TITLE:
INTERIOR ARCHAEOLOGIES: VIEW POINTS, KNOTS AND ENTANGLEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper records conversations between an artist, archaeologist and interior designer as they map the material landscape of an artwork and make present their experience of the work through making and interpreting drawings, photographs and narrative. The work explores differences in ontology and experience, whilst making marks and sharing knowledge that moves between disciplinary and human experience.

The project uses an interior landscape, an artwork set up by a visual artist with a background in weaving, as a site for exchange and interdisciplinary discourse. The readings of the artwork, make explicit methods of practice and the different entanglements of past experience creating tension between words, ways of representing, mapping and navigating space. The initial collection of objects, drawings and installations form a meshwork of relationships that are materialized in the discourse to form a new fabric of experience.

The actions of the loom are used as a tool to think through the discourse within the paper. A loom is a tool that is used to weave cloth, it holds the warp under tension allowing for the interweaving of the weft threads, the weft is, that which is thrown across, with the transverse threads. The work opens up practice based methods through the to and fro of conversations to rethink methods of representation in interior space, through different viewpoints, knots and entanglements.

The paper explores and thinks about the use of metaphor and practice based research, with art making and its relationship to interior research and the reinvention of interior space. The project was used to model thinking behind a larger event, Map, Plot, Plunder, [1] an interactive theatre event that invited people to enter the backstage of a theatre to become part of the performance. The discourse questioned how the interior might be re-imagined using archaeological processes as a model for thinking and metaphor to work with. The Harris matrix, an archaeological tool, emerged through the process as a way of thinking through space and time, the mapping of interlocking events offers an exciting potential when thinking through past, present and future.
The project started with a visual artist bringing together a collection of threads, objects, maps, elastic, a teapot, books, which were ordered and reordered and placed in relationship to each other. The objects, become a landscape of provocation for others to make connections, to have conversations of, express views they hold and acted as a starting point for discussion.

The artwork established visual and physical relationships between the collection of objects and their contained meanings and memories. The objects contained personal memories, of use, maps, ways of navigating space, and references to the loom as a set of actions involved in making and to relevant physical locations. The artefacts and drawings acted as maps, as ‘snapshots of defining moments’ and became ‘tools’ in the developing discussion.[2] The objects formed an index or reference point between past events and future thinking. A glass box became the frame for the collection creating an interior landscape, a world within a world. Books, thread, pages, relationships were woven together as a fabric through a loom.

As a group of three people, artist, archeologist and interior designer, we used our different experiences and disciplinary knowledge in our interpretation and re-drawing as Cazeau points out in essay ‘Inherently interdisciplinary’ it obliged us as ‘participants to reflect on working methods and assumptions.’[3] Through our discussions and drawing activities we opened diverse approaches to looking and used different words and gestures to draw and interpret and re-interpret through the other the said landscape. Our aim was to ‘materialize discourse itself’.[4] This process of materializing discourse, of the to and fro backwards and forwards zig -zagging between conversations, moving from one description to another is according to Carter ‘like the shuttle ducking and weaving across the warp’ of a loom. [5]

The interaction between the participants, the warp and weft of the conversation through interdisciplinary discourse, opened different viewpoints, knots and entanglements in the search to rethink our practice through the discipline of the other.

The dialogues represented in the paper open up fragments of the exchange and visual documentation in relation to practice based research, referencing Ingold and Latour. The soil represents the material discussion, the material the archaeologist works with searching for finds, it represents the actual material for the artist and interior designer. We are interested in the ‘the gap between words and the world’ [6] and how as Latour in his essay ‘Circulating Reference, Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest’ demonstrates that these are not two separate ontological domains but a new phenomenon, the ‘circulating reference’.[7]

The artwork acted as a laboratory, incubating ideas and discussions, making connections in the present, exploring past material, to model future thinking. The drawings enabled us to abstract information, to talk about the material and to establish co-ordinates to work with. They abstract information and take it into another media, our disciplinary knowledge is reflected in the way we make drawings of the site. We attempt to unravel knots and entanglements as a means of understanding and re-imagining ways to represent the interior.
THE LOOM/THE SITE

The artwork, The Value of Things, see figures 1 and 2, was part of a wider exhibition that took place in the Discovery Centre in Winchester. A glass cabinet held the collection and formed a framework through which we could objectify and interpret meaning, it transformed the collection of objects into a material landscape creating distance and offering fixed viewpoints through which we could engage our different knowledge and experiences. The artwork referenced the histories of the site, the building, its archaeology and made connections to current activities taking place within the space, in the city and beyond, crossing real and imagined boundaries to future events.

The artist and interior designer have had a history of working together over a period of 10 years exploring their practice, language and crossing disciplinary boundaries using drawing as a site of exchange. The discourse that materialized attributed value to inter-disciplinary exchange and recognized differences in the way we perceive, look and read through language, signs, gestures, drawings and convention.

‘Improved connectivity starts with the map-knowing the complex system you are embedded in.’ [9] The conversations explored threads and lines, and the movements of discussion through difference and similarities forming inter-lacings that map territories and reveal shifts of tension between us. The conversation acted as an open ended activity of drawing and re-drawing, ‘drawing is characterized by a line that is always unfolding and becoming.’[10]

From our disciplinary experience, we considered our different working methods and the assumptions we therefore carry, how a visual artist values and gives meanings to lines, the methodology the archaeologist works with and how an interior designer represents space. The discussions opened up our individual interests and experiences to form a layered and overlapping understanding and connectivity of space and time. ‘The implication is that all writing – all creative activity – can be located within wider systems of reference: a network of ideas across time and space’.[11]

Using the framework of plan and elevation as a starting point and collaborative exchange as a method, we set out to evaluate the work from different perspectives and to create another kind of mapping to create a fabric of exchange woven through a system of interlacing networks. The discourse materialized the interior through inter disciplinary practice, it used the economy of drawing, exchange, the language of site, its histories and past experience, it explored ways of representing a site and reimagining it for the future.
THE READINGS/THE DRAWINGS

Figure 3. Enabling discussions between visual artist, interior designer and archaeologist, June 2011 ‘Making A Drawing’, elevation and plan recording the installation ‘Things Of value’, created for Drawing place, City Space gallery, The discovery Centre, Winchester. June 2011

The interior designer set the ground for the conversation through making drawings, a plan and section of the artwork. The drawings were specifically made from her disciplinary experience of interior practice; they were orthogonal, diagrammatic drawings to enable the collection of data and information to re draw the site within the context of a design studio. The method of interrogation was based on a set of procedures clearly defined stages used within the building industry.

The drawing above, figure 3, started out as a conventional plan on paper drawn with pencil, the glass cabinet provided a grid, a frame of reference. Through the intervention of the visual artist the elevation was drawn on graph paper with a ground of paint. The surface of the page became as important as the drawing, causing the drawing to be a more gestural response to the artwork. Edges became hard to locate and the drawings began to explore the relationships between the objects, making them less fixed.

The archaeologist drew on top of the plan mapping inclines, angles and defining features with a coded syntax of lines and tapered marks. Information on the pages of a book were replaced with a new pattern representing the landscape through its scale and plane. The archaeologist read the site through the process of stratification, examining the soil, and finds in the reverse order within which they were deposited. These layers of information are inputted into the Harris matrix, a tool that enables stratification problems to be unified on site as part of an ongoing process of discussion and reflection during the excavation.[12]

For the artist the ‘drawing’ was an actual method of working, a way of gathering and testing. Collating the landscape of objects and whilst drawing with pen and pencil, the artist drew together and made relationships between components by seeking out visual links, assessing gaps and content. The connections set up routes, paths, footways across the work, moving in the gaps and spaces between objects across fields within and outside of the work.

Common language emerged from of the site as, field, space and place, time, object, and find. The language of archaeology of unearthing, cuts, digging, marking, became metaphors for thinking through the artwork and the objects within the cabinet, the personal histories, and the sensory memories they contain. The cabinet acted as a domestic interior with objects filling the space, archaeology operated as a way of digging into the work, to bring forgotten material to the surface to make new histories.
The Harris matrix emerged in the discussion as a framework to think about the interior. The site is methodically taken apart in reverse order, the soils, colours and textures labeled, a measuring rod implanted into the ground and photographs taken. The process is drawn, noted on a context sheet, labeled with objects, ‘finds’ being sent away and soil being sifted through. This information is then represented through the Harris matrix, which is a 2 dimensional representation of the layers, contexts in space and time. The matrix maps out sets of interlocking and chronological relationships of the events on the site, the disassembled parts are preserved as an archive, catalogues, in boxes, files, as photos, a set of images ready for re-interpretation.

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 4. Entanglements.** Photograph taken by the interior designer with a visual arts practice of the installation Things of Value, originally created by the visual artist with a background in weaving who is now a curator. The string acted as a cut-line set out by the archeologist, engaging with an artwork in the City Space Gallery for which he is now a curator.

**Exchange.**

During the drawing and the toing and froing of conversation, the soil, the ground line, the plan, section and elevation became key points of exchange and discussion, the archaeologist wanting to know where the ground line was, the artist wanting to understand the terminology of soil—what did soil represent? What soil existed beneath the surface? The designer looking to put trial holes into the ground to understand the soil beneath. The books became the soil, the delineation of the archaeologist cut was set out in plan, a circular diagram sliced into quadrants.

The archaeologist identifies different contexts of social activity by unearthing, hidden space. Through the confusion and difficulty of interpreting what was an exposed landscape he was provoked to cover the glass returning to fundamental concepts in archaeology. In so doing he transformed our viewpoint and drew a new set of co-ordinates for excavation. The action transformed the perception of the material landscape for the artist and the interior designer causing them to see through a curtain of paper onto a stage of activity. The apparent walls of the cabinet exposed views through the space of the interior and picturing our entanglement in it.
Figure 5. The Soil, seeing through a curtain of paper onto a stage of activity.

The action of the covering over, of shifting the whole cabinet to become the soil, the paper the cut the string the line, activated the space into an interior. The paper wrapped the cabinet pulling in new surface qualities, reflections and activating a connection between the walls of the gallery and the cabinet. There was a shift from objects and their relationships in the landscape to the space of an interior, the paper shifted the scale of the work from landscape to cityscape. And offered a way to model and reflect on actions to take place within a wider event.

The artwork enabled the interior to move away from its location within architectural representation to shift to a location within art practice and archaeological process. The conversation materialized a method for working with the interior through a material model. The exchange moved between viewpoints forming knots and entanglements both within and between us forming ‘a meshwork of interwoven lines of growth and movement.’ [13] where knots have threads that ‘trail beyond, only to become caught with other threads in other knots.’ [14]

For the visual artist the soil was a metaphor for a rich connection of ideas and networks of activities. The surface and the textural meanings where ideas could shift one to the next were more important, drawing into the elevation to open up new possibilities for surfaces and spaces. The elevation became a key organizer and a site to be reorganized. The whole landscape became a soil made up of a set of social constellations, throwing up ideas to take forward and develop as an ongoing discussion. Metaphor is a ‘cognitive principle where by a category is borrowed from one domain in order to be ascribed to another to which it does not literally or conventionally apply’. [15]
Looms are complex systems that use a network of signaling to transfer information about the lifting and lowering of threads being woven. The loom is a sequence of lines and movements up and down and back and forth.

In weaving threads are held horizontally and vertically within the fabric, inter-lacings link threads from different directions under tension. The warp is held on the loom and weft is thrown through creating a tension in both, when weaving the threads of the weft move directly through the fabric performing under tension: through the stress of the other in the performance of the loom. Within this context, it is only when the fabric is relaxed and removed from the loom that the performance of the fabric is experienced. When relaxed away from the loom the properties of individual threads spring.

The toing and froing of conversation, the materiality of the work, the actions of doing and making materialized new practice based methods for engaging with the interior. Art practice brings a dialogue of visual and material experimentation opening out conventional representation and drawing practice in interior design. For example the textural quality of the paint on the page obscures the grid to form a new surface enabling a different set of actions within the surface and drawing.

Archaeology is a scientific method that investigates and records material culture, it is also a skill a practice based discipline. Archaeologists work with their hands on site, digging, using trowels, drawing, and measuring. They learn how to excavate, record, look at different geological deposits through objective and subjective processes. The diagramming of the Harris matrix, the dig and recovered objects, the mapping of these objects, events, traces of human activity and reconstructing of stories offers a potential tool with which to rethink the representation of the interior and to move away from the architectural frame.

The process of our exchange informed the development for the larger project, Map, Plot, Plunder, an interactive event held in the backstage of Winchester’s Theatre Royal. [fig 7] The structure of elevation and plan were used to locate people within a complex meeting space. A live feed projection layered the plan into the natural elevation of the stage and formed a knot where people where made aware of the way they were enmeshed within the dynamic relationships between artist, designer and performer. The artwork acted as an actual model and a method for thinking and engaging with real space.
The project has thrown up a sequence of things that we want to further explore to think about as a metaphor of systems for practice based research, with art making and its relationship to interior research. The Harris matrix as a method of thinking through space and time mapping interlocking events offers an exciting potential when thinking through fabric, knots and entanglements. The process offers the possibility to gather together a new economy, a different set of enactments with which to design, to shift methods of practice, perception and representation of interior space.

Exploring the archaeological process enabled us to look at space differently and to consider what we knew about the past, what is hidden and what is exposed, how it is shaped through many different interpretations and meanings, talking about the thing rather than naming the bound object. It has supported us to look forward to re-imagine current opportunities.

References:
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Bibliography:

Note: All photographs taken by B. Mitchell unless stated otherwise.