



# SWIMMING MACHINES

**PROFESSOR  
LISA STANSBIE**

**LEEDS  
ARTS RESEARCH  
CENTRE**

# OUTPUT INFORMATION

Title:  
Swimming Machines

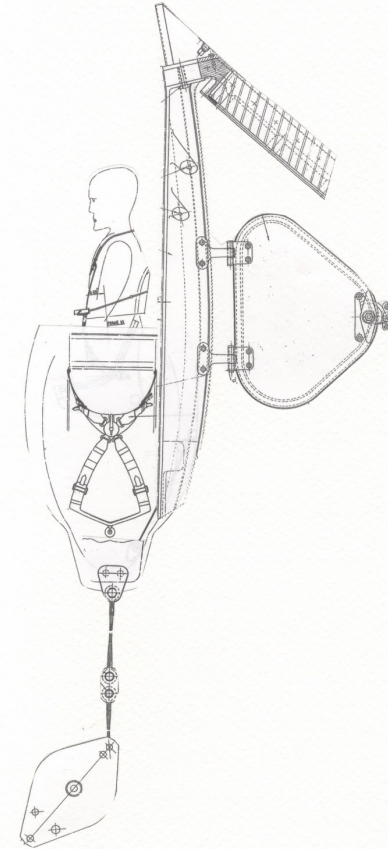
Output Type:  
M – Exhibition

Venue(s):  
Huddersfield Art Gallery; Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE

Year of first exhibition:  
2014

Date of Publication:  
2017

Research Groups:  
Curating Research



## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT**

Artist, triathlete and open water swimmer Lisa Stansbie's project Swimming Machines began as a series of collages which mine Google Patent's archive of fantastical swimming devices. Stansbie's research project stimulates interplay between art and endurance sport whilst exploring the history, apparatus and rituals of endurance swimming.

Stansbie created a new archive, in the context of sculpture and performance, in conversation with the past, through which, endurance swimming and identity might be understood as contemporary and historical contexts; offering a new research insight.

Her methodology is to revive digitised archives of unrealised patents designed to assist with swimming to provide the visual and conceptual basis for the project which evolved to span performance, sculptures, and written web-content. Stansbie builds on methodologies established by artists such as Guido van der Werde, exploring synergies between art and endurance sport. The project uses an ethnographic framework to demarcate a history and identity of endurance swimmers as a community, creating new multidisciplinary junctures between art practice, endurance swimming and the digital archive.

Contexts include 'Thought Positions in Sculpture' - an exhibition (5902 visitors), live performance at Huddersfield Art Gallery – which was the subject of a public lecture as well as contributions to: an exhibition and booklet at the Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE; UK touring exhibition 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind'; and a paper at a public symposium, Huddersfield University.

Impact includes an essay by Dr Rowan Bailey contextualising Stansbie's work, and a forthcoming chapter in the book, 'Physicality and Endurance' by C. McCallasa well as a Stansbie's own chapter in the Journal of Writing and Creative Practice, 2014, vol.7 issue 3. Stansbie's work features in a Huddersfield University film as well as in the national press including The Huddersfield Examiner and international online platforms such as the Heritage organisation 'Heart of Sharjah' website.









Images: Courtesy of the artist

Photos: Alina Pankova





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Photos: Alina Pankova



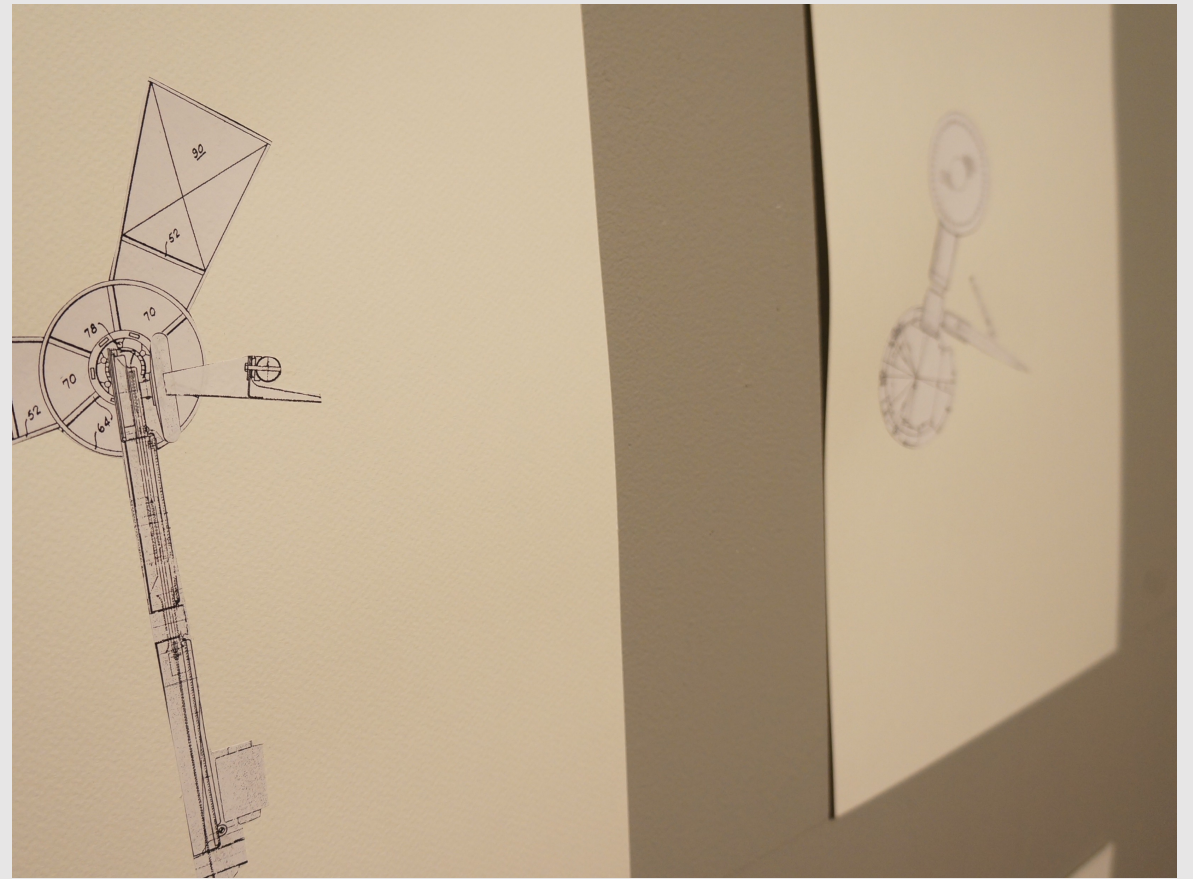




Images: Courtesy of the artist

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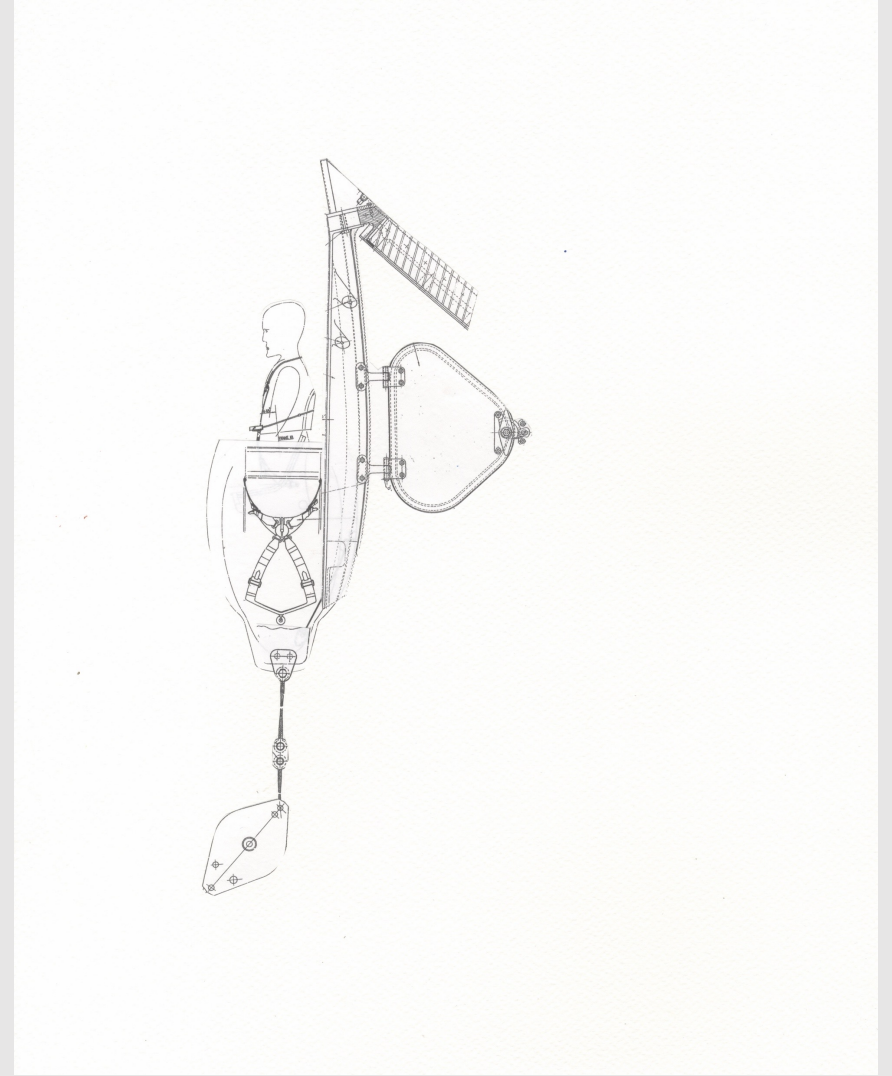
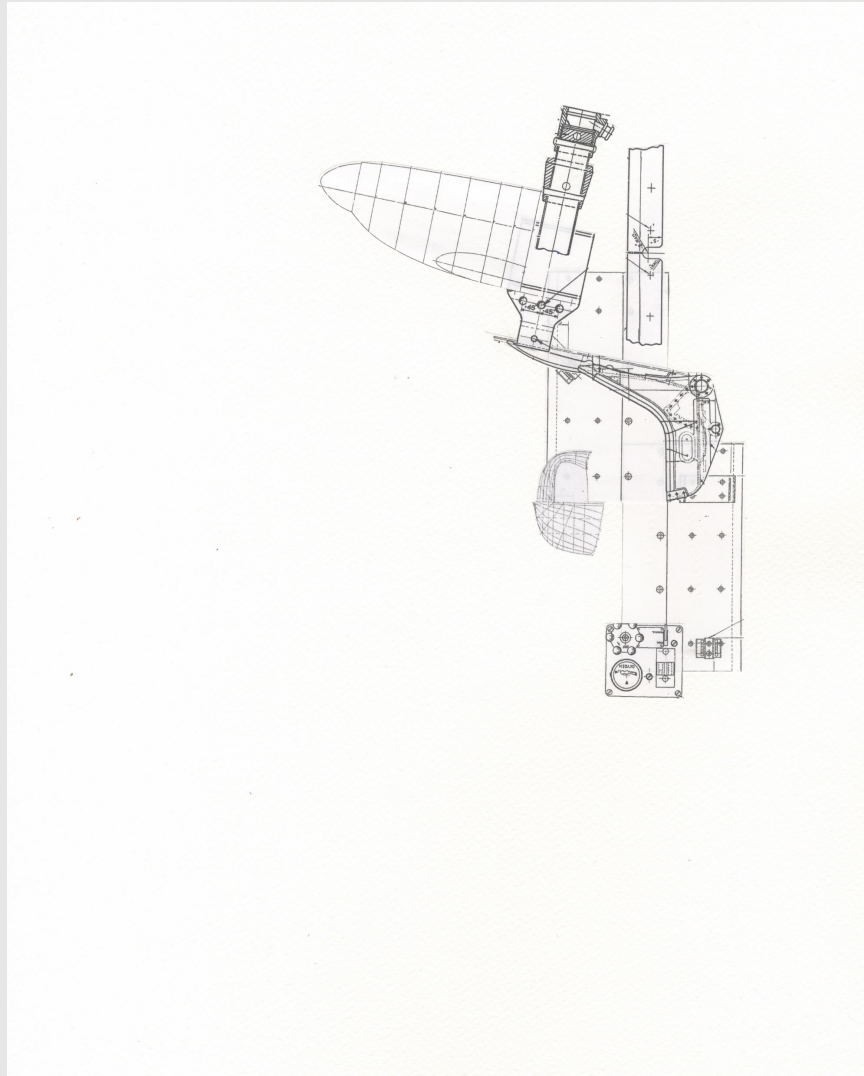


Images: Courtesy of the artist

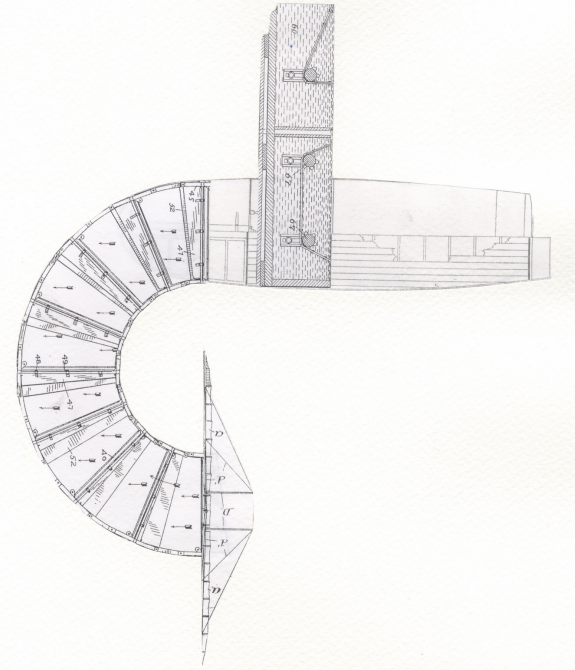
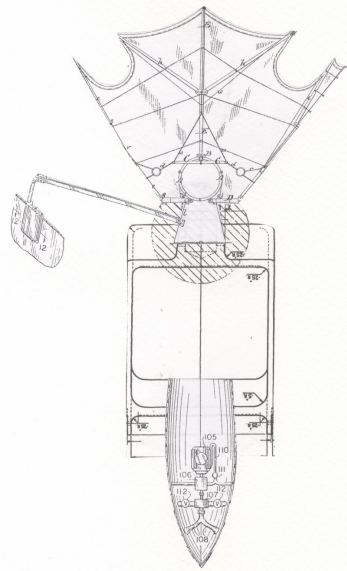
Photos: Alina Pankova







Images: Courtesy of the artist



# APPENDIX





'Thought Positions in Sculpture' by Curlew Films [Film]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3qB-SDxDgg>



Thought Positions in Sculpture: Between Sculpture and the Archive (2015) (Public Symposium at Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, 12 November)

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/publicsymposium/>



Teesside University (2016) 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind – Constantine Exhibition' (20 October 2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6w6-5lt-Mqk>



University of Huddersfield, 'Artist Lisa Stansbie – how she combines her art and swimming'. (Interview, 19 September 2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4KG3DEDg-8>

# AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

**9 September 2014**

The composite drawings – symbols of swimming and invention of machines for waterborne propulsion. Superb set which also appear on the stairs and in the escape route stairs of the gallery so the artist is frothing with ideas!

**4 October 2014**

Lisa Stansbie is a cerebral artist – playing with collage and nonsense – like Humpty Dumpty wrestling the meaning from meaningless fragments of elegant drawings.

**5 December 2015**

Fantastic performance and exhibition tour today – thanks to Curator Rowan Bailey and Artist Lisa Stansbie.

**July 2016**

Gorgeous and inventive exhibition. Love it.

[Paint Her to Your Own Mind – Visitor Book]

**29 July 2016**

Wonderful exhibition – thoroughly recommend visiting Coxwold's Shandy Hall @LaurenceSterne #PaintHertoYourOwnMind

**17 August 2016**

My eyes are opened here such an eloquent display.

[Paint Her to Your Own Mind – Visitor Book]



## PRESS RELEASES

October 19, 2014, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE. 'October Exhibitions' (Press Release).

[http://sharjahart.org/images/uploads/downloads/Press\\_2014\\_Exhibition\\_October\\_exhibitions.pdf](http://sharjahart.org/images/uploads/downloads/Press_2014_Exhibition_October_exhibitions.pdf)

Thought Positions in Sculpture, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Huddersfield, UK. 16 October 2015 – 09 January 2016 (Press Release)

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/>

The Laurence Sterne Trust (2016) 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind' (Press Release).

<https://www.laurencesternetrust.org.uk/exhibition.php?id=202>

McCall, C. (forthcoming) 'Physicality and Endurance' [Working title for Book Chapter]

Stansbie, L. (2014) 'The archive of unrealised devices' (Journal of Writing in Creative Practice. Sep 2014, Vol. 7 Issue 3, p447-457)

Stelfox, Hilarie, 'ROTOR exhibition opens at Huddersfield Art Gallery', (The Huddersfield Daily Examiner, 30 October 2015)  
<http://www.examiner.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/rotor-exhibition-opens-huddersfield-art-10352912>

## ONLINE

Archives and Creative Practice, 'Huddersfield Art Gallery showcases artists' responses to archives', (Archives and Creative Practice, 10 November 2015)

<http://www.archivesandcreativepractice.com/archivesandcreativepractice/2015/11/9/huddersfield-art-gallery-showcases-artists-responses-to-archives>

Bailey, R. (2015) Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture (Online Essay)

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/rowanbailey/#/rowan-bailey-i>

Book Arts Newsletter, (2016) 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind: An exhibition at Shandy Hall', Book Arts Newsletter No. 106. September – October.

<http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/pdf/newspdfs/106.pdf>

Heart of Sharjah (2014) /seconds (Online Article)

<http://www.heartofsharjah.ae/event-saf-seconds.html>

Hutchinson, C. (2016) 'Shandy Hall turns Sterne's blank page into 147 beauties for auction in summer exhibition', The York Press, 4 August.

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/exhibitions/14663538.Shandy\\_Hall\\_turns\\_Sterne\\_s\\_blank\\_page\\_into\\_147\\_beauties\\_for\\_auction\\_in\\_summer\\_exhibition/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/exhibitions/14663538.Shandy_Hall_turns_Sterne_s_blank_page_into_147_beauties_for_auction_in_summer_exhibition/)

Leeds Inspired (2016) 'Your what's on guide for events in Leeds: Paint Her to Your Own Mind', Leeds Inspired, 28 October.

<http://www.leedsinspired.co.uk/events/paint-her-your-own-mind>

Mead, H. (2016) 'Quirky home of cleric scribe', Telegraph & Argus, 23 July.

[http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/lifestyle/taleisuredaysout/14637956.Quirky\\_home\\_of\\_cleric\\_scribe/](http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/lifestyle/taleisuredaysout/14637956.Quirky_home_of_cleric_scribe/)

Museums of the World (2016) 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind', Museums of the World, 09 July.

<https://museu.ms/event/details/116851/paint-her-to-your-own-mind>

Pantry, L. (2016) 'A blank page no more: Artists imagine their visions of beauty for exhibit inspired by 18th century author', The Yorkshire Post, 12 July 2016.

<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/what-s-on-exhibitions/a-blank-page-no-more-artists-imagine-their-visions-of-beauty-for-exhibit-inspired-by-18th-century-author-1-8004637>

# ONLINE

Stansbie, L. (2015) 'Swimming Position' (Online Article)

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/lisastansbie/#/lisa-stansbie-i>

Stelfox, H. (2012) 'Huddersfield University's Lisa Stansbie on the art of open water swimming', (The Huddersfield Examiner, 20 June)

<http://www.examiner.co.uk/lifestyle/health-family/huddersfield-universitys-lisa-stansbie-art-4950307>

Teeside University (2016) 'Own a unique piece of artwork', Teeside University News Releases, 20 October 2016.

[https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=6348](https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=6348)

# FILM

Thought Positions in Sculpture: Between Sculpture and the Archive (2015) (Public Symposium at Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, 12 November)

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/publicsymposium/>

Teesside University (2016) 'Paint Her to Your Own Mind – Constantine Exhibition' (20 October 2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6w6-5lt-Mqk>

'Thought Positions in Sculpture' by Curlew Films [Film]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3qB-SDxDqg>

University of Huddersfield, 'Artist Lisa Stansbie – how she combines her art and swimming'. (Interview, 19 September 2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4KG3DEDg-8>

**Yorkshire Post, July 2016**

**A blank page no more: Artists imagine their visions of beauty for exhibit inspired by 18th century author**

It was a page left blank in one of the greatest novels of all time, designed to ask the reader to contemplate their vision of beauty.

Now artists, writers and composers including the likes of John Baldessari, Stephen Fry, Lemony Snicket, and Norman Ackroyd have created their own representations of how they imagine the most beautiful woman in the world for a new exhibition at The Laurence Sterne Trust in Coxwold, near Thirsk.

Sterne's novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, became a bestseller in the 1760s and was ranked the sixth best novel in history by *The Guardian*.

Famed for its stream-of-consciousness approach that was unheard of at the time, Sterne used a variety of experimental and unusual techniques to convey Shandy's story, including engaging the reader in interactive games.

In the sixth volume of the book, Sterne intentionally left page 147 blank when attempting to convey the beauty of the love interest of one of the protagonists, Uncle Toby.

Sterne wrote: "To conceive this right, — call for pen and ink — here's paper ready to your hand, — Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind — as like your mistress as you can — as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you — 'tis all one to me — please but your own fancy in it."

It is the third time The Laurence Sterne Trust, which is based at Sterne's former home, Shandy Hall, has used a narrative technique by the author to invite artists to contribute to an exhibition.

The first, in 2009, invited 73 artists to interpret the page filled with black ink in volume one of *Tristram Shandy* to convey the death of the character Parson Yorick. The second, two years later, celebrated Sterne's marbled page — page 169 in volume three — described by author as the 'motley emblem of my work'. The

printing technique used meant that each marbled page had to be created by hand, and was therefore unique — visual confirmation that his work is endlessly variable, endlessly open to chance.

After both exhibitions, each 'page' was auctioned to raise funds for the Trust, and that will happen again with the 143 piece from this exhibition, but with the added twist that the maker of each will be kept strictly anonymous until after the sale. Shandy Hall curator Patrick Wildgust said: "Laurence Sterne used unconventional devices to tell his stories. For the death of Pastor Yorick, for example, he simply used the quote from Hamlet, 'Alas, Poor Yorick' and a black page as he could not find the words to describe the character's death."

"It was an experimental approach we saw again with the marbled page, which was not printed, so in every copy it looks different."

"In volume six, he asks the reader to imagine Widow Wadman, who is in search of a new husband. What Sterne wants to do is force the reader to imagine how beautiful Widow Wadman is in Uncle Toby's eyes. He says, 'paint her in your own mind', and that's what I have asked the artists to do."

Mr Wildgust said the Trust is extremely grateful to the artists, which include six who are exhibiting at the Royal Academy this summer, as not only have they given up their time to create new work to donate, they have done so on the basis of anonymity, and little exposure.

"The responses have been quite astonishing. To attempt to represent beauty is a complicated thing," Mr Wildgust said.

"Some of the writers have gone directly to the source material and played with the text, others have taken the idea and made it fit their own method of expression, be it an etching or watercolour."

**Yorkshire Post, July 2016**

**A blank page no more: Artists imagine their visions of beauty for exhibit inspired by 18th century author**

“Sterne writes on the page following 147, ‘was there anything so sweet and so exquisite’, congratulating the reader on their piece. I think he would be equally pleased with what has been created for the exhibition.”

Paint Her to Your Own Mind opens at Shandy Hall in Coxwold on Saturday until September. All the pieces will be included in a blog, accessible via the Trust website [www.laurencesternetrust.org.uk](http://www.laurencesternetrust.org.uk)

### **Who was Laurence Sterne?**

Laurence Sterne was born in 1713 Ireland, the great-grandson of a former Archbishop of York.

Sent to school in Hippholme, near Halifax, after graduating from Cambridge he took holy orders and became vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest, north of York. He began writing in 1759, and later took on the parish of Coxwold, where he settled at Shandy Hall.

His most famous novel, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, was published in nine volumes, the majority written from his home Shandy Hall.

A huge hit at the time, and in print ever since. It was made into the film, A Cock and Bull Story, in 2005 starring Steve Coogan, Rob Brydon and Gillian Anderson.





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## \seconds.

**When:** 11th October, 2014 - 10th December, 2014

**Where:** Block (I), SAF Art Spaces

**Organizer:** Sharjah Art Foundation

Curated by Peter Lewis, Sharjah Art Foundation presents a selection of artists' works from the online journal /seconds. (2004-2014), which covers a broad range of issues and art practices from different cultural perspectives. The project was initiated in 2004 and has invited over 1500 artists and writers to contribute over the years. The exhibition features key contributors from the ten year period, in tandem with Lewis' curatorial projects. Works on display include installations, interactive performance, video, photography and several hundred commissioned posters. The opening will also include performances by French artist and singer Fabienne Audéoud, Al Fadhil's audience participation of Baghdad Cafe, and a unique screening of Judith Cowan's film, Angelica. Additionally the exhibition will present the premiere screening of Ah Istanbul by Graziella Rizkallah Toufic and Jalal Toufic.

### **Participating Artists:**

Abdullah Al Saadi, Emily Allchurch, Conrad Atkinson, Fabienne Audéoud, George Bolster, Tony Chakar, Elizabeth Chadwick, Gordon Cheung, Ami Clarke, Stephen Clarke, Judith Cowan, Roger Cremers, Myriam Custers, Shezad Dawood, Sean Dower, Milena Dragicevic, Thomas Draschan, Alan Dunn, Paul Eachus, Laura Emsley, Al Fadhil, Nooshin Farhid, Anna Faushauer, David Ferry, Damian Flores Cortes, Peter Fillingham, Leo Fitzmaurice, Alison Gill, Margarita Gluzberg, Alex Hamilton, Margaret Harrison, Laura Hatry, Dan Hays, Taraneh Hemami, Aaron Hobson, Janet Hodgson, Mandy Lee Jandrell, Mohammed Kazem, Peter Kennard, Uta Kögelsberger, Karen Knorr, Colm Lally, Thaniel Lee, Liliane Lijn, Rut Blee Luxembourg, David Mabb, Ruth MacLennan, Melanie

**The Huddersfield Daily  
Examiner, 20 Jun 2012**

**Huddersfield of University's Lisa  
Stansbie on the art of open  
water swimming**

Competitive open air swimming is becoming the new marathon as increasing numbers of athletes take to the lakes, rivers and seas around Britain.

NO EXPERIENCE in life is ever wasted on an artist. That's certainly true for long-distance swimmer Lisa Stansbie, Head of Art and Communications at Huddersfield University, who has found herself artistically inspired by her strenuous hobby.

Since taking up competitive open air swimming three years ago she has begun developing work based on the paraphernalia that swimmers use to feed and drink while in the water.

She's all-too-familiar with the problems faced when tackling a lengthy and cold swim. Her past successes include winning a race across Derwent Water in the Lake District and completing swims in Buttermere and Windermere. She regularly trains in the River Wharfe and has even been swimming in Salford Docks.

Next month Lisa will be part of a six-swimmer relay team in an attempt on the English Channel and she has signed up for a 10k race along France's River Seine in September.

"There are lots of rules and rituals connected with long-distance swimming," says Lisa. "When you swim solo you feed or drink every hour. You can't touch the boat that's accompanying you so people create all these ingenious devices with bottles, baskets and tubes."

As a working artist as well as member of the university staff, Lisa decided to create sculptures based on these devices.

"I asked swimmers to send me images of their homemade apparatus that their helper sticks out over the edge of the boat," she added. "There were all sorts of contraptions."

Lisa, 37, admits that until seven years ago her swimming style was more "doggy paddle" than anything else.

"I wasn't much of a swimmer as a child," she said. "I was a runner and a dancer, but I decided to go to adult swimming lessons as an improver and found that I had a natural knack for it."

Her progress from swimming laps of a pool to becoming an open air swimmer was swift. She joined the City of Leeds Swimming Club and, after initially being told she wasn't good enough to compete decided to give it her all.

"If something's a bit of a challenge I want to pursue it – that's my character," she said. "My best thing is outdoor long-distance swimming because I used to do marathon running so I'm good at endurance."

The season for open air swimming begins at Easter and finishes at the end of the summer. Even so, the waters in and around Britain are cold.

Lisa can expect the Channel to be between 15°C and 17°C in July. By comparison, the average indoor swimming pool is between 28°C and 30°C.

"I began open air swimming with a wet suit but the British Long Distance Swimming Association doesn't allow you to wear one," she explained.

"I don't grease up because I've never found it helpful, although some people do. I think you just get acclimatised to the cold. You start off with 15 minutes at a time and build up your resistance."

In order to qualify for the Channel relay she will have to complete a two-hour swim in water that is 16°C or below.

Lisa trains every other day with swimming club Leeds Masters. When pool training she swims 3.5kms at a time and needs to get up at 5.30am in order to complete the session before starting work.

**The Huddersfield Daily  
Examiner, 20 Jun 2012**

**Huddersfield of University's Lisa  
Stansbie on the art of open  
water swimming**

Because she was a late entrant to competitive swimming, Lisa believes she has yet to peak and is more than happy to dedicate much of her spare time and holidays to the sport.

"My partner is Greek so when we go to Greece I'll do a lot of really long swims with him following me in a boat," said Lisa.

"I have swum from Kefalonia to Ithaca which is about 5kms. I've even had a pack of dolphins following me, which was wonderful."

While the challenge of Channel swimming has always been a headline sport, Lisa believes that open air swimming generally is becoming vastly more popular than it used to be.

"When I first started in 2009 there weren't that many events," she said. "Now, with the popularity of triathlons, 10k open water swims being in the Olympics and David Walliams swimming the Thames, it's getting really big and there are almost too many to choose from.

"Last year's Great North Swim in Windermere attracted 7,000 competitors."

Lisa is now in serious training for the Channel relay which will take up to 14 hours. And it's inspired another artwork based on the GPS routes followed by swimmers and boats.

"We have to pay for a boat to accompany us and a pilot who knows the currents and tides," she said. "I have asked them to supply me with the GPS routes and overlaid them to make an interesting drawing."

Lisa, who graduated in contemporary art from Leeds University, is originally from Birmingham but has worked in the USA, Edinburgh, Manchester and Leeds.

Her work, including sculpture, installations and short films has

been exhibited in several countries.

## University of Huddersfield, 2017

### Swimming Position

A few thoughts on my position:  
Swimming Position

(position in swimming is actually really important!)

#### Part 1: Swimming in Water

To watch a 'good' swimmer (there is a potential debate here, but let's not go there) is to witness an act that looks effortless. The body 'fluidly' (apologies) moves through the water. The body causes minimal disruption of the surface of the water, slicing through it with ease, almost part of it. Water can be dense and to cut through it requires some coordination.

Swimming is incredibly technical. Usually (I will say this, as no doubt there are exceptions to the rule out there) 'good' swimmers were trained as children. Their muscles and limbs remember what to do as it is encapsulated within their 'muscle memory'. Even if they give up swimming as children and return to it in adult life, their technique never leaves them. The feel for the water is part of their being. I envy these swimmers that have this embedded within them.

Each part of the body in the sport of swimming makes a difference to the swimmer's stroke...right down to the fingers and feet. Having each part of the body at the 'right angle' (not literally, but as in correct) makes moving through water easier. If you learned to swim as an adult or weren't a particularly 'good' child swimmer... perhaps a child that wasn't afraid, but preferred to do handstands and cartwheels in the water, then you have to consciously think about all these body parts and their relationship to the water until it becomes 'natural' or as close to natural as you will ever get.

On good days when the mechanics are aligned, you feel like your body is slipping through it, you feel your hands catching the water and propelling your body forward through it. You can push off a swimming pool wall and feel that you have travelled a reasonable distance. You can also, while learning to flip turn off the aforementioned wall, end up surfacing in the wrong lane... it happens. Wearing a wetsuit and swimming outdoors is a whole different ball game (well, sport). Wetsuits are great (I could be

asked to leave the room in certain swimming circles for that last sentence).

Wetsuits keep you warm, in a kind of slightly strangled, squashed fashion and most of all they make you buoyant. I rarely kick my legs when I swim in a pool, usually just occasionally to keep them afloat. In a wetsuit they stay afloat without even trying... so does my whole body. I am lying on a thin rubber raft and using my arms as oars. Swimming is so much easier in a wetsuit, I am proven to be faster in one. That's why in certain swimming sports (channel swimming being one) they are the devil's work. They are 'cheating'. They are a great invention that made swimming easier.

#### Part 2: Swimming Out of Water

All these descriptions of swimming are completely at odds with what it feels like to be strapped into a hard constructed machine. A machine that originally was meant to make swimming easier (once you got in the water). This machine gives an impression of swimming, it is constructed as a trick, the viewer might be fooled into thinking this is swimming (albeit a strange adapted doggie paddle, renamed the 'Stansbie Paddle' by the machine's maker Joe Hancock). Visually, it resembles swimming but things are amiss (aside from the lack of water).

I am suspended slightly diagonally, so as to keep me from slipping and my legs are strapped into sections of the sculpture with Velcro straps – they are not free-floating at all. My shins are also against hard metal and wood, measured to fit my own legs.

All the power comes from the adapted cross trainer arm sections that my arms push and pull. It is rare in swimming to push (OK, there is a 'push' in backstroke)... you are usually pulling, pulling yourself through the water. I did once 'push' in swimming; in the early days of learning Butterfly I somehow managed to go backwards... a skill in itself I think.

## University of Huddersfield, 2017

### Swimming Position

A few thoughts on my position:  
Swimming Position

(position in swimming is actually really important!)

There is also strength needed in your arms to hold onto the hand sections, to hold, to a degree, the weight of my body. Hence the performance photographs where my arms resemble 'Popeye', my arms are working hard in this machine.

I cannot see either when lying in the swimming machine. This isn't unusual for me actually. I can't see a lot when swimming due to my eyesight, although I do wear prescription swimming goggles. They aren't perfect. I can't mention prescription swimming goggles without telling the tale of when I lost my glasses on the poolside after training one morning. I had (without me knowing) put them in a fellow swimmer's bag... he had the same swimming bag and without my glasses on, I couldn't tell which was which. After swimming I couldn't find them and my only option was to drive home wearing my prescription goggles which caused much amusement at traffic lights.

In the swimming machine I am face down, my head is held this way by a cushion – an oxymoron. I cannot see the reactions of people around me, which is for the best. The cushion is leather and makes my face sweat easily due to the effort I am putting in. I heat up quickly.

I can only 'swim' in the machine for about 8 minutes as it takes too much effort in my upper body and is fairly uncomfortable. It is totally restrictive. It is as far away from the feel of swimming as it could be. You can tell this when watching... swimming in the machine looks difficult, impractical and absurd. I like this. This fits well with the original foundations for the piece in the exhibition Thought Positions in Sculpture. The 1870 patent for a 'Swimming Apparatus' was a design for a large wooden machine that was aimed at teaching the user how to swim breaststroke... that is, breaststroke out of water, on land. The idea for the machine was developed in a time when not many people in the UK could swim. I wonder if the inventor could or had ever swam?

## Huddersfield Art Gallery

### Showcases artists' responses to archives

Have you heard about the current exhibition Thought Positions in Sculpture at Huddersfield Art Gallery? Ten contemporary artists have created work in response to archival collections, including those held by the Tate, the Henry Moore Institute and the British Library.

Those who have chosen to seek inspiration from the Leeds sculpture collections include Desmond Brett, who explores the notion of 'assemblage' through the photographic archives of Eileen Agar and Paul Nash; Liadin Cooke, who considers the parallels between her own sculptural thinking and that of Geoffrey Clarke; Nicola Redmore, who explores some of the plaster works of Kenneth Armitage; and Juliet MacDonald, who focuses on Henry Fehr's memorial Head of Victory as a means of communicating her thoughts about issues of war and triumph, grief and loss.

Among the others featured are Brass Art, an artist collective who explored the Freud Museum House in London during their residency there earlier this year. Using laser-scanning techniques, they have captured uncanny images of fleeting sculptural forms accompanied by a haunting soundtrack that records involuntary parts of their performances and coaxes sounds out of long-dormant objects. The final piece alludes to Freud's ideas about the unconscious, and forms part of a larger project on Shadow Worlds: Writers' Rooms, where they occupy the domestic interiors of well-known literary figures.

Unlike the other artists, Lisa Stansbie chooses to explore a digital archive of a series of 19th-century patents for machines designed to help people learn to swim that were never constructed, producing her own sculptures in response to them. Jill Townsley is a sculptor with a particular interest in repetition, appropriation and authorship. She chooses to engage with the processes of making an archive through the retrieval of stones from the West Yorkshire landscape.

Over the next two months, all ten artists will be making a personal contribution to the exhibition website. They will be revealing not only their unique back stories to the making of art, but also the archives they looked at, the thoughts they had about them and the practice-led strategies they employed.

If you'd like to visit the exhibition, it's on in Huddersfield until 9 January 2016.



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

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## /seconds.

Exhibition  
10 October—9 December 2014

Gallery 3  
Al Mureijah Square

Curated by Peter Lewis, Sharjah Art Foundation presents a selection of artists' works from the online journal */seconds.* (2004—2014), which covers a broad range of issues and art practices from different cultural perspectives.

### Overview

Curated by **Peter Lewis**, Sharjah Art Foundation presents a selection of artists' works from the online journal */seconds.* (2004-2014), which covers a broad range of issues and art practices from different cultural perspectives. The project was initiated in 2004 and has invited over 1500 artists and writers to contribute over the years. The exhibition features key contributors from the ten year period, in tandem with Lewis' curatorial projects. Works on display include installations, interactive performance, video, photography and several hundred commissioned posters. The opening will also include performances by French artist and singer Fabienne Audéoud, Al Fadhil's audience participation of *Baghdad Cafe*, and a unique screening of Judith Cowan's film, *Angelica*. Additionally the exhibition will present the premiere screening of *Ah İstanbul* by Graziella Rizkallah Toufic and Jalal Toufic.

### Participating Artists

Abdullah Al Saadi, Emily Allchurch, Conrad Atkinson, Fabienne Audéoud, George Bolster, Tony Chakar, Elizabeth Chadwick, Gordon Cheung, Ami Clarke, Stephen Clarke, Judith Cowan, Roger Cremers, Myriam Custers, Shezad Dawood, Sean Dower, Milena Dragicevic, Thomas Draschan, Alan Dunn, Paul Eachus, Laura Emsley, Al Fadhil, Nooshin Farhid, Anna Faushauer, David Ferry, Damian Flores Cortes, Peter Fillingham, Leo Fitzmaurice, Alison Gill, Margarita Gluzberg, Alex Hamilton, Margaret Harrison, Laura Hatry, Dan Hays, Taraneh Hemami, Aaron Hobson, Janet Hodgson, Mandy Lee Jandrell, Mohammed Kazem, Peter Kennard, Uta Kögelsberger, Karen Knorr, Colm Lally, Thaniel Lee, Liliane Lijn, Rut Blees Luxemburg, David Mabb, Ruth Maclennan, Melanie Manchot, Kito Mbiango, Makiko Nagaya, Adam Nankervis, Warren Neidich, Guillaume Paris, Nada Prlja, Annie Ratti, Cullinan Richards, Graziella Rizkallah Toufic, Giorgio Sadotti, Hilary Koob-Sassen, Edgar Schmitz, Hassan Sharif, Lisa Stansbie, Sergei Sviatchenko, Jalal Toufic, Rob Voerman, Jonathan Whitehall, Cindy Wright, Takayuki Yamamoto.

This exhibition also presents a special section composed of selected artists' video and audio from issues 1-14 with works by: Asa Anderson, Paul Allsopp, Martyn Blundell, Ben Brierley, Tim Brotherton, Edward Chell, James Chinnock, Rosie Cooper, Patrick Courtney, David Cunningham, James Early, Luciana Farinati, William Furlong, Mark Harris, Véronique Janin Devoldère, Ben Judd, Anne Keleher, Conor Kelly, Peter Lewis, Peter Lloyd Lewis, Katrin Lock, Karl Lydon, Elizabeth McAlpine, Monika Oechsler, Uriel Orlow, Mark Pickles, Adrian Shaw, Marie-Anne Souloumiac, Stuart Tait, Anders Weberg, Cecilia Wee, Robert William, Jo Wonder.





## **Paint Her to Your Own Mind**

**28 Oct 2016 – 12 Nov 2016**

**&Model – Leeds Inspired**

**(Leeds, LS1 2BH)**

147 artists and writers respond to Laurence Sterne's request to depict beauty on the 'blank page' in Vol 6 of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

### **Participating artists/writers include:**

Norman Ackroyd, Carry Akroyd, John Baldessari, Jérémie Bennequin, Nancy Campbell, Brian Dettmer, Maura Dooley, Ian Duhig, Stephen Fry, Maria Fusco, Neil Gaiman, Tom Gauld, Patrick Hughes, Tom Phillips, Martin Rowson, Wendy Saunders, Lemony Snicket, Carolyn Thompson, Momoyo Torimitsu, Alison Wilding and many more.

Contributors' identities are hidden and all pages are for sale by auction.

[www.blankpage147.wordpress.com](http://www.blankpage147.wordpress.com)

## **Paint Her to Your Own Mind**

**9 July 2016 – 30 September 2016**

**Shandy Hall (York YO61 4AD)**

'Paint Her to Your Own Mind' invites 147 artists / writers to join in creating 147 different representations of beauty on the blank page – responding to Sterne's request in vol VI of *Tristram Shandy*: 'Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind—as like your mistress as you can – as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you – 'tis all one to me – please but your own fancy in it.' All artworks (kindly donated) are for sale by auction at the gallery and, over the coming weeks, online on the exhibition blog. Norman Ackroyd, Carry Akroyd, John Baldessari, Jérémie Bennequin, Nancy Campbell, Brian Dettmer, Maura Dooley, Ian Duhig, Stephen Fry, Maria Fusco, Neil Gaiman, Tom Gauld, Patrick Hughes, Tom Phillips, Martin Rowson, Wendy Saunders, Lemony Snicket, Lisa Stansbie, Carolyn Thompson, Momoyo Torimitsu, Alison Wilding and many more.

To see a full list of participating artists and more information about the exhibition see:

<https://blankpage147.wordpress.com/>

Source: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/yh000142?id=EVENT558317>

**Telegraph & Argus, 23 July 2016**

## **Quirky home of cleric scribe**

Eccentric, quirky and fascinating — Shandy Hall perfectly befits its most famous resident.

Sitting at the top of a hill, on the edge of the picturesque village of Coxwold, the historic timber-framed house is a confusion of styles, from medieval to Georgian.

Surrounded by beautiful gardens with far-reaching views, it was the home of local vicar and novelist Laurence Sterne who lived here from 1760 until his death in 1768.

It was here, within this higgledy-piggledy assortment of rooms of all shapes and sizes that the Irish-born writer, who earlier attended Hipperholme Grammar School, wrote the bulk of the comic masterpiece *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and later as he faced death, the influential novel *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*.

The nine volume *Tristram Shandy* was in its day a novel like no other. Its appeal has endured and today it is among the most widely admired books in the world.

In his convoluted, humorous narrative, Tristram is telling his life story, but it is neither chronological nor structured — one of the central jokes is that he cannot explain anything simply.

Paying for the publication of the first two books himself, sales took off and success came, but there was also criticism, levelled at a man of the cloth for penning a work containing bawdy, sexual themes.

Sterne used the word Shandy — an old Yorkshire dialect word meaning 'odd' or 'crack-brained' — to describe his vicarage as well as the hero of the book. The vicar added a two-storey brick extension not more than two metres deep masking the medieval gables and creating the look, at one side, of a Georgian dwelling. Visitors admiring the house from the front will notice its most

distinctive feature — its huge leaning chimney.

In the mid-1960s the house was rescued from a state of disrepair when it was bought by the newly-formed Laurence Sterne Trust, a charity which continues to preserve the house, promote Sterne's work and raise much-needed funds.

The rooms — including Sterne's office — are fascinating: a marble bust of the curate and Medieval wall paintings, discovered during the 1960's renovations, being among the highlights.

During opening times, custodian Patrick Wildgust — who lives at the hall with his partner Chris Pearson — welcomes visitors and Sterne devotees, happy to impart his boundless knowledge and enthusiasm for the novelist.

The garden, lovingly tended by Chris and a number of volunteers, is a delight, with cottage garden borders alongside lawn, fruit trees and wild areas.

In a corner stands an ancient sweet chestnut tree that was struck by lightning in 1911. "It was probably here in Sterne's day," says Chris.

A disused stone quarry, consumed by nature, is accessed by paths mown through.

There's a moth hut — these gardens are playing a key role in USA-led research into the insects.

Rowan Bailey

## Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture

I

Thought Positions in Sculpture is a project which has used the exhibition environment as a platform and starting point for considering the sculptural facets of thinking activity. The exhibition opened on the 16 October 2015 at Huddersfield Art Gallery and ran until 09 January 2016. In the lead up to the exhibition selected contemporary artist-practitioners were presented with an opportunity to engage with some specific archives and/or to articulate a sculptural focus to archival material. Whether interpreting existing works of sculpture from Leeds Museums and Galleries Sculpture Collection, archival material from the Henry Moore Institute, digitised archival material from the Tate, audio material from the British Library and other archival sites, some of which are inventions by the artists themselves, the exhibition has served as a research platform and context for the emergence of narratives of sculptural thinking in and through differing modes of research practice.

Thought Positions in Sculpture is part of an Arts Council Funded project called ROTOR; an initiative which seeks to engage new audiences in art and design research at the University of Huddersfield through a curatorial platform. ROTOR's establishment of a public engagement network, with the aim of generating new ways of understanding the specific issues and concerns surrounding the nature of social and cultural values in the arts, inevitably draws upon research into cultural policy and the public value of art within the wider context and role of the civic university. Research-curation in this particular exhibition environment is thus informed by the ways in which the specific material forms of the research have been disseminated to different audiences. In effect, the exhibition does not begin and end with itself but has served as an important arena for considering how specific research outcomes might be communicated to members of the public within and beyond the gallery context.

II

### The Archival Encounter

In 2014, I guest-edited an issue for the Journal of Writing in Creative Practice (<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-issue.id=2890/>), which sought to stimulate collaborative exchanges, in and around what the archive is as a 'concept' and as a 'form', with the aim of expanding the archive out into the fields of creative practice. In the editorial for this issue, I wrote about the legacies of 'archival art'; a term that gained currency in the 1990s and took hold in art practices that sought to appropriate the archive's form and function so as to interrogate its order and logic. The dissemination of particular modes of approach to the archive can be found in projects like Deep Storage — an exhibition and book — housed at the Gallery der Kunst in Munich in 1994 (Schaffner and Winzen, 1998), the circulation of art-theoretical writing on the archive in edited collections such as Charles Merewether's *The Archive*, produced for the Whitechapel Gallery's Documents of Contemporary Art series (Merewether, 2006), within which feature the writings of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur and Carolyn Steedman, and more recently, *All This Stuff — Archiving the Artist* (2012), edited by Judy Vaknin, Karyn Stuckey and Victoria Lane, engages with the archive as an expanded field, incorporating the artist as archivist, and includes different kinds of meta-archives generated by artists, including anti-archives and invisible collections (see also Tate, 2015).

The archival turn in the field of contemporary art registers a visual etymology that describes an act of material transformation. The turn scrutinises the terrain of the familiar so as to think the archive otherwise and this includes further understanding of how, as a resource for artistic research, archival content has been registered, understood and worked with in the contexts of creative practice. One particular art critic and historian who registers this currency as an impulse is Hal Foster.

**Rowan Bailey**

## **Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture**

The now well-renowned and established key text in discourses on art and archives, 'An Archival Impulse', was first published in the journal *October* in 2004. Foster describes how the ambitions of archival art can transform the archive into a utopia – a set of imagined states or places – where thinking about and through the past produces new forms and responses. This 'archival imaginary' has led to many exhibitions, events and writings on Foster's reading of the counter-hegemonic and utopian character of archival art (Foster, 2004). As I argue, in *The Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, over ten years have passed since the publication of this article and over twenty years since 'archival art' entered onto the stage of contemporary practice as an evocative and necessary 'turn'. Perhaps the turn has indeed turned into a more established and embedded set of writing practices about research in, with and through the archive, and with this, an opening out of the 'intensities of experience that can captured through the different creative mediums and methodologies deployed by each practitioner to access and re-trace the past' (Bailey and Power, 2014: 355). This now has to include, in cultural and art discourses, further rigorous engagement with the 'specific tensions that arise between the archive itself and the personal narratives that think with and through specific items and the impact of new technologies on modes of access, engagement and analysis of archival experiences'

(Bailey and Power, 2014: 355).

### **III**

#### **Archives, practice and the exhibition environment – cultivating objects of knowledge**

Thought Positions in Sculpture is both an affirmation of sculpture's historic and aesthetic determinants and a necessary diversion from them through the intensities of an archival experience. 'Experience' is a necessary and inevitable operative dimension of the 'turn' in different modes of research. In effect, the exhibition has

acted as a force field of exchanges between archival experiences and modes of making. As a site for the dissemination of thinking activity the exhibition environment may be conceived as the necessary container for enabling the turn of the turn in the staging of a thought position.

However, with an ever growing wealth of discourses on the intersections between practice-led research and archival engagement, there is a certain distraction from sculpture itself as a medium with its own historic and aesthetic histories. Opening the door to critique with a willingness to scrutinise the norms and conventions of existing and established practices of thinking and doing is, in this context, a way of gaining deeper insights into the experiences of encountering archival material about the practices of making sculpture and/or to examine sculptural objects as documentary records in and of themselves.

In April 2014, I organised and chaired a panel entitled 'Archival Interventions in Sculpture' for the annual Association of Art Historians conference at the Royal College of Art. Bringing together art historians, archivists, curators and sculptors, the panel explored the role of the archive in sculptural practice and examined how works of sculpture are in and of themselves archival (AAH, 2014). Some of the papers presented at this conference now feature as essays in the Henry Moore Institute Essays on Sculpture series, issue no 73, entitled 'Active Archives'. As part of this publication, I wrote a short piece which drew attention to different sculpture archives and what, as resources, they can offer to the study and exploration of sculpture. My primary focus lay in firstly, addressing how archival resources can disclose different histories of sculptural thinking and making, which we in turn, can scrutinise and explore, and secondly, how practitioners may use existing archival collections of sculptural materials and artefacts to think with and through the object of sculpture itself as a documentary record. The archives selected for consideration in Thought Positions in Sculpture stem from this written account (Bailey, 2015).

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## **Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture**

The first archive is the National Life Stories project, Artists' Lives, which is a part of the British Library's oral history collection, and runs in association with Tate Library and Archive. It features interviews with British sculptors such as Phyllida Barlow, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Garth Evans, Bruce McLean and Richard Wentworth. The second archive is Tate's recent development of a Creative Commons licensed online platform of artists' archives of sketchbooks and photographic records. It forms part of a major digitisation project called Transforming Tate Britain: Archives and Access, which now has over 52,000 archival items published online. The third archival resource is the Henry Moore Institute which houses a sculpture archive and which maintains, in collaboration with Leeds City Art Gallery, a sculpture collection, some works of which have been loaned as part of this exhibition, including pieces from Henry Charles Fehr, Kenneth Armitage and Geoffrey Clarke.

Many of the contemporary works in Thought Positions in Sculpture have explored one or more of these archival resources, whilst others have worked with the archive as an expanded term to be found on Google, within the landscape and inside specific museum and gallery contexts. Each thought position on this website presents an experience shaped out of different approaches to working with archival material.

In the context of the exhibition environment itself what these 'objects' embody is always already in relation to a prior referential encounter in the archive and how they operate in relation to each other provides a space for the juxtaposition of ideas. This is not quite the context to consider research-curation in full nor to fully explicate the notion of ideas-led/ideas-laid curation. But, it is necessary to signpost the curatorial turn – in the spirit of turning – and to emphasise that exhibitions as spaces for experimentation are now a well-known feature of the legacy of the curator-as-artist and the artist-as-curator. Harald Szeeman's 1969 ground-breaking exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*: works, concepts,

processes, situations, information and in particular, the expanded field of curation and its different modes of public experimentation cannot go unnoticed within the field of contemporary art practices. The exhibition environment for Thought Positions in Sculpture, however, sits inside perimeters which are institutionally framed by the contexts of higher education and the public museums and galleries sector. The exhibition has staged a context for research into sculptural thinking with and through the archival encounter. Primarily, it is the material manifestations of thought positions in sculptural form that provide this condition of research possibility.

Therefore, the co-correspondences between the work on display in the exhibition environment and the narrative explications formed by the contemporary practitioners featured on this website has necessarily paid attention to the histories of sculptural making that have come before. The site of historic and aesthetic determinants is never more present than in one's attempts to access the past from the cultural conditions of the present. This has involved thinking about the sculptural as a necessary object of investigation. The sculptural does not necessarily reside within sculpture per se. It is an oblique formation – where dedication to something resides in the efforts undertaken to examine a practice or object – in many spaces, places, iterations and formations. So whereas some practitioners have acknowledged the work of others as important sources of influence for thinking through shape, space, time, dimension, motion and materiality, others refer to and interpret the wider historical and cultural contexts within which allusions to sculptural forms may appear. All of these engagements are oblique registers, because as modes of thinking, they are necessarily evocations of how practice is a research process in and of itself.

Rowan Bailey

## Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture

### IV

#### Re-thinking the Thought Position

Within the context of creative practice, how research – as a process and material outcome – manifests itself in different modes and forms of sculptural activity has been underpinned by an idea of thinking-through-making. This enacts the premises of practice-led/practice-based enquiries (see Barrett and Bolt, 2010 and 2012). Research into the sculptural both relies upon the historic and aesthetic determinants of what has come before – within the wider remit of sculpture as an art historical legacy, set of artistic practices and/or cultural forms – and interpretation and engagement with the resources and sources of a given avenue of investigation – the sculptural thinking in, with and through the archive as a site where these historic and aesthetic determinants may be found.

*Thought Positions in Sculpture thus seeks to engage with archival materials as the focal point for practice-led thinking and doing and its experimentation lies in the transmission of meaning through making, where the researcher is able to engage in self-reflexive thinking about the objects and materials under their investigation. It is necessary, therefore, to firstly address how this approach to research might operate in and through an exhibition platform and for what purpose?*

A triangulation – an abstract formation of the complexities at hand – serves to help establish the goals of the research itself:



These three interconnected points form the framework for this project: the archive as the site of history, the practice-led strategies and approaches deployed to draw upon and interpret archival content and the thought positions formed in response. This triangle demarcates a field where thinking can potentially take shape in and through creative practice.

Triangulations operate at the site of most research activities. Intersecting approaches within the framework of history, practice and theory meet within a triangle to help constitute the questions of research. The defining criteria for such a framework shifts according to different bodies of practice, methods of interrogation and making, interpretation and critical reflection. The approaches that emerge through the thinking process necessarily rely on the ways in which material, spatial and visual practices generate different outcomes. Research practice thus operates and negotiates a demarcated field of points – history, practice, theory – but understands that these terms are culturally loaded and subject to scrutiny through the modes of thinking activity. The challenge lies in the articulation of this activity in an exhibition environment and how this can illuminate a body of practices in new ways.

**Rowan Bailey**

## **Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture**

According to John Rachman in 'Art as a Thinking Process: New Reflections':

*[...] vital to the process of thinking in art, and in its forms of research, is something raw and wild, given by things one cannot quite identify or see or say, creating a kind of blindness or muteness combined with a sense of an inchoate necessity that causes or forces one to think – or rethink – often opening up in the process new unanticipated relations with others.*

(Rachman, 2013: 196)

It is this possibility that makes the creative act a process that does not necessarily set out to achieve a set of prescribed objectives. Furthermore, this process of thinking generates a capacity to forge relations with other objects of investigation and other audiences. It does not simply reside within the experience of the artist-researcher. How we position ourselves in relation to this otherness, and indeed, how others are positioned by this experience, plays an important role in the exhibition environment. Rachman's account of the thinking process in art resonates with what Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén describe as the 'democracy of experiences' or 'experiential democracy' (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005). In their book *Artistic Research. Theories, Methods, Practices*, they account for a necessary circularity for artistic research which follows a line of hermeneutical enquiry. This is focused on the idea of the 'continuum of experience' where self-reflexive examination of the conditions of encounter are opened up to further scrutiny. This allows for the ethical dimension of hermeneutical research to be registered and understood in the context of artistic research activity. Their account provides an insight into the thinking and rethinking borne out of the 'inchoate necessity' Rachman describes is part of the 'process of thinking in art':

*The continuum of experience has to be approached in a way that is*

*thoroughly hermeneutical: in practice-based research experience looks at experience and thereby produces new experience. This is the basic assumption underlying something like experiential democracy. In research, experience looks at itself in a circular way, thereby also reorganising itself*

(Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005: 44)

There is always a necessary epistemological bias in artistic research – the subjectivities of experience and the intersubjective relations they give rise to, is part of the multi-relational exchanges generated between practice and context. However, this bias can only be arrived at through the circularity of experience. We may start out from a set of given interpretations – historic and aesthetic determinants, let's say – knowing that this is the start of thinking through of what has come before: an examination of a given object of investigation in context. These interpretations require different cogitating modes: the search for understanding, close observation and analysis, reflection and questioning. But how these modes of thinking operate in and through pre-existing determinants – at the level of practice itself – necessarily opens the field out to multi-directional approaches, and this allows for an 'ideal of openness between theory and practice' to be critically staged. Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén describe this condition in the following way:

*Criticality in the context of the democracy of experiences means specifically: i) multi-directionality, ii) lack of ultimate foundations, and iii) admitting circularity and, therefore, also the ethical nature of the interpretation. [...] Admitting circularity corresponds with the fact that in artistic research one must also tell others about the meaning of the presented information with regards to skills and artistic practices as well as their individual and social connections. This interaction between the research and research object forms the ethical dimension of the research (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2013: 59-60)*



## Rowan Bailey

### Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture

This account adequately describes the function of the triangle at the core of Thought Positions in Sculpture. To reiterate the goals of the research, but this time taking on board 'criticality in the context of the democracy of experiences':



In effect, the formation of a position is always already open to adaptation and change through the co-relational exchanges shaped between others. The practice and the context are in circulation: 'an inquiry is not only positioned as part of a tradition, but also points to new intersubjectively accessible experiences and their conceptualisations' (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005: 32). As positions – standing grounds for thinking – the works on display act as propositions: outward facing material manifestations activated through different modes of sculptural thinking. A position can act as a standing stone for the ways in which we may choose to think with and through the sculptural qualities of matter, form and process, but to cogitate on these means to activate the dormant: to start up, lift off and set thinking into motion.

V

Concepts-in-the-making – narratives of experience

The works on display in Thought Positions in Sculpture bring the features of archival content alive in, with and through the production of new form positions. These positions are activated through the processes of making. Whether through assemblage, serialisation, weight and balance, physical movement, digital data capture, sound and listening, critical self-reflection, observation and displacement, they articulate a relationship to archival content. This might be the historical backdrop to the formation of a work of sculpture, to the documentary records and sketchbooks that reveal the features of a mode of sculptural making, the archival site where an experience is retrieved, or a reflection on the specific processes of archiving itself as a methodology for producing insights into the displacements of order and serialisation. As modes of cognitive understanding they serve as the precondition for a specific knowledge process which takes on sculpture as its referential register. But, these relations are differential and provide the exhibition with multi-directional approaches to the tangential, peripheral and sometimes unanticipated features of the making process. They are concepts-in-the-making. As a turn of phrase used by Erin Manning, concepts-in-the-making is an indispensable part of the creative process. It is also in operation through the framework of 'research-creation', a term used in academic circles in Canada.

SenseLab, Montreal – founded by Erin Manning in 2004 – has, with a partnership grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, extended its network out to 'to 12 universities and 20 community arts partners in North America, Europe, and Australia, as well as informally connecting to a constellation of other groupings' (SenseLab, 2015). For Manning, this research centre/lab 'was borne out of a desire to build a supportive environment conducive to new modes of encounter and expression' with the position that 'concepts are never pre-programmed. Rather, they are experimental effects of an on-going process which emerge in the doing, and merge with making' (SenseLab, 2015).

**Rowan Bailey**

## **Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture**

The context of research-creation thus provides an opening for a consideration of sculptural thinking as that which engages ‘in the process of thinking by doing, always with the understanding that concepts are made in and through the event’ (SenseLab, 2015). In this respect, the concepts that have emerged in, through and out of the project Thought Positions in Sculpture have provided opportunities for further consideration of the complexities involved in the skills and practices of the thinking process. As singularities of experience the narratives on this website are reflections a posteriori – after the event. But it is only through the immanence of thought-in-the-making that has made them possible. In ‘Creative Propositions for Thought in Motion’ Manning writes:

*Concepts are aspects of a creative process already active in the imminence of thought that can force the work to take form. Moving beyond fixed meaning, concepts gather and articulate the intensity that transduces the creative process from work to world.*

*To work with a concept is to explore what makes the work work.*

### **VI**

#### **The democracies of experience — hoorah for creative commons!**

Thought Positions in Sculpture has been working within the contexts of the archive, and in particular, archives that contain and store the objects and documents of sculptural practice. As cultural institutions these archive sites have the potential to generate new democracies of experience. I am pluralising democracies here rather than experience because modes and avenues of access to information are shaped and formed by the institutional spaces that host and contain the objects and materials of potential knowledge. And this pluralising potential, I would argue, is at the heart of public access to and engagement with archives, particularly within the context of creative commons licensing.

Creative Commons was founded in 2001 by Lawrence Lessig, Hal

Abelson and Eric Aldred. With support from the Center for the Public Domain and a founding management team, which included Aaron Swartz, the first set of creative commons copyrights were released in December 2002. There are now over 880 million works licensed under creative commons licenses and the Open Access Movement has broadened its scope to include the Open Educational Movement and the Free Culture Movement in particular. These cultural shifts are significant for creating new opportunities for public access to resources for learning and research. That is why Tate’s Heritage Lottery Funded project Transforming Tate Britain: Archives and Access has potential scope for generating new kinds of experiences with art in and through the digitisation of archival documents – experiences that perhaps operate within and beyond the gallery context. Polly Christie, ProjectManager for Transforming Tate Britain writes:

*[...] we are exposing a wealth of unpublished, hidden stories, narratives and histories to a global audience for the first time. This enables Britain’s artistic heritage to be explored in new ways, and in so doing, exposes the potential and power that archives possess. We will work with partners across 5 regions of the UK, not only to test, embed and work with our new content and tools, but to look at, digitise and expose their own archives, enabling local communities to access, explore and appropriate them for themselves, and use them as a tool to explore their own cultural heritage. So alongside looking at Britain’s artistic heritage, other themes like public health, adult literacy and urban regeneration will be explored through the medium of community archives around the UK. (Christie, 2013)*

This project has sought to foster new cultural democracies of experience where the online digital platform provides an opening for community engagement with artistic heritage at a localised level. In effect, co-relational exchanges between artistic research and archival experiences are actively encouraged and enabled by this platform, but which also make cultural place-making possible.

**Rowan Bailey**

## **Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture**

This, I would also argue, is another way of thinking about 'democratic public engagement', a term used recently by Montague, Powell and Swindells to describe the wider ambitions and complexities of cultural place-making in Huddersfield. In 'Exploring Place and Public Memory: Huddersfield and the Regional North' (2015), they discuss the multitude of different viewpoints and perspectives that may inevitably arise when local people are asked to consider how they might relate to culture. Similar to the account I have provided in the context of artistic research – of the multi-directional approaches in operation at the site of any prominent interpretation – what forms might these responses take, when different communities are confronted with a set of historic and aesthetic determinants?

According to Gilles Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*:

*Aesthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On the one hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience. For these two meanings to be tied together, the conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience; in this sense, the work of art would really appear as experimentation. (Deleuze, 1990: 260)*

This has been part of this project's consideration of public engagement and how it might be facilitated within a gallery environment. As previously articulated, the works on display have served as the starting point for research and as objects within an exhibition are embodiments of a complex sculptural thinking process. In this respect they are works which – as experimentations in sculptural thinking – negotiate theory and context.

As a process therefore, sculptural thinking involves not only the gathering and use of material, ideas, concepts and technologies, but also collaborations with others. The mind is an archival resource of its own, where, over time it takes on specific patterns

of retrieval – determinants – derived from the accumulation of lived experiences. These patterns can often fix the fluidity of free thinking as a potential. The ridge lines of our neural pathways can stubbornly resist the imagination's desire to detour, deflect and divert the course we are on. As the philosopher Martin Heidegger puts it in his lectures 'What Calls for Thinking', first delivered at Freiburg University in 1951 and 1952, poets and the act of poiesis (making), provides us with an elusive kind of thinking, whose object steadily withdraws, with its own movement and direction. Attending to the 'gathering of thought' (Heidegger, 1993: 367) is crucial because, as another philosopher Jacques Derrida remarks in his very close reading of Heidegger's words, it reveals how 'thinking is what we already know we have not yet begun' (Derrida, 1997: 93).

In this respect, there is a difference between being positioned and working towards arriving at a position, just as there is a difference between thought and thinking. As objects of investigation they are hard to grasp. But, the abilities of our own cognitive experiences, which we know, are creative acts in themselves, have the potential to form ideas and allow them to take shape in the world to be shared with others. As John Dewey, the educational reformer, explains in *Experience and Nature* (1925) and *Art as Experience* (1934):

*Thinking is pre-eminently an art; knowledge and propositions which are the products of thinking, are works of art [...] art is the most direct and complete manifestation there is of experience as experience. (Dewey, 2008a: 28 and Dewey, 2008b: 301)*

In the mind of received histories of know-how and their retrieval is also a recovery of the field of experiences in sculptural terms. This relies on giving shape to a moment of archival retrieval in the mind. Thus encounters with the sculptural – as a vehicle of and for new experiences – helps to coordinate the place of the thought position within the field of visitor reception.

Rowan Bailey

## Reflecting on Thought Positions in Sculpture

The thinking activity of the visitor, whose negotiation through an archive site of sculptural forms and responses, has the capacity to register the resonances of an encounter with the archival referent. Looking activates – through the mind’s creative play – new juxtapositions of shape and meaning in oblique form. Here, it is not the total form which takes precedence, but the sculptural particularities of a process which the spectator has to negotiate through their own democracy of experience.

### VII

#### The self-generating Twitterbot

A final thought in regard to open access and dissemination. As part of the activities accompanying the exhibition, Rob Lycett, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Art and Communication at the University of Huddersfield, has curated his own Twitterbot of responses to the underlying themes, responses, and areas of exploration in Thought Positions in Sculpture. A Twitterbot programme is used to generate tweets at regular periods. Lycett has developed a coding system where words relating to the show are put-into-relation with each other to randomly generate concrete poetic forms every hour. These are tweeted out into the ether and have been in circulation since October 2015. To date – 11 January 2016 – over 2, 162 thought positions have been posted through Sculptural Thinking (@thoughtposition). As self-generating thought positions they are, necessarily, oblique registrations of the very ‘gathering of thought’. I would like to end my own thought position with some examples that seem to resonate with my own experience of the exhibition project:



#thoughtposition #sculpture  
the artistic process  
is similar to travelling  
12:38 AM - 9 Jan 2016



#thoughtposition #sculpture  
interlocking shapes  
interested in sensation  
through making  
7:38 PM - 8 Jan 2016



#thoughtposition #sculpture  
the artistic process  
remove  
narrative begins  
3:38 PM - 8 Jan 2016



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## 4 August 2016 – The Press

### Shandy Hall turns Sterne's blank page into 147 beauties for auction in summer exhibition

AN exhibition inspired by Laurence Sterne's infamous blank page in *The Life And Opinions Of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is on show at Sterne's home of Shandy Hall, Coxwold, near York.

*Paint Her To Your Own Mind* continues the conceit of the two previous Shandy Hall shows, *The Black Page* and *Emblem Of My Work*, this time by inviting 147 artists, writers and composers to join in creating 147 different representations of beauty. Each contribution remains anonymous, leaving the visitor to guess which artist created which page.

By Volume VI of his nine-volume novel that Sterne began publishing in 1759, his exuberant and provocative approach to telling the story of Tristram's life and opinions has reached the point where he surrenders all responsibility and encourages the reader to do all of the work. Hence Page 147 is blank.

Sterne wants to stimulate the creation of the most beautiful woman that ever existed and invites the reader: "To conceive this right, – call for pen and ink – here's paper ready to your hand, – Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind – as like your mistress as you can –as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you – 'tis all one to me – please but your own fancy in it."

Forgive The Press for not naming all 147 creators of the 147 beauties but they include Norman Ackroyd; Radio Bavaria; Glen Baxter; Frank Cottrell Boyce; Peter Carey; Helen Douglas; Ian Duhig; Stephen Fry; Jonathan Meades; Simon Morris; Lemony Snicket; Momoyo Torimitsu; Craig Vear; Helen Whittaker; Greville Worthington and Hugo Yoshikawa.

Each page is for sale by auction. Not only exhibition visitors are able to bid, so too are online bidders via the exhibition blog: [blankpage147.wordpress.com](http://blankpage147.wordpress.com) *Paint Her To Your Own Mind* runs until September 30.

Shandy Hall Gardens and Gallery are open every day, except Saturday, from 11am to 4.30pm; Shandy Hall is open on Wednesdays and Sundays with tours at 2.45pm and 3.45pm.

For Immediate Release

October 19, 2014



Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara, *The Martyr Raja' a Abu Amasheh*, 1974

Sharjah Art Foundation Announces the Opening of Three Major Exhibitions

***Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara***

***GCC: Achievements in Retrospective***

***/seconds.***

SAF Art Spaces, Al Mureijah, Sharjah Heritage Area (behind Al Zahra Mosque)

The opening of Sharjah Art Foundation's (SAF) Autumn programme of three major exhibitions took place on October 11 in SAF Art Spaces, located in Al Mureijah (behind Al Zahra Mosque). On view until December 10, 2014 are ***GCC: Achievements in Retrospective*** and ***/seconds.*** while ***Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara*** is on view until January 10, 2015.

Curated by H.E. **Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi**, a solo exhibition of work by the Palestinian revolutionary artist **Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara** includes a selection of the artist's work since 1965. Another exhibition that opened was ***GCC: Achievements in Retrospective*** by **GCC**; a "delegation" of artists presenting their first solo exhibition in the UAE which is a departure from the work in their recent MoMA PS1 retrospective. In addition, a group exhibition titled ***/seconds.*** curated by **Peter Lewis** presents a selection of artists' works from the online journal of research of the same title (2004-2014). The opening of this exhibition also included performances by French artist and singer **Fabienne Audéoud**, Al Fadhil's participatory performance of *Baghdad Cafe*, and a screening of **Judith Cowan's** film *Angelica*. Additionally the exhibition presented the premiere screening of *Ah Istanbul* by **Graziella Rizkallah Toufic** and **Jalal Toufic**.

Following the opening of the exhibitions was a free film screening of the award winning comedy-drama animated film *The Illusionist* by **Sylvain Chomet** in Building P, SAF Art Spaces.

Amongst the attendees of the openings were **H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Bin Khalifa, Sultan Bin Sooud Al Qassemi, Hisham Al Madhloom**, Their Excellencies Japanese Ambassador **H.E. Yoshihoko Kamu**, Argentinean

Ambassador **Rueben Eduardo Caro**, Mexican Ambassador **Francisco Alonso**, Canadian Ambassador **Arif Lelani** and American Consul **Rob Waller**, Korean Consul **Song Doo Ahn** and Kyrgyzstan Consul **Kuban Omaraliyev**.

#### ***Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara***

Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara is a self-taught artist whose work explores ideas of memory, resistance and collective action through the lens of the Palestinian struggle. His paintings depict scenes from everyday life—village weddings, family gatherings, traditional dancing and the contributions of women—conveying a determination to carry on in the face of displacement and conflict.

Political commitment and artistic experimentations have been defining interests of Zarara's practice. After briefly serving in the Jordanian Air Force, he joined the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the late 1960s. Zarara and his family were later sent to Libya by the PLO, where he developed the bas-relief technique that became a signature of his paintings. For over fifty years, Zarara's body of work has both contributed to and been informed by the spirit and strength of his surroundings and its relation to other political movements around the world.

#### ***GCC: Achievements in Retrospective***

Consisting of a "delegation" of eight artists, GCC makes reference to the English abbreviation of the Gulf Cooperation Council and makes use of ministerial language and celebratory rituals associated with the Gulf to create videos, photographs, sculptures and installations. Excavating the material and visual culture of the Gulf, the collective have developed a practice that uses the framework of collaboration and outsourced production to echo political models and practices in the region. The exhibition also features a new commission, *Topocelia*, an installation of a ceiling built under the existing ceiling of SAF Art Spaces Building J. The artists explore the aura of achievements within material built environments and through lighting and soundscapes, highlighting the mechanism of power consolidation that exists at the thresholds of public and private space.

#### ***/seconds.***

Curated by Peter Lewis, SAF presents a selection of artists' works from the online journal */seconds.* (2004-2014), which covers a broad range of issues and art practices from different cultural perspectives. The project is online based, initiated by Derek Horton, Peter Lewis, and Graham Hibbert and supported by an international editorial and advisory board of academics, artists and curators. The exhibition features key contributors from the ten year period, in tandem with Lewis' curatorial projects. Works on display include installations, interactive performance, video, photography and several hundred commissioned posters.

#### ***/seconds.* participating artists:**

Abdullah Al Saadi, Emily Allchurch, Conrad Atkinson, Fabienne Audéoud, George Bolster, Tony Chakar, Elizabeth Chadwick, Gordon Cheung, Ami Clarke, Stephen Clarke, Judith Cowan, Roger Cremers, Myriam Custers, Shezad Dawood, Sean Dower, Milena Dragicevic, Thomas Draschan, Alan Dunn, Paul Eachus, Laura Emsley, Al Fadhil, Nooshin Farhid, Anna Faushauer, David Ferry, Damian Flores Cortes, Peter Fillingham, Leo Fitzmaurice, Alison Gill, Margarita Gluzberg, Alex Hamilton, Margaret Harrison, Laura Hatry, Dan Hays, Taraneh Hemami, Aaron Hobson, Janet Hodgson, Mandy Lee Jandrell, Mohammed Kazem, Peter Kennard, Uta Kögelsberger, Karen Knorr, Colm Lally, Thaniel Lee, Liliane Lijn, Rut Blees Luxemburg, David Mabb, Ruth MacLennan, Melanie Mancho, Kito Mbiango, Makiko Nagaya, Adam Nankervis, Warren Neidich, Guillaume Paris, Nada Prlja, Annie Ratti, Cullinan Richards, Graziella Rizkallah Toufic, Giorgio Sadotti, Hilary Koob-Sassen, Edgar Schmitz, Hassan Sharif, Lisa Stansbie, Sergei Sviatchenko, Jalal Toufic, Rob Voerman, Jonathan Whitehall, Cindy Wright, Takayuki Yamamoto.

This exhibition also presents a special section composed of selected artists' video and audio from issues 1-14 with works by:

Asa Anderson, Paul Allsopp, Martyn Blundell, Ben Brierley, Tim Brotherton, Edward Chell, James Chinnock, Rosie Cooper, Patrick Courtney, David Cunningham, James Early, Luciana Farinati, William Furlong, Mark Harris, Véronique Janin Devoldère, Ben Judd, Anne Keleher, Conor Kelly, Peter Lewis, Peter Lloyd Lewis, Katrin Lock, Karl Lydon, Elizabeth McAlpine, Monika Oechsler, Uriel Orlow, Mark Pickles, Adrian Shaw, Marie-Anne Souloumiac, Stuart Tait, Anders Weberg, Cecilia Wee, Robert William, Jo Wonder.



***The Illusionist* by Sylvain Chomet**

In this French animated film, an illusionist finds himself out of work and travels to Scotland, where he meets a young woman. Their ensuing adventure changes both their lives forever.

This screening has been made possible by Institut Français des Emirats Arabes Unis  
French film office – Embassy of France in the UAE

**About Sharjah Art Foundation:**

Sharjah Art Foundation brings a broad range of contemporary art and cultural programmes to the communities of Sharjah, the UAE and the region. Since 2009 SAF has built on the history of cultural collaboration and exchange that began with the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993. Working with local and international partners, we create opportunities for artists and artistic production through our core initiatives that include the Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, publications and a growing collection. Our education and public programmes focus on building recognition of the central role art can play in the life of a community by promoting public learning and a participatory approach to art. All our events are free and open to the public. Sharjah Art Foundation is funded by the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah.

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**20 October 2016 –  
TeesUniNews**

## **Own a unique piece of artwork**

A chance to own a unique piece of artwork created by a notable artist or writer is on offer through an exciting exhibition hosted at Teesside University.

Actor and writer Stephen Fry and North Yorkshire artist and curator Greville Worthington are among a diverse range of celebrated individuals who have been invited to create work for the Paint Her to Your Own Mind exhibition.

Exhibition visitors can bid to own each of the 147 exhibits through an auction, without knowing who created the artwork as all identities are hidden.

The Laurence Sterne Trust, which is behind the exhibition, invited 147 contributors to create work in response to a blank page in 200-year-old humorous novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

Published in nine volumes, the first two appearing in 1759 with others following over the next seven years, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* purports to be a biography of the eponymous character.

Sterne's intention with the blank page of the book – page number 147 – was to stimulate the reader to complete the page by creating their own representation of beauty.

Work created by the artists to complete this blank page with their own creations can be seen at the University's Constantine Gallery until Monday 24 October.

Other participating artists and writers also include Norman Ackroyd, John Baldessari, Jérémie Bennequin, Nancy Campbell, Maura Dooley, Ian Duhig, Neil Gaiman, Tom Gauld, Patrick Hughes, Tom Phillips, Martin Rowson, Wendy Saunders, Lemony Snicket,

Carolyn Thompson, Momoyo Torimitsu and Alison Wilding.

Rachel Dodd, from the University's School of Design, Culture & the Arts said: 'It is really accessible lots of things can seem very complicated, but as there are lots of bite-sized pieces of work, ranging from very traditional things that you would expect to things which are a bit more contemporary.'

**Public Symposium – Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield**

**12 November 2015**

A public symposium was held at Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, on Thursday 12 November 2015, with talks by artists from the exhibition, archivist Janette Martin from the Henry Moore Institute and Allison Foster, Archive Curator of the Tate. The symposium brought together different responses to the exhibition and to the on-line narratives curated around the intersections between archives, access and practitioner responses.

**Friday 16 October 2015 –  
Saturday 09 January 2016**

## **Thought Positions in Sculpture**

**Curated by Dr Rowan Bailey  
Huddersfield Art Gallery**

Thought Positions in Sculpture presents contemporary artists who have encountered the archive through the stories of their own art practice. The physical exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery refers to existing works of art from Leeds Museums and Galleries Sculpture Collection, archival material from the Henry Moore Institute, digitised archival material from the Tate Gallery, audio material from the British Library and other archival sites, some of which are inventions by the artist themselves.

Intended as a starting point for thinking in, with and through the archive, the exhibition serves as a platform and context for different narratives of sculptural thinking. Over the duration of three months, conversation pieces will be generated through this website alongside the physical work on display at Huddersfield Art Gallery.

Thought Positions in Sculpture features the following artists:

Brass Art are an artist collective who explore the Freud Museum house, London as an archive site for capturing uncanny resonances through digital sculptural forms  
<https://brassart.org.uk/Thought-Positions>

Desmond Brett explores the notion of 'assemblage' through the photographic archives of Eileen Agar and Paul Nash.  
<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/thought-positions-in-sculpture-a-curatorial-research-project>

Liadin Cooke responds to the parallels of her own sculptural thinking in relation to Geoffrey Clarke (Leeds Sculpture Collection/Henry Moore Institute archive).

Sheila Gaffney stages her own thought position through the object relations she believes are in play in the evolution of twentieth century British sculpture.  
<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/ourprojects/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/sheilagaff>

[ney/](#)

Juliet MacDonald addresses Henry Fehr's memorial 'Head of Victory' (Leeds Sculpture Collection).  
<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/ourprojects/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/julietmacdonald/>

Nicola Redmore encounters some of the plaster works of Kenneth Armitage (Leeds Sculpture Collection) and digitised archival materials from the Tate Gallery.

Hester Reeve listens to the audio interviews from the 'Artists' Lives' project at the British Library to address the concept of 'sculptural substance'.  
<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/thought-positions-in-sculpture-a-curatorial-research-project>

Lisa Stansbie explores a series of swimming machine patents from Google to produce her own sculptures.  
<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/thought-positions-in-sculpture-a-curatorial-research-project>

Jill Townsley, a sculptor influenced by serialisation, engages with the processes of making an archive through the retrieval of stones from the West Yorkshire landscape.  
<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/stones-thought-positions-in-sculpture>

### Artists' Writing

Each artist in the exhibition will write a personal narrative about their work that reveals the unique backstories to the making of art; through the archival content addressed, the practice-led strategies deployed and the thought positions formed.

**LISA STANSBIE**

University of Huddersfield

## The archive of unrealized devices

### KEYWORDS

swimming  
practice-based  
research  
collage  
immaterial archives  
fiction  
Google Patents

### ABSTRACT

*Google Patents is an eight-year-old virtual searchable database containing the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) patents, with US patent applications dating back to 1790. This searchable online archive of invention, novelty and innovation is a valuable tool for designers and researchers. As a point of departure for recent art-based research, Google Patents online database is mined by me as a creative practitioner. As an artist-hacker, the found material used in my research arises from patent searches for fantastical machines and devices developed to assist with swimming, dating from the 1870s to the early twentieth century. The retrieved patent, etched drawings and information evidence an understanding of a new sport at particular moments in time. However, almost all of these patents remained 'unrealized', only contained within the drawing and text of the patent itself. These patents are used as the visual and conceptual basis for *The Swimming Machine Archive* (2014), a growing body of collages featuring fictional devices for moving through water.*

## 1. A SWIMMING CONTEXT

The body of research that this article discusses surfaces from a contemporary art practice that is located around the sport of swimming and specifically the history of outdoor swimming, stemming back to the first ever English channel swim in 1875 by Captain Matthew Webb. The history of swimming itself poses a multitude of potentiality with regard to researching social and cultural behaviour from the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom and, in particular, the impact such behaviour had upon design and the role of ‘invention’. Swimming as a popular activity in its own right in the United Kingdom arose from forms of bathing<sup>1</sup> and was further propelled by the publication of Everard Digby’s book *The Art of Swimming* in 1587, which proposed that swimming was a science to be studied and that such study could reduce the number of drownings in the country at this time. At the start of the nineteenth century swimming was beginning to be considered a more serious sporting activity. The poet Lord Byron demonstrated a feat of endurance by swimming the Hellespont in 1810, and for those who could swim in the United Kingdom, breaststroke was the fashion. The first indoor swimming baths were also opened in 1849 in London. It is from this point onwards that many inventions were patented. The inventor’s aim was to capture the imagination of the public around the new interest in swimming and also make the activity potentially accessible for the majority of the country, who were still unable to swim. The fantastical and, to our contemporary eyes, cumbersome objects that were proposed during this time were submitted as patents, and it is these designs that form the basis of this exploration. The point of departure for this practice-based enquiry is the archived swimming apparatus patents mined from the online immaterial archive, Google Patents. The patents range from simple hand gloves for making the hands ‘webbed’, to complex land-based machines that the body is strapped into with the aim of replicating the bodily movements of swimming. Each patent is presented via a series of etched diagrams showing the design from various angles, with many showing a representation that includes a depiction of a person. The majority of the patents are titled ‘swimming apparatus’ or ‘swimming devices’. Text that accompanies the etched drawings often states the benefits of such devices. An invention by Charles R. Daellenbach lodged at the United States patent office in 1889, titled ‘Swimming Device’, describes an invention whereby a wearer has hinged wooden shapes chained to their ankles:

The device may be readily and easily applied to the ankles of the wearer, and may be worn while out of the water and walking, as well as when in the water and swimming. As they increase the amount of surface available when expanded or in the open position, they enable the swimmer to swim faster than he could do by the same amount of exertion, and as they are very light and impervious to water they maintain their lightness at all times both in and out of the water.

(1890)

1. Bathing dates as far back as the ancient era and was viewed in the Roman period as a healthy activity. The development of ‘Spa’ towns such as Bath further encouraged the notion that bathing had medicinal benefits.



This may read like an absurd invention, but its shape and the concept of making the legs buoyant in the water is replicated in a contemporary swimming device called a 'pull buoy': a foam shape held between the legs that swimmers of all abilities use for training. It is noticeable that some of these impractical patents appear to have a lineage with a number of today's contemporary devices used within swimming, although the most obvious difference is the use of materials. The modern inventions of rubber, foam and plastic were not available in the nineteenth century.

The tracing of the history of the object is also made possible through the Google Patent search for 'prior art'. This filter will trace the ancestry of an object, including potential earlier influences and versions. The prior art search is actually intended to be used as evidence to support each patents' originality. When you click 'find prior art' Google will pull information from the patent you are viewing to cross-reference throughout its database. Google becomes your bespoke archivist.

## 2. VIRTUAL ARCHIVES

Jacques Derrida reminds us in the introduction to *Archive Fever* (1995) that the foundations of the word 'archive' stem from the Greek word *arkheion*: a home, an address or a residence of the magistrates. He writes:

[...] the citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law. On account of their publicly recognised authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house [...] that official documents are filed.

(Derrida 1995: 2)

This description of the earliest archive gives it a specific, internal material site in which the deposited files are protected from the outside world. From this description, the archive is seen as a place to be guarded, creating a sense of secret/private/protected information. In order for the archive to remain largely private it requires continued restriction and control. It is this authority over the archive that governs its identity, shapes its contents, collects and orders the information within it. In this notion of a traditional material archive it is a fixed body of knowledge that is maintained and controlled. This could be seen as a closed and 'passive' archive. As the archive evolved it became used as a basis for historical research alongside the initial Greek focus on containing information for legal purposes. The information located in an archive therefore became specialized and possessed a sense of authentic authority due to its ability to generate lost places, times, objects and people. Users of the historical archive have a sense of trust in its contents. Historians utilize the archive as an imprint of history to make connections with the present. However, their present experiences and situation would usually guide the creation of individualized narratives, mining

of the archive with an underlying voice of an author. The authenticity of the traditional archive is relied upon as a sound evidential work. Its collections can be forensic, but they might also pave the way for multiple interpretations. The classification of documents in an archive relies upon a narrative constructed through interpretation in order to classify. This, according to Derrida, 'establishes' the document. The performative aspect of this classification involves an author of the archive as an underlying classification is developed.

In Hal Foster's essay 'An archival impulse' he describes in a footnote how there might exist 'archive reason' within a controlled society whereby 'our past actions are archived (medical records, border crossings, political involvement [...]) so that our present activities can be surveilled and our future behaviours predicted' (2004: 60). This is particularly pertinent in relation to the immaterial archive and the ways in which contemporary society has a need for fast archives and virtual storage mechanisms. Infinitely expandable archival systems are attached to our everyday activities and information retrieval is rapid. However, the immaterial archive is also infinitely fallible, potentially open to hacking, editing and crashing and this is where the appropriation approaches of contemporary artists can potentially flourish. In opposition to the traditional archive the digital apparatus allows for transient and ephemeral information, a sudden jolt against historical materialism (Benjamin 1988).

### 3. GOOGLE AS CO-AUTHOR

Archives rely on an underlying system, otherwise they become impenetrable. This system arises from the author and the conventions to which the author adheres. The archive's organization and presentation cannot be separated from its author. The use of online archives has become commonplace. Lev Manovich's (2001: 16) premise that 'the shift of all of our culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication' is well established in our Internet-driven society. The Internet as an archive can be likened to Borges' *The Library of Babel* in that the seemingly endless information it contains is governed by the log book of search engines, which organizes what would be otherwise unwieldy sets of information (2000). The Internet as archive has a system of storage in the form of 'pages' but no overall visible authoritative editor. This lack of overriding authority allows for the existence of material that is fictional/inauthentic alongside the non-fictional/authentic, and all manner of sub-divisions in between these two descriptions. Search engines are the 'key' to this 'library' of information, yet these engines run on popularity where results are ranked, creating and reproducing a 'popular' narrative, which is becoming increasingly managed by Google as the archive-keeper. As Google has rapidly expanded, new forms of knowledge are organized by Google<sup>2</sup> and our access to this information is manufactured by Google as co-author.

2. One example being Google Scholar, which makes published scholarly material accessible but can be limiting to information literacy. As William Badke states: 'Google Scholar serves up some citations without full text, making it an easy place from which to build a bibliography without necessarily providing the opportunity to read the full paper' (2013).

#### 4. UNREALIZED WORKS

The title of this article is influenced by Hans Ulrich Obrist's (with Julia Peyton-Jones, Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle) project, in collaboration with The Serpentine Gallery, London, Agency of Unrealised Projects (AUP). The project attempts to document artworks that were never realized and as such largely remain unknown. In parallel to the swimming devices from Google Patents, Obrist's interest lies in the potentiality of a possible future for unrealized artworks that exist only in documents, drawings and plans. Many of the works are not possible to complete due to their deliberate creation as a utopian concept, others are restrained by their technical and practical requirements, and others are censored due to the messages they carry. The 'agency' in the title of Obrist's project acts to archive these works and represents them in gallery and museum exhibitions, alongside an extensive online database of the works. They become documentation as artwork:

Archival art is as much preproduction as it is postproduction: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces [...] artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects – in art and in history alike – that might offer points of departure again.  
(Foster 2004: 5)

#### 5. FICTIONAL ARTIST ARCHIVES

Mark Godfrey states that from the 1970s onwards there are an increasing number of artists whose practice and research begin with archives, alongside artists who 'deploy what has been termed as an archival form of research with one object of inquiry leading to another' (2007: 143). This process involves the audience collectively making connections between images, text and objects to create new narratives (much like the Swimming Machine Archive as it sits within this curated paper). Some of these new narratives represent existing historical archival material, made visible or appropriated by the artist. This interest in the archive *for* artists stems from the history of Conceptual Art in the 1970s, informed by critical theory and philosophy, such as the writings of Walter Benjamin that were first translated into English in 1968. Alongside these developments, the postmodern rejection of stylistic definers, the deconstruction of modernist narratives and a notion that anything could be appropriated as a basis to create artwork fuelled an interest in the archive, which had previously been seen as a fixed institutional apparatus. From the 1960s onwards, the idea of the document in contemporary art is also increasingly apparent in performance, live works and the processes of artistic practice. The photograph and film (and progressive advances in digital technology) play a central role in the process of archiving ephemeral work and with it, creating evidence of methods of production.

## 6. THE ATLAS GROUP

Through the work of The Atlas Group, a project set up by the artist Walid Raad, the associated authenticity ascribed to the documentation of historical events through archival processes is questioned and the notion of a fixed historical chronology is disrupted. The Atlas Group project and its associated online archive research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon and, in particular, the civil wars of 1975–1991. Through photography, video and text, experiences are collated through memory, personalities and the juxtaposition of fact and fiction. The Atlas Group archive focuses on an abstract notion of history, one that is not fixed or linear, drawing from disparate areas of experience. An example of this approach can be seen in the fictionalization of an historian called Dr Fadl Fakhouri. In *Notebook Volume 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire* (1999), Fakhouri charts the exact make, model and colour of every car used in car bombings during the period of the Lebanese wars. This is done through a combination of collage/cut out photographs and notes which state the exact time and date, location, casualties and type of explosives used. Each plate of the notebook appears factual, although the apparent evidence it presents and the fictions it creates is difficult to detect. It is only the gallery context within which the work appears that provides a clue. In contrast, *Secrets in the Open Sea* (1997) appears as a distinctly manufactured art object. It is a series of shaded panels of photographic paper that have small black and white portraits of men and women who were found dead in the Mediterranean Sea during the specified period of the Lebanese wars. Raad explains:

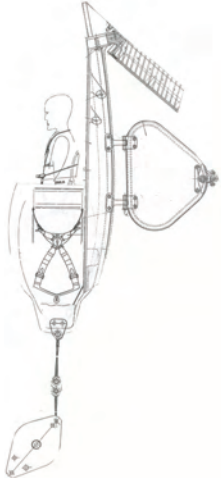
The documents in this imaginary archive do not so much document ‘what happened’, but what can be imagined, what can be said, taken for granted, what can appear as rational or not, as thinkable and sayable about the civil wars. They focus on some of the un-examined effects of the wars as they are manifest in photographic and videographic reproductions.

(2004)

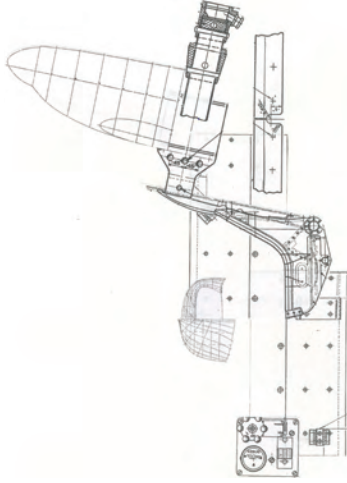
## 7. THE SWIMMING MACHINE ARCHIVE

We produce new concepts, new perceptions, new sensations, hacked out of raw data. Whatever code we hack, be it programming language, poetic language, math or music, curves or colourings, we are abstracters of new worlds. Whether we come to represent ourselves as researchers or authors, artists or biologists, chemists or musicians, philosophers or programmers, each of these subjectivities is but a fragment of a class still becoming, bit by bit, aware of itself.

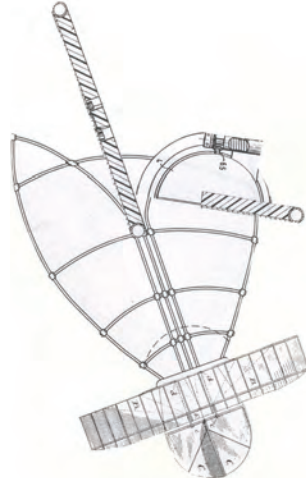
(Wark 2004: 1)



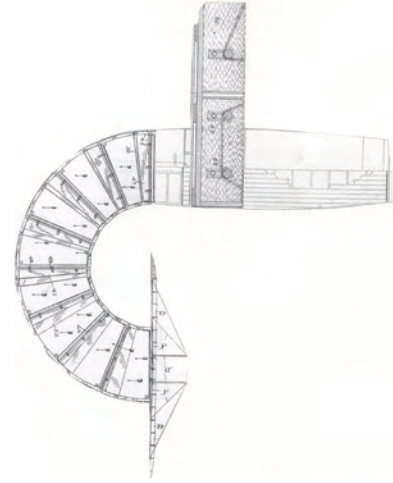
*Figure 1: Multi directional floating capsule with GPS antenna.*



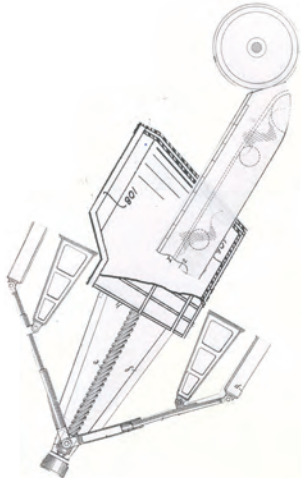
*Figure 2: Land-based swimming machine with weight bearing sections.*



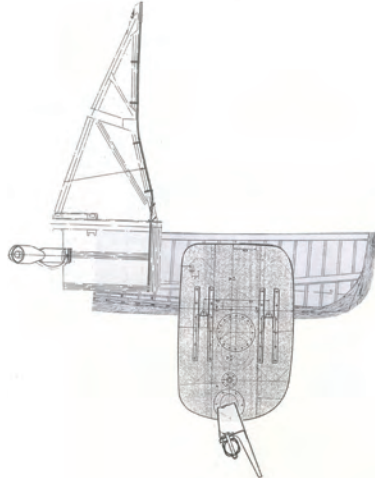
*Figure 3: Digital leg resistance float.*



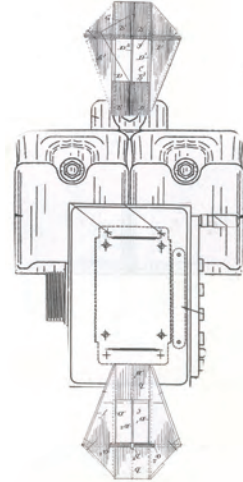
*Figure 4: Underwater multi-functional head-piece.*



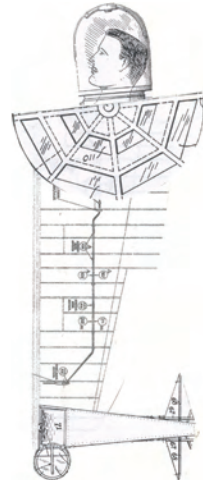
*Figure 5: Fully automated swim tracker (to follow open water swimmer).*



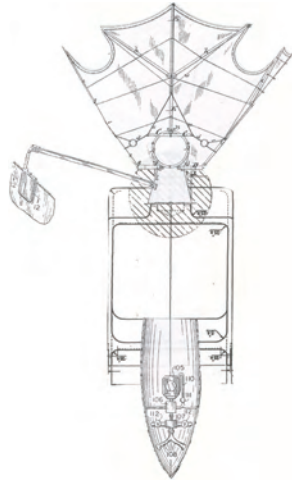
*Figure 6: Long distance swim and overnight adventure pod.*



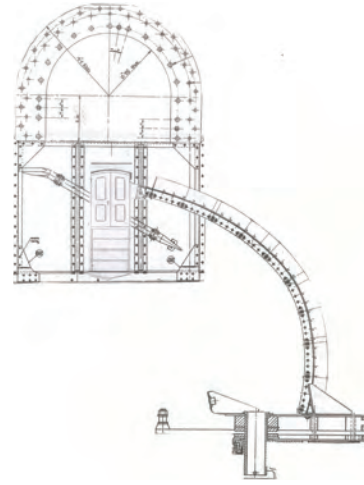
*Figure 7: Abdominal pulse for building core muscle.*



*Figure 8: Swim instructor capsule for land and submersion.*



*Figure 9: Butterfly exercise board and training apparatus.*



*Figure 10: Floating training shell with detachable propulsion machine.*



The collages that form The Swimming Machine Archive are constructed from a mash-up of digital plans of objects; the plans themselves demonstrate an object yet to be realized. The plans consist of diagrams for boats, aeroplanes, machinery and weaponry and, importantly, are acquired from sellers on eBay.<sup>3</sup> The plans are then printed out to use as a basis for each 'machine' collage. Therefore, a looped transition from digital to material, returning to digital, is presented here in this piece of writing (see Figures 1–10). The locality of the work promotes the space of the page reformed as exhibition site and potentially generates a blurring of the spaces traditionally inhabited by writing and practice. This article becomes a place for encounter with the artwork, framed by episodes of writing, some of which consist in the collage of quotations, threaded together by myself as author/curator/maker. There is, however, an immaterial 'loss' from the material versions of the collages presented here. This loss is also evident in the scanned Google Patents. This materiality (quality of the paper, ink and scale) is flattened and potentially reduced to a poor equivalent or perhaps a new immaterial object that mirrors its former self. This mismatch of the digital and material quality of appropriated imagery is discussed by Hito Steyerl in her essay 'In defence of the poor image':

The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.

(2009)

Uriel Orlow in his essay 'Latent archives, roving lens' poses three distinct categories of contemporary artists whose work is archival: first, those who 'simulate memory processes and create fictional archives by way of collecting'; second, 'those that reject the imaginary or symbolic archive in favour of the real, making use of the documentary' (2006: 34); and third, a smaller group who he describes as 'archive thinkers' – those who are interested in deconstructing the notion of the archive itself. It could be said that the multitude of current contemporary creative practice concerned with the archival cannot easily fit into such categories. The practice within The Swimming Machine Archive perhaps crosses the boundaries of all three categories. It collects and excavates material stored in Google Patents (via the internet) to create fictional diagrams that in themselves suggest a new archive of potential objects that are impossible to materially construct, thus remaining imaginary and, therefore, unrealized.

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3. Ebay is another example of a transitory archive of objects of dubious authenticity.

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# Horror Studies

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'Paint Her to Your Own Mind', Constantine Gallery, Middlesbrough, UK. 7 – 24 October 2016

'Paint Her to Your Own Mind', &Model Gallery, Leeds, UK 27 October – 12 November 2016

'Paint Her to Your Own Mind', Shandy Hall, York, UK 09 July – 30 September 2016

'/Seconds', Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE 10 October – 09 December 2014

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Live performance on 5 December 2015 'Swimming Machine' at Huddersfield Art Gallery, UK

'Artist Talk: Lisa Stansbie', at Huddersfield Art Gallery, UK 5 December 2015.

2015 Lecture on 'The History of Swimming Machines', Huddersfield Art Gallery, 5 December 2015

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<https://www.hud.ac.uk/research/researchcentres/st/thoughtpositionsinsculpture/lisastansbie>

'Huddersfield Art Gallery Showcases artists' responses to archives', Archives and Creative Practice website, Birmingham City University.

Launched 10 November 2015 <http://www.archivesandcreativepractice.com/archivesandcreativepractice/2015/11/9/huddersfield-art-gallery-showcases-artists-responses-to-archives>

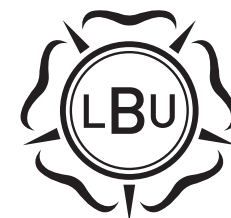
'Thought Positions in Sculpture' by Curlew Films [Film] Published 15 March 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3qB-SDxDqg>

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