

1. Footprints and Philosophy:

Sonic Explorations in Divergent Landscapes

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What this essay is for?

This essay functions as an introduction to the composition portfolio as a whole. It is not intended to give the reader a description of the creative process involved in making each piece; that is something I do in detail in the project write ups themselves, Chapters 2 through to 11. My intention here is more to give a sense of the overarching themes and ideas that emerge from this body of work and from my creative practice.

In much the same way as music is granted the freedom to abandon linear narrative and to be flexible in terms of its form and construction, so I claim the right to use text and language in a comparable way here: as a freely employed creative and expressive tool. Language and text has the facility to communicate in different ways, and below I'm using it in a way that I consider to be most appropriate for the task at hand. I would define that task as follows: to communicate what I think and feel to be the essence of the composition portfolio and of the processes employed to make the work. The reason I am taking this approach with the text is because I think it's the most effective strategy: I don't feel that I can fall back on more regular and formulaic ways of using text and language if my interest and priority is in communicating to you, the reader, something meaningful about my work. The heart of the point I'm making is this: I don't want to use text here to 'rationalise' the creative process, because the creative process as I experience it is not something I would describe as rational.

It seems evident to me that our experience of life doesn't happen in logically coherent sentences or fall into neat and tidy paragraphs, and I do not accept that artistic creative practice is a rational, 'balanced' process. In my experience, human consciousness is not, in general, a rational place in which to be, and this is the location from which art works arise and coalesce. The experience of consciousness can perhaps better be described as a fragile, ephemeral and multi faceted *construction*: habitual ways of seeing and thinking make it easier for us to forget that

it is something we *construct*. Furthermore, that construction process involves a lot of filtering out of information: I would suggest that what are generally considered to be ‘rational’ and ‘stable’ ways of thinking, ‘well adjusted’ modes of thought and action, are brought about more through a reduction, not an increase, of consciousness and awareness. I would argue that what passes as sanity in our culture often comes about through a narrowing, not a widening, of the aperture of awareness: we often filter out aspects of ourselves and the reality of the world around us in order to function and survive.

Although at a superficial level of self reflection it might appear that we experience consciousness and time as a continuous unbroken stream, if we stop for a minute and think, it’s clear that our experience isn’t really like that. We live day to day in what I would better describe as a ‘flux’ state: an ever changing, fluctuating ‘now’. That ‘now’ itself contains a complex mosaic of past, present and future. To quote William James:

Consciousness is in constant change. I do not mean by this to say that no one state of mind has any duration – even if true, that would be hard to establish. What I wish to lay stress on is this, that *no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before*. Now we are seeing, now hearing; now reasoning, now willing; now recollecting, now expecting; now loving, now hating; and in a hundred other ways we know our minds to be alternately engaged. ¹

So according to this way of seeing things, consciousness is a stream of perceptions in the present moment intermingled with reflections on these perceptions. The ‘now’ is constantly folded back into itself and reflected upon in the ‘now’ that follows. And then this new ‘now’ is compared with memories of a more distant ‘now’, and imaginings of a future ‘now’. The conception is of a multi-layered collage of experiential phenomena in a state of constant flux and change.

So, to return to the earlier point, if text is used to describe life and experience, and if it seeks to create an effective analogue of our conscious experience with shining black ink on the page, then it may well need to operate in a similar way. Rather than try and fit life into tidy sentences and paragraphs, perhaps language should be at the service of life’s description; used *creatively* in an attempt to describe conscious experience. And this composition portfolio is essentially a record of life lived: it is about life and experience, not something called ‘composition’ that is abstracted and sealed off from life, from living and being. So it follows that I should be more creative with my use of language when attempting to describe the work and my lived experience that created it.

¹JAMES 1984, page 141.

I've come to realise whilst writing this essay that consciousness – human consciousness and experience – is a primary interest and concern that underscores my composition practice: it is a central theme. My work is a reflexive process through which I explore my own and other peoples' consciousness and experience. Through this enmeshed process of composition and living, what I'm looking at and returning to again and again is the following question: how can I better relate to others, to myself and to the world around me? This suggests that my work is primarily about communication, because consciousness and communication are inseparable. Our shared consciousness can be imagined as a shared collective experiential space that we inhabit together: the platform or stage onto which the information brought to us by the five senses is projected, experienced, analysed and 'played out'. As such, contact and communication with one another depends on the permeability of the borders of our conscious awareness. The degree to which we are aware of others, and are able to empathise with and connect with others is bound up with borders and boundaries, awareness and sensitivity to alternative ways of seeing. So, at the heart of my work is an interest in exploring ways in which I might be able to effect consciousness, our shared experience, and to change it, both for myself and for others. Thinking in this way, perhaps artwork creates a kind of 'no mans land' between individual psyche's: an external point of reference and meeting place that enables us to cross borders between minds and so to share our experience.

This is not something I am always aware of, this central theme in my work. I can't always see it myself. But I can see it now, and I am trying to capture that perception in *this* text, in *this* moment: the act of writing itself brings about a change in awareness. The transductive process of manifesting internal emotional and psycho-physiological 'states' in the medium of language *itself* creates new levels and degrees of understanding. And right now I am trying to capture the essence of these ideas somehow in the present moment that I am experiencing here at my writing desk, on my laptop. Because I *am* writing this in the moment. I am constructing *narrative* in the present that will become a part of *your* present, the reader, whoever you are, and whenever and wherever your present moment might be.

It is important, if one is to understand the nature of this text, to understand that I hold the following view: *there is only the present moment*. That is my view: that there has only ever been and only ever will be the eternal present moment. The rest is narrative: it is a narrative construction, a constructed story. I am not denying that there is an external world out there; it's just that gaining concrete knowledge regarding the nature of it is a difficult thing to do. The sense many people have of a concrete, fixed idea of events that happened in the past and of what might happen in the future is frequently an illusion based on little real evidence. It is, in my view, extremely important to be aware of this, as constructed narratives have the habit of fooling people: if not checked and carefully questioned and examined, they can often appear as

incontrovertible 'truths' about the past, present and future: 'common sense' facts that are beyond dispute. So what you are reading here, the words on this page, is another narrative construction about imagined futures, memories, ideas of the self and one's relation to the world. Woven into this text are my own hopes and fears, traces of my own misconceptions and fragments of unconscious narratives. Such narratives have been absorbed from the culture in which I live and are embedded here, along with everything else. For me it seems absurd to think that this text, or any other, may be objectively 'true'. Rather it is an imagined construction and trace of a lost present moment for the author, which is then reconstructed by the reader: reimagined and re-remembered in the reader's conscious experience, in their new 'now' that is itself constantly becoming and changing. I will return again and again to these ideas and themes in this essay. For now I am just introducing them into the discussion; beginning to map out the territory.

To recap, let the points stand that conscious experience is complex and multi-layered, and that text can be used in creative ways to reflect that on the page. Moreover, my opinion is that it *should* reflect that complexity, as that will encourage the writer and reader both to be more consciously aware of the inherent limitations of text as an analogue for experience. Furthermore, I put forward the view there is nothing but the present moment, and the rest – our memories of the past, our knowledge of what we think is history, and our imaginings of possible futures for example – are constructed narratives that exist only in our mind. There may or may not be correlations with our thought processes and actual events in the external world, but this is always extremely difficult to establish, and so caution is advised. What I'm emphasising here is an awareness of the habit in academic writing of using text in a way that professes to gain mastery over the complexity of experience. We might feel we are achieving something when we make up stories and construct narratives on paper, but we must be wary of the tendency to 'edit out' the complexity of our individual and shared experience of the world and the complexity of events that happen in order to make it fit textual norms: in order to write a 'paper'.

Navigating between different worlds.

For me, bound up with my interest in conscious experience and its representation is a deep fascination with the process of navigating between different states of being and experience: navigating between what I might call different experiential 'modes'. And by this I mean the process of building bridges between different worlds: building bridges between different ways of experiencing, and different ways of seeing and feeling. This process I am trying to describe and articulate, of navigating between different modes of being and ways of seeing the world and feeling about the world, is an essential part of my work. So at its heart this composition portfolio is about feeling and value – about how I *feel* about living, about being alive, and about states and modes of *being*.

And as I said earlier, I am using language creatively here to evoke a sense of what it is I mean. There is no direct correlation between these words and ‘theories’ about art, or specific philosophies. I am using language creatively in an attempt to express *my* experience of the world. This essay is a composition: think of it sitting somewhere between prose, poetry and music.

For me, music is a kind of existential prophecy – it is in part about creating possible new feeling and being *states*. Divorced from the constraints of the material world, it can move faster in developing, organising and formulating analogues of new social relationships and ways of seeing.² It is, as such, a bit like an experimental laboratory for experience, except that it is not hermetically sealed off from the world and from life like a laboratory, but a part of it. Music ‘folds back’ into our experience and itself becomes a part of it and the world in which we live. We all know that music listened to at a certain time of life can remind you of that time when heard years later: it can bring back the emotions, sensations, the ‘feeling tone’ or ‘experiential cloud’ of a period of our lives. But also music *made* at a certain time of life as a composer reminds you yourself of that time; the time in which you wrote it. So, when you are reminded about the experiential cloud of a period of your life in the past because of music made by *another* person, you are connecting with *their* stored experiences through the music, and that ‘folds back’ into your experience. It is an intermingling that is happening in the shared cultural space; an entangling of experiences, experiential clouds, feeling tones, and ways of being and seeing the world.

I will return also to this theme again throughout this essay. For now this is just an introduction, a beginning, an exposition of some of the ideas that I will return to, go on to explore and examine. However, as I’ve alluded to, I don’t intend to do this in a particularly rational way, whatever that means.

Some questions.

Some of the central questions examined in my life and through my work are, I think, as follows:

²Attali says something similar in *Noise* (ATTALI 2006, page 11), although I am emphasizing the experiential nature of music and its ability to create new ways of seeing and feeling in the world, which is different to Attali’s notion as music as prophetic harbinger of different social organizations.

Why is it that sometimes life is illuminated, numinous, a joyful experience, but then sometimes life doesn't feel that way, but is drained of meaning? How can we navigate away from a state without meaning, towards a more effective and positive way of seeing the world? In my work I am trying to create *navigating strategies*, designed to move between these different worlds and ways of feeling and seeing. I am convinced that through the creation of artwork we can create positive change in society by making interventions that help to build bridges between different ways of seeing what is here before us in the eternal present.

I believe we desperately need such bridges in our culture in the West, one that is fixated with what I consider to be a materialistic view of life that is dampening the vitality of a potentially more rich and vibrant experience. I think that is the message of art: to unlock human potential for experiencing, feeling, thinking and seeing.

As William James says in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, we sometimes encounter states of mind in which:

[...]we read in common matters superior expression of meaning. The deadness with which custom invests the familiar vanishes, and existence as a whole appears transfigured.³

My life is full of such moments, and I have them every day. My work is about trying to communicate them and give them form, manifest them and encourage others to see the world in the same way. It's about manifesting spirit, making ephemeral experience more concrete, and, as I said earlier, about building bridges. It's also about finding ways of affirming that *I* exist – that the way I experience the world has a place and some value; as such it is about a search for identity.

These points, and everything I'm saying, is of course to do with my own subjective feeling and experience. It is one possible narrative that I am constructing here using metaphor and symbol. Language is not a photograph; words are only symbols, and this particular sentence is referring to itself, like a dog biting its own tail.

Rather than seek to explain in a linear narrative what my work is about, I am trying here to create a text that will make the reader connect with what the work is about in a different way. You will come away from the text having been presented with a collage of interrelated ideas, thoughts, images, philosophical concepts and feelings. I will use repetition, looping and other ways of telling a story, like I do in music. The text is designed to change the way you feel and

³ JAMES 1982, page 476.

see things, just for a moment perhaps. I am trying to draw you into my way of thinking, viewing and experiencing the world. It is not meant to present a well-constructed argument, but rather it is supposed to draw you into the orbit of my way of thinking, and through that to leave a feeling and thinking *residue*. So it will jump about from one nexus of ideas to another, and make no apology for doing so, because that is what my life and experience is like, which is where the work comes from. As a consequence, like a piece of music, this text has an emotional form, as well as containing multiple sequences and groups of ideas. It has crescendos in it, and fluctuations of intensity. For me, every day of experience contains fluctuations of intensity: days are like experiential compositions; they have a timeline, form and meaning, moments of elation perhaps, and moments of tension and relaxation. There are moments where consciousness becomes dislocated, moments that are passionate, and there are some periods that are less coherent than others. In life, sometimes an idea will seem real and clear to me; I jump on it as being true. But then I look back at the statements I've made when I'm in another qualitatively different emotional state, and the exact same statements don't seem to have the ring of truth they once did. But then I see the same statements again another time and they seem dead right, pinpoint accurate once again. And likewise so is this text sometimes less coherent than at other times. That's because it is an attempt to create an analogue, a transduction. Some passages are more logical and restrained than others. This is deliberate, because this text is about my life and living, the art I've created as distillation, residue and product of living over the last four years and what it has meant and still means to me. I am shaping the text to suit me as an expressive medium, not the other way round. As I said before, I am not shoe-horning my experience of the world into the pre-existing formal constraint of an academic style. What would be the point of that? It doesn't fit.

The real point is, that to abstract narratives *about* experience *from* experience and present them on the page in sentences is not to accurately *present* those experiences. You cannot take the life out of living and represent it with printed symbols without losing a great deal. At best you can draw some kind of loose analogue between life and the text. And I'd suggest that at least we should always be aware of that process when writing or reading about living. We should consciously acknowledge it, rather than pretend that it isn't true and then get confused about the limitations of text, about the differences between the text on the one hand, and being on the other. For example in this essay, I am asking myself some questions: why did I do the work? What's the work for? Neat and tidy rational answers to these questions would surely in themselves be constructions of a lie.

So can I ask you to bear with me and go with the flow? Don't feel the need always to extract specific packets of data or information from the text; this is the humanities, not the sciences, and as such it is feeling and experience that I am interested in exploring here. The objects of our enquiry in the arts – the art works we look at, experience or create – are themselves distillations:

transductions of feeling and experience melded into rich modes of expression in different media and into different forms and shapes. They are singularities of experience, being and time. Such objects are the manifestation of our inner world, of our private joys and sorrows, into sonic, literary, embodied or visual art works. They are *spiritual manifestations* and as such they can be viewed as *sacred objects*. Please read through the text with attention, be in the present, and see how it makes you feel and what thoughts it fires in your mind. It is sincere, not cynical; I am trying to communicate honestly with you, as best I can, whoever you are. Of course text can be used in many different ways, and for many different purposes, and they are perhaps all valid. I'm trying to make it clear what the function and purpose of *this* text is, and counter any arguments regarding the validity of the approach I'm taking.

Before moving on, I just want to clear up the use of the word 'spiritual' in this essay. When I use the word spiritual, I don't mean to talk of something pertaining to a specific religious dogma or mystical belief system. I mean more 'concerned with the spirit' rather than with matter or material objects. As a yoga teacher and practitioner, I have a daily commitment to a spiritual practice, and I will use a quote to back up my way of thinking on this subject from yoga literature:

We make a clear distinction between mystical (the claim to the perception of a supernatural reality experienced by some extrasensory means) and spiritual (from the Latin *spiritus*, meaning breath, the animating, sensitive, or vital principle of the individual).⁴

I am using spiritual in this way: to refer to the animating or vital principle of the individual personality, and to refer to the realm of experience as independent from matter. To me the idea of the spiritual is very important in terms of talking and writing in the humanities, because what we do and experience happens in what I would call an ephemeral, spiritual realm. This is the realm of consciousness that I am talking about here in this essay and that is referred to in the quote above. Our conscious, imaginative and emotional shared *experience* is not a physical thing, and does not take place in the physical world as such. It may well be the emergent property of physical and biological processes, but *experientially* it is non-material. So we need in the humanities to develop a better language for talking about this place in which we work, think and imagine, and in which works of art are made. We need a word to talk about this realm of experience, which is at one and the same time outside and inside the material. 'Spiritual' itself is loaded with other connotation, so is perhaps admittedly not ideal.

⁴ KAMINOFF, MATTHEWS 2012, page x.

William James identified this distinction very clearly in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*⁵ back in 1901. For James the value of religion and religious practice was not about ‘truth’: not about whether religious belief systems present historically accurate facts or are accurate as descriptions of physical reality and the way the physical universe works. In contrast, religion is valuable for James as a force in our culture due to how it has a significant effect on consciousness and the personality: how religious practices in many different cultures around the world *changes* the nature of conscious experience. The parallel question to ask in terms of music and the arts is this: ‘in what way does a piece of music or art work make us *feel differently* about life? What is its function and what does it *do*?’

Ten different pieces and what they are about.

Although contrasting in terms of content and media, the ten works presented here share a number of common conceptual threads: they all involve the use of sound to reveal, uncover and communicate, and to map hidden aspects of the subject matter. This statement leaves two questions to answer with each of the ten pieces under discussion: firstly, what is the subject matter in each? Secondly, what is revealed and communicated in each? So let’s start by looking at each piece individually and at least try to answer these two questions if we can.

With *Snow Cradle*⁶ there is first of all what I might call an interest in creating imaginary sonic landscapes: imaginary worlds of feeling, being and experience encoded in sound. The album is made from fragmented isolates gleaned from deconstructed Kariwitan.⁷ I discuss the creative process at length in Chapter 2. However, in my view what the music is really about, beyond a description of what I did to make it (the form and harmonic/melodic content and that sort of thing) is the creation of imagined ways of feeling and being in the world: imagined ways of experiencing living. The same can be said for *Ice Pictures*⁸: both *Snow Cradle* and *Ice Pictures* were designed to be listened to on headphones or at home, or perhaps in the car, and as such they are ways of feeling and experiencing that can be transported around in the listener’s own present moment and evoked at will. So the subject matter being uncovered and revealed is a way of seeing and experiencing, of feeling about living and being alive. I am also *looking* for this way of seeing and experiencing *within myself* through the creative process: I am trying to find it and present it. In *Snow Cradle* I am mining myself to find this alternative way of seeing and feeling. In *Ice Pictures*, it is a collaborative effort. But in both projects, and in all the projects in the portfolio, I am trying to find and manifest this ‘spiritual’ reality somehow – this different way of seeing,

⁵ JAMES 1982.

⁶ See Chapter 2.

⁷ Traditional Central Javanese gamelan music.

⁸ See Chapter 3.

experiencing and feeling. I am doing this by coding it in acoustic media: by coding experience in sound.

With *Ash Dome*⁹ these same ideas apply. With this piece I am searching for a way of manifesting feeling and experience in sound. But this time, I am working directly and collaboratively with specific outside influences: the work of British sculptor David Nash, along with the choreographer Simon Birch and 26 dance students. Here the interest is in uncovering and manifesting responses to David Nash's work: the finished product and performance is our collective response to his output. Nash's work itself is an attempt to manifest his interior world: his inner life and experiential world. The chosen media in Nash's case is found wood: the media Nash uses to present this personal alternative vision of experience is found wood and fallen trees. David Nash uses found wood to create objects and shapes that stand freely in the world and in life. In our piece, these shapes resonate with composer, choreographer, lighting designer and performers to create new work. This work itself is a new manifestation of being and experience.

With *Ash Dome*, I also started to work with natural, environmental found sound: field recordings gathered throughout the composition process. For me fragments of recorded sound are fragments of time and experience. In *Ash Dome* I used these found sound fragment to construct music and sonic textures, and to inspire musicians to create new material. For example in the 'Bird Cello' section¹⁰ I used bird song recordings from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park¹¹ and then worked with Min Song in the studio to create cello phrases in response to these found sounds. I was then able to use these phrases freely on my canvas: the phrases themselves could then be thought of and treated as brushstrokes of sound, emotion and experience: I could shape them and combine them with other sounds in the work, making the composite whole into something that had and still has meaning for myself and for others. So in this piece, and in other areas of my creative practice, I am dealing with fragments of time, emotion and experience, and reconstituting them into new collages. In this sense the performance space and the moment of performance becomes a reconstruction of and exploration of consciousness. It becomes a new possible way of being in a specific, designed space; a shared experience with audience and performer and a way of being together. I am emphasising here and through this compositional process the idea expressed earlier: that art is essentially about communication.

⁹ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰ See Chapter 4 for details.

¹¹ As a starting point for this piece the dancer, choreographer and myself visited David Nash's major retrospective exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The creative process is covered in detail in Chapter 4.

*Another Place*¹² is a collaborative work created with recorder player Charlotte Pugh. Here, I was searching *in* the landscape for inspiration and for meaning. Found sound recordings taken whilst on a costal walk from Whitby to Robin Hood's Bay were used as a starting point. The journey, the walk, had a *contour* and a *form* of its own. There was a moment when I moved from the sunlit cliff path down into the woods and the shadow of the trees, as the path led into a shallow valley and across a woodland stream. The stones were green with moss in the shade, and sunlight came through the spaces in the natural canopy above, playing on the water's surface. It is *this* experience that I try to capture and distil in the piece; this is the experience I try to make manifest. The subject matter here is, again, life and experience. I am seeking to reveal hidden aspects of life and experience: hidden moments of emotional and psychological shift and change as I move from cliff top to stream and back out into the light. As we live we pass through periods of tension and relaxation, periods of expansion and contraction. There is the blocking of our spirit and periods of spiritual growth. Musical forms of course reflect this: that is because they are formal analogues of the living process and life cycle: they are the bridges we build between experiential worlds.

With *Terrarium*¹³ the shared experience of a specific landscape and geographical region is examined and explored. Composer and choreographer here sought to distil and re-present their shared experience of the North York Moors, developing a language using found sound, instrumental composition and physical movement as modes of expression. Again, here it is the shared experience that is the hidden aspect of the subject matter. The subject matter is consciousness and life lived as it was experienced for the choreographer and composer in the landscape. The choreographer and I spent many days exploring the North York Moors, and it is the peak moments of that experience of landscape that we seek to distil and capture in the music and dance, the text, the sound and the movement of bodies in space. With *Terrarium*, I developed my working methods and creative process considerably.

With *A Dip in the Lake*¹⁴ I sought to uncover the inherent beauty contained within the everyday and apparently mundane. Or rather, that is what happened: I didn't realise it would happen when I started it, but that is the nature of Cage's piece. *A Dip in the Lake* is a realisation of a text composition by John Cage. The piece is about seeing one's everyday surroundings and life being lived for what it really is: astonishing and beautiful. It is a process that leads to a way of seeing, using chance procedures applied to a specific urban landscape. For me this piece was a discovery of the remarkable complexity and variety found in the city streets; in what can so easily be considered mundane and everyday. When the process of the piece is 'performed' and

¹² See Chapter 5.

¹³ See Chapter 6.

¹⁴ See Chapter 7.

carried out,¹⁵ participants with imagination will find that the world *looks* different: everything that appeared so mundane before will seem fresh and new. So Cage's piece is about changing the way we see the world, and so he was also interested in building bridges between worlds, between different ways of seeing and being, and between different levels of consciousness and awareness.

With *Sonic Horizons of the Mesolithic*¹⁶ the focus shifts from a present day urban landscape (as with *A Dip in the Lake*) to a present day that happened in the long distant past; in 'deep time'. In this project, we used sound to examine the hidden biography of an *ancient* landscape. Composer and archaeologist develop a methodology to explore an ancient landscape narrative through sound, creating a 34 minute long soundscape working with archaeological data from the world famous Star Carr site in North Yorkshire. Here, ancient objects reclaimed from beneath the ground, from inside the landscape, are animated sonically. Through this process, narratives of hidden lives are revealed and layers of previously silent historical strata are made audible.

With *Phase Revival*¹⁷ visual artist, composer and scientist collaborate to construct a kinetic sound sculpture based on the physics of spectroscopy. An ambisonic sound fabric, based on the oscillations of the installation itself, helps to create a meditative public space. In this space, previously hidden mathematical principles are made manifest, re-presented sonically and in physical form.

With *Hydrology*¹⁸ choreographer, composer and dancers are searching again for the beauty in the everyday. Related in terms of process to *A Dip in the Lake*, this piece involves the mapping of a specific modern landscape. But this time, there is a theme and the rules of the game are different: all sounds used are found sound recordings of water. So what is examined here is our complex relationship to water in the landscape. This complex relationship is brought to the surface; made manifest through the use of sound and the body in space.

Finally *Transmission*¹⁹ again returns to scientific themes, as this project was created in collaboration with evolutionary biologist Professor Mike Brockhurst. The hidden subject matter in this case is disease and its transmission in the human population. In *Transmission*, we are making manifest the underlying scientific forces that exist below the surface, outside of our day-to-day conscious awareness. Throughout this work the fragility of our consciousness and its balance against the backdrop of the natural world is a prominent theme. As human beings we

¹⁵ The process involves identifying 467 points on the map of a city selected using chance procedures, and then recording sound at each location. Then the sounds are organized using chance procedures and played map using multiple sound systems.

¹⁶ See Chapter 8.

¹⁷ See Chapter 9.

¹⁸ See Chapter 10.

¹⁹ See Chapter 11.

stand between heaven and earth: in this piece, the dance floor is this human plane and the ground on which we stand. On this terra firma we are balanced between the extreme polarities of two invisible worlds: one is visible only when we extend our senses with the help of the electron microscope: the other, the reality of the wider cosmos, can be perceived only through the telescopic lens. Science tells us that our body is a battleground: viruses and our own cells fight against one another to evolve and counter evolve, and bacteria evolve resistance to the antibiotics we use to fight them. From a scientific perspective, our own consciousness can be seen as little more than an emergent property of these forces; the emergent property of the need for DNA to proliferate, regenerate and replicate. At the opposite pole, through the telescope rather than the microscope, we learn from the science journal *Nature* that a black hole has been discovered with a 12 Billion solar mass: SDSS J0100+2802 is a quasar that compresses the mass of 12 000 000 000 suns into the space of a single atom.²⁰ We now have access to this bewildering scientific knowledge: images from the electron microscope and the hubble space telescope alike fill our computer screens. Human consciousness in the early 21st century must somehow hold a position between these polarities, whilst new narratives take the place of old mythologies.

What can we see emerging from this overview?

So that is my overview. We can see themes emerging here: themes of landscape, of process, the use of found sound, and a pronounced interest in consciousness and experience.

The theme of landscape features heavily, and this is because landscape is where we live: it is the world, the stage, the playground of human consciousness and experience. It is the platform on which the *being* of our life plays out and the dome of experience in which the five senses operate. The landscape also has multiple layers; maps are perhaps so fascinating to us because they express the multiple layers that are present within the landscape narrative. It is interesting to see an old map of an area in which you live for example, because you can see old lost narratives and stories overlaid onto the present. It makes one aware of multiple narratives and stories that have been lived within the landscape, right under our feet. The spirit of men and women, of lives lived and the experience of love and of intimate moments, of betrayal and hate: all this is stored somehow in the bricks, the earth, the rock and the stone. And also such maps make one aware that in one sense the past still exists in the present moment, if we are sensitive and allow it to filter into our consciousness. To do so adds an extra dimension to our being, our consciousness, and through that process our experience of living in the present can be enriched and enhanced. I believe that the function of my work is bound up with a desire to create immersive public spaces designed to bring about such a *raising* of consciousness. Through this process I am encouraged to be aware of more elements of the present than I regularly encounter when engaged in a more 'everyday' or 'habitual' way of thinking and experiencing the world.

²⁰ WU et al 2015.

My hope is that through the creation of the work I can communicate this way of seeing and create it for others. This is part of what I talked about earlier regarding bridges, and also what I mean by revealing hidden aspects of subject matter. I see my work as the process of creating cultural interventions designed to foster and encourage this kind of approach to life and way of seeing the world, both for myself and for the audience.

Like the maps mentioned above, living contains many hidden dimensions that can easily be overlooked: for example, the world of feeling. My work is often about making other people and myself more aware of feeling: about manifesting feeling through sounds, imagery and the use of the body in space.

Related to the idea of maps and landscape is the use of found sound and field recordings throughout the portfolio. Such material features heavily in *Ash Dome*, *Another Place*, *Terrarium*, *A Dip in the Lake*, *Sonic Horizons* and *Hydrology*. This tendency is related to my own perception of sound recordings as recordings of time and experience. As such recordings have a numinous, magical quality: the recording and manipulation of sound enables me to take threads of lived life and experience and weave them back together again in new configurations and constructions. I find recorded sound an inspiring starting point and powerful tool in creative work because of this inherent power and energy.

Looking over the works contained in this portfolio I can see an attention to and an interest in *process*. Process is important, and in my work I often seek to use process to uncover and communicate. I design creative processes that will enable feelings and experiences to be found and revealed in the present. This requires a balance between plans and no plans, and also the willingness to abandon plans if necessary. The processes themselves are designed to enable meaningful things to be discovered and uncovered, but they do not however have a *specific* target in mind: the target, if there is one, is to find something that is not yet known or seen, but relevant to the present moment; to *uncover* and *reveal*. As such, the process is about trying to be in the moment: to be mindful of the present, and to step outside of habitual thought patterns and ways of seeing that reduce rather than increase awareness.

That's the end of the introductory part of the text: now we are going somewhere else. That was the exposition, and we move now to the development section.

Plans are good for some things, but not for others.

Plans are good for some things, but not for others. Sometimes they need to be flexible, to adapt to circumstance and specific context. I had no idea what my PhD was going to be about

when I started it: I thought I knew, but I didn't. I had a plan and it made for a good application back in 2010, but that plan turned out to be completely different to what I actually did. It seems to me, now, in retrospect, to be clear what it was I was doing, and what happened in the end seems, in a mysterious way, to be inevitable. Now, with a little temporal distance, I can see the links, the threads, a number of themes and ideas emerging more clearly through the body of work. But I didn't *know* that in the beginning, and neither did I know quite what I was doing at the time. I was aware of some things: some elements of the jigsaw, some parts of the puzzle. But I couldn't see them as clearly as I can see them now.

This suggests that perhaps there's a lot more going on and influencing my thinking at any given moment than I'm directly conscious of: things I don't quite know about, until after they happen; only then can I see them better. Or rather, only then can I detect their presence through looking at the traces left behind. This PhD submission is a record of the traces left behind: the projects and pieces are not well executed plans brought to fruition, but the traces left behind by the making of themselves: footprints.

Right now, writing this, I'm asking myself some questions; there's lots of questions spinning round, whirring round in my head as I look at my fingers resting on the keyboard. My visual attention is moving, from the keyboard back to the screen, then out of the window to a band of sky over the slate rooftops. I can hear the hum of a central heating system, a car passing on the street below. I'm on the 3rd floor, 17 Wenlock Terrace, York, UK. It's a sunny day in late Autumn, November 2014. I was up till 5 am writing last night. I'm tired, but happy: it's all coming together. Next week, I'm handing this in, and the next day I'm going to India to study Yoga for seven weeks. All this information, this sensory and perceptual data and detail about my life as it's happening right now is becoming part of the text, and that's because I chose to include it here and to write it down. It was already there; it was already part of what I was thinking, seeing and feeling; the change came when I decided not to edit it out of the story I'm telling. For me, this decision regarding the editing of text – what to leave in and what to leave out – raises some interesting questions. For example, where does my life end, and the text begin? Where should I draw the line concerning what's part of the text and what isn't? Is this text supposed to be a representation of something real, or just a neat and tidy, noiseless white lie about the process of making things, of creating things? The dominant question rattling round inside my head, the one making more noise than all the rest, is:

What is the point of what I'm writing? What's it *for*?

I'm not asking this question in a cynical way – I'm not implying that this introductory text is a pointless exercise and has no function. It's more that the question itself is an exercise, a process: a way of helping me to clarify things which in turn might help me to write something

that has meaning. A way of trying to get to the heart of what this introductory body of text might be able to offer, so that I can focus better on writing something that communicates, that might have value. I don't want to just go through the motions; construct a neat and tidy document that ticks the right boxes. I don't want to strip out the complexity, to simplify life beyond all recognition, drain out the colour, the feelings, the perceptual detail, water it down to a monochrome description, no more than a detailed list of events on a timeline. I try and ask the same question when I make music: what's it *for*?

When I was about 19, I suffered a sort of breakdown, kind of. Perhaps it could be better described as the shock of an *awakening*. Whatever it was that happened, I changed. I started getting interested in the visual arts, literature, music, everything really: I woke up to it all. It felt as if I'd been asleep since I was about seven years old. I wanted desperately to transform myself, to become something else, something better. And I didn't like what I was, what I had become as a result of where I'd come from. I decided I needed to understand more about my relationship to myself, to others, to my family, to nature and to history. And so I decided to go into therapy, and became obsessed with psychoanalysis and psychology: with the ideas of Carl Jung, Eric Berne, Eric Fromm, Albert Ellis. I also became interested in the psychophysical, specifically through yoga, and also the Alexander Technique. My Alexander teacher in London, where I was living at the time, a wonderful woman called Anne Battye, said something to me once in a lesson that has stuck in my memory: that Alexander Technique is about building bridges, developing ways of getting from one psychological state to another through physical means. It is a tool that allows one to create the physical conditions – through muscle relaxation, the management of our experience of energy and the release of unconscious tension – that can build bridges between psychological states, or modes. I've had the same experience throughout my life with art, literature and music. They have been signposts for me, bridges to better worlds, better ways of being and feeling.

I remember around that same time I was first encountering abstract art. I remember thinking – 'what is it *for*?'. It had a powerful effect on me, suggesting a different way of seeing the world. The question was: in what world do people decide that creating such vibrant, dynamic images that don't have any obvious 'use value', or monetary value, is something worth doing? I wanted to know more about that world from which these objects came. I spent time alone staring at Holbein's portraits in the National Gallery: 'A Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling', 'The Ambassadors' and the portrait 'Christine of Denmark, Duchess of Milan'. I would also often visit the British Museum. Looking at the human faces, and gazing at the objects and sculptures on display, I realised I was exposed here not to 'facts' about history, but more to traces left behind; traces of the psyche of a particular historical period, or way of seeing, captured somehow in the brush strokes or the stonework. I wondered how that could be so? What was this intangible realm that I was encountering in these works and others? How could that sort of

information be coded aesthetically, in the strokes of a brush, in marks left by oil on canvas, or the shape of a pot or statue?

According to Deleuze and Guattari, 'Like all painting, abstract painting is sensation, nothing but sensation'.²¹ And that makes sense to me now, reflecting back. It was neither in the painting, or the object, or in me, this essential quality I was seeing. The value of the work resided in my perception and the analysis and processing of my sensations. The painting or object is in this reading a dynamic, active agent: the physical catalyst for an *event*, more than an object. Brian Massumi, in his book *Semblance and Event*, suggests that:

[A]rt claims the right to have no manifest utility, no use-value, and in many cases no exchange-value. At its best, it has *event-value*.²² It is something that happens. A painting, a piece of music, a novel, a myth, a poem: they are *active agents* operating in our culture.

I find a similar point being articulated in the writings of Wassily Kandinsky. Writing in 1910 in *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky is trying to articulate his own artistic metaphysics, introducing the concept of 'spirit' into the discussion:

In an obscure and puzzling way, the artist develops a work of art. As it gains a life of its own, it becomes an entity, an independent spiritual life, which, as a being, leads the life of material realism. It is, therefore, not simply a phenomenon created casually and inconsequentially indifferent to spiritual life. Instead as a living being, it possesses creative active forces. It lives, has power, and actively forms the above-mentioned spiritual atmosphere.²³

Kandinsky, in this wide ranging text, speaks of what he calls a 'spiritual principle' at work across the arts.

To me this is a key area for which I feel that I need to develop a better language. To be able to talk more fluently about this other world: the world of the imagination, of spirit, of feeling and experience. This, for me, is where the real action is, where things happen. To get beyond the idea that poems, music, archaeological artefacts and buildings are just things: objects to be examined, put together in lists and taxonomies. I want to develop new language and concepts

²¹ DELEUZE, and GUATTARI, 1994, page 183.

²² MUSSAMI 2011, page 53.

²³ KANDINSKY 1946, page 91.

for myself that enable me to talk more effectively about them. I feel that there is a language deficit when it comes to talking about the spiritual, emotional and imaginative in our culture.

Art objects are distillations. They have cultural mass.

I'm suggesting that art objects are catalysts, connected in a complex web, a *rhizome*.²⁴ And that they are also *distillations*. I am talking about artwork, in any media, as *distillations* of time, memory and experience: distillations of life lived. Objects that are art are perhaps objects with unusual amounts of time and meaning packed into them: they are distilled, time-dense objects. If a composer spends 400 hours working to create a sonic image that is four minutes long, there is a lot of time invested and packed in to that object, a lot of experience. What's created is an unusually dense object in the cultural cosmos; and as such it has a correspondingly strong gravitational pull. Looked at from this perspective, art is a kind singularity, or a neutron star: those small squares of fabric and paint in the National Gallery I referred to earlier have been pulling people into their orbit for centuries, demanding attention, fixing the gaze. If judged according to the amount of physical space they occupy, these objects punch far above their weight. That's because they have high levels of what I call 'cultural mass'.

I need a way of measuring cultural mass. Can we perhaps define cultural mass as a measure of some quantity or another? Of 'potential'?

For Brian Massumi, all objects possess 'potential'. Speaking about form in conceptual art in *Semblance and Event*, he uses an example from the visual world, the world of visual experience. He suggests that looking at a three-dimensional object, for example a hollow wooden box, we don't just see the object as if abstracted as a shape from a two dimensional plain. We also see lots of other qualities in it. He suggests that perception is an active and collaborative process between the viewer and the object. We see its volume, we know it has a back and a front, and takes up space, we get a sense of its weight, and if, for example, it is made of stone or wood. All of these perceptions are part of the *seeing* of the object. In themselves they are *potentials* of action and of activity, and they are bound up with our *imagined interactions* with the object in time and space. We might, for example, lift the object at some time in the future, or we might walk around it.²⁵

Massumi suggests that, furthermore, this type of multi-layered perception is a perception of 'form', and that form has very real content that has the quality of being both there and not there:

²⁴ DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987, page 1-28. I will discuss the Rhizome concept in detail below (page 13/14).

²⁵ MASSUMI 2011, page 42.

Voluminousness and weightiness are not in themselves visible. But we can't not see them when we see an object. In fact, we see them *in the form of* the object. Form is full of all sorts of things that it actually isn't – and that actually aren't visible. Basically, it's full of potential. When we see an object's shape we are not seeing around to the other side, but what we are seeing, in a real way, is our *capacity* to see the other side. We're seeing, in the form of the object, the *potential* our body holds to walk around, take another look, extend a hand and touch. The form of the object is the way a whole set of active, embodied potentials appear in present experience: how vision can relay into kinaesthesia or the sense of movement, how kinaesthesia can relay into touch. The potential we see in the object is a way our body has of being able to relate to the part of the world it happens to find itself in at this particular life's moment. What we abstractly see when we directly and immediately see an object is *lived relation* – a life dynamic.²⁶

So Massumi is suggesting that there is a kind of 'aura' of form in the mind of the perceiver, that, together with the physical object itself, constitutes the totality of the object: potential is *part of* the object. The object impacts into the rhizome-like web of human perceptions and relationships we call culture: it causes ripples in the pond. Or, to switch to my own metaphor, cultural spacetime bends and curves around its mass, its gravitational force: the object has cultural mass.

The quote from Kandinsky above, and his writing elsewhere, reaches out toward this same sense of the double modality of an artwork; it's existence in both the material and 'spiritual' realm. It seems to me from the quotes above that Massumi, following Deleuze, is forging his own language to describe comparable experiences and ways of seeing. To return to my own work and the composition portfolio for a moment, I feel that I was reaching out for the same thing, attempting to articulate it in 'Mutation Tides' (see page 313), the final movement of the dance piece *Transmission* (see Chapter 11). In the music here I was trying to find something to express in addition to the scientific, rational themes of the piece of evolution and the transmission of disease. I was trying articulate in the music something of how those ideas effect the way I feel about living and being alive; how they impact on feeling, being, on the human experiential realm: the realm of the spirit, of experience.

²⁶ MASSUMI 2011, page 42.

The human body and it's potential to 'be'.

What happens if we consider the human body on stage through the conceptual lens of Mussami's 'potential'? Look at the human body in the same way as Mussami considered the wooden box in the earlier quote. The human body placed in the performance space exudes the potential to 'be', abstracted from life. In everyday life, all human beings we see are full of potential action, potential 'humanness'. They are poised, ready, about to act in unpredictable ways that we can imagine: they are not static. The choreographer works with bodies loaded with these layers of potential meaning. And they also work with people, not just bodies: individual dancers carry their own movement styles, ways of being and their own personalities. When developing material and creating a piece with dancers, the work is embodied, always. The medium is human: the body in space.

Recent research in psychology tells us that the movement of faces and bodies is of considerable interest to social primates,²⁷ and that our visual perception system has evolved extremely high levels of sensitivity to the moving human body.²⁸ It is interesting to note, especially in relation to the Deleuzian concept of 'potential' as discussed by Mussami, that we also have a striking sensitivity to the potential *implied* dynamic information in still images as depicted in paintings and photographs of the human form.²⁹ We are transfixed by them, and for good reason: non verbal communication is an important part of our lexicon,³⁰ and so the body on stage is an articulate visual presence: with the body in the performance space we have an object loaded with the potential for all human action, of life being lived. Such bodies have force: they have cultural mass.

With the dance piece *Terrarium* (see Chapter 6), we set out to encapsulate this potential, this cultural mass, in a transparent globe in the landscape. This globe was then surrounded by a sound fabric constructed through the cutting and splicing of found sound, of memory and experience. The sound was mixed carefully to immerse the audience in the outdoor ambisonic speaker circle, and the complete assemblage was placed in the landscape. A terrarium is a special kind of transparent tank or jar, designed to protect living specimens, plant or animal, whilst retaining the ability to subject them to examination. With this piece, we were playing not only with the borderlines between sound, noise and music, but also with the division between the human and the non-human. In *Terrarium*, animals and nature become a part of the work. As well as the use of bird-song in the sound fabric, the costumes were animal-like: they made the dancers look like birdmen. Through sound, costume and choreography, the dancers are woven together into the fabric of nature.

²⁷ PUCE and PERRET 2003.

²⁸ JOHANSSON 1973.

²⁹ KOURTZI 2003.

³⁰ BULL 2001.

Every territory, every habitat, joins up not only its spatiotemporal but its qualitative planes or sections[...]and every territory encompasses or cuts across the territories of other species, or intercepts the trajectories of animals without territories, forming interspecies junction points[...] the territory does not merely isolate and join but opens onto cosmic forces that arise from within or come from outside, and renders their effect on the inhabitant perceptible.³¹

Working with dancers is like being able to create living, moving paintings. The oil is the human body and its potential, and the canvas is living time, space and experience.

The significance of the senses.

There is a lot of references in this essay to sensation and our analysis and processing of sensations: both in this work and in the portfolio as a whole there is an interest in the examination of the sensorium. It has been suggested that all art is about sensations. Deleuze talked about 'blocs of sensation' as a way of referring to the means-whereby an artwork wields its power:

Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations. Art does not have opinions. Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language.³²

An awareness of the historical significance of the senses is something that has developed significantly in recent decades, a trajectory that Alain Corbin suggests begun to emerge five decades ago with Lucian Febvre's call for a history of the sensibilities.³³ The recent emergence of the sound studies field can be seen of part of this process. Sound studies involves research across a range of disciplines, where sound, both ambient and specific, is recognized as crucial for our understanding of the environments that people inhabit.³⁴ While some of this research has had a clear historical dimension and focus,³⁵ some of the most innovative works on 'acoustic

³¹ DELEUZE, Gilles, GUATTARI, Felix 1994, page 185-186.

³² DELEUZE, Gilles, GUATTARI, Felix 1994, page 176.

³³ CORBIN 2005, page 128.

³⁴ BULL and BACK, 2003; STERNE 2012.

³⁵ CORBIN 1999; HENDY 2013; SMITH 1999.

ecologies', and on the complexity of soundscapes, has taken the contemporary world as its focus.³⁶

Looked at as a cultural phenomena, the emergence of the sound studies field is indicative of an emergent interest in *experience itself* as a legitimate field of enquiry, as independent from objective lists of things and events and the construction of descriptive taxonomies. There are numerous successful attempts to chart the sonic history of a specific landscape, place, or historical moment in the sound studies literature. Richard Cullen Rath's fascinating look at the acoustic world of the early American pioneers is a good example³⁷, as is Bruce Smith's treatment of Shakespeare's England.³⁸ Alain Corbin's *Village Bells* takes us through a detailed study of the importance of church bells in rural France, and how their sonic presence was an integral part of the political, imaginative and physical landscape at the time of the French Revolution.³⁹ These works suggest a developing interest in sensory experience itself, and I see in my work a fascination with feeling, sensation and experience that corresponds with this cultural tendency. I see my use of immersive ambisonic speaker systems, in *Terrarium*, *Phase Revival* (see Chapter 8), *Star Carr: Sonic Horizons of the Mesolithic* (see Chapter 9) and *Hydrology* (see Chapter 10) for example, as an experiment with, and in, the sensorium.⁴⁰ An interest in the cutting and splicing of experience: a desire to distil it down, then re-present experience in a new way, reconfigured, rearranged. As I said before, my work is about *distillation*: about playing with time, experience and memory.

The concept of the unconscious.

There is another line of thought here, lurking behind this text, and so running through my work. It's something that I have touched on, but not yet examined in any detail: that is the concept of the unconscious. The concept that there are forces outside conscious awareness that influence thinking goes back many centuries and across many cultures. There are different networks of stories and narratives regarding the derivation of terms and words and philosophical concepts related to the idea of the unconscious. For example, looking simply at modern Western intellectual history, Eduard Von Hartmann's 1884 publication, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, has a lengthy chapter entitled 'Predecessors in Respect to the Conception of the

³⁶ AUGOYARD and TORQUE 2005; LA BELLE 2010; SCHAFER 1977; Also see the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE), which was founded in 1993. *Soundscape*, the journal for the WFAE, is available online in 12 volumes – see SOUNDSCAPE 2000-2012 in the Resource List for details.

³⁷ CULLEN-RATH 2003.

³⁸ SMITH 1999.

³⁹ CORBIN 2005.

⁴⁰ I'm using this word in the sense used by Marshal McLuhan, See McCLUHAN 2005. Also for an elucidation regarding this term, see HOWES, 2005, section 11 'The Shifting Sensorium', page 53-139.

Unconscious'.⁴¹ In this particular chapter, he traces what he considers the earliest clear elucidation of the term 'unconscious' back to Fredreich Schelling. Hartmann comments that '[...] we find in Schelling the conception of the Unconscious in its full purity, clearness, and depth'.⁴² He is referring to Schellings work *System of Transcendental Idealism*, published in 1800.⁴³

And that is just one academic story, one strand of narrative, used to illustrate a point.⁴⁴ I don't know if it's true. All I think I know is that someone thought it was true enough to write in a book once one hundred and thirty years ago. What does seem to be indisputable however is that for a very long time, people have been thinking about forces acting on decision making processes and the personality that are beyond conscious awareness, outside mind if you like, or outside what we experience as the 'self'. Our storybooks, movies and myths are crammed full of tales of gods, daemons and mysterious forces intervening in human affairs. It seems sensible to state that the search for effective conceptual tools for talking about and describing such experiences, the feeling that we are not conscious of the full measure of our own selves, has a long and rich history.

So I'm not talking here about a Jungian 'collective unconscious', or a Freudian 'subconscious', or William James' 'subliminal consciousness', or anything specific, although I'm sure what I have read by these particular writers has influenced my own thinking.⁴⁵ What I'm trying to do in the text above is to demonstrate that the concept goes beyond the parameters of one particular accepted narrative, or one individual philosopher or psychologist. I am also stating that, along with a lot of people who have lived, I can relate to the experience of the totality of my sense of self being something greater than I am able to hold simultaneously in my consciousness at any one moment: something greater than the narrow aperture of my own conscious moment to moment experience of reality. Writing back in 1902, William James referred to the 'subconscious self' as '[...] nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity'. James went on to state that '[...]there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of'.⁴⁶ In a later passage he quotes the pioneering poet, essayist and researcher Frederich Myers' 1892 paper 'The Subliminal Consciousness':⁴⁷

⁴¹ HARTMANN 1884.

⁴² HARTMANN 1884, page 24.

⁴³ SCHELLING 1997.

⁴⁴ For a detailed overview of the intellectual history of the concept of the unconscious, see DEVIANCE 2014 in the Resource List. This fascinating website provides a comprehensive selection of essays from a diverse range of contributors that precede Freud's conception of the subconscious, from John Stuart Mill to Franz Brentano and Schelling.

⁴⁵ FREUD 2002; JUNG 1980; JUNG 1968; JUNG 1989; JAMES 1982.

⁴⁶ JAMES 1982, page 511.

⁴⁷ Born in 1843, Frederic Myers was an English poet, essayist and psychic researcher who was one of the early leading members (and founding) of the Society for Psychical Research, established in 1882 'The Subliminal Consciousness' appeared in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research in 1892. Information retrieved from DEVIANCE 2014.

Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows – an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. The Self manifest through the organism; but there is always some part of the self unmanifested; and always, as it seems, some power of organic expression in abeyance or reserve.⁴⁸

The aperture.

What I'm getting at has to do with this idea of the 'aperture'. For me there is some kind of mechanism that comes into play in the creative process, and it has something to do with the adjustment of this aperture; the control of the border between different worlds. In everyday life, the size of the aperture changes all the time, depending on the situation, or the particular conditions you are in: a lot depends what you need to focus on at any given moment. For example, when you are driving a car, it pays only to perceive a general category of 'tree', the vaguely green shapes that occupy a particular portion of your peripheral vision. You're aware of them to some extent, but not aware at the same time. It's not economical in terms of cognitive load to increase your awareness, to take in each tree individually. But conversely, when you're out on a walk in the countryside on a sunny Autumn day, you might take the trees in one at a time, allow their beauty to flow unimpeded into your conscious awareness. You might be aware of the species of each tree, and even the shape of one specific, individual leaf. So clearly there are different states of mind appropriate for different tasks and pastimes: these different states are different ways of being.

I'm suggesting that art can disrupt these ways of being, interfere with the categories we use to process the world around us. In art we can create objects that break through the categories, and through this process we can shift the gearing that controls the quality of our perception.

Creating the conditions as opposed to planning.

In the work I do, the projects presented here and the creative process I use, I'm interested in the operation of this mechanism, this aperture. When making pieces, I find myself thinking more about 'creating the conditions' in which something will happen, something will be found, as opposed to planning what the thing will be. If there is planning, it is about planning to create the conditions in which I can work effectively: planning to create the conditions in which I can find

⁴⁸ JAMES 1982, page 512.

out what it is I'm trying to say. The aim is to get access to what I don't know yet, to what lies somehow below the threshold of consciousness. When practising Alexander Technique, this same aim is achieved through the inhibition of the psychophysical habit Alexander called 'end-gaining': going exclusively for the end result, and disregarding the process. When 'end-gaining' is inhibited, the focus shifts to the 'means-whereby': the method by which the goal can be achieved.⁴⁹ This is the approach I try and make ever present in my work: creating the conditions that might allow something interesting to happen. I try to design processes that in themselves are the 'means-whereby' something can be discovered, rather than going for the end result.

With *Terrarium* and *Hydrology*, the conditions were created through the design of the process: the identification of a specific landscape, and the discipline of building archives of sound, image and text: archives of experience. I have grown to trust that once a system is laid down, something special can happen: and it often does. With *Terrarium*, something happened at Boulby Cliffs, and Hummersea Beach (see page 166-170). I try to make something happen in this same way whenever I go into the studio to work collaboratively with a musician. I try to make the technology invisible, get it out of the way, and to clear the channels for the artistic subject matter to emerge. For example I tried, and I think succeeded, with cellist Min Song when working on *Asb Dome* (see Chapter 4), on the material that became the Bird-Cello section (see page 129). And also with violinist Val Pearson working on what became Hummersea Beach (see page 166-170). I try first to establish the right feeling in the session, in the studio. It is important for me to make it a priority get rid of tension, and friendship and personal relationship is important: the way the session feels is important. To use the studio as a composition tool, you need to create the right conditions, so that you might be lucky and capture a moment of time, a moment of expression. To capture such a moment is to capture something valuable: real human feeling and experience coded in sound.

Building bridges between the conscious and the unconscious.

To relate back to the earlier part of the discussion, I would say that I try in my creative process to create conditions in which I can build bridges between what is conscious and what is unconscious. I'm not claiming to know what I'm talking about here – claiming to know what I mean exactly, as if I have an accurate clear definition or model at my disposal of something called 'an unconscious'. As I said above, I'm not talking about a specific theory of the unconscious: there are many theories about what the unconscious might be, and of course many people question if there is any empirical evidence that it exists at all. But from time to time I find it a useful concept to explain the way my psyche seems to work. And it's in that spirit that I'm

⁴⁹ ALEXANDER 1932, page 69.

using the language now: as a practical tool that can help to explain my experience. Language and thought isn't the thing in itself, but always removed from it: there are a lot of spaces and gaps between language, thought, our perception, and the source of our perception.

Ideas and concepts are not photographs.

It depends on what you think ideas and concepts are, or what they are for. We can see philosophical concepts for example as being more valuable as 'thought machines', rather than 'truth machines'. What I'm saying here is that ideas and concepts are 'creative machines'. The gap is too big between language and the thing in itself for philosophy to be 'true'. Colebrook, unpacking Deleuze, suggests that:

Concepts are not correct pictures of the world; [...] [c]oncepts are philosophical precisely because they create possibilities for thinking beyond what is already known or assumed.⁵⁰

In this way of thinking, the concept is imbedded in language. It's something we create in the domain of language, not something that actually exists independent of language. Whilst it might refer to a phenomenon of experience that we encounter internally, in some psychological state, it is not that thing in itself. From this perspective, all language is seen as metaphor. The problem comes for us when we mistake that metaphor, that linguistic symbol, for being an actual thing. What I'm saying here is antithetical to the idea of Plato and his forms. Or rather, it is antithetical to the ideas that Plato's concepts are actually 'true'. It seems much more likely that there are no such Platonic 'forms' out there in the cosmos that form a sort of metaphysical template for the reality we see around us. Scientific evidence suggests that his attempt at an explanatory metaphysics wasn't accurate as a description of reality. But the point is that, disregarding its accuracy as a metaphysical hypothesis, it has had real utility and power as a creative tool in thought and language for many thousands of years.

A key idea in relation to this discussion is that concepts that are not questions, but conversely are *imbedded in our language as assumed facts*, can foster *habits of thought* and action, and lead to a kind of sterility. Our task is to challenge concepts, find new ways of developing thinking styles that enable us to question habitual ways of seeing. If we do that, perhaps we can avoid getting lost in a web of static metaphors, mistaking intellectual categories for reality itself. We are now returning in this discussion to the subject of the function of the art object.

⁵⁰ COLEBROOK 2002, page 19.

What am I writing this for?

To return to a question posed earlier ('what am I writing this *for*?'), this text does have a function: to provide an appropriate introduction to my PhD, and to provide some kind of context for the work presented in the next 300 pages or so, and the 57.59 GB of accompanying data. So the function is to clarify, and to elucidate. But this still leaves a lot of options, a lot of decisions to be made: what information should I include, and how should that information be presented in order to provide a meaningful context for the work? There's not a straightforward easily identifiable body of information that I *need* to communicate. In truth, there's no clearly identifiable purpose to this document at all. I've made all the practical lists, the contents pages, the lists of figures, and I've written the introductory blurb. The reader should be able to navigate the text without too much trouble.

If I were writing a science paper, the function would be clear. There would be an experiment to describe, a table of results to analyse and explain, and some conclusions to draw. There would be information to be communicated in a straightforward manner. And this makes sense, as the scientific method predicates the careful externalisation of what *isn't* relevant to the experiment. The more effective the experimental design, the more noise it will filter out of the results, and so the better it will test the hypothesis. So the scientific paper has a clear function: it wants to differentiate, as clearly as possible, the events that took place during 'the experiment' from the surrounding, messy paraphernalia of life being lived. That's the idea of a laboratory; it is an extreme alternative to the mess and chaos of everyday life. And it's an effective and appropriate approach, because the purpose of the whole enterprise is to isolate packets of information, molecules of data, discreet particles of knowledge. But in this field, in music and the arts, in the humanities, the nature of the task at hand is less clear, and the use of a laboratory is not appropriate for the task at hand. The question is, if the function of this text is to understand, to communicate, to clarify, then what should be externalised? What is deemed to be irrelevant to the description?

The concept of the rhizome.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari put forward the concept of the rhizome.⁵¹ The Rhizome abandons the idea of a beginning: the concept of the initial cause in the cause and effect chain. Instead, the emphasis is on a multiplicity of connections. The rhizome concept rejects the 'common sense' notion of a linear timeline, with a clear beginning, middle and end. It rejects the imposition of hierarchical patterns of thought on complex networks: all things are

⁵¹ DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987, page 1-28.

connected with equal status. The rhizome model favours a complex network of connections, and is designed to supersede the tree/root bifurcated structure, which the authors suggest has dominated Western thought. With the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari offer a coherent conceptual tool for thinking more effectively about our experience and how we communicate it, about how things are connected, about sharing information.⁵²

And of course, this text you're reading now wasn't all written at the same time. The bit about the cars passing outside and looking out of the window of the flat at the start was written just now, (and that's my now, not yours) but I inserted it there about an hour after the text that precedes it. But what am I saying? All that was days ago. The general form and meaning of the paragraph has transformed now, developed over time. I've realised what it's about now, after having written a whole load of other things, many of which will appear in the final document, but many of which won't: right now, it's still open to question. What I'm trying to illustrate is that this paragraph is a compression of a lot of time and thinking. It is a distillation of a complex network, of time passing and life being lived. It's 15:17 now, and I probably wrote the first line at 12:00. I'm editing it now, and it's 12:39 the next day! Right now it's May 2015 and I'm finishing off my corrections.⁵³ It's a complicated illusion this writing process! I'm shaping time for you, the reader: you experience this as a continuous stream, but for me, the time is fractured up, broken into fragments. And that's just this paragraph! What I'm *trying* to do here is to collect together the fractured parts of four years of work, life and experience: to arrange it into some kind of coherent, believable stream of text. It like trying to stick a smashed mirror back together! It's an impossibly complicated jigsaw. It's a Rhizome, not a tidy root and tree diagram with discreet events connected along an imaginary chain of cause and effect.

So, to return again to the question, what is deemed to be relevant to the discussion? How do I decide on the parameters of the document? How should I set my aperture? I could go wide, go all Proustian on you, covering an extremely small amount of ground in an extremely large amount of detail. Tell you everything that's happening. Or narrow: construct a tidy narrative connecting events across a wide span of time: explain how this body of work, these ten projects, are strung like pearls on a golden thread, a sparkling timeline that cuts triumphantly through the past four years.

⁵² It is interesting to note that Deleuze and Guattari's work predates the internet. Could it be that the web is perhaps the perfect expression of the concept of Rhizome? See Ian Buchanan for a discussion regarding Deleuze and the internet in relation to the concept of Rhizome: **BUCHANAN** 2009, page 152.

Incase you're interested, the viva went well – I got minor corrections! And the trip to India was incredible.

Is all text a lie?

My real caution though, part of the reason I'm going on about this, is that I think it's dishonest: there is a serious point behind what I'm saying. So many of the friends I have that are practising artists go through hell in the creative process. (And that's just them: I'll tell you about me later). They are unstable, have periods of deep and painful depression: they seem to have no idea sometimes if they are any good at all. They oscillate between feeling OK and positive about their work, and feeling terrible about it. And the thing is, the people that have those experiences are usually the most prolific and creative artists. Maybe that tells you more about my friends than anything else, but it's the only experience I have to go on. It's knowledge by acquaintance. All the rest is just knowledge by description.⁵⁴

Surely if we keep presenting neat and tidy descriptions of things, and edit out our more complex, individual, actual experience of reality – relegate that to the side lines with formulaic approaches to the presentation of text – then we're in danger of losing something. We need to tell people that it's OK to have these experiences: they're not external to the world of the arts, but on the contrary they are central to it. In my experience, creating things often involves a difficult and frightening struggle, and a lot of self doubt and fear. It's not a neat and tidy process, and it *costs* something.

Sometimes I feel like I do things the wrong way round, upside down. It's never a 'top down' process for me. I have to make the thing, whether that be an essay or a piece or whatever, by the 'doing' of it. Only then do I know what it is that I'm making. And this involves a process of struggling with the media, whether that be text, sound, or visual media. It's not like there's ever a fully formed idea that I then use a particular material to articulate, as if there's a clear and transparent transduction process from something formed in the mind that is then manifest. It's more that the articulation of the thing through a specific medium, and my emotional and intellectual experiences whilst making it, all of this becomes an inextricable tangle. There is the sense of something that needs to be got outside and externalised, to be expressed and 'materialised' in order for it to be communicated. That 'thing', whatever it is, is given form by the medium, made manifest, but also shaped by it. The work made through this process is tangled up with experience, with life being lived. Experience is imprinted on it and through it. It is usually a sort of feverish, unstable process for me.

⁵⁴ For an exposition of the philosophical concepts of knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance, see RUSSELL 2009 pages 32-41.

The creative process is a 'struggling to become'.

For me any creative process is a 'struggling to become' of something that lies partly in awareness and partly outside of it. And then when I create something, I have the sense that the thing made at the end is bound up with that 'time', that part of my narrative, my story, that part of my life. My experience has shaped the object: it has rubbed off on the object, become a part of it, is manifest by it and through it.

I recently came across an interesting concept reading an essay by Bruno Latour, 'Reflections on Etienne Souriau's *Les differents modes d'existence*'.⁵⁵ In it he's breaking down Souriau's thinking, and explains the term 'instauration', used here as representative of a focus on process, rather than product. Or rather, on the idea that the notion of fully formed, fixed ideas being 'realised' in the compositional process is just not very useful. He offers the illustrative concept of the sculpture with a rough block of clay. This imagined craftsman works on the clay, and gradually the piece is fashioned. Latour criticises the idea that the work 'emerges', as if the form was pre ordained. Rather, Latour, following Souriau, argues that the making of the thing is more tangled up with what the thing turns out to be: the creative process is inseparable from the completed created object. There is not such a clear dividing line between the subject (the maker) and the object (the sculpture). The becoming, the making, the fashioning, are all aspects of the final thing that is made.

But this growing existence is made, we can see, of a double modality that finally comes together, in the unity of a sole being progressively invented in the labouring process. Often there is no warning: up to a certain point the finished work is always a novelty, discovery, or surprise. So that's what I was looking for! That's what I was meant to make!⁵⁶

But who knows? Who really knows what Latour is talking about? Sometimes these continental philosophers just seem to be posturing, writing unnecessarily complicated sentences that ultimately mean nothing: It's often difficult to tell. After reading Sokal and Bricmont's book *Intellectual Impostures*,⁵⁷ I have to admit I've become more cautious. And who ever really knows how another human being thinks and sees the world? Surely language is just not that precise: it's not like mathematics. I can't be certain about what I mean, or what I think anyone else might mean. But on the other hand, what I can do with something approaching certainty is say that some things I read seem to connect with my experience, and I can try to articulate that

⁵⁵ LATOUR 2011.

⁵⁶ LATOUR 2011, page 310.

⁵⁷ SOKAL and BRICMONT 2003.

observation, try to share those thoughts with people and communicate. And I do that because it makes me feel good to be connected with other people, rather than isolated, and to celebrate being alive.

It's no more, or less, than that.

So for me, this is important: this sense of struggling to articulate, to delve into, to find, to make. It is as if there is something hidden, something inside, within the volume or the totality, that might, once found, be uncovered and revealed. I recognised recently here a common concern in my work: the interest in revealing something. This sense of something to be revealed in the world that is hidden has always been important to me.

Noise, truth and lies.

I must return to the task: that is, to write an introduction to the PhD. As we have established, committing thoughts to paper is of course reductionary. Representing life in all its complexity with symbolic marks on the page is a tricky and problematic thing to do. You have to construct a quite brutal aperture, and decide on your settings: should they be narrow or wide? One has to decide what is appropriate in that particular context. The task here is to select a believable, acceptable narrative line from the process of making these ten works I am submitting. From a kaleidoscopic, bewildering mass of images and feelings stored in my memory, I need to construct a narrative that sounds plausible, that neatly links a series of events along a timeline of causation, pretending that life works like that. Except that it doesn't. That's just making up stories to fit the specific requirements of the medium, to fit the brief. This is a rhizome: it won't fit without being distorted: it can't fit the medium of text without it misrepresenting itself: without telling white lies. It happens in journalism all the time of course; a journalist's job is to reduce rhizomes to neat and tidy narratives. A journalist's role on the whole, contrary to popular belief regarding the adversarial nature of the press, isn't to tell the 'truth', as noble custodians of the Fourth Estate, but to manufacture narratives that provide appropriate 'content' designed to daisy chain adverts together. At least that's the norm in the commercial journalistic model. Tidy narratives are constructed that filter out unpleasant 'noise': uncomfortable information that might not be pleasing to corporate sponsors. At least that's the view of the great linguist, philosopher and activist Noam Chomsky, as laid out in *Manufacturing Consent*⁵⁸, *Necessary Illusions*⁵⁹ and elsewhere. And it's one that I find convincing.⁶⁰ It strikes me that an unconscious

⁵⁸ CHOMSKY and HERMAN 1994.

⁵⁹ CHOMSKY 1989.

⁶⁰ See CHOMSKY and HERMAN 1994 for a detailed study of this topic, particularly 'A Propaganda Model', page 1-35.

filtering process is in operation in many other contexts. It happens in the academic world surely, but just in a different way, according to a different set of criteria. Narratives are controlled and set in the academic sphere by a different set of needs and vested interests, a different set of emotional and intellectual parameters, dependent on individual department, staff, and supervisors for example. Personalities regulate one another: they dictate and control: they territorialise. But ultimately, there is only the present moment: all these narratives are constructions.

In one sense, it's all about noise; what one considers noise, and what one doesn't. The history of music in the 20th century has been described as the shifting of parameters regarding the introduction and acceptance of noise: the shifting border between 'music and its others'. The invention of the tape recorder, and music technology in general, has played an important role, giving composers and musicians access to what John Cage called 'the entire field of sound'.⁶¹ *A Dip in the Lake* (see Chapter 7), a realisation of Cage's piece, is a clear example of this tendency alive in the work presented in this PhD. Furthermore, I'd say that the boundary between noise and music is a theme that runs through all ten projects. From the use of environmental sounds in *Ash Dome, Another Place* (see Chapter 5), *Terrarium* and *Hydrology*, to *Sonic Horizons of the Mesolithic*, where we tried to recreate the everyday sound world of people living 9000 years ago at Star Carr, on the banks of Lake Flixton.

My basic position with noise is that I like to leave a lot of it in: I don't want things to sound too clean. I have never been particularly attracted to clean, sparse synth sounds for example. For me they are redolent of excessive control and discipline: of atomisation and exclusion. *Ice Pictures* (see Chapter 3) plays a lot with the boundary between noise and recorded sound. Sounds from improvisations recorded roughly in a gamelan rehearsal room are juxtaposed with clean, studio recordings of the same instruments.

A little anecdote about Brian Eno.

A long while ago, in my early 20s, I worked as a tape op in the Matrix studio group in London. Brian Eno came in for a session, working with the Senegalese singer Baaba Maal, at the mix room we had in Kilburn. I didn't get to do the session, which was a bit of a blow, because at the time they were both musical heroes of mine. Afterwards I chatted to the tape op who was selected for the session, and he told me a story. He told me that Eno came in when he was lining up the tape machine, and told him to stop, not to do it. Then, when he was asked to set up the mics, he asked Eno where he wanted them, and Eno just said 'anywhere you feel like

⁶¹ COX and WARNER 2008, page 5.

in the room'. He really didn't care; he was more interested in mistakes happening, because in the mistakes, in the noise, something might happen that you don't expect, a sonic idea that you would never have imagined. Eno's use of the recording studio as a musical instrument and compositional tool has been a significant influence on me since I was discovering electronic music in my late teens and early 20s.⁶² The control and liberation of noise. The acceptance of error, mistake. The mindset of creating conditions. The openness to allow things to happen, rather than rigidly controlling the outcome. These are all important.

Attali identified that the control of sound is related to power:

Everywhere codes analyse, mark, restrain, train, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and others{...} All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power centre to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms.⁶³

If the control of noise relates to power, then the desire to clean, to neaten, to sanitise, is a powerful one. It is the compulsion to eradicate imperfection, to marginalise, to edit and control.

What noise should be eradicated?

So, what should be edited out of the concert hall? What should be externalised? For *Terrarium*, we decided to bypass this problem by abandoning the concert hall altogether, and move out into the landscape. Taking a 30 meter diameter circle of speakers, and a giant transparent globe housing a pair of dancers, we created a work inspired by rivers, birds, landscapes, beaches, monks, insects and flowers. The music was full of noise: it was actually created from it. The sounds of birds, flowing waters of the River Esk, the gong-like reverberant clonk of a disused water outlet pipe, the whining of a broadcast aerial. This find of found sound managery was combined with cello, violin, percussion and vocal sounds. In the landscape, outdoors in performance, you couldn't really tell which sounds were part of the environment and which sounds were part of the piece: it all bled together. Rather than seek to subjugate nature, to shut it out, we wanted nature it to get involved. During one memorable performance, we even invited the weather: at Danby in the North York Moors, we could see and hear a thunderstorm approaching in the far distance, across the valley of Danby Dale, for almost the

⁶² SCOATES 2013, page 293, and ENO 1983.

⁶³ ATTALI 2006, page 6.

entire piece. It finally hit us in the last five minutes. It was one of the most exciting performances we did.

In 17th Century America, Richard Cullen Rath tells us that thunder was considered to be the angry voice of a vengeful god.⁶⁴ But with *Terrarium*, we abandoned such projections onto the sonic emanations of nature: we made our peace with that particular manifestation of the divine. Actually, we went further than that: we let God in to join the party, to get involved. No longer personified as the emotionally distant father figure, the psycho-parent, threatening punishment and discipline with his deep booming voice, we welcomed the weather in as an instrument, as part of the piece: we had a jam with the thunder! Our attitudes toward nature seem to have changed since the time of the pilgrim fathers.

This network of metaphors reminds me of the story of Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau on his death bed. When his Calvinistic aunt felt obliged to ask “Henry, have you made your peace with God?” the apparently unruffled Thoreau mildly replied, “I did not know we had ever quarrelled, Aunt”.⁶⁵

The ebb and flow of experience.

A lot of things have happened to me over the past four years. A lot of things have gone into the creation of this body of work. There are a number of narratives threads I could pick up and run with. I could tell the story of a research plan that I hatched in 2010 that I have effectively carried out, and that I am here presenting the results of that plan. It would be a made up story, but I could easily construct it in a way that would be believable: you would never know. I could on the other hand tell the story of my constant struggle with depression, periods of time in which I was convinced that my work was a complete embarrassment. Maybe in that story the work is a struggle for identity, to find meaning: this is getting closer to the truth, but it's a bit 'messy', and maybe a bit embarrassing to talk about. I don't really want to dwell on the three months I spent lying in my bedroom in a state of terror, frequently in tears, convinced that I had failed in every way imaginable. Maybe it's best not to talk about the therapy, the course of anti depressants, consultations with a psychiatrist convinced I had manic depression. I didn't by the way: I've learnt through that experience that the internet is not always a good thing when it comes to making a diagnosis. Much better to tell a calm, measured story of moderate success: much better to talk about results, thus avoiding the messy details and instability of the process, with its oscillations from terror to ecstasy, and not enough time spent in between. But perhaps I

⁶⁴ CULLEN RATH 2003, page 20.

⁶⁵ HODDER 2001, page 302.

should talk about it. As Kahlil Gibran so beautifully puts it in his meditation on joy and sorrow, these kind of experiences, this dynamic range, has value:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the self same well from which
your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can
contain.

Is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was
hollowed with knives? ⁶⁶

And then there is the unmasking: periods of intense excitement and creative revelry. The amazing feeling of creating a piece and seeing it operating in the landscape, making a contribution to the culture, having an effect. The joy of creating something new, something that people tell you they think is beautiful and that makes their day better. And the friendships, relationships and experiences. And there is also love woven into the fabric of it all. The colour, the landscape, the smell of the sea, the celebratory meals after a show, and the red wine. The excited, slightly unhinged conversations through which all the good ideas always seem to come about. The trampoline on a drunken summer night in a Cornish garden with dancers Debbie and James. The bowl of soup and a cappuccino in a cafe with the choreographer Simon at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, a meeting that started one project, and led to so many more. The sounds and memories of life being lived: the ebb and flow of experience.

Feelings, experiences: this is exactly what the work is about. It's always part of the work, part of the way I talk about the work with collaborators and with friends, but it's rarely part of the discussion in the academic environment. It's as if, perversely, information detached from feeling is considered to have *more* value. Antonio Damasio set out some convincing arguments to the contrary some time ago, but the view still persists.⁶⁷ Research tells us that emotions are central to human decision making processes, and link us in a web of shared understanding and concern. 'Indeed, the 'socio-moral emotions such as compassion, love, remorse, empathy, and guilt have been seen as the key qualities making us human'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ GIBRAN 1996, page 30.

⁶⁷ Antonio Damasio's Book, *Descartes' Error*, examines the relationship between emotion, reason, and the human nervous system, showing how thinking and feeling are closely interrelated. See DAMASIO 1994.

⁶⁸ SPIKINS, RUTHERFORD and NEEDHAM 2010.

Tears are useful: they give spirit form.

Tears are useful: they externalise our inner world. They make it something that can be seen, and so reflected upon, acted upon. They are a form of ‘emotional leakage’, to borrow a particularly unpoetic phrase from the psychological literature.⁶⁹ And as such they make our feelings something real that we can see and touch. This I think is part of the role of music and the arts in our culture: to make emotions and feelings and other important subject matter hidden from view in everyday life more apparent; to get it out, into the culture. The manifestation of feeling, emotion and the best of what we feel inside. To make what is otherwise invisible visible, so that it exists: to give spirit form.

Theories such as Durkheim’s collective effervescence support this notion: this suggests that ritual is a mechanism with profound social function, ‘[...]serving to promote social cohesion, in particular with respect to the genesis of values and the affective charging of symbols representing the group.’⁷⁰ And Steven Feld has written on how song is used to insert emotional values into the culture of the Kaluli people of Bosavi. Perhaps ritualised⁷¹ behaviour such as a concert enables us to reflect on hidden or forgotten aspects of ourselves?

This isn’t science: the humanities isn’t about neat and tidy results, it’s about life and feelings. It’s about experience, being in the world. It’s a spiritual enterprise: concerned with the development and emancipation of the human spirit. Surely discussing and better understanding emotion and subjective experience should be at the top of the agenda? It’s as if people look across campus from the humanities departments and see the physicists and biologist writing complicated equations and being proper scientists producing real ‘facts’ and then think that they need to do the same: to say sensible, sober things, and to regulate their emotions like proper grown ups. But I’d argue that we are not in the same game: music, I think, is all about feelings. It’s all about sensation, about life being lived. The emotions, contours of experience and being, colour of life lived and the context of relationship and friendship. All these should be included, as this is what the work is really about, and this is the content that fills the form of an artwork. Form is not simply a shape to be identified in a taxonomical exercise, but a vessel, a container for a code, for the drama of distilled experience, for the manifestation of our inner world, our emotional, imaginative life. To give this immaterial dimension form, to make it visible. Art gives spirit form: it makes visible the intangible: ‘Behind matter, within matter, the creative spirit is hidden.’⁷²

⁶⁹ EKMAN and FRIESEN 1982.

⁷⁰ SCHEVE 2012.

⁷¹ FELD 1990.

⁷² KANDINSKY 2006.

Culture is the categorical garden.

People are living like they are driving. That makes sense, because they're busy: it's necessary to create categories in order to function: you can't reassess the world anew every time you leave the house, you'd never get anything done. So clearly it's necessary for consciousness to function selectively, to edit. But how it edits depends on what categories have been laid down.

Culture is the categorical garden.

The function of artwork for me is to create objects that break through categorical habits, and make people see the world in a new way: To 'MAKE IT NEW. Day by day make it new'. This aphorism is better known now as one of Ezra Pound's mottos, and the title of his book published in 1932. It is interesting to know that it was translated from an inscription on a Shang emperor's bathtub.⁷³

I think Art can slow down time, or at least the perception of it, and through that can insert ideas, elevate to prominence concepts and ways of seeing that are important, but forgotten. Aspects of our shared humanity that get unnoticed and overlooked, in the business of everyday life. I'd say, when society is organised such that people don't have time to think or feel, aren't encouraged to be fully human, why not throw a spanner in the works?

The value of feelings can get lost. Part of the artist's job is to reinstate authentic feeling into the culture, to protect feelings. I think public outcry to the war in Iraq might now be more visceral if the feelings and emotional experience of the estimated 601,027 post invasion violent deaths that took place from 2002 to 2006 had been effectively communicated through the mass media.⁷⁴ Isn't that what happens, when you hear a great piece of music? You think 'that's what life's really about. What have I been doing with my time? Those are the values that matter, that are worth defending, worth disseminating'. At least that's what I do. Art can function as an antidote to violent impulses. It's worth noting that of course it can also act as a panacea.

When power wants to make people *forget*, music is ritual *sacrifice*, the scapegoat; when it wants them to *believe*, music is enactments, *representation*; when it wants to *silence* them, it is reproduced, normalized, *repetition*.⁷⁵

⁷³ ALEXANDER 1992, page 19.

⁷⁴ For a major study on the death toll post invasion in Iraq 2002-2006, see BURNHAM et al 2006.

⁷⁵ ATTALI 2006, page 20.

Emotions and feelings are important, and they need to be respected, and the regulation and control of emotion is significant. Emotions have been an important part of our shared culture and modes of expression throughout human history. Recent research into the archaeology of compassion for example tells us how important the care of others was for archaic humans, with the earliest evidence of compassionate behaviour being some 1.5 million years old.⁷⁶

I think that there is a responsibility to insert content into our culture that has integrity. Of course what I'm talking about is my subjective opinion of what has integrity, and what is important. But that is indeed exactly what I'm talking about. We have a responsibility to be true to creating output that we believe in, subjectively: that we believe has integrity. What more can we do than be true to ourselves?

We live in a time in which we are constantly exposed to deliberately false information. Lies. Whether it's the avalanche of manipulative messages designed to foster a desire for environmentally destructive consumption and needless 'growth', or the dangerous lies of the media propaganda model.⁷⁷ We have to navigate through a confusing miasma, a consistent stream from the nonsense factory: a devastating and destructive blizzard of misinformation concerning what has value in our culture. I think a major motivation for my work is a struggle for identity despite the confusion. A struggle to contribute in a meaningful way, to insert content that I believe has value: to elevate to prominence values that I believe in. And this isn't a neat and tidy struggle, a rational decision I have made. Right now I'm looking back at what I've done, and trying to make sense of it, and this explanation makes sense to me.

Trying to escape from habitual ways of thinking and feeling about the world.

It also makes sense to me, looking back, that throughout my PhD, I have been searching, looking for a method to see more clearly, to escape from habitual ways of thinking and experiencing the world: this a definite line or theme that emerges from the body of work I'm presenting here. It started with *Ash Dome* I think. But it was also present in the work before that: *Snow Cradle* (see Chapter 2) and *Ice Pictures*. These two pieces were in part a continuation of work done previously, a kind of 'over hang' from a different period. *Snow Cradle* was in part a response to my long term work with the gamelan⁷⁸, and in part the antithesis to *The Women of Trachis*, the

⁷⁶ SPIKINS, RUTHERFORD and NEEDHAM 2010.

⁷⁷ CHOMSKY and HERMAN 1994; CHOMSKY 1989.

⁷⁸ I've played and sung in the gamelan since 2006, and composed a number of works for gamelan, including *Three Moments on a Journey* (2006) for gamelan and choir, *Antigone* (2008), an opera scored for gamelan and string ensemble, and *The Women of Trachis* (2010), a music drama scored for gamelan and electronics.

project I had done immediately preceding the start of my Phd.⁷⁹ I used live gamelan and electronics for the project, and I took on a lot of work as director and composer. I enjoyed it, but the experience also exhausted me, burnt me out. Following the performances, I wanted to scale things down completely for the next project. I wanted to make something that didn't involve having to organise large groups of people; players, actors, costume designers and technicians. Just to work alone, only with sound. But I was also interested by gamelan musical structures, and how they might be utilised in the creation of electronic music: I could see a lot of parallels between the two genres. This is part of the reason why it is relevant to the body of work, the entire PhD, as use of cyclic structures and the gamelan sound world permeates through the ten projects I'm presenting. I was also interested in the ideas of Brian Eno, in his electronic music. And I was inspired by the concept of creating 'imaginary landscapes'. Originally the title of a number of pieces by John Cage, imaginary landscapes is a phrase I've always liked. The idea of realms, places, which are also psychological spaces, internal imagined possible ways of being. Imaginary places and possible futures: potential ways of seeing, of feeling. There is a connection between our ability to imagine a better future for ourselves, and the ability to imagine works of art. Music is prophecy:

If we want to know what something (such as art, science or philosophy) is, then we can ask how it serves life. The problem, today, is that when we ask what art or philosophy are for we tend to feel they should serve some everyday function: making us better managers or communicators. We fail to see the purpose or force of art and philosophy goes beyond what life is to what it might become.⁸⁰

Searching for a better way of being.

So for me, the pieces I'm presenting here are about searching for a better way of being. A better way of feeling, communicating and interacting. Music offers alternative emotional landscapes, or feeling landscapes: sensescapes. Music offers alternative ways of seeing and feeling about the world: different ways of communicating and different things to communicate. I remember when I was in my early 20s seeing a string quartet for the first time. It seemed to me to be an extraordinarily civilized way of being in the world and of communicating. I'd never seen people *being* like that before. For me it was an encounter with a new communication style, a new way of being to aspire to and the indication of a direction to head in psychologically and spiritually.

⁷⁹ *The Women of Trachis* was a full length Ancient Greek drama I put on in July 2010 at the Guildhall, York; a setting of Sophocles' text in a new translation by Dr Richard Rowland.

⁸⁰ COLEBROOK 2002, page 13-14.

So, after the two initial projects, *Ice Pictures* and *Snow Cradle*, *Ash Dome* came around in the spring of 2011. This piece was pivotal for me: *Ash Dome* got me into working with found sound taken from the landscape, and with the landscape itself. In preparation I read a good deal of research on land art, as the piece was based on the work of the sculptor land art sculptor David Nash. This research, and the exposure to his work, got me thinking about art, nature and landscape, and on the relationships between them. It made me think more about the borderlines between these different concepts and aspect of my experience, and about different ways of listening. The next piece chronologically was *Another Place*, inspired by reading about land artists such as Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy. With *Another Place* I focussed on a specific stretch of coastline in North Yorkshire, and based the piece on found sounds collected on a walk from Whitby to Robin Hoods Bay. But it was also based on the experience of the walk itself: the route, the movement from light to dark, from the bright light to the shade. It was about looking out from the cliff tops across the distance, across an infinite volume of water into the depth of the North Sea. I'm not saying I was successful in articulating that in the piece, but I tried to.

The most significant single work in the PhD is *Terrarium*, the next on the timeline. It enabled me to develop a process initiated in *Ash Dome*, and explored a little more with *Another Place*. I became more seriously engaged in the idea of working with landscape, with a fixed, identified geographical area: working with a map. *Terrarium* enabled me to develop more fully a process and a way of working that I was starting to feel could produce successful results. To make something I believed in and thought had value.

Following *Terrarium* I had the chance to work on a new project, a realisation of *A Dip in the Lake*, as part of *Getting Nowhere*, a conference and festival celebrating the life and work of John Cage run by my PhD supervisor, Professor William Brooks. I learnt a lot making *A Dip in the Lake*, and working on that festival as a whole. It's not really my piece, but I included it here anyway because it was very important for me: it's John Cage's piece. The score essentially consists of a couple of lines of text, asking you to record sounds from 467 selected locations in a city using chance procedures, and then to play them back. What I learnt from that, from actually doing it, was that Cage's piece is a thought process. It's a powerful thought machine that is designed to change your perception. As such, it's essentially about *awareness*.

To go hypothetical for a moment, if someone was to ask you to choose 467 locations in a city and record sounds, the chances are you would immediately think of all the 'best' places to go, the place with the best sounds. Or alternatively you might select locations that would give you the most diverse range of sounds. Whatever you decided to do, your decisions would inescapably be based on your own habits, knowledge and experience. Even if you were deliberately to attempt to subvert your choices, and go against habit, that would still bear a

relationship to your own experience: it would be a sort of negative imprint of it. The selected locations are also likely to be contingent on the most convenient routes offered by the public transport system, or road system if you have access to a car. Things would change though were you to get involved with chance procedures: then you would cut through habit, and you'd be forced to go to all sorts of places that you never knew existed, that you would never have noticed on the map. It's only through the discipline of making a detailed grid, rolling the dice, or using whatever scheme you devise to make the procedures genuinely chance orientated, that you would begin to really *look* at a map. Then you would have to find the locations, write down the exact address, and get there.

Cage's process for *A Dip in the Lake* is a tool to encourage the artist to look, to see, to analyse. And then, what you find when you get there, when you go to all these places and record sound, is an astonishing variety. The amount going on in any city at any given moment surpasses what one individual can imagine: one simply can't imagine it all alone, in isolation: there are too many variables. The people you meet, the stories you have to tell, the sounds you hear – the variety is extraordinary. What's more, because of the random nature of time and place selection, you cut through categories such as social class, economic habit, profession and lifestyle. *A Dip in the Lake* is about the variety found in the shared acoustic space: the variety of life lived in the urban landscape, and its acoustic footprint. Cage's piece is an algorithm, a process that wakes you up to what is really there: life in all its profusion and abundance. And, if you have some imagination and are prepared to listen, it makes you aware of how beautiful a thing that is.

So *A Dip in the Lake* is about shifting our attention: the message is that the beauty is there all the time; it's our way of seeing, of listening that needs to change. Cage is calling on us to shift our awareness, to see what's staring us in the face: to try actually looking. This reminds me of Laurie Anderson's quote, the opening lines from 'Language is a Virus':⁸¹ 'Paradise is exactly like where you are right now, only much, much better'.⁸²

My antidote to nihilism.

Art tries to open the aperture, and so to make visible what previously remained hidden from view. It's connected with speeds: thinking speeds and being speeds. It's also connected with awareness and categories:

For the purposes of life, everyday thinking has to work by a kind of shorthand. From a highly complex flow of perceptions I tend to

⁸¹ Laurie Anderson 'Language is a Virus' from *Home of the Brave*. Warner Bros 1986.

⁸² Anderson was in turn quoting Willaim S Burrough. See: BARDINI 2008, page 149.

perceive recognisable and repeatable objects. I do not perceive all the minute differences that make up the flow of time. I see this as an extended object that is the same. I regard myself, not as a flow of perceptions, but as a person with an identity. So when I experience data – such as colour, sound or texture – I subordinate it to an everyday concept. Art works in the other direction. It disengages the ordered flow of experience into its singularities.⁸³

This has been my life over the past four years creating these works, although I didn't realise it at the time: attempting to disengage the ordered flow of experience into singularities.

There are moments. It is a searching for moments – a searching for freedom from a state in which the world ceases to be beautiful. That is the core motivation in all my work and activity: Searching for freedom from a state in which it isn't beautiful to live anymore. It is bound up with the depression I have experienced for two decades. I am trying to navigate between states, between ways of seeing the world.

Because I know that it should be beautiful: it has to be.

I'm motivated, in part, by fear; fear of being forced to live in a way that cuts me off from living in accordance with music's prophecy, and a fear of being cut off from seeing the world as it really is, or as it could be. Bound up with this is a desire to create prophecies and imaginary landscapes of my own. If the economic system we live in pushes me into a way of being that doesn't involve thinking and feeling and seeing the world for what it is, or what it could be, I might stop being able to perceive its beauty, and it will become devoid of meaning. In my 20s I spent years working in restaurants, waiting tables, whilst I did my A levels at night school, and learnt to read music and play the piano in a bedsit in London. I'm scared to go back there, to that place where I don't have any options, and where I'm cut off from creativity and the search for true identity and authenticity.

The root of the fascination with maps, with landscapes, with archives, is a searching for what I know is there: a searching for the beautiful in the everyday. I'm not searching for the beautiful in the extraordinary, elite, special or 'other worldly': not searching for beauty and meaning in the transcendent, but searching for the way of thinking, the awareness in which the ordinary world has not fallen from grace.

It is my answer to Nietzsche, my antidote to Nihilism.

⁸³ COLEBROOK 2002, page 24.