.08cm, steel plate 2m², Friedrichsplatz Park, Kassel.
- 5-2 Walter De Maria, *Lightning Field*, 1977, stainless steel rods, H 600cm x 1mile x 1kilometre, Dia Art Foundation, New York, located Quemado, New Mexico.
- 5-3 Dan Flavin, *The Diagonal of Personal Ecstasy*, 1963, yellow fluorescent tube, L 244cm, Green Gallery, New York.

- 5-4 Dan Flavin, *Varese Corridor*, 1976, green, pink and yellow fluorescent light, H 558 x W 2855 x D 254cm, site specific installation, Villa Panza di Biumo, Varese, Italy.
- 5-5 James Turrell, *Rise*, 2002, installation view, dimensions variable, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh.
- 5-6 Ann Veronica Janssens, *Playing with your Head*, 2002, installation view, light projection, dimensions variable, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.
- 5-7 Christian Boltanski, *Les Ombres (Shadows)*, 1985, installation view, electric fan, light bulb, mixed media, Hayward Gallery, London.
- 6-1 Nic Hamilton, *Bark Heap NE Tasmania*, 2008, digital image, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-2 David Hamilton, *A Trophy for Doug*, 1983, bronze, H 26 x W 60 x D 9cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-3 David Hamilton, *Sting*, 1995, wood and steel, H 280 x W 290 x D 120cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-4 David Hamilton, *Sting*, (detail), 1995, wood and steel, H 280 x W 290 x D 120cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-5 David Hamilton, *Knot*, 2004, painted steel, H 46 x W 239 x D 42cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-6 David Hamilton, *In Blue*, 2005, painted steel, H 170 x W 225 x D 75cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-7 David Hamilton, *Bolt*, 2007, painted steel, H 14m x W 48m x D 6m, School of Visual and Performing Arts, Inveresk, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-8 David Hamilton, *Earth Drill* (part one), 2007, painted steel, H 380 x W 80cm, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Inveresk, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-9 David Hamilton, *Earth Drill* (part two), 2007, painted steel, H 180 x W 80cm, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Royal Park, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-10 David Hamilton, *Air Awl*, 2007, painted brass, lights and electronics, H 17 x W 30 x D 30cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-11 David Hamilton, *Thread*, (detail), 2004, painted steel, H 64 x W 187 x D 87cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

- 6-12 David Hamilton, *Twist* (detail), 2004, painted steel, H 70 x W 317 x D 96cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-13 David Hamilton, *Hatch* (from the series *Looking for the Void*), 2007, drawing, H 61x W 84cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-14 Andy Goldsworthy, *Breath of Earth: Dust Throws*, 1994, Runnymede California, in 1994, Wood: Andy Goldsworthy p.171.
- 6-15 David Hamilton, *Blue Void*, 2007, digital image, H 61 x W 84cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-16 David Hamilton, *Red Void*, 2007, digital image, H 61 x W 84cm, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 6-17 David Hamilton, digital maquette of proposed gallery installation, 2010.
- 6-18 David Hamilton, digital maquette of proposed gallery installation, (detail), 2010.

Introduction

Fragments and the Space Beyond

Is there more to art than meets the eye? It's a question that has increasingly occupied my mind as I reflect on more than 40 years of professional practice.

To me, the answer is now and always has been clear – that there is more than the physical representation, manifested as the artwork. But is this a universal apprehension, or something only experienced by an artist's mind steeped in the process of first conceiving art, making it, and then having the courage to present it and argue its case for existence in front of a wider audience?

This is the question I have investigated in *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

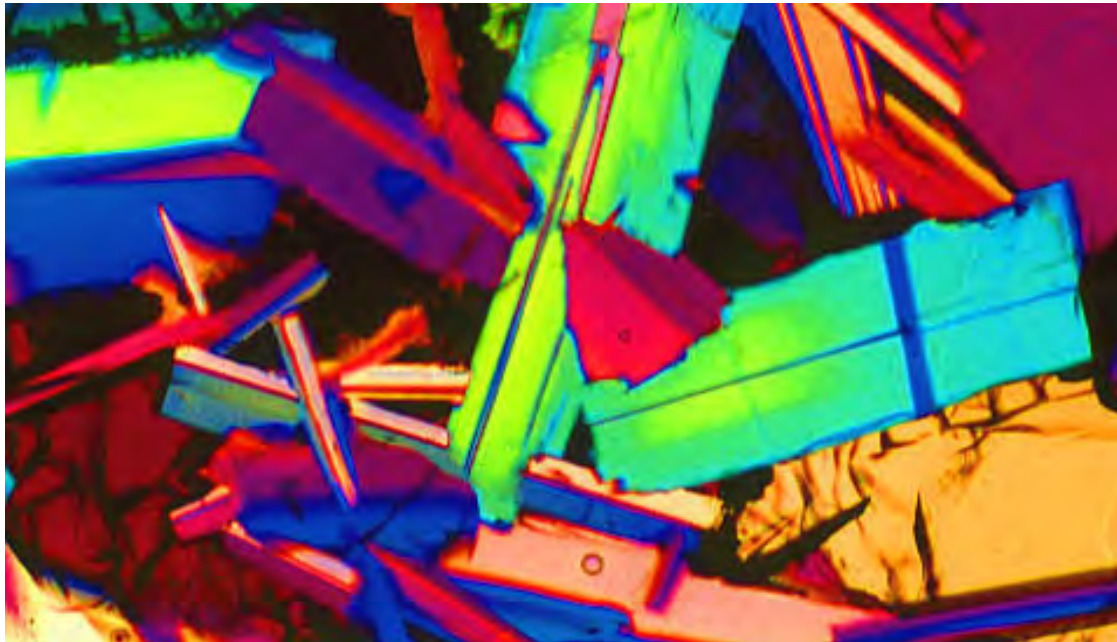
I will demonstrate that the physical art object is merely the beginning in a journey that leads to a full appreciation of the artwork in its entirety: that each viewer's mind will see the artwork's physicality in different ways, but they will also subconsciously call on their life's experiences – including their sophistication in art appreciation – and this will influence their overall interpretation. Importantly, they will 'see' subtleties which the object itself does not show in a physical sense, but which will be powerfully imagined. I will argue that the artwork has been the initiator of this process of creating a sense, an image, which extends beyond the physical, indeed beyond the object.

I arrived at this understanding in a series of steps. The process started to reveal itself several decades ago, in 1969, the year of the famous first manned trip to the Moon. While the astronauts returned to earth with scientific data, they also brought back the most mundane of objects: a piece of Moon rock. I saw this fragment many years later, in 1983, when visiting the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC.

To me, this was no ordinary rock – it suggested the existence of an other-worldly place, Earth's Moon, a place which at the time was the new *terra*

incognita, truly a place for speculation and wonderment. I found myself building a picture of *my* Moon, not the moon I had always seen in the sky, but a *new* moon. My new Moon was represented on the one hand by that very special piece of rock, on the other as some fantastic place, which my imagination was conjuring up in what seemed a logical progression from the simple physicality of a rock fragment encased in acrylic, and displayed on a pedestal like some religious relic.

The sample slice was no more than 1cm across and polished to allow the viewer to look inside and wonder at its origin (Fig. 1-1).



1-1 *Apollo 11 moon mission*, 1969, photo micrograph of rock sample, Molecular expressions.

Augmenting the scene on a nearby display panel (and demonstrating on behalf of the museum an attempt to channel viewers' thoughts in a very literal way) was a photograph of the moon rock from which the fragment had been taken, along with photographs of the rock being retrieved from the moon's surface. This was set against a backdrop of the earth and its somewhat larger fragment, the moon in orbit around it. A further illustration showed the sun

and the earth and the other eight planets of our solar system, followed by a positional illustration of our solar system within the Milky Way galaxy.

Despite this 'channeling' it suddenly struck me that the piece of moon rock I was observing was a fragment of another larger part, just as our solar system is part of the greater universe. Conversely, I could also imagine it in ever-decreasing forms, as being crystalline, molecular, atomic and even sub-atomic: a whole world that existed within that fragment. I was, in essence, viewing a tiny point of a huge and magnificent three-dimensional form that expanded both outwards and inwards to infinity and beyond.

My observation of the moon rock sample at the National Air and Space Museum and the associated perception of our solar system provide an excellent analogy to describe the nature of an artwork, both as it exists as a fragment, and the space that lies beyond it.

Thus my research project *Fragments: Beyond the Object* in part seeks to identify and examine the mechanisms that inform the various ways the visual object is seen, evaluated and interpreted. Do other people genuinely 'see' more than they actually see when looking upon an artwork?

Fred Watson, in *Universe*, states that from earth we are only able to observe a tiny four percent of the matter that occupies the void we call space (Watson 2007, p. 18). The remaining 96% is composed of so-called dark matter and dark energy and particles, with curious names such as massive compact halo objects, weakly interacting massive particles, black holes and brown dwarfs (Fig. I-2).

To draw a parallel, the vast majority of an artwork seems to me to lie beyond the mere appreciation of the physical. As a civilisation, humans examine the totality of our world through the evaluation and interpretation of fragments of information. In art, this practice of examination acts as an initiator for the interpretative processes carried out by both the maker and the viewer.



1-2 Michael Downing, *Nebula – IC1396*, 2005, photograph, www.space.com.

Fragments can be accordingly considered as isolated, unfinished, or incomplete parts of some larger whole. A fragment can be the detritus of an unfinished project, terminated before completion and therefore remaining incomplete and deficient, or it can also be the significant remnant of an original whole object that has broken or deteriorated. I am intrigued by the contradiction that a fragment can be perceived both as a whole object and at the same time as part of a presumed whole. The word 'fragment' might refer to an actual physical object or may simply be just an imagined part (or whole).

Camellia Elias in *The fragment* describes the fragment as having '...its own ability to mediate between its state of *being* and its state of becoming' that is... 'it is something which holds a past but it also can be seen as something that signals to another meaning altogether' (Elias 2004, p. 356).

The fragment is by its very nature a chameleon; it is a precursor of the paradoxical, an unstable entity always changing and therefore constantly open to re-interpretation. This can bestow upon it qualities quite independent of its original purpose and meaning. Some fragments are seen as having a

poignancy, an implied fragility, because of a dislocation from an original context. Conversely, the fragment is sometimes believed to be permeated with additional powers capable of holding the accumulated emotions and essences of those who have touched it. In various cultures, fragments are often believed to possess a supernatural influence that can give access to the power of some unseen world.

When observing a fragment, as humans we subconsciously accept that it may presage a vision of a whole. For example, if during an archaeological dig, we examine a fragment of an ancient work of art, we can visualise what the whole might have been. In this way the fragmented part is accepted as signifying a new whole object that is composed of both physical and imagined elements.

The fragment functions as a memory prompt, stimulating familiar pathways in the viewer's mind. How successful these memory prompts are depends almost entirely on the quality and succinctness of a particular fragment. The fragment may be something that has historical interest because of its age and association with the past, or it may exist as a surviving part that simply serves as a memento or a souvenir. It is in the space between and beyond the substance of the fragment that the imagination is challenged to visualise a completeness. The fragment transfers a sense of confidence and certainty, while the gaps and spaces beyond the fragment are places of imagination, uncertainty and speculation.

When examining the space that exists beyond an object, discussion inevitably is about two differing aspects. From a physical, measurable standpoint, space is defined by *Random House dictionary* (2010) as 'the unlimited or incalculably great three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur'. It follows that we can describe space as a virtually boundless receptacle in which we can compare and quantify the distance between objects, their relative sizes, their shapes and their velocity. Although space is certainly spacious in a physical sense, it is

not empty. The expanse that surrounds an object, and the objects that occupy that area are in fact the same thing; the difference is simply a question of density. Every object is an assemblage of atoms, which are in turn separated from one another by microscopic spaces.

An issue of psychological debate is whether space is simply a conceptual framework that we use to talk about the world or an ontological entity in itself. The philosopher Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of pure reason* describes space as an *a priori* intuition that, together with another *a priori* intuition, allows us to comprehend sensual experience. He terms this experience as a *noumenon* or *the thing in itself* (Kant 1998, p. 72). In Kant's view neither space nor time are conceived of as substances but are seen as parts of an organised framework that we use to configure our experiences. This organisational framework is applied by our minds but is in fact not part of an object itself. To me, the object as initiator, and the space itself, are locked inextricably together to form a whole.

My own thoughts about the nature of this interrelationship are summarised and confirmed by philosopher Dr John Cunningham Lilly when he comments on the writings of Franklin Merrill Wolf '...[it is] the basic fabric of the universe beyond space, beyond time, beyond topology, beyond matter, beyond energy, ...[it] is Consciousness ... that is, space is an area of "Consciousness-without-an-object" but initiated by the object' (Lilly 1976, p. 176).

The process of art making often employs a kind of subtractive distillation to exclude surplus visual information. The role of the artist is to orchestrate this process to create a heightened sensory experience, enabling a viewer to appreciate the full import of what exists in the space beyond the object. The aim is to leave just the essence of the work, and in this process the quality of the remaining 'fragment' is of critical importance. The object initially attracts the viewer through what might be considered its intrigue, and through degrees of nuance and ambiguity further layers of meaning are revealed. Close examination can transform both the fragment and the imagined space beyond

into a third something, in short 'another'. It is the ambiguity of this 'another', constructed by the imagination from both the object and the metaphoric space beyond it that is of particular interest to me.

In recent years, my art practice has been increasingly influenced by a quest to better understand what is meant by this construct *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. My work has evolved from a purely Modernist and formal approach to one that is a more refined investigation into the nature of the space that surrounds objects. In short, as a consequence, the object now borders on redundant in my most recent works. The ambiguity of this implied space is speculated upon through the use of digital images in dark tone-on-tone scenarios, with low gallery lighting levels removing any possibility of finite evaluation. It is a simulacrum of the space beyond the object.

This space is never completely decoded and never fully confirmed. It is an ethereal place where nebulous forms and images appear to fall in and out of focus, never fully observed and consequently never totally comprehended. It is a place inhabited by phantoms of image where existence is only sensed and is difficult to prove. Light reveals darkness and shadow, giving what might normally be considered a tenuous space, a degree of the palpable. It is in this void that a temporality exists and where the artist Ann Veronica Janssens comments that it is possible to make an 'attempt to escape from the tyranny of objects' (Mannoni, Nekes & Warner 2006, p. 166). I contend that the richness and imaginative potential of the space surrounding the object is of paramount importance, the challenge therefore is to determine a way in which one might illustrate this importance.

In order to establish an informed theoretical basis for my project Chapter One of this exegesis titled *How We Perceive* investigates and evaluates perception from physiological and psychological viewpoints. Memory is discussed because of its pivotal role in the viewer's ability to imagine the gaps and spaces beyond the visual fragment. Although my research examines the role of the object as initiator, the focus of my investigation is the space between

and beyond the object. The research attempts to reveal the intelligence a fragment might suggest, and how far is it possible for a form, or indeed one of its fragments, to be broken down yet still convey a sense of the original. Is it possible for a fragment seemingly devoid of 'message', to be considered an art object?

My contention is that what happens in the space beyond the object is ultimately more important to our understanding than the visual object itself. However, the process by which it is realised, the selection of materials and elements, and the way it is contextualised is more usually seen as vitally important. The central question here is - if fragments evoke a sense of the whole, does it then follow that fragments of sculpture may be considered the ultimate understatement of sculpture as an entirety?

Chapter Two *The Clumsiness of Interpretation* examines the process of interpretation as a somewhat crude forensic tool that is heavily influenced by social and cultural factors. How these conditioning factors prejudice our evaluation and understanding of an object is examined from an archaeological or historical perspective. The function and importance of context and its influence on interpretation is also evaluated. The chapter outlines the development of a Western interest in the fragment as art object from its beginnings in the Renaissance, with the unearthing of fragmented classical sculptures, through to its profound influence on the development of Western contemporary art. Two examples of Classical art, the *Elgin Marbles* and the *Parthenon* are briefly considered as case studies.

Chapter Three *The Genesis of Contemporary Sculpture* undertakes an appraisal of the work of Michelangelo and his interest in the *non-finito*. I use Michelangelo's work to support my contention that his work marks the foundation of contemporary sculpture as we recognise it today. Rodin is also mentioned because of the influence of Michelangelo on his work and as a consequence, the contribution both these artists have made to our present-day perception of sculpture.

Chapter Four *The Object as Precipitator* considers some specific contemporary artists whose work supports and informs my art practice. It examines how fragments can be used to create an entirely new whole, and how the fragment can act as a portal for an understanding of the importance of the space beyond the object. The chapter describes the art object as a tool for communication, plotting the development of contemporary art attitudes and practices as it relates to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

Twentieth century artists such as Walter De Maria and Dan Flavin are reviewed for their interest in the art object as a precipitator for ideas beyond the actuality of the object. Works by artists James Turrell, Ann Veronica Janssens and Christian Boltanski are examined, particularly for the way they use the immersive qualities of light and dark in the gallery environment.

One of the visual challenges in undertaking a studio project which sets out to depict the space that exists beyond the object is how to represent this space using available visual technologies. Significantly, my research investigates how the form and quality of an object can influence our reading and subsequent interpretation of its surrounding space.

Chapter Five *Work Along the Way* documents and evaluates the development of my philosophy related to this question through studio research. Specifically there is a detailed overview of the various early studio attempts using techniques such as sculpture, drawing and photography to exemplify the spiritual and conceptual space that I contend surrounds the physical object. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of studio based project findings, and how these have formulated a final proposal to employ elements of light, dark and digital technologies within the gallery context.

Chapter 1

How We Perceive

Seeing and understanding - the aesthetic experience

Traditionally the word perception has been used to describe a whole class of processes, from the sensory to the act of concept formation. Sometimes the term is intended to be interpreted quite literally, such as perceiving in the sense of seeing, or hearing some aspect of the environment. The word perception can also be used in a metaphoric sense to describe a world view or an outlook on life. My interest in this chapter focuses on the way we mentally organise and interpret sensory information and how perception is influenced by a variety of factors including past experiences and the intensity of particular stimuli.

The poet and writer Wendell Berry gives a lyrical insight into perception that accentuates an important feature of being human. 'All creatures ... dance ... to a music so humble and vast that no ear hears it except in fragments' (Berry 1990, p. 123). It demonstrates our ability to grow a sense of understanding from what can often amount to only fragments of information: we are able to create something we take as reality from the incomplete. These fragments, patterns of fragments, and spaces between them, constitute an ever-changing prototype of the reality in which we live.

For all humankind the basic process of perception is the same, but discrepancies arise as a result of different social and cultural assumptions. When observers view their surroundings they superficially assume that the world is as it appears, and it is exactly as they see it. There is a tendency to accept this evidence of perception uncritically: as humans we often do not realise that visual perception is mediated by certain contextual assumptions. 'It is implicitly assumed that the evidence of vision is directly, immediately, unmediately given ... this is called phenomenal absolutism' (Segall & Herskovits 1966, p. 5).

Sight, sound and touch are the three primary tools that the body uses to access information from the surrounding world. The incoming data is received by the mind where it is assimilated, evaluated and interpreted. This is the process we call perception.

The human mind is extremely creative about the process of extracting meaning. Sometimes no meaning may be intended, except in the mind of the beholder. The mind constantly constructs meanings in an attempt to make sense of the information it receives, all influenced, indeed coloured, by previous experience. The social psychologist, Muzafer Sherif, describes an interesting practical demonstration of the relative nature of our perceptive abilities (Sherif 1936, p. 33). In the experiment, Sherif prepares three bowls of water, one hot, one lukewarm, and one cold. Placing one hand in the hot water and one hand in the cold water and then immersing both in the lukewarm water he achieves a conflicting perception. The hand from the cold water feels hot and the hand from the hot water feels cold. Normally when we feel hot or cold water we believe that the temperature is an attribute of the water directly experienced through touch. This experiment demonstrates that the sensing skin of the hand is able to contribute substantially to the contrasting information perceived. In other words, it is a practical demonstration of how our senses intervene in the process of perception and interprets incoming information to arrive at an assumption that may (as in this experiment) be illusory.

Viewing images can evoke a perceptual response commonly known as 'an aesthetic experience'. The aesthetic experience is often perceived as a pleasurable and desirable experience, which at the highest level can bring the individual to a moment of insight, or more simply, a heightened sense of being. To perceive an experience is to 'know' through the senses, not merely just to 'see'. For example, operating at its highest level in art, the aesthetic experience brings forth all the senses, enhancing recognition of the self and of the body. In some ways it is a process analogous to the meditational

practices of many religions. Making art, physically and mentally, allows this process to occur.

Gestalt psychologists believe that we perceive whole configurations before becoming aware of the details of the component parts. 'The word gestalt has come to be synonymous with "whole" or "total pattern" ' (Bloomer 1976, p.15).

According to Bloomer, in everyday life our minds form gestalts so rapidly that they seem to appear instantaneously, and we are not conscious of the processes involved. For example, as you read this text you perceive words and phrases, not the individual letters of the text. Therefore perception of the partial view becomes synonymous with perception of the whole, for the mind has filled in the missing data '...at the same time the mind tunes out information it deems not relevant to the mental pre-pattern and in this way corrects the stimulus to fit a perceptual prejudice' (Bloomer 1976, p. 57).

Gestaltists consider that the human mind tends to interpret the information it receives in the simplest or 'most correct' way possible. This means that we tend to see things not as they are, but as our mind thinks they ought to be. This tendency for the mind to correct stimuli could explain why proof reading text or identifying visual errors in our own artwork can sometimes be such a difficult task. Mental correcting, or seeing what we think we should be seeing, tends to tune out the very errors we are looking for.

When the viewer perceives an artwork in a gallery environment the mind goes through a process of isolating the work from its surroundings and then evaluating the work in order to establish meaning. Following this identification and classification process, the mind further evaluates the object in an effort to establish meaning through interpretation. The establishment of meaning imparts a sense of certainty for the viewer that the object is now measurable and predictable. The gestaltists call this process 'closure'. Once closure has occurred the viewer may become largely uninterested and move to something else. Perception is in fact just a best assessment of the

probable meaning of outside events. The neurons in the brain construct a description of a likely reality and a 'model' is established which is confirmed to us as 'authentic'. Colin Blakemore, Director of Physiology at Cambridge University, describes the mind as constructing a perception of reality in the cerebral cortex of the brain.

The brain gains its knowledge by a process analogous to the inductive reasoning of the classical scientific method ... neurons present arguments to the brain based on the specific features that they detect, arguments on which the brain creates its hypothesis of perception (Blakemore 1977, p. 91).

How visual information is physiologically accommodated within the brain's structure and then perceived by the mind has been a matter of conjecture since classical times. In order to understand and assist debate the process of seeing has often been described through metaphor. The Greek philosopher Euclid thought that light streamed out from our eyes like a million fingers and felt objects as solid and real through the touch of these imaginary seeing hands. Aristotle imagined that visual sensory perceptions entered the head with such force that they left physical impressions on the brain.

The philosopher John Locke also echoes his ideas through metaphor, postulating that information gained through the experience of understanding the three dimensional nature of forms is essential to our true perception of reality. In 1690 he wrote 'Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas ... how comes it to be furnished? To this I answer in one word, from experience' (Blakemore 1977, p. 102).

Philosopher Steve Blakemore confirms Locke's view when he remarks: 'The fact is that the subjects of seeing are not objects themselves but the flat intangible images of them that hide within the pupil of the eye' (Blakemore 1977, p. 66). By inference he makes the point that seeing is

not touching, and that only experiencing an object through touch will confirm it as solid and permanent.

British empiricist philosophers George Berkeley, Thomas Hobbes and David Hume developed a similar idea that knowledge is built from mental images and that the mind is a sort of *tabula rasa* on which experiences are written. They point out that if our knowledge is based on experience, mental representations are the result of that experience and they reflect the properties of sensory perception. Berkeley wrote that what we perceive with our senses and what we perceive by looking inwards in our imagination and memory are all the same, just ideas: 'The former are more forceful, vivid and orderly and less subject to our wills than the latter' (Monk & Raphael 2001, p. 183).

Berkeley gives an interesting testimonial example (known as Molyneux's problem) by way of providing factual and experimental vindication of the main thesis of his *New theory of vision vindicated*. He quotes from William Cheselden's 1728 account of a boy who was blind from infancy, but was able to see again at the age of twenty after the surgical removal of cataracts. When the boy regained his sight, he was not able to perceive differences in the scale and size of objects he saw, nor was he able to tell the difference between the landscape outside the window of his room and a painting on the wall of that same landscape. It confirms what we see is entirely different from what we touch. Berkeley writes:

Before I conclude it may not be amiss to add the following extract from the *Philosophical Transactions* [no. 402, 1728] relating to a person blind from his infancy and long after made to see when he [the boy] first saw, he was so far from making any judgement about distances that he thought all objects whatever touched his eyes (as he expressed it) as what he felt did his skin ... He knew not the shape of anything nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude: but upon being told what things were, whose

form he before knew from feeling, he would carefully observe that he might know them again ...(Monk & Raphael 2001, p. 183).

The reality of an object can be substantiated because our past visual and tactile experiences tell us that the object is both tangible and recognisable. Because we have learned to experience through sight combined with touch, a powerful synaesthesia has developed between the visual and the tangible so that the visual object is seen or imagined to be solid.

For many people, the fullest grasp of reality seems only to be realised when they are able to personally and physically experience an object, place or event. Early explorers of our planet felt the need to land upon a shore and touch the ground to confirm its actual existence. Today, there is considerable emphasis placed on the personal visit of astronauts to a new planetary body; it is considered much more important than the arrival upon and discovery of the Moon or Mars by an orbital or robotic vehicle, which may be seen as only a virtual experience. These robotic devices attempt to approximate the act of physical reality through contextual photography and the use of finger-like probes that attempt to sense the new world through tactile sensations of pressure and texture. I am reminded of Euclid's analogy of light streaming out of our eyes as long fingers of vision to feel objects as solid and real, and how this would certainly have freed us to confirm this distant reality from the tiny world within arm's reach.

Memory

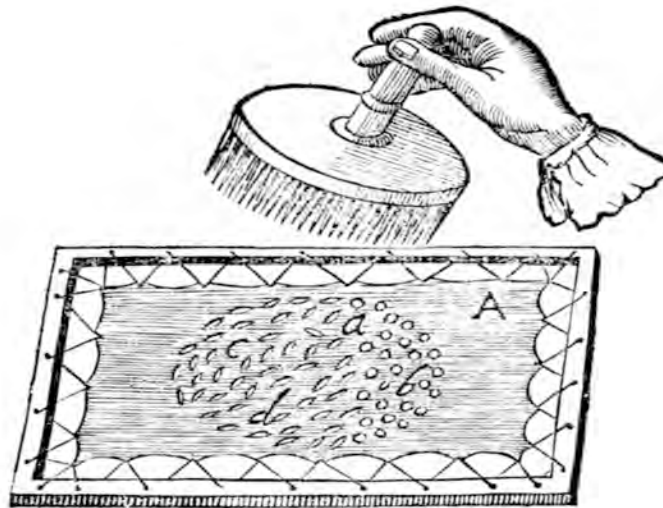
The philosopher René Descartes in his third discourse of *La Dioptrique* theorised that 'it is the mind which senses not the body' (Jay 1994, p. 75). He supported the view that the mind and the body are separate entities, believing that mental phenomena such as consciousness and ideas composed a non physical substance compared with the physical matter of the brain. Voltaire asked in his philosophical dictionary:

What is an idea? ...It is an image, that paints itself on the brain. The most abstract ideas are the consequence of all the objects I've perceived...I've ideas only because I've images in my head (Jay 1994, p. 83).

Both Descartes and Voltaire used 'idea' to refer to an internal representation in human consciousness and matter, believing that only the perception of external objects and never innate intuitions and deductions are the source of our ideas. I believe that art demonstrates an excellent analogy of Descartes' ideas on the dualism of mind and matter (the brain). It is the physicality of the art object that is the repository and beginning point for the idea, shaping and directing the viewer's insight to form a perceptual judgment, not merely a simulacra of the observed.

Although visual objects play a fundamentally important role as the initial trigger in our interpretation and final perception, it is the process of memory, enriched through personal and cultural experience that deepens this viewed experience.

In 1664 René Descartes described a model for the machinery of the memory process in *Traité de l'homme* (Fig 2-1). He imagined that visual information, once accepted by the eye, enters the brain as a vital spirit, which then passes through certain pores in the brain's ventricle wall, forcing open these pores to produce a persistent representation of the original pattern. His analogy for the means by which the brain accepts and stores information is comparable to punching a pattern of holes in a piece of cloth with a stamp made up of numerous needles: 'When the needles are withdrawn the holes stay either completely or partially open' (Sutton 1998, p. 50).



2-1 René Descartes, *Analogy for mental memory*, 1664, *Traité de l'homme*.

Edward de Bono explored similar issues in relationship to memory in his book *Mechanism of mind* (De Bono, 1976 p. 52). He argued that image memories are stored in the mind on something like a photographic memory surface. De Bono cautions that it would be a mistake to expect the memory surface of the mind to function like a camera, faithfully recording an image to which it had been exposed. He saw individual memories not as fixed and frozen images but rather as flickering and permeable, poorly-related factors almost entirely dependent on the varying external social and technological experiences of the viewer. He concluded that each individual mind (surface) had its own unique prior characteristics that would distort the image memory. He further used the analogy that the mind operated like a photo-sensitive film that had been wrinkled and bent or had something wrong with the emulsion. Accordingly, the storage of memory information in the mind was an imperfect psychological achievement, not a given.

The initiation of memory is not a passive process, but relies on the use of various metacognitive strategies to make the best use of our capacity to remember, and so the appropriate priming of the mind through viewing visual objects as mnemonic aids has an important effect on what is retrieved by the

viewer. Normally we try to remember information using the techniques of recall, recognition and recollection.

To me, it would seem that the art object's purpose, accessed through these processes, is to act as a repository for embedded visual triggers. It is the very foundation of the art object regardless of its initially perceived content. The art object works as the sensory trigger or initiator, stimulating the viewer into thought trajectories that extend beyond the actual substance of the object. The precise crafting of the art object is of supreme importance in the initiation and directing of the memory process. It acts as a certificate or verifier of presence, with the object itself providing both the 'code' and a direct encounter with the maker of the image.

The French historian Pierre Nora postulates that memory is archival and can exist in solid form, such as in a monument. 'It relies entirely on the specificity of the trace, the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording, the visibility of the image' (Nora & Kritzman 1997, p. 153). Nora argues that the less memory is experienced from within, the more we rely on external props, in particular the archive (the object) as a document of authentication.

Nora's idea that a monument (the visual object) is a place where memory crystallizes and secretes itself is a view I strongly hold. The object becomes the meeting point between the viewer and the maker, with both creatively sharing in the process of making, reflecting and interpreting the visual information at hand. Martin Heidegger in his essay on *The origin of the work of art* observes that: 'When we look at an artwork (object) we are looking for resemblances to what we are familiar with and at the same time we hope to discover more of the concealed' (Heidegger 1975, p. 25).

However Alison Motluk, writing in *New Scientist*, points out that '...the object triggers a process of reflection that may culminate in meaning and insight but often the actual meaning is never fully revealed' (Motluk 1996, p. 19).

It is Heidegger's point regarding the familiar and the concealed that my research project *Fragments: Beyond the Object* seeks to explore and interpret through studio practice. An artwork itself (the familiar) is simply the launching point for the perception and interpretation process. I have formed the opinion over my professional lifetime that the mental processes of perception and interpretation bring tangible form to what may have previously been concealed, but are in fact the expression of the ultimate artwork.

The fragment

How can the fragment operate as a potent precipitator for associated ideas that exist beyond its boundaries? My curiosity in this central concept was first provoked by the observation that viewers are often willing to accept the fragment as an entirety even though it is essentially incomplete. A well-known Classical example of this is the *Venus de Milo*.

This ready acceptance of the fragment as entirety concerns me not so much because of the actual incompleteness of any work, but more because of the ability of the object to act as a precipitator for a series of ideas. This melding of physical object coupled with the ideas generated by it give rise to a new whole - part physical, part-imagined, yet in its own way highly tangible and able to be appreciated as an entity.

The fragment can be interpreted as a frozen slice of the past and as such it can act as a storage place and precipitator of memories. Functioning as a memory tool it provokes imagination, thus providing a trace or code that contains clues to its meaning. Primarily the function is not to learn about the object itself but rather, for the object to act as a stimulus to initiate responses and reactions that evoke the use of memory, a recall of past experience and precedents, to create a new meaning or realisation.

Roger Scruton, as a contributing author to *The great philosophers*, gives insights into how the philosopher Spinoza described the fragment. Spinoza's contention is that there is a sense in which the finite modes of a fragment or

indeed a fragment of some previous whole, may still maintain a sense of self-dependence. Fragments endeavour, as Spinoza puts it, to have 'conatus and to persist in their own being.' This conatus or 'self-will' is the underlying principle he uses to explain the persistence and properties of an object deemed to possess this quality. Spinoza attributes to animals a self-dependence and individuality that we rarely give to inert things. He states that 'we describe a stone as a lump of stone and a lake is a pool of water, a snowman is a heap of snow but until dead, a cat is an individual not a lump of cat but once dead it is strictly no longer a cat but a lump of cat flesh' (Monk & Raphael 2001, p. 154).

Thus the individuality and independence of the cat are part of its nature as an organism, and so when we divide the cat in two, it creates not two half cats, but two whole pieces of something else. This exists for just as long as that endeavour is in Spinoza's idiom, 'granted', by definition the conatus of a thing is also its essence.

'That pertains to the essence of a thing which, when granted, necessarily involves the granting of the thing, and which, when removed, necessarily involves the removal of the thing or that without which the thing can neither exist nor be conceived'
(Monk & Raphael 2001, p. 154).

Spinoza speaks not only of the power of the individual fragment as being both a past part of some other whole, but also existing as a fresh and individual fragment that still contains the essence of the original whole. He imagined that nothing can take away the existence of an object (fragment) and as such, any fragment may be seen to still contain the conatus (essence) of its original.

Fragments are often defined by the absence that surrounds them.

'Nothingness' is necessary for 'somethingness' to exist (Heidegger 1959, pp. 7-8). The fragment becomes the interface between the real and the imagined. The psychoanalyst Freud often used archaeological metaphors to

describe the process of psychoanalysis. 'In this process moments of realisation are like archaeological finds that can be used to investigate, re-interpret and construct a new whole' (Hall 2000, p. 297).

Reading the art object

To produce an artwork is to become involved in the process of communication. As artists we arrange stimuli in certain ways that lead the viewer to complete in their own mind, an image that may in fact be only partially alluded to. If a viewer is going to achieve a 'closure of meaning' he/she must be able to read the visual language. Visual languages vary from culture to culture. Our own tradition derives largely from the Italian Renaissance. To be meaningful, visual language, like verbal language, must establish a point of shared experience.

One of the achievements of a great artwork is its ability to provide a kind of renewable closure in which the work is in a delicate balance between the simplistic, that is, when viewers see, identify, turn off and move on, and the obscure, when viewers cannot make closure, and will also tune out and move away. If 'great' art exists, it may be in that form which straddles the imaginary line between the simplistic and the obscure, with the result that the viewer is sufficiently intrigued to examine it longer, to maybe even go away to reflect upon it, and to return to it at a later time. As long as the meaning derived from the artwork remains sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in the viewer's own ongoing experience, still further meaning will be generated by it. One of the difficulties for a viewer in reading an artwork with a fresh unbiased eye is the cultural conditioning and personal understanding that is brought to the experience. This gives rise to a perceptual expectancy, which means that wherever possible, the viewer will see what he or she expects to see.

My view is that perception rather than intellect is the raw material through which the artist and the viewer communicate. Before an artwork can 'speak' the viewer must find some meaningful aspect to relate to. The viewer constructs an idea of the whole object from past experiences of many objects

seen from many viewpoints. Eventually a partial view of a whole object will trigger a perception of the whole. In many ways it is like perceiving the totality of a piece of music or a play. No single note or word reveals the whole, meaning that all of the parts must be experienced in sequence and over time to understand the whole. As Franz Kafka said: 'It is up to us to accomplish the negative. The positive is given' (Crumlin 1998, p. 16).

In this chapter I have outlined the key physiological processes of perception that have bearing on my project as well as highlighting some of the important psychological and philosophical debates related to perception. These mechanisms are crucially important because they underpin my fundamental research regarding *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. Being aware of the physiological mechanisms of perception as well as having an understanding of the related philosophical ideas of others, enables me to position my work theoretically and facilitate ways as to how the project might be realised to contain a sense of something more than that which is immediately apparent.

In the next chapter I will examine some aspects of the interpretative processes that we consciously apply to the precepts of perception.

Chapter 2

The Clumsiness of Interpretation

In the previous chapter I examined issues related to our perception of reality, establishing that an appreciation of our surrounding environment is essentially a learned experience, and that perception is actually a construct manufactured almost entirely in the mind. Having applied the forensic processes of recognition and identification as part of the perception process, the mind then enters an evaluation and authentication phase to interpret and understand the object under consideration. The process of interpretation is a major tool of our culture, a culture in which the physical is always taken for granted, but anything which lies beyond that physicality is subconsciously assessed in the process of making sense of our aesthetic environment. In our culture, the aesthetic is as important as the merely physical attributes. This subliminal practice of examination applies, whether for the assessment of ancient artefacts or contemporary fragments of today's art practice.

This interpretation process is heavily influenced by various cultural and social factors that ultimately affect our final comprehension of the particular aspect under examination. How the brain processes this information to establish a simulacrum of what it accepts as 'the reality' is significant to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. To discuss the interpretation process it is first necessary to examine the unique qualities of the art object as a repository for ideas.

The art object

Artists from widely divergent traditions build objects that they believe to be representative of their cultural memories: as such, they are clearly fragments of a larger whole. I see these art objects as being sponge-like entities, taking in a diverse range of qualities that reflect the totality of the character and spirit of those who have made them, and in doing so, act as conduits between maker and viewer. The artist attempts to reproduce in his/her work a pure

idea, omitting all superfluous features that might distract. This empowers us to see into a world through their eyes. Notwithstanding, the object is almost always an imperfect representation of the artist's vision. It is within this object, in its guise as a 'doorway' to the surrounding space, that the process of interpretation takes place. In conjunction with chosen materials, the maker embellishes this doorway, in effect building a range of prompts that, through innuendo and nuance, are designed to channel the viewer's appreciation.

In anthropological terms, words such as *mana*, *ka*, or *chi* are often used to describe a common universal archetype that we imagine to be invested with an essential power or spirit. Humans, animals and inanimate objects such as sticks and stones are believed to contain this force. Cult objects are believed to be endowed with a dynamism, forming a close relationship between the object and its spirit or *mana*.

The primitive sculptor worked with the belief that he was not making a lifeless object but a living form. For example, during ceremonial events certain African tribal masks are believed to allow the wearer to gain access to supernatural powers. In today's largely secular Western society, words such as 'presence' are often used to describe that inner force which is sometimes apparent within a particular artwork. It is the successful amalgamation of the emotional forces influencing an artist, that provides the 'flow', imbuing a work with an elusive quality, transforming it from being a mere object into a work of art. The primal attribute of touch, for example, holding a sculpture in the hand, creates sensations that the viewer interprets as a quality of the artwork and thus an imaginary fusion between object and the viewer takes place. This process can be described as a form of enlightenment in which the viewer perceives the object to be embodied with the personality and ideas of the maker.

It is not just the sculpture alone that is important but also the perceived successful melding of both material and ideas to permeate the object with its life force, thus the artist's emotion also determines the form. From a Western perspective, the aesthetic experience lies in the transmutation of the base

material and the idea into an extension of the maker. For the primitive sculptor, however, the very materials, such as particular woods, are sometimes chosen for carving because they are thought to contain certain magical attributes. Ritual objects often exude distinctive smells derived from the materials used in their construction, such as grasses, leaves and various fibres. Odours, combined with other qualities including texture and colour, are all critical factors in the choice of construction materials for these objects. In many cultures the synergy between the object and the ritual of performance is as important as the objects themselves. The performance creates a relational ambience through the utilisation of various other additional elements such as drumming, thumping, the flickering of firelight, of smoke, and smell.

The importance of structured movement, the appropriate lighting level and the use of sound can be essential components in any masquerade or immersive installation. Sound, or its opposite silence, can convey sentiment, shape, and intention to the performance or installation. In some cases spiritual manifestations or ideas are conveyed solely by sound, and may have no visual or physical presence.

Both context and object are of equal importance to fully appreciate the visual experience. Without context there is often little more than a series of framed points of focus for the viewer within a gallery space. *Fragments: Beyond the Object* endeavours to blur this boundary between the object and the viewer to create an immersive kinaesthetic experience.

Context

Context is an important part of any artwork. If a pile of tyres is viewed in front of a service station it will be perceived completely differently from a pile of tyres in a museum. Sculptures from aboriginal cultures, which might originally have been part of a shrine, become contextually unrecognisable when removed from their original location. The isolation of the object when placed into a Western gallery environment for the sole purpose of aesthetic contemplation or for some pedagogical function can transform a work of art

into an historical illustration of itself. In this context, to show a mask as a relic of a masquerade or a digital image as a memento of the performance is clearly meaningless.

Western practice in the display of cultural artefacts has often been to reinforce the strength of that civilisation. Yet, this process frequently removes the original context and domesticates the object, making intimate, and unintended, relationships between the viewer and the object. In their original context, some cultural artefacts were intended to be seen only briefly in dim flickering firelight. For example, a tribal masquerade mask, often part of a costume, was considered to be imbued with certain powers and imagined to be alive as part of a performance. Isolated from its original context, the mask is simply an incomplete part of a whole, and may be unrecognisable in the harshness of gallery lighting.

Most museum and gallery displays represent contemporary assumptions about the best space to view art. They are often the result of passing fashion and the personal taste of the curator. Gallery spectators have come to accept four white walls as the ideal backdrop against which to view and understand art. As a consequence, the space of a gallery may dwarf objects placed within it. However in the environmental domain of public art, that is, art in public spaces, there is no such place as the neutral space of the gallery. In Western culture, the display of 'art in public places' is one area in which the aim of the artwork, like many tribal artefacts, is to enter the context of the public domain. These artworks discard the gallery white cube template in preference for the establishment of context as an important aspect. Part of the contextual process is consultation with the public and, although often a difficult process, it is permeated with the belief that a public art sculpture is not simply memorialising some past statesman, but that it has a wider role to question its environment, and to introduce new ideas.

These Western public 'tribal' artefacts rely heavily on various social, historical and geographical elements for their ultimate contextual success in the public

domain. If successful, the idea is able to transcend the artwork itself, and to become owned and accessible to all.

Differences of interpretation

Differences of interpretation are at their most obvious when viewed across the cultural divide that separates our Western cultural perception from that of indigenous tribal social groupings. Of interest to this discussion is an article by Ross Bowden in *Tribal Art* magazine (Bowden 2005, p. 124).

The Kwoma people of the upper Sepik River region of New Guinea had decided to offer for sale to the highest bidder their *Men's House* (Figs. 3-1&2). The building named Geyastuka, meaning literally 'Eagles Nest,' had been used as the site for male instruction and initiation, and was constructed over a period of several years in the late 1970s. The proposed sale of the building, together with its interior paintings, comprised one of the last two surviving examples of vernacular architecture on the Sepik River.



3-1 Kwoma Tribe, *Men's House*, 2005, wood and grass, Upper Sepik River, New Guinea.

The sale was not a consequence of missionary zeal or because the building had fallen into disrepair. It was simply that as far as the Kwoma were concerned, it had reached the end of its productive life and so the decision was made in keeping with their cultural traditions, that the site should be cleared and the construction of a new *Men's House* be commenced. To the Kwoma it mattered little if the building with all its artwork was sold or simply burnt. Of interest is how this act, when viewed from a Western perspective, is seen as the wanton destruction of an important cultural artefact, but to the Kwoma it was just part of the ongoing expression of an active and vibrant traditional society.



3-2 Kwoma Tribe, *Men's House*, interior, 2005, wood and grass, Upper Sepik River, New Guinea.

The Kwoma, like the overwhelming majority of other tribal cultures, take the view that 'works of art' as modern westerners understand the notion, are not the original creations of the

humans who physically manufactured them, but are simply physical facsimiles or physical embodiments of prototypes created by spirits at the beginning of history (Bowden 2005, p. 124).

If this notion is accepted, no particular cultural artefact is unique and can therefore be discarded without cultural loss, and a new one constructed in its place. To the Kwoma the artwork is lost only when the memory is lost and when there is no-one left who has the knowledge and technical skill to recreate it. In contrast, modern Westerners believe that an artwork is the original intellectual creation of a unique individual or group, and that artworks are distinctive, historically important objects. In this view the damage or loss of a major work of art is seen as a major loss to that culture.

Plato advances an observation in *The republic* that is very close to the view of the Kwoma and many other tribal cultures, when he remarks that. ‘...all works of art are merely physical manifestations of the Form of Beauty, or at an even higher level of abstraction the Form of the Good’ (Plato in Bowden 2005, p. 125).

The inference is that a great artist will be able to reveal this form far more effectively than a lesser skilled artist. The Kwoma and Plato share the common view that ‘Forms of Beauty are not created by humans but by gods and are eternal’ (Plato in Solomon 2004, p. 479). One might conclude that although the physical object may be lost, the ideas that generated it may adequately reside either in individual or collective memory. By my reading, the Kwoma’s approach is superior to that of Westerners, in that the Kwoma clearly perceive the space beyond the object as providing all the memory they need: we as Westerners would need the object itself, and would mourn its physical loss.

The notion of owned memory, either collective or individual as the residing place of the constituents of the physical (object) is very important to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. Through studio practice I explore this

enigmatic space where memory resides, attempting to reveal through experimental hand drawn and digital techniques the essential features of this space.

Fakes and forgeries

Because of Western society's fixation with conceptual originality, forgeries and fakes are not valued as important art objects, even though they may be brilliantly executed by highly skilled artists and are often indistinguishable from the original. I am intrigued that works of art which have hung in Australia's museums and art galleries for decades, enjoying the adulation of both art professionals and the general public, can suddenly be reduced to the status of a 'lesser' art object, because of some 'enlightened' investigation. What has really changed in the work, except perception: its 'worth' has been manufactured.

Sometimes an object can undergo a transition of meaning that defies the usual accepted notion of authenticity. In the British Museum's Living and Dying gallery, there is a piece of rock crystal carved in the shape of a skull. It is one of the museum's most famous fakes (Fig. 3-3). It was originally thought to be of Aztec-Mitec origin, but doubts about its authenticity grew with increasing knowledge and understanding of South American civilisations.



3-3 Maker unknown, *Crystal skull*, date unknown, quartz, British Museum, London.

Crystal skull was purchased in New York from Tiffany and Company in 1897 and subsequent microscopic examination revealed evidence of the use of a lapidary wheel, a tool unknown in pre-Columbian times. Despite the skull's now uncertain authenticity it has not been taken off display and consigned to the storeroom as a fake. Curiously, it remains on display amongst genuine authenticated artefacts from pre-Columbian times.

The skull is one of the most popular objects on display in the museum today and is considered by some to have supernatural powers. Sometimes even in our own secular society, myth and the object are so inextricably linked that the true notion of historical authenticity becomes meaningless. The existence of this piece is evidence that authenticity is not always the only criteria in considering an object's worth.

Examining this object at close proximity becomes an intimate form of observation which draws the viewer into the work. There is a temporary perception of change in the boundary that usually separates viewer from object. The viewer senses some of the mystery that may be embodied in the object, acting as a potent precipitator for ideas and memories relating to our history.

The examination of culturally significant archaeological fragments has given me insights and direction into the development of my research project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. I am particularly interested in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome and the influence that these cultures have had on the development of contemporary Western sculpture. I intend now to briefly discuss some examples of sculpture from these cultures to demonstrate the emerging perceptual importance of the fragment as art object.

Excavation work during the Renaissance uncovered considerable quantities of Classical artefacts, frequently broken or fragmented. These were commonly left un-restored, however because of an almost insatiable demand to own antiquities, a major industry was established to 'restore' original works

and reproduce antique copies that were often sold as originals. The restoration of Classical statues was often a daunting task for the Renaissance sculptor. The smaller the surviving fragment, the greater the ingenuity required. Many of the antique sculptures we see in our museums today are what the 20th century artist Marcel Duchamp might have called 'assisted ready mades' (Hughes 1980, p. 66).

A striking example of the radical nature of some of the restoration is the *Rondanini Faun* (Fig. 3-4). This antique statue of a dancing faun was discovered as a single marble torso fragment without arms, legs or a head. It underwent a total restoration by François Duquesnoy between 1625-1630. The limbless and headless torso fragment was heavily reworked and furnished with new arms, legs and a head, all from Duquesnoy's imagination. The restored work was purchased as an authentic Roman statue by the British Museum in the early 19th century and for years formed part of their Greek and Roman collection.

However this sculpture is today recognised as having no credibility as a Classical work and now resides in the British Museum as a Renaissance copy (Roberts 1978, p. 329). Is there within us all an innate desire to see things physically as our imagination tells us they once may have been? Are we not content to merely imagine the space beyond the object? We want to see it as well, and if the resulting image is not truly authentic, we may nonetheless almost irrationally choose to accept it as such.



3-4 Classical Roman, *Rondanini Faun*, marble, major restoration by François Duquesnoy between 1625-1630. British Museum, London.

The power of the fragment

During the Renaissance a growing number of collectors developed a penchant for the acquisition of Classical fragments untouched by the restoration process. They considered the incomplete sculpture to still contain the life force of the maker, believing that any form of restoration would debase the authority of the sculpture's history. The idea that the artwork was something more than just a physical manifestation had its beginnings in the Hellenistic period when artists were first esteemed for their artistic originality. Creative individuals were considered to be inspired as the 'vessel[s] for an alien power, acting as the intermediary through whom the muses spoke' (Danto 1998, p. 103). This view of creative inspiration still remains as a residual element in current theories about the artistic process, with distinctions frequently drawn between an artwork that is consciously contrived, and an artwork that is inspired.

Under the influence of artists such as Michelangelo, the sculpture as fragment became synonymous with an evolving idea in art that the part could be even more important than the whole. I am intrigued with the notion that a fragmented and incomplete classical work, such as *Aphrodite of Melos* (*Venus de Milo*) (Fig. 3-5), can be accepted in our consciousness as a whole form, even though it may be missing various anatomical elements. It is a classic example of how 'ordinary' people (i.e. those who are not artists) nonetheless have an innate ability to 'fill in the missing pieces', constructing for themselves a satisfying vision of what it is they imagine they should be seeing.

The remaining fragment of the original work, through its cultural notoriety or historical importance, has become accepted as an entirety. Today any conservation process that aims to replace missing parts with facsimile elements is viewed as a debasement of the original intent of the artist. We readily accept unrestored fragments of Classical sculpture as being what they are: a whole that has been degraded by the passage of time, yet still retains the essential element of intrigue, the notion discussed earlier as the divide between the simplistic and the obscure. The artwork, demonstrating if you will its 'greatness', is acting as a signpost or precipitator to related ideas beyond object.



3-5 Hellenistic Greek, *Aphrodite of Melos* (*Venus de Milo*), 130-120 BC, marble, Louvre, Paris.

This Renaissance perception of the antique fragment as a sufficiency foretells the beginnings of contemporary thinking about modern sculpture. It is the development of this particular aspect of the perception of the object, coupled with Michelangelo's later observations about the power of the fragment, that has been instrumental in the formulation of my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

Context is everything - what is original?

The prevailing post-modern attitude is that the art object cannot be understood in isolation from the context in which it was created. This is true of many cultural artefacts and suggests that the art object operates as 'a form of signpost that point to things other than itself' (Rocco 2006, p. 1). It asks us to consider that an artwork cannot exist through being separated from its surrounding space.

Once antique statues, for example, are housed within a museum, detached from their bases, labelled with their dates and styles and supposed authorship, it is all too easily forgotten that they had to be disinterred from their original context. Most Greek and Roman sculptures came from sanctuaries that offered a contextualisation for the work. When we go to museums we expect to see the original object, but what in fact are we seeing? Some institutions, in an effort to contextualise a work of cultural importance, build dioramas, albeit well-researched, around the works. This, paradoxically, has the effect of trivialising the power of the individual sculptural pieces, if indeed they are original.

In the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California (Fig. 3-6), there is a re-creation of a villa with a Classical sculpture garden displaying several reproductions of classical marble statues. The statues are all 20th century copies of Roman copies of Greek originals. The so-called original sculptures, the Roman copies, are on permanent display in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. Both museums exhibit copies, the only difference being

that the two sets of sculptures are separated by time. Which is more authentic? At the Getty Museum, the copies are set in a superficially magnificent diorama that places the figures in a staged context for the viewer. This villa simulacrum gives immediate fulfilment but leaves the informed viewer unsated, in fact feeling the same disappointment that might be felt on a film set, that it is merely a façade. Architectural historian, Victoria Newhouse, comments that 'in substituting replica for reality, context replaces content' (Newhouse 2005, p. 106). The display by the British Museum of the Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon is an example where the reverse is true; content (Elgin Marbles) has been used to create a new fabricated context as elements of a gallery installation with little relationship to their original intended purpose.



3-6 J. Paul Getty museum, villa, 2009, Malibu, California.

The Elgin Marbles and the Parthenon

In 1801 Lord Elgin, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Greece, observed the damage being done by the Turks to the sculptures of the metopes, friezes and pedimental sculptures of the Parthenon. After protracted negotiations, he obtained permission from the Ottoman authorities to remove sculptures from the Acropolis to England. The *Elgin Marbles*

included just under half of the Parthenon frieze together with some 15 metopes taken from the series on the south side of the Parthenon and some figures from the east and west pediments.

When the fragments from the Parthenon were first shown in 1806, they were considered to be amongst the finest examples of Greek sculpture ever to be imported into Britain. Benjamin West, the president of the Royal Society, was very enthusiastic and praised them as 'sublime specimens of the purest sculpture' (Farington 1923, p. 46). In 1816, the British government, after years of controversy, finally purchased the celebrated *Elgin Marbles* and housed them in the British Museum.

In stark contrast to the highly refined surfaces of other existing Greek statues, these fragments from high on the Parthenon, with their uneven and rough expressive surfaces, were seen as a new kind of Greek sculpture (Figs. 3-7& 3-8). Seen at eye level for the first time, the author Quatremere de Quincy remarked in one of his essays on the Elgin marbles that sculpture integrated into architecture always loses much of its grandeur, and the removal of the sculptures from the architecture of the Parthenon and the redisplay of the fragments at eye level now allowed the works to be seen much more intensely.

'Here on the contrary you are on the building site or in the studio itself and the objects are to hand in their actual dimensions; you can move around each one, counting up the fragment, assessing relationships and measurements' (Hall 2000, p. 223).



3-7 Classical Greek, *Elgin Marbles*, frieze from east pediment, 438-432 BC, marble, British Museum, London.

As soon as these sculptures were removed from their original context on the Parthenon, a new interpretation of them takes place, one that was never intended by the original sculptors. Certainly these sculptures do exude the power mentioned by de Quincy, and the new eye-to-eye relationship does allow the imagination to take flight. However they were never constructed to be seen as separate discrete art objects in a gallery setting, so that the present reading of the sculptures as gallery objects establishes a new - but fictional, perhaps even flawed - interpretation removed from their intended reading.

The fragments were regarded as the zenith of art and the decision to put these sculptures on display as unrestored and fragmented bits, punctuated by gaps and spaces, contributed to a growing taste for dramatic combinations of solids and voids. It also demonstrated an interest in the incomplete not as something 'lacking' but as an art object complete in all the necessary details. It is the mind's ability to be able to operate in the space that is missing that gives the work its magnetic attraction.



3-8 Classical Greek, *Elgin Marbles*, frieze from west pediment, 438-432 BC, marble, British Museum, London.

Nowadays when we visit museums and view collections of sculpture from antiquity, we perceive these ancient fragmented torsos as objects that still live as artworks even though they no longer endure as the personification of the body image intended by the Greeks. They continue to live on as pieces of sculpture as long as a recognisable fragment of the original survives. The fragment bears the artist's signature and therefore an impression of his sensibility still survives the physical dismemberment of the original. In a traditional and physical sense, these sculptural fragments are seen as broken and unfinished. It is this very notion of incompleteness that imbues them with the potential to act as a potent visual initiator for a broader contemplation by the viewer.

The removal of the *Elgin Marbles* from pediments on the Parthenon has left the space in which the sculptures were affixed vacant and empty. In comparison, the fragments that now reside in the British Museum are often read as entities in themselves, in fact as separate independent sculptures. The display of these salvaged fragmental remains (Figs. 3-7&8) as independent art objects is certain evidence of the contemporary acceptance of the power of the fragment as an ideas repository.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon building was used as a gunpowder store by the Ottoman Empire and during a siege in 1687 a shell hit the temple, blowing it apart. The force of the explosion was such that the columns of the northern and southern colonnade were flattened. Over the ensuing centuries numerous restorations have been made and in the current restoration every remaining block of marble on site has been removed, conserved and reassembled to its original position (Fig. 3-9). However it was never considered appropriate to attempt to repair the Parthenon to its pre-1687 condition. If the Parthenon were to be seriously damaged today I am sure that the building would be restored to its state prior to that latest damage.

There seems to be some indefinable moment in time when historic damage becomes part of the building's fabric and it seems wrong to repair it. The extent of restoration to a building such as the Parthenon is a question that is relevant to my study of the space beyond the object because it demonstrates in a similar way to the Elgin Marbles our ready acceptance of the fragment as an important trigger for ideas. No longer is the Parthenon seen as a destroyed building but instead a site rich in memories unsullied by the obvious intervention of restoration.

It is reminiscent of the philosophical debate about the old axe that has had two new heads and three new handles in its lifetime: is it still the same axe? This issue is particularly relevant as it exemplifies the ultimate importance of the idea generated by the object rather than just the object itself. I concur with Pierre Nora when he suggests that monuments are archival entities (art objects) containing crystallised memories (ideas). He states that these monuments act as 'sites where memories are concealed' (Nora & Kritzman 1997, p.19). Thus the art object becomes an important precipitator of ideas, bringing a focus to the swirling miasma of ideas which may exist between the viewer and the maker.



3-9 Classical Greek, *Parthenon*, front (eastern view), 1998, marble, Acropolis, Athens, (showing missing frieze and metopes).

The interpretation of visual objects remains a complex issue, often fraught with whim, whimsy and changing assumptions about how objects deemed as art might be displayed. How can a ritualistic object such as a mask, designed to be seen for a fleeting moment in the dramatic half-light of a night masquerade performance, withstand intimate scrutiny under harsh lighting as an 'art object' in the context of the Western gallery environment? With context removed, the work becomes meaningless and unable to function in its intended role. On the other hand, context will be quite different for a discrete and singular art object that may be purposefully designed for the isolation of the four white walls of the Western art gallery environment. This does not mean that one type of work is more or less important than the other. Both rely heavily on an active synergy between the object and its display environment for contextual relevance.

Fragments: Beyond the Object applies the expressive technology of today's digital world to create an immersive installation environment that is similar to the ritualistic dances and performances of tribal culture. Installation art of the 21st century, as with the tribal masquerade, has become the new tribal experience theatre. Much of the experience is inferred. Both 'objects' (work and context) act as honed physical traces generating a new 'other' beyond the object, a new idea, a new entity. We are left with the memory of the performance as the artefact. It is, in the final analysis, the perceiving of the quintessential quality of this relationship that is the artwork.

Chapter 3

The Genesis of Contemporary Sculpture

This chapter evaluates the sculpture of Michelangelo and Rodin because of the influential role their work has played in the development of contemporary sculptural thought. Many of their works reveal an exceptional ability to distil the human figure into understated forms that herald the beginnings of contemporary art practice. Their innovative use of a technique known as the *non-finito*, created seemingly unfinished sculptures that exposed insights into the process of creation. The *non-finito* established a bond between artist and viewer, enabling the formation of a new 'other' beyond the physicality of the object. I consider the 'incompleteness' of much of the sculpture of Michelangelo and some later works by Rodin, to be the most enduring images ever created, marking a pivotal step in the evolution of modern sculpture.

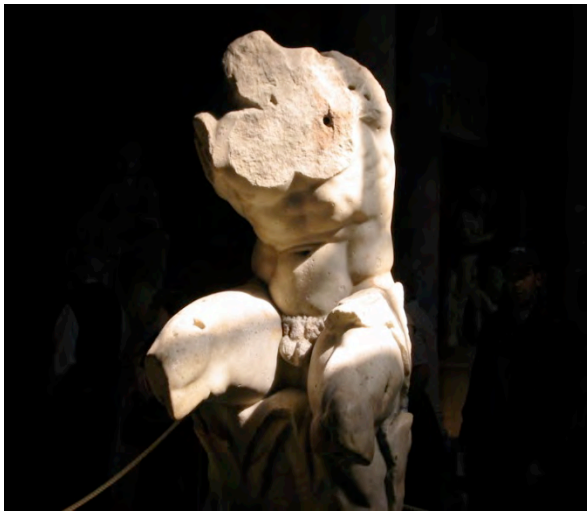
It was through a study of Michelangelo's drawings and sculpture that I came to realise and understand the significance of the *non-finito* as an important turning point in modern art making methodology. The notion that an artist could 'construct' a new imagined work using an artwork to trigger and direct the viewer's imagination had a profound importance on the development of my sculpture. However it was my growing interest and speculative thoughts about the nature of this imagined space that ultimately led to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

Michelangelo and the acceptance of the non-finito

Michelangelo's first visit to Rome coincided with the discovery of some ancient classical statuary, including the *Belvedere Torso* (Fig. 4-1). This torso, and later in 1506 the *Laocoön* group (Fig. 4-2), proved to be powerful stimulants to his sculptural development. The first-hand experience of the discovery of the *Laocoön* as four individual fragments had a profound effect on Michelangelo's work. In later years he noted that it was not seeing the final restored work, but the fragments themselves, that had excited his interest

in the power of the incomplete object. It was this comment by Michelangelo that initially motivated my curiosity in the fragment as a metaphor for the totality of an artwork.

To Michelangelo the block of stone was an embodiment of the human condition. He believed that the stone functioned as a container or vehicle for the soul, so, through the act of carving, he was able to release the captive spirit trapped within it.



4-1 Apollonius, *Belvedere Torso*, 1st Century BC, marble, Vatican Museum, Rome.



4-2 *Laocoön*, 160-20 BC, marble, Vatican Museum, Rome.

He describes this process in one of his sonnets from 1538-44. It begins with the lines 'Not even the best of artists has any conception that a single block of marble does not contain within its excess, and that is only attained by the hand that obeys the intellect' (Saslow 1991, p. 302).

When examining Michelangelo's sculpture, the question must be asked: why was so much of his work left unfinished? Although Michelangelo was deeply influenced by fragments of Egyptian and Classical works that survived into the Renaissance, when looking at his work the real reasons for non-completion may be quite different. Although in many of his letters, Michelangelo blames work-related problems such as lack of payment for commissions for his failure

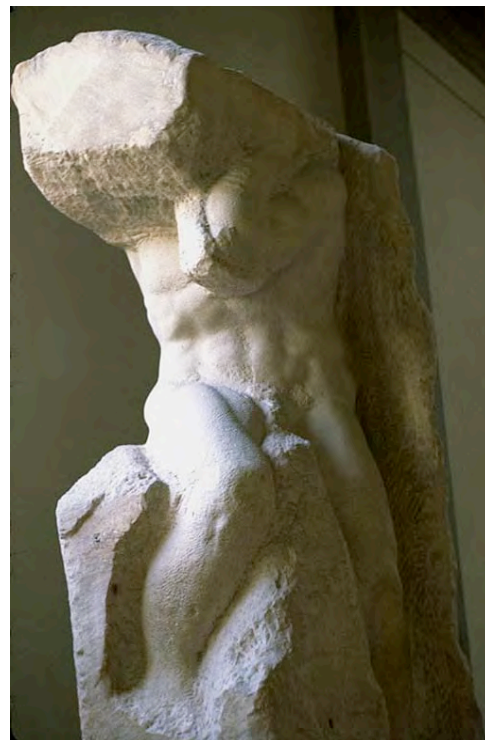
to complete work, I consider that the most likely reason was his inability to complete works to his own satisfaction.

The term *non-finito* has been used to describe a good deal of Michelangelo's sculpture. I believe that his work reveals a tension between the concept and execution, and a frustration with the perceptual gulf that he felt existed between translating thought to the concreteness of matter. It is possible that his hand could not complete the creative ideals of his mind and this factor may have prevented him from completing some works.

In *The Entombed Slaves* (Figs. 4-3&4), sculptures originally planned to decorate the tomb of Pope Julius, the figures remain encased in their stone blocks, and as such, demonstrate much about the making process. It raises the question, when seen in a contemporary context, as to why it might be at all necessary to complete such works entirely.



4-3 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Cross Legged Slave*, 1520-1530, marble, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.



4-4 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Atlas*, 1516-1519, marble, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

Although I do not believe that he would have claimed that his incomplete works were in some way complete in the Classical sense, I think that he grew to accept the very incompleteness as being nonetheless whole in much the same way that he accepted his drawings and maquettes as purely preparatory for some grander work for the future. Although his capacity for long hours of hard labour in the execution of his sculpture was legendary, he was quite prepared to accept a sculpture, somewhat fleeting in its execution, as a completed work. Contemporary documentation indicates a general acceptance for the unfinished by a growing number of commentators and collectors of the time.

According to the writer and humanist Francisco de Hollanda, Michelangelo is reported to have said: 'I value highly the work done by a great master even though he may have spent little time over it. Works are not to be judged by the amount of useless labour spent on them but by the worth and skill and mastery of their author' (Wittkower 1974, p. 151).

Michelangelo was known to have presented sketches and models (*bozzetti*) for commissions that contained just a few deft strokes to simply capture the essence of a proposed work, see example *Figure sketch* (Fig. 4-5). This approach was quite different from many artists of the time who laboured in great detail on their working drawings and maquettes for commissions.



4-5 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Figure sketch*, 1525, red pencil, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Many connoisseurs and collectors of the time had come to perceive the *bozzetto* as the true evidence of artistic achievement. The contemporary historian, Vasari, held Michelangelo's brief drawings in high regard. 'Many painters achieve in the first sketch of their work, as though guided by a sort of fire of inspiration ... a certain amount of boldness; but afterwards, in finishing it, the boldness vanishes' (Vasari 1996, p. 303).

I think that this statement encapsulates Michelangelo's attitude to his sculpture and the growing interest in the unfinished as a way of working. In 1568 Vasari felt sufficiently confident in the notion of the *non-finito* to praise the perfection of Michelangelo's figure of *St Matthew* (Fig. 4-6), even though it was only roughly hewn. This was contrary to many of the Renaissance ideals of completeness. Vasari found the figure to be perfect, not because of its unfinished state, but rather in spite of it being unfinished. Like Michelangelo, he was aware that in the finishing of a work some of the creative spark might be lost.



4-6 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *St Matthew*, 1503, marble, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

During Michelangelo's time, artists' preparatory sketches came to be regarded as a collectable work of art in their own right. It was believed that in the very nature of the sketch it is possible to perceive a synergy and creative tension between the material and the idea.

It is this growing perception of the existence of another entity lying outside the object, but generated by the object, that has become the focus of my investigations in *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. This is a place in which not all is explained and the viewer is encouraged to become involved in the translation process.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who executed presentation drawings and models with a great degree of detail and care, Michelangelo produced simple half-format design sketches and small three-dimensional models in wax or clay for his proposed sculpture. In his clay sketch of *Samson and the Philistine* (Fig. 4-7), details are ignored.



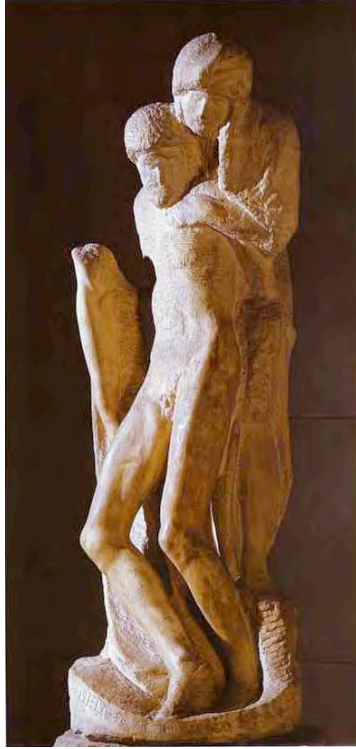
4-7 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Victory Group (Samson and the Philistine)*, 1528, clay model, Casa Buonarroti, Florence.

The predicament of the uncompleted was something that was to absorb Michelangelo throughout his life and is most apparent in the *Entombed Slave* series. The *non-finito* is best exemplified in his very last sculpture, the *Rondanini Pietà* (Fig. 4-8).

This statue, carved from an ancient Classical marble column, was worked on until a few days before his death. Revealed in this incomplete work is seen, perhaps for the first time, the threshold space where form ceases and art begins.

This threshold provides a vehicle in which it is possible to imagine the unsaid or that which is merely implied. Michelangelo used 'modern' techniques of finishing certain parts and then leaving other parts of the work unfinished. This device focuses and draws attention to particular elements and then, in an unfocused sense, also to matters which are barely hinted at. For example in

the *Rondanini Pietà*, the curious isolation of Christ's arm in the sculpture becomes a fragment of a larger fragment. The work is both *finito* and *non-finito*.



4-8 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Rondanini Pietà*, 1564, marble, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.

In the 19th century Michelangelo's work was believed to be poor by many historians, being seen as a denial of the Classical quest for detailed reality as demonstrated by Greco-Roman sculpture. Michelangelo's figures were considered deformed, wilfully exaggerated, and abandoning many of the rules of proportion of the ancient world. Certainly when one looks over the entirety of Michelangelo's sculptural output, it is an attractive proposition to conclude that many of his sculptures were purposefully left unfinished. The reality may be somewhat different from this simplistic observation. His sculpture was partially the result of social circumstance, but more positively, the result of an acute visionary perception of an emerging new order of sculpture, a sculpture in which subtlety and indirectness assumed an ascendancy.

Michelangelo is significant to me because he was the first sculptor to produce works that could be described as purely conceptual. The idea of the *non-finito* is, in the end, the confidence to allow viewers to complete the work in their own way, secure in the knowledge that it puts forward sufficient markers to direct an appreciation and understanding, but in a broad and certainly not pre-ordained direction. It marks for me the starting point in a journey in which there can be many destinations, ones that the artist has inspired, but not prescribed.

The Renaissance notion of the unfinished or *non-finito* had a marked effect on many of my sculptures such as *Bolt* (Fig. 6-7) and *Earth Drill* (Figs. 6-8&9). Further contemplation on the nature of the gaps and spaces between the physical elements of these sculptures was to be instrumental in developing the project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

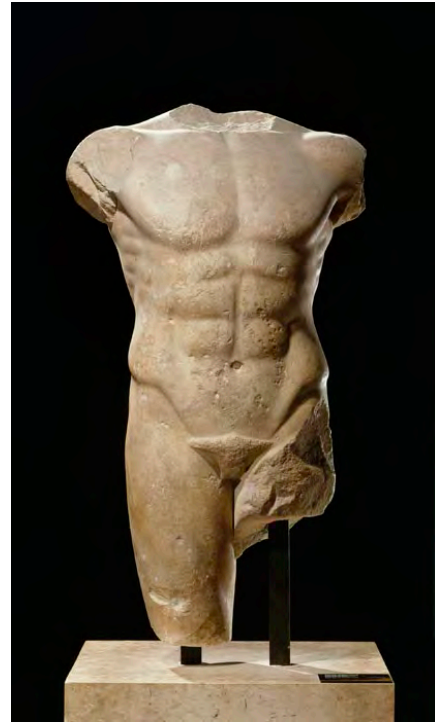
Rodin

In the 19th century Rodin, one of the most important sculptors of the modern era was, like Michelangelo, very interested in Classical sculpture. He was intrigued by the fragmentary quality of many of the Classical sculptures he saw displayed in museums and art galleries, commenting that 'Antiquity is supreme beauty' (Taillandier, 1977 p. 11). An important example of this influence is seen in his sculpture of the life-size bronze titled *Male Torso* (Fig. 4-9). The stance and construction of this sculpture is very similar to an early Classical marble fragment of *Apollo* (Fig. 4-10) housed in the Louvre.

However it was the unintentional pathos often evoked by Michelangelo's unfinished sculpture that was to have the strongest influence on Rodin. Of specific importance to Rodin was the fragmentary nature of Michelangelo's sculpture of *St. Matthew* (Fig 4-6). Viewing works such as this gave Rodin the confidence to eventually break with the long established traditions of academic sculpture. 'It was Michelangelo who freed me from academicism' (Taillandier 1977, p. 991).



4-9 Auguste Rodin, *Male torso*, 1878, bronze, Art Gallery of South Australia.



4-10 Early Classical Greek, *Torso of Apollo* 480-470 BC, marble, Louvre, Paris.

Rodin recognised the expressive possibilities of the *non-finito* in Michelangelo's sculpture. In Rodin's work, however, there was a deliberate decision to bring the creative process to an end at some point in its making, requiring the *non-finito* to be seen as a new form of sophisticated control of the creative process. Rodin's awareness of the advantages of the *non-finito* was evident when he wrote about his sculpture *Balzac* (Fig. 4-11): 'The essential things of the modeling are there, and they would be there in less degree if I "finished" more' (Rodin in Wittkower 2003, p. 299).

Rodin hints at the connection between the artwork and the maker where so much is hidden or unsaid, and the personality of the artist asserts itself in the work. There is a requirement for the viewer to work too, and to be involved in the interpretation process. Undertaking such considerations has the effect of creating a blurring of the distinction between art and artist.



4-11 Auguste Rodin, *Monument to Balzac*, 1891-1898, bronze, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington.

In a similar way to Michelangelo's *Slaves*, particular sculptures by Rodin, such as *Walking Man* (Fig. 4-14) were to have a strong impact on contemporary sculpture because, through the very incompleteness of some of the works, the viewer entered into the mindset of the artist. This manifested itself by contrasting the emergence of details of the figure against the stark raw mass of the block.

When Rodin visited the tomb of Pope Julius in Florence he was impressed by Michelangelo's figure of *Day* (Fig. 4-12). The figure is mostly complete but the head remains in its original roughed-out form.



4-12 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Day*, 1520-34, marble, Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.

The experience of this sculpture gave Rodin the confidence to produce a work titled *Thought* (Fig. 4-13). Rodin reversed the idea by finishing the head, but 'losing' the rest of the body in the stone block, thus setting up a tension between the actuality of the head and the abstract embodiment of the block as body.



4-13 Auguste Rodin, *Thought*, 1898, marble, Rodin Museum, Paris.

Rodin had a great interest in the damaged fragments of Greek and Roman statues from antiquity as well as the incomplete works of Michelangelo. These two groups of sculptures led him to abandon more academically themed sculpture and turn to the partial figure, stripping it to its bare essentials, ridding it of subject focus and concentrating on such abstract notions as harmony and rhythm. *Walking Man* (Fig. 4-14), which was first exhibited at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1900, is the most well known of these 'incomplete' works. The idea of exhibiting an incomplete figure was seen by many as a scandalous mutilation of the human form. However Rodin believed his headless and armless two metre high bronze sculpture was pivotal to the development of his aesthetic. This sculptural version of the Impressionist rough sketch has strong correlations with the *bozzetto* of Michelangelo's Renaissance period.



4-14 Auguste Rodin, *Walking Man*, 1899-1900, bronze, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington.

Through their sheer modernity the sculptures of Michelangelo and Rodin provide a powerful means of arousing emotion and interest in the work. The power of the *non-finito* in these sculptures raises speculation, stimulating the viewer to take part in the formation of the artwork beyond object. This modernity is sharply demonstrated by the increasing acceptance during the Renaissance of the idea of the *bozzetto* as a 'pure' art object, containing the artist's *primo pensiero* or 'first thought', unsullied by technique and artifice. I find the notions of the *primo pensiero* and the *non-finito* very compelling ideas in support of my premise that the art object (fragment) should be a succinct entity, crafted by the artist to provide a primary departure point to ideas existing beyond the object. The notion of the *non-finito*, confirmed in the work of Michelangelo and Rodin is therefore critical to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

The extraordinarily contemporary viewpoints encapsulated in the idea of the *non-finito* provide strong and logical links to the related philosophies of 20th century artists such as Walter De Maria, Dan Flavin, James Turrell, and Ann Veronica Janssens discussed in the following chapter. The formal 'object' in the work of these artists is often relegated to the role of initiator. This directs the viewer to an imagined space beyond the object or in other cases the object is discarded entirely and the viewer is invited directly into an immersive simulacrum of the object.

Chapter 4

The Object as Precipitator

The developing importance of the space beyond

The ability of an artwork to act effectively as a precipitator of ideas relies on a union (thinking on the same wavelength) between that object and both the artist and the viewer. This merger is heavily influenced by the quality and nature of the visual object. The object acts as the medium through which an idea is transmitted and the artist and viewer take on the role of sender and receiver respectively. The importance of the role of the viewer is something that Marcel Duchamp spoke about in *Salt seller*.

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act (Sanouillet & Peterson 1973).

Ultimately it is the idea promoted by the object that is of the greatest importance, not the object itself. This is not to say that the visually attractive qualities of the work are somehow less important. Physical and formal characteristics built into the object or fragment act initially as elements of attraction and then in a secondary but important manner, to prompt the viewer to progress to thought trajectories that extend beyond the object.

The object as imagination

I contend that it is the excitation of the imagination by the object that is critical; I see the artwork as simply a fragment of some larger whole, which functions as a memory prompt in both an historical and perceptual sense. It sets out to initiate particular focused pathways in the viewer's mind and how successful these memory prompts are depends almost entirely on the quality and succinctness of the particular work presented.

Often the integration of an artwork into our understanding relies very heavily on the imagination of the viewer. United States artist, Walter de Maria's work for the 1977 *Documenta* at Kassel, Germany, is an excellent illustration of this point. He constructed a sculpture that was almost entirely hidden from view, challenging the viewer to imagine the completed work in its entirety.

The sculpture *Vertical Earth Kilometre* (Fig. 5-1) comprises a one kilometre deep hole drilled into the earth, and into this hole is inserted a one kilometre brass rod. The hole is capped with a metal plate. This invisible object required a significant act of faith and imagination on behalf of viewers to believe in its existence. Viewers would inevitably consider the pointlessness of a work that had been rendered invisible to the human eye. Of relevance is that the work and the act of making it operate as powerful precipitators for the imagination of the viewer. It is the audacity of such a project that sparks the imagination and spurs us to think about the earth beneath our feet. The sculpture raises issues related to the US\$300,000 cost of the hole, through to the very idea of the removal of a one kilometre long by five centimetre diameter cylinder of earth to create a void of these dimensions, and the placing into the void, a brass rod of similar length.



5-1

Walter De Maria, *Vertical Earth Kilometre*, 1977, brass rod, steel plate, Kassel, Germany.

Another 1977 sculpture by Walter De Maria titled *Lightning Field* (Fig. 5-2) also relies very much on the imagination of the viewer, through a combination of title prompt and the encouragement of an extended viewing of the object for its full effect. The physical components of the sculpture occupy part of a valley floor in New Mexico, and consist of 400 five centimetre diameter, seven metre high stainless steel poles, each sharpened to a needle tip and laid out in a grid. The layout is described as forming 'a grid array measuring one mile by one kilometre [sic]. The poles - 2 inches in diameter and averaging 20 feet 7½ inches in height - are spaced 220 feet apart and have solid pointed tips that define a horizontal plane' (Dia Art Foundation 2010).



5-2 Walter De Maria, *Lightning Field*, 1977, stainless steel rods, Dia Art Foundation New York, located Quemado, New Mexico.

Although lightning typically occurs in the area in late July through August, it is unusual for the sculpture to be actually struck by lightning. De Maria intends *Lightning Field* to be walked through as well as viewed from a distance. Visitors to the site are encouraged to respond to the subtlety of changing environmental lighting conditions on the sculpture. Because of the near-verticality of the sun, the rods at midday seem to disappear, but at sunrise and sunset, when the sun's angle is low, they reflect the light and cast shadows giving an enhanced impression of the grid. The sculpture becomes an event with the anticipation of seeing a lightning strike high on the viewer's mind. Whether or not the viewer sees a strike becomes inconsequential. Photography is not allowed, supposedly to protect copyright. However the viewer carries away the idea in their mind's eye. A photo of the installation can be purchased as a digitally manipulated postcard memento alleged to represent a lightning strike on the *Lightning Field*.

Both these sculptures mark the emergence of a philosophical standpoint in which the physicality of the sculptural object comes to be seen as subservient to the needs of the idea. Earlier in the 1970s, Donald Brook, the Australian art critic, had foreseen this development, and was to famously describe this as *Flight from the object* (Brook 1970).

Vertical Earth Kilometre and *Lightning Field* by Walter de Maria have been chosen for consideration because I believe they demonstrate and strengthen my contention that the art object's primary role is to encourage the viewer to imagine the nature and form of the space that lies beyond its physicality. At first encounter *Vertical Earth Kilometre* appears as a somewhat visually uninteresting physical fragment, however when fully perceived with the title of the sculpture as a contextual prompt, a much more complex form is realised in the mind of the viewer, a form composed of both physical fragment/s and idea/s.

In contrast *Lightning Field* operates as a somewhat visually intriguing sculpture that utilises scale and the changing effects of natural light falling on the sculpture's polished grid form to establish initial dialogue with the viewer.

The artist uses the title and photographs of the sculpture struck by lightning to complete the generation of a cumulative mental image. These works are of particular interest to me as they function in a similar way to my sculptures *Bolt* (Fig. 6-7) and *Earth Drill* (Figs. 6-8&9). Both groups of work challenge the viewer to become involved in the interpretation process. The object and the ideas generated subsequently operate together to realise the artwork in its entirety for the viewer. However it is the nature of the idea generated by the sculpture that is of ultimate interest to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

The immersive environment

One of the aims of installation sculpture, which incorporates kinematic and immersive environments, is that the viewer can actually be within the idea, not merely an observer on the outside skin of the work. As humans, our natural mode of communication has always been to employ the entire body, albeit in a subconscious manner. We communicate through our movement, speak with our hands, and understand the world predominantly in relation to ourselves. The process of immersion offers the viewer a richer experience, one that is sublimated and strengthened by the actual physical experience.

Light, darkness and sound are the fundamental elements of the contemporary immersive installation. These elements, either separately or together, have the capacity to imply that the installation might envelop and absorb the viewer into the work. This experience of being surrounded within the internal void of an installation takes on a visceral quality, connecting as it does the viewer from the front and the back as well as from the sides. Light in its various nuances is the most common element in our everyday lives but we seldom pay much attention to it as a substance in itself. Although we can see it, we are unable to touch or hold it. However, our familiarity with light as a physical sensation defines much of our visual and mental experiences. Because light is difficult to describe or indeed to quantify, it retains a remarkable ability to express the spiritual, a language that we immediately understand on an intuitive rather than a material basis. When light is used as an integral part of

a gallery installation, the result can impart a sense of the infinite, allowing the viewer to develop a stronger focus. I am interested in incorporating the combined effects of light and dark within the gallery environment to illuminate individual images and provide a kinaesthetic experience for the viewer. It is through this synergy that I believe it is possible to create a simulacrum of the space beyond the object.

The work of 20th century artists Dan Flavin and James Turrell are seminal examples of the use of light as an immersive tool to interpret space. Flavin employed light from coloured fluorescent tubes; either fixed to a wall, or to divide the gallery space. This produced often-dazzling lighting effects that flooded out to occupy the space, painting the surrounding walls, ceilings, floors and viewers with a glow of brilliant light and colour. His works rely primarily on the exuded light from the tube as the major visual component, with the tube (object) relegated to the role of electronic initiator. An example of this can be seen in *The Diagonal of Personal Ecstasy* (Fig. 5-3) produced in 1963.

The almost epiphanal experience described by writer Aemilia Scott eloquently sums up the force and power of the light that flowed from his sculptures at a retrospective at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art.

... you are immediately bathed in light. The T-shaped forms of fluorescent tubing light up the first room with yellow and red light, but no sooner do your eyes adjust to the light than you are enticed by the mysterious glows of other rooms — green, amber, purple. You walk into the next room — a huge atrium with a 50-foot long barricade of green neon in front of the window. You have to squint because of the light. You are mesmerized by the bright green ... (Scott 2005).



5-3 Dan Flavin, *The Diagonal of Personal Ecstasy*, 1963, Green Gallery, New York.

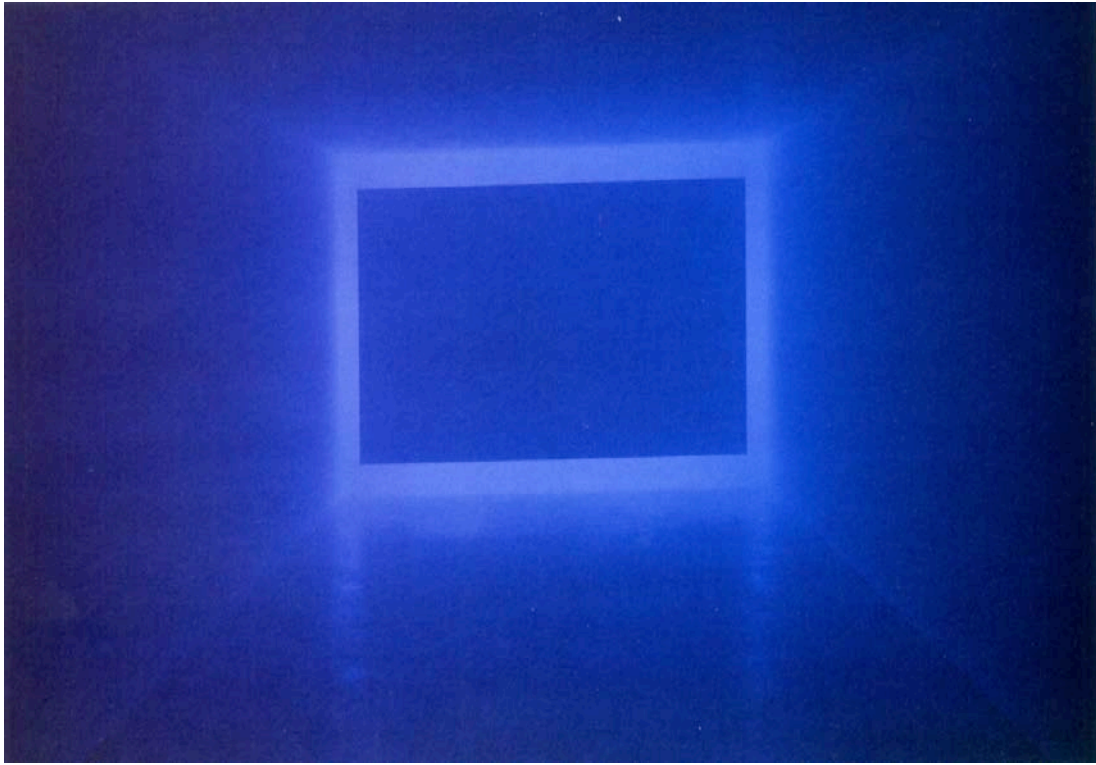
Later site-specific installations by Flavin, such as *Varese Corridor* (Fig. 5-4) installed in 1976 introduce more essential immersive experiences for the viewer. This is achieved through the incorporation of the interior geometry of the space, such as passages and hidden doorways, to provide a less discernable and therefore other-worldly quality to the environment.

Dan Flavin was one of the first sculptors to give the viewer a sense of physical immersion in his work by bathing both the space and the viewer in a sea of seemingly liquid iridescent colour. Although the fluorescent tubes are a primary part of the work, it is the quality of the light they produce that is most important to me. It provides an excellent metaphoric tool to describe the space that exists beyond the object.



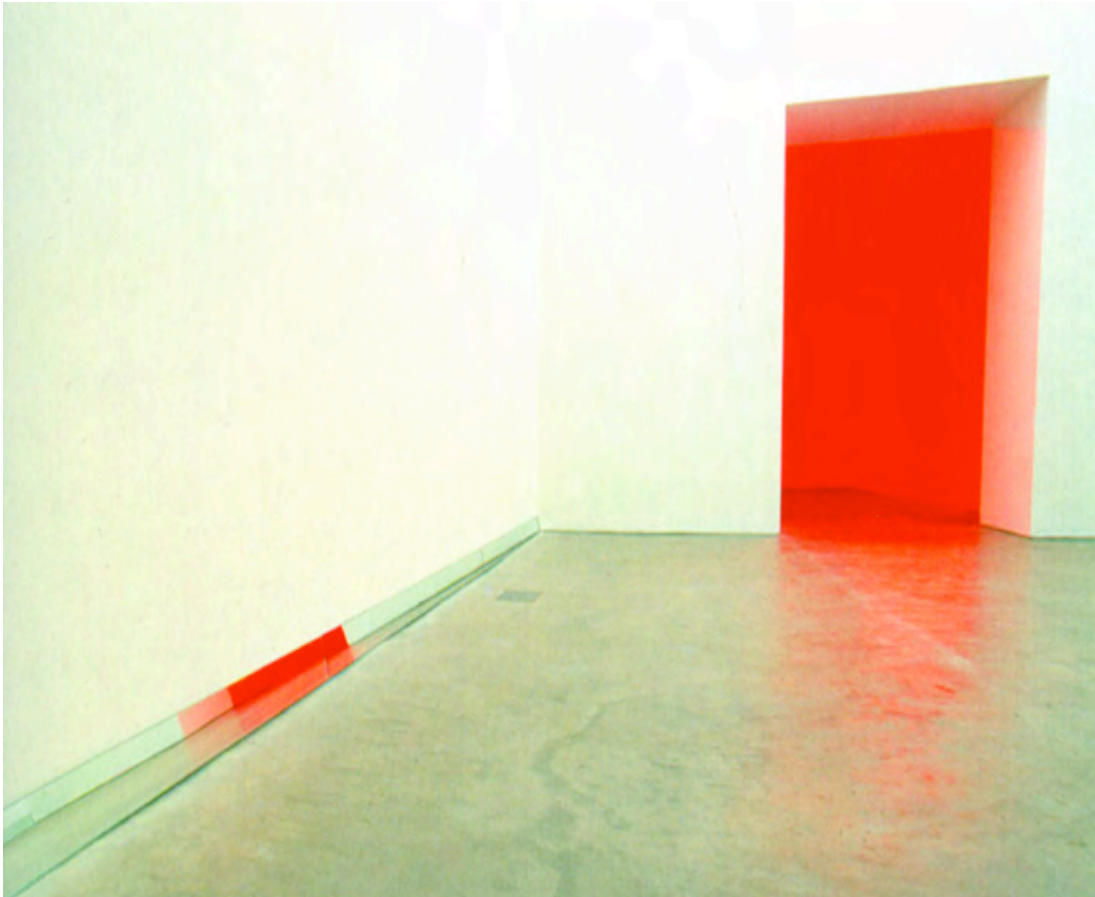
5-4 Dan Flavin, *Varese Corridor*, 1976, Villa Panza di Biumo, Varese.

James Turrell does away completely with any obvious prime physical object and creates fully immersive experiences. In his installation *Rise* (Fig. 5-5) light becomes the sole initiator of viewer response. In these installations the enclosure of the gallery space becomes a simulacrum of the 'object'. Paradoxically, Turrell's light installations seem to have a material solidity in the gallery space. Often the light emanating from his work has such a palpable physicality that the viewer may try to reach out and touch it. Both viewer and gallery space are saturated with intense colour, opening up memory and emotional experiences free from the constraints of the object itself.



5-5 James Turrell, *Rise*, 2002, installation view, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh.

Ann Veronica Janssens' light installations are sometimes manipulated in ways that are reminiscent of Flavin's later works but in a more discrete way. She often sees her work as extensions of the architectural spaces in which they are exhibited. Janssens's installation piece *Playing with your Head* (Fig. 5-6) produces enclosures that seek to capture and hold light. Janssens aims to create what she describes as light spaces that are 'freed from the tyranny of the object'. In describing her work she states: 'I am interested in what escapes me not in order to arrest it but on the contrary in order to experiment with the ungraspable... It is this void that I try to set in motion, conferring upon it a kind of temporality' (Mannoni, Nekes & Warner 2006, p. 166).



5-6 Ann Veronica Janssens, *Playing with your Head*, 2002, installation, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.

Both Janssens and Turrell use light as a metaphorical device, allowing a much simpler and unencumbered transfer of information via the immersion experience into the viewer's consciousness. Artist Christian Boltanski makes almost exclusive use of light and shadow to generate somewhat melancholy meditations on memory in his darkened gallery installations. In *Les Ombres* (Fig. 5-7) the liminal space created by the use of light and phantom-like cast shadows acts as a metaphor for the undefined threshold between two states of perception. As Boltanski remarks: 'The shadow is an illusion, it is really nothing - as soon as the light is turned off it vanishes' (Mannoni, Nekes & Warner 2006, p. 158) and only the memory remains.



5-7 Christian Boltanski, *Les Ombres (Shadows)*, 1985, Hayward Gallery, London.

Examining the work of Flavin, Turrell, Janssens, and Boltanski has been pivotal in assisting me to understand the immersive light experience as it applies to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*. These artists use light and dark as sculptural tools to create environments that enable the viewer to transcend the space separating them from the work. The perceived acuity of the experience permits the participant to seemingly meld both physically and mentally into the fabric of the artwork. For a work of this type to be successful it should not attempt to force ideas onto its audience, but suggest meaning through insinuation of relationships, through hints, and the creation of uncertainties and contradictions. Meanings emerge from the work to combine and form a new but imagined whole. I am intrigued by the notion that an artwork may contain no actual physical object but rather be a fleeting representation composed wholly of light and dark.

Fragments: Beyond the Object aims to position the viewer within a gallery with subdued lighting, disconnecting them from the world they usually inhabit. The low lighting levels force the eyes to adjust, seeking light and points of focus, prompting a questioning of sources and perceptions of what is seen. Instead of the viewer's mindset affecting what is experienced, the low lighting levels induce a focus on the mind itself, a turning inwards as it were, on ideas and memories.

In the following chapter I discuss the transition of my work from early experiments with sculptural objects crafted to act as repositories of memory and ideas through to the development of more speculative propositions using light and dark to explore the nature of that critical part of the artwork that exists beyond the object.

Chapter 5

Work Along the Way

As a sculptor living and working in Tasmania, it is impossible to be unaware of the wholesale destruction of the natural forest environment to feed the demands of the State's woodchip industry. Visiting the bushland in the north-east of the state, I am often confronted by large heaps of bark, a stark reminder of the clear-felling of native forests. These heaps contain the discarded hides of forest giants, left to rot. I see them in much the same way as someone in earlier times might have viewed corpses littering the field of battle (Fig. 6-1).



6-1 Nic Hamilton, *Bark Heap, NE Tasmania*, 2008, digital image, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

Every year around autumn, there is a burning season; the Tasmanian skies become nicotine-yellow with smoke pollution, as the remnants of these clear-felled forests are fired in preparation for replanting. Follow-up poisoning programs then kill the native wildlife to protect a new fast-growing but alien forest, the diversity of the native forest replaced by a monoculture of non-Tasmanian species.

During my early years as a sculptor, I dealt with issues and ideas that had developed out of my concern for the accelerating loss of Tasmania's native old-growth forests. I started using the axe, an efficient yet to me a sensuous tool of destruction. I cast the axe in bronze and used it as a metaphor to highlight the destruction of my state's forest heritage (Fig. 6-2).



6-2 David Hamilton, *A Trophy for Doug*, 1983, bronze, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

In the early 1990s and with the approach of mid-life, my deep disquiet at the destruction of native forest surrounding my home in north-eastern Tasmania continued.

Nevertheless I became intrigued with the beautiful shapes of limbs sticking from the heaps, and often salvaged curved and bent pieces to use in sculptures. As part of my sculptural process this reclaimed wood was often tightly wrapped, bound and knotted with steel sheet and rod. The implied tension in the work, created by heating and bending hot steel around the logs, produced a broodingly aggressive anthropomorphic quality. An important factor of the ensuing steel and wood constructions was a sense of the 'large

scale' with the resulting enigmatic artefacts appearing as if produced by some ancient culture. I felt that this aesthetic acted as a strong allegory for the destruction of the forest and for my own mortality.



6-3 David Hamilton, *Sting*, 1995, wood and steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

During the making of these earlier wood and steel sculptures such as *Sting* (Figs. 6-3&4), my interest focused on the visual qualities of the steel knots and twists used in construction. Living in the country, I became increasingly aware of the similarities between these knots and the tightly twisted discarded pieces of wire left over after building farm fences. The quality and beauty of these jewel-like fragments provoked an awareness in the twist of line as art object.



6-4 David Hamilton, *Sting*, (detail), 1995, wood and steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

I embarked on constructing a series of large twists and knots from steel pipe to create forms that were analogous to flexible linear elements such as thread or cord. In sculptures like *Knot* (Fig. 6-5) the linear elements were enlarged to bring them into focus, as if placed under a magnifying glass for closer scrutiny. I started to see these sculptures as a part or fragment of some larger unseen form, and became fascinated with the notion that beyond the reality of the object there was a much larger and important entity composed of ideas generated by it. I envisaged that the object acted most importantly as a marker or point of trajectory for the viewer to imagine what lies beyond. I saw that the gaps and spaces beyond object are places of imagination, uncertainty and speculation and what is inferred or suggested by the object are sometimes more important than the object itself.



6-5 David Hamilton, *Knot*, 2004, painted steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

It was this idea and the memories elicited from my 1983 visit to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington that led directly to the development of my research project *Fragments: Beyond the Object*.

The knowledge that our perception of reality is in fact a construct has had a profound effect on the way I view an artwork. The philosopher Spinoza believed that fragments had a *conatus*, meaning that any piece, no matter how small, still contains the life force of the original form. The importance and special nature of these pieces has a basis in the perceived life force hidden within the sculpture of primitive cultures. It seems to me that the primitive sculptor's aim is not to make a sculpture as such, but rather, to build an image that is permeated with the spirit of the form itself. In my own art practice I have become particularly interested in the power of the 'fragment' to describe more than that which is physically visible.

An early experiment *In Blue* (Fig. 6-6) deals with the notion of the incomplete. It is made from a pipe-like lineal element that appears to puncture the floor

surface as it moves in a series of coils across the gallery. There is an implied dialogue in this linear configuration because the viewer is encouraged to imagine that the work continues below the gallery floor surface. It is the part that is unseen yet imagined which marks a change in focus in my art practice.



6-6 David Hamilton, *In Blue*, 2005, painted steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

A larger 48 metre long sculpture commission *Bolt* (Fig. 6-7), completed for the University of Tasmania in March 2007, also deals with the idea of the incomplete. It takes its form from a lightning bolt and acts as a unifying strike through the site. The work is composed of three separate fragments, one that pierces the corner of an adjacent building while the other two fragments pierce the ground. Apart from the obvious connection of the lightning bolt as a symbol of ideas and creativity, I am mostly interested in how the fragmentary nature of this sculpture infers the existence of elements of the sculpture underground, and makes conjectural connections to the sky beyond the object.

I am interested in how the viewer, on observing a fragment, fills in the gaps between the pieces by imagining those parts which are missing. In some cases, the viewer may accept the fragmented part as a new whole object. *Bolt*, for example, prompts the viewer to visualise a completed continuous work from the three fragmental prompts given by the sculpture. It is in these gaps and spaces between the fragments that imagination, uncertainty and speculation reside. This space, as it is in the area between the substance of the fragment, is where we attempt to imagine a completeness.



6-7 David Hamilton, *Bolt*, 2007, painted steel, School of Visual and Performing Arts, Inveresk, Launceston, Tasmania.

A similar commission *Earth Drill* (Figs. 6-8&9), completed for the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 2007, also deals with my ongoing interest in the notion of the sculptural fragment acting as an ideas precipitator. This work attempts to enable the viewer to contemplate and speculate about the implied space beyond the sculpture. The QVMAG commission is designed to link the two separate museum sites, located approximately one kilometre apart, through the placement of an individual element of the same sculpture

on each site. The viewer is encouraged to imagine the one kilometre long underground virtual form that joins the two sites beneath the city of Launceston. The two sculpture elements are supplemented by an underground plan (similar to a mining plan) of the drill and its progress under the city to link the two sites.



6-8 David Hamilton, *Earth Drill*, 2007, (part one), painted steel, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Inveresk, Launceston, Tasmania.



6-9 David Hamilton, *Earth Drill*, 2007, (part two), painted steel, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Royal Park, Launceston, Tasmania.

The *Island-to-Island* exhibition in 2007 was a collaborative exhibition between three geographically isolated island sites: Launceston, Tasmania; Honolulu, Hawaii and Georgetown, Penang. This exhibition provided an ideal opportunity to further extend the idea of the physical fragment and the space beyond on a trans-Pacific scale.

Air Awl is a calibrated compass-like device that allows for the correct orientation of the work to the precise map coordinates of the other two island states taking part in the exhibition. *Air Awl* (Fig. 6-10) was designed to be 'actual,' that is, the object, and to act as a precipitator for the viewer's imagination to speculate about the much larger work implied by the lines that link the three sites together. Two sharply focused light beams attached to the top of the sculpture indicate the directional location of the other two islands on the world map incorporated into the work. A panel of the Pacific Ocean/South-East Asian region indicating both the compass direction of the focused light beams and the geographic positions of the other two participating islands accompanies the sculpture. This forms a lineal triangulation between the three sites similar to those illustrated as air routes on a map.



6-10 David Hamilton, *Air Awl*, 2007, painted brass, lights and electronics, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

Refining the research project

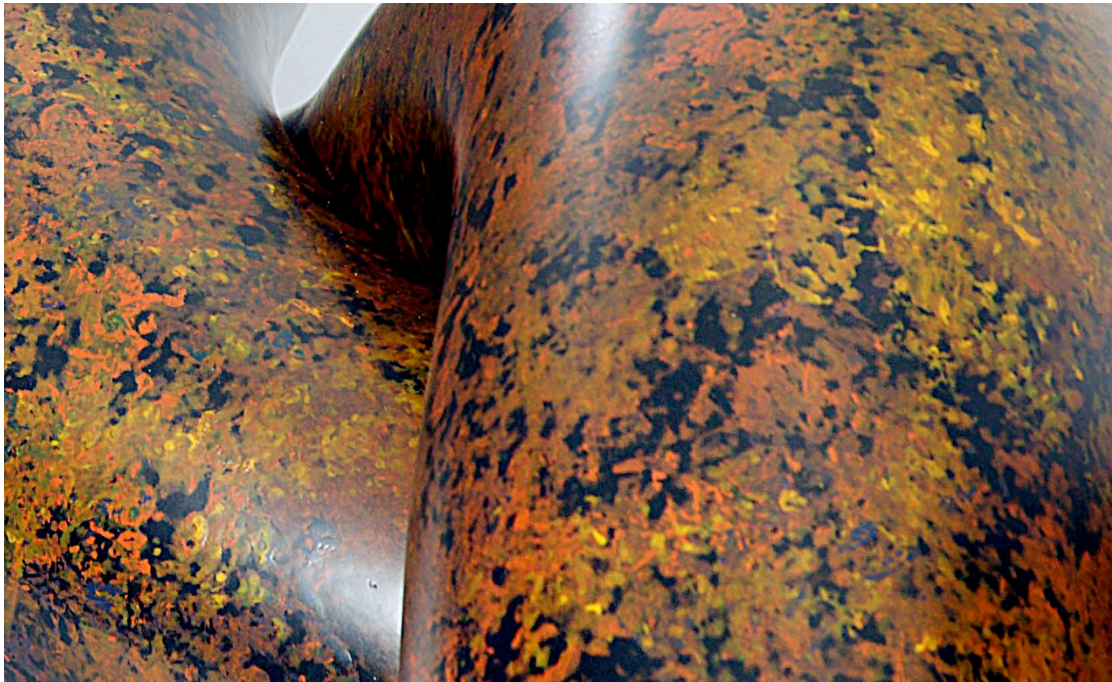
Much of my previous work took the form of steel lineal elements that were fragmentary in nature. Increasingly, the surface of many of these objects has become embellished with varying layers of transparent paint to create an illusion of a three-dimensional space extending deep below the physical surface of the object itself. The surface treatment of *Thread* (Fig. 6-11) and *Twist* (Fig. 6-12) permits the viewer to look into the interiority beyond the surface, producing an approximation of what the space beyond the object might look like. I imagine that looking into the work through the various layers of paint and its textures is like looking into the interior of a gemstone, such as an opal.



6-11 David Hamilton, *Thread*, (detail), 2004, painted steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

The darkened interior spaces beyond the surface seem to provide imagined portals into the absences surrounding the physical but unseen molecular

fabric of the physical object. It also hints at representations of a much vaster inter-galactic space. In both examples the implied voids impart a sense of ambiguity that I find so stimulating, in that the surface treatment of the sculpture becomes as important as the object itself.



6-12 David Hamilton, *Twist*, (detail), 2004, painted steel, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

I consequently undertook a series of hand and digital rendered drawings titled *Looking for the Void*. These works attempted to quantify just what this space/void that surrounds an object might look like. In the Buddhist tradition this space is described as *sunyata*, which in Sanskrit literally means empty and meaningless. *Sunyata* is also described as possessing the properties of light.

My early attraction to the blackness of the void of space continues to be worthy of investigation. Of influence to my work are artists such as Christian Boltanski who describes the shadows created in his work as phantoms and ghosts of an object that exist only as long as the light remains on. When the light goes out they disappear, together with the light, into voided space.

Searching for meaning

To begin the process I embarked on a series of drawings composed of closely drawn meshed lines incorporating subtle tonal changes of black. This was an attempt to explore and hopefully uncover the qualities of a place that might lie beyond the object. Mostly these drawings fail to provide a 'permeability window' into the work through which I am able to observe this hidden world. The reason for this is that the hand drawn, sprayed, rubbed and blotted surfaces contain so much 'noise' that it creates an impenetrable barrier of physical surface marks that seems to act as a distraction to my efforts at uncovering content.



6-13 David Hamilton, *Hatch*, 2007, drawing, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

In this instance, I decided to photograph the drawings and then rework them within the computer to remove the 'crafted' element of drawing that seemed to be so problematic. Sections of drawings were enlarged to expose voids between the lines to provide views into the interior of the image (Fig. 6-13). I had started to understand that individual works are more successful if there is little or no recognisable imagery within the work. Reworking individual images

initially retrieved from photographing intangible materials that I felt were ephemeral in nature, such as shadows, light, light reflections, darkness, and smoke, had the effect of producing works that were more ambiguous. This ambiguity 'dematerialised' the object and was therefore capable of more fully engaging the viewer's mind and imagination.

Elements such as the rippling waves generated by a stone tossed into water and the recording of the destructive power of an explosion also offered some opportunities, albeit by substitution, to describe the space beyond. In the violence of an explosion, forces are released instantly, tearing apart the whole and distributing fragments in an unstoppable way. Andy Goldsworthy's *Breath of Earth* (Fig. 6-14) operates in a similar way, involving throwing dust into the air in an explosive upward gesture. The resultant cloud-like form expands outwards and then quickly dematerialises, leaving a flickering and transient memory with no chance of repetition.



6 -14

Andy Goldsworthy, *Breath of Earth*, 1994.

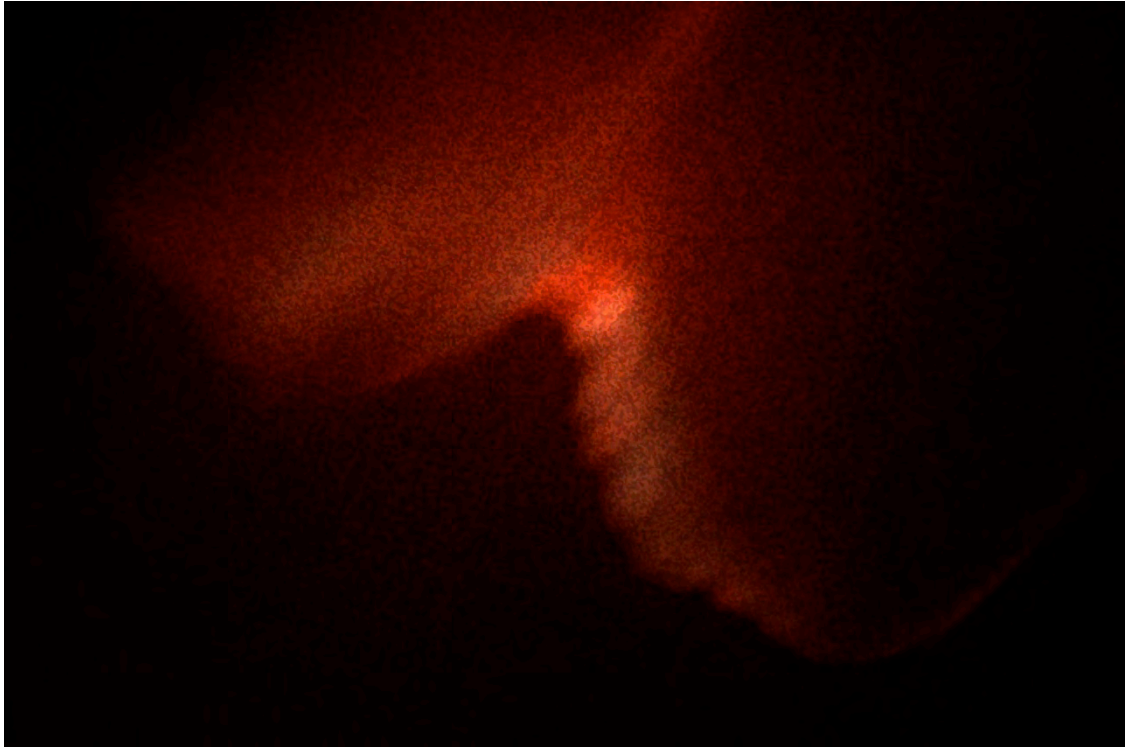
In constructing images that could be seen as acting as visual examples of the void there arises the question of whether the resulting art objects are simply

mere illustrations of the hypothesis put forward in this exegesis or whether they act in the art sense as visual interpretations of that hypothesis. It could be argued that many of the images seem derivative of photographs of interstellar nebulae, and that all my images are simply hand or digitally rendered illustrations of such photos (Fig. 6-15). Certainly the images can be seen as examples, but my contention is that this is exactly the territory in which art operates. Art is in fact a process of what I would call 'exemplification', a series of actions through which often intangible ideas are given a sufficient form for the mind to arrive at a realisation.

Art operates at its most successful level when the resulting images are without the baggage of the narrative object or the use of the written word. Ambiguity is an essential element of all but the most literal of art. It is the element that facilitates, enhances, and finally directs the process of creative thinking by the viewer to an as-yet undefined space beyond object. In this situation the resulting work is mutually interpretive, the artist and the viewer both playing an active role in understanding, interpreting and developing the idea presented.



6-15 David Hamilton, *Blue Void*, 2007, digital image, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.



6-16 David Hamilton, *Red Void*, 2007, digital image, collection of artist, Launceston, Tasmania.

As investigation progressed I found that some images were more appropriate to my project *Fragments: Beyond the Object* when the residual artefacts of the technical and crafted skills used in production became hidden from sight (Fig. 6-16). The representation uses the edge of the sheet or some subtle phantom image as a trajectory point into the darkness of the rest of the work. I became aware that the actual size of the image in relationship to the body of the viewer was an important aspect. When the viewer moves towards the image, arriving at close range, the size of the work needs to be of sufficient scale to fill the peripheral vision of the viewer in order to provoke a sense of potentially 'falling into the work'. An image with a defined edge that purports to investigate the void could be problematic because of the unintentional creation of an obvious finish point. The intention of these images is to create a series of illuminated portals within the subdued light of the gallery, providing a glimpse of a much larger space beyond object.

For the artwork to be successful it needs to cut free from any sort of focus on physical and technical attributes, but to create a vision of space that permits interactivity with the viewer on a sensory and intellectual level. It should promote a feeling of detachment and floating within the work, in a world beyond the physical, transforming the material experience of the object into an illusory manifestation of light and dark.

The space between the viewer and the art object imposes a distancing and a separation of the viewer from the viewed. This could be seen as removing us from the actual experience, with the object always 'over there', away from the viewer. Even in touching the object there is an away-ness and we are still on the outside looking in. The purpose of my project is to entice the viewer into the experience itself: this is where some of the display possibilities of the immersive installation have a role to play.

The immersive experience of light and dark

A major attribute of the installation as an exhibition format is that it is capable of transforming the viewer from the traditional role as passive observer to an active participant. Becoming immersed in the kinaesthetic and visual totality of the installation the viewer can experience an intensely personal perceptual understanding, where he/she is capable of initiating ideas beyond the physical into another world of experience.

Cultural anthropologist Carolyn Bloomer in her book *Principles of visual perception* describes the immersive effect of the installation.

The most powerful frame of reference is yourself - all your perceptions take place in the context of your location in space. Besides vision other senses tell you of your location. Kinaesthetic responses from your muscles tell you whether or not you are moving. The inner ear relays information regarding motion and position to your brain. Hearing relates you to sound sources in the environment. Your skin registers temperature and

air movement, smell helps you identify events and objects in your space environment (Bloomer 1976, p. 66).

I am using the elements of dark and light contained within the gallery envelope as my fundamental building materials to facilitate a 'beyond-object' experience. Using subdued lighting reduces unwanted visual cues related to the gallery geometry, allowing greater focus on the illuminated images both as a group of portals and as individual speculative works. The two digital maquettes presented below (Figs. 6-17&18) give some insight into how the images are presented.



6-17 David Hamilton, digital maquette of proposed gallery installation, 2010.

I am drawn to the idea that the 'objects' in this installation will not possess any palpable physical components in the traditional sense. I intend using images that are diaphanous in nature to remove the viewer from the sense of certainty that is often evident when reading the solid physical object. The installation perceived by the viewer will ultimately manifest itself as a form of detritus, the remnant of a physical action. It can be likened to the aural prompts generated from the action of loading, cocking and then finally – after a period of anticipation - firing a gun, and the ensuing flashes and smoke.



6-18 David Hamilton, digital maquette of proposed gallery installation (detail), 2010.

Establishing a cumulative perception of the space beyond object is a major focus of my current studio practice. The subdued lighting and subsequent removal of detail within the interior of the installation can generate a sense of forensic revelation. Building an image for the viewer, piece by piece, produces a sense of mystery that demands exploration and infers that there is more than is initially apparent. It marks out as sculptor Ann Veronica Janssens comments, 'the space between the visible and the invisible' (Mannoni, Nekes & Warner 2006, p. 166).

My aim is to present a situation in which the viewer can no longer take on the role of passive observer, but through the creation of a 'situation' environment, becomes part of the work as an 'immersed' participant. In doing so it is the viewer's imagination that becomes the work.

Conclusion

I have argued that beyond the physicality of the object there is a much larger and important reality composed of ideas generated by the object.

Significantly, I claim that the art object acts as a marker, a point of trajectory, a transition between the obvious and the imagined, encouraging the viewer to imagine what lies beyond. To inform this investigation I have examined the way perception, memory, and interpretation influence the construction of the 'virtual other,' that entity which lies outside the physicality of an object.

Through theoretical research my sculptural practice has moved from essentially a Modernist position of reverence for the constructed form and the making process to the creation of sculptural environments mostly devoid of object. This initially remote and at times somewhat uncomfortable territory has demanded philosophical shifts in my approach to sculpture as well as requiring the acceptance and application of new technologies.

One of the visual challenges in undertaking a project that sets out to represent the space surrounding an object is to effectively depict this emptiness yet fullness. I have arrived at the conclusion that a form of immersive installation encounter that encapsulates the viewer into an almost palpable experience is the best way to demonstrate this. Light is one of the most primal of all elements and when used sparingly in a darkened environment, has the potential to help create a form of mental pathway into an other-worldly experience, a place of imagination, uncertainty and speculation, where what is inferred or suggested is now more important than the object itself.

Low lighting levels impede the viewer's judgement of the boundaries of the gallery space, effecting a degree of disorientation. Subdued images glimpsed in this darkened environment take the viewer out of their zone of familiarity and create a perception of the space beyond object. The use of ambiguous, diaphanous images is intended to deprive the viewer of any sense of certainty that is evident when evaluating a solid physical object. It forces a speculative

dialogue between the viewer and the image. No longer can the viewer be a neutral observer, but instead becomes part of the work itself. I believe that in this type of space, finite evaluations are difficult to form and ultimately, a suspension of what we take to be reality - as conditioned by experience and precedent - prevails.

Through this project I intend that viewers enter my world, not seeing what I envisage but arriving at a personal realisation that there is indeed space beyond the object, and that this space or place has a value greater than that which is merely perceived through visual appreciation.

They will have arrived, through their own imagination, at a sense of understanding.

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