Visual notes

The following record of my own visual work is arranged in an order which is intended to echo the themes developed in the main body of the text.[1] As mentioned in the Introduction, there has been a necessary interplay between ideas generated in both text and visual work with either activity propelling and determining the direction of the other. This 'dialogic' relation has been dynamic in that the pressures exerted by one mode of thinking and working required me to constantly monitor, reassess and, where necessary, alter the form and direction of the other mode. In the following section, I have presented particular examples of visual work produced throughout the project which are followed by short texts giving an indication of a work's context or the specific train of thought which led to its formation. The status of these 'notes' falls somewhere between that of discrete chapters and footnotes in that each instance contributes to the project as a whole whilst also serving as a means of framing and contextualizing a particular aspect of the main text. In that the main body of writing positions the reader in a *conceptual* sense, the following notes are additionally intended to position this reader (who is simultaneously a viewer) in a *visual* sense.

In addition, selected works produced in the later stages of the project were exhibited in a gallery space as part of the final submission. This exhibition was in turn intended to articulate both the *physical* and *narrative* relationship between image and viewer by orchestrating that viewer's journey through the gallery space. The pieces *From where you are standing* (see pages 134-137) and *4 intervals* (pages 141-146) were installed in adjacent areas within a rectangular exhibition space which was divided into two by a single partition wall (see plan on following page). In one of these areas, I constructed a temporary box-like space and hung the two large images (*From where you are standing*, illustrated on pages 134-135) on the opposing interior walls of this space. One was able to enter or exit via two openings in opposite sides of the construction. Once inside, the spectator was unable to see both pictures simultaneously and was literally enclosed within a space which was itself reminiscent of the room represented in the two pictures. Similarly, two small stereo viewing boxes containing stereo-scopic images of the same virtual room (see page 136) were hung directly outside the temporary room. The actual space between lens and picture surface in these small boxes appeared to extend the three dimensional space represented in the pictures themselves (when these were viewed through the lenses, that is) and could be likened to the actual space demarcated by the larger box-like structure. The viewer was free to move within the space occupied by these two works and in a sense, could be understood as moving in and out of the picture itself.

From where you are standing

installation views (see plan)

In the adjacent area demarcated by the dividing wall, I hung the four parts of *4 intervals* on each of the four walls such that they literally surrounded the viewer. These four pictures represent discrete segments of a virtual camera's 360° pan around an interior space in which various pieces of furniture and assorted objects can be seen. The gaps between the discrete frames - which, in effect, serve as *stills* from an absent or unrealized film - were intended to provoke an uncertainty about the temporal continuity of the series. Again, I wanted to draw an analogy between the real space in which the pictures were situated and the virtual space which they represented. As they moved around the space to look at each picture in turn, the spectator mimicked the moving viewpoint implied within the pictures themselves. Much as a stereoscopic picture could be seen as *incorporating* its viewer into a particular illusion of space, this spectator literally inhabited and became part of the work.

Exhibition plan (not to scale)
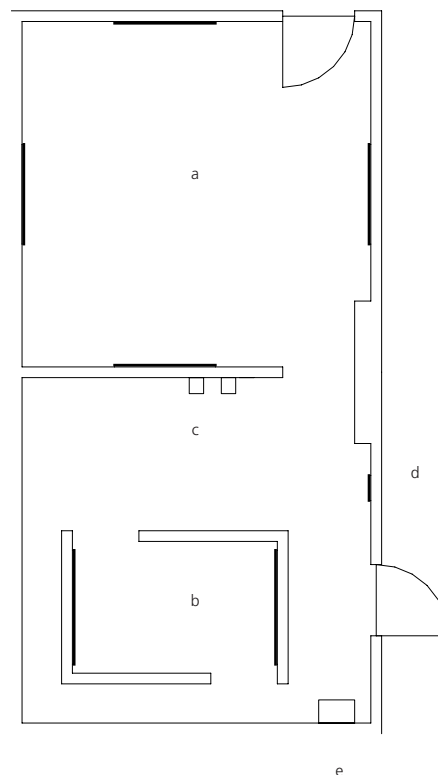
a. *4 intervals* (see pp141-144)

b. *From where you are standing* (pp134-135)

c. *From where you are standing (stereo version)* (p136)

d. *The road which disappears toward the horizon* (pp115)

e. *Steps* (pp123)

Figure 53

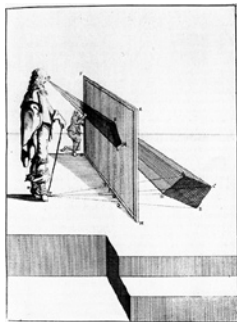Brook Taylor Plate from *New Principles of Perspective* London 1719
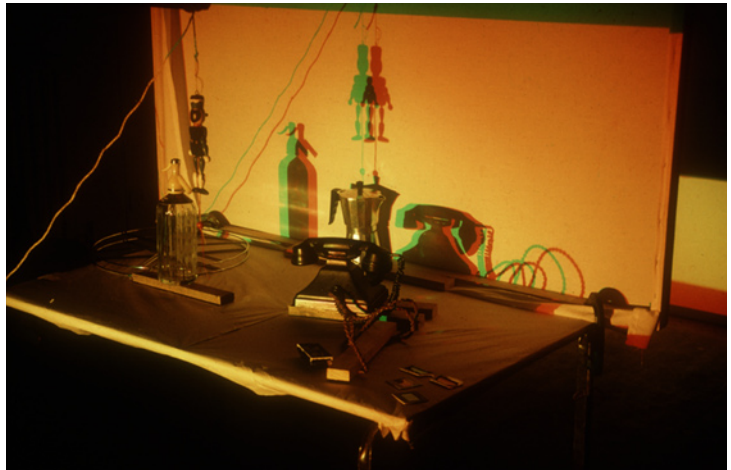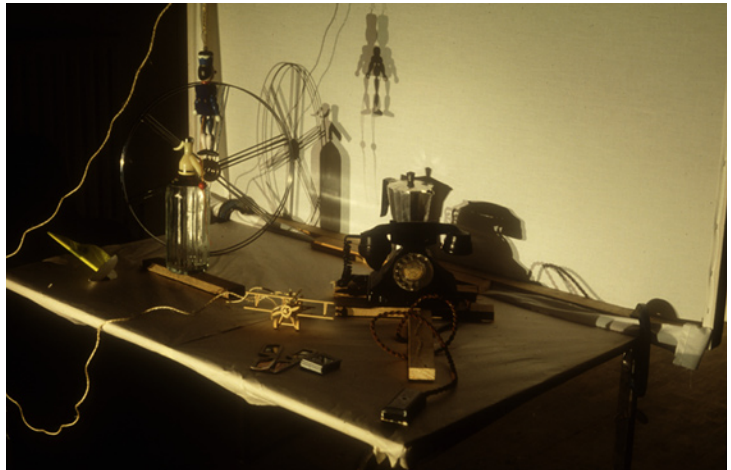

Figure 54

Jean du Breuil Plate from *La Perspective Practique* Paris 1649

Reconstruction of *The Miracle of the Shadows* described in chapter 1. The last image shows the view of the stereoscopic shadows projected onto the reverse side of the screen.

The Miracle of the Shadows

As discussed in chapter 1, this experiment described by Valyus, provided a
tangible demonstration of the relationship between object, picture plane and
image. The transparency of the way the image is formed recalls images from the
perspective treatises of Jean du Breuil and Brook Taylor amongst others where
the picture is depicted as a transparent plane intersecting the visual cone or
pyramid. 'The Miracle of the Shadows' configuration provided a useful analogy
for the relationship between digital space and its representation on a monitor
screen. It encouraged me to look more closely at perspective theories as well as
at the history and practice of optical and spectacular illusions. Duchamp's *Large
Glass* and his related work concerning optical illusions and the cast shadow
became a focus of attention after this recreation.
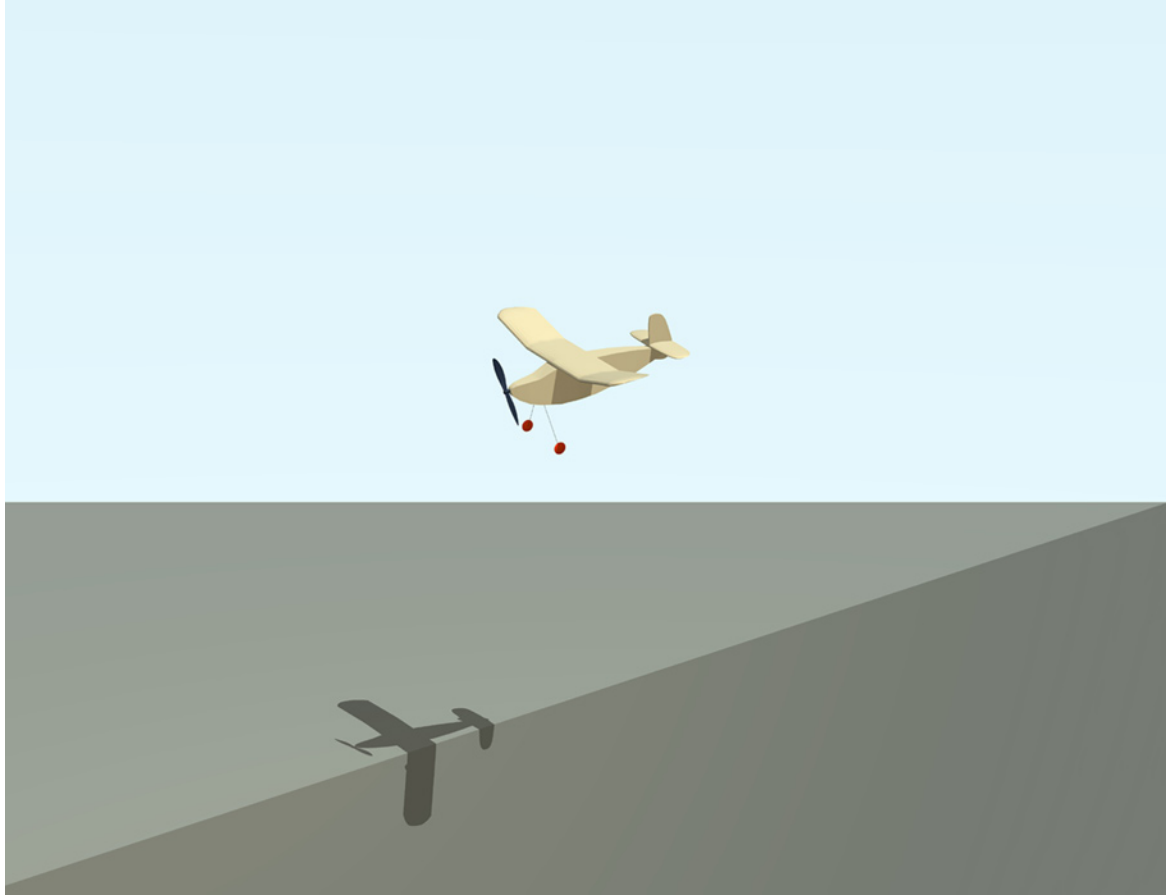
Souvenir

c-type photograph from computer generated image (47 x 61)

Souvenir

Confronted with the apparent infinity of digital space and given the labour intensive nature of modelling itself, one of my first concerns was to populate the space with objects which had some value in the sense that they had an appreciable reality of their own. The (model) aeroplane in this picture produced early in the project was based on plans of an *actual* model (a KeilKraft *Achilles*) and was constructed accurately to scale. As well as reflecting the novelty inherent in the new medium, I was interested in the relationship between an object, its image on the monitor screen - and, by extension, the picture plane - and that object's representation in digital space via its cast shadow. I was also interested in playing on the reading of a diagonal or orthogonal line which simultaneously defines both a flat and an inclined plane.
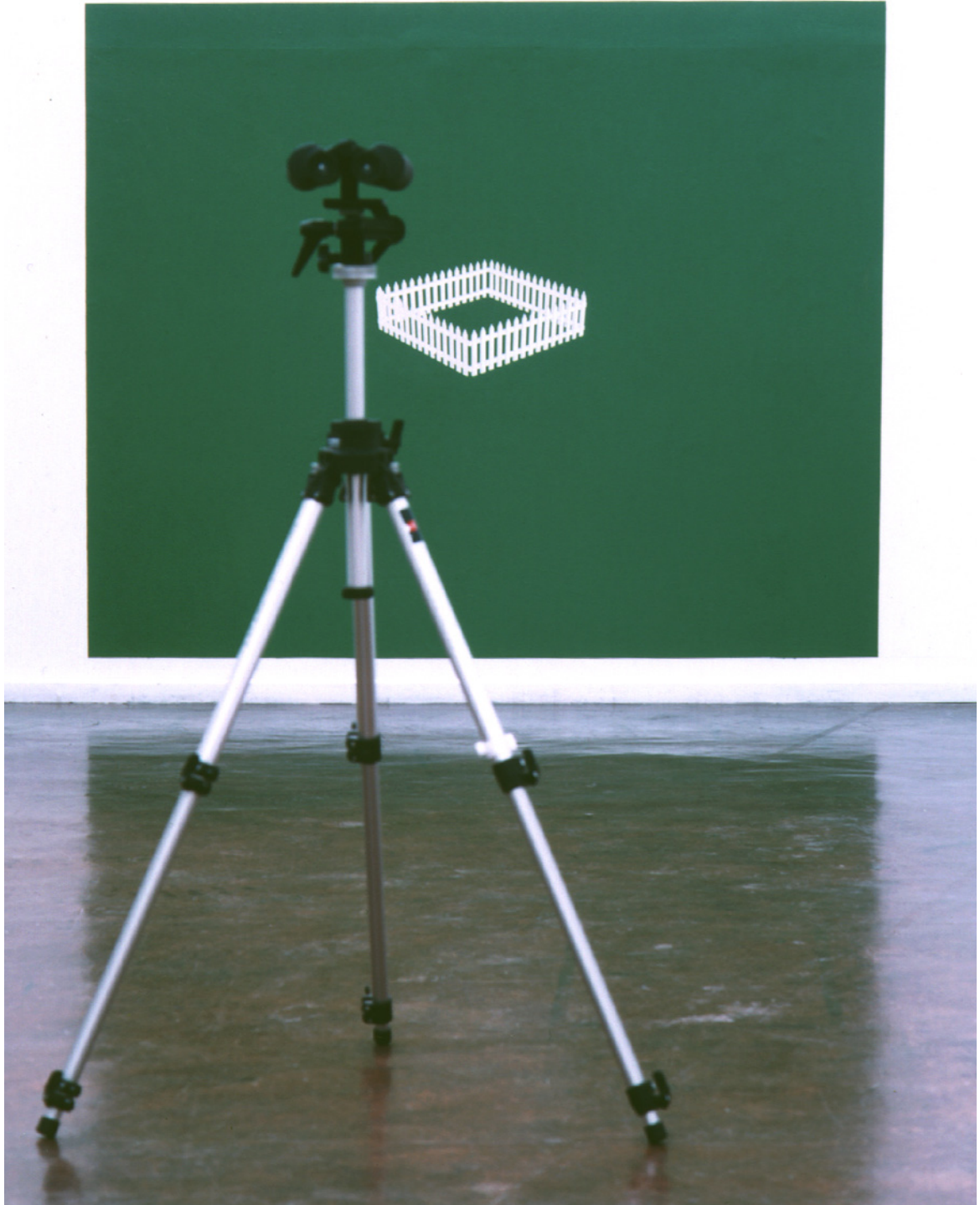
Here, there, over here, over there

wall drawing (183 x 244), binoculars, tripod
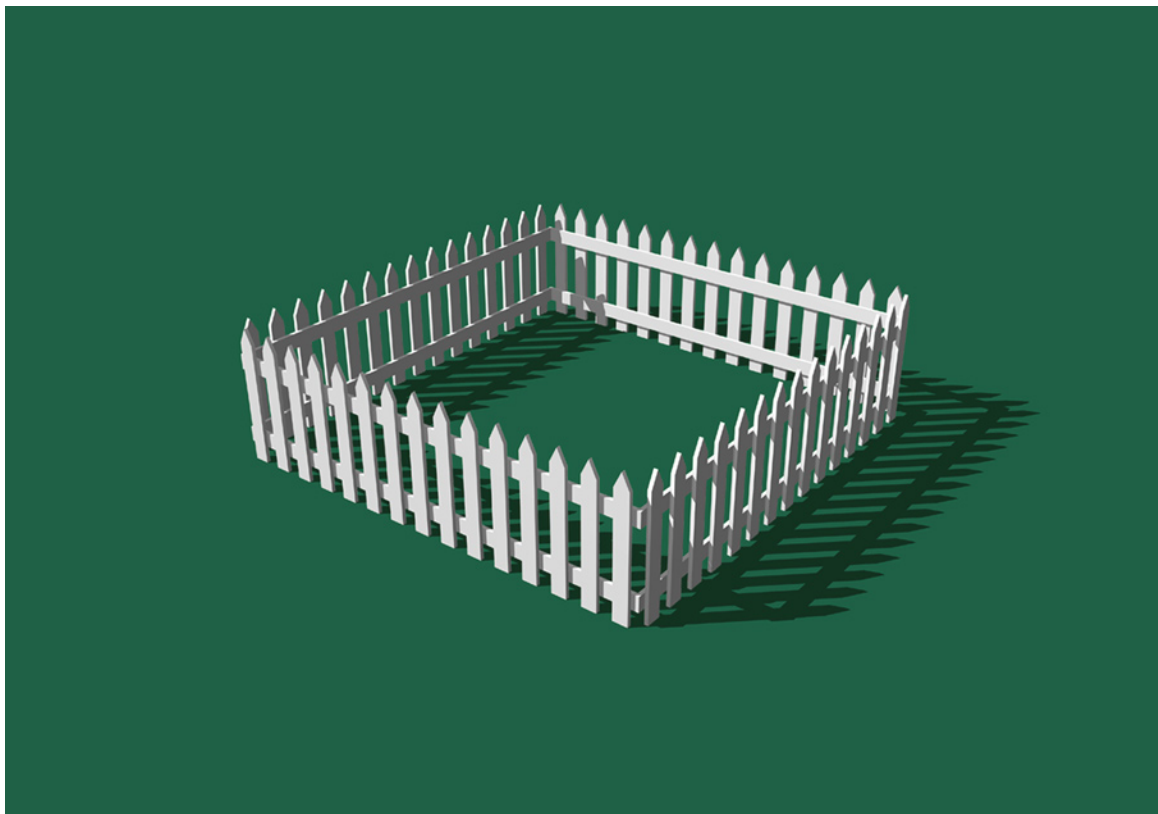
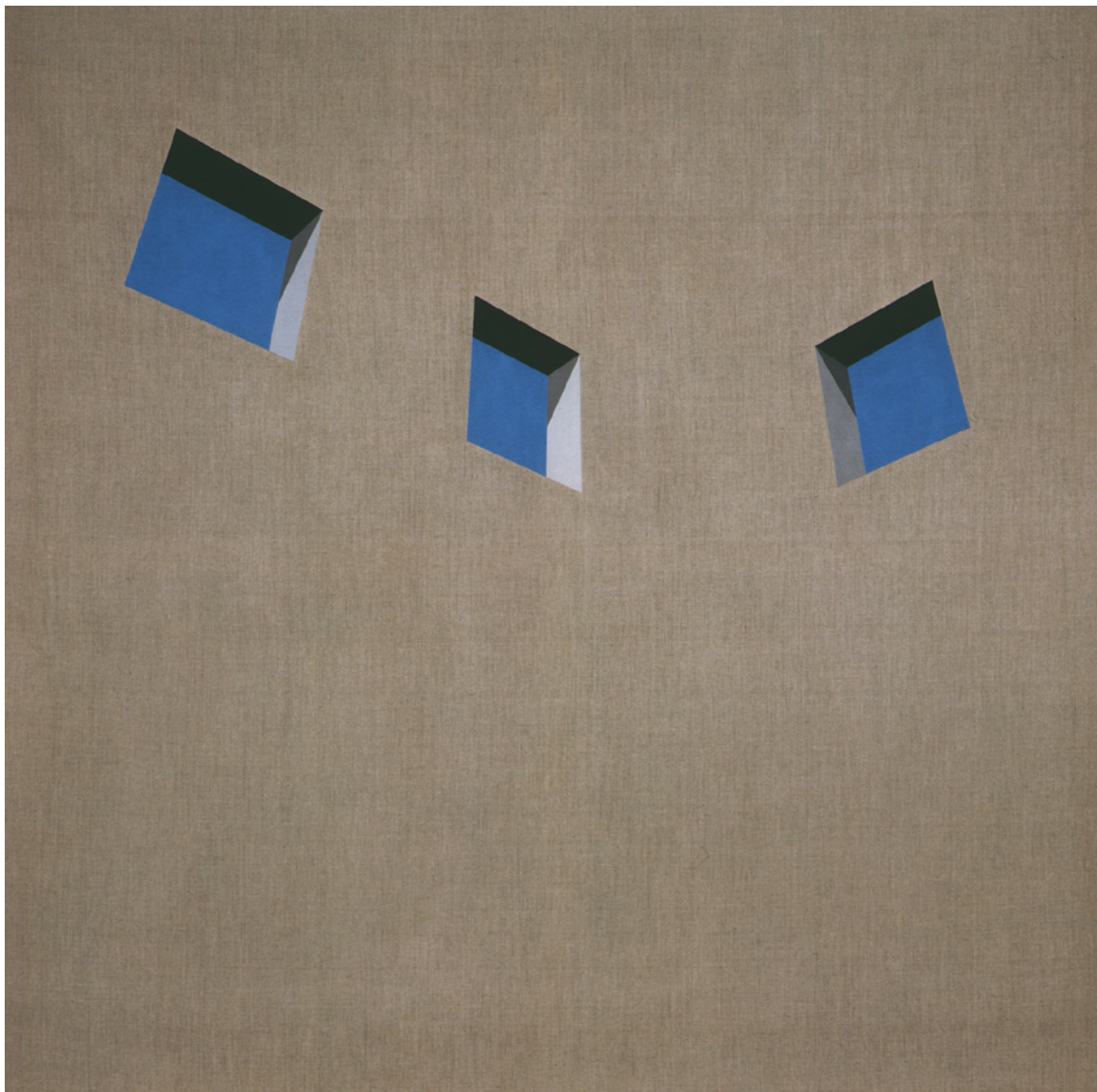*Here and there*

iris print (42 x 61)

Here, there, over here, over there - installation view

Here, there, over here, over there

The picket fence was chosen as a means of defining or claiming an idealized portion of (digital) space, and of framing a space within the picture which distinguished itself from its surroundings. I eventually used the model as part of an installation in a long narrow space where my intention was to play on the architectural layout by emphasizing the distance between viewer, picture and the implied (ideal) space within the picture. The thinking behind this work was very much bound up with my research into the history and theory of perspective and how the picture *anticipates* its viewer or in Todorov's terms, how the picture indicates the manner in which it is to be viewed.[2] I constructed a model of the gallery to scale in the computer and positioned the fence so that from a particular viewpoint, the perspective implied in the model appeared to continue the actual space of the gallery. The image of the fence was transferred to the gallery wall by projecting it from the correct viewpoint and drawing directly onto the wall. A pair of binoculars on a tripod was then positioned at the correct viewpoint. These served both as an invitation for the prospective viewer to peer at the picture which was some 40 feet away and as a representation of an ideal viewer. I wanted to encourage a narrative reading of the distance between the 'here' of the viewer and the 'there' of the picture but felt, in retrospect, that the work would have been more successful had the image been considerably smaller in scale with the binoculars providing the only effective means of viewing it.

2. "The text always contains an indication of the way it is to be read." Tzvetan Todorov 'Reading as Construction', *Genres in Discourse*, p46. Russell's notion of 'egocentric particulars' is also relevant here although I was not familiar with his ideas at the time this piece was made. See Bertrand Russell 'Egocentric Particulars', *Human Knowledge*, pp100-108.
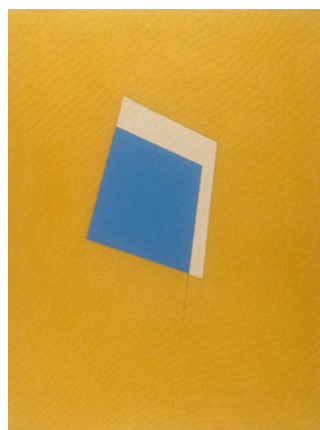
Three windows

acrylic on linen (183 x 183)

Windows 1992 (produced as part of my M.A.)

screenprint on c-type photograph (20 x 25.5)

Window

acrylic on canvas (40.5 x 30.5)


drawing from notebook (5 x 3.9)

Three windows

This picture forms part of an on-going series which was initially based on a work produced as part of my M.A. (*Windows* 1992) which treated the picture literally as a window. The earlier work consisted of a photograph of three high windows, each giving an uninterrupted view onto the sky. The areas corresponding to the sky were then over-printed by hand in a single, flat and unmodulated colour. In an attempt to equate the picture's implied viewpoint with the viewer's actual viewpoint, the picture was positioned high on the wall such that a viewer had to look up at it.

This work provided the impetus for a series of paintings which similarly attempted to position the viewer in way which would encourage a narrative reading of the actual space in front of the picture and the implied space behind it. In *Three Windows*, I constructed a simple architectural space within the computer, specified a particular viewpoint within this model and subsequently transferred the resulting image to a large canvas. When hung, the dimensions of the picture and the placement of the window-image on the picture plane were such that the viewer was inevitably encouraged to look up. In a more reflexive manner than in the previous example (*Here, there, over here, over there*), the perspective construction itself implies the viewpoint from which the picture should be seen. Arnheim calls this perceptual process, "spontaneous induction", where a shape projected in perspective enables the spectator to establish a sense of the surrounding space.[3]

3. Arnheim *Art and Visual Perception*, p291.

In addition, the canvas or linen was stained using acrylic paint so that the colour and the support occupy the same plane. That is, the paint does not sit *on* the picture surface but is integral with it. My thinking behind this approach was in response to a certain tendency in modernist painting characterized as post-painterly abstraction in which the representation of space is subordinated to an investigation of painting's essential attributes - colour, plane, support. In contrast, I wanted to puncture such paintings' flatness - the painting as a "curtain" as Clement Greenberg refers to it - by using the very same methods and materials as artists such as Kenneth Noland.[4] In *Three Windows*, the areas representing the windows themselves - that which represents the behind or the 'inside' to use Greenberg's term - are the only areas of canvas painted. In this sense, they become the 'figure' rather than the 'ground'.

4. Clement Greenberg 'Abstract, Representational, and so forth', *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* Boston: Beacon Press 1961, pp133-138.
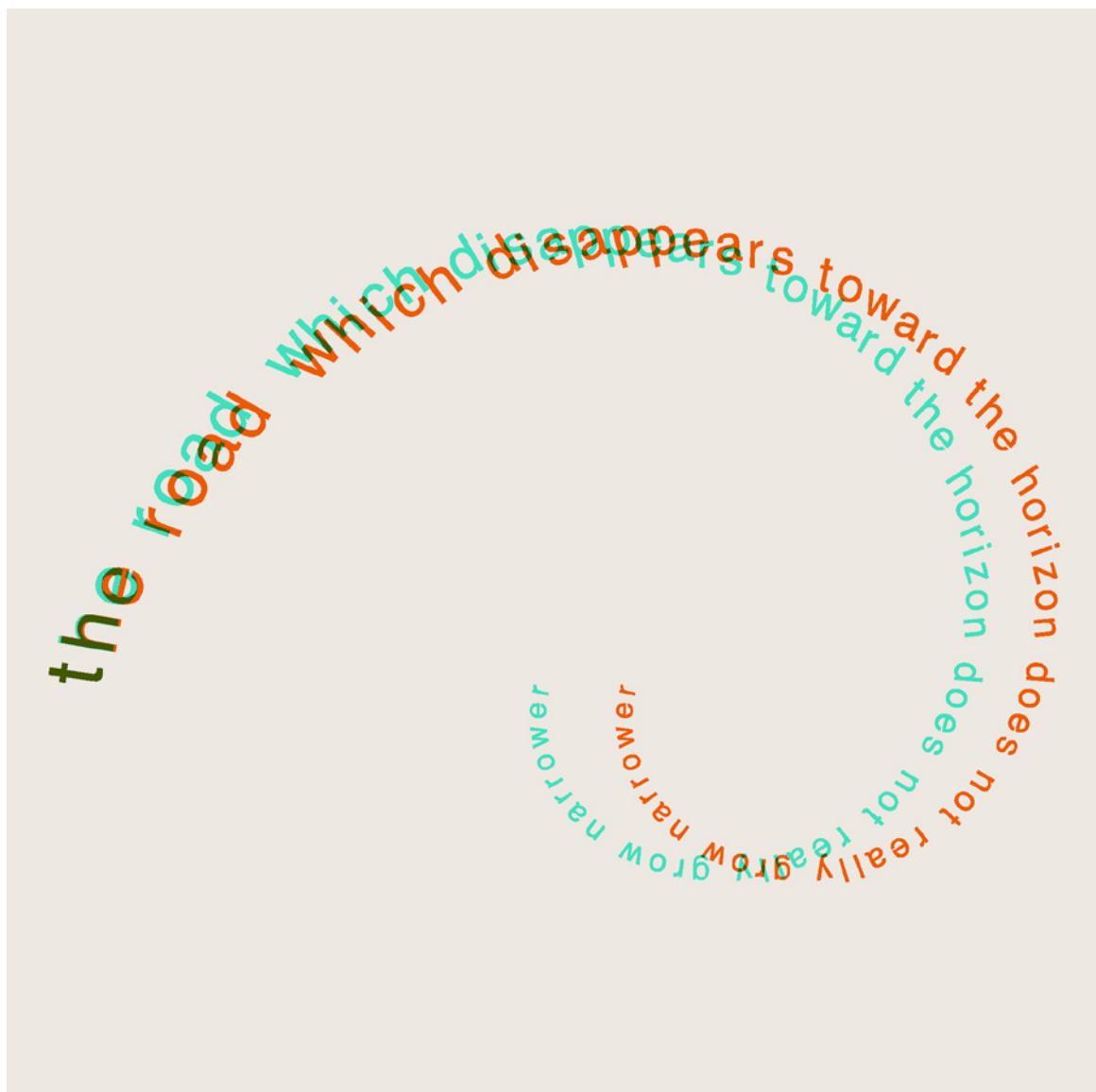
The road which disappears toward the horizon

stereoscopic screenprint on m.d.f. (38 x 38), red/green glasses

The road which disappears toward the horizon

actual-size stereoscopic image which can be viewed through the stereo glasses supplied

Road 1992 (produced as part of my M.A.)

screenprint on steel (15 x 48)

The road which disappears toward the horizon

Stereoscopy is a two dimensional pictorial form with aspirations to the third dimension. It provides a means of bypassing the conventional way in which we look at pictures by dissolving our awareness of the picture surface. It manipulates what we think we are seeing by isolating each of the images of the world perceived by our separate eyes. By severing this physical link or rather, by accentuating the natural division between left and right, it directs information as much towards the brain as towards the eyes.

In this picture, I was interested in what could be called the 'paradox' of perspective where an illusion of three dimensional space is created on a two dimensional plane. The words in the piece were taken from a passage in Merleau-Ponty's 'The Experience of Others' which discusses the supposed artifice of linear perspective and which draws significantly on Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*.[5] The picture consists of a textual critique of an illusionistic convention presented in a pictorial, stereoscopic format. This allows a direct manipulation of the viewer's visual system and presents him or her with a visual and conceptual paradox in which the apparent *visual* spatial effect conflicts with the sense of the text itself.

This picture also draws obliquely on a piece of work produced as part of my M.A. (*Road* 1992) in which the picture is treated as a window beyond which a road stretches away toward the horizon and the boundaries of the picture itself.

5. Maurice Merleau-Ponty 'The Experience of Others', *Merleau-Ponty and Psychology*, p36.
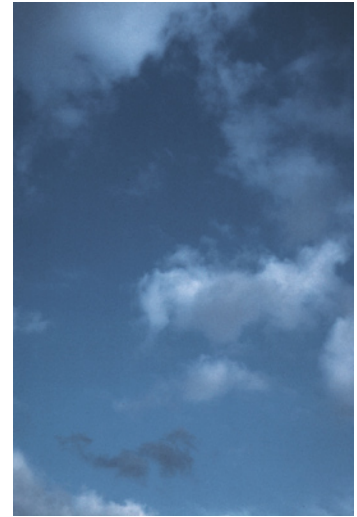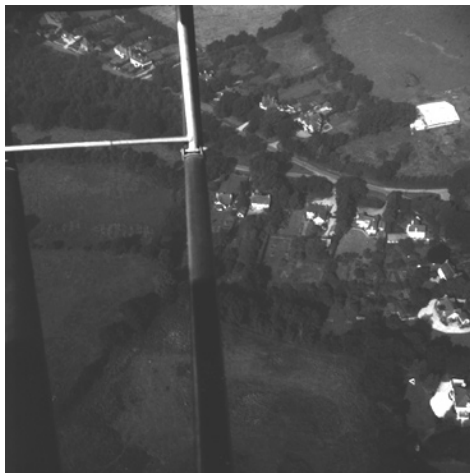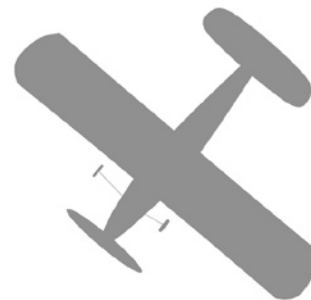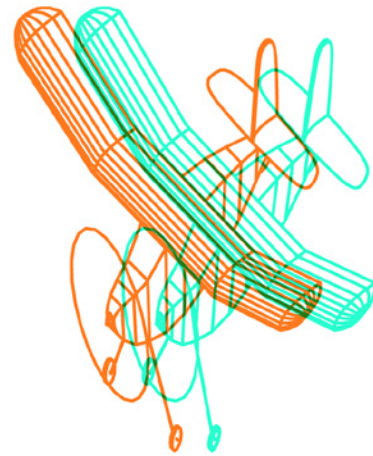
As far as the eye can see #1

3 parts: c-type photograph (35 x 30); black & white photograph (25 x 25); stereoscopic screenprint on m.d.f. (30 x 30) & red/green glasses

above: *As far as the eye can see #1* - sky (c-type photograph, 35 x 30)

left: installation view

above: *As far as the eye can see #1* - aeroplane - actual-size stereoscopic image which should be viewed on a horizontal surface from an oblique angle of approximately 45° through red/green glasses

left: installation view

As far as the eye can see #1 - aerial view (black & white photograph, 25 x 25)

As far as the eye can see #1

Drawing on my observations in both the textual and the visual work about the relationship between spectator position, picture placement and narrative and in order to acknowledge the temporal dimension of looking/viewing, I attempted to combine a number of different pictures and their respective viewpoints within the same work. In *As far as the eye can see #1*, the 'sky' image was hung on the wall well above the height of an average viewer and the 'aerial view' hung at their approximate eye-level. A stereoscopic/anamorphic image of an aeroplane was printed onto a surface which was attached to the wall below the viewer's eye-level such that it projected out at right-angles. When seen from an oblique angle of approximately 45° degrees above the horizontal, the aeroplane appears to hover above and cast a shadow onto the picture surface.

I wanted to encourage the viewer to make the connections - narrative and/or spatial - between the differing pictures and their implied viewpoints, to create a notional 'narrative space' in the gap between these elements which could be only be 'inhabited' through participation. The physical array of the object/pictures on the wall was intended to relate to the viewer's own sense of scale. One is implicated in both the illusionistic space and the narrative space simultaneously.
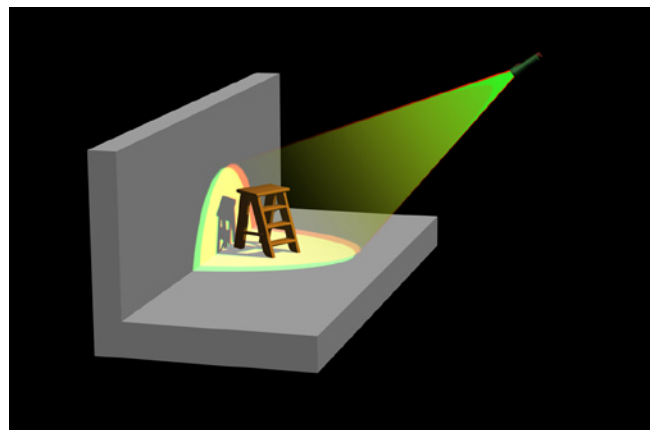
Steps

stereoscopic screenprint on mill board (76 x 60 x 60), red/green glasses

Steps - view of the digital model from the correct viewpoint

Steps - computer-generated diagram of the 'shadow-casting' analogy for determining the stereo views (see the note about this work on the following page). Two torches placed a certain distance apart project red and green light onto the step-ladder and cast shadows onto the floor and wall planes. These shadows are analogous to the stereoscopic linear drawings used for the actual work although they obviously do not convey any information about the object's internal structure, merely representing it as a pair of overlapping silhouettes on the floor and wall.
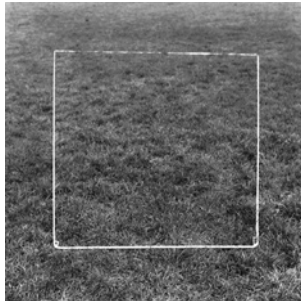
124

Figure 55

Jan Dibbets *Perspective correction, Big Square*

1968

Steps

This piece was constructed in much the same way as the aeroplane image in
the previous example except that here the stereoscopic/anamorphic image was
projected across not one but two picture planes. A step-ladder was constructed
to scale in the computer and situated in a virtual room close to the juncture
between floor and wall. A viewpoint was specified from which two stereoscopic
images or 'shadows' of the lines which formed the model were projected or cast
across the floor and wall planes. The resulting linear drawings were photographi-
cally transferred onto a screen-printing frame and printed by hand in red and
green for each respective view. When viewed through appropriate glasses, the
steps appear to project vertically upwards from the floor and away from the wall
but any shift in the viewer's position causes the apparent image to wobble and
distort.

I was interested here in the extent to which the illusion appeared to occupy the
viewer's *actual* space and how it was affected by their movement over time.
Bearing in mind G.E. Moores' paper discussed in chapter 1, the work is only fully
realized when it is perceived and each viewer's perception and experience of the
image is *private*. Duchamp's optically-based work was evidently of interest as
were Jan Dibbets' *Perspective corrections*. These are photographs of an anamor-
phic, linear form which has been drawn onto either the walls or floor of a studio
or marked out on the ground. The distorted form, however, appears perfectly
'correct' and two dimensional - it reads as a square - from the single viewpoint
from which Dibbets has photographed it and appears precisely parallel to the
picture plane, neatly echoing the photographs' square format. These images
seem to defy a common-sense reading and by extension disrupt our conven-
tional reading of photographic space.[6] Also of interest whilst I was making
Steps were Raetz's theatrical, anamorphic 'drawings in space' where a coherent
perception of the image results from the viewer's movement within the space in
which the work is situated.

6. see *Jan Dibbets* New York: Rizzoli & Walker
Arts Centre 1987, pp19-20.
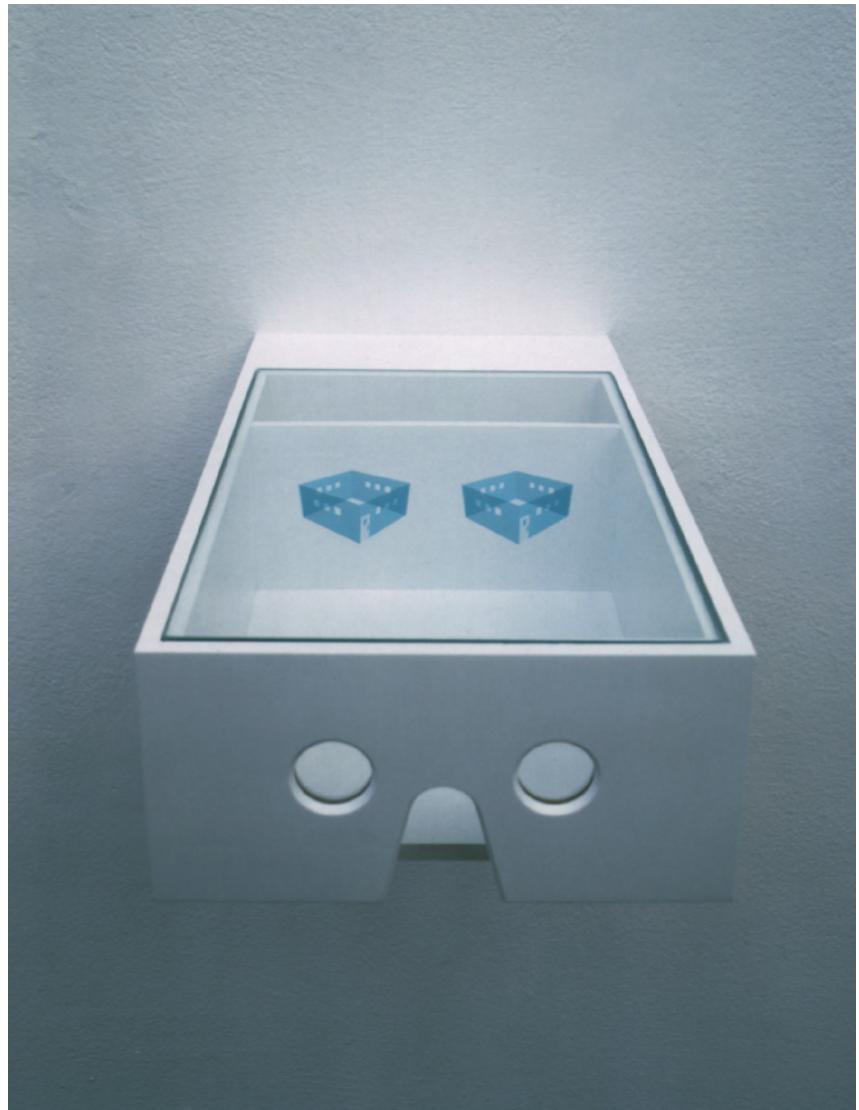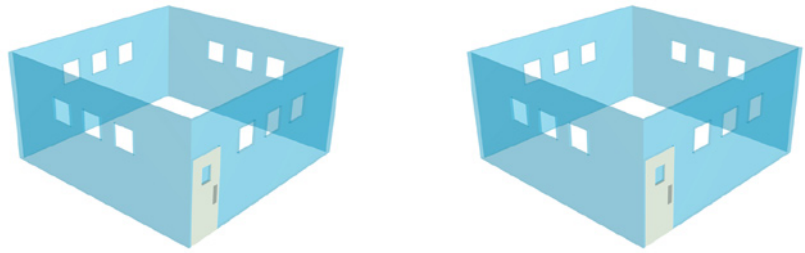
top: *See-through room* - actual-size stereo image

below: *See-through room* pictrograph (7.5 x 15) and stereo viewer (8.7 x 17.5 x 25)

See-through room

Stereoscopic pictures in which two, almost-identical images are placed side-by-side date from the 1840's and are most effectively viewed through a device which uses lenses to direct the relevant image to the relevant eye (Sir David Brewster produced the first *lenticular* stereoscope in 1849). Having constructed some of my own viewers and bearing in mind the relationship between picture space and actual space discussed in the previous examples, I became interested in the notion of the viewing device as a fictional space in itself - that is, in the potential for it to have a narrative as well as an optical function.

In *See-through room,* the stereo image was placed in a box with a glass lid. When viewed through the lenses, the semi-transparent structure appears to float in front of the picture plane and to notionally *occupy* the space in which it (the picture) is situated.
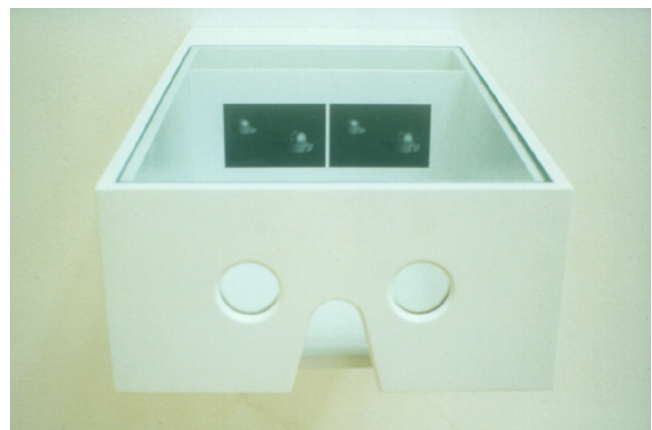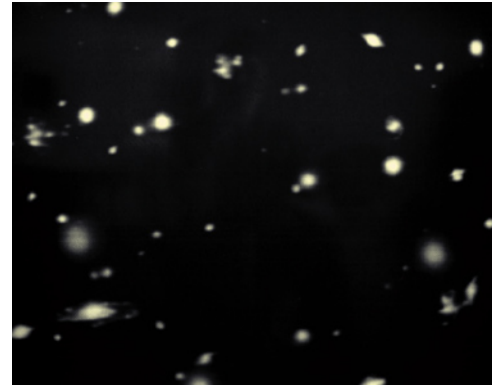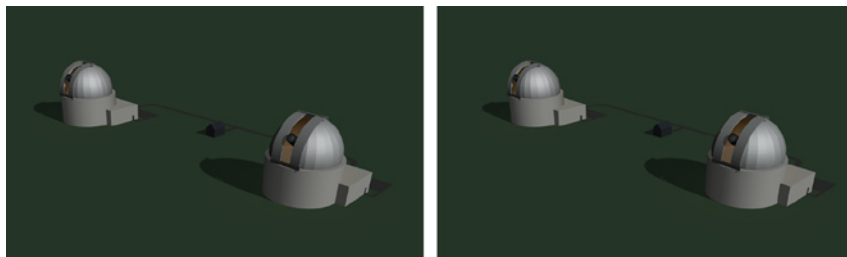
As far as the eye can see #2
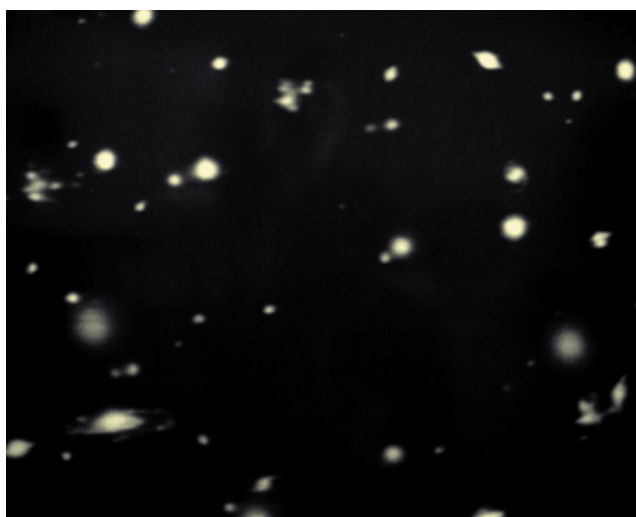
3 parts: iris print (25 x 30); c-type photograph (38 x 38); pictrograph (7.5 x 15) & stereo viewer (8.7 x 17.5 x 25)
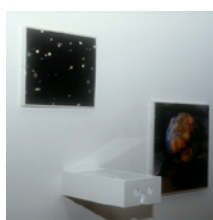
As far as the eye can see #2 - globe (c-type photograph, 38 x 38)

As far as the eye can see #2 - observatories - actual-size stereo image

As far as the eye can see #2 - star field (iris print, 25 x 30)

As far as the eye can see #2 - installation view

As far as the eye can see #2

This piece is similar to the work of the same name which I have already
mentioned in that I was interested in creating a conceptual space between a
series of disparate yet related images. As in *As far as the eye can see #1*, here
there is an implication of a switching of points-of-view in the cinematic sense of
the term. The picture at the top represents a star field and is hung well above
the viewer whilst the next picture is hung just above the viewer's eye-level and
represents a globe, an ideal model of the world as if seen from without, that
is, from the perspective of the heavens. The stereo picture in the viewing box
depicts a pair of astronomical observatories whose gaze is directed out of the
frame. The picture and box are positioned on the wall just below the viewer's
eye-level. As
in *Here, there, over here, over there*, I was interested in the oscillation of one's
sense of position in relation to the work. On the one hand, we are *in* or *part of*
the picture and on the other, we are outside it, involved as much in the construc-
tion as in the interpretation of both its narrative logic and its implied space.

Before, during or after

3 parts: 2 x pictrographs (7.5 x 15) and stereo viewers (8.7 x 17.5 x 25); screenprint on m.d.f. (10.5 x 16) - the two sets of

images immediately below are the actual-size stereo images
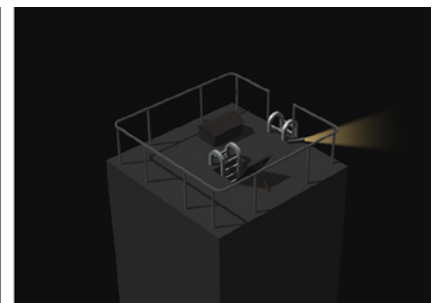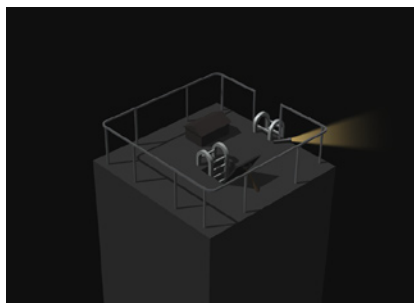
Before, during or after

Again, this is a three-part piece consisting of two stereo pictures, one depicting a roof-top fire escape and the other, a car seen from above in the dark, with its headlights illuminating the road ahead. The final element is a facsimile of a fire escape sign which is hung high above and to the right of the other elements. Together with the previous work, *Before, during or after* is as much related to my research into cinematic narrative as it is to my interests in perspective and illusion although it predated the bulk of the work and thinking which contributed to the chapters discussing narrative space, *La Jetée* and *Rear Window*. Here I imagined the viewer as a kind of investigator, as one who is actively engaged in the construction of a story or a sense of order from a sequence of fragments. There was no *a priori* order to or linear narrative governing the images and so the sequence in which the individual elements are seen is less important than the fact that one is unable to perceive the individual pictures simultaneously (owing to the discreteness imposed by the viewing boxes). The separate parts could be seen more as fragments of a potential story which may be different for each individual viewer.

The experience of working on those pieces which combine a number of disparate elements prompted me to think more carefully about the relationship between pictures, space, narrative and the viewer and I subsequently began looking more closely at narrative theory in terms of both literature and the cinema. In particular, the Russian Formalist distinction between syuzhet and fabula provided a useful model, not only for discussing narrative strategies but also for considering how they might be implemented. As has been seen, the viewer/reader never has direct access to the fabula. This is only ever a construction facilitated by the syuzhet, the latter acting almost as the evidence or trace of a hidden story, the series of clues with which we piece together the sense of a work. In pictorial terms, the syuzhet can be likened to a frame which determines what is inside and what is outside the picture. This frame allows the viewer to see only a particular aspect
of the represented world from which he or she infers a unified whole (the fabula).

From where you are standing #1

2 x c-type photographs from digital images (198 x 183)
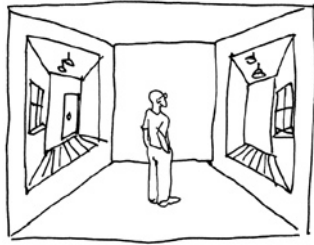
From where you are standing #2

From where you are standing (stereo version) #1 & #2 - actual size stereo images

From where you are standing (stereo version) #1 pictograph (6 x 12.6) and stereo viewer (7.2 x 15 x 19.2)

From where you are standing (2 parts)

drawing from notebook (5 x 7.5)

The initial impetus for this piece came from studying Hoogstraten's *Peepshow* and my observations on examples of my own work which incorporate viewing devices or boxes - particularly those where the box itself is implicated as a 'space' in which the objects represented (as well as the picture which represents them) are somehow situated.

My original intention was to create a small-scale stereoscopic piece where the space represented in the picture itself appeared as an extension of the actual space in the viewing box. I wanted to create two 'views' from either end of a notional room and place these in the centre of a specially-constructed viewer which had viewing apertures at opposite ends so that each picture appeared to be the reverse of the view represented in the other picture. I began by constructing a miniature digital model to the correct scale and filling it gradually with objects and pictures which to varying degrees were concerned with 'looking'. As work progressed, it became apparent that there was a significance to the particular pictures and objects which were accumulating in the space. I decided to increase the scale so that the identity of these things could be more easily perceived and so that the illusory space could more readily act as a continuation of the viewer's actual space. As we have seen, in Hoogstraten's *Peepshow*, there is a sense of time having elapsed or of the potential for an event to occur as one traverses the space between the two peepholes. This observation, in conjunction with my earlier thoughts about the connection between space and narrative, led me to think about the virtual 'room' in terms of the viewer's own experience of the image over time.

I decided to produce two (monocular) pictures from either end of the room which were enlarged such that the height of the picture corresponded as much as possible to the height of an actual room. The two pictures are hung opposite each other in a space where the distance between them corresponds to the actual proportions of the virtual room's floor in relation to the pictures' height (see plan on page 104). My aim was to enclose the viewer within a picture which at the same time implied that they were only ever on the threshold of the represented space.
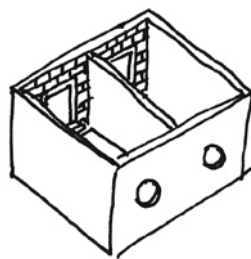
Portable keyhole (detail)

pictrograph (6 x 12.6) and stereo viewer (8.3 x 14.8 x 17.8)

Portable keyhole - actual-size stereo pair

Portable keyhole - notebook drawing of the viewing box (box dimensions: 8.3 x 14.8 x 17.8)

study for *Portable keyhole*

Portable keyhole

As in the previous example, I wanted to create a picture which related to the space in which it was situated. This particular image was constructed for a stereo viewer where the picture plane coincides as closely as possible with the plane of the wall on which it is hung. The title was taken from a comment by the character Stella (Thelma Ritter) in *Rear Window* about Jeff's (James Stewart) obsession with peering through a telephoto lens at his neighbours. As described in chapter 9, the narrative strategy of *Rear Window* is to construct a 'story' predominantly around a single character's perspective, a point-of-view which is epitomized in the image of Jeff's camera with its long lens. The 'fourth wall' which separates the spectator from the scenic space of the film is only represented at the very climax as Jeff is flung out of his window by the murderous Thorwald (Raymond Burr).[7] I wanted to draw an analogy between the windows - out of which an absent character has looked and perhaps will look again - and the peepholes through which the viewer is peering at this very picture. This picture serves as a window onto another space whilst simultaneously holding up a kind of mirror to the viewer in which they see themselves seeing.

7. Michael Chion 'The Fourth Side', *All you ever wanted to know about Lacan (but were too afraid to ask Hitchcock)* (ed. Slavoj Zizek), London & New York: Verso 1992, pp155-160. Chion discusses the role of this scene in its reversal of the relationship between audience and film where the fiction literally invades reality and its admission that the entire narrative has been structured around a single viewpoint which necessarily precludes other viewpoints.
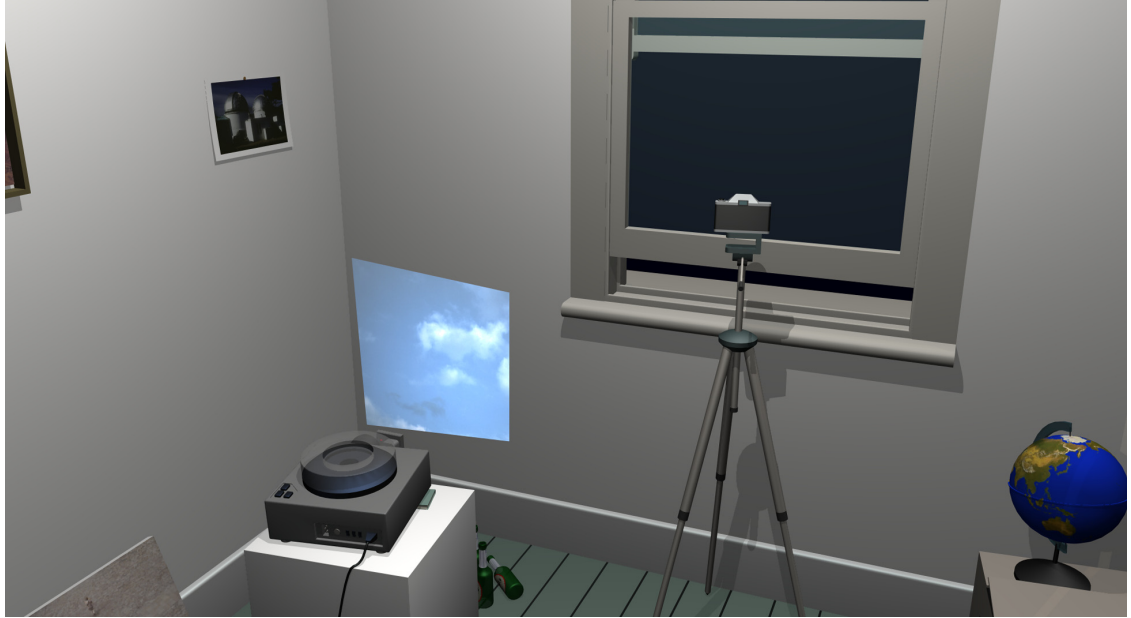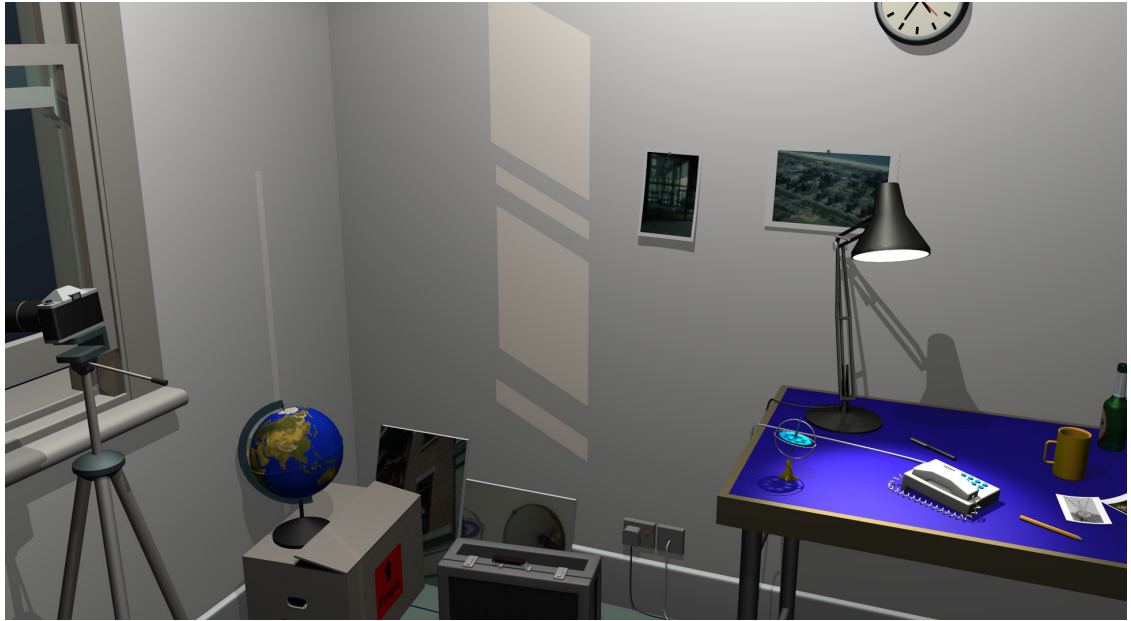
4 intervals #1

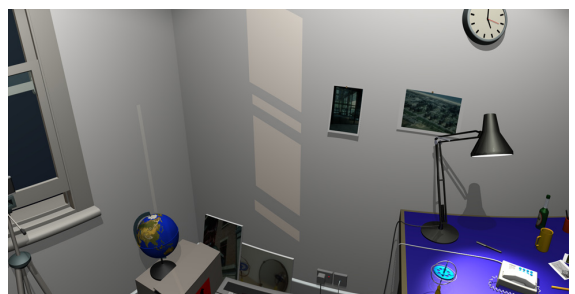4 x c-type photographs from digital images (flat dimensions: 80 x 150)
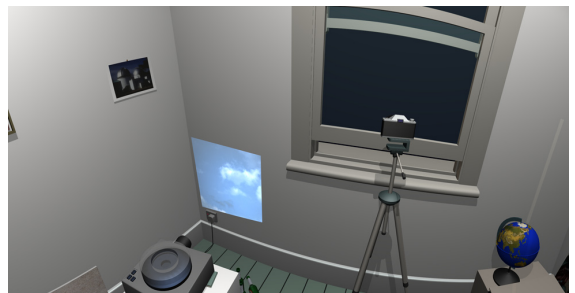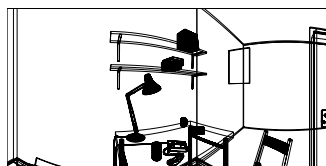
4 intervals #2

4 intervals #3

4 intervals #4

4 intervals #1-#4

panoramic studies (flat dimensions: 10 x 20)

study for *4 intervals*

8. see Sam Taylor Wood *Five Revolutionary Seconds* Barcelona: La Fundacio 'La Caixa' 1997.

9. see Nicky Hamlyn 'Seeing is Believing: Wavelength Reconsidered', *Afterimage* 11, Winter 1982-83, pp22-31, for a discussion of Michael Snow's film, particularly the role of the zoom as regards memory and narrative.

10. The software I used for this and other works over the course of the project (Auto-des-sys *form•Z*) enabled me to create authentically *panoramic* pictures. Here the picture plane is conceived of as a curved surface in that an image of the scene is projected onto it by a camera which revolves about a central axis. When printed flat, the perspective in such pictures appears distorted. However, when their surfaces are curved to correspond to the angle of view which defined their construction, the pictures yield an undistorted image which allows for the head's rotation as we scan the picture surface. Due to technical limitations, however, at the time of writing it was not possible to render the panoramic images on a large enough scale for printing at high resolution. In addition to producing small versions of the panoramic views (these studies are illustrated on the previous page), I decided to render conventional wide-angle perspective images from the same viewpoints on a larger scale (see pp141-144).

4 intervals

This final project draws together many of the threads developed through both the text and the visual work. Drawing on notions of narrative space and film technique, I wanted to pan around a virtual space and create or record a series of discrete pictures which represented the space in a coherent sense but which allowed for a degree of slippage in terms of temporal coherence. Like the large-scale work already described (*From where you are standing*), this piece acknowledges the viewer's space and scale and consists of four parts which surround the viewer like a panorama (see plan and description on pages 103-104). Unlike Sam Taylor Wood's panoramic photographs where an interior and its occupants are captured on film within a five second period as the camera literally revolves around its axis, I wanted to introduce an element of narrative uncertainty about the apparent order and sequence in the series.[8] Rather than create what would appear to be a continuous pan, I decided to create gaps in the sequence (not unlike Michael Snow's use of a continuous but strategically interrupted zoom in his film, *Wavelength* of 1966-67).[9] Each image in the series represents a quarter of a complete revolution around the virtual camera's axis.[10] The field of view is wide enough to allow for the repetition of parts of the space and the various objects it contains between the four views. Although the space and most of the objects remain consistent throughout, there are intentional discrepancies in the images' continuity. The gaps between the images are therefore as important as the images themselves with the relationship between them being elliptical in that each image points to either of its neighbours in order to enable us to identify differences as well as repetitions.