



## MATERIAL LEGACIES IN THE LANDSCAPE OF THE LOST

Material Legacies is the culmination of a four-year research collaboration with The Hospice of St Francis, a palliative care charity. This collaboration explores how artistic making supports the bereaved to negotiate their own approach to translating and finding a place for the dead in their lives.

Within this process, biography is distilled into three distinct experiences, which collect a range of materials capturing the essence of the deceased's archive. This deep interaction advocates how a material approach to loss can expand our personal and aesthetic relationships with the dead. These experiences provide momentary glimpses of relationships – through material and technological composition – that unfold unique stories of love and loss. Visitors are invited to connect with these experiences on a visceral level. The materials used become a language that is refined through the iterative process of making, as stories of the dead are told through the bereaved's physical engagement with materials and their collaborations with creative practitioners.

The exhibition as a whole expresses a new materiality of death that blends narrative, craft and archives. This promotes an approach to thinking through making that supports the co-creation of loved one's physical and digital legacies.

### CREDITS

Material Legacies was created for the Stephen Lawrence Gallery by Stacey Pitsillides as an outcome of her PhD in Design. This research is in association with the University of Greenwich (Creative Professions and Digital Art) and has been supported by The Hospice of St Francis and Goldsmiths, University of London. The works exhibited have been produced by Freda Earl, Sam Durant and Anne Marshall, in collaboration with Elwin Harewood and Stacey Pitsillides. Sound design by Aiden Finden and projection design and 3D mapping by Giulia Brancati. With thanks to Greenwich Bright for the filmed interviews.

### CHAZ WAS 'ERE



In Sam's space you will encounter multi-coloured felt mushrooms, that were made for a mushroom-obsessed teenager. Here, the walls speak of washing machines, felting needles and her voice preserved in a dictaphone. She describes the mushrooms as gaudy, cheesy and perfect. They reflect the adolescent relationship with faultless clarity honouring a person that is known longer in death than in life. The process of hundreds of pin pricks make the coloured felt solidify, forming around the interaction as each mushroom is nurtured into existence.

### LONGER IN DEATH THAN IN LIFE

*Sam had known Charly when they had both attended a school for girls and hated it; they were both mischievous characters and gelled with each other almost immediately. For Sam, Charly was a true friend even from the start, asking to move her room closer to Sam to make her feel welcome. Then came the insider jokes and group connectors, such as going out down a treacherous alley to smoke and constantly stepping in 'badger poo' until this became a 'thing' or seeing a mushroom and becoming incredibly excited, with Charly shouting shrilly 'OMG its Nature'.*

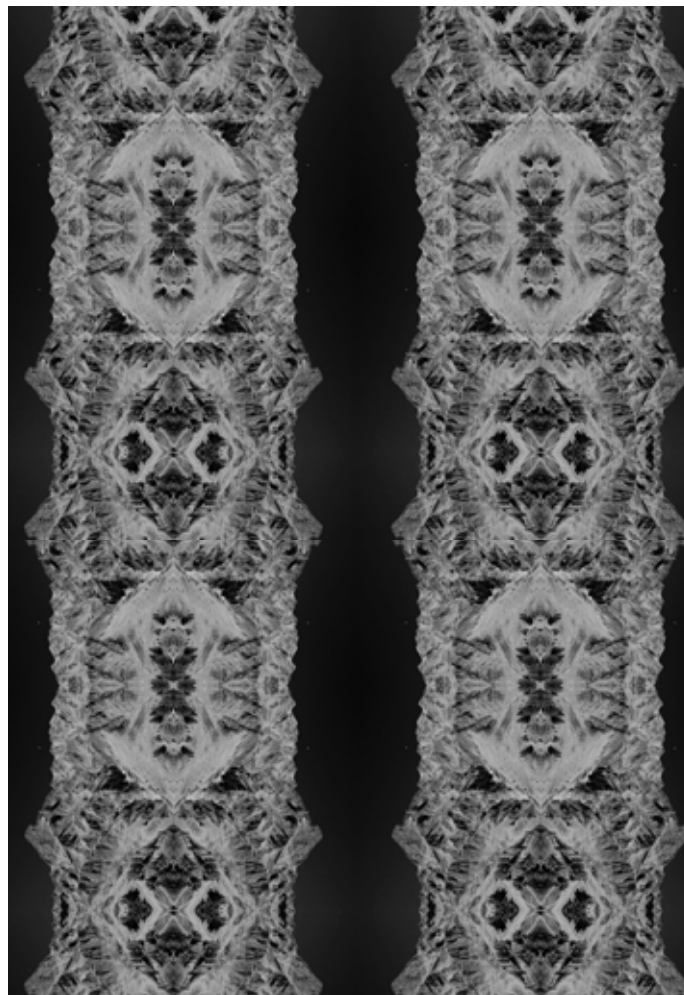
Sam's reflections on Charly are also reflections on her own youth, intermingled with her guilt of not having kept in contact when they both left to go to university. The liveliness of the description shows the qualities of their friendship and their playful engagement with nature that formed such a strong part of their school experience. The mushrooms and nature mentioned are entwined in this experience

and her understanding of Charly, despite who Charly may have become later in life, for Sam the mushrooms will always remain as her things. They evoke Sam's recollections including: pictures of her with a mushroom on her shoulder; or the fact that she always had a mushroom birthday cake. Her admission that they have known each other longer in death than in life shows that this bereavement is as much for the absence of contact as it is for the person themselves. Charly will always be a mischievous teenager to Sam, and the wall of mushrooms incorporates this relationship.

Sam reflects on their lack of digital heritage stating "there are no photos of us together on Facebook." Due to the timing of their friendship there is a transition between physical and digital things so although this was not their place, Sam uses Facebook to ask people to wear colour to her funeral, as this was how she imagined Charly would have wanted it. She describes Facebook as a good bookend for their relationship. They were not together there but this is one of the strongest triggers to remember and a place to put all these feelings, allowing for the internal process to develop. Sam's self-observed instances of grief online also give glimpses into her participation in this research. She claims it is a way of inscribing her Charly onto another reflective surface and exploring how she is able to confirm her life.

### MAKING MUSHROOMS

The mushrooms adorning the walls are made out of felt. It is not a material that Sam has used before. In fact, she states that she would never consciously choose to use it as it reminds her of craft fairs and she is usually a painter, but she enjoys the repetitive process of poking the tiny needle in hundreds of insertions that make the soft and loose strands submit and solidify into a hard mushroom-like structure. She parallels this to her experience of the memory of Charly, that through stabs of repetition over the years the memory becomes solidified and gains a solid form which constitutes their relationship. She also chooses to make the mushrooms colourful to mimic her desire for people to wear colour at Charly's funeral. Their organic layout and mossy smell transports us to Sam and Charly's forest.

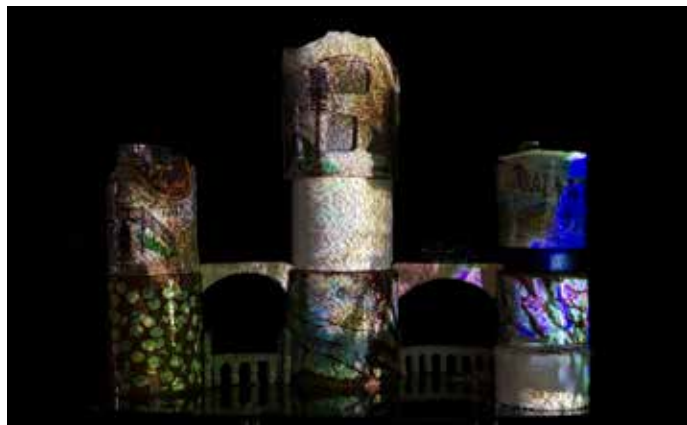


Stephen Lawrence Gallery  
28th February – 24th March 2017





## ABOVE AND BELOW



Freda's space contains clay, one of the oldest building materials in the world, which is overlaid with projections that play with light and motion, depicting Victor's life. Clay is a material Freda is very familiar with, having been a ceramicist and teacher of ceramics for many years. The choice to work with ceramics and narrative combines Freda and Victor's unique materiality. Stories weave through the geology of the Swiss Alps, commencing with a young boy trainspotting during the 2nd World War, right through to the dying man watching Michael Portillo's Great British Railway Journeys mediating his final journey. Freda states that at the beginning of our collaboration, three months after her husband's death, it felt very necessary to talk about Victor and make this artefact to honour him. However over the two year collaboration, the emphasis is shifting to a playful re-imagining.

### SEDIMENTED LIVES

As Freda is very familiar with clay she is able to consider its properties deeply and gauge how to incorporate the geology of the Swiss mountains into the nature of her vessels. Freda's attention to detail shows how she is attempting to instil the qualities of the Swiss mountain in her clay. This is not a process of illustrating the mountain or interpreting it in a nostalgic way from memory but about integrating it, as best she can, into the materiality of her physical experiments and iterations with clay. The care that is taken to produce the granular effect of years of layering and the entangled nature of the Swiss mountains is considered deeply. The

Swiss mountains are beautifully entangled in Freda's and Victor's lives. By paying attention to their geology Freda can reflect on the sedimentation of years of marriage where the clay is active in gathering her thoughts. The projections translate Freda's biography of Victor's visually. The trains embody him and speak of his life and loves.

### A LIFE OF TRAINS

*Wartime 1940 - 45 playing cricket in a field, lookout yells "train coming". Drop everything and run up footbridge to see steam trains from all over UK with extraordinary selection of wagons. Images of bombed trains. Start of lifelong love affair. After the war. 1947 onwards. Metropolitan train to school. I believe the old fashioned train was called the Bug. Boys doing boy things in compartment trains. Caps thrown out of window. National service train journey to North Wales and Germany. Trains ran past the barracks. University. Train journeys to and from Oxford with huge bags of books. Train from Sawston and later Cambridge to London to work at The Economist. Little Catherine used to hear the trains hoot two miles away and say Daddy's coming. Commuted everyday to London working for The Economist in Finance and for the GLC. For years we had day trips, away days all over the country covering as many miles as possible there was an unlimited ticket for 24 hours. Railway holidays all over Europe starting with a sample trip to France which kept him happily busy for months with the timetable working out the best way to see as much of the country as possible! We didn't miss much. Couchette across Belgium, through the Ardennes to Basel where everyone woke at 5 to watch the most amazing high speed shunting operation in Europe. Through the Alps (literally; in corkscrew tunnels) to Italy and back in time for dinner. Who wants to drive when you can both look out of the window of a train in comfort? Eurostar trips to Paris. Last one impossibly difficult because of MSA. Never again. Taken down to the station to watch steam trains going through Berkhamsted. No more travel but watched Michael Portillo's Great British Railway Journeys from his bed. The places were so familiar that his worsening eyesight did not prevent him from enjoying them.*

## LARK ASCENDING



Anne's room captures the breadth of the grieving process in textural detail as a body of works move the viewer from dark to light and static to fluid. Traveling across the works through some of those dark things. They speak of fingers pressing paint into canvas and paper, rubbed raw as though they have been digging in the earth.

### FROM CEREBRAL TO TACTILE

Anne states "I am aware that there have been a few moments when I have realised that something has somehow 'moved' or 'changed.' I am a very cerebral person and words are important to me so this process has accessed something different and deeper... It has reminded me that I enjoy the creative process. Tim was extremely creative in many areas of his life so participating has enabled me to think about those aspects and to 'draw near to him'." This reflection encapsulates Anne's own understanding of how the process has impacted her and shifted her relationship with her husband Tim. By considering what to make and how to work with materials she has been given time and space to think about the meaning of her husband's life, considering the things that were important to him and translating them into her own life.

As well as being an Anglican vicar Tim was also a composer and it is this element that Anne has been interested in capturing. The pieces hold a kind of textural musicality that she identifies with in an intimate way. She has in a sense translated the music within the pieces themselves. The movement within the pieces that Anne refers to and the thickness

or thinness of the whiting function as textual crescendos and diminuendos within the collection, which reflect how her own emotions grow and soften over time. The limited colour palette of black and white emphasises the textures and focuses the eye upon the contrasts. There are two main inspirations that embody the works: Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* a piece of musical composition that Tim loved in life and a poem from Prudentius that was spoken at his graveside.

### PRUDENTIUS IN CANVAS

Take him, earth, for cherishing,  
to thy tender breast receive him.  
Body of a man I bring thee,  
noble even in its ruin.

Once was this a spirit's dwelling,  
by the breath of God created.  
High the heart that here was beating,  
Christ the prince of all its living.

Guard him well, the dead I give thee,  
not unmindful of his creature  
shall he ask it: he who made it  
symbol of his mystery.

Comes the hour God hath appointed  
to fulfil the hope of men,  
then must thou, in very fashion,  
what I give, return again.

Not though ancient time decaying  
wear away these bones to sand,  
ashes that a man might measure  
in the hollow of his hand:

Not though wandering winds and idle,  
drifting through the empty sky,  
scatter dust was nerve and sinew,  
is it given to man to die.

Once again the shining road  
leads to ample Paradise;  
open are the woods again,  
that the serpent lost for men

Take, O take him, mighty leader,  
take again thy servant's soul.  
Grave his name, and pour the fragrant  
balm upon the icy stone.