Nicholas Middleton

The Image, the Frame, and the Off-frame

38972 words (footnotes 9812 words)

Declaration

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Nicholas Middleton September 2023

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Abstract

Within a digitalised visual culture saturated with images, consumed at speed, this practice-based research project seeks to produce a body of work centred around still images in painting and in photography which create modes of looking that engage or structure time differently. Developing from an artistic practice rooted in painting, I use the concept of the off-frame, expanded from the off-screen of film theory, to explore the experience of absence that works around the presence of still images. This exploration moves between the implication of perceptual absence in different modes of representation and the absences implicit within narrative, knowledge, and understanding. The thesis addresses the relationship of absence and presence as constructed differently according to materials and processes specific to the different mediums of painting, photography and film.

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Acknowledgements

Thanks first of all must go to my supervisors, Dr Catherine Ferguson and Jeremy Millar, for all their support, their questioning, suggestions, their contributions to the broadening of my knowledge, and their shepherding of this project through to its conclusion.

I must also thank my initial supervisor, Dr Melanie Jordan, who saw something in my proposal which I couldn't entirely grasp, but allowed the time for this project to develop into what it has become. I am also grateful for Dr Lucy Lyons for providing a timely and invaluable reference, without which my application would have gone nowhere, and Dr Sarah Wishart for her support, both at this stage and throughout. Gratitude is also due to a number of other tutors at the Royal College of Art whose input was invaluable at different times through my studies, in particular, Professor Rebecca Fortnum, Dr Josephine Berry, and Olivier Richon. I also would like to acknowledge the support and camaraderie of the changing group of fellow PhD students which comprised my peers through what was at times a difficult process.

I must also acknowledge the financial support of Debbie Ayles, and, indirectly, Matthew Burrows, for instigating the Artist Support Pledge which contributed a significant amount of funding to enable me to continue my studies.

Lastly I must acknowledge the constant support, patience, and understanding of Tana West without whom none of this would have been possible.

Introduction

The use of photographs by painters has a history as long as that of photography itself. A technology which reduces a three-dimensional world to a two-dimensional (and fixed) image had immediate and obvious attractions and applications for artists. The ever-expanding reproducibility of the photographic image has had profound effects on visual cultures, continually evolving through different technologies of display and dissemination, a changing landscape inserted into our everyday lives. My core artistic practice is that of a painter who has worked from photographic reference material for over two decades, and an awareness of the history of painting has long informed my work, but bound in some way by the legacies of Modernism in how I thought about what I was making–the artworks themselves. This practice-based research and thesis seeks to rethink the relationship of the photographic referent to the paintings that make use of it in a new way.

The idea or concept of the off-frame re-contextualises and expands on the off-screen from film theory. What is outside the frame of a film can possess a dynamic relation–one changing and changeable–to what is on screen; that which can be said to lie outside of the frame of a painting does not possess this dynamism, and is therefore a problematic concept, but, as a result, one that became a productive area for me to examine: the presence of the off-frame is usually not a consideration when making paintings from photographic sources. As the practice-based research developed, my attention was drawn to the limits of the image and what lay beyond it, what is absent, left out or implied. This led to my three research questions:

How do different representational mediums account for the relationship of absence to presence in the making of and in the encounter with an image?

How can the idea of the off-frame be used to articulate these relationships in a new and meaningful way?

What are the implications within a contemporary painting practice for rethinking its relationship with time and the photographic image through the off-frame?

These questions imply certain fundamental conditions of the making of images which relate to the world as experienced–and the limits of that representation–and the viewer's encounter with those images. Contained within this encounter are implications for the image's different manifestations specific to the mediums of painting and photography, and aspects of reflexivity and external references, intuited or not by the viewer.

The sequence of chapters in this thesis broadly follows a chronological development of the practice over the period of the research degree. Literature review is embedded throughout and there is a constant

dialogue between theory and practice: artworks were made in response to my readings; reflecting on these artworks then led to further theoretical considerations. Within this back-and-forth, much of the work is developed out of a forensic approach to details of the histories of painting, photography, and film, other artworks, and sites and locations with specific resonances to these histories. As well as for the purposes of referencing, I use extensive footnotes throughout the thesis, developed in an expansive manner to function as the off-frame to the main body of the text.

Chapter 1 forms an overview of my practice as a painter working with photographic sources prior to undertaking the research degree. I contextualise this way of working as a specific type or instance of contemporary painting with reference to the Hayward Gallery's 2007 exhibition 'The Painting of Modern Life', as well as an exhibition from 2015 that my work was included in, 'Documentary Realism: Painting in the Digital Age'. Identifying some broad tendencies in how photographic sources are used in contemporary painting, I reflect that in my practice I had not infrequently made paintings which had an 'ostensible' subject at variance to their 'true' subject, rooted in the concealed conditions of their making. The tension between these two was used productively to develop the research questions, emerging as a result of my own frustrations with the practice of painting from photographs.

As a means of questioning my material choices as an artist, in Chapter 2, removing painting from the practice, I engage with photography directly for its own specific qualities, largely that of immediacy and the index. Outside of painting, I identify certain important concerns within my practice, using strategies of reenactment, around location or site, with photographic pieces made reflecting on other artworks, or relating to specific histories. Considerations of these works, and a critical revisiting of them, brings in the concepts of immanence–what is intrinsic to the material object of the work–and provenance–the history and context of that object–with the difficulties of reconciling these polarities as a practitioner. I also use film for some artworks, conceived as moving photographs, but with the same awareness of what's outside the frame as in the still images. Here I introduce the off-screen from film theory with reference to key texts by Noël Burch and Eyal Peretz, among others.

Developing from the photographic work in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 considers how content extrinsic to an image can be communicated, through aspects of display and, in particular, considerations around the use of titles and text. Practice elements here are concerned with the limits of what photography is able to represent, and what is unphotographable, or uncommunicable in or through an image itself. This develops into an understanding of the relation of the title to the art object, an awareness of the nature of what is a 'composite' form in contemporary art, comprising the linguistic or verbal element of the title and the visual or non-verbal image or object as a whole.

Responding to Noël Burch's scheme of the off-screen space in cinema, using a painted installation piece which attempts to create an awareness of its own off-frame space, Chapter 4 locates the potentiality of this off-frame with the emergence of perspective in European art. Resulting from a new conception of space

as being infinitely extendable, pictures for the first time are conceived of as a window onto an internally coherent pictorial world. A brief historical overview teases out changing applications of perspective by artists, leading to the visual revolutions of the nineteenth century, with the development of the panorama as an attempt to abolish the frame, and the inventions of photography and moving images in which an awareness of the limits of the frame becomes unavoidable.

Reflecting on the work on perspective, Chapter 5 details the development of the studio-based painting practice during pandemic restrictions. These works attempt to communicate the nature of the adjacent and contiguous space outside the frame through the use of shadows and mirrors, with the context of how these themes have been used historically before the invention of photography, with reference to the mythic origins of art. The conditions of the pandemic forced changes in the practice: earlier work in Chapters 2 and 3 relies on the specifics of particular locations for their meaning; without the ability to travel, the limits of domestic interior space appear in a number of still life paintings, made from observation to remove the photographic, working through iterations of shadows and mirrors. The photographic referent then returns with a set of paintings from photographs which further develop the use of shadows, as well as using *trompe l'oeil* to bring the shadows out of the image and into the viewer's space.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the experience of the viewer in the encounter with the artwork. With reference to Roland Barthes' writings on viewing photography, I apply this to the act of looking at paintings. In contrast to moving images–in which the dynamic processes of the off-screen unfold in front of the viewer– paintings have a similar (but also distinctly different) static temporal dimension, which allows for a certain freedom in the possibility of the viewer's imaginative and interpretive play. I then look at how time is embedded in the process of making paintings, how this can be intuited by the viewer and that working from a photograph can inscribe a further temporal register to painting. Expanding on the limitations of Chapter 5, I use examples of contemporary painting to examine these temporal registers, applying these to a set of paintings made from photographs with the motif of pictures within pictures, doubling the aspect of displacement inherent in the nature of images. Further, I then reflect on how aspects of scale and display can enact a symmetry of making/looking in which the evident time and care by which an artwork has been constructed can be repaid in the time of looking by the viewer.

The conclusion offers some further thoughts on the off-frame's call on the viewer's imagination through its functioning as a figure of metonymy, with reference to Barthes and Roman Jakobson in particular, as well as its necessary relationship to the open form, providing for the possibility of a productive mode of viewing. In addition, I consider how Jakobson considers metonymy to be intimately bound to realism, which in turn reflects back onto the predictive nature of the off-frame itself. The limitations imposed by painting from photographic referents are expanded through the possibility of the off-frame, a new way of conceptualising relations between painting, its photographic referent, and the external world.

1. Reflections on practice

1.1 Painting with photographic referents

In 2007 the Hayward Gallery in London staged an exhibition bearing the name, 'The Painting of Modern Life'. This title derives from Charles Baudelaire's essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863),[1] which, at its heart, is an invocation for artists to be attuned to the ephemeral, the quotidian, the contingent moment, the fleeting impression, all representative of the experience of life in the emergent urban landscape of the nineteenth century.[2] The Hayward Gallery exhibition was a survey of painters working in the second half of the twentieth century to the present day who use photographic references to make their paintings. A further and finer definition for inclusion would be that the painters did not hide or disavow their source material, but instead foregrounded aspects of the photographic. The exhibition sought to assert that, although painters had made use of photography since its invention, there was something distinct in the way that the post-war generation of artists working from the early 1960s began to use photography as a means to 'let the world back in' after abstraction,[3] but, at the same time, were acknowledging and allowing the distancing or strangeness of photography to enter their paintings. The formulation of the exhibition's title with the nature of the works shown constitutes an equation that the experience of a world seen through 'photography' (or mediated through a lens) somehow equals 'modern life'.

As an artist working in the medium of painting, and using photographs as my source material, which has largely constituted my professional practice since 2001-2002, the Hayward Gallery exhibition felt timely and important, an affirmation and justification of the criticality and appropriateness of this mode of making images. However, 'The Painting of Modern Life', taken as representative of this field of contemporary painting (while allowing for the exhibition's own omissions) posits a set of relatively limited and defined types of photographic image that the artists included draw from, reflecting the curatorial thesis in a mutually-supporting fashion. Many of the painters included in the exhibition work with found material, second hand images, filtering a wider media landscape that includes film, television and video. As such, many of these photographic sources point to the power of iconic images which have already circulated before being arrested in the act of painting by the artists involved (Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans, Vija Celmins, Richard Hamilton, for example). There are also paintings based on the artists' own photographs, and these generally highlight the domestic nature of photography within the family or equivalent structures (David Hockney, Robert Bechtle, Franz Gertsch, Liu Xiaodong). Some of the painters included in the exhibition work with both types of sources, and a few could be said to be outside

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1 Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, Phaidon, London 1965
2 Often used as a means to contextualise the work of Eduard Manet, it should be remembered that Baudelaire is writing about the graphic artist Constantin Guys (1802-1892).
3 Barry Schwabsky 'Sheer Sensation: Photographically-Based Painting and Modernism' in Ralph Rugoff, et al, *The Painting of Modern Life*, Hayward Publishing, London 2007, p. 30.

either category, but these dominate.[4]

Intuitively, my own practice felt as though it represented different concerns. The types of images I had been working with and the way of working from them was a result of a slow refinement of choices made through the development of my practice as a whole, and never explicitly or consciously calculated in terms of what was or was not the 'right' kind of imagery for the paintings that I was making. In 2015 I was included in a small exhibition titled 'Documentary Realism: Painting in the Digital Age'.[5] Although much lower in profile, the general thesis of the exhibition was not dissimilar to 'The Painting of Modern Life', but with an emphasis on the digital dissemination of photographically-derived images and how this was being reflected in the work of contemporary painters in the UK. Although not exclusively, a number of the artists in this exhibition also worked with found images from news media, film and television, or, again, their own photographs, reflecting domesticity. The effect of the digital itself did not appear to be reflected in the way the painters included worked (for example, the work of Dan Hays[6] reflects on the nature of the experience of the screen, absent by omission in a number of the painters' works in the 'Documentary Realism' show[7]). Despite my inclusion in this exhibition, I felt as though my paintings did not necessarily have any real purchase on the idea of 'the digital age' nor necessarily reflect a sense of the 'documentary'. Reflecting on the experience of being in this exhibition, amongst others around this particular time, I felt the need to re-evaluate my practice and attempt to grasp some of its core aspects which had developed incrementally, and, as a result, had only ever been approached intuitively.

1.2 Prior practice: The ostensible subject and the true subject

For most of my practice as a painter I have used photographic reference material, usually my own pictures, an expedient means of reducing a three dimensional reality 'out there' in the world to two dimensional compositions on a surface plane which can then be translated into paint. Beyond that expediency, 'the photographic' as a look–in contemporary western image cultures at least–carries its associated conflation

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4 I had hoped that, when announced, the exhibition 'Capturing the Moment', subtitled "A journey through painting and photography" at Tate Modern in 2023 would provide something of a more contemporary version of the thesis behind 'The Painting of Modern Life'. However, the curatorial thinking behind 'Capturing the Moment' depends almost entirely on the fact that the exhibition is drawn from the Yageo Foundation, and without a catalogue or curatorial essays, one is left largely to draw one's own connections and conclusions between the work of Alice Neel, Francis Bacon, Dororthea Lange, David Hockney, Peter Doig, Paula Rego, Lisa Brice and so on. One conclusion I did draw from this exhibition is what appears to be a mutually-reinforcing cycle of scale: large-format photographs by Jeff Wall, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky strive to achieve the effects of salon-style tableaux or vast abstract expressionist canvases; recent paintings by Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Jana Euler and others, seem to me to be about matching these effects as much or as well as their own heritage in painting. In contrast to 'The Painting of Modern Life', in 'Capturing the Moment', the experience of the specifically *digital* realm makes itself felt with Crosby and Laura Owens, in particular, and others, rather than conditions of the screen more generally. See footnote 7, below.

5 At The Crypt, St Marylebone Parish Church. See Robert Priseman, *Documentary Realism: Painting in the Digital Age*, Seabrook Press, 2015. The exhibition also included the work of Wayne Clough, Natalie Dowse, Nathan Eastwood, Alex Hanna, Barbara Howey, Lee Maelzer, Robert Priseman, Katherine Russell, Wendy Saunders, and David Sullivan.

6 Dan Hays, *Screen as Landscape*, PhD thesis, Centre for Useless Splendour Contemporary Art Research Centre, Kingston University, 2012.

7 Artefacts of the screen were present in a number of works in 'The Painting of Modern Life', though often in more 'analogue' fashions, given the time these works were made.

with 'the real' or simply 'realistic': the photographic look established a visual language, a style naturalised to the degree that it becomes synonymous with the idea of a realistic representation. By contrast, when photography emerged in the early 19th century, appreciation of its realism was offset with any number of examples of how the technology was a distortion from human sight. Additionally, most of my paintings are in black and white, which has its own connotations to the photographic, but with the paradox of the lack of colour being one further remove from reality.[8] These paintings have an intrinsic relation to pre-existing images, even if those images only existed as a reference for the painting. This is often not a direct relationship in that many of the photographs I take which end up as the basis for a painting were never taken with that purpose in mind—but some explicitly were. Implied or inherent to the sense of these paintings' relation to pre-existing images, the framing of the subject was a given, technologically determined before the painting is made, highlighted in a long series of paintings that which used the size and shape of a typical picture postcard, including an integral painted white border. In an indirect way, these attempted to reconcile what I was doing by painting from photographs, acknowledging this as a method, with the photograph as cultural artefact: sometimes the work is more explicitly about the photograph as object, although usually this is an inherent assumption. More recently, this has developed into larger paintings with deeper integral painted borders. One aspect of this acknowledgment of the photograph-as-object leads into *trompe l'oeil*: paintings with photographs *as* actual objects, amongst others, within the world of the painting—which also begins to turn working from photographs to a form of observational painting. *Trompe l'oeil* was an approach I often used early in my career, with the notion that, as a format or strategy, it could create a visual argument in which the viewer was asked to make connections between disparate objects, an approach abandoned for a number of years but then later returned to, as it felt as though there was still some utility in the form.[9]

As a result of how the paintings are made, using a photographic referent means that the paintings represent *something*. Often, or not just infrequently, this was a simple re-presentation of something that caught my eye when taking the photograph. Inevitably, themes emerged through the accumulation of a practice, and sometimes the work which felt most aesthetically satisfying had something more to offer: this was often where the 'true' subject diverged from the picture's ostensible subject, that is, what the painting appeared to be about, or to show, on the surface was not what it was really 'about', or not only.

One such painting was *Housing on the Edge of a City*, showing medium height apartment blocks from across an expanse of overgrown open ground. This derives from a photograph taken on the site of the Berlin Wall: the buildings were not actually 'on the edge of a city', but the appearance of that edge was due to

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8 Photorealism in painting often seems to highlight artefacts of the photographic process: high contrast, saturated local colour, wide angle distortions, contrasts of focus and out of focus areas, and concentrations on repetitive subject matter about the surfaces of modernity—the very fetishisation with certain types of these surfaces, and so on; there is also a sense of self-circumscribed oeuvres amongst many of the artists that one could describe as representative of 'canonical' Photorealism. Despite the surface or superficial appearance of my paintings, many aspects of this work is at variance from many of the concerns which seem to dominate Photorealism.

9 I do feel some reservations about using *trompe l'oeil*—it suffers from some of the same concerns as Photorealism, notably a fetishisation or valorisation of technical ability, foregrounded above other aspects in the work—but there are certain reasons I enjoy it as a form, mainly for its ludic qualities and its inherent nature simply being 'about' perception.

the history of the city, in that the Berlin Wall created *two* Berlins, and this was an image of the remains of the buffer zone where East and West did not quite meet. Perhaps this painting could have been titled more descriptively as 'View from the former death strip of the Berlin Wall' or similar, although the assertion itself–the essence of what the picture *is*–is not the same as being what it *shows*.

Figure 1.1, Nicholas Middleton, *Housing on the Edge of a City*, oil on paper, 10.2x15.8cm, 2008

At the time that particular painting was made, I think I would have struggled to articulate or identify why it fulfilled a number of aspects of what makes a 'satisfactory' work (which is an ever ongoing process). Some aspects, aside from the subject matter, are purely aesthetic or technical, how particular passages are rendered, the fine balance between control and happenstance in the way a brush deposits paint onto a surface, which, even with experience, can still hold some elements of surprise for the maker. Subject matter and how it is treated and approached (and what is disclosed or directed through an artwork's title) comprises most of what makes a work satisfactory–what the work is 'about'. This is something I've long felt the necessity for: that the work is about *something*, and as an image or representation of something, that something exists outside the work.[10] As a painting, *Housing at the Edge of a City* points to the importance of themes of place and history which began to be more present, through choices of subject matter, in my practice as a whole.

1.3 Opening up the practice: a re-evaluation

One of my motivations for undertaking a practice-based research degree was to use it as a means of critiquing my practice in depth. Having mostly concentrated on painting for a number of years, I had reached a point of feeling alienated from my practice, not inherent in painting itself as a medium, but part

10 All artists' work is 'about' something, but since Modernism, that 'thing' can be entirely within the material confines of the object itself, without a specific necessity for the work to point to something outside itself, except in the general case of other instances of similar being considered works of art, thus establishing a lineage of prior moves in such a direction.

of this dissatisfaction about my practice came from the very fact of making paintings based on my own photographs. I realised that an aspect of this dissatisfaction was due to feeling the loss of immediacy, the difference between the photograph and its painting, which felt important as I had been the one taking the photographs, rather than relying on found or appropriated images. I'd begun a project in which I used photography for its documentary qualities, revisiting and photographing locations from Wim Wenders' road movies of the 1970s, and as a result I was thinking about how to use photography more broadly in my practice as an artist. These images were never intended to become paintings. Photography offered its immediacy, its indexical nature, as a material practice, and, although this still lacked the contingent aspects of experience from where the images originated, there was, ontologically speaking, less 'mediation' in the resultant work.

For the practice component of the research to be meaningful there needed to be a significant re-evaluation of my practice as an artist. This began with questioning the nature of my habitual approach, the assumption that a 'work', the best expression of an idea in a concrete form, would be a painting based on a photograph. Further, there was also a questioning in more general terms about how I was thinking about what an image is or does and, by extension, an artwork (which could be thought of as, specifically, an image in a visual arts context). A broad overview of my practice through this period can be broken down into three stages:

First stage: As a process, this began by putting painting to one side, and letting photographs, which might otherwise have simply functioned as referents for paintings, stand on their own, not needing to be translated into painting to accrue meaning as an artwork.[11] This meant taking photographs with intentionality, particularly with strategies of re-enactment, seriality, and repetition. There was a desire to access the indexicality of the photograph for how it supplements meaning, its documentary aspect as a direct physical trace to the world out there.[12] In doing so, this led to a rethinking of narrative in the work, through the tension between immanence and provenance in the artwork. Included in this stage would be some short films, which were generally–although not wholly–conceived as a sequence or juxtaposition of moving photographs.

Second stage: As a move to account for this tension, or to use it productively, I experimented with the use of text as part of the work itself, manifest in a number of photograph-with-text pieces, where the images and texts, a juxtaposition of two different forms of information, worked as supplements to each other, especially so when the text explicitly describes what is *not* in the image.[13] As an extension of this process, I began to think more critically about the use of titles, a text attached to an artwork but most often not

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11 This included exhibiting photographs for the first time in many years in a handful of group shows. I had previously exhibited photographs in exhibitions in 2000-2001 and twice in 2005.
12 Referring to C. S. Peirce's division of signs and their relationship to a referent into icon, symbol, and index, with the index having an existential connection to its referent (the symbol has an arbitrary relationship, the icon a visual similarity). See Charles S. Peirce, *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by Justus Buchler, Dover, New York, 1955.
13 This also functioned as a means to highlight some aspects of moving images through still photographs with texts asking the viewer to imagine them as moving images.

materially inscribed within the physical object itself.

Third stage: A return to painting and an implicit acknowledgment of painting being key to my practice as an artist: one, familiar, approach, working from photographs again, but with more consciousness about this as a process; importantly, the other approach was a series of works direct from the motif–observational painting–without the photographic referent, albeit in a very limited way, partly due to the pandemic restrictions in force at the time, as a means to test out some assumptions inherent in my thinking about the use of perspective as the origin, the point where the off-frame emerges conceptually, but also how this relates to how perspective was used historically, specifically in relation to changing ideas of space.

In the reality of the studio-based practice, these stages did not have quite so clear demarcations as described, overlapping chronologically and in other ways, but, although an oversimplification of the practice-as-research, I found it useful to think about how one stage has led to another and formed the basis of my methodology. Cutting across stage one and stage two (but also present in stage three) were a number of pieces which referred to other works of art or film, frequently relating to pivotal moments within the development of different mediums, coalescing around painting, photography and film, and deployed with aspects of reenactment. In part, this stemmed from my own interest in the history of materials and modes of representation, but also from an awareness of how these histories and traditions set in train expectations and associations within the work.[14] This was one aspect of the practice requiring or drawing on references external to the actual physical objects made, but, more directly, this led to a number of pieces that are specific to a location, or the history of a location, and relied on that information to give them meaning, whereas the actual location was not evident within the images themselves. Taken together, this resulted in works that needed some form of explanation or background knowledge for these to make sense, though frequently not 'in' the image themselves. While exploring film and photography earlier in the research, there was a change in my thinking about the nature of an artwork (which no doubt predated the research degree), from what could be described as an essentially Modernist position,[15] conceiving of an artwork being an autonomous self-contained creation in which the object itself was 'the artwork' in total, to then thinking about how everything that wasn't 'in' the object but was somehow part of the work has–or could have–a real, meaningful existence, which in some hard-to-define way leaves a trace on the object, or more accurately 'around' the object–perhaps only for the maker at an immediate level–but one that could also be communicated in some way to a viewer.

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14 This is in part an avoidance of starting from a blank canvas, and making works which would not exist without their prior instances as a dialogue with the history of images, but also a reflection on technological changes with lens-based media and the dissemination and display of images.

15 As exemplified by the writings of Clement Greenberg, in particular, 'Modernist Painting' (1960) and Harold Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters' (1952; "The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind…"). Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Blackwell, Oxford 1994, pp. 754-760; Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters', also in *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, pp. 581-584, quote above, p. 581.

1.4 The emergence of the off-frame through the practice

The idea or realm of the off-frame solidified when reviewing the practice elements I'd been making somewhere around the second stage, responding to problems in the first stage. I realised that a form of context to many of the pieces, needed to 'complete' the work's meaning, was missing or somehow absent in the images themselves, but, simultaneously, this absence was key to the work. It was productive to formalise this absence around the off-frame. In the practice-as-research this was a necessary reduction or concentration, a means to describe the limits or boundaries of the image, and could also be extended to aspects of time and its relations to the still or static image. I was aware that this application of the off-frame was 'just' a concrete instance of a much larger relationship of externalities surrounding an artwork (in a sense, the idea of the off-frame stands in for the impossibility of a perfect communication between maker and viewer, between the sender and the receiver of a message), but *as* the off-frame it was something that I could grasp, something which could be explored through the making of work (which became much clearer from the practice elements previously made) and could be both expansive enough for a deep period of study, but not too large an area to grapple with within the constraints of a research degree. In practical terms, Noël Burch's definition of the two types of cinematic space[16] (see Chapter 2), and his scheme of the six segments of the off-screen space could be taken across from film theory and applied to still photographs, and, further, to painting, as an aspect fundamental to image-making in Western cultures since the Renaissance, aligning with the idea of a visual pyramid which forms the boundaries of a representation, as first described by Leon Battista Alberti in the fifteenth century.[17] This scheme of the six segments was a quiet revelation, in particular its relation to my experience of making images using a camera, framing being the quintessential act of photography, with the off-screen *turning this framing inside out*, suddenly being aware of everything that wasn't in the picture, but more particularly, being aware of what had an importance to the making of the work–but which, for any number of reasons, was outside of the frame.[18]

Thus, from what appeared as a problem, a split between the elements which were immanent to the object ('in' the work) and those defined by its provenance ('around' or 'about' the work), leading to an incompleteness, there was a realisation that this could be recontextualised as a possibility, a lens to consciously approach these elements of allusiveness, reflexivity, external references, through the off-frame, adding a richness to the work. Although some of the practice emerging in stage three was explicitly about the off-frame, either as a demonstration of its existence or a commentary on this existence, some or most

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16 Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, translated by Helen R. Lane, Secker & Warburg, London 1973. First published as *Praxis du cinema*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1969.

17 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, translated by Cecil Grayson, Penguin Books, 1991.

18 There were also productive contrasts to be made with other theoretical positions on the off-screen from Stanley Cavell (*The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Viking Press, New York 1971) and Eyal Peretz (*The Off-Screen: An investigation of the cinematic frame*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2017), which give film a pre-eminent place thanks to its flow and indexical relationship to the world that it is cut from, and that painting as a medium lacks those aspects which makes the off-frame meaningful.

of the work was about other concerns where the off-frame comes into play or is activated in some form. Extending this, there are a number of works which test the limits of where the off-frame may still (just) be a meaningful concept–including those where, for all intents and purposes, it fails.

2 Photography & the Index/Film & Site

2.1 Circumventing (one level of) mediation: the photographic (reflections on painting as a means to avoid being a photographer)

In the preceding chapter I described the initial stage in the practice-based research of concentrating on photography, not as a way of generating source material to make paintings from, but rather to explore the medium for its own specific qualities. What drove this part of the investigation was a desire to see whether a photograph could function in my practice to sufficiently satisfy the concerns that paintings had otherwise done up to that point. I was conscious that there are multiple differences between a photograph and a painting that superficially *looks* like a photograph, but, as I felt that *something* about the nature of the image itself was where my central concerns as an artist lay, I needed to explore whether the photograph in and of itself could satisfy these concerns–and, in doing so, articulate these concerns to myself more fully as a result. Identifying the making of images, representations of a world out there, as what was central to my practice, I questioned whether the act of making a painting from a photograph was a tactic of avoidance in taking photography seriously. Although I had begun to form some definitive ideas about the materiality of painting in my practice, that this was always in service to the image, the 'paintingness' of painting did not appear to me to be sufficiently important as a reason that my images *should* be paintings. As a painter, in having developed a method in which I worked from photographs that I take myself meant that my practice already had an active photographic basis: I was not working with found photographs, which would have meant a very different procedure had I chosen then to put the act of painting to one side. What I had long felt to be photography's inherent distinctive quality, its nature as an indexical sign, was attractive, and the act of painting removed that, or was at least a step away from it, disguising this by adding a layer of mediation to the image.[19]

2.2 Present to the act of photography, but *not* in the photograph

The photographic work that directed my research to the off-frame began as the documentation of an action, specifically, a reenactment. My original intention was for it (the photograph later to be titled *Alice's Grandmother's House*, figure 2.1) to be part of a series recording the locations from Wim Wenders' 1973 film *Alice in den Stadten* (*Alice in the Cities*) as they were over forty years from when the film had been made. At this point in the development of the practice, it made no sense for these photographs to then function as source material for a series of paintings, and were not considered so: they were a record of a journey and an experience which did not call for further mediation through the act of painting.

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19 For the purposes of this explanation here, this is a much simplified argument, without many of the nuances which come into play with specific instances of the respective mediums.

Figure 2.1, Nicholas Middleton, *Alice's Grandmother's House*, photograph, 2016

Conceptually, however, this particular photograph did not strictly fit with the rest of the series as it cannot be said to actually *show* a location. Although this image had been made with the idea that it was one of a series of photographs in which location was key, I realised that the location itself to which I had travelled to make this particular photograph was in no sense 'in' the actual picture.[20] I felt that this could be considered a problem, but not necessarily in the staging of the reenactment, or the photograph which resulted from it, but rather a problem in *how* I was thinking about the photograph *as an artwork*.[21] After all, I had actually gone to this particular location to make this image, but the fidelity to reenacting the gesture from the film–holding a photograph of a house in the street before that very house–meant that, paradoxically, the house which appears in the picture within the picture–in close proximity to that reenactment and therefore somehow 'present' to the act of photographing–could *not* be in the photograph.

When I showed this photograph in the exhibition 'Daybreak' (Maverick Projects, London 2017, see figure 2.2), I juxtaposed it with the photograph I had taken of the house itself, as it is, or was, when I documented it in October 2016, the 'pure' location photograph. These two photographs had a proximity in time and space, that isn't immediately apparent: I could however give the photographs a proximity *as exhibited* which might imply more. No interpretation other than the title, 'Alice's Grandmother's House', was given in the exhibition, but, as a form of context, I made a third photograph. This was a picture of the film playing

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20 More broadly, this project as a whole was also about the difficulties of discovering where these locations were, through close readings of the films, and supporting material, the experience of travelling to these locations, how they had changed or not, and the taking of the photographs.
21 But also as a discrepancy between intention and outcome in the making of the work.

on a monitor, an imaginative depiction of how I might have first encountered *Alice in the Cities*,[22] not of the actual shot reenacted, but the one used for the photograph *in* the reenactment, when Alice in the film goes to knock on the door of the house which used to be her grandmother's.

Figure 2.2, Nicholas Middleton, *Alice's Grandmother's House*, installation, Daybreak, 2017

Although tested in the form of an exhibition, to the uninformed spectator the juxtaposition of the three photographs might have seemed to be about the *materiality* of the image, the house repeated three times, once 'unmediated' in a 'straight' photograph, then as a photograph within a photograph, and then as an image on a screen, which implies that this image *as image* originates from a film or other form of moving images, and was plucked from their flow. I had started from the assumption that the work was concerned with location, and an expectation that encountering these locations now might reveal something; here, I realised that in trying to communicate something about this encounter–through the intervention of the reenactment–the difficulties in using the photograph as a container for that encounter instead revealed something about the fundamental nature of images. There was also, in part, my own sense that I was unclear as to where exactly the work resided–leaving aside the explicit reenactment, which the photograph could stand in for; there was the research involved in identifying these locations and the journey itself, the physical, bodily retracing undertaken.[23] However, this did not feel like 'the work'.

I realised that my own prejudices were at work here, in how I was conceiving of what an artwork was, or could be, in part engendered by a practice that had been largely concerned with making paintings which often seemed entire in themselves as objects (paintings being a generally uncomplicated, or very widely accepted manifestation of what constitutes 'art'), while being entirely representational, referring to

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22 I had in fact first seen the film at the cinema when it was rereleased in the mid- to late 2000s; I was able to watch two of Wim Wenders' films–*Paris, Texas* and *Wings of Desire*–on VHS in the school library while studying on my undergraduate degree course. This was what the third photograph was trying to recreate.

23 This could have become an entry into a form of performative walking practice, but I was too invested in the idea of the image for this to be the case.

something out there in the world. This prior prejudice was most often manifest in a reaction against some kind of curatorial statement, a feeling that I could not see 'in' the work what I had just read, whereas, more precisely, this might not have necessarily been in the physical object designated 'the artwork'–disregarding how artworks themselves are never encountered free of a framing context.[24]

From considering that what was missing from the photograph (the location in which it was made) was a problem, I began to think that some aspect of this 'missingness' could be an integral part of the work. It was somewhere in an 'outside' proximity, close to the making of the photograph, an important part of my experience as the maker of the photograph. I was still unsure how to communicate this missingness to a viewer of the work. I made a reenactment of my initial reenactment as a strategy towards this communication.
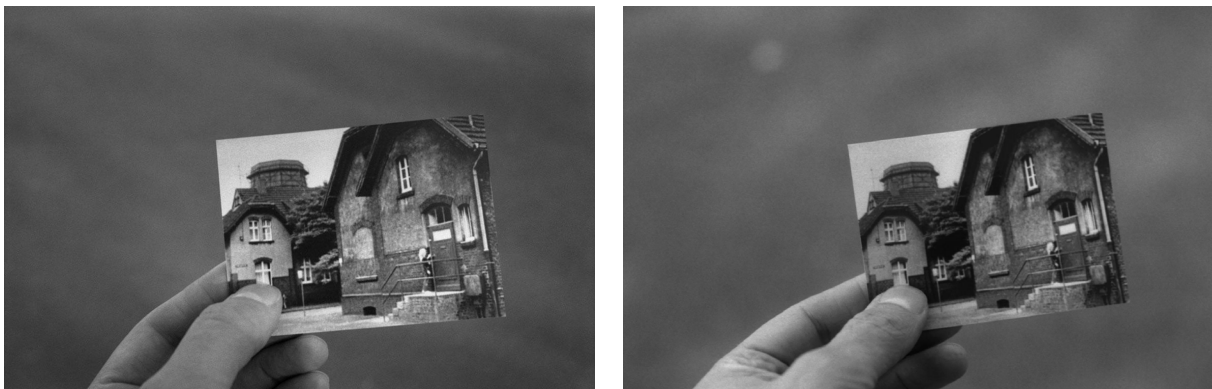
Figure 2.3, Nicholas Middleton, *Alice's Grandmother's House*, 2016/*A photograph taken 3 years and 492 kilometres from one which it superficially resembles*, 2019

Titled *A photograph taken 3 years and 492 kilometres from one which it superficially resembles* (figure 2.3), this was made to look as close to *Alice's Grandmother's House* as practical, but with a title to draw attention to its fundamental differences. This photographic pairing was emblematic of something that was beginning to run through my practice more widely: other works are often concerned with ideas of location, or material histories, or are the documentation of performative gestures like the reenactment of the shot from *Alice in the Cities*–but with some important component lacking from the photographic record.

2.3 'Counterpresence' in photography

Photographic practices, in contemporary art, and more broadly in visual cultures, often activate the kind

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24 As an argument for the indivisible nature of this context, the work of Amalia Pica–which almost always requires interpretation, concerned with Argentinian political history–provoked a comment from an audience member at an in conversation event I attended about how the work (the objects in the gallery) could be read by a viewer if Pica could not herself 'talk' about the work (and for 'talk' I think this word could stand in for all curatorial and interpretative actions and interactions–see Chapter 3). Pica's answer was "In what world would I not be able to talk about the work?" Amalia Pica, Chisenhale Gallery 'in conversation' event, May 2012.

of absences seen in *Alice's Grandmother's House/A photograph taken 3 years and 492 kilometres from one which it superficially resembles* in meaningful ways, most frequently through the relationship of images to each other. A work such as Sharon Lockhart's diptych *Lily (approximately 8am, Pacific Ocean): Jochen (approximately 8pm, North Sea)*, while presenting the viewer with a common typology of subject framing, immediately calls the relationship between the two subjects into meaningful play.[25]

Figure 2.4, Sharon Lockhart, *Lily (approximately 8am, Pacific Ocean): Jochen (approximately 8pm, North Sea)*, 1994, c-prints.

The composition of each photograph and how they mirror each other with subject and background are sufficient to do this; the work's title underlines and concretises their relation, adding time to the space depicted. The diptych also references the convention of the cinematic shot-reverse shot, although not the classic Hollywood version, but something more akin to Yasujirō Ozu's practice of confronting the camera, creating an awareness of its otherwise elided presence.

In discussing Sharon Lockhart's photographic work Norman Bryson uses the term 'counterpresence' to describe how "the real medium [of Lockhart's work in photography and film] lies elsewhere, in the attention of the work's spectators."[26] In defining counterpresence, Bryson links it to the "conceptual turn" in photography: "it is what lies outside the individual photograph–in the internal rhymes and relations across components–that define its features, not through affirmation but negation, not presence but 'counterpresence.'"[27] This work on the attention of the spectator as identified by Bryson has direct parallels with the visual language of cinema which he explicitly draws out: "Photography suddenly incorporated within itself structures of interruptions and montage formerly reserved for the cinematic."[28] Bryson affirms

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25 This photographic strategy goes as far back at least as Doctor Barnado's famous 'before and after' pairings, although there are antecedents in painting such as Hogarth's two versions of *Before* and *After* from c.1730-31.

26 Norman Bryson, 'Sharon Lockhart: From Form to Flux', in Dominic Molon and Norman Bryson, *Sharon Lockhart*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2001, p. 79.

27 Bryson, p. 82. Bryson grounds this in the Düsseldorf school of photography, referencing Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Ruff; Bryson sees counterpresence as "a key strategy in photographic work over the past thirty years". Bryson, p. 82.

28 Bryson, p. 82.

that:

> The beauty of counterpresence, as an aesthetic strategy, is that it confers on photographs a mysterious "afterlife". In a sense, classical photography is always advertant, turned toward the spectator; it holds nothing back; it has not powers of self-retention; sooner or later its destiny is to be exhausted by the gaze, used up. Counterpresence is all about the inadvertant, about deflection and withdrawal; it wards off the forces of depletion and expendability on which classical photography had been based.[29]

The closely mirrored formal aspects of the two photographs do much of this work of counterpresence, but Lockhart's title, with its linguistic mirroring, makes this explicit: *Lily (approximately 8am, Pacific Ocean): Jochen (approximately 8pm, North Sea)*; the viewer is asked to 'complete' the work with the title. In Lockhart's piece, the titles assert what the image *is*, not necessarily what the image *shows*. This difference between what an image is against what it shows began to interest me in the practice-based research as it developed.

2.4 Indexicality, and location outside the frame

Figure 2.5, Nicholas Middleton, *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*, 2019/*The same object photographed in an arbitrary location one year later*, 2020

I revisited the approach used in *Alice's Grandmother's House* and its counterpart in another pair of photographs, the result of a visit to Poland, where I took a photograph to record a performative gesture: *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground* shows a playing card lying on the ground in Zaspa, a suburb of Gdańsk.[30] In Günter Grass' novel *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*) the protagonist is taken to this (real) location where his uncle is buried in an unmarked mass grave outside of a cemetery wall. A seven of spades, a reference to the card game *skat* that his uncle played, is left as a sign. The photograph I took in Poland includes no clue inside the frame–it could be a playing card photographed almost anywhere–as to where it was taken: as a single photograph, it lacks this context.[31] I then photographed the same playing card exactly one year later, in the early days

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29 Bryson, p. 84.

30 Having an opportunity to travel to Gdańsk in 2019, I was curious as to what films had been made there (a counterpart to the work I had been making in relation to Wim Wenders' films), and, subsequently, reading *The Tin Drum*, I was drawn to the significance of the incident so exactly described by Grass as to be easy to identify its location in present-day Gdańsk. I took a pack of playing cards with me for the explicit purpose of photographing the seven of spades in this location.

31 It also contains no internal reference to Grass' novel.

of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in the UK, in an arbitrary location[32] which looked similar to the first photograph while on a permitted walk for exercise, allowed under the regulations in force at the time, reflecting on all the situational differences that the temporal gap since the first photograph represented. In an earlier iteration of the piece, each photograph was paired with a description of the specific scene from the novel in which the playing card is mentioned, but using text from the two different English translations of the novel, foregrounding another set of differences. However, I felt the relationship of the two photographs to each other was best expressed through their visual similarity and the sequential nature of the titles: *this*, then *this*.[33]

If one was somehow able to raise one's head within the world of the first photograph and look up from the playing card, the wall of the real-life cemetery in Zaspa would come into view; outside of this, the mass grave (in the novel) was dug, and this wider view would provide the context of this specific location–the provocation for making this gesture and then recording it through a photograph.[34] Its wider context is outside the frame. As with *Alice's Grandmother's House*, there was an unease that this location, so important to the genesis of *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*, was not 'in' the photograph. In a presentation I described this unease with *Alice's Grandmother's House* as a problem of *trust*, that the viewer is required to trust the artist's assertion about the origins of such an image (and indeed questioned whether this matters): the picture could have been taken anywhere, and yet was not (with the result that it was relatively easy for both of the first photographs in each of these pairs to be reenacted). A response, in particular to the use of the word 'trust' in my presentation, defined this issue as an opposition of *provenance* against *immanence*: that the photograph *Alice's Grandmother's House* was taken in front of the house which it shows through the motif of the picture-within-the-picture is not *immanent* to the object–the containing photograph–but this 'fact' can be described as belonging to its *provenance*, the history of the object in its widest sense.[35] This immanence/provenance opposition feels apposite due to photography's indexical nature, its relation to a reality 'out there' against which it can be measured, while highlighting the limitations of the photograph as a container for everything outside of the frame: the photograph itself could only stand in for so much. I was unable at this stage to conceive how this could be communicated other than as some form of *absence*. The reenactment of each photograph with its pair was one means of signifying this absence, coupled with the use of titles that reference this through location, distance and time.

2.5 The role of reenactment

A number of the works made around this stage of the research involved strategies of reenactment. Initially, this was a means to activate the practice element when making photographs of the locations of Wim

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32 Not entirely arbitrary: the sandy ground is replaced by gravelly ground instead, intended to be not too dissimilar visually.

33 In terms of being *read*, the logical arrangement is for the earlier photograph to be placed to the left as a pair, assuming the convention of reading left to right as with European writing systems, which is then an analogy for temporal order.

34 In the second photograph, the location revealed would merely be a small suburban park.

35 Dr. Peter Oakley, conversation 13/12/17.

Wenders' *Alice in the Cities*: the other photographs taken at the time were documentary in form, their function being to show the locations where scenes from the film were shot as they currently existed at that moment in time and, as a result, had a certain passivity. My reenactment of the shot from the film was an active intervention within this process, and as described above, this then changed the nature of what I thought I was doing with the work: it opened further questions about the nature of images, what (and how) they disclose or conceal.

One of the attractions of reenactment is in its liberatory potential (its "signature quality" according to Robert Blackson,[36] being transformative "through memory, theory, and history to generate unique and resonating results."[37]) The generative aspect of reenactment is one reason for using it as an artistic strategy, over and above any other concerns about content: it fills in the artistic blank at the moment of creation; intuitively, this quality may have been why I was drawn to it in the process of expanding my practice, here using photography for its own merits in the move away from painting. With the works described above, responding to film or literature–for me as the maker–there was an attempt to inhabit the original narrative, in a brief and partial way, and, through this, a desire to borrow some of the power of the original in the work that I could make in response, while acknowledging that whatever I made as an artist could never have the same immersive quality as a film or novel, but perhaps could approach the quality of being *reflective*. In addition, there was also the role of translation or transposition, in moving from one form to another, going from a film or a novel to a still photograph, or in transposing a historical event from Lyon to London, for example in *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* (see Figure 2.8 below). One medium here reflects on the status of another. There was in this translation, implicitly perhaps, a move to 'cool down' some of the affective quality of the original, again, this opens up the possibility of the reflective or pensive quality in the work.

Contained within reenactment is the idea of the existence of a real event, existing outside the realm of art, beyond mediation, somehow accessible through that which can be documented–the performative gestures seen in the photographs that became *Alice's Grandmother's House* and *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*. (Here, one could talk about, not the narrative time of *Alice in the Cities*, but its zone of production, the reenacting of the gestures that the actor Rüdiger Vogler made in a street in a suburb of a German town which happened to be filmed). The act of visiting those locations highlights the significance (if just for me) of the works that were made or inspired by these particular places, an affirmation of 'this thing happened here' (or 'this thing happened, here'). The idea of accessing a real event through its reenactment was related to my feelings of estrangement from my practice as a painter which provoked my embarking on the research degree: a reaching out for some kind of "restorative nostalgia"[38] for something authentic, in that this appeared to be lacking in the painting practice at the time. Reenactment (and particularly with

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36 Robert Blackson, 'Once More… With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture', *Art Journal*, Spring 2007, 66, 1, p. 30. See also Sven Lütticken, 'An Arena in Which to Reenact', in *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art,* Lutticken, Allen, Phelan, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2005.

37 Blackson, p. 29.

38 Wojciech Drąg, 'Compulsion to Re-enact: Trauma and Nostalgia in Tom McCarthy's "Remainder"', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Fall, 2015, pp. 377-392, p. 381.

the performative gestures that some of the work documented) and its relationship to simulation rather than representation was a means to think about the necessary omissions or displacements in the creation of an artwork, leading to the off-frame.

2.6 Still photographs into moving photographs: immanence and provenance

As described earlier, one of the motivations for using photographs was for their own distinctive qualities as a medium, in comparison with painting, which had comprised my practice prior to the research degree. I instinctively felt that the semiotic status of the photograph as an index,[39] a direct impression of a reality experienced first-hand in the making of the work, was important to my concerns of the specificity of place which drove me to make the work in the first place. In pieces such as *Alice's Grandmother's House* and *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*, both of which, as interventions, were more than a simple record of a location, there were no internal clues in the images themselves as uncontested proof that the photographs were in fact taken where they were.

Relying on my own assertions of what these *showed* felt like a stumbling block in the communication of the artwork's content. Many contemporary artists' practices rely on some form of assertion about what an object is or what it represents.[40] With *Alice's Grandmother's House* and *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*, the effect of making reenactments of each initial photograph in the two pairs was to create a form of explicit commentary on this situation: it highlights the difference between what an image is against what it shows. Clearly, the viewer can disregard the statements of both titles in each pair, but linguistically their relationships do still pertain whether accepted or not. Replacing a general sense of 'trust' in the image–the artist's assertion through an artwork's title or other interpretive materials of what it shows–with the idea of provenance brought into focus a temporal dimension to the work: what is immanent to the image is always present at the moment that it meets its viewer, while its provenance is its history, expanded to be not just that of the object in the conventional sense of the term–the history of an artwork, its owners, exhibition history, and so on–but here the conditions that led to the moment of the creation of the photograph, a narrative of its production, and an awareness of the limitations of the single, static image.

A different form of reenactment would have made for a different set of considerations: *Alice in the Cities* is a film, and so the specifics of this location could have been referenced very differently if I had reenacted it as some form of a *moving* image, rather than a still photograph, thus removing the element of translation or transposition. As a still photograph, the reenactment as a performative gesture to be documented was as far as I could conceive of interrogating its source material; being transposed into another medium, one to which the viewer adds time (see Chapter 6), rather than it being imposed by the medium itself, provides a

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39 Its *iconicity*–its visual similarity to that which it represents–is a given of course, the reason that it could take the place of painting in my practice as another iteration of 'image'.
40 Cornelia Parker's *oeuvre* is a prime example of this.

different set of considerations against a straight reenactment in the same medium.[41] During this period of the research I did make a number of short films however. These were conceived as moving photographs, an extension of the photographic investigations of the practice, rather than truly using the moving image for its own distinctive qualities. As a development from using photography for its indexical nature, many of the same concerns were present in these works.
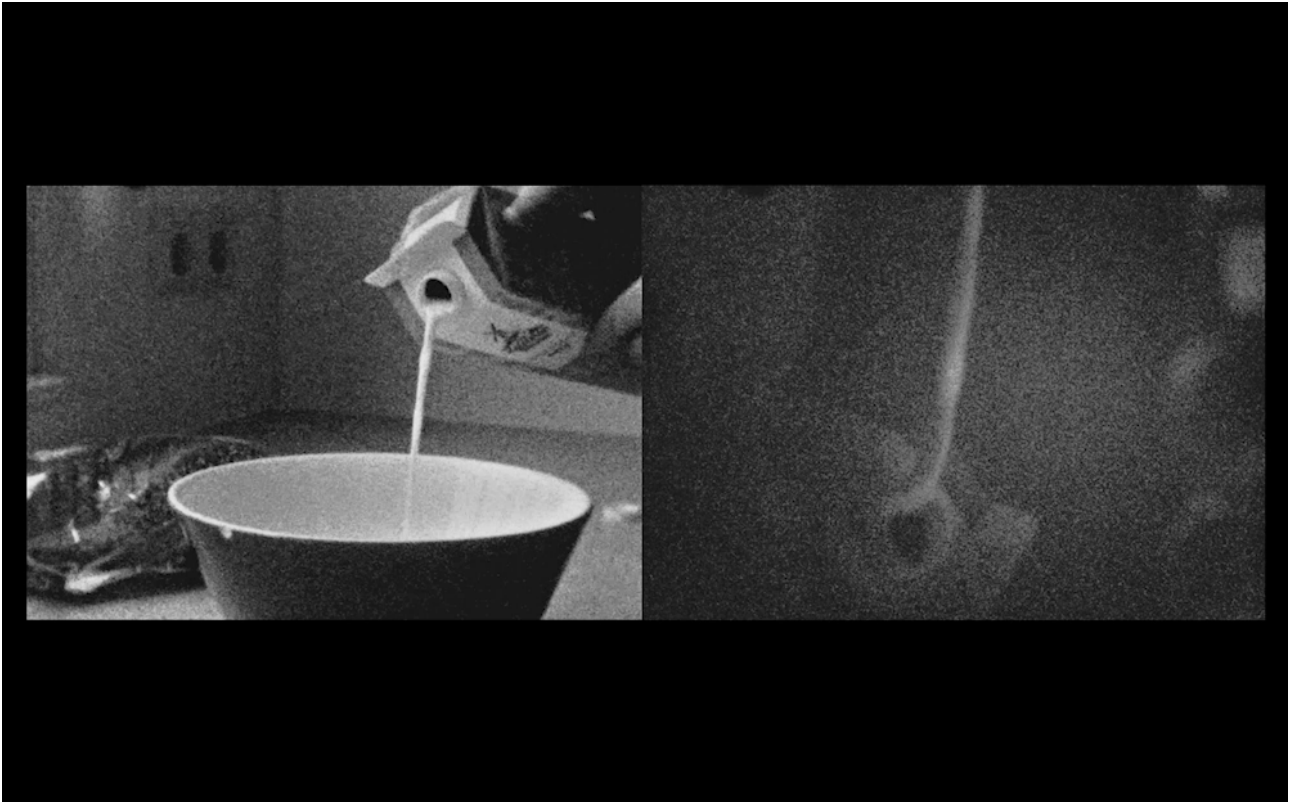
Figure 2.6, Nicholas Middleton, *Pouring Milk*, 8mm film, digitised, 37 seconds

Pouring Milk (figure 2.6) shows milk being poured from a carton into a ceramic vessel across two frames, this action being doubled on the ground glass screen of a camera obscura in the right hand frame, inverted in the process of being projected. The photographic grain of the 8mm film mimics the granular quality of the ground glass. The film was shot in Delft, where Vermeer worked in the seventeenth century; the photographic look of many of Vermeer's paintings has prompted much speculation over the artist's use of the camera obscura. Vermeer's *A Maidservant Pouring Milk* (c.1657-1661) is one such painting often cited as exhibiting 'photographic' aspects, with out-of-focus areas and specular highlights. Within the frame, the film itself contains no clues that it was filmed in Delft, other than the Dutch milk carton and European electricity sockets.

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41 *The Tin Drum* is a novel; it would have made no sense to me to reenact this moment as a *text*; in the film adaptation, the scene where this occurs is shown on screen, but crucially without the detail of the seven of spades being dropped to mark the mass grave.

Site and history are key to the film work *South Woodford* (figure 2.7). This shows four tightly-framed views of a road surface, with cars crossing the frame. The particular stretch of road filmed here used to feature a cattle grid. This had been relatively recently removed at the time of filming, but was still discernible in two lengths of concrete which span the width of the road: these once formed the edges of the grid's shallow trench. The cattle grid, the location of which provided the reason for making the film, as well as its removal, exists outside the time of the film.
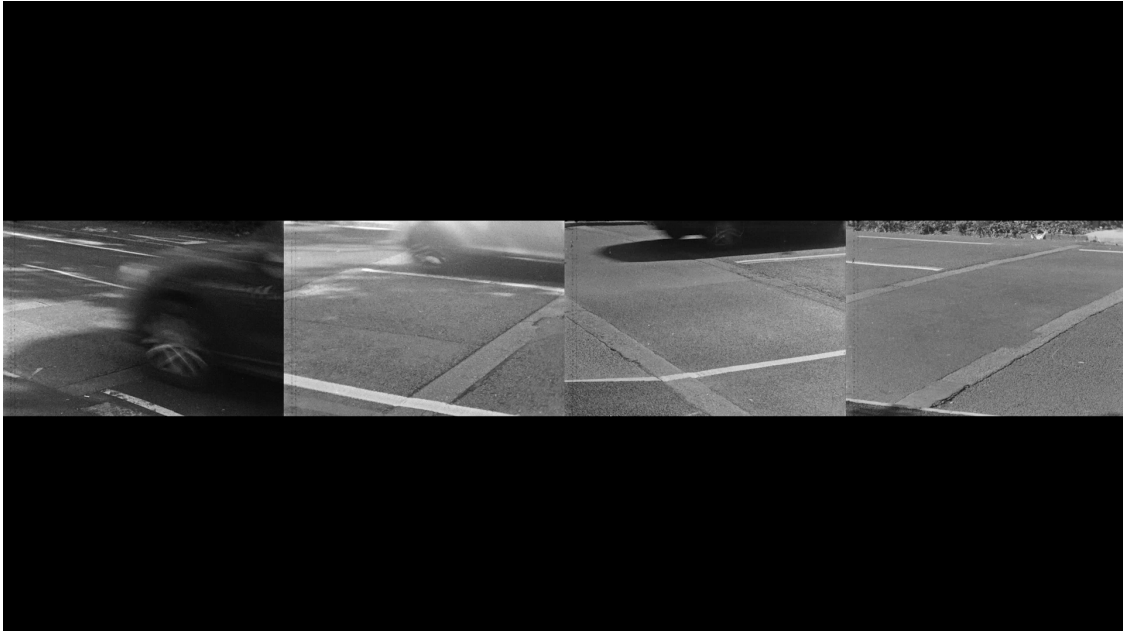
Figure 2.7, Nicholas Middleton, *South Woodford*, 16mm film, digitised, 0m33s, silent

Two other films in which site and the history of locations are important to their genesis are *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* (figure 2.8) and *ADDITIONAL POURTRAYALS [sic]* (figure 2.9); *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* shows two views of the site of the Ilford photographic factory in Ilford, East London, demolished in 1984, replaced by a supermarket. It is shot on Ilford film, which was hand cut to fit a 8mm camera,[42] and the two views show where exits were at different times in the factory's existence. Its title borrows from the Lumière brothers' first film projected to an audience in 1895, *Workers Leaving the Factory*,[43] which shows the Lumière factory for manufacturing photographic plates in Lyon, contemporary to the Ilford factory. The title alludes to two versions of 'not leaving': first, this is the site where a factory *was*, but is no longer, a simple temporal dislocation. At the time the Lumières demonstrated the Cinématographe in London, there would have been workers leaving the site each day; second, for many occupations, although not those physical, repetitious ones which typically take place in factories or on construction sites, obliquely seen in the film, work in the 21st century is never truly left behind

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42 Ilford stopped making motion picture film many years ago, but I wanted to shoot moving images in Ilford on Ilford film.
43 See Harun Farocki, 'Workers Leaving the Factory', in *Imprint: Writings*, Lukas & Sternberg, New York 2001, and Jennifer L. Peterson, 'Workers Leaving the Factory: Witnessing Labor in the Digital Age', *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*, 2013.
https://www.academia.edu/5728999/Workers_Leaving_the_Factory_Witnessing_Labor_in_the_Digital_Age   accessed 1/3/20

when one exits the premises: the site of work is all pervasive in the digital realm. Of this kind of work, if 'the factory' stands in for work itself, then work is all around in a sense that the workers leaving the Lumière factory could never have conceived: once they had left the factory site, work had no call on them until they reappeared for their next shift.

Figure 2.8, Nicholas Middleton, *Workers Not Leaving the Factory*, 8mm film, 0m30s

After making *Workers Not Leaving the Factory*, I had wanted to revisit the concept of that film, but using either one of two significant dates: the 125th anniversary of the Lumière brothers' first film screening to a paying public, or of their films being shown in London for the first time. The first date happened to be during my recovery from Covid-19, with the second falling while the general 'stay at home' order was in place. Prevented from going to Ilford to revisit this idea, and, at home with limited means, I imperfectly printed by hand–and in several short sections–the negative of *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* to make a positive 8mm print for projection. This was projected at home alongside a 'live' feed of a traffic camera[44] which points in the direction of the Ilford photographic factory site where *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* was filmed. I recorded these projections as live to make *ADDITIONAL POURTRAYALS [sic]* (figure 2.9).[45] The multiple frames and times present in the two projections are full of gaps: gaps in the live feed due to the shortness of the loop, gaps in the registration (and continuity) of the print of *Workers Not Leaving the Factory* thanks to its hand-made aspect, gaps in the temporality between the original film and the digital projection as live, with its own gap from being actually a live feed of what it shows, showing an elsewhere to its projection.

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44 Actually a short loop with a little delay, which periodically updates on refreshing a web browser: https://archive. tfljamcams.net/archive/A118_Romford_Rd_A406_Ncr/ Retrieved 28/02/21.

45 Which thus contains *Workers Not Leaving the Factory*. The title comes from the original programme of the Lumière films when shown in London in 1896: their first film, of workers leaving the factory, is not among the titles listed, but the possibility that it may have been shown is suggested by the promise that the programme "will be selected from the following subjects, and will be liable to frequent changes, as well as ADDITIONAL POURTRAYALS [sic]".
See http://www.cineressources.net/consultationPdf/web/o000/310.pdf Retrieved 28/02/21.

Figure 2.9, Nicholas Middleton, *ADDITIONAL POURTRAYALS [sic]*, digital video, 1m55s

I was approaching these works rather like photographs *which just happened to move* for the purposes of their subjects. If the cars in *South Woodford*, had been the subject rather than the surface of the road (its ostensible subject) or, as I intended, the history this surface contains and obscures (its true subject, the fact of the cattle grid representing an aspect of the changes in this part of London during my lifetime), the work could have captured something of a more dynamic relationship of presence and absence (represented by the cars entering and leaving the frame), existing temporally–and immanently–in the film itself, rather than being located in its implicit provenance.

2.7 An awareness of things disappearing: Maxim Gorky at the cinema

One of the earliest (and most perceptive) accounts of experiencing the moving photographic image a few short months after the appearance of projected film–specifically the Lumière brothers' *cinématographe*–from the writer Maxim Gorky explicitly describes being aware of things disappearing at the edge of the screen. The Lumières' habitual practice when first exhibiting their earliest films was to begin by projecting an initial still frame before then 'bringing it to life', turning the cinématographe's handle to make the pictures move. By starting with a single photographic image, this mode of exhibition replicated the typical lantern show or lecture, existing in its various iterations prior to the invention of photography, a form which was then able to encompass the lantern-slide photograph. It is worth quoting Gorky's account at length:

> I was at Aumont's and saw Lumière's cinematograph—moving photography. [...] When
> the lights go out in the room in which Lumière's invention is shown, there suddenly

appears on the screen a large grey picture, 'A Street in Paris'–shadows of a bad engraving. As you gaze at it, you see carriages, buildings and people in various poses, all frozen into immobility. All this is in grey, and the sky above is also grey–you anticipate nothing new in this all too familiar scene, for you have seen pictures of Paris streets more than once. But suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen and the picture stirs to life. Carriages coming from somewhere in the perspective of the picture are moving straight at you, into the darkness in which you sit; somewhere from afar people appear and loom larger as they come closer to you; in the foreground children are playing with a dog, bicyclists tear along, and pedestrians cross the street picking their way among the carriages. All this moves, teems with life and, *upon approaching the edge of the screen, vanishes somewhere beyond it*.

[…]

Suddenly something clicks, everything vanishes and a train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you–watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones, and crushing into dust and into broken fragments this hall and this building, so full of women, wine, music and vice.

But this, too, is but a train of shadows.

Noiselessly, the locomotive disappears beyond the edge of the screen.[46]

Technological expressions of the moving photographic image *before* August and Louis Lumières' cinématographe of 1895 were unsympathetic to producing an impression of these screen edges in the viewer, sensed so keenly by Gorky. Edison's kinetoscope, predating the cinématographe by a couple of years, was provided with films made in Edison's studio, known as the 'Black Maria': almost all of these short films are of performers of various descriptions, enacting something in front of the static electrically-driven camera, and, although filmed in the studio using natural light, the figures are isolated against its dark interior–conceived of as if reproducing the proscenium of a theatrical performance in miniature, rather than a photograph that happened to move.[47] By contrast, the Lumières' hand-cranked camera could suddenly go anywhere in the world, and did. Prior to Edison, Eadweard Muybridge's approach in his chronophotography similarly neutralised any possibility of the screen edges becoming productive, not only through the 'scientific' grids that enveloped his subjects with their central framing, but also through the limitations of the short, circular sequences, and the means with which Muybridge later animated them, generally hand-painted and entirely devoid of any background.[48] Although the use of screen edges in film and their relation to presence and absence developed further through the realisation of the essential possibilities of the medium–the innovations of the mobile camera and of editing, then the later addition

46 Maxim Gorky, (writing as I. M. Pacatus) 'Last Night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows', *Nizhegorodski listok*, 4 July 1896. Quoted in Colin Harding and Simon Popple, *In the Kingdom of Shadows*, Cygnus Arts, London 1996, p. 5. My italics.

47 The other examples of projected films which predate the Lumières' presentation to a paying audience in December 1895 by a few short months were not dissimilar to Edison's Kinetoscope in their subject matter: boxing matches in the case of the Latham's Eidoloscope, and various performers usually seen against a white sheet in the case of the Skladanowsky's Bioskop. For the Eidoloscope, see Ethan Gates, 'The Latham Eidoloscope: A Cautionary Tale in Primacy', https://www.nyu.edu/tisch/preservation/program/student_work/2013fall/13f_2920_Gates_a2.pdf; for the Bioskop, Stephen Barber, 'The Skladanowsky Brothers: The Devil Knows', *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 56, October 2010. For a general historical overview, see Deac Rossell, 'A Chronology of Cinema, 1889-1896', *Film History*, Summer, 1995, Vol. 7, No. 2, Indiana University Press, pp. 115-236.

48 See Philip Brockman, *Eadweard Muybridge*, Tate, London 2010.

of sound–that animated objects disappeared off the edge of the screen is explicitly mentioned in Gorky's account is testament to the realisation of the off-screen insistently present in the new medium.

2.8 Noël Burch, and the two kinds of cinematic space

The second chapter of Noël Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* has a description of elegant simplicity, that, while being fundamental to the nature of moving images, also opened an avenue for investigation for photography and for painting:

> To understand cinematic space, it may prove useful to consider it as in fact consisting of *two different kinds of space*: that included within the frame and that outside the frame. For our purposes, screen space can be defined very simply as including everything perceived on the screen by the eye. Off-screen space is more complex, however. It is divided into six "segments": The immediate confines of the first four of these areas are determined by the four borders of the frame, and correspond to the four faces of an imaginary truncated pyramid projected into the surrounding space, a description that obviously is something of a simplification. A fifth segment cannot be defined with the same seeming geometric precision, yet no one will deny that there is an off-screen space "behind the camera" that is quite distinct from the four segments of space bordering the frame lines, although the characters in the film generally reach this space by passing just to the right or left of the camera. There is a sixth segment, finally, encompassing the space existing behind the set or some object in it: A character reaches it by going out a door, going around a street corner, disappearing behind a pillar or behind another person, or performing some similar act. The outer limit of this sixth segment of space is just beyond the horizon.[49]

Using Noël Burch's description of these six segments of off-screen space, it is easy to construct a schematic diagram (figure 2.10).[50] Conventional film editing frequently minimises the viewer's awareness of these screen edges, returning the gaze to the centre; Burch's purpose in describing this model is to use it as a tool to examine how the tension between on-screen and off-screen space can be used 'structurally', how the viewer's appreciation of what this space consists of can be activated in the course of a narrative. This scheme can be applied to any representation depicting space within a frame: it resembles–for good reason, as the camera reproduces Renaissance perspective–the visual pyramid described by Leon Battista Alberti in *De Pictura* (of course, Alberti was concerned about what was *inside* the visual pyramid).[51]

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49 Burch, p. 17. Italics in original.

50 For Burch's purposes, and adopted here, the model of an image using a rectangular picture plane is taken as a given, a convention ultimately derived from architecture, sufficiently deep seated to resist the appearance of lens-based images: an optical lens creates a circular image; almost all lens-based images are used, composed, and displayed with a rectangular crop applied, almost always built in to the technology itself.

51 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, translated by Cecil Grayson, Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 42-43.
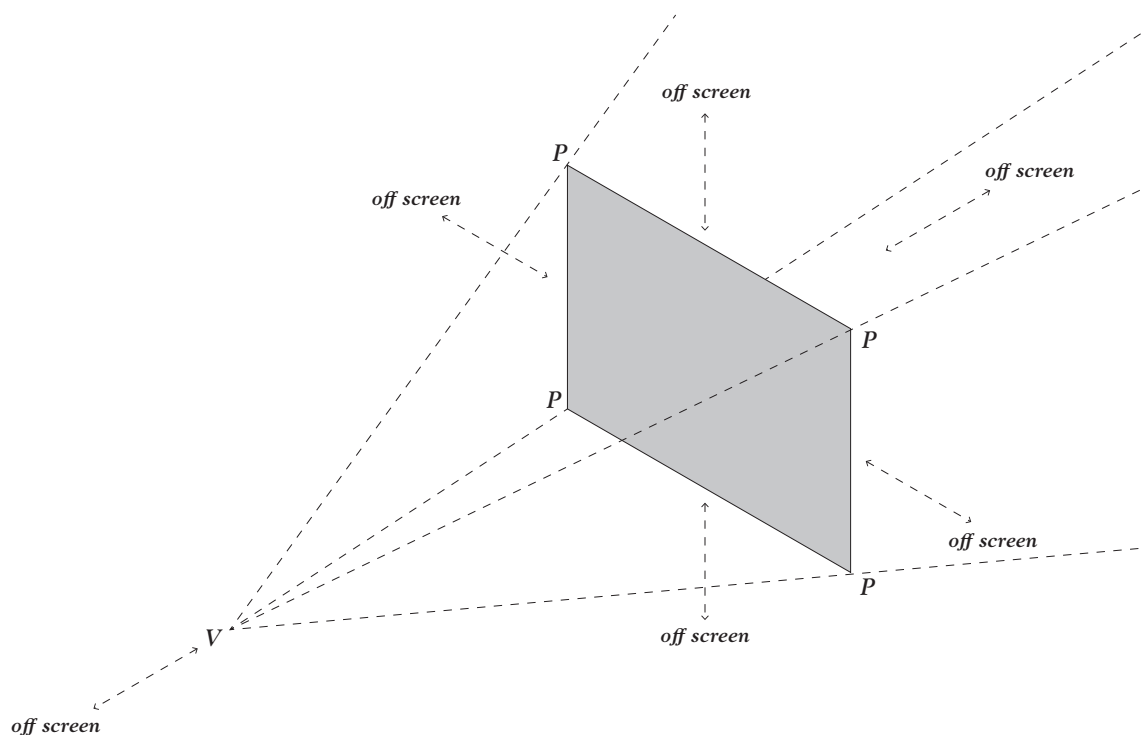
Figure 2.10, Diagram of the off-screen spaces in film adapted from Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*; ***V*** is the single view point, ***P*** the extents of the picture plane, shaded grey.

Although Noël Burch's scheme of the six segments of off-screen space can be applied to any representational system within a frame only the moving image allows for the relationship of the on screen and the off-screen to be affected by change through its duration in all its manifestations. Yet in photography the off-frame is clearly there due to its indexical nature: as Stanley Cavell writes, "You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame."[52] Eyal Peretz admits photography to share something of "the fundamental innovation of the art of film",[53] the 'off-screen':

> The photographic image, a product of the camera, is also a product of passivity; as such it shows a slice of an actual reality continuing beyond the edges of its frame. A relation between the discontinuity of the frame and the continuity of the world exists in photography in a way which does not hold for theater or painting. However, because there is no ongoing communication between the off-photograph and what we see—no constant back-and-forth between the "on" and the "off"—the mysterious dynamism between the anytime/anyplace and the actual that film effects does not really occur in photography.[54]

Is it not also possible to imagine an "ongoing communication" with the photograph and its off-frame, albeit not one temporally *in* the work but rather in the experience of the viewer's encounter with the

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52 Stanley Cavell, p. 23.

53 Peretz, p. 37.

54 Peretz, p. 220. There is a negative echo of Bryson's claims regarding counterpresence. See section 2.3 above.

photograph? Is there no "mysterious dynamism between the anytime/anyplace and the actual" present in photography? In discussing photography, I think Peretz uses 'the photograph' in a rather classical sense of a single image, entirely free-floating from any context. This is not the usual condition for viewing photography, however. Photographs are frequently seen with text, and often in conjunction with other images, as in the different iterations of *Alice's Grandmother's House*: this is common enough in contemporary photographic practices to barely need comment–Sharon Lockhart's work mentioned above, with the two photograph's relations to each other complicated through their titles, being one mere example among countless others. The particular arrangement in Lockhart's two photographs suggests a shot/reverse shot dynamic. For Victor Burgin, in 'Photography, Phantasy, Function', the camera features as the absent 'other'[55] in "imaginary command of the look":[56] in the cinema "such devices as the reverse shot close up this rent in the imaginary. The still has no reverse shot (I am of course talking about the single image)…"[57]; Lockhart provides the viewer with such a reverse shot, with spatial qualities equalising the temporality of the two frames (although one cannot really be described as a reverse shot to the other unless the tendency to 'read' from left-to-right means that the left-hand image is given some form of priority). As Burgin indicates, the presence of more than one photograph, seriality, may in part stand in for the absent other of the camera–and in doing to, this points to some articulations of the off-frame in still photography which extend its possibilities beyond the single image ("…it is not an arbitrary fact that photographs are deployed so that, almost invariably, another photograph is always already in position to receive the displaced look.")[58]

2.9 The off-frame as a tool to conceptualise presence/absence relations in an image

Throughout this thesis I use the phrase 'off-frame' as an encompassing concept, where applicable, across all forms of representation, revolving around film, photography, and painting, well-defined mediums with established histories, with existing conventions, boundaries, and exemplary practitioners–as well as possessing continuities and discontinuities. The off-frame is directly analogous to the 'off-screen', the term used by both Noël Burch and Eyal Peretz when writing about film; using the term off-frame keeps the frame as a productive and defining characteristic: this is in comparison to, for example, Gilles Deleuze's 'out-of-field' (*hors-champ*),[59] and Bernhard Comment's 'outside-the-field',[60] while the 'out of frame'[61] loses the on/off binary present with the on-screen/off-screen. Admittedly, the clear and direct antonym to the off-frame really should be the *in-frame* rather than *on*; moving from screen to frame, there is of course no semantic logic to describe what is in a representation as being an 'on-frame' in opposition to the off–the designation 'on' must surely relate to the projection of images *onto* a screen, but lacks the association back

55 There are obviously many photographs and films that include the camera in one form or another: John Hilliard's *Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)* (1971); Michael Snow's *Authorization* (1969); Jeff Wall's *Picture for Women* (1979), among others.
56 Victor Burgin, 'Photography, Phantasy, Function' (1980) in *Thinking Photography*, edited by Victor Burgin, Macmillan, London 1982, p. 191.
57 Burgin, p. 191.
58 Burgin, p. 191.
59 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, London 1986, pp. 15-18.
60 Bernard Comment, *The Panorama*, Reaktion Books, London 1999, p. 100.
61 D. N. Rodowick, *What Philosophy Wants from Images*, University of Chicago Press, London, 2017, pp. 30-33.

to Alberti's famous window analogy when we think of a classically-constructed painting creating a world on the other side of the picture plane.

In thinking about how to address some of my concerns about my practice as an artist who makes paintings from photographs, it was necessary to simplify the operations in my image-making. Removing the act of painting was the obvious way to do this, thanks to the way my practice already incorporated photography. This shift of a medium helped to identify important elements of the practice–that it is about making images of things out there in the world–but around this there are deeper interests in what images also do not or cannot show, which at one level is the image's fuller context. Revisiting earlier photographs and using strategies of reenactment helped to refine or highlight what I considered to be problems in articulating their wider contexts, location and histories, and their relationship to the already existing works of art which inspired or provoked them. In exploring photography as a medium, I was drawn to the idea of the index as a means to ensure a connection to what was being left out of the images. This in turn led to the idea of the off-frame, taken from film theory, and then applied to a broader spectrum of image making, to the photograph and to painting. Making work in film, moving photographs, was not however a productive way to explore these concerns, as the off-screen has a clear existence in film, and this would then be a mere demonstration of an already-theorised relationship. This confirmed that the more problematic and therefore more productive direction was to think about *how* the off-frame could relate to still images, to photography, but more particularly to painting, where the status of the index was no longer a direct guarantor of the existence of the world outside the frame.

3 Image/Text and the composite work of art

3.1 Adding to the photograph: seriality, text and titles

As the research practice developed, I felt that I needed to reconsider the photograph as an artwork–as a whole–and how it could achieve a condition which could be closer to film in some manner. This meant adopting a number of strategies: using seriality, the use of more than one photograph to comprise the work in total (like the juxtaposition of *Alice's Grandmother's House* with *A photograph taken 3 years and 492 kilometres from one which it superficially resembles*), and the way the titles had begun to function in these works. In my prior practice as a painter, titles had always been important, often being thought about as a means of interpretation if more than just descriptive.[62] However, this had been an intuitive process, and not a position that had been carefully thought about or looked at with any theoretical context.

Apart from the conscious use of particular formats in my prior practice, such as the postcard size, giving these paintings a uniformity, an approach of seriality was not one used before to expand the work's meaning. The perceived problems of immanence/provenance in the previous chapter called for this strategy as a form of resolution, or a means of highlighting an awareness of these concerns. In these pairings, suddenly the title of the second photograph then became important as a way to communicate the specificity of the first photograph through its relation to a superficially similar image: the work's title underlines and concretises their relation. The titles point to one important way in which the off-frame in still photographs can most readily activated: through language–in all its manifestations:[63]

> We rarely see a photograph in use which does not have a caption or a title, it is more usual to encounter photographs attached to long texts, or with copy superimposed over them. Even a photograph which has no actual writing on or around it is traversed by language when it is 'read' by a viewer…[64]

and further:

> …the influence of language goes beyond the fact of the physical presence of writing as a *deliberate* addition to the image. Even the uncaptioned photograph, framed and isolated on a gallery wall, is invaded by language when it is looked at: in memory, in association, snatches of words and images continually intermingle and exchange one for the other; what significant elements the subject recognises 'in' the photograph are inescapably supplemented from elsewhere.[65]

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62 Often descriptive titles were sufficient, but sometimes titles which appear to be purely descriptive were used as a means to indicate that a deeper reading might be appropriate to the subject of the work but, for whatever reason, this was not to be disclosed.

63 As indicated, language need not be the sole preserve of a meaningful off-frame in the still photograph, but one can see it as clearly analogous to asynchronous sound and narration in the moving image, and it can function in the same way.

64 Victor Burgin 'Looking at Photographs' (1977) in *Thinking Photography*, edited by Victor Burgin, Macmillan, London 1982, p. 144.

65 Burgin, 'Photography, Phantasy, Function', p. 192. Italics in original.

In trying to resolve some of the problems that I perceived to be present in the photographs *Alice's Grandmother's House* and *An Object Dropped in Sandy Ground*–that neither showed site, important to their creation, in the frame itself–through their reenactment as a means of commenting, if obliquely, on the fact that the original photographs could have been taken anywhere, their counterparts thus highlighted a strategy in which the use of the artwork's title became a key means to communicate the off-frame content of the work. Reconsidering titles became useful in the practice, and so titles, or text as an expansion of a title or a caption integral to the work, had a critical function in highlighting what cannot be seen in a number of works.[66] I had instinctively felt that there was something not strictly 'legitimate' about using titles in such a way, that there was a form of bad faith in doing so, but this was based on residual notions of the idea of the work of art with a hermetically-circumscribed Modernist autonomy: as a maker of an object, able to choose a title by which it could be known, this act itself would never not be legitimated by the consciousness of its act–all possibilities remained valid.

3.2 Photographs as performative trace

A number of the photographic pieces that I had been making at this point in the research were evidence of performative gestures, the photograph being a residue of that act. The photograph is unable to show the wider context of its making, not just in terms of location, as in *Alice's Grandmother's House*, where the house itself is just outside the frame, but also the act of taking its internal photograph to that specific location, the shot from the film it emulates and so on. The titles and pairing of images indicate that there is a difference to be attended to between what each shows, which then might be considered by the viewer to have wider implications. From these, I began to construct titles which contained 'positive information values', titles which refer to elements in their 'zone of production'. This could be thought of as narrativising the making of the work, something present in the earlier photographs. I was wary of depending on titles doing too much work in respect of what was present to the act of photographing, but at the same time this approach also seemed to be a legitimate one when attempting to communicate something important *about* the work not immediately evident *in* the work.

One such piece is *Six photographs taken while walking in a built up area for one hour intersecting the Greenwich Meridian between 12 noon BST and 12 noon GMT on the summer solstice* (figure 3.1). As the title asserts, I walked along the Greenwich Meridian, an artificial and unseen line, for an hour at the described time and date. The six photographs were taken whenever I found a pavement marker on the Meridian line itself: for the Millennium, the London Borough of Waltham Forest placed a number of markers in the form of a yellow and green compass rose made from thermosetting plastic on suburban streets following the Meridian.

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66 Including, for example, *CCTV* in Chapter 4, where the title refers to a CCTV camera in the painting's off-frame, of which only its *indexical sign* in the form of a distinctively-profiled shadow appears.

Figure 3.1, Nicholas Middleton, *Six photographs taken while walking in a built up area for one hour intersecting the Greenwich Meridian between 12 noon BST and 12 noon GMT on the summer solstice*

Many of the markers have disappeared, either through being entirely worn away, or the pavements themselves being replaced. Each time a marker (or the remnants of a marker) was found, I placed the camera's tripod directly over it, and, using a compass, I pointed the camera due south towards Greenwich and the origin of the Meridian. The determining factor of what the photographs show was defined by fully extending the camera's tripod, using a 50mm lens, and the fact that the Meridian marker is out of the frame, unseen beneath the camera. As a result, the Meridian markers are in close proximity to the edge of the frame but do not indicate their presence to the frame, and are only obliquely alluded to in the title.

Having made this series of photographs on the Greenwich Meridian, the idea of this artificial line, present in how a territory is represented on a map, existing as an invisible presence, felt productive and I made two other works in relation to it, at Pole Hill on the edge of London where an obelisk marks the Greenwich Meridian from 1824; a trigonometry pillar to its east (figure 3.2; hard to read in the black and white image) marks the revised and later universally adopted Meridian. These two lines overlay the

landscape in an imaginary but once critical system where longitude originates.

Figure 3.2, Nicholas Middleton, *A photograph taken at twelve noon on the winter solstice facing due south towards Greenwich from a position between the meridian of 1824 (right) and the meridian of 1884 (left).* Photograph, 2021

As a photograph of something that cannot be represented but was somehow 'present' to the act of photographing, then explicitly described in the title, this work attempted to expand the idea of the picture's off-frame into a direction which was hard to meaningfully define, and so it begins to undermine any thought of demonstrating the idea of the off-frame through its making. I revisited the site and its subject for another photograph (figure 3.3), using a hand-held mirror to complicate the *space* within the photograph, to think through the off-frame more clearly, by showing the motif of one Meridian marker against the other.

The reflection discloses the off-frame space behind the camera, while still referring to the artificial lines of the two Meridians which cannot be seen–but are described on the plaque in the photograph, legible when printed at a sufficient scale. The title here describes what the photograph is doing without having to assert a form of unseen content, as with the earlier picture. The necessary symmetry and compositional placing of all the elements alludes (in a schematic and truncated way) to perspective construction, while the mirrored surface and the backwards glance suggests the arrangement of Brunelleschi's first perspective demonstration panel, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.3, Nicholas Middleton, *Converging the markers of two different Greenwich Meridians, from 1824 and 1850. Pole Hill, at 12 noon on the spring equinox, 20-03-2022*. Photograph, 2022

3.3 The limits of representation within a given medium

The Meridian, being an artificial and imaginary line, cannot be photographed, although some of its structural apparatuses can. Other photographic pieces made around this time were concerned with the limitations of what the photographic medium can–and can't–show. The film and still photographs both titled *Heatwave* (figure 3.4) were shot during the summer of 2018, with the work resolved through the addition of texts in 2019. The film showed two views of dry, bleached, and uncut grass just perceptibly moving in a slight breeze, shot using 8mm film stock with a 'process before' date of 1976, the year of the previous record-breaking heatwave in the UK that 2018 was compared to. The still photographs were made on the same film stock to document the process of making the film, and were exhibited with texts to accompany each image, describing the process (see Appendix for texts); these were more successful in conveying the essential context behind the film. These texts were technical descriptions with allusions and analogies appropriate to the subject matter, linking the materiality of the film to the physical world that it represents.
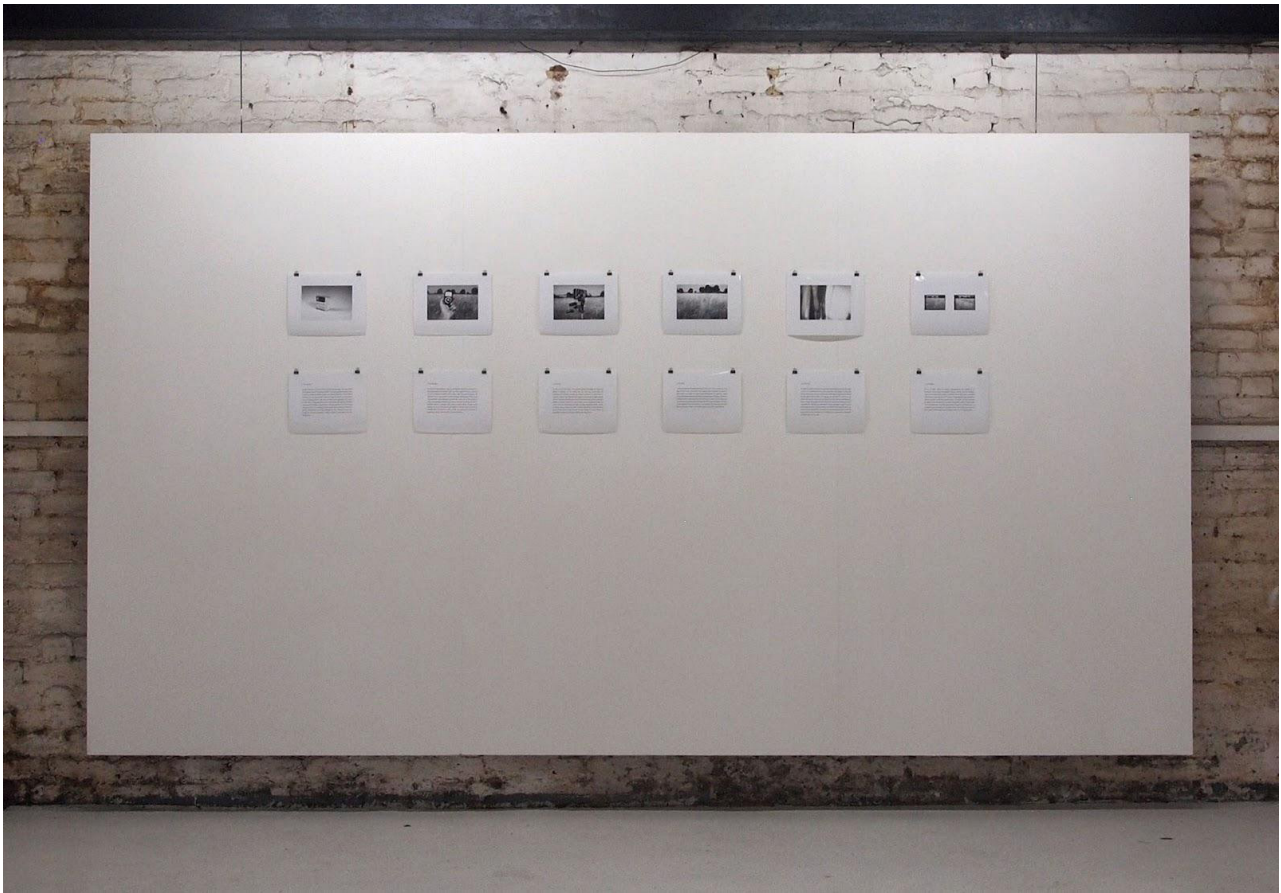
Figure 3.4, Nicholas Middleton, *Heatwave*, 12 photographs each 20x25cm, installation 'Undertow', Sluice HQ, 2019

The Hottest Day of the Year (figure 3.5) shows a film negative, hanging to dry, of blinds on a window, photographed on the hottest day of the year in 2020; the print itself is a paper negative, thus returning the hanging negative to a positive. The title of the piece asserts something it is unable to show, recording light only, while the structure of a picture within the picture reinforces an awareness of the frame, or frames, and two different registers of time in the photograph *of* the photograph.

Figure 3.5, Nicholas Middleton, *The Hottest Day of the Year*, silver gelatin paper negative, 10x15cm

A photograph exposed for the looped duration of a radio transmission (figure 3.6) has a similar relationship to its production, but also to the idea of the photograph being an indexical witness to something outside its means of representation. This shows a lamp post in the centre of the image with a radio transmitter, playing out a loop of Graeme Miller's site-specific sound installation *Linked*, only audible with a specially-designed radio receiver. The radio waves carrying Miller's carefully-constructed and looped soundwork pass, unrecorded, through the photographic emulsion: outside the narrow section of the electromagnetic spectrum to which the light-sensitive emulsion reacts, the title asserts the conditions of its making, not evident in its actual appearance (and not disclosing the content of that radio transmission).[67]

Figure 3.6, Nicholas Middleton, *A photograph exposed for the looped duration of a radio transmission*, cyanotype, 14x17cm

Although a communication of the narrative of the work (or the work's production) is necessary for these off-frame elements to meaningfully exist in the works discussed here, the indexicality of the photographic medium returns as a guarantor of the existence–at the time of production–of something that the medium *cannot* record, such as radio transmissions. The presence of something invisible within the frame is exemplified by Robert Barry's *Inert Gas Series* from 1969 (figure 3.7): each photograph shows a measured

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67 My desire to make a set of photographs of Graeme Miller's transmitters from his site-specific sound work *Linked* was frustrated by the artist himself deciding that they should be removed after nearly twenty years; I had time to make some test exposures to work through some technical aspects of how I might take the photographs before the possibility of completing the series no longer existed.

volume of an inert gas (unreactive and therefore colourless, not visible in any way) being released into the atmosphere.[68] Barry's photographs in this series are the documentation of an action or performance, in a sense 'not' the work itself, but its residuum. Gases escaping the metal cylinder are within the frame, circumscribed by its boundaries, but not 'present' in the picture, and exist in a form of the photographs' 'off-frame': the adjacency of the title provides this.

Figure 3.7, Robert Barry, *Inert Gas Series: Helium*, 1969. © Robert Barry, all rights reserved.

There are also sufficient visual clues inside the frame for the viewer to 'complete' the events they represent– when Barry's photographs were first 'shown', their only manifestation was a poster, blank except for a line of text directing the reader to a telephone number which led to a recorded message describing the action of the work.

3.4 The title as an 'essential property' of a work of art

Having worked as an artist for many years, exhibiting not infrequently, and occasionally having work included in publications, as well as maintaining a website and a presence on social media platforms, the idea of the title of a work of art was something intuitively part of the process of resolving artwork before it left the studio, either in a literal, physical fashion or metaphorically by appearing in reproduction in some form. I had a sense of the power of a title, and, as the research progressed, the use of photography helped to refine this: I was aware that the conditions of its making, its creation, were different from those

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68 Darsie Alexander, 'Something out of Nothing: A Conversation with Robert Barry', *Art on Paper*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (January/ February 2004), pp. 62-65.

of painting, and, feeling that something was frequently being left out of the final image, this was a way of putting that back into the work, reinserting something from its zone of production, attached to the image but not in the image.

In his essay 'Entitling', John Fisher ascribes painting's turn away from representational concerns as the historical point at which titles of artworks no longer needed to refer "primarily" to what was represented.[69] By implication, this changing need embodied in the use of titles itself points to a changing function of works of art, through evolving conditions of production and consumption (as, simplistically, artists making speculative works of art, displayed for a more general viewing public, compared to previous models of patronage and religious or allegorical functions). For Fisher,

> …titling calls for some special acknowledgment of value or relationship. [...] Titles are names which have a sense; they call for responses. They determine, to a degree to which significant attention has never been given, interpretations and other acts.[70]

and

> ...for all of its hermeneutical difficulties, the relationship itself is inescapable. Not all artworks are titled. Not all artworks need to be titled. But when an artwork is titled, for better or for worse, *a process of interpretation* has inexorably begun.[71]

Fisher describes the ability of titles to lead and mislead; he describes the "simplest situation" of what a title is as being "where an inscription of the title is physically part of the work",[72] citing Goya's aquatint *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*: "No other title fits…"[73] However, Hazard Adams, in 'Titles, Titling, and Entitlement to',[74] disputes this: that Goya's aquatint has an inscription does not mean that Goya *could* have titled the print differently, expanding on–or at variance to–its internal inscription.[75] Hazard Adams quotes Jerrold Levinson's "four important theses"[76] on the title:

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69 John Fisher, 'Entitling', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Dec., 1984), pp. 286-298. Fisher's cardinal example of this is in the practice of James McNeill Whistler, specifically with *Arrangement in Grey and Black*, often colloquially referred to as 'The Artist's Mother'. Fisher, p. 295.
70 Fisher, pp. 297-298.
71 Fisher, p. 298. My italics.
72 Fisher, p. 286.
73 Fisher, p. 287.
74 Hazard Adams, 'Titles, Titling, and Entitlement to', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Autumn, 1987, pp. 7-21.
75 "…there is no reason to claim that Goya's painting [sic] could not possibly have another title than the words inscribed on it. Words inscribed on a painting can have functions other than titles. All Goya need have done was to declare that it had another title. Then the inscription would have had to be regarded as something other than a title, perhaps like statements inscribed on Blake's Laocoon. (Fisher does acknowledge that not all inscriptions are titles.)" Adams, p. 10. In Chapter 6, *The Picture of 'We Three'* contains that particular sequence of words, among many others, but equally, without changing anything about the painting, I *might* have legitimately entitled it *You Are The Third Loggerhead*, creating a much longer and more wilful chain of associations.
76 Adams, p. 9.

(1) Titles of artworks are often *integral parts* of them, constitutive of what such works are.

(2) Titles of artworks are plausibly *essential properties* of them, in many cases.

(3) The *title slot* for a work of art is never devoid of *aesthetic potential*; *how* it is filled, or that it is *not* filled, is always aesthetically relevant. (A work differently titled will always be aesthetically different.)

(4) There is significant disanalogy between titles of artworks and *names of persons*, particularly in regard to their roles in the understanding and interpretation of the objects they denote.[77]

Adams accepts (3) and (4) "unconditionally", but finds (1) and (2) to not be categorical enough:

> If, as Levinson insists, the only true titles are "those given by the author" (and I accept this), then it seems to me that a true title must *always* be integral to the work. Further, I cannot see how one can claim a distinction between essential and inessential properties of works of art. Some properties are essential to some interpretations and inessential to others, but they are all simply parts of the work, and the true title is one of these.[78]

Although for Fisher the particular emphasis on the importance of title of a work of art as functioning as more than just a descriptor comes about through painting's turn away from representation, this still applies to work that is representational, whether painting or photography: the title can thereby highlight for the viewer the difference between what the image shows and what it is. This has been the case for many of the paintings and particularly photographs in my practice, expressing the difficulties and limits of representation, alerting the viewer to something important to the generation of the work, but not recorded in the image itself. However, titles of works referred to in this chapter (and to some extent the previous one) such as *Six photographs taken while walking in a built up area for one hour intersecting the Greenwich Meridian between 12 noon BST and 12 noon GMT on the summer solstice*, *Converging the markers of two different Greenwich Meridians, from 1824 and 1850. Pole Hill, at 12 noon on the spring equinox, 20-03-2022*, and *A photograph exposed for the looped duration of a radio transmission* become quite unwieldy and in some respects problematic as a result, functioning more as a caption than a title. I felt as though this was not then the most productive way to develop the practice, especially as with some of these titles, it might be possible to apprehend the central concern in such a piece entirely through the title, leaving the image behind and operating–beyond a description of the zone of production of the work–almost like an injunction to the viewer, for which language itself would suffice. One work which took this to an extreme is *The Latent Image* (figure 3.8; see Appendix for text). The work comprises three unfixed photographic prints of a text which describes the photographic latent image, its relation to the history of the medium, the transition to digital image-making and my experience of taking the photograph *Alice's Grandmother's House*. The three prints were displayed on an exterior gallery wall and were subject to daylight for the duration of the exhibition and changed accordingly.[79]

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77 Quoted in Adams, pp. 9-10. From Jerrold Levinson, 'Titles,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 44, No.1, 1985. Italics in original.

78 Adams, p10. Italics in original.

79 'Earthwise' at Beaconsfield Gallery, London 2023. Ideally, I would have wanted the prints to become so dark as to be illegible, but this did not occur.
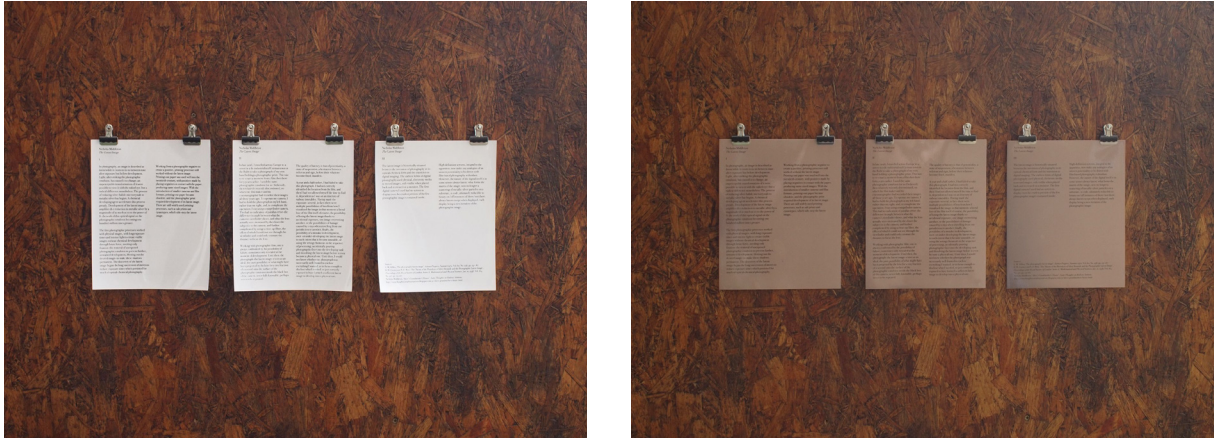
Figure 3.8, Nicholas Middleton, *The Latent Image*, unfixed silver gelatin prints, each 20x25cm, installation 'Earthwise', Beaconsfield Gallery, 2023

3.5 The central marginality of the title

Hazard Adams in 'Titles, Titling, and Entitlement to' begins with stating: "I shall conclude that titles are parts of works; though they are marginal, their marginality is central, and they are always synecdoches."[80] After discussing Levinson's 'the true title' (which for Adams, 'title' alone will suffice),[81] that designator given to the work of art by its author, Adams then describes the apparent "problem of the particular issues presented by the verbal title in relation to the plastic object"[82] and that, given the dual authorship of object and title (where this is certain), the resulting artwork is really a *composite*.[83] Adams asserts that titles are 'always' synecdoches, the figure of the synecdoche being a form of metonymy, where the part stands in for the whole.[84] This emphasises the indivisible nature of title/work, or more accurately the equation of *title+art object=(composite) artwork.*

This conception of an artwork "raises the fundamental question"[85] as to

> whether or not the nonverbal aspect of a work is inevitably secondary to the words. As linguistic creatures, so-called, can we as viewers of paintings ever do other than read them, turning them into words and attributing to them a verbal source? Or is there a language (or perhaps an antilanguage) of painting that stands in relation to the words of the title?[86]

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80 Adams, p. 7.
81 Adams, p. 12.
82 Adams, p. 12.
83 Adams, p. 13, with reference to W. T. J. Mitchell's *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, University of Chicago Press, 1986.
84 Which has a certain affinity to the 'metonymic expansion' of Roland Barthes' *punctum,* as discussed in Chapter 6 and in conclusion, Chapter 7.
85 Adams, p. 15.
86 Adams, p. 15.

Jacqueline Hassink's *The Table of Power* series (1993-1995)[87] activate this relationship between title, text and image in constructive ways, most notably when the project produced no image at all. The photographs show the boardrooms of the top forty most powerful multinational corporations in Europe. These were shown with texts–thus making these composite works of art–which identify the company, its address, turnover, and incidental facts about the boardroom and the table itself:[88] absent from the photographs are the members of the board. Where no permission was granted to photograph the boardroom, Hassink represented this lack of access through photographic prints made to the same dimensions as the other images, but entirely black, accompanied by the same information, and the communications relating to the refusal of access.
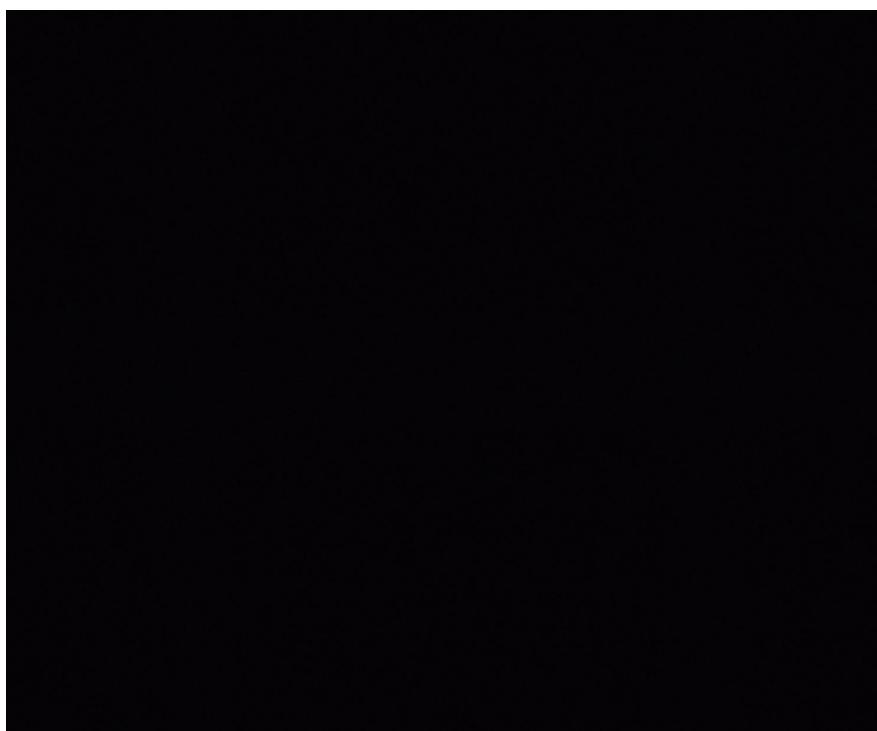
Figure 3.9, Jacqueline Hassink, *The Table of Power: The meeting table of the Board of Directors of Deutsche Bank*, 2009-11. From Jacqueline Hassink, *The Table of Power 2*, 2012. Reproduced by permission of Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Hassink made a second series of *The Table of Power* following the financial crash of 2009 with the same methodology,[89] receiving fewer refusals for this second series, although the eleven refusals from the forty multinationals chosen were represented as before, with a completely black photographic print. The individual prints are all titled 'The meeting table of the board of directors of…' and the name of the

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87   Jacqueline   Hassink,   http://www.jacquelinehassink.com/jh/site/paragraph/item/22092/THE-TABLE-OF-POWER- project-The-Table-of-Power-1993-95 Accessed 27/06/20.

88 Jacqueline Hassink, *The Table of Power* press release http://www.jacquelinehassink.com/jh/media/original/24/the_table_of_power_press.pdf Accessed 23/06/20.

89   http://www.jacquelinehassink.com/jh/site/paragraph/item/22159/THE-TABLE-OF-POWER-2-project-The-Table-of-Power-2-2009-11 Accessed 26/06/20.

company-including those which refused permission.[90] Thus the title 'The meeting table of the Board of Directors of Deutsche Bank' (figure 3.9) asserts that the particular photographic print it designates in the series is a representation about which this particular statement is true, despite its inability to show that it is so.[91]

3.6 *Gants Hill* and the composite work of art

A different linguistic tactic emerged through resolving a piece titled *Gants Hill* (figure 3.10). The reason for taking the photograph that now comprises part of the work was that it shows the site of the Gants Hill Odeon in east London. This came from a series of photographs of cinemas–or sites of cinemas–where I would have seen films as a child. Although this was a clear organising principle, this set of photographs felt underdeveloped as a distinct work, and I considered how I could expand one in particular into an artwork. In other work in this chapter I began to feel as though I was losing sight of the off-frame as a meaningful way to think about the nature of images and what they show and do not show. I wrote a text to complement the photographic image, intended to become an integral part of the work, the image and text having equal weight when shown together.
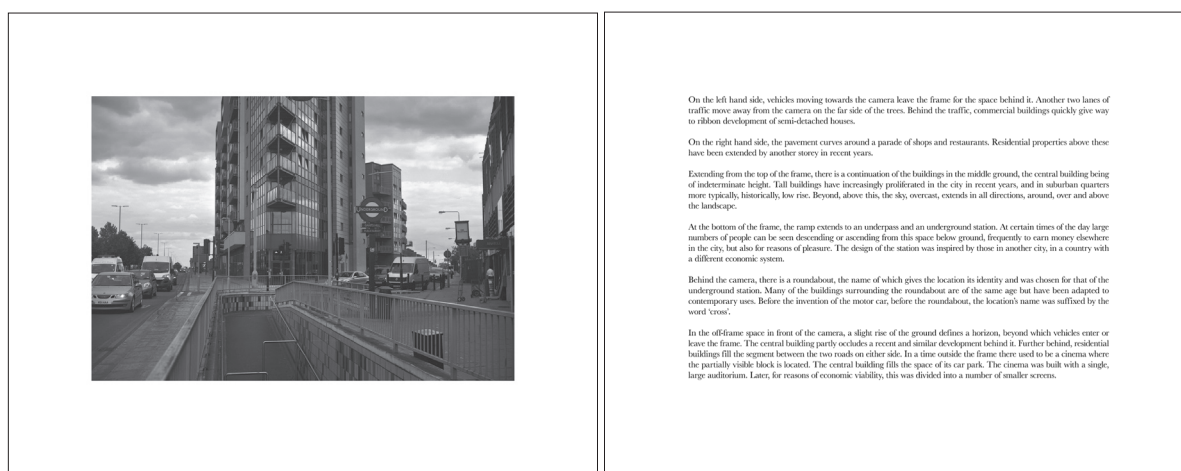
Figure 3.10, Nicholas Middleton, *Gants Hill*, photograph and text, 2019/2021

90 Jacqueline Hassink, *The Table of Power,* 2009-11 press release http://www.jacquelinehassink.com/jh/media/original/d6/the_table_of_power_2_press.pdf Accessed 27/06/20.

91 Unable to find an image of Jacqueline Hassink's photograph 'The meeting table of the Board of Directors of Deutsche Bank'–which I had seen in the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam–as not all photographs from the series are illustrated on the artist's website, rather than create a black rectangle of the correct proportions, I downloaded the jpeg file from the page 'The meeting table of the Board of Directors of The Royal Bank of Scotland' (www.jacquelinehassink.com/jh/media/original/03/royal_bank_of_scotland.jpg Accessed 23/06/20; A Google image search for the series does not show any of the black images). This would have to stand in for the absent black photograph; in a sense, the image illustrating 'The meeting table of the Board of Directors of Deutsche Bank' on this page does *not* embody what the title says it is, in addition to what it does *not* show.

For the text, I explicitly used Noël Burch's model of the six segments of off-screen space, to structure this around the off-frame of a single, still image. The six separate paragraphs relate to each segment in Burch's model. It is an experiment in writing to the off-frame and uses the idea of the 'retrospective'[92] off-frame through memory and history, articulating this off-frame in relation to the photograph's clear demonstration of perspective: the effect of depth recession is clearly evident in the choice of the point of view and its framing. The text draws the viewer's attention to the two vanishing points indicated by the diminishing rows of streetlights, towards the left and right of the picture, bisected by the projecting acute angle of the building in the centre of the composition, mirrored by the opening of the space immediately in front with the subway entrance. Through the printed text which accompanies the photograph, the viewer creates this narration, activating the imaginary off-frame space of the still image: the text draws the viewer's attention towards the edges of the frame, and by doing so, the space outside the frame in the final paragraph, explicitly using the term 'off-frame' in the text: the spatial dimension of the off-frame was easiest to conceptualise, although this then also incorporates the temporal.

The text reads:

> On the left hand side, vehicles moving towards the camera leave the frame for the space behind it. Another two lanes of traffic move away from the camera on the far side of the trees. Behind the traffic, commercial buildings quickly give way to ribbon development of semi-detached houses.

> On the right hand side, the pavement curves around a parade of shops and restaurants. Residential properties above these have been extended by another storey in recent years.

> Extending from the top of the frame, there is a continuation of the buildings in the middle ground, the central building being of indeterminate height. Tall buildings have increasingly proliferated in the city in recent years, and in suburban quarters more typically, historically, low rise. Beyond, above this, the sky, overcast, extends in all directions, around, over and above the landscape.

> At the bottom of the frame, the ramp extends to an underpass and an underground station. At certain times of the day large numbers of people can be seen descending or ascending from this space below ground, frequently to earn money elsewhere in the city, but also for reasons of pleasure. The design of the station was inspired by those in another city, in a country with a different economic system.

> Behind the camera, there is a roundabout, the name of which gives the location its identity and was chosen for that of the underground station. Many of the buildings surrounding the roundabout are of the same age but have been adapted to

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92 Burch, p21.

contemporary uses. Before the invention of the motor car, before the roundabout, the location's name was suffixed by the word 'cross'.

In the off-frame space in front of the camera, a slight rise of the ground defines a horizon, beyond which vehicles enter or leave the frame. The central building partly occludes a recent and similar development behind it. Further behind, residential buildings fill the segment between the two roads on either side. In a time outside the frame there used to be a cinema where the partially visible block is located. The central building fills the space of its car park. The cinema was built with a single, large auditorium. Later, for reasons of economic viability, this was divided into a number of smaller screens.[93]

In writing the text, I did consider that the work *could* exist as a video, with the text as a spoken narration to a static camera, recording the scene as framed in the photograph with a duration defined by the length of the voiceover. However, the effect of this would be to prioritise the physical movements above all others: with a still image, the traffic is fixed within the frame in entirely the same manner as the coming and going of buildings over decades and it is the *lack* of movement in the image which expands the work. As described above, the 'retrospective' off-frame comes into play. Noël Burch defines off-screen space as either "predictive and imaginary or retrospective and concrete";[94] here, on first viewing the photograph before reading the text, aspects of the spatial off-frame in the "predictive and imaginary" mode are easy to conceive, such as the top of the centrally-positioned building cut off by the top edge of the frame, or the roads disappearing into the distance. Existing within the duration of looking, it is not inconceivable that the relationship between the image and text creates a "back and forth" that Peretz denies the photograph.[95] This is, of course, a movement back and forth between a photograph and a text, intended to progressively reveal information about what is seen, structured in such a way as to increasingly foreground the temporal over the spatial, but, as described above, the practice of display and dissemination of photographs almost always includes text, even if only as a title or author.

The final paragraph points to the reason for the photograph's existence: the absent Gants Hill Odeon, demolished in the 1990s. Through the text the viewer is asked to picture the absent cinema, then taken inside the cinema itself. The approach taken in *Gants Hill* developed from a piece called *Paper Cinema* (figure 3.11), which comprises two photographic prints in which both image and text are combined in the photographic print to possess a seamless, discrete common materiality.

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93 The text for *Gants Hill* received editing suggestions from Paula Fitzsimons when submitted for publication in *Prova*. This helped to make the phrasing more precise.
94 Burch, p. 23.
95 Peretz, p. 220.

On the left hand side of the screen, an image of sunlight passing through a canopy of leaves, forming circular patterns on the ground.

Observations in the ancient world of the behaviour of light during a partial eclipse are the first realisation of those properties which allow an image to be formed by projection; that the patches of light beneath a canopy of leaves formed a crescent shape clearly indicated that the circles of light more commonly seen are in fact images of the sun, the principle behind the camera obscura.

This image, of circles of light on the ground, was taken at the start of a roll of film. Stray light, entering obliquely through the film canister's light trap, commonly referred to as a leak, has caused the image to be obscured. In the darkroom, the burning in – or additional exposure of more light - is an attempt to ameliorate this leak.

The photographic image is made positive by the action of light shining through a negative: what appears as the grain is in fact the traces of light passing through gaps in the grain. Each black dot on the photographic paper is an image of the light source inside the enlarger, itself a mechanical analogy of the sun that it indexically reproduces.

On the right hand side of the screen, an image of the leaves themselves, animated by an unseen wind.

Among the earliest films shown to the public, the movement of inanimate objects excited a special interest. That animate bodies could be represented in movement was clearly understood as an extension of earlier optical toys that exploited the perceptual basis of the moving image. The movement of the inanimate revealed something else, its archetype being the trace of wind in the leaves forming the background of a shot, returned to by many film makers since.

Film took photography's capaciousness and extended this through the multiple image with the dimension of time. The lens renders anything within the frame with indifference, its mechanical reproduction does not differentiate between its ostensible subject and that subject's surroundings. Unable to control the viewer's gaze on the screen, the possibility of an open form arises.

A mark of the camera's indifference was the revelation that film could disclose the life of objects. A screen of leaves becomes indicative of this life, a life clearly seen in its movement, an indexical sign of a force not visible

Figure 3.11, *Paper Cinema*, Nicholas Middleton, silver gelatin prints, 30.5x24cm each, 2018

This was derived from an idea for a short film which would have juxtaposed images of sunlight being projected through a canopy of leaves with shots of the leaves themselves, moving in the wind. The circles of sunlight on the ground are projections of the sun, through the canopy's pinhole effect, the physical mechanics of which led to the invention of photography; accounts of reactions to early cinema not infrequently included a fascination with the movement of inanimate objects, exemplified by wind moving the leaves of trees. In the place of a film I produced two photographic prints incorporating text (see Appendix) originally intended to be heard as a voiceover. The viewer is then left to imagine the film itself from the still images and reading the texts.

Gants Hill and *Paper Cinema* (and *Heatwave*) were both as far as I wanted to go in this direction: there was a sense that the balance of text to image was not so weighted towards the text itself. It is important to emphasise that the texts in these works were not concerned with explaining the images but with extending or expanding them, and letting the *composite* work approach the condition of film. Indeed, both *Gants Hill* and *Paper Cinema* came out of the desire to make something that, as the ideas behind them were developing, could have found its final form as a film with a voiceover. However, I liked the appeal to the viewer's imagination in the interplay between looking at the static images, reading the texts, returning to the images, and conjuring movement in the viewer's imagination. Although there may be a complexity to be further productively explored in the relation of the text to image in these works, the single photograph in *Gants Hill* and the description of its perspectival effects would then lead on to considerations of perspective itself as a means to activate the off-frame.

4 Perspective and the Off-frame

4.1 The presence of space outside representation: *Painting comprising four components and six segments*

Wanting to apply Noël Burch's scheme of the six segments of off-screen space[96] to a work in painting (see Chapter 2 and figure 2.9), I looked for an appropriate means to do so. The installation piece *Painting comprising four components and six segments* (figures 4.1-4.4) is an attempt to indicate in purely visual or graphical terms the presence of space outside that which it depicts. The piece consists of four separate paintings on paper in monochrome, each being the same size: two of these contain a representational image, described here as the *picture area*. These two picture areas are rectangles in a landscape format, and are abutted on each of their four sides with a rectangle of the same size and dimensions, painted a mid-grey. The other two paintings are rectangles painted mid-grey, the same size, dimensions, and colour as the mid-grey rectangles in the paintings which contain the picture area. These grey rectangles represent in an entirely schematic manner Burch's six described segments, although, having made the equivalent of a shot-reverse shot construction with the painted work, the four segments abutting the picture area are duplicated in these paintings, and the space 'in front of the camera' is bounded by the limits of the space represented in the picture area. The decisions concerning the scale of the various segments–the picture areas and the abstract grey segments–were determined by the size of a four-by-six inch photographic print, which is also roughly that of a typical postcard (see Chapter 1 and *Houses on the Edge of a City*). There is something about the hand-sized scale that has long appealed to me.

The piece is intended to be installed on two facing walls or surfaces, with one of the paintings containing the picture area shown next to one with the single mid-grey section (figure 4.1).[97] On the facing wall, directly opposite, are the other two paintings, arranged so the single grey rectangle faces that with the picture area and vice versa. When a viewer is engaged by looking into a picture area, the single grey painted rectangle would be directly behind the viewer.

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96 Burch, p. 17.
97 Figure 4.1 was made in Adobe Illustrator, using the one-point perspective tool, which relies on a Renaissance perspective model.
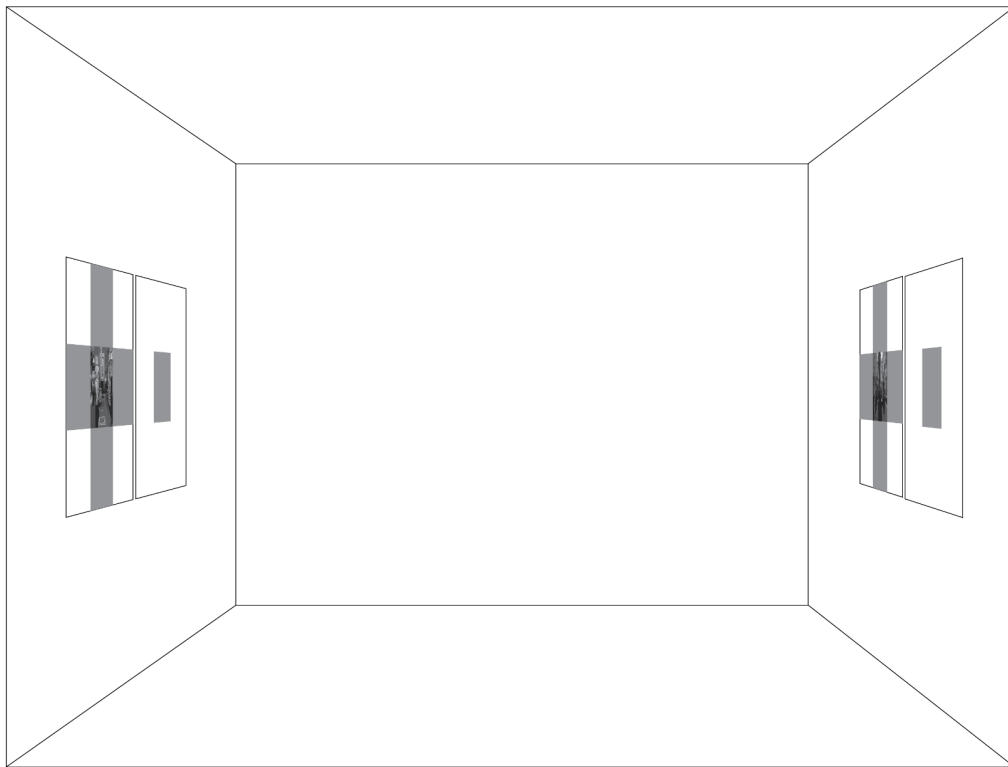
Figure 4.1, Nicholas Middleton, *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, schematic
installation diagram (not to scale)

The painted grey rectangles are intended to have a visual equivalence to the representational picture area rather than to be descriptive of the space outside this area, intended as a means to highlight the nature of the act of framing, that this is just one choice amongst the near-infinite possibilities of how these boundaries could be drawn, turning to either side or up or down. Implicitly, these non-representational parts of the painting also stress the flatness of the painted surface which the representational areas pull against. The compositions of the paintings with the picture areas also suggest the flattened net of a cuboid object, an operation of turning three dimensions into two. The grey rectangles displayed directly opposite each picture area are intended to suggest to the viewer an awareness of the space existing *behind* that represented in the picture area, in some sense through the other side of the viewer's head, if the viewer recognises the position of this part of the work and its significance in the work's overall scheme.

Figure 4.2, Nicholas Middleton, *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, oil on paper, each component 30x45cm, 2020

The two representational picture areas in the work show views of Room 46b in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Known as the Weston Cast Court, this contains plaster and other casts of Early to High Renaissance sculpture and architecture. In my desire to find an appropriate subject, having conceived of the general scheme of the paintings, each picture area had to show something with a definite sense of depth, and thus space. The construction of the piece as a whole could have relied on any illusionistically-rendered three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, but this felt incomplete. The space of the Victoria and Albert Museum cast courts was chosen specifically as these contain electrotyped copies of the East doors from the Baptistery in Florence, made by Lorenzo Ghiberti,[98] a displaced analogy for the birthplace of perspective–if such a thing could be said to exist. In the first years of the fifteenth century, Filippo Brunelleschi made two paintings on panel, both since lost, demonstrating the art of perspective.[99] One of these panels was a painting of the Baptistery in Florence. Descriptions of this panel are sufficiently detailed[100] to locate precisely the viewpoint from which it was made–just inside the main doors of the cathedral in Florence, which directly faces the East doors of the Baptistery itself.

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98 Victoria & Albert Museum collection record 'Doors - Gates of Paradise': http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O127840/gates-of-paradise-doors-ghiberti-lorenzo/ Retrieved 16/02/2020.

99 See Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, and Eugenio Battisti, *Brunelleschi The Complete Work*, pp. 102-113, Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art*, pp. 11-14, and Michael Kubory, *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art*, pp. 32-38.

100 See Damisch, pp. 89-90, and Kemp, Appendix II, pp. 344-345.

Figure 4.3, Nicholas Middleton, *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, (detail) oil on paper, 2020

The viewpoint of one of the picture areas faces the cast of the doors from one end of the Weston Cast Court (figure 4.3); the other is a reverse angle viewpoint, looking back in the direction of the first from a position directly in front of the doors (figure 4.4). The arrangement of the various other casts in the space, placed grid-like on the floor, creates a strong sense of depth recession appropriate to the general scheme of the work. Obscuring the Baptistery doors themselves is the cast of Michelangelo's *David*, making it less clear that these doors are the focus of the work.[101] Initially, I thought that this obscuring was unhelpful in the making of the work; however, that objects in space occlude other objects is perhaps relevant or apposite. The reverse angle is dominated by *David* again, but immediately in front of the doors is a cast of Donatello's rather smaller *David* being dwarfed by Michelangelo's version directly in front. The size of Michelangelo's *David* in front of the doors means that the figure is cut off by the edge of the picture area at the level of the chest, perhaps serendipitous: Michelangelo's *David* is sufficiently iconic that a viewer of the work can imaginatively reconstruct the missing portion.

Although *Painting comprising four components and six segments* was designed with the intention of demonstrating by graphical means an equal weight to the off-frame space bordering the 'in-frame' space of the picture area, the choice of subject for these picture areas, two opposing views of the same room, allows the work to further develop the theme of the off-frame in relation to the perspective construction of illusionistic space.

101 Michelangelo's *David* used to be positioned less centrally, further into the corner of the room, giving a clearer view from a greater distance of the doors before recent refurbishment.

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4.2 Technologies of perspective and the placing of the viewer

Although painted from photographs, the picture areas in the work could have been drawn or painted by hand, constructed through the application of linear perspective. Both photographs I worked from were taken with a 50mm lens on 35mm film, approximating a 'normal' angle of view, that is, without the distortions of a wide angle or the apparent flattening or compression of long focus lenses.[102]

Figure 4.4, Nicholas Middleton, *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, (detail) oil on paper, 2020

The two representational areas in the work were painted in black and white as these were made from black and white photographs, but this monochrome colour scheme does also provide an equivalence with the non-picture areas, each a neutral mid-tone, with the grey paint having the same material presence as the representational parts of the work. This might not be appreciated if the work had been made photographically. In *Painting comprising four components and six segments* the grey rectangles frame the central picture areas in such a way as to appear collage-like: the abstract and pictorial registers are somewhat

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102 Indeed, Damisch explicitly links Brunelleschi's viewing construction for this panel to the operation of a lens (Damisch, p. 378). In the most detailed near-contemporary description, the hole through Brunelleschi's Baptistery panel that the viewer looks through is conical; the size of this hole at the front is explicitly likened to that of a *lentil*. Linguistically, this simile immediately brings to mind a lens in and of itself. See Damisch p. 129, Kubory p. 32, Kemp p. 344.

discontinuous.[103]

Brunelleschi's choice of the Florentine Baptistery as a demonstration of perspective construction has particular implications: the octagonal shape of the building provides lines from the two visible oblique sides that must recede to two different vanishing points, either off or at the very edge of Brunelleschi's panel, suggesting that the illusionistic depth created in the missing panel extends to these points, continuing outside the frame, beyond the bounds of the depicted space. Brunelleschi's viewpoint in his panel of the Baptistery means that the horizon line of the painting would have run through the double-doors at eye-level height, mimicked in my piece, their meeting being the lateral mid-point of the panel. To enhance the illusionistic qualities of his work, Brunelleschi devised a means of viewing it whereby the painted side of the panel faced a mirror, with the spectator's eye placed at a peephole drilled through the back of the panel itself, looking at the painting reflected in the mirror. This hole must have logically coincided with the doors of the Baptistery itself on the front of the panel.[104] The inclusion of the reverse angle view in my piece, in a sense, also puts the viewer into the position of the peephole in Brunelleschi's panel, looking out from a hole drilled through the Baptistery doors. In *The Origin of Perspective*, Hubert Damisch is explicit about this:

> Even if the Brunelleschi configuration served only to demonstrate the specular coincidence of the point of view and the vanishing point, this demonstration would suffice to confer upon such an "invention" its value and meaning as *origin*, without there being any need to attribute to its author a premonitory view of subsequent theoretical developments.[105]

The invention of perspective, allowing for an internally consistent world, in which everything could be placed, creates the *conditions* for the presence of the off-frame through the force of its internal consistency: objects occluded by other objects within the frame, truncated by the frame, continue into this consistent world, cut by the frame. The photographic lens and its imposed frame reproduces this perspective construction of the world.

4.3 From three dimensions out of two to two dimensions out of three

Tracing the idea of the off-frame to the invention of perspective, Eyal Peretz sees this as the foundation of "a general logic of framing that preoccupies the work of art in modernity" which 'culminates' in cinema[106] and, by implication, the off-frame finds its fullest articulation as the off screen of film. To the invention

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103 As an exercise in addressing these spatial relationships, the painting may have had greater validity had it not relied on a photographic referent, which may confuse its reading.

104 As clearly identified by Damisch, pp. 111-112.

105 Damisch, p. 164. Italics in original.

106 "…cinema stands as a culminating and to an extent revolutionary moment of what we will try to understand as a general logic of framing that preoccupies the work of art in modernity, that it, the work of art as it has developed from the Renaissance to the present." Peretz, p. 3.

of perspective, Peter Galassi, in *Before photography: painting and the invention of photography*[107] also traces the "ultimate origins of photography".[108] In identifying photography's origins in perspective, Galassi is clear that it is *not* the development of perspective construction itself (though necessary) which leads to the invention of photography, but how, in the hands of image-makers, it is used:

> The Renaissance system of perspective harnessed vision as a rational basis of picture-making. Initially, however, perspective was conceived only as a tool for the construction of three dimensions out of two. Not until much later was this conception replaced—as the common, intuitive standard—by its opposite: the derivation of a frankly flat picture from a given three-dimensional world. Photography, which is capable of serving only the latter artistic sense, was born of this fundamental transformation in pictorial strategy.[109]

Galassi notably uses as an example of the Renaissance "construction of three dimensions out of two" the Urbino *Ideal Townscape* or *Ideal City*, a key work in Hubert Damisch's *The Origin of Perspective*. The difference between the two conceptions identified by Galassi can be summed up that, in works such as the *Ideal Townscape* (figure 4.5), the space depicted is placed *before* the viewer; with Galassi's contrasting example, Emanuel de Witte's *Protestant Gothic Church* (figure 4.6), the viewer is placed *in* the space.[110]

Figure 4.5, Unknown, *An Ideal Townscape*, c. 1470, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino. © MiC – Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino – Ph. Claudio Ripalti.

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107 Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1981.

108 "The ultimate origins of photography—both technical and aesthetic—lie in the fifteenth-century invention of linear perspective. The technical side of this statement is simple: photography is nothing more than a means for automatically producing pictures in perfect perspective. The aesthetic side is more complex and is meaningful only in broader historical terms." Galassi, p. 12.

109 Galassi, p. 18. Jean-Luc Delsaute asserts a similar position, linking it both to paintings of church interiors and the camera obscura: "Before the beginning of the seventeenth century, perspective appears mainly as a factor in the internal organization of the painting, not as a means of apprehending the external objective world in order to represent it in painting. The church interiors painted by Pieter Jansz Saenredam from 1628 on are the earliest paintings that use perspective for purely representational purposes in that they tend to render the visual appearance of the thing represented with the most possible objectivity. This new approach to perspective is inconceivable unless we consider that there might exist "natural" images that are not the result of an artificial construction - such as those produced by geometric perspective - but that are identical to them in terms of the result. In fact, only retinal images and those produced by the camera obscura possess this property." Jean-Luc Delsaute, 'The Camera Obscura and Painting in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Studies in the History of Art*, 1998, Vol. 55, Symposium Papers XXXIII: Vermeer Studies, pp. 110-123, p. 117.

110 Galassi, pp. 12-13. Galassi also describes periods in the history of Western art where the concentration on "new practical applications of the perspective system" were "denser": the fifteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Galassi, pp. 15-16.
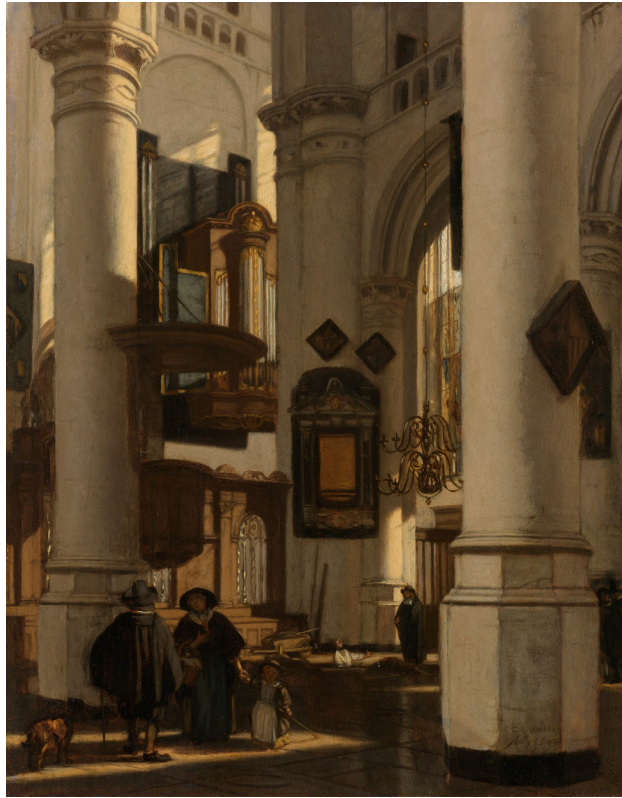
Figure 4.6, Emanuel de Witte, *Protestant Gothic Church*, 1669. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

In addition, with the Urbino *Ideal Townscape* as an example of constructing "three dimensions out of two",[111] the use of single-point perspective construction creates a logical problem in the ability to imagine the off-frame space adjacent to the lateral edges of the frame: a view any wider than that typical of the *Ideal Townscape* begins to force distortion towards the extremes, breaking down the illusionistic power of perspective itself. In the de Witte example, it is rather easier to imagine the space surrounding that within the frame.[112]

Painting's means to overcome the limitations of the frame was to culminate in the panorama, emerging at the end of the eighteenth century. This development of a 360° painting that surrounded the viewer was an attempt in 'abolishing the frame', as Bernhard Comment describes the need which created it.[113] In his 'theory of the frame' leading to the development of the panorama, Comment shows that there were two simultaneous and contradictory impulses at work after the invention of perspective and the development

111 Galassi, p. 18.

112 Erwin Panofsky identifies this approach as early as van Eyck's *Virgin in the Church*, relating this to a more 'empirical' understanding of perspective which emerged in northern Europe in the same period as artificial perspective does in Italy. Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Zone Books, New York, 1991, pp. 60-62. As well putting the viewer in the space, de Witte also defines a specific time of day, in the use of projected daylight, in comparison to the 'anytime' of the more evenly and diffusely lit *Ideal Townscape*. Galassi, p. 13.

113 Comment, p. 99. Or almost entirely: the architecture and false terrain which hides the top and bottom of the painting is a frame pretending not to be one; the horizontal axis of a panoramic painting is far more important than the vertical, beyond the usual extent of the field of view. For a comprehensive overview, see Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, Zone Books, New York, 1997.

of the mobile easel painting, pulling in divergent directions: an awareness of the importance of the frame to create a separation which establishes the work of art *as* a work of art,[114] against a wish to abolish the frame for the possibility of a total immersion *in* the work of art, the desire for an entirely convincing illusion.

The panorama took painting into the realm of *simulation*, and as such, away from 'art', from representation. It also made the viewer mobile, in contrast to the nominally fixed viewer of Renaissance perspective. Lev Manovich sees these–simulation and representation–as the two traditions of the screen,[115] the latter separating its fictive space from that of the viewer, the unfixed and movable painting's world, to the former in frescoes and mosaics, into the panorama and beyond, where the space depicted is contiguous with that of the viewer, allowing for mobility. It may not be purely coincidental that the two periods in which the panorama's popularity as a form of entertainment was highest occur just before the invention of photography at the start of the nineteenth century and then towards the end of that same century as cinema was being invented; the cinema screen fixed the viewer's mobility once again. The 360º circular panorama creates an immersive space in which the limits of the painted representation are defined by the limits of the viewer's field of vision, at least in the horizontal axis. Unable to be comprehended all at once, the artwork reveals itself through the viewer's experience of the time of viewing. Variants of the panoramic form also do this in more prescribed ways, such as the moving panorama, with paintings scrolling past the viewer, coinciding with the development of the railways or journeys by water, turning the in-frame to out again, like the unfolding of a strip of film.

Figure 4.7, Nicholas Middleton, *False Terrain (Study)* 3 and 7, photocopies, pen and pencil on paper, 40x50cm

False Terrain (figure 4.7) is based on a number of photographs of Hendrik Willem Mesdag's *Panorama of Scheveningen* in the Hague, 1881. In the mature form of the panorama (of which the *Panorama of Scheveningen* is one of the best surviving examples) the lower edge of the cylindrical canvas is typically obscured by

114 See Wolfgang Kemp, 'The Narrativity of the Frame', p. 14, in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*. Edited by Paul Duro, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 11-23.
115 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 2001, pp. 111-115.

'false terrain', blending from three dimensions into two with various degrees of sophistication: with the Mesdag Panorama, this is achieved by placing the viewing platform in what appears to be a rise in the sand dunes, constructed with real sand, falling away out of the viewer's line of sight, creating a dip before the vertical canvas rises up beyond. *False Terrain* was made as studies for photographic prints: my intention was to create these in the darkroom by exposing selective areas of a single sheet of photographic paper to the negatives, leaving expanses of white, unexposed between the images.[116] Photographs from within the viewing platform are juxtaposed with sections of the unseen structure behind the scenes, laying bare the illusion. The intention was to suggest that these images shown on a contiguous surface have a relationship to each other, extending 'under' the white space which frames each, inviting the viewer to speculate on these relationships.

The panorama was just one solution to the growing awareness of the limitations to representation in this period: it added the sensation of embodied, perceptual space to painting; other developments, like Daguerre's *Diorama*, notably, but also the *Diaphanorama*, Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon*, and the moving panorama, all added the impression of time.[117] These shared aspects of their heritage with the magic lantern and the theatre as much as with painting. The invention of photography in the 1830s belongs to the same impulses which expanded vision during the nineteenth century in other ways and it, the emergence of photography, did coincide with changes to painting: among certain artists there was an embrace of "its fragmentary status", Bernhard Comment's "kind of *in medias res*"[118] and an awareness of how this could relate to the frame. Jonathan Crary, in *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, describes how, by the early nineteenth century, a visual revolution predating the invention of photography had already begun:

> …I have tried to give a sense of how radical was the reconfiguration of vision by the 1840s. If our problem is vision and modernity, we must first examine these earlier decades, not the modernist painting of the 1870s and 1880s. A new type of observer was formed then, and not one that we can see figured in paintings or prints.[119]

Without the distinctions Galassi makes in *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* between what could broadly be thought of the use of perspective for construction or for description (thus anticipating photography), Stanley Cavell, in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* contrasts photography with painting and that:

> You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame. This generally makes no sense asked of a painting. You can ask these questions of objects in photographs because they have answers in reality. The world of a painting is not continuous with the world of its frame; at its frame, a world finds its limits.[120]

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116 These were not made as intended in the darkroom due to pandemic restrictions at the time.
117 Comment, pp. 57-65.
118 Comment, p. 100. Italics in original.
119 Crary, pp. 149-150.
120 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Viking Press, New York 1971, p. 23.

Cavell states "You can always ask, pointing to an object in a photograph–a building, say-what lies behind it, totally obscured by it. This only accidentally makes sense when asked of an object in a painting."[121] There *are* cases that this asking makes sense, and not just "accidentally": Velazquez's *Las Meninas* would be a prime example of how a painting can activate its off-frame space in a structural manner. *Las Meninas* does this in part through the use of a mirror, deep within the space of the painting to bring the off-frame in to the illusionistic space of the canvas.[122] The off-frame does become more defined in representational painting after the invention of photography, as seen in Edgar Degas' seemingly arbitrary cropping of figures;[123] this develops further with the direct use of photography as a reference material for the creation of painted work: paintings which borrow exclusively from the photograph sufficiently share the implications of the photograph's off-frame, especially if, for the viewer, the reading of the painted image is conflated with its photographic referent and thus on to the photograph's indexical referent itself, something that remains unconsidered with Stanley Cavell's "accidentally".[124] The quote above from *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* in which Cavell compares photography and painting continues:

> We might say: A painting *is* a world; a photograph is *of* the world. What happens in a photograph is that it comes to an end.[125]

We *might* say: "A painting is a world; a photograph is of the world"; in considering the off-frame, divisions between painting and photography based on medium specificity, semiotics and the automatisms of lens-based media effect to elide the *continuities* of systems of representation. The Renaissance approach to constructing an internally-coherent depiction of space is appropriate to Stanley Cavell's description "A painting *is* a world".[126]

Galassi identifies a broad tendency from the Renaissance to the early 19th century in which artists began to make work that approaches Cavell's "*of* the world"[127] designation that he gives to photography, not painting. The fullest expression of this, according to Galassi, is in the development of the oil sketch

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121 Cavell, p. 23.

122 The relationship of mirrors to the off-frame is discussed in the next chapter.

123 The contemporaneous influence of Japanese prints on Western painting is also notable compositionally, with Degas, and Whistler especially, among others; "The sense of the picture's edge as a cropping device is one of the qualities of form that most interested the inventive painters of the latter nineteenth century. To what degree this awareness came from photography, and to what degree from oriental art, is still open to study. However, it is possible that the prevalence of the photographic image helped prepare the ground for an appreciation of the Japanese print, and also that the compositional attitudes of these prints owed much to habits of seeing which stemmed from the scroll tradition." John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966, pp. 10-11.

124 Cavell, p. 23. However, it is possible to see the historical emergence of photography as part of a deep exploration of visuality that already (and increasingly) concerned artists at different periods from the Renaissance on, but particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as evidenced by the practice of sketching directly in oils from the motif in *plein air* traditions: 'taking' from the world of appearances rather than constructing a world in the studio. As Galassi writes, "It is not Degas's work that needs explaining but the invention of photography." p. 17.

125 Cavell, p. 23-25. Italics in original. In fact, Cavell does accept that with paintings which aspire to the condition of photography this may be the case: "Something like this phenomenon shows up in recent painting. In this respect, these paintings have found, at the extremest negation of the photographic, media that achieve the condition of photographs."

126 Cavell, p. 24. Italics in original.

127 Cavell, p. 24. Italics in original.

from nature.[128] Galassi uses comments from a lecture by Turner on Claude's method to elucidate this developing tendency, contemporaneous to Turner's lecture, the difference being "pictures made up of bits" (a synthesis drawing on close study of nature, as Turner saw it, to create imaginative compositions) to "pictures of bits" (an analytical record of nature in and of itself).[129] Much of Galassi's argument turns on the tension between these two designations in artistic practice, which, at the time, also encapsulated the difference between public and private expression.[130]

4.4 The origin of perspective as the origin of the off-frame

The East doors of the Florentine Baptistery, the casts of which are the ostensible subject of *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, were not present at the time Brunelleschi made his panel.[131] The casts in the Victoria & Albert Museum are Ghiberti's *second* set of bronze doors: Ghiberti's initial pair of doors were installed in 1424 and then moved to the North side of the Baptistery when he completed a commission for a second set of doors nearly three decades later, and these doors were then placed to face the cathedral entrance. This second set of doors takes a different form from the first (these reproduce the decorative scheme from Pisano's doors made a century earlier), and contains panels which have internally consistent perspective schemes, quite different from the isolated figures and incidents in the panels of Ghiberti's first doors; in those from the second doors, Biblical scenes take place in convincingly rendered illusionistic spaces, complete with architectural elements constructed along coherent perspective principles. Although no firm date for the creation of Brunelleschi's first perspective panel is commonly agreed upon, this was made at some point after the awarding of the commission to Ghiberti, but before his first set of doors were finished and placed in situ. Brunelleschi's panel of the Baptistery therefore looked directly into the space where his rival's first masterpiece was to be installed.

Brunelleschi made a second panel, also lost, of the Palazzo de' Signori in Florence. Unlike the Baptistery panel, Brunelleschi's Palazzo de' Signori panel was cut along the upper edge of the buildings it represented, providing a visual confirmation for its accuracy when positioned and viewed at the correct distance in front

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128 "The rise of realistic landscape painting around 1800 contradicted the dominant Neoclassical principle of an ideal art. However, it coincided exactly with the Neoclassical conception of the sketch—devoid of traditional artistic value but devoted to the problem of transcribing the appearance of nature. Academically sanctioned as an aspect of craft, the landscape sketch was a ready vehicle for experiments in realism. The sketch was, in other words, a loophole in the traditional definition of artistic practice, which allowed a generally unacknowledged but formidable shift in artistic values to develop. Thus, although lacking the status of high art and rarely receiving full artistic attention, the landscape sketch—particularly the landscape sketch in oil—became around 1800 the primary vehicle of a tentative but profoundly original sense of pictorial order, based on a heretical concern for the visual aspect of the most humble things." Galassi. p21; These "…landscape sketches […] present a new and fundamentally modern pictorial syntax of immediate, synoptic perceptions and discontinuous, unexpected forms. It is the syntax of an art devoted to the singular and contingent rather than the universal and stable. It is also the syntax of photography." Galassi, p. 25.

129 Galassi, p. 21.

130 Galassi, pp. 22-25.

131 For the positioning of the different doors by Ghiberti see, Filippo Rossi, 'The Baptistery Doors in Florence' *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 89, No. 537 (Dec., 1947), pp. 328, 334, 336-339, 341, and Eloise M. Angiola, '"Gates of Paradise" and the Florentine Baptistery', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (June 1978), pp. 242-248.

of the motif it represented. In neither panel did Brunelleschi attempt to depict the sky[132] as it could be seen as being outside the remit of perspective construction, not something to be 'demonstrated'. Neither the Baptistery panel nor Brunelleschi's second panel had a centrally located vanishing point, unlike the picture areas in *Painting comprising four components and six segments*. If Brunelleschi did disclose his method for the making of his convincing demonstrations of perspective construction, this has not been recorded and is not divulged in the near-contemporary sources. However, that perspective was demonstrated by an architect at the beginning of the Renaissance returns to the frame itself, with its own origins in "post and lintel architectural construction".[133]

Initially intended as my own demonstration of a means to indicate the existence of the spatial off-frame in painting, the decisions made about the ostensible subject matter in *Painting comprising four components and six segments* seem to enfold fundamental aspects of spatial representation itself in the work. Alluding to the origin of perspective implicated this as the moment that the conditions necessary for the off-frame came into being.[134] This historical moment, as Margaret Iverson describes it, "announces or anticipates the modern construction of space",[135] necessary, I would argue, for the existence of the pictorial off-frame:

> What we understand as systematic perspective construction is the culmination of a long history and implicit in this history is the development of the idea of space as we now understand it. Perspective announces or anticipates the modern conception of space, which is *homogeneous, infinite extended substance*. This is not something given to perception or immediately intuited.[136]

Iversen notably draws on Erwin Panofsky for her summary just quoted; Panofsky, in *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, sees the beginnings of this conception of space emerging in the Trecento with Duccio and Giotto, searching for new pictorial solutions, away from a sculptural sense of the thing depicted being part of the substance of its support:

> This surface is now no longer the wall or the panel bearing the forms of individual things and figures, but rather is once again that transparent plane through which we are meant to believe that we are looking into a space, even if that space is still bounded on all sides. We may already define this surface as a "picture plane," in the precise sense of the term. The view that had been blocked since antiquity, the vista or "looking through," has begun

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132 In the first panel this was reflected in an inlaid piece of polished silver.

133 "The signifying system of photography, like that of classical painting, at once depicts a scene *and the gaze of the spectator*, an object *and* a viewing subject. […] It is the position of point-of-view, occupied in fact by the camera, which is bestowed upon the spectator. To the point-of-view, the system of representation adds the *frame* (an inheritance which may be traced through easel painting, via mural painting, to its origin in post and lintel architectural construction)…" Victor Burgin 'Looking at Photographs' in *Thinking Photography*, edited by Victor Burgin, Macmillan, London 1982, p. 146. Italics in original.

134 At least in spatial terms. Expanding the off-frame into the temporal and non-visual, one *could* see the existence of the off-frame in pre-Renaissance art in intimations of the divine as something outside representation (as indeed Peretz does), but it may be debatable how much this off-frame presence structures the meaning of such works in that the case here is not about the dynamic relationship of the represented space to the spectatorial space.

135 Margaret Iversen, 'The Discourse of Perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan', *Oxford Art Journal*, 2005, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2005), pp. 193-202, p. 195.

136 Iversen, p. 195, my italics.

to open again; and we sense the possibility that *the painted picture will once again become a section cut from an infinite space*, only a more solid and more integrally organized space than the antique version.[137]

That sense of possibility is key to the existence of the off-frame, developed in a fundamental way with the coherent, consistent space of perspective once formulated. In *The Off-Screen: An investigation of the cinematic frame*, in tracing "a general logic of framing" to the Renaissance,[138] Eyal Peretz locates the origin of his discussion of the off-screen to this point, but as a broader historical phenomenon, considering what he calls the 'off' in the early modern period, in theatre and in painting. However, until the invention of photography (with its indexical link to a reality which continues outside the frame) and then film (with its temporal unfolding being able to reveal that outside), for Peretz, this is an 'off' lacking in any "relation between the discontinuity of the frame and the continuity of the world"[139]; I would argue that the off-frame does have the capacity and ability–depending on how pictorial space is conceived–for this meaningful relation to exist.

4.5 An improbable illustration of offscreen space: Thomas Harrison, *Offscreen Space, From Cinema and Sculpture to Photography, Poetry and Narrative*

Thomas Harrison, in 'Offscreen Space, From Cinema and Sculpture to Photography, Poetry and Narrative',[140] states:

> …many, if not most, artworks activate relations between spaces directly embodied by their signs (recognizable shapes in the visual arts, for example, or words in written texts) and spaces *indirectly* conveyed by contexts, associations, or imaginings produced outside the borders of those perceptible forms in the mind of a reader or spectator.[141]

The approach that Harrison takes in examining sculpture, photography, prose and poetry through the off-screen is not dissimilar to the direction my own research into the wider implications and applications of the off-frame outside the moving image has taken. In using 'offscreen' throughout, applied to all his diverse examples, Harrison ensures the concept's derivation from film theory remains, referring to the work of Andre Bazin and Noël Burch as a framework from which to expand the off-screen. Harrison describes these 'activated relations' as forms of spatial and temporal extension. These extensions are contrasted with 'self-containment', which provides for no dimension of the offscreen, his example being Michelangelo's *David* when seen in comparison with other sculptures of the biblical David by Donatello and Verrocchio: by omitting the head of Goliath, Michelangelo structures this encounter for his *David* in the future, 'offscreen'

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137 Panofsky, pp. 55-56; my italics. The 'once again' here relates to forms of perspective emerging in classical Roman wall painting.

138 Peretz, p. 3.

139 Peretz, p. 220.

140 Thomas Harrison, 'Offscreen Space, From Cinema and Sculpture to Photography, Poetry and Narrative', *California Italian Studies*, 7(1) 2017, p. 1, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2w40187f Retrieved 10/11/2019.

141 Harrison, p. 1. My italics. Some of these "contexts, associations, or imaginings" may be directly conveyed as well.

and, through this, the sculpture "...envisions–or makes us envision–something else unsaid, or only implied, in its representation."[142] In *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, the presence of the cast of Michaelangelo's *David* in front of that of Ghiberti's doors and in front of Donatello's *David*, appears coincidently apt: according to Harrison, Michaelangelo's *David* is an "improbable illustration of offscreen space […] drawn from the highest canons of Western art—'improbable' because we are speaking of that veritable epitome of self-contained, artistic embodiment which is solid, three-dimensional, Renaissance sculpture."[143] In contrast to those self-contained sculptures of Donatello and Verrocchio, Michelangelo's *David* is conceived very differently:

> Precisely because these Davids [of Donatello and Verrochio] include the giant in the representation, they lack the tension of Michelangelo's statue. Positioning Goliath's severed head at David's feet, they complete the story, announcing a finality resolved in time. They show what Michelangelo obliges us to imagine, compels us to recreate. The later sculptor produces an offscreen space within the frame of his imposing but vulnerable body. […] The poise of this body is offset by a spiritual tension and process of deliberation. One can hardly imagine a statue *so little self-contained* as this self-affirmative figure of Michelangelo's.[144]

Donatello and Verrocchio both place the action of the biblical story in the past, as having already happened at the moment of representation, further emphasising the self-contained aspect of the work. Harrison's exemplar, Michaelangelo's *David*, is chosen explicitly as a work that *initially* appears to be 'self-contained' yet is clear in its legible cues to the sculpture's off-frame. Other examples that Harrison uses to explore the off-screen are more easily assimilated (less 'improbable' in Harrison's own designation) to the filmic off-screen: Antonioni's *L'avventura*, photographs by Luigi Ghirri and Aldo Rossi, but also a short story by Gianni Celati and poetry by Eugenio Montale.

The content of *Painting comprising four components and six segments* references other works of art which can be described as either self-contained, thus not implicating the off-frame in their "structure of significance"[145] or, by contrast, point to the off-frame for their meaning. This is a reminder that every representation has an off-frame, but not all utilise the off-frame as part of their meaning:

> Offscreen space, an absence inscribed in a work's structure of significance, can be posited by a statue, photograph, film, poem, or story. Some works point to what is omitted from a scene of representation, others thematize, reflect upon, or configure it in complex ways. Do such artworks bear implications for others that have no apparent concern at all for offscreen space? Is it not true that most works incorporate the greater bulk of their meanings within their field of representation? Not necessarily, and [Eugenio] Montale's poem[146] helps us see why. It allows us to glean the consequences of [Stanley] Cavell's observation that every experience of a screen is already an experience of displacement—a displacement that

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142 Harrison, p. 3.

143 Harrison, p. 1.

144 Harrison, p. 3; italics mine. One could argue that *present* in the off-frame of both Donatello's and Verrocchio's Davids is the *body* of Goliath, severed from his head. However, this off-frame element does not structure the meaning of the work in the way that the complete absence of Goliath in Michaelangelo's sculpture does.

145 Harrison, p. 19.

146 Eugenio Montale, *Forse un mattina andando in un'aria di vetro*, reproduced with English translation in Harrison pp. 17-18.

ordinary perception neutralizes, making it appear as our natural condition.[147]

For "every experience of a screen" being "already an experience of displacement" one could state that every experience of a representation is "already an experience of displacement"; this leads Thomas Harrison to a broad conclusion of referentiality present in myriad artworks, producing a "theater of reflection"[148] in the viewer that essentially reflects on the nature of representation itself and "the interpretive codes by which we operate."[149]

4.6 *Painting comprising four components and six segments* **and the embodied viewer**

Figure 4.8, Nicholas Middleton, *Painting comprising four components and six segments*, installation May 2022

The photographs for *Painting comprising four components and six segments* were taken before the theoretical research discussed in this chapter, with a limited understanding of the implications of the choice of representational aspects of the work, but with some half-remembered intuition as regards how the structure of the piece as installed might be impacted by these. Due to restrictions that came into force in the United Kingdom in early 2020, soon after making *Painting comprising four components…*, this work was not tested by being installed at the time. It remained a theoretical construct, with the intentions behind it yet to be realised in an exhibition context. The relationship of the parts in the scheme to each other and to the space and experience of the viewer were not at this stage confronted by reality. Many months later

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147 Harrison, p. 19.
148 Harrison, p. 19.
149 Harrison, p. 19.

I was able to install the work in an *ad hoc* fashion (figure 4.8).

It did not quite function as envisioned. It was apparent that, relying on scale and space to relate the separate elements to each other I would need a narrow space to successfully convey my intentions. The relationship of the space depicted to the space inhabited by the viewer was unsatisfactory, and the clarity of the scheme as it had existed as imagined was dissolved, as can be seen by comparing figure 4.8 with the schematic diagram in figure 4.1. It did lead to the engagement with the history of perspective which comprises this chapter, a sense of how the off-frame derives ultimately from the re-thinking of space to the invention of perspective, as, without this, the off-frame cannot be conceived. The subject matter of *Painting comprising four components…* draws on the museum as a place of encounter, in which, standing in for a particular space and time (Renaissance Florence, facing the Baptistery doors) as a notional origin for the birth of perspective, displacing both the context of place and of time through the casts, which, as facsimiles, bring particular objects into a new, re-contextualised space.

What is the off-frame here? It is an imaginative realm which the viewer creates around an artwork, around an object or artefact that comprises the artwork in conjunction with its encounter with the viewer, conjured into being through relations either to intrinsic signs within the work or interpretive signs without. Simultaneously, it is a structuring absence for the maker of the work, a necessary condition for the work's production which cannot (in some form) be directly 'in' the work itself, alluded to or referenced with degrees of legibility or obscurity. Returning to Noël Burch's description about the two types of screen space, the on-screen and the off, and the relations between the two ("Have I not simply been describing how *every* film is made?"[150]), his analysis in *Theory of Film Practice* is concerned with the "structural" use of the off-screen.[151] The 'structural' off-frame, more widely applied, remains by necessity tied to an artwork representing something 'out there' in the 'real world' around which the displaced viewer can imagine something absent existing, taking place, or having taken place, which informs what the artwork *means*.

The painted installation, intended to have a meaningful relation to the viewer in space, is something of a poor relation to the panorama. It attempts to stage a situation for the embodied viewer that the panorama excels in, without the necessary specific conditions of that form which make this possible: it functions as an illustration of an idea. In some respects, being about an actual panorama, *False Terrain*, although made as a study for work not completed, was more successful, less about controlling the viewer's encounter than that in *Painting comprising four components…*, with a more productive ambiguity in its relationships, staging its dispersed encounter across its surface, allowing the viewer in to its depictions of non-contiguous space in a more open way.

The choices in the painting itself point towards a further development of the painting practice (discussed in Chapter 5) in thinking about the viewer's encounter with the work, their awareness of the space depicted

150 Burch, p. 23. Italics in original.
151 Burch, p. 24.

in a manner compatible with Renaissance perspective, being largely determined by spatial considerations. This often obscures the fact of the time in which the viewer encounters the work–as intended with the installation here, the viewer would have to move back-and-forth in the space, turning one way and then the other to be able to read the scheme of the work as intended. This time of the viewer is developed further in Chapter 6.

5 Registers of absence: Shadows and Projections/Mirrors and Reflections

5.1 Removing the photographic referent: still life paintings from observation

At this stage in the research, I was primarily thinking about the off-frame in still images as a spatial concern. Understanding how conceptions of pictorial space changed with the invention of linear perspective, and the further nuances of how perspective was then used by artists, a return to painting, but without using photographic references was the next logical step to the investigation. As a departure from what had been my usual working practice for many years, I made a series of paintings from observation.[152] This coincided with strict restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic in the UK,[153] and, although it might have been desirable to work at scale, with all the possibilities that this might provide, I made a number of still life paintings on my kitchen table, with the express desire to remove the camera as a factor in the work's relation to the off-frame. These particular paintings use a small selection of objects placed on the table top. They are also domestic in scale, all being made on canvas boards of the same small size.[154] The objects do have a resonance with the time in which they were made, notably the bottles of hand sanitiser, the most frequent motif. As a series, the paintings work through a succession of steps, using first shadows and then mirrors, as two different means to disclose the existence of something outside the frame demarcated by the painting's edge but within the adjacent off-frame space.

The fundamental difference in working in this manner is that, unlike a photograph where the camera has already imposed its frame and angle of view as an automatism of its technological basis (as well as reducing reality to a two-dimensional image), the relationship of the edges of the canvas to the visual field of the artist when working from observation is one determined by other factors: in part, the conventions and history of painting itself; practically, the size of marks made by the tools of their making against the scale of what these marks depict and the scale and surface of the support on which they are made and so forth. Painters working from photographs frequently use the photograph far more freely than my habitual practice, in not necessarily holding close to the pre-existing image, with degrees of acknowledgment of the photograph as source, object and artefact. The painting's referent there already exists in a past moment,

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152 Working from direct observation is still a mainstay of art educational approaches in schools in the United Kingdom, with diminished importance at degree level, and this was my general experience; although I had done very little working from observation since the beginning of my undergraduate degree, these early experiences provided something akin to 'muscle memory' which was drawn on for this part of the research.

153 The limited circumstances under which the paintings were made were due to the UK entering into restrictions in November 2020 as a result of rising cases of Coronavirus infections, which were then more stringently applied in early January 2021. Further, the initial paintings were made during the week that I became ill with Covid-19. Subsequent paintings were made at intervals in December and January during a long recovery from the illness.

154 I made over two dozen of these small paintings and not all are illustrated here: a number are simply different iterations of the same compositional approach. For titles these were numbered sequentially in terms of the order of their making.

given photography's relation to the index.[155] In painting from observation there is a presentness to the referent: it exists in the same present moment as the painting's maker.

5.2 Painted shadows (I): still life paintings

The initial paintings in the series use cast shadows to indicate the presence of some object or objects in the space just outside the edge of the composition. The series begins with using another object (limes, then a glass of water), seen within the frame itself, to cast a shadow, indexed to this object, alongside the shadow cast by the unseen object outside the frame (figure 5.1). This was intended to create a coherent space and lighting scheme that extends outside the frame, indicating the presence of the off-frame object as a result.

Figure 5.1, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (1)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

The initial choice for this unseen object was the skull of a black bear, a *vanitas* motif at one remove; the shadows of both objects were projected onto the same vertical plane, creating a shallow composition in depth, using a single light source, also outside the frame. Decisions made about these paintings were mostly practical, given the circumstances. For the support, I already had to hand a number of canvas boards, previously tinted with a warm mid-toned ground; the use of black and white has been a feature of

155 This is of course a reason to use photographic references: many of the artists included in 'The Painting of Modern Life' were working with appropriated images of historical events (Warhol, Richter, Celmins) and it is not so much their 'pastness' which is apposite, but the particularity of their fixed moment in time.

my practice as a painter for many years, and previous paintings, based on black and white photographs, were also painted in black and white. In terms of what these initial paintings were intended to achieve, I suspected that colour would add little apart from possibly taking away some of the 'photographic' associations of black and white.[156]

In *Still Life (1)* (figure 5.1), the edge of the skull intrudes into the right-hand side, not necessarily intended when I began the painting, working from left to right. The compositions were not planned or mapped onto the canvas boards before beginning each painting, the only drawing being done with the brush in the execution of painting. All paintings (except one) were completed in a single session, working wet in wet with oil paint, and, very generally, were painted from top left to bottom right. No system of measurement was used, entirely working by eye, but occasionally the canvas boards were held up to see how much of the view they blocked in order to roughly gauge the edges and extent of the composition. With the light source used, a table lamp, I found it difficult to have the skull close enough to cast a defined shadow without intruding into the frame at the right-hand side, particularly as a result of not planning or making significant compositional changes once the paintings were begun. The third painting (figure 5.2) used a vertical format to ensure that the skull itself did not intrude into the frame.

Figure 5.2, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (3)*, oil on canvas board, 17x12cm

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156 One could of course imagine some circumstances in which colour might indicate something off-frame: reflections of a bright local colour just outside the frame for example, and the series of still life paintings did later include working in colour when using the mirror to indicate the off-frame.

The next iterations (figure 5.3, *Still Life (4)*) used a glass of water within the frame, casting a shadow in which the liquid refracts the light passing through it; the shadows from outside of the frame in these paintings are cast by bottles of hand sanitiser with push-pump tops, through which the light is also refracted, but in a much diffused manner.
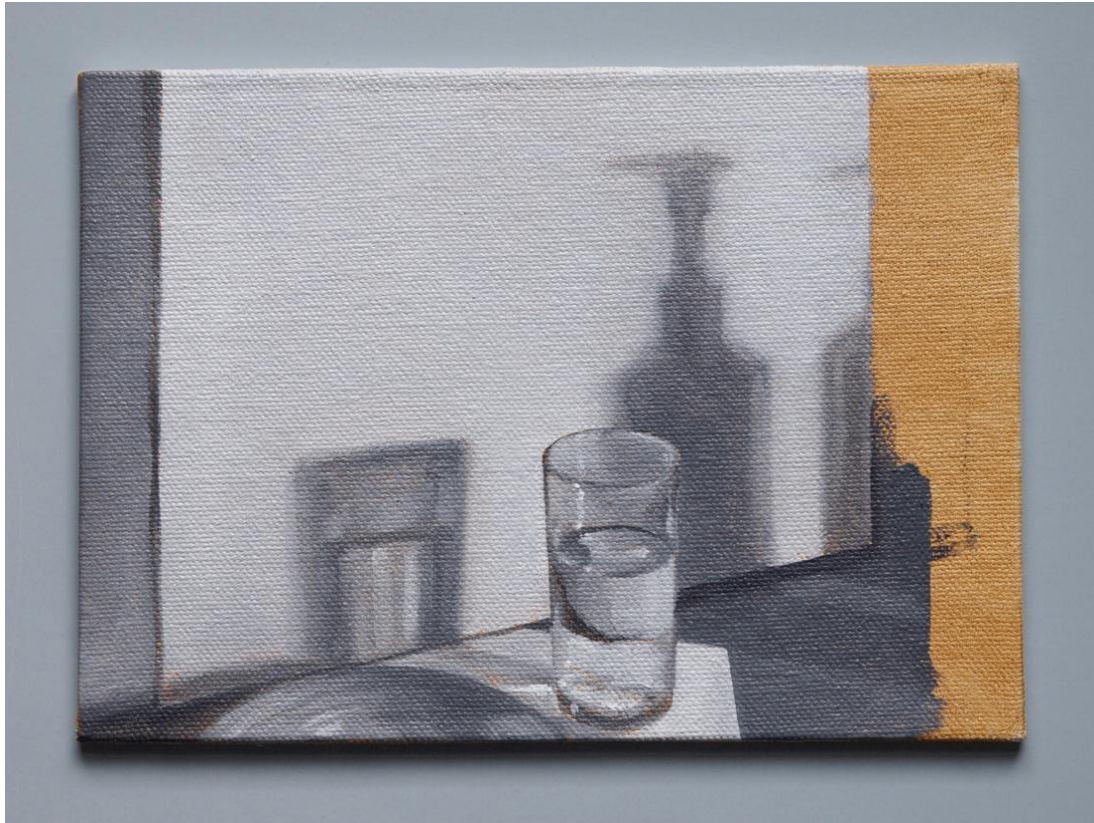
Figure 5.3, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (4)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

Two further paintings using shadows were made in which no object is inside the frame to cast a shadow alongside those of the off-frame objects. One (figure 5.4) used two bottles of hand sanitiser, the shadows of which had appeared in previous paintings; the next (figure 5.5) was also from a container of hand sanitiser, but with a flat top, looking not unlike a partially-filled glass of water. This was also raised up so that the bottom edge of the shadow coincides with the bottom edge of the vertical plane; in the previous painting, the shadows track across the horizontal plane of the table top before intersecting with the vertical plane, but here the focus was entirely on the two intersecting planes and the shadow.

Figure 5.4, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (6)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

Figure 5.5, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (7)*, oil on canvas board, 17x12cm

As well as being a departure from my habitual way of making work over many years, what this group of still life paintings does is to engage with some of the automatisms of painting since the Renaissance without the technological imposition of photography:[157] conceiving of the canvas surface as akin to being a window onto a coherent space, bound by its edges and one that the viewer interprets as such. The use of shadows, and shadows alone, as a motif is suggestive of displacement: the genre of still life evoked through not looking at the objects themselves, the paintings of their traces being an image of an image, provides a double displacement. The paintings were made relatively quickly, working through different iterations of their core idea, puzzling out how to paint them in terms of scale and composition—much of which would already have been determined if working with photographic references. As a result of the speed of making, many of the paintings were left in an incomplete state (the use of a toned ground makes this less visually jarring), once the essential aspects of the compositions had been laid down. The fragmentary facture of their surfaces does effect to highlight their materiality, something that has been essentially suppressed in my practice as a painter generally, or subservient to the image:[158] working from observation, a different relationship to the referent not being a pre-existing image as when working from photographs seemed to allow this, as well as these paintings being more like exercises or propositions for how the off-frame might enter a painting.

5.3 Cast shadows in painting before photography

Distinct cast shadows feature rarely in painting from the Renaissance until the invention of photography. E. H. Gombrich gives a brief and simplified overview[159] which highlights some instances from the early Renaissance (Masaccio's *Saint Peter's Shadow Healing*, 1425), followed by High Renaissance advice to artists to make shadows diffuse (Leonardo da Vinci); more distinct shadows return with Caravaggio and his influence, then become less prominent again in the eighteenth century, although important to painters of views (such as Canaletto and his followers), before returning once more with the Impressionists.[160]

If distinct cast shadows are relatively rare in painting until the invention of photography, shadows which are projected from entities outside the frame are rarer still, almost entirely absent before photography. Gombrich introduces this particular use of the shadow with a church interior by Emmanuel de Witte: "The interior […] finally reminds us of the capacity of shadows to reveal part of a scene that lies hidden from the viewer. We observe on the wall in front of us patterns of sunlight projected through the unseen

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157 As deeply-ingrained automatisms, one feels that these hardly need to be specified but it is perhaps useful to do so when thinking through some of the fundamental aspects of making images of the world, following on from the previous chapter.
158 See, however, comments in Chapter 6.5 on the materiality of paintings made from photographs.
159 Gombrich, pp. 19-26; "…that cast shadows as such are comparatively rare among its [the National Gallery's] treasured masterpieces was perhaps worth pointing out." E. H. Gombrich, *Shadows: The Depiction of Cast Shadows in Western Art*, Gombrich, p. 59. Gombrich's slim volume accompanied an exhibition, the theme of which was something barely to be found in the National Gallery's collection.
160 These periods of the relative importance of distinct shadows also appear to map roughly the points at which "new practical applications of the perspective system" were "denser", Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1981. pp. 15-16. See previous chapter.

window on the opposite side of the nave."[161] What this first example reveals about the off-frame is a generalised sense of space: the projections from the unseen windows confirms the architectural symmetry of the church, that what the viewer sees inside the frame is mirrored by the structure outside the frame, behind and above. Gombrich's other examples of "…the capacity of shadows to reveal part of a scene that lies hidden from the viewer" are more 'structural' uses (in Burch's terms[162]) of the off-frame, in that they comprise some part of the paintings' meanings. Appearing just before the advent of photography, Gombrich then illustrates this theme with William Collins' 1833 painting *Coming Events*: "William Collins, an anecdotal painter of the nineteenth century, cunningly appealed to the imagination of the beholder in his painting […] by the device of the shadow of the unseen object. The painting shows a country lad who has just opened the gate and touches his cap–to whom? To the horseman whose shadow we see in the foreground."[163]
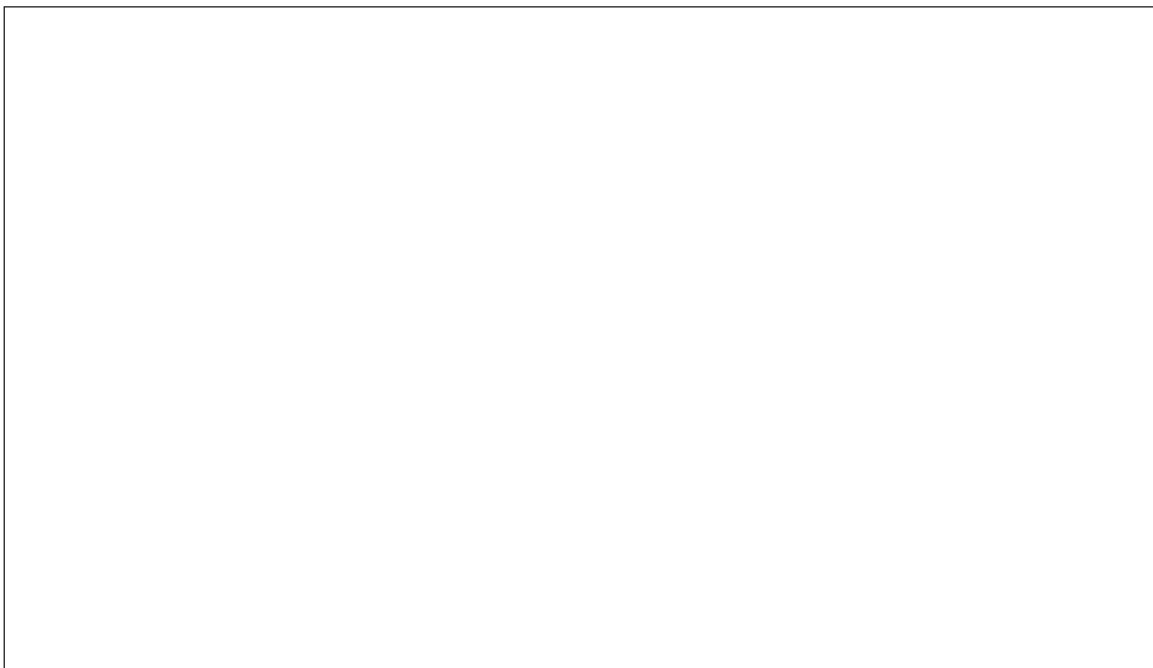
Figure 5.6, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Golgotha* (1868). Image redacted for copyright purposes.

Gombrich's other examples of this use of the shadow are from *after* photography's appearance,[164] notably Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Golgotha* from 1868, which shows the scene of the crucifixion through the shadows of three crosses cast on the bare rocky ground from out of the frame to the right, while the Roman legions leave the scene at the left, in front of a dramatically-lit Jerusalem. Gérôme's own description of his work

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161 Gombrich, p. 53 (Plate 45: Emanuel de Witte, *The Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, during a sermon*, c.1660).

162 Meaning here being created through the "implicit dialectic" between the on-screen and the off. Burch, pp. 23-24.

163 Gombrich, p. 53; the boy is not in fact wearing a cap, and is rather (and perhaps more pointedly) touching his forelock in lieu of a cap. Collins painted a smaller replica of the work, titled *Rustic Civility*, in the Victoria & Albert Museum.

164 Another isolated instance from before photography which I stumbled across appears in William Hogarth's 1759 print, *Pit Ticket*, with the shadow of a suspended debtor appearing across the ground of the cockpit, as the figure's shadow holds up a pocket watch as a stake. One can speculate that its status as a print rather than a painting allowed for more formal radicalism.

in the Salon of 1868 highlights its radicalism:

> As to the subject of […] Golgotha, there was great astonishment because I had painted only the shadows of Christ and the two thieves, thus breaking with ancient and venerated traditions. It seems to me, however, that there was a certain poetry in this view of Calvary, a new manner of treating it, *well within the domain of painting*; but my innovation was not to everyone's taste, and I was made to feel it keenly.[165]

Critics at the time did not find that Gérôme's treatment was "well within the domain of painting", likening it to 'Chinese shadows' (Paul Pierre and Firmin Boissin), and, perhaps paradoxically, that this use of shadows, so as to *not* depict Christ, but to infer the scene through the shadows, was a "profanation" (Pierre) and that it stripped "sacred history" of its "supernatural character" (Boissin).[166]

Contemporary to Gérôme's use of the off-frame shadow in Golgotha is Édouard Manet's *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1868-69). In the lower right of the picture there is a shadow on the buff-coloured ground, not as clear as the shadows cast by the soldiers in the centre, but a subtle presence, especially in comparison with the earlier two oil sketches of the subject, in which it is notably absent.[167] This shadow appears to belong to the viewer of the painting, placed into the same space as the firing squad, with ethical implications (there are spectators inside the painting, but they are separated from the action, cut off from the place of execution by a high wall).[168]

A third contemporaneous example is given by Victor I. Stoichita in *A Short History of the Shadow*: Pierre Renoir's painting *Pont des Arts, Paris* from 1867-8,[169] which, with the sun positioned behind the painter, shows the shadow of the bridge from which it was painted (Pont du Carrousel) *and* the shadows of figures passing by; Stoichita speculates that one may be the painter: "It would demand too much ingenuity to determine whether one of them is the painter himself and whether the others are passers-by glancing absentmindedly over their shoulders."[170] Introducing the idea of the artist's shadow allows Stoichita to

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165 Jean-Léon Gérôme, quoted in Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonne*, Sotheby's Publications by Philip Wilson Publishers, London 1986, p. 82. My italics.

166 See Paul Pierre, *Un Chercheur au Salon 1868*, and Firmin Boissin, *Salon de 1868: études artistiques*. My own rather basic translations from the original french relying heavily on Deepl with comparisons to Google Translate.

167 The full-scale sketch of 'The Execution of Emperor Maximilian' (1867), oil on canvas, 195.9 x 259.7cm, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the reduced sketch, in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

168 This description of the off-frame of Manet's painting derives from Waldemar Januszczak's television programme, *Manet: the Man Who Invented Modern Art*, first broadcast 13/06/20 (around the 1h04m mark): "...you see this shadow here? Who's casting that? Where does it come from? The only possible answer is from out here. We're the ones that are casting it. And that's the point. Whoever looks at this scene is being accused of being there and doing nothing."

169 Victor I Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, Reaktion Books, London 1997, pp. 104-106.

170 Stoichita, p. 105. The angle of the shadows appears too oblique for that to be likely–if so, it would be the far left of the picture, crossing onto the Seine, the shadow disappearing due to the lower plane of the river.

quote from Baudelaire, emphasising how the conception of painting was being changed at that moment: "What is pure art in the modern concept of the term? It is to create an allusive magic that contains both the object and the subject, the world outside the artist and the artist himself."[171]

It is perhaps not uninstructive that Gombrich uses photography–in a book and exhibition on shadows in painting–in his discussion of shadows cast from outside the frame to render graspable how such compositional arrangements function for his audience: "To us these paintings may look somewhat contrived but the photographer, who likes to take pictures with the sun behind him, will often detect in his rangefinder tell-tale shadows of objects outside his field of vision."[172] Gombrich's illustration here is a picture by Henri Cartier-Bresson, titled *India, Ahmedabad, 1967*. Gombrich continues: "It is hard to imagine a more poignant use of this device than Cartier-Bresson's photograph [...] showing the exhausted sleeper sheltering from the sun in the shadow of an elaborate shrine."[173] In this section of shadows from outside the frame, the approach in Gérôme's painting is introduced by Gombrich by a quote from Gaugin: "'If, instead of a figure, you put only the shadow of a person,' he wrote to Emile Bernard in 1888, 'you have found an original starting point, the strangeness of which you have calculated.'"[174]

5.4 The origin of painting: the Corinthian Maid & Narcissus

> We know very little about the birth of painting, said Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* (XXXV, 14). One thing, however, is certain: it was born the first time the human shadow was circumscribed by lines. It is of unquestionable significance that the birth of Western artistic representation was 'in the negative'. When painting first emerged it was part of the absence/presence theme (absence of the body; presence of its projection). The history of art is interspersed with the dialectic of this relationship.[175]

Two versions of the origin of painting from classical antiquity, from Pliny the Elder and from Quintilian, ascribe this to the act of tracing shadows. Of the two myths, that of the Corinthian maid, from Pliny, is more well-known, thanks to its relative popularity as a subject for painters: this recounts the actions of a daughter of a potter who traces the shadow of her lover in liquid clay.[176] In all the depictions of the

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171 Stoichita, p. 105.

172 Gombrich, p. 55.

173 Gombrich, p. 55.

174 Gombrich, p. 55.

175 Victor I Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, Reaktion Books, London 1997, p. 7.

176 Stoichita, pp. 124-125. Notable differences in the myths are the nocturnal/diurnal and female/male oppositions between Pliny and Quintilian respectively. Also see Hubert Damisch, 'The Inventor of Painting', translated by Kent Minturn and Eric Trudel, *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2010, pp. 303-316, Oxford University Press, pp. 310-311. Stoichita details how this myth–a short anecdote in Pliny–was expanded and embellished to become the Romantic history that inspired numerous artists in the 18th and early 19th century. Stoichita, pp. 18-19. It is worth noting that this myth is also taken for that of the origin of sculpture: the traced outline is later filled with clay, presumably to create a shallow relief in profile: E. H. Gombrich treats it as such in *Shadows: The Depiction of Cast Shadows in Western Art*, p. 30.

Corinthian maid, the shadows (and usually the light source itself) come from inside the frame: none of the representations of the myth take the action off-frame–neither spatially nor temporally–the compositions always depict the moment of tracing,[177] never showing the outline being filled in after, without the lover present. In *Burning with Desire*, Geoffrey Batchen quotes Robert Rosenblum's assertion that the popularity of this particular myth of the origin of painting was at its height at the time that photography was being imagined into being, between 1770 and 1820[178]: this was the same period that also saw the invention of the silhouette machine and the physionotrace (as specifically mentioned by Batchen[179]), both of which used methods of direct (and thus indexical) tracing from a subject's profile to create a form of portraiture.

If Pliny the Elder and Quintilian trace the origins of painting to the cast shadow, for Leon Battista Alberti, conceiving the picture as a window, it was the myth of Narcissus, transfixed by his own reflection in the still surface of a pool of water that was its origin:

> …I used to tell my friends that the inventor of painting, according to the poets, was Narcissus, who was turned into a flower; for, as painting is the flower of all the arts, so the tale of Narcissus fits our purpose perfectly. What is painting but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?[180]

The use of the myth of Narcissus as a subject for artists, despite Alberti's assertion, does not possess the same referential qualities as a model for or of painting that the myth of the Corinthian Maid does. It cannot enact the art of painting in the same way, as the viewer is always in an *outside* position in relation to Narcissus, whereas we see the shadow (or its representation) just as the Corinthian Maid does.[181] One would have to imagine a painting of the Narcissus myth which displayed his reflection as seen from his point of view–what would, in effect, be a painting of the reflection, and *only* the reflection, looking back at the viewer, collapsed into the position of Narcissus.[182] Without any direction for the viewer to read a reflection *as* reflection, its displacement is essentially nullified, that it *is* a reflection as a category of image disappears. Perhaps this, in part, was what Alberti wanted to evoke in his choice of Narcissus, the very transparency of a reflection being an 'ideal image' that Alberti's conception of picture-as-window, his

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177 Almost always: a lost 1810 painting (known through an engraving) by Jeanne-Elisabeth Chaudet, titled 'Dibutade coming to visit her lover's portrait', originally called 'Dibutade coming to visit her lover's tomb and lay flowers there', shows the function of the shadow's lasting trace long after the moment of invention. See Robert Rosenblum, 'The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism', *The Art Bulletin* 39, No. 4, 1957.

178 Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999, p. 114.

179 Batchen, p. 114.

180 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, translated by Cecil Grayson, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 61. The passage continues: "Quintilian believed that the earliest painters used to draw around shadows made by the sun, and the art eventually grew by a process of additions. Some say that an Egyptian Philocles and a certain Cleanthes were among the first inventors of this art. The Egyptians say painting was practised in their country six thousand years before it was brought over into Greece. Our writers say it came from Greece to Italy after the victories of Marcellus in Sicily. But it is of little concern to us to discover the first painters or the inventors of the art, since we are not writing a history of painting like Pliny, but treating of the art in an *entirely new way*." Alberti, pp. 61-62. My italics.

181 Albeit at a distance, being able to take in the whole scene.

182 Perhaps this might appear a little like Courbet's *The Desperate Man*.

"treating of the art in an entirely new way" enacts.[183] Hubert Damisch explicitly links Alberti's passage of the myth of Narcissus to the approximately contemporaneous development of portable easel painting as an autonomous form:

> …one is tempted to see the Narcissus of the fable not as the inventor of painting in general, but rather as the inventor of easel painting. But is this not precisely what Alberti implicitly intended to suggest, in a surprisingly 'modern' manner: that painting cannot be conceived independently of–or outside of–the canvas (as in fact it was already the case in the Quattrocento)?[184]

The two origin myths have very different temporal qualities: as a myth, Narcissus' reflection only exists in the moment his face is present to create the image, whereas the Corinthian Maid has an inherent, imagined future, the absence of the figure as its reason for being, although almost all representations of the myth show the moment of creation of the image. What the myth of Narcissus has is specular likeness, depth, colour, and a subject/viewer engagement, with Narcissus looking out of the water back at himself, an awareness of the image's audience, against the mute outline of the Corinthian Maid's tracing. The two myths contain within them two modes of address for representational painting: absorption, with the Corinthian Maid, as a form of necessary fiction about the viewer's being unobserved by the subject, against the direct acknowledgement of the viewer in the engagement with the gaze that Narcissus represents.

What the myth of Narcissus and the Corinthian Maid share however, is their relationship to the quality of the index, that they–shadows and reflections–speak of the presence of their cause: "The cast shadow and the specular reflection share the same evanescence, at the same time that they necessarily refer–unlike the portrait–to a reality or to an object given *in praesentia*, and which is intensified, so to speak, by the effect of projection or reflection…"[185] This shared quality of the index, not an absence but a displacement–as with Gombrich's statement that shadows cannot be touched or grasped[186]–utilises its very insubstantiality as a metaphor for painting. This insubstantiality is played out in Caravaggio's version of the myth,[187] depicting Narcissus at the moment of reaching out to touch his reflection, with his left hand just entering the water. As described above, the viewer has to imagine what Narcissus sees from the painting's outside position. Like Michelangelo's *David*, Caravaggio stages the moment just before the action, or, more precisely, the result of Narcissus' action: his hand entering the water, poised at the very moment that its movement is about to disrupt this perfect surface and destroy his reflection.

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183 Alberti, p. 62.
184 Hubert Damisch, 'The Inventor of Painting', translated by Kent Minturn and Eric Trudel, *Oxford Art Journal*, 2010, Vol. 33, No.3 (2010), pp. 303-316, Oxford University Press, p. 311.
185 Damisch, p. 311. Italics in original.
186 Gombrich, p. 17.
187 *Narcissus*, c.1597, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.

Figure 5.7, Nicholas Middleton, *Interface (After Caravaggio)*, 2022, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

I made a *trompe l'oeil* painting (figure 5.7) showing a tightly-cropped detail of the left hand of Narcissus from Caravaggio's picture, repeated in parallel with the same detail from an infra-red image, revealing the painting's structure. The infra-red image is difficult to read but shows some apparent changes during painting, with visible pentimenti. Caravaggio appears to have originally painted the whole hand in a cupped position, presumably to be seen just above the water's surface, and then painted over this to then place it half in the water. As appropriate to the form of a *trompe l'oeil* painting, the sense of touch here, doubled and repeated, is demonstrated as confirmatory to the sense of sight: in his act of confirmation, an attempt to grasp this image, Narcissus will cause it to (temporarily) disappear, in an immediate, (off-frame) 'predictive and imaginary' future to the picture's temporality.

5.5 Painted reflections: still life paintings with a mirror

Developing from the observational still life paintings using shadows, I subsequently made a number of paintings exploring the use of reflection to expand or to indicate the space outside the frame. The first paintings used a small round mirror (*Still Life (9)*, figure 5.8) in an exploratory manner, largely concentrating on the reflection itself; like the first paintings with shadows, I began these paintings with some objects that were doubled, seen both inside the frame as well as in the reflection, alongside objects present in the adjacent space.

Figure 5.8, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (9)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

I also reintroduced the motif of the animal skull in a number of these paintings and 'completed' one of these in order to show the depth and extent of the space inside the frame (figure 5.9). Although subtle, the difference in lighting between the in-frame and off-frame, side-lit and front-lit, help to orient everything within the wider space.

Figure 5.9, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (10)*, oil on canvas board, 17x12cm

The earliest paintings here were made with a round mirror, before changing to use a rectangular mirror. Being larger, this does not appear as just one more 'object' within the still life in the way that the round

mirror does: the rectangular mirror functions more like a window; by contrast, the reflection in the round mirror appears like a peephole into the off-frame, punctured through the picture plane. Unlike the round mirror, the rectangular mirror was too large to show whole in the picture, or at least too large to show whole and keep a meaningful scale for the still life as a composition. Depending on how it was used, the rectangular mirror created a more spatially ambiguous scenario; one can imagine many better ways to use a mirror beyond these demonstrations made with limited means.
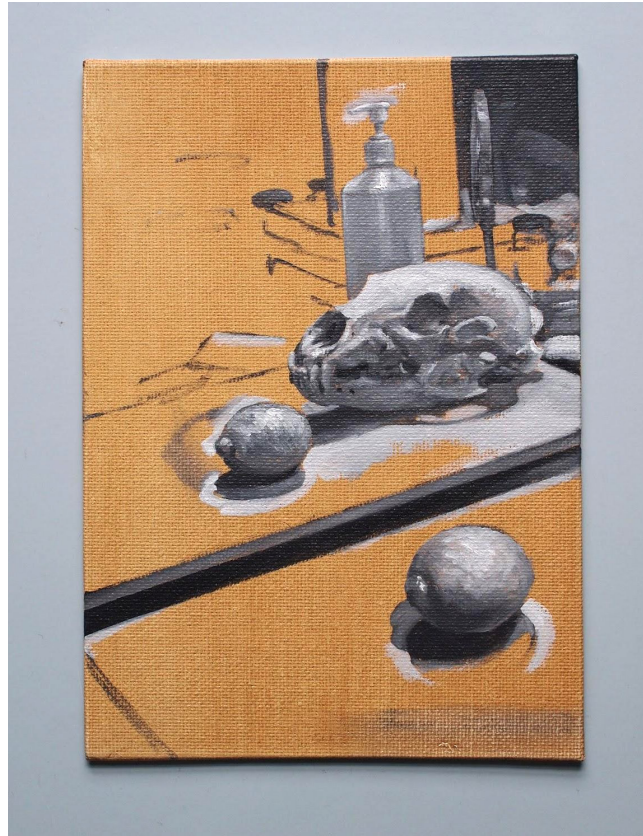
Figure 5.10, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (11)*, oil on canvas board, 17x12cm

The first paintings with the rectangular mirror (figure 5.10) use a lemon in the foreground space which is doubled in the mirror, in front of the skull and the hand sanitiser reflecting from the off-frame space, linking these two spaces, much as with the first shadow paintings. Changing the orientation of the canvas board allowed for the frame of the mirror to appear either side of the reflection; changing the scale further shows the top of the mirror's frame (figure 5.11). In this painting, *Still Life (13)*, a pair of postcards were tucked into the frame of the mirror to indicate its transparent plane, although this appears contrived. Subsequent paintings (*Still Life (16)*, figure 5.12) were made without the use of a board on the table top, butted against the mirror. This reveals the rounded edge of the table, providing a sense of depth in the gap opening up in front, while showing a polka dot table cloth. This pattern indicates the depth recession into the reflection, functioning a little like a pavement grid in a Renaissance painting.

Figure 5.11, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (13)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm
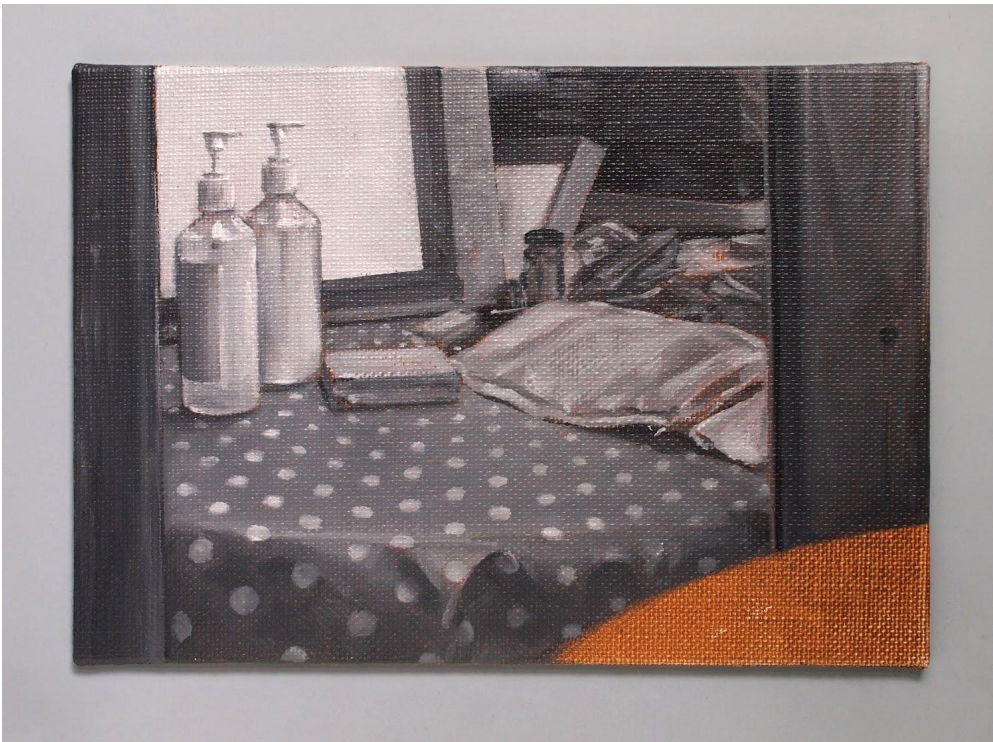
Figure 5.12, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (16)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

The next paintings concentrate solely on the reflection as it appears in the mirror, closer to its plane so as not to include anything of the frame. As a result there's no indication that these paintings (*Still Life (19)*, figure 5.13) show a reflection. There is no clear sign that the space depicted here is in any sense off-frame:

there's no back-and-forth[188] to any other space. It is possible to imagine that at a different scale, there might be sufficient detail to show the lettering present on some objects, and with that lettering being reversed, to indicate that the space the still life occupies is a reflection in a mirror (a strategy then developed in later paintings, see figures 5.16 and 5.17). Another painting (figure 5.14) shows only the mirror without the edges of the frame intruding: a sheet of paper taped to the glass shows the plane of the mirror.

Figure 5.13, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (19)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm
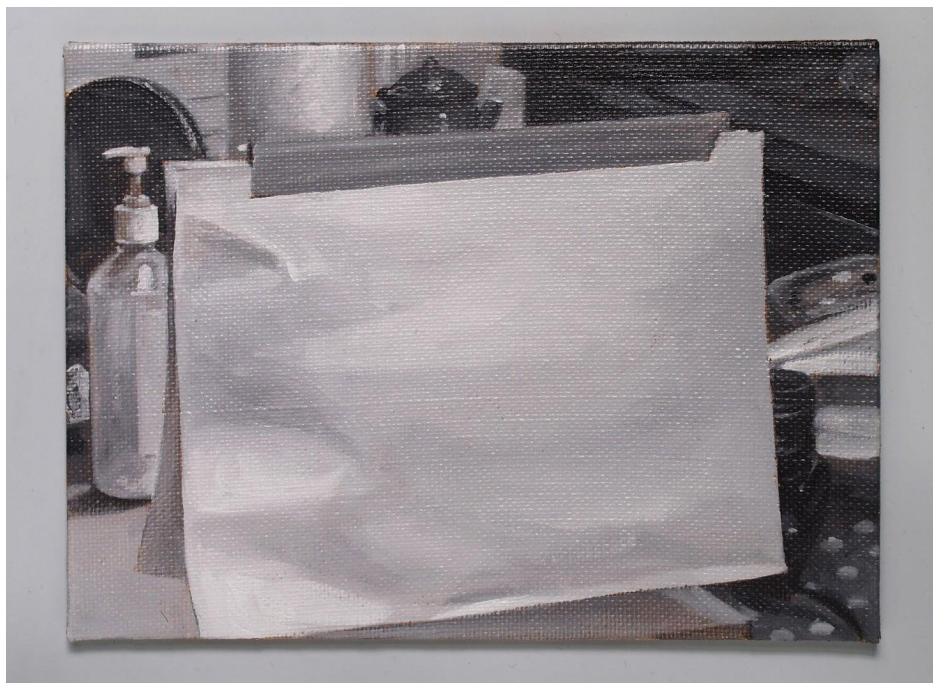
Figure 5.14, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (20)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

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188 Eyal Peretz describes a "back-and-forth between the 'on' and the 'off'" screen which "does not really occur in photography"–which one could extend to painting too. Peretz, p. 220.

Continuing the series of small still life paintings that I had worked on during lockdown conditions towards the end of 2020 and into early 2021, I made several further paintings which extended this theme, particularly with regards to working from mirror images. These later paintings were in colour, as an intentional contrast to the somewhat paradoxical 'photographic' associations of my use of black and white in the preceding work. These paintings also show only the reflection, but with different approaches to show that it is a reflection. *Still Life (22)* (figure 5.15) uses masking tape on the surface of the mirror to 'frame' the still life. Unlike the sheet of paper in figure 5.14, thanks to the painting's scale, the masking tape here casts little of its own reflection to show that it sits on the surface.

Figure 5.15, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (22)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

Wanting to explore this idea one step further–that the entire painting is in fact a reflection viewed in a mirror–I tackled the question of how to make a painting which is entirely a reflection without using anything to indicate the plane of the mirror itself. To disclose the fact of the reflection, I used some objects in still life arrangements which have a defined left-right orientation–and so are clearly the wrong way around. Text would have worked, but would have been generally too small for the scale of the paintings. Instead, I chose a map of the world (*Still Life (25)*, figure 5.16), and some postcards of well-known works of art (*Still Life (26)*, figure 5.17) as well as a small cut-out from one (as seen in figure 5.16), Vermeer's *Maidservant Pouring Milk* (a ticket from the Vermeercentrum in Delft).

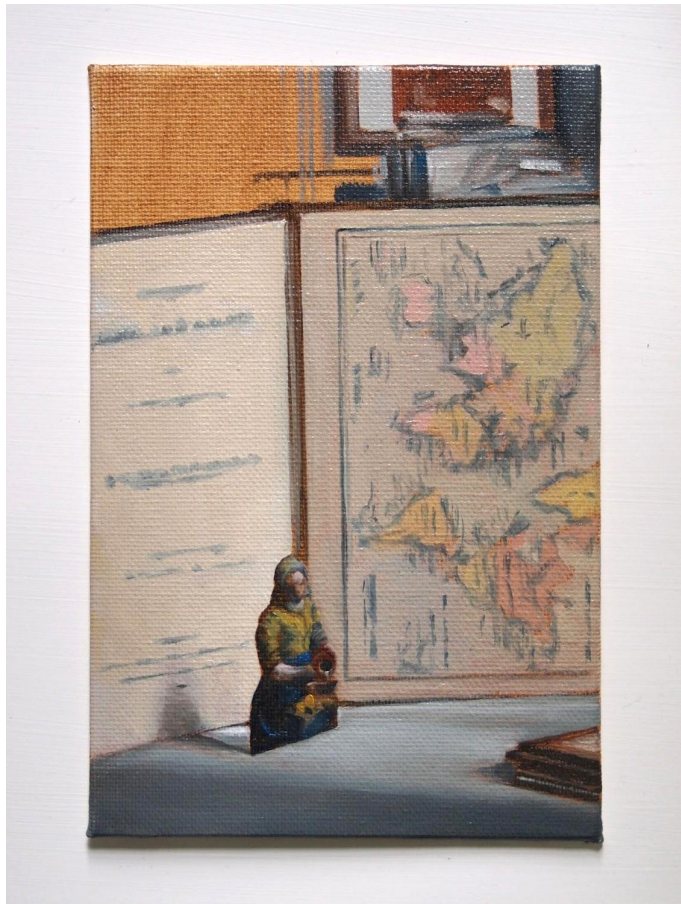Figure 5.16, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (25)*, oil on canvas board, 17x12cm

Figure 5.17, Nicholas Middleton, *Still Life (26)*, oil on canvas board, 12x17cm

These later still life paintings do not really develop the idea of the off-frame productively, being instead a subtle play on expectations (the reversed elements of otherwise familiar icons) without adding to the meaning that the off-frame produces in its relation to the in-frame, and an exploration of working from the reflection itself, as an *operation* of painting. Having not worked from observation as a painter for many years, the series of still life paintings called upon much earlier experiences of this way of working, in particular the act of mentally composing and then projecting onto the canvas before commencing each painting—a conscious choice of approach, given that I wanted these paintings to be as direct as possible, without any preparatory drawing. Using a mirror both simplified *and* complicated this, especially with those paintings concentrating on the entire reflection: simplified, as the still life was immediately reduced to an image on a flat plane (although one's perception sees it in depth beyond the plane of the mirror); complicated through the added awareness of the frame of the mirror and the need to keep a stable viewpoint while constantly glancing between the motif and the painting as it emerged (any shifts of position have a compounding effect on the angle of the mirror's frame in relation to the objects seen within). A further development of the work could have involved using a grid on the surface of the mirror (like Dürer's gridded frame), or outlines traced from the mirror's surface for some form of visual accuracy, though this itself would have added little to the exploration of the off-frame, merely making explicit many of the intuitive aspects of attempting to take visual perceptual information of the world 'out there' and render this in some analogous marks of paint on a surface.

5.6 The shadow and the index (I): the cast shadow as 'reality effect'

The still life paintings which entirely feature shadows cast by objects from outside the frame (such as in figure 5.5) do so without a form of a still life 'focaliser' to introduce the idea to the viewer. This particular arrangement is echoed in a description of "a revolutionary, new compositional method",[189] from Émile Zola's *L'Œuvre* (1886, titled in English as *His Masterpiece* or *The Masterpiece*), as described by Stoichita in *A Short History of the Shadow*; in *L'Œuvre*, the character Gagnière[190] stands at a window and describes "An impression… To me this is above all a landscape that disappears

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189 Stoichita, p. 104.

190 Zola introduces Gagnière with the description: "Gagnière, short, slight, and vague looking, with a doll-like startled face, set off by a fair curly beard, stood for a moment on the threshold blinking his green eyes. He belonged to Melun, where his well-to-do parents, who were both dead, had left him two houses; and he had learnt painting, unassisted, in the forest of Fontainebleau. His landscapes were at least conscientiously painted, excellent in intention; but his real passion was music, a madness for music, a cerebral bonfire which set him on a level with the wildest of the band." Émile Zola, *His Masterpiece*, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly, Chatto & Windus, London, 1902, pp. 69-70.

into the distance, a melancholic street corner, where the shadow of a tree we cannot see is projected."[191] Stoichita continues: "…the shadow (which we are given to understand makes the street more melancholic) is cast by no object in the image. It is an extension, a projection of something that is still 'outside-the-frame', in other words, in the real world." In the novel this appears as a casual musing, a throwaway idea, one in which Zola has Gagnière use the term 'impression'–but the impression is that evoked by music: what Gagnière is actually describing is not the scheme of an imaginary painting ("a revolutionary, new compositional method",[192]), but a passage of music–he begins announcing a trivial "only four bars" and the figure of the *disappearing* woman introduces a temporal note, appropriate to an 'impression' in music, not painting. Despite this distinction, the conception itself is important: Gagnière is a painter, and the description echoes that quoted by Gombrich above in the almost contemporaneous letter from Gauguin to Emile Bernhard. For Stoichita, the idea itself is an example of the nature of the radical shift in the conception of painting in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century:[193]

> The truncated shadow of which Gagnière speaks would be incomprehensible if it were not viewed within the context of this new perception of the boundaries of the image and their function.[194] Yet there are two reasons why the truncated shadow is more than the product of a revolutionary, new compositional method. The first is that in the painting it is not just a 'fragment' but a 'messenger' of reality. The second is more complex and involves one of the shadow's core components: in nature, the shadow corresponds to a very precise moment in the day. Consequently in the painting, the shadow establishes a unity between

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191 Quoted in Stoichita, p. 103. The passage from *L'Oeuvre* (in the Vizetelly translation runs): "While the others went on discussing the subject [reforms to the Paris Salon], Gagnière drew Mahoudeau to the open window, where, in a low voice, his eyes the while staring into space, he murmured:

'Oh, it's nothing at all, only four bars; a simple impression jotted down there and then. But what a deal there is in it! To me it's first of all a landscape, dwindling away in the distance; a bit of melancholy road, with the shadow of a tree that one cannot see; and then a woman passes along, scarcely a silhouette; on she goes and you never meet her again, no, never more again.'" Zola, p. 74. The Thomas Walton translation of the passage has a different emphasis: "While the others were deeply involved in their discussions, Gagnière had drawn Mahoudeau towards the open window, and as he looked away out into the night he was murmuring in a vague, far-away voice:

'It's hardly noticeable, really, just the faintest impression, a matter of four bars. But it's the amount of meaning he's got into it! . . . It makes me think first of a fleeting landscape, with the shadow of a hidden tree at the turn of a melancholy bit of road, and then of a woman passing by, just the faintest glimpse of a profile as she goes away, away into the distance, never to be seen again…' Stoichita omits the exclamation "But what a deal there is in it!" (which might be taken as an expression highlighting the novelty of the idea; the discrepancies in the text suggest that Stoichita is working from his own translation, although the endnote gives the same page number as the Walton translation); however the specificity of the phrase "a melancholic street corner" rather than "a bit of melancholy road" makes the figure of the unseen tree more easily comprehensible, and uses the word 'projected' which Stoichita explicitly links to outside the frame.

192 Stoichita, p. 104.

193 The artistic undercurrents which led to this shift do stretch back to the seventeenth century, as indicated in Chapter 4.

194 Stoichita uses a quote by Mallarmé on a painting by Monet to related this emerging tendency of this "new perception of the boundaries of the image": "The secret is to be found in an altogether new concept of cutting the painting that gives the frame all the charm of a completely imaginary boundary ... Such is the painting, and the function of the frame is to isolate it, although I realize that this might run counter to preconceived ideas. For example, what is the point of portraying an arm, a hat, a river bank, if they belong to someone or something outside the painting? All you have to do is make sure that the spectator who is accustomed - in a crowd or in nature - to picking out the parts that please him, can reconnect with the whole, not have cause in the work of art to regret the loss of one of his customary pleasures, and, while remaining aware that it has become a painting, half believe that what he is seeing is the vision of a genuine scene." Stoichita, pp. 103-104.

being and becoming.[195]

These types of shadows, cut from their referents, defined as "orphan shadows" by Dennis Hollier,[196] appropriately, appealed in particular to Surrealist painters.[197] The cast shadow, absent as a distinct entity for much of painting's history since the Renaissance, functions in this new conception of painting as a kind of 'reality effect'.[198] Alongside the preference (or at least the acceptance) of the fragmentary, the sketch, and the incomplete as valid artistic expressions and statements in and of themselves, simultaneously the very specificity that clearly defined shadows introduce into painting is no longer seen as jarring or incongruous. The reality effect of the cast shadow *was* present in painting from the Renaissance, but periodically suppressed–one thinks again of Peter Galassi's periods of 'denser' applications of perspective and "the problem of vision" (the fifteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries)[199] as countering this suppression–Gombrich's brief survey of cast shadows similarly accords with these periods: Gombrich quotes advice from Leonardo da Vinci for painters to suffuse their work with a 'mist' or 'transparent cloud',[200] implicitly creating an idealised atmosphere of suffused light, one that gives High Renaissance painting a sense of a mythical or religious 'any time', that clearly defined shadows would intrude on this and provide too much *specificity*.

For Gombrich "…shadows […] are not part of the real world. We cannot touch them or grasp them…", a property which leads to their use as metaphor, but continues: "And yet there are situations when the appearance of a shadow testifies to the solidity of an object, for what casts a shadow must be real."[201] Similarly, Hubert Damisch describes, as per Peirce, the shadow as an index of the body, qualified as "ever-changing", "…determined by the relative positions of the source of light and of the body. But it is also a fugacious index, one without substance or a reality of its own, directly connected to the body or the object it denotes, just like an image in the mirror."[202] The shadow-as-index "…refers to its object not so much by similarity or by analogy, but by the physical or even dynamic connection that binds it to the object in space, and in the memory of whomever it functions for as a sign."[203] This 'binding' is that which allows the shadow cast from outside the frame to pull its 'reality effect' into the image. There is always the possibility of shadows being deceptive about *what* they are an index of, that a shadow can appear deceptive as to its origin (played on in the shadow sculptures of Tim Noble and Sue Webster, for example), but, like Roland Barthes and the fact of the photograph's referent–that, by necessity, there must be *something* present to the lens–whether ambiguous or not, the cast shadow from the off-frame realm simply announces the *presence* of

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195 Stoichita, p, 104.

196 Denis Hollier, 'Surrealist Precipitates: Shadows Don't Cast Shadows', translated by Rosalind Krauss, *October*, Summer, 1994, Vol. 69, pp. 110-132, MIT Press, p, 119.

197 Hollier, p. 119.

198 Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', 1969, in the *Rustle of Language*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1989, pp. 141-148.

199 Galassi, pp. 15-16.

200 Gombrich, pp. 19-26.

201 Gombrich, p. 17.

202 Damisch, p. 312.

203 Damisch, p. 313.

that referent. Without the temporal aspect of the moving image (and the attendant possibilities of sound), in a still image this use of the shadow cast from outside the frame creates an always-imminent presence, 'imaginary and predictive', caught in its moment of enunciation, unable to move into the categories of 'concrete and retrospective', remaining forever unresolved.

5.7 Painted shadows (II): reintroducing photographic referents

Working from observation in the still life paintings was a result of thinking of the off-frame as a largely spatial approach to painting. There was a simplicity to the approach here that could be developed in the studio further to take account of more sophisticated concerns, but pursuing this felt as though it might not be the most productive development of the practice-based research. To complement the still life paintings, I made a series of paintings based on photographs taken previously, that is, not taken for the purpose of making paintings, with a process of selection to find photographs where there was a clear sense of the spatial outside, largely through shadows cast from the off-frame.[204]

Figure 5.18, Nicholas Middleton, *CCTV*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

In the painting *CCTV* (figure 5.18), the shadow of a surveillance camera positions its source outside the

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204 These paintings were also made during pandemic restrictions in 2020, the reason for the expediency of using existing photographs, rather than taking pictures specifically for the paintings: I didn't have equivalent photographs using mirrors, but shadows seem to have often caught my interest when taking photographs in the past.

frame, behind the viewer, essentially looking at the viewer's back. The shadow is isolated within a relatively small patch of light; the space as seen in the image consists of a concrete floor and walls, with some attention given to these surfaces, highlighted in the hatched lines painted on the floor. The title itself refers to what is not actually in the picture: it names what is casting the shadow, not the shadow itself.

Threshold (figure 5.19) plays with shadows again, but relies more on the partial inclusion of what is casting the shadows, the gates in a temporary security barrier. Compositionally, these are heavily cropped, but with enough visual information for the viewer to make sense of the relationship of the shadows to the structures, with the security gates 'completed' by their shadows. The presence of the gates suggest that the barrier seen on the left continues out of the frame, enclosing the space of the viewer.

Figure 5.19, Nicholas Middleton, *Threshold*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

The projection of architectural details has a resonance with Damisch's 'The Inventor of Painting', previously referenced: paraphrasing Vitruvius, Damisch describes painters "counterfeiting, through a projection on the wall, the silhouettes of edifices or colonnades,"[205] and, when discussing Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, "...here Alberti intends to show that the ornaments used by architecture–which provide it with

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205 Damisch, p. 305.

a kind of additional beauty, or supplement–can be broken down into a certain number of parts each of which presents, when projected on a planar surface, a characteristic profile".[206] The CCTV camera has a "characteristic profile" equivalent to the typical pictogram used in warning signs: the index becomes symbol, needing little decoding on the part of the viewer; the shadow in *Threshold* is rather more ambiguous on its own, in need of being attached to its reference for recognition.

Figure 5.20, Nicholas Middleton, *FILM*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

In *FILM* (figure 5.20) irregular, oblique shadows create a pattern across a blank wall. As a plane in space, this is articulated by a sign–of which the only complete letters spell 'FILM'–and the edge of a projecting canopy just seen at the bottom right, casting a more solid shadow attached to the portion within the frame. As a proposition about the off-frame, the clear implication is that the irregular shadow is cast by trees standing to the right of the visible section of wall. The juxtaposition of the shadows and the sign was fortuitous: this motif brought up associations with the piece *Paper Cinema* (see Chapter 3), which considered the impressions made on viewers of early film by the movement of the inanimate, typified by wind moving the leaves on trees in the background of a shot; perhaps the viewer of the painting can imagine the absent movement of the shadow of the leaves on the wall, contrasting with the unmoving shadows of the sign and canopy. These continue outside the frame to the right, but neither animate the surface of the painting

206 Damisch, p. 305.

(and in doing so, the painting's off-frame) in the same way that the trees' shadows do.

Although the sign and the inability to read it from behind, frustrating its function to impart information, was the prime reason for making the painting *Reverse of a Temporary Sign* (figure 5.21), I found the shadows of bare branches cast upon it evocative: these shadows give a sense of what is behind the viewer, out of the frame again, with the differing focus of these shadows also suggesting a sense of spatial depth and distance, as well as associations that might reasonably be drawn of season and time of day.

Figure 5.21, Nicholas Middleton, *Reverse of a Temporary Sign*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

When these paintings were made, I was concerned in demonstrating aspects of the off-frame in a spatial manner. As a result, I was keen to assert that, despite the paintings' clear photographic referents, and taking away some of the more sophisticated digital editing involved in their production, these paintings *could* have been made direct from the motif. Without the intervention of the lens and the camera, some of the fragmentary compositions, oblique angles of view and framings possibly would not have occurred to a painter without any prior experience of photography: the paintings' compositional basis in photographs

is often informed by looking at the world through the viewfinder of a camera.[207] The viewfinder could in these instances be replaced by any number of optical devices existing before the invention of chemical photography: the camera lucida, the camera obscura, a frame with a wire or string grid, painting on glass or a mirror, the architect's surveying tools.[208] These paintings could also have been made freehand, as with the still life paintings, without the use of such devices. Removing the practical considerations of working with these different methods, it would be possible to make these paintings–or very similar ones–without photography.

5.8 The shadow and the index (II): Duchamp's *Tu m'* and 'orphan shadows'

> *Tu m'* is a painting Marcel Duchamp made in 1918. It is, one might say, a panorama of the index. Across its ten-foot width parade a series cast shadows, as Duchamp's readymades put in their appearance via the index. The readymades themselves are not depicted. Instead the bicycle wheel, the hatrack, and a corkscrew, are projected onto the surface of the canvas through the fixing of cast shadows, signifying these objects by means of indexical traces.[209]

In Duchamp's *Tu m'* (1918; figure 5.22), the readymades fictively *overshadow* the surface of his final painting. The literal-to-figurative play in this metaphor is appropriate: painting is an illusionistic medium (and the content of *Tu m'* foregrounds this), while the readymades are real physical objects which cast shadows attesting to their solidity as *something* existing in the same realm as the viewer–while simultaneously stressing that the painting is simply a flat, opaque surface after all. The missing objects which only feature as shadows are, logically, in 'our' space–but not in our time. The shadow, the "fugacious index"[210] of the non-illusionistic readymades (which stand in for nothing but themselves) is fixed (like a photograph) in the act of painting, so that their presence–outside the frame, at the moment of creation–can be carried forward by their traces through time (perhaps Duchamp was aware of the ephemeral nature of the readymade, not yet anticipating their later replication), indexing their very existence.

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207 *FILM* and *Threshold* however are considerably cropped from their photographic sources.

208 This last instance being one 'explanation' for the construction of Brunelleschi's perspective panels at the beginning of the Renaissance; see previous chapter.

209 Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America', p. 70. See also Stoichita pp. 196-199 for a discussion of *Tu m'* and its shadows.

210 Damisch, p. 312.

Figure 5.22, Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918. © Association Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2024.

Related to its being "a panorama of the index",[211] *Tu m'* is a compendium of the possibilities of painting as a medium. Within it, there are a number of different registers of representation: the illusionistic, the perspectival, the symbolic, the real, all playing with (and disrupting) the sense of the picture plane and its concordance with the surface of the canvas: recession in depth, through perspectival construction (and the suggestion of aerial perspective); the insistence on the nature of the flat surface of the canvas (with the sign-painter's hand, and the black void of the tear disclosing that there is nothing beyond the canvas surface); the real, through the bolt in the middle of the canvas, the safety pins holding together the painted tear; and, reversing perspectival depth, projection into the viewer's space through the bottle brush and its real shadow,[212] supplementing the painted shadows of the readymades, thus positioning these in real space, with the scale of these shadows providing a one-to-one concordance to the absent objects themselves.

Duchamp's title, specifically its use of abbreviation (the *m'*), has a number of interpretations, often either ascribed to mean "'tu m'emmerdes' (you annoy me) or 'tu m'ennuies' (you bore me),"[213] appropriate enough for Duchamp's last painting, a renunciation. However, both Rosalind Krauss[214] and Dennis Hollier interpret it to mean *tu/moi*, you/me: "… its very title reduces to the pure and simple conjugation of the linguistic index the only two pronouns that can truly be called personal, those of the first and second person, *tu* and *me*, you and me."[215] By implication, the you/me is the viewer/artist or viewer/artwork relationship, foregrounded by Duchamp in the particular strategies of *Tu m'*, its orphan shadows creating a "dynamic connection"[216] between the in-frame and off-frame space of the work, and especially through

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211 Krauss, p. 70.

212 The white rectangle painted in recession to the right of the bottle brush is where its shadow should land, pointed to by the sign painter's hand, forming a diagrammatic re-enactment of the painting of the shadows of the other readymades: *Tu m'* was a site-specific painting, made for a position high on a wall above a bookcase, making this particular, short projection of the bottle brush's shadow clearly defined within its construction. See Susan Barbour, 'Duchamp's Long Shadow: The Secret Meaning of "Tu m'"' *Los Angeles Review of Books*, April 10, 2017, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/duchamps-long-shadow-the-secret-meaning-of-tu-m/ Retrieved 16/10/22; this includes a photograph by John Schiff of its original installation in Katherine Dreier's home, for which it was commissioned.

213 https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/50128. Retrieved 16/10/22. Susan Barbour suggests *Tu m'excite* (You turn me on), playing on the erotic connotations of the bottle brush.

214 Krauss, p. 71.

215 Hollier, p. 124. Italics in original.

216 Damisch, p. 313.

the use of *trompe l'oeil*, which is always, at some level, about spectatorship, addressing the viewer through its play and uncertainty.

Responding to Duchamp's *Tu m'*, I wanted to make a piece which would use *trompe l'oeil*'s explicit situating of the viewer to invoke the idea of a painted shadow pointing to *something* with a definite presence in the 'real' space around or behind the viewer.[217] The conceit of *trompe l'oeil* painting, is that, often, what the viewer sees–life-sized, painted to-scale objects or fragments–are intended to be read as inhabiting the same space as the viewer, unlike the Renaissance model of a painting as a window, with the illusionistic space of the painting being clearly demarcated as existing on the other side of the picture plane, that invisible surface that separates the viewer from the viewed. The implicit appeal to the viewer in the most convincing *trompe l'oeil* paintings is the desire for a confirmatory touch to *dispel* the illusion, to assure the eye that what it sees is just paint after all. As shadows, that we cannot touch them[218] denies the possibility of this confirmatory desire. With *After Carel Fabritius*, (figure 5.23) I took a photocopy from a book[219] with a reproduction of Carel Fabritius' painting of the goldfinch, and combined with the painted shadows of a cage, off-frame, falling across it–with the implications if the viewer is understood to be in the same space.
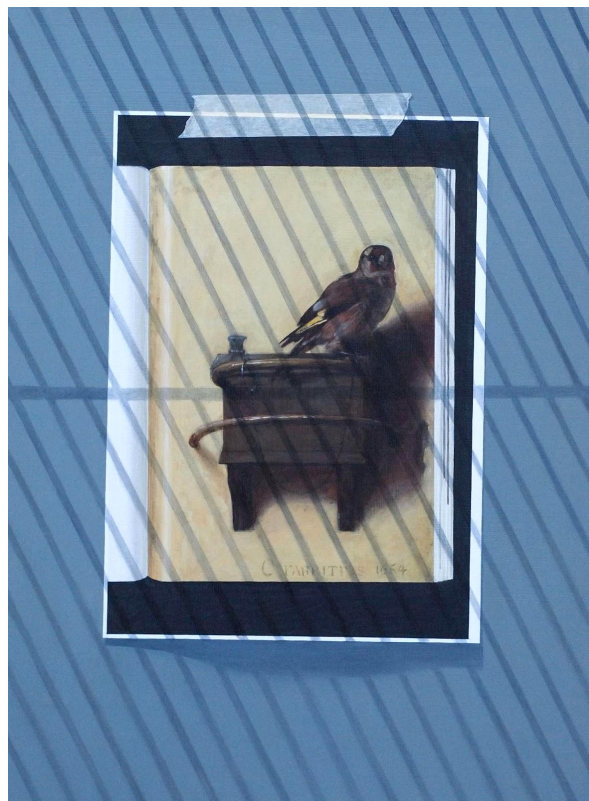
Figure 5.23, Nicholas Middleton, *After Carel Fabritius*, 2022, Oil on paper, 60x40cm

217 This also developed out of ideas from the painting installation piece *Painting with Four Components and Six Segments* and also *The Painting of We Three*.
218 Gombrich, p. 17.
219 Mariet Westermann, *Art of the Dutch Republic, 1585-1718*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1996.

Fabritius' painting itself has been frequently written about with reference to *trompe l'oeil*: its scale is life-sized, its point of view is quite specific, being clearly seen from below, with speculation that it might have formed part of some piece of furniture, painted on an uncharacteristically thick panel, and its lighting scheme is also very particular, lit with diffused reflected light from below, suggestive of sunlight falling from a high Dutch window into a white-washed interior, perhaps. The form of the photocopy itself in my painting also duplicates the internal allusions to trompe l'oeil, which in turn suggests *displacement* in the experience of encountering works of art through photographic reproductions at one or more removes.

Although the return to painting in the research began with largely spatial concerns, there were emerging temporal considerations which Duchamp's *Tu m'* points toward. That a still image, whether a painting or a photograph, does not unfold over time internal or inherent to the object–as in a film–creates a what could be seen as a lack of the 'dynamism' of the off-frame (in Peretz's term)–becoming always predictive and imaginary as a result. This however was where a productive distinction lay, and an approach to thinking about different temporalities in the work, in all its manifestations, needed to be thought and worked through.

6 Temporalities of painting and the viewer's part

6.1 Every work of art implies a viewer: *The Picture of 'We Three'*

The previous chapters have largely concentrated at looking at the practice-based research from the position of a maker in the studio. The paintings in Chapters 4 and 5 were made explicitly as a demonstration of the off-frame in relation to the painted image and as an exploration of some of the strategies available to me as the maker of such artworks. This began with investigating the conception of the visual pyramid in relation to the development of perspective, through to the use of the twin motifs of shadows and reflections, a means by which the nature of the off-frame space could then be referenced or indicated within the picture itself. This also required looking at some of the assumptions inherent in working from photographic source material and making a series of paintings from direct observation to act as a counter to this. In this chapter I turn to look at how the viewer might approach such works, and how the off-frame, felt or intuited by the viewer in their encounter with the artwork, affects its reception.[220] In doing so I consider Roland Barthes' concept of the *punctum*[221] in his viewing of photographs and suggest that the off-frame is a similar mechanism at work on the viewer in the reading of still images through the power of 'metonymic expansion'.[222] Further, I also consider the temporalities involved in the construction of a painting, and in particular how a painting made from a photograph develops this expansion in specific ways, further affecting the viewer's reading of the work, again with an emphasis on moving from spatial to the temporal concerns in the viewer's 'free rewriting time'.[223]

For the viewer, the relationship of absence to presence–the off-frame–across film, photography and painting, manifests itself differently in each instance. This is a result of the temporal and indexical aspects of the respective mediums (as in each it is possible to achieve a similar spatial representation, wherein the optical lens reproduces Renaissance perspective): experienced by the viewer, this can be summed up as the *flow* of film, the *transparency* of photography and the *opaque objecthood* of painting.[224] Photographically-based moving images have both the referential qualities of photography itself (the index) and temporal flow, a linear unfolding (pre)determined by the structure of the work itself.[225] The photograph's referential quality

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220 The artist is always the work's first viewer.
221 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, 1993, p. 27 and pp. 40-59.
222 Barthes, p. 45.
223 Peter Wollen, 'Fire and Ice', in *Photographies*, no.4, Paris, April 1984, p. 108.
224 One anecdote from my own prior experience of this in my painting practice came from being able to read responses to my painting *Scene from a Contemporary Novel* when it was shown in the John Moores Painting Prize in 2006. After it was awarded the Visitors' Choice Prize, the Walker Art Gallery provided me with copies of the cards by which the public voted for their favourite painting in the exhibition. I thought I had made a 'transparent' painting by using photography and a mimetic stylistic approach in which the subject matter was the important consideration: many of the responses focussed on the technique of the painting, a surface reading of how the work was made rather than what it might have been 'about'– not discounting of course that this may been what visitors were most comfortable in articulating.
225 There is a possibility of this linear flow being more complex or disrupted with digital moving images, allowing for internal access to the work.

gives it a transparency, that is, the displaced subject of the photograph becomes what it 'is'.[226] Painting, by contrast, is always bound by its materiality: painting with any level of figuration is apprehended by the viewer as being both its subject and its material constituents of pigment, binder, substrate. (This is rarely the case with photography unless actively foregrounded by the maker, usually through the use of 'alternative' processes, and probably less true in the digital realm, where signs of its 'materiality' might be exhibited through excessive file compression, pixellation, or some form of glitch.[227]) The stillness of a painting and the equilibrium between its material and referential qualities are an invitation to the viewer to look more closely at the work and enter into an imaginative relation to what it depicts. This in turn allows for the development of a painting's off-frame, one not necessarily consciously articulated but felt or intuited in the encounter with the work.

In the previous chapter, *After Fabritius* used the approach of *trompe l'oeil* painting to collapse the space of the artwork with the space of the viewer, or rather to suggest that the illusionistic qualities of what was depicted in the painting is *in* the same space as the viewer, and not a projected space separated from the viewer by a picture plane. The implied commentary of the *quodlibet* or 'what you please' style of *trompe l'oeil* painting was one of the appeals of working with this form, and following *After Fabritius*, I made another *trompe l'oeil* work *The Picture of 'We Three'* (figure 6.1). The text in this painting–of which its title is an extract–comes from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.[228] The line is spoken by the Clown Feste to Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch, and refers to a type of trick painting which shows *two* fools or jesters[229] with the title 'We Three', inscribed into the work,[230] implicating the viewer in the act of reading to complete the three, and is, therefore, by association also a fool (the other element in my painting is a piece of paper with the famous fool's cap watermark which gives the paper size its name). The lettering is a representation of printed text, but, unlike other painterly illusions, representations of text function indivisibly as the thing itself–the separation or displacement of a representation here collapses.[231]

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226 "…this seems, ontologically, to be what is happening when we look at a photograph: we see things that are not present." Cavell, p. 18.

227 This may also be the case with digital moving images.

228 William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, c.1601-02, Act II, Scene III. From *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by W. J. Craig, Oxford University Press, 1924.

229 There is an extant painting contemporaneous to *Twelfth Night*, believed to show Tom Derry and Muckle John with the painted legend "Wee three log[g]erh[ea]ds": Victoria Jackson, 'Shakespeare in 100 Objects: We Three Loggerheads', Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2012, https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-100-objects-we-three-loggerheads/ Retrieved 26/04/2022. Similar paintings show two asses, hence Sir Toby's reply: "Welcome, ass."

230 Although undifferentiated amongst the rest of the extract from *Twelfth Night*, the title of my painting also appears within it, on the painting's surface, "the simplest situation" for what a title is, according to John Fisher (see Chapter 3).

231 Something similar happens in the photographic works *Heatwave* and *Paper Cinema*, where the texts are simultaneously photographs of text and text itself. See Chapter 3.

Figure 6.1, Nicholas Middleton, *The Picture of 'We Three'*, oil on paper, 30.5x24cm

The text in *The Picture of 'We Three'* has an explicit address to the viewer,[232] a self-conscious acknowledgment of spectatorship: it posits a *role* for the viewer, not just a place in front of the picture plane. Presumably the puzzle picture of 'We Three' was well-known enough at the time that *Twelfth Night* was first performed to be evoked as a joke by the characters; it has now become an obscure reference which needs explanation–a form of expansion that is a feature of a number of works I have made in pursuit of the off-frame. *The Picture of 'We Three'* is a commentary on spectatorship, on the idea of the viewer's implication in the scheme of the type of painting referred to in the text of the play, which, in the original referred to, feels like a very modern form of referentiality or self-consciousness.[233] Every work of art implies a viewer: there is no work of art without the viewer, merely assemblages of materials, whether an accumulation of

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232 Assumed to be literate of course, and English-speaking.

233 Peretz, in *The Off-Screen: An investigation of the cinematic frame,* discusses the off in Shakespearean theatre as being fundamentally different to that of the ancient Greek 'obscene' as part of the emerging early modern sensibility in which the off becomes active. See Peretz, pp. 19-21.

pigment in a binder on a support of canvas or paper, or reductions of metallic silver in a gelatin suspension on a paper support.[234] All art works exist within their encounter with the viewer.[235] The invention of perspective marks the beginning of a self-consciousness of the artwork expressed in this relationship as an ideal model: a perspectively-constructed image demands that the viewer take up an ideal position in front of the picture, conceptualised and constructed as immobile and monocular as a necessary simplification. Making *Painting comprising four components and six segments* as an installation (Chapter 4) was a means by which the ideal monocular viewpoint was extended by (or distributed through) this work being an installation, with the demand that it is seen spatially, in the viewer's space like the *trompe l'oeil* works. The fact that the two image areas of the work are shown opposite each other means that the one point perspective in each does not create the situation of a paradoxical illusion, as these can only be seen one at a time, and that it cannot be seen 'all-at-once'. The reality of the embodied viewer makes physical what is denied in one-point perspective: the viewer is required to move–to turn around–to grasp the whole of the piece and how each component relates to the other. As a result, memory comes into play, much like when watching a film: the viewer builds up a mental image of the space represented in their short term memory, through the temporal succession of shots, camera movements, or movements of the actors. With the painting installation, rather than the image moving, the viewer has to move–much like with the panorama, although on a much smaller and limited scale. Despite the work's success or otherwise in terms of its scale as realised, the viewer relies on being able to turn and move between the different sections of the work to complete it. In this movement, *time* in the encounter brings out what is already there: the movement of the viewer is needed to experience the spatial, and the temporal is the realm in which movement exists.

6.2 'A free rewriting time' Peter Wollen on Roland Barthes and the temporality of the viewer

The various attempts in the preceding chapters–particularly in painting–to demonstrate the existence of the off-frame through its *spatial* adjacency largely came from an exploration of the practicalities of working through exactly *how* what is outside the frame can inform what appears within or is contained by the frame. The existence of this off-frame space in a (single) still image is always in some sense "predictive and imaginary" in Burch's phrase,[236] and for this reason, according to Eyal Peretz, the 'off' that belongs to a still image loses the power that the off-screen is able to possess in film. This power, or *dynamism* as Peretz defines it,[237] rests on the temporality of film and its basis in photography. One of Peretz's prime examples of how this power is demonstrated by the most simple means is a shot from the beginning of Andrei Tarkovsky' film *Solaris*, outside the narrative of the film's story, but disclosing something of the nature of experiencing the world, and experiencing it through cinema.

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234 "Without a spectator, the art work is merely a thing in a room." Wesseling, Janneke, *The Perfect Spectator: The Experience of the Art Work and Reception Aesthetics*, Valiz, Amsterdam 2017, p. 218.
235 This is a very broad and simplified summary of relational aesthetics from *The Perfect Spectator*, particularly 'Chapter 5: Discourse on Spectatorship', pp. 167-222.
236 Burch, pp. 21-23.
237 Peretz, p. 220.

Figure 6.2, Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris*, 1972

> *Solaris* begins with a tightly framed view of a body of water […] Suddenly, a leaf flows from off-screen into the frame, only to float off-screen just as quickly. As the leaf enters the frame from the upper right, the camera starts to move to the left, not exactly following the leaf but going in the general direction of its movement. […] The camera, as mentioned, starts to move as the leaf enters the cinematic frame from the off-screen. Reading allegorically, it gains its power to move from the fact that the off-screen intrudes into the screen even as the screen bleeds into the off screen…[238]

In the above quote the appearance (and disappearance) of the floating leaf is, for Peretz, a guarantor of the independent existence of the world outside the frame which is implicated through the indexicality of the medium.[239] One can also see this leaf as an analogy for the materiality of physical film and its expression in cinema: it is spatial, linear, moving in one direction, *flowing*, with a beginning and an end. Peretz (and Stanley Cavell) admits to the presence of the off-frame in photography thanks to its semiotic nature as index, but that here its 'off' lacks the 'dynamism' belonging to film, being static and *unchanging*.

However, something *does* happen temporally with a still image, and I would argue it does so with both photography and painting.[240] As with film, the image encounters its viewer. This encounter takes place in the time of the viewer: with a fixed, unmoving image, this encounter is itself not, or not necessarily,

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238 Eyal Peretz, *The Off-Screen: An investigation of the cinematic frame*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2017, pp. 35-36.

239 Stanley Cavell also expresses a similar conception to Peretz in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*: "You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame. This generally makes no sense asked of a painting. You can ask these questions of objects in photographs because they have answers in reality. The world of a painting is not continuous with the world of its frame; at its frame, a world finds its limits." Cavell, p. 23.

240 'Painting' here could stand in for any number of non-indexical forms of representation, but, for the off-frame, it is still imperative to think of an image to which it must belong.

a 'static' one. Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, defines what he terms the *punctum* as an incidental and somehow compelling detail, the presence of which, often entirely unintended or even unnoticed by the photographer, guaranteed by the photograph's indexical nature, becomes a detail that 'pricks' the viewer, one that emerges through time, as against what Barthes calls the *studium*,[241] a general aspect of the photograph which usually aligns with the intentions of the photographer, and one able to be apprehended by the viewer 'all at once'. The *punctum*, for Barthes, appears to be quite absent in film:

> Do I add to the images in movies? I don't think so; I don't have time: in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not *pensiveness*…[242]

I am not suggesting here that the off-frame is somehow to be found in Barthes' *punctum*, but, rather, the appearance of the *punctum* in the photograph is a model for how the off-frame can function in a photograph– or a painting. It is something that the viewer 'adds' to the image: paradoxically the *punctum* "…is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*."[243] Barthes writes that "the *punctum* has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic."[244] The off-frame also carries the power of this 'metonymic expansion' of an image. Peter Wollen, describing Roland Barthes writing about film through the film still–rather than the experience of film itself–states that the still image has "a free rewriting time rather than an imposed reading time."[245] Once made, the still image (photographic or painted) allows for the pensive contemplation which can open it up to expansion, an expansion that includes its off-frame, temporally as well as spatially.

The photograph is also indivisible from what it represents: with some exceptions, it exists as a *transparent* medium and circulates freely. Photographs can be located as specific objects, but, by their nature and design, deriving from a matrix of a digital file or a physical negative, they reproduce promiscuously. For Barthes, the photograph is a "weightless, transparent envelope",[246] always tied to its subject, to what is *in* the photograph: "the referent adheres."[247] Similarly, Stanley Cavell states that "A photograph does not present us with 'likenesses' of things; it presents us, we want to say, with the things themselves. But wanting to say that may well make us ontologically restless."[248] One suspects that the 'ontological restlessness' is more

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241 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, 1993, p. 26.

242 Barthes, p. 55. Italics in original. Barthes relied on the film still as his point of access to be able to write about cinema. The passage continues: "Yet the cinema has a power which at first glance the Photograph does not have: the screen (as Bazin has remarked) is not a frame but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living: a "blind field" constantly doubles our partial vision." Barthes, pp. 55-57. This "blind field" is the off-screen.

243 Barthes, p. 55. Italics in original.

244 Barthes, p. 45. Italics in original.

245 "Time, for Barthes, should be the prerogative of the reader/spectator…" Peter Wollen, 'Fire and Ice', in *Photographies*, no.4, Paris, April 1984, p. 108.

246 Barthes, p. 5.

247 Barthes, p. 6. Further, "A specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least is is not *immediately* or *generally* distinguished from its referent (as is the case for every other image, encumbered– from the start, and because of its status–by the way in which the object is simulated)…" Barthes, p. 5, italics in original.

248 Cavell, p. 17.

sharply drawn in the photograph, as, unlike film, it doesn't move.[249] The ubiquity of the photographic image in the experience of contemporary life obscures this however, subsumed a general media landscape, exploded in the digital realm (Barthes writes about photography being 'tamed', 'society' 'generalising, gregarising, banalising' it, decades before the invention of the smartphone with its camera and screen recording and disseminating photographic images).[250]

As the exhibition of 'The Painting of Modern Life' attempted to stage, even before its digital proliferation, this photographic image-world became a fit subject for engaged painters in the second half of the twentieth century. Although it would be impossible to quantify the motives of all the artists represented there (and taking these as also representative of painting practices which use photographic reference materials as anything more than a visual *aide memoire* or compositional crutch), through the act of painting, one gets the sense that there is a generalised desire to arrest the circulation of these images, and to concretise them in a single, specific object–the painting–which has particular qualities of facture (among others) which can only be truly appreciated in a direct encounter with the viewer, together, in the same space at the same time. As an artist, using painting to make artworks which *look* similar to a photograph is one means of highlighting the particular in the image, that *this* specific image may be worthy of the viewer's attention. This occurs through the obvious–if subtle–care of its skilful hand-made qualities, the artist demonstrating that this image may be worth a reciprocal attention bestowed upon it.[251]

6.3 Temporalities of painting: Mohammed Sami, *Disremembering I*; Narbi Price's *Untitled Trees Painting (Westerplatte)*; *Houses by a Canal, Mural*

What separates painting and photography as artistic mediums and leads to their ontological distinctness is the fact of photography's mechanical basis. This is something stressed by Roland Barthes (it provides the conditions for the presence of the *punctum*), and by Stanley Cavell and Eyal Peretz when writing about film: its basis in the photographic is that guarantor of the world outside the frame. This mechanical aspect, the gathering of the world through an objective lens, and, notably, the technology of the recording medium itself (whether photographic film or a digital sensor) has profound differences for how the temporal qualities of photography and painting differ. One *could* conceive of the difference between the time of making with a photograph and that of a painting as simply a difference of scale: taking away the automatisms of technology, the accumulation of photons recorded by a light sensitive surface may be analogous to the accretion of marks, brushstrokes, layers of pigment and binder in a painting. Yet one surely feels the durational nature of time in a painting as being very different from that of a photograph, with the indexical sense of capture that a photograph possesses against the mediation of the painted surface. That

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249 The difference between stillness and movement in the photograph and film–with all its implications–is sharply brought into focus in Christian Metz's 'Photography and Fetish', *October*, Vol. 34. (Autumn, 1985), pp. 81-90.
250 Barthes, pp. 117-118.
251 This is not a plea for a kind of mechanical facsimile approach to painting. The catalogue essays in *The Painting of Modern Life* all shy away from the term *photorealism*, notable by its absence.

mediation itself can further complicate the temporal aspects of a painting, even (or especially) if that is a painting based upon a photograph.

Aspects of the complications of the temporal dimension in painting can be demonstrated in a couple of examples from two contemporary artists, Mohammed Sami and Narbi Price. I was initially drawn to Sami's *Disremembering* series as an embodiment of how the space outside the frame can be folded back into the picture, specifically by using what appears to be projected patches of sunlight into otherwise relatively conventional pictorial spaces, relating in particular to the paintings I made which used shadows to introduce something of the adjacent off-frame space into the pictures themselves. The ragged nature of the patches of light in *Disremembering I* (figure 6.3) separates these projections from what the viewer might have expected from a door or a window, suggesting damage and destruction, the implication being that the (perhaps unusually) bright sun casts its light through holes made by bullets and shells from a wall or ceiling located off-frame. In addition, the construction of the title suggests the site of memory (and its temporal aspects), but altered in some way by the prefix *dis-*.
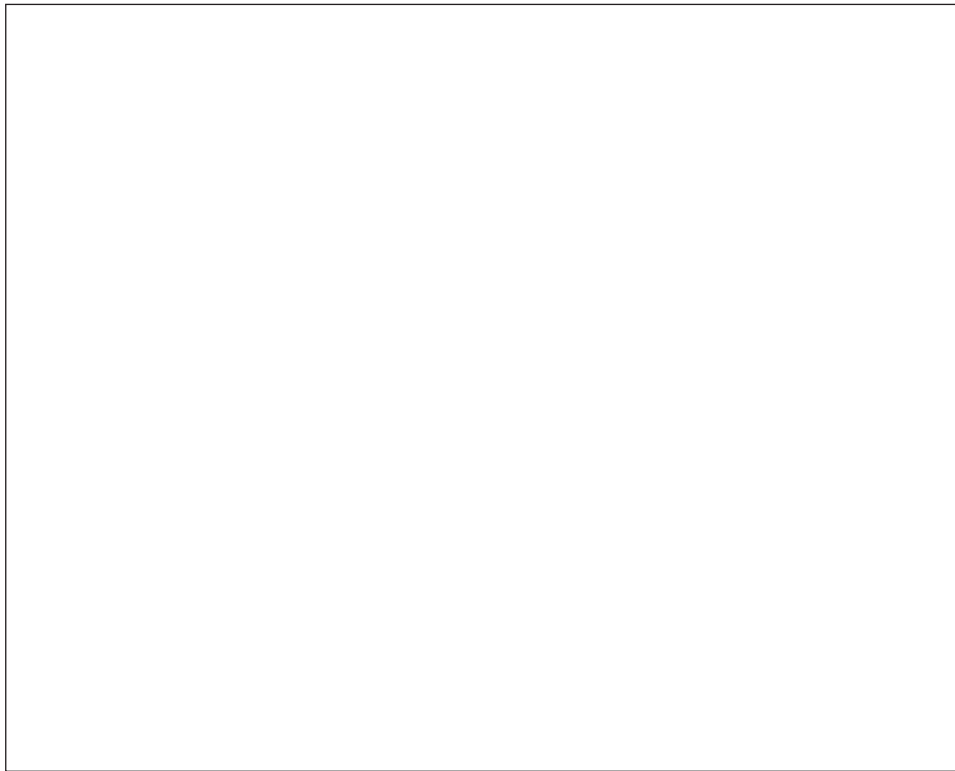
Figure 6.3, Mohammed Sami, *Disremembering I*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 195x155cm. Image redacted for copyright purposes.

The artist, a native of Baghdad, describes his work as exploring "belated memories"[252] provoked by

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252 Mohammed Sami in conversation with Sohrab Mohebbi, Camden Arts Centre File Note 144, London 2023, p. 5. As an affinity to some of the themes in this chapter, Sami draws on "linguistic strategies from Arab literature–puns, euphemisms and *metonyms*". Sami, p. 3. My italics.

"common everyday objects" during his time as a refugee in Sweden.[253] The light shining through these holes invites the viewer to imagine a ruined dwelling, while the interior that the patterns of light falls on (along with the titles) suggests an ambiguity, that the visible scene and the (implied) partially-destroyed wall are not in fact a contiguous space, but the *memory* of one within the other, different times and spaces brought together on the painting's surface. The broken chair in *Disremembering I* (figure 6.3) appears to exist simultaneously in both past/present, memory/reality; presumably this is the object which has provoked the memory itself. From thinking that Sami's work here could function as a clear demonstration of the spatial off-frame in painting, it is as much–if not more so–a demonstration of how the spatial and temporal aspects of its off-frame are inseparable.

Figure 6.4, Narbi Price, *Untitled Trees Painting (Westerplatte)*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 70x100cm.
© Narbi Price 2019, all rights reserved.

In Sami's work, time announces itself through memory and personal history made visually concrete. By contrast, history as it makes itself felt in Narbi Price's work is generally not personal. Price's *Untitled Trees Painting (Westerplatte)* (figure 6.4) shows an apparently uncomplicated representational landscape scene.[254] In the painting itself some aspects of the off-frame reside in the way the view is framed: vertically, trees extend beyond the upper edge of the painting; horizontally, a deep blue horizon line (the sea), bisects the

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253 Mohammed Sami, https://www.mohammedsami.com/blank-mpvle Accessed 29/06/20.
254 This painting may not be entirely representative of Price's work. Other paintings by Price often focus on screening motifs: blank walls, gates, doors, which, as with other components of his paintings, allow for a very particular emphasis to be placed on the flat surface of the material as simultaneously being patches of coloured paint while still creating an illusionistic description of three-dimensional space. For the artist's own description of his practice, see Price's PhD thesis, *Repainting the Pitmen: The Ashington Art Group & Robert Lyon - Rethinking Legacy through Archive and Practice*, Newcastle University, 2020.

panel at its mid-point, meeting the sides, surely continuing beyond these; from the bottom edge of the picture, perspectively diminishing shadows indicate that there are trees behind the viewpoint chosen to construct this painting. Roughly in the centre there appears to be the remains of a weathered concrete structure, its purpose unclear, but subtly suggestive of an abandoned void. Price's work concerns itself with specific locations where historical events have occurred. Being named *Untitled Trees Painting (Westerplatte)* provides a descriptive key as to what the painting shows (its ostensible subject, a painting of trees) with a hint to its 'real' subject in parenthesis *(Westerplatte)*. This is Westerplatte in Poland, with a view through the trees to the Baltic Sea where the battleship Schleswig-Holstein fired its initial barrage on the Polish garrison on the 1st of September 1939, heralding the start of the Second World War in Europe–none of which is contained 'within' the painting. Being painted from Price's own photograph, one can describe four clear registers of time embodied in this work:

1. The *now*, the present moment that the painting currently exists within–the moment at which the viewer encounters it.[255]

2. The embodied time of painting. Although Price works from photographs, his process is very clearly inscribed into the facticity of his surfaces. As such, one can read the layers in his paintings as evidence of the time of their making, the span of time of a brushmark, quick or slow, the fluidity or viscosity of the liquid paint as it moves, disperses, pools, drips, spatters and so on.[256]

3. The time of Price's original referent: working from photographs, this indexes a definitive moment in time.

4. Price's work depends on locations with a specific history. The choice of location for the photograph which each painting is based on has its own referent (or referents) in the time of the event or events that provoked the making of the painting. This is usually not disclosed explicitly but obliquely referred to in Price's titles, which usually take the form of a descriptive phrase explicitly referencing that this is painting, prefixed by *Untitled*, then with a single word contained in parentheses which refers to the history of the place seen in the painting. Gallery and catalogue texts have the capacity to further expand on these references.

255 Hans-Georg Gadamer states that "The reality of the work of art and its expressive power cannot be restricted to its original horizon, in which the beholder was actually the contemporary of the creator. It seems instead to belong to the experience of art that *the work of art always has its own present.*" Gadamer, 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics', quoted in Janneke Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator: The Experience of the Art Work and Reception Aesthetics*, Valiz, Amsterdam 2017, p. 31. My italics. This no doubt holds true as an encounter with the painting as a physical object: the painting will change as an object as it ages, and these changes are also encoded as signs upon its surface. As a reproduction, this becomes a fixed point in time from when the reproduction was created from the original work; the reproduction also ages. Ralph Rugoff, in *The Painting of Modern Life*, describes how the photograph is tied to the specific time of its making, while representational painting exists "in an unfolding present", "a kind of post-modern temporality inflected by currents of reference and repetition, and in which images of the present were inevitably permeated with a sense of *déjà-vu*." These "currents of reference and repetition" are very much in evidence in the work discussed in this chapter. Rugoff, p. 14.
256 This may be almost entirely lost in reproduction, and especially so at a small scale.

Although my technical approach in painting is very different from that of Narbi Price, that is, the surface of my paintings are often harder to read in terms of the time of their making, however, as an example, a very similar set of registers can be described in my painting *Houses by a Canal* (figure 6.5).[257] This depicts a specific location in Delft, recently identified as being that of Vermeer's painting *The Little Street* (c. 1657-61); other research, which I find convincing, has found a different location for this.[258] When I took the photograph on which this painting is based, in late 2019, a life-sized photographic print of a detail from Vermeer's painting covered the door which was identified as aligning with the doorway leading to an alley alongside the house from *The Little Street*.[259] *Houses by a Canal* was one of a handful of paintings that continued the general format of those paintings from photographic referents concerned with using shadows to imply the space outside the frame in Chapter 5, but combined this approach with some of the concerns about site and location from earlier photographic work (Chapters 2 and 3). These also used the motif of a picture within a picture found in the environment.[260]

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257 It is worth noting that both Sami and Price's work uses traumatic events or histories, personal in the one case, a more generalised history in the other, but their use as examples here is to demonstrate the *possibilities* of the temporal layers inherent in paintings which use photograph references that speak of a history or histories, however that may be defined.

258 Philip Steadman, 'Vermeer's The Little Street: A More Credible Detective Story' http://www.essentialvermeer.com/delft/little-street-steadman/little-street-steadman.html. Not dated but refers (in the present tense) to an exhibition at the Rijksmueum in 2016. Retrieved 16/04/22.

259 The particular reflexivity of art works reflecting on each other has its own temporal implications: "...the art work in which another is recaptured is a reflection on the reciprocal relationship with the other art work and the deliberateness of that relationship. It involves a fundamental equality between the later and the earlier work. Although one art work dates from a later time than the other, the reciprocity of this relationship contradicts linear, chronological time. The two works influence each other: one triggers the other. And once the other has come about it affects the impression and interpretation of the first. It is a non-linear to-ing and fro-ing in time. When art works are recaptured, art history is rewritten, our understanding of the past changes." Wesseling, p. 109.

260 There were more than the two paintings illustrated here, *Houses by a Canal* and *Mural*, but these were the more successful due to their specific historic contexts.

Figure 6.5, Nicholas Middleton, *Houses by a Canal*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

The time registers implied here are again (1) the now, the present moment; then (2) the embodied time of the painting; within this is (3) the time of the taking of the photograph; this 'contains' (4) the time of Vermeer's painting, as well as the time in which the identification of the location had been considered secure enough to make this intervention–the photographic reproduction of the detail from Vermeer fixed to the door–but was no longer at the time I photographed it.[261] In addition, the viewer may recognise the detail and be able to imaginatively reconstruct the rest of Vermeer's painting around it, spatially, blotting out the present-day cityscape of Delft[262]–and this could also include an awareness of the way that *Houses by a Canal* is constructed as a painting, with its integral painted white border, a framing element, the same material as the 'image': sensing Vermeer's *The Little Street* superimposed upon it, the crop or cut down to this detail reflects back to the 'metonymic expansion' of Barthes' *punctum*.[263]

Figure 6.6, Nicholas Middleton, *Mural*, oil on paper, 24x30.5cm

The picture-within-a-picture in the environment as a motif from *Houses by a Canal* reappears in *Mural*

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261 One might also add the time difference between the time of taking the photograph, and the time of developing the film it was taken on, as against the immediacy of digital: the latent image and the physical image existing in their own time registers.

262 The presence of parked cars attests to the painting's contemporaneity in a way that none of the other elements are quite able to do.

263 There is also something 'off' about the sense of space and perspective when the detail of the painting is encountered from the street, from either side of the canal, and from the position where I took the photograph on which the painting is based: Vermeer's viewpoint is higher up, presumably from a first floor window opposite. My title references the canal which is not in either painting, the far edge of its brick embankment beginning just at the interface between the image area of the painting and its white border.

(figure 6.6), again as a means to collapse two different time registers, but one without a similar art-historical resonance. The mural of the title refers to the image painted on the end of a building. This shows a view of the Berlin Wall which would once have cut across the foreground space seen in the painting from left to right: Gartenstraße, as named on the mural, was a road cut in two by the wall and this historic fact itself provides the blank wall that the mural is painted upon. The painting's viewpoint is from a patch of open land that was once the 'death strip' surrounding the wall itself; the mural was painted to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall and German reunification. The placing of the image on the wall, both its height and containment, as well as this being at 90° to its actual viewpoint, means that, as a choice of subject, *Mural* lacks the appropriate scale and fit of the detail from the Vermeer painting which gives *Houses By A Canal* that sense of its temporal registers collapsing time *and* space within the painting (the name and dates inscribed internally to the painting do however provide clues about the specificity of this resonant picture-within-the-picture).

With a single, static image, whether a painting or a photograph, the off-frame must always be "predictive and imaginary"[264] for the viewer; for the maker of the work however, this can be "retrospective and concrete"[265]: in my painting practice, I generally work with photographs that I have taken, and *Houses by a Canal* and *Mural* are no different. Likewise, part of the meaning of *Untitled Trees Painting (Westerplatte)* is located in Price's own journey to Westerplatte in Poland and selecting and photographing the contemporary view from there which indicates (almost) nothing of its history. Price's paintings are of locations which appear banal, but often with a history of trauma: this appears to be a project of negative psychogeography, in that these traumatic histories leave no trace. The paintings become about the *inability* of representation to account for trauma as much as it is about site, history, and a kind of pilgrimage on behalf of the artist.[266] Trauma of a different kind haunts Mohammed Sami's work, in which the individual's own history invades the present and is worked through the paintings. The content of my work contains little of this (it is of course present in *Mural*, but the mural within the painting is already a work of coming-to-terms, not something added into the painting); however, both Sami's and Price's paintings stand for a mechanism of the presence of temporal layers in paintings from photographs.

6.4 *The Logic of Images*

Making works such as *Houses by a Canal* and *Mural* involved a process of surveying photographs I'd already taken to find (like the *punctum*) something in them that expanded on the nature of representation, which happened to be images within images in both cases. Looking back to work made at the beginning of my research, I revisited the material on Wim Wenders' *Alice in the Cities*. When I had taken the photograph

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264 Burch, pp. 21-23.
265 Burch, pp. 21-23.
266 This was also true in my case of work made as a response to my travelling to Delft. Although I sometimes think with Price's work it's actually about the inability to *imagine* the traumatic events occurring in a place which feels banal and unremarkable.

which became *Alice's Grandmother's House* in 2016 (see Chapter 1) I was aware, then, that this performative gesture contained nothing within the frame which located it to the specific place that I had travelled to in order to take the photograph of the re-enactment. I had an intuition that this might feel like a problem at the time: I attempted to take another photograph–one moving away from being a reenactment of the specific gesture in the film and its framing–of my hand holding the photograph of the house up against the actual house itself in the background, partially obscuring it. The intention was to provide a clear link between what the photograph being held in the hand shows, and the location in which this was then photographed.

Figure 6.7, Nicholas Middleton, *The Logic of Images*, oil on paper 24x30.5cm

However, this photograph was right at the end of a roll of film, I shot just one frame, and, only apparent after I developed it, half the frame was entirely bleached out by exposure to light from loading the film.[267] To complicate matters further, I'd used a different photograph of the house, the actual shot from the film which I was initially reenacting, which meant the shot itself in which the actor's hand also appears. Despite apparently resolving the problem I had anticipated, folding the location into the photograph's immanence (while departing from my gesture of reenactment), had this come out as intended it would simply feel too *recursive*. I later made a painting titled *The Logic of Images*[268] (figure 6.7) reconstructing how

267 This was bulk-loaded 35mm film, so the exposure was caused by the opening of the bulk loader to tape the film to the spool of the 35mm cassette, rather than being caused by exposure at the start of the film when loading the camera.
268 The title comes from a book of collected writings by Wim Wenders, originally published in German *Der Logik der Bilder: Essays und Gespräche*, Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt 1988, published in English as *The Logic Of Images: Essays and Conversations*, Faber and Faber, London 1991.

this *might* have looked had it worked and had I held up the image of the house without the nested version with the hand inside and if the whole frame had come out. This painting was made from combining three reference photographs: the still from the film, returning to the one seen in *Alice's Grandmother's House*; the hand holding up the photograph from the left hand side of the frame, the right hand side being bleached out, obliterating the house; and my own photograph of the house itself.

The "central act of photography" is "the act of choosing and eliminating", the act of composing, of framing.[269] The doubling of frames, the picture within the picture as shot in *Alice in the Cities*, and then duplicated in the reenactment, a frame within a frame, stresses the boundaries–and therefore the limitations–of the image. The way the frame of the photograph cuts off the rest of the world is implicit here, but as yet these implications are unarticulated. In the painting, a reconstruction of a photograph I failed to take, I had intended to show that the photograph I was holding existed in a contiguous space *and time* to the house itself, and demonstrate its proximity in that space to my gesture of reenactment. The act of making this painting acknowledged a failure, its reconstruction a severing of an indexical link to an experience of reality, out there in that particular street in a suburb of a city in Germany on an autumn afternoon: I was unable to bring all these components together as a single photograph that could become an artwork. However, this now fits into the mould of the other paintings in this chapter, folding into its scheme a number of different registers of time, the time of making the photographs, the time of the film that it refers to (in both its narrative time and its time of production, which then has its own layers in how it includes the photograph within the flow of the film), the time of making the photographic image held inside the frame. The painting both makes a world, but, through its photographic referents, a world in which its off-frame has answers in (a form of) reality, a fragmentary metonymy perhaps, but one to which all these internal references point, through its narrative, its zone of production, its provenance.

6.5 Modes of display and reception

These later paintings *Houses by a Canal*, *Mural* and *The Logic of Images* bring together concerns about site and location from earlier photographic pieces with a more complicated relation to the spatial off-frame, which includes the temporal through the picture-in-picture motif, a motif (in the first two paintings) found in the environment so as to be not actively constructed, not 'artificial', but instead indicating a commentary on the ubiquity of images in the world. In the examples above, particularly with *Houses by a Canal*, aspects of painterly concern are apt to the subject matter (the way Vermeer painted brickwork, or more exactly, how he transformed a plane of flat colour by indicating courses of mortar through delicate skeins of lighter paint, was never far from my mind in the painting), while *Mural* returns to the territory of *Houses on the Edge of a City* (Chapter 1): unlike the earlier painting the past is contained within the frame in an internal reference. Both of these paintings are made at a relatively small scale, being 24 by 30.5 centimetres, the same size as *CCTV*, *Threshold* and the other paintings from photographs in Chapter 5; within this, the

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269 Szarkowski, p. 9.

actual size of the painted area within the white border is 12.7cm by 17.8cm.[270]

This scale and level of detail is an invitation for the viewer to look closely at the image: from a distance these works may appear at a glance as being 'near-photographic' but perhaps not sufficiently photographic as to need a confirmatory look from the viewer as to *how* exactly these images are made.[271] Working from photographs again, these paintings moved away from the attempt to show–within the frame–the spatially-adjacent off-frame used in the paintings of shadows, and instead these indicate something more layered, with the picture-in-picture motif referring to the nature of depiction itself, the temporal registers within the paintings serving as a reminder of the fundamental aspect of *displacement* that all representation creates.

Figure 6.8, Nicholas Middleton, *Houses by a Canal*, detail

As touched on above with the description of *Houses by a Canal*, what paint can do–(generally) missing from the transparency of the photograph–is highlight a certain duality of representation:[272] paint both remains

270 The rationale behind these particular metric dimensions was due to their derivation from photographic paper sizes, which, for historical reasons, is still sold in sizes largely divisible by whole inches: the paintings were made on acrylic-primed paper cut to 9-and-a-half by 12 inches, while the central image area measures 5 by 7 inches, offset from being aligned to the middle of the paper by half an inch vertically.

271 *Houses by a Canal* was shown in the exhibition Unruly Encounters, Southwark Park Galleries, March 2022, and the sense of it having an appeal to the viewer to look closely at the work appeared to hold true (partly emphasised, I think, as a result of being juxtaposed with a large multi-canvas painting with bright primary colours by Seungjo Jeong–which invited the viewer to stand back).

272 This may be an amplification of what is present in works of art in general: a "…duality that is intrinsic to Western art, the duality of an artwork that appears to us twice, as depiction and picture." Wesseling, p. 169.

its stubborn material self while at the same time being an analogy of a perceptual experience, here filtered through the photograph, read as being the equivalent of something out there in the world by the viewer in a simultaneous balance with its facticity. I had thought that the act of painting from a photograph took something *away* (the quality of the index, the unmediated aspect of being drawn by a lens): this may be the case, but it does also *add* to the time of the image, and a time present on the surface of the work which is hidden or simply not present in a photograph.[273] Painting from a photograph thus becomes a double displacement.[274]

Houses by a Canal was exhibited in 'Unruly Encounters' at Southwark Park Galleries in 2022 (figure 6.9). To display the work, I made the choice to install it unframed, unmounted, and hung by the means of two bulldog clips clasping the white painted border surrounding the picture area. The informal quality of this method of hanging with clips is a not uncommon means by which unframed works on paper are displayed in some instances of contemporary exhibition design: I used this with photographic prints (for example, in figures 2.2 and 3.4), but not previously with paintings.

Figure 6.9, *Houses by a Canal*, Nicholas Middleton, 'Unruly Encounters' exhibition installation, 2022

Paintings on paper are usually framed to protect them, as well as making it easier to hang and secure the work. The lack of a frame removes the barrier of a glass surface between the viewer and the painting, and

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273 The viewer can of course neglect to find this addition an interesting component of the work of art, and feel that it does not sufficiently add to the work to merit the labour of taking a photograph and creating a hand-made artefact derived from it.

274 This 'double displacement' is missing in the paintings made from direct observation in Chapter 5.

highlights its delicate physicality, the bulldog clips pressing into the painted surface. There's an element of this being an antithesis of the digital experience of looking at images (often 'behind' glass): foregrounded is the fact that this painting is a real, material thing in real space. The perceived preciousness of the unprotected hand-painted object, indicating hours of labour, treated informally, is, alongside the size and scale of the image, a means to invite the viewer to look closer and examine the painted surface, with nothing between it and the viewer—an invitation which I hope encourages a state of pensiveness in the viewer.

As described above, with paintings from photographic references such as *Houses by a Canal*, the particular way that they are constructed and displayed as artworks is designed to appeal to the viewer on a number of different levels. An immediate surface level reading of the work does foreground aspects of 'the photographic', with all the associations that this contains.[275] It should be stressed that in working closely from photographic source material as a painter, there has never been the intention that the viewer should in fact *mistake* the painting for a photograph (although this may happen): as with *trompe l'oeil*, entirely fooling the eye is not productive, although creating a situation of perceptual uncertainty may be. Many or most of the artists whose work was included in 'The Painting of Modern Life' exhibition clearly resist this too (in reproduction, work such as those by Robert Bechtle, or Franz Gertsch begins to meet that level of verisimilitude, but this is absent when experienced in the gallery) while clearly inscribing the particularities of their source material in the work (this was less evident in the work of some of the contemporary artists included in the exhibition). However, the photographic look in these paintings is used to make reference or connection to the dominant visual language of a contemporary media landscape filtered through lenses and screens. The photographic look in the paintings is then a signpost to its *association*—if not the fact—of the painting being a representation of something out there in the world, with the result that its 'out there' conceals something in attendance, kept out of the frame. This the viewer has to take on trust, being part of the narrative, existing in the zone of production of the image, in its provenance. With paintings from photographic sources, some of this provenance then becomes inscribed in the surface of the work—the photographic look as part of its 'history'—and the sharp distinctions made earlier about the division of immanence and provenance in the photographic work (see Chapter 2.6) cannot be so easily applied here. The implication for my practice as a contemporary painter is that, through careful construction of an image from a photographic source—which includes an aspect of the off-frame inherent to the workings of that medium—and its re-presentation through the medium of paint, again, with care and attention in the decisions made through this aspect of the artwork, a richer whole can be achieved where these spatial and temporal complexities mutually reinforce each other.

Over the course of the research, once I had identified the off-frame as a productive concept to re-evaluate the pictures that I was making as an artist, my thinking about the off-frame went from being considered as a largely spatial element of the artworks, to a way of thinking about its time, the two being in many senses inseparable. Painting from photographs involves a re-orienting of the time of the image, which

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275 Other levels include an awareness of the nested references, the play with surface and depth, painterly effects, and so on.

can be conceived of as being uncomplicated in a single photograph. The loss of making images in this way–painting from photographs–is the dilution or a severing of the indexical link to a world 'out there' that the image is a representation of. However, from the viewer's perspective, the indexical aspect of the photograph, in relation to painting's lack, can be overstated.[276] Much of the writing on the off-screen within film theory (Burch, Cavell, Peretz) attributes this to the fact that film's basis in photography is the guarantor of an independent existence of the world outside the frame, and privileging such moments as the leaf flowing downstream in *Solaris* is a perfect example of that. And yet *Solaris* is a fictional narrative, the dominant form of cinema for over a hundred years, a production taking place in front of the camera, even if the sequence of the floating leaf is not, being merely a contingent moment recorded on film. The viewer accepts the quality of the fictional narrative, and, while overlaps between this and the film's 'zone of production' *can* develop into a productive tension, this is generally minimised in most films. Much of what makes film as a medium powerful exists in the viewer's imagination, in their immersion and suspension of disbelief: in a fictional narrative one is presented with a constructed world that the viewer sutures together to form a coherent whole, with the off-screen part of that coherence. Still images, photographs and representational painting *can* ask the same things of the viewer: despite film's grounding in a reality before the camera, the call on the imagination is still there.

The different moves through the practice-based research were ways to address the central concerns of the relationship between presence and absence in an image. This began by using photography for its own distinct qualities, to then thinking about this in an expanded manner, through seriality, titles, and captions. While acknowledging the idea that the title of an artwork is an invitation for the viewer to enter into an interpretative process, with some of the titles, these were too specific in their assertions, which, in some respects, *narrowed* the interpretative process (while accepting that, as the maker of the work, the titles that I chose could only ever be their 'true' titles, even if misleading or unwieldy). However, this did help me to develop an appreciation of the concept of the 'composite work of art' and its implications for painting in the contemporary field in that the nature of the artwork is greater than the simple fact of the painted material object. Returning to painting, and discovering that the productive aspect of the off-frame was not a purely spatial concern, the titles remain important, but become more open again (the titles in the paintings in this chapter are subtle, but were intended to add to the interpretative process: *Houses by a Canal* says something about what cannot be seen, about the conditions of production of this image, but it may also clue the viewer into speculating about where such canals might be geographically; *Mural* indicates that the mural is the important detail in the painting, but that the wider context is important, otherwise the field of view could just show the mural and little else within the frame; *The Logic of Images* is a more allusive title, but the way the picture is constructed around the image within the image and its relationship to the background suggests the picture is about the nature of images–somehow–while also having an external if relatively obscure reference).

The capacious nature of the possibilities of painting as a medium means that, amongst other references,

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276 Equally so, in my opinion, as regards the indexical quality of the digital image, where no direct trace *materially* forms part of the representation of its referent.

it can contain 'the photographic' across a range of registers, and in doing so, contains a reference *to* a reference to a world out there sufficiently to do so *meaningfully*. One hopes that the viewer intuits this and the nature of the painter's distinct set of procedures to bring this situation about. Once in a condition of display or exhibition (with title and other interpretative material), the viewer is given *unconstrained* time in an encounter with a painting; this time of the viewer may be given as the same with the encounter with a still photograph, but the time reflected back from *within* the artwork is different. The work in which this is more successful are those pieces which call for a 'productive mode of reception'[277] with a "free re-writing time",[278] opening the possibility for a "pensiveness"[279] in the encounter, and how they can enact, through particular strategies (internal and external references, the relationship of the painting to photography, the painterly mark to the referent it conjures up, its materiality and display) what Janneke Wesseling describes as "the performativity of contemplation."[280]

277 Ricoeur, p. 122.
278 Wollen, p. 108.
279 Barthes, p. 55.
280 Wesseling, p. 239.

7 Conclusion

In the previous chapter I used Roland Barthes' *punctum* as a model for how the off-frame works on the viewer in a similar fashion, being something that the viewer adds to the image yet is already there,[281] without always making itself felt or being structurally present. To continue the analogy, there are photographs for Barthes that are exhausted at the level of the *studium*; likewise there are images–paintings and photographs–in which there is no appreciable off-frame that contributes to the understanding of that image in any meaningful way: the in-frame content exhausts meaning. In contrast to the *studium*, Barthes gives to the *punctum* a power of expansion, one that is "often" metonymic.[282] Similarly, however formed or communicated, the off-frame is a metonymic expansion of the image. Roman Jakobson describes language as operating around the two opposing poles of metaphor (substitution) and metonymy (contiguity)[283] and asserts that this 'bipolar structure' extends beyond linguistics: "The alternative predominance of one or the other of these two processes is by no means confined to verbal art. The same oscillation occurs in sign systems other than language."[284] Jakobson's cursory examples outside 'verbal art' briefly touch on painting–Jakobson declares cubism to be metonymical, while surrealism metaphorical–and, fittingly, cinema: to metonymy, Jakobson ascribes the formal aspects of the use of angles, perspective, and focus, and, in particular, the power of the cinematic close up; in contrast, the metaphoric example given is montage, with Charlie Chaplin and Eisenstein being named as exemplars.[285] It may be worth noting that these metonymic aspects that Jakobson highlights all revolve around how the camera is operated, and how it cuts out a slice of the world–how space is represented–while montage is a temporal and cumulative process. To apply Jakobson's binary model further, if the off-frame is metonymic, it would be tempting to think that the image–what is in the frame–then occupies the place of metaphor, that it is a 'simple' substitution for its referent,[286] but the image has a dual nature of being *both* this substitution for a displaced referent, and its own material existence, both "depiction and picture".[287] Due to the dual nature of representation, the analogy breaks down: a visual representation is, importantly, not *just* substitution, not equivalent to the linguistic case of one word or concept in the place of the other, as representation and referent are not equal entities, unlike two nouns in speech.

A further aspect of Jakobson's 'Two Aspects of Language' which, for me, appears particularly apt, is the way that Jakobson aligns metonymy with realism. In contrast to metaphor, which for Jakobson belongs to romanticism and symbolism, and surrealism in art, "it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies

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281 Barthes, p55.

282 Barthes. p. 45. In typically elliptic fashion, Barthes does not define the expansion which is *not* metonymic.

283 Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in *Fundamentals of Language*, Jakobson and Morris Halle, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, second, revised edition 1971, pp. 69-96.

284 Jakobson, p. 92. For arguments against Jakobson's particular use of metaphor and metonymy, see Leon Surette, 'Metaphor and Metonymy: Jakobson Reconsidered', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol.56, No.4, Summer 1987, pp. 557-574.

285 Jakobson, p. 92.

286 Which it can be–the image has the attributes of metaphor.

287 Wesseling, p. 169.

and actually predetermines the so-called 'realistic' trend…"[288] Realism relies on an understanding that an artwork–whether *Las Meninas* or *Madame Bovary*–belongs to a contiguous world and its necessary fiction is that what comprises the work is one fragment among many: the viewer constructs the world based on this fragment through their experience of a contiguous world.[289] This requires a certain openness of form: to make use of the off-frame, an artwork cannot be a hermetically sealed unit, entire within itself. This aspect of the fragmentary is important: ascribing qualities of the fragmentary to *Las Meninas* might feel antithetical, but when compared to High Renaissance painting, for example, such as the Sistine Chapel ceiling, which has no appreciable 'outside', the difference I hope is clear (as in Chapter 4, with Peter Galassi's examples of the Urbino *Ideal Townscape* and Emanuel de Witte's church interior from *Before photography: painting and the invention of photography*). The fragmentary is the subject's experience of the world since modernity (see, for example, Siegfried Kracauer's epilogue in his *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*[290]). As a result, the contemporary viewer understands the nature of the fragmentary in art–just as the experience of film teaches us to understand the close up, and photography the disjunctive or apparently arbitrary framing, elements of the subject disappearing beyond the frame.

In the work of art which utilises the fragmentary, metonymic nature of the off-frame, the viewer is asked of the work to create the whole in a productive and reflective sense. Through contiguity and extension, the viewer can 'predict and imagine'[291] the world of the work continuing beyond the frame. In 'The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality', concerned with 'symbolic systems' that "'make' and 'remake' the world",[292] Paul Ricoeur states that the "…imagination is 'productive' not only of unreal objects, but also of an *expanded vision of reality*."[293] Ricoeur uses painting–discussed in a very generalised way to reflect back on language–as an instance of 'exteriorising thought',[294] and that "[p]ainting enables us to see the world in another way; it augments our vision of the world."[295] Intimations of the off-frame have a direct call on the viewer's imagination, even if this is simply through a clear motif of an easily-decipherable shadow. As a result, the use of the off-frame in a still image, being always predictive and imaginary, *adds* something, a reflective element (largely) missing in the off-screen in film, there being a form of tension always with the potentiality of being resolved at the next moment, movement, or cut. In a still image, whether a photograph or a painting, this resolution is forever held at bay, or relies on the viewer to do so through imaginative, productive work. Painting from photographic sources adds a further dimension. In contemporary visual culture, there is a false but understandable vernacular equation of the 'photographic' with 'realistic', sufficiently embedded in the everyday world as to feel 'natural' or a natural reaction, which

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288 Jakobson, p. 92.

289 My argument here relies on an account of realism largely drawn from Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner's *Romanticism and Realism; The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1984, pp. 131-160.

290 Kracauer, Siegfried, *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Dobson Books, London, 1960. Note the UK publication took 'Nature' rather than 'Theory' for the book's title, with the implication that this is more fundamental.

291 Burch, pp. 21-23.

292 Ricoeur, summarising Nelson Goodman in this instance. Ricoeur, p. 117.

293 Ricoeur, p. 123. My italics.

294 Ricoeur, p. 131.

295 Ricoeur, p. 133. As already indicated, in relation to the double nature of representation, Ricoeur also states "Because fictions do not refer in a 'reproductive' way to reality as already given, they may refer in a 'productive' way to reality as intimated by the fiction.", Ricoeur, p. 121.

is exploited by the digital.[296] As a result, this phenomenon creates the conditions for a painter to play with the expectations that this sets up, as well as the possibility of working in such a way being a commentary on the phenomenon in itself. In Chapter 4 I quoted Stanley Cavell's formulation, "A painting *is* a world; a photograph is *of* the world."[297] Perhaps in the particular case of photographically-based painting the viewer is able to restore the 'ofness' to the non-indexical image or meet it half-way in a form of ontological uncertainty or a willing suspension of disbelief.[298] The particular power of the photographic mode of representation, through its mechanical automatisms, has long been located in the index as a guarantor of the world outside the representation that it refers to. This may be looser now, or more uncertain, diluted in the contemporary world with digital imagery. However, the photograph's indexicality is not the only or the whole aspect of this power. Semiotically, photographs are *also* icons–as paintings are–with a visual similarity to what they represent; the digital plays on this.

New paradigms of visual representation build upon those pre-existing at their moment of coming into being. For Eyal Peretz cinema is the "culminating and to an extent revolutionary moment" of "a general logic of framing that preoccupies the work of art in modernity,"[299] which he traces back to the Renaissance: this 'logic of framing', specifically the relationship of that which is inside the frame to that outside–but which acts upon the in-frame, was inherent to picture-making all along but hidden, mostly in plain sight. The off-frame emerges through modernity, through the self-awareness of the condition of the art object, a process that becomes clearer with the new representational system of film, but located within the conception of space as an infinite substance which surrounds us of which a representational image contains a slice. The depiction of this conception of space is constructed through an artificial system–perspective–with all the problems that this implies. Pictures had to move for this to be realised.

By using the off-screen as a lens or a filter to think about these relationships brings the temporal into play: it is clearly articulated in relation to film because film unfolds through time. A still image does not *inherently* unfold: as an object it exists in an ongoing present with the viewer. The fact that its time with the viewer is not encoded structurally within the work opens different temporal possibilities. While not unproblematic, this highlights the inherent way that images are consumed or apprehended by the viewer and allows for a different encounter, one in which there is a possibility of adding time to the image–which may be particularly evident in an encounter with a painting in which its material facticity inscribes the work's coming into being through temporal processes; a further reference to the medium of photography may heighten this temporal awareness.

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296 Rather like Photorealism in painting (see Chapter 1, footnote 5), computer generated imagery often plays on the artefacts of lenses–flare, selective focus, wide angle distortions and vignetting for example–in order to convince the viewer of its 'reality'.

297 Cavell, pp. 23-25. Italics in original.

298 I would still argue against the categorical division that Cavell defines between painting and photography being quite so clearly felt in all cases; with digital photography and the possibilities of its manipulation, the photograph's status in being 'of' the world is also further complicated.

299 Peretz, p. 3.

In painting, the off-frame can be usually, sometimes, often, a weak effect, but one which highlights fundamental aspects of the limits of representation, and an awareness of how those limitations shape the work. At a point in the research where the indexical nature of the photographic image seemed paramount, painting appeared to be a poor relation, semiotically speaking, to photography. Using the off-frame as a tool allowed me to rethink the relationship of the photographic referent to the paintings which make use of it: the presence of the off-frame is usually not a consideration when making paintings from photographic sources. This became a concrete way to pay attention to what is absent in the image, to what, by necessity, is left out or implied–an absence that can be felt by the viewer, guided by strategies of making, display, and the context of the work. These are all strategies to counteract the speed of consumption in the age of the digital image. Rethinking the 'zone of production' lessened the hold of the index on my thinking in relation to the off-frame: returning to painting became an invitation to the viewer, in a pact with the disclosures occasioned by the use of titles, to look again at what the image shows *or does not show*.

Appendix: Texts from works in Chapter 3

1. *Heatwave* (see figure 3.4)

1. The Film Stock

The same film stock was used for both moving and still photographs. The stock is ORWO UP15 black and white reversal 2x8mm ciné film. This was manufactured in East Germany at the former Agfa plant in Wolfen, Saxony-Anhalt, during the Cold War. The roll of ORWO UP15 film used has a 'develop before' date of 1976; England in Summer 2018 experienced the most prolonged heatwave since that year. Despite being superseded by the Super-8 cartridge format, and subsequent electronic, and then digital, video cameras, 2x8mm film, otherwise known as double or standard 8mm, is still manufactured at the time of writing. Photographic film loses its sensitivity to light with age, with the result that manufacturers provide a develop before date on film packaging; this loss of sensitivity occurs in part through the unexposed photographic emulsion reacting to electromagnetic radiation, including heat.

2. The Lightmeter

The intensity of light available to expose the photographic material was measured with a hand-held lightmeter. The lightmeter used was a Weston Master II, based on a selenium cell and manufactured in Enfield, North London. Light falling onto the selenium cell, reflecting from the subject, produces an electrical charge, which moves a needle on a scale of numerical light values. Selecting the indicated light value on the calculator produces a range of corresponding combinations of aperture and shutter speed settings to give an equivalent exposure. To translate light values to exposure indexes, the light meter's calculator needs to be set to represent the sensitivity of the film used. Orwo UP15 was originally rated at a sensitivity of 25 ISO, or 15 DIN. To compensate for age, the film was exposed at an exposure index equivalent to 10 on the ISO scale.

3. The Camera

The film was shot with a Canon Cine Zoom 512 camera; still images were shot with a Mamiya-16 Automatic. As was common with most 8mm ciné cameras before the introduction of the Super-8 cartridge, the Canon Cine Zoom 512 camera's motor is clockwork, wound by hand. Movement of the hands on a clock mimic the apparent motion of the sun through the sky, traversing a clockwise direction from East to West, echoing the shadow of a sundial's gnomon. The camera's frame advance mechanism translates the motor's continuous, unwinding circular motion into intermittent, linear motion. The film was shot at a rate of 12 frames per second. The Canon Cine Zoom 512 exposes 80 frames per foot of film. Five feet of film was used, run twice through the camera. Duration in physical film is measured in feet, from which the term footage derives.

4. The Scene

Intensity and duration of sunlight bleaches grass. The colour of the uncut grass is a visual sign of its lack of water, an indication of the absence of green chlorophyll, the pigment in plants which turns sunlight into energy through photosynthesis. The appearance of grass during the heatwave of 2018 was also noted as marking hidden archaeology, revealing the presence of features under the ground. Grass itself became volatile, with a number of fires during this period reaching local and national news. The motion of the grass in the film is a visual indicator of the movement of air; the movement of the inanimate, observed in leaves, waves, steam, smoke, was a revelatory aspect of early film to some observers.

5. The Film Itself

The 2x8mm or double 8 film format was created by taking existing 16mm film and adding an extra set of perforations between those designed for 16mm cameras. By producing cameras with a smaller frame size, exposing a series of images across just half the width of the film, when its end is reached after shooting, the reel of film is removed from the camera, and reinserted, turned over, to expose the other half, with the second sequence of frames running in the opposite direction. Developed as reversal or transparency, the film is slit down the middle after processing into two halves and spliced together to make a single length of film 8mm wide for projection. Each end of the film is exposed to light when inserted into and removed from the camera, with this exposed film acting as a leaders; as the film is run through the camera twice, the middle section between these two sequences is therefore bleached by the light.

6. The Projection

The use of smaller formats for amateur cinematographers was facilitated by the development of fine-grained photographic emulsions and fine grain film developers desired by the motion picture industry; the 2x8mm frame is 4.8 x 3.5mm, the smallest frame size of any commonly used ciné film format. The photographic image is formed from clumps of reduced silver particles, described as grain. As a result, the smaller the frame, the larger the appearance of grain for any given photographic emulsion. This grain both carries the information in the photographic image at the same time as disrupting it: as a metaphor it is both signal and noise. That these clumps of silver molecules are known as grain suggests that their appearance is reminiscent of the seeds of domesticated grass.

2. *The Latent Image* (see figure 3.8)

I

In photography, an image is described as latent while it exists in its in-between state after exposure but before development. Light, after striking the photographic emulsion, has caused it to change, an imperceptible

transformation–if it were possible to view it with the naked eye–but a radical difference nonetheless. The process of reducing silver halide microcrystals to metallic silver has begun. A chemical developing agent accelerates this process greatly. Development of the latent image amplifies the reduction to metallic silver by a magnitude of as much as 10 to the power of 8–the work of this optical signal on the photographic emulsion becoming one hundred million times greater.

The first photographic processes worked with physical images, with long exposure times and intense light to create visible images without chemical development through brute force, needing only fixation–the removal of unexposed photographic emulsion to prevent further, unwanted development, blotting out the desired image– to make these shadows permanent. The discovery of the latent image began the long succession of moves to reduce exposure times which persisted for much of optical-chemical photography.

Working from a photographic negative to create a positive, printing processes still worked without the latent image. Printing-out paper was used well into the twentieth-century, with positives made by placing negatives in contact with the paper, producing same-sized images. With the introduction of smaller cameras and film formats, printing-out paper became obsolete, and the photographic print required development of its latent image. There are still widely used printing processes, such as salt prints and cyanotypes, which side-step the latent image.

II

In late 2016, I travelled across Europe to a street in a de-industrialised German town in the Ruhr to take a photograph of my own hand holding a photographic print. This was to re-enact a moment from a film shot there forty years earlier, using the same photographic emulsion (or so I believed), then relatively recently discontinued, that the film maker and his cinematographer had used all those years ago. To operate my camera, I had to hold the photograph in my left hand, rather than my right, and, to complicate the operation, I was using a rangefinder camera. This had no indication of parallax error–the difference in angle between what the camera's viewfinder shows, and what the lens actually sees, increased by the closer the subject is to the camera, further complicated by using a close-up filter, the effect of which I could not see through the viewfinder and could only estimate the distance to focus the lens.

Working with photographic film, one is always confronted by the possibility of failure, sometimes only revealed at the moment of development. Until then, the photograph–the latent image–exists as an ideal, the pure possibility of what might have been projected by the lens for a tiny fraction of a second onto the surface of the photographic emulsion inside the black box of the camera, never fully knowable, perhaps never to be repeated. The quality of latency is that of potentiality, a state of suspension, a hesitation between referent and sign, before their relations become fixed, manifest.

A year and a half earlier, I had failed to take this photograph. I had not correctly identified the location from the film, and then I had not allowed myself the time to find it, dependent as I was on an itinerary of railway

timetables. Having made the exposure–several, in fact–there were multiple possibilities of loss from how I visualised the image in that moment: a literal loss of the film itself of course, the possibility of losing the latent image thanks to accidental exposure, one image overwriting another, or the possibilities of damage caused by x-rays when travelling from one jurisdiction to another; finally, the possibility of a mistake in development, over- or under-developing the latent image to such extent that it became unusable, or using the wrong chemicals in the sequence of processing, accidentally pouring photographic fixer into the developing tank and dissolving the latent image before it even became a physical one. Until then, I would not know whether the photograph was necessarily well-framed to enclose everything I wanted, or in focus enough to disclose what I needed, or just correctly exposed to have formed a sufficient latent image to develop into a physical one.

III

The latent image is historically-situated between the invention of photography in its optical-chemical form and the transition to digital imaging. The earliest forms of digital photography used physical, electronic media to record images, only visible when played back and recreated on a monitor. The first digital camera I used had no screen to display even the crudest preview of the few photographic images contained inside. High definition screens, integral to the apparatus, now make any analogies of an unseen potentiality to be drawn with film-based photography redundant. However, the nature of the digital itself is in some senses always latent: what forms the matrix of the image, now no longer a scattering of metallic silver particles on a substrate, is code, ultimately reducible to binary on/off instances of there/not there, always latent except when displayed, each display being a new iteration of the photographic image.

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3. *Paper Cinema* (see figure 3.11)

(*Left hand print*)

On the left hand side of the screen, an image of sunlight passing through a canopy of leaves, forming circular patterns on the ground.

Observations in the ancient world of the behaviour of light during a partial eclipse are the first realisation of those properties which allow an image to be formed by projection; that the patches of light beneath a canopy of leaves formed a crescent shape clearly indicated that the circles of light more commonly seen are in fact images of the sun, the principle behind the camera obscura.

This image, of circles of light on the ground, was taken at the start of a roll of film. Stray light, entering obliquely through the film canister's light trap, commonly referred to as a leak, has caused the image to be obscured. In the darkroom, the burning in - or additional exposure of more light - is an attempt to ameliorate this leak.

The photographic image is made positive by the action of light shining through a negative: what appears as the grain is in fact the traces of light passing through gaps in the grain. Each black dot on the photographic paper is an image of the light source inside the enlarger, itself a mechanical analogy of the sun that it indexically reproduces.

(*Right hand print*)

On the right hand side of the screen, an image of the leaves themselves, animated by an unseen wind.

Among the earliest films shown to the public, the movement of inanimate objects excited a special interest. That animate bodies could be represented in movement was clearly understood as an extension of earlier optical toys that exploited the perceptual basis of the moving image. The movement of the inanimate revealed something else, its archetype being the trace of wind in the leaves forming the background of a shot, returned to by many film makers since.

Film took photography's capaciousness and extended this through the multiple image with the dimension of time. The lens renders anything within the frame with indifference, its mechanical reproduction does not differentiate between its ostensible subject and that subject's surroundings. Unable to control the viewer's gaze on the screen, the possibility of an open form arises.

A mark of the camera's indifference was the revelation that film could disclose the life of objects. A screen of leaves becomes indicative of this life, a life clearly seen in its movement, an indexical sign of a force not visible.

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