

You'll never know

A Spatial Narrative

Begins on ground level with footsteps. Footsteps that will take me around the gallery. As I approach the front entrance I am greeted by a security guard waiting to open the door. The door opens. I nod with gratitude, but he doesn't respond. The entrance *space* is large and open. Artificially lit with a slight orange dim. The *space* is minimal, no signs, no *map* of direction, order of sequence, preferred navigational route. I am left to make my own decision. I am given options.

Do I *move* forwards and into the gallery straight head?

Or do I turn, right?

To the right side of me a few steps in, there is stair case. It reflects the industrious and minimal nature of the entrance *space*. Sparse and white. The staircase reminds me of a Rachel Whiteread sculpture. As if it is the remains of an exhibition, left to become an integrated architectural feature. I make my decision, turning right towards the first gallery *space*. Tucked into the corner of the entrance, outside the first gallery is a display table with the clinical organisation of publications. An opportunity to read and perhaps reflect after my visit. They appear untouched, with the surrounding chairs perfectly tucked under and inline.

As I *step* forward and into the first gallery *space* there is a guard. Obscured from sight at first, standing in the bottom right corner rustling the coins in his pockets. A soundtrack to the *space*. I am the only visitor in the *space*, yet I feel far from alone. The sculptures I am fronted with contain a bodily presence. The guard moves on from his standing post. He starts pacing around awkwardly, trying to avoid being in my *line* of sight. That feeling of being watched. There remains a variable distance between us that detracts any awkwardness. Often opposite sides with the work becoming the middle men. With a view of the entire gallery, the two sculptures frame the *space*. Situated within the centre, they are displayed in their simplest *form*. Solid, rectangular blocks of minimalist purity. Their reduced aesthetic reflects the space they situate themselves in. They are the formal organisation of material in relation to the space.

The leading sculpture is shorter in height than the one behind. This allows me to peer over and across its *surface*. The top plane takes my eyes around the perimeter edges. The far-right edge appears rippled. Around ten inches of the back block can be seen. The *space* between isn't visible, with the second sculpture appearing directly behind as part of my background. The flat white walls framing the remaining view above. *Moving* anticlockwise, a sudden stream of sunlight bursts through the large square frosted panes, illuminating the *space*. Not strong enough to cast any shadows but enough to wake the *space*. Despite its intensity the flat white walls keep the *space* cool. *Moving* closer, my eyes concentrate onto the top corner. Studying the marks that remain. The *process* in construction. These marks reflect the particularization bestowed on the material by the artistic activity. They give the sculpture its own *story* to tell.

The shorter side has two long narrow indentations. Marks that resemble a packaging crate. As if the blocks had been tightly packed and contained before being released within the *space* it now stands. The sculpture forever bears its processed scars. The guard moves again. The sound of rustling coins continues. The *space* between the two sculptures has Tension. It also makes way for an opportunity to sense scale.

Are these sculptures proportionate to the *space*?

How many of these blocks could the *space* contain?

As my eyes run left to right in a comparative state, each sculpture imposes and reinforces its own weight. I cannot help but think about my own weight, intrinsically feeling smaller than I physically am. My bodily weight shifting to the floor, my feet feeling heavy. Because of the physical weight I read them as bodies. Now I know I'm not alone. This sense of weight has somehow become fundamental in acknowledging my own human existence. Despite the texture that appears rough, there is a desire to touch. I am convinced I already know what they will feel like and yet I am still drawn in.

Could I sweep a hand past?

Would such weight contain warmth?

A slight touch that hopefully the ever so wary guard wouldn't acknowledge.

The back block is at eye level. Suddenly those extra inches have provided dominance. I begin to measure myself up against the work. I start to consider the proportion of both my body and the *space*. I'm becoming increasingly aware of the *space*. The space that is occupied, the space that isn't. There is a consideration to the spatial possibilities these rectangular blocks could take. Towards the back of the *space* the sculptures appear more mauve with bursts of cracked rust.

The material appearing deep with layers of rough skin like texture. Despite the resemblance of mauve, there isn't one dominant colour. With every *step* the colour appears different. The texture further questions the process. Anti-clockwise around to the back of the sculpture and the gallery, the shorter sculpture is now removed from view. It is here that I have no sight over the block and beyond. My eye line matching with the top of the sculpture, my body shifting towards the back wall. I am Critically attentive. The guard completely out of site, the bodily presence of the sculpture is now rather provoking. The mass and overbearing weight is in full force. I look right to see the gallery's white wall, reminding me of my position. The sunlight fades.

Have the gallery lights gone out?

Along with the faded light comes silence. The guard *walking* back to his original corner. The rustling of change is no more. It is as if the gallery has closed.

The sculpture darkens in colour. *Time* playing its continuous role in the perceptive colouration of these sculptures. With its darkened tone comes the bearing increase of weight. Imposing a gravitational load on the *space*. A permanent footprint. The wall directs me around the corner of the work and onto the side that aligns me with the *spaces* entrance. A few steps forward and rotating to the left, centralises myself with the sculptures side. My eyes run from the floor and up the face of the block. The sculpture standing in alignment to the window. There is all but three inches of white wall before the window recesses back to the frosted pane and an obscured view of a *space* beyond the gallery walls.

Turning back towards the entrance and moving forwards I look slightly up and to the right where colour has invaded the walls. The white has been broken. A green exit sign next to the outline of an oversized hidden door. A slim thin black frame. Flush with the wall to prevent any impact on the *space*. It poses no distraction. I continue to *step* forward. All that remains is the perspective view through the opening taking me back out into the main entrance. A glimpse of the opening into the next *space* is in sight, but my eyes very much focus on the back wall directly in my forward-facing line of sight. It provides an interesting focal point.

The view of the publications, spread from side to side across multiples high shelves. An unreachable library.

Who are they for?

Below two receptionists appear highly concentrative and heads are down towards their computer keyboards. The sound of *taping* away, yet consciously attempting to be discreet and control the noise they make. Any sound, just like the rustling change, becomes dramatic as it echoes throughout the open *space*.

As I *move* towards the second gallery I notice just how artificially lit the main entrance is. It appears to be the only *space* lit with that amber ambience. The walls appear to be glowing with warmth. The white cube effect removed. The wandering guard pushes the hidden door behind me open. The squelch of the rubber, as the door closes, breaks a *space* of general silence. As the opening to the next gallery *space* become more visible I am fronted with what appears to have taken over the *space*. Burnt orange in colour, the sculpture optically warps and wraps itself in and amongst the space. The curves moving away from a central position.

Two guards are standing in the *space*. One caught on his phone as I make myself visibly. Before addressing the sculptures entrance to the left, I notice wide black *line*. A void between wall and ceiling. A *space* beyond. Against the white wall the oxidised orange sets bright. There is a strong almost break like line between sculpture and the white *space* it sits within.

As I move towards the sculptures entrance, the enormity is unveiled. My eyes split running along and into the sculpture as well as along the floor and towards the end of the gallery. Against the back wall, there is a distinctive trapezoid shape created with this clash of white and burnt orange. Once in line with the entrance of the sculpture the *space* appears to enclose on itself. Producing a dark triangular perspective. A route into the depths of the sculpture. Uninviting in one sense but intriguing none the less. The sculpture somehow invites my body forward, still perhaps taken back by the enormity of this cavern like space. Up the top a slot, no larger than two inches wide provides the only light.

This is my *map*.

This strip of light that prevents the feeling of entering complete darkness. The sound of a chair belonging to the reading table is dragged across the concrete floor. An awkward sound, but somehow rather fitting with the sculpture I am engaging with.

My body arches back. I find myself again distinguishing my size against the sculpture. The perception of a space smaller than my body unease's me. There is however a shard of light at the end of the first passage. *Walking* forwards and down the sculptures entrance I no longer find myself looking forwards at eye level. Knowing the only direction, I focus on the strip of light and the view peering above the sculptures towering walls.

My body weight and stance is over to the left, away from the angled plane inclining towards me. That remote sense of potential collapse. Utter darkness potential imposing itself on me.

How is this not falling?

A look over my shoulder and back towards the entrance confirms how dark the space I have entered is. Black. The outer gallery space appearing lighter than before. A white triangular *space* framed between the sculptures walls.

Have I entered a new *place* within the existing site?

As I turn the first corner, completing an almost 180 degree bend the *space* opens slightly. An openness I was somewhat unprepared for. I naturally feel forced to lean back shifting the weight onto my heels with my back almost pressed tight up against the sculptures curved wall. The plane that just a few steps ago was leaning towards me, is now in reverse. The gallery ceiling is now visible noticing for the first time the skylights above providing the only source of light within the space. My eyes continue to bounce back and forth along the floor. Up and down the sculpture, travelling the length of it. I have no real awareness of my relation to the gallery walls. I keep *walking*. Leaning in tangent with the sculpture to re-align my own body weight. The vertical alignment of both myself and the space is under constant question.

Once my body has overcome the stance and angles I am more relaxed. Before embarking on the second bend I notice a slight lift in the material as it skews around, still angling away from me.

Intentional Or Unintentional?

The gap between sculpture and floor is exposed and the structural *process* is unveiled slightly. The continued steps taking me around the next bend are much slower.

The gradient less sharp. Here the space is certainly at its brightest. I no longer consider myself to be *walking* within a sculpture but indeed walking within a *space*. My *walking* pace has slowed. I certainly feel aware of my own presence and indeed my own isolation.

The general rhythm of my body dealing with time in relation to this space. There is a Labyrinth quality to this space and I can sense this Changing from step to step. I Cannot remove myself. I know this, so I focus on the route. The route that offers me three colours. Oxide orange, mid grey and white. It becomes a trio motion of looking at the floor, wall and ceiling.

Floor, wall, ceiling.

This has become my Way of *walking*.

Over to the right there is another gap. This time a dark shadow line moves along one edge where the sculpture is again exposed. Another bend towards the left and back in on yourself once more. These *Intertwined paths* have giving their shape to the space. Each winding passage feels like *spaces* in themselves. *They weave places together*.

The sound of heels clonking on the concrete floor echo above the sculptures walls.

Passing through the outer gallery *space*. It sounds like they are walking away. The unknowingness and relationship between *space* and time once brought back to the forefront as the sound disappears. I feel spatially disorientated. This Turn anti clockwise reveals for the first time the thickness of the sculptures material. Around two inches thick suddenly there is an imponderable vastness to the weight. Weight shifts onto my left foot as I lean with the sculpture. The cascading card effect comes into full view as I can see three graduating planes learning towards the right.

My eyes run up and down at the long dark exposed edge. The sliced perspective offers me a divisional view point. For the first *time*, I have this split view of two labyrinth corridors. This formal viewpoint has distinguished the *spatial system*. I cannot help but re-look at the angle and consider how this is not falling. The sun goes in once again and a sense of being outside is evoked. Like being in a cave the walls become darker. The angle appears fiercer. I start to question my location within the gallery.

There is an embodied perception of loss. I am conscious of the object I have inhabited. I know I have followed a path which has created the environment I am within, but all time and awareness of location is lost.

Time is all that is on my mind. The absence of what has passed, the *route* that I have taken into the labyrinth. This relationship between the *path taken* and me, the *walker*. As I look down towards the floor, the junction appears to be perfectly aligned to the end of the towering plane. Almost like a marker for a *space*.

What will this new space be like?

I can't help but sense that the ending could be soon approaching. Until now my movements have been directed by the weight of the environment. I can't recall the last time I was in control of my body weight and pace.

As I turn the corner the *space* is completely transformed. The vastness of light flooding in has opened the cavern like sculpture up. This is the final corner. The final turn reveals the gallery wall and outer *space*. The white walls of the gallery have reappeared for what I have considered to be an eternity. White and light, these are my last few *steps*. A white triangle viewpoint is all my eyes focus on, directing me down the last tunnel like space. I re-engage with my bodies own alignment.

As I approach the exit I glance over my shoulder. The space curves around to the left and a dense black shadow marks the turning point. It shows in contrast just how much lighter this final straight has been. As I leave, the sculpture I feel incredibly exposed. The openness of the gallery has given my body lightness. I do not look back. My eyes concentrate on the space ahead. Over to the right-hand side the third opening directs me into the back gallery. Open and on show.

Just like the security guard leaning against the wall, caught reading his book.

He looks up and catches me standing in the *space*.

He puts his book away.

I wonder what time feels like for him?

Walking around in a constant monitoring loop. The odd pause in his walk as he attempts some reading. I walk towards the gallery opening and the security guard moves in the opposite direction. Staying close to the wall he walks along parallel to the sculpture I have just left. As I turn in line with the gallery entrance my line of sight is focused on the right-side wall. I notice another hidden door.

The scale of it as my eyes run along the black linear frame that is the only evidence. As I step forwards and into the back-gallery *space*, I am faced with the last remaining sculptures.

This space in contrast to the work is large. There is almost too much space.

The spacious quality of the gallery has made the sculptures appear soft. Like humble bodies standing present. One taller than the other. Located on the floor, the junctions between the concrete appear to create a perimeter frame. They almost propose a situated *space* for the work.

A *space* that I can enter?

As I *move* a few steps closer to the first cylinder, the sculpture takes form. The height becomes established. Just like the first gallery *space*, I start to analyse my own height in relation to the work. Measuring myself against the horizontal and planar elevation. There is space in-between the two sculptures. Large enough to pass through yet, I don't consider *walking* in-between. The two bodily forms are very much viewed as one. Viewing from the boundary floor lines I am consciously more comfortable. To walk in-between would consciously create disruption.

Being in the space furthest from the main front entrance certainly comes with the reduction of noise. Moments of pure silence at times, as I stand there listening to the passing of trains. This nature of silence adds coldness. Both to the space and work. The walls are a cold and gives the space a feeling of being derelict. The work feels relative to the place. Resembling two forgotten sculptures left to decay. As I move around towards the lower cylindrical sculpture, I am still yet to enter within the boundary markers. My eyes study the forms in meticulous detail. These two sculptures demonstrate their own construction. They showcase the process but are covered in working scars.

All I can think about is that the material resembles playdough.
Coloured flecks of purple and grey covered in marks on its surface.

Can forged steel be manipulated?

Despite knowing the material, and the toughness of steel. It appears as if someone had pressed their thumb into the material and scooped it away. Walking towards the exit and back into the main gallery *space* I offer myself one last look at these sculptures. Each work occupies a single space. The work is distinctive in forms of looking and thinking. There is a gravitational load to these last sculptures and upon viewing my body becomes equally balanced with both feet weighted towards the floor.

Moving back into the largest gallery I am once again overwhelmed by the enormity of the sculpture that I had previously walked through.

I won't be entering it again.

I move around to the right and seem to find myself closer to the white gallery walls. My weight shifting onto my right side. Even though the sculptures towering walls and weight is shifting away from me, I am still conscious of the potential collapse. Looking straight down the gallery. My eyes do not wander.

The guards are grouped together.

There appears to be a change over and as I pass them to turn right, the guards break up. I am more relaxed once I re-enter the reception space. The main doors now in sight. One last look over at the table, still identical in arrangement. Untouched. I walk forwards.

The door is opened.

The guard says nothing.

I exit.

A successive encounter and occasion. My experience is over but the concrete existence and memory of the journey very much built out of this fragmentary story lives on.

Dan Fardell
MA Interior & Spatial Design