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What draws the artist to the subject of dereliction and urban decline?

By

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Thesis submitted
for the degree of MA by Research
2016

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introduction

“Consider what the ruin has meant, or might mean today: a reminder of the universal reality of collapse and rot; a warning from the past about the destiny of our own or any other civilisation; an ideal of beauty that is alluring exactly because of its flaws and failures; the symbol of a certain melancholic or maundering state of mind; an image of equilibrium between nature and culture; a memorial to the fallen of an ancient or recent war; the very picture of economic hubris or industrial decline; a desolate playground in whose cracked and weed infested precincts we have space and time to imagine a future.” (Dillon, 2014, p. 5)

Dereliction and old ruins have always held a fascination for many artists throughout the centuries. But why are they drawn to them? Is it because it is a reminder of the fragility of the past, how civilisation has crumbled and failed, how fragile our own destiny may be, or do we look on smugly believing that this failure could never happen in our generation with the knowledge we have gained today? Each ruin throughout history has its own message to the present observer, to make us think of what has passed and to consider what is our future. These crumbling buildings were once the theatre of life, where people acted out their lives, their work, their suffering and their joy. These are the fragments left over from their history, their memories of place which have now become our heritage and a monument to our feelings and emotions to be felt for their lost, departed souls. Places and human history are inextricably linked and this may be an important reason for the artist's interest, they are drawn to the concept of remembering and ultimately to creating images of the past, the ghosts of generations gone by, so they will not be forgotten or lost in time. The artist is drawn to these stories and as their thoughts unfold, perhaps creating artwork to shock or frighten the viewer, to make them feel uneasy, to make them question how soon it will be before their own warm, homely place will too become the subject of the artist's interpretation, that journey in to the sublime?

Today it is urban decline that dominates and makes today's ruins. The closing down of factories and industrial plants due to either new technology, cheaper manufacturing from abroad or a combination of both. These faceless facades stare out on the communities that once thrived and prospered, but now boarded up they have become desolate places left only for nature to take its course and reclaim their weary shells, reminding their communities of a grand past but also of a future with no hope. Within these ghost towns, where time has stood still, is the fodder for the artist's imagination, and yet for the majority of the outside world it is a reminder of a more prosperous past, and now only time endures in their empty spaces until dereliction eventually crosses that fine line of nostalgia over to the inevitable process of demolition, and the memory of the place will eventually become the memory of that space alone.

As Dillon (2014) suggests in his quote above, the ruin has the potential to represent many things and to embody

many ideas: “....an ideal of beauty that is alluring exactly because of its flaws and failures....”

My research will examine the relationship between artistic practice and the representation of ruins, focusing on what motivates the artist in their interpretation of the ruin, whether it be the ruin as a celebration of historic architecture or as a sublime image to arouse the viewer’s response both creativity and aesthetically. The research is divided into three elements:

- 1) A brief history of the representation of ruins in art;
- 2) Site visits;
- 3) My work journal shown in appendix 1, and the practice that comes out of my primary studies (see appendix 2 DVD);

And through this research using literature, but primarily through my own practice, I aim to produce a series of work which reflects the motivations and feelings I experience as an artist on this subject. My main theme for my practical work will be the decline and dereliction of the south coast seaside resorts.

the artist research

It was The Grand Tour of the 18th century that first made the visiting of ancient ruins popular with both artists and the public. The Tour was considered to be the means for completing the young aristocrats' education through the study of art and architecture, usually funded by an allowance from their affluent parents. The Grand Tour essentially involved a trip to Paris, then through Germany and Austria, and from there a tour of the principle Italian cities including Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples. The mundane everyday dwelling was of no interest to furthering the tourist's education and was not included on the itinerary for their visit. Black comments in his book, "The British and The Grand Tour":

"Tastes varied, but, in general, there was a preference for the classical over the Gothic that led most tourists to ignore or dislike the architecture of Germany, most of provincial France, and some of northern Italy. Old towns were disliked; the preference for wide, straight streets, as in Turin or the newer sections of Marseilles. Narrow, twisting streets were associated with dirt, disease and poverty." (Black, 1985 p. 225).

This travel for education only celebrated classical architecture, their places of pilgrimage were classical ruins such as the Colosseum in Rome. Its image in 18th century art was represented as a romanticised version of history with the ruins sitting alone in their splendour, whilst in reality it was surrounded by small streets and dwellings rarely included in these fanciful 'portraits' of these historic sites. This 'dishonesty' of the representation of place is not something I enjoy, I feel that whatever surrounds the subject should also be part of that historic representation too, not marginalised or overlooked. These pictures brought home from the Grand Tour were indeed just facsimiles of the building itself, and if photography had been invented then, a snapshot would have probably sufficed to show your contemporaries as 'evidence' of your trip.

For the less wealthy who could not afford the Grand Tour, Britain's historic sites became of increasing interest to both the middle class tourists and artists of the 18th century. Tintagel Castle, Lindisfarne Priory (Fig1) and Rievaulx Abbey all became keen subjects for the artists who romanticised the ruins with pastoral views, cattle and sheep gently grazing,



Fig 1
Edmund Thornton Crawford (1806 - 85),
Lindisfarne Priory, Holy Island, 1851,
Oil on canvas (Private Collection)



Fig 2
John Constable (1776–1837)
Sketch for Hadleigh Castle, c.1828–9
Oil on canvas 1.226 x 1.673 cm
(Tate Britain)

landed gentry on horseback intending to awe the viewer with the building's dramatic size and height. With few exceptions these 18th century precisely executed, topographical paintings were more like back drops to a theatrical production. I feel that the over exaggeration and embellishment of these subjects by the artists destroy the soul of these wonderful buildings. Was this what the artist wanted? Or were they being a little bit showy, a little bit snobby, stating 'we have visited these places, whilst

the majority of you have not, we can show you the sublime, but you won't experience it as we have, you were not present.'

In the 18th and 19th century the feeling of the sublime was captured by the landscape artists as a response to the immensity of the natural world with all its wonders of tumultuous weather, high mountains and exploding volcanoes. The sublime always aimed to achieve a high level of theatrical ambition, weather at its best and worst, with dramatic chiaroscuro lighting, a far cry from the static portraits of the ruins brought home from the Grand Tour. Riding and Llewellyn describe this in their research paper on the Sublime:

"It was at this point in the history of the word sublime that visual artists became deeply intrigued by the challenge of representing it, asking how can an artist paint the sensation that we experience when words fail or when we find ourselves beyond the limits of reason?

Indeed, the sublime was, and remains, an important matter for visual artists on a number of levels, affecting artists' choice of subject matter, the nature of the spectator's response, ideas about artistic creativity as well as offering a yardstick for judging aesthetic excellence.

Darkness – which constrains the sense of sight (primary among the five senses)

Obscurity – which confuses judgement

Privation (or deprivation) – since pain is more powerful than pleasure

Vastness – which is beyond comprehension

Magnificence – in the face of which we are in awe

Loudness – which overwhelms us

Suddenness – which shocks our sensibilities to the point of disablement" (www.tate.org.uk)

John Constable's painting of Hadleigh Castle (Fig 2) sums up the artists of that period's wish to capture the sublime. Most artists of the time wanted to represent this sensation, to express their emotional feelings for the place, an experience where no words are necessary, just a visual aesthetic moment to share with the viewer, a moment when they believe they have captured their entity through paint. In his work of Hadleigh Castle Constable tries to capture the sublime by painting the tension between man and nature, recording the landscape of this ancient site in ominous weather conditions, reflecting how this manmade structure appears so vulnerable, so fragile, struggling against the elements which will eventually erode away the past and the life that once was. This was the artist trying to conquer that moment in time, almost experiencing it as a religious zenith, above and beyond the understanding of us mere mortals who stare into their darkness from the position of comfort and safety of the art gallery.

As much as I appreciate these 18th century artworks are technically outstanding, in my practice I want to escape from these pre-conceived images of dereliction as the romantic, historic ruin to be seen on the tourist trail, just another cultural box to tick. Unlike the Grand Tour aristocrats, I am not looking for the famous buildings, the grand opera houses, castles and churches. I want to go 'off piste' into the back streets of the urban town and learn about the everyday living of the city dwellers. In every town or city there will always be a street crumbling under the resistance of change and the lack of money to change it - places for reflection, places in memory to keep memories.



Fig 3
LS Lowry (1887-1976)
Clifford's Tower, York 1952 - 3
Oil on canvas
York Art Gallery

They too have their own sublimity.

For myself there is true beauty in decay, organic or the manmade, but you have to find it, to feel it and you have to look deep to understand its textures and life. But to the majority the everyday decay and dereliction of modern architecture is not thought to be beautiful. The majority may think these buildings should be ignored, covered up, or at best forgotten about. Uninhabited slums, disused factories and power stations are eyesores, to be boarded up or razed to the ground, hidden away behind high fences, hoardings or barbed wire, unattractive reminders of our industrial and failed past. But surely this is the draw to the artist; the unknown and the neglected, a paradise of texture, history and evocation. And the more I delve into this research, the more I understand that it is not only the derelict landscape that appeals, but the texture of that dereliction that draws me to it (see appendix 2).

The modern urban landscape is seldom represented alongside any of the romantic settings of the paintings of the classical ruins by 18th/19th century artists. It is as if 'modern life' could not exist alongside such wonders of architectural history and would only seek to blemish the beauty of their pictorial landscape. This is why the painting of Clifford's Tower in York (Fig 3) by L. S. Lowry is so interesting. It could have so easily been a pure homage to the ruin itself, (it was commissioned by the York City Art Gallery (Bryant, 2005, page 42)), but Lowry has not romanticised his subject, he has included the old and the new by painting the modern industrial landscape with its cooling tower and factory chimneys in the background. As mentioned, the modern environment was seldom represented alongside the ruins of the classical paintings of the 17th/18th century even though they are situated in or nearby their modern cities. The ruin itself always took centre stage with little reference to the activities of present day life surrounding them. Clifford's Tower was Lowry's homage to the urban living he so enjoyed painting throughout his career. He wanted to show how an historical site once rescued and restored to become a popular tourist attraction, should be painted in its true environment, warts and all. What lies at the edge of this painting is almost as important as the subject itself, through time the cooling towers and factory chimneys will be demolished and forgotten, but this painting is their legacy and that is why I admire this picture's honesty.

These are the modern urban ruins I'm interested in; the factories, industrial plants and slums. These are the living history of our urban past, to be 'celebrated' and enjoyed. To me every building has a soul which lives and breathes its past, watching generations come and go, after all they were designed, built and used by us. Their dereliction tells the story of past inhabitants, of daily life, a piece of broken china, an old sink or rusty cans and fading wallpaper, textures from bygone days. You won't find grazing cattle or sheep in today's urban dereliction, only ferret cats, dogs or rats foraging through the rubbish of these forgotten and abandoned places.

My first memory of dereliction was the bomb sites I had played on when I was quite young. There was no health



Fig 4
St Augustine's Church, Manchester
Photograph
Originally printed in the 6th February 1942
issue of the Catholic Herald

and safety then, no fencing or burly security guards or dogs patrolling the territory. These sites were a child's paradise of make believe where the imagination had no boundaries (Fig 4). But in the mid 60s when the government could afford regeneration projects, these bomb sites began to disappear and my playground was no more. The fencing was up and the children were turned away. We could no longer play our imaginary games, build our pretend homes or camps with the broken objects on offer. Someone had stolen our world. We met in the street with our heads bowed, dejected and wondering where we could go next, to explore and build our imaginary lives again. And perhaps this is the draw to many artists to represent the memory of a building or place, that moment in time, before it is taken over by the developer and regurgitated into the modern living ideal, all in the name of progress. Even as a child I wondered about the past lives,

about the bricks and mortar of this rubble, their sense of place. This was once someone's home or workplace ruined by war and now years on forgotten in the obscurity of their history; not to be dwelt upon, 'keep calm and carry on'. I watched one 'playground' turn into a Catholic Church and another was transformed into a municipal swimming pool, which I could enter for the princely sum of 6d, and as a child perhaps far more alluring than the heap of rubble that it once was. Though the memory of playing on that site is perhaps more poignant than the memories of swimming in that new pool. So perhaps it is this strong memory of place that draws the artist to the urban ruin?

Not so well documented as his famous street and factory scenes, Lowry captured the landscape of these bomb damaged sites (Fig 5 & 6). He had worked as a firewatcher in Manchester during the 2nd world war where he was usually stationed on a department store's roof. He recalled being 'first down in the morning to sketch the blitzed buildings before the smoke and grime had cleared.' (www.thelowry.com). In 'Blitzed Site' (Fig 5), you can feel the pain of the man looking through the debris of his old home, whilst in the background others pick through the rubble of what's left of their own history, their memories, their belongings. Dillon (2011, p.55) quotes Jean Paul Sartre from his book 'Being and Nothingness': "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body in so far as the house was already an indication of my body." This, I believe was the beginning of the 20th century version of the sublime represented in art with the subject now including war, ruin and waste, replacing the tempests, fire and brimstone of the 18th/19th century artists like Constable and Turner.



Fig 5
 LS Lowry
 (1887-1976)
 Blitzed Site 1942
 Oil on canvas,
 41 x 51cm
 The Lowry Collection,
 Salford



Fig 6
 LS Lowry (1887-1976)
 St Augustine's Church 1945
 Oil on canvas, 46 x 61.3 cm;
 Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester.



Fig 7
Clyde Tower demolition,
Lozells, 2006 ©
Birmingham Mail

So arguably, this was the start of my obsession with dereliction - my playground had been taken away from me, my short history of ferrel play was no more. I was no longer allowed to be creative, fantasise about or build my imaginary future, using the rubbish and debris left behind on these derelict sites. Bachelard sums up this feeling: “It is a strange situation. The space we love is unwilling to remain permanently enclosed. It deploys and appears to move elsewhere without difficulty; into other times, and on different planes of dream and memory.” (Bachelard, 1958, p. 74).

And yet I was privileged, my generation had escaped major conflict and in the 60s when the local authority’s money was available again, new build was top of the agenda. I watched high rise buildings grow up throughout South London - the perfect answer to the Baby Boomer generation - towering blocks of residential properties. These were optimistic days when tower blocks were envisaged as streets-in-the-sky; magical, amenity-crammed, modern alternatives to the old, run-down and bombed-out terraced houses. They looked good, modern, the new urban dwelling, the chic place to live - all mod cons. Nobody wanted to live in the slums of Victorian terraces anymore with their shared outside toilets and no bathrooms. But we didn’t know to what cost high rise living would affect these modern families. Eventually the tower blocks became urban ‘no-go’ areas where crime became rife; channels in the sky where no one dare venture after dark. These are one of the few architectural structures in history that are seldom celebrated in art as an architectural masterpiece. I wonder why; was it because these homes alienated their inhabitants, or because the structures were stark and ugly on their exterior and had become sleazy and dangerous inside their passageways and corridors? Had these buildings lost their soul and few artists were willing to interpret



Fig 8
Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864 - 1916),
Interior Strandgarde 30, 1906,
Oil on canvas 51.8 x 44cm
(Tate)



Fig 9
Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864 - 1916),
Interior of Courtyard, Strandgarde 30, 1906,
Oil on canvas 65.7 x 47.3cm
(Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio)

a subject without a soul? Though through their stark ugliness, I am quite drawn to these buildings, and feel they have become somewhat forgotten and ignored, standing proud, similar to the industrial cooling towers of the urban landscape. Now the remaining hi-rise blocks have become the canvas of the street artist where graffiti messages and images became territorial rights of passage and so they have now become a living, daily work of urban art with their own sublimity of that moment in time.

Within 10 years of being built, the hi-rise were the living dereliction of the 70s and everyone wanted to escape them. Eventually block by block these buildings were demolished, blown up (Fig 7), leaving a site piled with rubble. So within a few years they were back to how they started, a 'modern day bomb site' and a child's imaginary playground but now behind closed fences, all there to repeat the cycle of regeneration but with no opportunity to pick through the remains of their lives, to be left and forgotten.

And from these early beginnings and interests I became an urban observer, following the development of a town or city's progress into modernity. The most important thing about the urban landscape and dereliction is the feeling it evokes in you, both as an artist and as a person. It's part of your life, it's your history and when you stand before that building or childhood home, or if you are lucky enough to stand within it, you can be suspended in time and

experience both a spiritual and emotional phenomenon, that memory of place locked away in the back of your mind, that feeling of past life and old memories. And so it is perhaps these feelings of memory that evokes the artist in to capturing that early experience, drawing from their memories, their own sublimity suspended in time.

Hammershøi and Urban Exploration

The Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864 - 1916) succeeded in creating a similar kind of atmosphere in his paintings. Although his pictures were not celebrating dereliction, the empty interiors evoke the same sense of desolation one can experience in an empty or disused building, where time has stood still akin to an old sepia photograph. The viewer has become the intruder, the Urban Explorer, slipping nervously into his claustrophobic and lonely spaces (Fig 8 and 9). Hammershøi strips bare any narrative in his paintings, so there is very little sense of history or occupation, one could be standing in his empty rooms at any period of time during the last 200 years. And like the disused and abandoned houses of today, he paints closed doors, or when ajar, there is little hint of life beyond and yet one is drawn in to the painting, intrigued by the curiosity of what lies beyond. What enchants me is that there are no contents or decor suggesting that there is life still inhabiting these rooms, and it is as if you are now the modern Urban Explorer picking your way through a 19th century abandoned building waiting for redevelopment, where all exits are blocked, doors leading nowhere to nothingness, as if the building is tempting you in, but trying to resist your presence but ultimately feeding your curiosity?

In his essay, 'The Uncanny' (Freud, 2003), Freud famously interprets a definition of the uncanny with the German words of 'Heimlich,' or 'homely,' vs. the 'unheimlich,' or 'unhomely', where the mind can quickly cross over from one feeling to the other when entering a building. So is it this 'unheimlich' feeling that draws the artist to their creative response the space they have entered eventhough the particular building may not be a part of their personal history? Is there something that triggers the imagination and personal memories that evoke a feeling of belonging, of what might have been experienced, a feeling of déjà-vu, maybe we had been here before in a past life, or maybe we have wanted to? So do we want to capture the uncanny, that feeling of being unnerved and do we want, as artists, to share that emotion with the viewer?

The paintings of Hammershøi can be compared to the modern day photographs of the Urban Explorer. The similarity is in the sense of emptiness and the loneliness these pictures evoke. The Urban Explorer is the 20/21st century artist recording these abandoned buildings through photography. Their photos aim to capture the magic and soul of the place before the building developers move in. Urban Explorers enter these forbidden places others would not dare to visit, and experience the presence of these spaces beyond the imaginations of the 'norm'. They protect their secret locations from the public, these abandoned buildings sometimes left with contents in place as if they were the Mary Celeste. They are artistic outlaws, enjoying the buzz of avoiding security guards or surveillance

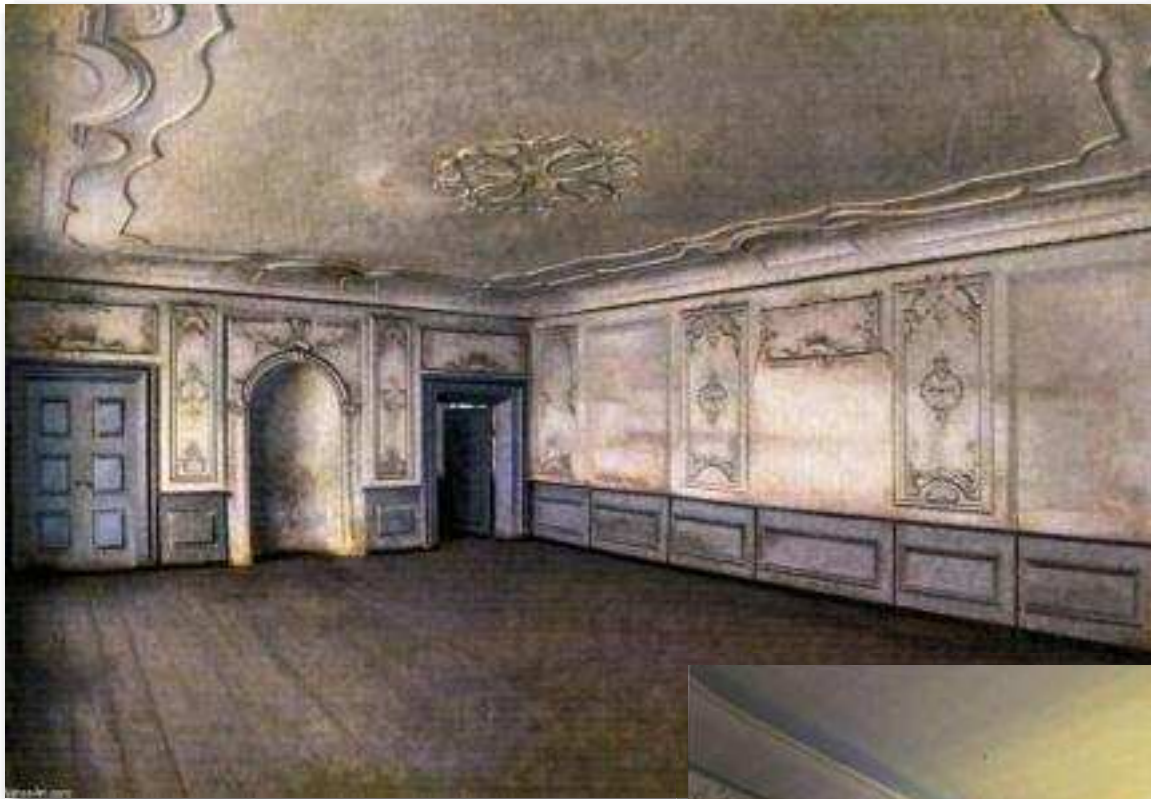


Fig 10
 Vilhelm Hammershøi
 (1864 - 1916),
 Interior of the Great Hall in Lindegaarden, 1909,
 Oil on canvas 77 x 118cm
 (Sikorsky Family Collection)

cameras to record these forbidden buildings' previous lives on film, to feel the ghosts of the past that lurk in every corner, to pass on their images to the viewer so they can be unnerved by their findings too. They truly want to share the sublimity of these buildings, which they regard as spaces rather than places through their photography. The Urban Explorer is an artist who is truly sensitive to their surroundings, nothing is moved, everything left as it was found as if they had never entered the space. The Urban Explorer Patrick Potter sums up this experience: "The contractor who enters the derelict

building to survey it for his client clearly does not have the same experience as the Urban Explorer. They are in the same place, but they are not in the same space." (Romany, 2012, pages unnumbered).

If you compare Hammershøi's painting of the Great Hall in Lindengarten (Fig 10) with the photograph taken by the Urban Explorer Silvia Margaine (Fig 11), you can see a similar ideal or composition to the subject matter



Fig 11
 Silvia Margaine (1977 - present),
 Aegidium Cinema, Brussels,
 circa early 2000s,
 Photograph

although they are practising their art nearly a century apart. Each room is recording the history and architecture of the building. The viewer is now the voyeur, watching and listening, feeling the atmosphere charged with energy of what might have been or what may be about to occur. The lack of furniture gives no clues to the use of the room - it's just an empty space where time hangs heavily, whatever period of history you are watching or viewing in.

These artists still want to explore these empty spaces and share their subliminal mood with the viewer, the only difference is in their chosen medium. It is significant that throughout the years the same abandoned places are still a draw to the artist. Perhaps the artist is more sensitive to the 'aura' of these buildings and feel that

this feeds their creativity, their sensitive nature, their imagination and they want to share and evoke the sublime, to their modern viewer as Constable and Turner had in the past.

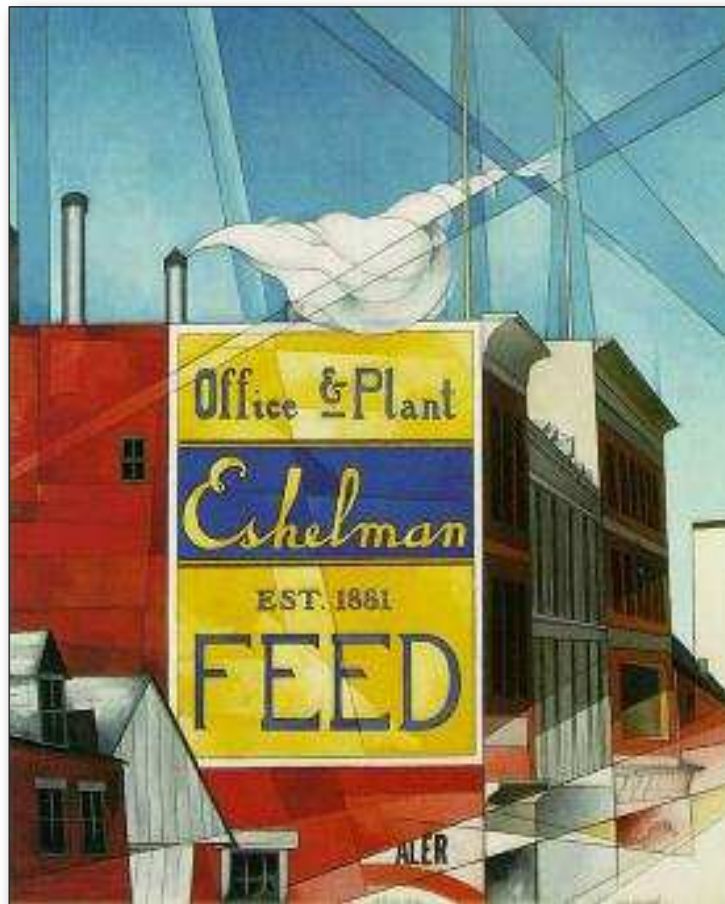


Fig 12
Charles Demuth
Buildings in Lancaster 1930
Oil on composition board. 20 x 24 ins
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York

The Precisionists and Futurists

Industry was booming at the start of the 20th century and the urban landscape was developing rapidly. In France the Cubists including Picasso and Braque, were making collages of the Café Society and not showing much interest in these industrial developments. In Italy, the Futurist Movement was evolving, with their members celebrating speed, industry and the machine age, with their vibrant paintings, sculptures and collages of life in the fast lane. The Italian Futurists had grown bored of their Greco-Roman past, much loved by the Grand Tour tourists, and were now disinheriting their history as too oppressive and archaic for their modern world. Museums and libraries were renounced and described as the 'cemeteries' of Italy. The Futurists were now actually creating their own form of urban dereliction.

In America, though still 'separated' from the European art movements, industry was also moving forward rapidly and the American Precisionists were emerging, painting and drawing all things new; agricultural buildings, urban landscapes,



Fig 13
Elsie Driggs
Pittsburgh 1927.
Oil on canvas 34¹/₄ x 40 ins
Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York

advertising hoardings (Fig 12) and the monolithic steel plants (Fig 13). Elsie Driggs (1898-1992), Charles Demuth (1883-1935) and Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) were the leading artists, and although the subject matter was similar, their art was a far cry from the chaotic, vibrant paintings of the Italian Futurists (Fig 14). The only natural object in a Precisionist painting was a background of sky or water, with no apparent rendering of any movement whatsoever – a static composition, a vast contrast to the Futurist ideal of sweeping lines crossing the canvas to denote speed and action. These static compositions were almost in the style of the 18th Century Grand Tour artists, though the subject matter was a far cry from ancient ruins. Although the artist emotions had been stripped away in their graphic interpretations, they were celebrating the things that the everyday person undervalued or overlooked. Charles Demuth wrote about their work: “Pictures must be understood through the eye - no writing, no singing, no dancing will explain them. They are final.” (Fahlman 2007, p. 141), a totally different story from the flamboyant Futurists.



Fig 14
Antonio Sant'Elia
Electric Power Plant
Ink and pencil on paper 31 x 20.5cm
Private collection

But time moved on and in the 21st century, heavy industry became the dereliction of today's society and many of these monolithic structures once new and heralded as the future are now abandoned throughout the continents. Deemed as too expensive to demolish, many have been left to rust away and let mother nature reclaim her broken land as Dillon mentions in his quote in the introduction: “... the very picture of economic hubris or industrial decline;

a desolate playground in whose cracked and weed infested precincts we have space and time to imagine a future.”
(Dillon, 2014, p. 5)

The celebration of industry through the Futurists and the Precisionists is now forgotten and urban decline and dereliction have now become the subject for today’s artist. An organic memory of past lives mixing the deconstructing textures of urban decay alongside the success of mother nature reclaiming her soil. And it is these textures of decay that are now drawing myself as an artist, rather than the representation of the building itself. (See

appendix 1)



Fig 15
Banksy Art in St Leonards, East Sussex
Author’s own photo

Banksy and Dismaland

I do find the emerging artists of the 21st century very compelling. They have turned the celebration of the past into the warnings of the future, both politically and environmentally. The onus is no more on celebrating the old ruined monasteries and castles of yesterday, but on the future and demise of our planet; this is the artist’s

prediction of urban decline, the artist drawn to ‘what will be’ and not ‘what has been’.

Today Banksy is probably the best known urban artist (Fig 15); he brings his politics to the street to be viewed by the public and not tucked away in some gallery where art has ultimately become a commodity and only the rich are welcome. Banksy’s stencilled and airbrushed ‘murals’ are challenging the government and large corporations about their ethics; a small proportion of the world’s population dictating to the rest of us on how we should live, what we should buy and the aspirations of the material world.

‘Dismaland Bemusement Park’ (Fig 16) was Banksy’s first major project, organised with 50 other artists from over 17 countries he created a dystopian world of what the future may hold, using the derelict Tropicana Lido in the seaside resort of Weston Supermare (September 2015). Ironically this ‘theme park’ was a victim of its own commercial success with tickets changing hands for £100 or more on the blackmarket, instead of the £5 face value. Banksy writes in his introduction to the Park:

“...this is not your average sugar-coated fantasyland selling scrapings from the Hollywood floor. No we couldn’t afford that. Instead this is an attempt to build a different kind of family day out - one that sends a



Fig 16
The Big Wheel and Princess's Castle at Dismaland
Author's own photo



Fig 17
The advertisement hoarding featuring David Cameron at Dismaland
Author's own photo

more appropriate message to the next generation - sorry kids. Sorry about the lack of meaningful jobs, global injustice and Channel 5. The fairytale is over, the world is sleepwalking towards climate catastrophe, maybe all that escapism will have to wait.”

I visited Dismaland on the best day possible with heavy rain and heavy grey skies above, which only added to the atmosphere of this dystopian world. It was like Disneyland after a nuclear attack, everything left in its place, hanging by a thread while the remainder of the population picked through the attractions like salvage hunters. Hoardings and buildings with their graffiti political messages (Fig 17 & 18) about the future or the government were everywhere. Anything and every thought or thing that would or could bring the world to its knees was here as a message. The photographs I took reminded me of the pictures Urban Explorers had taken in the remains of Chernobyl where the nuclear reactor had exploded and caused almost an Armageddon site stretching for hundreds of miles (Fig 19). The story more poignant, showing the fairground abandoned for ever, perhaps this was the influence that had started Banksy imagination in to creating Dismaland and its hard political message. This was how Banksy saw the future and it was frightening and unfortunately probably true. Twenty first century art had become a political tool, anti-establishment, with the artists’ view set firmly in the future with no celebration of the



Fig 18
The graffiti message on the Lido
entrance from inside
Author's own photo



Fig 19
The bumper cars in the Pripyat Amusement Park
Photo by Justin Stahlman

past. This was the artist drawn to predicting and representing urban decline before it's too late. Banksy cites Bertolt Brecht in his programme: "Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer to beat it with."

So through the last couple of centuries the representation of the ruin in art has changed substantially. From Turner and Constable sketching their subjects during a full tempest to capture their sublime moment where the elements battle against man, to the American Precisionists and Futurists celebrating the Machine Age as their sublime, to Banksy and his contemporaries showing the modern artists' definition of their interpretation of the sublime; a warning to us all about the future with war, ruined lives and climate change, rather than the religious zenith achieved by the 18th century artists.



Fig 20
The main building of Cane Hill
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 21
The main building of Cane Hill
Photograph
Author's own

An urban exploration and observation

There is something about the ‘uncanny’, something that draws you in, even though you know you’ll feel scared when you enter that unknown space. All buildings have ‘energy’, the walls of our homes and workplaces have absorbed our human lives and memories through the decades. In fact I believe that our human energy is absorbed by the building and helps keep it alive and vibrant. You only have to look at an abandoned house, whether old or modern, to see how quickly it goes in to decline without the occupants feeding the bricks and mortar with their energy for its survival.

I wanted to experience the ‘feelings’ of the Urban Explorer first hand, that unnerving emotion as you enter a derelict site, to experience the ghosts of the past, to see the space for myself, to feel the textures of decay. You want that adrenalin rush, that fear of the unknown. And by using the photography of these abandoned sites, I could build up a portfolio of images that would be good reference in my research for the key ideas I had for my art practice.

Cane Hill Hospital, Coulsdon, Surrey

Every county in the UK had one, an austere gothic building set in its vast grounds, the asylum, the place where the Victorians would keep their mentally ill, troubled patients or sometimes the non-conformists; the misfits of the generation. The 1960s brought many closures to these outdated ‘health’ institutions and many remained as empty buildings, on the outskirts of the village, made more scary as they became the modern urban ruin with all the myth of ‘lunacy’ attached.



Fig 22
The main building of Cane Hill surrounded by
secure fencing
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 23
Entrance to secure unit of Cane Hill
Photograph
Author's own

And so these abandoned buildings with their 'secret' history have become a great lure to both the artist and the Urban Explorer, only the brave will enter to 'feel' the spectres of the past, but I had a personal agenda to fulfill as recounted below.

I hadn't thought about Cane Hill for many years, this was the mental institution where my maternal Grandmother had died. But I was in the vicinity and had an overwhelming desire to go back there to lay to rest the many ghosts I had, and to discover whether it would evoke the memories I had put to the back of my mind, the sort of memories that you want to forget about, but still lie in the dark corners of your mind. The memories that could either evoke inspiration or send you into depression.

I think the visit to Canterbury Prison (see page 25), followed by the visit to St Augustine's (see page 28), had fuelled the fire in my soul to revisit this abandoned place where I had last seen my maternal Grandmother, the only Grandparent I had ever known.

I think I was 24 or 25 years old when I last visited this site. I knew the hospital had been closed for some years, but what I encountered was not as I had hoped. I remembered the long path up the hill from the bus stop, the trees and the views, but I did not remember the actual building, hiding its face away from the path, where mother nature was already winning the battle against the past (Fig 20 & 21).



Fig 24
Canterbury Prison on the outside
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 25
Canterbury Prison cell for two men
Photograph
Author's own

Of course it was closed off. Iron railings and barbed wire surround it (Fig 22) - there was no way through to get up close, to go inside or even stand in the grounds. Barretts the builders owned the site and as in the 60s my 'playground' was a 'no go' area - the developers had moved in and I was separated from my memories of place.

My brother and I had to get Gran sectioned and taken here. Gran had had a series of mental health problems over the last 10 years of her life. My mother was away in Canada, so my brother Alun and I did what we thought best - but was it? In those days they would use electric shock treatment and 'people's brains were 'fried' behind secure units (Fig 23). I used to wait by her bed until they had finished. I didn't really understand the consequences of what was happening, she never recognised me again. And when I would visit, I would be stopped in the corridors by various inmates touching or prodding me, asking strange questions and demand to know where the exit was, so they could go home as they were never meant to be here. It was not a good place visit, to be honest it was a bit scary - no wonder my grandmother gave up hope and left this mortal world to meet her God. She should never have been there, she had just given up the will to live.

This was a strange visit. I felt nothing but emptiness, perhaps if I had got inside like a true Urban Explorer, I would have experienced more of the sublimity I was searching for. Had my sensitivity as an artist been dulled through the expectation of memories? I felt let down, perhaps the sublime was not my quest and I was searching for something else? Perhaps I was becoming more inspired in the crumbling structure rather than the memories of the past?



Fig 26
Canterbury Prison entrance to secure unit
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 27
Canterbury Prison corridor with cells and suicide mesh
Photograph
Author's own

Canterbury Prison

I had never visited a prison before and was completely shocked by what I encountered. The place was now an empty shell, there was no 'vibe' you could pick up on - absolutely nothing - no presence felt, no anguish, no sadness, no fear - just a void which made the visit even more poignant. Had my sensitivity been dulled through expectation again? But of what? It made me think about dereliction and the abandonment of homes, which were once a happy place to be. Could this or any other prison be celebrated through art (see page 26)?

The visit was terrifying, the thought of ending up here for any length of time was frightening (Fig 24). You see a prison portrayed in a TV drama or comedy with the camaraderie and sometimes the violence between inmates, but it is almost a glamorous interpretation of real prison life. The cells are tiny, with a small window high up (Fig 25), so you'd never see out - just sky, not even a brick wall, an aeroplane passed by whilst I looked out, an ironic taste of freedom. As a claustrophobic it must have been terrifying to be locked away in this small room, knowing your only escape was in your thoughts or whilst you slept, shivering in these four walls, biding your time. Even the security guard accompanying me said he would never go in the building alone when the sounds of the night are exaggerated in your head. One could almost hear the banging and locking of the cell doors.

The prisoners were divided, the serious offenders on the ground floor, in the darkest area (Fig 26) and the petty

offenders on the 3rd floor, where the sunshine crept in - lucky for them. And between each floor was the suicide mesh to stop the jumpers from having the opportunity to end their grim existence, an eerie reminder of how desperate life could get (Fig 27).

The interior colours intrigued me - not quite pastel shades of blue and yellow (Fig 27). Why on earth were they chosen? Was it to create a sunshine and sea/sky atmosphere (pretend your on holiday)? A narrow black border separated the colours, could this represent the fine line they trod whilst incarcerated - a black division between life and death or good and bad, don't cross that line? All so strange, such a uncanny place, so unnerving.

I felt a deep dark depression visiting this place, but it made me think deeply both as an artist and as a person.

Art inspired by Canterbury Prison

The visit left a mark on me which has bored into my psyche. The cells may have had no frightening aura about them, apart from the sick feeling of emptiness, and a strong feeling of loneliness. Yet hundreds of men had passed through, spent months or even years of their lives living in this claustrophobic environment, so why weren't they 'present'? Some part of them should have been 'left' there, surely some strong feeling of malevolence should have been present? But I do believe the reason that there was no feeling of 'evil or unhappiness' made the experience all the more shocking, it was just one large, abandoned empty space. Perhaps the inmates didn't want to give themselves up to this confined environment, afterall it wasn't a 'home' as such, it was a place to pass through and 'do their time'. It was almost like purgatory, playing the waiting game until your mind and body is released to the outside world. Once in prison they had become an anonymous face in an anonymous place.

It was this lack of 'presence' that stayed with me after the visit. I expected to feel some chilling presence in this terrifying building. So why have I chosen to show loads of 'mugshots' of criminals, googled on the internet? There is part of me that feels these men had been abandoned and forgotten, just as the cells are now. I suppose I feel that the cells were full of failed members of our Utopian society, judged on their crimes and locked away, away from the 'good and normal people' who shouldn't ever have to set eyes upon these misfits and non conformists who don't play by the rules. Subconsciously I believe this is why I have made the far wall of the cell out of the many mugshots, the uglier the better (Fig 28 & 29), to shock and show the viewer that these men have been present in their tiny spaces, locked away as 'faceless' statistics, but I had given them a face, a memory.

In a few cells some of the inmates had left cut out pictures from magazines, but not of naked, beautiful women or film stars as one would expect, but of wildlife - fish and birds (Fig 30). This surprised me, was nature and the outside world more important than bodily desires? And so I took the theme of the soaring eagle escaping and soaring into the cell rather than out of it (Fig 29). This was to represent the freedom of mind anyone can have, the freedom



Fig 28
Prisoner mugshots
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 29
Detail of montage as it is being made
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 30
Cut out eagle inside the cell
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 31
The montage so far...
Photograph
Author's own

to dream and forget where you are, to be able to liberate yourself from this claustrophobic space. You have the freedom to wander anywhere you want in your head and nobody knows where you go to, only you. No one can control your thoughts, it is your form of escapism and no one can take that from you, a freedom that is yours and yours alone.

The wall to the right of the collage represents broken dreams. There are wedding pictures and a film star mixed in with the black wall representing the sad thoughts of what might have been and what has been given up or lost. The other wall is covered in a smoke pattern representing the drugs that are now prevalent in prison - another form of escapism, something for the inmates to help them get through their time 'inside'. The floor is made up of torn newspaper and shows that their lives are yesterdays news - thrown into the cell and left there, forgotten by the majority of the world until it is time to pick up the shreds of their lives again and move back to reality. Newspaper is worth nothing, once read, it is thrown away and forgotten, almost a comparison to these mens' lives?

Being 'inside' is what prison is all about with sometimes only one hour out of the twenty four outside your cell, a time to be 'free'. The ceiling of the cell is represented by a grey sky, the outside coming in. This represents the cell mates' freedom and the fact that there is only one view from the small window, and that it is upwards only, no vision of life outside, no sense of belonging to the outside world. The sky is oppressive and shows that even given your freedom, nothing is perfect in the outside world - that there is no sunny side to the street. Perhaps it is a nod to religion with heaven up an above, looking down on the cell mates and now being judged by the ultimate being, their God.

The door is collaged out of wordsearch puzzles. Why? I mainly chose this collage material so it separated the texture of the door from the environment of the cell. But it also represents the passing of time, how does an inmate fill their day, do they search for answers as to who they are and what they have become? The collage is almost finished (Fig 31), I have no more to say, I have left it alone, abandoned it like the prison inmates never to find a 'happy ending'. Though this artwork had lead me into the start of my journey, to using collage as a prime medium; the layering of textures and pictures, one overlapping the other, like memory itself.

St Augustine's Asylum, Chartham, Kent

St Augustine's Hospital (1875-1993) was a psychiatric hospital in Chartham, Kent. The hospital gained notoriety in the 1970s when it was the subject of a committee of inquiry into malpractice and mismanagement. It closed in 1993 and the site is now occupied by housing, although a few of the original hospital buildings remain.

I was recommended to visit the remains of the abandoned hospital by a tutor that new I had an interest in urban dereliction (Fig 32). He told me it was easy to enter, which meant I could now become a true Urban Explorer and experience the



Fig 32
The main building St Augustines now
open to the elements
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 33
Main corridor from entrance
Photograph
Author's own

inside deterioration rather than the building's exterior only, basically I could trespass without causing criminal damage.

I found the site on a hill, tucked away at the back of a modern housing estate, reminiscent of something out of *The Stepford Wives*. This was eerie even before I had arrived at the site of the derelict asylum. It was the hottest day of the year and no one was outside in their gardens, it was like the whole estate had been left, abandoned, as if some dreadful disaster had befallen the inhabitants and they all had to leave in a hurry or lay dead in their beds. It was a strange atmosphere to feel surrounded by a modern housing estate.

Unlike Cane Hill I had no personal connection to this place and yet it was the one site that did give me goosebumps. Perhaps it was because I was trespassing, nervous of being caught like a true Urban Explorer or maybe it was just simply stepping in to the building as it looked unsafe. The sun was streaming through what was once the ceiling casting strange shadows along the first corridor, I felt unnerved (Fig 33 & 34). The silence was deafening. Trigg sums this feeling up:

A shadow emerges from elsewhere, and in casting itself on a wall, it does so from a different point of time. At times, detecting the origin of a shadow proves elusive, and we are thus left with a strange spectral presence that both unsettles and settles us, situating us in and out of time. Fallen from time, the shadows on the walls and cast upon the floors are also an invitation for further exploration, an opening, into which human desire is invariably drawn. (2012 p. 145).



Fig 34
Ceiling now open to the elements
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 35
Graffiti is present throughout the main rooms
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 36
The Sports Hall
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 37
Stairwell
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 38
Derelict common room
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 39
The sports hall floor
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 40
Stairwell
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 41
Nature was beginning to intrude
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 42
Nursery wallpaper peeling away
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 43
Coat hooks in the nursery area
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 44
Staircase to offices
Photograph
Author's own



Fig 45
Stairwell with peeling paint
Photograph
Author's own

This derelict hospital showed it had a second chance of living, it was now obviously used as a meeting place for kids, high on drugs or drink or both. Nearly every wall was daubed with graffiti, from artistic drawings to macabre messages (Fig 35 & 36). The Urban Explorer would not have approved:

“ Consider the way Urbexers (*Urban Explorers*) use the sites they explore. Unlike the other urban tribes that haunt these sites, the explorers explicitly avoid any intervention in the space. They do not paint, vandalise, steal, move or even use the sites at all. It is as if they are walking through a sacred space, too overawed by the aura of the location to feel the need to intervene.” (Romany WG, 2012, page unnumbered).

As mentioned in Romany’s account; to an extent this graffiti detracted from the feel of the place, it didn’t feel empty or give you the fear of entering the room with the ghosts of the past or present, watching. It was now a home for the bored, not for the mentally ill.

Nevertheless it did open up the concept and excitement of urban exploring with the long corridors with rooms off either side (Fig 37, 38, 39, 40 & 41). Nature was beginning to encroach on the manmade structure, already finding the cracks and fissures for its new life (Fig 33); mother nature showing her strength once again. Some areas didn’t look safe, but they had to be explored, after all who can’t resist a staircase? Why is the staircase so alluring to the Urban Explorer and the artist? Trigg sums it up: “Intuitively, we feel compelled to ascend the staircase, curious to where it might lead or end. A staircase is an inviting entrance, its conclusion a source of curiosity.” (2009 p. 168).

The graffiti artists hadn’t ventured up the first staircase, (probably because they were more sensible), but it was disappointing, just a corridor with empty offices, no drama here, no inspiration to draw on. Downstairs was a whole different world on display, with peeling paint and wallpaper denoting the children’s areas, again untouched by the graffiti artists (Fig 42 & 43) as if there was some strange taboo not to interfere in this space. In this room I felt like an intruder, uneasy, it was as if I was being watched, like I could touch the past and it could touch me. The textures of the peeling paint and wallpapers intrigued me, I wanted to touch them, to feel their roughness to imagine the life before. Perhaps this was the draw to me, the actual tactile feeling of the abandoned site and not the ghosts of the past?

The second staircase shown in Fig 44 & Fig 45 was far more alluring than the first. It was well worn and dangerous and it turned a corner, so you could not see where it would lead. Trigg writes: “ ... staircases that do not reward ascent tend to be memorable, if only because they purport to negate their supposed essence. Because of this inversion, staircases that fall into an abyss are a motif central to Surrealism and Freudian dreams” (2009, p. 168). Magritte shows this ideal of the forbidden staircase leading to a blank wall in his picture ‘Forbidden Literature’ (Fig 46), making the viewer curious about what lies behind the blocked entrance and why is it forbidden?

John Monks stairwell (Fig 47), though larger than the one at St Augustine’s, evokes this sense of foreboding and trepidation

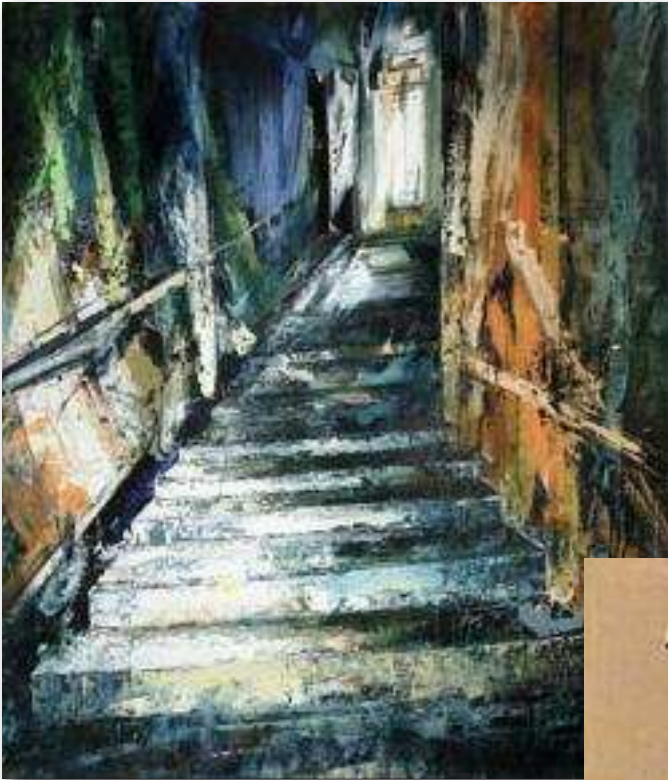


Fig 46
Magritte (1898 - 1967)
Forbidden Literature 1936
Oil on canvas 54.4 x 73.4 cm

Fig 47
John Monks (1954)
Landing 2008
Oil on canvas 206 x 178 cm



that I had experienced in St Augustines. Monks style of painting consolidates these feelings: “Through a range of painterly processes – pouring the paint, glazing the surface in layers and scraping with a palette knife – Monks weaves and layers surfaces to imbue his subjects with a built-in history, implying atmosphere, life and change in seemingly inanimate and immutable objects and scenes.” (Barber Institute of Fine Arts, 2014).

Is the stairway crying out ‘come up if you dare and see what is ahead of you’? Are we as artists drawn to this unheimlich feeling when entering a derelict space? Do we want to scare and share our feelings with the viewer; is this our sublime? Or are we just drawn to the shadows, textures and shapes of the decay, leaving the viewer to make up their own interpretation of what we are representing in our art practice?

conclusion

So why am I so obsessed with dereliction?

I spent my early years visiting hospitals, not through illness myself, but through visiting members of my family who I felt so dearly towards and yet some how disconnected from. My elder brother was born with health problems. My formative years were spent visiting him in Cheyne Hospital, a fantastic place for treating childhood illness, but I was young and got bored with these visits and would go off to explore and find new friends. And I eventually found one, a baby of maybe six months alone in her ward. I was probably 2 or 3 years old, I decided she could be my 'baby'. I threw back the cot cover to pick her up to mother her, but got confused (and upset) by what I saw. She had the face of an angel, but no legs or arms, only hands and feet growing out of her torso. I had never seen such perfection in the face of a child and yet there was this broken body beneath. This was the result of Thalidomide I realised in later years. Perhaps this early glimpse of beauty and non perfection fed my imagination and interest in the derelict and abandoned sites I love so much. Afterall this beautiful little girl had been abandoned too.

So is the artist drawn to dereliction and urban decline by a sense of nostalgia, the sentimental way of looking at memory, as Crawford does in his picture of Lindisfarne Priory (Fig 1, page 6), or does history alone play a large part in their subject choice? Or could they be trying to render the sublime in their artworks as the 18th century artists had, like Turner and Constable?

So here we are in the 21st century, trying to compensate for our past. The romantic ruins of 18th century classical architecture seem to guarantee their origins, their authenticity command authority and nostalgia creating an obsession of the passing of time. Ultimately all buildings 'died' for a reason and maybe it is right that some should be left to be reclaimed by nature - 'dust to dust and ashes to ashes' and eventually absorbed by the earth that had given up their resources that had allowed these structures to be built. To me these derelict buildings are like sick people. They may have been fit, healthy and beautiful once, but now we should embrace and nourish them, bring them back to good health, and start loving them again, warts and all.

The artist is now the voyeur of today, peaking through the cracks of history where the ruins stand as a reminder of the past, with nostalgia never far from our thoughts, but with the reminder of a bleak future ahead of us as Banksy showed with his Dismaland theme park. Art today is becoming more and more of a political tool rather than the aesthetically pleasing subjects that hang in the large galleries which few aspire to or want to acknowledge, apart from recognising their technical ability and their historical content.

Many cities have been built over previous cities, as is discovered all the time when we excavate and dig deep to create the high-rise, monolith structures of today's urban cityscape. The city destroys our landscape and once abandoned for whatever reason, the natural progression of mother nature will ultimately reclaim it, and as we build

more into the green sites, we will unearth more of this history that mankind has destroyed through so called progress. We will smile at what we discover about our fractured communities of the past and celebrate their history, but will we ever learn?

The cycle will repeat again and again but the artist will always record these cherished memories of place as they try to fill the void between celebrating the past and showing what the future holds. So perhaps the artist is a prisoner of their own memory and by producing their work is cathartic to escape and expel the ghosts of the past that lie dormant within them? And through urban exploration and documentation the artist will always continue to pull together the threads of these frayed communities and endeavour to share their own silent thoughts with the viewer for generations to come.

So I have discovered through my research, that I am, as an artist motivated by nostalgia to a certain extent with the happy memories of playing in the rubble of the old bomb sites. And I am also drawn to the neglect of these once beautiful buildings, through their texture of decay and their loss for any hope in the future. I am drawn to the ugly and forgotten, the everyday, and see the beauty in their form and texture as their 'bodies' crumble away throughout the passing of time, as a metaphor for the dereliction of the physical self. The celebrated sublime landscapes of Constable or Turner leave me cold, there is power and skill in their brushwork, but they seem arrogant and condescending towards the viewer. Lowry on the other hand paints a simpler picture to emotive the viewer; one can feel the pain and loss of his figure in the blitzed building (Fig 5, page 11), the viewer doesn't need to see the wrath of God to make you understand.

My urban exploration to Cane Hill, Canterbury Prison and St Augustine's helped me understand that it was the crumbling textures and thought provoking presence these buildings had that would lead me to explore the urban decline nearer to home, where I could document their degeneration and regeneration as time progressed. And as a 50s child, the south coast holds special memories of family holidays in their heydays of the 1960s. I aim to create a representation of these fabulous, neglected buildings through their texture and memory and hope to bring nostalgia and celebration to the viewer so they too can see their beauty.

I believe the choice to use Weston Super Mare as a backdrop for Dismaland was no random choice for Banksy. And like myself, with Folkestone (see appendix 1, page 45), he too was focussing on the decline and dereliction of this seaside resort, to open the eyes of the visitors so they realise this sense of past could all be lost should the tourists stop coming. These coastal resorts have unfortunately gone through the most upheaval in recent decades in terms of social history and urban decline. The buildings I have chosen to represent in my practical work may not have personal memory for me, but large or small, they all were 'living' buildings with their own unique history, and a sublimity all of their own.

appendix I

work journal



Fig 48
Hastings house with washing
Mixed Media

introduction to the artist's work

When I was studying for my BA in Visual Art & Design, dereliction became a key part of my subject matter in the last year of study. I was drawn to the medium of collage and my dissertation was titled 'Collage: an art revolution of the 20th century or just surface veneer?'. This formative work and the previous influences studied has led me to experiment and produce my latest view on dereliction through various mediums I had not really explored before.

My first exploration into developing an artwork was by using photography from my reference files of towns I had visited throughout my university study. I have, and still am collecting a huge reference library of photographs of these South Coast seaside resorts, their demise as popular holiday destinations and their regeneration. The artworks shown (Fig 48 & 49) are my initial collages made from newsprint, textured wallpaper and colour printed magazines. These buildings were in the back streets of Hastings and Dover respectively. They were dark and damp structures looking like they had seen better days and really had no more love to give or indeed to accept. Passed by the majority of people, they are only looked on as run down eyesores, but I see hope, their windows like dull eyes looking out and trying to shine again.

The majority of the picture is torn newsprint old, textured wallpaper and parts of the original photographic print itself. All were overlaid with charcoal, rubbed into the 'joins' to give the effect of crumbling facades. Then I ran indian ink using a pipette over the finished piece, as if they were the tears of the building, disappointed by their neglect. But I saw a kind of vibrance with the colourful washing hanging out the window and the vivid coloured bunting across the road opposite the hotel. I had no personal identity with these Victorian places, but I didn't want them forgotten, I wanted to celebrate their beauty and revival by breathing life and adding colour into their dull grey surroundings.



Fig 49
Dover Hotel
Mixed media



Fig 50
Photo montage of Folkestone street as it was being redeveloped.

photomontage

I have also experimented with photomontage inspired by the polaroid 'joiner' works produced by David Hockney in the 1980/90s. The subject is represented in spatial terms with the visual priorities and interests honed in on, similar to my collagraph grid (page 60). After all the eye can not take in every fragment of its view at one time, but by producing these photomontages, one's eye can focus on one image and take in all aspects of the building to form a concise picture of the whole subject. This creates a more interesting view of the topic rather than the static portrait of a single building (Fig 50 & 51). It also reflects my interest in collage and the fragmenting of the subject as produced with my 48 collagraph piece (Fig 78 & 79) with each individual section having its own right aesthetically as a stand alone subject.

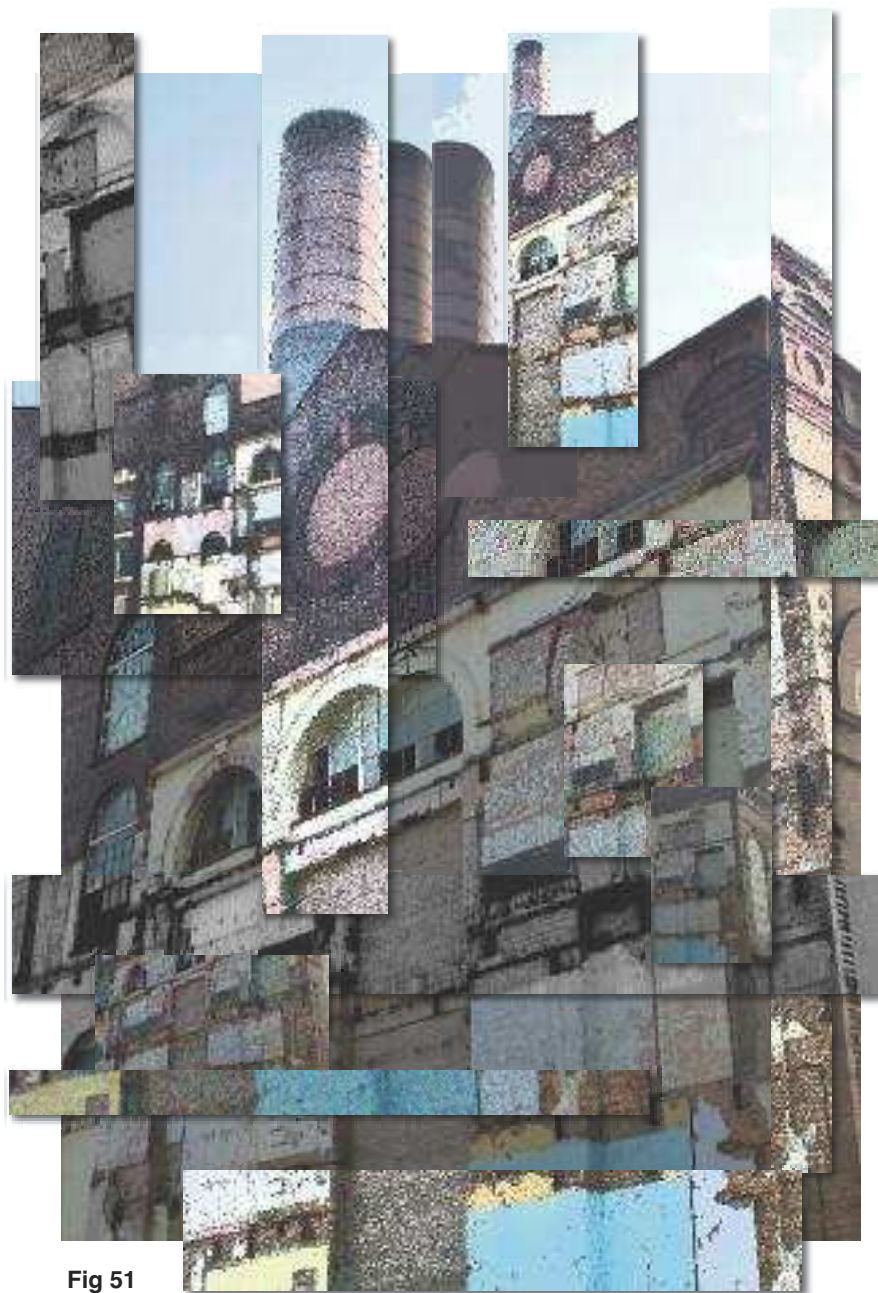


Fig 51
Photo montage of Chelsea
warehouse using Artist's own
photography and photoshop



FOLKESTONE

IT'S QUICKER BY RAIL



FOLKESTONE

IT'S QUICKER BY RAIL



FOLKESTONE

IT'S QUICKER BY RAIL



FOLKESTONE

IT'S QUICKER BY RAIL

Fig 52

A1 Posters produce promoting Folkestone dereliction.

2016

Lynne Morinan

posters and post cards

As support work for the exhibition I started looking at railway posters of the 20th century (Fig 53). By the end of the 19th century, railways were the best mode of transport for the tourist. With rail travel becoming increasingly popular in the 1930/40s, this was the advent of the scenic railway poster with artists/designers such as Fred Taylor (1875 - 1963) and Tom Purvis (1888 - 1957) following in the footsteps of Toulouse Lautrec using flat lithographic colour to promote their destinations, creating the maximum impact to reach the imaginations of their passengers' for their future destinations. These wonderful illustrated posters inspired me to produce my small collection of posters (Fig 52) and postcards to satirically promote the wonders of Folkestone's decline (Fig 54). Afterall isn't the British seaside resorts' decline the result of today's international holiday travel?

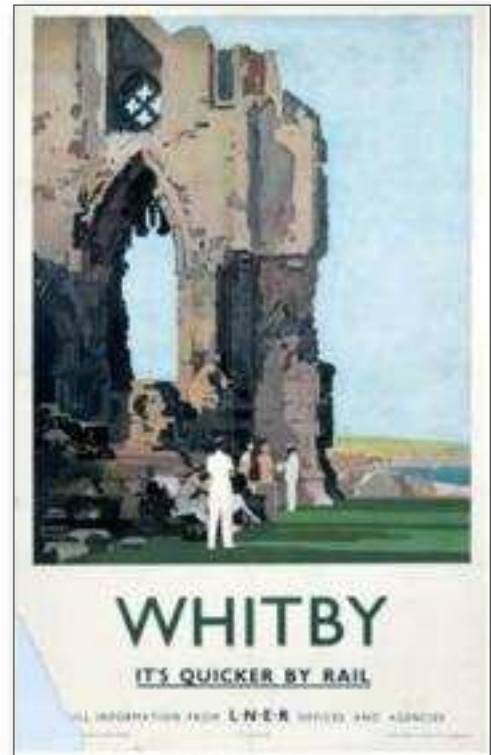


Fig 53
It's quicker by rail.
1923
Fred Taylor
National Railway Museum

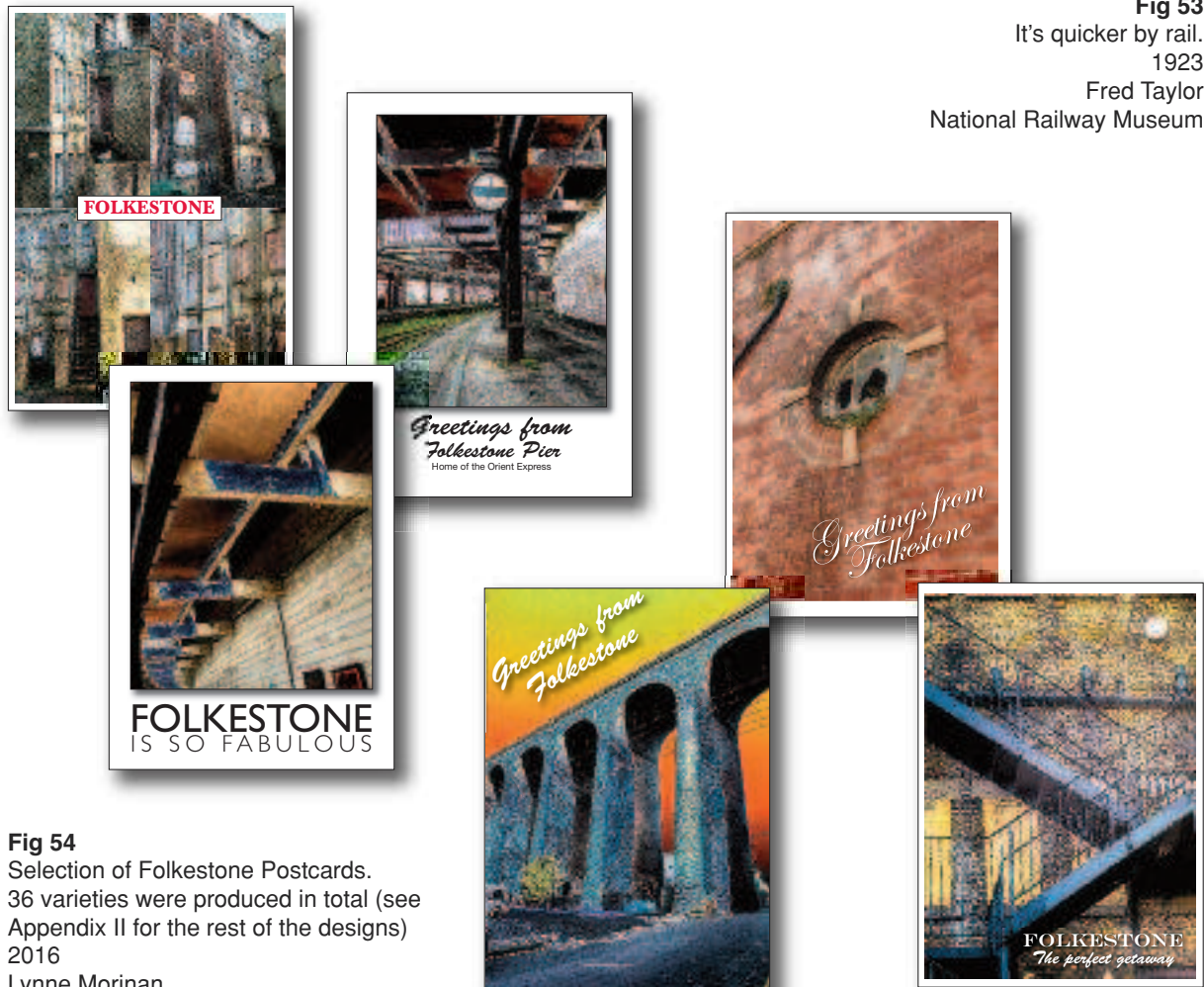


Fig 54
Selection of Folkestone Postcards.
36 varieties were produced in total (see
Appendix II for the rest of the designs)
2016
Lynne Morinan



Fig 55

Detail of front facade Marine Parade dereliction (2011) with photoshop filters used in small pictures below
Author's own photography

finding inspiration in location

I have no personal history with the building I chose as the subject for my major piece, it just winked at me when I was passing by. It is the quintessential seaside terrace (Fig 55), left forlorn in its forgotten position across from the beach, looking over the Rotunda fairground site which had long gone, along with the tourists and day trippers who had kept the town vibrant and alive. Folkestone seemed to have lost its heart. The developers were supposed to move in to create a seaside village with shops, restaurants and a bowling alley, but nothing had happened in years and ‘my building’ sadly

looked over an expanse of concrete and asphalt, all that was left of the former fairground site, which was now also beginning to show the cracks of time and neglect (Fig 56). Even the Triennial installation by K. Dolven, ‘Out of Tune’, a bell stung up 20m high for visitors to pull its cord and ring its out of tune tone across the sea (Fig

57). Three years earlier, people were queuing to experience this hands on installation. The bell rope has long disappeared, and now like my building, it too was looking neglected and unloved with no purpose, hanging ominously like a dead weight over the barren space, suspended in time, a reminder of its golden age.



Fig 56
The Rotunda Fairground Site
Author's own photography



Fig 57
Out of Tune
K. Dolven
Author's own photography

This is the South Coast seaside resort at its best in the 21st century. The popularity of the 1950/60s seaside holiday or day trip has been replaced by cheap holidays with guaranteed sunshine and ferry rides to the continent and this is where my obsession begins. I was born in the 50s and as a Londoner we spent our week-long summer holiday in Margate or Westgate which seemed a magical place to me. The coastal towns were full to overload and there was the cry of the gulls heralding the sea and sand, funfair rides, ice creams and zillions of people all smiling and laughing and having fun. A far cry from the desolate places the South Coast towns are today. The magic for me is now in that memory and what these neglected places have become.

Most days in the last few years I have cycled past the building on Marine Parade, watching its slow decline. It was like a magnet to me, wherever I went in Folkestone I was drawn back to this abandoned terrace, but I had no idea why, it had become a bit of an obsession.

Eventually the squatters and migrants moved out and the windows and doors were boarded up ready for its next stage in life. And as I tried to find out the history of the buildings, I discovered numbers 8-9 of the terrace, formerly a seaside hotel had become a centre for army intelligence, and a spy school during the first world war (No Use Empty), and was also featured in the BBC World War I Programme 'The Spies Who Loved Folkestone' (BBC 2015). Thankfully the Kent County Council issued a grant through its 'No Use Empty' scheme and the developers moved in to convert two of the terraces into twelve flats. My building was getting back its life, and this was the start of my documentation of its recovery and the inspiration for producing my collagraphs.

Marine Parade displays all the decadence of Victorian architecture, but for all its flamboyance on the front facade, the back displayed the true 'nuts and bolts' of the building, the bland and functional side of the architecture (Fig 58), no passer by would see this, no need for money spent to 'tart it up', to impress the middle class Victorian. And these plain and functional facades became a more fascinating subject for my collagraphic artwork. I started to feel a strong bond with this building for reasons I didn't understand. So what was drawing me to it?

Perhaps it is a reminder of what had happened to myself at that hospital years ago, or perhaps what I was experiencing now. I have suffered with severe psoriasis for 30 years where my crumbling exterior was flaking off and leaving scars that would never heal. I was just like the broken facade of this building, falling apart at the seams. And with each year the psoriasis grows worse, until your body is not yours anymore and some 'thing' has taken away your 'perfect' skin and like a visible cancer it spreads through you until you lose all confidence. People believe you have a contagious disease, because they are ignorant and believe that their ignorance is truth. And much like Marine Parade, I too have become an eyesore. So probably for these reasons I am drawn to collage where torn paper and found objects make up the picture, where imperfection is the key and texture dominates.

The process of making and developing the collagraphs

Basically a collagraph in simple terms is a collage that is used as a plate for making a print from. It is built up from various textures to form a relief picture. I use anything from packaging material to found objects to create the collagraph. It is a laborious yet soothing process which can create some interesting combinations of textures. Sometimes the results can be unexpected, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad, but always interesting in their development.

In my capacity as an urban observer I have taken many photographs of the changing face of Folkestone. And at the start,



Fig 58
Detail of back facade Marine Parade dereliction, before work started (2011)
Author's own photography



Fig 59
Roundabout dereliction (2014)
Author's own photography



Fig 60
Dereliction off the Sandgate Road (2013)
Author's own photography

I wanted to celebrate the beauty in the dereliction I had uncovered at various locations throughout the town. I chose three buildings that interested me, the back of Marine Parade being my favourite (Fig 58) as mentioned earlier, a boarded up building on a roundabout in the town centre (Fig 59) which has remained like this since I moved here 18 years ago, and a derelict building in a side road off the Sandgate Road (Fig 60).

To make the collagraph plate (Fig 69), I use a mountboard surface on which I draw the subject matter (Fig 61 & 62) as a stencil for the texture layers. Fig 63 to 68 shows how the collagraph is built up through layers and the final print achieved from it (Fig 70).

The same process was followed for the subject of Fig 60, but including the railings outside the building to give the collagraph a dramatic perspective, to make the dereliction subject almost cathedral-like, stretching up to the sky and showing its force as a building to be reckoned with despite its neglect.

Although pleased with the collagraph plate (Fig 71), the actual print (after several attempts) never seemed to come out as I had wished (Fig 72). I decided the plate was more interesting than the print which led me on to a new path to create my central piece for the final MA exhibition (page 69).

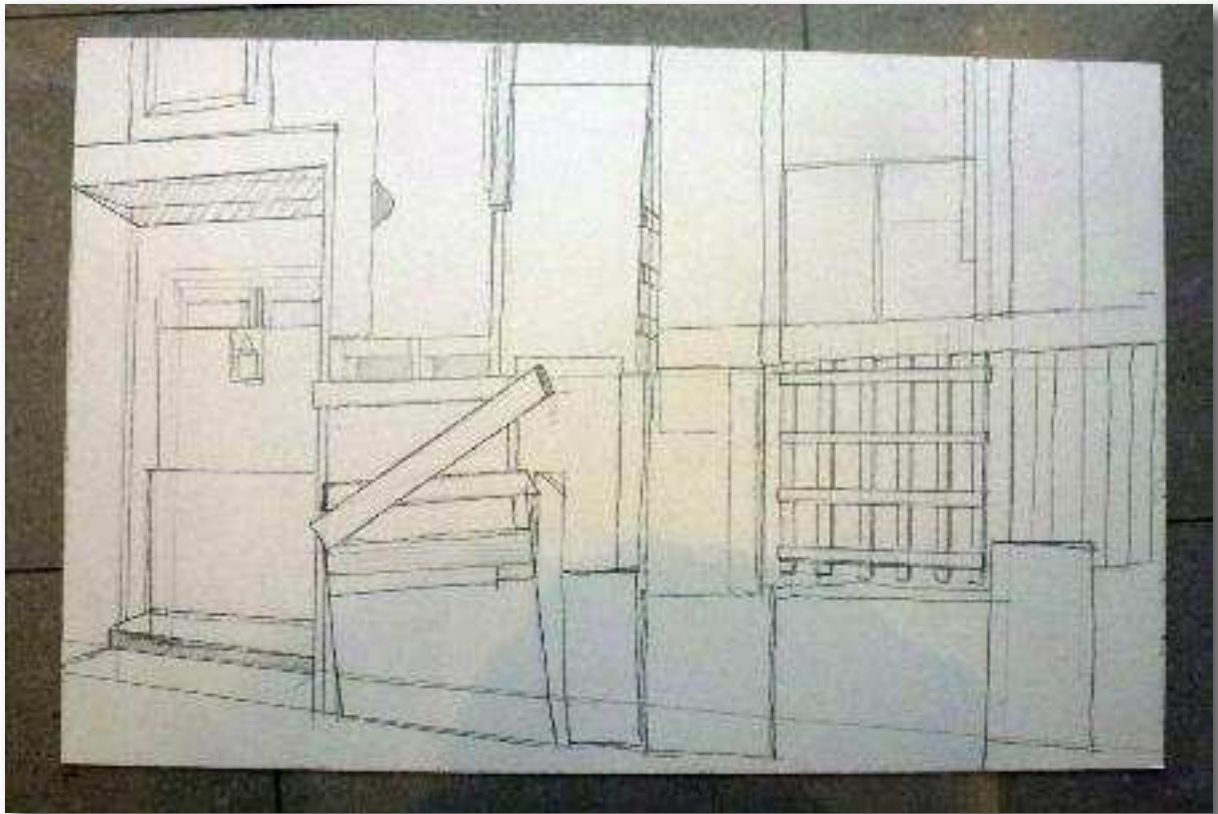


Fig 61
Initial drawing of subject for base stencil.
Author's own photography

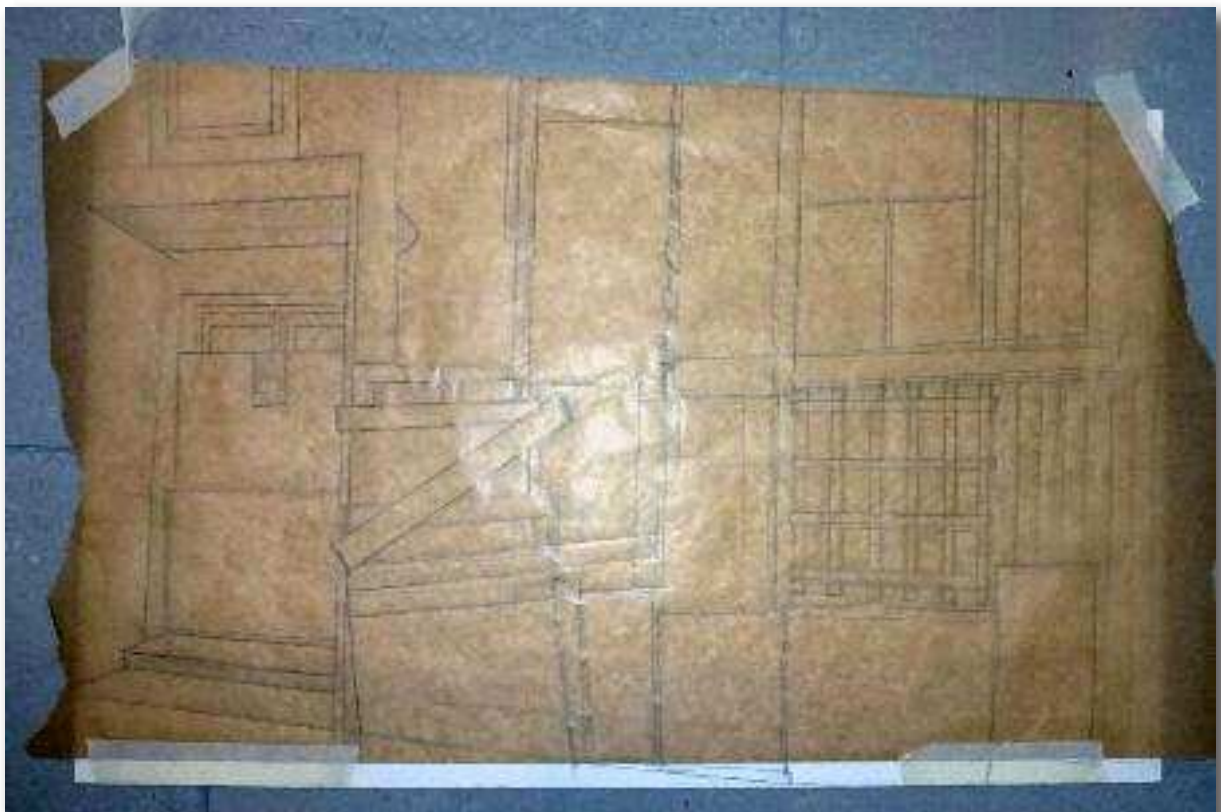


Fig 62
Trace base stencil for guide to cut out or transfer various textures to the right size.
Author's own photography

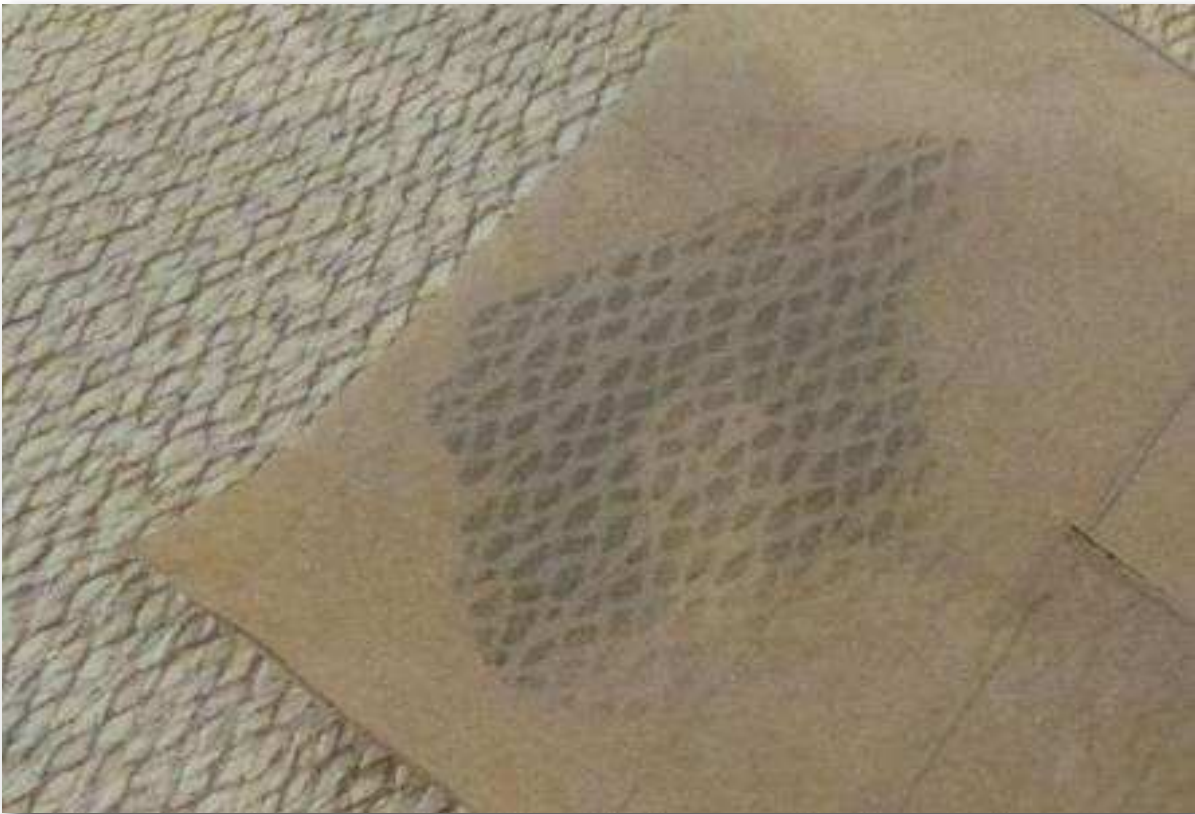


Fig 63
Using tracing paper to see how textured paper may appear once printed.
Author's own photography

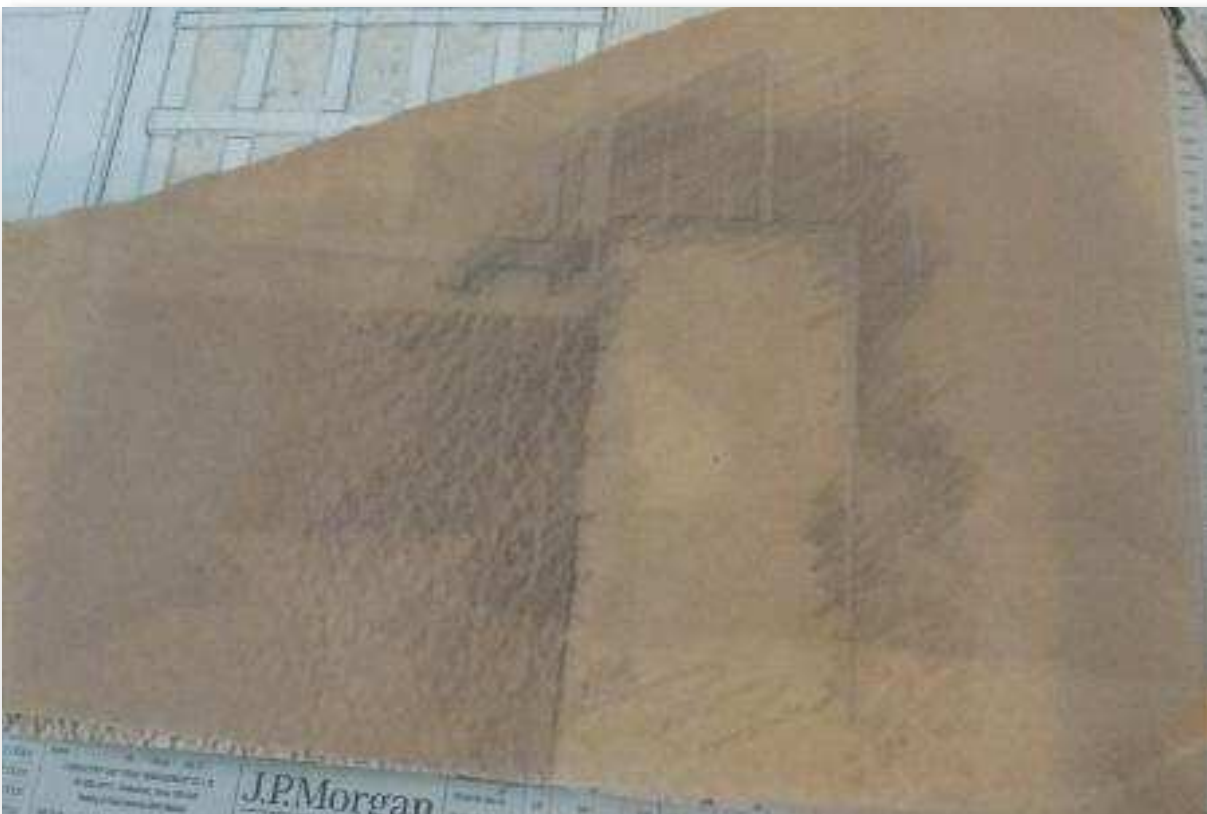


Fig 64
Using tracing paper to see how textured paper may appear once printed as collagraph builds.
Author's own photography



Fig 65

Building up the plate using textured wallpaper and cutting in to mountboard to form windows.
Author's own photography



Fig 66

Detail of textures used.
Author's own photography



Fig 67
 Finished collagraph plate using beads hammered into plate to represent the nails of the boarded up wood.
 Author's own photography

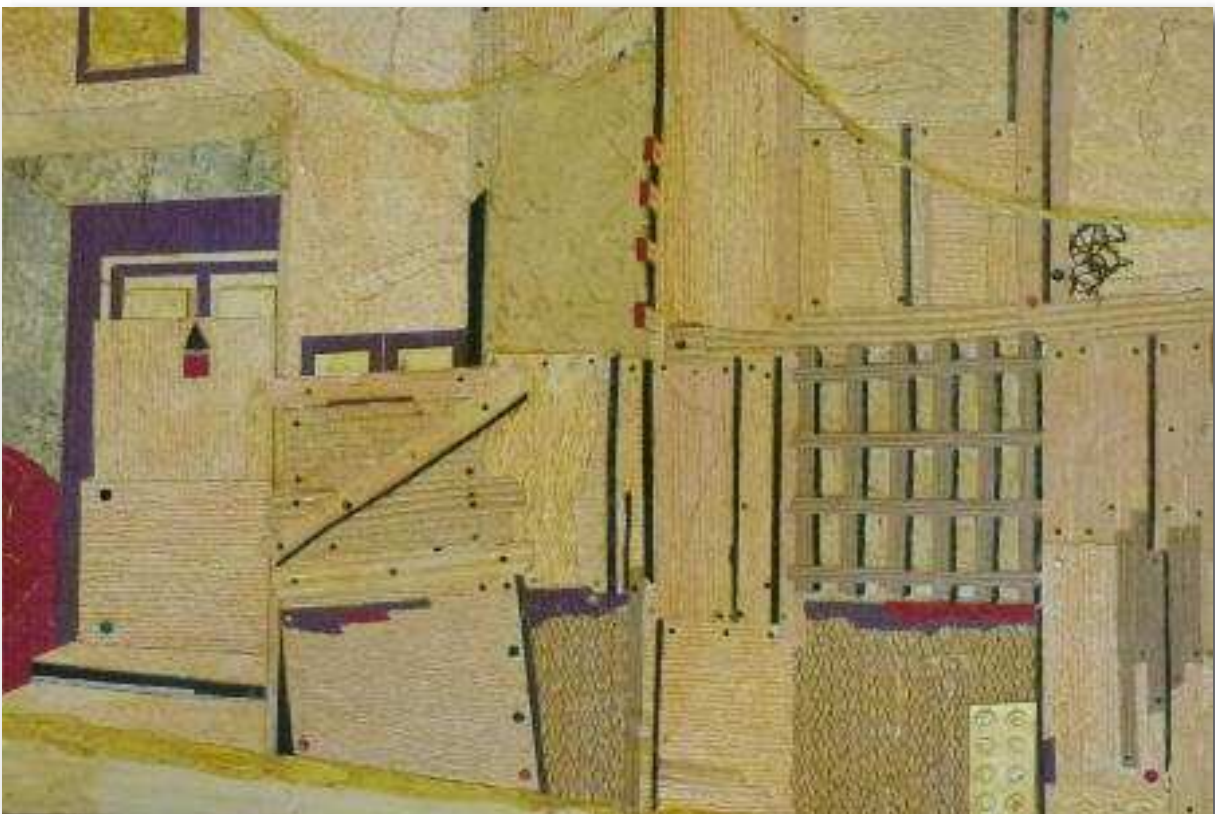


Fig 68
 The plate is then varnished and once dried button polish is rubbed in as a protective coating.
 Author's own photography



Fig 69
Collagraph plate after inking which shows the textures at their best.
Author's own photography

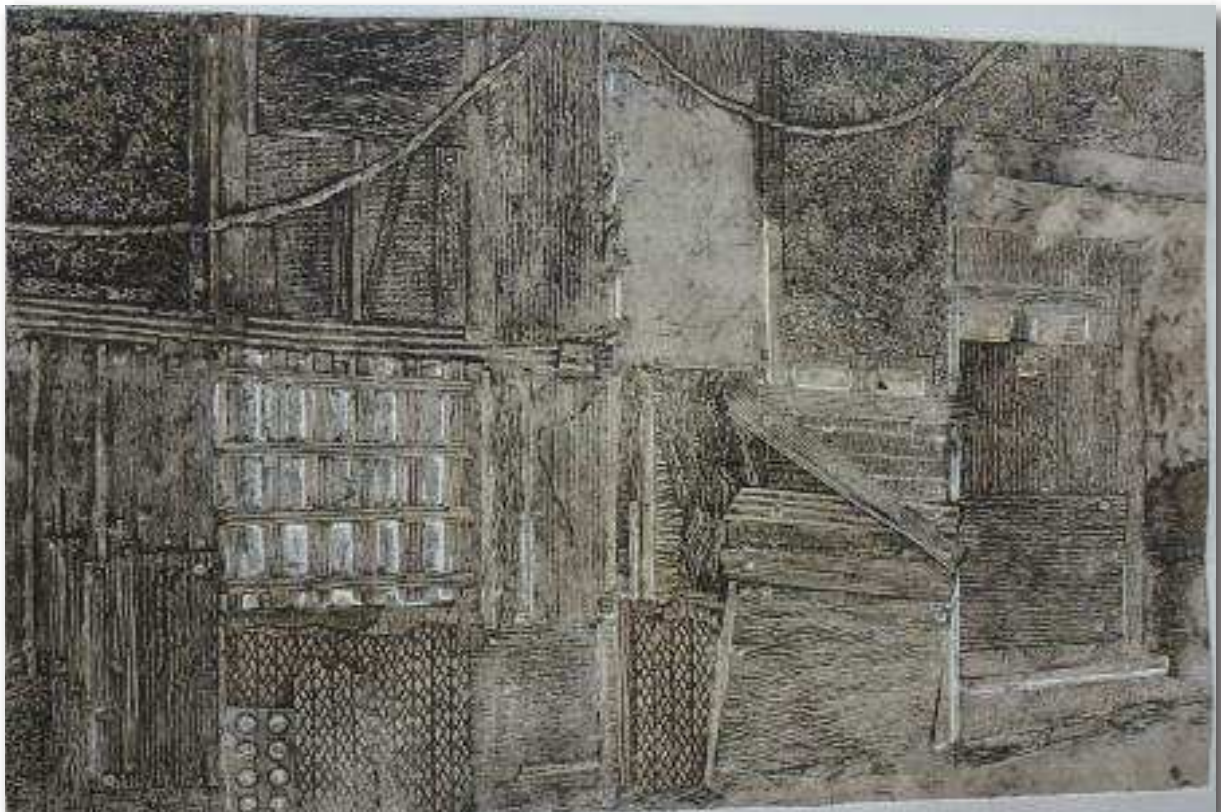


Fig 70
Final print from collagraph
Author's own photography

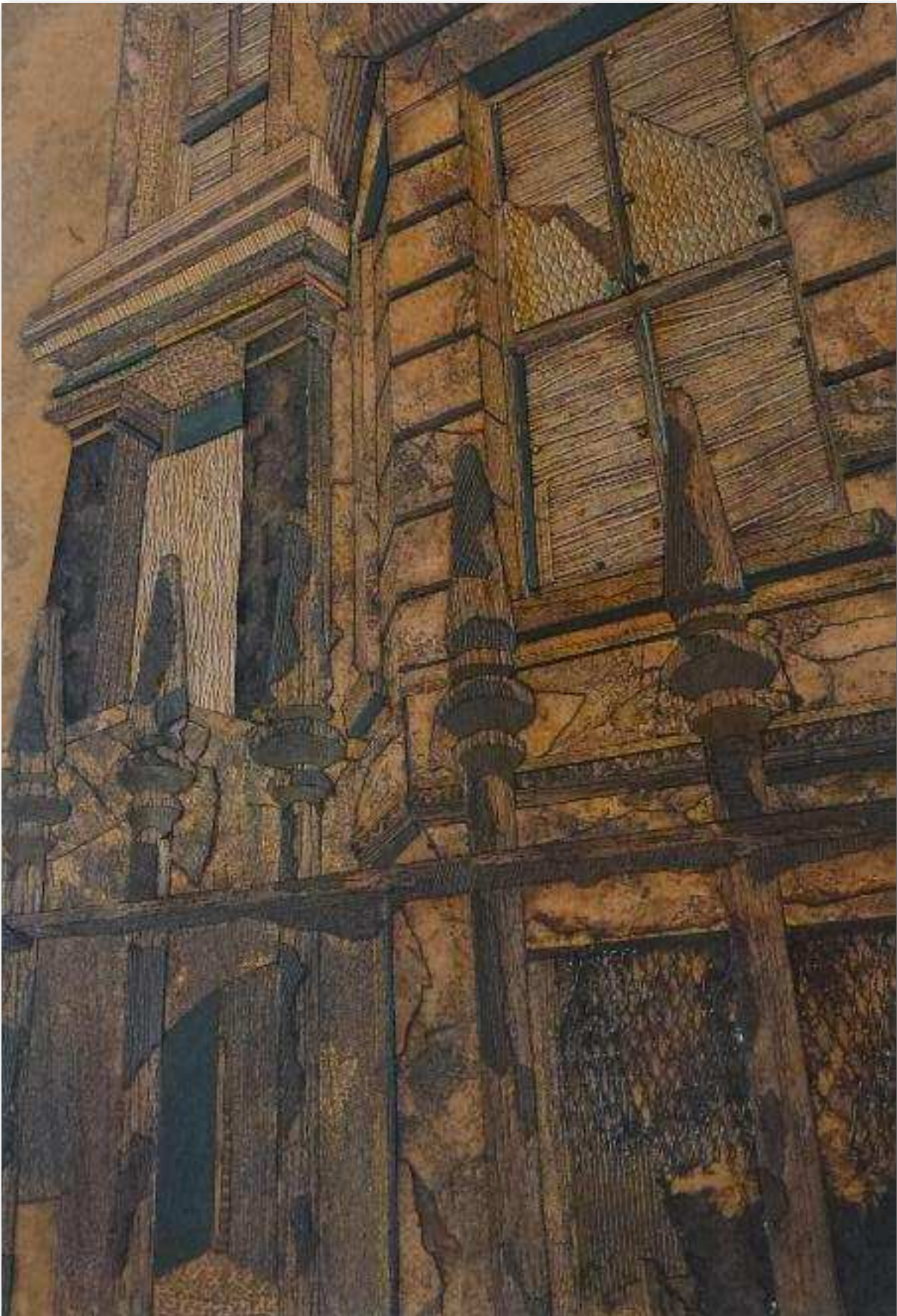


Fig 71
Collagraph plate after inking
Author's own photography

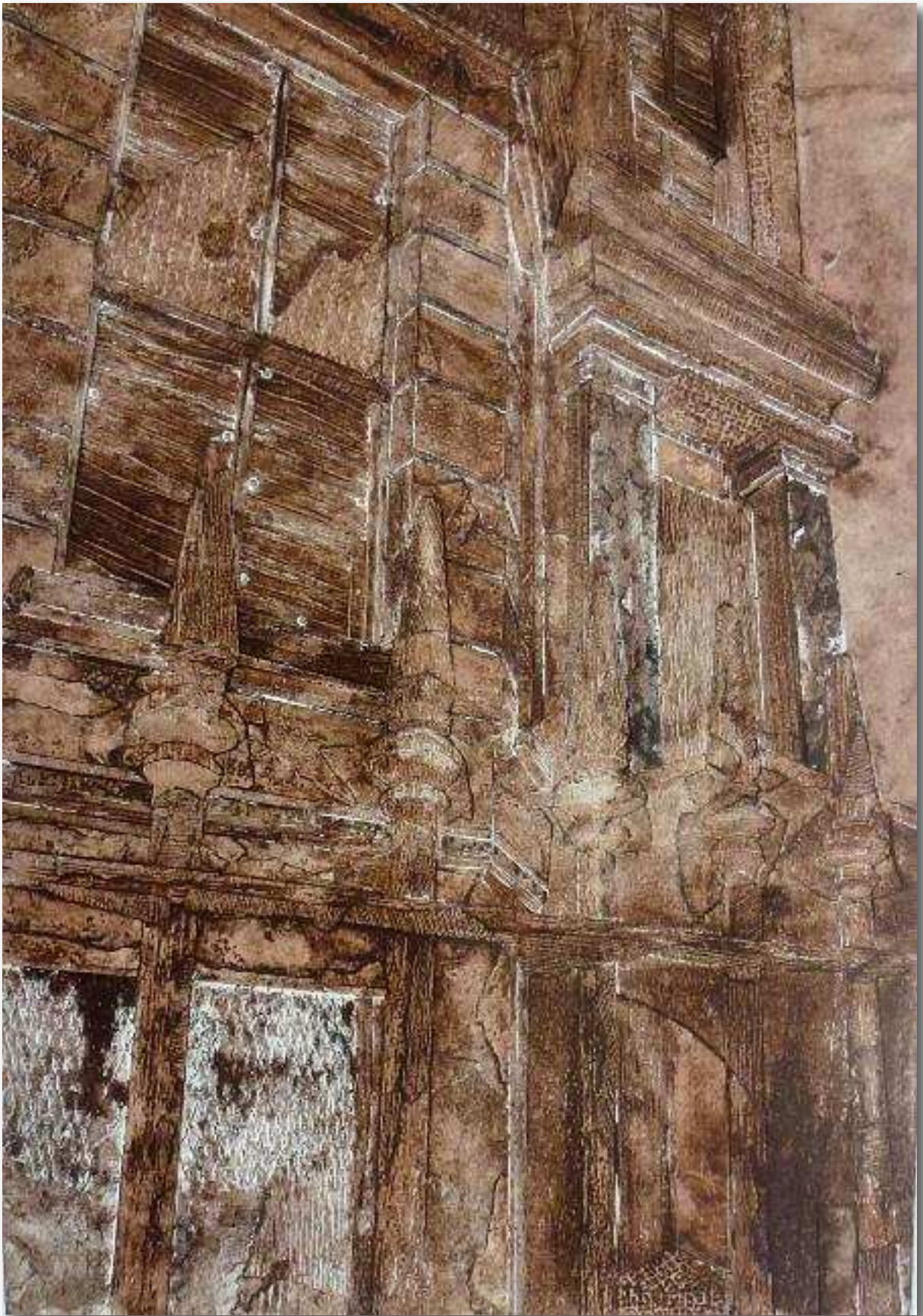


Fig 72
Final print from collagraph
Author's own photography



Fig 73
Back of Marine Parade being renovated
(Nov 2014)
Author's own photography

The process of developing the idea for the montage collagraph

Over the year I watched the building of Marine Parade starting to be redeveloped. At last I could see the inside out and what made up this beautiful building. It was obvious it had been converted into flats by the presence of the fire doors hanging perilously above the ground (Fig 73). I decided to make a large plate of this area (Fig 74) as I had with the

previous two sites. Though now the renovations had started there was a lot more scope for using texture and layers, which made the final piece far more interesting and tactile (Fig 75). There was so much going on in this site; wood, old brick, drainpipes, piles of rubble, broken windows, boarded up windows and flaking render, really too busy and too much to show on one plate. I decided to celebrate this building with making a montage wall of collagraphs, each honing in on one particular area of dereliction, joining together to make a tactile derelict surface, so the viewer could experience the crumbling building.

I photographed the rear of the site from different angles, at different times for reference for the work ahead (Fig 76 & 77). From these photographs I chose aspects of the building which I felt enhanced its natural beauty in its derelict state. Each collagraphic plate would be 280mm x 280mm, and 48 were produced to create an overall wall of 1680mm wide x 2240 high. I was now more interested in seeing the colour and texture of the plate after printing rather than the result of the printing process. I pieced together photos to give me an idea of which areas of the building would look good together (Fig 78). Some of the squares I actually decided to make as one, creating a rectangle shape 280mm wide x 560mm high, this I believed would alleviate the monotony of a purely squared up grid, made up of the same size plates.

As I started to produce the collagraph plates, I began to change the conception of the original pictures chosen. The renovation at Marine Parade was moving on and the contrast between the derelict and the new became of great interest. I liked the idea of the smooth services in juxtaposition to the bare brick or crumbling plasterwork, so I decided to make some plates using my new images which I drew out as a grid using a photoshop filter (Fig 79) for each plate.

Once satisfied with my choice, I printed out each individual square to size to see how it would look. This would give me a better idea of the full impact of the wall of collagraphs and to let me know if I was on the right track to what I hoped to achieve (Fig 80).

By making each collagraph an individual square it gave me the option of interchanging those plates that didn't work together, and the flexibility of being moved within the overall grid. The making of the plates began and a more detailed subject could take up to a couple of days, with the more abstract areas, for instance a door frame, taking only a couple of hours. Each drawing was transferred on to the mountboard base ready for the textures to be applied.

As each collagraph plate was produced, I photographed each one before varnishing and printing, and replaced them in my original photographic grid (Fig 78) to see how they would all begin to sit together (Fig 81). This practice would allow me to experiment on screen with which plates would work best together in the overall grid.

Once I had produced the first twenty plates, they were numbered on the back for ease of positioning, varnished and then printed. The byproduct of the actual print was kept to one side, but more importantly the plate could now be seen with

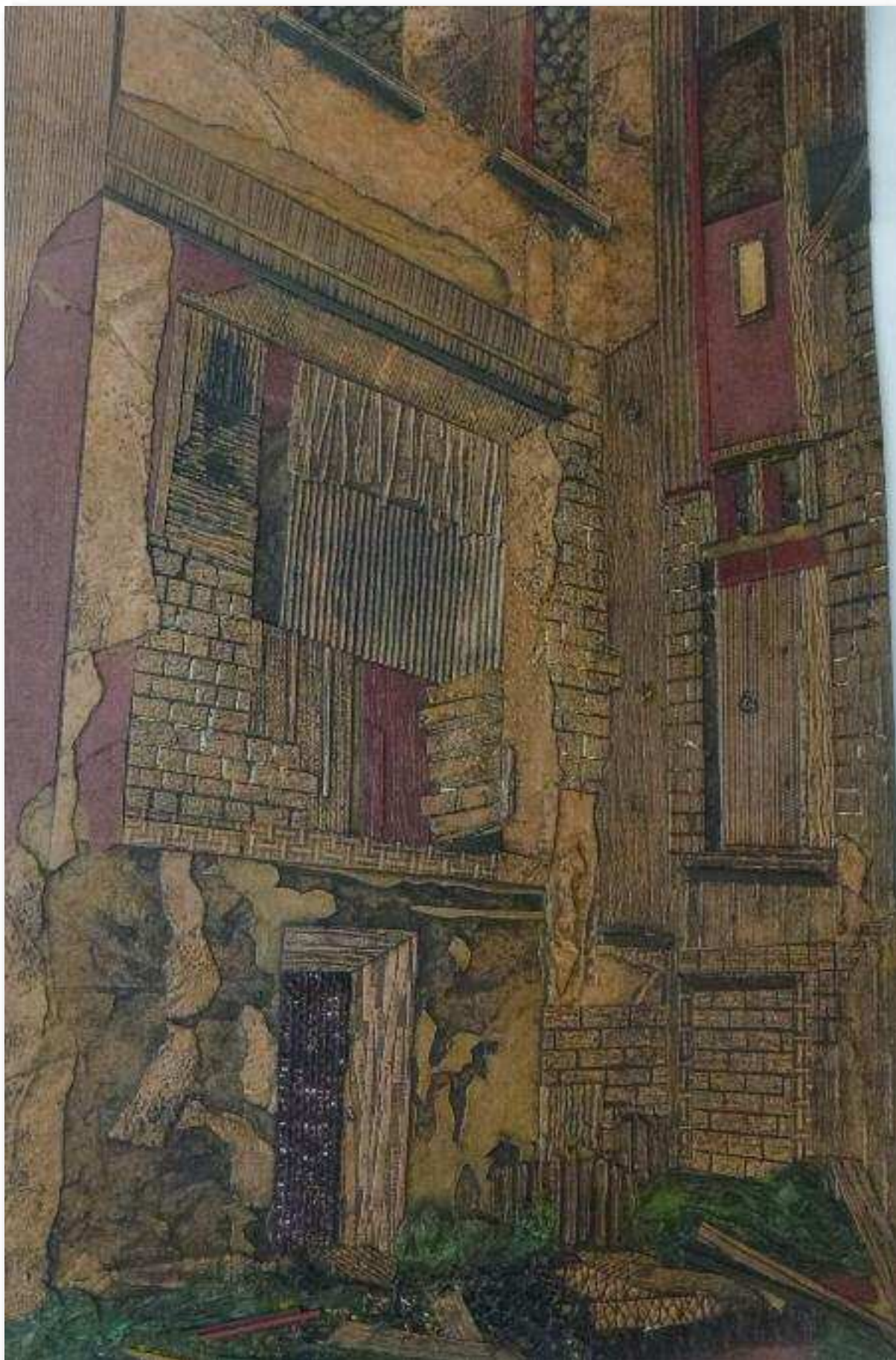


Fig 74
Final print from collagraph
Author's own photography



Fig 75
Final print from collagraph
Author's own photography

its textures, pronounced by the oil based printing inks. This was the more important result. I wanted to achieve the look of dereliction; grubby and dark with the feeling that the viewer could actually be there and be part of this building, touch it and feel it, know it, belong to it.



Fig 76
Various shots of rear of Marine Parade as restoration starts
Author's own photography



Fig 77
Various shots of rear of Marine Parade as restoration starts
Author's own photography



Fig 78
 Montage squares of photographs of rear of Marine Parade
 Author's own photography

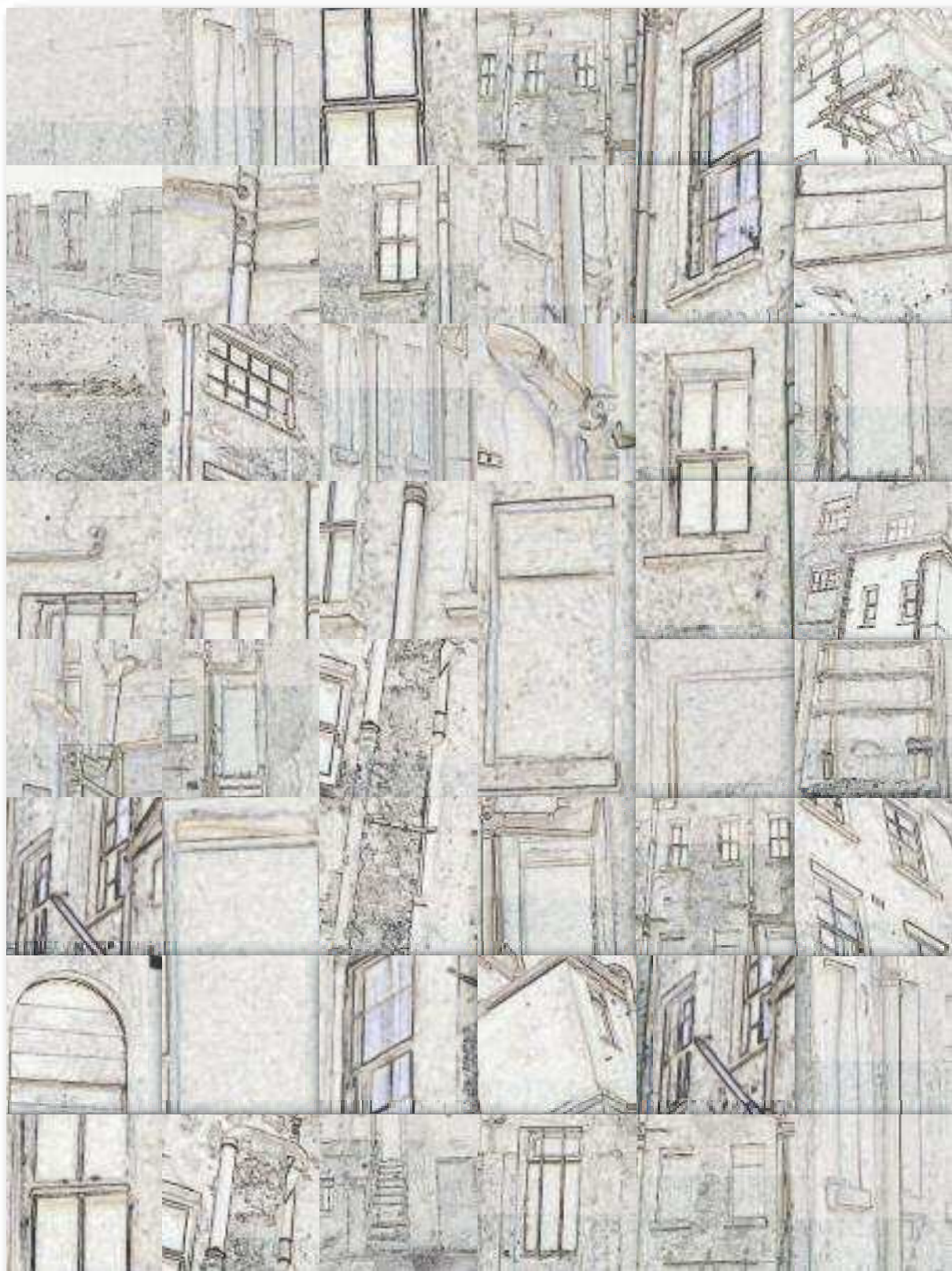


Fig 79
 Montage squares of drawings of rear of Marine Parade after visiting site as the renovation progressed
 Author's own photography



Fig 80
Montage squares of drawings printed to size, final rows in place.
Author's own photography



Fig 81

Montage squares of collagraphs replacing original photographic reference as each plate was produced.
 Author's own photography

embossing

As I had now realised I was drawn to the texture of the structure of the Marine Parade building. Before inking some of the plates (Fig 82), I decided to experiment by embossing a few of the plates. This process was achieved by placing the damp plain paper on top of the collagraphic plate and running it through the press, to make a rendition of the pure textures used in making the plate. The result was interesting, a ghosted image of the subject, a representation of a fleeting memory of the past (Fig 83).



Fig 82
Collagraph plate before printing ink was applied.
Author's own photography

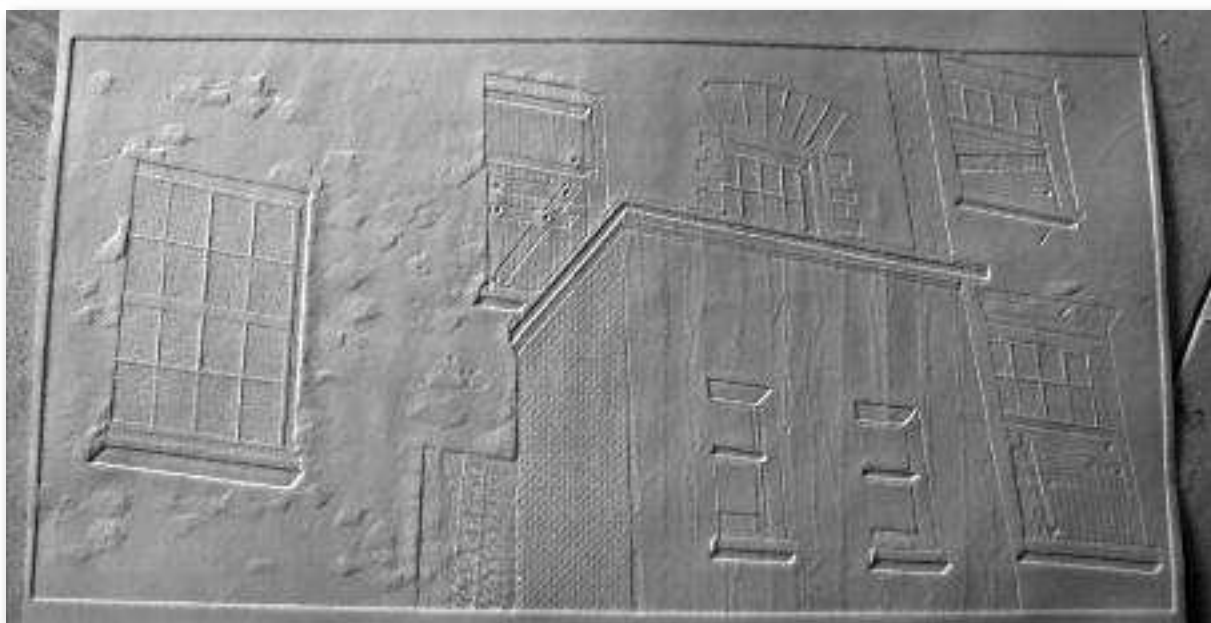


Fig 83
Embossed image from collagraph plate shown above.
Author's own photography

finishing the main piece

Once all the collagraph plates had been made, the inking process began. First the plate was covered in button polish (Fig 84), and then varnished to protect the plate from cleaning with white spirit, after inking (Fig 85). Once the inked surface was covered, the plate was put through a press to make a print (Fig 86 & 87). This was really a by-product, and kept as a record of each individual collagraph plate used in the main piece.



Fig 84
Covering plate with button polish.
Author's own photography



Fig 85
Inking plate.
Author's own photography



Fig 86
Final print from separate collagraph plate.
Author's own photography



Fig 87
Final print from separate collagraph plate.
Author's own photography

After all plates had been inked and prints made any surplus ink was removed using white spirit (Fig 88) in the carefully chosen areas. This achieved the grimy effect I was looking for. I used plywood cut to a quarter of the size of the final piece, so it could be easily transportable and also gave options of layouts for future exhibitions. The plywood was painted black to stop any see-through joins showing once the collagraphs had been attached (Fig 89). Once dry, the four boards were placed together ready to choose the position of each collagraph from the layout I had produced earlier (Fig 90) or indeed to have a chance to swap them around for a better composition.



Fig 88
Collagraph plate with surface ink removed.
Author's own photography



Fig 89
Painting plywood backing.
Author's own photography



Fig 90
Laying out completed collagraph plates in position on plywood backing.
Author's own photography



Fig 91
The final piece.
Author's own photography

The final piece, stuck down and hung in position using mirror clips on each quarter. (Fig 91)

appendix II

Other support work to the artist's practice during the MA is contained on the DVD situated on the inside back cover of the hard bound copy.

These include:

Collagraph Prints

Embossed Prints

Engraving Plates and Prints

Postcard collection from exhibition

Reference photography of Urban Dereliction

Sketchbook/Ideas Pages

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illustration credits



Fig 1 Lindisfarne Priory, Holy Island (Page 6)
Edmund Thornton Crawford (1851)
Oil on canvas (no dimensions available)
Private Collection
(Bryant, J (2005) *The English Grand Tour, Artists and Admirers of England's Historic Sites*. Swindon, UK: English Heritage, Page 83).



Fig 2 Hadleigh Castle (Page 7)
Sketch for Hadleigh Castle (circa 1828–9)
Oil on canvas 1.226 x 1.673 cm
Tate Britain
(Bryant, J (2005) *The English Grand Tour, Artists and Admirers of England's Historic Sites*. Swindon, UK: English Heritage, Page 61).



Fig 3 Clifford's Tower, York (Page 8)
L S Lowry (1952-3)
Oil on canvas (no dimensions available)
York Art Gallery
(Bryant, J (2005) *The English Grand Tour, Artists and Admirers of England's Historic Sites*. Swindon, UK: English Heritage, Page 43).



Fig 4 St Augustine's Church, Manchester (Page 9)
Photograph
Originally printed in the 6th February 1942 issue of the Catholic Herald
www.siteresponse.wordpress.com/earlier-catholic-churches/york-street/



Fig 5 Blitzed Site (Page 10)
L S Lowry (1942)
Oil on canvas 41 x 51 cm
© The Lowry Collection, Salford
www.thelowry.com/ls-lowry/microsite/art/other/blitzed-site/#qZFgMyLTHmalw48A.99



Fig 6 St Augustine's Church, Manchester (Page 10)
LS Lowry (1945)
Oil on canvas 46 x 61.3 cm;
Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester.
www.homepage.ntlworld.com/john_green/sacm.html



Fig 7 Clyde Tower demolition (Page 12)
Lozells (2006)
© Birmingham Mail
www.municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/post-war-high-rise-in-birmingham-iii-the-blocks-come-down/



Fig 8 Interior Strandgarde 30 (Page 13)
Vilhelm Hammershøi (1906)
Oil on canvas 51.8 x 44 cm
Tate
(Monrad, K et Al (2014) *Hammershøi and Europe*, London: Prestel Publishing Ltd. Page 101).



Fig 9 Interior of Courtyard, Strandgarde 30 (Page 13)
Vilhelm Hammershøi (1906)
Oil on canvas 65.7 x 47.3 cm
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (Gift of the Apollo Society)
(Monrad, K et Al (2014) *Hammershøi and Europe*, London: Prestel Publishing Ltd. Page 51).

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Fig 10 Interior of The Great Hall in Lindegaarden (Page 15)
Vilhelm Hammershøi (1909)
Oil on canvas 77 x 118 cm
Sikorsky Family Collection
(Monrad, K et Al (2014) *Hammershøi and Europe*, London: Prestel Publishing Ltd. Page 249).



Fig 11 Aegidium Cinema, Brussels (Page 15)
Sylvain Margaine, (circa early 2000s)
Photograph
Artist's own collection
(Margaine, D (2013) *Forbidden Places, Exploring our Abandoned Heritage, Volume 2*. France: Jonglez Publishing. Page 48)



Fig 12 Buildings in Lancaster (Page 16)
Charles Demuth (1930)
Oil on composition board 24 x 20 inches
Whitney Museum of American Art
(Fahlman, B. (2007). *Chimneys and Towers: Charles Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. Plates, Plate 217)



Fig 13 Pittsburgh (Page 17)
Elsie Driggs (1927)
Oil on canvas 34¹/₄ x 40 inches
Whitney Museum of American Art
(Kimmerle, C (2008) *Elsie Driggs: The Quick & the Classical*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Page 61)



Fig 14 Buildings in Lancaster (Page 17)
Antonio Sant'Elia (1888-1916)
Ink and pencil on paper 31 x 20.5 cm
Private Collection
(Martin, S. (2006). *Futurism*. Köln, Germany: Taschen GmbH, Page 77)



Fig 19 The bumper cars at Pripyat Amusement Park (Page 21)
Justin Stahlman (April 2006)
Photograph
www.losapos.com/chernobyl



Fig 46 Forbidden Literature (Page 34)
Magritte (1936)
Oil on canvas 54.4 x 73.4 cm
(Wooding, B (ed.) (2009) *Musée Magritte Museum Guide*. Tours, France: Mame. Page 69)



Fig 47 Landing (Page 34)
John Monks (2008)
Oil on canvas 206 x 178 cm
Private Collection
The Barber Institute: www.barber.org.uk/john-monks/



Fig 53 It's Quicker by Rail (Page 43)
Fred Taylor (1923)
Lithographic Poster for LNER
National Railway Museum
Bryant, J (2005) *The English Grand Tour, Artists and Admirers of England's Historic Sites*. Swindon, UK: English Heritage. (Page 9).
