



Accidental Drift:

Julian Hyde's notes on the exhibition:
From The Lane

The Link Building @ Carver Church, Windermere
21-28 August, 2013



"An object that tells of the loss, destruction, disappearance of objects.

Does not speak of itself. Tells of others. Will it include them?"

Jasper Johns, cited by Susan Sontag in 'On Photography' (Allen Lane: 1977)

I realise now that the unseen edges draw me in and have done so since childhood. Swirling dust, broken glass, the trees, fields and pylons have been staring into our very souls. For years we didn't understand, thought we had no language with which to articulate this beautiful disquiet. 1975: the last house on the last edge of the seemingly never finished new estate. Idyllic and eerie, a strange boundary. Neither part of the town or the village, nor of the landscape, which cowered before the screaming diggers. We played fantastically; derelict barns, disused engine sheds, discoloured streams. Friendships, gangs and groups formed. Every relationship, every activity was shadowed by the sense of disconnection; that we were truly out of place, lost forever in the stinging smoke of the burning stubble.¹ The "edges" haunt me. I owe them so much.

There is risk, freedom and revelation in liminal spaces. And they ask nothing of you in return. Such places or moments can only be chanced upon of course; the last glinting of a chain link fence, an unfinished daisy chain on a derelict beer garden table. You alone decide to either find a way to document the experience or to blank it out. They are true thresholds. I have crossed them and it is difficult to return. 'Ordinary' no longer exists. Disappearances have to be faced. 1996: the last train stalls just outside Peterborough, a floodlit sign by the goods yard, "New England". Another false start in another small town. Before I left the city, a lost friend scribbled this, his touchstone quote, and now one of my keys to understanding, in my notebook,

*"To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return."*²

Highs and lows to be faced in this terrain. Steve Willis was lost to the liminal. Without him, I'd have given up. I must dedicate this work to him.

I had no expectations of what The Lane might reveal. Initially I was unaware of its spiritual and sensual presence. It was merely an unnamed short-cut to work. It was only when I returned to writing that I realised I had accidentally accumulated a huge visual awareness of this overlooked place; the myriad shades of lichen, the angles of the skewed rusting school railings.

¹ Years later, this sense of dislocation was so beautifully evoked

by Martin Newell:

"Friday morning - farmer burned the corn, saw the dreaming fields a flame ."
(from : **Martin Newell: The Greatest Living Englishman**, Humbug Records, 1997)

² From: **Walter Benjamin: One Way Street and Other Writings** (Verso: 1979)

Each element spoke. Seasonal change, political change, personal change was being revealed. I'd been unconsciously reading The Lane's debris; the melancholy of a forgotten gym shoe, a storm battered fragment of a Christian Aid banner, shreds of Union Jack bunting spinning like leaves. By the fourth year The Lane was alive for me; the intensity building each time I set foot in its realm; a place for visions, for triggering and dispelling memories. I remember the brief startling Indian Summer of 2010, narcotic and crimson. As the seasons reversed, I swear I heard The Lane breathe.

There were crystalline points when time slipped; waking at dawn in the derelict boathouse, or cutting my way through the ominous brambles guarding an abandoned gardener's workshop - moments when I believed I'd glimpsed the rips in the world and had fallen through. Subsequent walks, the only wayback from such intensity. I see the exhibition as a collage of unanticipated themes, unseen textures and as Iain Sinclair described his M25 walk, "more dream than document"³. All I can say with certainty is that an image representing what I consider the end-point or a beginning is here;

I refer to my last notebook; June 2011:

"On the steps to the church's steeple, I hid from the rainstorm.

For the first time in a decade I was above The Lane. The stained

glass had absorbed its every shade. The halted restoration enveloped me,

plaster dust danced with Messianic dust. A forgotten broom, a carpenter's pencil.

Moths and wasps snagged in webs above the shadowed lintel. At peace, I watched the

distorted sway of the oaks that shade the church car park.

Here, in this glorious and secret place, I wonder if the work I have accidently generated has become my fevered poem to, or perhaps even an unconscious prayer to, The Lane."

I hope I am part of a romantic tradition⁴ however accidental

³ From: **Iain Sinclair**: *London Orbital - A walk around the M25* (Granta Books: 2002)

⁴ *Romantic art deals with the particular. The particularisation of Bewick about a bird's wing, of Turner about a waterfall or a hill town, or of Rossetti about Elizabeth Siddal, is the result of a vision that can see in these things something significant beyond ordinary significance : something that for the moment seems to contain the whole world : and, when the moment is past, carries over some comment on life or experience besides the comment on appearances."*

John Piper " *British Romantic Artists*" (Constable Books: 1988)

or stumbling; I'm aware of John Clare's ghost⁵, of the fleeting glory in Andy Goldsworthy's leaf lines⁶, on great days I connect these and feel alive. At the sprawling decaying school which served only to reinforce our "nowhereness", there was no sense of the possibilities that art might offer us; ways to interpret our immediate situation, help us plan our escapes. We generated our own shadow art because there was nothing else to do; we typed fanzines, formed post-punk groups, became obsessed by Warhol⁷, began engaging with Socialism⁸. The notebooks began, a thirty year journey began towards this very evening. Fragment upon fragment, confusion/clarity/confusion, a dark world so beautifully illuminated by Vladimir Nabokov: ".....cobwebby, splintery, filamentary elements, confused heaps and hollows, brittle debris."⁹

Only in The Lane did these influences begin to connect, a kaleidoscopic focus, everything an echo, swirling between moss coated church hall wall and the school's forgotten copse-voices (perhaps my own) chanting half memorised sentences, everything combining; the elegiac fishing pond sequences from George Orwell's "Coming Up for Air ", John Fowles' terrifying description of Wistman's Wood¹⁰, the pure joy of Gerard Manley Hopkins' nature notes¹¹. My romanticism revealed; a particular, peculiar Englishness - all I know, an identity that both frees and traps me.

⁵ **John Clare's** 'Journey out of Essex', July 1841.

"I heard the voices but never looked back to see where they came from."

⁶ **Andy Goldsworthy:** *Passage (Thames and Hudson:2004)*

"The last time I made a colour change leaf line was for my father the day before he died. Following the colours that occur in a leaf is an attempt to understand change that runs through all things."

⁷ As the school continued to press us through the cracks in the tarmac, the record shop began to free us; life, colour, connections, the gaps in our knowledge filled by mix tapes recorded there; Kraftwerk, P.I.L b sides, King Tubby/Lee Perry dub, New York Dolls bootlegs and the 'Velvet Underground and Nico (Verve Records,1967) featuring Warhol's banana screen print.

⁸ 1981. Fascist youth groups trying to recruit at the school gates. Some older kids fought them, some joined. We hid from the politics of fear, desperate to understand. Another journey within *The Walk* had begun. 'Writings on The Wall - a Radical and Socialist Anthology 1215-1984' edited by **Tony Benn** (Faber and Faber, 1984) remains a key influence on me.

⁹ From: **Vladimir Nabokov:** *Transparent Things* (Penguin Books: 1972)

¹⁰ From 'The Tree' by **John Fowles** (Autumn Press: 1979)

"It was forlorn, skeletal, almost malevolent - distinctly eerie, even though I am not a superstitious person and solitude in nature has never frightened me one-tenth as much as solitude in cities and houses."

¹¹ **Gerard Manly Hopkins:** *poems and prose: selected and edited by W H Gardner* (Penguin Books, :1976)

"I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,"

During the darkest period of the walk my great friend and mentor Alasdair Maclean wrote to me, suggesting that the eeriness that I just can't seem to detach myself from, "may actually signify a basic mental health: evidence of love and wonder." Perhaps that is the key to this unexpected body of work, this accidental drift.

It was a shock to realise that the images in this exhibition map the end of this particular journey, a decade's walk to the edges, into the hallucinatory textures of a small town. The astonishing Link Building at Carver Church, the incredible glass, is the last metaphorical landmark. The purest, the only setting for this accidental project. It is a privilege to be here; a structure that connects the spiritual and the social to the environment. Modern reflection in every sense. It's possible that these photographs mark the shifts in my relationship with The Lane; from feelings of a great and previously unfamiliar security to a complete and dangerous alienation and then forward to here, this discussion, this lime-green afternoon. A new calmness? I hope so. My relationship with these images remains uneasy. Do they offer joy or sadness or anything in fact?



"Figure In The Fog": The Recreation Ground, Windermere : 2008

"Forest Sounds": the exhibition's soundscape.

This was created by my great friend Alasdair Maclean:

"On Sunday 9th December 2012 I cycled out to Epping Forest to record the sound of the woods for my friend's exhibition.

I recorded the sound of the traffic from the underpasses and the woods just shy of the North Circular, then along the old road from Walthamstow to Essex, now an avenue of trees leading from wood to wood. Then I cycled over to Hollow Ponds and Birch Well, the spring by Eagle Pond. I stood very still and pressed record, listened through the headphones. The wind, the traffic from the distant roads, aeroplanes, an occasional caw of a rook or a robin singing. The sun came out. I hadn't listened that hard to the world since I was a kid, and it reminded me of the days, listening to the suburb around us, being filled with a sense of weightlessness and wonder. I heard a deep bass drone that seemed to move from the horizon to the sky. The sound of the traffic was gathered by and fed into the sound of the planes, the sound of the wind in the wood. I edited it together with another recording of a harp's strings being played by the wind and presented it to my friend."



*The Wanderer, pen and ink drawing
by Alasdair Maclean: 2008*

An excerpt from the soundscape can be heard at
www.voicesinalane.co.uk

