

on **THE BLANK**

Photography, Writing, Drawing

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Art

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ABSTRACT:

On the Blank: Photography, Writing, Drawing.

My visual practice is concerned with an articulation of the 'left-out-thing', remnant or *blank*, produced by and embedded within technologies of representation; which themselves echo the mechanisms through which an identity is formed. As automatic, 'empty apparatus', technological devices threaten as well as construct this self image.

This thesis proposes a new theoretical interpretation for art practices that engage with this empty space, or 'shifter'; understood as a form of punctuation around which meaning revolves. Indexing an object both absent and 'has been', the kind of mark-making that falls into this category can be identified – like an hysterical symptom – as the reproduction of an *unrepresentable sign*.

It is through my practical work, which explores the link between the photograph, the body, and the written sentence, that my contribution to the field of fine art practice is primarily offered. The way in which an image is put together, or a sentence is organised, can be considered as an exemplary definition of subjectivity in operation. Yet, as Ann Banfield (1987) has argued, after the invention of the lens, novelistic writing began to index a 'world without a self'. My visual work, which frequently looks like writing, attempts to construct a similar 'grammatical' form: one in which the "I" is absent.

The aim of my work is to stage or record this empty place, understood as a disturbance, impediment or failure within speech; as the text's undertow; and equated with a photographic – or optical - 'unconscious'. This failure, this fault in language, detected in the lapses, gaps and silences within a body of writing or in an image – a gap upon which such language systems are nevertheless hinged - is, I suggest, both the place where technology and the non-self are linked and, paradoxically, the site where the "I" is constituted.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Without support from the following I would not have attempted to weave my spidery path through theory, with this in order to replenish my practice.

I would like to thank:

My Supervisors: Dr Michael Newman and Professor Anne Tallentire

Sheila Lawson for the exhibition at Platform gallery.

Simon Josebury of Secondary Modern for all design, including that involved in the construction of my work.

The Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, especially Astrid Gessert and Darian Leader.

Mathew Hale

Clive Hodgson

Marc Hulson

Clare Mee

Aaron Down

For providing me with various places to escape the distractions of London and write in solitude:

Felicity Lunn

Lawrence Kenny

Cathy and Robert Maguire

Glenn Scott Wright

For all the rest: Trevor Horne

The writing was for me but the work is for you, Hanna

*'... I was reminded of something, an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever.'*ⁱ

*'Nothing tells memories from ordinary moments; only afterwards do they claim remembrance.'*ⁱⁱ

- i Fitzgerald, F.S, (1990) *The Great Gatsby*, Penguin, London, p106
- ii From the English translation of the film *La Jetée*, (1962) directed by Chris Marker, Video from Argos Films