

unravelling uppark



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Uppark

4 May - 2 November 2014

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Inside front cover: *Remnants*, Caitlin Heffernan

Opposite: *Salvage*, Zoë Hillyard

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Unravelling Uppark – ravelling up

Polly Harknett, Caitlin Heffernan, Matt Smith

Unravelling Uppark is the third and final exhibition of the series *Unravelling the National Trust*. In 2012 we unravelled Nymans House and Gardens, West Sussex and in 2013 The Vyne, Hampshire. *Unravelling Uppark* sees us adding 11 new commissions to this stable of work, where again we have charged artists with the task of making new work that is conceptual, rooted within a craft practice, and also responsive to some aspect of the historic site where it is exhibited.



Uppark House and Garden

Over the last three years, Unravelling's exhibitions and other activities have explored many different sides of working site-specifically. It was always our intention to work with three National Trust properties that had very different stories to tell. What we hope may be of interest now is to make comparisons between working in those spaces and how our act of unravelling has brought together some common threads that link the three disparate sites of Nymans, The Vyne and Uppark.

Nymans is a folly of artifice, a house that is a jigsaw of different periods of architecture, not achieved through a linear progression of time, but through the intervention of the Messel family. Leonard and Maud Messel built a mock-medieval manor house in the late 19th century, in place of their early 19th century villa. Here they acted out their lives in an aristocratic way,

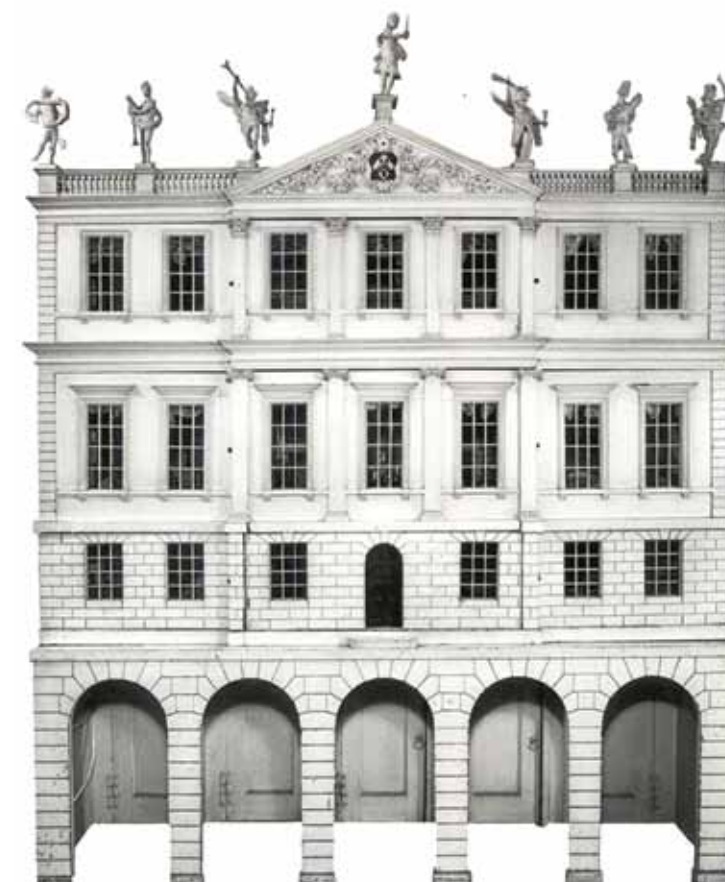
making the family, who were essentially 'new money', appear as if they had always been part of the English establishment.

The Vyne was a substantial powerhouse now layered through with complex architectural modifications, political alliances starting from Tudor times, and difficult familial relationships. The estate itself has experienced periods of crumbling decay as well as refurbished glory, reflecting mostly on the disposition of the inheritors of the place.

Uppark is like a giant doll's house perched on top of the South Downs, that is a status symbol of merchant wealth. It boasts views to the sea that have been uninterrupted for centuries. However, in contrast to these unchanging views, the site has been one of transition and possibility. At Uppark, it is as if the grand views have offered people chances to broaden their own personal horizons of potential, and this potential for social movement is reflected in the presentation of two floors of the house – the grand upstairs and the working downstairs.

Unravelling has worked with 29 artists across these three properties, artists who have exposed myriad different histories within each site. Yet through the very specific and individual responses to the houses, common themes have emerged.

Firstly there is the concept of intervention itself. This is something discussed in detail by Julian Walker both through his works placed at Nymans and his accompanying essay in the *Unravelling Nymans* catalogue.¹ Within this catalogue, Sara Roberts introduces us to the idea that the sites are host to continual interventions and that these interventions, no matter how short-lived, leave a long-lived legacy of change.² We should be under no illusion that interventions in historic houses are a new idea: throughout their histories, these properties and the histories we use them to tell, have



The doll's house at Uppark House and Garden

been continuously modified and rearranged. At every stage of the history of these three properties there have been interventions of different natures. These interventions proved fertile ground for artists, whether it be imposing a particular style of new architecture onto an older space, as was very evident at The Vyne where John Chute superimposed a grand neoclassical staircase within a Tudor palace, or the incorporation of the 20-year-old working class Mary Ann Bullock into the centre of the family tree at Uppark through her marriage to Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh, thereby accepting and incorporating a working class sensibility into an upper class environment. Unravelled's interventions have all been brief – six month exhibitions – but



30 August 1989
at Uppark House
and Garden

at the same time long-lasting. The properties have purchased objects made for exhibition, which have now become part of their permanent collections, and which will be recognised fully from now on as part of the complex history of each house. As each property purchases work, so they link themselves to each other, through our series of interventions.

Intervention may also not necessarily be physical. Matt Smith's research and conceptual approach to his piece *Piccadilly 1830* shown as part of *Unravelling Nymans*, prompted the recognition of Messel family relationships previously unrecognised. The work centred round theatre stage designer Oliver Messel, who lived at Nymans during his childhood. Smith reinterpreted a costume by Messel (who had originally designed it for the theatre production *Piccadilly 1830*, but then altered it so that he

could wear it to parties). Smith placed the costume on an antique Roman statue within the house, staged as if Messel had casually thrown the jacket and bonnet over the figure on a visit to see his recently widowed sister Anne. Anne's two marriages are of course duly noted in the National Trust Nymans guidebook and family tree. Oliver's long-term homosexual relationship with Vagn Riis-Hansen was not noted however, despite it enduring longer than either of Anne's marriages. Smith's work spoke to this relationship, through the story he evokes of one widower (Oliver having lost Vagn) visiting another (Anne having lost The Earl of Rosse). It prompted the National Trust to acknowledge Oliver's relationship and write it into their interpretive materials and the Messel family tree.



Restoration of the
Staircase Hall ceiling
at Uppark House and
Garden following
the 1989 fire

Uppark itself is a site of contentious intervention. The disastrous fire that destroyed most of the upper part of the house in 1989 led to international debate around the appropriateness of another form of intervention – the conservation and restoration of historic sites. The National Trust decided to embark on a full programme of restoration. They reopened the house to the public in 1995, re-presenting Uppark as it had looked the day before the fire six years earlier. Helen Carnac discusses this in her essay *Is there ever a first-time visit, and how will we remember it in the future?*³ in terms of how the National Trust have, through this act, stopped and rewound the clocks, thereby distorting time. This distortion can also be construed as the creation of a fictitious reality, since the laws of physics tell us that time moves forwards and continuously. The act of restoration by the National Trust at Uppark can be directly compared to the work of David Cheeseman at Nymans, Maria Rivans at The Vyne and Simon Ryder at Uppark. All of these artists have, like the National Trust at Uppark, created visions of different worlds and other realities. Cheeseman sealed a motionless sooted impression of plant life within a giant acrylic globe, placed in the Gun Room at Nymans as if dropped by aliens. The globe preserved a world of information lost when the collection of botanical books was lost in the 1947 fire at Nymans, a fire that destroyed much of the medieval-style building, including the library. Rivans gave characters from The Vyne's history three-dimensional paper form in the library in her work *Short Cuts and Pop-*

Ups by creating a chaos of exploding books, and Ryder encapsulates the songbird's music using rhythmical patterns engraved inside blocks of crystal glass in his work *Songbird*. All of these interventions, including the restoration of Uppark, show us a fictitious reality; all are valid, and remind us that we all create our own realities, constructed through our continuous seeing and learning.

Being aware of these interventions has allowed Unravelled artists to scrutinise concepts of good and bad, as explored more fully by Paul Jobling in his essay for the Nymans catalogue⁴ *A Twitch on the Thread*, and the visible and invisible, as explored by Laurajane Smith in her essay *Domestic bliss or the great divide? Country houses and the perpetuation of social inequality* in this catalogue.⁵ This scrutiny begins, for some, through the act of staging a contemporary art exhibition within a historic space, but extends through to the work on display. The four concepts are much interlinked and explored by artists within all the properties, most notably by Gavin Fry and Guy Holder at Nymans, Mrs Smith, Penny Green and Matt Smith at The Vyne and Caitlin Heffernan and Robert Cooper and Stella Harding at Uppark.

Fry's footstool at Nymans entitled *Tortoise* is bejewelled to the extent that it is unusable, and in its construction Fry has employed Oliver Messel's approach of transforming cheap and everyday materials into expensive looking items. The work is a bad footstool, but a valuable object made from items that alone have little monetary value, and whose original purpose is hidden from the viewer. The title also alludes to an excerpt from the book *A Rebours/Against Nature* by J K Huysmans in which the anti-hero Des Esseintes decides to bejewel a living tortoise to such an extent that the tortoise dies from bearing the weight of the adornment, an unnecessary death brought about from an act of beautification. Holder presents death on a plate in ceramic modelling in his work *Field of Vision*, presenting the reality of the willow pattern plate story, a tale of two doomed lovers who are killed by a vengeful duke and transformed into birds. The piece shows us the darker side of acquiring wealth through the representation of the misfortune of others – in the case of Holder's intervention, literally, through the corpses of the transformed lovers as trophies of the hunt presented on a dining table platter.

At The Vyne, Green explores concepts of good and bad through her work *Lady Dacre's wedding gift – a conceit* when considering the history of Lady Dacre, who lost her fortune and right to live at The Vyne when her husband died. In her essay *A Woman's Place: Power, Gender and Work*

in the Country House,⁶ Jill Seddon contextualises this and other newly-commissioned art dealing with the women of The Vyne, by providing historical insight into the roles of women within this environment. Lady Dacre is written up in history (by men) as a cantankerous money-grabbing woman, content to rage prolonged legal battles against her stepson in order to reclaim her assets. Green reconsiders and re-presents the story from a feminist perspective in a series of narrative plates, paying homage to Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* by setting the plates out on the dining room table at The Vyne.

At Uppark, Cooper and Harding for *Dish of the day: chicken in a basket* refer simultaneously to 15-year-old Emma Hart, employed by Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh as the entertainment for his summer partying, and current underage exploitation, questioning our perceptions about the subject within historical and contemporary society. The concept of the 'safe spectacles of time' has been discussed by Eliza Gluckman in her essay, *Theatrical Engagements*⁷ which looked at what the English country house comes to represent, in terms of theatricality versus reality. This same thinking can be applied to our understanding of how we should receive the popular and very dramatic story of Emma Hart supposedly dancing nude on the table at Uppark to entertain Sir Harry's party-goers.

At Uppark, Heffernan explores the plight and visibility of classes other than house-owning families through *Remnants*, her work in the stables. It reveals the labour behind the sport of horseracing, and what it meant to the stable staff and horses alike. Julian Walker at Nymans, Mrs Smith at The Vyne and Caitlin Heffernan together challenge our preconceptions of the visitor experience of a country house as a place about the rich and for the rich.

These approaches contribute further to the idea that at each property Unravelled has in some way upturned a convention. This is not a moral question of what is conceived as good or bad, but instead a broadening of our own realities, perhaps most prevalent if we consider how concepts of time have been explored across the three sites.

As Sara Roberts points out in her essay, the National Trust often represents a house from a single viewpoint.⁸ From this a single, chronological timeframe can be extrapolated. Presenting ten or more artists within one exhibition can undo this convention. As visitors to historic houses, we are used to moving backwards and forwards in chronological time as we walk through properties and encounter different life stories and building adaptations. Likewise, the artists we have worked with have often played with time:

juxtaposing historical and contemporary events and attitudes as well as factual and fictional events and historical points in time.

At Uppark, Alice Kettle and Helen Felcey's collaboration *The House of Eloi* places the literary work of the adult H G Wells within a space he knew as a child (when his mother was Uppark's housekeeper). At The Vyne, Sharon McElroy for *Exquisite Diversion* fused 1970s glam rock with the Venice carnival as experienced by John Chute in the mid-18th century, comparing the hedonism and experimentation with gender and personas of both eras. At Nymans, Caitlin Heffernan placed *Hide and Seek*, child-size sculptures that evoked the childhoods of Anne and Oliver Messel at Nymans, which is now presented by the National Trust as it was at the time of Anne's retirement. These mixings of time allow us to see historical and contemporary events from different perspectives, introducing other, more inclusive stories into our fields of vision, and an understanding that there are always multiple truths.

To conclude, we hope that Unravelled has helped demonstrate that there is value to opening up historic spaces to the imaginations of artists, and undoing our perceptions of truth, convention and intervention. Moreover that objects can be powerful storytellers, and their authenticity is not necessarily bound up with origin or age.

Unravelled would like to thank Sarah Foster, Andy Lewis, and all the team at Uppark for their invaluable help in making *Unravelling Uppark* possible.

- 1 Julian Walker, The Nature of Intervention, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Nymans* (Hove: Unravelled 2012), pp 56-59
- 2 Sara Roberts, Accreted Histories, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Uppark* (Hove: Unravelled 2014), pp 12-20
- 3 Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Uppark* (Hove: Unravelled 2014), pp 58-62
- 4 Paul Jobling, A Twitch on the Thread, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Nymans* (Hove: Unravelled 2012), pp 48-55
- 5 Laurajane Smith, Domestic bliss or the great divide? Country houses and the perpetuation of social inequality, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Uppark* (Hove: Unravelled 2013), pp 48-55
- 6 Jill Seddon, A Woman's Place: Power, Gender and Work in the Country House, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling The Vyne*, (Hove: Unravelled 2013) pp 8-17
- 7 Eliza Gluckman, Theatrical Engagements, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling The Vyne* (Hove: Unravelled 2013), pp 18-24
- 8 Sara Roberts, Accreted Histories, in Harknett, Heffernan, Smith (eds.) *Unravelling Uppark* (Hove: Unravelled 2014), pp 12-20

Right: Fire bucket at Uppark House and Garden



Accreted Histories

Sara Roberts

Walking down the great slope of concrete, the vast space seems perfect in its modernity, and the distractions of its vastness mean it is a while before you notice the scar. But it is there, and you will notice it, snaking and jagged, a rough diagonal across the expanse of the floor, a smooth, expert repair, of concrete, in concrete.

This is the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, the great entrance hall to one of Europe's most significant spaces for contemporary art,¹ offering a daunting challenge to the artists commissioned to exhibit there: a huge space, taller than it is wide; interrupted by a raised walkway and staircase; overlooked from several levels on one side. Whose work then is the subtly filled crack in the concrete surface? It is nobody's as such, but is nonetheless a permanent and vivid physical trace of Doris Salcedo's commissioned piece, *Shibboleth* (2007), part of the Unilever series. This work was a great fissure where the visitor was expected to walk, contemplating its depth, making decisions about which side to walk on, navigating its meandering length.



Salvaged fragments from the fire in 1989 at Uppark House and Garden

The Salcedo repair is a clear, mechanical example of how artists' interventions leave traces which become contributory presences in the projects which follow. But these connections are not necessarily physical. Each action becomes part of the history of the space and charges it with expectation, contributing to the meaning of whatever happens there. Thus the movement of people across and around the crack in the floor seemed to be echoed by the crowds of visitors who ran with the choreographed participants of Tino Seghal's later work, *These Associations* (2012), and listened

to their confessions. In turn, the very particular blend of confidence and disoriented uncertainty exhibited by performers and audience together in this piece seemed also to call up the ghosts of the giant spiders of Louise Bourgeois' first artist intervention on the site. Meanwhile, the sheer self-aware spread of people throughout the great space was a reminder, as large crowds there so often are, of the crowd of friends and strangers which lay on the floor in 2003 to see their own reflections on the far-distant mirrored ceiling, in the glowing sun of Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project*.

Of course, this particular space also had a whole other previous life as the heart of a power station, the essence of industrial strength and modernist





Emma, Lady Hamilton,
George Romney

This is the challenge of making all site-specific art, whether for gallery- or non-gallery spaces: it requires not just creative acts and aesthetic judgements, but associative play with existing narratives, and with layers of history. This process is selective, offering a choice of one narrative over another, and of one aspect of the fabric or history of the building over another. And the process is cumulative: once the work has been installed in a space, it too becomes part of its story.

Naturally, the histories of older buildings tend to be more complex: many have served several purposes; they have been altered, extended, damaged and repaired; rationalised and restored. The social and political events to which they have borne witness have changed not only their use but also

ambition for the capital city. Any art placed within these huge walls has to contend in equal measure with this history as well as the history of recent usage, and it is open to discussion as to where the Turbine Hall sits on the spectrum of exhibition sites, which runs from white cube to non-gallery venue.

Its counterparts at Tate Britain, the Duveen Galleries, as purpose-built sculpture galleries, are unequivocally gallery spaces, but similarly laden with a sense of their own history. When Simon Starling was commissioned in 2013 to develop a new work in response to the Tate collection, his *Phantom Ride* highlighted exactly this aspect, presenting on large screens in the space a rollercoaster view of it, in which the major works that have been shown there over the years reappeared like ghosts.

the attitudes of society towards them; some have been commandeered in times of war and served as playgrounds to the wealthy in times of peace. Their expansion and occasional contraction bear witness to the prosperity or failed fortunes of their occupants.

The experience of such properties in the care of, say, the National Trust, tends to be driven by simplified narratives: editorial decisions are made about which stories should be told and how best to tell them, with which artefacts and decoration. Stories tie objects together in a comprehensible and appealing way, and locate the houses themselves within wider historical narratives. The practical challenges for artists are not to interfere with the fabric of the buildings, nor to confound visitor expectation of access to authentic historical material. Compensation for these difficulties comes from the reassurance of the scale of rooms, the familiarity of domestic idiom, and the scope for alterations in scale or material to be conspicuous and sometimes startling. Artists become animateurs – they curate and re-frame, they present and perform, draw out new connections and references, allow new readings of old stories and refresh attitudes to familiar objects.

At Barrington Court in Somerset, for example, the entire volume of the kitchen was recently filled with filigree screens made of tied parabolas of willow.² The tradition of basketry is well established in Somerset and the material is local, but there is no specific link between this craft and the house or the kitchen area. But this intervention by Laura Ellen Bacon, with its human-scale gestures, functioned as an analogy for the kind of activity which would once have taken place in this kitchen: piece work, assembled later into a palatable whole; the repetition of fairly simple actions to make a spectacular collective presentation. The art was neither literal nor narrative, but still conveyed a sense of the history of the site and, once again, contributed to that history.



Mary Ann Bullock,
photographer unknown

At Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, Susie MacMurray in her coolly beautiful installation *Promenade* (2010) provided a contemporary spectacle in the Marble Hall, originally used for entertaining guests and demonstrating wealth and good taste. The piece involved a winding structure of shimmering gold embroidery thread, supported by the alabaster columns designed by Robert Adam for Sir Nathaniel Curzon's neoclassical 'Temple of the Arts'. The work was in the spirit of the site – an excess of valuable material, referencing rich textiles, furnishings and dance, designed to inspire awe and admiration, operating on an epic scale yet retaining a reference to human scale and interior architecture.

At Uppark, site of the current project, editorial and curatorial control has led to a dual presentation of the history of the building divided on grounds of both period and social standing. This capitalises on the material treasure and evidence available, and, to lay claim to some good stories, associated narratives which afford a glimpse into upstairs and downstairs life and of tangential histories from different eras – of the early lives of Nelson's lover, Emma, Lady Hamilton, and of H G Wells, the socialist novelist who brought us *The War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine*. Life 'below stairs' in the servants' quarters and the kitchen areas, the working areas of the house, is presented as it would have looked in the mid-Victorian era, when Wells's mother served as housekeeper between 1880 and 1893.³

In contrast, 'above stairs' hosts a wealth of Georgian trappings: a collection of fine furnishings and paintings gathered by the wealthy owners Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh (1714-1774) and his wife during their Grand Tours of Europe. Their son, Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh (1754-1846), socialite confidant of both the Prince Regent and the architect and landscape designer Humphry Repton, was 'a great seducer of pretty poorish girls, milliners, tenants, singers and servant maids, after the fashion of the time'.⁴ Sir Harry collected young women as easily as his parents had collected European artefacts for the house. One such conquest was the very beautiful young teenage Emma Hart, formerly Amy Lyon, whom he brought to Uppark to entertain, dance and smile, and who reportedly frolicked naked on the dining table for the house guests. Having become pregnant whilst at Uppark, she was then discarded, taken up by Charles Greville, and finally made a comfortable marriage with his uncle Sir William Hamilton, who tolerated her grand affair of the heart with Admiral Lord Nelson.

For *Unravelled*, basketmaker Stella Harding and ceramicist Robert Cooper have re-cast this story in a 21st century light. Their collaborative work *Dish of*

the day: chicken in a basket, a silkily seductive faux porcelain woven platter, sits in the Stone Hall surrounded by oil paintings of hunted game, and its decorative motifs reveal instances of trafficking of the young then and now: of exploitation, for sex, cheap labour and cheap food. The pragmatism of this intervention, necessarily and very lightly layering new perspectives upon an old tale without replacing it, and allowing the old to readily show through, sums up the challenge of the site-specific when dealing with the historic fabric of a building.

Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh never lost his predilection for working class women, and at the age of 70 he was entranced by singing emanating from the Dairy. The sound drew him to the young dairymaid's assistant Mary Ann Bullock, whom he loved, groomed expensively into respectability, and – controversially – married. Artist Gen Doy combines ambient sounds with her own singing to make a sound piece for the Dairy. It seems gentle and benign, yet this charming sound had the power to break social taboos and ancestral inheritance. The song marks a transition in the fate of the property; the moment when it became both possible and inevitable that it should eventually fall into the custodianship of the common-born widow Fetherstonhaugh, née Bullock. This sound becomes part of the fabric of the Dairy; an imagined element of a diverting story which has been realised and made audible.

An expanse of luxurious oriental carpet in the Little Parlour becomes an ocean of the imagination, across which Steven Follen's flotilla of simple folded metal boats convey spices. Follen has used them to demonstrate hidden narratives and unspoken origins: they trace the history of Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh as a major investor in the East India Company, and he says they are intended as playthings designed to teach boys the principles of overseas shipping and colonial investment, just as girls were to learn household management through constructive play with the doll's house. For frequent visitors to the house – and National Trust properties support many repeat visitors due to their loyal membership – this kind of intervention casts new light on the sometimes untold origins of the fortunes which funded the extremes of luxury in Georgian Uppark.

The dual presentation of histories and class on different floors in Uppark reflects the divisions of race in H G Wells's *The Time Machine*: the peaceable but dissolute Eloi conduct their lives apparently without function above ground, and their needs are provided for by the darker forces of the Morlocks below. This social division and these characters were influenced by the way of life witnessed by Wells when he visited his mother at work,



and artists Alice Kettle and Helen Felcey close the creative loop and bring the Eloi home. Their figures are carefully crafted on the scale of the doll's house, but they play house on a grand scale with the whole building: secreting themselves in corners; appropriating objects for their own use; conducting a parallel and gently parasitical life. They turn the house visitors into the 'other' race; they embody part of Wells's socialist literary project and give face to its divisions and strata.

The disastrous fire at Uppark in 1989 has laid a different kind of historical narrative upon the building – that of restoration and rebuilding. It is the kind of story the National Trust tells well, and it is appealing to the public in that it involves painstaking craftsmanship, time and tragedy, and ultimately the triumph of endeavour over adversity. For *Unravelling*, Matt Smith thoughtfully reinstates the 'above stairs' fire buckets; the originals were said to be lost in the *Titanic* disaster en route to their new purchaser, the Metropolitan Museum in New York. As artefacts, however impractical, they draw together narratives and themes from several eras, and contrast mundane purpose with romantic stories of tragic loss, of the crossing of class boundaries through marriage, of the potential of fire to destroy layers of material history.

Zoë Hillyard has supplemented the Uppark ceramics collection, which includes pieces salvaged from the fire, with her own salvaged ceramic patchwork pieces. The works extend the story of restoration of rescued objects through the imagery printed upon their surface. Their meticulous reconstruction, and their cool acceptance of mismatching and missing parts, are part of the evolution of the object and its physical reaction to events. Hillyard's work perhaps sums up the aptness of the historic house as host for artists' interventions: the house is stimulus and receptor; it is both interpreted and altered by the intervention; and every action and installation contributes to its accreted history.

1 Tate Modern was the most visited contemporary art museum in the world, with 5.3 million visitors in 2012. www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/tate-modern-attracts-record-53-million-visitors-2012

2 Part of *Make the Most* project, Somerset Art Works and the National Trust at Barrington Court, curated by Craftspace, June-October 2013.

3 Wells, H. G., *An Experiment in Autobiography Vol. I: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)*: Vol1 Faber & Faber (27 Nov 2008). The account was first published in 1934. http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/wells/hg/experiment_in_autobiography/complete.html#chapter3.3 (accessed 1 December 2013)

4 *ibid.*





the artists

Andrew Burton

Vessels

fired clay, paint, glaze, stain, cement

Vessels has been conceived and designed as a series of objects for the Beer Cellar at Uppark. The space has a particular quality that I respond to: its muted colours, curves and vaulting, the stone floor and the white-painted bricks. Its enclosed, subterranean atmosphere contrasts with the rest of the house. The space is full of vessels, beer barrels and other containers. Nearby, in the Butler's Pantry, are dozens more glass vessels with their assorted stoppers.



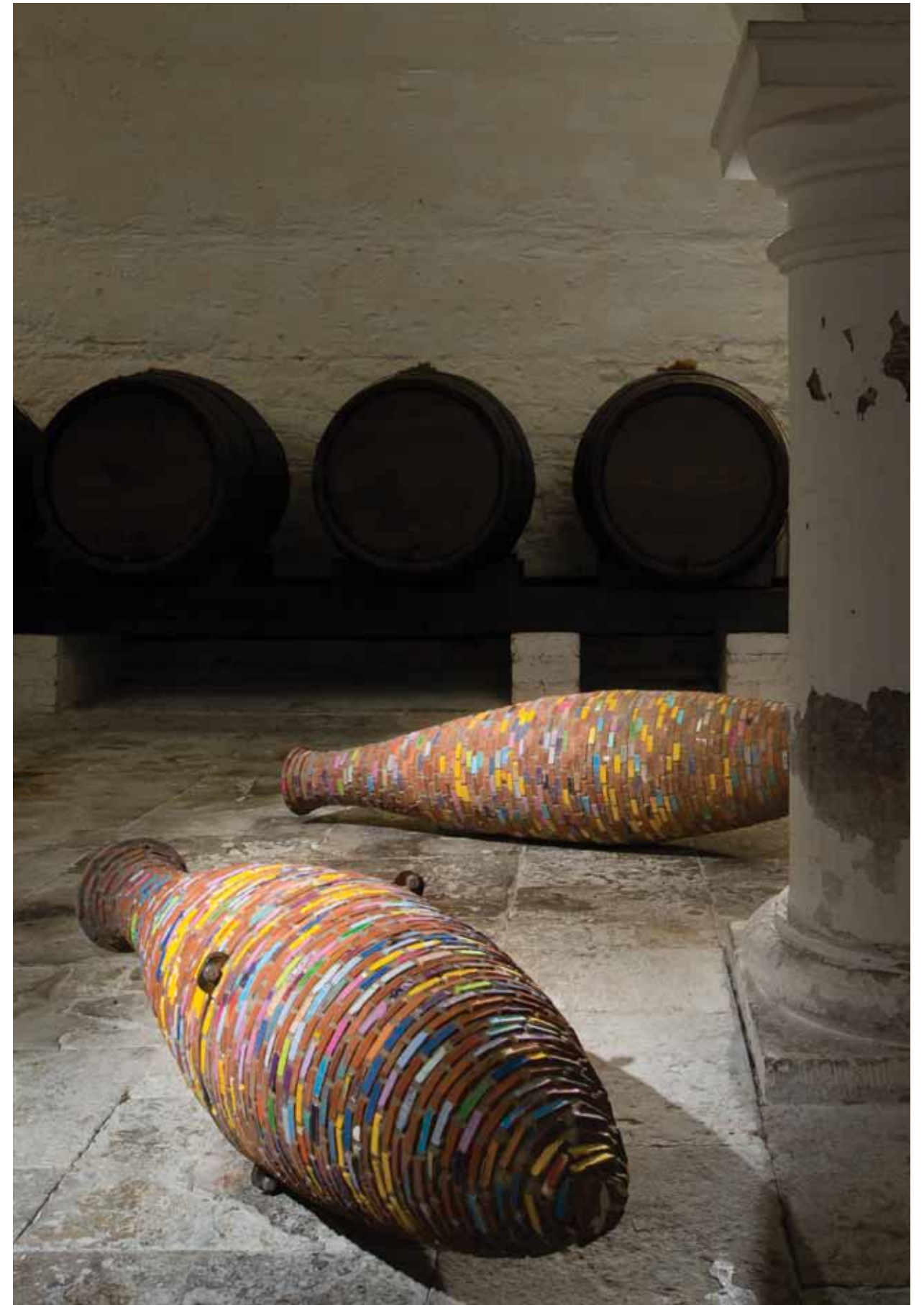
Often, my work responds to the spatial or architectural nature of the space it proposes to inhabit and also to the objects that already occupy the space. My response is initially visual: the shapes, forms and colours that intuitively feel right for a space. My ideas develop as I spend time in a space: looking, drawing and making photographs. This group of elongated vessels felt right.

Although these works are new, the tiny bricks that I have used to make *Vessels* have been used in many earlier sculptures and recycled into the current work. Once exhibited, these earlier sculptures were then broken up, the component parts salvaged to form the building blocks for the next work. As the sculptures were often painted or glazed, over time, and with their continual re-use, the tiny bricks have become accreted with scraps of the paint and cement that glued them together. Their encrusted, palimpsest-like surfaces convey a sense of the

way that traces of memory and history can remain visible, overlaying one another in apparently simple forms. The bricks are hand-made in my studio using the same process as is used to make building bricks.

This process seems to have a particular resonance at Uppark where the house itself is a kind of patchwork of the wildly divergent episodes and memories that form its narrative. Most recently, the house has been re-formed after the devastating fire in 1989.

The ambiguous form of *Vessels*, both bomb-like and vessel-like, and the way that the bricks from which they are made have changed across time, struck me as having an oblique association with the narrative of H G Wells's *The Time Machine*. Perhaps fancifully, I felt a sense of Wells's presence in the Beer Cellar – one could imagine the time machine departing from here. Wells's mother was housekeeper at Uppark and the poignant and sad image of her extraordinarily sculptural ear trumpet, twisted and vessel-like, influenced my thinking.



Robert Cooper
and Stella Harding

Dish of the day: chicken in a basket
porcelain paper clay, on-glaze ceramic transfers

Inspired by H G Wells's reference to the child-like Eloi as 'delicious people' in *The Time Machine*, our *Dish of the day* re-contextualises the relationship between Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh and Emma Hart.



In 1780 Sir Harry, connoisseur of ceramics, fine food and horse flesh, brought 15-year-old Amy Lyon (aka Emma Hart) to Uppark. He'd hired her for a year from an exclusive brothel in St James where, as one of Mrs Kelly's 'chickens', she'd been groomed as a high-class courtesan.

Tradition has it that Amy danced naked on Uppark's dining table for Sir Harry's male guests – possibly in the manner of a 'posture moll', a tavern harlot who performed striptease on a large pewter platter to arouse the punters. In Georgian times, when one fifth of London's female population (including children) worked in the sex industry, their liaison would barely have raised a false eyebrow. Although Amy later attained celebrity status as Emma, Lady Hamilton, such was the sexual double standard that her reputation never recovered from the gossip surrounding her past.

Playing on the multiple connotations of the word dish: shallow serving vessel, attractive person, scandalous gossip and ruined reputation, we've combined our practices of ceramics and basketry to weave a dish reminiscent of a Sceaux faience basket collected by Sir Harry.

Sited in the Stone Hall amid the ravages of the hunt, pastoral innocence is stripped away and floral decoration is reduced to the dark stains of withered lilies. Lines from Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) encircle our dish of contemporary news stories, drawing parallels between the Georgian sex trade and modern slavery. Then, as now, invisible chains of debt bondage, emotional manipulation and fear bound thousands to lives of sexual servitude. Then, the rich gratified their appetite for young flesh with impunity. Now, sexual predators are themselves consumed in a tabloid feeding frenzy of moral outrage – begging the question: who are today's delicious people?



Gen Doy

A Milkmaid's Song

sound, speaker, stand, tablecloth

I work with texts, images, installations, and particularly sound and the voice. The speaking and singing voice has great potential in terms of its sensual and seductive qualities: evoking people, events and meanings, including hidden or forgotten ones.

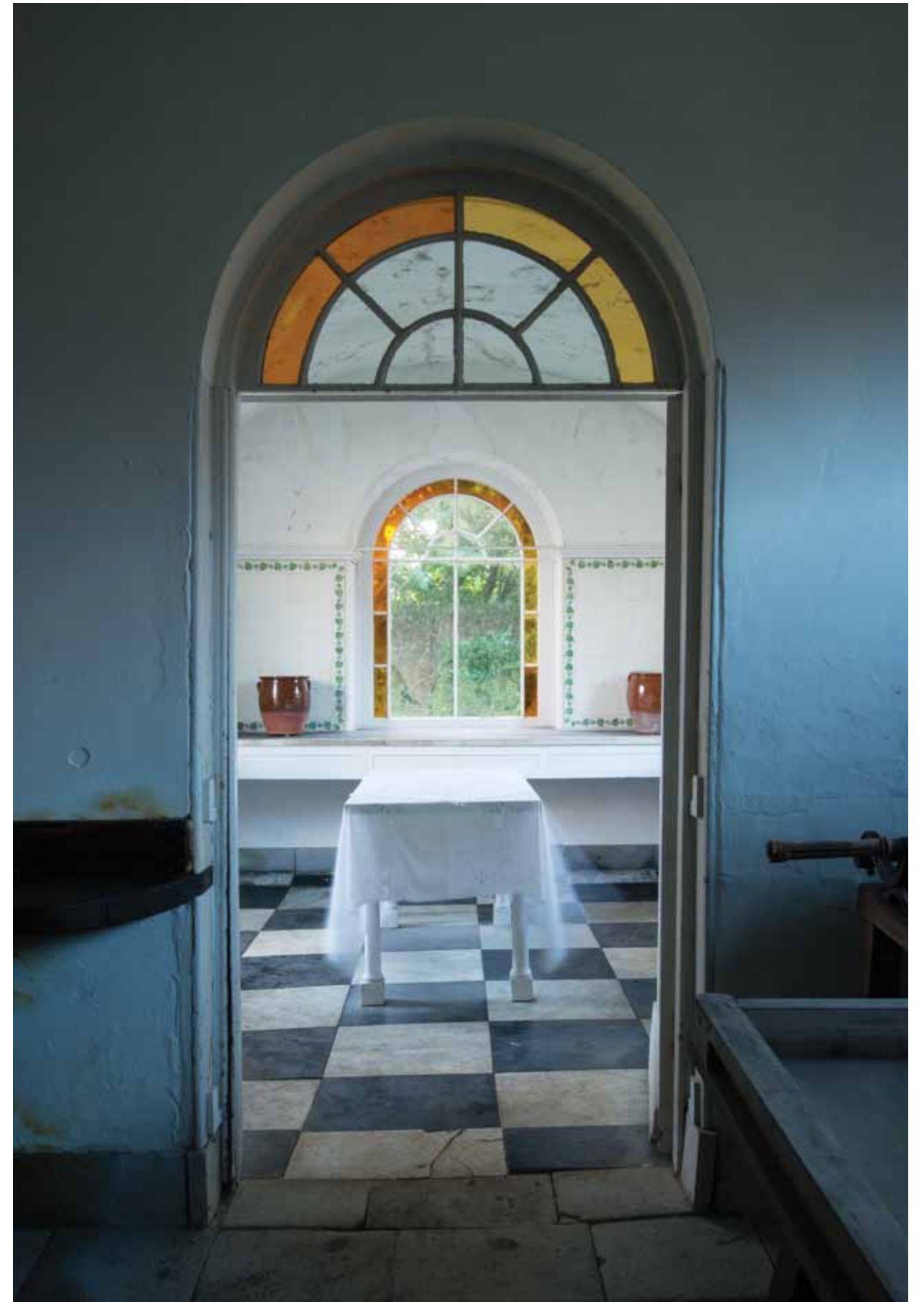


I like to situate the voice in a 'fabric' of sound gleaned from field recordings, often of specific sites. My piece *A Milkmaid's Song*, sited in the Dairy at Uppark, includes recordings made outside the dairy of birds singing, a cockerel crowing, and of traditional butter-making machinery. These then enter into a dialogue with the non-recorded sounds experienced by the listeners when they come to the work. When the visitors come to the Dairy, whisper to one another, walk on the flagstones, more layers of sound come into play.

These layers of sound combine with the recorded sounds, whose source is uncertain, and another meaning is created.

Sound can bring the past into collision with the present. Here I sing a newly composed melody, which supports the traditional words. And the story of the singing dairymaid who married the master of the house is brought together with sounds of Shirley Hill, National Trust employee, demonstrating how to make butter.

As soon as I visited Uppark I knew I wanted to make a work about Mary Ann Bullock singing in the Dairy, and the way in which her voice attracted Sir Harry who had yet to see her. The sound piece works both *outside* the Dairy – as the sound is directed from a single speaker out of the door, across the fields, enticing visitors to approach – and also *inside* the Dairy where the hard surfaces and resonant space are like a resonant chamber. The voice is alive, breathing out through flesh. But from what kind of body, one living or dead?



Steven Follen

Trade

tin, tea, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, vanilla, turmeric, cardamom, jute, cotton, indigo

Having spent time in India and Bangladesh I was interested in Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh's (1714-1774) connections with the East India Company (EIC). He is said to have been one of its largest stockholders and part-owned several East Indiamen: ships used to transport goods back from the EIC trading centres, including Bengal.



Uppark has a history of play and learning. H G Wells wrote of how his experiences in the house informed events later in his life. The grand doll's house belonging to Sarah (Sir Matthew's wife) was a tool for both play and instruction, encouraging an understanding of how to manage a home. Sir Matthew was heir to a kinsman, Sir Henry Fetherstone (1654-1746), who taught him the trade of investment and speculation.

I've made a group of tin boats, inspired by the shapes of traditional vessels from Bengal. They are filled with cargo which the EIC traded such as tea, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, vanilla, turmeric, cardamom, jute, cotton and indigo. They wind their way across the floor, beneath the pagoda cabinet in the Little Parlour, as if left by a child who has finished playing. The boats can be seen as a boy's equivalent of the doll's house, designed to encourage an interest in shipping and trade.

There were major famines in Bengal between 1769-1773 when approximately a third of the population died. Some believe this was caused by EIC policy in the region, which forced farmers to

produce cash crops like opium, cotton and indigo, and forbade the storage of surplus grain.

Robert Clive (1725-1774) was employed by the EIC and was twice the Governor of Bengal. Clive was challenged in Parliament during the 1760s and 1770s for his activities in India, which generated vast wealth for EIC stockholders and himself. Clive received support from a number of MPs, including Sir Matthew.

It is hoped the smells of the spices will gently waft around the room adding to the dreamy atmosphere of the space and evoking far-off places.



Caitlin Heffernan

Remnants

hay bales, hay nets, horsehair, felt, rescued fragments of fabric from Uppark's 1989 house fire, leather reins, jewels

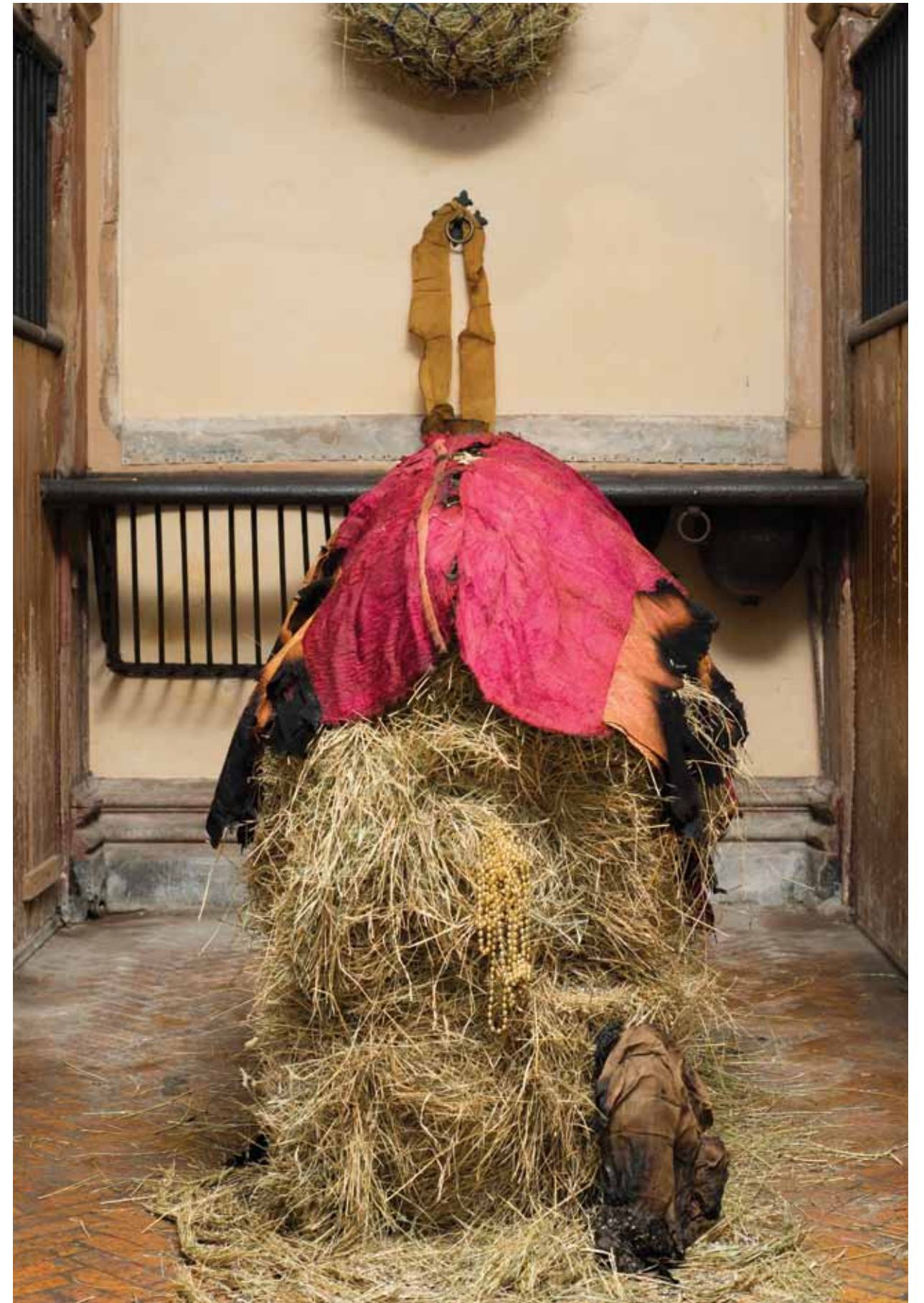
Remnants is a site-specific installation based in the stables. This evocative space houses many of the charred remains from the house fire at Uppark in 1989, but the scuffs and hoof marks of the empty stable bays also reveal the traces of the horses once stabled there.



My response has been to use fragments of burnt and charred fabrics from the house fire to re-create horse coats, feeding bags and partial elements of clothing. There are also objects made from hay, partially-formed horses in thick felt, horsehair and reins made from leather.

Suspended and embedded within the space these fragmentary elements are designed to draw out the stories of the building's history and to play on the idea of horses as status symbols through fleeting glimpses of jewels within the bales hidden in and around the bays.

I am fascinated by the history of the space and the markers – the traces literally etched on the walls and floors – left by the former occupants. It is these elements that have informed my intervention within the stables.



Zoë Hillyard

Salvage

ceramic, fabric, thread

In 1989, Uppark was devastated when a fire, which started on the roof, ended up gutting much of the house. As the fire burnt downwards, a desperate race began to remove artifacts, paintings, textiles and furniture from below. Chains of people passed precious items out onto the lawns. Eventually ceilings and fireplaces caved in, plasterwork and remaining items were smashed and all ground floor rooms were left exposed to the sky.



In the aftermath, the four feet of damp ash and debris which lay in the rooms was gathered and stored in regiments of black dustbins out on the lawn, waiting for their contents to be carefully sorted. After some debate, the decision was made to restore Uppark to 'the day before the fire'. What then emerged was a vibrant community of skilled craftspeople, taking up residence in makeshift workshops and offices in the grounds of the property. Old skills were rekindled and expertise shared. Salvaged fragments were grafted onto replacement sections. Tides of people came and went and slowly Uppark was rebuilt. From the traumatic event came an amazing opportunity for discovery and innovation and the collective energy of the endeavour left its mark on everyone involved. My ceramic patchwork pieces celebrate the painstaking dedication of this remarkable temporary community.

Playing on the aesthetics associated with archaeological restoration and traditions of Japanese ceramic mending, the hand-stitched pieces revive materials, embrace flaws and celebrate the outcome of misadventure. They sit in the Red Drawing Room as 'replacements', alongside 'fire survivors' and substitute ceramics. Their hand-stitched construction echoes the pioneering textile renovation work undertaken by Margaret Meade-Fetherstonhaugh to reinforce Uppark's 18th century curtains, a task that later enabled them to withstand being wrenched from the windows.

Because I am interested in the journeys objects make, all the ceramics I re-work are second-hand finds, making for an interesting play between Grand Tour treasures and revived mass-produced reproductions. The fabrics are a mixture of old and new, either gathered on my own Grand Tour of charity shops and vintage sales, or digitally printed with repurposed classical and oriental imagery.

There remains a room, stacked high with bread trays, containing smoky fragments of an array of beautiful ceramics found within the ash after the fire. Photography, digital fabric printing and hand-stitched construction enable these fragments to once again take on three-dimensional form and return to sit, if still incomplete, within the elegance of the Red Drawing Room.



Agnes Jones | *Io and Euthenia*
steel

I am an artist blacksmith who uses steel to draw – I make sketches which I then re-create in steel, retaining the exciting feel and energy of the original drawings. Each piece has a life and character brought out by the use of a single line running through the piece.

Since I work primarily to commission, the location of an object I make is always important, because the work interacts with the environment around it. An object should always fit the location it is designed for, and on the visit to Uppark it was clear that the two niches on either side of the portico would be perfect for work which would tell the visitor something of the people of the house. The two who impressed themselves on me were Mary Ann Bullock and Emma Hart: two women who experienced amazing transformations in the house.



As a young woman, Emma Hart was painted a number of times by George Romney, in the guise of various Greek goddesses and nymphs. Based on Romney's combining of classical dress with contemporary allure, she created a set of charades. These involved her dressing up, dancing and posing to evoke images from Greek mythology in front of an audience who would guess the names of the classical characters and scenes. This, and the huge classical influence of Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh, led me to look to ancient Greek goddesses for characters who would work as playful sculptural counterparts.

Emma Hart, who was the daughter of a blacksmith, a society hostess and later the mistress of Lord Nelson, linked perfectly to Euthenia. The daughter of the blacksmith god Hephaestus, Euthenia was the goddess of prosperity, growth and sailing.

For Mary Ann Bullock, the milkmaid who Harry Fetherstonhaugh fell in love with and married, Io was perfect – a nymph that Zeus fell in love with, but had to turn into a cow to prevent Hera from noticing her. Io was forced to wander the kingdom until Zeus could turn her back into a woman. She became a queen and was the ancestress of Hercules.

I drew the two women as these goddesses, showing who they are through the symbols the Greeks used to identify them, and providing a narrative based on the similarities between them which the audience can piece together. Io retains her cow horns and carries an olive branch of peace, whilst Euthenia carries a cornucopia of plenty, has a wheat sheaf crown and a flowing dress to symbolise water.



Alice Kettle
and Helen Felcey

The House of Eloi

cloth, thread, beads, glass, Perspex, ceramic, plastic

As a child, the doll's house at Uppark had a huge impact on me as a repeat visitor with my mother and two sisters. We acquired our own monumental doll's house and each of us made furniture and curios for it. I still have the doll's patchwork quilt made by my mother. Alice Kettle



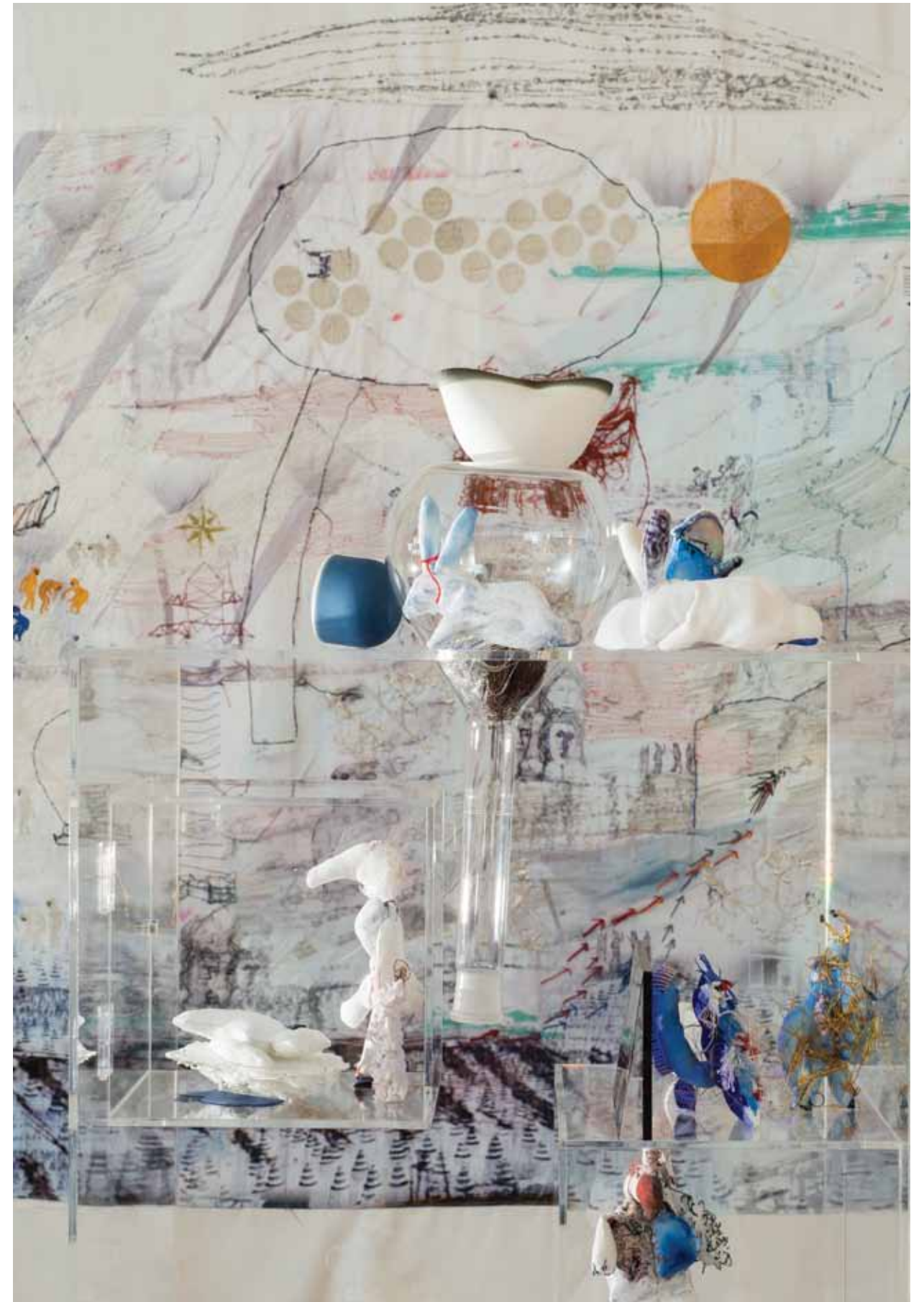
As a young boy, H G Wells spent a great deal of time at Uppark where his mother was the housekeeper in the late 1800s. He immersed himself in the rich contents of the library which influenced his imagination and desire to become a writer.

His science fiction book *The Time Machine* describes an alternative universe, which moves between virtual dimensions of the earthly world; in *The War of the Worlds*, the earth is subjected

to a near-apocalyptic invasion by Martian beings. We have used these novels by H G Wells to make our own futuristic cityscape in the doll's house room.

The House of Eloi wallhanging depicts a city destroyed and inhabited by strange and curious creatures – Eloi – from H G Wells's original text. A futuristic, Perspex house is erected next to the existing doll's houses. The lower section contains the shards: ceramic debris of broken buildings and a destroyed world. In the top section, the creatures make a new environment, where the familiar becomes unfamiliar and magical. The creatures are explorers: they begin to venture beyond their house to occupy crevices, corners and cabinets in other rooms.

Helen Felcey (ceramics) and Alice Kettle (textiles) have a history of collaborating with each other, and co-creation. They combine their practices to make collections and environments of cloth, thread, slip-cast ceramics, fragments and stitch. The creatures are both beautiful and strange; which, like H G Wells's visions of the future, question our perceptions of the real and the unknown.



Jini Rawlings

Amy Emily Emma and Four Times of Day (Vernet)
semi-aluminised mirrors, acrylic, HD video, sound



The Dining Room at Uppark provided the stage for one of Amy Lyon's early famed performances. Did she or did she not dance on the mahogany table for Sir Harry and his friends when she was 15? Was she nude? Over the almost two centuries since her death in 1815, Amy – later transforming into Emily Hart and finally Emma, Lady Hamilton – has been a screen for various projected fantasies about women. She is the hyper-sensualised/sexualised object of the male gaze, the beautiful object/subject of painters, the lover of Nelson or his nemesis, the 'vulgar woman' first acclaimed, then rejected, by polite society. Alternatively, she is an important artist whose 'attitudes' – classical and mythological tableaux, created in Naples – are a forerunner of performance art and interpretive dance.

My work is often about the marginalised or outsider and in this installation I use video projected through layers of semi-aluminised mirrors to reflect some of the fragmentation of a complex life. There is no one optimum viewpoint; there is always a different way of looking at things.

Emma was always a composite construction. She was partly self-made and partly constructed by others. The piece on the table celebrates her at the height of her self-actualisation before her final, sadder

end. The main performance in the video is intertwined with fragments of the significant series of marine paintings by Claude-Joseph Vernet collected on the Grand Tour and displayed in the Dining Room. Emma's life is intimately connected with the sea, most especially through her relationship with Nelson, and of course Emma herself became a part of the Grand Tour in Naples. The 'stories' embedded in the installation contain a variety of references to her life and times ranging from the statues of dancers uncovered in Herculaneum, Greek vases collected by Lord Hamilton, to the classically inspired dancers on a Wedgwood mantelpiece and the paintings of Emma by many artists and, most significantly for this piece, by Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun.



Simon Ryder

Quartet
laser-etched crystal glass

Do the technological devices by which we enlarge our understanding of nature enhance or diminish our sense of kindredness with it?
Richard Mabey, *The Scientist and the Romantic*



Quartet brings the songs of four birds encountered in the gardens of Uppark into the interior of the house. A single phrase from each of the birds' repertoires (one lasting less than a tenth of a second and beyond the ability of the human ear to discriminate) has been analysed to reveal how its pitch and loudness varies over time. This digital process splinters the seamless flow of each song into a mass of numbers, which are then plotted as an undulating landscape – the position, shape and height of the topography an accurate reflection of the song dynamics. To capture and preserve this sonic form

within crystal glass, lasers are used to make pinpoint fractures in the vitreous material, each fracture corresponding to a single point of data. As the fractures accumulate, so the song reappears, its cadences now turned into an etching.

So much of our understanding and appreciation of the natural world is mediated through the many technologies that accompany us in our everyday lives. At Uppark, the house is full of different representations of this world in a variety of media and crafts; the whole estate itself is in many ways a grand re-presentation of the nature that was here before. Into this tradition, *Quartet* offers both a scientific record of that world as well as an etched composition – a murmur from the avian world beyond the window.



Matt Smith

Garniture: The Bullock Buckets

ceramic, screen-printed decals, underglaze, enamel, lustres

In 1825, Uppark's owner Sir Harry married his dairymaid Mary Ann Bullock, 50 years younger than Sir Harry, Mary Ann was promptly sent to Paris to acquire 'the social graces'.¹ I was interested in this transition from below stairs to above stairs and how this transformation could be visualised.



Outside the Still Room in the basement at Uppark is a row of fire buckets. The fire at Uppark in 1989 caused most damage to the upper floors. It therefore seemed prudent to bring a new set of fire buckets – suitably embellished – upstairs.

Mirroring Mary Ann's life, these buckets went on their own fictional journey to Paris to acquire social graces. The once humble buckets now form a garniture² in the Staircase Hall. Whilst on initial inspection they may suit the new location, the effect of manual labour upon their form is still visible in the throwing marks, seams and joins.

The buckets are no longer able to fulfil their original duties and instead occupy a decorative position: static upon a marble-topped table to be gazed at by the master of the house, under the watchful eyes of his parents' portraits.

Country houses ran on strict adherence to one's place, and unsettling the hierarchies was unusual. In visual art, treating things that would normally be considered lesser or of marginal importance is a core method of camp. Indeed this garniture embraces the idea of camp, with its 'philosophy of subversion and doubt which questions the legitimacy and seriousness demanded by social and cultural hierarchies'.³

¹ Christopher Rowell, The National Trust, Uppark Guidebook 2010, p29

² Garniture: a set of decorative accessories, usually vases

³ Florence Tamagnes, *Mauvais genre? Une histoire des représentations de l'homosexualité*, La Martinière, 2001, p251, quoted in Paul Bourassa, *The object in its own right* in Léopold Foulem *Singularities*, Musée National Des Beaux-Arts du Québec, 2013, p118





Domestic bliss or the great divide? Country houses and the perpetuation of social inequality

Laurajane Smith

Uppark was the home of Thomas Deller for 50 years. It is often forgotten, as we peer across the red ropes into gold gilded living spaces, presented as if frozen in time, that country houses were people's homes – dynamic spaces where the day-to-day messiness of living was carried out. We may, as we wander from room to room, imagine what it must have been like to live among such opulence and luxury. However, the collective imagination tends to focus on what it might have been like for 'the family': to imagine Sir Matthew or Sir Harry or Sir Herbert sitting in their dining rooms, or striding through the halls decked out with the artworks collected on their travels through Europe. However, let us stop and consider what calling Uppark home may have been like for Thomas, as Uppark also happened to be Thomas's workplace as the butler, where he slept, ate, and went about his own life when not seeing to the needs of his employers.



The Butler's Pantry at Uppark House and Garden

Indeed Uppark, like all such houses, was both workplace and home, places where the divisions between 'work' and 'home' became strangely blurred, if not obscured, for domestic servants and estate workers. These houses, often perceived as aesthetic objects, are of course statements of power, built to assert, cement and document the owner's position in British social hierarchies.¹ The employment of servants and estate workers was also part of that statement of social position. Thus, the activities of home and work experienced by those employed to maintain house and grounds, and the privileged lives of their employers, take on more meaning than the completion of the worker's day-to-day tasks. The blurring of work and home experiences, particularly for domestic workers, undertaken within the theatres of symbolic monuments to power and hierarchy, was a daily economic and social performance of the legitimacy and naturalness of the class system. The country house provides a very public, but nonetheless domestic, setting in which

class relations were performed, and this sense of domesticity normalises and naturalises the experiences of house employees and the 'place' of workers in British life – a place which ultimately is about providing for social elites. That life 'below stairs' was exploitative has been well documented.² However, the exploitative realities and consequences of these lives has often been obscured or lost, as the performance of a 'good' servant was measured in the degree to which they could go about their duties

unnoticed and unregarded. Thus, in the domestic performance of the country house, workers fade into the background, playing supportive roles for the star performers of British history, and are easily forgotten.

The country house performance in the 21st century has not substantially changed since the times of Sir Matthew or Sir Harry, but the players have. While these houses may no longer be the workplaces and homes of large numbers of domestic or estate workers, the houses nonetheless, as theatres of memory, play a role, reminding visitors to them of their place in British society and the place of the social and political elites. Visiting Uppark and other historic houses is itself a performance, which might be part of a pleasant Sunday afternoon excursion – a 'nice day out' – or as a place to take an overseas visitor, but nonetheless our visits and the maintenance of these properties has meaning. The way we use and maintain these houses spells out and sends a social message about the historical importance (or unimportance) of the people who called these houses home.

Visitor research at historic houses has illustrated that visitors engage in individual and collective acts of remembering and forgetting, which help perpetuate the social meaning and significance of these houses in the present.³ Visitors will often look with envy or awe at the lives of owners and employers, and the following are examples of visitors talking about the emotions conjured up while touring houses like Uppark:

A bit envious, but proud of the history.
(CH102, male, 50-59, painter and decorator, 2004)

Overawed by opulence.
(CH006, female, over 60, retired, 2004)

Yes it's very grand, very awe-inspiring to see how much, how big an area it covers.
(TN42, female, 25-34, sales, 2007)



Cleavers at Uppark House and Garden in 1930

In awe of it, I wouldn't be able to live here.
(CH218, male, 18-29, student, 2004)

The size produces awe. How nice the people are.
(CH219, male, 21, student, 2004)

Awesome to think one family needs such a huge place to live.
(CH266, female, 18-29, teacher, 2004)

These feelings of awe work to focus attention on the experiences of 'the family', as CH266 does, to consider what it might have been like to live in such surroundings. Such feelings also help to reinforce pride in the country's history, and offer reassurance that the elites who lived here were, as CH219 observes, 'nice people'. Often coupled with this sense of awe are feelings of comfort:

I like the house – it is warm and welcoming. I feel comfortable and at home here.
(CH269, female, 30-39, computer systems operator, 2004)

Comfortable, pride as well.
(CH328, female, over 60, housewife, 2004)

Proud and comfortable.
(CH363, female, 40-59, teacher, 2004)

Exciting, and feel very comfortable being here.
(CH343, female, 40-59, engineer, 2004)

Contented – wouldn't change my lot for this.
(CH329, male, over 60, company director, and who identified that their mother had been 'in service', 2004)

Visitors touring the house know that they are simply visiting: they know, as CH218 states, that they could never live here. Nevertheless, feelings of being in a comfortable 'home', of domestic bliss, staged and on display, reassure. The largesse of the social elites is recognised, and although awestruck and humbled by the display of wealth there is nonetheless comfort in knowing one's place in British society. CH329 would not change his 'lot' in life for such a lifestyle; he can feel contented with what he has. When walking through Uppark and similar establishments the roped-off rooms let us know that such lifestyles are beyond our reach: 'I feel I am

on the outside looking in' (CH265, male, 40-59, teacher, 2004), as one visitor noted. The position of looking in reinforces the idea that it is the upper classes that are both the caretakers and subject of British history, a history that they alone made, and were and continue to be responsible for. Stately homes embody the gravitas and weight of a particular understanding and vision of history, and solidify the intangibility of historical consciousness, so that the survival of these houses offers assurance for those anxious about social change and lost traditions, and provides a sense of historical and social continuity:

Feeling of satisfaction of solidity of continuity in this modern restless world.
(CH267, male, 40-59, writer, 2004)

Honoured that these places existed and still do. We need to maintain them for our identity and future generations.
(CH270, male, over 60, stores manager, Ministry of Defence, 2004)

Thus, these houses come to stand in for a particular vision of British national and social history – and even national identity – their grand solidity lending literal weight to a particular collective remembering and forgetting in which only the elites have agency. Mary Ann Bullock, who at 20, and from the position of dairymaid, married the septuagenarian Sir Harry, inherited Uppark on his death and herself passed on the house after her death to her sister Frances Bullock. Interestingly, the tenure of these women from working backgrounds as owners of the house has been described as a 'long Victorian afternoon', a sleepy period in which both women were



characterised as being ‘devoted’ to the preservation of Uppark as Harry had left it.⁴ Indeed, they are praised as having handed the estate on ‘intact and well maintained’ to the Meade-Fetherstonhaughs,⁵ as if they were simply passing through the house, looking over the red ropes from their Victorian afternoon, and had not actually *lived in* Uppark. This implies that their greatest life achievement was the maintenance of the legacies of the house, so that it could be passed on to ‘appropriate’ inheritors. Re-imagining the

house as a home, a place lived in by workers, allows us to think, and exercise our imagination and emotions, about the limited and limiting choices that might be presented, as they were to Mary Ann Bullock at 20 by her 70-year-old employer, and what it may have been like for Emma Hart at the age of 15 to dance naked on the dining table for Sir Harry’s titillation, and to be ‘packed off’⁶ and discarded when six months pregnant.



Subterranean passage at Uppark House and Garden

To what extent, however, does the country house performance allow us to engage in such re-imaginings? At a number of houses located in Yorkshire, and similar to Uppark, visitors were asked to comment on installations and exhibitions that examined the lives of domestic and estate workers. Visitors were asked to think about what the lives of such workers might have been like. As one visitor noted, the exhibition revealed:

Basically how badly treated were the workers. The great divide.
(TN7, female, 45-54, project worker for trade union, 2007)

For many visitors, however, such contemplation elicited anxiety, many stressing the idea that the employers in the houses they were touring were ‘good people’ who treated their workers well, for example:

Not saying they didn’t have hard lives but in comparison and if they were with a good family, you know, I tend to think, you know, they were looked after from birth, from young to old.
(TN32, female, over 65, retired teacher, 2007)

They had beautiful surroundings to live in. I mean imagine waking up every morning and looking at that view even if you were a scullery maid.
(TN33, female, over 65, retired teacher, 2007)

Yeah, I think people weren’t as cruel to their servants as what I thought they were.
(TN72, male, 35-44, window cleaner, 2007)

Depending on how they were treated by the people they were working for, I think they probably had a much better life than a lot of people around because they’d got shelter and food and were looked after in their old age.
(TN69, female, over 65, personal assistant, 2007)

The Saloon at Uppark House and Garden

The desire that the idea of the country house, as an icon of national heritage, should produce or affirm national narratives that one could feel proud about or comforted by, is strong, and these visitors hope to maintain that sense of comfort by believing in a benevolent employer. Other visitors took a different stance and, while noting that they were glad not to have been born into service back then, went on to observe:



It was how it was.
(TN73, male, over 65, camp director, 2007)

That's just the way it was.
(TN76, male, 55-64, postman, 2007)

...but [they] were generally treated well, so yes. And back then, they had their place, that was the way of the world ... That's the way it was.
(BH1, female, 45-54, nurse, 2007)

Well actually that we cannot live in the past, we have to move on.
(HH70, female, 55-64, welfare benefits officer, 2007)

These sentiments express the belief that our understanding of the past is immutable, that we should accept that immutability and move on from it, or that we cannot judge the past based on the values of the present. However, our understanding of the past is not immutable, and is indeed understood and interpreted through our contemporary social values and experiences. Our subjective selves interpret and give meaning to the past through the way we remember it – either individually or collectively as a nation. Remembering is never politically neutral, nor is it possible to engage in absolute recall, so that forgetting is an integral part of remembering.⁷ Here are three visitor interpretations of and responses to an exhibition on domestic and estate works at one country house:

TN39: I think most history concentrates on the family and the lords and ladies and ... I think ... social history should be considered with the whole running of the house and the estate.

TN40: Me too, I feel like that as well, I feel social history is very important because without the estate workers these people would have been, well they wouldn't have been able to exist!
(TN39, male, 55-64, lecturer; TN40, female, 55-64, lecturer, 2007)

Well the people who lived in these houses were way out in front weren't they? ... We worked and you knew when to bite your tongue but these days young people don't do that do they? They open their mouths and out comes abuse or whatever because they have rights.
(TN73, male, over 65, camp director, 2007)

These are two very different interpretations, one considering the integral part workers played in maintaining and enabling these houses, the other

asserting that the lesson to be learned from these houses is knowing when to 'bite your tongue', be deferential, to know your place and, in effect, not voice your rights. How we interpret and remember the past influences the way we understand and give meaning to the present, and it shapes how we think about and envisage the future, and the roles and rights individuals and collectives might have in it. In the traditional heritage performances centred on either visiting or preserving country houses we often engage in the forgetting of the lives and experiences of workers, women and the enslaved⁸ at the same time as the lives, genealogies and experiences of the elites are remembered and commemorated. A choice is made as to what is or is not remembered. If history and heritage is about informing the present, and allowing the present to learn from the mistakes and injustices of the past to inform current and future social debate, then the challenge of the country house as a heritage attraction is to engage in an *active* remembering of the lives and experiences of *all* the people who called these places home. What might putting ourselves into the shoes of workers within these houses tell us? In what ways will we choose to allow such reflections to inform our understanding of past and present?

1. See Raphael Samuel *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso 1994); Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1997). Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn *Class and Contemporary British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013). Also for a gendered reading of the history and use of these houses see Jill Seddon, 'A woman's place: power, gender and work in the country house in *Unravelling the Vyne* (Hove: Unravelling, 2013).
2. Pamela Horn *Life Below Stairs in the 20th Century* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing 2003).
3. Visitor interviews were undertaken at the following houses. In 2004: Audley End, Belsay Hall, Brodsworth Hall, Harewood House, Nostell Priory and Waddesdon Manor. In 2007: Brodsworth Hall, Burton Constable, Harewood House, Temple Newsome. The 2004 research was funded by the British Academy and reported in Laurajane Smith *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge 2006); 'Deference and humility - the social values of the Country House', in L. Gibson and J.R. Pendlebury (eds) *Valuing Historic Environments* (Farnham: Ashgate 2009). Further research into visitor uses and responses to historic houses is occurring as part of ongoing research funded by the Australian Research Council (2010-2014).
4. Christopher Rowell *Uppark* (house guide: National Trust 2010): 30.
5. *Ibid*: 90.
6. *Ibid*: 26.
7. James V. Wertsch *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002); Paul Connerton 'Seven Types of Forgetting'. *Memory Studies* 1(1): 59-71, 2008.
8. The extent to which some country houses were built and maintained on the proceeds of African enslaved labour is an under researched topic, but see for example James Walvin *Britain's Slave Empire* (Abingdon: The History Press 2000).



Is there ever a first-time visit, and how will we remember it in the future?

Helen Carnac



Boulle clock case with ormolu mounts in the Staircase Hall at Uppark House and Garden

The sensation of succession and so duration imbues human experience, providing it with its unique character. We are able to compare the present held in memory with the present as currently experienced.¹

Part I

Time is an ever-present feature of all our lives, we can't and don't get away from it: the seconds and minutes that course through each day, and the seasons shifting, light changing and memories fading. Sometimes it is the small details that fade in and out that can bring to bear the memory of something distant, that can't quite be recalled and yet is still there, lurking in our minds. Visiting somewhere for the first time can trigger a feeling of remembering and having seen something before.

When I was seven years old my family visited a Greek Island for our summer holiday. During our stay we went on a day trip to Turkey, which I still remember as, while we were there, even though for the first time, I remembered being there before. I recall now that, even at that young age, I had a real sense of déjà vu and more than that I seemed to know where things were and how to walk to them. I often recollect this episode and

wonder about it – about memory and time and how we remember – and it has made me wonder whether we can really experience a place as if for the first time.

What we remember...

of ourselves

As we move about in space we are constantly accruing memory, a bodily memory, how we walk, how we move, what we feel as we move, a brush of air across the face, through the hair, a stiffness in the back, the leg; a creak of bone, a feel of stone through shoe. We take this accrued memory with us.

of others

When we see something familiar in or of a person, that reminds us of another, a slight movement, a touch to the hair, the crease of a brow, the way someone smiles, a distant wave.

of everyday objects

When we see a familiar or everyday object it can bring to bear the memory of use, of a familiar person or a particular moment in time, an enamel jug, a teapot, broom, spoon, fork or pile of pins. A reminder of something in object form.

of unfamiliar objects

Of recognising something in the unfamiliar, a shape, a form, a material that makes something all the more familiar? Perhaps a familiarity in the unknown.

of tasks being undertaken?

The knitting, stitching, threading, folding, polishing, chopping, cutting, tying, reaching, packing, writing, planting, mending, that remind us of something else.

of a landscape and place

Over time and through generations we remember through landscape and the form it takes. The word 'scape' is a derivation of ship or shape – working or understanding the landscape is a mediation of a shaping process of social and material things. Simon Schama writes in *Landscape and Memory*:

'Here was the homeland for which the people of Giby had died and of which, in a shape of their memorial hummock, they had now been added. Their memory had now assumed the form of the landscape itself. A metaphor had become a reality; an absence had become a presence.'²

of material

Memories held in the creases in curtains: in the colour of the wallpaper; the fading of lead paint 'to a silver grey; the faded furniture; the light dispersed through a stained glass window; or the reflection in a gilt mirror'.³

of a fleeting...

view from a window, sound of birdsong, smell of beechwood and bracken, voice...



The house seen from the Dairy at Uppark House and Garden

Part II

I still have not visited Uppark and so I have no physical memory of it. My research into it has taken place completely online. In this search three pieces of writing have helped me to think about this place from afar and about the physical nature of place changing, and yet and at the same time, the things that stay the same.

In extracts from *Experiment in Autobiography*, H G Wells recounts his memories of Uppark: from its 'wide undulating downland park' to 'the walled gardens containing the gardener's cottage which my father occupied' – which really still give a sense of the lie of the land. Wells also recounts being with his father at Uppark:

'Once when I was somewhere in my twenties and he was over sixty; as I was walking with him on the open downs out beyond Uppark, he said casually: "when I was a young man of your age I used to come out here and lie oh! half the night, just looking at the stars."'4

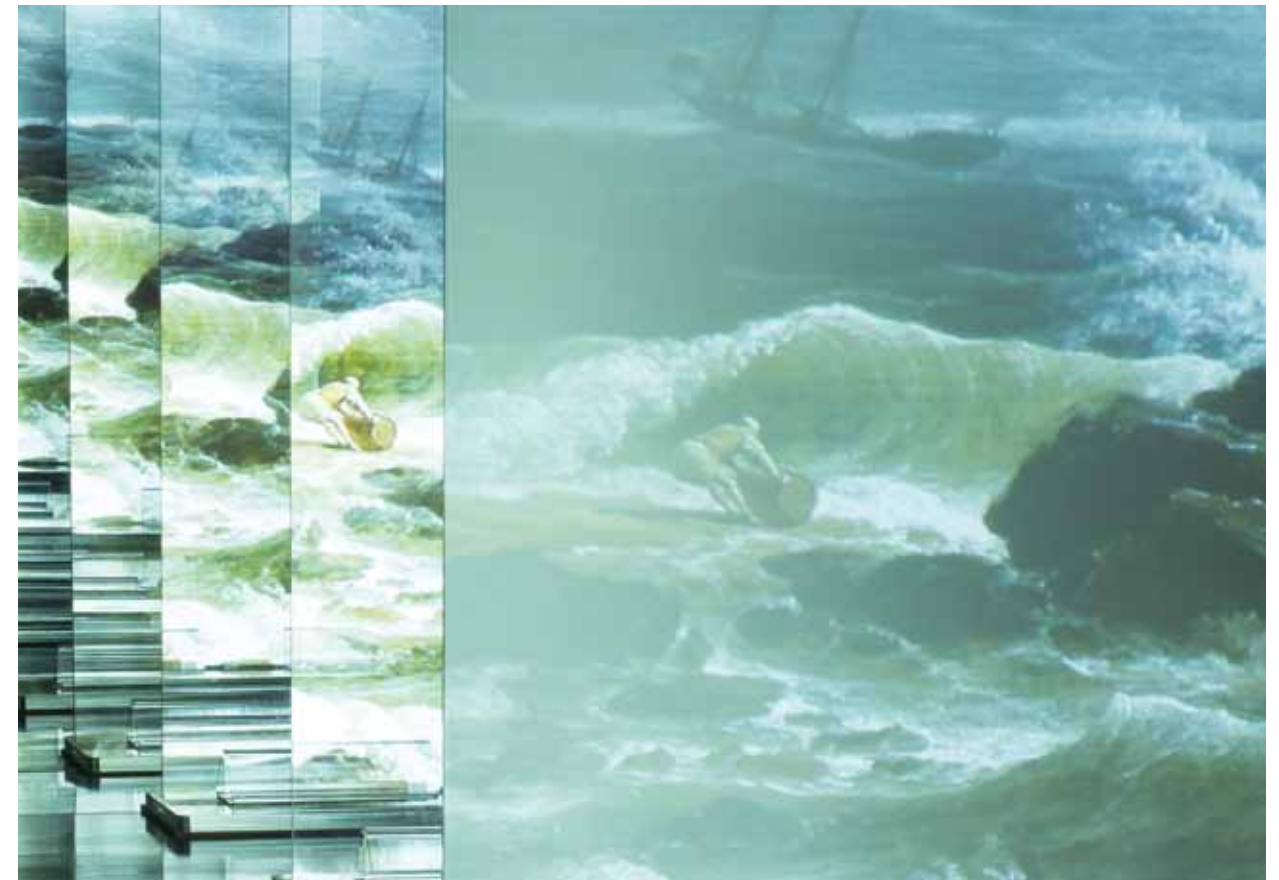
It made me wonder that we still see the same stars and sky as he did, that this is something that changes somewhat but ostensibly remains the same regardless of other things. The stars are not controlled by human forces. In a blog post, recently written by the current assistant gardener at Uppark, Jennifer Swatton gives thought about time passing and things changing and yet the same things occurring as they have for centuries, when she writes of one of her 'unexpected jobs' – winding the clock at the top of the east Pavilion at Uppark which she describes as:

'...a weekly ritual that must have taken place since the 1750s (albeit with occasional gaps). (and) while winding away ... it occurred to me that the clock had chimed its way through centuries of change in the garden.'5

Some of this 'change' occurred in the house too and I read about it with interest in an article in the Independent newspaper about the re-opening of Uppark after it was 'ravished' by fire in 1989 and subsequently restored and re-opened in 1995 in a 'determination to restore the house to its state the day before the fire.'6 Here we seem close to a notion of time stopping for a short while, a forced stop in which things are rewound.

In the restored house where the 'Gilt decoration has been painstakingly burnished and then distressed with an overcoat of artificial dirt designed to resemble two or three centuries of grime' and 'A flock wallpaper in the

red drawing room, which was a bright crimson in 1851, has been restored to resemble its faded 1989 colours',7 we are taken to something that has gathered a different version and notion of time, a stopping and then a restarting of time.



Whilst the clock (even though dependent on the consistency of its winding) presided over events, maintaining a regularity of time, time in the house seemed to stop between 1989-1995 while it was restored to its 1989 version. And if time did stop, what of the real time taken in the restoration by the craftsmen and women who rewound this time, un-made, in their minds and capabilities, the flocked walls and colour of the paint to understand something of what had been before, to then recreate it?

My mind now travels forward to the future and the Unravelling exhibition and installations which will be at Uppark from May 2014. How will these pieces intervene with time and place and add to the memory of any visitor's

encounter with Uppark? Will they freeze something in time – an idea, a material or a gesture – or will they activate something more transitory and fleeting? Will encounters with these installations enable us to experience something new of the place through the work? And as, in so many ways, the installations are fleeting, as they are temporary, what of them once they are gone – will they leave a ghost of their presence, will their memory only remain in the pages of this catalogue and in photographs, or will they permeate further? Will they exist somewhere else or are they gone forever, confined to a memory now?

And when these memories intertwine with your current present and one thing reminds you of another, will you experience time in a different way? Something that isn't linear, but unravelling over time, overlapping and expanding – a layering and/or condensing of time?

What I find fascinating about some experiences of visiting a place is how, as Cees Nooteboom has written, you may have a feeling of another time where a '...constant intermingling of now and then, and ... associated layers of memory...' exist. And as W G Sebald noted in *Austerlitz* '... memories behind and within which many things much further back in the past seemed to lie, [are] all interlocking...' perhaps drawing us in to remember something.

I will end now at the beginning again – is there ever a real first-time visit? I will visit Uppark for the first time in 2014 but right now I imagine I have almost been there before. My paternal grandmother's family lived in Midhurst, very close to Uppark, and as I have written this I have wondered if they ever visited; if they walked the land or heard the chime of the clock bell. But there is one thing I am sure of, that they saw the stars in the sky.

1 Evans, V. 2006: *The structure of time: Language, meaning and temporal cognition*, John Benjamins Publishing, p.24

2 Schama, S. 1996. *Landscape and Memory*, Fontana, London. p25

3 Gillie, O. July 1994. Independent newspaper, Restoration of mansion consigns 1991 fire to faded memory: Fire-damaged Uppark has been re-created in meticulous detail.

4 Wells, H. G. 1934. *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain* (since 1866). Victor Gollancz Ltd, London

5 <http://upparkgarden.co.uk/tag/hg-wells/> Jenny Swatton 14 December 2013

6 Gillie, O. July 1994. Independent newspaper, Restoration of mansion consigns 1991 fire to faded memory: Fire-damaged Uppark has been re-created in meticulous detail.

7 Gillie, O. July 1994. Independent newspaper, Restoration of mansion consigns 1991 fire to faded memory: Fire-damaged Uppark has been re-created in meticulous detail.

8 Nooteboom, C. 2013. *Roads to Berlin*, MacLehose Press, London. p274

9 Sebald, W. G. 2001. *Austerlitz*, Penguin Books, London. p192



Andrew Burton
www.andrewburton.org.uk

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fired clay, paint, glaze, stain, cement

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Dish of the day: chicken in a basket
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Caitlin Heffernan
www.axisweb.org/p/caitlinheffernan

Remnants
hay bales, hay nets, horsehair, felt, rescued fragments of fabric from Uppark's 1989 house fire, leather reins, jewels

Zoë Hillyard
www.zoehillyard.com

Salvage
ceramic, fabric, thread

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