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Portraiture and Place

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Abstract

Creative Work

Three works are presented for examination:

Hello consists of two programmed animated lightboxes that simulate human presence through the medium of light. This work was exhibited at Branch gallery in Glebe as part of the exhibition *Bunkered* in September 2014. It will also be exhibited at the Sydney College of the Arts Postgraduate Exhibition in December 2014.

Here/There is a series of photographic portraits depicting its sitter's interacting with virtual place. An abridged version of this series was exhibited at Home at 735 gallery in Redfern in October 2014. It will also be exhibited at the Sydney College of the Arts Postgraduate Exhibition in December 2014.

Are You There is an interactive installation consisting of a robotic mirror and a live video feed. This work was first exhibited in *Other Worlds* at Sydney College of the Arts Graduate School Gallery in October 2014. It will also be exhibited at the Sydney College of the Arts Postgraduate Exhibition in December 2014.

Research Paper

This research paper charts the journey from an initial theoretical standpoint of viewing *Portraiture and Place* as two oppositional elements, to the conclusion of viewing them as enmeshed and indivisible. The paper argues that the boundaries of portraiture need to be expanded beyond depiction of the face and body to incorporate place. Furthermore, it proposes that this expanded portraiture may indeed be more eloquent in depicting the 'self' and the notion of being-in-the-world than the depiction of images of the body. Much of this argument is based on the relatively recent influence of the heterotopic technological landscape of the internet and virtual reality that is redefining notions of 'self' and 'being' in the world. The paper charts the evolution of my theoretical and studio work in a chronological fashion and contextualises my practice through an exploration of the philosophers J.E. Malpas, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, the artist and theorist Victor Burgin and the artists Wendy McMurdo, Eadweard Muybridge, Gary Hill and Dan Graham.

Introduction

“...there is no possibility of understanding human existence – and especially human thought and experience other than through an understanding of place and locality, it follows that the inquiry into the mind or the self will be identical with the inquiry into place.”

J.E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*.

The subject of my practice-led creative research examines the intersection of portraiture and place. The question I have posed for this research is: can the boundaries of portraiture be expanded beyond the nexus of face, body, person to incorporate *place* as a means to represent the self?

In the past, my lens-based practice has been centered on the examination of the affective relationship between people and place. My previous works depicted place, space and architecture, and has attempted to speak of the human traces held within them without ever showing a human figure. However, for my Masters project, I am attempting to approach my practice from the other side. That is, looking at place through the convention and framework of portraiture – looking at place by looking at people and, conversely, looking at people by looking at place. This method is a launching platform to explore place and the Heideggerian notion of *being-in-the world*.

Portraiture is, according to Richard Brilliant, a “particular phenomenon of representation in Western art that is especially sensitive to changes in the perceived nature of the individual in Western society.”¹ Brilliant argues the point that portraiture more than any other art mode reflects the changing notion of self through time. Writer and photographic curator, Susan Bright agrees with this assertion when she says in her book *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography* (2010) that a resurgence of portraiture has occurred during periods such as the 1960's and

¹ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*(Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991). P. 8

70's when gender and national concepts of identity came to the fore². Both these views suggest that at this point in time, with the ever-increasing influence of online and virtual worlds, examining the notion of 'self' and portraiture needs to incorporate an exploration of 'being' in the relatively new place of the virtual world.

Portraiture is a phenomenon that in many cases attempts to marry the depiction or likeness of a person with a glimpse of their inner-self and their 'being'. Sandy Nairne, in *The Portrait Now* (2006), declares that a portrait has a function to reveal what lies beneath, unveiling the "hidden information" of someone's "personal interior life" so that it be made available to the public sphere³. This notion of glimpsing into the character and interior landscape of a person through their portrait is one that held the greatest influence during photography's early years, when the medium was co-opted into 'sciences' such as phrenology and physiognomy⁴. In his book, *Ghost in the Shell* (1999), charting the history of photographic portraiture, Robert A Sobieszek describes the lure of such a portrait – "we are consistently and addictively bent on studying facial representations and trying to discern what lies beneath them."⁵ Despite the fact that the era of physiognomy has long past, portraiture still mostly focuses on the face and body as a mode for representing the 'self'. I aim to challenge this view by creating work that sidesteps the face. Rather, I aim to represent 'self' through place.

² Susan Bright, *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography*(London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2010). P. 18

³ Sandy Nairne and Sarah Howgate, *The Portrait Now*(Great Britain: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2006). P. 7

⁴ By measuring and mapping the skull, phrenologists believed they could ascertain an individual's personality type. Physiognomy linked facial features to the soul, being, and character of an individual.

⁵ Robert A. Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell*(Los Angeles & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and MIT press, 1999). P. 17

In examining 'place' as a concept, I draw upon the research of the Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas and his examination of the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger. Malpas maps out 'philosophical topography', a theory that human self-conception is embedded and embodied in place. He argues that an inquiry into self is identical to an inquiry into place⁶. Thus the aim of my research is to examine the point where these categories collapse from being two separate notions into one osmotic zone. This osmotic zone highlights the interconnected and indivisible relationship between place and being – with the main connective tissue between them being the notions of self and identity. In this research the notions of being, self and identity are placed as central hallmarks of both portraiture and place and constitute the twin-foci of my research.

Our sense of 'place' and 'being' are being tested, expanded and questioned through our experiences with technological advancement. When we inhabit virtual spaces, our notions of self, place and being-in-the-world are altered. In the heterotopic nature of the internet, (which I explore further in Chapter 2), we can be 'being' in multiple places in time and space simultaneously. This is a relatively new way of 'being' that I argue portraiture should be able to attempt to render. It follows on then that this research, which situates itself around portraiture and place, should also look at the way that our understanding of being and place is changing in response to virtual spaces.

While I am not an artist who is particularly interested in making work *about* technology, new technological spaces are considered when examining the links between place and being in my work. By taking this theory and exploring it through

⁶ Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1999). P. 15-16

new forms of place - online and virtual – through the convention of portraiture, I will creatively examine the shifting frontiers of self, identity, place, and being.

I have chosen to structure this paper in a chronological fashion in order to chart the development and processes of my creative practice throughout my candidature. The paper thus reflects the unfolding explorations of my research as I developed one body of work into another. In Chapter One, I will clarify and define the terms, ‘place’ and ‘being’ in the context of my practice and research. This process will lead to an introduction to the main theorists that I have concentrated on in my exploration of *Portraiture and Place*, who have helped to shape the body of my research from seeing the notions of portraiture and place to be in an oppositional relationship, to a more subtle understanding of these concepts as indivisible and enmeshed. Alongside these theoretical explorations I will profile works undertaken at the early stages of my research. *A Loved One Sleeping*, *Towards the Light* and *The Path of Totality* (2013) approached portraiture through an anthropomorphic⁷ lens and provided vital conceptual and stylistic stepping-stones that led on to the works presented for examination. These works provided the launching point for my first major work for examination, *Hello* (2014). These animated lightboxes acted like a simulated human presence, reduced to a light source that attempts to communicate sentience through Morse code. I chart these earlier works against the evolving practice of artist and theorist, Victor Burgin.

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary defines Anthropomorphism as “Ascription of a human attribute or personality to anything impersonal or irrational”. A common example of this is when human characteristics are ascribed to animals. In my own early work in this project, I ascribed human characteristics to a building that I was working in – seeing it as a being on the edge of death. In this same body of work I also ascribed human characteristics to the objects left behind in this building that I photographed as ‘portraits’.

In Chapter Two I profile the photographic series, *Here/There* (2014). This series is an almost literal rendering of *Portraiture and Place*. The classically framed head-and-shoulders portraits depict each of my subjects wearing a virtual reality gaming mask, through which they are experiencing a simple exploration program of a house interior. Quite simply, we are looking at people looking at place – and yet we never see their faces and we never see what they can see. *Here/There* is discussed in relation to Eadweard Muybridge's famed *Animal Locomotion* (1887) series as well as contemporary photographic artist Wendy McMurdo, who creates uncanny photographic portraits of people engaging with technological and virtual worlds. Theoretically I explore the idea of being 'here and there', and in doing so I once again engage with the work of Malpas and Heidegger alongside Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias. Utilising this concept, I propose that virtual worlds are themselves a heterotopic space.

In Chapter 3 I explore the interactive work, *Are You There* (2014). This piece consists of a mirror, which turns away from the face offered to it, and offers instead a view of place. This work seeks to challenge the audience's sense of selfhood and asks them to consider their concept of identity beyond the borders of the body to incorporate the place that surrounds them. I have examined this work via Jacques Lacan's mirror theory, in particular the notion of the *Innenwelt/Umwelt* relationship. I again make reference to Foucault in relation to his writing on mirrors in *Of Other Spaces* (1986), and once again seek Malpas and Heidegger in relation to being-in-the-world. Exploring this work against Gary Hill's video-based interactive installation

Tall Ships (1992), I explore the role of interactivity in unsettling the viewer from the usual passive gallery dynamic, and how this destabilisation can engender a deeper engagement with a work. I also look at Dan Graham's *Two Viewing Rooms* (1975) and explore how it and *Are You There* both challenge the audience's sense of self and being.

In my conclusion, I reflect upon the central path of my research, namely how it went from a proposed exploration of binary opposites – place and portraiture – to a realisation of how these two notions are in fact, not opposites, but rather, two enmeshed concepts. I will reflect how through the practice led-research, this outcome became a new site for exploration and has come to constitute my creative interests and thus practice.

Chapter 1

The Expanded Portrait

*“The city, however does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines on a hand,
written in the corners of the streets...”*

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*. p.11

This chapter acts as a preamble of sorts. It will include a clarification of terms and definitions and also chart the manner in which I began shaping my methodology for exploring portraiture and place. I will present the development of my project through an examination of works that I undertook during the earlier stages of my candidature. I will chart these works against the artworks and theories of artist and theorist Victor Burgin. Burgin's work of late has shifted from being primarily a photographic artist, to developing a practice that incorporates computer simulations. This shift has reflected the way my own practice has developed beyond photography.

Place And Being

The term 'place' is difficult to define. Looking at a wide range of theorists, we can find examples of a multitude of definitions, many of which acknowledge the difficulty of making such a definition. The words 'place' and 'space' are sometimes offered in exchange for each other, but I would argue (as do others)⁹ that while each hold within them the stuff of the other, they are able to be teased apart enough to stand apart and defined. Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest look at the role of place and space in contemporary photography in their book, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective* (2011). They quote geographer Yi-Fu Tuan as saying that "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as one gets to know it better."¹⁰ They also quote another geographer, Tim Creswell, who concurs with Tuan's assertion by simply stating that place is "a meaningful location" and who argues that space is "a more abstract concept, evoking for instance, a sense of outer space or the spaces of geometry"¹¹. There is a sense that space can be unbounded, whereas place is a concept that is experienced in relation to, or through, human experience.

⁹ Descartes said in *Principles of Philosophy* that space and place are "closely related notions neither of which is to be understood independently of the body." Isaac Newton agrees with this notion, declaring that "Place is a part of space which a body takes up." Both of these examples are quoted by Jeff Malpas in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, p. 28.

¹⁰ Hilde van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective : Case Studies from Contemporary Art*(Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). P. 113

¹¹ Ibid.

Jeff Malpas, one of the primary theorists that I have concentrated on in my research, is very thorough in his analysis of space and place, charting the etymological origins of the terms and declaring that, "...the vocabulary of place and space alone is indicative of the way these are part of a network in which each term is inextricably embedded"¹². While I acknowledge these close relations of place and space, I also agree with Tuan and Creswell that the notion of place is one that is experienced *through self and being*, whereas space can often simply mean a geometrical extension. If we talk about place, we must also talk about space¹³, but for the purpose of this research, and in acknowledgement of the limitations of this paper, I will turn my focus solely to place, and not elaborate further about the links between place and space. Place, in relation to human experience, is most often place in relation to the body, as Edward Casey explores in *The Fate of Place* (1997). Casey charts how Kant, Whitehead, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty all emphasise the corporeal relationship involved in 'place'. Casey says,

"The more we reflect on place, however, the more we recognise it to be something not merely characterisable but actually experienced in qualitative terms...Indeed, how can one be in a place except *through* one's own body?"¹⁴

This emphasis on the 'being' inherent in 'place' elaborated by Casey and others is a relationship that I see as a distinct point that differentiates place from space and this is the logic for bringing together portraiture and place, not portraiture and space.

In looking at the enmeshed relationship of place and being I again return to Malpas who states that "...there is no possibility of understanding human existence – and especially human thought and experience other than through an understanding of place and locality, it follows that the inquiry into the mind or the self will be identical

¹² Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* P. 25

¹³ Particularly as there has been, according to Malpas in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* and Edward Casey in *Getting Back into Place* a primacy placed to 'space' in Western philosophy. Malpas argues in that "...place..(has been)..viewed as secondary to and derivative of spatiality." P. 27

¹⁴ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place : A Philosophical History*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). P. 204

with the inquiry into place.”¹⁵ This quote eloquently summarises the essence or kernel of what I am attempting to explore in my research.

This then leads to the task of defining the terms ‘self’ and ‘being’, terms that I will return to over many examples in this paper. Malpas articulates this term as simply “the question of being is itself always a question in which human being is necessarily enmeshed.”¹⁶ In this context, when I speak of being, I see this term as an amalgam of human being/self/identity. To look at being through the philosophy of Malpas, one is led to Heidegger and his notion of ‘being-in-the-world’. Malpas articulates this state as “an encounter in which self, other, and world are given together as a single unitary phenomenon”¹⁷. Heidegger describes a human being as *Dasein*, a German word that can be translated as ‘being there’. According to Heidegger the notion of being-in-the-world is not akin to, for example, water being in a glass. Rather, a *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world is an essential of being *Dasein*. He says,

“What is meant by “Being-in”? Our proximal reaction is to round out this expression to “Being-in” “in the world”, and we are inclined to understand this Being-in as ‘Being in something’... By this ‘in’ we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended ‘in’ space have to each other with regard to their location in that space...”¹⁸

It could be argued that Heidegger’s being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon, where *Dasein* (humans) are embedded in the world as much as the world is embedded in *Dasein*. In agreement with this assertion, Malpas defines being and place as elements nested within each other, where each notion is more a question than a definition. He says that the “...the question of being itself unfolds into the question of place.”¹⁹ Both the notion of being and the notion of place are difficult territories to negotiate and define and to some extent remain questions and ideas to ponder rather

¹⁵ Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* p. 15-16

¹⁶ Heidegger’s *Topology : Being, Place, World*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006). P. 15

¹⁷ Heidegger and the *Thinking of Place : Explorations in the Topology of Being*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012). P. 3

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*(New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

¹⁹ Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology : Being, Place, World*.

than strictly defined terms. Heidegger himself acknowledges this difficulty in *Being and Time* (1962) when he states, “you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being'. We, however, who used to think we understood it, have become perplexed.”²⁰ Malpas interprets Heidegger’s sense of ‘being’ as one that is related to temporal presence in the world where the ‘being’ emerges disclosed from, but also enmeshed within, that which is gathered around it²¹. This view can be extrapolated to reinforce the notion of ‘being’, and in that sense ‘self’, as being embedded within that which surrounds it. That being is embodied in place and place is embodied in being.

This is the view that I put forward as the reasoning to bring together portraiture and place. Simply put, one is in the other and vice versa. This notion of being-in-the-world has greatly influenced my aim of marrying portraiture and place. In my work, I do not see clear-cut defined boundaries between place and being, and thus I make work that explores the nuances and oscillations of these two states. This project is less of an exploration of the interstices between portraiture and place as it is a probing of two enmeshed and overlain concepts.

Early Works

I began this project with a preliminary interest in notions of place and space, and the human traces held within them, without ever depicting any human forms in my work. There was no particular logic or rationale to this decision, rather more an inclination to allude to beings in my work rather than depict them. My early works sought to present where portraiture may exist within place through anthropomorphifications of architectural interiors.

²⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*. P. 152

²¹ Malpas says in *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, “Heidegger understands the question of being as indeed a matter of the happening of the presence, where presence is not some simple "standing there" of the thing independently of all else, but is, indeed a matter of coming into relatedness with things in their sameness and difference, in their unity and multiplicity... this happening of presence or disclosedness is always the happening of a certain open realm in which, not only things, but we ourselves are disclosed and come to presence - in which we are gathered together with the things around us.” P. 15



Figure 1. *A Loved One Sleeping and Towards the Light*, 2013. Installation view at ArticulateUpstairs.

A Loved One Sleeping and Towards the Light (2013) were a series of photographs and video installation works that I exhibited at ArticulateUpstairs in 2013. The works were the result of a residency undertaken at Fraser Studios, which was part of the large-scale redevelopment of the Carlton Breweries site in Chippendale, Sydney. The artist studios were located in a ramshackle warehouse shell, earmarked for potential retail/office space. I was one of the last group of artists to inhabit the site before its redevelopment – thus a spectre of ‘passing’ hung over the space, and this feeling was central in the creation of my works. During my time at Frasers Studios, I responded strongly to the atmosphere of the warehouse building. I would often work at night when the building was empty and very quiet. This solitude intensified my communion with the space and like in Italo Calvino’s city of Zaira, it seemed to me that this building soaked up memories, events and human presence, ‘like the lines on a hand’.²² Standing on a corner of a narrow street, the warehouse, while sturdily constructed, seemed to transform into a more and more fragile being as time moved on and looming towers sprung up around it in an effort to redevelop the surrounding area.

²² Italo Calvino, “Cities & Memory - part 3” in *Invisible Cities*, London: Vintage Digital New Ed edition 2010



Figure 2. *A Loved One Sleeping #2*, 2013. Archival Pigment Print, 50x40cm.

My strategy during the residency was to work in response to the studio site, both to the warehouse itself, and the surrounding shifting urban environment, and to focus particularly on the tension between the two. The work I created treated the space in an anthropomorphic manner, where found ephemera from the building was photographed and filmed using framing and composition devices borrowed from portraiture. This strategy was employed to emphasise the resonant links between being and space.



Figure 3. *A Loved One Sleeping #5*, 2013. Archival Pigment Print, 50x40cm.

In *A Loved One Sleeping*, I photographed the capricious collection of objects that were left behind at the studios after the building was just about to be handed back to the developers. This odd collection of ephemera – bricks, string, milk crates, and trestles somehow became supercharged memorials to what was. These inanimate objects, lying abandoned where they fell, acted as stand-ins for lived experience. I framed them in a formally constructed, central position within the photograph, positioning them between landscape and portraiture. My intention was that these object ‘sitters’ would suggest transient and unseen human presences and that the works would speak of the shifts and slips that play out in a dynamic built environment.



Figure 4. *Towards the Light*, 2013. 5 channel video installation, dimensions variable.

During the time that I worked in the warehouse, the view from the windows changed daily, with the light available to it ever-diminishing as it became increasingly overshadowed by large multi-storey residential towers. This dimming effect was both a physical and metaphysical representation of the certain extinguishing of this creative space; it was this sensation that I explored in the multi-channel video installation *Towards the Light*. This multi-channel work is hung on the wall, salon style, like a grouping of portraits, complete with oval cut mounts. The oval, to me, suggesting the

human face, was a way to infer human presence on the screens where there was none. The oval also referenced the look of the Victorian-era post-mortem daguerreotypes²³.



Figure 5. *Towards the Light*, 2013. 5 channel video installation (detail), dimensions variable.

The video works were simple tracking shots towards the windows of the Fraser Studios space, where the camera would be flooded with light as it got to the window. These screens were interspersed with video portraits of my fellow artists filmed sitting within the space, with their eyes closed. The effect of the closed eyes was twofold: the contrast between the visible movements of each artist's body as they shifted and breathed; and their unseeing, silent eyes created a tension reflective of the tension inherent within this site as it teetered on the edge of its demise. During the shooting, all of my sightless subjects reported a heightened awareness of the space around them via their other senses. I became aware of the importance of this 'awareness' as I looked through the lens and saw how this seemed to translate into a 'sinking' of the subject

²³ Daguerreotypes were an early photographic technique that were in widespread use during the 1840's. The post mortem photograph was a popular and normal facet of the mourning process in American and European culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For me, the striking effect of these images is the way that the line between the dead and the living is blurred; this is emphasized when the dead are propped up as if they are still alive, often pictured amongst their family members.

into the space, where the sitter became enmeshed and part of the very fabric of the building itself. This revelation - this sinking of the being into the place - was a major launching point to the future direction of my research.

Victor Burgin's *A Place To Read*



Figure 6. Victor Burgin, *A Place to Read*, 2010. Digital Image Projection (colour, Silent, Loop Duration 4'05") © Victor Burgin; photo: Henning Moser, http://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/5962-victor-burgin_ (Accessed September 10, 2014).

Victor Burgin has also created responsive work to a site undergoing urban renewal in his 2010 work, *A Place to Read*. As resident artist during the “Lives and Works in Istanbul” program, Burgin concentrated his focus on Taşlık Kahve, a coffee house built by Sedad Hakki Eldem. The building and surrounding gardens, created in a combination of an Ottoman and Modernist style was mostly demolished in the 1980’s, when the site was redeveloped into a “a hideous orientalist luxury hotel”²⁴.

²⁴ Victor Burgin, "Other Criteria - Interview with David Company," *Freize*, no. 155 (2013).

Burgin “disinterred from oblivion”²⁵ surviving historical photographs and drawings of Taşlık Kahve in order to depict the site through a computer modelled virtual environment.

Burgin says of historical sites and events: “to show the event ‘as it really was’ is not an alternative. It never ‘really was’ any one thing – past and present alike are sites of contestation where radically different perspectives collide.”²⁶ In this way, the work is a memorial gesture – not a way to recreate the past, but rather to create a new living memory. This sense of memory creation is amplified in the way that the work was presented. Functioning as a looped video projection, the work would be subject to variations of ‘beginnings’ dependent on when the viewer entered the room of the projection. The ‘narrative’ would also be subject to how long each viewer decided to stay with the work, before moving on elsewhere in the gallery space. In this way each viewer creates their own memory space, their own memorial, and their own relationship to the place presented. In presenting a work that is specifically designed to be viewed in a gallery setting, where viewers drift in and out, versus a cinematic setting, where the established mode is to watch from beginning to end, Burgin comments on the way that historical place, or indeed any place, is mediated through the viewer. This looped format, one that I utilised in *Towards the Light*, also initiates active contemplation. Through the literal ‘stepping-in’ of the viewer to the video space in a gallery setting – creating their own starting point to the work – the viewer becomes a more active participant. This ‘stepping-in’ is also a step into the frame of the work, where each individual, eventually withdrawing through their own volition, emerges with their own unique experience. Like the ‘sinking’ of the subject in the space that I discussed above when shooting the *Towards the Light* video installation, the format of a video-looped work allows enmeshment of self and place through the agency of the participant.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.



Figure 7. Victor Burgin, *A Place to Read*, 2010. Digital Image Projection (color, Silent, Loop Duration 4'05") © Victor Burgin; Source: <http://www.artslant.com/ber/events/show/160788-a-place-to-read>. (Accessed 5th October 2014)

Burgin's *A Place to Read* is a work that charts the reciprocal traces left between an individual and their place. Burgin says about his work, "My project has been to disinter the memory of the coffee house as it was at the time it was built, to leave a trace in Istanbul of one of the traces that Istanbul has left in me"²⁷. The emphasis on the traces left between self and place is also strongly suggested in my own works, *A Loved One Sleeping* and *Towards the Light*. While we can see commonalities in these works through trace and memorialisation, my works diverge from Burgin's at the point in which we approach place. In *A Place to Read* Burgin is attempting to unearth, simulate and in some subjective fashion, recreate the Taşlık Kahve coffee house. My own works sought rather to record a portrait of the 'passing on' of the Frasers Studios site, inspired by Victorian mourning rituals, and in particular post-mortem photography of the nineteenth century. In treating my site in an anthropomorphic

²⁷ *Parallel Texts : Interviews and Interventions About Art*(London: Reaktion Books, 2011). P. 227

fashion, the realization of my current methodology of looking at place through portraiture was realised.

The Path Of Totality



Figure 8. *The Path of Totality* 2013. Installation view at A-M Gallery November 2013. Photo: Amber Lang.

The Path of Totality (2013) was an exhibition of photographs and animated lightboxes that I exhibited at A-M gallery in November 2013. This solo exhibition drew upon the experience of a total solar eclipse that I photographed in Far North Queensland in 2012. My intention was to focus on the liminal point existing between individual consciousness and surrounding place during the sublime event of the eclipse. The works for the exhibition attempted to create portraits mainly through sky-scape imagery. Like the *Towards the Light* video installation, where I used the oval motif to indicate a sense of a portrait, in *The Path of Totality* I utilised a circular motif to suggest a human presence where there was none pictured. The circle in these works is suggestive of a face, of eyes, of a viewfinder, and also of the lens itself.

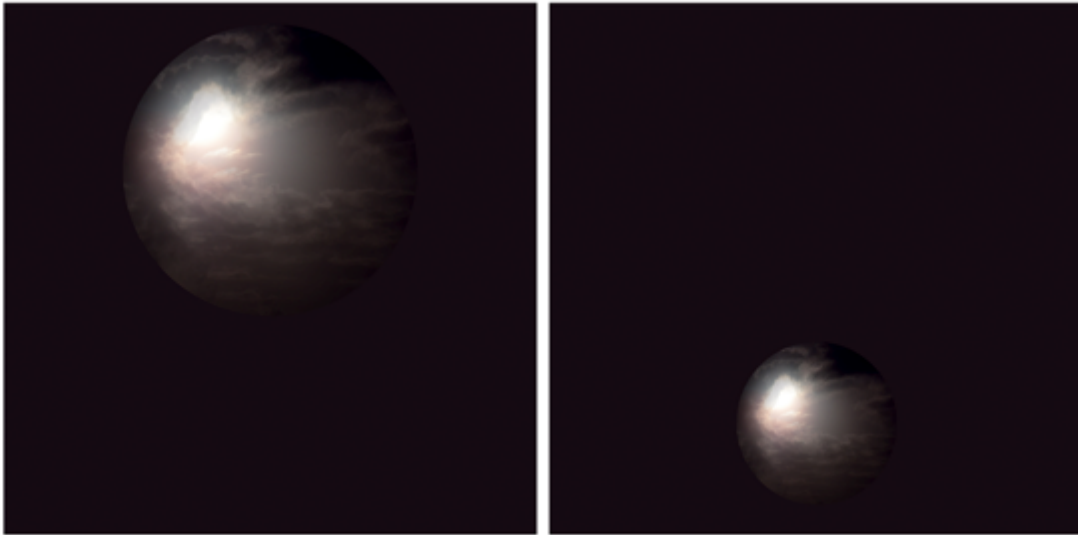


Figure 9. *Portrait #3 & 4*, 2013. Archival pigment prints, 50x50cm.

This body of work focused on representing the dissolution of the boundaries between self and place. This was heightened during the uncanny experience of totality, where the sun is completely covered by the moon and casts a unique, silvery colour onto the land, creating a whole new impression of the surrounding landscape. In my own experience it felt as if my vision was overwhelmed and that I was at once experiencing blindness and illumination, inciting a hyper-awareness of self, space and vision. I felt as if I was as much in the sky as I was on the land.

I explored this phenomenological perspective and the hyper-awareness described in the four animated lightboxes that I created for the exhibition. Charting the oscillations between light and dark, each lightbox was custom made with three concentric circular rings of LED lights laid in the frame. Using the programming language C++ each individual LED could be controlled and each lightbox was programmed to illuminate slowly, starting from the centre ring and moving outward to the periphery and then contracting back again. Like an iris opening up slowly, this lighting effect dramatically changed the experience of viewing the Duratrans image that fronted each lightbox.



Figure 10. *The Dark of Lightness #1* – 2013 Installation view and detail. Unique Lightbox, Duratrans, microprocessor, LED lights. 50x50x5cm.

Each image went from being barely visible during a brief pause between each loop of illumination when the lightbox is completely dark, to being almost blown out and light-flooded during the period when all of the LEDs are at full illumination. This loop was timed to the 2 minutes and 2 seconds of totality that occurred in the eclipse. I undertook this ‘animation’ of the traditionally static lightbox in order to reflect the cognitive process of being overwhelmed by both presence and absence of light that occurred during the eclipse.

The static, Duratrans image took on dynamic properties when subjected to the animated light. This animated light meant that each image moved from being dissolved into blackness to being dissolved into lightness and then returning to a dissolved darkened state at the end of the loop. My intention was for these dissolves to also reference the dissolution of boundaries between self and place – the enmeshment of portraiture and place. This was a personal, phenomenological and

conscious exploration of self and place. Experiencing the eclipse confirmed my interest in exploring the porous boundaries between individual and place.

Hello



Figure 11. *Hello*, 2014. Installation view at Branch 3D gallery. Custom-made programmed lightbox, microprocessor, LED lights.

Hello (2014) consists of two robotic animated lightboxes that explore the relationship between people, place and light. These animated lightboxes followed on from the lightboxes that I created for *The Path of Totality*. The work was inspired by a serendipitous act of removing the Duratrans image from one of the lightboxes while it was still switched on and illuminating. Watching the play of light through the white layer of perspex that served as the baffle for the Duratrans immediately evoked a sense of sentience. Despite the colour difference there was a resemblance between my

lightbox and the image of HAL9000²⁸ from Stanley Kubrick's *2001:A Space Odyssey* (1968). Observing the first pinprick of light expanding outward, the image suggested the iris of an eye with this effect being emphasised when two lightboxes were placed side by side. This sense of sentience and the suggestion of human form inherent in the circular shape of the lightbox was a natural progression from the work begun in *A Loved One Sleeping*, *Towards the Light* and also *The Path of Totality*.



Figure 12. *Hello* – 2014. Custom-made programmed lightbox, microprocessor, LED lights. 50x50x5cm each.

Hello is a portrait that suggests traces of a human form by subtly simulating the human eye via an aperture through which light is emitted. The round aperture within each lightbox is at once a light source, communication portal, face and eye. This work is created not through a camera, but rather through light and a computer. By removing the pictorial image from the lightbox, this portrait is, in the words of

²⁸ Standing for Heuristically programmed Algorithmic computer, HAL9000 was a sentient computer that was the primary antagonist in the film. The filmmaker rendered the conversations between HAL and 'Dave' the only other character in the film, through the imagery of a round, red light in a round frame.

Burgin, simulating the portrait as opposed to attempting to represent the portrait.²⁹ I undertook this ‘simulation’ in order to stretch what I viewed as the hemmed-in boundaries of portraiture, as well as stretch my own practice beyond the lens.

This simulation of the eye amplifies the humanoid qualities of the piece and is further enhanced by the Morse code programmed into the lightboxes. The Morse code programmed into the work was a way of further emphasising the humanoid qualities of the piece and allows each lightbox to ‘communicate’ to the other and also to the audience. This communication takes the form of an attempted conversation, an excerpt of which is transcribed below (when installed lightbox A is on the left and lightbox B is on the right):

Lightbox A	Lightbox B
<p>..... . -... -... ---</p> <p>Hello</p>	<p>.- -... . / -... --- ..- / - -... . -... ..</p> <p>Are you there?</p>
<p>..... . -... .</p> <p>Here</p>	<p>..... . -... .</p> <p>Here</p>
<p>..... . -... .</p> <p>Here</p>	<p>..... . -... .</p> <p>Here</p>

Figure 13. Transcription of the programming document for *Hello*.

This dialogue is less of a conversation and more of an attempt at communication. The repetition of the word ‘here’ was used to reflect the relationship between a human

²⁹ Victor Burgin, "Camera as Object and Process: An Interview with Victor Burgin by Ryan Bishop and Sean Cubitt," *Theory, Culture and Society* (2013). Victor Burgin says, "where photography represents the object in front of the camera, the computer simulates the object itself."

presence and place. The word 'here' in the Oxford English Dictionary is defined as, "In this place; in the place (country, region etc.) where the person is speaking is, or places himself", and also "in answer to a call or summons"³⁰. In *Hello* the Morse code of the word 'here' takes on both of these meanings. My aim is to draw attention to a sense of human presence through the flashing light.

Hello is one of the three artworks for examination that explore portraiture and place. This work built upon the bodies of work before it, *A Loved One Sleeping*, *Towards the Light* and *The Path of Totality* where portraiture was indicated through images of place rendered anthropomorphically. *Hello* references this anthropomorphism through the repetition of the circular motif, but by removing the pictorial image from this work, I aim to focus attention on the concept of 'being-in-the-world' rather than just depicting a defined 'being'.

³⁰ <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/86141?rskey=jRQ54N&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid1753949> accessed 15th September 2014.

Chapter 2

Here/There

“I do not know when you have had time to visit all the countries you describe to me. It seems to me you have never moved from this garden”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* p. 103

In this chapter I will examine the photographic series *Here/There* (2014). In the previous chapter my creative work explored portraits without a human face or form, but in this work I return the physical body to the portrait. Taking the classic form of head and shoulder portraits, *Here/There* depicts its subjects wearing virtual reality gaming masks. By pointing my camera at these people during their virtual exploration, this series looks at people looking at place – a seemingly straightforward intersection of portraiture and place. In addition to this intersection, I was also interested in the notion of nested selves and nested places that occur within the heterotopic landscape of the internet and virtual worlds. Such links between self and place are reflected in the theories Jeff Malpas and his reading of Heidegger’s works about place and being-in-the-world, as well as Foucault’s notion of heterotopic spaces. These theories are further elaborated by pioneering photographer Eadweard Muybridge and contemporary artist, Wendy McMurdo.

The Here and There



Figure 14. *Here/There* #2 & 4. 2014. Archival Pigment Prints. 80x53cm

Here/There (2014) is a series of 13 photographic portraits that explore the intersection of portraiture and place through the act of looking. Each of my subjects was wearing a virtual reality gaming mask with the 'game' being viewed actually just a simple dimensional exploration program of a house interior. With the mask in place, the head movements of each subject dictated what they saw in each room, replicating real life visual exploration, e.g. if they looked up, they would see the ceiling, if they look down, they would see the floor, etc. I chose to photograph my subjects exploring an immersive virtual environment in order to look at the act of looking at place and to illustrate the sense of *slipping between worlds* that occurs between 'virtual' and 'real' and 'place' and 'being'. In making this work incorporating virtual worlds, it's important to briefly note that the choice to work photographically was a deliberate one. I explore the relationship to intangible virtual worlds by using the tangible photograph, itself a virtual object. As Burgin highlights, the photograph is a "virtual double of the real".³¹ In *Here/There* this is explored through the layering of the virtuality of the photographic object to the virtuality of the intangible computer simulation of reality.

In creating this work, the shooting process was very different to creating a normal photographic portrait. Whilst each subject was placed in a photographic studio in a formal position directly in front of the lens, (a place that often incites self-conscious behaviour), the wearing of the virtual reality headset short-circuited any self-conscious action. The headset, not only covered my subjects' eyes from the act of being looked at, but also immediately transported them to another immersive world. Once the goggles were placed over their heads, I observed how their awareness of themselves 'in reality' – as a subject of a portrait in a photographic studio – reduced to almost nothing. Their awareness, their vision, and the sense of their being-in-the-world was in the virtual place. This was evidenced by the way that they moved in front of the camera in a completely artless fashion, with no shred of obvious awareness of how they 'looked'.

³¹ Victor Burgin, "The Location of Virtual Experience," in *Little Madneses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena and Cultural Experience*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013). P. 28

Functioning like a mask, the goggles worn by the subjects not only placed them in a zone of apparent unselfconsciousness; they also removed most facial details - the hallmarks of the traditional portrait. The mask, by removing facial details encourages the gaze towards the direction of each sitter's head as they themselves gaze elsewhere. Another feature of the work was to place my subjects in a dark room devoid of spatial detail. By combining the darkened space, with the black mask and black clothes of the sitters I tried to emphasise a point of dissolution between the subject and their surrounds, as if the boundaries between the two were dissolving. We gaze upon these people as they themselves gaze upon other worlds. We watch them watching, and yet we are never privy to what they see or what they look like. The subjects are centred in the frame and are seemingly receptive candidates to the portrait, but we cannot get any sense of who or where they are. We are viewing these beings here and also there.



Figure 15. *Here/There* #12 & 13, 2014. Archival Pigment Prints. 80x53cm

While my previous work, explored in Chapter 1, sought to create a portrait through images of place, in *Here/There* I have sought to insert the figure back into the portrait, and create an image of place through an image of a person. Instead of an image of

someone, the intention is that these are images of *somewhere*. While my subjects were 'here' in front of me to photograph, they appeared to be more 'there' – in a state of multiple 'theres'. Between 'looking' and being 'looked at', between the 'virtual' world and the 'real' world, and between 'being' and 'place'.

Nested Places, Nested Selves

The notion of oscillating between worlds is articulated in the work of Jeff Malpas in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999). He says, "...places are juxtaposed and intersect with one another; places also contain places so that one can move inwards to find other places nested within a place."³² This concept of nested places (a place within a place) is one that is clearly delineated within cyber and virtual spaces, and one that I have chosen to highlight in the *Here/There* series. Malpas states that, "... being and place are inextricably bound together in a way that does not allow one to be seen merely as an "effect" of the other, rather being emerges only in and through place."³³ When discussing the notion of 'being' here, it should be noted that the definition of 'being' is inextricably bound with a 'human being',³⁴ and in that case I seek to extend this definition of 'being' to also being equivalent to that notion of 'self' in the world. If we accept this notion of self and place as entwined, and we also accept the notion of nested places, then by extension there must also exist the concept of nested selves (selves within selves) within and through these places within places. *Here/There* hopes to illustrate this concept by contemplating the multi-layered and 'nested' places that are inherent in virtual worlds yet are paradoxically not visible in the artwork itself. The subjects in this piece are in a place which is nested within another place – their bodies are sitting in a blackened void, (that of the photographic studio), but they are experiencing the multiplicity of places that can occur through virtual worlds that as viewers we cannot see.

³² Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* P. 34

³³ *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*. P. 6

³⁴ Malpas states in *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, "the question of being is itself always a question in which human being is necessarily enmeshed". P. 15

This sense of nested places within virtual worlds and the internet also suggests Foucault's notion of heterotopic spaces. Foucault defines heterotopias as counter-sites to the rest of society. These are places beyond places that, while potentially locatable in reality, function more as social sites beyond the significance of their physical location. Examples include the prison, the museum and the cemetery – spaces where specific functions of society (and often acts of deviance) are performed in isolation to the rest. Most pertinent for this discussion is Foucault's definition of the third principle of heterotopia. Foucault states that this third heterotopic space "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."³⁵ He names the cinema, theatre and garden as examples of this third principle. It can also be argued that the internet and virtual reality spaces can be encompassed within this third principle, in that technological landscapes have an ability to encapsulate "a whole series of places that are foreign to one another"³⁶. Helen Westgeest reads Foucault's heterotopic spaces as "necessarily fragmented"³⁸, but I would argue that a better term than fragmented is 'nested', recalling Malpas's notions of nested places. When we are 'being' in several 'places' at once, as in the case of virtual worlds, we are experiencing nested places, which then leads onto nested selves. The intersection of technology and self mirrors the intersection of place and being. In the *Here/There* series, I'm interested in how these 'virtual' heterotopic spaces act upon the boundaries of identity, self and being.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986). p. 25

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁸ Helen Westgeest, "The Concept of Place in Photography in Multimedia Artworks," in *Take Place : Photography and Place from Multiple Perspectives*, ed. Helen Westgeest, *Antennae* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009). P. 116

The Frozen Gaze

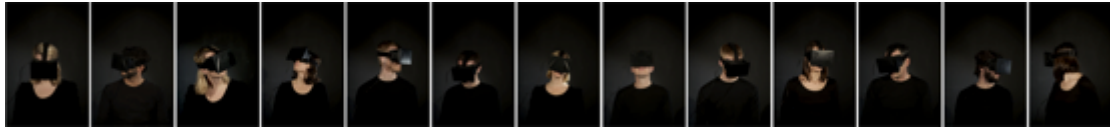


Figure 16. *Here/There*, 2014, installation view. Archival Pigment Prints

The title of the series, *Here/There*, was deliberately chosen in order to highlight the notion of *being here and there*. I am interested in being-ness as a state of oscillation, between the here and the there, the real and the virtual. The subjects depicted are not fixed to a point in time and space, but rather fixed by the freezing of the photograph. In the presentation of this series I have created a long horizontal line of portraits. I attempt to invoke the sense of a temporal visual landscape, where the variances of poses resemble at once both undulations in a horizon line and also freeze-frames in a video timeline. By presenting this elongated line of photographic portraits, there is both a visual and a conceptual tie to Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* series.



Figure 17. *Animal Locomotion* Vol 7. Eadweard Muybridge 1872 - 1885.

[http://www.muybridge.org/Other/Animal-Loocomotion-Vol-](http://www.muybridge.org/Other/Animal-Loocomotion-Vol-7/15860509_Lkt8W4#!i=1337450637&k=HTMZNxM)

[7/15860509_Lkt8W4#!i=1337450637&k=HTMZNxM](http://www.muybridge.org/Other/Animal-Loocomotion-Vol-7/15860509_Lkt8W4#!i=1337450637&k=HTMZNxM) (Accessed 30th September 2014)

Begun in 1872 and first published in 1887, Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* series was a revolution in what was called 'instantaneous' photography. Muybridge first came to capture rapid action through photography when commissioned to photograph racehorses so that their owner could better understand their movement in space. Through photography, Muybridge was able to allow the naked eye to see the vectors of fast motion for the very first time. His technological breakthrough was deemed at the time to "stop motion - that is to say capture the animate reality of nature"³⁹, meaning that for the first time, the photograph lent expansion to the human gaze, beyond that which it could capture by itself. This new vision illuminated an element of the world that whilst was known to exist, had never actually been able to be recorded. Muybridge went on to create thousands more images over the course of his career, with his images of human movement breaking down the movement of the body in space.



Figure 18. *Animal Locomotion* Vol 7. 1872 – 1885. Source: http://www.muybridge.org/Other/Animal-Loconotion-Vol-7/15860509_Lkt8W4#!i=1337452603&k=fNpmS25 (Accessed 30th September 2014).

In Muybridge's images, the figure is isolated in space and removed from its place in the world so that we can solely concentrate on the nuances of its movements. Like the decontextualisation of an artefact in a museum, we are guided to examine these figures objectively. Tom Gunning writes in 'Never Seen This Picture Before: Muybridge in

³⁹ Phillip Prodger et al., *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement* (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University in association with Oxford University Press, 2003). P. VII

Multiplicity', that Muybridge's detailed rendering of the locomotion of a figure in space is an "exploration of the zone between stillness and motion"⁴⁰ that is fascinating because it presents something that our eyes cannot "verify"⁴¹. In *Here/There* I also isolate my figure in space, but the 'locomotion' that I seek to record is a potentially more problematic one to capture photographically. While Muybridge was able to create a fast enough shutter speed to accurately capture movement in space, I fear that there is no such camera technique to show the movement of 'being' between the 'real' and the 'virtual'. As such the *Here/There* series relies on subjectivity and allusion. While I was able to photograph my sitters exploring virtual space, I cannot show the 'locomotion' of their selves oscillating between real and virtual places. In this work I allude to the movement between worlds by the repetitious use of black elements so that visually, there is the suggestion of dissolving boundaries between the figure, their surrounding place and the virtual reality mask that propels them elsewhere.

Animal Locomotion and *Here/There* both capture the body at a new technological threshold. Both works presents what Gunning sees as "the transformations of modern life brought on by technological change".⁴² Gunning further notes that depicting this change makes "visible a drama that would otherwise remain invisible: the physical body navigating this modern space of calculation"⁴³. Like Muybridge's breaking down the vectors of movement, the *Here/There* series seeks to deconstruct the immersive relationship between the individual and their virtual place in the world into a concrete photographic object. Resembling a composition of decomposition, my work attempts to look at the looking at place and also the oscillating movement of the self between the nested places of technological spaces. Ultimately, both Muybridge's and my own work aims to deconstruct the "reality that we might not be able to see clearly or accurately with our own eyes"⁴⁴, and in doing so expand vision and understanding of the human in space.

⁴⁰ Tom Gunning, "Never Seen This Picture Before: Muybridge in Multiplicity," in *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement*, ed. Phillip Prodger (Stanford, CA: 2003). P. 227

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Prodger et al., *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement*. P. 4

Technological Heterotopias - Wendy McMurdo



Figure 19. Algorithmic Boy (i), 2013, Wendy McMurdo. Source: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/cream/doctoral-programme/current-phd-researchers/wendy-mcmurdo>. (Accessed 1st October 2014)

Through virtual reality, avatars, gaming, and the internet we can simultaneously be being-in-the-world in many locations at once. Our being-in-the-world can be tracked physically; by facial data points and social media images and check-ins, to tangentially; through the metadata trails that we leave in our wake – all potentially occurring simultaneously. This way of being-in-the-world seems to suggest the notion of a nested self, a self that is simultaneously here and there, this ‘here and there’ aligned with the sense of nested place that Malpas elaborates.

The concept of a nested self, a state of being-in-the-world that is both here and there is seen powerfully in the photographic work of Wendy McMurdo. Since 1995 McMurdo has been examining the heterotopic nature of virtual worlds through her photographic work. Working primarily with children models, McMurdo creates photographic portraits that examine the relationship between science, technology and identity. Her work depicts children engaging with technology, from gaming consoles to computers, in a distinctly uncanny way. Looking at McMurdo's images, there is an underlying sense that her subjects are enmeshed in an *other* world. Using children as her models is something that she describes as an obvious decision when making work about potential futures. She states:

“The child has often been represented as a kind of conduit for the unknown ... The image of the child as a tabula rasa, a blank slate onto which our desires can be written, is one that is also very common.”⁴⁵

David Hopkins, writing in a recent exhibition catalogue of McMurdo's work, says that children also have an ability “to enter, via play, into other levels of reality”⁴⁶, perhaps suggesting that the tabula rasa state of a child makes them more able to slip into other levels of reality, and by extension, into other worlds and places.

Francis McKee, writing on McMurdo's work, states, “The banalities of daily life are erased and the children seem almost blind or to be in a visionary state - what they see is not within the frame of the image, perhaps not even in this world.”⁴⁷ This notion of vision out of the frame of the ‘real’ world, a visionary state that is at once mysterious and intriguing, could be argued to be the vision of a nested self that exists in nested places. In McMurdo's photographs, we see children here *and* there.

⁴⁵ Interview with Wendy McMurdo by Duncan Forbes. Wendy McMurdo, "Digital Play," *Source*, no. 70 (2012).

⁴⁶ David Hopkins, "Wendy Mcmurdo: Collected Works -1995 - 2012," ed. Street Level Photoworks(Glasgow: Street Level Photoworks, 2014).

⁴⁷ Francis McKee, "Now Objects Perceive Me," in *Wendy Mcmurdo*(Spain: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca, 1998). P. 40



Figure 20. *The Games Hall (i) Edinburgh* 2007. Wendy McMurdo, Source: <http://www.artphotoindex.com/api/#photographer/Wendy-McMurdo/13289> (Accessed 1st October 2014)

This notion of slipping between worlds is highlighted by digital manipulation in many of McMurdo's images. In *The Games Hall (i)* (2007), McMurdo conjures up a forest of trees that suggests where she, or her avatar may be, suggesting that this girl is not only just present within the named Games Hall, but also simultaneously elsewhere. The forest, overlaid into the 'real' world of the games hall, seemingly depicts the nesting of the virtual world into the real world, or vice versa.

In *Algorithmic girl (iv)* (2013) McMurdo again highlights nested places by the use of a line drawn rectangular portal. Hovering in front of the girl absorbed in her tablet device, it acts as a marker to another world, like a doorway that would lead to more doorways.

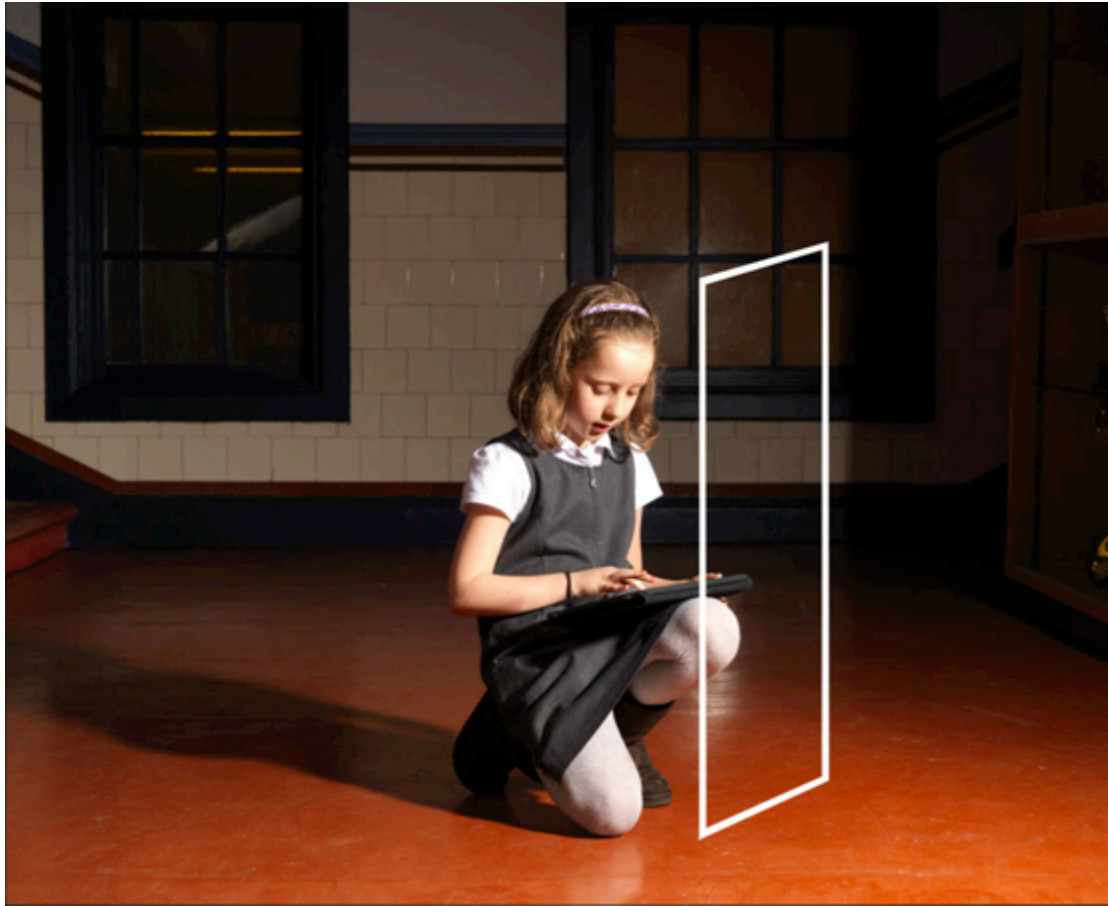


Figure 21. *Algorithmic girl (iv)* 2013. Wendy McMurdo. Source: <http://www.someoneiknow.net/wendymcmurdo.html>. Accessed 1st October 2014

McMurdo's *Algorithmic girl* is seemingly at the edge of this portal, and we are uncertain if she is on one side of it or the other. There is a suggestion that if this was a video work, she would be moving across its boundaries, or the portal would move across her. Like the *Here/There* series, Wendy McMurdo's photographs illustrate a virtual world, "a world inaccessible to us, the spectators"⁴⁸. While McMurdo gives hints as to the features of this world, through the placement of trees in *The Games Hall* or the 'portal' in *Algorithmic girl*, I do not give such clues in *Here/There*. This was a deliberate strategy, in that the series is not seeking to illustrate my subjects in a specific place, rather it is seeking to illustrate their 'place in the world' - moving between 'real' and 'virtual' space.

⁴⁸ Vikki Bell, "Illusio and Mimesis in the Age of the Avatar: On Wendy Mcmurdo's *the Skater*," in *Wendy Mcmurdo: The Skater*(Cardiff, Wales.: Ffotogallery Wales Ltd, 2009). P. 17

In this way McMurdo is depicting a portrait of Foucault's heterotopia of the third principle, where we can see not only the superimposition of several spaces, but also, by the fact that each girl is holding a technological device, the means through which this is achieved. Foucault states "the museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century"⁴⁹, looking at McMurdo's images it appears that we can extend this argument to state that the internet, gaming and virtual reality are the heterotopias of the twentieth and twenty first century.

Just as place and being are inextricably bound together, so we can see that the juxtaposition and displacement of the multiple selves and places are also inextricably bound together. This does not allow us to say categorically that one's being-in-the-world is certainly more *here* than *there*, but rather, I would argue that our being-in-the-world is expanded by the nested and heterotopic worlds that we inhabit. Could we then argue that McMurdo's work, and by extension, my own *Here/There* series, are examples of expanded portraiture? Do these portraits unpack our sitter's being-in-the-world like a Russian doll? I would argue that by depicting and examining the interaction of an individual and the technological innovation that allows them to 'be' in multiple places all at once, this is portraiture that shows the expansive potentials of being.

⁴⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." P. 26

Chapter 3

Are You There

“Looking-glass, Looking-glass, on the wall, who in this land is the fairest of all?”

Snow White. Brothers Grimm

In this chapter I will discuss the interactive portrait *Are You There* (2014). This work challenges the notion that the face and body should be the means to capture ‘self’ in a portrait. The work does not depict a body, yet relies on the bodies of the audience to activate it, which aims to reference the personal, subjective and experiential nature of the intersection of place and being. I shall explore this work by examining the notion of self and identity and its relationship with photography. I will also look at Lacan’s Mirror Theory as well as topological theories based on Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world. Finally I aim to contextualise the work alongside artist Gary Hill’s interactive portrait *Tall Ships* (1992), and Dan Graham’s *Two Viewing Rooms* (1992).

The Self And The Portrait



Figure 22. *Are You There*, 2014. Mirror, plinth, computer, facial detection software, LCD screen, micro camera, servo motors. Installation view at SCA Galleries, October 2014.

Are You There is an interactive work that explores portraiture and its intersection with the notion of place. Consisting of an oval shaped mirror sitting atop an elongated plinth, *Are You There* is an interactive artwork that was designed to be deliberately mimetic of the human form. The plinth acts as the body, and the mirror acts as a head. The work stands in the gallery space like a humanoid structure, standing still until activated by the proximity of a person attempting to see their reflection. Then, through facial detection software programmed to interact with a micro camera embedded in the mirror frame, the mirror turns away from the face presented to it and denies this reflection. The mirror, by turning away from the person who approaches, is saying 'no'. This mirror denies us our self-image and appearance.

In denying the view of self and denying an opportunity to glance at 'self' the work echoes what Susan Bright describes as the "impossible image"⁵⁰ of self. In *The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography* (2010), Bright contends that the notion of mimetic representation within portraiture is ultimately a doomed crusade. She argues that "The 'self'...is always in some respects also an 'other'"⁵¹ – meaning that a portrait or self-portrait can never truly represent, embody or reflect a person's inner being. This idea is built upon the notion that a photographic portrait functions as 'double', and therefore 'other,' separated from the 'original'.

The heterogeneous subject/object dynamic of portraiture is one that reverberates throughout my research. If we accept the idea of the *failure* of representing the self through the mode of portraiture, (a mode that traditionally aims to capture the self), then perhaps we have the reason for expanding the boundaries of portraiture beyond the face and body in order to encompass place. In *Are You There* the mirror turns away from the face that is offered, and instead offers an alternative view – that of the reflection of the exhibition space itself – a reframing of the place in which the viewer is located. This bait-and-switch tactic aims to challenge the audience's sense of selfhood and asks them to consider their concept of identity beyond the borders of the body to incorporate the place that surrounds them.

⁵⁰ Bright, *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography*. P. 8

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 8



Figure 23. *Are You There*, 2014, installation view and detail.

Are You There is a work that is split into two parts. On one side of a wall panel the mirror plinth stands and invites the audience to interact, and on the other side, there is a monitor showing the live video feed of the view from the mirror's camera. This live feed captures the attempted interactions between the viewer and the swivelling mirror that turns away. These elements are divided in order to make it even more difficult for the viewers to 'get at' the image of themselves. This element of the work amplifies Bright's notion of the 'impossible image'. Bright further states,

“... there is no 'true' self...the self splits, merges, fractures and becomes so performed and so constructed that nothing authentic remains: it becomes an 'every' man or a 'no' man, and ultimately a true self is nothing more than a fabrication and a void”⁵².

By dividing this work into two separated spaces, I aim to emphasise this schism.

⁵² Ibid.



Figure 24. *Are You There*, 2014, installation view.

Are You There shows us at best a passing glimpse of a face as the mirror/camera moves away to avoid giving the participant their reflection. Seeing the most fleeting glimpse of our face emphasises the sense of rejection that occurs when the mirror turns away from us. This feeling of 'rejection' that the work engenders adds to the humanoid qualities of the piece. When the mirror swivels away it seems as if this rejection is a personal slight against us. While this work is not about rejection, it is a reading that can occur when encountering a situation of having our visage denied to us. The point of this supposed 'rejection' is not rejection as such, but rather an attempt to reject the face and body as the sole defining features of self. The work offers up instead the result of the mirror's attempt to avoid the face presented to it - we see oddly framed views of the room in which the work is placed - walls, doors, ceilings, floors - a portrait of place ensues in place of a portrait of a person. This work, by turning away from the face (the physical structure that has been considered in the past to be directly

indexical to what lies within the character⁵³) instead offers us place, and asks that this view be reconsidered in relation to our notion of self.

In the complex creation of this work, there were many technical questions to resolve that had to be answered and continuously tested against the work's central premise – to create a humanoid structure, which spoke to portraiture by denying a viewer their own portrait. There was an anthropomorphism inherent in the overall structure of the work: it was made to be of average height – approximately 170cm; the mirror sits upon a steel rod that resembles a neck; and the mirror itself articulates as a human head would – moving left and right, up and down, all within the parameters of a human head's possible movement. The structure, while containing a mirror, also mirrors the form of a human. In creating the interactive experience of the work, there was again a rendering of human characteristics applied to the way that the work would react to a viewer. The mirror was made to act like a head, and when presented with a face it would turn away, like a human would turn away from something they do not wish to see. The speed of this movement was finely tuned to echo that of natural human movement – not too fast and jerky and yet not too slow. When exhibiting this work, much of the feedback I received spoke about the humanoid qualities of the piece. A number of viewers noted that when the mirror turned away and was angled downwards, it was as if it was 'shy'; conversely when the mirror turned away and tilted upwards, they felt the mirror was 'snobbish'. Another significant phenomenon that I noted was the way that many viewers tried to 'trick' the mirror so that they could see their reflection. I observed viewers playfully crouching, running, bending and jumping in an attempt to thwart the mirror and catch their face.

There is deliberate conjuring of the uncanny in *Are You There*. Like a cross between a sentient piece of furniture and a humanoid figure in space, this work plays a fine line between the work itself being an anthropomorphised structure, and the denial of the human figure presented to it. The mirror reflects and yet repels, the piece stands to

⁵³ Robert Sobieszek in his book *Ghost in the Shell* (1999) charts the history of the now defunct practices of physiognomy, pathognomy and phrenology, 'sciences' of the 19th Century that linked facial expression and head formation to the 'character' and 'essence' of the individual. Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell*.

reflect the face but refuses the face, the work resembles a human figure yet is mechanically non-human. This study of oppositions creates a field which I encourage the viewer to traverse, and by doing so, invite them to consider the liminal realms between two fixed points – this territory echoing the liminal space between portraiture and place which is the basis for this work and this project.

The Mirror And The Self

The concept of the mirror is a central concern of *Are You There*. The idea of a mirror as a mode of constructing and understanding selfhood and identity is one that French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan famously elaborated in 1936. Lacan's original explication of the 'mirror stage' postulates that looking in the mirror is directly related to the construction of identity and a sense of self. Lacan states that between six and eighteen months of age a child experiences their body as a series of 'fragmented' parts and it is only through looking at others or by examining themselves in a mirror that they project a notion of a unified 'self' (*imago*). The infant then connects this *imago* with its own existence. However in 1949, Lacan clarified and revisited his mirror theory and stated: "The function of the mirror stage...is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality – or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*"⁵⁴. The oscillating relationship between the *Innenwelt* (inner world) and the *Umwelt* (environment) is thus one focus of *Are You There*, and again reflects the intersection of portraiture and place.

Are You There, as a portrait that uses an animated mirror, is reflective of the *Innenwelt/Umwelt* dynamic. We seek the *Innenwelt* by looking for ourselves in the mirror and instead are only offered the *Umwelt* – a view of the environment in which we are located. In exhibiting this work in a gallery space, the viewers see themselves in a place that is zoned for 'looking'. When confronted with a mirror in a gallery space, a viewer becomes subject and spectator. If installed in a domestic bedroom space, this mirror would quickly become merely a source of annoyance. As the gallery space is a

⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Ecrits* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006). P. 78

site for 'looking', the work, when turning away from the gaze, charges the act of looking and hopefully incites further contemplation of the notion of self-perception along with a corporeal relationship to the gallery space.

The titling of the work, *Are You There*, was a deliberate strategy, essentially offering a question to the viewer. Are you here or there? Inside or outside? Where is here and there? Where is the self? i

In Chapter 2 I outlined Foucault's notion of heterotopias when discussing the *Here/There* series and also the technology based work of Wendy McMurdo. I argued that the technological landscape is itself a heterotopic space and showed how *Here/There* and McMurdo's works depict these heterotopic zones. The use of a mirror in *Are You There*, according to Foucault, references not only heterotopic but also utopic places. Foucault declares a mirror to be a utopia in that it "is a placeless place... that enables me to see myself there where I am absent"⁵⁵. But, he then asserts, that the mirror is also a heterotopic place in that a mirror exists in reality and,

"it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there."⁵⁶

This oscillation between the real and the unreal, the utopia and the heterotopia is reflective of the oscillation between place and self that I seek to exhibit in this work. I aim to establish a dynamic of dualities in *Are You There*, central to which is the self/place dynamic, and where the real/unreal and the utopia/heterotopia dynamic can also be housed. Like the moving mirror that is the central feature of the work, *Are You There* seeks to show the moving and relational nature of these dualities. Foucault goes on to say that through using a mirror he is able to "direct my eyes toward myself and

⁵⁵ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." P. 24

⁵⁶ Ibid.

to reconstitute myself there where I am”⁵⁷. *Are You There* however gives us no fixed mirror in which to ‘reconstitute’ ourselves, instead it turns away and offers us place. It then asks, can we reconstitute or construct our sense of self through the place in which we stand?

Mirroring The Self – The Work Of Dan Graham



Figure 25. *Two Viewing Rooms* - 1975, Dan Graham. Two way mirror, TV screen, video camera. Photo: Documentation Generale du Centre Pompidou, Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris France. Collection Marc & Josee Gensollen, Marseilles, France.

The mirror and the video camera/feed are integral tools that artist Dan Graham used in his works of the mid to late 1970's that focused on notions of self perception. While Graham produced a suite of works during this time period that combined the mirror with the video camera, I will focus my study on his 1975 work, *Two Viewing Rooms*. This work used a combination of mirrors and a video camera and monitor in order to ‘look’ at the act of looking and perceiving the ‘self’. Graham says that the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

mirror itself is a metaphor for the Western notion of the 'self'⁵⁸, and by combining mirrors with video cameras and video feeds we see how this work act as survey of the notion of 'self'.

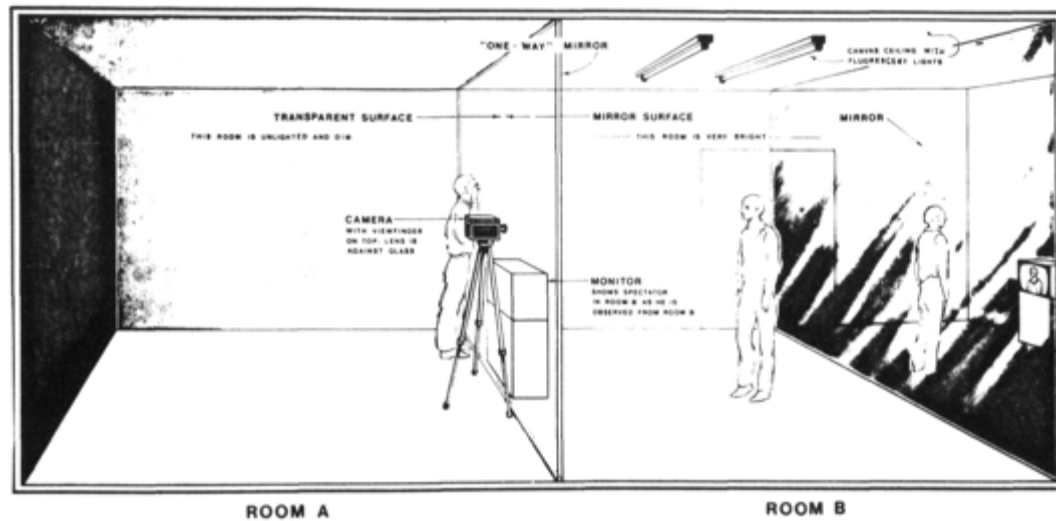


Figure 26 *Two Viewing Rooms* - 1975, Dan Graham. Two way mirror, TV screen, video camera.

Source: MOMA press archives website,

https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/5860/releases/MOMA_1980_0063_66.pdf?2010, (Accessed 2nd September 2014).

Two Viewing Rooms is an installation that consists of a large room bisected by a floor-to-ceiling two-way mirror-wall. Each room has its own entrance and participants can access either room in any order. Room A is darkened and due to the properties of the two-way mirror-wall, allows its viewers to look into Room B without being seen. Placed against the two-way mirror-wall in Room A is a video camera that points towards Room B. The people in Room A can choose to observe the people in Room B either through the video camera's eyepiece or through the two-way mirror. Room B is a brightly lit space that consists of a mirrored back and front wall. The front wall mirror is the two-way mirror-wall that allows those in Room A to observe those in Room B, but those in Room B will only ever see their own reflection in this mirror-wall. In front of this mirror-wall is a video monitor that shows a live feed from the

⁵⁸ Dan Graham, Alexander Alberro, and Marion Goodman Gallery (New York N.Y.), *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*(Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1999). P. 55

camera situated in Room A, this feed shows those in Room B a view of themselves. If facing front, this view stands in contrast to the mirror image that they see in the wall, as they are mirror-reversed and rescaled. Facing the back mirror wall, the viewer has the possibility of seeing both their front and back at one time – by looking at the mirror they can both see their front side and also their back by looking at the reflection of the video monitor.



Figure 27. Two Viewing Rooms 1975 Dan Graham. Two way mirror, TV screen, video camera. Source: <http://eyeandmind.wordpress.com/2010/06/12/les-complices-s%E2%80%99enrichissent/> (Accessed 5th October 2014).

In Room A the participant becomes the spectator, looking at those in Room B looking at themselves. Room A acts like a surveillance zone, with the privilege of concealment and darkness. In Room A we do not have to look at our own selves, rather we are privy to the private relationship between another individual and a mirror. Room A allows a view of, what Foucault calls the 'placeless place' of the mirror and shows us the process of 'reconstitution'⁵⁹ of self that he describes taking place when an individual confronts a mirror. In Room B the dynamic is completely

⁵⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

different. Instead of darkness and concealment, the participant is confronted with a brightly lit zone where there is no place to hide. Room B is a crucible where the visual elements of self are mediated through the mirror view and the video screen. Despite the brightly lit, 'examination room' atmosphere of Room B, the participants do not come away with an objective view of themselves. Rather, their selves are fractured through the infinite mirror view, reframed through the video screen and dispersed through the mediums of mirror, camera and monitor. While Room B stands in contrast to the mirror that turns away in *Are You There*, the effect could be seen to be comparable. Both works could be argued to be challenging the notion of a fixed 'self' and both work disperse the notion of self through space/place.

The relationship between the mirror and the video feed is one that Graham uses to illuminate the problematic concept of self-image. Graham argues that the mirror presents the self in stasis, whereas the video feed presents the self in a temporal flow⁶⁰. By bringing these two mediums together in *Two Viewing Rooms*, Graham forces a collision to occur, the mirror presenting the self in a static instant and the video feed presenting the self in the "immediate present, without relation to past and hypothetical future states"⁶¹. This collision opens up a dialogue about self-perception. He argues:

"By linking perception of exterior behaviour and its interior, mental perception, an observer's 'self', like a topological Mobius strip, can be apparently without 'inside' or 'outside'... While the mirror alienates the 'self', video encloses the 'self' within its perception of its own functioning, giving a person the feeling of a perceptible control over his responses through the feedback mechanism."⁶²

These oppositions – the interior/exterior and the alienated/enclosed – are used by Graham to unravel the notion of the 'self'. By pulling at the opposite ends he unbinds

⁶⁰ Graham, Alberro, and Marion Goodman Gallery (New York N.Y.), *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*. P. 55

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

the process of self-perception. Instead of looking in a mirror and seeing a 'whole' self, Graham presents his audience with slivers of self dispersed through space that do not marry up at the edges. Acting as a sort of unhinging mechanism of the self from the body, this process is also seen in *Are You There*, where the process of self-perception is unhinged when the mirror turns away from us.

Gary Hill's *Tall Ships*



Figure 28. *Tall Ships* 1992 Gary Hill. Sixteen-channel video installation, silent. Source: <http://garyhill.com/left/work/tall-ships.html?q=569> (Accessed 5th October 2014).

The concept of an interactive portrait is one that has been approached by numerous artists since the early 90s. I shall specifically look at Gary Hill's seminal piece *Tall Ships* (1992) and examine the parallels and points of intersection that occur with my own work, *Are You There*. Hill's immersive piece consists of a long, darkened corridor, lit only by sixteen projection points on the corridor walls. Each projection is a black and white full-length video portrait of a person, with each projection depicting a different individual - old, young, men and women. All of the video portraits resemble

ghostly spectres arriving from another place. Emerging from the darkness of the corridor as if arriving from the after-world, the result of this emergence from the darkness is that the participant walks down the corridor with all of their senses heightened, unsure of the nature of the encounter to come. As the viewer walks down the corridor, they trigger sensors that ‘awaken’ the spectres, which then walk, as if from a distance, towards the viewer until they are life-sized and face-to-face. The projected people seemingly look *at* the viewer as if they can somehow actually see them and as if they are interacting with them. Even though the audience is aware that they are viewing filmed projections, the silent figures seemingly ‘speak’ to the audience beyond the limits of their projected state. The simple movement of ‘approaching’ the viewer sets up a personal interaction where only one person is actually live. The viewer gazes upon the work and the figures within the work gaze back. This unsettling experience is ultimately an open dialogue where the viewer dictates the level of interaction. If they move onwards down the corridor, the projected figure will turn away and walk back ‘away’ from the site of interaction.

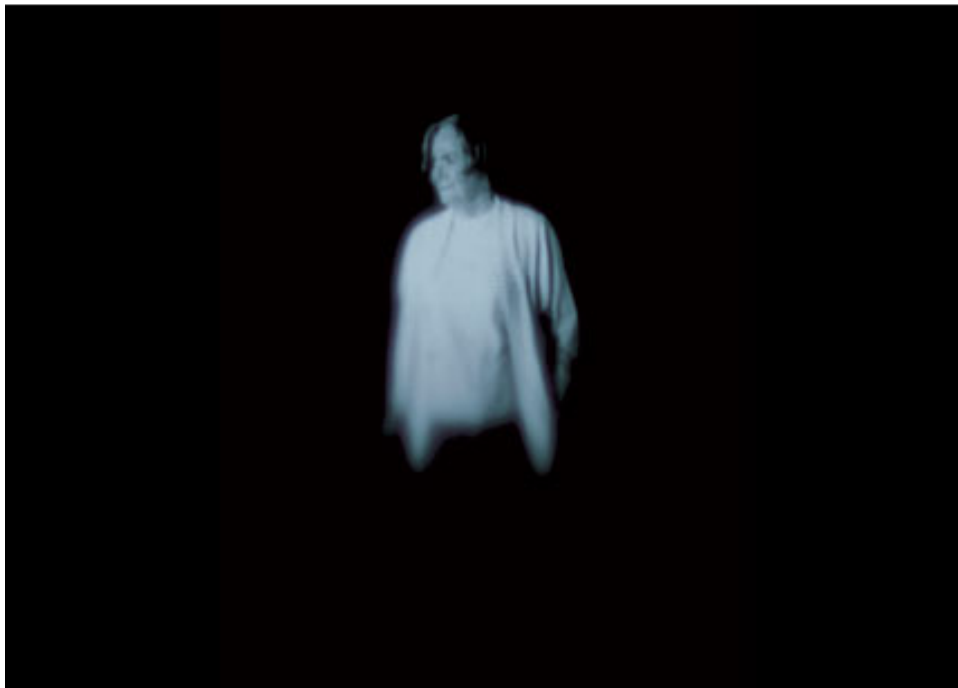


Figure 29. *Tall Ships* 1992 Gary Hill. Sixteen-channel video installation, silent. Source: <http://garyhill.com/left/work/tall-ships.html?q=569> (Accessed 5th October 2014).

Gary Hill describes the dynamic of the work as such –

"It's simply the idea of a person coming up to you and asking 'Who are you?' by kind of mirroring you and at the same time illuminating a space of possibility for that very question to arise. Basically I wanted to create an open experience that was deliberate and at the same time would disarm whatever particular constructs one might arrive with, especially in a museum."⁶⁴

This 'construct' that one may arrive with and that which is being challenged in the work is the traditional dynamic of the gallery space itself. This work draws our attention to the way that even the simplest moving gestures within a portrait can alter our relationship to a work from passive spectator to watchful participant. Indeed this interaction with the technological 'other' seen in *Tall Ships*, is enhanced by the way that the interaction is not dictated by the artist, rather the viewer themselves.

The spectres utilised in *Tall Ships* are in the order of "simulated human personas"⁶⁵, a cornerstone of interactive portraiture. Whether these 'personas' are anthropomorphised objects, such as the robotic mirror in *Are You There* or uncannily 'real' beings such as those in *Tall Ships*, the use of these simulations destabilise the traditional passive viewer relationship of gallery audiences. This destabilised relationship was of key interest in creating *Are You There* as this work seeks to set up a dual destabilising relationship - first, by creating a humanoid interactive presence in the gallery space; and secondly, by the mirror refusing its passive reflective function. Digital culture writer Kathy Cleland outlined the way that destabilising the passive viewer role engenders a shift in gallery viewing dynamics. She states, "... as the portrait we are looking at suddenly looks back and subject object viewing relations are reversed, we become the object, subject to the gaze of the portrait."⁶⁶ This role reversal, (also elaborated by Lacan as we have discussed previously), is of key

⁶⁴ Interview with Gary Hill conducted by Regina Cornwell in George Quasha, Charles Stein, and Gary Hill, *Tall Ships*, Gary Hill's Projective Installations (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Arts, 1997). P. 44

⁶⁵ Kathy Cleland, "Talk to Me: Getting Personal with Interactive Art," in *Interaction: systems, practice and theory*(University of Technology, Sydney, November 16-192004).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

importance to both *Tall Ships* and *Are You There*. Both of these works aim to unsettle the audience in the way in which they both acknowledge and interact with their audience directly. George Quasha and Charles Stein describe this interaction in their book *Tall Ships* in the following manner:

"We are speaking here... about being on the verge. The work produces...a particular state of psychological engagement in which we are *going to meet* but don't. This is a state of apparent incompleteness."⁶⁷

The unsettling exchange activated in *Tall Ships* is one that not only subverts the traditionally passive role of the viewer in the gallery, but is also one that encourages a deeper interaction with the work.

In *Are You There* the mirror/camera purports to be gazing upon the audience and, indeed, allowing the audience to gaze upon themselves – but really it is only looking at its audience for long enough (100 milliseconds) to ascertain their facial data points so that it can actively refuse this gaze and ‘look’ elsewhere. The audience is the subject of the portrait - in that their role is what activates the work - but in the denial of a view of their face and body, the work challenges the individual to consider what indeed they are looking for when they encounter this mirror. The destabilising relationship goes further still when the work, programmed to respond to even the most surreptitious attempt to gaze upon the self, highlights the private act of examining oneself in a mirror by the mirror abruptly moving away from the face that is offered. By refusing their bodily image, and instead offering a view of the place in which they stand, *Are You There* seeks to unhinge the concept and construction of self from the traditional portrait boundaries of the face and body. Simply put, *Are You There* asks the viewer to consider the notion of place-bound identity as opposed to body-bound identity.

⁶⁷ Quasha, Stein, and Hill, *Tall Ships*. P. 22

Conclusion

"In *there* - which it would be better to call *here* - shall I first look for my being? Or am I going to find, in my being, above all, certainty of my fixation in a *there*?"

Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space* p. 214

In undertaking an examination of portraiture and place, the central theme of the 'self' has been a constant. Portraiture as an art form has long held the monopoly as the method of choice when examining the 'self'. My creative research has sought to argue for an expanded notion of portraiture that incorporates place as a mode to understand and communicate what it is to be being-in-the-world. This project has been undertaken at a time when the relatively recent heterotopic zones of the internet and virtual reality are exerting greater influence on the way that we view ourselves in the world.

I began this project viewing portraiture and place as two subjects that were disparate and almost oppositional. Over the course of the candidature I have developed and demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the way that these two elements are nested within each other. This conclusion has been aided primarily through the theoretical research that I have undertaken. J.E. Malpas's introduction to, and analysis of, the Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world has been the foundation for the argument to expand portraiture to include place. Through exploring these theories I have developed creative work that has illustrated the osmotic zone between place and being. In looking at place and being through the current technological landscape, Foucault's theory of heterotopias has been employed to explore the way that our selves can be 'being' in the world in a state of 'here and there' simultaneously.

Throughout this paper I have contextualised my creative practice to a cohort of artists who all explore notions of place, being and portraiture. Through examining the conceptual and visual similarities and differences between these chosen artists and my own creative practice, I was able to reflect on and develop my own work with greater clarity. From photography's earliest beginnings of the body in space via Eadweard Muybridge, to the contemporary practice of Wendy McMurdo who examines 'being' in new technological worlds; through Victor Burgin's work on simulating place and memory; to the installation based practices of Gary Hill and Dan Graham, each of these artists not only provided fertile ground for reflection but also a framework of context through which I anchor my own practice.

The three final works presented for examination look at portraiture and place in evolving and disparate ways. My earliest works, *A Loved One Sleeping*, *Towards the Light*, *The Path of Totality* and *Hello* all explore the possibilities of portraiture with bodily absence. Culminating in the minimal lightbox work, *Hello*, the strategy in these works was to replace the body with 'place' and to see how far a 'portrait' can be pushed before it can no longer be called a portrait. Can a portrait of place speak more strongly of human presence than a portrait incorporating a body? In *Here/There*, I take the opposite approach. I tackle portraiture head-on by creating classic head-and-shoulders portraits, except for the fact that I almost totally obliterate the face of my sitters by masking them with virtual reality headsets. This series attempts to create portraits of place through depicting portraits of people immersed in a place virtually. This series also strongly comments on the multiplicity of self in online and virtual places.

The interactive installation, *Are You There* is a synthesis of portraiture and place. Through the mirror that turns away from the faces offered to it, combined with the live video feed of this action, the work is designed to make the viewer constantly aware of their bodily absence. This work, by not depicting a body, yet relying on the bodies of the audience to activate it, aims to directly challenge the role of the face and body in portraiture. The mirror, and by proxy, the live video feed, will only ever depict a place where there are no faces. This is a portrait that constantly, and potentially infuriatingly, only ever wants to show us the place in which we stand, as opposed to the body and face that we inhabit.

Throughout this practice-led research my aims have been twofold: firstly to create an understanding of an expanded portraiture and to illustrate the enmeshed concepts of place and being; and secondly to expand the scope and ambition of my own practice. Looking forward I can clearly see how the future trajectory of my work will continue to question and interrogate the boundaries of portraiture, particularly with a focus on work that explores 'being' in technological spaces. This research has provided the platform from which I can continue to create work in a variety of mediums that speaks of being-in-the-world.

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List of Images

Hello

1. *Hello* Documentation (video file)
2. *Hello* close up
3. *Hello* installation view

Here/There

1. *Here/There* #1
2. *Here/There* #2
3. *Here/There* #3
4. *Here/There* #4
5. *Here/There* #5
6. *Here/There* #6
7. *Here/There* #7
8. *Here/There* #8
9. *Here/There* #9
10. *Here/There* #10
11. *Here/There* #11
12. *Here/There* #12
13. *Here/There* #13
14. *Here/There* installation view

Are You There

1. *Are You There* - documentation (video file)
2. *Are You There* – installation view
3. *Are You There* – mirror
4. *Are You There* - screen

Catalogue of Work Presented for Examination

1. *Hello*

Animated lightboxes – LED lights, perspex, microprocessor
50x50x5cm each

2. *Here/There*

Series of 13 Archival Pigment prints
80x54cm each

3. *Are You There*

Mirror, plinth, LCD screen, micro camera, computer, facial detection software, servo motors, custom wall.
Dimensions variable