

Title page

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Photographing the invisible: A practice based photographic investigation of different environments using peripheral vision as a phenomenological narrative on the consciousness of space and place.

EXEGESIS SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Declaration of Originality

I, Kevin Adrian Miller

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Miller', written over a horizontal line.

hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

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Photographing the invisible

A practice based photographic investigation of different environments using peripheral vision as a phenomenological narrative on the consciousness of space and place.

Abstract

There can be a distancing effect in our interaction with the environment and it can be reduced to a spectacle rather than a multisensory experience through our use of photography. This practice-based research investigates the use of still photography to capture our peripheral interaction with the environment that we either do not notice or take for granted. The aim is to capture this invisible daily interaction with the world in photographic form as a participant rather than a spectator. Photographs that form the body of this research are constructed into visual narratives in order to consider an alternative way of understanding our interaction with space and place. This research uses a number of camera and printing techniques to capture the nature of peripheral vision and expand the notion of what constitutes a photograph. The results take the form of a series of field study investigations resulting in five photographic projects on peripheral vision, space and place that become visual surrogates for these interactions. In order to view a selection of the completed works the concluding exhibition installation uses a modified suburban house to provide a controlled light environment to trigger peripheral seeing through light and dark adaption.

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Introduction

My practice-based research investigates the use of still photography to capture our peripheral interaction with the environment that we either do not notice or take for granted. The aim is to capture our invisible daily interaction within the world in photographic form as a participant rather than a spectator. It also investigates peripheral vision in order to consider a different way of looking at the world. Therefore my research is both a practical investigation about what constitutes a photograph and a philosophical investigation of the issues around seeing from a peripheral perspective. It could be considered a paradoxical investigation because of the aims to photographically capture what is usually considered un-photographable, particularly when the nature of peripheral vision has key characteristics that include movement, visual crowding, low acuity, low light, lack of colour and a connection to the non-language part of the brain. Therefore how do you photographically capture an aspect of the environment that you either don't register or don't acknowledge?

Looking at the world

There can be a distancing effect in our interaction with the environment and it can be reduced to a spectacle rather than a multisensory experience through our use of photography. Our general interaction can be distanced as well. Psychologist James J. Gibson describes this as looking at things while we are separated from it, by either a lens, a window, a phone, or a car windshield. Our lives are separated from the world in a detached way rather than being within it and the world becomes a spectacle for observing. I know this from personal experience because one day when heading to the beach I instinctively reached for my camera and was told by my children to leave it behind. Their explanation was that when I have my camera I am not there – meaning I am not with them. To be within the world, or an environment, means I am looking around as well as looking at things. In order to survey the surroundings I need to use my peripheral vision, turn my head and move my body. In my research peripheral vision becomes the key to reengaging with the environment.

The architect and writer Juhani Pallasmaa in his book *Eyes of the Skin* succinctly describes the role of peripheral vision and its relationship to space and touch:

The very essence of the lived experience is moulded by hapticity and peripheral unfocused vision. Focused vision confronts us with the world whereas peripheral vision envelops us in the flesh of the world.¹

In this book Pallasmaa laments at the loss of our sensory engagement in modern cities and its architecture. My interest in peripheral vision takes two forms due to my background as both a photographer and an architect. Each area informs the other and as an architect I have an overwhelming interest in our relationship to space and what constitutes place. As a photographer my aim is to photographically capture interesting relationships of space and place throughout the environment. As an architect my

¹ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 10. Note that hapticity in this context means haptic perception.

questions focus on what this means in terms of the formation of space in the built environment and through photography; how is it possible to capture this interaction and what does it look like? I am interested in both the aesthetic and documentary potential of this type of photography. As geographer Yi-Fu Tuan reflects in his book *Passing Strange and Wonderful* the "...aesthetic potential of the proximate senses has been undervalued..."²

Each sense in the perceptual and phenomenal field has a limit of range or horizon. Tuan emphasises the differences between proximate and distant senses in his series of texts on environmental perception and place.³ At close proximity all our senses are engaged in a multisensory experience. Touch and taste has the closest horizon followed by smell, hearing then sight. At a long distance only the sense of sight remains. This distant horizon is the limit of our central focused vision but our peripheral vision has a closer horizon related to the other senses. Understanding the horizon of peripheral vision helps to understand how to photograph the peripheral experience of different environments. My project proposes to extend the limits of the use of still photography and as a result challenge our notion of what we believe the process of seeing is. Ultimately what is the aesthetic potential within this type of imagery and does it lead to having some value within the making of spaces and photographic narratives?

Being in the world

In this research I am investigating peripheral vision as an alternative mode of representation through still photography using the tools and outcomes of the medium being challenged. I am also using almost documentary type camera techniques to produce images that are somewhat removed from the tradition of documentary photography. This may seem paradoxical but it gives me the method to capture and examine examples of what we don't register as we move through an environment. The documentation of peripheral vision is far from simple using this method due to the number of characteristics within this mode of vision, each of which opens up a new question and difficulty within the research and subsequent questions about how the resulting images are to be represented. Therefore the number of photographic projects or studies contained within this research is a reflection of the complexity of the topic area.

The depth of complexity can also be seen in the number of camera and printing techniques that have developed in my attempts to capture the nature of peripheral vision. The results take the form of a series of field study investigations resulting in five photographic projects on peripheral vision, space and place that become my visual surrogates for these interactions. These are a reflection of my understanding of the nature of peripheral vision and our symbiotic relationship with space and place. My investigations are a first person subjective experience within the environment and are therefore phenomenological in nature. The aim of these experiments is to adequately define what peripheral vision is through this subjective experience. It may be highlighted

² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful - Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture* (New York: Island Press, 1993), 36.

³ Yi-Fu Tuan has written three books on the subject of experience, perception, culture and place: *Space and Place*, *Topophilia* and *Passing Strange and Wonderful*.

that there are difficulties in doing this as peripheral vision skirts the border of an unconscious interaction not a conscious one. I would argue here that it is about degrees of consciousness and intentionality, our awareness in an environment is constantly moving between unconscious negotiation and the intentional. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty puts it in this way:

To see an object is to either have it on the fringe of the visual field and be able to concentrate on it, or else respond to this summons by actually concentrating upon it. When I do concentrate my eyes on it, I become anchored in it, but this coming to rest of the gaze is merely a modality of its movement...⁴

Moving through the world

Looking through the camera lens I concentrate on objects and they become anchored in photographic form. My main action in this research is to move from looking at the world from behind the lens of a camera to using the camera as an extension of my body, or more directly, my arm. Philosopher Alva Noe argues that we cannot perceive without movement: "The world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction."⁵ This is despite the common characterisation of vision as being static and almost camera like in nature. We also use language relating to vision in a static way with words like focus, inspect, view, survey and gaze. The eye is in constant motion, as Martin Jay states in his introduction to *The Downcast Eyes* (a book that critically examines our ocular centric society in the twentieth century).⁶ We see because of continual movement either through saccadic vision, our vergence system (as we find objects to focus on) and head and body movement, as we move through space. This is something we often overlook but if I look at the etymology of the word peripheral, its root periphery and origin periphēria⁷ the prefix peri- has meanings such as round, around, enclosing and roundabout. Therefore when combined in active description (adverb) you get meanings such as; to look around, to turn around, and to walk around⁸ – these all include a movement component. Peripheral vision in meaning suggests being within the world not looking at world.

The movement in our vision is probably best expressed in the Japanese kanji symbol mi(ru) (to see); 見 this is representative of an eye on legs – to constantly look around.

Therefore my first area of complexity is the idea of movement. It is a key component of peripheral vision but not still photography. In clarifying this statement, capturing a frozen moment in time is a characteristic of photography (capturing the decisive

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Routledge, 2002), 78.

⁵ Alva Noe, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004), 1.

⁶ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 6,7.

⁷ An ancient Greek word that more closely means circumference, globular, rounded or spherical.

⁸ Douglas Harper, "Online Etymology Dictionary," http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=peri-amp;allowed_in_frame=0 (peri-) accessed 22/09/2016.

moment⁹), but in this case the camera is apart from the action not part of it. Photographic experiments with the concept of movement within the activity have been intermittent. There are notable examples in early Futurist photographers such as Anton Giulio Bragaglia (1911)¹⁰ and later in the fotoform movement lead by Otto Steinert¹¹ leading to contemporary photographers such as Alexey Titarenko. In Anton Giulio Bragaglia's images the movement is fragmented like a multiple image and movement blur is visible whilst in Titarenko's images the movement is both frozen and visible in a kind of mist rather than a blur (suggestive of a period of time). These instances and generally through the history of photography (up until recent advances in digital photography) movement of the camera itself has remained underdeveloped and apart from the action captured.¹² In this research the camera has been removed from its static position and has become a mobile recording device. Therefore movement is taken from the perspective of both the first and third person.

Documentation of my exploration in camera movement is described in the first chapter and a selection of the photographic results is compiled within the first project book titled *Everyday*. Works included in the *Everyday* project or study cover the full breadth of the research from first handheld experiments to more defined experiments within the final year of this research. All photographic projects in this study contain some level of movement, although the *Everyday* and the documentation of the outcomes in the first chapter help define the approach, questions and context for this study. Such as, what constitutes seeing and why is there an apparent separation in our understanding of central and peripheral vision? Or what constitutes a photograph and what are its aesthetic boundaries? Or what constitutes place and does it have unique visible characteristics? And finally, what constitutes peripheral image making and can this be used to produce a photographic narrative about space and place? Understanding these questions sets up a framework for exploration within the remaining practical photographic investigations.

My research highlights the complexity of how we relate to space and the environment, a process that develops through our experiences from childhood to adulthood within a particular place. Our perception of the environment can be seen as a symbiotic relationship and how we see is a product of that relationship. We modify an environment to suit our needs and it modifies us, the layering works both ways and is important in our

⁹ Particularly a characteristic of documentary photography. Henry Cartier-Bresson made this his philosophy and approach and originally coined this phase in early written works. Graham Clarke, *Oxford History of Art - the Photograph* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157.

¹⁰ Anton Giulio Bragaglia wrote the manifesto Futurist Photodynamism in 1911. This manifesto proposed that still photography could capture the sense of movement in a more accurate way than cinematography or chronophotography. Umbro Apollonio, ed. *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 38.

¹¹ Otto Steinert's theories of *Subjektive Fotografie* lead Steinert and his contemporaries to early experiments with hand held movement photographs and had a large influence on Japanese intuitive photography. I believe this has ultimately led to contemporary photographers such as Hiroshi Sugimoto. Japanese Professional Photographers Society, ed. *Japanese Photography Today and Its Origin* (Amsterdam: Orion Press, 1980), 10.

¹² There has been instances related to light painting in photography with artists such as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy with his Lumino Kinetic Art and penlight photographs. Harry Callahan also experimented with the Camera toss technique.

connection to place. When I am investigating peripheral vision I am also investigating our relationship with the external environment. Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* highlights the importance of this experience with the world, where geometrical space changes into anthropological space and then into existential space. Existence is therefore spatial and our daily practices transform an environment.¹³

Stories thus carry out a labour that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places. They also organise the play of changing relationships between places and spaces. The forms of this play are numberless, fanning out in a spectrum reaching from the putting in place of an immobile and stone-like order ... to the accelerated succession of actions that multiply spaces...¹⁴

Representations of direct perception

In the essay, *A Theory of Pictorial Perception*, psychologist James J. Gibson proposes that pictures are surrogates for direct perception.¹⁵ By this statement Gibson means that pictures are visual representations of our direct perception with the world. When Gibson talks about direct perception it means a direct perception of the environment without cognitive construction. "So when I assert that perception of the environment is direct, I mean that it is not mediated by retinal pictures, neural pictures, or mental pictures. Direct perception is the activity of getting information from the ambient array of light."¹⁶ A photograph is essentially a single point in space from a certain position pointing at a certain angle at a particular focal distance within our direct perception. The point is unique within an infinite number of potential opportunities, angles and focal lengths but appears to suggest more information than the flattened view offered as a photograph. The capturing of this image changes to become an indirect relationship with the environment when it is constructed in our minds as an ascetic opportunity for a photograph. This is like what Merleau-Ponty describes when we concentrate our attention upon an object. Is a photograph therefore just the appearance of the world or can it be a surrogate of direct perception, or is it a representation of an indirect relationship with the world?

When I look at a photographic image it has a duality, it is a flat two-dimensional object, and also has the ability to show a representation of three-dimensional space. A photographic image is constrained by its dimensions, flatness and rigidity. Although it is possible to obtain information about three-dimensional objects, information about obscured objects, hidden objects and planes and sometimes information not in the image itself. There is no opportunity to look obliquely past the objects represented in the photograph, when viewing an image from different angles it does not change, it does however remain readable despite an oblique viewing angle. A photograph is expected to contain something real and readable about the environment and brings with it an

¹³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1988), 117-18.

¹⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹⁵ Rebecca Jones Edward Reed, ed. *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 241.

¹⁶ James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 147.

expectation of legibility. Photographs within this study that are representative of our peripheral interaction with the world are somewhat different. They are not always legible and they can be ambiguous. The photographs produced in this research will confront the question; what is it of? But can you also ask; what does it mean?

The reason for this uncertainty around surrogacy and peripheral vision is that our interaction with the external environment is a far more complex process than our interaction with still pictures (or even motion pictures). We are always moving and the environment around us moves in and out of focus as we scan from one point to another with rapid successive eye movements. During our movement our orientation within the world remains stable, our eyes move and our head moves, there is motion parallax, visual crowding, binocular parallax and our eyes automatically adjust to light and colour conditions. We can reconcile depth and space and - at the same time - interact with other moving objects. We adapt to the changes in light levels during a day and, in addition to this, we embed meaning into objects and spaces around us through our indirect perception. These meanings can be simple and help with recognition and way finding, whilst others are more embedded and personal, such as memories.

Interaction between direct and indirect perception oscillates through all the projects in this research - the coexistence of the visible and invisible. It is the mystery of the spaces between the steps we take through our direct perception of the environment. There is always tension in this coexistence between the known identifiable elements, the unknown fleeting glances and the forgotten passage of everyday objects. What is it that we see out of the corner of our eye? What are we seeing when we are not concentrating? What about when we are interacting with the environment but thinking of something else? These different types of interactions are explored separately through all the projects.

Our external world does not change but our interaction with it does, as Gibson points out:

Perceiving is an achievement of the individual, not an appearance in the theatre of his consciousness. It is a keeping-in-touch with the world, an experiencing of things rather than having experiences. It involves awareness-of instead of just awareness.¹⁷

The photographic projects

The *Everyday* project explores questions about seeing through images of movement and interaction within a number of environments but it is not specific to any one particular place. In the two subsequent studies *Glare* and *The Horizon* the difference between our cone and rod vision and the relationship to the horizon is investigated within specific locations. Roland Barthes describes the noeme of photographs as being “That has been”¹⁸, implying that each photograph has embedded history – a frozen moment in time. But there is also a geographic component that might extend that meaning to “That has been there”, the “there” or “where” being the hidden contextual or cultural content embedded within. How do you see and capture these ghostly traces of events and previous

¹⁷ Ibid., 239.

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 2000), 76-77.

interactions if you are a visitor to an area and don't have environmental and culturally specific conditioning? Can peripheral images capture the intentionality or affordances within specific places? *Glare* and *The Horizon* are my initial experiments in capturing the essence and embedded content of an environment as we move through it. *Glare* contrasts the nature of inside and outside in the far south coast region near Eden while *The Horizon* explores our periphery in relation to large open spaces. These two projects can be seen as a pair, contrasting the limit of our horizon of our perception.

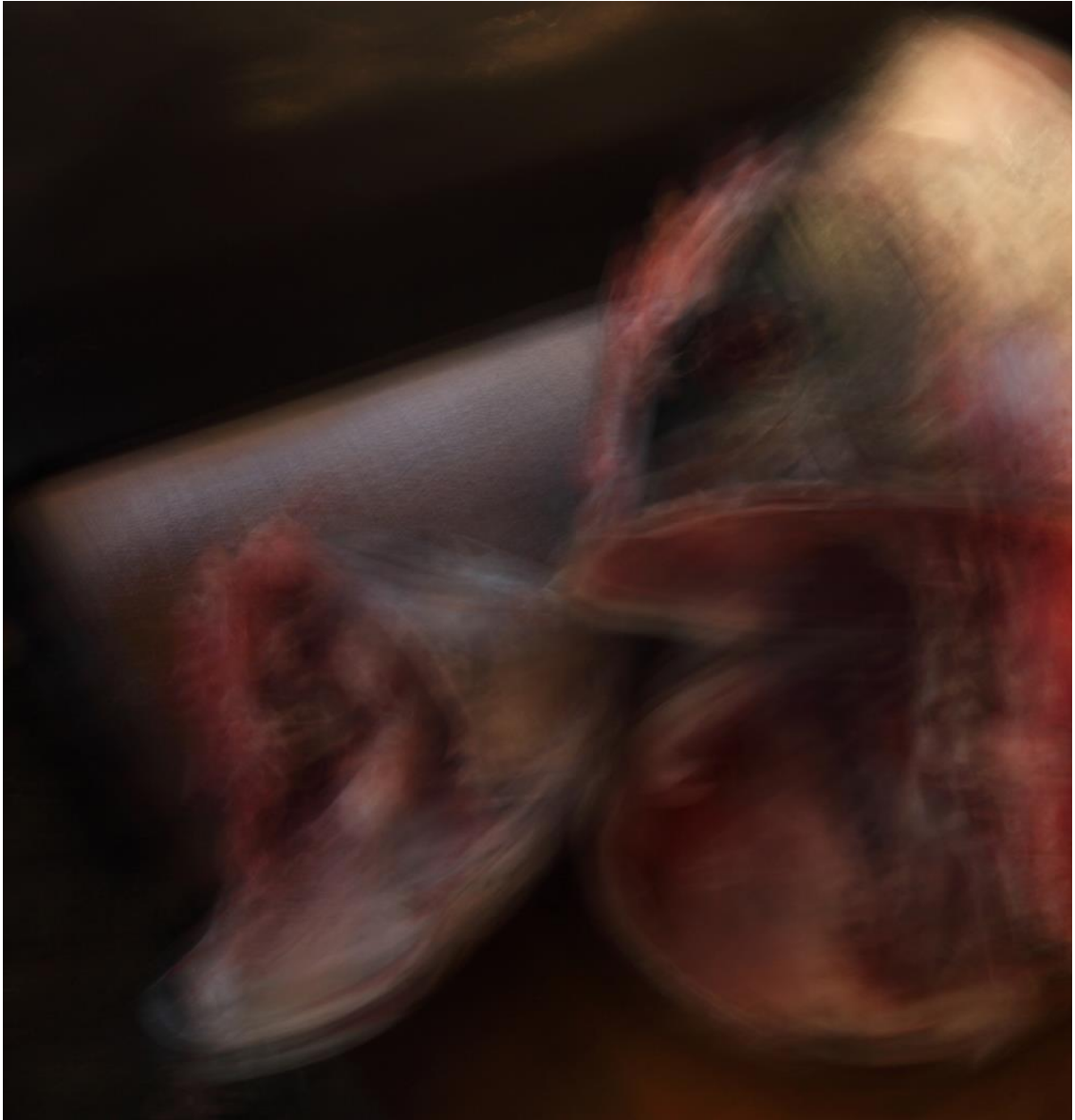


Figure 1: Untitled from *Blood and Bone* series, Pigment print on glass

In the concluding two projects *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone* the limit of our identifiable perception is tested further through highly ambiguous photographs that explore low light (mesotopic and scotopic vision) and fine levels of movement (visual crowding). These final projects, which form the body of the final exhibition in the house, are also connected to a place within our environment. *Uninhabited* takes the form of an exploration through the use of hand held lighting to explore the images like exploring a dwelling in low light. This reflects my own explorations of abandoned buildings in Western Sydney. *Blood and Bone* displays through ambiguous imagery our subjective – objective relationship to environments. We are both here and out there and this is depicted through the meshing of ambiguous peripheral photographs from two contrasting environments. These pose the question of what do we see when thinking of something else?

Place and narrative

Fieldwork has played a crucial role in these explorations into the connection between peripheral vision and the environment.¹⁹ Organised field studies through the ANU School of Art Environment Studio have provided investigation opportunities, leading to unexpected results. It has afforded an avenue for experimentation in camera use, display of resulting work and analysis of the results. My participation in the field studies was linked to my own body of research and not the topic area of the field study itself.²⁰ This provided the opportunity of exploring different environments, not selected by myself, for the first time. I believe that this allowed no preconceived knowledge of an area and an opportunity to experience a direct perception of place as Gibson describes; not mediated by retinal pictures based on memory. Subsequent investigations in the same area can reveal information not seen in the initial field trips and highlight the acquisition of knowledge and the move towards indirect perception or an understanding of the place.

Place is a changing and continuing relationship where the objects that make up the environment comprise of layers of meaning that can transcend general interaction. Each object then becomes a container of meaning about past events and can afford meaning to

¹⁹ Field study excursions have included (in no particular order); Lyneham and surrounds (home environment), Hall, Eden and the South Coast, Western Sydney (Hawkesbury River), Benalla and Lake Mokoan, Calprum Station (Renmark), Darwin and surrounds, Bathurst Island, Lavender Bay (Sydney), Cockatoo Island (Sydney), Melbourne, Katoomba, Tokyo (Japan), Kyoto (Japan), Hiroshima (Japan), Osaka (Japan) and Naoshima Art Site (Japan).

²⁰ Benalla and Lake Mokoan formed part of the ANU Engaging Visions project, investigating water security along the Murray Darling Basin. Western Sydney explorations formed part of the Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney project, investigating food security along the Hawkesbury River. Eden and the far South Coast formed part of two projects Far Enough and Now and When, investigating impacts of climate change on coastal regions. Calprum Station (Renmark) formed part Mallee project, aesthetic responses to a semi-arid place with artists from the Land Arts of the American West program. Hall experiment formed part of the Centenary of Canberra, Portrait of a Nation Unmade Edges project. Other projects were self-organised explorations. Fieldwork funding was obtained to investigate and obtain research material from the Naoshima Art Site in Japan. Each field study has afforded the opportunity to exhibit work within a formal gallery setting and analyse the results in terms of the images themselves and the viewing experience. These works have then been incorporated into the larger projects related to the place investigated, for example Benalla and the Hall are incorporated into the Everyday project due to their experimental nature. Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney is incorporated into the Uninhabited project due to the site-specific nature of the project.

the inhabitants of the area as they move through it. Photography can be considered as an aide for recording this relationship as a memento mori of where we have been. As a surrogate for this experience it captures only a small portion of this complex sensory interaction. Chapter two examines the potential for extending this interaction, from the surface view of capturing place towards a complex interpretation of space and place. The *Hall* experiment documented in this chapter is my attempt to capture the invisible daily aspects of a small community using peripheral imagery. The aim is to show that this type of imagery can lead to identification, meaning and narrative amongst a select group of participants in this community and provide some basis to the concluding projects *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone*.

All of my narrative projects have sample reference works that provide a context and background relating to each study documented in this exegesis. The resulting practical research on peripheral vision is in the form of five photographic projects that have been translated into photographic books and subsequently into the final installation within a suburban house. Narratives of these research investigations are discussed within this exegesis but the photographic books themselves contain no text to help with understanding their context.²¹

The associated narrative writing in this document is in coloured text and often changes tense; it is to be read like a flow of subjective consciousness and highlight, in words, our duality between objective and subjective thought. The coloured text also functions as an embedded footnote where it is thought to be an important side note to the main discussion.

When discussing the individual site specific photographic projects, the Naoshima Art Site²² in Japan provides an analogy to the experience of place and its meaning (where). The Art Site has provided the opportunity to see key artists work directly, including Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Seascape* and *Architecture of Time* series, James Turrell's *Aperture* and *Ganzfeld* works and Tatsuo Miyajima's *Sea of Time* installation. Architecture and site specific artworks can be seen on these islands and provide background context to my own work and examples of unseen cultural and historical content not easily captured from the perspective of an outsider (tourist or viewer). Works at Naoshima Art Site encompass many of the aspects of phenomenology or bodily engagement explored in this project.²³ Partly due to the correlation of phenomenological thought with Eastern thought, particularly in Zen Buddhist practices and the pursuit of wordless thought or the world of

²¹ These investigations have a subtle underlying commentary on environmental issues but this is secondary to my general interaction into peripheral vision and the narrative of a place itself.

²² Naoshima is a small island in the Seto Sea approximately an hour by train from Okayama. The actual Art Site includes three main islands, Naoshima, Teshima and Inujima, each of which have their own unique characteristics. During the Setouchi Art Triennial the Art Site expands to include up to 12 islands and two ports.

²³ In Japan a visit to a temple is an embodied engagement, as well as a spiritual engagement, through action. For example it might include the washing of hands, the lighting of incense, ringing a bell, squeezing through a hole in a column, walking through a pitch black passage to rotate a large stone or walking through a dark underground chamber feeling along the walls in order to turn a large key. In Naoshima the installation of site-specific artworks mimics this type of engagement. Turrell's work in Minamiddera art house requires you to wait in a darkened room until your scopic vision adjusts to a blue light rectangle. Sugimoto's installation *Appropriate Proportion* requires the participant to walk up a hill, around a pavilion and down one side, then squeeze along a 4 metre slot into an underground chamber.

mu (nothingness), and partly due to the subjective investigation of being in the world and the subsequent reductive nature of this investigation.²⁴ Fritjof Capra touches on this in the *Tao of Physics* and gives some insight into how the Naoshima art site might provide direct links to this project through the correlation with peripheral vision. In Eastern philosophies, as Capra states, "...all things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated, connected, and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality."²⁵

The Art House project on Naoshima represents a unique phenomenological aspect of the role of art in an urban environment through subjective interaction. It is an initiative of restoring old houses and inserting contemporary art into the fabric of the house. The phenomenology of using an old house to display art is a multisensory experience that engages with the community and the personal consciousness of a viewer of the work. As Gaston Bachelard notes in *The Poetics of Space* a house is not empty and neither is it just an object, a house is about habitation and the essence of the notion of home.²⁶ These are lived houses that go beyond our own lifetime to an inbuilt need for shelter and comfort. Houses contain nostalgic dreams and memories of protection, places to daydream and later to remember and daydream about. In the role of peripheral seeing, the site-specific works on Naoshima are within the horizon of our senses and reference different parts of daily Japanese life; one is like a temple, another is a shrine, yet another is an old dentistry. Houses are generally where we have most of our daily peripheral interaction with the environment and small spaces like these are a reoccurring theme within this research project leading ultimately into the final installation in a suburban house.

Unlike an environment, a photograph has a limited amount of visible content (captured) that can be explored. An image is a still and instantaneous appearance of an event (a point in the past) within an environment (a point in space). In relation to being a surrogate it appears to contain selective content of an environment. These research projects show how a still image can be moved beyond an instantaneous appearance and bring the body of the photographer and the camera firmly together, providing a map of subjective peripheral experience about the various environments explored. By this I mean extending the proprioception and kinaesthetic awareness of the body to include my subjective interaction of using the camera whilst moving through space. A digital camera is used to provide the most flexible means of capturing body movement due to the ability

²⁴ "When Hindu and Buddhist philosophers reflected on states of consciousness achieved in a variety of meditative states, they were practicing phenomenology." David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology," in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta (2003, revised 2013. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/phenomenology/>). Zen Buddhist writing is a type of phenomenological reduction as it is a subjective reduction of being in the world. Haiku poetry is an example of this type of reduction.

Not clouded

mountains around the sea

in which the moon I see;

the islands, in ice

holes become. (Translated by Gunter Nitschke in *From Shinto to Ando*)

²⁵ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Fontana: Wildhouse Press, 1975), 23.

²⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [La poetique de l'espace], trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954).⁵

of the sensor to refocus across multiple points in a light field. The resulting body of work leads ultimately to questions about ways of imparting this peripheral experience to another person. The installation of the work within a house aims to provide a level of interaction on behalf of the viewer, slowing down the viewing process and expanding further the idea of looking around and engaging peripheral vision. Dark adaption or scotopic vision can take up to ten minutes in a low light environment. Therefore, the installation facilitates this adaption in the display of the completed work, providing a controlled environment that allows interaction as an experience rather than passive viewing of images. It is then possible to interact with the work in a way that builds up tension between the direct and indirect perception of the viewer and move the work from appearance towards surrogates of experience, expanding the area of experimental and conceptual photography and bridging the gap between image making and our interaction with space.

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The following chapter explores a series of questions about the nature of seeing and photography through the first project titled *Everyday*. Do we see like the diagrams (often found in books) that indicate a way of seeing like a camera obscura or is seeing much more complex? How complicated are the processes of seeing and the notion of the visible? Can the peripheral aspects of seeing help provide a better understanding of the visible and our relationship to space and can this actually be photographed? The *Everyday* project underlines these questions about seeing through images of movement and interaction within a number of environments. This project establishes the methodology for image making using peripheral vision for the subsequent investigations. In chapter two our relationship to place and the potential of a peripheral photographic narrative is highlighted through an experiment in the small village of Hall. An analysis of the Kadoya Art House from the Naoshima Art Site forms a reference point to the experiment and acts as a metaphor for place and the interaction of a community. In chapter three the projects *Glare* and *The Horizon* are my initial investigations into specific environments and investigate through different techniques the limits of perception. Chapter four documents the final two projects, *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone*, where peripheral seeing transforms into phenomenological narratives on space and place from the barely visible to the invisible.

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Test Image

Some of the images within the five project books and also within this exegesis can only be seen under certain light conditions. Therefore the image below is a test image. If the image appears to be completely black lower the light levels until a subdued image appears. Try also to view the image out of the corner of your eye. Please note that the lighting levels suitable for viewing this and other images may not be suitable for general reading.



Figure 2: Untitled from *Uninhabited* series, Pigment print on rag (Scotopic test image)

This test image is particularly relevant for two of the projects *Glare* and *Uninhabited* where low light levels or the aid of a torch is required.

Chapter One: Seeing and Photography

Introduction

Through my research when I am investigating peripheral vision I am doing this through the practice of taking still photographs. I am using this tool to investigate our relationship with the external environment. This simple act immediately highlights questions around whether a photograph is actually like space and place in terms of intention, affordances or meaning or is it something else entirely? Our interaction with the external environment is a far more complex process than our interaction with pictures and the complexity of this relationship is expressed through my first photographic project titled *Everyday*. The *Everyday* project is a photographic investigation of movement through space, which is both illustrative of peripheral vision and a method to identify a preferred mode of representation. This project covers the full breadth of the research and is an exploration of space that leads into the following chapters (and projects) on place.

The main problem of investigating peripheral vision using still photographs is that it has inherent characteristics that appear to be at odds with this mode of representation. The production of an alternative mode of representation using the tools and outcomes of the medium I am challenging does in many ways seem contradictory. This first project uses still photography to explore the essence or sensation of movement to find out what might be representative of peripheral vision. Put simply, I am trying to find an ideal movement and resulting image type that best represents this mode of vision. This exploration of still photographs and peripheral vision highlights questions about how we actually see and the processes of our vision and the notion of the visible. The subsequent section of the chapter examines closely the problems with how various texts describe the optical processes of vision and the relationship of the visible to the eye. The perceived issues around seeing are investigated from the perspective of the practical outcomes generated from the first project and identify how aspects of peripheral vision relate to our direct interaction with the visible world and how these can be photographed.

In the section *The problem of a photograph* the issue of using still photographs to represent peripheral vision is explored in relation to selected written works on photographic representation, such as: *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes, *On Photography* by Susan Sontag and in particular *Understanding a Photograph* by John Berger. These texts are interwoven through the broader phenomenological problem around the complex nature of our relationship to space and the viewing of photographs. Psychologist James J. Gibson has proposed that images are surrogates for experience, but is this the case? Through this section my aim is to find some consensus of what a photograph is and what are its key components. These components are useful in determining how a photograph can be used to represent peripheral vision and whether this type of representation varies or is similar to what may be considered to be a standard type of photograph. Therefore it helps me to establish the limits of what photography might be.

Peripheral Vision and Photography concludes Chapter One and summarises the approach to capturing images identified as aspects of peripheral vision.



Everyday project (Experiments in movement and capturing time)

I don't know what I am seeking but I'll know when I find it.

In this project I am trying to capture what peripheral vision and direct perception might be, although at the start I did not know that this was what I was seeking. Psychologist James J. Gibson's work on ecological perception helps to provide detailed background information on this topic and, although useful, it is not entirely definitive. Direct perception is essentially a non-thinking interaction with the world. It is a lack of conscious awareness of the multiple cumulative interactions with the environment, as Bruce Wexler indicates in *Brain and Culture*:

...we are not capable of detecting, tracking and summing the subtle and numerous environmental influences on our development and thought, any more than we can count and track the different molecules in the air we breathe or the food we eat.²⁷

Therefore everyday, like Richard Long, I go walking, sometimes driving or catching a train, trying to register what I see as I negotiate the world and capture what it looks like out of the corner of my eye. Whilst moving I search for an ideal speed and type of environment to provide stimulation to my eye (and the camera sensor). The *Everyday* project is a series of photographs that covers the breadth of the study through a number of locations. It is a record covering the types of camera movement and the levels of legibility achieved through this movement and it is the device that informs the other projects.

WITH NO DIRECTION KNOWN
LIKE A ROLLING STONE

ROAM
DRIFT
CHANCE
AIMLESS
WHITEOUT
WANDERING
IRRATIONAL
UNCERTAINTY
FREEWHEELING
INDETERMINACY
DISORIENTATION
INCONSEQUENTIAL

A FIVE DAY WINTER WALK ON DARTMOOR
ENGLAND 2013

Figure 3: *No direction*, Richard Long, 2013

²⁷ Bruce E. Wexler, *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), 40.

It can be argued that taking photographs is like capturing time. The length of exposure is a segment of time of equivalent length. In still photography more time obviously means more light and more optical flow, but this does not necessarily mean more optical information. Information is related to the intensity of the light, which means that intense light (daytime) may result in less optical information than is visible, whilst low light (evening or morning) may result in greater optical information than is visible. It is related to the length of exposure and aperture. A dramatic illustration of the different outcomes from intense and low light is the series *Motion Pictures* by Hiroshi Sugimoto – see example following (figure 4.). In this series Sugimoto has used a very long exposure time that is equivalent to the length of a movie. The movie on the screen disappears into complete whiteness while the surrounding area, which is normally dark, becomes extremely detailed. In the *Union City drive-in* image the exposure has captured aeroplane trails in the sky behind the screen and the movie has dissolved into white light.

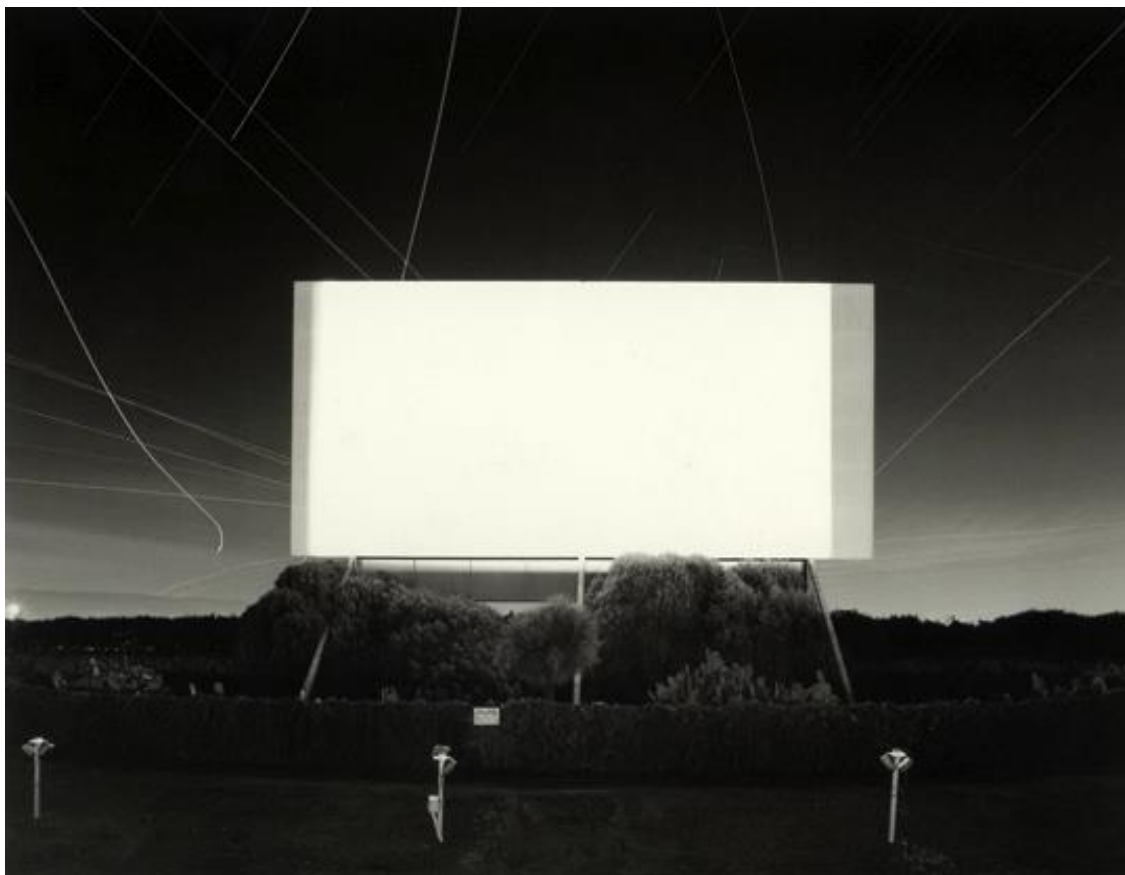


Figure 4: Union City drive-in, Union City, Hiroshi Sugimoto, 1993

My own images have the added complexity of movement, my own movement and the people around me. A long exposure in this instance captures this movement but depending on the length of exposure and speed of movement the image can dissolve into smoke or a misty blur. In terms of vision this type of misty blurring is called visual

crowding and is associated closely with peripheral vision.²⁸ Misty visual crowding is an actual representation of moving through a visual array or optical flow described in the next section about seeing and as represented in figures 30-32. It is thought to be the limit of our perception and legible recognition.

I have experimented with a number of different types of movements and speeds including taking images from a fast moving train, a car, running, jumping, walking, through to general camera shake. I maintained a low ASA setting throughout these experiments (100 ASA) unless the external light levels were too low to register without a very long shutter speed. Images taken from a car were some of the earliest attempts at capturing what we may see at the side of the road whilst driving.

Vehicular movement

In the moving car images the central view remains relatively clear and recognisable as a road (although the movement of the car is captured) while the peripheral areas become either misty or watery (figures 5 and 6). Depending on the speed of the car and the density of the trees, along the edge of the road, this peripheral edge can dissolve into a misty wall of detail and appear flattened or completely crowded. If the trees overhang the road (as in figure 7) the surroundings become completely misty (or crowded) like travelling within a tunnel. Visual crowding or mistiness is less noticeable in the darker images (such as figure 8) as it becomes enveloped within the surrounding darkness outside of the lights of the car. In this situation it is a distal arrangement and I am separated from the environment in which I am travelling. Michel de Certeau calls this travelling incarceration: "Immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by. What is happening? Nothing is moving inside or outside the train."²⁹

In this de Certeau is not entirely correct, things are not immobile but actually moving and it is like two worlds one inside the car (or train) and one outside. The mistiness of the outside world can sometimes tire the eye and induce drowsiness. In the distance there is less mist. In all cases there is something there but what is it? The mist is a conglomeration of objects overlapping and forming a single form. I have found out subsequently that there is a law related to this type of crowding – the Bouma law of crowding – that determines our ability to see an object within a cluttered scene based on features, size and spacing between nearby objects within an overall scene.³⁰ The interesting thing about the articles that describe this law is that movement is not mentioned. Therefore you could add that the ability to recognise objects in a field is based on features, numbers of objects, size, spacing and speed of movement.

²⁸ David Whitney and Dennis M. Levi, "Visual Crowding: A Fundamental Limit on Conscious Perception and Object Recognition," in *Trends Cogn Sci*, ed. National Institutes of Health (Berkeley: NIH Public Access, 2011).

²⁹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 111.

³⁰ Ramakrishna Chakravarthi Sarah Rosen, Denis G. Pelli, "The Bouma Law of Crowding, Revised: Critical Spacing Is Equal across Parts, Not Objects," *Journal of Vision* no. December (2014).



Figure 5: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Driving along the Tathra Bermagui road towards Mimosa Rocks)



Figure 6: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Driving along the Tathra Bermagui road towards Mimosa Rocks)



Figure 7: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Driving on Wattle Street in Canberra under large deciduous trees)

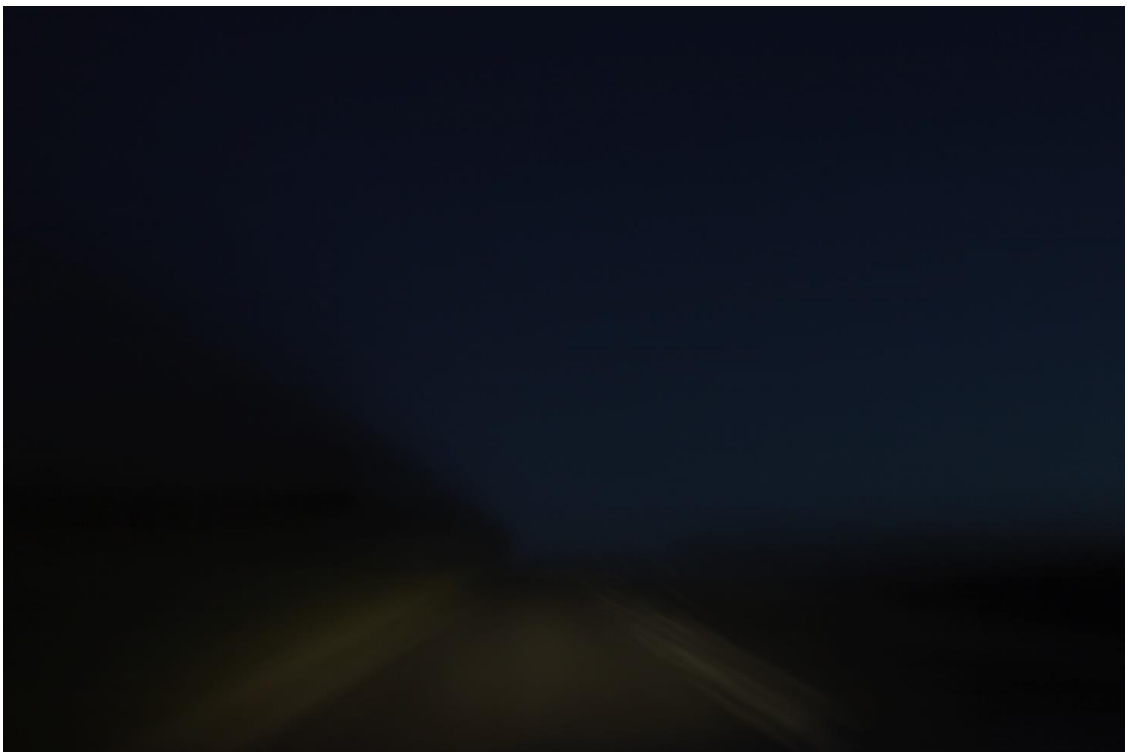


Figure 8: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Driving past Blue Lake in Mount Gambia)

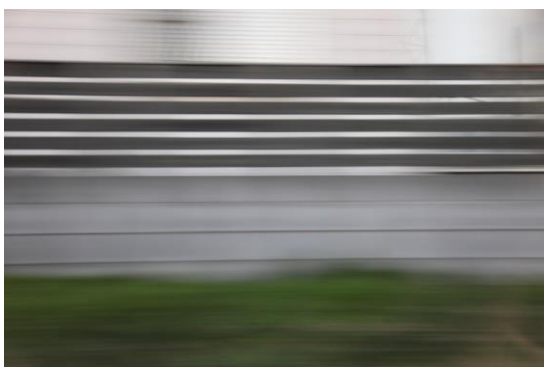
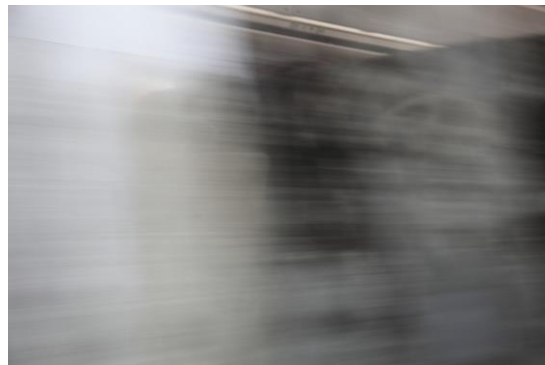
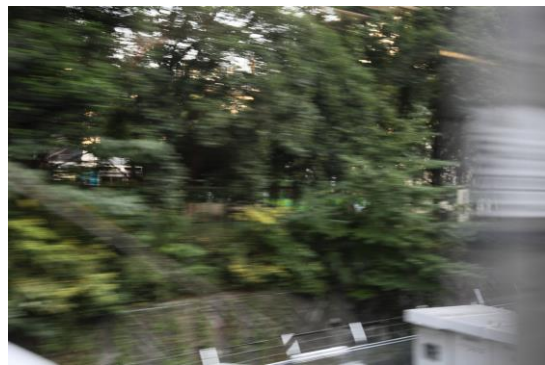
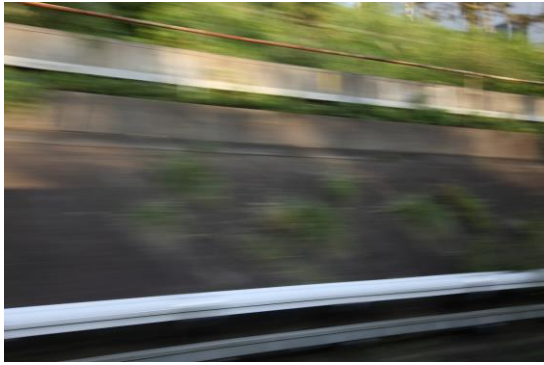
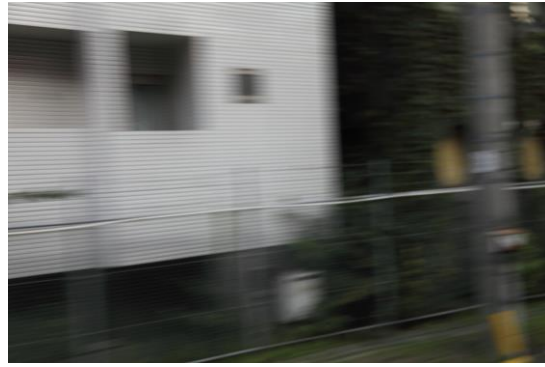
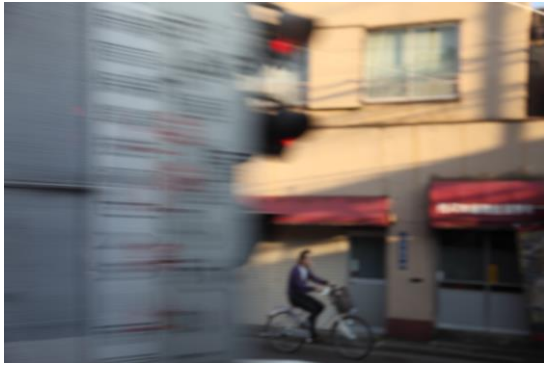


Figure 9: Images taken from a train in Japan at 30 second intervals (unprinted images)

Images taken on a train in Japan highlight this relationship in a clear way. On two Shinkansen journeys, I took images every 30 seconds for the length of the journey without any attempts at composition. Images were taken regardless of the location of the train and whether it was at a station, in a tunnel or at full speed.

Unlike the car images these are the side view of the passing landscape that soon becomes a background during travel. The interesting element highlighted during this experiment is that it is not just speed that is critical to blurring and crowding it is also distance. The series of images in figure 9 taken from the train show that objects in close proximity to the train are blurred or crowding beyond recognition but if there is a vista to an object further away it is less blurred and more distinct. An example of this is the bicycle rider captured in one of the images in this sequence. Therefore the law of crowding could be expanded further to include the relationship between speed and proximity of the observer.

Although the car and train images provide a valuable insight into motion, proximity and crowding, I came to the conclusion that these forms of motion were separated from a direct engagement with the external environment. I also began to question which environment I was interacting with? Was it the inside of the car, the train, or the outside? If my aim was to interact with the outside then I was separated from it and the mode of movement and speed did not match a natural motion or movement experienced in our peripheral vision.

Embodied movement

Walking images vary from the driving images and show sections of clarity amongst the crowding. Depending on the speed the images can appear like an overlay of multiple images (less crowding) simulating how I think saccadic eye movement might appear. Slower movement captures more of my own movement or possibly walking creates more erratic movement than the linear flow of the car or train. While walking I am closer to and within the flow of optical information derived from the objects around me. In de Certeau's *Walking in the City* there is a nice description of this interaction:

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together.³¹

I am attracted to the swarming mass of people in cities, as they not only define spaces they provide optical information and texture within these spaces. On paths and within pedestrian spaces there is minimal information and they can be like urban sensory deprivation chambers. In some areas my camera is unable to focus and take pictures and I am drawn towards gatherings of people or areas of high texture. I wonder if this is what we do unconsciously. Resulting images still have a reasonably high level of visual crowding but it is possible to pick up unique elements of the places explored.

³¹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

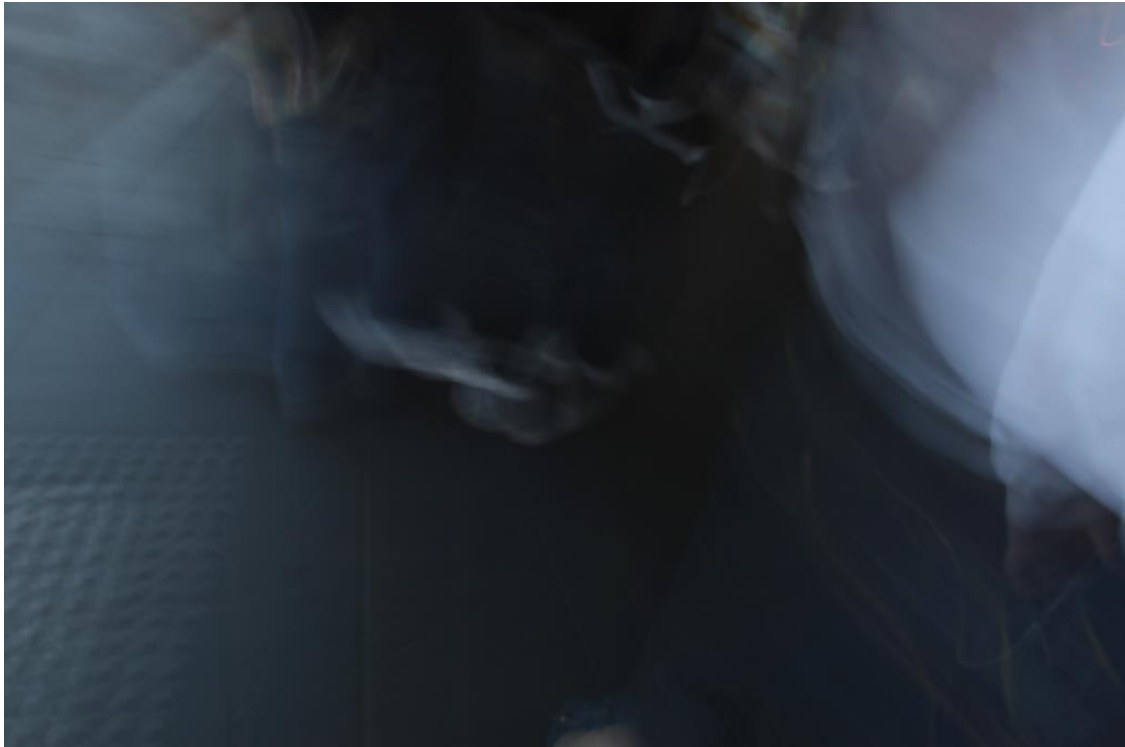


Figure 10: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Waking on a footpath with many people crossing in front of me outside a train station in Melbourne)

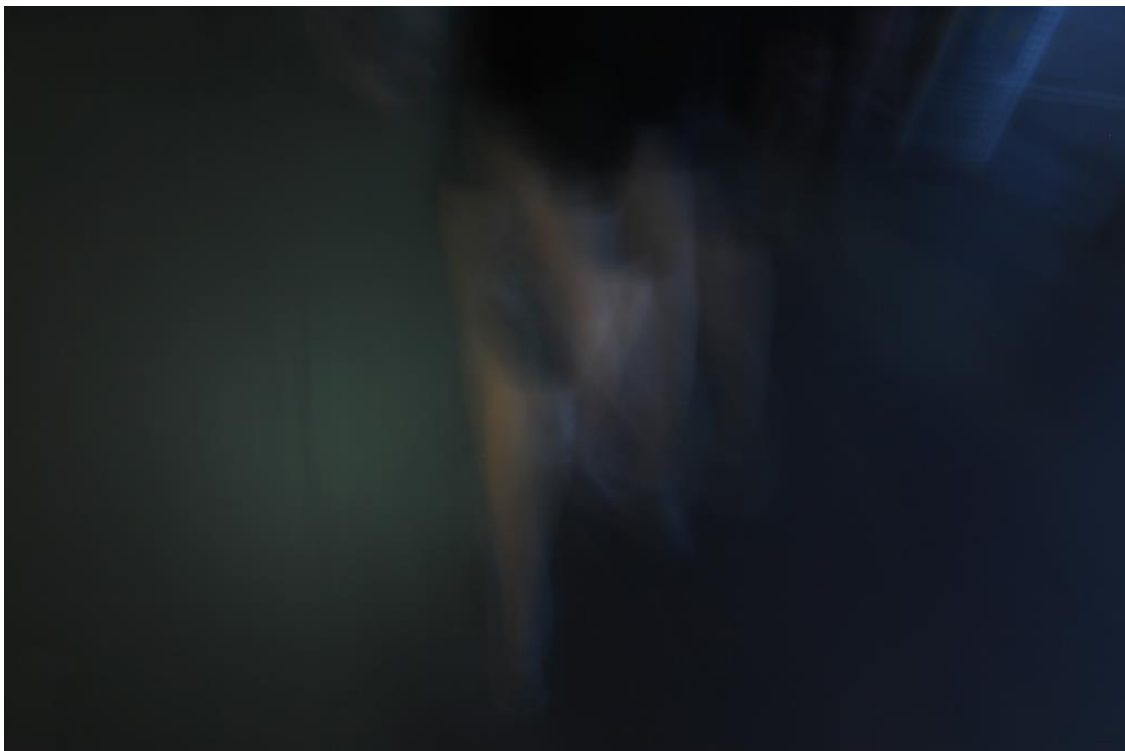


Figure 11: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Waking on a footpath following another person holding my hand in front of me outside a train station in Melbourne)

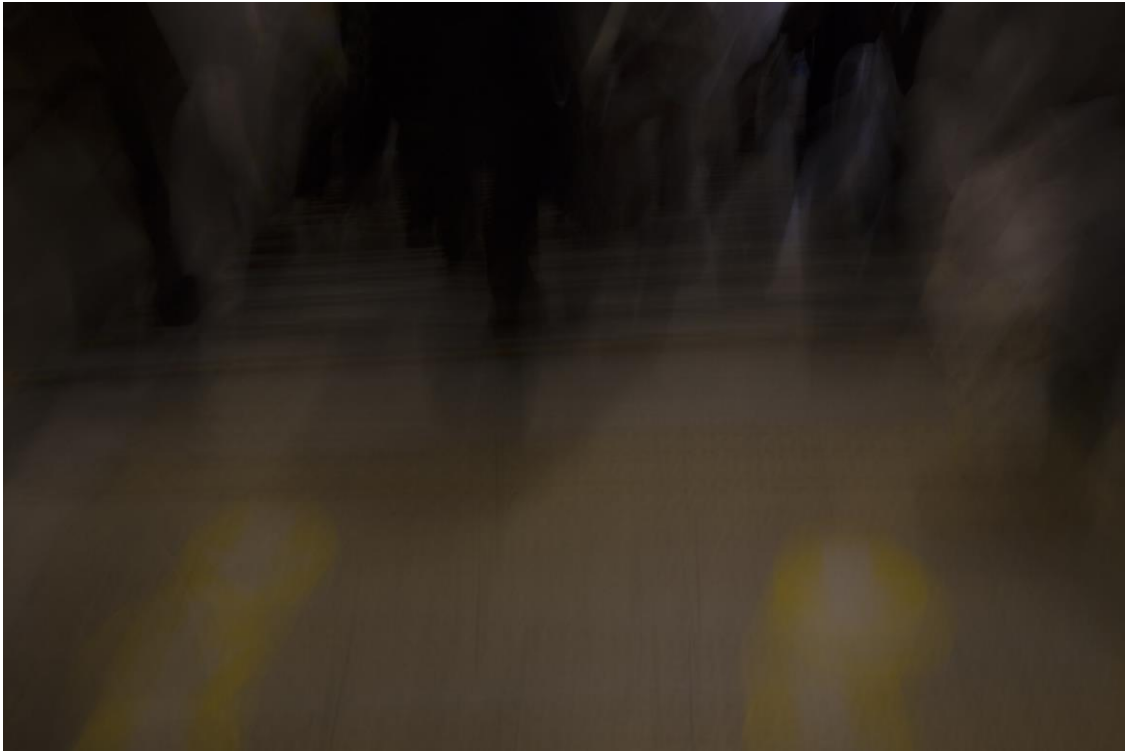


Figure 12: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Waking in a subway tunnel with many people crossing my path heading down steps in Tokyo, Japan)

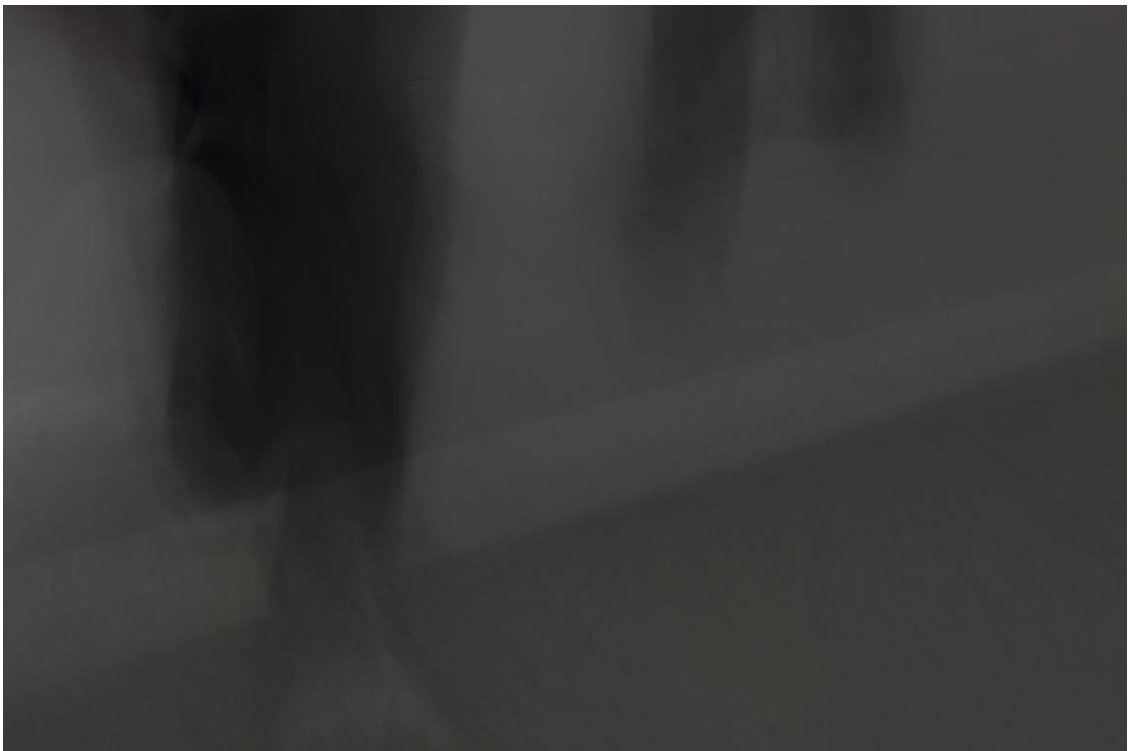


Figure 13: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Waking in a subway tunnel with people next to me in Tokyo, Japan)

Melbourne has bluestone footpaths in the city centre and this contributes to the sense of greyness attributed to it (Figures 10 & 11). Whilst the Tokyo substations use a white speckled granite tile that picks up different light, sometimes warm yellow near sunlight and a cool blue under fluorescent light (Figures 12 & 13). Some areas of a city have almost no visual stimulation and I feel impelled to move along and not linger. I have read that places like this can increase anger levels in people if there is not adequate visual stimulation.³² A good way to test the level of available optical information is to use the panorama function on my phone while walking. Limited optical information fails to engage this function. Higher levels of information engage the function but produce a disjointed image. In areas of high optical information the panorama function produces a seamless image.

We don't see like a camera but we crave optical information of some form, and we are attracted to either activity or highly textural environments like parks or gardens.³³ This may explain the notion that sensory deprived environments bring to the surface internal thoughts and internalises the participant. Without any visual stimulation the eye actually ceases to see at all.³⁴ Natural environments or active environments on the other hand externalise the walker. When walking in a natural environment there is a dramatic change in the quality of information and texture as seen in the images following (Figures 14-19). In a natural environment I have no need to chase activity and people, as there is an abundance of optical information. My walking pace and camera speed slows in order to adequately capture the available information without too much movement blur or crowding. This matches studies linking visual perception and movement. Drawing on the early studies by Gibson, Alva Noe in his book *Action in Perception* calls this engagement with the environment Enactive Perception: "All perception...is intrinsically active."³⁵

In early field studies, such as the exploration of Benalla and Lake Mokoan, which formed part of the Engaging Visions Research Project³⁶, and my own explorations in areas around Canberra highlight the textural information available in contrast to the urban settings. These natural field settings promote a slowing down of movement from fast walking to slow walking, then slight jumps and ultimately hand held camera shake.

³² In an article, *Tracking restoration in natural and urban field settings*, participants walked in two settings, one urban (and quite bland) and the other natural (a path by a river). In task-based walks anger levels were measured post walk and were found to be similar with only a slight increase in the urban walk. When participants were set a route with no tasks the results varied greatly. In the urban setting anger levels rose dramatically while in the natural setting anger levels dropped and it was found that the setting had a restorative effect. Gary W. Evans Terry Hartig, Larry D. Jamner, Deborah S. Davis, Tommy Garling, "Tracking Restoration in Natural and Urban Field Settings," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, no. 23 (2003).

³³ Kate van Dooren Julie Dean, Philip Weinstein, "Does Biodiversity Improve Mental Health in Urban Settings?," *Medical Hypotheses* 76(2011).

³⁴ Alfred L. Yarbus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, trans. Basil Haigh (New York: Plenum Press, 1967), 1 & 100.

³⁵ Noe, *Action in Perception*, 3.

³⁶ The Engaging Visions Research Project was a Government funded project to engage artists and the community on water issues in the Murray-Darling Basin. Rod Lamberts John Reid, Carolyn Young, Charles Tambiah, *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2010).



Figure 14: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Walking in a field near Benalla)

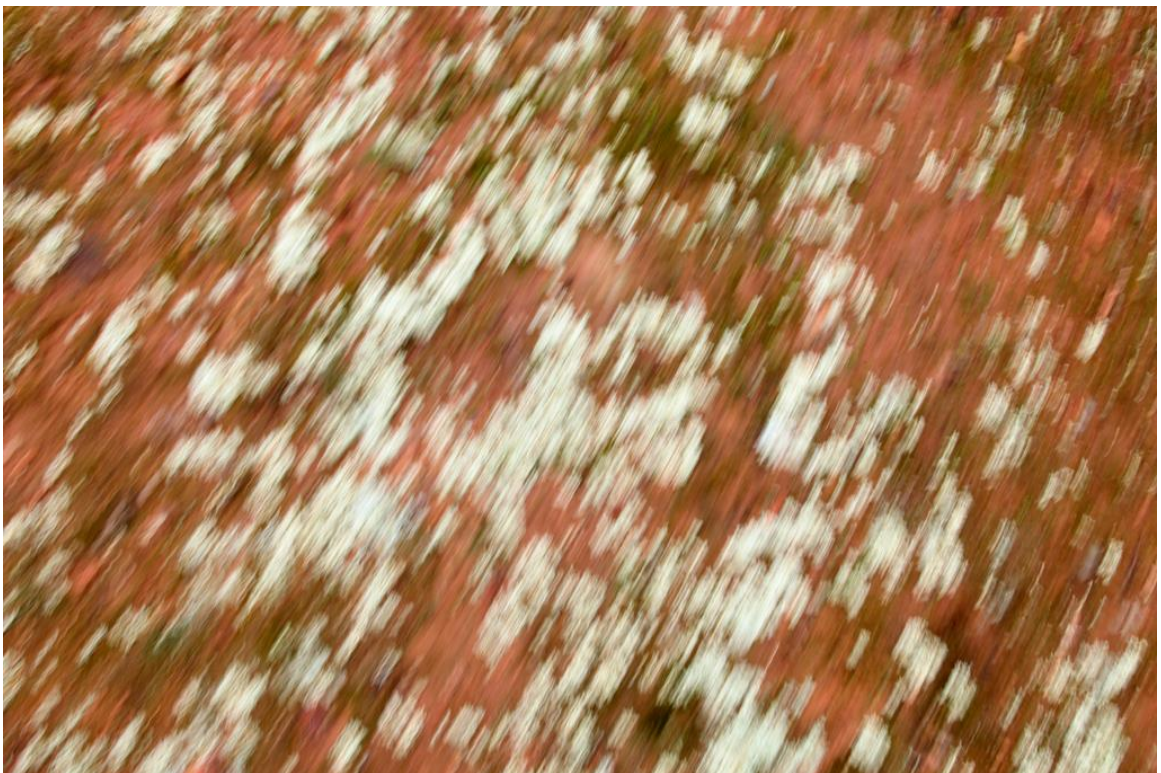


Figure 15: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Walking in a field near Benalla)



Figure 16: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Walking on the dry lake bed of Lake Mokoan, Benalla)

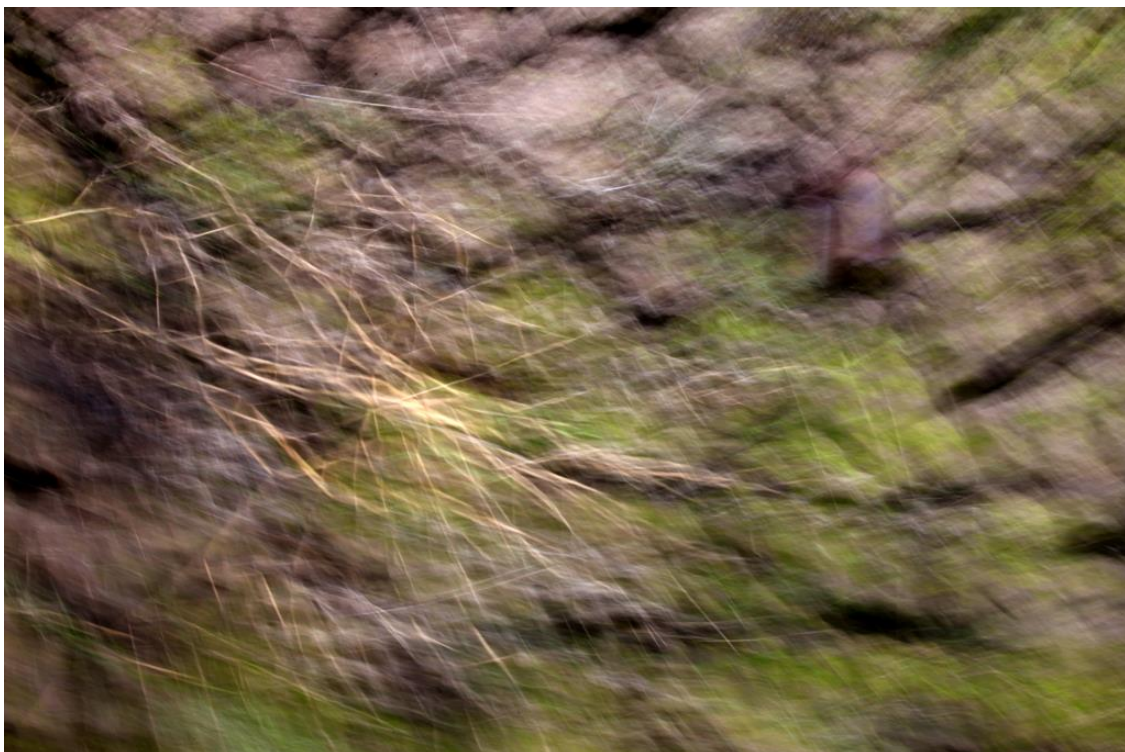


Figure 17: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Walking on the dry lake bed of Lake Mokoan, Benalla)



Figure 18: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Slightly jumping on the dry lake bed of Lake Mokoan, Benalla)



Figure 19: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Camera shake along the streets of Benalla past a large hedge)

The works developed during these explorations incorporate my embodied motion, varying between a slow walk and a camera shake. Replication of my body movements is not an exact science but after some practice an ideal movement was achieved. Speed settings on the camera were more controllable and the ideal settings varied by only small increments between 0.6 of a second and 2 seconds. During very low light conditions this extended up to 4 seconds, however beyond that setting blurring and crowding became excessive. In figures 14 and 15 the motion blur is so pronounced that when viewing these images the eye cannot rest, it wants to follow the motion. In figures 16–18 the motion blur is less visible and these photographs have an appearance of a series of multiple images overlapped and merged into one. These photographs have a painterly appearance and have also become flattened spatially. Figure 19 has the slowest camera movement and shortest exposure time. In this photograph movement blur has disappeared into a slight double image. The interesting element in this image is that it begins to exhibit three-dimensional qualities. It might be argued that this is a representation of saccadic eye movement³⁷ captured at the junction between saccades and although the camera is monocular the appearance of three-dimensions is achieved through motion.³⁸ This is called motion parallax and means that someone who only has one functioning eye can experience depth perception through motion. Experimentation shows that motion parallax can be picked up through camera movement.

The context of movement in photography

Capturing movement or motion in photography is not a new concept and dates back to 1870s with the early analysis of movement by Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey.³⁹ These images were a stop motion type sequential analysis of movement aiming to capture the unseen overall movement of people and animals. Generally we only see this at a glance but in Muybridge's and Marey's images you could see the breakup of actual bodily movement. Etienne Jules Marey called this type of photographic study of motion Chronophotography. This type of photography, according to Marey:

...is the application of instantaneous photography to the study of movement. It permits the human eye to see the different stages which would not be visible in direct way; and it recomposes the movement initially decomposed.⁴⁰

This is not so much capturing motion but freezing motion so it may be examined in closer detail. In my images I am more interested in the decomposed motion, to use Marey's words, and the sense of motion in relation to peripheral vision. In this regard Anton Giulio Bragaglia's Futurist Photodynamism (1911) is the closest precedent in capturing active motion through still photography.

³⁷ Saccadic eye movement is the involuntary movement of the eye to change fixation points of the fovea towards an object. Due to its duration it also helps remove movement blur from our vision. Yarbus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, 129-211.

³⁸ Michael J. Hawken Dario L. Ringach, Robert Shapley, "Binocular Eye Movements Caused by the Perception of Three-Dimensional Structure from Motion," *Vision Research* 36, no. 10 (1996).

³⁹ Jesus Pastor-Bravo Yolanda Herranz-Pascual, Covadonga Barreiro-Rodriguez Moldes, "Representing the Movement / Presenting the Movable," *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad* 3, no. 25 (2013): 461.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 463.

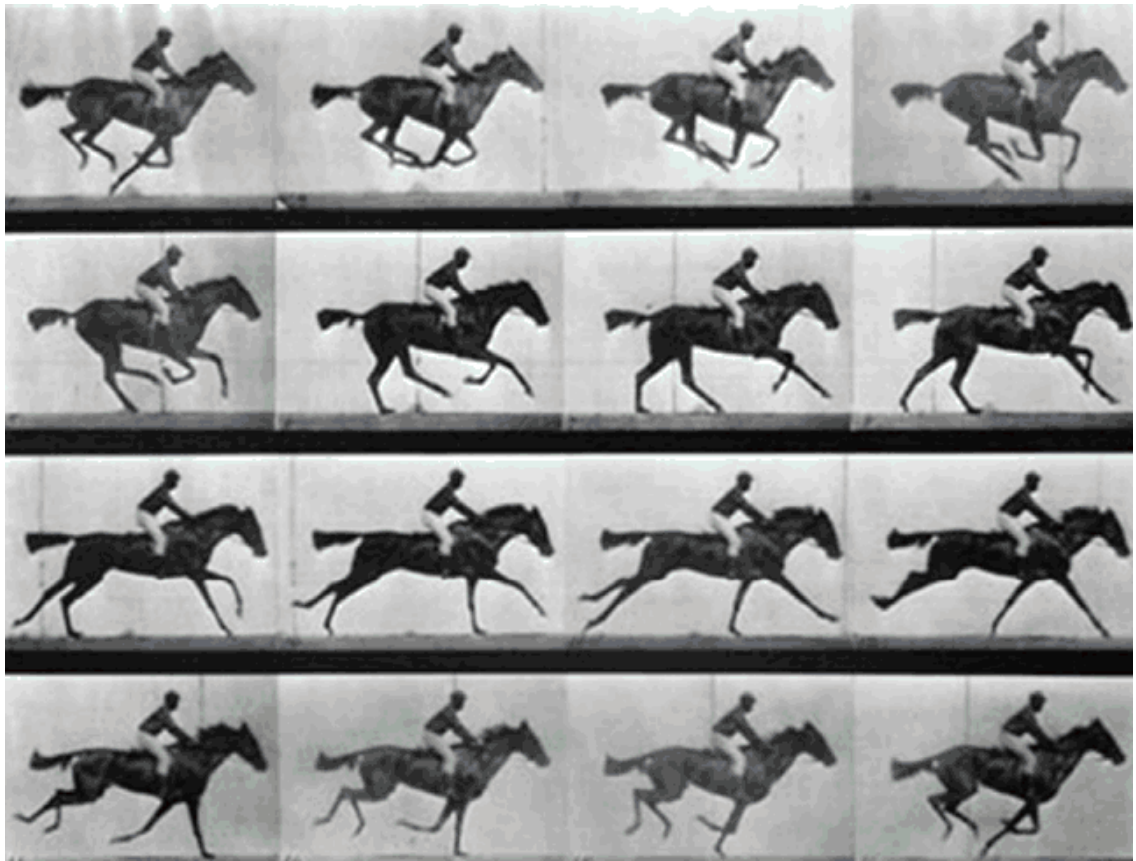


Figure 20: The Horse in Motion, Eadweard Muybridge, 1880

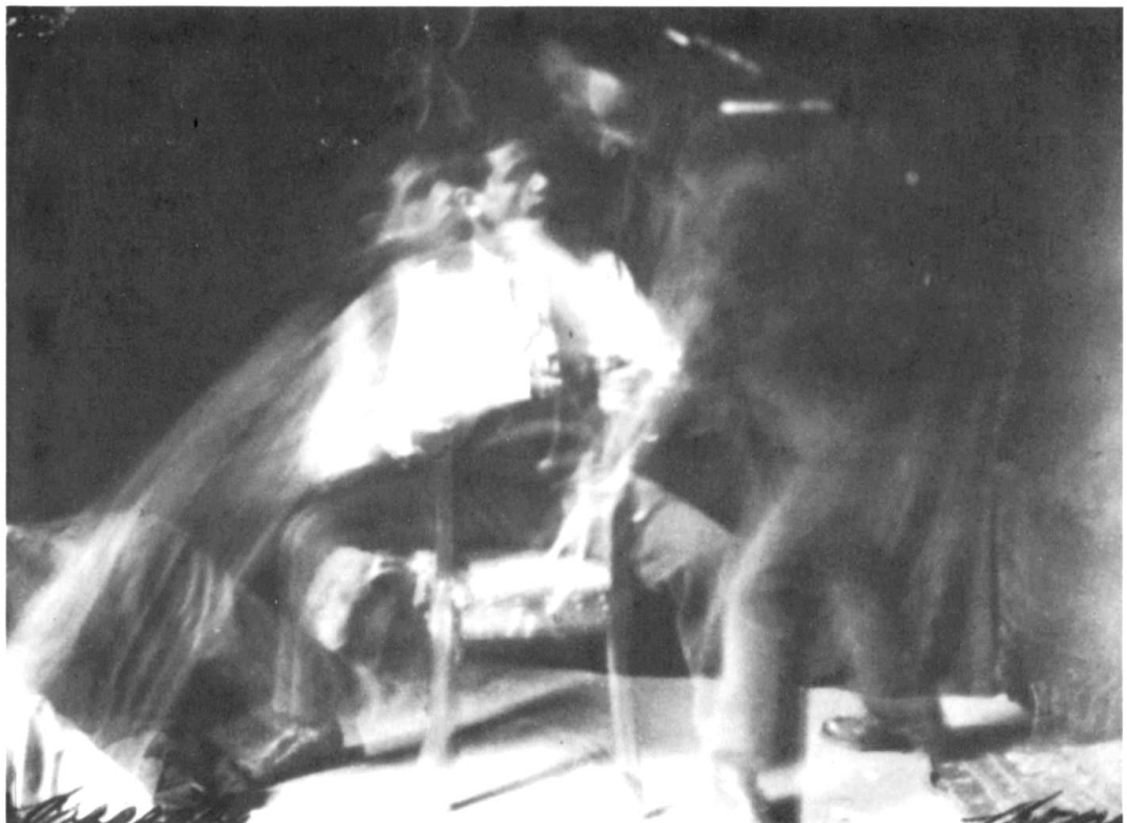


Figure 21: The Slap (Photodynamics) Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, 1912

Bragaglia's Photodynamism manifesto was produced in 1911 as a direct criticism of Marey's Chronophotography arguing that it did not in fact synthesise movement or give the sensation of movement but fragmented action into a series of instantaneous events.⁴¹ Photodynamism is actually the use of long exposures and photomontage to capture the trace of movement in figures. Bragaglia talks about the dematerialisation and distortion in relation to speed and exposure as being an ideal and desirable outcome and pre-empts discussions on the perception of movement by J.J Gibson and the idea of formless invariants.⁴² The aim was to move photography away from fixed realism into an art form and beyond a "mechanically precise and cold reproduction."

We seek the interior essence of things: pure movement; and we prefer to see everything in motion, since as things are dematerialised in motion they become idealised, while still retaining, deep down, a strong skeleton of truth.⁴³



Figure 22: Untitled (Crowd 2) from the series *City of Shadows*, Alexey Titarenko, 1993

⁴¹ Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, 39-42.

⁴² Invariants are solid and stable objects in the environments such as trees, rocks, etc, which become formless through transformation due to our movement around them. James Jerome Gibson, "On the Concept of 'Formless Invariants' in Visual Perception," *Leonardo* 6, no. 1 (Winter) (1973).

⁴³ Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, 44.

Alexey Titarenko can be seen as contemporary example of the ideals contained in this Futurist Manifesto through the series *City of Shadows*. Titarenko captures the sensory deprived and once oppressed post Soviet Russia in the city of St. Petersburg. This long exposure of people lining up for rations reveals them as ghosts within a smoky throng surrounded by a grey muted city. In this case Titarenko uses a subdued Gelatin-silver black and white print to emphasise the muted tones of St. Petersburg.⁴⁴ Titarenko's images are apart from the crowd watching as an observer but seem to give an impression of the thoughts of the individuals in the crowd. These images give both the sense of movement and in some ways an enrichment of the essence of the subject, proposed by Bragaglia. To me it emphasises the unimportance of the inhabitants against the stability of the city and its government.

My own images are more subjective from within the crowd negotiating the spaces between the people and capturing my own movement. In Bragaglia's and Titarenko's images the camera and photographer is still an observer and apart from the movement itself. In the experiments contained within the *Everyday* project the images are from the first person perspective trying to understand and capture my own movement and not the trajectories of others. I am the photographer and the subject.

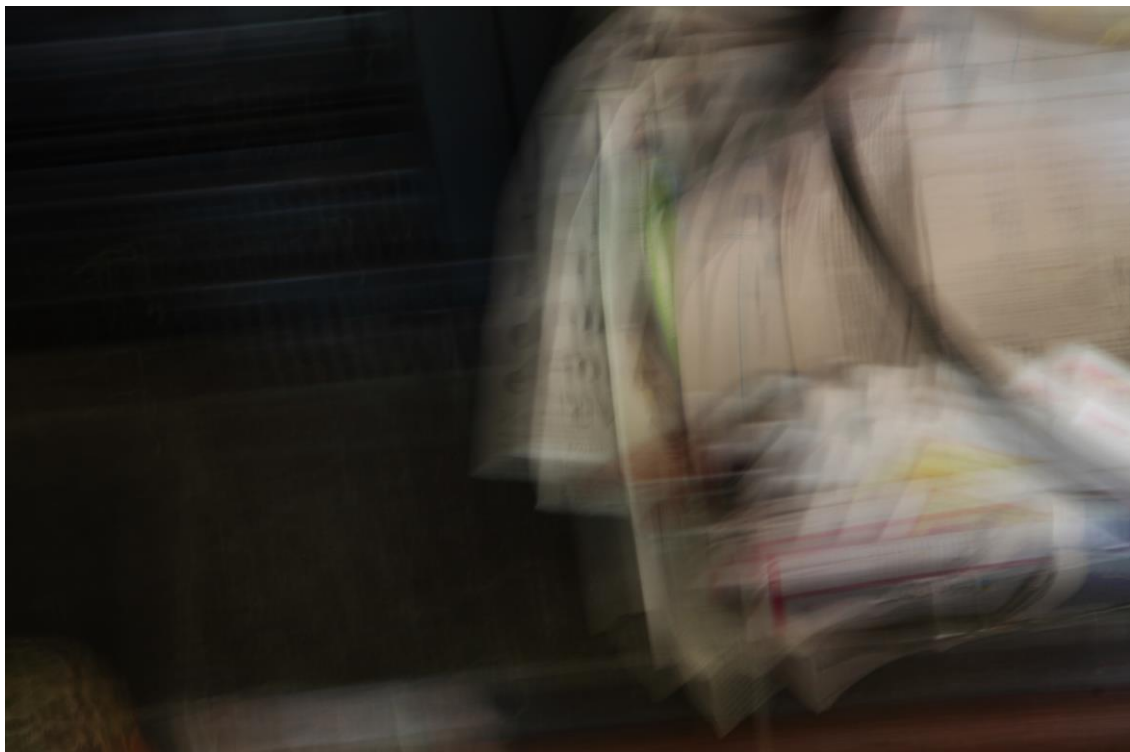


Figure 23: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(An invisible aspect of a neighbour's house in Hall)

⁴⁴ Irina Tchmyreva, "Alexey Titarenko. The City of Moist Silver," Moscow Museum of Modern Art, http://www.alexeytitarenko.com/home_pix/tchmyreva_article.pdf accessed 29.11.2015.

Subjective movement

Everyday is an exploration of spaces and movement. Speed, light and texture are the defining characteristics between legibility and illegibility but it is the border between these that leads towards a sense of mystery and emotion. The last images in this series are within houses at close proximity and at the slowest speeds.⁴⁵ They have both optical information, and through their dark legibility, the promise of mystery and narrative content. This project explores movement and space and opens up the questions about seeing and peripheral vision. Movement is just one aspect of peripheral vision but as Merleau-Ponty states “it is by principle that that every perception is movement.”⁴⁶

These points of movement and displacement where objects merge and obscure define our relationship and apparent distance to objects around us. This is sketchy until our eye moves to pick up the fine detail. The legibility of the surroundings can be a measure of our mobility through the space and when this is captured in a photograph the movement is frozen in perpetual motion. It affords to the viewer that I am moving. In *Sense and Non-Sense* Merleau-Ponty talks about perception as a system of configurations that is far from homogeneous and this is highlighted in the resulting images from the *Everyday* project:

The idea we have of the world would be overturned if we could succeed in seeing the intervals between things (for example, the space between the trees on the boulevard) as objects and, inversely, if we saw the things themselves – trees – as the ground.⁴⁷

Looking at the results of this project it is not hard to propose that we do see the intervals between things that contain various degrees of legibility and varying degrees of colour to colourless peripheral vision. Therefore, what is it that I am looking at?

見

⁴⁵ The Hall Experiment - refer to Chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort (Northwestern University Press, 1968), 231. In the section Working Notes.

⁴⁷ *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus & Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 48.

How do we see? (What is the visible?)

Exploring movement and photography from the first person perspective in *Everyday* has opened up many questions about how vision is discussed and represented. I believe that central focused vision and photography can have a distancing effect when interacting with the environment. The world then becomes a spectacle for observing. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan discusses the differences between proximate and distant senses in his series of texts on environmental perception and place.⁴⁸ Each sense in the perceptual field has a limit of range or horizon. At close proximity all our senses are engaged in a multisensory experience, touch and taste has the closest horizon followed by smell, hearing then sight. At a long distance only sight remains. The distant horizon is the limit of our central focused vision but not necessarily the limit of our peripheral vision.

The science of optics and seeing

As I work my way through the science of vision I have a sense of dissatisfaction arising from the perspective that the written science of optics does not appear to wholly align with the experience of being in the world. The science of optics explains the mechanics of how the eye works but it does not explain our interaction with the visible world. As an example when looking at a diagram of how we see (Figure 24), it shows lines that represent light passing through the Cornea and Lens of the eye, crossing over at the midpoint of the Lens and spreading out to form an inverted image of the world on the Retina at the back of the eye. The diagram represents a camera obscura effect where light passing through a small hole projects an inverted image on a nearby surface. This is how a camera works but is it really how we see, especially when I think of our constant movement where the outside world provides a stream of overlapping information? In many ways this image of the eye is like John Berger's diagrammatic representation of a photograph (discussed further in the next section).⁴⁹ It represents a frozen moment in our experience of seeing in the visible world.

In another image the lines do not cross over but converge to a small point perpendicular to the lens in the Retina (Figure 25).⁵⁰ This axis of vision directs light to the fovea and is, according to the authors of *Sensation and Perception*; "The most important section of the human retina..."⁵¹ The fovea is important for our central focused vision, but it is a very small part of the eye. The fovea is made up of cones, which are attuned to high levels of acuity and colour whereas the remainder of the eye (peripheral vision) is made up of rods (and a small percentage of cones) and is attuned to low light and movement. There are approximately 5 million cones in the small area of the fovea whilst there are 120 million rods in the remainder of the retina.⁵²

⁴⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan has written three books on the subject of experience, perception, culture and place: *Space and Place* (1977), *Topophilia* (1974) and *Passing Strange and Wonderful* (1993).

⁴⁹ This is from the essay *Appearances* in the book *Understanding a Photograph*.

⁵⁰ Adapted from a diagram in Nicholas J. Wade and Michael Swanson, *Visual Perception: An Introduction* (Florence: Routledge, 1991), 44.

⁵¹ Lawrence M. Ward Stanley Coren, James T. Ennis, ed. *Sensation and Perception*, Fifth ed. (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999), 57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 61.

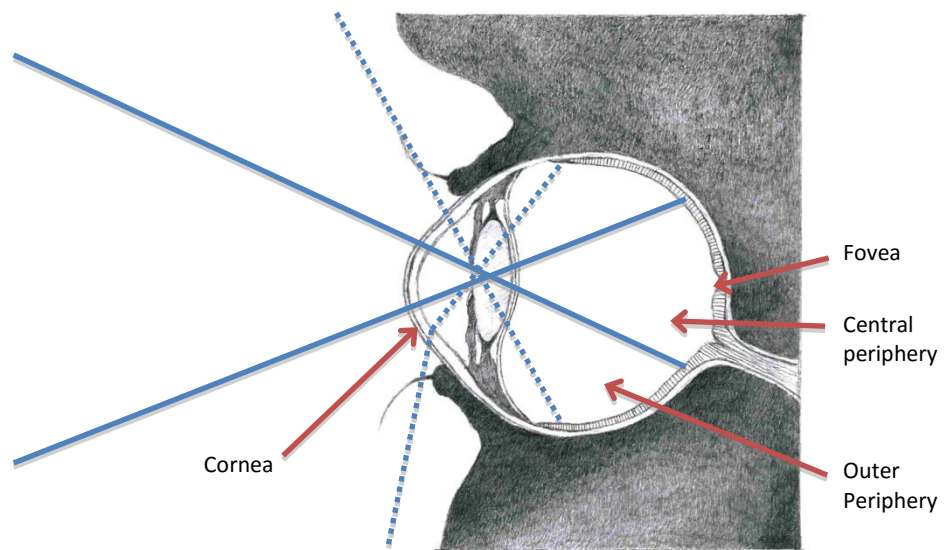


Figure 24: Seeing as camera obscura showing lines of peripheral vision (pencil drawing by author)

Note that our peripheral vision has a wider scope than through the lens and is partially refracted by the cornea. Our field of view is 208 degrees horizontally and 120 degrees vertically.⁵³

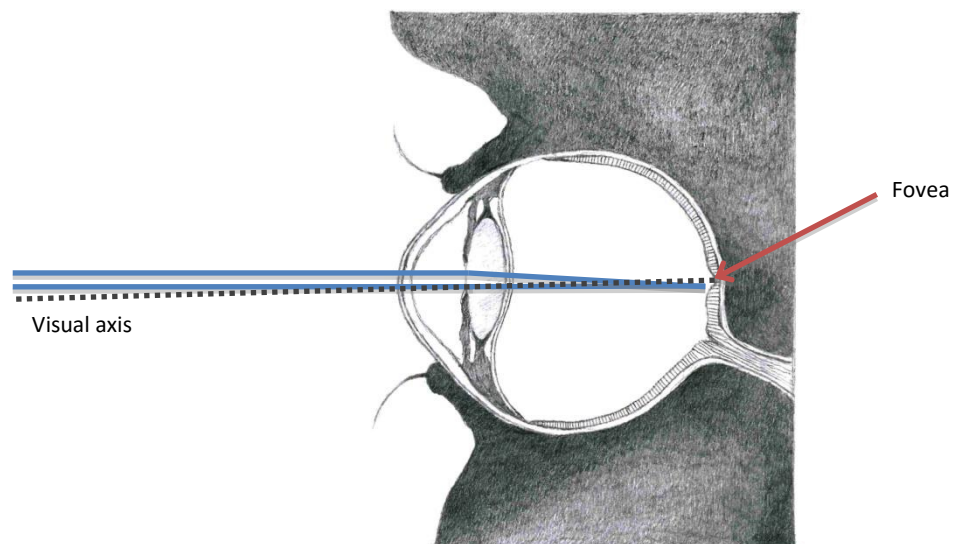


Figure 25: Focused vision, showing misalignment of visual axis (pencil drawing by author)

The optical axis through the lens does not align with the visual axis.⁵⁴ Something that is hard to understand considering the emphasis on this area of our vision.

⁵³ Swanston, *Visual Perception: An Introduction*, 46.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Separating out parts of the eye in terms of importance is an unfortunate terminology within some texts as each part of the eye forms an important role in terms of our overall perception of the world. Central vision and peripheral vision have different characteristics that also relate to different components of our overall perception that is highlighted during motion. Our central vision is colour selective (or sensitive), slow responsive in terms of movement, has high acuity and low contrast sensitivity. Peripheral vision is predominantly colour-blind, is highly responsive to movement, and has low acuity and high contrast sensitivity. Each of these sections of the eye is responsible for different areas of our interaction with the world. Central vision generally registers information related to recognition whilst our peripheral vision registers information related to our spatial and perceptual organisation of the world.

In relation to vision my research is less about the mechanics of the eye than about the process of our interaction with the visible world. Movement through different environments involves complex visual experiences and they are also sensual experiences. These are not like a camera view or a simplified cross section of the eye, such as a set of angles, focal lengths and apertures. My research is less about recognition than about the visible points at the edge of our recognition or the horizon of our perception. Nicholas Mirzoeff suggests in his recent book *How to See the World* that we are continually learning about seeing and the process of interpreting what we see and some of these diagrams may still represent an old world-view of seeing. He argues that how we see is not like a photograph but more fragmented like a sketch (refer figure 31 as an example). Philosopher and natural scientist Rene Descartes first produced the diagram showing how vision was geometrically and mathematically possible in *La Dioptrique* in 1637 (Figure 26).⁵⁵ Mirzoeff proposes that Descartes interpretation of how images were compiled into seeing was through a sense of judgement within the brain. Unfortunately Mirzoeff actually misinterprets Descartes etching by assuming the elderly man in the etching is a judge (homunculus in the brain). When reading Descartes *Fifth Discourse: Of the Images That Form on the Back Of the Eye*⁵⁶ it becomes evident that the diagram is from an experiment where an eye - with the rear part of the retina removed - has been inserted into a chamber with a thin piece of paper or eggshell covering. The translucent paper or eggshell covering allows a person – such as the bearded gentleman – to view what is projected through an eye.⁵⁷

Although Descartes discussion on seeing is somewhat confusing there is a section where he pre-empts current discussion on visual perception:

Now although this picture, in being so transmitted into our head, always retains some resemblance to objects from which it proceeds, nevertheless, as I have already shown, we must not hold that it is by means of this resemblance that the picture causes us to perceive the objects, as if there were yet other eyes in our brain with which we could apprehend it; but rather, that it is the movements of which the picture is composed which, acting immediately on our mind inasmuch as

⁵⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2015), 76.

⁵⁶ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry, and Meteorology* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 91.

⁵⁷ This experiment was first conducted by Christoph Scheiner and documented in his book *Oculus* in 1619.

it is united to our body, are so established by nature as to make it have such perceptions;⁵⁸

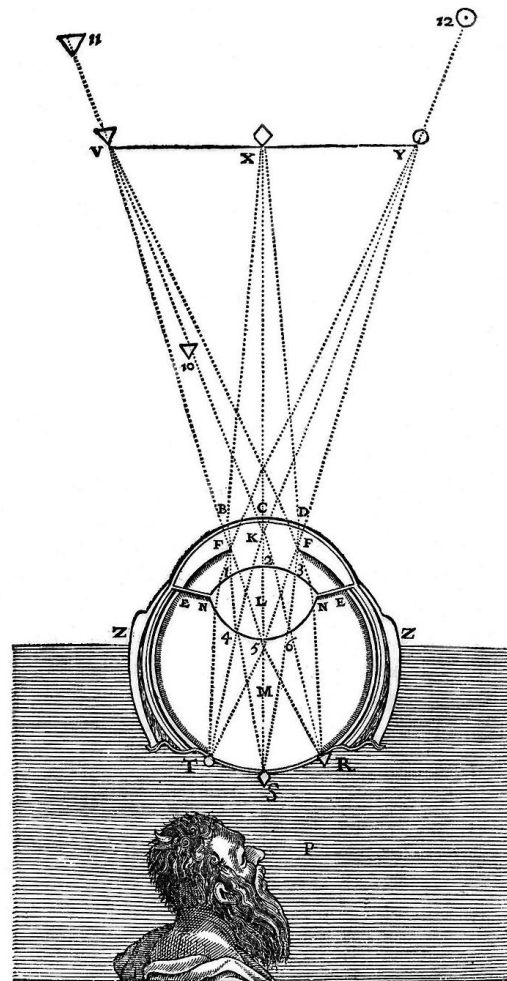


Figure 26: Descartes, 'Vision', from *La Dioptrique*

Mirzoeff's misinterpretation of the etching is not uncommon and misses that Descartes subtly argues against the homunculus belief in *La Dioptrique*. Ironically, Mirzoeff and Descartes are in agreement when it comes to actually seeing - that we see with our brains (mind) not our eyes and it is in relation to our movement through an environment. The movement of light across the retina triggers neural impulses directly in the brain and eyes can be imagined as a direct extension of the brain. Seeing is primarily unconscious and linked to movement, like the Japanese Kanji symbol for seeing mentioned in the introduction, our movement is constant within the visible world. According to Alfred L. Yarbus in *Eye Movements and Vision* movement is a key factor in our ability to see at all, without movement or light flux we can lose the ability to see.⁵⁹ Under natural conditions the image that reaches the retina is never stable, however if an unchanging image is produced artificially through consistent light and a consistent environment, such as a

⁵⁸ Descartes, *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry, and Meteorology*, 101.

⁵⁹ Alva Noe also proposes this notion in his book *Action in Perception*. He calls it *the enactive approach*, where our ability to perceive depends on movement and sensorimotor knowledge (page 2).

ganzfeld effect,⁶⁰ then an empty field is produced and the eye stops seeing.⁶¹ Ganzfeld like environments can produce interesting changes in vision and sometimes hallucinations due to the consistent light environment, something that has been exploited by the artist James Turrell in his series of light installations.⁶²

The effects of sensory deprivation highlight our relationship with the external environment. Our sensory input, which includes vision, is a physical interaction with the environment.⁶³ Alva Noe describes this interaction or perceptual experience "... an activity of exploring the environment drawing on knowledge of sensorimotor dependencies and thought."⁶⁴ Using my own movement through different environments in the *Everyday* project illustrates that highly textural or highly active environments produce the most interesting results and environments with stable and low textural input produce flat and undetailed imagery. In fact if the area of exploration is too stable and has no texture the camera (when in automatic mode) cannot focus.

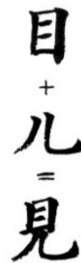


Figure 27: Japanese Kanji symbol mi (ru) (to see), composed of an eye and legs

Visual motion through space

In *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, James J. Gibson proposes an approach to perception recognising that a seeing being or subject is constantly moving through space. Gibson describes our visual motion through space as *Ecological Optics* and he describes *Visual Space Perception* as moving through an ambient visual array. This means that a visible space is made up of unlimited points where light can be reflected from the surfaces or planes (objects) to form a convergence point (figure 28). This convergence point is the view of the environment of surfaces from a point as the eye crosses that point in space (figure 29).⁶⁵

In interpreting Gibson's argument we can therefore imagine space as having an infinite number of points and each point is a unique view of the world. Our movement through these points register as changes in view and therefore this is seeing as motion through a static background environment. Other moving objects are picked up through this static background. The photograph (figure 30) highlights this idea of moving through a visual array. While in a moving car we pass through many points within a visual array but when

⁶⁰ Perceptual deprivation field or a uniform stimulation field.

⁶¹ Yarbush, *Eye Movements and Vision*, 1 & 100.

⁶² Refer to Chapter 4.

⁶³ Wexler, *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change*, 39.

⁶⁴ Noe, *Action in Perception*, 228.

⁶⁵ Edward Reed, *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson*, 149.

moving our head and eyes we can still isolate objects. Therefore the tree stands immobile and in focus while both the foreground and background are in movement relative to this point. A movement parallax such as this example shows that a three dimensional space can be experienced from a single viewing point (note that our eyes use two viewing points).

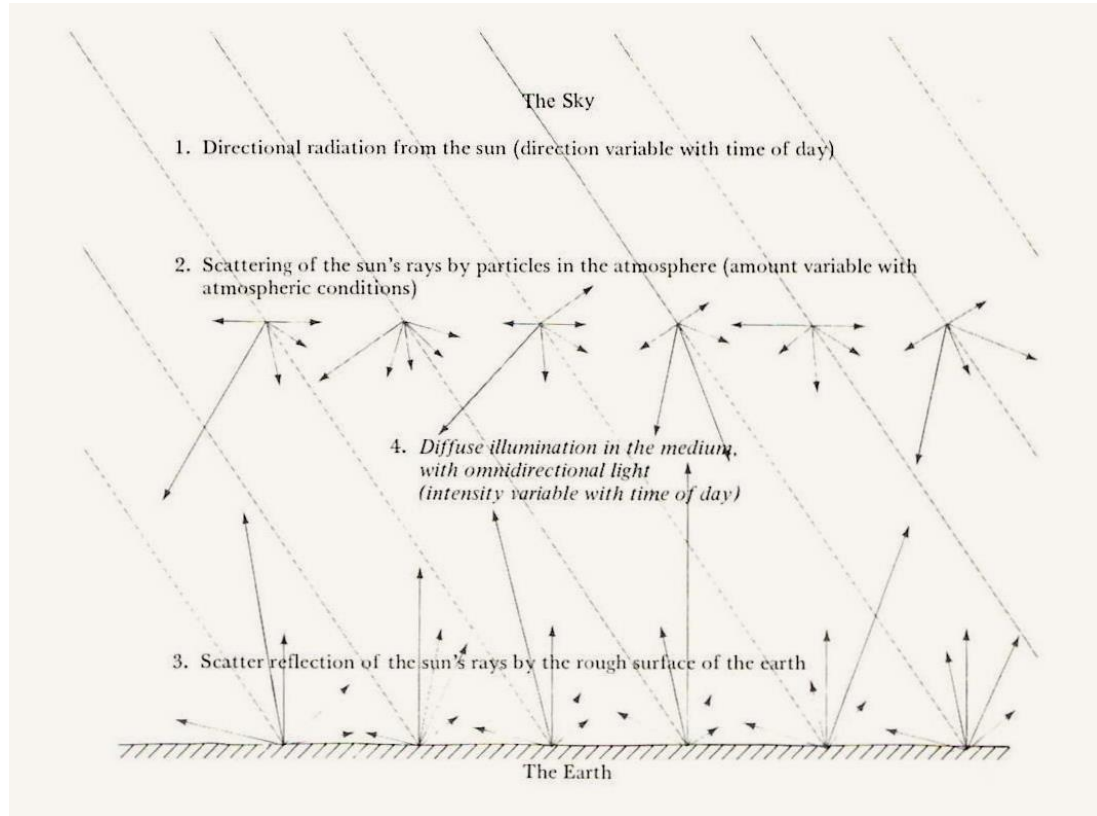


Figure 28: The steady state of reverberating light in an illuminated medium under the sky.

Unlike this image created by panning with the camera, when we pan with our eyes we do not see motion blur exactly like this and generally we don't register motion in the same way. We register a seamless progression through space through saccadic eye movement.⁶⁶ In a saccade our eye effectively jumps from one point in the optic array to another point. This happens so fast that our retina does not register the movement between saccades and therefore movement blur is reduced.⁶⁷

In order to describe this progression through space it can be imagined that each convergence point of an array is like a perfect droplet in space containing a multidirectional view of the surrounding environment of surfaces. If the space is then made up of an infinite number of these droplets (convergent points) then an ambient array of light (space) can also be conceptualised as a liquid of variable density depending on the environment of surfaces (texture). In an environment like this our eye moves

⁶⁶ It is most likely that we do not register this motion blur rather than not see as the photographs images with high motion blur appear to have contained motion and the eyes cannot rest comfortably.

⁶⁷ It is hard to know whether movement blur is reduced or ignored as the images with high levels of movement blur do not allow the eye to rest. If we did not see movement blur then the images would not induce this effect.

through liquid visible space and the static surrounding environment of surfaces and planes in a seamless way.

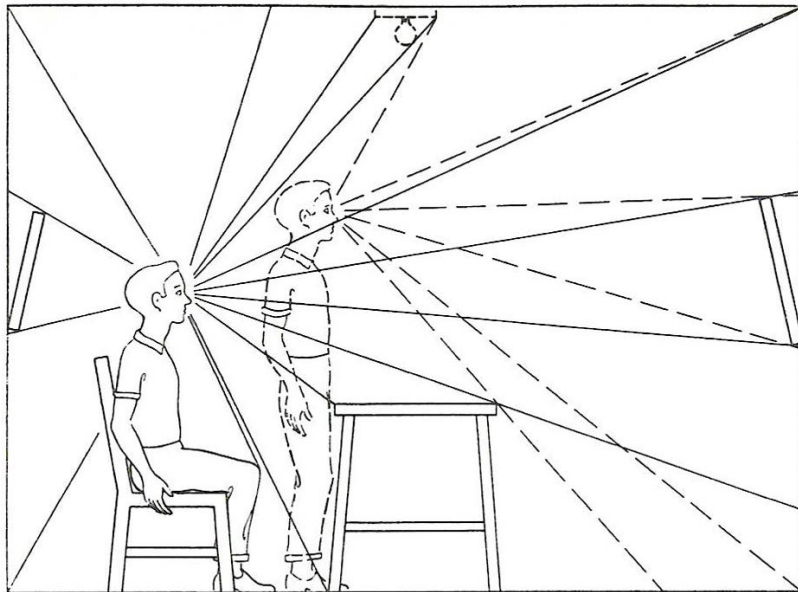


Figure 29: Transformation of the optic array obtained by locomotor movement. Solid lines represent the optic array before the observer stands up, the dashed lines after he has moved. The whole array transforms.⁶⁸

Gibson talks about this as a flow of optical stimulation or *response stimulus*, it can also be described as *light flux*.⁶⁹ The movement of this stimulus across the retina generates our ability to see.⁷⁰

Visibility.

What this means is; light stimulates the eye through the movement of reflected light across the rods (and cones) in the eye. Therefore light, visibility, touch and 'seeing' can be thought as being interlinked. The visible caresses the eye and at the same time the eye caresses the visible.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Edward Reed, *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson*, 81.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁷⁰ In order to visualise this I have constructed an example using a three dimensional modelling program (ArchiCad). Refer to figures 31 - 33.

⁷¹ Adapted from Emmanuel Levinas, "*The visible caresses the eye. One sees and one hears like one touches.*" Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers of Emmanuel Levinas* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 118.



Figure 30: Untitled from *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Panning view of a forest)



Figure 31: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on rag
(Walking in a subway with many people crossing my path following a line of tactile indicators in Tokyo, Japan)

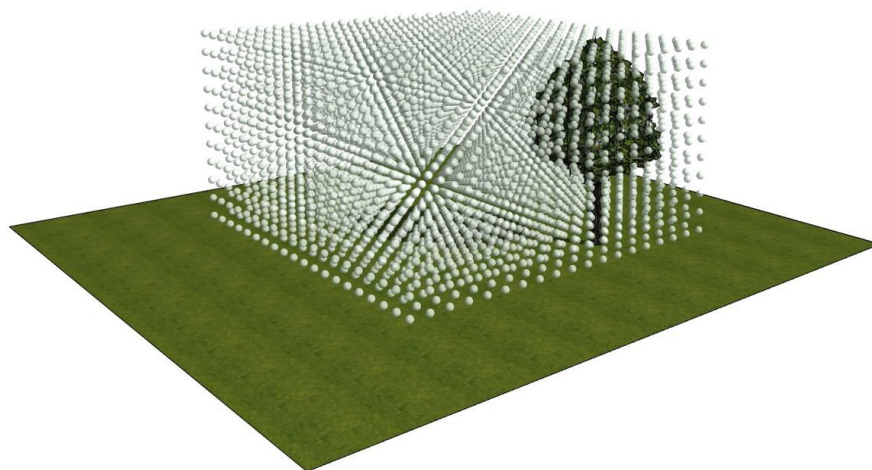


Figure 32: Imaging optical flow stimulus as droplets of visibility (computer generated 3D model by author)

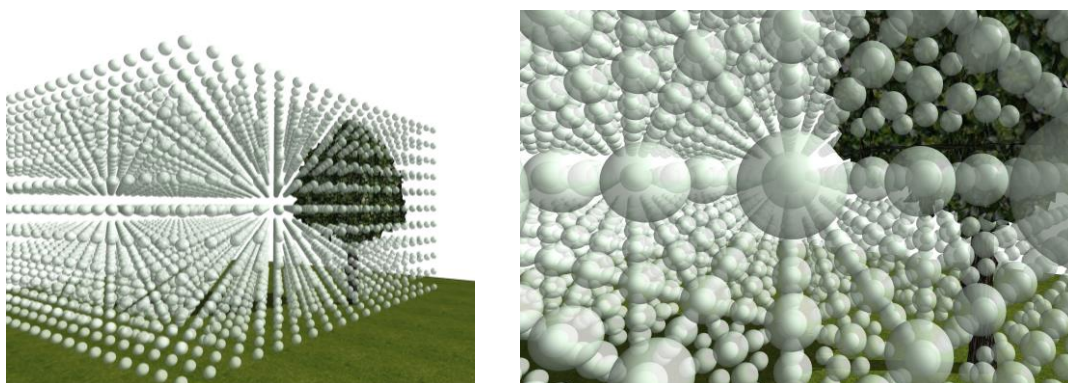


Figure 33: Movement through a visible array from one droplet to another showing crowding in the periphery (computer generated 3D model by author)

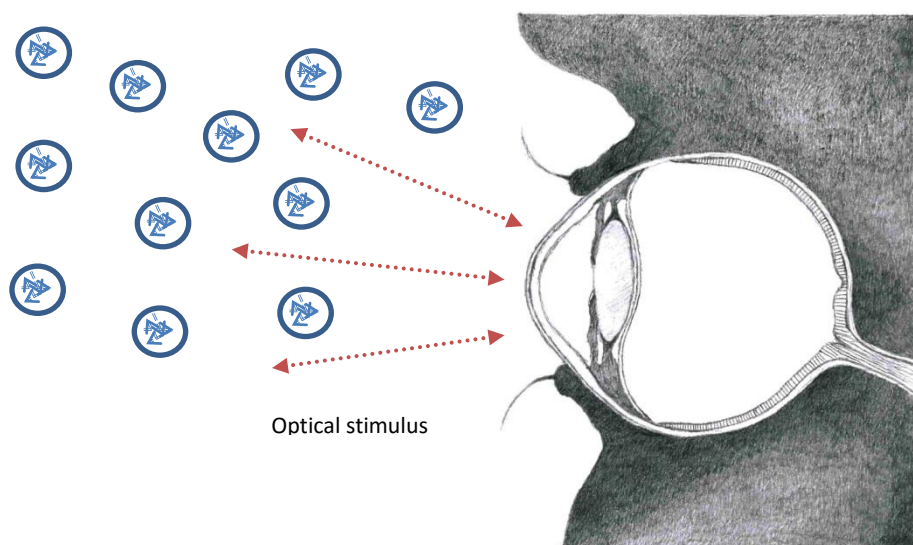


Figure 34: Imaging optical flow stimulus carrying information to the eye (pencil drawing by author)

Image and recognition

Experiments taking photographs while moving can exhibit aspects of liquidity through creating movement blur, giving an image the appearance of moving through water – this can be imagined as capturing a segment of optical flow through time or more than one saccade (refer figure 35). The appearance is like a convergence of droplets into a liquid through movement and visual crowding. Images taken while moving can also exhibit some of the saccadic eye movement discussed depending on the speed of the movement. Therefore the extent of movement determines the boundary between the recognition of an object and within this study the boundary between the recognition of an image (Refer figures 32-34).

The margins of our vision have less acuity but are more sensitive to light and movement. Light running over the peripheral areas of our eyes is like the running of fingers over our skin (or the running of liquid). It stimulates the rods sending electrical impulses to the brain causing our modes of vision to shift from peripheral to central and back again. Darkness turns to light, blurred turns to focus and illegible turns to legible. Renee van de Vall reinforces this in relation to Levinas's writing and a Rembrandt Self-Portrait where the painting appears to engage both of our modes of vision. Van de Vall proposed that the extent of the marginal area of our vision actually leads into non-vision or darkness. The periphery is seen as the boundary between seeing and blindness and therefore the boundary between seeing and touch. She argues that our central vision sets us apart from the world and is the studying and objectifying component of our seeing whereas peripheral vision connects us to the world and subjectively to ourselves:

...one's own body as experienced from the inside, from which vision starts and where it returns, but which can no longer be seen itself, only felt. It is in this dark zone that vision gives over to other senses, especially to the feeling of our body's movements, and to imagination and memory.⁷²

According to Van de Val early painters such as Rembrandt and Da Vinci were able to capture these two modes of vision in one painting. Paintings, such as Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* or Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, have two levels of detail in the application of the paint. There is a level of detail or clarity that appeals to our central vision but the paintings also have a blurred level or layer that is picked up by our peripheral vision. These paintings are surrogates for our own interaction with faces where there is a continual alternation between central and peripheral seeing. My own research illustrates that it is also possible to do this photographically.

Questions on how we see inform this research on peripheral vision and our relationship to the environment and place. The images made as a result question the relationship of our visual perception to a commonly held centrally focused camera view of the world and illustrate that the visual world is more complex, intimate and strange. By using a digital camera I have been able to visualise a closer link to the movement of light across the rods and cones in the retina through the movement of light across an image sensor recording patterns and modes of light. Through the camera these patterns translate into a stream of

⁷² Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg, ed. *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 106.

numerical digital information that can be imagined as similar to the translation of light into electrical impulses to the brain. This effect has some of the characteristics of seeing whilst remaining as a static image and by using a camera in a different way through movement, it is possible to capture my own motion and the movement of light not normally captured through standard analogue still photography. In a similar context to Cathryn Vasseleu's essay on vision and touch, that also references Levinas's writing, the camera moving through space can caress the visible through the movement of light across its sensor and constructs a metaphor for seeing.

Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks.⁷³

This ambiguity of vision is in essence similar to the aims expressed in the Futurist's Photodynamism and extends into my own aim, which is to capture the essence of peripheral vision rather than the scientific reality. In the end my experimentation in this area does end up supporting the current scientific view that vision, perception and movement are interconnected and that action is the key component.

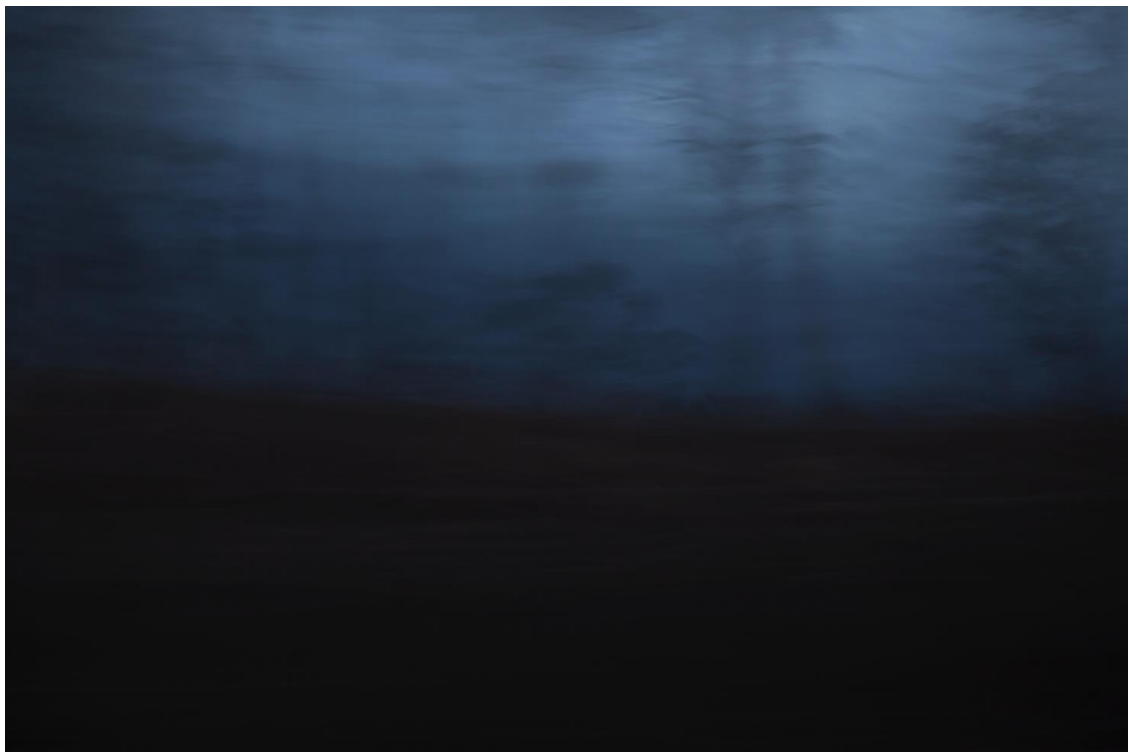


Figure 35: Untitled from *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Panning view of a forest)

見

⁷³ Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1998), 106. Quoting Levinas.

The problem of a photograph (A response to ideas on photographic representation)

How does this research into peripheral vision relate to ideas on photographic representation and can the resulting images become part of the broader context and history? Are these images photographs or something different; like Photodynamism as proposed by Bragaglia? Therefore what are photographs? Are photographs purely replicative or are they noemata or objects with meaning? If they are considered noemata then how much meaning does an individual photograph contain and can you read a photograph out of context? Looking at a photograph initially brings an expectation of legibility more than meaning. It is expected to contain something that is readable about the environment it is taken from and brings with it an expectation of legibility. The visually ambiguous photographs that are present in this research challenge the questions of legibility but the aim is that this questioning will lead into meaning after considered reflection by the viewer.

A photograph contains a limited or restricted amount of information from an available visible light field. It is a single point in space from a certain vantage point at a certain angle with a particular focal distance. Therefore a particular image is a unique representation within an infinite number of potential opportunities, but appears to suggest more information (as if it crosses a number of points) than the flattened view offered as a photograph. Although a photograph is a flat surface with markings it can provide quite detailed information about three-dimensional objects, information about obscured objects, information about hidden objects and planes and sometimes information not related to the picture itself (trigger mental images). Unlike seeing directly within an environment, when looking at a photograph there is no opportunity to look obliquely past one object to see what is behind. When we move our eyes across the image by moving our head to different viewing angles the picture itself does not change.

This means a photographic image has a duality, it is a flat two-dimensional object, but it also has the ability to show a representation of three-dimensions (although somewhat contained within the extent of the image). In the essay, *A Theory of Pictorial Perception*, James J. Gibson proposes that pictures are surrogates for direct perception.⁷⁴ Does Gibson really mean that pictures are surrogates for the appearance of direct perception or does he mean that pictures are visual representations of direct perception? When Gibson talks about direct perception it means a direct perception of the environment without thought. Our direct perception is a thoughtless interaction. More closely our interaction of the environment is direct when it is wordless.

Gibson appears to struggle with the idea of pictures and our relationship to them and in another essay, *Pictures as Substitutes for Visual Realities*, he also outlines why pictures are relatively poor substitutes for visual realities.⁷⁵ The reason for this uncertainty I believe is that our interaction with the visual world is a far more complex and multisensory interaction than our interaction with still pictures (or even motion pictures). Our orientation in the world remains stable despite movement, we can look around, move our head, there is motion parallax, there is binocular parallax, and visual crowding and our

⁷⁴ Edward Reed, *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson*, 241.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

eyes automatically adjust to light and colour conditions during a typical day. We are always moving and the visual world moves in and out of focus as we scan from one point to another in rapid successive saccadic eye movements. A photograph is essentially equivalent to one saccade.

The content of a photograph

Early in the history of photography it was thought that photographs could be an objective account of the world, like a kind of truth (or proof of the visible world) due to its ability to freeze movements and remove the ambiguity of movement and peripheral vision. Therefore photographs are not like reality, they are frozen. Once the picture is taken it is already history or memory. Some may even say that because photographs are in the past they are images of the dead. Is a photograph dead or an avenue for seeing the dead - as Roland Barthes states in *Camera Lucida*: "Photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of Tableau Vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead."⁷⁶ Or as Susan Sontag claims in her book *On Photography*, is a photograph like a trace, similar to a footprint, a stencil of the visible world.⁷⁷ Gibson's term 'surrogate' does help when it is discussed as a language or transmission of ideas to another individual. In this way a surrogate is not a substitute for an object, event or place it is a type of communication.⁷⁸ In this meaning can a photograph move from just appearance to a surrogate of direct perception?

A photograph is a unique and singular isolated moment in time as well as space.

Roland Barthes states that the noeme of a photograph is "*That-has-been*".⁷⁹ I have seen this and taken a photograph. I believe this can be expanded into *That-has-been-there*, adding the context of place.⁸⁰ I have seen this and taken a photograph while I was there. A photograph like a place can have a number of readings depending on the subject and the reader. Therefore a photograph can contain information that can be interpreted on a number of levels. As a still image, this is a static reading and the image does not change but remains available for future readings by potentially different readers.

In Susan Sontag's book *On Photography*, photographic images can be seen as a type of sensational short story similar to a newspaper article: "Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, free standing particles; and history past and present, a set of anecdotes and *faits divers*."⁸¹ But Sontag also states that photographs can be ambiguous and open to interpretation. I believe that this depends on the simplicity of the image at hand and in this Gibson helps again and this is particularly useful for this research project in relation to ambiguous images. He points out the correspondence between the replicative nature of a surrogate and the relative learning required to interpret its content or meaning. Higher level of replication means lower learning and higher abstraction

⁷⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 32.

⁷⁷ Interestingly the idea of a trace of reality is something mentioned in Bragaglia's manifesto.

⁷⁸ Klaus Landwehr, ed. *Ecological Perception Research, Visual Communication, and Aesthetics* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 1990), 7.

⁷⁹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 77.

⁸⁰ Barthes talks around the idea of there but does not go so far as to add it to his phrase.

⁸¹ Susan Sontag, *Susan Sontag on Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 23.

means higher levels of learning and interpretation is required. John Berger illustrates this in his essay *The Ambiguity of the Photograph* where he shows a diagram that indicates, in a simple way, the idea of a photograph as a singularity but with the potential for interpretation (figure 36).⁸²



Figure 36: A photograph as a similarity during progress through space

The circle is a photograph and is representative of a snapshot or frozen moment in our movement through the visible world. It is a simplified diagrammatic symbol of the taking of a photograph but does embody the idea of a still moment in time. *It is interesting that Berger has chosen to use a circle as representative of the photograph. This is like the aperture of the camera and not the resulting printed image.* Berger takes this symbol further when discussing the content of the photograph and the relationship to the reader (or viewer). A photograph of limited content and limited relationship would be a small circle (figure 37).⁸³ This could also be representative of an image that is purely replicative as indicated by Gibson's discussion.



Figure 37: Photograph of limited content or purely replicative

If I were to imagine a photograph with limited content it could be something like the image of the house (figure 39). Without context I can only discuss what it appears to be representative of as there are no real clues to location or meaning. Therefore it is a house that appears to be on a hill with a grouping of trees around. It seems to be either abandoned or not well looked after judging by the condition of the building and the surrounding landscape. However if the content is high and the relationship to the reader is close, such as they are either the photographer, have a relationship to the photographer or the content of the photograph. Then the circle would be much larger (figure 38).

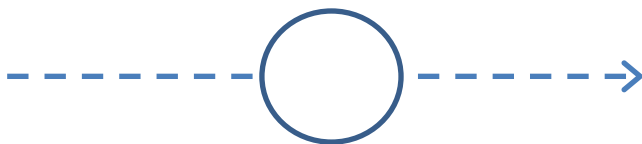


Figure 38: Photograph of containing high content or potential for higher reading

⁸² Geoff Dyer, ed. *John Berger - Understanding a Photograph* (London: Penguin Group, 2013), 91.

⁸³ Ibid.



Figure 39: House in Western Sydney, photograph by author

The interpretation in this case is not just the internal content of the photograph in a direct way, or what it contains; it is also the ability for the photograph to lead the reader to other thoughts. These might be memories around the content of the photograph directly, or alternatively, memories or thoughts that are unrelated but triggered through the content. Berger's final image (figure 40) is representative of a photograph that has a high level of content. Through the use of arrows contained within the boundaries of the circle, the photograph can be thought of as an object with potential meanings contained within its appearance.

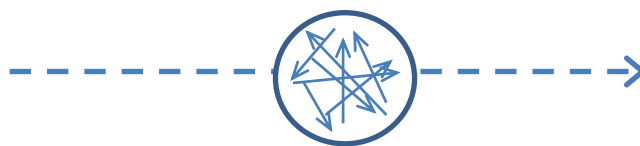


Figure 40: Photograph containing potential content or meaning as represented by the arrows contained within the circle

Ambiguity and metaphor in a photograph

I believe that if the content has a certain ambiguity and can create links to other thoughts or ideas then the boundaries of the photograph would be less hard edged. How, for example, would you read the following photograph by Paul Graham (figure 41)? As a direct reading and without the title you could say that the coherence is low and therefore the potential links or meaning is low (it is just an image of a storm cloud). But in reality

the content may be too subtle or hard to read without a clue of some kind (a code). It is both replicative and abstract, therefore initially our reading is low (figure 42).



Figure 41: *Ceasefire, Newry, April 1994*, Paul Graham



Figure 42: The appearance of limited content within a photograph

The clue (or code) is in the title of the photograph – *Ceasefire, Newry, April 1994*. When this is known the coherence changes and the meaning expands. The choice of this particular photograph as an example is deliberate as the content is not what is contained within its appearance. It is not in the photograph. You could say that the photograph is peripheral to the content (or event) and the content and photograph are linked by the code (the title). It is a metaphor for the Ceasefire (a cessation of shooting).⁸⁴ If I symbolically try to represent this like Berger it would look like the following diagram (figure 43).

⁸⁴ Douglas Harper, "Online Etymology Dictionary," http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=cease-fire&allowed_in_frame=0 (cease-fire, n.) accessed 14/10/2015.

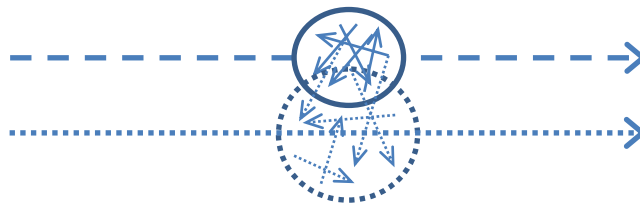


Figure 43: Diagram of a photograph that is metaphorical

Therefore in this representation a photograph with a small level of coherence is expanded to a high level of coherence through a code (learning). There is no expansion without learning unless the reader has an intimate relationship with the photograph (is familiar with the photographic series).

Berger's use of these diagrams is partly in response to Susan Sontag who says that the singularity of a photograph is like an anecdote out of context – a free floating unrelated particle.⁸⁵ You could argue (as Sontag does later) that a still photograph has the potential to contain and link to more than its appearance. This is also the crux of Berger's argument.

Photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow... Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one can keep and look at again.⁸⁶

This research explores the area of ambiguity within the photograph and the potential strength of the linkages beyond the image itself. It also investigates the potential of a photograph without a code or legibility. Can these ambiguous photographs still contain meaning and linkages that are more than its appearance and how might it do this? There are a number of symbolic diagrams that might represent these types of photographs.



Figure 44: Diagrammatic representation of an ambiguous photograph

The previous diagram (figure 44) is representative of a photograph that has content that is ambiguous. When I say ambiguous in this case I mean it also has a level of detail or abstraction that leads to multiple meanings amongst readers and requires interpretation. It has a base level of cognition represented by the smaller circle and hard line arrows but it can expand to a larger level of cognition due to its embedded content or level of abstraction. It has the potential to be unlocked by its embedded symbolic meaning. The ability to do this is dependant on the level of legibility. This type of photograph therefore has a targeted audience, a selected reader who brings with them an embedded code to

⁸⁵ Sontag, *Susan Sontag on Photography*, 23.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

unlock the extended meaning.⁸⁷ A reader without this knowledge can only unlock the extended meaning through research and background reading. Graham's photographs fit into this category and can be described as metaphorical - what you see is not what it means.

In Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Architecture of Time* and *Pinetrees* series the photographs are less metaphorical but still challenge our sense of legibility. His images are in the mode of documentary style but question the definition of what may be described as 'straight' photography. His photographs, although unembellished, lead us to question the boundary between objective and subjective reality⁸⁸ (this is something inherent in my own work). Sugimoto considers that the camera is not an inert instrument, but a way of unearthing the depths of our memories:

What I have attempted to show via the medium of photography is an ancient level of human memory. Whether individual memory or cultural memory or the collective memory of humanity as a whole, the idea is to go back in time to remember where we came from, how we came to be. As for myself, my own memories seem to plumb some interminable, dim and hazy primordial chaos from which issues a thin threadlike strand.⁸⁹

In the series *The Architecture of Time* we are presented with shadowy recollections of world famous architectural icons. There is no detail in these images and they are blurred almost beyond recognition. In the black and white format these images could be representative of a peripheral view of these buildings. Are these the memories we have after visiting these buildings or do they represent the simple idea behind the architectural work? Is it the essence, like a quick sketch on the back of the napkin in a cafe?

Speaking in a documentary by Jean-Pierre Krief, Sugimoto said of his series that his intention was to use the soft – focus principle to emphasise each architect's essential design idea.⁹⁰

The images produced – in some way like Graham's – are for connoisseurs with background knowledge. The background knowledge in this case is significant architecture of the world. The Church of light by the architect Tadao Ando is an example from this series (figure 45) and is easily identifiable from the blurred image by anyone who has studied contemporary architecture, particularly someone who has studied contemporary Japanese architecture. It may not be easily identifiable to someone not familiar with contemporary architecture or architecture in general, although it is readily identifiable as a church. It is not metaphorical but does require learning to unlock the code to what it may be specifically about and does not greatly differ to a clear focused image from the same viewpoint. I would argue that to be focused or unfocused makes no difference to the reading of the image, which is an important consideration when producing my own images that exhibit a similar or greater level of blurring.

⁸⁷ This does not prevent readers from finding other meanings within the imagery.

⁸⁸ Shimizu Minoru, "Sugimoto - Guardian of the Void," *ARTiT* 2005, 60,61.

⁸⁹ Eckhard Schneider, ed. *Hiroshi Sugimoto - Architecture of Time* (New York: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2002), 79.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50. Essay by Thomas Kellein



Figure 45: *Church of light* – Tadao Ando, Hiroshi Sugimoto - *Architecture of Time*, 1997



Figure 46: *World Trade Centre* – Minoru Yamazaki, Hiroshi Sugimoto - *Architecture of Time*, 1997

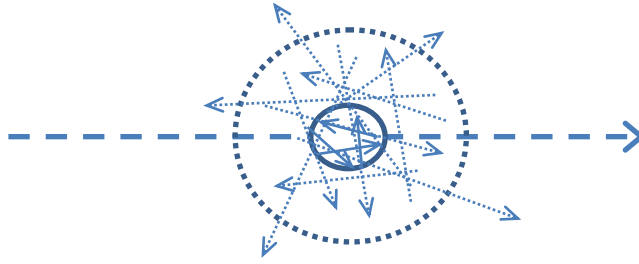


Figure 47: Diagrammatic representation of the World Trade Centre Image.

In this case there is initial recognition that is represented by the solid outline of the inner circle. The extent of expansion to the outer circle and beyond is primarily dependant on the relationship to the events of 9-11 and not the actual building.

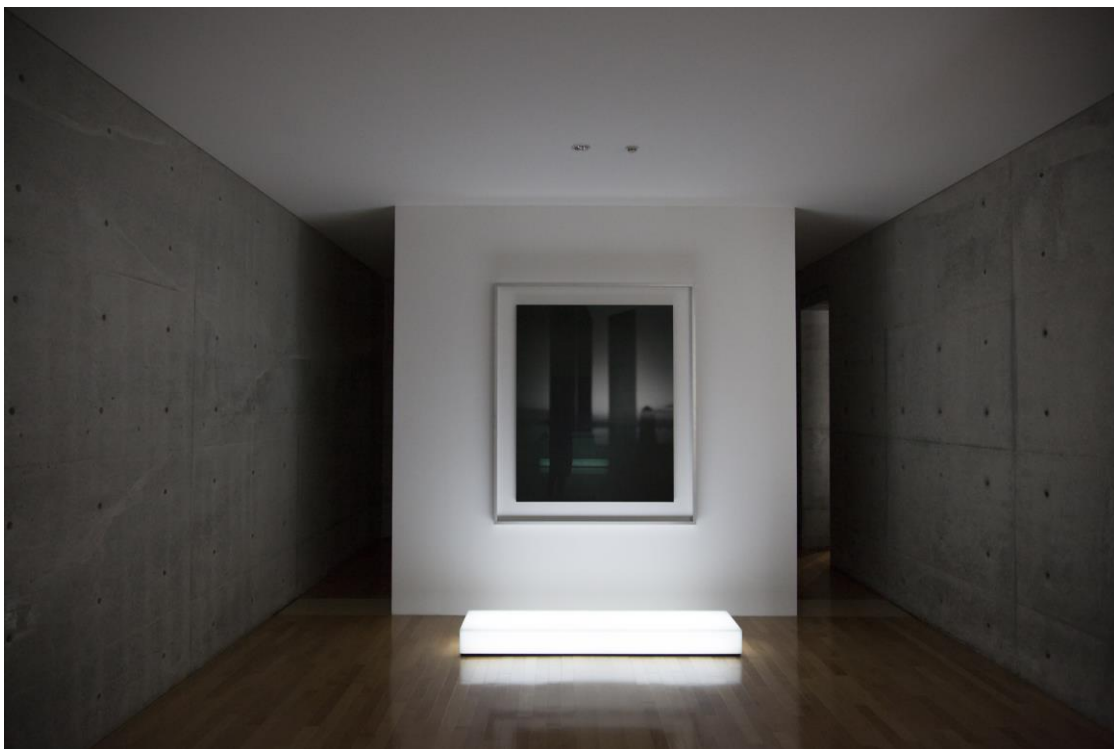


Figure 48: *World Trade Centre*, Hiroshi Sugimoto - *Architecture of Time*, in an installation on Naoshima in Japan (photograph by author).

This installation at Naoshima (Benesse House park building) in Japan has low light using the floor mounted light boxes and the image of the World Trade Centre is surrounded by other Sugimoto images including the *Church of Light* (this is at the opposite end of the room), *Pinetrees* is on one side and the *Crystal Pagoda* on the other. Sometimes the side images change and I have also seen *St Benedict Chapel* and *Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut*. The whole installation is called *The Coffin of Light* and I am reminded Echhard Schneider's comment in his essay on the *Architecture of Time* series where he calls these images, "silent beautiful sarcophagi, they aspire to contemplative withdrawal into a deep, abstract darkness that is ringed with a garland of light..."⁹¹

⁹¹ Ibid., 51.

Hiroshi Sugimoto's photograph of the World Trade Centre is also from this series (figure 46). When this was first produced in 1997 it may have been more obscure as an image in terms of recognition, however the code of this image has changed over time through dramatic circumstances. Sugimoto's image of the Twin Towers has developed beyond this original concept into both an icon of terrorism and a memorial of loss. It is the emotional content that provides the code to greater cognition. In this case I would argue that the linkages and meaning for some readers would extend well beyond the content of the photograph and the diagram could be adjusted (figure 47).

In this instance the initial reading of Sugimoto's photograph is very small, it is a blurred image of what might be two buildings but could equally be of two pillars or two timber posts. It is on the horizon of perception. There is a high level of abstraction that could lead to low cognition but it has enough legibility to initiate a response to a greater level in most readers. The level of recognition has increased dramatically since the original production of the photograph. This is primarily due to the broad contextual coverage of the fate of the World Trade Centre in the media, now imbedded within the consciousness of a large number of viewers. Although the title obviously gives away the code, it is unnecessary to read the title. In the photograph the blurry appearance now enhances the significance of the image of the World Trade Centre. The darkness and mysteriousness around the perception of this image seems to mirror our recollection or memory of the towers. They have become fuzzy and distant like the memory of a lost relative, you try hard to recall them clearly but the memory is hard to grab hold of, it slips in and out of recognition. At the site of the Towers it may be hard to clearly remember what was originally in that location.

Memory, nature, culture and tradition play a big part in Sugimoto's work. The series *Pinetrees* draws further than the architecture series into his own tradition and cultural background. These are again in the shadowy blurry style but this time referencing the traditional Japanese ink painting – in particular Hasegawa Tohaku (16th Century Japanese artist).⁹²

In the context of my own research the problem of a photograph and its cognition is inherent to the paradoxical nature of trying to represent (or visualise) an alternative mode of photographic representation (peripheral vision). Will the resulting photographs have the ability to register levels of cognitive responses beyond the containment of the photograph itself? I would argue that most photographs have the ability to contain extended levels of cognition but it is the ability to access the code that determines the level of expansion available. In terms of the photographs taken during the research, the level of legibility is another component in the extent of cognition of the photograph. In this research the significance of the border or boundary between legibility and illegibility – the horizon of perception – is very important. To what level does a photograph have to retain some level of legibility to be both a legitimate surrogate and provide meaning.

⁹² Ibid., 11.

Reading a photograph

A photograph inherently simplifies our complex interaction with the world through perception. This simplification helps with legibility but can reduce the level of cognitive response and the narrative range, reducing the level of learning required. On the other hand the instantaneous nature of a photograph can make the meaning ambiguous, especially when it is out of context or has no code. In most cases (excluding the Sugimoto example) the higher the level of complexity contained within the photograph the higher the potential connections and meanings available. The discontinuities of photographs make them more like memories than historical documents and although they are in the past they can interact in the present without needing to be in any identifiable chronological order.

The sight of any single thing or event entrains the sight of other things and events. To recognise an appearance requires the memory of other appearances. And these memories, often projected as expectations, continue to qualify the seen, long after the stage of primary recognition.⁹³

As this quote by Berger implies, what we know or remember influences what we see. Our knowledge and background can modify the visible to a certain extent. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a photograph tends to bring with it a level of potential legibility. A series of photographs also implies connections in some way either as a narrative or a typology (a collection) as the Sugimoto series highlights. Therefore it can be argued that a collection of photographs can either be a museum of replicative artefacts or a type of narrative. As a narrative in images the content is ambiguous unless you have a relationship to the images, therefore photographs can be thought of as more conducive as a collection. I believe this is where the expectation of legibility gets in the way of seeing or rather feeling. In reality I believe that a narrative in photographs gives the sense or feeling of a story not a definitive account. In this research the aim is to use photographs in a peripheral way to produce a narrative on space and place. The aim is to produce a series of photographs that give sense or feeling of a place more like a metaphor and not a replication of that place. Our instinct to make narratives out of photographs, whether these are our own or as found objects, is a natural and instinctive way of interpreting the nature of the material at hand. As the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas outlines in his essay, *Language and Proximity*:

Narrative – and, consequently, verbal, linguistic – intentionality is essential to thought, inasmuch as thought is thematisation and identification. For the identification of the given in experience is pure claim. It is not a vision or a sublimated experience. It does not consist in perceiving *this* and *that*, but in “understanding,” in “alleging” ... this *as* that and that *as* that, in “understanding” this *as* that, without in any way prejudging the contents.⁹⁴

Therefore my narratives in photographs are about trying to understand.

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⁹³ Dyer, *John Berger - Understanding a Photograph*, 84.

⁹⁴ Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers of Emmanuel Levinas*, 110.

Peripheral vision and a photograph

Photographs are synchronic and can be either a closed system or make connections to a more open system depending on complexity or content. A photograph can also be a memento-mori of our interaction with the environment. It is also generally a frozen celebration of the fovea, our central focused vision. The question for this research is how might a photograph that is peripheral be represented? One option (as noted in the first section of this chapter) is that it represents something else – it is a metaphor. In the *Ceasefire* series by Paul Graham the content is peripheral to the photograph (figure 49).



Figure 49: *Ceasefire, Ballymurphy, Belfast, April 1994*, Paul Graham

In this chapter I have investigated a number of approaches in relation to peripheral vision. Some of these are directly related to a physical aspect of peripheral vision and may be represented by the following diagram (figure 50). In this diagram an image with seemingly low content or legibility can expand to higher content, legibility and meaning. Each photograph or series of photographs, however, has unique characteristics that are cognisable in different ways in relation to peripheral vision. The aim has been to work with levels of recognition and find the balance between legibility and illegibility to slowly reveal to the reader over time.

Components of peripheral image making

Peripheral vision contains a number of characteristics that can be explored either in a combined way or as separate investigations. In the *Everyday* the main characteristic is movement but other characteristics include adaption to low light, low colour saturation (or no colour) and a shift towards the blue spectrum of light.

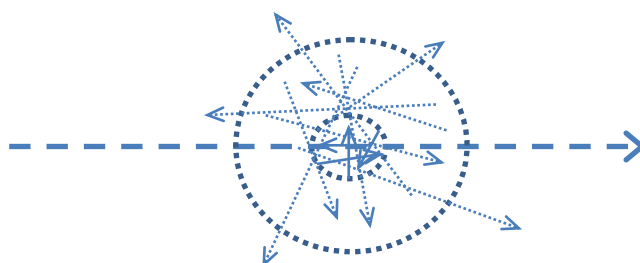


Figure 50: Diagrammatic representation of an ambiguous photograph

As an example I try to imagine what vision might be like if I had no cone vision or central focused vision. This is actually the definition of being colourblind – congenital achromatopsia.⁹⁵ Many of the photographs in the research projects discussed in following chapters can be viewed from this perspective. What might the photographs from this world look like? Our vision can be divided into levels related to sensitivity of light. Cone vision, which is predominantly our central fovea vision, has the least sensitivity to light and is our daytime seeing mode. This is called photopic vision and is full colour and the least sensitive to movement. In the evening or early morning when light is subdued but it is neither day or night our eyes are at a mid level of adaption where a reasonable level of peripheral rods are engaged and some cone vision is still present. This is called mesopic vision and engages our central periphery that contains a small amount of cones and therefore some colour vision still remains but it may be noticeable that blues are becoming more intense. There is also a greater perception of movement. The final level of light adaption is called scotopic vision. This is our night vision and is purely rod based with no cone vision. Scotopic vision is colourblind and is the most sensitive to both light and movement and it has the lowest level of acuity.⁹⁶

If I diagrammatically show an image from this perspective it may be represented with a slight modification (figure 51). To people with normal vision under standard light conditions in a gallery space the photograph may initially appear to have little content and little meaning represented by the solid circle (they may not see anything at all).

⁹⁵ Oliver Sacks investigated a colour-blind community (achromatopsics) on the on the island of Pingelap at the Caroline archipelago in the Pacific Ocean in his book *The Island of the Colour-blind*. In these communities a large percentage of the population has no central or coloured vision (cone vision) and have to rely entirely on peripheral vision (or scotopic rod vision). Daylight to these people is unbearable and also cuts off the information for seeing, making them practically blind. In low light they are able to negotiate space at a higher level than a normally sighted person due to their scotopic vision. Oliver Sacks, *The Island of the Colour-Blind* (Sydney: Picador Pan Macmillan Australia, 1996), 78.

⁹⁶ Stuart Anstis, "The Purkinje Rod-Cone Shift as a Function of Luminance and Retinal Eccentricity," *Vision Research* 42(2002).

Under different light conditions allowing mesopic and scotopic adaption (or through the eyes of the colour blind) greater detail and content is revealed represented by the larger dashed circle and arrows. This diagram is very similar to the diagram that is ambiguous in content.

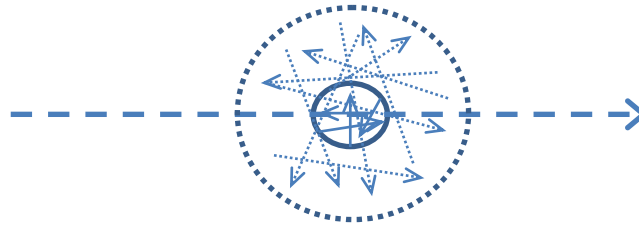


Figure 51: Diagrammatic representation of a mesopic or scotopic photograph

Engaging our low light vision (mesopic and scotopic vision) can require waiting up to ten minutes to shift between our modes of vision. The shift between day and night vision is called the Purkinje rod-cone shift, which is a modal change that changes our colour perception from reds to blues.⁹⁷ Therefore if I have two identical photographs, one with a red cast and one with a blue cast, then the image with a red cast will be more visible in standard lighting conditions and the image with a blue cast will be more visible under low lighting conditions. If the images are at the right level of luminance it is possible to see a shift in visibility from one image to the other.

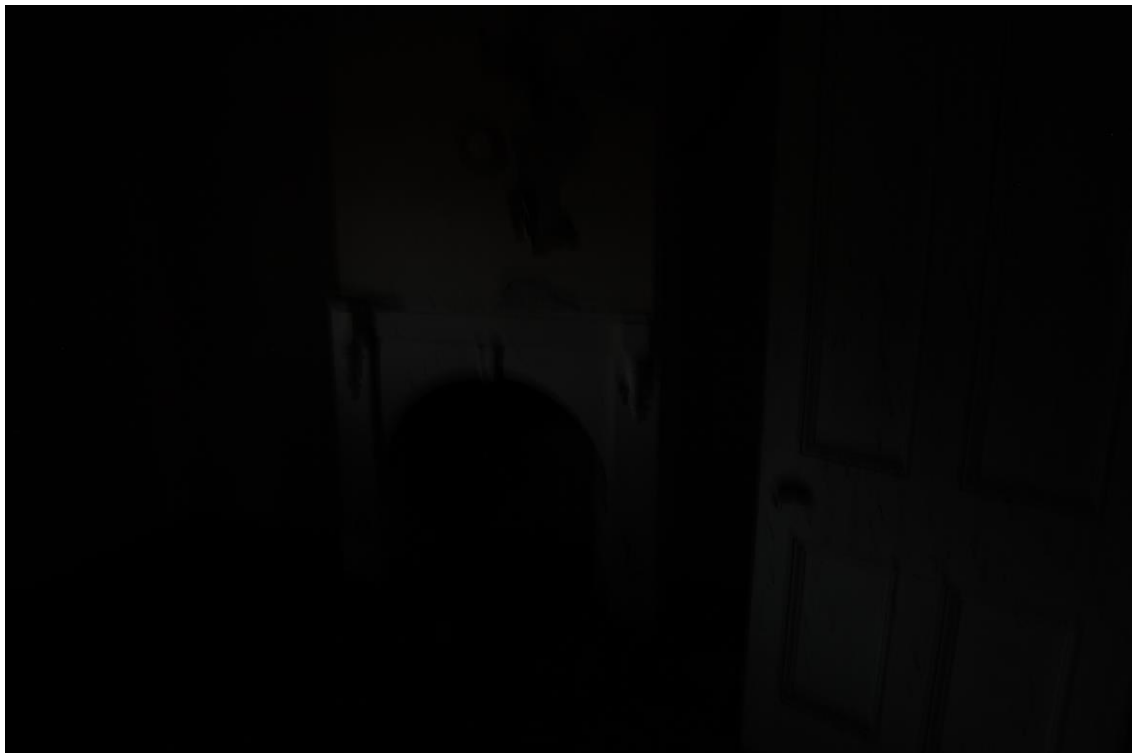


Figure 52: Untitled from *Uninhabited* series, pigment print on rag. Scotopic image – what is this image of? This image has a very low level of movement blur.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 2485.

Low light and a reduction in colour leads to an increased sensitivity to movement. Images of low light and colour that also contain aspects of movement simulating peripheral vision in a more accurate way but depending on the extent of movement these images have a tendency to disintegrate into complete illegibility. Therefore the inclusion of movement has a limit in terms of legibility and lower light levels, generally meaning reduced movement time (figure 52). At a base level the photographs that involve movement bridge a number of instantaneous moments in space and time. This means that the images theoretically have more levels of perceptual representation; even though the end result remains as a still photograph that is bounded by its edges it, has the potential to contain a higher level of sensory data. This is a paradox within this research practice and the question is - what type of sensory content does it contain?

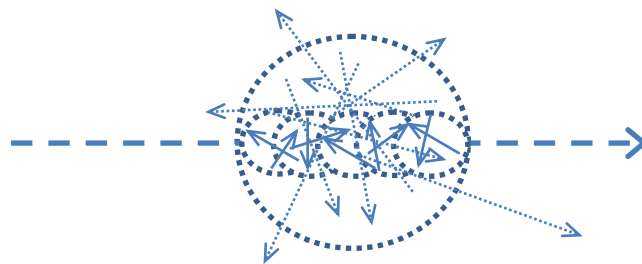


Figure 53: Diagrammatic representation of a photograph taken with a moving camera

Photographs capturing movement can be taken and shown under both standard and low lighting conditions. Figure 53 represents a photograph that contains camera movement (a walking photograph) that crosses a number of points in space through a visual light field. The diagram is visually representative of the saccadic movement of the eye, which also contains the visual information contained in points in space. In theory it should contain more visual information than a photograph from a single point, but as mentioned earlier when analysing the *Everyday* series, the overlapping of visual information across many points obscures some of the information contained within adjacent points. At what level does this occur and is there a point at which movement is apparent but the level of abstraction is not? Optical content and texture (light flux) is a key element in these types of photographs and is a measure of our eyes sensitivity to movement and detail. In reality a peripheral image is most like the final diagram (figure 54) a stretched shape rather than a circle contains our initial reading that may or may not be expanded into a more clearly defined shape containing meaning depending on its legibility and lighting levels.

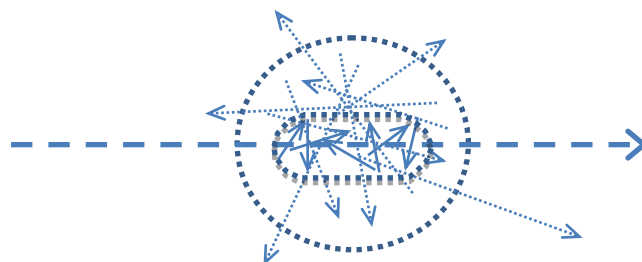


Figure 54: Diagrammatic representation of a peripheral photograph



Figure 55: Untitled from *Everyday* series, pigment print on paper.
(Walking in a subway tunnel with many people crossing my path following a line of tactile indicators in Tokyo, Japan)

Through the five photographic projects presented in this research the levels of abstraction vary according to the movement, light levels and the intent of the representation. As a representation of peripheral experience this leads to questions about ways of imparting this information to another person. In what type of environment is it possible to interact with the work in a way that builds up the tension between direct and indirect perception and move the work from appearance towards surrogates of experience through peripheral vision?

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Conclusion

Photographs are objects with meaning and can be a selective view of an environment that can provide a narrative on place particularly when assembled as a series of images. There is minimal difference in the potential of the photograph to act as a surrogate for this journey, either through a 'straight' clearly focused image that is representative of central focused vision or an alternative and potentially unfocused and dark image that is representative of peripheral vision. The difference is the level of legibility and distancing verses the higher potential for mystery and greater intimacy. As an example a clear focused black and white photograph is not a representation of what we see because clear focused vision cone vision is in full colour. When we see in black and white we are using our rod or scotopic vision that has low acuity. Sugimoto's *Architecture of Time* series is very close to what we may see in our peripheral vision but lacks movement. Titarenko's and Bragaglia's images include movement but only from a third person perspective and what Bragaglia had missed in his Manifesto on Photodynamism is that one of the main characteristics of still photography is the ability to capture light, time and meaning.

In this chapter I have argued that a peripheral image and a metaphorical image is almost identical in its basic structure. The cognitive act of interpreting the image (what is it of?) increases narrative function through increased attempts at understanding its meaning (trying to understand). The balance of the type of vision and the level of legibility verses abstraction and narrative potential is the key practical outcome of the photographic work in this research. This structure therefore shows peripheral image making as a logical expansion to photographic practice within the historical context of photography.

The next chapter delves into the notion of a narrative within this peripheral structure. As a narrative on place a series can be seen as representative of my own subjective interaction with a particular environment as a journey. How well this type of image making can translate as a narrative is the subject of an experiment within a small community and forms a rationale for the projects discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

From the Everyday we move into the other projects and each is a travel story, stories about places that we interact in.



Chapter Two:

Seeing, Place and Narrative

Introduction

Peripheral vision cannot be understood as just a process of vision but as a symbiotic relationship with an environment. How we relate to space or the environment is a product of our evolution at a base level and the product of experiences from childhood to adulthood. An environment modifies us but the layering works both ways and influences our connection to this environment. This ecological relationship or perception can be expressed in this way:

Perceptual systems thus become sensitive to information for persisting features of the environment such as objects and surfaces, rather than fleeting retinal images of an internal kaleidoscope of sensations, because it is those features to which effective actions are directed.⁹⁸

Place is more than the product of our evolution but a continuing relationship where the objects that make up the environment comprise of layers of meaning that can transcend general interaction. Each object then becomes a container of meaning about past events. Photography can be considered as an aide for recording our relationship with the general environment as a memento mori of where we have been. As a surrogate for this experience it captures only a small portion of this complex sensory interaction. This chapter examines the potential for extending this interaction, from the surface view of capturing place into a complex interpretation of space and place, where the work becomes a perceptual narrative that is a visual surrogate for this interaction. The coexistence of the visible and invisible or appearance and meaning permeate through a particular place.

The *Hall* experiment documented in this chapter is my attempt to capture the invisible daily aspects of a small community using peripheral imagery. The aim is to show that this type of imagery can lead to identification, meaning and narrative amongst a select group of participants in this community. Houses are generally where we have our daily peripheral interaction with the environment and these become specific containers of meaning and memory not easily seen from the perspective of an outsider (tourist or viewer). Kadoya Art House, within the Naoshima Art Site,⁹⁹ forms a contextual reference point to this experiment as a metaphor for place and community interaction within a small town (Honmura) that is a similar size to Hall.¹⁰⁰

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⁹⁸ William H. Warren, "Direct Perception: The View from Here," *Philosophical Topics* 33, no. 1, Spring (2005): 342.

⁹⁹ Naoshima is a small island in the Seto Sea approximately an hour by train from Okayama. The actual Art Site includes three main islands, Naoshima, Teshima and Inujima, each of which have their own unique characteristics. During the Setouchi Art Triennial the Art Site expands to include up to 12 islands and two ports.

¹⁰⁰ Kadoya Art House which includes the *Sea of Time* by Tatsuo Miyajima was the first Art House constructed at Naoshima.

Place and Narrative (*The Hall experiment*)

During this research I had the opportunity to explore the notion of different invisible worlds within a particular place and ascertain whether peripherally constructed images could provide links and narratives that could be decoded. In this experiment peripheral photographs would be used as fragmentary representations of a place. I had been asked to participate in a small community engagement for the Unmade Edges project celebrating the Centenary of Canberra, an organised project to provide an artistic engagement with the small communities and villages found in and around Canberra.¹⁰¹ Each artist was paired with a selected community member who had an initial idea of what they would like to see emerge.

Originally my task was to photograph 100 houses with people arranged neatly in front. Within the Hall Township there are approximately 100 houses. However I wanted to reveal more than just the facades of houses (and people), I wanted to investigate the private world beyond the front door. Each house is like a separate universe with different aspects or contents within the home (and the surrounding garden) contributing to a sense of place. They are like the thought experiment from Quantum Physics *The Many Worlds Theory*¹⁰² and I could imagine each universe moving in each house side-by-side, some fast and some slow. Every so often the threads of existence would merge joining the universes together for a short duration before splitting and resuming their parallel journey. Therefore I did not photograph the houses as requested but tried to photograph each invisible universe or at least capture elements of it. The aim was to capture and see what each person knew about each other within a small group (members of the local book club). Six people from Hall were generous enough to open their homes and allow a glimpse into the invisible aspects of their universes and later allow this to be shared with their neighbours and the public. They allowed a glimpse into secret knowledge as Michel de Certeau explains in *The practice of Everyday life*: "This is the sort of knowledge that remains silent. Only hints of what is known but unrevealed are passed on "just between you and me"."¹⁰³

As the artist and documenter of this small exercise I was surprised by some of the artifacts shared and how significant a role they play in each home. The houses are living museums of stories that are embedded within the objects it contains. Some of these objects mark the death of a friend, the birthdays of children, the passage of children growing up. They allow connections to the greater history of Hall and contain connections between generations. I was able to freely roam through their homes and gardens and try to capture aspects of their attachment to home through blurred and sometimes indistinct imagery. *I'm not sure they expected this.*

¹⁰¹ Many of the villages and communities predate the city of Canberra.

¹⁰² In the Many-Worlds Theory whenever there is a choice in life such as a fork in a path the universe splits into another copy representing each option (a parallel universe). This is a generalisation of the Many-Worlds Interpretation (MWI) of Quantum Mechanics. Lev Vaidman, "Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics," Mataphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/qm-manyworlds/> accessed 25.02.2017.

¹⁰³ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.



Figure 56: Untitled image from *Invisible aspects of Hall*, series of photographs within digital photo frame (The 100 year old mint bush)



Figure 57: Untitled image from *Invisible aspects of Hall*, series of photographs within digital photo frame (Hall mirror)

At one home an older couple had arranged themselves comfortably on the back porch ready for a photograph of themselves on this newly cleaned area. I was able to do this but then walked around their home trying to find other elements that they might consider represents their attachment to the place they live. Subsequently the couple was able to point out a mint bush in a pot that had been handed down through the generations (figure 56). It was believed that this mint could have been over one hundred years old. Near the mint was an old cooking pot, which belonged to the owner's mother; this again was nearly one hundred years old. In other spaces I made my own judgment at what might be a precious object based on its position within the house. Mantelpieces and hall wall cabinets feature prominently in this respect (figure 57).

In another house an old wisteria vine was fondly selected as one of the objects of attachment (figure 58). The vine predates the house and is so intertwined with the fence it is hard to guess where one starts and one finishes. Images of these appear quite sinister and as I look at one image then the other the vine seems to be moving, making its slow progress along the line of their yard. I can imagine that if you stood still for long enough the branches would slowly make their way around you and draw you into the fence and its vines. In the living room a chair is left reserved for the father of the house (figure 59). It is well worn and I was informed that each night he could be found sound asleep and snoring before nine o'clock.

After compiling images from each house, the task was to find a format that suited engagement with the participants. Printed photographs didn't seem to be enough. Instead of selecting only one or two images from each house at Hall I compiled a number of selected images that I thought best represented each household onto a digital photo frame. The transitory nature of the photographs in this format suited the context of capturing formless meaning and memory. Most of the images are ambiguous, although I did have a number of clear focused images as well. The house of the old couple I chose to make predominantly black and white images as it appeared to best suit the character of both their house and the occupants.

The resulting photographs are complicated images and I realise that these were hard to recognise, even for the resident whose home it was. They were images of the everyday aspects and pieces that we may take for granted and walk past without a second look. But each has meaning and has a story. At this point I wondered how well they knew each other's stories and universes. To help I went to three selected residents and asked them to look through the images on the photo frame and set the speed of transition between each image. One couple could not recognise many of their images and we had to go through them one by one. Most were generally happy with the images and speed (although I took extra images for one of the residents).



Figure 58: Untitled image from *Invisible aspects of Hall*, series of photographs within digital photo frame (Wisteria vine)



Figure 59: Untitled image from *Invisible aspects of Hall*, series of photographs within digital photo frame (The sleeping chair)

How well do you really know your neighbour?

This was the primary question in this experiment in addition to how well do you know yourself and what do you take for granted? Which ultimately leads to what has become invisible over time within the home environment. Therefore when the photo frames were given back to the participants they were deliberately given to the wrong people. This seems kind of cruel in a way but in the end the event became a kind of selective treasure hunt. Each participant was given a photo frame and a bar of chocolate which was not their own and the task was to find their own images and share the chocolate. They were not allowed to talk about the images they had in their possession but had to find another participant and visit them and discuss the images. The event provided the participants an opportunity to share stories about objects and spaces within their homes.

I had chosen a random grouping from the book club from a list given to me by my contact (one of the participants). To make it interesting I had chosen one home from outside the book club. In the end I was informed that the event became a chocolate and champagne visit to each person's house – each gathering increasing in size. They had found the participant from outside the book club as one book club member lived nearby.



Figure 60: The series of photo frames from each house assembled for a community discussion after the event of finding the images and sharing stories.

Some of the images from this experiment are incorporated into the *Everyday* series.

A large wisteria vine is wrapped through and around our rear fence. We have heard that it predates our house.
Every day my husband falls asleep in that chair, usually before nine in the evening.
This is a silver cutlery set from my grandmother.
My daughter collects Eiffel Towers.
I converted the old cubby house into a studio for my wife.
My brother gave me that duck.
We participate in medieval sword fighting.
Actually I have never been to Japan.
The coat of arms by the front door is the most distinctive element in our house.
This part of the verandah is where we entertain all our guests.
We found this old stained glass window and incorporated it into the house.
The camellia bush used to be right next to the back door and we had to move it when we extended.
My friend brought that back from Japan.
My friend bought that pig, let me tell you the story...
I planted that rose bush when my friend died in Iraq.
A friend from book club gave me a sprig from their camellia bush when my father died.
My husband likes to smoke a pipe.
We prefer to use an old typewriter.
The kids chose the colour scheme for their rooms.
This mint bush has been handed down from generation to generation in our family - I think it is over one hundred years old.
My mother used to cook on an open fireplace using this pot.
The rear verandah is our favourite place to sit.
I had moved those chairs around the side so you would not see them.
The clock was from my grandmother
My son would like to do archery.
That is my parents dining setting.
My children like to play in a tree house we made out the back.
This plant produces flowers on the twin's birthday.
So that's where the water pistol went.
We have a prayer bead hidden within the wall sculpture. It came from Indonesia.
It's an old sewing machine from my husband's grandmother.

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Interacting with the visible (Place and Kadoya Art House)

Our interaction with the visible (space and place) can take two forms. One form is an unconscious interaction through movement and peripheral vision. This may be thought of as our base animal embodied interaction or as Gibson would argue our direct ecological perception of the environment. A direct perception is a naïve interaction without language and it is a direct flow through space. It is an unconscious perceptual awareness of objects within the environmental world and from this point of view the world is not made up of appearances or fabrications of the mind it is a static environment in which we interact. The other form of interaction is a conscious interaction with the visible. In this interaction how we place our bodies in space is related to our cultural context, the type of space we are interacting with, our emotional situation and our concept of time. This interaction is language biased and is an indirect perception of the environment. It is a perception mediated by what we know of the space or place we are interacting with. Like the discussion in the previous chapter on artists such as Rembrandt capturing two modes of vision in one painting our interaction with the environment constantly moves between direct and indirect perceptual interaction or between unconscious and conscious interaction. A direct interaction would involve the movement through points of visibility as mentioned in the previous chapter and an indirect interaction, as highlighted by the *Hall* experiment, is more subjective and complex.

The meaningful environment¹⁰⁴

An environment is not an empty layout devoid of meaningful things. At a base level it contains shapes, surfaces, substances, objects, shelters, events, and other animals that are meaningful even in the smallest of ways. In James J. Gibson's book *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* he calls the base transference of information from the environment to the animal (human) affordances. In this theory affordances are what the environment offers, provides or furnishes to the animal by way of its direct interaction. For example, a surface may afford support or non-support or potential locomotion depending on its properties and the type of animal. Therefore affordances are unique to a particular animal.¹⁰⁵ As the *Hall Experiment* highlights in the previous chapter, affordances (or meaning) in an environment can also be unique to individuals.

The complexity of how humans relate to space or the environment develops through our interaction growing up within a particular place. This perception of the environment is a symbiotic relationship and the layering works both ways and is important in our connection to place. My research investigations in peripheral vision are also investigations of environments through my own movement. My movement through a space or a place helps me to understand the nature of its content in terms of what it affords me. In this there is a tension between the perception of objects that help with my navigation and perception of deeper meaning contained in these objects.

¹⁰⁴ Title taken from Gibson's chapter number three of the same name. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 127.

Yi-Fu Tuan discusses the nature of “space” and what is “place” in terms of experience and from different perspectives (or various cultures). His analysis is particularly helpful in establishing certain differences in relating space and time between western and eastern cultures. In summary he argues that place is not just the physical attribute of space and the objects within, but over time it is the layering of events and people that give these physical spaces and objects meaning. Simon Schama elaborates on this idea in *Landscape and Memory*. He argues that this meaning is located in place beyond the conventional level of sight and within the layers of myth and memory. It is something we overlook “...a way of looking; of rediscovering what we already have, but which somehow eludes our recognition and appreciation.”¹⁰⁶

Schama delves into great detail on the mythical, historical and metaphorical aspects of various significant landscapes (places). He believes that landscape (or place) is a layering process of events and memory that modifies the natural landscape form and the inhabitants themselves. Schama points out that the word landscape is actually derived from the meaning “of a land transformed by its inhabitants”.¹⁰⁷ When we talk about landscape it represents the degree in which we have modified the land over time. Yi Fu Tuan and Schama agree that experience is one of the defining characteristics of place and landscape. Cultural aspects lace these areas with ghostly traces of events that are picked up in our consciousness and reinterpreted in our buildings, writing and artworks. This forms the background to our indirect perception of an environment. Every place affords stories about its content like a travel story, as de Certeau points out:

In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor” – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.¹⁰⁸

Environments contain a web of spatial trajectories containing affordances to the traveller.

Art house project

Naoshima is an example of a place with a large invisible cultural framework. During the Hall experiment I travelled to Japan to participate in the Setouchi Triennial and obtain background material in relation to the role of art and place. Naoshima is an island in the Seto Sea in Japan, which has an art site covering half the island. The Benesse Corporation established the art site and the Benesse House Contemporary Art museum opened in 1992.¹⁰⁹ Kadoya Art House with *Tatsuo Miyajima*, *Sea of Time* within was completed 1998 and was the first Art House completed on Naoshima.¹¹⁰ I chose Kadoya as a way of decoding place and time and as a contextual reference to the *Hall experiment*. It is a physical representation of Ai Wei Wei’s quote: “What you see is not what you see, and

¹⁰⁶ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 14.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Kumiko Ehara Yuji Akimoto, ed. *Remain in Naoshima* (Okayama: Benesse Corporation Corporate Communications Office, 2000), 16-17.

¹¹⁰ Phillip Jodidio, *Tadao Ando at Naoshima - Art Architecture Nature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2009), 154.

what you see is not what it means.”¹¹¹ What do you see when you are not from the same cultural background as either the artist or the place of installation? We bring aspects of ourselves when we look at artwork so I may look at the work and be thinking about something else entirely to the intention of the artist. I have read that this is called fragmented projection, where we project fragments of ourselves onto the work or object.¹¹² We interact with new places in a fragmentary way taking in an edited highlights version of a place that has taken many years to establish. Some fragments may be hard to understand to an outsider as de Certeau points out in the chapter *Waking in the City*:

Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolisations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body. ¹¹³

There is Contemporary art behind the charred exterior walls¹¹⁴ of this house I have to remind myself. At Kadoya I am a tourist in the true sense of the word and initially can only take it on face value. The art installation (which includes digital counters) within the restored traditional Japanese house initially shocks me because it is unexpected. Tradition and LED counters appear to be poles apart.

Getting to Naoshima is a journey in itself depending on your starting point. On this trip it took a whole day to travel from Tokyo to this small island in the Seto Sea on three trains, a ferry and then a small bus. Once at the town of Honmura on Naoshima the main mode of transport is walking. All this has the progressive effect of slowing you down. Kadoya art house blends into the fabric of Honmura and there is no hint of the work contained within. I walk slowly through the external courtyard and have to remove my shoes before entering the main part of the house. In the largest room is a shallow black lined pond. Once seated I look across the water and see reflected in its surface the interior of the house and people seated opposite, an upside down world. Under the water numbers tick over at various speeds 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 in three colours red, yellow and green. Some tick over very fast, some slow, some don't work.

9 and 8 and 7 and 6 and 5 and 4 and 3 and 2 and 1 and blank, then again.

What do they represent and why are they at different speeds? What of the stopped counters?

¹¹¹ "Interpretation Text on Aei Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds," Tate Modern, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series-ai-weiwei/interpretation-text.

¹¹² Actually 'projective identification': This notion was first proposed by Melanie Klein in relation to children in terms of projecting emotions into objects. Juhani Pallasmaa takes this further by suggesting that in human interaction we project fragments of ourselves on to other people (we see aspects of ourselves in other people). Here I am suggesting that we project fragments of ourselves on to the artwork, therefore we see aspects of ourselves in the work (memory of an event or object). Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 66.

¹¹³ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

¹¹⁴ The charring of timber boards is particular to houses around the Seto Sea and the burning process of the external face of the timber protects it against rot and insect attack. As the boards age the uncharred timber begins to show through and the passage of time is evident as they age. Boards can last up to 80 years using this process. Yuji Akimoto, *Remain in Naoshima*, 44.



Figure 61: Kadoya Art house site prior to renovation



Figure 62: Entry to the Kadoya Art House (photograph by author)

Kadoya Art House

The Art House Project represents a unique aspect of the role of contemporary art on the island of Naoshima. The project is an initiative of restoring old houses and inserting contemporary art into the fabric of the house. This first Art House, Kadoya - which includes three works by Tatsuo Miyajima; *Sea of Time*, *Naoshima's Counter Window* and *Changing Landscape* - is a 200 year old house in the central part of Honmura (Figures 61 & 62). Miyajima is a Japanese artist known for his use of digital counters – LED (light emitting diodes) digital numbers controlled by integrated circuits.¹¹⁵ Before the restoration the existing structure dated back to 1781 when a fire devastated a large portion of the houses in the town.¹¹⁶ It occupies a central position along a main road. Kadoya has 200 years or more of memories and dreams and the artist Tatsuo Miyajima uses the *Sea of Time* installation to represent Honmura's personal histories. Number display counters run continuously under a shallow pool of water at rates determined by the local residents.¹¹⁷ Within the pool are 125 coloured digital counters in red, green and yellow that can count down from 9 to 1 at varying speeds.¹¹⁸ While sitting on the edge you can imagine that it is like a scale model of the residents going about their business unseen like the hidden mechanics of a clock.

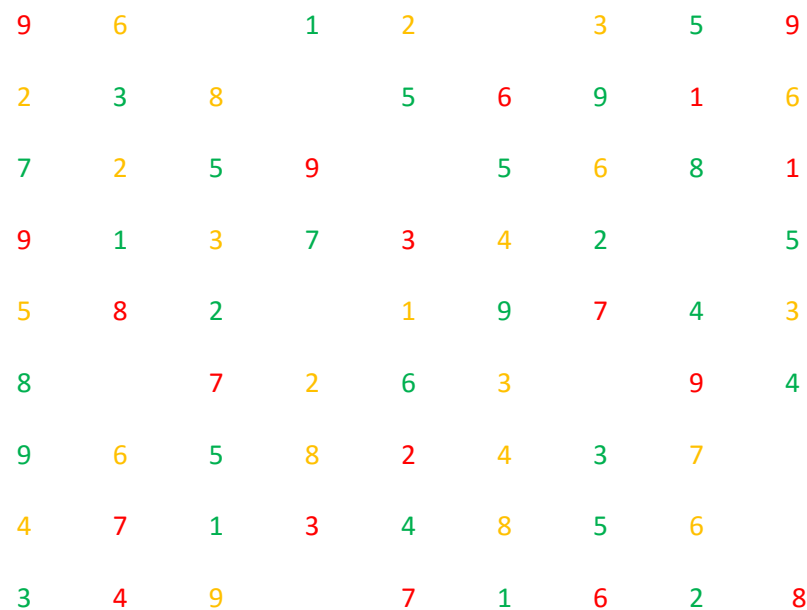


Figure 63: Diagrammatic representation of the *Sea of Time* digital counters

Watching the counters tick over with this in mind allows you to imagine different types of people, some in a hurry, some taking their time, and in cases where the counters have stopped – possibly dead. It also allows you to imagine the lives that have passed through

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁷ This is something I incorporated for some of the residents in the Hall experiment.

¹¹⁸ Yuji Akimoto, *Remain in Naoshima*.

this house both as residents and tourists. As if in sympathy with the pool a large counter window in the next room counts off the seconds in real time using a liquid crystal display.



Figure 64: *Sea of Time* installation within the Kadoya Art house by Tatsuo Miyajima

The window is translucent and the numbers count in clear allowing glimpses to the outside world as if it is moving at a different pace to the inside. On the outside timber slats cover the glass and with the dark internal space the numbers become invisible to the people walking by, effectively dividing inside from outside into a one way perspective. Other art houses reference different aspects of daily Japanese life: one is like a temple; another is a shrine; yet another is an old dentistry. Do these restorations reinforce the illusion and memories of stability gained during childhood and general life in Honmura?

Time and Culture

Kadoya as a timepiece references three types of time: the seemingly timeless example of the old house; the personal time of individual residents in the water; and the impartial counter of the progress of a clock in the counter window showing the world going by. The use of time links the contrasting elements of the traditional construction of the house and the contemporary use of modern technology in the counters and the liquid crystal display. For example, it can allow the viewer to make links between the coloured counters in the pool with the coloured carp (fish) that can be found in most Japanese garden ponds. In addition a link can be formed between the counter window and the sliding screens that can be found in traditional houses such as this one. Miyajima links this aspect further in

his third work *Changing Landscape* where he has overlayed the shapes of digital numbers in a red background over a traditionally painted scroll. Digital numbers are clear and you can make out the original painting underneath – a work by Toyohiko Okamoto completed in the late Edo Period (1850s). The old and new work together in this overlay, linking time periods together as if they stand side by side in a temporal arrangement.¹¹⁹ In this way Kadoya Art House is a metaphor for place. It symbolically represents both the town of Honmura, the people within it and its history.



Figure 65: *Naoshima's Counter Window* installation within the Kadoya Art house by Tatsuo Miyajima

In Western culture the measurement of time causes us to think of it like a line. This abstract and universal concept began in Greenwich in 1884 and it is an impersonal representation. However, as Miyajima points out in an interview with James Lingwood, time does not exist outside the interaction of people. Therefore time is personal and flexibly controlled by the observer. He also sees time as a cycle, life and death, rebirth, life

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 42.

and death, and so on.¹²⁰ The idea of time being cyclic and temporal is a central aspect of Japanese culture and Buddhism.¹²¹

Counters count down from 9 – 1 then start again. Other counters count down side by side at different speeds - different times at the same time. There is also a pause, so it is 9 – 1, pause then start again. Zero is a western idea (abstract concept) there is no physical zero. Miyajima mentions that in Buddhist philosophy there is the word Ku, which means emptiness – a real physical emptiness. Therefore the pause is emptiness or death and when the counting starts again it is rebirth.

空

ku (empty or vacant)¹²²

Ku has a physical meaning that can be explained through another Japanese word, Ma. Ma literally means place, space and void all rolled together in one meaning. As an ideogram in Kanji the symbol shows the sun under the symbol of a gate – rays of sun shining through the gate. Symbolically this is very similar to hearing, which is simply an ear under a gate. This emphasises the passive nature of space as something that is acted upon or like hearing it receives interaction. Personal interaction changes space to place.

間

ma (space)

If the digital counters are seen as representative of people and their time span then the pause takes on a significant personal meaning as death. Death is not visible so the moment of darkness is a metaphor. The blank also represents the potential or possibility of a new beginning – nothing and something. In the installation at Kadoya each counter has a link to the community through people being allowed to set the speeds of the counting. This adds a further link to the work as a metaphor for place. Ku has a number of characters in Kanji with other meanings or connections – therefore is the use of Ku as

¹²⁰ James Lingwood, "Keep Changing. Connect with Everything. Continue Forever: Tatsuo Miyajima Interview with James Lingwood," http://www.tatsuomiyajima.com/en/text/interview1_2.html; *ibid*.

¹²¹ This is embodied in the Isa Shrine (the most important Shinto Shrine in Japan). Japanese observe historical time (irreversible time like as we know it), which is marked by the emperors and counting the years since their enthronement. But they also observe natural time as a cyclic eternal rhythm. Renewal in a cyclic way, one thing after another can be expressed simply in space by placing things side by side. The Isa Shrine comprises two Shrines side by side and is renewed every 20 years in an 8-year process resembling an agricultural year extended over this period. The renewal of the Isa Shrines has been occurring for a period of nearly 1500 years. Originally the process was every 19 years (possibly matching a lunar cycle) until 1609, which it changed to 20-year cycle. Renewal is an important symbolic aspect of Buddhism and pairs of objects side by side like the Isa Shrine are a spatial representation of this process. Gunter Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando - Studies in Architectural Anthropology in Japan* (London: Academy Group, 1993), 10.

¹²² Naoe Naganuma, *Kanji Book*, vol. 1, The Naganuma Japanese Language Series (Tokyo: Japan Publications Trading Co, 1951), 76.

an explanation deliberate? The most obvious sign is that Ku is also the number 9, it has different Kanji symbol but same Romanji characters. Other meanings for Ku are 'Shrine', 'Artisan' and the particularly relevant 'long lasting' (of time).

The image shows the Kanji character for 'Ku' (九), which is the number 9. It is a simple, bold character with a curved top and a vertical stroke.

ku (nine - 9)¹²³

Miyajima has three concepts central to his interpretation of time in his artwork that is particularly relevant when I am aiming to interpret place:

1. Keep changing
Everything changes. Nothing is permanently fixed. Whatever it is, however long it takes, everything changes.
2. Continue forever
Everything keeps going on forever. Everything moves on a never-ending line as it changes itself.
3. Connect with everything
*Everything is interconnected with each other. Nothing is independent.*¹²⁴

Together this is expressed as 'Inochi' or as Miyajima translates 'The life'. The kanji symbol for 'Inochi' looks surprisingly like a family within a house or a face under a roof.

Art house?

The image shows the Kanji character for 'Inochi' (命), which means 'life'. It is a complex character with a roof-like top and a face-like bottom.

inochi (life)¹²⁵

Using these concepts Kadoya and the *Sea of Time* can be interpreted in the following way:

1. Digital counters count down or up (Keep changing) and these are also at different speeds.

The constant changing brings about a certain level of unpredictability similar to real life.

Reading interviews with Miyajima it becomes evident that he has an interest with mathematics and quantum physics. He discusses some of the theories of Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg. Links to quantum physics are quite strong and the *Sea of Time* could almost be a metaphor for Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle*. This principle came about when scientists were trying experiments with sub-atomic particles. It was found that the scientists would actually influence the particles by just participating in the

¹²³ Ibid., 28.

¹²⁴ Tatsuo Miyajima, "Tatsuo Miyajima," <http://www.tatsuomiyajima.com/en/index.html>. Concept of Works

¹²⁵ Naoe Naganuma, *Kanji Book*, vol. 2, The Naganuma Japanese Language Series (Tokyo: Japan Publications Trading Co, 1951), 60.

experiment and therefore each would obtain a different result. A theoretical branch of physics formed called Quantum Physics to try and explain or predict the movement of particles as well as other theories.¹²⁶ The *Sea of Time* most closely resembles another thought experiment called *The Many-Worlds Theory*. In this theory whenever there is a choice in life such as a fork in a path the universe splits into another copy representing each option. One universe is where a person went left and the other universe is where the same person went right.¹²⁷ Time in this theory turns into branches of a tree instead of a straight line.

2. The counters continue counting over and over (Continue forever).

Although not mentioned by Miyajima, the use of the numbers 1 – 9 or 9 – 1 links with the mathematical progression of the 9 times table. Here I believe the link is through the reference of Ku where it is the number 9:

Ascending			Descending		Staying the same
	$1 \times 9 =$	09		$0 + 9 = 9$	
	$2 \times 9 =$	18		$1 + 8 = 9$	
↓	$3 \times 9 =$	27	↓	$2 + 7 = 9$	↓
	$4 \times 9 =$	36		$3 + 6 = 9$	
	$5 \times 9 =$	45		$4 + 5 = 9$	
	$6 \times 9 =$	54		$5 + 4 = 9$	
	$7 \times 9 =$	63		$6 + 3 = 9$	
	$8 \times 9 =$	72		$7 + 2 = 9$	
	$9 \times 9 =$	81		$8 + 1 = 9$	
	$10 \times 9 =$	90		$9 + 0 = 9$	

The progression continues at the next level:

Ascending			Descending		Staying the same
	$11 \times 9 =$	99		$9 + 9 = 18$	
	$12 \times 9 =$	108		$10 + 8 = 18$	$1 + 0 + 8 = 9$
↓	$13 \times 9 =$	117	↓	$11 + 7 = 18$	$1 + 1 + 7 = 9$
	$14 \times 9 =$	126		$12 + 6 = 18$	$1 + 2 + 6 = 9$
	$15 \times 9 =$	135		$13 + 5 = 18$	$1 + 3 + 5 = 9$
	$16 \times 9 =$	144		$14 + 4 = 18$	$1 + 4 + 4 = 9$
	$17 \times 9 =$	153		$15 + 3 = 18$	$1 + 5 + 3 = 9$
	$18 \times 9 =$	162		$16 + 2 = 18$	$1 + 6 + 2 = 9$
	$19 \times 9 =$	171		$17 + 1 = 18$	$1 + 7 + 1 = 9$
	$20 \times 9 =$	180		$18 + 0 = 18$	$1 + 8 + 0 = 9$

And so on... infinitely...

3. The 8 shape of a digital counter has a unity that contains all the numbers from 1 – 9 (connect with everything).¹²⁸ Allowing other people to set the speeds of the counters has extended this to become a real metaphor for an individual life. Connecting with one person ultimately leads to connecting with family members, then friends and so on to the whole community. This is where I believe the exercise in Hall of giving the digital photo frames to the wrong people was successful. It allowed interaction between people.

¹²⁶ Josh Clarke, "Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle," howstuffworks,

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/science-questions/quantum-suicide2.htm>.

¹²⁷ "The Many-Worlds Theory," howstuffworks, <http://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/science-questions/quantum-suicide3.htm>.

¹²⁸ Transcript, "Interview of Tatsuo Miyajima for Transcript ", *Transcript* 3, no. 1 (2003), http://www.tatsuomiyajima.com/en/text/trans_1.html.

A web of connections

At Naoshima the setting of the counters became an event in itself. 125 residents were invited to a counter-setting event and were asked to set the counter to a speed, which felt most comfortable to them. The location of their counter was then marked on a special print of the pond that was then stamped and signed by Miyajima and given to the resident as a certificate of their participation. Each participating resident can then visit the installation and know the location of their counter and neighbours' counters. Later, after the completion of Kadoya and the *Sea of Time*, an event was held at the Benesse House Art museum where residents were asked to walk around one of the gallery spaces counting to the speed of their digital counter. The event was recorded and each resident received a copy of the print.



Figure 66: Residents in the Countdown Performance

A visitor to the island will see Kadoya as a traditional Japanese house with a hidden element. Like Schrödinger's cat in a box we may not know what is inside or its state. For the residents of Honmura the house connects to them over a number of levels. It has been renewed to follow a new cycle while retaining some the traditional elements and history of its previous life. The contemporary installation by Miyajima does not compete with the historical tradition but seeks to add another layer of interpretation. Unlike some of the other contemporary site specific work that have been installed on Naoshima this installation has made an attempt to connect with the local residents. Therefore when walking past Kadoya they can imagine their counter ticking over the numbers 9 – 1 and then again within the fabric of the house, as a representation of themselves going about their daily lives. This reinforces attachment without destroying the identifiable landscape of either the house or their town.

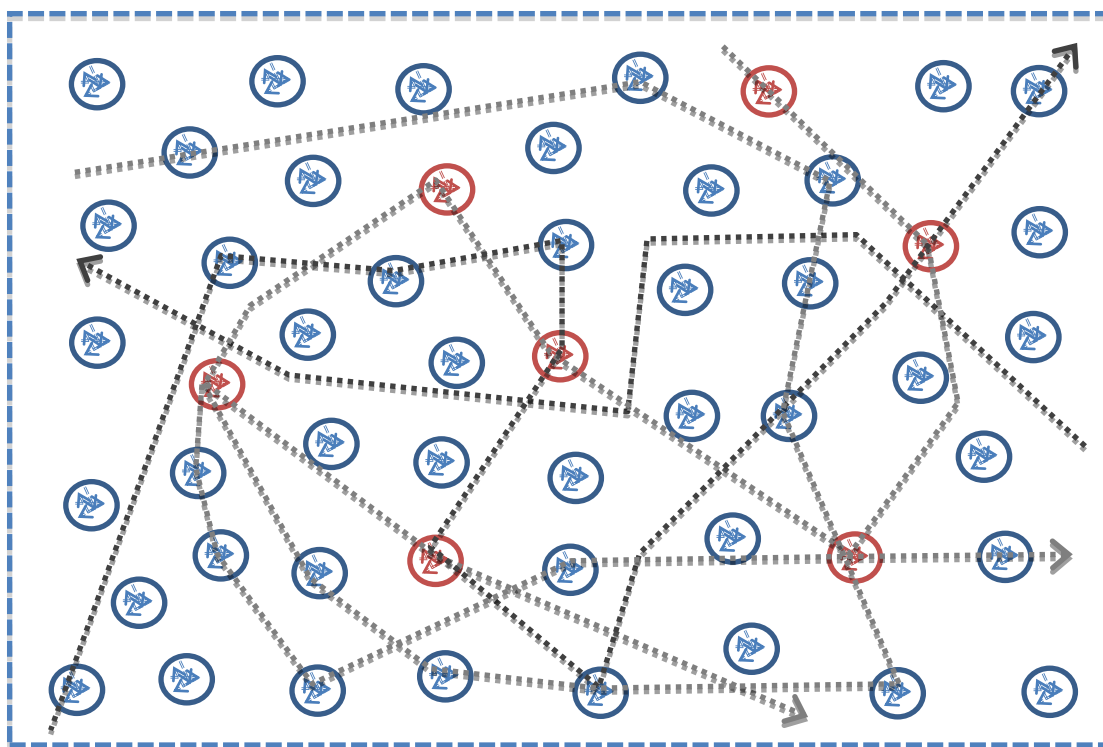


Figure 67: Diagrammatic representation of place. The red circles either represent the Art houses at Honmura or the investigated houses at Hall (diagram by author)

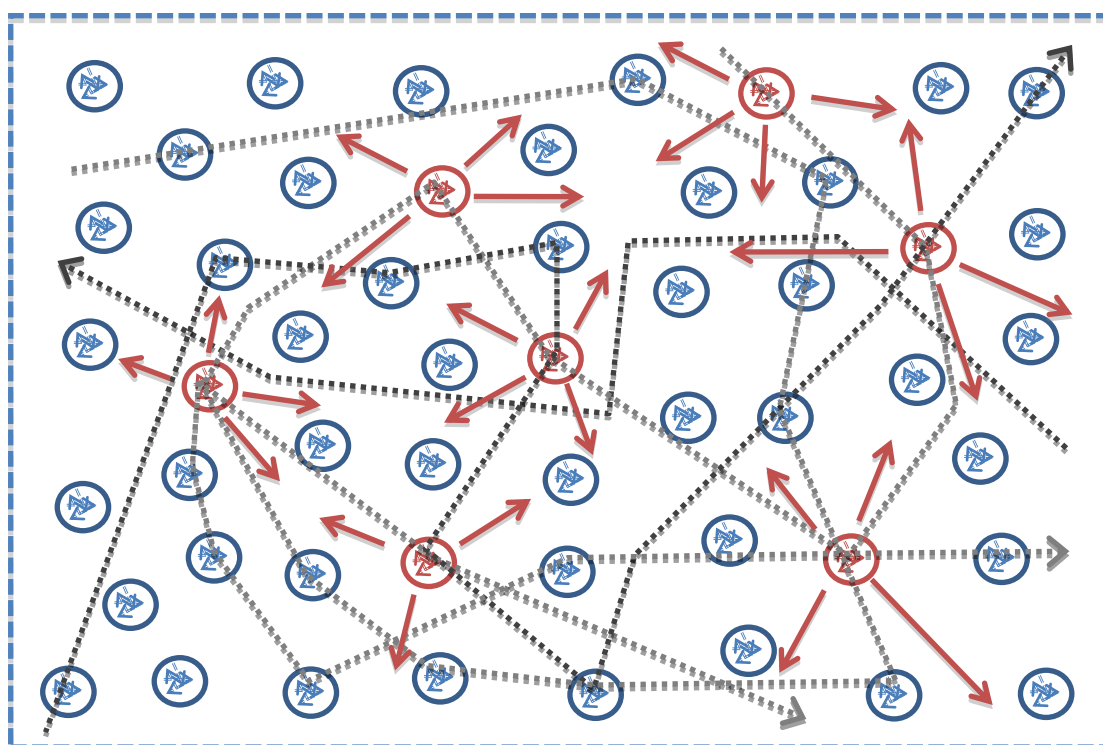


Figure 68: Diagrammatic representation of place. The red circles either represent the Art houses at Honmura or the investigated houses at Hall (diagram by author)

An environment is inherently more complex than a photograph and is more likely to be a mosaic of points each of which contains meaning relating to its context. Therefore it is possible to obtain multiple meanings relating to place. If you look at each arrow shown in figure 67 as representing a journey on which it is possible to take photographs, then each journey is only a selected view of an environment or a place. It is also only a surface view or an edited version.



Figure 69: Aerial view of Honmura on Naoshima showing the location of the Art Houses, Kadoya is in red

If you image the diagrams on the previous page (figures 67 & 68) as being representative of a place, like the aerial view of Honmura (figure 69), and the circles are representative of objects with meaning, then depending on the route you take you may obtain a different impression of the town. The inclusion of art houses (shown in red) allows greater access to the hidden aspects of place in a similar way to investigating the houses in Hall. In this way place is not completely closed and each installation or fragment links to other fragments forming connections to both the visible presences and the invisible absences, as de Certeau highlights: "It is striking here that the places people live in are like the

presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there: “you see, here there used to be...” but it can no longer be seen.”¹²⁹

Kadoya hints at these invisible presences as the numbers count down at their various speeds, changing but providing connections to other things and other worlds running side by side. Looking at things as being interrelated but connected and acknowledging complexity is important. An investigation from a multiplicity of standpoints helps in creating a narrative on place and narrative making is a key characteristic of our attempts at understanding that which might be hidden to us. It is also my attempt to understand the various environments I have visited. John Berger’s statement about photographs is equally valid for places:

...appearances are oracular. Like oracles they go beyond, they insinuate further than the discrete phenomena they represent, and yet their insinuations are rarely sufficient to make any more comprehensive reading indisputable. The precise meaning of an oracular statement depends upon the guest or need of the one who listens to it.¹³⁰

見

¹²⁹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

¹³⁰ Dyer, *John Berger - Understanding a Photograph*.

Conclusion

Places can be embedded with layers of meaning from the base level of affordances to general historical value and then to great personal value. Objects large and small are containers of meaning that provide fragmented strata forming layers that make up an environment. It is not just the visible objects and spaces that comprise these layers but the invisible absences inherent within this visible strata. Every object is haunted by these invisible absences, which actually form linkages to experiences that are memorable about family, spaces, home and the street. In Homura, on Naoshima, the Art Houses are concentrated containers of invisible absences about place. In this research it is important to understand how abstract these linkages can be and still provide a narrative response. In the case of Kadoya the digital counters form links to the community through collaboration with its inhabitants. Visitors to Homura, such as myself, when we understand what the counters represent can imagine the mechanics of the town. *The Sea of Time* invites us to construct stories about the inhabitants; here de Certeau's statement in *The Practice of Everyday Life* is in accord:

The memorable is that which can be dreamed about a place. In this place that is palimpsest, subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it "be there," *Dasein*.¹³¹

The experiment in Hall shows that peripheral abstract image can be a strong link to the narrative content of the environment embedded within and contain a higher content of available information than the counters in Kadoya. The process of the participants explaining the content of an ambiguous photograph to another participant inherently leads to a narrative about what the object means rather than a direct recognition of the object itself. It leads to story telling. The abstract nature of the image does not appear to reduce this ability. For example, the couple that had the most trouble identifying their images were still able to relay a story about a particular image. If our attempts at understanding that which might be hidden to us ultimately leads to making narratives about content and meaning then this is valuable in the assessment of my own explorations into environments where there are no participants.

The next two chapters document my own investigations into place as constructed visual narratives from the aspect of peripheral vision.

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¹³¹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 109.

Chapter Three:

Proximal Horizon

Introduction

When investigating the periphery the horizon is an abstract concept as the dictionary meaning infers:

The line at which the earth and sky would appear to meet but for irregularities and obstructions.

Limit of mental perception.¹³²

I am interested in the notion that horizon experienced through our central vision is something quite different to that experienced through our peripheral vision. This can be discussed as the difference between our distal horizon and our direct proximal horizon. Etymology in English leads to the word *eaggemearc*, which literally meant, 'eye-mark' for the limit of our view and this is appropriate to the meaning investigated in this chapter.¹³³ In order to visually illustrate the differences between distal and proximal perception two bodies of work have been created within two different environments. One project *Glare* investigates the idea of the horizon and its relationship to a forest in the South East coast of New South Wales. The other project *The Horizon*, the desert and plains are the subject of investigation within the Bookmark Biosphere near Renmark in South Australia.

These investigations into the horizon and landscape are not simple as they also incorporate the relationship of time. This relationship in terms of time is interesting as two references, one from Gaston Roupnel and one from Hiroshi Sugimoto propose the same connection in relation to history and memory for two different types of landscape. One is the idea of a limitless forest where no horizon is visible and the other is the defined sharp line between the sea and the sky. *Glare* and *The Horizon* are my conceptual tests of the notion of the ability to see into the past and to visualise a proximal horizon. Seeing, the horizon and time interlace through both of these bodies of work, which have an underlying and unspoken narrative about environmental issues related to our landscape.

Ultimately these two projects sit within this research as conceptual visual thought experiments that test the limits of our vision and interpretation of this vision. The conceptual and practical outcomes of these investigations expand the early experiments in motion and legibility and the ability to transfer information to viewers of the work.

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¹³² P.A.Mitchell J.M.Hughes, W.S.Ramson, ed. *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 8th ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹³³ Harper, "Online Etymology Dictionary".

Glare project (Exploring the difference between our rod and cone vision)

As we move through the three-dimensional physical environment we receive information about form and content through a complex sensory interaction. At close proximity all our senses are engaged in a multisensory experience. Visual perception is one form of sensory interaction, where proximal stimulus in the form of light provides specific information about objects, motion and changes in form. Most of the visual information at close proximity is through transformations of the spatial pattern of light interacting with peripheral vision or the movement sensitive rods in our eyes. Each sense in the perceptual field has a limit or horizon. Touch and taste have the closest horizon, followed by smell, hearing then sight.¹³⁴ At a long distance towards the horizon our senses drop away leaving only our central vision. Sight has two horizons, the horizon of peripheral vision and the horizon of central vision. The horizon of central vision can vary significantly depending on the surrounding topography and the elevation of your eyes. Standing on a beach or on a flat plain looking to the horizon the distance can be calculated to be around 5 kilometres.¹³⁵ This is not the limit of vision but a function of the curvature of the Earth; the distance seen is dependant on your elevation or the elevation of a distant feature (for example we can see the moon due to its elevation).

At a long distance the three-dimensional environment flattens as it is beyond the limit of our binocular vision, but in terms of this research I'm interested in the direct perceptual environment and investigating the horizon between these proximate and distant senses. In vision the proximate horizon could be argued to be 6 metres, which is when the lens of the eye is in its most elongated state.¹³⁶ This is also referred to as optical infinity. All my field studies projects include experiments in relation to this horizon; specific experiments are in these two projects, *Glare* and *The Horizon*. These two field studies are an attempt to visualise the periphery, even though it is an abstract concept and actually invisible. I would argue that the focusable range of 6 metres is also our range of direct peripheral engagement with the world.¹³⁷ Peripheral and touch horizons are closer than imagined and actually closer than smell and sound. In this case images that are taken at close proximity provide an ideal representation of my engagement with the surroundings. In houses, in gardens, in markets, on a busy street, in a forest, in an open landscape the detail of the direct environment engages my peripheral vision more than the open view to the horizon.

A forest therefore can be considered as more personal and intimate than an open plain. Forests have a duality, in that they are intimate and a rich source for peripheral engagement, but they can also be immense. A forests' immensity is unknown because we can see no horizon and although each section of a forest is unique as you walk further it gives the impression of unending sameness. Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* states that the idea of immensity is within us and our own perception can make the forest

¹³⁴ Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful - Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture*, 35.

¹³⁵ NASA Education Resources, "Space Math Iii - Problem 19, Beyond the Blue Horizon," www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/files/SMIII_Problem19.pdf.

¹³⁶ Swanston, *Visual Perception: An Introduction*, 45.

¹³⁷ The peripheral horizon is complex, in terms of light we can see further than our central vision for example when we look at stars. What I mean here is what is the horizon of our direct engagement with the world - we don't directly interact with stars.

seem immense and limitless. In his discussion on this concept he uses ideas from Gaston Roupnel to describe the confrontation with an ancient forest where the horizon is hidden and the forest seems limitless.

Forests reign in the past. I know, for instance, that my grandfather got lost in a certain wood. I was told this, and I have not forgotten it. It happened in a past before I was born. My oldest memories, therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more.

This then is my ancestral forest. And all the rest is fiction.¹³⁸

Forests are places of darkness and places for getting lost. I wondered how I could photograph something like this? Can you position yourself at the edge of a forest and capture the imagined expanse of a limitless forest? To imagine it in this way is to lead the direction of the research towards a distal view and seeing the forest as an object of the sublime. The idea of an ancestral forest however moves the imagined towards intimacy and the idea of memory, history and time.

Field study area

Exploration for this project covered a number of areas such as Barraga Bay, Green Cape, Davidson Whaling Station and Ben Boyd National Park. It includes my own personal visits to a forested block of land at Barraga Bay and a number of organised field studies through the environment studio at the ANU School of Art. *Glare* emerged from these explorations, but unlike Repouel's forest this time the visual interpretation is a eucalypt forest full of light and not darkness. I was trying to imagine what the first settlers might have seen when looking into a forest edge from their ships or newly constructed huts, gazing into an impenetrable mass of vegetation. Or maybe it is the emergence from the whaling station to confront an ancient forest. The horizon is not visible and time and scale is uncertain - the assumed vastness of the forest is daunting. Glare from the sun when exiting the station hurts your eyes and the retained image of the trees on your retina is white - a large white forest evoking fear.

A white wall of forest with endless height and no base.

There are many forests on the South Coast of New South Wales and it is the subject of some controversy in terms of the timber industry in an area where State forests adjoin National Parks with no discernable boundary. My initial aim was to capture the edge of a forest through the cut made by logging. This was not to be, due to the sensitivity of the forestry industry, which had given permission to visit an area on one day, and then installed a no admittance barrier on the actual day of the visit. In the end I found a forest adjoining a river in an area of Ben Boyd National Park quite close to the campsite where we were staying at Jigamy Station. Severs Beach is a section of beach along the estuary of the Pambula river. In this location it is possible to walk along the beach and photograph a steep slope of trees leading down to the water's edge. The bank is high enough to ensure that the sky is not visible in the image and I can walk along and take multiple images side

¹³⁸ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 188. Quoting Gaston Roupnel, *La campagne francaise*.

by side and create a long stitched photograph that appears to be like the long edge of a forest.

While taking the images I took two shots, one correctly exposed to the available light levels, and the other over exposed. Later I removed a portion of the colour saturation increasing the level of whiteness and compressing the tonal range. This was done with both images, which were then overlayed and stitched together to create a panoramic view of a large white forest. Only one image was used in the exhibition relating to the organised field study and a narrative emerged relating to light and dark, photopic and scotopic vision, inside and outside, and the nature of our relationship to trees and our homes.



Figure 70: *The Submerged Forest*, pigment print on glass (later incorporated into the series *Glare* as pigment print on paper)

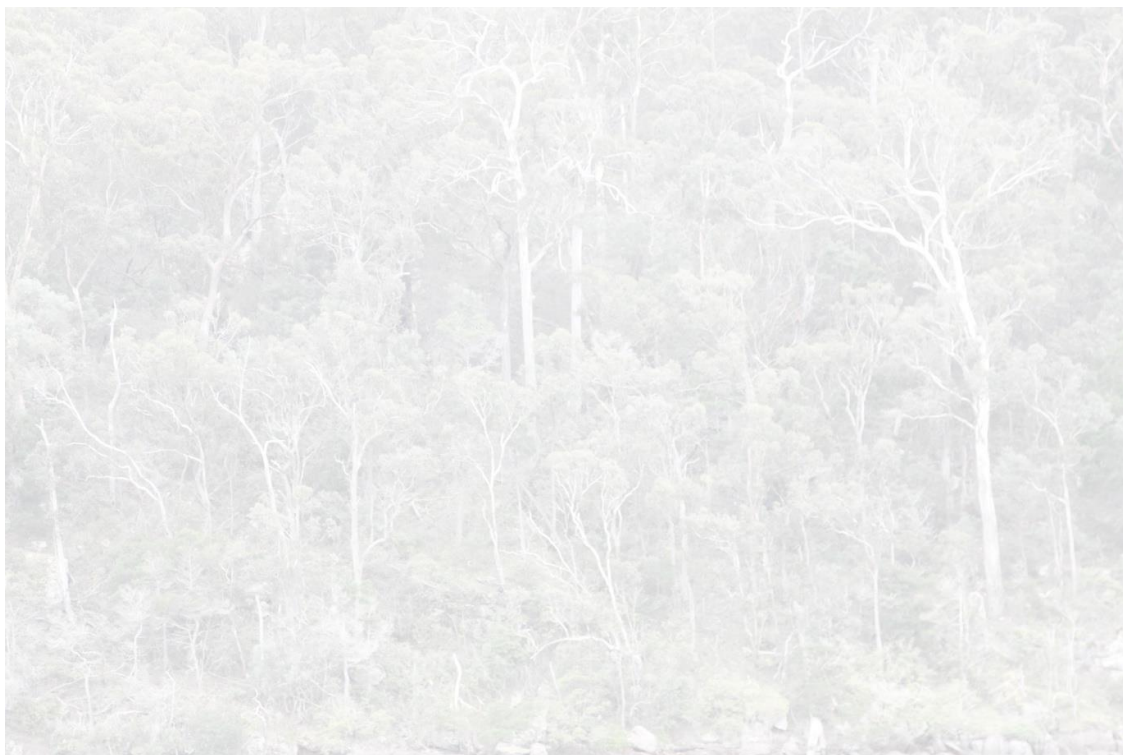


Figure 71: Detail of *The Submerged Forest*, pigment print on glass (later incorporated into the series *Glare* as pigment print on paper)

The original artwork *The Submerged Forest* was printed on glass using a flatbed printer (Oce Arizona UV cured inkjet printer – now replaced)¹³⁹ in the Inkjet Research Facility at the ANU School of Art, which sprays and heats ink on to the surface. Interestingly the printer at the time did not print 'white' and was therefore reliant on the base material for the whites. *As a side note the new printer (Agfa Anapurna M2540 UV cured inkjet printer), which does print white, prints a layer of white onto a surface prior to the main print and not as an integrated layer.* In the printing process the first attempt resulted in an almost completely transparent image. Initially I was not sure if an image had been printed but looking along the edge of the glass towards the light it was possible to pick up an impression of the image. A second print was overlayed with some of the greens and shadows darkened resulting in a translucent image. The blue-green hue of the glass panel did not have the white glary surface I was hoping for, which was the basis of this experiment (figures 72 and 73). On paper (like the previous images figures 70 and 71) there was a level of whiteness that captured some of the intended outcomes.

In a serendipitous moment the process of applying layers of translucent ink allows the image to adhere to the glass in a more permanent way than applying a full opaque image. I had found an effective way to print images on glass. This came after some experimentation with materials such ceramic tiles, melamine board, carpet tiles, timber and finally glass. In most cases these materials were found objects that still retained some of the visible patina of a previous use. In this case the glass came from an old shower screen, an underlying reference to liquid. Use of glass also replicates the idea of a formless invariant within an invisible structure. James J. Gibson argues that objects in the environment are not actually illusory they are formless invariants. Objects are both an invariant or do not change (stay the same) and also formless or change continuously (always changing) as we move past them within an optical field.¹⁴⁰

For the purpose of the field study exhibition (in the Bega contemporary art gallery) the glass was then mounted on a white board in an attempt to bring out more 'whiteness'. An image then emerges but is dependent on the viewing angle and light intensity. When viewed at an angle a double image occurs whilst straight viewing results in a slightly blurred image. In intense light the image projects to the board behind and looks like a normal colour image. Overall the final image has a watery feel to it like viewing an image under water and therefore the title was derived from this observation. Considering the location where the image was taken from (Severs Beach) this could in the end be somewhat prophetic if sea levels rise. *The Submerged Forest* was exhibited at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Bega as part of the *Far Enough! Aesthetic Responses to the Far South Coast*, group exhibition.

The images following show the final installation with a detail view similar to the previous images. It is quite different and I'm unsatisfied with the result in terms of the white and the glare aspect. An unexpected result did occur with the overlaying of the glass over the board, as mentioned above, due to the thickness of the glass the image exhibited aspects of movement across the background. The motion is like the movement between foreground objects within an array of vision and the background.

¹³⁹ This printer has subsequently been replaced with one that does print a white layer.

¹⁴⁰ Gibson, "On the Concept of 'Formless Invariants' in Visual Perception," 43.



Figure 72: *The Submerged Forest*, pigment print on glass (later incorporated into the series *Glare* as pigment print on paper)



Figure 73: Detail of *The Submerged Forest*, pigment print on glass (later incorporated into the series *Glare* as pigment print on paper)

Therefore there is a motion parallax that produces a three-dimensional effect within the image itself that is very similar to the movement photographs discussed in the previous two chapters.

Light, pressure and glare

Herman Melville devotes a whole chapter to whiteness in his book *Moby Dick*¹⁴¹ and it seems appropriate here to link whiteness, forests and fear of the unknown. But in this part of the research I am exploring the notion of glare and the pressure of light and its effect on peripheral vision. Underexposed images are flattened in a similar way to how we see. If I were to imagine that light had pressure¹⁴² then in terms of scale, brightness means high pressure and darkness means low pressure. When the pressure of light reaches a certain level of brightness the rods in the periphery become less active and the cones, which are less sensitive to light due to the smaller surface area, take full control of the process of seeing. At a certain point the pressure (brightness) of light becomes too intense and there is further loss in vision. This is called glare.

Glare can flatten a three-dimensional world by blocking both the peripheral receptors and a large portion of the fovea's receptors. When the intensity of light is seen as part pressure then it is possible to imagine that there might be a shift in the ability to perceive the correct location of objects. Therefore a brighter intensely lit object might appear larger or closer than a darker object. Over lit spaces are like a Ganzfeld, which is a sensory deprivation device, and can take us to our inner most thoughts and, as mentioned previously, can cause our eyes to stop seeing.¹⁴³ Ganzfelds can take many forms from simply staring at a featureless wall to a dark floatation chamber. In the extreme a featureless room with bright lights can be a form of torture. In our architectural environment, Ganzfeld like spaces can be used to make people move along and not linger.¹⁴⁴

James Turrell has included a number of elaborate Ganzfeld like installations in his practice that explore the edge between our outward focus and inner being. Naoshima was my first experience of Turrell's work in *Open Field* (2000) at the Chichu Museum. Here the junctions between walls and ceilings, and walls and floors are curved in order to reduce the perception of edges. Turrell discusses how his aim is to make light appear solid, like an object, and in this installation the intention is that you are within a volume of light.¹⁴⁵ A sloping floor within this space also puts you slightly out of balance and with no features it is easy to believe that you might be floating within a liquid of blue light. Within the Chichu Gallery there is an earlier Turrell work called *Afrum, Pale Blue* (1968), which is a projection into a corner of a room. Hexagonal in shape, I first thought it was an unusual window to the outside due to the intensity of the light. Walking back past it again it

¹⁴¹ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (London: Vintage, 2007 (first published in 1851)), 212.

¹⁴² Recent experiments have shown that light does have pressure although it is very small. Weilong She Li Zhang, Nan Peng, Ulf Leonhardt, "Experimental Evidence for Abraham Pressure of Light," *New Journal of Physics* 17(2015).

¹⁴³ Yarbus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, 1 & 100.

¹⁴⁴ Wexler, *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change*, 84.

¹⁴⁵ Eriko Osaka, ed. *James Turrell* (Ibaraki: Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, 1995), 88.

formed a cube of light suspended in the corner of the room. Intensity of light helps this projection transform into a cube and it appears more intense in the corner than the edges bringing the corner forward of the planes of the sidewalls. A quote by James Turrell from the book *James Turrell – The Wolfsburg Project* that accompanied his exhibition in the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg helps to emphasise how he uses light:

My interest in light perception consists of conferring materiality on it. It exists the same way a physical object has a presence. The reification of light is an atmospheric phenomenon, in which the refraction of light on dust, sand or drops of water leads to veils of colour and mists of light. The light materialises in a room of incomprehensible depth that is both body and empty space, surface and depth.¹⁴⁶

Photographer Paul Graham uses the idea that too much light or whiteness reduces our ability to see in his series *American Night*. In this series full colour photographs of McMansion houses are contrasted against white images of the poor (figure 74). Within these images the poor become invisible and we don't see them, in a similar way that sensory deprivation stops our vision.¹⁴⁷



Figure 74: #32 (Man crossing road) from the series *American Night*, 2002, Paul Graham

¹⁴⁶ Esther Barbara Kirschner Markus Bruderlin, ed. *James Turrell - the Wolfsburg Project* (Wolfsburg: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 72.

¹⁴⁷ In this case it is reflective of our ability to filter out content in the environment that we don't want to see.

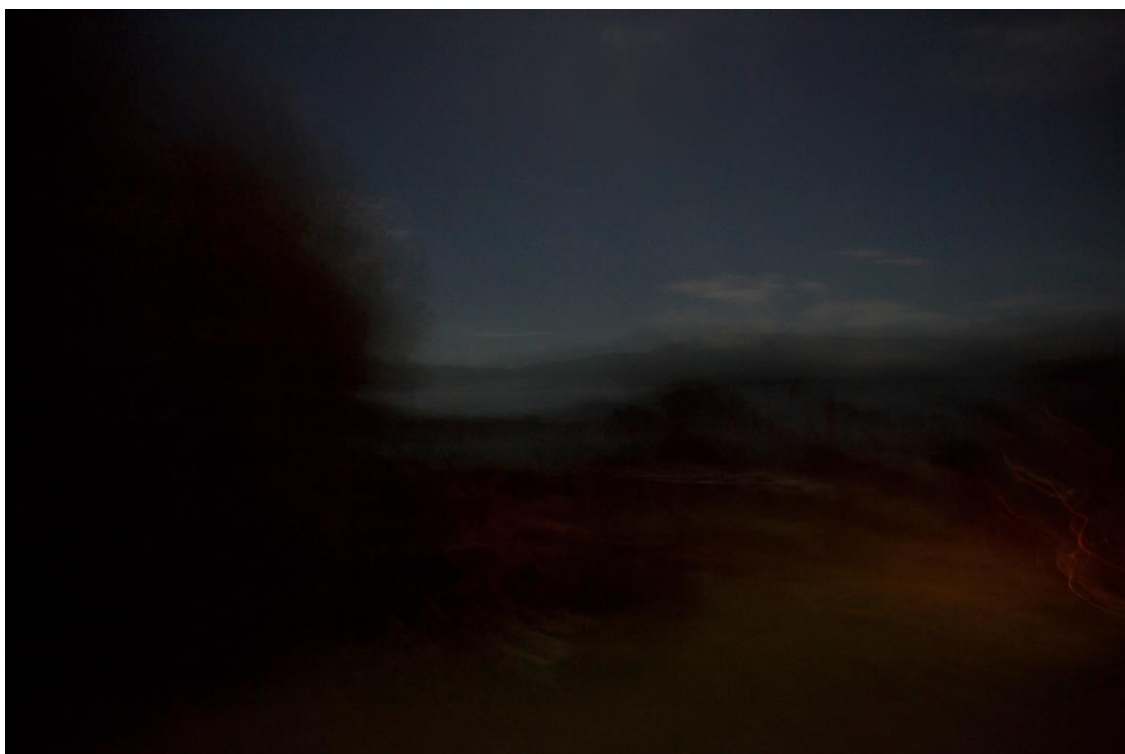


Figure 75: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Jigamy farm over looking Pambula Lake)

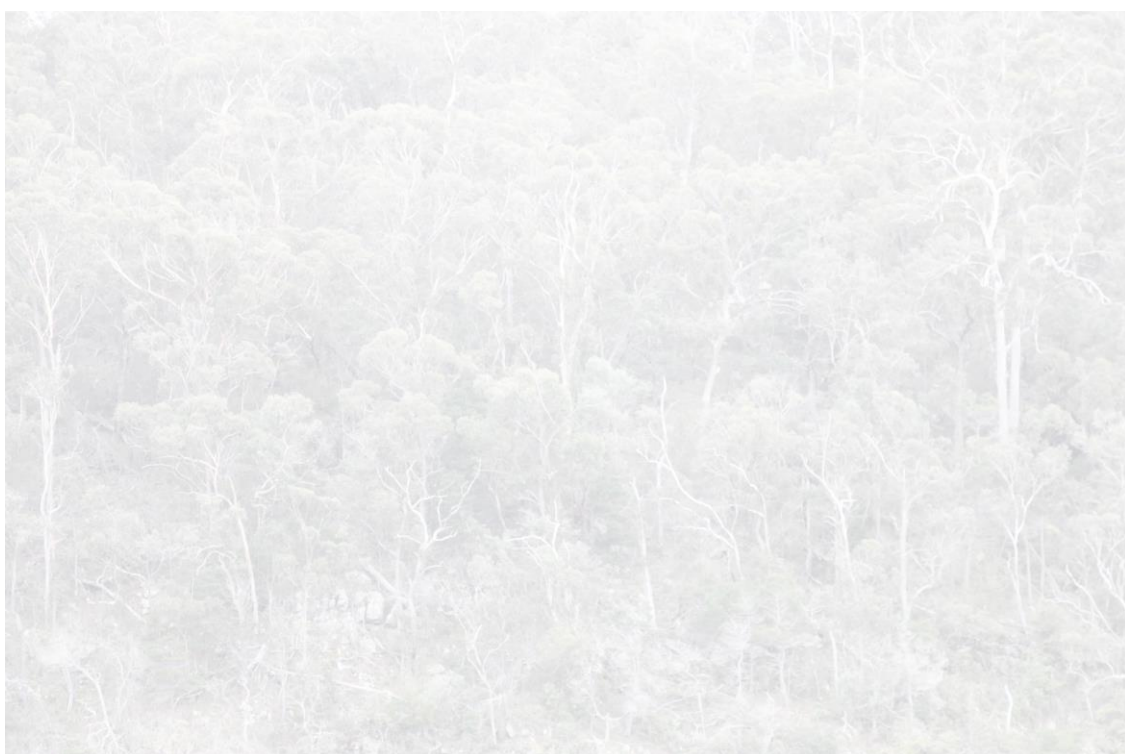


Figure 76: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(The forest from Severs Beach)



Figure 77: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Fish processing at Eden wharf)



Figure 78: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Davidson Whaling station and the remains of killer whales)



Figure 79: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Mantle piece in the Davidson Whaling station)



Figure 80: Untitled from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Forest on the crest of Brown Mountain)

Therefore the *Glare* project fluctuates between light and dark, inside and outside and is an exploration of the South Coast in search of a forest but also in search of an Ancestral past (but not my own). This fluctuation between light and dark, inside and outside highlights the limitations of our peripheral vision in the intense daylight. In the book *Glare* the images fluctuate between the bright and white landscape photographs taken at Severs Beach and the dark intimate photographs in either close proximity within a forest or within the Davidson Whaling station. The aim of the bright images is to reset your vision like the progress between stepping outside of your house in the middle of the day and then returning inside. Within the book of images this is hard to achieve fully and depends on the available light whilst looks between the printed images. A progress presentation of the images in PowerPoint via a projector gave the most dramatic resetting of our scotopic vision. As the slide moves to the while forest it is like a flash of light like car headlights at night. The next dark image becomes black and impenetrable until our eyes adjust and the details emerge once more.

In the final exhibition within the empty house one room is painted completely white, walls, floors and ceiling. The white forest photographs printed on paper are hung within the space. The room is entered after viewing dark images within low-lit spaces and when entering the light has the appearance of a mist within the air itself. In this context the white images appear to have a green cast although the actual coloured content is very low and not apparent in other light.



Figure 81: Untitled images from the *Glare* series, pigment print on rag
(Final installation within white room)

On a small piece of left over land at Barraga Bay we camp on a deck structure with a roof but no walls. Our view is into a forest of Spotted Gum, some of which are over 50 metres tall. This is not the original forest; the original trees were much larger. Over time our visits have built an attachment to this small forest. Further down the coast our camp is at Jigami Farm, a piece of land owned by The Twofold Bay Aboriginal Corporation, located between Pambula and Eden. On this piece of land is the Monaroo Bobberrer Gudu Keeping Place, a building built by the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council. We camp on the edge of Lake Pambula and every morning I wake up to the local dog waiting for me outside my tent. At various stages of our field study the community elder informs us about different aspects of the area and its inhabitants. I learn about land rights issues, abalone quotas, the Shield Tree and the local aborigines' use of killer whales to lure other whales to shore. I also hear about the surveying of the Bundian Way, an ancient Aboriginal walking route between Bilgalera (Fisheries Beach) and Targangal (Kosciuszko). After surveying a map of the area I venture into Ben Boyd National park in search of the horizon and a forest. At Quondolo Beach amongst the multi-coloured rock formations I take several photographs of the horizon. It is early and a mist hangs between each wave as it rolls into shore. At Severs Beach, amongst middens containing oyster and abalone shells, a forest borders the edge of the Pambula River. It is not an ancestral forest. We stay at the Davidson Whaling Station. The Davidsons' had learnt to use Killer Whales from the local aboriginal community. The whaling station has been left as an historic house from the era and also as a museum. In the museum the skeletal remains of two killer whales are on display. I learn that the original Davidson house had burnt down and this house is a replica or a surrogate. Leaving the coast we drive up Brown Mountain and along the edge of the road is the oldest forest I have seen so far. I roll down the passenger window and try to take photographs as we move by, but by the time I take a shot it is too late.

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Forest and Perceptual Horizon (Jitka Hanzlova and the relationship to landscape)

Sublime landscapes are not peripheral or intimate landscapes.

Intimacy within a forest is reflected in work of Czech photographer Jitka Hanzlova in her series of photographs simply titled *Forest*. Her attachment to a forest (or two forests) stems from a childhood growing up in the village of Rokytník. This village is at the undefined junction of two forests. For Hanzlova this is an ancestral forest and her images are not from the outside looking in but a personal intimate narrative from within. John Berger highlights this in his essay to the book of photographs using her words:

I went to the forest-hills early in the morning when the forest awakes. Standing there I breathed in the wind, the unruffled voices of the birds and the silence which I love. And then when I was concentrating on a picture, I stopped hearing the silence around me. It was as if I was somewhere else, like a film. The forest started to move and, as I looked through the camera, I experienced fear. Maybe it was just the framing and the stillness of the evening. As if the birds and the crickets had stopped their singing, as if the wind had come to a stop in the valley. Nothing, but nothing to hear. No birds, no wind, no people, no crickets. The darkness of the light and this other silence made my hair stand on end...¹⁴⁸

Every forest has a context and Hanzlova states that the more we look into the forest the more we look into ourselves. Hanzlova left Rokytník when she was 24 in 1982 and claimed asylum in Germany. In 1990 after the collapse of communist regime she was able to return to the village and forest.¹⁴⁹ But what happened before she left to make her fearful of the silence? A forest is a place to hide but also a place to be hidden. The *Forest* series is not actually about fear but about memories and coming home. The events are unspoken but the essence is somehow visible.

Time and space

Berger talks about forests as being timeless places and not being restricted by the laws of linear Western time. This is similar to the idea of cyclic and temporal time reflected in the Isa Shrine and Kadoya Art House in the previous chapter. Geographer Yi Fu Tuan discusses the different experiential time scales in *Space and Place* where the dense forest represents short time duration and limited perceptual space. Using the Congo Pygmies as an example, their restricted space within the rainforest has resulted in an inability to judge the size of distal objects. Tuan argues that this restricted judgement of space is also a restriction in time.¹⁵⁰ The density of space is like a web of features and textures with limited apparent structure (at least in our eyes). Time is also restricted into intervals of short duration due to this limitation of space. I can only make the assumption from Tuan's argument that the size and density of space influences the perception of time.

¹⁴⁸ Dyer, *John Berger - Understanding a Photograph*, 204.

¹⁴⁹ Gerhard Steidl, "Forest: Jitka Hanzlova," <http://www.claxtonprojects.com/books/jitka-hanzlova/> accessed 30.11.2015.

¹⁵⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place - the Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 119.



Figure 82: Image from *Forest* by Jitka Hanzlova



Figure 83: Image from *Forest* by Jitka Hanzlova

Therefore the idea of a limitless forest may come from someone who inhabits larger spaces, possibly a visitor and not a true inhabitant. Alternatively the distance between trees and the amount of undergrowth may have an effect on the perception of an ancestral forest. A true ancestral forest shows evidence of human habitation as Simon Schama points out throughout his book *Landscape and Memory*.¹⁵¹

Dark and light forests

When I went searching for a forest on the South Coast I was aware that this would not be my ancestral forest but maybe I could find a connection of some kind. I also realised that there are different types of forest. Hanzlova's forest is relatively neat and clean particularly in terms of undergrowth and there is snow. Her forest is also dark. On the South Coast there is a rainforest, full of undergrowth and textural density and the darkness similar to European forests. Then there are the open forests that have no shade. These open forests are full of light and harsh contrasts and not the soft light of the forest near Rokytnik. In the hot summer sun the intense light makes an intimate relationship difficult. It is a forest that provides no respite, as the eucalypts turn the edges of their leaves to the sun, there is little shade (universal whiteness or glare). In these forests I have to walk carefully and look where my feet fall as the glare blinds me to things hidden. I wonder whether a large portion of the contemporary population is still fearful of Australian forests, as they are not our own ancestral base but the base of the original inhabitants.

The original settlers built houses with small windows that matched their European heritage, and like *William Thornhill* the main character in *Secret River* by Kate Grenville, they could survey the outside through these tiny openings in safety.¹⁵² Similarly the artisan in Gerard Murnane's *The Plains* hides away in a library researching the landscape with curtains closed unable to face the outside in the flesh.¹⁵³ Intense light outside removes peripheral intimacy from the surrounding environment and we retreat inside our houses during this time to peer out of blinds and small windows waiting for the cool of the afternoon or the cover of cloud. Inside is dark and starkly contrasts with the outside and as we wait the qualities of intimacy in our internal environment has an increased intensity.

The project *Glare* is derived from this background.



¹⁵¹ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 7.

¹⁵² Kate Grenville, *The Secret River* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2005).

¹⁵³ Gerald Murnane, *The Plains* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1982), Fiction.

The Horizon project (In search of a proximal horizon)

The Horizon haunts me. It is the periphery that does not exist. I move towards it and it moves away taunting my efforts. I am looking for two horizons, the horizon of the past and a proximal horizon of the present.

This journey starts back at Quondolo Beach amongst the multi-coloured rock formations. I take a number of photographs looking out across the water to where the water meets the sky. These are my own seascapes in an effort to understand the horizon. First I stand on the beach but the waves get in the way of taking a clear view of the water (figure 84). Moving to the rocks the view is clearer but not like Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Seascapes* and therefore I realise he must have been higher still, looking further and seeing further into the past. At beach level I can only see five kilometres; what was his ideal height for the *Seascape* series?

My photographs are livelier than Sugimoto's Seascape series because they include waves, spray, mist, clouds and are in colour. I am actually attracted to the movement of the water and the repetition of wave lines with mist between. The clouds also have something ominous about them. These images are less abstract although there is some level of abstraction in the composition. Higher on the rocks the view flattens dramatically, although some water movement is visible, and there are still some ominous clouds in the background (figure 85). The most abstract view is from a cliff top in the Ben Boyd National Park during a cloudless day. In this image the waves are just an expanse of texture. At this high vantage point I can see quite far to the horizon. I imagine that this is the vantage point that Sugimoto used to take his photographs.

The idea of an ancestral view is the idea of looking back in time and this interests me in terms of what we actually see when we look towards the horizon and also in terms of the perceptual view of time in relation to space. I wonder if the idea of looking back in time when looking out towards the horizon on the ocean is the idea of a small island nation? How do we view the horizon and the connection to an ancestral past in Australia and where would it be? When looking out to the ocean I feel that the beach and the water is more about life than the past and when we collectively look out towards the horizon it is about hope and the future. When I think about looking towards the horizon and seeing the past I think about the interior and the plains and desert. This is the ancestral base of this country.

To obtain these my journey heads inland to Renmark and Calprum station. This is another organised field study trip through the ANU School of Art Environment Studio. Calprum Station is in the newly formed bookmark biosphere and contains the last remaining sections of untouched Mallee country. Mallee scrub has now become one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ "Biosphere Reserve Information - Riverland," <http://www.unesco.org/mabdb/br/brdir/directory/biores.asp?mode=all&code=AUL+11> accessed 9.12.2015.



Figure 84: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(View of the horizon from Quondolo beach, at beach level)



Figure 85: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(View of the horizon from Quondolo beach, at elevated level)

Inland

Calprum station has been transformed from a farming station to a research station and with Taylorville Station makes up about a third of the Riverland Biosphere. The Riverland Biosphere Reserve (previously called Bookmark Biosphere) is a large section of land in South Australia and covers 900,000 hectares. It is partly the floodplain of an ancient river and partly Mallee forest or scrub. Each section of the area is starkly contrasted with the other and is predominately a degraded country, apart from the largest remaining stand of original Mallee forest.¹⁵⁵

It is not long before I'm on a bus heading towards the interior. Along the way we stop on the Hay Plain so that I can take an image of the Horizon. It is very flat along this section and we pass a trig point marking the highest point but I don't perceive any visible change in the landform. In order to get an uninterrupted view I stand on a fence post near the entrance to Hell's Gate (figure 86). Taking the photograph, I think, how far am I looking back? Soon after I learn that this is a disturbed landscape and when looking at the horizon here I am only looking back some 50 years or so. When we arrive at Calprum Station we go for a short drive around the immediate area. At the time I did not anticipate the nature of the landscape, this only became evident when looking back through photographs of the field study (figure 87). On this side trip I took another series of images but even here the view is only about 100 years old. Not quite a primal landscape.

I made a number of experimental projects in this area. Darkened scotopic and mesotopic images still remained one of the main themes of experimentation although this time the images highlighted the degraded nature of the landscape. Work also explored further the nature of underexposed images or white images within the salt lakes near the main research station. These starkly contrast with the dark images and hide the detail of the devastation farming in poor soils can bring. On the salt lakes I became fixated on the idea of producing a slim line between the sky and the salt. It is interesting that once you have something set in your mind you begin to see lines of different types throughout the landscape.

There are natural lines everywhere when your focus is this way (figures 88-91). A sand line made by my hand turns into a natural sand line made by the wind. Floodwaters had left mud lines on trees, bushes and fence posts. There were different colours or shades in the mud that formed a line. A line between wet mud and dry mud and a line between wet mud and water. Another line formed between the salt and the surrounding red sand. At one stage I feel impelled to fill a bucket with the red sand and make a line within the pan of the salt lake itself (figures 95 and 96). The most intriguing lines however are those made around the edge of the salt lakes. Reminiscent of the line made around the bath from dirty water these lines were made when the floodwaters from Queensland washed thousands of insects, scorpions, frogs and other creatures into the salt lake. The concentration of salt killed the small animals and when the lake slowly dried out a ring of death lined the rim. Some lakes had only a small line but at Rotten Lake the width of the line was thirty centimetres wide in places. I move along this line documenting different insects.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.



Figure 86: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(View of the horizon from Hell's Gate on the Hay Plain)



Figure 87: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(View of the horizon from Calprum Station)



Figure 88: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line between wet mud and dry mud)



Figure 89: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A natural line in the dry mud)



Figure 90: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line left by the floodwaters on the bushes near Lake Woolpolool)



Figure 91: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line of insects at Rotten Lake)

I feel that being in this country is like a type of *Ganzfeld* and it makes me feel restless. After taking more photographs of the horizon at Lake Woolpolool (figure 92), where the sky has become grey pink from volcanic ash haze blown all the way from Chile, I begin making a line of dark mud (figures 93 and 94). The mud line follows a natural crease in the plain of cracked mud on the edge of the lake. At the base of the crease either side is a lighter colour of mud, almost white. Pieces of mud are pulled up and turned upside down; the underside is almost black in comparison to the mud of the plain. The making of this line and the sand line are an attempt at putting myself in the shoes of artists like Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. Like the aimless walking mentioned in chapter two this process had no aim, it had no purpose as such. Making the mud line took three days, first with only my hands, two pieces at a time, then with the aid of a metal basket found in the Station dumping area. At the beginning I had no set length in mind just 'a length'.



Figure 92: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(View of the horizon at Lake Woolpolool)

Eye mark

What did Richard Long have in mind when he made *A Line Made by Walking* in 1969? Although the line of mud and the line of sand are land art type installations and appear to sit somewhat outside this research it does link to some of the identifiable aspects of the area. One aspect is the seemingly unending flatness of the country that only changes when in Mallee Country itself. Another is the extent of mud and the line it forms on trees, fences, bushes and buildings. The main link is the exploration of the horizon as a peripheral element.



Figure 93: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line of mud near Lake Woolpolool)



Figure 94: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line of mud near Lake Woolpolool)

The line of mud and the line of sand like the horizon are abstract concepts. You cannot obviously go to the horizon, because it moves with you, but you can disappear over someone else's horizon. Both lines made are ephemeral and now only exist as images. The line of sand started to disappear shortly after completion when the wind increased. A day after making the line of mud, the dark underside, which had been turned upright, was beginning to dry and turn a light grey. The making of the mud line was a solitary dream-inducing act that occupied my time during the day; an act of turning my back on the vastness of space and horizon surrounding me. Like the piece of writing from Henri Bosco included in the *Poetics of Space*:

On the plains I am always elsewhere, in an elsewhere that is floating, fluid.
Being for a long time absent from myself, and nowhere present, I am too
inclined to attribute the inconsistency of my daydreams to the wide open
spaces that induce them.¹⁵⁶

So the plain induces me to daydream and occupy my time by making lines, making marks for my eyes. It is not until the evening when the light subdues and the horizon reduces that the landscape engages my peripheral that the dreaming stops. In the semi darkness I cannot see the horizon and my interaction with the world closes in and non-thinking I move through this proximal space taking images. Brian Massumi is close to what I am suggesting in his essay on the panoramic photography of Luc Courchesne: "The horizon is the paradox of a line that encircles, wrapping distance dizzyingly around into immersion."¹⁵⁷

One day I walk to the edge of Mallee country. Here the landscape is thousands of years old, a true primal landscape, but with no horizon to be seen (figure 97). It is a forest of sorts. This is like Roupnel's forest, a ridged landscape of sameness combined with the low stunted Mallee that makes it impossible to see that beautiful clean division. I can easily imagine getting lost here as each low ridge is like another and the distance is restricted to only 50 metres or more. It is a peripheral landscape but it offers no shade. I notice that kangaroos make nests under the Mallee trees very close to the trunks in the only piece of shade. In order to find my way back I retrace my steps back through the red sand and surprise myself when I feel relieved to see the salt lakes once more.

Proximal horizon

A number of artworks were created after this field study. An initial display *Expression of Intent* in the School of Art Foyer Gallery included under exposed works from Rotten Lake with images of the two lines placed in boxes. This gave an opportunity to see a few works in context but in the end the boxes seemed out of context with the images and the idea of a peripheral landscape. In the next exhibition of work – *Mallee* - I use the darker images obtained in the semi darkness and use the flatbed printer in the Inkjet Research facility to print on pieces of unused melamine board (figures 98 and 99).

¹⁵⁶ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 203.

¹⁵⁷ Brian Massumi, "The Panoramic Photography of Luc Courchesne," <http://www.brianmassumi.com/textes/Panoscopia.%20The%20Panoramic%20Photography%20of%20Luc%20Courchesne.pdf> accessed 9.04.2017. Luc Courchesne places panoramic photographs within a bowl like structure where the viewer can insert their head. In this arrangement they can swivel their body and head to view the horizon 360 degrees – it is both a distant and intimate view at the same time.



Figure 95: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line of red sand in a salt lake)



Figure 96: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A line of red sand in a salt lake)



Figure 97: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag (Mallee forest)

When displayed the boards were set in two halves slightly away from each other forming a thin straight line that is the imaginary line of the horizon. Each image is extremely dark and appears to change under different light as you walk by from one side to the other. Initially these images appear to have no detail. One looks like animal scratching on the bark of a tree, the other has a mottled maroon mass that that could be anything and the third is almost indecipherable. These photographs are very similar to the images from the Davidson Whaling station and require low lighting levels in order to see the content. This is an interesting note as the difference between the dark peripheral images generated from these external spaces and the images generated from the internal spaces of the previous field study is very minor. Therefore the outcome appears to be more a product of light levels, type of movement and proximity of the environment than the actual environment itself.

These prints on board were not completely successful. The dark inks on the melamine highlighted imperfections in the board such as round suction marks where the boards had been lifted during production.

During this period a display of the work produced to date from the various field studies was exhibited for a general review. The following morning when time came to remove the work a band of light from the clerestory windows of the gallery illuminated a section of each image, bringing into view details that had previously been invisible. Later it was found that these dark images could be explored with a torch in a similar way to exploring a darkened room. It appears from this that although the movement across a number of points in space does obscure some information this can be revealed through an intense bright light penetrating through the overlaying layers of darkness and ink.

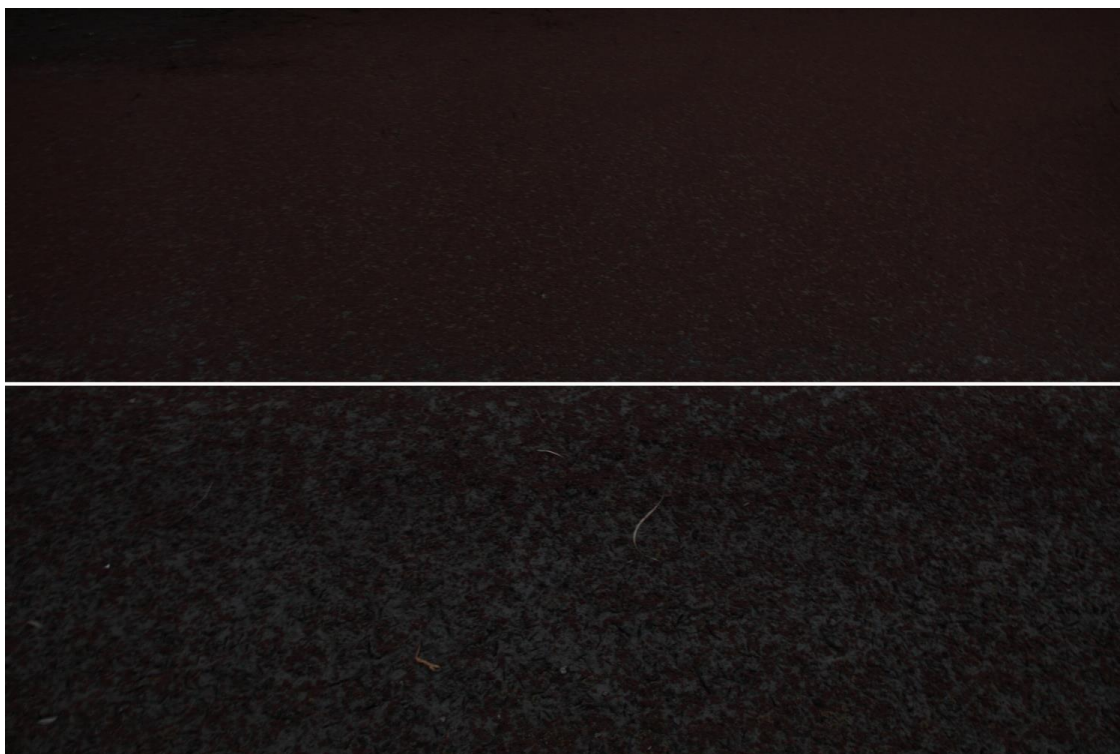


Figure 98: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A proximal horizon)

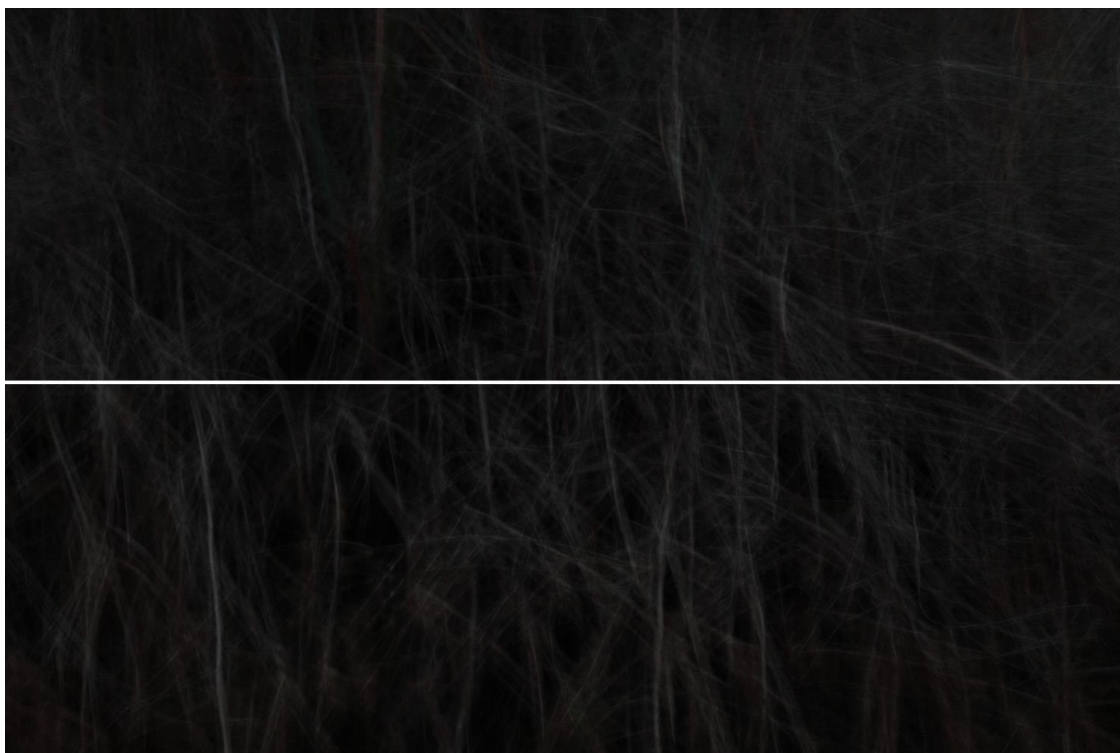


Figure 99: Untitled from *The Horizon* series, pigment print on rag
(A proximal horizon)

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Sugimoto and Horizon (Sugimoto's Go'o Shrine and Seascape series)

On a hill overlooking the small fishing village of Honmura on the island of Naoshima is a reconstruction of the Go'o Shrine by the photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto. Hiroshi Sugimoto is better known for his simple Zen like photographic works of the Sea, Movie picture theatres, Museum displays and blurred architecture series. The Go' o Shrine is one of Sugimoto's early departures from photographic practice and is part sculpture and part architecture with subtle personal references to his main practice of photography.



Figure 100: Picture of the glass stair leading to the Honden (Shrine), the Haiden (Hall of worship) is on the right hand side (photograph by author)

Sugimoto's work is also called *Appropriate Proportion* something that may be difficult to understand when observing the work directly and on face value. In an interview with Hino Naohiko in ARTiT magazine Sugimoto talks about the columns of the main pavilion structure in the work being slightly thinner than intended and the main reason for the slenderness is due to matching the style of most important Shrine in Japan – the Ise Shrine.¹⁵⁸ This may not be evident to a tourist or even some Japanese residents but this type of architectural style is called *shinmei-zukuri* and dates back to around the seventh century.¹⁵⁹ Therefore the name *Appropriate Proportion* is due to the symbolic relationship of the haiden (main pavilion) to the Ise Shrine, giving it an 'appropriate' historical context. Sugimoto has enhanced this context further by adding an underground chamber. Before the construction of the Ise Shrine burial mounds were a more common form of shrine structure. At the *Go' o Shrine* Sugimoto links historical periods together by having a burial mound and *shinmei-zukuri* styled haiden constructed on top of each other linked by a

¹⁵⁸ The Ise Shrine came about after the introduction of Buddhism into Japan and is actually two Shrines that sit side by side each being renewed, in turn, every 21 years.

¹⁵⁹ Hino Naohiko, "Self-Appointed Inheritor of Orthodox Modernism," *ARTiT* 2005, 47.

glass stair. Linking these periods together extends the historical connection to a primal (or ancient) past emphasised by a vertical slot capturing a selective view of the Seto Sea (an area considered a primal landscape by Sugimoto and the Japanese people).¹⁶⁰



Figure 101: *Go'o Shrine*, Hiroshi Sugimoto, View from the passage toward the exit

Appropriate Proportion is both a shrine and an artwork and, although Sugimoto has explained that he did not want the work to be self-referential, two of the main elements are distinctly personal. These elements add an interpretive level to the work and add another level of reference, a reference to the origins of photography. The glass stair connecting the underground chamber to the honden is made from the same optical glass used in camera lenses. Therefore light (and spirits) are the only elements that can pass between the two levels. In the underground chamber the slot to the view of the sea forms a camera obscura (figure 101) giving an image representative of Sugimoto's most well known series of work, *Seascapes (Time Exposed)*.

¹⁶⁰ Jodidio, *Tadao Ando at Naoshima - Art Architecture Nature*, 27.

The spiritual horizon

The *Seascape* series of photographs are a series of images of seas or oceans around the world (figure 102). No presence of land or man interferes with these shots, which are both similar and different to each other when presented in the same format. Sugimoto has been taking these images over a period of thirty years (beginning in 1980). Conceptually the process of taking a series of shots of the same subject is called a typology, however in this case the series extends beyond a simple typology into something more. The sea is reduced from continual movement and liveliness into an abstract image of light and dark neatly divided. It is a selected view, like the view out of the slot in the *Go'o Shrine* removing any sign of life. You will find no whales, dolphins, birds or ships as these views of the Sea of Ocean are before life and before time. These images provide an archetypical view of the horizon where the line that divides the sky is exactly in the middle and the image ultimately dissolves into abstraction.



Figure 102: *Caribbean Sea, Jamaica* from the *Seascape* series, Hiroshi Sugimoto 1980

This type of representation and repetition is like a Buddhist Aniconism and also like the Isa Shrine itself, an emptiness that goes through and beyond the images themselves.¹⁶¹ Sugimoto talks about the Seascapes being quite spiritual: “The work allows one to pause and observe something closely it freezes the world and captures it, holds it still so that

¹⁶¹ The Isa Shrine contains a mirror that no one has looked into since its construction. Schneider, *Hiroshi Sugimoto - Architecture of Time*, 48.

one can examine and study it. ...the Seascapes do not only represent nature, but were intended to be very religious.”¹⁶²

Therefore these images have a religious connection and a connection to the natural world. Sugimoto also has a personal connection to these views as an embodied experience or more as a disembodied experience as his words highlight: “I looked around at my hands and feet. And then I seemed to be looking down on myself from above. As if I were there merged into that seascape.”¹⁶³

At the opening lecture of the 2010 Sydney Biennale Sugimoto stated that the view to the ocean connected him with his childhood, standing on the beach with his grandfather as a child and beyond that to his ancestors and further still to a primordial consciousness. Through time this clean view of water and sky has remained unchanged connecting the consciousness of the viewer across continents and through time. The idea of the horizon has filled my mind, questioning the idea of what this actually means. Sugimoto discusses these as historical and spiritual, linking him to a primal past of what the first humans may have seen. It is an ancestral view and his words are similar to Gaston Roupnel’s words about a forest.



Figure 103: Seascape series (or *Time Exposed*) by Hiroshi Sugimoto at the Benesse House art museum on Naoshima (photograph by author)

Yi Fu Tuan in *Space and Place* discusses time in relation to people who live in areas where the view of the horizon is unobstructed and the country is vast. He uses the example of the Hopi Indians who live on a semi-arid plateau and can see great distances in the

¹⁶² Ibid., 10.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 51.

periphery. Their time is based around the seasons and they can mark this progression on the horizon. They do not recognise simultaneous time across distance. An event that happens far away is always in the past. It is a relationship to the time news takes to get from that place. The greater the distance the greater the time and the more uncertain the event may become.

Events dissolve into mythology.¹⁶⁴

The ability to see into the past is evident in both environments explored in this chapter but it appears that the unchanging nature of the ocean gives the potential to see further into our ancestral past. It is always changing but staying the same.

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¹⁶⁴ Tuan, *Space and Place - the Perspective of Experience*, 120-21.

Conclusion

In terms of vision I have worked with the idea that excessive light and vastness of space dulls our peripheral engagement. The world becomes flattened as the rods in our eyes are effectively turned off. Oliver Sacks talks about this in his book *the Island of the Colourblind* where his companion – who is colour blind – has to wear two pairs of dark sunglasses in order to see during the day.¹⁶⁵ Even though I do not have this issue, in the large open areas around Calprum station my focus is reduced to the detail of the ground plane and my inner thoughts. It is like looking at a landscape from above and even though I do look towards the horizon it does not hold my attention and I become restless. I believe that this is an awareness of time through lack of peripheral stimulation and therefore the line making becomes an instinctive response to the perception of having time to fill. This changes when light reduces and the perceptual environment reduces. In a close proximal environment like a forest or interior time becomes less relevant and there is less need to fill the space (or time).

Glare and *The Horizon* emphasise the phenomenological difference between a landscape experienced through our central vision and a landscape experienced through our peripheral vision. It has been illustrated as the difference between our distal horizon and our direct proximal horizon. *Glare* starts with the idea of an ancestral forest and ultimately ends within a small building whilst *The Horizon* starts with the vastness of space but ends in within a limitless proximal forest. Both projects intersect in terms of outcomes and the dark resulting imagery has similarities despite quite a different context blurring the visible distinction between inside and outside. This ambiguity between the distinction of spaces leads into the next chapter where the ability to determine outside and inside, habited and uninhabited, and visible and invisible is questioned.

Experimentation with printing and materials has led to some interesting discoveries. In terms of light and the exploration of an image it has been found that dark movement induced images have embedded visual content. A fortuitous fault in the printing of white ink led to an effective application of ink on glass. These discoveries are explored further in the concluding two projects documented in the final chapter.



¹⁶⁵ Sacks's companion Knut Nordby is a congenital achromatope and has no functional cones in his eyes. Therefore in bright daylight he is blind as the rods in his eyes switch off. Sacks, *The Island of the Colour-Blind*, 15.

Chapter Four: Photographing the invisible

Introduction

Our peripheral rod vision is attuned to low light, movement and lacks clarity and colour definition. Scotopic vision is purely rod-based vision and is our night vision, it is the most attuned to movement and is colour blind. Mesotopic vision still has some cone vision and is our twilight vision. It still has some colour response but tends to be biased towards the blue spectrum. These types of seeing are the home of ambiguity and hallucination, because scotopic and mesotopic seeing is movement based and lacking in clarity. It taps into our primal fears and instincts. What is the object you have just seen out of the corner of your eye and where is it now? The two projects in this chapter investigate the peripheral area of seeing and expose the ambiguities of what we imagine we see. *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone* aim to capture our interaction with the invisible and the ambiguous in our close proximal world.

The reference and context for these images is James Turrell's light works and in particular the Art House *Minamidera*, a collaboration between Turrell and the Japanese architect Tadao Ando. This Art House is an example of the process of dark adaption and the Purkinje shift, where colour perception shifts from red to blue spectrum as our vision moves from cone dominated vision to rod dominated vision (photopic to scotopic vision). Both projects go to the edge of what is photographically possible and the edge of our perception. *Uninhabited* examines the limits of our scotopic and mesotopic vision through a fieldstudy in Western Sydney. In this series the boundaries between inside and outside is tested as well as our ability to see what has been captured photographically. These images are flattened tonally and require low light with possibly the aid of a torch.

Blood and Bone examines our visual processing and the ambiguity of what we see. In this series the main question is: what do you see when thinking about something else? We all do tasks that involve seeing but may not fully occupy our minds. Driving a car we can listen to an audio book and not remember the journey; when we ride a bicycle, we can simultaneously write a report in our head. What do we see when we have experienced a trauma and our mind is fully occupied – what is it that we see?

These projects are my concluding peripheral works that investigate small intimate places that closely link to our memories of events and the darkness brings us to the boundaries of our inner thoughts. These phenomenological translations are about inside and outside but not literally; they are about the boundary of what we dream more than seeing itself. They are photographs of the barely visible and the invisible.

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Uninhabited project (Capturing the barely visible)

The site of this project was an organised field study of the (uninhabited) outskirts of Sydney near the Windsor and Pitt Town region and extending to the foothills of the Blue Mountains. It is the area within the flood plain around the Hawkesbury River and is some of the last remaining food producing areas of the Sydney basin. The study is a joint initiative with the ANU and the CSIRO and is investigating issues of food security. During the field study I was told that this 1% of NSW land produces more than 11% of the total food crop of NSW and is some of the most fertile land in Australia.¹⁶⁶ This land is now under threat from the increasing expansion of the suburbs of Sydney. *Contested Landscapes* was quite a broad study covering a large area and population and therefore harder to engage with a specific community unlike the Eden field study and the *Hall* experiment.

Interpretation of this area came from my own memories of growing up in Smithfield. At that time Smithfield was the edge of Sydney and there were market gardens and bushland in close proximity. As time passed the gardens disappeared and the natural bush receded and the old farmhouses lay empty and this became our playground. The houses were eventually demolished and at about the time we were leaving to come to Canberra, the first factories were being built in place of the vegetable gardens. This process is now happening further out and already the signs are evident. Old farmhouses are abandoned in fields and independent service stations and supermarkets are going out of business. The empty buildings that litter the periphery of Sydney are shells of lost hopes and dreams. These buildings became my subject.

The Hawkesbury River harbours evidence of a complex indigenous and settler history that will soon be covered over with suburbia, even though many abandoned houses or buildings are the silent linkages to this history. In Cattai National Park amongst the spear sharpening grooves is a carving of a sailing ship (figure 102). I am (again) reminded of Kate Grenville's book *The Secret River* and the myth of an uninhabited landscape due to our inability to actually see.

Taking photographs of abandoned buildings is quite a common theme in contemporary photography. Social media sites such as Instagram are littered with images of empty abandoned buildings of various types. This type of imagery can be very attractive in terms of texture and grunge but my aim here is not to show abandonment it is to show signs of invisible habitation and the essence of a narrative. Over time the uninhabited buildings on private land slowly wither away leaving an outline of footings on the ground. I cannot tell what was there, the shape of the rooms or the lives of the people. It takes an effort of abstract thought to allow some interpretation of the history and connection to place. Soon it may be too late as the suburban sprawl swallows what is left.

¹⁶⁶ This may be an overestimation but it is hard to obtain clear data. One article estimates only 8% of food crop in NSW. Whereas in another article particular crops such as lettuce, mushrooms, tomatoes and spring onions are as high as 70-90%. The significance is more in the social and historical value of food growing in the area.



Figure 104: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(Rock carving in Cattai national park)



Figure 105: Unprinted photograph from the Western Sydney field study
(Abandoned house along Wisemans Ferry Road, 15)

Our attachment to houses

On Naoshima, in Japan, houses such as these are used to bring connections between past and present through art and architecture (as discussed in chapter two). I try to imagine a suburb in Western Sydney interpreted in such a way - an Art House in each suburb. In contrast to this the protected buildings at Scheyville and Cattai national parks appear to be losing historical connection through displaced restoration. In my last visit to the buildings at Scheyville - which in previous trips were in disrepair - have been restored into an unrecognisable state. Some of the rooms have been converted for wedding receptions and other events in a kind of mock heritage interpretation.

I take pictures of areas of Scheyville still in a dilapidated state and wonder if these recordings will be the noeme of Western Sydney.¹⁶⁷ I become absorbed in the process that has now become a pattern in my photographic practice. First straight shots carefully record the spaces in a recognisable documentation then a second process of recording documents my movement through the spaces resulting in dark blurred ambiguous images that are barely visible. Although serious in intent, in relation to recording peripheral vision, these explorations link my own thoughts back to my childhood in Smithfield and I have a guilty pleasure in this, as Michel de Certeau explains:

To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in place, to be other and to move toward the other... The childhood experience that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, floods private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces, and creates within the planned city a "metaphorical" or mobile city...¹⁶⁸

I realise that in some way I am exploring my own memories when exploring these buildings and houses. This reflects the success of the Art Houses in Honmura and on some of the other islands. The houses are not inaccessible museum pieces they are triggers for your own memories and if you live in Honmura they are a reinforcement of attachment. Therefore these photographs in Sydney emphasise the small invisible elements that may trigger memories, such as the light under a door, dappled sunlight through closed blinds, a messy desk, a decorated mantelpiece or a worn mattress. Like the city of Tamara in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* these are signs of other things and not the sign of what they are:

The eye does not see things but images of things that mean other things: pincers point out the tooth-drawer's house; a tankard, the tavern; halberds, the barracks; scales, the grocer's. Statues and shields depict lions, dolphins, towers, stars: a sign that something - who knows what? - has as its sign a lion or a dolphin or a tower or a star... However the city may really be, beneath this thick coating of signs, whatever it may contain or conceal, you leave Tamara without having discovered it...¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ In reference to Roland Barthes, "*That has been*"

¹⁶⁸ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 110.

¹⁶⁹ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc, 1974), 15.

This project links back to the house depicted in the first chapter, the image without a code (figure 39). This is the house along Wisemans Ferry Road (15) and is an old abandoned homestead on a small knoll overlooking Little Cattai Creek (figure 105). I know nothing about the history of this house and its previous occupants. I have visited this house and two other houses along Wiseman Ferry Road, plus the buildings at Scheyville and Cattai numerous times. The images I have taken contain a trace of my peripheral exploration of the region and a phenomenological narrative may be formed to attempt to obtain an understanding of these houses and this place.

We stay in a number of places along the Hawkesbury River. One is a caravan park that abuts the river edge between farms that now grow grass instead of food. Disused caravans litter the nearby field. This area is in the flood plain of the river and therefore safe from development (figure 106).

Another camping stop is in the Cattai National park and it is here amongst the spear sharpening grooves that I find the carving of a sailing ship.

The homestead on the small knoll was the first house visited and also the last house visited (figure 107). It reminds me most of the houses explored in Smithfield. There is no track to the front door and no visible car access even though the house is quite close to the main road. It is a simple house as a child might draw, two windows either side of the front door, a big roof with chimney. The plan of the house is just four rooms along a central hall.

Once inside the outside disappears. The windows are grimy and you have to put your nose to the glass to see out. Around part of the house the verandah has collapsed and it is possible to see the underside of corrugated iron. Therefore it is dark and gloomy, a stark contrast to the glare of the day outside. Like Minamidara Art House¹⁷⁰ it takes a while before details become visible and I wonder how to transfer this experience into photographs. The dim doorway from one dark room leads to another darker room. Friezes in the hallway have faces that emerge from the darkness. An old fireplace with its mantle removed yawns an inky black chasm.

In the front room the pressed metal ceiling has collapsed making a strange twisted labyrinth.

In one house it does not take long to realise that a photographer once lived in the place I was silently moving (figures 108 and 109). Inside the house it was like a kind of shrine. Obviously the house was abandoned but it certainly wasn't empty. Papers, books, old photographs lay strewn throughout on every surface. In the kitchen was an old enlarger with unopened boxes of photographic paper. The sink and sideboard still had trays filled with old chemicals and negatives hung from clips on the shelves above.

It is an unfinished project by an unknown inhabitant; alone in an old house desperately trying to print off all the negatives accumulated over time.

¹⁷⁰ This Art House is discussed in detail in the following section.

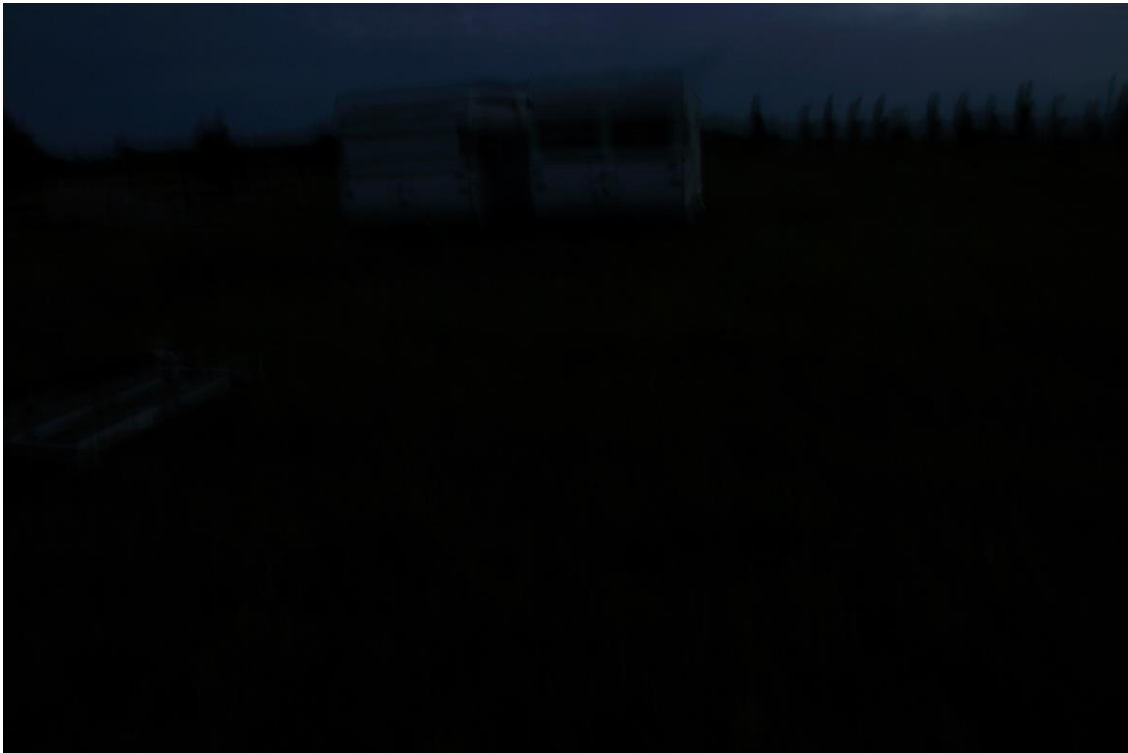


Figure 106: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(The caravan park)



Figure 107: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(Inside a house on Wiseman's ferry road)



Figure 108: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(The photographer's house)

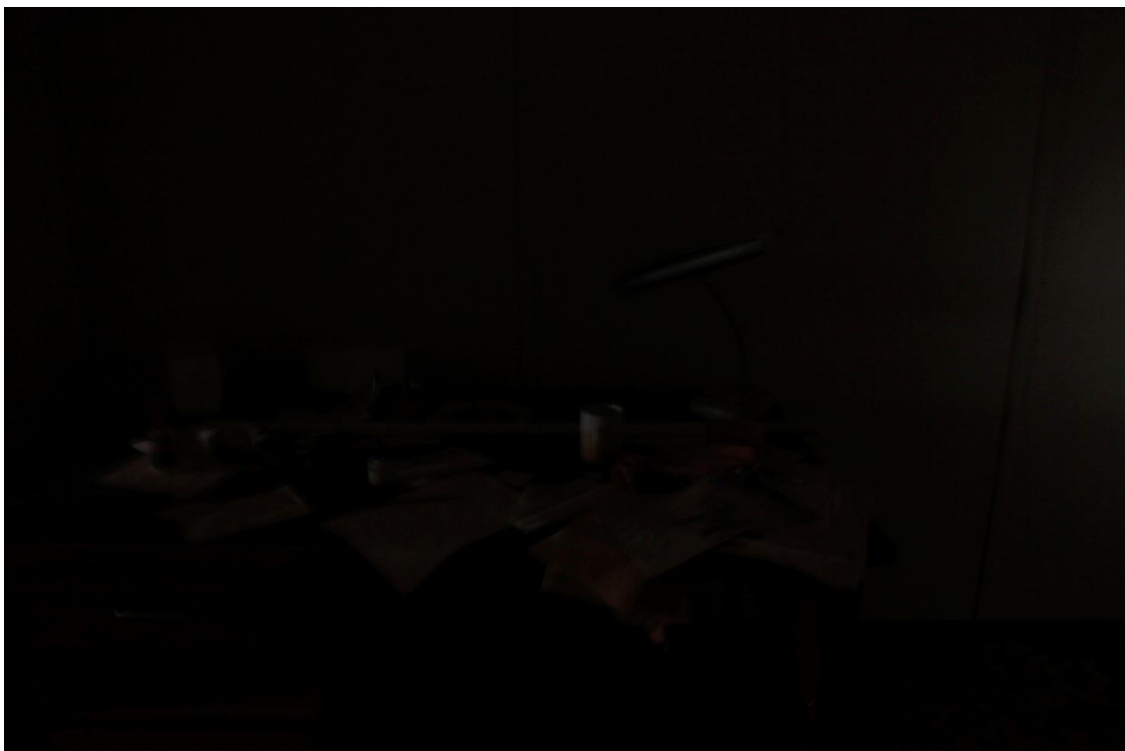


Figure 109: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(The photographer's house)

Taking pictures while carefully avoiding making any disturbance became difficult in these houses. Slowly I made my way through rooms collecting a number of indistinct images.

In one room I pause. It must have originally been a bedroom but later had been converted into a study. There was a desk with lamp, pencils, pens and papers and I could just make out some of the markings but not enough to put together a sentence. In a tray to the left of the main writing area was a set of completed papers.

In yet another house I am stuck by its habitation. Although abandoned it showed recent signs of living, curtains across a doorway, a mattress, a stool used as a small table, utensils in a sink and messages sprayed on the walls. It felt comfortable in some way and the difference between these houses and the houses in Hall suddenly seemed quite small. Does it matter whether these houses are inhabited or not or whether they are the houses I have lived in? As Gaston Bachelard would argue, it only matters that these are oneiric houses and the exploration and interaction within, that "...the places in which we have experienced daydreaming reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because of memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time."¹⁷¹

This is what I think when exploring the buildings at Scheyville (pronounced Sky-Ville) but why in this place am I also moved to daydreaming (figures 110 and 111). Scheyville is a National Park near Pitt Town. I only knew initially that Scheyville was a place that wayward boys were sent to learn farming skills and was later used as barracks during the Second World War. There seems to be more however and there was a familiarity to the domed Nissen huts. These were lived in buildings at one stage and had a feeling of homeliness to some of the rooms explored. Many rooms also had a sense of unease and I feel this is also true of the houses. The investigation has a sense of riskiness in the act of accessing these buildings and a heightened sense of awareness of that something or someone may be within. At this point it had moved from an everyday experience into something else.

Fear of the ambiguous

When showing some of these works, and the following series *Blood and Bone*, I was asked if my topic was horror. I had never thought of these images in such a way, that somehow the process of the images being dark and ambiguous had moved the photographs towards the uncanny. Maybe this is what can develop from showing images from our peripheral vision. This is somewhat different to the celebration of the everyday experience found in Naoshima towards something that is more like Gregor Schneider's *Dead House* or installations.

¹⁷¹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 6.



Figure 110: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(House at Scheyville)



Figure 111: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(House at Scheyville)

In an article about Schneider written by Ulrich Look there are two sentences that could very well apply to the *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone* works: "So the uncanny is not the straightforward Other, it is anything of one's own, rendered inaccessible and unidentifiable. It is the flip side of the conventional and the everyday."¹⁷²

And:

"Anything may become uncanny when its hidden presence is palpable, when it is possible to report on it, yet all the while it is invisible, unfathomable, impossible to verify."¹⁷³



Figure 112: *ur 3 B, Verdoppelter Raum*, Gregor Schneider, Berlin, 1994

I would like to think that the dark photographs of this series are not like Schneider's rooms, which in his imagery are light, clean and sinister like the rooms of serial killers (figure 112). The photographs of his rooms are clean and have the staged appearance of attempting to look normal. They do look normal and mundane but something is not quite right.

Reengagement with scotopic vision

The images from the *Uninhabited* are not staged but direct from reality – in some ways they could be classed as documentary photographs, unstaged and unmanipulated. It could be interpreted as the documentation of the barely visible. To me these are a celebration of events not normally photographed. These photographs are closer in intent (but not in form) to Justine Varga's *Moving Out* series – a simple capture of the movement

¹⁷² Ulrich Look, "The Dead House Ur," *Parkett* 63, no. 34 (2002): 148.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 148-49.

of light through a room.¹⁷⁴ A thin strip of light under a door has something comforting about it. Or the exploration of a dark house where you can just make out the details of furniture and objects as your eyes adjust. Or the first dim rays of morning light between the blinds. The loss of our appreciation of dark spaces is discussed personally within Junichiro Tannizaki's small book, *In Praise of Shadows*:

We have all had the experience... of being shown a scroll, one of the temple's treasures, hanging in a large, deeply recessed alcove. So dark are these alcoves, even in bright daylight, that we can hardly discern the outlines of the work; all we can do is listen to the explanation of the guide, follow as best we can the all-but-invisible brush strokes, and tell ourselves how magnificent a painting must be. Yet the combination of that blurred old painting and the dark alcove is one of absolute harmony. The lack of clarity, far from disturbing us, seems rather to suit the painting perfectly.¹⁷⁵

These photographs are difficult to create. They are hand held shots between 2 – 4 seconds and the resulting images contain the slightest movement (my own). I wonder if it is the tremble of my hand or my heart beat that is captured in this movement. When the photographs are taken I cannot see what I have captured in the viewfinder and have to wait until the images are downloaded before I can see what is contained in the darkness (representative of analogue photography). I lighten the images a small amount to the boundary of visibility although this is sometimes difficult depending on the screen brightness and surrounding light. Some images have no contained information and therefore look pixelated, whereas others have a depth that appears to be related to the camera shake. Printing is identical to analogue printing requiring test strips and trial and error and each print is unique and does not conform to the paper profiling normally required for digital printing.

After finding the morgue room at Scheyville I realise the extent of the history is larger than previously thought. Between 1911 and 1939, Scheyville farm was home to boys taken from broken or poor homes in England. Boys and girls were shipped from England to countries such as Australia and Canada by the Dreadnought foundation and Barnardo's. A stolen generation not discussed generally. During the war Scheyville was used as a military training camp. After the war the farm became part of the immigration program providing accommodation for predominately Polish immigrants.¹⁷⁶ Reading this in the information pamphlet I am suddenly linked to my own family history where my Great Aunt and Uncle aged 13 and 9 respectively were sent away separately on ships to Toronto, Canada. They're whereabouts now unknown. My own family immigrated to Australia in 1966 and stayed for a short time in the Nissen huts at Villawood Migrant

¹⁷⁴ Anna Johnson, "Justine Varga," <http://www.artistprofile.com.au/justine-varga/> accessed 9.04.2017. Justine Varga's work explores the material quality of the photographic process and the room images in moving out are distorted through light spill and prolonged exposure, which transform the images towards simple abstract compositions.

¹⁷⁵ Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (Sedgwick: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 19.

¹⁷⁶ Anna Williams Charles Pickett, "Fields of Memories: The Scheyville Training and Migrant Accommodation Centre 1911 - 1964," ed. Department of Environment and Conservation (Sydney: Migration Heritage Centre, 2006).

Hostel and then at Maroubra. These huts are now demolished but I suspect this is the source of my familiarity to these structures.

Later looking at these images of houses and buildings I wonder if there are invisible or unseen connections that may be evident to other viewers of these works. Would the viewers be able to see direct linkages and narratives or make up their own recollections, seeing themselves and their own story? Would they wonder, like me, whether the papers in the tray of the photographer's house contain something related to their own life or the life of someone in the past? The images of this series raises the question about whether a clear focused image is just an image of an old house whereas an indistinct dark image has the added element of mystery and imagination and a higher potential to lead into narrative making.

Unfortunately unlike the restored Art Houses in Japan where the past sits side-by-side with the present, the uninhabited houses and buildings on the periphery of Sydney are destined for disappearance. These houses are like the stopped counters in the Kadoya Art house, no longer lived houses but still a place that can afford invisible linkages to other things whether real or imagined.

Viewing of the works

The *Uninhabited* images have been exhibited a number of times during the course of this research, at one stage four of the completed images sit dark and forgotten at the rear of the gallery (See Street Gallery, figure 113) where no one seems to give them a second glance. I had asked for them to be unlit and perhaps people don't have time to wait for an image to appear. Or do the lighted areas around make it difficult to engage the scotopic area of our vision. In the Sassafras Creek Gallery the works are lit directly with small spotlights that bring out the details within the overall blackness. It feels like too much is given away and therefore the images are somehow reduced to just blurry images of rooms. The images appear to suffer in the context of a group exhibition where generally people are attracted to the brightly lit objects while darker objects recede into the background. Later still, the images are displayed for a review without lighting and the darkness comes to the fore and the detail recedes. Given time and looking indirectly, details in the works start to emerge. The next day I arrive to remove the works (somewhat deflated) and the images have changed yet again. As mentioned in the section about the *Horizon* series, a strip of sunlight is visible through the centre of each photograph emanating from the skylight above. Within the band of light all the hidden details have become visible while outside the band the photograph remains black. Waiting a while before removing the works, I watch as the progression of sunlight reveals segments of detail in the image during its slow progress.

In this I am reminded of James Turrell's work in Minamidara Art House on Naoshima in Japan (described in the next section) and waiting patiently within this work as a rectangle of light slowly reveals itself before the room it is in also becomes visible. At home I move one of the images through different rooms of the house to see what happens. Then I try a small torch and find that it is possible to explore the photograph in the same way that you can explore a dark room (figure 114).



Figure 113: Installation of four *Uninhabited* photographs at the See Street Gallery, Sydney



Figure 114: Exploring one of the *Uninhabited* photographs with a torch



Figure 115: Final installation of five of eleven *Uninhabited* photographs at the Hackett house

In other experiment I change the colour cast and print one photograph twice, once with a blue cast and once with a red cast. The image with the blue cast appears darker under normal light conditions while the image with the red cast is brighter but when the light levels are lower this reverses.

In the final installation in Hackett, Canberra (figure 115) the house helps to provide the sensation of exploring the houses and buildings in Sydney. This is not in the same way as the original experience but it does add to the emotional state while viewing the works. The installation may induce a sense of anxiety in some people or excitement in others when becoming the surrogate for exploration. The house and its rooms become a museum for other houses or buildings and their rooms, which are contained within these darkened images. Viewers of the work are each given a torch to explore individual photographs and reveal the hidden details. In a more intimate way this is possible with the *Uninhabited* book where it is possible to sit at a table and examine a larger selection of the work with or without the aide of a torch.

Along Wisemans Ferry Road (15) there is an old abandoned homestead on a small knoll overlooking Little Cattai Creek. At the base of the knoll is a sign announcing that the future of golf, property and life is here! It is coming into my third year of visiting the area to take photographs for the *Uninhabited* series and this house, and I notice that the sign has now yellowed and some of the poster has peeled. The homestead is made of local sandstone which makes it – in my estimation – 150 years old or maybe more. Once inside

I do an initial inspection to see if anyone is around and also to check on what has happened since I was last here. I am initially shocked at the amount of deterioration and damage. The mantelpieces around the fireplaces have been removed, there is graffiti on most of the walls now and in one of the front rooms the pressed metal ceiling has fallen in.

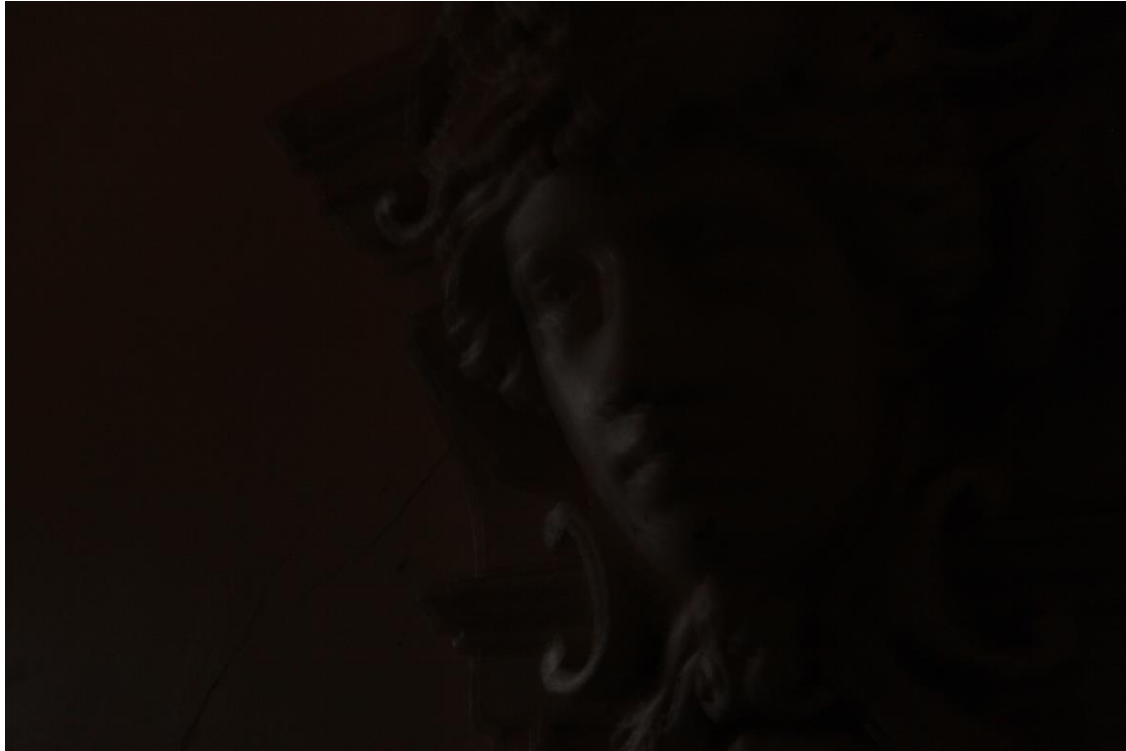


Figure 116: Untitled from *Uninhabited*, pigment print on rag
(Frieze in the hallway of house on Wisemans Ferry Road)

Racing into the main hall I check that the two friezes (faces) at the base of an arch are still in place. To my relief they are still there and intact. Every time I visit this house and the buildings at Scheyville I am transported in time and place. Sometimes while looking at the photographs of friezes taken in the hallway of this house I am transported to the memory of my grandmother and her hair like a finely spun spider web across the exposed scalp of her head. These are connections I make which are unrelated to the actual history of either the homestead or Scheyville but still add meaning to my interaction with these buildings (or objects).

I try to imagine what multiple interactions would be like for different people. Maybe it would be a stronger connection depending on the particular place and the person who is engaging with the place. This leads me to understanding what Simon Schama means in *Landscape and Memory* when he talks about meaning of landscape being beyond the conventional sight level and within the layers of myth and memory, a layering process of events and memory that modifies the natural landscape and the inhabitants themselves.¹⁷⁷

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¹⁷⁷ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*.

Minamidera Art House (James Turrell and Scotopic vision)

At a small building near the Kiyomizu-dera temple in Kyoto, Japan, you can descend into the Tainai-meguri (symbolically entering the womb of a female bodhisattva). You take your shoes off and walk in socks on the timber boards before descending a steep set of stairs that appear to be more like a ladder. At the base of the ladder a rope with smooth timber balls acts as a handrail and guides over a smooth cobbled stone floor in complete darkness. To find the way you rely completely on touch. In this passage my eyes feel like they press against the darkness, almost like they are hungry for the faintest speck of light. Time passes slowly in the darkness and there are many turns effectively helping you to lose any sense of direction. Even though I cannot see I sense that the passage is low in height; maybe only slightly higher than my head. Around the next corner my eyes suddenly latch on to a small pinprick of light that highlights what looks like a blurred stone plinth. The light is so dim that it is hard to obtain any strong acuity of the object. There is only just enough light to give the misty outline, the top seems concave like a bowl (it is actually convex). It is hard to retain the image in my memory of the misty outline of this object but I do clearly remember the experience.

On an island in the Seto Sea on a pleasant sunny day I have a similar experience where a guide leads me into a darkened room. It is complete darkness and I have to trust him when he indicates to sit down. Luckily I can feel a bench and relax. Sitting in the darkness I hear him quietly talking in Japanese before complete silence. Like in Tainai-meguri my eyes press against the darkness again. After a period of time an ultraviolet rectangle appears before my eyes, it feels quite close. Judgement of size and distance seem to fail as my eyes and brain try to register and make form of the light. At some point the blurry rectangle appears to move back and forth or is it enlarging and shrinking. It is hard to gauge time at this point. After a period of time the space becomes more distinct, quite suddenly like falling asleep then waking up at dawn. At this point it is possible to walk in the space across the cobble stone floor towards what appears to be a projected rectangle of light on the opposite wall. At first the light seems solid but then inserting a hand through the light can break the solidity. The rectangle is actually a cut out with an undefined space beyond.

On the first visit to Minamidera I did not think about how the guide was able to lead me to a bench in complete darkness without the aide of a torch. On a second visit nearly two years later I was disappointed to find that I could already partially see when entering (it was raining and quite dark outside). Turrell's work *Backside of the moon*¹⁷⁸ uses the time it takes for our eyes to change from photopic vision to scotopic vision. He also works with the colour shift when our eyes move from photopic to scotopic vision. In Minamidera the rectangle uses a blue almost ultraviolet light that is invisible when first entering; as we become dark-adapted (this can take 10 – 15 minutes) the rectangle becomes visible due to the colour shift.

¹⁷⁸ I suspect this could be an error in translation and could actually be called *Dark side of the moon*.



Figure 117: Looking towards the entrance of Minamidera Art House by Tadao Ando with internal artwork by James Turrell (photograph by author)

Although Turrell makes only small references to traditional Japanese influences in his work there are similar examples in experience that can be drawn upon. The first is Kiyomizu-dera experience in Kyoto and another is the Zenkoji Temple in Nagano where again you descend into complete darkness into an underground passage. Turrell visited Japan very early in his career in the 1960's¹⁷⁹ and it can be assumed that some of these temples had an influence on his work, particularly on the *Aperture* series, which includes the Minamidera Art House. Minamidera itself goes beyond the artwork within due to the influence of architect Tadao Ando who designed the exterior structure. The official name is Jizoji Kannon-in but generally it is referred to as South Temple (Minamidera). Although this particular Art House is newly constructed it uses the traditional Japanese measurements “ken” and “shaku” in its design.¹⁸⁰

Turrell's *Aperture* works are the opposite of his *Ganzfeld* works, these are not works where light becomes a solid element, they are works where light could be considered a gaseous substance or no substance, as he mentions to a curator of his work in Japan:

I have an interest in the invisible light, the light perceptible only in the mind. A light which seems to be undimmed by the entering of the senses. I want to address the light that we see in dreams and make spaces that seem to come from those dreams and which are familiar to those who inhabit those places. Light has a regular power for me. What takes place in viewing a space is

¹⁷⁹ Osaka, *James Turrell*, 79.

¹⁸⁰ Yuji Akimoto, *Remain in Naoshima*, 59-64.

wordless thought. It's not as though it's unthinking and without intelligence;
it's that it has a different return than words.¹⁸¹

In this quote Turrell could be describing the interaction of light and space through peripheral vision. Our general experiences through space are non-language based, as our peripheral receptors cannot easily distinguish individual details whilst we move through space.¹⁸² The two projects in this chapter are a study of this area and the instinctive act of perceiving the world through our bodies. Within these works are two small worlds of our unconscious that can be found within houses and within gardens. Concentrations of the unconscious can be found in these locations through our experiences and therefore these studies are not just about invisible light they are about invisible connections. Turrell's *Aperture* works form a contextual connection between the two projects represented in this chapter and help link between the barely visible, the invisible and the idea of being formless.

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¹⁸¹ Osaka, *James Turrell*, 86.

¹⁸² This is a complex relationship between the ability to recognise details through selective attention. It is a balance between our peripheral and central vision that has difficulty if there is limited visual information. It is often referred to as the balance between our "Where" and our "What" system. Margaret Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing* (New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc, 2002), 50,51. Deni G Pelli and Katherine A Tillman, "The Uncrowded Window of Object Recognition," in *Nat Neurosci*, ed. National Institutes of Health (New York: NIH Public Access, 2008).

Blood and Bone project (Capturing the invisible)

One of James J. Gibson's more interesting concepts states that objects in the environment are not actually illusory they are formless invariants. In this concept objects are both an invariant or do not change (stay the same) and also formless or change continuously (always changing) as we move past them within an optical field.¹⁸³ This is a concept that is difficult to capture in photographic form. In this project the use of glass as a printing medium is my attempt to replicate this idea. Glass is solid in form or invariant in structure and is also transparent or visually formless. When I print on glass the image is translucent and when moving past the translucent image it can have a formless appearance against background objects.

In these works the aim is to also capture invariants at the point of formless appearance where the image embody an illusory state. *Blood and Bone* is a series generated from the experiments in movement from the *Everyday* project discussed at the beginning of the first chapter. The images have an ideal movement but don't show movement as such. The images are ambiguous and illusory through movement and reflect our initial attempts to make sense of what is visible through peripheral vision. In this way they are photographs of the invisible.

Near every house there is a garden. *Blood and Bone* is about a secret garden.

A garden can contain rooms just like the inside of a house. But a garden is outside so how does this sense of containment work, the outside trying to be inside? The best gardens in are the ones that do not look like gardens but look like a natural space that someone has cut a path through or placed a clearing and a seat. An original definition of a place is a clearing in a forest. Even though this place looks and feels like a small forest and a unique oasis saved within the mass of the city it is actually a constructed space. The reason I am attracted to the gardens that appear natural is this idea of replication or surrogacy, the attempt to create a kind of natural disorder amongst the ordered construction process. The borrowing of scenery or natural features is called 'shakkei' in Japan although this is a more stylised view of the natural scenery than this garden.¹⁸⁴ There are some similarities like the garden at Katsura Imperial Villa, designed for walking and reflection. Each time you stop and look there is a different view. This garden is about the process of concealing and revealing.

When working on a garden it can be pleasant or desultory, although at moments it can be physically challenging. It can allow time for thinking and reflection. In a similar way to driving a car your thoughts can drift and the actual physical activity can become secondary to the invisible action of dreaming. In an intimate proximal environment such as this we are prone to dreaming as we work and wander in this space. This is the conflict of inside and outside, what is it that we actually see when thinking of something else? If I drive and listen to an audio book and at the end of the journey have no recollection of the route what have I actually seen during this journey?

¹⁸³ Gibson, "On the Concept of 'Formless Invariants' in Visual Perception."

¹⁸⁴ Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando - Studies in Architectural Anthropology in Japan*, 41.



Figure 118: Untitled from *Blood and Bone*, pigment print on glass

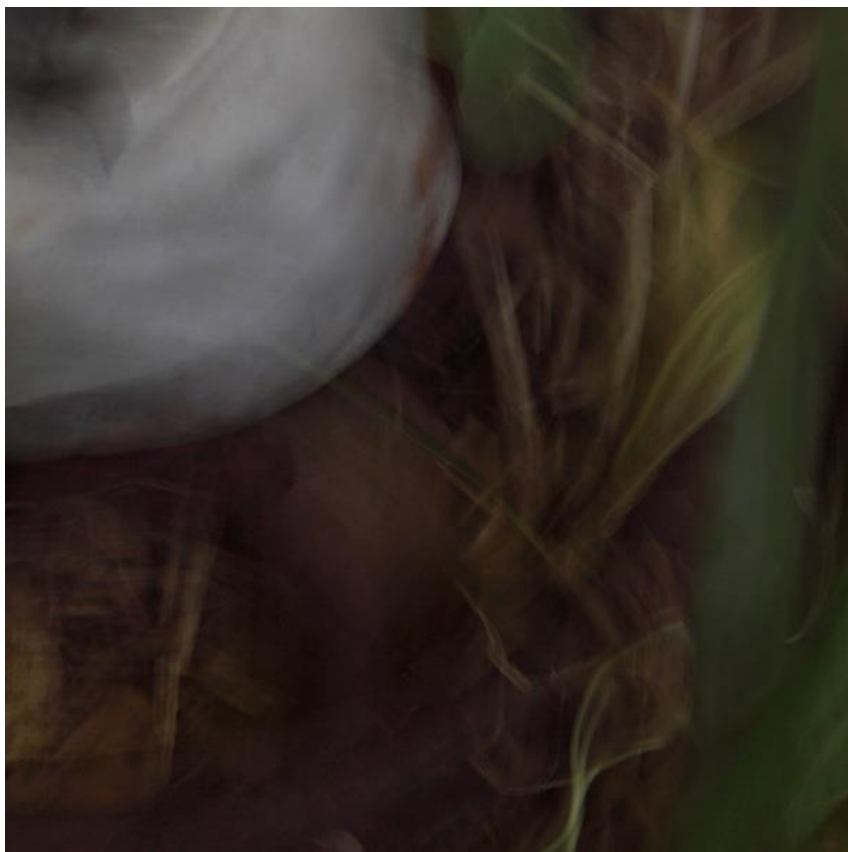


Figure 119: Untitled from *Blood and Bone*, pigment print on glass

In this research this is one of the more abstract and paradoxical questions around peripheral vision and capturing this mode of interaction. As Merleau-Ponty tries to untangle with words in *The Visible and the Invisible*, I am trying to capture "... an interior horizon and an exterior horizon between which the actual visible is a provisional partitioning..."¹⁸⁵.

The garden I am looking at in Australia (which is unnamed) ironically has its origins in England through the boundless garden. It has no obvious beginning or end and its edges or boundaries are confused. This may have something to do with the fact that at one stage it was also illegal. A boundless garden is an un-garden. It is a closed place set apart from street life and private. In this garden the only thing missing is a ha-ha, an un-wall half sunken and hidden.¹⁸⁶ Therefore a garden can also be a metaphor. Robert Harbison in his small book *Eccentric Spaces* highlights the symbolic nature of gardens:

Gardens always mean something else, [and] uses one thing to say another. Vegetation in gardens is symbolic, hence one can write about them without using the names of the plants... Here the outside is arranged to suit the inside, in mocking imitation, in imaginary threat, in soothing reminiscence, as it leads the soul through all the old situations, portraying comforts and dangers enlarged or diminished in neutral unhuman green. Trees, bushes, and slopes show us closeness, separation, dependence, arrest, depression, exultation, until rarely even in dreams can a person get such a sense of traversing years in a jump, surmounting obstacles with a few sloping steps, looking back on the past with a turn of the head. In gardens everyone is free to go where he pleases, to follow a number of avenues, to make contradictory choices.¹⁸⁷

Could you also say that a garden is like a photograph? A garden can be a metaphor for memories and events through its attempts to be both an outside space and a container of rooms that mimic interior spaces. It is also a space between control and freedom. I always wonder at which point is the balance between this control and manipulation, and the point at which the plants take over. It is controlled but at the same time imperfect, a sudden loss of control for a moment. It is the imperfections that are attractive and these momentary lapses into disorder bring back a human or primal quality. Or, as it was pointed out to me, maybe my eye is not educated enough to see the art and design in a carefully planned boundless garden. One that appears natural and untamed.

Capturing the invisible

If I imagine that the ultimate vehicle of being absent from vision is to suffer loss of some kind, then how do I capture or represent this visual absence? How can you imagine what is seen in day-to-day interaction with the world after a traumatic event. In this state of fragility wrapped in cotton wool the world is always at a distance. Working within a proximal environment such as a garden may provide a restorative affect, a drawing out of inside to outside.

¹⁸⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 152.

¹⁸⁶ An illegal sunken fence originating in England Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces* (New York: MIT Press edition, 1977), 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

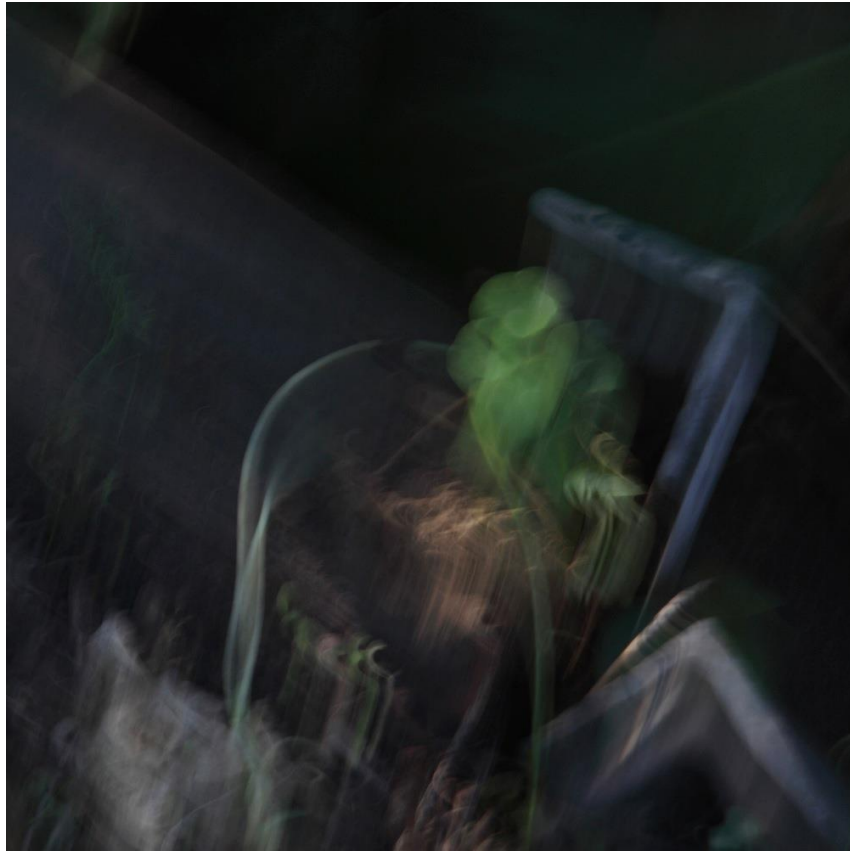


Figure 120: Untitled from *Blood and Bone*, pigment print on glass

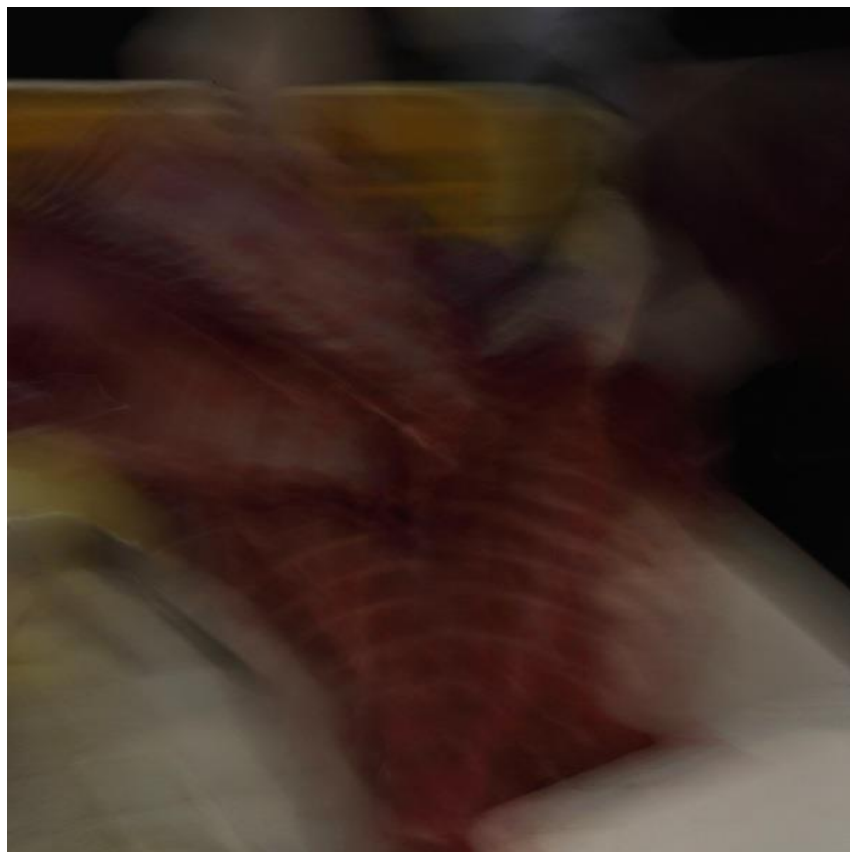


Figure 121: Untitled from *Blood and Bone*, pigment print on glass

Therefore this series of photographs contains something else unseen by an observer within this space. It is representative of something within, some inner turmoil that manifests itself as another layer within the formless environment.

In this I imagine a woman in a garden cutting rough steps into an embankment of an old railway siding as a process of forgetting. Not forgetting but a dulling of the senses through a multisensory engagement. The steps have timber risers in parts that hold compacted dirt in place whilst in other areas dry packed stones form steps and ramps in a makeshift way. A handrail made of rough tree stems is sanded and joined together using lead flashing from an old shed. I try to see the bare patch of ground prior to the work like the bare and open wound of grief that shared this point in time. Initial dirt and grim mixed with tears to form caked mud on hands. At moments the unending sound and shock of mattock on earth. This hard toil chips away at the dreams and internal thoughts in a similar way to the carving out and shaping of soil and ground. Then sprouting and bursting forth of tiny stems and leaves bringing hope of new beginnings. Are these new beginnings or forked pathways tinged with memories? Are new plants encouraged to take root as a mark of a new beginning or plants of familiarity each with a link to a memory or an event; we had our first kiss under the fig near the old school, rolled in the grass under the giant iron bark, hid in the hedge at a party smoking dope and lazily lounging arm in arm.

As a public garden it is particularly densely packed with plants and you imagine that this would not be out of place in the rainforest area of a botanical garden. An Eden. Or a shrine, as Harbison acknowledges:

The plan answers to needs everyone shares: the need to memorialise the past and hallow it, to rationalise confusion, transmuting ugliness into ease without losing the sense that disturbance preceded harmony, to reduce it to comfortable proportions for play, to summon up other places and other times, to have everything at hand, to stay at home.¹⁸⁸

I'm photographing this garden using the techniques highlighted within previous chapters. I feel at this stage that there is a certain amount of confidence in the approach. Light around the garden has that reddish hue prior to sunset and the dense vegetation produces lower light levels than expected at this time of day. My movements are slow and deliberate and at this stage with hours of practice I know that taking an image hand held will give the desired movement blur to the resulting photographs. It is hard to be sure as the images won't be visible until I look at them later. I am looking for the point of transition of the horizon of inside and outside. The photographs produced in this series are not surrogates of an experience in a garden they are surrogates of the experience of working through grief using the construction of a garden.

In order to achieve this two locations are fused together through ambiguity. One is this garden in Sydney and the other is the Toyko fish market. The images from the market present ugliness, a confusion and a growing sense of unease siting alongside images from the garden. It is a visceral sense of unease and a confusion of identity and imperfection.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 4.

Both are formless and ambiguous and therefore open to confusion about the real context of each image.

Interaction with the works

The first version of this work was displayed in a group exhibition *Assisted Reproduction* at the ANU School of Art. In this exhibition three images are printed on reclaimed glass found at a property near Barraga Bay. They are distressed and have stains and scratches on the glass that I can't remove. The gallery assistant tells me that the glass is not safe and it has sharp edges that require special gloves. But all I can think is that somehow the glass may have picked up the passage of time through this patina of use and the sharp edges add to the sense of unease.



Figure 122: Installation of glass images from *Blood and Bone* in the *Assisted Reproduction* exhibition at the ANU School of Art

The final *Blood and Bone* works are printed on sheets of freestanding glass in a similar way to the forest image in the *Glare* project. Two layers are printed with a varied translucency. The first layer is printed at 25% of the original image and the second layer is printed at 75% of the original image. In appearance the final image is not quite the full intensity of a 100% printed image. Although the new flat bed printer can print white as a background layer to the image it was turned off in this process. Layering gave greater adhesion and translucency, and the new printer provided better adhesion to the glass. The final glass panels are 180cm high by 90cm wide, allowing viewers of the work to walk around and see between the images. These works are at the scale of a body and have more presence than the original images. In the final exhibition the works are split

between two locations, the original three works and four of the larger works are installed in the ANU School of Art gallery whilst four large works are also installed within the house in Hackett.

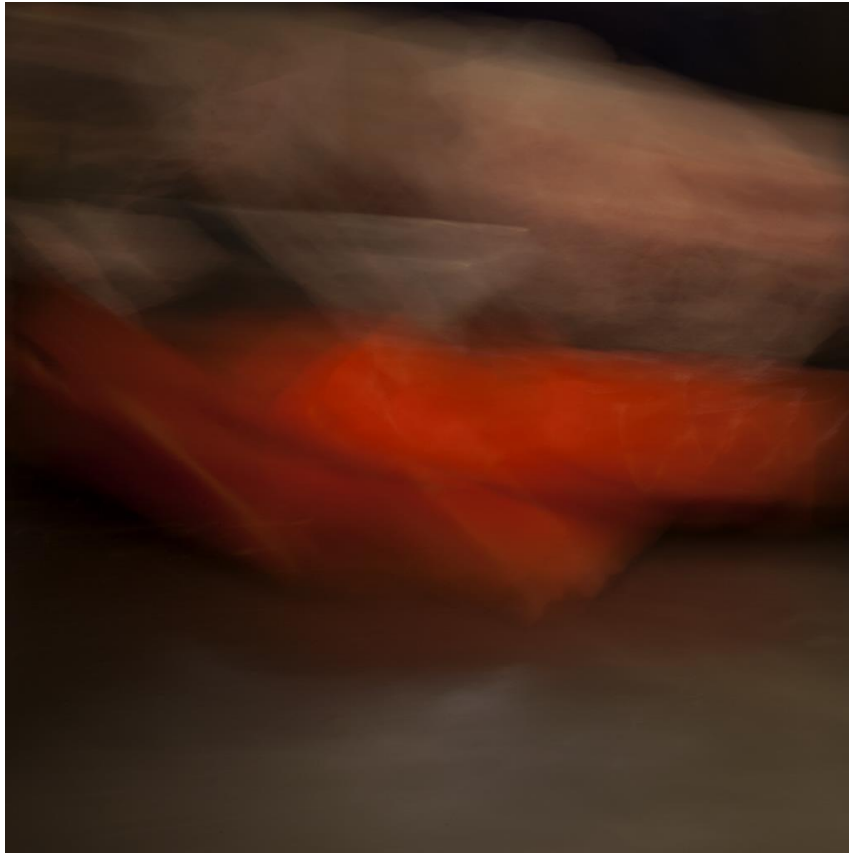


Figure 123: Untitled from *Blood and Bone*, pigment print on glass



Figure 124: Glass panels from *Blood and Bone* series within the house (books are in the foreground)

Although it would have been ideal to have the work together within one location the different scale spaces allowed for a different type of experience. In the gallery the works were viewed at a distance and there was less direct interaction with the glass at close proximity apart from close inspection to see how the printing is achieved. Within the house there is little room to stand back and therefore people are forced to interact with the work in a more intimate way (figure 124). In this situation the works have more presence and in many ways it reflects more closely the intimacy of both the garden and the fish market.

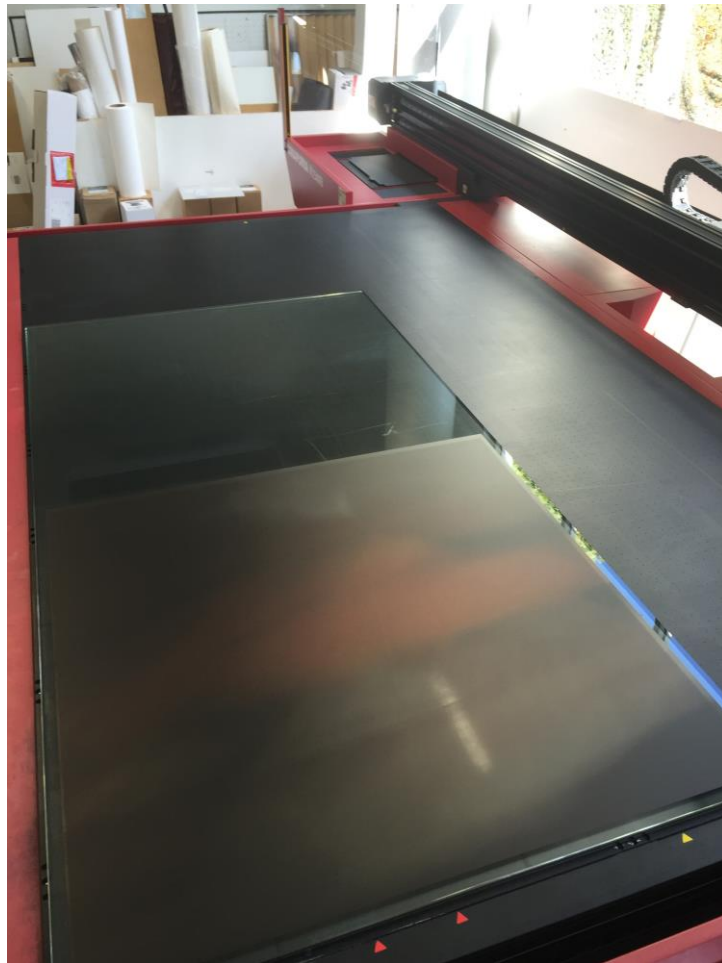


Figure 125: Glass panel during the printing process

The book of the Blood and Bone photographs is different to the glass works, these are printed on paper and therefore the formlessness is the image itself without the transparency that the glass adds to the works. In the book there are more photographs and this allows a different experience where the ambiguous nature of the images and original location blend into a reflection of the edge between visible and the invisible.

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Translation into space and experience

The results of this project influenced an architectural project that was being completed concurrently with the production of these works. The architectural project was a refurbishment of a building that had a high social heritage embedded within the fabric of the walls and rooms but invisible in actual form.¹⁸⁹ The challenge of the project became how to represent the social heritage in a way that integrates with daily interaction of the building without conforming to standard ideas around interpretive signage. Drawing on inspiration from the series of explorations within this research and investigations into the Naoshima art site, historical images were incorporated into the fabric of the building through glazing and as integrated installations.

Historical images were obtained from the Noel Butlin archives and the National Archives of Australia. These images were printed onto glazing adhesive film and became the privacy screening to a number of meeting rooms and offices throughout the building (figure 126). The location of these images approximately corresponded with the historical location within the building and the new refurbished space like a rephotograph showing the passage of time. Some of the images include figures giving a trace of occupation into an empty space. Due to the translucent nature of these images, like the *Blood and Bone* series, many of these images give the appearance of movement across the background of the spaces like the formlessness of movement mentioned by Gibson.



Figure 126: Historical image on privacy film, Florey Building ANU (image by author)

¹⁸⁹ The Florey building at the ANU had no heritage value as a building but high social value through historical events.

The installations within the building comprise of large timber lenticular structures that change the image form as you walk through the wide corridors. These lenticular images have been printed at the Inkjet Research Facility at the school of art and required a specially constructed frame to allow the photographs to be printed flat across the angled timber slats – in two halves (figure 127). The two halves of the angled slats were then assembled together and fixed to a sub-frame before wall mounting. When assembled there are two images that form one image from one direction and another from the opposite direction (figure 129). The installation when viewed directly in front displays portions of both images in a fragmented or formless way (figure 128).



Figure 127: Historical image in the process of being printed on timber slats (image by author)

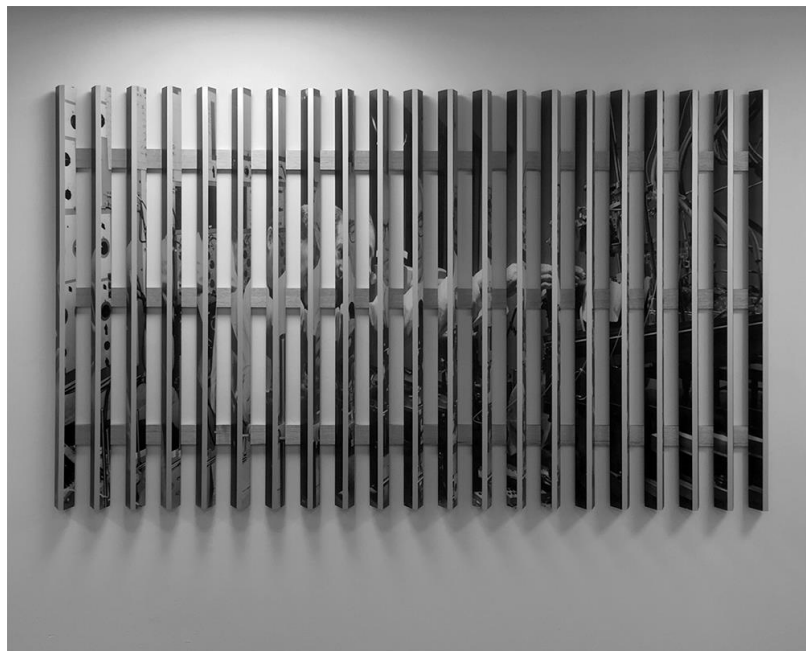


Figure 128: Completed installation, front view (image by author)

Occupants of the building have described the interactive nature of both types of installation. The lenticular images in particular have been described as appearing to reach out towards people as they walk past in the corridor.



Figure 129: Completed installation, side view (image by author)

Within the context of this particular research this emphasises the importance of the space that the works inhabit. All these projects require some level of interaction beyond the level of purely viewing. The suburban house containing the final exhibition has been used in this way to allow the time to inspect the completed works and provide an opportunity for movement to enable seeing from a different perspective.

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Conclusion

I have developed the final two projects in a way that consolidates all the elements of peripheral vision documented in the previous chapters through the early experimental projects. The idea of capturing my own movement within a particular place (*Everyday*), differences in our photopic, mesopic and scotopic vision (*Glare*) and peripheral proximity and space (*The Horizon*). These are overlaid with the phenomenological investigations of small intimate places. Both projects translate invisible elements that closely link to our memories of things and events and allow the viewer to navigate the darkness that brings us to the boundaries of our inner thoughts. *Blood and Bone* is a specific investigation of the boundary of what we see and the dreams and thoughts that sit next to the process of seeing.

The *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone* projects provide some foundation to J.J Gibson's theories on formless invariants and highlight some of the difficulty in translating this aspect of perception into photographic form. Further translation of these projects on peripheral vision through the use of materials such as glass, the aide of devices such as a torch, incorporation into architectural elements and the use of space emphasises the cross disciplinary applications of the research beyond image making and provides the justification for the use of a suburban house for the final exhibition of the work.

Uninhabited and *Blood and Bone* are the practical outcome of the research in photographing this interaction with the invisible and ambiguous in our close proximal world. These works form the main body of the final exhibition *Photographing the Invisible* and document our phenomenological interaction of space and place through peripheral vision.

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Main Conclusion

I would like to see more clearly, but it seems to me that no one sees more clearly.¹⁹⁰

This practice-based research has investigated the use of still photography to capture our peripheral interaction with the environment. It is an area of our interaction we either do not notice or take for granted and it is generally not celebrated by photography to a great extent. Initially the idea of using peripheral vision as a form of taking photographs appeared to be a relatively straightforward approach to finding an alternative photographic technique. However to encapsulate peripheral vision in a single form of representation has been quite difficult due to the number of embedded characteristics inherent in this part of our vision. Each aspect is a study in itself and this has led to a complex research project as I have grappled with these characteristics within each of the photographic projects.

I believe that research into peripheral vision within photography and other disciplines such as visual perception is underdeveloped. This is particularly the case in relation to our movement through the environment and in areas of low light. Essentially it is undeveloped in the area of our rod vision. Most investigations into visual perception are two-dimensional and examine our cone vision. As an example, articles on experiments in visual crowding use tests where the subjects look through an eyepiece at a modified eye chart, the crowding around the central cone of vision is then measured.¹⁹¹ This type of experiment negates the third dimension and movement, which are the main areas that induce visual crowding. Some of the theories of James J. Gibson have helped in this regard to gain a better understanding of vision and movement in relation to an optical environment, particularly his theories on Ecological Perception as these include movement. It was never my aim to produce a theoretical response to issues around our understanding of vision. The aim has been to produce a body of photograph work that encompasses the complex aspects of peripheral vision and at the same time produces a narrative on space and place that has the same legitimacy as straight focused photographic work.

Everyday Project

The first project *Everyday* is a highly experimental work that investigates movement in peripheral vision from the first person perspective using a hand held camera. It highlighted that visual crowding in peripheral vision is not just related to object size and distance in an environment, it is also related to speed of movement and proximity of the observer to the environment. This helped to identify the ideal type of movement for my photographic work and showed that ambiguity or abstraction within the resulting photographs is also related to speed of movement and proximity of the camera to the environment. *Everyday* identified a further aspect related to visual crowding; the simple

¹⁹⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 36.

¹⁹¹ Sarah Rosen, "The Bouma Law of Crowding, Revised: Critical Spacing Is Equal across Parts, Not Objects."

idea that light influences the ability to capture of movement. These key findings established a working method for the remaining bodies of work. In this research the camera has been removed from its static position and has become a mobile recording device. Therefore movement through space and place is taken from the perspective of both the first and third person.

Use of field studies, either self initiated or through the ANU School of Art Environment Studio, has allowed a direct engagement through a number of different places which both helped to develop the photographic practice and allowed an interpretation of some of these places. Although many places were explored in *Everyday* only a key selection has been used to form the other projects in this research. Photographs within the *Everyday* project show a wide range of types of embodied movement, some of which are indecipherable in terms of content. The mixture of types of movement helps to define an ideal mode of motion but when combined as a collection the potential for narrative content is reduced. *Everyday* primarily highlights our interaction with space over the more complex interactions of place within the other bodies of work.

Hall experiment

My architectural background underpins all research where it is important to investigate connections from a number of areas before consolidating into preferred scheme. This is to examine from a multiplicity of views. Therefore the projects in this research are grounded through numerous investigations. The Naoshima Art Site is one of these investigations and its site-specific artworks have shown a context in relation to an artistic response to place and a form of community restoration through this type of development on the island. Art house projects, such as the Go oh Shrine, Kadoya and Minamidera, although not photographic in nature helped to provide a contextual base for my own project responses in regard to place. The *Hall experiment* developed in relation to some of the aspects of Kadoya has shown that the nature of peripheral image making can form legitimate readable narratives within a small community not normally used to this type of photographic image making.

Photographs are objects with meaning and can be a selective view of an environment that can provide a narrative on place particularly when assembled as a series of images. The *Hall experiment* was a breakthrough in terms of adding foundation to the idea of narrative making, highlighting that there is minimal difference in the potential of the photograph to act as a surrogate, either through a 'straight' clearly focused image that is representative of central focused vision or an alternative and potentially unfocused and dark image that is representative of peripheral vision. The difference is the level of legibility and distancing verses the higher potential for mystery and greater intimacy. In the experiment the process of the participants explaining the content of an ambiguous photograph to another participant inherently leads to a narrative about what the object means rather than a direct recognition of the object itself. It leads to story telling and the abstract nature of the image does not appear to reduce this ability but enhances it. The cognitive act of interpreting the image (what is it of?) increases narrative function through increased attempts at understanding its meaning (trying to understand). The balance of the type of vision and the level of legibility verses abstraction and narrative

potential is one of the key practical outcomes of the photographic work. This narrative content therefore enables peripheral image making to be a valid photographic practice within the historical context of photography. Peripheral images therefore do have the potential to become the neome of a particular place and time.¹⁹²

Glare and The Horizon

The idea that Central focused vision and photography can have a distancing effect whilst peripheral vision brings us into close interaction with the world was the origin of this project. In the two projects *Glare* and *The Horizon* ideas relating to distance, texture and light become another set of layers in relation to peripheral vision. The works I have produced in *Glare* show how contrasting intensities of light and particularly high light levels can produce peripheral blindness by shutting off the rod function in the eyes. Whereas the dark and close proximal works become almost purely rod based seeing. In this project the juxtaposition of white photographic images against the darker imagery plays with the adaption of our peripheral receptors – resetting them each time. It is worth noting that the white images included in this project have not been untried by other photographers (Paul Graham is a notable example) or directly peripheral in nature, but form a contrasting element to the dark scotopic images. The contrasting imagery fluctuates between two states of vision – photopic and scotopic – simulating our interaction between different lighting conditions.

Glare and *The Horizon* use two different types of environments or landscapes to investigate our proximal relationship. In the intimacy of a forest there is a high level of peripheral stimulation due to the texture and layering of objects. Photographs show that the interiors of houses or buildings can have the same type of texture and visible strata and the resulting dark images show similarities, which can make it hard to discern between inside and outside. Like Jitka Hanzlova's photographs in her series *Forest* the sections of undergrowth or small clearings can appear to be like rooms and can lead us to similar intimate attachment. Each sense in the perceptual field has a limit of range or horizon. At close proximity all our senses are engaged in a multisensory experience. Understanding the horizon of peripheral vision has helped to understand how to photograph the peripheral experience of these different environments and shows that peripheral vision has an ideal distance in terms of our relationship with the environment that approximates to our focusable range (six metres for people with good vision).¹⁹³

Excessive light and vastness of space on the other hand dulls our peripheral engagement and when we have an open view to the horizon we are predominantly using our central cone vision. These investigations into the horizon and landscape have not been simple as they also incorporate have elements in relation to time in a metaphorical way. This relationship in terms of time has been interesting as two references, one from Gaston Roupnel and one from Hiroshi Sugimoto, propose the same connection in relation to history and memory for two different types of landscape. One is the idea of a limitless

¹⁹² From Barthes "That has been." Expanded into "That has been, there." Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, 36.

¹⁹³ Swanston, *Visual Perception: An Introduction*, 45.

forest where no horizon is visible and the other is the defined sharp line between the sea and the sky. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that time through the expanse of distance leads to myth making¹⁹⁴ but this project shows that intimate spaces such as a forest tend to have higher potential for embedded mythological content. This is more in line with Simon Schama's essay on landscape and memory where he believes that landscape (or place) is a layering process of events and memory that modifies the natural landscape form and the inhabitants themselves.¹⁹⁵ Most of the photographic works within *The Horizon* project are 'straight' focused images and less peripherally related in appearance. In isolation the project functions almost like a side experiment, and perhaps is the least successful in terms of peripheral vision, but when viewed with the *Glare* project it emphasises the relationship of the environment to peripheral vision.

Glare and *The Horizon* have been my practical tests of the notion of the ability to see into the layering (or change) and to visualise a proximal horizon. The ability to see into the past is evident in both environments but it appears that the unchanging nature of the ocean gives the potential to see further into our ancestral past. The main difference between the two environments is the ability to see the layering of events through time. The ocean can appear unchanged for millions of years but not contain evidence of events through time, however a landscape can be completely modified by our occupation but still retain traces of events through this modification like a historical document. As a photograph, a seascape may only have a small number of potential readings in terms of meaning whereas a photograph of a forest or detailed landscape may pertain to a large number of readings and this is evident in the difference between the images of these two investigations.

Uninhabited and Blood and Bone

Glare and *The Horizon* lead into more proximate and intimate peripheral explorations in *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone*, incorporating the next level of visual strata. In *Uninhabited* the ability to capture and represent mesotopic and scotopic vision has been tested through the exploration of abandoned houses and buildings in Western Sydney. These images and some of the images from *Glare* test both the ability to capture our perception within low light levels and also to physically represent it within a printed photograph. This has highlighted a recurring question throughout the research relating to the representation of environments in low light and the effective visualisation by a potential viewer of the works. As an example, the transference of exploring darkened rooms into a photograph that has the ability to exhibit the same qualities like the idea of a surrogate proposed by J.J Gibson.¹⁹⁶ The completed photographic representations do change under different lighting conditions and do have the ability to be explored by a torch, which does give some sense of surrogacy. Ultimately it is the use of the suburban house for display with the appropriate lighting conditions that completes this experience and offers a viewer of the works an immersion and experience into the peripheral investigations conducted in this research.

¹⁹⁴ Tuan, *Space and Place - the Perspective of Experience*, 120-21.

¹⁹⁵ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 10.

¹⁹⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 77.

These final images represent the uncelebrated and rarely photographed edge of our experience with the world, the times when we cannot see clearly or distinctly make out what is nearby, or as a child find comfort in the thin line of light under the bedroom door. Peripheral vision has a certain mysteriousness about it, having no sense of clarity it sits on the edge of our imagination asking us to question what it was that we saw out of the corner of our eyes. This is implicit within the final project *Blood and Bone* where the ambiguous nature of peripheral vision is explored within another intimate environment, a small secret garden in Sydney. In this project it is not just actual seeing but what we may see internally when thinking about something else. Therefore in this book of images the ambiguous is combined with the imaginative, enhancing the emotive content in relation to loss. The peripheral is the edge of vision and also the edge of our internal being.

Each project (except for the *Everyday* project) has been developed into a narrative of some form contained within a photographic book. These books are a record on paper of the exploration in peripheral vision and of the place. Books allow time to investigate and reflect on the images at leisure and within different lighting conditions. A small torch aides this viewing of the images. Parallel to the books has been the exploration of printing for viewing within an exhibition environment. Each project has had an issue in the transformation of the work into a photographic form that best represents the visual and spatial exploration, which then can be viewed by others. Initial experimentation in digital printing highlighted the use of different types of paper, developing a dark tonality and a sense of depth and layering within the printed images. Matt papers flattened images whilst paper with low gloss sheen¹⁹⁷ added depth and were best suited to different light conditions and exploration using a small torch. The Inkjet Research facility at the ANU School of Art enabled further exploration of materials other than paper such as ceramic tiles, timber, carpet, melamine board and glass. Experiments in glass led to a technique of printing that enabled adherence to the glass substrate without application of a medium or film. Glass became the preferred material for the *Blood and Bone* works as it emphasises the ambiguity between images and best represents the idea of a formless invariant proposed by J.J Gibson.¹⁹⁸ The final glass installation allows viewers to walk around an image adding a further layer of immersion. Further translation of these projects on peripheral vision into architecture and space highlights the cross disciplinary applications of the research beyond image making and provides justification for the use of a suburban house for the final exhibition of the work.

Photographing the Invisible

In the end all peripheral images exhibit levels of formlessness, which is a true characteristic of peripheral vision. When images have form they inherently have the properties of an invariant frozen without movement, a characteristic of our central vision and straight focused photography. The formless or ambiguous images that mimic our peripheral vision invite us to always question and interpret its legibility and meaning. Trying to interpret and understand naturally leads to narratives and the five books and final exhibition are a record of my exploration in understanding peripheral vision and the

¹⁹⁷ A balance between being flattened through the matt paper and being too reflective.

¹⁹⁸ Landwehr, *Ecological Perception Research, Visual Communication, and Aesthetics*, 7.

places that form this research. *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone*, in particular, are the practical reflection of the understanding of this interaction with the invisible and ambiguous in our close proximal world. These photographic works form the main body of the final exhibition, *Photographing the Invisible* and display our phenomenological interaction of space and place through peripheral vision.

This research shows that it is possible to capture our peripheral interaction with the environment as a participant and construct visual narratives from the photographs produced that have meaning. Due to the complex nature of peripheral vision and subsequent image making it is easy to think that this type of artwork sits outside of photography rather than being an extension of the medium. This is something that the early Futurist photographer Anton Giulio Bragaglia had thought when writing his Manifesto on Photodynamism (1911)¹⁹⁹ but what he missed is that one of the main characteristics of still photography is the ability to capture light, time, place and meaning, aspects which are still inherent within peripheral photography.

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¹⁹⁹ Anton Giulio Bragaglia wrote the manifesto Futurist Photodynamism in 1911. This manifesto proposed that still photography could capture the sense of movement in a more accurate way than cinematography or chronophotography. Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, 38.

Postscript

The main scope of a practice-based exegesis covers the individual works or series of works leading to their display within a final exhibition. In this case the installation of works within an empty house is an artwork in itself and therefore this postscript forms an integral part of the research conclusion.

The final exhibition was held in an average sized three bedroom suburban house in a back street within the suburb of Hackett in Canberra (figure 130). It had been empty for nearly one year and contained only minimal traces of its previous habitation. The house required a small amount of modification to facilitate the exhibition. A wall was relocated from the main living area into the kitchen and dining space, a slot was cut between two bedrooms, one room was painted white throughout and another room was lined with a black plastic membrane.



Figure 130: Exhibition House in Hackett (The house was demolished in February 2017)

Works from the *Uninhabited* and *Blood and Bone* projects were displayed in most of the house and a few key works from other projects. These included three white works and one dark work from *Glare*, one work from the *Horizon* and five photo screens from the Hall experiment. The relocated wall allowed the rooms to be arranged according to light levels, from slightly subdued, leading to more subdued lighting, then to darkness, then bright white and finally sun filled. In the final room the books of all the images were available for viewing on a large glass table.

Providing suitable light levels for the works required adjustment blinds, shading of windows and application of translucent film over a number of days. In the darkest room floor lights were placed near each image and subsequently removed when these interfered with the viewing of the images. The main room (room 1) maintained an ideal subdued lighting level with allowed the *Uninhabited* works to appear almost completely black apart from a small section of lighter detail within each work. In the kitchen and dining area (room 2) the light levels darken slightly but the space contains flickering light from the photo screens in the laundry area (room 3). There is a small work from the *Uninhabited* series that could be easily missed which is an image from a bathroom in Scheyville. A fallen door blocks access to the laundry and the screens are viewed from a distance while they change between images from houses in Hall. The screens are deliberately set at differing speeds and therefore flicker independently of each other.

As you move from the laundry kitchen space the light dims further until entering almost complete darkness in the rear bedroom. When leaving the kitchen and dining area a large dark work from the *Glare* series is presented on the right within very subdued lighting. In the rear bedroom (room 4) four *Uninhabited* photographs are displayed on top of the black plastic wall lining. Chairs allow visitors to sit and wait for scotopic adaption to occur. Moving from the dark a light patch is visible emanating from a door leading off the hallway. In this room (room 5) everything is white, walls, floor, ceiling and white frosted film on the window. When entering the air appears to have a mist and your footing seems uncertain. There are white forest images from *Glare* in this room. In the far corner is a low narrow slot through a wall. Squeezing through the slot you emerge in a sun filled room (room 6) with the green leaf canopies of trees visible through the windows (it is the only part of the house with views to the outside). In this room large glass panels of the *Blood and Bone* images line the walls and in the corner by the windows is a glass table with five photographic books.

Viewers of the work elicited a number of responses in relation to the exhibition and some of these are appropriate for inclusion within this exegesis. When entering the house each person was given a torch to aide with the viewing of the work.

When I looked at the dark photographs I noticed that a portion was initially visible without the use of the torch. This reminded me of waking up at night and trying to walk through the house at night. Initially it would be difficult until a portion of light from outside illuminated the corner of a wall or a piece of furniture then you could orientate yourself and layout the room in your mind.

The rooms in the photographs reminded me of growing up in my parents' house down the coast.

After you have used the torch to search through the image it seems like it gets retained in your memory because when you look at the photograph without the torch you know what is there even though you can't see it.

Are these pictures of this house?

I tried to focus on one of the photo screens to work out what they were of, but every time another screen would flicker in the corner of my eye and I would have look at that one.

The dark room made me feel uneasy.

I liked the luscious green forest photographs.²⁰⁰

The images seemed to move and change as you walked past them (of the glass images).

It was interesting the composition of the ceramic pots on one of the glass panels.²⁰¹

Overall the installation moves the final works from a purely central focused visual experience to a multisensory experience by engaging our peripheral vision through action. Throughout the day (and one night) this experience varied through changing light conditions as the sun outside rose and then set. We grow up in houses and these are our environments; therefore they can afford meaning to a viewer but each meaning is different. The viewers then bring the narratives of their own places with them.



Figure 131: Room 1 – *Uninhabited* series

²⁰⁰ When I replied that the forest images where actually almost completely devoid of colour they were completely surprised and went back for another look.

²⁰¹ These were actually severed fish heads.



Figure 132: Room 1 – *Uninhabited* series



Figure 133: Room 2 – Looking through to Room 3 and Hall experiment beyond



Figure 134: Room 3 – Hall experiment



Figure 135: Room 2 (kitchen and dining)



Figure 136: Room 4 (torch highlighting one of the *Uninhabited* photographs)



Figure 137: Room 5 - White images from the *Glare* series



Figure 138: Room 6 – *Blood and Bone* series



Figure 139: Room 6 – *Blood and Bone* series

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