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Spatialising narrative pictures: Transforming 2D narrative drawing/illustration to video installations

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Practice-led PhD Thesis

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Abstract

This Ph.D. thesis is an investigation of the processes and problems, both practical and conceptual, involved in the transformation of my small-scale two-dimensional narrative drawings into video installations. The aim of this transformation was to increase the active involvement and engagement of the viewer and to enhance and open up the narrative/s within the original drawings.

I use the term 'spatialise' for this transformation, looking particularly at three major narrative factors - character, event and space. It became apparent through the investigation that scale and position were also crucial factors. These elements are examined through creative practice and a critical body of knowledge gained from first-hand practical experience, contextualised against the historical and theoretical backdrop relating to narrative images and how images relate to spaces.

As an artist coming to this inquiry from a drawing/illustration background, the three key concerns and questions were: how to transform a two-dimensional narrative illustration into an installation without losing the drawing/painting quality? When transformed into a video installation, what changes happen to the narrative and to the audience's engagement and self-awareness, and subsequently the audience's understanding of the narrative? How can technology, sculpture, installation, and video projection be used to develop and enhance my drawings?

This desire to search for a new medium and approach for my drawing/illustration practice is in the context of both my own artistic identity and the backdrop of dramatic social transformation in China. The research has led to new insights as well as new dialogues for me - between drawing practice, my cultural identity as an artist, the narrative content of my own hand-made drawings, and comparisons between the traditions of Western/European and Chinese art. A particularly important new element for me was the idea of an 'open narrative' gained through spatialisation.

The research therefore contributes to the field of contemporary art practice, video installation and narrative drawing through bringing together experimental video installation and a cultural critique – and by directing the audience's self-awareness through open narrative discourse.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Key questions and research scope

This thesis provides a detailed analysis of my cross-disciplinary, practice-led Ph.D. research into transforming, or more specifically, 'spatialising' my narrative illustrations. Research questions are answered by practical projects and reflected upon, explored and contextualised in this thesis.

From the starting point of being dissatisfied with my small drawing-based narrative illustrations, drawn with ink-and-pen on paper, I aspired to develop new narrative effects and test out new representational mediums. This thesis is a record and account of my investigation.

Spatialisation

The noun to 'spatialise' has two principal meanings: one is in terms of spatial metaphors of abstract concepts used within the social sciences. This is a relatively new term, only appearing since the 1990s, based on Geographic Information Science (GIS) literature. It is also used in social science, for example when referring to the spatial aspects of human existence, social activities, procedures or the activity of subjects.[1]

However, in the context of my research, I am not using the above definition. I am instead using its second principal meaning: 'the process of causing something to occupy space or assume some of the properties of space'.[2] It literally describes the process of turning something flat or conceptual into a real three-

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[1] R. Shields, 'Social Spatialization and the Built Environment: The West Edmonton Mall', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* June 1, 1989.
Andre Skupin, Sara I. Fabrikant, Chapter 4 'Spatialisation', eds. John Wilson. A. Stewart Fotheringham, *The Handbook of Geographic Information Science*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pg. 61-2.

[2] Definition of 'spatialisation' in *Collins Online Dictionary*,
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/spatializationhttps://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/spatialization, accessed on 10, 06, 2018.

dimensional form that takes up physical space. Therefore, this research *spatialises* my drawings/illustrations into video installations.

One of the most significant uses of this term in the context of art and design was during the academic symposium 'VaroomLab 2: Spatialising Illustration' held by the Association of Illustrators (AOI), Swansea Metropolitan University/VaroomLab, 2013. 'Spatialisation' in this conference had a wide definition and was used metaphorically and literally to interpret illustration in social, emotional, physical and psychological contexts, to explore the 'space' between literature and image, as well as exploring the possibilities of transforming small illustrations into environmental works.[3] Among the papers published, that of Creative Director Chris Aldhous', *Architects of The Invisible Idea* used examples showing how illustrations were given a spatial quality when enlarged and made into A0 prints and presented on the side of a building. His project *HYPE,* 2004/2005 used a series of DIY galleries in several European cities to display illustrations spatially by using large screens on their exterior walls or windows (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Chris Aldhous, *HYPE,* 2004/2005

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[3] 'Abstracts of the Conference and Paper's, *Varoom Lab Online Journal*, Issue 2, https://theaoi.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/VaroomLab_Journal_Issue2.pdf, accessed on 08.08.2018.

Another example of 'spatialising' images is illustrator Geoff Grandfield's lightbox works based in the Jewel House at the Tower of London. In his paper *Illustration and Narrative as a Spatial Experience – the Jewel House at the Tower of London*, 2011, he presented his interpretation of the spatialisation process by using six enlarged illustrations displayed on lightboxes. Installed inside rooms within the Tower, they illuminated the semi-darkness and embraced the audience in their light and colours (figure 1.2).

The examples above demonstrate that the spatial potential of illustration is an area of interest for some illustrators who are questioning the small-scale, paper-based conventions of illustration and exploring a more public and physical engagement.

Figure 1.2 Geoff Grandfield, illustrations on lightboxes, Tower of London, 2011

As an illustrator working exclusively with small-scale illustrations, I too have the ambition to spatialise my works, to look for new ways for the viewer to engage with illustration and of inviting them into the pictorial space. This thesis describes and analyses a series of experiments aimed towards this end. It focuses on four video installation projects, based on a series of self-narrative illustrations about my experiences whilst living in China during a period of major cultural

transformation in the late 20th century.

I identified several key questions that would help focus my investigations into developing a personal system of spatialisation for my illustrations:

Key questions and aims

- How can a two-dimensional narrative illustration be transformed into an installation without losing the drawing/painting quality?
- What is the resulting relationship between an illustration and an installation work in this transformation?
- When transformed into a video installation, what changes happen to the narrative and the audience's reading of that narrative?
- How can technology, sculpture, installation, and video projection be used to develop and enhance my drawings?

Research scope

In order to focus productively, the research is limited to exploring the spatialisation of my own (self-narrative) narrative illustrations. These are hand-drawn, two-dimensional, static, small-scale narrative images mainly produced using pencil, pen and ink on paper. As most of the works are illustrative drawings, the terminology used in this thesis is illustration/drawing.

Comparisons are made to historical narrative paintings and murals, as although often made for very different reasons and using distinctly different materials and formats, their shared narrative nature, two-dimensional format and compositional approach are directly pertinent to my research. However, narrative photography and film (machine-based images) are not within the scope of this research.

My contextualisation is based on the exploration of pictorial space within historical Chinese and Western painting.

Representational frescos found in Western churches and painted scenes in Eastern temples that have a strong pictorial and spatial narrative intention have had a significant impact on this research. Analysing the range of approaches and visual effects used in these historical works has provided valuable insights used directly in the development of an approach to transforming my two-dimensional narrative drawings into three-dimensional installations.

I came to view early examples of spatialised painting and drawing as the foundation of the relationship between narrative, pictorial plane, architectural space and bodily engaged audiences. Studying them helped to affirm the significance and creative potential of maintaining the two-dimensional pictorial plane of my original drawings within the video projections and animations I used, creating a tension between actual and illusionary space.

Re-evaluating these two distinctive but equally successful archetypes of immersive installation that retain the use of two-dimensional narrative imagery helped identify many of the key concerns of this research. For example, the use of compositional devices such as poly-scenic narratives, the significance of scale, the use of the frame and its relationship to pictorial and actual space and its role in generating a greater sense of immersion.

Focusing my contextualisation on an exploration of pictorial space within both historical Chinese and Western paintings of this type allowed me to make comparisons and test alternative approaches across the cultures. One significant example of this is the comparison between Western Linear Perspective used to create illusionary depth within a picture plane and classical Eastern paintings that employ a very different system. Linear perspective requires a static, single point viewing position, limiting the audience's free engagement. The historical Oriental works I chose to look at provided an alternative approach that avoided this limitation, gaining an environmental quality by placing simple characters against a flat, blank background and employing ambiguous shapes such as snow, water,

clouds and mists to join views from different times and places in one scene. My research tested both approaches in relation to spatialising my drawings (Chapter 3).

These (and other) considerations mapped directly onto my practice-based research. They were questions that arose innately through the practice and remained directly applicable when analysing other artworks, in particular, contemporary video installations. Understanding these historical examples not only helped to drive and focus the enquiry but also provided solutions.

Contemporary video installation art is a large and expanding field. Identifying some of the fundamental aspects of the relationship between two dimensional and three-dimensional space through my historical investigations helped to concentrate my contextual research and identify relevant artists and artworks. Artist such as Daniel Barrow, Shahzia Sikander and Jim Shaw, who employ digital technology to spatialise two-dimensional pictorial space using video installation. My contextual research of contemporary video installation has thus been limited specifically to artists or instances where there is a strong connection to or interest in two-dimensional pictorial space. By examining examples of creating immersive pictorial environments using single-screen and multi-screen video installation techniques, I investigated the blurred boundary between the real and pictorial space. It helped provide solutions to many of my questions relating to audience engagement.

1.2 Research outcomes

The key outcomes of this research are four public exhibitions based on my autobiographical narrative illustrations/drawings (see more details in Appendix):

By No Definition (2015, 2016, DVD1, Folder A). A solo exhibition of a large-scale,

cinematic video installation showing an animation based on a self-narrative about a community garden in China. It included a soundtrack made by sound artists Adam Potts and Ben McVinnie. It was exhibited as a video installation in Studio 1.17, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, August 22-September 5, 2015 and a small video art at the Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh, and February 20-28, 2016.

Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems (2016, 2017, DVD1, Folder B). Three sections of a collaborative exhibition accompany the 2016 Newcastle Poetry Festival funded by the Catherine Cookson Foundation.[4] There were four groups of Ph.D. artists from Fine Art and Ph.D. poets from Creative Writing, Newcastle University (Jo Clement, Alexia Mellor, Jake Campbell, Jim Lloyd, Joanna Brooks, Jason Lytollis, Bernadette McAloon and Jenni McDermott) working together contributing to the exhibition[5]. It was under the theme of cultural dislocation and re-definition of the north landscapes, originally exhibited in the Ex Libris Gallery, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, May 5-7, 2016. The work was made in response to the work of poets Bernadette McAloon and Joanna Brooks, both Creative Writing Ph.D. students at Newcastle University. McAloon and Brooks provided poems on the theme of the transforming communities that I interpreted by making drawings, video projections and installation. My contribution to the group show had three parts: *Then is Diffused in Now*, a video projection on a curtain; *When Grief Turns Carnival*, made up of video projections on to the ceiling and on to rocks placed on the floor; and *Dislocations*, small drawings and collected objects on two tables in the centre of the room. Also exhibited as a part of the group show *Imaginary Chasms* curated

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[4] There were about nine poets and artists divided into several groups in this exhibition. Each group had its own area to exhibit in.

[5] '*Northern Landscapes: Picture Poem* exhibition at *Northern Poetry Festival 2016*: Newcastle University'. https://www.getintonewcastle.co.uk/whats-on/newcastle-university/northern-landscapes-picture-poem-exhibition-at-northern-poetry-festival-2016

by the Lungs Project in Gosforth Civic Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, April 21 - June 30, 2018.

The Reversible Future (2016, DVD folder C). A solo exhibition of video projections prints and collected objects, at the Abject Gallery, Breeze Creatives, Newcastle upon Tyne, July 20- August 13, 2016. This exhibition was based on a self-narrative about watching Chinese teenage girls undergoing military training in the same garden that was introduced in the narrative work *By No Definition.* It explored the paradox between the natural environment and the formal training, which in my mind was presented as a metaphor for chasm between individualism and the collective culture.

The Outsiders (2017, DVD folder D). A solo exhibition consisting of a multi-screen video installation and murals (drawings), Studio 5.08, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, August 22 - September 2, 2017. The installation contained five video projections spatialising the drawings of a self-narrative, which reflected on the 'mutual gaze' between me (an outsider) and my friend (an insider) and the invisible barriers created by the collectivist culture in late 20th century China.

1.3 Background and goals: Why narrative? Why video installation?
1.3.1 Why narrative?

Narrative illustration forms the main interest and passion for my art practice and research. The American filmmaker and screenwriter Brian De Palma said, 'People don't see the world before their eyes until it's put in a narrative mode'.'[6] When our experiences are not organised in such a way, it can be difficult to make

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[6] Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, (Cambridge University Press 2002), pg. 6.

sense of life.[7] The narrative is the tool I use for interweaving my fragmented memories and experience into a structure that I can reflect on and share with my audience.

My fascination with narrative pictures is rooted deeply in my interest in ancient Chinese textiles and other decorative crafts that include figurative and representational images. Here, miniature stories are revealed and I enjoy identifying with the characters and their activities within the tiny pictorial spaces. Traditional Chinese patterns are also well known for their symbolic and narrative qualities and offer a view of the past and a multiplicity of storylines.

Figure 1.3 Blue-and White porcelain vase, Yuan Dynasty   Figure 1.4 Embroidery, Qing Dynasty
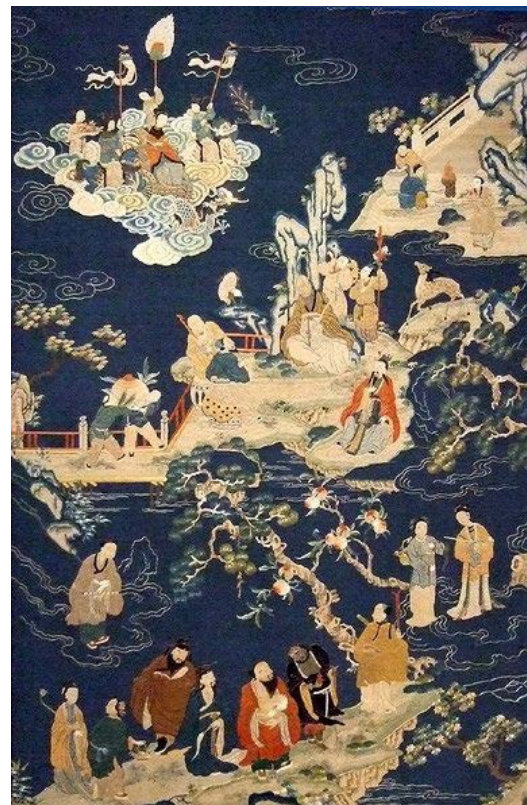
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[7] Ibid, pg. 12.

Figure 1.5 Carved wood decoration in Qiao's Grand Courtyard, Qing Dynasty

Figure 1.6 *Date Making* (《打约》), T*he Story of the Western Wing/ Romance of the Western Chamber* (《崔莺莺待月西厢记》), woodcut 1640

I remember how excited I was when I first saw the figures painted on a blue-and-white vase and in a fabric embroidery. On the limited surface of a vase, a dramatic event was being played out (figure 1.3). Here, Xiao was vividly represented on his horse, chasing Xin Han across a beautifully painted 'landscape' with trees, rocks, and plants. On a piece of embroidery, gods and goddess were depicted celebrating the birthday of the Supreme Gods under a large tree (figure 1.4). Guests were represented playing Chinese chess,

appreciating a painting and playing a harp.

My living environment also boosted my curiosity of narrative pictures. Born in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province in 1988, which is rich in ancient architectural heritage, I had many opportunities to visit Ming and Qing Dynasty buildings and see their narrative decorations. Looking at the complex composition of the wooden decoration of Qiao's Grand Courtyard (figure 1.5), for example, on the wooden frame of one gate arch, I found a horseman trying to hold onto a horse.[8]

Figure 1.7 *Interrogating Hong Niang* (《拷红》), *The Story of the Western Wing/ Romance of the Western Chamber* (《崔莺莺待月西厢记》), woodcut, 1640

Separated into small cells, the wooden decoration accommodates a great diversity of artistic figures including animals, trees and rocks. I enjoyed looking at this free arrangement of figures across the various planes, horizontal and vertical regardless of the realistic spatial relationship.

Besides these stories on objects, those used to illustrate ancient Chinese texts

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[8] Qiao's Grand Courtyard (about 10642 m2) (乔家大院) is the courtyard of financiers and merchants of the Qiao family in the Town Qi, in Shanxi Province, China. Constructed in 1757, it is an example of folk heritage architecture rich in decoration, especially wood and brick carvings and painted wooden frames and arches. Many of these narrative decorative pictures were made beyond orthodox art disciplines and show a sense of free visual exploration. http://www.qjdywhyq.com/list-16-1.html. Accessed 20,06,2018.

also encouraged me to explore the 'surreal' arrangement of characters. For example, in the woodcut illustrations for the classic play *The Story of the Western Wing* (《西厢记》), made by Qiji Min (闵齐伋) in the Chongzhen Period, Ming Dynasty, the artist depicts the designs as if they are on objects and vessels, rich in metaphorical meaning. In the piece *Date Making* (《打约》) (figure 1.6), the character Junrui Zhang and heroine Yinyin Cui are depicted as if decorations on two interlaced jade circles. The hero Junrui, sick with love, sits on a couch in the left circle, while the heroin Yingying stands with her maid in the right circle, holding a love letter. The conjoined circles symbolise the romance between the characters. In the piece *Interrogating Hong Niang* (《拷红》) (figure 1.7), three groups of characters are depicted as if on each side of a paper lantern.

In the small space on a vase, a piece of fabric, book pages or a wooden frame, these folk artists and craftsmen seemed unconcerned with strict adherence to what might be termed 'realism'. The elements of the story are arranged wherever there was space for them or however it was most appealing to the eye. The stories embedded in these strange and stylistic patterns prevent the immediate understanding of the narrative. Instead, they keep the eye searching for visual clues.

My fascination with these ambiguous pictorial spaces in Chinese traditional narrative images was questioned, interrupted and enriched by a new influence - namely western drawing techniques introduced to me in my teenage years in the 1990s. The training I received was a restricted academic drawing method adopted from Soviet Russia and was the prevailing method of art education in China at the time. I was trained in western modes of representation, linear perspective, and composition, requiring me to observe an object locked in the fixed framework of perspectival lines (figure 1.8).[9]

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[9] In the first chapters (Chapter 1-8) of *The Story of Art*, Ernst Gombrich suggests how free visual composition was replaced by realistic pictures. He analyses the conflict between the realistic demands of linear perspective and the pictures made before this technique. The earlier works enjoy the freedom of arranging visual elements freely for visual
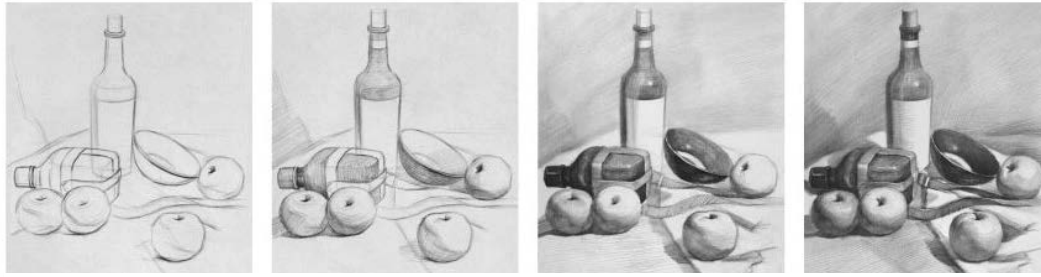
Figure 1.8 Drawing procedure using linear perspective

Drawing whilst following the rules of linear perspective required me to pre-arrange the composition by making a draft, a pre-made framework to locate each pictorial element at the start of the drawing. The position of each element was fixed and unchangeable in its realistic spatial relationship within the composition. This strong discipline of a drawing made me miss the 'surprises' and unexpected encounters with unfamiliar shapes and contents inherent in the Chinese method. I missed the use of free line drawing across the paper that allowed shapes to develop into whatever they wished to be.

Unlike the classical Western artists who used a structured linear perspective system to create harmonious compositions, ancient Chinese artists seemed free of these 'rules' and arrange their works in a more subjective way. More than just a realistic depiction, these artists were capable of moving mountains and rocks, capturing scenes that could not be seen from one fixed viewpoint and re-assembling them into an ideal landscape. By representing spaces as seen from 'mobile' viewpoints, these artists could arrange landscapes from different physical spaces into one single frame, simultaneously.

Figure 1.9 Ding Qu (屈鼎), *Summer Mountain*《夏山图》, Chinese ink painting on silk, Song Dynasty

Figure 1.10 Anonymous, *Autumn Mountain and Lonely Temple* (《秋山萧寺图》),
Chinese ink painting on silk, Song Dynasty

For example, in the context of Chinese landscape painting, the artist Wei Wang, Tang Dynasty, argued that due to the limitations of human sight, people could not exhaust the infinity and entirety of the landscape with one fixed viewpoint, unless combining various angles together.[10] Thus, to avoid incomplete and partial views,

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[10] 'Human's eyes are limited so we can't see all of the scene at once. But we can capture the whole body of the universe

the artist should keep moving and observing and then integrate the sights viewed from multiple angles into one imagined ideal image (figure 1.9, 1.10).

Instead of an overall framework (composition), it is common to see Chinese painting or drawing starts from a small point, from which the artist expands the image. Rooted in Chinese philosophy (especially Taoism), artists believe drawing and painting is a process of natural growth and the flow of the mind. As Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu (老子) puts it, 'Tao gave birth to the One; the One gave birth

Figure 1.11 *The Summer End Shower*, pen and ink on paper, 24×36 cm, 2010

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with a painting brush.'("目有所极，故所见不周。于是乎以一管之笔，拟太虚之体"), Wang Wei (王微), *On Painting* (《叙画》), Southern and Northern Dynasties, in Yu Jian Hua, *Chinese Ancient Art Theory,* (People Art Publish, 1998), pg. 585.

successively to two things, three things, up to ten thousand.'[11]

This approach echoes with my experience of reading Virginia Woolf's 'stream of consciousness' novel *The Mark on the Wall*,1919 during my Undergraduate period from 2007 to 2011 in Jiangnan University, China. Rather than narrating a story with a clear plot, Woolf traces her continuous imagination of what a mark on her wall might refer to. One supposition evokes another; one mental image creates another idea. The imagined elements connect with each other irrationally, casually and subjectively, without being 'polluted' by rationale and logic. The

Figure1.12 *Tale of Genji - The Parallel Universe VI* (1 of 9 pieces, 24×36 cm), pen and ink on paper, 2011

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[11] Original words: "道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物。" Lao Tzu (老子), *Tao Te Ching* (《道德经》), the 4th century BC. Translated by Arthur Waley. (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 2007), Chapter XLII.

narrative develops like a plant growing into shape.

I felt that Woolf's tracing of her free flow of consciousness paralleled Chinese art techniques. Following this 'mental journey' in Woolf's novel, I learned to re-define my artwork as a vehicle, a tunnel through which the audience could be invited to experience my transforming mental state and consciousness. In 2010, at the end of my BA, inspired by Woolf's novel and classical Chinese painting and drawing techniques, I started to make experimental drawings/illustrations tracing the transformation of my emotions and mental state through personal narratives. I became occupied with the free arrangements of elements, with which I could create a visual 'flow', reflecting on my memories and emotions. The significance of this approach is analysed in depth in Chapter 2.

In the early stage of my experimental practice during 2010-2014, I focused on small-scale pen-and-ink narrative drawing/illustrations on paper based on my life stories. For example, *The Summer End Shower* (24x36 cm, figure 1.11)*,* 2010, my Undergraduate degree work *Tale of Genji-The Parallel Universe VI* (1 of 9

Figure 1.13 *Frog Feast V* (1 of 8 pieces, 24×36 cm), pen and ink on paper, 2013-4

pieces, 24 x 36 cm, figure 1.12), 2011, my MA work *Frog Feast V,* 2013-2014 (24×36 cm, 1 of 8 pieces, figure 1.13) and for Yan Mo's (莫言) novel *Frog* and *The Handscroll of Maha SaQing - Giving Feeding Tigers* (15×80 cm, figure 1.14), 2014. In these experimental works, I attempted to visualise the flux in my mental activities by tracing the ups and downs of unsettling emotions using random lines, dots and shapes. I interwove my life events and figures into dense webs, aiming to re-configure ignored and fragmented emotions. My works developed the characteristic of crowded visual contents, freeing the viewer from one definite answer.

These practices highlighted a question that had haunted me throughout my practice: Why narrate my life stories and mental events even the seemingly insignificant details? Woolf believed that the disregarded details of life were the special elements that gave her 'a satisfying sense of reality' and released her from the pains of consciousness. Her stream of consciousness thus resulted in the inner cohesion of her fragmented self, which turned her negative experience into a positive, constructive one. I discuss this in relation to my practice and this research in greater depth in Chapter 2. Woolf's belief deeply affected my use of 'common' objects as references for my life stories in my drawings/illustrations. She showed me the significance of ordinary things as the triggers for a more fantastic, surreal and subjective dimension, the mediation between the negative and the positive. She also made me aware of the significant function of narrative to an artist constantly inquiring into life, society and humanity. Behind each 'thing', there may be problems, struggles, pains, joys, excitements, memories, etc. Behind each ordinary person, identity, gender, class, ages and relationship trigger more questions to explore.

Figure 1.14 Details of *The Handscroll of Maha SaQing - Giving Feeding Tigers*, pen and ink on paper, 15×80 cm, 2013

Figure 1.15 Painted clay figures and landscapes in Shuang Lin Temple, Shanxi Province, China, Ming Dynasty

In my earlier narrative drawings/illustrations, I narrated the overwhelming social-economic transformation happening around me in the late 20th century in China. On the paper, I attempted to create a universe that challenged the realistic order. The connection and interaction between my surreal characters unveiled the complexity of inter-personal relationships hidden within the Chinese collectivism culture and memory. Chapter 2 analyses this social-cultural background and the self-narrative texts inspired by it.

Narrative drawing as a way of recording and analysing made me conscious of the social changes happening around me, and how I felt about them. By visualising

and spatialising these stories in my drawings and video installations, I invited the viewer to reflect on their connections within their own society.

1.3.2 Why video installation?

Having used drawing as my favourite medium for many years, I had reached a point where I had begun to feel limited by the medium. I wanted to find a way of enriching it and overcoming what I saw as its limitations and restricted possibilities, especially in terms of viewers' engagement. Also, I was not resigned to see narrative drawing and illustration as a 'lesser' form of art and believed their power and value to be greatly undervalued. Installation art and digital media seemed to offer the capacity to merge distinct art mediums and the potential to transform them into something new.

Access to the facilities, equipment, and training also made it feasible for me to experiment with a range of techniques and processes and to develop new skills and experiences in terms of working with digital equipment and computer programs, such as Adobe Photoshop and Premiere Pro.

Working with video installation resolved many issues that threatened to limit the scale and scope of the research such as scale, medium, and experience**.**

I was aware of the limits of paper and pen, the small size, the slow speed of production and my habitual use of particular drawing techniques. It was difficult to use pen and ink for making large-scale images and almost all my illustrations were made on A4 paper. The pictorial space of the picture on the two-dimensional surface of paper, wood or canvas cannot physically invite the audience to walk in. The impossibility of the bodily immersion of the viewer makes this experience a limited, discrete and imaginative one.

Visits to several Buddhism temples to view their murals gave me an alternative feeling. For example, in Shuanglin Temple (双林寺) (figure 1.15) in Pingyao Town, the miniature and life-scale clay figures in front of the murals blurred the

boundaries between reality and the story, as well as between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. [12] This experience triggered my interest in paintings and murals that generate a sense of bodily immersion.

At the same time, I was inspired by Japanese narrative scroll-painting and its sister art form *fusuma-e* (interior panel paintings) (襖絵). [13] The fusuma-e provides a good example of what happens when a small-scale picture is enlarged enough to envelop a room and enclose an audience (figure 4.18-20). Rather than holding a painted scroll in their hands, people sit and walk within the painted illusion. The painted fusuma-e screens in the temples had reminded me of cinema screens where large moving images are projected, the overwhelming images enveloping the viewer inside a fictional world of light.

Installation Art

Installation is a loose term referring to many kinds of immersive work that allows for a physical 'walk-in' experience by the audience. [14] This art genre owes much to various art movements including Dadaism, Land Art, Happenings, Minimalist Sculpture, and Conceptual art. It has been a common art form since the 1960s. [15] There is a great variety of installation art, for example, total immersion installation, performance installation, video installation, sound installation, and sculptural installation, etc. They all share the common quality of the art being viewed and experienced by the audience from 'inside' the work.

Installation art is fundamentally different from my illustration practice. A reader of a book containing illustrations looks at the pictures from a close distance. Their eyes search for visual information while their physical body stands outside the

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[12] Shuanglin Temple is a significant Buddhism Temple origin in (about) Song Dynasty while rebuilt till Qing Dynasty. It is well-known for its narrative colourful clay figures and accompanied murals. Jinxing Zhang (张金星), *Painted Clay Sculptures in Shuanglin Temple* (《双林寺彩塑》), (Tianjin People's Fine Art Publishing House, 2015).

[13] Xiaolu Liu (刘晓路), *Japanese Art History* (《日本美术史话》), (People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004). Chapter 5.

[14] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art, A Critical History,* (Tate Publishing, 2005), pg. 6.

[15] Mark Rosenthal, *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer*, (Prestel, 2003), pg. 9-12.

work. As British art critic and historian Claire Bishop describes, the reader has 'a pair of disembodied eyes' limited in terms of active exploration.[16]

On the contrary, installation art invites the audience to walk into the work physically, rather than gaze at it from a distance. Bishop believes one fundamental feature and quality of installation art lies in its capability to give the audience a literal and direct experience.[17] By walking into an installation, the audience gains a direct, first-hand, physical bodily experience of the work.[18] As French phenomenological philosopher also states, 'I do not see (space) according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it…the world is all around me, not in front of me.'[19]

The audience is an inseparable factor in installation art that has deep roots in Phenomenology. As Merleau-Ponty also points outs, 'the thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it and can never be actually in itself because it stands at the other end of our gaze or at the terminus of a sensory exploration which invests it with humanity.'[20] In these environments created by artists, the audience may gain a stronger awareness of the movement of their body and feel the power of their own sensations.[21] This is not only a viewing experience; various kinds of sensory experience can be triggered, and touch, smell or sound may be counted as a part of the work. The physical and psychological reactions of the audience are consequently crucial components of the work.[22]

Narrative images in installation art

Narrative discourse and self-narratives are often explored through the installation

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[16] Claire Bishop*, Installation Art, A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing, 2005), pg. 6.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', *The Primacy of Perception*, (Northwestern University Press, 1964), pg. 178.

[20] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. Colin Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (Routledge, 1995), pg. 373.

[21] Robert Irwin, *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin.* (University of California Press, 1982), pg. 153. (Routledge, 2004), pg. 165-7.

[22] Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age,* (Routledge, 2004), pg. 167-8.

as exemplified by Russian-American conceptual artist Ilya Kabakov's *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment*, 1985 and Chinese contemporary artist Dong Song's (宋冬)'s *Waste Not,* 2005.

Some video-based installation arts are also concerned with narrative and character as in the works of American artist Tony Oursler but these most often use live moving image footages, rather than drawing/illustrations. The moving images generated by video cameras are fundamentally dissimilar to painting and drawing. For These machine-generated images have their archetypes in life: actors/actress, objects, and landscapes, etc. (for example, figure 4.46-7).

Russian artist El Lissitzky (Lazar Markovich Lissitzky)'s environmental project *Proun Room*, 1923 (figure 4.27), is an early example of an abstract 'painting' being given a three-dimensional quality by deconstructing the two-dimensional surfaces. By dividing the painting into separate elements and presenting them on different physical planes, Lissitzky dismantled and undermined the objective pictorial space and gave the work the quality of the installation art. This action enabled the elements of the painting to become part of the space, allowing the audience to 'walk into' the spatial painting. This is a clear example of a relationship between painting and installation, but it has no element of representation or narrative.

In contextualising my practice, there are significantly more examples of artists interested in expanding narrative and representational illustration into installation within the last 10 years (2008-2018), for example, William Kentridge, Shahzia Sikander, Jim Shaw, Lubaina Himid, Nalini Malani, Sun Xun, Suzan Shutan, Michelle Ussher, Stas Orlovski, etc. These artists, who in the main come from a drawing and painting background, use space and digital technology to explore alternative ways of creating installations. In my research, I wish to contribute to this discourse on the use of digital projection in narrative-based installation but endorse the importance and value of retaining the quality of the original

drawing/illustrations. Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis outline the development of a methodology to realise this goal.

1.4 Terminology

1.4.1 Narrative: Character, event, space and time

Put simply, narrative refers to telling a story. The English word 'narrative' originates from the verb 'narrate', meaning to 'to tell a story, or to describe events as they happen.'[23] In the context of this research, narrative means 'describing a series of actions conducted by a character in a certain space, at a certain time'.[24] Gerald J. Prince defines a narrative as a sequence of '…one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narratives.'[25] It is a process that 'presents a sequence of facts and acts, linked by some logical or meaningful relationship, from beginning to end, presented to a listener/reader/audience'.[26]

Narratives have various forms depending on the variety of mediums used to deliver them. There is also a broad range of sub-categories. There are oral narratives (singing, TV, and radio, etc.); language/text-based narratives (novels, scripts, poems, etc.); non-verbal narratives such as visual narratives (paintings, illustrations, etc.); spatial narratives (murals, decorated architecture, etc.) and multi-media narratives (drama, films, performance art, installation art, etc.)[27]

However, no matter what kind of medium is used for a narrative, it contains several essential shared factors: event, character, space, time, narrator and

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[23] Definition of 'narrative from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*. Cambridge University Press. Digital edition. http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/narrative, accessed on 02.07.2018.
[24] Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), pg. 73-5.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Philippe Lorino, 'The Bakhtinian Theory of Chronotype (Spatial-Temporal frame)', Second International Symposium on Process Organization Studies, 2010.
[27] Ed. Sandra Heinen, Roy Sommer, *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, (Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pg. 1-4.

narratee, and configuration, the ways these elements are associated together.[28]

The four main narrative elements that I focus in research are event, character, time and space. Below I will introduce each one.

Narrative: Event and character

Event is an essential element of a narrative and needs to be conducted and participated in by a character.[29] Literary theorist Fotis Jannidis defines a character as 'a text - or media-based figure in a story world, usually human or human-like'.[30] Event and character are analysed together in this thesis due to their inseparability; the character is the participant in the event(s) of the narrative. For example, in 'Down the Rabbit Hole' in *Alice in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll writes: 'Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up in a moment. She looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before she was in another long passage and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it.'[31]

Character is the crucial factor for engaging readers/viewers with narrative events emotionally and psychologically. A character, normally a human, or a creature with human quality (emotion, action, language, etc.) is the emotional 'stimulation' of the narrative, enabling the audience to have emotional and psychological reactions, such as affection, empathy, anger, sadness, etc.[32] By projecting ourselves onto the characters in the fictional or non-fictional narrative world, we can vicariously 'experience' others' emotions, goals, and circumstances with our imagination.

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[28] Paul Ricoeur, trans. Kathleen Mclaughlin and David Pellauer. *Time and Narrative,* Volume 1, (University of Chicago Press 1990), pg.67. *Jose Angel, Garcia Landa. Narrative Theory. University of Zaragoza,* online edition. 2005. https://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia_inglesa/garciala/publicaciones/narrativetheory/3.Time.structure.htm, accessed on 04.06.2017.

[29] Marie-Laure [R]yan, 'Narration in Various Media' in Peter Hühn (eds.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL = http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-various-media, accessed on 01.07.2018.
[30] Ibid.

[31] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, (Princeton University Press; 150th Anniversary edition. 2011).

[32] Marie-Laure Ryan*, 'Narration in Various Media' in Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.): *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL = http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-various-media, accessed on 01.07.2018.

An event, according to literature researcher Peter Hühn, is the transforming status that is caused by the previous event(s) and affects future one(s).[33] In simple words, an event is 'a thing that happens or takes place'.[34] When several events are put into a sequence with a cause-and-effect logic, they can make a narrative.[35]

In this thesis, as well as describing actions and happenings in my life, 'event' is associated with the 'mental events' of my self-narratives, which will be introduced in Chapter 2. Unlike an event in the general sense, these events are not necessarily connected in a chain of 'cause-and-effect'.[36] Rather, they are random emotions or perceptions associating freely and often irrationally. The main body of this research contains four major video installations based on several of these autobiographical narratives in which real and mental events are interwoven.

The characters and events of my narrative illustrations and installations are discussed and analysed in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 5. Chapter 2 focuses on how I create my characters and present my self-narratives using drawings on paper. Chapter 5 re-considers these characters when the drawings are transformed into video installations.

Narrative (pictorial) space and time

Space is perhaps the most significant factor in this research. To spatialise my drawing/illustrations into installations requires a transformation between two diverse kinds of space: the two-dimensional pictorial space on the paper and the physical space of a room/gallery. Developing an understanding of the difference

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[33] Peter Hühn, 'Event and Eventfulness', (eds. Peter Hühn et. al. *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press).
https://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Event_and_Eventfulness, accessed on 01.07.2018.

[34] Definition of 'event' in *Oxford Dictionary*. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/event, accessed on 01.07.2018.

[35] Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 70-74.

[36] Generally, the relationship between each event in a plot is not casual. One event needs to be the reason or effect or another. One needs to cause another. This transforming process connects the stories to be a meaningful entirety, in which the motivations, themes and thoughts of the narrative could be revealed.

and the specific traits of each type of space was a priority of the research.

A story happens in a certain place and takes up duration of time. Literature researchers Sabine Buchholz and Jahn Manfred define narrative space as the physical environment represented in the narrative where characters stay and participant in the events.[37] Literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan maintains that this space is essential, as the story must provide this 'spatial extension' so that the audience can sense the developing plot in a changing environment.[38]

In literature, space is a basic narrative medium. It integrates various characters and events together. If we do not know where the story is happening, we may not be able to locate these elements.[39]

In a static, two-dimensional pictorial narrative work (painting, book illustration, prints, etc.), a narrative space has two basic meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the physical space of the work's medium, for example, a piece of paper or canvas. This space can be measured and touched physically, and it has a defined frame or edge. On the other hand, it refers to the imaginary space implied by lines, shapes, and composition on the two-dimensional surface.

1.4.2 Illustration and pictorial narrative

A narrative that uses a two-dimensional visual medium to tell a story is a 'pictorial narrative'.[40] It describes events happening across time using visual representation. The representation of narrative time in a mute, static two-dimensional medium is complex. Rather than the narrative unfolding gradually as

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[37] Sabine Buchholz, Jahn Manfred, 'Space', (eds.) D. Herman et al, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory*. (London: Routledge, 2005), pg. 551–54. Also see Marie-Laure Ryan, *'Narration in Various Media'* in Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.) *The Living Handbook of Narratology.* Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL = http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-various-media, accessed on 01.07.2018.

[38] Marie-Laure Ryan*, 'Narration in Various Media' in Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.): *The Living Handbook of Narratology.* Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL = http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-various-media, accessed on 01.07.2018.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Wendy Steiner, *Pictures of Romance: Form against Context in Painting and Literature*, (University of Chicago Press, 1988), pg. 8.

one reads a book or watches a film, time in a narrative picture relies heavily on the audience's imagination inspired by the content. There are many types of pictorial narrative techniques used by the artist. However, of particular relevance to my research is Austrian art historian Franz Wickoff's descriptions of pictorial narrative techniques, as they accurately describe the property of my own illustrations. In 1895, he built an influential model by summarising three basic pictorial narrative modes: 'mono-scenic', 'poly-scenic', and 'continuous' narrative.[41] My research and practice focus on mono-scenic and poly-scenic.

Mono-scenic illustration

Mono-scenic illustration has only one united pictorial space (background).[42] It refers to a picture that tells one story in one picture.[43] It most often represents 'the single, culminating episode of a story' from which the audience can presume what happened before and after.[44]

A story presented thus, in one single picture frame is highly condensed with often only the most recognisable or climatic moment depicted, for example, Gustave Doré's *The Angel Michael Falls in the Cloister* in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, 1615 (figure 4.1). Writer, philosopher, and critic Gotthold E. Lessing calls this 'the pregnant moment' with which the audience can imagine the early actions and the later results. In these images, the audience can sense the 'flow' of time by imagining the previous event and the following one from the action, expression, and details occurring in the one narrative pictorial space. This is a psychological engagement with the narrative picture, with imagination filling in the gaps

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[41] Franz Wickoff uses 'continuous narrative' to describe narrative pictures such as sequential pictures such as comic strips, graphic novels or children picture books. I exclude it from this research as it is not related. Also, it is another big research area which discipline, and traits are largely different from the two types I am research into.
Franz Wickoff Die, *Wiener Genesis*. (Vienna, 1895). Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative - Mural Decoration in Italian Churches*, 431-1600, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1990.), pg. 7-8.

[43] Ibid.
[44] Vidya Dehejia, 'On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art', *The Art Bulletin*. 72, No. 3, September 1990, pg. 374-392.

between what is represented and what is implied.[45]

Poly-scenic illustration

In a poly-scenic narrative illustration, more than one event takes place simultaneously.[46] Examples can be seen in Hans Memling's *Panorama of the Passion,* 1470 (figure 4.4) and Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights,* 1515 (figure 4.5).

My drawings/illustrations are usually poly-scenic, interweaving multiple events and characters. For example, *The Summer End Shower*, 2010 (figure 1.11), *The Parallel Universe-Tale of Genji,* 2011 (figure 1.12), *The Navigation,* 2016 (figure 2.100), and *Frog Feast,* 2013-2014 (*figure 1.13).

Space and time in installation

When a narrative image is placed in a space it has the potential to gain a physical quality and the narrative space can become more complex. In a picture-based installation, or installation-like environment (video installations and church frescos), narrative space has a further two layers of meaning: the physical, architectural space of the venue and the pictorial space of the image. A narrative can unfold in addition through the movement and physical engagement of the viewer in the real three-dimensional space.

Chapter 3 and 4, the core sections of this thesis, describe in detail the significant part played by this shifting relationship between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space, the audience, and in transforming my narrative illustrations into video installations.

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[45] Neil Cohn, Marta Kutas, 'Getting A Cue Before Getting A Clue: Event-Related Potentials to Inference in Visual Narrative Comprehension'. *Neuropsychologia*, 2015 October, pg. 267-78.
Also see Suzanne Ferguson, 'Spots of Time: Representation of Narrative in Modern Poems and Paintings', *Word and Image*, 1988, volume 4.
[46] Franz Wickoff , *Wiener Genesis*. (Vienna, 1895). Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative - Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431-1600*, (The University of Chicago Press. 1990.), pg.7-8.

1.4.3 Single and multi-screen video installation

Video installation, as in other fields of art, has very many different categories. In this research, I concentrate on two main types: single-screen and multi-screen video installations.

These definitions refer to the appearance of the video installation: single or multiple screen projections in the space and it also reflects the approach used to transform my drawings into video installations. This is expanded upon in the later chapters.

The single-screen work uses only one screen/screen-like surface to project the image/animation onto as the single visual attraction. It could be made with only one wall or other materials, or several connected walls constructing a complete shape. There are no other elements such as sculpture, painting or other videos playing in the space. I align the single-screen video installation with 'mono-scenic' illustration. It normally requires the audience to focus more on the content of the image, as there is nothing else to distract their attention. In Chapter 3, I analyse a single-screen video installation *By No Definition* as the first approach to solve my key questions.

A multi-screen video installation, on the other hand, presents multiple scenes/characters located in various areas of the room. It may use a variety of projections, screens and/or monitors to show videos, and may also integrate other mediums such as sculpture, collected objects, drawings, etc. In a multi-screen video installation, the artist may separate a single narrative into several parts and arrange them separately throughout the space. The audience cannot see all the different projections by standing in one place - they must move around to see the whole narrative.[47]

I equate it with poly-scenic illustrations. Each projection is a fragment of the

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[47] Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age*, (Routledge, 2004), pg. 145.

whole work and needs to be actively 'configured' together by the audience, leading to the creation of an open narrative (different interpretations of the narrative). In Chapter 4, I analyse multi-screen video installations through works such as *The Outsiders*, 2017 (figure 4.146-154) and describe the advantages and limitations of this method.

1.5 Limitations

The main goal of this research is to explore the potential of developing a relationship between my narrative drawings/illustrations and installation practice. Its scope is purposely limited to my hand-drawn narrative illustrations, the use of video projection and dark gallery spaces. The inclusion, for example, of installation in site-specific spaces or outdoor projections was beyond the scope of the research.

Chapter 2: Self-narrative events and characters: drawings and animations of four video installations

2.1 Introduction: creating events and characters for my installations

As a cross-discipline practice between illustration and fine art, this research required me to work as both an illustrator and video installation. This research project exploring ways of spatialising of my narrative drawings/illustrations into video installations can be summarised across three main stages:

- Drawing the original characters and events on paper. (Chapter 2)

- Making the characters and events into video animations. (Chapter 2)

- Spatialising these animations using video projectors or other methods (Occasionally I also used the found objects and drawings) into video installations. (Chapters 3 and 4).

Before describing my approach to spatialising my narrative drawings/illustrations in Chapter 3 and 4, I will first describe their creation and content and how I employed the three major narrative factors: event, character, and space in the creation of my self-narrative images.

Events and characters are the contents of both my narrative pictures and my installations. I create them by making drawings/illustrations based on self-narratives that reflect on the transformation of identities during the dramatic social change in North China during the late 20th century. Using these drawings, I make video animations using Adobe After Effects, which I then projected within installations.

Digital video projectors can play both static and moving images. Although I originally used a video projector because it could project a large, high quality still image I gradually became curious to explore the effect of introducing movement into my drawings/illustrations.

However, I did not want to make a fully animated cartoon as I felt this would shift the emphasis away from the original drawing. It was important that the projection

retained the impression of a drawing 'coming to life' and therefore I used only subtle movements. The animations stand between the static drawing and fully developed cartoon. For example, in *By No Definition*, 2015 in the third section only the eyes of the 'tiger' move as he blinks. In this way, I could use both the subtle aliveness of the animated movement to attract the audience's attention and enhance the characters while retaining the static quality of the drawings/illustrations.

This chapter is divided into three main parts:

The first part (section 2.2) describes how my drawing approach is inspired by Virginia Woolf's short novel *The Mark on the Wall*, 1921 and its narrative device 'stream of consciousness' using my previous narrative drawings as examples.

The second part (section 2.3) is a brief introduction to the social-cultural contexts of my narrative drawings/illustrations and installations. These are based on four short experimental stories, inspired by personal experiences. These stories provide the original 'narratives' for my four video installations, *By No Definition,* 2015, *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016/2018, *The Reversible Future*, 2016 and *The Outsiders*, 2017.[1] They help to contextualise my symbolic characters and the metaphorical stories behind the installations. I wrote the stories down after making the visual work, keeping the text as close to the original thinking as possible in order to provide an insight into my ideas.

The final part (section 2.4-7) reflects on my drawings and animations inspired by these self-narratives that were used to make the animations for my installations. Using pencils, pens, and watercolour on paper I created a variety of characters on a small scales (A4/A3). Using Adobe Photoshop and After Effects, I animated them and made the videos for each installation.

I will begin by describing the 'stream of consciousness' approach to drawing I use in my projects:

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[1] Please see Appendix for more information.

2.2 A self-narrative device: 'stream of consciousness'
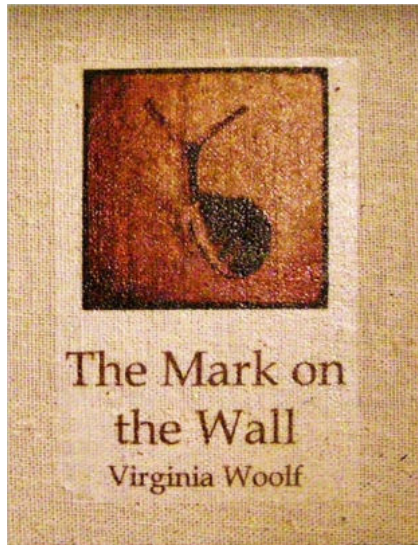
Figure 2.1 The book cover of Virginia Woolf's *The Mark on the Wall*

Throughout most of my practice of making narrative drawing/illustrations, I have used a 'stream of consciousness' approach to creating self-narratives. Stream of consciousness' is a term adapted from psychology and was first used by psychologist and philosopher William James in 1890. He used it as a metaphor to describe a continuous flow of perception.[2.] In his book *The Principles of Psychology,* 1890, he suggests that human consciousness is made up of a stream of perceptions, rather than separated concepts.[3]

Used as a literary device by novelists such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and Marcel Proust this method became a powerful tool to describe the interior monologue of multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind.[4]

The stream of consciousness literary device can be made up of a series of mental transactions that record ideas, emotions and perceptional changes without giving them any significant rational control or logic.[5] British novelist Virginia Woolf pioneered this style of writing using it to trace her mental activities without locking them into a solid narrative structure.[6] In her short novel *The Mark on the Wall*, 1921, she records a series of psychological reactions to seeing a

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[2] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, (Henry Holt and Company, 1890).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, (University of California Press, 1962).
[5] Barry Dainton. *Stream of Consciousness: Unity and Continuity in Conscious Experience*, (Routledge, 2000).
[6] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, (University of California Press, 1962).

mark on a wall (figure 2.1). I first read this work when I was an Undergraduate student and it encouraged me to be attentive to my internal thoughts, generated by events happening to me. Woolf's encounter with a small mark on the wall is based on a real event that triggered 'infinite' thoughts as to what it could be. Objects, emotions, events, places, self-reflections are freely associated: images include a piece of burning coal, the nail used to hang a miniature portrait, turnip roots, a tunnel, the tale of a racing horse, a housekeeper, an ancient tomb and water beetles.

Her imagination takes her away from reality to an imagined world and back again; she enters a room where people are talking about botany, a warm Sunday walk in London, a local museum, the riverside, the vast countryside and so on. Happiness and peace mingle with horror, anxiety, and sadness. And in the end, they all disappear in the transient and fragile flow of consciousness. Woolf says, ' Where was I? What has it all been about?... I can't remember a thing….'Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing...There is a vast upheaval of matter.'[7]

Her attitude is echoed in the pursuit of my own artistic practice that also attempts to trace the free stream of perceptions. To be more precise I identified two significant concepts that basically direct my work: free association and 'every day'/unimportant things.

2.2.1 Free association

The connections between each element in the fast flow of consciousness are

Figure 2.2 Hermann Rorschach, *Rorschach Test*, 1920

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[7] Virginia Woolf, *The Mark on the Wall*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921).

unstable. They seem to appear and disappear without reason. One element may not cause the next, nor be brought about by the previous. It is difficult to explain the sequence of elements.

Woolf's leap of imagination takes me to the unexpected and to destinations unknown. For example, when she imagines some precious missing things: book-binding tools, a birdcage, opals or clothes, I understand that she is actually making some kind of metaphor for life. She describes life as 'being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour - landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair!'[8] Although initially confusing, Woolf's free assemblage of fleeting perceptions provides a reflection on the truth of human consciousness. This is what I attempt to achieve in my illustrations and installations. Woolf's approach taught me to appreciate the process of thinking and accept the 'gaps' between the elements.

This free association or configuration in a psychological sense refers to making meaning by configuring all kinds of information freely.[9] Each individual has their own unique way of choosing different information and associating it together. Psychologists can analyse hidden or disregarded mental activities by interpreting the free associations made by their patients.[10] For example in Sigmund Freud's use of therapy, he gave the patient a picture or an object and asked them to

Figure 2.3 Andre Masson, *Battle of Fishes 1*, 1926

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[8] Ibid.
[9] William James, *The Principles of Psychology,* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).
It was used by psychologist William James in his *The Principles of Psychology* to describe the connections between overlapping or chronicle sequential stimulation.
[10] Eric Berne, *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*, (Penguin, 1976).

associate freely with it. When seeing a table, they may write down fish, tablecloth, a Sunday afternoon, family conflicts, local newspaper, broken glass and so on. Despite the missing connections between these things, the therapist can distinguish certain 'central themes' deep within the patient's mind.[11] In Swiss psychologist Hermann Rorschach's test, the patient is given pictures of ink blots and asked what they can see in them. The answer may be anything depending on the mental status and personality of the patient.[12]

Figure 2.4 Andre Masson, *Automatic Drawing 2,* 1924

In Woolf's stream of consciousness novel, heterogeneous elements come together freely in a sequence of words, artists, however, visualise them with lines, shapes, colours, and compositions. By assembling unexpected elements together, they record and examine their own introspections, and this is where deep self-examination and reflection happen.

In visual art, 'free association' and the tracing of a stream of consciousness were the key approaches of surrealist automatism used by French writer and poet André Breton as the fundamental concept in his *Manifesto of Surrealism* (*Manifeste du surréalisme*)*,* 1924. This inspired artists such as André Masson,

[11] Josef Breuer, Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, Penguin UK, 2004.

[12] Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, Alan Tyson. 'On Beginning the Treatment'*, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. 1958).

Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Austin Osman Spare, Arshile Gorky, Joan Miró and Jackson Pollock.[13]

For example, in André Masson's *Battle of Fishes 1* (figure 2.3), 1926, his hand moved across the paper reacting directly to the psychological activity. Emotions, impulses, consciousness, and unconsciousness controlled the movements of his hand, forming the 'fish' and other unidentifiable lines, shapes, and structures. It does not rely on linear perspective to arrange each element in a system. There was no planned composition in the artist's mind as he let the drawing 'grow' into an unknown form.

It seems to be a natural result of the automatic process to associate fragmented
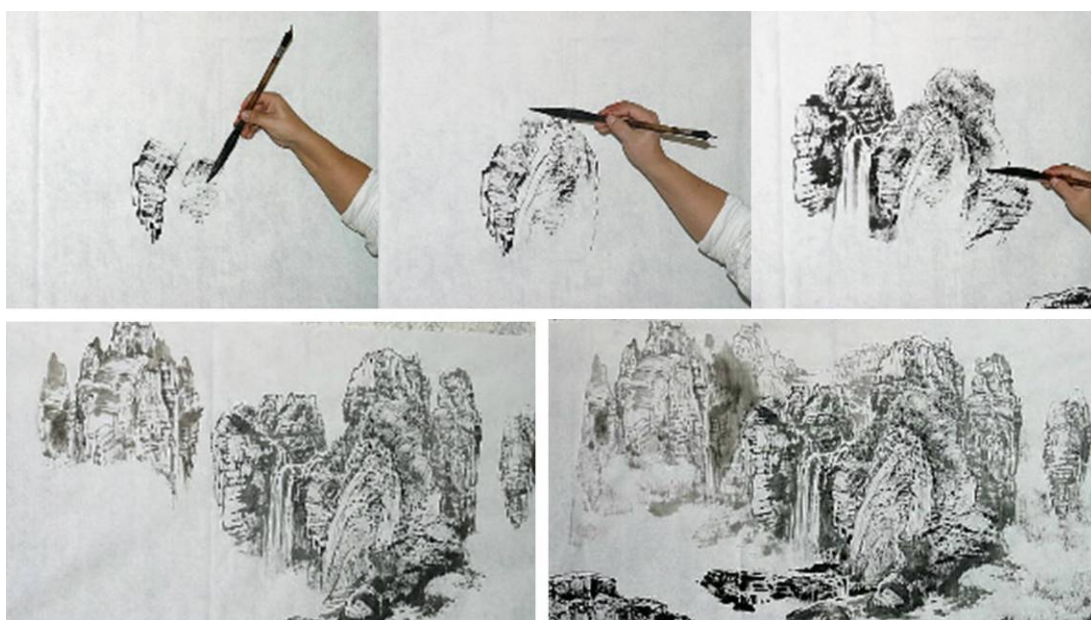
Figure 2.5 Shi Zhenquan, the process of Chinese landscape painting, year unknown

visual information freely, generating unexpected surreal narratives. In Andre Masson's *Battle of Fishes 1* (figure 2.3), 1926, pointed mountain-like shapes stand behind the dark-blue dry brush strokes. The 'fishes' are connected to each other among the confusing tangle of lines. In his *Automatic Drawing 2* (figure 2.4),

[13]Linda M. Austin, *Automatism and Creative Acts in the Age of New Psychology*, (Cambridge University Press, 2018). Automatism in art was adapted from physiological research referring to unconscious physical motions such as winking eyes and sleepwalking. Started in the 1920s, Surrealist automatism is a method which makes use of free associations of random ideas, emotions, accidental moves of the body, and irrational arrangements of the shapes, etc. to break away from the control of minds, routines and conventions.

1924, a woman's face floats strangely at the top of the paper, her body missing. The scale of the figurative elements, legs, and hands, alter and turn into a plant. A pair of eyes open in the torso and a smiling mouth with teeth. The identifiable features of animals, figures and objects growing out of the flowing or tangled lines construct a narrative of myth, adventure, and curiosity.
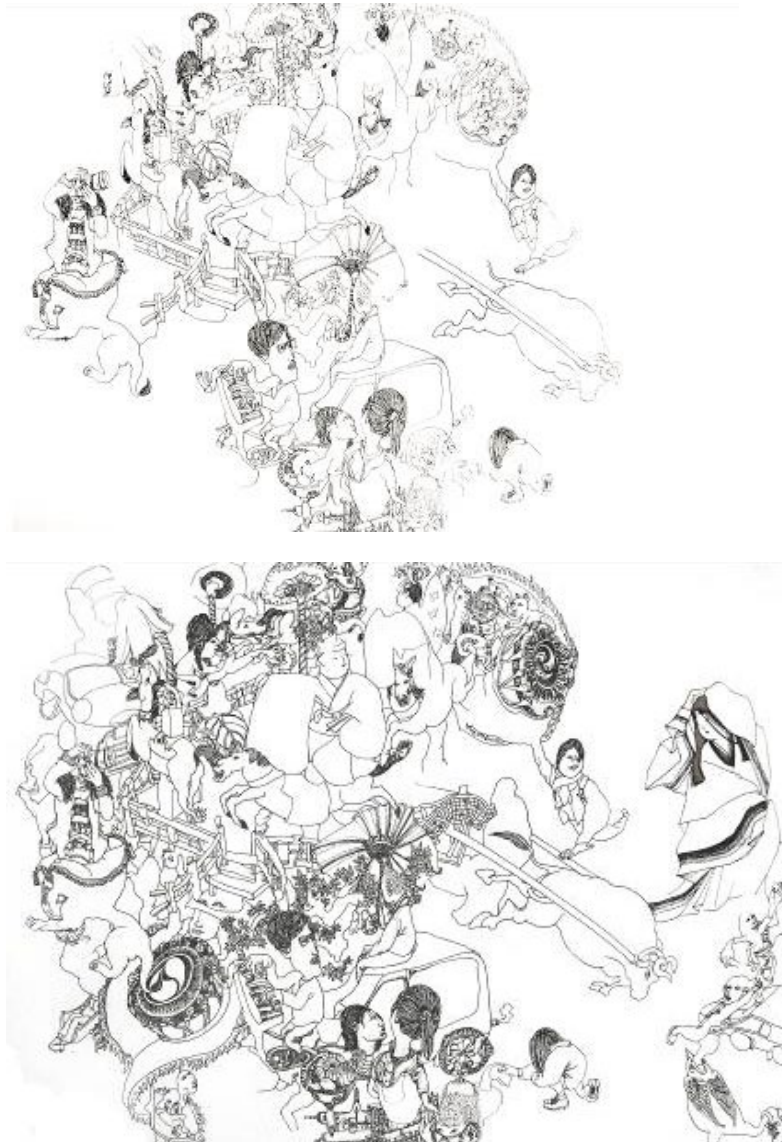
Figure 2.6-7 The drawing process of *Parallel Universe - Tale of Genji III,* 2011

This free growth of lines, shapes, characters, and events is echoed in Chinese traditional painting techniques that also emphasises the continuity in mapping and tracing the flow of perceptions. This is in accordance with Taoist philosophy,

as Lao Tzu the Taoist philosopher describes it: 'Tao gave birth to the One; the One gave birth successively to two things, three things, up to ten thousand.'[14]

Chinese painting or drawing starts from a small point and expands to cover the whole surface; one structure grows on former ones, eventually forming a meaningful entirety. Previous brush strokes and shapes provide suggestions for the next ones. The artist may not know what the next stroke will be until they finish the previous one (figure 2.5).

Here, I will provide an insight into how this stream of consciousness combined with the traditional Chinese drawing style is used in my work. Many of my illustrations are greatly inspired by this technique. The flow starts from one small element such as a word, a phrase or an object that I find interesting. Events and characters 'grow' from this process naturally. I do not know what kind of things I will draw until I complete them.[15]

Figure 2.8 The drawing process of *Parallel Universe - Tale of Genji* III, 2011

[14] Lao Tzu (老子), *Tao Te Ching* (《道德经》), the 4th century BC, trans. Arthur Waley, (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007).

[15] Free association is attributed to the 'possibilities' in the spatial arrangements and compositions in my poly-scenic drawings, where the webs of psychological events are interwoven and are visualised.

For example, the set of poly-scenic narrative drawings *Tale of Genji - The Parallel Universe* (pen and ink on paper, 24×36 cm, 9 pieces), 2011 was inspired by Japanese classic novel *Tale of Genji*. I began my mental journey with Genji's dance in the Autumn Red Leaves Ceremony (figure 2.6-8). With a pen held in my hand, my flow began; I drew free lines from the top left-hand corner that suggested two men dressed in black costumes dancing on a stage. Suddenly this intersected with a scene of 'wooden fairground rides', making me draw a dancer on the back of a horse. Later, a tree found a way to grow through the 'stage', building a fence between the sage and a man who was peeping through it by balancing on top of a 'van'. I saw horses spinning quickly around a pole that turned out to be a mushroom. My mind sensed danger from people who were staring at the mushroom tree that was somehow also me. I adapted the figure of a black ox (from the original handscroll of the story) to 'take me out of the crowd'. The ox pointed his horns towards a little child who screamed and let his spirit fly away. A pretty lady dressed in Heian court gowns looked behind towards the dancers on the horses.

These works were among the many I have made in the past several years, attempting to integrate reality and imagination, real and surreal and East and West. As experimental works, they presented challenges as well as new possibilities. Using the stream of consciousness method for years I have become familiar with its capabilities as well as limits. It enables me to reflect deeply on my experiences and gradually understand what troubles or touches me the most. Thus, a crucial challenge I faced was the conflict between my need to communicate a more specific emotion or story and the indiscriminate attention of every conscious thought.

I continued this approach for the work produced for my Ph.D. research, although in a different form. Each event and character in the narrative drawings/illustrations made for my four video installations were produced individually rather than as one complex poly-scenic drawing/illustration. This was largely because I wanted to animate the characters for the installations, which meant I had to make each character into a separate image for editing/animating in Adobe Photoshop and After Effects. I will analyse this aspect more extensively using cases studies in the final part of this chapter (2.4-7).
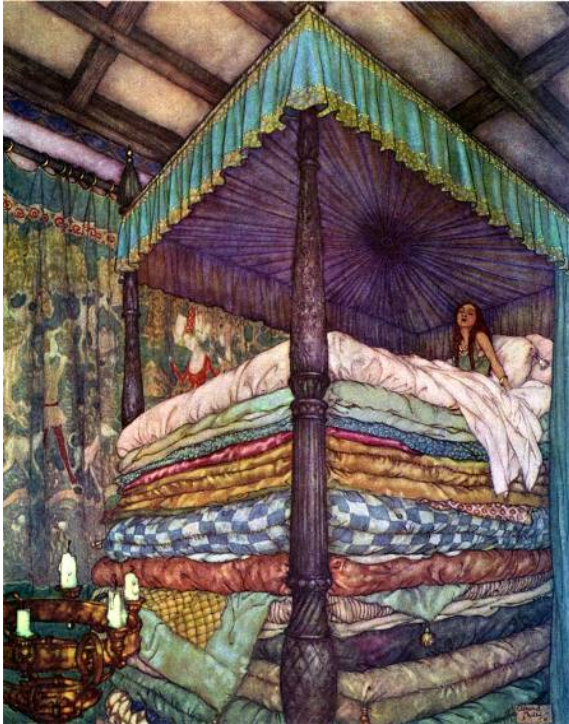
Figure 2.9 Edmund Dulac, *Princess and Pea*, 1911

2.2.2 'Everyday' and unimportant things

As well as the freedom to gather together fragments from my life, the 'stream of consciousness' device also disclosed the significance and value of the 'common' and 'everyday' in life.

Conventionally a narrative is a configuration of events and characters. The author/artist chooses significant elements and places them within a fixed structure. In this process, many 'insignificant' and 'inferior' elements may be filtered out. Only 'necessary' elements that contribute to the storyline are kept. For example, in the fairy-tale *The Princess and the Pea*, 1911, Hans Christian Andersen narrates a story in which a girl is proven to be a real princess because she can feel a hard pea, even through 20 mattresses (figure 2.9).[16] It is a short story with only 380 words when translated to English. Andersen does not provide many details about what the girl looked like, what she wore or how she behaved. The reader does not know where or when the event happens. The only information provided is the main plot, or what interested the artist most.

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[16] Hans Christian Andersen, trans. Henry H. B. Paull, *The Princess and the Pea and Other Favourite Tales,* (Hythloday Press, 2014).

In the context of narrative illustrations, especially in mono-scenic narratives, it is common for the artist to focus on the main character(s) and action(s) and neglect the less important ones. For example, when Edmund Dulac illustrated *The Princess and the Pea,* 1911, he chose to depict the 'pregnant moment' or the climax of the story.[17] He depicted the moment where the girl 'wakes up' after an uncomfortable night sleep. He chose this moment as it includes the key character and the main event of the story. He excluded any subordinate characters such as the people who set up the test or the servants. Consequently, what the viewer sees is a highly condensed, processed and a modified visual event with most of the 'subordinate' information missing. Using linear perspective, the illustration has its visual centre where the girl 'sits', attracting the main attention of the viewer, leaving all other elements in subordinate positions.[18]

Figure 2.10 Unica Zürn, the automatic drawing in *Orakel und Spektacle*, 1960

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[17] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, trans. Edward Allen McCormick, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1984).

[18] See more about 'linear perspective' of mono-scenic narrative pictures in Chapter 3.
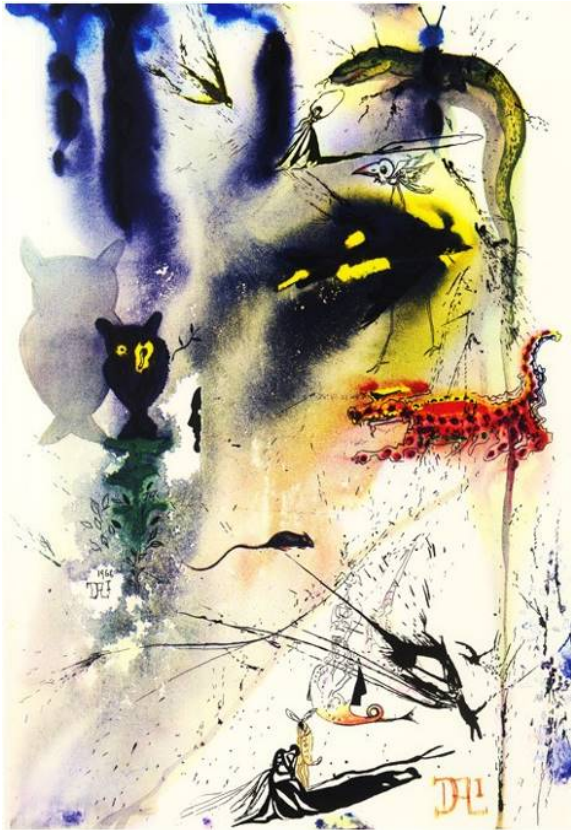
Figure 2.11 Salvador Dali, *The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill*
in *Alice in Wonderland*, 1969

In contrast, Woolf's novel does not aim to tell a story with a clear plot. There is no central event or character (apart from herself perhaps) that dominates the whole narrative. It displays equal attention and interest to a series of common everyday things, freely associated with each other: the little mark on the wall,

Figure 2.12 Details of *Tale of Genji* - The *Parallel Universe III,* 2011

Figure 2.13 Details of *Tale of Genji* - The *Parallel Universe III,* 2011

chrysanthemums, a tennis ball, the bird cage, fire, tablecloths, Whitaker's *Table of Precedency*, arrowheads, clay pipes, a moorhen, etc. Each element exists by itself. It is neither the cause of another, nor is it brought about by something else. They are the fragments of ideas, emotions and mental activities. Together they create a decentred narrative where each element has an independent value.

Automatic drawings have a similar indiscrimination in relation to 'insignificant' elements.[19] Artist Unica Zürn's drawing from her illustrated manuscript *Orakel und Spektacle*, 1960, includes insects, plants, faces, bodies, hands, hair, etc (figure 2.10). In Salvador Dali's illustration *The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill*, 1969, that was made to illustrate part of the *Alice in Wonderland* story, he includes a black rat, the rabbit in suit, an owl, a swift, girls holding hoops, a cat-like animal, a green lizard, and many unidentifiable splashes and brushes strokes (figure 2.11).[20]

In my work *Tale of Genji - Parallel Universe* III, 2011, I collected fragments from life such as funfair rides, a stage, cars, tangled plants, etc. (figure 2.12-3). These elements interweave and spread into each part of the picture. It is impossible to focus for very long on any one element. Your eyes are continually attracted and

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[19] Austin O. Spare, *The Book of Automatic Drawing*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014). Automatic drawing is a drawing technique developing in the early 20th century aiming at freeing expression from the control of the conscious mind and letting ideas, thoughts, emotions, impulses, etc. go. It was promoted by artists including Andrew Masson, Salvador Dali and Joan Miro, fuelling many art movements including Dada and Surrealism.
[20] Lewis Carroll, Illu. Salvador Dalí, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, (Princeton University Press, 2015).

distracted by all the other components that keep them continually moving, activating your vision with the flow of information.

These common, everyday objects are important as the starting point for a stream of consciousness narrative. They continually trigger new visions and enrich my imagination. In Woolf's words, they produce a 'satisfying sense of reality' that leads away from anxiety and the struggle with actuality and into a peaceful pleasant state of mind.[21] She writes:

> 'I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality… waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of...Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree, and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow…' [22]

These ordinary elements are the anchors that drag her back to safety after she has journeyed to an unknown world. They are real, solid and certain. They stand between reality and the dream, peace, and danger.

Figure 2.14 *Rooster*, pen on paper, 2011

[21] Virginia Woolf, *The Mark on the Wall*, (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921).
[22] Ibid

Figure 2.15 Details of *Summer End Shower*, pen and ink on paper, 2011

Woolf's fascination with everyday things resonates with my own perspective on narrative drawings. Although they do not provide a 'safety anchor' for me, they do provide the abundant details of life through which I sense the world. They encourage me to trace their history and past, imagine their future, and presume their connection with people and their role in life. In them, I sense changes in society and in the corresponding behaviour of the people using them. They are the materials that facilitate self-reflection and the examination of my relationship with others.

Looking closely, I discover the extraordinary in normal everyday things and

Figure 2.16 Details of *The Wind between the Wings of A Nightingale*, pen and ink on paper, 2011
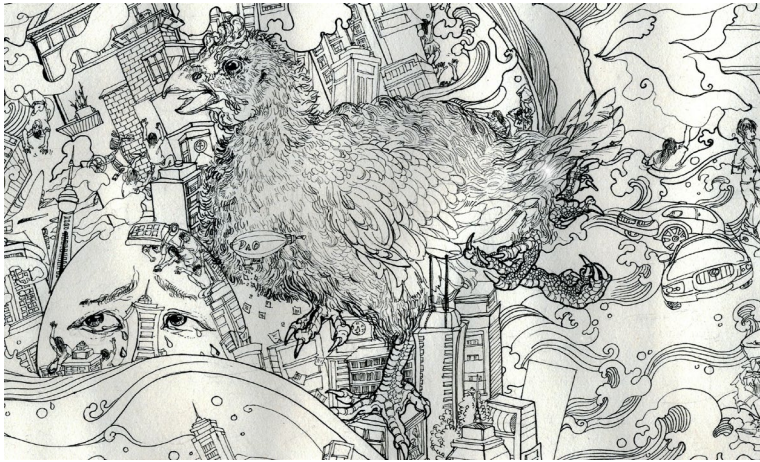
Figure 2.17 Details of *Scroll of Mountain and Sea*, pen and ink on paper, 2010

events, sensing relationships between people, society and nature. Using lines as my basic technique, I pay attention to the details and textures of the everyday things and events I draw. In drawing things that are easily overlooked and forgotten, I attempt to give a real sense of the social and cultural environment where I once lived.

Drawing everyday stories is also a form of rebellion, a rejection of the rules of classical art and a refusal to submit to the social rules that were imposed on me by my education. Normally, in the sense of classic Chinese art, there is clear discrimination between 'high art' and 'low art'. The depiction of 'low' everyday scenes, outside of approved themes is often frowned upon in order to protect the classic aesthetic and value of art.

These everyday scenes seem insignificant, poor and fragile, but they have the power to decentralise unanimous and integrated ideas. Depicting stories of the 'unimportant' is a tool against the hierarchical classification imposed on my mind. Using pens, I emphasise and draw attention to marginalised individuals living in the corners of society, reflecting their uniqueness and loss of identity within the collective culture.

My use of everyday elements is based on self-expression and encouraging my audience to find alternative perspectives on life. Beneath the appearance of the ordinary, there are 'wonders' and 'extraordinary' aspects that act as the starting point of imagination.

For example, in a country market in China I found a rooster with its feet stuck to a glue-based mousetrap. Standing in a muddy corner of the market, it was used as a live advertisement for a cruel master (figure 2.14). It became the prototype for many characters in my illustrations such as *The Summer End Shower*, 2010, where the cockerel stands high on a skyscraper with its determined eyes staring (figure 2.15). In *The Wind between the Wings of A Nightingale*, 2011, it has the body of a leopard (figure 2.16) and in *Handscroll of Mountain and Sea* (figure 2.17), 2010, it becomes a giant chicken with an extra claw.

Using a similar approach, I created many surreal and metaphorical characters for the animations for my video installations. They included a great variety of everyday elements: flowerpots, grasshoppers, lumps of coal, window frames, chairs, a candle, bricks, etc. I describe and analyse these characters and their metaphorical meanings in detail in the third section of this chapter (2.4-7). However, prior to this, I will outline the social and cultural context that provides the foundation for my self-narrative drawings/illustrations and is the source of the 'everyday' events and objects that populate them.

2.3 The social-cultural context of my self-narratives and installations

My life has provided me with abundant stories, generating a resource of emotions and ideas. Many of these are quite random, irrational and fragmented, connected only by loose and ambiguous ties. I purposely avoid giving them a concrete narrative structure in order to retain their specific character and quality. In the text below, I present an insight into my history and the experiences and emotions that provide the main subject of my drawing/illustrations and I explain how the stream

Figure 2.18 *A Typical 1970s North China Community*, Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, 2010

Figure 2.19 *Deconstruction,* Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, 2017

Figure 2. 20-1 Site Meng, paintings in series, *Details of Collectivism*, oil painting, 2012.

of consciousness approach is relevant to these self-narratives.

The stories told in my four video installations were inspired by life events and memories of the dramatic social and economic changes over the last 20 years in my hometown of Taiyuan, Shanxi Province in North China (figure 2.18-9). During this period, the local economy was transformed from a highly restricted collectivist economy to the market economy bringing about a rapid chain reaction in all aspects of life.[23] The reaction that shocked me the most was the collapse of

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[23] Since the birth of the Republic of China in 1949, the dominating economic form of China has been a highly nationalised collectivism that rejected the market economics of capitalism and private ownership. Free market competition and private property were almost forbidden. Individualism was highly repressed and replaced by a strong unified pursuit of collectivism and communism, impacting on every subtle aspect of life including art. Not until the late 20th century was this reformed. People were allowed to have individual economic activities (family business, free trading, traveling, migration between countryside and city, explore the western world, etc.). This policy allowed isolated collectivist economies to become market economies, bringing considerable wealth that has reshaped the whole country. Less controlled and dependent on the community and group, people gained more opportunity to plan their own life individually, greatly undermining the old collectivist way of life.

an ideology based on the traditional collectivist culture and the rise of consumerist individualism. The traditional communities based on nationally owned industries such as coal and steel mining, military factories and even schools were torn apart. The large-scale demolition of old community buildings destroyed the lives of many citizens, propelling them into the unknown and uncertainty, a promising but remote future.

The bonds which linked communities together in their individual districts of the city were significantly challenged when their old homes were torn down and replaced with new buildings. The tight-knit, mutual-dependency between each resident was deconstructed, forcing them to become isolated individuals trying to adapt to a strange, alien, fast-changing and chaotic environment. The city became alien to its local inhabitants, cutting itself off from any visual, audio and physical contact with its recent history.

My four video installations were inspired by my emotional journey during this social change when I had to relocate from an old community in my grandmother's home to another community in a city centre; both eventually were torn down. I experienced both the positive emotional bonds of the collectivist culture and the dark, exclusive and cold aspect of it; positive or negative, warm or cold, these places, full of emotional memories for me have all disappeared now.

Through self-reflection and self-narratives, I investigate the character of an individual living in communist China (myself), who feels confused by the sudden loss of their familiar collective community. This reflection brings a great deal of pain and suffering and demonstrates how vulnerable and weak an individual can be when hit by the giant wave of history. However, it also brings happiness, new opportunities and new perspectives on life, prompting a move forward. I endeavour to identify, understand and reflect on the contradictory results of this change. Some people enjoyed a new happy life living in larger, modern flats, but some suffered from being cut off from their old neighbourhood and for others their identities and ideologies became confused (figure 2.20-1). Initially, I struggled a great deal with the overwhelming sense of dislocation, gradually learning to gain energy from the process of re-shaping and re-identifying who I was.

My self-narratives are metaphors for my confused and struggling identity, my attempt to redefine myself within a period of great dislocation and disorientation. In this transformation, I lost and I gained. Freed from the unyielding old collectivism, I felt disoriented. My mind was challenged, attacked, imprisoned, threatened, scattered, deconstructed and reformed, encouraged, freed and empowered. It went through confusion, isolation, and loss but it also gained the ability to turn the negative experience into positive energy.

Using self-narrative and art I transformed my confusion into a power that fostered a rebirth. My thoughts were individual and private, although they mirrored those of the collective and shared the memories of everyone living in the same context as me. My views, my choices, my ways of exploring and finding answers to my questions were part of the numerous solutions developed by each of us in the collective. By understanding this, I recognised how I was also different, and this helped me repair misplaced connections with the now lost community.

Of the four self-narratives used to generate the video installations, three were set in two of the collectivist communities where I lived and one, a collaboration with Ph.D. poets, I reshaped into collective memory. Each one was a mixture of happiness and sorrow, light and dark and past and future.

For example, the animation *By No Definition,* 2015, has several sections representing a variety of emotions. It includes the loss of my grandmother and the disappearance of the old community homes, the dim traffic lights that illuminated the cold winter nights, a moment of curiosity about nature, the bonds of friendship and a friend and I chasing each other in a garden.

The video installation *The Reversible Future*, 2015, presents the compulsory military training of teenage students in Chinese colleges. A beautiful garden, rich in memories of the community culture, friendship and nature was turned into a political place of commands and slogans as students were put through their paces. This weird juxtaposition of beauty and young militia demonstrates the dislocation that appears in people's minds as they were overwhelmed by the social change. This scene that I personally witnessed was confusing and absurd, making reality surreal.

The story behind the video installation *The Outsiders*, 2017 is of my dislocation in a new community and the eventual 'freedom' I gained when the community was torn down and made into ruins. The work depicts a mutual gaze between an 'outsider' and her friend, an 'insider'. As a metaphor, it described the conflict between the hope of happiness and the wish to join a community and feelings of cancellation of individuality, exclusion and rejection.

As well as these three very personal stories, I made a narrative in collaboration with two poets Bernadette McAloon and Joanna Brooks, creating an installation in the group exhibition *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016 for the Newcastle Poetry Festival, 2016 and group show *A Study of Imaginary Chasms*, 2018. McAloon, Brooks and I found that we shared a similar background. We had all grown up in heavy industrial (mining) areas that had now been demolished and transformed. Myself in China and McAloon and Brooks in the North East of England. We combined our individual memories of dislocation into a collective one, finding connections by reflecting on the transformation of the mining communities which were threatened when the industry was torn down. We told our stories about coal mining and trains and fused them together as one in the work.

These assemblages of real events and imagination that made the stories for my works triggered emotional memories and a self-transforming response. Philosopher Alexander Bain notes that there are layers of mental activities in one event happening simultaneously.[24] Philosopher John Mill also emphasises this inseparable coherence in which each mental activity can only exist in context with others.[25] A remembered event is like a pebble cast into a pond creating ripples on the water, triggering an understanding of the event in its entirety.

One tiny action fueled my reactive mental growth or consequent reactions that took place unexpectedly. These thoughts and feelings were initially shapeless and invisible. They existed in the form of continuous floating fragments waiting for me to give them a vessel to inhabit. They were not completely isolated elements, but the knots on a dense web covering my life. They existed in 'free association',

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[24] Alexander Bain, *Mind, Senses and Intellect*. (John W. Parker and Son, 1855).
[25] John Mill, *Analysis of the Human Mind'*, (Longmans, 1878).

open to being connected 'irrationally' and randomly. No matter how insignificant they may appear, they each played a crucial role in constructing my perspective of life, society, and culture.

Philosopher Thomas Hobbes finds human minds, imagination, memories, and dreams come from sensations triggered by external factors: 'seeing, hearing, and smelling'.[26] Our feelings are continually triggered by exterior stimulation, keeping our minds in eternal motion.[27] Memories are particularly significant to us as they aspire to make sense from the fading and lost past.[28] However, there is no certainty as to what we may find in them, as they come and go, even occurring without our really noticing.[29]

Novelist Virginia Woolf describes this experience in her short novel *The Mark on the Wall* (1921) as an unpredictable flow of consciousness:

> How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little
> way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave
> it'. …It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I
> should like to take each one separately—but something is getting
> in the way.... Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A
> river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I
> can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping,
> vanishing...There is a vast upheaval of matter.'[30]

The method of narrating this flow of consciousness is crucial to this research. Sigmund Freud used trains as a metaphor to describe this progression and intersection of perceptions. He suggests the image of 'a traveller sitting next to the window of a railway carriage and describing to someone inside the carriage the changing views which they see outside.'[31] Pleasant scenery passes by quickly; one scene is rapidly replaced by another. While describing the pleasant

[26] Thomas Hobbes, Chapter I: Of Sense and Chapter II: Of Imagination. *Leviathan* (*The Matter, Form and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*)', (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2011).
[27] Ibid
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid
[30] Virginia Woolf, *The Mark on the Wall*, (Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1921).
[31] Sigmund Freud. Translated from the German under the General Editorship of James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, Alan Tyson. 'On beginning the treatment' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1958).

changing scenery outside the window, the person is also haunted by inner darkness.[32] Freud argues that this 'freedom' of association of outlooks can be 'both desirable and terrifying' as it not only enables the person to see the pleasant views but also references them to interior darkness mingled with unidentifiable horrors and impulses.[33] He suggests this can bring about a chain of mental emotions that may enforce an infinite transformation.[34]

My self-narratives are collages made from many different sources including real events, imagination, strong emotions, and unnameable impulses. Consequently, I could not use a conventional narrative technique to capture something so indefinite and infinite. I needed a more flexible and open structure through which I could develop a more holistic view of them. My self-narratives are not an attempt to answer any specific questions about my life, society and human relationships, but a process of trying to understand them and their consequences.

From 2.4 to 2.7, the text analyses four case studies to show how I use the stream of consciousness technique to develop my self-narratives, reflect on social change, draw my characters and make the animations for the four video installations.

2.4 Case study 1: *By No Definition*, 2015, 2016

By No Definition, 2015 is a single-screen video installation work consisting of three identical High Definition animations projected onto a U-shape wall (2.4×5m each side) installed in the middle of a large studio and accompanied by an independent soundtrack made by musicians Adam Potts and Ben McVinnie.

The animation video, approximately 14 minutes long, has three main sections made from animated drawings inspired by my memories of being in a garden. Each section metaphorically represents a story involving the transformation of identities during the dramatic social changes that took place in Taiyuan City, China in the 1990s.

[32] Ibid

[33] Alan Tyson, 'On beginning the treatment', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho - Analysis, 1958).

[34] 'Free Association', 23rd IPSO European Meeting, https://ipsoparis2017.wordpress.com/, accessed 06.06.02018.

2.4.1 Self-narratives

By No Definition, 2015 was based on several childhood stories that happened in a garden near my home. The garden was built in the 1970s as a part of a local college and was perhaps the only architecture preserved in the dramatic social changes that took place. Every building around it was new, and the people who worked and lived in them. Having witnessed the transformation of the city, this garden became a remnant of the old collectivist community culture, bridging the past and the present.

Figure 2. 22 *The Long corridor* (*The Tunnel*), 2015

Figure 2. 22-3 *The Building next* to *the Long corridor* (*The Tunnel*), 2015

My narrative started from a photograph of the fountain in this garden taken several years ago. It reminded me of when I witnessed a young girl nearly falling into the fountain. Looking at the photograph, my stream of consciousness began to flow, taking me back to the garden.

A variety of elements appeared: the light of the summer sun, the water beetles floating on the water, the smell of the hot concrete bricks, the street lights standing tall along the path, the scream of the girl who nearly fell in the water, wet shoes and the falling rocks. My imagination enabled me to wander through the past where there was a long corridor covered by dense ivy. My 'eyes' peeped through the vine to see dancers practicing behind them.

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Inspired by Woolf's short fiction *The Mark on the Wall*, the texts below attempt to trace and map my flow of consciousness in the form of three short monologues and a poem under the themes *The Tunnel, The Long Corridor, The Fountain, and Two Sisters*. They are assemblages of a range of impressions generated by my imagination and memories. Fragmented, absurd, irrational and somewhat confusing, they reflect the untidy original mind streams and the true nature of a practice bound by imagination and shifting moods. Not attempting to provide clear meaning, they are intended to provide a sensation of the roots of my drawings/illustrations.

The Tunnel (figure 2.22-4)

It was a tunnel between life and death. At one end was my home, at the other a hospital. Between were flowers, fountains, paved paths and pavilions. Here I found a dry beehive with a tiny white larva struggling in its cell waiting to be fed, cleaned and comforted. Later it died, dried up and shrivelled. It resembled a coconut flake. A breeze blew it into a dark pit, the mine in Yang Quan town 100 miles away. There it came back to life, saying goodbye to the sun, the morning dew and the noisy magpies. But where was its queen bee? She was lying in a hospital ward bed dying. Her yellow and black tripped body now turned to a dark grey.

Figure 2. 24 *The Long corridor* (*The Tunnel*), 2015

The Long Corridor (figure 2.22-4)

The long corridor was mysterious. It blended with the surrounding trees and bushes. It refused to be viewed from the outside as if it was a secret castle. I

barely noticed it as the heavy wisteria and ivy-covered it. I walked inside as if into the belly of a big fish. It was dark, cool and damp. Through the gaps between the dense vines, I saw the windows of the studios in the college opposite. Some dancers were practicing with colourful silk fans in their hands. The colours of the waving fans penetrated the corridor as if they were burning coals. Suddenly a cat approaching the window distracted me, as she walked towards me searching for food. I moved the flowerpot near my foot trying to get the cat some food. Under the heavy pot, a larva was awoken from its sleep, its tiny body wiggling furiously. In less than a second, the pale body disappeared into the dark soil leaving a tiny black hole. Maybe, to the long corridor, I was a larva enjoying the peaceful darkness, cut off from the outside world.

The Fountain (figure 2.25)

It was a warm summer afternoon. Jie and I spent the whole day in the garden trying to use a new fishing net. The hot sun distilled the pond and turned it into a dark, olive green jelly. It was so dense that I wondered whether it could flow. In this green jelly, the water snails crawled slowly on the wall of the fountain. A grasshopper dropped into the water, struggling to swim and quickly drowned.

Jie tried to pick up a snail with her net but dropped it in the water. She stretched her arm out and lost her balance; her arm reaching into the dark green jelly. She lost the net and almost fell into the water. The wet arm dried quickly in the burning sun. For the first time, we understood that nature could be a threat to our

Figure 2. 25 *The Fountain*, 2015

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lives. She was scared, and so was I. The fountain in front of me was no longer what it used to be. I sat on the broad edge of the fountain and could not let go.

Two Sisters (figure 2.25)

Two sisters with no eyes,

Held each other by invisible ties,

Hand by hand they crossed the bushes,

Resting their feet on the hot terrazzo wall of the pond.

Gazing at the snails marching in the warm green mud,

With sticky bubbles coming out of their abdominal legs.

Their faces reflected on the soft bubbles,

Floating, floating…

Up to the rustle of the wings of the red dragonfly,

Which was chewing a grasshopper's head alive.

The crack of the head,

Broke up the emptiness.
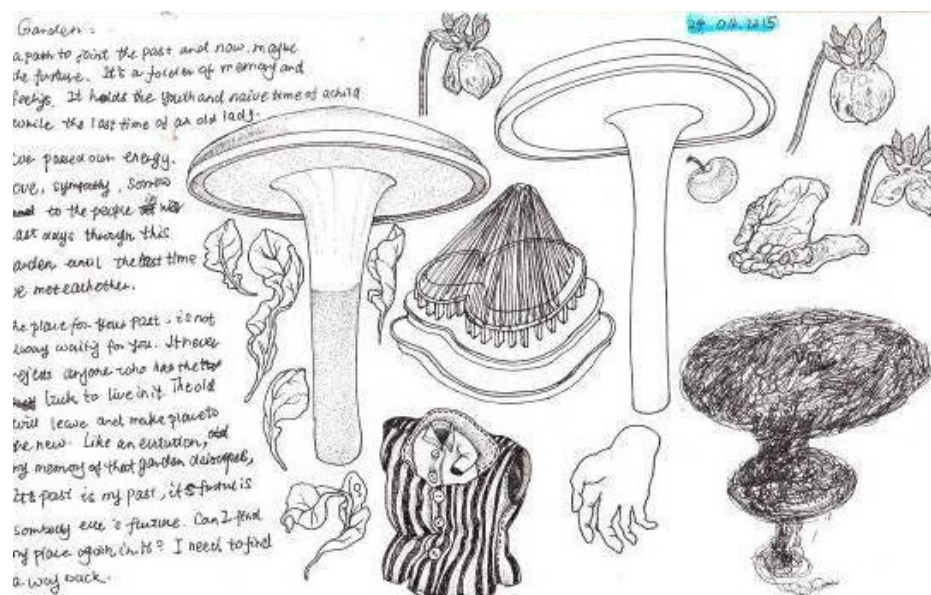
Figure 2. 26 The drawing for *By No Definition*, 2015

Figure 2. 27 The drawing for *By No Definition*, 2015

Figure 2. 28 The drawing for *By No Definition*, 2015

2.4.2 Drawings and animation

These self-narratives gave me abundant mental images of figures, environments, objects, and people for drawings/illustrations.
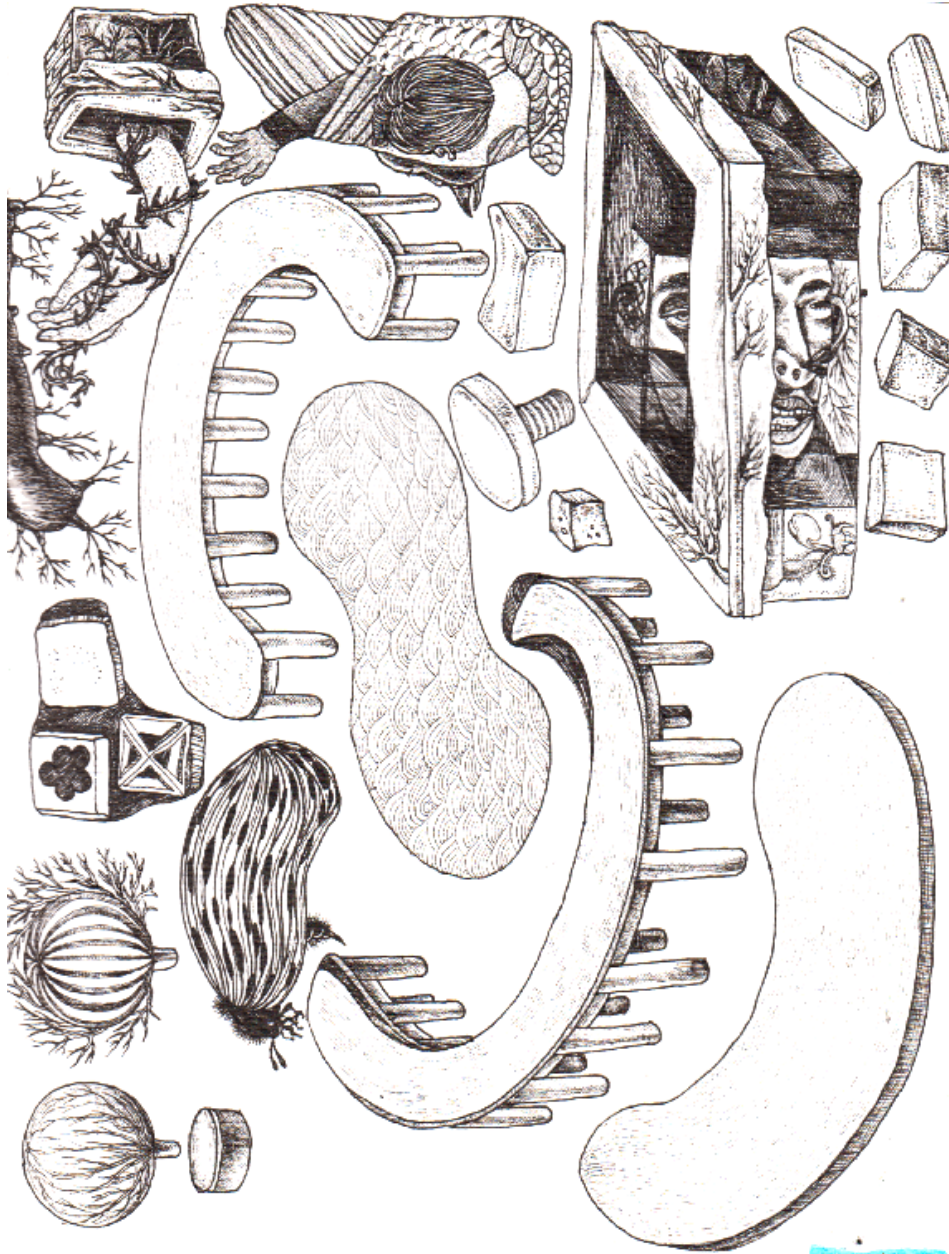
Figure 2. 29 The drawing for *By No Definition,* 2015
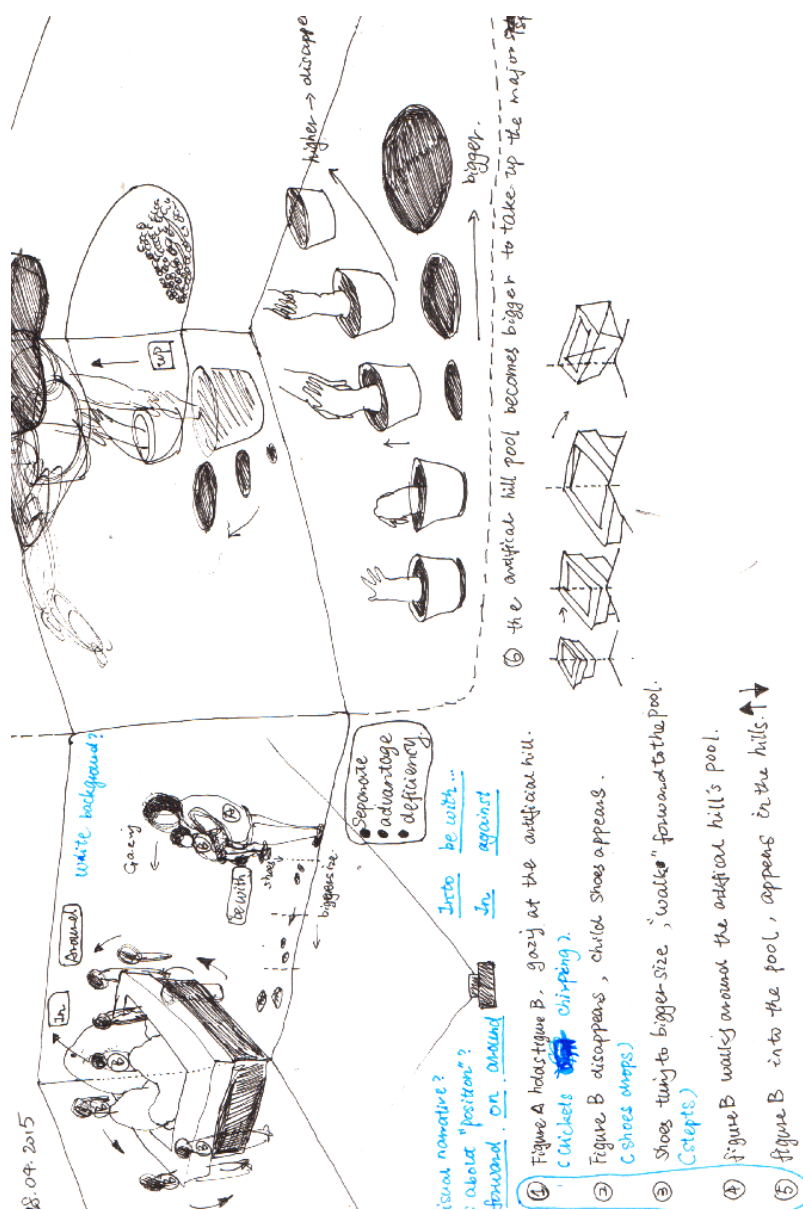
Figure 2. 30 The drawing for *By No Definition,* 2015

Figure 2. 31-2 *Grandma in Hospital* and *Flower Pots in Winter*, 2013

Figure 2. 33 The drawing for *By No Definition,* 2015

Figure 2. 34 The drawing for *By No Definition,* 2015

AE leay website: http://www.videocopilot.net/basic/
Gareth Hudson (2ⁿᵈ Year Practice-led PhD, new media): g.hudson2@newcastle.ac.
Richard Grayson (new media, narrative): r.m.grayson@ncl.ac.uk.

02.05.2015

I worked in media lab for the whole day to re-do the
videos which are not proper to be done in Premiere.
When I tried After Effect I found I should realize that
I shouldn't have use Premiere for animation. The AE
works very fast making the process go smoothly and fast.
Furthermore I found many special effects of video making
in this software which totaly changed my video and past expect
to video making. I stylized part of my video and combined them
with my draw. The effects are really, really ~~also~~ fansinate
and surpring. New possibuties have been found! I like the
looks of " ~~Exp~~ interferix 2 (万花筒). Strangenebulae 2(星云)
and blizzard(暴雪). Pixei Polly (爆炸片). " These effects gave me more
~~of~~ chances to ~~change the video to my~~ the background of
my video. The illustration's movements seem to simple and needed
more animations.

Use light
Change the bend mode. MASK
use "style"
Use "Distort."
use "Stimulation"

low vivid
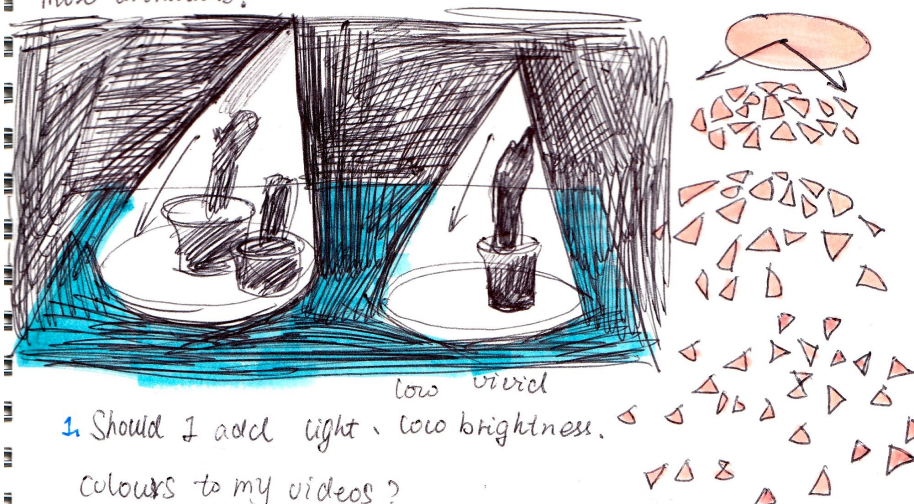
1. Should I add light、loco brightness.
   colours to my videos?
2. Should I mix the text (Poem) with the illustration?
3. How to make the animation more exiting and rich?

Figure 2. 35 Sketches for *By No Definition*, 2015

The process is the same for each project. To begin drawing I select several elements from my self-narrative and draw them on paper (figure 2.26-30). I choose characters mainly based on their visual shapes. Some shapes I find more interesting than others, for example insects, miniature artificial 'mountains', a child with the head of a bird holding a piece of dry lotus flower in her hand, a faceless child cuddled by her 'grandma' who has no head, an elderly lady with a mask lying on a bed made of grass and thorns and a large unicorn beetle with a spotted back.

I draw these elements with pen and ink on A4 paper, giving them a surreal quality to distance them from any literal description and to enhance the suggestion that they are to be read as metaphors. For example, the arm growing from a flower pot has a discursive symbolic implication of 'rebirth', 'self-salvation' and 'isolation'. The mask that elderly lady wears was inspired by my grandmother as she lay dying on a hospital bed (figure 2.30-5). The child with a bird's head looks stressed and uncomfortable, reflecting my anxiety about integrating with the outside world (figure 2.27). I represented the 'light' of the street lamps with dense black lines, attempting to re-experience the dark road between the garden and the outside world (figure 2.29).

Once I have the drawings, I scan them at a high resolution, make a 'cut-out' of each one and placed them on a separate transparent layer in Adobe After Effects.

Figure 2. 36 The still frame of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

At this point I have not decided what I would do with them or fixed the events they would be involved in. I manipulated and related them to one another 'freely' by moving them around and trying out different combinations and dimensions, alterations in scale and placement having different implications for the narrative.

The completed HD animation of *By No Definition* (DVD 1, Folder A) was approximately 14 min in length and consisted of three short 'episodes. The first episode was from 0.13 min to 2.06 min, the second ran from 2.25 min to 5.34 min and the third one from 5.36 min to the end. In the short gaps between each episode, my poem *Two Girls Chase* was projected as white texts against a black background.

Episode 1

In deciding where to place the different components and characters of the
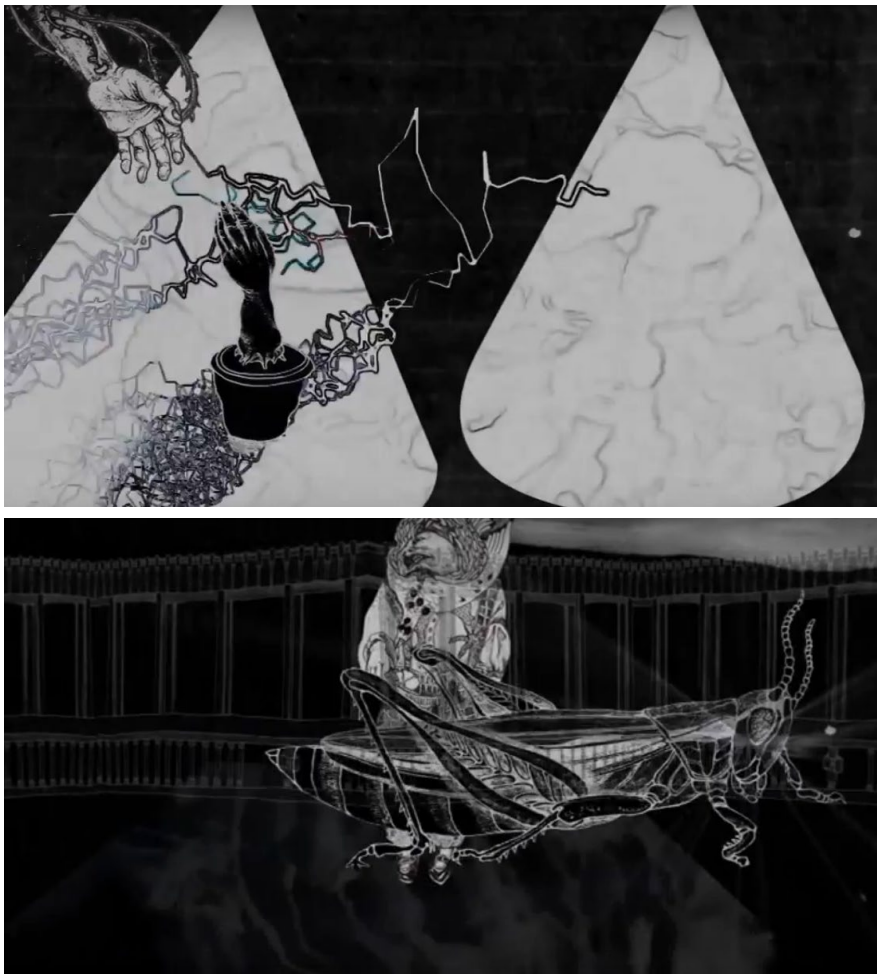
Figure 2. 37-8 Still frames of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

animation I realised how crucial their scales and positions were to the narrative

and the metaphorical meaning of the story. In deciding where to place a grasshopper for example, when it was small and arranged next to a flowerpot, it did not look particularly interesting, just like a normal realistic scene. Then, I enlarged the grasshopper creating a giant and placed it in the 'long corridor', with the child figure close beside to interact with it (figure 2.37).

An interesting event occurred to me as the 'child' came across such an abnormal creature. I moved her back and forth as if she was both excited and scared by the giant. At the same time, 'light beams' appeared behind in the 'corridor', penetrating through gaps and looking as if a torch is flashing in the darkness. Perhaps someone looking for the lost 'child'?

When finished, I decided to develop a section of video to precede this, as I felt

Figure 2. 39-40 Still frames of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

the 'long corridor' was a metaphor of being 'bound' and connecting two spaces or emotions. The section before this animation should contain 'darker' emotions as I wanted the audience to enter my narrative through a slightly oppressive and mysterious beginning. So, against a black background, I arranged two pale silhouettes of cones on which hands in flowerpots were animated as if illuminated by flashes of a 'lightning' (figure 2.38). Then, the 'bony hand' of an 'old lady' lying on a bed made of vines appears from the upper left-hand corner. Using her weak hand, she scoops the pots up towards her.

I continued to use the 'hand' in the pot as a key element throughout this first episode of the animation.

The next section of episode 1 was inspired by beetles living below a flower pot. Once I moved the pot, the little creatures suddenly lost their peace and drilled into the earth in panic. I reversed the scale of the pots and the bugs in my animation. I arranged a unicorn beetle so that it dominated the pots. Trundling around like a 'vehicle', the beetle goes back and forth, shipping the flower pots here and there (figure 2.39). The 'hands' in the pots turned into vulnerable 'new-born' sprouts, vulnerable to the 'ladybirds' that drop and crawl on them. All eventually fade into the black background (figure 2.40).

Episode 2

Episode 2 lasts from 2.28 min to 5.33 min (figure 2.41-2). It was inspired by flashing half-broken street lamps and a midnight walk. In the darkness, the lights

Figure 2. 41 The still frame of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015
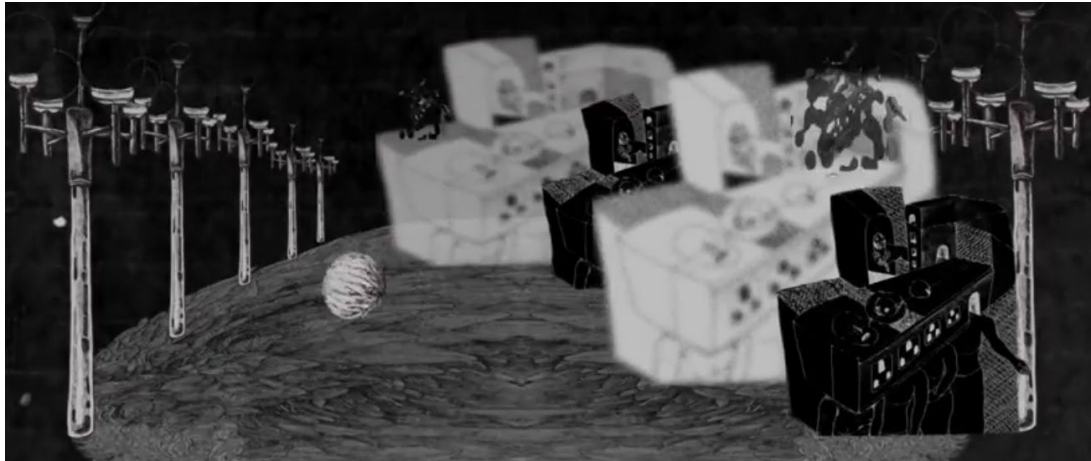
Figure 2. 42 The still frame of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

illuminated the path below. The animation depicted two rows of lights along a 'wide street', a corridor that the audience could enter. They implied a mediating status between the darkness and the brightness, between the reality and the dream. Later, a group of 'buildings' appear, implying the decaying community where I lived. Later, a 'ball' bounces up and down on the buildings, which eventually drops outside of the frame. Several 'fountains' spew out on the tops of the buildings. A square-shape 'flower bed' - about appears next to the biggest building. A 'Chinese artificial mountain' appears and 'grows' from the pool, occupying the left-hand space. Eventually, a faceless child and her grandmother, appear at the end of the 'street'. Standing among the black-and-white objects and buildings, their blank 'faces' suggest infinite loneliness.
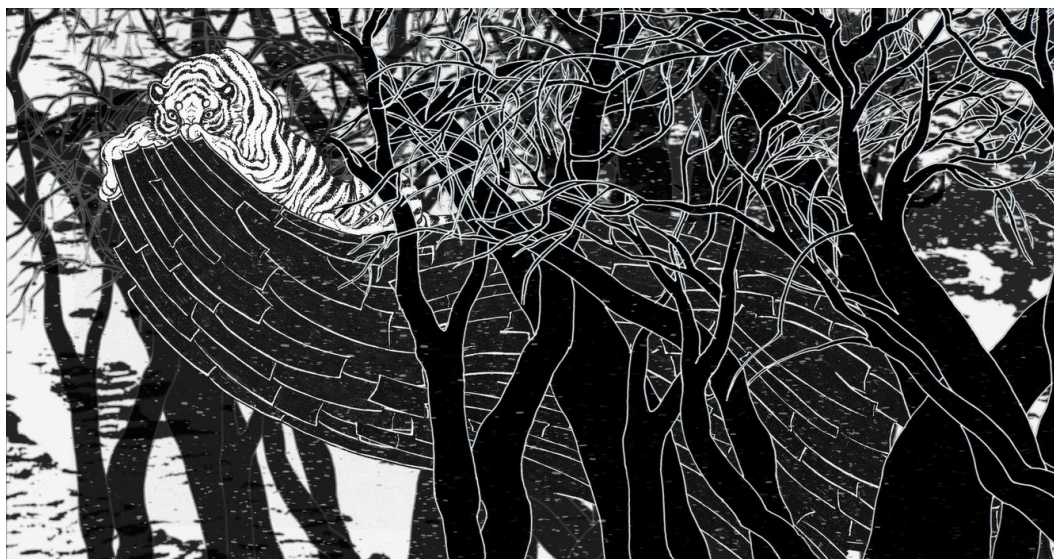
Figure 2. 43 The still frame of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

Episode 3

Figure 2. 44-5 Still frames of animation of *By No Definition*, 2015

Episode 3 started from 6.67min and ends at 14.5 min (figure 2.43-5). It has the simplest, and the longest event. Initially, it contained only one event in which a 'sleepy tiger' is laying on a 'rock' in a dense wood. Its eyes blinking occasionally. Later, a sleeping 'girl' appears laying against the wood. She breathes with her chest gently moving up and down. Eventually, two girls with bird bodies appeared resting on a branch. Behind these simple characters, a 'roaring sea' is raging, in marked contrast with the peace and quiet of the scenes in the foreground.

The backgrounds
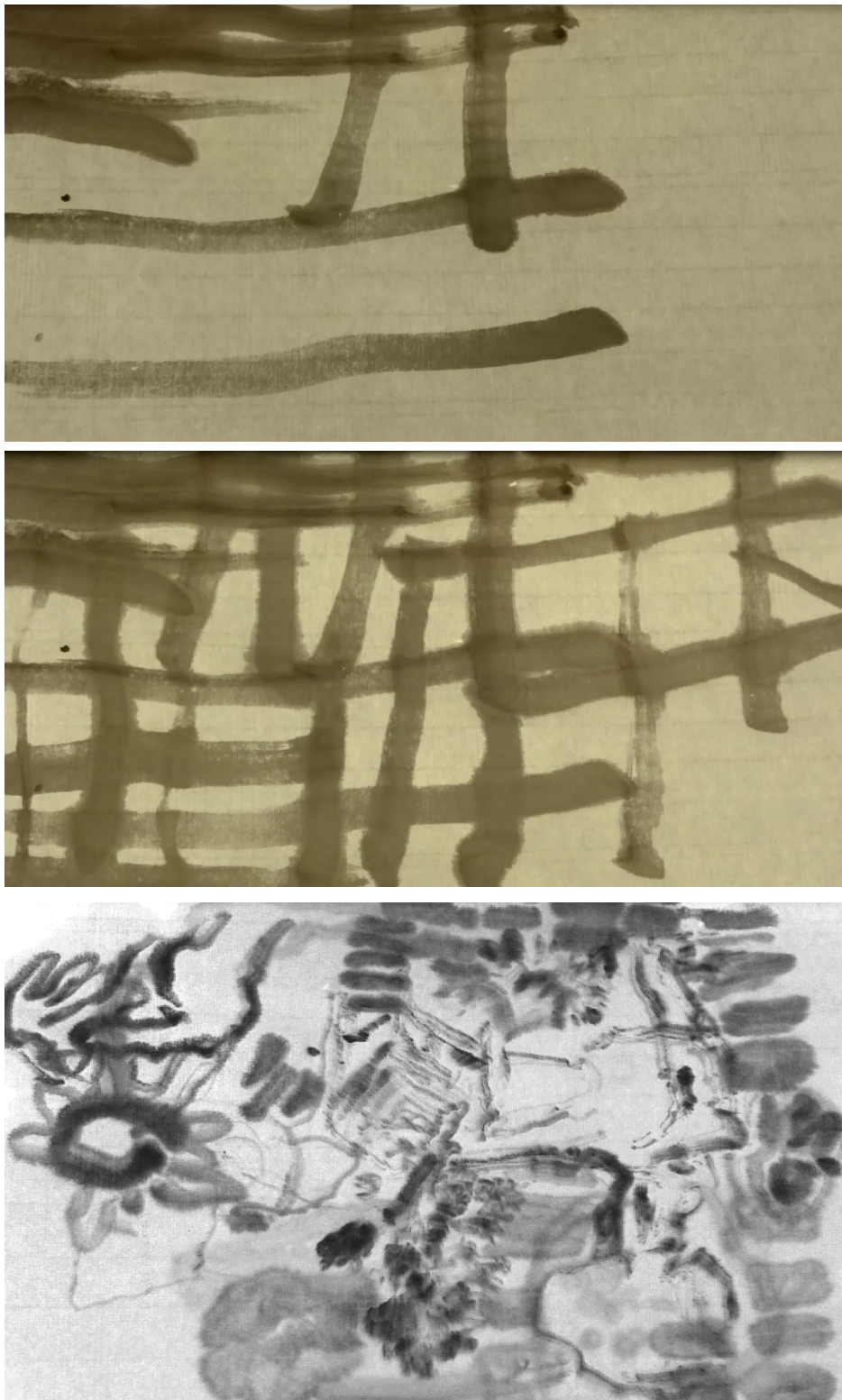
Figure 2.46-8 Still frames of ink painting background, 2015

The backgrounds of these animations also depict some simple movements. The backgrounds for the first three episodes were made from real-time videos

Figure 2.49 The still frame of ink painting background, 2015

documenting a picture being painted by arranging a camera below a piece of rice paper.

By experimenting, I found that brush strokes could be seen on both sides of the paper because of its translucency, enabling me to film the painting process from below while painting from above with the paper placed on a specially designed stand.

Rough, broad brush strokes move across the rice paper and watercolour marks blur and expand. When imported into After Effects, they were first inverted (made as a negative) and then cropped to fill the frame and played back at a higher speed (6 times faster). The finished video showed white and grey broad-brush strokes moving across a black background. The strokes of various opacities and brightness formed simple shapes such as grids. The subtle contrast between their tones implied an ambiguous distance between them. Sometimes this type of effect was used in the foreground also. For example, when a beetle is 'transporting' flowerpots with arms growing out of them, some shapes appear near the hands that look like worms drilling out of the earth. These shapes gradually weave a web that 'captures' the characters in the foreground.

From the beginning of the animation to 0.44 min, the background is of the inverted image of brush strokes on rice paper, rich in vertical textures (figure

2.46-7). I then used a more complex background of an inverted video of an ink painting in progress which lasted a further 1.25 min (figure 2.48). The brush strokes created a depthless plane with white shapes floating against a black background. Another image of the text from my poem followed, ending at 2.25 min. Following this, two rows of traffic lights emerge, gleaming against a black background (figure 2.41) and a textured near-oval shape at the bottom of the frame. Then the painting process starts again, creating broad brush strokes in the darkness (figure 2.42).

The final episode's pictorial space was made distinct from the previous ones. It was made using a drawing of a forest, together with a video of sea waves (figure 3.43-5). The 'sea' video was also inverted in After Effects and when placed behind the drawing of the 'forest', the waves could be seen through the gaps between the 'tree branches'. The dense 'tree branches' set up a barrier and blocked the path into the sea behind.

Compared to the previous two pictorial spaces, this one has a stronger implication of 'expansion' beyond the edge of the frame. This is partly because of the nature of the imagery in the videos; the fast-flowing 'sea' was held by the frame but could not be stopped by it, it faded into the dark and the extremities of the 'trees' disappeared into the gloom. This space did need the audience to walk into it, as if 'invaded' the audience's real space.

Soundtrack

Each part was accompanied by soundtracks provided by two 'noise' musicians - Adam Potts and Ben McVinnie. Responding to the characters and the atmosphere of the work, I suggested they add some referential sounds such as a ringing bell, chirping crickets, wind, rain, etc. The noise was dark and heavy, full of unexpected digitally generated noises that emphasised the surreal atmosphere of the narrative. Some parts were abundant in subtle changes, while some were simple but penetrating.

I also added the spoken narration (my voice) of the self-narrative poem *Two Girls Chase*, to the soundtrack. I manipulated the sound recording, adjusting its

frequency and speed, to produce a deep slow murmuring voice that would evoke a sense of distance, isolation and a suppressed impulse.

To conclude, based on the characters created in my self-narrative drawings, I created an animation using After Effects where surreal events happen. Chapter 3 will explain how I spatialised this animation via a single-screen video and in Chapter 5, I analyse audience interaction and participation.

2.5 Case study 2: *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*

The video installation for *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems* exhibited in the ExLibris Gallery in Newcastle University, was a group exhibition accompanying the Newcastle Poetry Festival May 5-7, 2016 funded by the Catherine Cookson Foundation.[35] There were four groups of Ph.D. artists from Fine Art and Ph.D. poets from Creative Writing, Newcastle University (Joanne Brooks, Jake Campbell, Jo Clement, Jim Lloyd, Jason Lytollis, Alexia Mellor, Bernadette McAloon, Jenni McDermott) working together[36]. I received the opportunity to collaborate with two poets Bernadette McAloon and Joanna Brooks (Creative Writing Ph.D. students at Newcastle University) to produce an installation. The theme of the exhibition was northern landscapes and the culture of North East England.

The work I made was based on several self-narratives about a landscape in transformation, told to me by my poet collaborators in combination with my own. The topic of our group was the transformation of the coal mining area and the dislocation of the residents. Poets McAloon and Brooks contributed four inspiring poems on the theme. In responding to their work, conversations and research trips, I made three groups of works: *Then is Diffused in Now*, *When Griefs Turns Carnival* and *Dislocations*.

2.5.1 Self-narratives

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[35] There were nine poets and artists divided into several groups in this exhibition. Each group had its own area to exhibit in sharing space in the gallery.
[36] '*Northern Landscapes Picture Poem* exhibition at Northern Poetry Festival 2016',
https://www.getintonewcastle.co.uk/whats-on/newcastle-university/northern-landscapes-picture-poem-exhibition-at-northern-poetry-festival-2016

In the collaboration, we each made work from alternative perspectives using different mediums but we were inspired by shared self-narratives. The two poets informed me about the local history and culture of Newcastle, Durham, and Northumbria. They were particularly passionate about the social and economic transformations (mainly the closing down of mines) that took place in the late 20th century that changed the lives of many residents, dislocating them from the life they once knew.

Bernadette McAloon narrated her experience of witnessing the coal mines in north County Durham close. The land has now recovered and has been reclaimed by nature, displaying a little trace of what it once was. Narrating her childhood, growing up in this area and how she would run through fields covered in wildflowers and stop to wish at a wishing well. She reflected on the sound of the coal as it was piled up and the sound of chopping wood for the fire. The memory of a coal train passing by, fleeting as history fades unrelenting, mingling tender romance with the hardships of the mining industry.

Figure 2. 50-1 *Coals Mines in Shanxi Province*, photo: Taiyuan Night News, 2010

McAloon and Brooks also reflected on their memories of the North Sea with its untamed wildness; beautiful yet dangerous. I encouraged them to collect some sea coal on the beach at Cullercoats, the only evidence left of the once great industry shipping coal across the world. Jo Brooks invited me on a field trip to the coast near Alnmouth. We hiked through the untamed seaside landscapes, a 'dying village' with a dwindling population. We walked old narrow paths with walls covered by heavy green moss and saw abandoned buildings with broken windows. On the shining beach, Brooks found inspiration for her poem in the tidal streams running back into the sea. I told her they looked like the Yellow River in

China that carries a vast amount of mud into the sea every year. We imagined how water circulates across the globe, joining our two worlds together.

The memories of the two poets echoed with my own experiences in many ways. I grew up in the coal mining city of Taiyuan, Shanxi Province where coal was an essential part of our lives and industry (figure 2.50-1). Millions of people depended on coal mining and had generations of miners in their families. The industry connected everyone together by providing them with a harsh life that also contaminated their bodies. The air was filled with choking coal dust and coal dust lived in every corner of my life. I did not see a green tree and forgot the smell of grass. Everything seemed to share the same monotone appearance. My face, my coat, my food, and even my bed were covered with coal dust. Coal was in my body, in my blood, and in my lungs.

I saw coal pits as horrifying things; they open their mouth wide and wait for giant steel monsters to dig them up. Nothing about them is soft, gentle, elegant or artistic. However, I felt conflicted about their closure and the dramatic social changes that instigated their loss. I was afraid of this change, the dislocation that split the community and the loss of all the memories that dwelt in the land. My old home was torn down and we were forced to move to a completely alien place. The bonds between the traditional communities were broken and nothing was familiar anymore. It was a moment when the dream of a prosperous future conflicted with a lingering reminiscence.

Several self-narratives evolved from combining my experiences with the stories from my collaborators:

The Sea Coal (figure 2.52-3)

McAloon gave me a piece of coal that she had collected on a North Sea beach. It had been polished by the fierce waves and reflected the light as if it were the shining eyes of a crab crawling by. It may float across the ocean to Spain, Africa, or even China. Its peers may have been burned to ash or travelled the planet; reaching the snowy mountains of Tibet, been carried across the boundless Gobi desert or trapped between a blue whale along with the plankton. Or, they may have been made a part of my body, breathed into my lungs to swim in my blood

and reach the deep tissues of my brain. The sea coal carried the memory of every place it had been and passed them on.

I took the piece of sea coal with me when I visited the old Victoria Coal Tunnel in Newcastle upon Tyne.[37] I wanted to show it where it may have once belonged 50 years ago, lying in a cart with other chunks of coal waiting to be shipped to Tynemouth and from there to the ends of the earth. I bowed down and put it in a corner; back to where it belonged.

The Pit (figure 2.54-6)

It was the winter of 2003. My bus passed by a coal mine in the north of Taiyuan city. Lumps of coal were piled up high, reaching the grey clouds. A light was twinkling deep within the pit. Giant earthworms chewed and swallowed the

Figure 2. 52 *Sea Coals*, 2016

Figure 2. 53 *Alnmouth Beach*, 2016

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[37] Victoria Tunnel was built in 1842 to transport coal from Leazes Main Colliery to the riverside staithes in Newcastle.

supporting walls. I noticed an ant nest under my feet. Ants travel for thousands of miles in their underground empire, drilling holes just as we do.

Figure 2. 54 *A Coal Mine in Shanxi Province*, 2010, photo: *Shanxi News*

Figure 2. 55 *Victoria Tunnel*, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2016

I glanced at the fading light of the gas lamps that reveal the damp walls of a cave. Where were these dry tree roots from? Maybe they belonged to the poplar tree standing above my head, the coal dust squeezed into the stomata of its leaves blocking its cells and choking them. I rested my sore back on the dead beehive and yawned at the sun.

Just three months ago, I heard news from my hometown. A big hole appeared in the yard of the Second Hospital. It ate an ambulance, doctors, patients, a woman passing, and the boiled eggs in the woman's hand, also her husband and his walking sticks. It was said they fell for two hours until they met a mining tunnel. Adults told their children they might appear in other pits as all the tunnels were connected below ground.

Figure 2. 56 *Road Collapses*, Taiyuan City, photo: *Shanxi News*

The Dead Badger (figure 2.57)

My friend and I drove past Stony Heap, a place in North County Durham that appears in a poem by McAloon. There was not a trace left connecting it with the old coal pit that she had described to me. The only thing associated with its mining history was some rusty iron gates and an abandoned pile of bricks. On the road, in front of a field, there was a dead badger that had been hit by a vehicle. Seen at a distance it looked like a big piece of coal waiting to be dragged away. When it was alive it would have enjoyed its underground home near this old mining site. It may even have some coal dust in the bottom of its tunnel. A month later its body would disappear just like the old coal mine.

Figure 2. 57 A *Dead Badger*, County Durham, 2016

In 50 years-time the mining in my city may also disappear. Trains may no longer stop at my door. They may move to a new city centre in the south, a place beyond my memories. The rail tracks running beside my apartment may be removed and replaced with a new road. Maybe new homes will be built with residents who know nothing about the history of the place.

McAloon was right; she said we saw treasured things disappear as if chasing a train and waving goodbye to a friend. The faster you run, the faster the train

Figure 2. 58 The watercolours for *Then is Diffused in Now*, ink, crayon and glue on A3 acid-free paper, 2016

Figure 2. 59 The watercolour for *Then is Diffused in Now*, ink, crayon and glue on paper, 2016
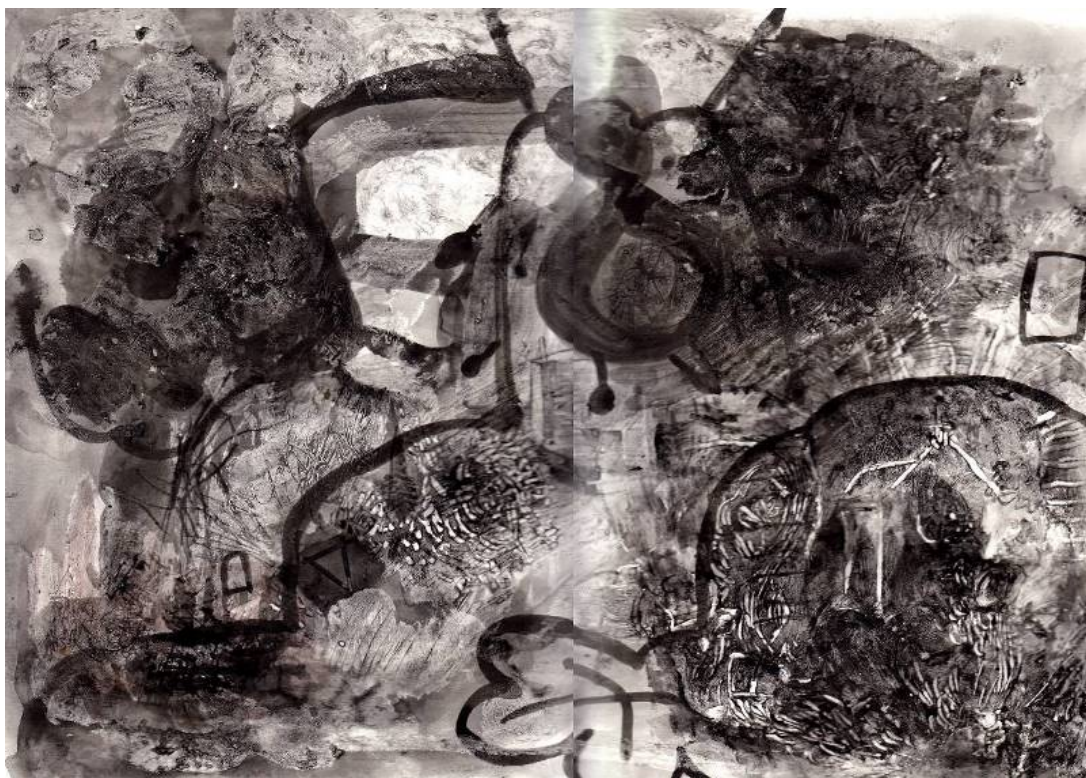
Figure 2. 60 The watercolour for *Then is Diffused in Now*, ink, crayon and glue on paper, 2016

moves. Maybe what has disappeared was a good thing. At least I have not been bored by a repetitive life. I stared at the railroad tracks, the pale sleepers and the black rocks between them remind me of the injured fur of the dead badger.

2.5.2 Drawings and animations

Once again, I drew many figures based upon the major elements of the self-narratives generated by my stream of consciousness. They were made for two purposes; some were made for the animation projections (*Then is Diffused in Now* and *When Grief Turns Carnival*) and the others were on display on tables in the centre of the room.

Projection 1 *Then is Diffused in Now*

Then is Diffused in Now (a title created by the poets) was a video projection on a curtain (200 × 75 cm) hung on a wooden bar with the soundtrack of the poets' reading and the sound of sea waves and ship bells, etc. This projection consists of four independent episodes inspired by the poems of McAloon (*North Point* and *Stony Heap*) and Brooks (*Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* and *Cowries*).

The poems touched forgotten aspects of the landscape that interweaved with the pain of dislocation and loss. I attempted to visualise an atmosphere using abstract forms in watercolour and drawing to give the audience a sense of the landscape. The slowly transforming shapes, coloured areas, and lines echoed the ambiguous and uncertain features of the self-narrative and the fading memory of the industrial North East.

Words and phrases from each poem were also added to the animations. These were used in various sizes and arranged in response to other elements in the animation.

Being a part of the collective exhibition, the sound was played through two headphones. The audience could sit facing the projection and listen to the sound. Below I will introduce each episode.

Episode 1 *North Point* (figure 2.61-6)
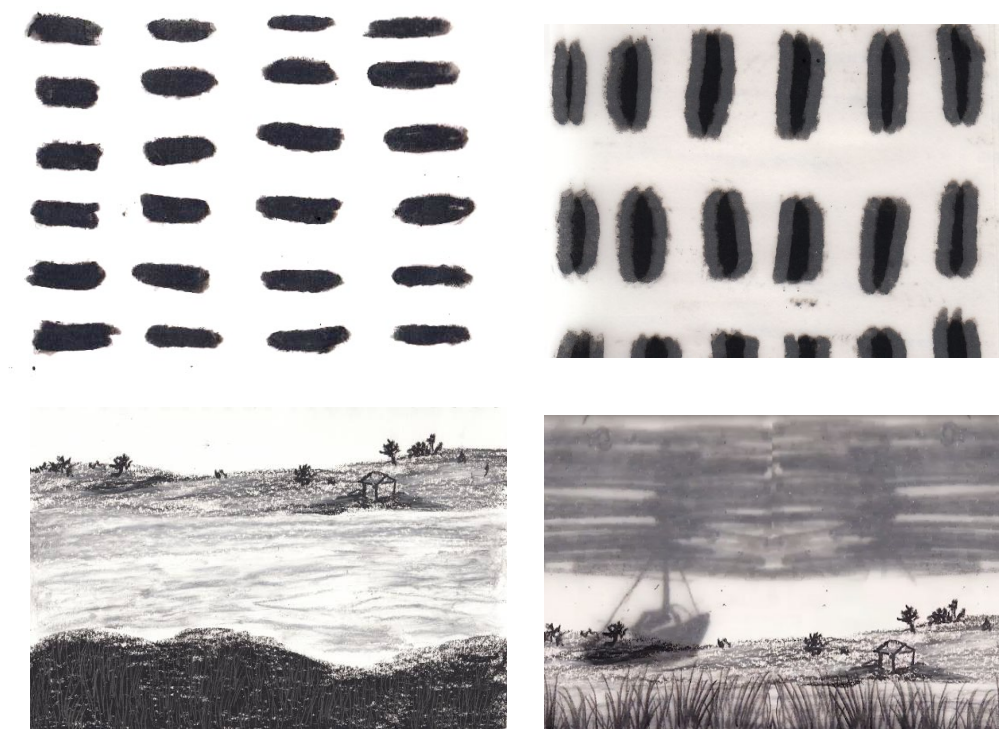
Figure 2. 61-4 The drawings of *North Point* animation, 2016
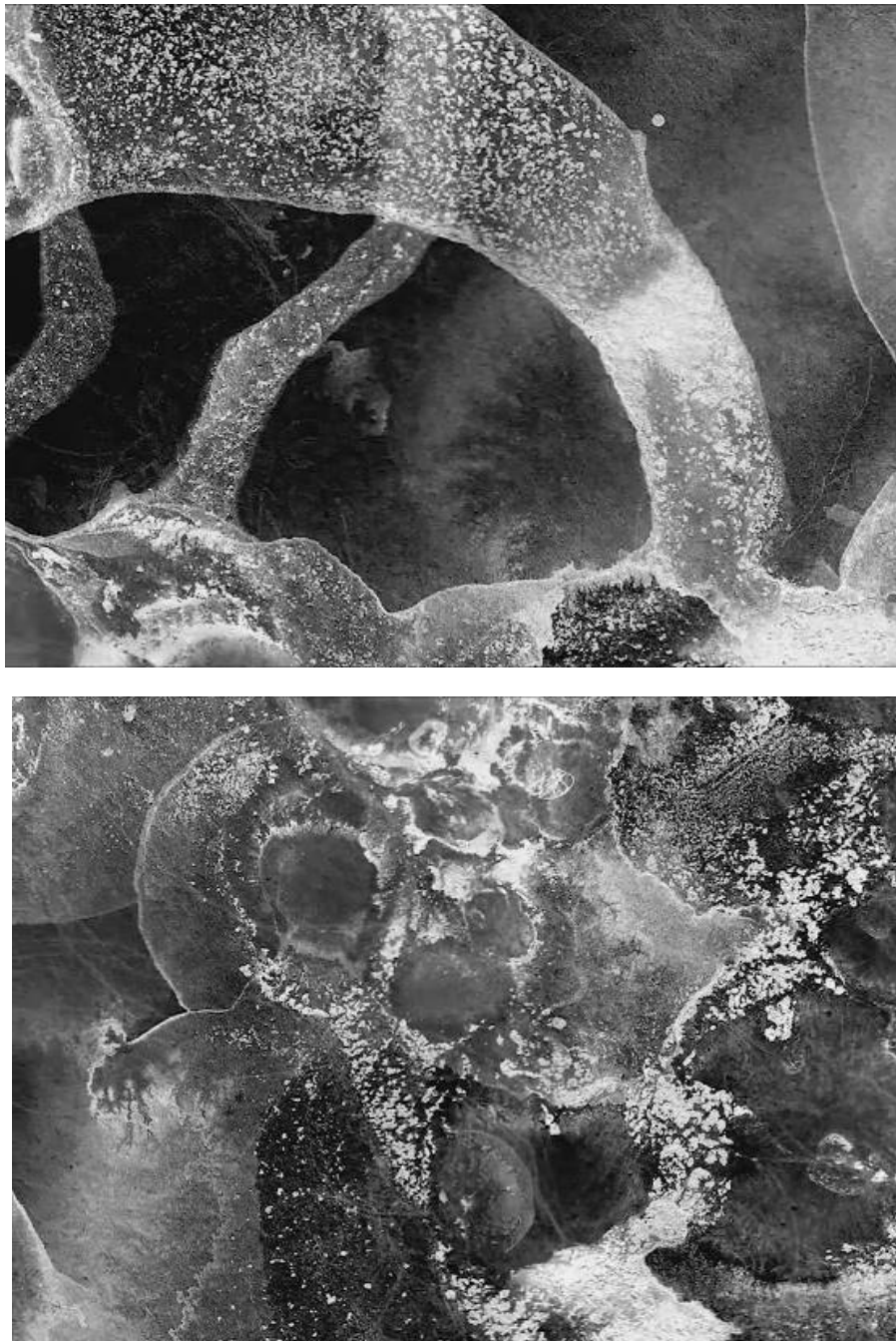
Figure 2. 65-6 Still frames of *North Point* animation, 2016

The first section of the animation (5.35 min, DVD 1, Folder B) was made in response to McAloon's poem *North Point*. It associated with the narratives of sea coal which in my imagination travelled to China. Using Chinese ink and glue to make abstract shapes and rich textures, I let the materials decide their forms,

echoing the unpredictable flux of life (figure 2.58-9). Layers of wet PVA glue were filled with black ink in different proportions. Once dried out, I coated it with another layer of glue and ink. It was exciting to see the ink crystallise in the glue and create unexpected accidental shapes. These free growing shapes on different layers collided and overlapped.

The animation gave the impression that the viewer was walking through a watercolour landscape. This effect was created by magnifying the glue and ink drawing using Adobe After Effects and moving it around to create the animation. Tiny dust particles grew into blotches that stimulated the imagination. They may be jellyfish floating in the sea or the trace of a snail crawling along with the brickwork of an old house, pebbles on the beach, foam on the seashore, the bubbling lava of a volcano or chunks of coal resting on the shore of the Yellow River.

This section of the video ended with a scene depicting a grass-covered seashore with a lonely abandoned house. The image was made from two pencil drawings on tracing paper (10×6 cm) that were overlapped (figure 3.61, 63). Moving the pieces of paper, back and forth in opposite directions created the illusion of sitting in a boat whilst sailing away from the land (2.63-4).

The animation had a soundtrack of the poet reading her poem. Using Adobe Premiere Pro, I overlapped her voice to make it more mysterious and accompanied it with a mix of sounds of the sea, winds and a ships bell to enrich the atmosphere.

Episode 2. *Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* (figure 2.67-70)

This part of the animation*,* related to Brooks' poem *Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* (1.53 min, DVD 1, Folder B*)* and used a similar approach. The original drawing of a seascape was made with coloured pens on A4 paper (figure 2.67-8). When magnified in Adobe After Effects the drawing became a boundless vast seashore and it was difficult to understand its real size (figure 2.69-70). As the animation zoomed in and out, moved from left to right and faded in and out of focus, the splotches and lines kept transforming from one status to another. Sometimes they were a small pebble on a beach, then a lonely island in a vast

ocean. In this way, I invited my viewers to sense the consistent changes happening around us.

The soundtrack was consistent with the previous two using similar elements such as sea, wind, ship horns, etc. while Brooks' reading with her strong Scottish accent responded to her poem and her identity.
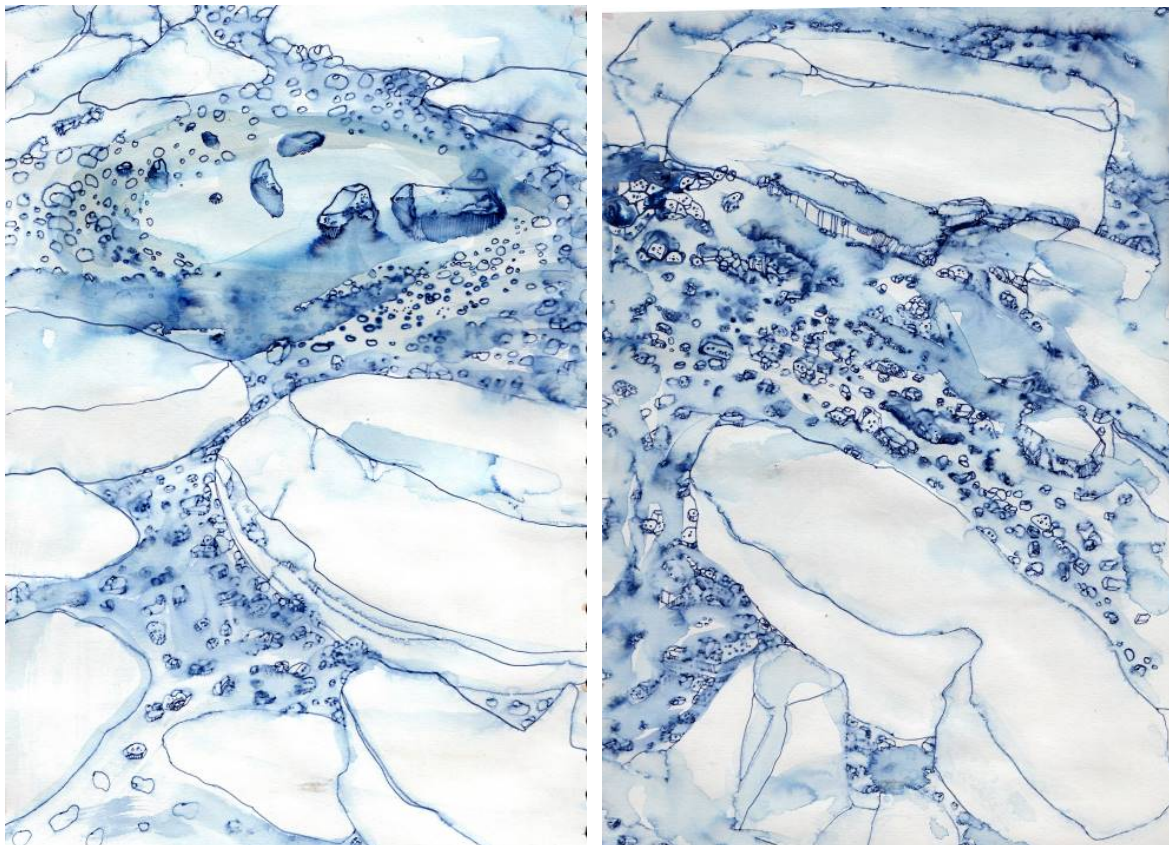
Figure 2. 67-8 The watercolours for *Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* animation, 2016
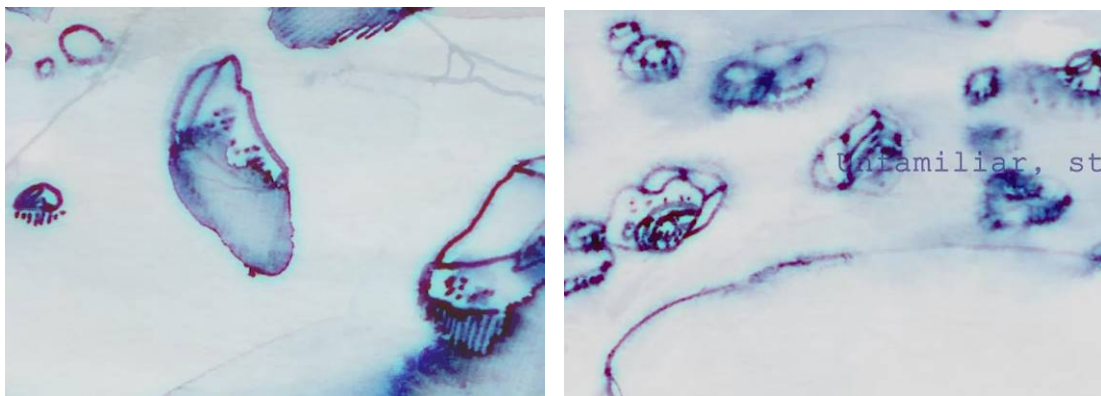
Figure 2. 69-70 Still frames of *Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* animation, 2016
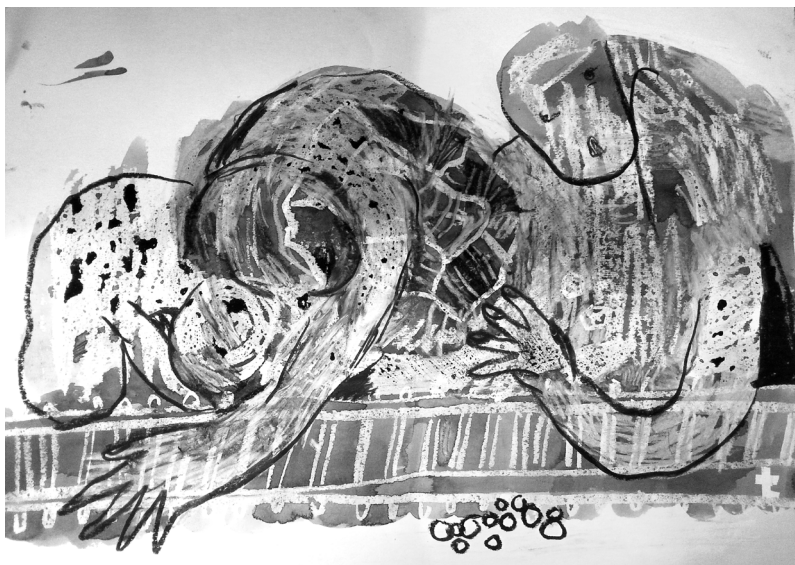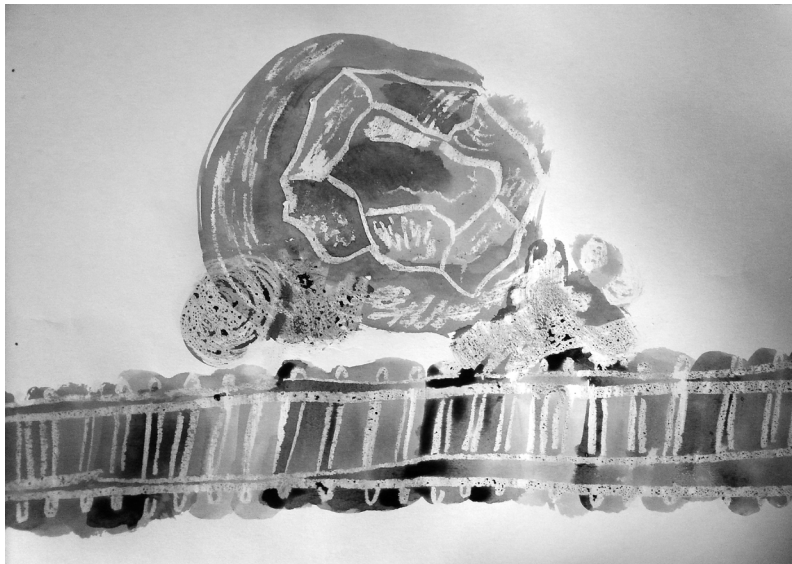
Figure 2. 71-3 Still frames of *Stony Heap* animation, 2016

Figure 2. 74-5 Still frames of *Stony Heap* animation, 2016

Episode 3.*Stony Heap* (figure 2.71-5)

The animation of a railway being built at the beginning and the end of the video refers to *Stony Heap*, a poem by McAloon (2.03 min, DVD 1, Folder B). The animation was made as a series of photographs that recorded the drawing process. I drew a railway track with Chinese ink and wax crayon and added some 'giants' bowing down to touch the rail and listening to the train approaching from the distance.

This was followed by another animation of a watercolour painting that gradually formed the image of a harsh winter in a mining village. I poured layers of PVA glue onto paper, added Chinese ink and used a sharp piece of coal to scratch out the details (figure 2.60, 74-5). The Chinese ink bar in my hand reminded me of the sea coal; the smooth surface and the hard body, its black stain was so difficult to remove. I enjoyed seeing the sharp ink scratches melting gradually into the wet glue and watching tiny particles swim about. Some lines were sharp and clear, while the others blurred and blended into soft patches. I focused on creating the textures of the muddy black land I once walked on in my city, as well
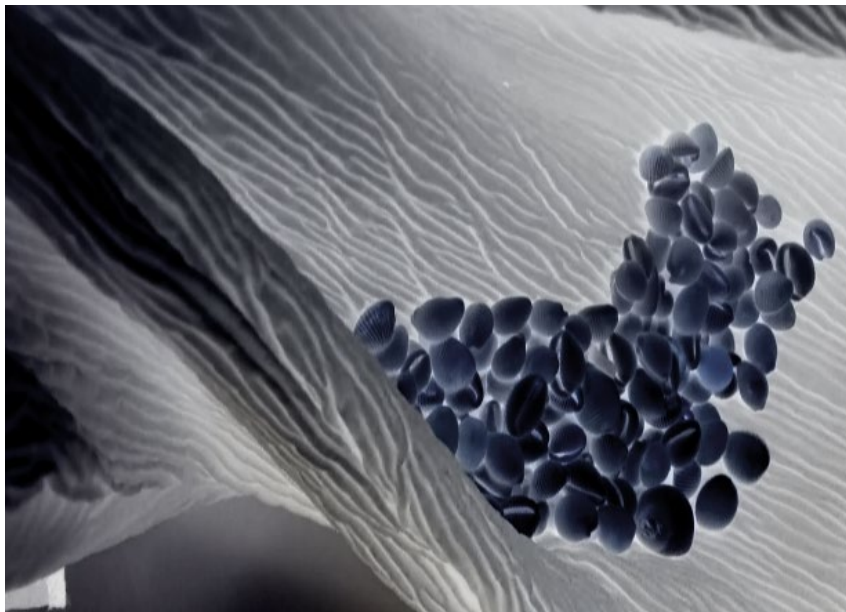
Figure 2. 76-7 Still frames of *Cowries* video, 2016

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as that in McAloon's memory.

The soundtrack for this episode consisted of McAloon's reading of the poem accompanied by sounds of bells, sea, wind, etc.

Episode 4. *Cowries* (figure 2.76-7)

The final episode (1.11 min, DVD 1, Folder B) was not made from drawings but videos showing a handful of small white cowries rolling on a sheet of chiffon fabric. Using Adobe After Effects I layered up several semi-transparent versions of this video, making the grained fabric look like waves upon the sea. Carefully collected from the North Sea shore by Brooks she linked them with her memories of living in the North East of England.

The soundtrack of this episode was quite simple. It consisted of only the reading of the poem by the poet and the sound of the rolling cowries echoing the lonely and forgotten memories.

Projection 2 and 3 *When Grief Turns Carnival*

When Grief Turns Carnival, (a title created by the poets) consisted of two identical, silent looping video projections. Animated in Adobe After Effects, the drawings of seagulls on A4 paper (figure 2.78) came to life. One was projected, on the ceiling, the other onto two piled up objects (a sea-polished brick with a
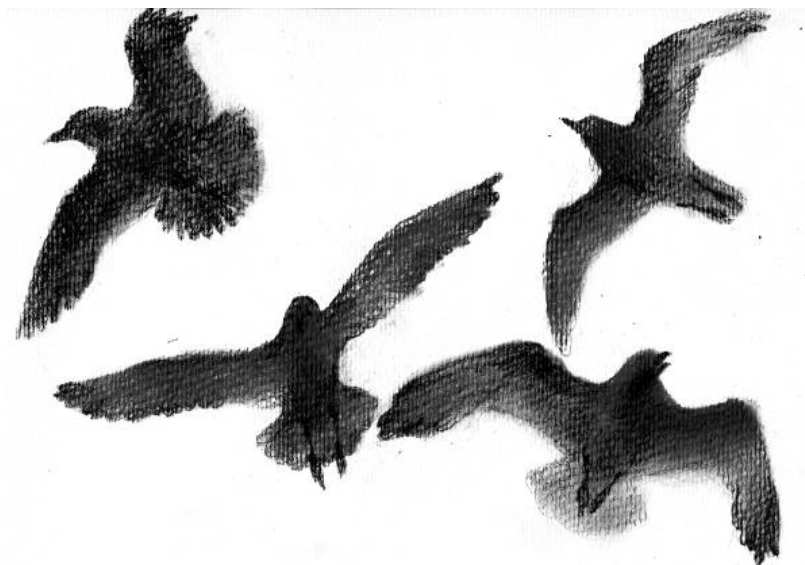
Figure 2. 78 The drawing for *When Grief Turns Carnival,* 2016
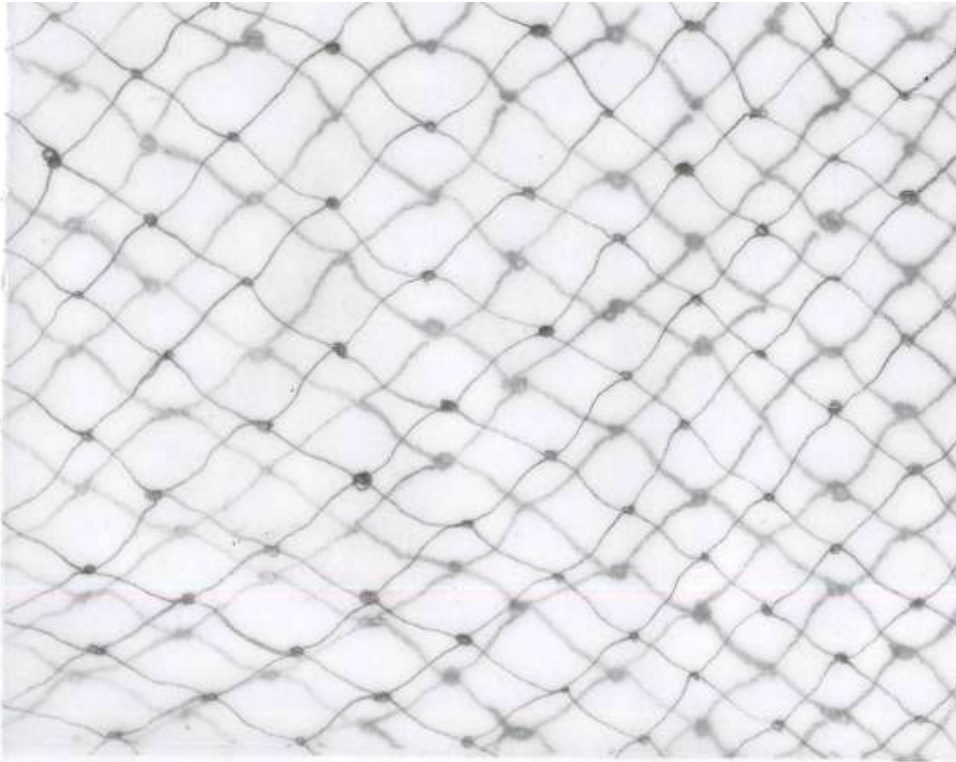
Figure 2. 79 The drawing for *When Grief Turns Carnival,* 2016

Figure 2. 2.80-1- Still frames of *When Grief Turns Carnival,* 2016

round hole in the middle on the top of a concrete cube with a rough surface, collected from Whitely Bay and Tynemouth, about 30 × 55 cm) (figure 4.49-52), placed in a corner close to the projection of *Then is diffused in now*. Another was projected onto the high ceiling next to the entrance in approximate life-scale (figure 4.110-2).
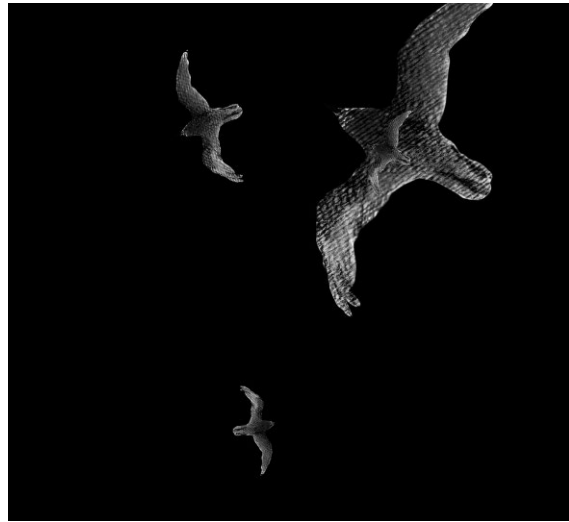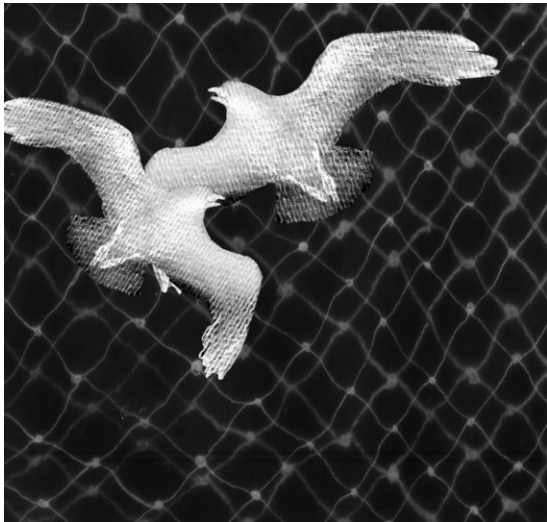
Figure 2. 2.82-3 Still frames of *When Grief Turns Carnival*, 2016

The drawing of seagulls was made with pencils, scanned and made into separate images in Adobe Photoshop. Using the Motion tool in Adobe After Effects I created animation by moving them around as if they were gliding on the wing. In part of the animation, I added another drawing of a fish net on A3 tracing paper (figure 2.79), so that the bird would look like it was trapped by a huge web in the sky (figure 2.81-3). The video was also saved to a different version in which the tones of the animation were inverted. Both versions were used in the installation.

Chapter 4 analyses how I projected these in the gallery space and Chapter 5 reflects on how this arrangement activated the audience mentally and physically.
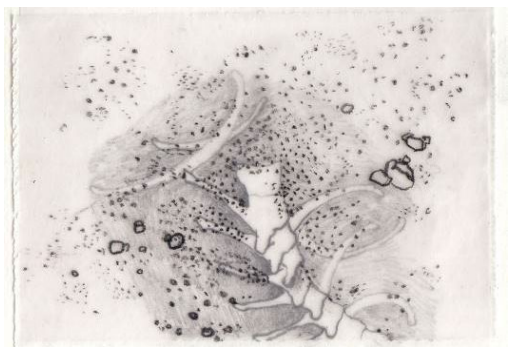
Figure 2. 84-5 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016
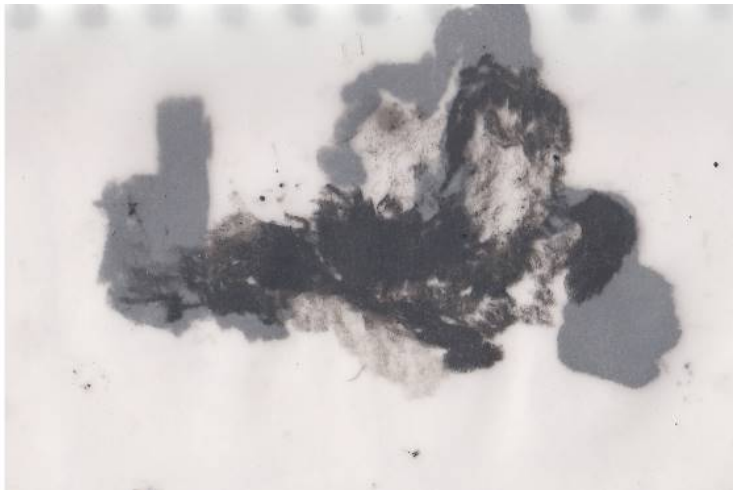
Figure 2. 86-8 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016

Figure 2. 90-1 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016

Figure 2. 92 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016
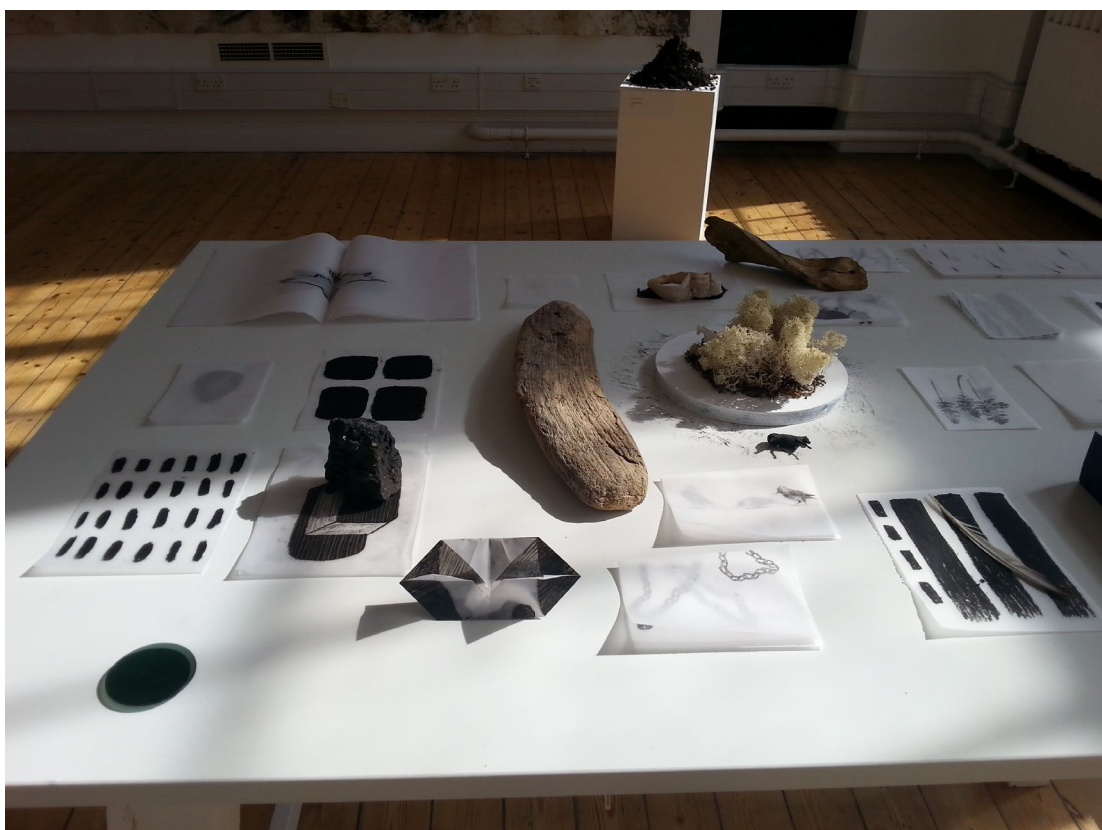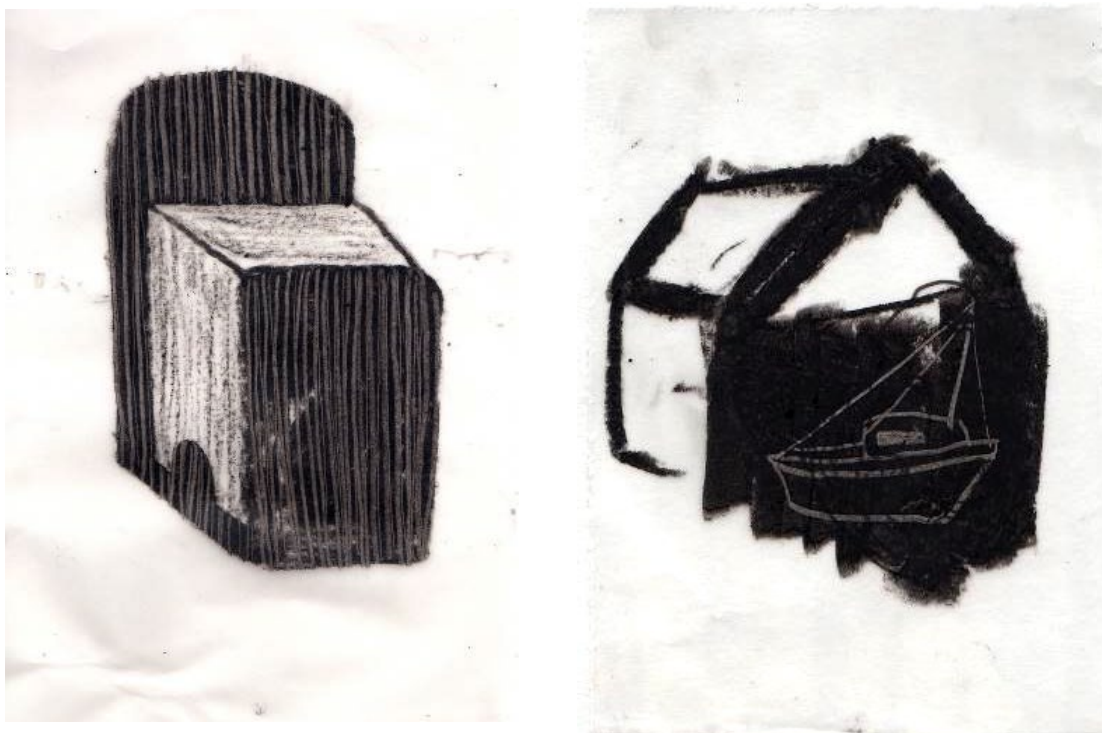
Figure 2. 93 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016

Figure 2. 94-5 *Dislocations* (small drawings, pencil or crayon on tracing paper), 2016

Figure 2. 96 *Dislocations*, collected objects and drawings on a table, 2016

Dislocations (small drawings and collected objects)

Accompanying the projections was *Dislocations*, an assemblage of drawings and collected objects. I drew with pencils and crayons on a small-scale (10 × 6 cm) using tracing paper and painted larger characters on paper (40 × 28 and 63 × 42 cm) (figure 2.84-91). Many of the drawings on tracing paper represented elements of the landscape including wood, jackdaws, the seashore with a house, bird eggs and a basket of fish, etc. They directly referenced my memories and attempted to give the audience an insight into my inner world.

These small drawings were presented with a collection of objects displayed on two trestle tables set out in the middle of the gallery (figure 2.92-5). For example, on top of a drawing of a chair made with black crayon I placed some white cowrie shells collected by Brooks and I arranged a small branch with pine cones on a long strip of drawings. These drawn and real objects accentuated each other, whilst also declaring the difference between a drawing and its prototype in nature.

To enrich the effect, I also made several origami forms of boats, made with painted paper and placed with the drawings and objects on the tables (figure 2.96). These miscellaneous objects and drawings made a distant reference to

those in the animations and simulated surprising connections in the viewer. The audience was encouraged to look back and forth between animations and object to discover the subtle connections.

In Chapter 4, I will analyse how I arranged these elements in the gallery to form meaning and in Chapter 5 I will explain how the work created a new pictorial narrative by triggering the active viewership of the audience.

2.6 Case study 3: *The Reversible Future,* 2016

Figure 2. 97-8 *Military Garden*, 2015

The third video installation I made for this research was *The Reversible Future*, a solo show in the Abject Gallery, Breeze Creatives, Newcastle upon Tyne, July-August 2016. I exhibited two video projections, two sets of assemblages of collected objects and two videos played on TV monitors. All these works were inspired by my memories of the military training I witnessed in 'my' garden in China in 2015.

Annually, before the new academic year begins in September all new Chinese students must go through the military training provided by their college. With limited outdoor space, the college next to my grandmother's home used the garden to drill the new recruits.

Girls wearing the same red uniform lined up in the garden and rehearse basic training such as goose-stepping, shouting slogans, following orders and trying to march at the same pace. Their square formations took up every corner of the garden, like piled-up red Lego bricks. Everyone tried to hide their body traits as much as possible, their uniform covering up their individuality and moulding them into a unified whole. The troop slogans were repeated and repeated loudly throughout the day, mixed with the sound of pianos being played in the surrounding buildings.

It was very surprising to see this kind of training taking place in the garden (figure 2.97-9). It generated an ironic collision of two conflicting activities. The garden meant freedom to me, it was diverse and open, allowing different creatures to develop in their own way, while the military training was to enhance collective cohesion by unifying individual thoughts and behaviour. In the dense square formations, the individual disappeared in the collective. In the first weeks of their new life in this college, these young girls were learning to shed their identities.

2.6.1 Self-narrative

The self-narrative below discloses several elements that caught my attention from this memory:

The Military Garden
It must have been in the middle of August. I carried a bag of grapes to feed the red ants in the garden. My eyes rested on the girl standing in the fifth row of the

military training group as there was something moving on her leg. It looked like a small pea rolling up a steep hill, while its round body seemed to be connected by long thin strings. It was a long-leg spider climbing quietly on the rough surface of her trousers, trying to escape from the hot summer sun. It climbed up to her waist, her chest, her neck, and all the way to her head. She didn't notice this little creature at all. The girl behind her saw it but she couldn't say anything. She had to lift her head high. The little creature finally crawled into the girl's dense hair and disappeared. Suddenly, the girl felt something tickling her head. She screamed like a whistle from a kettle. She stepped forward and pushed the girl in front of her. One by one each girl in the formation pushed forward creating a chaotic mess that even the officer couldn't control.

Figure 2. 99 *Military Garden*, 2015

2.6.2 Drawings, animations and collected objects

Drawings

Inspired by this self-narrative, I made two long-format drawings. In the first *Navigation* (18 × 80 cm, colour liner on paper, figure 2.100-3), 2015, I drew an imagined troop of girls marching into an unexpected and dangerous swamp. The characters were drawn with colourful lines and were simplified providing few details. Each has a similar face and body. One by one they hold hands like grasshoppers tied to a straw. They are empty inside and therefore transparent.

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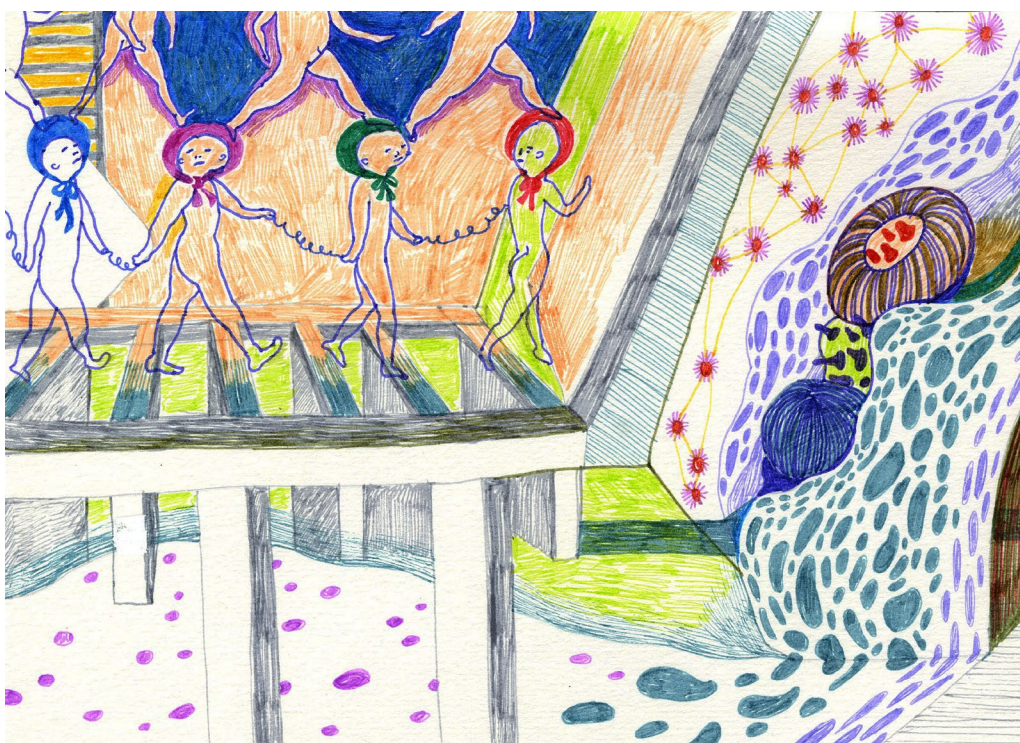
Figure 2. 100-2 *Navigation* and details, colour pen on paper, 2016
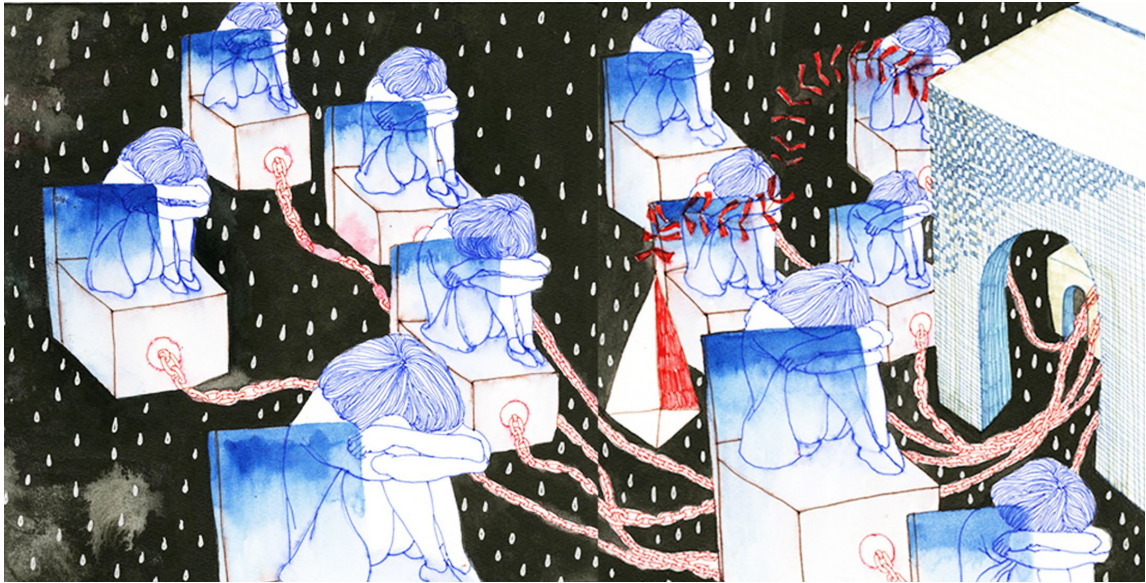
Figure 2. 103-5 *1000 Miles* and details, colour pen on paper, 2016

The figures were marching away from the beautiful garden, not even looking at it. They have optimistic faces and quick light steps even when walking on narrow rails. They keep on marching, even though there is no road under their feet and a swamp filled with purple dots waits for them to fall in. Using straight lines, I built geometrical structures that contrast with the organic shapes of the 'garden'. The plants tangle with each other, they are unorganised, untidy and reject any attempts to be unified into a single form.

A second long-format drawing *1000 Miles* (21 × 90 cm, colour pen and watercolour on paper, figure 2.103-5), 2016, is a poly-scenic illustration representing several events happening simultaneously. It begins at the right-hand side where there are two figures swimming in a pool. A giant man rests his arms on the edge of the pool while talking to a tiny boy below. On the left-hand side of the work, a group of identical girls are sitting, chained to boxes. They hide their faces in their arms and remain forever asleep. The chains are joined to the drawing of a house on their right. The sleeping girls are unattended and isolated, a brick wall separates them from a nice, cosy interior space depicted in the centre of the drawing. Mushrooms in pots, the green leaves of plants and an armchair provide an empty utopia that nobody wants to visit. It is forgotten or unknown. The work metaphorically implies closed minds that have lost their independence in a closed society. The featureless identical figures show little interest in breaking the chains that hold them, preferring to follow and sleep forever in darkness.

The animation of the black-and-white abstract shapes (for projection)

The marching teenagers in the garden looked like groups of moving boxes filling up the narrow paths of the garden. This inspired me to make a colourless animation of falling ice cubes for the projection (figure 2.106). Using the Motion tool in Adobe After Effects, once again, I made the animation from inverted photographs of ice cubes. At the end of the animation, using the special effect filter 'Hair' I transformed the cubes into pieces of 'plankton' swimming in dark water (figure 2.107). The animation was quite abstract as most of the forms were not identifiable, but they enhanced the suppressing atmosphere.
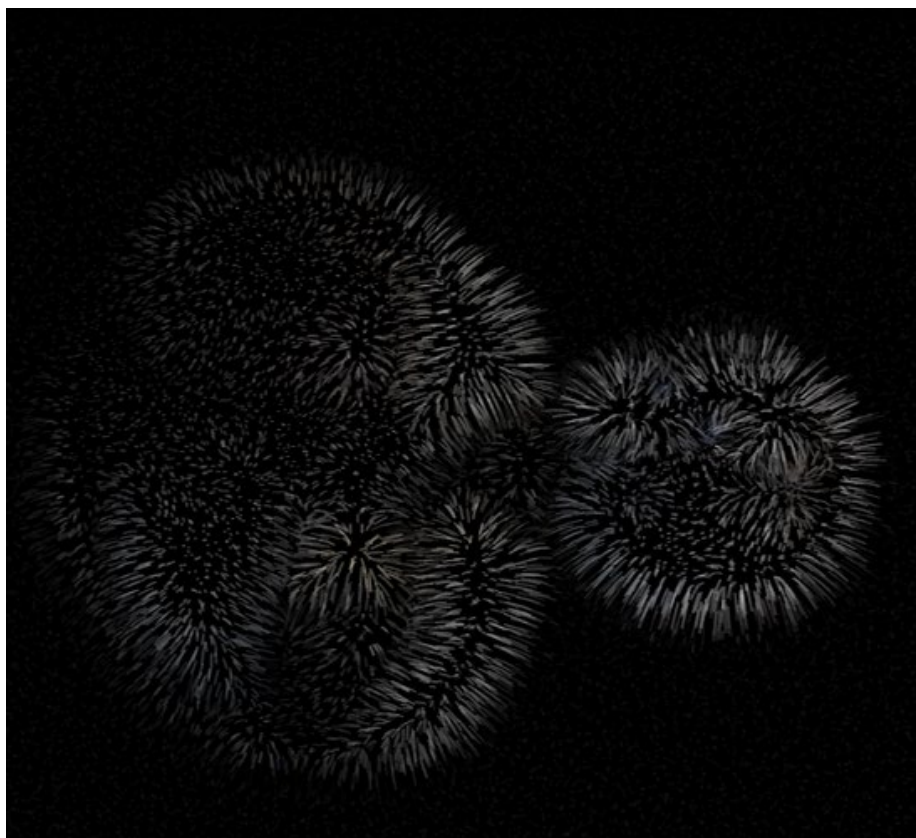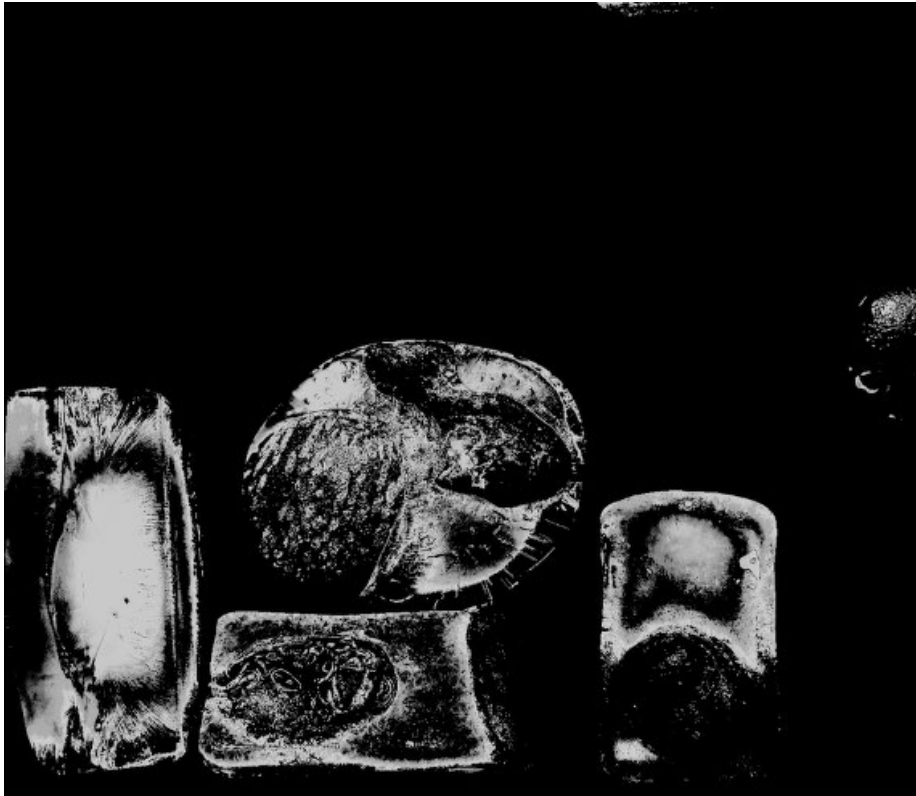
Figure 2. 106-7 Still frames of *Plankton* animation, 2016

The animation of the transforming colourful shapes (for TV 1)

I made another animation for display on a T.V. monitor by using the Blur tool to blend a drawing of colourful abstract shapes (figure 2.108), forming a background for a semi-transparent video of a flower (in the negative) trapped in a spider's web. The video implied a promising future, a dream imposed on the trainees. Although they were young and beautiful, it was hard to tell exactly what they were. They were nothing but an illusion, misleading the eye.

Figure 2. 108 A still frame animation for TV 1 (the transforming colourful shapes), 2016

Figure 2. 109 A still frame of the video for TV 2 (a military training), 2016

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The video of military training (for TV 2)

Observing the military training through a dirty, old and broken glass window in 2015, I made a surreptitious film of a group of trainees resting. It shows the featureless girls dressed in identical red clothes that makes it hard to tell their individual identity. Using the Beam tool in Adobe After Effects I added a beam of light behind the girls, echoing their dream of a good future (figure 2.109).
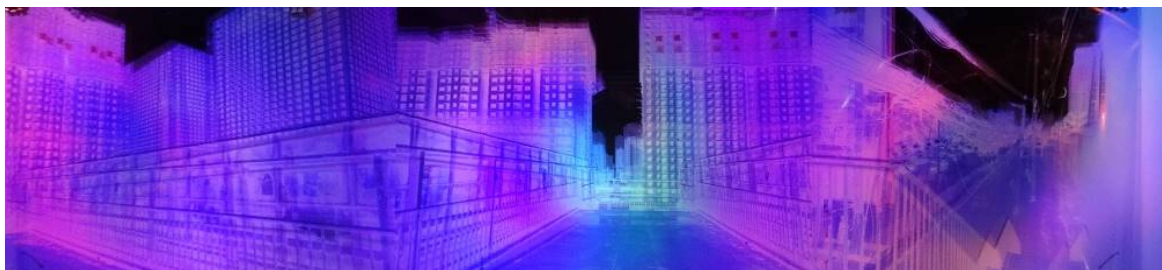
Figure 2. 120-1 Photographs in *The Reversible Future*, printed on acetates, cast by blue LED lights, 2016

Photographs

My position enabled me to observe this training at close quarters, enabling me to get first-hand materials for documenting this event. Several photographs were chosen and printed on acetate sheets. For example, a group of trainees marching across the wide yard behind the garden (printed on A4 acetate in the pink-blue

and orange, figure 2.104), a girl playing the piano in an old classroom (repeated six times and printed on A4 acetate in tonally, figure 2.103), as well as the construction site of a skyscraper in Taiyuan city (printed on a long strip of acetate 594×28 cm in purple and blue, figure 2.105). These elements were used as visual references linking my work to the veracity of what I saw and as a complementary element to the drawings. Pinned at a little distance from the white wall of the gallery (approximately 1-2 cm) they cast psychedelic colours when lit by the LED bulbs on the ceiling, emphasising the constrained atmosphere and the fragile 'bubble' of the dream of a prosperous future.

Assemblages of the collected objects

Figure 2. 122 A photograph in *The Reversible Future*, printed on acetates, cast by blue LED lights, 2016

Figure 2.123-4 Assemblages of collected objects, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

Using collected (found) objects to tell stories is not common for me. I had experimented with them in the previous project *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems* but I wanted to be bolder and have a stronger emphasis on the

objects/sculptures to see whether this method suited my work. I wanted to test whether the projecting animations based on my drawing/illustrations were the best way of presenting my self-narratives. Could the animations or even the live events being filmed work just as well on TV monitors? Would photographs of real events or assemblage's using found object work equally well? I was mostly convinced that I did not want to lose the direct connection between the installation work and the drawing/illustration but felt I should thoroughly test this before continuing.

So, I collected several objects including a baby doll, a pair of toy glasses, a painted plastic sheet, several plastic soldiers and white round wooden plates.

Assembling these objects, I attempted to suggest some of the narrative events. For example, one assemblage consisted of two mirrors and a baby doll fixed upside down (about 40cm wide and 22cm tall, figure 2.123) to represent the character of the marching girls. I arranged the doll upside down on a round platform with two circular mirrors in front of it that reflected two more doll figures. They shared similar traits to the girls in the drawings; they were hairless and featureless; their individualities lost. They waited for an exterior power to define them, so they would know what to do.

Another assemblage contained an A2 acetate sheet, rolled up and brightly coloured with paint surrounded by a group of toy soldiers (figure 2.124). It also attempted to impart the idea of the constraint of the 'promising future' in the dreams of the girls being trained.

By using this variety of elements, I attempted to enrich the narrative effect of the installation by asking the audience to freely associate with them. However, this did not work as there were too many disparate elements and they did not come together to make, the work a wholly immersive experience. This problem is reflected upon critically in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.7 Case study 4: *The Outsiders,* 2017

The installation *The Outsiders* was a multi-screen video and drawing installation exhibited at Newcastle University in 2017. It included five independent video projections, each with a soundtrack and four sets of line-drawings on the walls of the room.

It was inspired by several small events that made me aware of how my identity transformed when I was living in a Chinese collectivist community in the late 20th century (figure 2.125). This experience permitted a personal insight into the analysis of the collectivist culture. Built in the 1970s, these communities were typically based in buildings designed to reflect the 'planned economic' and unified collectivist ideology.[38]

They were usually a group of flats accommodating the people working in the same factory, college or institute. The collectivist communities connected to each other, unified by their workplace and family activities. Every day the residents left home together and worked in the same place near to their accommodation. After work, they went home with their workmates who were also their neighbours. Everyone was familiar with their neighbour's home as every flat had the same structure. The proximity of the buildings enabled each resident to see their

Figure 2. 125 A *Community in Taiyuan City*, 2016

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[38] In the typical collectivism economic, for example, a factory or school, would provide accommodations for their workers. Not far from the working place, they built large-scale communities which had their own flats, streets, schools and markets. Coworkers would be neighbours living in highly populate flats. Before the 1990s in my area, each family was given fixed share of life resources such as flour, oil, meat, vegetables, etc. using 'coupons' from the same source, such as a local council. Their children went to the same schools and would carry on working in the same place as their parents. It created a tightly knit community between individuals and generations in a small area. Each person was a cell of the collective and was relatively isolated from the world outside.

neighbours' private life clearly: their kitchens, living room, bedroom, and the food they ate, the objects they collected, and the TV they watched. Many people not only worked together but shared entertainment together at home, as if they were one big family. Each was part of the whole system and relied on one another. The boundary between individuals was vague, and any outsiders were obvious.

I enjoyed life living in the collectivist community where I was born, living with my friend Jie, whose parents and grandparents were also friends of mine. Our relationship was set, arranged or inherited from our families and their shared history. Both of us treated the other's home as a part of our own and shared the emotional support offered. Very rarely were we aware of the world beyond our small zone. This was a solid system built by the cohesion between the people. The families had interwoven with each other for generations. They helped and supported each other while excluding people from outside their small world. Being forced to emigrate from this community meant cutting off the roots that provided me with all the emotional support and connections I had ever known. The move to a new community in the city centre in the late 1990s completely changed my life into a rootless floating one, with no anchor.

Adapting to a new collectivist community was hard as there were no helpful introductions provided. It was a self-sufficient society with no interest in newcomers. The hidden but insurmountable boundary between the outsiders and the locals would never disappear, even ten years later. I sensed the great difference between how people treated 'outsiders' and their own people and began to become aware of the complexity of human interactions and the negative side of the coin. My family's endeavour to be accepted seemed doomed to fail, which made me reflect on my identity as an outsider, and the culture I had left behind.

Highly united and assimilated minds provide cohesion but can also be the reason for blindness to new possibilities in life. An economic collectivist culture provided the basis for lifelong connections between community members but discouraged people from connecting with the broader world and new possibilities. It was affectionate while dangerous, beautiful but poisonous.

The political change in the late 1990s from the 'planned economy' to the 'market economy' was a significant factor in the collapse of this community culture. Dramatic economic development brought about a massive city renewal that largely erased these communities from the map. Thousands of people were forced to leave their homes for the reformation of the city and immigrate to unknown destinations. This city-wide emigration broke down the solid mutual dependence of the people and allowed new blood to mix in. It unsettled many from their roots and forced them to redefine and reform their identities. Being an 'insider' or 'outsider' no longer mattered, now everyone had to adapt to their new environments. The transformation from insider to outsider seemed so common that to distinguish between them was not logical. I tried to make sense from what I observed and by reviewing my self-definition.

2.7.1 Self-narratives

Three small events from my continuous process to redefining my role in this social change, form auto-narratives in my video installation *The Outsiders*, 2017. Each was about the 'mutual gaze' between me and the others, reflecting changing identities in various contexts.

The Nude at the Window

This story happened on a Saturday in 2001. I was sitting in a warm community art studio drawing sketches with other students. My hand was moving across the paper while my mind had fallen asleep. The golden sunshine seemed to be made of honey wine which drowned me in a dense sticky sweet dew.

The peace was suddenly broken by a nude man who was jumping, dancing and running along the balcony next to our studio. On the other side of the broken windows supported by rotten wooden frames, he displayed his bony naked body to us and we burst into laughter and screams. Boys and girls rushed to the window to have a look at the man. He moved and they moved; he jumped and they jumped. He moved so fast that our eyes could hardly follow him. The afternoon silence was replaced by excited screams, curiosity, and fear.

It did not seem weird watching this stranger's fearless dance performed to other strangers. His twinkling eyes touched everyone's face but never paused on

anyone. He shouted and screamed to himself, eventually ending in a long cry. The window frames cast dark shadows across him. His eyes disappeared and reappeared up as if they were two pieces of bouncing burning coal. Suddenly, our eyes met, hitting me like a bolt of lightning. His gaze was full of restless excitement and intelligible horror. It seemed to have the power to seize my neck and lock me in an invisible hold. At that moment, both of us were accidental intruders in each other's life.

Figure 2. 126 *A Flat in the Opposite*, 2011

The Girls in Pyjamas

It was a big beehive and my friend Jie and I had lived there for 10 years. Yes, a beehive was just like where we lived. She was living in the opposite building. Every morning, we would wake up and wait at the window to see each other in our pyjamas. She was in her red pyjamas that blended with her red curtains (figure 2.109). She appeared and disappeared as if she were a lappet moth flying in an autumn wood. We talked to each other by reading lips. The window frames cast shadows on her face, the room and the curtain. They framed us and turned us into portraits for each other.

I told her of my dream using my body language. I dreamed of a cage covered by red curtains. Inside it, a tiger was approaching a girl who was pressing her muddy feet on the white wall. Danger! Danger! I wanted to save her, but I couldn't, a

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wide river blocked my way. A hand stretched outside the cage holding a piece of a dragonfly wing.

The Pot Holder

Figure 2. 127 *Abandoned Home*, 2011

It was dawn in the autumn of 2009, the fifth year of my move to this new community. I walked towards a neighbours, Jiao's home with a flower pot in my hand. The building was shaking as there was a train passing by carrying coals.

I saw a balcony surrounded by green ivy leaves (figure 2.127). There was a girl staring at me with a silent smile on her face. I stared back. Her face was melting in the warm sunshine like an ice-cream dropped on a burning road in August. Behind her was another window through which I could see the living room. Who were those people gathering here? They laughed, smoked, drank and ate.

The rhododendron in my pot blocked my sight. I wished I could join her party but she didn't react. Neither did she refuse, just kept smiling peacefully. She said nothing but gazed into my eyes. We lived in parallel universes that prevented us from moving forward into each other's world.

The Chair

Last year, I went to visit this community for the last time before it was demolished completely. I went back to the place where I once waited for Jiao's invitation to

her party. The family has gone. The chair which she used to sit on is abandoned on the balcony. A faceless giant was resting her arm on the building, picking holes in the chair with her long fingers. There was a chair resting on top of a door, waiting to sail to the sea. Where was it going to? A train passed by very fast and enveloped me in a layer of coal dust. It took all my memories away and dumped

Figure 2. 128-9 *Chair* and *Abandoned Home*, 2011

them in a deep mine pit.

What is inside it? A dark, damp and smelly chair (figure 2.128-9). What was around it? There was some broken glass, some dry roots of rhododendron, and the patterned wallpaper with red dots, a bucket, bunting, footprints, newspapers,

tea leaves, a small red maple tree, keyholes, a sofa, and a TV. I dug and dug to the deepest part of the Earth's core. A black dog was barking at me. He jumped on my shoulder and stared at his reflection in a mirror.

2.7.2 Drawings and animations

Figure 2. 130 Detail, Pieter de Hooch, *Woman with a Child in a Pantry,* painting, 1656

The auto-narratives above helped me to decide what kind of characters and events to create for the installation *The Outsiders*. It provided many visual triggers such as chairs, window frames, flower pots, etc.

The window frame is a crucial element in my work. Just like the window and door frame in Pieter de Hooch's *Woman with a Child in a Pantry* (figure 2.130), 1656, I am interested in the special layering it affords. The painting invites the viewers' imagination to travel freely through the door and the window out towards the imagined world beyond. The portrait of the man on the wall captures the viewers' attention and forms a link between them and the interior of the old house.

Figure 2. 131 *Abandoned Homes,* 2017

Windows represent a medium of 'transformation' from one status to another, from one time to another. They indicate another space beyond.

Throughout my life, I have lived in crowded apartments with windows positioned opposite in proximity. Windows and curtains were often the only means of privacy between families. In the collective community where I once lived, most people did not mind exposing their individual lives to their neighbours' close gaze. It was common to see a friend and her family busy in their small rooms talking, tidying things up, cooking, fighting, cleaning, etc.

The window frame became the transparent tunnel through which we could drop into each other's lives. We saw the people opposite framed by their windows, like semi-permanent portraits. As if they were a collage or a jigsaw, the residents, the furniture, interior space, and walls were assembled together. However, there was always a sense of potential danger; that this peace could not last and would finally collapse and scatter into a thousand fragments.

The main narrative of installation *The Outsiders* is about a girl (perhaps me) holding a flower pot and waiting on a balcony (figure 2.127, 131). Dressed in a secondary school uniform she is the main character. Throughout the installation she is depicted from several different perspectives, implying the transformation of her identity depending on the position she is viewed from.

Once again the five separate animations I made for *The Outsiders* were made from original drawings based on my auto-narratives. I used coloured pencils to produce the separated elements for my animations. They were drawn on paper (110×60 cm, 21×18 cm), scanned and were eventually made into high-definition video animations. Here, I will analyse each.
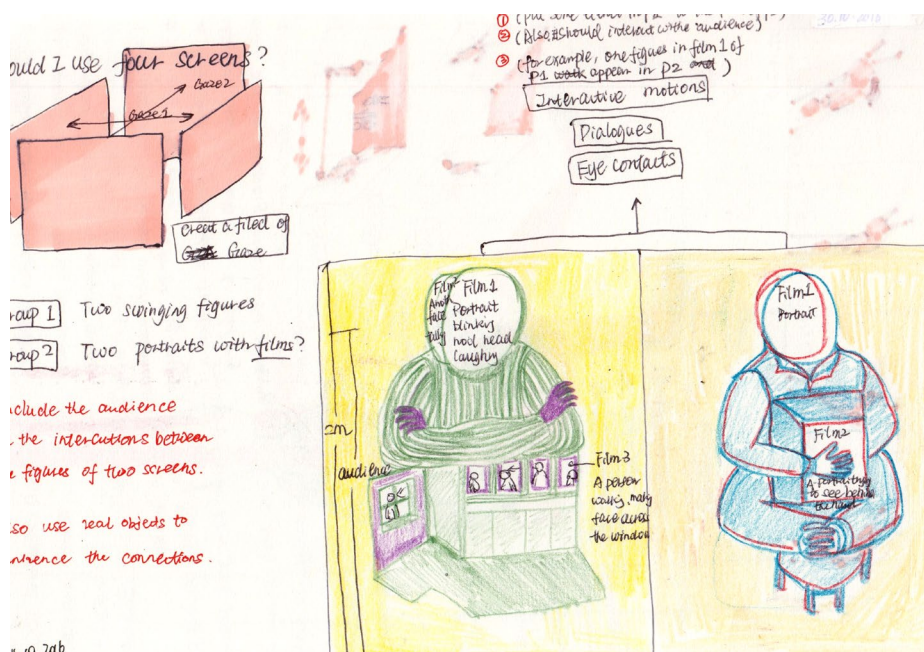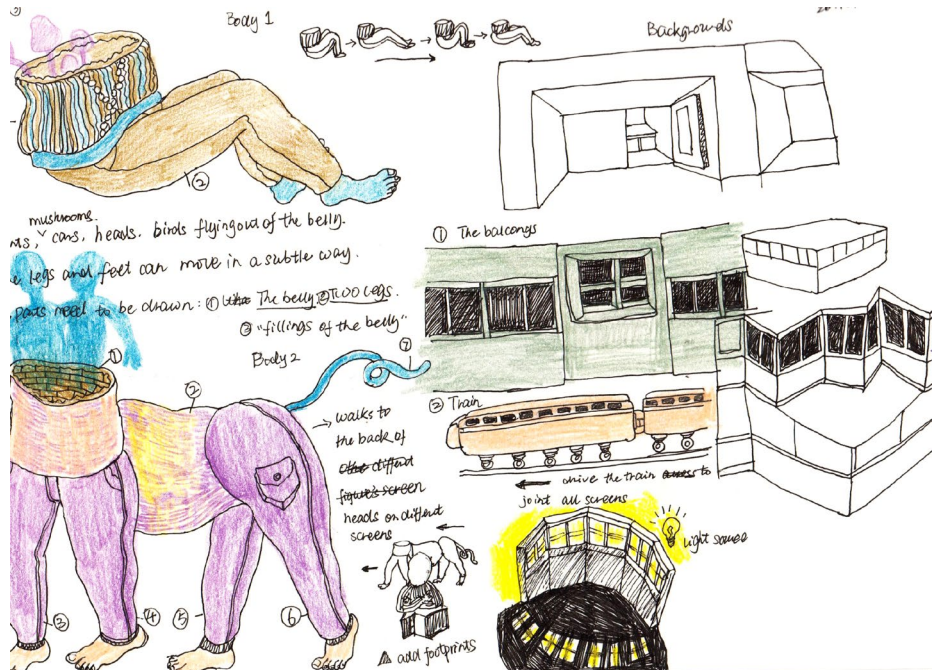
Figure 2. 132-3 The sketches of *The Beholders*, 2017

The Beholders

For the projection *The Beholder,* I created an A2 drawing of a giant in a knitted jumper resting her arms on a balcony (figure 2.132-3). The balcony has two windows and was given a 'three-dimensional' quality by a shadow that falls across it. The girl stands in front of the building holding a blooming flower. This potted plant is the boundary between her and the events happening inside the house.

Figure 2. 134 The drawing of *The Beholders*, 2017

Figure 2. 135 The *inverted* drawing and still frame of *The Beholders*, 2017

Figure 2.136-7 Still frames of the animation in *The Beholder, 2017*

The woman leaning on the balcony is a 'giant' figure with two faceless heads, symbolising an invisible power controlling everyone in the community. The face was left blank in order to prevent any reference to the identity, gender and social status of the figure. The jumper she is wearing is a typical fashion that was often made by Chinese housewives in the 1980s and 90s. It is clumsy, heavy, and bloated, a symbol of the planned economic period in China when people produced their own clothing. This handmade jumper helped hands of love extend to the body of their families, binding them together as a whole.

Framed by the window is a video of a watercolour painting as it was being painted (figure 2.134-6). The painting gradually depicts the pale silhouettes of a family get-together with various characters arriving and sitting on chairs. At the end of the animation, they all disappeared into splashes of colour. On the left of the figure, there is a window of an imagined 'living room'. Here, I arranged another video of the process of some chairs being painted in an empty room.

The drawing of the characters and the balcony and the video of the paintings being made were combined using Adobe After Effects and exported as an MP4 video file, ready to be played on a projector with a media player.

The Outsiders

I continued to draw the girl holding a flowerpot, this time from the front on A2 paper (figure 2.138). She is 'holding' an empty flower pot and 'wearing' a 1990s school uniform. In this second projection of *The Outsiders* installation, she is no longer standing alone but in a row with five identical peers. Their faces are a black-and-white video of my face inverted (made as a negative, figure 2.139). They are possibly a metaphor for the collective culture that assimilated me and my peers by unifying our appearance. The empty flowerpot is a significant image I used in all my illustrations, symbolising a container for potentially anything. It is the base of a diverse range of possibilities. Here, it emphasised a missing individual identity. Nothing original grows here. An external power decides what is produced.

Figure 2.138 The inverted drawing of *The Outsiders,* 2017
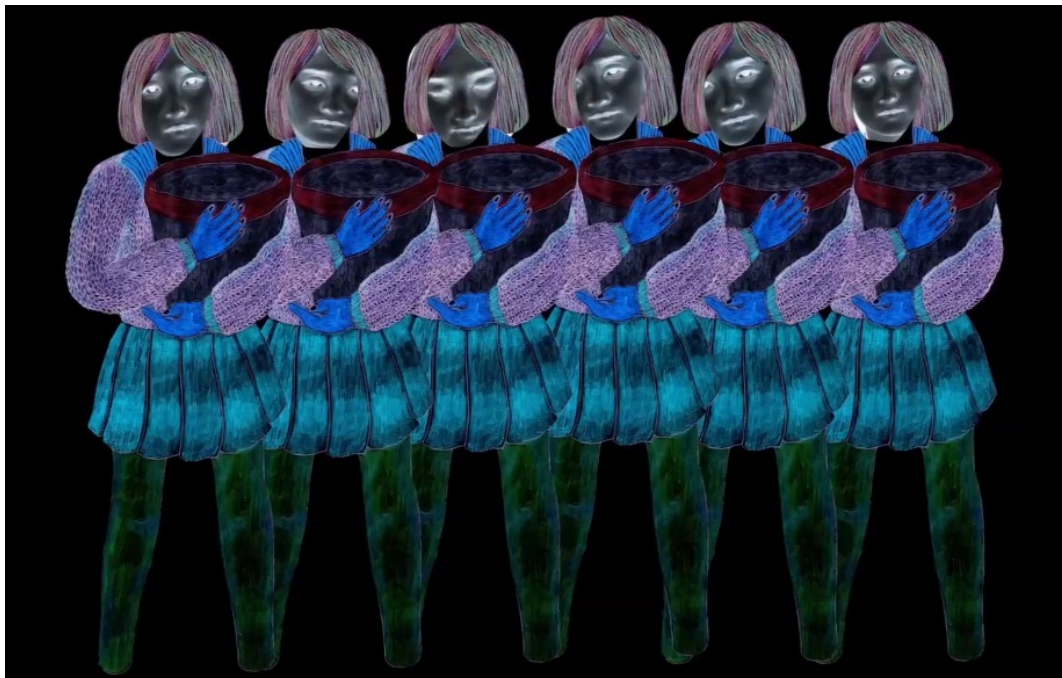
Figure 2.139 A still frame of *The Outsiders,* 2017

The Inspectors
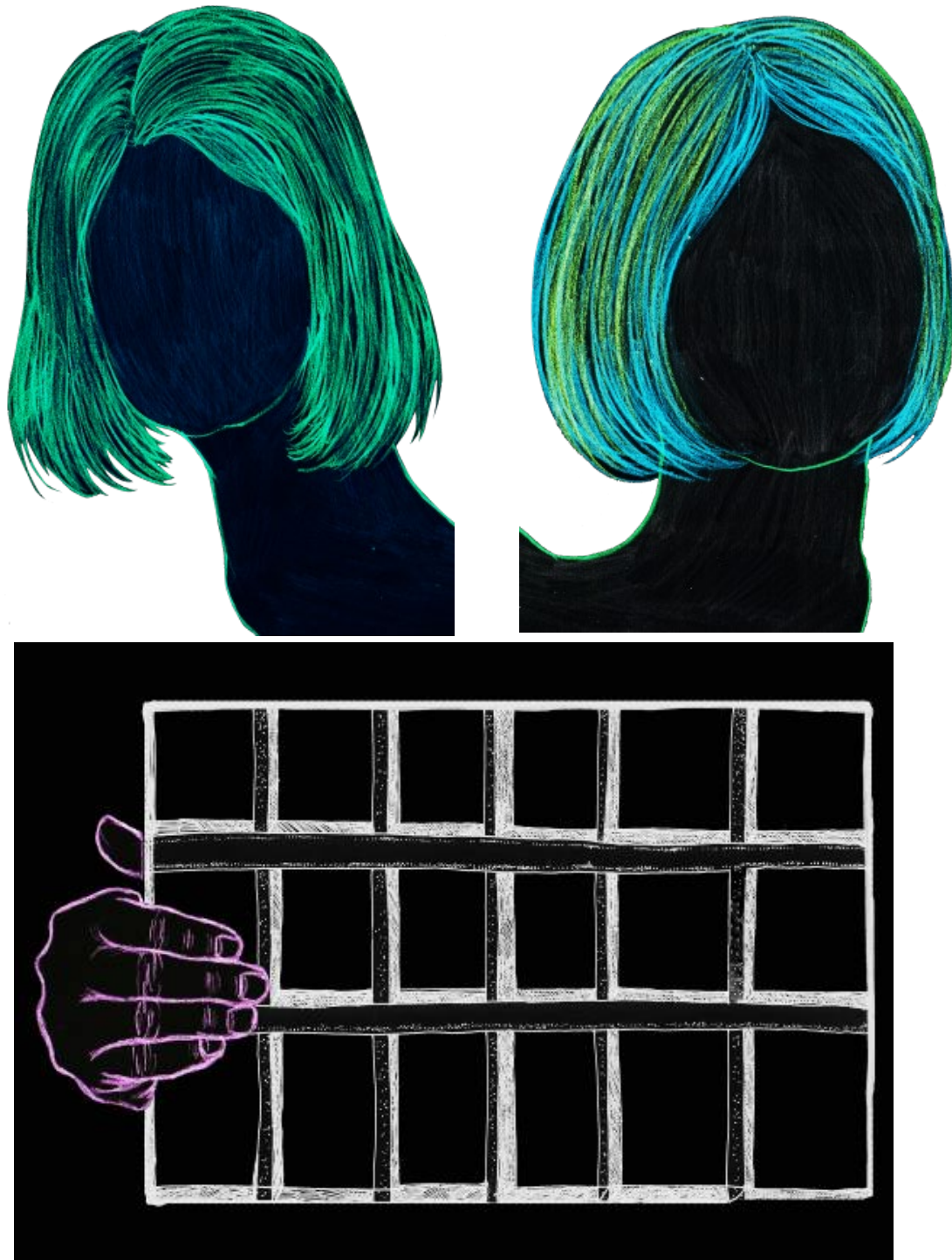
Figure 2.140-2 The inverted drawings of *The Inspectors*, 2017

I had also made an animated drawing of two giant girls who appeared to be looking at the audience through the bars of a cage, echoing the window frames in my self-narrative *The Girls in Pyjamas.* It metaphorically implied anybody could be an outsider or an insider. People may transform from one to the other

Figure 2.143-5 Still frames of *The Inspectors*, 2017

unconsciously.

In order not to overload my audience with very complex settings and details, I used a simple, clear style of drawing and small subtle movements in the animation. For example, the main elements of this drawing consisted of two large girl heads, a cage door and a hand (figure 2.140-2). I used a video (in the negative) of my own face to create the features on the faces of the two girls, referencing me and my friend gazing at each other through our windows. The animation contained only three simple movements: a hand opened the cage door, the heads moved at an angle to peep in, and a hand closed the door (figure 2.143-5). The animation sequence was only 30 seconds in duration and was made into a loop with an 8-second still of the cage between each play. This had the effect of implying that the giant girls came and went.

The animation was accompanied by a soundtrack made from a dialogue of two girls. Using Adobe Premiere Pro, I increased its speed to 30 times, which created a strange mysterious whispering between two unknown creatures. The sound of opening and closing the wooden sliding door was also added, echoing the motions of the door in the animation.
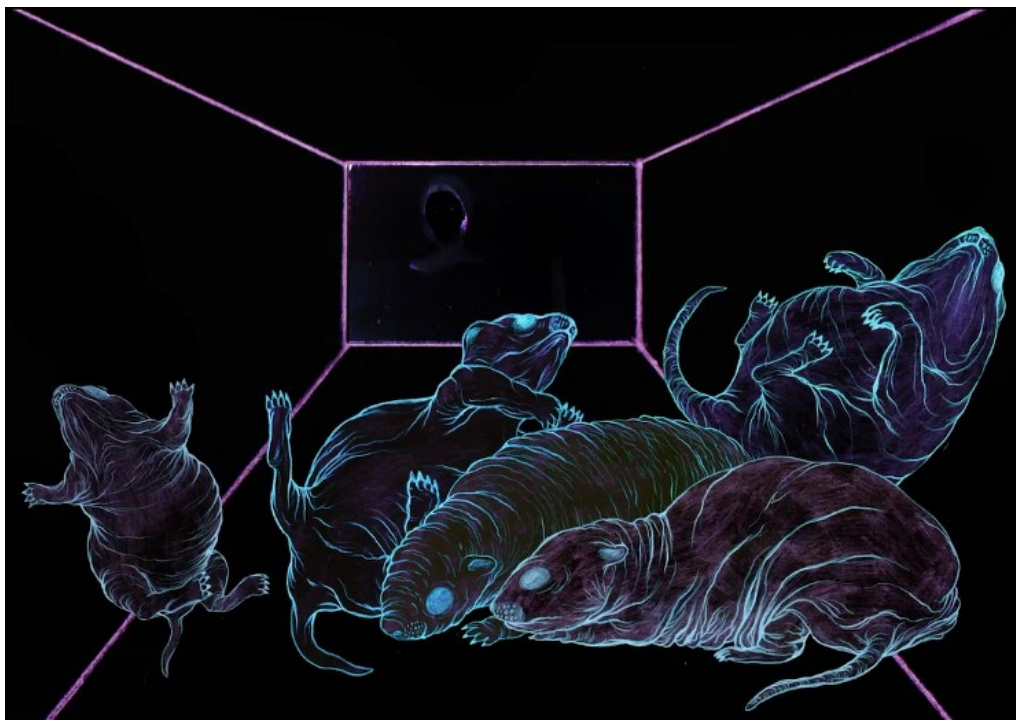
Figure 2.146 Still frames of *The Sleepers*, 2017

The Sleepers

Corresponding to these giants inspecting the room, I made *The Sleepers*, an animation projection of several sleeping hairless rats (figure 2.146). I made them as a corresponding element to *The Inspectors* 'peeping' into the room. A memory of observing my pet new-born hairless hamsters through a small window in their cage and a wild rat in the dark gaps of the walls inspired me to make this projection.

For the projection, each rat was drawn separately on an A4 piece of paper and subsequently scanned. I animated the inverted images in Adobe After Effects using the Puppet tool. This tool allowed me to add motion to static figures by setting different 'pinpoints' on their bodies, adding motion by pushing and pulling these points. I made my rats 'breathe', their bellies moving up and down. They also 'twitched' their arms and legs as if they were having dreams. The characters were arranged on a black background with a line drawing in the background. Although this drawing used the convention of linear perspective, it was not intended to create a three-dimensional illusion but emphasise the blurred boundary between the pictorial space and the surface of the wall. A soundtrack of gentle breath and ticking clock enhanced the peaceful atmosphere.

The Intransigent

In responding to the second self-narrative looking at a nude boy dancing outside the window on the balcony of my art class I painted a figure using just water on Chinese rice paper, once again using the technique of filming from below. The video showed a figure 'growing' from a tiny point on the left side of the paper, a portrait from the waist up. On its 'face' I attached another negative video of my face (cropped in After Effects figure 2.147-9). Making the face into a black and white negative de-familiarised a common face and gave it a sculptural quality. The face gently observes its gender-less body grow, transforming into an unknown shape.

To the right of the figure is a negative video of a burning candle. Occasionally, the candlelight sways as if there is the wind in the video. These elements are

Figure 2.147-9 Still frames of *The Intransigent*, 2017

arranged on a blank, light-coloured background using Adobe After Effects. To avoid a sharp frame, I feathered the outline of the video in Adobe After Effects using the Feather tool creating an ambiguous boundary between it and the outside space of the installation.

This silent video shows the discreet development and transformation of an individual. Starting from a very small point, the person starts their journey to an unknown destination. They are in the gaze of others', and they also gaze at others. This tension between the gazer and the gazed always existed in the collective, no matter who was the insider or the outsider.

Wall drawings

Figure 2.150 The sketch *of Girls Holding Snake Pots*, 2017   Figure 2.151 The inverted sketch of *The Window* , 2017

Figure 2.152 The inverted sketch of *The Sofa,* 2017

Figure 2.153-6 Unused inverted drawings, 2017

The row of girls holding pots also appear in a wall drawing (figure 2.150). They are drawn with their backs to the audience, escaping through a door with flower pots full of snakes as a sign of quiet rebellion and the awakening of their independent identity.

As well as the drawings of the main characters, I drew several complementary elements; several girls sitting on a sofa (figure 2.152), clothes hanging up and potted plants, a stairway and dry roots (figure 2.153-6). They were all originally intended to be projected onto the walls and in the corners of the room however not all of them were used as projections. In the final installation, some were drawn as large-scale murals directly onto the white walls of the room.

To summarise, I made five animations based on the self-narrative drawings and several sketches for the wall paintings in the video installation. These five animations, although not independent narrative by themselves, were made to be configured together in a physical arrangement in the installation. In Chapter 4, I will analyse how I found positions for each element, organising them into a whole story. Chapter 5, I describe how the audience were 'invited' to be 'characters' in the story and encouraged to 'create' their own stories.

2.8 Conclusion

To conclude, by reflecting on my self-narratives using a 'stream of consciousness' approach, I accumulated a significant body of characters and events that were originally made into drawings, scanned and animated to create narratives.

I also used some original footage of my face and of paintings as they were being produced and combined these with the animated drawings to create characters and events. However, their narrative values and meanings could not be fully realised until I spatialised them within an installation. In Chapter 3 and 4, I analyse the positive aspects and limitations of the two main methods used to achieve this.

Chapter 3: Transforming mono-scenic space into the single-screen installation

As examined in Chapter 2, I created drawings and animations based on self-narratives, memories of my time growing up in China. They provided a substantial body of narrative characters and events, which I used to create animations, drawings, assemblages, and sculptures, in the development of a successful approach to spatialising my drawings/animations. This chapter and the next describe the significance of two-dimensional and three-dimensional narrative space, analysing and reflecting critically on its application in relation to transforming my two-dimensional works into video installations.

This chapter focuses on the first approach I investigated, transforming a mono-scenic illustration into a single-screen video projection in the installation *By No Definition* (2015). It is contextualised in association with church frescos, contemporary video installation and my early experiments.

Transforming my two-dimensional drawing/illustrations into an installation can be conceived as the transformation between two types, or modes, of narrative spaces - pictorial narrative space and installation space.

Art historian Marilyn Lavin uses the term 'expanded field' to describe the transformation of narrative paintings into environmental works: the 'spatial and psychological penetration into the ideological content of narrative'.[1] A successful transformation can not only extend the pictorial space but also open the door to an unexplored psychological realm. Transforming the pictorial space of a small narrative illustration into an installation narrative space relies on the interaction between both realms. It is precisely this question of how to accommodate and expand the world contained within a two-dimensional pictorial 'frame' into an environment that this research intended to answer.

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[1] Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431-1600*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994), pg. 226.

This chapter is divided into four main parts:

Firstly, I start with analysing one of the fundamental factors - the significance and relationship of the 'frame' to a drawing or painting and its role in defining the nature and quality of static two-dimensional visual art. It was my curiosity about this aspect that originally prompted me to think about transforming my drawing/illustration work into installations.

Secondly, in order to help explain and contextualise the information and issues around translations between two-dimensional and three-dimensional narrative space, I look at historical precedents ranging from Roman wall paintings and church frescos to video installations made within the last 30 years. This highlights several factors that deeply impact on this transformation: embedding/mapping an image onto an architectural surface or screen, the role of scale in creating an immersive effect, the quantity and composition of the image(s) and their relationship to an audience.

Thirdly, it describes my early experiments made in order to identify the specific relevance and use of these factors in relation to the nature of my original drawings/illustrations. These tests subsequently determined my methodologies for transforming my works into installations. Using my first complete video installation *By No Definition,* 2015, as the main case study in analysing the results of these experiments in relation to answering the key questions of the research.

Finally, I evaluate the advantages and limitations of using the large-scale animation projection to make single-screen video installations in relation to their effectiveness in spatialising my drawings/illustrations.

3.1 The frame of a two-dimensional picture and pictorial space

3.1.1 The frame of a two-dimensional picture

Before discussing the transformation between two-dimensional and installation work, it is necessary to explore the nature of two-dimensional images. This section analyses the nature and limits of the fundamental factor of the 'frame'.

The 'frame' of an image is both a physical and a conceptual idea. It can be a physical thing conventionally made of wood but could be any material. It also refers to the limits/edges of the paper, canvas, wall or screen that the two-dimensional image is presented upon and it is this description that most concerns this research. It has a physicality and can be touched, moved or disrupted. As a physical thing, it acts as a barrier between the material carrier of the pictorial surface of the paper, canvas, wood, silk, etc. and the space around it. Its shape ranges from the common rectangular, square and circle to irregular shapes, responding to the specific site or context of the image.

The 'frame' is crucial to a two-dimensional picture because it performs three major roles: protecting the image, separating it from the space beyond and confining the image, helping to bring order, define parameters and aid composition.[2] For example with an illustration in a book, the 'frame' of the image separates it from the text in order to maintain the clarity of both.[3]

The word 'frame' carries with its complexities of meaning and definition, particularly in relation to the history and technologies of film, video and painting, for example the verb, 'to frame', which has its own additional complexities. These are very much at the centre of the questions arising in this thesis. They are also part of a broader issue of 'boundaries' and what separates, both physically and metaphorically, an artwork whether an image, an object, or an installation, from the real world. A debate engaged with by Duchamp and other 20th century artists around questioning the conventional use of contexts, frames, and plinths in art.

3.1.2 Frame and pictorial space

The 'frame' is crucial to a narrative drawing/illustration as it is the fundamental device used to create a limit for an image. A frame is about selection, choice, and exclusion, confining and defining the content of a picture. For some artists, using a frame or being conscious of the edges or limits of a surface is a way of

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[2] Ed. Verity J. Platt, Michael Squire, *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*. (Cambridge University Press 2017), pg. 9.
Paul Crowther, *Figure, Plane, and Frame: The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space, in Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (even the frame)*, (Sandford University Press: Sandford, California, 2009), pg.52-3.
[3] For example, Gustave Doré's *Fables de La Fontaine* (1868).

questioning the integration of various elements, the sense of order and the use of the composition.[4]
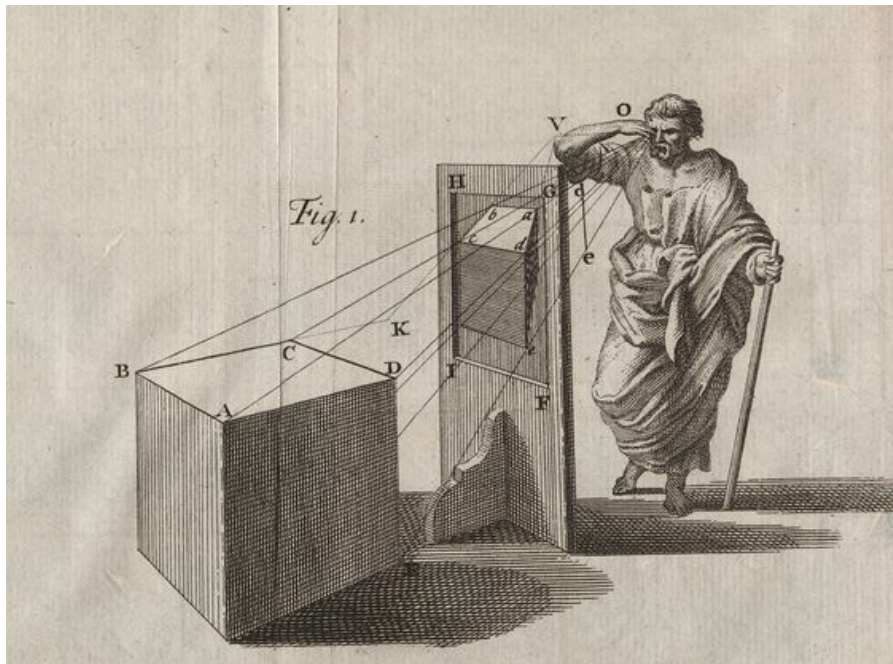
Figure 3. 1 Leon Battista Alberti's *Visual Pyramid*, 1811

The frame and the pictorial space are mutually dependent. A frame stands between the pictorial space, the implied space created by the artist on the two-dimensional surface and the real, external physical space around it. [5] In art historian and psychologist Rudolf Arnheim's words, it distinguishes 'field' from 'ground'.[6] Also, according to art historian and theorist Louis Martin, the frame is the fundamental factor that helps the pictorial space gain autonomy and that separates it from non-pictorial elements around it.[7] It sets the referential boundary of a field, a two-dimensional plane in which to fix the selected elements into stable, fixed and permanent locations.[8]

[4] Louis Martin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of Its Figures', ed. Duro, Paul, *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pg. 46, 82.

[5] Paul Crowther, *Figure, Plane, and Frame: The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space, in Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (even the frame)*, (Sandford University Press: Sandford, California, 2009), pg.52.

[6] Ed. Verity J. Platt, Michael Squire, *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*, (Cambridge University Press 2017), pg. 12.

[7] Louis Martin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures', ed. Duro, Paul, *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pg. 4.

[8] Paul Crowther, *Figure, Plane, and Frame: The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space, in Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame)*, (Sandford University Press: Sandford, California, 2009), pg.43.
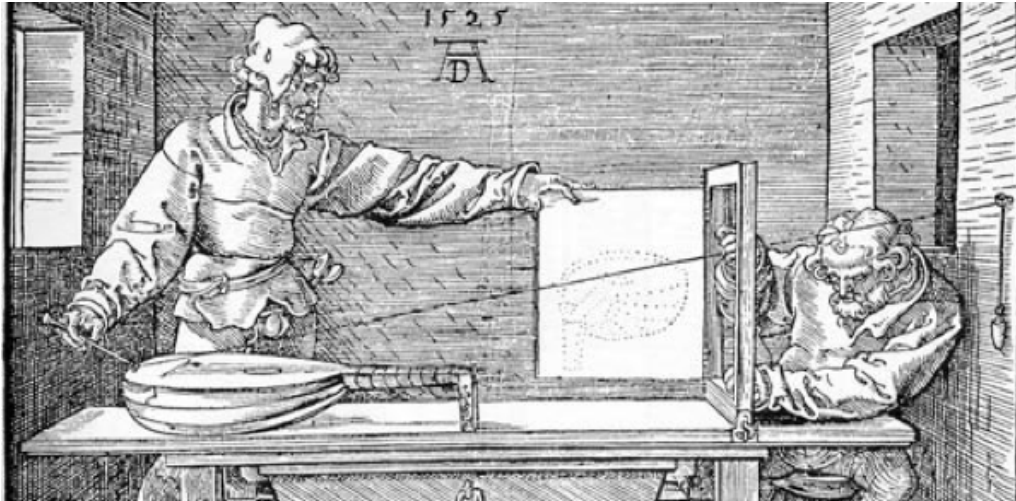
Figure3. 2 Albrecht Dürer, *Liner Perspective*, 1525

The frame of a picture helps to define its nature. Philosopher Barbara Savedoff emphasises the significant symbolic function of the frame that establishes the aesthetic quality of the work.[9] Confined by a frame, pictorial space is constructed by filling in selected, filtered and extracted elements from life, narrative or nature. It presents a way of coping with and separating reality from the pictorial narrative connected with the artist's own perspective, the experience of life and purpose in producing the work. Consequently, what the audience sees is more than a copy of the nature or description of a narrative, but a carefully structured independent pictorial composition demonstrating the artist's view and/or uniqueness.

The frame and its relationship to the history, development and nature of linear perspective is another crucial element in this discussion. The word 'perspective' originates from the Latin verb *perspicere*, which means 'looking through'.[10] It refers to the relationship of a static observer (one eye closed), to the objects observed through a flat two-dimensional gridded plane (figure 3.1).

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[9] Barbara Savedoff, 'frame', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57, no.3, 1999, pg. 345-356.
[10] Definition of 'perspective' in *Oxford online Dictionary*. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/perspective，accessed on 08.04.2018.

Figure3. 3 Frescos in House of Livia in Rome, Italy, 1st century BC

Figure 3. 4 Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, oil on board, 1533

First developed by Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi in the early 15th century, linear perspective is a technique used to systematically record (or invent) a three-dimensional space or object on a two-dimensional surface.[11] Leon Battista Alberti, a few years later in 1435, theorised the nature and logic of linear perspective and demonstrated the geometric/optical underpinnings of the system.[12] He described an image created in this way as being the equivalent of looking through a window. The image formed at the intersection of the picture plane, the 'window', as if rays of light travelled from the object to the eye in straight lines leaving a mark where they intersected with the (real or imagined)

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[11] Ernst. H. Gombrich, Chapter 12, *The Story of Art*, (Phaidon Press, 2007), pg. 188-120.
[12] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (*Della Pittura*), 1435-36, trans. John R. Spencer (Yale University Press, 1966), pg. 11-2.

surface, the window (a piece of glass, paper, canvas etc. figure 3.2).[13] Put simply, the principle of linear perspective can be seen when one draws on the surface of a sheet of glass what one sees while standing still and closing one eye. The traced image on the glass replicates what is seen from that position. It follows from the geometry of optics that the closer to the observer, the bigger the observed objects appear on the glass, and vice versa. For the image to be fully 'correct', it should be seen from exactly the same position, distance, height etc, as the original viewer.

For an image that uses linear perspective, the connection between the frame and the surface of the image are inseparable. The relationship between the illusionistic 'perspectival' image to the surface on which it sits and to the frame and the viewer, have been used in highly inventive ways, questioned, investigated and played with by artists since Roman times. For example, in Roman paintings such as those found in House of Livia in Rome, Italy, the artist has extended the real space of an architectural interior outwards into an imagined external space by painting gardens and the landscape beyond (figure 3.3). Hans

Figure 3. 5 Fra Andrea Pozzo, *Glorification of Saint Ignatius*, Church of St. Ignazio, 1691-1694

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[13] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (*Della Pittura*), 1435-36, trans. John R. Spencer (Yale University Press, 1966), pg. 11-2. Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope, How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe*, (Cornell University Press, 2009), pg. 126-8.

Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors* (figure 3.4), 1533, depicted a skull near the bottom edge that can only be resolved as an image by looking at the surface of the painting from a very particular position.

On a very large scale, Andrea Pozzo's ceiling mural *Glorification of Saint Ignatius* in the church St Ignazio in Rome, Italy, 1691-1694 portrays the church as having a dome, an illusion that works only from a very particular point in the church, a point identified by a brass plate in the floor of the church (figure 3.5). The real architecture 'frames' the illusionistic painting.

In all works described above, there is a constant need to draw the viewers' attentions to the nature of the illusion, which is interesting, particularly in relation to the idea of immersive environments and installations, and virtual reality. Aspects of this paradox will be discussed later.

Linked to the history of linear perspective is the invention of photography, which also involves the formation of an image through its projection on to a flat plane. In this case, light passes through a pinhole, or lens, and forms an image on a plane, which has been chemically sensitised to light.[14] 'Projections', therefore, have a physical and real and necessary connection to the two-dimensional image. Above all, there is a complex and reciprocal relationship between the image and 'frame', real and illusory space, and the viewer. 'Projections' – moving or still, digital or analogue, therefore also have a physical and real and necessary connection to the original formation and nature of the two-dimensional image.

Figure 3. 6 Zhou Shen (沈周), *Snow Landscape* (the middle part) (《雪景山水》), Chinese landscape painting, Ming Dynasty

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[14] Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope, How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe*, (Cornell University Press, 2009), pg. 126-8

Even though clearly not using western spatial and compositional conventions, in the case of Chinese classical painting, the frame acts as the basis of various kinds of compositional techniques that decide how the artist will arrange the content; 'arranging elements in composition', in Chinese terms, written as 'Bu Ju' (布局), 'Zhang Fa' (章法), 'Zhi Chen Bu Shi (置陈布势)[15] or 'Jing Yin Wei Zhi'(经营位置).[16] For example, when painting a landscape on a horizontal narrow long scroll (长卷), the artist tends to make multiple visual centres to activate the whole scroll. He/she may also place a river, lake or mountain parallel to the top and bottom edge of the frame to imply their infinite length and space. For example, in *Snow Landscape* (《雪景山水》, figure 3.6), Ming Dynasty, Zhou Shen (沈周)
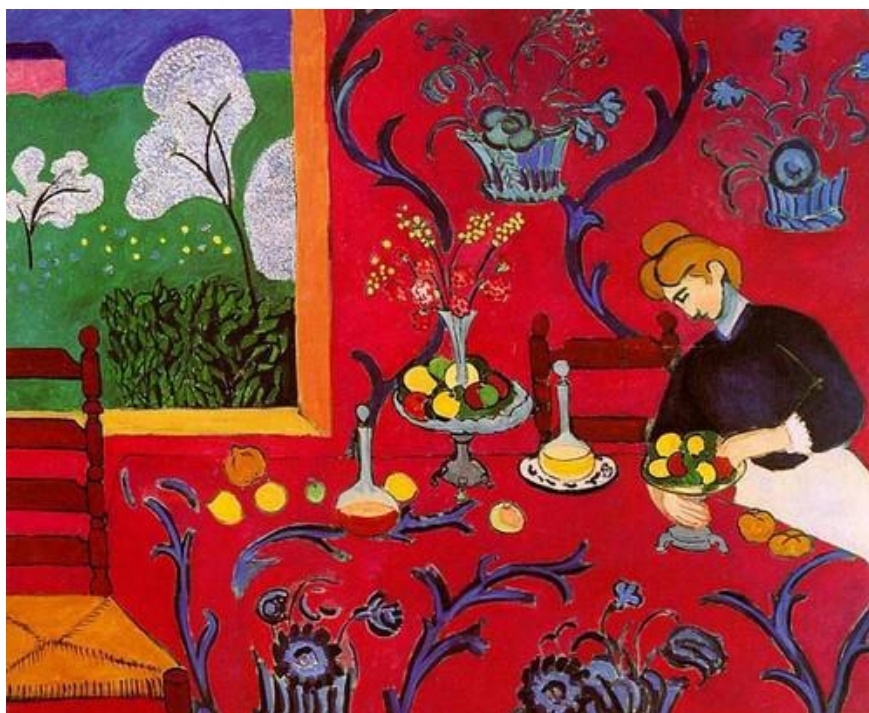
Figure 3. 7 Henry Matisse, *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* (*The Red Room*), oil on canvas, 1908

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[15] Kaizhi Gu (顾恺之), *On Painting* (《论画》), The Eastern Jin Dynasty, ed. Shixiang Wang, *Chinese Painting Theories*, (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010). 'Arrange element in proper positions to produce visual power and force'.

[16] Yanyuan Zhang (张彦远), *Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties* (《历代名画记》), Tang Dynasty, inspired by He Xie (谢赫)'s *He Xie's Six Laws of Painting* (《谢赫六法》), Southern Dynasty, (Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2011). 'Making arrangement/composition.'

integrates views from various perspectives of the mountains and water and represents them horizontally along the paper scroll.[17]

For those western paintings in which there is an intention to avoid depth, the frame also shows an important function. Henry Matisse, for example, aiming to explore the planarity of painting using flatly painted colour, consciously avoided the conventions associated with linear perspective, such as diminution of scale and vanishing points. He argued that the content of the pictorial space needs to remain in harmony with the frame and described the contents as the music hovering in a room that is responding to its space and shape.[18] He is therefore emphasising the integrated function of the frame. In his painting *The Dessert: Harmony in Red/The Red Room* (figure 3.7), 1908, it is the frame that helps him to create the incomplete shapes across the edges of the painting. It assists him in deciding how much to show the audience: the chair is cut in half, the window is

Figure 3. 8 Daniel Barrow, *The Thief of Mirrors,* projection installation,
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2013

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[17] A 'Li Zhou'/ 'Zhong Tang' ("立轴/中堂"), a narrow but tall scroll usually hung in a living room vertically, the painter may make a 'Z-shape', 'S-shape' or '1-shape'composition. Responding to a small round fan ("团扇"), the artist may pick only a part of the scene or object and leave the unnecessary parts outside the frame to imply vastness and liveness in the limited space.

[18] Henri Matisse, 'Temoignage', ed. Dominique Fourcade, *Ecrits et propos sur l'art*, (Paris: Hermann, 1972), pg. 196.

just wide enough to show the little house in the upper left, and the only character, the lady in black and white, is depicted as a complete shape which just fits in the gap between the 'table' and the right-hand frame edge.

3.2 The framed immersion: narrative frescos and single-screen video installations

The frame is therefore one significant factor that helps define a drawing/painting and its broader identity. Therefore, keeping its 'frame' guarantees the drawing/illustration's original pictorial space without it being deconstructed and disturbed when projected.

A video projection or architectural work such as a fresco or mural retains maximum spatial impact by retaining its pictorial frame. In this research, the term 'single-screen' refers to the digital installation work that has only one, unified pictorial content. It can be achieved with one projection for example, in Daniel Barrow's *The Thief of Mirrors,* Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Canada (figure 3.8), 2013, or Shahzia Sikander's single-screen video installation *Parallax* (figure 3.10), Tufts University Art Gallery, USA, 2013, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain, 2015*,* Honolulu Museum of Art, 2017, which uses three projectors to create one continuous panoramic image. It can also be seen in narrative frescos, for example Bernardino Pinturicchio's *The Encounter Between St. Anthony Abbot and St. Paul the Hermit*, Collegiata di Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello, the 16th century Italy (figure 3. 9).

The sense of immersion generated by a single-screen installation is based on the 'totality' (unity) of the picture and the complete and unbroken pictorial frame.'[19] Art historian Oliver Grau, attributes this immersion to the 'totality' of images and their 'overwhelming' visual force, which dislocate the audience from reality.[20] Surrounded by a large-scale picture, a 'closed-off' artificial world, the audience is shifted into a visual utopia and cut off from the reality psychologically.[21]

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[19] Oliver Grau, trans. Custance Gloria, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. (The MIT Press: London, Massachusetts, Cambridge, England, 2003). pg. 27, 32-3.
[20] Ibid. pg. 13.
[21] Ibid. pg. 4.

However, long before today's artists made immersive pictorial environments, artists had been aware and made use of the overwhelming visual force of large-scale images, taking their audience on imaginative journeys via the painted frescos in churches. Below, I analyse how narrative frescos inspired me to identify the key factors in achieving an immersive visual force.[22]

3.2.1 Narrative frescos

The narrative frescos in churches and other buildings are appropriate and relevant examples showing successful approaches to transforming a scene that might normally be viewed as a small two-dimensional image (painting, print, etc.) into large spatial works. This is mainly a quantitative change in scale. When enlarged and fitted into an architectural structure, a narrative picture becomes part of the building and part of the 'reality' entered in to by the audience. The audience walks into the alternative narrative world of the Bible, or Greek and Roman myths for example.

My analysis of the examples below highlight several key factors used by artists in bringing about this transformation, inspiring and supporting my practice: mapping the images to the architecture/screen, illusory depth, quantity and size. Here, I analyse each of these factors.

The fully embedded/mapped image

Many examples of frescos evidence painters paying attention to the function of the pictorial frame and how the fresco works in relation to the wall on which it sits. These frames may be provided by existing architectural structures such as, a rectangular wall, the space between two windows, the space of an altar or chapel, etc. These structures are a given, provide a natural limit defining how big the fresco can be and what kind of shape it will have. Artists often, fit their pictures exactly into these 'frames'.

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[22] Frescos are mural paintings made with freshly with wet lime on the walls of architectures. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fresco, accessed on 04. 04. 2018.

Figure 3.9 Bernardino Pinturicchio, *The Encounter between St. Anthony Abbot and St. Paul the Hermit*, Collegiata di Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello, Italy, the 16th century

Figure 3. 10 Shahzia Sikander, *Parallax*, video installation, the United Arab Emirates and Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, USA, 2013, Honolulu Museum of Art, USA, 2017

For example, Bernardino Pinturicchio's fresco *Christ among the Doctors* (figure 3.11) on one of the lunettes of the Baglioni Chapel, Spello, Italy, 1550/1501 emphasises the context and shape of the frame by painting pillars and decorative marble arches along the lunettes. He even paints a broad strip at the bottom that enhances the effect of the event taking place on a tiled stage.

Similarly, Raphael Sanzio fits his large fresco *The School of Athens* (figure 3.12), 1509-1511 into the lunette of the Apostolic Palace, Vatican City. He paints the decorative rims along the lunette and redefines the shape of the pictorial frame by adding a skirting board decorated with painted sculptures and square motifs. He uses this panel to lift the frame so that the audience need to look up to sense the aesthetic of the sublime narrative.

These images are 'mapped' exactly into their architectural 'frames', with apparently no flaws or a contradiction to disturb the illusion, as every inch of the wall is painted. The pictorial spaces of these frescos, and their framing, whether painted or real, or a combination of both, completely align or 'overlap' with the existing real surfaces and the real architectural elements. The decorative rims

Figure3. 11 Bernardino Pinturicchio, *Christ among the Doctors*, fresco,
The Baglioni Chapel, Spello, Italy, 1500/1501

and panels painted realistically by Pinturicchio and Raphael, to the point of 'fooling the eye', bridge the pictorial narrative and the architecture by transforming it into an illusionary narrative environment. They show how well the narrative pictures are fully 'embedded' inside the building when they successfully trick the audience's eyes by making it hard to distinguish what is real and what is not.

The illusionary depth

The frame in this case strengthens the illusionary unity of the pictorial space. In combination with linear perspective the frame can act as the 'window' through which the scene is being viewed, thereby strengthening the compositional elements and the narrative being portrayed. Normally, the artist only uses one-point of perspective and puts the vanishing point on the central axis of the picture; this is especially useful when the artist wants to invite the audience into the illusionary depth.[23] Also, it is common to see the artist leave some relatively open space in the lower part of the painting, with this 'frontal view', which enhances the sense of 'openness', encouraging the audience to 'walk into' this space.

Figure3. 12 Raphael, *School of Athens*, fresco, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, 1509-11

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[23] One-point, or single-point perspective refers to the linear perspective which uses only one vanishing point where all perspective line joint. Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art, Optical Themes in Western Art from Burnnelleschi to Seurat*, (Yale University Press, 1989).
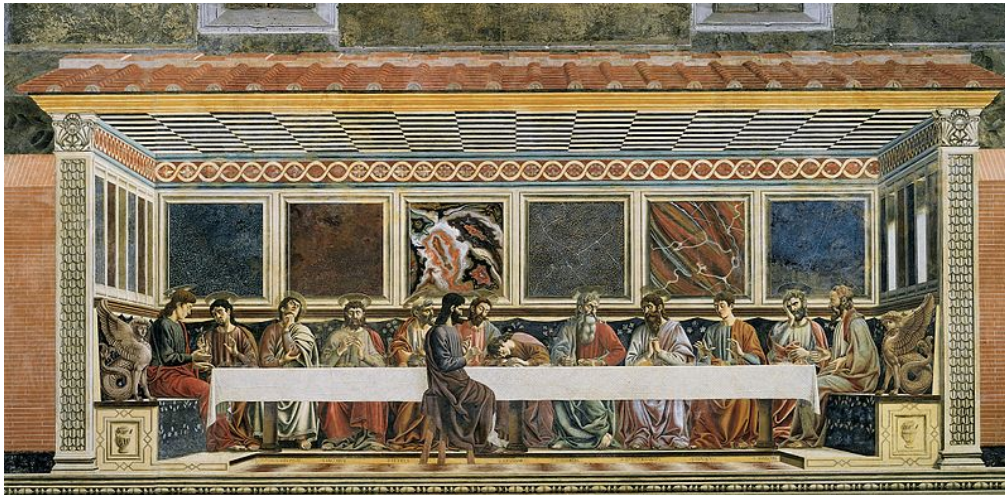
Figure3. 13 Andrea del Castagno, *The Last Supper*, fresco, Sant'Apollonia, Florence, Italy, 1445-1450

For example, using single-point perspective, Pinturicchio creates the illusion of opening a window onto a believable scene that stretches to a distant building, and the landscape beyond (figure 3.9, 3.11). Raphael also uses single-point perspective and generates a depth reaching the far distance by using a series of arches diminishing in size (figure 3.12).

Another typical example is Andrea del Castagno's fresco *Last Supper*, 1445-1450, (figure 3.13) in Sant'Apollonia, Florence, Italy. He created a framed 'cut-away' view fully embedded into the space, showing an interior space where the events are taking place. The artist is conscious of the space 'in front of' the table. Except for one figure sitting at the front centre, there are no redundant elements standing in the way of the audience walking into the room in their imaginations.

Position, size and quantity

However, this illusionary depth relies on other factors to realise its full capacity. Castagno's visual trick may not work to its full capacity if he is unconscious of its position and size. The artist needs to make the picture large enough to be 'mapped' on to the architecture and to 'envelope' the audience, making them aware of their surroundings, in order to enhance the connection between the viewer, the picture and the architecture.

When the figures within a pictorial space are, or feel life-scale, it can generate a sense of an 'environment' that the audience are 'within'. Many narrative frescos have this capacity. For example, both Pinturicchio's and Raphael's characters are

made almost life-scale, which strengthens the sense of connection between reality and the pictorial space.[24]

Regarding 'position', Andrea del Castagno's *Last Supper* (figure 3.13), 1445-1450 is a typical example of making use of the physical position of an image in order to blur the boundary between the two worlds. Its size (453 × 975 cm) makes it large enough to contain approximate life-scale characters and objects.[25] The work sits close to the floor of the abbey's refectory, resulting in the space within the painting feeling almost a part of the real space in which the nuns would be having dinner. [26] It thus generates an intimacy between the users of the room and the spiritual event.

By comparison, Cosimo Rosselli's *Last Supper* (figure 3.13), 1481-1482, in the

Figure3. 14 Cosimo Rosselli, *The Last Supper* (the middle right), fresco, the Sistine Chapel, Vatican, 1482

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[24] 'Cultural Heritage', https://www.villadeimosaicidispello.it/en/spello/cultural-heritage/, accessed on 26,03,2018.

[25] 'Andrea del Castagno, *Last Supper'*, 1447, http://www.travelingintuscany.com/art/andreadelcastagno/lastsupper.htm, accessed on 04. 04. 2018.

[26] Andrée Hayum, 'A Renaissance Audience Considered: The Nuns at S. Apollonia and Castagno's Last Supper', *The Art Bulletin*, 2006, pg. 243-266**.**

Sistine Chapel does not generate such a vivid sense of immersion. Although it depicts a realistic room using linear perspective, it is arranged within a small frame (349×570 cm) lined up with other images and is more like a painting hung on the wall, with little sense of an illusionary space merging with the architecture around it. It calls for the audience to look up at this holy event, not be a part of it.

To conclude, there are several key factors that are instrumental in enhancing how a single image might be transformed in to a spatial work: 'mapping' to the architecture/frame and positioning in order to show a connection with the real space, the inclusion of linear perspective producing illusionary depth, the apparent scale of the figures (the characters should be at least life-scale).

In the context of video installation art, the illusion of depth made overtly by using linear perspective is rarely used. However, there are a small number of artists who continue to use illusionary depth, combining it with other systems including the use of light, projections, and animations in order to generate a sense of physical immersion.

For example, in Daniel Barrow's projection installation *The Thief of Mirrors* (figure 3.8), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, USA, 2013 based on his

Figure3. 15 Paul Sandby, *Landscape with Castle*, fresco from the Painted Dining Room, Drakelow Hall, Derbyshire, UK, 1793

narrative paintings, he transfers illustrations onto transparent sheets of acetate and projects them with overhead projectors, animating the pictures by physically manipulating the overlapping acetate sheets.

The images depict the story of a thief who attempts to steal jewellery in a Baroque house; a wounded bisexual nude lies on a tiled floor, attacked by flying shards of glass from a broken mirror. Behind, through a window, is a seascape by night. Barrow creates an inviting space using linear perspective. The edges of the tiles, floor, and walls trace the framework of a one-point perspective system, seeming to create a recess in the 'distance' as if we were able to step into the room. This effect is enhanced by projecting the image onto a wall, paying attention to the arrangement of the projection. The scale (almost life-scale) and proportions of the image have been carefully designed to match that of the wall perfectly, enhancing the optical illusion that a flat blank wall has transformed into a three-dimensional volume, extending the real physical space.[27]

Looking at these works, while I appreciate the visual fantasy of allowing me to 'walk into' their narrative space, I do not want to repeat these achievements. Most of my drawings/illustrations do not use linear perspective, on the contrary, their indeterminate 'depthless' pictorial space called for me to develop an alternative sense of immersion.

Next, I describe the ideas and experiments using video projection, with which I attempted to transform my drawings into 'spaces' with a heterogeneous sense of immersion.

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[27] In Chapter 5, I look closely at how the varied scale of my projected characters affect the immersive capabilities of my video installations.

3.2.2 Spatialising indeterminate 'depthless' pictorial space

The panorama and ambiguous shapes

The immersive effect of the frescos described above is demanding. They expect the viewers to position themselves in a place where they can see the illusionary depth, as intended by the artist. Walking away from this 'sweet spot' and viewing from a sharp angle, impairs the magic and reveals that it is no more than paint on a surface. For example, the best view of Andrea del Castagno's *Last Supper* (figure 3.13) is standing in the middle of the space, opposite to the fresco. Viewed closely at the right or left side, the image is distorted and the illusion disintegrates.

Artists who made panoramic images in the 18-19th century tried to improve on this by using multiple visual centres to free the audience form a single static view. The term 'panorama' means a complete view, which combines *pan* (all) and Greek word *horama* (sight or spectacle being seen).[28] In 1791, the word

Figure3. 16 The dobert Barker, detail of *The panorama of Edinburgh from Carlton Hill*, 1792

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[28] Definition of 'panorama', *Online Etymology Dictionary*. https://www.etymonline.com/word/panorama. Accessed on 03.04.2018.

'panorama' was first used by *The Morning Chronicle* (British newspaper) to describe immersive pictorial views.[29]

In a panorama, the painter uses the technique of 'circular perspective' in which 'partial views' (visual centres) are assembled into one continuous frame. For

Figure 3. 17 Edouard Castres, *Bourbaki Panorama*, Lucerne, Switzerland, 1881

Figure 3. 18 Jan Styka, Wojciech Kossak and assistants, *The Racławice Panorama*, Wrocław, Poland, 1894

example, Paul Sandby, mapmaker and a landscape painter made a panoramic fresco (figure 3.15) on the walls of Drakelow Hall, Derbyshire, UK, 1793. It wraps the audience inside a painted landscape surrounding them. The almost life-scale trees and clouds flow into the dining room enclosing the viewers inside the artificial nature.

Later, large scale panoramas moved outside of private halls into public life. Initiated by painter Robert Barker who made the *Panoramic Views of Edinburgh*

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[29] Ed. Marie-Louise von Plessen, Ulrich Giersch, 'Erfindung und Entwicklung des Panoramas in Grossbritannien', Sehsucht. *Das Panorama als Massenunterhaltung des 19 Jahrhunderts*, (Basel and Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, note 11, 1993), pg. 35.

(21 m long, 180 degrees, figure 3.16), first exhibited in Edinburgh in 1788 and later re-exhibited in London in1789. They were an extremely popular form of entertainment, gaining public attention by allowing them to 'walk into' the painted landscapes.[30] Increasingly more ambitious panoramic works were made in the following years by Barker and other artists: for example a panorama of London by Baker in 1792, followed by the large-scale battle-site panoramas such as Edouard Castres's *Bourbaki Panorama* in Lucerne, Switzerland, 1881; 14 m in circumference and 15 m high (figure 3.17),[31] and *The Racławice Panorama* (figure 3.18) made by Jan Styka, Wojciech Kossak and assistants in Wrocław, Poland in 1894 that was 38 m in diameter and 15 m tall.[32]

These panoramas produce a 360 degree 'virtual reality' effect, a 'living environment' that surrounded its audience. Unlike the church frescos that imply depth with painted internal architectural structures, these panoramas normally avoid showing clear geometric 'spatialised' and readable interior structures.[33] Rather, they make use of the ambiguous elements of the far-reaching landscape. In the empty and vast pictorial space, a limited number of referential objects,

Figure3. 19 Antoine Watteau, *The Embarkation for Cythera*, oil, 1717

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Jan Mieszkowski, *Watching War*, (Stanford University Press, 2012), pg. 91.

[32] Ibid. pg. 220.

[33] Oliver Grau, trans. Custance Gloria, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion,* (Leonardo. Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2003), pg. 7.

buildings, and figures show the exact spatial relationship between the distance and the elements positioned at the front of the picture plane.

For example, in Raphael's *The School of Athens* (figure 3.12), 1509-11, we can tell there are four layers of lunettes in the middle of the view. The figures standing on the staircase appear 'further away' than the ones sitting on the tiled floor in the foreground. However, in the *Racławice Panorama* (figure 3.18), the flat fields extend to the horizon, providing a little reference to the depth.[34] The figures and trees are not depicted using sharp angles so that the contrast between their scales is subtle. The floating clouds melt into the sky making it hard to identify their exact shape and size.

Using ambiguous shapes such as irregular-shaped clouds and trees to create an illusionary effect demonstrates an alternative sense of immersion. For example, among many 18th century paintings, like Antoine Watteau, who makes full use of vague shapes to imply the depth? In *The Embarkation for Cythera* (figure 3.19), 1717 and *The Feast/Festival of Love* (figure 3.20), 1718–1719 the artist uses the

Figure3. 20 Antoine Watteau, *The Feast/ Festival of Love*, 1718–1719

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[34] 'Panorama of the Battle of Racławice', https://www.panoramaraclawicka.pl/?lang=en, accessed on 04. 04. 2018.

ambiguous outline of trees, clouds, steam and water to soften the depth.[35] In art historian Norman Bryson's words, they are an 'amorphous substance' blurring our sight in order to stop us locating accurately where we were.[36]

Figure3. 21 Rui Zhu (朱端), *Distant Night View of the Mist-Shrouded River* (《烟江晚眺》), Ming Dynasty

In Far East classical paintings, shapeless forms such as snow, water, clouds, and mists are widespread tools used to join unconnected views, selected from different spaces and/or times. As painter Tao Shi (石涛, Qing dynasty) notes: 'Water and clouds gather and separate, which implies the connection and separation of mountains and rivers… The sky ties mountain and river down with winds and clouds.'[37] By integrating 'water' and 'clouds' in a dense or lose composition, the artist can drag mountains and rivers together or push them far

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[35] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, (Cambridge University Press. 1983), pg.91.
[36] Ed. J. P. Richer, *The literary works of Leonardo da Vinci*, (London, 1939), pg. 150.
[37] "水云聚散，山川之连疏也。" "风云者，天之束缚山川也。" Tao Shi, *Tao Shi's Discourse on Painting* (石涛，《石涛画语录》/《苦瓜和尚画语录》), http://www.eywedu.com/hualun/hl083.htm, accessed on 04.04.2016.

apart. By manipulating the size, shape, and opacity of the clouds, a painter can adjust the tension between the sky and the views below. Using these elements, they can create a utopian landscape, a perfect, ideal spectacle in which scale and distance are ambiguous. The spatial relationship between each element is vague, unstable and waiting to be identified by the viewer. This depth, unlike Raphael's, is in continuous expansion.

For example, in *Distant Night View of the Mist-Shrouded River* (《烟江晚眺》 figure 3.21), Ming Dynasty, Rui Zhu (朱瑞) uses plenty of clouds and mist to fill the gaps between the tree in the front view, the rocky mountain in the middle view and the distant view of mountains. They cover up the details and make it hard to understand the distance between the places and the events. We don't even know whether it is a depiction of a real place or an amalgam of scenes, observed in various places. The far distance is shrouded in mysterious mist, leaving space for the imagination.
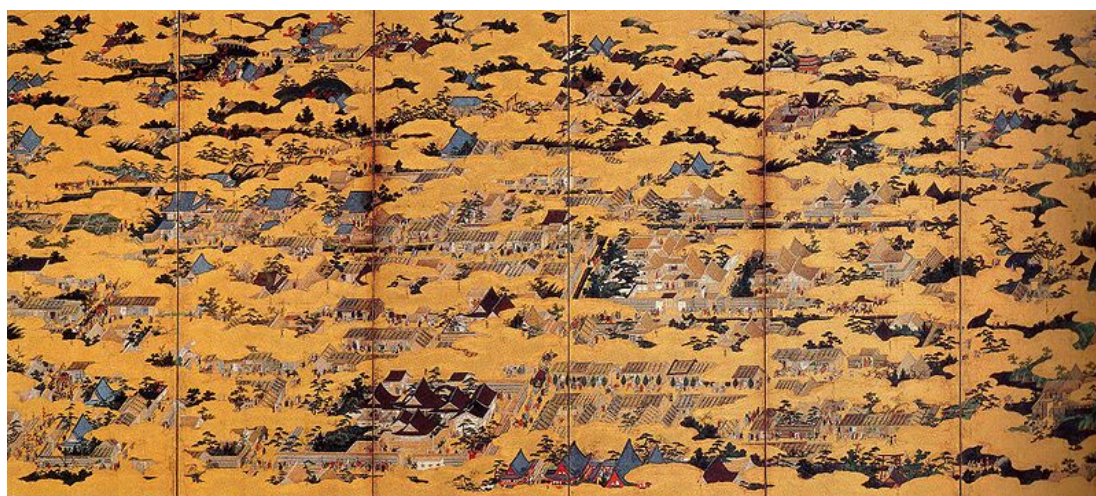
Figure 3. 22 Eitoku Kanou (狩野永徳), *Folding Screens of Scenes in and Around Kyoto* (the left) (《洛中洛外図屏風》), 1565

In Japan, 'Genji Cloud' ("源氏云"), a highly stylised cloud pattern is created to connect heterogeneous spaces (the golden parts in figure 3.22). Eitoku Kanou's (狩野永徳) *Folding Screens of Scenes in and Around Kyoto* (《洛中洛外图屏风》, figure 3.18), about 1565 uses Genji Cloud to connect events happening across the four seasons of a year, as well as landscapes inside and outside of the capital city. On the panorama-like screen, the golden clouds cover up the

boundaries between each heterogeneous event and unite the various spaces and timelines. The landscape thus becomes a land of dream, beyond the control of logic, nature's rules and geographical differences.

Using clouds and mists as ambiguous shapes, or 'amorphous substances' to connect separated elements, times and spaces, these panoramic images become artificial natures, tricking the senses of the audience. This approach is not limited to paint and brush, but also applicable to new media art today. Below, I will reflect on a single-screen video installation that realised this goal using light, animation and a projector in a gallery.

Single-screen video installations

Figure3. 23 Olafur Eliasson, *360° Room for All*, video installation, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2004, The Museum of Modern Art, USA, 2008

Figure3. 24 Peter Coffin, *Flying Fruits* in *Still Moving: A Triple Bill on the Image*/(*Untitled*), Singapore Art Museum, 2014-2015

I find most single-screen video installations that generate a strong sense of immersion use panoramic format and ambiguous shapes to activate and unite the content. For example, Pakistani-American artist Shahzia Sikander's video

installation *Parallax* (figure 3.10, 21-2), Sharjah Biennial, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, USA, 2013 demonstrates her 'magic' ability to give the 'traditional' two-dimensional art mediums of watercolour and drawing an environmental quality through her animated projections.[38] Sikander's 15-minute, 12 x 60 foot, projected animation demonstrates an alternative way of entering her spatialised environmental watercolours within a single-screen video installation.[39] Using three HD projectors, she created a united panoramic image. Like the clouds used in the works described above, Sikander presents a flexible and fluid visual experience with the flowing abstract wash of watercolour, ink painting and gouache, which construct an undefined space, 'flowing' out from the frame.[40]

The pictorial space is in constant re-formation, presenting a great variety of shades, opacities, and tones. At no point are you able to distinguish which part is 'closer' or 'more distant' as everything exists in a fluid motion. It is even difficult to distinguish the background from the figures, fragments, and particles on it.

Unlike Canadian Daniel Barrow's *The Thief of Mirrors* (figure 3.8) that invites the audience 'in', Sikander presents her projection as 'flowing' out. The 'depthless' pictorial space emphasises an irresistible power of growth, expansion, and invasion into the real space of the viewer; the frame does not stop the colour wash flowing out into the darkness.

This expansion can also be seen clearly in Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson's works, which emphasises the immersive atmosphere and landscapes of Scandinavia. His non-narrative immersive panorama installation *360º Room for All Colours* (figure 3.24)*,* Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2002 is a video installation of transforming coloured lights, projected onto a panoramic screen made of steel and wood.[41] The artist fills the room with slowly changing fluorescent lights, their reflection illuminating the ceiling and the floor. The pictorial space, the area

[38] Exhibition Overview, http://honolulumuseum.org/art/exhibitions/16048-shahzia_sikander_parallax/, accessed on 28,03,2018.

[39] Komal Sharma, 'Shahzia Sikander: Parallax' https://www.maharam.com/stories/sharma_shahzia-sikander-parallax, accessed on 28,03,2018.

[40] Exhibition Overview, http://honolulumuseum.org/art/exhibitions/16048-shahzia_sikander_parallax/, accessed on 28,03,2018.

[41] The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA PS1, 'Take your time: Olafur Eliasson',
 https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/31. Accessed on 08.04.2018
'Olafur Eliasson', http://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK101068/360degree-room-for-all-colours, accessed on 04.04.2018.

painted by lights, expands into the physical space, embedding the audience inside. The audience facing the screen is standing in a changing colour spectrum, expanding beyond the physical edge of the screen. It 'mixes' with the air and changes colour, having a direct strong sensory impact on the audience.

In American-based artist Peter Coffin's single-screen video installation *Flying Fruits* in exhibition *Still Moving: A Triple Bill on the Image,* 2014-2015, Singapore Art Museum, (figure 3.23), he projects a video of the numerous X-rays of fruit floating against a dark background.[42] These fruits appear to 'fly' quickly towards the audience when they increase from tiny dots to giant forms big enough to 'embrace' a person within. The viewer experiences the sensation of fast oncoming 'objects' dashing out of the frame. This animated pictorial space loses its stability and rushes psychologically into the physical space.

Here, we see a sharp contrast between the two senses of immersion: centralisation and expansion. The former for example, Danial Barrow's *The Thief of Mirrors* (figure 3.8) and Castagno's *Last Supper* (figure 3.13) rely on maximum realistic imitation of nature.[43] They are 'virtual realities' that force the audience into one ideal viewing position. While, Shahzia Sikander's *Parallax* (figure 3.10) and Coffin's *Flying Fruits* (figure 3.23) with their non-mimetic backgrounds expand into reality and stimulate the audience to walk around and experience it more fully, physically and actively.

For my own practice and research, I value the latter approach most as it gives the audience freedom to identify for themselves a type of sense of space within the visual confusion and instability. In my research discussed and analysed below, I attempt to specifically explore the idea of an ambiguous expanding space using projection onto a single 'screen' based on my experiments with a projector and the first video installation *By No Definition*.

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[42] Peter Coffin, https://www.artsy.net/artwork/peter-coffin-untitled-flying-fruits. Accessed on 08.04.2018
[43] Oliver Grau, trans. Custance Gloria, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, (The MIT Press: London, Massachusetts, Cambridge, England, 2003), pg. 16.

3.3 Early exploration with projector

Figure 3. 25-6 The drawings on plaster models, 2014

Painting large-scale narrative fresco has its disadvantages: it is financially costly, time-consuming and logistically complex. Can a video projection realise similar goals in a quick, economic and effective way?

Starting in late 2014, I made a couple of experiments using projectors and media players, projecting scanned drawings, from which I gained knowledge of the key factors affecting the result. The drawings, made using different materials such as

pen, pencil, and watercolour, came from my archive of drawings that contained a variety of older and more recent works.

Prior to conducting these projection experiments, I had not thought about the approaches and skills needed to spatialise my illustrations. I began, in perhaps the most obvious way, by translating some elements of my drawings into small sculptures and maquettes (figure 3. 24-6). Even though the materiality of some of the objects made from cardboard, clay, and plaster was encouraging and engaging, I quickly realised that my ambitions in terms of complexity and scale were impractical, particularly given my sculptural experience and skills, as well as the prohibitive cost. I could not draw accurate lines and shapes onto, or with the sculptures and they looked nothing like my original works, losing most of the character of the original drawing. I considered how I might be able to produce work at a significant scale and yet retain a sympathetic or appropriate quality of the drawn element.

My instinct and intuition told me that I wanted to make installations, not individual sculptures. It was important that the narrative pictorial space within my

Figure3. 27 The overhead projection of a drawing on acetate, 2014

illustrations remained a key component of the practice and research and I did not want to separate this from the individual characters or objects. I envisaged the audience being able to enter a large pictorial space and walk around.

An experiment with an overhead projector opened new possibilities. For the first time, I drew on an A3 transparent acetate sheet and projected it on the wall (figure 3.27). I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the projected drawing on the wall when it was enlarged. I was also fascinated by the convenience of being able to project the image onto any surface I wanted. Next, I explored the use of digital projectors that were even better at keeping the original quality of the illustration. Therefore, during the first year of my research, I spent a great deal of time learning to use the projectors and playing with and investigating various kinds of images, on different types of surfaces, and in different spaces.

A digital projector can of course cast either a still or animated image onto any surface, at practically any scale within its capability. The projected image not only gives the surface a 'skin' but also has the potential to evoke complex psychological reactions. The projector can place the image almost anywhere, even places that might be inaccessible to reach, or impractical to create an image by hand using pens and brushes. The artist can let the image reach the ceiling or the exterior walls of a building. They can 'paint' or 'draw' on impossible materials

Figure 3. 28 Front Pictures, *Multimedia Renaissance*, video projection, Kyiv, Ukraine, 2016

such as water, trees or stones without losing the quality and character of the original work. A projection is economic but effective. Using a small amount of paint or ink, the artist can enlarge the image with the help of scanning and projection.

One stunning example of this potential is the project *Renaissance: The Age of Genius* (figure 3.28) by Front Pictures, Kiev, Ukraine 2014, a studio that specialises in large-scale panoramic projections.[44] The company enlarged several historical paintings to a giant-scale (200×3.4m) by projecting them onto blank walls.[45] One of the original works, Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Hunters in the Snow/Winter* (figure 3.29), 1565, is originally 162 x 117 cm in size,

Figure 3. 29 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Hunters in the Snow* (*Winter*), oil on oak, 1565

which made the people skating in the far distance difficult to see clearly.[46] This painting was magnified to such a large-scale that it appeared to embrace the audience 'inside' its snowy landscape. This enlargement lessened the effect of depth in the linear perspective of the painting, pulling everything forward and more frontal. It created a new illusion by altering the relationship between the image, space, and the audience. The physical space of the room and pictorial space of the painting merge and the audience seem to inhabit both. The discovery of this function significantly boosted my research.

Introduced to a projector in 2014, my early-stage experiments with video projectors were quite blind and random; they gave me a general impression of

[44] *Multimedia Renaissance by Front Pictures*, 2014, https://blog.frontpictures.com/multimedia-renaissance-by-front-pictures/, accessed on 08.04.2018.
[45] *Ibid*
[46] *Ibid*

the projector's capabilities and what my works looked like when enlarged. I used several different examples and types of my illustrations, including pen-and-ink drawings, watercolours, photographs, and videos. Sometimes these projections worked well and had the immersive quality that I was most interested in, while some just looked like a picture in a PowerPoint presentation. To begin with, the outcomes were accidental and unconscious, however little by little I built a significant amount of experience and knowledge in using the process. Eventually, I understood what kind of images I needed and how to achieve the best results for the transformation of illustrative pictorial space into immersive pictorial space. Below I analyse these experiments under the themes of the key factors impacting my works: position and size.

The fully embedded/mapped pictures: position and size

When embedded on a surface or structure in an 'appropriate' position, an enlarged illustration can look like a fresco. In this 'best' position and size, the work feels as if it is a part of the physical space. However, when projected randomly at a small scale it is difficult to sense any connection between the pictorial and physical space. For example, when I projected part of the line-drawn

Figure3. 30 The projection of *Giving Feed Tigers*, 2014

Giving Feeding Tigers (figure 3.30) to approximately 2.5 × 1.5 meters, the frame of the pictorial space did not match/coincide with the edges of the wall. The parts of the wall not covered by the projection disturbed the illusion, that the illustration was 'drawn' onto the wall.

Figure3. 31 The projection of a video of a duck on the frozen lake under a bench, 2015
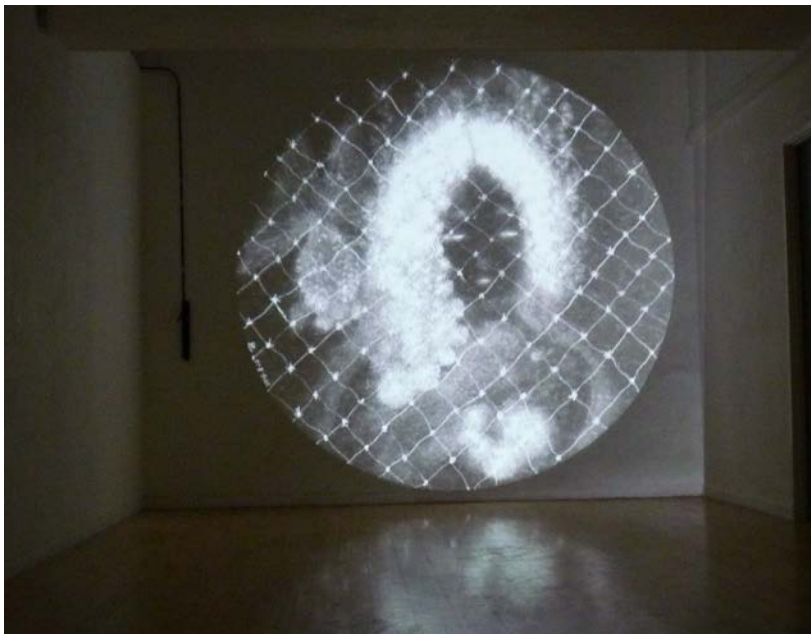
Figure3. 32 The projection *of Moon Shadow*, 2015

During the many experiments, with the effect of projection in various positions and spaces, I found several particularly successful examples. This inspired me to identify the specifics of the relationship between the projection and physical

Figure3. 33 The projection of *Web Seeker*, 2015
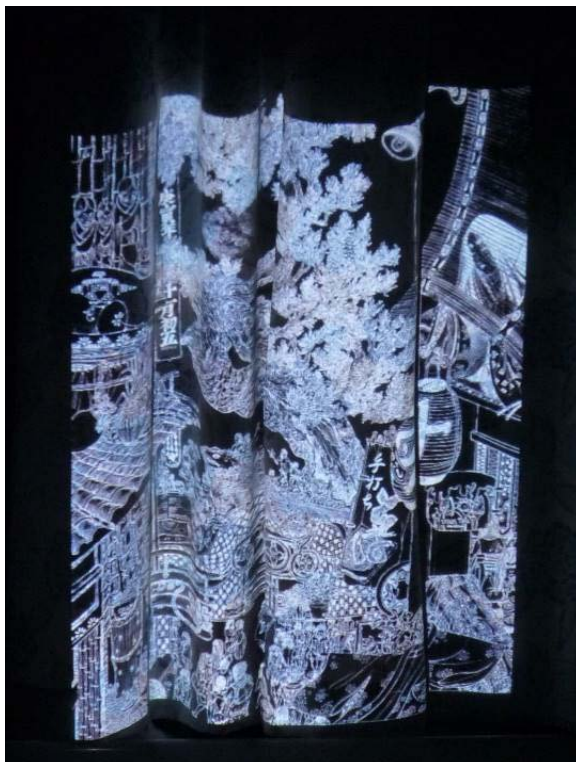
Figure 3. 34 The projection of *The Pine*, 2014

space in these cases. For example, I projected a photographic video-still of a duck standing on a frozen lake into the rectangular space under a bench (about

Figure 3. 35 The projection of *Untitled* (the right part), 2015

2×0.3 m, figure 3.31). The position and scale embedded it into space perfectly and created the illusion that there was a duck hiding under the bench.

The experiments that used large-scale projections, at least 2×3 m, showed a stronger ability to be felt as 'spaces. For example, the projection of the inverted *Moon Shadow* (figure 3.32), 2015 originally a pencil drawing on rice paper, was projected about 3m in diameter. It covered most of the wall, its round shape successfully occupying the space of the wall. In another same-size projection (approximately 3m diameter, figure 3.33) *Web Seeker,* 2014, a pencil drawing on rice paper, the pictorial space and effect was such that it appeared as if it was a big spider's web hanging on the wall. These tests taught me that transformation was not simply the random overlapping of a projection and physical space, but that by careful manipulation of the position of the projection I could build a connection, an interaction and a dialogue between the two kinds of space. The projection should merge and integrate with the projected surface completely.

Content: avoid complex line drawings

In exploring what kinds of pictorial spaces could best be transformed into installations, I realised that the visual content and nature of the original illustration was also a crucial factor in guiding this decision. Complex line-drawn poly-scenic narrative illustrations, which have a very complex and indeterminate pictorial space, were very difficult to transform into an installation work without breaking their original frame. In contrast, mono-scenic illustrations with a simple setting and drawn and painted with pencils or watercolour were easier to deal with.

For example, in my poly-scenic drawing *The Pine,* 2010, (24 × 36 cm, pen on paper) there is a very particular pictorial space. The pine tree, buildings, and figures take up most of the space. The pictorial space is fragmented and uncertain. Each part of the picture is interwoven into a firm and dense web.

When projected onto a curtain, approximately 80 × 120 cm, the effect was

unsatisfactory (figure 3.34). Even when enlarged, the rectangular framing around

Figure 3. 36 Details of projection of *Untitled* (the right part), 2015

the drawing held the fragmented pictorial space together and stopped the imagery from melding with the physical space. The dense composition prevented any physical engagement with the pictorial space, blocked as it was by tangled tree branches and buildings. In addition, the delicate dots and fine lines of the original drawing lost their characters when projected, becoming vague pixelated dots through the digital projection.

Another test such as that of *Giving Feeding Tigers* also showed this problem. The characters, trees, and animals gained little connection with the physical space when magnified by a projector to approximately 2.5 m wide (figure 3.30). Every element was interacting well with each other within their two-dimensional 'composition', and consequently their mutual connection was too strong to break.

Later experiments with pictures containing simpler contents worked better. For example, I projected a part of my watercolour scroll *Untitled* (21 × 15 cm) on a wall (approximately 2.5 × 1.5 m, figure 3.35 - 6). The brush strokes, thicker lines, and loose shapes made it easier to make them feel part of an environment. The enlarged characters reached almost life-scale, implying a connection with the audience.

These works and experiments demonstrate that the images that have more blankness and 'openness' in the pictorial space have good immersive qualities, even though they still seem too busy to invite the audience in. It helped me to find an alternative and a new effect of illusion and projection: the transformed space could not only have the illusionary depth as if looking through a window, but also could be flat and expanding, as though looking at a 'flat' spacious visual field.

Without the clear spatial referential elements to help me, or force me, to locate the real distance between each element, the sense of the size and distance would remain ambiguous, and hence more engaging. However, the contents should be simplified for the stronger effect, just like the projection *Untitled* (figure 3.36).

An inspiring example is the enlarged Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Hunters in the Snow* (figure 3.28). The reason why this projection gains the environmental quality, not only relied on its large size but also its 'open' pictorial space. The

aquamarine blue lake was painted evenly, and apart from the several small figures scattered on it, there are few visual clues to set the boundary between the viewers and the world in the picture. This indeterminate 'depthless' coloured area became a wide-open entrance for the audience to walk into. Its simplicity and openness reminded me to avoid overloading my audience with complex contents and leave them a chance to explore.

These examples demonstrate that even without using the obvious trope of linear perspective to create illusionary depth, artists can still transform a space using pictures with simple backgrounds and open, indeterminate and/or ambiguous pictorial spaces when they fully cover the physical space in to which they are projected. My first video installation *By No Definition*, 2015 attempted to maximise this effect by utilising and dealing with the key factors as discussed above. Next, I will analyse the installation in depth.

Figure3. 37 The U-shape wall in Studio 1.17, 2015
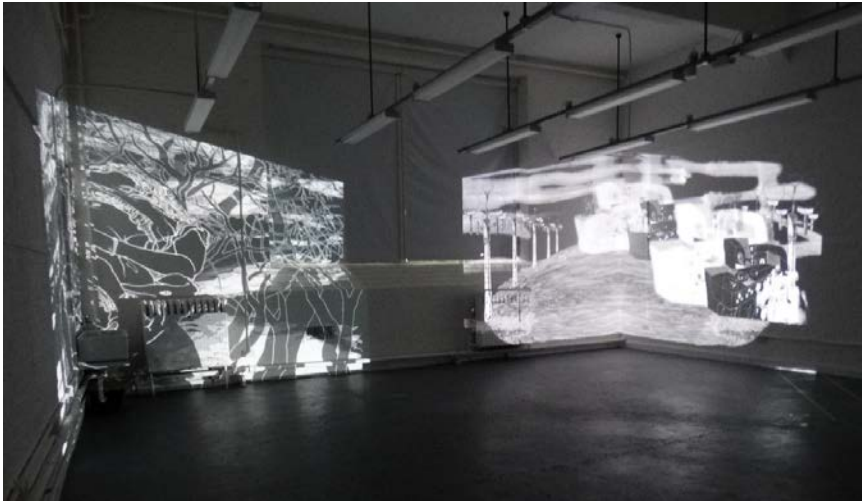
Figure3. 38 A projection test of *By No Definition* with two projectors, 2015

Figure 3.39 An experiment of projection *By No Definition* on two corners of the U-shape wall, 2015
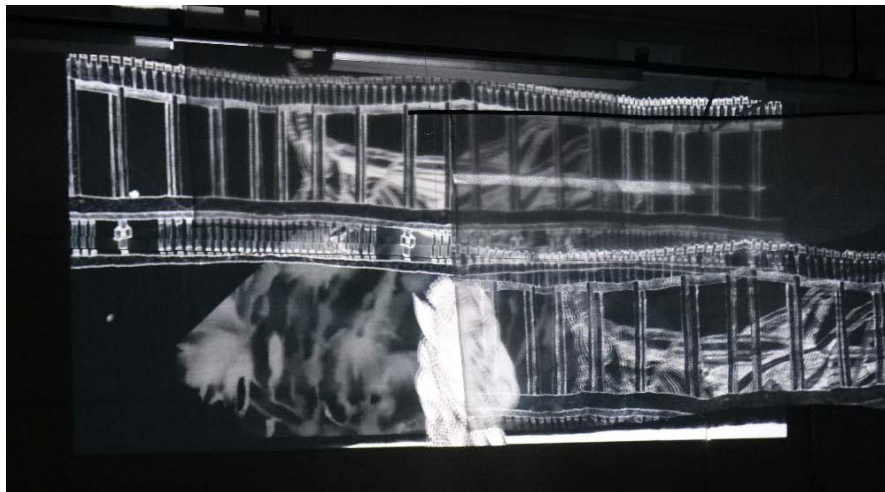
Figure 3.40 An experiment of projection *By No Definition* on a transparent piece of fabric, 2015

3.4 Case study: *By No Definition*, 2015
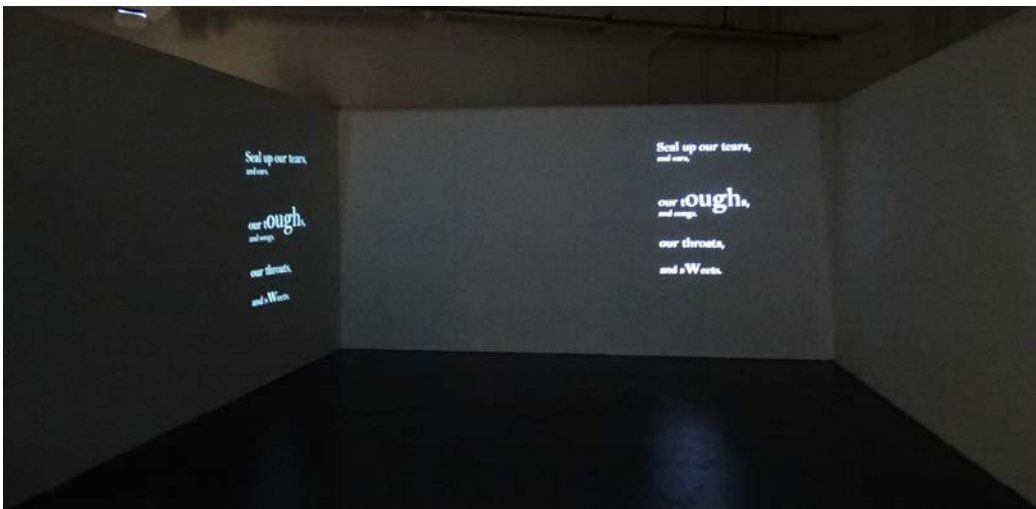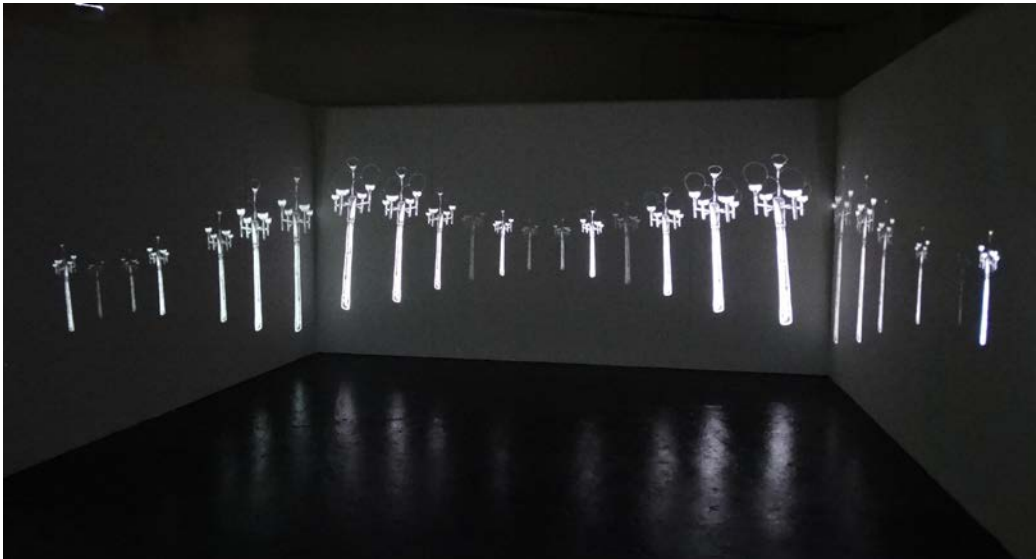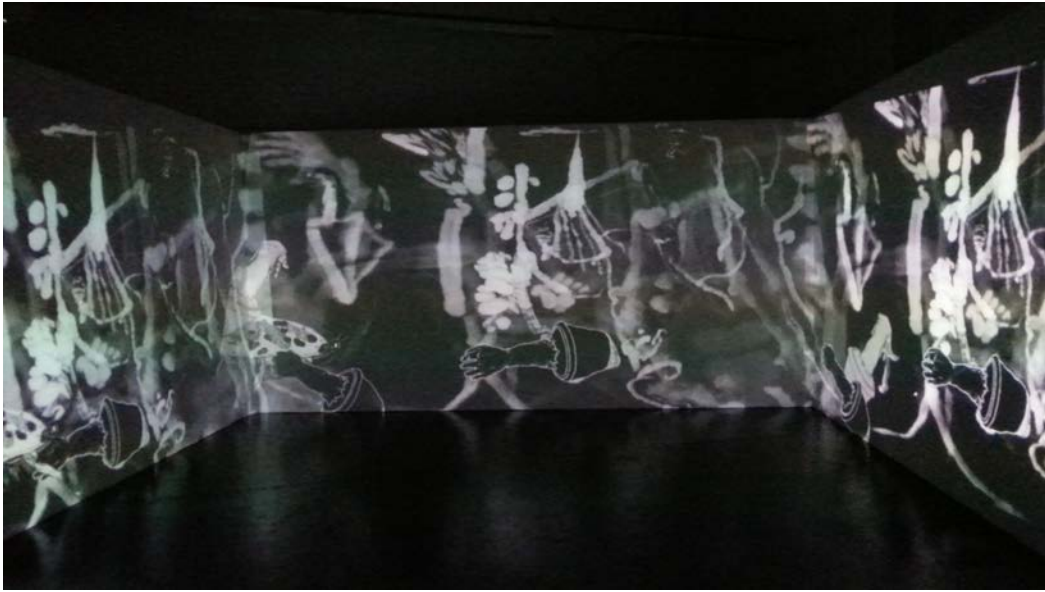
Figure 3. 41-3 Installation views *of By No Definition*, 2015
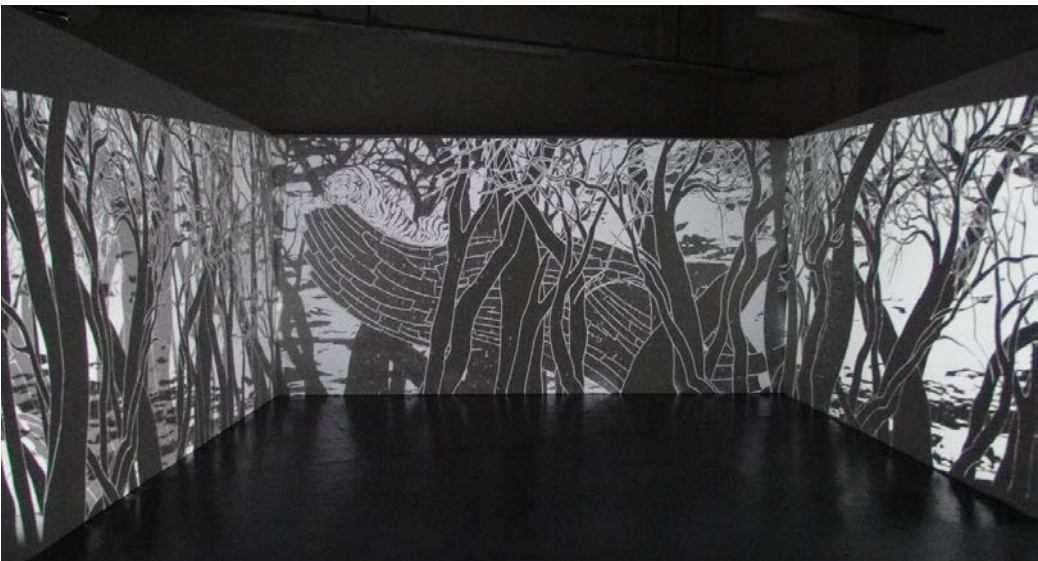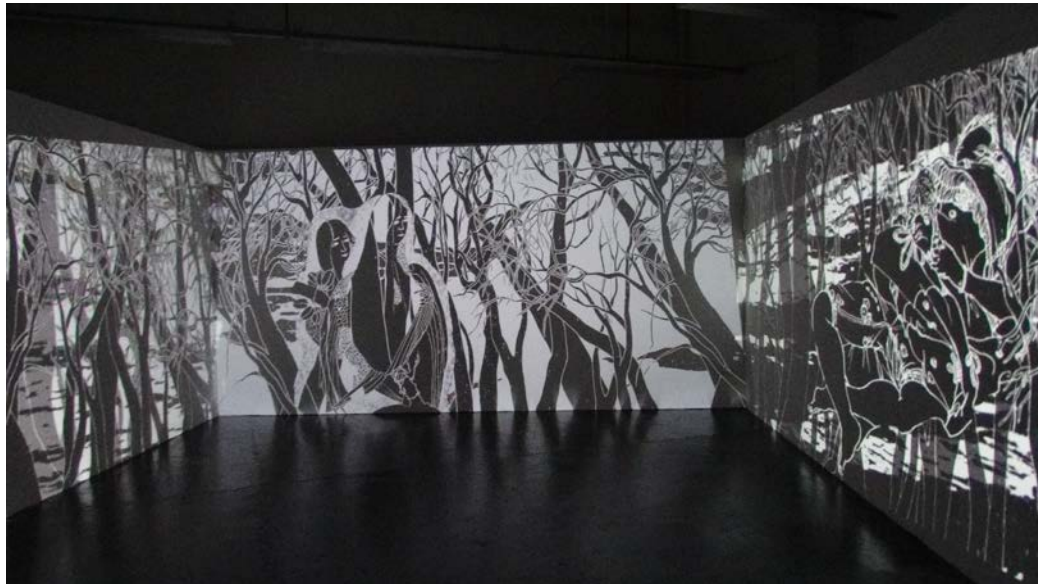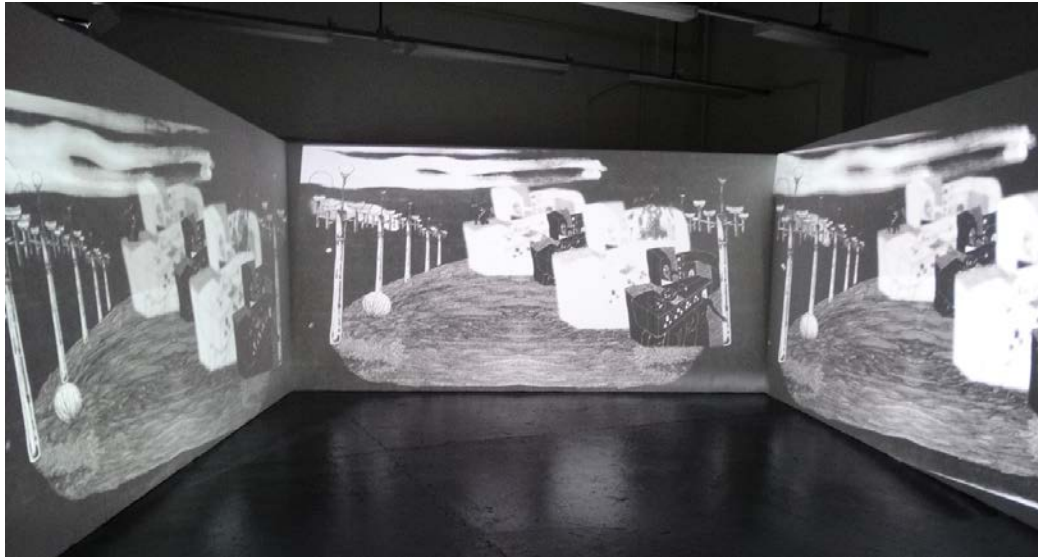
Figure 3. 44-6 Installation views *of By No Definition*, 2015

By No Definition, 2015, was my first projection/video installation exhibited in 2015 in Studio 1.17, King Edward VII Building at Newcastle University based on my early-stage exploration. It was a single-screen video installation on a U-shape wall accompanied by a soundtrack made by musician Adam Potts and Ben McVinne.

As analysed in Chapter 2, I prepared animations based on my self-narrative drawings. The exhibition space I chose for this work was a large empty, square-shaped room (approximately 5m high, 6m long and 5m wide) with large windows with black-out blinds. I built a U-shape wall as a screen (figure 3.37). Initially, I used two Optoma projectors and two mini media players connected by HDMI cables, that were synchronised together to produce one continuous single-screen image. Several experiments were conducted to find out the best way of projecting my animations/videos within this space (figure 3.38-40).

Up to this point, I had been playful and experimental, projecting onto different existing surfaces, adjusting the scale and shape, Then, I needed to be conscious of what I was doing and careful about every detail, as each decision would have an influence on the overall effect. I realised that projections could not only transfer images but also create unwanted 'negative' shapes and structures that disturbed the illusion (figure 3.39). To guarantee the quality of the installation, I should not only care about what I wished to show but also avoid what should not be seen.

To solve this problem, I decided to use a third projector (in sync with the other two) in order to cover each of the three walls as much as possible. In the final solution, the middle wall was covered properly by the projection, while the sidewalls were almost covered, with only a triangular-shaped gap left at the top of each (figure 3.41-6). This worked well and I achieved a single-screen (though three channels/projectors used) projection at a size of 2.4 × 8m for each wall. Although this was smaller than the 12 × 3.5m originally planned, it was large enough to generate a sense of immersion based on the expanding pictorial space. Below, I will analyse several traits of this work.

The 'expanding' pictorial space

When transformed into an installation, my drawings/illustrations gained the quality of the immersion that I was aiming for. In the first two sections of the installation (figure 3.41, 44), I sensed a similar pictorial/physical space as that found in Claude Monet and Sikander's works. For example, in the large-scale panoramic painting *Water Lilies*, Musée de l'Orangerie (figure 3.47),1915-1926 led me on a virtual tour by arranging the paintings as two elongated frames within a specially built room. Monet intended to immerse the audience in the 'depthless' pond, suggesting an infinite expansion of pictorial space beyond the physical frame.

Monet and Sikander's indeterminate pictorial spaces made the distance between the viewer and the depicted ambiguously. There are very few clear spatial references or clues that help the viewer rationalise or fix the distance. Sikander integrates coloured areas together using abstract shapes; the strips, watermarks,

Figure 3.48 Claude Monet, *The Water Lily* (*Agapanthus*) *Triptych*, 1915-1926

Figure3. 49-50 Still frames of *Parallax*

dots, flowing lines shown as complete shapes suggest that there is more beyond what is seen in the frame (figure 3.30, 3.49-50). Monet's impressionist brush strokes blur the boundary between the lilies, shadows and the pond. The varying sizes of the plants makes it hard to sense an orderly recession of size in space. The paintings look as if the pond 'stands up' in front of the viewers. The incomplete lily leaves near the edges imply there are more plants beyond this frame. The pond is 'expanding' and 'invades' the physical space in the audience's imagination.

In preparing the painted background of the animation's first two episodes, I also did not let the frame limit the brush strokes (figure 2.46-9, 3.41, 3.44). The painted strokes went across the pictorial space and reached out of it. Like Sikander and Monet, I determined that the 'frame' should not act as its cage. This realisation helped me to choose what to show, and not to deny its connection with the unshown and unseen.

The third episode of the animation also showed an expansion using shapes that were sharply cut off (figure 3.45-6). The tangled dense trees in the forest expanding into the real space in my project reminded me of David Hockney's painting *The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire* (figure 3.51)*, 2011. Hockney's trees stretch outside the frame creating the sharp contrasts with the horizontal view of 'grasses at the bottom of the picture.

Figure 3. 49 David Hockney, *The Arrival of Spring in Woldgat*, oil, 2011

This incompleteness emphasises the expansion outward and beyond the frame. These truncated fragments - brush strokes, trees, water lilies, bamboos, and vines shift my attention within the frame to a place beyond, where I expect to see similar contents as those within the frame. The missing parts appear in my imagination, linking the inner space and the physical space, the visual and the invisible, the reality and the imagination.

Figure 3. 44 Sanraku/Sansetsu Kano (狩野山楽/狩野山雪), *Tigers in Bamboo Grove* (《竹虎图》), Tenkyu-in Temple, Japan, the 17th century

In Henry Matisse's paintings such as *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* (figure 3.7), 1908, the artist also makes us be aware of the incompleteness to imply the vastness of the pictorial space and its connection with the space beyond the frame. As he says: 'That's why I used figures which are not always whole, so half of them is outside'.[47] Thus, he could create a 'motion' between the pictorial space and the outside space. This 'motion' 'spins out over unpainted surfaces and beyond the four sides of the picture to evoke, once again, limitless space, weightlessness, air.'[48] The incompleteness shows the continuity of the pictorial space, the connection between what is within and outside the frame. The flat-painted half-shown elements invite one to imagine the possibility of its motion into or out of the frame, the penetration of the external space into the framed one.[49]

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[47] Henry Matisse, Jack D. Flam, 'Interview with Charbonnier', *Matisse on Art*, (University of California Press, 1995), pg. 39.

[48] Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Volume 4. (The University of Chicago Press, 1957-1969), pg. 98.

[49] Piet Mondrian believes abstract painting could connect the pictorial world with physical space as the works no longer relying on linear perspective constrained by the frame. He claimed this would free the pictorial space from the boundary of the frame by letting the flat-painted colour expand beyond the frame. Paul Crowther, 'Figure, Plane, and Frame: The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space', *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame),* (Sandford University Press: Sandford, California, 2009), pg.134.

A non-western example of a similar sensibility is a panel painting made by Sanraku/Sansetsu Kano, (狩野山楽/狩野山雪) *Tigers in Bamboo Grove* (《竹虎图》, figure 3.44), Tenkyu-in Temple (天球院), Kyoto, Japan in the 17th century, showing a more obvious relationship with my work.[50] The artist(s) focused on the centre of the bamboos and excludes their tops and roots outside the pictorial space. Similarly, Jakuchu Ito's (伊藤若冲) painted *Grapevines and Birds* (《葡萄小禽图》, figure 2.45), Rokuonji Temple (鹿苑寺), Kyoto, Japan, 1795.[51] He arranged the grapevine so that it stretched its vines across each surface of the three frames. Viewed from the front, the vines are incomplete and expand to the space beyond the frame.

My video installation *By No Definition*, 2015 brought these 'frame-breaking' elements to large-scale digital projection. The effect was enhanced and dramatised using animation, sound and an enveloping scale. In the glary light of

Figure3. 45 Jakuchu Ito (伊藤若冲), *Grapevines and Birds* (《葡萄小禽图》), Rokuonji Temple (鹿苑寺), Kyoto, Japan, 1795

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[50] Sanraku/Sansetsu Kano (狩野山楽/狩野山雪), *Tigers in Bamboo Grove* (《竹虎图》), Tenkyu-in Temple (天球院), Kyoto, Japan, the 17th century. http://global.canon/en/tsuzuri/works/25.html, accessed on 28,03,2018.

[51] Jakuchu Ito (伊藤若冲), *Grapevine and Birds* (《葡萄小禽图》), Rokuonji Temple (鹿苑寺), Kyoto, Japan, 1795. http://inoues.net/club3/jyakuchu034.html, accessed on 28,03,2018.

the projection, the audience encounter the 'trees' and ambiguous shapes flowing beyond the frame into the semi-darkness. As the first video installation made to solve my key question of how to spatialise my small-scale narrative drawings/illustrations, it succeeded in being an immersive environmental work, although with some limitations. Below, I analyse the advantages and limits of this work.

3.5 The advantages of a single-screen video installation space

Transforming a pictorial space into a single-screen video installation space has two obvious advantages: keeping the maximum drawing/painting quality of the original picture and generating a strong immersive environment.

From the position of an artist using small drawing/illustrations, its strongest point is to maintain the maximum quality and integrity of the original illustration when it is transformed into environmental work. In other words, when transformed into an installation space, its original pictorial space, its indeterminate space or its perspectival space, is not deconstructed or cancelled. On the contrary, it is enriched and empowered to the utmost when magnified by the projection.

In the video installation *By No Definition,* 2015 the transformation was mainly down to the adjustment in scale - making the pictorial space of the illustration the correct dimension for the physical space of the installation and in relation to the viewer. This single-screen video installation guaranteed the integrity of the original illustration when projected onto a surface using a precise alignment (despite small gaps). The characters and objects remained in their original positions without having to be separated and re-configured. When paused, each still of the animation appears as a complete and coherent 'drawing'/illustration'. And the tension and spatial relation of the composition is preserved fully.

However, normally a large-scale, single-screen video installation has a stronger immersive effect. Enveloped by the digital environment of large-scale projections, the audience would be cut off from reality and dropped into the alien world of light, sound and the space around them. This bodily, walk-in experience also contributes to the audience's psychological involvement, the engagement of their

senses, imagination, and curiosity. As German art historian and theorist Oliver Grau points out, this bodily immersion 'dislocates' the audience mentally from reality.[52] They are encouraged to think and feel through the fictional, search for alternative explanations and renew their experience of life. This overwhelming effect was not generated by this single-screen approach.

3.6 Limits

3.6.1 The passive adaption to physical Space and facilities

One main limitation of the single-screen video installation is that the work relies heavily on the architectural space and the facilities (high-quality projectors which can project clear large-scale pictures, accessibility to power, etc.). As I analysed and discussed above, the transformations rely on several significant factors such as the fully covered surfaces, large-scale projection, and correct position. However, satisfying all these needs simultaneously is by no means easy.

Space and facilities can be demanding. Many immersive single-screen installations are set within an ideal, specially constructed, large space, for example, Shahzia's video installation *Parallax* was 5760 x 1080 pixels (45-foot in width) using three high-capacity HD projectors.[53] It is in a large cinema-style room that allows the panorama screen to expand freely and realise its maximum effect. Similarly, the ambitious work *Renaissance: The Age of Genius* made by Front Pictures was arranged in a space big enough to accommodate its 200 × 3.4m projections.[54] This work relied on a collaboration between a computer engineer and a visual artist to map the image, using 64 projectors and 24 controllers.[55] The project required the collaborative work of a team with technical, financial and management support to integrate the facilities, technology, staff, and the public.

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[52] Oliver Grau, trans. Custance Gloria, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, (The MIT Press: London, Massachusetts, Cambridge, England, 2003), pg. 13.
[53] 'Shahzia Sikander', http://www.pilarcorrias.com/artists/shahzia-sikander/, accessed on 08.03.2018.
[54] Ibid.
[55] 'Multimedia Renaissance by Front Pictures', https://blog.frontpictures.com/multimedia-renaissance-by-front-pictures/, accessed on 08.03.2018.

In *By No Definition*, the single screen (made of three projections) was 2.4 × 16 m, which was smaller than planned. Even though the ceiling was quite high, (approximately five metres) strip lights hung down from the ceiling preventing any building of screens higher than 2.8 metres. Also, the strip lights got in the way of any full wall projections, creating shadows. Because of the size of the room, and without access to short throw projectors, it was hard to find a good position to locate the projectors. It was clear that I did not have a space big enough to hold my initial plan.

Shrinking the scale of the projection was the compromising option, although it meant sacrificing some of the immersive effects. Even when the U-shape wall was installed, I found it incredibly hard to map my videos fully onto the two sidewalls, which regrettably left some corners uncovered. It took six weeks of careful experimentation and adjustment in the space to decide the distance between the projectors and the walls.

The experience of setting up this work taught me the importance of considering the physical space before assuming what would the work look like; this was totally distinct and contrary with my experience of being an illustrator who worked at a table using pens. It also taught me to understand the practical limitations and to use the properties of the exhibition space and make full use of any potential.

The exact positioning or 'mapping' of the projection in the space, can be hard to find; sometimes, the location of the pictorial space (projection) is quite a 'passive' choice dictated by the limitations of the physical space or structure. This is particularly obvious for mono-scenic narrative pictures that used linear perspective. The optical illusion only works when the picture fits perfectly into the frame of the wall or screen. Whilst, an image with a depth-less background is relatively flexible, if it covers up the whole surface in large-scale, at least larger than an average person.

This was a great learning curve for me in terms of installation techniques. As an illustrator, all these construction and technical skills were all new to me (choosing and installing projector shelves, installing projectors and screens/walls, connecting and fixing cables properly to the walls, painting the walls and floor, etc). The final installation was completed on time but there were some

compromises I had to accept; the projections onto the sidewalls remained slightly distorted due to the angle of the projectors, leaving an imperfection that weakened the immersive illusion.

3.6.2 The limit of the content

Another limit of single-screen installation space is its inefficiency, or inappropriateness, in terms of the transformation of complex poly-scenic narrative pictorial spaces. The single-screen method works best with simple clear illustrations that have a unified illusional pictorial space using linear perspective, or with depth-less, ones where the content can 'expand beyond the frame'.

Unlike the pictorial space of an illustration, the sensation of a physical space is obvious, direct and immediate. Interpreting some illustrations needs prior knowledge of the narrative being depicted, as they often included a symbolic system that needs to be decoded by an educated eye. Physical spaces, however, are more direct and literal; sensations of depth and distance, for example, are felt rather than cognitively understood.[56] The audience do not need to imagine they enter an illusional depth, rather, they sense the physical depth with their body.

In an ideal composition of an image for a single-screen video installation, there should be no obstacles standing' between the audience and the pictorial space of the projection, reducing any risk of confusion or distraction. A simple blank background of animation makes it easier to directly affect the audience's senses.

For example, in Barrow's *The Thief of Mirrors* (figure 3.8), the illustration has a tiled floor in front of the scene. Even though there is a nude lying on it, the artist leaves space around it, connecting the space of the illustration with space where the audience stands. Likewise, the pictorial space of *By No Definition* was based on simple ink paintings without complex details (figure 3.42, 44). This simple setting makes it easy to understand the pictorial space and the spatial relationship between each element, increasing the connection between the real and pictorial spaces.

Single-screen projections also have limitations when coping with simple pictures. This limit was most noticeable in my third installation *The Reversible Future,*

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[56] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, (Routledge, 2005), pg. 8.

2016. In this multi-medium installation, I attempted to transfer the complex poly-scenic pictorial space of *Navigation* (fine lines on paper, figure 2.100-2)*, 2016* into a single-screen spatial work (figure 3.46). However, this method failed and highlighted certain problems.

I transformed it from its original size of 18×55cm to 50×350 cm by outputting it as a digital print on fabric. I then hung it on the wall of the gallery. Upon it, I projected a video showing flowers shaking in the wind and a mirrored view of the passing landscape seen in a moving train. However, although the effect of the projection and the print were in some ways interesting, it did not become in any way spatially active.

This problematic project gave me a vital critical insight into understanding the relationship between drawing (illustration) and space - real, imagined and projected. I found such a complex poly-scenic pictorial space is not suitable for creating a spatialised single-screen installation - even when it was enlarged greatly compared to its original size. As outlined in the introduction, a poly-scenic narrative image represents multiple stories simultaneously and may mingle several spaces together. This pictorial space is normally busy with plenty of figures and details. It is not cohesive, but fragmented and separable. Its complexity conflicts with real physical space, cancelling each other out. The overloaded visual and conceptual information confuses the audience; they cannot understand one clear space and find it hard to know what pictorial space they are being invited into. The boundary between the 'front' and 'back' part of the picture is ambiguous. Also, the details (many figures) standing in the 'foreground' of the illustration seem to block the 'entrance' into the pictorial space.

Simply by magnifying the complex poly-scenic drawings does not make them spatial. To solve this problem, I developed an alternative approach by deconstructing the complex poly-scenic drawings and turning their fragments into multi-screen video installations. In Chapter 4, I analyse this approach in depth.

3.6.3 The limited immersion – the cinema-like experience

Figure 3. 52 *Navigation* printed on a fabric with a projection of flowers and a horizon, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

Another deficiency of single-screen installation space is its limited viewing position, due to the presence of the frame. The expectation is that the audience will view it from one single direction by standing in front of it. Its screen indicates its totality and completeness, implying that there is no need to look elsewhere.

Viewing a framed picture could be an experience that has a built-in exclusion. To appreciate it, the audience need not be aware of any other parts of the room, as the frame claims there is nothing else to see beyond it.

Therefore, the pictorial world is disconnected from the real space. This completeness, according to art historian Louis Martin is the basis of the autonomy of this type of work of art, as it helps to exclude outside stimulations.[57] Likewise, a framed moving image claims it is finished and needs no more work done by either the artist or the viewer. As a result, it can weaken the connection between the work, the physical space, and the viewer.[58]

This 'separating off', in Martin's opinion is the exclusion, definition, and clarification of pictorial space established by the frame and is a deficiency in installation art.[59] *By No Definition* required a frontal view facing the U-shape wall, which implied there was no need to look around and beyond the image. The projection entranced the audience; the glary projection held them still and the darkness behind the wall helped lock them in position.

This kind of viewing relationship is like that of the cinema. Philosopher and critic Roland Barthes uses 'cinema-situation' to describe this kind of experience; the audience watch a shining screen while locked in their seats.[60] Artist Robert Smithson also points out that even if the viewing experience in a cinema is immersive, it is also a kind of 'immobile' engulfment. The audience are required to stay in their seats focusing on the glaring screen in front of them.[61] When the pictorial space of the moving image is spatialised in a cinema, it stops the audience exploring the physical space of the auditorium. The walls disappear into the darkness and the audience's awareness of the real space they inhabit is suspended in favour of the illusionary one on the cinema screen.

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[57] Louis Martin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures', ed. Paul Duro, *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pg. 4.

[58] Georg Simmel, 'The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study', *Theory, Culture and Society* 11, 1994, pg.11-17.

[59] Louis Martin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures', ed. Paul Duro, *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pg. 58.

[60] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (Vintage Books, 1980/2000).

[61] Robert Smithson, 'A Cinematic Atopia', ed. Jack Flam, *The Collected Writing of Robert Smithson*, (Berkeley, 1996), pg. 138-42.

Most large-scale, single-screen installations that I have studied have a similar effect. They expect their audience to stay in a certain zone in front of the screen. For example, in Shahzia Sikander's *Parallax*, the fantastic content of the projection becomes the viewing focus. The audience's motion is limited in front of the screen, while; other parts of the space dissolve into the darkness, the ceiling, sidewalls, and the floor becoming 'invisible'.

My installation *By No Definition* worked in a similar way. My audience largely stood still against the opposite wall. As there was no attraction in any other part of the space, they had no reason to walk around or explore. They were not greatly encouraged to enter the U-shaped space to attain an enhanced sense of immersion as they placed themselves between the projector and the wall and cast shadows (except for rare cases). Also, if the viewer got too close to the projection the work appeared pixelated or blurred. There was an optimum distance for clarity.

This experience was a bit disappointing and frustrating, but it stimulated me to try out alternative methods to make full use of the space and encourage the audience to become more active. In the next chapter, I analyse how I used multi-screen installation to solve the problems caused by the limits of single-screen approach.

3.7 Conclusion

By enlarging my video animations and mapping them onto a surface, I spatialised my drawing/illustrations as a single-screen video installation. Using this method, my first video projection *By No Definition*, provided a pictorial environment where the audience could walk in. The large-scale and good visual quality of the digital projection preserved the maximum quality of the original artwork from my sketchbook. However, the single visual centre limited audience engagement in a similar way to mono-scenic pictures using linear perspective.

This approach, however, worked well with drawings/illustrations with a simple background/pictorial space. More complex poly-scenic drawing/illustration such as *Navigation* could not be spatialised effectively in this fashion. To solve this

problem, I developed an alternative approach by separating the characters and the backgrounds and projecting them individually as a multi-screen video installation, as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Transforming poly-scenic illustrations into a multi-screen video installation

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the method using large-scale single-screen video projection works well for simple mono-scenic narrative pictures using simple composition and a single visual centre. Although the projection crossed three walls, using three synced projectors, it was a 'single-screen' installation as the image used was of a mono-scenic, single frame animation. The single-screen work used only one screen/screen-like surface to show the image/animation. There were no other elements such as sculpture, painting or other videos playing in the space. I consider single-screen video installation as the equivalent of a 'mono-scenic' illustration that presents one 'event', requiring the viewer to focus fully on the screen, as there is nothing else to distract their attention.

This approach has a limitation. It makes high demands on space and facilities, requires the animation (drawings/illustrations) be shown within a complete frame carefully mapped onto the surface(s) of the 'screen'. It limits the engagement of the audience and does not work well with complex poly-scenic works. Only magnifying the image gives the work the environmental and immersive quality required.

This chapter analyses how I developed and applied an alternative approach to solving my key question using a multi-screen, poly-scenic approach to video installation (fragmentation). Using this method, rather than putting all characters in one scene/projection, I projected animated characters separately on multiple screens throughout the installation space, each screen presenting only part of the narrative. The result was that the single visual centre of the video installation was divided, fragmented and spread to each part of the space. The audience would only visualise the whole narrative by walking around in the work, collect

information and mentally configuring the apparently separate segments into a story.[1]

I consider this parallel to poly-scenic illustrations that similarly represent multiple visual centres in one space. Each screen/projection is a fragment of the whole work that needs to be 'configured' or brought together by the audience in their imagination.

This multi-screen approach is inspired by both my observation of poly-scenic illustrations, church frescos, contemporary video installations and my own experiments. This process is presented in four main parts: Firstly, the analysis of this procedure by comparing the relationship between characters and the pictorial space in mono-scenic and poly-scenic narrative pictures. Secondly, testing the idea to separate the characters and to re-arrange them in the physical space, which is contextualised with associated historical and contemporary works. Thirdly, I analyse the case studies of multi-screen video installations *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016 and *The Outsiders*, 2017, proving the efficiency and advantages of this approach in relation to solving the key question

Figure 4.1 Gustave Doré, *The Angel Michael Falls in the Cloister*, etching,
in Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, 1615

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[1] Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age*. (Routledge, 2004), pg. 145.

of the research. Finally, I reflect on the limits and advantages.

4.2 Inspiration: comparing mono-scenic and poly-scenic pictures

Poly-scenic images often include a variety of events happening in distinct spaces and at different times in one pictorial frame. Unlike a mono-scenic image that uses linear perspective, the position and size of each character in a poly-scenic picture are often flexible. Not 'locked' in one consistent linear perspective framework, the characters in a poly-scenic work are relatively 'independent' from the general pictorial space (background). This format inspired me to 'cut' the characters out of my poly-scenic drawing/illustration, give them independent physical forms (screens) and re-arrange them in a new 'spatial composition' of a multi-screen installation.

To begin, I will clarify and define the specific nature and quality of poly-scenic space. I use the word 'neutral' to describe the loose connections between the visual elements.[2]

As previously explained, usually a mono-scenic illustration using linear perspective uses the size of the visual elements to imply distance, (the 'closer' to the audience, the bigger the figure, the further away, the smaller) illusionary

Figure 4.2 Hans Memling, *Scenes from the passion of Christ*, oil, 1470

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[2] Definition of 'neutral' in *Oxford Online Dictionary*. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/neutral, accessed on 06.06.2018. 'not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc. or impartial.'

depth and spatial relationships.

For example, in *The Angel Michael Falls in the Cloister* (figure 4.1), Gustave Doré uses single-point perspective, together with the gaze of the other figures in the picture, to help direct the viewer's attention to where the angel is falling, which then creates dramatic tension in the pictorial narrative. The lines of sight and the architectural space, combined with dramatic foreshortening, firmly make the scene and the figures within it reliant on each other.

In this picture, the pictorial space is not 'neutral' like it and the visual elements are mutually supportive of each other. Extracting any element would impair the completeness of the narrative. The pictorial space benefits from the arrangements, sizes and positions of the visual elements. In turn, it tricks our eyes into believing what we see is 'real'. It is usual to feel the event happening in this space. Time and space are united.

The pictorial space of a poly-scenic picture is comparatively 'neutral' and is not decided by the composition and the characters. Without trying to create a coherent optical illusion or the 'correct' unified perspectival appearance, various time and space frames are assembled together. Works such as Hans Memling's *Scenes from the passion of Christ,* 1470 (figure 4.2), and Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of the Earthly Delights*, 1510 (figure 4.3), even though they use one unified, shared background create an imagined surreal space.

Figure 4.3 Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of the Earthly Delights*, oil, 1510

Figure 4.4 Characters riding animals (middle)

Figure 4.5 A man in ice hole with a slide with a slide coming from the back (left)

Figure 4.6 The figure in white cloak (left)

In *Scenes from the passion of Christ,* the artist paints 23 separate events of Jesus' life in one unified landscape, a city on a hill under a narrow strip of sky. Each event in time is depicted and embedded into a crowded space framed by the buildings within the city.

In *The Garden of The Earthly Delights* (figure 4.3), we see countless small groups of characters busily interacting. Because these scenes do not use conventional linear perspective to focus attention to a single viewpoint, each element is presented as almost equally important. The illusory depth within the pictorial space is limited and the illogical spatial relationships between each tableau are such that it seems to flatten them as though they are a series of vertical planes.[3]

Figure 4.7 Papercuts of *Giving Feeding Tigers*, 2016

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[3] Also See contemporary works such as Henry Darger's *At Jennie Richee* in *The Story of the Vivian Girls* (late 20th century) and Grayson Perry's *The Adoration of the Cage Fighter*, 2012 and *The Vanity of Small Differences* and *The Adoration of the Cage Fighters*, 2012.

Figure 4.8-10 Paper-cuts of *Giving Feeding Tigers*, 2016

In this poly-scenic narrative picture, its pictorial space is undermined, ununified, flattened, and consequently rendered ambiguous. Containing numerous events, each is squeezed into the composition, often with irregular gaps between figures. The pictorial space is usually not a realistic representation of where the event happened; it is more a general setting or a 'neutral' space that allows various heterogeneous elements to exist simultaneously. It acts as a universal device to accommodate each element; however, it does not support them to any great degree. In turn, the characters live independently. Their flexible size, position and arrangement have very little impact on the background. They are mutually independent.

Figure 4.11-2 Paper-cuts of *Navigation*, 2016

Not only the characters and the pictorial spaces are relevantly independent so are each group of figures or events. In the middle panel of Bosch's, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (figure 4.3), nude humans are separated into groups either riding animals or hiding in giant fantasy plants (figure 4.4). The characters all focus on their own business as if unaware of what is happening nearby. In the right-hand panel where hell is depicted, a man concentrates on sliding

unconcerned by the man in the ice hole in front of him (figure 4.5). A person wearing white cloak is sitting on a panel keeping themselves separate from the games going on behind them (figure 4.6). Space unites all the individual scenarios without concern for the laws of linear perspective. Their positions are largely decided by their sizes or shapes or the effect required to trigger interest in the viewer. As the characters all dwell in an imagined neutral space, the connection between the characters and the space is not strong or fixed; the individual elements and space seem independent, they can associate freely and subjectively. Changing the position of objects, adding or deleting any of them, may have little apparent influence on the overall narrative within the picture.

Each character or object has its own space and independence, allowing the viewer's eye and brain to focus on it and therefore give each element an in-depth consideration.

I found this pictorial space has an advantage over mono-scenic ones: it allows each character to be 'independent' and flexible in relation to their positioning. The pictorial space is not fully realistic, but fictional and imaginary, allowing the artist more freedom to play with characters' positions based on their shapes, or other characteristics, rather than worrying about their realistic spatial relationships. Whereas an element in an illusionary mono-scenic image, references and relies upon being within and part of, a unified picture and spatial system. It inspired me to consider that maybe there was no need to keep the whole pictorial space with a frame at all for complex poly-scenic images. Perhaps placing individual characters or events within a space is enough to give them a narrative quality.

This was a significant discovery for me, a positive quality that would enable me to separate the drawn characters and re-configure them in the space of an installation.

In my poly-scenic illustrations, characters and events are 'tangled' together, their pictorial spaces are made intentionally ambiguous, for example, *The Handscroll of Maha SaQing---Giving Feeding Tigers* (figure 4.8-10) and *Navigation* (figure 4.11-2).

I experimented by cutting out figures and reassembling them on a white background. For example, using the drawing/illustration *Giving Feeding Tiger* I cut out the sitting figure, the singing girls, some bricks etc. and resembled them in a different order. From *Navigation*, I took out several walking figures, a plant, several pillars, etc. I made the paper cut-outs stand up on my table, manipulating their spatial relationships and created new 'narratives'.

By letting the cut-out figures stand by themselves, I made 'spatial' compositions, instead of 'pictorial' compositions. The examples are shown in the 'figures', however, are just one among numerous solutions. By moving them around, adjusting the distance between, changing the back to the front, etc, I could emphasise or weaken the role of a figure, which may subsequently change the narrative.

Also, these separated cut-out paper characters that were freely manipulated provided multiple visual centres without being dominated by a single-visual centre. There was no 'best frontal view', my eyes moved around searching for hidden parts and details or shapes hidden behind.

What was more crucial was the physical distance between each 'fragment'. This inspired me to carry on imagining what would happen if the separated characters were enlarged to life-scale or bigger using video projectors and arranged in larger physical space within a room. The audience would have more chance to walk 'between' the characters and sense more of the physical space. This presumption developed with the help of multiple of experiments with projectors, as well as the investigation into relevant works made by other artists varying from church murals to 20th - 21st-century installation works, which are analysed in depth in the contextual review below.

4.3 Contextual review - transforming poly-scenic pictorial space into a multi-screen installation

Separating the characters from a poly-scenic illustration and dispersing them around a physical space can be fundamental to both deconstructing and developing a single-screen approach to narrative video installation. This section

explores how other artists have used a similar approach in order to transform their drawings or paintings into multi-screen narrative installations or works with the quality of installation art. Utilising different purposes, intentions and techniques, these works will contextualise my own work and research and help explain my practice and research.

This section is in three parts that analyse key examples of deconstructing the single viewing centre of a linear perspective using the approach of fragmentation. The first part analyses historical examples of architectural works including church frescos and temple wall paintings that use individual characters/events to create multiple views. The second part presents a brief history of installation art in the 20th century and traces the development of the concept of deconstructing, events single viewing centre. The third part focuses on my experiments with using separate characters/ events in space using projections, stimulating the production of my multi-screen video installations.

4.3.1 The 'separated' characters and multiple viewing centres in historical works

Spreading visual elements (characters, events or objects) around to create multiple centres of attention has been widely used unconsciously and consciously in historical architectural settings, as well as in installation art in the 20th and 21st centuries. The examples I have investigated range from prehistoric cave

Figure 4.13 Cave painting, Cave of Altamira, North Spain, the Upper Paleolithic

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paintings to the ceiling frescos of churches, to 19th-century theatre and 21st-century video installations.

The technique involves separating and dismantling (or avoiding) a single centre of focus by separating the image into several parts (decentralisation) in order to present several views from various angles within a space. For example, without the unifying control of linear perspective, early humans portrayed their prey on cave walls without locking them inside one unified frame (figure 4.11). They delineated the shapes across the uneven surfaces and created an expansive and far-ranging field of vision. The images grew from bulges, hollows and gaps in the rock and flowed with the structure of the cave walls. Each animal painted in similar size was arranged evenly across the cave wall and given equal attention. These 'frameless' paintings became an 'environment' allowing unlimited angles of view requiring the audience to look around to search and discover. This is the 'infinite view'.[4]

Another particularly well-known example would be the House of Livia (figure 3.3), Rome, Italy, early 1st century B.C. where there is a very naturalistic depiction of

Figure 4. 14 Giulio Romano, *View of the Sala dei* Giganti (south and west walls), Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo del Tè, Mantua, 1532-34

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[4] Gottfried Wihelm Leibniz, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God. The Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil,* (Open Count, 1988), pg. 147.

gardens and a landscape 'beyond' the physical surface of the walls of the room. By separating the elements of a scene onto various surfaces, walls, ceilings and doors, the artist immerses the viewer in the painting. A few painted trees and rocks indicate the boundary of the landscape, holding the viewer in the middle of the space and encouraging them to look around. The soft blank backgrounds 'separated' by trees, free each character allowing them to be dispersed evenly around the entire space.

Artists in the 15th century used a similar approach to consciously dismantle (or avoid) a single visual centre. For example, Gaudenzio Ferrari's fresco *Stories of the Life and Passion of Christ,* 1513 (figure 4.15), Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Varallo Sesia, Italy, forces the audience to see various biblical stories displayed simultaneously. The characters and space in each frame compete for attention with one another, creating a decentralised viewing experience. It is hard to find a place to begin viewing or a definite route to follow. It seems to generate infinite and inexhaustible perspectives, which engage the audience and encourage exploration.

Figure 4. 15 Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Stories of life and passion of Christ*, Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, 1513

Figure 4. 16 Andrea Mantegna, *Camera Degli Sposi* (*Bridal Chamber*), Ducal Palace, Italy, 1465-74

Figure 4. 17 Fra Andrea Pozzo, *Glorification of Saint Ignatius*, Church of St. Ignazio, 1691-1694

A bolder example is Giulio Romano's fresco *View of the Sala dei Giganti*, 1532-4 (figure 4.14) on the southwest wall of the Palazzo del Te, Mantua, Italy. This work has abandoned the use of frames and melded all its content into one. The artist understands the limitations of strict adherence to linear perspective and a single point of view and avoids the use of a singular vanishing perspective and one viewing point, using clouds and rocks to obfuscate the boundaries between each group of characters and spatial settings. Also, when released from a unified order of directional light, the characters gain equal power to attract the viewer. The effect is to immerse the audience in a labyrinthine illusion that triggers, and forces, a journey of exploration. Embodied in the painted narrative, the audience are expected to be confused by the boundary between reality, architecture and image.

Art historian and theorist Ernst Gombrich explains the relationship between the fragmentation and the immersive illusion: 'in letting the pictures thus break the frame the artist wants to confuse and overwhelm us so that we no longer know what is real and what is illusion'.[5]

The optical illusion of a logical and coherent space relies heavily on a completely closed frame; when this frame is withdrawn, the illusion is impaired and therefore breaks. On a different scale, in frescos that have no frame, the pictorial space can expand to every corner of the surface, which magnifies its contents. To fill the space the artist can spread the elements evenly and their scale need not be determined by their position within the hierarchy of a coherent perspectival space. Equal visual importance can thus be given to each element.

In the case of Giulio Romano, the artist successfully frees the characters from the limitation of the frame and the confines of linear perspective, consequently achieving an immersive environmental narrative. Even though the characters are placed in a recognisable space of some kind, the relationship between the background space and the characters becomes flexible and unstable. Space becomes 'neutral'.

For example, in the mural of *Camera Degli Sposi* (*Bridal Chamber*), 1465-74 (figure 4.16) in the Ducal Palace, Mantua, Italy, Andrea Mantegna introduces into his picture several visual foci spread over every part of the wall. The fact that the characters are all painted at a similar scale weakens the hierarchical order of a linear perspective. Although the artist keeps the pictorial space, the connection between the background and the figures are not tight. For example, if one exchanges the position of the man next to the horse with that of the man in the right corner, there is little effect on the space in the background.

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[5] E. H. Gombrich. *The Story of Art*, (Phaidon Press, 1994), pg. 332.

Also, in the church of Sant'Ignazio, Rome, Andrea Pozzo's ceiling fresco *Glorification of Saint Ignatius,* 1691-1694 (figure 4.17), also abandons the use of frames. He frees the characters by adopting the use of multiple vanishing points to decentralise the single viewing centre. The clouds and mists soften the boundaries between each figure and by 'floating in the air', the characters seem free to shift their positions. Even though they still share the same background, they are not locked into position and are placed for compositional balance rather than any other reason. The overall architectural setting does conform to a single vanishing point, and a very-defined viewing position – identified via a bronze plaque on the floor, but the floating figures are set free from that implied earthly reality.

In some more extreme examples in Far Eastern art, the painted/depicted objects

Figure 4. 18 Okyo Maruyama, *The Playing Tigers,* Katohira-gu, the 18th century

Figure 4. 19 Okyo Maruyama, *The Painting of Seven Sages*, Katohira-gu, the 18th century

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Figure 4. 20 Tanlyu Mulata, *The second room of Mount Fuji*, Katohira-Gu, about 1902

are often arranged against a blank background. An excellent example of this is Japanese *fusuma-e* (screen or panel painting). The painted animals, plants and figures are located on each panel in the room creating a panoramic scene. For example, Okyo Maruyama (圓山応挙) painted groups of panels in Katohira-Gu Temple (金刀比罗宫), Japan. In *The Painting of Playing Tigers* (《游虎图》, figure 4.18)*,* 1787, the animals are painted against a flat golden background. Each animal is given an independent space and is placed close to the boundary between the panels and the tatami floors. In the adjacent room, Maruyama painted *The Painting of Seven Sages* (《竹林七贤图》, figure 4.19) using a similar technique to spread the characters around the room. The Sages are placed along the bottom of the panels creating the illusion of them 'walking' on the floor.

In the same temple, Tanlyu Mulata (邨田丹陵) painted *The Hunting in Fuji Mountain*, (figure 4.20) about 1902 in the second room of Mount Fuji (《富士二之間》).[6] Unlike Maruyama who keeps a minimum amount of implied depth in the background of his paintings, Mulata completely separates his characters from any realistic setting. His figures are 'floating' on a void, implying the possibility of free motion and ambiguous relationships between them. These works show how the artist deconstructs a single pictorial space by separating the characters. The flat minimal background information pushes the characters forward into the physical space as if they are paper 'cut-outs'. Surrounded by these characters,

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[6] To see more: http://www.konpira.or.jp/museum/shoin/drawing-room_2015.html, accessed on 04,04, 2018.

the audience cannot see everything in one position and are encouraged to move around the work.

These 'multi-visual centre' historic works showed an awareness of the power of deconstructing the single visual centre in order to activate the audience's engagement. Looking and moving around, searching for clues and configuring the fragments together, the audience are not limited to only one way of observing or interpreting the work. Their reading of the pictorial narrative is enriched by their bodily engagement.

4.3.2 Multi-screen installation in the 20th century – a brief history
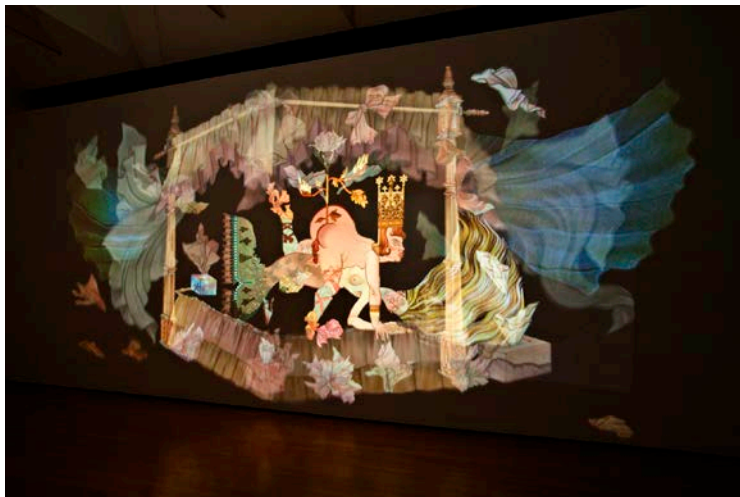
Figure 4.21 Daniel Barrow, *Learning to Breathe Underwater*, the Musée d'Art Contemporain's Sobey 2010 exhibition,

Figure 4.22 Daniel Barrow, *Learning to Breathe Underwater*, the Musée d'Art Contemporain's Sobey 2010 exhibition,

I find echoes of these historical works in contemporary installations made by artists including Daniel Barrow, Jim Shaw and Lubaina Himid. In *Learning to Breathe Underwater,* 2010 (figure 4.21-2), the Musée d'Art Contemporain's Sobey, Daniel Barrow divides his stories of a princess and a mermaid into two separated screens/walls. The artist encourages the audience to 'animate' the images by moving the acetate 'slides' on the overhead projectors. One shows a bed with two characters making love. Another is a 'house on fire' filled with the numerous faces of babies looking out. Barrow did not make a pictorial background for each projection. The figures are set against blank backgrounds making them appear 'real' in the physical space.

However, before we look at the method of 'deconstruction' or 'fragmentation' in my multi-screen video installations, I want to examine some relevant artists and various art movements of the late 19th century and early 20th century including Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism, examining aspects of the art-work, as well as the activities of the artists involved in deconstructing the single viewing centre.[7]

Their aim was to question and undermine habitual thinking dominated by linear perspective (a single-visual centre) and what was seen and believed to be the conventions of representation, as well as the conventions of the exhibition. The question had arisen of how much of our understanding of the world was determined by the way in which it was habitually depicted.

Many pioneering experiments aiming at deconstructing conventional pictorial space took place in the late 19th century and early 20th century. For example, Paul Cezanne's approach to space and representation led to Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque's experiments with Cubism.[8] These artists experimented with 'assemblage installations' using three-dimensional objects to replace the more conventional painted visual elements.

[7] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, (Tate Publish, 2012), pg. 6-13.
[8] Ibid.

Others not only abandoned and reacted against linear perspective but also the current conventional forms of painting and drawing. For example, when Marcel Duchamp made his *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors/The Large Glass* (figure 4.23), 1915-1923 he arranged his collected materials (dust, wire, foil, etc.) on two sheets of glass. This glass surface refers to the transparent picture plane of linear perspective, as identified by artist and philosopher Leon Battista Alberti in *Della Pitture* (*On Painting*), 1435 and on which the world is depicted when seen from a fixed point of view. [9]

Figure 4. 23 Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* (*The Large Glass*), 1915-26.

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[9] Ibid, pg. 12-13

Figure 4. 24 *International Surrealist Exhibition*, Paris, 1938

Figure 4. 25 Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, Hannover,1933

There are several distinct elements in this work such as a chocolate grinder, nine 'malic moulds' and many geometric shapes whose edges/boundaries are clearly dislocated from their background, the glass. The elements are divided into several groups that take up the whole space without a clear sense of the central focus. They float in a transparent space. Each group of objects share the equal visual significance and refuse to serve a single coherent identifiable space. There

are thus multiple viewing centres competing for attention.[10] *The Large Glass* thus comments quite succinctly and subtly on the nature of, and conventions of linear perspective.

Another pioneering example is the International Surrealist Exhibition (figure 4.24), Paris, 1938, where the exhibition and space moved beyond the conventions of framed paintings on walls and sculptures on plinths and pedestals. It invited the audience to walk into an immersive space occupied by found objects, sculptures and drawings. Artists made full use of the space including the floor and the ceiling, areas that were, up to this point usually ignored. The audience were encouraged to explore every corner of the space. The sense of an ideal viewing point was thus rendered redundant and replaced by the 'infinite views' of the scattered elements all competing for attention.

German artist Kurt Schwitters, in his installation *Merzbau*,1937 (figure 4.25) went even further, abandoning the frame and turning domestic rooms into immersive installation work. He covered the walls and ceilings with abstract structures. The complex division of space and the inter-connected structure expand freely while

Figure 4. 26 El Lissitzky, *Proun 19D*, 1920/1921

[10] Herbert Molderings, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance*, (Columbia UP, 2010), pg. 8.

no single viewing centre dominates.[11]

Many artists between 1910 and the 1930s explored the deconstruction of the pictorial space directly through the medium of painting. Suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich's research in 1919 and EL Lissitzky's series of experiments in the same period explored the relationship between painting and physical space.

Lissitzky work has a direct impact on my research. He was influenced by Malevich who in 1919 promoted the idea of turning a painting into physical space: '…painting the whole surface of a wall, a plane, or a whole room in the Suprematist system.'[12] Malevich wanted to turn a whole room into a 'Suprematism painting' by assigning different colours to various architectural structures; window frames, doors, floors, ceiling, etc. Each colour would reveal a centre of focus and together they construct a decentralised space.

Figure 4.27 El Lissitzky, *Prounenraum*, re-construction of the original, 1971

Rooted in Malevich's idea, Lissitzky took a further step in order to divide the pictorial space.[13] He began with a series of abstract geometric paintings and drawings called *Proun* (figure 4.26), 1919 - 1927 described by Lissitzky as a

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[11]Elizabeth Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery,* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), pg. 25-7.

[12] El Lissitzky, ed. Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed. *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow,* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2003), pg. 50.
[13] El Lissitzky, ed. Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed. *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow,* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2003), pg. 50.

'project for the affirmation of the new'.[14] In *Proun,* Lissitzky explores the predominantly two-dimensional visual language that includes unusual spatial elements and utilising a shifting axis and multiple perspectives. He goes on to fully spatialise his *Proun* paintings, as he felt limited by the size and the surface of conventional painting/drawing mediums stating that: 'The painter's canvas was too limited for me'.[15]

At the Great Berlin Art Exhibition in 1923, Lissitzky was given a small square exhibiting space. Instead of hanging paintings he turned it into the *Proun Room* (*Prounenraum,* figure 4.27) by attaching painted structures to the wall. He made a physical arrangement of several flat painted colour plates and rods attached to the wall. Two long wooden rods cross the corners of the walls and link the three surfaces as an entirety. He claimed that the audience could walk into his '*Proun* painting' saying that 'The image is not a painting, but a structure around which we must circle, looking at it from all sides, peering down from above, investigating from below.'[16]

Lissitzky's *Proun Room* successfully transforms his two-dimensional works into three-dimensional space by cancelling and undermining the singular viewing point. As he says: 'We begin our work on the two-dimensional surface, we then pass on to the three-dimensional model constructions and to the needs of life.'[17]

He also transformed his two-dimensional painting into a physical space by separating and relocating the elements. The series of reliefs placed on the walls forced the audience to move their body around the space in order to view the work. This creates a dynamic interface between the body, image and space.

Lissitzky's experiments with separating pictorial elements physically encouraged and led me to make a series of my own experiments. However, unlike Lissitzky's investigations, which deconstructed his abstract paintings, my experiments

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[14] Christiane Berndes, 'Replicas and Reconstructions in Twentieth-Century Art', *Tate Papers*, no.8, Autumn, 2007. http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/08/replicas-and-reconstructions-in-twentieth-century-art, accessed 10.03.2018.

[15] Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (London, 1968), pg. 329.

[16] EL Lissitzky, 'Proun Space', the Great Berlin Art Exhibition of 1923, in *EL Lissitzky in 1890-1941: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer,* (Thames & Hudson, 1991), pg. 35.

[17] El Lissitzky, *Proun*, in (ed.) Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, Elena Semyenova, Donald Karshan, Jean Leering, and John E. Bowlt. *El Lissitzky* (Galerie Gmurzynska, 1976), pg.33.

needed to cope with the relatively naturalistic/realistic figures of my hand-drawn drawings/illustrations. The experiments below demonstrated how I tested my idea using video projectors, from which I gained more skills and experience to apply to make my installations.

4.4 Experiments with projectors: separating characters from original background setting

In Chapter 2, I considered how to create animations for the video installations *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016 and *The Outsiders*, 2017. Drawn and animated separately, individual characters were created independently avoiding the difficulty of separating figures from original poly-scenic work. In my original
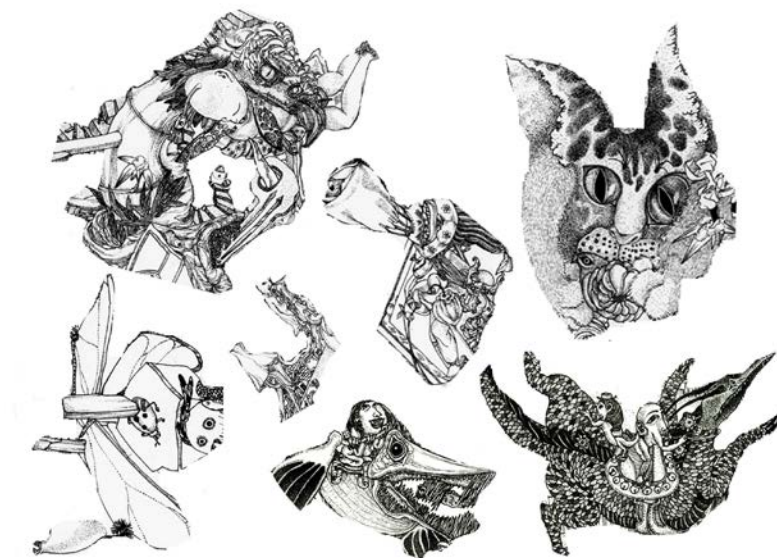
Figure 4. 28 Incomplete figures separated from *Parallel Universe – Tale of Genji,* 2016

poly-scenic drawing/illustrations made using the 'stream of consciousness' method, many of the characters overlap with each other or are tangled together; they 'grow' from other objects or share the same body. This causes problems in relation to animating and spatialising the characters. For example, when I tried to extract a complete character from *The Parallel Universe I* (figure 4.28), I found it was almost impossible to obtain a complete form. Each was 'connected' to something else and could not be separated. Also, the scanned image taken from the original A4 drawing was quite small and lack of definition, which meant that the image would be blurry or ill-defined when enlarged through projection.

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My solution was to change my method of drawing and its size. I drew each character separately on a larger scale (from A4 to A2). When scanned and selected the files had a better visual quality. For example, for an animation in the video installation *The Outsiders* I drew several large rats separately on A4 paper using strong lines with coloured pencils (figure 2.146). Also, I drew the figure of a girl and the giant figure who rests her arm on a balcony, separately on A2 paper (figure 2.134). For the projection on the ceiling, I drew two large heads and a door that would be assembled into one animation (figure 2.140-2).

The animations of these separated elements were not complete in themselves but awaited definition in the context provided by the space, they needed to be spatialised and given some 'physical' form on a screen or a wall.

Spatialising these separated animated characters went through a long process of projection tests on a variety of surfaces, materials, scales and positions. I tested them on three-dimensional objects (boxes, building structures, balloons, rocks etc.), two-dimensional surfaces (paper screens, fabric screens, walls, floors, ceilings, etc.), soft materials (curtains, paper screens, etc.) and hard surfaces (rocks, walls, boxes, objects, etc.). By presenting examples of each experiment, I will explain the development of ideas and the decision-making behind the
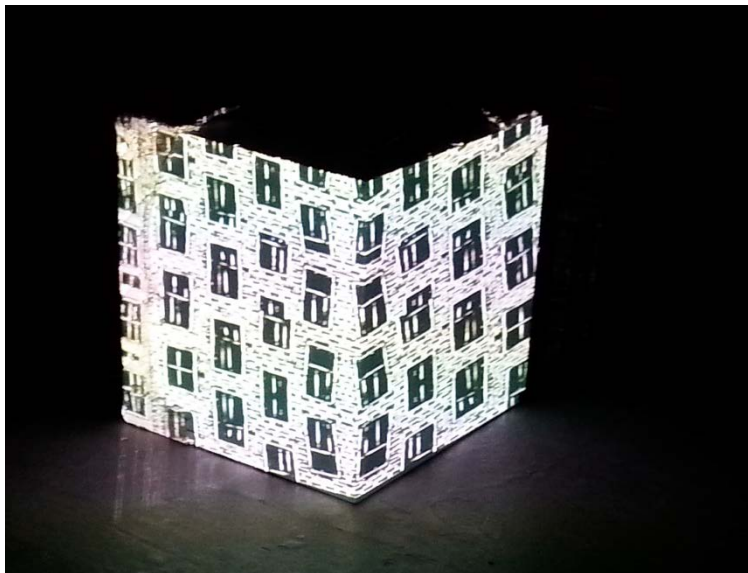
Figure 4. 29 The projection of the drawing of a building on a wooden box, 2015

production of my video installations *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poem*, 2016 and *The Outsiders*, 2017.

A. Projections on objects
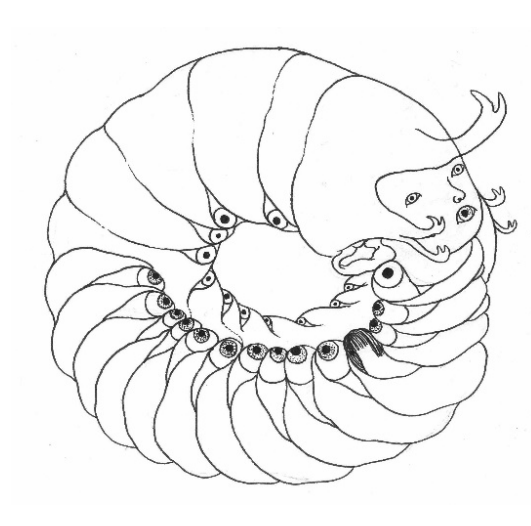
Figure 4. 30 *Caterpillar*, pen on paper, 2015

Figure 4. 31 The projection of *Caterpillar* on a balloon, 2015

Figure 4. 32 *Rain*, watercolour, 2015

Figure 4. 33 The projection of *Rain* on a balloon, 2015

Projections onto three-dimensional surfaces enhanced the quality of the drawing/illustration being an 'object' that occupies real space. For example, when I projected a drawing of a building onto a square box, the projection covered the box (approximately 28×28×28 cm, figure 4.29) with a 'skin' that turned it into a small apartment block with lots of black windows. I could touch the 'building' and feel its square shape and its weight when I lifted it. I could put my hand behind it to sense the space it took up.

Figure 4. 34 The projection of the video of African toads on a balloon in a water bawl, 2015

Figure 4. 35 The projection of a video of toads on a paper pyramid, 2015

In another experiment, I projected a drawing of a caterpillar on a white balloon (about 28cm tall and 15 cm wide, figure 4.30-1). The drawing easily adopted the spherical form giving the caterpillar a fat round body. When I projected an animation of rain made in watercolour onto the balloon (figure 4.32-3), it looked like the raindrops were flowing down the surface of a grey rock, and when I projected a video of my African toads onto the balloon, the creatures looked as though they were swimming in a bowl of water (figure 4.34).

Figure 4. 36 The projection of a video of water-weeds on an empty plastic bag, 2015

Figure 4. 37 A curtain

Figure 4. 38 The projection of a dead pigeon photo on a curtain, 2015

Figure 4. 39, *The Earthworm Party*, fine liner and marker on paper, 2015

Figure 4. 40 The projection of *The Earthworm Party* on a chiffon curtain, 2015

The same video on a paper pyramid looked completely different as it gained a solid, hard body (figure 4.35). Similarly, a projection of green waterweeds on a plastic bag filled with air (approximately 45 cm wide and 38 cm tall, figure 4.36), made me believe the weeds were inside the bag. It was clear that there was much potential for the projected image to adopt the shape and characteristics of the object that it is projected onto.

A more mysterious test was the projection of a photo of a dead pigeon onto semi-transparent chiffon. I digitally 'cut out' and separated the bird's image from its original background using Photoshop and set it on a black background so that the frame was not shown in the projection. The projection on a semi-transparent fabric (approximately 120 cm × 40 cm wide) showed the magnified bird as if a 'floating ghost' (approximately 150 cm tall and 45 cm wide, figure 4.37-8). In addition, a large glass bowl (29 cm wide) was placed below the projection on a box (90 × 100 cm). The bird's shadowy feathers melted into the dark background. This ambiguous edge made it look like a cloud of vapour lifting from the water
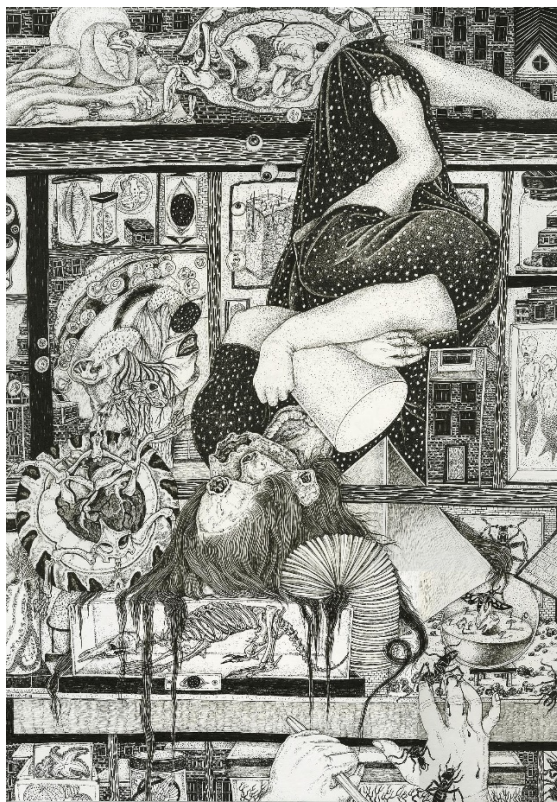
Figure 4. 41 *The Cabinet*, fine liner on paper, 2015

Figure 4. 42 The projection of *The Cabinet* on piled up boxes, 2015

bowl below. However, on the same fabric, the projection of my drawing *The Earthworm Party* became a colourful patterned curtain wrapped in curved lines (figure 4.39-40).
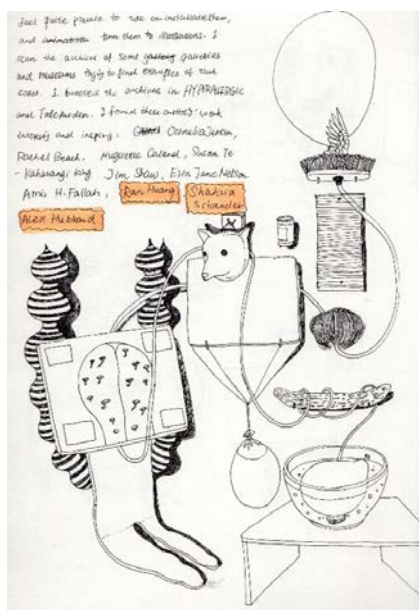
Figure 4. 43 The sketch of an assemblage of objects, 2015

Figure 4. 44 The projection of the walking figures on an assemblage of objects, 2015

Figure 4. 45 The sketch of an assemblage of objects, 2015

In conducting these experiments, I gained considerable knowledge of the potential of certain materials and forms as projection surfaces. Projecting a simple character or object onto a surface in the main worked well, whereas the use of complex images and/or surfaces was generally not so good. For example, I projected the image of a girl (approximately 90 cm tall and 30 cm wide) lying upside down onto two boxes (approximately 28 × 28 cm and 160 × 80 cm, figure 4.41-2). The illustration, finely drawn with pen and ink and with complex textures and colours was turned into a relatively crudely made picture. The complicated shape of the outline was distorted and unidentifiable. In addition, the shape of the boxes with the projected figure did not seem to produce any meaningful or useful connections.

Another negative and unsuccessful example was a video projection showing several characters walking. It was projected onto a complex set of objects placed against a wall (figure 4.43-5); a box (90 × 100 cm), two panels (18 × 15 cm), a mask (approximately 35 cm tall and 13 cm wide), a broom head (27 cm wide) and
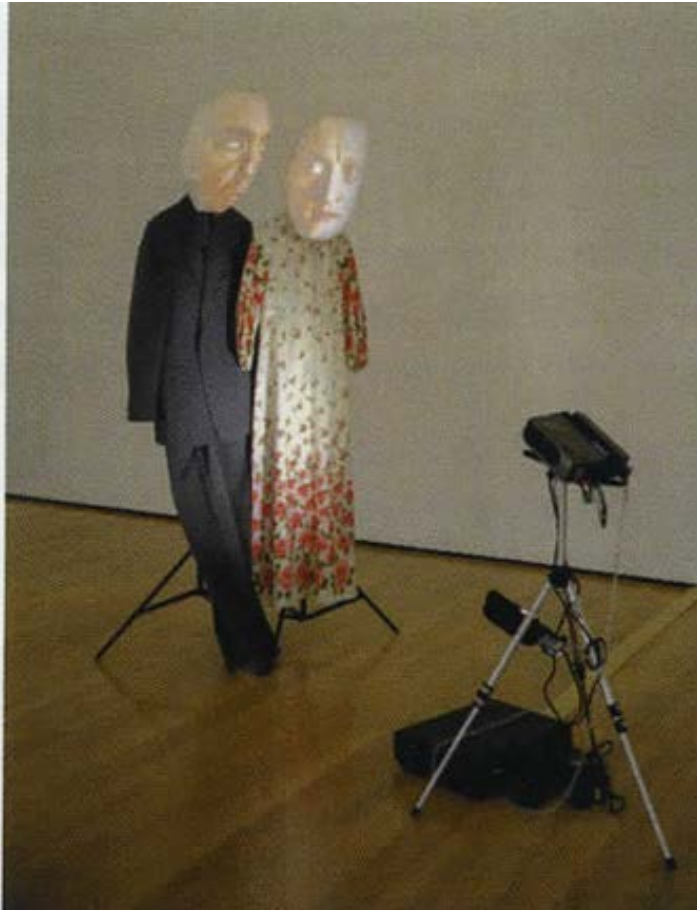
Figure 4. 46 Tony Oursler, *1Plus 1 Equals 1*, video installation, 2014

Figure 4. 47 Tony Oursler, *Bound Interrupter*, video installation, 2012.

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some soft tubes (approximately 24 cm long). The content of the projection and the assemblage competed. The objects failed to enrich the image, and in fact, disturbed it by adding irrelevant elements. These experiments made me more

Figure 4. 48 The projection test of *When Grief Turns Carnival* on piled up rocks, 2016
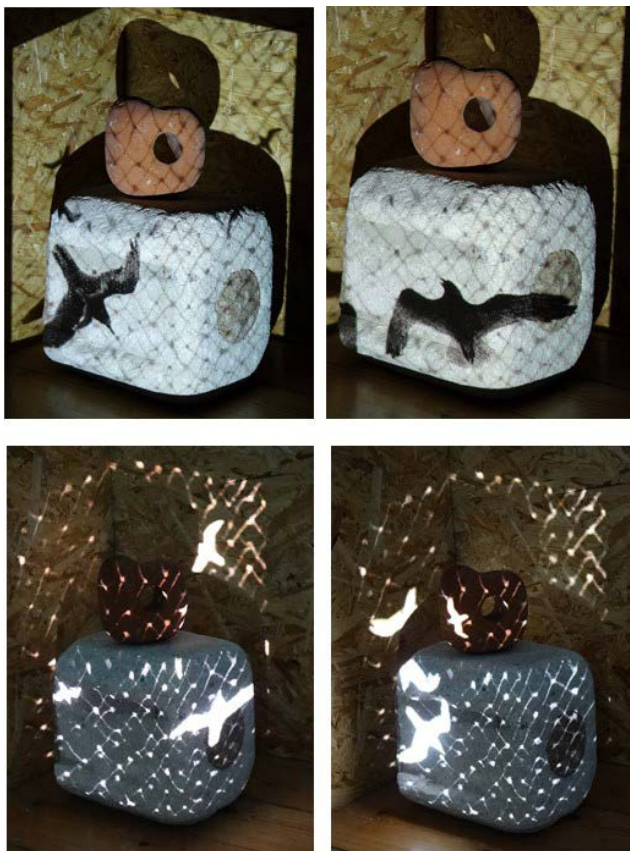
Figure 4. 49-52 The projection of *When Grief Turns Carnival* on piled up rocks,
Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems, 2016

cautious about the illustrations that I chose and more aware of the relationship between the image and the object. Some installation artists have presented me with good examples of the balance between the projected image and the object.

Tony Oursler, for example, is perhaps best known for his ability to play creatively with projected images on various kinds of objects. His mixed media works such as *1 plus 1 Equals 1* (figure 4.46)*,* Musee d'art Contemporain Montreal, Canada, 2014 and *Bound Interrupter* (figure 4.47), 313 Art Project, South Korea, 2012 are good examples of his careful use of projected images. He normally picks the most expressive parts of a human (their face, eyes or mouth), and excludes any potentially distracting elements. *In I plus 1 Equals 1*, he projects three faces with exaggerated expressions onto three oval objects placed on the floor. In his more complex installations such as *Bound Interrupter,* he projects many individual video projections onto objects/surfaces on a variety of scales. Although these works are assembled to be complex sculptural installations, each element is quite simple and clear. For example, in *1 plus 1 Equals 1*, the 'faces' are reduced to minimal features by excluding the hair, ears and necks. The nude men and women in pink and purple light in the centre of the *Bound Interrupter* are reduced to the simplest gestures. Simple as they are, they communicate information in a strong and clear way using multiple visual centres.

Understanding how and why Oursler's projections worked so well, prompted me to take a big step and simplify my drawings. In my video installation *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* I projected the animation *Carnival* made from my drawings onto two pieces of stone, half a piece of red brick (approximately 11×11 cm, figure 4.48-52) and a concrete block (about 17×17 cm) piled up. The projection (approximately 45× 45 cm) depicted several seagulls hovering 'on' the stones.[18] The projection made the stones appear as if wrapped in a fish net. It turned my drawing into an 'object,' providing a distinct quality to the image; it appeared hard, heavy, solid and static. It had 'weight' and felt 'cold' and 'rough', while the projection that overlapped onto the wall behind showed the opposite effect of a flat picture distorting itself on a two-dimensional vertical surface. The

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[18] In the test before the exhibition, I arranged a curtain behind the piled-up rock and brick. While in the exhibition I changed the background to two pieces of board placed in a corner. This was partly due to the limit of the space, but the main purpose was to give the projection a 'rough' texture.

projection onto the rocks presents an elusive event in which the birds seemed to 'touch' or 'attack' the rocks, stroking their surface with their wings. Due to the different shapes and colours of the rocks, the birds' shape and size continuously change. It gives the impression that real seagulls hovering overhead are casting shadows on the rocks. This difference emphasised the boundary between the two-dimensional plane and the three-dimensional object, reminding us of the possibility of transformation.

B. Projection on two-dimensional surface
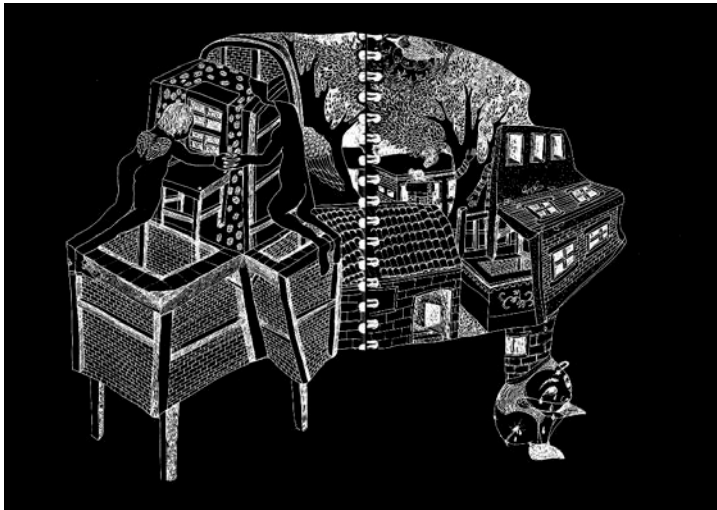
Figure 4. 53 *Piano House*, liner on paper, 2015
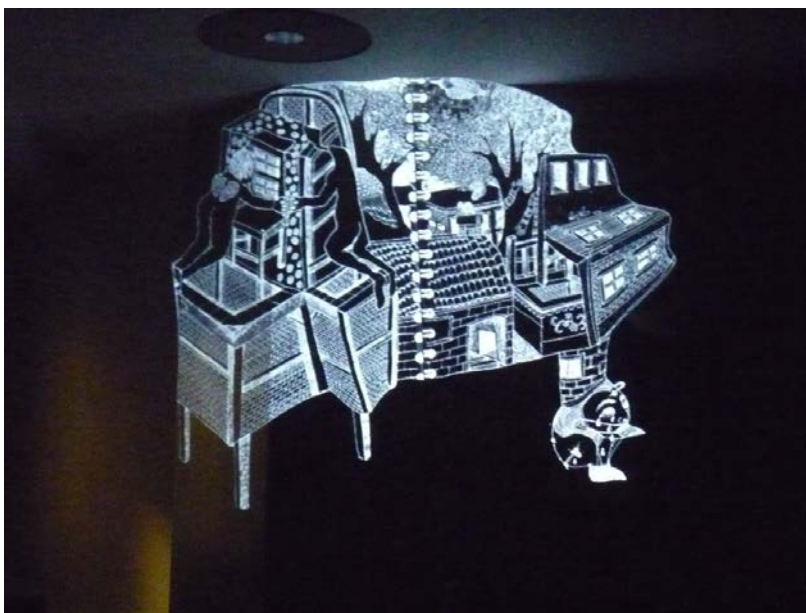
Figure 4.54 The projection of *Piano House* on a wall, 2015
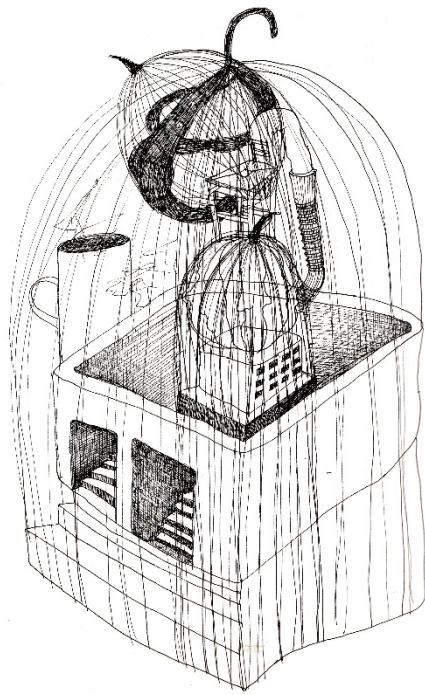
Figure 4. 55 *The Cage*, fine liner on paper, 2015   Figure 4. 56 The projection of *The Cage*, 2015
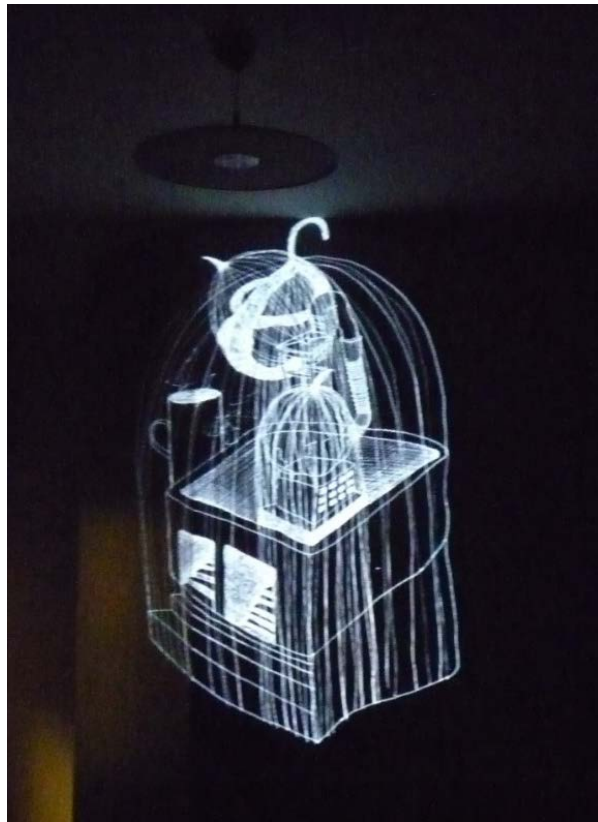
Figure 4. 57 The projection of *Untitled* on a wall, 2015

The projections on objects did give the projected drawings three-dimensional quality. However, the visual effect seemed to be far from my original drawings and did not reflect the trait and medium of drawing. I wanted to find a balance in the transformation between two and three dimensions and carried on testing different surfaces for alternative results.

The projected illustration segments were also turned into 'objects' when projected onto two-dimensional surfaces but in a subtler way. This sense of being an 'object' was conceptual and phenomenal. For example, in a dark room, when I projected a piano-shaped 'house' into a corner the structural lines of the original drawing almost paralleled the edge of the walls, making it look like a three-dimensional structure (approximately 160 cm wide and 60 cm tall, figure 4.53 - 4). When I projected a drawing of a birdcage on the upper part of a wall, it appeared as if it was a real one floating in the darkness (100 cm tall and 45 cm wide, figure 4.55 - 6). The inverted watercolour *Untitled*, 2014, was projected on

Figure 4. 58-9 The projection of *Monument on a wall*, 2015

Figure 4. 61 The projection of *Rebirt*h on the video projection of sea, 2015

Figure 4.60 *Rebirth*, fine liner on paper, 2015

Figure 4. 62 The projection of *March* on the video projection of sea, 2015

Figure 4. 63 *Day Dream*, pencil on paper, 2013

Figure 4. 64-6 Still frames of the projection of drawing *Day Dream* on a video of sea, 2015

a wall, the 'horses' and 'trees' were spread across the wall (figure 4.57).

I also tested two overlapping projections in my studio. In *Boatmen* (figure 4.56), 2015, I projected a video of a large rock on a beach onto a plane wall (about 300 cm tall and 500 cm wide (figure 60 - 61). Then I added a projection of a frame-less drawing showing two girls in a boat. It looked as if the boat was resting near the rock with a reflection on the water. Also, the drawing *Rebirth* (figure 4.60-1), 2015 was projected onto a video of a rock disappearing in the rising tide. Appearing as if resting her upper body (approximately 80cm wide and 40 cm tall) on the narrow top of the rock, the drawn character with three faces gains a new space on the sea. A further test using these two projections, where the lower half of the body of the character falls outside that of the projection of the sea created the effect of the body stepping outside its illusionary space and into the real space. In the same vein, another example of connecting space inside the video and the wall was *March* (figure 4.62), 2015. Again, using the projection of the

rock in the sea as a base, I projected a drawing of a row of radishes marching into a box on top of a rock.
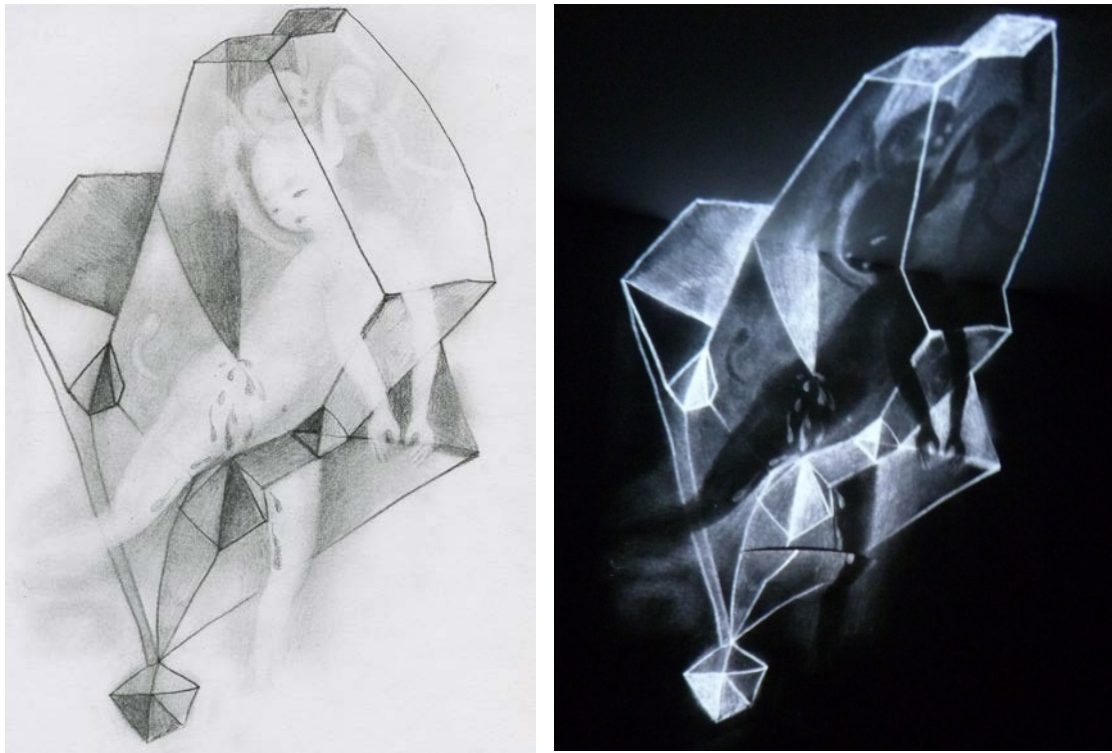
Figure 4. 67-8 *Clap*, pencil on paper, 2013 and its projection a wall, 2015
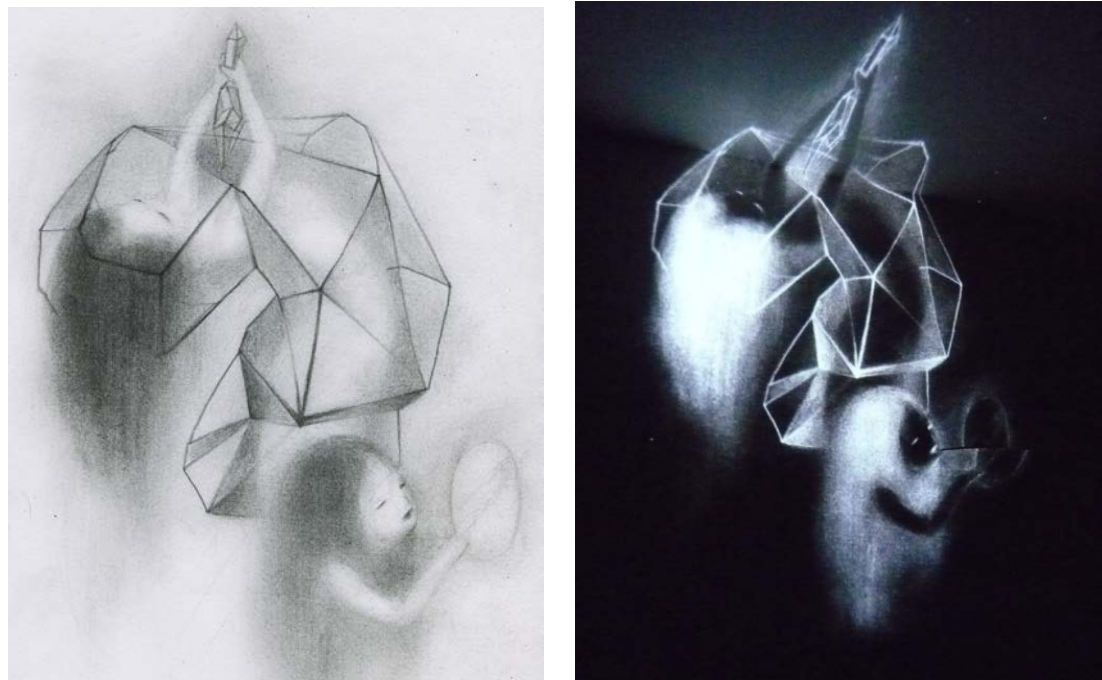
Figure 4. 69-70 Mirror, pencil on paper, 2013 and its projection on a wall, 2015

The use of pencil drawings (inverted in Adobe Photoshop) showed a more mysterious effect. I overlapped the drawing *Day Dream,* 2013 with a video of

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roaring sea waves made in 2015 (figure 4.63-66). This semi-transparent layer of illustration was given an independent life and seemed to dominate the landscape. The moving waves filled in her eyes and her mouth and created an illusion that she was talking and blinking her eyes.

It seemed that the pencil drawings in negative had a magical effect, enabling them to appear almost as real objects/figures in the darkness. I continued with this investigation, trying out the images in complete darkness.

A mermaid projected in a black room gave a stronger sense of volume. Also, I was pleased to find out that even the lines are drawn with a pencil, rather than pen, could be spatialised properly without losing their quality. For example, the projection of *Clap*, 2013 (figure 4.67) became a large piece of crystal floating in the dark room (figure 4.68). Similarly, the drawing *Mirror* (figure 4.69)*, 2013 used lines to create a geometric net containing two figures. Projected onto a wall in the darkness it shone as if from an internal light source (figure 4.70).

The experiments on both two and three-dimensional surfaces acknowledged the capability of the projector and the effects of drawing using pencils and pen. This experience enabled me to use my knowledge to create a video projection work in which all fragments of my narrative came together. Below I analyse the procedure of spatialising my stories in the five-screen work *The Outsiders*, 2017 that was successful in finding many solutions to the key questions of this research.

4.5 Case study: video installation *The Outsiders*, 2017

4.5.1 Spatialising the separated characters

Using characters drawn from my self-narrative on the mutual gaze between an 'insider' and an 'outsider' and the transformation of identity, I spatialised them using techniques developed in the experiments above.

In my video installation *The Outsiders*, 2017 (see the self-narrative in Chapter 2), there were five separate projections: *The Beholders*, *The Outsiders, The Inspectors, The Sleepers* and *The Intransigent.* As analysed in Chapter 2, I used several self-narrative drawings and animations and arranged them as a video

installation. Here, I analyse how I found the correct position for each element and gave them spatial qualities.

The Beholders

Figure 4.71 *The Beholders*, 2017

In the installation, I projected the video animation *The Beholders* onto a wide roll of paper hung on a taut wire between two walls. The paper screen was tough and thick and approximately 140 cm wide and 190 cm high. The projection dominated the centre part of this paper screen and became a floating sculpture, about 50 cm high and 35 cm wide (figure 4.71). The rough edges of the paper enhanced the sense of it being an object, not just a depthless surface. The projection on the paper screen could be seen from both sides, also encouraging the notion that the projection was a solid object.

The Outsiders

The projection of *The Outsiders* was different from the others in its installing, as it took the bold step of projecting animation onto a specifically shaped screen (about 154 tall and 200 cm wide, figure 4.72). For the first time, one of my

Figure 4.72 *The Outsiders*, 2017

projections could stand in a space without relying on the architectural structure of the room.

The projected animation was made of six identical hand-drawn characters (figure 2.72). Before deciding to project them onto a life-scale form, I went through a long process of testing out various solutions. If I projected a version of the video containing a single girl on to a wall, it looked as if she were standing next to the wall. When I projected a six-girl life-scale animation (approximately 155 cm tall) onto a blank wall in a dark space, the illusion of them becoming a physical 'object' was not strong because the content was too complex. Therefore, I considered whether I could make the characters come out from the surface of a

Figure 4. 73-4 Tunnel Book, Martin Engelbrecht of Augsburg, Germany, Smithsonian Libraries, 1684-1756

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screen or wall and occupy the same space as the audience. Consequently, I made a freestanding, carefully shaped screen, which allowed my characters to leave the confines of the wall.

Putting this in context, painting or drawing characters and objects on freestanding flat screens is a method used by artists and designers for centuries. It is possibly most well known in the use of 'flats' in stage design; a series of parallel vertical screens used to create the effect of a three-dimensional scene. The same method is seen in 'tunnel books' or 'paper/toy theatres' (figure 4.73-4) that separate various visual contents of a picture into independent layers and which created a three-dimensional illusion of depth by layering them.[19]
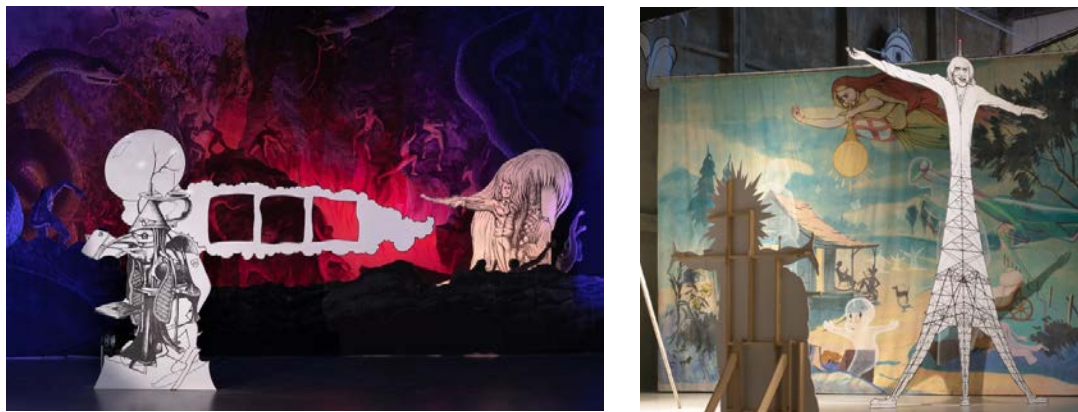
Figure 4. 75-6 Jim Shaw, *The Wig Museum*, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, 2017

For example, Jim Shaw is an American artist involved with deconstructing pictorial space by making large-scale 'tunnel books' as theatrical spaces. Looking at his installation *The Wig Museum,* 2017 (figure 4.75-6), Marciano Foundation, Los Angeles, USA, I was impressed by the amount of drawn and painted characters used to assemble a sense of space by transforming the visual contents onto life-size, freestanding, flat cut-out forms. One of his characters looks as though he came from Bosch's *Garden of the Earthly Delights* (figure 4.79), while others are his own comic drawings: a man with a lion head crawling on the floor, another sitting in a tall three-leg bowl, and another an electricity

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[19] Dating back to the 18th century, tunnel books are made of several stacked pages to create a visual illusion. Each layer depicts the interior or exterior settings. Looked from the front view (or a hole on the front page), the reader could see the illusionary depth produced by the layering of pictures. A paper/toy theatre is like a tunnel book. It is a miniature model that appeared around the 19th century. It shows a variety of theatre settings on layers of paperboards including the stage, curtains, as well as the character puppets. George Speight, *Juvenile Drama: The History of the English Toy Theatre* (Macdonald & co. Ltd., 1946).

pylon as a body, etc (figure 4.80 - 1). This magnified 'tunnel-book' effect allows the audience to walk in-between the characters as if magically able to project themselves within a two-dimensional pictorial scene.

British artist and curator Lubaina Himid is another artist who has worked with free-standing painted characters. In *Naming the Money* (figure 4.77 - 9), Hatton

Figure 4. 77-79 Lubaina Himid, *Naming the Money*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK, 2018

Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2004, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 2007, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 2017 - 2018, Himid painted many slightly larger than life-scale figures on shaped boards placed around the gallery space. She freed the figures from rectangular frames and allowed them to 'walk' in the gallery. Although still two-dimensional, the paintings occupy real space and feel as if they are interacting with one another, space or the viewer, enhancing their three-dimensional qualities.

For the exhibition in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, from October 2017 to March 2018, Himid selected twenty free-standing figures from *Naming the Money* and reconfigured them with other works that she selected from the Art Council

collections.[20] Placing a two-dimensional figure of an African woman among three classical marble sculptures created a contrast between the flatness of the painted cut-out and the three-dimensional depth of the sculptures. It also seemed to raise questions around images of 'real' people compared to the idealised and value-laden classical sculptures, as well as the question of what is real and what is an artful illusion. This paradox challenged my understanding and definition of a two-dimensional work; it was flat, while still being an object. The works step out of painting within frames, also keep the precious quality of being two-dimensional.
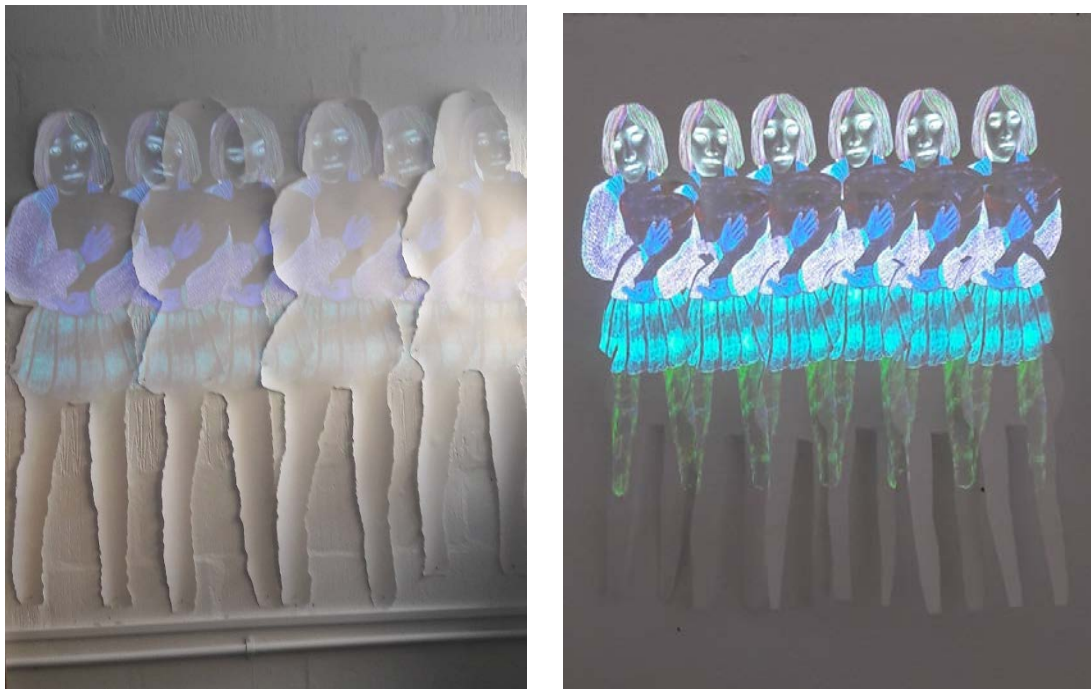
Figure 4. 80-1 Projection experiments of *The Outsiders* on paper models, 2017

[20] See more: http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/exhibitions/arts-council-collection/lubaina-himid/index.aspx, accessed on 06.06.2018.
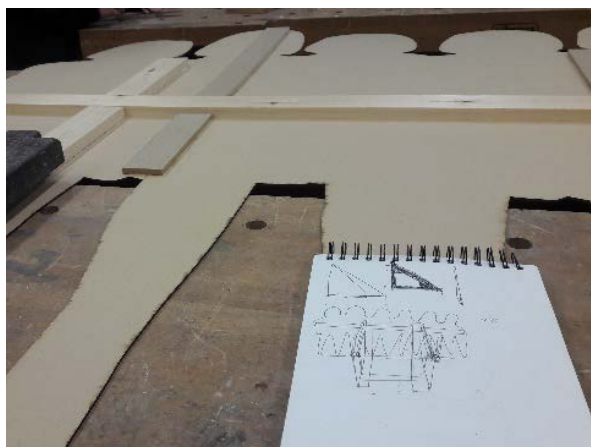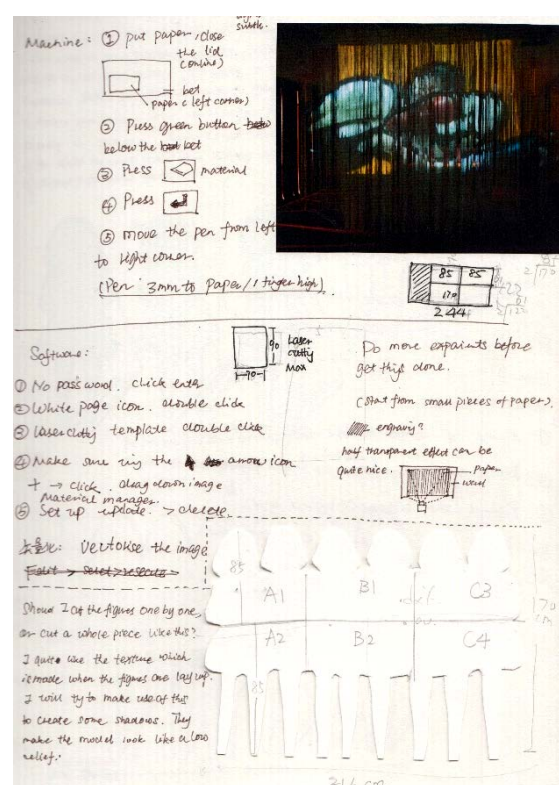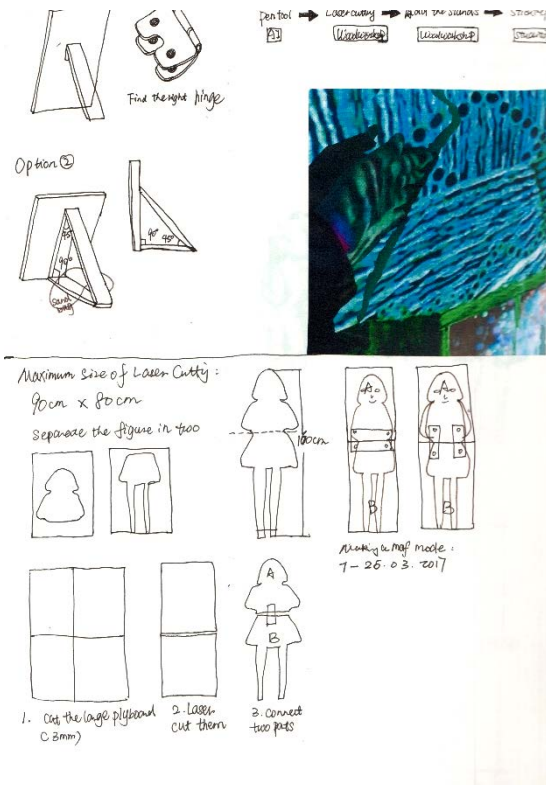
Figure 4. 83-6 Making the MDF model for *The Outsiders*, 2017

My approach and purpose for making life-scale cut-outs were slightly different, however. I wanted to retain a material connection to the original drawing as much as possible by keeping the surface of the cut-out screen made of paper that I also saw as a metaphor of fragility. As with my choice of materials for making the projection screens for *The Beholders*, I felt that the use of paper was a very important connection to the original drawing/illustration. These works should continue to be seen as drawings spatialised within an installation and brought to life by animation.

Regarding *The Outsiders*, in order to find the proper material and the best visual effect, I tested several kinds of paper on a large paper model (155×320 cm, figure 4.80). I made the outline of the girls by carefully tearing the paper, producing irregular rough edges. I overlapped sections of the paper and attached them to the studio wall. The shadows cast by the overlapping sections gave the construction the quality of low relief, suggesting that each one was an object with volume and weight. It also gave the impression that it floated at a distance from the wall.

I created a set of smaller paper models (around 20×35 cm, figure 4.82). This time I used scissors to cut out the shapes neatly. These models were hung like washing on a line but the clean-cut outlines of the figures did not look so interesting. The quality of the projection on them was good and the miniature quality of the projected drawings was intriguing but the whole lacked the quality of the figures being 'alive'.

Initial feedback on presenting these test pieces in my studio encouraged me to make life-sized models that could stand on the floor rather than having to be hung on the wall or on a stretched line. These free-standing models would be much more effective in making the audience feel they had walked out of an illustration and into the real space. Making the large form for the installation (160 cm high and 240 cm wide, figure 4.83-6) was not an easy task. To make the large paper 'cut-out' stand up I had to build a ridged surface to hold it, determine which type of paper and board to use and what kind of tools and techniques were needed to cut and assemble the materials. Cost and limited time were also a factor. I chose 3mm MDF (medium density fibreboard), an economic but tough material for the main surface of the form. The most accurate way to cut the rather complex shapes out of this board was using a laser cutter. Using Adobe Illustrator file of the silhouette of my row of girls I could send the information straight to the laser cutter. However, the machine's maximum work area was only 70 × 90 cm and was not big enough to accommodate the whole image at once. To solve this problem, I divided my design into 6 sections and reassembled them

after cutting.[21] The sections were glued onto a free-standing wooden structure that held them vertical and free-standing.

Figure 4. 87-9 The details of *The Outsiders* projected on MDF model, 2017

Inspired by my torn-paper models, I glued several layers of acid-free paper on the surface of the MDF base. I carefully tore the paper into shapes to match the shape of their hair, faces, arms, legs and clothes. The rough edges enhanced the quality of relief (figure 4.87-9). When the animation was projected onto this surface, the impression was that the girls had solid bodies and appeared to be standing on the same floor with me. The projected light emphasised the texture of

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[21] The whole cutting process was not achieved in one go and failed several times. It involved a variety of techniques to work with the machines and tools. A simple task could turn out to be an exhausting one with several techniques to learn. However, once I was familiar with the processes, my models were cut well, and quickly.

the paper and created shadows around the torn edges. The effect was to successfully turn my drawing into a sculpture without weakening the quality of the drawing/illustration.

The Inspectors

The Inspectors was a large-scale projection (approximately 130 cm x and 75cm) onto the ceiling in the left-hand corner of the room. Inspired by my seagull

Figure 4. 90 Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Triumph of Bellerophon on Pegasus*, Venice Palazzo Labia, 1743-1750

Figure 4. 91 Andrea Mantegna, ceiling oculus, Ducal Palace, 1471-1474

Figure 4.92 Jennifer Steinkamp, *6EQUJ5*, video projection, 2012

Figure 4. 93 Everywhere, *Cloud Pink*, video projection, 2011

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projection on the ceiling of the Ex Libris Gallery, I wanted to make an even bolder effect. I was inspired by 18th century ceiling frescos particularly Giovanni Tiepolo's *The Triumph of Bellerophon on Pegasus* (figure 4.90)*,* 1743-1750 on the round ceiling of Palazzo Labia in the Würzburg Residence, Germany, and Andrea Mantegna's ceiling oculus fresco (figure 4. 91), 1471-1474 in the Ducal Palace in Mantua, Italy. These frescos appear to 'open' the ceilings by painting the sky and floating figures within it. This connects the interior and exterior space and encourages the audience to look up. The figures look down at the audience engaging them with their provocative gestures. The ceilings provided an ideal place for the audience to imagine what happens outside the interior space. As an extension of the physical space, and with reference to the sky and hence almost an infinite space with religious or mythical associations, these frescos stimulate simultaneously both the viewers' visual and mental faculties.

Contemporary artists today make use of ceilings in many unconventional ways, not necessarily creating an illusion of depth with linear perspective. Jennifer Steinkamp's video installation *6EQUJ5* (figure 4.93)*,* 2012 transformed the ceiling of Minneapolis Institute of Arts into outer space. In the darkness, many aerolites appear to be floating and rotating. The video installation *Cloud Pink* (figure 4.94)*,* 2011 created by Everyware (a South Korean artist group of Hynwoo Bang and Yunsil Heo) was an interactive work at the Savina Gallery in South Korea. It also demonstrates how artists play inventively with ceilings using digital media. A large piece of white fabric is hung in a room, creating a false ceiling just above the audience's head. When pressed or dented by the hands of the viewer, colourful clouds appeared projected on the surface. The artists make use of a surface that would the audience normally disregard. They invite the audience to look up and be aware, changing their usual point of view. The clouds appearing and disappearing keep the composition and space in flux and thus avoid a single ideal point of view.

The ceilings in these installations are transformed successfully into an expanded space but without a specific narrative intention. My works, on the other hand, aim to retain narrative elements even if the illusional depth disappears. *The Inspectors* was projected onto the ceiling, retaining its own narrative quality. I

imagined the room as if it were a doll's house with a window on the ceiling. Two giant figures seem to peep through the window at the viewers walking below as if inspecting pet rats in a cage. Looking at my new-born hamster babies in their cage provided the inspiration for this imagery.

This experience also reminded me of Brian Griffiths' solo *exhibition Bill Murray: a story of distance, size and sincerity* (figure 4.94-7), Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015-6, [22]. The artist arranged nine house models and other objects to narrate stories of the American actor, writer and comedian Bill Murray's life experience. When I looked closer at the interior of model houses through their windows and doors, I saw tiny details: the pattern
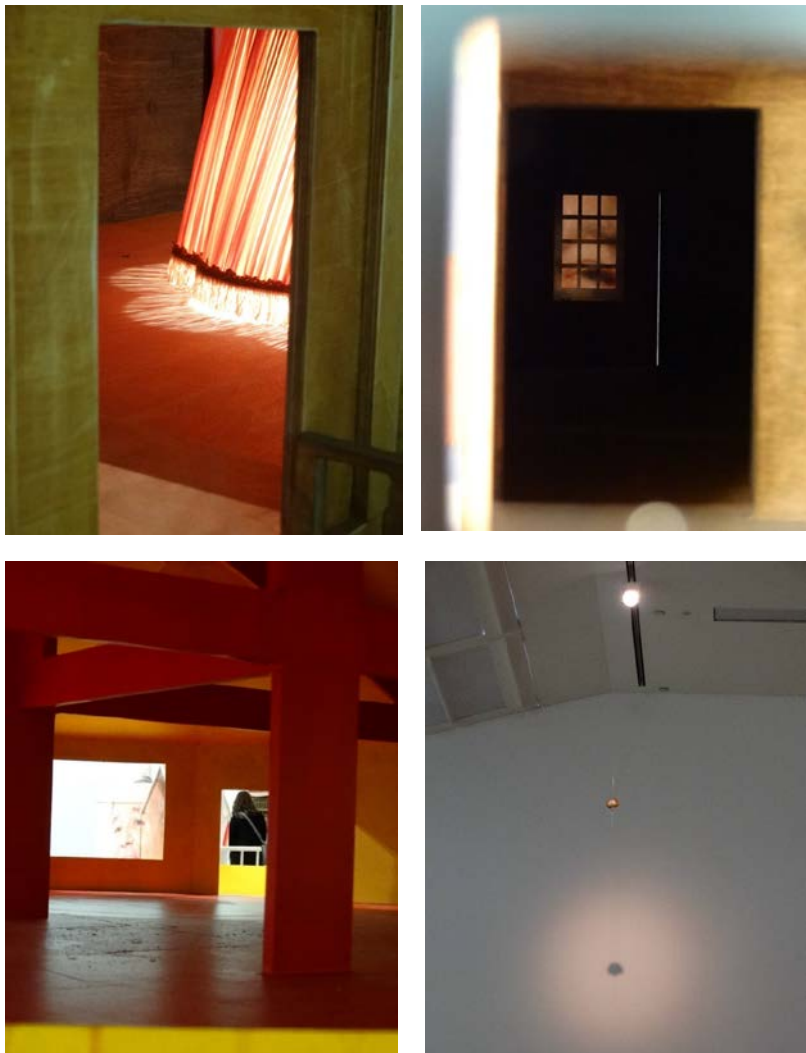
Figure 4. 94-7 Brian Griffiths, *Bill Murray: A Story of Distance, Size and Sincerity*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. 2015-16

[22] See more: http://baltic.art/whats-on/brian-griffiths. Accessed on 21. 03. 2018.

and colour of the wallpaper, miniature furniture and even 'residents'. In the contrast between scales, I sensed the tension between the viewer and the subject of their gaze, between the powerful and the weak.

The Inspectors video was projected high onto the ceiling (figure 4.98 - 9). The architecture/structure of the room was such that the ceiling was built up into the roof, creating an angle between the wall and the ceiling along two sides of the room. I chose to project *The Inspectors* at the point where the two surfaces joined, which created the effect that when the cage door was opened in the animation it followed the angle of the wall, enhancing the three-dimensional effect. Even without the use of linear perspective in the drawing, the projection expanded the sense of a physical space by giving the ceiling a 'kinetic skin'. Metaphorically and
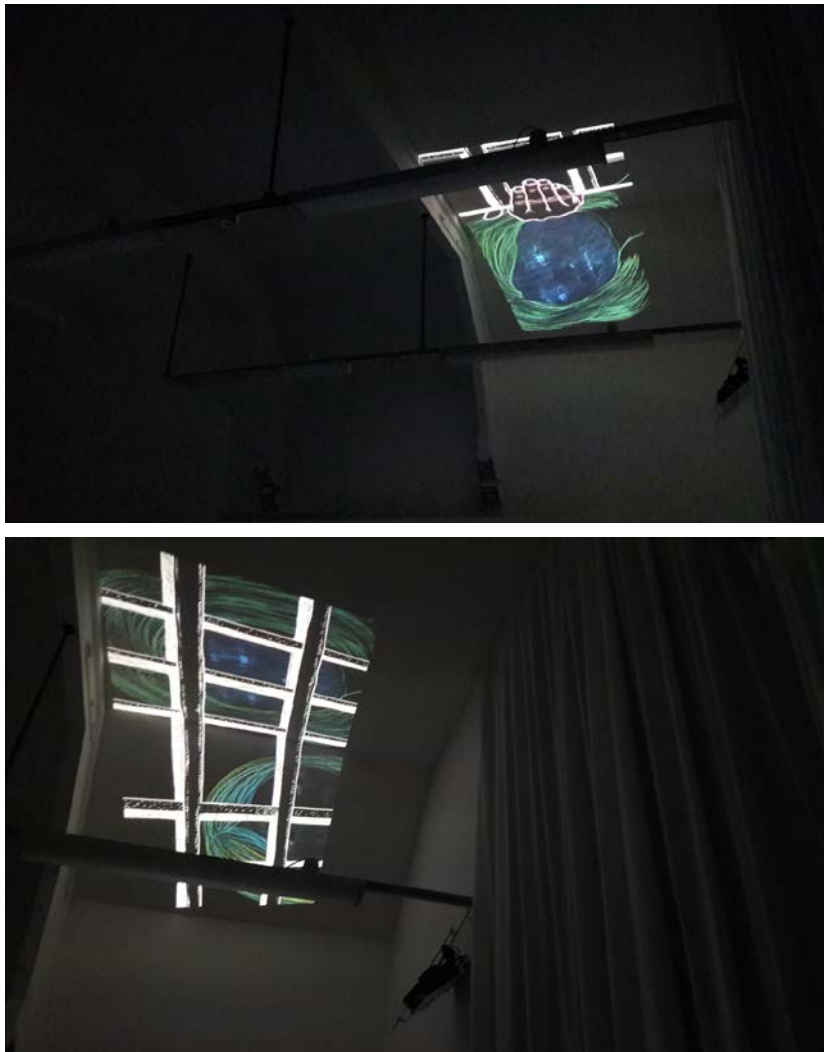
Figure 4. 98-9 *The Inspectors,* 2017

visually, the shifting cage door implied an imagined space on the other side of the ceiling.

In this way, I made the audience aware of the ceiling space that was usually disregarded. It encouraged them to look up at events happening above their heads and have a more expanded awareness of the space they were in, and beyond. The large animated heads peeking down upon them also shifted and altered the viewer's sense of scale; were they now small creatures in a cage?

The Sleepers
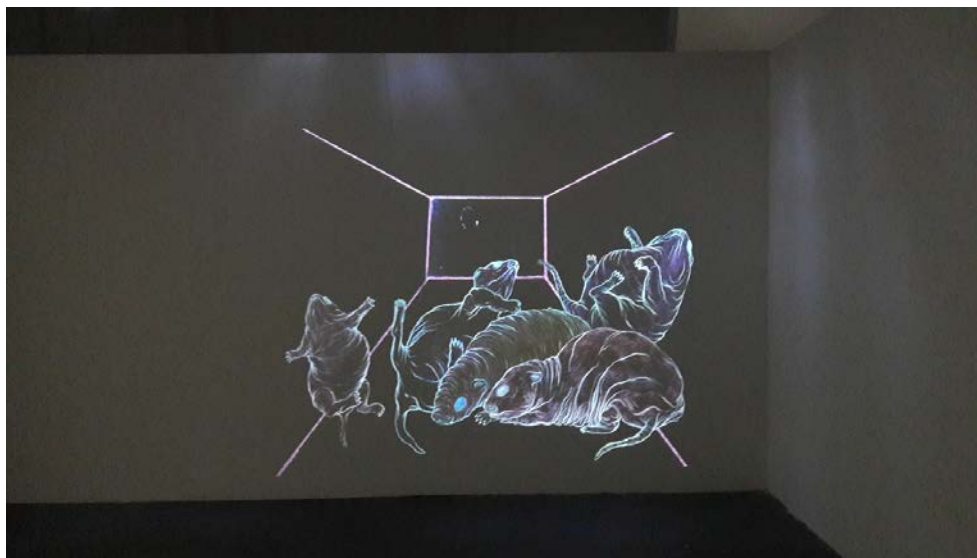
Figure 4. 100 *The Sleepers,* 2017

The Sleepers, the projection of the animation of several sleeping rats were arranged on the inner side of the L-shape wall (figure 4.100). The projector was installed on the opposite wall. I chose this place due to its secret and private character. Shielded by a sidewall, the audience could not see the sleeping rats immediately. When standing at a distance watching *The Intransigent* (figure 4.105) before approaching the screen, the audience was not supposed to see them. Only when they reached the inner space of the L-shape wall could both projections be viewed.

The Intransigent

The largest projection in this installation was *The Intransigent*, projected on to a paper screen of approximately 3 × 4.5m (figure 4.104-6). I made a paper screen from 8 rolls of wallpaper hung on a cable. This arrangement was inspired by traditional Chinese painting techniques and conventions. In this tradition, the

Figure 4. 101 Zhiqian Zhao, *Peach*, Chinese painting on paper, Qing Dynasty

Figure 4. 102, Yin Tang, *Autumn Wind and Fan*, Ming Dynasty

Figure 4. 103 Zhiding Yu, *Two Beauties*, Qing Dynasty

painter can present one image across several scrolls or screens, for example, Zhiqian Zhao (赵之谦),'s *Peach* (《寿桃》), Qing Dynasty, a productive and prolific peach tree painted on four screens. Remarkably, each of the sections or screens also work separately as a complete painting.
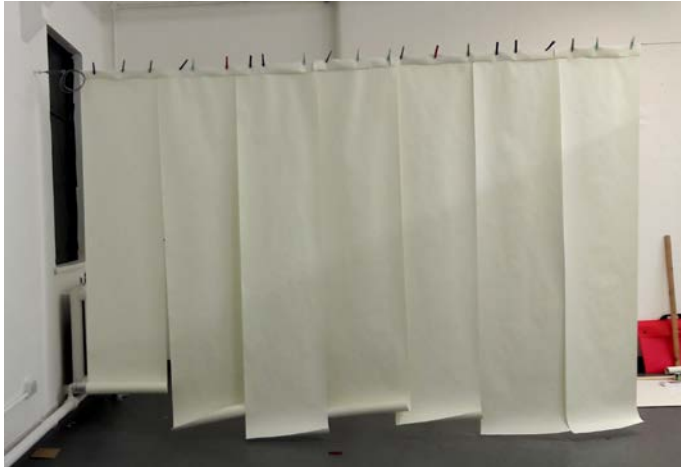
Figure 4. 104 Making Paper Screen, 2017

Figure 4. 105-6 *The Intransigent*, 2017

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It was traditional to paint on a long roll of rice paper or silk (either vertically or horizontally), giving the paper an expansive format, for example, Yin Tang (唐寅)'s *Autumn Wind and Fan* (《秋风纨扇图》, figure 4.102), Ming Dynasty and Zhiding Yu (禹之鼎)'s *Two Beauties* (《双英图》, figure 4.103), Qing Dynasty.

The Intransigent video was projected on a large screen made of eight long strips of paper hung from a taut cable stretched between two walls of the installation. It was hard to find a paper roll that was long and wide enough for this format. I found the solution by using white wall-paper rolls that were long enough to make a screen of this size and tough enough to be hung from a wire cable. The edges of the paper were torn to emphasise the texture and the material property of the paper and to 'blend' the edges into space. Both video and the paper screen had a light yellowish colour and when projected the screen and the video seemed to meld together. It made the pictorial space of the video 'disappear', releasing the character and the candle from the flat picture plane. At the same time, the gaps and rough edges between the rolls of paper were revealed giving the drawing/illustration the quality of being an object.

These experiments with projections and the projection 'screen' transformed my drawings/illustrations into 'objects' that dwelled in a physical space. Each projection was a fragment of a story that needed to be reconfigured in order to generate a new open narrative. In a multi-screen video installation, this narrative not only relies on each individual character or scenario but also the connections between them. The next section describes how I configured these 'fragments' into stories.

As well as these five independent video projections, I also chose several drawings to paint onto the walls of the gallery as complementary elements. However, before I configured the projections into their final positions, I could not decide the scale and the position of the wall drawings. In the next section, I analyse how I arranged each projection and wall drawing in the space.

4.5.2 Reconfiguring the projected fragments

Each projected element of my poly-scenic self-narrative drawing/illustration needed to demonstrate a connection with each other within the physical space of the installation. Every element should be essential and have a role and function;
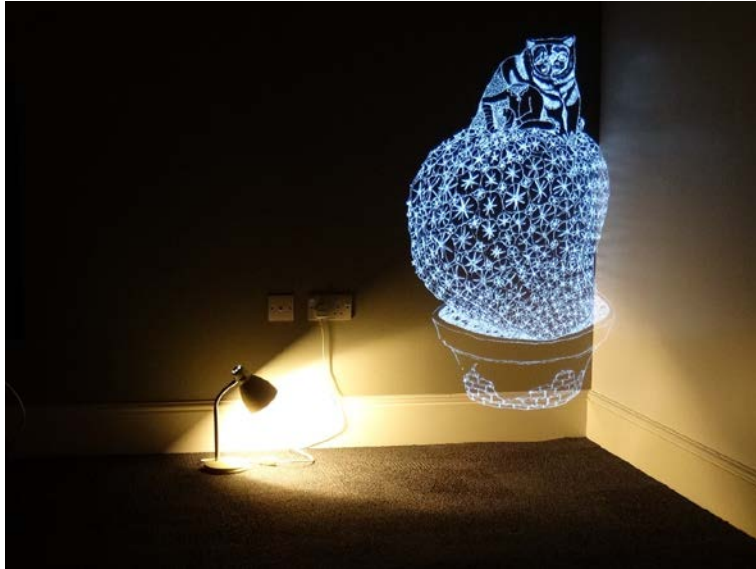
Figure 4. 107 The projection of *Cactus* on a wall, 2016
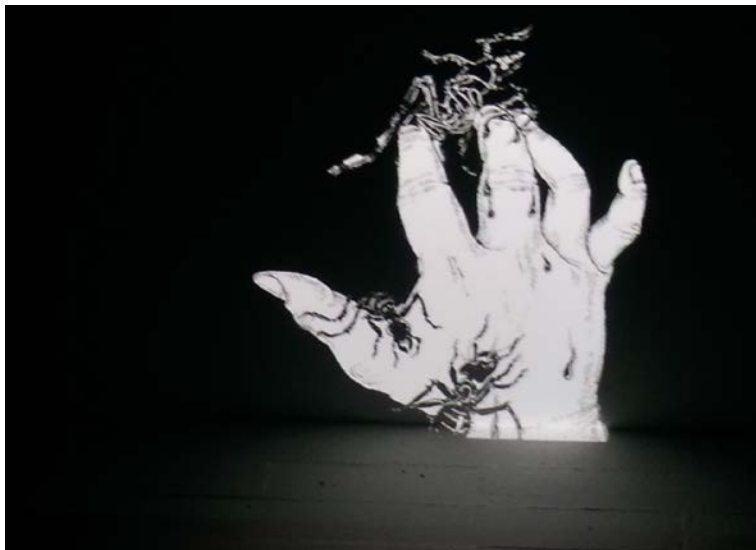
Figure 4. 108 The projection of *Hand* on a wall, 2016

if not, it could disturb the entire narrative.

Before I found out how to configure my elements to be an installation work, I conducted many experiments that taught me that this physical and conceptual connection was made by carefully arranging each projection in the space. For example, I projected a drawing of a potted cactus into the corner of a wall (about 50 cm tall and 23 cm wide, figure 107), making it look like a real pot resting on

the floor. Casting a soft light on it from a desk lamp gave it a soft and calm character. However, projecting the same picture onto the centre of a wall failed to give the same result. The physical position of the projection directly affected the character and implied a narrative of the piece.

Also, when I projected the drawing of a 'hand' at the bottom of a wall (about 50cm tall and 55cm wide, figure 4.108), it presented the illusion that it was 'growing' from the ground. The dark background gave the impression that ants were crawling from a mysterious space behind the hand and towards me. The same image projected in the centre of the wall failed to stimulate this narrative atmosphere.

In my works for the collective exhibition *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016, there were four projections. I arranged them into positions that would make the audience sense the various layers of space; the walls, floor, ceiling and the centre of the room (figure 4.109). For example, the projection of the video *When Grief Turns Carnival* (figure 4.51-4) onto a small pile of rocks on the floor in the right-hand corner of the room, its small scale and low position called for the audience to bow down to look at it. I also projected the same animation on the ceiling of the gallery (about 4.9 m, figure 4. 110) where it turned the light-blue ceiling into the 'sky'.
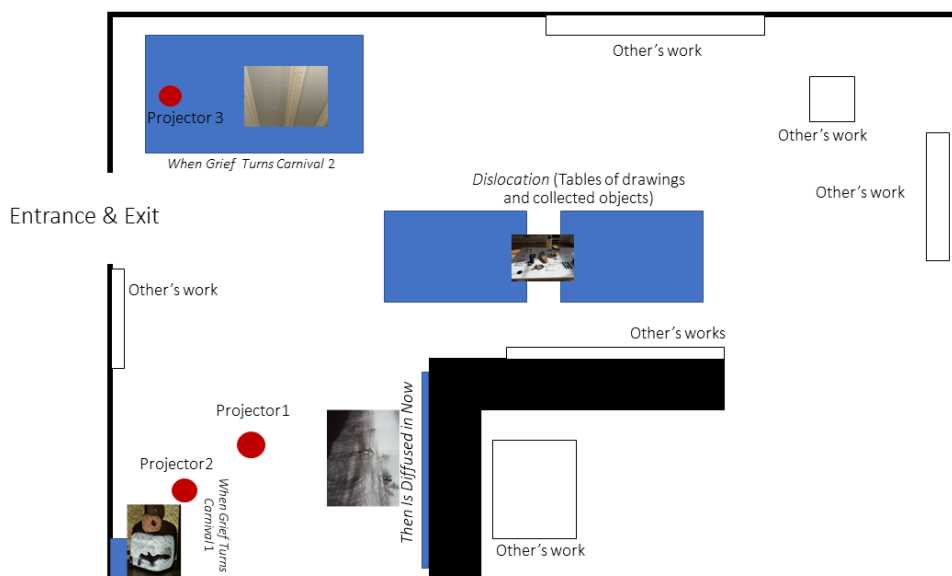
Figure 4. 109 The map of *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* 2016

Figure 4. 110-112 Installation views of the projection *When Grief Turns Carnival* on the ceiling (day and night), *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016.
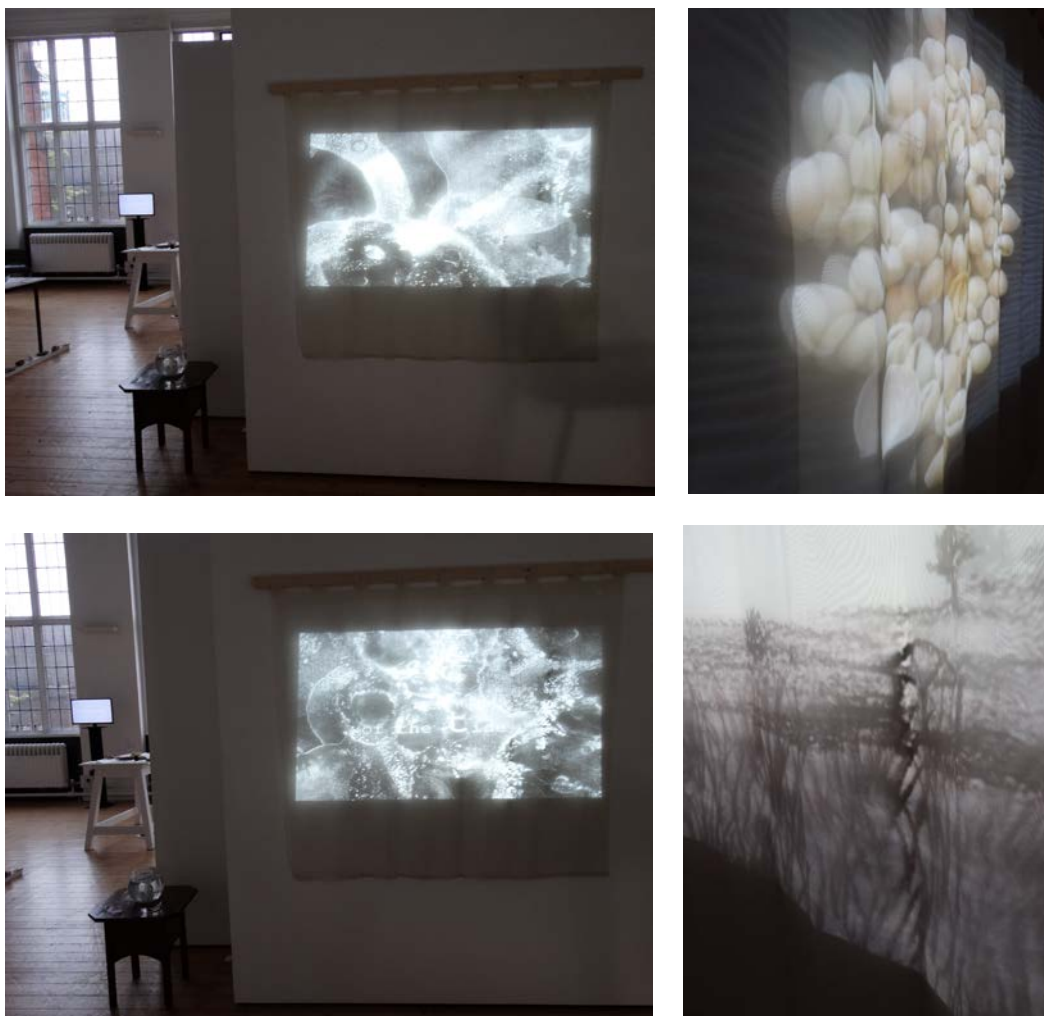
Figure 4. 113-6 Installation views of *Then Is Diffused in Now*, *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016
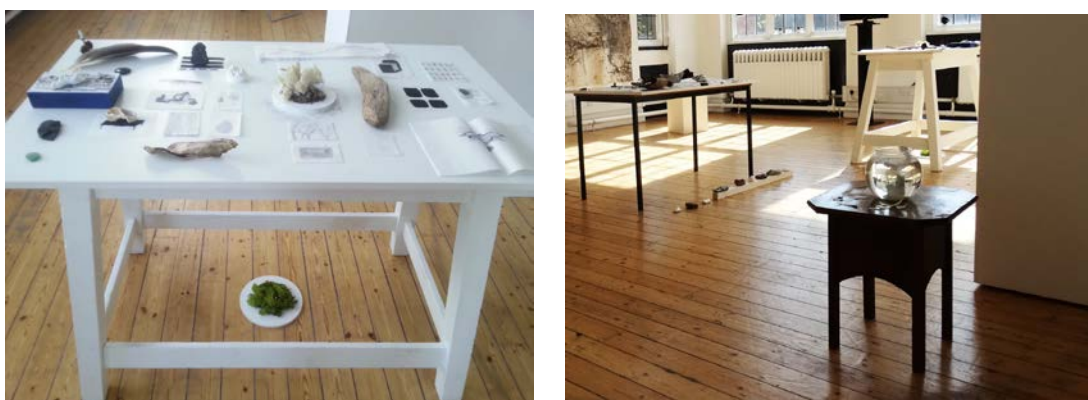
Figure 4. 117-8 Installation views of *Dislocations* (the drawings and collected objects), *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* 2016

The ambiguous outline of the projection on the ceiling generated the illusion of infinite expansion. The seagulls appeared and disappeared as if they were moving to other parts of the ceiling/sky. By comparison with the same animation

projected on the piled-up objects (figure 4.51-4), the large projection on the ceiling displayed the gentle motions of the birds, implying a peaceful liberation and free expression.

By comparing the effect of the same video projected onto completely different surfaces, the audience were invited to sense the distance between them. As well as these projections there was *Dislocations* (two sets of works arranged in the middle of the room). One was a video projection on a curtain that was hung on the right-hand wall (figure 4.113-6). Another was a set of small drawings and collected objects placed on two tables in the middle of the gallery (figure 4.117-8). Both emphasised the space in the centre of the gallery.

Each of the four elements was also connected using common content. For example, seagulls appeared in the two projections and were also implied by the feathers placed on the table. Coal was depicted in the animation projection on the curtain, while I placed real coal chunks on the drawings on the table. The small drawings on tracing paper depicted similar scenes to those seen in the animation projected onto the curtain. By representing the same elements in a variety of ways, I enhanced the connections between each element and indicated their belonging to the same narrative.

Sometimes, however, things went wrong and I failed in some way to balance each element or lost the connections between them. This happened in situations where I used too many heterogeneous elements (objects, drawings and

Figure 4. 119 TV1 (the transforming colourful shapes), *The Reversible Future*, Breeze Creatives, 2016

Figure 4. 120 TV2 (video of a military training), *The Reversible Future*, Breeze Creatives, 2016

projections which showed completely different content) that overloaded the viewer.

Figure 4. 121 A printed acetate, *1000 Miles*, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

Figure 4. 122 The assemblages on the plinths, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

Figure 4. 123 The assemblage on the low plinth, *The Reversible Future*, 2016
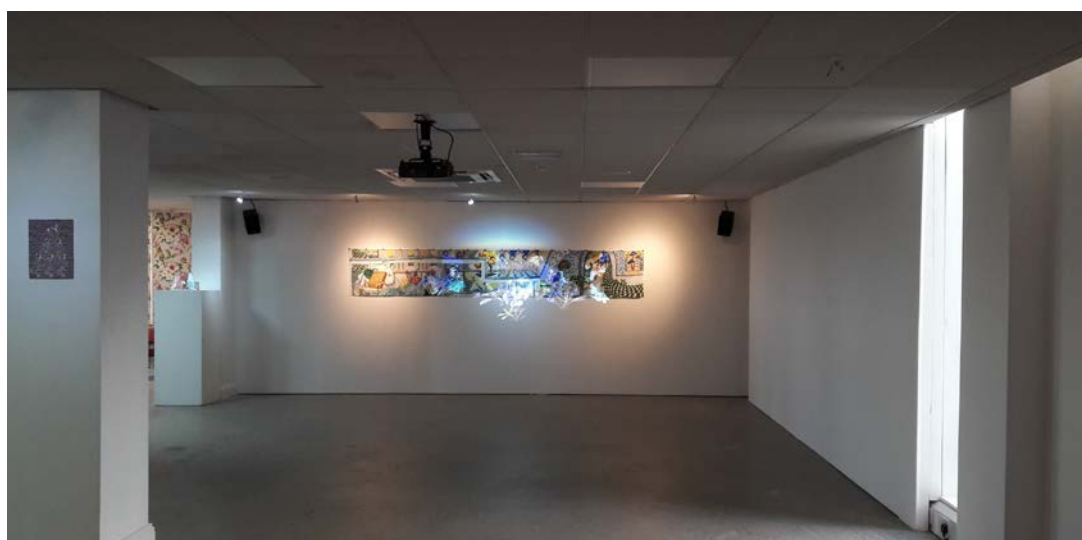
Figure 4. 124-6 *Navigation*, The Reversible Future, Breeze Creatives, 2016

Figure 4. 127-8 Installation views, *The Reversible Future*, Breeze Creatives, 2016,
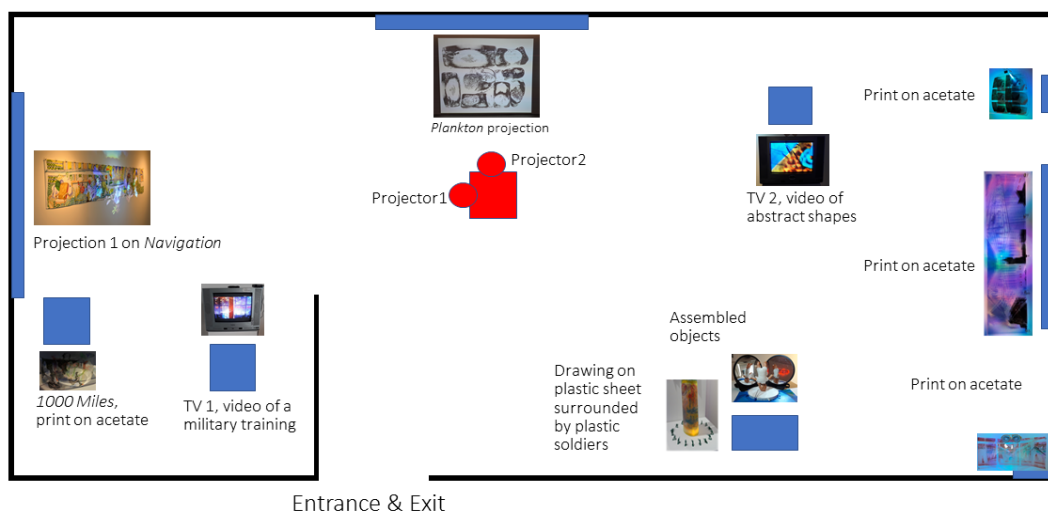
Figure 4. 129 The map of *The Reversible Future*, Breeze Creatives, 2016

For example, in *The Reversible Future*, 2016, at the right side of the gallery was the illustration *1000 Miles* printed on transparent acetate, casting a shadow of itself against the wall, and when rolled up, the characters and structures on it overlapped to produce new content (figure 4.121). On another wall *Navigation*, a digital print on a long piece of fabric (Panama Flo fabric, 150gsm, 360×60 cm, figure 124-6) hung on the wall and on another wall of the gallery, opposite the entrance was the projection (2.5×2.5 m, figure 4.127-8) of a group of 'plankton' swimming under a microscope. The assemblage of the toy baby held upside down was placed on a plinth, left of the entrance along with a group of plastic soldiers surrounding a roll of painted acetate on a lower plinth to the left (figure 4.122-3). In the corner at the end of the space on the right hung a printed acetate sheet depicting military training with a pair of toy glasses on the top. On the middle of the right wall was another long strip of printed acetate of a construction site and to its left was an acetate of a girl playing the piano.

Each part found its position based on its shape and size. The projections were given more space due to their larger role in the exhibition, whereas the prints, photos and assemblages were arranged in less prominent places.

Each one was certainly interesting by itself. However, this was part of the problem, elements were complete works in themselves and did not need to be considered with others (figure 4.129). Others were hard to associate together as they seemed to contradict or cancel one another out. This was perhaps a successful exhibition of individual artworks but not a successful narrative installation. Each element had little connection with one another and could not be read as fragments of a whole narrative. Their position within the room did not make them part of the space, but dispensable accessories. Even though they were all inspired by the same self-narrative of military training, their varied contents, mediums and styles, unlike those in *Northern Landscapes*, failed to unify the elements with any shared content. It made it impossible for the viewer to discern any coherent intention.

This experience taught me a great deal about clarity, simplicity and the significance of the proper relationship between content, method, material and placement. Separate elements without connections fail to contribute to the

narrative of an installation. They need to be configured physically and conceptually, share some similar contents, medium or material or have a special relationship. Too many kinds of the medium make it hard to configure them under one idea/concept as each material has its associations and language that may compete and conflict.

This project also reminded me of the importance of keeping the quality and character of my hand drawn/painted illustrations during their transformation into a video installation. I had experimented with using three-dimensional objects (sculptures or collected objects) as references for objects from my illustrations. For example, rather than drawing an apple, I used a real apple or a photograph of an apple. However, this cancelled the important connection to drawing/illustration by replacing its specific drawn quality, changing it to something else entirely. At the beginning of the research, I wanted to explore new possibilities in relation to my drawing but not cancel or abandon it. I was determined to find a way of turning my illustration into installations without losing the hand-drawn quality of the original image.

In *The Outsider*, 2017, I believe I achieved this goal by not overloading the audience with excessive information and controlling the type of medium and the content of the images. I focused on using pencil and watercolour drawings projected on two-dimensional surfaces and excluded found objects. All the images were drawn in a similar way with colourful lines and rich detail, even confining the main use of colour to blues and purples.

Each image also shared some similar content with the others in order to strengthen the connection between them. For example, the small girl figure in *The Beholder* (figure 4.71) appears in other parts of the installation in various sizes and different positions. The six life-scale girls in *The Outsiders* (figure 4.72) are her clones. In *The Inspectors* (figure 4.98), the figures appear as her giant twin peeping in from the ceiling and, painted on the wall behind the screen of *The Intransigent* (figure 4.105), several identical sisters trying to escape through a door.

Figure 4. 130-2 Studio 5.08 before use, 2017

Figure 4. 133-4 Studio 5.08 before use, 2017
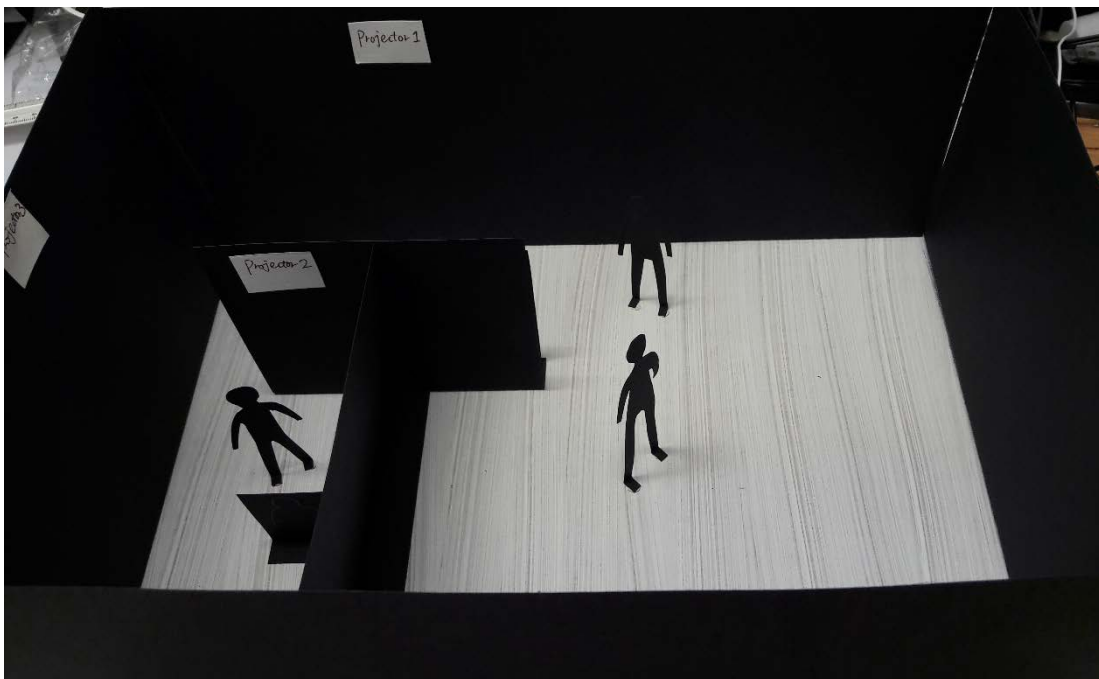
Figure 4. 135 The first maquette of *The Outsiders*, 2017
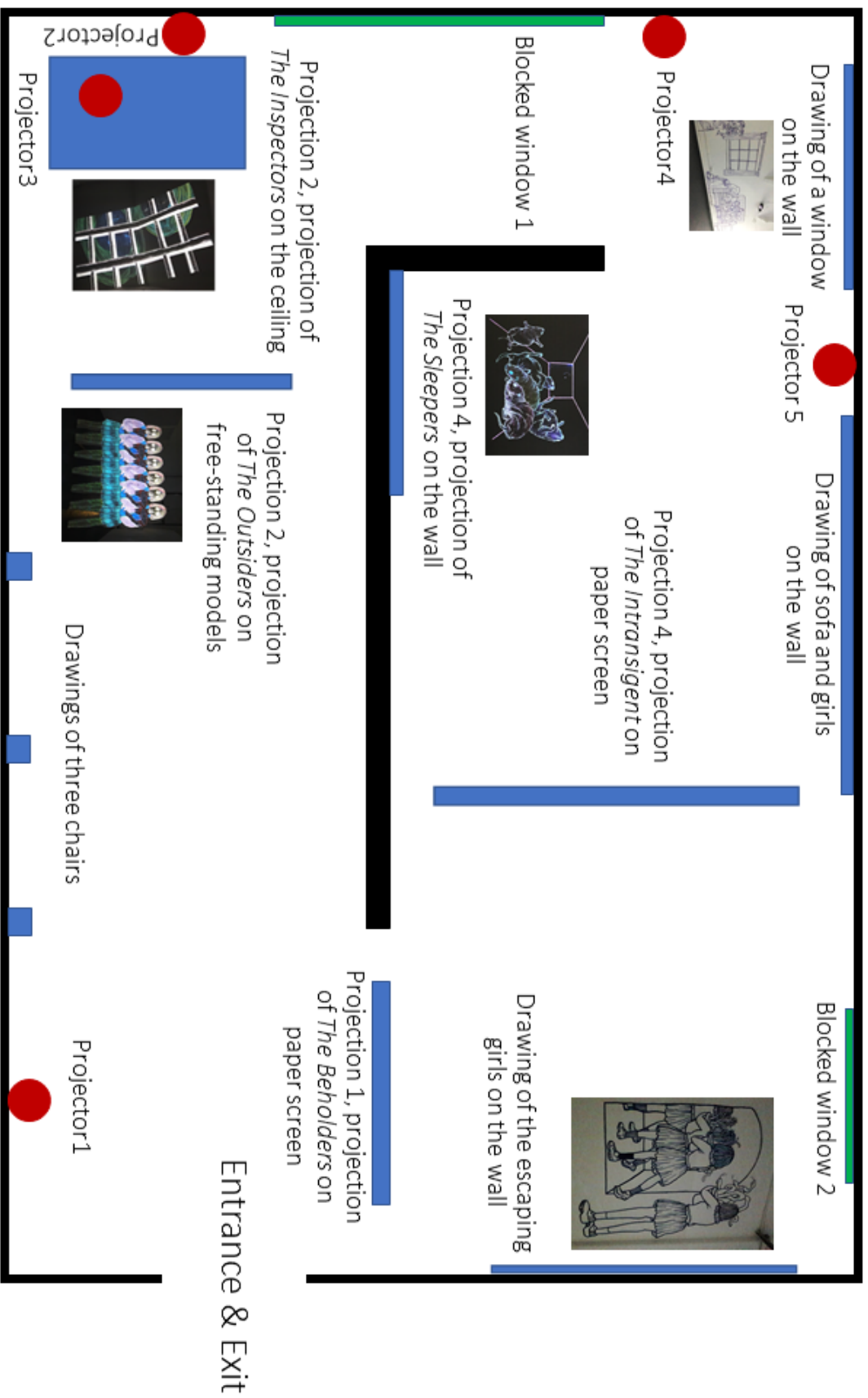
Figure 4. 136 The map of *The Outsiders*, 2017

As well as these shared details, each element was very carefully positioned in the space. I developed designs for the installations by making small-scale models of the space, allowing me to test out my ideas of, for example, how to divide the space and where to locate the projections. This, very importantly, also enabled me to think about how the audience would negotiate the space.

The space chosen by me for the 2017 exhibition was a large empty studio space with a complex angled ceiling. I blacked out the large windows at one end of the room as well as the smaller window on the right-hand wall, making the space completely dark (figure 4.130-4). I added an L-shape 2.4m high wall in the centre of the room - effectively dividing it into the halves (figure 4.136). The whole room and the L-shape wall were painted white. Two large white curtains were added to hide the blackout material on the windows while acknowledging the continued presence, shape and scale of the original architectural feature. They also softened the shape of the windows and in addition, they corresponded in part to the quality of my paper screens.

Using the maquette and map (figure 4.135-6) I had developed a schema to arrange the projections in order of scale, small to large, as the viewer walked through the room. However, I could not determine the exact size of each one until I tested the projection in the real space. I began by making The Intransigent in as large a scale (at least 2×4.5 m) as possible, as I wanted it to dominate the whole space. *The Outsiders* was already built as a freestanding life-scale cut-out (1.55m tall and 2.8m wide) and The Inspectors were to be projected on to the ceiling at a large enough scale (at least 1×2.5 m) to make them appear as though they were giants.

The main difficulty was deciding exactly where and how big *The Sleepers* and *The Beholder* were to be. I tested *The Sleepers* projected onto several different walls in the installation and although the scale seemed to work it was not easy to bond it or integrate it tightly or appropriately with the physical space. I solved this by adding a small wall at the end of the 'I' shaped wall to create an 'L' and a corner. This produced a more suitable and 'relaxing' space for the 'sleeping rats'. The problem with *The Beholder* video was that it needed to be projected at the entrance to the installation but there was limited space for it. My solution was to

add a second paper screen (approximately 1.5× 2.5 m) between the constructed and permanent walls.

Figure 4. 137-8 The drawings on walls, *The Outsiders*, 2017
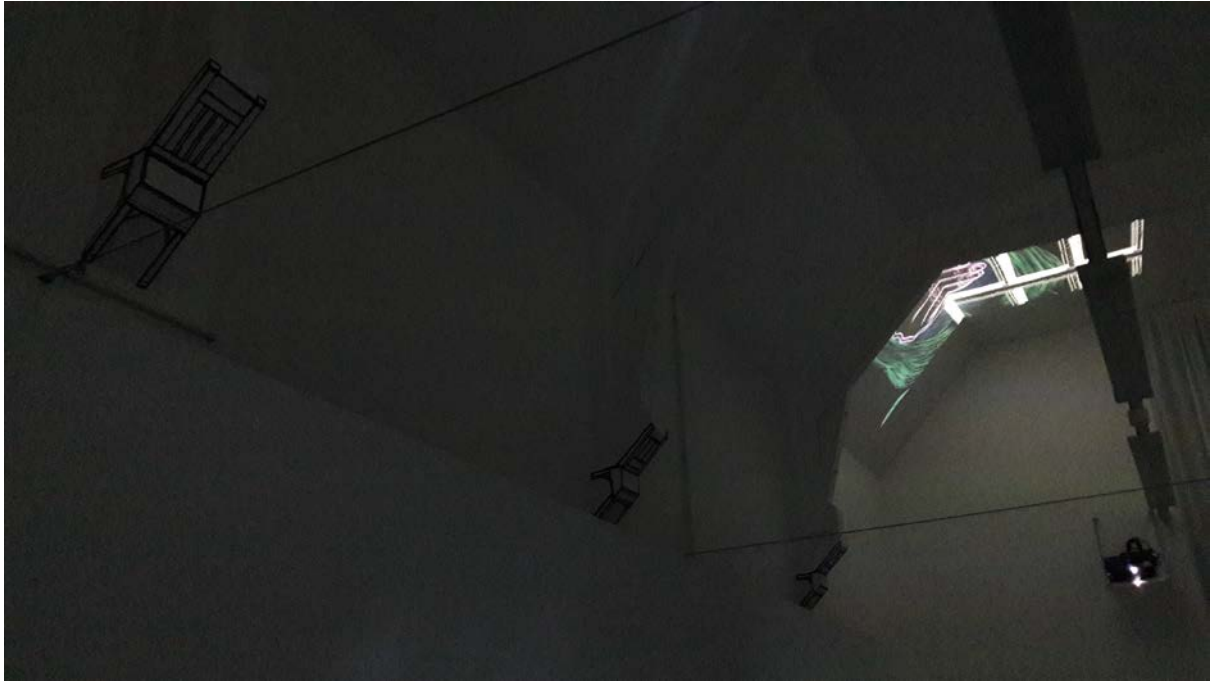
Figure 4. 139-140 The 'chairs' drawings on the wall, *The Outsiders*, 2017
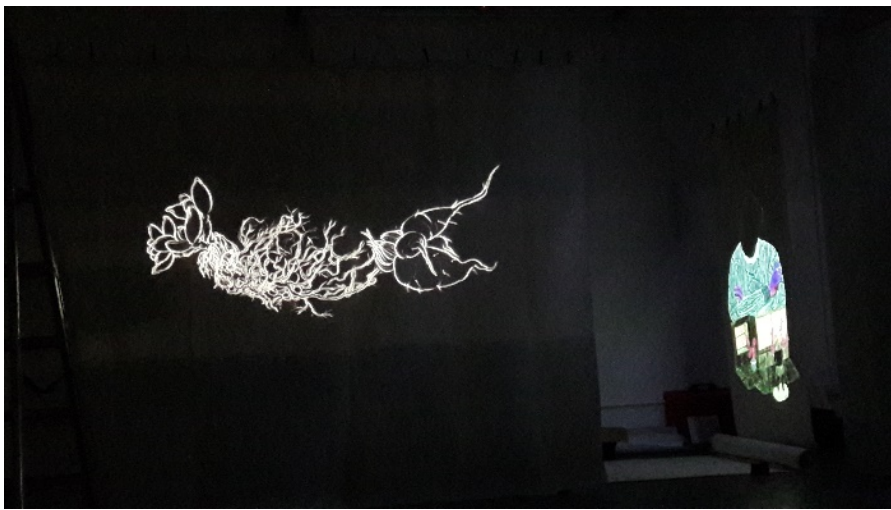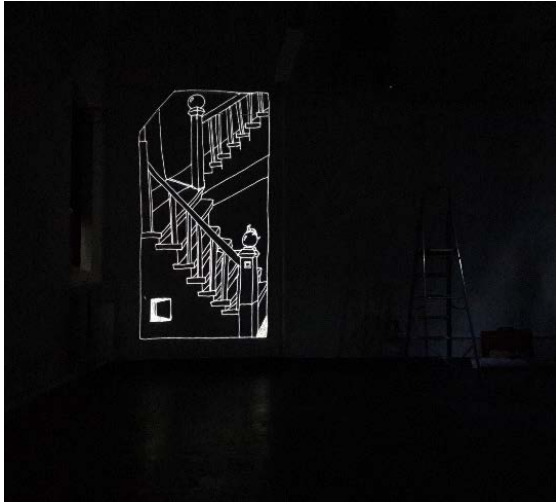
Figure 4. 141-3 Unused drawing projections, *The Outsiders*, 2017
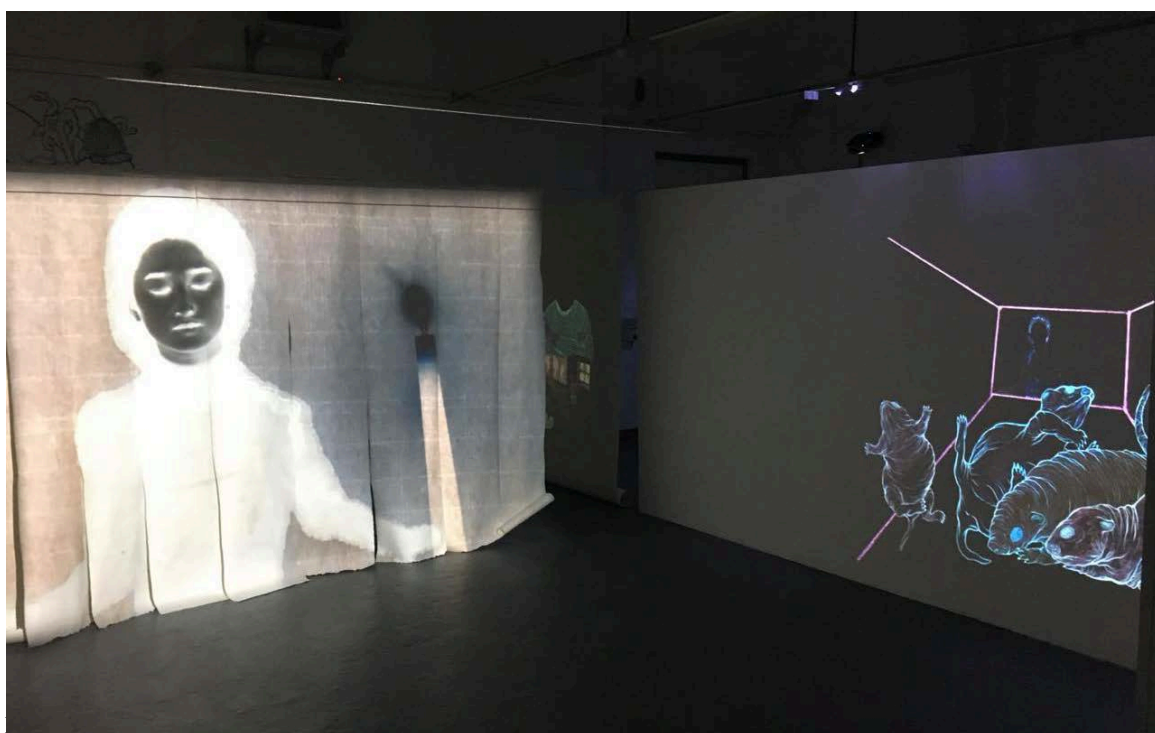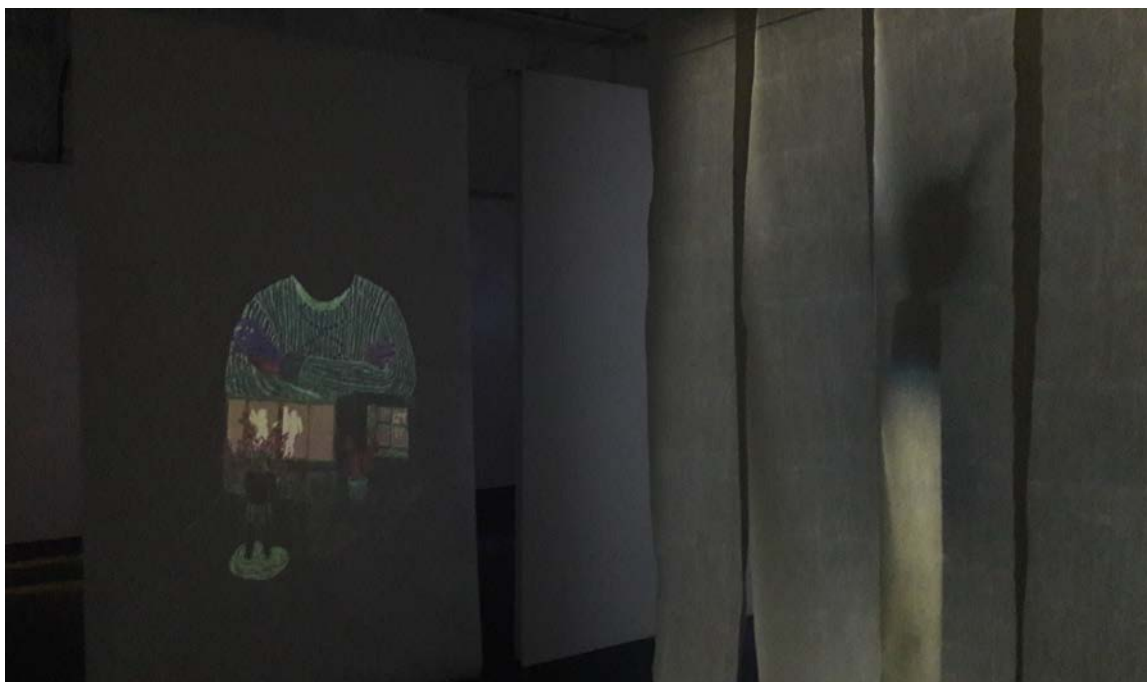
Figure 4. 145 The installation view of *The Outsiders*, 2017

Figure 4. 146-7 The installation views of *The Outsiders*, 2017

This blocked the view of *The Intransigent* video behind it and created a mysterious atmosphere at the entrance to the installation.

In the final arrangement, the audience viewed the projections from the smallest to the largest as they moved through space, creating a shrinking sensation through the change in scale. Walking from one section of the installation to another they gradually became aware of the changing relationship between themselves and the scales of the projected figures. In this way, the positioning of the projections was configured as an entirety.

Once the projections were installed, I began to integrate the drawings into space. Due to the limitations of space, I only used four drawings in the space (figure 4.137-140). Other drawings that I originally made were not used in the final exhibition (figure 4.141-3).

I drew 'chairs' on the ends of four of the ceiling beams (figure 4.144-5). Each one emphasised the three-dimensional structures of the beam and encouraged the audience to look up and explore the shape of the ceiling. When the audience turned the corner at the end of the entrance space, they saw a drawing on the right-hand wall of a window with curtains that corresponded with the two real curtains covering the windows of the room. Next to this drawing, on the wall in the opposite *The Sleepers*, I drew a group of life-scale faceless figures sitting on a sofa with dark violet acrylic (figure 4.137). On the wall behind the screen of *The Intransigent* projection, I drew several larger than life girls escaping through a door (figure 4.138). I placed it there to be the 'final discovery' at the end of the journey of exploration. This drawing depicted the characters heading towards an unknown destination 'outside' the room, implying an open end to the narrative. These drawings were lit very subtly so that they would not compete too much with the projections. The gentle contrast between the drawing and the white walls contributed to the peaceful but mysterious atmosphere.

4.6 Advantages of the 'infinite view'

The main advantage of these approaches is that they decentralised, or dispersed, the notion of a single or primary viewpoint by giving the audience an 'infinite view'.

The narrative content was dispersed throughout the space; the placement, restricted medium and repeated use of characters encouraged the audience to configure them as an entirety, even though there was no single way of doing so.

The narrative potential seemed to be 'infinite' depending on the audience. There was a great variety of ways of seeing, feeling, assembling and interpreting with no single 'correct' answer to satisfy everyone - including myself. The audience were invited to explore each part of the space, every wall, corner, window, screen, ceiling, floor etc. There were no rules to tell them where to start or finish, nor were there any definite routes that they must take. Each view, each visit may present a different experience for each person.

The 17th-century German rationalist philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz criticizes the relationship between the infinite view and linear perspective, claiming linear perspective prevents humans from the infinite viewing experience.[23] As he argues,

> ...as one and the same town viewed from different sides looks together different, and is as it were, prospectively multiplied, it similarly happens that, through the infinite multitude of simple substance, there are, as it were, just as many different universes, which however are only the perspective of a single one according to the different points of view of each monad. ... It is as in those devices of perspective, where certain beautiful designs look like mere confusion until one restores them to the right angle of version or one views them by means of a certain glass or mirror.'[24]

Leibniz pointed out that the single, frontal viewing experience is a false one as it fails to enable the audience to observe the whole magic of the object/space. It prevents us from viewing from a variety of positions, gaining alternative experiences. Our eyes are limited by their optical capabilities that allow us to see

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[23] Gottfried Wihelm Leibniz, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God. The Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil,* (Open Count, 1988), pg. 147.
[24] Ibid.

things from only one angle at a time.[25] Leibniz pursues the idea of viewing from all angles and regards it as 'the infinite gaze' of God or 'the divine eye'.[26]

Leibniz discovered this experience in theatres and argues that: 'not only the functional or meaning-making facilities mattered but also the decorative and supplementary elements.'[27] Small or big, dominating or seemingly minor, each element should be considered as essential parts of the whole context. The relationship between each element encourages the audience to build connections actively when they pay attention to each element from different perspectives. Only with this rich experience could the theatre audience obtain 'the divine eye' and be free from the limitation of static observation from one single aspect.[28]

Leibniz's wish of the 'infinite view' could, I would argue, be seen in my multi-screen video installations that demonstrate such viewing potential. They attempt to give each viewer an 'infinite view' by activating their bodily movements in the work. By separating my narrative elements to every corner of the space, I invite the audience to encounter numerous, if not infinite, ways of viewing them.

The spaces of *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems* and *The Outsiders* were divided into various sections by screens, tables and walls. These tools that I used to divide the space stopped the audience seeing all contents at once. The audience needed to walk around and be conscious of the existence of each part of the space including the ceilings, floors and corners. This uninhibited access allowed them to change their perspective by moving forward and backwards, bowing down, looking up, etc. Their sensations, understanding, comprehension and interpretation, would be the results of encountering each part of the work, including both the intentional and 'made' elements as well as the decisions made about the composition of the whole space.

This result was quite different from the single-screen video installation such as *By No Definition* discussed in Chapter 3. Although wide enough to generate some sense of an immersive encounter it was quite limited. There seemed to be no

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[25] Branka Arsic. *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (via Beckett)* (Stanford University Press, 2003), pg. 2.
[26] Ibid
[27] (Ed.) Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig, *Collection - Laboratory - Theater: Scenes of Knowledge in the 17th Century* (Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pg.275.
[28] Ibid.

need to move around the single screen or move in any way, as there were no triggers to suggest that anything lay beyond the immediate experience. In contrast, the multi-screen installation made use of every part of the space and turned the passive experience into an active one. Consequently, the audience engaged in the narrative and became a part of it.

4.7 Limits

4.7.1 The conflicting 'pictorial space' and 'installation space'

In relation to my main research question, a limitation of the installation approach to transforming my existing drawing/illustration practice was how it deconstructed the original pictorial space, requiring me to draw characters separately and potentially changing the original character and intention of my drawing/illustration.

As discussed above, my drawings were generally made by using a 'stream of consciousness' method and an 'automatic' approach. In these illustrations, the contents 'grew' little by little. Every character and object tangled with each other in a dense web. I did not plan to create the elements - they developed intuitively. However, with the specific requirements and limitations of a real spatial installation, this 'free association' of elements in the drawings, created new problems that needed to be addressed, tested and resolved. In the drawing of one part could be inspired by another, but for the installation, each part had to be drawn separately. Because of the space between each projection in the real physical space, the connection between the elements became more conceptual than directly 'entangled' as on the drawing's surface, connected by the content rather than any directly attached parts.

For example, when I developed the idea of projecting two giant heads on the ceiling, making the room into a rat cage, and then created the projection of the sleeping rats, these two parts were not originally attached, and neither were they physically connected in the installation space. There were though other links however, some invisible and some physical in the installation space. In summary, the drawings made specifically for the installation were fundamentally different from those that I use to draw. Each character had to be drawn as an entity and as

easily identifiable as possible. They were drawn using smooth outlines that were suitable for projecting and for reinforcing the sense of being 'objects'. Only one main character was arranged in each projection and told only one part of the story. They were incomplete unless 'assembled' mentally and unless assembled, retain little independent narrative value. From this point of view, they lost some qualities being a real 'illustration', which will be analysed in the Conclusion. Although the spatialised and reconfigured drawings/illustrations lost some character of the original drawings, as their content and complexity became limited by the need to be identifiable outlines, they gained the ability to be felt and understood as 'objects'.

4.7.2 The changing drawing method

As described in detail above, the questions, problems and the solutions that I have encountered and investigated, have forced me to change my approach to drawing. It could be argued though that it has some drawbacks, in that I have needed to develop more conscious control and perhaps this begins to limit my freedom of expression? Unlike my previous illustrations where the outcomes were unexpected and accidental, those for the installation were pre-determined.

The characters were the products of well-planned, rational thinking and took less time than previous illustrations. For a long time, this problem haunted me. I felt constrained not being able to use my free-flowing imagination and unconsciousness. I missed the feeling of spending time gradually developing the illustration and missed the joy of encountering the unexpected surreal figures as they grew in my mind and on the paper. The creation of the story and its characters was tightly bound with the action of drawing, tracing, and visual thinking, while those in the installation were the products of practicalities, definite goals and planned decisions.

For example, I used my auto-narrative method to find a story for an installation. I organised fragmented memories into a story about my attempt to join a friend in her room for a social gathering. This determined what kind of characters I should create and in doing this the story was made using active thinking, reflecting and concluding, and was not a natural product of the previous drawing process. Once the story was decided, I drew the characters that I needed. This chain of events

seemed to be a complete reversal of my previous drawing method. Here, the thinking went ahead of drawing and decided the content. Thus, I had concerns that this process changed the fundamental character of my drawing/illustration; not just the appearance, but also its conceptual intention and quality and it became fundamentally a completely new work.

4.8 Conclusion

To conclude, using multiple separated video projections, I spatialised my narrative works into video installations. This approach works well for both simple pictures as well as complex poly-scenic works. Located in different parts of the installation space, the images encouraged the audience to move around and search for information. Even though this process reduces some qualities of the drawing when the pictorial background is cancelled, and my drawing procedure had to be altered, it achieves a new narrative discourse. These spatialised narrative pictures also have new physical and narrative potential beyond their conventional capabilities within a pictorial frame.

In Chapter 5, I continue to reflect on these new narrative capabilities of the spatialised image: and their power to engage and immerse the audience.

Chapter 5: Events, characters and audience participation in the video installations

In Chapter 3 and 4, I analysed how I transformed my small-scale drawings/illustrations into video installations by enlarging and animating my drawings to produce both single and multi-screen video installations.

The key question of *how* to turn my illustrations into installations is, to a lesser or greater extent resolved, although each approach has its advantages and limitations and present a range of outcomes from the different methods used.

Of significance to me are the new narrative discourses that develop as a result of spatialising my illustrations. By creating a way for the viewer to literally walk into my stories, new unforeseen psychological engagements were generated. The audience's bodily immersion in the work brought about a series of reactions that transformed the meaning of the characters and events, broadening their connotations. I was excited by this outcome and encouraged to discover how exactly it occurred and how I could continue to exploit it effectively.

This chapter analyses the key elements (the bodily immersion, semi-darkness, varied scales and free association) that contributed to the development of these new narrative dialogues. In addition, how the audience's direct engagement within the work has the potential to absorb them into the narrative and allow them to become 'characters' in the story and create their own stories.

Firstly, I analyse the audience's bodily immersion by comparing the difference between the engagement with two-dimensional illustration and installation art, describing how the slow psychological engagement with pictures is turned to 'live engagement' in installations.

Secondly, I investigate the semi-dark environment that is required by my video installations, which helps to enhance the self-awareness and focus of the audience without impairing the qualities and nature of the image.

Thirdly, I explain how differences in scales - of the elements within the projections/drawings generate distinct effects in terms of engaging the audience. More specifically, how the use of the miniature, the life-scale and the large/over-scale elements affect the relationship between the viewer, the characters and the narrative of the installations.

Lastly, I analyse the role of the audience in the free-associating and transformation of narrative elements, becoming open narratives, based on Umberto Eco's 'open work' theory.

Observation approach

An extremely important aspect of this practice-based research has been the refining of ideas in relation to audience response and feedback. Throughout I have developed my ideas of how best to spatialise my drawings, based on my theoretical and contextual research and my personal experiences. However, at each stage, I have tested these by presenting them to a live audience. Two main methods were employed in relation to evaluating audience engagement, direct observation and informal interviews during the exhibition.

Observation is a direct and efficient way to gain first-hand knowledge. Depending on the nature of the work (exhibition, single screen installation or fully immersive installation) I either stood outside of the work to observe or walked around with the viewers, following the flow. I did not intervene or initiate conversations with the audience and in the main, they were not aware that I was the author. As well as a visual observation I surreptitiously listened to discussions concerning the work. I photographically recorded some aspects of audience engagement and reflected upon this subsequently in my research logs. Other recorded information includes the average time spent in the installation, gender and age range.

The most useful information in relation to these observations was how the viewer approached and physically engaged with the work. Whether they stood still in a 'sweet spot' or moved 'into' and through the work. The placement of their body in relation to each element, their expressions and even minor body movements were all telling in relation to whether my intentions were being fulfilled. For example, in the

video installation *By No Definition*, 2015, an audience of three women in their early twenties engaged in an unpredicted way with the projection. Using their shadows, they 'played' with the animation of a ball for approximately 5 minutes. I also understood how conceptually engaged they were as they called to each other to 'catch the ball.' Some young children also interacted directly with the projections but were restrained by parents. In *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016, the audience's bodily movements were more obvious and frequent as they bent to examine the details of the small drawings on the table, sat to listen to the video projection or look up to observe the projection on the ceiling.

Informal interviews were usually conducted in relation to an invited audience/viewer. These were like 'private views' lasting 10 - 15 minutes. After viewing the work unaccompanied, I would meet with the individual or small group to discuss their reaction to the work. I asked about their initial overall response, their direct feelings before moving on to more specific aspects of the work, for example, the characters and narrative. The questions asked by these interviewees were also very telling. For example, what my intention was, why the choice of methods and materials, the relationship between the characters and scenes and me.

An example of an interview for *By No Definition*, 2015 was with a friend who also brought his young boy. They moved around the screen and touched the projected creatures several times. We talked about the soundtrack the quality of the voice reading a poem and discussed my intentions in creating the creatures and their settings.

Several discussions with invited guests in their early twenties for *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016 related to the projection onto a pile of rocks. They were interested in why and where I had collected the materials. Most did not observe the projection on the ceiling (due to the strong daylight) until I pointed it out to them.

Observing the audience's movements and direct interaction with the work provided clear and authentic evidence in relation to my intentions, however, the interviews were less definitive. In the discussion, it was easier to get confused or 'stuck' on one aspect, for example, how or why I made the work rather than focusing on their views of the experience. This nevertheless reflected some of the issues that needed adjustment. Later interviews made in relation to *The Outsiders*, 2017 were able to

focus more on broader topics such as the characters and narrative. I was particularly pleased to find the audience curious about the background context to the work and that they had picked up on the self-narrative and the broader social commentary in the work.

5.1 Bodily immersion

In this section, I will analyse the audience's bodily engagement with my video installation in contrast to the experience of reading a two-dimensional picture.

A viewer's participation in my two-dimensional drawings/illustrations is mainly psychologically. Physical interaction is highly limited. As art historian Normal Bryson points out, most, although not all, two-dimensional arts are made on a relatively small scale due to limitations in material, time and costs.[1] These works generally create a micro-universe in which miniature characters and other details appear smaller than life-scale. Any bodily interaction with these small-scale pictures is largely made through the hands and eyes, with the rest of the body relatively inactive.

When viewing an illustration in a book the reader needs only to turn the page. My handscroll illustration *Giving Feeding the Tiger,* 2014 requires a little more hand coordination as the viewer opens one side (left) while closing the other (right) to change the aspect of the scroll (figure 1.14).

A reader/viewer of a book illustration has what art critic and historian Claire Bishop calls, 'a pair of disembodied eyes'.[2] The reader stands at a distance and triggered by the compositional setting 'experiences' the narrative space in their imagination. As perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim points out, this psychological engagement can be a time-consuming and arduous process rather than a quick insight.[3] He describes a vivid metaphor of this process,

> 'Looking at an object we reach out for it, with an invisible finger we
> move through the space around us, go out to the distant places where
> things are found, touch them, catch them, scan their surfaces, traces,

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[1] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, (Cambridge University Press), pg. xv.
[2] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art, A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing, 2005), pg. 6.
[3] Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, (University of California Press, 1984), pg.35.

trace their borders, explore their textures. It is an eminently active occupation …a physical process of vision.'[4]

In my poly-scenic illustration *Tale of Genji - Parallel Universe VI*, for example, made by drawing a 'stream of consciousness', the viewer's eyes and their attention need to follow the connected shapes (figure 1.12). It is a 'constellation' - a network where elements are arranged in fixed positions and roles.[5] Each element has a specific role in defining the other and in the whole compositional effect.[6] Nothing is separate.

As Norman Bryson points out, it is the visual information reaching our eyes in the form of a 'stream of contiguities' that link the information and form an unbreakable chain.[7] Elements are interlocked into a dense web that resists any attempt to interpret them individually. Each character, twisted line, inter-connected shape or miniature creature in *Tale of Genji - Parallel Universe VI*, lacks any independent value when separated from the original composition (figure 4.30).

The role of the viewer's body is of no consequence in this psychological engagement. In fact, in the process of trying to decode the complex puzzle of the drawing they may forget themselves and become oblivious to bodily sensations. The image takes the reader on a mental journey beyond reality. The copious information pouring into their mind does not indicate a beginning or end. The attempt to configure the chaos happens silently in the mind.

Organising this drawing's composition was a slow process, requiring me to carefully trace and shape the mutually dependent elements; one leading to the other, one distracting another, trapped in a dense web of visual triggers that evoke the stories behind them. The elements were referential, inspiring and reflective.

My installation works went beyond this psychological engagement, emphasising the physical space that each composition inhabits. A fundamental difference between my video installations and my drawings is that the installation work physically embeds the audience within the work, allowing them to experience it both visually and bodily.

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[4] Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, (University of California Press, 1984), pg.13.
[5] Ibid, pg.14.
[6] Ibid, pg. 40.
[7] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pg. 21.

In the installations *By No Definition*, 2015 and *The Outsiders*, 2017, spatialised characters and events build new environments for both psychological and physical exploration. In these works, the audience has not only 'eye contacts' but also a real physical engagements utilising all their senses. These works provided spaces large enough for the viewer to walk into and wander about in freely. As well as imagining, they can see, move, feel and hear - their views and sensations changing as they move into different parts of space and encounter pictures in various scales.

Located in various parts of the space rather than as a two-dimensional surface, not all the elements of these multi-screen installations can be seen simultaneously. In *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016, the projections and drawings were arranged at a distance from one another. The audience, when looking at the drawings and objects on the tables, could not see the video projections, and vice-versa.

In *The Outsiders,* 2017 for example, when stepping into the room, the audience could only view the first scene (*The Beholders*) clearly, while the other elements of the installation were only partially visible (figure 4.71, 136). The additional projections and drawings were obscured by the L-shaped configuration of the space. The visual continuity of a pictorial plane was disrupted and destroyed, forcing the audience to find another way to hold the elements together. They couldn't acquire all the information if they stayed in one position - they must move through space to 'collect' what they need. Consequently, the contents of the installations are closely connected to, and reliant on, this bodily participation.

This bodily engagement, according to my practical research and experience, owes its mechanism to one key factor, namely the relative scale of the pictures in the installation. Using animations (drawings/illustrations) in a variety of scales (miniature size, life-scale and large/over-scale) I could activate the audience physically and mentally. For example, they need to go close to look at the miniature-scale elements or stay back to view those larger than themselves. Or, the very-magnified pictures (life-scale and large/over-scale) with stronger visual power and presence, may assert to be 'equal' or even to 'dominate' the audience psychologically.

Walking among elements of varied sizes, the audience may be persuaded or transformed, to become 'characters' - dropping into my stories. Their bodily

engagement and presence have the potential to enrich the contents of the narrative. This bodily engagement turned the audience from observers in to 'characters' participating in the 'live' stories.

5.2 The 'live' events and the audience being 'characters'

Compared to the 'frozen moment' feel of my static small-scale illustrations, my animation installations create 'live events' happening 'now' and participated in by the viewers. In contrast, the narratives in my illustrations seem to have happened in a time distant from now and in a space alien to the reader.

In the illustrations such as *Parallel Universe VI* (figure 1.12), real events have been recorded, organised and presented in one way - even though there may be many alternative possibilities. The audience is led on a visual journey where they can see a series of elements in a surreal world all within one pictorial space. While examining the image the audience imagine it, perhaps as set in the past. It has little connection with 'now' and is distant, in many aspects, from reality.

When transformed to become installations, my drawings gain a material quality as 'objects' inhabiting a physical space. They have a physical form: a paper screen (figure 4.104-5), piled-up rocks (figure 4.49-52), a semi-transparent curtain (figure 4.113, 115), MDF cut-outs (figure 4.72), etc. They could take up a corner of a room, separate the space into two, cover up a window or block a route. The audience could walk around the paper screen, touch the rough surface of the sculptures and feel the weight of the rocks and the movement of the curtain.

My narrative video installations presented events in 'real' time, giving the audience a vivid first-hand experience. The viewer did not 'enter' the drawings using their imagination only; they encountered characters and events physically. In these video installations, viewers witness the events of the animations as happening in 'real time'. The audience entered the narrative space, interacting with the spatialised characters and scenes as if discovering something unexpected in a dark cave. The boundaries between the story and reality were blurred and permeable.

For example, in *By No Definition,* a big beetle moves flowerpots around and fountains spring out of the rocks in front of them (figure 2.39). In *The Outsiders,* the

viewer watched as the image of a giant woman was painted with an invisible brush from behind the real paper screen. They turned a corner and find a group of big hairless rats breathing and stretching their legs in the darkness (figure 4.147). In *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* seagulls hovered above their heads as they perused the collection of objects on the tables (figure 4.110-112).

Figure 5.1 Audience's shadows on the projection, *By No Definition*, 2015

Their bodily immersion in the narrative enabled them to walk between reality - the objects on display, and the imagined - the video animation. Their different actions also provided a resource for the deciphering of the work's meaning. They must look closely and carefully at the small drawings on the table - walk around to see each side of the small objects - bend down to see the projection on the rocks. While sitting on chairs to watch the animation on the curtain, they must look up high to see the projection of seagulls hovering above their heads. As if following stage directions, my 'actors and actresses' performed how I expected them to, and in response to how I have choreographed the space (figure 4.109).

Russian artist Ilya Kabakov describes his 'total installations' as a 'well-structured dramatic plays' in which everything has a function in the plot.[8] People are 'diving',

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[8] Claire Bishop , *Installation Art: A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing,2012), pg. 14-5

'engulfed' or 'engrossed' in the work as their bodily movements contribute to the 'plot' of the 'drama'.[9]

The participation of the audience blurs the boundary between the subject and the object. In the viewer's imagination, the drawn characters became 'real' figures standing in the room with them, alongside other members of the audience. They all became 'characters' in the narrative.

Figure 5.2 Audience's shadows on the projection, *By No Definition*, 2015

According to phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'subject and object' are inseparable and mutually dependent. They are connected in our mind as if 'two-halves of an orange'.[10] Without the participation of the audience, the object - the projections and drawings, would not have the quality of being 'real'; and without the drawn characters in the space, the subject - the audience, could not imagine a fictional world.

As well as this personal relationship between the viewer and the drawn or animated characters, members of the audience that share the space can also become

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[9] Ilya Kabakov, *On the Total Installation*, (Bonn, 1995), pg.275.
[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (Northwestern University Press, 1994), pg. 133.

'characters' for one another. The shape of another person's body reflected in the glow of the projection or its shadow cast on the wall may affect the 'contents' of the work (figure 5.1-3).

The number of people in the installation at any one time could also affect the experience. As a solitary experience, it was quite disturbing, enigmatic and quiet, but when the installation was crowded, it became more playful and louder. Encountering other people in the space, was, in effect, encountering other characters in the story. Seeing them in relation to the scale of the drawings and projections gave the viewer a clearer sense of their own relative scale.

My invitation to the audience to be 'characters', in one way or another, in my narrative required me to emphasise their self-awareness. In all my video installations, I reached this goal by using semi-dark spaces which guaranteed both the video projections' high quality and the heightened awareness and focus of the audience. Below, I will analyse how this factor affected my practice.
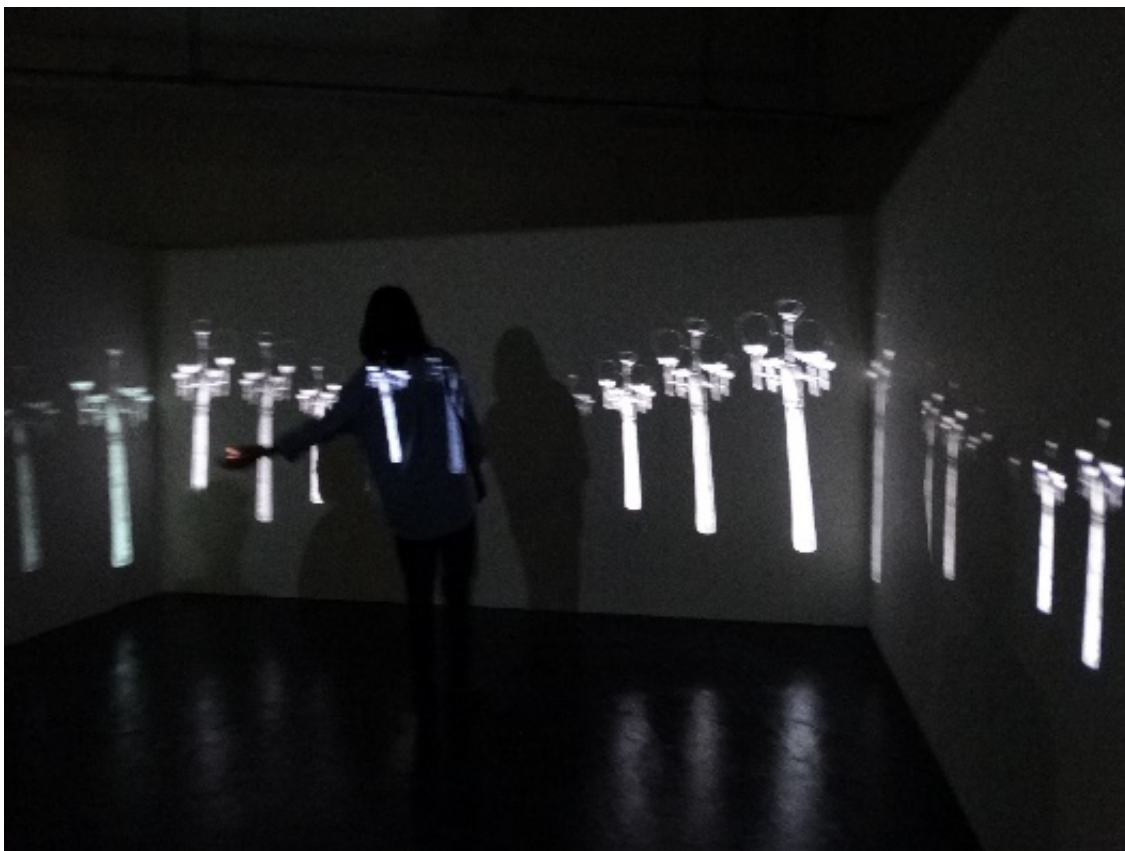
Figure 5.3 Audience engaging with the projection, *By No Definition*, 2015

5.3 The semi-darkness

The 'live event' effect of the projection-based installations renews or changes the relationship between the body of the viewer and the physical space by either emphasising it or weakening it. Among the many factors that contributed to the ideal or appropriate results of my installations, was the quality of light in the space.

The light quality of a video installation needs to be considered and tested through careful tests. The light should be the right balance between the total darkness and brightness to guarantee both the quality of the projection and the audience's self-awareness.

For example, *By No Definitions*, 2015 was set within a light-tight space, giving complete darkness to enhance the quality of the projected image. However, it didn't stop the audience seeing themselves and other people in the audience, especially if they were standing in the middle of the U-shape wall (figure 5.1-3). The reflected light from the projection created enough ambient light for the audience to see the space and themselves. This semi-darkness created a dreamlike atmosphere in which the audience can, however, see quite clearly.

Complete darkness, an art historian and critic Claire Bishop's view, 'dissolves', 'dislodges' and 'annihilates' the audience.[11] In the darkness that expands into the unknown and provides no referential information that would tell them where they are, the audience loses any sense of their location.[12] Their route through space is not perceptible or obvious. French psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski also states that darkness can cancel any sense of self.[13] The audience would be trapped in 'nowhere' - their bodies melting into the darkness.

I generally attempted to avoid this overwhelming darkness, as I did not want to stop my audience from sensing their own bodily behaviours. Inside these, sometimes, dark magical boxes, the audience were not supposed to gain power but to lose it. They were reminded of their insignificance and vulnerability when confronting the

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[11] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing,2012), pg. 84, 86.
[12] Eugene Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 1970, (Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies, 1970), pg. 428, 405.
[13] Ibid.

unknown.[14] In the darkness, scale, shape, colour and distance are indefinite. We lose a complete understanding of our own body and neither could we see how other people move and react, inevitably confusing our sensations and self-awareness.

My installations required a balance between darkness and light. I needed darkness to enhance the quality of the projections and create a dream-like atmosphere. I kept the light as low as possible, just enough for the audience to see where they were, who was around them, the scale of the space they inhabited and to clearly see the non-projected elements of the installation (drawings, objects and sculptures).

I realised how important the right balance of light was when I made my first video projection installation work *By No Definition.* Here, I noticed that most of the time the audience was not very active; they stood at a specific distance from the projection screen, hiding in the darkness. When they approached the screen, their bodies lit up as the glow from the large U-shaped screen embraced them. They also cast their shadows on the screen by stepping in front of the projector, adding the silhouettes of new 'human characters' onto the black-and-white animations. In this way, they

Figure 5.4 *The Outsiders*, photo: Victoria Chen. 2017

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[14] Claire Bishop , *Installation Art: A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing,2012), pg. 90.

became 'actors' participating in a game of shadows. This interaction was particularly obvious when the audience tried to 'catch the bouncing ball' in the animation with their shadowy hands (figure 5.4). In *By No Definition*, 2015, I came across this effect accidentally but in later works, I used this potential of the semi-dark space deliberately.

In *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016, the natural light through the windows of the Ex Libris Gallery enabled the audience to see clearly both the projections and the objects placed on the tables. I arranged the main projection in the shadow of a wall opposite the window that offered the minimum amount of darkness required for the projection (figure 4.110-112); likewise, the video of the hovering seagulls on the rocks. The seagulls projected on the high ceiling were quite subtle, becoming only pale shapes when the sunshine was too bright. It was interesting to notice how the projections became brighter and clearer when the day darkened towards the afternoon. Here perhaps the quality of light was too bright. It gave the minimum required clarity to the objects and encouraged the audience to move around the space to view each element, but there was no 'dream-like' atmosphere.

The main video animation projected onto a screen was tucked behind a wall and limited in scale in order to maintain the quality of the projection. There was a good connection established between objects and projections but there was little sense of stepping into an imaginary space and becoming a character in the scene.

In my concluding installation *The Outsiders*, 2017, I returned to using semi-darkness in order to create a sense of atmosphere and as a way of engaging the audience physically and emotionally in the space and therefore in the narrative (figure 5.4-5). I wanted to avoid the static confrontation between audience and video screen that occurred in *By No Definition*. Instead, I wanted to encourage the free movement of the audience around the space, moving between elements as in *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* but to also have the potential to project the video animations on a large scale without losing image quality.

I created the semi-darkness by having a very large room that I could divide into distinct but connected areas by building temporary walls. This meant that I could project one or two video animations of significant size in each space, without the reflected light becoming too strong and destroying the dream-like quality of the semi-darkness. In the iteration of the installation, five separate projections illuminated the spaces with different degrees of brightness, altering the atmosphere of each section of the room and revealing the drawings on the walls (figures 4.137-8). Space
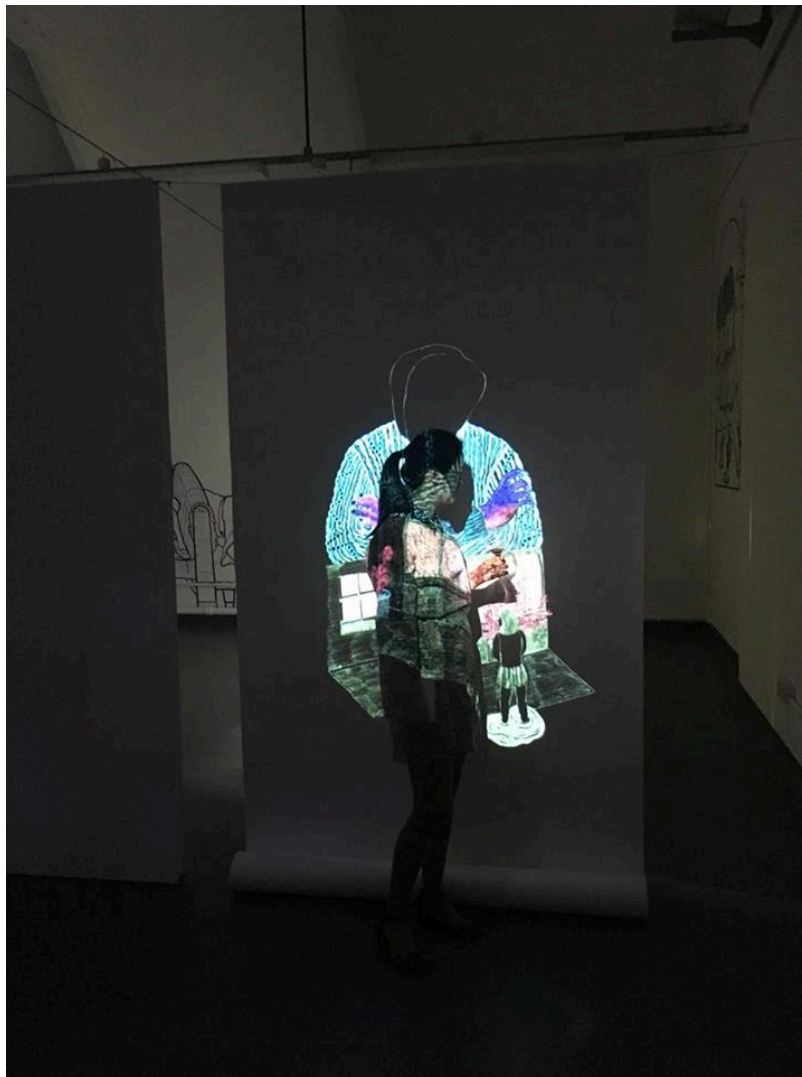
Figure 5.5 *The Outsiders*, photo: Rob Colbert. 2017

became 'unstable' with areas of light and shadow, revelation and concealment, where characters (including the audience) appeared in the transient brightness of the projections and disappeared in the semi-darkness between them. The audience was able to see only some of the space at any one time and meandered through the labyrinth of spaces as if half-awake and walking in a dream.

5.4 Body and scale

A significant factor involved in solving my key questions was the scale of the drawing spatialised in the installations. The 'scale' of the drawn characters greatly affected the role, actions and perception of the viewers in relation to the images.

To begin with, though, I need to be clear on the difference between 'scale' and 'size'. These two words can have similar meanings. They can be simply numbered/measurements to describe the space taken by the object. Even though they are often used as equivalent in general cases, they describe two distinct meanings in the context of visual art.

Art historian T.J. Clark explains that 'size' is an objective and literal measurement of an object based on its physical property and can be understood immediately. However, 'scale' is relative and metaphorical and depends on the contrast with the viewer's body and is flexible in varying contexts.[15] The human body is a crucial reference in understanding how big an object is - or what the scale is. American sculptor Robert Morris observed that a person is aware of the scale of an object by comparing their body to it and that this simultaneously reveals the space between objects.[16]

So, I use 'size' to describe the objective measures of pictures/objects, for example, the size of *The Parallel Universe VI* is 24 × 36 cm (figure 1.12). While, when exploring the relationship between the audience's bodies, I use the term 'scale'. For example, a life-scale projection, a miniature-scale object.

Norman Bryson argues also for an understanding of these terms in relation to 'emotional intensity', which has been evident in my video installations.[17] Curator and designer Tristan Manco also support the idea that the scale of a narrative character or other visual elements can be very powerful.[18] Various scales such as miniature-scale (smaller than real objects/figure/human), life-scale (similar/same with the real)

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[15] T.J. Clark, eds Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Kamel, 'Pollock's Smallness', *Jackson Pollock-New Approaches,* (Harry N. Abrams, 1999), pg. 15-16.
[16] Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture', *Artforum*, 1969, Volume 7, no. 8.
[17] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pg. xv.
[18] Tristan Manco, *Big Art, Small Art*, (Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2014).

and giant/over-scale (larger than the real) could trigger distinct physical activities and reactions accompanied by psychological reactions.

In my video installations, the audience viewing my installations were encouraged to recognise and respond to these differences in size and in doing so access memories, search for clues and build up connections between the characters, and between the characters and themselves. Here, I will investigate each type based on my practice and their functions in enhancing the audience's bodily participation.

5.4.1 Miniature-scale characters/objects, events and participation.

Figure 5.6-7 Miniatures on display in *Dislocations, North Landscapes: Picture Poem*, 2016

The miniature characters, by virtue of their size/scale, pull the audience towards them in order to have a close, private and intense look.

I included them for two reasons. Firstly, to make the audience aware of my manipulation of scale; in contrast to the life-scale and giant characters, these miniature figures are closer in size to those of the original illustrations. Secondly, these 'miniatures' attempt or aim to trigger a reassessment of scale in the audience (as described above) and create a sense of the viewer's domination over the smaller characters. As American poet Susan Stewart notes, the miniature calls for intimate and close observation in the domestic personal environment, which is dominated and manipulated by the viewer.[19]

These miniatures produced the familiar experience of looking at a book illustration closely and carefully, for example by placing them within an installation space made them more physical and immediate. They ask the audience to pay attention in order not to miss important details. These small-scale, miniature characters and objects act as the artefacts in their small scale, attempting to trigger curiosity in the audience.

For example, in *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* 2016 responding to post-industrial old communities, abandoned and desolate space, the video projection *When Grief Turns Carnival* was projected on the piled-up rock and brick (figure 4.51-4). The tiny size (about 17 cm wide and 24 cm tall) encouraged the audience to approach closely and observe at an intimate distance. Only then did they see how the scale of the small birds keep changing as the projection falls across the uneven surfaces.

Also, in this work, there were twenty small drawings (average size 8 × 6 cm) of memorable objects, placed on two large tables, as if specimens in an archive. The drawings on tracing paper required the audience to hold their breath so as not to blow them away when looking at such a close distance. They presented the fragile quality of the memories arranged in the installation, inviting the audience to treat them gently and carefully.

A drawing (figure 2.87) of a little house by the sea was animated in the video projection *North Point* in *Then is Diffused in Now* (figure 4.116). The tiny house

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[19] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Duke University Press Books,2012), pg. 69.

implied a great distance between the audience and life fading into the past. The tiny house in the animation does not invite the audience to live in it. At such a distance they couldn't know what it is for, what happened there, or who lived in it. The audience were trapped at sea heading off to an unknown place leaving these old things behind. The distance implied by the small-scale of 'house' made the audience passive onlookers who have nothing to do with the events of history.

Alongside the drawing, there were several white plastic miniature people, approximately 30mm high, combined with the other collected objects and drawings on the tables. There was a girl walking in the dense 'moss land' (figure 5.6). Another one was sitting on some rotten wood (figure 5.7). These miniature people acted as complementary elements in the narratives. I intentionally weakened their existence by using tiny models (approximately 8 mm tall). This was to emphasise the emptiness of the landscapes, abandoned and left behind in the historical social changes, as well as the smallness of an individual in the face of irresistible change. They also attempted to intensify the emotional tension: memories were fragile and vulnerable, fragments easily forgotten and ignored. Without patient and gentle attention, they could become invisible.

In the first projection, *The Beholders,* in the video installation *The Outsiders*, 2017, there was a small character (approximately 10 cm tall) who has her back to the audience and is overlooked by a second, larger female character with a blank face (figure 4.71). Her small scale emphasised her insignificance to the group that she attempts to join. The larger character dominates; she was the 'insider' in charge of the whole scene.

The small figure, in contrast, has a tiny body arranged at the bottom of the drawing, suggesting her subordinate position as the 'inferior outsider' - rejected and marginalised. The audience could play the powerful 'insider' who ruled the tiny figure of the girl as if she was a small doll in a dollhouse, vulnerable and easily manipulated. Her hidden features left the audience with some unknown information, an open-ended situation, suggesting perhaps that the girl may have a chance to transform the situation as the story develops further within the installation.

Figure 5.8-9 The participating audience in *By No Definition,* 2015

Also, in *The Outsiders*, there were four 'chairs' drawn on the top of the arched beams on the ceiling (figure 4.139-140). These tiny chairs appeared to be hung on the wall by invisible strings. Their small scale indicated that they are miniatures, re-defined by the structure of the building and their role in the story. On the one hand they encouraged the audience to observe the structure of the physical space that they were in, and on the other hand, and most importantly, they proclaimed that this
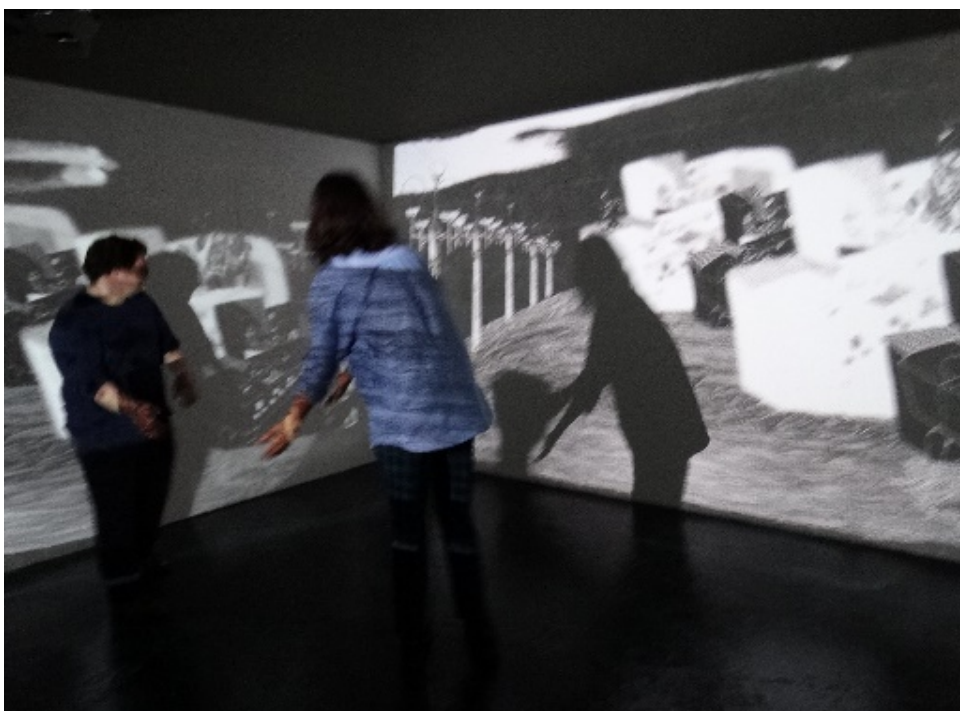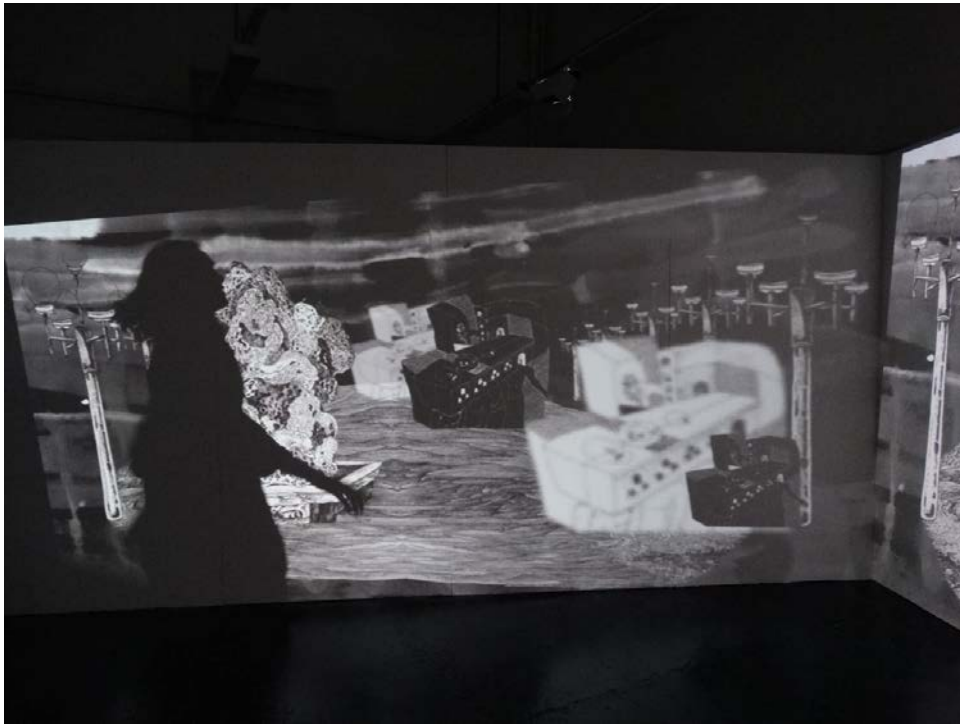
Figure 5.10-11 Audience participating with the projection, *By No Definition*, 2015

was a surreal space where things have new meanings from their everyday designation. The miniature chairs implied absent tiny characters who might sit on them and that the audience has entered a 'strangers' home, discovering their tiny furniture.

5.4.2 Life-scale characters/objects, events and participation

There were numerous life-scale characters and objects in my installations. They helped to build a sense of reality, maximising the illusionary experience in the semi-darkness. As art historian Rachel Wells points out, life-scale can be, 'life-size as a trick, as a fake stand-in for the real'.[20] The life-scale figures also refer to the 'real' by integrating themselves with the audience. A life-scale element is what Rachel Wells identifies as the 'universal' and symbolise 'a common standard', a 'reference point' for comparison and calling for common human awareness.[21]

I regarded life-scale figures/projections as tools used to break the boundary between reality and the story, life and fiction. In order to produce an abnormal and restless tension, I avoided representing them using a realistic style, as photographs for example. Instead, I emphasised the drawn quality of the life-scale characters using slightly distorted and exaggerated shapes. I also refrained from making them '3D' objects that could be viewed from 360 degrees, as it was important that they retained a direct relationship to illustration, as the installations were transformed drawings - not sculptural installations.

In *The Outsiders*, the audience could identify most closely with the life-scale figures and were at a resting point in the installation, the mid-point between the miniatures and the giants. The audience themselves were neither giants nor tiny rats in a cage but, like the life-scale characters, they were the 'real-scale', neither growing nor shrinking.

Another a typical example was the 'ball' bouncing in video installation *By No Definition,* 2015 (figure 5.8-11). Near the end of the second episode, I animated a 'ball,' about the size of a basketball, bouncing up and down against a landscape of box-like buildings and an artificial mountain. The audience approached the screen and used their own shadows to pretend to catch and pass the ball to each other. As the U-shape wall was covered by three identical projections, the audience could walk back and forth, 'playing' with the ball on the different screens. The bouncing ball triggered an audience interaction, turning their shadows into 'characters' in the installation. Here, the life-scale characters were the audience and their shadows.

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[20] Wells discusses the potential meanings of 'size' and 'scale'. Rachel Wells, *Scale in Contemporary Sculpture: Enlargement, Miniaturisation and the Life-Size*, (Routledge, 2013), pg. 103.
[21] Ibid, pg. 95.

In *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, the projection *Carnival* on the ceiling, turned the audience into characters walking along a beach, looking up at the far-reaching sky where the birds hover (figure 4.110-112). The contrast between this life-scale projection and the miniature one demonstrates how the audience 'transforms their identity' by altering their position in relation to the work. The audience became the characters in a story who can decide where they want to be - a wild beach looking at the sky or a small corner where they could relax and enjoy observing the details on small objects (figure 4.51-4).

Another example was *The Outsiders*, the eponymous second projection in the installation *The Outsiders,* 2017. When the audience walked into the room, before they passed or encountered the L-shape wall, they would encounter a life-scale projection of a row of girls carefully mapped onto a shaped MDF screen (figure 4.72). The screen was 156 cm tall, the average height of a teenage girl in China.

The girls appeared as a free-standing life-scale cut-out, sharing the same space as the audience. The audience could walk around them, touch them and feel their hard, flat 'bodies'. Even though they were largely two-dimensional, they have the sense of being 'real' girls chatting with each other, blinking and looking at the audience directly in the eye.

This encounter blurred the boundary between the narrative illustration and reality for the audience, provoking the question, did these pictorial characters escape from my illustration into reality, or did the audience walk into my illustration unconsciously? The audience were encouraged to identify with these life-scale characters and believe that they may share a similar role in the story. Neither is superior, illustration or human, at this point neither dominates the other. They were equals and the audience who were normally seen as the main subject was defined as counterparts.

Walking deeper in this studio, I drew several life-scale girls sitting on a sofa (approximately 1.5 × 2.1 m, figure 4.137). Their faces were left blank in order to encourage the audience to project themselves onto these figures, and to imagine if they were the girls, where would they be looking? The drawing of the life-scale sofa was the only furniture to 'rest on the floor'. It appeared to lie against the wall, turning the open space in front of it, by inference, into a 'living room'. The audience standing

in this room was made to feel as though they were unexpected intruders in a stranger's home.

5.4.3 Large-scale characters/objects, events and participation

Large-scale characters are the 'climax' of my narratives and were the extreme opposite to the miniature ones. American poet and literal critic Susan Stewart defines giant public sculpture as a metaphor of infinity that is viewed in public.[22] Using large/overscale figures/characters requires a large space that can embrace an open public engagement rather than an intimate private appreciation. Unlike the miniature work with details that require close inspection, a 'giant' work needs to be viewed from a significant distance. The image may be incomplete and distorted if looked at close distance.

By No Definition, 2015 was the first installation in which I intentionally aimed to make surreally large figures. For example, in the first episode, there was a unicorn beetle (approximately 1.5 m long and 0.4 m tall, figure 2.39). Its abnormal scale reversed its relationship with the audience. It was no longer weak and small and consequently, humans pose no threat to it. The audience must accept this condition when standing next to it in the semi-darkness. They must adjust their impression and re-define their relationship with it, reconsidering how they should behave and react towards such a big insect. Was it a threat to them? Would it attack them or could they train it and ride it like a horse?

Figure 5.12 Rosetsu Nagasawa, *White Elephant, Black Ox Screen*, the late 18th century, Japan

However, in later installations such as *The Outsiders*, I tended to use large-scale projections as an approach to gain within the space an 'environmental' quality, which Stewart describes as 'a container' that holds the audience inside.[23] As discussed in

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[22] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Duke University Press Books, 2012), pg. 102-3.
[23] Ibid, pg. 70-71.

Chapter 3, many large 2D and video screen-based works gain this 'environmental' quality enveloping the viewer and creating a tension between standing back and seeing the whole picture and moving forward (figure 3.10, 3.17-8, 3.23-4). What most attracted me was its power to create ambiguity and to blur the figures with 'landscapes'. The forms with the drawing could be interpreted as a landscape.

An example of using large-scale characters/figures is the Japanese screen painting *White Elephant, Black Ox* (《白象黑牛图屏风》), late eighteenth century, where Rosetsu Nagasawa (长泽芦雪) painted a large black ox and a white elephant across a pair of six-panel folding screens (figure 5.12). Each monumental animal takes up the whole screen (about 155 x 359 cm each) leaving little space for any background.[24] The elephant seems to transform from the recognisable figure of an elephant in the detail of the head to a stylistic landscape of 'curved mountains' in the

Figure 5.13 Gillian Wearing, *Drunk*, video installation, 1997-99

large folds of its skin, finally fading into a flat surface across its back and body. The size of the animal's large body encourages this association with the landscape, requiring the viewer to begin a visual journey following the flowing lines reaching

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[24] ·《白象黑牛图屏风》, https://global.canon/ja/tsuzuri/works/27.html, accessed on 04.04. 2018.

beyond the frame of the screen. The viewer's gaze is not static, but a journey that activates the space making it an immersive embracing medium.

A more contemporary example of this immersive quality of large-scale two-dimensional works is Gillian Wearing's video installation *Drunk* (1997-99), a giant man lying against a white background, his body expanding across three wide screens like a mountain with peaks and valleys.[25] Close up, his black-and-grey clothes 'embrace' the viewers inside a landscape. The viewer, however, couldn't see the entire figure in the right proportion unless they stood at some considerable distance from the screen.

In my installation *The Outsiders*, there was a projection *The Inspectors* on the ceiling above the free-standing life-scale models (figure 4.72). It amplified the giant presence of two girls who represented dominance as they 'inspected' the installation space below them. Only their heads and hands were visible through the bars of the 'cage'. The scale and position of the projection suggested that there was a whole other world of giants beyond the confines of the installation room and that the audience were just miniature creatures with no power over their own existence. The 'inspectors' were checking their little prisoners down below, not because they cared about them but to make sure everything was under control.

The position of the audience in this installation was reminiscent of the vulnerable 'prisoners' trapped in the limited walled communities in my hometown. Outside was a diverse world with all kinds of possibilities and futures but the audience has no choice but to stay and remain under constant scrutiny.

When the audience passed the L-shape wall, they would see the largest projection within the installation - *The Intransigent*. This showed a portrait of a woman with a candle on a paper screen (figure 4.105-6). Only the upper half of the body was shown but this part of her is approximately two meters high. She stood tall and looks directly into the face of the viewer, her scale made it difficult to avoid her gaze. She mesmerised the audience with a bright light that seems to emanate from her whole body.

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[25] Gillian Wearing's *Drunk* (1997-99) was a three-channel video made in black and white (396.2 x 1127.8 x 670.6 cm). It was 28.35 min with sound. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/92848 accessed on 02.01.2019

The animation showed the character 'growing' from a small starting point on the left into a giant figure in a series of continuous flowing lines. It began as an inconspicuous little mark and seemed to spontaneously, but slowly, transformed into a large and powerful character. This modification in scale changed the status of the character and amended the audience's assessment of it. In the same room (approximately 3 x 4 m) was the projection of the enormous squirming rats (approximately 60-80 cm wide each). The viewers were assailed on three sides by these large-scale works and could not, because of the enclosed space, get back far enough from them to view them dispassionately. They were forced up close and became 'contained' within the work.

The body, painted as it was with a simple brush against a flat background, didn't encourage the feeling of three-dimensionality but did exhibit the capability to be a 'landscape' - a part of the architectural structure dividing two spaces. Its flatness harboured the infinite potential to 'expand' beyond the frame into the real physical space.

On the wall behind the paper screen - the last element that the viewer came across in the installation, was a drawing of a large 'secret door' - an escape route from the psychological trap of the installation (figure 4.147). The row of life-scale schoolgirls in *The Outsiders* had been transformed into larger, stronger characters (approximately 120-200 cm high) and they were pictured escaping through the door, no longer static but running, possibly even skipping. They have awoken from their reverie and have become determined to abandon the despondent conditions of their captivity without looking back. This was their silent rebellion against the choking indifference of the darkness. The change in the scale and posture suggested this new, stronger attitude of the girls to the audience.

The large-scale imposed a strong visual and psychological pressure on the audience, reversing the relationship between the subject and object. Anthropologist Alfred Gell even compares this effect to horror films in which the audience are threatened and vulnerable.[26] In my installation, the audience made an appraisal of the scale between themselves and the giant characters in the installation, which reminded

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[26] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), pg. 22.

them how small they were in comparison and consequently made them aware of both their loss of power and their privileged position.

Some of the giants were oppressive but some are benevolent. The use of a giant scale could also mean dominance but it could also mean strength. Not all the giants were negative characters, the schoolgirls 'grew up' and became stronger, and the beetle was given new power and respect. It was the viewer that must decide their implications.

Standing in front of the small-scale projection near the entrance, the audience became powerful giants, overwhelming the tiny girl in the animation. Walking towards the large projection of a woman holding a candle, the audience lost this 'power,' no longer dominating but dominated by the image. The large-scale projection *The Inspectors* (approximately 2 x 1.5 meters) on the ceiling of two faces looking down through bars into the room below enhanced the impression that the audience were (like the rats) pets in a 'cage'.

Thus the 'identity' of the audience became unstable dependant on their position in the room and their relation to the scale of the drawing or projection. Without this bodily engagement to collect, interpret, sense, experience and configure various elements together, this metaphorical content of the narrative could not be constructed in this open narrative. Below, I have analysed how this free interpretation happened based on philosopher Umberto Eco's Open Work theory.

The installation *The Outsiders* provided a built fictional space where the audience were driven to ask a series of 'what if' questions, which could enrich the content of the narrative. What if I entered a world in which I was not the biggest and strongest?

Using large-scale characters emphasised the fundamental purpose of my narratives, questioning how people reacted in a dislocated environment. How did they re-define their identities in relation to unexpected social change? How did they understand and learn from this transformation? How might their capabilities grow in the face of challenges? How could they bridge the gap between old and new? These were open questions waiting to be explored by configuring the elements together.

My installations would not be complete without the audience's active engagement. They configure the fragmented elements into a whole narrative. Without their

engagement, the installations would not have open meanings. To analyse this notion of an 'open work', I engaged with Umberto Eco's book *The Open Work*, which I expand upon and discuss next.

5.5 Open narratives and free association

The different scales of the drawn characters in my animations assigned and determined roles for the viewer and the subsequent way in which they participated in the narrative. This involvement inevitably encouraged them, or provoked them, to generate new meanings from their own perspective. Moving through the installation triggered free psychological associations between their own memories and identities and the narratives presented within the space. The interpretation of the work would vary from person to person based on how their unique individuality connects the fragments together.

The audience's free association of the visual elements helps to disrupt the conventional 'three-way' communication of illustrations, which emphasises the single-direction communication that begins with the author/artist, then the work and eventually the audience.[27] In this order, the audience are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, accepting information passively, never the creator of the narrative.

Conventionally illustrations accompany a written text and show key events and information from it, clearly, and with a minimum of confusion. They express what the author has written and avoided ambiguous or paradoxical visual expression.[28] These works are generally close-ended and have a single conception-based intention. For example, Gustave Doré's *The Angel Michael Falls in the Cloist* (figure 4.1), the viewer is expected to understand that there is just one 'correct' interpretation, a mono-scenic, univocal voice and will avoid any alternative interpretations.

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[27] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art, A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing, 2005), pg. 10.
[28] Most narrative illustrations have a literature/story to follow. It is what Umberto Eco describes as the control of 'linguistic system' of the literature where Eco finds that the works made in the 20th century have dramatically transformed their goal from being the tool for authorities to speak with, to become mediums of free expression. The narrative painting before this time are required to representative of what have been said in the literature. They respect the original contents and tried to be accurate in their representations. However, the art today attempts to stay away from this 'linguistic system' built by words and replace it with their new laws and system.
Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989), pg. xi and 60.

Philosopher Umberto Eco regards these kinds of illustrations as the metaphors of a hierarchical order dominated by authorities - author, church, government, the community for example, that serve the dominating power and its ideology. Artist is expected to work to 'preordained orders' decided by the client or author and limit any chance of the audience changing the meaning of the illustration.[29]

In general, mono-scenic illustrations feature clear expression using minimum contents. Most use the conventions of linear perspective to create a realistic/natural setting that is easily understood.[30] This technique helps to arrange all the visual elements in a clear order that makes reading easier and more accurate. It ensures that the audience understand spatial relationships without much room for doubt. We can again see this type of intention in Doré's *The Angel Michael Falls.* The audience do not need to try hard to understand the relationship between the figures and their setting, as they are realistic and obvious. The elements are clearly arranged in space in order to reduce any difficulty in interpretation - at the cost of diversity or complexity of information and active viewership.

In *The Open Work,* Umberto Eco points out the factors that contribute to open meanings. He notes that conventional forms generate definite meanings, whereas an artist can make a more flexible work, a more 'open' work, by constructing a piece with new original associations between characters and scenes.[31] This process matters as knowledgeable artists are often visualising their own experiences for an inexperienced audience.[32]

My drawings/illustrations, generated by a 'stream of consciousness' (figure 2.8) also generate these kinds of 'unstable' associations, creating ambiguous relationships that prolong the process of reading the image. The drawings are not a response to and do not have an accompanying narrative text. The viewer's participation in configuring them into narratives is a game of filling in the gaps to make the works complete. The players may never find a single fixed answer but continue to explore

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[29] Ibid, pg. x.13. 94.

[30] As Erwin Panofsky notes, the pictures which use Linear Perspective to create an optical illusion would be associated with a fixed viewer. The viewer, however, stands at the bottom of the hierarchy and receives information passively. This perspective system received generally negative criticism in the 1960s-70s on the grounds of presenting/symbolising a visible centre of power and domination. Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, (Zone Books, 1991), pg. 34-5.

[31] Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989), pg. 36, 60, 103.

[32] Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989), pg. 103.

the endless possibilities. Solutions vary from individual to individual as each associate what they see with their own unique background and experience. As Eco describes, this openness is 'intentional, explicit, and extreme' and full of potential to evoke infinite reactions and a 'dramatic explosion of information.[33]

This assessment works well in relation to my poly-scenic illustrations such as *The Parallel Universe VI* (figure 1.12) and *Navigation* (figure 2.100), but when spatialising my drawings for videos/installations I found I must adjust this method. As I discussed at the end of Chapter 4, I could no longer build conventional associations between elements in the conventional way as they didn't inhabit the same plane but were drawn separately. In the 2D drawing/illustrations, elements have a direct link, developed by the composition and the way in which the drawing is produced. In the physical space of the installation, however, this didn't apply. Each projection (scene or character) was separate and arranged at a distance from each other. Consequently, in order to carry some of the same content over from 2D to 3D, I had to find and exploit the new possibilities provided by the physical space.

In a drawing the spatial relationship is fixed, left or right, below or above, in front or behind. An object in the foreground overlaps an object in the background and the one furthest away is smaller than the one depicted as being closer. The viewer is in a static position, a single static point outside of the scene.

Within the real space of the installation, spatial relationships are not implied but occur. In an installation, the spatial relationship between drawing/projection and viewer is not fixed. The spatial relationships change as the viewer moves through the installation constantly altering the relationship between each element and between the viewer and the image. For example, characters seen from a distance may seem small but as the audience approach them they 'grow' larger and more imposing. Also, as they walk through the complex installation new areas are revealed 'expanding' the narrative space and revealing new scenes and new characters that add to, and alter, the potential of the narrative.

Art critic and writer Jean Fisher believes an installation is a place where an audience may feel the loss of the conventional definitions of life. What they see may have been converted, simplified, twisted, modified, re-shaped and re-assembled. Each

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[33] Ibid, pg. 43-55.

part distancing them from the familiar and making them feel uncertain. Their freedom of movement through the space can decentre their solid subjectivity and encourage the acceptance of a new sense of their fragmented selves.[34]

The placing of each element of the narrative, separately within a space allows the audience to make a choice, to decide where to stand, how long to stay and which way to go. They could include all the projections and drawings or only focus on some. They could walk through the space in a consistent manner, from beginning to end or their navigation may be more irregular, back and forth, around and around.

In configuring the space in my installations, I normally suggested a path and the sequence (small-to-large) in which the elements should be viewed, but there was nothing to stop the audience veering off the track to explore in their own way and in doing so configure a whole new narrative. This 'free association' is a fundamental aspect of my original poly-scenic illustrations and as Ilya Kabakov points out, an installation's meaning is based on this free configuration of the elements provided in the immersive space.[35] Without the participation of the audience, the stories cannot be completed.

Even if the viewer faithfully follows a regular path through the installation they must try and make sense of the connection between each element and configure them together to form a narrative whole. However, the audience may never know the 'correct' answer and the calculation of what is right or wrong no longer matters.[36] It is not expected that the audience will decode all the information in the work and it is inappropriate to expect one definitive answer or reading.

The fragments were purposely distributed in the installations in order to provoke variations in configuration and to require the audience to refer to their own experiences and memories to help interpret them. Eco calls this a 'back-and-forth' motion between the identity of the audience and the artist's expression.[37] This engagement may be a self-reflective journey where the viewer has to generate meaning by 'assimilating' their previous life experiences.[38] Responding to Eco, psychologist J. Kilpatrick points out that it is in these efforts to make a 'probability-

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[34] Jean Fisher, 'The Play of the World', *Empty Club: Gabriel and Orozco*, (Artangle, 1998), pg. 19-20.
[35] Ilya Kabakov, *On the Total Installation*, (Bonn, 1995), pg. 275.
[36] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art, A Critical History*, (Tate Publishing, 2005), pg. 11.
[37] Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989).
[38] Ibid.

like integration' that knowledge is generated.[39] This endless searching for solutions may require the audience to go back to the deepest parts of their memories to discover the hidden, forgotten, ignored or even 'insignificant' aspects of their life. The more they searched the more details they might find.

Audiences of my installations often asked me how they should view and interpret the work, asking a question such as 'am I correct in thinking those birds with human faces in *By No Definition* (figure 2.44) are the guards of the woods?' or 'Is that giant face, you?'

Some had read the exhibition handout that explains that the installation was based on a self-narrative about a transforming community said 'But I don't see this theme in your work. Where can I find the story?' Others commented 'I just want to say your work is interesting although I am not so sure of its meaning. But if I were you, I would make the atmosphere more delightful and positive. Yours is too dark.' Viewers were often complementary but still want a definitive answer, 'I like the tiger blinking its eyes at me. I hope it appears in my dream tonight. But why is it there?'

Other comments made it clear that the work did successfully trigger personal associations and memories: 'That is a lady-bird, a lady-bird!' and 'My grandma has a sofa like that one on your wall. It's lovely, isn't it', and 'The dark textures in your video look like the soil in my garden.'

A Chinese viewer visiting the installation *The Outsider* recognised the school uniform worn by the girls in my drawings. She was happy and surprised to see them although displeased by the stories in the work. She told me that she and her family also had to move in her childhood but had a totally different experience. She did not feel excluded or depressed by social change and could not understand why I did. Through the dialogue, she had with the work she began to be conscious of a different perspective on this experience. Her confusion, or disagreement with my ideas, meant that she had to reflect on her own memories and experiences in order to find answers and not just accept my version of events. She had to make a fundamental reassessment of her belief in order to confirm her own life experience, making her an important and unique active viewer.

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[39] J. P. Kilpatrick, 'The Nature of Perception', *Explorations in Transactional Psychology*, (New York University Press, 1961).

As French symbolist poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé notes, 'To name an object is to suppress three-fourths of the enjoyment of the poem, which is composed of the pleasure of guessing little by little...'[40] The endless conjectures as to the meaning of the work helps the audience make their own stories; however this can cause 'frustration' as they may have to accept what Eco calls the 'imperfect conclusion(s) in the 'dynamic potentiality'.[41] Literature theorist Monica Fludernick believes this kind of narrative does not rely on finding the definitive plot that the artist leaves in the work, but rather it relies on triggering the subjective consciousness and emotional reactions beyond that expressed in the work.[42] In this way, the personal, intimate, intellectual and emotional activities of the viewer can be integrated *with* that of the artist's.[43]

The audience will hopefully realise that there is creative freedom in the lack of necessity to reach a definite answer and that what matters is the sensations and feelings generated by the exploration. Although some of what I presented in my narrative illustrations and installations might be alien to a British audience, there were many familiar elements to both cultures that are able to bridge the gap, for example flower pots, window frames, curtains, chairs, beetles, woods, school girls, mice, coal mines etc. These elements were key to opening their own memories and inviting them to integrate their stories with mine. Even if their associations were very different from mine, they were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and create new narratives.

Philosopher and psychologist John Dewey argues that it is only in the interaction with the environment a human being develops him or herself.[44] My audience, in having to 'adapt' to alien spaces, could make sense of it by referring to what they already know. In this way, they could learn to re-define themselves in a new, unfamiliar situation by searching for resources in their personal experiences and

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[40] Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989), pg. 8.
[41] Ibid, pg. 16.
[42] "The specific aesthetic effect of narrative need not rely on the teleology of plot, on how all the episodes and motives contribute to the final outcome but can be produced also by the mimetically motivated evocation of human consciousness and of its (sometimes chaotic) experience of being in the world.' Monica Fludernick, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, (Routledge, 1996), pg.22.
[43] Umberto Eco, trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1989), pg. 80.
[44] John Dewey, Art as Experience, (Perigee Books, 2009), pg. 19.

memories. Passive memories thus could also be activated and gain new roles in the now.[45]

While different viewers reacted differently to my installations. In *The Outsiders*, some viewers left the room very quickly, the 'haunting' sound in the darkness driving them away. In *By No Definition*, some stayed for a few seconds and saw just a section of the whole narrative; and in *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poem*, some viewers ignored the projections *Carnival* on the ceiling and only paid attention to what was directly in front of their eyes.

However, most of the audience entered the installations and spent a considerable amount of time walking through the spaces and viewing every element. They moved back and forth and discussed the work with others. They were confused, but both involved and intrigued. They immediately understood there was the potential of a story, a meaning in the work and they were trying to figure out what it could be. The way they placed themselves in relation to each character, their engagement with each projection and drawing, the way they moved through the space and their interaction with other audience members evidenced an active attempt to decipher or conjure-up some meaning.

A few found them either too disturbing, abstract or complex to engage with, for others they were too taxing. Most, however, found the complexity intriguing and the 'open narrative' provocative. They enjoyed the challenge of finding their own interpretation, their own narratives in the work and found the personal associations and memories that were evoked emotional and moving.

My installation works could, therefore (perhaps) mediate between the single memory of the artist and the diverse memories of the audience encouraging them to accept imperfectness and incompleteness. In providing a situation where there is no absolute solution even a 'non-creative' audience has the chance to be creative by constructing their own interpretation of what they see. Accessing their capabilities of memory, emotion and association, they may reject the immobile and fixed single answer. Although sometimes this process can be frustrating and taxing, the viewers may feel they are on a journey to an unknown destination, this hardship could be a valuable way of training passive eyes to become active ones.

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[45] Ibid.

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude, by making use of the semi-dark space and varied scales of projections (characters), I encouraged my audience to engage bodily with the installations, which perhaps made them be active 'characters', creating their new 'narratives' in their imagination. Also, some aspects of my key questions have been addressed using two approaches to spatialising my small-scale narrative drawings/illustrations. This provided perspectives on re-defining the role of hand-made narrative pictures in an environment by giving them new values: engaging, experiential and mindful. Hand-made narrative pictures can operate outside of a given text or the speech of authority and can be a trigger of free-imagination - increasing individual self-awareness.

Chapter 6：Conclusion and future practice

6.1 Contribution to video-based Installation Art

Contemporary video installation art has limited connections with drawing or painting. Even those artists who are initially interested in this aspect often end up losing the physical material quality of drawing and painting when transforming their work into video projections. My research presents new understandings and perspectives on how to retain the quality of drawing/illustration while exploiting the use of digital projection and installation.

Below is a summation of conclusions drawn from the research conducted - an inventory of good practice and advice to those who explore the dialogue between hand-made pictures and installation art.

6.1.1 Two-dimensional pictorial space and installation space.

The research revealed an interesting and somewhat paradoxical relationship between two-dimensional pictorial space and installation space; spatialising my drawings made the original pictorial space in the drawing disappear.

Turning a complex poly-scenic drawing/illustration into multi-screen narrative installation requires the deconstruction of the original narrative pictorial space. Individual elements (characters and small scenes) must be lifted from the original drawing and made into independent components for the installation. Cut out from their original background the narrative relationship between the characters and the background scene is lost. The figures are deprived of the important associations and relationships that were established in the original drawing. Pictorial perspective or composition can no longer be used to indicate scale, position or central focus. The use of drawing devices, such as intersecting, overlapping or free-flowing connections between elements becomes limited. Each element is a separate projection or drawing placed within the installation space.

As experiments described in Chapter 4 demonstrate, video projections that retain the pictorial space of the original drawings are limited in their ability to transform

successfully into installation work. The two-dimensional pictorial information contradicts the 'real' space of the installation room and disrupts the audience's acceptance of an immersion in the physical illusion.

Individual elements, separated from their original pictorial space and frame, no longer construct a completed picture and are open to new ways of being configured within a physical space. Consequently, the original pictorial space disappears and its characters 'escape'. The illusory space of the original illustration no longer conflicts with the real space of the installation as the viewer moves through the installation in order to see the whole 'picture'. Below, I analyse two significant changes in this procedure.

6.1.2 Lose the pictorial frame

A key feature contributing to this limitation is the reliance of pictorial space on its original pictorial frame - the boundary between the picture and space beyond. The shape and edges of the paper present a boundary between the spaces depicted in the drawing and the real space outside its borders. The pictorial space is a concrete system locked inside the frame. Round or square, big or small the frame defines the edge between the real space and the pictorial one. Even within a poly-scenic illustration (as discussed in Chapter 4) elements remain objectively static within the frame. Nothing new can enter, nor can the scene bleed beyond its confines.

The installation space - a real physical space, contrasts significantly with pictorial space. Rather than a fixed frame, it acts as a container allowing new elements inside and a shifting and variable point of view. Rather than a narrative composition that can be viewed immediately from one position, the story evolves through time and space as the viewer moves in the space.

Consequently, losing the original pictorial frame of the drawing is therefore significant in relation to the successful transformation of illustration to installation.

Also, losing the pictorial frame relates to the individual video projections. The use of a black background for many of the animations (for example, *The Beholder*) allowed them to dissolve into the semi-darkness of the room - blurring the boundary between the video and space and diminishing, although not completely

negating the sense of a frame. Another tactic for losing the pictorial frame is to make the video exactly fit the perimeters of the walls or other architectural features creating a sense of false perspective or a window into another world as in the video *The Inspectors* projected on the ceiling of *The Outsiders* installation.

6.1.3 The 'sacrifices'

However, there are some 'sacrifices' that have to be made; alongside the positive aspects of losing the frame, there is some forfeiture. Lifting characters from their original pictorial space can make them seem unstable and lost, weakening their original visual and narrative impact. The physical distance between each element in the installation negates the visual continuity leaving 'gaps'. This is beneficial in that it provided space for the audience to explore the room and to fill the gaps with their own potential narratives. However, they cannot see everything simultaneously or in one definitive narrative configuration. The various parts may eventually become assembled in their imagination, and they can reflect upon the whole, but they will never have the opportunity to see the rich complexity of the original illustration.

Art historian Ernst Gombrich warns that deconstructing the pictorial space and denying the frame can be fatal for an image. Commenting on frameless Baroque ceiling murals he considers that the value and power of painting are impaired when fragmented and turned into parts of an environment. He notes: 'In letting the pictures thus break the frame the artist wants to confuse and overwhelm us so that we no longer know what is real and what [is] illusion. A painting like this has no meaning outside the place for which it was made'.[1] Gombrich reveals an important truth about the integration of two-dimensional imagery and installation work: the images assembled within a space are deconstructed elements of a whole, reliant not on the frame, but on the space that contains them.

When preparing drawings/animation footage for the installations, I had similar concerns to those expressed by Gombrich. The drawings spatialised in the installations were fundamentally different from my fully realised illustrations. On reviewing the drawings that I had made for the projections and animations for the

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[1] E. H. Gombrich. *The Story of Art.* (Phaidon Press. The 16th edition, 2007), pg. 443

installations, I believe they do not have the same visual impact as my previous work. They have little meaning when read separately and are nothing but segments of the whole. Their value is limited and temporal. Once the installation is dismantled, they lose the quality of being artworks, presenting little difference between themselves and other elements such as the paper screens, walls and tables. I have had to concede that even though the installation embraces and even enhances some aspects of the original drawings, the necessary process of deconstruction is detrimental to others.

Consequently, a major concern is that transforming illustrations into installations contributes new capacities and contents to installation but does not help strengthen my drawings or paintings. Alongside its narrative goals, my illustration is concerned with pictorial factors including pictorial space, composition, texture, line, shape and colour. However, these aspects have not been given major attention in the context of my experimental installation.[2] In their place, my attention, instead, became focused on space, physical positioning and participation.

Consequently, I found a fundamental distinction between my visual thinking and spatial thinking. When I draw two-dimensional illustrations, I rely on the visual elements - lines and shapes growing on the paper, inspiring, framing and enhancing my thinking. I draw while responding to a free 'stream of consciousness' that flows naturally without the need for any additional control. However, when drawing for installation, I have to separate the process into two parts - drawing the elements for the video footage on paper and installing the work in the installation. The essential continuity of my visual thinking is obstructed; each drawing must be carefully considered, pre-designed and refined to fit a particular narrative role. The task goes beyond the conventional concerns of painting and drawing. In other words, they are no longer considered drawings, but plans.

Not everything is completely predetermined, however, and there remain some flexibility and invention in the installation of the work. Responding directly to

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[2] Although not possible within the limitations of this PhD, future research will however continue to explore the potential of pictorial space, composition, texture, line, shape and colour in relation to installation.

space, I played with the placement, scale and relationship between elements - like playing with a giant dolls house. Space determined the exact size and position of each projection and although limited in some way by technical practicalities, I began to appreciate and manipulate three-dimensional composition in a more creative way. Instead of a flat oblong of paper in which the narrative elements had to work together, I had an oblong box, a cabinet in which to house my curiosities.

From the perspective of an illustrator, I believe that spatialising an illustration through experimental installation may bring a new 'crisis' to my drawing while consequently bringing about new potential for installation. There is little to be gained in continuing to compare drawings made for video animation and installation with the original independent drawings, as both exist for their own unique reasons. What is most significant is how this new discourse between drawing and installation enriched the audience's aesthetic experience.

My research concludes that in order to create an immersive environmental effect, the completeness of the original illustration has to be 'sacrificed'. However, sacrificing the visual impact of the original pictorial space brings new freedom and flexibility for the drawn characters and the relationship between each element becomes ambiguous and unpredictable. Each one can be arranged in a variety of ways in relation to each other, their juxtaposition in the space effecting how they are read and their roles in the visual narrative. The distance between each element and differences in scale allow the viewer to pay separate attention to each before connecting them together. Each is respected and given individual attention. Some gain a new significance while others become mysterious and their purpose malleable, in a space where conventional illustration rules no longer apply. Breaking the limitations of the frame allows real space and illusional space to become permeable. The installation creates a place where illustrated characters and the human audience can interact tangibly; in the half-world between illustrative space and physical space, the lines between drawn character and viewer become blurred.

6.2 Installation as a fundamental aid to an open pictorial narrative discourse

There is a stimulating tension between the real space of the installation and the 'narrative space' where the story is set. Sometimes the narrative space remains within the drawing/video animation, but where the work is most successful the installation space itself becomes the 'site' of the events taking place in the narrative. Immersing the viewer literally within the fictional space enhances the sense of immediacy, of events happening now, in the present, not only to the illustrated characters but also to the viewer themselves. The engagement with the pictorial narrative is no longer purely psychological or imagined. The viewer physically interacts with the images, becoming an active character in the narrative, who can affect and be affected by the other characters and events. Aspects of the narrative are not just observed but 'felt'; the giant girls peeking down into the room in *The Outsiders,* for example, create a sense of oppressive surveillance and dominance.

The pictorial narrative is also 'open' to the viewer or 'reader' as they can move through the 'poly-scenic installation' and view the characters and events in any order or for any length of time they wish. It is also 'open' to interpretation, with the viewer encouraged to utilise their own experiences in the analysis of the images and construction of their own version of the narrative.

There are in addition several significant factors an artist/researcher needs to consider, to achieve the transformation between two mediums:

6.2.1 Scale

Significantly enlarging the scale of the initial drawing, either through projection or as an image drawn directly onto a wall or screen is an effective way of directly engaging with issues of immersion, audience engagement and spatial illusion. The sense of immersion is enhanced if the size of the screen is large enough to 'envelop' the audience and fill their peripheral vision. This is perhaps most simply illustrated by my single-screen video installation *By No Definition* that presented an illusion of an alternative space that appeared large enough for the viewer to 'enter.' The relationship between the *size* of the projection and the *scale* of the

viewer is vital in the creation of this type of immersive effect. This is particularly effective with illustrations that retain some information pertaining to pictorial space.

In poly-scenic, multi-screen installations, where the projections are of individual characters or events cut out from their original pictorial space, the scale has a very different application. The room itself provides the immersive quality of pictorial space and the projections become the 'characters' within it. Varying the scale of each element can be used to imply the development of the narrative and adjust the physical and psychological relationship between each character/event and the audience.

Miniature-scale characters/events draw the viewer closer in to have a more intimate 'conversation' with the character. They can make the viewer feel dominant and/or position them purposely 'outside' the 'event', looking in, or down, and there is an increased sense of distance.

Life-scale projections blur the boundaries between reality and illustration. They increase the sense of temporal and special immediacy, triggering a more direct psychological engagement between the audience and the characters/events. The audience have a stronger sense of being 'within' a narrative - or indeed perhaps, becoming a character and playing a role themselves.

Large-scale projections can function as climactic events within the narrative. Giant characters/events that dominate the space can overwhelm and intimidate the viewer. Their relationship with the pictorial elements is reversed as they become 'observed' by the large characters and engulfed within the spatial narrative they once dominated.

The use of a variety of scales can thus enrich the characterisations and the development of the narrative. However, finding the exact scale of the projected character/event in relation to the viewer is extremely important to produce the intended effect. It requires careful consideration and extensive testing in relation to specific intentions.

6.2.2 Video projection

The use of video projection is a very swift, flexible and an economic way of experimenting with the notion of spatialising drawings. Digitally scanning small illustrations at a high resolution retains much of the quality of the original drawings, especially the thin black lines of pen and ink. Using a high-quality video projector, for example, Optomo HD27, W300 and Ben Q W1000, used with a mini-media player maintains the high resolution (1080 dpi) and enables experiments with scale, placement and surface.

The flexibility of this method is an important creative tool, not only in relation to developing ideas but also when responding directly to space during final installation. Where possible, it is beneficial to test the capabilities of the projector in the exhibition space before deciding on the final spatial composition of the installation. This includes the positioning and height of the projector, as well as the distance between the projector and the screen. However, installing a multi-screen video installation is extremely time-consuming and it is important to prepare as much as possible.

Another crucial factor to consider when using multiple projections in an installation is the quality of light within the room. Video projection in a dark space produces a semi-darkness that lends the installation an atmospheric ambience. However, too many projections within one space can create 'light bleed' - destroying the ambience and affecting the quality of the projections, whereas total darkness around a screen in a large space can produce a cinematic experience.

6.2.3 Animation

The restricted use of animation retains the impression that the images are drawings that come to life rather than full-blown animated cartoons, and subtle movement preserves the emphasis on the original drawing. In this balance, between stillness and motion, the qualities and content of the drawing/painting remains the main carrier of character, emotion, and most importantly, narrative. The animation may 'enliven' the image, but it does not provide narrative information in any cinematic way; to do so would dilute the idea of it being a spatialised narrative drawing.

Animating the process of producing a drawing, for example in *The Intransigent* video for *The Outsiders* installation, also reinforces the drawn aspect of the work without providing information on the main narrative. Showing the slow procedure of an image emerging on the paper emphasises the material quality of the original hand-made picture, produced using the traditional tools of brush, inks and water.

6.2.4 Sound

Each projection had its own subtle soundscape but together they created an ambient soundscape within the space. This helped to create an atmosphere in the room and helps to 'glue' the separate poly-scenic elements into one whole narrative installation. The use of this 'soundtrack' was especially effective in enhancing the disturbing quality of my narratives.

While sound should be used with careful consideration, the exact specifications depend on the unique needs of each project. For example, for my single-screen video installation *By No Definition*, 2015, I used an overwhelming complex noise soundtrack made in collaboration with musicians and set to play at a high volume. This was because I wanted the effect of the sound to be equal to the impact of the large screen animation that dominated the space. However, I chose not to use such a strong sound in the multi-screen installation *The Outsiders*, 2017, so as not to disturb the unique subtlety of each individual projection. I used very simple sounds such as whispering girls, breathing, a window sliding open and a ticking clock that helped create the quiet and mysterious atmosphere I desired. In most cases, these simple sounds had a more penetrating and atmospheric effect than more complex louder ones.

The contents of the sound can be referential (for example, a ticking clock), or abstract such as a computer-generated noise or even music. It is important, in relation to my goals of retaining the emphasis on the drawing, that the sound, which I do believe it to be an essential element, remains complementary to the projections.

6.2.5 Mono-scenic versus poly-scenic/single screen versus multi-screen

As considered in Chapter 3, it is possible to create an immersive installation using a large, single screen video projection. In terms of spatialising drawings, it is most effective for use with simple images, especially mono-scenic narrative pictures that use linear perspective to generate an illusion of depth. This method is best at retaining the maximum painterly/drawn quality of the original work, without destroying the pictorial frame. However, it tends to limit audience engagement, creating a 'sweet-spot' - a single preferred viewpoint in front of the projection.

A multi-screen approach is far more effective for immersing the audience and engaging them in the investigation of the narrative. It is especially suitable for complex, poly-scenic illustrations that have multiple visual centres, various groups of characters and several narrative events. The audience must enter and move through space in order to see the whole work. There is no 'sweet spot' and no sense of being able to stand 'outside' the work to view it. The audience are encouraged to enter and explore every corner of the installation space, enriching the narrative with their engagement.

Even though this method loses some important qualities of the original illustration, for example, the complete pictorial frame and the autonomy of the image, it is nonetheless worth the sacrifice, in order to gain new capacities in terms of audience engagement and open narrative.

6.2.6 Projection Surfaces

I tested various surfaces for my projections, from three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional screens, to conventional rectangular fabric screens, to specifically shaped screens laser-cut from plywood/MDF boards.

I conducted a great many experiments with projecting onto different surfaces in terms of forms and materials. Projecting onto three-dimensional forms was used only once in this research in *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016, where I projected animation of hovering seagulls onto rocks. The found objects carried referential meanings that linked the seagulls to their original environment. Challenging conventional ideas of video projection, where the image becomes connected to the 'solid object'. This kind of projection mapping onto a form has

great potential in terms of three-dimensional illusion and I may re-examine it in future research. However, it has the potential to undermine the relationship between the original drawing and the projection.

A projection on a two-dimensional surface, a wall or a projection screen, reinforces the quality of the drawing. It preserves the flatness of the illustration - although it may lose some of the material quality, whether it was made on paper, canvas, board or fabric.

In order to reinstate the material nature of the drawing, some projection surfaces were given special attention and made with unique materials, shapes and textures. Several were made from rolls of plain wallpaper hung on a cable as if they were painting scrolls, their torn edges showing the fibres of the paper. A carefully shaped screen made from MDF and covered with layers of torn thick paper held a life-scale projection of a row of schoolgirls. The textured surface made the projected characters look as if they were drawn on the paper. They did not look fully three-dimensional but more like a row of paper dolls. The screen balanced between a two-dimensional and three-dimensional form, successfully preserving the material quality of the drawing, as well as creating a sense of a free-standing object.

6.3 A metaphor: How spatialised drawings reflect on self-narratives – personal and social situations

The process of lifting individual characters from the original drawing and turning them into independent components in the installation became a working metaphor for the individual, as defined by their part in the whole, perhaps reflecting the relationship between the individual and the collective culture in the Far East. Chinese culture is typically a collectivist culture, where people tend to depend on and relate to each other, to family, society and nature, rather than seeing themselves as separate individuals who have a unique personality and independent ideas. An individual is largely defined by his or her, social relations, position, family and background. They would be limited in terms of independent thinking and are required to conform. Perhaps without the essential awareness of

individuality and the resulting subjectivity, it is hard to develop an independent mind or creativity?

It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed critical reflection on this culture. What I am interested in is questioning the kind of art produced in this context. The way artists observe and represent objects is greatly influenced by Chinese culture. People, flowers, animals and landscapes remain in harmony together in traditional Chinese painting, free from any attempt to dislocate or alienate them.

My enjoyment of the richness and power of the collective cohesion is reflected in the complexity of my original illustrations using the approach of 'stream of consciousness' (figure 2.8), while the subject of the drawing reveals my fear of the threat to my subjectivity. In my dense, complex and inseparable compositions, many figures are no more than a single cell in an immense society. However, I cannot resist using the drawing to examine the power and force exerted by other elements on the individual. The tension between the individual and the society that surrounds them dominates the composition and refuses to rely on any one part. My drawings that exploit this to maximum effect are intended to symbolise the impossibility of the individual gaining their own independence. They lose independence as they are squeezed into the system - having no choice or chance of escape.

Transforming my illustrations into the installation is my attempt to break this control, a metaphor symbolising the freeing of the individual from the collective and the development of their subjectivity. When I separate my characters from their complicated backgrounds, I see them gaining new independent identities. A significant difference is that each character is fully developed visually. They are clearly identifiable and have a larger scale. I see this as a metaphor for the awakening of individualism in the collective culture. Each character/element gains individual attention before becoming configured as part of a narrative whole in the audience's minds. They occupy their own unique space without being disturbed by other elements.

The arrangement within the installations is also a metaphor, a self -narrative of my own effort to break away from the collective, in the pursuit of individuality and

liberation. My installation is the idea of individualism in which a person is self-reliant and independent from others.[3] Each element is respected as a fundamental unit of the narrative that has the 'right' to realise their own 'goals'.[4] This symbolism is reflected in the separation and independence of the individual elements from the dense pictorial space (fragmentation). The adventures in the dark allow the pursuit of independent free meanings.

Consequently, my works embody the social-cultural transformation I have experienced in China over the past 30 years. The highly restricted ordered collective community I lived in 19 years ago has largely disappeared from history, physically and ideologically. The conventional stable, solid, intimate and exclusive culture collapsed with the old generation fading away and the collectivised living modes dismantled.

It has now been replaced by heterogeneous consumerism that has re-divided the people into new and different groups and there seems to be no bridge between the past and present. Deep cracks have developed around each individual and each generation creating new confusion, conflict and anxiety.

As a metaphor for an individual who recently broke away from such a dense collective culture, the characters in my installations (for example, *The Outsiders*) suggest confused identities. I projected my identity onto my characters; standing in the semi-darkness they pose questions to the audience - if you were me, how would you react?

6.4 Future practice

In the third year of this research project, as I was beginning to find answers for the key questions on transforming my small-scale illustrations into video

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[3] Pierre Birnbaum, Jean Leca, *Individualism: Theories and Methods*, (Oxford University Press. 1990). Chapter 1 and 5.

[4] The principle of individualism lies on the division between each person and the environment. The separateness requires an individual to rely on the own to explore, improve, shape and support his/herself. An individual is encouraged to construct his/her unique thoughts and ideas to cope with the problems and challenges in life. Ellen Meiksins Wood. Mind *and Politics: An Approach to the Meaning of Liberal and Socialist Individualism,* (University of California Press. 1972), pg. 6–7.

installation art, I developed several new ideas for future research and practice. In particular, the animated video projections that I made for the installations gave me new ideas about the potential of these drawings. I understood that the installation space provided new elements that gave the qualities of the drawing beyond the capabilities of a piece of paper; the quality of the light, sound, the interaction with the audience, etc.

During the research I experimented with new ways of making images using water and ink, combining them with photo (video) collage and making them negative creating black backgrounds and white lines. I gained more confidence in my drawing/painting and my practice acknowledged the value and infinite capability of drawing and encouraged me to continue to pursue the possibilities. Working with drawing and watercolour still enables me to express myself in the most direct and inspirational way. No matter what kind of medium I use however, illustration on paper will always be the starting point of my journey. Before transforming into anything else, I need to use lines flowing on the paper in order to think. They allow me to respond to my inner 'stream of consciousness', and I highly respect and value the infinite power of such free imagination.

I will continue to make video installations but in the future, I want to emphasise the material character and the nature of the drawings more, rather than rely so much on projection. As I discovered, in most video installations, the projections lacked the quality of an object. They are nothing but light and digital files living in a USB stick and have no physical form. I am fundamentally unsatisfied with this aspect, as many of the precious qualities of drawing are lost in digitalisation.

Future research will continue to explore the potential of creating a sense of physicality in the projected drawings. I do not mean I want to give them a fully three-dimensional effect, as in the work of Tony Oursler, but I want to explore the possibility of creating a greater sense of physicality without losing the quality of the drawing. In order to achieve this, a major direction of future research is to experiment with making flat 'models', specifically shaped screens for projection mapping characters onto. I will also continue to explore the concept of deconstructing and re-constructing my drawings in space.

I believe these pictorial conventions are not in any way redundant in installation, and that there is huge potential to expand how they are used. They are not harmful to the spatial experience but are essential elements that can enrich it and define it. What happens if I separate a brush stroke from a character's face, or place lines on different surfaces or enlarge them significantly? There are many questions waiting for me to resolve. Perhaps used in the appropriate way, they can renew the field and definition of installation art?

This research is not ended. It is just a period in the long process of my artistic exploration. It has generated new questions as well as solving others and provides a solid foundation for continued research into the relationship between drawing and installation. When I finish this journey, I stand at the entrance of another adventure.

Appendix

Project 1   *By No Definition*
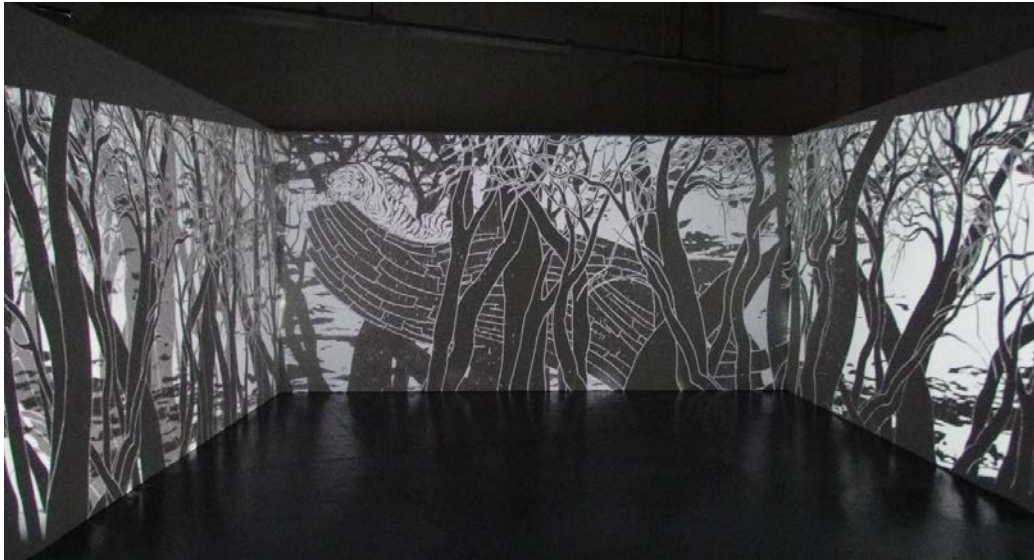
Figure 1 The installation view *of By No Definition*, 2015

Venue: Studio 1.17, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne; Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh

Time: 22.08-05.09.2015. 20-28, 02, 2016.

By No Definition is a single-screen video installation work made in 2015. The work consists of three identical HD animations projected as a full image on a U-shape wall (2.4×5m for each side) installed in the studio 1.17, accompanied by independent soundtracks made by Adam Potts and Ben McVinnie. Three pairs of Optoma video projectors and media players were installed on the opposite wall with metal projector shelves, connected with HDMI cables. One loudspeaker was installed on the back of the U-shape wall and played the soundtrack of one laptop placed on the floor.

The animation video (14 min) has three main episodes made from animated drawings inspired by my memories in a garden. Each episode metaphorically represented a story implying the transforming identities and the dramatic social

changes in the 1990s, Taiyuan City, China. The garden, which is the only architecture, place and material memory survived in the overwhelming social reformation, witnessing the potential danger of separation between friends and family and the irreversible loss of inter-person bonds of traditional community culture. Against the dark textured background of this 'garden', a 'unicorn beetle' carries 'flower pots', 'hand' grows from the 'pots', 'traffic lights' twinkle, 'tiger' lies on a tree branch, metaphorically visualised the confrontation between an individual and the social force.

The spacious darkness and the heavy, disturbing noise soundtrack echo with the tension implied by my self-narrative animation. The audience were cut of the mundane and locked in the pit of alienation and isolation by the enveloping size of the projections. Their shadows cast on the wall participate with surreal figures wriggling across the screen, which turns them as part of the installation.
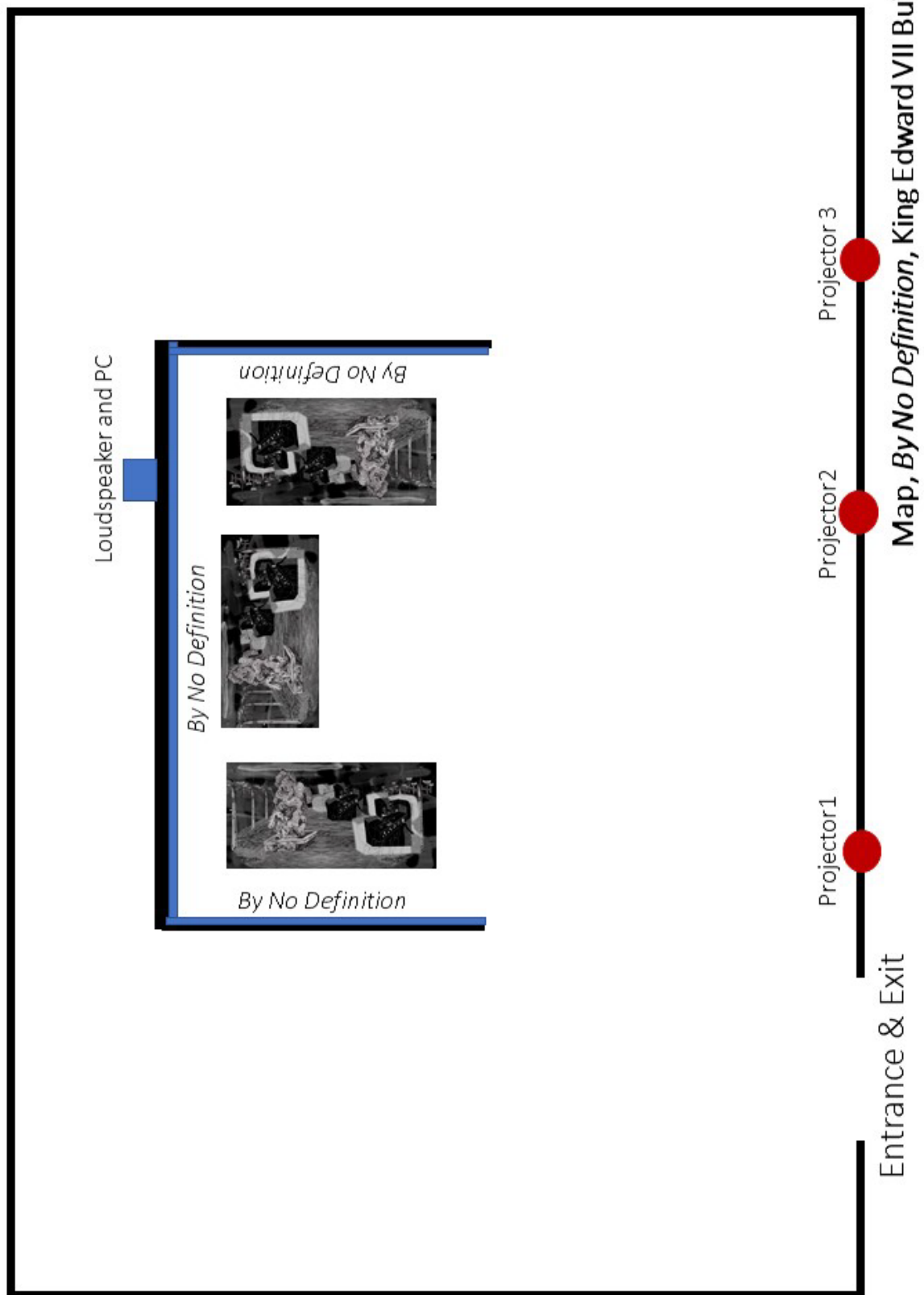
Figure 2 The map *of By No Definition*, 2015

Project 2   *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*

Venue: Ex Libris Gallery, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University; Gosforth Civic Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne.
Time: 5-7.05.2016, 21.04-30.06.2018.

Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems is one of three sections of the collaborative exhibition of Newcastle Poetry Festival in Ex Libris Gallery, 2016. I worked with PhD poets from Creative Writing Bernadette McAloon and Joanna Brooks. It exhibited a group of video projections, drawings and objects based on our collaborative autobiographical narratives. It was also a part of the group show *Imaginary* Chasms curated by Lungs Project in Gosforth Civic Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018. While only the video projections and drawings were displayed.

This multi-medium installation was arranged next to the entrance of the Ex Libris Gallery and the deep end of Gosforth Civic Theatre Café. It has three major sections located in various area of the space: *Then is Diffused in Now*[1], *Carnival*[2] and *Dislocations* (all named by the poets):

Figure 3 *Then Is Diffused in Now*, *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016

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[1] Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*, section V, (Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2009).
[2] Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*, section V, (Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2009).

Then is Diffused in Now is the video projection on a curtain (200 × 75 cm) hung on a wooden bar with soundtracks of poets' reading. This projection consists of four independent episodes inspired by the poems of Bernadette McAloon and Joanna Brooks: *North Point* (0.15-5.40 min) and *Stony Heap* (7.36-9.5 min) and for McAloon's poems, *Collaborating on Alnmouth's Shore* (5.45-7.30 min) and *Cowries* (10.00- 11.05 min) for Brooks' poems. The poems touch the forgotten sides of the landscape which interweave with the pain of dislocation and loss. I attempted to visualise an atmosphere to involve the audience's felt sense of landscape with abstract forms of watercolour and drawings. The slowly transforming shapes, colour areas and lines echoed the ambiguous and uncertain features of self-narrative and the fading memory of the North. Being a part of the collective exhibition, the sound was not played in public, but with two headphones connected with two desktops hidden in a white plinth. The audience could sit down facing the projection.

When Grief Turns Carnival consists of two identical video projections on two surfaces. Animated in Adobe After Effects, the drawings of seagulls came to life hovering on the two piled up objects (a sea-polished brick with a round hole in the middle and a concrete cube with a rough surface, about 30 × 55 cm). One was on the piled-up rock and brick collected from Whitely Bay, and Tynemouth, Newcastle upon Tyne, placed in the corner close to *Then is Diffused in Now.*
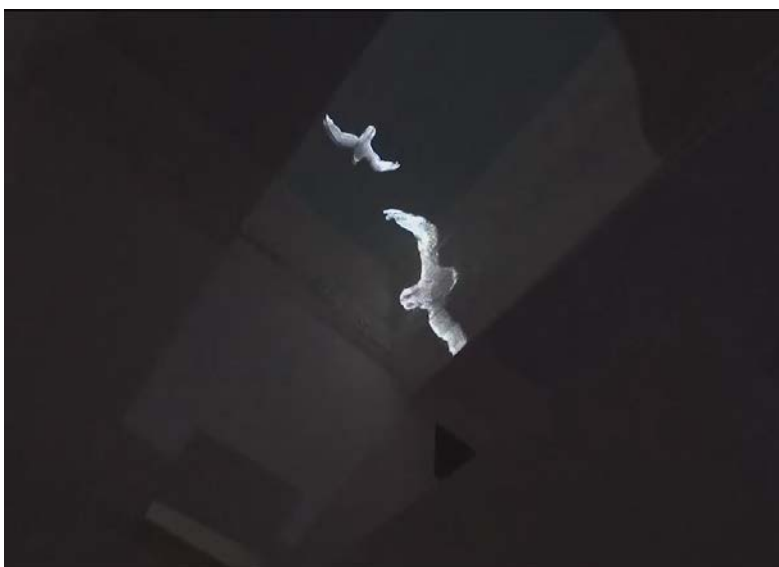
Figure 4 *When Grief Turns Carnival, Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems,* 2016

Walking close and bowing down, the viewers could see the small 'birds' 'flying' across the 3D projects and are 'stretched' the surfaces. Another one is on the high ceiling at the entrance of the gallery. Depending on the daylight, the audience could discover the flying life-size 'birds' with their heads held high clearly or ambiguously.

Dislocations involve a group of drawings on tracing paper (varied sizes from 10 × 6 cm to 40 × 28 and 63 × 42 cm) and collected objects (sea coal chunks, seaweeds, beads, seashells etc.). They were displayed on two tables and in the middle part of the gallery, in the opposite of the window. It was a mixture of the new (drawings) and the old (fossils, old beads, etc.), the rough (drifting wood pieces, brick pieces, etc.) and the soft (feathers, moss, paper etc.), the tough (coal chunks, plastic belts, etc.) and fragile (seashells, dry weeds, tracing paper strips, etc.).

The installation played with the scale of drawings and projections, which attempted to trigger bodily engagement and active exploration. The audience were supposed to look closely at the small-scale projection on objects in the corner and up at the life-scale seagull projections 'hovering' on the ceiling. Each part carried rich referential information waiting to be configured into an open-end narrative reflecting on the transformed landscape and the fragility of human memory.

Figure 5 *Dislocations, Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016

Map, *Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, XL Gallery, King Edward VII Building
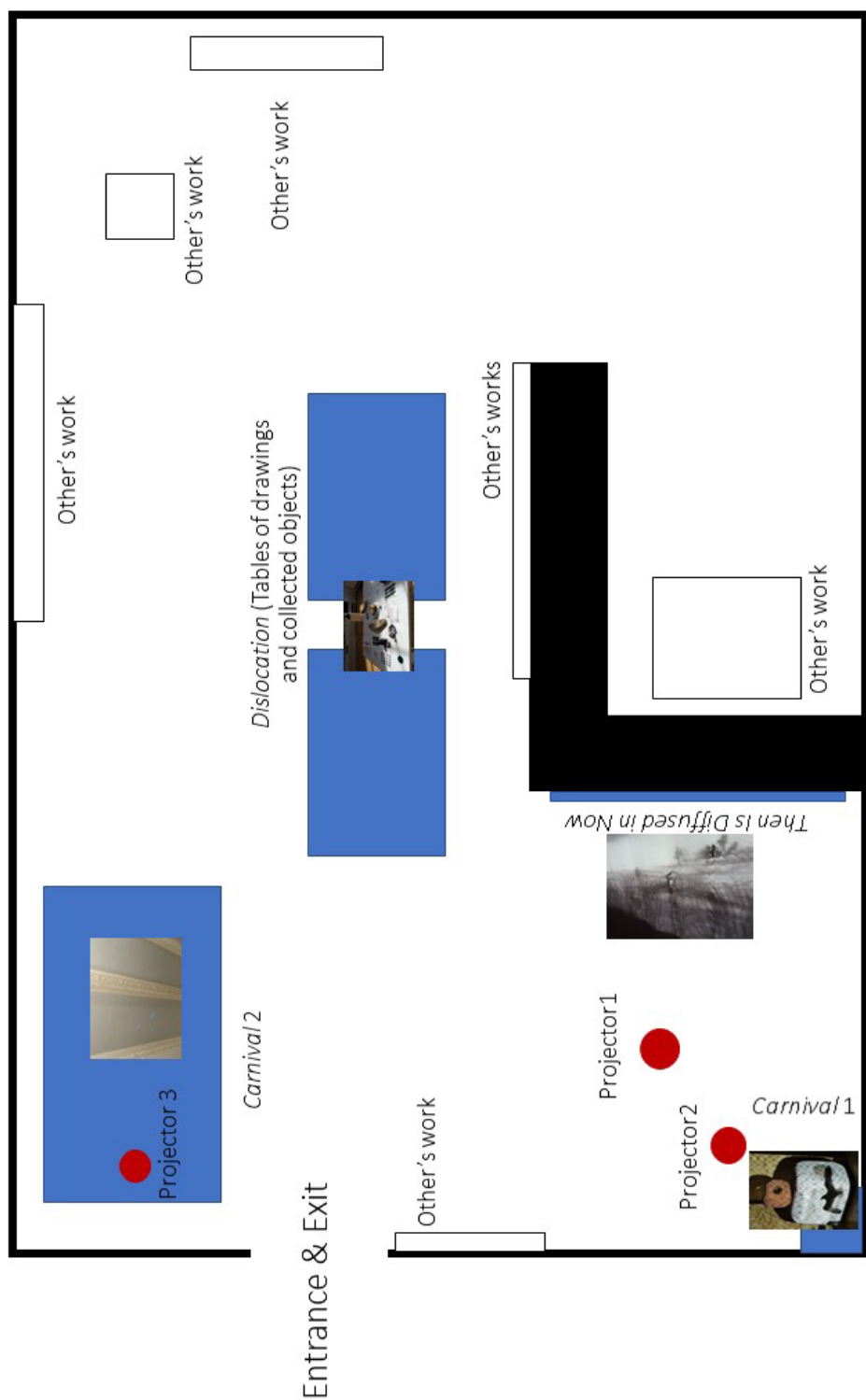
Figure 6 The map *of Northern Landscapes: Picture Poems*, 2016

Project 3   *The Reversible Future*

Venue: Abject Gallery, Breeze Creative, Newcastle upon Tyne
Time: 20.07-13.08.2016

The Reversible Future is a solo exhibition funded and exhibits in Abject Gallery, Breeze Creative, Newcastle upon Tyne, 20 July-13 August 2016. It attempted to reflect on watching military training in a garden, which metaphorically discusses the conflicting cultural struggle in recent 20 years in North China. The shortage of space pushed the 'troops' into the path between the rose shrubs and the fountain and break the peace of nature. The highly unified marching steps and slogans of the trainees renew the identity and character of the garden. The military training, which was a symbol carrying heavy meanings of collectivism, nationalism and mutual bonds between the trainees, happened in a garden is a space of nature, romance and individuality.

Figure 7 The projection of flowers and a horizon on *Navigation*, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

This work involved multiple mediums including two video projections, two videos played in TVs, several printed drawings and photos on acetate sheets and a couple of assemblages of collected objects. It attempted to try a diversity of mediums to transform my drawings to an installation using two video projections, collected objects and printed photographs and drawings.

Video projections:

Navigation the drawing on paper (18 × 80 cm, colour liner on paper, 2015) was printed and displayed on a piece of Panama cotton fabric (50 × 350 cm) hung on an empty wall. An HD projection of a film of the horizon in the sunset (mirrored) and lambent flowers was at the centre of the fabric. It was along with a military training song recorded during the military training in 2015.

Another projection *Plankton* was at the entrance of the gallery in an almost square shape (about 2×2 m). It showed a group of slowly sliding cell-like creatures and several X-ray-like objects falling from the top to the bottom. Unlike the former one, this work was made black-and-white and mute.

Figure 8 *Plankton*, *The Reversible Future*, 2016,

Figure 9-10 Videos shown on TVs, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

TV videos:

On the left corner, a gallery TV was placed on a plinth showing a video of trainees slowly marching in a long roll. The character and trait of individuals were covered up and dissolved by the highly unified troop marching towards nowhere. An acetate was hung across the top of the plinth, which requires the audience to look from low position to a high one, then to a lower one again. The motions were so subtle that it requires the audience to be patient to observe. Another TV was at the right end of the gallery showing the slowly transforming colour patches.

Printed acetates:

In the right corner of the gallery, the photo printed on acetate showed a group of trainees marching across the wide yard in behind the garden (A4, the pink-blue and orange tones). On the corner in the opposite, another acetate showed a girl playing the piano in an old classroom (repeated in six times, A4, black-and-white tone). Between there was a long acetate stripe showing construction site of a skyscraper in Taiyuan City (594×28 cm, purple-and-blue tone).

A second long-format drawing *1000 Miles* (21 × 90 cm, colour pen and watercolour on paper, 2016, figure 2.103-5), drawn with colourful liners and painted with watercolour, was a poly-scenic illustration representing several events happening simultaneously.

Objects:

There was an assemblage made of collected objects on the plinth next to the right wall. A plastic toy baby was held upside down with several black hairbands on a white wooden round plate. Two car mirrors were places angled right in front of the figure, which gave it two more identical companions. On the lower plinth next to it, there was a circle of plastic privates holding guns at a roll of plastic card (A2) painted with crayons.

Each part was a small fragment of the self-narrative reflecting on the conflict between individuals and the collectivism. Behind the colourful pictures and animations hid the loss of independent identity and the confusions of the role of a person in the group. All these elements attempted to enrich the narrative effect of the installation by asking the audience to freely associate them, while somehow ambiguous representations may make the interpretation hard.

Figure 11 A printed acetate, *1000 Miles*, *The Reversible Future*, 2016
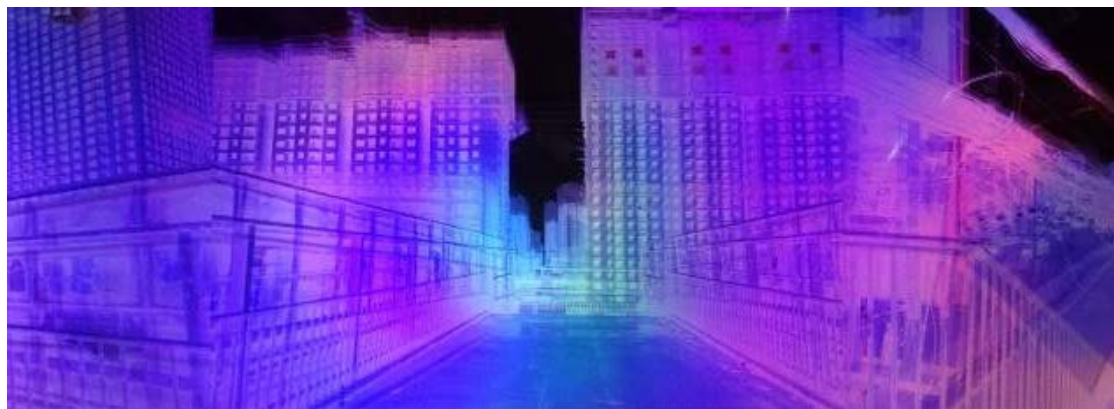
Figure 12 A photograph in *The Reversible Future*, 2016
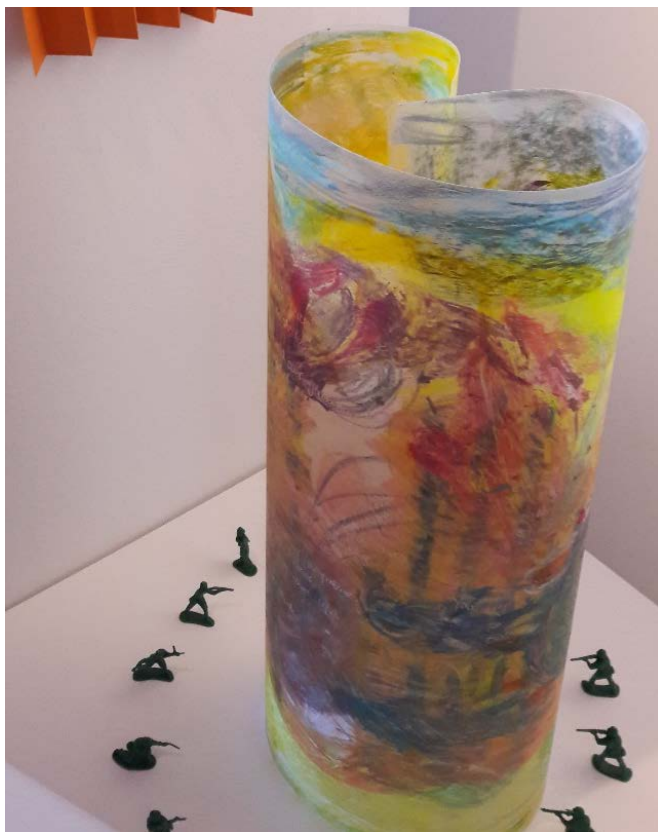
Figure 13-4 The assemblages on the plinths, *The Reversible Future*, 2016

Print on acetate

Print on acetate

Print on acetate

TV 2, video of abstract shapes

Assembled objects

Drawing on plastic sheet surrounded by plastic soldiers

Projection 2

Projector 2

Projector 1

Entrance & Exit

Map, *The Reversible Future*, Abject Gallery, Breeze Creatives

Projection 1 on Navigation printed on fabric

TV 1, video of a military training

1000 Miles, print on acetate
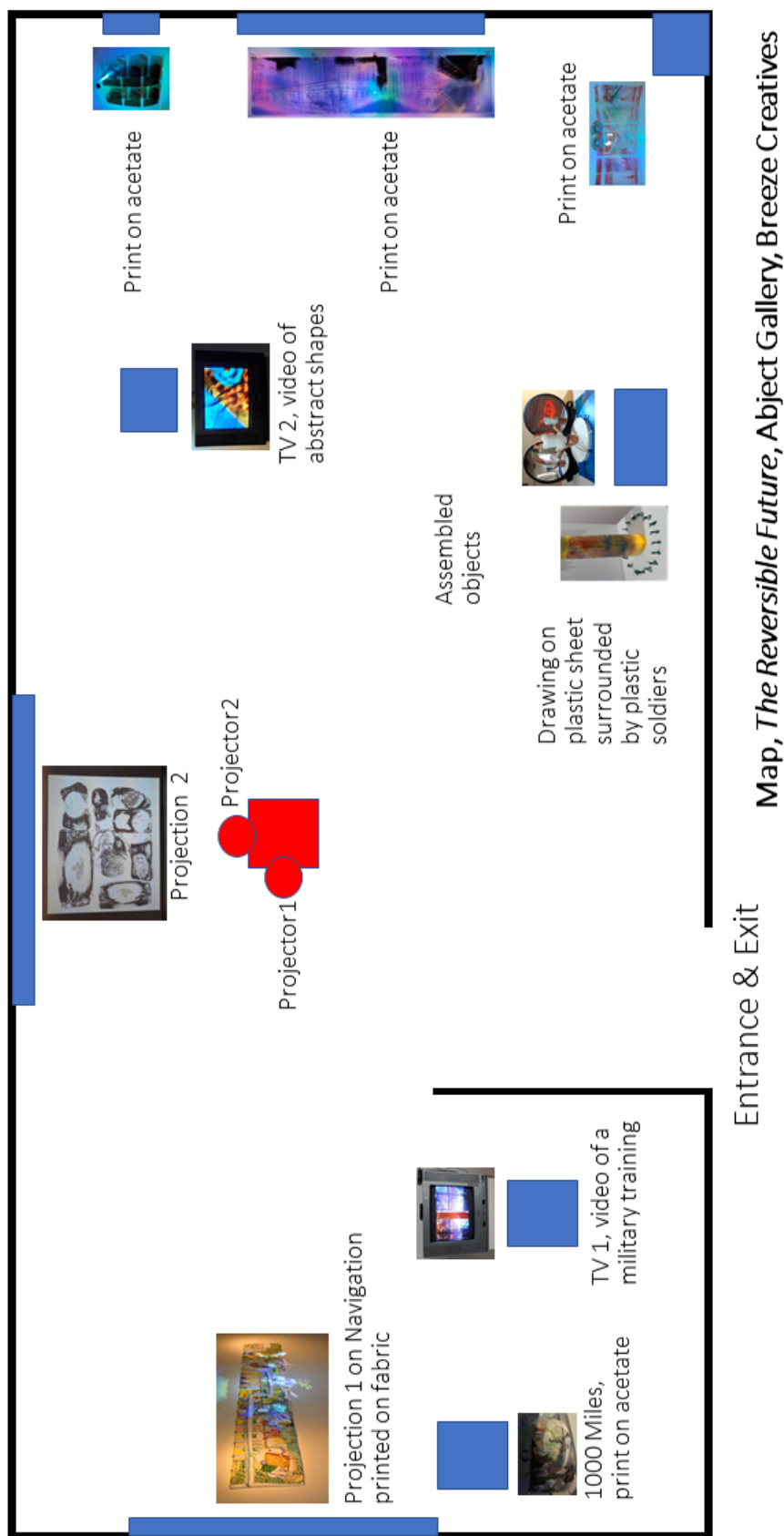
Figure 15 The map of *The Reversible Future*, 2016

360

Project 4   *The Outsiders*

Venue: Studio 5.08, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 22.08-02.09.2017

The Outsiders is a solo exhibition of multi-screen video installations and murals, at Studio 5.08, King Edward VII Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne. It was based on my self-narrative of a 'mutual gaze' between me (an outsider) and my friend (an insider) and the invisible collectivism cultural barriers in late 20th century China.

The installation involves many perspectives to discuss and reflect on this story using five independent video projections and four groups of drawing on walls in the space divided by an L-shape wall. To solve the key question to make my drawings installation work, I used the approach of 'fragmentation' to separate my drawing characters with their backgrounds (pictorial space) and re-accommodate them in real space of the studio. It allowed the narrative characters to 'walk out' of paper, or the audience to drop into a 3D story. Following an order of growing size, I arranged similar characters appearing in miniature-scale, life-scale and giant-scale, implying the shrinking size of the audience when walking deep into space. Here are the details of each projection and drawings:

The Beholder

It was a projection on a hanging paper scroll on a cable (50 cm high and 35 cm wide). The figure was wearing a patterned jumper represented by thin lines and has no face or background. The background was removed in order to prevent any framing of the projection and the face to prevent any reference to the identity, gender and social status of the figure. In front of the window with her back towards the viewer was a girl holding a flowerpot in her arms. The prosperous purple leaves of the plant growing from the pot spread to the balcony and block her view. A small pond was gushing around her feet as she gazed at the window below the balcony.
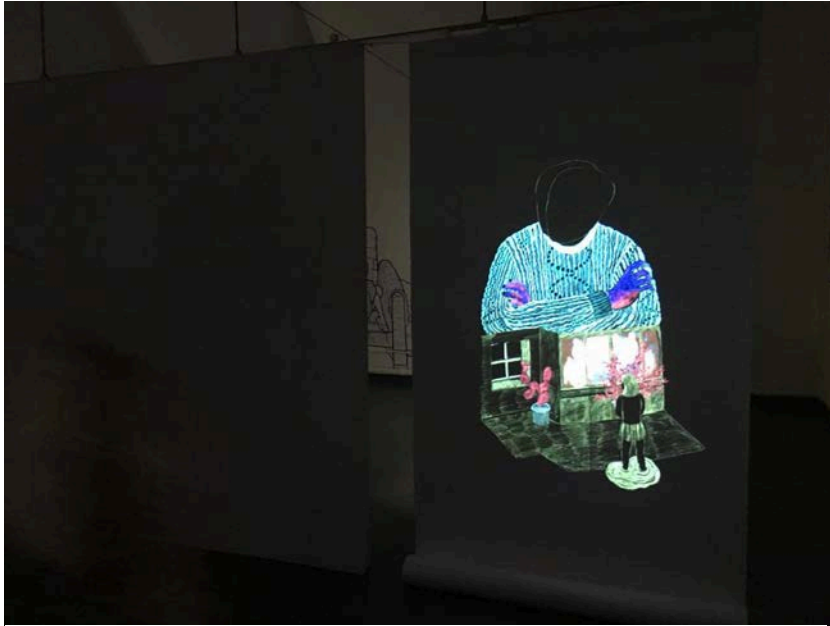
Figure 16 *The Beholder, The Outsiders*, 2017

Figure 17 *The Outsiders*, *The Outsiders,* 2017

Framed by a 'window' was a video of watercolour painting as it was being made. The painting gradually depicted the pale silhouettes of a family get together with various characters arriving and sitting on chairs. At the end of the animation, they all disappeared into splashes of colours. On the left of the figure, there was a window for the imagined 'living room'.

The Outsiders

Keep walking past the first projection to the end of the room, the audience would encounter six identical hand-drawn characters (about 160 cm high and 240 cm wide) projected on an MDF free-standing model. They were the same as the small girl character in the first projection while increasing much in size. They were identical in the body and slightly different in their faces (identical films of my moving face). The model was covered with torn paper pieces to exaggerate the texture and structure of the projection, which emphasised the connection between the projection and the drawing on paper. The projection was played with a noisy tweet made from my dialogue with a friend (20 times speeded up) and the crunching doors and windows. Till now, the audience met figures standing freely as if they walked out of the drawing. Or, the audience broke into a narrative illustration.

The Inspectors

Figure 18 *The Inspectors, The Outsiders*, 2017
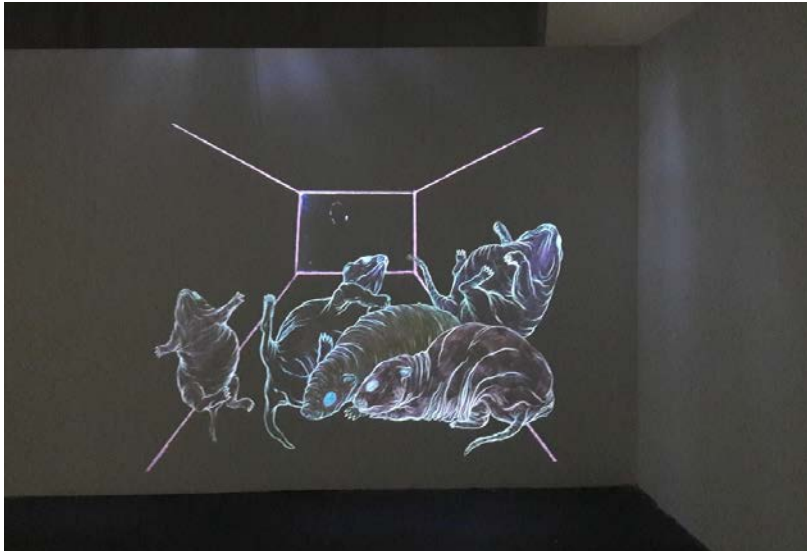
Figure 19 *The Sleepers*, *The Outsiders,* 2017

Figure 20 *The Intransigent*, *The Outsiders*, 2017

Looking above near *The Outsiders*, the audience could see *The Inspectors*, a large-scale projection (about 130 cm wide and 75cm wide) onto the ceiling in the left-hand corner of the room. The animation contained only three simple movements: a hand opened the cage door, the heads moved at an angle to peep in and a hand closed the door. The animation sequence was 30 seconds and was made into a loop with a 30 second still of the cage between each play. This had the effect of implying that the giant girls came and went. The architecture of the room meant that the ceiling was built up into the roof, creating an angle between the wall and the ceiling along two sides of the room. The audience now

were under the 'inspection' and control of the drawing characters. Their bodies 'shrunk' conceptually in comparison to the big heads above.

The Intransigent

When the audience turned at the end of the room, they would discover another space on the other side of the L-shape wall. *The Intransigent* was the largest projection on a paper screen made of eight long strips of paper. It was hard to find a paper roll which was long and wide enough for this format (approximately 3 × 4.5m). This video was made by filming the painting of a figure being made in watercolour on Chinese rice paper. A video of a burning candle in negative was placed next to a painted character and a video of my own face, also in negative was superimposed on that of the watercolour figure. The edges of the paper were torn to emphasise the texture and the material property of the paper and to 'blend' the edges into space. This projection reminds the audience that their dominating size over the small drawings.

The Sleepers

Corresponding to the giants inspecting the room, I made *The Sleepers* an animation projection of several sleeping hairless rats (about 200× 175cm). Each rat was drawn separately on an A4 piece of paper and scanned. I animated them in Adobe After Effects using the puppet tool. It was a tool which allowed me to add motions to static figures by setting different 'pin spots' on their bodies. I could add motions by dragging, pushing and pulling these spots. I made my rats to 'breath' with the belly moving up and down. They also 'twitched' their arms and legs as if they were having dreams. The characters were arranged on a black background with a line drawing in the background.

Drawings on the walls:

There were some figures drawn with brush and acrylic on walls mediating the projections and the narrative. When the audience walked into the room, they may

notice the 'chairs' painted based on the structures of the ceiling on the left. Subtly illuminated by the light of the projection around, they have a weak sense of existence, while carried a foreshadow of the drawing next.

When they moved to the end of the room and turn right, they would see a life-scale line drawing of a window frame with curtains. On its right, the middle of the wide wall, a life-scale sofa drawing held several face-less girls facing towards the big paper screen directing the audience to keep on exploring the room.

Walking through the gap between the paper screen and the L-shape wall, they would see several girls holding flower pots dressed in the same way in the first projection running into a 'gate'. This indicated the open ending of my narrative, which may lead the audience to imagine what happens next beyond this room.

Starting from the entrance, the audience were supposed to view the projections from the smallest to the largest, creating a shrinking sensation through the changes of scale. Walking from one section of the installation to another they gradually become aware of the changing relationship between themselves and the scale of the projected figures. However, it was also open to free walking across the projections.

Figure 21 Drawings on the wall, *The Outsiders,* 2017

Figure 22 'Chairs' drawings on the wall, *The Outsiders*, 2017

Using the multi-screen method, I solved the key questions transforming my drawings to video installation to develop the new capacity of narrative pictures without impairing the nature of 2D art. It metaphorically implied the transformation between an outsider and an insider in the dramatic social change in the late 20th century. The audience, however, might become the narrative characters engaging in my story using their bodily and mental reactions to enrich the narrative.
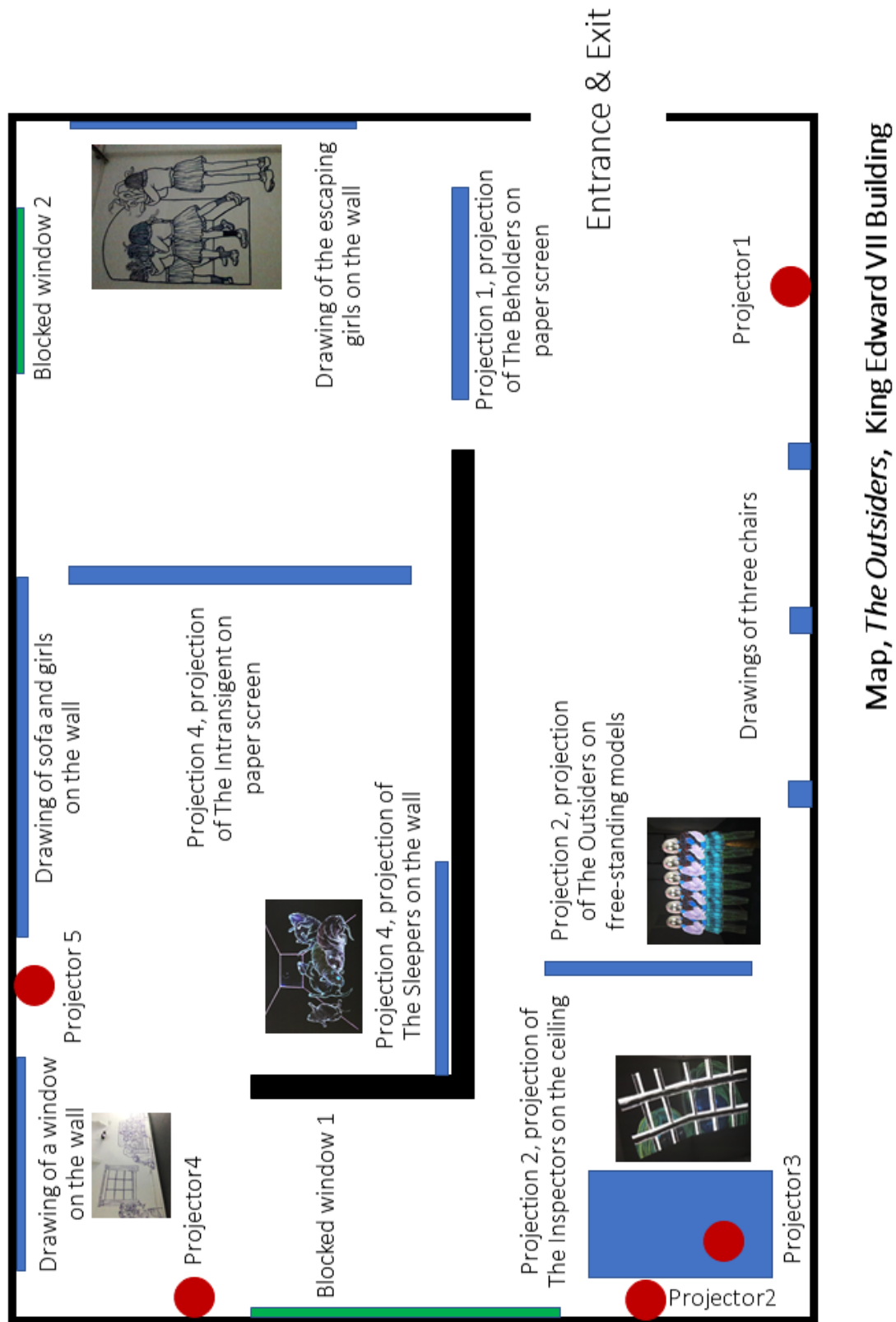
Figure 23 The map of *The Outsiders*, 2017

The following labels appear within the map figure:

- Blocked window 2
- Drawing of the escaping girls on the wall
- Projection 1, projection of The Beholders on paper screen
- Entrance & Exit
- Projector1
- Drawing of sofa and girls on the wall
- Projection 4, projection of The Intransigent on paper screen
- Projection 4, projection of The Sleepers on the wall
- Drawings of three chairs
- Projection 2, projection of The Outsiders on free-standing models
- Projector 5
- Drawing of a window on the wall
- Projector4
- Blocked window 1
- Projection 2, projection of The Inspectors on the ceiling
- Projector3
- Projector2
- Map, *The Outsiders*, King Edward VII Building

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