

Overview of Mapping Practice

(extract from PhD research)

The map work developed out of a desire to explore personal history during the second year of my masters study. I began writing early life experiences in order to create text based work but had difficulty using this material because the personal storylines connected to the material changed according to when it was written. The solution was to deal with a specific site i.e. my childhood home rather than with the experience itself. I sketched a plan of the site including the physical furniture and objects and the changes to these over time then added associated experience in the form of text to the diagram. Using this method I was able to put down the material without the storylines, and let the viewer to construct their view of the experience and the site whilst connecting with the material. The method enabled me to work with thoughts, feelings and experience in a changing field of perception, and encouraged the viewer to connect with their own memories and perception and relate to the common experience presented. Maps commonly deal with the authorised typography and experience of a place. To present personal experience as maps is to present a personalised history of place that challenges official histories.

At this stage I made a connection with the work of alternative psychologist John Rowan¹ and his idea of the 'Ordinary Divine', which I interpreted as the connection between people through their common experience of life and living. As such the map work was a response to ideas of transcendence in art being dead, using personal material and experience as a vehicle for shared perception and a common humanity. The first maps were about locating oneself and ones experience and finding a way home. The initial sketch was redrawn and photocopied on A2 paper. A map cover with photograph, an explanatory text, and the title 'Mapping Life' completed the work.

This was the process of making the 'Map of my Childhood Home' and the maps of places I had lived in or significantly visited including Bradford, Sussex, Cornwall and India, this work being done in 1999 and 2000 during my MA study. Using this method I made maps of York City Art Gallery and Parliament Street in York in 2003. Both used the same approach to narrative but added to the method by incorporating interview and research material to the personal text of the sites.

Since then I have returned to map making developing the work in two distinct stages. The 2005 – 2007 maps include: Map of Van Gogh, Map of Bradford (reworked), Map of York Art Gallery, Lakeland Walk, and Map of Florence. The making of the above maps was the result of Arts Council grant in 2005 to develop and explore the map work in terms of their intention and quality. The maps of 2005 – 2007 use the same approach to narrative as the original maps but differ in two respects.

i) Hand drawn maps were scanned using *Photoshop* then placed into and cleaned in *Indesign* then printed on high quality Bockingford paper. ii) The sites explored expanded to include Rowntree's chocolate factory in York, the Van Gogh Museum, a Lakeland walk and a map of Florence. These map works while based on my experience and perception of places were not directly concerned with my life experience, rather they dealt with and included research on the sites alongside anecdotal and personal text. An example of this is the Lakeland map, which draws on notions of the View.

The map work has also expanded to other media eg. 'Teatro D'Istruzione' is a version of a toy cut out theatre presented in six A4 packs. The statues of Rome became 2D photographic puppet characters to cut out and play with whilst the theatre front is formed from a city building and a map of Rome.

The map work has also been taken into 3D with small white boards incised with imagined contour lines then text and line drawing added to create a landscape or an imagined site. In the same style I made 'The Passion of Jade Goody', translating tabloid text into religious narrative.

The 2008 – 2009 maps include: Maps of practice 2002 – 2007, Map of making Map of showing, Map of Florence, Two Grahams on a walk on art in Newcastle, Amsterdam diary map, Berlin art map, Reflective stories. The first of these maps were hand drawn then scanned, this then was graphically traced and printed on inkjet coated tracing paper. Later maps were such as Berlin art map were designed directly on the computer.