

The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice

The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice:

Material Memory

Edited by

Gwen Heeney

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9937-2
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9937-6

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would especially like to thank Newcastle University Institute for Creative Arts Practice and the Postgraduate Research Fund for their support with the conference and publication and for the continued support of my two supervisors, Andrew Burton and Ian Thompson.

INTRODUCTION

GWEN HEENEY

This publication grew out of the conference, exhibition and student-led symposium *Material Memory: The Post Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice* that I organized in 2014 as a PhD researcher in the Fine Art Department at Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne in the UK.¹ The events were the university's contribution to the much larger international research project *Topographies of the Obsolete*,² initiated by the Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Norway and involving a number of collaborating institutions, which included the Fine Art Department at Newcastle University.³ *Topographies of the Obsolete* included a number of residencies which took place in the abandoned Spode ceramic factory buildings in Stoke-on-Trent and an exhibition, *Topographies of the Obsolete, Vociferous Void*⁴ which was part of the 2013 British Ceramics Biennial, also staged within the derelict buildings of the Spode factory. The research project and subsequent exhibitions explored themes associated with *site* and the associated histories of post-industry. Its main strands of investigation included: "The Socio-Economic Post Industrial Landscape as site, The Globalized Landscape of Ceramics, The Human Topography of Post-Industry, The Topography of Objects/Archives and the Artist/Archaeologist and The Topography of the Contemporary Ruin". (Mydland and Brownsword 2013, 2). *Topographies of the Obsolete* is unique in that it brought together a group of international, multi-disciplinary artists with very diverse creative approaches, but with one focus: to respond to and make work in specific post-industrial sites, in this case the disused Spode ceramic factory in Stoke-on-Trent. It also opened up the arena for critical debate and it was in this climate of intense research and exploration that I began to organize the conference, symposium and exhibition at Newcastle University.

The key focus of this publication is to further debate the creative potential of material memory and its relationship to the post-industrial landscape as a site for creative practice which began in the conference. It brings together a broad range of disciplines which includes contemporary visual artists, art historians, cultural geographers, landscape architects, musicians and curators and provokes discussion through a number of different perspectives on themes such as transformation, loss, erosion, absence, collective memory and regeneration.

Material Memory

My own interest in material memory and the post-industrial landscape as site for creative practice had started many years ago when in 1992 I developed the 30-metre long *Mythical Beast* created from 30,000 bricks for the Garden Festival Wales, Ebbw Vale, in an abandoned South Wales Valley, once home to the Welsh Steel Industry. The bricks were cut and carved to respond to the light and shadow in the valley and also communicated both a sense of loss and regeneration. This year, 2016, as testament to the enduring effect regeneration can have on post-industrial landscapes, the Living Valley's team at Ebbw Vale on the site of the original Garden Festival, which houses the *Mythical Beast*, entered their project *Furnace to Flowers* into the *Grow Wild* competition to work with Kew Gardens and BIG Lottery. The project won the competition to develop a flagship site in Wales that showcases native plants and demonstrates how they benefit people as well as wildlife. As part of this the *Mythical Beast* will also be restored and planted with wild flowers. Although initially the home of the Garden Festival Wales event, the regeneration of the Ebbw Vale site differs greatly from some of the more exuberant post-industrial sites globally, especially in Germany, where in 2010 the "musealization" of the German Ruhr valley, with its extinct mining and steel industries took on a much grander approach to regeneration:

A gigantic modern cathedral of industry in the style of new objectivity, its form is fully functional and modern. Today, the former "forbidden city" of industry bursts with public life, arts performances, and industrial heritage tours. (Barndt 2010, 10)

¹ The events were funded by a grant from the Postgraduate Research Fund and NICAP (Newcastle Institute for Creative Arts Practice).

² <http://topographies.khib.no/>

³ Other collaborating institutions included: The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, The Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Kiel Germany, Bucks New University UK, Nottingham Trent UK, Sheffield Hallam UK, ENSA Limoges and Geneva University of Art and Design

⁴ http://topographies.khib.no/media/1936629/vociferous_void.pdf



Figure I.1 Gwen Heeney, *Mythical Beast*, Garden Festival Wales, Ebbw Vale, 1992 carved and extruded brick. Image Gwen Heeney.



Figure I.2 Desolate valley site before the garden festival, Ebbw Vale 1989. Image Gwen Heeney.

In 1999 I had also organized a major conference and symposium, *Creating the Yellow Brick Road*, the core of which took place in the derelict Madeley brick factory in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, UK. Here 12 international artists used brick to create artworks which responded to the interior and exterior spaces within the environs of the disused brick factory site. The Italian artist Alberto Duman created *Voto*, a temporary site-specific installation verging on performance located in what was once one of the oldest brick factories in the country, now a heritage site. “Sited in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, it employs bricks and candles to create a kind of time based ritual both to celebrate and mourn a bygone era.” (Farrell and Heeney 2000, 96)

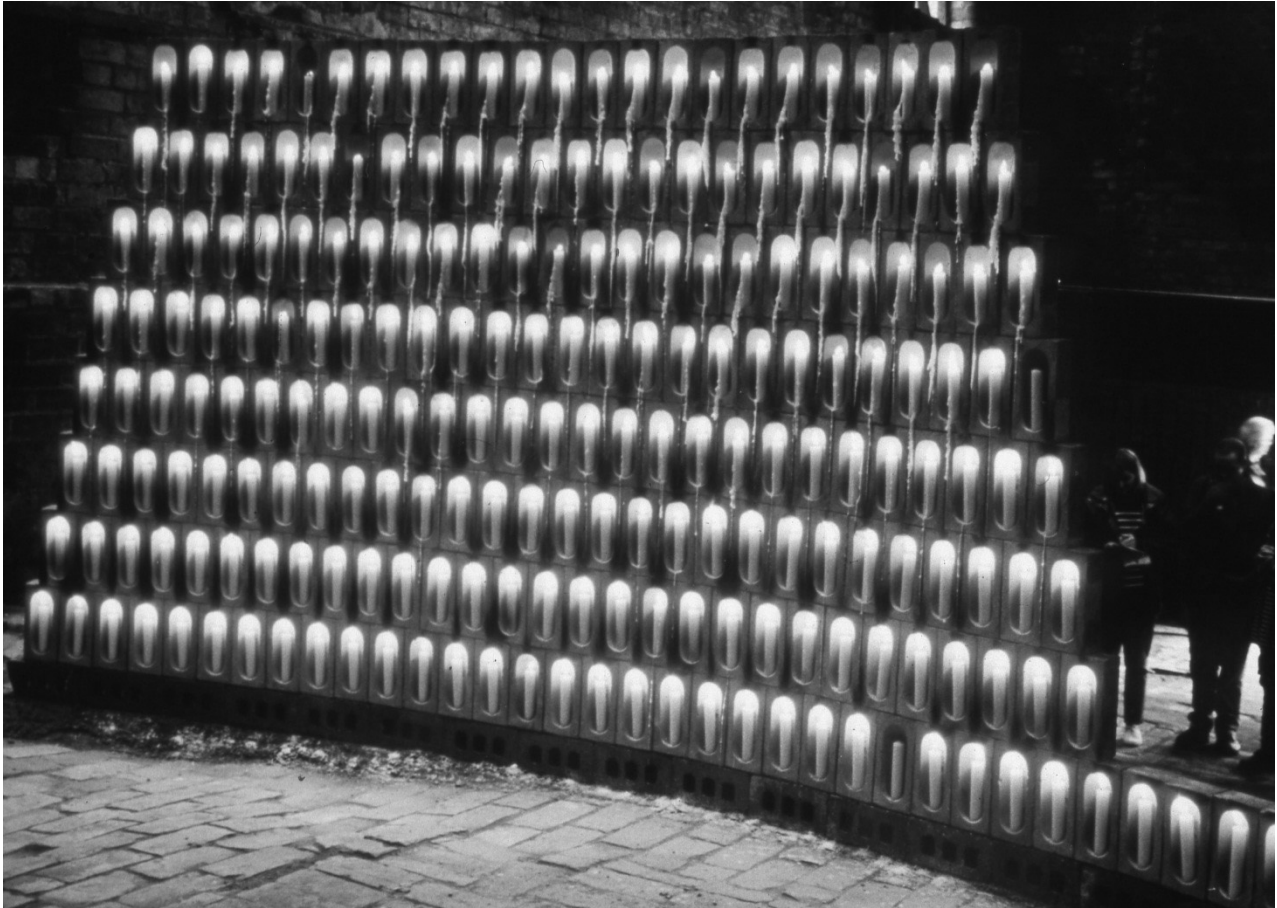


Figure I.3 Alberto Duman, *Voto*, Madeley Brick Factory interior, Ironbridge Gorge Museum, 1999, bricks and candles.

In order to put this publication into a wider context I thought it was valuable to get an archaeologist’s point of view on memory and the post-industrial landscape, as this is very topical within current archaeology research, especially the subject of heritage sites. The archaeologist Hilary Orange states in her book *Reanimating Industrial Spaces, Conducting Memory Work in Post-Industrial Societies*, that “The term memory covers a number of interrelated concepts spanning the individual, the social (or the collective) and the material” and that “the material properties of objects, landscapes, books or indeed monuments or buildings form examples of ‘Material Memory’.” (Orange 2015 16.) She explores cross-disciplinary approaches towards memory work and presents a range of papers from researchers working in archaeology, the arts, anthropology and geography. One of the main themes running through her book is the importance of heritage sites and preserving memory through the regeneration of heritage sites as museums. She talks about the language of memory:

Memory in relation to industrial spaces can be framed as a cognitive process which is informed by interaction with other individuals, authorized and popular forms of social memory, and the thingness of memory: the memory props and materials and environments of industrial spaces can act as change agents within that dynamic process (Orange 2015, 16–17).

Case studies explore community engagement and the connection between archaeology and memory. Paul Belfords discusses heritage sites such as Blists Hill in Shropshire and how repurposing of sites for the public as museums can encourage “a hermetically-sealed view of the world” (Orange 2010, 35) and Peter Oakley “questions the possibility of “contrived dereliction” bestowed upon heritage sites (Orange 2015, 49).

Kerstin Barndt, affiliated faculty member in the museum studies programme at the University of Michigan, states that

As deindustrialization has transformed entire industries and landscapes, the post-war industrial past has become an object of historical contemplation. As such, it has entered museum and exhibition culture, which in turn has begun to powerfully shape our sense of (post) industrial time. (Barndt 2010, 6)

In “Layers of Time: Industrial Ruins and Exhibitionary Temporalities”, Barndt explores post-1989 exhibition culture and states that “an essential part of heritage production is the conversion of industrial land and architecture into museums”, giving, in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s words, “dying economies and dead sites a second life as exhibitions of themselves” (Barndt 2010, 4). One major site of regeneration is the heritage park Landschaftspark Duisburg Nord in the Ruhr District, Germany, created in 1991 by the architect Peter Latz, covering a vast area of post-industrial landscape that once belonged to the German Democratic Republic. The site of the disused ironworks has been aesthetically turned into a site of memory to past industrialization. Here “flowering trees interweave with the bizarre framework of the blast furnaces and the windheaters to a fantastic image. So, by degrees, a fresh history and a fresh understanding of the contaminated site and of the landscape art have been developing”.⁵ One of these artworks on the site of the former blast furnace is the enormous neon light installation by the British light artist Jonathan Park.⁶



Figure 1.4 Jonathan Park, Light Installation, Landschaftspark Duisburg, Germany, 1991, architect Peter Latz. Image Horst and Daniel Zielske.

Historically, the ruin and its association with material memory has always been an important subject for artistic interpretation. In 2014, the writer and critic Brian Dillon curated a major exhibition at Tate Britain, *Ruin Lust*.⁷ Included in the exhibition was the work of Jane and Louise Wilson (keynote speakers at the Material Memory conference) who exhibited their 2006 photographs of the Nazis’ defensive Atlantic Wall. *Ruin Lust* explored historical and contemporary perspectives of the ruin and offered “a guide to the mournful, thrilling, comic and perverse uses of ruins in art from the seventeenth century to the present day”. Other works included in the exhibition were historical works by Turner and Constable, Graham Sutherland’s *Devastation* series 1940–1, which depicts the aftermath of the Blitz and Dean’s nostalgic film installation *Kodak 2006* exploring the ruin of the image, as the technology of 16 mm film becomes obsolescent. The Tate states that this exhibition “explores ruination through both the slow picturesque decay and abrupt apocalypse” and shows the way artists “view ruins as zones of pure potential, where the world must be rebuilt or reimagined”.

The Tate exhibition differed from the approach adopted by the *Topographies of the Obsolete, Vociferous Void* exhibition at the Ceramic Biennial, Spode Factory, Stoke-on-Trent in 2013, curated by Mydland and Brownsword. Here artists worked on various sites around the derelict factory and then exhibited the work on site making the connection to the post-industrial site, memory, and making. This could be seen as having links to Early Detroit Techno music of the 70s and early 80s which was particular to industrial Detroit. Here in a similar way to the *Topographies* project, artists and musicians inhabited the vast derelict factory spaces left by defunct industry. They created music using influence from industrial memories of “the vibrations of the drill, the clashes of steel upon steel, the beat of metal being forged and their reverberations through the cavernous factories and assembly halls” (Hamidi 2014, 7). Emily Eliza Scott in her pre-doctoral thesis at the University of California, Los Angeles, *Wasteland Aesthetics: Art and the Postindustrial Landscape, 1962–72*, argues that the emergence of the post-industrial “was evident in the

⁵ <http://www.landezine.com/index.php/2011/08/post-industrial-landscape-architecture/>

⁶ <http://en.landshaftspark.de/the-park/light-installation/light-design>

⁷ <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/ruin-lust>

production of new landscapes, new conceptions of landscape, and new crises of relation with land, to which artists shared an aesthetic response.” She contextualizes artworks created by these artists⁸ in relation to a precise socio-historical moment, “namely the shift from industrial to post-industrial economies in the West, as well as longstanding landscape aesthetic traditions (e.g. the picturesque, the American technological sublime)”.

Chapters in this publication

This publication consists of 19 chapters which examine diverse attitudes to Material Memory in the post-industrial landscape. I have not attempted to divide the publication into definite sections but chapters are grouped together to give an insight into connecting themes and there is more a sense of interweaving of ideas and debate. In Chapter 1, the art historian Dr Venda Pollock ponders the relationship between memory and the post-industrial landscape in the context of regeneration and reveals the complex dialogues between individual and collective or social memories and site and the contentiousness of inscribing memory into places. She gives some excellent new insights into the role of public art in post-industrial, often diasporic, communities such as the Gorbals in Scotland and discusses how “artists can intervene to permeate the past into narrative identities”. Focusing on some important case studies, notably the artists Heisenberg and Daphne Wright, whose artwork *Home Ornaments* “memorialized, probed and generated community itself”, she highlights the importance of artworks “which accept and reflect the complexity of community within regeneration.”

In Chapter 2 the cultural geographer Dr Tim Edensor, keynote speaker at the conference, discusses the industrial ruin and its role as a sensory realm with its own chaotic aesthetic that contrasts with the deodorized “blandscapes” of the well-ordered city. He explores the sense of absence that pervades the ruin, proposing that bodies are more apparent by their absence and how discarded tools and machinery implicate loss of knowledge and skills.

Photography has an important place in recording memory and this is evident in Chapters 3 and 4 by Ian Thompson and John Kippin. Ian Thompson’s research is unusual in that he comes from the point of view of a landscape architect turned photographer. He explores the erasure of mining heritage from the everyday landscape, and considers the way in which these altered landscapes have been received by local communities. He discusses a section of sites from across the Great Northern Coalfield, and compares a range of outcomes and conditions. He investigates why some sites have been transformed and the past celebrated while others have been abandoned or all traces of industry removed. He questions what information these sites hold about the consequences of an industry coming to an end. What landscape aesthetics have been in play and how did these mesh with the political and economic imperatives driving landscape change? John Kippin discusses his photography in Chapter 4, which pays allegiance to the traditions of pictorial landscape whilst reflecting upon issues within contemporary culture, politics and representation. He believes that art has an important function in engaging the world culturally and politically and his photography, like Thompson’s, is particularly focused on the North East. He looks at the issue of the North being the first to industrialize, and the first to de-industrialize, creating a broken environmental and economic legacy evidenced by deserted shipyards, coal pits and factories. He discusses his exhibition *Futureland Now*, a major touring UK show that did much to establish the currency of the post-industrial landscape as well as foregrounding photographic arts practice in a new light.

In Chapter 5 the musician Danny Bright explores the role of contemporary sound/music composition and performance practice in the creative interrogation of ruined, disused, derelict, and repurposed sites of the post-industrial landscape and its social, cultural and sonic legacies. He discusses the potential of a “sonic ghosting” practice as a means to deliberately conjure apparitions, echoes and secondary sonic “images”, making them foreground and offer a sonic space in between present, past and future. The chapter draws on examples of recent work that engages with sites of the South Yorkshire steel industry and Sussex chalk industry to identify how a “sonic ghosting” practice can manifest itself, and the questions it raises about material memory, sonic legacy and the post-industrial landscape as site/stimulus for creative practice.

Michael Mazière discusses his role as director of Ambika P3, the University of Westminster’s experimental space for international contemporary art and architecture, in Chapter 6. In Ambika P3, which was built in the 1960s as a concrete testing facility and converted in 2007, Mazière examines how large-scale post-industrial spaces can be activated by curatorial practices dealing with moving image practices. Through a number of case studies he explores how curatorial practice for film and video work can deploy the full spatial and architectural scope of post-industrial spaces within its commissioning processes. He looks at the space through a number of contexts: cultural, artistic and curatorial, production and exhibition, design and co-production, interpretation and selection.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 explore the role of ceramic installation as a political tool. Both Andrew Livingstone and Megan Randall discuss their creative practice through projects embedded within the post-industrial landscape. They investigate the value of site (abandoned) as a means for artistic production with reference to “material” and “manufacture” and explore how these create the potential for socially and politically engendered practice. In Chapter 9, David Jones examines the way ceramic installation can work as a collaborative project with the public, in this case

⁸ One such artist was Robert Smithson whose fascination with New Jersey’s urban decay and industrial areas led him to question the dynamic relationship between human beings and the spaces they inhabit. In his art, Smithson took these dilapidated industrial sites and used organic materials to create massive, archetypal sculptures that were infused with historical meaning, such as spirals, mounds, and circles. See: <http://museumnetwork.com/robert-smithson-and-the-1970s-land-art-movement/> (accessed 31 July 2016)

to respond to the destruction of humanity as experienced in the death camps of Buchenwald, Germany. Through his installation *Grenzerfahrung* made at the Römheld International Ceramics Symposium, Germany and exhibited in the unoccupied factory building belonging to the furnace manufacturer ELIOG in Römheld, he addresses the industrialized aspects of the death camps and how this gives a new significance to the post-industrial landscape.

In Chapter 10 the artists Jane and Louise Wilson discuss their photography and film with particular focus on the petrified ruin of Pripyat. They discuss the role of photography in exploring the aftermath of man-made disasters and how the use of Kubrick's yardstick can become a forensic and literal measure for the viewer. They make comparisons with their own photography as a means of recording transformation and that of the Ukrainian film maker, Vladimir Shevchenko, who captured the effect of radiation on film for the first time.



Fig I.5 Jane and Louise Wilson, *The Toxic Camera*, image 2012

A group of artists have used the land itself to explore memory, post-industrial heritage, politics and social and economic issues. In Chapter 11 the landscape architect Rowland Byass discusses the post-industrial urban landscape of Berlin, seeing it as unfinished and open ended, allowing wasteland sites to offer niches for natural and human ecologies and how this landscape has helped to forge contemporary Berlin's distinctive sense of place against its tumultuous twentieth-century history of war, division, destruction and isolation.

The sculptor Andrew Burton looks at two very different landscapes in Chapter 12. He explores his Brownfields residency at the Airspace Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent where natural, industrial and architectural fragments strewn around a typical brownfield site in the middle of the city are reclaimed and reconstructed into sculptures. He asks the question whether the "waste" spaces of towns are really wasted at all and what they can reveal about their previous occupancy – in this case the site of an extinct ceramics industry. He compares this with projects in India, discussing the way objects can embody and reveal their own history and explores the tension in India between pre-industrial and urban environments. In Chapter 13 Neil Brownsword discusses *Marl Hole*, a site-specific residency and film conceived and curated by Brownsword and filmed by Johnny Magee for the 2009 British Ceramic Biennial. He explores concepts of artistic dislocation within the context of North Staffordshire's indigenous clay deposits. By stripping away the familiarity of the artist's studio, tools, materials and working practices, Brownsword together with three international artists interrogates the articulation of clay in its geographic abundance through a range of ephemeral interventions and captures moments of fleeting curiosity, failure and discovery, reiterating a symbiotic relationship between human endeavour and a material which was once the basis of the area's economy for over three centuries. In Chapter 14, Nigel Morgan talks about the land in poetic terms. He proposes that to really interrogate a substance it has to be discussed in terms of essence. He talks about the material of landscape – soil, seed, stone, wood and steel – and how materials reflect the processes of landscape: processes of extraction, manipulation and deposition. In Chapter 15, Michele Allen discusses her use of photography and video to explore the landscape of colliery lagoons, created to manage toxic mine water and spoil heaps in Newstead, Nottinghamshire in a process of regeneration after the coalfields closed. She focuses on the multi-layered quality of place, interviewing former miners about their experiences of work underground.

In Chapter 16 Professor Anne Helen Mydland discusses, through a number of case studies, the research project *Topographies of the Obsolete and the Vociferous Void* exhibition in the Spode factory, Stoke-on-Trent, both initiated by Mydland and Brownsword, Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Norway. Focusing on the landscape of post-industry in Stoke, North Staffordshire, which had a flourishing ceramic industry for hundreds of years she investigates how ceramics and clay may be understood as both material and subject in contemporary art practice and how they may form and construct our understanding of the site. Chloe Brown, one of the artists in the *Topographies of the Obsolete* project discusses her video *Dancing in the Boardroom (Turning my Heartbeat up)* in Chapter 17. This was shown in the Spode factory as part of the *Vociferous Void* exhibition and at the Material Memory conference. She discusses the sanctity of the now abandoned Boardroom at the Spode factory, a place where traditionally the Managing Director and the Board would entertain buyers and guests and its reanimation into a ballroom with Northern Soul dancers. The work articulates with contemporary questions around site, dance and music as a way of addressing emotional responses to particular places and referencing, amongst many, Jacques Derrida's ideas of Hauntology. Also part of the *Topographies of the Obsolete* research project, Jeremy Welsh, in Chapter 18, discusses sites of former productivity and the remains, remnants, debris and traces encountered therein, exploring this through photography, video and sound, often combined within installations. He presents his practice which involves long periods of visual research – collecting imagery and material, exploring spaces, making connections between things encountered by chance, often quite literally “fumbling in the debris”.

In Chapter 19 I explore my own research, which is concerned with shadow, light and reflectivity as material and metaphor within the post-industrial landscape. I discuss artworks created on a number of post-industrial sites in Europe and the USA that reflect past histories and memories of site. I focus on my use of traditional technologies which pay homage to the loss of skills and knowledge on those sites juxtaposed with my use of new technologies, research and experimentation which offers the possibility for renewal of those sites through the placing of the artworks.

So what for the future?

“While the space of experience provides a link to a known but continuously shrinking present past, the horizon of expectation calls on an unknown, ever-expanding future.” (Barndt 2010, 1)

The many artists, geographers, historians, landscape architects, curators and musicians that have contributed to this publication give valuable insights into the complex nature of the post-industrial landscape and its potential “as site for creative practice”. Dr Venda Pollock feels that creating artworks within communities which can be seen as “permeating the past into narrative identities, accepting many of these are yet to be formed” is particularly relevant for the Gorbals and I feel this also has wider implications for many post-industrial sites within Europe. Edensor in contrast sees the subtle nuances of everyday fragments such as abandoned concrete floor layouts and old adverts on the sides of buildings and the way they can contribute to the layering and building of narrative within the city as having equal importance to the commissioning of artists to create site-specific artworks within the post-industrial landscape of the city.

The potential for creative practice within the post-industrial landscape is ever expanding and as with the *Topographies of the Obsolete* project, this research is ongoing and into its second stage. Many of the works created in the *Topographies of the Obsolete* were temporary and responded directly to the post-industrial landscape. This asks the question: is this purely temporary intervention which is inevitably more about developing the artist's practice or does it have wider implications for providing permanent change within the landscape? In the case of *Topographies of the Obsolete* the Spode factory site has now become a centre for artists, housing artist's studios, and a performance hub. This would not have been possible without the artist residencies which highlighted the potential for regenerating the post-industrial buildings as permanent centres for creative practice and giving confidence to funding bodies.

On a monumental scale projects, especially in Germany, have used the post-industrial landscape to provide large-scale theme parks using relics of its past industries to create artworks and spectacular light displays. However, the landscape architect Rowland Byass sees the serendipity of the urban wilderness as equally important and feels this has the ability to provoke the kind of contemplation that awakens our existence. In Chapter 11 he quotes Gray: “Struggling to change things around us, we forget that another kind of change is possible: an inner change, through which we can enter a richer and more spacious world that was there all along” (Gray 2013). This has also been the philosophy of the Garden Festival site at Ebbw Vale, where wild flowers and plants have been allowed to take over the landscape and sculptures over the past 20 years, allowing the site to evolve naturally without much intervention. Edensor would also agree with this sentiment saying that urban regeneration has obliterated historical traces, leaving ruins and derelict spaces to contribute to a “collage of time”. And Danny Bright would give voice to those ruins in the future through his *Sonic Ghosting* stating that it “is a deliberate creative act of conjuring that attempts to give the spirits voice, rupturing the present soundscape where they dwell in silence”.

Siting artworks in the post-industrial landscape also has potential for political commentary by the artist and this has been expressed by both Livingstone and Randall. Randall produces artworks which “question the function of space and the desire to inhabit these spaces” whereas Livingstone comments on the aftermath of the 2007–8 financial crisis in Ireland. Jones's installation *Grenzerfahrung* “brought home the ironic parallel between kiln-firing and the crematoria, (and gas chambers).” Jones makes no attempt to withhold a narrative which embraces the Holocaust within his very personal work in which the death camps are interpreted as industrialization on a grand scale. This is in

stark contrast to what Barndt sees in many German exhibitions and heritage sites “where we can observe strong moves to rescue a past not touched by the catastrophe of the Holocaust and to provide narratives of common heritage that would leapfrog over the traumatic historical periods of recent history” (Barndt 2010, 8). In this way the post-industrial landscape enables freedom to express deep-seated personal emotions and political view points and may have relevance for many future situations which might include war and man-made disasters.

The land itself has also featured strongly in this publication and Professor Andrew Burton sees a future where “Post-industrial sites are a context artists respond to because there is often a strong and immediate political and social narrative. Alongside this is the visual aspect, the romance of architectural decay: pleasure (visual pleasure) in ruins. If this has latterly been reframed as ‘ruin porn’, it’s hard to imagine that artists won’t continue to work in sites of ruination – grey walls and green ruins.”⁹

Photography is also seen as a means of commenting on the past to provide resource for future debate. Both Kippin and Thompson have brought to light the plight of the de-industrialization of the North East. Photographing the Great North coalfields, Thompson comments that the “mines were not so much tidied up as tidied away” and feels that the rapid removal of evidence of mining could be seen as a political act reinstating the fact that mining will never return to the North East. Thompson comments that Kippin’s work “recognises the traditions of pictorial landscape but interrogates the conditions that produce particular sorts of landscape, including ... post industrial sites”. Kippin himself sees his images as “offering space for consideration, contemplation and reflection” and intends that they might generate discussion, especially exploring the landscape’s links to important subjects such as ownership, capitalism, consumption and exploitation. Jane and Louise Wilson with their portrayal of sites of man-made disaster such as Pripyat also see photography and film as important tools for looking at humanity through a focused lens and hopefully pointing to new considered futures through imagining “a future ruin”. Photography of the post-industrial landscape then has an important part to play in reimagining the future and possibly altering our view of its inevitable course.

As I have discussed in Chapter 19, the placing of artworks into the post-industrial landscapes that inspire them, enables reanimation of those sites, and in Edensor’s words, conjures up “the forgotten ghosts of those who were consigned to the past”. Researching within the post-industrial landscape enables objects to be “interrogated through their tangible remains, historical analysis and by means of interviews with former workers” (Orange 2015, 55). Investigating traditional technologies inherent to those sites and reinventing them using new technologies to create artworks has the possibility of invoking within those artworks an examination of “past social relationships and how they were forged, mediated, and made meaningful during the everyday practice of material culture production” (Orange 2015, 160). Contemporary artworks then, can act as powerful signifiers to a forgotten past and important visual symbols of a new future.

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⁹ This was a quote from a phone conversation with Andrew Burton 2016

CHAPTER ONE

REMEMBERING THE GORBALS: PUBLIC ART AND MEMORY IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE

VENDA LOUISE POLLOCK

In June 1999 a series of yellow posts and orange figures appeared on wasteland in the Oatlands area of the Gorbals in Glasgow. Six tenements that once dominated the site had been demolished and these new occupants were part of a temporary art project entitled *Oatlands needs Pakora*, the name taken from graffiti that once adorned the local chip shop (figs 1.1 and 1.2). The artwork sought to explore the meaning of this new “public space” for the remaining community. Residents drew maps of how they remembered the site, and from these memories posts with plaques were erected to mark where significant local places were thought to have been. The accuracy of their locations sparked intense debate and, consequently, new posts were erected. Further controversy ensued upon the installation of washing lines, in the same way as they would once have occupied the backcourts of the tenements. Local residents complained that it made them look like travellers and the installation was removed but, as noted by its creators Heisenberg (sculptor Matt Baker and architect Dan Dubowitz) this marked an important moment as the community took ownership of the site. The project culminated in a street party with the washing lines resurrected but hung with paper bags printed with photographs of old Oatlands borrowed from local people.



Figure 1.1 Heisenberg: Matt Baker and Dan Dubowitz. *Oatlands Needs Pakora*, 1999. Image courtesy of Matt Baker.

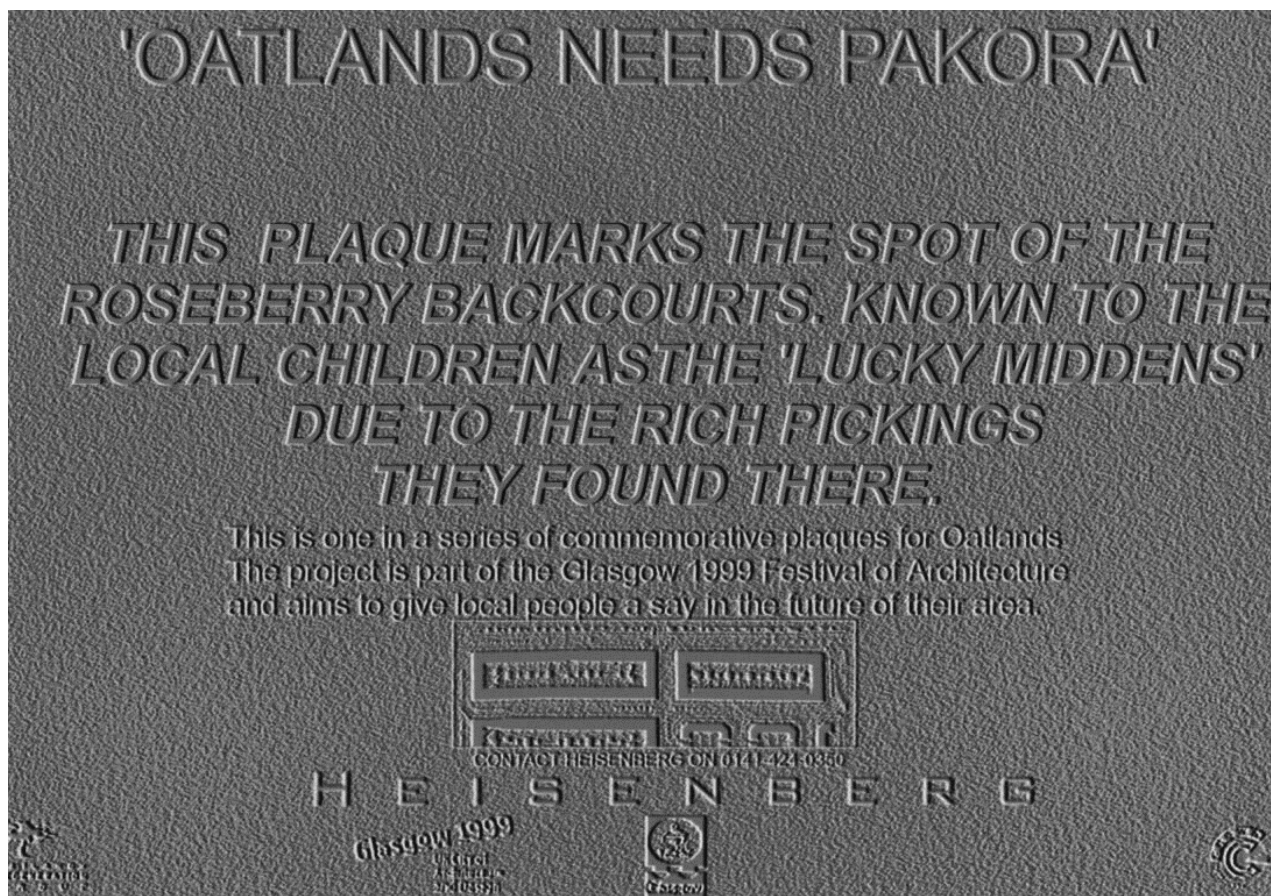


Figure 1.2 Heisenberg: Matt Baker and Dan Dubowitz. *Oatlands Needs Pakora* (plaque), 1999. Image courtesy of Matt Baker.

Oatlands needs Pakora was the precursor to a series of public artworks to be created for the Gorbals area as it underwent virtually wholesale regeneration beginning in the 1990s, the third such redevelopment in just over a century. Having grown from a small village known as “Bridge End” into a community renowned for handloom weaving, by the late nineteenth century the Gorbals succumbed to the overcrowding and social deprivation that industrialization and urban expansion brought in their wake. Famously documented in the photography of Thomas Annan (1829–1887), Glasgow’s City Improvement Trust set out to eradicate slum dwellings in the city and, under the Improvement Act of 1871, the traditional cottage-style dwellings in the Gorbals began to be replaced with tenements. A delegation from the City Council had visited Paris in June 1866, the same month that the original City Improvement Act was passed, to see the effect of the comprehensive programme of redevelopment undertaken by Georges-Eugène Haussmann and returned with similar ambition for the transformation of the worst of Glasgow’s overcrowded slum areas into open streets lined with modern housing and with decent sanitation.¹ Accordingly, the Main Street of the Gorbals, complete by 1879, boasted high quality tenements and elegant façades, including the Royal Princess’s Theatre by James Sellars which was fronted with a portico recycled from David Hamilton’s Union Bank on Ingram Street which had been demolished in 1876. The vista to Gorbals Cross terminated with a clock and fountain, designed by the City Architect John Carrick, master of the redevelopment programme.²

By the 1930s, the area’s diverse 90,000 population included Poles, Lithuanians, Irish and Highlanders, and was served by around 1,000 shops and 130 pubs. The vast influx of workers seeking employment in the nearby factories and shipyards, however, meant that by 1951 the census revealed endemic overcrowding, poor housing and high levels of social deprivation. The Gorbals was also blighted by a not inconsiderable reputation for gang violence, part-fact, propagated by fiction, notably McArthur and Kingsley-Long’s novel *No Mean City* ([1935] 1978) which charted the life of Razor King, Johnnie Stark. Again, councillors looked to France. Bolstered by a visit to Marseilles in 1947 where their eyes were opened to the sleek modernism of Le Corbusier, Glasgow City Council introduced a high-rise policy and used powers from the 1947 Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act to adopt a Comprehensive Development Area approach. The resident population was dispersed to new housing estates on the periphery of the city and in the Gorbals 19 high-rise blocks soon towered where traditional tenements once stood. The area’s saviour was seen as Sir Basil Spence, who was commissioned in 1959 to redevelop the Hutchesontown C area. Spence was a Modernist post-war architect who, reflecting the vogue for Le Corbusier, envisaged the Gorbals as a utopia of

¹ It is fair to assume that, after this visit to Paris, the decision to commission Annan to conduct the survey of the Old Streets and Closes of Glasgow (Annan 1877; 1900) was inspired by Charles Marville’s extensive record of the transformation of Paris.

² The remainder of the Gorbals redevelopment took nearly 20 years to complete, largely due to an economic slump in the late 1870s.

Modernist living. Sadly, the planners failed to account for the Scottish climate, riddled with damp and decay and, with problems of social deprivation persisting, “Hutchie C” was demolished in 1993 as part of the latest revisioning of the Gorbals.

Oatlands needs Pakora and the subsequent public art programme provide an interesting starting point to begin to ponder the peculiar relationship between memory and the post-industrial landscape in the context of regeneration. Through its process, which was the artwork, *Oatlands needs Pakora* made apparent the complexity in the dialogues between individual and collective (or social) memories, between place and site, and the contentiousness of inscribing memory into place. What I want to do here is move from the more familiar story of iconic artworks and cultural regeneration, and from a post-industrial narrative focused on an economic landscape and grounded in the repurposing of industrial buildings and site, to the generally neglected local, neighbourhood scale and to a relationship which sees art practices engaged in a more knotty process of leading and responding to regeneration, its masters and its forces, and to palimpsest-like places and diasporic communities, in order to provide an alternative view on materiality, memory and the post-industrial landscape. In this, attention moves from bounded and memorial sites of memory to everyday spaces, where, it will be argued, memory is in constant renegotiation even where artworks are integral and fixed. Through a case study of the Gorbals, I hope to suggest that considering the significance of art in relation to the issues of memory within the context of regeneration is a valuable means through which change in the city can be read.

Regenerating the post-industrial landscape

*“Let them eat cake” made no bones about it.
But we say let them eat the hope deferred
And that will sicken them. We have preferred
silent slipways to the riveters’ wit.
And don’t deny it - that’s the ugly bit.*

(Edwin Morgan, Extract from “Glasgow Sonnets v”, published in *From Glasgow to Saturn* 1973)

The phased regeneration of the Gorbals took place as the concept of urban cultural regeneration was gaining traction. With the “Barcelona model” of urban renewal widely vaunted as the solution to catalyse the economies of beleaguered post-industrial cities, regeneration became dominated by the concepts of the “creative city” (Landry 2012) and “creative class” (Florida 2003). Cities across the UK fostered the development of cultural quarters (e.g. see Montgomery 2003; McCarthy 2006; Roodhouse 2010) and clusters (e.g. see Chapain et al. 2010; Cooke and Lazzeretti 2008; Evans 2009a, 2009b; Mommaas 2004) as they sought to reorientate their economies and identities. Skylines, riversides and canal paths in cities such as Newcastle and Gateshead, Manchester and Birmingham, were reconfigured by iconic architecture (e.g. see Miles 2005). Despite aspects of this being critiqued (Markusen 2006; Peck 2005), the rhetoric still holds much sway and place-making is now integral to the policy orthodoxy that seeks to enhance the global competitiveness of cities (Harvey 1989; Massey 1991). In Glasgow, a city with a reputation for reinvention, this agenda was proactively pursued through its hosting of the Garden Festival in 1988, attaining the European City of Culture accolade in 1990, and becoming UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999. Alongside the building of the Royal Concert Hall (1988–1990) and redevelopment of the Kelvingrove Museum (2008), its riverside has been transformed through the creation of the Clyde Auditorium (1997, popularly known as the Armadillo) and Zaha Hadid’s Museum of Transport (2011). Within a stone’s throw of the Clyde, and walking distance to the city centre, the redevelopment of the Gorbals shared this citywide vision for a reimagining as well as a reimagining.

During this period, public art and urban regeneration developed an almost symbiotic relationship. On one level this was through the prominence of large-scale iconic artworks, most notably Anthony Gormley’s *Angel of the North* (1998) whose Cor-Ten steel form rising above Gateshead symbolized the resurgence of the region’s fortunes whilst acknowledging its industrial roots (quite literally, as the *Angel* rises from the site of an old mine). While the *Angel* became almost emblematic for the potential of cultural regeneration and remains a potent symbol of transformation, it should be acknowledged that difficulties faced by more recent proposed iconic artworks perhaps signal that momentum for this particular trend has waned. Funding difficulties have stalled Anish Kapoor and Cecil Balmond’s Tees Valley Giants (of which only *Temenos* in Middlesbrough (2010) has yet been realized), Mark Wallinger’s *White Horse* (or *Angel of the South*) intended for Ebbsfleet, and *The Star of Caledonia* at Gretna, a collaboration between Cecil Balmond and Charles Jencks. That the envisaged works by Wallinger and Jencks/Balmond are billed as larger than the *Angel of North* highlights the import afforded to scale in the creative city script, albeit here possibly of ambition rather than realization.

Public art was also deployed at an entirely different scale, however, in neighbourhoods, typically those that were seen as trapped within cycles of decline. In the Gorbals, the desire to revert to pre-Modernist architectural designs to create neighbourhoods with more public spaces, combined with the ambition for a mixed income residential community, reflected the belief that the material environment, and the process through which it was developed, could contribute to cultivating a sense of community. The rhetoric surrounding public art shared much of this new urbanism’s “social doctrine” (Brian 2005; Talen 1999), with local authority policies, not always evenly implemented, reiterating public art’s ability to address social exclusion, cultivate civic identity and pride, create meaningful public places, and develop sense of community and place (Hall and Robertson 2001; Pollock and Paddison 2010). Although

this groundswell of advocacy rested on a poor evidential base (Evans and Shaw 2004; Mirza 2006; Selwood 2006), public art within communities was seen to be beneficial on two counts: it contributed to the re-aestheticization and reimagining of place whilst, through process, it was deemed effective in bridging “old” and “new” places and carrying communities through what could be a challenging transition. As has been discussed elsewhere, New Labour’s overt instigation of its social inclusion agenda paralleled more critical attention being paid to participative or “socially engaged” art practices (e.g. Bishop 2006; Bourriaud 1996; Lacy 1995; Kester 1995, 2004) and public art practices became perceived as a means through which the softer, more intangible aspects of policy could be addressed (Sharp et al. 2005; Belfiore 2006; Belfiore 2012; Pollock and Paddison 2014).

It is too simplistic to dichotomize for degrees of artistic autonomy and community engagement are increasingly blurring what might otherwise be seen as very different practices. Within regeneration, however, it is important to recognize the broader policy context in which practices at all scales are enmeshed. The incorporation of public art, or participation, within regeneration is not a neutral or democratic process, and neither is its use of memory. Forest and Johnson (2001, 48) contend that at points where political legitimacy is sought elites can take “a pastiche of materials at hand to create a coherent narrative of tradition, memory and history” and, although discussing more national monumental landscapes, this has validity at other moments of transition and transformation. In certain contexts, this approach can construct superficial heritage landscapes, which are in danger of cultivating “kitsch geographies” (Atkinson 2007) in pursuit of accessible identities. Writing on heritage, Atkinson notes that memory can be “a pliable resource: often exploited by interest groups offering ideologically laden histories to serve capital, tourism, or the local or national state” (ibid., 522). Similarly, within regeneration, memory is used to serve several masters and its evocation of, and inscription into, place is a deliberate process of remembering, forgetting, and re-presenting.

Remembering in the post-industrial landscape

*Partial transformations endlessly
pull the dream forward into it - into
what can never become memory
even in the distance of its most famous stations.*

(Edwin Morgan, Extract from “The Ages”, published in *The Second Life* 1968)

In an era of post-modern urbanism, or posturbanism, Mark Crinson (2005) has noted that the past is treated as something to be quoted selectively. Memory is a political process where the past is “selected, filtered and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessity of the present” (Jedlowski 2001, 30), and increasingly this is a present inflected with global ambitions and perspectives (Huyssen 2003). The way in which this has been manifest in the post-industrial landscape in the UK has most extensively, and evocatively, been explored by Manchester University’s *Urban Memory in Manchester* project and in selected essays within Crinson’s edited volume *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City* (2005). The project’s aptly titled *Fabrications: New Art and Urban Memory in Manchester* exhibition, which included work by Nathan Coley, Layla Curtis and Sarah Waring amongst others, encapsulated the project’s approach to Manchester as “a rich network of layered memories, concealments and fabrications” (Crinson et al. 2002). Reflecting Boyer’s *City of Collective Memory* (1996), for Crinson: “Urban memory can be an anthropomorphism (the city having a memory) but more commonly it indicates the city as a physical landscape and collection of objects and practices that enable recollections of the past and that embody the past through traces of the city’s sequential building and rebuilding” (Crinson 2005, xii). Uprooting memory from its concentration on bounded sites, Crinson and his contributors move through post-industrial landscapes encountering suburbs, interstitial spaces, symbolic representation in reclaimed and reconfigured industrial haunts, and the city’s very materiality. There is synergy here with Edensor (2005) who pays particular attention to industrial ruins, their disruptive temporality and ability to evoke a sensual and contingent sense of memory. A particular concern for Crinson is modernism, which Boyer said “blew apart the relationship between history and the city” (1996, 4). It is perhaps not surprising then that, for Crinson and his contributors, Walter Benjamin’s view of shock as a central facet of modernity is a recurrent motif alongside that of the fragment, which “was understood as having a dynamic role as a random element to do with moments and discontinuities” (Crinson 2005, xviii).

This idea of discontinuity pervades contemporary consideration of memory and place. In *Lieux de Mémoire* (1984–1992), a seven-volume meditation on French memories of the Republic and nation, Pierre Nora detects a rupture between the agrarian, peasant cultures, which for Nora epitomized a “repository of collective memory”, and modern French culture (Nora 1989, 7); this, in turn, provokes the need to consciously archive and remember. Through his volumes, now a keystone for consideration of memory in the modern era, Nora argues that we have *lieux*, sites, of memory because we no longer have *milieux*, environments of memory. He traces the shift from the construction of a canonical national identity to a more diffuse, eclectic and disparate exploration of identity (Nora 1996). In the traditional city, for example, monuments functioned as “rhetorical topoi” (Boyer 1996) that aimed to instil civic virtue and stir national pride. In these monumental landscapes often adorned with allegorical architectural forms, memory operated across and between spaces. The modern city has changed to the extent that there are no longer environments of memory but these statues could operate as “sites” of memory, which, by Nora’s definition, could be physical, or symbolic (including ceremonies or rituals), or functional (for example, dictionaries) (Nora 1989, 19). For Nora, these

sites, which could be used to rouse emotion and claim to represent – and thereby construct – certain memories or views of the nation, had assumed increased importance because the contemporary condition meant that “real” memory had waned.

We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left. Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory (Nora 1989, 7)

It is not surprising that such demarcated ‘sites’ have become the focus of much writing on memory, where attention has been paid to, for example, the complex ways in which monuments or architecture are constructed, understood, and responded to (e.g. Johnson 1995; Forest and Johnson 2001; 2002; Wheelan 2002; 2003), the differing perspectives that emerge in the reconstitution of collective memories (Graham et al. 2000; Johnson 1999) or memorial landscapes (Hayden 1995), and the difficulties of remembrance and contesting narratives (e.g. Withers 1996; Young 1993). For many writers this is entwined with analysis of the commemoration of major traumatic events and urban landscapes subject to the ravages of war, with trauma, difficult histories, and counter-narratives forming constant threads alongside the dialectics between memory and forgetting, and the individual and the collective.

Atkinson (2007) has suggested that this tendency to focus on particular places and sites of memory, partly due to the influence of writers such as Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwachs, poses a danger of “fetishizing” sites while neglecting the wider production of social memory throughout society and proposes: “One way forward may be to loosen the more strident aspects of this spatial fetishism in order to recognize the constant reconstitution of social memory in all kinds of spaces - discontinuous in some, overlapping in others, but never bounded exclusively within particular sites” (Atkinson 2007, 523). Interestingly, Halbwachs’ work is looser in its spatialization of collective memory, with a focus on the more everyday, shared spaces of the city; History is not interested “when nothing apparently happens, when life is content with repetition in a somewhat different, but essentially unaltered, form without rupture or upheaval” (Halbwachs 1980, 85). For Halbwachs memory was socially constructed and spatial: “The individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory” (Halbwachs 1992, 182; see also Eyerman 2004).

Halbwachs elucidated:

... place and groups have each received the imprint of the other. Therefore every phase of the group can be translated into spatial terms, and its residence is but the juncture of all these terms. Each aspect, each detail, of this place has a meaning intelligible only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it (1980, 130–31).

The sustainability of memories for individuals, however, was dependent on the persistence of the group; for example, a change in location would mean that “neither the group nor the collective memory remains the same” (ibid., 131). When the local environment is threatened, the effect can be profound:

Were the relationships between streets, homes, and groups inhabiting them wholly accidental and short of duration, then men might tear down their homes, district, and city, only to rebuild another ... But even if stones are movable, relationships established between stones and men are not so easily altered. When a group has lived a long time in a place adapted to its habits, its thoughts as well as its movements are in turn ordered by the succession of images from these external objects. Now suppose these houses and streets are demolished or their appearance and layout are altered. The stones and other materials will not object, but the groups will ... The force of local tradition comes forth from this physical object, which serves as its image (ibid., 133–4).

Halbwachs was not alone, with Kracauer writing about Berlin in the 1930s similarly arguing that, amidst the pace of modern urban life, “perpetual change erases memory” ([1932] 1987, 17). These theories have obvious repercussions for memory in regeneration contexts where both the physical form and demographics of place are radically altered.

In contending with this difficult landscape, it is useful to consider recent challenges that have been made to the place-bound nature of memory. For example, Misztal (2004) has argued that as place-bound memories fade, memory is typically articulated through disparate and fragmented “memory groups” stretched across space. Memories may be conveyed through objects and narrative in a diasporic process more apt to reflecting stories of migration, displacement and resettlement (Tolia-Kelly 2004). Memory is increasingly being seen as productive, something that moves beyond specific sites, and that is at times unsettled and displaced (Terdiman 2003; Crang and Travlou 2001; Moran 2004; Crinson 2005). This thinking is feeding into reconceptualizations of heritage sites where Landzelius (2003) has called for a “rhizome heritage” that accommodates multiple pasts and forestalls closure. Similarly, Boym (2001) advocates a “restorative nostalgia” which engages the past, and pasts, more productively in the present.

This more diffuse, unbounded and productive sense of memory is useful when considering public art and its processes within the context of regeneration and how artists respond to a shifting, lived landscape. While it is tempting to see public art as “mediating elements in the recreation of [...] place” in acting as “surrogates for a memory-time-space which can never be fully recovered” (Lovell 1998, 16), the situation is more complex. In the motives underlying its commissioning, public art is often “strategically mobilized by professionals” (Crinson 2005, xii), the communities to which it responds are often dispersed or not yet formed, the palimpsest landscape in which it is sited has a complex

history and temporality, and in its realization what is remembered and what is forgotten can prove extremely contentious. The Gorbals provides a unique example through which these issues can be explored.

Dismembering and remembering the Gorbals

*A multi is a sonnet stretched to ode
and some say that's no joke. The gentle load
of souls in clouds, vertiginously stayed
above the windy courts, is probed and weighed.
Each monolith stands patient, ah'd and oh'd.
And stalled lifts generating high-rise blues
can be set loose. But stalled lives never budge.*

(Edwin Morgan, Extract from "Glasgow Sonnets x", published in *From Glasgow to Saturn* 1973)

The Crown Street Regeneration Project (a consortium of Scottish Enterprise, Glasgow City Council, Communities Scotland, the private sector and the local community) was established in 1989 to oversee the development of a master plan for what, significantly, became rebranded as the New Gorbals. Devised by Piers Gough of CZWG Architects, the plan purposefully reverted to tenement-style living with combinations of flats and townhouses, and a range of local amenities including a supermarket, library, offices, local shops and a public park. This was followed in 1998 by the Queen Elizabeth Square (QES) master plan developed by Gerry Henaughen (Hypostyle Architects) which similarly sought to create a socially inclusive mixed neighbourhood, albeit within a broader programme of gentrification. There was a resolute move from monotonous streetscapes toward idiosyncratic developments by different architects, particularly in the QES phase. Enhancing this, percent for art was written into both masterplans but applied differently. In Crown Street the developers retained control and, lacking an overall vision, the public art commissioned usually took the form of sculptural relief panels which made loose reference to the area's history. Tom McCartney, who became Director of the Crown Street Regeneration Project (CSR) was instrumental in initiating the ambitious public art programme for QES. He felt that the first phase was piecemeal and resulted in "normal" public art, and so wanted a stronger process for the second stage (interview with McCartney, 2006).

Oatlands needs Pakora was one in a series of temporary artworks responding to wasteland areas of the Gorbals realized as part of Glasgow's year as UK City of Architecture and Design. Heisenberg's process-led approach appealed to McCartney and they were asked to devise an artworks strategy for QES. At this time, Heisenberg were also creating the most distinctive artwork of the Crown Street phase, *Gatekeeper* (fig. 1.3), which, looking toward the QES phase, was a "statement of intent" (Heisenberg 2000a). As practitioners, Heisenberg had reservations about the grand rhetoric of masterplanning, particularly given the area's past experience, and also the instrumentalization of artistic practice within regeneration (its "strategic mobilization"). In their *Manual*, Heisenberg referenced the "Divining Liver of Babylon," which was an ancient method of divination called hepatoscopy where the liver was used to determine the will of higher powers in various facets of life, particularly wellbeing. This was a means to question the tradition of town planning and highlight the incongruity of asking artists to produce a rigid rather than responsive strategy. The visual masterplan (fig. 1.4) took the form of a series of CD-sized cards with quotes, images and historical facts from the area, in order to emphasize their contextual practice. They advocated a process-led approach, "following a dynamic and organic route that will change and adapt as it progresses" (Heisenberg 2000b). The percent-for-art monies from developers were directed into an independent trust fund, which was managed by the Artworks Programme, as it was named after the dissolution of Heisenberg in 2002, under the supervision of Turner Townsend Project Management. The reconstituted group, with Baker as lead artist, sought to create works realized through collaboration between artists, architect and the local community.

The programme comprised three strands: integral, public realm and itinerant. Integral artworks were allied to one of seven housing developments and delivered through a collaborative design process with artists commissioned at the earliest opportunity and selected through an international design competition. Those in the public realm were geared to improve the quality of the environment and tended to be permanent works. Conversely, itinerant works were "experimental artworks which arrive unannounced and then move on - poetic terrorism" (Heisenberg 2000b). The reactive nature of the latter meant that they were commissioned directly by the lead artist, often at short notice. As well as artists engaging with various stakeholders, including the public, as part of their practices, Heisenberg initiated "the forum" to elicit broader community participation and provide a vehicle through which artists could engage with residents. The forum, designed to mimic the uniquely Glaswegian model of community-managed housing associations, was managed by a local artists' group, the Gorbals Arts Project (GAP). Although the artists' brief did not place a requirement on working with the community (artists were asked to respond to the social and physical context), this was a crucial factor in the selection of artists. As Baker (interview, 2006) explained:

... we've taken on a range of artists, all of them see the context that they're working in as very important and that doesn't just mean where the sun comes from ... It's a whole emotional landscape of place and some people respond historically and some more contemporary or even in a future sense because a lot of the time they're dealing with imagined, projected futures. ... So the idea of context is absolutely essential.



Figure 1.3 Heisenberg: Matt Baker and Dan Dubowitz, *Gatekeeper*, 2002. Image: Les Hill.

Underpinning the Artworks Programme was a belief that the artists should be chosen on the basis of their practice rather than in response to a specific proposal and that, once chosen, the artist should have time to develop a work “whose outcome and final form is shaped by the process of producing it” without having ideas “compromised by a committee process.” (Heisenberg 2000a; Baker, interview 2006). As a programme with considerable budget, this process-led approach stood in stark contrast to trends for bringing in blue-chip artists to create specific works.

As the “notorious” Gorbals made its transition to the revisioned New Gorbals, the social and physical landscape to which the artists had to respond was complex. Fragments of older developments persisted against an incrementally changing environment where areas of building site, wasteland and new build coexisted. Moreover, community involvement, particularly in the early stages, was problematic due to the area being a cleared site, except for some high-rise blocks, and there being no representative community body for the area (McArthur 2000, 58; Tiesdell and MacFarlane 2007, 429–30). This is where the itinerant, responsive strand of the Artworks Programme became particularly useful, but it did raise issues for the permanent works being derived for an as yet largely non-existent or not yet formed community. This was not the post-industrial landscape of repurposed factories and warehouses, revisioned riverbanks and cultural landmarks, but a neighbourhood whose fortunes and futures had been profoundly shaped by the processes of industrialization and deindustrialization and the ambitions of its City Fathers.

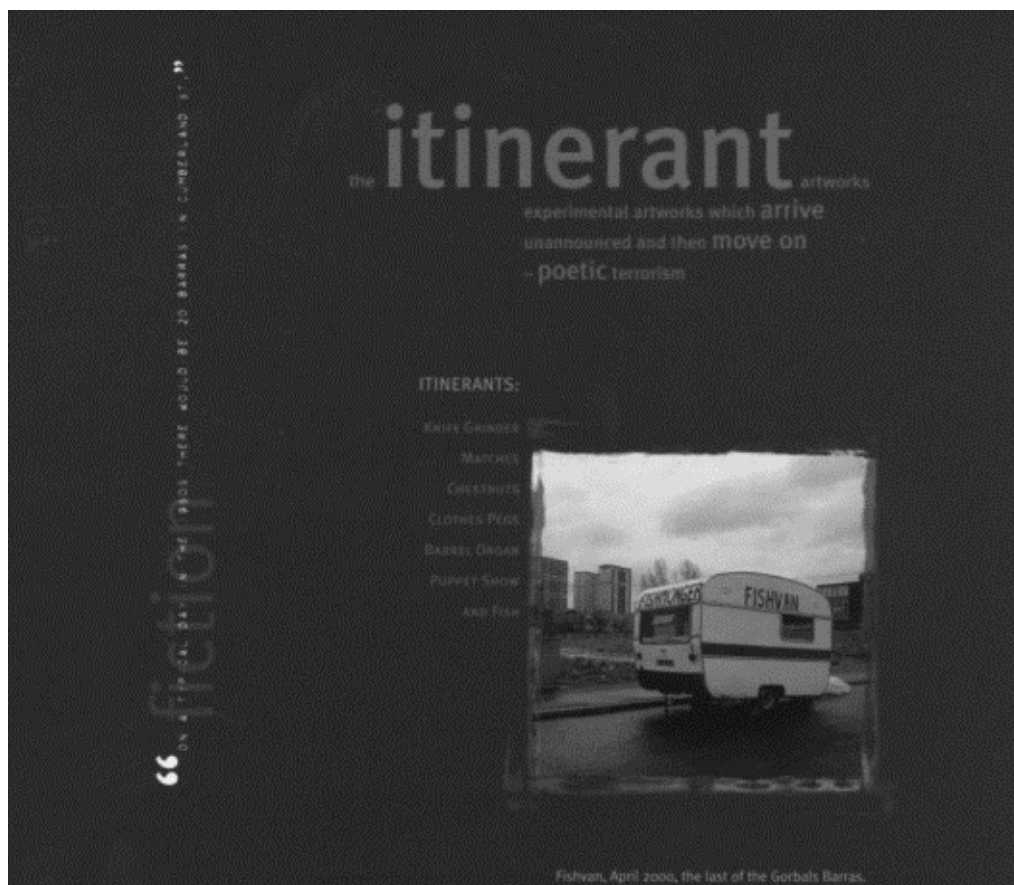


Figure 1.4 Heisenberg: Matt Baker and Dan Dubwitz. *The Artworks Masterplan*, 2000. Image courtesy of Matt Baker.

Reimagining the Gorbals

*Old Gorbals flicked dust from his sleeve,
sighed a bit and swore a bit,
made for the stairs, out, looked back
at the grand tower, gave a growl,
and in a spirit of something or other
sprayed a wall with DONT FORGET.*

(Edwin Morgan (2004), Extract from “Old Gorbals”, commissioned as part of Peter Smith’s *Highlights* art project, Artworks Programme, Gorbals)

Absence and displacement

In consideration of the artworks,³ it seems appropriate to start with modernism, given its thorny relationship with both memory and the Gorbals. As part of the integral scheme of artworks the Polish artist Monika Sosnowska was commissioned to create a work for the final phase of the QES. Her previous work had interrogated issues of planning and power through architectural form. *M10*, which was part of Glasgow International in 2005, referred to the Polish system of housing being allocated according to predetermined spatial requirements. As space became a premium, however, living spaces were subdivided. *M10* was a series of repetitious rooms, identically carpeted and wallpapered, which got incrementally smaller so that the viewer comes to a space too small to enter. It is a telling, somewhat absurd, comment on the failure of utopian planning. This sentiment was carried forward to her *Gorbals* project which, at first sight, appeared to be a series of abstract sculptural metal relief forms recalling perhaps Soviet avant-garde graphics or minimalist geometric forms. It is only on closer examination that, recalling Rubin’s vase, the word “Gorbals” can be seen spelt out in the spaces between the sculptural forms. Notably this is not the “New Gorbals” vaunted by the developers and planners, but simply “Gorbals,” therein emphasizing the power of association in the name. This is not, however, a nostalgic proposition, as Moira Jeffrey (2006) has noted; it is disruptive. Due to be sited on the periphery between the redeveloped area and existing housing, it was literally pivoting between old and new. As well as bringing

³ Select artworks have been chosen for discussion here. For further information on realized, and unrealized, artworks see Warwick (2006) and the archived website of the Artworks Programme. <http://www.theartworksprogramme.org> (accessed March 2016).

the layered and difficult history associated with the name to bear, it also raised uncertainties about its future reputation. With each new rebuilding of the Gorbals proclaimed as an exemplar but failing drastically, Sosnowska queried whether the same fate awaited the current redevelopment. It also reflected the paradoxical nature of the Gorbals where conformity was never wholly reconciled with a community renowned for being non-conformist, and where a largely working class, socialist ethos met the aspirations of gentrifiers. Sosnowska presents “the Gorbals” as an absent presence. If modernism itself was eradicated from the Gorbals, and modernism had destroyed bonds with history, it is fitting for its testimony to be spectral. In this story of failed dreams, it is a strange irony that Sosnowska’s proposed work was not realized and as such remains a critical proposition, somewhat utopian in itself.



Figure 1.5 Calum Stirling, *The Wanderer*, 2003. Image courtesy of Matt Baker.

The evocation of modernism through failed utopianism is a disruptive motif in which an aesthetic of absence recurs. Calum Stirling’s *The Wanderer* (fig. 1.5) appeared in the Gorbals in December of 2003. Coinciding with Earth’s nearest approach to Mars in 60,000 years, an image of a Martian landscape from the NASA Pathfinder mission of 1996 was printed on a huge banner stretched across scaffolding on a partially constructed building. The proximity of Mars instigated a series of exploratory missions, including the ill-fated Beagle 2 expedition, and, just as the building of the Modernist high-rises of the Gorbals coincided with an era of space exploration, Stirling sought to create a critical space through which the emotions of hope, fear and trepidation could be considered. In echoing the contemporary language of urban advertising, the work was suggestive of the selling of (perhaps unattainable) dreams and, in light of this, tellingly, created a visual dialogue with the equally unpopulated rubble-strewn landscape of the building site. Edwin Morgan’s poetry from the 1970s likened the Modernist landscape of the Gorbals to Mars in its alien otherness and here Stirling, in this nuanced punctuation mark in the regeneration process, sought to evoke an unsettling sense of the uncanny. Till characterizes Berlin as “a place haunted with landscapes that simultaneously embody presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering” (Till 2005, 8). The haunting for the Gorbals is less temporally marked with ruins due to its serial demolition but rather than literally reinscribe history into the landscape, artists use absence metonymically for the Modernist legacy. In recognizing modernism’s role in the history of place they provide a critical space for reassessment of modernism which acknowledges its importance in lived life.⁴

⁴ The affection for modernism amongst the local population was the subject of a series of works by Dan Dubowitz for an exhibition called *Stirring the City* which was held in the Lighthouse in 2001. The works *Last order at Queens* and *Testimonies* focused on the Queen Elizabeth Arcade, the last part of Spence’s development to be demolished. As part of the work, residents sat on an uprooted park bench and spoke of their memories of the site. On seeing the film, Tom McCartney commented: “I had no idea people cared

Remembering inevitably involves a pervasive sense of loss. Bhabha, recalling Till's intentionality, has referred to it as never "a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha 1993, 63). The physical and social landscape of the Gorbals, characterized as it is by demolition and displacement, has an enduring but particular sense of trauma that stretches beyond its geographic boundaries. Layered within this its history is the ebb and flow of communities, home as it was to immigrant Catholic, Jewish and Asian communities before, now, being a refuge for asylum seekers. They joined a (geographically determined) community that was close-knit and, somewhat paradoxically, suspicious of outsiders. Many of the native residents themselves and, historically, their families had been dislodged from their homes and the area during successive periods of rebuilding. As with most places, therefore, the "community" was complicated, and that complexity clashed somewhat with the simplistic way in which the word was used within the rhetoric of planners and developers. Daphne Wright, whose practice typically involves sculptural installations accompanied by audio through which she seeks to interrogate narrative or use narrative as an interrogative technique, was commissioned to create an integral artwork but rather than situate a permanent piece she chose to create works which memorialized, probed, and generated community itself. Drawing on conversations with residents and tales told, Wright created a series of five *Home Ornaments*: an architect's plan, a polyurethane cast of a 1960s building at the point of demolition; a porcelain guinea-pig complete with drinking bowl; a set of three small knitted cacti; a hand-embroidered silk parrot; and a gesso-framed intaglio print of an orangutan (fig. 1.6). Each has layered meanings – Guinea-Pig, for example, directly refers to the popular family pet for apartment dwellers, but more obliquely to the Wemyss Pig ornaments once commonly found in working-class homes but that have since become prized collectables, and also to the history of migration, as guinea-pigs hail from South America (Léith 2006, 121). Similarly, "Fidelma," the title of the parrot "ornament", is a Gaelic name with Irish roots, reflecting one of the main immigrant groups that was fundamental in shaping the area's identity. The knitted cacti allude to the textile industry, a mainstay of employment for generations of people in the Gorbals, particularly women, but, notably, Wright's ornaments were made in China. *Home Ornaments* gestured "both backwards and forwards in time, acknowledging a complex set of relations between loss and progress, impoverishment and regeneration" (Léith 2006, 124)



Figure 1.6 Daphne Wright, *Home Ornaments*, 2002–2005. Image courtesy of Matt Baker.

about it. I saw it, thought it looked like s**t, was trying to clean up the area, so I wiped it out." ("Testimonies," *Scotland on Sunday*, 19 Aug 2001).