

This exegesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology for the Master of Art and Design

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

House and Contents Insurance: An exploration of tactility and narrative

Erna Stachl

December 2007

table of contents

abstract	1
the hearth and heart of the domicile	4
telling tales	9
making meaning, making things	17
knit one, purl one, drop one, pick one up, repeat from k	22
a tale to tell	28
appendix 1	35
appendix 2	43
references	49

abstract

This thesis examines the relationships between fictional narratives and material objects through writing and sculptural practice. Its purpose is to explore how fiction assists in an understanding of the world we inhabit and, conversely, how our experiences of the world and its real and physically accessible contents (or objects) prevent fiction from transgressing into nonsense. It is anticipated that the combination of material practice and textual fiction will not be an easy marriage: it may be the objects which ultimately give presence to our voices, voices which historically have often attempted to claim and own of things through utterance.

The sculptural component of the project addresses the tactility of objects and examines the space where so many tales are told - the home. In so doing, the project explores issues of isolation and connection through objects and materials which harbour a narrative of ostensible comfort. Objects may simultaneously project conflicting accounts of comfort and unease, connection and isolation, contributing to an articulated consciousness of the home.

introduction: inhabiting words and worlds

We dwell within language - we construct whole cities with words. We inhabit the linguistic spaces we construct and in turn they define the boundaries, not of space, but of human thought.

However, this does not negate the obvious. We also dwell in physical spaces, we rub up against them in ways we cannot do with words. The child who places his or her hand on the stove top after being repeatedly told not to, because it is hot, knows only too well that touch answers questions about being that language cannot.

We exist in, and to degrees inhabit many different spaces. Public spaces, apparently lacking necessity, are inhabited only fleetingly, as if by design. These are not spaces for sleeping in, washing in, living in, such behaviour is considered offensive. Written law, social attitude and architecture do their best to deter people from doing so.

In contrast, habitually frequented spaces, with their familiarity, become sites of second nature. The idiosyncrasies of sticky cupboard doors and uneven flooring cease to be treated with caution as the inhabitant relaxes with the space; words are not necessary, silence ensues. This is not, however, an empty silence, here is a silence capable of revealing that which, as Foucault (1989) suggests, lies at the limits of what we say.

As a visual arts project, *House and Contents Insurance: an exploration of tactility and narrative* develops a narrative concerned with that most familiar of spaces - the home as a place where reading (of space and narrative) begins. The project

concerns itself with a physical experience of the world, namely through the tactile quality of its objects and materials, as well as to language in its silent and most unchanging form - text. Although, superficially, home represents for many a haven or refuge, it can also manifest other qualities; to return to the example of the child with his/her hand on the stove top, despite the security home can offer, it also contains danger and possibly even fear. The project developed alongside a reading of several fictional texts, primarily; *The Snow Queen*, *The Collector* and *The Pearl Bastard*. These particular three texts are significant to the project, not so much for their literary eloquence, but in developing an articulation of 'home' that influenced the progression of the work. Fiction offers a way to develop thoughts that do not necessarily conform to the rigour of academic writing, and can, therefore, display new and independent ways of thinking or articulating. Home might be considered as a site where the development and practice of experiential research takes place on a daily basis. Fiction is itself a home in so far as it operates as a fluid space explore and a potential research strategy more in keeping with the nature of the practical aspect of this project than conventional methods and approaches to theory.

The sculptural practice of this thesis began by addressing a physical experience of subject, space and object through touch. A number of acrylic wool crochet replicas of my external self were intended as the practical component of the project - however it became increasingly inescapable that the act of doing so prevented a truly tactile experience of space from remaining evident, instead the body became paramount. What is more, the tactile engagement or experience was restricted to the immediate vicinity of the body succeeding only in mummifying or suffocating

it. In this way the body ceased to exist in direct contact with the world and became an object.

If worn, the wearer became incapable of direct, full sensory touch, while externally the wearer would find themselves in fact *not* themselves, but an object to be freely touched. The project attempts to probe the depths, rather than the surfaces, of who we are as beings of inhabitancy. To get to the depths, paradoxically, the approach to inhabitancy takes place externally, rather than internally. It is through contact, physical and verbal, that an understanding of not only the world, but the self can be explored and explained. It is the spaces and things outside of the self that provide relativity: without them an individual has no context and an isolation of this sort, if it were possible, would inflict a severe limitation to the individuals existence. The sight, sound, touch, taste, smell of things, places and people are a constant reminder of the scope of ones own existence.

While tactile objects are of interest to this project, it was never my intention to turn the body into a central object of study. To do so would suggest the necessity to explore and discuss ideas too directly related to the body, potentially leading the project away from its underlying intention - addressing narratives of home. Instead, it suffices to say “one’s own body is both a constituted and constituting object in relation to other objects” (Merleau Ponty, 2002, p.275). Its capacity to drive and interpret narratives through sensory engagement, or perception, remains an implied rather than explicit concern within the work.

the hearth and heart of the domicile

Rather, it is preferable to embrace not the body, but the home itself as an object and site from which to explore human narratives. Our first experience of narrative begins in the home. Bachelard (1994) tells us the home is where one's first experience of space and place is located. It is here that we first begin to tell ourselves tales of relativity that lend insight into who we are, and where the narrative of self begins. The house also offers the first sight of mystery (1994).

Moreover, the house is not only a space or place, but an object where Sartre's interior and exterior can at first appearance be traversed quite literally by the inhabitant. But a closer inspection leads us to a place where the supposed reality of domestic inhabitancy becomes exposed as a lived fiction, for in Sartre's model, things are not as they first seem. Sartre would have it that one can never know the internal of the object, only ever the intimacy of its surfaces. The idea or perception of a house is an external concept, its "secret reality" (Sartre, 2001, p.70) or essence, is unknown and must be imagined. The inhabitant is not in the house itself in that s/he is not within the fabric of the house, its walls, roof etc. This, the inhabitant can never achieve, and thus never truly speak for. The true nature of house remains largely hidden; all that can be known is the intimate traces left by something less tangible, the fiction: home.

However, by inhabiting this fiction, the occupant of 'home' may see the boundaries of his or her presence oscillate disconcertingly between a state of 'real' physical being and something imagined. Both Benjamin (in Leach, 2005) and Bachelard (1994) suggest this experience is most profound in children. Leach quotes Benjamin, in his article on *Mimesis*, describing a boy playing a game of

hide-and-seek. In Benjamin's example the child transforms not only himself via the objects, but to some degree transforms the objects as well; the table becomes a temple; in becoming the door, the door becomes a mask.

Although Benjamin embraces the whimsy that the child can actually become an element within his or her direct surroundings, it cannot go unnoticed that an object always stands between the child and the object that has become the subject of assimilation, perhaps because the child cannot actually become the door as Sartre perceives it. The deeper the child engages in this mimetic game the more he becomes a submissive subject to it until he "has become so perfectly at one with the environment that he fears he might never escape". "He needs to offer a shriek of self-deliverance so as to free himself from the spell under which he made himself identical to the interior landscape around him" (Leach, 2005, p. 97).

It would seem that, in order to get as close as possible to Sartre's 'secret reality', one plays a dangerous game of assimilation that threatens to suffocate or petrify its subject. A game that can only be escaped by vocally separating the self from the object one has imagined becoming. A game best not played too often.

While the inhabitant of the home may well, from time to time, imagine what it is to *be* a house or *be in* a house, the majority of one's existence happens as events that more often indirectly influence and are influenced by the physical structure of the home. One's own physicality constitutes and is constituted by the home's objects (Merleau Ponty, 2002, p.275). Events have the capacity to leave traces both cerebral and physical. Despite their seeming chartability within human consciousness and on the surfaces of the house, the meaning of these traces is

fluid rather than fixed. “A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We constantly re-imagine its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house” (Bachelard, 1994, p.17).

The ‘soul of the house’, in this sense, is directly influenced by those events and beliefs which manifest as proofs or illusions of stability for Bachelard. Bachelard’s house is a family home, owned for more than one generation, his first home, a home he can return to at later points in his life. This greatly influences the projection and importance of stability. Such a home is one of fluidity and freedom, the freedom to come and go, to explore and expand one’s understanding of space, not just the space of home, but all spaces. It seems it is precisely this fluidity that gives Bachelard’s home its stability. What happens then when the bounds of inhabited space are firmly fixed? Although Fowles wrote *The Collector* (Fowles, 1963) to explore social commentary regarding class structure and access to knowledge, it is useful here in other ways.

The dwelling Fowles’ Frederick constructs for Miranda is neither house nor home as we may imagine it, although he constructs it to resemble one. Instead, it is a windowless subterranean space, where an isolated Miranda tells herself the stories of her circumstance as there is no one else to tell them to. She must fictionalise Frederick in order to ‘understand’ him, and she must fictionalise the lives of friends and family, with whom she has no contact; all this serves to maintain a sense of their existence, which in turn serves to maintain her own sense of connection and, thus, self. When space is fixed and the inhabitant cannot move with will, fiction serves to provide comfort and context rather than a satisfactory

means of escape. Miranda's stories are mundane in their content, plausible constructions of reality, the effect being to project within her dwelling the illusion of stability.

But it is a conscious illusion, one that - for all the normality her stories seemingly possess and project - only serves to complicate Miranda's current situation. Her stories only remind her of difference and distance, rather than the sameness and connection she seeks. The unfamiliarity and isolation of her existence conflicts with the familiar, the comfortable and comforting of her imagination, ultimately repelling it. The comfort derived from her attempts to imagine reality is fleeting and Miranda herself eventually admits its futility (Fowles, 1963, p. 307). Miranda has no delusions of home in her confined space, the reality of dwelling is brought to the fore, her attempts at distraction are hampered, subsequently there is no distance from it. It is strangely like the home that Foucault (1989) identified as a retreat from the world, a place of rest. Indeed, there is nothing for Miranda to do in the dwelling place Frederick has created for her, but rest.

However, where Foucault's exclusion of the heterotopic from the home renders it as a place of comfort and salvation, here Foucault's tranquil home becomes a façade. For not only in Miranda's current predicament, but in her knowing that should she ever truly escape, rather than just escaping through fiction, her inhabitancy of her original home and all other spaces in the world will never be as solid, consistent, fixed - in other words as *real* - as she had previously allowed herself naively to imagine. Her knowledge is not consoling, but necessary, for if "we forget that fictions are fictions we regress to myth" (Kermode, 1969, p.41).

It is not only Miranda, but Frederick too, who feels a disenchantment that leads to an alienated connection. Both the collector and the collected engage in the game of traversing the tightrope between distance and closeness. This oscillation in Fowles' novel seems imperative, each must see the other as both object and subject to interpret the next course of action.

Where, for Fowles, the productive tension lies in this mutual oscillation of subject and object, Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva and Susan Stewart share a concern with the implications of thwarted human connections to objects or subjects. For Freud this manifests as melancholy when the subject refuses to forfeit the lost object, instead attempting to incorporate the object as part of the self. By incorporating the other, conflict and division are created within the desiring subject, causing alienation within the self. Kristeva develops this concept further and suggests that melancholia stems from the subject's inability to separate from the pre-symbolic domain paired with an inability to relate to others.

In the melancholic state the subject is unable to mourn, instead s/he is left pining "over a lack that cannot be symbolized, cannot be given a name. Therefore, this condition involves a total devaluation of social bonds and of language, whereby *everything becomes meaningless*" (Cavallars, 2003, p.131). Where Freud and Kristeva's melancholic subject risks becoming inert and despondent, Stewart's yearning subject does not pursue the absent or desired object, but pursues desire itself. Stewart's subject avoids melancholia, replacing it with nostalgia which Stewart articulates as "the desire for desire" (Stewart, 2001, p.23).

In her introduction to *On Longing* (2001), Stewart explains her interest in narratives' capacity to operate as "a structure of desire, a structure that both

invents and distances its object” (p.ix). Within Fowels’ text, it is Miranda, as much as Frederick, who suffers from Freud’s melancholia, and it is Miranda, as much as Frederick, who engages the structure of desire, imagining Frederick above ground in his own dwelling and imagining those places and people who signify her own object of desire; familiar space.

telling tales

Henri Lefebvre warns against describing space solely through literature, as literary descriptions risk endangering the space (in this case home) by turning it into a message and inhabitancy into a reading (1991, p.7). It is not enough to describe these locations, or the accounts and practices that take place within them. In order to have a more profound knowledge of the spaces and secrets of home which go beyond an arbitrary reading, it may be necessary to render them solid, to provide the would-be ‘reader’ (for want of a better word) with a tangible, touchable thing. It is also necessary for this ‘thing’, whatever its form, to be able to talk back, preventing a mono-thesis from taking place.

Lorraine Daston claims that things have a voice and narrative of their own, rendering them able to converse, rather than inertly or passively awaiting a ventriloquistic directive. For Daston, the ability of things to converse is due, in part, to that which differentiates Martin Heidegger’s “thingness” from Immanuel Kant’s “object”; Heidegger’s thing is able to “gather” other elements to it: the humble jug gathers to itself heaven and earth, mortals and immortals. But Heidegger is mute on how “the thingness gathers [das Ding versammelt]” and why it gathers these items and not others” (Daston, 2004, p.20).

It is possible to conceive that the fiction precedes the object within art and other practices, that is: fiction is the event or making, rendered fictional because of its fixed location in the past. It is the same fictional past that the reader recognises in the book (Kermode, 2003). The object is thus partly a testament to, or evidence of the event, but it also moves outward, picking up grit, rubbing up against the world, gathering to it other elements. Ownership of ideas or objects in art practice is never complete. Giorgio Gargani writes that ideas, thoughts, metaphysical objects, even numbers eventually autonomous, even if they were generated “by an act of will”. They are entities

that do not let themselves be indifferently manipulated and that impose constraints on us - on us who invented them. This is not unlike what happens in writing a novel in which we freely create characters that gradually impose their constitutions of necessity to which we, their creators, have to submit. We began by inventing the characters of the book, but at a certain point an astronomic rotation takes place in the pages of the text through which we have *to listen to them* instead of *inventing them*.
(Gargani, 1988, p.79)

The same could be applied to material objects in general, not solely within the confines of art, as it is through the material object that the thought, the idea, the metaphysical can be physically manifested. The object is a by-product of imagination (Bachelard, 1994), however, at some point, its narrative diverges from the linearity of production and ceases to be a simple commodity restricted by form and function.

Our use of an object initially propels its narrative much in the same manner as textual fiction. Through imagination we may provide the grounds or direction for idiosyncratic behaviour and meaning, never its totality. What the object gathers, then, cannot be categorically defined. Nor is the object, or the things it gathers, static, suspended in time or, least of all, at the beck and call of our will. It is this un-fixedness that keeps the evolution of both the object's autonomy and associated discourse going. The object gathers because it has gaps and secrets of its own, inscribed by us/e to some degree, but also by its own rotation.

The house gathers narrative to it through time and space - Bachelard traverses "from the cellar to the garret" (1984, pp. 3-37) exploring rooms and wardrobes - spaces beyond and within spaces. He is not alone in his search for the hidden in architecture, for Baudrillard (2003), too, voices a desire for the anomaly on the part of the house where one space, or room, simultaneously obscures and reveals the next.

The sequential nature of narrative movement required of the inhabitant who moves from room to room exists not only spatially but also within and through time. For Paul Tillich dwelling

is the first and most immediate relation that man has to space at all. In this relation he creates the space that is *his* space. And only by starting from his space can he thrust forward into space at large, into infinite space. (1987, p.82)

While this sounds remarkably like Bachelard's approach, Tillich's interest in the relationship between dwelling, space and time seems to come from a desire to

balance the highly abstracted philosophical constructs, space and time, with that of dwelling which “designates concrete, lived reality” (Tillich, 1987, p.81).

Hans Christen Andersen’s *Snow Queen* has a keen interest in abstracted philosophical constructs, her parlour - no less than a mile long, is dedicated to them. In the centre of the room is a lake, made entirely of shards of ice, each one identical to the next. Depending on the translation, she refers to this frozen lake as the Mirror of Reason or “the Mirror of the Mind” (Frank, 2004, p.185). It is here that she keeps Kai (or Kay) captive by way of words; she promises him release if he can spell her one word, from the shards of ice. The word eludes him and he is absorbed by the task oblivious to all else, time included, making word after word, pattern after pattern, fascinated, but unable to complete the task. The word finally manifests itself in the event of Gerda’s coming to rescue him. The word being eternity. Where Kay’s quest lies within language and reason, Gerda’s is driven by devotion. Release or freedom, it seems, comes about through an emotional intelligence that makes it possible to articulate what keeps one captive.

Furthermore, it could be considered that eternity keeps not only the inhabitant of the story but the inhabitant of the home - with its endless demands - captive. Repetitive acts form a microcosm of eternity. There is a suspension of time in the Snow Queen’s palace, which is a pseudo home like Miranda’s in *The Collector*.¹ In it the seasons do not change, Kay does not age. It is perhaps no coincidence that it is not until he and Gerda return to their childhood home, having been separated from it, that an awareness of the passage of time passed is recognised in their aging and echoed by the ticking of the grandmother’s clock (Frank, 2004, p.188).

¹ Indeed, all homes can be considered pseudo to some degree, given that one’s experience of it contains a certain element of illusion with regard to stability. It is a home none the less, a space of containment, a place to house items necessary and precious.

Like a patient of whom Oliver Sacks writes, Kay is unable to articulate the eternity that binds him, until he is released from it. Instead he invents thousands of other words or patterns in an attempt to make sense from the fabric of his surroundings. Sacks' patient, having been deprived of a sense of his own history, of a personal lineage of place and time, finds that the "world keeps disappearing, losing meaning, vanishing - and he must seek meaning, *make* meaning in a desperate way, continually inventing, throwing bridges of meaning over abysses of meaninglessness, the chaos that yawns continually beneath him" (1985, p.106).

It is moments such as these, within a text, that reveal the potential of something external to the linear narrative. Kermode writes that the "secrets to which these words and ideas are the index have no direct relation to the main business of the plot", "they form associations of their own, non sequential, secret invitations to interpretation rather than appeals to a consensus" (2003, p.29). Texts, like works of art, contain multifarious points of connection and departure for the reader or viewer to engage with, preventing a singular, didactic and static interpretation. An understanding of this quality allows the freedom to exist independently of, to, or in the story, opening a door between the world of that which is being narrated and the narratee, or recipient of the message, as autonomous yet analogous.

This particular door is less like Benjamin's and more like Bachelard's (2004, p.224), as understanding the door is a means to an end rather than the end itself. Bachelard is less interested in *being* the door and more interested in the door's role *in becoming*. By igniting an awareness of past and future, and of spaces whose adjacency is simultaneously obscured and revealed, this door leads the inhabitant

back and forth, through ideas of time and spatial dwelling, without an element of assimilation or submission.

It is time, as much as space, that gives dimension to narrative; for although space provides context, it is through time that narrative unfolds. It is also across time that narratives, both lived and textual, are recounted. When the individual loses the ability to recount his or her own narrative past at will (as in cases such as amnesia, schizophrenia or dementia) the sense of the individual's self is impaired. Here, the individual loses an aspect of their own dimensional being to time. This confuses the sufferer, reducing the moment under scrutiny to nonsense (Hanne, 1994, p.9). Where the polarities of finite and infinite define the limits of spatial dwelling, and give the inhabitant something to push against, or forward into (Kermode, 2003, p.83), eternity provides the limits and limitlessness for time and subsequently narrative duration and sequence.²

Just as Sartre's secret reality is hidden within, or beyond the accessible surface of things, it is within, and so too beyond sequence, that the secret resides. This occurs due to the nature of secrets being "at odds with sequence, which is considered an aspect of priority: and a passion for sequence may result in the suppression of a secret" (Kermode, 2003, p.84). But the active suppression of a secret may betray itself; the concealment prompts the reader to the location of the secret within the narrative (ibid).

The reader who seeks more from fiction than a moral or simple, satisfactory closure, will find themselves, by sleuth or stumble, as Alice down the rabbit hole, falling through the white space of the page into the margins, discovering that

which lies at the limits of what we say (Foucault, 1989, p.96). The making of art, in terms of its actual production, occurs within this very margin. It is the thing we may have clues (but not direct access) to, within the completed work.

Kermode also flags repetition as a clue for uncovering secrets; when a word or idea reoccurs with notable frequency over the course of the narrative, it may be another invitation to a secret (Kermode, 2003, p.86). Lillian Halegua's *The Pearl Bastard* (1978) perhaps offers up such a secret, one that is of particular interest to the sense of isolation not only implicit within the act of reading, but also of home. The reoccurrence of the word 'white' within the text, heightened in places by an overt contrast to other pure hues and tones, cannot go amiss. It becomes similar to Foucault's white space within text that allows the reader a passage to the margins and access to a place where the act of not saying potentially opens further discourse. Pregnant and fifteen, the narrative's subject finds herself in such a place, and she becomes suspended within this whiteness which collides with the narrative's sequential trajectory when she becomes snowed in.

Foucault reminds us of the boundaries and restrictions of language and the manner in which 'man' assumes authority over language and text when in fact one is really

expressing themselves in words of which they are not the masters, enclosing them in verbal forms whose historical dimension they are unaware of, men believe that their speech is their servant and do not realise that they are submitting themselves to its demands (Foucault, 2002, p324).

The anonymity bestowed by the absence of her own name allows the protagonist to tell the story without omission; it is also what reminds us that the subject could be closer to the reader than the distance of text implies. Without a name, the girl

potentially becomes any fifteen year old, our neighbour, or even ourselves.³

Halegua's *Pearl Bastard* presents a way of avoiding the trap that language sets up, according to Foucault, through naming and ownership. The total isolation to which the young girl is subjected, is the space in which she gives birth to the thing she cannot name, the thing that connects itself to the whiteness and becomes the title of the book, *The Pearl Bastard*. It is by not naming the thing she has produced that she is able to free herself, albeit violently. For not naming the child seems to give her permission to separate herself from the infant, enough to drown it. This releases her from the language trap, a patriarchal naming of the role 'mother' and, it seems, subsequently of domestication.

In this way it becomes possible to lead the inhabitant of the home out of hiatus - it comes about in the silence and isolation of white space, that place in the book where the girl is able to think her way to new thoughts previously unimaginable. The spell is broken and a sense of the girl's story only just beginning takes place at the point where both her residence and the readers involvement ends.

³ Here I must caution against my own interpretation of that which has not been said. When Kermode (Kermode, 2003) explores the secret within fiction and the way novels advertise and conceal their secrets, he also cautions against over intellectualising as much as under reading. This suggests a delicate balance and an open-ended one at that, he does not call for a reading of the 'correct' secrets in order for the text to be meaningful in its omitted content. It is something of a private and confidential pursuit, this discovery of the secret, not without the element of surprise. Like the dream that shocks its recipient/creator (for the dreamer is both) out of banality by presenting a narrative so vivid, or so at odds with lived reality, as to confront everything the dreamer has come to believe about the self, world or both.

making meaning, making things

Poetry allows something similar to what the secret that may reside within narrative allows; it can supply order and structure without imposing or demanding a total, fixed and categorical reading. It is the secret spaces within a text and the not-necessarily sequential structure of the poetic that invite, sometimes even demand, the entry of the reader's thoughts and intertextual exchange. Not only within text and narrative, but also within the domain of objects, must we recognise anomalies that deviate from expected structure and repetition. Recognition of wear and tear and the way we move over or around the peculiarities of the familiar, become aspects that contribute to intertextual readings of spaces and objects. They can contribute to an empathy with spaces and objects. For, as inhabitants of interior space, we "are all poet[s] of furniture" (Bachelard, 1994, p.78).

Something incongruous happens when empathetic exchange is hampered and becomes reduced to a unidirectional acknowledgement of the subject or object. Oliver Sacks provides us with the example of observing a woman in her 60's, a severe sufferer from Tourette's syndrome, who directly mimicked no less than 40 or 50 people while walking down a street (Sacks, 1985, p.117 -118). Not unlike the mirror in *The Snow Queen*, which distorted everything good and truthful into something ugly and mean, her direct copy of something external (both to herself and the people she mimicked) became a ghoulish compulsion that neither assimilated nor endeared her to the subjects copied. Moreover she showed visible signs of distress as it competed with her own sense of self.

The physical object that manifests itself, then, would not be the house itself. A direct replica of the most immediate, the external: house, would be a clumsy attempt at giving voice, unable to reveal anything secret at all. Instead, it would become something like the compulsive rendering of the external that Sack's Tourette's sufferer becomes trapped by. This would be to speak of the home as a brash statement, with little indication of the home's secrets and substance. Things that embody or present a sense of home and inhabitancy, rather than the architectural construction, may be more readily used as a voice for the fiction of home. D. Walter Gotshalk writes: "since perception contains cognitive elements, the elaboration of intrinsic perception will engage cognitive powers and leave an imprint on thought" (1962, p.12). This insight, combined with Lefebvre and Bachelard's, makes it possible to argue that one such cognitive element is the perception of space. Therefore, the intrinsic perception of an object would contain an inherent reading of the space to which it refers.

To make a copy, is not enough to understand the object, or understand something else via the object. In a sense, this does little more than validate the superiority or importance of the original. The copy then leaves both the viewer and the maker with a self satisfied vindication of their knowledge and perceptions of the world. Reassuring, yes, but little more than "the pleasure of recognising" (Baudrillard, 2003, p.13). To simply present an object 'as is' risks turning the object into a void through which words and thoughts eventually drain, pouring in the pleasure of a superficial recognition, without drawing anything back out. This turns the object into a repository for the preconceived. While Marcel Duchamp intended to open up a new terrain for discourse when he exhibited objects such as 'fountain', the potential of this shift for representation has since diminished. The readymade,

once analysed and accepted by contemporary art theorists, ceased to ignite new speech in others, and suffered self-inflicted laryngitis as a result. It could not speak of its own accord, rather, it was spoken to and through. It borrowed voices and its overt recognition as a functional object, the very thing that initially bestowed upon it infamy, was also its silencer. Recognisability reduces objects by causing them to reside within a self - that is, they become intrinsically known and therefore hold no surprises.⁴

The process of physical engagement or interaction itself is the key, “knowing an object does not mean copying it - it means acting upon it” (Piaget in Turkle, 2007, p.38). To directly copy the object presents a limitation of outcome, whereas to act upon an object can be undertaken in a potentially endless number of ways. It is this limitlessness that assists in retaining a subject’s interest in an object, something we will return to later with regard to Frederick and Miranda.

Within my own practice, when acting upon the objects that articulate something of home, it has been of importance to both select and produce objects that could be acted upon further by the viewer without commanding the direction of the viewers own action too rigidly. The objects themselves needed to contain some degree of ambiguity so that a narrative order may be applied rather than a specific one implied. Matthew Belmonte writes of autism and his childhood affiliation with a yellow raincoat: “Autistic symptoms are what a person does in order to force a

⁴ Advertising, Baudrillard tells us, as a sign is meant to harbour the element of surprise to ‘enrich’ and give rise to new thoughts and ideas. When advertising becomes a sign (eg: Coke or a Campbell soup can) it loses its sign impact and becomes part of the self, a reality needing no explanation or discussion. It eventually loses the element of desire, the acquisition of its meaning has been sated. For Baudrillard, we do not desire ourselves, our desires are externalised, thus the object becomes “not contemplated - only recognised” (p.6).

chaotic world to follow a predictable script. We are all trying to impose a narrative order on what may seem a fundamentally chaotic world” (in Turkle, 2007, p.75).

It is a fine line between ordering for sense, on the one hand, and enforcing a systematically contrived structure that allows no intrusion of imagination and refuses all possible entry of (or to) new thoughts, on the other. The latter tends to dictate the path of action for the viewer, leaving them with little course but to make a ‘copy’ of the work within their own mind. The qualities, obsession and a desire for the set, are often present in autistic behaviour. The final work exhibits both, through the process of crochet, and in the connecting of the objects visually by subjecting them all to the same process. If there is a certain autism present in the object, the maker must avoid straitjacketing the work in order to maintain a degree of autonomy over the works projected potential meaning.

The viewer needs to be able to get to know a work on their own terms, for as Susan Sontag writes, “Art is not only about something; it is something. A work of art is a thing in the world, not just a text or commentary on the world” (1994. p.21). She warns against “treating works of art as statements” however what isn’t made explicit is the reductive nature of statements themselves. It is not a sentence, paragraph or dialogue; in effect a statement is capable only of pointing, it offers up no narrative with which to engage. Were a ‘work of art’ to be viewed simply as a text or commentary it would be reduced to statement, pointer, gurgling recess, as has already been mentioned.

Perhaps it is better to consider how a work of art operates as a quotation, for here, the bounded “ ” marks define both the integrity and limits of the utterance in relation to the original. “In detaching the utterance from its context of origin,

the quotation marks textualize the utterance, giving it both integrity and boundary and opening it to interpretation” (Stewart, 2000, p.19). Furthermore, the “quotation mark points not only inward but outward as well. What stands outside the quotation mark is seen as spontaneous and original” (p. 19). It is also cautionary to note that it is largely the artist’s intention or meaning that is referred to here, not the entirety of the object itself. The object may quote the artist, but that is not all of which it speaks.

Meaning is made not only by the artist, but equally by the spontaneity and originality of the individual viewer. And due to its own inherent narrative, that which the artist did not construct, the object is always more than an intermediary between artist and viewer. Its own narrative allows the object to contain and consequently share its own secrets.

Although the viewer is situated outside the bounded marks of the object, s/he must initially imagine his or herself within them, a preliminary ‘Einfühlung’, or empathy, is required in order to grasp a sense of the quotation or idea which the viewer is confronted with (Gotshalk, 1962, p.14). It is an almost simultaneous account of internal and external, of imagining the self as the object, and at the same time, drawing on one’s own accounts of outside, of other objects similar and seemingly dissimilar.

Returning to the earlier example of the boy imaging himself as a door, the act of *mimesis* appears to require a degree of metaphor in order to articulate that transformation; the boy wears the persona door ‘like a mask’. Metaphorical import is also integral to understanding objects that are represented to us in a new or unfamiliar way as it “gives concrete substance to an impression that is difficult to

express” (Bachelard, 1994, p.74), thus granting access to the new, so that a dialogue based in intertextuality can begin. However, Bachelard is dismissive of metaphor and prefers an approach based on the image as he feels metaphor has “no phenomenological value” (p.74). What is wrong with metaphors, in Bachelard’s opinion, is that in order to be understood, tacit knowledge is required and this differs from person to person. The metaphor always contains a certain generality, or ambiguity, in order to enable interpretation through the use of this tacit knowledge. Yet it is precisely this generality that allows *mimesis* to take place, preventing the production of a static copy - a monologue repeated by the thousands.

However original and spontaneous an individual’s experience of a given object, there is a certain commonality according to Leach, whereby the attempt to understand or assimilate oneself to the object presents itself as the desire for camouflage, and that the “*desire for camouflage is the desire to feel connected. It is the desire to find our place in the world and feel at home.*” (2005, p.93). This is not necessarily a comfortable place though, given that, as stated earlier, this desire is one that will eventually make you scream: Deliver me from comfort, from the very thing I seek!

knit one, purl one, drop one, pick one up, repeat from k

In comfort, there is something synonymous with rest and leisure. Mary McLeod argues against Foucault’s omission of the experience of home from the world of heterotopic spaces. In a discussion on his exclusion of women and children as “other”, she writes

Women are admitted to his discussion primarily as sex objects - in the brothel, in the motel rented by the hour. (And what might be even harder for most working mothers to accept with a straight face is his exclusion of the house as a heterotopia on the grounds that it is a “place of rest”). (in Argrest, 1996, p.20).

Her rejection of the notion of home as a place of rest could indeed be stretched to include the ‘homely’ handiwork, which might otherwise mistakenly be seen to support notions of rest and recreation within the home. Crochet has historically been viewed as a craft of leisure given its excessive use of materials and the time required to learn the process and produce objects. Yet it is precisely this obsessive laboriousness that could give voice to a seeking, rather than a present state, of comfort and stability, through repetitive action.

Where invention is born of necessity, repetition is born of obsession. If we cast our thoughts back to Frederick, we can consider how Miranda becomes the premise for the collector’s next victim. The book closes with Frederick expressing his cognisance of seriality: when he discloses his intentions to seek his next Miranda he notes the possible number of women living nearby who harbour the same qualities (Fowles, 1963, p.465). He could be, by his own admission, busy for some time looking for Miranda’s successors, thus, in effect, multiplying her. In this way, his desire for the object can never be sated, instead it is played out as a repetitious act, subjecting Frederick to a perpetual state of desire. It is also of interest to note that while the narration of the story switches midway from Frederick to Miranda, it is Frederick who has the last word:

Storytelling, it must be recognised from the start, is always associated with the exercise, in one sense or another, of power, of control. This is true of even the commonest and apparently most innocent form of storytelling in which we engage: that most continuous monologue which everyone maintains, sliding from memory, to imaginative reworking of past events, to fantasising about the future, to daydreaming. (Hanne, 1994, p.8)

Both the sense of structured sequence and an obsessive repetition are also bound up in the narrative act of crochet. The act provides order, or at least the illusion of order, as if a physical manifestation of an internal narrative; a narrative driven by obsession. The method of production constantly re-inscribes and thus validates the action of the maker within the work. There is something almost feverish, as though the act of crocheting is a constant stream of words, the unrelenting flow of fictions that one of Oliver Sack's patients exhibits. Mr Thompson uses this strategy in order to retain a sense of identity (1986, pp. 103 - 110). Even though Mr Thompson's accounts are rarely based in his former lived reality, they still serve to hold at bay "the bewilderment of narrative disconnection" (Hanne, 1994, p. 8). But it is more than this, and Hanne also notes Lyotard's paradoxical assertion that narrative is, in one manner, a mechanism by which to consume the past, to forget it (p.8). Narrative, fiction, crochet, these are all are mechanisms for sorting, recounting, ordering, discounting, reordering, resting the mind, loosing oneself to the catharsis of repetition only to pick it up again, moments or rows later.

Annette Messenger gathers together objects of apparently "diverse elements, ... allows them to go forth and multiply, copying them painstakingly in various techniques" (Grenier, 2001, p.72). There is something cynical or satirical about her

approach. It bears similarity to what she is attracted to within that most overt of fictions, the fairytale, where “life is enlarged, in which a serene and friendly world can suddenly appear unstable, violently threatening or dangerous”. It is the “amplified”, the “theatrical” (p.74), the spectacle she seeks out and represents, and the resulting objects are lively re-articulations of the everyday. Her cosy knitted covers activate the ultimately inanimate in *Savage Mercies* (p. 49), by the use of colour, as well as the activity and labour implied by the process. One knits as a living being, for the living.

A different approach to labour is undertaken in Anne Hamilton’s work where the process of production is addressed directly through action. Individuals carry out tasks

not difficult to perform: mundane and (apparently) repetitive, they require only minimal skill. Yet they are performed with unwavering focus and diligence, thereby creating a cocoon or nimbus around each protagonist. This intimacy characteristic of the private domain not only removes them from the risk of seeming absurd, but dispels any effect of display or spectacle. (Cooke & Kelly, 1994, p.96)

My process is much like Hamilton’s product, something similar is implicated in the process of the object’s becoming, not so much in its being. The work is, by its nature, attached to the private domain, and the absurd is held at bay perhaps precisely because so much of the private is absurd, for example the inane act of brushing ones teeth every single day. This is the case in my own project, where the act of covering objects through handwork demands an intimacy between the subject and the object, a heightened awareness of form and surface, of one’s

hands and body moving over and around the object. When those objects belong to that most private of places, the home, the act is prevented from becoming farcical, but does not forgo the sense of amplification or activation.

There is something else to consider: an obsessive attention to detail within art practice serves to inflate the real and the fictional (Barton & Lawler Dormer, 1993, p.56). Within my own project, the real and fictional aspects of home are inflated in the intimacy, the attention to each object's details, which manifests as an articulation of form, like a second, crocheted, skin. In addition to this, the obsessive and eternal labours of domestic inhabitancy wrestle with their own meaninglessness, and here the mundane becomes anything but mundane in its amplification.

There is a gathering, within my own project that is similar to *Messenger's*, a desire for the set is indulged, not by collecting objects explicitly the same, but by subjecting them to a process which results in a complete sameness of surface. This treatment that allows the objects to "go forth and multiply" comes, then, not from a multiplicity implied by sameness, but from the process of production itself. Similar to an organic life form, such as lichen, the mundane, and at first appearances inanimate, the objects perhaps pose a quiet menace; their own coverage threatening to engulf all objects eventually, through a stillness in time.

The objects selected needed to be more than just the remnants of home. Time plays a part in another respect, for stories are always told in an absent tense, with a recognition of past inherent in the process of retelling or reading (Kermode, 1969). The quality of absence is also inherent in the objects, somehow familiar but located not in the present but, rather, in the not too distant past. It is their

familiarity that makes them “subject objects. Like us, for us and through us, they have qualities of intimacy” (Bachelard, 1994). This intimacy has the capacity to suspend time; to a degree, a recognition and nostalgia for these objects prevent the inhabitant from moving forward (Stewart, 2000, p.139) and this, in turn, may serve to remind us that our expectations, illusions and suppositions of home may also threaten to engulf us. Refer to appendix 1.

Rachel Whiteread has an interest in materials that exhibit traces of a narrative beyond the maker’s own, which then become an aspect of the finished work. She once said:

I always use second-hand things because there is a history in them ... I once got a load of second-hand bedding from the Salvation Army and it was all sweat and urine stained. All the things I was trying to use ... The smell of people, just everyday living ...” (Causey, 1998. p. 237).

These are things that leave traces, clues for the viewer, concerning a human state of being. More than this, many of her objects, from *House* to *Torso* (Kraus, 1997), reveal something about domestic inhabitancy. Sheets suggest a place of inhabitancy where time stands still, or at the very least, is slowed. In dreaming, the time of the lived world is suspended in favour of the alternative time present in imagination (Bachelard, 1994, p.184). It can be a site of melancholy, reminding us of birth and death, of passages of time unconnected to the present, of love, of loss, of loneliness. It is, partly, from this fabric that my own project is laboriously constructed.

The selection of materials for my own project was also aesthetically specific, as a result, unlike Whiteread's sheets they were not gathered in one fowl swoop, instead the accumulation also became an aspect of the process. The sheets were gathered over the course of a six month period, specifically second hand, specifically white linen. Where the house gathers narrative to itself, white things gather silence and the cold, combined with the obsessive; the whiteness of the objects produced might indicate a quiet gnawing at the corners.

a tale to tell

While the project began with a physical object, the crocheted body, and ultimately ended with one (or rather several), the body of the project was diverted elsewhere. Frustrated by the insufficiency of exploring fiction externally, that is, as a reader, the necessity of stepping inside the bounded marks “ ” to better understand elbowed, so to speak, its way to the fore. The space of writing, like reading, is one of silence and solitude (Stewart, 1984, p. 142). Not saying, or silence, is sometimes necessary in order to allow the inhabitant to find the secret. This is much like playing hide and seek - a boisterous, noisy seeker will distract themselves and risk missing the indications that something is not as it should be. However, once the object or subject is found, utterance breaks the silence, shatters the mirror, releases the captive, delivers the world.⁵

In order to explore and articulate concerns I had about the fictions of objects, and their capacity to speak, I stepped into the silent space of text. Doing so arose from

⁵ Gerda is not a boisterous seeker, although she wonders aloud and engages with others in her quest - however, the act of dancing is difficult to undertake quietly, and it is her direct articulation "Oh Kay, I have found you!" that becomes the utterance.

a need to understand fiction, and something about distance and closeness, that I was yet to be able to articulate. This part of the project took shape as a series of short fictional accounts. What I began with, and what seems to hold the closest relation to where I ended up, was something concerning sound and silence, closeness and distance and their potentially suffocating nature. While silence is necessary, so too is sound. It seems sound matters because it denotes presence, because it can potentially be produced by subject and object. Perhaps it is the resonance of both thoughts and things.

This idea ran its own course, more than being directed by myself as the author, in *...Coming, Ready or not...* (see Stachl, 2006 in appendix 2), where Simon, the subject around whom the story unfolds, fixates on sound to articulate both his own existence, and that of his mother. Here, sound fills the silence of text, he uses it to combat absence. Simon seeks sound by interaction, rubbing his arm, the audibility of brushing his teeth internal and external, licking the TV in contrast with his soundless honey sandwich. He wonders if reading the paper out loud to another person is really talking, as it lacks the characteristic exchanges inherent in conversing, since no back and forth is required.

Simon is isolated within the text, and not only within the text that renders him fiction (suspended in a recorded fictional moment that does not move or breathe beyond the end pages of the book much in the same way that the narrative moment of making is suspended within a work of art). He is also isolated in the 'factual' newspaper text he reads over dinner with his mother. Simon is trapped in Foucault's (2000) white space between image and text (*this is not a pipe*), severed

by Barthes dead author (1987), that is, until the phone rings, releasing both Simon and the reader.⁶

“If the ‘subject of utterance’ is best conceived of as a character speaking or thinking, then the ‘subject of enunciation’ is the subject of a narrative act.” (Allen, 2000, p.40). For Kristeva, the importance of the distinction between utterance and enunciation lies in its potential to undo or unravel notions of totality within a text. What is, in this regard, of interest to this project is to consider how utterance might allude to the act of saying - which puts both the speaking subject and the listener or recipient on the spot, whereas enunciation allows a full consideration of the thing being said. The distinction could be conceived of as the difference between speaking and saying. To utter, or say, leaves no question of authorship in that the words are still firmly attached to their author, or the subject forming the words. To enunciate, or speak, demands in Kristeva’s model a separation of the author from his or her words in the form of text (p.40).

Both Kristeva and Barthes would thus claim that the author is lost. However, what is not addressed is that, in the act of utterance, it is not the ‘author’ but the ‘text’ or message that becomes lost in its impermanence. The speaker would have to keep repeating the sentence in order for it to remain present. We must imagine the words, and their referents, after they have been spoken, just as we must imagine the author when reading. This might suggest that the subject (or in the case of this project, the objects) must both utter and enunciate in order to be fully understood.

⁶ The repetition within the text and the short, sharp structure of the sentences share some similarity with the act of crochet and the recording of crochet or knitting patterns. It is as if crocheting a story.

These thoughts have accompanied the majority of my engagements with the objects in my work. For the sake of brevity, I will discuss this movement in relation to one object only, namely the one that released Simon from the text; the telephone. The telephone is capable of utterance, we understand its function, attaching meaning to it as we would to a speaking subject. In the opening passage of Andy Warhol's *a* (2005), the telephone operates as vehicle to the conversation that commences the book's narrative, setting the tone. The passage is written as a conversational transcript where no mention or reference is made to the object itself. Yet, by its own mechanical language, the phone announces its presence and colludes with the speakers to reveal that it is indeed a payphone. Without the aid of a descriptive passage, the reader is able to become more engaged with the telephone than with the obtuse conversation taking place.

A conversion of the object may behave similarly to the conversion of spoken narrative into text; that is, the object may be rendered capable of enunciating by giving it the maker's (or author's) traceable points of reference. In the case of my project, by crocheting over the phone, the object is not only transformed but may move from utterance to enunciation. By separation, that is, by removing its overt functional everyday context, by placing it into " " marks, the phone is now capable of enunciation and must be subjected to a number of other 'texts', as it were, in order to be understood. However, to avert the danger of a reductive or static reading, the phone must ring, or at least retain the potential to ring, to maintain its power of utterance. In this way, a simplistic exchange in favour of enunciation can be avoided, as to do so would core the phone of its secret reality - and so its autonomous power as an object.

Some initial considerations given to the possibility of rigging the phone to ring, and to installing pre-recorded narratives for the viewer to discover, if the phone was answered. However, this posed concerns as to what that narrative might be, and how it would influence the recipient's understanding of, or engagement with, the work as a whole. Daston is careful to warn against a simplistic approach to 'speaking things', where a too literal approach to *utterance* reduces the articulation of object to impersonation. In Joseph Leo Koerner's essay, *Bosch's Equipment* (in Daston, 2004), the example of a talking doll released by the toy company Mattel in 1959 reveals how an object proclaiming "I really can talk", was able to produce 11 sentences (no mean feat in 1959). However, when compared to its non-'talking' counterparts, the talking doll's capacity to engage in discourse was restricted by the sentences it could utter (Daston, 2004,p.39).

While I intended to address the utterances of objects, it seems clear that these need not be linguistic narratives. The objects' own sounds are idiosyncratic and lend themselves to narratives less didactic than those I could provide if I were to produce a mini film for the television to speak, or a pre-recorded message if someone answered the ringing phone, both would be acts of impersonation. The ringing is utterance but also enunciation enough, the 'listener' or viewer is still able to respond to the object whose narrative capacity is more diverse for not 'talking'.

The objects, in their white crochet skins, allude to a place of isolation, but are not individually isolated, their sameness binds them together for "no utterance exists alone"(Allen, 2000, p.19). A recognition of time and place on the part of the viewer, and the potential dialogue the relationships the objects set up for

one another, suggest an intertextuality of objects where “all utterances are *dialogic*, their meaning and logic dependant upon what has previously been said and on how they are received by others” (Allen, 2000, p.19).

in conclusion: closer, closer...

If we consider how

mimesis may come into operation as a third party engages with [a] model, and the model becomes vehicle for identifying with the original object.

Mimesis is therefore an operation evoked both by the artist who makes a work of art, and also by the person who experiences it. (Leach, 2005, p.95)

All this leads us to an uncomfortable dwelling, and a silent one at that. A condition in which the narrative is more a sense than a clearly articulated voice, and a situation where the inhabitant must fall so quiet, so still, as to be able to hear beyond the statement, through to the core of the objects and, in so doing, to the core of the home of which they speak.

The soul of Bachelard’s house, constantly being re-imagined, bears similarity with Kristeva’s model of intertextuality. Accordingly, we could consider the possibility of an intertextuality of objects, where the objects’ meaning is not fixed or didactic. Instead, it would be idiosyncratic, subject to social order and readings through time.

Through this intertextuality, an understanding of the fiction brings us closer to the essence of the thing (in this case the fictions of the home bring us closer to the physicality of the house). Closer, and at the same time ... lost in language, lost in comfort, lost at home ... The unease created by a feeling of loss, or lack, within

the intimate is compounded by an uneasy relationship within the project concerning the materials used. The white sheets that go beyond the domestic by suggesting occupancy and encounter, the physicality of inhabitancy and connection, are also a fabric stained with the possible traces of disconnection and melancholy. This is the fibre that constitutes the narratives told of and within the home.

The shadows cast about the room as words are only ever referential of the world beyond. Beware, for this is not the world relived in the word, but only ever the shadow of reality. For all the reality it may seem to possess, it is but the poor cousin and, once this is acknowledged, the fire is less warm, the walls protecting one from the outside world less substantial, and even the reality of that world beyond perhaps a little less convincing. The negotiation of space and notions of freedom are important to occupancy as they provide a means to break away from the cavity of 'home', however uncomfortable this extraction may be.

A desire for extraction and a need for the reassuring contained within the familiar result in an uncomfortable and silent dwelling - one that is capable of speaking, not necessarily of speech. More like a narrative sensing to break out beyond homely fictions. The final work casts literal shadows not only on its environment but within and on itself: subtle shadows that reveal the lineal nature of crochet. The back and forth that bears testament not only to the monotony of its manufacture but also resembles the structure of text. Here then, is a monotony that simultaneously captures and offers a secret release. A sensing of proximity and distance, of running one's finger along the crevices and ridges to find Foucault's gap.

appendix 1: visual log



Crochet body. Materials: Yellow acrylic wool.
Final dimensions: 5 foot 4 in.

A number of acrylic wool replicas of my external self were intended as the practical component of the project – however it became increasingly inescapable that the act of doing so prevented a truly tactile experience of space from remaining evident, instead the body became paramount. What is more, the tactile engagement or experience was restricted to the immediate vicinity of the body succeeding only in mummifying or suffocating it. In this way the body ceased to exist in direct contact with the world and became an object (see p.1-2).



If worn the wearer became incapable of direct, full sensory touch, while externally the wearer would find themselves in fact *not* themselves, but an object to be freely touched (see p.2).



6mm wide strips of sheeting. Linen. Approx 12cm x12cm. The intensity of labour present in the final product as crochet conceals the truly labourious act of slicing up sheets into 6mm wide strips and winding these continuous lengths into balls, a process which initially took five times longer than crocheting when scissors were used. The mundane nature of this task also far outweighed the production of pattern pieces made to fit over three dimensional objects of varying forms.



Pattern pieces made directly from the object to be covered in single crochet. White linen sheet. Dimensions variable.

The obsessiveness of process and the repetition required to produce the coverings is not unlike Kay's patternmaking attempts to reproduce elements of language in the Snow Queens palace. Structure and repetition may testify to an internal narrative driven by an obsessive desire for order (see p.6).

The sameness of surface that crochet imposes on the objects operates as a unifying element, creating the idea of a set, an obsessive quality in itself (see p.13).



Materials: Wooden fire surround, white house paint and crochet linen.

Dimensions: 1.75m x 1.50m.

The hearth and heart of the domicile.

Bachelard (1994) tells us the home is where ones first experience of space and place is located. It is here that we first begin to tell ourselves tales of relativity that lend insight into who we are, and where narrative begins. The house also offers the first sight of mystery (1994)(see p. 2).





Materials: Wooden chair with metal frame, white house paint and crochet linen. Dimensions: 90cm x 50cm.

In order to create for the viewer an object or environment that goes beyond the pleasure of recognising it is not enough to reproduce a replica of the original object. Crochet represents the chair, producing an object that can be contemplated rather than simply recognised (see p.10).



Materials: wooden lamp base with electrical components, glass bulb, appliance white spray enamel and crochet linen. Dimensions: height 1.60m, base 60cm.

In one aspect, production, the object is a by product of imagination (Bachelard) but at some point its narrative diverges from the linearity of production and ceases to be a simple commodity restricted by form and function (see p.6).



Materials: bakelite telephone and crochet linen. Dimensions: 25cm x 30cm x 20cm.

A conversion of the object may behave similarly to the conversion of spoken narrative into text, that is the object may be rendered capable of enunciating, by giving it the maker's (or author's) traceable point of reference. In the case of my project, by crocheting over the phone, the object is not only transformed but may move from utterance to enunciation (see p.17).



It was necessary for the objects to allude to a past rather than present moment, but one that could still be easily recognised.

When the individual loses the ability to recount their own narrative past at will, in cases such as amnesia, schizophrenia or dementia, the sense of the individuals self is impaired. Here the individual loses an aspect of their own dimensional being to time and this confuses the sufferer, reducing the current moment under scrutiny to nonsense (Hanne, 1994, p.9). (see p.7)



Materials: Plastic television set with electrical parts, glass screen, appliance white spray enamel and crochet linen. Dimensions: 75cm x 60cm.

The act of covering objects through handiwork produces an intimacy between subject and object, a heightened awareness of form and surface, of one's hand moving over and around the object. When the objects belong to that most private of places, the home, the act stops short of becoming farcical, but does not forgo the sense of amplification or activation (see p.14).



Materials and dimensions variable. Installation view.

appendix 2; narrative

... coming ready or not ...

The house creaks. Simon is sitting on his bed. It's almost dark and a history of empty feeling is breathing down Simon's neck. It makes the hairs on his arm stand up; he can't hear his mum moving around in the kitchen. Her soundlessness pinches at the corners of the empty feeling, making it twitch. He decides he is cold and rubs vigorously at his arms, the goosebumps don't subside but the comforting sound of skin against skin replaces the silence and makes time move again. The rubbing is rhythmic, like a clock but friendlier and Simon is grateful he can make this sound. Schick, schick, schick, he peers at his arm, the skin is pink from friction but the bumps are still there. He licks the back of his wrist, this action makes no sound but he imagines one. Because it is an action, because it lives, because it breathes. A knife clatters to the floor in the kitchen and Simon jolts, he is at the door with his finger below the light switch before the word 'shit' ruptures the omnipresent doom of anti-presence. It's temporary, Simon knows, but you take it where you can. He switches on the light and leaves the room.

In the kitchen their feet converse with the lino, squeak, swish, tap, Simon still in his school shoes and Jenny in her socks. He follows her about, from stove to cupboard to sink to stove. They move around each other in here and don't talk. Simon fetches two forks from the draw, spaghetti and eggs on toast for tea, no knives. He holds the forks up so they cut through the glare of the light bulb and squints at them, warding off the light. Her fingers brush the tip of the forks directing them down. Simon thinks about forks - there are six in the draw, but they

only ever use two. Two forks. He holds them out in front of him and lets them drag him to the table by their own force. There is an unnerving feeling that the two forks now on the table are lonelier, somehow more deserted, than the four left unused in the draw. He wonders if she's ever noticed this, but doesn't bring it up.

They read the paper out loud to each other while they eat, taking it in turns to pick articles, sometimes Jenny points to something and Simon reads it. Or they try and follow a theme through the paper, like only stories with animals in them, or the weather or technology. Simon wonders if reading out loud is really talking. He never says if he likes something he's just read, or if it's funny or anything, he figures she can hear it when he reads. They do the dishes together, two plates, two cups, the two forks, a pot, a knife, a fish slice, a spoon.

Simon bares his teeth in the bathroom mirror and stares at them. His teeth stare back. He balances his toothbrush on his upper lip, a plastic moustache. The toothbrush moves loudly across his teeth, he closes his mouth around it so the sound is in his head. Opens his mouth so it fills the bathroom competing with the running tap. The toothbrush clinks back into the jar. Simon leaves the bathroom quickly. Before the last guttural glurk of water is sucked from the sink.

His bed is cold and he drums his feet under the covers to warm up. He settles into his favourite spot and closes his eyes. If you can manage it, it's better to get to sleep quickly before you notice how quiet everything is again. He pokes the knuckles of his index fingers in his outer ears to block out the crouching stealthy silence. He thinks he hears his mum call goodnight. He calls goodnight back without opening his eyes.

Jenny is already in the kitchen when Simon wakes up. He gets dressed and wishes he went to a normal school so he wouldn't have to wear a uniform; he doesn't like that it is all grey. It seems funny to be wearing coloured underpants when your uniform is all grey. He pulls the covers up on his bed and goes to the kitchen. Cornflakes and cocoa for breakfast. He chooses an orange and a banana from the table and these go in his bag with his sandwiches. Jenny is at the sink washing tea towels when he leaves. He leaves the backdoor open for her to hang them out.

He doesn't want to be at school, he spends the whole day willing it to be home time. Lunch hour is agony. He runs around the school field three times to speed things up. Then he sits by the bell, counting from one to fifty. Hoping each time that when he reaches fifty it will finally ring. ...forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty. Pause. One, two... Clattering, scraping, the rise and fall of voices, the skritty-skrit sound of books and fingers on paper. Simon stares at the blank rectangle on his desk, willing it to make a noise all of its own. It doesn't. He sighs and begins his project.

It always takes Simon almost seven minutes exactly to walk home. His mum told him once that that's how long it was, almost seven minutes exactly. The back door is open again when he gets in. There is the despondent sound of air squishing through the zip as he drops his bag in the living room and goes to make himself a sandwich. Bread, butter, honey, marmite, knife, plate. Simon carries them back to the living room, he doesn't want to be in the kitchen. He doesn't like it in there today, the ceiling is too high.

The knife clicks against the plate. He turns it over. It is an old butter knife moulded in one piece with ridges down the hollow handle and a bent tip. It doesn't

match the other knives in the draw with their serrated edges and green plastic warehouse handles. Simon strokes the button on the tele and it plunges into the room with a cacophony of removed human sound and movement. The bread is soft in his mouth, cast up against the roof of his palate by his tongue. He lets it fall and swallows. Honey sandwiches have no sound, the television has no taste. Simon leans forward on hands and knees, one wrist curled up still clutching the sandwich. The glass is cool under his tongue, no taste, leaving a wet smudge in the corner of the screen. He wipes it with the cuff of his jersey sleeve and settles back, cross legged, shoes off to watch the cartoons.

The kids shows finish for the afternoon, Simon leaves the tele on and pulls his school project out of his bag. The carpet makes his bum prickle, he scratches and works on his knees. This leaves little pink indentations, bumpy and numb. The project is supposed to take a week, Simons is finished before Shortland Street come on, he always finishes them on the first day. He takes up the container of honey, the knife becomes a spoon. Half way down he wishes he'd thought to get a drink of milk from the fridge.

He watches tele for a while, unmoving, afraid to break the real time silence he is ignoring. Darkness presses its palms against the window and the television light flickers around the room, refracting the night back out to itself. He hasn't drawn the curtains; Jenny usually tells him when to do that. There are no sounds from the kitchen. He can't hear her at all. It's late, he hasn't had tea and the crime programmes are over now too.

Simon pulls his shoes back on. One heel gets stuck and he has to stand up and wriggle into it. He touches the TV button with his knuckle and it blinks off with an automated click.

Outside the air is cold and he sucks it in between his teeth, his feet make subdued, clonking sounds all the way to the shed. The ladder is heavy and has to be dragged, gritty, spitting and scrapey over the concrete. Inside he sets it up in the kitchen and goes to the bench. The tea towels are still in the sink but all the water has drained away, plug still in. Simon watches himself reach out for the handle of the knife and fork draw. It slides out smoothly, no jingle, no chatter of knife on knife, spoon on spoon, it makes his insides tense, clench, release. He extracts the meat knife from a jumble of cooking utensils and carefully climbs the ladder.

The weight of her body makes it easy to cut through the rope. Jenny falls heavily, noisily on the floor, her foot knocks the ladder, making it wobble. He clutches the top step until it steadies, for a moment the silence wins over and his heart shakes and burns. He stays still until he can hear himself breathing again. Descend ladder. Knife back in draw. Ladder back out to shed. Collect paper from letterbox.

Simon sits on the floor beside Jenny, he's careful to sit where he can't see bits of her skin. He wants to touch her. He winds his fingers through her hair, sniffs it, it smells like cotton and apples, comforting, he spreads the paper out on the floor with his other hand. He reads her a story about a seal that keeps leaving the coast to visit a farm because it thinks it's a sheep. Pressing the palm of his hand against his mouth, his elbow digging at the soft flesh of his thigh, he reads a muffled account of a man who has won lotto and is using some of it to pay for his ex-wife's cancer treatment. He reads about a scientific Antarctic expedition, a successful

helicopter rescue, the movie reviews, an add for a once-only shoe sale. A stray cat wanders in through the open back door and steals along the skirting board.

The paper runs out of stories to read. Simon sits in the dark. He has made a mattered knot in her hair. The stray sniffs hopefully at the paper. The phone rings. It hasn't rung for weeks. He lets it, untangles her hair. Phone stops ringing. Simon gets up off the floor, his legs are wobbly. Gathers up the paper. The stray bolts in the wake of activity. Eleven forty three. He heads for the phone.

References

- Allen, G. (2000). *Intertextuality*. Routledge: London and New York
- Argrest, D, Conway, P & Kanew Weisman, L. (1996). *The Sex of Architecture*. Harry N Abram: London
- Barthes, R. (1987). *Image, music, text*. London: Fontana
- Barton, T & Lawler Dormer, D. (1993). *Alter/Image: Feminism and Representation in New Zealand*. City Gallery: Wellington
- Bachelard, G. (1994). *The Poetics of Space: the classic look at how we experience intimate spaces*. Beacon Press: USA
- Ed: Borradori, G. (1988). *Recoding Metaphysics*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL.
- Baudrillard, J. (2003). *Mass. Identity. Architecture*. Editor: Francesco Prunto. Wiley Academy: Great Britain
- Causey, A. (1998). *Sculpture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press: New York
- Cavallars, D. (2003). *French Feminist Theory*. Continuum: New York and London
- Cooke, L & Kelly, K. 1994). *Anne Hamilton: Tropos*. The Stinehour Press: New York
- Daston, Lorraine. (2004). *Things That Talk: object lessons from art and science*.
- Eco, U. (2005). *On Literature*. Secker & Warburg: Great Britain
- Frank, D Crone and J. (2004). *The Stories of Hans Christen Andersen*. Granta Books: London
- Foucault, M. (1989) *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*. Penguin Books: London
- Foucault, M. (2002) 4th ed. *The Order of Things*. Routledge Classics: London and New York
- Fowles, John. (1963). *The collector*. Little, Brown & Co: London
- Gotshalk, D.W. (1962). *Art and the Social Order*. Dover Publications Inc: New York
- Grenier, C. (2001). *Annette Messenger*.
- Halegua, L. (1978). *The Pearl Bastard*. The Women's Press Ltd: New York
- Hanne, M. (1994). *The Power of the Story: Fiction and Political Change*. Berghahn Books: U.S.A.
- Kristeva, J. & Moi, T. (1986). *The Kristeva Reader*. Blackwell Publishers: New York

- Kermode, F. (2003). *Pieces of My Mind: essays and criticism 1958-2002*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York
- Kermode, F. (1967). *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford University Press: New York
- Kraus, R. Mari, B. Morgan, S & Tarantino, M. (1997). *Rachel Whiteread: Shedding Life*. Tate Gallery: Liverpool
- Leach, N. (2005). Mimesis. *Architectural Theory Review*. 10 (1). Pp.93-104
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Blackwell Publishers: London & New York
- Merleau Ponty, M. (2002). *The Phenomenology of Perception*. 3rd edition. Routledge Classics: New York
- Sartre, J.P. & Priest, S. (2001). *Jean Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*. Routledge: London & New York
- Schneider, E (ed). (2005). *Rachel Whiteread: Walls, Doors, Floors and Stairs*. Kunsthau Bregenz: Germany
- Sontag, S. (2001) 2nd ed. *Against Interpretation*. Vintage, Random House: Great Britain
- Stewart, S. (2000). *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. Routledge: London
- Tillich, P. (1987). *On Art and Architecture*. Crossroad Publishing Company: New York
- Turkle, S (ed). (2007) *Evocative Objects: things we think with*. MIT Press: USA
- Warhol, A. (2005). *a*. Virgin Books: USA