

KRAN XUAN [Pg9]

Junko Mori

[Pg26]

TRISH O'SHEA

[Pg41]

KATTIE DAVIES

[Pg57]

Yorkshire ArtSpace
Residency Programme

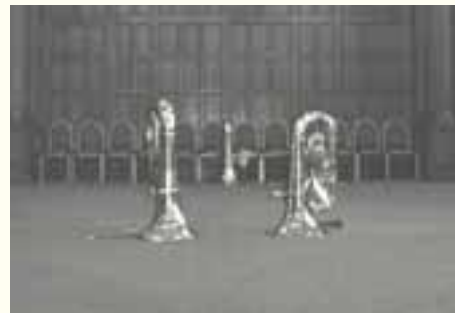


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KAN XUAN
Junko Mori
TRISH O'SHEA
KATIE DAVIES



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Sheffield Town Hall Residency 01
Trish O'Shea
Jul 7 - Aug 29

Sheffield Town Hall Residency 02
Katie Davies
Oct 6 - Nov 28



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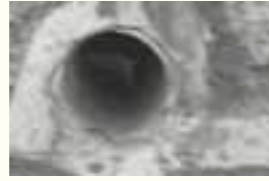


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Persistence Works Exhibition
Kan Xuan
Feb 16 - Mar 30



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Persistence Works Residency
Junko Mori
Apr 21 - June 13



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Sheffield Town Hall Residency 01
Trish O'Shea
Jul 7 - Aug 29



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Sheffield Town Hall Residency 02
Katie Davies
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Residency Programme

Foreword

There is something about the curve of the entrance of Persistence Works, home of Yorkshire ArtSpace Society, that always makes me think of the prow of a liner. This may be an unlikely image for one of the most landlocked cities in the UK, but I spent my childhood in Liverpool, where the pilot boats darting from ship to shore guiding the large ships in to port were a familiar sight.

This year's residencies have ebbed and flowed into the life of the city, linking the grey bulk of Persistence Works with the Town Hall and back again, and out into the Assay Office at Hillsborough via the city's Galvanize Festival and the starter silversmiths' studio.

"Space Time and Money" has always been the mantra of the Yorkshire ArtSpace Residency Programme, a rare opportunity for artists to be financially supported for eight weeks, to have access to studio space

and resources, and to create, investigate and explore a very individual response to an open brief.

This year's residencies have ebbed and flowed into the life of the city, linking the grey bulk of Persistence Works with the Town Hall and back again...

This year's residencies have all involved partnerships with city organisations. One of the benefits of the residency programme is the opportunities it offers to partners and

Persistence Works spaceholders to get involved in the selection process for the artists. For partners this offers an opportunity to appreciate the richness and breadth of artists's responses to the same brief, and to get a glimpse of the many different ways of seeing offered by different artists. For spaceholders it offers a link between the core population of the building with more temporary visitors, and involvement in the process from 'the other side of the table' can also act as a professional development opportunity for artists to see what works when applying for residencies.

Our first project in 2008 was the exhibition of new work created by our first international artist in residence Kan Xuan. Her work was on display for six weeks during the Art Sheffield 08 citywide contemporary art event, organised in partnership with Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum.

Persistence Works' population is equally balanced between makers and fine artists. Junko Mori was our first blacksmith/silversmith in residence and she was able to make use of the excellent facilities that are set up in studio 10, our start-up studio for emerging silversmiths. In partnership with Sheffield's Assay Office who sponsors the starter studio programme, we supported Junko to create an artwork which now adorns the new premises of the Assay Office in Hillsborough.

Over the last few years Yorkshire ArtSpace has been developing close links with Sheffield's North and South Area Regeneration teams and other partners in the neighbourhoods of Parson Cross and Manor Oaks. Two new developments with studio spaces for around 30 artists and makers are due to open in 2010. In relation to these two projects, Yorkshire ArtSpace set up two Town Hall residencies to strengthen the links with Sheffield City Council by placing the artists at the heart of council business.

Artists Trish O'Shea and Katie Davies produced work in response to the architecture of the building, as well as the operational and ceremonial functions that take place in this Grade I listed Victorian building. Council members of staff were also encouraged to take part in different activities, both at the Town Hall and at Persistence Works.

This last year of residencies has helped us to strengthen the relationships with partners who have given their support to Yorkshire ArtSpace over a number of years. It is with their continued support that the importance of our organisation for the city and the city's artistic community is recognised. We hope this will continue for a long time to come.

Clare McManus, 2009

Director, Eventus and Board of Directors,
Yorkshire ArtSpace Society

Residency Programme

Introduction

We are proud to introduce our third publication, featuring the residency projects of 2008. As has already been mentioned in Clare's foreword, this year was all about working in partnership.

Since November 2001, when we first opened the doors of our brand new building Persistence Works, we have had the support of the Sheffield Assay Office to establish a start-up business incubation studio for emerging designer silversmiths. This programme has become a huge success and many of the beneficiaries of the programme have gone on to set up workspaces for themselves in Sheffield and become mentors for the programme. This initial partnership developed into further links

2008 was an exciting year for the organisation. Our plans to begin the process of developing more artists workspaces in Sheffield began to bear fruit and two new projects got under way, both due for completion in 2010

between Persistence Works and the Sheffield Galleries: Millennium Galleries, where we showcase our annual Sheffield Assay Office sponsored 'Little Gems' commissions: new work made by new silversmiths. We also became partners in a new contemporary metalwork festival 'Galvanize Sheffield' which started in 2007 to highlight the sector

to a much wider national and international audience. So, this year we wanted to give one of our residency opportunities to a prominent metalworker and selected blacksmith/silversmith Junko Mori. She spent 8 weeks of her time in Sheffield and part of this residency was used to design and develop a new artwork for the new Sheffield Assay Office in Hillsborough which was first unveiled during Galvanize Sheffield 2008.

2008 was also an exciting year for the organisation. Our plans to begin the process of developing more artists workspaces in Sheffield began to bear fruit and two new projects got under way, both due for completion in 2010. We have been working closely with the Area Development Teams of Sheffield City Council and in order to strengthen links with the Council our second partnership project in 2008 took place at the Sheffield Town Hall. Two visual artists, Trish O'Shea and Katie Davies, were given full access to this grand Victorian Building and made new work in response to this environment and its people.

Of course, apart from providing artists with residency opportunities, we again added other programme activities to ensure that other artists and members of the public gained access via complimentary events, exhibitions and training opportunities. Over 3000 people visited Kan Xuan's exhibition as part of Art Sheffield 08 and we also had a record number of visitors during our Open Studios event in November when resident artist Katie Davies opened up the door of her studio, together with the other artists based at Persistence Works.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

Rachael Dodd and Mir Jansen
Programme Managers, 2009

KAN XUAN

KAN XUAN

KAN XUAN

KAN XUAN

KAN XUAN

01

KAN XUAN

KAN XUAN

Exhibition
Persistence Works

Kan Xuan, *A Pound!* (2008)



KAN XUAN



ART SHEFFIELD 08: **YES NO OTHER OPTIONS***

Art Sheffield 08: Yes, No & Options was a citywide contemporary art exhibition involving work by 38 artists in 8 venues. Taking as its foundations

an essay by art critic Jan Verwoert, this citywide exhibition addressed the fact that in a post industrial condition, one particularly pertinent to Sheffield, we entered into a service culture where we no longer just work, we perform in a perpetual mode of 'I Can'. Verwoert asked: 'What would it mean to put up resistance against a social order in which high performance and performance-related evaluation has become a growing demand, if not a norm? What would it mean to resist the need to perform? He suggested that certain means of resisting are in themselves creative - that as well as embracing exuberant performativity, art has also used the 'I Can't', by creating moments where the flow of action

is interrupted, established meanings are suspended and alternative ways to act become imaginable. He suggested that as well as Yes & No, there may be Other Options.

SHE PRODUCED NEW WORK 'A POUND' CONSISTING OF A VIDEO SLIDE SHOW OF 300 OBJECTS BOUGHT FROM THE POUND SHOP IN SHEFFIELD, A CONTINUATION OF A PREVIOUS WORK 'TWO YUAN' MADE IN BEIJING IN 2007. 'A POUND' WAS SHOWN ALONGSIDE TWO EXISTING WORKS: 'NOTHING' (2003) AND 'GARBAGE' (1999).

Kan Xuan (PR China) was selected by Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum and Yorkshire ArtSpace Society to undertake a three month residency in Sheffield. She produced new work 'A

Pound' consisting of a video slide show of 300 objects bought from the Pound Shop in Sheffield, a continuation of a previous work '*Two Yuan*' made in Beijing in 2007. '*A Pound*' was shown alongside two existing works: '*Nothing*' (2003) and '*Garbage*' (1999).





One of the key categories that we today use to describe meaningful acts and experiences is the event. But what constitutes an event? And how does it make meaning?

Kan Xuan raises these questions in her work, precisely by shifting all conventional parameters for what we perceive as an event and what we see in it. In her videos she enacts small gestures that take you into a microcosm of performance where anything goes but everything matters – in ways that have yet to be established.

She films, for instance, the breaking of eggs and the slow oozing out of their inner liquid – or the ceremony of going through her rubbish bin and carefully addressing each item by its proper name – or spiders crawling

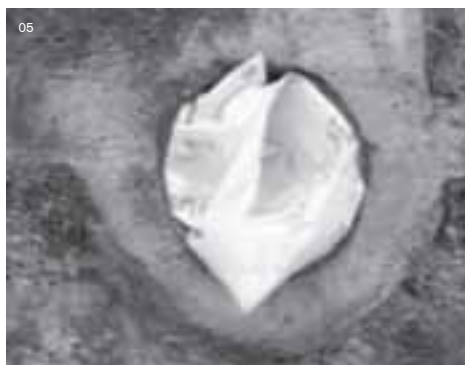
across human skin investigating all folds and crevices. Object (2003) in turn is black and white video that shows small items (coffee, hair, apple ...) dropping into water, accompanied by a voice describing the (invisible) colours of each object.

Under the scrutinizing gaze of Kan Xuan's camera, hierarchies

of importance are inverted. Notions of the monumental, spectacular and heroic collapse, as you are made to experience the smallest acts and occurrences as fully fleshed out events.

IN HER VIDEOS SHE ENACTS SMALL GESTURES THAT TAKE YOU INTO A MICROCOSM OF PERFORMANCE WHERE ANYTHING GOES BUT EVERYTHING MATTERS – IN WAYS THAT HAVE YET TO BE ESTABLISHED.

Jan Verwoert
2008



05-06
Stills from **Nothing** (2001)

Kan Xuan

JAN VERWOERT HAS SAID THAT HE IS ATTRACTED TO EMPTINESS AND SILENCE, THE PLACES WHERE PERFORMANCE FALTERS AND ATTENTION DRIFTS. HENCE THE VIDEOS HERE OF CHINESE ARTIST KAN XUAN, IN WHICH THE ARTIST EXCLAIMS "AHA! NOTHING. SHIT! NOTHING. WOW! GEE! JESUS – NOTHING. SHIT, SHIT, SHIT – NOTHING" IN A GLEEFUL VOICE. ON A SMALL SCREEN, THE CAMERA HOVERS OVER CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT AND HOLES IN A WALL. AN ARMY OF ANTS TREKS BY. I WONDER WHAT THEY DO IN THEIR FREE TIME – HOW ANTS SABOTAGE THEIR SLAVERY TO WORK?"

Review by Adrian Searle
Guardian 26 February 2008

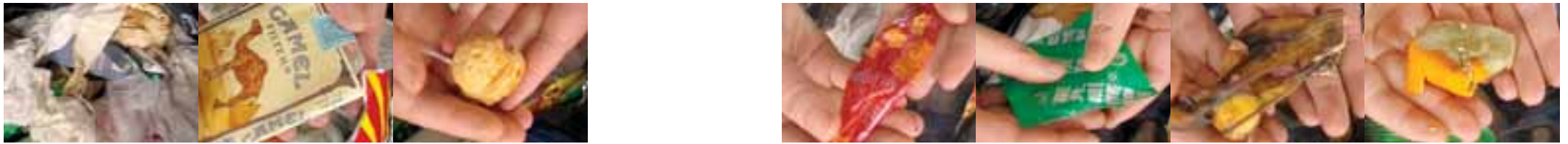
KAN XUAN
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KAN XUAN



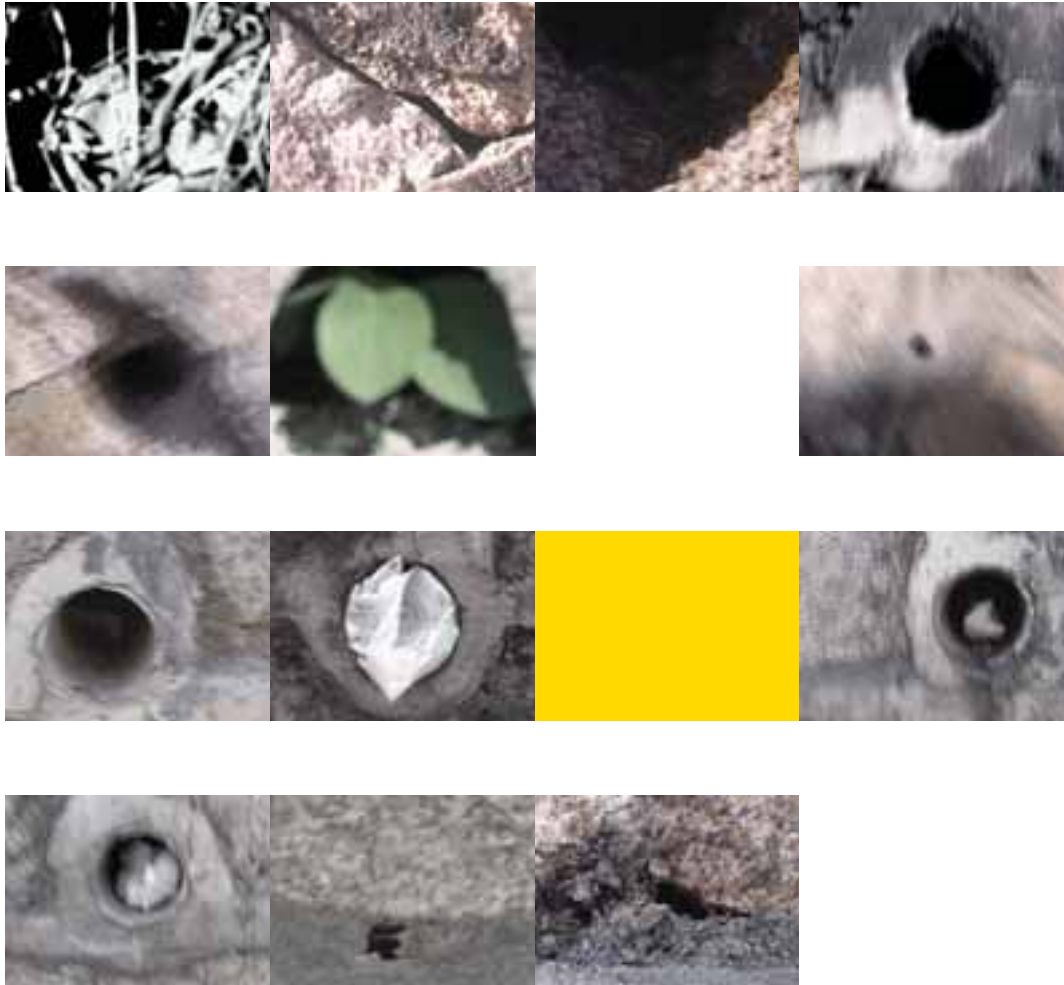




A Pound! (2008)



Garbage (1999)



Nothing (2003)



Interpreting contemporary art

EVALUATION REPORT / TRAINING & PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ARTISTS

—
WORKSHOP
MAR 08
—

“This has given me an insight, and greater confidence, into how to speak about contemporary art in general but more specifically might help in terms of verbal communication concerning my own work, as it’s something I don’t find particularly easy.”



Yorkshire ArtSpace worked in partnership with Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum to offer training to Sheffield/South Yorkshire based artists during the Art Sheffield 08 contemporary art festival. The aim was to develop skills in the interpretation of contemporary art and enable a wider public to access and engage with the various works in the festival.

Contemporary visual artists were invited to apply, and five artists were selected from eleven applicants. These were Paul Evans, Lesley Guy, Kate Pickin, Jane Mellor and Graeme Stonehouse, All practising artists living and working in Sheffield, at various stages of their careers. Applicants were selected on several criteria, including how the training would benefit their personal and professional development, the quality and content of their application, their prior knowledge and experience and generally how their involvement could benefit Yorkshire ArtSpace and Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum.



“I really enjoyed it and would have liked to have done more – 2 tours just got me loosened up! I’d like to do more of this type of work”



The training was comprised of four sessions:

- **Setting context, an overview on the art and artists of Art Sheffield 08 led by Jan Verwoert**
- **Attending a Public Tour led by Sheila McGregor, Chair of Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum**
- **Interpretation Training led by Helena Tomlin, Senior Education Curator at Manchester City Art Gallery**
- **Leading guided tours for the public – each trainee led two tours**

Eight guided tours took place throughout Art Sheffield 08 in February and March, offering participants the opportunity to put their skills and training into practice by leading the tours, taking the public round various venues and talking about work of their choice. 105 members of the public attended these tours.

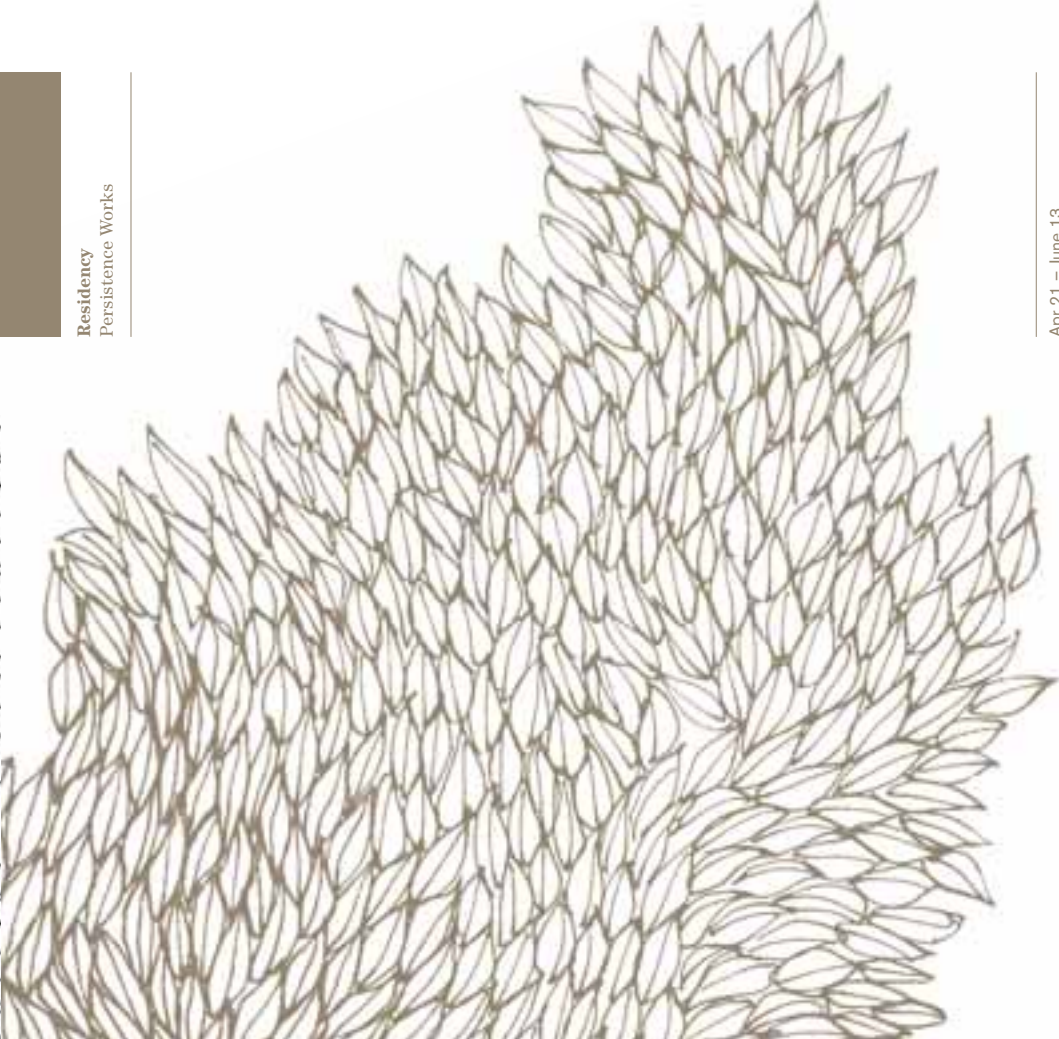
All artwork photography
Kan Xuan

Other photography
Yorkshire ArtSpace

XUAN
XUAN
XUAN
XUAN

Art
Sheffield
08Yes
NoOther
Options*

Residency
Persistence Works



02
**Junko
Mori**

Apr 21 – June 13

Junko Mori

The publications of Yorkshire ArtSpace's residency programme reveal the many ways artists respond to the opportunity of a new territory for making work that a residency offers. Some define their locality and place purely through the landscape of their body of work and view the residency as an open space within which to reflect on a particular work or idea: Persistence Works is perhaps one space amongst many where this might take place. Another strategy is to address the challenge and benefits of being presented with a 'blank canvas', using the residency's parameters and specific identity as an impetus for a new body of research.

One might argue that the material grounding of makers' practices can offer a particular response and awareness of place. The maker Junko Mori occupies the first crafts residency in this established programme and this decision beholds the question about the value of extending the opportunity to other areas of visual arts practice and what this may add to this experienced and published record of responses. A maker's connection and intellectual and bodily relationship to the physical

properties of material is often manifested in an understanding of what it is to test out an experience, idea, process or material property. This capacity to test, to problem solve and wrestle back and forth through an empirical process, one which is grounded in the intimate knowledge of the properties of material and one's relationship to the world of things, offers a research methodology that many makers use when faced with new surroundings.

As a maker who takes inspiration from her surroundings, in particular a delight in nature that forms the starting point for much of her work and is informed by Japanese values that revere nature and appreciate sensitive observation, Junko has made a particularly strong engagement with Sheffield, one that has operated at many levels, reflecting the differing identities of the city. It was clearly not unnoticed by the residency organisers, that a metalsmith, and one who is particularly comfortable with collaborating with industry, might respond to the city's industrial

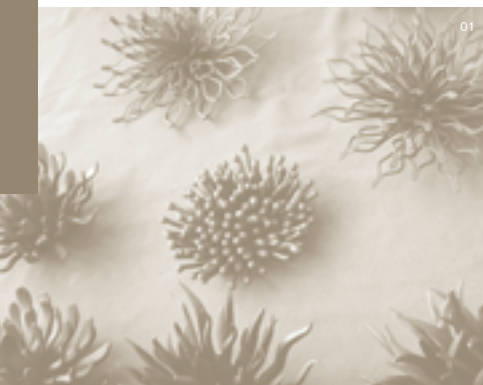
identity that is based upon particular metal traditions and objects and the opportunities that are presented through the provision of materials, skills and processes present within the remaining manufacturing industries.

Indeed this opportunity made a particular link with a commission for Junko for the new Sheffield Assay Office, responding to a recent change in hallmarking legislation. Since May 2007 it is possible to hallmark objects which contain a mixture of precious and non-precious metals, a significant change for the industry and for artists. It challenges notions of value, cost and preciousness. Up to this point Junko had worked with pure materials or a single type of metal in each piece. The mixing of metals introduces the possibility of accessing a palette of colours and hues and an additional aesthetic quality.

The maker Junko Mori occupies the first crafts residency in this established programme and this decision beholds the question about the value of extending the opportunity to other areas of visual arts.

Junko's response to the city and the environment of the residency is reflected in the unfolding and mapping of her experiences – her interest in the specificity of place, the attention to detail that is often a particular refinement for metalsmiths and jewellers who make at a small scale, sensitivity to her surroundings

and a delight in the opportunities that they might offer – was balanced by the opportunity to reflect more widely on changing directions in her practice which had been informed by recent experiences, most notably a collaborative residency with the potter Kate Malone at the Harley Gallery in late 2007. There is a small cultivated space outside her studio window with vegetables grown by resident artists. For Junko the vegetable garden and the historic green spaces, represented within old maps of the city, are all part of the connectivity of things.



01-03
Junko Mori Masterclass at Persistence Works

Her personal philosophy and intellectual enquiry was exemplified in her research into some of Sheffield's Victorian industrialists, whose villas populated the area in which Junko was based. In particular she responded to the history of Henry Clifton Sorby (1826-1908), the son of a wealthy metal manufacturer, whose many interests and passion for natural history and geology, typifies the philanthropy and intellectual enquiry of the period and exemplifies Junko's capacity to draw a common thread through seemingly unrelated concepts and practices. Sorby became well known for his development of microscopes which had the capacity to reveal the crystalline structures of steel and the

relationship between geology and metals and which caused a sensational response at the Great Exhibition in 1851. The recognition of the synthesis between their shared interests and the metaphor of the microscope which reveals the connection between the smallest components and their greater whole, provided something of that experience that feeds into the ways in which a residency can support an artist

in consolidating their identity and practice.

A residency is also about making work – it is never a neutral space – within a certain given freedom that may remove the artist from day to day pressures.

In talking to Junko it is interesting to be made aware of still strong cultural influences that continue to inform her practice.

In particular she notes

her ambiguity towards an overly unconstrained opportunity, given her training which encompasses a formal education in Japan and a more experimental art school training in London, a contrast that is particularly heightened by the balance of the residency with the Assay Office commission.

It is perhaps the makers' commitment to a particular material with its constraints and demands which sensitises them to a more pragmatic understanding of opportunity. Most certainly these opportunities have drawn out her awareness of the many demands on skills and knowledge of the maker, and which can be so easily overlooked and unrecognised – drawing, scanning, CAD, model making, design and creating components, fabrication and installation as well as creative development.

The mode of enquiry and context of the residency has provided impetus for Junko to reflect on the breadth and inter-related facets of her practice. She has recognised distinct differences between her studio based practice and creating work for the public realm. In her studio she works small scale, applying hand skills in a singular and individualistic way. Her work for the public realm is more exposing and usually borne out of a requirement for social engagement, interaction,

collaborative working, shared vision and expanded problem solving. The change in scale necessitated the introduction of industrial processes of manufacture to her practice and the use of technology to achieve multiple components and effects. The creative quest she has set herself for the Sheffield Assay Office commission is to replicate the refinement of her studio practice to her work for the public realm.

That is to achieve a more finely crafted piece of public art with jewel like quality and attention to detail, reflecting the sensitivity of her drawings and hand forging process. Her desired effect is to lessen the evidence of a manufactured process.



04



06

In her studio she works small scale, applying hand skill in a singular and individualistic way. Her work for the public realm is more exposing and usually borne out of a requirement for social engagement... and expanded problem solving.

04-05

Junko Mori in her Studio

06

Junko Mori Masterclass at Persistence Works

Having known and observed Junko's practice from the year she emerged with her first body of work at the Chelsea Craft Fair, it is fascinating to see the transition points in her intercultural journey which juxtaposes production of work for sale within a commercial marketplace with a series of projects with very different outcomes. Each project has reshaped the maker like another facet on a diamond and each experience is overlaid and nuanced in her studio work. The extreme dimensions of scale in her work coupled with the need for different skills and applications position her well to move fluidly between art form definitions; craft, design, graphic artist, sculptor. However it is all underpinned by a characteristic openness to dialogue and to challenging exploration combined with a fierce conviction in defending and respecting traditional values around craft and skill. She is at once an exemplar of high quality and exquisite making and 'craftsmanship' and an exploiter of high tech laser cutting and other technologies.

Junko was therefore well placed to respond to, interpret and contemporise aspects of history and culture of Sheffield. In addition to researching Henry Clifton Sorby, a carved wooden panel of the Yorkshire Rose symbol seen on a visit to the Assay captured her interest.

Junko was therefore well placed to respond to, interpret and contemporise aspects of the history and culture of Sheffield. In addition to researching Henry Clifton Sorby, a carved wooden panel of the Yorkshire Rose symbol seen on a visit to the Assay captured her interest. Exploring the form through a process of what she calls 'free' drawing resulted in exploding the rose. The abstract shapes created by the meeting of the edges of petals became a focus of new composition followed by a transformation into a set of interchangeable 3D components. Translating the essence of an iconic symbol typifies Junko's ability to create an interchange of dialogues through her work.



07-09
Junko Mori in her Studio

What might otherwise be discordant and unconnected is synthesised into visual responses and objects. Interculturality in her work represents the breadth of her experiences; growing up with Japanese aesthetics and values, living in an urban region of North West England, understanding the language and capabilities of industry and business and practical collaborations with other practitioners.

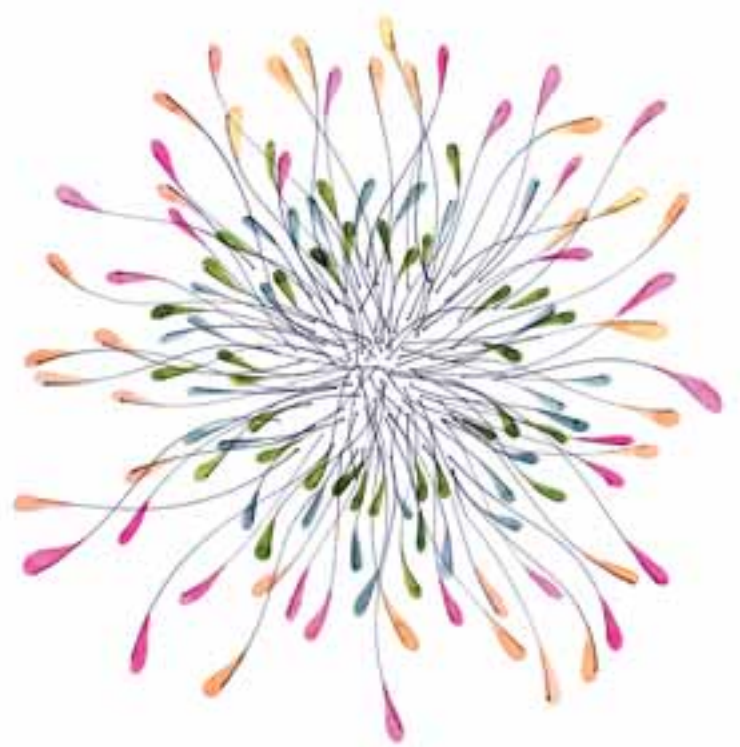
The spirit of enquiry, an absorption of influences and filtering of experiences is heightened in a residency. This residency has developed a quest to give expression to the more spontaneous and dynamic side of her personality which may be partly realised through the chemical reactions of working in mixed metals. In essence the development of Junko's practice is driven by working in new contexts that make creative and intellectual demands both on her and on the materials she chooses to use.

Like the Victorian industrialists located in Sheffield before her, whose investment and experimentation left a fertile legacy, so Junko will leave evidence of her current investigation as a tangible and publicly visible legacy.

Andy Horn and Deirdre Figueiredo
of Craftspace, August 2008



← Preparatory drawings for
White Rose by Junko Mori
✓ Junko Mori experimentation with
Fimo™ for new range of jewellery



Junko Mori in her Studio



Junko Mori



34/35



Installing White Rose in Sheffield Winter Garden
for Galvanize Sheffield 2008



Junko Mori



10
The White Rose installed on the Assay
Office (2009)

11-12
Junko Mori in her studio

Junko studio photography
Carl Rose

Assay Office photograph
Steve Ellis

Winter Garden photography
Yorkshire ArtSpace



Residency
Sheffield Town Hall



TRISH O'SHEA

03



Jul 7 - Aug 29



INTRODUCTION TO THE RESIDENCIES OF TRISH O'SHEA AND KATIE DAVIES

WHILE THE NEARBY NEWLY-BUILT HOWDEN HOUSE ACCOMMODATES MOST OF THE CITY COUNCIL'S DEPARTMENTS, THE TOWN HALL CONTAINS ALL THE CEREMONIAL SPACES, GRAND MEETING ROOMS AND THE WEDDING SUITE

This was the first time that Yorkshire ArtSpace Society's Residency Programme was able to offer two eight week residencies to artists living and working in Sheffield with access to the Sheffield Town Hall.

Yorkshire ArtSpace Society is currently a recipient of Arts Council England's Thrive! Organisational Development funding to support the growth of the organisation over the next few years. An essential part of that growth will

be securing the support of local development partners to establish additional studio spaces across the city. With support from Sheffield City Council's Housing Market Renewal teams Yorkshire ArtSpace is currently developing workspaces with partners in a number of different neighbourhoods, the first phase of which is due for completion in 2010. In order to engage more comprehensively with other local authority departments and gain the wide support of councillors we were given permission for two of our residencies in 2008 to be linked to Sheffield Town Hall.

Sheffield Town Hall is a fine expression of Victorian civic pride. While the nearby newly-built Howden House accommodates most of the City Council's departments, the Town Hall contains all the ceremonial spaces, grand meeting rooms and the wedding suite. The councillors themselves also have their offices and library here along with the Lord Mayor's parlour and dressing rooms. We felt we had been very fortunate in gaining temporary access to the whole environment of the Town Hall.

As part of the introduction to the Town Hall residencies Trish and Katie were given two guided tours.

Mir Jansen
2009

Trish O'Shea and Katie Davies
tour around Sheffield Town Hall

TRISH O'SHEA

SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL
RESIDENCY

THE SPACE IN BETWEEN

We were walking around the perimeter of the Sheffield United football ground on Bramhall Lane. But not only

that: we were counting. Counting every step. 1.2.3.4.5. We'd stop, look around and make notes of what we saw. It was an exercise in chance, of making sense in the connections of the everyday. That was a while ago on a different community arts project but this idea of taking some kind of inner meaning from a small random journey is a major feature of Trish O'Shea's work. One look at the work she has created through her residency at Sheffield Town Hall tells me it still is.

Trish O'Shea's eight week residency at the Town Hall in Sheffield has produced a highly personal collection of photographs, portraits, sketches, notes and journeys. Like all artistic endeavours the work is organic. It is itself and it grows from itself, from the space within. Someone said that art is its own seed. I think that someone might have been me but no matter. Art grows from art. It is also produced by life, by the myriad sounds, smells, ideas, thoughts and feelings any single day produces. It can be the poetic - the way a certain light plays and spangles through a window. It can be the real - a thrown away stamped upon cigarette stub. It can be breathtakingly poignant and fall down funny. Art is life and life is art.

O'Shea's work is all of this and more. It is at once challenging and inspirational. One of the most captivating ideas was to collect and collate her daily walks around the Town Hall itself.

'I wanted to navigate myself around the building as if being forced by the architecture itself.'

The Town Hall slowly came to represent something other than the thing it is. This imposing civic building with its sense of history, politics and power seemed to act as both a barrier and a threshold. O'Shea talks about how the building 'welcomed me and spoke to me'. It is clear that some intimate bond was being formed here, something tangible and highly personal.

'every time I walk into the kitchen on the 2nd floor I think of my maternal grandmother - maybe it's the smell of the room, the wooden cupboards.'

Magic was at work. O'Shea was conscious that as an artist she had allowed herself to 'expand and be receptive' in an attempt to 'enter the space of the artist, to commune with people and place, allow my

idea's to form, to be free' and work alongside - and not against- the sway and pull of the building's own imposing energy.

'It's interesting how a space can quickly become an extension of oneself.'

These walks or journeys around the Town Hall formed a large part of the final Yorkshire ArtSpace

exhibition. Drawn in simple pencil lines on a white backdrop, they come together to create something that has more than a hint of the scientific, something with a sniff of the medical, the geographical and the electronic. What are they? What do they look like? What do they mean?

They engage you and draw you in. To me they could be a briefcase of architects plans, a vein, rivers on a map or electronic circuits. There is a real sense of things in transit, of the ebb and flow, of things being on the move. This plays in contrast to the bricks and mortar of the Town Hall. The Immovable Object. Can the power of art somehow move the immovable?

'EVERY TIME I WALK INTO THE KITCHEN ON THE 2ND FLOOR I THINK OF MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER - MAYBE IT'S THE SMELL OF THE ROOM, THE WOODEN CUPBOARDS'.



01 Town Hall kitchen
02 Trish O'Shea in the Town Hall

Lines

*Think of a river on a map,
of the lines on your hand,
now fuse the river with blood,
make a vein of it, give it heart.*

*Become an architect,
keep the angles sharp
stay practical
but allow yourself to dream
keep an eye out
for the space in between.*

*Yet,
there is something
of the earth in these lines
some spark of knowing,
some electrical insight
that stretches in a taut line like elastic
past the fusebox and conduit
past the past itself somehow
a line that shocks and zaps you back
to a time and place
to the here and now.*



Percussion

*Water
hissing through the open window
the clump
and scuffle of men's shoes
the skip
and scrape of highheels*

*A funfair
wheeling in the dark
tiptap
of computer keys
the boom and slam
of distant doors*

*music of echoes
the road, the din
voices outside
bringing the outside in*

Ladder

*I dreamt of you ladder
of every rung,
ladder you sang to me

and the song you sang
takes me higher
holding me, guiding me,*

*letting me balance,
rise, then fall.
Ladder, dreamladder*

I hear your call

You have to applaud O'Shea's absolute openness to the project and to her work as a whole. She perhaps became a little obsessed with the Town Hall.

'The work invades my life and becomes part of it. The more I got into it the more the work became autobiographical. In a sense this residency marks a moment in my life, in the city'.

O'Shea mapped down all her journeys in and around the town hall as well as listening to sounds the building made, what she calls the 'percussion of architecture'.

O'Shea even went as far as to analyse her own dreams she had during the course of the residency and see how these came to inform and affect her artistic vision. One dream in particular stood out for her. The dream was of a ladder.

'The central idea of a ladder is gaining special, albeit, precarious access to other places'.

The same could be said of O'Shea's whole artistic ethos. Art, this sense of being open to ideas, is a way in to the 'precarious' inner self of art and mind. Only when this association is made can one then allow it to express itself to climb up the ladder to the outer world.

O'Shea kept a series of detailed notebooks throughout her residency. These offer a highly valuable and deeply personal insight into the intricate and subtle mind of the artist. At times funny (the episode about visiting an acupuncturist and being told that she has too many thoughts in her head, springs to mind), at others polemic (the rant about the recent loss of the iconic Sheffield cooling towers – the King and Queen of Yorkshire). The notebooks are a real gateway, (ladder perhaps?) into the inner conflict of any creative artist. Leafing through the notebooks (O'Shea by the way, has fine qualities as a writer – an authentic and original voice for starters) you do get the impression that there is a bit of a hole somewhere – a fruitless search for some kind of great and all encompassing answer. There is an edge here certainly, an underplayed sense of frustration about something not being fully grasped.

O'Shea herself does admit that the physicality of the town hall, the actual size and sweep of it, with its myriad dark corners, its minute details (finger prints on doors, sequins on mosaic floors) and its overpowering sense of itself did at times, leave her 'chewed up and spat out'.

So there is a struggle being played out, an interplay between place and self, between the outside and the inside and between art and heart. But O'Shea's work shows there is also an acceptance of energy,

of interaction, of co-operation. There is a real, warm and very human openness. A grand Victorian stone building can inform, affect and enlighten. It can live and be given life. It can breathe and be given breath. It can delight and inspire

'the Town Hall building is so beguiling, intriguing and beautiful'.

It can raise many questions and promise no answers.

It positively delights in its own set of contradictions. It is a building with powerful connotations. Yes, it is grand. Yes, it is imposing. Yes, it is, for many, a symbol of authority and control and social order yet.

And yet. O'Shea's real success for me is the way she allowed herself to disappear and become part of the architecture of the town hall itself.

THE LINE DRAWINGS THEMSELVES, OF O'SHEA'S JOURNEYS, ARE MODERN DAY HIEROGLYPHICS THAT SPEAK TO US FROM A PRE-FORMED PAST TO AN EQUALLY INFORMED FUTURE.

The end result (if there is ever an end to anything) is that the work generated by this residency isn't cold and inhuman like so much tonnage of bricks and stone the town hall might have come to represent but it is very much alive and breathing.

The line drawings themselves, of O'Shea's journeys, are modern day hieroglyphics that speak to us from

a pre-formed past to an equally informed future. The work reminds us that we are all on the cusp, we are all in the space in-between, the here and the now, the past and the present. Life is in constant transit. The message is a powerful and deeply personal one and is presented in such a refreshingly clear and unpretentious way. There is a keen and highly tuned creative mind behind all this but at the same time the work and the main ideas and themes that run through it are open and greatly accessible to everyone – after all we talking about a public building here.

The work itself comes across as unforced, organic and unfolds from somewhere within itself, from the now familiar space in-between. O'Shea's challenging and intriguing work makes the ordinary – a grimy, Northern English Town Hall with all its comings and goings, its light through the many windows, its dusty corridors – and turns them into the extraordinary. It forces a re-thinking. The real trick though, and overriding success of this project for me, is the concealment of art itself. *Ars est celare artem* as someone once said.

Craig Bradley
2008



Work in Progress Exhibition
Persistence Works (2008)



Drop-in workshop and studio tour

16th – 17th August 2008

SPOON FORGING WITH VICTORIA DELANY / WORKSHOP FOR COUNCIL EMPLOYEES



Victoria Delany is a former beneficiary of the renowned Starter Studio Programme for Designer Silversmiths at Persistence Works. Originally from Shropshire, Victoria joined the programme in September 2005. On completion she awarded a place on the prestigious Goldsmithing and Silversmithing course at the Royal college of Art in London.

Victoria is interested in Victorian silverware, often etching elements of the decorative style of that time into her own very contemporary work. She has won numerous awards and one of her pieces is held in the collection of Museums Sheffield.

Victoria came back to Sheffield especially to deliver this workshop designed for members of staff at Sheffield City Council. People of all abilities took part and created their own silver spoon over the course of two days.

They learned the skills of designing, hand forging, plannishing and polishing. All the spoons were hallmarked at the Sheffield Assay Office and bear the Yorkshire ArtSpace hallmark.



“I haven’t done anything like this since school so it was fun to learn how to use the various tools and equipment. I felt a real sense of achievement at the end when my spoon was completely finished. I thought it was a nice object to make and is something I will actually be able to use.”



Town Hall tour photography
Trish O'Shea and Katie Davies

Work in Progress
Exhibition photography
Yorkshire ArtSpace

Workshop and Studio tour
photography
Carl Rose

Spoon forging photography
Victoria Delany



Residency
Sheffield Town Hall

KATTIE DAVIES

Oct 6 – Nov 28

THE SHIMMERING OF THE TIPPING POINT

KATIE DAVIES
SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL
RESIDENCY

In sociological terms, a 'tipping point' describes the moment of a critical turn, the unstoppable momentum of an emergent trend, the accumulation of innumerable minor factors resulting in some form of major – often epidemic or catastrophic – transformation. It is the final straw that breaks the camel's back; the moment of recognition or

realisation that prompts the declaration that enough is enough, that things have gone too far. It can be imagined as the invisible boundary scoring the limits of a particular belief system or moral code, which once breached might force the individual or collective to rise up and make a stand. It has been used to signal the point at which the metaphorical tide turns, the irreversible passing of the point of no return. Here, the tipping point designates a line of separation that distinguishes between the events of the past and a future way of being; it is the threshold where one thing suddenly slips into or becomes something else. However, tipping points can also be experienced at an individual level, as those daily yet often imperceptible shifts and transformations that form part of the fabric of lived life. The term can be used to describe the moment at which a decision is made or an opinion changed; or the threshold crossed when you realise that you are no longer a child. In these terms, the tipping point is not experienced in the same tenor as that of the sociological model – as a clear or abrupt cut between one state and another – but can be understood instead as a pivot about which things turn; as a gesture of tilting that sets in motion. It is the interstice between one thing and something else, an interval of reflection that momentarily holds two or more possibilities in the balance where they remain equally present.

Here then, the tipping point inevitably produces a zone of potentiality or ambiguity, a period of instability and indecision before a definitive choice has been made or a fixed stance taken. This is the shimmering of the tipping point, the point at which things begin to waver.

Katie Davies' practice often explores and attempts to capture the shimmer of a tipping point, by focusing on the nature of the ambiguous threshold zone between one state and another, or on spaces that are somehow liminal or transitional. Her previous video work, *Looking for Abraham* (2005) for example, documents the awkward tension of a stand-up comedy routine as it hovers at the point of collapse. The audience remains suspended, not wholly knowing how to respond to the comic's ambivalent attempts towards humour. Their laughter fluctuates between uneasiness and derision, an involuntary lubricant that attempts to ease the embarrassing moment past. Alternatively, the video *38th Parallel* (2008) presents a portrait of the Demilitarised Zone on the border between North and South Korea, an eerie no-man's land

KATIE DAVIES' PRACTICE OFTEN EXPLORES AND ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE THE SHIMMER OF A TIPPING POINT, BY FOCUSING ON THE NATURE OF THE AMBIGUOUS THRESHOLD ZONE BETWEEN ONE STATE AND ANOTHER

or non-place where nothing happens bar the daily performance of ceremonial protocol by the military on either side. The isolated gestures appear devoid of specific purpose or functionality, or else begin to operate within a mysterious choreography analogous to the territorial dance of the courting bird stamping out its turf. This fascination with the

conventions and choreography of protocol within official, ceremonial and social behaviour underpins the new work produced by Davies during her recent residency at Sheffield Town Hall (2008). During her residency, Davies focused on those spaces and areas of activity within the Town Hall that are marked by a sense of transition or decision-making – such as the citizenship ceremonies or the council meetings – drawing attention to the codes of behaviour and civic rituals which surround them. The work explores how the fragile rules of ceremony – and of various local government procedures and protocol – often rely on the precarious authority of tradition and the continuation of common values and beliefs, without which they could lose their power and become little more than empty gestures.

Davies occupies an ambivalent position in relation to the events that she witnesses; her work critically reflects on how the function of the ceremonial is often double-edged. During the ceremony or ritual an individual might gain access to certain rights and permissions that had hitherto been denied, yet at the same time such ceremonies can be used as a method of control and order, where existing rules and hierarchies become reinforced and sustained. The weekly citizenship ceremonies became a point of focus during Davies' residency, for they presented

DURING THE RESIDENCY, DAVIES' POSITION WAS ONE OF BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM; HER EXPERIENCES OF THE TOWN HALL GLEANED FROM BEING BOTH WITHIN AND YET ALSO REMAINING WITHOUT.

remain in two minds. However anachronistic the pledges and proposed values of the ceremony might seem, even the briefest encounter with any one of the new citizens reveals the importance and significance of this rite of passage. Individual narratives and back-stories silently rupture the surface of the proceedings; quiet reminders of what is actually at stake. Whilst the ceremonial might endeavour to support an existing order or keep things in their place, an inevitable period of instability and unruliness is simultaneously produced therein. Ceremony inadvertently creates that which it seeks to control. Anthropologist Victor Turner argues that during the liminal or transitional phase of any ritual performance – especially during rites of passage – the characteristics of the social structure are momentarily collapsed, as “the ritual subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity”ⁱ where “they are at once no longer classified and not yet classified”.ⁱⁱ For Turner, during this phase, “the past is momentarily negated, suspended or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, [it is] an instant of pure potentiality in which everything, as it were, trembles in the balance”.ⁱⁱⁱ

a specific context – a ceremonial rite of passage – in which these contradictory ideas could be explored. The concept of citizenship itself is inevitably inflected by the rhetoric of the media. However, Davies attempts to remain neutral or rather she suggests that the issue of citizenship itself can be understood as a shimmering tipping point where it is possible to inhabit or present more than one position or

In one sense, the artist herself occupies an analogous position to that of the pre-citizen or initiate. During the residency, Davies' position was one of being simultaneously inside and outside the system; her experiences of the Town Hall gleaned from being both within and yet also remaining without. The artist is granted partial access to the unspoken codes and customs of a place, but does not yet have the status and knowledge – or significantly the responsibility – of a full employee. The artist, like the initiate, occupies an ambiguous territory where they remain “neither here nor there ... betwixt and between the positions assigned by law, custom, convention”.^{iv} Whilst this condition of limbo functions to remove or limit certain rights and privileges, it also has the capacity to liberate the initiate/artist from certain ‘structural obligations’. The liminal state of ‘exception’ thus contains the latent

possibility of disruption and unruliness, where habitual behaviour and practices might get turned on their head.

The threshold is a space to be treated with caution. For Marcel Griaule it is, “a thing of dread, because there one must manifest or cast aside one's qualities, because there it is necessary to register, forcibly or with levity, the rank one occupies in society”.^v

Ceremony is a method for managing the instability or *terrain vague* of the threshold stage of ritual performance, where its protocol offers a code of conduct through which to ensure a

smooth passage through the interregnum moments when things remain ambiguously no longer and not yet. Within the act of ceremony, individuals assume their place within the agreed order of events, where they are designated the role of the initiate or novice, the witness or observer, or that of the presiding official – the arbiter, the dignitary or some other agent of power – who has certain responsibilities, particular actions to perform. Signatures and certificates offer further solemnity to those more volatile ceremonial tipping points – the entry and exit thresholds such as those of birth and death – providing paper-proof of one's state of existence or identity at a given time.



Video Still from **Commonwealth** (2009)

Ceremony in fact, attempts to momentarily erase or dampen the specificity of the individual in favour of a role or a model of homogenised uniformity within which they are expected to operate. They must follow the rules and offer their pledges and promises on cue.

Davies' work reflects on those moments when the rules or order of a ceremony and its protocol begin to collapse or disintegrate, the instances where the specificity of the individual reasserts itself once

WITHIN THE ACT OF
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more. She draws attention to the points where the collective identity of a group becomes frayed at the edges, to those brief interludes within a ceremonial performance when the mask of duty or anonymity momentarily falls to reveal signs of the individual beneath. In the video, *Commonwealth*, produced as part of her residency, Davies shifts her focus between three distinct types of ceremonial activity taking place within the Town

Hall: the citizenship ceremonies, the council meetings and a one-off brass-band performance which was orchestrated at the artist's request in one of the Council's ceremonial chambers. Davies' editing blurs the edges between these different contexts; fragments of sound from one location become dislocated and bleed over into the frame of another, offering an aural sub-text in which unexpected parallels and analogies are made. The pledges and promises of prospective citizens, for example, might as easily apply to those council members who have been sworn in to office; however the observation of certain similarities functions as a foil that simultaneously draws attention to the differences and discrepancies between these two groups. Panning shots of empty rooms paused and awaiting undisclosed gatherings become underscored with the discordant melody of the brass-band rehearsal. Both elements remain suspended at the point of anticipation or of preparation, perpetually tuning up and ever maintaining their readiness.

Davies highlights those moments when the formality of the ceremonial proceedings lapses to create gaps and caesura that are then inhabited by the individual in various ways. The work reveals the drifts and slips and pockets of inattention, boredom and momentary distraction that inevitably occur before and during the ceremonial event itself; the uncertainty and irresolution that is a necessary part of any process of decision-making or public performance.

Any decision involves a gesture of renunciation or rejection, the termination of one trajectory of possibilities in favour of another. Allegiance to or belonging within one particular group or party might then mean that others are relinquished, forgotten or are cast aside. In one sense, Davies' work reveals the presence of latent societal values, provoking further questions around what it might mean to belong or not belong within a given context; what is at stake, what is to be gained, what forfeited or lost. It attempts to create gaps and ruptures in the Town Hall's ceremonial proceedings and protocol; spaces of reflection or tipping points around which such questions might be hinged. Davies focuses on the moments of potentiality before an allegiance is pledged, a decision made or a performance actualised; thus making visible the unstable and uncertain thresholds within the ceremonial before order is returned, the tipping points where things shimmer or remain hanging in the balance.

Emma Cocker
2009

i. Victor Turner, From *Ritual to Theatre, The Human Seriousness of Play*, (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), p.24.

ii. Turner, '*Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage*' in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Cornell University Press, 1967), p.96.

iii. Turner, 1982, p.44.

iv. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: Aldine. 1969), p.95.

v. Marcel Griaule in Georges Bataille (ed) '*Critical Dictionary*' in *Encyclopedia Acephalica*, (Atlas Press, London, 1995), p.84. First appeared as *Dictionnaire Critique* in 1929 and 1930, and constituted a separate section of the magazine, *Documents*.



Production stills from **Commonwealth** (2009)





Video still from *Commonwealth* (2009)



Inside Sheffield Town Hall



1st, 8th and 15th Nov 2008

NEIL WOODALL / DRY POINT ETCHING

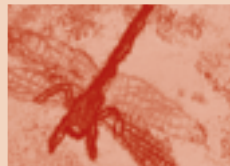
—
WORKSHOP
NOV 08
—



Printing Workshop

Neil Woodall is an experienced printmaker specialising in black and white aquatints. He has a studio at Persistence Works and regularly runs printmaking workshops for beginners as well as the more advanced. He teaches printmaking at Chesterfield College on the Art & Design courses.

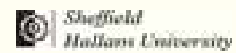
This printmaking workshop gave members of staff at Sheffield City Council the opportunity to access the printmaking facilities in Neil's studio at Persistence Works for one full day. Neil had asked the participants to choose an image they liked and to transfer this onto an etching plate and create a print.



Commonwealth Shoot
photography
Rose Butler

Town Hall interior
photography
Katie Davies

Print Workshop photography
Yorkshire ArtSpace



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