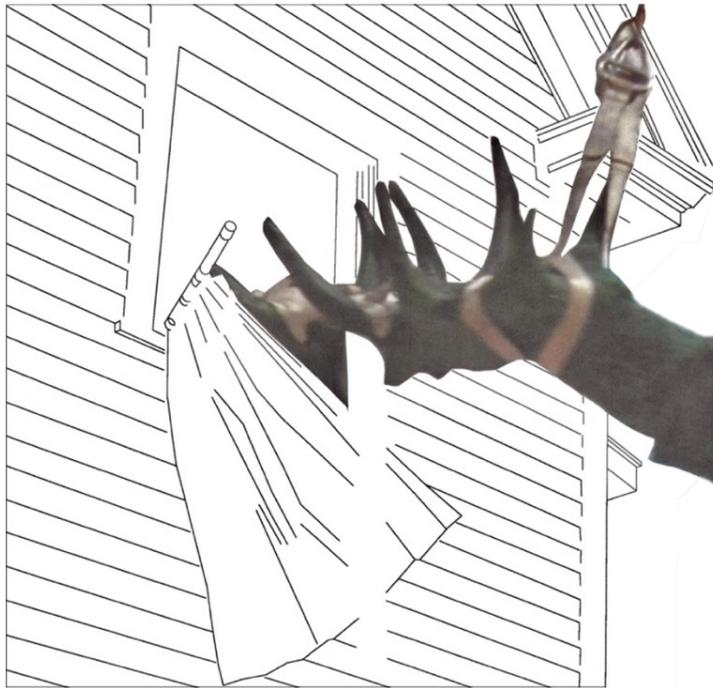


Screened Off: A Remote Encounter With Sculpture



This blog began with an attempt to view Fred Watson's *Still Life With TV Set*. The sculpture interested me because it depicts a domestic scene, very similar to the overlooked corners of the home I use as inspiration for my own art practice. I was drawn by the weighty effort it must have taken to carve this everyday image, I began to describe the piece, jotting down thoughts of - fluid screen has become solid object - and - the sculpture acts as a snapshot of the everyday preserved in stone - It surprised me how artwork from the 1980s felt so in tune with this strange period of isolation we are currently in. As I look for ways to fill my days while staying home, weeks stretch, shrink and merge. I think of this sculpture, set in stone and sitting in a waiting room, and there are moments where I feel like time is standing still.

Researching under lock-down in another country, to view *Still Life With TV Set* is to do so through the window of a computer screen. I google-cheated, trying to look around it, to look deeply at it, to guess the scale. Searching Watson's website and exploring the breadth of his practice, pondering his sculptural intentions, and reading his artist statement. Exploring art in this way is to miss out on peering close, seeing the little details, and stepping back to view the artwork in its surrounding space. To miss out on the walk to the Barbara Castle Health Centre, and possible interactions with Harlow's architecture, sculpture, and people en route. Confined to my family's home in Dublin, Ireland, I am finding new ways to learn about Harlow New Town and its art. I peer through a rectangle and use Google Street View to wander around, contacting local artists and experts, picking their brains and reading their research. But in viewing digitally a new opportunity presents itself to me, my thoughts extend outward, allowing the image of the artwork to mingle with my day to day actions and pastimes. The sculpture becomes a collage, layered with media, films, and online texts. A scroll through Instagram reveals a nostalgic picture of a TV set from *The House Book* (1974), green-tinged and dreamy, I screenshot and let the two photographs sit next to each other on my desktop. I question how I'll be able to bring Harlow's sculpture into the home I currently inhabit, and as if in answer, with the tongue in cheek of Tim Burton's film *Beetlejuice*, a peaceful cup of tea is rudely interrupted by a weighty sculpture crashing through the kitchen window.



Movers accidentally crash Delia Deetz's sculpture into the kitchen window, disrupting Charles Deetz's relaxing moment with a cup of tea (*Beetlejuice*, 1988).

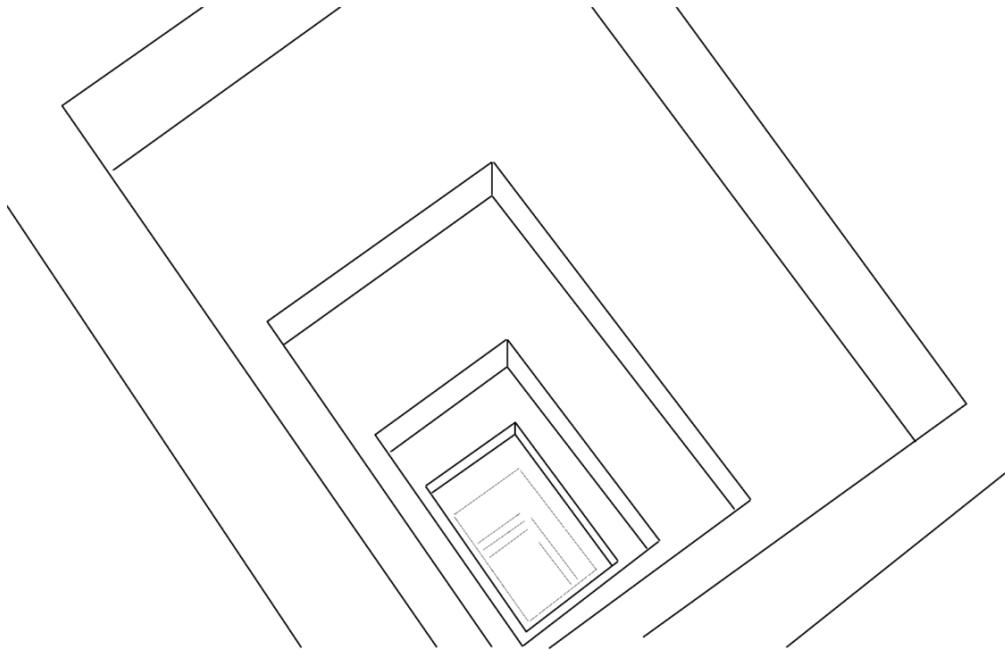
The heavy pebble dash of Delia's interior design cements over the daisy-patterned wallpaper of the (recently deceased) previous owners. Now ghosts, the couple are trapped in the house, powerless to prevent this gothic modernist takeover.

Lightning strikes through the glass bricks, backlighting heavy grotesque forms. Horror sculptures come to life and trap the living.

The sandworms of Saturn surround the house in *Beetlejuice*, the ghosts are trapped, they cannot leave - "The house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability." Reading Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* I think about the boundary walls of the home, I see the structure as geometric, a grid of windows and good sharp corners. I am reassured by the formality of this, separate and protected. But uncanny haunting seeps through, carried on a little back-of-mind awareness that these walls are still permeable. With determination, I imagine ways to move outside of the space in which I am confined, not physically, but in some sort of dream escape. "A house is first and foremost a geometrical object, one which we are tempted to analyze rationally. Its prime think of reality is visible and tangible, made of well hewn solids and well fitted framework. It is dominated by straight lines, the plumbline having marked it with its discipline and balance. A geometrical object of this kind ought to resist metaphors that welcome the human body and the human soul. But transposition to the human plane takes place immediately whenever a house is considered as space for cheer and intimacy, space that is supposed to condense and defend intimacy. Independent of all rationality, the dream world beckons."

Gaston Bachelard's, *The Poetics of Space*, the home has been
"seized upon by the imagination"
solid walls melt into dreaming, the house breathes.

The many levels of Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia's film *The Platform* (2019) appear as an infinity screen. Looking through rectangle after rectangle, no end in sight. But it is also a stacked way of living, levels repeated upwards one after another with a hole punched through the centre. This many-layered structure acts as an extreme exaggeration of attic and basement. I am reminded of the *Beetlejuice* ghosts in their attic sanctuary, and the self-



imprisonment of the basement in Bong Joon-ho's 2019 film *Parasite*. I question Bachelard, is the cellar the dark entity of the house? The lowest levels of *The Platform* are the most desperate, the most hungry, the highest levels have the power to help, but they do nothing.

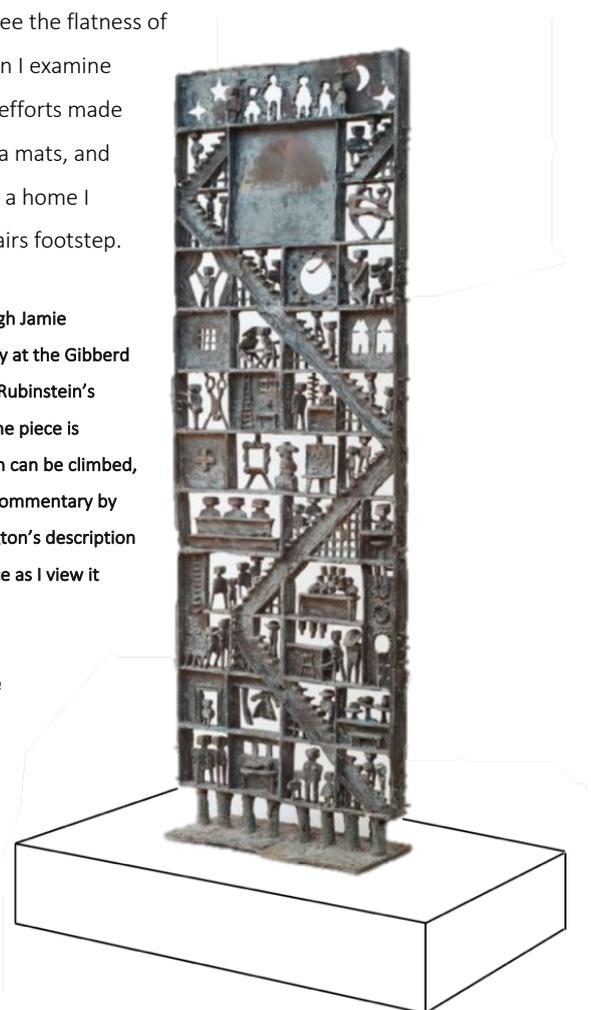
For me; Gerda Rubinstein's *Screen* also represents a kind of vertical living. I see the flatness of the sculpture as a cross-section, a slice taken from a block of flats. Zooming in I examine each modular room and witness the various activities of the occupants. The efforts made to maintain mental and physical health, pushing back the sofa, unfurling yoga mats, and rattling cabinets with jumping jacks. I can't help but feel fortunate there was a home I could retreat to, one with a garden. An escape from the thunk of every upstairs footstep.



I experience *Screen* through Jamie Gledhill's Virtual Residency at the Gibberd Gallery. Gledhill presents Rubinstein's sculpture in video form, the piece is imagined as a tower which can be climbed, one floor at a time, with commentary by Jenny Lushington. Lushington's description further illustrates the piece as I view it through her narrative:



"It's not solid, you can see through it, you can see what's going on in it"
 "you can go up it and come down it"



Lushington reminds me of how I may have viewed this sculpture if I had seen it at a different time. How its staircases appear as a method for options, a chance to be involved in these different activities. But for now, the gridded frame of *Screen* underscores the physical boundaries we must remain within. The isolated space. Quarantined in my bedroom I grow bored and procrastinate. Discovering a handful of free online audiobooks, I am finally listening to Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. The book sees Gregor Samsa wake up one morning to discover he has transformed into a giant bug. Previously the money earner for his family, they are now disgusted by him. As I too am confined to my room, I compare myself to that redundant creature, fearing my family will grow resentful of bringing me poached eggs on toast.

"Greater elasticity of daydreaming needed" – Bachelard



Watching inventive taskers make the most of lock-down on YouTube.

Taskmaster's *Stay Home* challenge to:
'Turn Your Bed Into Something That Isn't a Bed'.

"It is here that during one half of a life-time we forget the annoyances of the other half" ... "A bed sees us born and sees us die. It is the ever changing scene upon which the human race play by turns interesting dramas, laughable farces, and fearful tragedies." - *A Journey Around My Room*

In Xavier de Maistre's book, *A Journey Around My Room*, a man under house arrest uses the objects around him as "resource for weary moments" to escape from his confines through memory and narrative. I think about the things around me that connect me to another place, either directly or in a different, more fleeting, more emotional way. Accidental encounters made through shifting, scrolling and searching. Letting sound, film, literature and found imagery mingle with my thoughts on the sculptures I discover, I allow them to shade my perspective. In doing this I get to know Harlow's artwork in a way that is distinct to this separated moment time. I will take these thoughts and feeling with me from here, as I look forward to meeting the art in person in the future.