

10 Bowen St.

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of another degree or diploma of another university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgements."

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Cheers!

Abstract

This project is a site specific based exploration into the boundaries between the domestic home and the navigation of the anxious corporeal body which dwells in the space. These connections open up ways of mapping anxiety brought on through intrusive thoughts surrounding contamination (in relation to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). The corporal navigation of the domestic is fuelled by the thoughts and their control over the notions of fear and anxiety surrounding the transferring of contaminated material from the external temporal world (dust and organic matter) into the internal sterile environment through movement or fissures in the fabric of the dwelling. The project explores the notions of the domestic space being formed into a container for the intrusive thoughts through physical acts of decontaminating, containment, sealing and expelling the elements of dirt; the body and the home become a hybrid entity alluding to the extreme control which forms and takes over the domestic space.

Introduction

This exegesis is intended to explicate the final investigative element of my practical component of my research project. It brings forth and communicates issues encountered within the research practice and can be viewed as adding another layer to my project.

The essence of this site specific¹ project resides in the exploration and generation of work containing the notions of decontamination within the subjective domestic space, connected with the daily worries of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder sufferers². The interest in this project lies in the intrusive thoughts which accompany the disorder and how they physically manifest

¹ Site-specific art is artwork created to exist in a certain place outside the gallery. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork. As discussed by Nick Kaye in his (2000) text *Site-specific Art* that location in reading an image, object, or event its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic and geographic, institutional, or other discourses, all inform what 'it' can be said to 'be' (p.1).

² Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (or OCD for short) as discussed by psychiatrists Greist, J. and, Jefferson, J. in their text *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder* (2007, p.1) is a surprisingly common disorder that is often hidden by patients who have insight into the inappropriateness of their obsessional concerns and the excessive rituals they feel compelled to perform to ward off exceedingly low risk danger or more vague feelings of discomfort. Individuals are plagued by persistent, recurring thoughts (obsessions) which reflect exaggerated anxieties or fears, thus creating a constant psychological running dialogue that critiques the self and the world that surrounds the sufferer. Past, present and future fears, regrets, and anxious thoughts, which haunt the mind from time to time, feature within these internalised critiques.

themselves and control the domestic space, creating a corporeal dialogue between space and sufferer. This project will focus on redefining the notion of my space as 'traditionally a place of beauty' into a dwelling place which has morphed itself into a hybrid between the occupant's body and home. My investigation focuses on intrusive thoughts which result in cleaning/decontaminating actions within the domestic space; thoughts regarding 'Why did I say that? 'What if', 'if only', 'I should have' and 'did I?' One aim which the thoughts trigger is the desire to purge the space of all invasive physical contaminates such as dirt, dust, and hair, which are all part of daily living; and covering and containing any external matter which has been admitted into the home (flowers, footwear or organic matter).

However, the unseen psychological aspect of the disorder is always present; marring, filling the empty space, bringing forth and highlighting the void left by the clearing out, causing a shadow to reside over the area.

In short, the focus of this project, in response to my own constant intrusive internal dialogues, has been to allow these anxious obsessive thoughts to float to the forefront of my own mind to direct this research, through

mapping of the domestic space in relation to the act of decontamination. This approach has created works which communicate the qualities associated with intrusive thoughts in OCD; namely, the manifestation of thoughts within the domestic dwellings of sufferers, causing displacement, depression and overwhelming anxious emotions of loss, emptiness, solitude and helplessness.

The documentation and commentary for the final exhibition will be added at the completion of the exhibition. The final exhibition is to be held at 10 Bowen St, Kawakawa, Northland.

A CD of film and audio work is included in this Exegesis.

This Masters project constitutes 80 percent practice-based work, accompanied by an exegesis of 20 percent.

Intrusive thoughts

The manifestation of intrusive thoughts in a domestic setting forms the basis of my practice and research. Before the discussion moves on to discuss my own work, the concept of intrusive thoughts being contained in the domestic setting (the domestic space becomes the container for the intrusive thoughts) needs to be examined to form a framework to place my research practice into.

Intrusive thoughts³ are more likely to happen when a person is deprived of sensory feedback from one or more senses, such as during times of silence, concentration or disorientation. Intrusive thoughts also tend to occur more frequently in certain kinds of spaces within a domestic setting due to the time taken to ruminate in the space. These spaces tend to be ‘static’ spaces; i.e. places where constant movement is avoided, such as the lounge, bedroom and while relaxing in the bathroom. The frequency and intensity of the

³ In almost all cases of general anxiety, the driving factor fuelling the sensations is anxious thinking. Without addressing these intrusive thoughts, there can be little success in eliminating the root of the anxiety. People who experience anxiety and panic attacks frequently have to deal with the negative side-effects of unwanted thoughts that creep into their minds. These thoughts can range from worries about health, concern over loved ones, or even fears that do not make any rational sense at all but continue to linger in the mind.

intrusive thoughts are magnified exponentially with the time spent in these ‘static’ and ‘private’ spaces. When sensory deprivation combines with time spent in ‘static’ domestic spaces, then increasing anxiety can be the end result. With this anxiety comes the need to relieve it. The actions taken to relieve anxiety vary from person to person; artistic action being the primary focus of this research.

*

The subjective research into how to communicate these intrusive thoughts (the whispering voices in my mind) started to be communicated through audio recordings of the vocalised thoughts. This notion arose through the reading of American based author and art therapist’s Diana Halprin, (2003) in her text *Living artfully with the wounded self*, in which she discusses using audio recordings of intrusive thoughts to bring awareness to the use of audio recordings of sufferers’ thoughts and obsessions. Halprin’s (2003) concept of communicating the internal narrative revealed a way to convey subjective thoughts in which to immerse the listener into the thoughts, and through the act of listening to the verbalisation of the thought⁴, it becomes ‘a solid *‘truth’* to grasp and work with’ (Halprin, 2003. p. 178) . Through the use

⁴ However in viewing Halprin’s (2003) concept of verbalising and recording the intrusive thought, a sense of the freedom is created in the playing back and listening; this is left up to the actions and motivations of the listener.

of a digital voice recorder I vocalised the most ingrained intrusive thoughts which occur in the silence, Leitch, F. (2007) '*What if*', '*if only*', '*I should have*' and '*did I?*' (see enclosed CD) emerged. This work holds parallels with the other intrusive thoughts which occur in the same environment or circumstances. This work was recorded for the end of year exhibition (the work was looped, creating a continuous running narrative repeating itself over and over, forming a full immersion experience for the listener) and its placement was in a concrete room (running through four large speakers; not quadraphonic, but single tracked) which became like a tomb for traces of intrusive thoughts to be placed. The sound became a leftover thought inside the space, as if it were a lost physical presence or preservation of a memory. The work held a parallel with British sculpture Rachel Whiteread's (1990) work

*Ghost*⁵. Whiteread, R. (1990). *Ghost*

As discussed by art journalist Alison Ferris in her (2003) text *Disembodied Spirits: Spirit Photography* and Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost*, *Ghost* triggers memories of something familiar that has suddenly become strange, alluding to a connection between the corporeal and the space we dwell in. On later reflection on the work (2007) '*What if*', '*if only*', '*I should have*' and '*did I?*', a change in the context of where it was heard and played was re-addressed; placing it in the domestic dwelling rather than a concrete room/tomb created more of a subjective link with the space, which generates and fuels the

⁵ Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost* is the cast of a parlour in a typical Victorian middle- or working-class home, a row house in north London, one of many like it that was slated to be demolished. The exterior of the sculpture displays the negative imprints of the room's most prominent features, such as its door, window, fireplace and mouldings. The residue of soot and ashes left from the fireplace is apparent on the surface. It also reveals some of the room's details, such as the texture of the room's wallpaper, but like all the room's other details, they are partially obscured by the sculpture's sepulchral monochrome and white exterior.

thoughts in the bedroom or lounge, places of quietness where noise has to be blocked out⁶.



Leitch, F. (2007). 'What if', 'if only', 'I should have' and 'did I?' (see enclosed CD)

The act of blocking out other noises results in the loss of the more subtle external aspects of living and orientation, such as birdsong, rain, wind and the creaking and breathing of the dwelling we reside in⁷. The earplugs allude to sensory deprivation, yet they do not cancel out the thoughts; they create a new level of intense personal narrative, a chance to listen to ourselves on a cellular level even more

⁶ This links back into the subjective thinking about all the things I should have said, or not have said; actions I should have done or not have done. These intrusive thoughts begin to take over the action of trying to sleep, or relax. By placing earplugs in, to extinguish external noise (dogs barking, milk trucks, shouting and calling, and sirens going off), a large majority of the annoying exterior noise is blocked out; however, the contained voices within become louder and more intrusive in the relatively quiet zone of the home.

⁷ However, earplugs do not cancel out all spatial external and internal noise, some noise leaks in. Using earplugs, the listener could be faced with engaging in their own intrusive thoughts, which may be prompted by a leakage of noise into the ear from external noises (dogs barking, shouting, traffic, emergency service sirens).

carefully⁸. This builds up layers of narratives to engage with; by hearing the other noises or

Janet Cardiff (2000). *The missing Voice: (Case study B)*

leakage from the external, a sense of displacement and disorientation is formed⁹. The build up of narrative is alluded to in Canadian sound artist Janet Cardiff's (2000) sound work *The missing voice: (Case study B)*.

I reviewed Janet Cardiff's work¹⁰, and her process of using headphones in directing people on a walking detective tour of London. Cardiff's layered tracks consisted of two audio recordings interwoven with external city noise¹¹, which forms a sense of displacement, loss of control resulting in an unnerving and worrying immersion experience for the listener, and, at times, work 'evoking disturbing and worrying environments...an isolating experience the city can create'. As artist Monica Biagioli (2000) suggests, in her critique of Cardiff's in Art Focus *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*' (Biagioli 2000, p.2).

⁸ Heart beating, blood rushing in the ears, breathing, feeling the vibrations of movement from the body rather than hearing it.

⁹ In subjective experimentations of listening to the played back recording of the voice as suggested in Halprin's (2003) text layers of narrative occurred with (2007) 'What if', 'if only', 'I should have' and 'did I?' (2007) in relation to police sirens, shouting and a thunderstorm happening all at once, causing disorientation and slight panic.

¹⁰ The act of not participating, but allowing you to be led by a voice through the city, intrigues me in the way it connects to the unknown of the final destination.

¹¹ Through a process of mixing and re-layering on a mixing desk to create the layered narrative effect

Using the notion of displacement and isolation, experiments were conducted by using headphones and basic household speakers to see which one formed a more powerful immersion experience for the listener, in order to evoke such feelings and emotions. These tests were conducted in an empty room (to create dislocation and emptiness) using the singular track. *'What if', 'if only', 'I should have' and 'did I?'* (2007)¹². The reverberation of the space formulated a stronger meaning than the recorded sound alone. An example of this experience is noted by the author Kathleen Blake in (1973) *The whispering gallery and structural coherence in De Quincey's Revised Confessions of an English Opium eater* (p. 632-642). Blake discusses De Quincey's experience of the

Whispering Gallery in St Paul's Cathedral, London¹³.

I found this text helped to pull many aspects of my research together, that of immersion, disorientation and displacement through the use of the voice speaking internal thoughts; and through the reaction caused by an amplified whisper (which can be achieved by turning up the volume on the stereo); and its subsequent reverberation and effect on the subconscious.¹⁴

However, the immersion experience can also be applied to silence. In reviewing the work (2007) *'What if', 'if only', 'I should have' and 'did I?'* there appeared a gap between the looped playing of the work. This gap contained a silence, a pause, a held breath which created a tension and an anxiety, more so than the narrative of the recording. I wanted to explore the notion of silence further; how the removal one of the senses can affect the environment we are in; and how prolonged

Adrian Welch (1997). *Whispering gallery at St Paul's Cathedral*

¹² I experimented by using both speakers and headphones in listening and playing back the recording; the very nature of the headphones cancelled the use of the reverberation and echoing qualities of the empty room; while the speakers naturally used the reverberation and echoing qualities of the room more effectually.

¹³ The Whispering Gallery runs around the interior of the Dome and is 259 steps up from ground-level. It gets its name from a charming quirk in its construction, which makes a whisper against its walls audible on the opposite side.

¹⁴ Blake (1973) suggests that this can be caused by the developmental process of hearing the amplified whisper echoing back to the listener causing an immersion experience. (Blake 1973, p. 24)

silence and the absence of sound can often affect a person's state of mind. Silence can become uncomfortable and to the extreme, unbearable¹⁵.

However, displacement through the removal of sound has shaped my research through the addition of earplugs when decontaminating the space. This can be seen in the experimental work Leitch F (2007) *Empty Dwelling* taken with an Olympus digital camera. In the work, a chosen space was completely cleared of all material, objects and dust, creating a vacuum-packed environment free from any contaminant (apart from myself). Even though the image does not reveal the physical silence, the photograph tries to capture a sense of loss and displacement¹⁶. The act of clearing out and erasing functions like silence allows new

forms of uncertainty and new possibilities to take its place¹⁷.



Leitch, F. (2007). *Empty dwelling*

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Sensory deprivation is not just based on lack of noise, but can also be related to an overwhelming flooding of the senses with many layers of narrative, in order to create

¹⁵ Sensory deprivation is the deliberate reduction or removal of stimuli from one or more of the senses. Simple devices such as blindfolds or hoods and earmuffs can cut off sight and hearing respectively, while more complex devices can also cut off the sense of smell, touch, taste, thermoception (heat-sense) and 'gravity'.

By using ear plugs in an empty, decontaminated domestic space, I created a sense of displacement and cancelled out external noises; however, this sensory deprivation does not cancel out the inner thoughts from within oneself, but rather aggravates and accentuates the internal dialogue.

¹⁶ Silence in social interaction is the absence of speech. Silence in this arena can be divided into three categories; mental, social, or both. These are defined according to time, context, and perception.

¹⁷ However traces of the removed objects will always exist; American composer John Cages (1952) silent work *4'33"* allows incidental environmental sounds to be redefined as music, John Cage, "silent sound" had to be redefined if the concept was to remain viable. As discussed, in music critic Peter Gutmann's (1999) essay *The sounds of silence*, he refers to John Cage's definition of silence as simply the absence of *intended* sounds, or the turning off of our awareness. Cage (1999) suggests that, "...silence is a change of mind, silence is not acoustic, it's a turning around of thought and how we listen to ourselves." He was later to identify this with Eastern thought. "In India they say that music is continuous; it only stops when we turn away and stop paying attention"; just as artist Robert Rauschenberg's (1951) *white paintings* allow viewers to see reflections of themselves and of space around them framed within the surface of the canvas.

disorientation and displacement. This is seen in sound artist Janet Cardiff's work (2000) *The missing voice: (Case study B)*¹⁸ A build up of narratives occur in listening to the instructions given¹⁹. This is discussed by Monica Biagioli (2000) in her article an 'audio walk'; the difficulty in knowing whether the listener assumes the role of participant in this work or not is due to the participant's lack of control over the situation. This lack of control results in a 'surreal sensation, schizophrenic even' (Biagioli, 2000, p.1). It entices the listener through the recorded narrative of the city environment; the visual and recorded narratives blend to immerse the participant in a third dimension.²⁰

¹⁸ Where the public are invited to place headphones on and listen to a Discman which will guide them on a mystery walking tour.

¹⁹ Different narratives are intertwined into each other, creating a multilayered listening experience.

²⁰ This idea can be related to the sense of hearing being overwhelmed by too many narratives/sounds to cope with at once; the result is disorientation and confusion, which can make one seek out silence and stillness. The act of seeking out sensory deprivation can induce the main 'triggers' for intrusive thought, (silence, darkness and physical stillness) causing even more disorientation and displacement. The participant becomes isolated from the noise of the world/society/city life which is around them; instead they are involved and immersed in the instructions coming through their earphones: 'where to next'. By cutting out 'normal noise' and replacing it with a narrative, it opens up the participant's awareness of noise in our environment, and how external noise overwhelms our internal dialogue.

In search of inner silence

The American therapist J. Wiener (1988) suggested that:

‘In depression, what binds, holds, does not let go, and frightens us to the very core is silence!

This does not mean the creative silence of meditation and creativity, but rather a silence of the spirit’.

This feeling of emptiness, loneliness and abandonment in the ‘silence of the spirit’ fuels the intrusive thoughts, rather than expelling them. This process is wholly negative in its actions. Psychologists call this process ‘rumination’.

British author and psychologist Mark

Williams, (2007) discusses in his text *The mindful way through depression*, the process of rumination as ‘[becoming] fruitlessly preoccupied with the fact that we are unhappy and with the causes, meanings, and consequences of our unhappiness... if we have tended to react to our sad or depressed moods in these ways in the past, then we are likely to find the same strategy volunteering to “help” again and again when our mood starts to slide... As a consequence, we are at even higher risk of experiencing repeated bouts of unhappiness.’²¹ (Williams 2007, p.43)

Therefore, the condition of sensory deprivation through ‘silence of the spirit’ fuels rumination,

which leads to anxiety through intrusive thoughts. At this point we must consider *why* this process occurs. Williams has conducted research on this matter and suggests:

‘They do it because they believe it will help them overcome their unhappiness and depression. They believe that not doing it will make their condition worse and worse.’

(Williams 2007, p.43)

However, the act of ruminating about the intrusive thoughts only enhances the anxiety felt, and makes the person’s ‘shadow’²² darker and stronger. This process takes the form of a ‘domino effect’, resulting in a more destructive manifestation²³.

Kuitca, G. (1993). *Untitled*. Painted mattresses (detail)

²² The American psychiatrist, Diane Halprin (2003) suggests that everyone has a ‘shadow’ whenever a negative thought is present, but some of us push it to the back of our minds, and allow it to become hidden by our daily work and busy lifestyles. ‘The shadow is that part of us which contains all the repressed and wounded recollections from our lives’. Halprin’s idea suggests that universally, as humans, we all have the potential to allow our shadow to overwhelm our daily activities. Jungian psychologist John Giannini in his text (1987) *Welcome Darkness* takes this notion further, and suggests that ‘Most of us seek to avoid the dark shadow of our past which, nevertheless, continues to haunt us in every waking moment’ (1987, p. 5). In other words, we are all aware of the persistent, perpetual existence of the ‘shadow’ in our lives; and we are involved in a continual internal struggle to ignore its presence. The more ‘free time’ we have during our day, the more the ‘shadow’ emerges into our daily lives.

²³ “Imagine a car trip during which, every time we check to see how close we are to our destination, we find that the car has instantly moved away from it. This is tantamount to what happens in the interior world of emotions and feeling states... we can’t seem to stop reminding ourselves how bad we feel” (Williams 2007, p.44)

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the link between intrusive thoughts and sensory deprivation is through research on the condition of insomnia. During sleep induction (i.e. preparing to sleep) by necessity we attempt to deprive ourselves of intrusive amounts of light and sound, in order to relax the mind enough for us to sleep²⁴.

Sensory deprivation has been shown to cause intrusive thoughts, but we must also consider the idea that sensory deprivation alone does not cause intrusive thoughts. The spaces in which the sensory deprivation happens should also be considered as a cause, and can be seen to have an intensifying effect on the intrusive thoughts.

²⁴ Research on insomniacs has found that the main triggers which prevent them sleeping are intrusive thoughts and anxiety:

“The key result of interest is that...the items that refer to intrusive and worrisome thoughts, such as ‘My mind keeps turning things over’ and ‘I am unable to empty my mind’ are the ones most often endorsed by patients with insomnia.” (Williams 2007, p.44)

This research shows that it is intrusive thoughts which cause the insomnia in the majority of cases. This research is further supported by an experiment conducted by Gross and Borkovec (1982, p.112-116) in which a group of good sleepers were informed, just before taking an afternoon nap that they would have to give a speech. This group took a lot longer to fall asleep, compared to the control group who were not told that they would have to give a speech.

“The authors interpreted this finding as indicating that the speech threat led to an increase in worry, which, in turn, resulted in poorer sleep.” (In Clark 2005, p.94-95)

The spaces where intrusive thoughts occur are places for contemplation, where people *should* feel relaxed²⁵. The bedroom space where contemplation takes place is discussed in the work by artist Guillermo Kuitca, (1993) work *Untitled* as discussed in Guiliana Brunos’ text (2002) *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture*, and, in which mattresses are printed with maps, as an analogy that the bedroom, and the mattresses we sleep on, hold and chart the inner fabric of our mental landscape.

The work maps the movement of the body as the mind tries to still intrusive thoughts, fall asleep and eventually dream. Kuitca’s (1993) work maps our life through the emotions felt in this situation, the work is an anatomy of life, a relational chart. (Bruno, 2002, p.239).

This living document can be viewed as being imprinted with intrusive thoughts which map the bedroom as a domestic space. A sense of self-searching and self-scrutiny can also be seen on the weathered surface, suggesting loss and dislocation; a form of homelessness

²⁵ These spaces are not the corridors and doorways of a dwelling, but are spaces such as lounges, bedrooms (as seen with in the subjective work *What if* (2007)) and bathrooms. The bedroom is a place of relaxation, sexual energy and prayer; this atmosphere is marred by the intrusive thoughts which in turn are brought on by the relaxational qualities of the space.

achieved through the simple action of trying to get to sleep²⁶.

Gaining relief from these intrusive thoughts within the domestic space is achieved through manifesting the aforementioned intrusive thoughts into compulsive actions,

²⁶ “Repetition of activities, daily and weekly rituals, all illustrate the way space is used... within the home. Family members use rooms for a variety of purposes at different times of the day, and consequently the function and meaning of those spaces may consequently change.” (Clark, 2005, p.38)

The repetition of activities creates a habitual pattern. If this pattern is negative, then unwanted intrusive thought may be the result. This can be caused by the domestic space in question, or the repetitive activity which occurs there, or both in combination. Habits are easier to sustain in a domestic space, as psychiatrist William Gordon (no date, p.1) explains: “Rituals and compulsions often are most severe in the privacy of one’s own home. While they occur throughout the day in many different situations, the home turf is often the most problematic.”

When this statement is considered, the truth of the argument is obvious – home is where we are most comfortable, and increasingly in our modern society, the one place we can ‘be ourselves’. The domestic space is viewed as somewhere to relax and unwind after the stresses of daily life. When one’s own domestic space challenges this perception of relaxation and calm, then the ‘castle’ becomes a prison. In the text (2004) *Beyond belief? Consumer culture, complementary medicine, and the disease of everyday life* Social Geographers, Jeremy Segrott, and Marcus Doel see the domestic space in this context as a place to be feared, not as a refuge:

“The domestic is a space of ambivalent safety. Everyday objects become saturated with fear, transforming the experience of ‘home’.” (Segrott and Doel, 2004, p. 597)

The notions of repetitive behaviour are seen in British artist Martin Creed’s (2001) work *The lights going on and off*. The Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan commented on Creed’s work in his critical text (2004) *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off*:

‘I do not know what Creed was thinking about when he made it but to me it always looked like a swing, a mood swing’. That’s why I never found it funny but frightening in its simplicity, it’s a sculpture for our lithium oriented, Prozac enhanced reality’. (Cattelan, 2004, p.1)

designed to minimise the effects of the intrusive thoughts.

A lot of the compulsive actions which are caused to be manifested, create pain for the sufferer, in order to relieve and block out the intrusive thoughts.²⁷

Actions such as skin picking and hair pulling have the same basic motivation as flagellation

– to minimise the anxiety brought on by intrusive thoughts. These actions are grouped together and classified by psychiatrists as

Compulsive Skin Picking. As Dermatillomania (compulsive skin picking) researcher David

Florendale (2008) discusses in his text *The complete guide to Compulsive Skin Picking*:

²⁷Self-mortification has long been practiced in human cultures and religion for the purpose of attaining spiritual or intangible goals, e.g. reparation for their sins. The Black Death (14th Century) was a time of great anxiety for Christians, who saw the plague as punishment for their sins. Perhaps the most well-known attempt to prevent God from bringing down his wrath on humanity was made by groups known as the Flagellants. Medieval Historian Philip Ziegler focuses on the Flagellants in his (1998) text, *The Black Death*:

“These were men who put themselves to great pain and inconvenience... for the sake of their own souls and their own glory... It is impossible not to feel some sympathy for the person who, when disaster threatens, tries to do something to oppose it, however futile.” (Ziegler, 1998, p.96)

The self-mortification practiced by the Flagellants was a compulsive action, undertaken to minimise the intrusive thoughts and anxiety caused by the Black Death. Although their activities were not practiced within a domestic space; due to the climate of the times, and size and scope of the perceived problem, it was appropriate for the Flagellants to conduct their compulsive actions in the public eye. In the context of the Fourteenth Century, the compulsive actions undertaken by the Flagellant movement were necessary to minimise the anxiety brought on by the Black Death.

‘It’s that spellbinding, irresistible, uncontrollable urge to pick, poke, and prod to the point of pain and disfigurement that is the impulse control disorder known as compulsive skin picking, or CSP.’²⁸

Until the point of pain is reached, then the intrusive thoughts do not retreat. Being unable to stop the repetitive, relieving behaviour until the intrusive thoughts are appeased is a common trait to compulsive behaviours.

Menzies (2003) states:

“Compulsive and impulsive behaviours have a common characteristic of an inability to inhibit repetitive behaviour.” (Menzies, 2003, p.221)

The repetitive behaviour is not prevented until the point of pain is reached. Once the point of pain is reached, then the intrusive thoughts and anxiety retreat. These intrusive thoughts are then replaced by feelings of achievement mixed with pleasure:

‘[These] behaviours are associated with risk seeking and maximising pleasure, arousal or gratification (at least in the short term).’

(Menzies, 2003, p.222)

These short-term feelings of pleasure are later replaced by ones of disgust, regret and loss at the damage caused to oneself, and at the time spent in doing so. This leads to a cycle of anxiety-driven behaviour which causes the CSP to continue. In Art historian Catherine

Soussloff (1997) *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, she discusses artist Barry Newman’s (1989) *clown artist* which demonstrates the self inflicted physical pains of an introspective artist through self mortification. This work comments on the anxiety of the maker. Emerging Toronto artist Gareth Bate’s (2008) work *Penance* parallels Newman’s (1989) work, depicting Bates crawling on his stomach with a reconstructed field of grass on his back; a modern version of the medieval hair-shirt.²⁹ He states in art critic’s Marika Kemeny (2008) article (New York Times) ‘Penance & Devotion’ ‘I chose...this bizarre act of self-punishment and humiliation for the guilt of environmental destruction.’ The self punishment in relation to the anxiety is shown in the movement of the artist, the work’s sturdy yet fragile quality alludes to the skin the work touches, the connection between the itchy grass ‘shirt’ and his skin causes the artist to dig, scratch and gouge.

²⁸ Florendale, D. (2008). The complete guide to CSP: Compulsive Skin Picking. p.2

²⁹ In general hair-shirts were usually made of rough goat’s hair and used as self-inflicted punishment for the mortification of the flesh in atonement for earthly sins.

Bate, G. (2008). *Penance* (Bate performing his act of penance on a Toronto sidewalk)

Penance also highlights the qualities of endurance, contemplation and control; all these qualities are fuelled by the anxiety of intrusive thoughts.

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Leitch, F. (2007). *Picking tools*



Leitch, F. (2007). *Hair Pull*

Unlike using the hands, the pleasure of plucking hairs with tweezers, results in 'post pull euphoria'³⁰: this euphoria is followed by the act of running the hair between the fingers (as in (2007) *Hair Pull*) and lips. The euphoria contrasts with the calm and self-controlled actions during the scraping and digging, and the lining up the tools in readiness, before the action begins. The aesthetic of lining up the tools as if in an operating theatre forms an important part of the physical and mental experience, because it adds an element of control to proceedings.

The addition of control to obsessive physical rituals that relate to the body, transforms the domestic space into a ritualistic space. Eric W.

³⁰ The research around silence and CPS is centred around my own work, actions and experiences. The use of tools to remove body hair is important in my work, because this is the process I use to relieve intrusive thoughts. Plucking hairs from the body with sterile tweezers may cause scarring and draw blood, causing fear of contamination, but gloves will provide protection from infections.



Leitch, F. (2008). Solitary chair and window

Rothenbuhler (Professor of Communication at Texas A&M University) discusses this idea in his text (2005) *Media Anthropology; The transforming of a space into a place means to construct a theatre*. The creation of a place, by introducing control into a space entrenches the intrusive thoughts firmly into the domestic space, which in turn is fixed into the sufferer's intrusive thoughts; it creates a complete circle of order out of chaos. (Rothenbuhler, 2005, p. 263-264)

However the notions surrounding the idea of 'ritual' are associated with cleanliness and purification of the self, most of these kinds of rituals take place in a background of solitude, stillness and quietness.

This form of ritual behaviour is governed by the consequences of not following the prescribed behaviour. Compulsive rituals such as hand washing and ordering are further

strengthened or reinforced through associated obsessive worries and fears, which are allayed by adding the element of control to the rituals. Thus, temporarily, the tension, worries and fears of obsessive thoughts and feelings which dwell in the domestic space are reduced.

My research has led me to focus on my personal connection with my own domestic space, simply because the domestic interior is in some ways the perfect setting in which to focus on themes of inferiority associated with the intrusive thoughts. Leitch F (2008) *Solitary chair and window* captures the displacement and isolation felt from the exterior world due to the fear of external contaminating material entering the space. The home is a very secluded realm, entirely separated from the external world, the home is where we have complete control over a place, and how we act out and form our lives.

*

'...this room ... is so quiet, that it really deserves its name, which is the 'solitary room' (Gaston Bachelard, 1964 *Poetics of Space*, p. 227).

French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's discusses the 'whitewashed room' in his text *Poetic of Space*; he suggests that the

whitewashed room becomes a space for solitude, imagination and creativity. Bachelard suggests that an empty room is similar to a monastic cell, where the mind is free to reflect and be still; this becomes an interesting parallel between the notion of the cell as a place of escape or as a place of confinement³¹. In the short narrative '*To Room Nineteen*' by Doris Lessings (1978), the character Susan Rawlings (a woman suffering a midlife crisis – reacting to her stifling confinement within her marriage) finds a hotel room³² to which she can withdraw. It becomes her sanctuary where no rules or laws govern her actions. Lessing (1978) outlines the depression that besets many women who work at home, caused by the confinement of the home space. Susan's doctor husband Matthew's response to Susan suggests that he will not take the time to understand what she feels, and is unwilling to face anything outside his experience. Hemmed in by his lack of support, Susan cannot express

her emotions within the space, resulting in her suicide. Her actions are extreme, but the

Jane and Louise Wilson (1997). *Stasi City*

dialogue between her thoughts and the space is fuelled by anxiety and depression, and her engagement with the space results in a poignant imprint of Susan's intrusive thoughts being left on the space (her suicide); the space in turn becomes her lament.

The viewer gains awareness of aspects of paranoid fear and anxiety generated by spaces; as discussed in '*To Room Nineteen*' (1978), and in the Wilson Sisters' video installation *Stasi city* (1997).

Filmed in a disused German secret police headquarters, the sisters manage to capture the presence of those who once dwelled in the space, including the activities that took place there. The film is discussed by art critics Jeremy Miller and Clair Doherty in their (2000) text *Jane and Louise Wilson*. They

³¹ The stark decoration of the room has an effect on the internal dialogue, causing the mind to take on the qualities of the monastic cell; either to escape the mundane, or to be confined within it, based on the dialogue between the space and the mind

³² I view the hotel room is a non space, a space of anonymity, where we can behave how we wish and do what we want. This fantasy space becomes Susan's tomb as at the end of the work, her suicide is performed in the non space rather than within her own home, a place she feels free, yet she is confined by her own emotions which are brought to the surface and are allowed to dwell deeper into her mind.

suggest that *Stasi City* highlights a process of disorientation through the dialogue between viewer and the space; a visually compelling investigation into the creation of tension. The creation of tension relates back to CPS, through the conflict between the action of picking and the feeling of wrongdoing.

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I started to experiment with the ways the viewer is enveloped in the experience of the space; this interest has informed my practice in my decision to explore the abandoned domestic dwelling. By playing recordings of intrusive thoughts in an abandoned space, the listener is forced to reflect on previous occupants' possible past dialogues which may have occurred in that space³³; this creates an experience of immersion into the space.³⁴



Leitch, F. (2008). *Empty Dwelling space*

In Leitch F (2008) *Empty Dwelling Space*, the home becomes a collection of psychological inner chambers, the walls providing containment for anxious feelings. Each room became a container for the intrusive thoughts and anxieties of those who have dwelled there.

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As Bachelard (1994) states 'we bring our lairs with us'. Our perception of space and related emotions travel with us as we enter new spaces, and is projected from us into that new space. The new space thus becomes a canvas or a container for our internal thoughts to paint upon; in Lessings text (1978) she creates a room which is both cell and dwelling place, carved from a hotel room. Susan's internal

³³ As discussed earlier, this dialogue takes place between the internal thoughts and the space.

³⁴ The shift from the concrete chamber (in the work (2007) 'What if', if only, I could have') to an *Empty dwelling space* (2008) (thought to the silent work (2008) Solitary chair and window) was made to evoke a sense of connection/disconnection with the domestic space and bring a sense of humanity back into the work

thoughts are unpacked and allowed to manifest and take over the new space³⁵.

The work *River of the Moon* (1992) by artist Rebecca Horn as discussed by Holland Cotter in the (1993) text *Rebecca Horn: delicacy and danger - installation art*, focuses on a spectator being asked to enter a hotel room. The focus of this work is the fact that it is a place of memory where the mark of the occupant is continually erased every 24 hours, where no trace of the previous occupant can be found. Cotter (1993) suggests that the hotel room holds a sense of the anonymous; in contrast the domestic space is a sponge for the emotions, fears and anxieties of the occupants; over time this causes the space to take on the imprint of our own forms³⁶.

In Spatial Psychologist Anne Troutman's (1997) text *Inside Fear: Secret Places and Hidden Spaces in Dwellings* she suggests that fear, terror, fright and anxiety accumulate in the nooks and crannies of the home. Troutman's view of the domestic

³⁵ However, the notion of the hotel room is a place of displacement where one can do as you please, act out fantasies and recreate yourself in any image you wish, the space becomes a zone for detachment for ourselves (Bachelard 1967, p.8).

³⁶ The interaction over time between intrusive thoughts and domestic spaces has led my research project to focus on decontaminated spaces, which are cleaned through the use of intrusive thoughts, thus creating a place of fear and unease. The domestic space and its associations with the female has governed my practice and research through the mapping of controlled movements within the domestic space.

dwelling is a combination of dream, nightmare and circumstances; a portrait of inner life...

'there is danger in the house though I passionately wish for calm nourishing warmth and spaciousness, 'the promise of home,' I am irredeemably caught in the house Edgar Allan Poe built'.³⁷ (1997, p.356). Spaces where these nightmarish fears and anxieties occur are cupboards, wardrobes and narrow tight spaces which constrict the room in question (a hallway). This no-mans land of space becomes a place of displacement where the borders of the imagination are stretched as the unknown and the unseen remain locked behind cupboard doors.

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Leitch, F. (2008). *Taped up cupboards, against dust and contamination*

11 Poe, E. (1845) *The black Cat*. Oxford University press: 'These walls -- are you going, gentlemen? -- these walls are solidly put together;" and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom' p. 35.

I started to look at physical manifestations of intrusive thoughts, fuelled by the earlier vocal recordings which I had created. I focused on the physical actions of locking doors and cupboards against contamination from exterior sources. In the (2008) work *Taped up cupboards, against dust and contamination* the cupboards are sealed with tape. The permanent closure of these orifices from the exterior world prevents intrusive thoughts connected with contamination from entering the cupboard. By covering up all holes, cracks and keyholes with tape or cloth, reveals and highlights the gaps and small spaces through which contamination could creep.

The actions of taping up progressed from cupboards and doors to windows, chimneys, and gaps in the walls³⁸. Glad Wrap was used to block off the chimney and create a barrier for contamination entering via the flue. I discovered that the Glad Wrap began to move in and out with the updraft, creating a diaphragm-like movement over the flue. This discovery links to the idea of a house

personifying a human body; the 'trachea' (flue) brings clean air into the space, along with contamination.



Leitch, F. (2008). *Taped up window*



Leitch, F. (2008). *Glad Wrapped fireplace*

³⁸ The nature of the dwelling I live in (a 1920's wooden cottage) has no under floor insulation, thus not only does exterior dust and dirt blow up into rooms, but vermin climb up into the wall cavities and scurry around in the roof, nesting, defecating, and living above the human living space. The poisoning of the vermin though bait becomes an anxiety too, surrounding the putrefaction of the bodies around the home (more so than the anxiety and disgust of the living vermin).



Leitch, F. (2008). *Taped up Walls against vermin*



Leitch, F. (2008). *Taped up floor*

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Contamination of the domestic space.

The concept of contamination and decontamination in the home connects with the act of purification in order to control the domestic space. The removal and expelling of human waste (dust, hair, nails) along with external contamination (such as mud and other organic matter) is highlighted and translated in my work to the everyday person, showing how internal intrusive thoughts are manifested in the domestic space³⁹.

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My research started to form around the collected box of hair (a by-product of self-decontamination); the collecting of hair represents clinging on to life, as hair is one of the last bodily products to decompose. Even though the hair is collected in the act of decontamination, the collecting of hair strikes a chord of disgust in the viewer, as it is now separate from its owner.

³⁹ Constant decontamination reveals a space which is in continuous flux with the sufferer's intrusive thoughts; the cleaner the space, the more attention is paid to the removal of dirt, the upkeep of the decontamination process and organization of the environment.



Leitch, F. (2007). *Coffer of hair*

Hatoum, M. (1995). *Recollection*.

The hair has been kept in the box for safe keeping over a six month period. I decided to include it in the project as it alludes to hoarding and hair pulling; these responses are triggered by intrusive thoughts⁴⁰. The hair is collected during the physical act of decontamination (washing), but this decontamination is not taken into account when viewing the collection in its box. The original circumstances of the collection are lost and are replaced by feelings of disgust which surround the collection.

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Hatoum, M. (2001). *Hair grid with knots*

In Mona Hatoum's *Hair grid with knots* (2001) and *Recollection* (1995), her own hair is carefully formed into balls and grid formations. This is ethereally beautiful, but disturbing. The aesthetic appeal of her work cancel out the disgust felt at the realization of the medium. *Coffer of hair* (2007) uses the container of the box in order to cancel out any aesthetic appeal and introduces the idea of shamefulness, thus drawing attention to the dislocation with the source of the hair in the work. Through this dislocation, the identity of

⁴⁰ The location of the box is a secret, which suggests that the gathering of the hair is a shameful, solitary act.

the 'grower' is unclear; the borders and boundaries between what we perceive as tasteful and distasteful start to be crossed. The viewer moves away from the work, but the disgust still remains, as the presentation of hair in this manner confronts our own decay. As noted by Hatje Cantz text (2004) *Mona Hatoum*, once the hair has left its owner it becomes dirt and a byproduct of our lives. However the anonymity and dislocation associated with the medium (who is the grower?) creates a lengthened response to the work. The concept of contamination through human residue is discussed by social anthropologist Mary Douglas' (1966) book *Purity and Danger*. In it, she suggests the "... dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder... Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment" (Douglas 1966, p 2). The act of decontamination represents a striving for the purification and re-ordering of a space; on a deeper level this is seen as a controlling, anxious action, taken in order to prevent contamination from the environment. Once decontamination has occurred, the area now suggests (as suggested by Douglass (1966, p3)) a lack of human habitation. The one thing

which still exists in the purged space is the intrusive thoughts of the inhabitant⁴¹. The continual dialogue produces a constant monitoring of the space, in order to keep it clean and decontaminated. The constant intrusive thought and subsequent actions become exhausting and draining; the space can be only perfectly clean for a small amount of time, then tiny particles of dust leak under doors, through windows, and down chimneys. This creates thoughts of contamination; subsequent decontaminating actions are the result. The gathering of the dust during cleaning creates purification, and the cycle starts again; the cycle of purification becomes continuous and the focus of the inhabitant's life.

Bruno (2007) compares the cleaning of the home with the decontamination of human bodies⁴². Hair covers the surface of the body and is an extension of the skin, it maps both an erotic and aesthetic corporeal landscape; hair has a role in maintaining the equilibrium of the skin, but in the action of pulling or ritually removing it, pain is induced. In Rebecca Horn's work *Cutting ones hair*

⁴¹ Therefore, no matter how much decontamination occurs within the space, the human connection is never fully removed. The intrusive thoughts hang in the space, continuing to influence the dialogue between the inner thoughts of the inhabitant and the space itself.

⁴² In this case I will be concentrating on the female.

with two scissors at once (1975)⁴³ Horn is shown suffering the experience by the action of cutting her hair. Holland Cotter's (1993) article⁴⁴ discusses Horn's work as being a graphic demonstration of self-mutilation and abuse. Horn wildly thrashes about, aggressively cutting off her own hair with a large pair of scissors in each hand during the continuous ten minute film. The decontaminating action of cutting hair relates to other self-mutilating actions such as skin picking and hair pulling, all of which have the same basic motivation of self flagellation⁴⁵ – to

minimise the anxiety brought on by intrusive thoughts. The self-mutilation purifies and decontaminates the body. These actions are grouped together and classified as Compulsive Skin Picking by psychiatrists. As Dermatillomania (compulsive skin picking) researcher David Florendale (2008) discusses in his text *The complete guide to Compulsive Skin Picking*:

'It's that spellbinding, irresistible, uncontrollable urge to pick, poke, and prod to the point of pain and disfigurement that is the impulse control disorder known as compulsive skin picking, or CSP.'⁴⁶

Until the point of pain is reached, then the intrusive thoughts do not retreat⁴⁷.

The repetitive behaviour is not prevented until the point of pain is reached. Once the point of pain is reached, then the intrusive thoughts and anxiety retreat. These intrusive thoughts are

⁴³ Harmony Hammond, (1984) *Wrappings, Essays on Feminism, Art, and the Martial Arts* parallels Horns work with reference to the symbolic references to hair, as do many classic myths and folktales about female sexuality, such as the Medusa and Rapunzel stories. As Hammond discusses, the mythic Gorgon Medusa, originally a woman of such beauty that she competed with the goddess Athena, was known for her luxurious and attractive hair. When she was ravished out of wedlock by Poseidon disguised as a horse, in chaste Athena's temple, the goddess punished this transgression by turning her plaits into snakes and giving her the power to turn any would-be lover or enemy who gazed upon her to stone. Perseus beheaded Medusa, and the primal energy of her power was subjugated and constrained: her mighty head was used in battle and her blood to either poison the living or to re-animate the dead. Gorgons have long symbolized female sexual energy and the fear that men have for this creative, animating power. p. 89.

⁴⁴ 'Rebecca Horn: delicacy and danger - installation art, at the Guggenheim Museum, New York'

⁴⁵ As discussed in Philip Ziegler text (1988), *The Black Death*, the self-mortification practiced by the Flagellants was a compulsive action, undertaken to minimise the intrusive thoughts and anxiety caused by the Black Death. Although their activities were not practiced within a domestic space; due to the climate of the times, and size and scope of the perceived problem, it was appropriate for the Flagellants to conduct their compulsive actions in the public eye. In the context of the Fourteenth Century, the compulsive actions undertaken by the

Flagellant movement were necessary to minimise the anxiety brought on by the Black Death. Self-mortification has long been practiced in human cultures and religion for the purpose of attaining spiritual or intangible goals, e.g. reparation for their sins. The Black Death (14th Century) was a time of great anxiety for Christians, who saw the plague as punishment for their sins. Perhaps the most well-known attempt to prevent God from bringing down his wrath on humanity was made by groups known as the Flagellants.

⁴⁶Florendale, D (2008). *The complete guide to CSP (Compulsive Skin Picking)*

⁴⁷ Being unable to stop the repetitive, relieving behaviour until the intrusive thoughts are appeased becomes a common trait to compulsive behaviours. Menzies (2003) states:

'Compulsive and impulsive behaviours have a common characteristic of an inability to inhibit repetitive behaviour.' (Menzies, 2003, p.221)

then replaced by feelings of achievement mixed with pleasure:

‘[These] behaviours are associated with risk seeking and maximising pleasure, arousal or gratification (at least in the short term).’ (Menzies, 2003, p.222)

These short-term feelings of pleasure are later replaced by ones of disgust, regret and loss at the damage caused to oneself and at the time spent in doing so. This leads to a cycle of anxiety-driven behaviour which causes the CSP to continue.

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The personal habit of lip picking is an obsessive action, taken in response to intrusive thoughts caused by stress or anxiety, brought on within the domestic environment. The filming of such an action⁴⁸ became invasive and challenging, however I wanted to experiment and express this corporeal and private engagement with anxiety, revealing how subtle, yet destructive it can be. In analyzing the film Leitch F (2007) *Pick*, I found the action of lip picking most often occurs in the domestic environment, at any time. Playing back the film and viewing it on a TV monitor creates a sense of disgust and further anxiety, as I come face to face with my own actions, thus creating further personal

anxiety and picking of the lip. This creates a vicious cycle of personal abuse, eventually leading to the use of pins and picking tools to remove in-growing hairs⁴⁹.

The film *Pick* (2007) introduces elements of guilt, disgust with the self, and distress. These occur after the action due to the fear of contamination; my intrusive thoughts focus on the dirt and germs which reside under the nails being transferred from the fingers to open wounds on the lip, thus causing an infection. Again, the process is a vicious cycle, in the act of picking, contamination is introduced; the more picking occurs, the worse the intrusive thoughts about contamination become.

The film remains in an ‘extreme close-up’ of the mouth area; this technique avoids showing all facial features, in order to avoid recognition. This technique again introduces the idea of shameful anxieties surrounding the act.

⁴⁹ I also wanted to create work based around the physical residue which is left after the picking process: the action of picking and scratching the lip results in the drawing of blood. This blood is then used as ink to stain a piece of white paper. I chose the medium of lined A4 due to its universality and structure. This kind of paper is readily available from any stationery shop; its lines give it structure. The contamination process is started once the first spot of blood touches the surface of the paper; there is no way to decontaminate the surface, the purity has been marred and lost.

⁴⁸ Filmed on an Olympus FE-200 camera



Leitch, F. (2007). *Pick* Still from Film (see enclosed CD)



Leitch, F. (2007). *Pick residue*. Blood on A4 lined paper.



Leitch, F. (2007). Removal of hair from cushion cover.

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Domestic space as a container

‘A space is something that has been made room for... that which is let into its bounds. That for which room is made is... gathered together’.⁵⁰

(Heidegger, M. 1971)

The boundaries and characteristics which define the fear of spaces, as discussed by Troutman (1997) and Lessings (1978) are either created by others’ personal space; fear; or occur over time spent within the space, which leads to a contemplation of one’s own inner thoughts⁵¹. The emotions which exist in the domestic space hold the essence of privacy, concealment, and containment, all bound by the walls, ceilings and floors of the dwelling

⁵⁰ Heidegger, M. (1971), *Building Dwelling Thinking* In Giuliana, B. (2002) *Atlas of emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film..* (p. 91)

⁵¹ In German Artists Rebecca Horn’s work (1972), *Scratching Both Walls at Once* Horn attached to her hands spidery, cane-like forms made from fabric and balsa wood. With these prosthetic fingers she slowly touched the floor and walls of a narrow room, as if tentatively judging the limits of the space around her. The sound which accompanies the work has an eerie scratching quality to it, like fingernails down a black board, the work challenges not just the size of the space, but allows the viewer to hear the texture of the walls, and what it must be like to have the senses fully immersed into the space. Horn’s scratching of the walls with her elongated figures, can be also seen as scratching the skin, scratching the maddening itch which can never be fully satisfied. However the skin/wall analogy is discussed by Troutman (1997) as the skin of the dwelling which acts as an form of security and control through the activation and containment of memory regarding such confined spaces is show in Horns work along with windows, floors, doors and walls, all coming together to form a cocoon of comfort and safety which excludes the external and hones ‘my focus and insight, giving me a sense of comfort’. (Troutman, 1997, p.358)

space. However both texts suggest the existence of an emotional engagement further to the physical boundaries of the space; this creates a whole new dialogue and syntax between the space and the viewer. This dialogue is in its essence a travel story, formed as the space is traversed⁵².

Constant dialogue with various spaces makes up our everyday experiences. Space seems to have appropriated the dweller, and to have possessed and determined a psychophysical state of acting and being. Space is a dominant feature of daily life⁵³. The way in which the domestic space creates this syntax is discussed by film and visual cultural scholar Bruno Giuliana in her (2007) text *Public intimacy Architecture and the visual arts*. Giuliana discusses artist Louise

Bourgeois, L. (1940). *Femme-Maison*

Bourgeois' image *Femme-Maison* (1940)

which represents the female form as a hybrid with the house. When the female moves within the domestic space, she re-maps herself through the dialogue of her emotions and the space; thus the home becomes a place where a journey takes place⁵⁴.

Locating the female in the domestic space (domus) thus forms an image of the housewife. Louise Bourgeois (1940) work *Femme-Maison* uses windows, doors and chimneys as porous intrusions; leaking expressive intimate residue into the external world for all to see, turning the inside out. The privacy of the domestic space is challenged by the intrusions into the

⁵² The term 'space syntax' is something I have chosen to touch on (however I will not be going too deeply in its qualities). It encompasses a set of theories and techniques for the analysis of spatial configurations. As discussed by syntax consultant Phil Clark, (2000) in his article 'Changing the face of the world', space syntax grew out of research carried out by Bill Hillier, a professor of architectural and urban morphology at the Bartlett School, part of University College, London. Hillier wanted to find out why the social housing projects of the 1960s and 1970s were not creating the communities the architects had intended; within years of completion, the estates were becoming run down and attracting crime. His answer was simple: the way the estates were laid out stifled communities. Layout, he discovered, was critical in determining how a space would be used. (Clark, 2000, p.1)

⁵³ The character of Susan in Lessings (1978) text is trapped in a hotel room, masquerading as a prison space; the space traps her between a torture chamber and pleasure- palace, between grief and fascination.

⁵⁴ The notion of travelling or voyaging within a domestic space is an interesting one, as a voyage infers a romantic colonial ideal of an exhibition into the unknown to traverse and chart new territory and terrain. It lends itself well to the male ideal of being sent to explore the world and then return to settle down and produce a family

Whiteread, R. (1993). *House*

architectural body of the home, causing the inner life and inner consciousness to become exposed and revealed. The home becomes a body, as discussed by Jon Bird in his text (2000) *dolce domum*, and in British sculptor Rachel Whiteread's (1993) *House*⁵⁵. Both works use the analogy of houses as having a corporeal landscape, which consists of porous entities; the plaster represents the skin, the walls hide cables and power lines (veins) which connect the individual house to the local and global environment, and orifices, represented by doors, windows and chimneys,

⁵⁵ *House*, perhaps Whiteread's best known work, was a concrete cast of the inside of an entire Victorian terraced house completed in autumn 1993, exhibited at the location of the original house — 193 Grove Road — in East London (all the houses in the street had earlier been knocked down by the council). It drew mixed responses, winning her both the Turner Prize for best young British artist in 1993 and the K Foundation art award for worst British artist. Tower Hamlets London Borough Council demolished *House* on 11 January 1994, a decision which caused some controversy itself.

create openings of the body, connecting the material and social world.

Whiteread's (1993) work reveals these internal workings through the negative mapping of landscape; on closer inspection, all of the imperfections of the domestic surface are revealed, making the internal imperfections external. The now visible gouges on the walls were caused by actions taken to decontaminate the space; the intrusive thoughts represent the gouges on the walls. Bird (2002) discussed these erotogenic and spectral presences of the body which once inhabited the space, as offering clues as to the repetitive and mundane aspects of daily life. Whiteread's house (1993) reveals and unveils the psychopathology that lies beneath the everyday, the fears and desires, the prohibitions and transgressions which reside in domestic spaces (Bird 2002).

However the nature of humanity in Whiteread's (1993) work is revealed by using negative mapping, turning the internal into the external. The orifices, scars and wounds, create a record of peoples' interactions with a space, thus revealing a psychological presence or trace which becomes ingrained with aspects of the dwelling. The surface of the room carries imprint of a life once lived.

As Alison Ferris⁵⁶, suggests in her article “Disembodied spirits: spirit photography and Rachel Whiteread’s *Ghost*” (2003), “What is characteristic about *Ghost* (1990)... is not that it is seen or not seen but that it transforms the relationship between what is normally seen and what is not seen.” Both of Whiteread’s (1993 and 2003) works allow the viewer to see past the seen, into the realm of the unseen. The clear marks in the plaster take the form of a ‘death mask’, which traces our past actions⁵⁷.

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Leitch, F. (2007) *Scratch*. Worn away threshold in concrete and paint.



Leitch, F. (2007) *Paint touch*

The concrete threshold in the domestic dwelling became an investigation into the way in which the physical body moves, how this is revealed outside the domestic dwelling, and how it naturally leaves traces, marks, scuffs, scratches, dents, and stains (later investigations focused on scars on walls, floors, doors, windows and ceilings). The physical and visible traces on the concrete’s surface and the cause of the marks became my main focus of the research. The domestic surface gives the intrusive thoughts a stage where they can be displayed freely, creating a record or archive of the physical actions of internal intrusive thoughts and anxieties. This process leads to discolouration on the door frames from the oils and dirt in fingertips (from continuously touching or rubbing the exact same piece of wood every

⁵⁶ The curator at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

⁵⁷ Through pacing a carpet until it is threadbare, marking floor boards, continuously touching the same spot on a door jam when entering or exiting a room, grime on a light switch, or dust and dirt which sticks and manifests in carpets, these can be subtle and temperate to some, however the feelings of anxiety regarding contamination in intrusive thought and OCD sufferers can lead to feelings of panic, isolation and ultimately depression.

time I enter or leave a room)⁵⁸. The way in which Whiteread's work has informed my practice is through the imprinting, navigation and tracing of the physical body around the domestic dwelling, and how it will naturally leave traces, marks, scuffs, scratches, dents, stains and scars on walls, floors, doors, windows and ceilings over time. Examples of this can be seen in works *Scratch* (2007), and *Paint touch* (2007) where a glimpse into the private dwelling space is shown, demonstrating the navigation of a dwelling⁵⁹.

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Public and Private viewing of the domestic space.

Bruno in her (2002) text *Atlas of emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film interiors and house*, suggests that the home can be a private museum, telling stories and travels within the space...forming affairs of the senses, they sense, and make sense of, our passing through the space (Bruno, 2002, p.105). The corporeal connection between body and dwelling shapes and morphs the internal boundaries, through movement of the body and mind, thus leaving physical and mental marks, and traces of those who have lived there. German architect Bruno Taut as discussed by Bruno (2002, p.93) views the domestic space being formed and moulded by the inhabitation of the female⁶⁰. The domestic

⁵⁸ I view the stain as a physical, active build-up of residue, resulting from a manifestation of intrusive thoughts.

⁵⁹ The surface marks are mute, creating a veil of suppressed intimacy between the human and the domestic space; only when the surfaces are touched, brushed or unearthed does the relationship between the mark and the human action become synchronised.

⁶⁰ The home is traditionally the domain of women. In the Victorian age, they were expected to stay there and to become a part of the decorated interior. By focussing on the domestic realm in this period, it will highlight some useful metaphors to express the interior realms of the mind and soul; it is limited by an intrinsic link to the feminine. The placement of the female in the domestic setting is further discussed by Art historian Leng, Andrew in his text (1988) "Millais's 'Mariana': Literary Painting, the Pre-Raphaelite Gothic, and the Iconology of the Marian Artist." Leng suggests that Millais's *Mariana* shows the power of the domestic interior as a setting for images of contemplation and private thought. The darkness of the painted space and its finite boundaries help to focus the viewer inwards on the figure. He goes on to state that the oppressive closeness of the setting helps to emphasize that *Mariana* is a picture representing the feelings and

becomes a private museum and a stage, to be formulated and moulded into the narrative the housewife wishes to portray to visitors. By “promoting a general fashion for interior decoration that facilitated and accelerated ‘modern’ ideas such as privacy, intimacy, and comfort”⁶¹ (Bruno, 2002, p. 93); the placement of objects creates a show for the public to peer at, this juxtaposes with the idea of the domestic space as a private place. Thus, the house becomes a glass case, exhibiting our lives for visitors to gauge the dweller’s social and cultural status, and for the dweller to show off their goods and chattels. An example of this can be seen in American photographer Ian Goulden’s (2008) image, *The Curiosity Collector*. The females in the image gazes at the collection; her inclusion in the photograph places her as part of the collection. Goulden (2008) says in his artist statement for *Curiosity Collector* that ‘she is an item to be displayed for all to peer at’ (Gouldens, 2008, p.1).

workings of one woman's soul. The privacy of the space creates intimacy and the sense that the realm depicted is not meant to be breached by any voyeur. Perhaps entry into this space is impossible. Mariana's rooms are populated only by the lady's thoughts. In fact, her surroundings are almost an extension of her thoughts. The exterior world does not exist in this scene, except as she imagines it.

⁶¹ Rybcznski, W. (1986) *Home a short history of an idea*, p. 88



Leitch, F. (2008) *Glass Preserving Jar and bug under vase*



Leitch, F. (2008) *Kiwi fruit and potatoes left for 5 weeks.*

Goulden, I.(2008)*The Curiosity Collector*

Bruno’s (2002) analogy of the dwelling acting as a container and private museum strongly parallels the Victorian idea of presenting everything under glass, thereby creating cabinets of curiosity. Lecturer and author Laurence Talairach-Vielma’s (2007)

text, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels*, discusses the Victorian admiration of the female ideal, the glass cabinet and their process of enclosing and capturing objects to be observed in silence.

Talairach-Vielmas (2007) suggests that the Victorian woman was idolised and so admired, that they were kept and treasured like dolls behind glass cases. By taking this action, the female becomes suffocated and isolated; finally fading away and dying through not being able to voice their own desires or fears. This notion of the female being placed and preserved behind glass cases brings to mind a glass tomb⁶² and the inevitable Victorian fascination with death. Talairach-Vielmas (2007) further suggests that the Victorian female ideal set ordinary women a standard they could never live up to⁶³. The Victorian female ideal was locked into the symbol of the glass coffin/case; holding the artefact in an airless stasis. As seen in the Grimm Brothers' *The glass coffin* (1812)⁶⁴ which parallels the Victorian feminine ideal, underlining the

notions of the glass house representing femininity and death. The notion of crystallisation and preservation of the female figure is found over and over again in the Victorian period, whether as glass cases, mirrors or windows.

The Narrative of *The Glass Coffin*

(1812) reveals the suffocating status of women at the time and the expectations placed on them to live up to the ideal of society. The female character is contained by a glass container. She has no means of communication through the container, but remains mute; thus she is turned into an artefact to be admired and used at whim. This containment of the female as an artefact is also suggested by American author and lecturer Nina Auerbach in her text (1985) *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts*. Auerbach suggests that the female is being laid to rest, or placed in status, capturing her in her purest form; this stasis suppresses the ageing process, and morphs the female form into a cultural icon of the social and cultural times. 'In her glass coffin, she is an object, to be displayed and desired...a possession, and idealized image of herself...a suppressed energy of who she once was, the glass turning her into an artefact to be admired, and covered up when not in use' (p. 41).

When the glass coffin is empty, what then? An example of the unoccupied 'Glass

⁶² The biggest at the time being the Crystal Palace by Paxton

⁶³ The standards of today are not so structured, however, the media give standards which women still allude to, never being able to reach the ideal of the utopian female.

⁶⁴ Zipes, J. (1987) *The complete fairy tales*: Grimm, J, Grimm W. p.664: *The Glass Coffin* (1812) - A tailor gets lost in the woods, spends the night in an old hut, gets carried off by a stag, and finds, behind a wall of rock opened by the stag, a beautiful maiden asleep inside a glass coffin.

Coffin' is Whiteread's *Monument* (2001); the funereal aspects are pervasive, but never morbid. In (2001) 'London Calling', David Ebony (associate managing editor of *Art in America*) regards Whiteread's *Monument* as representing the notion of a glass coffin⁶⁵. Its clear glass form alludes to the qualities of transparency; the public are allowed to gaze through it, into it, around it and past it; there are no concealed elements. The internal being laid bare for all to see can also be viewed in the work of Kiki Smith's. She uses images of mirrored bottles in rows of 10, which bear labels in archaic lettering referencing "Blood," "Bile," "Tears" and so on⁶⁶.

Whiteread, R. (2001) *Monument*

⁶⁵ However Ebony (2001) states that its watery transparency relates to the large fountain that dominates the Trafalgar plaza. Following the aquatic theme, Whiteread's (2001) *Monument* evokes the scene of the 1805 naval battle for which the square is named, and thus eloquently corresponds, at least this summer, with Morley's maritime domain.

⁶⁶ They refer to the practice of medieval medicine, in which doctors attributed supernatural and spiritual powers to body fluids, powers still considered vital in some cultures

New York Times art critique Grace Glueck (2005) discusses Smith's work in her article 'An Object of Practicality, From the Inside and Out'. Glueck sees Smith's use of glass containers as poetic; they become spaces that are both in our world and uniquely separated from it. The containers show the internal and unseen as an external presence; the internal bodily fluids are revealed, allowing the public to view the inner world of the body (Much like Mona Hatoums *Corps etranger*, 1994). This act divorces the fluids from the body, thus creating and forming a disembodied space within the glass container and its contents (Much like *Coffer of hair* (2007)). By placing the fluids into the container, the use of glass as a medium is highlighted; the contents are not only held in stasis, but are the focus of one's view⁶⁷. German philosopher Martin Heidegger's notion of containment is discussed by By Hubert L. Dreyfus et. al (2000) in the text *Authenticity, and Modernity*. Heidegger states that containment is 'the limit of the enclosing body, at which it is contact with that which is enclosed' (Dreyfus, et. al 2000, p. 215).

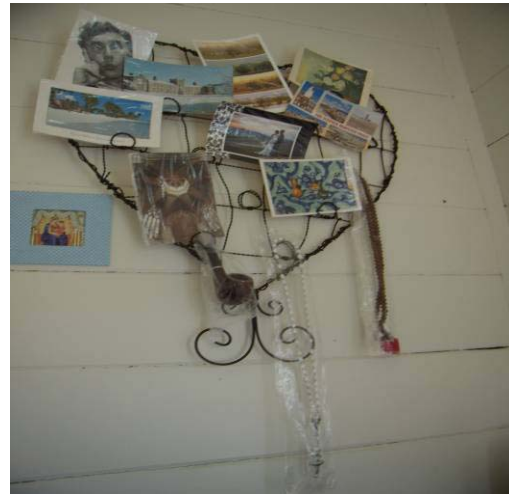
A prime example of containment is given by Dreyfus (2000) as the example of the glass of water, in which Heidegger states the body of

⁶⁷ The bottle's intrinsic psychological and physiological associations, as emphasized by folk artists, attracted the attention of the Surrealists in the 1920s and other modernists who were interested in raw, unmediated expression.

the water in the glass is contained by the embodiment of the glass, the emptiness of the air and the surface which surrounds the glass. The filling of an empty glass container in relation to the domestic dwelling is seen in Heidegger's essay *The Thing, in Poetry, Language, and Thought* (2001), in which Heidegger discusses emptiness and its importance. He stresses that a jug is related to its emptiness and it is the result of its forming by the potter/maker. He believes that 'the vessel's thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that holds it' (Heidegger 2001, p.124).

The emptiness of the vessel gathers and preserves nothingness. Heidegger does not see emptiness as a failure, but as a bringing-forth. The act of emptying a jug allows it to 'contain something, into its having been freed' (Heidegger 2001, p.122). The act of emptying is actually an act of creation, the perception of 'nothingness' actually admits and gathers.

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Leitch, F, (2008). *Glad Wrapped postcards, rosary, and worry beads.*

In the works Leitch F (2008) *Glass preserving jar and bug under vase*, and (2008) *Kiwi fruit and potatoes left for 5 weeks*, the glass of the container highlights the items within each container. The element of control over the internal domestic space is introduced by the covering and containment of the contaminant material with glass or Glad Wrap. These concepts can also be seen in the work (2008) *Glad wrapped postcards, rosary, and worry beads*, and (2008) *Glad Wrapped exterior flowers* (Leitch, F.). The concept of decontamination intrinsic to these works is achieved by containment, not by the act of cleaning out. The postcards used in the work were sent from all over the world and have been handled by many different people. The idea that the postcards have been handled (along with the rosary and worry beads) has been embedded into the fibres of the material, thus on a cellular level the postcards represent

an uninvited intrusion into others' domestic space. In order to reduce contamination within the domestic space, items are decontaminated and contained before they are allowed to enter. The same procedure is used with flowers and cuttings which are used to beautify the home. The Glad Wrap which covers the flowers helps to preserve them and creates a buffer zone between the item and the domestic space. The decontamination caused by falling petals, pollen and any air borne dirt which may have got onto the flowers is thus contained. So when a visitor brings flowers, these will be left outside until the visitors have departed, then the decontamination process can begin. This time lapse is partly due to the privacy needed to perform the act of decontamination⁶⁸ and in order not to offend ones guests.

The act of decontamination creates a multi-layered textural terrain, which revolves around the juxtaposition of the external-internal, inside-outside and public-private⁶⁹. The act of decontamination produces and formulates new dialogues between the space and the inhabitant. The domestic space in question is the porches at the back and front of the home;

these act as buffer zones where the dirt and clean space collide. This buffer zone becomes a threatening, penetrating, rejecting and demanding space; when the original purpose of a porch is to be a space of welcome, calmness and politeness.



Leitch, F. (2008). *Entrance to dwelling, decontamination zone 1.*

This porch space creates a barrier in which the controlled action of decontamination happens. During this process, rigorous vigilance occurs in order to prevent contamination in the rest of the dwelling. Glad Wrap is used in order to maintain visual access to the flowers, while ensuring containment and preservation.

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas' (2007) alludes to the aspect of control in his discussion surrounding the Victorian glass cabinet. The containment of the organic matter in glass containers or Glad Wrap gives control over the substance contained within the container. In

⁶⁸ Each flower is inspected, ruminated over, placed on a clean tea towel (with plastic underneath) then finally placed in a jar or vase.

⁶⁹ Immobility-mobility, the porch/front door and back door alludes to symbolize loss or gain, absence or presence, loneliness or reunion, separation or connection, life or death, the door speaks but the wall is mute.

covering the item its potential to contaminate the domestic space is highlighted, yet the item is still visible.

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Control of the domestic space



Leitch, F. (2008) Glad Wrapped exterior flowers

Arzner, D. (1936). *Harriet as the Pillar of the house*.

The control of the domestic environment and its products through the process of decontamination and containment of objects suggests timelessness⁷⁰. The concept of

⁷⁰ Such as Miss Havisham in her preserved tomb. As Pip entered Miss Havisham's room there was no glimpse of daylight, Dickens wrote this to show his views on how the higher class has been cut off from the outside world. The objects in Miss Havisham's room were decayed, yellow and had lost their lustre. They had faded over time like Miss Havisham. She was dressed in a bridal dress, veil and shoes that had once been white and fitted her properly, but were now yellow and she had shrivelled and shrunk inside her dress. Dickens has described her like this to show that she does not want to change; she wants to stay in the upper class. That is why she carries on wearing her best dress, because she does not want to fall down, even though the bridal flowers in her hair had withered with the dress and the bride. Nothing has changed in Miss Havisham's room, like the positioning of her half-packed trunks, her prayer book and the time on her clocks. This also shows that she doesn't want to change and she wants things to stay the same. Miss Havisham's existence in "the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house" (*Great Expectations* p.321)

timelessness mixed with decontamination evokes the atmosphere of a museum; a space where change and disruption have no role. The inhabitant takes on the role of a curator, constantly travelling around the house to monitor contamination. Dorothy Arzner's (1936) film *Craig's Wife* (as discussed by Bruno 2002 p.88-89) tells of a housewife called Harriett Craig (played by Rosalind Russell), who becomes obsessed with controlling potential contamination of her domestic space, despite sharing her house with her husband and maids. She becomes obsessed with the objects which surround her and is suspicious of human contact, as it reduces her control over the space. Harriet controls her space by clearing it of all non essential objects; by keeping the space as clear as possible she gains better control over it, and can chart every move of the other inhabitants with more ease⁷¹.

⁷¹ This can be paralleled by Feminist author Diana Fuss' text (2004) *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* in relation to the poet Emily Dickinson's comments on control over spatial arrangements and isolation from visitors. Dickinson's poetry routinely overlooks the objects within a room in favour of highlighting its spatial perimeters. "Size circumscribes," the poet writes in a poem composed in 1862; "it has no room for petty furniture" (P 641). Twenty years later she expounds on the theme of the unfurnished room in a two-line, eight-word poem remarkable for its economy:

All things swept sole away
This-is immensity

Utilizing the domestic metaphor of sweeping, Dickinson alliteratively sweeps the poem free of

Harriet's concerns are with the maids (have they broken anything?); her husband (has he smoked indoors?); her aunt-in-law (has she allowed the neighbours in – with their offensive flowers; or worse, a child?!). Harriet patrols the domestic space, mentally mapping the position of every object within the space. Bruno (2002) discusses Harriet's intrusive thoughts regarding contamination; she is compelled to straighten objects out of place, everything must be put back; otherwise her control over the space will be lost⁷².

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internal clutter, exposing in the process the sheer immensity of a minimalist space.

Most Dickinson commentators imagine the poet's bedroom as a claustrophobic space of self-imposed isolation, "a melancholy, even terrifying, sanctuary." The bedroom is the place where the poet "felt herself prematurely fitted to a coffin" (Fuss p.147). It is a "primary Gothic scene" with the heroine "imprisoned on the inside" (Fuss p.23). But the perception of Dickinson's bedroom as a domestic coffin or a Gothic prison is largely a critical projection. The room itself, fifteen-feet-square and ten-feet-high, is spacious and airy.

⁷² Harriet's final shift towards becoming incorporated into the home is seen in a shot as she stands in front of the staircase of her home, she is morphed into a pillar holding up the staircase. She becomes the pivotal centre of the home, holding up the extreme ideal of the housewife who has finally created and carved out the space she has wanted; the empty void banishing all exterior elements such as visitors, and their time consuming ways which don't fit into her spatial rules of placement and movement, and those who dwell in the space with her; her husband and maids. Harriet is left alone, as all emotion has been removed from the dwelling. Even air circulation has ceased due to the shut windows and doors. It is though the home is holding its breath and dare not breathe for fear of moving a curtain or blowing dust around, or banging a door.

“Craig’s Wife” (1936) connects to my project because of its similarity of focus: decontamination and control of the domestic space. My control of the space through decontamination revolves around the covering of external objects and their subsequent placement and containment within the domestic space. This process of decontamination and display becomes more complex than the removal of hair and organic material from the body, as part of the process includes public and private decontamination zones (taking the form of a back and front porch)⁷³. The front porch introduces public access and potential dealings with visitors into the baggage of this space; thus the front porch becomes the focus of intrusive thoughts, due to the potential for contamination to be introduced via this ‘orifice’. Control over the visitor occurs after they have left, however. In order not to appear abnormal, the decontamination process begins the moment the visitor (contamination) leaves; the objects they have touched and used while in the dwelling (mugs, glasses, plates etc) are either

isolated or decontaminated and cleaned. Even when the visitor has departed, their bodily residues, such as sweat, oil, lip marks, and saliva remain. Rubber gloves are worn during the decontamination process to prevent cross-contamination; after decontamination has occurred, all utensils used in the process (e.g. dish cloths) are exchanged for clean ones; the final act is to disinfect the sink⁷⁴.

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⁷³ This zone in itself is private, and concealed from visitors and can be shut out by closing the back door, its privacy allows the time and a space for contemplation and scrutinising the foreign object before a decision is given on how to best cope with it in the home. This whole activity usually surrounds flowers and fruit from domestic trees.

⁷⁴ Hoovering, dusting and disinfecting all surfaces which have been touched in the home. This process takes time, but a clean decontaminated home is the reward, cancelling out all the intrusive thoughts of dirt and disgust surrounding the act of having guests.

House Dress

Of equal importance to Harriet's control over the presentation of her domestic space is her control over her body and the way in which this is presented. Beverly Gordon's text (1996) *Woman's Domestic Body*, discusses the physical and psychological associations between a woman's body and domestic interiors in the Industrial Age⁷⁵. Gordon suggests that in this era, the home and body were inscribed upon each other, so that the domestic space became an extension of the housewife. She suggests that the housewife dissolves into the fabric of the home. This process represents the transmutation of the female into the housewife, she becomes a material of the domestic space, turning into a pillar of strength supporting the physical and emotional needs of the house. This interpretation is paralleled in Dorothy Arzner's (1936) work though the similar focus on obsession and possession. The hybrid formation of housewife is crafted and sculpted over time; there is an expectation that the housewife will be obsessively focussed on the cleanliness of the domestic space. The perpetual removal by the housewife of any

⁷⁵ The perceived relationship between the female and the domestic space in this era was virtually identical to what has already been discussed about the Victorian era

evidence of other humans' existence, allows her to create a corporeal landscape free from external contamination. This creation of a corporeal landscape reflects the relationship of the housewife with her own domestic space. Alienation and isolation is the price to pay for the creation of such a relationship. The German architect Bruno Taut's (1924) modernist text *The new Dwelling: Woman as Creator*, is compared by Bruno (2002) to the notion of the house as a dress. 'In respect, the house is similar to clothing and, at a certain level, is its very extension. Fertility and human creativity reside, now as ever in transforming things...' (Taut, 1924 p.69). Clothing shows stains and wear and tear; the corporeality of the person is mapped out by the visible evidence of being worn by a human. The history of a garment is shown in a similar way to that of skin; as an extension of the inner being, the garment indicates what lies beneath the surface, just as our faces, decorated with lines of life, memory and worry, map out the landscape of our lives.



Leitch, F. (2008). The house as a garment

The housedress in my research project has been decontaminated, and then clothed in a medium. Its medium is Glad Wrap and masking tape, and the motivation for its creation is the intrusive thoughts which reach their personification in the finished work⁷⁶. The controlled process of creating the work soothes the intrusive thoughts, thus suppressing the intrusive thoughts, and ensuring a sense of quietness and stillness prevails within the domestic space.

The pattern for the housedress has been formed through mapping out the contamination zones of the house; this process is known as Psychogeography.

⁷⁶ The Anxious body which wears the garment travels the domus, locating points of external connection with the internal, windows, doors, mantelpieces, chimneys and cracks in floorboards, and blocking up any exit or entry fissures which could lead to contamination of the home.

Bruno (2002 p. 71)⁷⁷ sees the home as a landscape, forming and tracing the memories and imagination of those who pass through and dwell in it. 'Architecture is a map of both dwelling and travel...an actual means of exploration: at once housing for and a tour of our narrative and our geography.'

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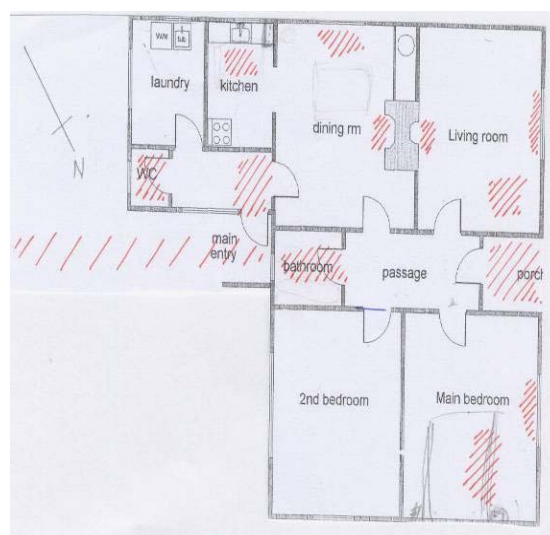
I created a psychogeographic map of my domestic space, focussing on how the subjective emotive pathways are shaped by intrusive thoughts. This map of the domestic environment identified the spaces in which the most distressing intrusive thoughts occur. The addition of lines to Map 1 shows the areas where the most distressing intrusive thoughts occur. Map 2 (see next page) shows the functions of the spaces. Mentally⁷⁸, a circle is

⁷⁷ The work of Jane and Louise Wilson's (*Stasi City* 1997) have often been discussed within the context of Psychogeography. In artist and author Jeremy Welsh (2004) text *The Mechanized Hum of Another World* he suggests that many of the Wilson Sister's film/video pieces share characteristics with the psychogeographic fictions of authors such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd. Drawing upon the tradition of the Situationist "Derivée", the psychogeographic endeavour is usually an attempt to unearth hidden dimensions of a space that may be overlooked, inaccessible, neglected or forgotten.

⁷⁸ The activity of mental circling a space is paralleled by British writer and film maker Ian Sinclair⁷⁸ in his work (2002) *London Orbital* which describes a series of trips he took tracing the M25, London's outer-ring motorway, on foot. He describes it as 'mentally circling the capital forming its grim necklace'⁷⁸ (Sinclair 2002, in Jeffries 2004 *On the Road*). The notion taken from Sinclair's quote in relation to my research is in the tracking of movements and the mapping of the sole description

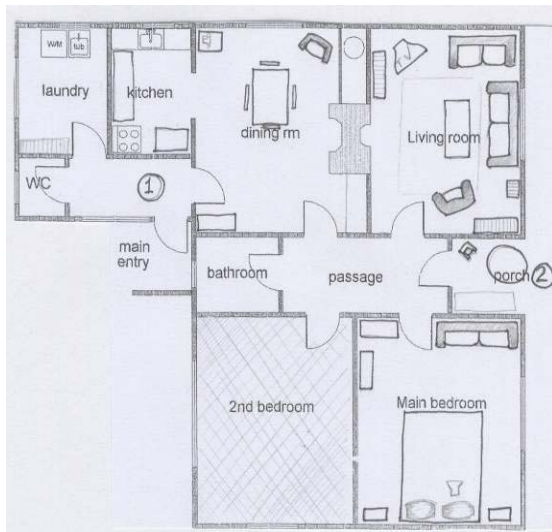
drawn around these areas, thus causing visualisations of the act of decontamination; these visualisations can include the continuous mopping up of water droplets around the sink, the placement of shoes on plastic bags when entering or exiting the home, or placing postcards from contaminated foreign hands in plastic envelopes before displaying them.

Further to the act of decontamination, all traces of the act must be removed, in order to rid the space of all residual presence of the action.



Map 1.

of the subjective life, paring away any additional events or behaviours to reveal a path of least resistance taken by the intrusive thoughts sufferer, which appears as aimless wandering or drifting⁷⁸ to the objective observer, but is in fact a way of dealing with the internal domestic environment.



Map 2.

Conclusion

The final project will include a variety of decontaminated, contained works. The viewing of these items will reveal the dialogue between the once contaminated exterior materials, the intrusive thoughts of the inhabitant, and the controlled process by which they have been transmuted into the domestic space.

Dossier of work

Family: Surface



Fig. 1: Leitch, F. (2007). *Drawn crosses* (detail) 1mx1m.
acrylic ink on Canvas
Kanzaman Gallery 2007 Kerikier



Fig. 3: Leitch, F. (2007). *plain Japanese origami paper and biro*
10cmx10cm



Fig.2: Leitch, F. (2007). *Japanese origami paper and biro*
10cmx10cm



Fig. 4: Leitch, F. (2007). *OCD manifesting a surface*
Pencil on Formica. 1mx30cm Domestic space. Kawakawa.

These early works concentrate on the marring and scratching into given surfaces: canvas (fig.1), paper (fig.2 and 5), and Formica (fig. 4), to express and bring forth the actions and creeping manifestations surrounding the condition of OCD. The physical act of drawing crosses or the letters OCD over and over again, relate to the banal and every day time wasting aspects of the condition. The crosses, while relating to the time wasting aspect, also connect with the intrusive thoughts: by thinking an intrusive thought, (i.e. why did I say what I did) an action occurs; this action is the drawing of a cross for every intrusive thought. The cross has no religious or symbolic association, but is simply a mark of an anxious human trying to cancel out intrusive thoughts.

Figures 2 & 3, show the delicate material of the Japanese origami paper, which represents the subconscious, and the gentle flexibility of the mind in relation to the intrusive thoughts. The use of Biro on such a beautifully delicate material represents the condition of OCD on the mind, destroying, marking and imprinting itself into the materials make up.

Figure 4, displays the notions of OCD spreading and manifesting itself in the domestic space by travelling, spreading over and contaminating surfaces. The pencilled

lettering starts to take over a work bench where food and drinks are prepared, hindering the space and restricting its use to a small section of the bench, until eventually the space cannot be used due to the text creating a space which is consumed with a contaminating substance.

Family: Remnant/trace residue



Fig. 5: Leitch, F. (2007). *DNA OCD*. Ink on skin.

Figure 5, is a work in response to *Decontamination* (2007) which suggested that a space seems to have appropriated the dweller and to have possessed and determined a psychophysical state of acting and being myself and the space in which I dwell. In essence my DNA was being left all over the domestic space. This realisation relocated my focus back into the research, and formulated work which reflected honest experiences in how I control and move around my dwelling space, interacting with it.

However while reflecting on the previous works, in relation to control, the action generated by the intrusive thought was present, but the intrusive thought was not.

In re-addressing the film work Pick (2007) I found the ambient sound track which accompanied the work rather intriguing,

What if I didn't turn off the stove.

Fig. 6: Leitch, F. (2007). *What if I didn't*. Audio 01:16 (see enclosed CD)

though the films banal and slightly disturbing aspect is through the quietness and stillness of the sound. What would happen if I removed the image and just left the sound to play, or if the intrusive thought which caused the picking was spoken?

Using sound as a carving tool (Mark making with sound created an emotive atmosphere much like the scratching and drawings in the surface section) allowed the research and work to be played out in different spaces and crafted different atmospheres with different spoken vocals.

Figure 6, *What if I didn't* (2007) (see enclosed CD) was a work to challenge the banal intrusive thoughts that in general the public all have. The work was played out in a concrete space, with four large (1m x 40cm x 40cm) speakers in each corner. The slight shift from

OCD into the everyday thoughts was brought forth by asking who the work was aimed at and what message/essence was the work trying to convey? In including the everyday, the work tapped into most people's minds in hearing the audio recording, evoking and alerting the audience to their own intrusive thought and actions. The work had an element of a delayed response; on first hearing it was just a whispering voice containing an intrusive thought; however, after listening and moving away from it, the whispering was still evident and hung onto (the mind of) the listener after the recording had stopped playing.

This was helped by a sense of urgency which appears in the work due to the speeding up of the spoken words, in essence, to get back to the stove and check it to see if it is turned off. The recorded work in this respect holds a sense of truth, a whispering truth, which creates an atmosphere of ethereal quality, evoking some kind of haunting of the space with a disembodied voice, an essence of 'otherness', an unseen something that has gone before.

Containment of intrusive thoughts:



Figure 7: Leitch, F. (2008). *Boxed thought*. Grease proof paper, with black paper inside. 20cmx 20cm



Figure 9: Leitch, F. (2008). *Invasive window boxes*. Grease proof paper manipulation. 80cmx100cm



Figure 8: Leitch, F. (2008). *Boxed up door way*. Grease proof paper manipulation into boxes 60cmx80cm

These works involve containment, control, contamination, internal and external surrounding the container/box which gave me a sense that keeping things in boxes hides the contents out of sight. It plays on one's mind, we can feel free when we cannot sense the contents of a box, yet on the flip side, we are intrigued to peek inside.

The relevancy to my work came from the simple notion that the feeling of freedom is down to the context box; however, the knowledge of what it contains can make you avoid it at all costs, placing it in a cupboard and shutting the door, to the extremes of burying it, either under the floor boards, or out in the landscape. Therefore, its disclosure

becomes part of the secrecy surrounding the work.

These boxes allow the viewer to observe the contents through the iridescent qualities of these greaseproof paper boxes, allowing the dark residue within (which would be the physical manifestation of the anxiety) to evoke a delicate sense of human trace through ghosting, and the use of the in-between space, which slowly builds up in doorways and windows, forming boundaries, inhibiting and impeding the dweller from exiting the rooms; in short, they were building a tomb from the inside out. The sound is played from within the boxes, creating a fragmented discourse of intrusive thoughts which occurred in the given domestic space.

Boxes are stored away in attics and basements, the contents are hidden from view and occupy spaces we rarely access. Figure 9, *Invasive window boxes* (2008) commented on the secrecy, paranoia of the unseen, generated by the subconscious, revealing how these internal psychological nagging are common to us all and how frustrating they can become when left to manifest.

However, the limitation of these works laid within the boxes representing an abstraction of the effect on the space rather than the explanation. The intrusive thought was forced

upon the space rather than allowing the subtle flow of the condition to morph the internal domestic mapping of the space, thus formulating a container within a container, being me and my intrusive thoughts.

Communication of loss:

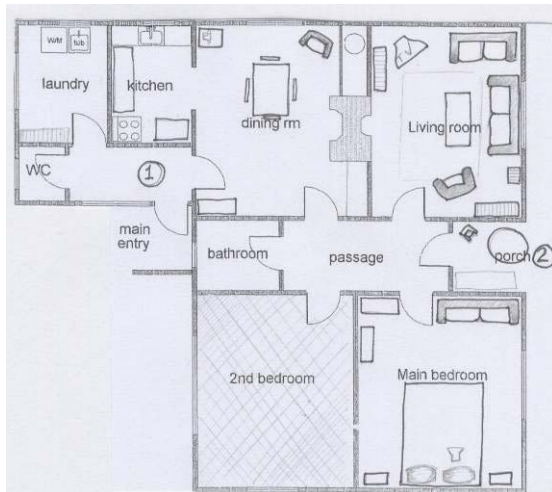


Figure 10: Leitch, F. (2008) *Shrouded Window*. Muslin cloth, over window. 1.30mx1m

I found a void of emotive communication in my research, consisting of a lack of personal connection with my OCD/intrusive thoughts, the depression it caused and the use of my domestic space for communicating these aspects. All three concepts pulled together by a diary extract I found '*Depression envelops me like a dirty muslin shroud. Can see through it, but all is grey. Of which I added 'Can see through it, but all is black and translucent...it removes all the sound from the house, cancelling out the bird song, road, creaking floor boards...leaving me with nothing but negative haunting silence ...' (Leitch 2008).* To fully understand the concept of the unseen, indefinable qualities of the depressive state, I

shifted the sound aspect to include silence. The communication of loss, associated with the act of decontamination, held aspects of sensory deprivation in cancelling out the sound which became pivotal in previous works, earplugs were added to the experience to induce sensory deprivation, a inner spiritual silence and to heighten the experience of containment; the self is contained within the body which navigates and maps the domestic space, thus the home is turned into the container. The project moved towards the more sculptural notion of hanging the muslin in the cleaned out area, thus evoking the everyday implied, using the undefined emotive quality of depression to framing the space, thus creating a silent stillness of the inner spirit. The Muslin shroud creates a sense of inertia associated with depression and loss.

The continuous cleaning and removing of objects from the space, created a disembodiment from the space, cleaning out the space to please the condition of OCD/intrusive thoughts which governs my domestic space.



Leitch, F. (2008) *Navigation of space around No. 10 Bowen St.*

The floor plan of No. 10 Bowen St was drawn out to show the zones and the personal navigation of each section. However, it does not just show the rooms' function, but also maps myself onto the space, archiving, navigating, documenting my behaviour and ultimately revealing how I occupy the home on a day to day basis.

The map lays down the ground work for identifying the pivotal moments of intrusive thought, communicating to the viewer when, where and how they manifest in my private space. This also brings forth a discussion into how my body and the site inter-twined, revealing a hybrid entity which is forever morphing and changing the way I navigate and travel my home emotionally and physically.

Concluding material:

The conclusion of the final work will be written after December 5th when the final photographing of my work will occur. These photographs will illustrate the aftermath of the exhibition which will run from the 4-5th December 2008, in which approximately 30 people will be contaminating my domestic dwelling when viewing the research project and its outcome. The photographer will be instructed to follow my navigated path around the home while I decontaminate the space using basic cleaning methods, such as hoovering, dusting, washing up cups and glasses, through to the minute removal of any hairs from upholstery and the masking tape on the floor which will inevitably catch lint from the visitors.

However, the work will not end at this stage. A further decontamination of the space will include the removal of walls and an extension, creating new rooms and corridors to remap. This will involve re-navigating the body in the space, concentrating on how the body reacts, morphs and is challenged by the space provided. The decisions that are to be made in navigating the new space (not just in the new space), but while the breakdown between the old and new space is formed, will challenge the internal and external boundaries of the

dwelling. While this is occurring, duration of time will also take its place in the continuing investigation of No. 10 Bowen St and its growth and change. Thus the conclusion will be essentially a revealing of boundaries, body, domestic, dwelling, and ultimately revealing how we navigate our living spaces, what they reveal about us, and how we go about our daily lives.

Final write up of work and the final aspects of study.

10 Bowen St.





(Fig. 1) Leitch, F. (2008). *Sound installation in the bedroom on bedside cabinet.*



Leitch, F. (2008). *Sound installation in the bedroom on bedside cabinet. (Detail).*

The final exhibition (as a conclusion to the exegesis) focused on the house as a container, housing many previous works⁷⁹, placing them

into a domestic setting. The reason for this was to place the works back in the context in which they originated, thus making the experience more intense. As stated earlier in the exegesis, all references to OCD have been removed from the work, in order to bring the project more in line with the everyday experiences of a larger group within the population.

⁷⁹ The complete list:

Leitch, F. (2008) *Bug under vase*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Coffer of hair*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Entrance to dwelling, decontamination zone*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glad Wrapped exterior flowers*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Glad Wrapped fireplace*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glad Wrapped postcards, rosary and worry beads*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glass preserving jar*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Hair Pull*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Kiwi fruit*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Pick* (Film); Leitch, F. (2007) *Picking Tools*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Potatoes left for five weeks*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Taped up cupboards, against dust and contamination*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Taped up floor*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Taped up walls against vermin*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Taped up window*; Leitch, F. (2008) *The house as a garment*; Leitch, F. (2007) *'What if', 'if only', 'I should have', 'did I?'* (CD);



(Fig. 2) Leitch, F. (2008). *Masking taped living room, with Pick (2008) film on the DVD.*



(Fig. 3) Leitch, F. (2008). *Glad-rap covered lounge inner porch handle.*

The main previous works which were included in the final exhibition were *'What if'?* (2007) and *'Pick'* (2008) (a re-recording of the original).

The audience would have heard this installation through earplugs; this was intended to make them listen more carefully to the words used.

Pick (2007) (Fig. 2) was re-recorded for the final exhibition in order to achieve a better quality of picture. The installation was placed in the lounge, a place for relaxing. This is the space where the intrusive thoughts manifest into the action of picking, and therefore the reason why this work was placed there.

In order to create a more poignant environment for the final exhibition, new works were created to this end.

The first step was to further isolate the audience from some of their senses, in order to intensify their experience. Earplugs were given to the individual before they entered the space; they were to insert them before they entered the property. This would immediately reduce the auditory feedback the individual would gain from their surroundings, and would force them to try to overcome this temporary disability by listening harder.

The next stage in the journey through the installation was the entry to the space.



(Fig. 4) Leitch, F. (2008). *Masking taped Sealed cupboards, floor and visitors flowers and fruit bowl with powerful Dettol smell.*



(Fig. 5) Leitch, F. (2008). *Visitors flowers under plastic.*

Upon entry the individual would experience the feeling of Glad Wrap (Fig. 3) on their hand as they touched the handle of the door to open it. This was designed to further enhance the feeling of decontamination and isolation from the exterior world.

The individual would then be hit with the overwhelming smell of Dettol (Fig. 4). This was intended to support the theme of decontamination; the smell of Dettol being linked with the smell of hospitals and sterilisation. In order to do this, Dettol was periodically wiped on floorboards (and on the masking tape on all the floors, Fig. 7), tables and surfaces so that the smell would remain pungent throughout the exhibition.

In order to support the containment theme of the exhibition, works were created which involved placing organic matter from outside the home in stasis within the home⁸⁰.

In order to beautify the house, objects such as flowers are brought inside (Fig. 5-6), but they contain organic matter which will contaminate the space. Placing them behind glass or Glad Wrap will allow them to beautify the home without the negative aspect of contamination.

⁸⁰ Namely the works: Leitch, F. (2008) *Bug under vase*; Leitch, F. (2007) *Coffer of hair*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glad Wrapped exterior flowers*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glad Wrapped postcards, rosary and worry beads*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Glass preserving jar*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Kiwi fruit*; Leitch, F. (2008) *Potatoes left for five weeks*;



(Fig. 6) Leitch, F. (2008). *Plastic bagged Hydrangeas*.



(Fig. 8) Leitch, F. (2008). *Contemplation on Decontamination after Visitors had gone*.



(Fig. 7) Leitch, F. (2008). *Masking taped hallway*.

Even though the final exhibition was based around the themes of containment and decontamination, the work progressed beyond the boundaries of the space.

While individuals waited to gain entry to the exhibition, neighbours and passers-by stopped and engaged with what was going on. Groups were formed of individuals who had experienced the exhibition, and of individuals who were waiting to experience the exhibition.

This located the work not only within the exhibition space, but outside of its' boundaries.

The experience formed a duration of response in many individuals, lasting days for some.

Due to this feedback from viewers, on

reflection I feel the exhibition was successful in its' aims. The decontamination of the house after the visitors left took some weeks, (Fig. 8) simply due to needing to photograph the work and how comfortable I felt with the house being airless due to the taped up windows and doors. The stuffiness in the home became too much to bear in the summer heat, so the tape was removed and windows allowed to be opened. This has changed the work and the way in which I navigate the space; the boundaries between external and internal have been broken down and replaced with more intrusive thoughts. The essence of the work will continue to morph between these two factors to create new works from the old.

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