

The Royal Road to the Unconscious - beyond meaning

a project by **Simon Morris**

in a collaboration with **Howard Britton, Maurizio Cogliandro, Nathaniel Hepburn, Daniel Jackson, John McDowall, Christine Morris, Clive Phillipot, Dallas Seitz, Greville Worthington & 78 students from York College.**

Introduction

My paper will examine the project *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* and how the artist and spectator are inscribed within the work. *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* was an Arts Council National Touring Exhibition that took place from September 2003 through to May 2004 and was exhibited as the inaugural exhibition at The Telephone Repeater Station in North Yorkshire, at The Freud Museum in Hampstead, London and at the Old Mining Building at The University of Leeds.

As the exhibition toured the three venues, questions arose over the problematics of documentation, the problematics of displaying the same body of work in three different contexts and the problematics of positioning the spectator in the work. Through the re-presentation of this work and its exhibition history, I aim to explore these issues and demonstrate how the work evolved from one context to another. I will also propose a model of how I work as a practicing artist, performing as a psychoanalyst in order to create a space of possibility for others to work within.

Finally, I will present my current project *re-writing Freud* which will be launched at an exhibition in France in March this year with Rodney Graham, Sol LeWitt, Allan Ruppersperg, Jonathan Monk and others. The exhibition is curated by the French artist Yann Serandour and is entitled, *An Art of Readers*.

Exploding the contradictions

The artist works to explode contradictions. They have a different relation to theory than the academic or the scientist. The artist is not trying to establish some law or rule based

on reason. Quite the opposite, they explore the potential of the irrational...they celebrate the nonsensical. As the American artist Mark Dion pointed out in interview:

“Artists are not interested in illustrating theories as much as they may be in testing them. This is why artists may choose to ignore contradictions in a text or choose to explode those contradictions. The artwork may be the lab experiment which attempts equally as hard to disprove as prove a point.”¹

In a recent article for the revue d'esthétique² in France, Dr. Howard Britton referred to me as philosophically irresponsible. This made sense to me as artists work outside of reason, and this could be supported by looking at the first five of Sol Lewitt's sentences on conceptual art.

1. Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
2. Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.
3. Illogical judgments lead to new experiences.
4. Formal art is essentially rational.
5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.”³

LeWitt's comments about how the artist celebrates the irrational resonate strongly for me. Particularly sentence 5 which invokes the artist to follow irrational thoughts logically.

I conceived of the project *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* in order to conduct an experiment on Sigmund Freud's writing. I had observed a contradiction in Freud's work that I wished to explode. Freud's work investigates the realm of the unconscious, the space of the irrational but he employs rational procedures such as syntax, grammar and punctuation to convey meaning.

The unconscious mind reverses the natural order of things. In dreams, objects can often appear the wrong size, words are disconnected from meaning and ideas can seem arbitrary and unrelated. Freud's text explores these ideas but his writing adopts the opposite form. Freud's words are highly considered, his sentences carefully structured and his arguments deliberately crafted. These arguments are then supported by a number of carefully referenced case studies.

What would happen if you subjected his entire text to an aleatory moment, a seemingly random act of utter madness? What would happen if you subjected Freud's text to an

¹ Dion, M. 1999, 'Field Work and The Natural History Museum', Mark Dion interview, *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Alex Coles, Vol. 3 de-, dis-, ex-., Black Dog Publishing Ltd., p.39

² Britton, H. 2004, 'Simon Morris: Philosophically Irresponsible', *Revue d'esthétique*, n°44, Jean Michel Place, Paris pp. 136-141

³ Sol LeWitt's 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' appears in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. 1992, 'Institutions and Objections: Objecthood and Reductivism', *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp.837-9

action that allowed one to encounter his text as if in a dream like state? And how could you achieve such a purposeful misreading of Freud's work?

Ed Ruscha's project (*Royal Road Test*, 1967) provided me with a readymade set of instructions to rupture the syntactical certainty of Freud's construction. I first encountered Ruscha's book back in 1996 but by 2002 his playful capers were but a distant memory. My journey back to Ruscha's work was taken through Freud.

The Royal Road to the Unconscious is a result of an extended dialogue and exchange of ideas with the psychoanalyst, Dr. Howard Britton⁴. In September 2001, I began an exchange of information with the psychoanalyst, Dr. Howard Britton. We shared information on our respective disciplines, art and psychoanalysis, in a series of lectures entitled, 'the domestic lectures'. Alternating, on a weekly basis, we would visit one another and deliver a lecture on a subject of our own choosing. The domestic lectures were filmed with both the 'teacher' and the 'student' being recorded. The lectures took place in our private living spaces and were intermittently interrupted by cats, dogs, small children, telephone calls and airplanes passing overhead. Having developed this interest in psychoanalysis and in particular, the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, I followed up our initial engagements with some background reading in the Spring of 2002. One evening, I was reading Freud when I came across the following passage of text:

"In waking life the suppressed material in the mind is prevented from finding expression and is cut off from internal perception owing to the fact that the contradictions present in it are eliminated - one side being disposed of in favour of the other; but during the night, under the sway of an impetus towards the construction of compromises, this suppressed material finds methods and means of forcing its way into consciousness.

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind."⁵

Utilising Ed Ruscha's Royal Road Test as a readymade set of instructions

The particular combination of the words 'royal' and 'road' in Freud's text immediately made me think of the 'Royal Road Test' by the conceptual artist Ed Ruscha.

⁴ It should also be noted that my original funding applications for *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* were turned down and it was Howard Britton that kept the project alive by insisting that it was worth pursuing, irregardless of funding. His constant interest, support and advice were invaluable and the project wouldn't have happened without him.

⁵ Freud, S. 1985, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (ed.) James Strachey, Penguin Books, London, pp.768-9

In 1966, Ed Ruscha (Driver), Mason Williams (Thrower) and Patrick Blackwell (Photographer) drove 122 miles Southwest of Las Vegas, Nevada in a 1963 Buick Le Sabre. The desolate area is known as 'The Devil's Playground'. They were traveling along U.S. Highway 91 at a speed of 90m.p.h when the writer Mason Williams threw a Royal (Model "X") Typewriter out of the window. The weather was perfect. The time was 5:07pm. Patrick Blackwell, the photographer then documented the scene of the strewn wreckage . The documentation of the action was subsequently bound into a book, 'Royal Road Test'. The book has become something of a cult classic and Ruscha is widely acknowledged as one of the first artists to use the book as an art form. 'Royal Road Test' has been printed four times and a total of 5,500 copies of the publication are currently in circulation. Like much conceptual art of the period, the work contains a minimal set of instructions that the protagonists followed as they completed the action.

The seemingly trivial associations between the words 'royal' and 'road' used by Freud and Ruscha gave me the means by which to subject Freud's text to a random act of madness or the aleatory moment.

It should be understood that I am utilizing Ed Ruscha's project as a readymade set of instructions in order to carry out an experiment on Freud's writing. There is no attempt to repeat or copy a previous work by Ruscha. I am using Ruscha's *Royal Road Test* in much the same way Jasper John's used the American Flag or Target in his practice as readymade Duchampian devices. Incidentally, it's interesting to note that it was seeing Jasper John's Target painting that made Ed Ruscha want to be an artist. Ruscha has referred to the painting of a target by Jasper Johns as an atomic bomb in his art school training.⁶ John's, by utilising readymades like the flag or target or the numbers 1-10 allowed him to dispense with rules of composition and concentrate his enquiry purely on the complicated textural surface he explored through the encaustic wax technique.

By utilising Ruscha's *Royal Road Test* as a ready made set of instructions, all the procedural decisions were taken care of, nothing was left to chance, save the action itself, which was beyond any control.

⁶ Ruscha, E. 2004, *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, ed. Alexandra Schwartz, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p.11. Originally published in *50 West Coast Artists: A Critical Selection of Painters and Sculptors Working in California*, ed. Douglas Bullis, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1977, pp.112-113 Later in the same publication, in another interview, Ruscha is even more specific in his reference to the influence of Jasper Johns on his own career: "Jasper Johns is the person who actually got me working as an artist. It was the fact his paintings did not look like paintings. I saw *American Flag* [*Flag*, 154-55] and *Targets* [*Target with Four faces*, 1955]. These two paintings were the reason for me being an artist." (Howardena Pindell, 'Words with Ruscha', p.58)

A student of mine at college had introduced me to a quotation by the English poet John Keats that could be found spinning in my head during the making of this project: “That which is creative must create itself.”⁷ From this, I understood that the art work must operate beyond the control of the artist who could establish the parameters of the project but not pre-determine the eventual form of the work.

Everything in the project had to be highly structured and carefully planned in order to facilitate this one brief moment of creative madness. Ruscha’s *Royal Road Test* acts a rigid symbolic corset against the moment of madness. Ruscha’s piece is used in much the same way as a poet would use stylistic devices or the rules of verse in their work.

Everything, apart from the action itself, was rigidly dictated by the logic of Ruscha’s instructions. The location was approximately 122 miles southwest of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical couch (using Freud’s couch as a marker instead of Las Vegas, Nevada). The action occurred on a Sunday, as it did back in 1967. The weather was perfect as it was 36 years ago.

In some instances, following the logic of the unconscious mind reversing the order of things, certain instructions would be reversed. Ruscha’s project took place at 5:07pm - our project took place at 7:05 am. The speed remained the same. Ed Ruscha had driven the car at a speed of 90m.p.h. along the desert highway and the psychoanalyst, Dr. Howard Britton drove at a speed of 90m.p.h. along the Dorset country lane. In order to access the unconscious, it was necessary to transcend certain boundaries, such as the national speed limit.

Mason Williams had thrown a typewriter out of the window of the speeding car in 1967 – it seemed perfectly illogical that the words should follow. To destroy meaning, firstly the words would have to be disconnected from the 'sentence' imposed on them by the logic of Freud’s construction. As Pablo Picasso is so often quoted: “Every act of creation is first an act of destruction.”⁸ Cut ups provided me with necessary methodology to deconstruct Freud’s seminal work.

Cut ups

Obviously, by cutting up Sigmund Freud’s book, I was also referencing directly a whole history of cut ups from Tristan Tzara to Bryon Gysin to William Burroughs. Here are some of William Burroughs’ own words about the magical potential of the cut up technique:

“Any narrative passage or any passage, say, of poetic images is subject to any number of variations, all of which may be interesting and valid in their

⁷ John Keats’ words are recorded in Pettet, E.C. 1974, *A Selection From John Keats*, Longman English Series, p.238

⁸ The Picasso quotation can be viewed at <http://www.quotedb.com/categories/art>

own right. Cut-ups establish new connections between images, and one's range of vision consequently expands.

At a surrealist rally in the 1920s Tristan Tzara, the man from nowhere, proposed to create a poem on the spot by pulling words out of a hat. A riot ensued which wrecked the theater. Andre Breton expelled Tristan Tzara from the movement and grounded the cut-ups on the Freudian couch. In the summer of 1959 Brion Gysin painter and writer cut newspaper articles into sections and rearranged the sections at random. The cut-up method brings to writers the collage, which has been used by painters for fifty years. The best writings seems to be done almost by accident.

You cannot will spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors.”⁹

As the exhibition at the Freud Museum got closer, one of their researchers, Ivan Ward (Director of Education) came up with a quotation by Sigmund Freud from 1897 that suggestively prefigures Tzara's methodology and leaves the possibility that it was indeed Freud himself who anticipates the cut up as a process natural to human thought:

“The whole spatially extended mass of psychogenic material is in this way drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, as it were, into pieces and strips. It is the psychotherapists business to put these together once more...”(p.377-8)

By following Keat's invocation to let the work 'create itself', an inherent tension existed between the readymade set of instructions which provided rigid parameters as to how the work should be carried out and the fleeting moment of the action itself which was beyond any control. The eruption of words from the window of the speeding car produces a moment that escapes definition, that escapes the rational and destroys meaning.

The poetic act of liberating Freud's text allows us to engage with Jacques Lacan's register of the real.

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Lacan introduced his 3 registers¹⁰, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real in the 1950's and these remained constant throughout his work from that point on.

⁹ A cut up selection of quotations from William S Burroughs and Brion Gysin, 1978, *The Third Mind*, Viking Press, New York

¹⁰ For a very good description of Jacques Lacan's three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real see Lichtenberg Ettinger, B. 1992, 'Matrix and Metramorphosis', *Differences: A journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 4.3, p.181

In psychoanalysis, the real is what cannot be imagined, mapped or symbolized. The concept of the real is far removed from anything that we conventionally attribute to reality. It is the experience of a world without language. If language names, it is all that escapes the name. It is an encounter beyond images and words.

The real emerges in para praxes, slips of the tongue, in wit, in bungled actions, in dreams, in all that interrupts us and disturbs us. We experience the real as a discomfort, as a lack, as non-knowledge or nonsense which creates a moment of anxiety.

The eruption of words from the window of the speeding car is a moment that escapes definition, escapes the rational and destroys meaning. For me the somnolent flurry of words allows the spectator a brief glimpse of 'das ding', the real, the space that is beyond articulation. However, I also believe that the action was beyond direct human perception and was only captured by the cameras. I don't think 'anyone' truly experienced the event itself on Redbridge Road in Dorset. The two people who may have confronted the 'real', faced the maelstrom of words at 90mph were the photographer and filmmaker, Maurizio Cogliandro and Daniel Jackson respectively. But I was interested that both of them said they saw nothing, the event happened so fast, they couldn't see anything at all. They said the sheer volume of words moving at speed temporarily blinded them. Which reminds me of Milan Kundera's comment: " At the moment of laughter, man does not think. A convulsed person is ruled by neither will nor reason." And at best, in the car, all the rest of us saw, the artist, the psychoanalyst and the additional photographer was a trace or residue of the event as a number of the words blew back in to the car and swirled briefly around our heads.

For a review of the project in *Art on Paper*, USA Anne Dorothee Böehme wrote beautifully about the images that resulted from the word distribution, making her own construction from the deconstruction of meaning:

“Just as dreams inhabit our sleep without any conscious interference and outside of our control, the scattered word scraps wash up as an immaculate wave of flotsam on the side of the road. These images are extremely evocative and of great celebratory quality, recalling the aftermath of ticker-tape parades, Mardi-Gras residue, or the surreal-ness of snow that has fallen at the wrong time of the year.

The connection between the general phenomenon of a dream and the metaphorical authority of these individual word strips, now strewn along the road in abundance, is clear: both express themselves by simply being, effortlessly, and are unconcerned if their existence can be communicated to anyone else. Dreaming allows us to play with experiences that were gained during waking hours; we re-arrange and stabilize them and thus enjoy a form of liberated, poetic, thinking that might in fact be the least repressed.

Engaged in a nocturnal process of sorting and categorizing, we add seemingly illogical text and thought fragments to existing mental patterns.”¹¹

Collaborative practice: effacing the self & creating a space of possibility for others to operate within

In terms of inscription, as well as attempting to interpolate or suture the spectator in to the fabric of the work, it is also important to discuss how I inscribe myself in to existing art discourses. Just as we are born in to a world filled with language and need to find our own particular relation to it - as artists we need to position ourselves in relation to what art already exists. We do not make work in a vacuum and the task for the contemporary artist, as I see it, is to inscribe themselves into existing discourses and find their own particular voice. I've been experimenting creatively by having my work constructed by others.

I am committed to making work through collaborative practices that allow an artist's work to be constructed 'through' them rather than 'by' them. Collaborations allow us the opportunity to engage with others, "to take a vacation from oneself"¹². Collaborations are much more productive ways of working. As Brion Gysin and William Burroughs put it so eloquently in their publication, *The Third Mind*, as they worked to finish each others 'cut up' sentences to make one complete sentence:

“(BG) It says that when you put two minds together...(WB)...there is always a third mind...(BG)...a third and superior mind...(WB)...as an unseen collaborator.”¹³

All of my projects intentionally set out to blur the distinction between artist and curator and adopt an innovative model of making through collaborative practice. What does collaborative practice entail? In order to create a space of collaboration, it is necessary for me to erase the concept of self and create a space of possibility that others feel

¹¹ Dorothee Böhme, A. 2004, Intentionally Scattered Thoughts, *Art On Paper*, vol.8, no.4, New York, USA, March/April, pp.82-3

¹² Mark Dion used the phrase, "taking a vacation from oneself" whilst describing the problematics of collaborative practice in conversation with Christopher Horton and Zina Davis (2003) *Collaboration: A Conversation*, Hartford Art School, Connecticut, p.3

¹³ William S.Burroughs & Brion Gysin, 1978, *The Third Mind*, The Viking Press, New York, p.19

comfortable working within. I concur with the English conceptual artist, Terry Atkinson that the problems in art will be best examined through a collective enquiry:

"The aspiration to form a collective intelligence was driven by a collective suspicion that the requirements of an inquiry into the emergent problems of an increasingly complex and expanded art practice thus far (1966) would perhaps demand a good deal more cognitive power than the established conditions of the traditional construction of the artistic subject (the solitary, quasi-heroic, self-confirming centre of truth) could provide and sustain."¹⁴

In order to efface myself from the work I have researched techniques used by artists to erase their egos in order to attain a pure state of creativity¹⁵. Working collaboratively, my work is entirely constructed by others, made 'through' me rather than 'by' me. In *The Royal Road to the Unconscious*, I did not cut up the 333, 960 words, I did not take the photographs, I did not shoot the film, and I invited a practicing psychoanalyst to make many of the curatorial decisions. Maurizio Cogliandro, an Italian photographer and Dallas Seitz, a Canadian artist and project director of the London art space 1000000mph took the photographs. Daniel Jackson, a London based artist made the film. The psychoanalyst drove the car at 90mph and my 78 art history students at York College cut up the words. By making work with my students it also allowed me to achieve a longstanding aim, to make my teaching and art practice indissociable activities.

My role was to establish the parameters of the project by creating a theoretical space that others felt comfortable working within. The theoretical space was centered round the initial concept of subjecting Freud's text to random procedures. It was also my role to find physical spaces in which the theoretical models could be tested and presented for exhibition. As well as collaborating with me directly on the rereading of Freud's text through Ruscha's work, the other artists also wanted to make their own constructions. Dallas Seitz decided he would also use a collaborative model of working and invited over one hundred artists from this country and Canada to construct objects that were originally imagined in the dreams of Freud's patients and appear in his case studies in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Seitz's object collection was titled, *For Irma* and contained 125 objects. Clive Phillpot wrote his own creative text, *Evidence: Royal Road Test* in response to the project. I asked Daniel Jackson if he would use the extraction programme he had created for the collaboration with Dr. Britton and myself in *a text that destroys itself in the process of its own reading* and map the programme on to Freud's entire text so that the words from Freud's book would pop up randomly in a virtual context.

¹⁴ Atkinson, T. 1999, *Cultural Instrument*, Staffordshire University, Staffordshire and Real, New York

¹⁵ see *spinning: de-centering the self*

Jackson added to this by producing a completely new work called *Communication 3D 1.0 – Consultation* which represented the conversation between the analyst and analysand. The artist John McDowall created a text based intervention entitled, *Roadside Soundtrack*. Greville Worthington made an intervention by secretly inserting a Roman pottery container from his own private collection into Sigmund Freud's extensive collection of antiquities. Worthington also presented a very exacting weighing machine, which measures to 5000th of a gram and was used to calculate the weight of one randomly selected word from the Dorset action.

In this respect the working model I have adopted is one of the psychoanalyst and the analysand. I would say in my art practice, I perform as a psychoanalyst, creating a space that others feel comfortable working in and erasing my own ego in order to stimulate desire in others. Creating a space of transference where linking and connecting can take place, a shared space of encounter. Both parties have to be open in the encounter in order for interconnectedness to take place. The space of analysis allows the analysand to discover hidden networks of information. Christopher Bollas talks about the networks of information in his book on the principles of free association:

“By suspending personal views and psychoanalytical theories in order to support the patient's unconscious thinking, the psychoanalyst not only facilitates the production of more thought; he or she also assists the patient in establishing the truths of the patient's own analysis. The patient will be the author of his or her own meaning. It will be the patient, not the analyst, who supplies the psychoanalysis with fields of meaning, creating a complex tapestry of associations that become deeply informative.”¹⁶

To become nothing in the shared space of creativity. I utilise the model of the analyst because they too must become nothing in the space of analysis, to leave a gap for the patient to resonate within. Jacques Lacan referred to the position of the analyst as the slag, the hard object created from the burnt off residue from the coal. I prefer the synonym 'clinker' but, like the analyst, I collect the residue of speech, the slippages, the mistakes and the fumbled bits or the residue of the art work as opposed to the art objects. As Joseph Kosuth pointed out in his text, 'Speak in the Gaps', it is necessary for the contemporary artist to work with marginalia and erasure:

“Within our culture of a constant bombardment of signification —let's call it 'meaning aggression'—what we don't include increasingly plays a positive role. Artists are finding it necessary to leave out, cancel, ignore, erase, misuse, disregard, sort of disappropriate, a variety of possible meanings in

¹⁶ Christopher Bollas, 2002, *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Free Association*, ed. Ivan Ward, Icon Books UK, Cambridge, p.38

order to be able to speak in the gaps. What is left out, of course, is very much part of the conversation.”¹⁷

or the artist and psychoanalyst, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger said in her text, ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’:

“Even if we believe that language is really only phallic, we still have a lot of room for shaping different relationships towards it, “different” discourses. We might try to change it from within, to destroy it here and there, to damage its signifiers, to discover and explore empty spaces, holes in the discourse. We might discover a language of margins, or a marginal language – is that not what poetry and art are about?”¹⁸

The psychoanalyst and the artist both work with the residue and play in the gaps, the pauses and the breaks. Whilst consciously effacing myself from the work, I am aware that the work is being made through me and I am being constructed by the exchange of information that is taking place. As Dr. Jane Rendell said so beautifully in her text ‘Travelling the Distance/Encountering the Other’: “I discover parts of myself in my encounters with others.”¹⁹

Some people who encounter my work find the open references to the work of others distracting...some artists have told me the overt references interrupt the viewer’s engagement with the work. But this is by necessity...because to quote as Walter Benjamin noted will always involve the interruption of the original context²⁰. It has certainly not been my intention to copy or repeat any other artists’ projects but it has been my intention to maintain a healthy dialogue with the past in order to find my voice in the present. As Alberto Manguel pointed out in his text, ‘The Library of Robinson Crusoe’:

“The students were demanding original thought; they were forgetting that to quote is to continue a conversation from the past in order to contextualise the present; to quote is to make use of the Library of Babel; to quote is to reflect on what has been said before, and unless we do that, we speak in a vacuum where no human voice can make a sound.”²¹

¹⁷ Kosuth, J. 1993, ‘Philosophia Medii Maris Atlantici’, or, Re-Map, DE-Map (Speak in the Gaps) in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p.235

¹⁸ Lichtenberg-Ettinger, B. 1992, ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, p.194.

¹⁹ Rendell, J. 2002, ‘Travelling the Distance/Encountering the Other’, *Here, There, Elsewhere: Dialogues on Location and Mobility*, ed. David Blamey, Open Editions, London, pp.53-4

²⁰ “To quote a text involves the interruption of its context.” Benjamin, W. 1973, ‘What is Epic Theatre?’, *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, p.148

²¹ Manguel, A. 2002, ‘The Library of Robinson Crusoe’, in Rémy Markowitsch’s *Bibliotherapy*, Edizioni Periferia, Luzern, p.29

From Maurice Blanchot's investigations²² in the nineteen-fifties to Roland Barthes' text, 'The Death of the Author' (1968)²³ to Michelle Foucault's text, 'What is an Author?' (1969)²⁴, the whole notion of authorship has been under attack. It was Foucault who suggested in his text that there had only been two original thinkers in the last 200 years, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud who had both established what he termed trans-discursive positions, disciplines that were capable of generating further discourses. The rest of us are merely recycling but an awareness of what has gone before will at least protect us from accusations of cultural amnesia.

It's a commonly referenced Buddhist concept that you have to erase your notion of self to get to a pure state of creativity. The artist, in order to create must efface themselves in the moment of production. In order for the work to be constructed through me rather than by me, it is necessary for me to work in a de-centered state. In an adoption of a Derridean model²⁵, the artist must be both inside and outside of the work simultaneously, speaking in the gaps as Joseph Kosuth would say. A nice analogy can be made from Eugene Herrigel's book, *Zen in the Art of Archery* which talks about how different your approach needs to be to allow these alternative methodologies to work:

"When, to excuse myself, I once remarked that I was conscientiously making an effort to keep relaxed, he replied: 'That's just the trouble, you make an effort to think about it. Concentrate entirely on your breathing, as if you had nothing else to do!' It took me a considerable time before I succeeded in doing what the Master wanted. But - I succeeded. I learned to lose myself so effortlessly in the breathing that I sometimes had the feeling that I myself was not breathing but—strange as this may sound—being breathed."²⁶

I wasn't just interested in just documenting the fallen words in the scientific manner that Patrick Blackwell had documented the fragmented pieces of the typewriter in Ruscha's *Royal Road Test*. Ruscha himself is indifferent to the photographs that appear in his books and see them as just performing a more impersonal function to drawing. He used photographs because they produced the most accurate delineation of the subject. Photography is used to create images in the book and Ruscha is also indifferent to who actually takes the pictures. As Ruscha said himself in an interview for the New York Times in 1972:

²² See Blanchot, M. 1982, *The Space of Literature*, University of Nebraska Press, London, originally published in France in 1955 by Éditions Gallimard.

²³ Barthes, R. 1968, 'La Mort de l'Auteur', Manteia, vol.5, (1977) trans. Stephen Heath in *Image/Music/Text*, Fontana Press, London, pp.142-148

²⁴ Foucault, M. 1969, lecture 'Ou'est-ce qu'un auteur?' *Dits et écrits*, 1954-1088, vol.1, Gallimard, Paris, coll. NRF, pp.789-820

²⁵ See Derrida, J. 2001, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference*, Routledge Classics, London for a discussion of the centre being both inside and outside of the structure.

²⁶ Herrigel, E. 1953, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Routledge, London, p.36

“It’s not really important who takes the photographs. I don’t even look at it as photography; they’re just images to fill a book. The camera is used simply as a documentary device, the closest documentary device.”²⁷

Although Ruscha aspires to blandness and anonymity in his photography, it has to be said that, paradoxically, this methodology has become something of a signature style. In the project *The Royal Road to the Unconscious*, it was not my intention to document the ‘facts’²⁸ in a similar way to Ruscha’s *Royal Road Test* - I wished to add a further layer of construction to our reconstruction. Therefore, I asked the psychoanalyst, Dr. Britton to direct the photographer and filmmaker to any slippages or eruptions of the real that occurred in the reconfigured text. In that sense the photographer and filmmaker performed as ciphers of indifference under the guidance of the professional analyst. Moments of interest in the reconfigured text were selected but not by the person looking through the lens. In analysis, the psychoanalyst will look for repetitions in the patient's speech, the use of certain words to punctuate the rhythm of the conversation. Could the analyst, perform the same function on our rearranged Freudian text? I also wanted the psychoanalyst to determine where the objects were placed in the space of exhibition.

The psychoanalyst is integrated into the materiality of the work. He directs the photographers and filmmaker to any slippages or eruptions of the real, he is invited to determine the separate areas within the book, he is invited to curate the exhibition at the Freud Museum. It makes sense that a psychoanalyst should determine the placing of work in the house of Freud. And, as Freud himself said, it is the job of the analyst to make the construction from the residue of speech. Although it should be noted the Lacanian analyst prefers to create the space for the patient to make the construction.

Work in progress

Much has been made in recent years of the artists move from making finished objects to exhibiting work in progress²⁹. We have seen this with many curated exhibitions that have rejected the idea of the work having been completed and a movement towards the exhibition space as a laboratory for experimentation. One thing I found particularly

²⁷ Ed Ruscha in conversation with A. D. Coleman, 2004, ‘My Books End Up In The Trash’, *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, ed. Alexandra Schwartz, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p.49 originally published in the *New York Times*, v.121, no.41, 854, August 27, 1972, p. D12

²⁸ “My pictures are not that interesting, nor the subject matter. They are simply a collection of ‘facts’.” – Ed Ruscha in conversation with John Coplans, ‘Concerning Various Small Fires: Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications’, in Ruscha, E. 2004, *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, ed. Alexandra Schwartz, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p.26. Originally published in *ArtForum*, v.5, February 1965, pp.24-5.

²⁹ See Gillick, L. 1997, ‘Der Umbau Raum: Nicolaus Scafhhausen’s Viable Place’, *Curating the Contemporary Art Museum and Beyond*, Art and Design, Academy Group Ltd., London, pp.66-69

useful about *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* as an Arts Council National Touring exhibition was that we had the opportunity to develop it as it progressed from one venue to the next, changing the exhibition according to the context and developing the ideas involved, working with and through the problems. I have found this opportunity of an exhibition in flux a particularly productive model to work with. It is a methodology that confirms the art critic David Sylvester's theory that "the artist works in order to find out how to do it."³⁰

In terms of exhibition, I have been very fortunate to have met the curator and art collector Greville Worthington. He can only be described as one of those people you meet in life who change your life for the better. Greville had two art exhibition spaces and had produced some wonderful exhibitions³¹ in collaboration with Robert Hopper at the Henry Moore Institute. I was aware that Greville was renovating a former Telephone Repeater Station with the intention of staging some exhibitions in its space. I pitched the project, *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* to Greville and he generously agreed to make it happen as the first exhibition in his new venue.

***The Telephone Repeater Station*, Brompton-on-Swale, Richmond, North Yorkshire**

We started the exhibition tour with what can only be described as the ideal white cube space. 7000 square feet of minimalist gallery space to play in. The sheer size of the venue, the Telephone Repeater Station meant that we could hang all forty framed images that documented the protagonists, the action and the residue in one continuous line.

The problematics of documentation

However, in the post exhibition discussions Dr. Britton voiced his concerns that the photographic documentation was too beautiful, too aesthetically pleasing and rather than giving spectators an idea of the event itself, was in fact covering it over in the sense of a screen or a veil.

So travelling to the Freud, one of the issues that concerned us was how we could problematise the documentation. The problematics of documenting performance art is a well traveled topic of debate. As Ross Birrell points out:

"For many performance artists, and critics such as Phelan, the immediacy of the live event before an audience is of central significance and any second level reading through documentation is the destruction of performance art itself."³²

³⁰ Gilbert & George, 1999, 'Gilbert & George with David Sylvester,' *The Rudimentary Pictures*, Milton Keynes Gallery

³¹ Robert Hopper and Greville Worthington, 1998-99, *Here and Now: Experiences in Sculpture*, at The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds and The Church of Saint Paulinus, Catterick, North Yorkshire

³² Birrell, R. 1999, 'The Aesthetics of Disappearance: Performance and Auto-Destructive Art', in *Gustav Metzger: Retrospectives*, MoMA, Oxford, p.9

The danger of documentation is that it can transform an action into a symbolic representation of the action which does not have the same resonance at all.

The Freud Museum, 20 Maresfield Gardens, London

The Freud Museum had its own problematics as a space to exhibit as we were making an intervention into an existing working museum. Freud himself was a massive collector of objects and paintings. The museum walls are lined with art including a wonderful ink study of Freud's head in the form of a snail by Salvador Dali. All the beautiful artifacts were displayed in the museum as they had been during Freud's life. How do we exhibit work that will just be lost within the existing collection, that would be overpowered and assimilated into the existing collection? The answer was again to use the modernist ideal, that all aspects of the work should refer back to their inherent nature. The words were thrown out of the car window, so I suggested that we present the documentation as if it had been thrown into the museum.

Punctuate the screen, tearing the veil

Taking Lacan's notion that language is a virus that contaminates everything, Dr. Britton made the additional suggestion that the framed pictures should bleed words. So each picture, once it had been 'thrown' into the museum was covered in a pool of language – as if the space of the real was entering and disrupting the symbolic order of the museum.

This radical intervention at the Freud Museum caused much controversy. The comments book was practically on fire and one newspaper review towards the end of the run at the Freud said it was worth going to the exhibition to read the comments book alone.

The comments swung from one extreme to the other:

"I would like to pay more to see nothing" - Bosse Dennis, Bruxelles

"One of the best shows we've been to in a long time." – Tanya Peixoto (bookartbookshop) & Alastair Brotchie (Atlas Press & London School of Pataphysics)

"Postmodern pointlessness." – unnamed

"Real dada – Freud would have appreciated it." – A. Rodriguez

"This exhibition and the objects added don't bring anything new to the Freud Museum but are just distracting and taking a too much important part rather than supporting our understanding of the Museum and Freud's environment." – L.S.

"I found the inclusion of the exhibition to be a bold step - and important, to remind us of Freud's words and reflections. His memory is so much more than furniture, antiquities and this very beautiful house and gardens - thank you for all of this." - Jane McGill Paris, France

“The exhibition disturbed me more than anything else – I came to see Freud’s house without expecting something else. What was the point, to disturb visitors?” – Delphin, France

“An excellent intervention between several worlds.” – D.A.

"Disgusting and extremely disrespectful to Freud. These items have absolutely nothing in connection with this man and I found it demeaning to him!" - unnamed

“Don’t let yourself be bothered by the negative comments about the contemporary art. I am glad you are making this effort to bring life into a temple.” Amout Jacobs, Amsterdam

The controversy at The Freud Museum interested me because the audience was completely divided, they either loved it or hated it and there was no middle ground. The fact that so many people questioned the idea that it was even art at all made me think that this was perhaps the closest I had ever got to that elusive thing called art. And, I purposefully use the word ‘elusive’ to describe art because I’m still uncertain as to what this thing we call art actually is.

What is art?

I’ve studied art from GCSE to PhD and still have little idea what it actually is. Reading a book by the psychoanalyst Darian Leader helped me to understand where I might look for the ‘thing’ we call art and looking at the work of several other artists helped me to determine the direction the work needed to develop in for its space of presentation at the University of Leeds

Darian Leader’s ‘Stealing the Mona Lisa’

His book starts with the theft of the world's most famous painting by a housepainter in 1911. Queues quickly form at the Louvre to see the empty space left by the missing painting. And these viewers of the void, of nothing were not daft - Kafka and his friend, the artist Max Brod are amongst the people queuing to see nothing.

What Leader’s work made clearer for me was the artist is not the person with the ability to represent so-called ‘reality’ but the one who makes our engagement with the work explicit to us. This is where the art exists – in the relational space between the spectator and the work – in the space of transference that escapes definition.

It is interesting to note that the space of engagement always seems to be in an in-between space. A space where two terms collide. As the Dada artists used to say: “The yes and the no, they belong together.”

Working through the problems

Thinking about Hal Foster's critical reflections on Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster Series* helped me to consider how documentary photographs operate and where to look for moments of rupture that take you beyond the image to the trauma of the event itself.

Andy Warhol's death and disaster series

In the nineteen-fifties before car design had taken on board the concept of the crumple factor – cars were built to last, strength was the key word. Solidity was supposed to equal protection. In reality however, when these cars crashed, the occupant was bounced around inside like a ping-pong ball, suffering maximum injuries. Now in modern design, the car explodes around us as the crumple factor takes effect and we are hopefully left safely strapped to our seats. Warhol reflected on this with his series of car crash pictures.

As Warhol said, he likes boring things because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away and the better and emptier you feel:

“I've been quoted a lot as saying, “I like boring things.” Well, I said it and I meant it. But that doesn't mean I'm bored by them. Of course, what I think is boring must not be the same as what other people think is, since I could never stand to watch all the most popular action shows on TV, because they're essentially the same plots and the same shots and the same cuts over and over again. Apparently, most people love watching the same basic thing, as long as the details are different. But I'm just the opposite. If I'm going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don't want it to be essentially the same—I want it to be *exactly* the same. Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away. And the emptier and better you feel.”³³

Repetition is a key to erasing signification and screening us from the horror of the violent act.

Warhol's work on car crashes sits uncomfortably in a non-space between one thing and another. Although we are screened from the trauma of the event through our repeated readings of the same exact image, Warhol's work also produces trauma through his presentation of the violent act.

Hal Foster's 'visual pops' & Roland Barthes' 'punctum'

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan defines the traumatic as a missed encounter with the real. The act of repetition and our repeated reading of the image serves to screen us from the direct trauma of the event but still the real punctuates the screen at various points

³³ Warhol, A. 1991, *In His Own Words: Andy Warhol*, (ed.) Mike Wrenn, Omnibus Press, London, p.16

and we get what the analyst would refer to as eruptions of the real, ruptures of the surface or 'visual pops' as the critic Hal Foster would call them³⁴. The semiotic theorist, Roland Barthes referred to this as the punctum:

“This time it is not I who seek it out, it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument, the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points. This second element which will disturb the stadium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph’s punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).”³⁵

Reflections on the punctuated screen led me to the work of the artist who created auto-destructive art, Gustav Metzger.

Activating the spectator as witness

The artist Gustav Metzger is best known for auto-destructive art - art that destroys itself in the process of its own making. His most celebrated realization of this was in the 1961 actions on the Southbank in London.

Gustav Metzger understands that you can't cognitively engage with a subject like the holocaust through direct engagement with images of the past. He tackles Adorno's supposition that art or poetry are not possible after the holocaust by covering the images over. He screens them from our sublimated gaze. If you are going to engage with Metzger's work and a subject that is so monumental, you are going to have to travel the distance, open up the photograph and go to a space beyond representation. Metzger does not allow the spectator to become a consumer but places them in a direct confrontation with history. Andrew Wilson in his article, 'Gustav Metzger: A Thinking against Thinking' talks cogently about the Holocaust being beyond representation. He quotes Jean-Francois Lyotard who says the holocaust "cannot be represented without being missed, being forgotten anew, since it defies images and words."³⁶ This reminded

³⁴ Foster, H. 1996, *The Return of the Real*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp.132-136

³⁵ Barthes, R. 1993, *Camera Lucida*, Transl. Richard Howard, Vintage, London, pp.26-27

³⁶ Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1990, *Heidegger and "the Jews"*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p.26

me of the French artist Christian Boltanski who has almost approached the subject through not approaching it and makes a clear case for more subtle engagements. I know Rachel Whiteread made the immaterial material for her concrete Holocaust Memorial in Judenplatz, Vienna, but it still seems too heavy handed when you reflect on the words of Christian Boltanski:

“Somebody asked me but I didn’t do it, in Germany to, to make a monument about the...holocaust and I said I didn’t want that because I don’t want to make monuments about the holocaust. But I told them that I think that the best solution to make a monument about the holocaust will be to make a monument very, very fragile and monuments that you have to rebuild every week. Because if you make a monument in bronze, after some time you forget completely why the monument was there but if you have to rebuild the monument every week, you must to repeat the prayer every week and you must to think about the monument and if the monument is destroyed – this time is very dangerous and for this reason I think it is much better to make very fragile monuments and not heavy monuments. I try to, to make pieces who are very open to plenty of interpretation and not to say something but to say a story and the story, everybody can listen to just what they want to understand.”³⁷

Both Metzger and Boltanski share an understanding that by working with the immaterial, the fragile, the temporal, the spectator is activated as witness. It was the artist Marcel Duchamp who awarded the spectator a 50% stake in the determination of an artwork’s meaning. We understand our active role in the production of meaning — the act of consumption completes production.

In Metzger’s *Historic Photographs, To Walk Into* and *To Crawl Into*, the images are covered over with a horizontal and a vertical blanket which the spectator must choose to go under if they are to engage with the work. The work is literally ‘beyond’ the surface and Metzger invites us, the spectator, to punctuate the screen as a bodily experience, to go beyond the veil and enter the zone of emptiness. Not safely distanced enough to make sense of the image through the imaginary and the symbolic, but close up, sutured into a space in-between. In a confined space, underneath the blanket and in the dark, the spectator becomes more aware of their body and their breathing as they struggle to decipher the work and are literally forced to feel their way through the image. We are woven into the fabric of the text, and must negotiate our relation to it.

The image on the floor, under the blanket was an image of Jews who had been forced by the Nazis to scrub the cobbled streets, and Metzger placed us on all fours, crawling over the image of the people crawling.

³⁷ Boltanski, C. in *Christian Boltanski*, edited and directed by Melvyn Bragg, Phaidon, ISBN 0-7148-6045-X

The gap between art and life is filled by the spectator. His work deals with memory but collapses the distance between the present and the past. The artist is not the person with the ability to represent so-called “reality” but the one who makes our engagement with the work explicit to us. The one who removes the gap between us and the work.

As the French artist, Christian Boltanski has noted, the point where art is, is the point where the difference between art and real life are almost imperceptible:

“If you want to move people, it’s always better to be just at the edge of life and art...if you want to touch people, it’s always better if the people who are reading you — the people who are looking at your art — they don’t know exactly if it is art or life.”³⁸

Emptiness or nothingness is a created/curated space. Art evokes something that cannot be named. The point at which art exists, is the point beyond description. Art exists in the relational space between the spectator and the work, in the space of transference that escapes definition. By erasing the screen or taking us to a space ‘beyond’ the screen, Metzger places us in a confrontation with the real, a space that is beyond articulation, a space where art exists.

My research in to Metzger’s auto-destructive art helped to develop my thinking on the problematics of presentation and documentation within the project. His idea of punctuating the screen, of tearing the veil was then combined with another tried and tested art technique...wrapping. Coincidentally, at this time, I was showing my students the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude and that gave me the idea of wrapping the documentary photographs in brown parcel paper. Their chosen methodology of wrapping objects has been referred to as ‘revealing through concealing’. I was also particularly amused by the story of how the Christo’s raised money for one of their public projects:

“The remaining costs of the project were covered by an edition of one hundred *Wrapped Boxes*, which (in contrast to Christo’s customary works) exactly resembled ordinary parcels. They were mailed to members of the Contemporary Arts Group, and those who inadvertently opened the boxes found inside a signed and numbered certificate reading: ‘You have just destroyed a work of Art.’”³⁹

Conclusion

Metzger’s covering over and Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s wrapped projects have provided me with a methodology that ‘possibly’ presents an answer to the problematics of documentation within this project.

³⁸ Boltanski, C. in *Christian Boltanski*, edited and directed by Melvyn Bragg, Phaidon, ISBN 0-7148-6045-X

³⁹ Baal-Teshuva, Jacob. 1995, *Christo & Jeanne-Claude*, Taschen, Köln, p.30

The Old Mining Building, University of Leeds, West Yorkshire

So at the University of Leeds, the actual words that were cut out by 78 students at York, travelled at 90mph on Redbridge Road in Dorset, covered the floor at the Telephone Repeater Station in Catterick, North Yorkshire, were dispersed widely throughout Sigmund Freud's home in Hampstead, London were now at the University of Leeds sutured between the glass and brown parcel paper of each framed image, placed in the gap. The translucent quality of the parcel paper made it possible for spectators to discern the ghostly trace of words caught between glass and paper. The stillness of the frozen words and the minimal appearance of the forty wrapped framed images was in sharp contrast to the moment of their release.

In presenting the work in this manner, it was left to the spectator to complete the work. They were invited to tear through the screen, punctuate the veil and let the words spill out into the space. Rather than the spectator being confronted with a symbolic representation of an aleatory moment, the spectator was invited to punctuate the work and recreate the aleatory moment for themselves. As Samuel Beckett said in a letter to Axel Kaun:

“...more and more my own language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at things (or the Nothingness) behind it.”⁴⁰

Once more the symbolic order would be contaminated. The onus at The University of Leeds was on the spectator who must be put to work in order to make meaning. For me, this project provided an opportunity to work with the problematics of documentation, the problematics of presentation and the problematics of placing the spectator within the work. I genuinely feel that this work had the opportunity to develop through touring which allowed us to work through problems and that its final presentation at The University of Leeds was its most successful. By wrapping the documentation and suturing the words into the space between the glass and the paper, the spectators were

invited to recreate the aleatory moment for themselves, and hopefully in doing so their distance from the work was erased. As Roland Barthes noted in 'The Death of the Author':

"The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination."⁴¹

At the opening in Leeds the spectators tore open the wrapped images and the words poured out in to the University - the spaces of academia were once again flooded with Freud.

What does the project do? It is not like Rodney Graham's work⁴², an interpolation within an existing text. Both the word interpolation and intervention would be misleading because they suggest an insertion into the original text where as this is something different. I'm using one person's text to reread another person's text. Ruscha's work rubs up against Freud's writing, it bruises it, it ruptures it and represents it for further analysis. Alan Bass, the translator for Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* described Derrida's practice as "entirely consumed in the reading of other texts". If I was to describe my own art practice, I could appropriate that sentence and re-write it as: my art practice has been entirely consumed by the reading or misreading of other people's art works.

My project does not present a conventional reading of Freud's work. One of the artists collaborating in *The Royal Road to the Unconscious* expressed the concern to me that they shouldn't really be in the exhibition because they had never read Freud's book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. To which I replied:

'Nor have I, I just threw it out of the car window.'

Finally, I would like to present my latest work which is made in collaboration with my wife Christine Morris who completed the creative technology on the project...in other words she did all the clever bits.

My wife, Christine and I have just made a piece for an exhibition in Rennes, France that opens in March with Rodney Graham, Sol LeWitt, Alan Ruppensberg and others,

⁴⁰ Samuel Beckett is quoted in Dworkin, C. 2003, *Reading the Illegible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, p.71

⁴¹ Barthes, R. 1977, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image-Music-Text*, Fontana Press, London, p.148

⁴² I'm thinking specifically of Graham's interpolation into Georg Buchner's novella *Lenz* with his *Reading Machine for Lenz*, 1993 or his intervention in to Ian Fleming's James Bond novel, *Dr.No* with an additional page, no.56a. See Russell Ferguson, 'French Novelist' in Rodney Graham, eds. Blazwick, I. et al., Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2002, pp.57-74

entitled *An Art of Reading*, curated by Yann Serandour. Our piece is called *re-writing Freud* and is dedicated to Tristan Tzara.

"At a surrealist rally in the 1920s Tristan Tzara the man from nowhere proposed to create a poem on the spot by pulling words out of a hat. A riot ensued wrecked the theater. André Breton expelled Tristan Tzara from the movement and grounded the cut-ups on the Freudian couch." - *The Cut-Up Method of Bryon Gysin* by William S. Burroughs

In this new work, re-writing Freud the artist Simon Morris has worked with the creative technologist Christine Morris to re-write Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* is fed into a computer programme (designed by Christine Morris). The programme randomly selects words, one at a time from Freud's entire text and begins to reconstruct the entire book, word by word, making a new book with the same words. A beta version of the programme can be viewed online at:

<http://www.informationasmaterial.com/space/RewritingFreud.htm>

This work will be displayed in the galleries in a wall mounted, touch screen kiosk with attached printer. As the text is randomly re-written, it will be re-printed and published. The programme uses complex algorithms in order to carry out the processing of Freud's 223,704 word text.

The benefits for the potential audience are the opportunity to engage with an interactive artwork that utilises cutting edge technology and new media. The audience can control the work and print directly from the screen by using the touch sensitive interface. In the gallery there will be two bound copies of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The first will be the 'conventional' publication written by Professor Freud and the second one will be the re-written version. By having a simple interface, the spectator will realize they can authorize the re-writing of Freud's work, pressing play and pause. They will also have the opportunity to print. This will allow the spectator the opportunity to intervene in Freud's original text, rupture it and return it to us in a new order. By subjecting Freud's words to a random re-distribution, meaning is turned into non-meaning and the spectator is again put to work to make sense of the new poetic juxtapositions. The world of dreams is subject to the laws of the irrational and *re-writing Freud* gives the spectator the chance to view Freud's text in its primal state.

images from all three exhibitions and the entire book can be seen online at:

www.informationasmaterial.com

...questions?

answers...

“I try to make pieces that are very open to plenty of interpretation and not to say something but to say a story and the story, everybody can listen to just what they want to understand.

Ask questions, I have really no answers, and I am completely lost I can say, I’m more and more lost, really, I’m lost in my life, I’m lost in my work, I’m lost everywhere but the only thing we can do is to question, ask questions, but there is no answers. And it is better not to have the answer, because the answers are always so dangerous, because there is no one answer, there is always so many answers and if someone thinks they know the answer, they are very dangerous.

And, I think it is very difficult to speak about your own work, because perhaps it is better not to speak about art but to look at it, because it is very difficult to explain everything because I’m sure there are plenty of things in my work I don’t know and I hope so – and there are plenty of things in my own work I can’t explain and everyone must find their own way to look at it.”⁴³

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

To date, The Royal Road to the Unconscious has been presented in the following public and private spaces:

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

The Royal Road to the Unconscious was exhibited in the following venues as a National Arts Council Touring Exhibition:

13 September – 13 October 2003
The Telephone Repeater Station
Brompton-on-Swale
Richmond
North Yorkshire
DL10 7PJ

28 January – 7 March 2004

⁴³ Boltanski, C. in *Christian Boltanski*, edited and directed by Melvyn Bragg, Phaidon, ISBN 0-7148-6045-X

Freud Museum

20 Maresfield Gardens
London
NW3 5SX

19 April – 28 May 2004

Old Mining Building

School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies
University of Leeds
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS2 9JT

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

The Royal Road to the Unconscious has participated in the following group exhibitions:

16 March-15 April 2005

AN ART OF READERS (curated by Yann Serandour)
Art & Essai, Rennes, France

8 September -28 November 2004 September 2004

GUARDARE-RACCONTARE-PENSARE-CONSERVARE (curated by Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, George Maffei, Liliana De Matteis and Annalisa Rimmaudo)
Mantova, Casa del Mantegna, Italy

INTERNATIONAL BOOK LAUNCH

22 July 2004

Art Metropole

788 King Street West
Toronto
Ontario
Canada
M5V 1N6

The book was launched at Art Metropole, Toronto with an accompanying performance and screening of two films.

PUBLICATION

The Royal Road to the Unconscious, a project by Simon Morris in a collaboration with Howard Britton, Maurizio Cogliandro, Daniel Jackson and Dallas Seitz, undesigned by Pavel Büchler, information as material, York, England, ISBN 0 9536765 9 5, 80pp

The publication is distributed by Cornerhouse in Manchester.

REVIEWS

Anne Dorothee Boehme, 'Intentionally Scattered Thoughts', *Art on Paper*, USA, March/April 2004, vol.8, no.4, pp.82-3

Howard Britton, 'Simon Morris: Philosophically Irresponsible' - commissioned by Professor Anne Moeglin-Delcroix for the *revue d'esthétique*, France, n°44, April/May, transl. by Dominique Férault, pp.136-141

Stephen Bury, 'On the Royal Road', *Art Monthly*, UK, March 2004, no.274, p.39