



Typographical poetics:

A contemplation on memory and loss at the Patea, Cool Stores and Freezing Works

by David Lewis Sinfield

**The telling of stories can be a profound
form of scholarship, moving serious
study close to the frontiers of art**

(Featherstone, 1989, p. 377)

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This exegesis is submitted to the **Auckland University of Technology**
for the degree of **Master of Philosophy**

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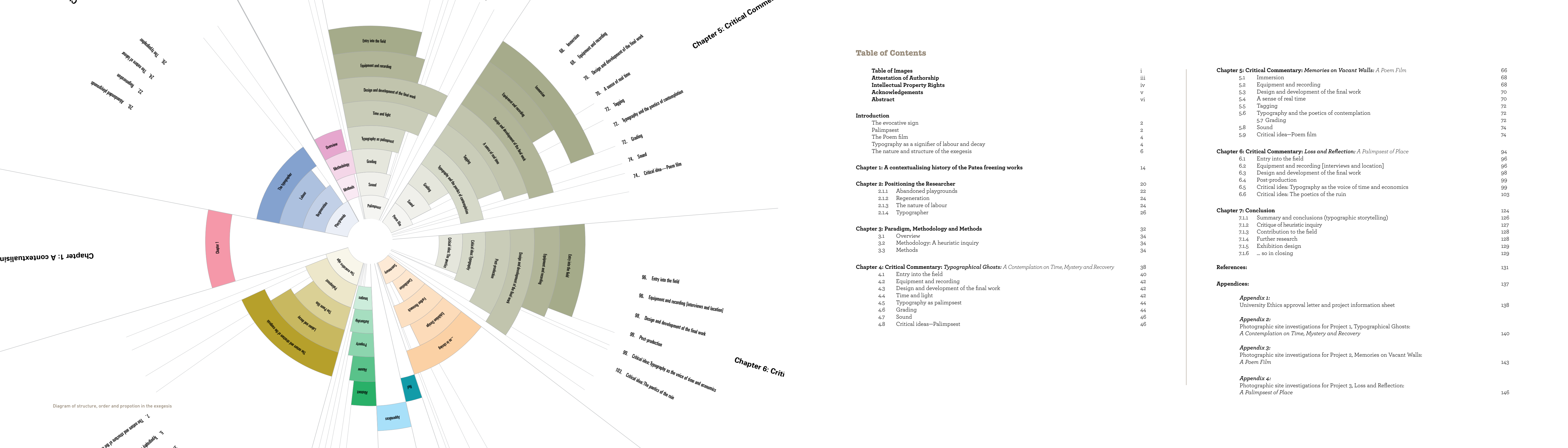


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David Lewis Sinfield

David Sinfield

Date: April 2016

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vacant buildings as more than the closure of an economic unit, they are symbols of a loss of faith on a very visceral level. Kia kaha.

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[1] The International Conference on Design Principles and Practices, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan, 6th–8th, March 2013

[2] The International conference on the Image, Chicago University, Chicago, 18th—22nd October 2013

[3] The International Moodlemoot Conference, Melbourne Conference Centre, Melbourne Australia, 23rd – 26th, June 2013

[4] The International ePic conference, Greenwich University, Greenwich London, 9th—11th July 2014

Abstract

The telling of stories can be a profound form of scholarship, moving serious study close to the frontiers of art. (Featherstone, 1989, p.377)

This practice-led research project is concerned with typographical poetics and the eroding forces of time, materiality and the elements. Using the abandoned Patea Freezing Works in Taranaki as a site of consideration, it explores how an interface between what is written, what

is thought, and what is lost, might operate as a form of typographic film poetry.

In so doing, the thesis creatively explores the poetics of palimpsest. Through layers of time, recollection, photography, film, sound and typographical thought, it asks “What is the potential of spatio-temporal typography to speak for the evocative nature of vacated sites of labour?”

Developed through a series of short, typographical poems, the project is concerned with subjective response. It questions the potentials of typography as a nuanced and temporal voice that might be employed to speak for the poetics of loss.

Typographical poetics:

A contemplation on memory and loss at the Patea Cool Stores and Freezing Works

Introduction

The evocative sign

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), destiny metaphorically watched the world's moral decay through the bespectacled eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. His face and an erosion of typography looked down on a valley of ashes from a slowly decaying billboard.

The peeling sign is an evocative image. It may be seen as a marker of an original purpose (advertising), but also a marker of time. It not only signifies place (Clark & Bell, 1994), memorial (Ings, 2001) and social class (Sinfield, 2013), but it also becomes woven into our personal narratives of place. These narratives Olney suggests, provide “contexts and patterns through which we can read, understand, re-realize, and transmit our experience” (1998, p.315). Billings argues that objects like billboards “do not

simply exist in a crude material sense but rather live out complex self-perceived narratives” (2009, p.2). These signs can constitute narratives of identity.

Painted signage often seen on the side of buildings, sometimes more than four stories high has gradually become a texture of flaking memories. These whispers of old paint now allude to an erosion of time, the demise of craft and memories of the use of social space.

Broadly, this thesis deals with four ideas:

- Palimpsest
- The Poem film
- Kinetic typography as a resonant expression of lived experience
- The poetics of the ruin

These concepts underpin the development of three poetic, typographical projections that draw their inspiration from a now abandoned freezing works^[5] in Patea, a small town in Taranaki New Zealand.

Palimpsest

The word Palimpsest derives its name from the Latin *palimpsestus* and refers to a piece of manuscript on which later writing has been overlayed on earlier inscription or images. Palimpsest has its origins in a form of medieval recycling. Due to the high cost of manufacture, from the sixth century forward, parchments or vellums were constantly reused. The words on these manuscripts were either washed or scraped off so new writing could be applied. However, the process of erasure left parts of the original texts still visible in places and this residue

[5] Freezing works are factories where sheep, pigs and cattle are slaughtered and the meat processed for human consumption. The meat is packed and stored in refrigeration units, then shipped to national and international markets.

1. *Opposite.*

Hand painted advertisement for a tailors on the side of a vacant Chicago building. In October 2013, I visited Chicago to deliver a conference paper called the *Semiotics of Business signage: How typography is used in impoverished and deprived areas of New Zealand*. Whenever I visit new places I make a point of walking off the tourist track so I might experience something of the unguarded essence of the place. During my walks through the back streets of the city I saw constant examples of such buildings, still bearing multi-storied wall advertisements. Now speaking with the typographical volume of ghosts. For me such texts are emotionally rich and deeply poetic. Their handcrafted typography, paint flecked erosions and loss of definition, are artistic statements in a palimpsestic gallery that the conventional art world rarely considers.



was called the *scriptio inferior*, or ‘underwriting’. Such writing, sometimes up to ten layers, produced the distinctively textured effect of the palimpsestic manuscript.

In the last fifty years the term palimpsest has been applied to other areas including architecture, archaeology, and geomorphology, where it has been used to describe erasure and residue on layered geological, social and architectural texts. In this thesis I use the concept of palimpsest in the manner of recent anthropologists and social geographers like Paul Basu (1997), Barbara Bender (1999), Andre Cobo (1983), Jasper Knight & Stephan Harrison, (2013) and Sven Lukas, (2005), who frame land as a palimpsest where erasures and exposures of lived lives are partially eroded or made manifest to the researcher. Within my work I use the concept of palimpsest as a means of discovery (both personal and factual) and a form of contemplation on time and place. I visit abandoned sites like the Patea Freezing Works and they speak to me in layered voices that talk of occupation and loss. I am surrounded by the ghosts of time and absence. In this company I photograph, film and typographically compose/decompose what is revealed, erased and imagined.

The Poem film
My impressions I compose as poems films. The poem film may be described as a combination of sound, imagery and spoken

or written words that are orchestrated to create meaning in a film text. William Wees in his 1984 work, Words and Moving Images notes, “When a poem appears as titles in a poetry-film, typography and graphics become significant considerations for the filmmaker, not to mention the timing and method of making the words appear and disappear” (p. 111). Broadly, the poem film is essentially a visual language that uses a non-linear non-sequential flow of images and spoken or written words (in the form of static or kinetic typography).

The poem film may be traced back to artists like Man Ray, Hans Richer and Louis Delluc, and poets like Herman Berlandt, Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The cross over between poets, artists and filmmakers has created distinctive relationships between words and imagery that have added rich dimensions to traditional, written, lyrical form.

The poem film has increasingly been framed as an art form that uses the moving image as its principal vehicle. Since the turn of the century it has been the focus of a number of dedicated festivals including the Literaturwerkstatt/ZEBRA Poetry Film Festival (Berlin and Seoul), the Felix Poetry Festival (Antwerp), the Rabbit-Heart Poetry Film Festival (Worcester), The Roma Poetry Film Festival (Rome), the Cin(E)-Poetry Festival (California), and the Sadho Poetry Film Festival (New Delhi). The

media form has also featured in television series of poetry films,^[6] and has been the subject of a number of academic theses (Kim, 2010; Leropoulos 2010 and Speranza, 2002).

I use a distinctly typographic consideration of the poem film as a way of expressing the nature of memory, loss and labour in industrial sites. In the decaying rooms of Patea’s freezing works, palimpsestic text becomes a way of thinking about the eroding forces of time and my reflective engagement with space.

Rather than using voiced narration in my poem films, I employ a collection of typographical expressions that transform as other objects vanish or reappear. I use texture, angles and fades within the typography to suggest integration with built space. Ambiance is established using natural recordings taken on the site. Accordingly, my poem films extend the corpus of work currently appearing in festivals because they seek to locate the lyrical and palimpsestic within filmed architectural space.

Typography as a signifier of labour and decay
Because this thesis considers the poem film as a palimpsest, I am also concerned with the potentials of typography^[7] in both static and kinetic^[8] form. I see typography as more than a group of letters combined to produce a word or sentence. The characters speak with a distinctive dialect made up of form, weight,

[6] Indicative of this is the twelve-week U.S. series, *Eyestruck* that was developed by George Aguilar and sponsored by Macromedia and Pixar Animation.

[7] Typography is the art and technique of arranging pre-designed typefaces in order to make text legible and aesthetically pleasing.

[8] Kinetic (or time based) typography refers to type that may be read within a moving image text. Emphasis is placed on the animation of the word as well as its formal typographic qualities.

2. *Opposite.*
Hand lettered signage for a local garage in Otara, Auckland, New Zealand; May 2013.
Here we see distinctive and vernacular approaches to spacing and lettering that openly transgress formal typographical conventions. However, in so doing the sign expresses a playful irreverence and a sense of belonging to a socio-economic environment that operates in opposition to the homogenising nature of affluent large businesses with their computerised, precise, genericised, branded signage.



space, tone and texture. When they operate in spatio-temporal environments, issues of time, rhythm and three-dimensionality become additional considerations. When such type appears in palimpsestic signage it becomes a combination of original structure and intension, and processes of damage and decay. As it is subjected to temporal erosion it develops a unique aesthetic where the idiosyncratic process of hand lettering and the destabilising ravages of environmental and social impact (like vandalism of palimpsestic graffiti) alter its meaning.

Ruskin (1857) said “It is not the material but the absence of human labour which makes things worthless” (p. 45). By extension I suggest that when hand lettered signage decays and becomes part of a palimpsest we are not seeing the erosion of the mechanical but, a subsuming of valued human activity into a substrate of human experience. The eccentric nature of spacing and embellishment, responsive and tailor-made to original sign dimension and purpose, carries with it a distinct human voice. These signs bear the marks of making that has produced typographic idiosyncrasies that may be understood as both type and image. The strangely spaced words operate as a kind of vernacular irreverence. When such signs are the voices of local businesses speaking in a local dialect, to local people their marks of making are as much human as they are social (Figure 2).

As a graphic and typographical designer I am drawn to the sense of authenticity in these signs. I am interested in their typographical construction and composition and the nature of their dialects.

Salen (2001) notes that typographic treatments can operate as a form of cultural dominance. She suggests that typography operates as a “visual voice over, which constitutes a... symbolic environment, as well as the organic process by which a standardized voice is generalized across an entire range of cultural expression” (p. 134). Thus type faces like Cooper Black, Helvetica, Bell Gothic, Arial, Univers, Century School Book, and Times New Roman have become ubiquitous voices to which we have grown accustomed in corporate signage. Salen suggests these faces are utopian and generic, “belonging nowhere, region less, without accent” (ibid.). In a mediated, global environment, she suggests they have no dialect and no affiliation to region and, as seemingly non-aligned; they are culturally superficial and stereotypical. Thus the standardised conventions of their use she suggests mark “exclusionary distinctions between standard and non-standard speakers” (ibid.).

Brumberger (2003) argues that we assign personality/emotional attributes both to typefaces and to passages of text, and as a

consequence, typographical treatments may be understood as having personas that convey not only visual texture and mood, but also rhetorical stances that vary in their emphases (p. 208). As an extension of this, Helfand (2004) has argued that kinetic type offers a distinctive language “with its own grammar, its own syntax, [and] its own rules” (p. 278). This language she suggests differs from traditional conventions and values associated with type as print. Kinetic typography enables a reconceptualisation of the purpose of type, because it has the ability to convey deeper meaning than conventional printed text (Hillner, 2009; Lewis & Nadeau, 2009). As temporal typography alters over time (either as film poetry or as a palimpsestic device), it delays the communicative function of a word and allows it to be viewed as a more abstract piece of imagery (Hillner, 2009). This enables typography to act as a medium through which ideas can be translated to the reader in a form that stimulates their senses and has subsequent emotional resonance.

The nature and structure of the exegesis

The contributing concerns of this thesis: palimpsest, poetry film and typography are embedded and creatively considered within three creative artefacts. These constitute the final exhibition of work.^[9] However, these ideas are also unpacked and explained in the body of this exegesis. Because the thesis explores sound

[9] Project 1. *Typographical Ghosts: A contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery.*
Project 2. *Memories on Vacant Walls: A Poem Film.*
Project 3. *Loss and Reflection: A Palimpsest of Place.*

3. *Opposite.*
Evidence of historical signwriting on the facia of the freezing works at Patea. Layers of type painted at different times, decay along with the concrete surface they originally adorned. Letterforms have faded, flaked and cracked to produce a distinctive form of palimpsest.



and moving image it is extremely difficult to adequately discuss iterations of the inquiry in print form. However, it is equally difficult to share in the relationships, proportions, and subtle design features of the works in a spatial temporal format.

Consequently I have chosen to explain my ideas within the exegesis in two publications. The written content is the same in both but it is presented in different formats.

The first is an interactive PDF that allows for a consideration of sound, movement and enables me to explain distinct approaches to time and edited emphasis in the work. Because poetry film is essentially kinetic, the reader can click on the mouse, open the page and the imbedded audio-visual file will automatically load and play. As one reads through the text one is able to hear and watch material under discussion. Each audio-visual file lasts approximately five to seven minutes and will continue to play until the chapter reaches its conclusion. This means if the reader navigates to another section of the chapter before the moving image piece has finished, they will still hear the sound from the previous piece playing as an aural palimpsest. Sound however stops at the conclusion of each chapter.

The second format is a print publication. This allows the reader to consider relationships between practical experiments and

finished work in dimensions and proportions that are lost when viewing material on the screen.

The exegesis is divided into four sections. Chapter one offers a contextualising history of the Patea freezing works. As the site of reflection in the thesis, it outlines significant historical and social developments that have been formative in the nature of the buildings.

Chapter two contains a positioning of the researcher. This outlines my background and positions me in relation to the inquiry. Griffiths (1998) notes that in all research the researcher must acknowledge both his subjectivity and that of the reader because “all facts and information are value laden [and]... knowledge of human beings gets its meaning from the value system of the knowers” (p. 46). She also suggests, “the political and social dimensions of individuals’ values systems” are important and that “...knowledge gets its meaning from the political position of the knowers, as well as from other value systems” (ibid.). Thus this chapter offers a personal narrative in a comparatively vernacular tone. The written text and accompanying audio-visual files recall histories of where I grew up and outline how the gestation of this essentially New Zealand research surfaced from a decaying socio-urban landscape of Kentish Town, in North London.

The third chapter of the exegesis discusses the methodology used to explicate the work. Again, this chapter operates as a discourse between audio-visual texts, written analysis and reflection. Situated paradigmatically as a subjective (thus qualitative), creative practice thesis, it employs a heuristic methodological framework activated through a range of methods including site identification, knowledge relating to the location, strategic reflective photographic documentation, indwelling and emotional reaction, sound recording and interviews.

Chapters four, five and six are the most detailed sections of the exegesis. Being a practice-led inquiry each offers a critical commentary on the work. Within these chapters I discuss conceptual, aesthetic and technological concerns relating to the physical outcomes of the research. The commentary relates to the design of three, projected, audio-visual poem films based on the abandoned Patea, freezing works. Chapter four, *Typographical Ghosts*, is concerned with unpacking a palimpsestic typographical investigation into the building’s façade. Chapter five considers the work, *Memories on Vacant Walls*. While discussing notions of loss it also considers the poem film as a lyrical form. Chapter six unpacks the final work *Loss and Reflection*. It reflects on kinetic typography as a resonant expression of lived experience.



4. 3 Lives, 2012: Moving image example showing the use of kinetic typography. This typographical construction looks at the narratives of four workers that have been employed under the national minimum wage in New Zealand. David Sinfield 2011. Played on interactive PDF only.

Chapter 3: Paradigm, Methodology and Methods



This chapter discusses the methodology used to explicate the work. Again, it operates as a discourse between audio-visual texts, written analysis and reflection. Situated paradigmatically as a subjective (thus qualitative), creative practice thesis, the project employs a heuristic methodological framework activated through a range of methods including site familiarisation, strategic, reflective photographic documentation, interviewing, indwelling and emotional reaction, and postproduction composition and refinement.

Chapter 4: Critical Commentary: Typographical Ghosts

In this chapter I will discuss the first of the three works that have surfaced from my creative reflection on the freezing works. *Typographical Ghosts: A Contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery* offers a consideration of typography as palimpsest and the recovery of a lost narrative. An investigation into the façade of the Patea Freezing Works wharf building has lead to the reconstruction of the lost wording on the façade and a poetic reflection on the architectural development of the building.



Chapter 5: Critical Commentary: Memories on Vacant Walls



In this second work, *Memories on Vacant Walls: A Poem Film*, I considered the potentials of film poetry. Using a single photograph of one of the Freezing Work's derelict spaces I sought a typographically poetic response to a feeling of occupation and loss I experienced.

Chapter 6: Critical Commentary: Loss and Reflection

In this third and final piece I have manipulated and layered still photography and filmed footage. Across and inside this imagery, type appears and disappears responding to voices from workers I interviewed, and to sounds I recorded on location. These elements make up a three-minute palimpsest that considers personal relationships with the buildings.



These chapters are supported by three appendices that contain photographic site investigations related to each of the respective works in the thesis (Appendix 2, 3 and 4).

The final chapter offers a conclusion to the thesis by summarizing the research findings, considering its contribution to the field, outlining future research, and discussing the exhibition design for the final display of the three texts.

Structural and proportional elements in the exegesis are illustrated in figure 5 opposite.

Chapter 1: A contextualising history of the Patea freezing works



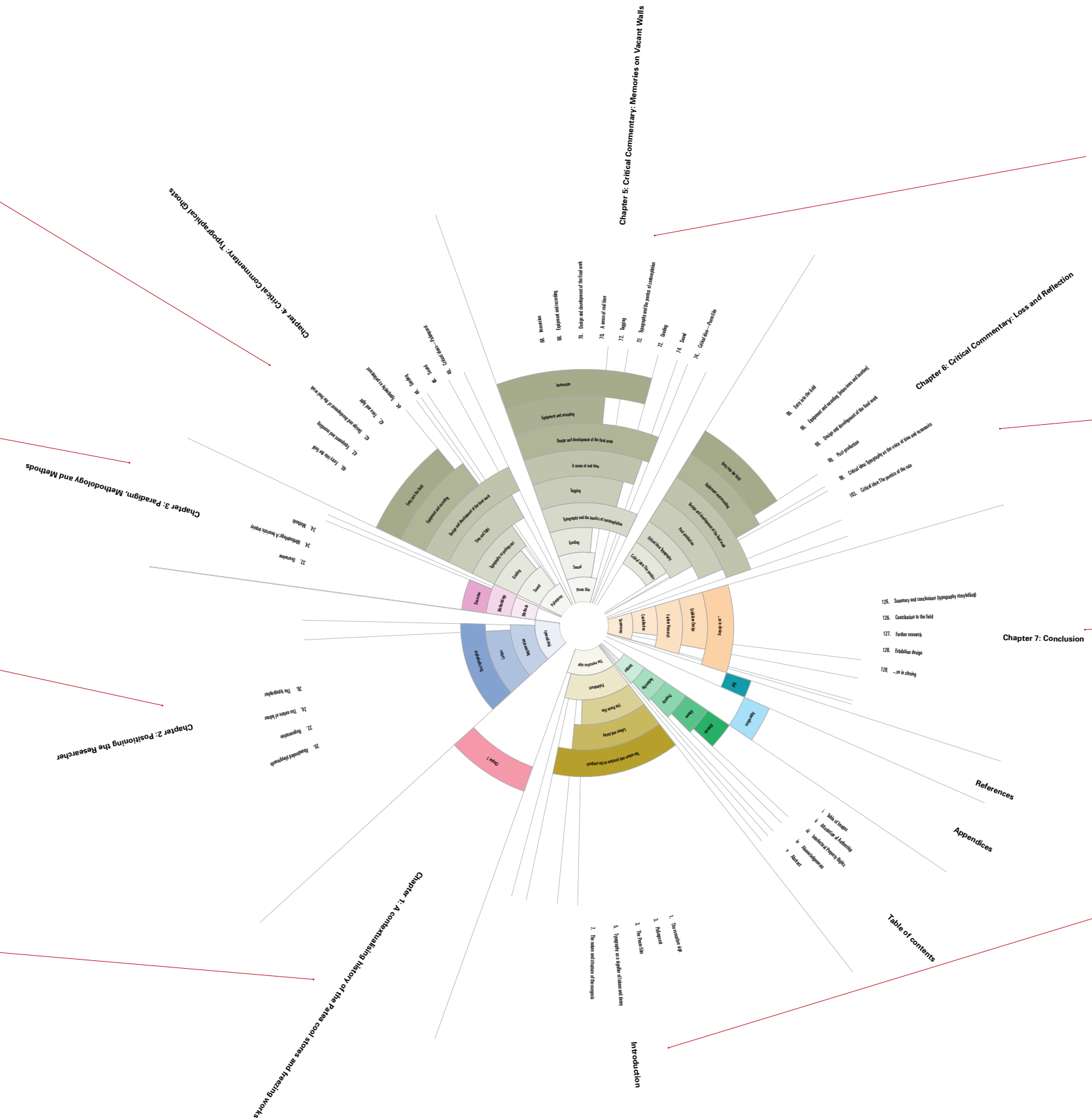
The Patea Freezing Works was established in 1881 on the true left bank of the Patea River, for the processing of woolskins and tallow. Although there was also a small amount of meat produced from this process, it was largely a by product and most of it was processed into fertilizer.

Chapter 2: Positioning the Researcher



I grew up a working class boy on the other side of the world to Patea. While the walls of its plant resonated with the sounds of slaughter and packaging, mine rang with the noise of building construction. However, both of these worlds were sites of labour, open and closed daily by the sound of a siren and sheltering lives of working families who sourced an income from the demand for labour that they generated. In explaining why this project resonates with me as a designer, it is useful to explain this connection.

Figure 5. Diagram of structure, order and proportion in the exegesis.





Chapter 1: Contextualising the history of Patea cool stores and freezing works

Patea Freezing Works was established in 1881 on the true left bank of the Patea River, for the processing of woolskins and tallow. Although there was also a small amount of meat produced from this process, it was largely a by product and most of it was processed into fertilizer.

The *West Coast Meat and Produce Export Company* was formed on the site in August 1883 as a tinning plant and tallow factory. In June 1897 fire broke out and destroyed the slaughterhouse and tinning building. The boiling down plant was also partially damaged but the outbuildings were saved.

However, the building reopened on April the 5th 1898. The new factory covered twice the area formerly occupied and new plant and appliances were installed. Capacity was expected to rise to the slaughter and processing of a thousand sheep a day. This resulted in

employment for more than sixty men. Beef was taken in at the end of the sheep season and pork was also processed so the operation was able to continue all year. In 1901 cool stores for handling dairy produce were added to the structure and twenty years later, Patea had become the largest cheese exporting port in the world.

In November 1904 the freezing was introduced to the works. The *Western Packing and Canning Company* was wound up and replaced by the *Patea Freezing Company*. At this stage the works began freezing and canning mutton, beef and pork.

Over the next sixty years the company became the primary site of employment in the district, hiring over 900 people at the height of processing. However, the works increasingly developed a reputation for stoppages and under productiveness, so when over-processing

capacity throughout the country became apparent in the early 1980s, Patea became one of the first factories to be closed down. It ceased operations in August 1982, at a time when it was largely owned by foreign interests.^[10]

The aftermath of the factory’s closure has been significant. On Waitangi Day in 2008 the abandoned, vandalised and deteriorating buildings were destroyed by fire. The arsonist was never found. In spite of public calls for the work’s demolition and removal, the buildings containing asbestos cladding, ash dumps, and collapsing structures, began a more rapid phase of disintegration. Finally late in 2009, after heated negotiations and protests from local residents at the negative impact the factory had on perceptions of their town, a clean up of the site was initiated.

[10] Most of the works were the property of the U.K. Vesty Group, although parts of the site were also owned by the Australian company Escada Enterprises.



Figure 6. Home movie footage of the demolition of the freezing works chimney. Restored from data available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i47RH6f_kRo Played on interactive PDF only.

Today, the Patea Freezing works is still considered one of New Zealand's largest toxic pollution sites^[11] and remnants of the factory remain in place after lying idle for more than a quarter of a century. The chimney, which was not part of the original factory, was demolished on February 19th 2010 (Figure 6).

The demolition occurred despite pleas from local Māori to explore the possibility of preserving it as a monument to the workers who had been the lifeblood of the factory. However, conservation of the chimney had not been budgeted for and the community could not afford to pay for its repair.

Today, despite contracts to clean up the site, parts of the factory still remain intact, although time, vandalism and corrosion have scarred what was once the economic livelihood of the town

(Figure 7). Patea has suffered both socially and economically. For over a hundred years the factory was the primary source of income for generations of local families. But now the buildings and their surrounds are largely populated by long grass and corroding debris. Signs warning errant visitors of the site's hazards have disappeared and trespass notices signalling the potential of prosecution are overlooked.

However, despite the factory's demise, the town of Patea has retained a strong sense of community. Although economically challenged, stories and artefacts relating to its history have been carefully assembled and documented at the local Aotea Utangauni-Museum of South Taranaki. As such the stories of the site and the lives that populated it are partially preserved and live on as part of a palimpsestic narrative of occupation and experience.

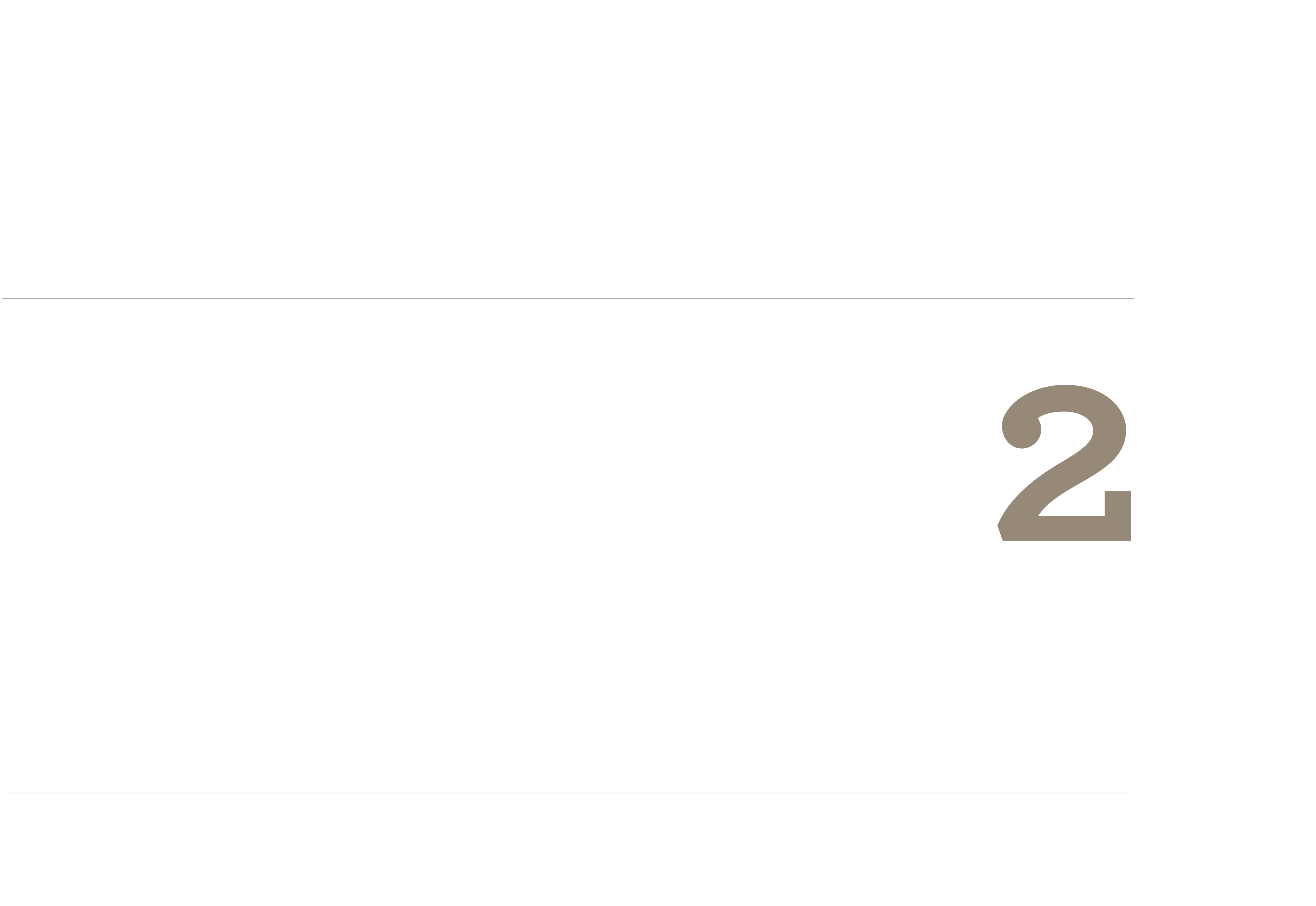


Figure 7. Workers at Patea freezing works circa 1950. Property of Hari Benevides. Used with permission.



8. Opposite.
Interior of an abandoned storage room at Patea freezing works (January, 2014).

[11] Reynold's (2008) site investigation report for the Taranaki Regional Council highlighted among other things: three underground fuel storage tanks with residual contamination, contaminated boiler fuel oil storage, infected groundwater wells, asbestos, electrical and mechanical equipment, tank sludge reservoirs, and fellmongery from wool stripping, liming, neutralizing and pickling. This contained chromium, manganese, copper, ammonia, sulphides, acids, sodium hydroxide, lime, formaldehyde, solvents, and cyanide. In addition there were itemised concerns relating to paint mix tanks, coal tar seal, toxic ash and dust and debris in buildings.



2

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Chapter 2: Positioning the Researcher

I grew up a working class boy on the other side of the world to Patea. While the walls of its plant resonated with the sounds of slaughter and packaging, mine rang with the noise of building construction. However, both of these worlds were sites of labour, open and closed daily by the sound of a siren and sheltering lives of working families who sourced an income from the labour that they generated. In explaining why this project resonates with me as a designer, it is useful to understand this connection.

9. *Opposite.*
Peckwater council flats Kentish Town North London.
This is the playing area outside of the flats where I was born.





10. A simple hand painted sign on wood showing eroded text from the housing estate where I was born. The word Appleford (the name of the flats were I grew up) is just visible.



11. Many of the street signs dating back to the mid to late fifties were hand painted and have not stood the eroded forces of weather and environment. Today, they function almost as typographical ghosts, bearing the semblance of a remembered state, now grown pale and incomplete with the passing of time. Peckwater Street is the street where I was born in 1961.



12. Peckwater council flats in Kentish Town North London. Shown here is Appleford Block, the site of my first home.

2.1.1 Abandoned playgrounds

The photographic records shown in this chapter were taken in July 2014 during a ten-day period when I returned to the United Kingdom. They document the world in which I grew up, played and worked. Although some of these areas have been gentrified over the years, there are locations that remain the same. Old hand painted street signs can still be seen if you know where to look. The landscape of memory I retrace here maybe seen as a kind of palimpsest and the decaying typographic signs (be it commercial, civic or graffiti) are the substrate of a British working class childhood. They operate not only as signifiers of social space, but also as catalysts for memory.

I grew up in London during the late 1960s and early 1970s. I lived in streets that still bore the scars of the Second World War.

After more than two decades since the bombing that decimated parts of the city there had been little government investment in working class areas like those in which my childhood unfurled. In more prosperous middle class areas I passed on weekend excursions I saw the effects of re-generation. Damaged structures were razed, buildings repaired and systems put in place that turned the anguish of loss into leafy roads and comfortable reminders of urban regeneration. Class was marked by the postcode where you lived and by the buildings that surrounded you.

In my world there were derelict places unsuitable for living, where we played. They were bombsites. The buildings eroded as time and adverse weather bore down on them. We were oblivious of the dangers of unexploded bombs and walls that

could collapse on us, although stories of such events punctuated our childhoods. We knew we were not supposed to play in these places, but the walls and enclosures were haunted by a thousand possibilities. In the decay and rubble our imaginations ran wild. We played hide and seek and war games in empty corridors and vacant rooms. These buildings were not fenced off or controlled by roaming security guards. There were too many and the costs of repair were low on the government’s priorities. Small, official signs warning “Danger! Keep Out” became our invitations to adventure. We broke the law by entering, but there was adventure here that played out in the presence of neglect, imagination and loss.

13. Opposite.
The walk way next to the Grand Union Canal Camden road.





14. Rubbish bins outside the Appleford Block. These receptacles are positioned by shoots connected to all floors in the building.



15. An example of a local business on Kentish Town road, no longer able to sustain itself economically.

2.1.2 Regeneration

Gradually, in some working class neighbourhoods London was being regenerated. These were the first signs of the high-rise tenement blocks developed under the Wilson^[12] government. They were towering concrete boxes and a new, state solution for 'modern living'. Devoid of mystery they held only the present, they had no histories, no hauntings of the past and they were destined to become a failed social experiment. When I think back, I realise that we were lucky that the part of London where we lived bordered the wealthy area of Highgate.^[13] Because of this, where I lived was not submitted to the high-rise concrete towers that infected the views of other suburbs.

These decades were tough on working class families. My father was abusive and my elder siblings left home. My brother lived on the streets and my sister fled into marriage. When I was seven, my mother could take no more, so she grabbed what she could carry and she and I went to live at my aunt's. We had nowhere

else to go. My aunt's house was small so we all slept in one room on the floor. We lived like this for eighteen months until my mother finally managed to secure a council flat of her own. We lived on the ground floor of a five-story block with a shared, central playing area.

2.1.3 The nature of labour

When I left school, my first job was as a labourer working on a building site in North London. Here I renovated Georgian and Victorian houses that had either been partly damaged by the war or invaded by nature after years of vacancy. These were not the concrete monoliths of British modernism. They held the residue of past lives. The peeling wallpaper, discarded artefacts and fragments of personality were reminders of something ephemeral. Their decaying delicacy was pitched against the brutality of work.



16. Entrance to a playing area with its gate left open. Dogs roam freely in this park.

17. Opposite. The abandoned shops of Kentish Town. Examples of palimpsestic typography can be seen on the eroded facias of buildings. These combined with more recent political typographic commentary operate as a kind of contested social dialogue.



[12] James Harold Wilson was a British Labour Party politician who served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1976. Towards the end of his time many of the 'bomb sites' in North London were regenerated and converted into liveable flats. Smith (1995) notes that few of "these tower blocks or high flats were designed by architects. Generally, imported systems of prefabricated construction erected by engineers were used. A main attraction was the elimination of architects' design fees" [para. 2]. These blocks he explains, "were cheaper for local authorities to build because the central government grant was greater than for low-rise housing ... How the tower block solution would work socially and environmentally was not considered" (ibid.). The designs were largely imported as units from Scandinavia (from Swedish systems in particular).

[13] We lived in Kentish Town North London. The surrounding suburbs included Highgate, Hampstead, Gospel Oak, Tufnell Park, Archway and Camden Town.

On the building sites in the UK at this time, there was a hierarchy and labourers were at the lowest level. As a bricklayer’s labourer I mixed sand and cement with a hopper^[14] but more often this was done by hand with a shovel.^[15] I carried the bricks in a hod^[16] up four flights of stairs (there were no lifts, hard hats or health and safety procedures at this time). Lugging buckets of muck^[17] seemed endless. When it showered I kept working, despite the lime in the cement working its way to the surface and burning my hands. There was nothing that you could do, plasters or gloves didn’t protect you. You just hoped for a strong downpour that might stop the bricklayers working so you would have a small break to wash the lime from the open wounds. In winter you mixed sand and cement in the snow, sleet, and freezing winds. This was not the glorious image of a rebuild profiled on the media. There was nothing heroic about labour. I had left school with few qualifications so for a working class kid there were few alternative careers opportunities. I thought this was my lot. Growing up and playing in vacated buildings and later working in them, has resulted in me being drawn back to unoccupied sites of damage and labour. Such places haunt

me because they fuse my narratives of experience with a sense of enigma, respect and mystery. When I enter such structures today, I sense lives that were once there. I walk in silence through emptied spaces not wishing to disturb them. The poetics of loss and labour are almost tangible. These are embodied sites. As a designer I try to talk about such connections.

2.1.4 Typographer

When I was nineteen I had a chance meeting with my art teacher from high school and I told her what I was doing as a job. She was disappointed to hear that I hadn’t pursued a career in the arts and told me that I should apply to university and study graphic design. This was a totally alien concept, as working classes of the time did not enter into careers such as these, and they certainly didn’t pursue higher education. Boys like me were destined to have manual careers and trades. She helped me to assemble a portfolio and apply for a place at the London College of Printing. I was accepted onto the graphic and typographic design course. I was the first person in my family to go to university. I was ecstatic, and my mother was very proud.

[14] A hopper is an electric or petrol driven machine into which sand and cement are mixed.

[15] This mix comprised four parts soft sand, one part cement, a proportional amount of water with a splash of washing up liquid to give it body. If you got it wrong the bricklayers would swear, shout, and kick the mix off the scaffolding.

[16] A hod is a three-sided box for carrying bricks. It has a long handle and is carried over the shoulder. Twelve bricks placed in a chevron pattern made up a full load. The reason for just having three sides was for speed of loading and unloading. A hod weighed 30kg when full.

[17] The word muck is a slang term used on London building sites for a mixture of sand and cement.

19. *Opposite.*
A distinctive example of a hand painted street sign from North London. The sign has been re painted at some point as the original wording can be seen beneath a layer of undercoat that has peeled away. Such signs are palimpsestic, because they carry references to periods of time, including in this case two separate interventions in red; one indicating the borough, and an earlier one showing the district code. This lettering reveals the effects of photo fugitive colour. I would suggest that the original sign contained the Borough of St Pancras as a blank. To this the street and district code would have been added in hand, by a sign writer. Over time the lettering of the street name faded and was reapplied. However the district code (NW5) has not been re painted. This accounts for the differing levels of typographic decay on the sign. It is likely that the lettering on the Borough of St Pancras has not decayed because the original red pigment was of a higher quality and less prone to photo fugitively.



18. Moving image example showing images of Kentish Town North London. Played on interactive PDF only.



When I entered the course I encountered the world of *typography*.^[18] I learned the conventions of leading,^[19] kerning^[20] and letterform construction. I was taught that type should be about arrangement in order to make the language it forms appealing yet transparent.^[21] But I also began to wonder about the visceral and poetic potentials of type. Perhaps this is because my induction into graphic design occurred in the early eighties when everything was hand produced.

This afforded a slower way of working. Calculating and casting-off^[22] type and hand producing the lettering onto finished designs made me appreciate type structure and arrangement. I learned about the physical ‘feel’ of type. I manipulated it by hand. I felt its weight and its behaviour when printed onto paper from pieces of metal type arranged in a chase.^[23] This physicality unfolded

in a studio space of labour where men and women worked together. This dynamic has been formative in how I understand typography. Its physical nature reminds me of it temporality but also of its lived social and physical contexts. The surfaces it appears on, and disappears from, the people it speaks to, and for, and its potential for clarity and enigma are as much part of its meaning as its conventions of construction.

It is these ideas of the physical nature of typography, its temporal contexts and the experience of labour and it’s vacated spaces that form the parameters inside which the creative concerns of this thesis are positioned.

[18] Typography is the art and technique of arranging type in order to make the language it forms most appealing to transparent learning and recognition. The arrangement of type involves the selection of typefaces, point size, leading, line length, the spaces between groups of letters and adjusting the space between pairs of letters.

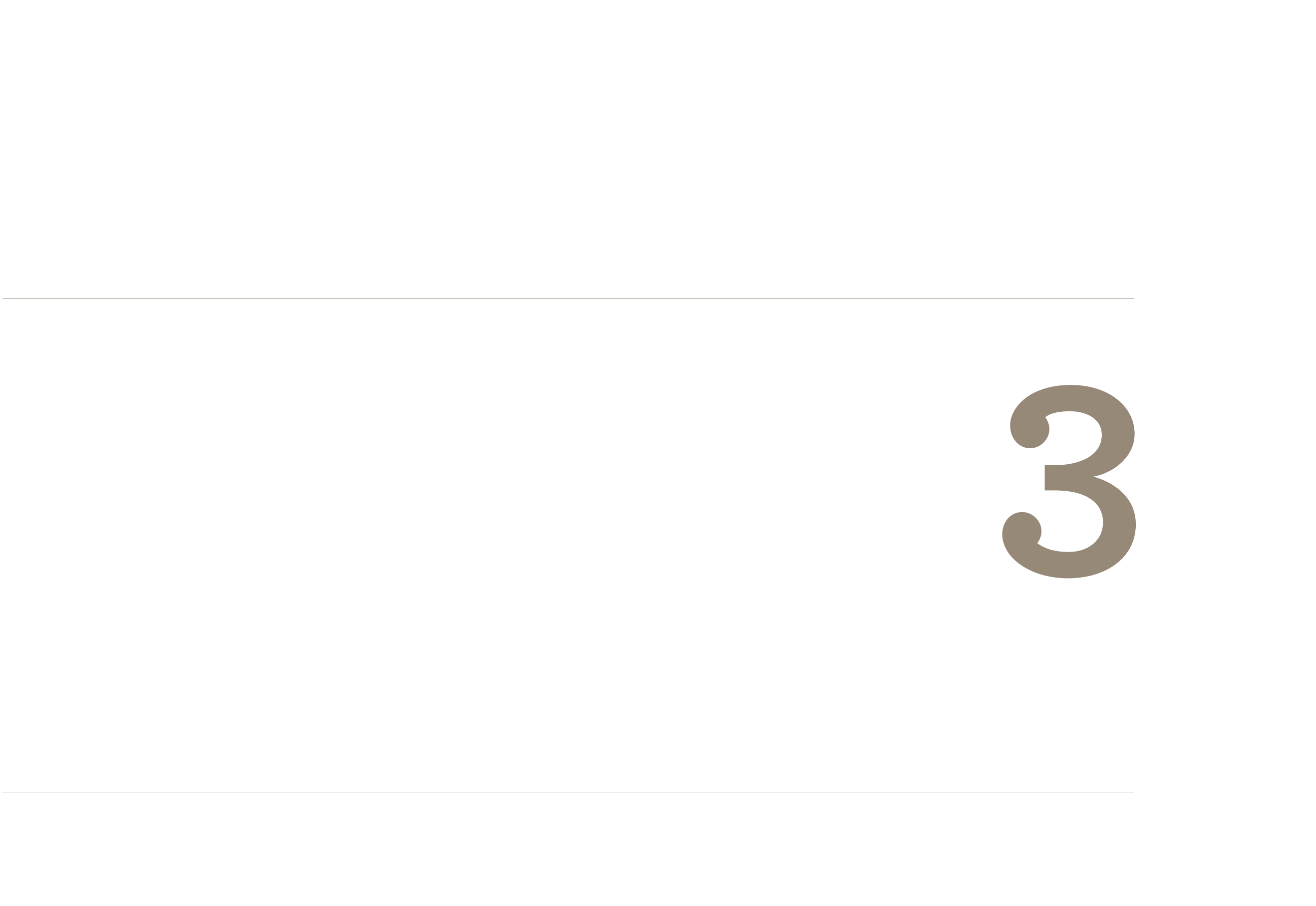
[19] Leading refers to the distance between the base-line (or the base of the capital letter on which it sits) of one line of text to another. This term first originated when thin strips of lead with varying thicknesses were inserted in between the type to increase spacing amount of space available. A common typographical convention of the period was to render all letters as capitals, and to design the initial letter of each word larger than the others.

[20] Kerning is the adjusting of space between letters or characters of a typeface so that they appear to be visually balanced.

[21] The concept of type as transparent will be discussed later in the exegesis but the idea is based on a belief articulated by Beatrice Warde (1932). Warde suggested that type should be ‘invisible’. By this she meant the reader should not notice the typeface, but instead easily comprehend what is written. She claimed therefore, that the printed word should give “no obstruction to the presentation of its content, the text” (p.16).

[22] Casting-off involves a calculation of the number of letters of a given typeface (and size) one can use to fit a designated area or page of text.

[23] The chase is the metal frame in which the galleys of type are placed. The manual composition of individual type letters from a type case, placing them in a composing stick, which holds several lines of text, then transferring them to the chase.



3

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Chapter 3: Paradigm, Methodology and Methods

20. *Opposite.*
The abandoned exterior of the wharf building. Note the trespass and danger signage.



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3:1 Overview

This chapter discusses the methodology used to explicate the work. Again, it operates as a discourse between audio-visual texts, written analysis and reflection. Situated paradigmatically as a subjective (thus qualitative), creative practice thesis, the project employs a heuristic methodological framework activated through a range of methods including site familiarisation, strategic, reflective photographic documentation, interviewing, indwelling and emotional reaction, and postproduction composition and refinement.

3:2 Methodology: A heuristic inquiry

In the creative processing of this research I employed a form of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Ings 2011; Kleining and Witt, 2000; Sela-Smith, 2002), supported by a form of indwelling (Polanyi 1967). Moustakas says, ‘Heuristic refers to the internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of

experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis’ (Moustakas, 1990, p.9). This process enables me to connect the self with the site of the inquiry and through this, increase the potentials for creative discovery in my work.

A heurisitic inquiry involves a process of discovery through trial and error and the ability to critically ‘feel’ one’s way forward using intuition and empathetic insight (Kleining & Witt 2001). Within this process I am “the insider” (Duncan, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, what I experience and create bears the signature and voice of my personal interpretation (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Accordingly, as Sela-Smith notes, heuristic inquiry “requires that the participant as-researcher focus on the feeling dimension of personal experience to discover meanings embedded therein” (2002, p. 63). Interestingly, Douglass and Moustakas (1985) describe heuristics as an attitude to research,

but I see it also as a responsive and adaptable framework that offers a rewarding system to connect an investigation to my personal experience of the question or topic of inquiry (Ings, 2011).

Using this methodology enables me to dwell inside the work to seek deeper meaning and discover directions it might suggest. This process of working is a long way from the methodologies prescribed in a commercial creative environment, where the designer is operating strategically with a set style sheets and guidelines.

3:3 Methods

Details relating to the methods used to develop the project are discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7. This is because, although involving similar media they vary within each of the three inquiries. However, broadly the project began with an initial physical investigation into the buildings. This foray was

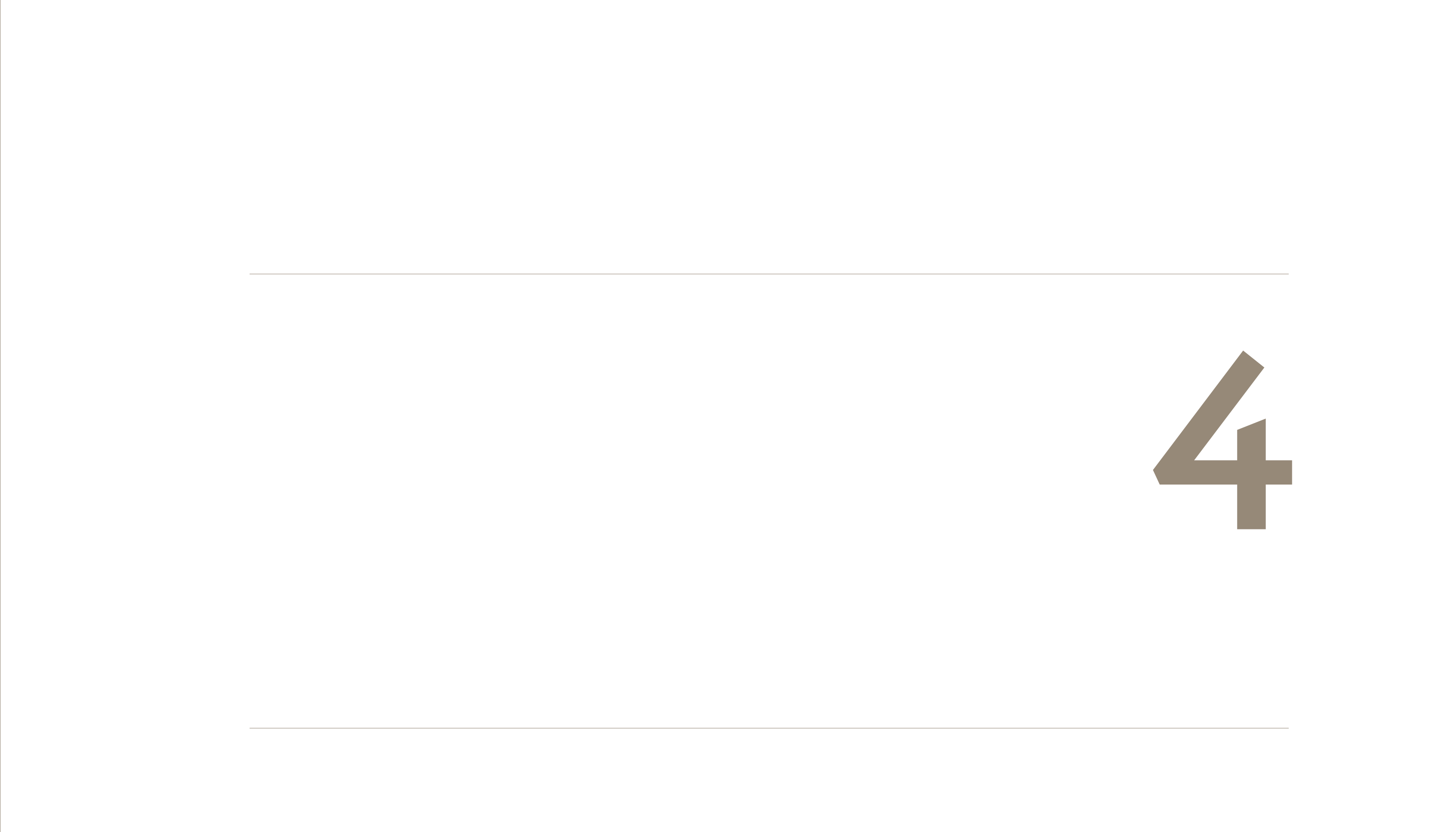
documented photographically. Because the spaces spoke so powerfully of occupation and loss I returned to Patea on three subsequent occasions to record sound, moving image footage and interviews with men and women who had worked there. During these trips I also conducted research into archives held in the Aotea Utanganui Museum. Broadly, while in the site I adopted the position of the ‘indweller’ (Polyani 1967). In this regard I walked and stood and sat and listened. I tried to ‘feel’ the absence and occupation of the building such that I drew its presences and absences into myself and dwelt within them before I began to record physical material.

When developing the three creative responses I similarly dwelt inside the data I had collected. These works took on average 120 hours to create. Because I worked immersively, I pursued a journey of discovery based on sensing my way forward through continuities within the data I had collected. While some of this

data was explicit (photographs and audio recordings), some of it was not. I carried back with me distinct emotional impressions. These were the intangibles where my interior self and the site had become mingled. In this regard I am reminded of Gregory Bateson who suggested, “the mental world – the mind – the world of information processing – is not limited by the skin” (1973 p. 429).

I processed each of the designs by employing a slow, reflective process that allowed me “to become immersed in the world and potentials of the image” (Ings, 2015, p. 4). In this approach, my thinking became dialogic. I conversed with the data and its connections and they talked back to me. Ings suggests that in this process “one thinks in tone and weight, emphasis and potential. Ideas are coloured and lit and their parameters are nuanced. Images operate with a more flexible grammar than words and one is able to connect possibilities in very abstract and intangible ways” (ibid.).

Having now briefly discussed the research design employed in the project, it is useful to see how it was applied to the development of each of the three works.



4

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Chapter 4: Critical Commentary: Typographical Ghosts: *A Contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery*

22. *Opposite.*
Remnants of the plant room at the freezing works.



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23. Rail side loading depot of the wharf side freezing works.



24. Exterior photograph showing the decay of one side of the building.

Typographical Ghosts: A Contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery

In this chapter I will discuss the first of the three works that have surfaced from my creative reflection on the freezing works.

Typographical Ghosts: A Contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery offers a consideration of typography as palimpsest and the recovery of a lost narrative. An investigation into the façade of the Patea Freezing Works wharf building has lead to the reconstruction of the lost wording on the façade and a poetic reflection^[24] on the architectural development of the building. My intention has not been a systematic historical recovery (although the project has referred closely to a number of relevant archived texts), but rather the work is a contemplation on time and subtlety. Through a compilation of still and moving images, I have traced changes in the building from the period of its full occupation as a working factory until after its closure in September 1982. In the work we experience a subtle rewinding of time that leads the viewer back in time from a dilapidated vacant building to a remembered period of work and full production.

4.1 Entry into the field

The buildings of the Patea freezing works were chosen for this project because they had been a site of labour, they had been abandoned since 1982, and their internal and external spaces bore signs of occupation both before and after the closure of the factory. The erosion of signage, decay of surface and signs of fleeting illegal occupation all suggested a form of palimpsest that was both evocative and unresolved.

I initially explored the site photographically, responding to its sense of vacancy and palimpsest. Its gutted chambers, decaying cement walls and traces of use and misuse spoke in resonances and suggestion. Sites within the building asked questions of me and I recorded these as frozen moments. This process enabled me to ‘feel’ my way towards a potential treatment of time, erasure, memory and meaning.



25. Entrance to the plant room.



26. Chimneys for the boiler and plant room.



27. Opposite.
Entrance to one of the loading depots. From here meat was loaded onto the train ready for delivery.

[24] By this I mean I have endeavored to capture something of the poetics of site change where differing architectural, typographical and environs have altered across time.



28. One of my original photographs showing the work in progress.

4.2 Equipment and recording

I used a Nikon D600, high-end stills camera, which is capable of recording high definition video footage. This camera shoots at full frame at a resolution of 24mega pixels. In conjunction with this I used a Nikor 24mm wide-angle lens capable of capturing the maximum amount of information (in this case the entirety of the building and its environs). I set the camera on a tripod 400mm above the ground to create a distinctive perspective. The shot was taken around noon on an overcast day. This meant that the architectural detail was not compromised by too many shadows. I used a small aperture to keep the depth of field as deep as possible and to maintain sharpness and clarity. Because of the overcast conditions, I set the shutter speed relatively slow. I was aware that speed was necessary because I was conscious that I was trespassing and could be easily seen by security.

4.3 Design and development of the final work

In this experiment I explored the nature of reclaimed information. I was seeking something more subtle than a methodical peeling back of time. I was interested in the mystery of what is known and what is not known. I was especially interested in how the façade on a building might be interpreted as a palimpsest and how the process of recovering meaning might be designed as a visual statement.

4.4 Time and light

I experimented with tension in the work by combining different approaches to time. The building is constructed from a still shot while the sky uses 'real time' moving footage that has been carefully placed on a mask against the background of the building (Figures 29a, 29b). Although the sky's movement is



29a: Photograph showing the original sky.

29b: Sky with the building mask.

almost imperceptible, (the day this was filmed the conditions were overcast and moderately still), it is a true representation of the time I spent recording the building. I was conscious that the diffused lighting on the structure needed to correspond exactly with the lighting conditions of the sky. This is why the sky footage was recorded separately on the same day, at the same time, in the same location. This process is more complex and time consuming than using a still image of a sky on a separate mask and manually tracking it across the frame. The end result achieves a distinctive suggestion of reality because it captures the nuances of changing cloud structures; the idiosyncratic flight of local birds, while the lighting remains consistent with the tonal rendering of the building. Thus, in this contemplation on a vacated world, almost imperceptibly, time is wound back, foliage and texture change, and vandalised structures and graffiti slowly disappear.

30. *Opposite.*
The completed, rendered drawing as shown in the moving image file.



4.5 Typography as palimpsest

When I photographed the building, its façade had become a bleached parchment. I noticed through its many layers of flaking paint and crumbling plaster, the faint residues of words. Reclaiming information from what time and weather had erased involved two processes. Firstly, I imported my photographs into software that allowed me to experiment with colour channels and various percentages of hues and brightness. I also reduced images of the façade to black and white so I could heighten contrast without the distraction of colour. These processes revealed traces of letterforms no longer evident to the naked eye.

What these processes couldn’t reclaim I recovered by applying my experience as a typographer. I knew that capital letter forms require specific spacing. This suggested that currently empty pieces of the wall must have contained longer words. Character letters all have different size widths; this is to say they are not standardised. Subsequently, I knew that a given space must belong to a certain group of letters (e.g. the letter ‘T’ consumes much less space than the letter ‘W’). Character letters also have straight, horizontal or circular components to their design^[25]. Understanding these principles enabled me to make relatively

informed guesses as to what was missing. A knowledge of the nature of type as caps or lowercase lettering and principles of justification were also helpful.

Within the typographical palimpsest careful consideration was also given to the decay of letterforms and their tonal appearance. Issues of perspective were addressed so recovered information could be mapped credibly onto existing structures that had been altered by the angle of the photograph (Figure 30).

While I was working on the piece, I found an aerial photograph showing part of the building. Although the resolution was very poor, it provided limited evidence of what was painted on the façade and gave me additional leads as to the probable styling of the typography. For instance, I was able to identify part of a construction of a letter in the top left-hand corner. Although I couldn’t identify what it was, I could ascertain its approximate size.^[26] In other parts of the façade I also noticed fragments of letters, but these were very small. However usefully, the spacing suggested a centred justification.

4.6 Grading

The subtle changes to colour saturation in the final work are not a reference to black and white photography but to a form of in betweenness and unknowingness I experienced on the site. Desaturation also, incrementally draws our attention to contrast and detail because we are not distracted by colour (Figure 30). Changes in the grade of the film take place incrementally so as not to distract from the sense of dwelling with the location. As the site’s erased features begin to resurface, the palimpsest is infused with subtle frame flickers, scratches, grain, and small amounts of dust. [Re]-creating this work was a time consuming exercise as small alterations to the image had to be individually executed. Thus foliage that had obscured details like railway lines, and architectural features like a collapsed veranda, had to be individually recreated or removed as time was retraced.

In the experiment, I used twelve individual layers to achieve the final result. While working on these I moved forward intuitively. One cannot begin in one area and systematically work across the photograph as one might in the construction of a jig saw. One moves back and forth, up and down, inside an image that operates as an integrated dynamic (Figures 33–40).

[25] For instance the letter ‘H’ is made of horizontal and vertical lines whereas the letter ‘S’ is essentially circular.

[26] Unlike contemporary type design, industrial signage during the nineteenth and twentieth century generally employed economical methods of text placement. Designs were normally centred and consumed the maximum amount of space available. A common typographical convention of the period was to render all letters as capitals, and to design the initial letter of each word larger than the others.



31. Moving Image Exploration 1. Typographical ghosts: A Contemplation on Time, Mystery and Recovery
Played on interactive PDF only.

4.7 Sound

Like image, sound in this work is also treated as a palimpsest. We initially encounter atmospheric material recorded on the vacated site. Sound is used to reinforce our sense of dwelling in real time. However, as we begin to note subtle recoveries of type and changes to the building there is a form of 'leakage'. Permeating the atmosphere are the almost erased audio marks of labour. The seven minutes of contemplation ends with a siren marking the exiting of a day's work and a reference of the end of occupation.

4.8 Critical ideas—Palimpsest

When using palimpsest as a concept within my work I aim to trace back in time what might have been there as time has eroded and faded it. The work is a combination of retracing faded images and recreating them when information is lost and interpretations of information that may have been there. As I delve into these works and create what might have been there the images talk to me and lead me on an artistic journey. In

tracing back and recreating the work one cannot be one hundred percent certain of what was originally there, but it also opens up the question of memory and loss and leads to the discussion of a personal understanding and meaning.

Within my work I endeavour to bring back the original signs, artefacts and the surroundings to its near original condition. This is to say I restore parts of the building that had been damaged by nature and the elements of time. Images such as graffiti would not have been there; the grass, bushes and trees would have been much smaller if time is wound back. These are all aspects of consideration within the work, and doing so the work becomes poetic palimpsests of time.

When I am back in my studio I study the images very carefully, looking into all of its miniscule details. I work on the photographs in minute detail as the progression needed to be extremely subtle. I am cognisant not to concentrate in one area,

but to look at the image as a whole. This is to say the entire image has to be worked on at very small increments conscious of moving from one area to the next and over to the opposite side.

When analysing these images one has to be cognisant of time, and how time affects things. Paint flacks, cracks and fades. Rust, mould and mildew grow over time if left. Concrete crumbles and falls away and needs careful attention slowly adding and bringing it back to its original structure. There are no plans to follow, no instructions from the designers or architects. I carefully work on each layer at a time, a sense of the typography and building structure starts to emerge. Questions have to be asked when faced with a lack of information. What was it? What does it say? Is it an awning, a veranda? What was the size?





33 — 40. *Over.*

These images show the progression of the work as a contemplation on the palimpsest nature of typography, architecture and environment.









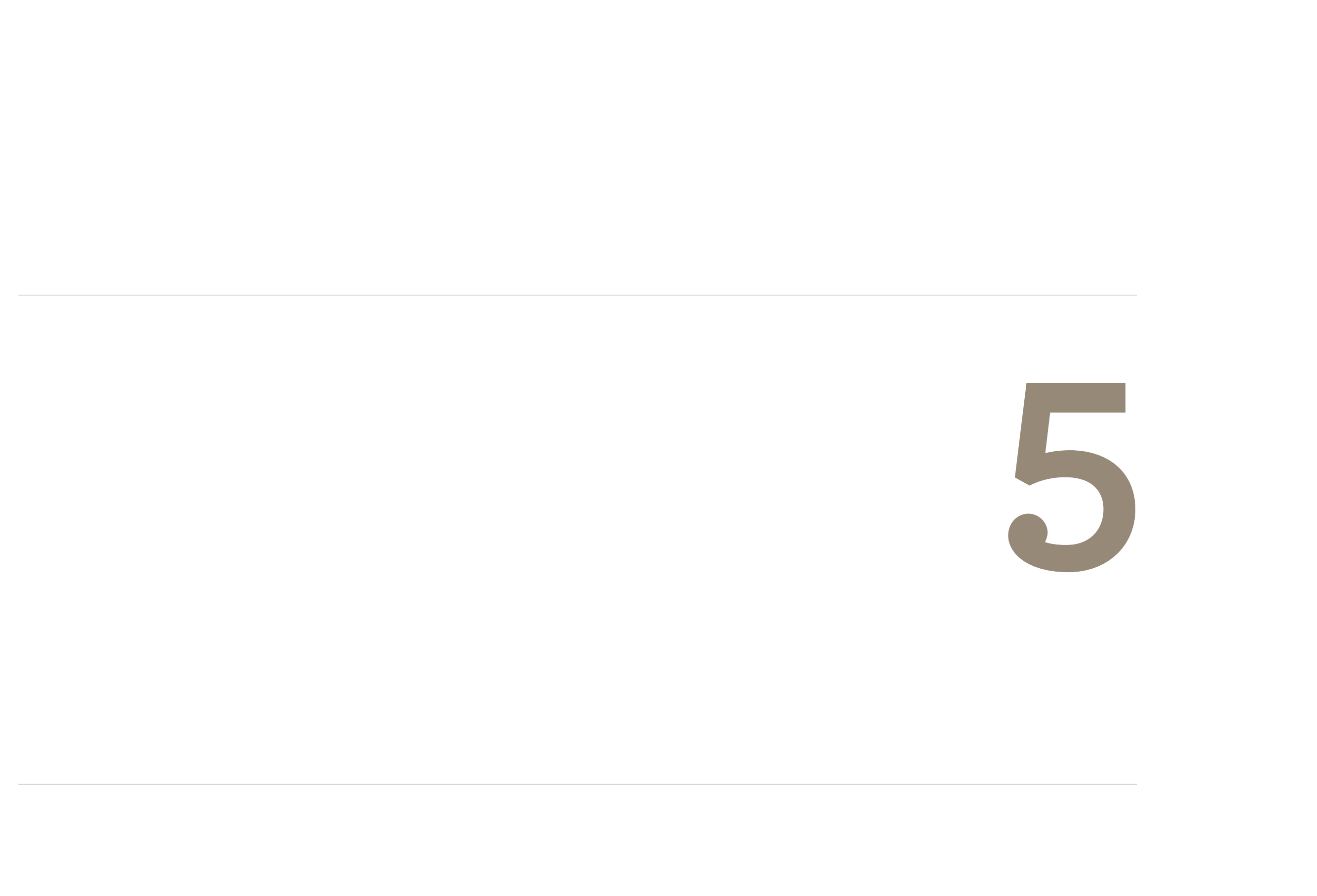








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Chapter 5: Critical Commentary: Memories on Vacant Walls: *A Poem Film*

41. *Opposite.*
Signs of occupation in one of the abandoned storage rooms (February, 2015).

22





42. Interior photograph of one of the storage rooms.



43. Exterior photograph showing a doorway to a derelict room.

44. The substrate photograph from the poem film *Memories on Vacant Walls*.

Memories on Vacant Walls: A Poem Film

In this second work, *Memories on Vacant Walls: A Poem Film*, I considered the potentials of film poetry. Using a single photograph of one of the Freezing Work's derelict spaces I sought a typographically poetic response to a feeling of occupation and loss I experienced.

5.1 Immersion

Walking through the Patea Freezing Works was like navigating a mausoleum. Although I was trespassing, my silence did not emanate from fear but from a whispered respect for lives that once toiled there. The cracked concrete and fading paint of interior rooms spoke in a way that new buildings cannot. I felt like I was being watched.

5.2 Equipment and recording

For this project I set the camera on a tripod at eye level (1700mm) so the viewer might experience a

proportional image that felt like being physically in the place. The still image (Figure 42) of the room was taken using a relatively small aperture so I could gain maximum clarity; this meant that a slow shutter speed was needed. On the day the weather was overcast although there were breaks in the clouds that caused some problems with exposure. Accordingly, because I wanted to avoid dominant shadows, I had to wait periodically until the sun went behind clouds.

The sky was filmed separately but from within the same location as the architectural shot. I used the same camera equipment and exposure as the still image, so the lighting was consistent. The grass was filmed separately using the same setup I had constructed for the sky (although more detailed execution was required). This was achieved by setting the camera quite low, in close proximity to the grass. This of course caused problems with the angles being significantly



45. Setup for filming the moving grass.

46. *Opposite.*
Concrete rubble from the building's collapsed ceiling.





47. Signs of tagging on the exposed walls of the factory.

different. Consequently I had to cover off the surrounding background using a white screen fixed to two stands and a cross pole, as a masking device. (The colour of the grass precluded the use of a normal green screen, see figure 45). Proportional adjustments were made in postproduction.

5.3 Design and development of the final work

In this experiment I further explored tensions between real and imagined time. I was interested in how the building spoke in 'lost voices'. Narratives of occupation whispered as a kind of palimpsest ... erased and imagined, subtly evident but also ephemeral. The experiment is a personal account of being located physically while concurrently being privy to an intangible poetic.

Being in this space surrounded by the crumbling walls and a lost ceiling felt very strange. Although the site was derelict, it still seemed alive. I could sense its walls talking ... and they spoke with the silence of type. I set this using Univers (Adrian Frutiger, 1954),^[27] angled to match the perspectives of the surfaces. While once industrial and totemic (like the walls) this type was now in a state of decay. Its definitions were monochromatic, unstable, impermanent ... forgetful. The fortitude of its youth and labour was dying, its dense blacks bleached out by the sun and the erosions of time. I lowered the opacity of the letterforms so they spoke in soft and transparent ways to the surfaces from which they emerged. The words fade in and out like a tired whisper. There is an old conversation here, but nobody left to listen. These walls talk to each other and the space that separates

them; sometimes repeating what has not been heard ... seeking attention for a fading narrative.

5.4 A sense of real time

In this experiment the sky moves with disconnected rapidity (this is real time footage) while the grass occasionally twitches (constructed time) and the graffiti disappears into a more enduring history of the building. Thus, again in this work, differences in time are composited into what may be perceived as a single shot. This combination of still and moving imagery was used to make tangible my response to a space that questioned the nature of time and the location/dislocation of one who dwells with memories.

[27] I selected this face because it is very close in the styling of the signage used on the original façade of the building (although this lettering would have been hand rendered).



48. Opposite.
Screen shot from the moving image 'Memories on Vacant Walls'.



49a showing the original sky and 49b, the desaturated version used in the final work.

5.5 Tagging

The rooms of the building, having once been dedicated to industrial function and the lives of workingmen, now bore the scars of taggers.^[28] This fleeting, subversive defacement showed attempts at individual identity in a world once predicated on collective effort. It reminded me of Satué’s assertion that such interventions create a form of typographical crisis or ‘design terrorism’ that we experience as ‘...labyrinthine, noisy, and common place’ (2002, pp. 208-210). To me these tags were not like natural signifiers of passing time (the grass that appears in cracks in the concrete and bushes that force their way through gaps where the factory floors meet its walls). They felt indulgent and disrespectful, like the language of a scavenger that attacks the vulnerable and defenceless. The tagger leaves, momentarily sated, but scars something he or she had no part in constructing or maintaining.

5.6 Typography and the poetics of contemplation

Memories on Vacant Walls is a dwelling in time that suggests disconnection and loss. While I was in the space I kept thinking about questions of occupation and vacancy. I found these questions almost poetic; like a fractured elegy. When I returned home I wrote down what I felt and embedded it in the work, refining the statements and the rhythmic reminder of loss as a spatially demarcated poem. Text that appears in shifting degrees of legibility on the walls of the factory.

As a poetic work, here on the flat surface of a page, the text does not really work. This is because unlike normal poetry it was experienced and designed as a spatial and temporal phenomenon. Its grammar, punctuation and rhythm occur visually, across diverse surfaces of a photograph, where the residue of certain words remain to be experienced in the context of new observations.

The work is a poetic response to a world where a ceiling no longer exists, where walls crumble, and I am suspended. Here I experience the hauntings of thought; the palimpsest of years of occupation.

5.7 Grading

In the work there is a tension in grading evident in the treatments of the building and sky. The colours of the walls and floor have been de-saturated and muted, while the colour of the graffiti has been preserved. It is treated as a disharmonic, an intrusion that is slowly absorbed by the more durable world of the assaulted. The breaks in the clouds, where the sky remains evident have been changed from bright blue to monochrome. This creates a conflicted atmosphere, because, we concurrently experience suggestions of colour in the building.

[28] Tagging is a personal signature in the form of graffiti. These idiosyncratic typographical works are used to mark territory and are generally sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in a public or deserted place. They generally contain the artist’s initials or other letters rendered as a ‘handstyle’. They may in addition, contain subtle or cryptic messages. Although often challenging conventions of readability, they serve as effective signifiers to other gangs in the area.



50. Moving Image Exploration 2: Memories on Vacant Walls.
Played on interactive PDF only.

The subtle movement of grass grown between the cracks in the concrete and the almost colourless sky gives an uneasy feeling. Graffiti images slowly disappear while the poetic words appears in its place telling the story of occupation and loss are played with the layered palimpsestic effect of time.

5.8 Sound

Music inspired by the site permeates the poem film. It is mixed with atmospheric sound recorded in site at the time I shot the photographs. The poem opens with the atmos^[29] of a still day. The wind moves faintly; once there, now gone. One senses the soul of the building. A soft finger picking of a guitar surfaces subtly, builds in tempo, then settles and fades into the background.^[30] The layering of a faint musical heartbeat connects us emotionally to the work.

5.9 Critical idea—Poem films

I define *Memories on Vacant Walls* as a poem film. There is considerable debate around the differentiation between poem

films and poetic film (Leropoulos, 2010). Wees, (1999), suggests that poem films^[31] may be understood as a subgenre of film that combine film footage enhanced by sound and written or aural, poetic text. He sees such works as a combination of synthesised image and text (at once independent and interdependent) that “generate associations, connotations and metaphors neither the verbal nor the visual text would produce on its own” (para. 16).^[32] The term poem film is therefore, normally applied to a text where the appearance of a poem occurs in the medium of film or as Cook (2014, para. 6) suggests a poem film may be understood as “the filming of words”.

In contrast to the poem film, ‘*poetic film*’ is a term used by Leropoulos (2012), to describe a cinematic style that is highly lyrical. Kammermann (2013, para. 3) suggests the term poetic film may be applied to film that uses the “visual image in a reflective, evocative or allusive way; much like a poet uses language to transfix us or stimulate a new way of looking at something”. Such films he suggests are “full of visual cues, symbols, allusions,

playful imagery.... [where the filmmaker’s] language most resembles the language of poetry... and thoughts and emotions are condensed and crystallized (ibid. para. 2). Filmmakers often associated with this style of work include Fellini, Buñuel, Tarkvosky, Cocteau, Svankmajer, Greenaway, and Bergman.

Conversely the term poem film may arguably be applied to the work of visual artists like Man Ray. In his film *L’Etoile De Mer* (France, 1928) he visualized images and the words of the poem so they complemented each other. Poem films have also been historically associated with lyricism (rather than narrative). The German Dadaist filmmaker Hans Richer cited in an interview with Jonas Mekas said,

The reason I use the word ‘poetry’ is to set it off against the ‘film novel’, which is represented by the entertainment film, or the reportage which is represented by the documentary. Where I would consider the entertainment film as ‘novel’, I would

[29] Atmos is an industry term for a soundscape that envelops the listener in an immersive environmental experience. It is sometimes constructed as a secondary palette inside which foley, dialogue, or a score is positioned.

[30] The music was composed by my daughter, who travelled with me to the location. It was her musical response to the site.

[31] Atkinson [2011] suggests the terms poetic avant-garde film, verse-film or verse-documentary represent the same media form. However, Wees [1999] includes all of these under the generic term, film poem.

[32] While type in these texts is normally executed during postproduction, sometimes techniques like stop frame animated type and image (Bentley, 2014, Résumé <http://movingpoems.com/category/videopoems/animation/>) or projected text (Jay, 2014, Incidental Words, <https://vimeo.com/110196396>) are employed.

describe the exploration into the realm of mood, the lyrical sensation as ‘poetry’. I would call all experimental films ‘film poetry’ (Richer, cited in Mekas 1957, p. 6).

However, this statement can be difficult because concerns with ‘the realm of mood and lyrical sensation’ are evident in both film poems and poetic film. Leropoulos (2010, p.19) suggests that the early use of the term poem film is historically specific because “it refers to a time when experimental filmmakers had to use parallels with other arts to define their work.” He suggests that such films were described as ‘poetic’ when the viewer was unable to establish a clear, coherent structure for the work. Significantly he draws attention to the ongoing confusion around differentiation and nomenclature when he notes,

...how chaotic the notion of the film poem has been in the last 80 years and how difficult it is to talk about a specific definition of its characteristics. Even the historical analyses of the film poem are often written by

individuals who have interests in promoting particular characteristics of it... (He suggests)... perhaps it is time to rethink the concepts of film and poetry taking into account all the different approaches that have been put forth by various filmmakers and critics without dismissing any possible perspective, but also with a critical and informed approach that would be useful to the research of the moving image (para. 28).

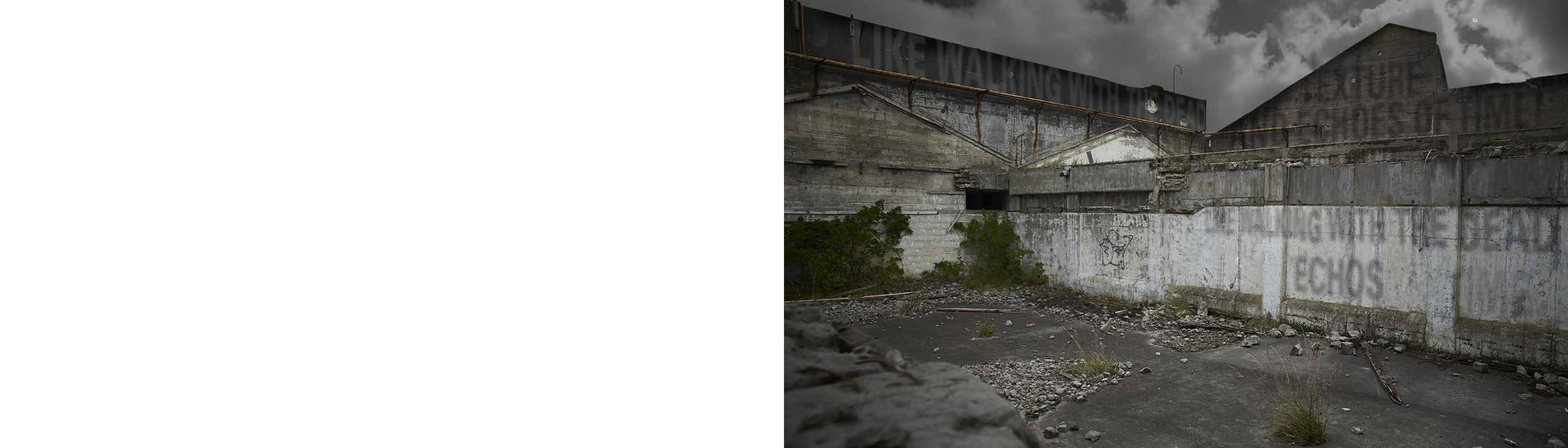
In this thesis I use the term poem film to define a non-narrative and lyrically reflective interpretation of a space or event that uses type as a significant component of its discourse. In the poem film *Memories on Vacant Walls* I use typographical reflection as a form of exteriorised internal monologue. These written elements fuse with visual images and sound to create a poetic interpretation. Within the work typography functions as more than an expression of words. It is a ‘voice’ that speaks in weight, tone, time and space. It negotiates surfaces of the filmed or photographed image, being positioned within it, fading and

replenishing, echoing and overwriting as a form of palimpsest. As such the poem film serves as a lyrical reconstruction of emotions that I experienced in these buildings.











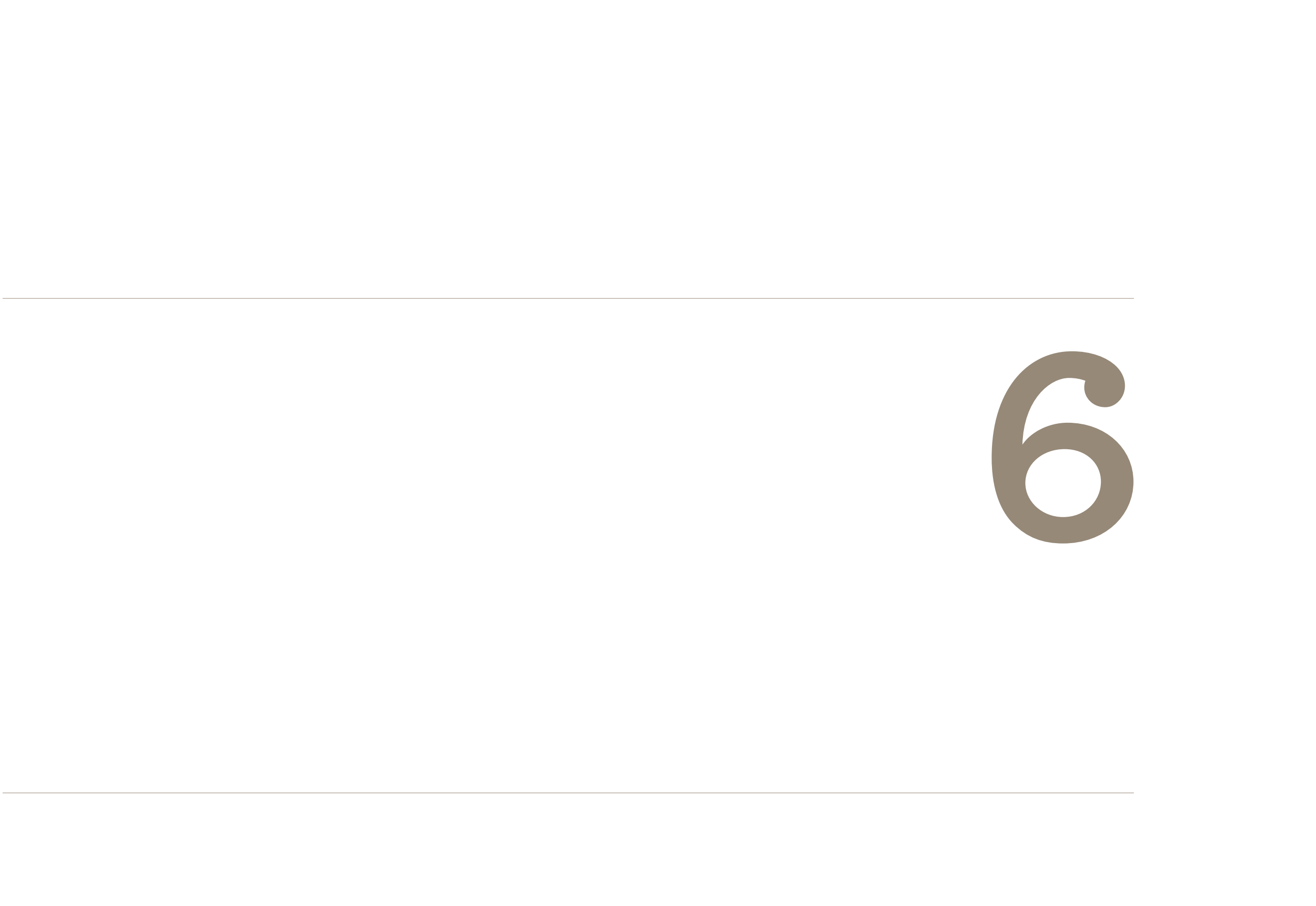








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Chapter 6: Critical Commentary: Loss and Reflection: *A Palimpsest of Place*

59. *Opposite.*
Remnants of machinery in one of the plant rooms at the freezing works.



59



60. Remnants of vandalised machinery.



61. One of the abandoned cool stores.

Loss and Reflection: A Palimpsest of Place

In this third and final piece I have manipulated and layered still photography and filmed footage. Across and inside this imagery, type appears and disappears responding to voices from workers I interviewed, and to sounds I recorded on location. These elements make up a three-minute palimpsest that considers personal relationships with the buildings.

6.1 Entry into the field

I revisited Patea in February 2015 to shoot this final sequence. In my absence, many of the buildings had been demolished. However some parts of the cool storage plant remained intact. It was inside one of these buildings that I filmed. The interior was dark and damp and parts of the ceiling were missing. Water from a storm the night before lay languid in dark pools on the floor and you could hear the echoing

sound of dripping in the distance, birds nesting in the doorway scoured into flight at the sound of my entrance. I stood amongst peeling paint and weeds and graffiti. On walls there were the scars where machinery had once been, its presence now only visible in stains and shadows. On this final visit, I was acutely conscious that this was a dangerous place. The walls could collapse, the ceiling cave in, or I might disturb the discreet worlds of homeless people who clearly occupied the building.

6.2 Equipment and recording [interviews and location]

In filming this final work I wanted to produce the sensation of a viewer watching inside the room, breathing, waiting, ... embodied. To achieve this I needed the camera to witness like a human being but not with the irregularity often produced by handheld recording. Several tests were conducted prior to travelling to Patea to ascertain



62. Rusting steel frames suspended from the rotting ceiling.

63. Opposite.
One of the abandoned plant rooms.

the right amount of movement I might need. I noted that just holding the camera and filming whilst walking around produced too much shake. To rectify the problem I constructed a steady-cam device (Figure 64) that would enable me to film with just a small amount of movement evident.

I filmed the visual material for this poem film using a Black Magic Pocket Camera. This only shoots moving image and is capable of recording RAW cinematic level footage in very low light conditions, with minimal image noise distortion. The camera was also small and light, which meant that I could move adroitly navigate confined spaces. However, whilst filming inside the building the sound made from my movements, especially when I disturbed debris underfoot, became problematic. I documented the sound of the room using a separate Digital (Zoom) Recorder set up on a tripod. This gave me much cleaner sound to work with.

While I was in Patea I also interviewed three people who had been employed in the freezing works at the time they closed. The factory

offered each of them their first employment in the early sixties and seventies. Prior to undertaking this phase of the research I obtained ethics approval for the interviews from the university. Because I could not interview the men in the actual buildings (due to Health and Safety regulations) I was able to use a room at the local library where the acoustics afforded clean recordings.

6.3 Design and development of the final work

The stories these men told were prosaic but heart breaking. The sense of economic loss and identity damage was palpable. But what was also important was the *texture* of their voices. These workers ranged from fifty to seventy years old. The grain of their interviews, the way words faded and sentences varied in emphasis suggested a distinctive kind of typographical approach. I wondered what might happen if type operated like a recollection of voice. In other words what might happen if these interviews unfolded inside the building and type responded to them. Not just to the content of what was said but also the texture and pauses, to the loss of breath, or the barely captured thought.



64. Black Magic camera on the steady cam device.

What we encounter in *Loss and Reflection* therefore, is the almost indiscernible sound of eroded voices. Words gradually become clearer and we are able to understand what the men are saying, but their voices are temporal, after a few seconds, they are consumed by the atmosphere of the building and we are left again with the faint sound of dripping water.

And inside this dynamic, typography talks to us. It listens to and mirrors the spoken word. It forms layers inside and across the imagery, moving at different speeds, in different faces, transparent and blurred, bleeding through the filmed material, explaining what has been heard or seen but eventually it is absorbed back into the weight of the building.

Much of the typographic work in this piece was organic. By this I mean, I did not resort to digital effects when I could create a treatment through the labour of my hands. For instance, occasionally we see letterforms that erode and blow away ... they disintegrate across time like the building they occupy. I achieved this effect by using sand to form the words on a black cardboard

background. Then, whilst filming, I used compressed air to gradually blow the letterforms away (Figure 65).

6.4 Post production

The post-production of this piece took several weeks to complete. Within this process I operated heuristically, feeling my way through data and potentials, connecting what seemed to resonate and discarding what was discordant. I designed while I edited.

The footage was first cut inside *Adobe Premiere Pro CC* with a dynamic link to *Adobe After Effects CC*. This produced an effective workflow for the final piece. The footage and still images were compiled and edited within *Adobe After Effects CC*, and most of the effects were generated in this environment^[33] The typographic effects were largely handled within *After Effects*, including the masking of sections of the sand letterforms.

The sound of the voices was edited and manipulated using Soundtrack Pro. The texture of these interview segments was treated with a slight reverb to produce a sense that the men were

being heard inside the deserted factory. Unfortunately the site recordings of dripping water were not of a high enough quality, so I produced segments of foley by placing a bucket of liquid with the sound recording device next to it. Then I stood on a chair to obtain the right height and dripped water from a meat-basting syringe.

Loss and Reflection is a palimpsest of place. My thinking within the work has been influenced by both the idea of palimpsest and the nature of the poem film. However, two other realms of discourse have also impacted on how I designed the work. The first is the potential of typography as a voice of time and economics.

6.5 Critical idea:

Typography as the voice of time and economics

In cities like London and New York there has been a growing trend to record fast disappearing typographical signage, both as documents but also as signifiers of meaning (Cox, 2014; Jump, 2011). This is arguable, because these signs tell stories

[33] Some colour grading was done in *Adobe Speed Grade* but the majority was handled inside *Adobe After Effects* because I could control the amount of sturation I wanted whilst compiling the work.



65. Typographical sequence constructed in the sand blowing experiment.
Played on interactive PDF only.

of a city's past that weave together unique histories, cultures, environments, commerce, places and people from a complex, composite social narrative. Recently, artists like Jay Shells (2013) have engaged in textual poaching of current street signs. He transforms these into Hip Hop quotes from songs that mention specific places. He then re-posts the signs in their mentioned locations as a means of engaging in a form of vernacular discourse.

Heavily eroded street signs from what is now called the most toxic town in America (Picher Oklahoma) have been documented by photographer Chris Brewer (2013). These signs provide an evocative commentary on the damaging toxicity of industrial environments. Brewer's work builds upon a growing corpus of photographic material that examines surfaces in decaying built environments (Romany, 2012; Van Loo, 2011). Investigations have also been made into the impact of meteorological damage on public signage. Significant

66. Opposite.
One of the abandoned cool storage rooms.





67. Decaying and rotting ceiling from one of the storage rooms.



68. Remains of rusting pipes and brackets.

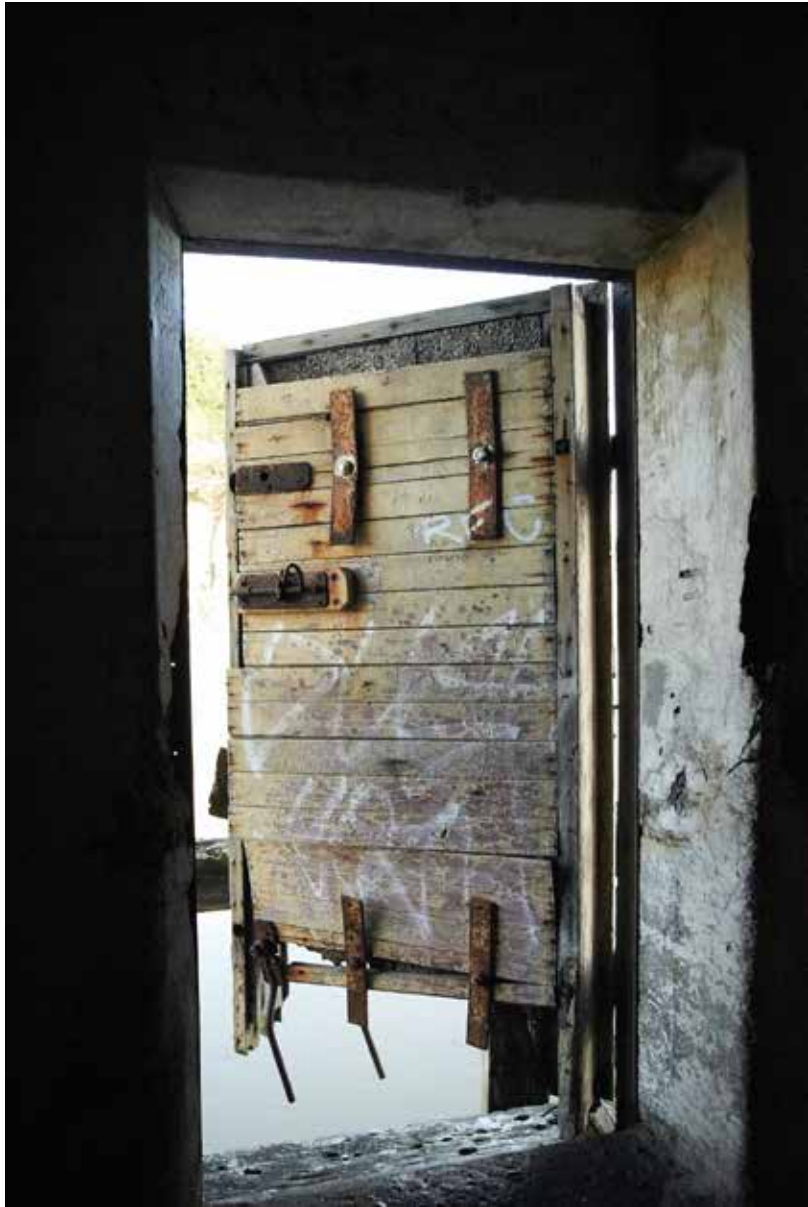
among these is Tom Varisco's (2008) *Signs of New Orleans*. This photographic portfolio documents signage and its context following the devastation wrought by hurricane Katrina in 2005.

But what is type when it decays in a built environment?

Satué (2002 p. 208) argues that contemporary urban spaces are in a state typographical crisis due to the decay of an imagined typographical order. While time distorts the polished surface of the typographical landscape, so too do the “social misfits” who Satué describes as “rebels without a cause”, who engage in “the foolish idea” that their contributions to city walls and buildings might make some kind of useful contribution to the urban landscape. He describes such voices as a form of “design terrorism” that he suggests, threatens an ideal “tempered city”

that we are forced to experience as ‘...labyrinthine, noisy, and common place’ (ibid. p. 210). Ings (2013, p.1) on the other hand argues that a built environment “is not a tempered space. It is an amalgam of diverse communities and divergent ways of seeing and speaking [where] varied expressions of identity seep into the public domain to form part of a rich texture of experience”.

Within this diversity, and especially evident in the built environments of the economically marginalised, we see a relationship between typography, the marginalised ... and time. In 2014, in *The International Journal of the Image* I wrote an essay about how lettering on shop fronts in South Auckland operated as a distinctive social signifier.^[34] Here peeling signs, fading paint and cracked words spoke not only of social economics but also of endurance. These buildings with their hand lettered type, with its



69. Rotting door leading to the wharf platform.

[34] Sinfield, D. [2014]. Semiotics of business Signage: How typography is used in impoverished and deprived areas of New Zealand, *The International Journal of the Image*, 4(4), 25-32

irregular spacing and disruptions to form, spoke of the endurance of the vernacular. These signs had histories that had not been painted over. Time was not rendered invisible, in fact I suggest that it gathered a dialect. As letters faded and eroded in the elements, they didn't lose meaning, they gained it. They spoke of belonging, of generations of use, of the impact of light and rain and cheap pigments that had become photofugitive.^[35] Type spoke of time and witness. It faded into the texture of surfaces so it became an integrated element. It is this idea of the potential of the surface and outlines of type to speak for belonging and loss that I have explored in this final work. Related to this is another idea. It is the poetics of the ruin.

6.6 Critical idea: The poetics of the ruin

If arguably type decays and concurrently gathers meaning, what

of the industrial ruin that has motivated and accompanied this thesis? In 2005 Tim Edensor said such buildings are, ‘haunted by disruptive ghosts, they seethe with memories, but these wispy forms can rarely be confined. They haunt the visitor with vague intimations of the past, refusing fixivity, and they also haunt the desire to pin memory down in place’ (2005, p. 829).

To me Patea is haunted. Not by the phantoms of Victorian horror but by residues of experience. These are not derelict structures decaying in the elements; they are sensory spaces that speak of occurrences, loss and belonging. Seremetakis suggests that ‘the sensory is not only encapsulated within the body as an internal capacity or power but is also dispersed out there on the surface of things as the latter's autonomous characteristics, which can then invade the body as perceptual experience’ (1994, p. 6). When I

stand in vacant rooms I sense the ghosts of labour, the noise, the smells, the congestion of workers who were once focused on the functional and prosaic.

Lynch notes that,

decaying buildings extinguish and reveal successive histories as layers peel away and things fall out from their hiding places. Like palimpsests, ruins bear traces of the different people, processes, and products that circulated through their environs at different times, for the diverse rates of decay mean that, arbitrarily, some spaces and objects are erased whilst others remain, recomposing a particularly dense and disorganised ‘temporal’ collage (1972, p. 459).

[35] Photofugitivity refers to colour that is neither lightfast nor permanent. It is sometimes associated with the cheap pigmentation of low quality paints.

It is this temporal collage one sees reconstituted poetically in my work. I document these spaces using photography, film and sound to suggest presence and absence caught in a concurrent dynamic. Here Stewart’s “not picture-perfect re-enactment of the living past” [becomes] the allegorical re-presentation of remembered loss itself (1996, p. 90). I reflect poetically on these buildings and the past is ‘constantly selected, filtered and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessities of the present’ (Jedlowski 2001, p. 30).

The Patea Freezing Works are charged with ‘multiple yet elusive memories’ (Edensor 2005, p. 834), that ‘begin at the end of things, overwhelming the ordinary flow of time with inescapable memories and desires’ (Stewart 1996 p. 95). Stewart’s ‘overwhelming of ordinary flow’ is what has been suggested in the subtle disjunctions and disorderings of time in my

work. Nothing in any of the poem films runs in truly ‘real time’ although on the surface one might think that it does. Time is a multiple, it is parallel and it is a palimpsest.

As an extension of this, in *Loss and Reflection*, type, sound and location form ‘knotted, intertwined threads of memory’ (Gilloch, 1996, p. 67). Within the poem film, the once prosaic becomes ineffable and mysterious. One cannot fix ruined buildings in the absolute and accounted. They exist as space and residue that I fill poetically with what is imagined. Edensor says of these buildings:

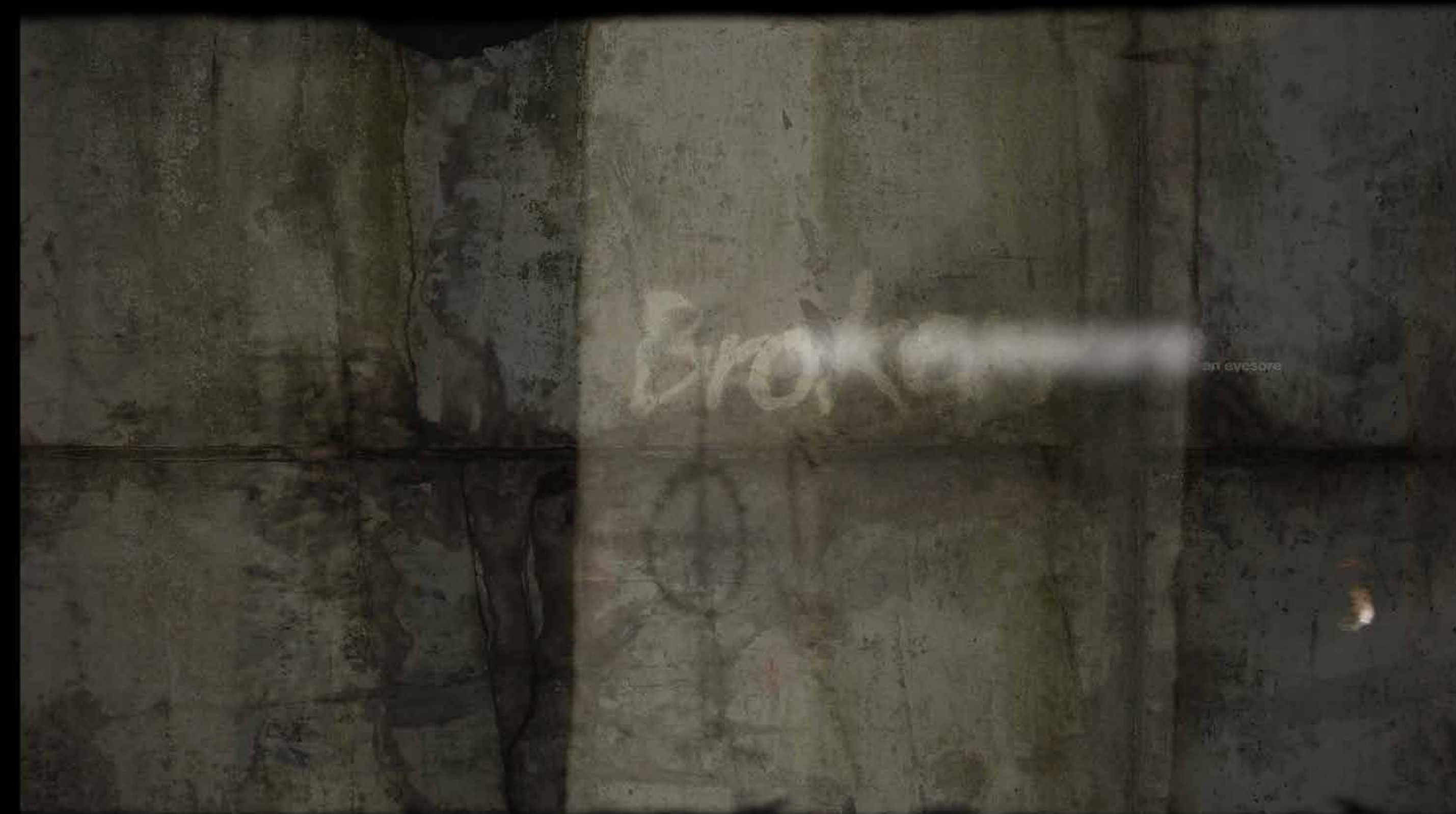
Even though intimations about previous denizens and their activities are multiple, they are obscure, ghostly, enigmatic traces that invite us to fill in the blanks. Like notice boards under decay that suffer from partial erasure but retain certain words, only fragments of stories

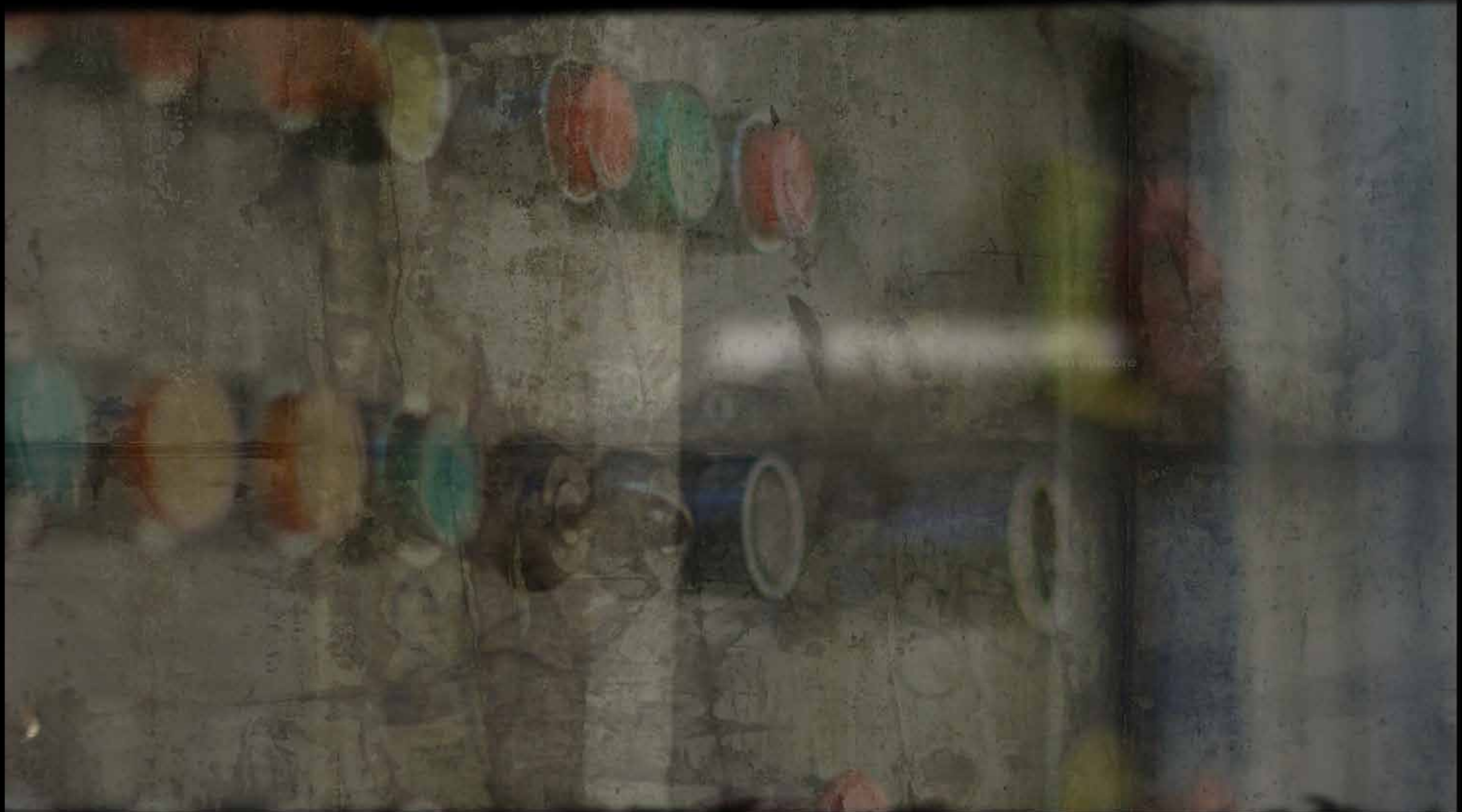
remain, and the task is not to piece the fragments of space back together – impossible in any case – but to trace out the threads and follow their convolutions’ (2005, p. 846).

... and so I trace lyrical threads and convolutions. Typographical poetics is, as the thesis title suggests a contemplation on memory and loss. It is a sensitised voice that speaks with image and sound and type ... and it is a homage to what is known and what cannot be known.



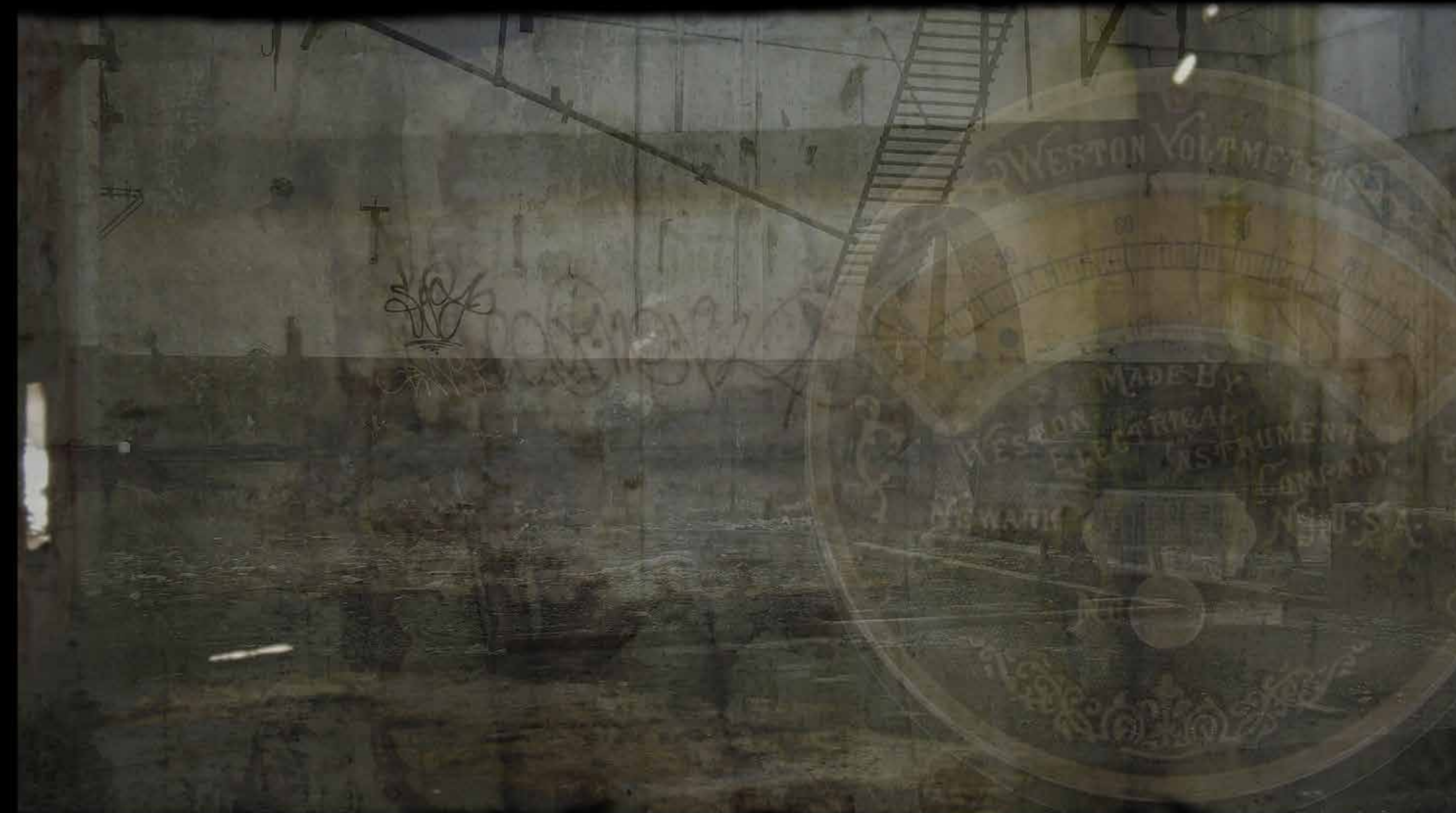
70. Moving Image Exploration 3: Loss and Reflection.
Played on interactive PDF only.















those days are gone





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Chapter 7: Conclusion

79. *Opposite.*
The abandoned exterior of the wharf building.



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7.1.1 Summary and conclusions (typographic storytelling)

On my last journey to the factory I met myself again. By this I mean, while I was walking around the abandoned buildings I recalled myself listening to the recollections of relatives and acquaintances who had experienced factory work and told me stories about it. Inside these buildings I also recalled my own work on production lines and in offices, work which by virtue of its habitual and repetitive character became absorbed into the body and although not consciously recorded, it reemerges when ‘atmospheres, fixtures, textures, and procedures provoke the sensual memories which have lain dormant’ (Edensor, 2005, p. 839).

It’s a long way from Kentish Town to an abandoned factory in Taranaki, and yet, not so far at all. When I look back over the complexities of this study, it is difficult to draw conclusions in the manner that one might in a traditional thesis. Instead there are three poem films:

Typographical Ghosts
Memories on Vacant Walls
Loss and Reflection

However, if we consider conclusions as conceptual considerations that have been explored in the thesis, then broadly we might map what has been generated against issues raised in the exegesis’ introduction.

In 2001, Katie Salen discussed the manner in which typographic treatments can operate as a form of cultural dominance. Within this, they may erase what is different and marginalised. In this thesis I have nominated and artistically explored the nature of typography at an abandoned freezing works and I have demonstrated how typography may be employed to not only reposition a place (and its social context), while drawing its poetics into the public domain.

As an extension, I have demonstrated how type in a state of decay and recovery, may be used to signify both what is lost and the memory of what was experienced. In doing this, I have applied the potentials of poem film to what may arguably be considered the unpoetic, such that the voices of workers in a small post-industrial town have played in film festivals, conferences and galleries both nationally and internationally. The same poem films (and this exegesis) have been gifted back to the community, such that what resourced the thesis has also become a koha and a permanent document of an artistic response to lived lives and memory.

Michael Rock (1996) argues that ‘the amplification of the personal voice legitimises design as equal to more traditional, privileged forms of authorship’ (para. 27) and John Wood (2004) suggests that ‘in an age of mounting ecological damage in which we often see ourselves as powerless individuals in the thrall of faceless corporations’, it is no longer appropriate for a designer



80. Visualisation of the exhibition space.

‘to deny his/her own views, ideologies and immediate well-being in the quest for his/her client’s cause or satisfaction’ (p. 50). As a designer, I see the articulation of social insights as my role. My professional, personal and academic concerns are not just applied to enhancing business potentials, but also those of the social and humane. I see myself as a critic and conscience of society,^[36] and arguably, on a more intimate level, as a worker whose ability to ‘speak’ in the typographically poetic, may enable a positioning of what is easily marginalised for reconsideration in the public domain.

The journey of this thesis has been heuristic, absorptive and reflective. The forms of both the creative work and this exegesis have been determined by an inquiry into the relationship between a designer and a place ... and these documents attest to what has been discovered.

7.1.2 Critique of heuristic inquiry

Heuristic inquiry in creative practice research may have both strengths and weaknesses and in this thesis, because of its flexibility (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), propensity to embrace artistic disruption,^[37] (Ings, 2011, 2016), and ability to engage productively with tacit knowing (Polyani, 1958), it proved effective. This said, such inquiries also pose distinct challenges to artistic research, especially where there is a close relationship between the self and the topic under investigation. This is because the self is intimately related to what is being studied and care must be taken so the researcher remains open to critique of his or her thinking, as separate from a critique of the self (Ings, 2011, 2016). Guba and Lincoln (1989), Moustakas (1990) and Ings (2016), suggest that to effectively engage with the potentials of such inquiries, researchers must be receptive to information that is collected through the senses. Here one is required to stay “fully with the experience of the phenomenon, irrespective of the shifting forms it may take” (Ings, p. 217). As such, “a site visit becomes a condition of being, an incursion into relationships

between a location and the self, where nuance, imagination and impression may be valued alongside what is explicit and recordable” (ibid.). As a consequence, one is relatively vulnerable. Sites like the Patea Freezing Works are physically and emotionally unstable. One’s sensibilities, if deliberately heightened to attune to nuances of loss and damage are often operating at very sensitive levels and as the researcher leaves the site, it is important to reorient him or her self to the outside world.

Finally, as Kleining & Witt note, when working heuristically, “the topic of research is preliminary and may change during the research process. It is only fully known after being successfully explored. The topic may be overlapped by another one or turn out as part of a different problem or just disappear” (2000, p. 2).

This means that heuristic inquires can often be unstable and require careful management of both time and resources (Ings, 2011; 2016). In addition, they can become disorienting because the “confusion

[36] This condition is the final quality of New Zealand universities, as stated in the 1989 Education Act, 162:4.

[37] For instance, if we look at the critical commentary of ‘Typographical Ghosts: A Contemplation on Time, Memory and Recovery’ one notes that the property, its erosion, and desolation operate as open signifiers that collect and pose emerging questions to the research trajectory. One isn’t simply collating images, but rather searching and seeking to understand the “spirit” of a location. In ‘Memories on

Vacant Walls: A Poem Film’ I was engaging with levels of embodiment, such that being in the room and experiencing the atmosphere gave rise to feelings that could be translated into graphic visualisation. This approach could only function effectively if I embraced disruptions to the logical and presupposed because it was situated in the responsive.

of ... different perspectives and different meanings, can disorient the researcher” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 71). To deal with this, in the thesis project I constantly overviewed what I was doing (often on multiple levels), so I could appreciate and develop the specific within the study’s broader context.

7.1.3 Contributions to the field

Work contained in this thesis has been exhibited in a number of locations. In 2015 *Memories on Vacant Walls* screened in Wellington at the *International Conference of the Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand*, (29 June – 1 July 2015) and in San Francisco at the *International Conference of the Image* (29th – 30th October, 2015).

Written work surfacing from the inquiry has been published in books and peer reviewed academic journals.^[38]

During the two-year study I have also presented six papers at international conferences. While only one of these dealt directly to the content of my thesis,^[39] the others were related to pedagogical design that has been significantly influenced by undertaking the project.^[40] In presenting these papers, the thesis has not only contributed thinking about digital realms for processing knowledge, but it has also been enriched by discussions and questions surfacing from the conferences.

In March 2016, one-month before it is examined in Auckland, the entire thesis will return to its origins. The three poem films will be on display at the Aotea Utanganui Museum, in Patea and the exegesis and copies of the moving image shorts will be gifted to the organisation and stored as reference documents. Following this in November 2016 an exhibition of the moving images and photographic works compiled during the research inquiry will

be also be on public display at the museum. In undertaking this initiative I hope that these works might contribute to community memory in Patea, and become part of an increasing body of documentation that is available to future generations. In this regard the thesis operates as a respectful koha (gift/reciprocity) for the support and generosity I have been afforded by the local people.

7.1.4 Further Research

Although an additional international presentation of research findings from this thesis has been accepted for the Social Sciences Conference at the Imperial College London in August 2016, it is my intention to pursue the study into a practice-led PhD. While this will still be concerned with the Patea Freezing Works, it will investigate the potential of typographic interviews and site-specific interactivity. These interviews will be conducted

[38] Sinfield, D. (2015). The Erased Layers of Typography: From the Eroded Palimpsest to Spatio-Temporal typography, *The International Journal of the Image*, 6(2), 37-45.

Sinfield, D. (2014). Semiotics of business Signage: How typography is used in impoverished and deprived areas of New Zealand, *The International Journal of the Image* 4(4), 25-32.

Sinfield, D. (2013). Social Commentary from the Graphic Designer: Workers stories expressed through Serigraphic Translations. *The International Journal of Visual Design*, 6(1), 67-82.

Sinfield, D. (2013). The Business of Type: A typographical consideration of local business signage in Otara South Auckland, New Zealand. In R. Hoskin (Ed.), *Typographical Typography—North Island Typographic Study* (pp. 64-85). Palmerston North, NZ: Palmerston North, NZ. UCOL.

[39] Sinfield, D. (2013). Corporate or Community: A typographical exploration of how signage is used in local businesses within South Auckland, New Zealand. In the *International Conference of the Image*, 18th –19th October, 2013, Chicago, USA.

[40] Sinfield, D. (2015). Typography off the page: Teaching typography as moving image. In *The International Conference of Design Principles and Practices Conference*, 12th – 14th, March 2015, Chicago, USA.

Sinfield, D. (2014). The Importance of ePortfolios: Teaching Graphic Design through an ePortfolio environment both in and out of the classroom environment. In the *ePIC Evidence Based Learning: ePortfolio and Identity Conference*, 9th – 11th, July 2014, Greenwich, London UK.

Sinfield, D. (2014). Moodle Me: An ePortfolio community of learning for the graphic design student. In the *ePIC Evidence Based Learning: ePortfolio and Identity Conference*, 9th – 11th, July 2014, Greenwich, London UK.

Sinfield, D. (2014). Beyond the classroom: An investigation into eLearning to create a blended eLearning environment. In *Beyond the classroom: An investigation into eLearning to create a blended eLearning environment*, 31st May –1st, June 2014,

with workers and may utilise archive footage but, my primary concerns will be with the texture and nuance of the human voice and how typography might respond to and interpret both the linguistic and the paralinguistic.^[41]

The designed texts may be developed so that by utilising the potentials Global Positioning Systems and emerging software like Aurasma they can play on installed still images distributed through the site. Thus, the abandoned paddock and few remaining walls might be constitute an anthology of typographical reflections that appear as large, billboard-like photographs, but they will be experienced by viewers as typographical and audio interviews that will play on their personal mobile devices as they hold them up to the images.

7.1.5 Exhibition design

The thesis exhibition that concludes this study will be held at St. Paul Gallery 2, Auckland, New Zealand, between the 4th and the 10th of April 2016. Using a High Definition 1920 x 1080 projector to preserve the subtle details in the work, the poem films will be projected onto a large, interior wall. The gallery will contain limited seating because the poem films vary in length between 3:24 minutes for *Memories on Vacant Walls* and 7:03 for *Typographical Ghosts*.^[42] The restrained seating design is employed to reinforce the idea that these poetic works were conceived and designed in a state of physical singularity. Positioned along the back wall of the gallery and illuminated by subtle lighting will be two pedestals; one exhibiting the print version of the exegesis and the other displaying its interactive form. This decision has been made so the thesis is understood

and consumed as an entirety and not as a disjunction between the poem films and the thinking that produced them.

7.1.6 ... so in closing

Places like the Patea Freezing Works and its equivalents will one day dissolve into remembered shadows, and then become absent on the landscape. They will be preserved only in documents of what once was. These documents that populate our archives are rarely poetic. They show people and places in the often didactic manner of the historically nominated. For me this is a shame because these places are not just events and locations, they are the essence of community. They are living things. Although history does not record the name of the tea lady, the man who gave the best birthday shouts, the local midwife, or the families who devoted three generations of their people to the factory,

Sinfield, D. (2013). One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Teaching Graphic Design through a Moodle based ePortfolio. In the *International Conference of MoodleMoot*, 23rd – 26th, June 2013 Melbourne Australia.

Sinfield, D. (2013). Thinking and Doing: Enhancing the Learning and Teaching of Graphic Design through the Use of Digital Technologies. In *Seventh International Conference on Design Principles and Practices*, 6th – 8th, March 2013, Chiba, Japan.

[41] By paralinguistic I refer to vocal signals beyond basic verbal messages. These may include pause, stress, pitch, volume and intonation.

[42] Thus, the full looped sequence is 13:37 minutes.

these things also matter and they are lost to time unless we re-historicise such sites. Local museums, staffed with people who have family ties to places like the Patea Freezing Works try to do this for one or two generations, but even this will fade.

So as a designer I try to help. I do not try to tell the stories of these local people, but in telling my own, I endeavour to show respect for their world. My subjectivity in this thesis is explicit. It is motivated by my past and generations of my family who have been socially labelled as ‘working class’ and who have spent their lives in such environments.

As a typographer I exist in a world of harmonized corporate branding, devoid of human imperfection and idiosyncrasy. Here the voices of the empowered are systematically reviewed and updated. These brandings are smoothed out and applied over the

social landscape. In aid of this, typography becomes a vehicle of cultural invisibility and the typographer a ‘service provider’, who contemporises and refines the voice that can afford to pay. I find this difficult. I worry about the ethics of what I do.

Typographical poetics is my attempt to reach beyond this. I have tried to use my skills as a designer to reach something human ... something beyond the branded site; beyond the voice of the mercantile and corporate. I have tried to understand and communicate the relationship a factory might have with people who worked there and the nature of what has become absent.

... and in so doing, this thesis reaches out to touch the heart of the poetic.

David Lewis Sinfield.

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Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced: 13/01/15

Project title:

Typographical keywords: A contemplation on memory and loss at the Pates Freezing Works

Invitation:

My name is David Sinfeld. I am a graphic designer and I am completing a creative project as part of my Master of Philosophy degree at AUT University. I am inviting you to be part of this research project in the hope that your personal reflections might add some new insights that will be part of a short creative film work about people's memories of the Pates Freezing works. The project will become an independent artistic response to the research.

What is this project about?

This project about recording people's memories of the Pates Freezing works when it was an operating factory. I am looking to capture the memories of people who worked there or remember the factory indirectly through family and friends who were employed on the site. Your recorded memories may become part of a short, 4-minute, poetic piece that includes film footage of the site and the interview. The questions I will ask you will be brief and open, meaning that they are designed to allow you to remember and talk about your feelings and stories associated with the works.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research is a Master of Philosophy degree and as such it will be a contribution to the wider research community both nationally and internationally. I have already completed two films that you are welcome to view. The first is a rediscovery of what the facade of the world building would have looked like, and the second considers the idea of emotional loss. The third film associated with this interview reflects upon a series of interviews as an expressive response to the site and its interface with memories and experiences.

How are the people chosen to take part of this research?

You have been selected because you have some connection with the Pates Freezing works and you may have memories of having worked or visited there, or had other associations with the factory. In selecting people I have used informal networks so you will have been recommended to me by somebody who felt that you might have something interesting to offer to the project. By taking part in this research your memory will become part of the recorded material gathered for the project.

What happens in this research?

The arrangement is that you will be asked you a series of open-ended questions (a copy of these questions will be given to you in advance). So a conversation between you and I will take place. This will be for a formal interview. Your part in this conversation will be filmed using digital recording devices. I also expect that other interviewers will begin designing the short creative film using digital and analogue systems. I may also insert written words that work artistically to emphasise things that you have said. In other words, I will use typography to highlight feelings of memory and emotional recollection.

What are the benefits?

Pates has retained a strong sense of community. Although economically challenging, stories and artefacts relating to the town's history have been carefully assembled and are circumstantially available. Museum of South Taranaki. As such, the town's stories of the site and the lives that populated it are partially preserved and live on as part of history. These accompanying short films are a way of sharing the memories of the people who participated in the project. You will be given a copy of the final work and express on a CD/DVD and you will also be acknowledged in the credits of the works and the accompanying academic analysis.

How will my privacy be protected?

At the end of an interview session and film you will be recorded on film, your privacy cannot be protected. However you will have the right to ask for the removal of any section or any part of photographs or footage of yourself that you feel unhappy with, upon request. If you do not wish to be recorded on film, you are fully aware that you are fully aware of the project goals prior to consenting. You will be identifiable and confidentiality cannot be maintained.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The cost to you will be your time. Times will be agreed upon by prior discussion and planned well ahead so you will have plenty of time to prepare. The filming sessions will take place in March 2015. The filming session will take between 60-90 minutes.

What will happen to the film taken on interview?

From the first interview I will analyse the footage and combine this with a typographical responses from the interview. The created final and all of the raw footage will become my intellectual property. A copy of the final film will be handed to you as the participant. The raw footage not used in the final film will also be handed to you for your personal usage. The film work will be archived indefinitely and available through AUT Scholarly Commons. The finalised film footage will be submitted on a DVD to AUT University as part of a Master of Philosophy thesis and a copy will be stored in the AUT library and faculty office. The final version of the work may be used in exhibition settings relating to the AUT Art & Design.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I will be seeking confirmation of your involvement a week in advance of the filming session and you will be provided with a questionnaire sheet showing the questions I shall be asking at the interview stage. You will be able to withdraw yourself or any information that you have provided to this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

There will be a consent form provided for you to sign.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this project?

You are invited to ask any questions or raise any concerns about the project at any stage. Once the off-line edit is complete, if you wish, you will be able to view the piece before it is finalised. You will also be provided with a copy of your interview on DVD for your personal archives. Ultimately you will receive a copy of the final work on DVD or on a USB stick format for your personal archives.

Is there someone other than the researcher who I can contact (confidentially) should this become necessary?

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this research with an independent body you are free to contact Professor Welby Inglis (the project primary supervisor). You are free to discuss any concerns you might have or to seek clarification on any issue related to the project. Any discussion will be processed in confidential.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

If you have concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the project supervisor: Professor Welby Inglis

welby_inglis@aut.ac.nz

(+64) 9 521 9999 ext: 8621

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be directed towards Kate O'Connor, Executive Secretary, AUTEC.

ethics@aut.ac.nz

(+64) 9 521 9999 ext: 6038

Who do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

David Sinfeld
Email: david.sinfeld@aut.ac.nz
Phone: 0211885974

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Welby Inglis welby_inglis@aut.ac.nz

(+64) 9 521 9999 ext: 8621

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee





Appendix 3









When a poem appears as titles in a poetry-film, typography and graphics become significant considerations for the filmmaker, not to mention the timing and method of making the words appear and disappear.

(Wees , 1984, p. 111)
