Being Home:
Exploring the idea of home and belonging through art practice.

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Abstract

Being Home: Exploring the Idea of Home and Belonging through Art Practice

In a time of worldwide mobility, global migration and subsequent cultural blending, our understanding of what makes us feel at home has become more significant. What do we call home, and what determines our sense of belonging? Is home simply a house – a place where we grew up?

Firstly, I studied different perceptions and interpretations of the concept of home and analysed the perspectives of leading experts in contemporary art and architectural phenomenology. Secondly, using an autobiographical approach combined with a practice-based art methodology, I investigated my perception of home in relation to my culture and its traditions. Furthermore, I analysed my own experiences, memories and the places related to what I call 'home' to understand how those experiences and memories mould our sense of home and belonging.

In this study, I question how the concept of 'home' can be researched through artistic practice. Thus, my creative process employs a practice-based method that focuses on material experimentation to create metaphors related to specific perspectives about home. This research utilises 'processes and methodologies of artistic research as the production of knowledge' and demonstrates,[1] as stated by Bolt, that 'knowledge is derived from doing'.[2] Through this research, I have developed a body of work that can connect to and communicate with the audience, facilitating a dialogue about what home individually means to us. The methods used in this research range from embroidery, video and photography to drawing, painting and sculpting. Moreover, the creative process employs Donald Schön's 'model of reflection', which comprises two types: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action.*[3] The research process, progress and findings can be best experienced by looking at the body of work I created during this PhD research.

The present research sits within the field of fine arts and draws on architectural phenomenology and contemporary art from the perspective of an artistic practice-based practitioner. Within the field of contemporary art, I have primarily examined the work of artists

[1] Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds., *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 1.
[2] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 1.
[3] Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 54.

Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, and Rachel Whiteread. I have studied the work of architects and theorists Juhani Pallasmaa and Norberg-Schulz, as well as philosopher Gaston Bachelard, within the field of architectural phenomenology.

I concluded that our sense of home is not bound to a certain place and is not limited by geography, but that our sense of home can take almost any form, even for a brief moment, such as when I felt at home surrounded by seascapes and skyscapes from a helicopter journey through childhood memories to experiences of loss and grief. The feeling of being at home may involve repetitive actions, such as remembering how to use a specific embroidery stitch (*Nest*, 2017; *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018; and *out of place,* 2018) or following traditional methods to collect and preserve seeds (*Seeds House*, 2018–2021). It can be a certain type of wind (*Wind Diaries*, 2021) or the mist of a foggy day (*Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020). This research offers an understanding that what each one of us perceives as 'home' takes an individual form that influences the various ways we are capable of belonging and making ourselves 'at home'.

These research findings assert that 'home' is not merely a physical location; it is a deeply experiential and existential concept that shapes our understanding of what it means to truly be 'at home'. This research challenges the traditional notion of home as a fixed place. Instead, it highlights our capacity as individuals to find or create a sense of home in language, meteorological conditions, transitional spaces, places, diverse cultural contexts and evolving life circumstances.

To my parents

(a mis padres)

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I do, I undo, I redo[4]
Louise Bourgeois

Introduction

This practice-based research aims to analyse the concept of home as it is understood through perspectives in two fields; contemporary art and architectural phenomenology, to gain a broader understanding of what we call home and to expand our knowledge about those places that mean home to us. Among the most significant influences on my research are the artists Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, and Rachel Whiteread; architects and theorists Juhani Pallasmaa and Christian Norberg-Schulz; and Gaston Bachelard, philosopher. With the purpose of developing a body of work that delves into the intricacies of the concept of home and the innate human need for a sense of belonging, I have experimented with a diverse array of materials and methodologies, all of which are intimately linked to my personal memories and experiences associated with the concept of home.

Research Questions

- How can the sense of home as a terrain be approached through artistic practice?
- What do we call home? What determines a sense of belonging?
- What are the roles of memories and experiences in the concept of home?

Methodology

This research uses a practice-based artistic methodology with a particular focus on experimentation and thinking through the material.[5] *Material thinking,*[6] according to Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Inquiry*, 'creates

[4] A reference to Bourgeois' renowned installation *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, exhibited in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in 2000.
[5] Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (London: Routledge, 2004), 104.
[6] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 30.

a record of the studio process as a means of creating new relations of knowledge subsequent to production'.[7] This research utilises 'processes and methodologies of artistic research as the production of knowledge'[8] and demonstrates, as stated by Bolt, that 'knowledge is derived from doing'.[9]

Throughout my research, I have adopted an autobiographical approach based on my personal experiences from childhood to the present in order to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of home, the sense of belonging, and the impact of memories and experiences on my concept of home. This approach has provided me with a broader knowledge of my own sense of home, confirming the impact of personal experiences on the research process and encouraging me to write and reflect on my memories associated with home and its significance through my research, with the aim of connecting with the audience and acknowledging the impact of personal experiences on the research process.

My methods included embroidery (*I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018; *out of place,* 2018; and *Nest*, 2017); sculptural processes, which include sanding and polishing (*Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III [in memory of those foggy days],* 2019-2020); immiscible effects of painting materials (*Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018); and preservation processes over significant periods of time (*Seeds House*, 2018–2021); and drawing (*Wind Diaries*, 2021). I explored the skyscapes and seascapes that shape my notion of home through multiple photographs during my trips to my hometown (*Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021), and I reflected on grief and loss through the use of video and photography in *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021. These methods enabled me to document a significant moment in my life,[10] facilitating my ability to manage and establish a more profound connection with the bereavement I was experiencing. It also made me experience a sense of reassurance upon realising that I could revisit the videos and photographs as a means of preserving their memories of home should my recollection fail.

My creative process is intrinsically woven with a continual practice of self-inquiry, manifesting itself as an ongoing inner dialogue. This process of questioning is an important aspect of my artistic process and my reflection-in-action. My research questions led to further questions,[11] which served as inspiration and guidance for my research and subsequently led to

[7] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 143.
[8] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 1.
[9] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 1.
[10] I elaborate further in Chapter Two: *Be-Longing: Memories of Home*.
[11] Refer to Chapter: *Conclusion and Original Contribution*, First Research Question for a summary of the questions in each chapter, pages 78–79.

exploration within each work.

My creative process focused on experimenting with and exploring the possibilities of working with organic (seeds and petals) and inorganic or industrial materials (acrylic, paint and aluminium) to create metaphors that express the work's meaning. For instance, I used the softness of the wool, thread and cotton fabric in the works *I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018; *out of place,* 2018 and *Nest*, 2017 to allude to the old traditions associated with the concept of home and, in this case, also to the role of womanhood in it. The *Seed House'*s (2021) small dimensions and the minute details of the thousands of seeds and petals it contains invite the audience to get closer. The transparency of the acrylic sheet walls instils a sense of contradiction in terms of safety; nothing is hidden behind them, and at the same time, you cannot hide inside. The desire to get closer to discovering the interior of a partially transparent figure occurs in *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020 as well. Additionally, I studied how the material reacts to other materials, either by mixing it with those of a different composition (as a metaphorical reference to the necessity of finding home wherever I go) or by analysing their ability to form a stable structure. Throughout this process, I observed and engaged in active reflection, which enabled me to be aware of my decision-making process regarding the appropriate means of representation that suited each project. Observation during experimentation prompted me to examine not only the material and technique but also the creative process itself by analysing the concept and production process for each possible piece.

While certain stages of the process for some pieces were completed entirely by hand, such as hand-picking, drying and storing daisy seeds and petals, stitching, painting and hand-sketching, other stages of the process required the use of more advanced technology and/or machinery. For instance, I used a vector graphics editor to create sketches and layouts for the embroideries *I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018, *out of place,* 2018 and the *Seeds House,* 2018–2021. I took photographs that became part of the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021, with a mobile phone, although they remained unedited to serve the project's purpose. Polishing and sanding were performed manually or with the assistance of specialised machinery, depending on the acrylic's size and thickness. Acrylic sheets and blocks were cut with a laser cutter, while aluminium sheets and blocks were cut with a water-jet cutting machine.

The process itself (including the previously mentioned methods used in each individual piece) is a crucial aspect of the work. My emphasis on process is important, since it draws attention to the significance of the journey, which is embedded as a theme throughout my

research. Without an analysis of each event that occurs on the road,[12] the destination will always lose some of its essence.

Each stage of my process involved a reflective analysis, either during the process of creating each piece, through observation and in situ interpretation, or through the subsequent reinterpretation of my research and its relationship to my research questions in order to analyse my own artistic process. According to Donald Schön's analysis of reflective practice, there are two types of reflection. A practitioner, when *reflecting-in-action*, 'thinks about doing something while doing it', whereas a *reflection-on-action* analysis is conducted after the creative practice.[13] My reflection-in-action analysis entailed delving into the entirety of the creative process, including each and every decision that contributed to the final outcome.

Alongside exercising my *reflection-in-action* during my creative practice and research, I was also conscious of my *knowing-in-action,*[14] or the set of analytical and technical skills I had acquired over the years. *Knowing-in-action* is inherent knowledge that establishes how we self-evaluate our practice. The criteria we use to analyse our research data 'are actions, recognition, and judgements which we know how to carry out spontaneously; we do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance'.[15] In line with Schön's perspective, Barrett and Bolt also recognise the role of tacit knowledge in art research, which 'operates not only on the basics of explicit and exact knowledge but also on that of tacit knowledge'.[16] I have therefore examined the conscious decisions I made, as well as any necessary corrections that I made along the way, such as when the technique required adjustment or when a different type of material was needed, as well as adjustments relating to the scale and feasibility of a project.

My reflection-on-action analysis took place after the completion of the work. Throughout this part of the process, I evaluated the outcomes of my 'practice as production of knowledge'.[17] This phase involved a reinterpretation of observations made during the reflection-in-action, along with an evaluation of the effectiveness of my creative practice via academic writing. To accomplish this, I evaluated the potential of the pieces created at each stage of the process, as well as the quality of their technical development and the extent to which they addressed and resolved the research questions. Both my *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* enabled me to bring theoretical insights to the work.

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[12] See *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action* in the following paragraphs.
[13] Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*, 54.
[14] Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*, 50.
[15] Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*, 54.
[16] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 4.
[17] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 1–5, 13, 195–98.

It is important to note the key role that sketches, drafts, mind maps and technique tests played in the completion of this research. While sketches and drafts allowed me to experiment with various ideas, mind maps helped me shape the potential and possibilities of this practice-based research. If I compare mind maps to a metaphorical forest, each option represents one of the numerous paths I could take while conducting research. Additionally, it aided me in delimiting the forest itself, narrowing my focus to the areas within the sense of home in which I was more interested, such as language and identity in Chapter One: *I Am Homesick But I Am At Home*. Childhood memories, loss and grief in Chapter Two: *Be-Longing: Memories of Home*. Place, climate, skyscapes, seascapes, repetition and in-betweenness in Chapter Three: *If We Are Not at Home, Where Are We?* and Chapter Four: *Home on the Move*. Finally, the evaluation of the chosen technique's implementation enabled me to develop the necessary skills for working with organic (seeds and petals) and inorganic materials (acrylic, wool, thread and aluminium oil-based paint), as well as to learn from my successes and failures.

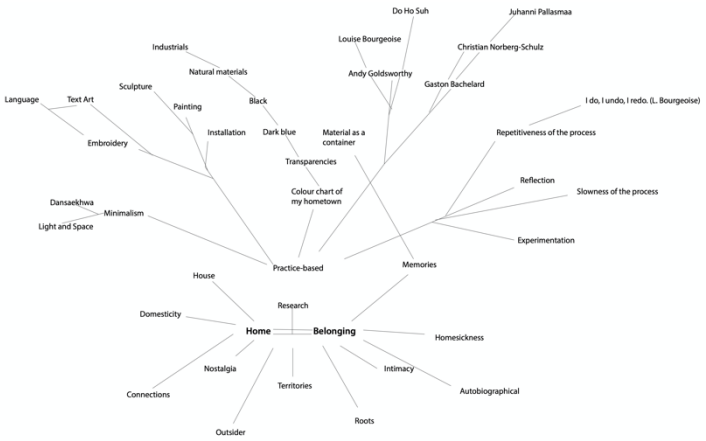


Figure 1: Mind Map

Precision played a key role in my work, both in the treatment of the materials and in the design of its final form. This precision helped me create the formal clarity that would later translate into the clarity of the message or concept of the work. If the embroidered letters were not neatly stitched, it would be more difficult for the audience to read the text and interact with

the piece. The same applied to the precision with which seeds were to be collected, extracted, dried and stored, the accuracy required to construct an empty acrylic structure, or the importance of precision in cutting, polishing and sanding when creating each of these geometrical shapes with defined lines. The purpose of using precision in my artistic process was not to pursue an unrealistic sense of perfection but to improve the elements that constitute the formal aesthetics of the work.

In addition to a self-reflective evaluation, I obtained feedback from my peers and supervisors during tutorials and PhD sessions. During these sessions, I received two types of feedback. The first type was work-in-progress feedback, where I shared my work at different stages of the process. For instance, I tested out various titles for my embroidery series, such as *elsewhereness*, *Ho_e*, and *land/scape*. Additionally, I received feedback on the use of different fonts, comparing commonly used academic fonts like Times New Roman, Arial, and Calibri to Helvetica and its various variants, which are widely used in graphic design. The second type of feedback focused on the overall aesthetics of my pieces. This included discussions about distinctions between capitalisation and the use of lowercase letters, spacing between letters and the placement and size of letters within the artwork. I also received feedback on specific finished pieces, such as *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018. In every case, I received feedback in which each person analysed and expressed their perception of the work.

Throughout each feedback session, I took notes on the elements and opinions expressed by participants and conducted an in-the-moment reflection in which I shared my thoughts on the comments that were most meaningful to me and those that gave me a new perspective on my work and prompted me to ask myself new questions. For example, during the feedback session for *Skyscape I,* 2019, a geometric sculpture created with acrylic and paint displayed on a plinth in the centre of the room, most attendees appreciated the ability to walk around the object and contemplate its reflection at the back (the reflectiveness of the glossy paint acts as a mirror). Others felt that once the optical illusion was revealed, they lost interest in the light and colour effects created by the polished and sanded sides of the acrylic block. These narrated experiences played a critical role in my decision-making process. I questioned whether it would be more important for me – the significance of the piece and the potential impact on the public if they observed their own reflection at the end – or whether I would prioritise their interest in the optical illusion. I chose to continue making my sculptures on plinths rather than on wall sculptures, prioritising their reflection on the reverse of the sculpture (which was not possible with wall sculptures) while still maintaining a three-dimensional optical illusion.

After I completed the assignment, I conducted a post-evaluation of the feedback I received. I reflected more deeply on what was said, analysing which elements were well received and which were not, the level of understanding and dialogue with the work, how people's comments enabled me to progress with my research questions, as well as any improvements that could be made during the next work-in-progress session.

Context

'artists are born phenomenologists'[18]

Juhani Pallasmaa

Through my research practice, I have examined two main approaches to the concept of home: 'Home as a Building' and 'Self and Home'.

The house is the structure of what has traditionally been considered a home. It is a place that delimits the inside – the interior – of the house with the outside – the exterior – the private and the public, the familiar and the unfamiliar. However, it should not be relegated to the category of a mere physical object. From a phenomenological point of view, Juhani Pallasmaa states that the purpose of this building is to be a 'symbol of human existence', capable of producing images that resonate with the emotions of our souls.[19] Pallasmaa gives the house poetic values that are usually attributed to the figure of the home: 'A building is not an end to itself', and states, 'it frames, articulates, restructures, gives significance, relates, separates and unites, facilitates and prohibits'.[20] A unique tendency to evoke opposite characteristics defines the unique potential of this space: 'intimacy or monumentality, rejection or invitation, hospitality or hostility'.[21]

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[18] Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Stairways of the Mind', *International Forum of Psychoanalysis 9*, no. 1–2 (2000): 8, https://doi.org/10.1080/080370600300055814.

[19] Juhani Pallasmaa, 'The Geometry of Feeling: a Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture', in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory: 1965–1995*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 451.

[20] 'The phenomenology of architecture is founded on verbs rather than nouns. The approaching of the house, not the facade, the act of entering, not the door; the act of looking out of the window, not the window itself; or the act of gathering around rather than the hearth or the table as such seem to trigger our strongest emotions'. Juhani Pallasmaa, 'An Architecture of the Seven Senses', in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, eds. Steven Holl, Alberto Pérez Gómez, and Juhani Pallasmaa (Japan: Nobuyuki Yoshida, 2008), 35.

[21] Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 31.

The sense of home has been extensively explored to unravel the essence of our inner self, our identity. This is a concept of home that, consciously or unconsciously, becomes part of our own being,[22] a 'projection and basis of identity',[23] our true self. The representation of the house as a container of the home is often portrayed as an emulation of the individual's own dilemmas: inside the house, the inhabitant can be who he has always been, while outside, he must be someone else in order to survive. South Korean artist Daehyun Kim, known as *Moonassi*, speaks about this connection between identity, home and intimacy in his drawing, *What's the first thing you do when you get home?*



Figure 2: What's the first thing you do when you get home?[24]

This piece illustrates a person's intimate ritual when they arrive home. We observe how the protagonist detaches himself from the first layer of skin and thus reveals his true identity, which appears to be identical to the first layer from which it is detached. Inspired by Moonassi's connection between identity and home, I decided to use the first person (I) in my embroidery work, *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 (see Figure 3). The artist reflects on the safe environment that a home provides – a place where we can be ourselves, perhaps the only one. 'A place where we can build a sense of self and be who and what we are',[25] affirmed Imogen Racz in her book *Art and the Home: Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday*.

[22] Imogen Racz, *Art and the Home: Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 9–13.
[23] Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile - Notes on the Phenomenology of Home', Uiah, accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.uiah.fi/studies/history2/e_ident.htm.
[24] Moonassi, *What's the First Thing You Do When You Get Home?*, accessed January 12, 2021, http://www.moonassi.com.
[25] Racz, *Art and the Home*, 12.



Figure 3: I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (detail)

Pallasmaa has widely explored the relationship between the self and home and has established two concepts when reflecting on our self-identity related to our sense of belonging: home and domicile. He gives the home the function of being a projection of our identity.[26] In his book *Questions of Perception*, Pallasmaa discusses how our domicile (Pallasmaa's background as an architect lies in the use of the word domicile, which implies an address, a place of residence and a building, both in the traditional sense and in more alternative options) represents the 'refuge of our body, memory and identity' and considers it 'impossible to detach the image of the Self from its spatial and situational existence'.[27] It is important to acknowledge his inclusion of memory in the sense of home and house, an element I have examined through the lens of Bachelard in Chapter Two: *Be-longing: Memories of Home*.

In Louise Bourgeois' *Femme Maisons* drawing series (1946–1947), the symbolic shape of the house and the home becomes part of the leading figure, which is the artist herself, since her work is a self-exploration of her experiences through her life, a representation of her self-identity linked to her own sense of home. Similar to Bourgeois, South Korean artist Do Ho Suh drew himself with the figure of a house that pierced his body from side to side (*Self-Portrait,* 2015). Far from showing a sign of pain in his features, his expression appears calm, as if it had been part of his body all his life or he had become accustomed to his presence.

[26] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[27] Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 31.

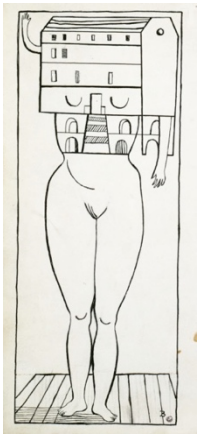



Figure 4: (left) Self-portrait, 2015, Do Ho Suh[28]

Figure 5: (right) Femme Maison, 1947, Louise Bourgeois[29]

I am fascinated by Bourgeois' approach to the relationship between identity and home in the sense of domesticity (*Femme Maison,* 1947), the weight of memories (*Cells,* 1989–1993), and art as a means of overcoming trauma (*I have been to hell and back*, 2007). She imagines it as a spider web (*Maman*, 1999; *Nest*, 1994) in which her life experiences are inextricably linked ('I am not what I am; I am what I do with my hands') within the role of a woman, daughter, embroiderer, sculptor and illustrator.[30]

Do Ho Suh also explores the meaning of home, as other artists do, from a personal point of view. After having lived in multiple places around the world throughout his life, he studied the idea of home in movement and the relationship between home and identity, as well as cultural identity and anonymity. For example, in his installation *Corridor and Staircase, 348 West 22nd Street New York, NY 10011, USA,* 2011–2012, he recreates inhabited spaces that he considered his home, a tangible representation of the intangible memory of the home.

Gaston Bachelard's studies in architectural phenomenology, as well as those of the architects Christian Norberg-Schulz and Juhani Pallasmaa, contribute an analysis of the emotional response to the inhabited house and reflect on our own concepts of home and belonging. Norberg-Schulz, a Norwegian architect, theorist and educator, expands the traditional terms of space and place, dwelling on the role of architecture and phenomenology in our daily lives and reflecting on questions such as 'Where are we if we are not at home?' and, therefore, 'Why do we leave home?'. Pallasmaa studies the connection between identity

[28] Do Ho Suh, *Self-Portrait*, accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/49873/Do-Ho-Suh-Self-portrait?lang=en.
[29] Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, MoMA, accessed February 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/s/lb/collection_lb/compositions/compositions_id-4358_sov_image-1.html.
[30] Janis Jefferies, Wood Diana Conroy, and Hazel Clark, *The Handbook of Textile Culture* (London, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 126.

(*the self*) and the concept and essence of the house, as well as the influence of memories, nostalgia, intimacy and language on what we call home. Finally, Bachelard interprets the action of inhabitation and the ways in which our sense of home shapes who we are. He uses the action of 'reading a house' in his research studies,[31] as he considers the houses or rooms to be 'psychological diagrams' in the 'intimacy analysis' of the home.[32] He studied the house and the universe and interpreted the home as a universal container, considering all the inhabited spaces as a house while interpreting the concept of the house as an anthropological cosmos. Moving from the particular to the general, from the drawer to the room, from the room to the home, from the home to the universe and back from the universe to the home, Bachelard constructs a poetic journey through those types of spaces that we inhabit and those that inhabit us.

Bachelard studied what would be the most important house of our lives: 'the house we were born in',[33] also called the 'unforgettable house'.[34] This refers to the first house where we learned to inhabit the domestic space, and that will be decisive in the relationship that we will forge with the future houses in which we will dwell. We will walk those corridors just like we walked them in our first home; we will keep our secrets in the closets as we did in the past; we will connect with the domestic space because we already learned how to do it in our childhood, but it will never be the same, and that is because 'the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting'.[35] In future houses where we will live, we will repeat the same patterns, approaching the exercise of inhabiting with the wisdom of the one who has already practised it before. The *house we were born in*, our first *cosmos* – that space of indescribable emotional value[36] – will remain anchored in our memory. We will remember and idealise this house during our daydreaming in 'this passionate liaison of our bodies, which we do not forget, with an unforgettable house'.[37]

In the course of my research, I encountered how, despite coming from different fields, countries and ages, the above-mentioned people's paths crossed multiple times throughout their lives, either in person or through their written or artistic work. In the following paragraphs, I

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[31] Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 55.
[32] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 73.
[33] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 15.
[34] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 15.
[35] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 15.
[36] 'For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the oneirically definitive house, must retain its shadows'. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 13.
[37] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 15.

have collected evidence of their interactions and how these connections influenced and, in some cases, shifted their approach to the topic of home in their careers. Without these interactions,[38] they would not have created the work that ultimately influenced my own.

When Whiteread encountered Bourgeois' work for the first time, she was fascinated. Stuart Morgan, one of her professors at Brighton Art College, was curating a retrospective of Bourgeois' work at the Serpentine Gallery in London. He noticed multiple similarities between her work and Bourgeois' and decided to show the young artist her work.[39] Years later, it would be Bourgeois herself who, after seeing a photograph of Whiteread's sculpture *House*, 1993–1994, in the *New York Times*, would demand her presence in her place. 'I want this woman in my house. I want her to come to *my* house',[40] Bourgeois stated. For both, the home serves as the 'space that starts the thoughts of a body of work',[41] according to Whiteread. 'When you meet her, you do not know what is true',[42] she said about Bourgeois. 'She has spun her web and drawn people in, and eaten a few people along the way'.[43]

Whiteread's castings of rooms or entire houses did not go unnoticed by Do Ho Suh either. He was planning to cast an abandoned studio when he discovered Whiteread's work. This event shifted the direction of his own work. If the trajectory of his artistic career had not changed, he would not have served as a source of inspiration for my own practice. He opted for a different approach to the subject of home: 'It allowed me to explore the notion of space and personal space in a looser way',[44] he explained. A path that reconnected him with his own culture: he says his own work 'represents the Eastern thought process way of thinking',[45]while

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[38] When questioned about Bachelard, Bourgeois expressed the following statement: '*I read Bachelard when I was over seventy-five. If I had read Bachelard before, I would have been a different person, I would not have been divided inside since I would have taken the materials, with their different characters, and I would have been more friendly towards them. In the past, every time somebody asked me about materials, I used to answer, ''What interests me is what I want to say and I will battle with any material to express accurately what I want to say''. But, the medium is always a matter of makeshift solutions. That is, you try everything, you use every material around, and usually they repulse you. Finally, you get one that will work for you. And it is usually the softer ones-lead, plaster, malleable things. That is to say that you start with the harder thing and life teaches you that you had better buckle down, be contented with softer things, softer ways'*. Louise Bourgeois, Marie-Laure Bernadac, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews 1923–1997* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 142. I provide further elaboration on this particular interaction in the subsequent pages.

[39] Killian Fox, Katie Toms, and Rachel Whiteread, 'Kisses for Spiderwoman', *Guardian*, October 15, 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/oct/14/art2.

[40] Richard Lacayo, 'A Talk with: Rachel Whiteread', *Time*, October 21, 2008, https://entertainment.time.com/2008/10/21/a_talk_with_rachel_whiteread/.

[41] Fox, Toms, and Whiteread, 'Kisses for Spiderwoman'.

[42] Fox, Toms, and Whiteread, 'Kisses for Spiderwoman'.

[43] Fox, Toms, and Whiteread, 'Kisses for Spiderwoman'.

[44] Ben Luke et al., 'A Brush with... Do Ho Suh', *Art Newspaper*, April 14, 2021, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/04/14/a-brush-with-do-ho-suh.

[45] Ben Luke et al., 'Brush'.

hers represents the Western. They exhibited together for the first time in 2008 as part of the *Psyco Buildings: Artists Take on Architecture* exhibition in London.

In 2021, Do Ho Suh participated in *For a Dreamer of Houses*, a collective exhibition dedicated to Bachelard and his analysis of the concept of home in his book *Poetics of Space*, published in 1958. The exhibition was arranged thematically according to five chapters of Bachelard's book: *Nests*, *Shells*, *Dialectics of Inside and Outside*, *Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes* and *Intimate Immensity*. Under the topic of *Shells*, Do Ho Suh revisited the hallway of his childhood home in his installation *Hub, 260-10 Sungbook-dong, Sungbook-ku, Seoul, Korea*, 2016. The *shell*, according to Bachelard, evokes the essential value of the home, a place that provides us with shelter, protection, confinement and tranquillity. The shell shields us from an aggressive exterior and defends us against all dangers. Do Ho Suh described the process of making this piece as 'an act of shedding skin'.[46] The connection between home and skin was analysed by Juhanni Pallasmaa in his 1996 book, *The Eyes of the Skin*.

Bourgeois did not read Bachelard until she was over seventy-five. She stated in an interview with Robert Storr in 1986 that she would have been 'a different person' if she had read Bachelard's work prior to this.[47] Learning about Bachelard earlier in life would have improved her relationship with the material. Rather than fighting the stone's hardness,[48] she would have chosen a softer, more manageable material like plaster earlier in her career. In this interview, Bourgeois discusses her rationale for working with hard materials such as black marble in *She-Fox*, 1958. She hypothesised that Bachelard would have replied by saying that the meaning behind her work was 'so painful that [she] had to hack it out of [herself]' and thus 'to hack it out of a very, very hard material'.[49]

Whiteread, unlike Bourgeois, was exposed to Bachelard's work early in her artistic career. It is to him that she attributes her interest in the notion of 'in-betweenness' within the concept of home.[50] In 2014, Whiteread took part in the exhibition entitled *The Space Where I Am,* held at Blain|Southern in London. Within this exhibition, Whiteread, alongside fellow artists, engaged in a reinterpretation of Gaston Bachelard's investigations into the concept of

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[46] Do Ho Suh and Vivian Li, 'Artist Interview: Do Ho Suh', Dallas Museum of Art Uncrated, August 13, 2020, https://blog.dma.org/2020/08/13/artist-interview-do-ho-suh/.
[47] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[48] '*How are you going to turn this around and make the stone say what you want when it is there to say 'no' to everything? It forbids you. You want a hole, it refuses to make a hole. You want it smooth, it breaks under the hammer. It is the stone that is aggressive. It is a constant source of refusal. You have to win the shape…*'. Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[49] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[50] Julius Pristauz, 'Rachel Whiteread: What to Shred and What to Keep?', *PW-Magazine*, April 4, 2018, https://pw-magazine.com/2018/rachel-whiteread-what-to-shred-and-what-to-keep.

home as presented in his work *Poetics of Space*.

The work of Pallasmaa is also profoundly influenced by Bachelard. He describes how, when he first read Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* in the late 1970s, it 'opened a new world to him',[51] introducing him to a 'world where perception, thought, imagination, and dreams' converge,[52] he stated. He came to the realisation that 'the world is not out there objectively, as it is fundamentally of our own perceptual and mental making'.[53] He often refers to the French philosopher when talking about the importance of intimacy,[54] warmth and memory in the concept of home.[55] Pallasmaa concurs with Bachelard regarding the significance of intimacy, warmth and memory in the conception of home, as evidenced by the sources he references in his literary works.

Interested in the relationship between architecture and art, Pallasmaa considers that 'artists are born phenomenologists', and 'a work of art and architecture can touch our soul only if it touches something familiar in our collective memory'.[56] Throughout his professional trajectory, he has engaged in numerous artistic collaborations, one of which notably includes his collaboration with Whiteread in the 2004 *Snow Show* in Lapland.[57] The installation, which can be categorised as post-minimal, was constructed using snow and allowed the audience to physically enter the artwork. The design of the form is derived from a stairwell area located in East London that has undergone a 90-degree rotation. 'A new space felt familiar and domestic, and I hoped that it would disorient the viewer and make him or her think of other places',[58] stated Whiteread. Pallasmaa also demonstrated an interest in the interconnectedness of art and architecture through the work of Louise Bourgeois, particularly her exploration of 'the relationship between the body and the house' in her artwork *Femme Maison* (Woman House),[59] 1984, a topic he researched in the aforementioned publication, *The Eyes of the Skin*.

Pallasmaa has actively engaged in lectures that explore the intersection of art and architecture, as exemplified by his participation in the symposium entitled *Light, Space, and*

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[51] Juhani Pallasmaa and Matteo Zambelli, *Inseminations: Seeds for Architectural Thought* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2020), XXI.
[52] Pallasmaa and Matteo Zambelli, *Inseminations*, XXI.
[53] Pallasmaa and Matteo Zambelli, *Inseminations*, XXI.
[54] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[55] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (London: Academy, 1996), 19.
[56] Pallasmaa, 'Stairways', 8.
[57] Fung Collaboratives, 'Rachel Whiteread & Juhani Pallasmaa – Description', March 26, 2014, https://fungcollaboratives.org/projects/past/the-snow-show-finland/artists/rachel-whiteread-juhani-pallasmaa/description/
[58] Fung Collaboratives, 'Rachel Whiteread & Juhani Pallasma'.
[59] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image: Imagination and Imagery in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2011), 126–27.

Contemporary Art held in Copenhagen in 2022. The Light and Space Movement, known as California Minimalism, influenced my works *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020, as can be read in Chapter Four: *Home on the Move*. 'Great works of art and architecture', Pallasmaa stated, let us 'feel the interaction between material and space' and 'make visible how the world touches us', as he cited Merleau-Ponty when he wrote about the paintings of Paul Cézanne.[60] The world touches us, and we touch the world primarily through the medium of light.[61]

It is important to acknowledge the existence of various parallels between the aforementioned artists, architects, philosophers and my own body of work. The artist Do Ho Suh found that the perpetual movement between his native country, Korea and the United States significantly impacted his artistic practice. Moreover, these journeys have afforded him the opportunity to delve into the concept of 'in-betweenness' within the context of home. I have personally experienced a similar phenomenon in relation to my country of origin, Spain, and England, where I have effectively utilised this state of in-betweenness in my *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021. The bilingualism of the individuals mentioned, including me (Spanish and English), Do Ho Suh (Korean and English), Bourgeois (French and English) and Pallasmaa (Finnish and English), exhibits similarities in terms of its impact on their respective conceptual endeavours. In my particular case, I have also observed similarities in the utilisation of either hard materials (such as acrylic blocks) or soft materials (such as fabric). A notable observation regarding Bourgeois' artistic practice is the juxtaposition between her fabric-based works and her stone-based works. Similarly, Do Ho Suh incorporates fabric within his installations and employs stone in his sculptures.

Chapters

Chapter One

Untangling the conventional and static ideas of home and belonging, Chapter One investigates how experiences impact our sense of belonging. This chapter explores the relationship between identity and home, feelings of 'outsiderness' and homesickness, and an examination of language semantics (both in our native and second languages) in relation to our concept of

[60] Pallasmaa and Zambelli, *Inseminations*, 251.
[61] Pallasmaa and Zambelli, *Inseminations*, 251.

home in two of my embroidery pieces in this chapter: *I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018 and *out of place,* 2018.

Chapter Two

This chapter explores the coexistence and interaction of both old and recent memories of home, delving into the influence and weight of time on our sense of home. It is the study of home as a memory and an examination of the warmth and intimacy at the core of our sense of belonging while weaving in cultural traditions and experiences associated with womanhood and embroidery (as seen in *Nest,* 2017 and *Seeds House,* 2018–2021). In *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, I also examine grief and loss within the context of a sense of home. The memories associated with the mentioned pieces have been indented and coloured grey to differentiate between the main body of the text and the stories.

Chapter Three

Having determined that our notion of home can be connected to a physical location in the form of a building, in this chapter, I explore which other shapes can enable us to analyse the role of the concept of space and place in our sense of belonging through the series of paintings *Where We Used to Belong I-XI,* 2018. From a phenomenological point of view, I proceed to define what is considered a place, how the concept of space can be defined, the importance of existential space and its relationship to the sense of home. From a contemporary art perspective, I look at some alternatives to what has traditionally been defined as space or place and how these approaches relate to the sense of home. Additionally, I investigate the aspects of wind and fog to explore meteorological phenomena within the context of home and belonging in *Wind Diaries*, 2021.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, I continue to broaden the concept of home and belonging to include not only the places and spaces that make us feel at home but also the necessity and possibility of creating them through my artistic practice. The concept encompasses a sense of home on the move that accepts each individual's (inhabitant's, dweller's) unique situation and creates spaces based on

other spaces. 'I am not in one place, just in between',[62] states Do Ho Suh. Inspired by his work, I investigate the in-betweenness of our sense of home, those liminal spaces that often go unnoticed but can contain a profound sense of belonging: skyscapes, seascapes and landscapes, as well as colours associated with meteorological and atmospheric conditions (*Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021; *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020), which constitute those other places to which we belong.

Conclusion

This chapter expands on the conclusions and findings of this research. Concluding that our sense of home is not bound to a certain place and not limited by geography but that our sense of home can take almost any form, even for a brief moment, such as when I felt at home surrounded by seascapes and skyscapes from a helicopter journey, through childhood memories to experiences of loss and grief. The feeling of being at home may involve repetitive actions, such as remembering how to use a specific embroidery stitch (*Nest*, 2017, *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place,* 2018) or following traditional methods to collect and preserve seeds (*Seeds House*, 2018–2021). It can be a certain type of wind (*Wind Diaries*, 2021) or the mist of a foggy day (*Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020). This research offers an understanding that what each one of us perceives as 'home' takes an individual form, which influences the various ways we are capable of belonging and making ourselves 'at home'.

[62] '"Seoul Home/L.A. Home"—Korea and Displacement', Art21, September 2003, https://art21.org/read/do-ho-suh-seoul-home-la-home-korea-and-displacement/.

Chapter One: I Am Homesick But I Am At Home



Figure 6: I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (30cm dia)

I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 is a circular textile piece. The subtle presence of the white cotton fabric contrasts with the boldness of the monochrome text stitched in capital letters. It is presented in the same wooden frame or hoop in which it was originally embroidered.

At the beginning of the making process of this embroidery piece, I was inspired by the word *solastalgia,* a neologism coined by philosopher Glenn A. Albrecht in 2005 to describe 'the homesickness you have when you are still located within your home environment'.[63] This term comes from the Latin *sōlācium,* which means comfort or consolation, and the Greek -*algia*, pain. Originally created to name the anguish associated with environmental changes near your home, this term has been commonly misused to name the feeling of missing home while at home, without mentioning any references to the environmental issues about which the word was originally conceived.

In Spanish, the word *morriña*, pronounced as /moˈriɲa/, is used to express the feeling of missing home. According to the *Diccionario de la Lengua española* ('Dictionary of the Spanish Language'), *morriña* is a feeling of sadness or melancholy, particularly the nostalgia of *'la tierra en la que se nace*' (the land in which one is born).[64] We observe how it establishes a similarity between the concepts of home and native land, ignoring the possibility of considering the house as a place other than the birthplace. The word *morriña* comes from the Galician-Portuguese *morriha* (sadness). Some authors have also suggested that it may be

[63] Glenn Albrecht, *Earth Emotions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 39
[64] *Real Academia Española*: *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 22nd ed., s.v. 'morriña'.

influenced by the Latin *mori* (to die). Galicia is a community in northeastern Spain that has a strong migratory tradition. The word *morriña* or *morriha* is of great importance in the Galician community, both for those who live in their own country and for those who reside abroad.

The suffix -iño / iña, characteristic of the dialects of northeastern Spain, is culturally and phonetically distanced from my hometown. *Morriña* is a word that is rarely used in the locality where I come from. I am from a Spanish city in North Africa. Our accent, culture and lexicon are linked to the communities of southern Spain. Although the suffix -iño / iña is commonly used in all aspects of our lives, *morriña* is one of those words that have such a northern cultural weight that using it as part of my vocabulary would sound foreign to me. This leads us to make use of phrases such as *echo de menos mi casa*, which could literally be translated as 'I miss my house' to replace what could be defined with a single word in other parts of the country.

Nostalgia has been widely used in both languages to express the feeling of longing for home. The word nostalgia is a neologism coined by the Swiss Johaness Hofer (1669–1752), who used it in his medical thesis written in 1688, which described homesickness as a disease. Nostalgia comes from Greek νόστος (nóstos, 'returning home', 'homecoming') and ἄλγος (álgos, 'pain').[65] In 1830, it was used to describe the homesickness that soldiers and sailors suffered when they spent long periods outside their homes. From 1920 on, this word also acquired the meaning of 'wistful yearning for the past' commonly used nowadays.[66]

Previous studies have indicated how the languages we speak shape our perspective on the world.[67] They will determine how we approach various aspects of our lives. From my perspective, the word *nostalgia* in Spanish lacks the intensity and perhaps the sadness and preciseness that the specific etymology of *homesickness* gives the word itself.

Following numerous changes in location throughout my life, I could identify my inability to articulate my longing for a home to which I felt phonetically and culturally connected. I discovered in English that there is the term 'homesickness', which captures the essence of these feelings. 'Homesickness' is an etymologically intriguing concept that is utilised as a means of exploration in my work. Having learned English as a second language

[65] 'Etymology of Nostalgia', Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed October 16, 2020, https://www.etymonline.com/word/nostalgia.
[66] 'Etymology of Nostalgia'.
[67] Lera Boroditsky, 'How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?', Edge.org, November 6, 2009, https://www.edge.org/conversation/lera_boroditsky-how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think.

means that my exposure to this language (SLA) was later in life,[68] which enabled me to approach the analysis of the terminology from the point of view of a foreigner or outsider.

Do Ho Suh is an artist who works with similar ideas about displacement. After living in Seoul, New York and currently London, Do Ho Suh's notion of displacement has been part of his life since he was a child. His parents had an unconventional yet traditional Korean home in Seoul at a time when the country was undergoing economic expansion, strongly influenced by the principles of Western countries, including their architecture. A house that looked back at the past in a city focused on the future. 'I had a sense of cultural displacement from within Korean culture from a young age',[69] explains Do Ho Suh. He experienced a feeling of displacement within his own country that would materialise years later in his installations.[70] In 2013, he made *Home Within Home Within Home Within Home,* an installation that consisted of a life-size replica of this traditional family-style home in Seoul. The set, made of fabric and wire, was shown floating inside another replica of his current residence in Rhode Island at that time. The artist reflects on the differences between his childhood home and his adult home. Such themes resonate with the themes surrounding our past and our present. Themes that are notably reminiscent of Bachelard's *unforgettable house* highlight the importance that first houses can have in marking us for life and influencing our relationship with future houses that we live in. A memory of his childhood home he will always carry within himself wherever he goes, an idea that he would develop in depth in *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home,* 1999. His aim was to transport 'a space from one place to another' and be able to bring his home with him all the time as a 'way of dealing with the cultural displacement' and homesickness.[71] A reflection on the sense of belonging associated with the notion of home, marked by a feeling of being an outsider, has accompanied him all his life.

The feeling of being homesick where you should feel at home has been widely addressed to describe the uncertainty, and in some cases, guilt and confusion associated with experiencing a type of distress that, culturally and socially speaking, we should not be experiencing in the place we traditionally refer to as home. We legally belong to the place where we were born, and in the majority of societies, this is also the location of our family.

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[68] Second language acquisition as an adult.
[69] Sandra Wagner, 'Personal Histories: A Conversation with Do Ho Suh', Sculpture, November 1, 2012, https://sculpturemagazine.art/personal-histories-a-conversation-with-do-ho-suh/.
[70] Sylvia Tsai, 'Close to Home: Interview with Do-Ho Suh', ArtAsiaPacific, December 23, 2013, https://artasiapacific.com/ideas/close-to-home-interview-with-do-ho-suh/.
[71] Tsai, 'Close to Home'.

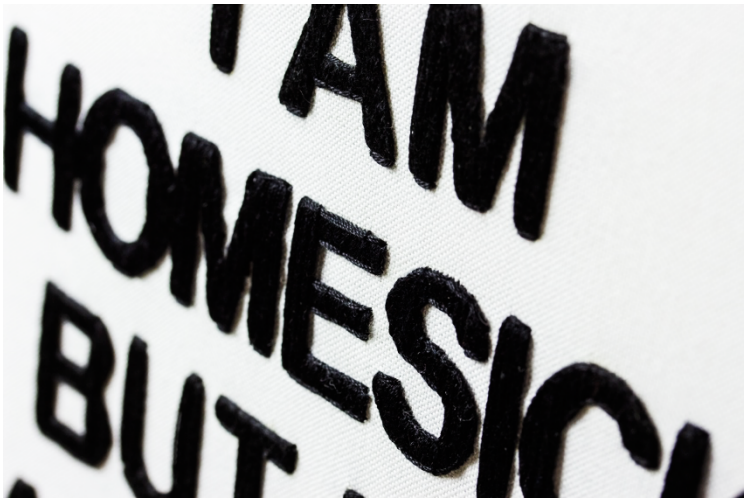


Figure 7: I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (detail)

Bourgeois also refers to a sense of displacement that would haunt her (and which she mentioned in her 1994 work, *Home for Runaway Girls*) throughout her entire life. While in both of my text-based embroideries, I exclusively use my second language, English, to explore the concept of displacement, Bourgeois uses both her native language (French) and English in this work. *HOME FOR RUNAWAY GIRLS: EMPTY HOUSES LES FILLE MÈRE D'ANTONY*, read this bilingual text art piece. This message refers to the young mothers of the town of Antony in France, but it can also be considered a self-portrait. Bourgeois decided to move from Paris to New York after she married at the age of twenty-seven. Even with the passage of time, she always thought of herself as a runaway girl, 'a runaway girl who turned out alright'.[72]

Pallasmaa recognises the importance of the role of language in our sense of belonging and states that 'our first home is in the domicile of our mother tongue'.[73] Later, we will use this knowledge to define essential concepts in our lives: the 'unconscious geometry of her language articulates our being in the world'.[74] For the architect, the sense of home is 'founded in language'.[75]

During the making of this piece, I was interested in reflecting on the concept behind the word 'homesickness' both as a whole ('homesickness') and its division by word formation ('home-sick-ness'). A way of dissecting the word, a practice I also explored in previous works made as part of my MA as *'Home.Hope.Hole'* (2016) and *'Homeless.Homesick.Homeland'*

[72] Jerry Gorovoy and Danielle Tilkin, 'There Is No Place Like Home', in *Louise Bourgeois: Memory and Architecture* (Madrid: Museo National Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999), 15.
[73] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[74] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[75] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.

(2016). *Homesickness* is a loan translation of 'German *Heimweh*, from *Heim* 'home' and Weh 'woe, pain'; the compound word comes from the Swiss dialect, expressing 'a longing for the mountains'.[76] While -ness and -sick are often used as suffixes to express a 'state or quality',[77] the suffix -ness can also be used to form adjectives that indicate that a person has been afflicted by a situation or object i.e. (-sick). The union of both (-sickness) as a suffix reminds us of the history of the word 'nostalgia' and how homesickness used to be considered a fatal disease.[78] I was interested in the multiple readings that a single term could suggest. The contrast between the meaning of the word itself and the presence of the suffix -sickness could be thought of as a way to describe an individual who is longing for the same home that they are sick of. The use of the first person in *I am home sick but I am at home*, 2018, aims to create an honest connection with the observer instead of hiding behind the language as it might have been received if 'Homesick but at home' had been the stitched text.

A house (*our* house) is always a home?[79]

From an early age, we are taught that the home is the house where we grew up and lived with our parents. Commonly, this extends to the city where we were born and to the territory that it occupies in a given country. We belong to that place, to that space, just as we belong to the people who live in it – to our family. It is a concept that can become immoveable at times; we are supposed to always feel at home in our house.

While travelling and living abroad (outside my native land of Spain), experiencing homesickness and contemplating the importance of what it means to be home prompted me to ask myself various questions: Where else should one feel more at home than in the family

[76] A loan translation, also known as calque, is a term that refers to the translation process where a word is taken from one language and translated literally (word-for-word or root-for-root) into another; 'Homesickness (n.)', Etymology, accessed July 15, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/homesickness?ref=etymonline_crossreference.

[77] 'Ness (Suffix) Definition and Synonyms: Macmillan Dictionary', -NESS (suffix) definition and synonyms | Macmillan Dictionary, accessed July 15, 2021, https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/ness.

[78] 'In the first two years of the war, there were a reported 2588 cases of nostalgia, and 13 deaths from this cause. These numbers scarcely express the real extent to which nostalgia influenced the sickness and mortality of the army. To the depressing influence of home-sickness must be attributed to the fatal result in many cases which might otherwise have terminated favourably'. Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *Sanitary Memoirs of the War of the Rebellion* (New York: Published for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, by Hurd and Houghton, 1869), cited in 'Nostalgia (n.)', Etymology, accessed July 15, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/nostalgia?ref=etymonline_crossreference.

[79] The present page adheres to the identical structure as pages 57 and 58 with the objective of establishing a discourse between Chapters Two and Three, highlighting two distinct perspectives of defining home: 'home as a house (or recollections/memories associated with it)', as presented in certain segments of this chapter, and 'home', as a concept that 'does not always mean a house', as presented in Chapter Three: *If We Are Not At Home, Where Are We?*

home in the town where one grew up? What happens when we come back to the family home after being away for an extended period? Does it feel different? We are both at home and not at home at the same time. Do we feel at home or out of place?

I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 was created to represent the longing for a home that is not there anymore, the nostalgia for an idea of home that has changed. Contradiction plays a key role in the concept behind the piece. I am missing home in the same physical location where I used to believe I belonged. There is an implicit reference to the transformative nature of what used to be considered immoveable, exploring the possibility of feeling at home in different *places* and *spaces.*[80] The possibilities of home being a place and a space and how these two concepts can be defined and connected to the notion of belongingness are discussed in depth in Chapter Three: *If We Are Not at Home, Where are we?* and Chapter Four*: Home on the move*.

I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 was displayed at the Graduate College Research Student Exhibition and Research Student Conference in 2018. In addition to a black-and-white poster posing the question 'What does home mean to you?', attendees who were interested had the option to engage in conversation with me and/or write their responses on a rounded piece of paper,[81] or both in response to the question: Can you feel homesick when you are at home?

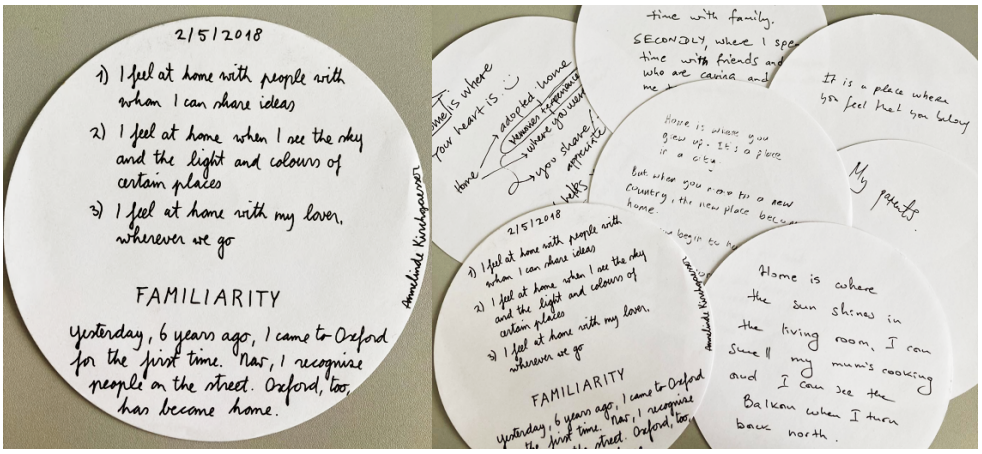


Figure 8: Responses from attendees

The experiential feedback received was varied and classified into two categories. Firstly, those who approached the question with the idea of home being a constant in their own

[80] 'That 'place' means something more than location'. 1. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Rizzoli, 1980), 10. Also 'a 'place' as 'an integral part of existence' from Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Principles of Modern Architecture* (London: Andreas Papadakis, 2000), 16; spaces 'as a system of places'. 1. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place: Selected Essays* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1988), 29.

[81] The selected shape connected with the embroidery piece and became a part of the installation as well.

lives, a concept that never changes. Secondly, those who observe its changeability. Although there was no official pattern, those who identified themselves as foreigners, as well as English natives who had experienced life abroad or in another region, even within the United Kingdom, tended to fall into the latter group. There were also contrasts between those who defined home as a house as a specific area or territory within a particular country and those whose sense of home was defined by something other than the traditional physical structure (the family house), such as the smell of the sea, a loved one or a specific memory in their lives. The answers to this question go back to one of the main cores of this research: What do we call home? This brings us to the following questions: Is home a physical or an abstract concept? Is it subject to change over time, or does it remain constant? Do we have the same sense of belonging in the same place as we did twenty, ten or five years ago? When, if there is a particular moment, where, if there is a particular location, and with whom, if there is a particular being, do we feel at home?

Through an in-depth analysis of the process of creating *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 (reflections in and on action, *knowing-in-action,* and feedback), I have come to understand that, while you can feel at home in a variety of 'places', you can also feel homesick in those 'places'. This piece was created to provide a space for the exploration of the feelings of uncertainty and confusion associated with missing home in a 'place' that should be your only home. Both in *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018 I used embroidery as a method of self-reflection by exploring my own experiences in order to accept those emotions. While one of the primary objectives of my practice-based research is to determine where, if there is a physical location, we feel at home and what happens when we feel at home in a variety of 'wheres', 'whats' and 'whos'. Throughout the process of creating *I am homesick but at home,* 2018, I discovered that you can experience homesickness in a variety of 'wheres', 'whats', and 'whos'. When I am at home, I feel complete and familiar, but I can also feel homesick because I am missing certain aspects of those other 'places' that may also be considered home to me – not longing for a home per se but longing for an idea of home that has changed.

Similar to Bourgeois, I consider 'the act of sewing' to be 'a process of emotional repair',[82] a way to explore and reconcile the previously mentioned contradictory emotions with which I was experimenting. I employ this technique not only as a means to achieve an end but

[82] Robert Storr, *Intimate Geometries: The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 526.

also to bring my insight and comprehension to the work. The continuous and repeated action of the needle guiding the thread from one place to another makes embroidery a repetitive and contemplative method that allows me to reflect on my intentions towards the work.



Figure 9: Out of place, 2018 (30cm dia)

Out of place, 2018 is a circular embroidery piece sized 30 x 30 cm. It is embroidered in black thread on a white cotton canvas and is presented in the same wooden hoop in which it was embroidered. The structure, or surface, on which I embroider is the hoop. Embroidery hoops have been used for more than a century and are connected to the family environment and domestic space.[83] For me, the act of embroidery alludes to connections, domestic spaces and memories.[84] There is something that speaks of both the present and the past. A hoop speaks about the inside: inside a house, a room, a space, and our memories. It has something to do with family and a sense of belonging. In these pieces, I displayed the hoop, thread and fabric that I used from the beginning. The hoop, which was once used to stretch the fabric and facilitate embroidery, is now incorporated into the message as the start and the end. It is both the tool and part of the piece.

My creative process was characterised by its slowness, which was frequently influenced by the method used in each piece. For example, the creation of these embroidery pieces began with a brainstorming process about the text I intended to use, followed by digital sketches created in a vector graphics editor. It was during this phase that I studied typography and made

[83] 'US744070A: Adjustable Embroidery-Hoop.', Google Patents, 17 November 1903, https://patents.google.com/patent/US744070A/en.
[84] See Chapter Two: *Be-Longing: Memories of Home*.

the necessary adjustments to the font and shape of the text to achieve the visual form I deemed appropriate. After deciding on the final appearance, I printed and transferred the design to a white cotton fabric that had previously been stretched in the hoop. I began embroidering the entire text and observed how the white cotton fabric responded to the various pressures applied to each letter. Depending on how the fabric reacted to the pressure exerted by the hoop, I readjusted the measurements halfway through the process, slightly altering the shape of the font or completely adjusting the design if it did not react accordingly.

The words 'out of place' are stitched by hand using the back stitch technique in the centre of the piece. One of the experiences I wanted to emphasise is the sensation of being an outsider in one's own country and/or in other countries where one is currently or has previously lived, feeling foreign where one should feel local. The conversations that occurred during the feedback sessions were instrumental in helping me realise that a significant number of individuals shared the experience of feeling out of place, as if we were strangers in a place where we once felt we belonged.

Do Ho Suh also reflects on feelings of 'outsiderness' that fall within the second group in *Fallen Star* (2012): immigrants settling in a new country – to be distinguished from natives on the outside in their own country of birth – in an art installation consisting of a small house 15 × 18 metres in size on the top floor of a seven-storey building. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the construction is practically held in the air, leaning slightly towards one of the corners of the roof and with a four-degree inclination. It is part of the University of California and is notably located in a state with a large immigrant population. This work reflects on the feelings of uprooting suffered by foreigners when they arrive in the country and of their attempts to readjust themselves physically and mentally to an unfamiliar place.

In order to create *out of place*, 2018, I first determined the appearance of the typeface. I chose a font with rounded nuances that was not overly elongated so that the letters could create a visually balanced composition that aided reading. Unlike previous works, I concluded that the use of lowercase letters was critical for conveying the message's specific connotations. I used a rounded, bold font that drew the audience's attention, transmitted a sense of calm (due to the absence of sharp edges found in other fonts), and welcomed without the violence associated with uppercase letters. Ilene Strizver and Laura M. Ahearn, both typographic

educators, conclude in *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* that using all caps in a text 'can be interpreted as SHOUTING OR EXTREME EMPHASIS'.[85]

The nature of the embroidery technique requires moving from one stitch to the next while being careful not to injure oneself; consequently, one must completely focus and thus slow down. The imposed slowness allowed me to make changes, observe how the fabric behaves to different pressures associated with each letter and readjust the measures halfway through the process. This was an exercise of precision and memory to recall how to use the backstitch, the only type of stitch my grandmother taught me. I delve into the importance of these childhood memories in Chapter Two: *Be-Longing: Memories of Home*.



Figure 10: Out of place, 2018 (detail)

The decision to use uniquely black for the text was first inspired by Daehyun Kim's black monochromatic work, known as 'Moonassi', since he has always been fascinated by the 'unlimited possibilities' of this colour.[86] 'It's simple, strong, beautiful, and just enough',[87] he states. Simultaneously, I noticed the number of skyscape photographs that I was taking during night flights in which the presence of blackness covered the entire image, as can be seen in photographs (Appendix Figs. 79–94) that are part of the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021. Acknowledging the presence and importance of black in my sense of home, I also used this colour in *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018; *Nest*, 2017, and *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020.

[85] David Barton and Carmen Lee, *Language Online: Investigating Digital Texts and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2013), 88, cited in Laura M. Ahearn, *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), 172.
[86] 'Moonassi-Mind Illustration', Moonassi, accessed May 3, 2019, http://www.moonassi.com/.
[87] 'Moonassi-Mind Illustration'.

In this chapter, I have used embroidery (*I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018) to research the emotion of feeling out of place in a place we used to call home or that, for social, cultural or political reasons, should be considered 'home' for us. I have understood that the feeling of being at home is inherently linked to belongingness. The significance of the weight of our cultural traditions, what we learned when we were children, and our roots shape our concept of home. The use of language is crucial in both *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018. Each text message contains wordplay and contradictions aimed at directly addressing the audience and evoking reflections on their own daily conceptions of home.

Chapter Two: Be-Longing: Memories Of Home



Figure 11: Seeds House, 2018–2021 (20x20x20 cm)

In this chapter, I explore the essence of home through my own experiences and memories. *Seeds House,* 2018–2021, is a transparent figure of a house filled with seeds and petals that are visible through the structure. The house is filled with daisy seeds, the flowers that have defined my childhood and adulthood and have played a significant role in my conception of home since I was a child. They are particularly meaningful to me because they evoke childhood memories of home and feelings of belonging, both past and present, as well as feelings of loss and connection to my family. It is important to note that, in contrast to England, and particularly Oxford, where I currently live, wild daisies are uncommon in my hometown. If someone wishes to have daisies in their garden or balcony, they must grow them. As a result, having daisies in or around your house is a choice, not a result of the environment. The walls of *Seeds House,* 2018–2021, are made of acrylic, a clear material that reveals the inside while maintaining a separation between the outside (the public) and the inside (the private), between the self (the *I*) and the others. It is worth noting that the daisy seeds and petals are layered together in the interior of this form, representing a landscape that alludes to my exploration of the places where I feel at home and which I analyse in depth through the following works: *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018 and *Wind Diaries,* 2021 in Chapter Three: *If We Are Not At Home Where Are We?* and *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021, *Seascape,* 2019, *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020 in Chapter Four: *Home on the Move*.

In this case, the house refers to the physical structure of the home, which, as in my personal experience, provides a sense of welcome and protection to its occupant. It is important to add that ‘as well as being a symbol of protection and order, home can, in negative life

situations, become a concretization of human misery: of loneliness, rejection, exploitation and violence'.[88]



Figure 12: Seeds House, 2018–2021 (detail)

The notion of intimacy that is experienced within the structure of a house is defined by the walls, floor and roof, which delimit the boundaries of its physical structure. The acrylic material, which defines the structure, acts as a barrier between the audience and the content of the sculpture, guiding their approach and inviting them to get closer. There is a duality in the component elements of the piece: inside and outside, organic (seeds and petals) and inorganic (acrylic), life and death, loss and passage of time.[89] Inside, both seeds and petals are exposed and decontextualised, allowing for a detailed examination of the memory's representation.

The house conveys both the past and the present. It functions as a container of memories, physically containing the seeds in a transparent structure that reveals its interior. Both the material and the structure serve as elements of communication of a metaphorical nature: the pure and simple lines of the house, as if drawn by a child, speak of childhood, imagination and the concept of home and house that I have had since I was little. 'The word home makes us suddenly and simultaneously remember all the warmth, protection and love of our entire childhood. Perhaps our homes of adulthood are only an unconscious search for the lost home of childhood',[90] states Pallasmaa.

[88] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[89] Loss and Home, a topic into which I delve in Chapter Two.
[90] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.



Figure 13: Seeds House, 2018–2021

Time plays a key role in the development and experience of this work. There is a connection between working with organic materials and the concept of time; nature grows at its own pace and cannot be hurried; we plant seeds in the spring and harvest them in late summer or early autumn. Seeds can embody the passage of time and the cycle of life and death.



Figure 14: Seeds House, 2018–2021

When I was a child, I used to spend most of my time at my grandparents' house. Every warm, sunny day, my grandfather used to take me to the little house they had in their garden. This house, which he built for his mother-in-law when she moved in with them, had only one bedroom and a small living room. At that time, he only used it to store his seeds and build model ships. He kept every little pile of seed wrapped in newspaper in one of the many empty jars that were always around the house. Every spring, we waited to see how daisies bloomed. Sometimes, the bushes were so big that they almost blocked the entrance to the house. I remember those afternoons playing outside in the garden. The daisies were the first thing we saw when entering the house and, therefore, the last when we left. Over the years, the daisies became part of our lives, of the stories that we invented when we were little. Each year, they died, and each year, more were planted. A routine that lasted until now. Grandpa passed away seven years ago. He kept making those tiny boards to scale while he kept collecting, drying and filling those glass jars with hundreds of seeds for the following year until his last months with us. All those good memories are forever encapsulated in that tiny house filled with seeds.

The process of creating this sculpture was characterised by its slowness in collecting, drying and storing the seeds. This took three years of repeating the process of holding a daisy with the fingers, inspecting it to determine whether it was at the optimal stage for collection and subsequent conservation by wrapping it in a newspaper, placing it in glass jars, and storing it in a dark cupboard for the following months. Additionally, it requires a high degree of precision; if I had collected the seeds while they were still fresh, they would have produced mould, which would have spread throughout the jar, contaminating the remainder of the collection. Since I was constantly performing a memory exercise to recall exactly how my grandfather taught me to do it, combined with the characteristics of the aforementioned process, I was able to enter a state of complete concentration. Through this state, I was able to reflect on the importance of my childhood memories in shaping my current concept of home, as well as the traditions passed down from parents to children. For example, learning how to plant flowers (*Seeds House*, 2018–2021) and the art of stitching or knitting (*Nest,* 2017), all of which contribute to my sense of belonging. The process of preserving and preparing the seeds evolved into a mindful activity that became part of my methodology alongside other repetitive actions such as sewing and knitting.

With this piece, I intended to create a sculpture that alluded primarily to my childhood memories, transported them to other places in their own memories of home, and served as a space for thought and reflection. I am aware that daisies may not have a special place in the viewer's concept of home or in their memories as strongly as they have in mine. My intention was that they would recognise the house as a universal figure, the same fundamental structure that a child would draw, transporting them to another era of their lives.

Bachelard established the house as 'a nest in the world'.[91] The nest represents 'the primitiveness of the refuge'.[92] It provides us with a refuge that is fragile but safe. A refuge that embraces the passing of time is 'the natural habitat of the function of inhabiting'.[93] The house is both a cradle and a world.[94] The inhabited space (the non-I) protects the inhabitant (the I) from the dangers of the outside. Outside the *house's being,* the nest, we find danger. Outside, 'the hostility of men and of the universe accumulates'.[95] In his book, *The Principles of Modern Architecture:Oon The New Tradition of the Twentieth Century,* Norberg-Schulz also gives the

[91] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 103.
[92] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 103
[93] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 99
[94] 'It is the human being's first world. Before he is 'cast into the world', as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle'. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 7.
[95] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 7.

house the function of refuge, a space that brings serenity and personal peace to the dweller, giving them the courage to go outside. Only when the house creates a sense of belonging and protection are we able to 'gain the inner strength' we 'need to depart'.[96] In Bourgeois' sculpture *The Nest,* 1994 – previously mentioned – we can observe a spider made of steel that protects its offspring. Its long legs occupy the space between the viewer and the young, which it places under its body in a challenging and protective attitude. The spider, a metaphor for the figure of the mother,[97] represents the protective nature of the home, always prepared to shield its children from the hostile outside world.

It was my mother who introduced me to the work of Louise Bourgeois for the first time when I was fourteen years old. I recall being impressed by the grandeur of her spiders, the woman-houses, and a unique use of embroidery that I had never seen before. Her insomniac paintings became my companion when I could not sleep. In contrast to the art education that I received in school, Bourgeois was able to depict a wide range of emotions, including comfort, isolation, conflict, fear and defiance in her works.[98] She had no qualms about expressing herself with a needle, plaster, fabric, paint or even metallic meshes to construct her *cells*. Everything she had on hand became a tool for self-expression. This early encounter with her work influenced my own work as an artist. Consequently, my embroidery works were inspired by two contrasting sources: the traditional stitching method and approach that my grandmother taught me and the courage and boldness with which Bourgeois uses the needle to speak about her feelings – in my case, feelings of 'outsiderness' and homesickness.[99] Visiting her exhibitions became a mother-daughter tradition that continues to the present day.

[96] Norberg-Schulz, *Principles of Modern Architecture*, 49.
[97] Penny Huntsman, *Thinking About Art: A Thematic Guide to Art History* (Chichester : Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 247.
[98] As it can be seen in her work *I have been in hell and back, and let me tell you, it was wonderful* (1996).
[99] Refers to my works *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place,* 2018.

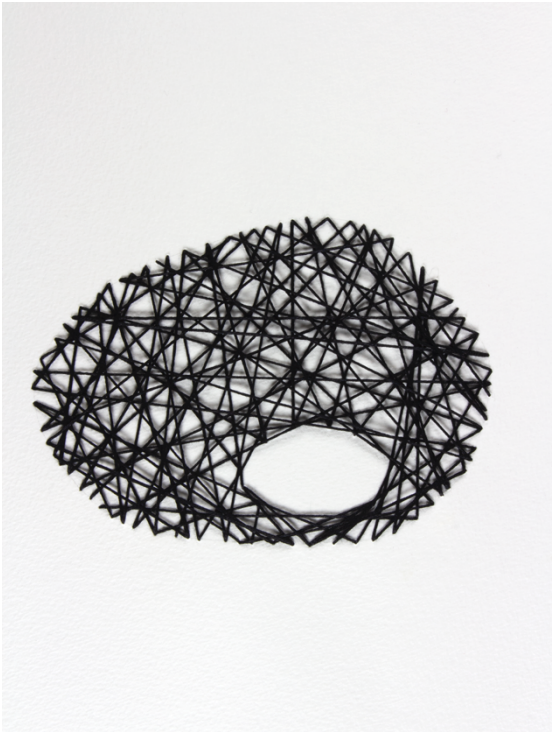


Figure 15: Nest, 2017 (21x29,7cm)

In my own interpretation of the concept of home as a nest, I am both a worm and a bird. I make my own cocoon to protect myself from the outside world, like the silkworm cocoons I used to collect when I was a child. Pallasmaa acknowledges the corporeal element in the exercise of building your own shelter both in the human and animal worlds, as he unfolds how 'construction in traditional cultures is guided by the body in the same way that a bird shapes its nest by movements of its body'.[100] For me, home has always meant a safe haven, like the warmth of Bachelard's room when he arrives at his house, which is also his home.

I approached *Nest*, 2017 with the aim of stitching my own nest. The materials I chose to accomplish the task were black thread and 300 gsm cold-pressed watercolour paper, which influenced the needlework and therefore the shape of the nest. Sewing on paper presented some difficulties, since stitching on paper is typically a painful technique to perform because the surface to pierce is thicker than the traditional cotton or linen fabric. This increased the time required to complete the figure, which augmented the amount of *reflection-in-action*. This technique is another repetitive action that involves a mindful state. This analysis led me to realise that the technique itself was a metaphor for the conflict that often exists within one's sense of home, which I explored in *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018.

[100] Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 29.

Nest, 2017, reflects the initial steps, as it was the first piece to be included in this research. In regard to the use of thick watercolour paper,[101] when a less demanding material sufficed, I identified Bourgeois' conception that the selected material work was focused on the message that she desired to convey. In her interview with Robert Storr, she stated, 'I will battle with any material to express accurately what I want to say'.[102] To Bourgeois, 'The thing that had to be said was so difficult and so painful that you have to hack it out of yourself and so you hack it out of the material, a very, very hard material'.[103] In my subsequent works, I stitched in a more malleable material (cotton fabric), focusing the strength of my message on the text. Choosing stitching on cotton fabric as a foundation to explore those emotions further was a decision that coincided with Bourgeois' development of her relationship with material:

> You try everything, you use every material around, and usually they repulse you. Finally, you get one that will work for you. And it is usually the softer ones – lead, plaster, malleable things. That is to say that you start with the harder thing and life teaches you that you had better buckle down, be content with softer things, softer ways.[104]

It was not until Bourgeois was over seventy-five that she began reading Bachelard's books.[105] 'If I had read Bachelard before, I would have been a different person',[106] she said. 'I would not have been divided inside since I would have taken the materials, with their different characters, and I would have been more friendly towards them'.[107]

Traditionally, when talking about the home, we refer to the inside, the private, and the intimacy of the domestic space. Bachelard, in his 'phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space'[108] or domestic space, considered the house as a *psychic state*; both its interior and its exterior 'bespeaks intimacy'.[109] It is a comfortable place that shelters us from the outside. We all have in our collective imagination the image of the house with the light of the room; outside, it is cold, and it is getting dark, and it is the warmth of the room that creates

[101] The answer also applies to the use of acrylic in the art works that form part of this research.
[102] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[103] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[104] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[105] Storr expanded on the connection between Bachelard and Bourgeois, drawing a comparison between them in 'From the Archives: Louise Bourgeois-Gender & Possession', ARTnews.com, June 2, 2010, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/louise-bourgeois-gender-and-possession-62846/.
[106] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[107] Bourgeois, Bernadac, and Obrist, *Destruction of the Father*, 142.
[108] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 39.
[109] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 72.

that safe and welcoming space. The characteristics of this space, warmth and peacefulness, are transmitted to the inhabitants. In order to find these allusions to shelter, warmth and safety of the home, I referred to my childhood memories:

> I remember arriving at my grandparents' house after a long day at school during the winter when I was a child. There is one specific memory in particular that I constantly return to: Outside, it is getting dark. The old lamp hanging from the ceiling illuminates the living room in a warm and soft light. Inside, my grandma sits by the window, her hands and fingers moving quickly as she knits a sweater for me. She does not even need to look at the needles while she smiles at me and invites me to join her; she has spent her entire life sewing clothes for herself and her family. I take a seat beside her. My hand movements are messy and uncoordinated. I am trying to knit a scarf that I will never finish. Outside, it is windy, foggy and humid. It is warm, safe and familiar on the inside. 'The experience of home is essentially an experience of warmth',[110] agreed Pallasmaa. During the following winter, she would teach me how to stitch instead, and I would be slightly better at it, albeit still clumsy.

Since I began experimenting with embroidery in my work in 2015, I have made a commitment to use the only stitch my grandmother taught me, backstitch, in an attempt to preserve the essence of that memory in time and its significance in my sense of home. Thread (*I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018) and wool (*Nest*, 2017) have been my chosen materials to add feelings of warmth and embody the feelings of contradiction (*I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018) and contrast (wool on rough watercolour paper in *Nest*, 2017) within my sense of home and belonging in my embroidery practice.

Embroidery, for me, relates to the more traditional concept of home. Decades ago, sewing was almost exclusively intended for women – skills that were passed down from mother to daughter and that was often done in the family home. In my case, it was exclusively my grandma who taught me how to sew. The concepts of embroidery, sewing and home reveal a collective memory that makes us remember this emotion of *feeling at home* and, at times, the conflict that this causes, as I have previously mentioned. Bourgeois, whose prolific fabric works explored questions of motherhood, domesticity, sexuality and genre, considered the needle a tool to confront her past. 'I've always had a fascination with the needle, the magic

[110] Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 45.

power of the needle. The needle is used to repair damage. It is a claim to forgiveness. It is never aggressive',[111] states Bourgeois. In *Nest*, 2017, along with *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *outsider*, 2018 the needle (and thus the stitching practice) acted as a healing tool for confronting the traditional concept of home as a house and its immoveable character.

Bachelard, in relation to the role of memory within our idea of home, established a difference between memories of the outside world and those within the house. Memories of the inside of the house will always be guided by emotions and nostalgia; we will never be historians but poets, says Bachelard, and he mentions Rilke as an example. Memories of Rilke's childhood home appear fragmented in his memory. Being a child when he inhabited it, he finds himself looking at the markedly childish image of his first house.[112] One of the aims of the house is to 'contain compressed time' for the inhabitant who does not want time to pass.[113] An aim that embodies my work *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021. We will keep the good memories and forget the bad ones. The rooms that used to be cold and claustrophobic will be remembered as warm and welcoming. Time, as well as the demands of our current reality, enhance memories from our past.

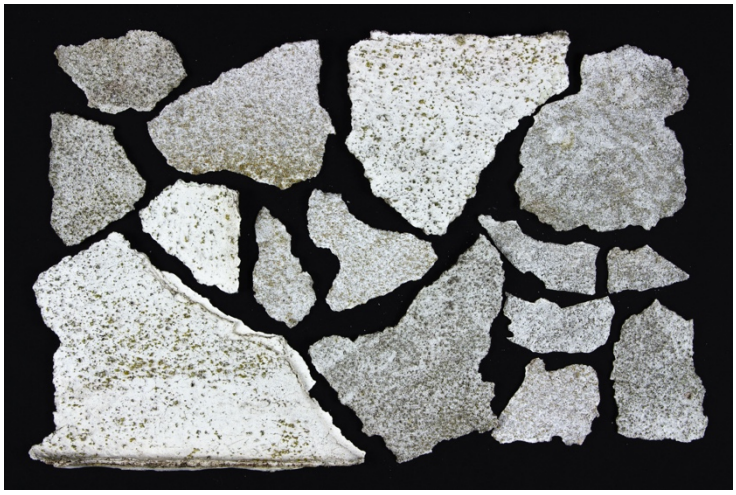


Figure 16: Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021.

Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos, 2021 is a collection of twenty-three photographs, three videos, and fragments of the wall's rendering that I collected after my grandmother's death. It documents the interior and exterior of her house.

[111] Storr, *Intimate Geometries*, 523.
[112] 'I never saw this strange dwelling again. Indeed, as I see it now, the way it appeared to my child's eye, it is not a building, but is quite dissolved and distributed inside me: here one room, there another, and here a bit of corridor which, however, does not connect the two rooms, but is conserved in me in fragmentary form. Thus, the whole thing is scattered about inside me, the rooms, the stairs that descended with such ceremonious slowness, others, narrow cages that mounted in a spiral movement, in the darkness of which we advanced like the blood in our veins'. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1930): 33, cited in Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 57.
[113] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 8.

Along with *Seeds House*, 2018–2021, this series explores art as a means of 'restoration', as Bourgeois referred to it,[114] Pleand comprehending our emotions during difficult times, as well as the loss of a home that once resembled a person and extended to a house. *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, is a reflection on home as both a loved one and a place, as well as the memories associated with them.

Photography is the method most used to document family experiences; they are physical files (in their revealed form) of memory. The static nature of photography contrasts with the impossibility of representing reality (and home) as something still and constant. Through this series, I have come to understand that just as change and the passage of time are inherent in life (either in our nature as human beings or even in the action of external causes in materials), time and change can be inherent to our sense of home. By focusing on photographs of the details of the walls and avoiding a traditional representation of the building (my grandparents' house), I subsequently avoid the literal representation of the house. Instead, the viewer confronts images that force them to analyse the minimalist aesthetic of the composition and look inside their own memories to interpret each piece.

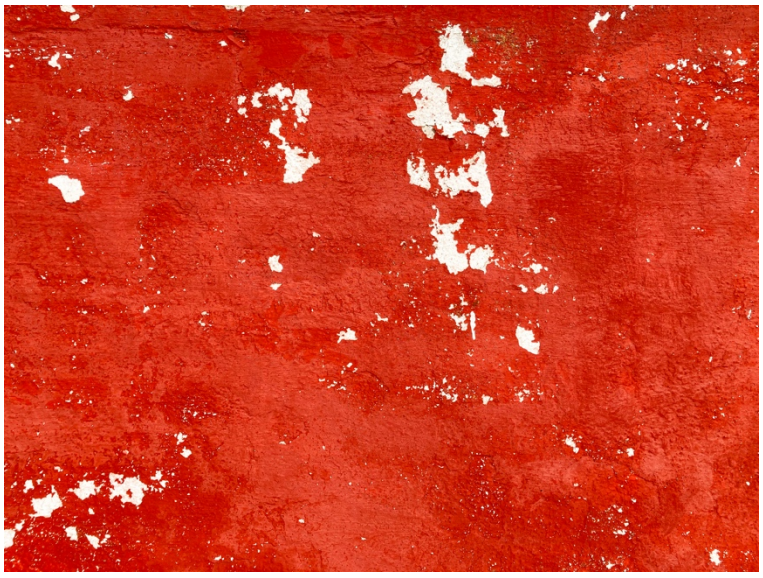


Figure 17: Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021.

The photographs depict two distinct types of walls. Figs. 150–156 in the Appendix portray the passage of time over the years through layers of limewash paint. By the garden, we

[114] 'My art is a form of restoration in terms of my feelings to myself and to others'. Rachel Cooke, 'Interview: Louise Bourgeois', *Guardian*, October 14, 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/oct/14/art4#maincontent. This statement can be analysed in connection to most of her work, as *I have been in hell and back, and let me tell you, it was wonderful* (1996).

can see the cracks in the concrete walls and the small plants attempting to grow, as if life were resuming. Figs. 144–149 in the Appendix are part of the roof's terrace and are mostly covered in a red paint that protects the roof, and thus the house, from the inclement weather. In these photographs, I assumed the role of an observer, establishing not only a physical separation from the decaying walls but also a metaphorical one, allowing space for my grieving process to unfold through my art practice. The series portrays deterioration due to the passage of time and the inclemency of the weather. At the same time, through the image of her house, this series enables me to reflect on the grief associated with the loss of a family member who was crucial in shaping my concept of home since childhood. The organic and the inorganic have, once again, a place in this representation of memory related to that sense of home. We see the influence of seawater that I already portrayed in the *Colour Chart project,* 2017–2021, and how it is capable of, in the form of humidity, creating microorganisms on the exterior walls of the terrace (Figs. 144–149 in the Appendix.) The excess humidity causes the appearance of mould that, little by little, defies the concrete and corrodes the paint, creating its own universe. This reminds me of Bachelard's description of a house as a *cosmos*, a place within a place, an idea I have developed through *the Where we used to belong series,* 2018. Later on, I photographed those fragments and arranged them with archaeological precision with the aim of analysing in depth my connection with the objects (Appendix Figs. 134–146).

> By the time I started to make the pieces that would be part of *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, more than a decade had passed since I remember knitting alongside grandma inside that warm living room. Grandpa passed away seven years ago. He kept making those tiny boards to scale while he kept collecting, drying and filling those glass jars with hundreds of seeds for the following year until his last months with us. All of those good memories are forever encapsulated in that tiny house filled with seeds. Grandma died a few months ago after a long battle with dementia. In the end, she still recognised me most of the time, despite the fact that I never grew up in her eyes. In her mind, I was always that little granddaughter who used to sit down with her after school, sewing, playing and keeping each other company. After years of focusing our attention solely on her and her needs, the garden, the unused couple of rooms and the roof terrace faded into the background.

I remember walking around inside and outside the house. Everything seemed familiar and different at the same time, possibly because I was paying attention for the first time in years. Living in a humid seaside town has its disadvantages. Grey humidity stains covered the

ceilings of the rooms my grandmother no longer used. Even the weekly bleaching was no longer effective on those ceilings anymore (Appendix Fig. 150). The house, like my grandmother, had been waiting to leave us for years, but I had not realised it until then. I was perplexed, ashamed and fascinated by the state of the entire property; therefore, I began photographing the inside and outside walls that were crumbling in front of my eyes.

Due to the property's impending sale, I found myself trying to find a method of preserving the physical remnants of a home. This led me to the following question: If I cannot save the house, how can I *preserve* home? There is something nostalgic and cathartic about gathering and archiving all those fragments – a way to preserve those moments in time in the event that our memory fails to do so.



Figure 18: Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021 (First Video)[115]

[115] Blanca Rodriguez Beltran, 'Wall Diaries', June 21, 2020, https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/wall-diaries.



Figure 19: Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021 (Second Video)[116]

These initial two videos comprise a sequence captured at eye-level position, wherein my hand meticulously removes layers of paint from the exterior walls of my grandparents' house. Using an eye-level shot as a filming technique offers a precise representation of the scene's occurrences while simultaneously highlighting my presence through the depiction of my hands.[117] This approach aims to establish an intimate connection with the audience. The level of intimacy portrayed in a visual medium can be influenced by the specific type of shot utilised. The aforementioned shot is classified as a close-up, specifically an insert shot that centres on a specific object or detail; [118] in this instance, the wall renders, thereby indicating to the viewers its importance.

[116] Blanca Rodriguez Beltran, 'Wall Diaries'.
[117] Team, N. F. I. 'Camera Angles - Everything You Need to Know'. NFI, 18 October 2021. https://www.nfi.edu/camera-angles/.
[118] Team, N. F. I. 'Close-Up Shot - Everything You Need to Know'. NFI, 18 June 2021. https://www.nfi.edu/close-up-shot/.



Figure 20: Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021 (Third video)[119]

In this third video,[120] the camera is the only element that remains distant while my body is in contact with the wall's surfaces. Peeling back the layers of paint that started to fall on the ground became a slow and reflective process, akin to picking up daisy seeds and petals with one's hands. How can one remember a moment of warmth and safety through creative practice? As Bachelard stated, 'We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection'.[121] The act of sliding my hands along the rough surface of the wall and peeling away the paint that fell from it was a search for solace during a painful time. Three elements are visible in these videos: the first is the action of picking up wall fragments, which, like sewing (*Nest*, 2017; *out of place*, 2018, and *I am homesick but at home*, 2018), painting (*Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018), or sanding (*Seascape*, 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020), is a slow process that becomes meditative due to its repetitive and emotional nature. The second is the wall fragments as an object representing those Bachelardian memories of protection at a time when the space that previously provided me with protection will cease to do so. Third is the method of video recording, with the goal of capturing a crucial moment in time alongside my fear that my memory will fail me and I will be unable to recall it entirely.

[119] Blanca Rodriguez Beltran, 'Wall Diaries'.
[120] Blanca Rodriguez Beltran, 'Wall Diaries'.
[121] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 6.

Because the house was collapsing in front of my eyes, it began to resemble an empty shell of what it had once been.[122] By touching the walls, picking up the falling fragments, and recording the moment with a camera, I ascribed solemn values to the fragments that fell from the walls, as if they contained the essence, my only physical representation of the part of my sense of home that had recently died and was gradually vanishing. 'The essence of home is closer to life itself than to artefact',[123] reflects Pallasmaa, 'it takes us away from the physical properties of a house into the psychic territory of the mind'.[124] Pallasmaa understands the home as a *metaphysical instrument*, a transcendent tool through which we seek to bring a glimpse of eternity into our temporal reality. The architect addresses the complexity of the concept and denies its simple categorisation as an object or a building, recognising how it embodies time, memories, traditions, wishes and fears.[125]

While the remains of the walls were seen as mere irrelevant pieces of concrete and paint by the rest of my family, my intention behind collecting and photographing them was to reclaim the physical fragments of my sense of belonging that are now part of the world of memories. This enabled me to take fragments of the home with me wherever I moved. Rachel Whiteread is also interested in 'monumentalising a space that is ignored' within the concept of home in her works.[126] The artist deprives domestic objects of the function for which they have been created and gives them a new identity and meaning. For example, in *Torso,* 1988, and *Untitled (Pink Torso),* 1995, a hot water bottle of plaster is transformed into a torso devoid of limbs, humanising an object that previously seemed to be inert. This pair of artworks incorporates feelings of loss and death into her personal representation of the home, such as the *Untitled (Bath),* 1990, in which a common bath appears to be a plaster and a glass sarcophagus.

Whiteread also reflects on loss within the home and uses repetition as a tool to delve into her associated memories during the making process. In *EMBANKMENT,* 2005, a Tate Modern Turbine Hall installation, hundreds of casts of boxes were stacked on top of one

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[122] Gaston Bachelard conducts a phenomenological study of the concept of home in his book *Poetics of Space*. Similar to Pallasmaa, he gives the house poetic values that other authors have related to the term home. When describing what the house is, Bachelard accepts the limitations of the descriptive exercise, both subjective and objective and explore, by analysing the memories of past homes that we 'have dreamed we lived in', the intimate essence of the house, the germ or shell of the function of inhabiting.

[123] 'The essence of home, its function as a mirror and support of the inhabitant's psyche'. Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.

[124] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.

[125] In addition to traditionally being the personification of safety and shelter, he acknowledges the possibility of the home becoming a source of suffering: isolation, alienation, abuse, aggression – a nest that becomes uninhabitable and harms the individual.

[126] '"Casting It in Plaster Monumentalized a Space That Is Ignored': Rachel Whiteread on the Sculptural Elements of Emptiness', Artspace, January, 5, 2018, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/book_report/rachel-whiteread-55186.

another in piles that invaded the space. It was inspired by an old cardboard box she had discovered in her mother's attic following her death. The box, which bore signs of years of use and had been used by the family since they were children, had become a part of their memories of family and their childhood home. A repetitive element, almost obsessive in its creation of thousands of moulds of various cardboard boxes, became critical in the creation of this work and helped me recognise a recurring theme in my artistic practice: repetition as a metaphor for home.

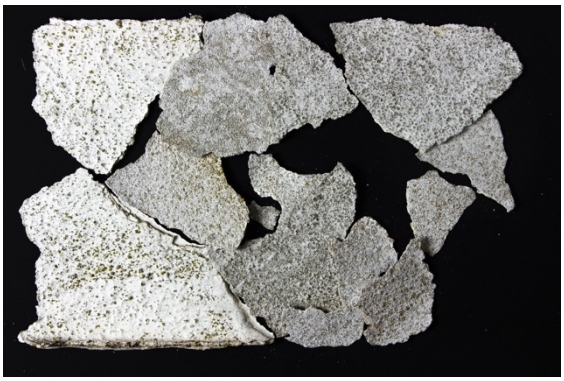


Figure 21: Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021.



Figure 22: Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021.



Figure 23: Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021.

In this chapter, I have examined several of the characteristics that contribute to and simultaneously reinforce my sense of belonging within my sense of home: intimacy, warmth,

a sense of safety and family traditions. My childhood memories collide with those of my adult self. I have emphasised the presence and significance of memories in my understanding of the concept of home. Time has been a constant force in the meaning of the work (as a representation of the passage of time) as well as the making process (in the shape of repetition and slowness). Walls falling down and the life cycle of flowers. I have realised that there can be no reflection on home without considering our previous memories and experiences. Home can be a memory, and dwelling on those past experiences can make us feel at home again. This chapter offers a timeline of a sense of home as a memory, loved ones and house. From the beginning of the chapter with *Seeds House*, 2018–2021, and *Nest* 2017 to the end with *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, we can observe the contrast between the little girl who used to play to preserve seeds or stitch alongside her grandmother and the woman who peels away the exterior walls of her grandparents' house. I have used photography, video, embroidery and sculpture as a way of coping with grief and loss in a final attempt to preserve the physical remains of experiences of home that will never come back. An empty house inhabited by utopian recollections of the good old days and the misery of recent months. A house of memories.[127] A longing for an experience of home that no longer exists.

[127] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 14.

Chapter Three: If We Are Not at Home, Where Are We?

'Je suis l'espace ou je suis' ('I am the space, where I am'), poet Noel Arnald[128]

In this chapter, landscapes, skyscapes, seascapes, and meteorological conditions coexist in a reflection of the places to which we belong. Colours, materials, and shapes are the core of this concept, which, as the concept of home, has the ability to shift, evolve, be physical, touchable, and known while also referencing its otherworldliness, the unknown, and the uncanny through the use of a medium (in this case abstract painting and drawing). The research described in this chapter conceptually laid the foundation for what would later become *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020; and the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021. The research carried out during the process of making these paintings represented the first steps in exploring the role of landscapes, places and locations within my notion of home.

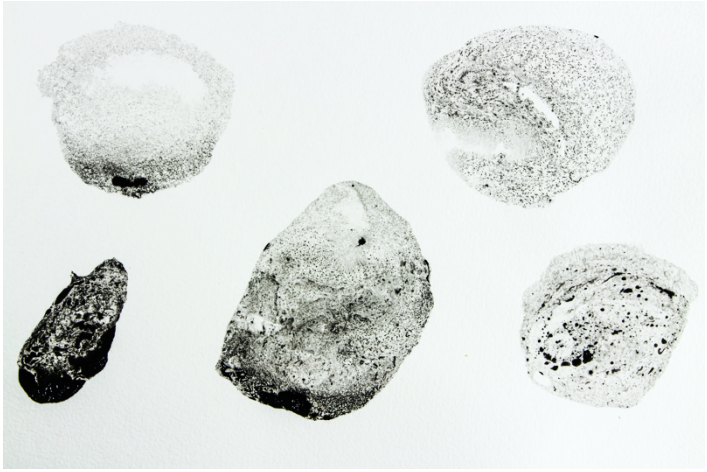


Figure 24: Where we used to belong I, 2018 (21 x 29 cm)

Where we used to belong I-XI, 2018 is a series of eleven 21 x 29 cm paintings made with black outdoor paint and water on thick paper. Each material used in the making of these works was selected due to its relevance: the branches that I collected in my hometown, the same paint designed to paint the interior and exterior of a house (that I would later use to paint the reverse of *Seascape,* 2019 and *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019-2020),[129] and water that represents the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean that geographically, culturally and emotionally delimits my hometown and has had a strong

[128] Noël Arnaud, *L'etat D'ébauche* (Paris: Le Messager Boiteux de Paris, 1950), cited in Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 137.
[129] See Chapter Four: *Home on the Move.*

presence with respect to my sense of belonging since childhood.

As I have already established in previous chapters, our concept of home can either remain constant throughout our lives or evolve in response to our life experiences. At the same time, we can feel at home in a variety of places but also homesick or out of place in those places as well.

~~A home is always a house~~

A home is *not* always a house

I created *Where we used to belong I-XI*, 2018, with the aim of broadening my comprehension of the concepts of home and belonging beyond the conventional notion of a physical dwelling (as a house), which I perceived as incomplete based on my personal experience. Subsequently, I initiated an analysis of the places and spaces that made me feel at home beyond the confines of the house or the memories linked to it.

An investigation of the role of these terms within my sense of home would not be complete without definition. In architectural phenomenology, concepts of 'place' and 'space' are widely studied; for example, architect Hubert Mazurek defines 'space' as 'an infinity of places'.[130] My initial exposure to the relationship between notions of place and the feeling of belonging originated from architect Norberg-Schulz. For him, place is both 'more than location' but an 'integral part of existence'. In his book entitled *Architecture: Meaning and Place*, he established that, in order to attain a feeling of belongingness, it is necessary to establish our existential space, which refers to our own notion of space. This unique notion of space is that in which a 'symbol of places, zones, and tensions' inhabits.[131] Tensions are classified as 'home' and 'elsewhere'.[132] Individuals who have not concretised their existential space are therefore 'on their way', 'elsewhere', or 'lost'.[133]

If we are *not* at home, where are we?

Are we lost?[134]

[130] Hubert Mazurek. 'Espacio y territorio: Instrumentos metodologicos de investigacion social [Space and territory: Methodological instruments of social research]', 2009. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.irdeditions.17798.
[131] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place,* 30.
[132] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place,* 30.
[133] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place,* 31.
[134] This inquiry pertains to the Norberg-Schulz's analysis on the concept of home as described in the preceding paragraph.

Intrigued by this statement, I found myself pondering the question and began wondering, 'If we are not at home, where are we?'. In both *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place,* 2018, I encountered a feeling of being lost in my own perception of home, specifically in relation to the concept of a physical dwelling. This statement inspired me to delve deeper into the idea of home as something beyond just a physical dwelling. Upon reading Norberg-Schulz's perspective on place being 'something else' more than a physical location, I found myself pondering the same question in regard to my own concept of home and how I could express it through my artistic practice?

Can landscapes or any other form of natural space be referred to as home?[135] Norberg-Schulz includes the natural space, the essence of the landscape, and its relation to the concept of place in the vast terrain, which is the sense of home.[136] He refers to Rudolf Schwarz and his description of the landscape space 'as a house: the mountains are the walls, the bottom of the valley is the floor, the rivers the ways, the coasts the thresholds, and where the mountain becomes low is the gate'.[137]

Norberg-Schulz attributes architecture with the ability to 'create a feeling of a world within a world',[138] whereas art curator Kristine Mckenna, in reference to David Lynch's artworks, describes his paintings' capacity to be 'a place, and things happen there that cannot happen anyplace else'.[139] Inspired by this idea and both authors' statements, during this chapter and the succeeding one, I used painting as a reflective method and tool to create spaces or places that represented other spaces, alluding to the audience's collective memory. The abstractive technique's specific characteristics were chosen with the intention of creating an incomplete space that the public could fill in with their own experiences and memories.

For me, the intentionality of the work begins with the selection of materials and techniques at the start of the making process. In the *Where we used to belong I-XI*, 2018 series, instead of using a traditional wooden or plastic stick to stir the paint, I decided to use branches that I collected during my visits to my hometown. The circular motion dissolved the small particles of the branch into the mixture, altering the material's appearance and composition.

[135] Landscapes, seascapes, skyscapes, etc.
[136] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*, 32.
[137] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*, 32.
[138] Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Kahn, Heidegger and the Language of Architecture', *Oppositions 18* (1979), 2.
[139] Stijn Huijts, ed., *David Lynch: Someone Is in My House* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2021), 12.



Figure 25: Branches collected at my hometown and used to stir the paint in Where we used to belong I-XI, 2018

The addition of organic elements to my pieces, which were also part of the *Seed House* (2021), aimed to reinforce the references to nature and my own memories of home and belonging. These allusions to nature and organic materials went from the complete 'presentness' of the hand-picked daisy seeds and petals to the subtlety of this series.

After preparing the paint, I poured water on the surface of the watercolour paper, forming a transparent circle that contained as much of the liquid as possible, almost transforming into a three-dimensional shape. Then, using a small drop of paint and a brush, I gently extended the material over the water, allowing the final appearance to be shaped in part by my own body movements and in part by the element of time.

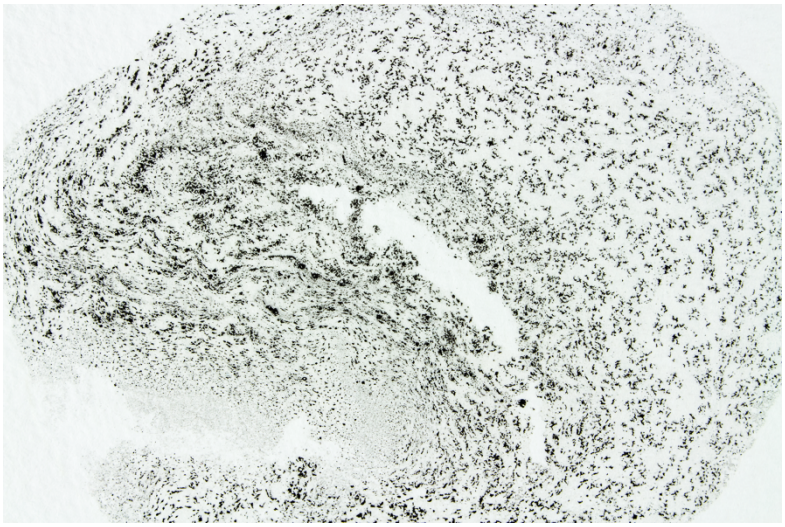


Figure 26: Where we used to belong I, 2018 (detail).

In the resulting abstract image, the lack of elements draws the viewer's attention to the shape, materials, and texture of the paper. Ad Reinhardt reflected on the role of meaning in abstract art and its relationship with the concept of space with respect to both the artwork and the viewer in his panel on *How to View High (Abstract) Art* from his 1946 *How to Look* graphic series. He asserted, '[An abstract painting] will meet you halfway but no further. It is alive if

you are. It represents something and so do you. YOU, SIR, ARE A SPACE, TOO'.[140]

Painting, like the concept of place, has the ability to contain. It is both a language and a tool for me, and as a method, it mirrors a journey from my memories of experiences in natural spaces that I currently call or previously called home. A repetitive and reflective process in time that begins with the rough watercolour paper and progresses through the preparation of the paint and water and the material's guidance through my own body movements. The drying period then ensues, during which I observe the dispersion of minuscule black paint particles across the transparent watery form that sits on the watercolour paper, resulting in small, unique patterns in various shades of grey, creating a haze or mist effect.

Later, it was the moment to rediscover new places within the confines of the space I had already created. The ability to achieve an immiscible reaction due to the composition of both materials (oil-based paint and water) alludes to things that cannot be fully mixed, making apparent a kind of conflict. This conflict within the sense of home is discussed in Chapter One through my embroidery work, *I am home sick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018.



Figure 27: Where we used to belong II, 2018.

Regarding the selection of the colour palette, I opted for a black monochrome that, due to the nature of the technique, resulted in a grey gradient. In *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018 series' tonalities were inspired by the following photographs from the *Colour Chart of*

[140] 'Ad Reinhardt: MoMA', The Museum of Modern Art, accessed April 31, 2020, https://www.moma.org/artists/4856.

My Hometown Project, 2017–2021: those in black tones, due to the photographs being taken at night (Appendix Figs. 79–94) and those in grey (Appendix Figs. 31–54).[141] In *Where we used to belong I-XI*, 2018, I sought to recreate the grey, foggy skies that are always so characteristic of my hometown. Previously, I used black in embroidery works *Nest*, 2017; *I am homesick but at home*, 2018; *out of place*, 2018; *Wind Diaries*, 2021 and *Skyscape II,* 2019-2020.

For Do Ho Suh, home 'always means more than spaces where we live'.[142] He finds himself fascinated by not only physical spaces but also the 'intangible, metaphorical and psychological ones'.[143] 'A space is never really just a space',[144] states Do Ho Suh. In his specimen series, he took inspiration from domestic elements of his New York home and made object-like sculptures, such as *Radiator, Corridor/Ground Floor, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA*, 2013, with the aim to 'create a sense of space' avoiding making an 'exact replica' in order to capture 'the intangible quality of memory' as Do Ho Suh.[145] During the making of *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018, I was exploring my definition of home away from the traditional image of home, that is, towards the outside of the house, focusing on all those places that make us feel at home, I observed that something was missing. However, during this process, I noted that I was feeling a profound sense of belonging on foggy days in Oxford and my tendency to experience homesickness when the windy days failed to reach a higher level of intensity.

Upon reflection, I came to the realisation that my perception of home was linked to two distinct meteorological phenomena that are commonly observed in my city: fog and wind. The sculpture *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days)*, created between 2019 and 2020, represents the outcome of my inquiry into the presence of fog in relation to my individual perception of home. While this exploration is elaborated upon further in Chapter Four: *Home on the Move*, in this chapter, I analyse the role of wind in shaping my perception of home.

Ceuta, my hometown, is characterised by the constant *presence* of the wind. We refer to the wind in terms of its direction. The easterly wind is referred to as 'levante' while the westerly wind is known as 'poniente'. It plays a crucial role in our everyday lives and in the conversations we have with each other. At the same time, it is common in England to ask, *'Are*

[141] I delve more into the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021 in Chapter 4: Home On The Move.
[142] Tsai, 'Close to Home: Interview with Do-Ho Suh'.
[143] Christopher Turner, 'For Do Ho Suh, There's No Place like Home', *Apollo Magazine*, December, 3, 2016, https://www.apollo-magazine.com/ho-suh-theres-no-place-like-home/.
[144] Jennifer Sauer, 'How Artist Do Ho Suh Fully Reimagines the Idea of Home', CR, May 22, 2020, https://crfashionbook.com/mens-a32626813-do-ho-suh-fully-artist-interview-home-korea/.
[145] Tsai, 'Close to Home'.

you all right?' as a form of greeting or casual conversation, whereas in my locality, it is typical to make reference to the type of wind we perceive to be present on a given day, such as *'Parece que hoy hace levante'* (which in English means, 'It seems like the wind is blowing from the east today'.). The wind is part of our lives; it can either connect us to one another or isolate us. It affects our food, our jobs and our routines. We depend on its strength and direction in order to be able to leave, when the wind is extremely strong. Both the harbour and heliport are close, isolating the city.



Figure 28: Wind Diaries, 2021.

I started making the *Wind Diaries,* a 2021 series of drawings and videos, when I was moving from one house to another, lacking a sense of belonging. I had a strong need to feel at home in those new, unfamiliar places. Throughout this research, I have been investigating the impact that our memories of places (landscapes, seascapes, skyscapes, etc.) have on our sense of belonging. Can landscapes or any other form of natural space, including meteorological conditions, be called home? While the fog is part of my memories of home,[146] I realised the significance of the wind's presence to my own sense of belonging and how the wind's absence was part of my homesickness while I was away. *Wind Diaries,* 2021 attempts to measure the strength of the wind, always present in my hometown, with the aim of making me feel at home.

In *Wind Diaries, 2021,* I am trying to locate myself and accept the element of change regarding my parents' house. I am going back and forth to the only place (as a physical building) that remains in my sense of home: my grandma's house.

The first time Do Ho Suh moved to Rhode Island, he felt completely unfamiliar with his new house, and it was when he started meditating about the sense of home. He found out that measuring or rubbing the space (*Rubbing/Loving Project,* 2012–16) for his installations

[146] See *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020 in Chapter 4: *Home on the Move*.

was a way to familiarise himself with the house and make him feel at home. This can be seen in his installation *Hub*, which is a representation of the entrance area of his London apartment, or *Apartment A, Unit 2, Corridor and Staircase, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA* (2011–14), a three-year project in which he rubbed the entire space in order to record every line, edge and texture to the create the installation in polyester fabric and stainless steel tubes.

In my research for *Wind Diaries,* 2021, measuring the wind in both houses helps me become familiar with the unfamiliar. It established a new foundation for belonging to an unknown place. My memories of homes from the past meet the potentiality of the present. I returned to the same grandparent's house whose walls I peeled off a few months earlier, *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, to rediscover the weight of the wind in my feelings of belonging and measure the familiar within my sense of home.

Throughout the creation of this series, I experimented with an abstract technique to incorporate allusions to nature and landscapes while also making references to memories associated with those places. These works were created to reinterpret the concept of home and their associations with terms like landscape, skyscape, and seascape, as well as space and place that are far away from the traditional view of the native land: that specific land on which you were born, which corresponds culturally to our traditional concept of what or where we consider our 'home'.

Chapter Four: Home on the Move

I am not in one place, just in between[147]

Do Ho Suh



Figure 29: Colour Chart of my Hometown 001, 2017–2021.

In this chapter, I will explore a sense of home that is on the move, those liminal places that have been traditionally considered non-home-related: the possibility of feeling at home in a landscape, seascape or skyscape. I will analyse the in-betweenness within all the concepts that surround and are part of the immense terrain, which is the notion of home and the need to belong in our lives.

The *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021, comprises a collection of ninety-six photographs taken on different helicopter trips over several years. In the photographs, the physical concept of home – the buildings, the landscape and the territory – is always far away. Indeed, there was both a physical and a metaphorical distance between the environment and myself as a photographer. One of the main elements that characterises this photo collection is the presence of the colour blue, whether a subtle undertone or all-encompassing. In her book *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit writes about 'the blue of distance'.[148] For Solnit, the colour of that distance is that of 'an emotion' of 'solitude and of desire'.[149] It is the colour of 'there seen from here'; it is both 'where you are not' and

[147] Art21, '"Seoul Home/L.A. Home"'.
[148] Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), 29–41.
[149] Art21, '"Seoul Home/L.A. Home"'.

'where you can never go'.[150] She notes that 'the blue is not in the place those miles away at the horizon, but in the atmospheric distance between you and the mountains'.[151]

As I have mentioned, I am from Ceuta, a small Spanish city on the north coast of Africa. For most of my life, the only way to access mainland Spain was by crossing the Strait of Gibraltar on a ferry. It is an area of great easterly windstorms,[152] and it is not unusual for maritime transport to be cut off, the city remaining isolated until the winds calm down. The city eventually hired the services of a helicopter, allowing me to see the city from above for the first time. The helicopter's windows were tinted with a bright and strange, almost extra-terrestrial, blue. In fact, everything was blue throughout the journey, from the port across the Strait of Gibraltar until we landed on mainland Spain. That helicopter is still in service today, though it has been joined by a larger one with transparent windows. Looking at the photographs, one can see how those blue, unreal landscapes contrast with the 'realness' of the original ones. The city, meanwhile, is foggy, cloudy, sometimes sunny and humid; these are the characteristics that I wanted to incorporate into photographs.

In the traditional image of the home, limits are always very delimited: from one room to another, from the garden to the gate, from the inside of the house to the outside. Norberg-Schulz considered we 'cannot feel at home in a space without limits'.[153] However, what determines a limit? Are these limits constituted by a physical structure, or are we referring to a metaphorical sense of delimitation?



Figure 30: Colour Chart of my Hometown 003, 2017–2021.

[150] Solnit, *Field Guide*, 29–41.
[151] Solnit, *Field Guide*, 29–41.
[152] I reflected on the role of wind in the sense of home in *Wind Diaries*, 2021.
[153] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*, 34.

Do Ho Suh finds home in between places, and it gives liminal values to a spatial vision of the home. 'I am not in one place – just in between', he states.[154] His installation *Passages* (2017) is an example of his exploration of this idea: a semi-transparent structure of corridors, walls and doors that opens to in-between spaces that are part of his life and his own sense of home.

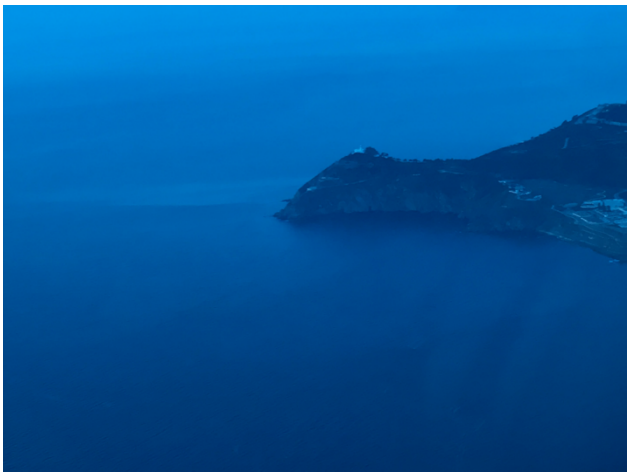


Figure 31: Colour Chart of My Hometown 002, 2017–2021.

The focal points of my photographs – the clouds, the peninsula, the ships, and the city – are always far away. As such, the majority of the photographs are objectless, while many are abstract. Although the landscape is unattainable, it portrays a moment in time when I felt at home. They are memories of home designed to immortalise the contrast between the repetitive context in which the photographs were taken (that is, the helicopter always follows the same route, from my hometown to mainland Spain and back) and the singularity of each photograph, none of which has been retouched or altered and each of which reflects a unique moment in each trip. The act of photographing the same location repeatedly over several years in the *Colour Chart project,* 2017–2021, aimed to expand conventional Norberg-Schulz's notion of the home as a house and thus as the physical point of arrival and departure by examining the liminal spaces that often go unnoticed.

The colour shades captured in this photograph collection inspired the following sculptures: *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020.

The series comprises four sculptures consisting of acrylic blocks of different thicknesses. In each of them, the front and back surfaces are hand-sanded, while the edges of

[154] Art21, '"Seoul Home/L.A. Home"'.

the blocks remain clear and polished. This contrast between transparent and opaque surfaces distorts the viewing experience, creating an atmospheric and ethereal representation. I painted only the back surface of the block with gloss house paint. Each block (either free-standing or wall-mounted) is inspired by a different photograph, each a part of the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021. I am particularly interested in the apparent fragility of the material and the unique characteristics of its surface, and I wish to attract the curiosity of the viewer. I also wanted to exploit the material's potential to create metaphors and evoke memories related to my sense of home. For instance, in *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020, the work that I introduce below, the translucent and transparent qualities of acrylic were used to evoke weather phenomena such as fog. Additionally, by increasing the thickness of acrylic, I created a 'space within a space', while the softness of wool and thread was utilised to evoke the comforting sensation of warmth, reminiscent of my childhood memories of 'home'.



Figure 32: Seascape, 2019.

Seascape, 2019 has a waterjet-cut aluminium frame that allows the block to be displayed on a wall. This sculpture is one of a series of four sculptures in which I have utilised a geometrical and minimalist approach to explore the idea of 'home' in relation to places to which we feel we belong. It has a layer of gloss house paint in a blue tone at the back. There is

a contrast between the polished, machine-made, hard-edged industrial acrylic and aluminium and the imperfect brush strokes made with the paint.

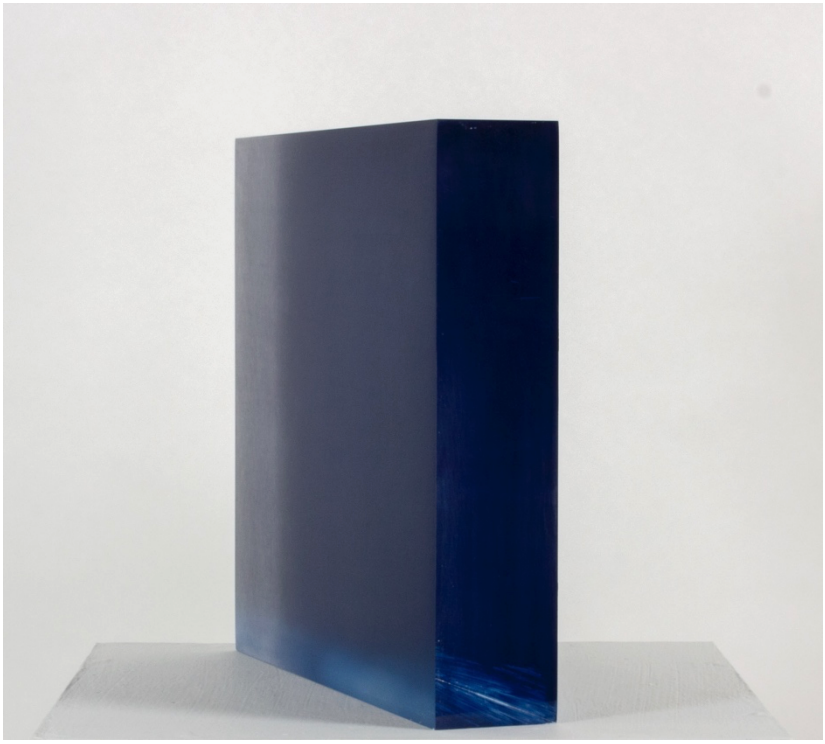


Figure 33: Skyscape I, 2019.

This colour treatment differs from *Skyscape I*, 2019's surface, which is also painted in a darker blue tone. While in the pieces *Seascape,* 2019, *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, in 2019–2020, I painted the entire back surface, in *Skyscape I*, 2019 I purposefully left a small portion unpainted at the bottom. This element allowed the light in so that the sculpture has a lighter or darker appearance depending on its position in relation to the lighting. One of the peculiarities of these pieces is that their colour tones change in accordance with the lighting of the space in which they are exhibited. Thus, the characteristics of the space transform the piece, not only influencing how those tones are perceived but also creating numerous shadows and lines that interact with the geometrical shape of the work. A unique experience is shaped for each viewer, depending on whether the piece is viewed in a closed room with continuous artificial light or if the pieces are exposed to the constant changes of natural light.

I wanted to create objects that have the potential to create an atmosphere, to construct a 'place' that could bring people to other 'places', much like how Norberg-Schulz reflected on the concept of places in architectural phenomenology as 'always something else than

location':[155] that is, a 'place' as 'an integral part of existence'.[156] If my sense of home is an integral part of my existence, which places delimit my idea of home?[157]

I have approached these pieces based on the most distinctive qualities of the American Minimalist movement of the 1960s: a search for harmony, simplicity and '*formal reduction'* together with the use of repetition and geometry using industrial materials.[158] Minimalism arose in response to Expressionism. The term 'minimal' was first used by the British analytical philosopher Richard Wollheim in his 1965 essay on 'Minimal Art', in which he described the monochromatic paintings of Ad Reinhardt:

> Minimal art content: in that either they are to an extreme degree undifferentiated in themselves and therefore possess very low content of any kind, or else the differentiation that they do exhibit, which may in some cases be very considerable, comes not from the artist but from a non-artistic source, like nature or factory.[159]

This concept of 'less is more' was used by both the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the artist Ad Reinhart to create a form that, as Carl Andre described Frank Stella's work in his *Preface to Stripe Painting*,[160] 'excludes the unnecessary'.

Interested in this reductive approach to art, I aimed to create a series of sculptures using a minimal number of elements,[161] seeking, instead, the greatest expressiveness with minimal resources. The major difference between my practice and the minimalists' work is the intentionality towards the role of expressivity in the piece. Indeed, Minimalism focuses on the lack of expressiveness, on art 'without interiority';[162] according to Frank Stella, 'What you see is what you see'.[163] My pieces, conversely, were created with the intention to communicate, to establish a dialogue and a connection with the audience. With this group of sculptures, I relied

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[155] Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 10.
[156] Norberg-Schulz, *Principles of Modern Architecture*, 16.
[157] They are both physical and metaphorical places.
[158] James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 85–106, 143–149.
[159] Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 387.
[160] Museum of Modern Art (New York). *Sixteen Americans*. Edited by Dorothy C. Miller. New York: MoMA, 1959.
[161] *The more stuff in it, the busier the work of art, the worse it is. More is less. Less is more. The eye is a menace to clear sight. The laying bare of oneself is obscene. Art begins with the getting rid of nature.* Twelve Rules for the New Academy (1953). Ad Reinhardt, *Art-as-Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt,* ed. Barbara Rose (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 204.
[162] David Batchelor, *Minimalism* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2004), 17.
[163] Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art,* 158.

on the shape and qualities of acrylic to create metaphors exploring the idea of home in relation to places where we feel we belong.



Figure 34: Skyscape II, 2019–2020.

The black *Skyscape II,* 2019–2020, dimensions have been chosen to reinforce its verticality, while *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019-2020, the thickest shape of the series, has been painted in a light grey colour with a blue undertone, strengthening its connection to the skyscape.

The repetitive nature of the process of creating these pieces drew my attention to the work's intentionality. I find that the repetitive actions involved in creating each piece shown in this practice-based research (i.e. stitching, sanding, polishing and hand-picking seeds) serve as a meditative process in which I am no longer exclusively concerned with or about the finished product. I was able to achieve a state of concentration in which I could freely reflect on why I began creating a piece in particular, and it cleared my mind sufficiently to see the

various paths that a work could take, allowing me to make conscious choices along the way. Repetition compelled me to connect on a primal or basic level with the underlying emotions, intentions, and memories.

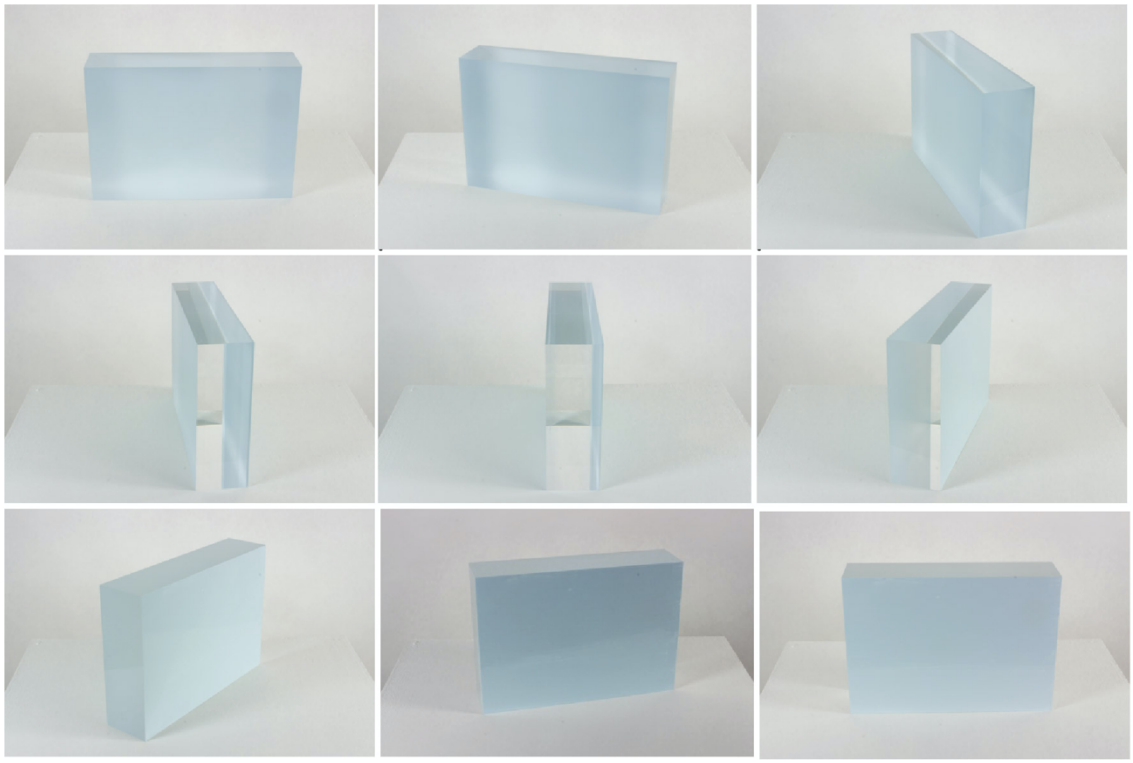


Figure 35: Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days), 2019–2020.

The formal qualities of *Seascape,* 2019, *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020 are inspired by the Light and Space Movement, also known as California Minimalism or Ambient Art. The movement encompassed a group of artists in the 1960s and 1970s who focused on perception and the manipulation of light, shadow and space through industrial materials that created an immersive experience for the viewer.[164] This concept of perception played a crucial role in the creative practice of Light and Space artists such as Doug Wheeler, whose main aim 'is to reshape or change the spectator's perception of the seen world'.[165] According to his curator, John Coplans, his 'medium is not light or new materials or technology, but perception',[166] as he stated about his first solo exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum.

[164] Robin Clark, ed., *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 68.
[165] Germano Celant, *Doug Wheeler* (New York: David Zwirner Gallery, 2020), 76.
[166] Celant, *Doug Wheeler*, 76.

I was compelled by the use of light - whether ambient or artificial - and colour shades in the works of Peter Alexander and Larry Bell, as well as how these aspects are projected onto objects that, due to their material characteristics, reflect the light of the space to which they are exposed. Alexander was a central figure of the Light and Space movement. His resin sculptures *Blue Wedge*, 1969; *Cube*, 1971, and *Emery*, 2009 served as inspiration for my work. Having worked with acrylic in its 'sheet' form in the past,[167] it was not until I worked with clear acrylic in its block form in the works mentioned in this chapter that I comprehended the inherent ability of this material to capture and reflect light effectively, thereby enhancing the luminosity of the paint's tonality. After gaining prior experience working with acrylic in its sheet form,[168] my understanding of the material's capacity to capture and reflect light, thereby enhancing the tonality of the paint, was further developed when I had the opportunity to work with clear acrylic in its block form, as discussed in this chapter.

[167] See *Seeds House*, 2018–2021 in Chapter 2.
[168] See *Seeds House*, 2018–2021 in Chapter 2.



Figure 36: Skyscape II, 2019–2020.

The three-dimensionality of the piece means that, traditionally, the public commonly interacts with the work by walking around it. These three sculptures (*Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020) are made to be shown on a plinth, allowing the public to move around the work. Depending on where the viewer positions themselves, the first

object or element they will see is an abstract, blurry, solid block of what appears to be a translucent nature. As they walk around, they will have the possibility to look inside the piece itself through its four transparent edges to observe the contrast between the translucency of the sides and the clarity of the edges, thereby discovering irregularities in a clear structure with a watery resemblance if they look more closely. As they continue walking around to the back of the sculpture, they will find themselves mirrored in either blue, grey or black gloss house paint. This is done to strengthen the connection between the piece and the observer and, ultimately, between me as the artist and the audience.

These pieces flee from the concreteness of the New York Minimalism of Donald Judd and embrace the transparency and delicacy of the materials. These sculptures reflect and absorb the room's lighting and, together with the ethereal nature of their materials, create a sense of atmosphere. There is a feeling of fluidity in these pieces, in the watery consistency of blue, grey and black acrylic gloss paint on the acrylic block's surface and inside the block itself.

Looking at Do Ho Suh's idea of carrying your home wherever you go and my own experiences of moving out of my hometown and later returning, my intention was to create an object that speaks about perception, both through its materiality and concept and specific moments from my memory, a time when I felt at home in a location that was far removed from the traditional concept of home as a tangible, physical element. My aim was to encapsulate the abstract nature of memory and transport the audience somewhere else – somewhere far away from the physical image of the home. I wanted to allude to the necessity of creating places that make us feel at home in a global society that is constantly on the move.

Conclusion and Original Contribution

In this practice-based research, I have analysed the complex concept and meaning of home and investigated our diverse sense of belonging and equal need to belong to whatever each one of us calls 'home'. Using an autobiographical approach, I examined my personal perception of home in order to understand how our experiences and our memories of them shape our sense of home and belonging, with the aim of gaining a new and more profound understanding of home.

I concluded that our sense of home is not bound to a certain place and is not limited by geography, but that our sense of home can take almost any form, even for a brief moment, such as when I felt at home surrounded by seascapes and skyscapes from a helicopter journey, through childhood memories to experiences of loss and grief. The feeling of being at home may involve repetitive actions, such as remembering how to use a specific embroidery stitch (*Nest*, 2017, *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place,* 2018) or following the traditional methods to collect and preserve seeds (*Seeds House*, 2018–2021). It can be a certain type of wind (*Wind Diaries*, 2021) or the mist of a foggy day (*Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020). This research offers an understanding that what each one of us perceives as 'home' takes an individual form, which influences the various ways we are capable of belonging and making ourselves 'at home'.

Our sense of home is inextricably connected to who we are and is thus part of our identity. According to my findings, home encompasses not only a physical and geographical place but also entails emotional and social connections that make us feel safe and accepted. Initially, I approached the concept of home in two ways: the Self and Home, and Home as a Building. This led to my research questions:

- How can the sense of home as a terrain be approached through artistic practice?
- What do we call home? What determines the sense of belonging?
- What are the roles of memories and experiences in the concept of home?

Over the course of this investigation, a compelling interconnection emerged among the outcomes of my inquiries. The memories we hold (as explored in Question Three) are intricately linked with the actions[169] we take (as examined in Question One) that engender a

[169] As in the act of stitching or the act of collecting and preserving seeds, for instance.

sense of ‘home’. For instance, recollections of skills like sewing or the act of collecting seeds evoke a deep sense of comfort and belonging. These actions, in turn, prompt us to engage in reflective contemplation (as addressed in Question Two) about the concept of ‘home’ and belonging in our lives. Thus, the three key questions – regarding memories, actions, and reflections – complement and enrich one another, offering a broader perspective on the terrain of ‘home’ and its significance in our existence.

When exploring one’s sense of home and belonging, complexities inherently arise. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that this research has been shaped by a variety of challenges and uncertainties that have impacted its development. As a result of adopting an autobiographical approach, my research draws extensively from – and, indeed, intertwines with – my own personal experiences. Consequently, these personal experiences, challenges, and ambiguities have significantly shaped the trajectory and evolution of my research. Among these struggles was the incident in which I physically injured myself while cutting, polishing, and sanding the sculpture *Skyscape I,* forcing me to take periodic breaks from my work between 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, the global Covid-19 pandemic added further layers of complexity by limiting my movement and preventing me from accessing certain resources that were essential to my continued research, including workshop facilities, materials, and machinery. In addition to these external difficulties, I also had to endure personal losses, including my grandmother’s death at the beginning of 2021, which inspired me to create the *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021. Moreover, the loss of my father after my final exhibition in April 2022 further intensified the emotional significance of my artistic exploration of the concept of home. The combination of these experiences compelled me to explore the themes of loss and death within the context of home, a direction in which I had not initially planned to venture, but which ultimately became integral to my research. Not only did these challenges influence the development of my project, but they also provided valuable context that enabled me to better comprehend the complexities surrounding the concept of home and belonging.

The findings presented in this research emerged from an exploration of my artistic practice. Among the most significant influences on my research were the artists Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, and Rachel Whiteread; architects and theorists Juhani Pallasmaa and Christian Norberg-Schulz; and Gaston Bachelard, philosopher. In April 2022, after I finished my practice work of my research, I held an individual exhibition titled ‘Exploring the Concept of Home and Belonging Through Art Practice’ at Oxford Brookes University. During this exhibition, I showcased not only the finalized pieces but also my work in progress. The

feedback and insights I received from this exhibition proved to be immensely valuable in addressing my research inquiries. Photographs and a video documenting the exhibition are available in the appendix for reference.



Figure 37: Final Exhibition, 2022

First research question: How can the sense of home as a terrain be approached through artistic practice?

The beginning of my doctoral studies started with the question, How can the sense of home as a terrain be approached through artistic practice? The research has utilised a practice-based artistic approach that prioritises experimentation and critical analysis of the material *(Material Thinking)*. Inspired by Barrett and Bolt's *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Inquiry*, this research employs 'processes and methodologies of artistic research as the production of knowledge' and demonstrates through the artworks showcased in this study that, as Bolt stated, 'knowledge is derived from doing'.[170]

In order to approach the sense of home through artistic practice, I employed Schön's 'model of reflection', which comprises two types: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action.*[171] During the process of creating each piece, *reflection-in-action* occurred through careful observation and on-site interpretation. After completing each project, I conducted my reflection-on-action analysis by reinterpreting the observations I made during my reflection-in-action, evaluating the effectiveness of my creative practice by means of academic writing and establishing the ways the work enabled me to encounter my research questions. Throughout this process, I was conscious of using Schön's concept of 'knowing-in-action', a blend of analytical and technical skills acquired over a lifetime, enabling self-evaluation of my practice.

For instance, during the *reflection-in-action* of *Seascape*, 2019, I engaged in the process of sanding the front and back surfaces, polishing the edges, and applying paint to the back. I found it fascinating to be able to look at the edge of the block, which gives the impression of looking inside the piece. This part of the piece was partially hidden by the aluminium frame. Following the completion of this work, I went through a *reflection-on-action* by posing the question to myself, 'In which ways can I enhance this particular aspect?' What would be the resultant effect if the object were positioned in an upright stance (plinth) as opposed to being suspended vertically on a wall? I realised that in order for that to occur, I had to increase the thickness of the block, which led to the creation of *Skyscape I, II,* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020. Schön's model of reflection played a pivotal role in the development of these sculptures and the acquisition of knowledge.

[170] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 1.
[171] Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*, 54.

My methods comprised embroidery on fabric (*I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018; *out of place*, 2018) and on paper (*Nest*, 2017); sculpture, including certain processes such as sanding and polishing acrylic sheets of varying dimensions (*Seeds House,* 2018-2021; *Seascape*, 2019; *Skyscape I, II,* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020); painting on sanded acrylic surfaces (*Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II,* and *III [in memory of those foggy days]*, 2019–2020); and immiscible effects of painting materials on watercolour paper (*Where we used to belong, I-XI,* 2018). It also included preservation processes over significant periods of time of daisy seeds and petals (*Seeds House,* 2018–2021); photography (photographs taken during my trips to my hometown (*Colour Chart of My Hometown Project* 2017–2021 and *Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs,* 2021); and video (*Wall Diaries Series III: Videos*, 2021). Additional procedures involved peeling out the remains of paint from the walls, collecting them, and preserving them over time in *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains*, 2021.

Precision played a key role in my work, both in the treatment of the materials and the design of its final form. This precision helped me create the formal clarity that will later translate into the clarity of the message or concept of the work. If the embroidered letters were not neatly stitched, it would make it more difficult for the audience to read the text and interact with the piece. The same applied to the precision with which seeds were to be collected, extracted, dried and stored; the accuracy required to construct an empty acrylic structure; or the importance of precision in cutting, polishing and sanding when creating each of these geometrical shapes with defined lines.

My creative process is intrinsically woven with a continual practice of self-inquiry, manifesting as an ongoing inner dialogue. This process of questioning is an important aspect of my artistic process and my reflection-in-action. These pressing questions served as inspiration and guidance in my research. This led to exploration within each work.

In the context of Chapter One, questions such as ‘Is a house (*our* house) always a home?’and ‘Where else should one feel more at home than in the family home in the town where one grew up?’ were part of my reflective practice. ‘What happens when we come back to the family home after being away for an extended period?’ ‘Does it feel different?’ ‘How can we be both at home and not at the same time?’ ‘Do we feel at home or *out of place*?’ These inner inquiries played a significant role in shaping my artistic works *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018.

In Chapter Two, questions like ‘Can I preserve home?’ and ‘How can I remember a moment of warmth and safety through creative practice?’ guided my process while creating works such as *Nest*, 2017, *Seeds House*, 2018-2021, and *Wall Diaries*, 2021.

Chapter Three prompted questions such as, ‘If we are not at home, where are we?’ and ‘Can landscapes, or any other form of natural space, including meteorological conditions, be called home?’ These reflective questions were part of my thinking process during the making process of the works *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018 and *Wind Diaries*, 2021.

‘What determines a limit?’ ‘Are these limits constituted by a physical structure, or are we referring to a metaphorical sense of delimitation?’ ‘If my sense of home is an integral part of my existence, which places delimit my idea of home?’ In Chapter Four, these questions were part of my reflection-in-action while making the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project* 2017–2021, Seascape, 2019; Skyscape I, II, and III (in memory of those foggy days), 2019–2020, shaping a deeper understanding of the concept of home throughout my creative journey.

(stitching)

As in *Nest* 2017 (wool stitched on rough paper), through this research, I found that the method itself led to an understanding of home and established the foundation to explore that element further. As it was in the case of *Nest* 2017, during the making process of this piece, stitching on paper was a challenge due to the relatively greater thickness of the surface as compared with my previous embroidery works in cotton fabric, thereby rendering it more arduous to perforate and making it more difficult to pierce. The realisation regarding the metaphorical significance of the stitching method occurred through two phases of reflection: *reflection-in-action,* which took place while stitching the piece, and *reflection-on-action,* which occurred after the completion of the work. These reflections led to an understanding of the metaphorical implications associated with the stitching process, which involves the initial resistance encountered when attempting to pierce the thick paper and the ongoing resistance experienced while inserting the wool thread at each stitch. The presence of resistance or conflict among these materials prompted me to reflect on the internal conflict that one may experience regarding their sense of home. Conflict within the sense of home was further explored in my works *I am homesick but I am at home* and *out of place*, both created in 2018.

Since I began experimenting with embroidery in my work in 2015, I have made a commitment to use the only stitch my grandmother taught me, back stitch, in an attempt to preserve the essence of that memory in time and its significance in my sense of home. Thread (*I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018) and wool (*Nest*, 2017) have

been my chosen materials to add feelings of warmth. How can I, as an artist, remember a moment of warmth and safety through my creative practice? As Bachelard stated, 'We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection'.[172] 'The experience of home is essentially an experience of warmth', said Pallasmaa.[173]

With regards to the utilisation of stitching as a technique method, I align with Bourgeois' perspective and her view of 'the act of sewing' as 'a process of emotional repair'.[174] 'The needle is used to repair damage', she stated.[175] It is a way to explore and reconcile the previously mentioned contradictory emotions with which I was experimenting. I employ this technique not only as a means to achieve an end but also to bring insight and comprehension to the work. The continuous and repeated action of the needle guiding the thread from one place to another makes embroidery a repetitive and contemplative method that allows me to reflect on my intentions towards the work.

In support of pre-existing arguments made by key figures linked to the study home, this thesis's findings highlight the apparent significance of the physical and emotional sense of warmth as it relates to a sense of home. This has been exemplified through links to activities such as stitching, as mentioned above, and collecting and preserving seeds.

Based on the findings obtained through this work, this thesis posits that there is a significant link between previous works, which a) focus on physical warmth,[176] b) use activities as means to confront life circumstances,[177] and c) relive memories of home as means of protection.[178] This thesis subsequently posits an interconnection between these concepts as it pertains to a sense of belonging and asserts that such feelings can be experienced simultaneously.

(painting)

Simultaneously, while researching the role of place and space in the sense of home, I encountered two quotes that completely altered and redefined both my artistic approach to home as a place from an artistic practice-based researcher perspective and my conception of painting: Architecture, according to Norberg-Schulz, can 'create a feeling of a world within a

[172] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 6.
[173] Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 45.
[174] Storr, *Intimate Geometries,* 526.
[175] Storr, *Intimate Geometries*, 523.
[176] Refer to Juhani Pallasmaa and Gaston Bachelard.
[177] Peeling out the remains of paint from the walls, collecting them, and preserving them over time in *Wall Diaries*, 2021, using back stitch in *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018 and collecting and preserving seeds in *Seeds House*, 2018–2021.
[178] Refer to childhood memories in Chapter Three.

world',[179] whereas McKenna, in reference to David Lynch's artworks, describes his painting's capacity to be 'a place, and things happen there that cannot happen anyplace else'.[180]

Inspired by both statements, in Chapter Three: *If We Are Not at Home, Where Are We?* It is through the work *Where we used to belong I–XI,* 2018 that I illustrated how painting methods can be used as a means to reflect and as a tool to create spaces or places that represent other spaces.[181] In Chapter Four: *Home on the Move,* I would translate into sculpture, either free-standing (*Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019-2020) or wall-mounted (*Seascape,* 2019), although keeping its painted nature. These pieces were influenced by Western Minimalism, particularly the Light and Space Movement.[182] Incorporating elements from the Light and Space Movement into my sculptures allowed me to infuse my exploration of home with a unique dimension. By carefully considering how light interacts with the sculptural elements, I aimed to create immersive experiences for the audience, evoking a sense of place. The major distinction between my artistic practice and that of the Minimalists lies in the deliberate emphasis on the role of expressivity within the artwork. Minimalism, as a movement, notably emphasised the absence of expressiveness, promoting the idea of art as 'without interiority',[183] as famously articulated by Frank Stella's dictum, 'What you see is what you see'.[184] My pieces, conversely, were created with the intention to communicate, to establish a dialogue and a connection with the audience.

[179] Norberg-Schulz, 'Kahn, Heidegger and the Language of Architecture', 2.
[180] Huijts, ed., *David Lynch,* 12.
[181] Painting on sanded acrylic surfaces (*Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II,* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019-2020); and immiscible effects of painting materials on watercolour paper (*Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018).
[182] This movement emphasised the reduction of visual elements to their most essential forms, often characterised by clean lines, geometric shapes, and a deliberate absence of excessive ornamentation.
[183] Batchelor, *Minimalism,* 10.
[184] Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 53.



Figure 38: Final Exhibition, 2022

I have demonstrated the capacity of painting and sculpture's processes and their capacity to be a place, employing both techniques to create places (in the form of artworks) that speak to other places where we can feel at home: skyscapes, seascapes and landscapes.[185]

(drawing)

My research investigated and drew from the artistic method employed by Do Ho Suh, specifically his technique of spatial measurement (in my case, wind measurement),[186] with the aim of making the unfamiliar spaces familiar, making ourselves feel at home, and getting a sense of belonging. My work, *Wind Diaries*, 2021, illustrated how, as Bolt and Barrett stated, knowledge (particularly in relation to the significance of wind in my perception of home) is derived from doing. Engaging in my artistic practice, namely the act of measuring wind patterns through the medium of drawing, has provided me with a profound understanding of the significant influence of the easterly wind, known as *levante* in Spanish, in my life. It has allowed me to explore my perception of home regarding this element and has made me realise

[185] Sanding and polishing acrylic sheets of varying dimensions (*Seeds House,* 2018-2021; *Seascape*, 2019; *Skyscape I, II,* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020); painting on sanded acrylic surfaces (*Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II,* and *III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020); and immiscible effects of painting materials on watercolour paper (*Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018)

[186] *Rubbing/Loving Project,* 2012–16 and *Apartment A, Unit 2, Corridor and Staircase, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA*, 2011–14 are two examples in which he employed this method.

that the absence of this wind contributed to my feelings of homesickness while I was away. The topic is further discussed in Chapter Three.

(photography and video)

The significance of the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021, emerges within the realm of video and photography as methods. The contribution of this work resides in its deliberate endeavour to extend and redefine the traditional understanding of 'home' as proposed by Norberg-Schulz. Rather than limiting 'home' to a mere physical structure, a point of arrival and departure, this project offered a valuable perspective by engaging in the repeated photography of a singular location over several years. Through this ongoing documentation, the project sought to illuminate the presence of often overlooked liminal spaces, thereby enriching our comprehension of the multifaceted concept of 'home'. The remainder of this section explores intentionality.

The decisions made during the creative process shed light on the significance of intentionality in the creation of art as a production of knowledge, both in a general sense and with particular reference to my own work. Every element in my works, from materials to methods, was intentionally chosen due to either its straightforward significance (daisy seeds, branches from my hometown to remove the house paint, choosing back stitch) or more abstract or metaphorical ones. For instance, I chose daisy seeds because they were a defining aspect of my childhood and adulthood and have played a significant role in shaping my perception of home since my early years. Another meaningful choice was to employ house paint for both sculptures and paintings. Additionally, I used branches from my hometown to stir the paint, a deliberate act symbolising reflection on spaces (landscapes) that hold personal meaning as home.

The selection of specific colour palettes drew inspiration from an extensive collection of photographs taken from the helicopter when flying over the sea on the journey home over the past four years (*Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021*).* For example, the colour blue, which is so distinctive in this collection (Appendix Figs. 1–30, 55–62), inspired *Seascape,* 2019 and *Skyscape I,* 2019. The grey and foggy skies, so characteristic of my hometown (Appendix Figs. 31–54), inspired the *Where we used to belong I-XI* series from 2018 and *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days)* from 2019–2020. For instance, the black monochrome palette used in *Nest,* 2017, *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018, *Wind*

Diaries, 2021 and *Skyscape II*, 2019–2020, was inspired by the black-toned photographs (Appendix Figs. 79–94) taken at night during helicopter trips.

I have utilised the characteristics of the material to convey meaning and create metaphors related to the concept of home. This approach has facilitated a meaningful dialogue with the public, alluding to the collective memory of the audience. In *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020, for example, the translucent and transparent qualities of acrylic were used to evoke weather phenomena such as fog. Additionally, by increasing the thickness of acrylic, I created a 'space within'; the softness of wool and thread was utilised to evoke the comforting sensation of warmth, reminiscent of my childhood memories of 'home'. For instance, in *Seeds House,* 2018-2021*,* both the material and the structure serve as elements of communication of a metaphorical nature; the pure and simple lines of the house, as if drawn by a child, speak of childhood, imagination, and the concept of home and house that I have had since I was little.

Second research question: What do we call home? What determines the sense of belonging?

In the exploration of my second research inquiry, I conducted a more comprehensive examination of the dichotomy between the tangible and intangible aspects of the notion of home. Is it subject to change over time, or does it remain constant? When, if there is a particular moment, where, if there is a particular location, and with whom, if there is a particular being, do we feel at home? While growing up, I was taught that home is the hometown where you grew up, specifically the family house, which includes the city in which we were born and the territory it occupies in a given nation. We belong to that location, that space, just as we belong to those who reside there – our family. The expectation that we should always feel at home in our home is a notion that can become rigid at times. Where else should one feel more at home than in their childhood home in their hometown? Although this research is not primarily concerned with answering these questions, contemplation of such questions served as inspiration in the completion of this research.

This research illustrated the way we perceive our home, which can either stay consistent over time or evolve in response to our life experiences. Simultaneously, we can feel at home in a variety of places but *homesick* or *out of place* in those places as well. Both works, *I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018, and *out of place,* 2018*,* provide a space for the exploration of the feelings of uncertainty and confusion associated with missing home in a 'place' that should be your only home.

In answering this second research question, these research findings assert that home as language, home as methodological conditions and home as a physical place factor significantly in fostering a sense of home and subsequent sense of belonging. Home is not merely a physical location: it is a deeply experiential and existential concept that shapes our understanding of what it means to truly be 'at home'. This research challenges the traditional notion of home as a fixed place. Instead, they highlight our capacity as individuals to find or create a sense of home in transitional spaces, diverse cultural contexts, and evolving life circumstances.

Home as language

Following numerous changes in location throughout my life, specifically my continuous trips during the last eight years between Oxford (where I reside) and Spain (where my family is and where I am from), I realised my inability to articulate my longing for home with a term that I felt phonetically and culturally connected to in my mother tongue. This dilemma stemmed from the unique characteristics of my place of origin.[187]

In Spanish, the word *morriña*, pronounced as /moˈriɲa/, is used to express the feeling of missing home and is the official translation of the English word 'homesickness'. The suffix -iño/iña, characteristic of the dialects of northeastern Spain, is culturally and phonetically distanced from my hometown. *Morriña* is a word that is rarely used in the locality where I come from. I come from Ceuta, a Spanish city in North Africa. Our accent, culture and lexicon that we use are linked to the communities of southern Spain. *Morriña* is one of those words that has such a northern cultural weight that using it as part of my vocabulary would sound foreign to me.

The languages we speak shape our perspective of the world, which includes our perception of home. They determine how we define certain feelings (being homesick or feeling at home) and concepts (home, belonging) and are an integral element of our identity. The

[187] Ceuta, North Africa, Spanish City.

terminology we use to describe our sense of home, belonging and hence our lack thereof. This led me to the question: what role does language play in our conception of home?

Drawing from Pallasmaa's research, he establishes not only that our concept of 'home is founded in language',[188] but also specifies that 'our first home is in the domicile of our mother tongue'.[189] This research also found the significant impact that language has on how we conceptualise home and the role that acquiring a second language can play. In Chapter One: *I Am Homesick But At Home,* we can see in my embroidery work how, due to my inability to find a term in my native language to describe the longing for home, it is in English, my second language, where I found a word to describe it: homesickness.

Through *I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018, this study illustrates the significant influence of language on our understanding of the concept of home and emphasises the role of second language acquisition in shaping this perception. As Pallasmaa suggests, the 'unconscious geometry of our language articulates our being in the world', profoundly influencing our sense of home.

My discovery of the English term 'homesickness', which encapsulates the essence of these emotions, further adds to the discourse. The etymological richness of 'homesickness' became a focal point in my work, culminating in a semantic analysis of the term. During the creation of this piece, I delved into the concept behind the word 'homesickness', examining it both as a whole ('homesickness') and through its word formation ('home-sick-ness'). This analytical approach allowed me to deconstruct and gain a deeper understanding of the intricate emotions of homesickness, even in the places where one would traditionally expect to feel at home.

As stated previously in my first research question (How can the sense of home as a terrain be approached through artistic practice?), I have made a valuable contribution by employing embroidery as a research tool, as seen in *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018 and *out of place*, 2018, to delve into the complex emotion of feeling displaced in a setting we once considered home, or in a place that, for various social, cultural, or political reasons, ought to be our 'home'. Through this exploration, I have illuminated the inseparable connection between the sense of being at home and the profound need for belonging.

My journey of learning English as a second language provided a unique perspective, allowing me to approach the analysis of terminology from the vantage point of an outsider or

[188] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[189] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.

foreigner, enriching my insights into the multifaceted nature of language and its profound impact on our understanding of home.

Home as a place

In the initial chapters of this research, I delved into the notion that our perception of 'home' is within the physical confines of a house (interior and exterior) and the memories related[190] to those. In Chapters One and Two, the works *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018, *out of place*, 2018, *Nest,* 2017*, Seeds House*, 2018-2021 and *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021 illuminated the intricate relationship between 'home' and physical location.

As my investigation evolved, I questioned what other places we call 'home'. What do we mean when we refer to home as a *place*? The architect Norberg-Schulz played a significant role in introducing the relationship between the concept of place and my sense of belonging. He expounded that a 'place' is inherently distinct from a mere physical location. Specifically, he defined a 'place' as 'an integral part of existence',[191] which prompted me to ponder: If my perception of home is indeed a fundamental aspect of my being, which specific places or spaces serve to define my concept of home?

In the conventional image of home, boundaries and limits are ever-present, as stated by Norberg-Schulz. He asserted that 'we cannot feel at home in a space without limits'.[192] This raises the question: What determines these limits? Are they defined solely by physical structures, or do they encompass a metaphorical sense of delimitation? Norberg-Schulz's perspective also highlighted that when we are not at home, as the traditional notion of home as a house, we find ourselves 'on our way', 'elsewhere', or 'lost'.[193] This prompted me to further inquire: If we are not at home, where are we? Are we lost?

This exploration continued with the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021*,* which was profoundly influenced by the unique geographical location of my birthplace, a Spanish town overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar in North Africa. Frequent helicopter journeys between this place and mainland Spain sparked my creative endeavour. Over four

[190] Into which I delved in Question Three: 'What are the roles of memories and experiences in the concept of home?'
[191] Norberg-Schulz, *Principles of Modern Architecture*, 16.
[192] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place* , 34.
[193] Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place* , 30.

years, I meticulously captured ninety-six photographs of the surrounding skyscapes and seascapes during these trips. Notably, the presence of the colour blue, whether as a subtle undertone or an all-encompassing hue, emerged as a defining feature of this photographic collection. This observation led me to understand the significance of the colour blue in my personal concept of home, a theme I explored in greater depth in my subsequent works, including *Seascape*, 2019 and *Skyscape I*, 2019.

This research draws upon examinations of transitional spaces between different locations, contributing to a unique and fluid understanding. This concept recognises that 'home' is not confined to a fixed location but can be found in transitional spaces.

An investigation was conducted to identify alternative forms that can represent the idea of home, focusing on the significance of space and place in our sense of belonging. This exploration was carried out through a collection of paintings entitled *Where we used to belong I-XI*, 2018.

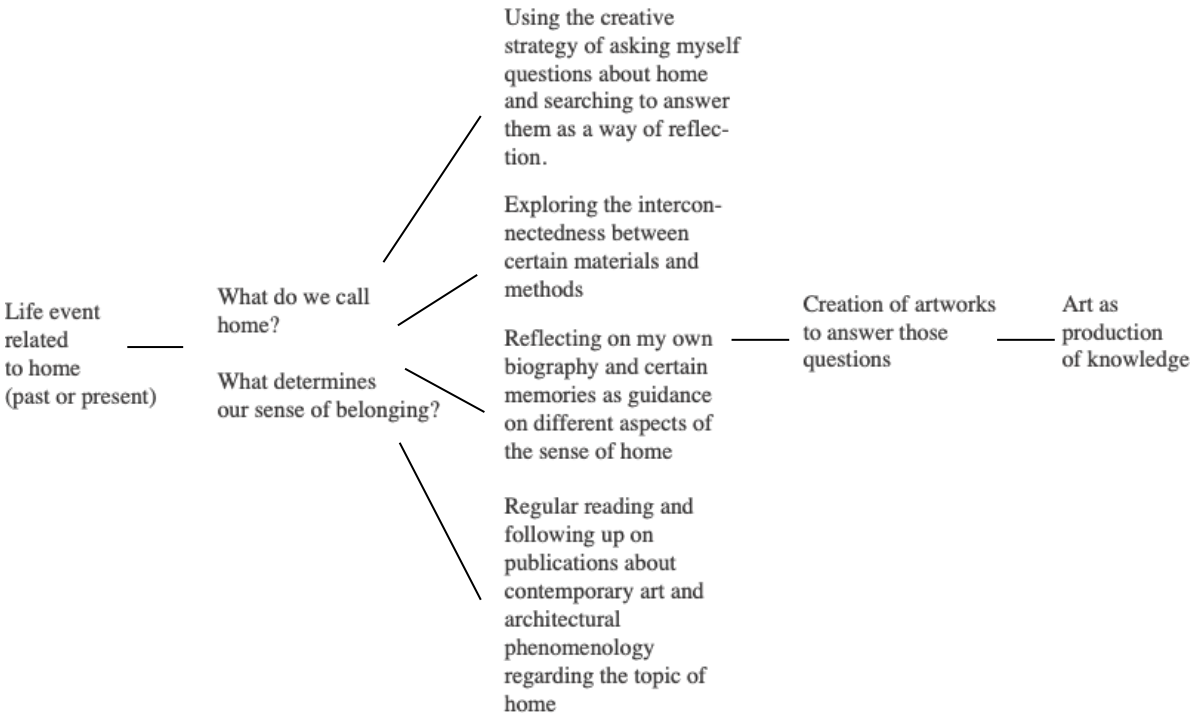
Transit spaces, while typically associated with movement and change, can also become temporary homes where individuals find comfort and a sense of belonging. Do Ho Suh finds home in between places, and it gives liminal values to a spatial vision of the home. Inspired by his work, I explored this question in Chapters Three and Four. In the *Colour Chart project* 2017–2021, the act of photographing the same location repeatedly over several years sought to expand the conventional Norberg-Schulz's notion of the home as a house and thus as the physical point of arrival and departure by studying the liminal spaces that often go unnoticed.

Home as a meteorological condition

In 2020, I introduced the elements of wind and fog as an exploration of meteorological conditions within the sense of home and belonging. The *Wind Diaries*, 2021, revealed that the wind is closely intertwined with my concept of home and how the acknowledgement and artistic practice of measuring the wind through drawing was a tool to make me feel at home in unfamiliar places. The artwork entitled *Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days)*, 2019–2020, based on photographs 034, 089, 067, and 090 of the journey during foggy days, a weather condition that is very characteristic of my hometown, invites the audience to consider home as a form of fog. This sculpture explores the concept of home as fog, both as a metaphorical representation and a meteorological phenomenon. The concept of home is analogous to fog.

This exploration adds an extra dimension to the ongoing conversation surrounding the concept of 'home'.

On the third research question, 'What are the roles of memories and experiences in the concept of home?'



The personal experiences I have encountered in relation to my home, whether in the past or present, have prompted me to engage in introspection and investigate artistic processes in order to address the inquiries that arose. Consequently, these inquiries have influenced the creation of the artworks that are being presented in this research, ultimately contributing to the generation of knowledge.

This study found that a reflection of home cannot be achieved without considering our memories and experiences. As Bolt and Barret stated, it is through the use of autobiography that I was able 'to better understand a personal situation by bringing forward prior, related experience'.[194] Home can be a memory, and dwelling on those past experiences can make us feel at home again. *Nest,* 2017*; Seeds House,* 2018–2021, and *Wall Diaries Series I, II and III*, 2021, determined that experiences of home, particularly from childhood, impact our sense of belonging. We repeat by heart those actions that we learned when we were children, and we

[194] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 129.

recall those first memories when we discovered what it was like to feel at home. The artistic technique (in this case, sewing and traditional seed collection and preservation methods) implies both a means and an end.

The present research began with an examination of the first recollections of home in order to explore those allusions of warmth, intimacy and safety within the home that Bachelard described in his book *Poetics of Space*, published in 1957. Subsequently, I referred to my childhood memories through my work *Nest,* 2017 and *Seeds House,* 2018–2021. *Nest* (wool on paper, 2017) was inspired by the work of architect Juhani Pallasmaa, who recognised the physical action involved in constructing one's own shelter, whether it be a human building a house or a bird building a nest. I decided to explore through the act of stitching my own interpretation of a nest. It is through my works *Nest,* 2017, *Seeds House,* 2018–2021 and *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, that I realised my first recollections of home, in my case and in many others, and therefore the first allusions of warmth and safety connected to it, inhabit the memories of my childhood.

I lost my grandmother while I was finishing *Seeds House,* 2018–2021. An experience that had a profound impact prompted me to question whether there is room for loss in our concept of home. The answer to the aforementioned inquiry is in my work, *Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021. This work comprises a series of twenty-three photographic images, three videos, and fifty-five wall fragments that I collected from my grandparents' house subsequent to my grandmother's passing. During a period of mourning, I captured, recorded and peeled out both the internal and external walls of their residence. As particularly demonstrated in Chapter Two through my work, *Wall Diaries Series*, 2021, there is room for grief and loss in our perception of home. The series portrays the deterioration due to the passage of time and the effects of adverse weather conditions. Simultaneously, through the image of her house, this series enables me to reflect on the grief associated with the loss of a family member who played an essential part in shaping my perception of the home from an early age. The *Wall Diaries Series,* 2021, became a reflection on home as both a loved one and as a house, as well as the memories associated with them. Grief and loss can often become intertwined with our perception of home. As an artist, I embarked on a journey to explore how I could creatively preserve the essence of home. Through my work, particularly in projects like the *Wall Diaries Series*, 2021, I discovered a means to encapsulate and safeguard the concept of home.



Figure 39: Sequence of the Final Exhibition, 2022 (video)[195]

My research highlights that memories and experiences related to home, extending from our current experiences to childhood, significantly contribute to the formation of our concept of home in adulthood.

My personal experiences of home have often been closely and chronologically aligned with the progress of this investigation. Through the analysis of this research, I have come to understand how my inner dialogue, expressed in the form of questions, as well as my life memories and experiences, are intertwined with my artwork and creative process. It was through these experiences and memories of home that I embarked on the journey of creating each piece. Consequently, this process has provided me with the insight and knowledge necessary to delve into memories of home, cope with grief, and address feelings of homesickness. The evolving research questions that emerged during the course of my PhD represent a unique contribution to the field of knowledge.

The trajectory of my research is closely intertwined with the development of my questions, which came from my life experiences related to home. For instance, certain pieces of my research coincided and happened due to significant life events, such as the passing of my grandmother (*Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021) or feelings of homesickness where I culturally should feel at home after living in a different country (*I am homesick but I am at home,* 2018). Th

[195] Rodriguez Beltran, 'Video Exhibition', blancarobel, accessed September 28, 2023, https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/video-exhibition.

is relationship between my research and life experiences is noteworthy. Moreover, my questions bear the unmistakable mark of my autobiographical approach, making them uniquely my own; this distinctiveness is itself a contribution to knowledge.

Contextual Findings

The present research sits within the field of fine arts and draws on architectural phenomenology and contemporary art from the perspective of an artistic practice-based practitioner. Within the field of contemporary art, I have primarily examined the work of artists Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, and Rachel Whiteread. I have studied the work of architects and theorists Juhani Pallasmaa and Norberg-Schulz, as well as philosopher Gaston Bachelard, within the field of architectural phenomenology.

During the course of my research, I have unveiled how, despite coming from different fields (fine arts, architecture and philosophy) and countries (Finland, France, England and Korea), the paths of Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, Rachel Whiteread, Juhani Pallasmaa and Gaston Bachelard intersected on numerous occasions throughout their lifetimes, whether through physical encounters or via their literary or creative productions. I have compiled evidence of their interactions and how these connections impacted their approach to the topic of home in their careers, sometimes resulting in a shift in perspective.

For instance, if Do Ho Suh had not seen a photograph of Rachel Whiteread's *House*, 1993–1994, which involved a cast of the facade of a house in London, when he was planning to also make a cast of his art studio, he would not have altered the course of his career. This event made him change his approach to home, allowing him 'to explore the notion of space and personal space in a looser way',[196] which translated into exploring the idea of home from an Eastern perspective instead. Consequently, had this change not occurred, his work would not have had an impact on my practice. His work has greatly influenced my artistic growth by broadening my understanding of the idea of home as a state of being in between or on the move. As a result, his influence has played a crucial role in shaping my artistic practice. Their joint exhibition in 2008 as part of *Psycho Buildings: Artists Take on Architecture* marked a pivotal moment in the exploration of the interplay between art and architecture.

[196] Pallasmaa, 'Stairways', 8.

In 2021, Do Ho Suh participated in 'For a Dreamer of Houses', an exhibition dedicated to Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. The exhibition, organised thematically around Bachelard's book, featured Suh's work under the theme of *Shells*. Bachelard's philosophy, emphasising the protective qualities of the home, particularly resonated with Suh's reinterpretation of the hallway from his childhood home, symbolising shelter, protection, and tranquillity. His creative process, described as 'an act of shedding skin',[197] resonated with Juhani Pallasmaa's analysis of the connection between home and skin in *The Eyes of the Skin*. Rachel Whiteread's early exposure to Bachelard's work significantly influenced her artistic trajectory. She attributed her interest in the concept of 'in-betweenness' within the concept of home to Bachelard's ideas.

Juhani Pallasmaa's work bears the profound influence of Gaston Bachelard's philosophy. His first encounter with Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* 'opened a new world to him'.[198] He often refers to the French philosopher when talking about the importance of the role of intimacy,[199] warmth and memory in the concept of home.[200] 'Artists are born phenomenologists',[201] stated Pallasmaa. His collaborations with artists, including Rachel Whiteread in *Snow Show,* 2004, or mentions of Bourgeois in his literature, showcased his deep engagement with the intersection of art and architecture. Pallasmaa's active participation in lectures, such as the *Light, Space, and Contemporary Art* symposium in Copenhagen in 2022, emphasised the interconnectedness of art and architecture. This movement, known as California Minimalism or Light and Space, profoundly influenced my own works, as evidenced in *Seascape,* 2019 and *Skyscape I, II, and III (in memory of those foggy day*s), 2019–2020, discussed in Chapter Four: *Home on the Move*.

In summary, these multifaceted connections and parallels among artists, architects, and philosophers often served as catalysts, where the merging of ideas, techniques, and perspectives led to the creation of the very works related to home that would go on to shape my own artistic practice. Through documenting their interactions and how they influenced and, in some cases, changed their career approaches to home. They would not have created the works that influenced me without these interactions. I understood the influence in my work during this investigation, and therefore in my art practice, as production of knowledge.

[197] Do Ho Suh and Vivian Li, 'Artist Interview'.
[198] Pallasmaa and Zambelli, *Inseminations,* XXI.
[199] Pallasmaa, 'Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy and Domicile'.
[200] Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin,* 19.
[201] Pallasmaa, 'Stairways', 8.

To my knowledge, this is the first instance where the connections between Louise Bourgeois, Do Ho Suh, Rachel Whiteread, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Gaston Bachelard have been brought together in a single written commentary, which implies a finding in this research.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes nine practice-based research outcomes.[202] My original contribution to knowledge occurs through these projects, which analyse the concept of home to provide answers to the following questions: How can artistic practice be used to understand and articulate a/my sense of home? What do we mean by 'home', what factors influence our sense of belonging, and what role do memories and experiences play in our concept of home?

Situated in the field of fine art, the primary beneficiaries of the research findings will be artist-researchers who investigate the sense of home and belonging through art, those who examine architectural phenomenology through the lens of other artists, and those studying the concept of home from a contemporary art and architectural phenomenology perspective through their own practice, whether academic or non-academic.

This practice-based research is deeply rooted in my own experiences and has enabled me to gain extensive knowledge of the fundamental concepts of home and belonging, as well as the influence of memories in the construction of both concepts. This is accomplished through an autobiographical approach, using a practice-based research methodology with an emphasis on experimentation and thinking through the material selected to address the aforementioned questions.[203]

It is through my practice-based research methodology that I have examined my own personal experiences of home and questioned the rigidity of traditional and cultural definitions of the term. By studying the context in which this research takes place, I have established a connection between two fields that, while fundamentally distinct, share a strong affinity for the sense of home: architectural phenomenology and contemporary art. Through my work, for example, in *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project,* 2017–2021; *Seascape,* 2019; *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020; and *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018, I have expanded the definition of home by examining the significance of place and space

[202] *Nest*, 2017, *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018, *out of place,* 2018, *Where we used to belong I-XI,* 2018, *Seascape,* 2019, *Skyscape I, II* and *III (in memory of those foggy days),* 2019–2020, *Seeds House*, 2018-2021, *Wall Diaries*, 2021, *Wind Diaries Series I: Remains, II: Photographs and III: Videos*, 2021, *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021.

[203] Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 30.

in relation to our sense of belonging by combining an architectural phenomenological and artistic perspective.

Future Work

I plan to keep expanding the *Colour Chart of My Hometown Project*, 2017–2021, to encompass various locations where I feel at home, commencing with Oxford, a place of profound personal significance for me. I will build upon the foundation established in my previous research, delving deeper into the exploration of the tonalities of the skyscapes and landscapes of this city, both as photographs and in the shape of acrylic blocks, with the aim of unlocking the potential of working with house paint on acrylic (from different thicknesses) to resonate metaphorically with the captivating imagery of skyscapes, thus contributing novel insights to the realm of artistic practice within the sense of home.

After incorporating natural elements into my work for the first time in this research (*Seeds House,* 2018–2021*, Where we used to belong I–XI,* 2018) and in previous works (*Dandelion House,* 2016 and *Salt House,* 2013), I would like to continue experimenting with natural materials related to my sense of home.

As I was collecting seeds and peeling off the remains of my grandparents' house, I found in the concept of 'preserving home' a path I would like to explore further.

It was late on during my doctoral research that I came to recognise the significant role that wind plays within my cultural context. I was previously unaware that the topic of wind, including its direction from the east or west, does not typically feature prominently in the everyday discussions of the majority of people outside my place of origin. I plan to explore further how the wind does not appear to hold significant importance in their daily routines, social interactions, interpersonal connections, or their overall sense of belonging and attachment to their dwelling places. I am interested in continuing the practice of wind measurement, drawing inspiration from Do Ho Suh's spatial measurement methods, for a year.

This project will continue to serve as a conduit for my ongoing exploration of wind within the context of the concept of home.

Although I have mostly worked independently throughout my artistic career, my recent research has made me wish to explore the integration of audience participation into my artistic practice. It has become increasingly clear that such engagement not only enriches my personal artistic journey but also contributes to a profound exploration of the multifaceted concept of

home. In the forthcoming chapters of my artistic journey, I am inclined to employ a multifaceted approach, utilising interviews, recorded conversations, collaborative discussions, and art projects. Furthermore, I am determined to investigate the complexities of migration and language in relation to the sense of home and belonging. Being an immigrant myself who had to learn English as a second language to advance in my career, these dimensions of my personal narrative hold particular significance, which connects the works *I am homesick but I am at home*, 2018, and *out of place*, 2018, that I made during this research, to my previous artistic works, specifically *Home.Hope.Hole*, 2016, OUTSIDER, and *Homeless.Homesick.Homeland*, 2016, which were created during my Master's programme. The profound and enlightening conversations that these works have sparked in recent years have served as an inspiration for me to realise that, and I am not only interested in continuing to explore that concept but also in engaging with the audience as I do so. Hence, I intend to incorporate audience participation in this project.

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Being Home:
Exploring the idea of home and belonging through art practice.

Appendix I

Blanca Rodriguez Beltran
2023

Submitted in partial fulfilment of Doctor of Philosophy, PhD by Practice-Based Research
School of Art, Faculty of Technology, Design, and Environment
OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

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Colour Chart of my Hometown Project

Photographs 001-094
2017-2021



Fig. 1 *001*



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

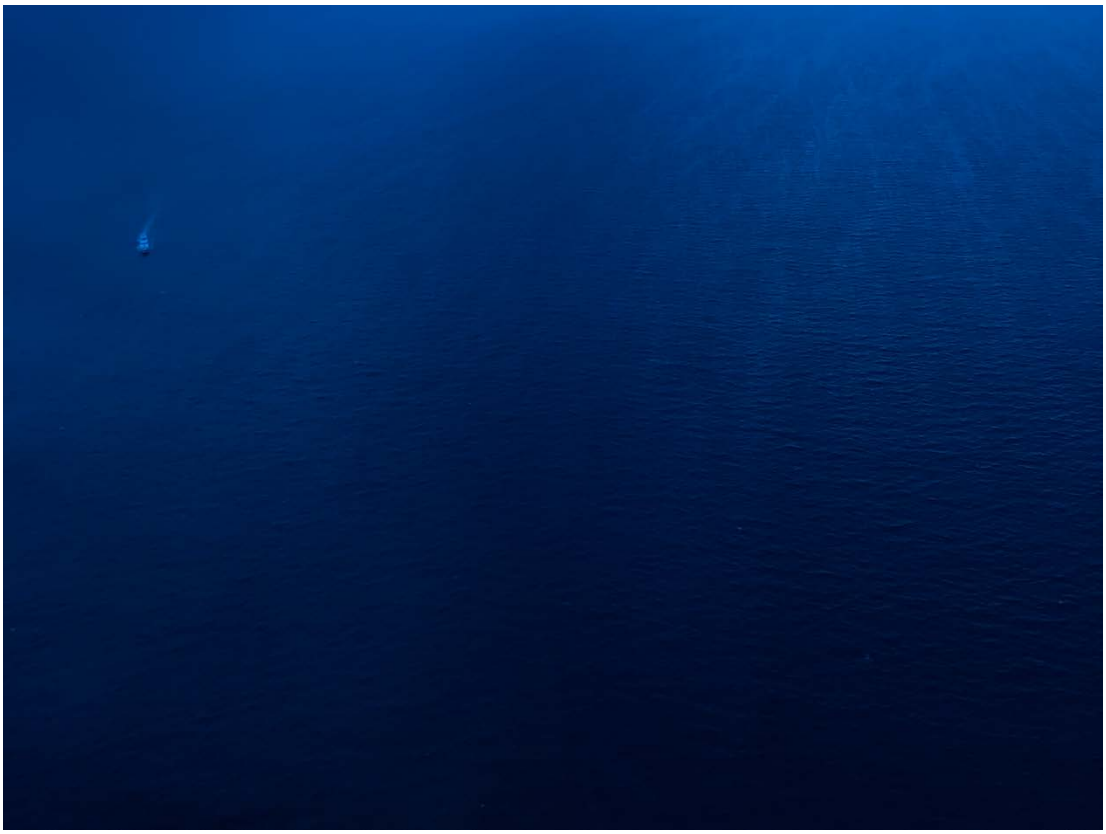


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

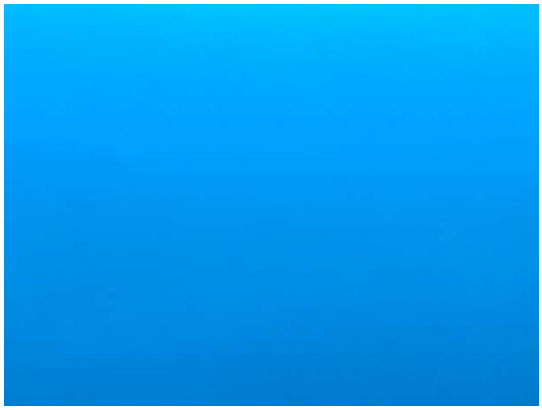


Fig. 8

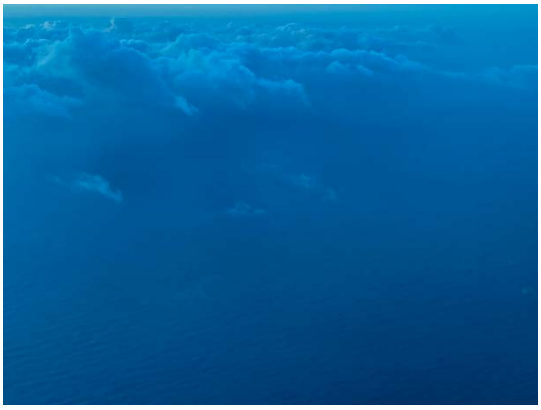


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11' 001



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

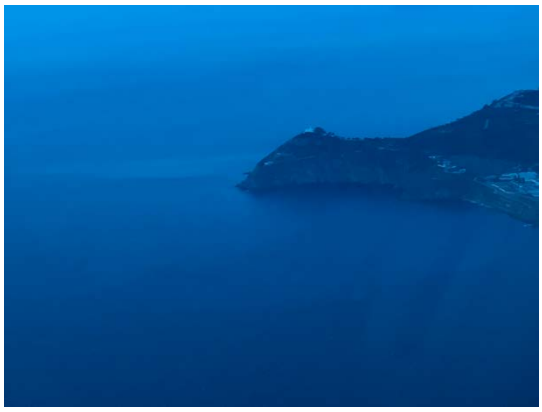


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

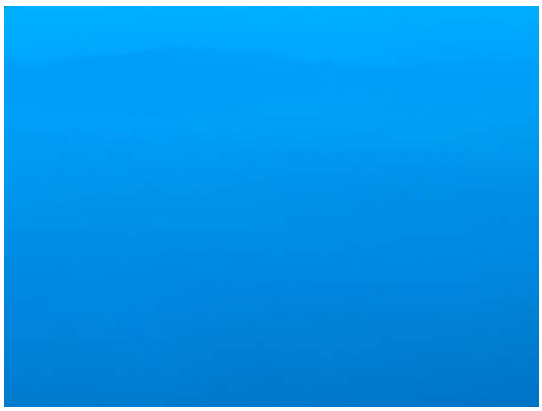


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

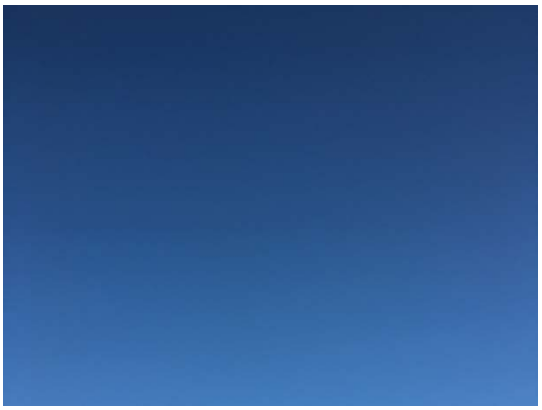


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

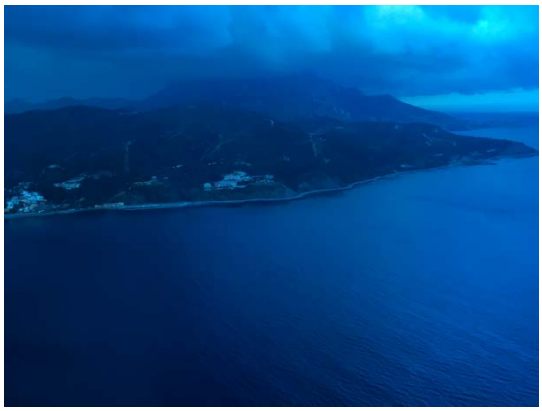


Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

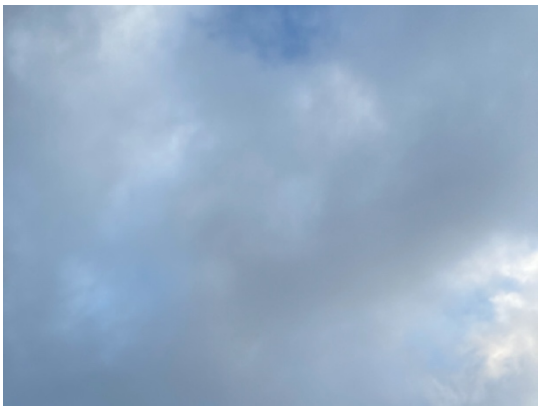


Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33

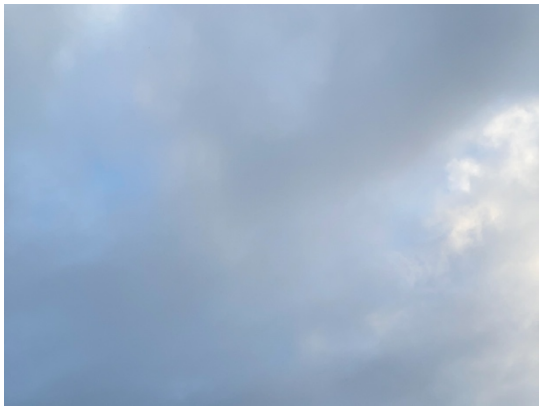


Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46

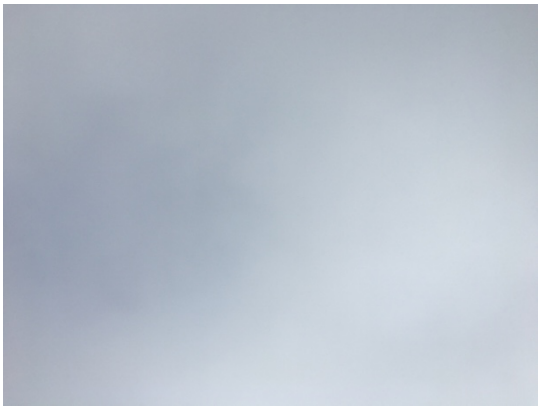


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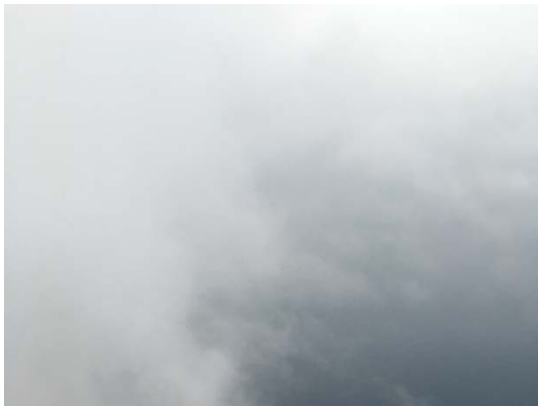


Fig. 48



Fig. 49

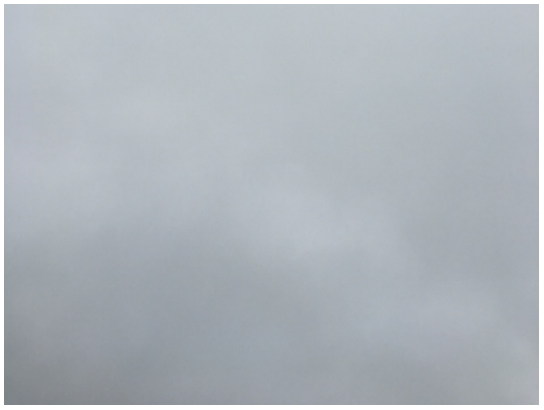


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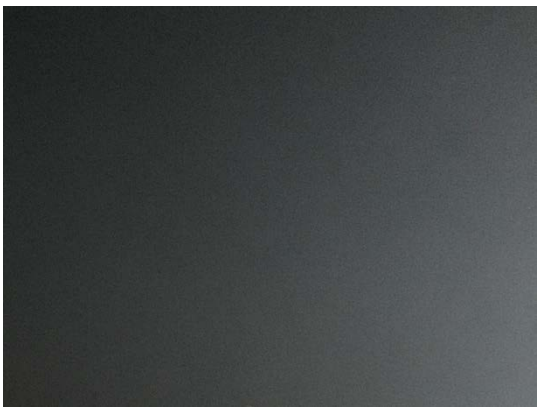


Fig. 51



Fig. 52

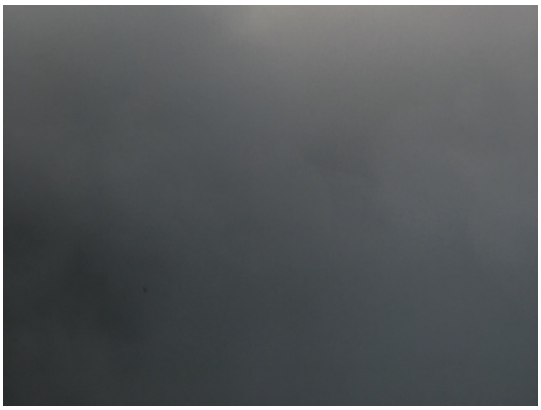


Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56



Fig. 57

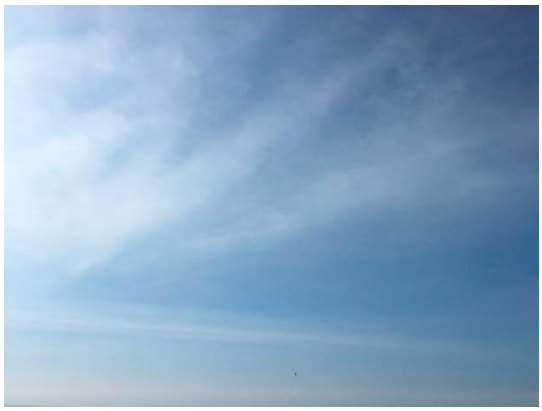


Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60



Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63



Fig. 64



Fig. 65



Fig. 66

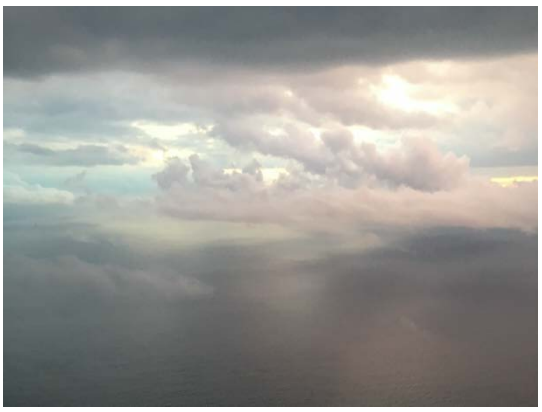


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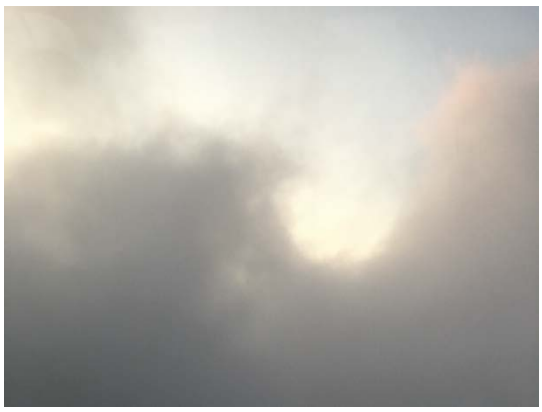


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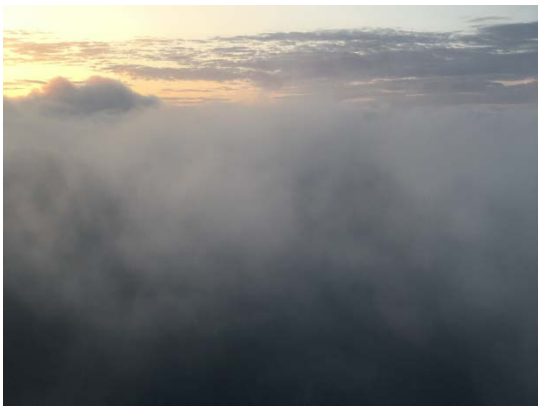


Fig. 69



Fig. 70

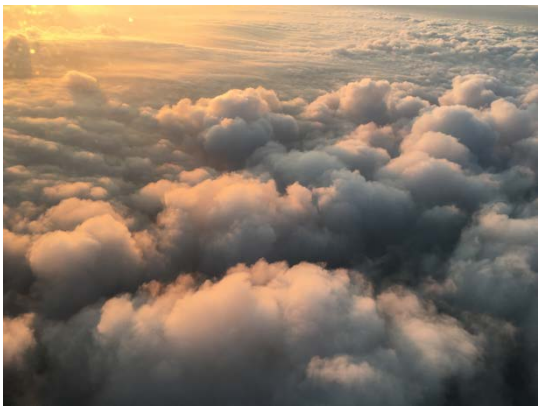


Fig. 71



Fig. 72

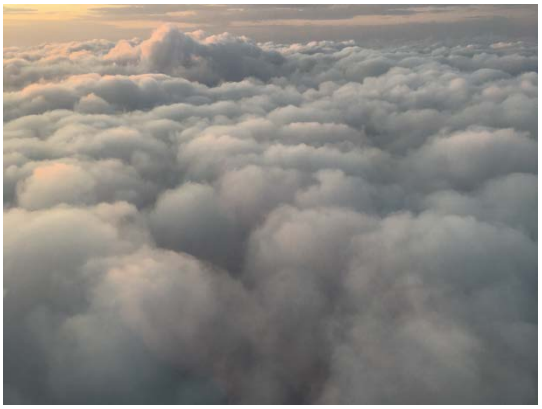


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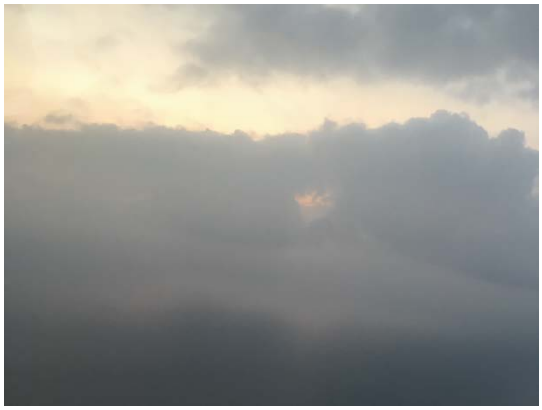


Fig. 74



Fig. 75



Fig. 76

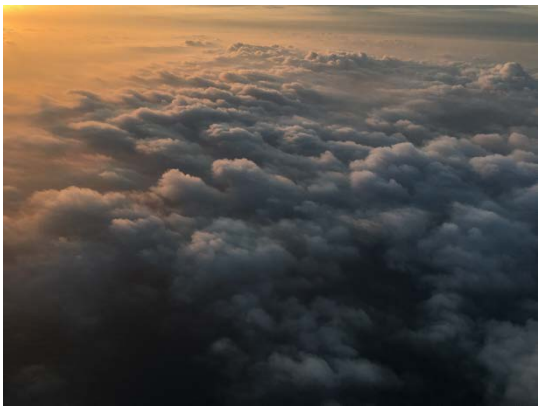


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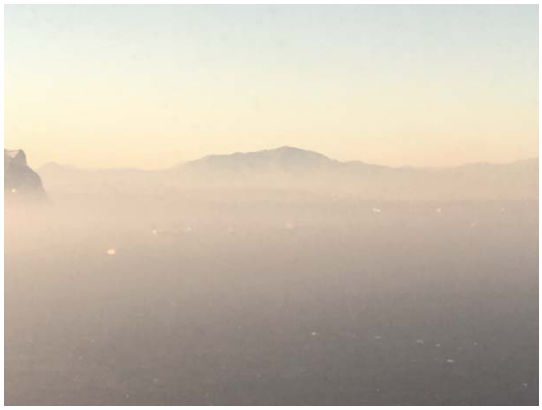


Fig. 78

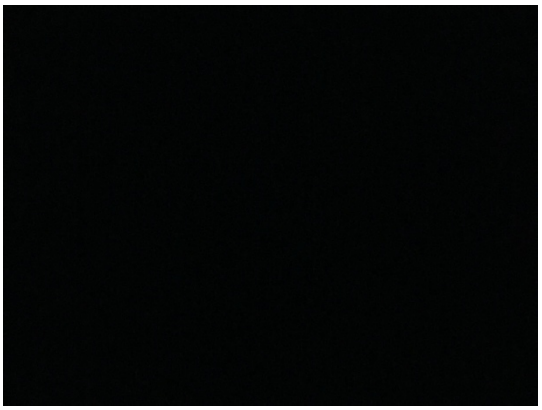


Fig. 79



Fig. 80



Fig. 81



Fig. 82

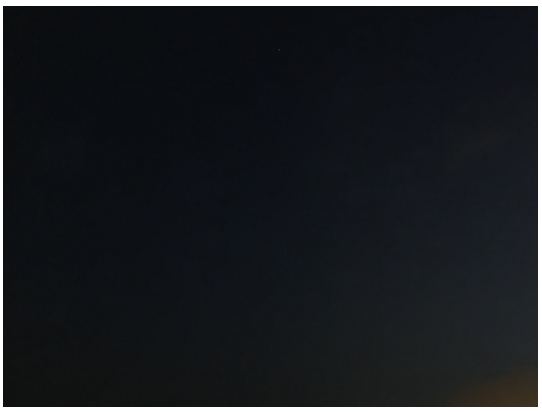


Fig. 83

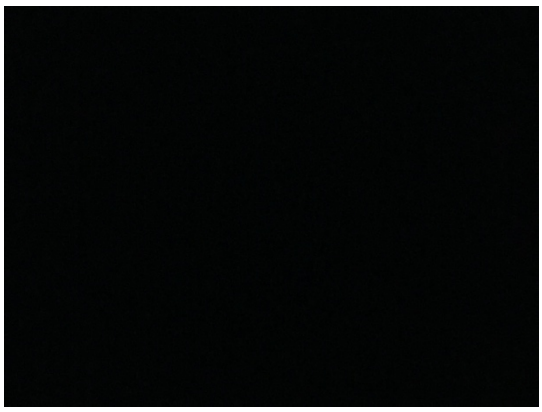


Fig. 84



Fig. 85

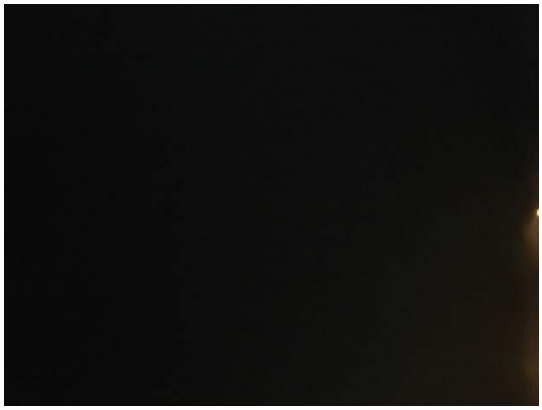


Fig. 86

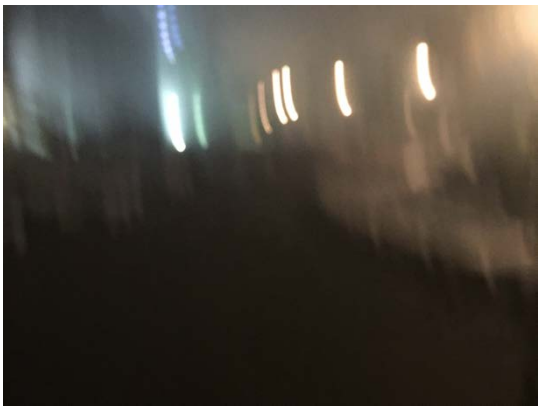


Fig. 87

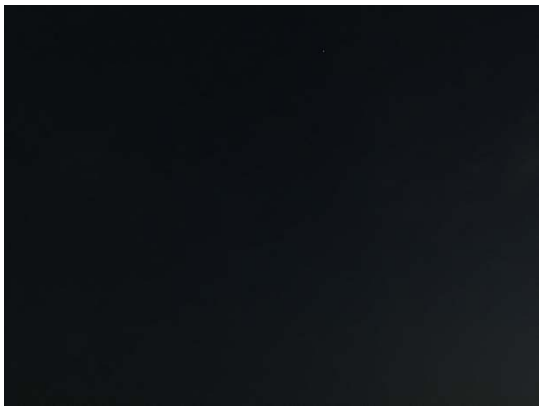


Fig. 88



Fig. 89



Fig. 90

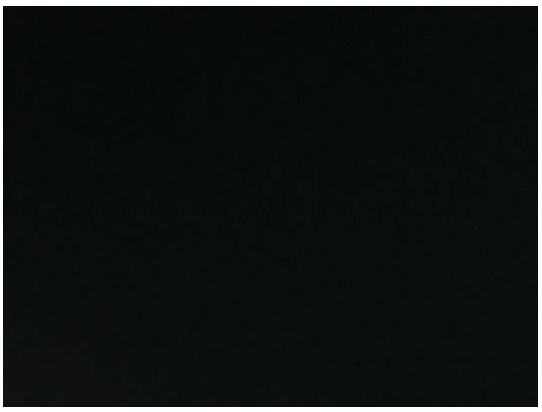


Fig. 91



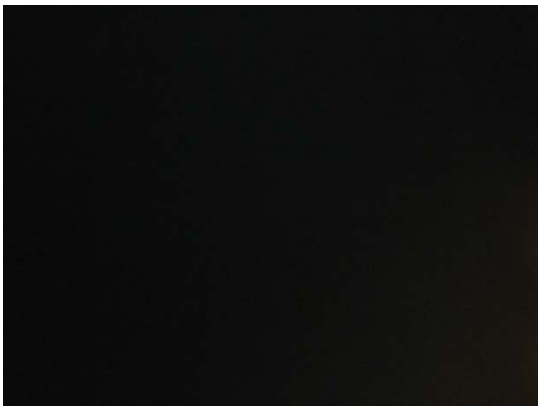


Fig. 93



Fig. 94

Nest,
2017
hand stitched wool on paper 21 x 29,7



Fig. 95 Nest, 2017

I am homesick but I am at home,

2018
hand stitched thread on cotton fabric, hoop
30cm dia



Fig. 96 I am homesick but I am at home, 2018.

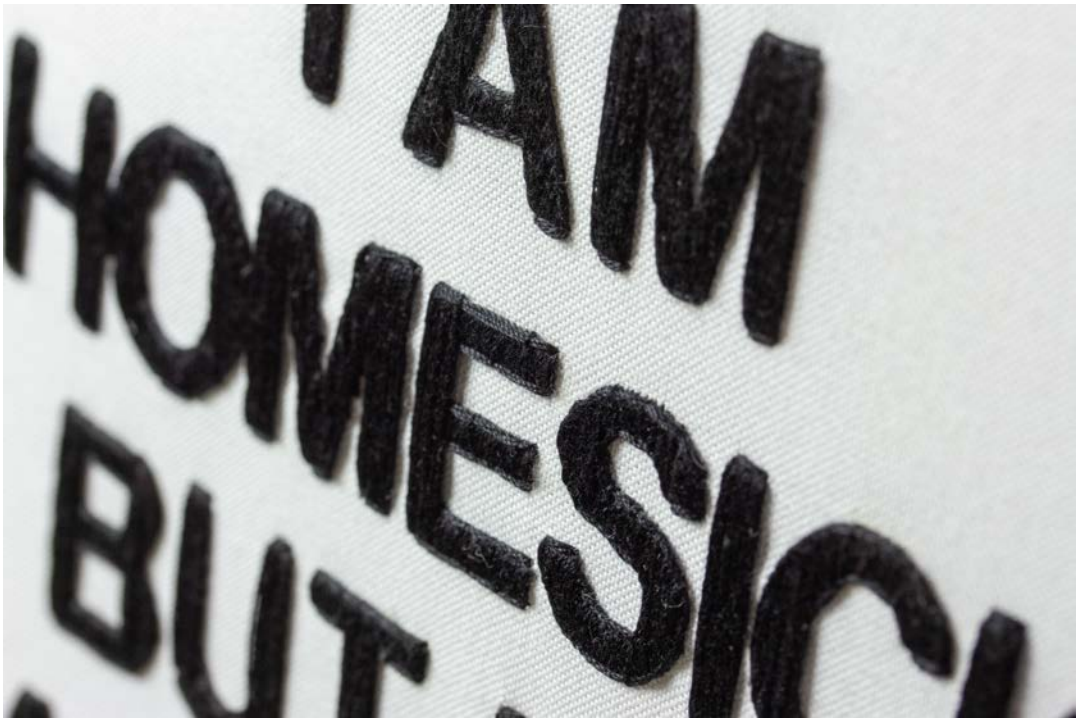


Fig. 97 I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (detail)



Fig. 98 I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (detail)



Fig. 99 I am homesick but I am at home, 2018 (detail)

out of place

2018.
hand stitched thread on cotton fabric, hoop
30cm dia



Fig. 100 out of place, 2018



Fig. 101 out of place, 2018 (detail)



Fig. 102 work in progress out of place, 2018 (detail)



Fig. 103 out of place, 2018 (detail)

Where we used to belong I-XII,

2018.

House paint, branch residue and water on watercolour paper
21.0 x 29.7 cm

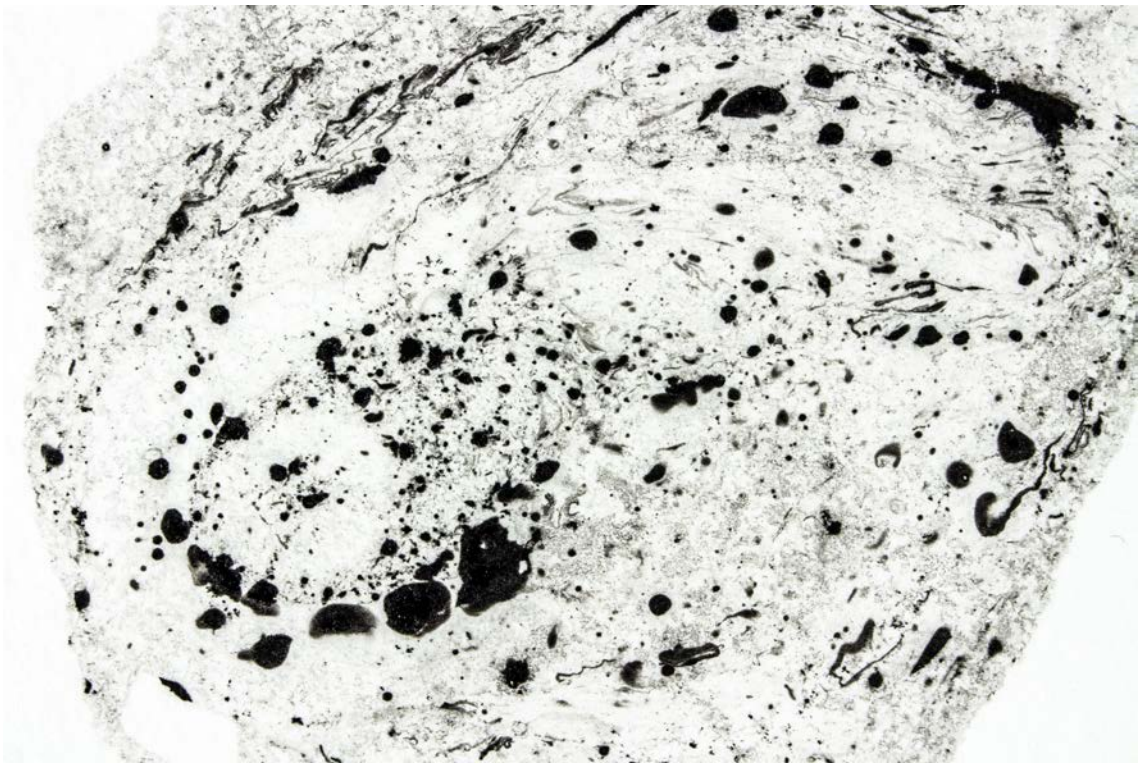


Fig. 104 Where we used to belong I, 2018 (detail)

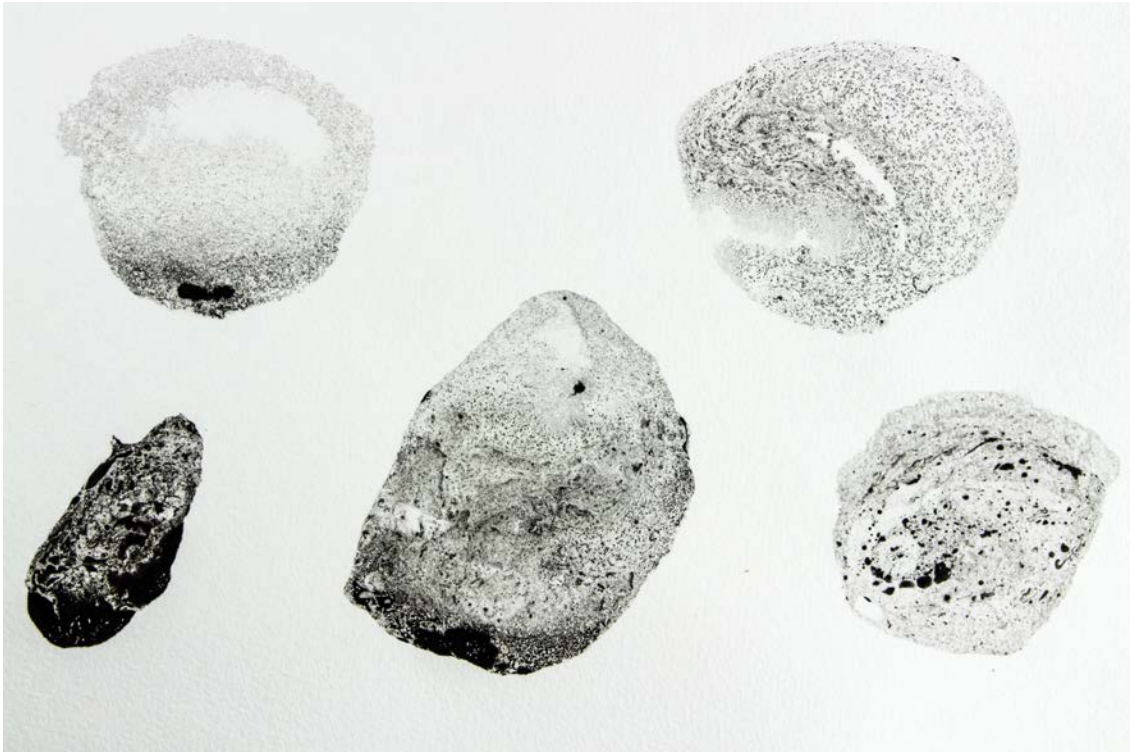


Fig. 105 Where we used to belong I, 2018

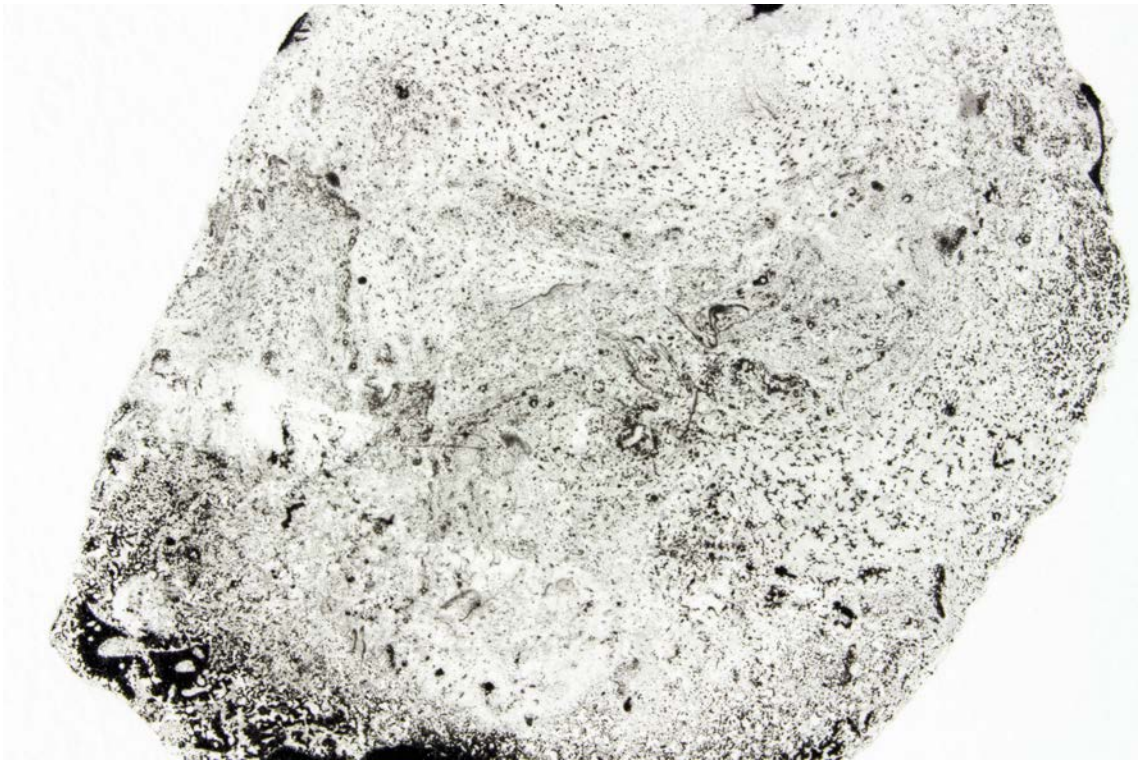


Fig. 106 Where we used to belong I, 2018 (detail)

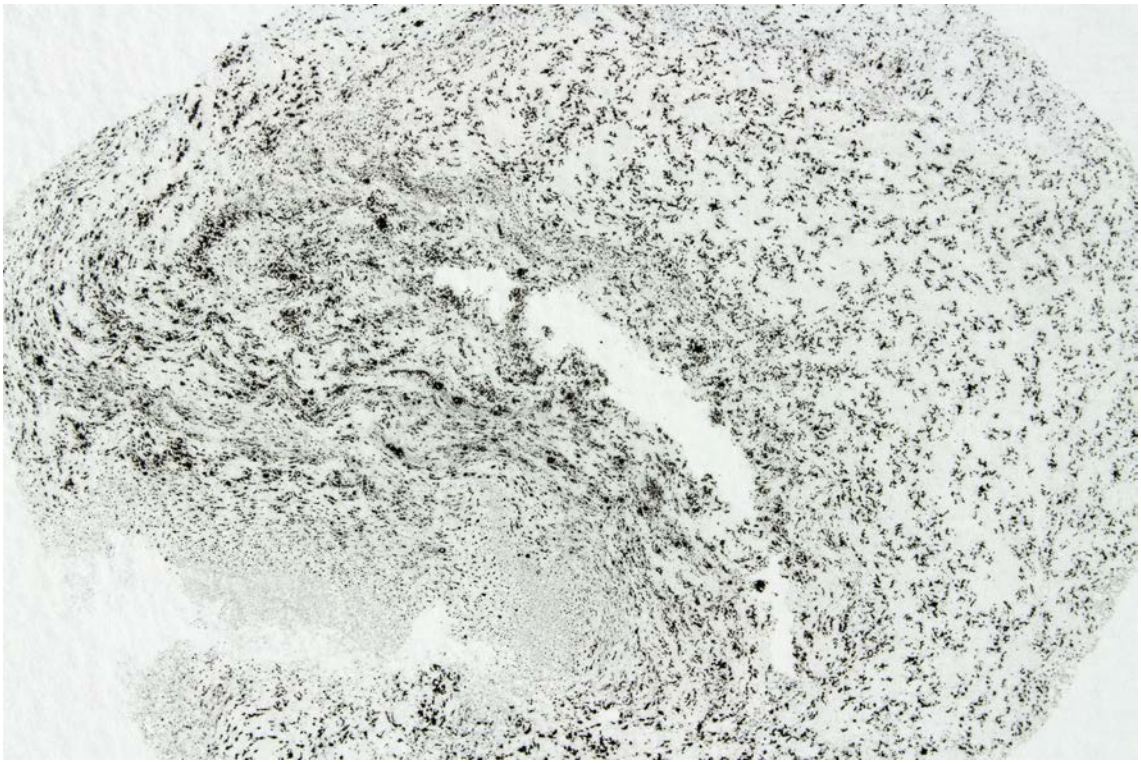


Fig. 107 Where we used to belong I, 2018 (detail)



Fig. 108 Where we used to belong II, 2018



Fig. 109 Where we used to belong III, 2018

Fig. 110 Where we used to belong IV, 2018

Fig. 111 Where we used to belong V, 2018



Fig. 112 Where we used to belong VI, 2018



Fig. 113 Where we used to belong VII, 2018



Fig. 114 Where we used to belong VIII, 2018



Fig. 115 Where we used to belong IX, 2018



Fig. 116 Where we used to belong X, 2018



Fig. 117 Where we used to belong XI, 2018

Seascape,

2019
House paint, clear acrylic, aluminum
20.8 x 20.8 x 1.2 cm



Fig. 118 Seascape, 2019



Fig. 119 Seascape,, 2019



Fig. 120 Seascape,, 2019 (detail)



Fig. 121 Seascape Fig. 122dd, 2019 (detail)



Fig. 123 Seascape,, 2019 (detail)

Skyscape I,

2019

House paint, clear acrylic

25 x 23 x 5 cm

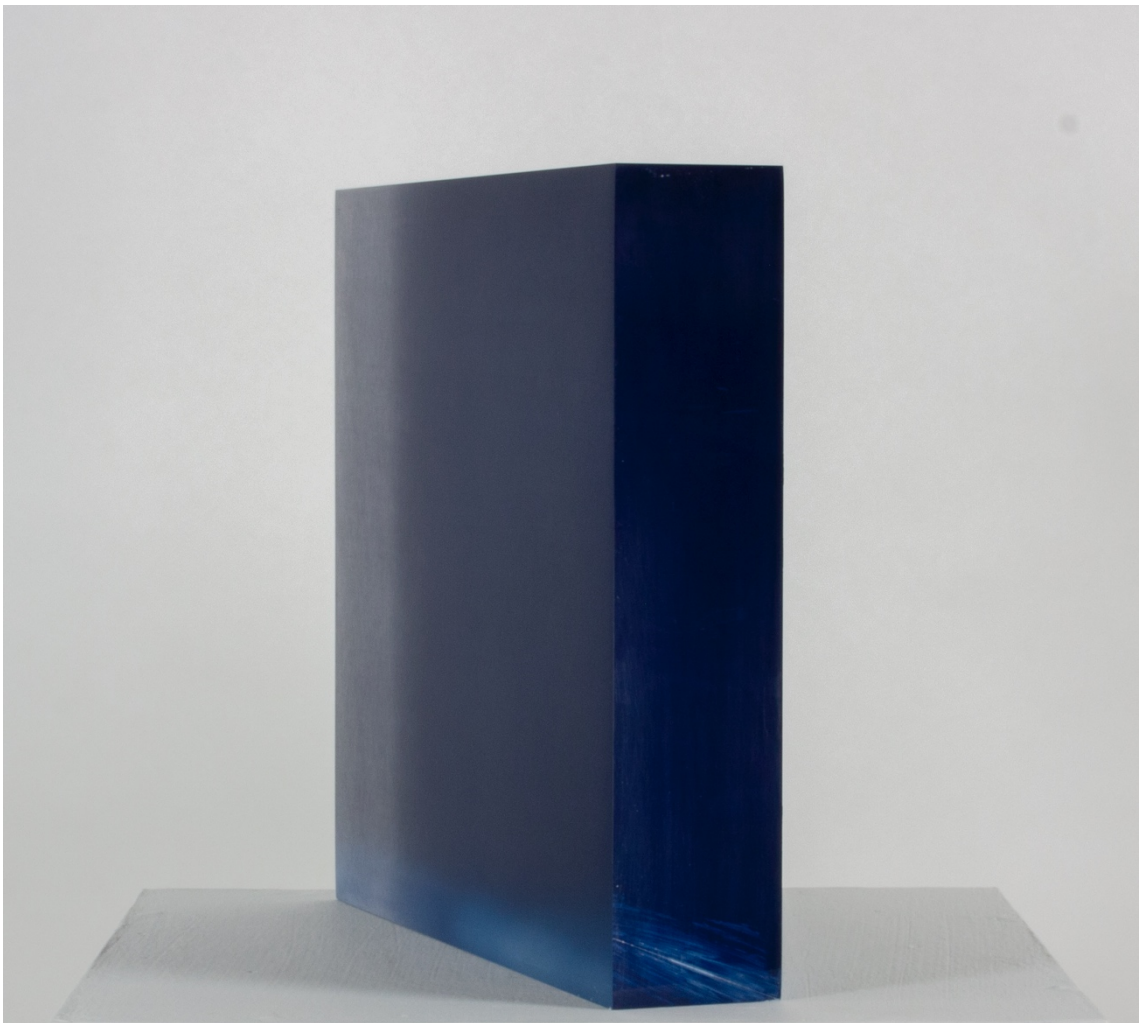


Fig. 124 Skyscape I, 2019.

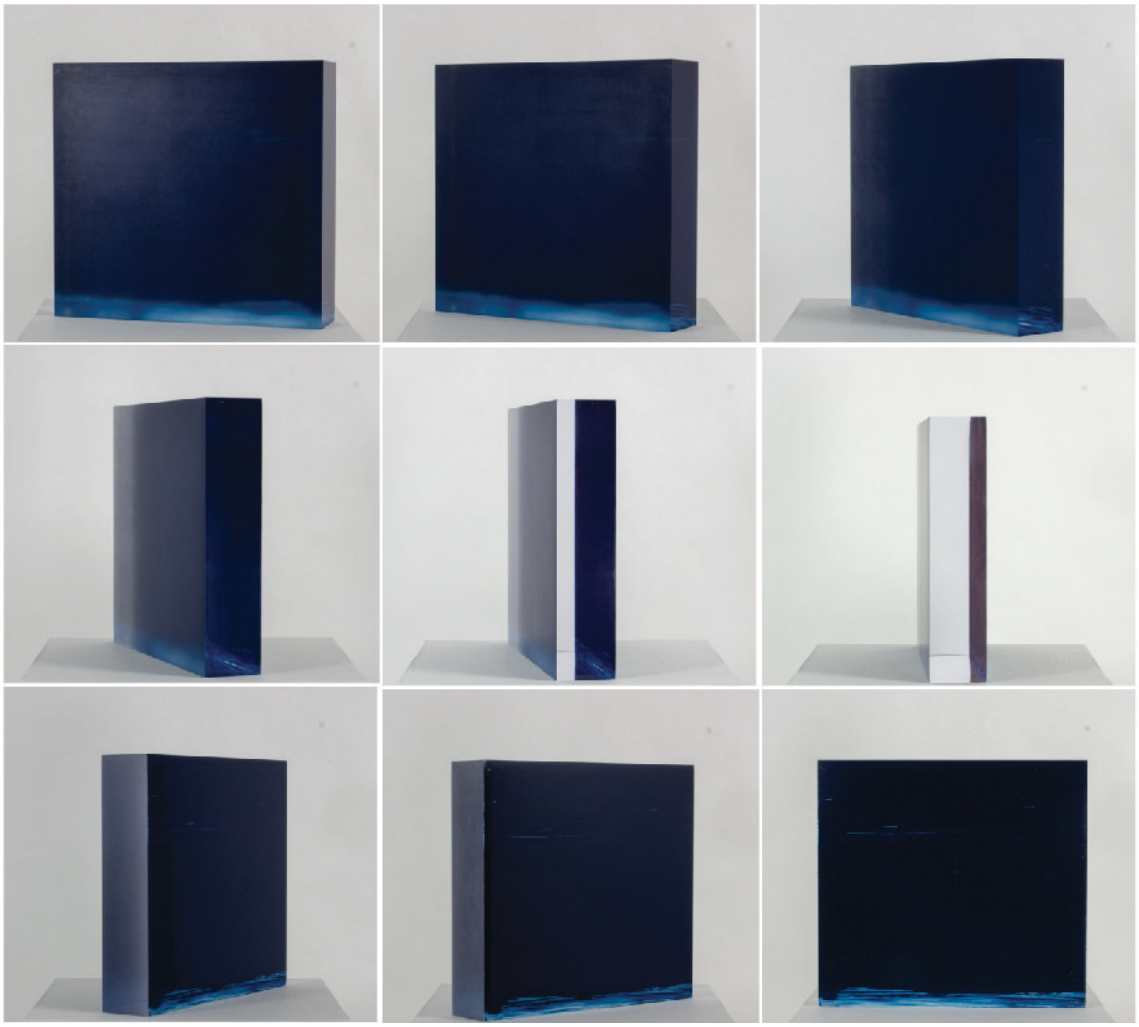


Fig. 125 Skyscape I, 2019.

Seeds House,

2018-2021
Dried daisy seeds and petals, clear acrylic
20x20x20 cm



Fig. 126 Seeds House, 2018-2021



Fig. 127 Seeds House, 2018-2021 (detail)



Fig. 128 Seeds House, 2018-2021



Fig. 129 Seeds House, 2018-2021 (detail)

Skyscape II,

2019-2020
House paint, clear acrylic
37 x 11 x 6 cm



Fig. 130 Skyscape II, 2019-2020



Fig. 131 Skyscape II, 2019-2020

Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days),

2019-2020
House paint, clear acrylic
30 x 20.8 x 7 cm

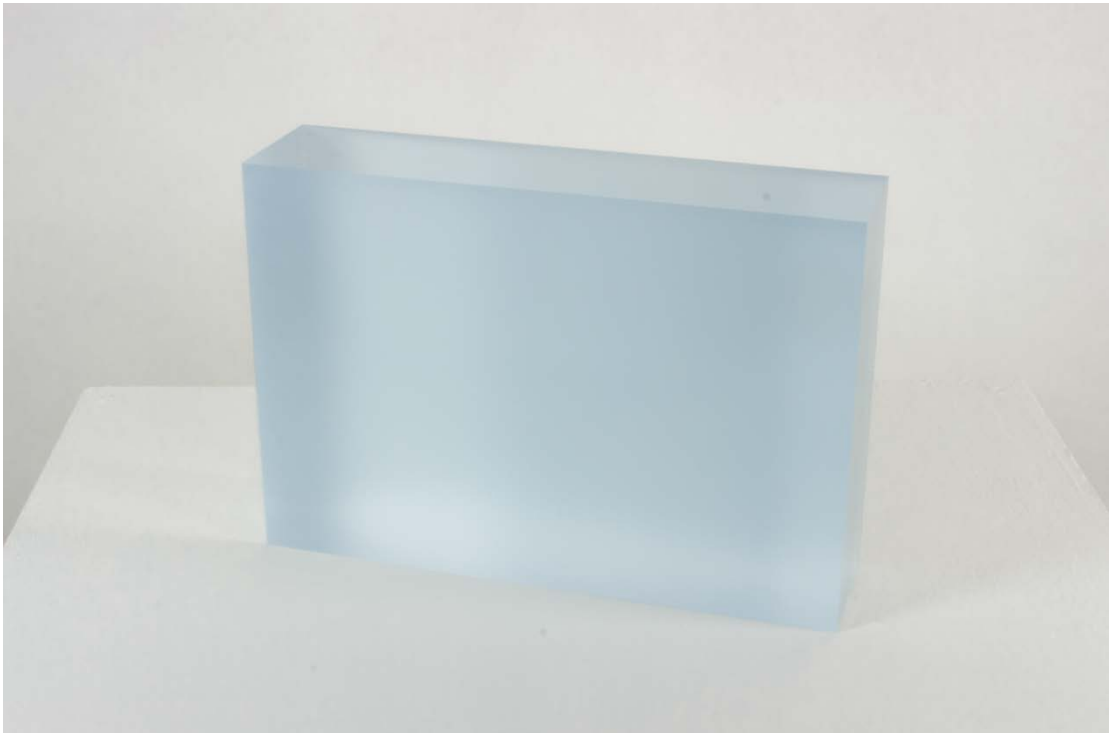


Fig. 132 Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days), 2019-2020

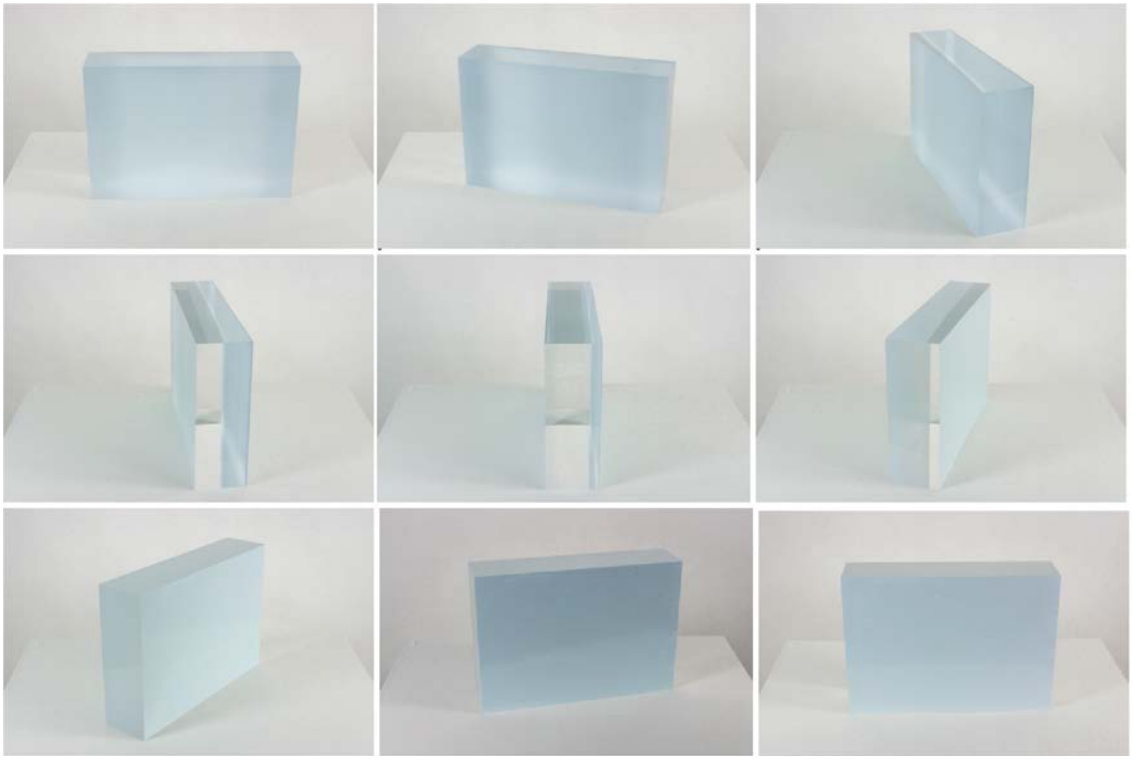


Fig. 133 Skyscape III (in memory of those foggy days), 2019-2020

Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 134 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 135 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 136 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 137 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 138 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 139 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021

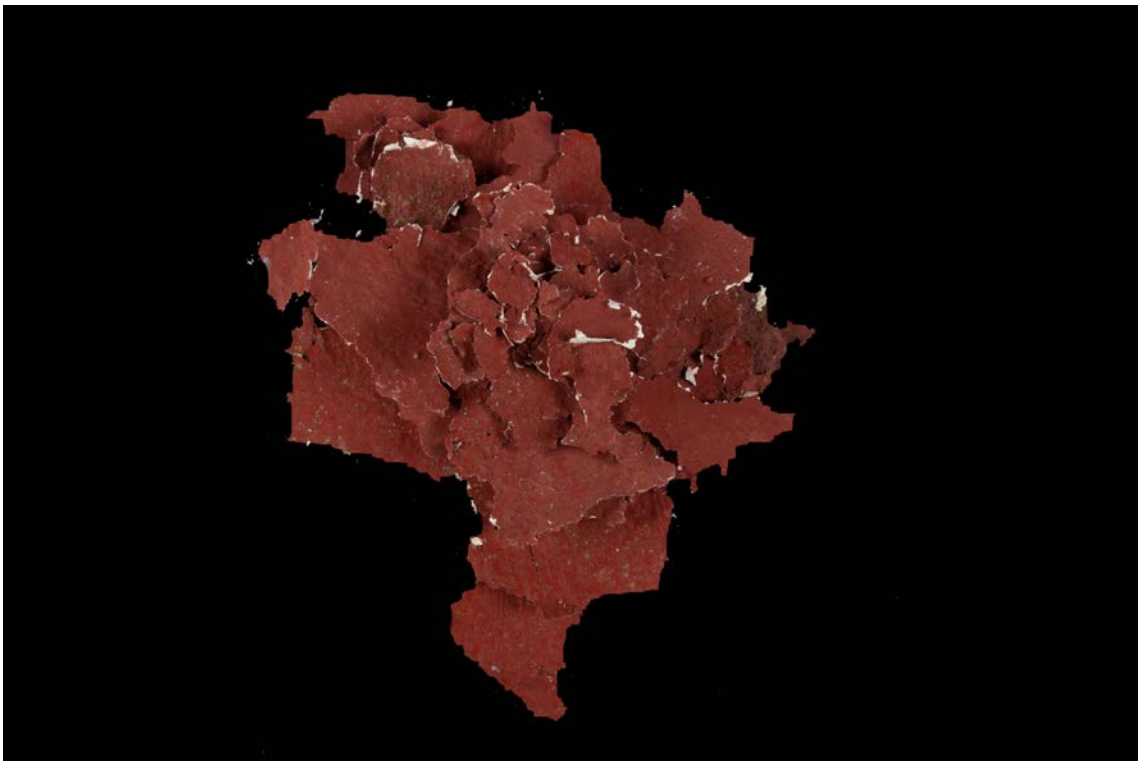


Fig. 140 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 141 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 142 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021



Fig. 143 Wall Diaries Series I: Remains, 2021

Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 144 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 145 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 146 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 147 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 148 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 149 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 150 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 151 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 152 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 153 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 154 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 155 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021



Fig. 156 Wall Diaries Series II: Photographs, 2021

Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021



Fig. 157 Sequence of Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021

Video: https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/wall-diaries



Fig. 158 Sequence of Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021

Video: https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/wall-diaries



Fig. 159 Sequence of Wall Diaries Series III: Videos, 2021

Video: https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/wall-diaries

Wind Diaries, 2021

Series of 4 pieces measuring 29,7 x 42 cm.
Black pen on watercolour paper



Fig. 160 Wind Diaries I, 2021.



Fig. 161 Wind Diaries II, 2021



Fig. 162 Wind Diaries III, 2021



Fig. 163 Wind Diaries IV, 2021

Final Exhibition

Photographs



Fig. 164 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 165 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 166 Final Exhibition, 2022

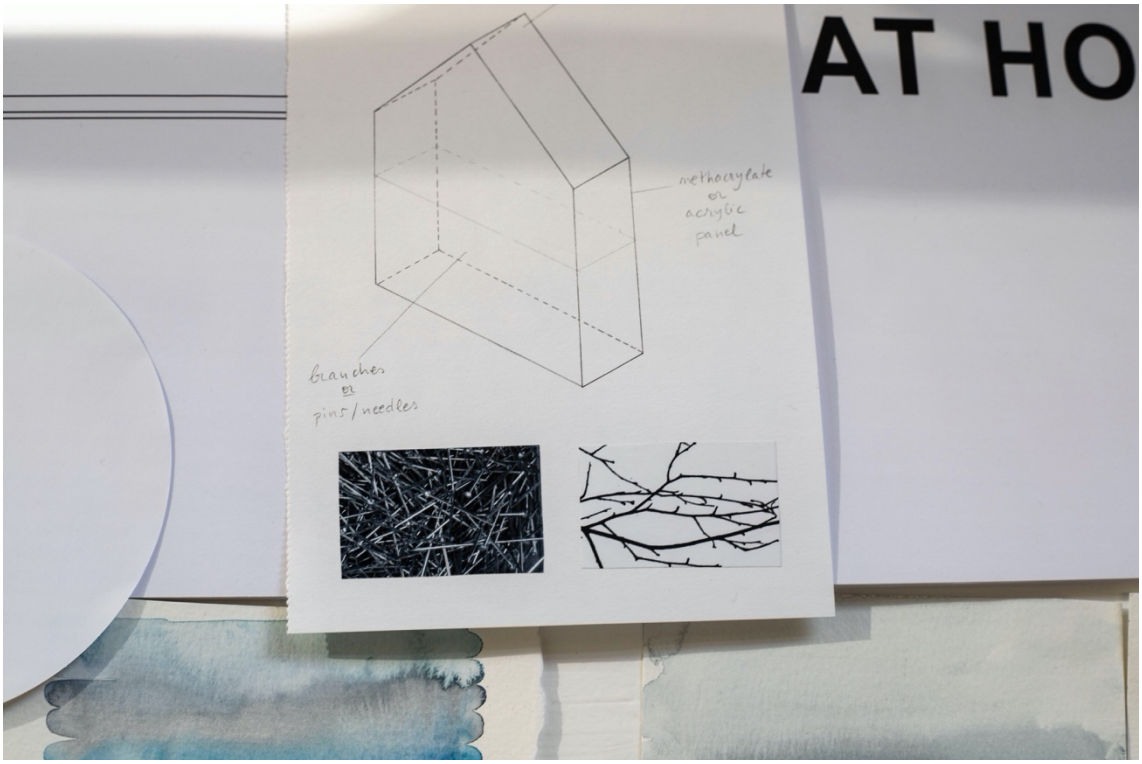


Fig. 167 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 168 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 169 Final Exhibition, 2022

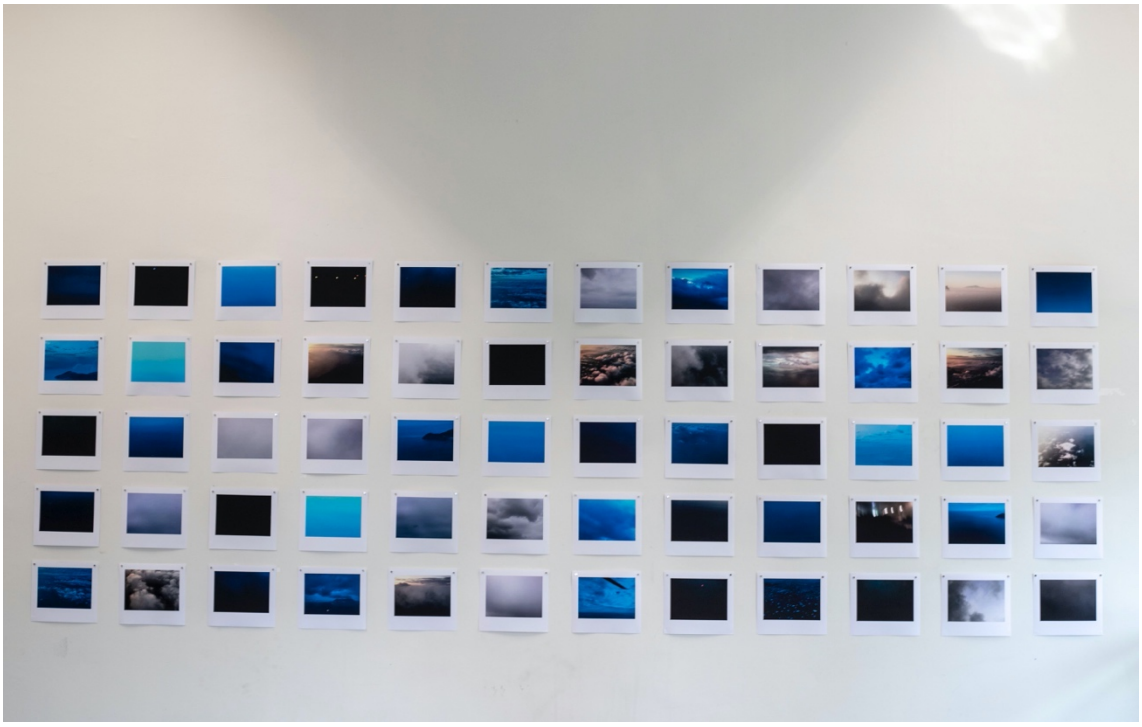


Fig. 170 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 171 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 172 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 173 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 174 Final Exhibition, 2022



Fig. 175 Final Exhibition, 2022

Final Exhibition

Video:

https://www.blancarodriguezbeltran.com/video-exhibition



Fig. 176 Sequence of the Final Exhibition, 2022 (video)



Fig. 177 Sequence of the Final Exhibition, 2022 (video)

BLANCA RODRIGUEZ BELTRAN

BEING HOME



"The Arena", RHG.46, Headington Hill Campus, OX3 0BP, Oxford.

Exploring the idea of home and belonging through art practice.

14.3 - 20.4.2022
10:30 - 17:00

blancarobel@gmail.com

Fig. 178 Final Exhibition, 2022 Poster

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Fig. 179 Final Exhibition, 2022 Poster