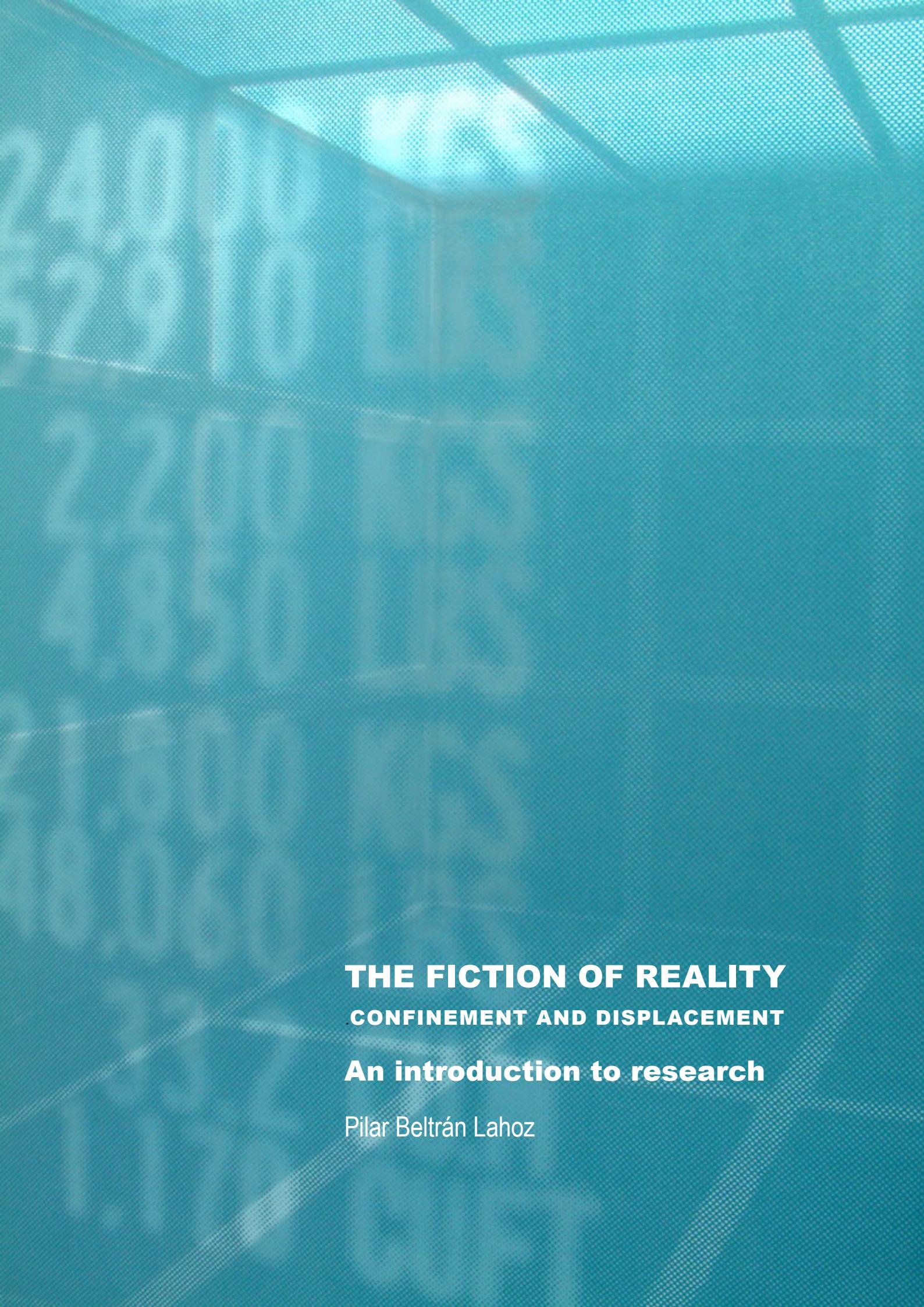


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THE FICTION OF REALITY
CONFINEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

An introduction to research

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ORIGINAL TITLE:

Between Reality and Fiction

TITLE PROPOSED:

THE FICTION OF REALITY;
CONFINEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT
An introduction to research

Pilar Beltrán Lahoz

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This PHD project has been based on 100% studio practice; the original title for the research programme was *Between Reality and Fiction* and aimed at exploring the construction of *reality* and *truth* in our society, a society strictly controlled by the mass media. Whilst developing the first project within this body of research - *Isolation* (an attempt to contrast a real life experience of a visit to a prison with existing institutional information obtained through second and third hand sources - readings, media, films...), a range of other more pertinent concepts arose, causing a shift from those initial ideas to ones incorporating control, displacement and space, understanding this, not only as a physical entity, but also as a socio-political construction.

Based on the different projects that form the basis of my research, I explored the concept of control and how that is exercised on individuals in free/democratic societies- from spatial control (access/no access), economical, cultural (oneself/others), medical/technological, or media control (the creation of public opinion). This research attempts to question/reflect public awareness of these control measures, in order to assess their limitations, whilst investigating any existing gaps in the system which could potentially subvert it.

What has been particularly relevant has been the exploration of issues relating to space, understood not only as a physical entity, but also as a socio-political construction, how space is organised, divided and controlled in an era of globalisation, and whether, or why access to certain 'spaces' is either severely restricted or completely denied.

Work developed during the PhD has consisted of: Practical studio research (mainly installations, video and photography), site specific visits/trips relevant to particular themes within the project (HMP Winchester, Strait of Gibraltar, Canary Islands, container depots, airports...); related readings; compilation of explicit news reportage; and the construction of an extensive archive that includes all printed and digital matter tracking the entire research process and its methodology. Personal experience has also been a main factor, influencing the development of specific research: temporary/precarious housing, part-time jobs, or in general, the situation of living abroad with all that that implies in the way of physical and cultural displacement.

Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Guide to the Research Archive	8
Introduction to the Research Project	12
Project Stages	22
Research and the Studio	
Phase 1	25
Phase 2	41
Phase 3	59
Epilogue	86
Conclusion	89
Index of Illustrations	92
Bibliography	102

*Without consideration, without pity, without shame
they have built great and high walls around me.*

*And now I sit here and despair.
I think of nothing else; this fate gnaws at my mind;*

*for I had many things to do outside.
Ah why did I not pay attention when they were building the walls.*

*But I never heard any noise or sound of builders.
Imperceptibly they shut me from the outside world.*

Konstandinos Kavafis (1896)

Text used in the video installation *Walls*
by Rogelio López Cuenca/Rafael Marchante/ Elo Vega.

To Yugo, Kai, Haku, my parents and my grandparents.
To Sonja Windham West.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Southampton for granting me a teaching assistantship in the Sculpture Department during the first three years of research. Also, thanks to Fundación Dávalos-Flécher for a 2 year grant (Beca Artes Plásticas 2000 and 2001) and Conselleria de Cultura i Educació for the Ayuda para la Realización de Proyectos Teóricos y/o Prácticos en el Extranjero. Without their financial support, this project would not have been possible.

For their time, assistance and constant support in this project, I would like to thank Professor John Gibbons, Jim Unsworth, Sonja Widham West, Sue Riley, Andy Brook, Chris Carter, Jane Smith, Caroline Hill, Mar Arza, Pablo Brotóns, Roz Buttle and Pilar Dolz.

Also, thanks to Father Peter Wilkins, and María, María, Ana, and Rita (inmates at HMP Winchester) for sharing their experiences of prison, (this was one of the most intense experiences within whole of the research).

To the scrap yard at St Marylebone for the loan of aluminium sheets for building the installation Isolation.

To Mary Sear and Salvador Beltrán for their commitment and help in collecting news on migration from the English and Spanish press.

To the journalists Cesar Hernández and Candi Oliver for inviting me to work as a translator in a series of interviews of Sub-Saharan citizens on the Canary Islands, and for kindly sharing knowledge and information about the situation of migration in Southern Spain. To Cruz Roja de Tarifa, Norman Offer and Freightliner Southampton, for allowing me access to their premises and to Pepe Naranjo for generously sharing his news archive on migration in the Canary Islands.

Guide to the Research Archive

The creation of an archive that evidences the research process formed a substantial part of the PhD which helped me to understand the methodology, and became, as time progressed, a powerful tool in aiding the development and evaluation of my creative work. This archive includes all relevant documentation gathered during the research period, from newspaper articles, sketches, notes, images (1st and 2nd hand sources), unresolved projects, and documentation of the artworks.

At the very onset of the research process, collected information stockpiled on my desk. Not being a very methodical person, it took me quite a while whilst working towards the MPhil Upgrade to structure this archive. I decided to divide it into projects, each one subdivided into folders containing various printed/photographic information, bibliographic references, etc... The archive also includes boxed audiovisual materials (mainly video tapes and CD's). Contents vary depending on the complexity of each project, with files organised chronologically, making the creative process more accessible. Folders have been rearranged and reorganised a few times whilst compiling and editing, whilst some tapes still hold completely raw, unedited material.

I now see that there are two stages in the archive: Stage One, up to the MPhil upgrade, which took place in February 2001 - includes the projects Isolation and Short Stories. This part is concerned with building the archive structure 'a posteriori' (once I had compiled all the relevant information and any conclusions). During Stage Two, having worked consistently on the archive for some time, it became almost a piece in itself. From then on it seemed to grow quite naturally and in parallel with my studio work. Most days I dedicated time to both practical and archiving work – at that time I was collecting a lot of press news so I needed to update regularly. I feel strongly that the continuity in archiving lead to a different way of working in the studio. Instead of concentrating on a specific piece, I began on a core body of work that, although exploring different media, held a common theoretical thread. The Second Stage pieces are all grouped in the series *Other Journeys*, except the transitional piece *Detrás de la Puerta, Debajo de la Cama (Behind the Door, Under the Bed)*.

The archive is structured as follows:

PROJECT I: ***ISOLATION***

Folder 1. www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk. Includes printed information from the website; this being the first source I accessed for information about HM Prison Winchester and the UK prison system.

Folder 2. Visits to HMP Winchester. Contains contacts at Winchester prison, calendar of visits, and notes about impressions and conversations with inmates.

Folder 3. Reference texts and images. Articles from newspapers on prison issues. Collection of related photographs from different media (newspapers, advertising, TV documentary, films, books...) and art references.

Folder 4. Relevant chapters from the bibliography.

Folder 5. Bringing the ideas to the studio. Visual material and notes that describe the whole process of creation, from unresolved/rejected ideas to the final installation.

Folder 6. The plans. Technical drawings of the installation. They were used to build the piece again in the 1st Biennale de Valencia (2001).

Folder 7. The process of assembly. Images of the set up and take down process.

Folder 8. Images of the final installation.

Box 1. Hi8. Contains all recorded material from this period. Only tape 7 (final frame used in the installation) has been edited.

Box 2. VHS/MiniDV/Sound. Edited material from the Hi8 tapes and final tapes for the installation. Sound samples from Sound library and recorded sounds. Soundtrack of final video.

Isolation index. Index of contents of the folders and boxes.

PROJECT II: ***SHORT STORIES***

Folder 1. Photo folder 1. Collection of images taken during the research period 1999-2001, mainly while travelling.

Folder 2. Photo folder 2. Collection of images taken during the research period 1999-

2001, mainly while travelling.

Folder 3. Final images. Final pieces of the photographic series *Short Stories*.

PROJECT III: *BEHIND THE DOOR, UNDER THE BED*

Folder 1: On surveillance. Reference material from the web, press, and collected images.

Images from speed cameras.

Folder 2: The images/final composition. Stills from the videos. Composition tests and final images of artwork.

Box 1 Hi8 tapes. Original recordings.

PROJECT IV: *OTHER JOURNEYS*

Folder 1: *The Lift.* Using the images of a lift -Various concepts to developed piece (unresolved)

Folder 2: The Airport. *Planespotters and 360°.* Reference material on airports, the creative process of Planespotters (photographic series) and 360° (video installation).

Folder 3: On Migration. UK. (I) Information from the web, brochures and British press. (The press articles are related to immigration in the UK: laws, politics, riots,..)

Folder 4: On Migration. UK. (II) Articles from British Press. Collection of news related to Sangatte and the Euro tunnel, migration in Southern Spain, Australia and migration policies, international issues.

Folder 5: On Migration. Spain. (I) Articles from Spanish Press. Immigration in Spain: general issues, migration laws.

Folder 6: On Migration. Spain. (II). Articles from the Spanish Press. Various issues.

Folder 7: Selected Bibliography.

Folder 8: Western Sahara. (Postponed project)

Folder 9: Straits of Gibraltar. Information about the trip, images and related press articles. Piece for the exhibition *Visiones Urbanas*, Santander 2006.

Folder 10: Canary Islands (I). Press articles from Pepe Naranjo's archive. Related arti-

cles from Spanish press. Fuerteventura airport (detention centre): Reports from Medicos sin Fronteras and Human Rights Watch.

Folder 11: Canary Islands (II). Images from the trip. Cesar Hernández's articles published in *La opinión de Tenerife*. Gathered information pre writing the articles.

Folder 12: Dover/Tampa. Reference images. *Tampa*: news on the press. Screen process. *Dover*: Articles from the press and screen process. Images from the process to final piece.

Folder 13: Rumors. From sketches to final piece.

Folder 14: Cargo. Visits to container depots: Southampton –Norman Offer, Redbridge – Freightliner, Nan-ko –Osaka kontena Futo.

Folder 15: Cargo. Process and final images from *Cargo 01*, *Cargo 02*, *Cargo 03*.

Folder 16: Container. Related references from press and exhibitions.

Folder 17: Container. From process to final piece.

BOXES MISSING

EXHIBITIONS

Folder 1: Personal exhibitions. Information about solo and group exhibitions. 1999-2003.

Folder 2: Personal exhibitions. Information about solo and group exhibitions. 2003-2007.

Folder 3: Visited exhibitions. Collected information from some of the shows visited during the research.

Introduction to the Research Project

Enrolling on a PhD course is to embark on a long journey. When I started I had only a vague idea of the topic I wanted to explore. Immersing myself fully was like opening door after door; I moved swiftly from taking the lead to letting the topic propel me along, naturally navigating its own development. The research became exciting and fulfilling as it created a balance between investigating, listening and resolving.

The title I chose at the onset of my research was *Between Reality and Fiction*. When I think about it now I feel it was probably too broad and vague, even though it did encapsulate most of the issues I explored: media control, construction of reality or construction of space... Although at first I was particularly interested in media control and the creation of a truth through the creation of public opinion, the exploration of space and how space is structured to control behaviour in an apparently more silent and concealed way slowly became the main issue.

The title was finally changed to *The Fiction of Reality; Confinement and Displacement*, emphasizing in two phenomena that partly define human relationships in the global era and which provide evidence of failures within contemporary society's utopic vision, in which freedom (of opinion, of movement, of access..) is deemed a highly respected value. I felt that drawing attention to these two phenomena in the title would help to clarify the main concerns of my work.

During the first stages of the project I mainly explored conditions of confinement and isolation, understanding them as a social, spatial, economical and personal condition. The prison, as symbol and metaphor, reflected these conditions. Prison has been used many times as a model for explaining how institutions are ruled and structured, providing a clear way of visualising how, in more subtle ways the functioning of it is reproduced in many other areas of life. In the second part of the research, confinement gave way to displacement, a concept mainly analysed through the exploration of contemporary migratory flows, a phenomenon that has always existed but has recently developed in many ways. Transport facilities (that make distances seem shorter) have encouraged many people to look for 'a

better place to progress in life'. On the other hand, while the numbers of potential migrants increase, destination countries have changed somewhat, from the vast countries in the era of the Big Migration (Australia, Canada, USA..) to smaller and overpopulated ones such as the Western European countries. Migration laws are becoming tighter and more selective; developed countries are shielding or fortifying their borders amid new and expanding waves of fear and prejudice in the world ¹. At the same time, in the globalised world, labour policies appear more permissive, contracts more unstable, unions and solidarity weaker, which again throws open new socio-political situations of isolation and displacement.

The work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault has influenced largely in my research. Not an expert on his writings, they have nevertheless helped me to analyse and expand on the main concepts (power, knowledge, control, the individual, institutions,...). Particularly relevant were the interviews and lectures collected in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984* and *Aesthetics. Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984* and the book *Discipline and Punishment*.

In 1974 Foucault said: 'I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers' ². That's exactly how I felt about his essays: they provided invaluable tools and were a constant inspiration for the development of my ideas and resulting work.

During the analysis of different types of spaces - disciplinary institutions (prison), non-places (airport, freight containers), borders (straits) ...- this research also attempted to

1 The era of the two blocks, western versus communist, has given way to a new contraposition between the Western and Muslim world. The crashes of September the 11th marked a dramatic/monumental change and has been prominent as an example of the new dangers/enemies of the West; this event fueled new conflicts in the Middle East (crisis in Afghanistan, Irak, Iran..) and used as a means of cracking organised resistance to white power. At the same time new potencies, i.e. China, are developing faster, urging a rethink of the balance of international policies. Endemic conflicts in the African continent continue and remain unresolved.

2 Michel Foucault, (1974) 'Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir' in *Dits et Ecrits*, t. II. Paris: Gallimard, 1994, pp. 523-4.

explore how control/power is exercised on individuals in contemporary society, a society that has been shifting from what Foucault called a disciplinary society to a control society. He associated these disciplinary systems with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ultimately reaching their apogee at the beginning of the twentieth century. They operated through organizing major sites of confinement, in which individuals were constantly moving from one closed site to another, each with its own laws; first of all the family, then the school, the barracks, factory, and occasionally hospital or prison - the model site of confinement. But as Gilles Deleuze states in a text titled *Postscript on Control Societies* 'we are in a midst of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement. 'Control' is the name proposed by Burroughs to characterize the new monster, and Foucault saw it as fast approaching. Paul Virilio too, is constantly analysing the ultra rapid forms of apparently free-floating control that are taking over from the old disciplines at work within the time scales of closed systems.'³

In the same text Deleuze describes how disciplinary societies are ruled by *precepts* while in controlled societies the key thing is the *password*, the *code* that indicates whether access (to certain areas, to some information...) should be allowed or denied. In controlled societies the *factory* (symbol of work in disciplinary societies) is giving way to the *business*, in which rivalry and healthy competition set individuals against each other; in education the *exam* is being replaced by *continuous assessment*; in the prison system *custody* is swapped in certain cases by a *tagging system*. Markets are won by establishing a discipline, by fixing rates rather than by reducing costs, by transforming products rather than by specialising production. Marketing is now the instrument of social control. In controlled societies a man is no longer a man confined but a man in debt. According to Deleuze, 'control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline is long-term, infinite and discontinuous'.

Control is exercised on individuals from many spheres. Perhaps one of the most interesting I found was that exercised through architectural space. How space is designed to

3 Deleuze, G. 'Postscript on Control societies'. Essay included in the catalogue Ctrl [Space]. Rhetoric's of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother edited by Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel. ZKM Karlsruhe and the MIT Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

control behaviour was very patent in the prison, but it is also happening much more subtly in many other spaces in everyday life. Talking about architecture, control, and power, José Miguel Cortés wrote: ‘It is true that the relationship of architecture with social behaviour is complex and full of interaction. Consequently, many people consider that the architectural environment and its role in the configuration of everyday life is not open to debate, is taken for granted and seen as being beyond questioning. This inability to question it is what has transformed architecture into one of the most effective and powerful of all ideological structures and representations of power. Something which Pierre Bourdieu underscored when he wrote, “The most successful ideological effects are those that have no words, and ask no more than complicitous silence”. Authority is tolerable only if it possesses the ability to hide its mechanisms and pass itself off as being for the general good, something which is no more than a legitimisation of its power. As Foucault insisted, we are no longer dealing with a relationship of power based on the evident domination of one person over another, rather on a concept of disperse power in the social body which uses the very capacity of the subject for its own repression. A power capable of constructing docile subjects and operating through social and spatial practices that extends into all corners of vital experience, a bio-power controlling the subject at a deep biological level, disciplining its corporal gestures, its habits and desires. And the complicity of architecture (given that the organisation of space and time facilitates the structuring of corporal discipline) is fundamental in this process, helping to elaborate different techniques to assign people to specific places and to reduce them to a limited number of gestures and habits. This spatial dimension of power, as we have said previously, is blatantly obvious in disciplinary institutions (hospitals, schools, factories, asylums, prisons ...), but tends to spill over into all of society. Architecture creates places where we play out our everyday existence, it establishes order and defines boundaries which lead to the construction of a certain fixed world and the way in which we live. In this way they help to construct and reproduce relationships of power, to reflect the identities, differences and struggle of the gender, races, cultures, generations and/or

social classes.⁴

This relationship between architecture/space and control/power has been explored in my research mainly through installation works. Installations evolve over long periods of time, from the generation of ideas to their conclusion. Developed in parallel, video and photography have been tools for documenting the research and the process and also a medium by themselves. Due to the length of the research programme, I haven't experienced an urge to produce final pieces, giving way to an expanding and complex Documentation of my visits, interviews, plus images collated within the archive and used as departure points. They are very open, always highly metaphorical – the images or representations of real spaces but 'construction' or 'inhabit'. Although the documentation process for these images was meticulously collected, I intended to keep an open apology but encouraging questioning.

There are many samples of contemporary art pieces that question these same issues. From 1984, Spanish artist Isidoro Valcarcel Medina presented *Arquitecturas Prematuras*, a series of architectural drawings with designs such as '*the unemployment house*', '*the people's prison*', '*the museum of the Ruins*', '*the*

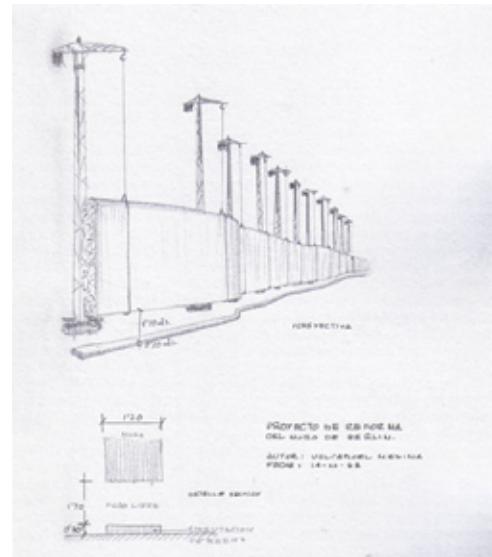


fig. 1 Isidoro Valcárcel Medina.
Proyecto de reforma del muro de Berlín.

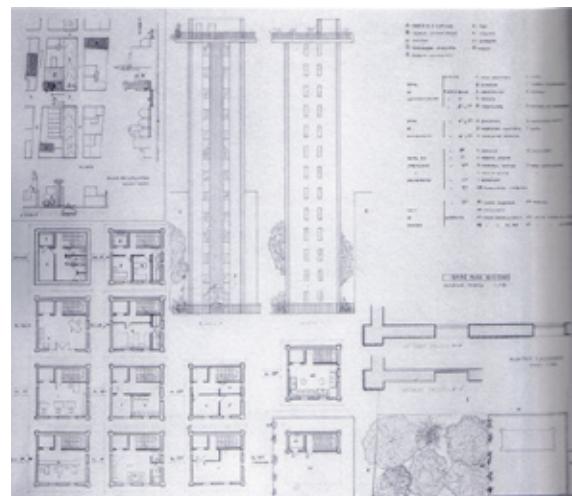


fig. 2 Isidoro Valcárcel Medina.

4 José Miguel Cortés. Against Architecture (I) (The Urgency to (Re) Think The Society of the *House* Castelló 1984: Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló.

suicidal's house' (fig 2) ,... a series of architectural designs that criticise a power unable to accept new realities and change, a society that accepts anything without questioning, or a culture based on the ephemeral but obsessed at the same time with self preservation in museums... All the designs are very ironic and based on socio-political issues.

Latterly, I found an interesting piece presented by Santiago Sierra in the Spanish Pavilion during the 50 Biennale di Venezia. The piece *Wall Closing off a Space*⁵ (fig. 3) was a direct criticism of the inaccessibility of space. Although displayed within an international exhibition at a European venue, the installation was invigilated by a Spanish policeman, with visitors having to provide evidence of their Spanish citizenship in order to be allowed in. That created a lot of complaints from the public, a public not used (in general) to be stopped and questioned at borders ... The most interesting part of the installation was its inaccessibility -independent of the inside installation (that I could not see because, despite being Spanish citizen I was not carrying my passport!).

Apart from Sierra's work at the 50 Biennale di Venezia there were many other works that questioned division, control, or precariousness of spaces in contemporary societies. The titles of the different curated exhibitions (*The Structure of Survival*, *Clandestine*, *Utopia Station*, *Individual Systems...*) evidence this interest. Among the works presented, the Oda Projesi's *Annex* was one of the most inspiring. Oda Projesi is an artist collective based in Istanbul. *Annex* was presented within the section *The Structure of Survival*, and was about an earthquake that disfigures the city image within the context of "urban violence". The project consisted of three parts: A prefabricated house, which



fig. 3 Santiago Sierra.
Wall Closing off a Space. 2003

⁵ http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200303_1024.php

was designed especially for families who'd lost their residences in the earthquake, was brought from its site in Adapazarı and moved to Venice. Cards were produced, showing the additional annexes which had been built and mounted onto the prefabricated houses, which after 4 years of usage turned from being temporary to fixed settlements. As the houses were not big enough for people to inhabit, they constructed these additional annexes from materials depending on their particular conditions and needs. The cards included 12 models, each comprised of four views, two in, and two outside (fig. 4). On the back of the cards was written the number of inhabitants, the reasons why, and how the families had built the annexes. The cards were accompanied by a bulletin entitled *Annex*⁶. This consisted of real, though dubious and scandalous news stories about the earthquake, taken from newspapers and pictures from Adapazarı (site of the earthquake), and three articles were written especially for the bulletin ('Laws of Hospitality' by Cem İleri, 'Vernacular's Chora: Post-Earthquake Homes as Representational Space' by Ayşegül Baykan, and 'Earthquake Diary' by Petra Holzer). It was interesting to witness the spaces of these prefabricated modules and see on the postcards how they had been transformed into real *homes* and adapted by the needs of the inhabitants. The project was also interesting in the way it combined the documentation and visuals.

Another of the spaces that I explored was the frontier - the border, the very place



fig. 4 Oda Projesi.
Annex.

6 <http://evonayakisti.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/front.jpg>

where displacement starts, where we leave *home* behind to become the *other* in a new environment. To investigate the concept, I chose the straits because I felt they symbolised both, a natural and a socio-political border, plus the straits also provided a more metaphorical way of discussing the issue. I chose the Straits of Dover and the Straits of Gibraltar for geographical proximity, and because they are also hot spots in the story of contemporary migration within a European context. During the research I came across other interesting works that related to the same topic although mainly applicable to the border between Mexico and the States. One of these works is Chantal Akerman's video installation *From the Other Side*⁷. In this work Akerman shifts her focus between the border towns of Agua Prieta, Sonora, where people from all over Mexico wait in limbo before crossing over, and neighbouring Douglas, Arizona, a town ringed by mountains and desert plains. For years, immigrants passed through San Diego. But now the INS, using cutting edge technologies developed during the Vietnam War and perfected for the Gulf War, managed to quell the flow of illegals there. This leaves only the mountains and deserts of Arizona for those desperate enough to try their luck. The film opens with a series of interviews with Mexicans in Agua Prieta, many of whom have family members that had perished whilst crossing the border. In another interview, a local sheriff in Arizona commented on the government's crackdown as "a bad strategy and a bad plan," calling the elevated death toll "a calculated consequence." Although far in distance, the situation described is similar to the one in Southern Spain, where the vigilance and control measurements have become more sophisticated and efficient in the Gibraltar straits – a crossing of only 14 kms-, and which have forced people to use more dangerous routes to reach European soil. The Canary Islands have become a main destination with journeys involving open sea crossings of three or four days from the Mauritanian and Senegal coasts.

Another piece that had as a back stage the border between Mexico and the States is *On Translation: Fear* (fig. 5), from Catalan artist Antoni Muntadas. The piece was broadcast by the Mexican Televisa Canal 12, and was part of the 'inSite_05', which included different analyses and artistic productions regarding the Tijuana-San Diego border. The

7 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ik7DkrVV_Cs. (video fragment)



fig. 5 Antoni Muntadas. *On Translation: Fear*.

work attempted to expose how modern states condition and manipulate the population in border regions. Muntadas addressed the problem of borders by questioning the feeling of fear according to the side of the border where he stood. He met and interviewed both adults and children of differing ages, gender and professions who had had a direct experience of the tensions caused by the border on both sides. He also used television film footage, as well as documentaries and other journalistic materials. Muntadas avoided presenting the problematic from the angle of violence or oppression/compassion; Fear is a deeply rooted emotion in all individuals; but the fear of the other is generated by ignorance and misunderstanding and it is very easy to inflame.

I feel that there are many pieces/artists questioning socio-political issues, issues of power and control, denouncing unbalanced/unequal situations, consequences of globalisation, ... Although these social concerns exist, I also think that sometimes the interest is fickle, opportunist and led by the media (that expand or hide information according to the interests of power). Many institutions give space to artists through exhibiting art that criticise the system but in doing so, they sometimes tend to neutralise the message through its very acceptance... It is tricky to fight the system from the inside, without being absorbed,

but at the same time it's crucial that a platform exists on which to air these issues, using different channels to openly question and reach the audience (from institutional to more alternative ones).

Just to conclude, whilst trying to find a definitive title, through reflecting on this body of research, the word *confinement* cropped up several times. Not being a native speaker, I checked it in the dictionary. The descriptions included were :

Confinement⁸

noun

1. concluding state of pregnancy; from the onset of contractions to the birth of a child; "she was in labour for six hours" [syn: parturiency]
2. the act of restraining of a person's liberty by confining them
3. the state of being confined; "he was held in confinement"
4. the act of keeping something within specified bounds (by force if necessary); "the restriction of the infection to a focal area" [syn: restriction]

I was quite surprised when I found child labour as one of the synonyms for confinement, which made me reflect on my pregnancy during the research. I was pregnant when I produced the piece *Container* in 2003. The experience of pregnancy produced a very deep way of exploring the space of one's own body, generous and complex enough to accept a new life inside, designed to create a space for the new being. On the other hand I felt that being pregnant immediately converted women to being *patients*, subject to many tests and monitoring the growing baby. This monitoring is presented as essential for mothers and babies, but for me it has become at times intrusive and obsessive (predicting gender, illness, growth pattern of the foetus...) and could be seen as Medicine having the power to make decisions for us... I realised that I had found yet another form of control, one exercised directly on the body in the name of progress and Medicine...

8 Definition from the on-line dictionary WorldNet® 3.0, © 2006 by Princeton University.

Project Stages

Oct 1999- August 2000:

Phase 01 **Studio 1:** Divided into 2 levels: 3x3m approx each level - low ceilings, connected by a wooden ladder. Dowstairs: no windows/artificial lighting. Upstairs: window with translucent security glass (no view).

House 1: 14 Bedsits in an old house inhabited by single people (students, unemployed and young people doing crappy jobs, old people living alone...)

Jobs: Teaching assistant, student 'shelver' at WSA library.

Background research: Reading and gathering information, organising documentation. Studio practice starts developing.

Complementary activities: Visits to art exhibitions and participation within the Sculpture department activities. Participation in exhibitions and open studio.

Visits: Prisons, zoos, farms, courtyard, student halls, old people's home.

Related works: *Short stories, Isolation.*

Exhibitions: '*Contemporáne@, 2000*'. Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló, Castellón (Spain).

August 2000- Feb 2002:

Phase 2: **Studio 2:** Provisional studio in the Painting Department on the 2nd floor. 3.5 x 2.5 m room, high ceilings and large window, facing the river bank and the park.

House 2: Rented flat near the school. Typical flat for student rental. Basic, damp and expensive. Sharing with my partner.

Jobs: Teaching assistant, cleaner, factory worker at weekends.

Background research: Clear structure for the archive that rapidly starts expanding. Development of themes emerging from the documentation

process. Transition in working processes.

Complementary activities: Visits to art exhibitions and participation within the Sculpture department activities. Presentation of research in PhD seminars (Bristol University) Participation in exhibitions.

Visits: Strait of Gibraltar, Tarifa Red Cross Centre, visits to airports (Heathrow, Southampton, Gatwick, Barcelona, Valencia, Luton, Stansted).

Works: *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama*. Beginning of the series *Other Journeys* with the works *The lift, Planespotters, 360°...*

Exhibitions: 'Somnis'. Galería Cànem. New Art. Hotel Barcelona-Sants, Barcelona; 'Líneas de Fuga'. I Bienal de Valencia. San Miquel dels Reis. Valencia; 'Short Stories'. Espai 292. Barcelona; Summer Show. Galería Senda, Barcelona; 'CORPORate Identity'. Galeria En Plein Air, Turín, Italy; ARCO 2002. (Galería Canem). Madrid, Spain.

March 2002-October 2003:

Phase 3: **Studio 3:** Studio on the ground floor of the Sculpture Department. Office space with table and shelves. Studio space with natural light. approx. 6 x 4 m. High ceiling.

House 3: Room in shared flat with landlady. Small but comfortable. Good atmosphere.

Jobs: Visiting tutor at Hastings College, visiting tutor at WSA, cleaner, library assistant at WSA.

Background research: Archive and studio work develop in parallel. Intensive activity in studio – most productive time.

Complementary activities: Visits to art exhibitions and participation within the Sculpture department activities. Presentation of research in PhD seminars (WSA). Participation in exhibitions.

Visits: Canary Islands, container depots in ports (Southampton, Osaka, Grand Canaria, Tenerife)

Works: *'Other journeys': Dover/Tampa, Rumors, Cargos, Container.*

Exhibitions: Galería Hotaru. Osaka, Japan; Kameoka Katsura Hall.

Kyoto, Japan; *VII Premio Ciudad de Burriana*. Burriana, Castelló,

Spain; *Primavera Fotográfica a Mallorca*. Galería Ferrán Cano. Palma

de Mallorca; *Bienal de Amposta*, Amposta, Tarragona; *ARCO 2002*.

(Galeria Canem). Madrid, Spain; *'Planespotters'*, Aula T. Galeria Visor.

Valencia; *ARCO 2003*. (Galería Cànem). Madrid Spain; *Art Miami 03*.

(Galería Cànem). Miami; *'In Motion'*. Departure Project. New Greenham

Arts. Newbury; *'In Motion'*. Departure Project. Galería m92, Lisbon.

'Other Journeys'. CMC, Burriana (Castelló).

Research and the studio

Phase 01: Oct 1999- August 2000

‘Architecture, similarly to language, is a structure which helps us to construct and order our experiences; it is a discourse that constructs meanings and frames contents. Urban spaces tell us stories that we read as if they were “spatial texts” made real in space.’

José Miguel Cortés. *Against Architecture. (I) The Urgency to (Re) Think the City*. 2000. Castelló: Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló.

The research topic put forward in my initial PhD proposal was based on the relationship between *reality* and *fiction*. Although at that time there was no clear idea of how the research would develop, I expected that it would be a natural evolution from my previous studio work, especially that produced during my MA at Winchester School of Art - 1997-98.

When I returned to Winchester in October 1999 to begin my PhD, I already knew the place (the facilities at WSA and the town) and even had some ideas about how to start working in the studio. From my previous stay, I also had strong recollections of the HMP Winchester building⁹. (fig.6) Located on a hill next to the local hospital, the prison is a focal point in the city that unlike the rest of the historical buildings around, remains hidden, unknown, and wholly inaccessible to the general public... The prison seemed an ideal subject in which to begin my investigation: For most people, prisons are places known only to the outside via second or third hand experiences. Knowledge stems mainly from media images i.e. cinema, TV etc., and it's therefore very easy to confuse the reality of the prison system with a more romantic hero/antihero narrative. With this notion in mind, a visit to the prison was instigated in an attempt to compare my expectations with the physical reality of the institution.

9 HMP Winchester is a male category B local prison and a closed female prison. The main building, where the male prison is allocated dates from 1846, and it is a typical Victorian prison of radial design. The Annexe, built in 1963 to house young offenders, became a prison for sentenced adult females in 1995.

Unsure as how to start, the local police station advised me to contact the prison chaplains in order to organise a visit, and a member of the *Mother's Union* who regularly visited the prison put me in touch with them. A Catholic Chaplain and his volunteer helper invited me to attend a weekly mass in the Annexe (Winchester Women's prison) where



fig. 6 HMP Winchester. Image published in the Hampshire Chronicle. 11/01/01.

there were at that time, a few Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American inmates. After the service they were granted '*association time*'¹⁰, which gave us an opportunity to talk in a relatively relaxed atmosphere. Meeting the Spanish women was very interesting but useful in the sense that communication was easier: the language barrier didn't exist, and using our mother tongue gave privacy to our conversations even in the midst of a larger group. Being of a similar age, we shared a common background, with similar cultural references which quickly generated a natural complicity. I felt very strongly that whilst in prison, they were suffering a double isolation: spatial and cultural (increased by the lack of family visitors due to their situation of being in a prison abroad).¹¹

During the time I was visiting the Annexe, the parents of one of the Spanish inmates (Ana), came to visit her. She asked that I look after them, to pick them up from the airport, to

¹⁰ *Association* is a period of time in which the inmates may mix together under supervision for recreation. In HMP Winchester, after the service there was around 30 minutes for a tea and biscuits, in which inmates and volunteers chat in a relax atmosphere.

¹¹ Most of these women prisoners were accused of acting as *mules* for drug traffickers, and were arrested at British airports whilst on stopover flights. Some of them didn't speak a word of English when they arrived at the prison, and they were faced with the impossibility of fully understanding the rules of the institution which made it very tough at times.

find them accommodation and to take them to the prison. They had only been in England once before during the court hearing, and were now trying to get their daughter transferred to a Spanish prison. Although looking forward to meeting Ana, their visit to HMP Winchester was very hard for them all. It had taken time to accept that their daughter was in prison and to deal with the social pressure in their home environment in Madrid. It was difficult for them to cope with constant questions and neighbourhood gossip to the point that they finally decided to sell their house and to move to a different town to isolate themselves from that situation.

Over a period of six months I regularly visited HMP Winchester, first the Annexe and, after a few weeks also the male prison. I had no idea when I first visited the prison how this experience would affect my work. Initially, the possibility of recording images or sounds from the inside was considered. However, special permission was required for entering with cameras or recorders, and I preferred to keep myself as inconspicuous as possible (as a spectator or observer). So I quickly gave up this idea and adhered to the non-recorded conversations with inmates and the physical experience of the visits.

Most of my early memories of visits to HMP Winchester are directly related to sensorial experiences: smell, sound, light, the lack of landscape and the omnipresence of the prison architecture ruling all inside life. From conversations with the inmates, I sensed a deep feeling of a ‘waiting time’, a suspended time in a small/enclosed world that would finish at some point just as a bubble might burst, but for that moment - just growing and expanding and floating...

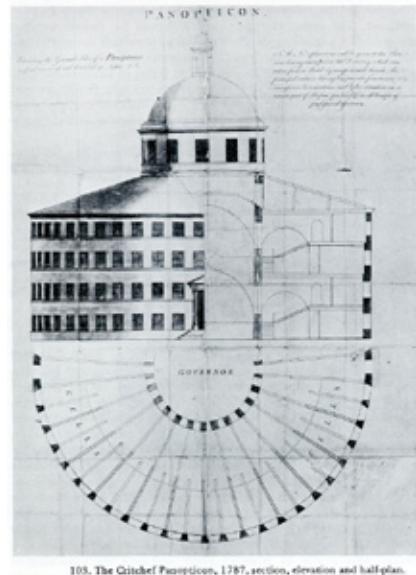
Research into prisons through novels, letters, the web, press, films, art and theory was carried out in parallel to the visits. I read Norman Mailer’s *The Executioner’s Song*¹² and also letters about his experience in prison (collected under the title *In the Belly of the Beast*)¹³ that J.H. Abbott sent to Mailer whilst he was writing his novel. From a more theoretical

12 Mailer, N. (1991). *The Executioner’s Song*. (4th Ed.). London, Vintage.

13 Abbott, J.H. (1982). *En El Vientre de la Bestia. Cartas desde la Prisión*. 1st ed. Barcelona: Ediciones Martínez-Roca, S.A.

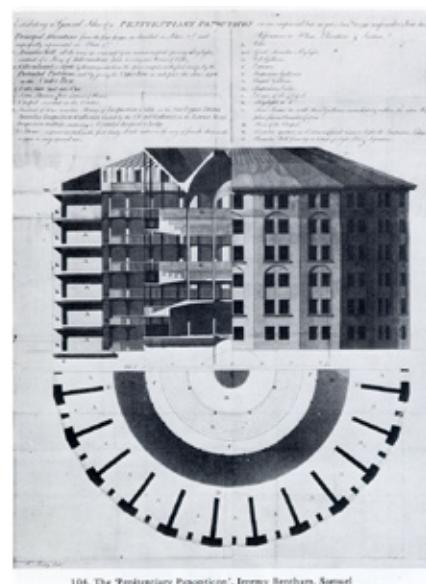
aspect, Michel Foucault's essay *Discipline and Punishment*¹⁴ helped to contextualise the birth of the prison into the institution we now know, an invention dated from the XIX century, when the creation of the modern state brought along a series of new institutions (parapenal and at times not penal) designed to sustain power and control the population (prison, factories, orphanages, schools,...). Foucault states that 19th century changes generated a *civilization of supervision*.

In the book *The Fabrication of Virtue*¹⁵, Evans describes the history of prison architecture in the UK from 1750 and analyses how its architecture has varied according to the perceived purposes a prison should have. In the chapter *A way of obtaining Power*, Evans explains Jeremy Bentham's theories of how through architectural design it is possible to modify human behaviour. These theories were put into practice in his designs for the *Panopticon*, a building in which a single guard, situated in a central tower, can watch over many prisoners while the guard remains unseen. The concept of the design is to allow an observer to observe -(*opticon*) all -(*pan*) prisoners without the prisoners being able to tell if they are being observed or not, thus conveying a 'sentiment of an invisible omniscience'.¹⁶



103. The Critchel Panopticon, 1787, section, elevation and half-plan.

fig. 7 Sample of Panopticon design:
The Critchel Panopticon, 1787



104. The 'Penitentiary Panopticon', Jeremy Bentham, Samuel Bentham and Wiley Reveley, 1791, section, elevation and half-plan.

fig. 8 Sample of Panopticon design:
'The Penitentiary Panopticon', Jeremy Bentham, Samuel Bentham and Wiley Reveley, 1791.

14 Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punishment. The Birth of the Prison* (3rd Ed.). London: Penguin Books.

15 Evans, R. (1982). *The Fabrication of Virtue. English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

16 The title of Bentham's writings on the Panopticon was: *Panopticon; or The inspection House: Containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to any short of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection; and in particularly to Penitentiary-Houses*,

In his own words, Bentham described the Panopticon as “a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example.”¹⁷ (fig. 7-8)

Foucault also compares modern society with Bentham’s Panopticon design for prisons. The dark dungeon of pre-modernity has been replaced with the bright modern prison, but Foucault cautions that “visibility is a trap”. It is through this visibility, Foucault writes, that modern society exercises its controlling systems of power and knowledge. Increasing visibility leads to power located on an increasingly individualized level, shown by the possibility for institutions to track individuals throughout their lives. Foucault suggests that a “carceral continuum” runs through modern society, from the maximum security prison, through secure accommodation, probation, social workers, police, and teachers, to our everyday working and domestic lives. All are connected by the (witting or unwitting) supervision (surveillance, application of norms of acceptable behaviour) of some humans by others.

Although HMP Winchester is not designed as a Panopticon but as a Victorian prison of the *Separate* system, where keeping the inmates in isolation and avoiding communication was the main issue, visits to the prison and the readings on prison architecture revealed a new expansive area to explore, and that then refocused some of the main topics of my research, specifically:

- The analysis of space (and architecture) as a socio-political construction
- The control of spaces in the *globalised* era as a way of maintaining power
- The exploration of transitory spaces (non places) and migratory flows

During this first period of the PhD I was located in a small split level studio connected by a wooden ladder. The ground floor only had artificial lighting and the top floor - a window with translucent security glass, and therefore no view to the outside. I put a table upstairs and used the top floor to write, draw and read, while the bottom

prisons, houses of Industry, work-houses, poor-houses, lazarettos, manufactories, hospitals, mad-houses, and schools: with a Plan of management adapted to the principle: In a Series of Letters, written in the year 1787 from Crecheff in White Russia to a friend in England. By Jeremy Bentham, of Lincoln's Inn, Esquire

17 Bentham, Jeremy The Panopticon Writings. Ed. Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995). p. 29-95.

floor initially remained a storage space, and eventually, a place to try out ideas (installations, projections...)

It took a while to start developing ideas in the studio. Using video and sound recordings, I started producing very literal images related to the physical experience of being in the prison (images of keys, the sound of metal doors closing, clocks marking time...) which slowly became more metaphorical, (images of skies as only landscape, sound of traffic or birds as signs of a life outside - trying to find a gap, a connection between the outside and the inside world) (fig. 9). I used the lower floor in the studio to project the images, to mix them with objects, to superimpose and edit them... As I was spending more time in the studio space I began to experience a claustrophobic feeling: the studio was dark, with no windows, and only measured about 3x3 meters (2.5 x 3 m usable, the rest taken up by the ladder).

I was living at that time in a bedsit with the kitchen and the bed in the same room, sharing a bathroom with a few people I'd never met. As I was becoming more aware of minimum spaces, I began to draw parallels with my own living conditions past and present.



fig. 10 Detail of a single room at the halls in residence Erasmus Park, Winchester

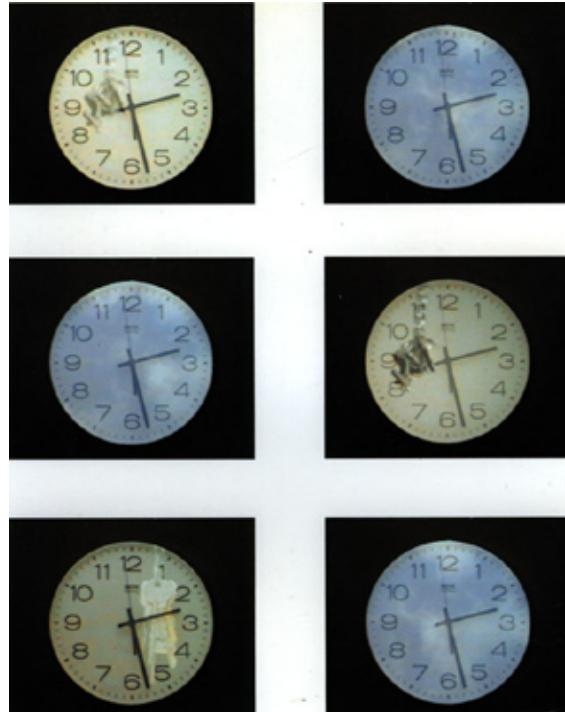


fig. 9 First tests in the studio. Experimenting with video projections on a clock.

I had previously lived in student halls; I revisited them and although better facilitated than the prison cells and more spacious, I always found it quite disturbing that, like the cells, the furniture in the student's rooms were screwed to the walls, limiting the freedom of the residents to adapt their rooms to their own needs (fig. 10).

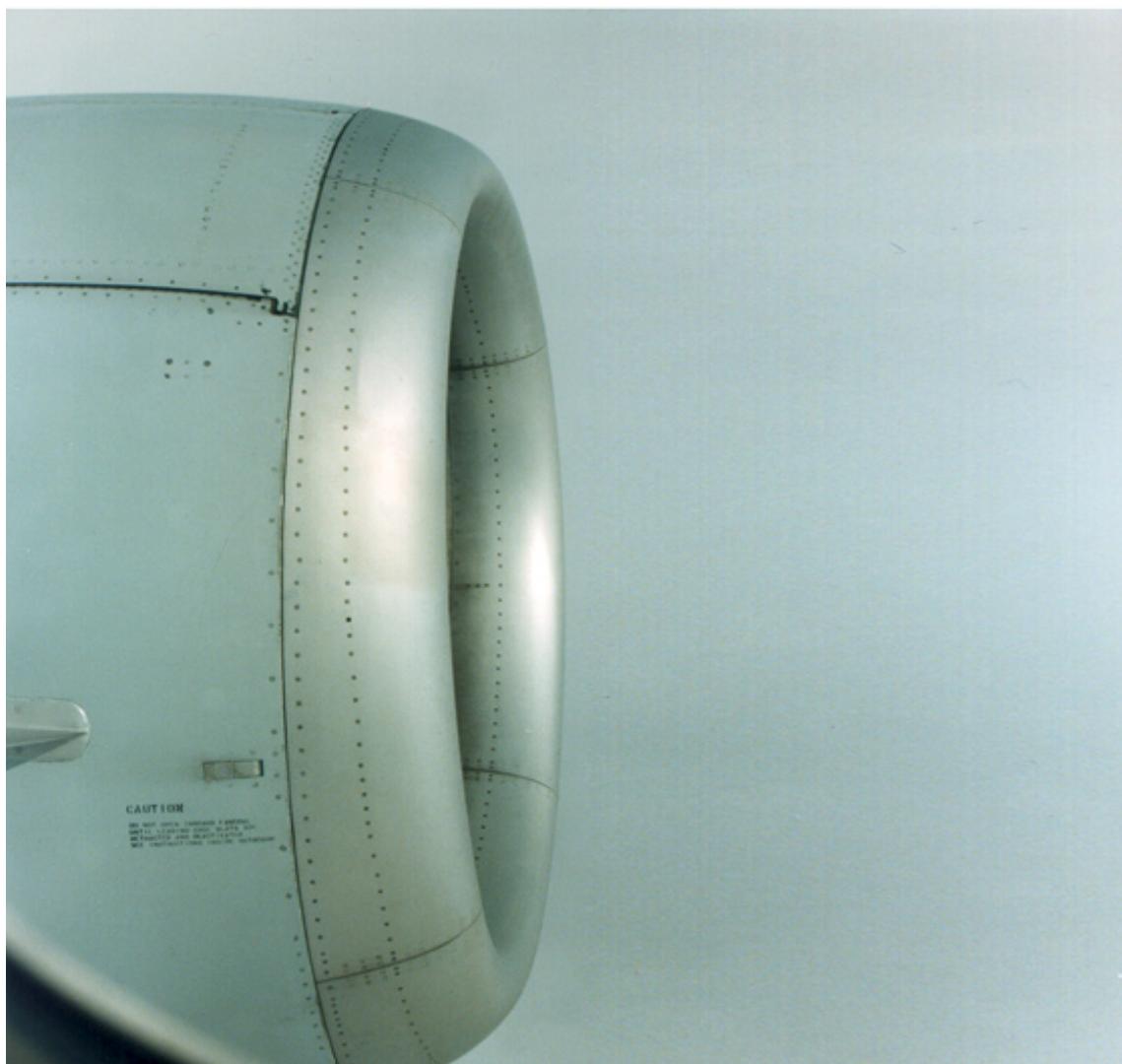


fig. 11 *Vuelo 0*. From the series *Short Stories*. 2000
Digital print mounted on aluminium

It was also revealing to find out that there are laws that regulate minimum space acceptable not only for humans in their living environment or at work but also for animals. For example the EU laws consider that a hen on a farm should have a minimum space of an A4 piece of paper.

During this time I was subconsciously taking a lot of photos on my travels (short trips to London, visits to Spain, Holland...): Views from a plane or train window, passing landscapes, temporary guest beds in friends houses, hotel rooms, public toilets, All these images are located in folders in the research archive - *Short Stories: Photo folder I and II*. I see these images as a reaction to the claustrophobic associations connected to everyday spaces/routines. From these, I later developed the photographic series *Short Stories* (fig. 11-14): mainly structured in diptychs, the pieces combine images of 'passing'



fig. 12 *Journey*. Diptych from the series *Short Stories*. 2000.
2 pieces 65x100. Digital print on alluminium.



fig. 13 *Tardor*. Diptych from the series *Short Stories*. 2000.
2 pieces 65x100. Digital print on alluminium.



fig. 14 *Rastro*. Diptych from the series *Short Stories*. 2000.
2 pieces 65x100. Digital print on alluminium.

in an attempt to create an open narrative of travel/ transition. This photographic work was shown at Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC) in Castellón as part of the exhibition *Contemporane@ 2000*.

Amongst the exhibitions I visited during this period I was particularly interested in Absalon's prototypes *Cellule n.3* and *Cellule n.6* (1992) (fig.15-16) that I saw in EACC as part of the show "Contra la Arquitectura. La Urgencia de (Re) pensar la Ciudad". Absalon (Israel, 1964-1993) was working from the end of the 80's with the concept of the minimum living space. *Cellules* presented self contained survival units on a human scale. Absalon was planning to build a series of six cellules (but unfortunately only two were built when he died), using different forms and to be installed in different cities around the world – i.e. Frankfurt, Tel Aviv, Zurich or Paris - and conceived to be used by the artist as his place of residence when finding himself in these cities. Therefore these structures were determined by Absalon's own body dimensions and his possible movements, with each one of them containing specific spaces to carry out the everyday functions of cooking, sleeping, working or having a bath. These rigorously economical spaces of solitude are entirely white and coldly illuminated with neon lighting and are approximately 9 square meters. There is no place for the superfluous in them, with everything responding to the maximum possible economy of space, something that brings them into proximity with the oppressive confined spaces for uprooted émigrés emerging on the periphery of large cities. Nomadism, displacement and a certain sense of absence of roots are also some of the

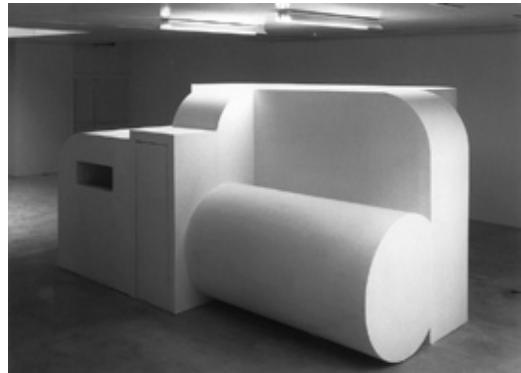


fig. 15 Absalon. *Cellule n° 3*, 1992.
Prototype. 210x404x240 cm.



fig. 16 Absalon. *Cellule n° 6*, 1992.
Prototype. 220x220x160 cm.

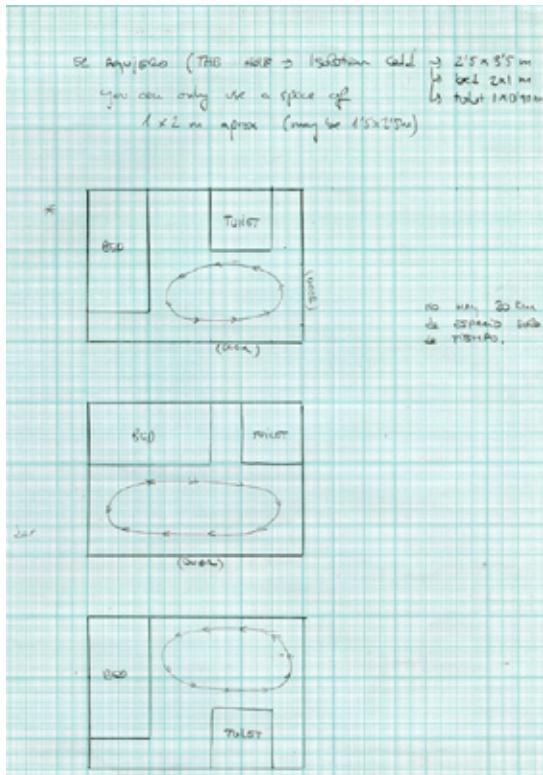


fig. 17 Sketch with different space distributions within the installation area

the spaces between the bed and the wall, and the toilet and the wall, are not usable.

If I were an animal in a zoo, the animal protection society would protest against the conditions under which I was being held and bring cruelty charges against those responsible. It is illegal to keep an animal in such conditions. But I am not an animal, so I won't insist on this'.¹⁸

My studio also had similar measurements, so following Abbott's description of the contents and organisation of the furniture inside the cell, I started playing with masking tape, segregating different areas within the room and experimenting with

most outstanding signs of identity of the work of Absalon.

Absalon's *Cellules* formed an interesting counterbalance with JH Abbott's descriptions of cells in high security prisons (of similar dimensions) and his experience of the time spent inside them:

'Let's imagine that you are in a cell 3.5 x 2.5 metres, almost 9 square metres of space, but the bed occupies almost 2 x 1 metres of this space, and the combination sink plus toilet 1 x 0.9 metres. Considering this, there is still 6 metres of empty space. The space where one can walk is approximately 2 x 1m; the rest,



fig. 18 *Isolation*. Installation process. Sink+toilet.

18 Abbott, J.H. (1982). *En el Vientre de la Bestia. Cartas desde la Prisión*. 1st ed. Barcelona: Ediciones Martínez-Roca, S.A.

reducing the mobility of the body in a constrained space (fig. 17).

On a visit to a scrap yard I borrowed some aluminium sheets from which I cut panels to start building a 3D cell within the studio space. This installation included a bed and a combination of sink-toilet, also made of aluminium. (fig. 18).

Working with the metal contributed to a completely different atmosphere. Slowly, the whole studio was covered in aluminium which gave off a coldness, an echoing sound, and a feeling not only of a cell but also a laboratory, a lift, a modern architectural module. The reflected light on the metal created an illusory distorted scale of the installation whilst projecting the image of the viewer within the space. (fig. 19)



fig. 19 *Isolation*. Installation process. Covering the walls with aluminium

During this time I visited some parks in London that have zoos, farms and birdcages. (fig. 20) In 1993 I lived near Battersea Park and was always fascinated by the contrast of the birds and trees in the cages of the relatively small zoo in the middle of the park, with other 'uncaged' trees and birds flying free. I returned to this park several times, video recording different views of the cages. (fig. 21)

On one of my visits to Spain I also made similar recordings on a rabbit farm (fig. 25) and in a courtyard of a family house in the outskirts of Barcelona which had a few



fig. 20 Bird cage at Crissold park, London.



fig. 21 Bird cage at Battersea park zoo, London.



fig. 22-23-24 Stills from the footage at Barcelona's courtyard.

cages in the garden with chickens, rabbits, peacocks and other birds. I recorded images of cages with different animals inside (fig. 22-24). Working with the animals brought new considerations into the piece. The cage was a space that was locked up but at the same time revealed its contents. Inside and outside were physically divided but, as in the Panopticon, visually connected. I was interested in the grid as an element of defining space.

The use of grids clearly reminded me of Mona Hatoum's works. The artist widely uses grid systems to create layers in her work, the grid acting as a screen that protects, a fence that limits, a corridor that guides the viewer through the space of her work...

Dan Cameron, in a description of Hatoum's work, stated: "Hatoum's sculptures confront us with situations and scenarios in which our perceptual integrity, our sense of place in the world is subtly called into question. Her work address the solitary viewer, whose relative isolation becomes enhanced by the machine like façade presented in different ways by each piece. This dynamic tension is effective in part because it pits an aspiring individual against a restrictive system, Hatoum does not specify a particular model of containment to follow, but chooses instead to encompass the broadest imaginable range of possible systems within its domain of reference. Facing the hypnotic movement of shadows in the 1992



fig. 25 Rabbit farm. Lucena del Cid, Spain.

installation *Light Sentence* (fig. 26), we are able to imagine a bewildered patient facing a battery of diagnostic machines, a worker in a semi derelict factory, even a homeless person in a shelter. In each imagining, the boundary between the protected zone of the viewer and the

more compromised experience of space

within the work itself is carefully blurred. The resultant sensation of being imposed upon by systems that are biologically linked to us and yet alien to our interests is made disarmingly corporeal, as is the knowledge that once we have ventured deeply enough into this experiential system to grasp its meaning, it has already surrounded us”¹⁹

The human figure, although not physically present in most of Hatoum’s pieces, is at the centre of her work, defining the scale of her installations and sculptures. This void can only be filled by the viewer’s presence, if at all. Positioning the viewer has been a key point in her work.

Defining public access to my installation was crucial. I was aware that depending on how I resolved it, the meaning of the work would vary. I didn’t want to allow free circulation around the whole installation, so I defined 2 zones: the room with the bed and the sink, and, a little corridor (50 cm wide) from where the viewer had visual access to the rest of the space. At first I thought to use glass as the divisional material, but I finally simplified it by horizontally crossing steel wire, thus creating some interesting visual disturbance within the viewer’s field of vision (fig. 27). The wire had the potentiality of being electrified adding an impending danger to the space. The viewer although allowed to freely enter or leave was placed in an uncomfortable situation.... (fig. 31)

I started projecting some of the images of cages from inside the installation. After trying different recordings with animals, the bird cage in Battersea Park seemed to be the one that worked more successfully. I re-shot the film footage a few times, trying to resolve the layout in which the inside and outside of the cage were co-existent. I filmed the actual moment when people approached the cage and when they left.... That made the image work



fig. 26 Mona Hatoum. Light Sentence, 1992.
Mixed media, dimensions variable

¹⁹ Mona Hatoum (1998). Catalogue of the exhibition held at Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago. Text by Dan Cameron (pag26-27).



fig. 27 *Isolation*. Installation view. Crossing wires divide the space into room and corridor.

because it doubled the experience of the installation in which the public came in and out freely, but at the same time they were put in a position in which they felt trapped..... (fig. 28). From its displayed position (above and beyond the toilet-sink combination) and its size (0,70x1m aprox), the projection seemed like a kind of mirror or window: The projected image replicated the space described by the installation – a confined space; at the same time, it looked like a window, an opening to the outside, an outside as constrained and claustrophobic as the installation space itself. (fig. 32).

In 2001 the 1st Bienal de Valencia, was organized and I was invited to take part in the project 'Lineas the Fuga. Poéticas de la Perplejidad', curated by David Pérez and held on San



fig. 28 *Isolation*. stills from the video projection



fig. 29 San Miguel de los Reyes, Valencia.

Miguel de los Reyes, a building that originated in 14th century as a monastery. In 1857 it became a poorhouse and later a women's prison. From 1874 until 1966 it was a men's prison (fig. 29) and during the Spanish civil war and the post war, many political prisoners were held there, living

in overcrowded conditions, suffering and living with the fear of constant repression, torture and execution...).

Its fairly recent history is still remembered by the local population, especially by generations that had known the building as a prison²⁰. The building was restored in the 80's, and in 2000 became the seat of the Valencian Library. Restoration attempts managed to preserve the many different layers of history in the building, the archaeological remains of the original convent (Cistercians), its adaptation to the Hieronymites order, and the prison wings. Within the architecture, these three layers coexist with the contemporary interior design (lifts, offices, library structure...) After learning about the history of the place, I felt adamant that *Isolation* be displayed there, and after my proposal was accepted, a Spanish carpenter re-worked one of the structures that supported the original installation in timber and mdf, applying the same dimensions as those at the WSA studio. (fig. 30) Seeing the piece within this specific backdrop created a powerful architectural setting in which the historic and the contemporary merged. The installation was displayed on one of the stairwells of the building adjacent to the main exhibition hall interconnected by a door. Those who access the piece found it quite shocking, its hidden location made it appear harrowing, more sordid and sad.



fig. 30 *Isolation*. Seting up at San Miguel de los Reyes, Valencia.

²⁰ My father says that he still feels sad, uncomfortable and indignant when he passes by the building. For him (and his generation) it still represents one of the most powerful icons of facist repression in Valencia.



fig. 31 *Isolation*. Installation view. Entrance and corridor.

fig. 32 *Isolation*. Installation view.



Phase 2: August 2000- Feb 2002.

'Why is this that we encourage the free movement of goods, resources, information and – most of all - capital, but have a problem with greater mobility of people? Increased mobility is seen by many to undermine sovereignty, security and national identity. Governments across Europe are under pressure to tighten borders and reduce the numbers of migrants entering their countries. In doing so, we may degrade the very thing that makes Europe attractive – its open society.'

Theo Veenkamp. From the article 'Migration's a question of management, not control' published in The Guardian on 5/6/03

The installation *Isolation* was completed and displayed in an open studio within WSA; it was later disassembled and placed in storage until shipped to Spain for its exhibition in the I Bienal de Valencia. I was then offered a new 'provisional' studio space, located on the second floor within the Painting Department. The room was approx 2.5x3.5 m, with a large window (the whole wall was glazed) facing the river bank. It was difficult to divide the space between research/documentation work and studio practice and both activities had to be shared within the same area.

During this time I was consistently preparing for the Upgrade; I realized there was still a lot of work to do with the archive to make it accessible, so I then devised a more structured format - dividing the information by projects and further subdividing that content into folders that would contain the documents in (more or less, as much as possible) chronological order. Once the archive was sorted and ready for upgrading, that same format was continued through the remaining duration of the research period. From then on archiving became a part of my everyday practice, growing and developing quite naturally.

A table and shelves were installed to cope with the documentation and quantity of archive folders, thus taking up most of the studio. This further limited my practical work as the remaining space wasn't big enough to work in. These constraints were challenging and initially inhibited my progress by limiting the format of the practical work. This situation eventually caused me to consider using other spaces (exploring the relationship between inside/outside through the use of the studio window, use of corridors, lifts, canteen and



fig. 33 Studio 2. View from the river bank.

other communal areas in the college to display, record or install the work...). (fig. 33)

The Upgrade took place in February 2001.

Trying to recreate the same atmosphere as in my practical work, I used the whole studio space to display my documentation on aluminium shelves. I created an installation that incorporated

the folders and digital material relating to both the finished works and work in progress. During the oral examination I was mainly questioned about the development of my PhD proposal. Before arriving at the studio, the external examiners only knew of my work through the written introduction I had submitted a few weeks earlier. The text helped to contextualise the work, but it was very interesting to see how the archive contributed to a fuller visual understanding of the processes for both myself and the viewers thus proving to be an invaluable tool situated inbetween the theory and the practical. This Upgrade proved very useful in analysing and evaluating the progress and evolution of the initial PhD proposal, whilst at the same time helping to re-focus my intentions.

About that time I was invited to take part in a hotel art fair in Barcelona – A fair in which each gallery has a hotel room to display its work. On one of my visits to Spain I went to see the hotel; it was a relatively new building, an *intelligent* building where temperature, light, etc, is automatically regulated, the windows didn't open, and the rooms were practically identical, with most of the furniture attached to the walls – again! (which limited considerably the potential outcome of the installation). I decided to create a piece of work reflecting on the idea of the hotel as a public/private space, a space in which guests repeat the same daily routines (sleep, have a shower, watch TV, have sex...) but that at the same time is a transitory space, where the room and the whole setting (sounds, smells, objects) is alien to ourselves, and therefore, one might experience the uneasy feeling of being observed/watched. Back in the studio, I recorded the faces of people, who, sitting on an office chair, spun slowly in front of the video camera. They were asked to stare straight ahead so that the camera captured them at different angles allowing their faces to be

partly hidden from it, as if they were scanning the space around, trying to catch the viewer by surprise in a kind of being watched/voyeuristic game. My initial idea was to produce a video installation with a few monitors displayed semi-hidden in the room showing the different faces spinning. Whilst editing, I started playing with the images and realised that it worked better when there were more monitors, but I also knew that there would be a problem sourcing them in Barcelona. I took photographs of the TV monitors. Interference appeared on images obtained from my own TV monitor, when photographed at a 30" shutter speed, displaying a diagonal band across, that together with the TV dots gave them a low resolution quality similar to CCTV images. (fig. 34) Once I'd laid out the photos in different compositions, I felt that they were stronger than the videos: I preferred their almost crude, rough quality, the possibility of being able to digitally manipulate them, and the potential of simultaneously using many of them without worries about technical equipment. This also offered the possibility of creating a narrative by working with them as a series, and finally the piece was resolved as a photographic series of 14 images in black and white. (fig. 35) For the hotel exhibition they were displayed on a mirror in the bathroom and were reflected on the wardrobe mirror parallel to that. This created a continuum of reflections ad infinitum, with the reflected images also visible from the corridor as well



fig. 34 *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama.*
Detail.

as from inside the room.

Although a minor piece in my research, this work (titled *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama - Behind the door, under the bed*) connected with *Isolation* with its use of reflective material (aluminium previously and the mirrors in this one) as a way of physically involving the spectator with the piece. This distorted the viewer's experience of that space whilst highlighting techniques of surveillance and control. At the same time,



fig. 35 *Detrás de la puerta,debajo de la cama.*
Final composition.

this piece introduced a new area to explore: the manipulation of images, the layering of different treatments (from video to photography, to computer manipulation, and finally digital print). In contrast to top quality photography, images of low quality resolution made them appear closer to that obtained by surveillance circuits, satellites, scanners, and other technological devices, continuously shown as evidential proof of a *live* fact. Since then, I have used the same technique in other pieces.

In relation to this subject, I want to mention the works of Sophie Calle, an artist who has been fascinated with blurring the boundaries of the public and the private in everyday life. Using photography and text as her medium, with strangers as her subjects, Calle



fig. 36 Sophie Calle. *The Hotel*,
Room 30, March 4, 1983.

personal peculiarities, intimate and everyday habits (fig. 36). Through the eyes of the artist the spectator becomes voyeur. I am though, particularly interested in Calle's piece *Cash Machine Surveillance* (1991), about surveillance cameras in banks. The piece show images of different people whilst using the cash machine in the bank, and includes the images of a woman who is attacked and robbed there. She questions the role of the cameras, in that, although they may deter certain acts occurring in their presence, they cannot necessarily stop the actions, but only show evidence of them. Where, how and why society use more and more CCTV is an issue that as citizens we should question, especially in a society that seems controlled by the ghost of new terrorisms and therefore appears ready to accept more and more security devices despite potential privacy infringements and to a degree, limitations of our freedom.

Around this period I found some tapes in a skip, with recordings from police speed cameras used to monitor and catch people speeding. What immediately grabbed my attention was the way the cameras were directed or pointed at cars to select them:

approaches her work much as a detective. She raises issues of intimacy and identity, playing with the experience of watching and being watched, often pushing the limits of what is generally respected as private. Among her works, *The Hotel* (1983), was a project in which she was hired as a chambermaid for three weeks in a Venetian hotel, but instead of tidying and cleaning the rooms allocated to her each day, she unscrupulously, photographed individual items and noted down her observations. The photos and texts that form this series (21 diptychs), confront the spectator with fragments of strangers' biographies,

The images showed an overlapping cross similar to a target device used in shooting, plus textual information re – date, time, and location. (fig. 37-38) Although the material was very interesting, I was unsure of how to include them and the project remains unresolved.



fig. 37-38 Still from the police speed camera from founded tapes.

The hotel project brought back to my work considerations about journeys, passing, and mobility (already attributed to in the photo series *Short Stories*). In Marc Augé's *Non-Places: An Anthropology of Super modernity*²¹, he describes what he calls a 'non-place' in opposition to 'place': 'If place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.' Non-places are a product of our contemporary societies based on the logic of excess (excess of time, space and ego). According to Augé, non-places are temporary spaces for passage, communication and consumption: airports, supermarkets, motorways... are samples of these non-places. The book made me reflect on the various ways of travelling within western/developed societies, the spaces in which journeys occur (vehicles, stations, airports, motorways...), and how, in contrast with earlier modes of travel, journeys now may be considered more individual, isolated and anonymous, with little time for gaps, rest and discovery, or to enjoy, learn and share.

I was using the lift everyday to access my studio, and became interested in the lapse that a 'lift journey' represented in this context. It was the shortest journey I could imagine but it shared some of the elements of a real contemporary journey (linking

²¹ Augé, M. (1995). *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Super modernity*. (tras. Howe, J.). London: Verso.

two different spaces; like any vehicle, it's a container for humans powered by an engine; and the relation with the other 'passengers', despite the reduced space, is normally minimum or nonexistent...). Like *Isolation*, it was a kind of 'metal cage'. So I started experimenting with the lifts in college, filming, photographing, blocking the doors, creating installations inside... They had the word 'lift' printed on a plate above the door. I liked the fact that this word had many other connotations (related to *movement/vehicles*) apart from the obvious 'elevator':

- ***Airlift***, in logistics, the act of transporting people or cargo from point to point using aircraft
- ***Forklift***, a trucking device
- ***Hitchhiking***, a form of transport in which the traveller tries to get a lift (or ride) from another traveller
- ***Homotopy lifting property***, in mathematics, a unique path over a map
- ***Partnering***, in dance, assistance that may involve lifting and carrying a partner
- ***Ski lift***, an aerial or surface lift for uphill transport
- ***Space elevator***, a hypothetical structure for transporting material from a planet's surface into space.²²

At the same time I visited airports specifically to observe human behaviour; these being the largest venues, and more representative of contemporary transport. Going to an airport without the purpose of travelling on from there, gave me time to observe and wander around unhurried... Heathrow is only an hour's distance from Winchester and is one of the busiest airports in Europe. I went there a few times, but also visited Southampton, Bournemouth, Luton, Gatwick, and Stansted. I tried to seek permission to film on Heathrow airport premises, but was asked for public liability insurance and a detailed outline of



fig. 39 *Lift*. BW photo test.

²² This list is a selection from the one included in the definition of LIFT in the on-line Encyclopedia Wikipedia.



fig. 40-41 Stills from the footage at Heathrow airport.

what I was doing. Ideas were still vague in my head so, without permission, I decided to film in areas that were accessible to visitors. I also approached Southampton airport and was allowed to film within the airport and the luggage halls... The problem was that Southampton airport, in contrast with Heathrow, had very little traffic and most of the time the areas were empty... (fig. 42) So after experimenting at both I finally decided on Heathrow. I filmed in the departure lounge, waiting areas, cafes, ramps, arrivals entrances... people waiting, eating, resting, 'killing time', reading, arriving or meeting... (fig. 40-41-43) After a few visits I discovered the *Spectators' View Point*, a terrace on the roof of Terminal 2 that has a bar and a shop with products for planespotters and collectors of air travel curiosities (books of famous planes and air crashes, or timetables of landing and departures, lists of number plates, plane scale models, etc...). Most of the people in the *Spectators' view point* - planespotters plus occasional travellers, were regular visitors to the airport roof terrace, following the continuous flow of planes with their binoculars, cameras and notebooks. They were ironically, mainly men sporting pseudo army or

casual outdoor clothing. I thought about finding out more about their hobby, but never felt comfortable enough to approach them, so from a reasonable distance I used a video camera to film them. Using the zoom I was able to film from the bar without arousing suspicion in that setting, I was just another planespotter, a person



fig. 42 Southampton Airport. Luggage hall.

filming planes... Although an inoffensive activity, their obsessive fascination with air control and airport traffic appeared to me a great metaphor for that element of control in everyday life, and I began to question the relevance or need of it... But there I was myself, watching the watchers, controlling them in a very voyeuristic way!...²³

From the opposite side of the roof where this terrace was located, we could see one of the radars at Heathrow. The radar continuously scanned the airspace, recording all movement²⁴. The contrasting position of both ways of control (official/amateur, necessary/unnecessary) was very interesting. I returned a few times until I decided I had enough footage to start playing with the editing.

At this stage I had different projects running in parallel (the lift, the airport, the planespotters..) which also around that time began to coincidentally overlap. I was moving home from the bedsit to a student flat near college and had to pile some of my belongings in the studio during the process. I played with bags, suitcases and rucksacks, stuffing the lift with them or blocking the door (the door closed until it touched the object, it opened for a few seconds and closed again). (fig.45) Keeping the door partially blocked allowed some play with the inside/outside of the lift: I tried to project a video there, of a corridor

fig. 44 *Lift*. Sketch for a videoinstallation inside the lift.

²³ Although planespotting is considered a ‘safe activity’, the Spectator View Point was closed after Sep 11 crashes.

²⁴ On one of my visits to Valencia, I arranged a visit to see and discuss the radar in Valencia Airport. It was explained to me how radars are able to scan to different heights, and because of that, the necessary interconnection, detection and monitoring of plane activity between different airports due to their radar capacity to detect planes within their specific scanning range.



fig. 43 Still from the footage at Heathrow airport.



in Heathrow that joined the arrivals lounge with the exit of the building. (fig.44) In the image, different people passed through, with or without luggage, alone and in groups, some lost, others self assured, and some even entered despite the sign - 'no entry from this end'. After a few more tests, this idea of projecting inside the lift became unviable: For security reasons I wasn't allowed to block the lift or to display any electrics inside, plus the light in the hall was too bright for the video images to be visible enough- it only worked successfully at night.

During the summer period I was offered a larger studio to try out installation work. It was a bigger room whose window was blocked before I arrived, so there was no natural light but therefore was perfect to play with video projections. I found two wardrobe mirrors of about 2.5 x 1 m, and borrowed a couple of video projectors. The length of the studio was enough to project the image of the lift full size... I displayed two parallel projections of lift images at the same time and used the

mirrors (located on the adjacent walls) to multiply the space, creating an infinite hall of doors: Not convinced with the video quality of the images, I tried the same composition with slides and it worked better, but limited the narrative - the movement of the images. I also printed a full size lift door on photographic paper (fig. 46)... I feel that many of these alternatives were not successfully resolved.

I edited a few versions with the footage of the planespotters' terrace and projected them. Like in the work *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama*, I was photographing the video while editing and felt that the TV mesh, the graininess and the interference added meaning

to and enriched the images. I played with the photographs,



fig. 46 Lift. Photography test.



fig. 45 Lift. Test with bags.

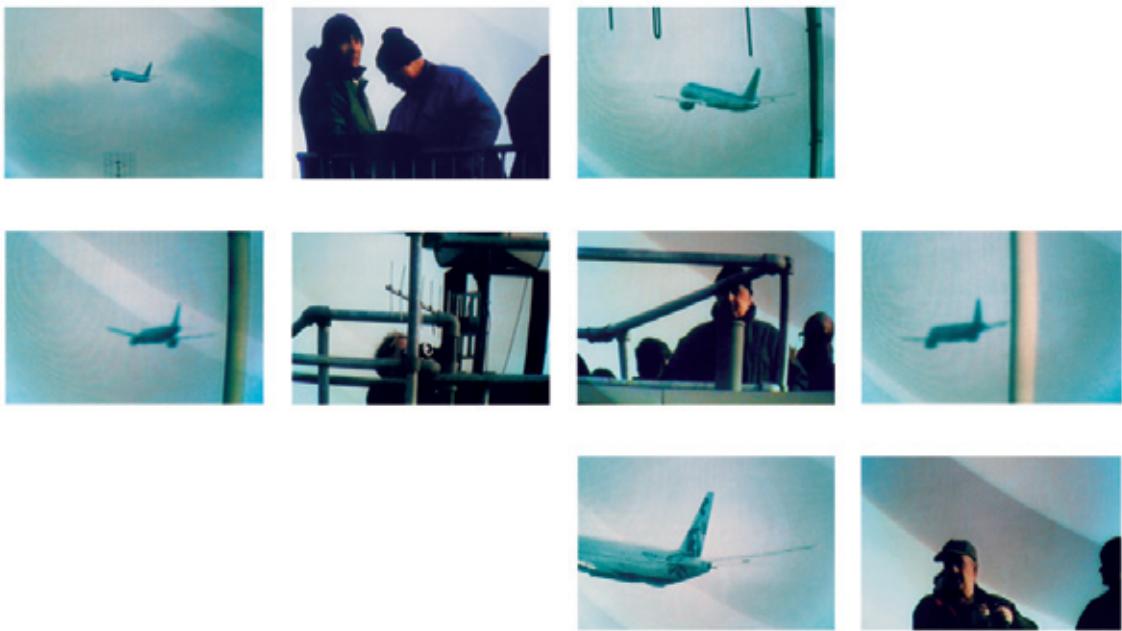


fig. 47 *Planespotters*. Photographic series.

combining views of people and planes, creating an ambiguous narrative (fig. 47-48). Although this series was produced before the Sep 11 crashes, they have been related to them many times when exhibited.

That summer I visited Venice Biennale and in the British pavilion saw Mark Wallinger's work *Threshold to the Kingdom* (fig. 49). Filmed in London City airport, the video shows the arrivals doors that automatically open and close and allow travellers to gradually and weightlessly walk toward the camera and out of view followed by gaze of a suspicious airport official, sitting in the left corner of the lounge... The sound that accompanies the video is Giorgio Allegri's *Miserere mei* [Latin: have mercy (!)]. The sound draws the viewer's attention to the allegory of arrival to Heaven, God's Kingdom - in this case the United Kingdom (thus the title). Wallinger said:

“ Every air traveller knows that behind the airport's doors are the beady eyes of the state's border controls and - a small step away, at least for the imagination - the apparatus that devises and manages the UK's immigration and asylum laws. The desperate people who don't make it across the threshold into the Promised Land (by air or any other means) are screened from view, literally and metaphorically. In most cases, one suspects, their sin is simply to have been unlucky.”

Mark Wallinger's video of people walking through 'International Arrivals' door



fig. 48 *Planespotters*. Detail.

in the airport reminds us also of a strange and bizarre sensation one experiences at places like this – lost among numbers of other unknown and probably lost people, looking for the right door to enter while keeping your travel documents safe, as these documents are the only proof of one's identity, rather than the place itself.

Wallinger's piece, made me realize at once what I was trying to say about airports, travelling and control of space. From different symbolologies/metaphors, I was obsessively searching to evidence this control, these selective mechanisms that constantly determine who/what is allowed to continue the journey...

In October 2000, the article “Muerte a las puertas del Paraíso” was published in the weekly magazine in the Spanish newspaper *La Vanguardia*. It was written by José Bejarano and included photographs taken by Javier Bauluz in Tarifa. The images were shocking: One in particular - a beach in Southern Spain, two tourists under a parasol looking at the



fig. 49 Mark Wallinger. 'Threshold to the Kingdom'. Video installation, 2000



fig. 50-52 Javier Bauluz. Image published in the article “Muerte a las puertas del paraíso”.

drowned body of a Sub Saharan man, and in another, the police taking the corpse off the beach while another couple play beach tennis. (fig. 50-52) This report set off an alarm. From then on I started searching for news relating to the arrival of migrants in Southern Spain. During 2000-2001, arrivals were mainly on the Southern coast of Andalusia, but in 2002, the Canary Islands became the main destination.

It was also during this period (summer 2001) that I started collecting information about migration in both the British and Spanish press - routes, laws, asylum seekers, detention centres, boat/shipwrecks, racist riots, European plans to stop illegal arrivals. Although with local differences (geographical – location of each country, arrival areas, or origins of the immigrants – Asiatics in UK, Africans in the Spanish case...), the general reactions in relation

to this phenomenon were similar (or perhaps that was the feeling after reading the press): ‘we need more control, we need protection, our countries are not getting any benefits from immigration, in fact just the opposite, we need a European law to deal with this situation.’

Both countries have in common, straits that separate two realities: The straits of Dover between the UK and the European continent, and the straits of Gibraltar separating the African coasts from the Spanish. The straits appeared to me as a space to explore further, representing a gap between two realities, a last step before reaching a ‘promised land’. A visit to the locations seemed a necessary step to investigate this issue, so after



fig. 53 Sample of the influence of Arabic architecture in Tarifa.

contacting the Red Cross Centre in Tarifa, a trip was arranged²⁵. I could only spend a few days there, time enough though to physically experience the complexity of the location. The Gibraltar straits represent a division -and a union, between:

- Two tectonical plaques: The Eurasian and the African
- Two seas: The Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean
- Two continents: Europe and Africa
- Two countries: Spain and Morocco
- Two cultures: Western and Eastern
- Two religions: Christian and Muslim

Only separated by 14.5 km of sea, these two realities face, observe, and desire each other. From Tarifa one can see the buildings, and the lights of Tangier at night, accompanied by the muezzin call from the mosque's minarets... And from Tangier, the city and lights of Tarifa, the wind generators on the hills, the kite surfers enjoying their holidays... so close, so far.²⁶



fig. 54 Mural on the walls of a primary school in Tarifa.

²⁵ Although further than the Straits of Dover, I decided to start by visiting the Straits of Gibraltar because it was more appealing, plus I don't speak French and I felt more confident approaching people in Spanish.

²⁶ Popular Spanish TV is now widely evident throughout Morocco, one sign of a lessening divide between itself and Spain and indicating a broadening influence of European values...

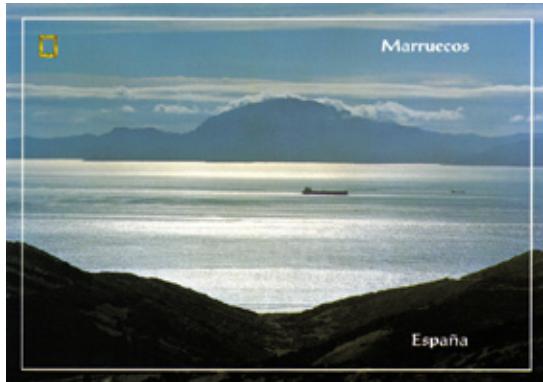


fig. 55 Postcard purchased in Tarifa.

A walk around Tarifa immediately reflects the strong influence of the Muslim culture in the area. It's apparent within the structure of the city, within the local aesthetics of the buildings (colour, arches, tiles and ornamental decoration). (fig. 53) The physiognomy of the locals reflects traces of the mixture of both the West and the East.

At the same time a castle and an army fort (used now as a temporary detention centre) show that this has also been an area of conflict (invasions, wars) in the past and a strategic location to control the sea (evident in the fact that Gibraltar, which is situated very close to Tarifa, still belongs to the UK.).

The souvenir shops are full of postcards showing the main attractions of the city, and being one of the closest points to Africa, the proximity to the other shore – views of the African continent. On many postcards the words 'Africa' or 'España-Marruecos' emphasize that idea. (fig. 54-55) Some posters displayed on the walls 'Aqui no sobra nadie' ('All are Welcome') as part of a sensitizing campaign to deal with immigration issues and mitigating alarm and xenophobic behaviour. After a day exploring the area I visited the premises of the new Red Cross Centre, located in the harbour next to the Passport control office and the tickets office of the ferry company, which similarly were built as container-like prefab structures. (fig. 56)

I had a meeting with Pepe Cardenas, the director of the Red Cross Centre in Tarifa. From his attitude, I clearly felt that he was well used to appearing in the media, relating mostly the official story of the numbers of arrivals, dressed by anecdotes that stressed



fig. 56 Red Cross Center at Tarifa harbor.

the heroic performances of the Spanish police and Red Cross volunteers. When asked his opinion as a Southern Spanish citizen who had grown up there (how the situation has developed, what the locals felt/experienced, or a more personal vision of the relation between the two shores) it seemed he was primed to respond by reiterating his initial official story... I gave up (I have most of these details from the press) and asked permission to take pictures inside the centre. (fig. 57-59) As I was leaving, one of the volunteers said: 'Shame!, you haven't been lucky ... No arrivals today... Maybe if you come back tomorrow!'. That sentence clearly reflected the relationship established with the media that have been visiting the area since the number of arrivals increased in 2000, - they stayed around until they got the right image to publish²⁷.



fig. 57-59 Interior views of the Red Cross Center at Tarifa

Chatting with a policeman working at the Border Control office, his viewpoint indicated that he was someone who had grown up there, who had family on both shores and who explained that there had always existed a relationship (cultural/ commercial/ economical) between the two cities (Tarifa and Tanger). He felt the recent events of constant desperate arrivals a real tragedy.

27 I'm not pertaining to say that all press/media only arranged pertinent visits when the issue prompted potential headline news and then forgot about it. But it did appear to have happened regularly, this 'punctual interest in a tragedy' without further questioning or following up the development of events over a period of time. I am also aware that there have been committed professionals too that have raised alarms and helped to sensitize the population on this issue.



fig. 60 Rogelio López Cuenca. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños*. (detail of the installation)

Amongst the artists who have explored the relationship between these two worlds I want to mention Rogelio López Cuenca, a Spanish artist that has worked on the construction of the image of the Arabic world as the otherness from our Occidental culture. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños* is a complex work started in 2000- a moment where integrist movements in Tunisia and Argel were getting more extreme, the European migration policies more restrictive, the Palestinian crisis was burning and the number of arrivals of illegal immigrants had grown on the Southern coasts of Europe. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños* (fig.60-61) has been developing ever since, through workshops and exhibitions, and had intended to analyse the representations of the Arabic world within Western culture, a representation full of stereotypes (from exotic veiled women, to the

violent Moorish or the exacerbated terrorists...) in which the Arabic has always represented ‘otherness’. López Cuenca has tried to criticise with irony these representations which repeated the colonial models.

The images taken during the trip to Tarifa were archived²⁸ until much later when I used one of them in a piece of work titled *Southen Gate* in 2006. I was invited to take part in a public art project -*Visiones Urbanas* (Urban Visions) in



fig. 61 Rogelio López Cuenca. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños*.

Santander, a wealthy area of Northern Spain. I was offered the use of the rear section of a glass pedestrian car park access on which to display a photographic image of work. The location was situated near the marina. This gave me the idea of enlarging an image of the precarious border control office at Tarifa's Harbour as a way of contrasting, whilst merging, two opposing localities (fig.62). I enlarged and created to size, a representative 3D image of the border control office complete with partly ajar door. The vinyl self adhesive piece adhered to the glass surface, immediately creating the illusionary presence of the actual building. (fig. 63-64) ... *Southern Gate* gave the impression than a person could pass through the doors. Situated there, it created an interesting contrast, questioning the two different realities on opposite shores of the same country. The precarious office seemed completely out of place in such a wealthy environment, but hopefully posed many questions.



fig. 62 *Southern Gate*. Border control office at Tarifa harbor. Original image.



fig. 63 *Southern Gate*. Manipulated image to adapt to installation measurements.



fig. 64 *Southern Gate*. Final installation in Santander's marina.

Phase 3: March 2002-October 2003

‘The sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without ships, the dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police that of the corsairs.’

Michael Foucault. *Different Spaces*.

In March 2002 I was offered a larger studio space within the Sculpture Department facilities. The studio had a shared office space in which I placed a table and shelves containing the archive, plus a separate room with a high ceiling and natural light. The room was about 3, 5 x 6 m, which allowed for much experimentation, and quickly, ideas that had remained latent started to take shape.

As part of my research on migration I was collecting newspaper cuttings and also reading books and essays on the topic. *On Immigration and Refugees* by Michael Dummett, helped to clarify some terms (identity, refugee, immigrant, citizenship, racism...) and also indicated how Britain has dealt with migration issues from the 50's- 60's, when it was still common to find the words 'No Coloured' on front doors, until the end of the colonial period when individual members of Commonwealth countries were treated differently – accepted often on their race alone, rather than their passports, which were identical!. Dummett's first chapter begins as direct as this:

‘What principles have governed the policies of successive British Conservative and Labour governments since the Second World War towards immigrants and refugees? And what principles have governed the policies advocated by the British media during that period towards emigrants and refugees? The newspapers, with only occasional partial lapses into decency, have acted upon a very simple principle: identify a fairly widespread prejudice, pander to it and inflame it, in the process, misleading or actually lying to the readers as far as can be safely done. The objective aimed at in following this principle has of course been to increase the circulation of the newspapers and, likewise, the number of people listening to or watching the broadcast programmes. This is of course a hostile description: but no lover or servant of the British media could make a case that I have

distorted the facts. The principle governing the policies of the Conservative and Labour governments, and indeed, with a very few honourable exceptions, of all Conservative and Labour politicians, has been exactly the same. The objective in this case, has been to maximise electoral support: to gain votes.²⁹

Dummett also states clearly in his book that although certain attitudes have radically changed in relation to racial prejudice, there is still a lot of racism and discrimination, and describes racism as a shallow construction easy to spread amongst the population (shallow because ‘although it can be described as a very deep feeling and is resistant to rational persuasion, its an attitude very easy to manipulate’). He, as many other authors such as Chomsky or Bourdieu, emphasizes the role of the media as powerful creators of opinion and of inciting racist feelings. They all report the intricate relationships between the media and Politics, and how some ideas spread initially by a minority group, have more effect after being echoed in the press/TV and which then become ‘big problems’ for mainstream parties. It is also clear though, that the relationship between media and politics work in both directions, each using the other to create and control public opinion.³⁰

This ‘manufactured reality’, whose beliefs and opinions are widely accepted and based purely on broadcast facts, were, when I started my PhD project, the main issue I was expecting to explore. My first approach to prison was to compare the ‘real place’ with the preconceived ideas I had (a knowledge built through media images, TV reports, and written documents)... But the actual prison visit opened up a whole series of new considerations about space and the control of it as another way of exercising power. It is only now, at

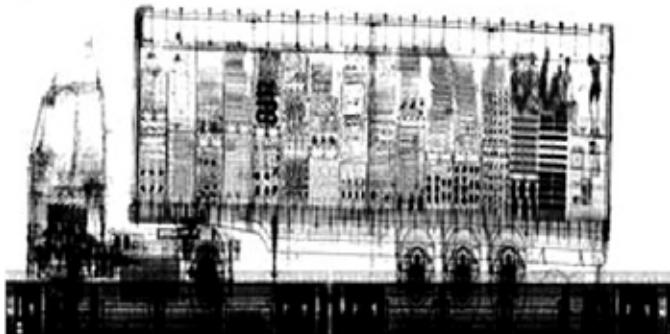


fig. 65 Image published in the British and Spanish press in relation with the death of 58 Chinese inside a sealed lorry while attempting to reach the UK (19/06/2000).

29 Dummett, M. (2001) *On Migration and Refugees*. London; Routledge. (Chapter 1, page 3)

30 See also Chomsky, N. (1997) *Media Control. The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*. 2nd Edition. New York; Seven Stories Press. The Open Media Pamphlet Series

this point of the research that the original concept becomes central again, making evident that control can be and is exercised through many channels (control of space, control of opinion, economical control, etc.)

Whilst working on the archive I started selecting certain news that received special media exposure (by the magnitude of their drama) tracking their coverage until it slowly stopped being reported. Amongst articles which caught my attention were two stories that shocked its audience. The first one occurred in June 2000, but was still appearing in 2002 as a point of reference to other news: the death of 58 Chinese citizens who suffocated inside a sealed lorry and were found at Dover. Certain issues raised, reflected the long journeys and high risks that illegal immigrants were ready to take in order to reach their dream paradises. This same story also related to the international web of traffickers who make huge profits from the illegal entry of many people, whilst creating an unfair situation that present for many entrants, their only option to access certain countries. The other news I chose (perhaps less 'popular', because there were no deaths and the story was located far away), from August 2001, was the case of 400 Afghan refugees on route to Australia that were rescued from their wrecked ship by the Norwegian cargo vessel *Tampa* in international waters. Neither the Australian government nor the Indonesian, the closest country, or the Norwegian, wanted to accept these boat people on their land, which created an international conflict taking several days to resolve and which evidenced the tighter emigration policies not only in European countries but also in many other areas - such as Australia, traditionally, a *receptor country*. In both sets of news, amongst the images illustrated, were those taken by high technological devices: In



fig. 66 Aerial view of the cargo Tampa. Published in The Guardian (05/09/2001)

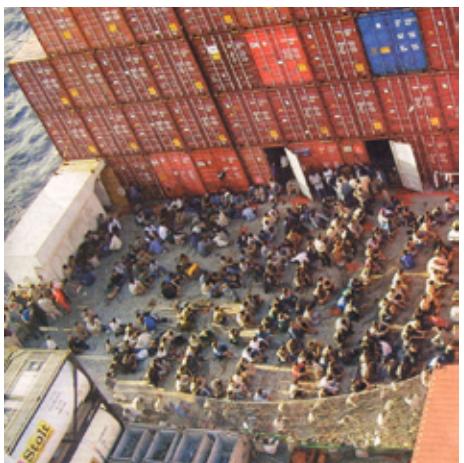


fig. 67 Afgans on board of the Tampa. Published in the Guardian (29/08/2001).



fig. 68 Working in the studio. Experimenting with TV monitors and videoplayers behind the screens.

the first one was a scan of the lorry where the immigrants were hidden among crates of food (fig. 65). In the high contrast, almost X-ray quality image, the silhouettes of the people were recognizable. In the second, an aerial view of the cargo ship in which we can just discern the people amongst the containers in their

limited space, covered with improvised shelter using tarpaulins.(fig. 66) These images, were quite different to the ones generally covering this type of news, and evidenced the amount of devices used in detecting illegal traffic (fig. 67). Instinctively I blew up these images using photocopies (A4 prints joined with tape) and pinned them to the wall of my studio. It took a while to find a definitive support on which to present this work; the images were initially low quality, as they had already been reproduced once in newspapers. I wanted to retain that particular technological feeling, a reference to the media (an image that can be *re-reproduced* again)... I considered various printing processes: lithography, photo serigraphy, silkscreen printing, but had no previous knowledge of these techniques. I finally decided to learn silkscreen printing because it could be achieved within college, plus, it allowed me to work with reasonably large formats, and the screens, as objects, which were



fig. 69 *Tampa/Dover*. Installation at CMC La Merce (Burriana, Spain). November 2003.

very appealing, could be included as part of the piece. After a few induction sessions within the Textile Department facilities I transferred the two images onto 100x150 cm aprox screens. Back in the studio I played with the screens trying to find a way to display them in which the quality of screening, layering, and dividing was evident. Hanging them on the wall killed the potential of seeing through the mesh, and when placed on the floor they looked too low. I made four long brackets and hung the screens from them using small clamps. This gave enough distance from the wall and allowed play from both sides (fig. 69), with enough space to display objects behind or even to have a person walking between the wall and the screens. I tried to display TV monitors behind the screens and played with the sound and blurred images from TV news, but wasn't convinced with the effect or with the literal reading of the piece. (fig. 68) Finally, I found that placing the viewer behind the screens made the piece



fig. 70 *Tampa/Dover*. Detail. Alluminium plates behind the screens.

more successful. I printed extracts from the related press articles on small aluminium plates and placed them on the wall behind the screens (fig. 70-71). The resulting effect felt too abstract without any other point of reference. To access all the information and to read the text that the piece represented, the public would have to stand behind the screens where they could then experience a much reduced and uncomfortable space, a claustrophobic space that echoed those described in the news articles³¹. Plus, by



fig. 71 *Tampa/Dover*. Detail. Viewer behind the screens.

³¹ Generally viewers of art are very concerned about touching or damaging exhibits which I felt, psychologically, would make the space seem even smaller.

physically ‘being’ behind, the viewer would then become the object of the installation, the one being seen, scanned or questioned.

After the trip to the Gibraltar Strait, I was preparing another to Dover and Calais, and also a visit to Sangatte, the location of the Red Cross centre. During 2001-2002 there was a continuous stream of news in the British media about attempts to reach the UK through the Euro tunnel, and the Sangatte Red Cross Centre was believed to have exacerbated the problem by providing shelter whilst acting as a meeting and information point for those wanting to cross the channel. These continuous attempts to reach the tunnel broke all security measures, affecting the train services (delays and cancellations, installation of new security devices...) and therefore created economical loss to the companies running them, plus friction between the French and British governments. Eventually Britain and France negotiated the closure of this Centre which was finally shut down in December 2002.

Whilst gathering information about the Straits of Dover and preparing for my trip, the writer and journalist César Hernández contacted me and asked to collaborate as a translator on a project for a book concerning the situation of migration in the Canary Islands, plus a series of articles for a Canarian newspaper. I had known him a long time and felt his work had always reflected a high level of commitment and independence, evident in earlier reports on Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall and his writings on South America -México, Cuba...). I immediately accepted his offer of acting translator for interviews he was planning with Sub-Saharan people arriving in the Canary Islands who were living on the streets or in charity (Red Cross, Las Palmas Acoge) and refugee centres. He was also planning to interview some Spanish authorities, the Director of the refugee centre in Grand Canaria, members of the Red Cross and possibly



fig. 71 Trip to Canary Islands. La Palma. Santa Catalina Square.

fig.72 Trip to Canary Islands. La Palma. Cutting the hear near La Palma harbor.

the police patrols in Fuerteventura. I felt it important to access all this information first hand whilst also learning more about a journalist's approach to the same issues I was exploring.

The Canary Islands have become the biggest focus on arrivals in Spain after new vigilance systems started to work in the Gibraltar Straits³². Similarly, as in the case in the UK, the insularity in the Canary Islands quickly created a developing sense of alarm. 'Soon there will be no space for all those people arriving'. It is true that the Canary Islands are part of Europe but they are so far away from the continent, that although a transient place (most immigrants don't consider it their final destination), there were at times, many people on the streets trying to find a way to continue their journeys.

The proliferation of detention centres for illegal immigrants has spread quickly all over Europe in the last decade. In Southern Spain many venues were provisionally used as such. Ironically one of these centres in the Canary Islands was the old airport terminal in Fuerteventura. (fig. 73) In February 2002, Medicos sin Fronteras and the Human Rights Watch denounced the situation in this centre and the illegal treatment that immigrants were receiving (no explanation for their detention, no access to lawyers or translations of their rights, very limited medical attention, etc). I contacted Medicos sin Fronteras who then sent me photos they'd taken with a mobile phone camera inside the terminal (fig. 74) and I also found the report of the Human Rights Watch³³ plus other related information about the situation of immigration on the islands.

I travelled to the Canaries in June 2002. We

32 The SIVE (Integral System of Exterior Vigilance) included new radars, night visors and infrared x-rays cameras, acoustic sensors plus new patrol boats and helicopters.

33 Report included in the archive: Proyect IV: *Other Journeys*. Folder 10: Canary Islands (I)



fig.73 Fuerteventura. Old airport terminal used as detention center.

fig.74 Fuerteventura. Lugagge hall at old airport terminal used as detention center. Image taken by Medicos sin Fronteras. Image taken by Medicos sin Fronteras.

stayed on Grand Canaria for a week before plans to visit Fuerteventura. Cesar Hernandez had been busy prior to our visit, contacting people and arranging interviews. Despite his efforts, some who'd agreed to be interviewed cancelled the meetings at the last minute (especially in Fuerteventura, where there was planned a visit to the old airport centre, and a meeting with the police patrols). We spent a couple of days exploring the area, the streets and squares where people were meeting and sleeping, the charity centres that offered shelter or food, the harbour, travel agencies, call centres and western union offices that had proliferated in the urban landscape since migration started increasing.... (fig. 71-72)

The first interviewee was Pepe Naranjo, a journalist and the head of the press office of The Red Cross on the Canary Islands. Interested in my PhD research, he permitted me to access their press archives containing all the news about migration on the islands since 1994, when the first pateras arrived with a few Western Saharans applying for asylum. I was also allowed to photocopy, and it was interesting to see a development in the coverage of the news and the changes in the numbers and dramatic conditions of the recent arrivals. Initially, news appeared in the section

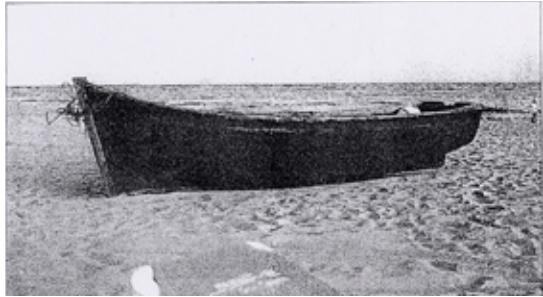


fig.75 *Patera* arrived to Canary Islands published in 1995.

fig.76 *Patera* being rescued by a patrol near Canary Islands, published in 2000.

fig.77 Subsaharians being rescued by a Spanish patrol near the Canary Islands, published in 2002.

fig.78 Diver team rescuing the corpse/ body of one of the Subsaharan immigrants drawn before reaching the Spanish coasts. Image published in 2003.

on accidents and crime reports, later it was positioned in other sections such as national news or social news.

Naranjo put us in contact with Benjamin, a Ghanian who had been living in Grand Canaria for a few months whilst trying to find a way of continuing his journey. Benjamin wouldn't be video recorded but agreed to an audio recording of the interview. He was the only person of all those interviewed that agreed to any type of recording. He described to us his journey from Ghana to Grand Canaria: Due to the difficulties in obtaining a visa and plane ticket, he contracted an '*agency*' -traffickers that charged between 1,500 to 3,000 euros to get people 'out of Africa', and initiating a long journey across

Burkina Faso, Niger, Algeria and Morocco before crossing to the Canary Islands; He also explained his fear of dying during the boat journey (he could not swim), his stay in the detention centre in the facilities of the old airport terminal ('*the camp*', as he called it) in Fuerteventura, where his eyes were damaged from the strong fluorescent lights constantly on for 24 hours. He talked about his transfer by boat guarded by the police, to the Grand Canaria after 40 days in the detention centre, his experience at the Red Cross centre, and after that, his time on the streets of Las Palmas, where he lived and slept. He said that after his experience in Spain he would rather have stayed at home but couldn't go back to his country because now he had debts (he had sold his belongings and borrowed money to pay for his journey) and couldn't return until he could make some money in Europe... On the one hand he sounded full of optimism when he told us that he had friends in Madrid and in Italy that were making money, because there it was easier to find a job... After all that, always a spark of hope to keep going!

We also interviewed some asylum seekers from Liberia and Sierra Leona. They were all escaping from the war in their countries where they lost part of their families. They arrived in the Grand Canaria stowed away or working on fishing boats. Having an asylum petition in process gave them the legal papers to remain in the country and even



fig.80 Trip to Canary Islands. Queue at Council center that offer food.

to work, but they all agreed that 'contracting a black person wasn't very 'popular'.

Physical racial differences made them very *visible*, and therefore also difficult to get work if they didn't have papers (even in fact if they did have legal documents). The last regularisation process in Canary Islands showed that most of the population who applied were Latin Americans. There are more Latin Americans in illegal situation than Sub-Saharan, but whilst the earlier ones blended in amongst the locals, Sub-Saharan stand out very distinctively.

Whilst analysing the situation of the migratory arrivals to the Canary Islands, many questions arose... How to get out off the islands, this transit area, in order to reach

the European continent without enough money?

The government has a policy of derivation with other areas of Spain to avoid over saturation on the islands. But this doesn't apply to everybody... Issues of how to get money if in many cases they don't find a job or even if they haven't got a legal passport with them (if it's been kept by the traffickers, or destroyed, or lost...)? Western Union plays an

important role here (fig. 81). There are many offices of the company in the towns, and, as one of their employees explained, only a code is necessary to collect the money. The code is given to the senders and they communicate it to the collector by phone... Relatives and friends from home or from other parts of Europe provide those funds that allow the continuation of the migrants' journeys.

Once they receive money, the next question would be: How to travel from here to the mainland of Spain? The owner of a travel agency explained that there was an Iberia regular night flight to Madrid in which there were no legal controls and that that was the safest way out... It was not a legally approved way, but a gap in the system, an unspoken pact to allow the escape...

These are only a few of the details from all the information obtained from that journey and the interviews. As an enriching experience it opened my eyes whilst helping



fig.81 Trip to Canary. Long distance call center with Western Union office.



fig.82 Image of a *patera* transferred to screen.

to confirm some of my view points on this complex subject. It was interesting to work with a journalist and documentary photographer whose approach I could compare with mine - always more allegorical. Their use of data was very factual and accurate; mine a back up reference to understand the topic.

Back in the studio, I reviewed the photocopies from Naranjo's archive. Looking only at the images that illustrated the news, it was interesting to observe, that until the year 2000 there were a lot of images of little empty boats moored in the harbours (after being rescued/detected by the police), or on the beaches (where the immigrants had arrived by their own means and had dispersed in the area...). (fig. 76) After 2000 there were no depictions of this kind... there were normally overcrowded boats photographed before/while being arrested or rescued by the police patrols. (fig. 77-79) I again enlarged some of the images on the photocopier of these empty boats and displayed them in the studio.

After the trip to the Canary Islands, I was given five old wooden frames for screen printing that were past their best. They were slightly bent, worn and stained but reminded me of the wrecked and fragile boats from the press images. After some tests on a smaller scale, I stretched the mesh onto these screens and exposed two of the images of empty *pateras* (boats) that I had previously manipulated and enlarged (fig. 82). At first I displayed these on the studio



fig.83 Test with wooden frame screens

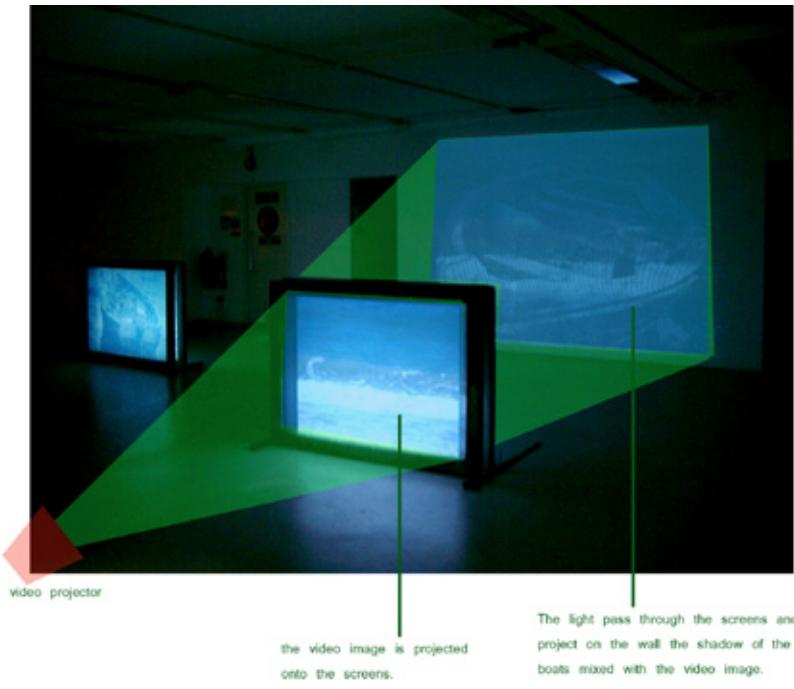


fig.84 Sketch of the installation *Rumors* at Winchester Gallery.

walls, but again, they became very two dimensional, almost like framed paintings, loosing all potential to exploit the translucence of the material, its ghostly and fragile qualities. Undecided as how to continue the project I only transferred two of the images, leaving the rest of the wooden frames with a white mesh. I stored them in the studio and returned to play with the video projections.

I was editing some images of the sea in the strait of Gibraltar in which the footage was playing normal (forward) and then backward, the waves ebbing and flowing (*departing and arriving*) from the same shore... Almost by chance I started to project this video onto the screens that were lying in the studio, standing them on the floor in the middle of the space. When the screen mesh was white, the image was visible on its surface and also projected on the wall behind. When directed at a screen with an image already exposed on the mesh, the projection wasn't as clear on either the mesh or the wall. It projected the shadow of the images of the boat plus the over projected image from the video projector. I finally combined two screens with a separation of approximately 10 cms between them. The screen facing the projector had a blank white mesh; the one behind and closer to the wall, an image of a boat. When projecting onto the combination of these screens, what was visible from the front side (closest to the projector) was the video image on the mesh, but

on the wall this image appeared mixed with the shadow of the boat exposed on the back screen... (fig. 83) Without moving around the piece it was difficult to understand what was happening... Only by accessing the other side was the mechanism that create this illusion evident.(fig. 84)

The screens placed directly on the floor in the middle of a dark space looked larger when lit, and with the images projected on them, started to resemble a flat TV monitor more than a framed painting. I liked this new association that linked them to the mass media. I then started reediting the videos. The sea, even with the disturbing backward motion was '*too nice*' an image, but the sound of the wind that picked up in the original soundtrack recording of the sea sounded very much like that of '*TV interference*'. Taking that as my departure point, I recorded an image of '*TV snow*' and edited it by mixing it with that of the sea whilst retaining the original soundtrack from the sea.

The images of the TV snow with the sea gave new meaning to the piece; it made it richer and more open: there was not a specific story behind it but a questioning of how we read and forget information broadcast in the media... in the end, what remains are only partial images /stories in the misty landscape of super-information... I titled this piece *Rumors*. (fig. 85)



fig.85 *Rumors*. Detail of the installation at Centro de Historia de Zaragoza, Spain.

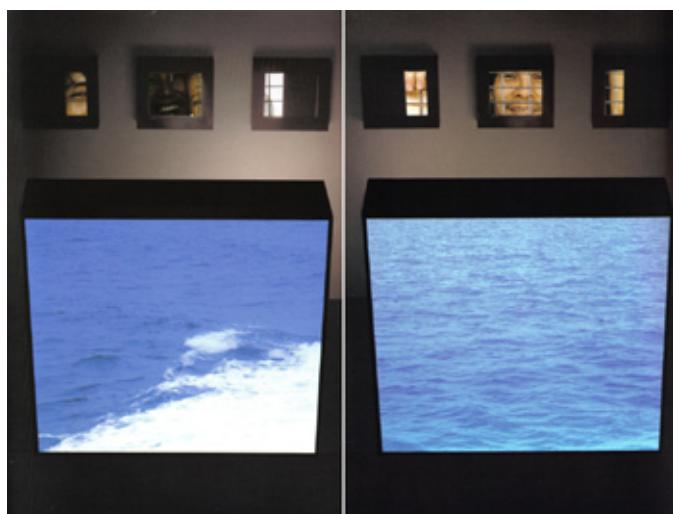


fig.86 Alfredo Jaar. *Sin Título (Agua)*. 1990.
Details from the installation.

This work had certain resonances with the piece from

1990 *Sin título (Agua)* (fig. 86) by the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar. In this work Jaar used a series of six light boxes positioned on the gallery floor with images of the sea on the side facing the public. Behind the light boxes, attached to the wall, a series of mirrors reflected



fig. 87 Canary Islands. View of Las Palmas harbor from the ferry.



fig. 88 Tarifa harbor. Ferry tickets office..

fragments of the gallery space, on which the viewer image mixed with the photographed faces of Vietnamese asylum seekers waiting for their refugee papers behind the wire netting of a detention centre in Hong Kong. These photographs were displayed on the back side of the light boxes, but they were only visible through the mirrors... and thus created a visual game revealed only when the viewer approached the work and had access to both sides of the light box. Compared with my piece, Jaar's work played more with the dichotomy tourism/immigration, oneself/otherness: the images of the blue sea full of connotations of freedom, were pleasant images, closer to those used in advertisements for cruises or tourist vacations... as counterbalance, the faces of the people behind the wire netting brings us a different reality, a different journey, not that openly 'advertised', a 'hidden route to freedom'... The mixture of one's own image with those of the Vietnamese creates some direct questioning about otherness...of the Vietnamese creates some direct questioning about otherness...

Jaar also questions migration issues in other works, such as *Coyote* (1988), *Fading* (1989-91-93), *Je me souviens* (1992), *Walking on Water* (1992), *Bonjour Sécurité* (1993) or *Crossing* (1993)



fig. 89 Norman Offer. Southampton.

amongst many more in which he reflects on journeys, frontiers or segregation/xenophobia.

During the period when I was researching migration issues, I was curious to compare the contrast between the continuous mention of 'the globalised world in constant flow' and new laws and regulations to control the movement of people... Definitely, goods and people travel at different speeds ... It is acceptable to produce goods in developing countries and then ship them, but why isn't it easy to understand that a person working for 10-12 hours or more a day in one of these factories for a very low wage should aspire for better living conditions - even if that means they might have to travel far away from home to achieve them!?

During my journeys (Tarifa, Canary Islands, Japan,...), also in some of the news and in the everyday life landscape there was another particular issue that captured my attention: The freight container. This container, I feel, is a symbol of contemporary society: with standard dimensions, bright colours, stackable like a massive LEGO, hermetic, with no windows, it's a mobile unit used mainly for the transportation of goods, but their prefab like structure, sometimes also used as a shelter or temporary office, house.... In Tarifa, the ferry tickets office, the border control



fig. 90 Osaka (Japan). Nanko container depot.

fig. 91-92 Freightliner. Southampton.



fig. 93 *Cargo 01*. Digital print on aluminium. 2003. 40x450 cm

office and the new Red Cross centre were all container like/prefab structures. (fig. 56 62, 88) In Tenerife and Las Palmas, the traffic/shipping of containers in the harbours was continuous, constantly transforming the view of the harbour area (fig. 87). In the news there were many attempts by immigrants to reach Europe hidden inside containers –some of them unfortunately meeting fatal endings...



fig. 94 Stan Douglas. *Damaged Containers, Mitchell Island.*(2001).

To continue exploring containers I decided to visit other harbours, and living near Southampton, I contacted the Freightliner Company, the company in charge of the transport by train of containers arriving at the port. A visit was arranged and I was shown around the area: from the cargos arriving, and the constant activity of the cranes, to the trains ready for departing.... I also visited a small company, Norman Offer, that transports containers by road and in both places I was allowed to take some photographs. (fig. 89-90-91-92)

Back in the studio I started composing some panoramic imagery with the photographs taken at the container depot (fig. 93). Two of the compositions depicted a train loaded with containers, and the other one, rows of containers stockpiled in the depot near the rails ready to be put on the train. I worked from 35mm photographs, so, to produce a panoramic image I had to join the original 35mm ones and to adjust size, perspective and colour, in order to simulate a continuous image. The result of this digital manipulation was an image with a very straight horizon (devoid of any perspective and giving a feeling



fig. 95 Allan Sekula. *Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic.* November 1993. From the work *Fish Story*.

of unreal flatness). The panoramic format (thin and long) should have emphasized movement, the colours of the containers and the scale gave a certain playful toy like feeling, but despite that, the images were cold, silent and motionless... - industrial landscapes without figures, waiting! These

images were conceived as part of a bigger project – they were a previous studio idea for a 3D installation I was planning to build, using screens. From these images taken in the container depots, I digitally re-created the surfaces of six sides of a container (fig. 97) that were later used to expose onto the screens for the installation - *Container*.



fig. 96 Stan Douglas. *A Journey into Fear* (2001).
Still from the video.

The Canadian artist Stan Douglas also explored the container in his work from 2001 *A journey to Fear*, presented at the Serpentine Gallery in 2002. Douglas used as the location for his film a generic cargo vessel, ‘possibly the most utilitarian symbol of globalization’ as he described it. In the exhibition, together with the film, he presented related photographs that depicted Vancouver harbour, a container yard, containers, as well as production stills from a film set: a passenger cabin on a container ship (fig.94-96). A 16-foot large panorama of a Vancouver street scene, a portrait of a contemporary global market place, completed the gallery installation.

Previously, Allan Sekula, in his work *Fish Story* (fig. 95) picked up the artistic tradition of depicting harbours, ships and coastlines, demonstrating the history and future of maritime space not only as a visual space but also as a socio-economic one. *Fish Story* was his third project in a related cycle of works that deal with the imaginary and actual geography of the advanced capitalistic world. A key issue in *Fish Story* is the connection

between containerised cargo movement and the growing internationalization of the world industrial economy, with its effects on the actual social space of ports.

Since its conception, Sekula sought to build the project cumulatively, exhibiting and publishing



fig. 97 *Container*. Sketch. *Fish Story* as a work in progress. For the project



fig. 98-100 *Container*. Experimenting the volume with screens, timber and tarpaulines.

fig. 99 *Container*. Experimenting with lights and objects inside the container structure.

fig. 101 *Container*. Experimenting with video retroprojections inside the structure.

Sekula photographed and described the harbours and cities of Barcelona, Gdansk, Glasgow, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, New York, Pusan, Rotterdam, San Diego, Seoul, Ulsan, Veracruz, Vigo and Warsaw, between 1988 and 1994, as well as his passage across the North Atlantic on a Sea-Land container vessel from Port Elisabeth, New Jersey, to the ECT/Sea-Land Terminal in Rotterdam.

With the images of the container as reference, I intended to create an installation in the studio using the printing screens in a more sculptural way: they became a modular element with which to build a whole 3D structure. I studied the actual measurements of containers in designing the structure in the studio as accurately as possible to the real thing. I tried to build it with borrowed screens from the Textile Department but the dimensions of these screens were not right, so I concluded that I needed to buy the materials (aluminium frames, mesh, coating...). That involved a lot of money that I didn't have at that time, so I started applying for sponsorships, whilst still trying to find alternative solutions. I purchased 9 aluminium frames from a local company so as to start experimenting with and creating one side of the container. I enlarged the image of the door side of a container and divided

it in nine parts that were transferred onto the screens mesh. I created the container volume through building the rest of the structure with timber and tarpaulins. (fig. 98-100)

The resulting combination was more similar to a lorry than a container. The front side built with the screens was joined with clamps and contrasted too much with the tarpaulins that were too soft and flimsy in comparison with the metal modular structure of the screens. Nevertheless, I tried out a few ideas using this concept and displayed objects (crates, suitcases, recreation of an office...) and lights inside playing with the shadows. I also tried video projections by placing the projector inside and projecting through the screens' mesh. (fig. 99-101)

The previous summer I had been playing with the footage of the radar at Heathrow. I created a 3 second loop in which the radar described a 360° spin. In the rotation, when the radar faced the video camera, an interference signal was recorded by the camera, creating a repetitive and strident soundtrack. I had already tested this video whilst playing with the planespotters images. I concluded that it worked better when the scale was bigger, but a projection on a wall seemed too flat for this image. I now brought back this video and projected it inside the 'container' installation, expecting that the image would emphasize the aspects of controlling a hermetic/closed space. But it didn't work as I'd imagined, just overcomplicating its meaning.

Whilst waiting for sponsorship, and with this provisional structure built in the studio, I started playing with other



fig. 102 360°. Video installation. CMC la Mercé, Burriana (Spain).

spaces in college. I asked the Winchester Gallery to lend me the space during a week when there were no exhibitions programmed: I wanted to try out some of the pieces (*Rumors*, the container front side...) in a much larger space, so I placed the screens and the projectors there and experimented. The gallery is windowed all along one wall, and I tried to project some of my videos through the glass, covering the glass with tracing paper, so the interior of the gallery wasn't visible from the outside and the projected image became more visible. I had to leave the gallery space just when I started to feel that this idea of retro projection would work very well with the radar image (fig. 102), so I decided to ask permission to work in the hall above the gallery, just outside of the Lecture Theatre. I again covered the glass of the windows with tracing paper; this time I covered the windows on two adjacent walls (at 90° angles), which allowed me to experiment in the corner space, and using the two perpendicular walls. The interaction with the building's architecture (using the whole surface of the glass walls), plus the projection within this angular space conferred an image with a more 3 dimensional entity. Moreover, being displayed on the first floor instead of the ground floor where the gallery was, proved a more successful working space. Due to its elevated height, the piece gained visibility with similarities to actual radar. This installation, titled *360°*, was conceived to be seen from outside the building and was only



fig. 103 *Container*. Building process in the studio. Making the hole in the alluminium frames.

fig. 104 *Container*. Joining the screens.

fig. 105 *Container*. Interior view.

visible when dark outside. Once the viewer entered the building he/she had no access to the visual element, but discovered the soundtrack of the installation: the noise recorded by the video camera, picking up the interference when the radar and the video camera faced each other. This sound had the same repetitive rhythm of the spinning radar in the image, and therefore, although at the beginning not obviously connected, when the viewer later encountered the actual projection, ended up relating to the image and the sound as a whole experience.



fig. 106 Do-Ho Suh. *The Perfect Home*. 2003

Bringing the video outside of the studio and finding a space for it, simplified the discourse but made it more powerful at the same time, and helped me to consider the container installation from a different perspective. Only then did I realise that I had overcomplicated it, by adding different elements (objects, light...), but I felt it needed to be simplified in order to work. The coated screens, joined to create

a modular structure were working very well. They created a surface in which the lightness of the mesh and the coldness and hardness of the metal were rich enough to work by themselves. The natural light in the space also enhanced the materials, creating varying levels of translucence on the mesh according to the light conditions during the day. The reading of the piece didn't need to refer to any specific news or experiences; it was a ghostly image of a contemporary icon. I decided to take down the timber structure and the tarpaulins, and finally received sponsorship for the coating plus discounts on the purchase of the frames and the mesh. How to join the screens was another question to resolve. The previous nine screens were joined with clamps and worked well, especially because they depicted the image of the container doors, but I felt that it wouldn't work the same on the other sides, so I finally used nuts and bolts instead of clamps as they were more neutral, creating a more definitive form of locking. From then I started the mechanical process of

drilling holes in the aluminium frames, stretching the mesh, and coating and exposing the 45 screens. (fig. 103-104-105)

Once the structures were built, the grid element created by the frames became very powerful, presenting a very distinct feeling of enclosure, of no access to the interior of the installation. Although physical access was denied, there did exist visual access as the mesh generated a translucence that allowed the viewer to scan the interior (the inner space). The light could freely circulate inside the piece, constantly modifying its levels of transparency. The coated images of the surface of a container appeared either clearly or diffused depending on the amount of actual light. (fig. 110)

The use of the fabric mesh made me think of some works of Korean artist Do-Ho Suh, who recreated full-size replicas of his dwellings in Seoul and New York using silk, nylon, and stainless steel tubing. Every detail, fixture, and appliance, right down to the light switches and door knobs were meticulously replicated; the experience of walking through these houses not unlike some dream sequence, in which reality - in this case, the reality of structure, material, and texture - has been drained, leaving only a gauzy, ghostly memory. (fig 106-107) These entire structures can be dismantled and packed into a suitcase. His work is perhaps symbolic to the millions of people around the globe who are, by choice or necessity, on the move. Sush's pieces have as their antithesis, the plaster filled voids of Rachel Whiteread's works (fig. 108) They are as heavy (literally and figuratively) as his transportable spaces are both physically and psychologically light.



fig. 107 Do-Ho Suh. *Seoul Home / L.A. Home*. 1999.



fig. 108 Rachel Whiteread. *Untitled (Apartment)*. 2001.



fig. 109 *Container*. Exhibition at Centro de Historia de Zaragoza (Spain).

Container was built in my studio and therefore designed to fit in it³⁴. Occupying most of the space, it left only a narrow corridor all around it, thus the viewer felt constrained within the space which reinforced the idea of a hermetic, enclosed space and gave the illusion that the installation was bigger. It was interesting to observe the difference when the same piece was rebuilt in a different space. The structure was collapsible and after disassembly, was reconstructed in the main sculpture studio in order to photograph it. Centred within a much larger space, the scale seemed completely different, the viewer didn't need to move closely to the object but observed it from different perspectives and distances... having more air and light (different windows and doors) around allowed more reflections through the mesh. The Container there seemed lighter, mobile...

This piece has subsequently been exhibited twice in group shows: the first was *TRANS-Emigración y Fronteras* curated by Esther Moreno and held in the Centro de Historia de Zaragoza. The exhibition occupied the second floor of the building and was presented in different rooms. I had the option of displaying the piece in a neutral gallery like room or in a reception hall on the second floor. I finally choose the hall because it was richer in terms of light and architectural surroundings – the geometrical elements within the windows, stairs, floor and tiled walls.... echoed the structure of the installation. It



fig. 110 *Container*. Detail.

³⁴ I had to adapt the dimensions of a real container in order to fit the structure in the studio space. The installation is a bit shorter than an actual container

was also a transitional space in which the public could freely move around to access the galleries. (fig 109) Ironically when preparing to ship the installation to Spain, it transpired that the piece was too fragile to transport inside a real container so it had to be conveyed by van.

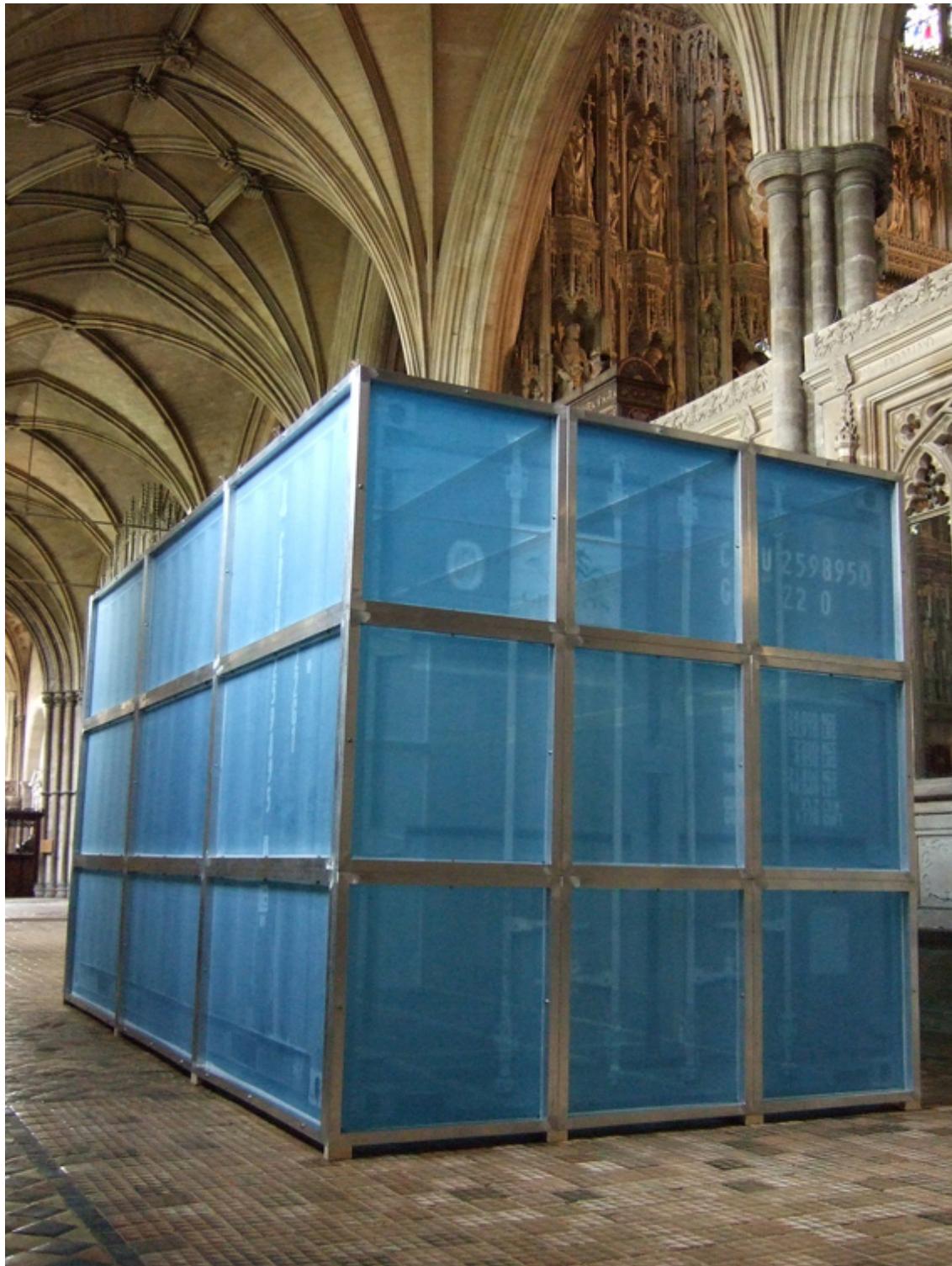


fig. 111 *Container. Light*, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral.

The second exhibition was *Light*, curated by Prof. John Gibbons, a project which formed part of The Year of Sculpture held in Winchester Cathedral from May till July 2007.³⁵ The Container was located on one side of the choir, beyond a short flight of stone steps, with a narrow space around it to access the retro choir. In this surrounding, the historical architecture of the cathedral, built to remain and transcend, contrasted with the lightness and ephemeral qualities of the Container, a transitional space, a non place, a space for carrying and transporting goods, mainly designed from a commercial perspective. The angular geometry of the installation contrasted with those of the curved organic shapes within the building; the artificial blue of the screen coating emulsion appeared incongruent with the natural materials of the construction, emphasizing the fragility and warmth of the fabric with the cold permanence of the stone ... Despite these differences, both spaces correlated in creating a remarkable relationship: The Container's mesh, penetrated by light filtering through the stained glass windows of the Cathedral produced a myriad of shapes and shadows in which architecture and viewers were included. (fig. 111-112-113)

During the exhibition, I was informed that the place where the container was displayed was actually the final destination for pilgrims who over centuries visited Winchester Cathedral in the quest of a better afterlife. Contemporary migrants also search for a better life... a compelling connection of transcending journeys...

³⁵ The exhibition included pieces from Rachel Whiteread, Richard Bachelor, Ian Dawson, Mark Queen, John Gibbons and Darren Almond.

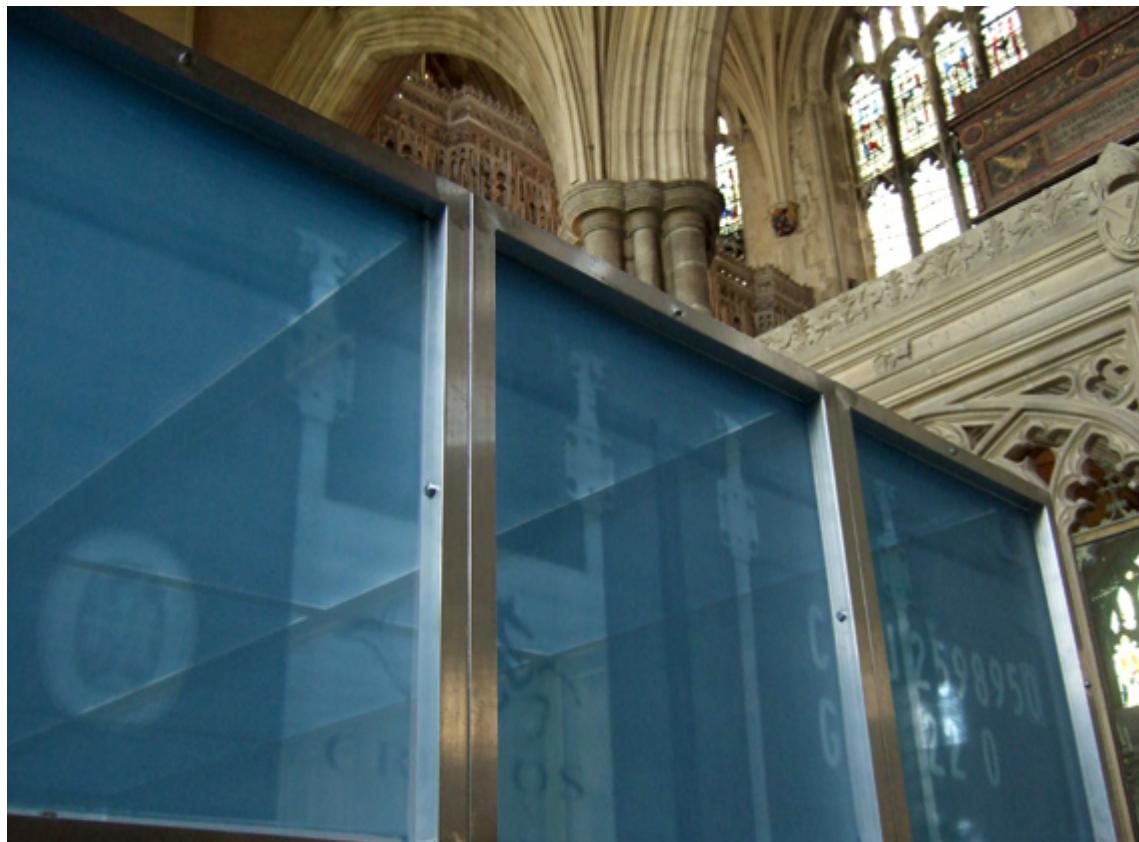


fig. 112 *Container. Light*, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral. (Detail)



fig. 113 *Container. Light*, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral. (Detail)

Epilogue

In October 2003, having produced all the practical work for the research, I went back home, to Spain. All that remained to do was the introduction, and to conclude the archiving process, but I was expecting a baby and needed more ‘space’ (physical and mental), perhaps this *nesting instinct* compelled me to go back home.

My situation changed completely once in Spain: I had a studio space at home but didn’t have access to the campus facilities such as the workshops for screen printing and sculpture, which limited the experimentation with the materials I had previously used; I started working in a more individual/isolated context, without the input that the University setting provided for exchanging ideas, attending seminars, etc; also, with a tiny baby it was impossible to dedicate the same amount of time to the studio practice (not for the two first years at least!). To support myself I started working as a graphic designer, this particular, up until now, unexplored field, fuelled my creativity in unexpected ways: I became much more aware of the visual trends in art and advertising, finding new materials to work with and discovered new processes of image reproduction such as offset plates for instance. These, in a way, were similar to the serigraphic screens I’d been using, even down to the blue screen coating emulsion and I used this process in the piece *El Rincón del Rumor del Recuerdo* (fig. 114).

I had taken all the archive material I had been using back to Spain with me, and carried on adding more to it, although not as frequently. As I was less mobile, I didn’t travel around as much but maintained much closer contact with my family; I stopped ‘*being a foreigner*’. Ironically, my partner (from Japan) and my son both look Asian, so this issue (of migration, of outsider) remains very present in my everyday life and also in my work.

During this time I remade a series of family photographs that I started in 1998 while doing an MA at WSA, in which, through the exploration of the mother/son relationship, I investigated the passing of time and the bonds and ties intrinsic in family relationships. I also used images of the family in the work *El Rincón del Rumor del Recuerdo*, that depicted my partner and my son playing with bamboo canes in the Valencia Botanical Gardens; for

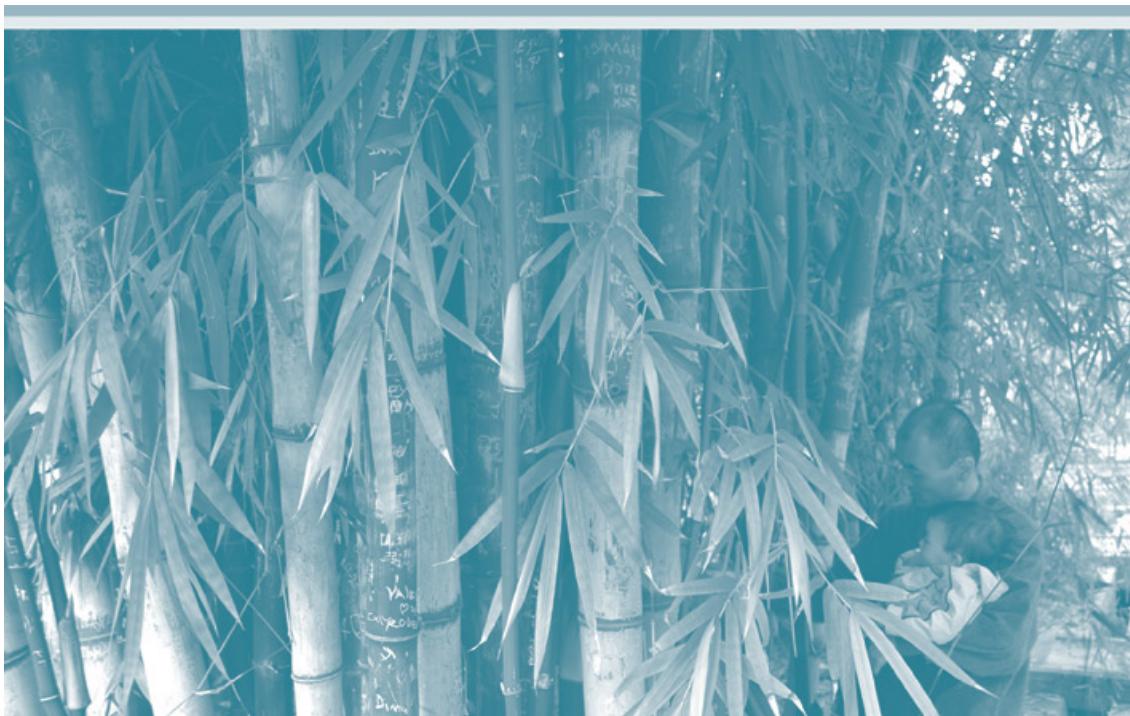


fig. 114v *El Rincón del Rumor del Recuerdo*. 2004.
Offset plates and emulsion.

my partner it was a very nostalgic moment, for our Western minds an exotic stamp: the image initially looks as though located in Asia (the people, the plants..); only the graffiti on the bamboo (Spanish names, Roman alphabet) show that the place is closer home.

It is true that being back home offered a new perspective on issues present in my work, convincing me that certain elements within my work are definitely autobiographic. Continuing to collect information about migration uncovered new aspects to investigate, such as the situation of migrant women working within a domestic environment, caring for children and the elderly. I was in direct contact with a few Rumanian women who looked after my own aged relatives (I come from Castellón, one of the main destinations for Rumanians in Spain); this opportunity offered an 'inside' vision about migratory women.

The association *Valencia Acoge*, helps immigrants to find accommodation or jobs, and supplies language lessons and juridic support, whilst fighting for and promoting their integration into local communities. They introduced me to a range of different functions and means of support that non-governmental organisations are constantly providing. Having a child oneself made one realise the long journey ahead in terms of integration

and respect among different communities sharing a common context. Spain, compared with other Northern European countries, is a relatively new reception country, with the possibility perhaps of not repeating the same mistakes of other societies,... but if we expect diverse generations to grow together over time, then there is a huge task ahead in developing tolerance through education both inside and outside of school.

Conclusion

This PhD research has been mainly an exploration of different aspects relating to the constructed space (public/private spaces, institutions, political borders, transitional spaces, notions of home and belonging...), understanding space not as an abstract entity/construction but as the place in which we live our lives, a medium that articulates and conditions our living experience. Although the research also includes some photography, I felt that the installation pieces (*Isolation*, *Container*, *Rumors* or *360°*) were particularly successful in exploring issues relating to space. They offered the viewer a 3D sensorial experience; the public had to circulate through the work, play with it and slowly disentangle its contents. This approach to the installation seemed initially more playful, and as a whole more challenging and enquiring.

The works produced during this period had become richer and more complex as the research developed and the archive became a thread that articulated the different projects. The use of the archive definitely affected my approach to the practical work, allowing me to be more analytical and aware of the methodological processes behind the work, without losing the instinctive part of its creation. With the archiving I didn't face the problems I had on other occasions when I had to constantly transcribe the studio processes into words; the method used this time involved collecting relevant materials and organising them in a way that helped to reconstruct the thinking process, but didn't interfere with the flow of ideas³⁶.

Although I finished the



fig. 115 *Un segundo de luz. (La Noche)*. 2006
Detail.

³⁶ I did obviously use the writing in parts of the archive: to transcribe interviews, note ideas, as part of sketches, etc... But it hasn't been the only and main vehicle to describe the studio work.

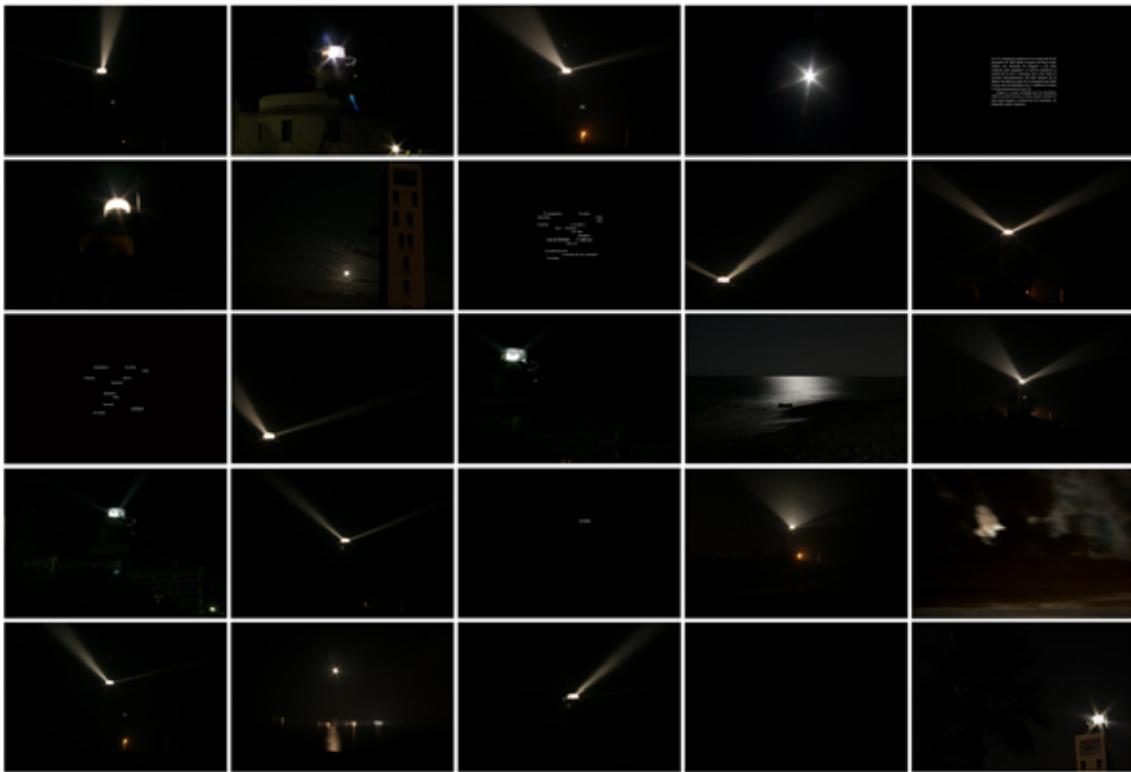


fig. 116 *Un segundo de luz. (La Noche)*. 2006

research period at the end of 2003, the archive has kept growing. It has inspired other pieces -*El Rincón del Rumor del Recuerdo*, *Un segundo de Luz (la Noche)* (fig. 115-116), *Un segundo de Luz (Señales e Interferencias)* (fig. 117), and even became a piece in itself in the exhibition *TRANS- Inmigración y Fronteras*, in which I selected part of the documentation included in the archive to create an installation that helped to contextualise my other work on show.

Taking part in exhibitions during and after the research period proved very positive. Trying to find a balance between deadlines and the natural flow of the research was challenging at times; on the other hand, the shows helped me to focus, re-evaluate and gave exposure to my research work within the public domain. I felt it very important to continue as a practising artist during this time, feeling that the constraints of only working within endogamous academic circles might contribute to tunnel vision whilst limiting the breadth of my research; It is crucial, I think, that the research, as a growing entity and a live process, remains in contact with real life/life outside.

Participation in group shows has been particularly interesting where there has been a common thread running amongst the pieces(-*TRANS, Light, In motion, Un Segundo de Luz...*) *TRANS Inmigración y Fronteras* has probably been the best experience in this

sense. The exhibition explored issues of migration and borders through a range of works from a variety of both established artists (Eva Lootz, Rogelio López Cuenca) and younger up and coming artists... Most of us met during the set up and the opening, and the exhibition proved more than just a shared space, as during the little time we spent together, we all found common links, thus creating a platform for further dialogue and discussion.

In 2006 I worked with the artist Mar Arza in the project *Un Segundo de Luz*, a small show forming part of The Valencia Art Fair. I met Mar in 2000 when we were both studing at WSA. Now we are both living in Spain although in different cities, but we keep in contact and discuss our work regularly, and for the show we tried to bring together issues that we were exploring individually, using e-mail mainly as a way of constantly and efficiently sharing information.

This space for discussion existed naturally in the University settings in which shared studio spaces, workshops and seminars provided regular constructive feedback from various tutors, technicians, students etc. This positive environment nurtured the development of the research project, and I felt it difficult and more challenging working in isolation in my studio in Spain. Saying that, participating in exhibition projects is currently helping me to continue to expand and explore issues proposed during the PhD.



fig. 117 *Un segundo de luz. (Señales e Interferencias)*. 2006. Stills from video projection.

Index of illustrations

Fig. 1. Isidoro Valcárcel Medina. *Proyecto de reforma del muro de Berlin*. 1988.

Fig. 2. Isidoro Valcárcel Medina. *The Suicidal's House*. 1984.

Fig. 3. Santiago Sierra. *Wall Clossing off a Space*. 2003.

Fig. 4. Oda Projesi. *Annex*. Detail of poscards published as part of the Project.

Fig. 5. Antoni Muntadas. *On Translation: Fear*. Stills from the video installation.

Fig. 6. HMP Winchester. Image published in The Hampshire Chronicle, 11/01/01.

Fig. 7. Sample of Panopticon design: The Critchef Panopticon, 1787. Illustration from the book The Fabrication of Virtue. English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840. (page 201).

Fig. 8. Sample of Panopticon design: The ‘Penitentiary Panopticon’, Jeremy Bentham, Samuel Bentham and Willey Reveley, 1791. Illustration from the book The Fabrication of Virtue. English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840. (page 203).

Fig. 9. First tests in the studio. Experimenting with video projections on a clock.

Fig. 10. Detail of a single room at the halls in residence Erasmus Park, Winchester.

Fig 11. *Vuelo 0*. From the series Short Stories. 2000. 81x81 cm. Digital print mounted on aluminium.

Fig. 12. *Tardor*. Diptych from the series Short Stories. 1999-2000. 2 pieces 70x100 cm.
Digital print mounted on aluminium.

Fig. 13. *Journey*. Diptych from the series Short Stories. 1999-2000. 2 pieces 70x100 cm.
Digital print mounted on aluminium.

Fig. 14. *Rastro*. Diptych from the series Short Stories. 1999-2000. 2 pieces 70x100 cm.
Digital print mounted on aluminium.

Fig. 15. Absalon. *Céllule n° 3*, 1992. Prototype. 210 x 404 x 240 cm. Collection of the
Caisse des dépôts et consignations, en deposito en el Musée d'art moderne de
Saint-Étienne.

Fig. 16. Absalon. *Céllule n° 6*, 1992. Prototype. 220 x 220 x 160 cm. Galerie Chantal
Crousel, París.

Fig. 17. Sketch of different space distribution within the installation area.

Fig. 18. *Isolation*. Installation process. Sink and toilet.

Fig. 19. *Isolation*. Installation process. Covering the walls with aluminium sheets.

Fig. 20. Birds Cage at Crissold Park, London.

Fig. 21. Birds cage at Battersea Zoo. Battersea Park, London.

Fig. 22. Still from the footage at Barcelona's courtyard. Peacock.

Fig. 23. Still from the footage at Barcelona's courtyard. Doves.

Fig. 24. Still from the footage at Barcelona's courtyard.

Fig. 25. Rabbit farm. Lucena del Cid, Spain.

Fig. 26. Mona Hatoum. *Light Sentence*, 1992. Mixed media, dimensions variable.

Fig. 27. *Isolation*. Installation view. Crossing wires divide the space into room and corridor.

Fig. 28. *Isolation*. Stills from the video projection.

Fig. 29. San Miguel de los Reyes, Valencia.

Fig. 30. *Isolation*. Setting up at San Miguel de los Reyes, Valencia.

Fig. 31. *Isolation*. Installation view. Entrance and corridor.

Fig. 32. *Isolation*. Installation view.

Fig. 33. Studio 2. View from the river bank.

Fig. 34. *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama*. Detail.

Fig. 35. *Detrás de la puerta, debajo de la cama*. Final composition.

Fig. 36. Sophie Calle. *The Hotel, Room 30, March 4, 1983*. Gelatine-silver prints, Ektachrome print, and text, Edition 3/4. 2 panels, 41 1/8 x 57 inches each (framed).

Fig. 37. Still from the police speed camera from founded tapes.

Fig. 38. Still from the police speed camera from founded tapes.

Fig. 39. *Lift*. BW photo test.

Fig. 40. Still from the footage at Heathrow airport.

Fig. 41. Still from the footage at Heathrow airport.

Fig. 42. Southampton Airport. Luggage hall.

Fig. 43. Still from the footage at Heathrow airport.

Fig. 44. *Lift*. Sketch for a video installation inside the lift.

Fig. 45. *Lift*. Test with bags.

Fig. 46. *Lift*. Photography test.

Fig. 47. *Planespotters*. Photographic series.

Fig. 48. *Planespotters*. Detail.

Fig. 49. Mark Wallinger. *Threshold to the Kingdom*. Projected video installation, 2000

Fig. 50. Javier Bauluz. Image published in the article Muerte a las puertas del paraíso, published in La Vanguardia in October 2000.

Fig. 51. Javier Bauluz. Image published in the article *Muerte a las puertas del paraíso*, published in *La Vanguardia* in October 2000.

Fig. 52. Javier Bauluz. Image published in the article *Muerte a las puertas del paraíso*, published in *La Vanguardia* in October 2000.

Fig. 53. Sample of the influence of Arabic architecture in Tarifa.

Fig. 54. Mural on the walls of a primary school in Tarifa.

Fig. 55. Postcard purchased in Tarifa.

Fig. 56. Red Cross Centre at Tarifa harbour.

Fig. 57. Red Cross Centre, Tarifa. Interior view (kitchen).

Fig. 58. Red Cross Centre, Tarifa. Interior view (nursery).

Fig. 59. Red Cross Centre, Tarifa. Interior view (storage room).

Fig. 60. Rogelio López Cuenca. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños*. (detail of the installation)

Fig. 61. Rogelio López Cuenca. *El Paraíso es de los Extraños*. (detail of the installation)

Fig. 62. *Southern Gate*. Border control office at Tarifa harbour. Original image.

Fig. 63. *Southern Gate*. Manipulated image to adapt to installation measurements.

Fig. 64. *Southern Gate*. Final installation in Santander's marina.

Fig. 65. Image published in the British and Spanish press in relation with the death of 58 Chinese inside a sealed lorry while attempting to reach the UK (19/06/2000).

Fig. 66. Aerial view of the cargo ship Tampa. Image published in The Guardian (05/09/2001)

Fig. 67. Images of the Afghans on board of the Norwegian cargo ship Tampa. Image published in the Guardian (29/08/2001).

Fig. 68. Tests with screens in the studio. Experimenting with TV monitors and video players behind the screens.

Fig. 69. Tampa/Dover. Installation at CMC La Merce (Burriana, Spain). November 2003.

Fig. 70. Tampa/Dover. Detail. Aluminium plates behind the screens.

Fig. 71. Tampa/Dover. Detail. Viewer behind the screens.

Fig. 72. Trip to Canary Islands. La Palma. Santa Catalina Square. One of the main meeting points for illegal immigrants.

Fig. 73. Trip to Canary Islands. La Palma. Cutting hair near La Palma harbour.

Fig. 74. Fuerteventura. Old airport terminal used as detention centre.

Fig. 75. Fuerteventura. Luggage hall at old airport terminal used as detention centre.
Image taken by Medicos sin Fronteras.

Fig. 76. Image of a patera arrived to Canary Islands published in the local press in 1995.

Fig. 77. Image of a patera being rescued by a patrol near Canary Islands, published in the local press in 2000.

Fig. 78. Image of Sub Saharans being rescued by a Spanish patrol near the Canary Islands, published in the Spanish press in 2002.

Fig. 79. Image of a diver team rescuing the corpse/body of one of the Sub-Saharan immigrants drawn before reaching the Spanish coasts. Image published in the national press in 2003.

Fig. 80. Trip to Canary Islands. Queue at Council center that offer food.

Fig. 81. Trip to Canary Islands. Long distance call centre with Western Union office.

Fig. 82. Images of a patera transferred to screen.

Fig. 83. Test with wooden frame screens.

Fig. 84. Sketch of the installation *Rumors* at Winchester Gallery.

Fig. 85. *Rumors*. Detail of the installation at Centro de Historia de Zaragoza, Spain.

Fig. 86. Alfredo Jaar. *Sin Título (Agua)*. 1990. Details from the installation.

Fig. 87. Canary Islands. View of Las Palmas harbour from the ferry.

Fig. 88. Tarifa harbour. Ferry tickets office.

Fig. 89. Norman Offer. Southampton.

Fig. 90. Osaka (Japan). Nanko container depot. General view.

Fig. 91. Freightliner. Southampton.

Fig. 92. Freightliner. Southampton.

Fig. 93 *Cargo 01*. Digital print on aluminium. 2003. 40x450 cm

Fig. 94. Stan Douglas. *Damaged Containers, Mitchell Island*. (2001). C-Print.

Fig. 95. Allan Sekula. *Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. November 1993*. From the work *Fish Story*.

Fig. 96. Stan Douglas. *A Journey into Fear* (2001). Still from the video.

Fig. 97. *Container*. Sketch.

Fig. 98. *Container*. Experimenting the volume with screens, timber and tarpaulins.

Fig. 99. *Container*. Experimenting with lights and objects inside the container structure.

Fig. 100. *Container*. Experimenting the volume with screens, timber and tarpaulins.

Fig. 101. *Container*. Experimenting with video retro projections inside the structure.

Fig. 102. *360°*. Video installation. CMC la Mercé, Burriana (Spain).

Fig. 103. *Container*. Building process in the studio. Making the holes in the aluminium frames.

Fig. 104. *Container*. Building process in the studio. Joining the screens.

Fig. 105. *Container*. Building process in the studio. Interior view.

Fig. 106 Do-Ho Suh. *The Perfect Home*. 2003. Translucent nylon. 279.4 x 609.6 x 1310.6 cm.

Fig. 107 Do-Ho Suh. *Seoul Home / L.A. Home*. 1999.

Fig. 108 Rachel Whiteread. *Untitled (Apartment)*. 2001. White robust plasticized plaster, 112 x 437 x 242 inches.

Fig. 109. *Container*. Exhibition at Centro de Historia de Zaragoza (Spain).

Fig. 110. *Container*. Detail.

Fig. 111. *Container*. Light, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral.

Fig. 112. *Container*. Light, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral. (Detail).

Fig. 113. *Container*. Light, Exhibition at Winchester Cathedral. (Detail).

Fig 114. *El Rincón del Rumor del Recuerdo*. 2004. Offset plates and emulsion.

Fig. 115 *Un segundo de luz. (La Noche)*. 2006. Detail.

Fig. 116 *Un segundo de luz. (La Noche)*. 2006

Fig. 117 *Un segundo de luz. (Señales e Interferencias)*. 2006. Stills from video.

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