

Coming Out Of The Woodwork

Foreword

'Coming Out of the Woodwork' brings together three artists - Richard Cramp, Mark Selby and Joe Watling - who similarly identify with the exploration of architectural space, in its formation, perception and physical affects as a key component to their practice. The Nunnery, as a gallery space and its associated architecture, is entirely reformed through a series of new installations, made specifically for this exhibition.

Each artist has added new layers of construction to the existing architecture in order to investigate ways of engaging the viewer beyond a 'static' looking experience, instead encouraging the

physicality of experience through their work. As well as containing their own physical elements and conceptual dialogue, each installation also creates a narrative that is completed through the physical journey between them. From Joe Watling's intense and disconcerting alteration of perspective rules, via the enclosed and claustrophobic observatory constructed by Mark Selby and squeezing up stairs to view Richard Cramp's vision of a faux-utopia; the exhibition is to be literally and conceptually negotiated.

In the Nunnery's reconfigured state of fictional spaces, the viewer will be asked to relinquish any

predetermined knowledge of how the space should function or operate, questioning the rules that illicit safety, security and predictability. Instead, by returning to the state of a childlike adventurer and taking up the proposed physical 'game' offered by the artists, the viewer will question the permissiveness of interaction and move through a complex narrative.

For further information and documentation of the construction please visit the exhibition website.

www.comingoutofthewoodwork.co.uk

Exhibition Open
2nd - 19th September 2010
Fri - Sun / 1pm - 5pm

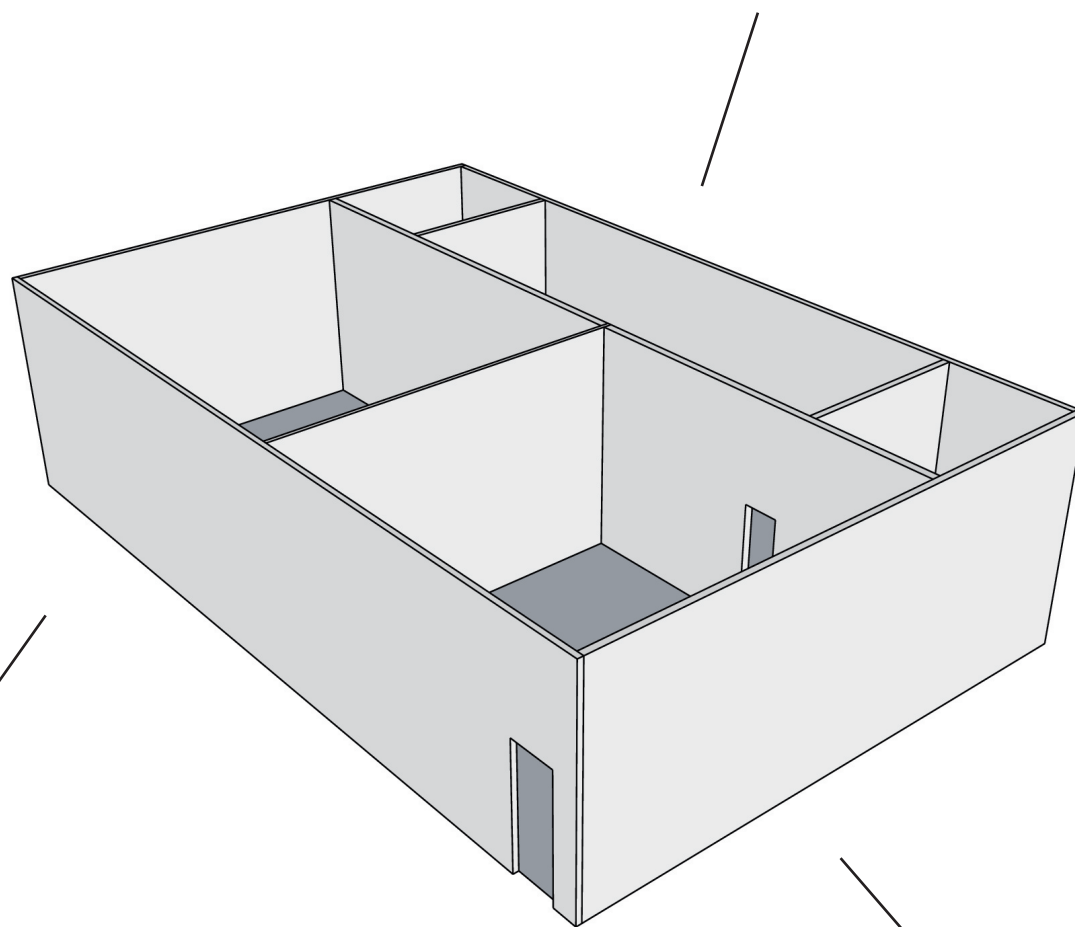
Artist Talk
Saturday 18th September 2pm

The Nunnery
Bow Arts Trust
London
www.bowarts.org
www.londonsartistquarter.org

Mark Selby

Concerned with the act of physical communication and the relationship this has within the technologically orientated systems of contemporary culture, Selby's work parodies methods of communicating. The ideal of technology as a tool to 'bring us closer together', seems for him, to simultaneously contain the possibility of physically removing us from one another. His work ranges from hand-made, DIY re-inventions of existing technological commodities, assuming the role of a fastidious garden-shed inventor, to creating entire fictional spaces in which the viewer becomes complicit in an estranged, uncomfortable or distanced sense of communicating.

www.manifesto-art.co.uk



Richard Cramp

Looking at materials, process and structure, Cramp builds sculptures and installations that evoke the viewer to consider what they see as well as projecting their imagination onto the possibilities of what lies beyond. By appropriating commonplace architectural signs, such as doors, windows and stairs as an initial framework, the viewer can enter a further, unseen space or fictional environment both conceptually and physically. In his current work there are echoes of science fiction narratives, drawn upon for their endless dialogue between aspirational creations of a utopian existence and their unattainable ideals.

www.richardcramp.com

Joe Watling

Watling holds a fascination for the existential physicality of our everyday environment; the constructions that surround us, the layering of our immediate world and the psychological connection we have to the spaces that we inhabit, influence, return to and ultimately leave. Dealing with notions of structure and surface he intervenes and negotiates in a process of construction and deconstruction both revealing and concealing the illusions of everyday physical spaces. Redefining locations, Watling attempts to overlap the conditions of present and past. Shifting these seemingly consistent sites locates the solid in a perceptible state of flux insisting on the presence of temporality as an element of permanence.



(Above) Documentation of the construction in the gallery

Conversation

Excerpts from a discussion with Jordan Baseman and the artists during the construction of the works.

[Excerpt 1 - Discussing the work of Richard Cramp]

JB The dystopian thing is something I have been thinking about a lot, I'm surprised because you [RC] talk a lot about utopia in what you are doing but its not really utopian is it?

RC No.

MS I used the word cynicism in some of the exhibition text and Richard wasn't very happy with that - for me, I saw this architectural vision as ironic.

RC You can go three ways, you can go anti- or dystopian, you get reality in the middle and then the utopian, the unobtainable dream. I like to think of myself as nothing below reality, though reality is pretty cynical.

JB It is these days.

JW Throughout all the work there is this prevailing sense, or something at least I'm fascinated by, of failed modernist ideology and I think a lot of people are still absorbing that now, what modernism was or is ... there are lots of relics of modernism now, the communication stuff, I mean TV is not really old media yet is it?

MS But we are made to feel like it is.

JW Yea, so these modernist architectural pieces, you're presenting them as this unobtainable thing because there is distance between you [the viewer] and them.

JB Especially because there are some pretty ramshackle ones and some more pristine ones, there is definitely a comparative analysis thing going on there between 'this is what you've got and this is what you might never have'.

RC Everyone's dreams and aspirations are so different anyway; it's why we can never have these as realities because people get in the way.

MS So you are cynical [laughs] but you can see it in things like space exploration, we seem to have just given up on man's ambition.

JB I was thinking about this earlier, there was a point when the future was something that was bright and gleaming and hopeful, now, especially with our immediate financial future and the way that is being discussed, its not very bright, its not very hopeful and its not very futuristic, its dystopian.

MS I went away on holiday for a week and when I came back I switched the TV on and read the paper, within half an hour that whole time of existing in another place is removed and I'm back in all this stuff, you feel yourself drop again.

JB Yea, I mean this is what I took

from what you [RC] were saying, there is this dream that we are being led to believe is our future, in terms of architecture as well as home and its really hard not to participate in that within our culture unless you are going to go and live in the woods, its pretty hard to not participate in extreme capitalism.

[Excerpt 2]

JB So do you think the audience or people will have a dark experience of this exhibition?

RC I'm hoping that they will be uplifted by it, through this childlike sense of adventure.

JB But it's not really playful though.

RC Well It takes you outside of your normal boundaries which is what play used to mean and you are not really allowed to do that anymore, except as art it [art] gives you a license to regress maybe, into some kind of childlike state of play, I mean we are all just building massive dens really [laughs].

MS The play seems more in us really.

JW And once its finished its boring, that play is over in the end, if people just walk out of this and say 'that isn't The Nunnery anymore', that's when something interesting has happened, whether it is a dark experience or not.

JB Without a doubt, and you can

already see that its happening from the website and looking at stuff now, thinking about it you can see that is definitely going to occur.

JW I'm not sure we are necessarily trying to give people a dark experience.

MS I think I am well, not freak them out but I think the show is setting up some kind of challenge, physical or otherwise.

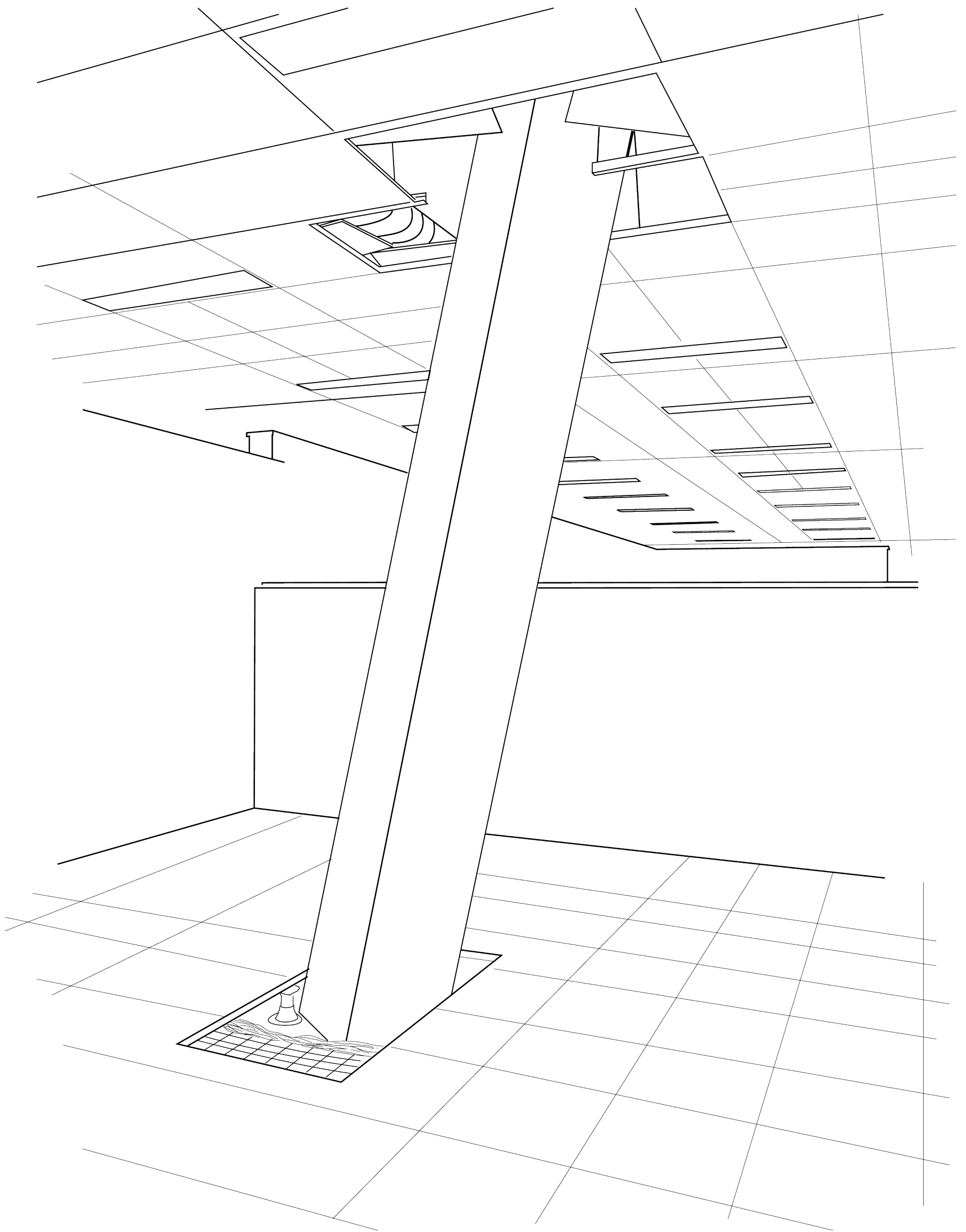
JW I think you are right, the whole thing will be relatively claustrophobic, and also to people who are used to walking into The Nunnery, they're going to be confronted, its going to be a new experience of the space.

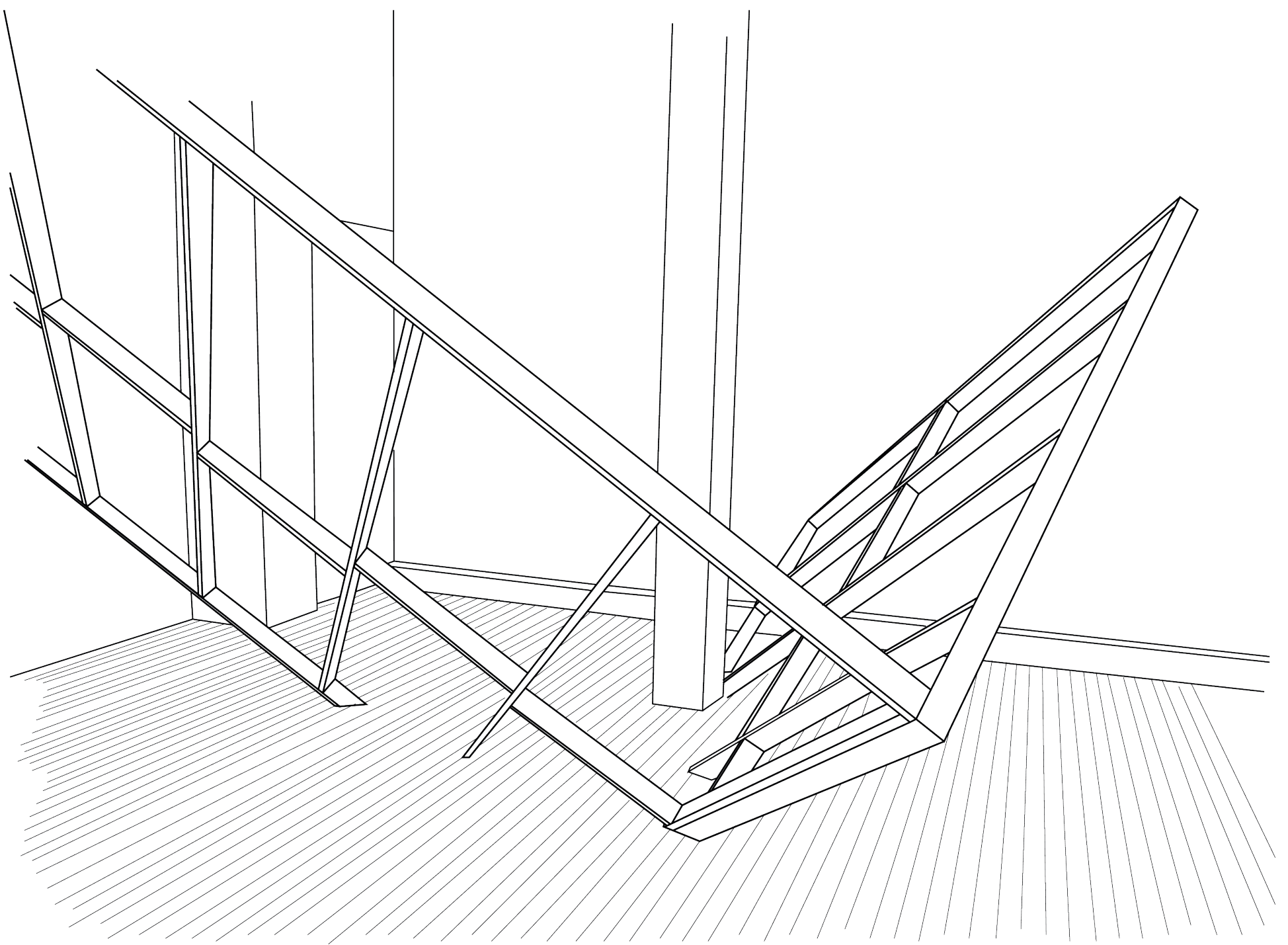
JB I think that'll be the richest thing, people's physical journey through the show, because you are all dealing with spectacle in one form or another and some sort of theatrical thing - you are not just looking at stuff, you are really in it.

Jordan Baseman is a visual artist and filmmaker. He received a BFA from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and an MA from Goldsmith's College, University of London. Baseman is currently Reader in Time Based Media at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts, London, and is also a Lecturer at the Royal College of Art Sculpture School.

www.jordanbaseman.co.uk







(Above) Long Story Short Notice, 2009 - Joe Watling (STORE gallery with Patrick Coyle)
(Right) A Freed Residue, 2010 - Monica Meriggi

You start thinking about English idioms and language.

COMING OUT OF THE WOODWORK

COMING
OMING
MING
ING
NG
G

OUT..wood MOOD woodoo!

--Configured Hook Motto Wow--

You think about space and perceptions.

Memory and time.

About movement as narrative.

Technologies of seeing and techniques of thoughts.

Techniques of seeing and Technologies of thoughts

You cannot think anymore so you take a walk.

Is walking thinking? I cannot stop thinking!

KANT AND THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

A Hangman Plotted Then Tenth Kit

Back to the papers you think about space and perceptions going through Kant, Bergson, Benjamin, Virilio and Derrida.

the relationship between sense and meaning is not 'to wish to reduce one stratum to the other, or to judge the complete recapture of sense into meaning to be impossible'; and specifically it does not seek 'to reconstruct experience (of sense) as a *language*'.

Derrida urges against identifying intuition and concept, or perception and meaning, so reducing visual experience to the co-ordinates of discursive conceptuality

DERRIDA PURGES!!!

The space of language and the tread of the texts.

You think about communication and transmission.

About the eye...the blink of an eye.

Luis Buñuel and slicing!

About hallucinations.

About perceptive mistakes and tricks.

OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

Panopticon – HETEROTOPIAS –FOUCAULT

About the senses, their failures... the body,

EXTENDING THE LIMITS OF THE BODY

The architectural structure as well as the structure of thoughts.

You think about falling!

There is a door ...stairs ... up the stairs there is nothing you keep on climbing stairs ad infinitum until...

Crouching down after your fall you cannot get up anymore.

Lights, colors, sounds, people.

Space, spatial.

Depth, deep.

Geometry, co-ordinates, orientation.

Building, thinking. Not again! Heidegger! Citing Hoelderlin!

"Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch, wohnet

Der Mensch auf dieser Erde"

AUF DIESER ERDE

Rarefied Suede

A Freed Residue

Dead Reuse Fire

Constructions construct and constructed.

The geometrical co-ordinates require orientation.

Thinking about building is building without thinking of building.

The depth of the space is spatially deep.

I take a break

Think about nutella on bread and a coffee. This becomes real. REAL.????

STRAWBERRY FIELDS>>>>>>>>NOTHING IS REAL!!!!

Eat and drink and think.

Reformulation

Reinvent the co-ordinates of experience. Engagement with the specificity of the space. Different contexts of experience; not as fixed co-ordinates, but as a network of vantage points through which to view other modes of experience, and thereby reflect on the limits of each particular condition of seeing and experiencing.

Subject-object relationship? **Communication BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR!**

interiority and exteriority, and the restriction of experience to subjective intention. the apperceptive categories of such a vision are immersed *within* the contingency of spatio-temporal experience, which provides the frame through which things are apprehended.

the allegorical gaze is a projection of the subject, which reduces the appearance of things to its own co-ordinates

RENDER the world as objectivity, and circumscribe experience as the repetition of the subject's own, fixed transcendental co-ordinates.

what is returned or rebounded by 'exteriority' back to the subject is in fact only an image of itself

Appearances are not empty and worthless, but are involved in articulating and reformulating the apperceptive categories through which experience is possible.

Experience what's not there

Or

Read what was never written

Benjamin 'the buried corpse' — the very world of things once construed as dead 'exteriority' — can be recognized as 'the "transcendental Subject" of historical consciousness', in that the apperceptive frameworks of perception are embedded in spatio-temporal experience....

THE BURIED CORPSE
Curbed Ethos Pier

BURY BENJAMIN!!!

non-synchronous interplay of configurations of experience

the absolute separation or distance between transcendental consciousness and the world has been breached.

A Aha Hah!

You Don't Know, You Weren't There

During that 'post-summer holiday' period we are all flooded (more and more so online) with other people's photos of thumbs up posing, inane smiles, burnt skin on the beach and unbelievable blue skies. I am always left wondering about the edit - what happens to the imagery of the arguments or the drunken crying when a partner was too flirtatious with a member of the hotel bar staff? It's that old story; everyone else seems to be having more fun - or maybe I am just jealous.

This is not to say these less glamorous incidents, just as human and emotionally valid as enjoyment, always occur, but from personal experience they often do. Of course, during those moments when things are going wrong, my own instant reaction isn't to get out the ever-available camera phone or even my video camera. 'Hold on, stop shouting, I just need to recharge the battery'. On the Internet, where you would expect every kind of salacious piece of information to be found, of the 228,000,000 results for 'holiday pictures' on Google, these incidents are poorly represented (except for a mocked up version I found relatively easily, of a couple arguing to depict a story by the Daily Mail).

It is a natural desire to present, as unarguable fact or through some calculated forgetting of the fact, an idealised aesthetic image of our personal history. With the

technological ease of text or image being stored as binary code that can be repeated, reproduced, re-cut and re-pasted ad infinitum and with little or no degradation, there is a greater pressure to edit out those memories that fit a little uncomfortably in our psyche. So, somewhere along the line we remove some of the fascinating human and emotional ambiguity to the narrative content of our documentation.

The practice of piecing together fragments of this jigsaw, the emotional or physical nuances of a story, is becoming a lost activity or at the very least it is becoming more difficult. The development of interweaved, complex, layered and multi-faceted threads of narrative are lost to the easiness of a flat reading from a tertiary or secondary source. A concerted effort needs to be made.

Truman Capote, for the writing of 'In Cold Blood', interviewed, researched and investigated the worlds of the murdering protagonists, Hickock and Smith, creating an emotional link (for both Capote and the reader) that opened larger questions as to the motives for the killing of the Clutter family; how did they reach their conclusion, their ultimate death sentence and hanging? Was it circumstance, luck or lack thereof, upbringing or just a pure psychological preference for blood lust? Reducing the narrative to a

binary didactic of right or wrong, of a definitive historicity, would have over simplified a fascinating story. The ambiguity between fact and fiction, explored through a personal experience with the subject, opens up a new approach, a new voice.

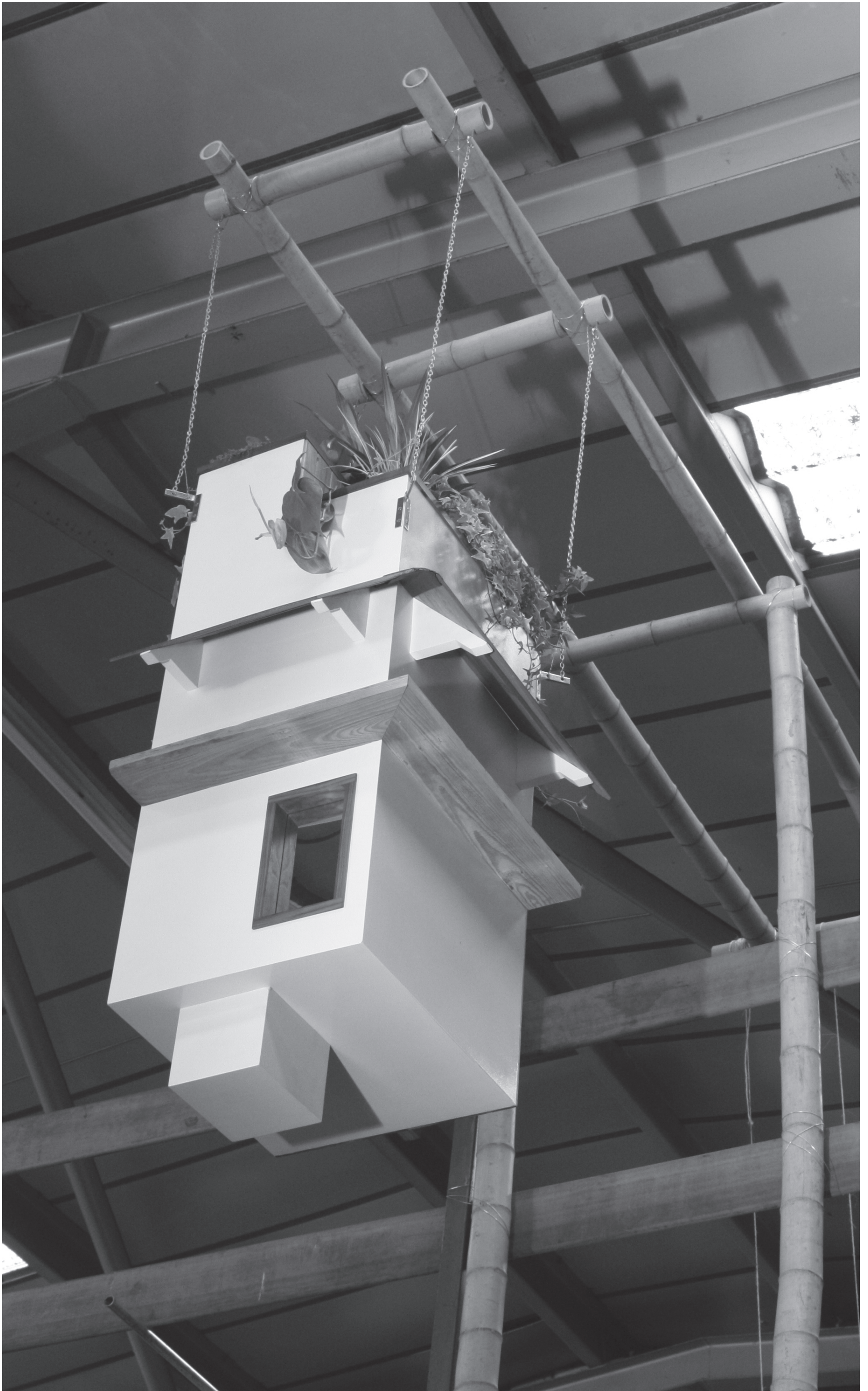
".... it is necessary to have a 20/20 eye for visual detail--in this sense, it is quite true that one must be a "literary photographer," though an exceedingly selective one. But, above all, the reporter must be able to empathize with personalities outside his usual imaginative range, mentalities unlike his own, kinds of people he would never have written about had he not been forced to by encountering them inside the journalistic situation. This last is what first attracted me to the notion of narrative reportage."

This has much to do with being taken beyond the prescribed 'as read' formula, of questioning authenticity and of an empathetic, open mind over-coming any pre-made judgements. In a media savvy generation, it is surprising our own sharpness at developing an interview practice, on a communicative social scale, is not more honed. Interview technique, when taught, is a game of evasion, power plays and empty transference. Saying a lot without saying anything. Not entirely dissimilar to those holiday snaps that scream 'hey, I had a great time!' but in no way describe the whole

story - even if you do fill up a 1GB memory card.

With 'Coming Out Of The Woodwork' I became interested in the relationship between a secondary, removed experience - allowing the viewer to see the development of the works through an online live webcam feed and blog - to the physical one, of actually being within the space. The story of the construction in the space, its trials, tribulations and successes are embedded within the work, lying surreptitiously beneath each installations conceptual narrative structure. As a viewer, you are encouraged to adopt the position of being an investigative reporter, a physical interlocutor, so as to piece together the journey between the works as well as their structural function. Each viewer's response is personal and temporal. Feel free to blog, tweet or inform others of your findings and experience, but in the end, no matter how much information is documented, disseminated, dispersed, digitised and discussed, you will still need to remind people that if they weren't there, it's just not the same.

(1) Truman Capote interviewed by George Plimpton, 'The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel' [New York Times], (January 1966)



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