

OCULAR OCCUPATIONS:

Painting and Other Spatio-Visual Strategies for Making and Inhabiting Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Many writers have suggested that our capacity to occupy space meaningfully has been undermined by our contemporary ocular-centric culture, which distances us from reality and corrupts our physical and embodied experience of the world. This study challenges these claims within an architectural context, by examining the fundamentally visual nature of architecture and inhabitation as well as the spatio-visual practices, acts and strategies that we use to occupy space. Drawing on theory and practice-based methods from outside the professional limits of architectural practice, the study implements visual acts of occupation to establish a new and expanded conception of architecture as a performative spatio-visual practice – a conception that engages and connects its practice with the purportedly ocular-centric spatial conditions in which it is made and occupied.

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Note:

Selected works from the practice component of the study are included in Chapter Three. Additional details, plans and images of these works are included in Appendix 1, which provides a complete and chronological documentation of the practice.

All figures and in-text references to the practice works are cross-referenced to Appendix 1 following the title (e.g. [24]).

STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:

Date: 6 November, 2008.

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INTRODUCTION

Structure of the Study

The study is made up of a written exegesis and an artistic practice component that have been developed simultaneously and co-dependently. Only the exegesis component, however, is submitted for examination and it constitutes 100% of the research materials to be assessed.

Structure of the Exegesis

The exegesis is made up of three chapters and is largely focused on theoretical concerns. In the first chapter, the problems of architecture and occupation, as well as the spatio-visual practices that underpin them, are explored. In addition, a conceptual framework for this conjunction of interests is established. The second chapter examines precedent spatio-visual practices, thus developing the theoretical concerns of Chapter One. Chapter Three provides an analysis of the artistic practice component of the study.¹ The works discussed will be shown as not only forming a way to 'think through' the theoretical concerns of the first and second chapters, but also as opening up new ideas, strategies and practices that contribute to, and expand upon, these preceding discussions.

In addition to this Introduction and the three chapters, a Conclusion, Appendices and Bibliography are included.

Background to the Topic

This study emerged from my on-going theoretical interest in how space is defined, produced, and conceived within architectural practice. In particular, I was interested in opening up questions of how space is used, occupied, appropriated, perceived, made and experienced through its ordinary, everyday occupation. These concerns were first tested in my undergraduate architecture thesis that explored performative practices as active constructions of space, chiefly through the writings of architect and theorist Bernard Tschumi, and the work of American artist, Robert Morris.² These interests have also informed my professional practice and teaching in architecture since my undergraduate studies.

¹ This practice is documented in full in Appendix 1.

² A. Paine. 2002. *Conceptions of Space: The Social Tactics of Performativity in Art and Architecture*. Undergraduate Thesis, School of Design and Built Environment, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

For this research project, I have once again examined architectural concepts within a broader cultural field. In particular, I have used my interests in visual art, painting and installation to assist the development of ideas concerning architecture and its occupation. My interests in these art practices have focused not on what art is or represents, but rather on what it does physically and how it may be used towards spatial and architectural ends. By spanning art and architecture, these interests have had the opportunity to combine and manifest in this study in challenging new ways.

Throughout my research, I have been conscious of the multitude of recent writings and studies that have tackled similar topics (of art and architecture, surface architectures and visuality) as well as the increasing number of projects, both in Australia and internationally, which have begun to exploit new techniques for applying visually complex patterns and images to buildings. I have also taken account of the many critiques of this approach to making architecture, including a strong reaction within architectural practice that has dismissed this privileging of our visual perception of surfaces. It seemed to me, however, that these positions are problematic and that the question of occupation in this context needed to be redressed. This study is my attempt to do so.

Overview of the Topic

Architecture is conventionally understood as the art of designing buildings and spaces, and as a professional practice defined and regulated by law. These conventional definitions however, exclude the necessary presence of inhabitants, implying that architecture exists regardless of its occupation. They also exclude the possibility that architecture may be made by non-architects. Because of these limitations, this study turns to alternative conceptions of architecture to examine its concerns for our visual occupations of space. Therefore, central to my argument is Jonathan Hill's recent proposition that architecture may be understood as existing *in-between* space and its occupation.³

This study explores the interrelation of these two terms – space and occupation – towards the production of architecture, specifically within contemporary visual culture. This raises further questions regarding our occupation of space, as it is frequently suggested that this ocular-centric and image-rich visual culture undermines our physical and sentient capacity to inhabit space – a debate that is particularly pertinent to the practice of architecture. At the same time, debates surrounding new media highlight increasingly important questions concerning the very nature of space and its occupation in a digital age (particularly between

³ J. Hill. 1998. 'An Other Architect' In *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, ed. J. Hill, 135-159. New York: Routledge. p. 141.

the conditions of the 'virtual' and the 'real') that challenge the material, phenomenal and embodied foundations of our spatial occupations.

In this context, a problem of occupation has emerged.

Through interdisciplinary and studio-based research methods, the study challenges much recent criticism of our ocular-centric culture, by exploring the fundamentally visual nature of inhabitation, through the various spatio-visual practices, acts, strategies and tactics that are used to occupy space. Moreover, I will argue that these visual acts of occupation actually produce space as well. Hence, the study turns to spatial practices outside the conventional disciplinary limits of architecture, establishing an expanded conception of its practice that, following Hill's argument, emerges in-between space as a *visual* condition and the *visual practices* we use to occupy it.

Context of the Study

This study follows numerous recent theoretical discourses on the interdisciplinary connection between practices of art and architecture, as well as emerging trends in research towards practice-led and studio-based methodologies. In particular, this study uses interdisciplinary theory (from the fields of architecture, art, new media and philosophy) to examine and redress questions on architecture and its occupation within the visual ubiquity of contemporary culture. It also includes painting and installation as studio-based methods to work through these key problems of the research project. For this study, practices of art and architecture are understood not in terms of discipline, but rather, more broadly, as spatial acts and practices with specifically visual foundations, processes and consequences.

The study also exists within the context of a contemporary ocular-centric culture, and much debate surrounding its foregrounding of vision, visibility, the surface, the image and the virtual. The impact of this visual culture on architecture is beginning to emerge, evidenced by recent moves by a small number of international practices 'away from spatial properties and towards a fascination with surface, relief, and applied representations.'⁴ While much of this work may be understood through the framework of a number of major publications on visibility in the history of western culture and philosophy, including Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*⁵, and Jonathan

⁴ J. Macarthur. 2000. 'Materials Historic and Plastic' In *Imaginary Materials: A Seminar with Michael Carter*, ed. J. Macarthur, 29-34. Brisbane: IMA Publishing. p. 32.

⁵ M. Jay. 1993. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*⁶, these lie outside the core interests of this study which focuses on our occupation of space within this visual culture. More precisely, the study examines space as a performed visual construction that is made through acts of occupation – a notion that is used to ground new possibilities for the conception and production of architecture. Moreover, contrary to the more dominant positions that suggest that visual culture threatens our capacity to occupy space corporeally and meaningfully, I will argue that the visual is highly significant to our occupation of space. As Simon Wallis notes: 'We are inescapably bound to the visual; it permeates our lives.'⁷

Finally, this research project also sits alongside a number of writings on performative and active conceptions of architecture and space, which have emerged in various discourses and practices since the sixties. This begins in the seminal writings of Henri Lefebvre, and in numerous art practices of the 1960s, including performance works, 'happenings', and minimalist sculpture. For architecture, this re-examination of space is first evidenced in Bernard Tschumi's writings and teachings in the 1970s.⁸ More generally, these ideas have also been reinforced by the writings of Judith Butler in the early 1990s on performative concepts of gender.⁹ While it may be argued that such performative conceptions of architecture emerged much earlier, and may be evidenced in examples including Le Corbusier's idea of the 'promenade architecturale', it is my contention that such relations constructed between the architecture and occupant are not performative. This is because the occupation of space is of little or no consequence to that space, apart from fulfilling the architect's will. Such examples may therefore be likened to a theatrical play in which the architectural script predetermines the actions and movement of the occupant. This is opposed to my specific interests in this field in which architecture is defined not by its control over its occupation, but actively *by* its occupation. This is the fundamental shift towards a truly performative conception of architecture inaugurated by writers and artists in the 1960s.

⁶ J. Crary. 1992. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge [Mass.]: MIT Press.

⁷ S. Wallis. 2001. 'Introduction' In *Hybrids: International Contemporary Painting*, ed. Tate Gallery, 6-9. London: Tate Gallery. p. 9.

⁸ A number of these writers, including Tschumi and Lefebvre are discussed in the first chapter of this exegesis.

⁹ See J. Butler. 2007. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. Note that the scope of this study does not allow Butler's writings to be discussed in depth, although they provide some additional support, from outside architectural discourses, to the discussion of performativity.

Definition of Terms

Given this context, and the wide-ranging discourses that are implicated by the study, it is important to define the use of a number of terms. In particular, 'visual', 'visual practice', 'visual occupation' and 'visual space' are frequently referred to and open up myriad complex interpretations. In this study, my focus and interest in the 'visual' is not simply in that which may be seen by the eye, but must always be understood as inextricably linked to my parallel concerns for space, occupation and performativity. This is explicitly manifest in terms such as 'visual space' which at first seem contradictory, as space is of course that which we cannot see. However, in my use of this term, I intend to implicate the specific range of visually apprehensible conditions that constitute space and our perception of it. That is, the visual fabric of surfaces and images that make up the rich optical conditions and sensations of the world in which we live. This broad definition therefore includes the surfaces of, buildings, streets and cities, as well as the layers of visual media that overlay, interact and co-exist with such surfaces to produce the much criticised ocular-centric conditions of contemporary space. Yet, with much of the discussion of this study focused on the occupation of the domestic interior, it is not just these surfaces and images that are suggested in my use of the term 'visual space'. It also includes decorations, décor, objects and furnishings that construct the visual fabric of our domestic spaces. I also wish to incorporate the visually encoded structures that order the appearance of the domestic interior, such as those found in the arrangement and selection of objects displayed within a room, of hanging pictures on a wall, or co-ordinating the décor to suits one's personal sensibilities and style. In sum, 'visual space' entails a complex layering of these visual conditions and perceptions that are experienced (and produced) through our occupation of space.

It follows that 'visual occupation' and 'visual practice' refer specifically to those acts of inhabitation that determine, produce, perceive, structure, arrange and appropriate these visual spaces. These performative acts are defined in greater depth later in Chapter One.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to establish the theoretical grounds for visual practices of occupying space, and to explore architecture as a performed visual construction. Thus, I wish to counter the dominant claims made about visual spatialities (and visual culture) that insist that they are detached, destructive and anti-corporeal. I therefore intend to also open up the conceptual foundations for new visual practices of architecture to emerge in-between the visual conditions of space and its occupation – a possibility which drives the practice discussed in Chapter Three.

Additional aims of this study include:

- To explore the performative nature of architecture as an act of making, inhabiting and negotiating space, set apart from the fixed and object-like notions of building in mainstream architectural practice, discourse and education. This focus on performative conceptions of architecture aims to facilitate closer connections between its production and its occupation.
- To open up architecture to include spatial practices emerging from outside the discipline, especially those spatio-visual practices that exist within visual arts, as well as in practices of occupying space. As such, the study aims not only at broadening our definition of architecture, but it also seeks to redress the question of how we understand our everyday occupation in relation to the practice and production of architecture.
- For these reasons, the study attempts to use painting and installation practices to 'test out' these ideas, and to forge new connections between visual constructions of space, visual practices of occupation and the production of architecture. Specifically, the intention is to connect the *act* of painting with spatio-visual acts of inhabiting space, to establish alternative, visual strategies for practices of architecture, as an in-between condition of space and its occupation.
- To explore and expand my existing architectural practice outside its professional limits, to include theory and practices from the visual arts, and in particular, from painting and installation. This means trying to establish and develop an art practice as an integral part of my architectural practice.
- To examine how space and architecture become meaningful to occupants through their actions, events and uses, rather than through the intention of the architecture. In particular, the study looks at how this meaning-making process occurs visually. It also looks at the role of the architect in facilitating and prompting meaningful appropriations of space.

It is not the intention of the study to promote visual practices above all other aspects of our occupation. Instead, it aims to acknowledge the vital role of the visual in our spatial acts of occupying space, which tend to be undervalued or overlooked by most contemporary discourses.

CHAPTER ONE: A THEORY OF INHABITING VISUAL SPACE

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICES OF OCCUPYING SPACE

OVERVIEW

The first chapter establishes a conceptual framework for the study of visual practices, strategies and processes of occupying space. Its first part outlines the central problem of this project. This centres on an apparent disconnection between visual space and occupation – that is, between how we create, conceive and define space visually, and the practices we use to live in, occupy and make meaning in space. To begin to address this problem, the first part of the chapter examines our conception and practice of architecture, where arguably, this disconnection is most pertinent. As a key discipline within spatial theory and practice, and one engaged fundamentally in issues of inhabitation, architecture's conventional and professional practices will be shown to constitute a limitation on its capacity to engage meaningfully and completely with our occupation of space. My discussion proposes a broader definition of architecture as a spatial practice within an expanded cultural field, not limited by its professional production by architects. I will argue that architecture is produced not only through design, but also through the occupation of space – an understanding that underpins much of the theoretical and practice-based aspects of this research project. More precisely, the chapter will contend that architecture is produced by the interaction, negotiation and co-dependence of two conditions – space and its occupation.

Using this expanded understanding of architecture, visual conceptions of space and occupation will be explored, to reveal an inherent connection between their practices. Accordingly, two key and interdependent areas of discussion are identified – the surface and the image – and are examined in detail in subsequent parts of this chapter. Despite the dominant and numerous criticisms of the visual realm, (often aimed directly towards the surface and image), I will show that our occupation of space frequently, and meaningfully, occurs through visual processes. Moreover, I will also contend that such visual acts not only constitute processes of occupation, but actually produce architecture and space as well. Emerging from this re-evaluation is a focus upon performative, iterative and mimetic acts of inhabitation. These acts have become central to this study because they not only reinforce the inherent connection between visual space and inhabitation, but also form the theoretical foundation to the practice-led component of the study discussed in Chapter Three.

PART 1: THE PROBLEM OF OCCUPATION AND VISUAL SPACE

The Problem of Occupation and Visual Space in Architecture

Central to this study is a focus on visual space, and the visual foundations, practices and consequences of inhabiting space within a contemporary ocular-centric culture that is often characterised as distanced, detached and disembodied. Despite this problem being most prominent within, and pertinent to, the discipline of architecture, arguably, the professional practice of architecture, and the theoretical discourses surrounding it, are yet to deal directly with this domination of visual culture. Rather than addressing this condition, or challenging the assumption of detachment, much contemporary architectural practice and theory has been divided into two polar positions: first are those practices which resist the visual hegemony (often turning to tactile and materially rich architectures that attempt to engage with other more intimate senses, as opposed to the 'detached' eye) and, second, are those which complicitly 'play' with the visual, decorative and surface qualities of architecture and space. Unfortunately, proponents of this latter position are yet to expand their practices to explore the inherently visual nature of inhabitation leaving the important theoretical grounds for this engagement still to be established. The problem of this study therefore, is to identify and develop spatio-visual practices that are fundamentally connected to how we occupy, and make meaning in, space. To do so, requires an expanded conception of architecture, space and spatial practices – the possibilities for which will be explored in this first chapter.

Defining Architecture – Space and Use

As an increasing number of writers have suggested, the conceptual and professional practice of architecture often exists in conflict with the actions and occupations of its inhabitants. This is because conventional methods for practicing architecture as well as our theoretical understanding of what actually defines the discipline are incomplete. They appear to be indifferent to the way in which architecture is actually lived, experienced and occupied. As Jonathan Hill comments, the profession of architecture regulates its practice to exclude spatial practices by those who are not architects – a status that as Hill describes, is enshrined in law and defended by architectural historians.¹ Thus, architecture is routinely limited to, and defined by, its professional practice, which remains closed, self-contained and self-referencing. It also maintains a clear distinction from other spatial disciplines, practices

¹ Hill. 'An Other Architect'. p. 137.

Also on this issue, Ullrich Schwarz notes that: 'The standard works of architectural history do not deal with what became of the architect's intentions. As such, a reception history of architecture or, in other words, a history of its usage and utilisation, remains an urgent desideratum for science.' U. Schwarz. 2006.

'Architecture Meets Life'. *Graz Architecture Magazine*, 03: 3-5. p. 5.

and acts, especially those of inhabitants that involve the use and appropriation of space. Such acts are usually looked upon as incursions into an otherwise discrete discipline, defined as a protected body of professional knowledge, and as an art in its own right. It seems that this disjunction between the professional production of space and its inhabitation only intensifies the core problem of this research – the apparent disjunction between visual space and our occupation.

However, it may be that this inability of professional practices to engage with the making of architecture and space through inhabitation is not simply a shortcoming of architectural practice. Rather, it is a problem of the definition of architecture itself. It is the contention of this study that the professional practice of architecture (by the very nature of its design, planning and construction processes that are necessarily distanced from the physical act of making) can only encompass a limited part of spatial production.² The study also argues that a broader understanding of spatial practices that exist outside of the traditionally recognised limits of the discipline should be included within our conception of architecture and its practice. Of particular interest here are those *visual* practices that exist or emerge through occupation – spatial acts and processes that include the structuring, ordering, organising, decorating, defining, and making of space and spatial relationships. These acts of occupation necessarily exist in tension and constant negotiation with the spaces designed and made by architects. Hill writes with reference to Roland Barthes' seminal text 'The Death of the Author': 'The architect and the user both produce architecture, the former by design, the latter by inhabitation. As architecture is designed and experienced, the user has as creative a role as the architect.'³ In fact, Hill proposes a new definition of architecture based on Barthes' reformulation of the relationship between the author, text and reader, suggesting that: 'Architecture is the gap between building and using, just as literature is the gap between writing and reading.'⁴ Here, Hill considers architecture not in the conventional terms of static built forms, but rather, as a particular set of relations 'between a subject and an object, in which the former occupies the latter'.⁵ This inclusion of the spatial actions (and occupations) of the inhabitant into the very definition, and production, of architecture is a significant precedent for this study, and commences an important discussion on the spatial practices of use, occupation and architecture. With this foundation, 'architecture' may be understood in this study as any spatial practice or act within the gap suggested by Hill – practices that necessitate the two focal points of this research: space and its use.

² It is important to remember here that architects do not actually make buildings, but rather, that they make and work through representations of buildings. This is not to argue that representations of architecture do not constitute an architecture in their own right (for, as it will be shown throughout this chapter, this is not the case), but simply to reinforce that architects are most often removed from the physical process of making and crafting the buildings they design for inhabitation.

³ Hill. 'An Other Architect'. p. 140.

⁴ Ibid. p. 141.

⁵ Ibid. p. 147.

Yet this position necessitates a further question – what is the nature of the interaction between these two terms, ‘space’ and ‘use’, that together produce architecture? It is perhaps too simplistic to assume that the coming together of space and its use necessarily results in architecture. Rather, as Hill suggests, architecture exists as a liminal condition ‘between’ space and occupation, and hence, indicates an interdependence of the two terms. He writes that while space cannot determine its use, it is certainly not independent of the actions and events that occur within its limits.⁶ Accordingly, this study argues that this relationship exists as a zone of proximity between space and use, where each begins to effect and define the other. In other words, architecture is produced in a reciprocal, interdependent interaction between space and use, in which space is shaped by its use, and use is, in turn, conditioned by space.

For the purposes of this discussion, ‘use’ is understood within a range of spatial actions and processes, including occupation, inhabitation, embodiment and appropriation. (Later in this chapter it will be shown that these are all active and performative processes, which have direct spatio-visual consequences.) Likewise, ‘space’ in this study is explicitly explored as a performed visual construction, and in particular, will be examined in this chapter as it is founded in, and produced by, surface and image-based acts of occupation.

Making (Social) Space

This core focus on the use and occupation of space, locates this study within a small number of writings on social space that, as Iain Borden suggests, began for architecture in the seventies.⁷ Arguably, this trend is indebted to the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre who, since the sixties, re-conceptualised space as a result of human activity, as opposed to the Kantian a priori theory of space. He outlined this approach in his seminal publication ‘The Production of Space’.⁸ For Lefebvre, ‘social space’ is made up of three types of space – ‘spatial practice’ (perceived space), ‘representations of space’ (conceived space) and ‘representational space’ (lived space). Victor Burgin has summarised these as follows:

‘Spatial practice’ [...] is the material expression of social relations in space: a market place, a bedroom, a lecture theatre, a ghetto. ‘Representations of space’ are those conceptual abstractions that may inform the actual configuration of such spatial practices, for example, Cartesian geometry,

⁶ Ibid. p. 151.

⁷ Borden suggests in the 1970's, a new ‘politically-minded approach’ to architecture emerges, ‘in which space assumes a more social character.’ I. Borden. 2006. ‘Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries and Spatial Flows’ In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 49-55. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. p. 50.

⁸ H. Lefebvre and D. Nicholson-Smith. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

linear perspective [...]. 'Representational Space' is a space as appropriated by the imagination.⁹

Lefebvre suggests that this 'representational space' overlays physical space. As such, he reveals that not only is space multiple in nature, but also that it is simultaneously experienced in various modes, contingent upon the affective, subjective and sentient individual. While Lefebvre's writings on space remain outside the core interests of this project (due to his dismissal of the visual image as detrimental to the richness of representational space), there exists an important link between this conception of space and the writings of Charles Rice discussed later in this chapter on the doubled interior.¹⁰

Lefebvre's writings have also had a significant influence on other writers on architecture, including Jonathan Hill (discussed above), and the architect and theorist, Bernard Tschumi. Like Hill, Tschumi defines architecture as a performative practice that encompasses both the idea and experience of space. He writes: '[Architecture is] about two mutually exclusive terms – space and its use or, in a more theoretical sense, the concept of space and the experience of space.'¹¹ Tschumi suggests that this understanding of architecture as defined by the permanent disjunction of spatial conception and bodily experience amounts to a new definition of architecture.¹² This opening up of the discipline to include the occupant as a co-creator of architecture is another important precedent for this study.

Interestingly, Tschumi also discusses the interaction of bodies and spaces within this conception of architecture, which he describes in terms of a 'ritualised violence.'¹³

[T]here is a violence that all individuals inflict on spaces by their very presence, by their intrusion into the controlled [conceptual] order of architecture. Entering a building may be a delicate act, but it violates the balance of a precisely ordered geometry [...]. Architecture, then, is only an organism engaged in constant intercourse with users, whose bodies rush against the carefully established rules of architectural thought [...]. The body disturbs the purity of architectural order. [...]

Violence is not always present [...]. Yet it is always implicit. Each door implies the movement of someone crossing its frame. Each corridor implies

⁹ V. Burgin. 1996. *In / Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 27.

¹⁰ As Neil Leach states, that for Lefebvre, 'the image "kills" and cannot account for the richness of lived experience.' N. Leach. 1997. *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. New York: Routledge. p. 10.

¹¹ B. Tschumi. 1996. *Architecture and Disjunction*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 16.

¹² Ibid. p. 23.

¹³ Ibid. p. 125.

the progression of movement that blocks it. Each architectural space implies (and desires) the intruding presence that will inhabit it.¹⁴

The 'violence' imposed on architectural space by the intrusion of the occupant, becomes ritualised and allayed through repetition. These repetitive actions are also implied and reinforced by the space – through its doorways and corridors that anticipate their inhabitation. In this way, space and its occupation appear to become reciprocal, or complementary, paralleling Hill's conception of architecture as emerging from the interaction of space and its use. Yet conversely, and more interestingly for Tschumi, the relationship between the body (and its individual actions or collective events) and the space that it accommodates, may also exist in discord.¹⁵ This position rejects modernist doctrines on the congruence of function and form that still dominate much architectural thought and architectural education. It also expands the understanding of how space and use may interact to produce architecture, to include not only harmonious engagements, but also the frictions that emerge. For Tschumi, this reinforces the need for architecture to be understood as both the concept of space and the use of space, as neither one alone can accurately, or fully, describe the architectural condition resulting from the interaction of body and space.

Similarly, Iain Borden and Frank-Bertholt Raith both include the user within their conceptualisation of architecture. For example, Borden is critical of the conception of architecture as an object or as the result of design intention, which in turn influences use and social interaction.¹⁶ Rather, he proposes (with reference to both Tschumi and Lefebvre) that architecture exists in a dialectical relationship with the body and with use – in a 'spatial flow' – and in the interaction of spaces, things, bodies and minds.¹⁷ Hence, his understanding of architecture and its production is again a dynamic one, suggesting that architecture is made

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁵ B. Tschumi. 1983. 'Spaces and Events' In *The Discourse of Events*. London: Architectural Association. p. 10.

¹⁶ Borden. 'Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries and Spatial Flows'. p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 50. Also see I. Borden. 1998. 'Body Architecture: Skateboarding and the Creation of Super-Architectural Space' In *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, ed. J. Hill, 195-216. New York: Routledge.

In particular, Borden uses performative gestures of skateboarding to develop this argument: 'The architecture of skateboarding falls into two interdependent categories, one closer to the conventional realm of architecture as the conceptualisation, design and production of built spaces, the other closer to the realm of the user and the experience and creation of space through bodily processes. Both involve spatial thoughts, objects and actions, and, through this intersection, skateboarding and architecture can be seen to carry the presence of each other, a dialectic that institutes the supplemental realm of super-architectural space.' Borden later adds that: '[T]he spatial architectonics of the skater, to use Lefebvre's body-centric terminology, is a space produced by the skater, out of the dynamic intersection of body, board and terrain.' Borden. 'Body Architecture: Skateboarding and the Creation of Super-Architectural Space'. pp. 196-204.

and re-made each time it is experienced – it is ‘produced and reproduced, designed and experienced. It is a medium not a message, a system of power relations not a force, a flow not a line.’¹⁸ Thus, Borden, like Tschumi, reinforces the performative and iterative foundation of our spatial occupations. These are key ideas that will be returned to throughout this study.

Raith argues for a similar approach to architecture and its production, grounded in the notion of ‘consumption.’ He suggests that the ‘consumer’ (or user) of architectural space becomes an active co-creator of both space and its meaning, and that this spatial meaning emerges from its repeated performance and the ‘cultivating’ of everyday spaces.¹⁹ He writes:

[A]rchitectural form does not receive social relevance and significance a priori as the encoding of pedagogical moral intentions, not as built community, nor even as the design for a better world, but as a series of differentiations, a range of signifiers that can be used and invested with meaning and indeed largely emerge only through the process of appropriation.²⁰

Space originates through successful tricks, clever ploys, and multifarious simulations through which consumers appropriate strange architectural places and thus create space for their own actions. The tactics of consumption result in practices of signification that invent temporary spaces and furnish them for living – whether a building is “used” in the strict sense or is merely used as a point of orientation, a signpost in one’s territory, whether it is experienced as the materialization of private memories or only as an atmospheric enrichment for one’s own actions. Consumption is not a practice of reading or processing information, and certainly not the admiring contemplation of significant forms, but a configuration of actions in a built environment.²¹

While none of the writers discussed above explicitly engage with the visual foundations and consequences of occupying and appropriating space, they nevertheless are important in grounding performative and iterative approaches to occupation and visual space. They are also important in opening up and complicating the relation between architecture, space and its inhabitation. Moreover, these writers give support to this study’s expanded conception of architecture, and they each foreground the interdependence of space and its inhabitation. Yet, despite these important arguments, the disjunction between architecture and occupation

¹⁸ Borden. ‘Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries and Spatial Flows’. p. 50.

Borden also quotes Adrian Forty: ‘[Architecture] is not made just once, but it is made and remade over and over again each time it is represented though another medium, each time its surroundings change, each time different people experience it.’ A. Forty. 1996. ‘Foreword’ In *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture and the City*, eds. I. Borden, J. Kerr, A. Pivaro and J. Rendell. London: Routledge. p. 5. Cited in Borden. ‘Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries and Spatial Flows’. p. 50.

¹⁹ F.-B. Raith. 2000. ‘Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?’ *Daidalos*, 75 (The Everyday): 6-17. pp. 14-16.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 14-15.

²¹ Ibid. p. 16.

remains a problem within much contemporary discourse and practice. As Raith has commented, 'the illusion remains that the designing subject, supplied with will and power, is fundamentally master of the situation and can impose his will on others (a viewer, a user) by sheer virtue of the building's physical permanence.'²² To an even greater extent, the disjunction persists between visual space and occupation. This disjunction is both highlighted and exacerbated by a contemporary, image-rich spatial culture and the emergence of new media and digital technologies.

Occupation and Virtuality

In the contemporary digital context, these questions of the nature of occupation and visual space are complicated by discourses and debates surrounding new (visual) media technologies, and their impact on our spatial inhabitations. While the interest of this research project does not rest with new media or new media technology (for which there are numerous theoretical discourses, texts, and speculations), the study is provoked by how they challenge our thinking on visual space and occupation. These discourses frequently suggest that visual and digital media technologies undermine the material, phenomenal, social and corporeal nature of our spatial experience. This is exemplified by the disembodied and simulated spatial experiences offered by Virtual Reality (VR) technologies. As Darren Tofts suggests of virtual culture: 'Its fetish is the disembodied sensorium, liberated from the materiality of the body, its totem is the Web, representing the decentred network of pure information.'²³

Consequently, these digital technologies, and in particular those related to VR, have instigated the revision and transformation of notions surrounding many aspects of our lives. Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz notes the polarised views of writers on VR, between those desiring its apparent potential for 'God-like status' and overcoming the physical limitations of the real, and those which fear and condemn its 'transformation of relations of sociality and community, physicality and corporeality, location and emplacement, sexuality, personal intimacy, [...] and the loss of immediacy, of physical presence.'²⁴ This follows decades of speculation by theorists including William J. Mitchell and Jean Baudrillard, on the electronic and virtual transformation of the space and place. Baudrillard, for example suggested in his seminal text 'The Ecstasy of Communication' that the 'electronic encephalization' of the world has led not only to the loss of interiority, intimacy and private space, but also to a

²² Ibid. p. 14.

²³ D. J. Tofts. 1999. 'Your Place or Mine? Locating Digital Art' In *Parallax: Essays on Art, Culture and Technology*, 29-35: Overseas Publishers Association, D. J. Tofts. 1999. *Parallax: Essays on Art, Culture and Technology*. Overseas Publishers Association.. p. 29.

²⁴ E. A. Grosz. 2001. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 77.

detachment, or 'satellitization,' from the world and reality.²⁵ Later, Mitchell described the electronic transformation of our world including the move from banks to ATMs, from prisons to electronic surveillance programs, from schoolhouses to virtual campuses, department stores to on-line shopping, and significantly, the transformation of our homes into places of work, leisure and entertainment.²⁶ It would seem that, as Jonathan Harris suggests, technical innovation has the potential to 'refigure fundamentally the capacity of people to know and understand the phenomenal world, a state of affairs that brings the very meaning of 'reality' itself into question.'²⁷ Yet, many such arguments routinely couple technological advancement with the emergence of a 'new' condition of virtuality, which, it is assumed, threatens not only our corporeal experience of space, but our occupation of it, and location in the world as well. A number of these assumptions will be challenged later in this chapter, yet they serve to highlight a dominant discourse on virtuality, which continues to undermine an understanding of our occupation of contemporary space, and denies any prospect of an embodied future ontology.

Occupation, Space and the Visual

This study rejects key aspects of this discourse on virtuality. Yet, the contemporary digital environment has brought with it specific challenges to inhabitation, because both our public and private spaces have become saturated with visual media, and our homes filled with images from advertising, marketing and fashion, all of which are consumed on an unprecedented scale. Like the threat of virtuality, a fundamental threat to our corporeal inhabitation in the world has been identified with the infiltration of our homes by all things visual (including virtual spaces), assisted greatly by the technologies of television, DVD, the internet, computer gaming, consumer advertising and so on. For example, Terrence Riley suggests that electronic media has created the 'un-private house', which debases an essential domestic condition of privacy that was founded in the 17th century.²⁸ Likewise, Juhani Pallasmaa, links the proliferation of visual media with a critique of ocular-centrism in

²⁵ J. Baudrillard. 1998. 'The Ecstasy of Communication' In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster, 126-134. New York: New Press.

²⁶ W. J. Mitchell. 1995. *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

²⁷ J. Harris. 2003. 'Introduction: Hybridity, Hegemony, Historicism' In *Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Painting: Hybridity, Hegemony, Historicism*, eds. J. Harris and Tate Gallery Liverpool, 15-36. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. p. 18.

²⁸ T. Riley. 1999. *The Un-Private House*. New York: Museum of Modern Art. Cited in C. Rice. 2007. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. London; New York: Routledge. p. 113-135. Rice notes that while Riley recognises the mediatisation of our homes traditionally through the presence of newspapers and books within libraries and studies, he specifically suggests that the problem of the un-private house is instigated by electronic media and its destruction of domestic boundaries of public and private.

architecture.²⁹ Not only do these new technologies reinforce the hegemony of vision in contemporary culture, but as Pallasmaa suggests the resulting ‘imbalance’ of the senses has contributed to a prevailing perception of detachment and isolation in the world.³⁰ While Pallasmaa advocates a more multi-sensory approach to architecture, such critiques on the ocular-centric and image-rich nature of our contemporary environments appear to condemn all connections between architecture and the visual as being detrimental to corporeal experience. Rarely is it acknowledged that visual acts of making of space are central to our perception and occupation of the world. This study seeks to overturn these largely reductive and homogenised conceptions of the visual in its relation to space and occupation.

An indication of how pervasive this discourse has become is revealed by Neil Leach, who makes a similar argument to Pallasmaa in his book, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*.³¹ Leach acknowledges his extreme and fatalist approach, yet he writes that architects’ obsession with images has been to the detriment of the profession, distracting architecture from its social concerns, and reducing it to a superficial play of seductive forms and fetishised surfaces.³² The core of Leach’s concerns seems embedded in Baudrillard’s notion of our detachment and ‘satellitization’ from the world and reality. He writes:

Once reality itself has been removed, all we are left with is a world of images, of hyperreality, of pure simulacra. The detachment of these images from their original complex cultural situation decontextualizes them. They are fetishized and judged by their surface appearance at the expense of any deeper reading.³³

The problem here is that within the depthlessness of our current culture of the instantaneous, the significance of context is eroded. It is this very lack of any sense of context – of historical or geographical specificity – that facilitates the process of fetishization. [...] If we accept that content is not a property of form but merely holds some allegorical relationship with it, the waning of any sense of context or relief within contemporary culture will come to erode that allegorical binding.³⁴

Thus, it is specifically the decontextualisation of images that is at the heart of Leach’s concerns. He argues that this lack of contextual grounding removes the possibility for meaning to be attached to images and by extension, it also removes the possibility of images and the visual realm as a whole to be engaged meaningfully in our occupation of space. This is a crucial distinction for this study, and suggests that, despite its appearance to the

²⁹ J. Pallasmaa. 2005. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 19.

³¹ N. Leach. 1999. *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

³² Ibid. pp. viii, p. 45.

³³ Ibid. p. 5.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 87.

contrary, Leach's position actually supports the discussion later in this chapter that seeks a connection between images and our making of social and spatial meaning through our practices of inhabitation. (In his more recent writings discussed later in this chapter, Leach deviates even further from this position of apparent contempt for the image, and explores our performative and visual engagement with architecture through acts of occupation.) The distinction Leach makes also supports the discussion of the creative practice in Chapter Three that operates as a visual practice specific to its physical and spatial context. Yet, despite this insight provided by Leach's criticism, it seems that the prevailing critical sentiment contends that visual space and its supporting media technologies remain a threat to our capacity to meaningfully occupy space.

Such sentiments and critiques of visual space are often founded on particular assumptions regarding the role of the viewer – namely, an assumed passivity of the percipient in the act of looking. However, this position negates the active role of the viewer in constructing their own visual experience. This active conception of the viewer has been described by philosopher Henri Bergson, and more recently by Mark Hansen and Ron Burnett in relation to virtuality and the image.³⁵ In particular, Burnett discusses images as active sites of interfacing, engagement, interpretation, reading and creativity on the part of the viewer, and as a medium for connections between humans. He states: 'The intersections of creativity, viewing, and critical reflection are fundamental to the very act of engaging with images in all of their forms. This would suggest that the notion of the passive viewer [...] is a myth.'³⁶ Similarly, it is often assumed that ocular-centric culture exists necessarily at the expense of our haptic experience. Despite his criticisms of the hegemony of our visual sense today, Pallasmaa notes that, like all of our senses, vision has developed from our first sense – the sense of touch.³⁷ This suggests an inherently haptic and physical dimension to our visual sensory experience that supports this study's approach to visual space and its capacity for rich, engaging and embodied experiences.

³⁵ While Hansen's ideas on the image are grounded explicitly on Bergson's seminal writings, Burnett makes just one brief reference to them. Despite this, significant similarities bind the ideas of all three writers, as discussed later in this chapter.

³⁶ R. Burnett. 2004. *How Images Think*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 13.

Interestingly, Karl Immonen points out, specifically regarding the static image in contrast to the moving image, that, according to Robert Storr: '[The static image] grants the viewer the greatest autonomy, the form in which the viewer controls the time rather than the artist.' K. Immonen. *Stop For A Moment: Painting as Presence*. <http://www.nifca.org/stopforamoment/presence/introduction.html> (accessed 16 August, 2005).

³⁷ J. Pallasmaa. 2000. 'Hapticity and Time: Notes on Fragile Architecture'. *The Architectural Review*, 207 (1239): 78-84 (accessed May 2000). p. 78.

Inhabiting Visual Space (Towards a Visual Theory of Architecture)

The central focus of this study is therefore made up of a number of considerations. First, the regulated and professional practice of architecture seems incapable of engaging completely and meaningfully with our occupation, appropriation and making of space and, specifically, visual space. Second, discourses on our ocular-centric contemporary spatial culture compound this problem, reinforcing the gap between visual space and practices of occupation. Third, recent debates surrounding new media, visual culture and VR appear to condemn visual aspects of space, and undermine our capacity to inhabit it in embodied, meaningful and material ways. Thus, a three-fold problem of visual space and occupation has emerged. And if, as it has been argued here, architecture is produced in the act of occupying space, then this problem of occupation is also one of architecture in a contemporary ocular-centric culture.

To address this problem, the following discussion will attempt to reveal the significant visual nature, foundations and consequences of our occupation of space. Through two theoretical fields (and spatial conditions) – the surface and image – this discussion will explore visual conceptions of space, specifically in relation to our occupation of the domestic interior. While the study is not limited to either domestic or interior space, occupants most readily interfere with, decorate, organise and personalise the spaces inside their homes. Thus, as a dominant site of visual negotiations between architecture, space and inhabitation, this discussion focuses upon the spatial conditions of surfaces and images in the domestic interior, where arguably, our occupation of space appears most threatened by a contemporary digital context and ocular-centric culture. As such, it also outlines a theoretical framework for visual inhabitations that demonstrates the capacity of an expanded and redefined conception of architecture to address the central problem of the study – the problem of our ocular occupations.

PART 2: INHABITING THE VISUAL SURFACE

Surface, Space and Semper: The Origins of Architecture

The surface and its relation to architecture has long been a contested and polarising site of discourse and practice. As Michael J. Ostwald notes:

From the earliest architectural treatises the surface of the building has been the inflection point for a range of strategic bifurcations. Whether the division has been between structure and ornamentations or interior and exterior, the amorphous and contested territory of the surface has provided the line of distinction between one characteristic and another.³⁸

The writings of Gottfried Semper in the mid-nineteenth century are seminal in this discourse of surface and architectural space, particularly because they relate to such contentious divisions of structure and ornament, interior and exterior. Semper's conception of architecture is also inextricably linked to a visual process of *making* and *inhabiting* space and, as such, establishes a crucial grounding for this study.³⁹ Importantly, Semper proposes an entirely new conception of the origins of architecture, in which he likens it to clothing and dress. Contrary to the more familiar presumption of architecture's origins in the tectonics of stone construction, Semper argues in his 'Principle of Dressing'⁴⁰ (devised in the mid-nineteenth century), that architecture actually originated with the use of decorative textiles, carpets and woven fabrics, hung on simple supporting structures, to define interior social spaces of dwelling.⁴¹ Hence, the traditional primacy of structure over ornament is reversed. For Semper, the truth of architecture exists in its decoration, in the 'clothing' and masking of structure, and the visible surface of enclosure.⁴² He writes:

The hanging carpets remained the true inner walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space [...]. Even where building solid walls became necessary, [...they] were only the inner, invisible structure

³⁸ M. J. Ostwald. 2003. 'Seduction, Subversion and Predation: Surface Characteristics' In *Surface Consciousness*, ed. M. Taylor, 75-80. London: Academy Editions. pp. 76-77.

³⁹ The focus on the visual foundations of Semper's theory in this study, are founded in Mark Wigley's exhaustive examination of surface and paint in M. Wigley. 1995. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

⁴⁰ Interestingly, in a footnote to his text 'The Four Elements of Architecture' Semper notes that '[t]he German word *Wand* [wall], [...] acknowledges its origin. The terms *Wand* and *Gewand* [dress] derive from a single root. They indicate the woven material that formed the wall.' G. Semper. 1989. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*. Translated by H. F. Mallgrave and W. Herrmann, *RES Monographs in Anthropology and Aesthetics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 104.

⁴¹ Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 11.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 25.

hidden behind the true and legitimate representatives of the wall, the colourful woven carpets.⁴³

Semper arrived at this conclusion after discovering the remains of paint on the white marble of the Greek temple of Theseus, and suggested that the use of marble as a building material was due solely to the fact that it provided a good support for the painted decoration.⁴⁴ Such use of paint evidenced the continuation of the textile tradition, following the shift away from impermanent fabric enclosures, towards solid construction techniques.⁴⁵ Semper therefore asserts that such 'painted and sculpted decorations on wood, stucco, fired clay, metal, or stone [surfaces] traditionally, though not consciously, imitated the colourful embroideries and trellis works of the age-old carpet walls.'⁴⁶

Architectural historian Mark Wigley points out that for Semper, 'Architecture begins with ornament. It is not just that the architecture of a building is to be found in the decoration of its structure. Strictly speaking, it is only the decoration that is structural. There is no building without decoration. It is decoration that builds.'⁴⁷ Wigley also notes that implicit in Semper's theory of architecture's origins, the surface not only produces an interior space, but it also produces the possibility of domestic inhabitation. This recognition suggests that the very possibility of housing, and of domesticity, begins with the surface and ornament.⁴⁸ Wigley extrapolates:

[T]extiles were not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. [...] Rather, they are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation. [...] Housing is an effect of decoration then. It is not that the fabrics are arranged in a way that provides physical shelter. Rather, their

⁴³ Semper. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*. p. 104.

⁴⁴ H. Frei. 2003. 'Masked Mater and Other Diagrams' In *Surface Consciousness*, Vol. 73, ed. M. Taylor, 43-49. London: Academy Editions. p. 45.

⁴⁵ Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 14.

On this issue, Wigley writes: 'This simulated textile, the painted text, becomes at once the new social language, the contemporary system of communication, and the new means by which space is constructed. Architecture is literally in the layer of paint that sustains the masquerade in the face of the new solidity because it is [quoting Semper] "the subtlest, most bodiless coating. It was the most perfect means to do away with reality, for while it dressed the material, it was itself immaterial."' Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 14. [Includes quotations from G. Semper. 'Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Aesthetik'. 1. p. 445. Cited in H. F. Mallgrave. 1985. 'Gottfried Semper: Architecture and the Primitive Hut'. *Reflections*, 3 (1): 60-71. p. 65.]

⁴⁶ Semper. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*. p. 104.

⁴⁷ Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 11.

texture, their sensuous play, their textuality [...] opens up a space of exchange. [...] Space, house, and social structure arrive with ornament.⁴⁹

According to Wigley, the visible surface and the decorative masking of structure described by Semper are bound up with the creation of meaning, subjectivity, social language and social life.⁵⁰

The Visual Surface of (Domestic) Space

Such an approach to surface and decoration helps to define and structure the social spaces of domestic life. Indeed it produces these spaces as well. Semper's concept of space and its production also reveals the visual nature of occupation due to its insistence on the decorative surface – in his terms, 'the visible boundaries of space.'⁵¹ As such, Semper's notion of the visible surfaces of domestic space establish a central framework for this chapter because his approach brings together ideas of surface, space and occupation, and introduces the related notions of visuality, materiality, decoration and domesticity.

Although his concept of architecture never gained mainstream acceptance, Semper's writings have nevertheless been influential, particularly (and perhaps least expectedly) on modern architecture. Following Semper's 'Principle of Dressing,' architect Adolf Loos describes a similar approach to surface in his 'Law of Dressing' of 1898:

The architect's general task is to provide a warm and livable space. Carpets are warm and livable. He decides for this reason to spread one carpet on the floor and to hang up four to form the four walls. But you cannot build a house out of carpets. Both the carpet on the floor and the tapestry on the wall require a structural frame to hold them in the correct place. To invent this frame is the architect's second task.⁵²

In this statement, which closely echoes Semper's writings, Loos also suggests that architecture exists within the sensuous surface. Yet some distinction must be made between their approaches. George Wagner argues that, unlike Semper, Loos does not imply any ethical responsibility in the differentiation of structure and cladding because his intent was to theorise the nature of the surface itself.⁵³ Rather than the idea of the space, Beatriz Colomina points out that it is the effect of the surface that Loos prioritises.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

⁵¹ Semper. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*. p.104.

⁵² A. Loos. 1898. 'The Principle of Cladding' In *Spoken into the Void*. p. 66. Cited in B. Colomina. 1992. 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism' In *Sexuality & Space*, ed. B. Colomina, 79-130. New York, N.Y: Princeton Architectural Press. p. 91.

⁵³ G. Wagner. 2006. 'Ultrasuede' In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 380-386. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. pp. 382-383.

Expanding these notions of the visual surface, Wigley quotes Van Doesburg's 1928 review of De Stijl's use of colour, where he states: '*In the final analysis it is only the exterior surface which defines architecture*, since man does not live within construction but within an *atmosphere* which has been established by the exterior surface.'⁵⁵ [Original emphasis]. Drawing on such examples, Wigley concludes that 'architecture is only ever a surface effect.'⁵⁶ This stance is also evident in Wigley's writings on Modernism's ubiquitous use of white paint, particularly as found in the work of Le Corbusier.⁵⁷ While modernism is largely understood as denouncing all decoration, Wigley argues that, in fact, it was maintained in the guise of the white painted wall. Wigley, in a mode reminiscent of Semper's theory, locates the whitewashed wall between structure and ornament, and between physicality and immateriality. The white surface therefore facilitates one's viewing of the pure new forms of modern architecture, while it remains bodiless.⁵⁸ Thus, according to Wigley, the white surface 'organises' vision, constitutes architectural space, and provides a backdrop against which objects can be read.⁵⁹ Certainly, similar visual constructions of space using paint have continued through to contemporary practices of domestic decoration, evidenced by successive fashions for painted feature walls, sponge effects and other manipulations of the surface that aim to create an 'atmosphere' for occupation.

The Performative and Iterative Making of the Visual Surface

While Semper's notion of the visible domestic surface establishes an important connection between occupation and visual space, of particular interest to this study are discourses that describe a performative approach to making the visual surface. This follows the earlier

⁵⁴ Colomina. 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism'. p. 91.

⁵⁵ T. van Doesburg. 1925. 'Farben im Raum und Zeit'. *De Stijl*, 8. [Translated as 'Space-Time and Colour' in Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, 175-180. p. 180.] Cited in Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 236.

A strikingly similar position is put forward by Caroline van Eck in a recent essay. She states that: '[Vision] is one of the primary ways for human being to engage with their surroundings. The built environment is experienced primarily through vision, and its object is not the hidden essence, but the way in which it appears to our eyes.' C. van Eck. 2002. 'The Visually Immediate: Sir Christopher Wren on the Corona of the Temple for Peace in Rome'. *OASE*, 59 (Scratching the Surface): 6-21. p. 20.

⁵⁶ Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 236.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 23.

According to Wigley, 'If, following Semper, to occupy a building is to wear it, then to wear a modern building is to wear a new set of eyes.' Hence, the white painted surface not only continues the visual production of space in the manner of Semper's ornamental carpets, but moreover, the white paint also initiates a new way of looking, and a new visual condition in Modernism. Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. pp. 23, 31.

discussion on the production of architecture as a performative act of making through the occupation of space. While the notion of performativity is more frequently associated with the formation of gender in the writings of Judith Butler, and the speech act theory of J. L. Austin, it is also useful in understanding our process of making and occupying space. Following Butler's writings, Neil Leach has described the connection between architecture and performativity in terms of (spatial) acts, behaviours and habitual practices. He writes that it achieves 'its aims not through a singular performance – for performativity can never be reduced to performance – but through the accumulative iteration of certain practices. It is grounded in a form of citationality – of invocation and replication.'⁶⁰ Other writers, including Maurice Berger, also connect the notion of performativity to the everyday enactments of human life.⁶¹ Accordingly, as a spatio-visual practice, performative acts might include the celebratory or ritualistic decoration of our homes and occupied spaces (such as at Christmas, Easter and so on), to mark an event (a birthday, for example), as well as more ordinary, habitual and everyday acts of establishing, and then maintaining, visual order and structure in a space (through interior decorating, tidying, gardening, cleaning and home maintenance, to name a few). And as Meredith Warner notes, such acts occur both within the interior as well as within the public realm. They also indicate individual and collective assertions of ownership and inhabitation.⁶²

While a number of writers discuss many such performative and iterative domestic practices, very few draw out the visual nature and spatio-visual effect of these acts of making and re-making. For example, Hilde Heynen describes inhabitation and domesticity as a continuous act of appropriation. She expands upon Walter Benjamin's comments on dwelling and habit:⁶³

Benjamin understands dwelling as an active form of interaction between the inhabitant and his environment in which the individual and his surroundings adjust to each other. In the German original, he refers to the grammatical connection between "wohnen" (dwelling) and "gewohnt" (customary, habitual), a connection that is found in English between "habit" and "inhabit" or "dwell" and "indwelt": dwelling, inhabiting, in this sense has to do with the formation of habits. To inhabit a house means to go through a mutual

⁶⁰ N. Leach. 2006. *Camouflage*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 170.

⁶¹ Berger writes that, 'Instead of the removed, pre-ordained, and staged articulations of the theatre [...] the 'performative' encompasses the broader range of human enactments and interactions – the performances of our everyday lives, the things we do to survive, to communicate, to thrive, to manipulate, to procreate, to love; it charts the direct and seemingly ordinary interaction between the individual and society and culture at large.' M. Berger. 1997. *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art, Issues in Cultural Theory*. Baltimore, Maryland: Fine Arts Gallery University of Maryland Baltimore County. p. 15.

⁶² J. M. Warner. 2006. 'Making and Breaking Private Space'. 306090, 10 (Decorations): 30-37. p. 30.

⁶³ H. Heynen. 2005. 'Modernity and Domesticity' In *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, eds. H. Heynen and G. Baydar, 1-29. London / New York: Routledge. p. 21.

process of moulding in which house and inhabitant become adapted to one another.⁶⁴

While recognising the active nature of interaction between occupant and space, Heynen stops short of discussing the inscription, structuring, marking, arrangement and decorating of space visually. Yet it is implied by the performance of such interactions, which necessarily leave their visual traces and visual structures. Beatriz Colomina quotes Benjamin on this matter, with specific reference to the nineteenth century interior:

To live is to leave traces [...]. In the interior these are emphasised. An abundance of covers and protectors, liners and cases is devised, on which the traces of objects of everyday use are imprinted. The traces of the occupant also leave their impression on the interior.⁶⁵

Charles Rice also develops Benjamin's thinking on this historically specific interior condition. He suggests that the upholstered interior surface (as opposed to 'building') 'denotes the preparing of an interior to receive objects, where the soft, upholstered materials of that space receive the impression of those objects.'⁶⁶ Again, we see that the inhabitant's traces of occupation necessarily contain a visual dimension, within which a visual order of space and objects is inscribed. These are frequently intentional markings of a planned order that is upheld through the domestic practices of tidying and housekeeping, which returns these objects to their place in the structure of the visual surface.

Furthermore, a number of writers describe how the use of furniture and ornament establishes a visual order in domestic space. For example, architectural historian Robin Evans reveals the visual role of furniture in the interiors of the 18th century, and the tensions between its use and its appearance.⁶⁷ Evans discusses architectural drawing, in particular the emergence of developed surface drawings – a representational technique particular to the 18th century. With this technique, the adjacent interior wall surfaces were unfolded to represent the entire room within a single drawing on a single page. The technique was particularly suited to the regular geometries of the interiors of this time because it could depict the complete suite of furnishings and ornamentations that were attached to the walls of a room.⁶⁸ Of interest to this study is a peculiar built example described by Evans. As a

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

⁶⁵ W. Benjamin. 1986. 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century' In *Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books. pp. 155-156. Cited in Colomina. 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism'. p. 74.

⁶⁶ Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 32.

⁶⁷ R. Evans. 1997. 'The Developed Surface: An Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth-Century Drawing Technique' In *Translations from Drawing to Building*, 195-232. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁶⁸ 'With the four walls arranged on a single sheet, sometimes supplemented with a carpet design, a floor pattern or an outline plan or, alternatively, all six surfaces illustrated in separate drawings, the developed

consequence of its restoration, it was discovered that the chairs of the Etruscan Room at Osterley Park (designed by Robert Adam 1775-1779) were aligned and painted as a continuation of the dado that circuted the room.⁶⁹ Moreover, the same chairs were elaborately painted on their leading edges, but their backs remained plain. This suggests that the placement of the chair was not determined by use (for which it would be taken into the middle of the room), but rather according to its role as a visual design element against the wall as depicted in its drawn representation.⁷⁰

Mark Kingwell, on the other hand, describes the placement of tables and chairs within space in terms of the innate desire of many inhabitants to continually seek out new ways to arrange their furniture.⁷¹ He argues that to locate a piece of furniture in a room immediately brings structure to that space. It transforms it into something meaningful and it opens up possibilities for its use and appropriation. To seek new arrangements is to seek new meanings as well as to create new ways of thinking about occupying the space.⁷²

Finally, considering Philip Johnson's iconic Glass House and its sparsely decorated (and highly visible) domestic interior, Kevin Melchionne makes this point about occupation: 'The art of domesticity means not just that the house is art, but that the very way of living in it is also an art, made and remade on a daily basis.'⁷³ In other words, the order of the house – and precisely, its visual surface and visual order – is necessarily made and maintained through performative and iterative domestic acts and practices of inhabitation. Despite the severity of his chosen exemplar ('where even table-top bric-a-brac are discreetly marked with indications of their correct location'⁷⁴), Melchionne asserts that the Glass House is 'only an extremely refined version of what any sensitive homemaker creates.'⁷⁵

surface and its derivatives offered an opportunity to saturate the interior surfaces with ornament. [...] The developed surface also offered the opportunity for an unexampled unification of the one interior. Drapes, furnishings, fittings, wall coverings, plasterwork, floor and carpet all beg to be drawn. They are not extras to be added after the essential architectural shell has been constructed, not foreign items to be imported into a ready-made cavity. They are the things that the developed surface invites the draughtsman to describe.' Ibid. p. 209.

⁶⁹ Evans discusses the Etruscan Room at Osterley Park. Ibid. p. 214.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 214.

⁷¹ M. Kingwell. 2006. 'Tables, Chairs, and Other Machines for Thinking' In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 173-179. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

⁷² Ibid. p. 177.

⁷³ K. Melchionne. 2006. 'Living in Glass Houses' In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 228-232. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. p. 230.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 229.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 230.

Performativity and Becoming

As such, an inextricable relationship exists between the house and its daily performance through acts of domestic ritual. These are spatio-visual acts that accord with notions of ritualised behaviours and performative processes of making (and re-making) architecture that have already been discussed through the writings of Tschumi and Borden, and that are implicit in Benjamin's comments on the interaction of the occupant and space. Here, the Glass House's strict determination of its occupation is revealing of the capacity of space to shape the behaviours of its occupants. The converse is also true. The act of occupying the house reinforces its strict architectural order and logic. This suggests that a reciprocal connection exists between the house and its occupant. As Melchionne writes:

The successful occupant of the *Glass House* [...] lives in the house in perfect harmony with its formal configuration and artistic meaning. On a daily basis, one achieves this harmony by developing a repertoire of habits that simultaneously achieves two things: first, it allows one to do everything one normally does in a home; second, our habits ensure that we always do these things in a way that respects and reflects the artistic integrity of the space. [...] Someone who habitually puts things back in their places has a habit-repertoire that is fully responsive to the organizational and aesthetic terms of inhabited space. Consequently, in order to successfully inhabit the *Glass House*, one would have to be extremely, perhaps perfectly neat and organized; neatness and organization would have to be perfectly habituated.⁷⁶

Neil Leach has described such reciprocal interdependencies of occupants and buildings in terms of 'becoming', following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's description of the co-dependent relationship between the digger wasp and the fly orchid.⁷⁷ For Leach, the act of becoming is a dynamic interaction where one entity enters into the logic of another and constitutes a space in-between.⁷⁸ In other words, it is a process of 'the becoming-building of the inhabitant, and the becoming-inhabitant of the building.'⁷⁹ He writes:

We might therefore associate "becoming" with a process of adaptation and assimilation which is related to formation rather than form, but nonetheless operates through form. In such a context, we might understand "design" as that rhizomatic interaction between human beings and their environment.⁸⁰

This understanding of a space of 'becoming' is strikingly similar to the approach to architecture outlined earlier, in which architecture was defined as a liminal zone of interaction between space and occupation. In this light, the controlled and iterative act of inhabiting the

⁷⁶ Kingwell. 'Tables, Chairs, and Other Machines for Thinking'. p. 231.

⁷⁷ Leach provides a detailed account of the relationship of the wasp and orchid in Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 84.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 85.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 97.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 98.

Glass House described by Melchionne as an 'art' can also be considered a process of making 'architecture'. It may also be argued that these domestic practices and rituals actively, and repetitively, construct and maintain an interior effect, or in more Semperian terms, a visual surface of interior space. Crucially, they also develop a correlation between the process of occupation and visual space, revealing the performative and iterative spatio-visual practices that ground their connection.

The Nature of the Visual Surface – Optical and Material

Emerging from this discussion on surface is an implicit and dichotomous understanding of the nature of the visual surface of space, and its existence either as an optical or a material condition. The contradiction is of particular interest to this study in the context of the debate on the physicality of the world around us, including surfaces, and the threat of its dematerialisation in a digital age. This dichotomy of optical and material conditions is also evident in the discussion of space and occupation above, where an immaterial, visual order is constructed, using material objects and the arrangement of furniture. Likewise, Wigley has already pointed to the condition of the modernist white-washed wall, which exists as both (or between) a physical and optical condition. The contradiction also exists implicitly within Semper's own writings, which describe the textile enclosure of space as both a physical construct of sensuous, woven textured carpets, and as a visual condition of enclosure and interiority. With such contradictory claims made about its optical and material foundations, how are we to understand the nature of the visual surface?

Avrum Stroll's writings on the topic provide a philosophical account of surfaces, and their perception and constitution. In fact, Stroll argues for two, or possibly four, distinct conceptions of surface.⁸¹ He describes the two dominant understandings of surface as, first, an abstract boundary between things (such as the edge between a solid object and the air that surrounds it) and, second, as a material entity with physical thickness (such as a skin, membrane, or the outermost layer of atoms of a material).⁸² Hence, Stroll identifies two seemingly mutually exclusive conceptions of the surface, both of which appear to hold true separately, depending on the object, and its form, shape and material. In either case, there exists a visible boundary between entities, irrespective of the materiality of that boundary itself. Interestingly, Mark Taylor notes a distinction between Stroll's notion of surface, and that proposed by Semper, suggesting that Stroll's work presents a challenge to Semper's 'oppositional dualism' between surface and structure, in which surface is privileged over structure.⁸³ Instead, Stroll privileges neither: he acknowledges both as equal, but

⁸¹ A. Stroll. 1988. *Surfaces*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

⁸² A summary of Stroll's surface ideas may be found in M. Taylor. 2003. 'Surface-Talk' In *Surface Consciousness*, ed. M. Taylor, 30-35. London: Academy Editions. pp. 33-34.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 32.

heterogeneous parts of construction.⁸⁴ While this debate lies somewhat outside the interest of this research, Semper, Stroll and Taylor all agree on the discontinuity of the surface and substrate. Perhaps more importantly, both Semper and Stroll also appear to agree on the fundamental duality between the optical and material surface.

It follows that this persistent and irresolvable dichotomy has consequences for design, and how we conceive and make both space and architecture. As Julieanna Preston observes: 'Pursuance of design as a condition of articulating surface enlists thinking and making processes that operate between and across that which is conceptual and abstract and that which is concrete and physical.'⁸⁵ While this connection between the material and visual belongs to a much larger discussion than can be sustained here, nevertheless, it is an implicit dialectic that occurs throughout this study beginning with Semper. It is also central to the discussion later in this chapter on the image, which is caught between a similar binary of the physical and psychical making of imaginal spaces.

Inhabiting the Surface

The consequence of this discussion is that the visual surface can now be seen as a means of creating and defining space. The visual surface can also be regarded as a site at which occupation may produce both space and architecture, and this is achieved through the repeated, performative making and inscribing of habitual behaviours and domestic structures. This occurs through the use of carpets, furniture, domestic objects and, importantly for this study, in the use of painted surfaces. The discussion has also revealed the intimate connection between social behaviours and spatio-visual practices of the surface.

With this understanding of the visual surface in mind, the following discussion will explore the writings of Charles Rice. For this study, Rice establishes an understanding of our capacity to occupy image spaces. Alongside surface spaces, image-based spatialities constitute the second area of focus for this conceptual framework of our ocular occupations of space.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 32.

⁸⁵ J. Preston. 2003. 'Sewing Surface: Ground Matters Beneath the Eiffel Tower' In *Surface Consciousness*, ed. M. Taylor, 81-85. London: Academy Editions. p. 85.

PART 3: INHABITING THE IMAGE – PHYSICAL SPACES

Image, Space and Occupying the Interior

Like the contentious debate surrounding the surface, the image and its relation to architecture and space is a source of much recent contestation and critical discourse. And, just like the visual surface, the image has long played a role in the production of both space and architecture. Yet, the relation of the image to this production is not only a matter of representation – it is also entangled within a more complex and multifaceted engagement with the performative practices of consumption, self-representation, identity formation, and the imaginary. Of particular interest here are the writings of Charles Rice on the emergence of the domestic interior in the nineteenth century, which, for this study, establish key connections between our practices of making and inhabiting space and the image.⁸⁶ These connections include both physical and psychical processes, in which space is perceived, experienced and produced through the visual image. Rice's writings form a theoretical framework for a discussion in the final two parts of this chapter that aim to develop an understanding of image-based practices of making and inhabiting space through visual practices. This is intended to compliment the framework established by Semper, and thus to open up further theoretical grounds to understand our ocular occupations of space.

Rice characterises the interior as a specific type of space, distinct from the outside city and place of work, and particular to the bourgeoisie.⁸⁷ He also describes its emergence as a historically specific condition, and thereby refutes essentialist and generalising accounts of the interior and domestic experience. Yet, more importantly, Rice argues that the interior emerged as a space of 'doubleness', understood both as a spatial context for living and as an *image* or *representation* of domestic existence.⁸⁸

Our contemporary image-saturated culture revolves around our homes. Sitting comfortably in our interiors, we are constantly offered images of how we should live our domestic lives, or how others live theirs – this correlation between images of the domestic and the domestic setting of their consumption is at the core of our contemporary fascination with lifestyle [...] Yet this is not just a contemporary quirk. At the beginning of the nineteenth

⁸⁶ This is a dominant theme in the writings of Charles Rice, which as a group have significantly influenced the argumentation in parts 3 and 4 of this chapter.

⁸⁷ This also follows Benjamin's account of nineteenth century domesticity. As Hilde Heynen writes, 'Walter Benjamin observes that the private individual makes his entry on the scene of history in the early nineteenth century, at the moment that, for the first time, his home becomes opposed to his place of work.' Heynen. 'Modernity and Domesticity'. p. 6.

⁸⁸ C. Rice. 2002. 'Thinking and Inhabiting the Doubled Interior'. In *ADDITIONS to Architectural History: XIXth Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*. Brisbane: SAHANZ.

century, bourgeois society began to experience the domestic interior as a particular kind of spatial condition, and also as a condition equally based in the visual. In short, they understood the interior to mean both a space and an image of a space.⁸⁹

In this revealing passage, Rice connects the imagistic nature of the interior in its nineteenth century emergence, with contemporary mediated images that shape and permeate our daily experience. Rather than appearing as a new phenomenon that threatens our corporeal and domestic inhabitations, this image-based condition of domestic space is understood as part of a much older trend that emerged with the very idea of the domestic interior. While Rice's concept of 'doubleness' stems from a specific historical context, the image-space relations it describes are relevant across a much broader timeline.⁹⁰ In fact, Rice has described the interior more generally as an 'apparatus' defined by the relation between image and space – relations that do not necessarily rely on traditional material conditions:⁹¹

[The interior's] spatial and image-based senses do not map directly on to one another. Visual representations of interiors are not simply transparent to spatial referents, even if such spatial referents exist; representations construct interiors on a two-dimensional surface as much as practices of decoration and furnishing construct interiors spatially.⁹²

At a particular moment, specific representational and spatial practices claim, and can be claimed as, the interior. [...] the very concept of the interior, and specific changes in the practices of inhabitation, are produced as much in representation as they are in spatial practices. This is why representation and spatial conditions need to be considered as doubling each other, rather than representation bearing objective and transparent witness to developments [...] in spatial practices.⁹³

Of interest here are the interactions between the interior's spatial and imagistic conditions, which Rice describes as non-causal and non-transparent. Rather, he suggests that image and space implicate each other, and are 'negotiated by perceiving and inhabiting subjects.'⁹⁴

⁸⁹ C. Rice. 2004. 'Space and Image - Inside Hill End'. In *Architecture Australia*. p. 40.

⁹⁰ For example, and in addition to a discussion of the interior's historical emergence, Rice also uses this conception of interiority to explore contemporary image culture, as well as the photographic work 'Grotto' by Thomas Demand, and the editing and layering of video sequences in the television drama '24'. See Ibid.; C. Rice. 2007. 'Thomas Demand's 'Grotto': Questions of Medium and Discipline between Art, Architecture and the Interior'. In *Architecture, Disciplinarity and the Arts*. IMA, Brisbane. 17 & 18 August, 2007. [Convenors: Macarthur, J. and Leach, A.] [unpublished].; and Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*.

⁹¹ Rice. 'Thomas Demand's 'Grotto': Questions of Medium and Discipline between Art, Architecture and the Interior'.

⁹² Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 19.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 26.

⁹⁴ C. Rice. 2007. Email Correspondence: [Received by Ashley Paine: 29 August, 2007].

It could therefore be argued that a condition of interiority is produced not simply through the relation of image and space, but through their negotiation, and their 'occupation' by the subject. This idea that a condition of interiority is produced by the subject's occupation is significant for this study. It also parallels the position outlined earlier in this chapter, whereby the occupying subject produces architecture through their interactions with space. As such, Rice's notion of doubleness may not only describe the conditions in which the interior is produced, but may also described an analogous process of making architecture as well, through our negotiation, mediation and occupation of space and image. In this way, Rice complicates this study's proposed re-conceptualisation of architecture which insists upon the interdependency of space and occupation, by introducing another factor – the image.

Accordingly, the final two parts of this chapter will detail a number of spatial practices in which the image begins to play part of this production of architecture. In particular, attention is focused on the capacity of the image to effect the key terms in this production – space and occupation.

Image Spaces and the Performative Subject

The continuity between Rice's conception of the production of interiority, and the understanding of the production of architecture proposed earlier in this chapter, stems from a critical positioning of the inhabiting subject as an active and creative mediator. In each case, it is the performative actions of the subject, mediating between space and use, or space and image, which construct the conditions of architecture and interiority respectively. For this reason, Rice concludes that inhabitation can never be a universal experience. Rather, and in parallel to Leach's writings, inhabitation is understood to constitute an individual process of defining difference and identity as well as a means of communicating subjectivity to others. In other words, our identities (our personal 'interiors') are spatialised and socialised by the constructed image that our interiors present.

While the conceptual grounds for the subject's role in making architecture has already been established in the first part of this chapter, Rice asserts that the role of the subject in the process of making the image-based conditions of the interior is more complex. Specifically, Rice understands the inhabiting subject as:

[O]ne who is caught up with both the material and immaterial aspects of the interior, as one who consumes furnishings and domestic objects and inserts them within a space [...] to make an interior, and who imagines and projects effects in relation to this consumption and insertion.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ C. Rice. 2003. 'Bourgeois Inhabitations: Theory and the Historical Emergence of the Interior'. *Architectural Theory Review*, 8 (2): 143-151. p. 145

Rice therefore insists that the subject constructs the interior materially and immaterially by producing both a physical and 'imaginary spatiality'⁹⁶. In this context, the immaterial or imaginary interior may be understood as an image space, or virtual spatiality, of the subject's mind that is occupied through the imagination. Developing this concept, Rice writes:

The interior thus emerged with significance as a physical, three-dimensional space, as well as an image, whether it be a two-dimensional representation such as a painting, a print in a portfolio of decoration, or a flat backdrop that could conjure up an interior as a theatrical scene. This image-based sense also encompasses a reverie or imaginal picture [...], one which could transform an existing spatial interior into something other.⁹⁷

These image-based concerns for reverie and its transformation of physical space help form an understanding of the immaterial making of the interior. It also reinforces the constitution of the interior as a specific condition – a performed visual construction – emerging from our mediation between image and space, and recognises the explicitly visual foundations of this experience. These are important ideas that will be returned to in Part 4 of this chapter.

Equally important is Rice's description of the interior as constructed through material and physical processes. This includes the arrangement, collection, coordination and display of furniture, possessions and other domestic objects in acts of self-representation. Once again, Rice's concept of doubleness holds – the inhabitant of the physical interior necessarily negotiates between its condition as a physical space for occupation, and its constructed image of domestic inhabitation. Once again, this practice of self-representation in the interior is a visual process. It is frequently achieved through consumption as well as through the insertion and arrangement of domestic objects within a spatio-visual order determined by the occupant. Significantly, this conception of the interior 'articulated through decoration'⁹⁸ may also be understood as constituting a particular type of visual domestic 'surface' in a way that accords with Semper's argument – that is, as a decorative surface that clothes the naked structure of space.

Making and Inhabiting the Physical Spatiality of the Interior

Rice defines inhabitation in the physical spatiality of the interior as 'the material and imaginative making of an interior and a domestic life within a given architectural space.'⁹⁹ This echoes many of Semper's interests in the social construction of space. It also reinforces his argument that space is produced by the decorative surface independently from the

⁹⁶ C. Rice. 2000. 'Image and the Interior' In *Imaginary Materials: A Seminar with Michael Carter*, ed. J. Macarthur, 35-40. Brisbane: IMA Publishing. p. 36.

⁹⁷ Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. pp. 2-3.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 3.

⁹⁹ Rice. 'Bourgeois Inhabitations: Theory and the Historical Emergence of the Interior'. p. 146.

'architectural' structure that supports it. Despite these similarities, it is important to note that Rice maintains a different conception of both architecture and surface. Historically, Rice argues, the concept of the interior emerged as a space distinct from architectural space. He also notes the antagonistic relationship between their respective professions in the nineteenth century. According to Rice, debate within architecture at this time was centred on theory and form, whereas the emergent space of the interior was much more concerned with decoration and a new culture of domestic consumption.¹⁰⁰ Rice also suggests that 'practices of inhabitation could be said to deny the architectural surface, in that these practices involve the covering of the inside surface of a room with "soft stuff," the furnishings that make an interior'.¹⁰¹ Yet, for the purposes of this study, the positions of Rice and Semper on the origins of the interior need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Rather, Rice's notion of a decorated and furnished interior can in fact be viewed as a more elaborate and purposeful construction of a textile interior 'surface' that, following Semper's theory, is applied over the hidden 'architectural' structure. Hence, Rice's discussion of the interior in the nineteenth century can in fact be used to develop Semper's ideas on the making of the domestic interior and its visual surface. As such, this apparent disparity actually opens up an expanded understanding of the surface and its relation to the occupation of space, and to the production of architecture. Moreover, the domestic practices that produce Rice's physical interiority may now be included within a broader conception of our inhabitation of surface spaces that includes the image-based concerns of this interior of furnishings and domestic objects.

Of particular interest here are the image-based practices that underpin our process of inhabiting space, especially the domestic practices of *consumption* and *self-representation*. These two key practices are also present in Rice's consideration of the nineteenth century interior:

[The emergence of the interior] framed newly articulated and increasingly widespread desires for privacy and comfort, for the consolidation of specific gendered and familial roles in life, for the linking of a *consumer culture* to the attainment of domestic arrangements that demonstrated acceptable norms, and for the practices of *self-representation* in the context of domestic life.¹⁰²
[Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 144.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 144.

¹⁰² Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. pp. 2-3.

Image, Media and Consumption

Like Rice, many writers have noted that the interior emerged in tandem with a new culture of domestic consumption. S.J. Kleinberg notes in regard to the nineteenth century domestic space in the United States:

Affluent women [...] in their interior decoration [...] ornamented the space purchased by men [...] displaying their husband's wealth as they embellished their homes with increasingly elaborate swirls of cloth and carved furniture [...] Even frugal women got caught up in this whirl of consumption.¹⁰³

Likewise, Mark Taylor and Julieanna Preston suggest that in regard to Victorian upper and middle class women's home decoration: 'Decorating one's home was added to a myriad of activities focused on "appearances" such as dress, hair style and make-up as instruments for inscribing individual difference and freedom.'¹⁰⁴ These appearances also described social status, reaching levels of obsession in the bourgeois domiciles of Paris in the nineteenth century. 'People became obsessed with the desire that no wall or floor be left bare; bare floors became a mark of poverty.'¹⁰⁵ Certainly, the importance placed on the appearance of domestic space – and the entire culture of domestic consumption surrounding it – must be seen as part of a trend that emerged with the very idea of the domestic bourgeois interior in the nineteenth century, not as a recent media-driven disruption of an essential domesticity free from such concerns.

Hence, there is a clear connection between the visual nature of the interior, and the domestic practice of consumption. However, it is the role of images in this process of consumption and inhabitation of the physical interior that is of particular interest:

Sitting comfortably in our interiors, we are constantly offered images of how we should live our domestic lives, or how others live theirs – this correlation between images of the domestic and the domestic setting of their consumption is at the core of our contemporary fascination with lifestyle.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ S. J. Kleinberg. 1999. 'Gendered Space: Housing, Privacy and Domesticity in the Nineteenth-Century United States' In *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, eds. I. Bryden and J. Floyd, 142-161. Manchester: Manchester University Press. p. 144.

¹⁰⁴ M. Taylor and J. Preston. 2003. *Interior Bowers: The Dormant Wilderness of Nineteenth-Century Boudoirs*. www.idea-edu.com/alt_content/2003/Mark_Taylor_and_Julieanna_Preston.pdf (accessed 13 November, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ M. Perrot and R.-H. Guerrand. 1990. 'Scenes and Places' In *A History of Private Life*, Vol. 4, ed. M. Perrot. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. p. 369. Cited in, Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Rice. 'Space and Image - Inside Hill End'. p. 40.

Rice, as we will recall, connects the contemporary profusion of media images in the domestic interior to our practices of occupation through the idea of lifestyle. These images are both prolific and penetrating; they occur most obviously within advertising, but also implicitly in the economic and fashion driven forces of real estate, lifestyle magazines and countless DIY television shows. Through such images and media, we are offered a plethora of ways in which to decorate, style and live in our homes. As David Summers asserts, images 'engage our fantasies, thus inducing us to buy products, as if to realize our "self-image" by acting upon the fantasies associated with those products.'¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Rice also understands the possibility of images as producing domestic desires for better lifestyles and desirable consumer products. Regarding Barthes's discussion of cinema, the image and identification, Rice writes: '[W]hat is found in the image with which one identifies can be taken up as a kind of disposition, a motivation to transform one's own life and surroundings.'¹⁰⁸ Clearly, these image-based inducements influence the making of our physical spaces through our consumption, insertion and display of our collected purchases and possessions.

Interestingly, Rice also suggests that the current proliferation of domestic images on our television screens, 'from Martha Stewart to Big Brother, has entrenched the role of the domestic as itself the mediator of a contemporary culture formed from the collective consumption of images of itself.'¹⁰⁹ Hence, these particular intersections of mediated visual imagery and domestic space reveal that our practices of inhabitation include not only the consumption of domestic furnishings, but also the very image of domestic life, underscoring an important connection between our ocular-centric culture, and domestic practices of occupation. Arguably, a significant part of this process begins by reproducing or mimicking those images we receive. For example, we may recreate the design features of a living room depicted in a design magazine, by purchasing the featured objects and inserting them in our

¹⁰⁷ D. Summers. 2003. *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*. London: Phaidon. p. 252.

¹⁰⁸ Rice. 'Image and the Interior'. p. 38.

¹⁰⁹ C. Rice. 2005. 'Photography's Veil: Reading Gender and Loos' Interiors' In *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, eds. H. Heynen and G. Baydar, 281-295. London / New York: Routledge. p. 282.

However, this new culture of image consumption is not conceived as a simple development of earlier mediated images in, and of, the interior, such as drawings, photographs and other representations. Rather, Rice argues for new formulations of interiority and domesticity, through the doubled conditions that exists between the transmission and reception of such images. He also writes regarding television and media transmissions that, '[...] the interior is not simply represented by the image, but it is actually constituted through a condition of transmission and reception. [...] These interiors are not different in kind – and do not necessarily replace – the more recognizable domestic interiors of the suburban metropolis. [...] the production of interiors through electronic media does not rely upon, or merely corrupt, conventional concepts or manifestations of domesticity.' Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. pp. 115-118.

homes. Equally, we may imitate the domestic behaviours of those people we see on TV. In both cases, these domestic practices become normalised by, and are judged against, the images presented to us.¹¹⁰

These practices of consumption are also connected to the image-based processes of making and inhabiting the physical interior – a connection founded in Rice's notion of doubleness. Within this notion of doubleness, our consumption of domestic products, furniture, decoration and décor items, can be understood both as an imagistic and spatial process, in which the subject negotiates between the material making of space (through the insertion, arrangement and organisation of such 'stuff' within a given space), and images of domestic spatialities, offered to us in the visual media that have become so much part of our domestic experience. These are performative processes enacted and mediated by the subject in the production of a physical interior. And significantly for this study, the concern for appearances within these practices of consumption also locates it as a visual practice of inhabitation. We must therefore consider consuming occupants less as victims of advertising and our image culture, but rather, as subjects that create, mediate and inhabit their visual conditions of occupation.

Image, Repetition and Identification

Thus, consumption must be understood as an active and creative process. Moreover, the process of creative consumption does not end with the purchase and insertion of goods into one's own space. On the contrary, as with many of the domestic practices already discussed, consumption is an iterative process of mediation, negotiation and making by the subject over time. As Frank-Bertholt Raith suggests:

Contrary to wide-spread opinion, consumption is by no means characterised by purely passive reception through the aggressive advertising of instant products, but rather, as the French philosopher Michel de Certeau emphasises, is marked by the "secondary production" of the consumer, although this production remains concealed in the manner of use. Hand in hand with use go individual practices of signification, which manipulate the appropriated objects and temporarily transform the (mental) property of another into a new autonomous place.¹¹¹

This process of 'secondary consumption' involves practices of appropriation and signification. These rely upon the symbolic and personal attachment of meaning associated

¹¹⁰ This follows Judith Butler's conception of performativity, and the earlier discussion of repetitive domestic practice. Leach writes (following Butler), that: 'All behaviour is based on a form of mimicry, including normative heterosexual behaviour that is thereby "naturalised" and instantiated by the force of repetition.' Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 173.

¹¹¹ Raith. 'Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?' p. 9.

with material spaces and objects. Such subjective processes involve an engagement between the occupant (or consumer) and the physical object or space, over time. This is especially salient within the domestic interior, which enables a dynamic, fluid and biographical identification of ourselves in various objects, images and spaces, and fosters a sense of connection, personal meaning, identity and belonging. Rice develops this idea by recourse to Benjamin's notion of the collector. Benjamin suggests that through the process of collecting, objects are removed from the world of commodities and become entangled with subjective meanings, histories, traces and the self. Rice extrapolates:

The impressionable surface holds on to the artefacts liberated from the world of commodities and interiorized for the securing of a private life; the [interior] surface folds to encase the inhabitant and these collected objects. The indefatigable collector understands that such a fabrication of the interior is a continual process, a set of techniques and practices that ensure the ongoing viability of the self.¹¹²

The individual – meaning both their subjectivity and biography – is contained within, expressed and mediated by the process of collecting.¹¹³ In his book, *Camouflage*, Neil Leach discusses a similar process of identification regarding the construction of identity within architectural space.¹¹⁴ Once again, identification is understood as an explicitly visual practice that is inextricably linked to our physical spatial context. This departs markedly from Leach's extreme argument in *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, discussed earlier in this chapter, in which he rallies against the aestheticisation of architecture and its reduction to an image. In *Camouflage*, he redresses and re-balances his exploration of aesthetics.¹¹⁵

According to Leach in this later publication, we seek both assimilation and distinction from our spatial environments. We desire to connect to our spatial context. We seek to feel at home, but also to stand apart from it, so as to define ourselves as unique, subjective individuals.¹¹⁶ Leach follows Lacan's specular notions of identification (based in his concept of a mirror stage in childhood development) which operate by establishing difference as much as similarities. Importantly, however, due to the dual desires for connection and distinction, this construction of identity is always tied to a physical context – it is the background against which we construct our identities. This is a visual, iterative and

¹¹² Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 9.

Rice also suggests later in the book that the 'creation of an interior through acts of inhabitation might be seen as a compensation against the objectification of culture. Objects were interiorised as an attempt to win them back from objectivity. A mode of organisation such as the collection, or the registering of traces of objects in an interior, offers the possibility of conferring a semantic sense to objects shorn of it.' Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 97.

¹¹³ Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. pp. 13-17.

¹¹⁴ Leach. *Camouflage*.

¹¹⁵ See Leach's own ruminations on the relationship between these publication in *Ibid*. p. ix.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*. p. 139.

performative process that, like the idea of 'becoming' discussed earlier, develops through repetitive acts of appropriation. Leach describes this process as follows:

Central to this sense of belonging is the principle of ritualistic repetition. [...] Repetition leads to normalization and consequent familiarisation. Acted out within a particular context, it may lead to an associative sense of belonging that effectively materializes this process.

Through these stylized spatial practices, these spaces are "demarcated" by certain groups via a kind of spatial appropriation, a visceral process of identification which depends on bodily memories. Through the repetition of those rituals, these spaces are "re-membered," such that those participating reinscribe themselves into the space, reevoking corporeal memories of previous enactments. The space becomes a space of projection, as memories of previous experiences are "projected" onto its material form. At the same time, the body becomes the site of introjection, as a recording surface registering those previous spatial experiences. As a combined result of the echoing and reinforcement of these two sets of experiences – introjection and projection – over time, a sense of mirroring and consequent identification is achieved. Identification is always specular.¹¹⁷

For Leach, the specular practice that emerges from Lacan's writings on identification is clearly a visual process.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Benjamin argues that spaces are appropriated both through use and perception – that is, both with the body and the eye. These appropriations, according to Benjamin, are then consolidated over time through habit and repetition.¹¹⁹ For example, Leach suggests that the notion of 'home' is a transferable attachment to a place, a 'symbolic identification' that is established over time through our domestic rituals and practices. As such, it is not a stable concept or place, but rather emerges from the relationship we forge with a given space, at a particular time.¹²⁰ Once again, it reveals that architecture necessitates the subject's symbolic attachments and habitual occupations in

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 181-182.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 139.

¹¹⁹ Neil Leach quotes Benjamin: 'Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriations cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points in history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.'

W. Benjamin. 1992. *Illuminations*. London: Fontana. p. 233. Cited in Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 142.

¹²⁰ Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 234.

order to become meaningful and complete. Space is otherwise essentially inert and meaningless.¹²¹

By attaching subjective meaning to our homes through our domestic practices and rituals, this process of identification opens up an understanding of the way in which we visually appropriate the objects, spaces and images. In the discussion that follows, this process of identification is developed within the context of the physical interior outlined both by Hilde Heynen and Neil Leach with specific regard to the notion of mimesis.¹²²

Mimesis and Identification

The term mimesis originates in its use by Plato to describe the relation between poetry and the events and acts which it recalls. For Plato it carries a negative connotation as the inferior imitation of a true reality.¹²³ However, Leach traces the later reformulation of the idea by Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno as a more creative and constructive act that exceeds mere imitation. Leach writes: 'For Benjamin, mimesis alludes to a constructive reinterpretation of an original, which becomes a creative act in itself.'¹²⁴ Moreover, it 'offers a way of finding meaning in the world, through the discovery of similarities.'¹²⁵ Adorno, however, develops another conception of mimesis. Whereas Benjamin's approach is established in language, mimesis for Adorno is strictly non-linguistic, and is founded in art and aesthetic experience as a non-conceptual mode of sensuous perception.¹²⁶ While Benjamin and Adorno's approach to mimesis insists upon an active, creative, critical and reflective process, they also accord with Plato's argument that the mimetic act does not simply imitate its referent, but rather, institutes a new condition in relation to it. As Adorno suggests, it is not a process of imitation, but one of assimilation with the other.¹²⁷

Developing this idea, Heynen uses the concept of mimesis (by way of Benjamin) to describe the process of making our homes as a kind of mediating zone between our bodies and the outside world.¹²⁸ In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin comments on the nineteenth century interior (in strikingly Semperian tone):

¹²¹ The same argument is put forward by both Leach in, *Ibid.* p. 144, and by Raith in, Raith. 'Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?'

¹²² See Heynen. 'Modernity and Domesticity'.; Leach. *Camouflage*.

¹²³ E. Craig. 2005. *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. p. 674.

¹²⁴ Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 19.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 34-35.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 22.

¹²⁸ Heynen. 'Modernity and Domesticity'. p. 22.

To live in these interiors was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself within a spider's web [...]. "To dwell" as a transitive verb – as in the notion of "indwelt spaces"; herewith an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behaviour. It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves.¹²⁹

Heynen describes this mediating process of 'fashioning a shell' around us as a mimetic gesture that surrounds our body, but never in a perfect, complete or stable way.¹³⁰ Rather, she argues that this mimetic process achieves an approximation of the body – a translation of it. She writes: 'This translation, however, is not stable or fixed [...] but is continually under revision. Since the modern individual's subjectivity is in a permanent state of transition, his or her interior should be capable of continuous change and variability.'¹³¹ Thus, mimesis may also be understood as a performative practice – one that expands our understanding of the use, appropriation and occupation of space.

Benjamin's understanding of mimesis is also discussed by Neil Leach. For Leach, mimesis opens up a similar understanding of how we relate to the world, and how we construct subjective meaning and identity within it.¹³² Again, this follows Benjamin's comments on dwelling, and the urge to recognise ourselves in our own environments – that is, to seek out similarities, and forge connections between us and the spaces in which we dwell. On this point, Leach quotes Adorno: 'The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human becomes human at all by imitating other human beings.'¹³³ Yet, as both Benjamin and Adorno recognise, mimesis is not simply a matter of imitation, but rather, it is a creative act of assimilating to something other through finding similarity. In the context of Adorno's writings, Leach states that:

It is in the mimetic impulse that human beings absorb external forms, incorporate them symbolically into their self-expression, and then rearticulate them in the objects they produce.¹³⁴

Mimesis allows us to forge a symbolic relationship with our environment. We read ourselves into our surroundings, without being fully conscious of doing so. In effect, mimesis is an unconscious identification with the object. It necessarily involves a creative moment on the part of the subject, who identifies with the object, even if it is a technical object – a piece of machinery, a car, a plane, a bridge, whatever – so that it becomes invested with some symbolic significance, and is appropriated as part of the symbolic

¹²⁹ W. Benjamin. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press. p. 216. Cited in Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 18.

¹³⁰ Heynen. 'Modernity and Domesticity'. p. 22.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 22.

¹³² Leach. *Camouflage*. pp. 18-29.

¹³³ *Ibid.* p. 19.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 44.

background through which identity itself is constituted. When we see our values “reflected” in our surroundings, this feeds our narcissistic urge, and breaks down the subject/object divide.¹³⁵

Leach regards mimesis not as a surrender or loss of the self to the other, but rather, it is a means of maintaining and ‘preserving the self against a certain backdrop.’¹³⁶ Leach takes this idea of mimesis further, linking it to a broader notion and logic of camouflage:

Camouflage [...] is understood here as a mechanism for inscribing an individual within a given cultural setting. [...] [Its role] is not to disguise, but to offer a medium through which to relate to the other. Camouflage constitutes a mode of symbolization. It operates as a form of connectivity.¹³⁷

Camouflage can [...] be read as an interface with the world. It operates as a masquerade that re-presents the self, just as self-representation through makeup, dress, hairstyle, and so on is a form of self-representation. But this need not be a temporary condition. The surface masquerade may have a lasting impact upon questions of identity. Far from denying any true sense of self beneath, it may actually contribute to a sense of self. Camouflage should therefore be seen as a mechanism for constituting human identity through the medium of representation.¹³⁸

These related practices of camouflage and mimesis are significant for this study in that their primary operation occurs through images, representation and the visual realm.¹³⁹ These notions reveal the role of images, as well as our visual engagement with physical space, in locating us in the world, in grounding our identities, and in constructing subjective meaning in otherwise neutral objects. This goes some way to explaining our preoccupation with images and our insatiable desire for consumer goods, as these are the means used to materialise and realise identity and self-representation. Leach points out that:

[T]he aesthetic domain can therefore be seen to be somewhat Janus-faced. It is the source of many of our problems, in a culture in which everything is coopted into images and commodities, and also potentially the way out. It offers the mechanism of locating the self within the otherwise homogenizing placelessness of contemporary existence.¹⁴⁰

Through the mimetic impulse and its practices we visually ground ourselves in the physical world as well as in the physical interior, incorporating our subjectivities into the forms, objects and spaces of that physical space. This is an important idea for this study. It counteracts the

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 45.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 24.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 240.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 247.

¹³⁹ Leach acknowledges this, while noting that camouflage may also be engaged through other senses. Ibid. p. 241.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 243.

prevalent view, exemplified by Baudrillard's writings, that image culture and ocular-centrism result in complete detachment and alienation from the world. Moreover, as Leach contests, it is through the visual and aesthetic realm that such connections may be (re-)established.¹⁴¹

Image and Self-Representation in the Domestic Interior

Identification is, however, not limited to a process of self-definition and subjective meaning. Rather, it also encompasses a desire to re-present this subjectivity to others, to define one's distinctions, class, taste, wealth, moral standards and identity, as well as to make connections between groups of people.¹⁴² This practice of self-representation is closely related to, and dependent upon, many of the visual and image-based processes of domestic occupation already discussed – namely consumption, mimesis and identification. It is also largely dependent upon, and operates through, the material and physical domestic interior – the site in which our identities are actively constructed and projected. Hence, the domestic interior must be understood as a social space for shared interaction as well as an interface between the social (public) and individual (private) inhabitant. Once again, this follows Semper's theory of the decorative domestic surface, which, as Wigley explained, is a visual space of social exchange.¹⁴³ This position also accords with a long history of architecture's use of decoration and ornamentation as a social language. As Brent Allpress has observed: 'A traditional 'proper' role for ornament has been to make the ordering hierarchies of society legible.'¹⁴⁴

This practice of self-representation may be found in the deliberate and subjective construction of the physical interior. For instance, in regard to the use of furniture, Mark Kingwell notes:

¹⁴¹ The distinction between Leach's apparent condemnation of the image outlined in *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, and Baudrillard's claims of alienation brought about by the image, has already been made earlier in this chapter. Leach's later discussion of image-based and aesthetic concerns in *Camouflage*, as highlighted here, further reinforce this significant difference.

¹⁴² Parallels to this concept of identification and the surface also exist within queer theory. According to Katarina Bonnevier, 'To follow queer theory, the self is constituted in the relation with people (an audience, a lover, or a kinship relation) and in interaction with things (a mirror, a chair or a flight of stairs). Material queerness is situated in the surface – that is, in the interrelation between built matter and the active subject.' K. Bonnevier. 2005. 'A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027' In *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, eds. H. Heynen and G. Baydar, 162-180. London / New York: Routledge. p. 168.

¹⁴³ Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ B. Allpress. 2003. 'Ornamental Operations' In *Surface Consciousness*, ed. M. Taylor, 69-74. London: Academy Editions. p. 73.

For centuries, furniture has been, along with clothes, hairstyles, companions, leisure activities, and personal conveyances, a way of signalling one's place in a complex hierarchy of social relationships [...]. More specifically, it has functioned as what Veblen first labelled 'invidious comparison' through 'conspicuous consumption.' [...] On the surface, the furnishing of the country house or the high-rise apartment purport to send intricately coded messages of personal taste or sophistication or refinement – and indeed these semiotic codes may well be rooted in some degree of reality. But more basically these objects are purchased, placed, and displayed to indicate sometimes quite precisely, one's average net worth and margin of disposable annual income.¹⁴⁵

The mimetic process of identification with domestic objects and possessions therefore becomes inextricably linked to a corresponding desire to use these objects to demarcate distinctions and difference from others. Similarly, Raith has explored the practice of self-representation through consumption. He quotes John Fiske, who suggests that consumer goods are "not only objects of economic exchange; they are objects with which one thinks, with which one speaks."¹⁴⁶ Raith continues, arguing that, 'consumption as a whole should be understood as the tactic of a conscious differentiation of the world, as an operative, meaning-making drawing of boundaries [...].'¹⁴⁷ Likewise, in response to the visual language and making of identity through the consumption of images and commodities, Jane Rendell writes:

The display of status symbols is as important as their possession. Distinctions are created not just through buying more goods, but by creating ever more subtle distinctions, by playing with an existing 'vocabulary' of material signs through the development of a 'rhetoric' of use. Distinct social identities of resistance and difference can be represented through the use (and re-use) of space and materials.¹⁴⁸

In this way, Kingwell, Raith and Rendell, each develop an understanding of consumption as a visual and social practice of self-representation within the domestic interior. Yet, there are other important aspects to self-representation that exist outside of consumption. For example, Meredith Warner has described the findings of a Spanish study of homemakers in Extremadura. This study found that the habitual practice of decorating and re-arranging furniture, pictures and ornaments within the interior reflected a conception of the house as a changing and dynamic construction. It is also revealed to be a desire to make one's domestic practices and work visible in the eyes of others.¹⁴⁹ On this basis, Warner insists

¹⁴⁵ Kingwell. 'Tables, Chairs, and Other Machines for Thinking'. pp. 175-176.

¹⁴⁶ J. Fiske. 2000. *Lesarten des Populären*. Vienna. Cited in Raith. 'Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?' p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ Raith. 'Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?' p. 16.

¹⁴⁸ J. Rendell. 1998. 'Doing It, (Un)doing It, (Over)doing It Yourself' In *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, ed. J. Hill, 229-246. New York: Routledge. p. 234.

¹⁴⁹ Warner. 'Making and Breaking Private Space'. p. 33.

upon the individual significance of the interior for the expression of identity, appearance and its close relation to our social interface with others. Warner's understanding of the dynamic process of interior decoration also develops an iterative conception of domestic maintenance, and attributes social significance to its performance.

Similarly, Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro discuss the potent concepts of home and identity, and their impact on how we both perceive and construct our domestic environments.¹⁵⁰ They highlight the particular tensions that exist between the domestic interior as a place in which to live and as an expression or image of our identities. While recognising the important role of consumption and appearances in the formulation of this identity, they suggest that other social issues of etiquette and respectability are perhaps more dominant. Madigan and Munro describe this respectability as founded in standards of cleanliness and organisation of the household, and as such, imply a visual structure and order on the domestic realm that is established and maintained through the performance of housework and domestic duties.¹⁵¹ These ideas regarding etiquette, respectability and domestic duties offer a further insight into the motivations that drive our visual practices of occupying the interior. They also complicate the understanding of our domestic behaviours which, as discussed earlier regarding Philip Johnson's Glass House, have an interdependent relation with the construction of the interior's visual surface. Moreover, these ideas highlight tensions between the interior as both an image and as a context in which to dwell that recall Rice's very definition of interior.

As such, the physical domestic interior may be understood in a number of ways. First, it may be constructed, arranged and maintained by the domestic practices of consumption and appropriation. Second, the interior emerges through the physical manifestation of the more fluid processes of mimesis, identification and self-representation. Together, these practices play a significant role in our visual occupation of space, and the rituals, processes and habits that constitute domestic inhabitation. These important domestic practices of the physical interior are, however, also overlaid and transformed by other image-based practices of the imaginary. As Rice notes: '[I]mmaterial acts such as imagining become folded within material consequences.'¹⁵² These ideas are developed below, once again focussing upon the role of the image in our spatial inhabitations.

¹⁵⁰ R. Madigan and M. Munro. 2006. 'House Beautiful': Style and Consumption in the Home' In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 221-227. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. p. 226.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 224-225.

¹⁵² Rice. 'Bourgeois Inhabitations: Theory and the Historical Emergence of the Interior'. p. 147

PART 4: INHABITING THE IMAGE – IMAGINARY SPACES

Making and Inhabiting an Imaginary Spatiality – Reverie and Doubleness

In this final part of the chapter, the imaginary process of making and inhabiting the interior will be examined. As already discussed, this notion of an imaginary spatiality comes from Rice's writings on the doubled interior. Yet, it is important to note that Rice actually develops three kinds of doubleness within his concept of the interior. The first of these – between image and space – has already been discussed at length regarding the physical interior. Second, Rice argues that the idea of the doubled interior enables the pairing of the physical and the immaterial aspects of our experience through imagination and reverie. Third, he contends that later in the nineteenth century, the interior also serves as a 'figure for articulating the interrelations between the conscious and unconscious mind.'¹⁵³ In this context, the focus of the following discussion on the making of an imaginary spatiality needs to be understood as an interdependent condition with the physical making of the interior, linking to the previous discussions of the domestic practices of consumption, identification, mimesis and self-representation. It is also bound up with the image-space and conscious-unconscious relations of Rice's three-part conception of the doubled interior.

To explain the making and inhabiting of an imaginary spatiality, and its interconnection with a physical interior, Rice cites a number of examples, including Michael Carter's discussion of a male erotic fantasy. Rice recalls Carter's description of a male subject within a domestic interior encountering an erotic image of a woman. Rice says of this experience that the male subject is necessarily 'caught between an image and an interior (or interiorised) spatial regime, and [that he] experiences both image and interior together through the mediation of his imaginary.'¹⁵⁴ In Rice's description of Carter's scene, the physical space is transformed by the imagination into a brothel in which the male subject may fulfil his erotic desires. Importantly, the correspondence and movement between the physical and imaginary interior is made possible through reverie, whereby actual spaces take on the quality of imagined spaces: 'he is able to take an image as an interior and an interior as an image.'¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Rice notes that reading a story of a 'domestic uncanny while seated in a cosy domestic interior might create an uncanny effect through the unsettling homology between the

¹⁵³ Rice. 'Thinking and Inhabiting the Doubled Interior'.

¹⁵⁴ Rice. 'Image and the Interior'. p. 35.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 36.

In a similar example, Rice recounts Baudelaire's poetic description of his own abode. Here, Baudelaire describes a dreamy and harmonious domestic room, with furniture that is well proportioned. At this point he is wakened from his daydream by a knock on the door, and the description changes. Here, Baudelaire concedes that the space is in fact a hovel, strewn with old junk, chipped furniture and fouled by grime. Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 1.

represented interior, and the interior in which a subject engages with this representation.¹⁵⁶ Rice adds that a 'domestic horror story or detective novel is affecting because it makes one sense this uncanny in one's own home as an immediate spatial affect.'¹⁵⁷ In a final example founded in contemporary domestic experience, Rice cites the close association between the numerous recent television programs depicting domestic scenes and practices, and the domestic context in which these representations are consumed.¹⁵⁸ He suggests that this connection is at the core of our recent fascination with these images of domestic life and lifestyle revealing the way in which 'domesticity is [both] formed and experienced through its mediation in images.'¹⁵⁹ In each case, the connection between image and space is mediated, or 'occupied', by the subject, bringing the image-based imaginary condition into the reality of one's immediate experience of space. Importantly for this discussion, Rice's examples establish a clear connection between our occupations of physical space, and the simultaneous visual, representational and image-based experience of imaginary spatialities – a connection that is made possible through reverie.

A similar condition is identified by Beatriz Colomina. Discussing images of Adolf Loos' interiors, she writes:

Looking at the photographs, it is easy to imagine oneself in these precise, static positions, usually indicated by the unoccupied furniture. The photographs suggest that it is intended that these spaces be comprehended by occupation, by using this furniture, by "entering" the photograph, by inhabiting it.¹⁶⁰

In a footnote to this comment, she further proposes: 'The perception of space is not what space is but one of its representations; in this sense built space has no more authority than drawings, photographs or descriptions.'¹⁶¹ Responding to this comment, Rice has clarified his position: 'While Colomina argues that the perception of space is produced by its representation, I would argue slightly differently that the perception of space is produced in the slippage between image [its representation] and space.'¹⁶² Yet, Rice and Colomina both appear to agree that conditions of interiority may exist both as spaces and as images. The interior may be occupied, therefore, both physically (by the body in the case of the actual interior) and virtually (by the imagination in the case of the photographs).

¹⁵⁶ Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 50.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 51.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 115.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 115.

¹⁶⁰ Colomina. 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism'. p. 75.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 75.

¹⁶² Rice. 'Photography's Veil: Reading Gender and Loos' Interiors'. p. 292

In this way, a more complex conception of our lived experience of space is established, one that bonds our occupations in real space, with our occupations of image space, virtual space and psychological space. As Rice suggests: '[T]he reality of the interior's spatiality [...] as well as its condition as an image, [...] can be imagined and dreamed, and inhabited as such.'¹⁶³ It may be argued that the spaces of desire, dreams, and of one's self are always present and embedded in our experience of the 'real' space of everyday life. Moreover, it is important to reiterate that these domestic practices of reverie and imagination are intrinsically connected to a visual process of making and inhabiting the doubled interior.

A similar argument can be found in the work of a number of writers on the psychical and subjective construction of spatial experience, perception and meaning. For example, in Lefebvre's notion of representational spaces discussed earlier, physical spaces are overlaid with spaces appropriated symbolically by the operations of the mind.¹⁶⁴ While Lefebvre dismisses the role of the image, he explicitly recognises the inseparable nature of real, physical space, and the psychological spaces of the imagination. Interestingly, artist Mark Rothko notes that it is only since the Renaissance that man has begun to make distinctions between the real, objective world, and the realm of sensation and imagination.¹⁶⁵ While this distinction is now fundamentally enforced, it seems that our experience of images and space remain complexly intertwined with our individual subjectivities, personal experiences and psychological make up. Again, this is particularly salient within the domestic interior, where such spaces of doubleness are readily and unconsciously made and occupied.

Image as a Performative Act – Making the Imaginary Image

In his book *How Images Think*, Ron Burnett also looks at our engagement with images, and the creative role of the viewer in their reception. Burnett argues: 'The intersections of creativity, viewing, and critical reflection are fundamental to the very act of engaging with images in all of their forms.'¹⁶⁶ He further argues that this interaction between images and percipients creates an in-between zone of interdependence, which he calls a 'middle ground.' Like Rice, he describes this middle ground in terms of *reverie* – an open, multiple,

¹⁶³ Rice. *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*. p. 39.

Similarly, Malcolm Miles describes these psychical appropriations of space in terms of 'the uses, occupations and embodiment of space, and its recoding through memory, association and desire.' M. Miles. 2000. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*. Chichester / New York: J. Wiley. p. 153.

¹⁶⁵ M. Rothko. 2004. 'Space' In *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*, ed. C. Rothko, 56-61. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. pp. 59-60.

¹⁶⁶ Burnett. *How Images Think*. p. 13.

and multi-modal space in which our subjectivities interact with images in the co-creation of meaning, and in which human interaction and communication is facilitated.¹⁶⁷

Developing this notion, Burnett introduces the idea of 'imagescapes'¹⁶⁸ to broaden the discussion of images in order to include the time and space-dependent role of the viewer, in addition to that of the creator. Burnett writes:

Most moments of viewing or listening simultaneously interact with daydreams and thought processes. Viewers, in a metaphorical sense, move into images and outside of them [...]. Viewers are separate from the images and yet are deeply concerned with experiencing them. This [...] allows for and encourages a mixture of imaginary and real emotion – perceptions and reflection on what has been seen, understood, or experienced. It is possible to inhabit the worlds that are viewed, and, just as quickly, it is possible to step outside, all the while interpreting each phase and thereby generating others. The experience of imagescapes is not just about taking in what is there; it is also about creating a dynamic interrelationship that continuously evolves.¹⁶⁹

[I]mages move from the realm of the objective into shared spaces of reverie and imagination. This is why these experiences need to be talked about using a model of shared intelligence and collaboration. Image-worlds are sites of exposition but also places of perpetual interaction [...] which pushes the entire process towards reverie.¹⁷⁰

Images, or imagescapes, may therefore be understood as performative and iterative sites of imaginary interaction, in which their meaning, and the image itself, is made and re-made upon one's encounter. This is similar to the re-conceptualisation of architecture proposed in the first part of this chapter, wherein architecture was defined through its repeated performance and re-making upon its every encounter. This understanding of the image again runs counter to a more pervasive position that suggests that images are passively received by viewers, and are complete and closed entities with prescribed meanings and interpretations. Burnett argues that this is a misunderstanding of the image due to an assumption that our vision is a 'far more precise activity than it ever is or could be.'¹⁷¹ He proposes the concepts of a 'middle ground' and 'imagescapes' because he regards them as more accurate descriptions of the contingent, relative and creative nature of one's encounter with images. In this way, Burnett follows the earlier writings of philosopher Vilem Flusser on

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 40.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 48.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 48

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 40.

the nature of lines (texts) as opposed to surfaces (images).¹⁷² According to Flusser, texts offer a narrow meaning that is both precise and clear, where as images offer richer meaning, but are far less clear and deterministic about that meaning. Once again, this recognition implies an active and creative viewer.

Moreover, if as Burnett suggests, images rely on the percipient's performative interaction and co-creation, then it may be necessary to also reassess and reconceptualise the image in the process of making the interior as an imaginary and image-based spatiality. Yet, rather than existing as a representation of an interior, images must be seen as an integral part of our active occupation, appropriation and making of our own subjective experience of the imaginary spatiality. Accordingly, the image should be considered as a process, and as a performative act of occupation of this virtual spatiality. A similar performative understanding of the image is also proposed by the philosopher Jacques Rancière:

'Image' [...] refers to two different things. There is a simple relationship that produces the likeness of an original: not necessarily its faithful copy, but simply what suffices to stand in for it. And there is the interplay of operations that produces what we call art: or precisely an alteration of resemblance.¹⁷³

This is the sense in which art is made up of images, regardless of whether it is figurative, or whether we recognise the form of identifiable characters and spectacles in it. The images of art are operations that produce a discrepancy, a dissemblance.¹⁷⁴

Rancière cites the example of director Robert Bresson's series of visual and auditory manoeuvres in the film *Au hazard Balthazar*, which provide a series of dissemblances to achieve a desired artistic affect.¹⁷⁵ Images in this case are not simply the various representations made by the camera and viewed on a screen. Rather, they are the affect of a sequence of visual and auditory operations constructed by Bresson – 'operations that make up the artistic nature of what we are seeing.'¹⁷⁶ While Rancière's interest lies in the artist's making of images, and Burnett's focus rests with the viewer's reception of images, in both cases the image is conceptualised as a process, and as an affect of operative gestures. In this way, Rancière and Burnett enable a significant expansion of Rice's concept of images within an imaginary spatiality, departing from simple representations of space, and moving towards a broader understanding of the capacity of images as acts and processes of making. So considered, images can be understood as synonymous with other performative

¹⁷² V. Flusser. 2002. 'Line and Surface' In *Writings*, ed. V. Flusser, 21-34. Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁷³ J. Rancière. 2007. *The Future of the Image*. English ed. London / New York: Verso. p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 2-8.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

processes undertaken by the occupant in mediating, appropriating and inhabiting the in-between zone of Rice's binary of space and the representational image.

Yet, this is only one aspect of Rice's notion of an imaginary spatiality. As noted earlier, he also suggests that images are types of spaces in their own right, and that they are occupied simultaneously within the physical interior. Therefore, it is not only the nature of the image that is in question, but also the very nature of space as well.

The Performativity of Virtual Image Space

If, as Rice suggests, we occupy images as spatial conditions, that is, outside of the usual material conditions of the interior, then this necessitates placing attention on the nature of such image spaces, and on their production. These notions have already been discussed in terms of reverie, and the imaginary spaces produced within the mind. Yet these ideas have also been developed in recent discourses surrounding the emergence of computer technologies and Virtual Reality (VR). Again, it is not the VR technologies that are of interest, but the questions these technologies raise in relation to image-based and imaginary spatialities, and our capacity to occupy them. For example, this concern is found in the writings of philosopher Elizabeth Grosz. While Grosz does not engage directly with questions of occupation, issues of embodiment and 'lived' spatial experience are a recurrent area of her examination, and they constitute an important parallel to the exploration of visual practices of occupation in this study.

According to Grosz, virtuality as a concept, encompasses and acknowledges the presence of the virtual as an implicit and interdependent condition of the real.¹⁷⁷ In contrast to the polarised views held by most writers on VR that occupy the extremes of VR discourses – between God-like control and complete disembodiment – Grosz's interest lies in the way in which new technologies have made more explicit the inherent virtuality of space:

[T]he computer and the worlds it generates reveal that the world in which we live, the real world, has always been a space of virtuality. The real is saturated with the spaces of projection, possibility, and the new [...]. The virtuality of computer space is fundamentally no different from the virtual reality of writing, reading, drawing, or even thinking: the virtual is the space of the emergence of the new, the unthought, the unrealized.¹⁷⁸

A number of recent writers have acknowledged that the apparently new condition of virtuality intrinsic to many digital technologies in fact rests on much older historical foundations, which

¹⁷⁷ Grosz. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. p. 78.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 78.

underpin our concepts of images and representations of three-dimensional space.¹⁷⁹

Arguably, proponents of new media technologies, and particularly visual ones, have simply championed a new consciousness of virtuality that has existed in art since antiquity.¹⁸⁰ While others have argued that the nature of more contemporary forms of virtuality (such as VR's immersion capabilities) are vastly different to early incarnations of 'virtuality' in art (such as the illusory space of a painting), it is the contention of this study that a commonality exists in the capacity of both new and old forms to transcend the material and 'real' world, while remaining inevitably grounded within it.¹⁸¹

Therefore, Grosz asserts that virtuality is neither a new condition, nor a threat to our capacity to occupy physical space. She instead argues for its close connection to the body. Rather than the traditional conception of mind and body (or the virtual and the real) as oppositional terms, Grosz complicates the binary by maintaining that the mind is embodied and inseparable from the body and therefore that the virtual is inseparable from the real. For Grosz, bodies are not simply biological containers of a transcendental mind. Instead she argues that we exist as identities bound up in the materiality and complexities of the body.¹⁸² Therefore, '[i]f we don't just have bodies but are bodies,' she claims, 'there can never be the threat of displacing body in favour of mind or abandoning the real for the virtual.'¹⁸³ This suggests that the very notion of virtuality needs to be reconsidered.

Furthermore, the complex and overlaid visual spaces (described by Rice, Burnett and Lefebvre) that exist between image and space, and between the image and the mind, may also be re-conceptualised as virtual spaces of our everyday experience. Yet, whereas these writers reveal the capacity to make and occupy such virtual spaces of the mind, significantly, Grosz suggests that virtual spaces are also made by the body – a notion developed in the writings of Mark Hansen on embodiment.

Image as a Space – Embodiment and Spectatorial Synthesis

Within this understanding of virtuality and its intimate connection to our corporeal, lived and visual experience, an even more pertinent connection between occupation and virtuality may

¹⁷⁹ O. Grau. 2003. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. Translated by G. Culance. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 5.

This issue has also been discussed by Elizabeth Grosz, John Macarthur and Margaret Wertheim.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Similarly, Wertheim has traced this back to Giotto's seminal frescos of the late thirteenth century. See M. Wertheim. 1999. *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet*. New York / London: W.W. Norton.

¹⁸¹ M. Carter and A. Geczy. 2006. *Reframing Art*. University of New South Wales Press Ltd. pp. 221-222.

¹⁸² Grosz. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. pp. 31-32.

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 86.

be found. In his recent writings on digital media and embodiment, Mark Hansen has described the essential role of the subjective body to 'enframe' information and images in a digital age. In doing so, he reveals our innate capacity to synthesise visual stimuli, embody meaning and to create spaces within the body and brain. As such, Hansen establishes a similar position to Rice and Lefebvre, in which we create virtual mind spaces and meaning through our interpretation, engagement, negotiation and occupation of the physical and visual world.

To do this, Hansen utilises the philosopher Henri Bergson's idea of the body within a world constituted by images in order to establish an understanding of embodied vision in the digital age. Hansen summarises Bergson's concept of perception, in which 'the body functions as a kind of filter [Bergson's 'centre of indetermination'] that selects, from among the universe of images circulating around it and according to its own embodied capacities, precisely those that are relevant to it.'¹⁸⁴ For Bergson, the body is an active framer of visual information that makes meaning and gains its sense of the world around it through a visual process of selection. Thus, visual perception is understood to be subjective, affective, impure and embodied. Moreover, updating Bergson's theory for new media and the digital image, Hansen extends the concept of embodied selection. In a digital age in which all media is reduced to a flow of information, the role of the affective body not only to select, but actually to 'enframe' information becomes paramount.¹⁸⁵ For Hansen, the body becomes part of the process that turns otherwise formless digital information into a 'corporeally apprehensible image' – that is, an appearance of information, whether it occurs in the form of sound, text or image.¹⁸⁶ Importantly, within this context, the body remains fundamental. Our experience of media (whether real or virtual) occurs as a selective and embodied process within our affective bodies.

Like Grosz, Hansen also refuses the predominant claims of disembodiment surrounding VR technologies. Rather, the necessary corporeality that underpins our experience of a VR environment is emphasised. He states that VR 'is the result of a "body-brain achievement" that creates an internal, bodily space of sensation.'¹⁸⁷ Rather than becoming obsolete, the body gains increased relevance in Hansen's concept of virtual space. Moreover, implicit in this statement is a blurred distinction between the real and virtual. Grosz writes: 'neither vision nor sound is virtual but rather the objects and spaces that vision and sound find as their fields of play. Vision, sound, touch, taste and smell function in their same modalities as

¹⁸⁴ M. B. N. Hansen. 2004. *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 15.

always.¹⁸⁸ A similar position is put forward by Christian Groothuizen, who parallels Hansen and Grosz's comment on virtuality, writing that:

According to Damien Keown, 'There is no difference between reality and virtual reality. What one sees, hears and feels is identical in either case.' [...] The 'world-as-seen' is constructed in the brain in the same sense as any virtual reality; in other words, virtual space is the only reality. In fact, 'virtual space' exists and has existed within what would commonly be considered the 'actual space' that we inhabit.¹⁸⁹

This is also evidenced physiologically. For example, Oliver Grau notes that the head mounted displays (HMDs) commonly used in VR simulations, present two distinct two-dimensional images to the viewer, and through stereoscopic vision, these images are interpreted as a single three-dimensional perception of space. Since this three-dimensional spatial experience exists only within one's brain-body, such technologies reinforce that all sensation, stimulation and meaning is embodied.¹⁹⁰

This capacity of our bodies to produce and then occupy such virtual, or imaginary spatialities, suggests that Hansen's notion of embodiment may now also be understood as a corporeal equivalent to practices that have until now been referred to as inhabitation. That is, to embody space is to exist within, and to experience the spaces of the body – the spaces of our own interior – which are meaningfully and corporeally constructed through the synthesis of real and virtual spaces of the mind and body. As Hansen suggests, virtuality is not a condition emerging from technology, but from ourselves as sentient human beings.¹⁹¹ Perhaps more importantly for this study, the combined theoretical positions put forward by Hansen and Grosz establish a new conceptualisation of contemporary visual-virtual space, and our experience of it, as a more complex event that is both visual and spatial, physical and virtual, embodied and performed. Thus, no understanding of our production and conception of visual space is complete without acknowledging the significant role of our own brains and bodies in the process.

Once again, the idea that the (virtual) image exists as a detached, anti-corporeal phenomena has been overturned. Instead, the image is understood as a key aspect of our perception, experience, making and inhabiting of imaginary space. It is essential to our mind-body making of spatial experience. This reinforces Lefebvre's notion of representational spaces,

¹⁸⁸ Grosz. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. p. 78.

¹⁸⁹ C. Groothuizen. 2006. 'Faith and Virtuality: A Brief History of Virtual Reality' In *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, eds. M. Taylor and J. Preston, 138-143. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. p. 138. [Includes quotation from D. Keown. 1998. 'Embodying Virtue: a Buddhist Perspective on Virtual Reality' In *Virtually Embodied*, ed. J. Wood. London / New York: Routledge. p. 85.]

¹⁹⁰ Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. p. 251.

¹⁹¹ Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. p. 50.

and Neil Leach's argument that it is the aesthetic realm that is key to re-establishing our place in the world, and our embodied sense of belonging. It is also close to Leach's description of mimesis, as a process of assimilating, and identifying the self with the other. As Leach puts it: 'The project of mimesis is [...] one of reconciliation and redemption that seeks to restore humankind to an unalienated state of harmony with the world.'¹⁹²

¹⁹² Leach. *Camouflage*. p 23.

SUMMARY: A THEORY OF MAKING AND INHABITING VISUAL SPACE

Through this investigation of the spatio-visual conditions of the surface and the image, a number of key issues may now be identified as the basis of a conceptual framework for the inhabitation of visual space. Despite dominant discourses to the contrary, this chapter has revealed an explicit connection between visual space and inhabitation. This understanding of the visual foundations, strategies and processes of occupation has not only reaffirmed the importance of the visual realm in an image saturated, ocular-centric culture, but it has also established the conceptual grounds to overturn much contemporary discourse that suggests that visual space is disembodied, detached and anti-corporeal. More precisely, the surface has been revealed to have a long historical connection with the social and domestic practices associated with the interior. The surface is also an intrinsically visual condition of space, which may be both constructed and inhabited through its visual organisation, and through the maintenance of a visual structure. The image too has been shown to have a significant connection to space and its occupation through such meaning-making domestic practices as consumption, self-representation, identification and reverie. The image has also been shown to operate both as a spatial condition in its own right, and as an act of occupying and making a visual spatiality. Hence, this chapter has revealed the performativity of vision. Moreover, it has shown that the visual realm is necessarily imprecise, subjective, complex and unstable in content and meaning. As such, the percipient's role to (visually) enframe, negotiate, mediate, appropriate and embody objects, images and virtual spaces becomes fundamental. Thus, rather than being alienated, passive or disembodied, the subject has been shown to take on an increasingly important and integral role in this visual culture of surfaces and images.

This discussion also supports the redefinition of architecture proposed at the beginning of Chapter One: that architecture emerges as the result of the interaction and interdependence of space and its use. Through the discussion of the surface and image, the possibilities for this production of architecture have been vastly expanded. Here, the nature of 'space' and 'occupation', as well as their interplay towards the production of architecture has been explored. In particular, this has revealed that space is complex and multiple in nature, and dependent on our active and individual construction and inhabitation of it.

It has also been shown that space has implicitly visual foundations, and that it may be constructed and inhabited *physically* or *psychically* through the visual surface, through images, and via the overlapping experience of one's imaginary. Similarly, occupation has been revealed to be a *performative, iterative and mimetic* practice that includes such processes as use, appropriation, becoming, embodiment, consumption, self-representation and reverie. These important factors will be returned to throughout the following chapters.

Together, these complex and visually-founded concepts of space, its production, and its occupation, have enabled a critical re-conception of architecture. It is a conception located in a broader set of spatio-visual practices, and one that has necessitated a re-definition of the discipline to encompass practices otherwise excluded from professional practice. More precisely, this chapter has opened up an understanding of architecture as a visual practice outside its material, professional and disciplinary limits. In doing so, it has also revealed the rich, material and meaningful foundations of such *visual architectures*, and our capacity to occupy its real and virtual realms.

CHAPTER TWO: SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICES OF INHABITATION

A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING AND INHABITING VISUAL SPACE

OVERVIEW

The first chapter established key theoretical connections between inhabitation and visual space, which challenged dominant critiques of visual-virtual spaces of contemporary spatial culture. Through the course of that discussion, I arrived at a particular focus upon *performative*, *repetitive* and *mimetic* strategies of practice. Yet, it remains to be seen what strategies exist in practice to resolve these tensions, either within architecture or without. It is this question on the nature and manifestation of strategies for making and inhabiting visual space that the following discussion develops.

In this second chapter, therefore, a contextual framework for this study will be established through the analysis of precedent spatio-visual practices. This discussion focuses on the visual *strategies* and *processes* of spatial practice that evidence and expand upon the theoretical argument put forward in the first chapter. It also reveals a range of visual manifestations, traces, effects and consequences of spatial practices of inhabitation that open up the discussion to the types of spaces and architectures produced through the interaction of visual space and visual acts of occupation. A necessarily broad range of precedents are used to construct this framework. These are historically, aesthetically and culturally varied, and include crafts, domestic practices, traditional arts and non-professional practices, alongside examples of Renaissance painting, twentieth century and contemporary art and architecture. There is also a bias in these precedents towards contemporary painting practices. This particular focus reveals the capacity of painting to engage with practices of inhabitation and, as such, bridges the gap between the theoretical concerns of Chapter One, and the practice-based concerns of Chapter Three.

VISUAL STRATEGIES OF MAKING AND INHABITING SPACE

Surface and Space

A key aspect of the discussion in the first chapter centred on the decorative and structural role of the surface in the domestic interior. According to Semper, the historical connection between architecture and its decorated surface can be traced back to the very origins of building and domestic life. This connection was continued in architecture through the painted surface and other applied ornamentation, despite the nineteenth century's separation of architecture from its visual surface into the distinct disciplines of painting and sculpture.¹ Moreover, decorative spatial practices also maintained this surface tradition through the furnishing of interiors with furniture, fittings, artworks, carpets, curtains and new consumer goods. With such practices in mind, the first chapter expanded upon the notion of a 'surface' in the context of occupation and space to include not only the literal physical surface of the room or space (that is, the outermost part of its walls, floors or ceilings), but also the *visual* surface of the space, which might include the furniture, objects and 'stuff' that makes up our interiors, all of which contribute to an overall spatio-visual arrangement, structure, order, or effect.

Thus, through a number of different forms and guises, the decorative, visual surface has retained a strong presence until today.² In the visual arts, a number of artists have continued the tradition through practices that include the use of murals, wall paintings, wall drawings and wall / room scaled installations. In the early part of the century, artists including El Lissitzky, Piet Mondrian, Erich Buchholz, Theo van Doesburg and Hans Arp executed wall works that explored the visual and spatial conditions of the surface.³ Later in the sixties, and with a renewed interest in such practices, wall (and floor) paintings and drawings were again made by artists such as Sol LeWitt. More recently this project has been continued by many contemporary artists including Katharina Grosse, David Novros, Toby Paterson, David Tremlett, Rémy Zaugg, and Michael Ming Hong Lin.

¹ F. Matzner. ed. 2004. *Public Art: A Reader*. 2nd, rev ed. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz.

² This has already been discussed in Chapter One, with respect to Mark Wigley's exploration of the use of white walls in modernism in Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*.

³ Lissitzky's Proun Room is particularly interesting in that it was conceived as a space between painting and architecture in which to live. As Eva Forgacs suggests, 'Lissitzky's Proun Room was less than theatre but more than painting. It aspired towards totality by integrating visual, spatial, and temporal experiences and by creating an unbroken rhythmic sequence of interrelated forms and colours in the real breathing space of a room.' E. Forgacs. 2003. 'Definitive Space: The Many Utopias of El Lissitzky's Proun Room' In *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow*, eds. N. Perloff and B. Reed, 47-75. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute. p. 47.

Of these contemporary artists, Michael Lin's work is an unusual example that deals explicitly with domestic decoration, derived from fabrics found in Taiwanese homes (bedding and pillow covers for example) – patterns that have themselves been derived from traditional Chinese and Japanese designs of flowers and foliage.⁴ Their delicate and domestic patterning is enlarged, however, for large scale installations that, like Grosse, Navros, Paterson, Tremlett and Zaugg, are frequently inserted within art galleries and public spaces. While the connection of this work to a discussion on inhabitation and space is not always obvious, Lin's paintings nevertheless complicate a contemporary understanding of this discourse, through the conflation of the domestic and institutional, intimate and monumental, local and global. In a recent floor painting that formed part of a larger installation entitled *Spring 2003*, Lin extends his decorative motifs to include military images – guns, grenades and tanks.⁵ Hence, Susan Cahan has described Lin's work as a 'microcosm of the world, where the social and the personal collide and condition each other.'⁶ Furthermore, Hou Hanru argues that Lin's work is suggestive of the fluid nature of his identity (having been raised in the US, and returning to Taiwan later in life) as well as of the nation of Taiwan itself, (as a country of hybrid and complex intercultural histories) due to the mixing of decorative textile motifs produced in Taiwan with those of neighbouring countries.⁷ These paintings thereby create a social space of fusion, interface and exchange through their ornate visual surfaces. As such, they may be read as both a continuation and expansion of Semper's notion of the (social) visual surface.

Other contemporary wall painters, such as David Novros, explore the phenomenal space created by large scaled wall paintings, which he connects to a long tradition of fresco painting in Western art. In a recent project, Novros designed a large-scale mural as well as the lake side boat house to accommodate the work.⁸ While this building does not appear to be 'occupied' in a traditional or domestic sense, what is interesting is Novros' use of painting as an integral part of the visual construction of this space. He describes the manipulation of colour on the wall's surface in terms of the spatio-visual relationships constructed between the parts of the work itself, as well as the relations between the work, the building and the natural landscape beyond.⁹ And as Saul Ostrow notes, Novros' paintings appear more as a

⁴ Michael Ming Hong LIN. Queensland Art Gallery.

http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/content/apt2002_standard.asp?name=APT_Artists_Michael_Ming_Hong_Lin (accessed 14 February, 2007).

⁵ S. Cahan. 2004. 'Michael Lin'. *ArtUS*, Sep/Oct2004 (4): 37.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ H. Hanru. 2002. 'Michael Lin' In *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, ed. V. Brevart, 190-191. London: Phaidon Press Limited. p. 190.

⁸ The mural is painted both sides of a freestanding wall that is 'U' shaped in plan.

⁹ S. Ostrow and D. Novros. 2005. *David Novros "Boat House"*. Art Documents: Now. <http://www.ica-artconservation.org/about/Newsletter/ArtDocumentsNovros.html> (accessed 14 February, 2007).

phenomena – ‘an event or environment rather than an image.’¹⁰ Whereas Lin examines the social spaces of surface through large scale painting, Novros expands its experiential capacity to create and define space.

Novros’ boat house project follows a small group of large scale paintings housed in purpose-made buildings that are directed towards an all-encompassing spatio-visual effect.¹¹ A notable example is Rothko’s series of black paintings in The Rothko Chapel, Houston. Originally designed as a square chapel by Philip Johnson, but later re-worked into an octagonal form around the paintings by Rothko himself, the design of this chapel and the paintings it contains, reveals a complex series of visual and spatial connections. While the works maintain a conventional relationship with their supporting walls, David Summers notes the particular spatial relationship formed between the dark recessed doorways and the almost black surface of the paintings, both of which appear against the white walls of the chapel. On the East and West walls, for instance, Summers suggests that the pair of flanking doorways either side of a central triptych may be seen as the completion of a polyptych of dark rectangular forms.¹²

Summers also notes in regard to the spatiality and depth of colour in the paintings: ‘This is another pictorial space, and therefore a construction in pictorial space [...] which, rather than counterposing ‘foreground’ and ‘background’ in a virtual space, links pictorial space with the surface of the painting and with the space of the chapel itself.’¹³ In short, the painted surface fabricates a rich interior space, and interplay of spaces. Painting is therefore used in a spatially complex way – as a surface, as a space within itself, and as part of the spatio-visual structure of the chapel.

This relation between space and painting is also central to the work of American artist Robert Ryman. Like Novros and Rothko, Ryman creates works that, according to Christel Sauer, operate ‘as planes of action that combine with factors *outwith* the painting; the walls on which they are installed, the space where they are presented and, above all, the light.’¹⁴ Of particular interest to this study is the physical immediacy and material actuality of Ryman’s

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Other examples of this include the installation of Claude Monet’s *Nymphéas* in the Musée de l’Orangerie (discussed by Oliver Grau in Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion.*), as well as panoramas of the nineteenth century to be discussed later in this chapter.

¹² Summers. *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism.* p. 647.

Interestingly, Summers also points out that ‘Rothko did not consider his paintings ‘abstract’, because, rather than being removed from reality, they are in real, active and intimate relation to observers.’ p. 648.

¹³ Ibid. p. 648.

¹⁴ C. Sauer. 2006. ‘Robert Ryman at Inverleith House: Introduction’ In *Robert Ryman at Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh*, 9-19. Frauenfeld / Basel: Raussmüller Collection. p. 9.

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Figure 1: Mark Rothko, The Rothko Chapel, Houston. Interior View. (1964-1970)

(Image source: URL: <http://www.houstonmuseumdistrict.org/default/images/Rothko%2002.tif%20for%20emailing.jpg>. Accessed 28.11.07)

works: they do not operate through representation, illusion or symbolic means, but rather as quotidian surfaces that directly and physically engage with spaces. Arguably, this quality of Ryman's works is related to minimalist strategies from the sixties, which similarly sought to engage the viewer with the immediate physical context in which they are located. These works also illustrate a type of performative quality inasmuch as they operate through their physical presence: they do what they are and they are what they do. While Ryman's site-specific paintings also do not contribute to the central discourse of occupation, they are nevertheless significant in revealing the capacity of painting to construct and engage with space through explicitly visual means.

It is pertinent to also examine the use of surface to define spaces outside of visual arts practices. Within architecture and home decoration for instance, wallpapers, borders, posters, artworks, mouldings and paint continue to contribute to the making of the decorative and literal surface of buildings and homes today. Similarly, many art galleries ubiquitously use white paint to construct a 'neutral' background for the observation of artwork and other objects. As Mark Wigley notes, the use of white paint is in fact loaded with associations of purity, hygiene and an assumed 'cleansing' of vision from all things sensual, impure and abject. Its frequent use in gallery spaces testifies to a deliberate and active construction of space – a visual space of (supposed) neutrality and ambivalence for the display and veneration of art – made via the application of a thin coat of paint.

Also in the field of architecture, a number of contemporary practices are beginning to explore the decorative and visual conditions of space. While many of these practices also do not appear to be engaged with discourses on inhabitation, they do offer some insight into possible strategies for spatio-visual practices of surface and decoration. This is evident in the work of practices, including Lyons and Ashton Raggatt McDougal (ARM) in Melbourne, and that of Brisbane based firm m3architecture.¹⁵ More well known is the work of Swiss practice Herzog and de Meuron, and its decorative use of image and pattern in projects such as the Eberswalde Library, Germany, in collaboration with artist Thomas Ruff (completed in 1998), and the Ricola Europe Production and Storage building in Mulhouse, France, using the historic photographs of Karl Blossfeldt (1994). The work of Herzog and de Meuron will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, yet it is important to cite these examples of the newfound decorative tendencies in architecture. John Macarthur has argued that this tendency forms part of a greater shift in architecture away from spatial conditions, towards applied surfaces and images.¹⁶ It remains to be seen if such practices will, in the future, extend to explore our inhabitation of these visual surface spaces.

¹⁵ Some of these projects will be discussed briefly in Chapter Three, as part of the practice-led component of the study.

¹⁶ Macarthur. 'Materials Historic and Plastic'. p. 32.

Domestic Surfaces and Occupation

Like the work of Herzog and de Meuron, Melbourne based architects Cassandra Complex have explored similar concerns for pattern, image and surface decoration in a number of recent houses, including the Newman House (the façade of which is covered by a three storey image of celebrity Pamela Anderson, completed in 2000) and the Smith Great Aussie Home, in suburban Black Rock, Victoria (completed 2006). In this later, highly decorative building, spaces and surfaces are embellished with successive layers of ornament and decoration, derived in large part from iconic images of Australian culture and sport. These include an image of swimmer Ian Thorpe applied to a faux stained-glass window, balustrades constructed from cricket stumps and fences from cricket bats. In addition, throughout the building are numerous patterns derived from vegetal and animal motifs as well as pixel-like computer patterns.¹⁷

This domestic space is literally constructed of images and surface patterns. Moreover, it is a rare example of pattern and surface decoration used to engage with the domestic experience of space as well as the physical and cultural activities that define contemporary suburban life. Importantly, this unique house stands apart from the normalising and homogenising forces of style guides, DIY television programs and architectural magazines, and instead uses visual means to manifest the personal and individual idiosyncrasies of the occupant and their occupations. Like most projects designed by architects, and constructed by professional builders, however, its occupants are removed from the material process of making the house. Perhaps most interesting will be the strategies the occupants use to inhabit the house and to mediate between its spatial and image-based conditions.

Other domestic spatio-visual strategies were also explored in the early part of the 20th century by artists such as Kurt Schwitters, Erich Buchholz, Piet Mondrian and other proponents of the De Stijl group, notably Theo van Doesburg. Schwitters' *Merzbau* projects, for example, are renowned for their re-configuration of the spaces within the artist's houses in Hanover (beginning in 1923), and later in Norway and in England, through applied surfaces of wood and plaster.¹⁸ Buchholz similarly transformed his own flat using applied

¹⁷ Speaking on behalf of the house itself and its ambitions for visual patterns and decoration, Cassandra Complex writes: 'Well, I thought, I want to be just like those leaves surrounding my crib, lusting and thrashing in the breeze, creating complex patterns and dense, continuous space. I want to add layers of space to time, to make time bigger through rich reverberations of two-dimensional surfaces. I want the Smith human eye to stretch through me, make me quiver in my toilet bits. I want no end to myself; pattern projects onto landscape through translucent reflection. I want to smear myself all over with colour and wear origami frocks.' Cassandra Complex. 2006. 'Architect's Statement'. *Architectural Review Australia*, 98 (Residential 06): 66-73. p. 67.

¹⁸ *Kurt Schwitters: Merzbau in Hannover*. <http://www.merzbau.org/Schwitters.html> (accessed 19 February, 2007).

relief constructions, wall and floor painting as well as painted furniture, to construct an occupied environment that was tied together by a unifying visual order.¹⁹

Mondrian, on the other hand, used his one-room studio and living space at the Rue du Départ in Paris to execute a major work of interior design (begun in 1921). Yet this was not the first of his domestic works. He had previously constructed a large scale composition of coloured cardboard and furniture on an earlier studio wall, interrupted only by a window that was used as part of the composition.²⁰ While the earlier work was concerned primarily with surface, Michael White notes that in the later work he worked with even greater freedom to link surface with space.²¹ The later intervention into Mondrian's five-sided space integrated furniture (a centrally located stove, a cupboard which divided the space and so on), floor rugs and other domestic objects and personal belongings within a total and all-encompassing composition, brought together using geometric forms painted directly upon the studio walls. Like Johnson's Glass House discussed in Chapter One, this is an explicit example of a purposely constructed interior spatio-visual structure.²²

Mondrian's studio is one of a number of De Stijl interiors that explored the use of surface colour and its effect on space. Regarding a studio designed by Vilmos Huszár and Jan Wils for photographer, Henri Berssenbrugge (1921), a review from 1922 describes how the application of colour must have appeared to viewer at the time of its construction:

[T]his space in colour is a completely different one to that which we know. In this space-colour studio is one unity and that is the space, and the space exists out of colours. And these colours are *form-determining*. The feelings which this space can awake are completely new. One lives in colour, it is as if one bathes in colour, one is *in* colour.²³ [Original emphasis].

¹⁹ E. Buchholz. 1993. 'Erich Buchholz: A Coloured Room 1922' In *Erich Buchholz*, eds. M. Buchholz and R. Eberhard, 87-88. Berlin: Ars Nicolai.

²⁰ M. White. 2003. *De Stijl and Dutch Modernism, Critical Perspectives in Art History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp. 118-119.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 121.

²² Also, in an interesting parallel to the discussion in Chapter One on the capacity of surface and painting to produce space, Mark Wigley notes that Mondrian 'understood his "neoplastic" paintings as mechanisms for producing space. [...] In Mondrian's view, Neoplasticism "creates space" by reducing space to its "essential" condition: "a composition of planes which give the illusion of lying on one plane." [...] Inasmuch as a composition of such planes is the fundamental mechanism of space, painting "expresses space on a flat surface."' [Original emphasis] Wigley. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. p. 234. [Includes quotations from P. Mondrian. 1918. 'Neoplasticism in Painting: The New Plastic as 'Abstract-Real Painting': The Plastic Means and Composition [part III]'. *De Stijl*, 1 (4).]

²³ J. P. Mieras. 1922. 'Het atelier van Berssenbrugge te 's-Gravenhage'. *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 43 (15): 150-152. quoted in White. *De Stijl and Dutch Modernism*. p. 109.

White also notes similarities in van Doesburg's use of colour as a spatial device. He writes: 'Colour could be present as a material rather than representation while floating free from the support onto which it was painted.'²⁴ Such concerns for the space and form-determining effects of colour lead White to reject decorative readings of the De Stijl group's collective interior designs. Nevertheless he connects their application of colour to Semper's theory of architecture and the surface. For the De Stijl group, colour made distinct from its structural substrate becomes the principle means by which spaces were actually constructed. Once again, surface is understood as an entirely visual condition – a surface of pure optical colour. However, White stops short of suggesting how such spaces were occupied, and thus he does not analyse the effect of their coloured surfaces and interior structures upon inhabitation.

More specific links between spatio-visual practice, the constructed material surface and domestic inhabitation may instead be found in an installation work that was created as part of the collaborative *Womanhouse* project, initiated by Paula Harper, and implemented by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro in 1972. The project included Faith Wilding's *Crocheted Environment*, better known as *Womb Room* – an interior space Wilding crocheted herself, with its surface appearing as a knotted web of organic knitted forms. This surface takes on not only biological allusions, but connects directly to the domestic and labour intensive practices of craft: 'a wry indication that any sense of emotional well-being imparted by women's presence in the home is the result of hard work - not a function of biology.'²⁵ It also connects to Semper's notion of the woven textile surfaces, and introduces a gendered reading of his visual interior surface that critiques the traditional domestic practices associated with women's occupation of the home.

The Performative and Iterative Making of Space and Order

As discussed in Chapter One, this process of making (and often subsequent processes of re-making) interiors plays a key part in our inhabitation of space and, not least, in our inhabitation of visual space and the visual surface. Perhaps the best example of this has already been discussed in Johnson's Glass House and its occupation as a domestic process of maintaining and reinforcing its visual order. A similar condition exists in many gardens, where an intended garden form is first determined, then actively maintained through the process of gardening. Julian Raxworthy highlights how the difference between the landscape architect and the gardener, which parallels the relationship between the architect and the occupant of space.

²⁴ White. *De Stijl and Dutch Modernism*. p. 116.

²⁵ Excerpts from the essay 'From Finish Fetish to Feminism: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in California Art History' by Laura Meyer, reproduced on website: 'Judy Chicago and Through the Flower: Womanhouse 1972'. <http://www.judychicago.com/judychicago.php?p=womanhouse3> (accessed 19 February, 2007).

If gardening is a form of language, then it has entirely different relationships with its media – plants. Landscape architects engage plants simply as singular items, where the key choice is selection and prediction of future form. The gardener in contrast responds repetitively, iteratively, to how the plant is changing over time.²⁶

Raxworthy's example not only illustrates the key distinction between the spatial practices of the designer and those of the user suggested in Chapter One, but it further distinguishes the understanding of process-based practices in the making of a (visual) spatial surface that are frequently undertaken by the inhabitant.²⁷

This link to occupation is perhaps even more pertinent in artist Gregor Schneider's *Haus Ur* project. This work, begun in 1985 when Schneider was just sixteen, consists of the reconstruction of the artist's home in Rheydt, Germany, (formerly his family home) and is built entirely within the original house itself. The slight scaling down of its parts, as Faye Hirsch notes, is done with some disturbing and unnerving twists.²⁸ David Barrett describes the work:

At least to passersby, it is ordinary. Inside, it is far from mundane. The entranceway, for a start, is tiny. Unremarkable in itself, perhaps, but this small room can rotate 360 degrees. The fact that you can end up in one of

²⁶ J. Raxworthy. 2006. 'Transgressing Edges and Doing Time'. In *4th European Landscape Architecture Biennale*. Barcelona.

²⁷ An interesting parallel to this notion of gardening as a performative practice is explored by German artist Hans Haacke in an installation in a courtyard of the Reichstag – Germany's recently re-opened parliamentary building in Berlin. Haacke invited each sitting Member of the German Parliament to bring an appropriate quantity of soil to constitute the garden. When an MP leaves office, an appropriate quantity of soil is again removed, and is replaced by the successor. In this ongoing process, a garden is established from the sprouting seeds and roots carried in the soil brought to Berlin. More importantly, a process is established in which the MP is allowed to determine how the soil is obtained, providing them (and by extension, all those represented by them) the opportunity to contribute to a national process of democratic participation. (In practice, many MPs invited suggestions from their constituents regarding where the soil should be taken from. Some collected soil from former concentration camps, and other sites of historical significance. Another brought soil from a house burned down by neo-Nazis, while some members used soil to make an environmental comment.) While it does not use explicitly visual strategies, the dynamic and iterative operation of this project offers an intriguing tactic for practice, in which a parallel process to that of domestic occupation may be established. H. Haacke. 2001. 'Der Bevölkerung'. *Oxford Art Journal*, 24 (2): 127-143. Arguably, similar performative and iterative strategies may be found in the visual arts practices grouped together under Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of Relational Aesthetics. See N. Bourriaud. 2002. *Relational Aesthetics*. Translated by S. Pleasance, F. Woods and M. Copeland. France: Les Presses du Réel..

²⁸ F. Hirsch. 2005. 'Gregor Schneider in East London'. *Art in America*, 93 (3): 147.

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Figure 2: Gregor Schneider, *Haus Ur*, Rheydt, Germany. (1985-2007)

(Image source: URL: http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/1985rheydt/pages/haus_ur_1985rheydt_photo01.htm. Accessed 13.03.08)

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Figure 3: Gregor Schneider, *Haus Ur*, Rheydt, Germany. Interior View. (1985-2007)

(Image source: URL: http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/1985rheydt/pages/haus_ur_1985rheydt_photo16.htm. Accessed 13.03.08)

several different spaces when exiting (depending upon the current rotation) offers a clue as to what the rest of the building might be like.²⁹

Apart from his ongoing reconstruction of the house, Schneider periodically removes parts of the work, and reassembles his interior constructions as suites of rooms within galleries, only to disassemble them, and re-build them once more within his home.³⁰ While the *Haus Ur* project appears more concerned with subjective space, psychological disturbance, childhood trauma and the unhomely – rooms within rooms, claustrophobic passageways, hidden spaces between walls and the traces of a fictional occupant – his obsessive process of making and re-making the house over more than twenty years, is of particular interest to this study. This is because the artist's iterative practice may be read as a series of acts of both constructing and inhabiting the house. The distinction between Schneider's art practice and domestic occupation therefore becomes blurred – both are constituted through practices that operate through the literal construction and re-construction of the mysterious Rheydt house.

The Performative, Iterative and Mimetic Act of Painting

Of particular interest, therefore, are practices of painting that reveal other performative, iterative and mimetic strategies. In regard to ancient rock paintings across all inhabited continents, David Summers notes that the incisions, drawings and paintings on the rock surfaces are made and re-made over long spans of time. This process necessarily involves different individuals and different groups of individuals in a collective palimpsest.³¹ The repeated *act* of marking suggests that this process was just as important as the images themselves.³² It appears, therefore, that significant sites of human occupation were marked and maintained over time through the repeated inscription of the surface. Arguably, the practice of graffiti reveals a similar human habit of marking the surface as an act of occupation and of identity that is evidenced in the earliest of cities and settlements through to the present day.

In a number of contemporary visual art practices, these performative and iterative aspects are pronounced. French painter, Bernard Piffaretti, for example, has constructed his paintings over the past two decades by dividing the surface into two halves, painting upon one half and then repeating its abstract forms, colours and patterns onto the second. This

²⁹ D. Barrett. 'Gregor Schneider: Sadie Coles HQ, London'.

<http://www.royaljellyfactory.com/davidbarrett/articles/arttext/arttext-schneider.htm> (accessed 20 February, 2007). [Originally published in *Art+Text*, Issue 61, May-Jul 1998]

³⁰ Schneider has also made photographs and videos of the work, while in other projects has added live actors to play out disconcerting domestic characters within his interiors.

³¹ Summers. *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*. p. 434.

³² *Ibid.* p. 252.

highly idiosyncratic approach to painting is of interest because it constructs a visual binary between each half of the work through this repetition. As Eric de Chasseay suggests: 'In actuality, he does not exactly copy the first image but imitates its creation process, going through the same movements literally remaking the first half. He does not reproduce chance effects [...] but reexperiences the process that produced them.'³³ Thus, Piffaretti's process also includes a mimetic aspect, which inaugurates a critical tension between its parts.

Other mimetic practices can be found in the work of Ellsworth Kelly, who in many works, directly transcribes found shapes and outlines of shadows, architectural details and various other forms directly and precisely onto the canvas. (This is also a feature of the artistic practice discussed in Chapter Three). These were often executed in a single colour on white, and described, for example, the shadow of a steel balustrade as it falls across the horizontal surfaces of a stair. This indexical practice, as Yve-Alain Bois refers to it, is intended to remove all traces of translation, encoding and perceptual interference.³⁴ While this is opposed to the subjectivities of perception and translation that are of interest to this study, there remains a close symmetry between these mimetic strategies of the index and the many formative works of the artistic practice discussed in Chapter Three, which explore spatial relationships between the index and the referent. Moreover, there exists an aesthetic similarity in the use of geometric forms, architectural details and monochromatic palette in both these sets of works.³⁵

Using different performative strategies, another practice of occupying the surface of domestic space began at least as far back as the 1920's with the tradition of Hajj painting on the houses of Upper Egypt.³⁶ Such work is a unique expression of identity, sociality and

³³ E. de Chasseay. 2002. 'Bernard Piffaretti' In *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, ed. V. Brevart, 252-253. London: Phaidon Press Limited. p. 252.

³⁴ Y.-A. Bois. 1992. 'Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises' In *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948-1954*, 9-36. Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art. p. 20.

³⁵ Yet another type of iterative practice is established by painter Katharina Grosse – best known for her spray painted works directly onto the walls, floors and ceilings on various gallery spaces. Many of these major works have included the installation of large canvas panels, which are painted as part of the spraying process. Of interest here is Grosse's re-use of these canvases over a number of installations, merging new works with old. She states that they 'collect left-overs of certain activities.' K. Grosse. 2007. 'Artist Talk'. Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane. [28 August, 2007]

³⁶ According to Miles, some sources cite examples from the later half of the nineteenth century. Miles. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*. p. 88.

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Figure 4: Bernard Piffaretti, *Untitled*. (2001)

(Image source: Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting. 2002. London: Phaidon Press Limited. p. 253.)

decoration outside the mainstream of either European or Egyptian art.³⁷ As Malcolm Miles explains, the practice of Hajj painting combines aesthetic and functional concerns. Like other decorative, applied and vernacular arts, it is frequently dismissed as a craft practice unworthy of intellectual enquiry.³⁸ Yet, for this study, the performative act of making these visual domestic surfaces presents a key precedent that connects the numerous concerns of the research, including surface, image, decoration, identity, domesticity, inhabitation and painting.

Found only in parts of Upper Egypt, Hajj paintings are executed on the external surfaces of the householder's dwelling upon their return from their pilgrimage to Mecca. The paintings can be quite small and, for example, may be integrated with other signage on shops within towns. In villages, however, the works can often consume the entire front face of the home. While these celebratory acts of decoration were traditionally made by the Hajji's (or Hajja's) family members, today they are made largely by local artists for a fee. Although their content, images and aesthetic varies, typical Hajj paintings depict the Hajji's journey to Mecca. Therefore, the Hajji's choice of transport is depicted – camels, boats, trains and, more recently, aircraft are all frequently represented – as are images of the pilgrimage sites, the mosque and the Kaaba in Mecca, along side various other things seen along the way, verses drawn from the Koran, or the date of the Hajji's journey.³⁹ These images are arranged in a narrative to be read from right to left, and may, on two-storey houses, be painted in two bands of narrative, one below the other.⁴⁰

Importantly, Malcolm Miles points out that these are temporary paintings, which form part of the celebration of the Hajji's return, and of the householder's new-found status.⁴¹ These

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 79-88.

Perhaps the most closely related practice can be found in Nubian house decoration also described by Miles. He notes that this decorative practice flourished around the town of Wadi Halfa in Sudanese Nubia in the mid twentieth century, and died out soon after with the construction of the Aswan Dam in the sixties, when residents were relocated and many of the villages flooded. Like the Hajj paintings, this decoration was temporary and had to be re-made every few years as the external render deteriorated. The houses were also decorated internally, with a variety of media and materials including painting, drawings, applied saucers, baskets and collages made from magazine pages. The imagery depicted is of particular interest, and included geometric patterns and motifs, as well as representations of trees, birds, crocodiles, lions and other wild animals from local folk lore. Miles also notes the use of European art deco motifs in the forties, which he suggests can be traced to the imagery of biscuit tins from abroad. Later in the fifties, Miles describes the depiction of images from newspapers and magazines, and the subsequent appearance of cars in the house decoration. Miles. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*. pp. 83-87.

³⁸ Miles. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*. p. 80.

³⁹ Ibid. pp. 79, 88.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 88.

⁴¹ Its practices may therefore be compared to the celebratory decoration of the home at Christmas or for a birthday in Western culture, discussed in the first chapter.

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Figure 5: Hajj painting from Thebes West Bank, Thebes. (Photo taken Oct. 1997)

(Image source: URL: <http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/database/image.asp?ID=10343>.
Accessed 13.03.08)

paintings are not monuments intended to last. They are typically made of industrially produced paint, and often last less than a decade when the routine plastering of a house's external surface obliterates any trace of the work. Miles writes of their festive role:

The feast which welcomes back the pilgrim will be a semi-public affair, and the painting is another element of that celebration, and the paintings remain for a few years to remind other villagers of the pilgrim's status, derived from both devotion and wealth. The paintings, then, have a function of denoting individual identity in village life, and are collectively elements in a wider cultural identity for village society.⁴²

The paintings therefore form part of a wider social engagement, in which the local community is actively involved in the celebrations they signify. In this way, the street itself becomes a site of occupation, with the paintings taking on a functional role, adding meaning to the everyday life of the street.⁴³

The Interdependence of Surface and Image

While the focus of this discussion on Hajj paintings has largely centred upon the practice as a performative and decorative act of occupying the visual surface, their images nevertheless are of great significance. The Hajj paintings highlight an as yet unexplored condition of the interdependence and reciprocity of the surface and image. In the case of Hajj paintings, the decorative application of visual representations of the Hajji's journey could not exist without the surface upon which it is applied. David Summers suggests that image necessarily implies a format in real space, and '[t]he simple ease with which we recognize images on surfaces of all sizes, [...] tends to conceal both the process of recognition and its significance.'⁴⁴

This interdependence is best illustrated through two particular types of painting. These painting types provide a valuable insight into the nature of image-space-surface relations and expand an understanding of our capacity to occupy the spatial conditions of the surface and the image. The first type is the traditional application of images to the walls and ceilings of the Western world's (often religious) buildings. In a number of works, particularly the often cited baroque fresco by Andrea Pozzo, *Triumph of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Saint Ignazio, Rome (1691-94), the image space of the painting becomes entwined with the actual space of the viewer.⁴⁵ In Pozzo's famed work, the perspective of the painted surface follows

⁴² Miles. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*. p. 97.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 98.

⁴⁴ Summers. *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*. p. 339.

⁴⁵ Both Macarthur and Grau have discussed this particular fresco in terms of its spatial effect, in, J. Macarthur. 2003. 'The Image as an Architectural Material' In *Medium Cool*, eds. P. Krapp and A. McNamara, 673-693. Durham, N.C. London: Duke University Press. and Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*.

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Figure 6: Andrea Pozzo, *Triumph of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Ignazio*, Rome (1691-1694)

(Image source: URL: <http://www.cord.edu/faculty/andersod/pozzo.html>. Accessed 26.04.06)

the actual perspective created by the architecture, and actually incorporates painted architectural features to complete this amalgamation of real and image space. John Macarthur notes that Pozzo attempts to offer a possibility for our occupation of space between real and image spaces – between the terrestrial and the divine – through the illusory blurring of real and depicted space.⁴⁶ The viewer is implicated in this spatial organisation between the spaces of architecture and image, and is encouraged to stand directly below the painting where the effect is most successful. As Wertheim notes, this potential to direct and implicate the viewer only became possible with the invention of perspective, which for the first time located the viewing body in spatial congruity with the painted image.⁴⁷

The second type of painting is the panorama, which emerged in the late eighteenth century. These often room-scaled painted images (usually of landscapes, cityscapes or scenes of battle and war) wrap 360° around the viewer, creating an effect of complete submersion into the space of the image.⁴⁸ In some cases, real objects were placed close to the painted surface to create a 'faux terrain' that would further confuse the distinction of real and representational space.⁴⁹ Smoke and sound effects were also used to enhance the simulation.⁵⁰ Like Pozzo's fresco, the blurring of real and depicted space results in an illusory and immersive experience for the viewer. It forms a material manifestation that parallels Rice's concept of doubleness, due to the capacity to simultaneously experience both real space and virtual (image) space.

In both types of painting, the confusion of image space and real space raises questions about the role of the surface. In the case of Pozzo's ceiling and the panorama, it may be argued that our corporeal experience of the limits of physical space are defined by a visual image – itself an immaterial and abstract entity. At the same time, it is the surface of the painted image that forms a thin physical skin to the space with its own materiality and physicality. This illustrates Stroll's various concepts of surface discussed earlier, and the complex conception of the surface as both an immaterial (or visual) condition, and as a physical entity such as a skin, a coating or membrane. In Pozzo's fresco and the panorama, both concepts of surface are apparent. Their surfaces may therefore be understood in a more complex way – as an immaterial image that dissolves the boundary of real space and image space, and, at the same time, as a material surface that anticipates and creates the very possibility of the two spaces. It is the site in which multiple spatialities are inscribed, created and observed.

⁴⁶ Macarthur. 'The Image as an Architectural Material'. p. 682.

⁴⁷ Wertheim. *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet*.

⁴⁸ Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 54.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 70.

Yet the panorama and illusory fresco are not the only manifestations of this in-between condition. The tradition of trompe-l'oeil and other forms of illusory painting have undoubtedly continued the visual play and power of perspective that was demonstrated by Pozzo's fresco. Arguably, this condition may also be found in other more recent art practices, which expose tensions between the material reality and visual immateriality of the work. For example, Rex Butler argues that the monochromatic canvases of painter Joseph Marioni oscillate between the optical effect of colour, and the prominent materiality of the paint, which is allowed to run down the canvas surface in numerous layers, only to gather at its edges, then pool and drip at its bottom edge.⁵¹

John Macarthur has described an architectural parallel in Herzog and de Meuron's use of applied images to often simple built forms.⁵² In fact, finding an appropriate image is often the starting point for the work of these architects.⁵³ Macarthur suggests that the treatment of the image as a material out of which space (and hence architecture) is constructed reveals a new trend in architectural practice. In the case of the Eberswalde Library already mentioned, Macarthur suggests that the practice of architecture is confined to the capacity to print various images (both from newspaper records and from 'high art,' determined by artist Thomas Ruff) onto the glass and concrete surfaces of the building.⁵⁴ While the library appears to be constructed of the images that cover its every surface, the images themselves carry individual and immaterial image spaces within themselves. Yet Macarthur warns that this broader trend may be destined for triviality. Still, the strategy of applied photographs adds another complexity to image and surface relations in architecture, which for this study, has offered yet another possibility for combining visual space and physical space.

In summary, all of these works exhibit both a visual surface of colour or image as well as a literal surface of applied media or paint. With this developed concept of surface, located between, and containing the possibility to create both image space and physical space, a more complex theoretical framework of the interrelation of image, surface and space is formed. This again counteracts the claims discussed in Chapter One, which suggest that images and visual culture vitiate the materiality of our everyday experience. Rather, the above-mentioned works highlight that images are inextricable from their physical support, format or surface in real space in order to come into view. This remains true even of digital images that require a physical computer screen to be viewed. Acknowledging this

⁵¹ R. Butler. 2000. 'The Touch Between the Optical and Material' In *Joseph Marioni: Four Paintings*, eds. D. Pestorius and R. Butler, 23-29. Brisbane: University Art Museum.

⁵² Macarthur. 'The Image as an Architectural Material'.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 675.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 679.

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Figure 7: Herzog and de Meuron, Eberswalde Library, Germany. (1998)

(Image source: URL: http://en.nai.nl/mmbase/images/168974/hdm_ebeswalder_450.jpg.
Accessed 13.03.08)

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Figure 8: Herzog and de Meuron, Eberswalde Library, Germany. Detail. (1998)

(Image source: URL: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/77/FH-Eberswalde_Bibliothek_Fenster.jpg/450px-FH-Eberswalde_Bibliothek_Fenster.jpg.
Accessed 13.03.08)

interdependence, this analysis argues for a new consciousness of the complex interrelation between the surface and the virtual space of the image.

Image Spaces of Reverie and Virtual Spaces of Occupation

The first chapter examined how both Rice and Burnett discussed images as potential sites of creative reverie in which the percipient is actively engaged in the creation of their spatial experience. For Rice, in particular, this concern was manifest in the domestic interior where the spaces of the imagination and mind overlay the physical spaces of inhabitation in a complex personal experience.

A similar condition is revealed in the video works of Japanese artist Hiraki Sawa. These works overlay fantastical dream-like images of flying planes, miniature people and wandering animals in everyday domestic scenes within the artist's own non-descript apartment. In the early work *Dwelling* (1992) Sawa animated toy aeroplanes taking off from tables and floors, navigating a flight path through the spaces of the flat, then landing in another room for a short break, only to take off once more for another part of the dwelling. While a number of commentators describe the sense of alienation, loneliness and isolation in Sawa's video works (connecting the use of aeroplanes in the apartment to the transitory and alienating nature of international airports and travel), Gregory Volk suggests a slightly different take on these works:

[Sawa's works] conjure a solitary apartment dweller's drifting, multiple thoughts – a transportation in and of the mind, including random memories, hopes, nagging reminders of pressing tasks, and strange bursts of enthusiasm that come from nowhere in particular. The way that the airplanes repeatedly land on and take off from the table and bed, travel from the living room to the kitchen, or from the bathroom to the bedroom, evokes our own habits, rhythms, and routines when we're at home [...].⁵⁵

In Sawa's works, images of the real and occupied spaces of the apartment are combined and transformed with surreal animated spaces of reverie, revealing the inextricable connection between the real and imaginary spaces of domestic inhabitation.

Other types of overlaid virtual spaces may also be found in the paintings of artist Franz Ackermann. In these works, subjective plans and impression-based maps are overlaid on figurative and abstract descriptions of space to create complex and personal images of space. Regarding his early 'Mental Maps', Dominic Molon describes Ackermann's 'small condensations of transitory impressions of a particular location into a skewed cartographic

⁵⁵ G. Volk. *Domestic Flight: On Hiraki Sawa's Dwelling*. <http://www.hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/74/> (accessed 29 January, 2007).

abstraction.⁵⁶ Other works invoke personal experiences and journeys through various cities, bird's-eye perspectives of towns, and one's encounter with the streets, buildings and public spaces in the tradition of the flâneur.⁵⁷ As such, these works again construct a subjective and image-based spatial narrative, revealing the overlapping and complex nature of such spatio-visual experiences of occupation – be it a domestic interior or the streets of a contemporary city.

Outside the context of visual arts, and in an extension to Ackermann's works and Sawa's exploration of virtual spaces, a number of on-line websites offer participants the ability to occupy virtual hotels, towns and even continents. Hence, they offer capacity to live, play, communicate and socialise in virtual space. For example, Habbo hotel offers young on-line participants a space in which to 'hang out' with friends, play games, adopt pets, and buy furniture to decorate and personalise their own rooms.⁵⁸ Similarly, an entire alternative world is offered by 'Second Life'.⁵⁹ Inhabitants of 'the World' can buy and sell property, create on-line goods that may be sold to other inhabitants, meet friends, build houses, visit nightclubs or attend exhibition openings. As such, these on-line spaces facilitate the social practices, inhabitation and 'domestic' reverie of dwellers in virtual space. Yet, despite the promise of a disembodied and unconstrained on-line existence suggested by such websites, these virtual spaces actually foreground the corporeal nature of our experience – as material bodies in front of physical computers in real spaces, engaged and embodied simultaneously in the virtual spaces that exist on-line and within the mind. This physical component of on-line experience is frequently over-looked, yet for this study, it highlights a necessary process of spectatorial synthesis which occurs in many aspects of daily experience. As Sawa and Ackermann's works have revealed, this synthesis of real and virtual space also occurs through our everyday acts of reverie, imagination and the occupation of the conscious and unconscious mind.

Doubleness and Simultaneity of Image and Space

The concept of imaginal spaces overlaid on real spaces (as described above) is just one of three types of doubleness identified by Rice in his conception of interiority. As discussed in Chapter One, another doubled condition of interiority emerges from the interdependence between the image of space and the physical space of inhabitation. Rice himself explores a clear example of this in a short exhibition review of the 'stitched' digital photographs of Alison

⁵⁶ D. Molon. 2002. 'Franz Ackermann' In *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, ed. V. Breuvert, 16-19. London: Phaidon Press Limited. p. 16.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 16

⁵⁸ See <http://www.habbo.com>

⁵⁹ According to its website, Second Life has grown, since opening in 2003, to include more than 4 million inhabitants of some 65000 acres of 'virtual' land. See <http://secondlife.com>

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Figure 9: Alison Bennett, Stitched digital photograph from *Inside Hill End*. (c2004)

(Image source: C. Rice. 2004. 'Space and Image - Inside Hill End'. In *Architecture Australia*.
p. 41.)

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Figure 10: Alison Bennett, Stitched digital photograph from *Inside Hill End*. (c2004)

(Image source: C. Rice. 2004. 'Space and Image - Inside Hill End'. In *Architecture Australia*.
p. 40.)

Bennett.⁶⁰ Rice describes the conditions of doubleness present in these works that depict the interiors of both derelict and occupied homes in this historic mining town of Hill End – a relic of late nineteenth century goldmining in New South Wales, Australia. Bennett's photos employ a panoramic technique in which multiple photos are joined together seamlessly to produce an impossible representation of the space spread across the width of the image surface. Rice suggests that these images construct a double of the interiors they depict.⁶¹ Yet, the occupied spaces also reveal traces of contemporary inhabitation – a stereo, a modern kettle and telephone – within otherwise 'period' interiors that are seemingly unchanged since the goldmining era. Rice notes that Bennett's photos highlight the tension between the image of the period home and the necessities of modern living spaces. As such, the photos also reinforce his understanding of the interior as a space of constant negotiation between an (ideal) image of space and its operation as a space of everyday occupation.

In a more direct engagement with the multiplicity of space, artist Toshihiro Komatsu's work explores strategies for the extension of vision using periscopic and kaleidoscopic devices installed into galleries and various other sites. These works permit views of spaces outside the space occupied by the viewer, making a literal spatio-visual connection between two or more spaces. His works construct simultaneous experiences of multiple and continuous spaces that, as Fernando Quesada suggests, also locates the viewer within both spaces at the same time, thus multiplying and extending the body in the same way the kaleidoscope multiplies and refracts our view.⁶² Komatsu's *O-House* project (2000) grounds these visual effects within a domestic setting – an abandoned house in the suburbs of Tokyo littered with the belongings of the former householder. For this work, Komatsu buried four square-shaped periscopes into the house, lined with mirrors on each of their faces that reveal complex and kaleidoscopic fragments of the interior to the viewer. As Quesada suggests, these fragmented images are:

[L]ike a representation projected into the future, not into the past, but in the crossbeam, because each spectator, once submerged in the kaleidoscope, experiences a simultaneous projection towards another moment in the same place, but at the same time is completely conscious of his own moment. The observer is installed optically in the past and the present, here and there, to produce, in this simultaneousness, and incessant chain of new images.⁶³

The physical body and embodied eye are once again foregrounded by the artist. Unlike the visual spaces of reverie found in Sawa and Ackermann's work, however, Komatsu's works overlay and combine images of real spaces. Salient in these works is the active role of the

⁶⁰ Rice. 'Space and Image - Inside Hill End'. pp. 40-41.

⁶¹ Arguably, any representation such as a photograph, still life painting or literary description necessarily forms this kind of 'double.'

⁶² F. Quesada. 2002. 'Toshihiro Komatsu: Optical Artefacts for the Body'. *O Monographias*, 1: 176-219. p. 190.

⁶³ *Ibid.* pp. 190-191.

viewer, and the creation of multiple spaces through the act of viewing itself. These aspects of Komatsu's work also accord with the writings of Mark Hansen and Elizabeth Grosz in Chapter One, regarding the role of the body in the formation of our subjective experience of space.

Spectatorial Synthesis and Embodiment in Real and Virtual Image Spaces

In an extension to the ideas of Hansen and Grosz, a number of new media artists have explored the relevance and location of the body in a visual-virtual digital context. For example, Oliver Grau describes a work by Paul Sermon, *Telematic Dreaming* (1992), in which the image of a person is projected onto a bed alongside a reclined viewer. The viewer is capable of interacting with the projected image of another's body in (almost) real time. Grau asserts that it is 'so suggestive that to touch the body's image [...] becomes an intimate act [...] expand[ing] the user's sense of touch.'⁶⁴ The connection between the tactile and visual perception is also discussed by Hansen, who suggests that, when coupled with visual simulation, tactile and physical motility 'has the effect of conferring reality on an experience.'⁶⁵

Perhaps most revealing of the potential for the physical and affective body in the visual realm of new media, however, is the work of Australian born artist Jeffrey Shaw, who for the past four decades has developed visual-virtual spaces for embodied sensory experience. The interest of this study does not lay with the medium or aesthetic of Shaw's works, but in its conception of the body's location in (and occupation of) space. His work is characterised by the combination of photography, cinematography and VR technologies that foreground the interactive and immersive capabilities of new media.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. pp. 274-275.

This is also evidenced in such early VR works as, *The Home of the Brain* (1992) project by Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, in which a new kind of virtual public space is created for multisensory engagement. The artists state: 'We are turning the theory on its head that man is losing his body to technology. In our opinion, the interactive media are supporting the multisensory mechanisms of the body and are thus extending man's space for play and action.' M. Fleischmann and W. Strauss. 2001. Email Correspondence: [Received by Oliver Grau: 27 May, 2001]. Cited in Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. p. 219.

⁶⁵ Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. p. 39.

⁶⁶ Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. p. 240.

For example, the project *The Legible City* (1989-91) conflates image, space, body and physical action within an interactive environment. Here, the physical motion of the user riding a bicycle generates a visual journey through six square kilometres of a virtual city of text, projected on a large screen in front of the cyclist. Here, as in many of his works, the image is a 'space of kinaesthetic activity.' Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. p. 53.

Regarding this work, Shaw writes: '[The viewer becomes a] traveller and discoverer in a latent space of sensual information, whose aesthetics are embodied both in the coordinates of its immaterial form and in the

In his recent works, however, it is VR that has allowed Shaw to develop the complexity of references and images used in his works.⁶⁷ As Hansen notes, the activity of the user shifts in his later works from providing kinaesthetic motion to centring on an active role in the production of space *within* the body.⁶⁸ According to Hansen, the viewer's body becomes the interface that mediates and synthesises multiple and heterogeneous media into a single, continuous and embodied experience – a virtual brain-body 'event'.⁶⁹ Hansen argues that this continuity of images and spaces experienced in Shaw's works are impossible in the empirical realm, thus reinforcing their unique, affective and individual 'spectatorial synthesis' in the user's experience of virtual space.⁷⁰

In recent works, including two versions of his *Place* project (*Place: A User's Manual* (1995), and, *Place: Ruhr* (2000)), Shaw has developed an immersive and interactive environment made up of a central rotating platform upon which the participant stands, surrounded by a cylindrical projection screen on which eleven panoramic image cylinders are presented to the viewer. These cylindrical image spaces are held together in a virtual space through which the user navigates by means of a video camera interface.⁷¹ The image cylinders each contain different 360° panoramic views and video sequences that the user may choose to reconstitute on the projection screen. Due to their identical size and proportion to the encircling screen, the image cylinders become 'co-active'⁷² with the physical projection surface in a simultaneous experience of real and virtual space.⁷³ (A very similar conflation of image and surface – real and virtual – has already been described in the traditional nineteenth century panorama, as well as in Pozzo's fresco.) Within this environment, the viewer must synthesise multiple layers of visual space and media, including texts triggered by noise made by the user, the virtual 360° image spaces of the projected cylinders as well as the physical projection surface that surrounds them. The resulting experience is unique for each user because the work creates an embodied physical event every time it is occupied – an event constituted through the conflation of real and virtual space, the reality-conferring tactile and multi-sensory interface, and a spatial synthesis in the body-brain of the viewer.

scenarios of its interactively manifest form. In this temporal dimension the interactive artwork is each time re-structured and re-embodied by the activity of its viewers.' J. Shaw. 1993. *Modalities of Interactivity and Virtuality*. http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/html_writings/writings_by_2.php3 (accessed 17 October, 2006).

⁶⁷ Shaw, quoted in Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. p. 60.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 53.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 60.

⁷⁰ Ibid. pp. 61, 87-88.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 85.

⁷² J. Shaw. *Place - A User's Manual*. http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/html_main/frameset-writings.php3 (accessed 17 October, 2006).

⁷³ Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. p. 86.

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Figure 11: Jeffrey Shaw, *Place: A User's Manual*. (1995)

(Image source: URL: http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/images/096_002.jpg. Accessed 17.10.06)

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Figure 12: Jeffrey Shaw, *Place: A User's Manual*. (1995)

(Image source: URL: http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/images/096_003.jpg. Accessed 17.10.06)

Regarding an earlier but related work, Shaw has described the navigation of such virtual image spaces as follows:

Painted images hang on walls or rest in storage; bringing them into view is a material handling. Digital pictures reside immaterially inside the computer, and the computer screen functions like a window through which the viewer chooses what he wants to look at. Furthermore, [...] the viewer can pan in any direction over the surface of an image, and also zoom into the details of a chosen image. These characteristics offer the possibility to create a virtual space of imagery wherein a three dimensional structure of relationships between two dimensional images can be defined. This can then constitute an interactive space which the viewer explores [...].⁷⁴

This description reiterates Hansen's theoretical objective of defining a new concept of visual-virtual space in which the body 'enframes' visual information and expands the spatial possibilities of the digital image. Such a work also suggests the unique and rich possibilities for occupation in such on-line spaces as Habbo Hotel or Second Life. Unlike these on-line spaces, however, Shaw maintains this potential within an embodied spatial framework that relies on the central location of the body to navigate, generate and synthesis these new spaces. In this way, we can see that Shaw's work offers the viewer a new, privileged and re-embodied location in the spatial regime of digital visual-virtual environments.⁷⁵

Similarly, yet outside of new media works, the collaborative group known as IRWIN explore the capacity of the viewer to construct meaning through the synthesis of multiple images. For example, their installations of painted works often combine images that are loaded with associations – from high art, historical references and popular mass-media, to political and military images and symbols – in order to provoke intense, ideological and complex responses from their audience.⁷⁶ Like Shaw's works, the meanings found, and responses made, by the viewer are contingent on their own interpretation and synthesis of information, as well the context in which the work is presented. As Igor Zabel states,

IRWIN's works are based on the conviction that the impact of different images, their aesthetic and moral values, and their charms are essentially connected to their context and social function. But the works also reveal the relativity and instability of an image's meaning.⁷⁷

There is also an iterative aspect to such works, through this re-presentation of images. This is understood as a 'retro principle' of practice, as IRWIN member Andrej Savski explains:

⁷⁴ Shaw. *Modalities of Interactivity and Virtuality*.

⁷⁵ Arguably, however, this very idea is implicit in most forms of painting, as highlighted earlier in the discussion on the interdependence of the image and surface.

⁷⁶ I. Zabel. 2002. 'IRWIN' In *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, ed. V. Breuvert, 154-157. London: Phaidon Press Limited. p. 154.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 154.

We view the 'retro principle' as a method of thinking; we borrow images (together with their meanings or particular aspects and levels of their meaning) and incorporate these in new statements. This is the basis. In our painterly practice [...] we have used many different approaches in constructing fresh semantic structures – by repeating certain images over and over again.⁷⁸

The viewer's role in determining their own experience and meanings occurs in all encounters with art, yet the work of both IRWIN and Shaw foreground this subjective process, which importantly is explored through the use of images. It is this commonality between their works, effected though very different visual and spatial strategies, that is of interest to this study.

Finally in architecture, similar visual strategies have been adopted by practices such as Melbourne-based Ashton Raggatt McDougal (ARM). ARM are noted for works such as the Howard Kronborg Medical Clinic (1994) which used a well known photograph of Robert Venturi's Vanna Venturi house, and reproduced it – distorted and disfigured by its photocopying – in built form, pixelated to the scale of the bricks used to construct it. Similarly, ARM have used a wide range of found images and visual references in their design for the National Museum of Australia (NMA) (1997-2001). Visual references to Australian history and culture (the fenestration of Sydney Opera House, Jackson Pollock's Blue Poles bought by the National Gallery of Australia), as well as images from afar (Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye is replicated in black, and alludes to Sidney Nolan's Kelly paintings), are densely layered into the surfaces and spaces of the museum. Yet, these prolific visual associations raise other questions regarding its positioning and expectations of the viewer. In particular, it is useful to consider if its visual language is intended to be read as a didactic text, pregnant with predetermined and hidden meanings only discernable to an educated visitor, or rather, as a series of visual ideas, that open up the building to the viewer to make multiple and complex associations of their own. Perhaps both conceptions of the building hold some truth, and offer insight into image-based spatial occupations. Like the Great Aussie Smith Home discussed earlier, this project also raises the question of the role of occupants in the production of architecture and even foregrounds some of the problems, limitations and possibilities of the architect using visual practices to construct works.

⁷⁸ B. Gruner and A. Savski 2005. 'IRWIN: Like to like - Interview with Andrej Savski from the Slovenian art collective, Irwin.' *un Magazine*, Winter (4): 17-19. p. 18.

SUMMARY: STRATEGIES OF SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICE IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

While few of the practices discussed here bear any immediate aesthetic resemblance to the practice-led works discussed in Chapter Three, all have developed key visual strategies of practice that establish a contextual framework for the making and inhabiting of space. This framework highlights the complex and interrelated nature of these visual strategies which, as suggested by the first chapter, often take effect through performative, iterative and mimetic processes.

This discussion of precedent practices also suggests the variety of possible forms, media and spaces in which architectures may emerge as performative visual practices of occupying space. While these practices exist largely outside of the mainstream of professional architectural practice, they have developed important connections between visual space and the visual strategies used to occupy them. These connections once again reinforce the need to open up our conception of architecture to multidisciplinary conceptions and practices, and as such, support the central thesis of this study is that architecture is produced through the act of making and occupying space. They also reinforce the contention of this study that the visual realm is fundamentally engaged in our material, physical and corporeal process of occupying space.

The precedents discussed have also grounded the practice of painting as both a relevant and strategically valuable medium through which to engage with space and its occupation. It also reveals painting as a spatio-visual practice, which exists not simply as an object on the wall, or as a thin coating of surface colour, but rather, as a process, act, event, space and image. In this way, this chapter has established the contextual field within which the artistic practice may explore and expand upon these visual spatial conditions. It has also established a variety of visual strategies of practice used to occupy them.

CHAPTER THREE: PAINTING AS A SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE

STUDIO-BASED RESEARCH INTO PRACTICES OF MAKING AND INHABITING ARCHITECTURE

OVERVIEW

As outlined in the introduction, the creative practice that has developed contemporaneously with the written project will be discussed in relation to the theoretical concerns outlined in Chapter One, and within the context of the practices discussed in Chapter Two.

The first part of the chapter addresses the connection between painting, architecture and occupation as well as the use of painting as a research method. Second, a framework for practice is established using a series of foundational works in order to establish the central ideas and strategies used by the practice to explore the connection between painting and the spatio-visual practices of occupation. Third, a group of key works are identified and discussed in detail in order to examine the interconnection between visual spaces and visual practices of occupation. An understanding of painting as an expanded spatio-visual practice of architecture in its own right will then be offered.

The works discussed are not simply *about* architecture or occupation, but rather, they offer an interdisciplinary means to 'think through' the problem of occupation and the production of space in the visual hegemony of contemporary culture. They are conceived as acts of spatial occupation and interaction that, following the definition from Chapter One, actually constitute a practice of architecture. While these works do not resemble any traditional practice of architecture, they are, at very least, architectural in their engagement with both our inhabitation of space, and our physical and psychological making of it. At most, these works reveal an alternative approach to architectural practice within the expanded field of the discipline. And, although the works may not constitute a 'building' that may be occupied in conventional or expected ways, they nevertheless construct spaces, or fragments of spaces and architectures, in which we may live, occupy, play, think, and in which we spatialise our subjectivities and construct spatial meaning.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO PAINTING AS A SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICE

Painting, Architecture and the Occupation of Visual Space

As discussed previously, painting has historically been used to locate the viewer in physical space, and thus a connection between space, painting and the viewing body is well established. In this study, a particular connection is sought between painting and everyday acts of visually making and inhabiting space, as well as the subjective identities and meanings created through the repetition of such acts of occupation over time. Accordingly, the painting-installations carried out as part of this research will be shown to establish strategies of practice that underpin this connection, establishing the works themselves as performative and spatio-visual acts of occupation.

As a practice explicitly engaged with both occupation and space, the studio-based practice discussed in this chapter will also be considered a practice of architecture in its own right. Painting, like architecture, must therefore be understood as a performative act of making and inhabiting space. By extension, the works discussed in this chapter must therefore not be thought of as being about architecture, interiority, space or use, but rather, as the performance, creation and enactment of them through the very process of their making (and subsequent re-making upon their every encounter by viewers). In this way, painting is discussed as a visual and spatial practice that redresses the limitations and polarisation of professional architectural practice discussed in Chapter One.

Painting as a Studio-based Research Method

Painting has been used as the predominant research method within the practice-led component of the study. This is for a number of reasons.

First, the discipline of painting has been intimately connected with the practice of architecture for centuries and, according to Semper, has continued the textile tradition of defining social space through the decorative visual surface. Certainly, painting is used prolifically upon buildings today, and reveals much about our occupation of them – our tastes and our identities, as well as the successive trends in style and fashion that are inextricable from these subjective sensibilities. Significantly, this occurs not only within our homes, but also across the surfaces of many public buildings and large-scale constructions. Painting also has other affinities with architecture, inasmuch as it is fixed and static. This means that the viewer is in control of the duration and nature of their engagement with these works. The other important parallel between the practice of painting and the practices of occupation, as discussed in Chapter One, is that painting inherently operates between the physical and immaterial, the real and the virtual, and between the visual and the spatial aspects of our

perception and experience. As a research method, painting may therefore be used as a material object or surface in order to explore the production of spaces and spatio-visual connections within the physical spaces we inhabit. It may also help to examine immaterial, pictorial or image-based spatial conditions, and the experience and appropriation of such visual spaces by percipients. This double capacity of painting to engage with both the visual and spatial realm renders its practice most useful to this study of our ocular occupations of architecture.

Second, as an art practice, painting is engaged in the process of its physical and material making of surface, image and space. The creative practice component of the study connects these physical processes to the practices of occupation. This symmetry between painting and occupation also grounds this chapter's contention that the act of painting may itself be considered an act of occupation. It is perhaps also because of this close connection between the physical act of painting, and physical act of occupation, that there is a bias in the artistic practice towards developing these material processes of making through painting. Nevertheless, the process of making and inhabiting the *immaterial* spatialities discussed by Rice remains important to the practice, if less explicit in its manifestation.

Finally, painting is also a 'porous' medium, by which I mean that it is open to cross-disciplinary hybridisation.¹ An often cited but important precedent for this hybridisation is German painter Gerhard Richter's use of painting, not to make paintings, but rather to make works that he describes as photographs. As Rosemary Hawker suggests, Richter reveals something about photography through this iteration in painting that is not apparent from within the medium itself.² This is significant to the study because it reveals the capacity of inter-medial practices to further our understanding of a discipline – its limits and potentialities – outside the confines of its disciplinary limits. In the case of this study, the inadequacy and inability of professional practices of architecture to engage with visual practices of occupation has already been established. While the theoretical potential of various spatio-visual practices to make this connection has been discussed at length in the first two chapters, my aim therefore is to explore the potential of painting in practices of occupation.

It is pertinent to point out that while firmly grounded in painting, the works undertaken within this study also include, and integrate, practices of drawing, photography, decoration, documentation, installation and various processes achieved through the digital mediation, translation and manipulation performed using computer software. These eccentric practices – which arguably locate the work within an expanded field of painting practices – have contributed enormously to the evolution of the studio work.

¹ Wallis. 'Introduction'. p. 7.

² R. Hawker. 2003. 'The Idiom in Photography as the Truth in Painting' In *Medium Cool*, eds. P. Krapp and A. McNamara, 541-554. Durham, N.C. London: Duke University Press. p. 544.

Introduction to the Practice

This discussion of a body of painting-installation works carried out during the research project is divided into two parts – ‘A Framework of Practice – Foundational Strategies’, and ‘Selected Works’. The first part offers a framework for understanding the practice. This is done in relation to predominantly early or preliminary works that, while often small and simple in their execution, cumulatively describe the key principles and rules of practice. These ‘building blocks’ of the practice also constitute an important source of ideas and approaches for later, more developed works.

In ‘Selected Works,’ four key works are discussed. While these too are experimental exercises, and do not constitute a fully realised body of work, they offer greatest insight into the problems, ideas and development of the practice, as a process of working through the central problem of ocular occupations. The works are characterised by their consolidation, combination, expansion and development of early preliminary works and formative ideas. Most of these works are also larger in scale, more detailed in their execution, and more complex in their exploration of visual space and practices of occupation.

It is also important to note that many of the works are site specific – the majority of them constructed for the interior of my own home. In fact, the house itself has become both an accumulation of works and an on-going work in its own right. While this site figures predominantly in the following discussion, it is not considered a limitation on the scope or the relevance of the works. Instead, it implies that the domestic interior is a rich spatio-visual environment where our ocular occupations are both pertinent and prominent. To counter the predominance of this singular site of domestic inhabitation, however, a number of works have also been tested within other spaces, including gallery and exhibition spaces as well as some public spaces. Arguably, the site-specific strategies used also have parallels to installation or interventionist tactics, hence their discussion in this chapter as ‘painting-installations’. While not all works are site-specific, none are without context. In these cases, works are grounded in the world by a pre-existing referent – often an image, pattern or object – in order to avoid what Baudrillard describes as the ‘satellitization’ of the real.³ Instead, these visual works develop Neil Leach’s notion that the aesthetic realm offers the means to ground oneself in the world.

Other works from outside the structure and timeframe of this study are also discussed where appropriate, to contextualise the studio-based work, and to connect it to larger trends and interests within the creative practice. This occurs particularly with architectural works that are

³ Baudrillard. ‘The Ecstasy of Communication’. p. 130.

shown as formative explorations of the ideas on visual space.⁴ The following discussion therefore takes a 'snap-shot' view of the practice. While much of the work remains preliminary, unresolved and tentative in its various manifestations, it nevertheless seeks to establish painting itself as an act of spatial occupation, and thus, as a practice of architecture in its own right.

⁴ This has been necessary since my involvement and practice of architecture has been largely on hold during this study.

PART 2: A FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTICE – FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIES

Strategies of Visual Space: Surface Practices

The artistic practice focuses on space as a performed visual construction and, in particular, the production and inhabitation of space through surface-based visual practices. To develop this principle, many works rely upon spatial relations constructed between the surfaces of pairs of paintings as well as upon visual connections made between surfaces across a space. Hence, many surface-based works operate through spatio-visual organisations that may be described as mirroring, doubling, pairing, paralleling or duplicating.

These simple spatial tactics have become so entrenched in my painting that they have almost become rules of the practice, and have been developed in various ways through a number of works. In works such as *Green Fence* [23] for example, this mirroring occurs within the work itself, while others such as *Yellow-White Installation 1* [01] operate in oppositional pairings across a space. Similar visual connections have also been made between works and the spaces within which they are located (for example, *Red Window 1* [03]), as well as between works and other objects and furnishings that make up a space. This includes the above mentioned *Yellow-White Installation 1* which implicates the spatial order of the room and its arrangement of objects. All of these works highlight strategies that intervene within existing spatial structures and initiate new or overlapping spatial organisations, thereby extending beyond the traditional spatial limits of painting. Despite some significant formal differences, there exists an important correlation between these surface-based strategies and the work of Robert Ryman discussed in Chapter 2, which implicates and draws upon its spatial context in order to operate completely. Moreover, both share an interest in the physical, spatial and material immediacy of the painting – a quality perhaps founded in minimalist works of the sixties.

This spatio-visual approach to painting, and the arrangement and connection of various parts within a visual structure, is also directly related to the process of constructing the interior conditions of the surface described in the first chapter. It may, therefore, be understood as an act of inhabiting the visual surface of space. Accordingly, these surface-based spatio-visual connections form both a conceptual grounding to the creative work and a critical strategy for practice.

The study has also examined the related visual practice of decorating the surface. This has been developed in works such as *Untitled – Blue Stencil* [14]. This permanent installation – a large scale stencilled work painted on an external wall of my house – is made up of two

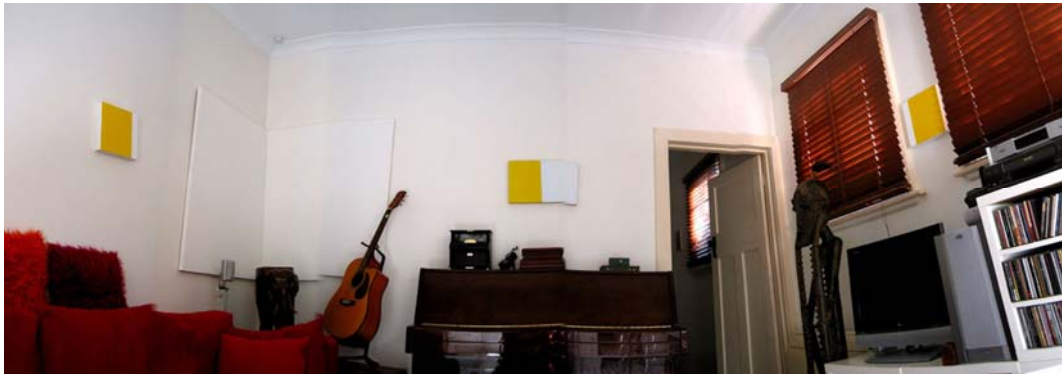


Figure 13: *Yellow-White Installation 1 (First State) [01]* (2006)
Installation view.



Figure 14: *Untitled – Blue Stencil [14]* (2006)
Installation view.

patterns derived from the decoration on a fragment of ceramic pottery found during minor excavations of the garden. Photographs were then taken of the fragment, which were digitally manipulated to re-construct and complete its original pattern, one pixel at a time. However, depending on the resolution and method of translating the original image into pixels, numerous different patterns would emerge, of which, two were then selected and painted onto the wall. Because *Untitled – Blue Stencil* was the largest and most time-intensive work undertaken at the time, the slow procedure of translating and re-making the work highlighted other significant aspects of the practice – such as ideas regarding the performative and mimetic act of making the surface. It also revealed to me the subjective and performative nature of viewing as a creative act due to the slippages and instability found in translating the original photograph.

Decorative surface practices have also been developed in works such as *Catalogue Snowflakes* [52]. A series of snowflakes derived from various Christmas themed advertisements were reproduced in a temporary installation on a gallery floor in December 2007.⁵ This work was developed to specifically engage with domestic and public practices of Christmas decoration that occur at that time of the year, and the absurd, yet ubiquitous, repetition of winter imagery during the heat of the Southern hemisphere's summer Christmas. (It also has some correlations with Michael Lin's decorative floor paintings discussed in Chapter Two). The constructed and mediated foundations of this received imagery are reinforced by the title, which is not only suggestive of the origin of the snowflake patterns, but also the close connection between practices of consumption and decoration.

While *Untitled – Blue Stencil* and *Catalogue Snowflakes* have developed a connection between these decorative strategies of the surface and our practices of occupying space, neither work has engaged directly with the spatial condition of the surface itself. This potential has been established in other decorative works, which were developed through my involvement in architectural practice.⁶ The four projects of interest here – the *Micro-Health Laboratory* [53]⁷; the *Human Movement Pavilion* [54]; the *Chemistry Laboratories Fitout [Level 6]* [55]; and *Brisbane Girls Grammar School's Creative Learning Centre (CLC)* [56] – form a body of works that use explicitly visual surface strategies towards spatial and

⁵ The work was conceived for the group exhibition: 'I Want to Believe,' TCB Building, Fortitude Valley. December 7- December 14, 2007. Curated by Boxcopy.

⁶ It is important to note here that all of these projects have been completed as part of my employment with m3architecture, and were largely conceived, designed and built before this study was begun.

⁷ While this work initially appears as an interesting point of reference for this study due to its integration of art and architecture, and its explicitly visual textured surface, its ambitions do not extend into the spatial concerns of this discussion. Nevertheless, there it is an interesting precedent for the study on the notion of translation, with its art work developed through a series of iterative translational processes.



Figure 15: *Catalogue Snowflakes* [52] (2007)
Installation view.



Figure 16: *Chemistry Laboratories Fitout (Level 6)* [55] (2004-2005)
Corridor views.

architectural ends.⁸ Two in particular are considered here. First, the design of the *Chemistry Laboratories Fitout (Level 6)* sought to reinforce the tunnel-like spatial effect of an existing corridor, by introducing concentric black and white banding to its surfaces. This visually startling project is particularly revealing of the capacity of the visual surface to effect strong spatial experiences. Similarly, the *CLC* project incorporates two interconnected visual strategies. First, the western wall of the project uses a moiré effect of circular motifs to engage viewers travelling past on a major by-pass road.⁹ While my involvement in this part of the project remained at a conceptual level only (and not in the detail of its resolution), it was conceived as an opportunity to engage visually with spectators outside of the school. Second, a series of similar concentric circular motifs were painted on the soffits of each floor. These were designed as visual and spatial devices to locate the viewer on each floor as well as to focus attention on the space below at specific points of interest. For example, the circles on the soffit of Level Two are centred over an open public space in which music performances may take place. Cumulatively, these projects demonstrate the use of visual strategies to make architecture. However, like a number of the precedent architectural works discussed in Chapter Two, these projects achieve little connection between their visual surface strategies and visual practices of occupying space.

Strategies of Visual Space: Image Practices

Like the strategies of mirroring, doubling and pairing that have been discussed regarding the visual surface, similar practices have been used to explore image-based conditions of space in my own home. For example, the work *Untitled – Towel* [21] re-created the pattern of a towel that had been hung as a temporary window covering in the laundry. This was made on the adjacent wall, mirrored about the junction of the coincident wall planes. Similarly, a

⁸ While my role on each of these projects differed, in each case I maintained a significant design and/or conceptual role. The full description and attribution of these projects is as follows:

Micro-Health Laboratory, University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, Gatton. (Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Michael Christensen, Ashley Paine; Ben Vielle; Artist: Ashley Paine);

Human Movement Pavilion, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove Campus, Brisbane.

(Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Ashley Paine, Ben Vielle, Dirk Yates; Artist: Dirk Yates);

Chemistry Laboratories Fitout (Level 6), University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, Brisbane. (Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Christensen, Michael Lavery, Ashley Paine, Helder Pereira; Design Architect: Ashley Paine);

Brisbane Girls Grammar School's Creative Learning Centre (CLC), Spring Hill, Brisbane. (Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Michael Christensen, Bronwyn Grimley, Emma Healy, Jayne Kelly; Ashley Paine, Helder Pereira, Ben Vielle, Dirk Yates).

⁹ This moiré effect was created over six storeys of the building by placing one screen of black aluminium battens in front of a wall of black and white painted stripes. In its use here, it creates the affect of a moving and shifting surface.



Figure 17: *Untitled – Towel (First State)* [21] (2006)

Installation view.

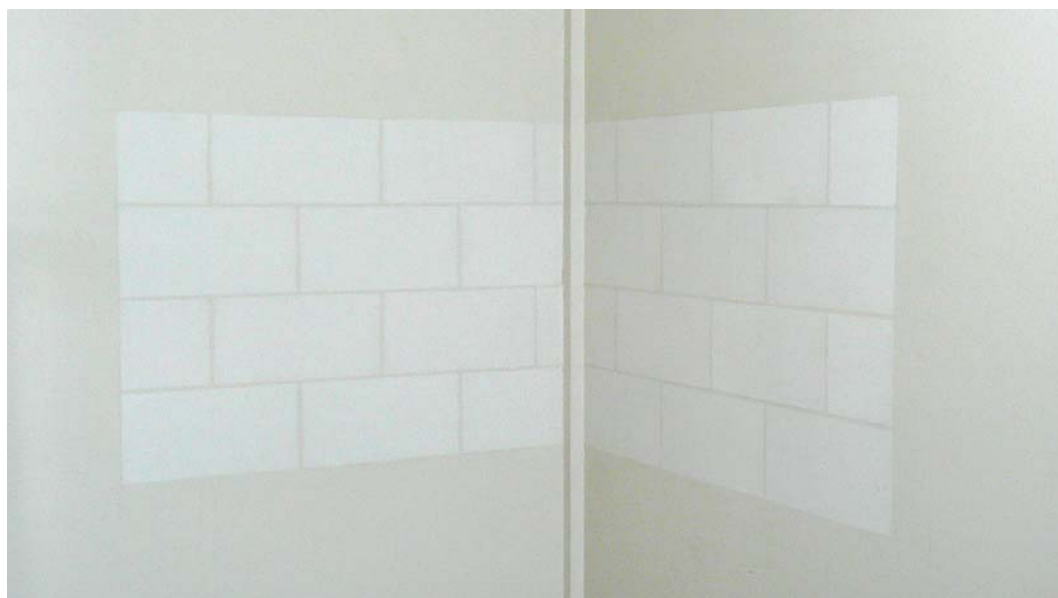


Figure 18: *White Tiles* [09] (2006)

Detail view.

simple pattern of white tiles that form the laundry tub splashback was re-created, at the same scale, height and proportion, on a wall just outside the space (see *White Tiles* [09]). In other works, shadows were painted onto the walls on which they appeared, as a permanent index of the light cast by the fixed downlights on the ceiling (various untitled works [19]).¹⁰ Importantly, in each of these site-specific works, the painting-installations reinforced the image as being grounded in its context. In contrast, the work, *Untitled – Orange Glaze* [29], reproduced the glazed pattern of a small ceramic jug onto the surface of a canvas, and was independent of the space in which it was sited. Instead, a spatial structure of pairing and reciprocity was formed between the canvas and the jug itself. Again, this image-based strategy is one of grounding objects in the world, and of assimilating them within a spatial context. These ideas of assimilation are discussed at greater length below regarding mimetic practices.¹¹

Further to these image-based works, are three painting-installations that were conceived as explicit explorations of the still-life genre. Yet in each case, the still life is installed in physical and spatial relation to its referent. First is a painting of a skylight that was installed into the corner of the same room (*Untitled – Skylight* [02]). In a later work, a still life of a bedside table and its arrangement of various objects was made. In this case, the work was installed directly behind the table and is painted upside-down, in order to appear as if it were a mirror that reflected the table-top collection of items (*Still Life 1* [05]). Finally, a small still life was painted of an ink-jet printer, which was also installed to appear as a mirror adjacent the source object (*Still Life 2* [20]). While the intention was to explore the spatial condition of images, the conspicuous labour of reproducing these images had greater ramifications for the later practice's focus on the performative and mimetic act of (re-)making. Nevertheless, these works are important within the trajectory of the practice due to their formative exploration of the spatial condition and spatial capacity of the image.¹²

¹⁰ Some of these shadow works overlay the third state of the work *Yellow-White Installation 1* to be discussed in detail later in this chapter. This also follows earlier shadow works from 2003-04 that were installed adjacent or behind pieces of furniture, and onto which shadows were painted as a permanent trace of location of that item of furniture.

¹¹ Importantly, these works are also suggestive of the mimetic strategies of occupation to be discussed below. Arguably, however, the practice of re-making images described here is more related to mimicry than mimesis, which following Benjamin and Adorno, suggests a critical and creative translation, rather than a direct copy. As such, their significance to the practice remains largely within the image-based strategies discussed here.

¹² Here, a concern for the spatial role of the image was explored, alongside image-based notions on the subjective and interpretative nature of vision, in an attempt to highlight the performative nature of perception described in Chapter One. Hence, the perceptual slippages between the immaterial image and the material process of their making are also brought to the forefront.



Figure 19: *Untitled – Orange Glaze* [29] (2006)

Detail view.



Figure 20: *Still Life 1* [05] (2006)

Installation view.

Strategies of Visual Occupation: Mimetic Practices

In a number of the painting-installations just discussed, the practice uses strategies which mimic, mirror, interpret, imitate, index, copy, extend, reproduce, repeat, represent, reinforce, reciprocate, translate, transform or re-make existing images, surfaces, details and patterns with paint. Such practices have been achieved through technical processes (photography, imaging and computer-based techniques in the case of such works as *Untitled – Blue Stencil*) as well as in manual and subjective acts of copying and re-making (such as those found in *Green Fence*). These are process-driven strategies, which like the works of Bernard Piffaretti discussed in Chapter Two, establish rules for production. Unlike Piffaretti's works, however, these strategies are used to explore visual and spatial arrangements, structures and patterns that emerge through acts of occupation. Despite the apparent profusion of approaches noted here, these strategies may be grouped together under the common notion of 'mimesis.' Critically, it is not the verisimilitude of the copy that is important, but the very *act* of making the copy, of proceeding from a desire to connect to the 'other' through the mimetic gesture. This supports the discussion of mimesis in Chapter One in which mimesis is understood as both a critical and creative process of assimilation.

Many of these 'mimetic' works began as simple interventions to the interior of my home, in small patterned or monochromatic exercises that repeat existing architectural details, mirror or extend existing objects, and construct new patterns that echo these existing elements. These works were intended to produce immediate and direct visual connections between painting and architecture, and established a number of key foundational strategies for the practice. For example, some of the early works include a pair of small red wall paintings that echo the shape of the window sills found throughout the house. (Arguably, there are some symmetries here with the indexical works of Ellsworth Kelly discussed in Chapter Two). While a series of these were designed (one for each window / window pair of each room) only two were actually made. The first of these (*Red Window 1* [03]) reproduced the sill shape in a series of small painted details, that were later duplicated in a continuation of the work [04]. The second of these works (*Red Window 2* [11]) described the negative shape and space around the window sill, and was also painted onto a canvas that was installed directly opposite the original. In this way, a spatial relationship between the two works was constructed through a visual connection between the two painted elements.

In an attempt to further develop this spatial condition, a similar group of works were made that operate as 'extensions' to existing architectural details and pieces of furniture. These include subtle white paintings on an interior wall, which graphically extends an adjacent window transom (*Untitled – White 2* [16]) and in a related work, continues the white laminate edges of a pair of storage boxes that abutted a wall (*Untitled – White 1* [10]). In another work (*Untitled – Red 1* [12]), sited adjacent a red couch, paint was again used to extend the red colour over a portion of wall, indexing not only the colour of the couch, but also its height and

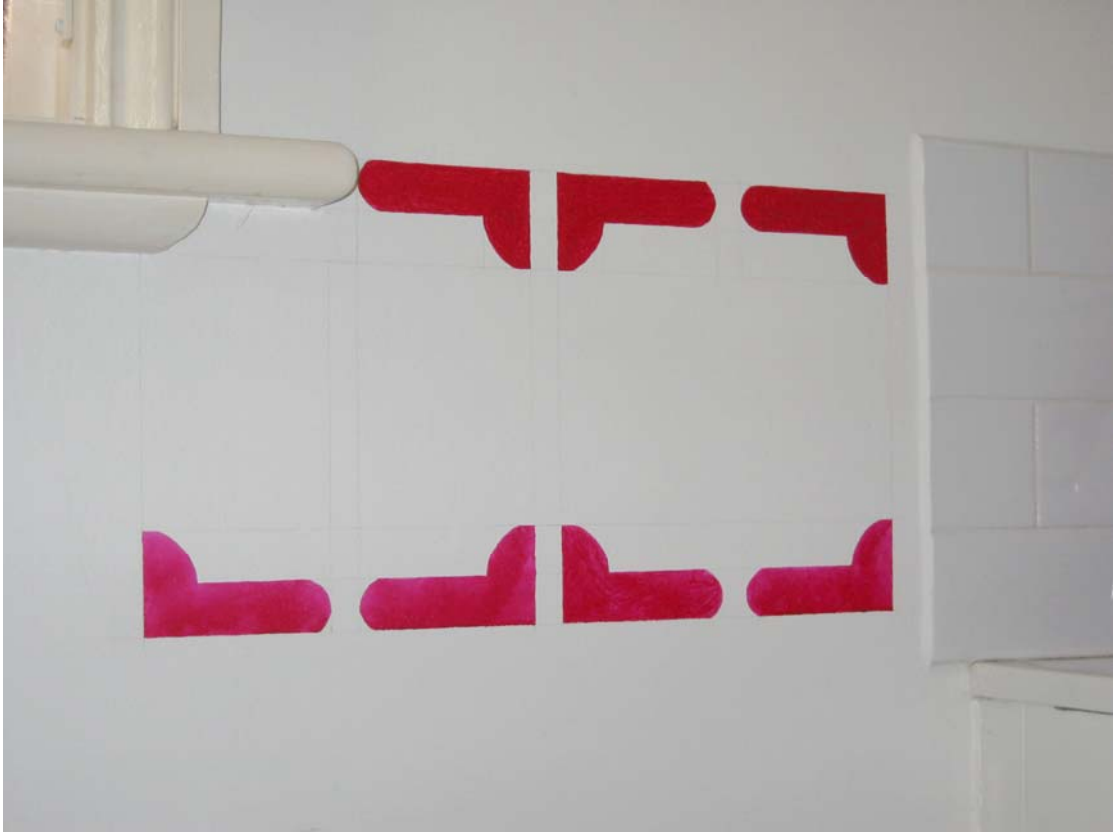


Figure 21: *Red Window 1 (Second State) [04] (2006)*

Installation view.

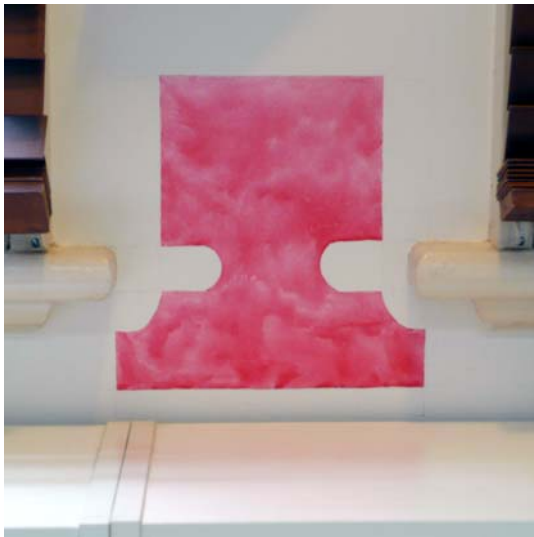


Figure 22: *Red Window 2 [11] (2006)*

Detail view (wall painting).



Figure 23: *Red Window 2 [11] (2006)*

Detail view (on canvas).



Figure 24: *Untitled – White 1* [10] (2006)

Detail view.



Figure 25: *Untitled – Red 1* [12] (2006)

Installation view.

distance above the floor. Like the red wall paintings discussed above, these three works exist in physical proximity with their referents, and explore the visual and spatial correspondence between them. Each of the works operate on a principle of copying as well as the construction of simple spatio-visual relationships between surfaces. The idea is to reinforce existing architectural details and to establish new visual and spatial structures.

Emerging from these works is a painting-installation that was to become a seminal exploration of mimetic spatio-visual strategies and explicitly integrates some of these image and surface-based practices. This work, *Yellow-White Installation 1* [01], installed in the living room, attempted to construct a new spatial configuration based on the position of an existing pair of artworks that were hung slightly off-centre on an end (south) wall of the space.¹³ The existing works – a yellow monochrome and a pale blue grid drawn on a white background – already began to structure and define the space visually, inasmuch as the junction between them registered the (approximate) centreline of the wall, and terminated the long axis of the room. New works were overlaid on this spatial framework. In particular, two small square canvases were installed on the two walls (east and west) adjacent the wall with the existing paintings. These works were hung opposite each other, and were painted yellow and white. The junction of the two colours was again used to denote the centre line of the wall. However, since one work was restricted in its location – only a small space between two windows was available – the paintings were forced off centre, leaving the junction between the yellow and white surfaces to record the centreline of the room. This work is significant in that it amplifies existing spatial conditions through its mimetic gesture, and interacts with the existing spatio-visual structure of the room made through the placement of objects within it – namely, the two existing paintings. The work is also notable for its integration of these mimetic practices, alongside a series of other visual strategies, in a bid to construct a more complex spatio-visual structure. This aspect of the work is developed below.

Strategies of Visual Occupation: Iterative Practices

This complex interaction of strategies became possible through the later continuation and revision of the installation. The first stage of this re-working occurred when one of the two new paintings was re-made. The image of the painting, including the shadow it cast upon the wall, was re-painted onto a larger canvas, and re-installed into the former position of the smaller work (east wall) [15]. Later again, another painting was added to the installation on the far (north) wall of the dining room / kitchen, and located opposite the original pair of

¹³ These works are *Yellow Monochrome* (2002) and *Blue Grid* (2002) by Dirk Yates. They are hung abutting one another, following a similar installation of the works in a series of 5 paintings, exhibited at the QUT Art Museum in 2002.



Figure 26: *Yellow-White Installation 1 (Second State)* [15] (2006)

Detail view (left).

Figure 27: *Yellow-White Installation 1 (Third State)* [17] (2006)

Detail view (right).



Figure 28: *Mirrored Squares (unfinished)* [22] (2006)

Detail view.

paintings [17].¹⁴ This process of repeated making and re-making, like that seen in the red window paintings, is an early exploration of the iterative and performative notions that became more explicit in later works. This iterative process also reinforces the open nature of the practice, as well as the dynamic relationship that exists between the work and the space in which it is located. Moreover, it parallels the shifting, fluid and repetitive nature of occupation, revealing the close symmetry between domestic practices of inhabitation, and the practice itself as a visual means of negotiating, mediating and inhabiting space. In the same way as the repetitive performance of one's habits and rituals have been revealed as spatial acts of occupation, so too, the act of repeating and re-making existing spatio-visual forms in the practice of painting may now be seen also as a mimetic and performative act of inhabitation. (An interesting parallel exists here between the practice and the *Haus Ur* project by Gregor Schneider, discussed in Chapter Two, which constitutes a practice of occupying, and that occupies, an existing domestic space).

This iterative process of re-making an existing work also occurred with *Untitled – Towel* (already discussed), which was extended from its central location on the wall, to both the floor and ceiling in two separate re-workings. The process is visible in the junction between the new and old parts, where slight differences in paint colour may be seen [41]. Other iterative strategies have also been developed that engage with ongoing processes of making, but differ from these works. In an unfinished painting, *Mirrored Squares* [22], a pair of canvases were each ruled with a 30mm grid. The squares were then painted progressively with paint left over from other works. This was done on both canvases within a mirrored structure, such that over time a simple mirrored pattern of random colours would emerge.

In a series of works based on home furnishing catalogues, yet another process of repetition is developed. In these works, a pixelation technique was developed to explore practices of consumption, the mediated and mass-produced nature of contemporary image, as well as the iterative process of making the domestic interior. *White Ikea Interior* [36], for example, uses coloured pencil to re-construct a low-resolution image of an interior setting depicted in an Ikea brochure. The drawing, built up in 2mm x 2mm pixels, makes salient not only the constructed and mediated nature of the image itself, but also of the interior that it depicts. Other works based on these catalogues, such as *Ikea Pattern 1* [39], are developed from images of decorative patterns and fabric designs, while *Savings that stack up* [51] repeats a catalogue's text. Once again, the meticulous process of reproducing these images, patterns and texts – pixel by pixel – is critical. This process was conceived to parallel the process of browsing such catalogues for consumer goods to buy, interiors to replicate, and new colours

¹⁴ This work also interacts with the shadow works [19] described earlier, and includes the small extension of the white portion of the painting on to the wall to register the exact width of the painting hanging opposite.

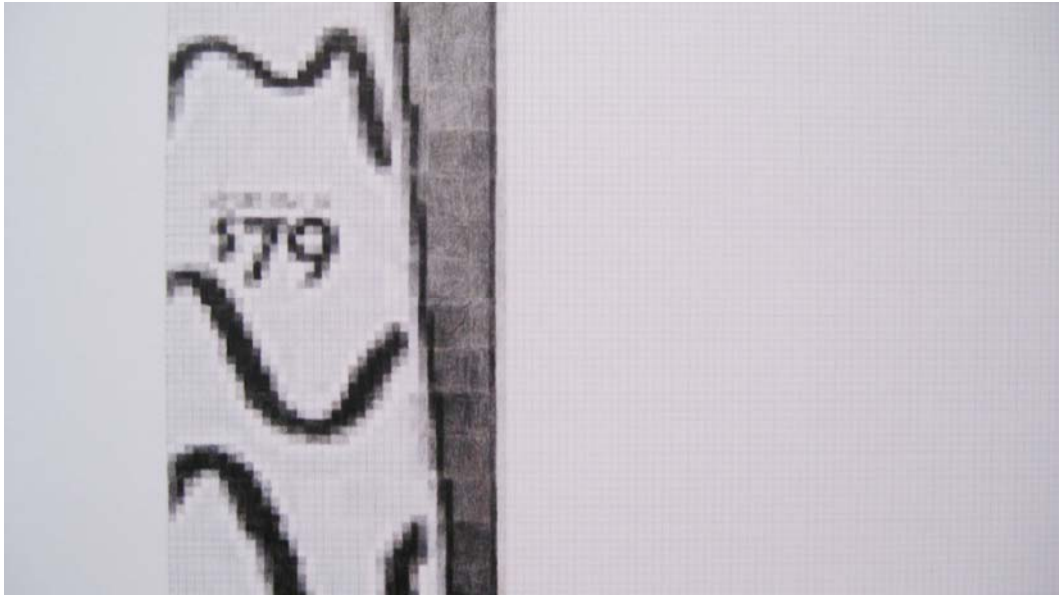


Figure 29: *Ikea Pattern 1* [29] (2007)

Detail view.



Figure 30: *NEW NEW* [38] (2007)

Detail view.

and patterns to decorate one's home with.¹⁵ These works also attempt to highlight the continuous, iterative and mimetic practice of imitating and consuming such images of domestic life, and re-making them in our own homes in a negotiation between image and space. Moreover, the pixelation of these images and texts also heightens the percipient's role in viewing the works, through the necessary act of reading and assimilating the pixels into a coherent image. Like practices of occupation, many of these works are left open compositionally, suggesting that they will be completed later.

These iterative strategies using pixels are further developed in *Untitled – Pink Graffiti* [37], and the painting *NEW NEW* [38], which like a number of works already discussed, is constructed in two mirrored panels. The first of these panels enlarged and reproduced the Ikea catalogue's 'NEW' label, located on any catalogue item recently added to the range. This text was then mirrored onto the second panel in a grid of 20mm x 20mm pixels. This work builds upon the processes established in the drawn works, and is intended to further reinforce the practice of consumption as a creative, iterative and mimetic act by explicitly mirroring its parts.

Strategies of Visual Occupation: Performative Practices

Closely related to these iterative processes are the performative strategies of practice. These performative strategies have not always been central to the practice, but have emerged in critical response to a number of early works. Many of these early works were ideational rather than process driven, and were concerned with the exact execution of the idea. The actual process of making was of little consequence, as was their use of paint. Arguably, many of them could have been achieved in any of a number of mediums – photography, drawing, digital media or projection. In a move away from this conceptual foundation, a number of works began to engage specifically with their use of paint, and importantly, the performative act of (re-)making. It was from this point in the development of the practice that the process of making was no longer distinct from my process of thinking, but rather, the act of making became a way of thinking. This central notion of performativity gave focus and direction to the discussion of Chapter One on visual space and occupation, and has become one of the defining aspects of the practice.

This new consciousness for the performative act of (re-)making first became evident in *Untitled – Blue Stencil* discussed earlier, but it was the work *Green Fence* [23] that concretised this new direction and opened up significant new strategies for practice. This painting-installation was conceived as an explicit exploration of pattern making, through the

¹⁵ Arguably, this selective process of consumption is closely related to Bergson's notion of the subjective selection of images from the world around us according to our own predilections.



Figure 31: *Green Fence* [23] (2006)



Figure 32: *Green Fence* [23] (2006)

Detail view.

process of mixing paint, and within a predetermined set of rules.¹⁶ The work began with a green paint sample that was made to replicate the colour of an existing green fence, without referring to the fence itself as the paint was mixed. The accuracy of this paint was tested when it was applied in a small rectangle upon a central paling of the fence. Once the paint was applied, the remaining paint was returned to the studio, where its colour was corrected, based upon the appearance of the sample painted upon the centre paling. This second colour was then applied to the two palings either side of the first, beginning a simple mirrored pattern within a band emanating from the centre of the fence. This process was then repeated seven more times until a suitably matched green paint was achieved.¹⁷ Despite the simplicity of this procedure, the work was inextricably bound to the very process of mixing and making paint colours as well as to the act of applying, interpreting and then re-making the paint in a series of performative and repetitive acts. It also established a formal process of breaking up the work into a series of parts, executed in discreet acts that ultimately construct a patterned surface of accumulative fragments. Again, this has had profound consequences for many of the selected works in Part 3, many of which built directly upon the process of this work.

Later works also developed performative practices, in more direct engagements with domestic occupation. For example, a group of works was made by polishing various patterns upon doorknobs and other domestic items ([42], [43] and [49]). These were made to explicitly connect my work to the practices of home maintenance, which establish and maintain particular visual structures and organisations through their repeated performance and their inscription on spaces and objects. These polished works require their re-making over time, and will only exist with this iterative and performative practice of maintenance. This supports Neil Leach's notion that performativity operates 'through the accumulative iteration of certain practices. It is grounded in a form of citationality – of invocation and replication.'¹⁸ As outlined in the first chapter, Leach also connects such performative and iterative practices with processes of appropriating space through occupation – processes which construct spatial meaning, identity and a sense of belonging.

Arguably, it is in these polished domestic objects and the *Green Fence* work discussed above that the notion of performativity is most evident, and most central to the process of making. However, it also has significant implications for the viewer's reception of works.

¹⁶ It should be noted that a consciousness for the process of mixing painting colours to match existing referents had already emerged in works such as *Untitled – Towel* and *Untitled – Red 1*.

¹⁷ Perhaps more accurately, it was not until after seven iterations that the process highlighted the fact that the fence was not evenly coloured, but was instead made up of varying greens that had faded in the sun, or had become darker with water staining. Hence, the process was exhausted as no single colour could achieve a perfect match with the fence.

¹⁸ Leach. *Camouflage*. p. 170.



Figure 33: *Untitled (Polished Door Knobs)* [42] (2007)
Detail views.

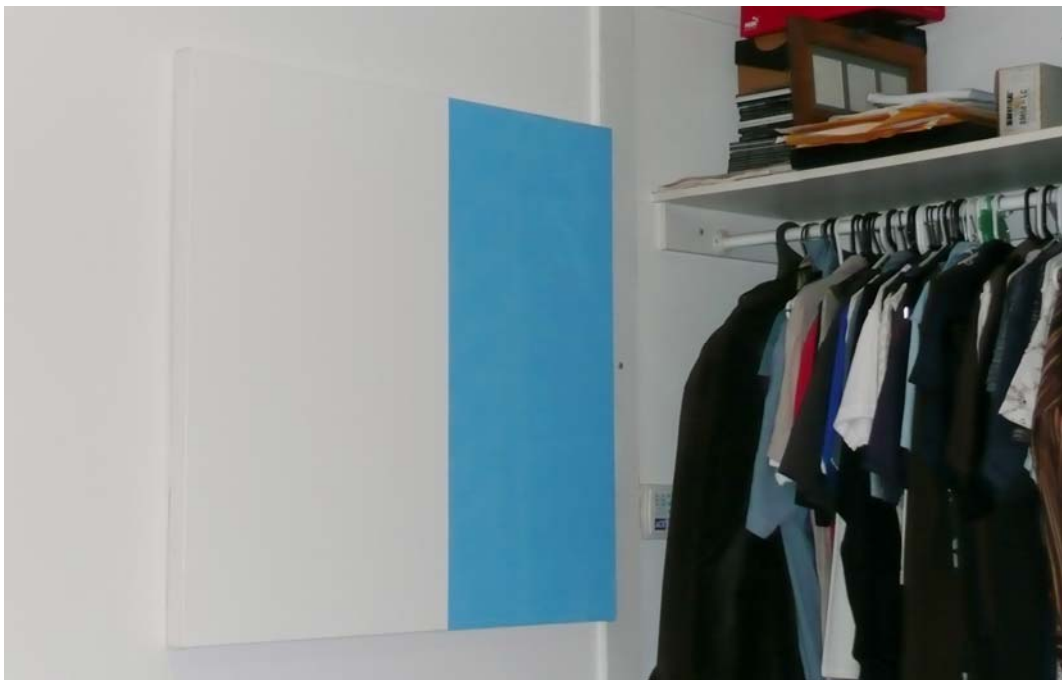
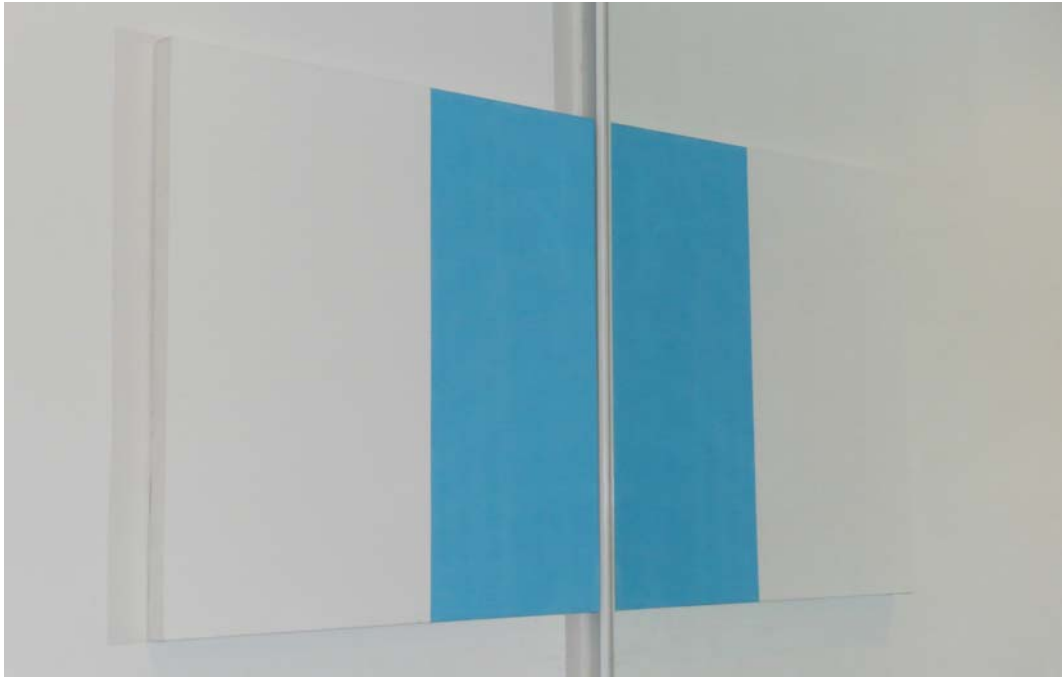


Figure 34: *Blue Mirror* [13] (2006)

Detail view (door closed).

Figure 35: *Blue Mirror* [13] (2006)

Detail view (door open).

These implications were explored in the painting *Blue Mirror* [13] toward an understanding of the performativity of the viewer. This work, on a large square canvas, was installed adjacent a tall mirrored sliding door capable of reflecting the entire painting surface. A blue rectangle was painted onto the canvas. When seen in the mirror, the rectangle and its reflection construct a square of the same dimension and proportion as the canvas itself. In this case, the blue square is made and re-made each time the mirrored door was moved into position, reinforcing the performative role of the viewer as a participant in the making of the work.

A more developed aspect of viewer-centred performativity was later explored in a small collaborative work in which a grid of round mirrors were arranged on a dark brown painted surface (see *Untitled – 25 Mirrors* [35]).¹⁹ A secondary grid of white painted circles of the same diameter was then applied in an offset position to the mirrors. These painted circles mirrored the shape and layout of the mirrors, completing an overall surface pattern. The work was constructed to be viewed from two distinct areas of my house – from the living room and kitchen. These distinct uses are reinforced by changes in the appearance of the work depending on the position of the observer. When viewed from the kitchen, the mirrors reflect the white walls and ceiling of the lounge room. In this view, the mirrors cannot be distinguished from the white painted circles and a complete and uniform surface pattern results. When viewed from a seated position in the lounge room, however, the mirrors reflect the dark timber colours of the window blinds and cannot be distinguished from the background. It is only the pattern of white painted circles that become visible.

While these viewer centred notions of performativity are implicit in all of the practice-led works discussed so far, these are the only works that have gone some way towards explicitly developing its potential. Some of the selected works discussed below address this factor more explicitly, and begin to merge the performative processes of making with the inherently performative act of making by the viewer.

¹⁹ This work was developed in collaboration with Dirk Yates, and executed in two versions – one by each artist.

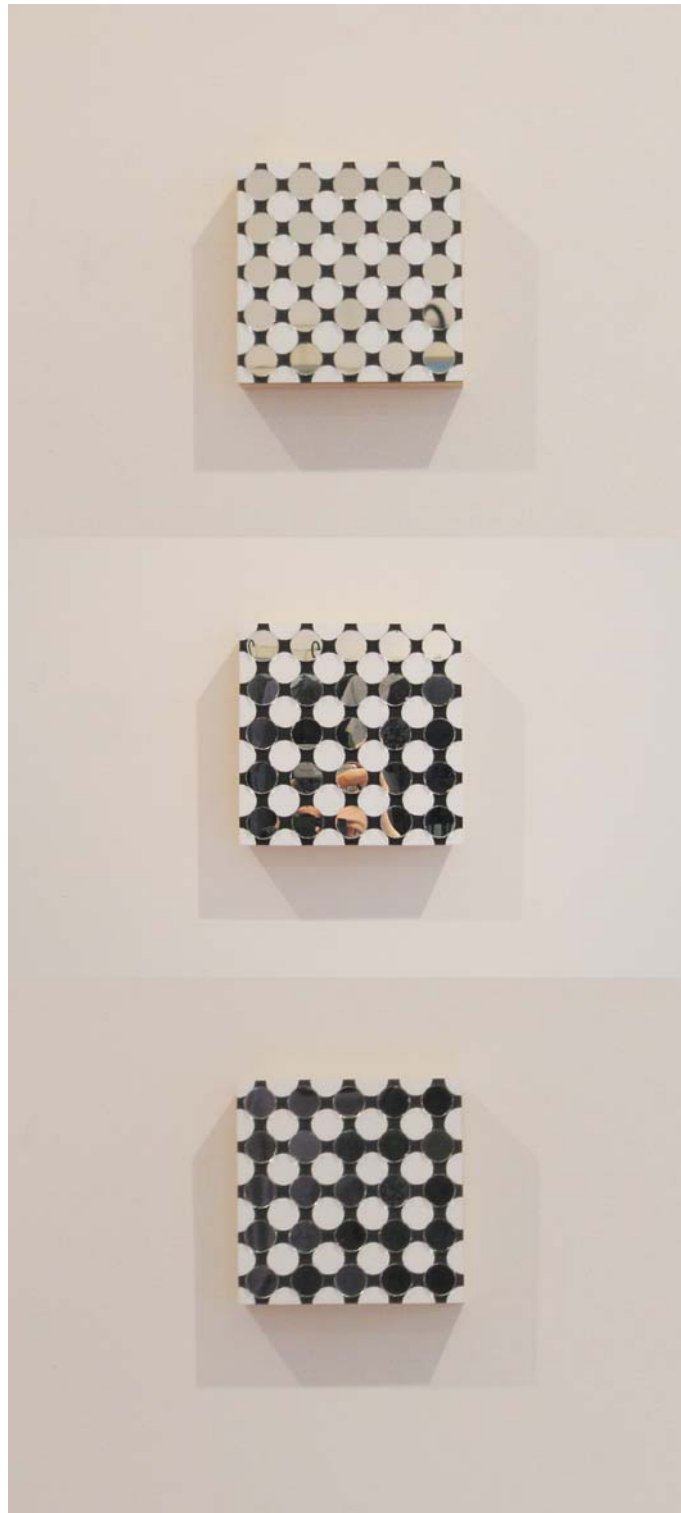


Figure 36: *Untitled – 25 Mirrors [35]* (2007)

(Collaborative work with Dirk Yates)

Multiple views.

PART 3: SELECTED WORKS

Selected Work 1: Installation (QUT H-Block): Untitled

Central to all of the selected works is the consolidation of visual strategies of occupation that have emerged in the formative works already discussed. In particular, the installation at QUT's H-block gallery was conceived as a two-week long occupation of the space and was intended to explore performative, iterative and mimetic processes of making and inhabiting the surface.²⁰ A group of five interrelated works were ultimately produced for the installation, including one key painting that was made prior to the commencement of the residency to initiate the process. This germinal work – an extension of the earlier *Green Fence* intervention – was installed on the first day, and then developed and re-worked in a series of painting-installations made within the gallery over the two weeks. The exhibition attempted to play out the spatial and visual consequences of the first work. The work, *Yellow Squares 1* [24], consisted of four 100mm x 100mm squares drawn upon the centreline of a large canvas. The first of these squares (on the right hand side of the canvas) was painted with pure yellow pigment. Working across the canvas from the right, a second square was filled with the same yellow paint mixed with a small amount of white, the third with a small amount of red, and the fourth with a small amount of turquoise. Across the four squares there appeared a subtle play of shifting yellow hues. This process was then repeated on a second canvas in a mirrored layout, working from the pure yellow on the left hand side, to the turquoise tinted hue on the right. Throughout this process, the first canvas remained out of sight and, as a result, the works again formed a mirrored pair when installed side by side. This pairing revealed the subtle variations between the first and second procedures. The resulting work, (which has strong parallels with the mirrored formats of earlier surface-based works, and to the paired works by Bernard Piffaretti discussed in Chapter Two), was installed in the gallery with its series of yellow squares centred on a skylight over, mid-way between floor and ceiling. This hanging was an explicit attempt to promote the interaction between the work and the existing structure of the space.

A 'copy' was then made for the opposite wall (*Yellow Squares 2* [25]). Like the painting on the east wall of the living room of *Yellow White Installation 1*, this second pair of paintings were executed on larger canvases that similarly reproduced the shadows cast by the original paintings in their particular location upon the gallery wall. This was an attempt to ground the works within their context, and to construct a visual and spatial connection between them.²¹

²⁰ QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

²¹ A small plinth was also installed in front of each pair of works, and was intended to connect the works, and reinforce the alignment of the centerlines of the paintings with the skylight over.



Figure 37: *Yellow Squares 1* [24] (2006)

Installation view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.



Figure 38: *Yellow Squares 2* [25] (2006)

Installation view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.

Two further works were then executed in an adjacent space as an extension of these two pairs of paintings. Here, eight pure yellow squares were painted directly upon the wall, in a matching position to those on the canvases in the adjacent space – the squares were intended to appear as if they had been projected from the first works, through the wall dividing the spaces and onto the surface of the adjoining gallery (*Yellow Squares 3* [26]). These eight squares were then mirrored once again onto the opposing wall within this second gallery space (*Yellow Squares 4* [27]). A projecting cupboard, however, divided the eight squares once again into two groups of four yellow squares. The first of these was produced by painting directly onto the cupboard doors. The remaining four were made by transferring the wet paint of the first four onto a sheet of white paper, and installing the resulting print on the adjacent wall. This act produced another kind of mirroring – a direct index of the previous four yellow squares.

A final work, *Sixteen Squares* [28] was made as a discreet exercise, separate from the four works already discussed. On a blank white gallery wall (adjacent to, and in line with *Yellow Squares 3*), the outline of sixteen white squares, again 100mm x 100mm each, were drawn. This represented double the actual number of days I spent working in the gallery. On the first day, only the outline drawings were completed. On the second day, the inner fourteen squares each received a single coat of white paint. On the third, the inner twelve squares were again painted: the process continuing until the last day of the exhibition, when the two central squares received their seventh and final application of white paint. As a result of this daily process, a subtle pattern emerged (again mirrored around a central point) with the white squares towards the centre of the pattern appearing increasingly bright and reflective as the paint smoothed out the slight texture of the wall. In the central squares the actual thickness of the paint edge also became visible, as a trace and evidence of the space's occupation.

The success of the five works discussed here – as spatio-visual acts of occupation and, hence, as architectural interventions in their own right – was mixed. In the wall painting of sixteen white squares, the performative nature of the work is arguably most pronounced. The act of making was directly related to the process and ritual of occupying the space on a daily basis and to the construction of the gallery space itself through its coat of white paint. The remaining four works, however, followed a largely formal repetition of the initial eight yellow squares, rather than specifically engaging with the gallery and my occupation of it. The site-specificity and spatio-visual impact of these works within the space was therefore problematic. The works were overwhelmed by the scale and visual complexity of the existing gallery. The small, geometric forms of the paintings, while operating within their own spatio-visual relationships, largely ignored their spatial context and, as such, were dominated by it. Arguably, the critical interaction between the process of making these works and the space



Figure 39: *Yellow Squares 3* [26] (2006)

Detail view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.



Figure 40: *Yellow Squares 4* [27] (2006)

Installation view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.



Figure 41: *Yellow Squares 5* [28] (2006)

Installation view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.

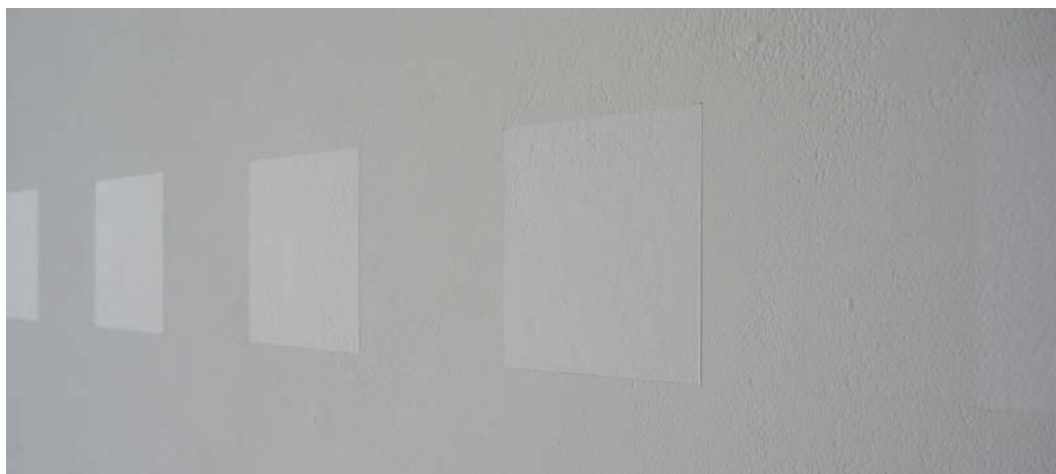


Figure 42: *Yellow Squares 5* [28] (2006)

Detail view at H-Block Gallery, Queensland University of Technology.

in which they were located was lost. Consequently, the installation was severely limited as an architectural proposal because it was meant to exist within the interaction between the works as visual structures and the gallery space as a visual condition.

Nevertheless, these works are critical in their consolidation of a number of existing practices, including surface and image-based strategies, in conjunction with the performative, iterative and mimetic aspects of the emerging practice. In particular, the mirrored surface structures that have become central to much of the practice are at their most developed and complex here. In its shortcomings, the installation also highlighted the need for more explicit spatial connections between the work and the space in which it is presented.

The work discussed below goes some way towards addressing this problem.

Selected Work 2: Exhibition: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture and Image'

The works of this exhibition – the first exhibition of the study – sought a greater connection to the constructed nature of the gallery, which is produced using surfaces of white paint to effect its spatial experience. The works were also intended to expand upon the performative and image-based strategies of the practice.

Three groups of work for the three available gallery spaces were produced. In addition, there were two preliminary studies that did not form part of the exhibition.²² These large studies, *Untitled – Study 1* and *Untitled – Study 2*, ([30] and [31]) were painted based on images taken of the white wall and ceiling details of gallery itself. The photos were taken by a digital camera, which captured and enhanced the warm colours of the artificial lighting in the room, which made the white painted surfaces of the space appear pink and orange in hue. (In this way, the photos were revealing of our perception of white gallery walls as a concept of white walls – pure, neutral and pristinely white. We do not see, or ignore in complicity, the various shadows, tones and colours of the actual walls.) This transformation of colour through the photographic process became the foundation of the two studies as well as the key works of the exhibition. It also closely resembled the process of interpretation, translation and re-making found in the process of mixing paint colours for *Green Fence* and *Yellow Squares 1*.

Thus, the studies attempted to repeat and highlight this process of translation. To do this, the surface of each work was divided into forty vertical stripes, which were then painted sequentially. The repeated process of mixing paint for each stripe to represent the corresponding part of the original digital image, replicated the interpretative process of the photograph itself, and its visual re-presentation and re-making of the space as an image. Since this was repeated some forty times in each study, the imprecision of this visual

²² 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture and Image,' QUT Art Museum. April 1- April 20, 2007.

translation became heightened, resulting in a highly patterned surface. The works therefore oscillated between this decorative surface and the construction of the image as a visual and spatial condition. Similar conditions have already been discussed in Chapter Two by way of works by Joseph Marioni, the panorama, and Pozzo's fresco in the Saint Ignazio in Rome.

This was a significant evolution of the practice in that it combined the image and the surface interests of this study, and linked those interests to a performative, iterative and mimetic process re-making the original photograph. Moreover, the procedural and performative nature of this work was arguably more transparent and pronounced than in most preceding works. These paintings also reinforced a further potential of the practice in that they engaged with their reception and re-making by the percipient. The 40-part images are reconstituted by the viewer – an act implicit in all acts of perception, but heightened here by the fragmented image – connecting the viewer to the way in which spaces (such as the gallery) are visually constructed through subjective perception. In this way, the two types of performativity – that of the process of making and that of the viewer's re-making (established in the works previously discussed) – began to come together.

These ideas were further developed in the final installation for the exhibition. The studies formed the basis of four works installed into the main Tom Heath Gallery space (*Untitled* [32]), that were once again installed in oppositional pairs on the centreline of the walls in order to reinforce the spatial structure of the orthogonal room. A similar process of photographing the four wall-ceiling junction details of the room was undertaken, which were reproduced in 20mm painted strips.²³ The works were executed on boards constructed to float off the gallery wall in a detail that mimicked the architectural detail of the gallery walls. This articulation of the wall planes is a distinctive characteristic of the QUT Art Museum and it formed the basis of a second connection between the paintings and their spatial context. It is revealing, however, that these site-specific gestures aiming to ground the work in the existing space seemed to have been overlooked by most visitors. Despite the inclusion of the source photographs alongside the works, their abstract appearance perhaps overwhelmed the subtlety of these intended connections with the space.

Two further groups of works were also made for the exhibition. Each of these developed the space-surface-image relations of the primary works. The first were a pair of white works (*Untitled* [33]) that were installed in the adjacent ramp space. Again positioned directly opposite each other, and painted onto identically constructed boards, these works provided clues to the paintings in the main space. Specifically, as one of these white paintings was placed at the very the edge of the wall plane, a more explicit connection was made between

²³ The source photographs used for the paintings were also included in the exhibition.

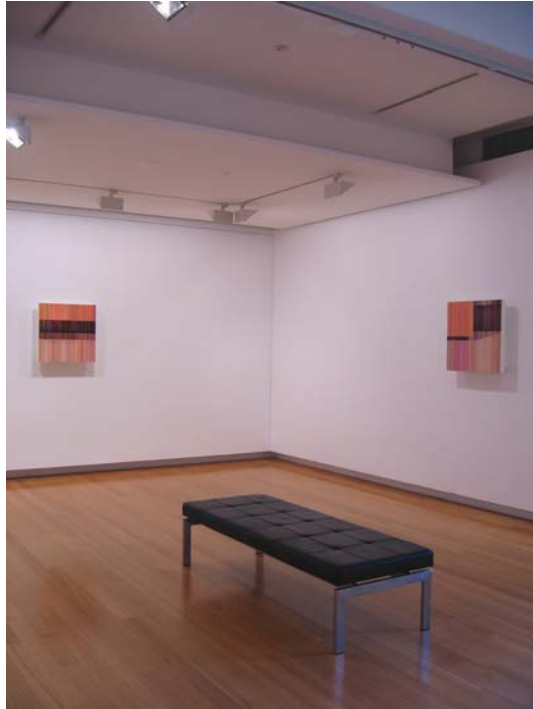


Figure 43: *Untitled* [32] (2007)
Installation view at QUT Art Museum.

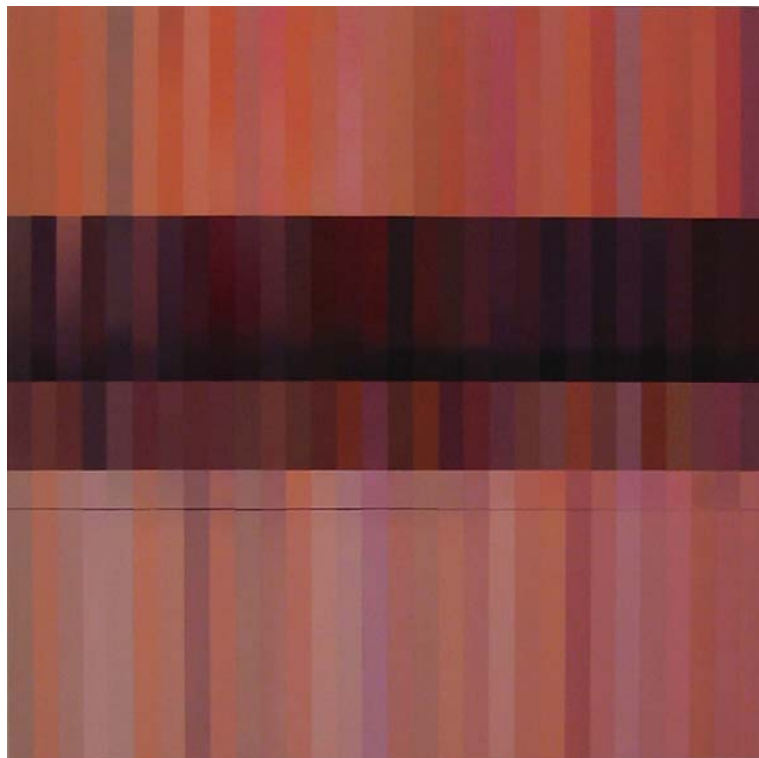


Figure 44: *Untitled* [32] (2007)
Detail view.



Figure 45: *Untitled [33] (2007)*
Installation view (left) at QUT Art Museum.



Figure 46: *Untitled [33] (2007)*
Detail view (right) at QUT Art Museum.

its physical construction and that of the gallery walls which it mimics. In this case, the paintings assumed a more overtly architectural resonance, both in their construction and in their spatial arrangement, because they constituted a threshold to the ramp. Again, the surfaces of the paintings were constructed in 20mm strips, which referred to the work in the adjoining space. The use of white paint suggested the gallery itself with its white painted surfaces, which 'clothe' its spaces.²⁴ In this case, however, the stripes were made on the same incline as the ramp itself in a further move to connect the paintings to their architectural context.

The final group of paintings were not made as site-specific works. Instead, each work reproduced the pattern of a shirt or T-shirt from my wardrobe (*Untitled* [34]).²⁵ While the paintings were produced through a similar process of re-making each colour every time it was applied, the works also referred to the 'clothing' of the gallery space in its coat of white paint – a subtle reference to Semper and Loos' description of the architectural surface as clothing. (The ramp threshold works also made this suggestion.) These paintings were made on masonite board, which remained visible in each work where the colour brown was present in the clothing pattern or design. The brown background also united the works, like a colour-coordinated 'outfit' of works. With the substrate revealed, the application of paint as a superficial surface also became pronounced, again reinforcing the surface concerns of the other two groups of work in the exhibition.

Despite some shortcomings, the interdependent groups of work in the exhibition (centred on the four striped paintings of the main space), contributed significantly to the development of many process-based and conceptual aspects of the study – including its interests in surface, image, performative, iterative and mimetic strategies. In particular, it developed the emerging understanding of viewing as a creative act. This idea first emerged within the discussion of Chapter One (by way of Mark Hansen and Ron Burnett) and it highlighted the subjective process of perception, and the interpretative or 'enframing' role of the viewer in determining how an image is perceived.²⁶ This performativity of vision was integral to the practice of making these works – specifically in the process of mixing colours in the Tom Heath Gallery works. As such, these works relied on the subjectivity of vision, both in their material process of making as well as in their encounter by a viewer.

Moreover, while the spatial strategies used to connect these works with the gallery were not all successfully achieved, these practices were developed beyond that of the QUT H-Block

²⁴ This follows a number of past works for exhibition in white gallery spaces that for various purposes have engaged with the ubiquitous use of white painted surface.

²⁵ Again, the source patterns were photographed, and included in the exhibition.

²⁶ This recalls Hansen's notion of enframing discussed in Chapter One. Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*.



Figure 47: *Untitled* [34] (2007)

Installation view at QUT Art Museum.

installation and most preceding works. Importantly, the works actually draw upon the space itself for their content (image) and their surface-based practices, even if these subtle connections were overlooked by viewers.

Moreover, as an architectural proposition, these works operated in a number of ways. First, as a series of image based strategies that subjectively appropriate and reconstruct the space of the gallery, the paintings of the main gallery space may be understood as an architecture of images. Along with the white works installed in the hall, these paintings also appropriate the built language of the gallery, and physically intervene within its walls to construct visual structures between their surfaces across the gallery spaces. Finally, in its surface strategies, the works once again use performative and iterative practices to negotiate the spatio-visual surface conditions of the gallery, to produce, arguably, one of the most concrete architectural proposals of the study.

Selected Work 3: Wall Painting (Private Carpark, Albion): Untitled – Pink Graffiti

While smaller in scale and scope than the two selected groups of works discussed above, this work was made to begin to explore issues of identity that were emerging within the written component of the study. It was also intended to engage even more directly with practices of making and inhabiting the surface than was achieved with these exhibitions.

The work [37] was initiated and developed out of a graffiti 'tag' that was spray painted onto the front wall of my property. These tags (as opposed to stencil works or more laborious graffiti works) are commonly scrawled in quick acts of vandalism, and usually carry the author's nickname, symbol or epithet – their 'tag'. In particular, I was interested in this random spatio-visual act of appropriating an existing wall and the construction of identity through the use of paint. Like the *Untitled – Blue Stencil* work, I photographed the sprayed text and pixelated it to the lowest possible resolution before the image became unreadable. The number of colours used to make up the image was also reduced to just three – the pink of the text, the purple of the wall, and an in-between colour where the pixelation produced an approximation of the shape and edge of the text. This colour mediated between the pink and the purple of the wall. It also had some parallels with my own process of mixing and mediating paint colours between two conditions. It is also similar to Leach's notion of 'becoming' discussed in Chapter One, in which a co-dependent relationship is established between two conditions. These in-between edges were also interesting due to the fact that the non site-specific pink text began to intermingle with the specific colour of the existing wall: the two becoming inextricable in this image. This precise grid of coloured pixels was used to develop a large scale wall painting on a white painted block wall. Here, the pixels were enlarged to 50mm x 50mm squares that conform with the 200mm x 400mm grid of the



Figure 48: *Untitled – Pink Graffiti* [37] (2007)

Installation view.

Figure 49: *Untitled – Pink Graffiti* [37] (2007)

Installation view.

block wall. Once again, this was intended to establish a site-specific connection between the work and the existing wall. When re-making the image on the white wall, the 'in-between' colour was changed to mediate between the white and the original pink of the graffiti. Thus, rather than remaining a placeless gesture that may be found anywhere within a city, this work is made specific to the existing wall.

The resulting work is important to the study for a number of reasons. First, it develops the mimetic practice of translation and the iterative process of re-making in more complex ways that are particular to the act of painting – in this case, the familiar practice of graffiti. This process is particularly salient in the finished work, due to the very apparent contradiction between the initial quick and sweeping gesture of the tag, and its meticulous and laborious re-making on a large scale from hundreds of individually painted pixels. The pixelation also reinforces the viewer's role in synthesising the surface of coloured squares into an image.

The work is also interesting in its consolidation of surface strategies to explore notions of appropriation, identity and, hence, our occupation of surface spaces. The original act of appropriating an existing wall with a graffitied tag has in turn been appropriated and then re-constructed as part of my own practice of occupying surfaces and spaces using paintings. The work does not meet conventional expectations of an architectural practice, but it is consistent with the argument of this study, which asserts that it is architectural in its use of visual strategies to appropriate and occupy the visual surface of the wall.

Selected Work 4: Interior at 1/20 Clay Street, New Farm

The painting-installations made within my own interior are conceived of as a series of visual negotiations of domestic space. These works not only constitute a practice of occupying the house, but they constitute an important work in its own right. The works began within six months of moving into the house and for nearly two years have accumulated upon its surfaces, decorating and redescribing them with new and overlaid spatio-visual structures and organisations. The works have also implemented a range of strategies that have copied, mirrored, translated, reinforced and transformed its various parts. As such, this practice has become an integral part of both my studio-based research as well as my everyday occupation of my home.

It is appropriate to revisit a few of these works in the context of making and inhabiting the interior. For example, some of the earliest works negotiated their way around existing pieces of furniture, artworks, and other domestic clutter, including *Red Window 1* [03] and *Still Life 1* [05], already discussed. Later works began to engage more explicitly with my occupation of the house, and were effected by it, such as *Blue Mirror* [13] and the collaborative work *Untitled – 25 Mirrors* [35], also discussed above. This interaction is also evident in the *Untitled* shadow works [19] in which the shadow cast by the kitchen joinery onto an adjacent

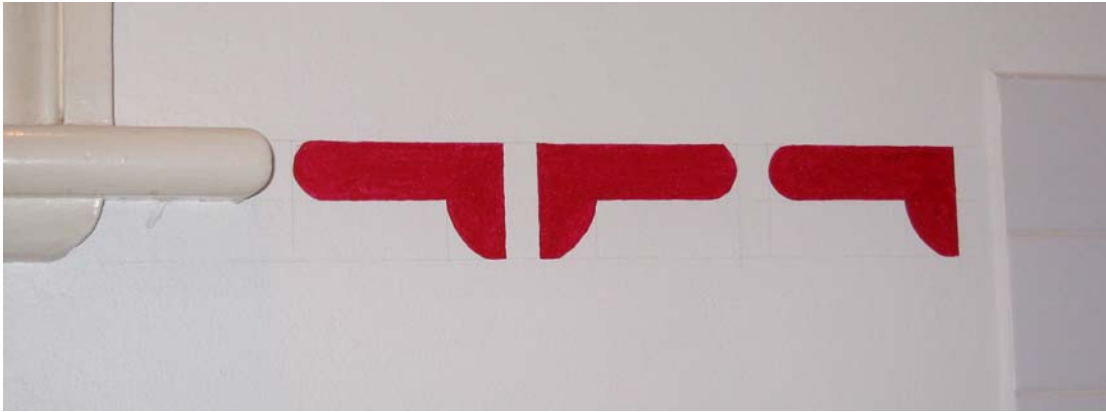


Figure 50: *Red Window 1 (First State)* [3] (2006)
Installation view.



Figure 51: *Yellow-White Installation 1 (Second State)* [15] (2006)
Installation view.



Figure 52: *Untitled* [19] (2006)
Installation views.

wall is painted (the shadow also crosses part of the *Yellow-White Installation 1* installation). When the lights are turned on, the shadow is completed across the surface of the painting – made and re-made each night as I occupy the kitchen. Perhaps more interesting are works such as *Untitled – CD Rainbow* [50] which was intended to construct patterns of colour using the spines of CD's, in contradiction to the usual organisational rules applied to their storage for the ease of daily use. In this case, a friction exists between the logic of appearances and the logic of practical organisation. It highlights the tension between the house as a space in which to live and a more performative conception of the house as an on-going series of spatio-visual experimentations.

Other aspects of the practice are also brought to the fore in the context of the interior. Of interest here are works such as *Untitled – Towel* ([21] and [41]) which were made and re-made directly onto the walls, recording the development of my practice. In the case of *Still Life 1* [05], changes in the collection and arrangement of items on the bedside table are registered by the painting, as I continued to occupy the space. Similarly, *Yellow-White Installation 1* ([01], [15], [17] and [18]) recorded patterns of organisation and occupation through its making, re-making and, in this case, ultimate un-making to allow for new spatio-visual organisations to be explored. In all of these works, the dynamic and fluid nature of occupation as an on-going process of negotiation is highlighted.

Cumulatively, these works have heightened my consciousness of the visual foundation of many practices of making and occupying space, and, as such, have contributed to a research method that has been central to the progress of this study. It is certainly the most revealing, developed, dynamic and contradictory work to date because it explores the various surface and image-based practices that emerged in Chapter One, but also establishes many of the performative, iterative and mimetic strategies that have come to shape and define the conceptual and practice-based developments of the study.

The interior of the Clay Street house must therefore also be seen as the most interesting and developed architectural proposal of the study as it emerges from the continued negotiation between its various spaces as well as from the strategies of visual occupation that have been tested out within them. Arguably, the interior exists as space, and an architecture, which resides between that of painting as an artistic endeavour, and painting as an act of home decoration and maintenance. It can be likened to a space between 'art' and 'life' that in turn offers an intriguing parallel to Rice's concept of interiority as that which is produced between space as an image and space as a context for occupation. As apparent in Rice's discussion of interiority, these tensions remain unresolved. They require the mediating subject to constantly negotiate between them. This has certainly been my experience of occupying this interior over the course of this project and it a process that is likely to continue well into the future.

SUMMARY: A SPATIO-VISUAL PRACTICE OF PAINTING AS ARCHITECTURE

Through this studio-based research, the key concerns of this study regarding visual practices of occupation were able to evolve and develop in parallel with the theoretical discussion of the first chapter. More precisely, the practice offered an alternative process in which to work through the problems and new potentials of the central thesis. While the practice remains largely tentative and in its early stages of development, the idea of the studio-based work as a practice of architecture has also gained greater purchase. This is made possible through the practice-based development of visual strategies to both make and occupy space – strategies that explored surface and image-based processes as well as their intersection with numerous performative, iterative and mimetic strategies of occupation.

These strategies reinforce a zone of interdependence between space as a visual condition (produced by surfaces and images) and occupation as a series of visual practices, following similar ideas raised in the first chapter regarding the production of architecture. The painting-installation works emerge from within this zone as visual acts of negotiating and inhabiting space. Accordingly, it is from these acts that the work *as architecture* emerges. The paintings must therefore be considered as visual records, remnants, inscriptions, documents, indexes and traces of these architectures that were produced performatively, iteratively and mimetically through this *act* of making. Put another way, the works themselves are not architecture, but rather records of the *acts* of architecture that produced them. As spatio-visual installations, the works also put into place visual conditions for the future making and re-making of these architectures. Once again, this follows the discussion of chapter one on performative conceptions of architecture that are produced and re-produced subjectively upon each encounter by a subject. It is through this process and act of making that spaces become meaningful, and this is reinforced by the iterative and mimetic nature of the practice and the strategies it employs. These are the architectures of painting that have emerged here.

The visual strategies and emergences of architecture that have resulted from this process nevertheless resist absorption within traditional or expected practices of architecture and, instead, offer insight into broader (visual-)spatial and cultural practices that may provide more complex, and arguably more complete, conceptions of the discipline. In particular, visual spatial conditions of painting have emerged that may be made, occupied, appropriated, modified and embodied through many of the same strategies used in our more familiar occupations of everyday space. Moreover, it has been shown that these are creative acts of occupation, through which we think and construct spatialised identities and subjectivities.

It is also interesting to note that most of the selected works are in fact groups of painting-installations. This highlights the difficulty in understanding space and occupation in singular, discrete acts. Rather, it suggests the necessity of the cumulative, iterative interdependence of a number of acts to begin to occupy space meaningfully. Once again, this supports the central thesis of this study, that architecture is made, and constantly re-made, upon every occupant's negotiation between space and its occupation.

CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

This study has established a framework through which we may now recognise, understand, and re-engage with our visual practices of making and occupying space. Through its use of interdisciplinary theory and practice, the study has also redefined the limits of architectural practice, and redressed questions on the nature of space and occupation in the visual hegemony of contemporary culture. More precisely, it opens up possibilities for visual architectures to emerge from, and engage positively with, our spatio-visual practices of occupation within this image-saturated or ocular-centric context – a context that has largely been condemned for distancing our corporeal experience from reality, and corrupting our physical and sentient being in the world. The study has refuted such criticisms, to locate architecture's very origins and practice within fundamentally visual conditions and, in particular, within those visual spatialities of the surface and image.

Conclusions and Speculations for the Discipline of Architecture

While this study has not sought practical outcomes for direct application by the architectural profession, it puts forward a number of challenges to architecture's professional practice and theoretical discourse that go to the heart of how to understand the discipline, its practice, and its engagement with our acts of occupation.

The first of these challenges emerges from the study's opposition to, and discrediting of, the destructive and anti-corporeal claims made against the visual realm in architecture, and against visual culture more widely. To mount this challenge, the study has located many of our practices of occupation fundamentally within the visual realm. In the process, it offers the conceptual grounds upon which the possibilities of visual architectures may be explored – architectures that engage with, and facilitate our occupation of, our ocular-centric world. The challenge for architecture is to embrace these essentially visual practices, and to facilitate a closer connection between occupation and its professional practices of making. Importantly, this approach avoids the limitations and polarisation that has been noted in the work of many practices faced with the problems of our visual culture. It also re-affirms Neil Leach's argument that the aesthetic realm may in fact offer a way to better understand our place in the world and, by extension, suggest possibilities for occupying its visual conditions.

Second, architecture has been expanded beyond its recognisable limits to include a range of performative practices, in which the subject negotiates between space and occupation. While I accept there are regulations and expectations of the architectural profession that must continue to be met, this expansion presents other challenges to professional practice,

and to the theory and practice of the discipline more broadly. Namely, these performative approaches loosen the control that the profession has traditionally held over architecture, and removes the assumed stability of its production and reception controlled by the architect. Instead, it opens up practice to include occupants, and their multiple, complex and subjectively constructed spatial experiences, as well as their own practices of making and occupying space. The study highlights these limits to professional practice, and acknowledges that meaning, occupation, space and 'architecture' can never be fully determined by the architect. Accordingly, Frank-Berthold Raith suggests that architects should 'concede their general helplessness not only with respect to the forces involved in the production of buildings, but above all with respect to their reception, that is to the consumption of architecture.'¹ Furthermore, that '[s]ignificance for everyday life originates in everyday appropriation: instead of intentional "words in stone," every building is a formal difference and differentiation, ideally giving voice to a way of life.'²

Similarly, Jonathan Hill accepts that even the most static architecture does not determine behaviour. Yet, he suggests that architecture's determination of so little, but influence over so much, is a cause for optimism in the discipline rather than despair.³ A shift is therefore needed within professional practice – away from conceptions of architecture as a container of fixed ideas, meaning and the intentions of the architect, towards its understanding as a prompt and facilitation of the occupant's negotiation and appropriation of space for themselves. Again, the study has revealed the significance and centrality of the visual realm in this process. In particular, it has revealed the uncertainty and instability of this aesthetic realm that, as such, requires the viewer's active interpretation and their performative construction of subjective meaning. Hence, the visual realm opens up space for occupants to engage with it, rather than limiting it to the closed and determined meanings imposed by the architect, or by the limitations and restrictions of architecture's many regulatory authorities.

Finally, the study has opened up architecture to interdisciplinary possibilities for its practice, in particular, spatial practices emerging from occupation. This broader conception of architecture, following Jonathan Hill, exists in-between space and our occupation of it – a notion that has been developed as a central project ambition of the research. Again, this is a challenge to professional practice and theory to include alternative conceptions of architecture, and to embrace, engage with, and learn from architecture wherever, and by whomever, it may be produced.⁴

¹ Raith. 'Everyday Architecture: In What Style Should We Build?' p. 14.

² Ibid. p. 15.

³ Hill. 'An Other Architect'. pp. 139-143.

⁴ Jonathan Hill came to similar conclusions in, Ibid.

Towards a Visual Practice of Architecture

These challenges to our conception and practice of architecture are also directly relevant to my own practice, both within and without the profession. The challenge of interdisciplinarity is particularly pertinent, and underpins the very premise of this study as well as its examination of architectural ideas using theory and practice from the visual arts. While a number of these concerns for visual, performative and interdisciplinary practices have been present in my architectural practice and thinking for some years, this study has provided me the opportunity and the conceptual means to develop these ideas further.

For my professional practice of architecture in particular, this study has expanded my existing interests in visual and decorative approaches to architecture, and it has provided me with a new focus to enable visual practices of occupation. Moreover, the introduction of new concerns for practices of identification, self-representation, consumption, becoming and mimesis, has provided important conceptual extensions to my interests in how we occupy space, and construct meaning spatially and subjectively. I anticipate that these will have an on-going significance for my practice.

The study has also opened up the possibility to explore these ideas through alternative practices beyond the conventional limits of architecture. In doing so, the study has redefined the boundaries of my practice in architecture, and bridged the gap between my existing architectural practice and my emerging art practice. The study has also developed a strong theoretical basis to this artistic practice by borrowing from my more developed architectural concerns. In turn, the art practice has offered my architectural practice new ways to think through the problems of space and occupation. The interdependence of these practices is an important feature of this study. It has also established my art practice as a specifically visual practice of architecture in its own right – an architecture constructed out of the spatio-visual act of painting. The emergence of such opportunities for a critical and creative practice, in conjunction with expanding the concept of architecture, is arguably the most important outcome of this study for my future practice.

This study has been pivotal in these developments of my practice in both art and architecture, and has reinforced my original contention that we, as sentient and embodied human beings, are inextricably linked to the visual realm. That is, we exist in the world, construct identities and find meaning in the objects, surfaces, images, rooms and buildings around us, through our ocular occupations of space.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: PRACTICE DOCUMENTATION

Overview:

The works documented here appear in chronological order, and cover the complete scope of the practice within the timeframe of the study. Four architectural projects are also included at the end of this appendix, which were completed largely outside the duration of this study, and as part of my employment at m3architecture.)

Other works discussed in the study but made outside this timeframe appear last and are indicated by a # following the date.

Works not discussed within the exegesis are indicated by a † following the title.

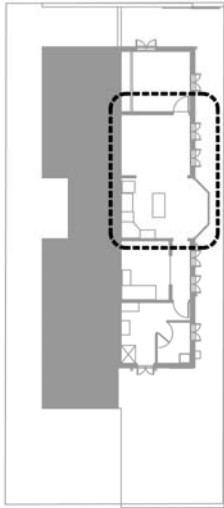
Dimensions are provided in millimetres, height before width before depth.

All works by the author, unless indicated otherwise. All photographs by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

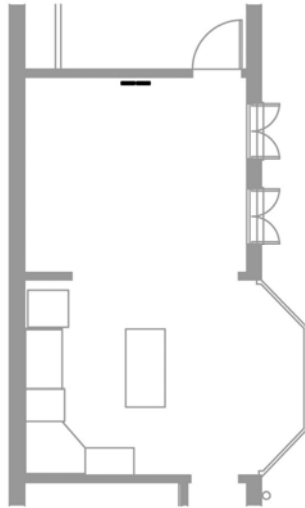
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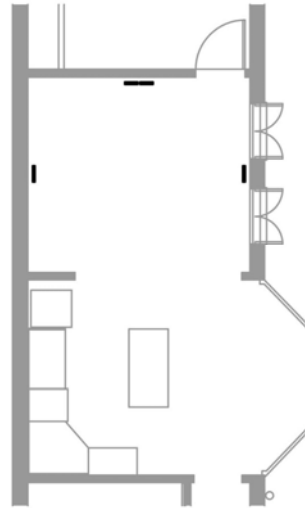
[32]	<i>Untitled</i>	178
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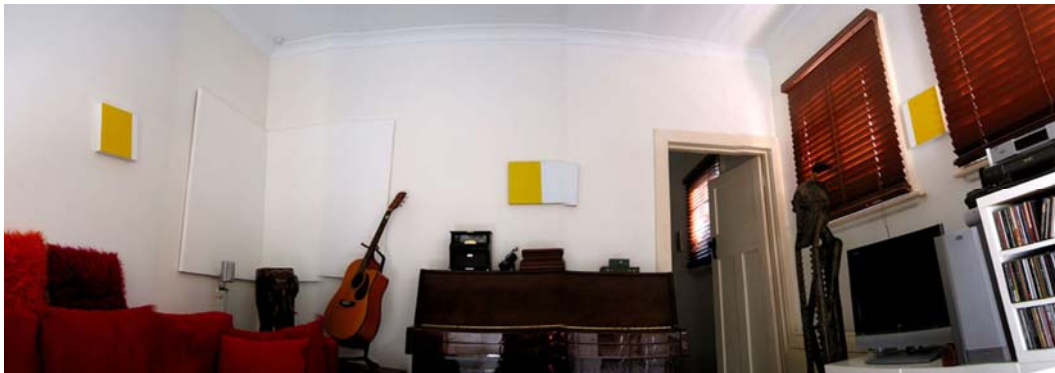
Key Plan
(Not to Scale)



Plan: Existing Paintings
(Not to Scale)



Plan: Installation of [01]
(Not to Scale)

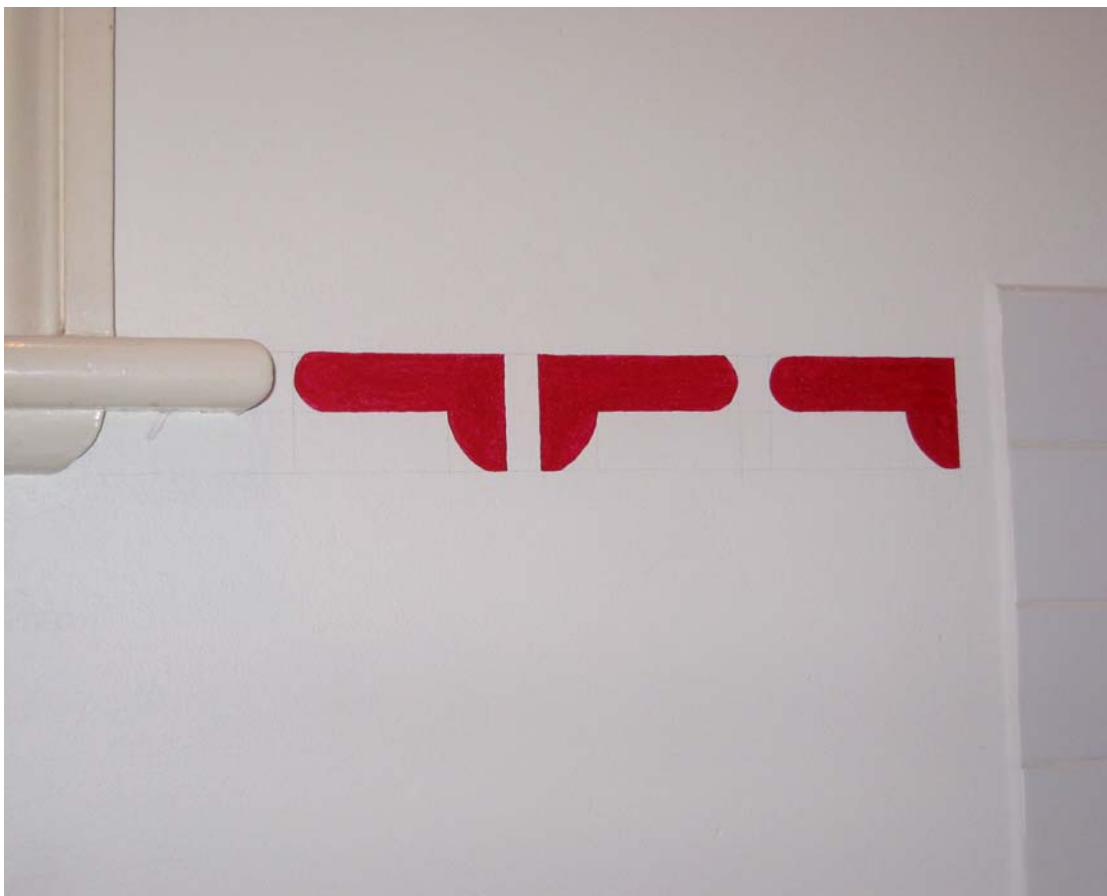


[01] *Yellow-White Installation 1 (First State)*
 April, 2006
 Two panels: Acrylic on Canvas, each 260 x 260

Installation view.

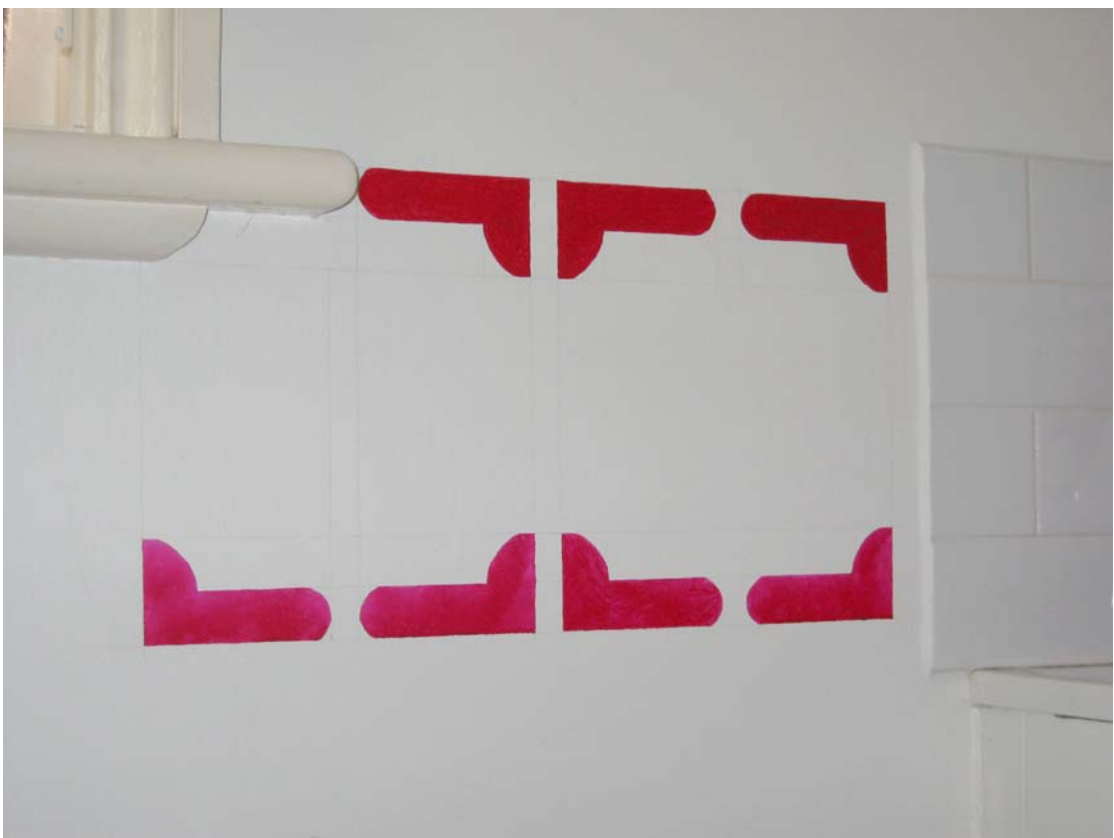


[02] ***Untitled – Skylight***
May, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 710 x 700 x 550
Installation and detail views.



[03] ***Red Window 1 (First State)***
May, 2006
Gauche on existing wall, 65 x 415

Detail view.



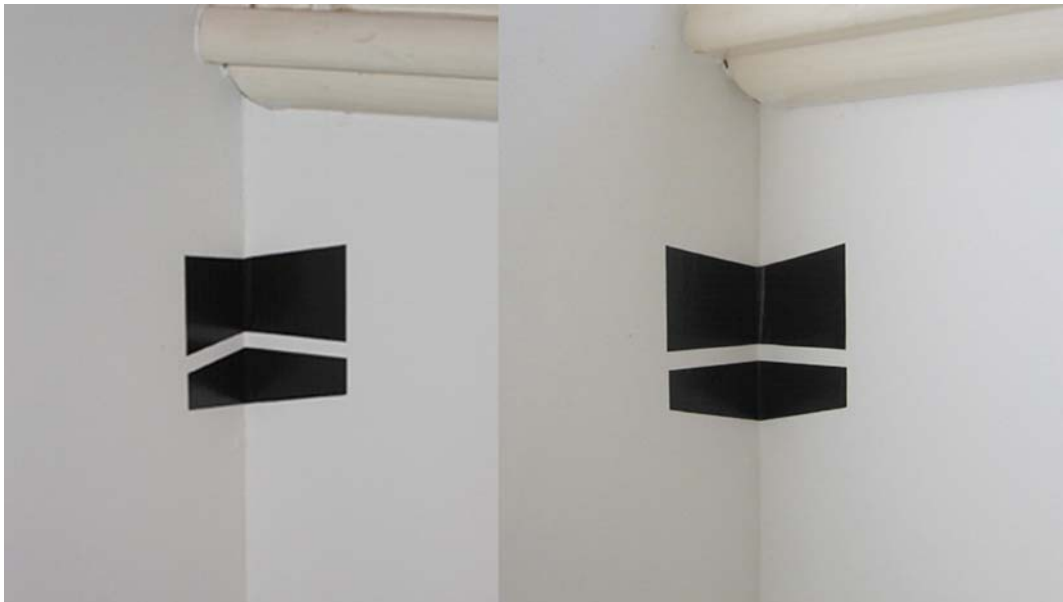
[04] ***Red Window 1 (Second State)***
May, 2006
Gauche on existing wall, 310 x 555

Detail view.



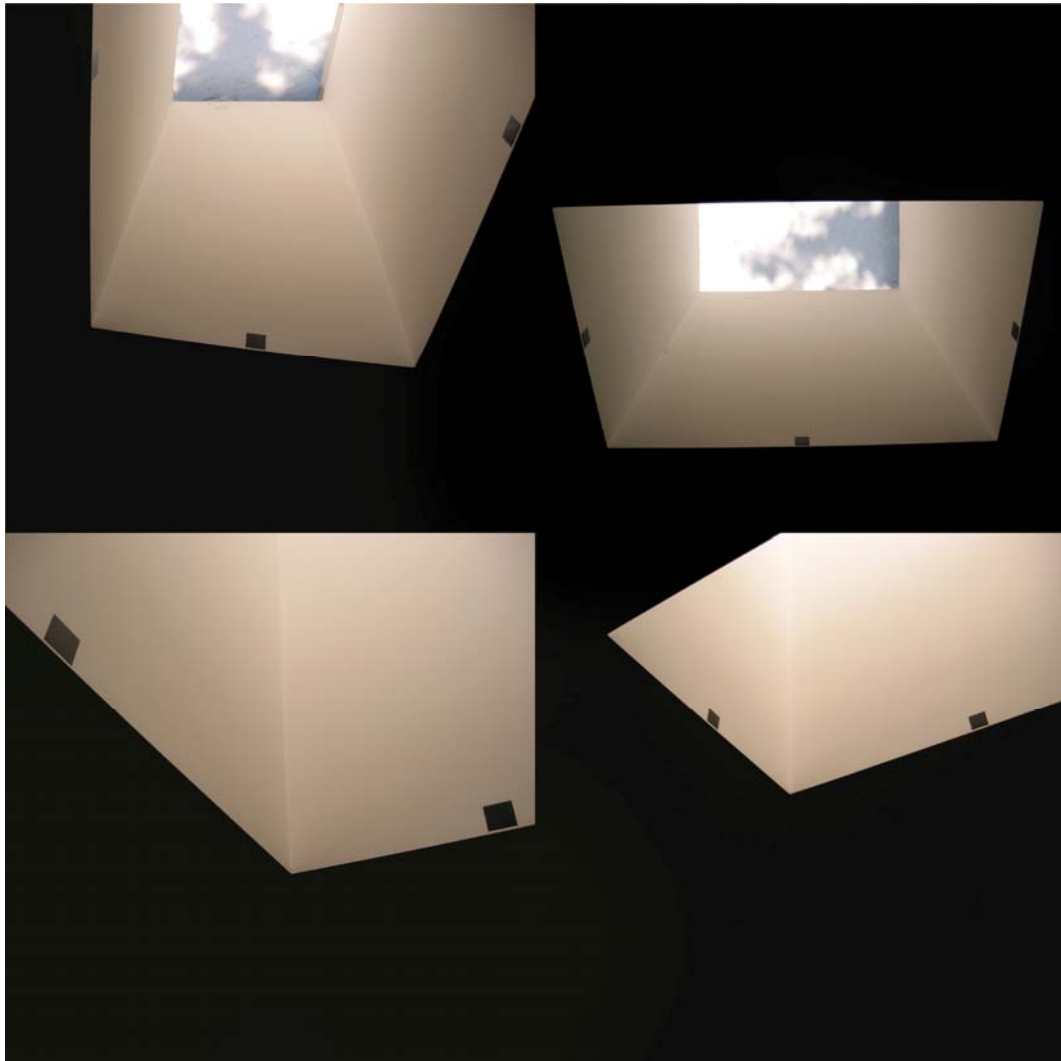
[05] **Still Life 1**
May, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 510 x 510 x 45

Installation and detail view.



[06] *Untitled[†]*
May, 2006
Coloured adhesive film on existing wall, approx. 100 x 100

Installation view.

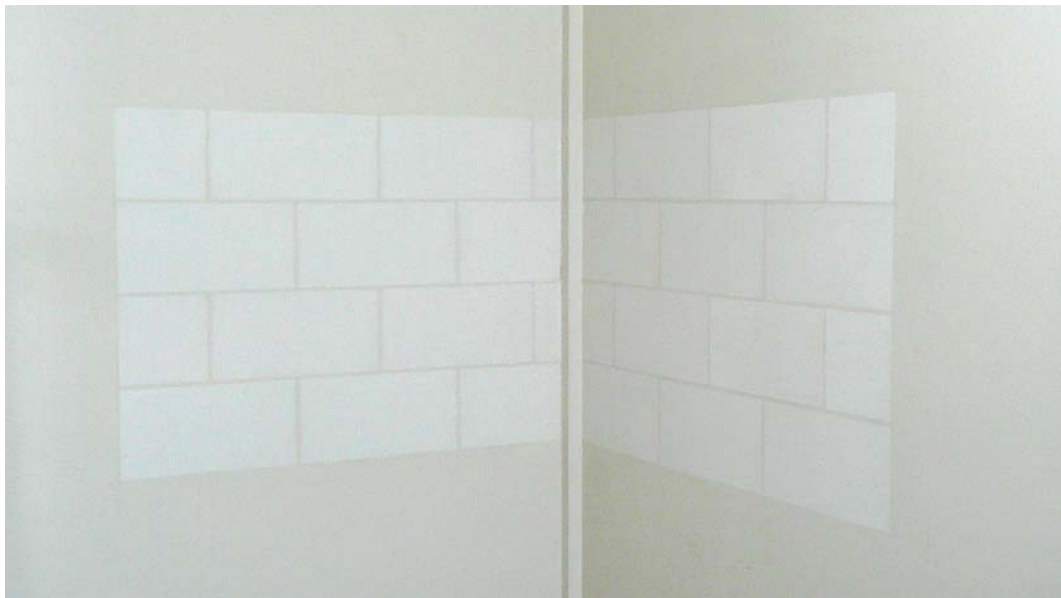


[07] **Untitled[†]**
May, 2006
Coloured adhesive film on existing skylight walls, 4 parts each approx 50 x 50
Installation views.



[08] *Untitled*[†]
May, 2006
Coloured adhesive film on existing wall, approx 200 x 150

Installation view.



[09] *White Tiles*

June, 2006

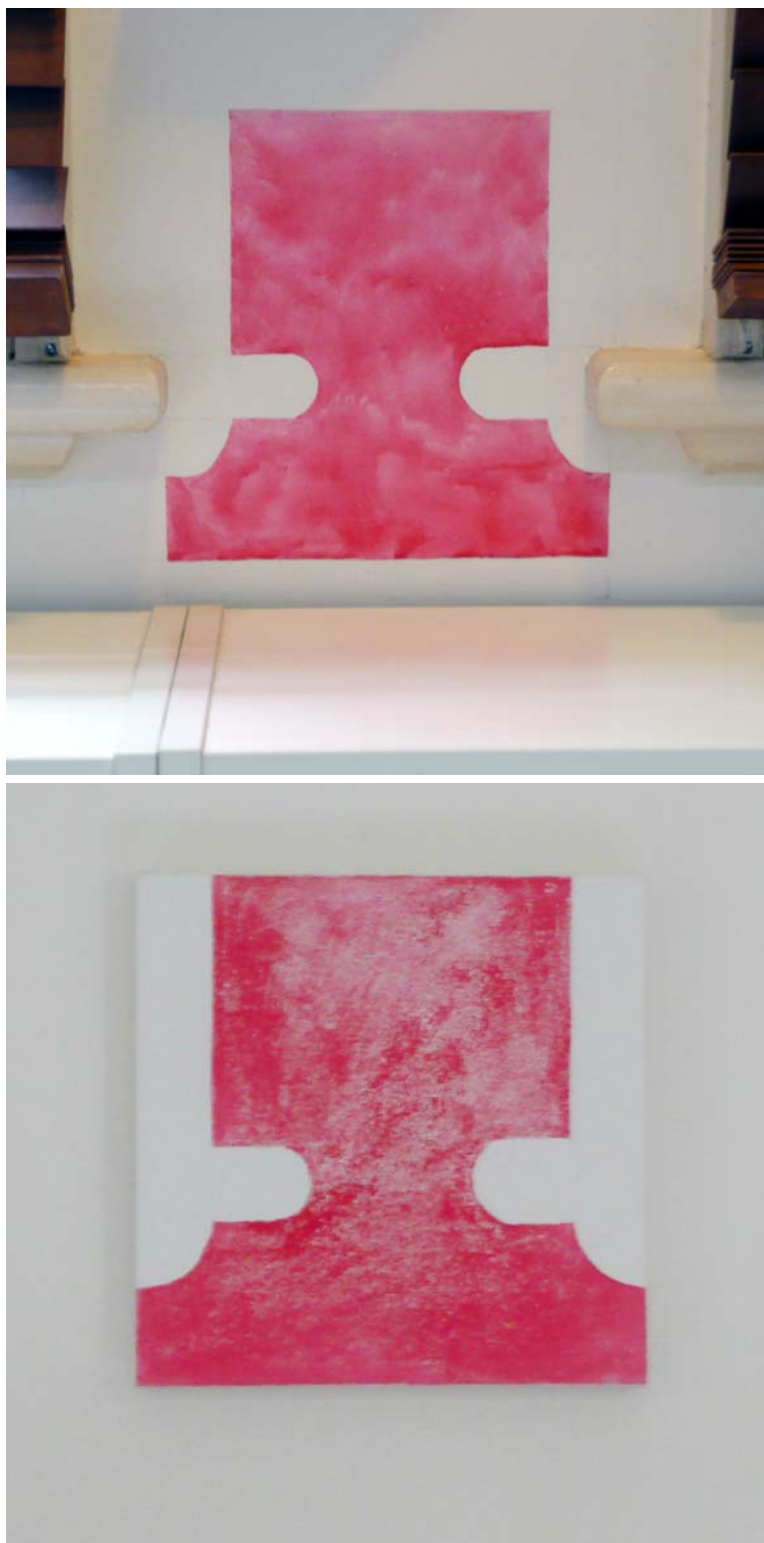
Acrylic on existing wall, 400 x 550 x 600

Installation view.



[10] ***Untitled – White 1***
June, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, 3 parts each 35 x 150 x 45

Installation view and detail.



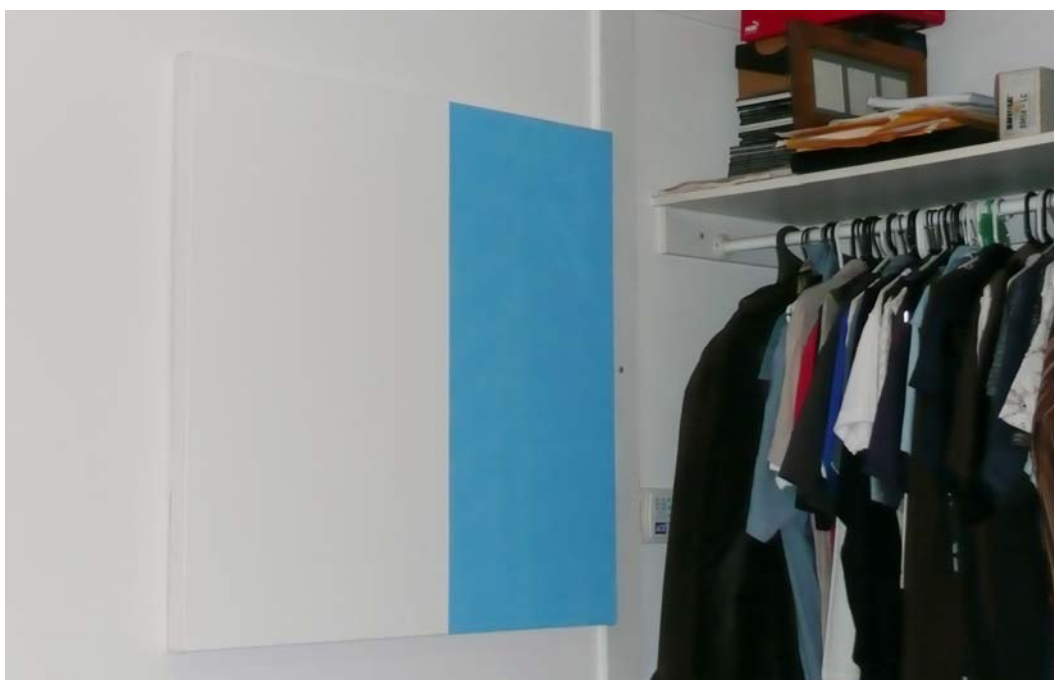
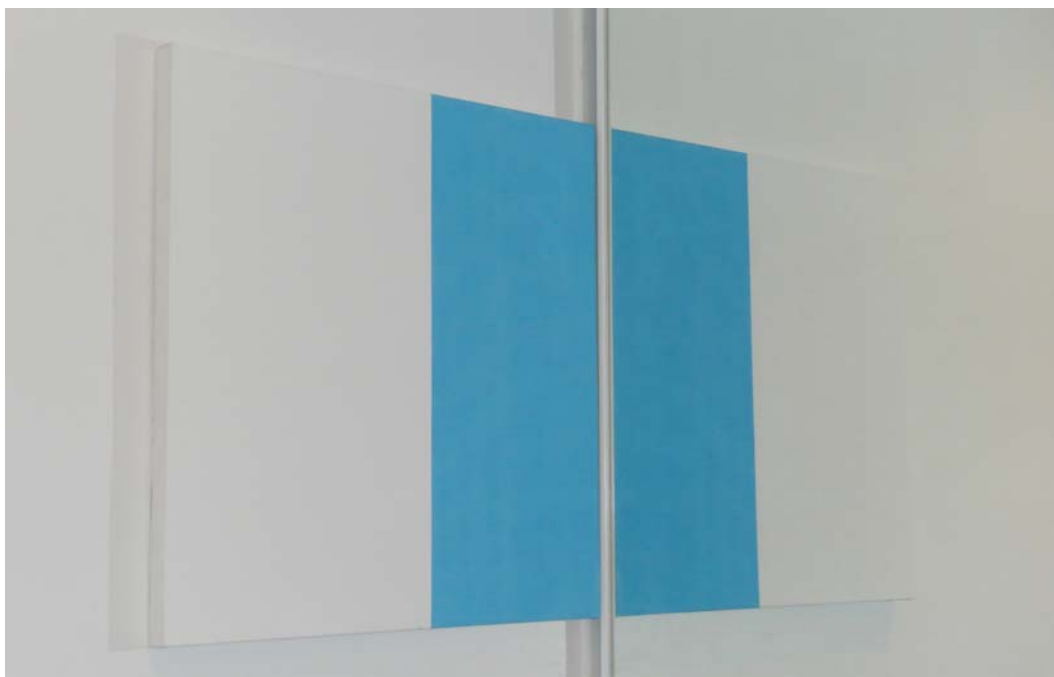
[11] **Red Window 2**
June, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, 260 x 260, and, acrylic on canvas, 260 x 260 x 45

Detail views.



[12] ***Untitled – Red 1***
June, 2006
Acrylic on wall, 590 x 145 x 50

Installation and detail view.



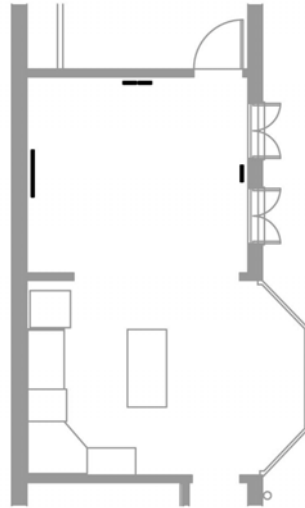
[13] **Blue Mirror**
July, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 900 x 900 x 45

Installation views.



[14] ***Untitled – Blue Stencil***
July, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, 1000 x 2000

Installation view and detail.



Plan: Installation of [3.15]
(Not to Scale)



[15] Yellow-White Installation 1 (Second State)

July, 2006

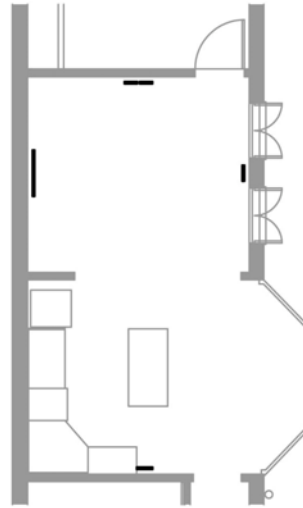
Acrylic on Canvas, 760 x 760 x 45

Installation view and detail.



[16] ***Untitled – White 2***
August, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, approx. 95 x 400 x 90

Installation details.



Plan: Installation of [3.17]
(Not to Scale)



[17] **Yellow-White Installation 1 (Third State)**
August, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas (and wall), 300 x 370 x 45

Installation view and details.



[18] ***Yellow-White Installation 1 (Fourth State)***
August, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, size varies

Installation view.



[19] *Untitled*
August, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, size varies

Installation view and details.



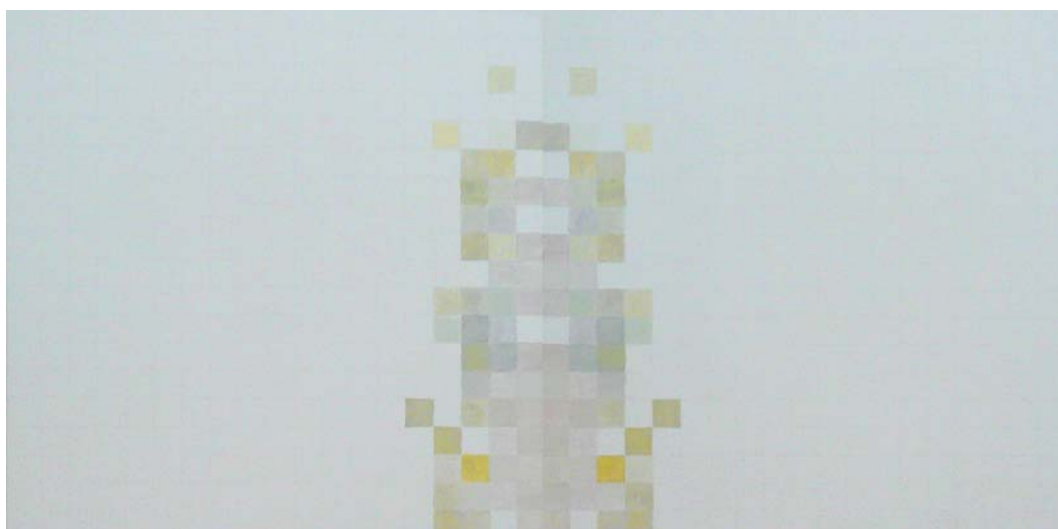
[20] **Still Life 2**
September, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 510 x 510 x 45

Installation view and detail.



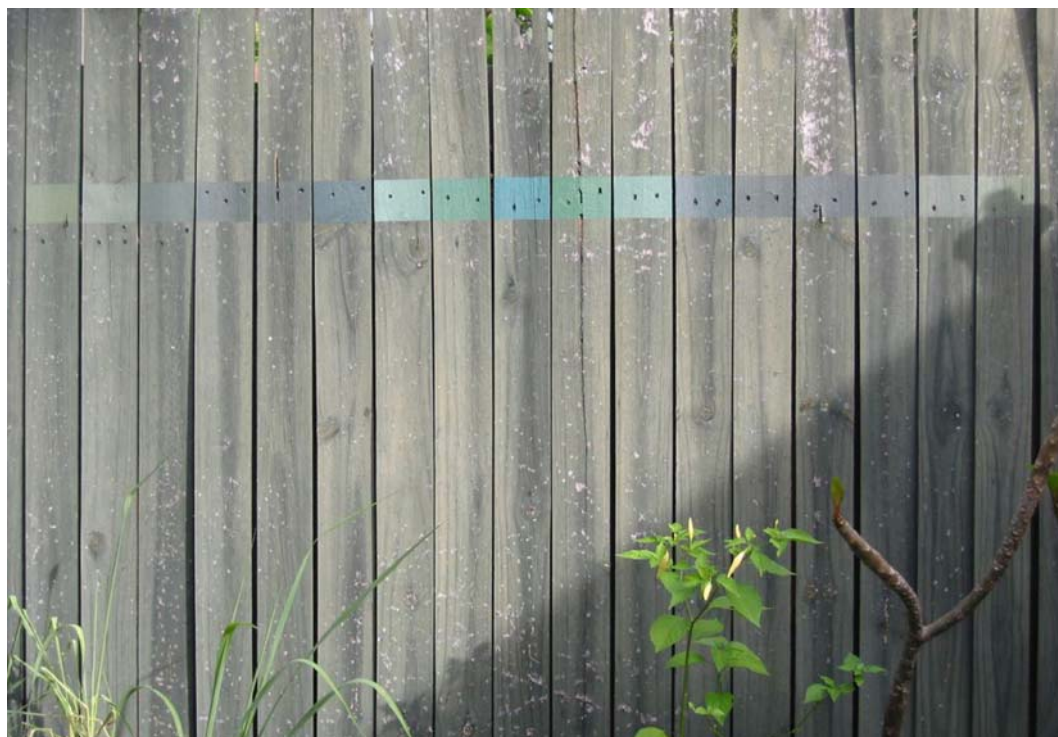
[21] ***Untitled – Towel (First State)***
September, 2006
Acrylic on existing wall, 800 x 800

Installation view.



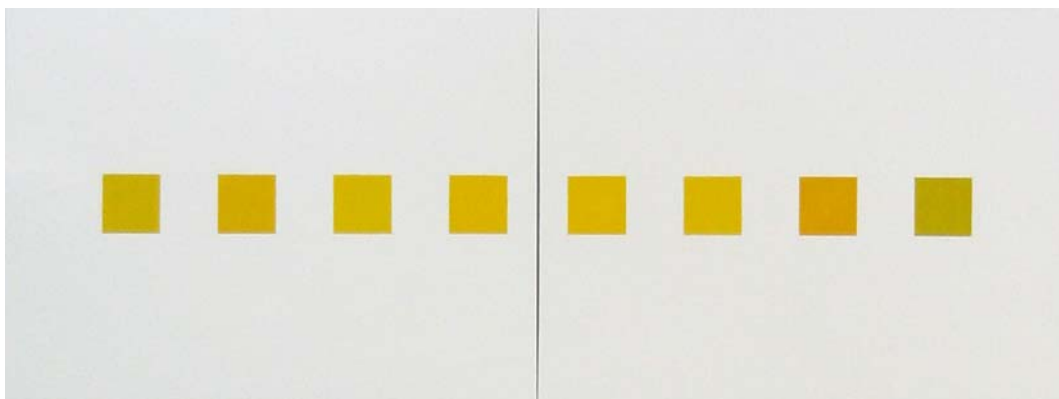
[22] ***Mirrored Squares (unfinished)***
September - October, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 620 x 1240 x 45

Installation view.



[23] *Green Fence*
October, 2006
Acrylic on timber fence, 70 x 1710

Installation view and detail.



- [24] ***Yellow Squares 1***
November, 2006
Acrylic on canvas, 2 panels each 760 x 1015 x 45
Exhibited: QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

Installation view and detail.



[25] *Yellow Squares 2*

November, 2006

Acrylic on canvas, 2 panels each 900 x 1200 x 45

Exhibited: QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

Installation view and details.



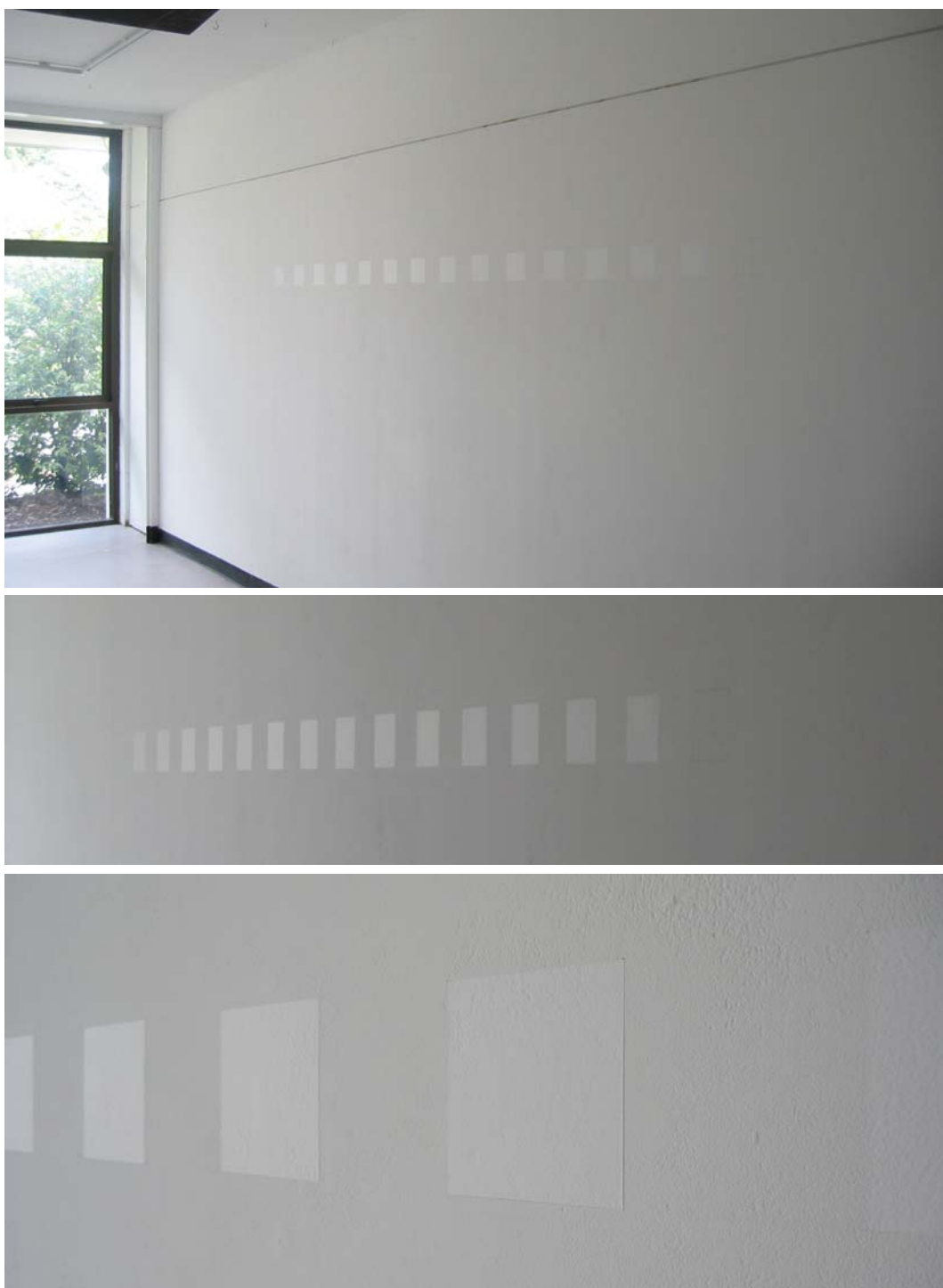
- [26] ***Yellow Squares 3***
November, 2006
Acrylic on wall, 100 x 1500
Exhibited: QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

Installation view (with [28] on right) and detail.



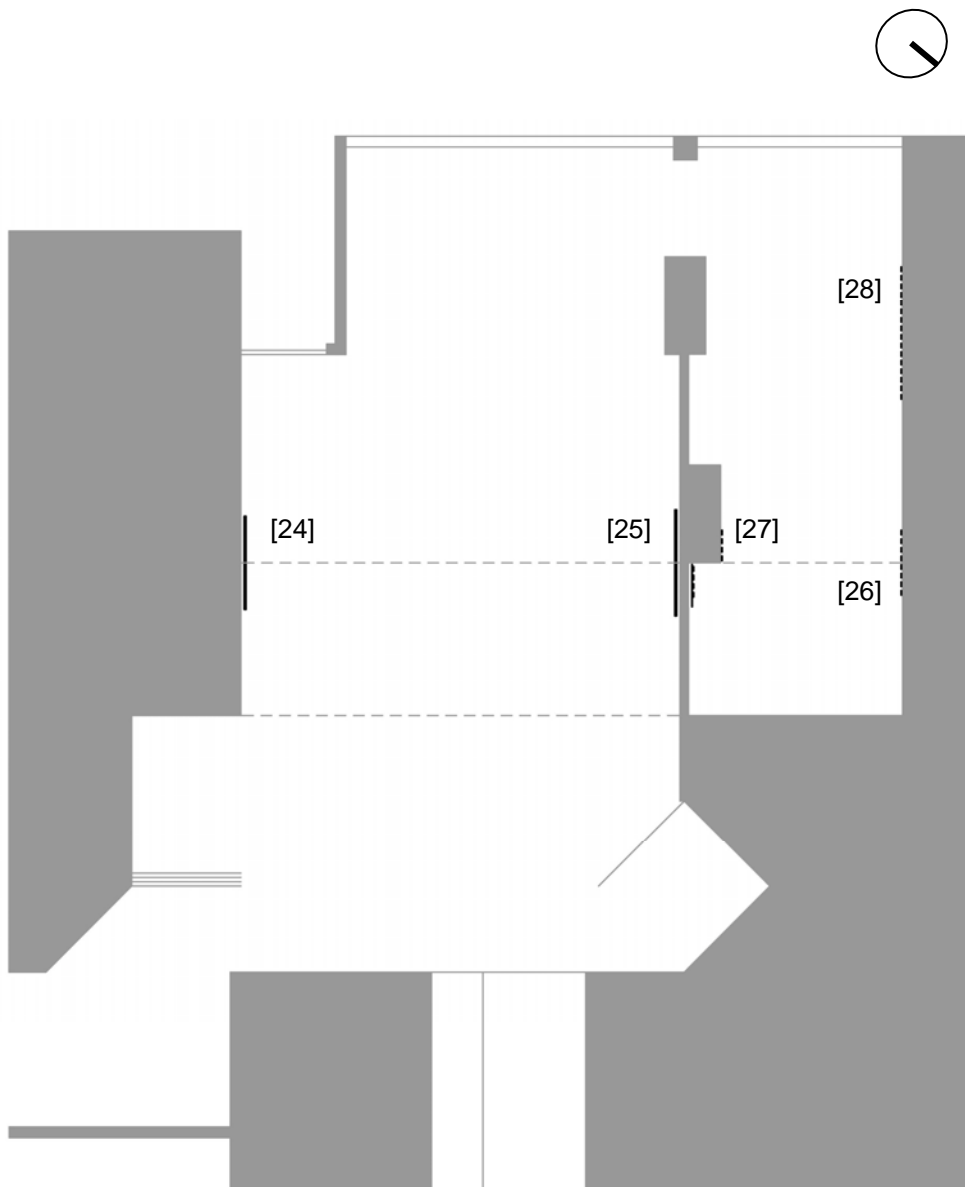
[27] **Yellow Squares 4**
November, 2006
Acrylic on wall & paper, size varies
Exhibited: QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

Installation views.



[28] ***Sixteen Squares***
November, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 760 x 1015 x 45
Exhibited: QUT H-Block gallery, 20 November - 1 December, 2006.

Installation view and details.



Plan: Installation of [24], [25], [26], [27] & [28]. (Not to Scale)



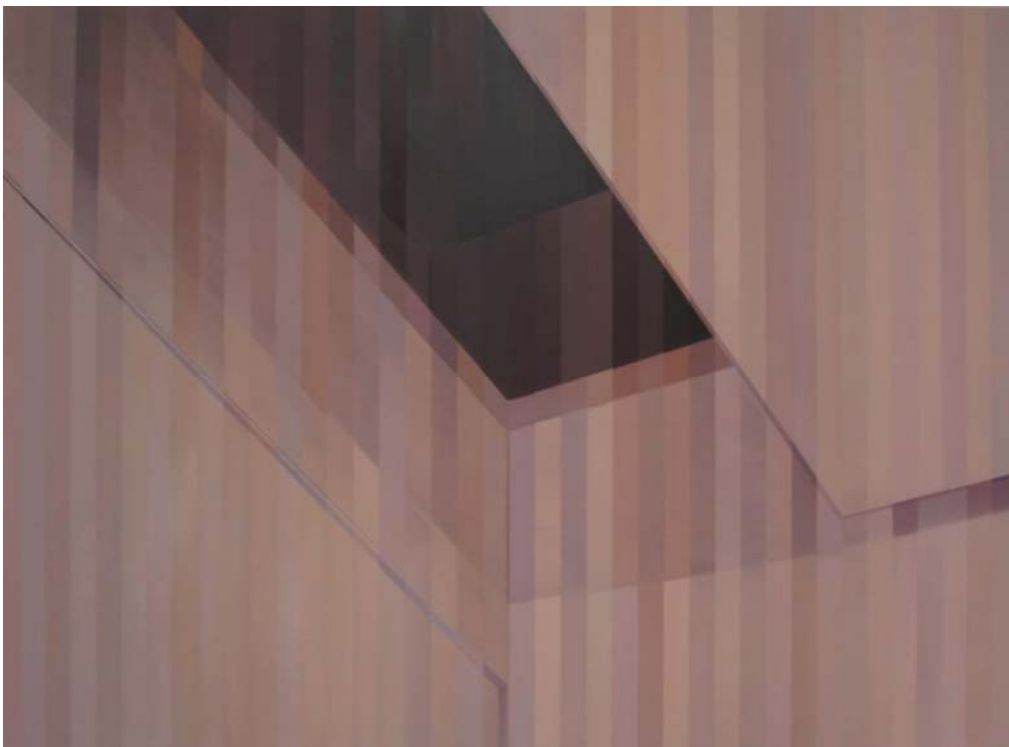
[29] ***Untitled – Orange Glaze***
November, 2006
Acrylic on Canvas, 460 x 460 x 45

Installation view.



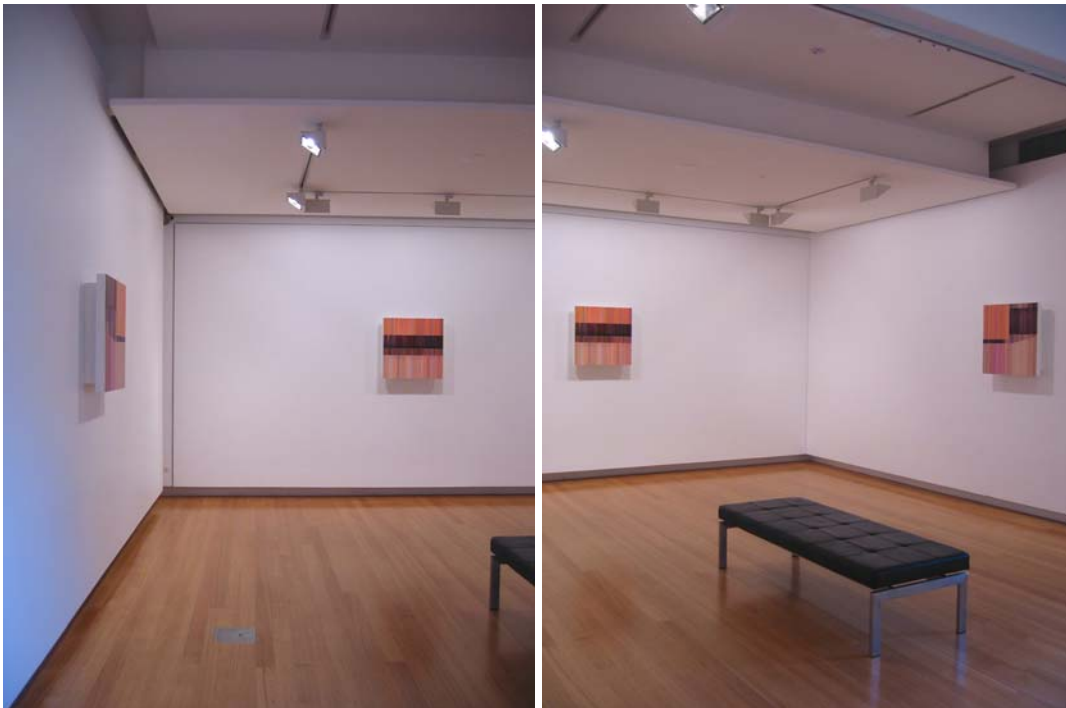
[30] ***Untitled – Study 1***
December, 2006 – January, 2007
Acrylic on Masonite Board, 900 x 1200

Source image (top) and detail view (below).



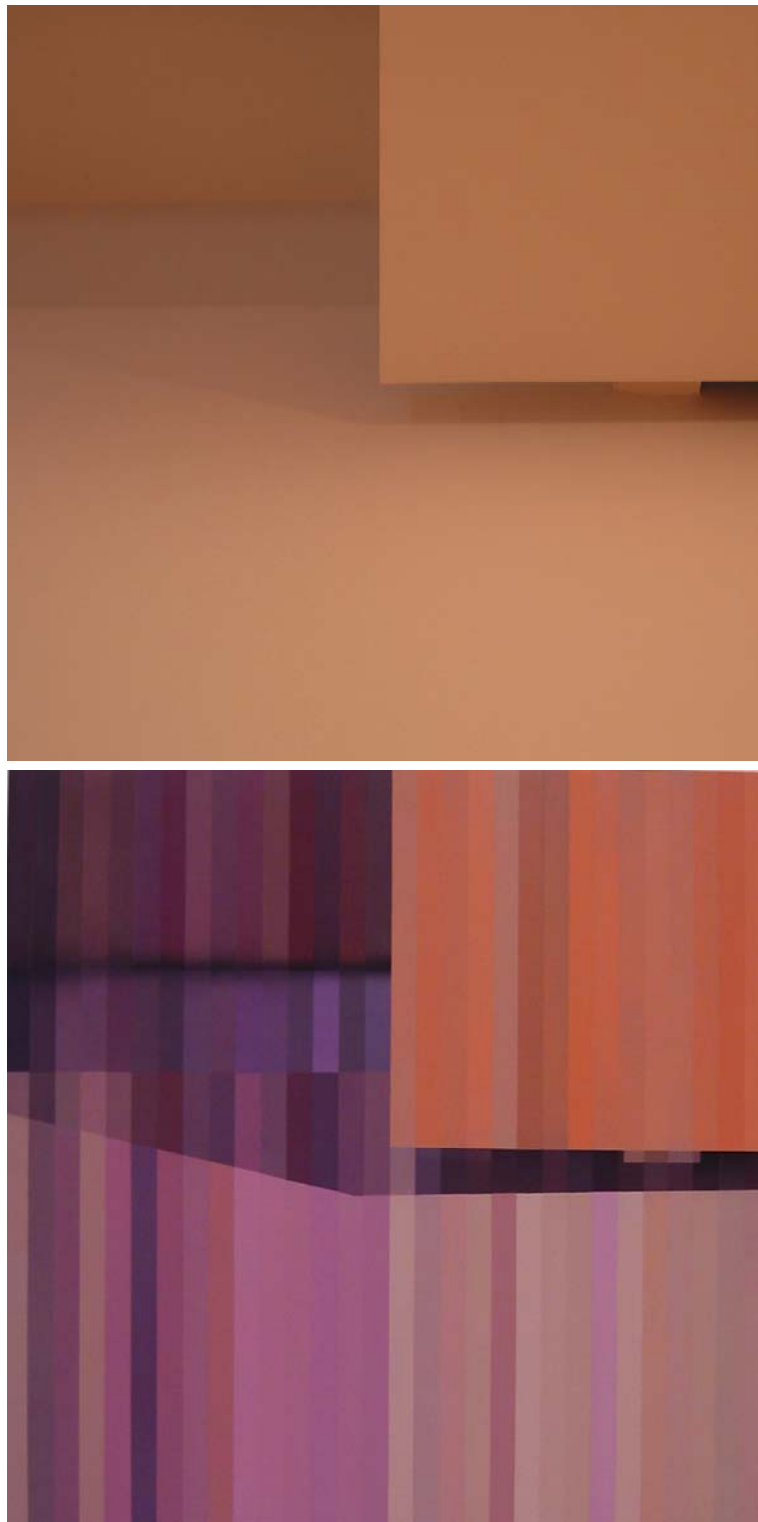
[31] ***Untitled – Study 2***
December, 2006 – January, 2007
Acrylic on Masonite Board, 900 x 1200 x 35

Source image (top) and detail view (below).



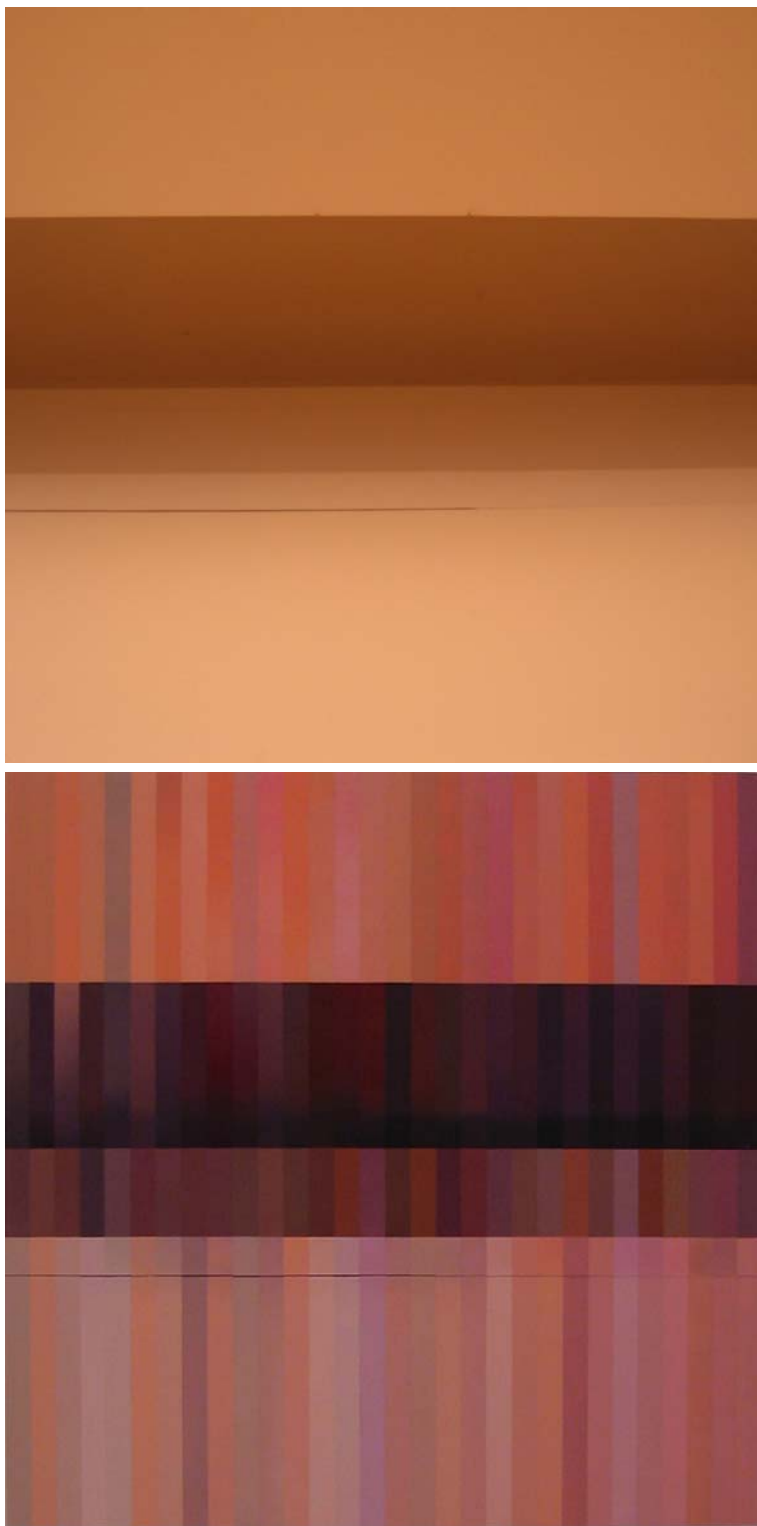
[32] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Installation views.



- [32] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Source image (top) and detail view (below) – Tom Heath Space – North West Wall).



[32]

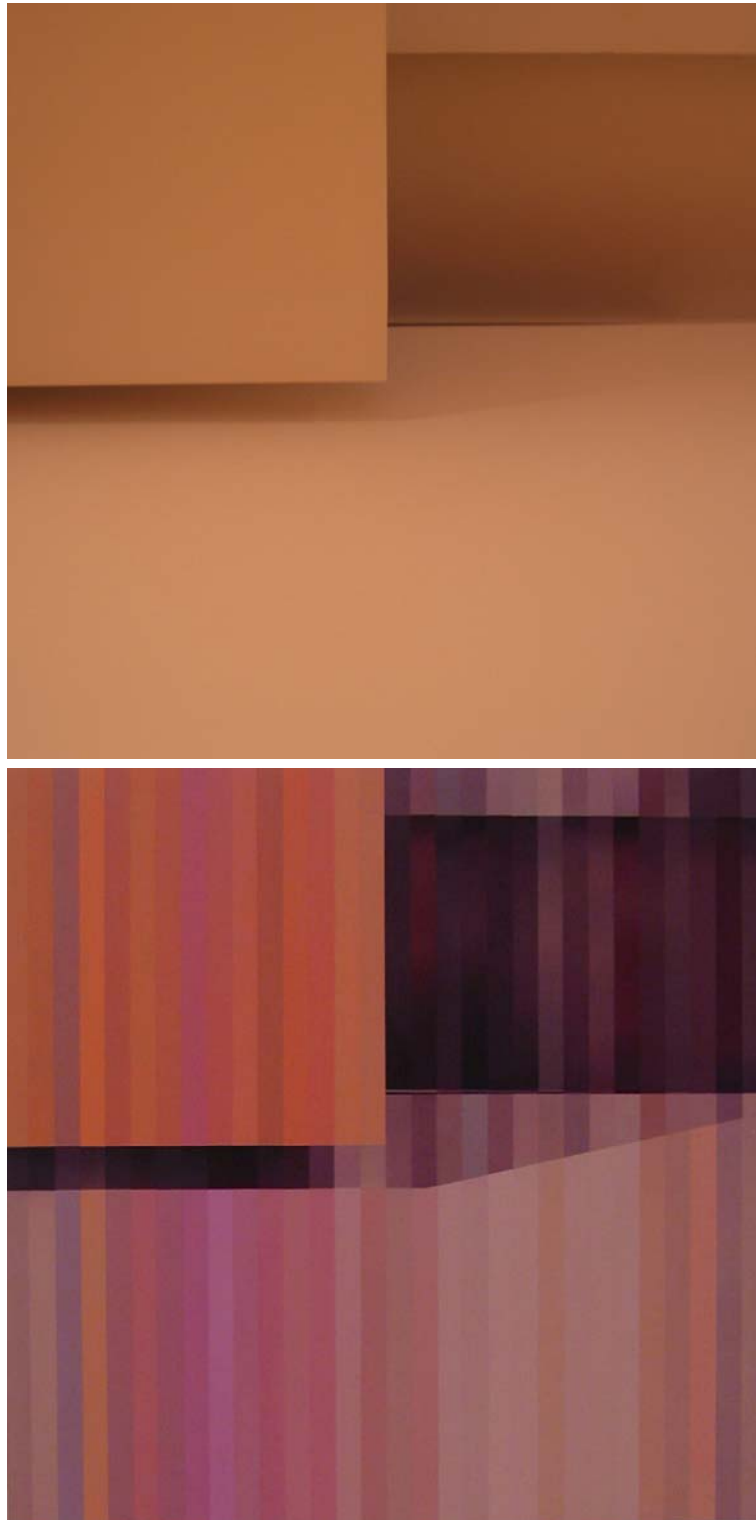
Untitled

February, 2007 – April, 2007

4 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125

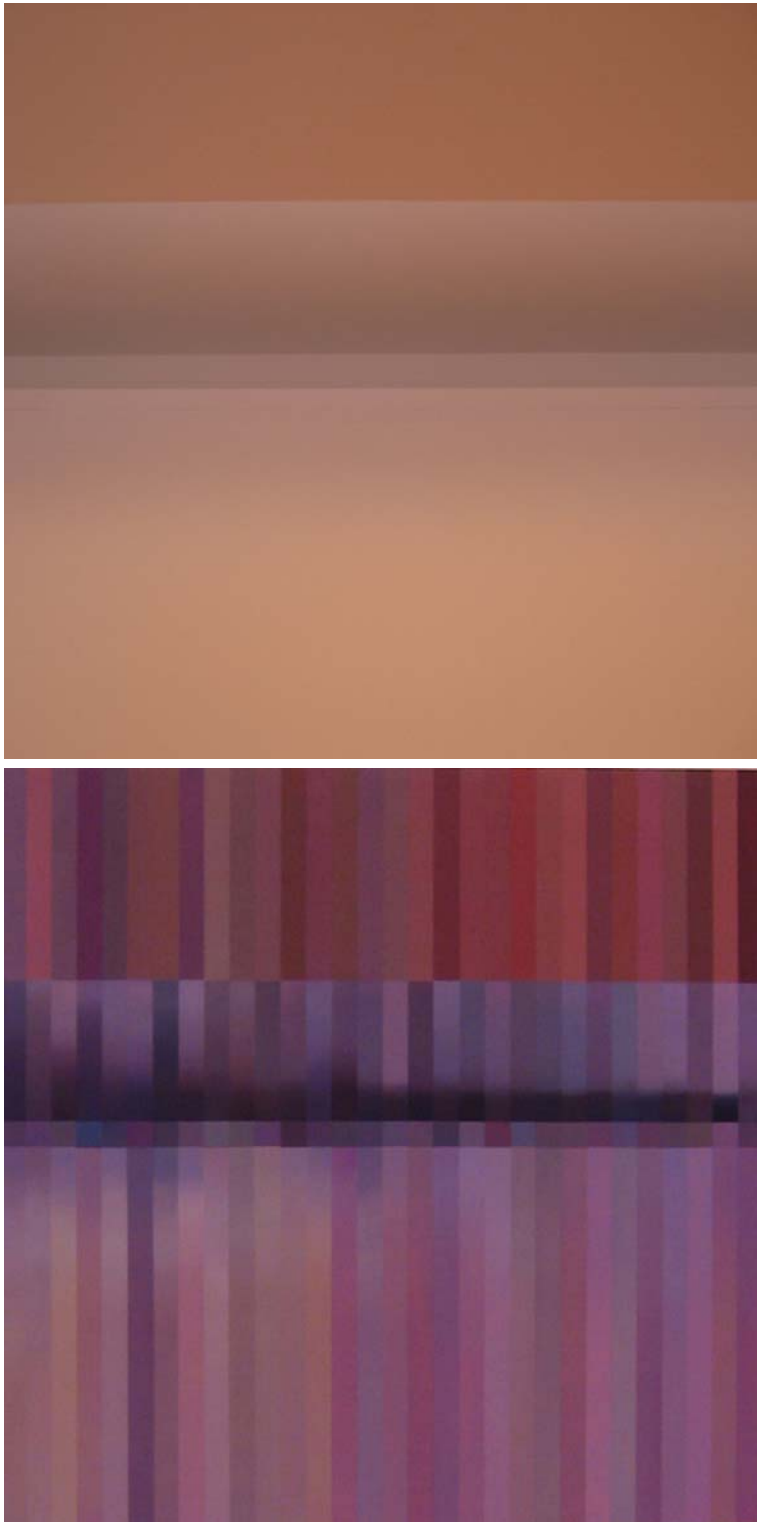
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum, April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Source image (top) and detail view (below) – Tom Heath Space – North East Wall).



- [32] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Source image (top) and detail view (below) – Tom Heath Space – South East Wall).



[32]

Untitled

February, 2007 – April, 2007

4 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125

Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum, April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Source image (top) and detail view (below) – Tom Heath Space – South West Wall).



[33] **Untitled**
March, 2007 – April, 2007
2 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Installation view and details – Ramp.



[33] **Untitled**
March, 2007 – April, 2007
2 Panels: Acrylic on Masonite / Timber, each 600 x 600 x 125
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Installation view and details – Ramp – South West wall



- [34] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Parts: Acrylic on Masonite, each 600 x 445 x 35
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Installation view.



[34] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Parts: Acrylic on Masonite, each 600 x 445 x 35
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Detail view of Pink T-shirt (original T-shirt shown left).



- [34] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Parts: Acrylic on Masonite, each 600 x 445 x 35
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Detail view of Striped Shirt 1 (original shirt shown left).



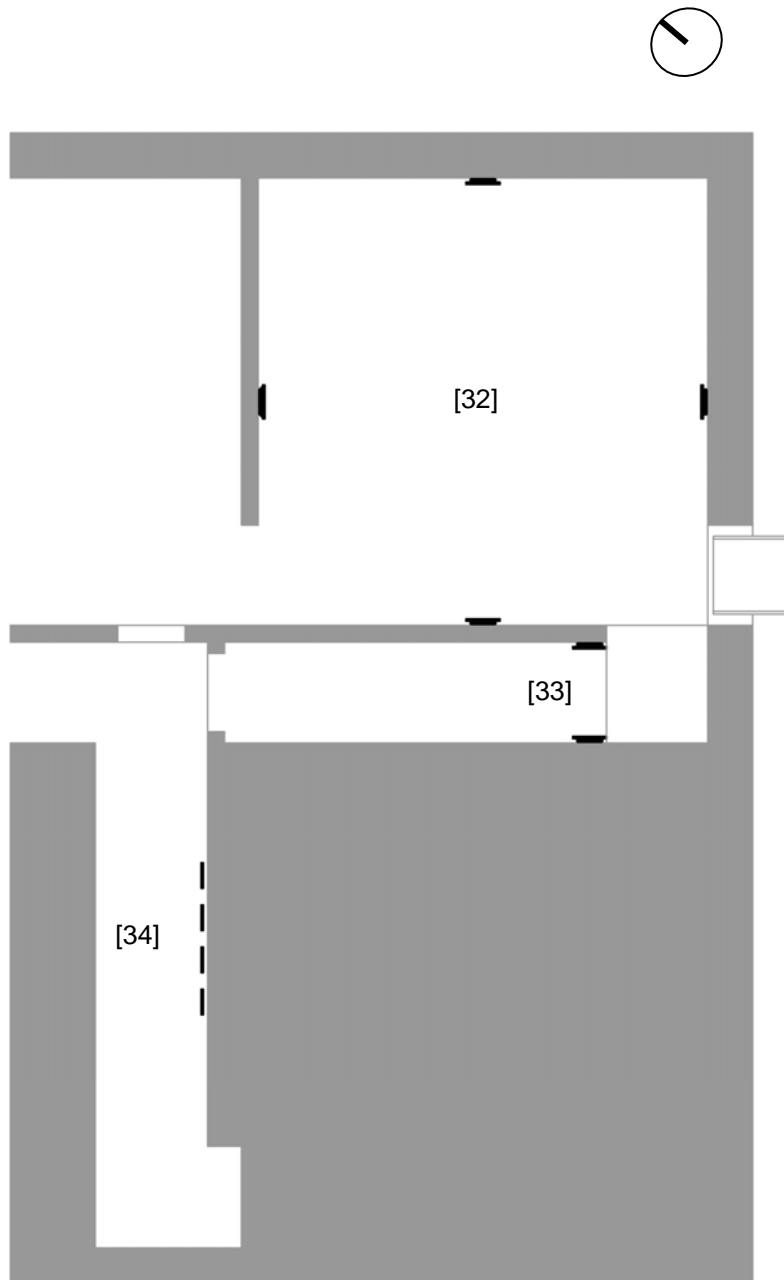
[34] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Parts: Acrylic on Masonite, each 600 x 445 x 35
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Detail view of Yellow Shirt (original shirt shown left).

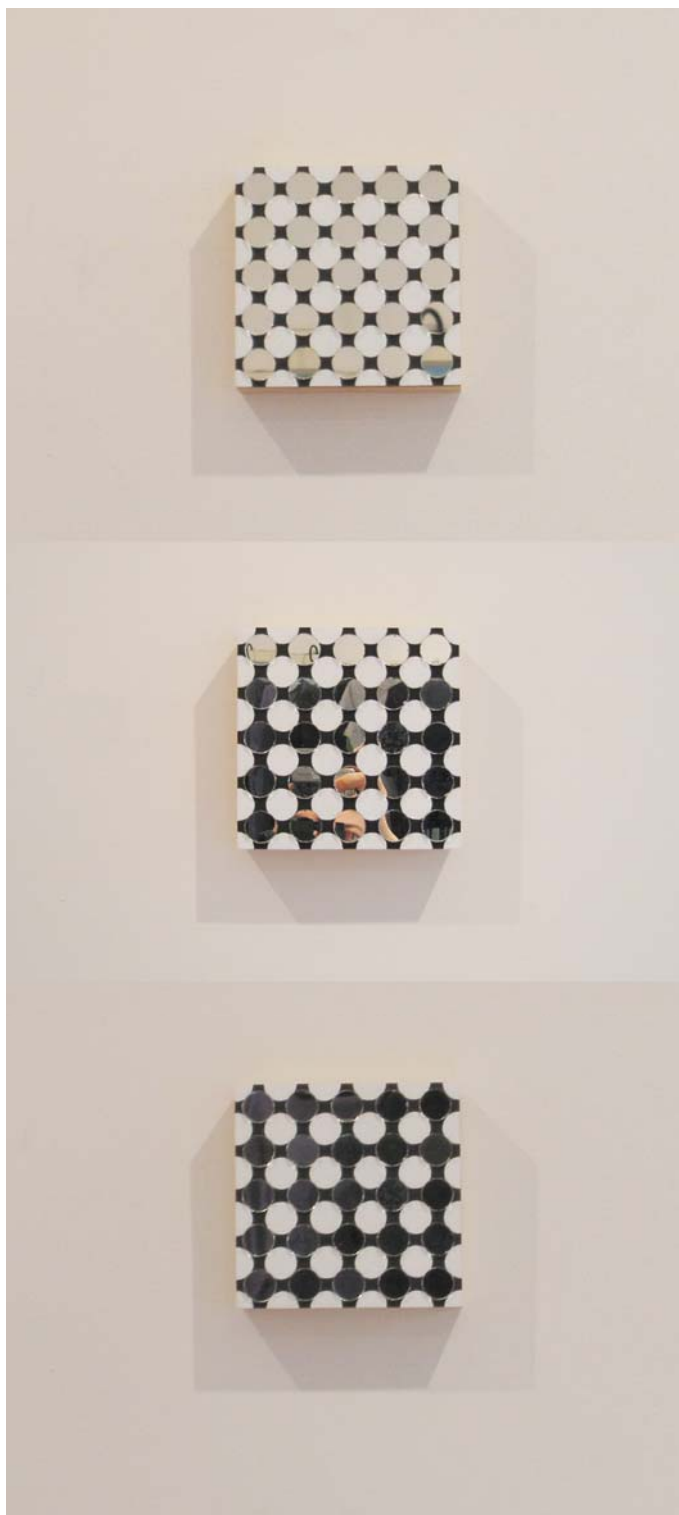


- [34] **Untitled**
February, 2007 – April, 2007
4 Parts: Acrylic on Masonite, each 600 x 445 x 35
Exhibited: 'Surface Spaces: Negotiating Architecture & Image,' QUT Art Museum,
April 1 – April 20, 2007.

Detail view of Striped Shirt 2 (original shirt shown left).

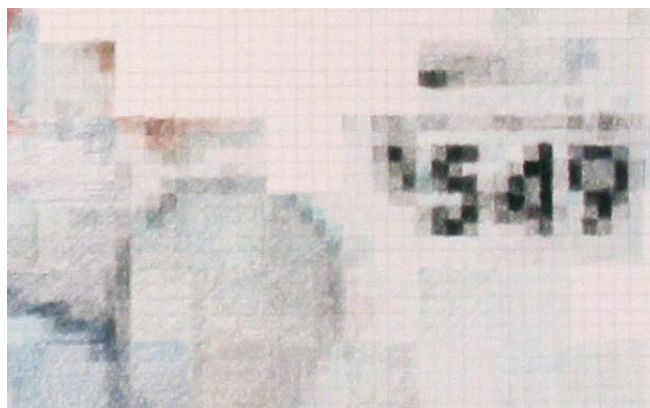


Plan: Installation of [32], [33] & [34]
(Not to Scale)



[35] **Untitled – 25 Mirrors**
(Collaborative work with Dirk Yates)
April, 2007
Acrylic and Glass Mirrors on Masonite, 157 x 157 x 35

Installation Views.

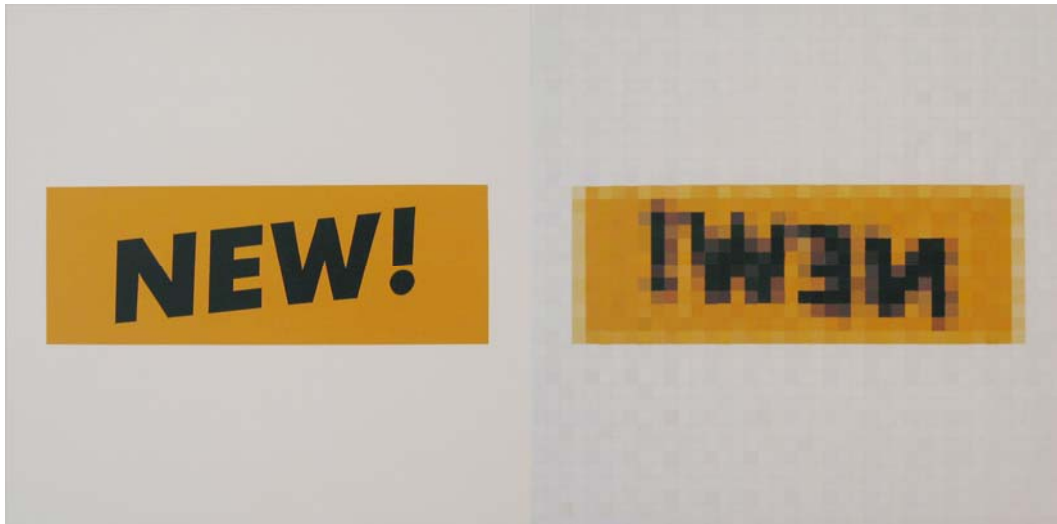


[36] ***White Ikea Interior***
May, 2007
Coloured Pencil on Hot Pressed Watercolour paper, 560 x 760
Drawing and detail.



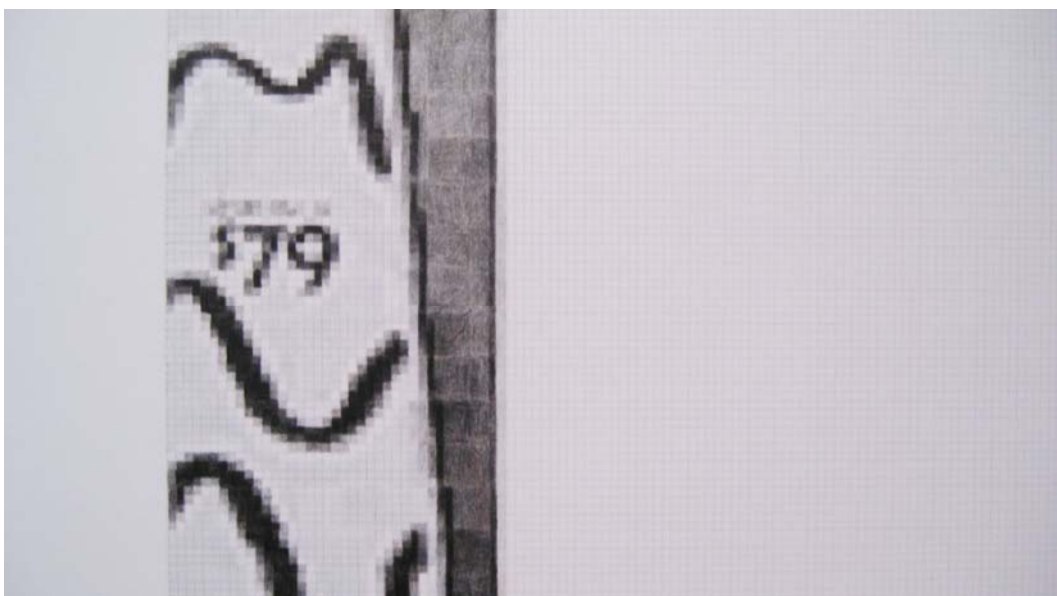
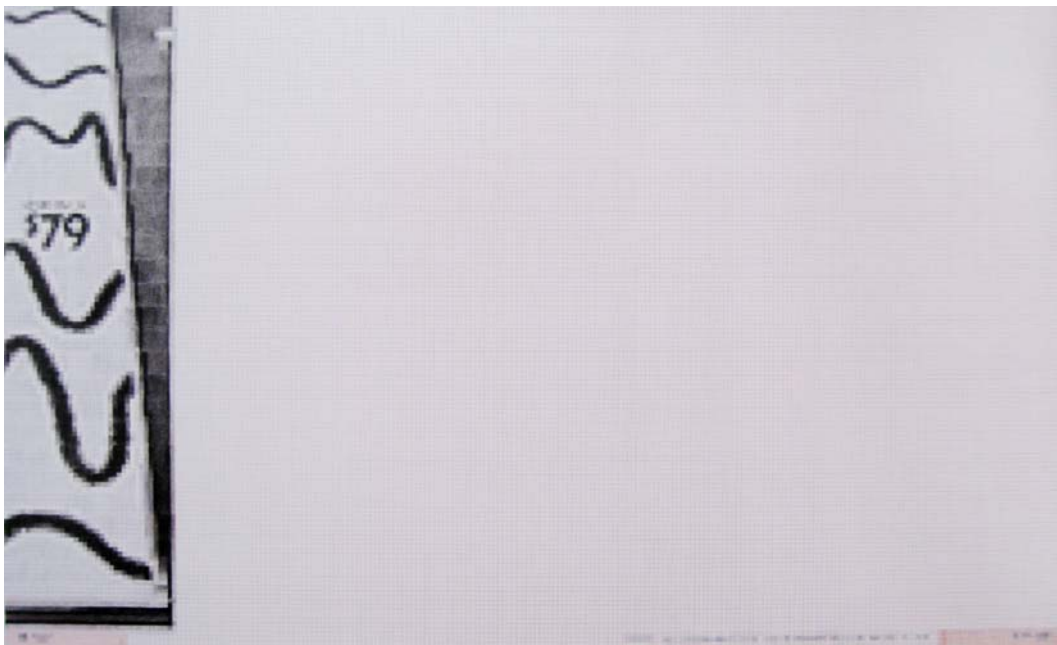
[37] **Untitled – Pink Graffiti**
May - August, 2007
Acrylic on block wall, 2400 x 5000

Installation views.



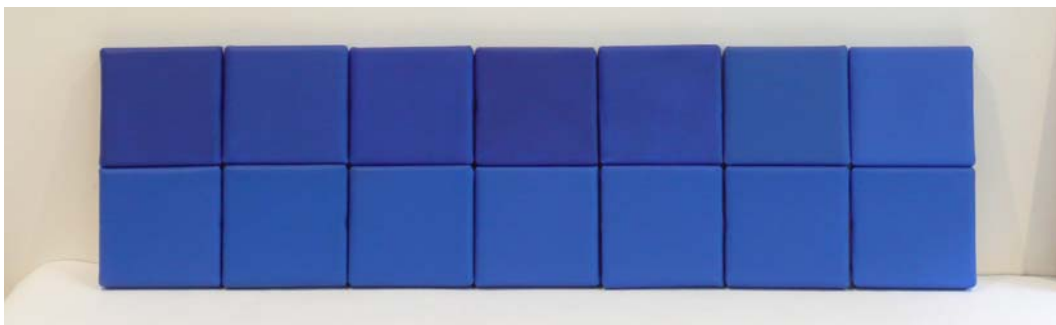
[38] **NEW NEW**
July - October, 2007
Acrylic on Masonite, 600 x 600 x 45

Detail view.



[39] *Ikea Pattern 1*
July, 2007
Coloured Pencil on Hot Pressed Watercolour paper, 560 x 760

Drawing and detail view.



[40] ***Untitled – 14 Blue Squares†***
August, 2007
7 Panels: Acrylic on Canvas, each 200 x 100 x 12

Detail views of work (bottom) and the original painting to which they refer by Gareth Donnelly (top) (Title and Date unknown).



[41] ***Untitled – Towel (Second State)***
August, 2007
Acrylic on wall, 2300 x 800

Installation view.



[42] *Untitled (Polished Door Knobs)*

August - September, 2007

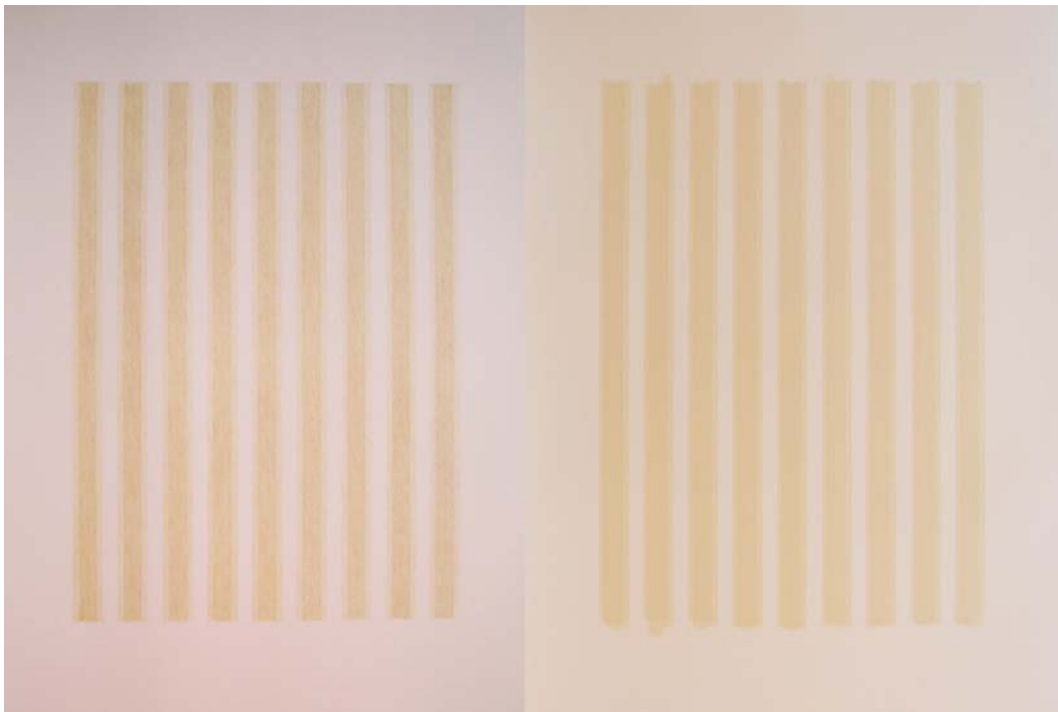
4 no. Existing Brass Door Knobs, each approx 130 x 65 x 60

Detail views.



[43] ***Untitled (Polished Pewter Mug)***
August - September, 2007
Existing Pewter Mug, approx 130 x 90dia.

Detail views.

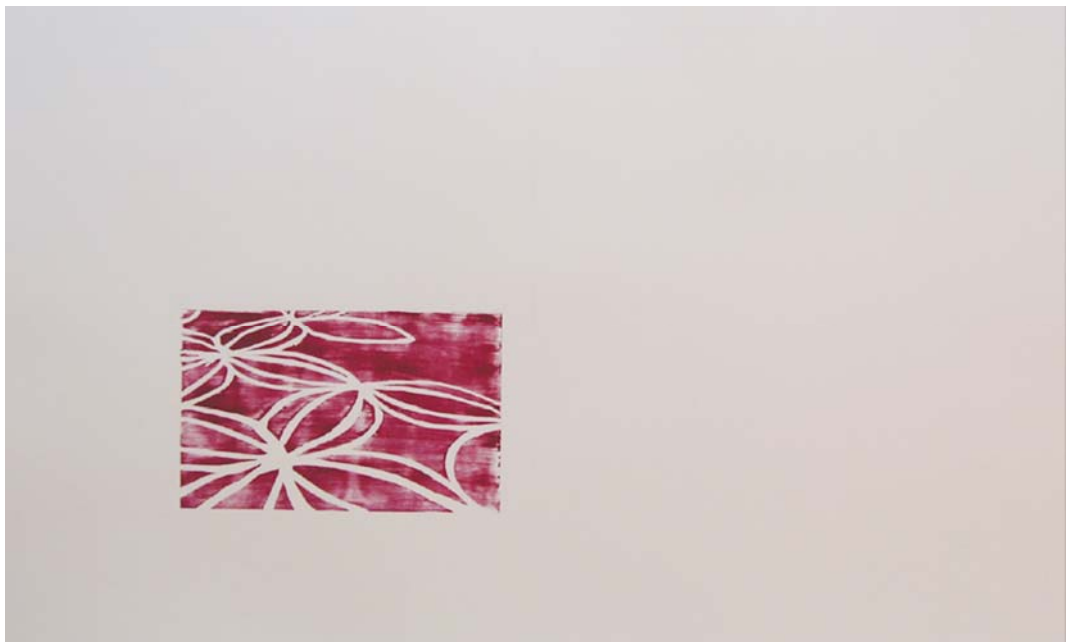


[44] *Untitled – Masking Tape Drawing*[†]

October, 2007

2 Sheets: Masking Tape and Coloured Pencil on Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper,
each 560 x 760

Detail view of pencil drawing (left) and masking tape drawing (right).



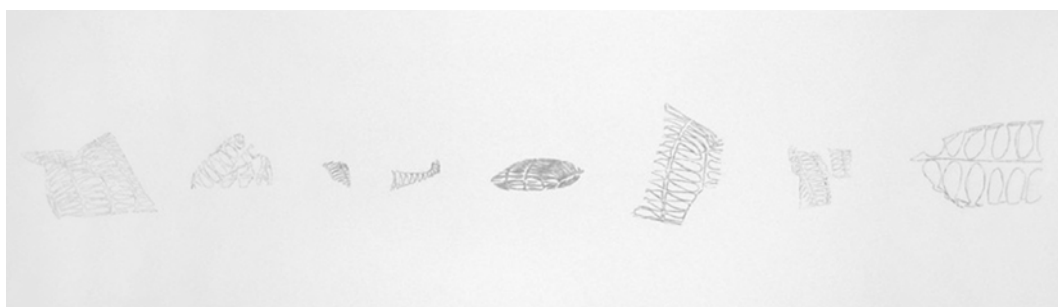
[45] *Ikea Pattern 2[†]*
October, 2007
Acrylic Paint print onto Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper, 560 x 760

Detail view.



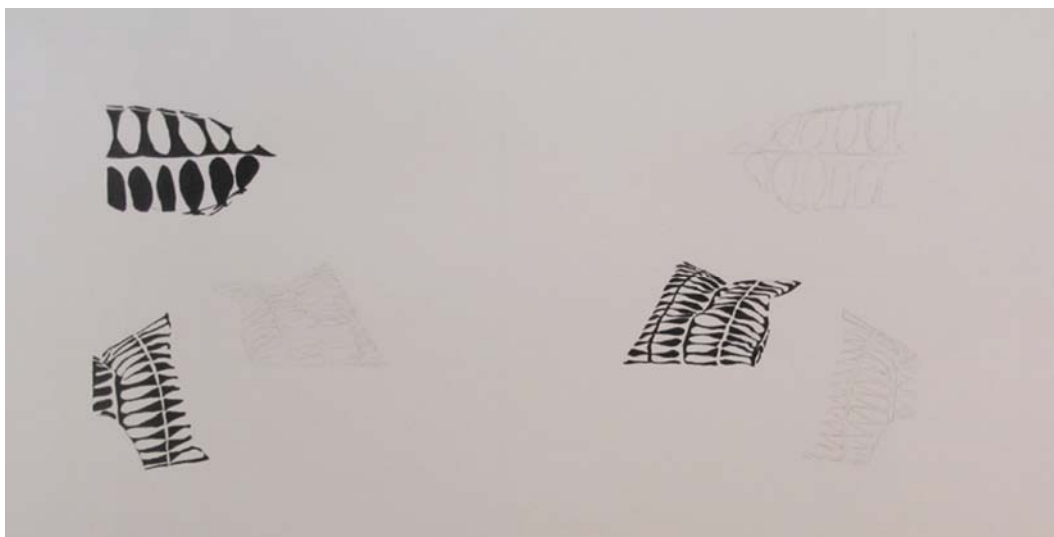
[46] ***Ikea Pattern 3[†]***
October, 2007
Acrylic Paint print and wash drawing onto Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper, 560 x 760

Detail view.



[47] *Ikea Pattern 4[†]*
October, 2007
Pencil Drawing on Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper, 560 x 760

Detail view.



[48] *Ikea Pattern 5[†]*
October, 2007
Pencil and Ink Drawing on Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper, 560 x 760
Detail view.

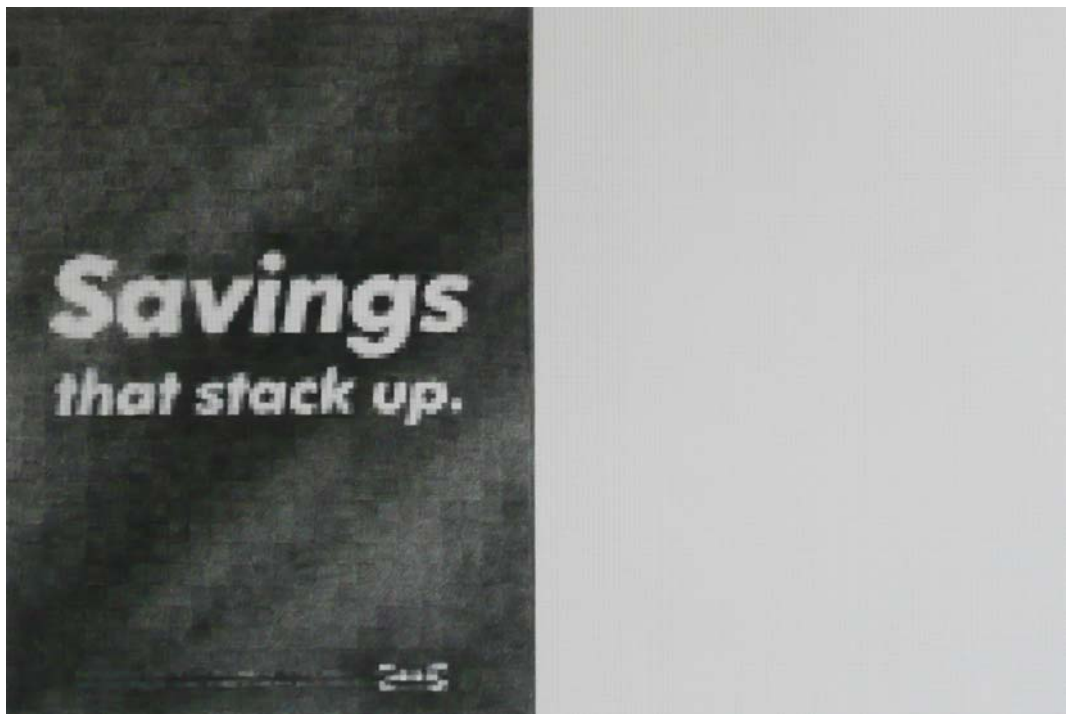


[49] ***Untitled (Polished Brass Vessel)***
November, 2007
Existing Brass Vessel, approx 270 x 155dia.

Various views.



[50] **Untitled – CD Rainbow**
November, 2007
Compact Disks, cabinet 1040 x 1040 x 400
Installation view.



- [51] ***Savings that stack up***
November - December, 2007
Pencil Drawing on Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper, 560 x 760
Exhibited: 'I Want to Believe' (Curated by Boxcopy) December 7 – 14, 2007.

Installation and detail views.



[52] **Catalogue Snowflakes**
December, 2007
Talc powder, Size varies
Exhibited: 'I Want to Believe' (Curated by Boxcopy) December 7 – 14, 2007.

Installation views.

This appendix is not available online.
Please consult the hardcopy thesis
available from the QUT Library

- [53] ***Micro-Health Laboratory***
Location: University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, Gatton.
Designed and Constructed: 2000-2001[#]
(Artist: Ashley Paine / Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney,
Michael Christensen, Ashley Paine; Ben Vielle)
Photograph © Jon Linkins

South elevation (top) and West elevation (bottom).

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Please consult the hardcopy thesis
available from the QUT Library

[54] *Human Movement Pavilion*

Location: Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove Campus, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane.

Designed and Constructed: 2003-2005[#]

(Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Ashley Paine, Ben Vielle, Dirk Yates / Artist: Dirk Yates)

Photograph © Jon Linkins

South elevation (top) and concept sketch by Ashley Paine (bottom).

This appendix is not available online.
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- [55] ***Chemistry Laboratories Fitout (Level 6)***
Location: University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, St Lucia, Brisbane.
Designed and Constructed: 2004-2005[#]
(Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Christensen, Michael Lavery,
Ashley Paine, Helder Pereira / Design Architect: Ashley Paine);
Photograph © Shannon McGrath

Corridor views.

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[56] *Brisbane Girls Grammar School's Creative Learning Centre (CLC)*

Location: Spring Hill, Brisbane.

Designed and Constructed: 2004-2007[#]

(Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Michael Christensen, Bronwyn Grimley, Emma Healy, Jayne Kelly; Ashley Paine, Helder Pereira, Ben Vielle, Dirk Yates)

Photograph © Jon Linkins

West elevation (top) and detail (bottom).

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- [56] ***Brisbane Girls Grammar School's Creative Learning Centre (CLC)***
Location: Spring Hill, Brisbane.
Designed and Constructed: 2004-2007#
(Architect: m3architecture; Project Team: Michael Banney, Michael Christensen,
Bronwyn Grimley, Emma Healy, Jayne Kelly; Ashley Paine, Helder Pereira, Ben
Vielle, Dirk Yates)
Photograph © Jon Linkins

Detail views of painted soffit motifs in construction (top) and complete (bottom).

APPENDIX 2: CD OF THE EXEGESIS

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