

INTERIOR. ART GALLERY.

Peter Bonnell, the gallery curator, sits with the two artists who are exhibiting there, Karin Kihlberg and Reuben Henry. They are engaging in a conversation staged for the camera.

PETER

Here we are in the midst of your new exhibition, Apeirophobia. The title Apeirophobia, as you tell me, means an irrational fear of the future. Can you explain a little more about what Apeirophobia means?

KARIN

Yeah sure. Apeirophobia is a little-known condition, but one that is not necessarily recognised medically - it sort of lingers in that space of hypochondria or over-categorisation.

REUBEN

But Apeirophobia isn't just fear of the future, it can also be described as fear of infinity, and is probably best described by the German phrase 'Außerplanmäßig Unendlichkeits Angst', which could be described as a fusion

of these two English phrases. The future that an Apeirophobic fears is an infinite future, rather than a present future.

But the root of the fear is of things going on forever, without ever changing. A bit like David Byrne's dystopian concept of heaven suggested in the lyrics of one of his songs - 'heaven is a place where nothing ever happens'.

PETER

So it's actually a fear of stability, a fear of absolute consistency? So that the world in which this irrational fear would be most pronounced is in a world where everything is finished, where there is no struggle for improvement or change?

REUBEN

Yes, and the antithesis of that situation is chaos. But Apeirophobia is certainly not cured by chaos. Conversely, it is generally dealt with by making detailed schedules, so that the sufferer is clear about what will happen in the near future, and how long the current activity is likely to last. The Außerplanmäßig Unendlichkeits Angst sufferer simply cannot be idle.

Karin Kihlberg and Reuben Henry
Beginnings

Beginnings

10 Igniting at 23:30 on January 27, 1967, launch Pad 34, Cape Canaveral, USA. Falling at 10:30 on February 12, 1947, Sikhote-Alin Mountains, Primorye, USSR.

18 Dead Actors, something from the films they come from?

28 Rising on the morning of October 18, 2011, Cambridgeshire, England. Succumbing quickly to the forces of gravity.

31 “The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries.”¹

33 Something from a quote from John Madin about the plan for the library- about how it should function as an open place, and the corresponding quote from the new architect.

40 This was one of the places at which it will begin.

49 This was not the beginning for that happened elsewhere in other words and times that have since been deleted or assimilated into other parts of the text.

52 Dead Actors, something from the films they come from?

64 Lights are concealed in a troughed ceiling, and the general colour motif is green and gold, with carpets in amber flame.

92 Dead Actors, something from the films they come from?

98 The film opens. You get the guidelines of the story.

114 Dead Actors, something from the films they come from?

118 The apeirophobic, represented here by the right angle, with its base in the present, probes gently with its apex into the future.









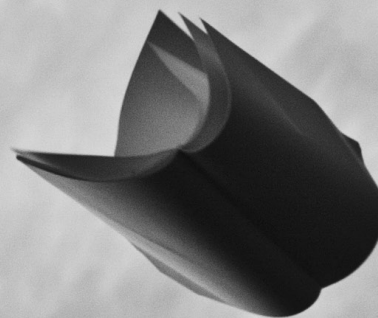








-PROPOSAL FOR THE LAUNCH OF A BOOK-



The Library of Babel

The Library of Babel is a complex of interconnected rooms, corridors and spiral staircases. The rooms are all identical, hexagonal in shape and presumably infinite in number. Apart from minimal accommodation (a weak lightbulb, a toilet, a closet for sleeping upright), the rooms contain nothing but bookshelves, from ground to ceiling, each holding an equal amount of uniform volumes. Each book has an equal amount of pages, each page an equal amount of lines, each line consists of an equal amount of randomly composed black letters.

For a long time the inhabitants of the library believed the books were useless, written in some lost or unknown language. When it was eventually discovered (or rather conjectured) that the library is total and complete, i.e. that the books contain every possible permutation of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, everything changed. The people of Babel became fired with enthusiasm. They realized they virtually possessed every possible bit of information that could ever prove valuable: predictions of future events, secrets of the distant past, intimate details of fellow inhabitants, and above all: the explanation of the riddle of the library itself, its meaning and its origin. People feverishly started to rush through the corridors and hexagons, haphazardly grabbing books, turning the weakly-lit pages in search for something of interest.

It didn't take long before the optimism waned. Years of browsing through volumes of worthless nonsense made the people realize that the probability of finding even the slightest string of useful information in the library was next to nothing. Enthusiasm sank into depression. That reason might be but a miraculous exception in a limitless expanse of chaos proved to be an unbearable thought. Some librarians were driven into a state of suicidal despair, others became mad. Still

others, impelled by stubborn faith or superstition, continued their quest. The insignificance of what they were satisfied with — e.g. the occurrence of one single intelligible word (“rosebud”) amidst thousands of volumes of orthographic disorder — indicates the extent of their desperation.

To escape the horror of senselessness, various pagan sects were formed, all with competing accounts of the purpose and meaning of the library. A group believed that somewhere, in some remote hexagon, a manual for the library exists, and that there is a man who has gone through it and has the powers of a deity. Another heretic cult radically abjured the books and imitated for themselves their divine composition by retreating into the toilets and throwing dice. They were eventually discovered by the authorities and thrown down an airshaft.

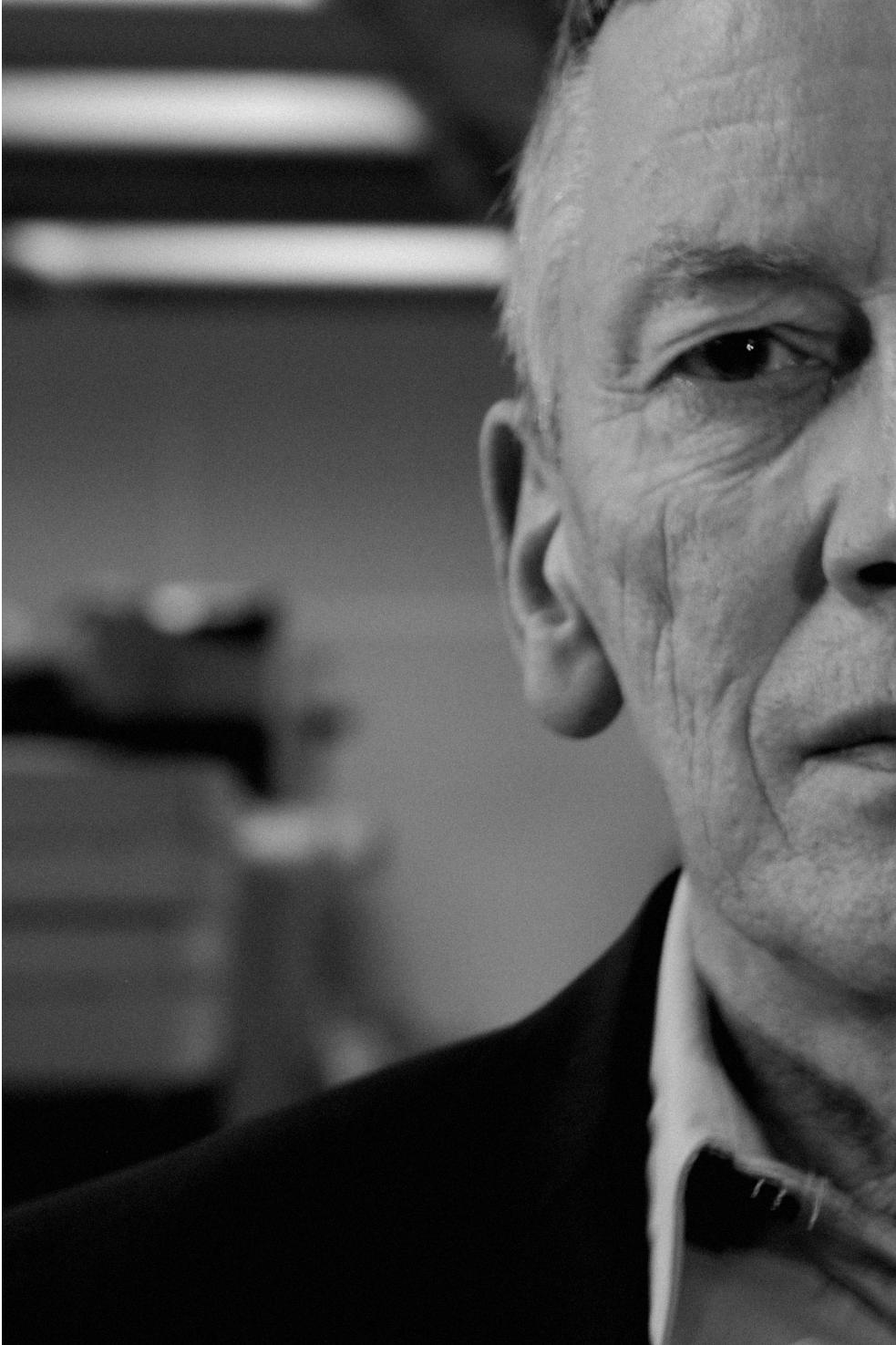
Today, as the people of Babel are dying out by internal strife and civil wars, it is clear that the library will keep its secrets intact. It has long preceded and will almost certainly outlive mankind. It shall continue to exist indefinitely, perhaps infinitely. And yet the library is not, and never was, indifferent to man. Its arrangements, however rudimentary — the weak light, the spiral staircases, the sanitary accommodations — betray a minimal benevolence to human life, a subtle and discrete invitation to penetrate into its secrets. Perhaps herein consists the true secret of the library: that its presumed infinity is only the negation of human finitude; that indeed it was there all along — but only for man, only to awaken in him the hope and misery of a quest at once endlessly promising and eternally futile.

Eli Noé (after J. L. Borges)









This was one of the places at which it will begin. In one sense, the conception, planning, and construction, which all preceded materialisation's conclusion, could constitute argument that it will begin long before. In another sense, the conclusion of materialisation, the thing's becoming concrete and static, constituted both a beginning and an end.

The people who inhabited this place during the future remained insensitive to the imminent change. The change, in fact, will already be in process, yet the lacking appreciation of it denied its materialisation.

Only in history will they see a clear reflection of the process, and regardless of those who will predict a sudden end to the present, the records show clearly that it is going to arrive gradually.

This is one of the places at which it will end. At this point some considerable time has passed since what was once perceived as the beginning. The change of grammatical tense in its description was the first evidence of this.

The nature of the process through which it will come to such an end was not evidenced by the erosion of the fabric of the building, nor will it be evidenced by the sudden absence of the people within it. This evidence showed only that it ended long before. The process will be marked instead by the deterioration of an ideology which will fail to withstand materialisation.

When the time arrives at which the change will occur, it was perceived to have begun, taking with it any opposition to that which had recently ended.

When the time arrives at which the change will occur, it was perceived to be over, despite the remains of the monument. The optimism of the people is now manifested elsewhere.

From the current perception of the place there was little way of knowing what is going to be. There will be, perhaps, no desire to query such things. Its relationship to its past will be recorded only in records which no longer held any meaning.









[...]

1 This was not the beginning for that happened elsewhere in other words and times that have since been deleted or assimilated into other parts of the text. The beginning was written some time after the process had already begun, and will only become discernible in retrospect, after the event has long since passed. One beginning is absorbed or displaced by another, in writing's waves of endless starting over. A beginning is often arrived *at* and not departed *from*. Writing is a duplicitous art for it presents

itself for something else or *other*. Its sentences work to smooth words towards organized flows and sequential rhythms that once written appear as though they have always been as such. Yet, the process of writing is often circuitous or discontinuous, not linear; the beginning of a text is rarely located in the first word much as the ending is unlikely to be the last. The time that it takes

to write the words is condensed into the *space* that they occupy once ordered into line.¹² The process of writing pulls liquid thinking towards the brink of thought, where it is coaxed further still towards the shape of letters congealing across the page. The wrestle of how the words got there will soon be forgotten. In becoming concrete, the process of thinking loses something of its flow or fluidity, for there is always something surplus that fails to be translated, that resists materialization into definitive form.

3 *Prochronism* — a chronological error or glitch in which a person or an event is assigned a date earlier than in actuality. *Prolepsis* — where something in the future is represented in the present as though it already existed or had occurred.¹³

2 That our human experience often wavers between a sense of wanting more and of feeling overwhelmed is a consequence perhaps of the unstable or even threshold status of a life lived, for paradoxically, we are a finite manifestation of an infinitely unfolding universe. Our sense of individual limitation — our time and space-bound experience of an impermanent self — is contrasted against the potential limitlessness of a world that existed before us and will still endure once we have gone. In order to make sense of the infinite and indivisible duration of the universe of which we are part, we have gradually constructed ever-elaborate systems and structures for rendering it under our control and within the range of our comprehension.⁹ The matter of the universe is thus differentiated into categories of named *things*, which can then be organized into dictionaries and encyclopedia

6 *Apeiophobia* is a term used to describe an abnormal fear of infinity, a fear of space going on forever or of things that never end. People who have this fear tend to make their lives as predictable as possible. The origin of the word *apeiro* is Greek where it means boundless or infinite.¹⁷

5 *Chronophobia* is characterized by an abnormal fear of time, or an anxiety about the passage of time.² People who have this fear are sometimes called ‘stir crazy’, a condition common to prison inmates confronted with the interminable duration of their assigned sentence. ‘Time madness’ describes a condition of temporal dislocation where the inability to accurately measure time results in parallel failure to identify one’s spatial bearings on the surface of the world.

and studied by specialists. The myriad durations of the universe are neatly plotted along a single line where its interminable continuum has

been divided into more manageable and measurable sections, the abstract tick-tock of sequential, linear time. Fearful of becoming lost and disoriented in a world of perpetual flux and change, we have found ways to stabilize or locate ourselves amidst this sea of uncertain forces. We have created the

8 To *lag* presupposes a proper speed against which one’s actions might be measured. It describes a failure to keep pace with what is normative, a falling behind and into distraction caused by tarrying or dallying or wandering off track. Lag plays out of sync with progressive time; it is time arrested or else *of* the arrested, the imprisoned time of a stint inside.⁴ Lag is the interval of time between two events, the discrepancy between this and that or then and now or even if and then. Or else it is the distance between stimulus and response or cause and effect, a slowing of attention, the critical spacing of a productive *gap*.

coordinates ‘here’ and ‘now’; set down the anchor points of ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’. Across unreachable distances we have scored our own horizon lines. Thus, *becoming* solidifies towards the fiction of *being*; settles for a fixed and stable sense of self. At some point, it seems that we have forgotten the constructed nature of the devices through which we have established this illusory order and control, determined the unknowable known. The classificatory lines between ‘this’ and ‘that’ no longer appear arbitrary or accidental. Gradually, certain limits and edges have become naturalized, their artifice passed by unnoticed. We have become conditioned to see the world and our place within it according to the narrow gauge of our own limitations; we have cultivated the rules of our own entrapment. And yet, there are certain experiences that refuse to be bound by the frameworks we have made, and it is in these restless instances that we might *remember*.



4 The infinitude of the universe is endlessly translated and organized from the perspective of our finite body, its singular point in space and time. The immeasurable multiplicity of life's unfolding becomes channeled through the prism of the human eye, whose aperture limits the depth of our focus, producing arbitrary points of clarity whilst leaving the rest blurred or concealed from view. Our own sensory apparatus — our capacity to see, hear, touch, taste, speak — establishes

7 Time itself is often used as proof or evidence, a means of testing and authenticating facts or confirming things as true. Certain dates are privileged and marked with cakes and cards and parties. Others are forgotten. Dates of birth register the inauguration of a person's life, whilst time of death is the official stamp by which the same is declared over. An alibi vouches for someone's whereabouts, a convention that presupposes the impossibility of them being in two places at the *same time*. Other dating systems are more slippery still. To the uninitiated, carbon dating can appear like a wild stab in the dark. The date of a book's publication or of a work of art signals towards its completion not inception; it is the somewhat arbitrary means by which the object becomes fixed and located within historical time. To be time-proof is to be impervious or resistant to the effects of time, somehow immune to its ravages. Yet, only the *unlived* or un-live are truly time-proof for all life is performed *in* and *as* time and changes accordingly. Utopian models are often conceived in terms of having '*no place*' or '*no time*', pitched purposefully beyond the reach and limitations of the lived and livable present. However, once materialized and inhabited, the utopian proposition can no longer stand outside of time, but must learn to evolve or become entropic.

the conditions through which we encounter the world or rather produces the shape of the world that

we encounter. We each beat the bounds of our own private universe. Yet, our bodies are not the only filters through which the limits of what is seen or heard or said are set. Rather the project of conversion or translation — the rendering of

11 Volume refuses to be bound by its own definition(s), which in failing to contain it point instead towards instabilities or inconsistencies within meaning itself. Volume describes both the intensity of a vibrating sound wave or else the density of rather more substantial matter(s). It is the space enclosed by the binding edges of a solid object or the name given to a gathering of pages once bound together, their singular identities united as one. Yet, the volume of a book has other volume too; it might be measured according to its cubic capacity or perhaps by the intended intensity of its speech acts, the proposed loudness of its text.¹⁴ To speak volumes is the contradictory occurrence of saying much without saying anything at all. And here, silence itself can speak louder and with more clarity of expression than any configuration of words.

There are certain ideologies that fail to withstand materialization. In their attempt to remain future-proof they never fully align with the timing of the present and instead appear somewhat anachronistic, chronologically misplaced.³

complexity into simpler form — takes place in a more insidious fashion, at a more prosaic level. In place of a process there is more often a product; instead of a flow, a form; distinctions are determined swiftly between either/or; black and white is generally preferred to grey; the sweep of generalization is generally preferred to an elaboration

of the exceptions to the rule. The willful use of ‘we’ and ‘they’ and ‘our’ create consensus or collusion by claiming agreement, by speaking on another’s behalf. Received opinion is taken for the truth; the truth is edited into a sound-bite, its meaning gradually reduced into a single memorable line. The uncertainty of things-to-come is prepared for with career advisors’ help or horoscopes; protected against through life insurance plans. The imagined landscapes of the future are already mapped out and territorialized, planted with the seeds of certain key events. Holidays are booked a year in advance; diaries determine life’s itinerary according to regular twelve-month

cycles. Life gets coached, steered safely between one goal and the next.⁶ Milestones operate as imaginary way-markers against which certain expectations and ambitions become set, where life itself becomes spatialized as a path or route whose course has already been furrowed. Future is a destination towards which

9 Representation and recollection reorganize the inchoate mess of lived experience into neat narrative blocks, a series of interlocking anecdotes where events move seamlessly from beginning to resolution, where what is superfluous to the story remains wasted on the cutting room floor. There are few strangers in recollected life, for memory casts its main characters and has little interest in filling in the blanks. Boredom and banality are routinely edited out at the whim of an omnipotent narrator. A life remembered thus plays quicker and shorter and snappier than it ever did in ‘real time’. It seems that we are compelled to narrate our lives backwards from the present, in order that we might make sense of things that remained insensible at the time. However, in doing so we risk solidifying the shape of our own character, narrowing the future trajectory of our own narrative

our present selves strive, whilst past is a place to which we are encouraged not to return and dwell (too often).

10 Life is woven through space and time; the structure of its weave shaped by the density of its manifold threads and the intensity of its innumerable rhythms or pulses. Unlike the clock, which determines the passage of time according to the regular and measured beat of its own spatial abstraction, the model of a weave acknowledges the effects of different and divergent temporal speeds and flows, the entanglement of multiple durations. A weave is produced through the interplay of vertical and horizontal forces (the *warp* and the *wefit*), much as the fabric of a life is shaped by the tension between internal and external experiences of space and time. It is possible to conceive of the warp of life’s fabric as *chronos*, the regular

plotline, cultivating the terms of every next scene in advance. The challenge then perhaps is one of creating modes of description or documentation that do not attempt to erase life’s complexity but rather reflect its non-sequential, heterogeneous, fragmentary and labyrinthine tendencies. The dilemma is one of finding the means through which to capture the live and lived experience of a given situation, without simply excluding or ignoring all that is formless, difficult to rationalize or render into thought. Or, to follow the Beckettian formula, it is a question of ‘finding a form to accommodate the mess’. Accommodation is the practice of flexibility, contracting and expanding one’s capacity when called upon and according to the needs of the situation.¹³ The accommodation of life’s mess is thus less a gesture of management and moderation as the development of a form malleable or mutable enough to *host it*. Accommodation involves making an *opening*, allowing room for manoeuvre.

spacing of measured or physical time, the thread held taut and still by the structure of the loom. So too, might the weft articulate a sense of inner or *felt* time, the temporal experience of duration. The production of a weave depends on maintaining the tension or harmony between the horizontal and vertical axis, between the consistency of the warp and the meandering of the weft.

Habitually, emphasis is placed on keeping the tension of the two threads synchronized and ‘in time’ with one another, ensuring the weave remains even. Moreover, the thread of inner time is often conditioned to keep pace with that of chronological time, with its measured and determined rhythm. However, the fabric of lived time is not determined by the mathematical meter of chronological clock time alone for this would produce only the most uniform or utilitarian cloth, smooth and homogenous and lacking in texture. Rather than following any standard beat, the weft of lived time can be made to speed up or slow down — accelerate or reduce its energy — producing different qualities of fabric, a more experimental weave.¹⁵

¹⁴ The length of a book is always indeterminate, for whilst its dimensions are measurable

¹² Too often temporal occurrences are translated through spatial visualization, fluid processes subjected to the contours of a single image or form. The clock-face epitomizes this tendency where the temporal experience of duration is neatly configured according to sixty equidistant marks measured around a circle’s edge. Similarly, spatial forms are often considered *subject* to the effects of time’s passing, where the lifespan of an object is determined by its capacity to withstand the wear and tear that each new day brings *to it*. Space and time are thus often perceived according to the terms of a basic

and the number of pages often set, the (length of) time that it takes to read is always variable, never fixed. Moreover, a book is a circular structure; it has the capacity to be read over and over and over and over [...]. Imagine a single book passed from one person to another, *ad infinitum*. As such, a book’s length is potentially infinite. Every book is one possible arrangement of letters assembled from the limitless pool of alternative others, and every reader produces further configurations by the way that they read the text.¹⁶ Some books are skimmed, others pored over or abandoned mid flow. The meaning of a book is thus always somewhere between intention and interpretation; it is produced *by* the reader as much as by the content contained *within*.

The time that it takes to write a book is condensed into the time that it takes to read it. The book is a conduit through which one process becomes another, through which one person’s thoughts flow into those of someone else. Books are meeting points at which the edges of selfhood soften and blur. At times,

¹³ The fabric of time it becomes impossible to discern the process of reading (another’s thoughts) from thinking (one’s own). Fictional spaces are created through the collaboration of a

dualism that keeps them separate and distinct, moreover, pitches them in opposition. However, spatiality and temporality are irrevocably interdependent, interwoven.¹⁰ Materials have a temporal dimension, they endure; time does not occur independently of or simply effect materials, but rather *is part of* them. Solid is a flow *slowed* to the point that its state of flux becomes no longer discernible. Every form has a pulse; is shaped as the vibrations of its internal rhythm meet with those of the world.

as delicate gauze or gathered up into thick and impenetrable creases. In certain states of mind, time seems to pass by too quickly and yet on reflection has produced dense, complex folds. On other occasions, the hour is waited upon impatiently without producing anything much at all. Boredom works time to a standstill, where the slow minutes become picked apart, teased open. Time's fabric becomes unraveled to reveal the nature of its separate threads, as white light fractures towards a rainbow once refracted through a prism's lens. The weave of lived time is not linear or continuous but structured through spiraling ellipses and baroque coils; the thread of the present a loop-stitch always twisting back on itself to reengage with the loose ends of its past. Unlike the

writer and a reader; they are the product of these two imaginations working as one. Less perceptible spaces open up between reading the text and turning the page. Books unfold spaces non-reducible to their external dimensions; their interior space is never equivalent to the space that they occupy on a shelf. Thus, architectural models reveal little about the *lived* space of a library, since internal — fictive or imaginative — space is always immeasurable, boundless, *inbindable*.

16 Possibility is the imagining of alternatives, the conceptualization of the world in other ways. *Possible* has a potentiality not yet proved; it contemplates the limit or measure of what something *might* be capable. Thus, to conceive of what is possible requires a speculative approach for possibility exists beyond the boundaries of what is already known for sure; it still contains some doubt. Possibility stands between the actual and impossible. Actuality is a realm of proven facts and of materialized forms, whilst impossibility is not only that which cannot be

irrevocable passage of chronological time, lived time is a process endlessly woven and unwoven. Its narratives are forever unpicked and repeated, undone and rewound. Tactics can be developed for preventing or stalling the teleology of its weave, the ever-forward trajectory of an unfolding (narrative) thread. Akin to Penelope at her loom, memory and dreams work against the progressive pressures of each day's events, perpetually undoing what has been done in the hope of starting over again, trying to change the direction of a future whose course might otherwise seem inescapable.⁷

Liberated from the grip of a single subject position, the camera eye *sees* the world in different ways to how a person does. Moving image has the capacity to cope with formlessness and flux; it can reflect the multiple durations of the universe without needing to reduce them to a single, stable narrative flow. Film speeds often operate at a rate of twenty-four frames per second, a normative frequency that captures the world much as it *appears* to the human eye.

brought into existence but also that which is intolerable or difficult to deal with. Certain things can be purposefully denied existence, exiled beyond the limits of accepted reality.⁵ Too often possibility is replaced with probability, feasibility or even practicability, where the desire for change or transformation — through testing the limits of what is possible — is sacrificed to the pragmatics of what the current situation *allows*. Utopian models express a sense of dissatisfaction with the way that things are, whilst proposing the shape and structure of a *possible* alternative. However, once materialized and inhabited, the utopian model becomes reality and its dreams are *no longer* possible.

15 Filmic technologies can offer glimpses of a reality that remains imperceptible to the

However, slower or faster frequencies reveal the presence of other speeds and durations. Slow motion records movement that is too quick for the eye to fully see, whilst time-lapse technologies prove the flow of situations that might appear unmoving or irredeemably static. Rather than colluding with the reality established by the hegemony of clock-time or reinforcing the boundaries that differentiate between different named *things*, filmic forms of representation can be used to fracture or disrupt the logic of these illusions. Close-up, things start to lose their edges; the distinction between figure and ground begins to yield. Unfixed from any cinematic frame,

17 The tighter our grasp upon the world becomes, the greater our need for or fascination with the idea of escape. Escape is a fugitive act where the resulting freedom is only ever temporary, fleeting. No sooner is one boundary breached as another becomes established. There is no *place* outside of our systems of capture to which to permanently flee. Rather, escape is a practice performed (daily) through the process of finding loopholes *within* the system or producing moments of porosity. The term *inbindable* thus not only describes that which is beyond capture — the infinite or boundless — but perhaps also those who, like Houdini, are practiced in the art of escape. There are tactical means by which a situation can be rendered *open*; wily methods by which one might avoid becoming fixed, immobile. Systems and structures can be rendered porous temporally as much as fragments of film no longer behave according to the structure of linear narrative, but might instead collide and proliferate, presenting multiple and mobile viewpoints. Montage creates contiguity rather than continuity, a friction of touching fragments that refuse to tow the (narrative) line. Sound can be separated from the image or else

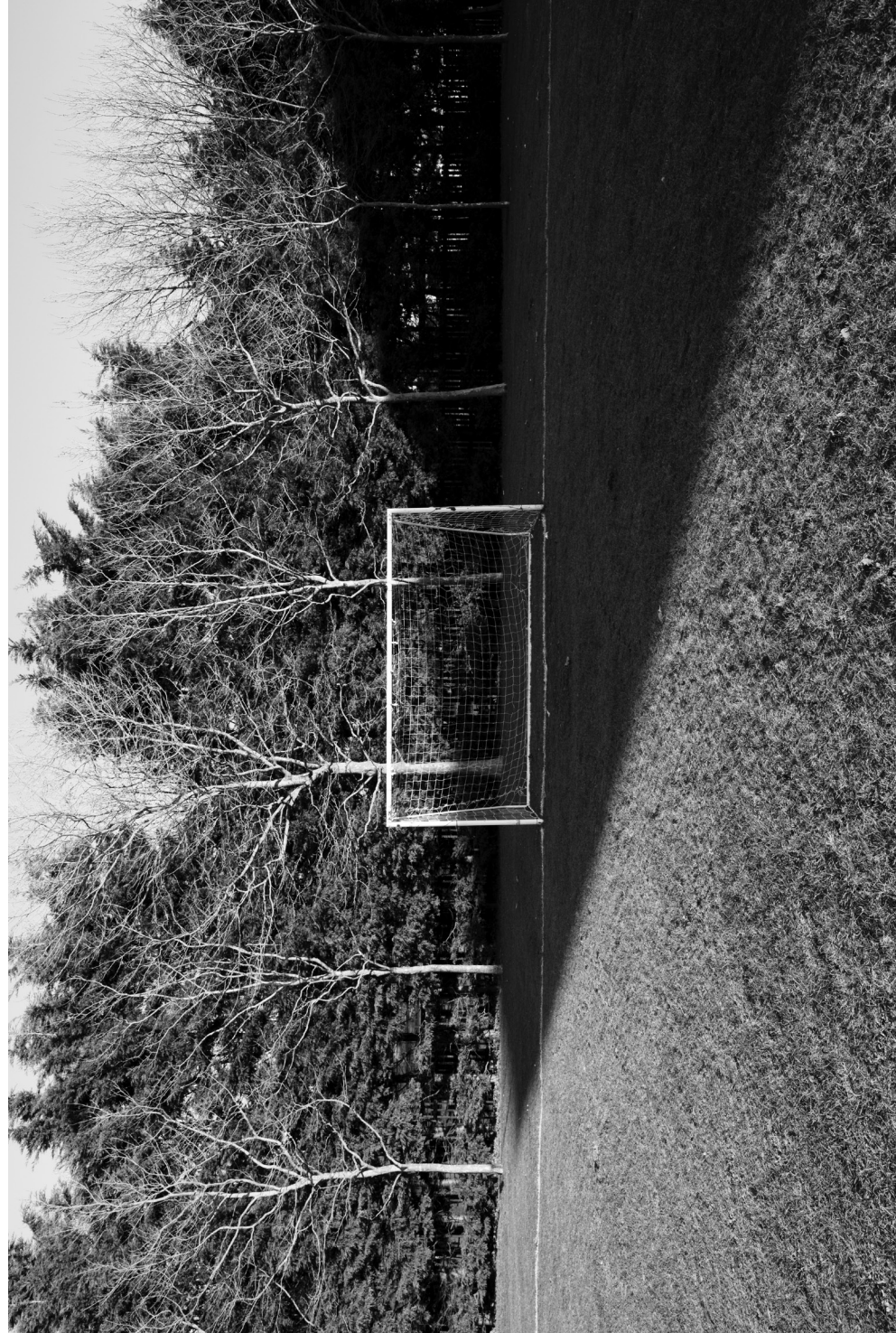
spatially. Escape routes can be conceived by changing the *quality* of time rather than by trying to free oneself from its grasp. Loose ends can be willfully left untied. Conclusions do not always need to be drawn. Every narrative can be re-edited to reveal a different ending. Every text can become endlessly modified and reworked. Resolution is an illusion, a moment of pause rather than of completion. Nothing is ever truly finished, for every process always becomes another becomes another becomes [...]. Every ending is also a beginning. This is not the end but rather another place from which to start.¹

replaced with extracts from other places and times.¹¹

Segments of footage gleaned from different moments in historical time become reassembled into new chronologies, where the sequential laws of cause and

effect no longer fully apply. Time loops and rewinds; events can occur in reverse. New patterns emerge and dissolve, where connections are made by rhythm not plotline, nor by replicating the habitual relations between things. Macro and micro share the same scale; a quality of light or luminosity can become an organizing principle.

Emma Cocker

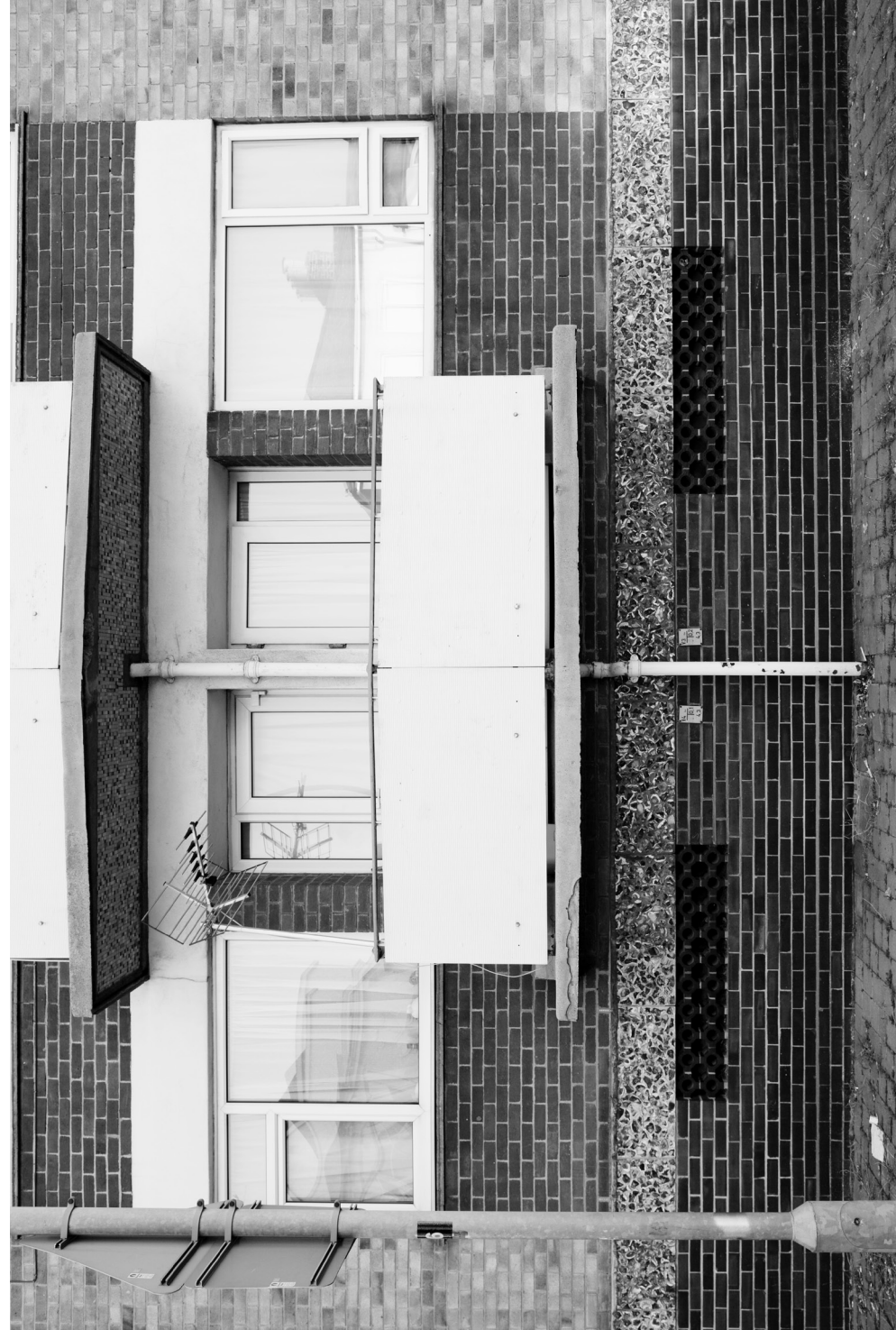


To the left is rendered an Italian garden, to the right a vista of Venice's Grand Canal, and the barrel vault ceiling is rendered as a cloudy sky, all picked out in coloured floodlighting.



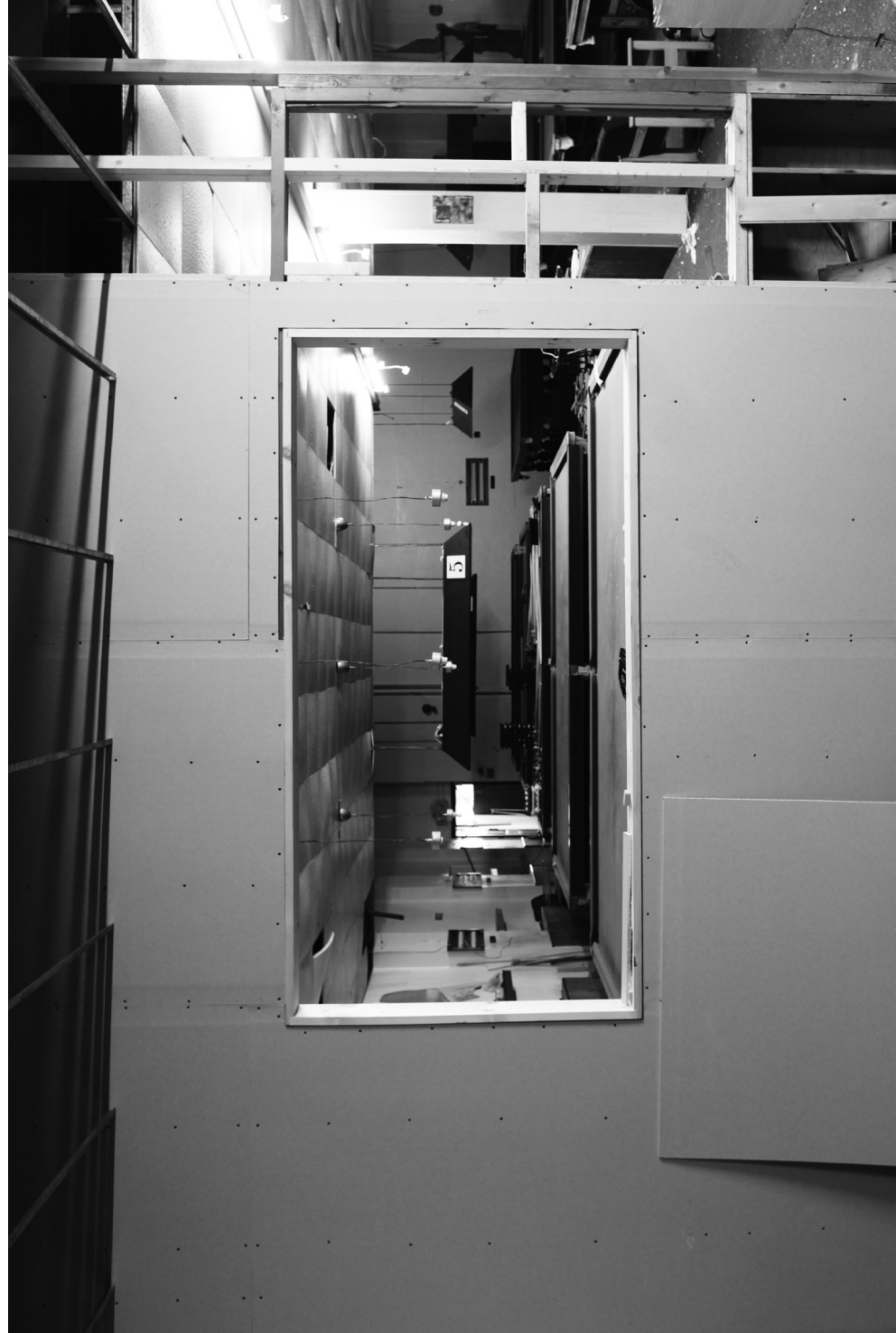
On the threshold is a mosaic which says
the Fratton Electric Theatre.







There is a proscenium arch decorated in scenes from oriental myth, and is framed at either side by a pair of columns in the Corinthian order, which themselves stand in front of painted scenes of nature.



The space is 36m long and 16m wide.
Concrete floors meet with oak panels rising 4m up the walls, and continue with ornamental plaster up to the barrel vault ceiling.





Chandeliers hang from the ceiling and
there are potted palms on a terrazzo
floor.

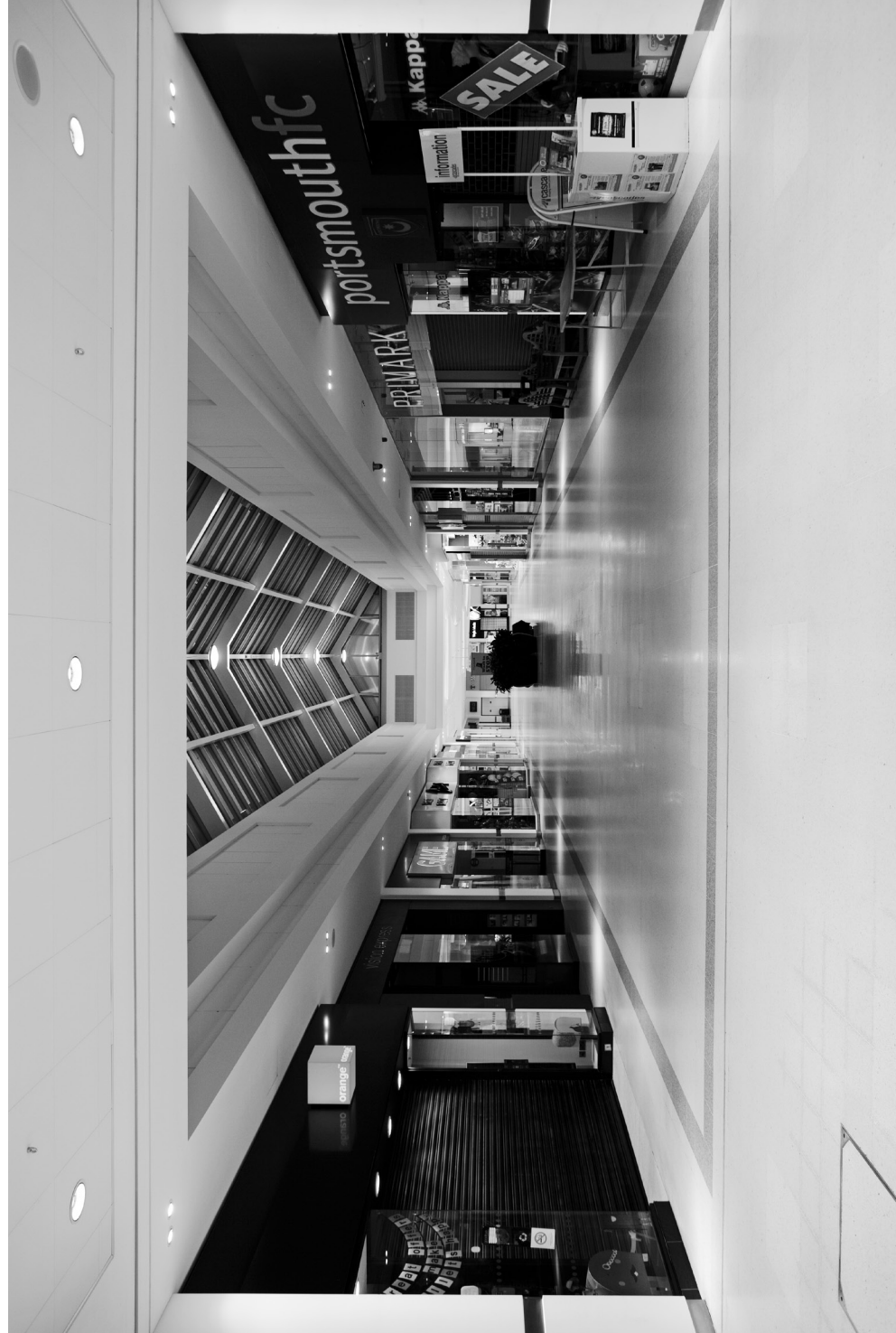




In the auditorium there are ornamental mouldings on cream coloured plaster walls, and a barrel vault ceiling.



The ceiling is made of plaster, and suspended from trusses. There are six exits.



Voice Under Voice

When did it all begin? Does it have a beginning?

On the face of it, there is an astounding break, a new beginning of the experience of the voice and sound, a gigantesque new departure. To this end the whole history of the voice can be divided into two parts of glaring disproportion, the first one reaching since times immemorial into the late nineteenth century, and the second one we are living ever since, in the past mere 130 years.

In the first part of this history, now hard to imagine, people were just listening to sounds and voices produced by 'real' creatures, animate or inanimate, human or inhuman, the rustle of winds and tempests, the cries of owls and the rattle of rattlesnakes, the murmur or the roaring of seas, the human speech and the song, cries and whispers, the noise of tools and machines, the buzz of cities; everything stemming from a proper origin that one could locate and see, or at least seek out. All the noises and the voices kept evaporating into thin air the moment they were emitted; there was a proper order to the appearance and disappearance of sounds. The sound-world appeared to make sense, or if not quite sense, since there was always a mystery pertaining to sounds, then at least it was governed by the self-evident supposition of their location, of their being pinned to the sources of their emission, and they could never cut their umbilical cord with their origin. And the vanishing of sounds — for a sound is an entity that keeps vanishing as it emerges — epitomized at the most palpable the passing away of all things finite. Precisely by their elusive and impalpable nature the sounds condensed this passing into an instant, each instant. Hence the yearning to fix them, to keep them, to hold on to them, to stop their fading away. For if one

could do that, couldn't one also hope that one could stop the fleeing away of all things, of our lives, and hold on to them? This is an old dream, pertaining to magic and fairy-tales. Like in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, where the melting of ice suddenly provoked the releasing of frozen sounds, so one could hear the cries and the clatter of a battle long past, conjured for the ears of bewitched listeners out of the melting drops of ice.

Then suddenly the magic materialized; one could really freeze sounds and voices, keep them and reproduce them at one's will. The true sorcerers appeared, with banal names like Edison and Bell, who with some magic wands endowed with the high credentials of science, made it all possible. Suddenly the feat of incredible magic was at everyone's fingertips. One could fix each passing sound and keep it in a box, turn it into an object and replicate it at will.

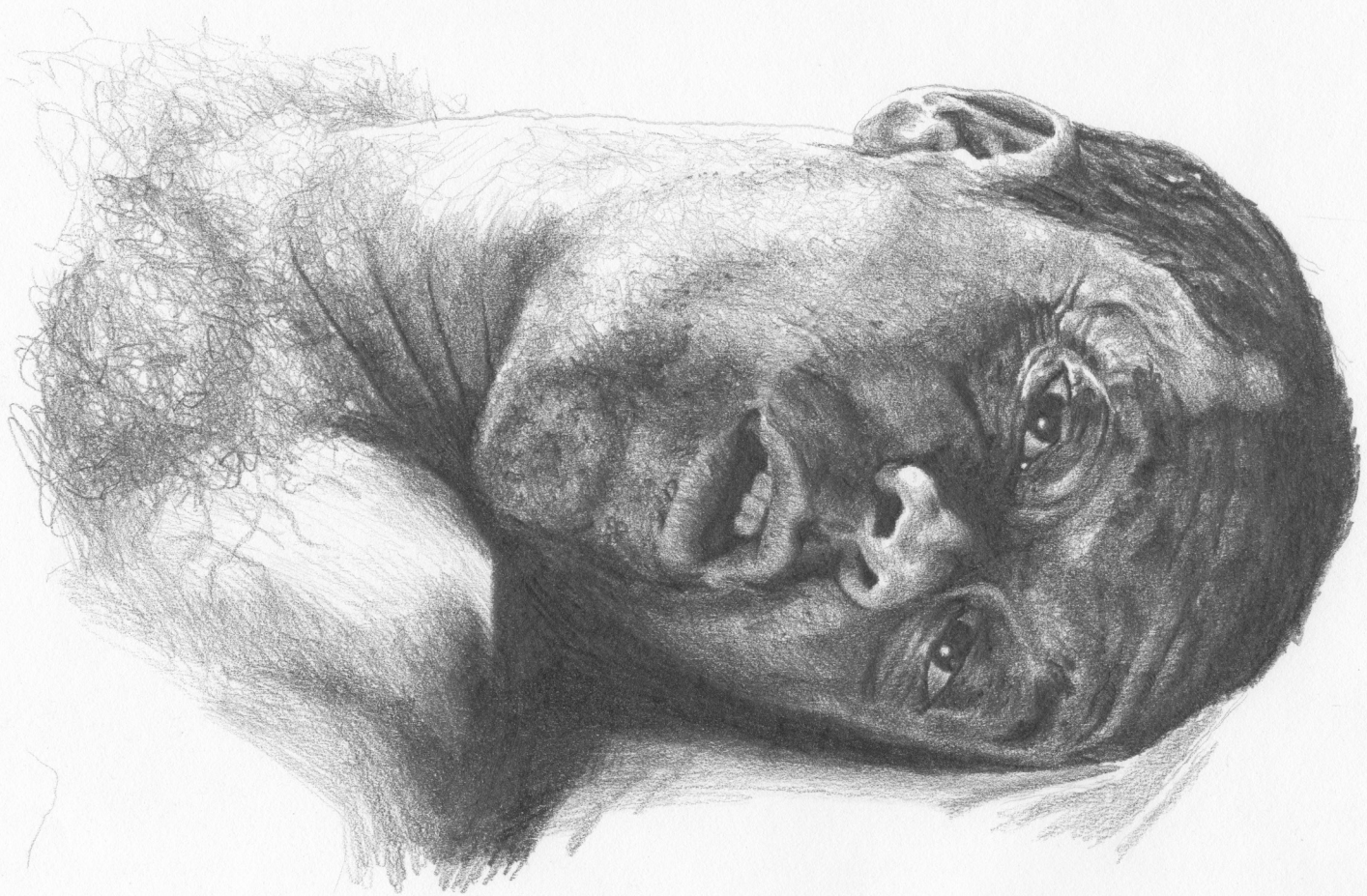
Along with fixing the voice on a support and making it replicable, a number of concomitant transformations took place: the possibility of transmitting the voice across any distance; the possibility of its amplification, of its modelling and transformation; the ubiquitous acousmatic quality, i.e. the property of voices and sounds to be completely divorced from their origin; the possibility of generating synthetic sounds and voices, etc.¹ All this, taken together, amounts to a most spectacular revolution. The very idea is staggering, unimaginable throughout the first part of sound history, and if I am recalling these trivial facts, it is to bring forth the most astounding thing about it: the fact of their triviality, over which nobody is any longer astounded.

What happened with this revolution is, first, that the voice has become deracinated, cut off from its roots and firm footing, disconnected from the immediacy of its presence, decontextualized, separated from its ambiance. It has become a transplant. And second, it has lost its uniqueness, another of its essential properties, its exclusive belonging to this here and

now and to this particular person, this singular source. What seemed to be an unrepeatable presence of the sounding voice has become easily reproducible. Without these two essential traits, can we still speak of the voice? In a nutshell, it seems that by this new capacity every voice has become a voice over. This shift has affected the seemingly innocent 'original' voices to the point that they appear truncated and haunted by their competing clones.

Over the last century the technology of voice recording and reproduction has been steadily getting ever more gigantic and sophisticated, giving rise to a hugely expanding industry, to the point of overwhelming all recesses of our lives. The new devices have come to rule our being at every moment and no doubt one of the most salient and significant features of the history of the past century is that it has brought an unprecedented experience of the voice, a ubiquitous experience which has irretrievably changed the very meaning of the word voice. Every experience of the voice, from the earliest infant stages on, is an inextricable mixture, in varying proportions, of voices from 'live sources' and voices (re) produced by technical devices, whereby live voices have as if lost their eminence and privilege and have to compete in the crowd, seemingly indistinguishable from the contrived ones by any positive trait. It's not that the relation to the physically present voice has disappeared, it has become redoubled in its very immediacy. The proportions of this change are staggering, its effects are omnipresent and overpowering.

The experience of the voice is not like any other. So much depends on apprehending the voice, ultimately the very notions of presence and consciousness, which cannot be quite conceived without a reference to the voice — ultimately what defines our being human. One only needs to mention the name of Derrida, who has argued for this forcefully and at great length and who invented the term phonocentrism as



a diagnosis of a certain take on the voice that determined our history. Has our experience of the voice, the presence, the self, dramatically changed with this stunning technological transformation? Are we human in a strikingly different way? On the face of it, far less than one would expect or surmise. Given the massive introduction of unprecedented devices with limitless possibilities, this certainly sounds most extraordinary.

Yet, this is not quite true. It is not really accurate to say that the new technologies introduced an unprecedented experience of the voice, rather they magnified and extended something that was already in the voice itself, although in a concealed way, covered by the aura of authenticity, individuality, expression and uniqueness. The voice, strictly speaking, doesn't mean anything — it is the signifier, the language, that is the bearer of meaning — but in a strange reversal it was precisely by not meaning anything that it was ascribed the highest meaning, the ineffable meaning beyond words, be it as an elevation to divinity or as the pledge of self-presence and uniqueness. But maybe this is a structural and necessary illusion that pertained to the whole history of the voice and largely covered up its disruptive nature, so that one can never quite pit the authentic voice, stemming from a 'live source', against the voice artificially contrived and replicated by technology. It is not the technology which disrupted the unalloyed presence of the voice and its aura, its untarnished sway and unrepeatable individuality, there is rather something in the nature of the voice itself which always pointed to this disruption, something by which the voice was never just a pledge of presence, but an indicator of an impossible presence. Where it seemed the most pervasive it referred at the same time to a paradoxical and truncated presence, ultimately to a void in the midst of presence. Where it seemed the most authentic it was at the same time a foreign body, a prosthesis, a quasi-artificial bodily extension. Technology magnified this

part, brought it to light and to a universal function, commonly available. But it magnified both sides at the same time: it made the prosthetic nature of the voice palpable, but thereby not dissipating the structural illusion, it rather kept covering the gap that it opened with ever more formidable and imposing technical possibilities.

So the astounding thing is perhaps not the unprecedented experience of the voice, but how easily it could be recuperated. It is true that the introduction of new technologies initially provoked a great deal of consternation, the sudden proliferation of acousmatic voices was initially accompanied by a vast panoply of uncanny effects, seeming like a new kind of magic endorsed by science.² My favourite is Marcel Proust's account of the first phone conversation with his grandmother, where we see a great writer realizing immediately, with great perspicacity, what was at stake. But the unsettling effects were short-lived and things quickly achieved a new state of normality, where the new voices were integrated into our life-world. Perhaps the upsetting thing is that not so much was upset.

There are, schematically, two ways of looking at this. First there is a nostalgic view which bemoans and laments this new development and yearns for the time of authentic voices, the sounding world as it used to be before being utterly denatured, so that the massive onslaught of technology is seen as a great danger for our being human, a loss of something precious and authentic, to which we have no more access. But this mourning for the lost live presence is misplaced, since that presence was always a retroactive myth that tried to cover up the unsettling nature of the voice. Perhaps equally insufficient is the opposite stance, the rejoicing over the new possibilities of voice (re)production and the profusion of new voices, say in the guise of the 'postmodern' stance of delight at the proliferation of simulacra, the endless string of copies and

replicas. Both attitudes, albeit here simplified into caricatures, are ways of giving up on the voice, although in opposite ways, once by holding on to its rooting in a (lost) presence, once by extolling its prosthetic nature as a blessing.

In the largest sense and in the endless possibilities it offers, it is the voice as Voice Over that walks with most precariousness this thin red line. It is based on voice transplantation, its extrication and implantation in a different milieu where it can seemingly grow new roots, to the point of naturalizing the very framework of its transplantation, providing it with sense, like a wound opened and healed at the same time. It is comforting in its capacity to provide sense and framework, but it can never quite conceal and suppress the unease of being a transplant. It is a voice which not only keeps the trace of, but embodies its own deracination, and covers it up. But isn't this the minimal way of getting to the very core of the voice, to realizing that every voice is a voice over? Isn't this the device which sounds like the most natural and the most unnatural at the same time? With something that emerges flickering and elusive in between, between the illusory rootedness and the implant, before it becomes solid as the purveyor of sense?

When did it all begin? Since ever, since there are voices and sounds, or every time anew? Could one say: in the beginning there was a voice over?

Mladen Dolar

Endnotes

¹

I must refer to Michel Chion, *Le Son* (Paris: Nathan, 1998), for a detailed account. This is the best book on the sound that I know of, and I find it incredible that it hasn't been translated into English yet.

²

Here I must refer to the meticulous and magisterial work by Friedrich Kittler, in particular *Grammophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

And she of course finds her husband in
bed, or with, or it doesn't really mat-
ter ...





And meanwhile the little boy is watching
the whole scene.

Oh no, no, no, no, no he's not watching
it, he's listening to it from his room.
He's been told by the butler to stay in
his room.

His idol has murdered his wife.



It's quite a happy moment this last scene, the little boy being reunited with his mom.



A Wilderness of Elsewheres

Slow black with ruin last refuge four walls over
backwards no sound. Legs a single block arms fast
to sides little body face to endlessness. Never but
in vanished dream the passing hour long short.
Samuel Beckett, *Lessness* (1970)

In his 1969 essay 'A Cinematic Utopia', Robert Smithson reflects on the entropic nature of film, its tendency to devolve into a unitary chaos, both at the moment of watching and subsequently in the viewer's mind: the film slumping as it were into ruin as it recedes in the memory. The process of forgetting, writes Smithson, is already under way in the darkened cinema. The spectator's body is immobilized, passively looking and listening. 'One forgets where one is sitting. The luminous screen spreads a murky light throughout the darkness. Making a film is one thing, viewing a film another. Impassive, mute, still the viewer sits. The outside world fades as the eyes probe the screen. Does it matter what film one is watching? Perhaps.' This tendency towards the undifferentiated becomes more marked after the fact, when the viewer tries to reconstruct the film. 'As I write this, I'm trying to remember a film I liked, or even one I didn't like. My memory becomes a wilderness of elsewheres. How, in such a condition, can I write about film? I don't know. I could know. But I would rather not know. Instead, I will allow the elsewheres to reconstruct themselves in a tangled mass.'

Film, on this reading, is a medium or material every bit as fractured, crystalline and chaotic as the landscapes and buildings that Smithson encountered in New Jersey or Mexico — film is itself a type of ruin, or (in a phrase from his 1967 essay 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic') a ruin

in reverse: coming into being and passing away in the same moment, before our eyes. The result is a kind of image-sump or cinematic graveyard. ‘Somewhere at the bottom of my memory are the sunken remains of all the films I have ever seen, good and bad they swarm together forming cinematic mirages, stagnant pools of images that cancel each other out. A notion of the abstractness of films crosses my mind, only to be swallowed up in a morass of garbage.’ Individual movies seep into one another; scenes migrate from one film to another; characters carry out their ‘dumb tasks’ and become indistinguishable from each other; stories proliferate even though, as Smithson notes, ‘the thought of a film with a ‘story’ makes me listless.’ Film is rendered anachronous and obscure, no matter its manifest content.

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The work of Karin Kihlberg and Reuben Henry seems especially attuned to both the ruin of cinema — its status as memorial fragment, attained long before the present post-digital crisis of film — and its mnemonic ramification, or even grotesque afterlife, in the mind of the viewer. Among the ‘sunken remains’ that the cinematic spectator moves between is an astonishing proliferation of dead bodies. (If this is not a historical novelty — prior centuries having been considerably more used to the presence of the dead — it is certainly an anomaly within most wealthier societies today: many of us who are quite used to seeing corpses on screen may make it to middle age without ever seeing a dead body in real life.) Kihlberg and Henry’s series *Acting Dead* (2008–2010) is in part an inventory of certain images that ought to persist in the viewer’s mind and yet are routinely elided by the narrative thrust of conventional or Hollywood cinema. Close-ups of faces of the dead constitute a type of narrative breach that

has to be closed as swiftly as it has been opened: typically such shots function merely as punctuation marks to a more protracted scene of violence, or as spurs to action or emotional response on the part of another character.

But what happens if we linger on such moments, on the faces of the fictional dead, expanding their merely punctual appearance? In *Acting Dead* the anonymous faces are meticulously drawn, thus extending the cinematic moment both in the process of their recreation and in the attention they demand of the viewer: the way we are invited to linger on monochrome bloodstains, neat bullet holes in otherwise unmarked foreheads, or contemplate their horrifying but oddly serene expressions. Behind these pictures, a whole ‘image repertoire’ — the phrase is Roland Barthes’s; he uses it in *A Lover’s Discourse* to describe the clichés and strictures by which desire expresses itself — culled from our prior experience of cinema hovers just out of focus. The drawings are a material reminder of a half-remembered frieze of *memento mori*, a partial map of those interstitial cinematic moments when a film passes fleetingly over the fact it can never truly represent: the fact of death. They’re a reminder too of Barthes’s formulation, in *Camera Lucida*, of the anachronous status of the photographic portrait. With a photograph even of the living, writes Barthes, we are faced with the knowledge that the sitter ‘is dead and is going to die’ — the moment when death statically punctuates the film is paradoxically the most moving (in more than one sense) moment in its unfolding.

Among the most compelling accounts of the phenomenon that Smithson describes, the process by which film decays in the memory into a heap of broken images, is that offered by artist and theorist Victor Burgin in his book *The Remembered Film*. In an essay of the same title, Burgin recalls two filmic scenes, the first from Tsai Ming-liang’s *Vive L’Amour* (1994), the second from Michael Powell and Emeric

Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale* (1944): the latter itself a film in part obsessed by images of a distant, rural and innocent, past. Both sequences that have stayed with Burgin depict women walking, the first in a scene of urban decay, the second among the fields of southern England, lately traversed by the machinery of the Second World War. Burgin writes:

I feel there must be more than merely formal grounds for my association of the two. I know the stories told in the two films, I know what I am supposed to feel, and what judgments I might make, but the peculiarity of my relation to the sequences has nothing to do with the stories in which they were originally embedded. The narratives have dropped away, like those rockets that disintegrate in the atmosphere once they have placed their small payloads in orbit. Detached from their original setting, each scene is now the satellite of the other. Each echoes the other, increasingly merges with the other, and I experience a kind of fascinated incomprehension before the hybrid object that they have become.

The tendency of such cinematic moments to escape the framing narrative in which they appear is playfully and painstakingly explored in Kihlberg and Henry's video *This is a Story About a Little Boy*. The source material here is Carol Reed's 1948 film *The Fallen Idol*. The little boy, Phillipe, is the son of the French ambassador to London; while his parents are away, he is accompanied by a butler, Baines, who is having an affair with a younger woman. Phillipe is embroiled in the couple's attempts to evade discovery by Baines's wife, and ultimately in the apparent killing of the wife. It is a film about lies and appearances, persistently framing its action in doorways and windows, concocting a web of images that

are not what they seem. *This is a Story About a Little Boy* reconstructs the film in the mind's eye — rendered by fleeting sequences and fades to black, shadowy recollections of the actual action and comically animated misconstruals — with the narrator trying in voiceover to recall its narrative. Some semblance of the story remains: the narrator knows the structure of trust, betrayal and discovery by which the film might be described — by which its plot could be summarized, for example — but finds his memory constantly snagging on stray details that set him on the wrong path. Images flare up from other moments in the film, he revisits time and again the scene of the boy's discovery of the butler's affair (though its import is unknown to the child), he tries to schematize the plot in a classic love triangle that it will not quite fit, and he has to correct himself at key moments. At length, he misremembers the ending of the film, fantasizing the expected reunion between boy and mother that the film never allows us to see. Memory supplies the cliché that art denies the viewer, revealing the narrator's own desires even as his efforts reconstitute a partly imaginary film. As Burgin puts it: 'Or forgotten answers to distant questions may reverberate down history to shatter remembered films. But what concerns us most is what we make from the fragments.'

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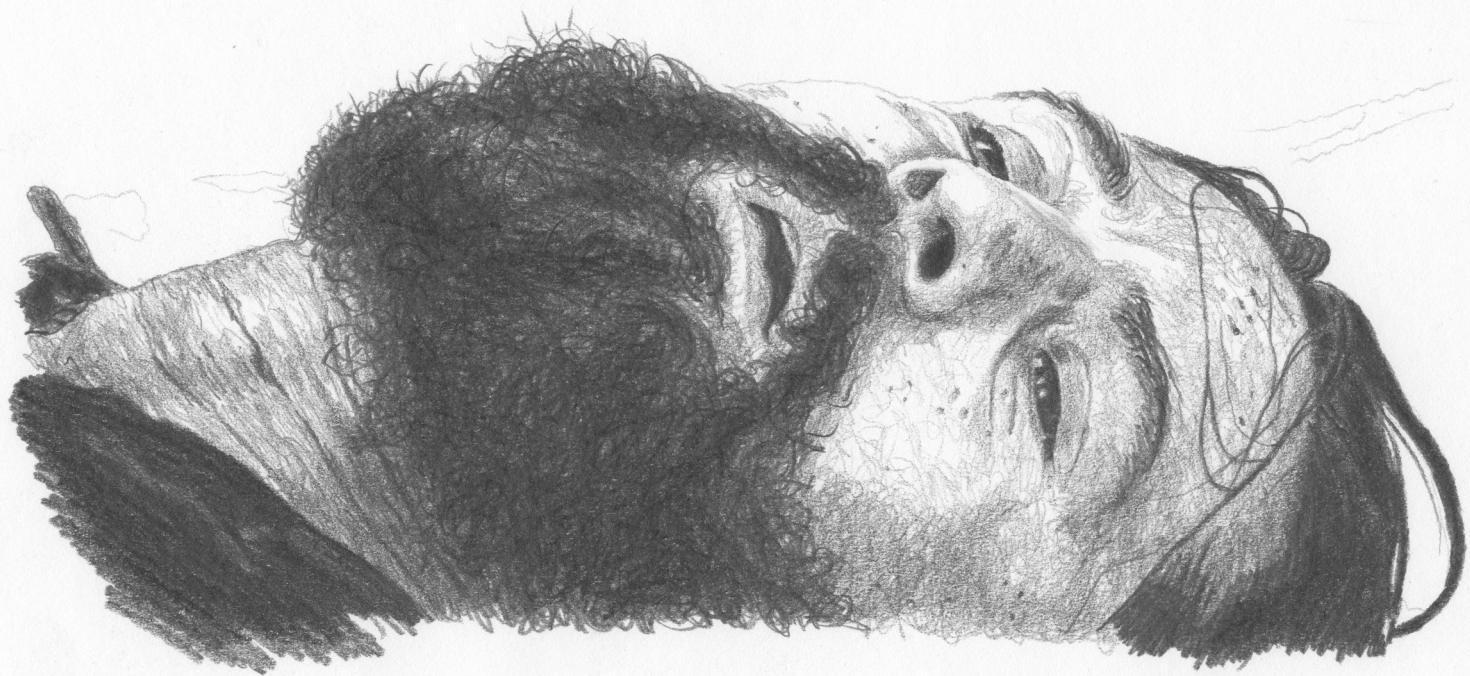
It is in Kihlberg and Henry's *Inbindable Volume*, however, that the temporalities of the moving image and memory are most fully explored, and projected into an unknowable future that curiously resembles the recent past. It's here too that certain ideas of Smithson's, regarding the ruinous nature of the present, may help to clarify the effects of their work. In his 1967 essay 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic', Smithson advanced the notion of 'ruins in reverse': the anachronous

temporality of an architectural, urban and exurban, modernity that was slumping into decay and being rebuilt in the same moment. The modern ruin, writes Smithson, exists in a curious temporal interval, a present that will not settle between past and future, but suggests antiquity at the same time as it rushes towards a science-fiction-derived future (Smithson has in mind both the architectural labyrinths of Jorge Luis Borges and the future ruins pictured in the fiction of J. G. Ballard). In Britain, the most resonant instance of modern ruin has long been the decaying fabric and forms of the Brutalist architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. These buildings, routinely disparaged for the supposed failings of the post-war social-democratic consensus as much as for their practical failings and provocative design, seem to embody a future that is rotting before our eyes.

Inbindable Volume treats one such building — the Central Library in Birmingham, completed by John Madin in 1974 — and at the time of writing scheduled for demolition — as the scene of an unnamed event that is to occur, or has occurred, in its hushed and empty precincts. In fact, it is unclear whether the event in question is the institution of the library itself — that is, the building inhabits past and future in the same instant, and is subject to a prismatic array of competing narrative accounts. Over three screens showing the austere fittings of the building's interior, serried rows of books and archive boxes, more shambolic office spaces and interstitial voids, a narrating voice intones: 'The records show clearly that it is going to arrive gradually ... This is one of the places at which it will end ... When the time arrives at which the change will occur, it was perceived to have begun.' Time — the time of the image and the time of the narrative — fractures, and the library becomes a monument that records an event (to be celebrated or mourned: again it's unclear) that is not so much to be situated in the past or future, but which appears to suffuse the space or enfold the ageing exterior: an event that

is endlessly in process. It is this sense of the ruin as unfinished and unfinishable, of an endlessly confused becoming, that once more recalls Smithson, who wrote of the 'Ultramoderne' architecture of the 1930s — which was roughly for him, chronologically speaking, what Brutalism is for us today — that here were spaces in which 'nothing is new, neither is anything old'.

Brian Dillon



Beginnings

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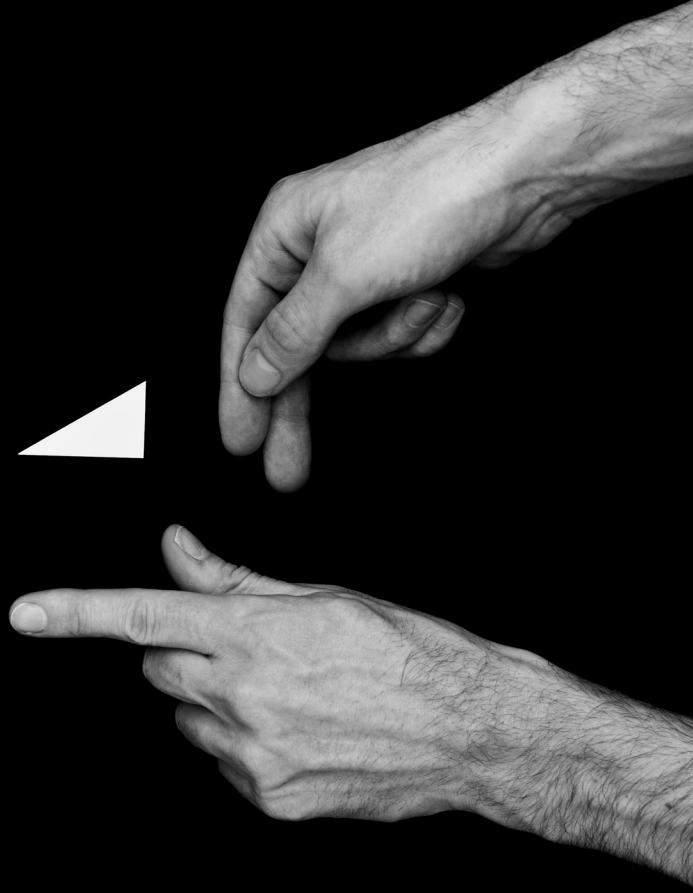
Including material from the following artworks by Karin Kihlberg and Reuben Henry: *Apeirophobic Framework* (2011), installation/video, commissioned by Artsway, New Forest; *Abandon in Place* (2010), steel-reinforced concrete and meteorite, commissioned by Danielle Arnaud, London; *Acting Dead* (2008–2010), pencil on paper, printed here at actual size; *Inbindable Volume* (2010); commissioned by and produced with VIVID, Birmingham, performed by Larry Rew; *This Story is About a Little Boy* (2010), video; *Afterimage* (2011), video installation/photographs, commissioned by Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth.

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PETER

Ok, I think I understand. So to summarise, the Apeirophobic, represented here by the Right Angle ...



VOICEOVER

... with its base in the Present, probes gently with its apex into the Future, represented here by the Parallelogram.

The Future channels time occurring between Present-Future and Future-Future, running parallel to one another yet offset to the Nth degree relative to expectation.

Beyond the Future is Infinity, represented here by the number 8.

8



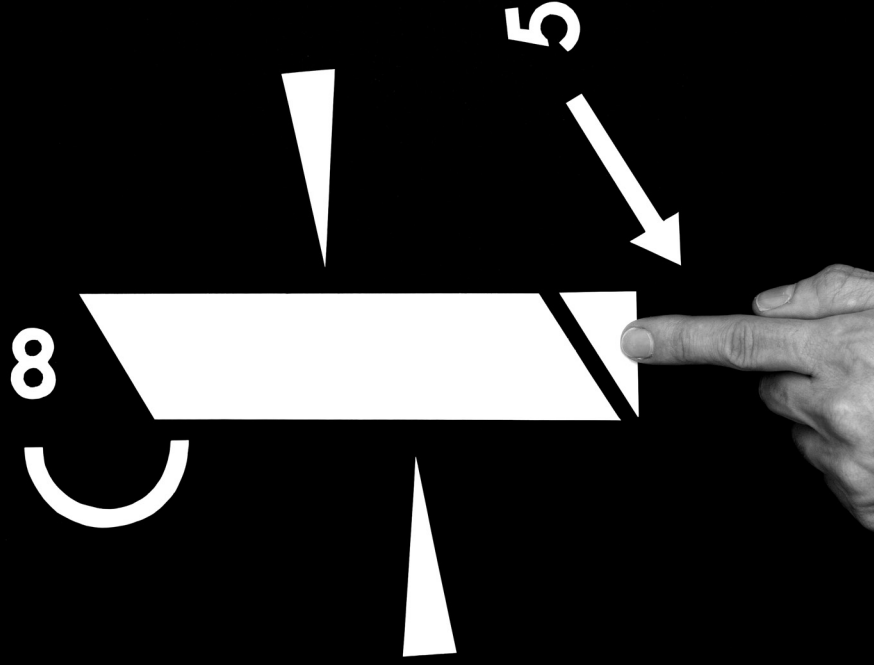
Within the Future we have the exhibition, mirrored on the two dislocated edges of the Future; Present-Future, and Future-Future. It is the offset of this angle, drawing the difference between the two possible sites of the exhibition relative to the Apeirophobic, that causes the Apeirophobic to perceive Fear.

8



Fear, represented here by the number 5, binds itself to the Apeirophobic while maintaining no further connection to the disambiguation between Present-Future and Future-Future.

In order to drop 5, or Fear, Right Angle must divide 8, or Infinity, by itself, reducing Infinity to an artefact of the present and rendering it impotent. The effect of this on Right Ang;e is a direct re-orientation towards the Future, further causing a re-alignment of Present-Future and Future-Future into the same place, the subjects self acting as the conduit for this re-alignment.



This forces the offset between the two sites of the exhibition into alignment, and their futures relative to the Apeirophobic become synchronised, thus releasing the Apeirophobic from 5 and binding the uncertainty of Fear to the Future itself.

