

RUTH SCOTT BLACKSON



2. ILLUSTRATION 1.

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3. ILLUSTRATION 2.

RUTH COSTT BLACKSON



4. ILLUSTRATION 3.





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Part 1e: Narrative (1-4 Pages Total)

I. Detailed project description, including a broader explanation of the proposed work.

One of the very first things I noticed during a visit to Eastern State Penitentiary almost three years ago was the crumbling, and peeling paint that existed on the surface of the walls throughout the prison. I imagined a person there, alone with their thoughts. Such a space brought me back to a quote by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, 'There is no trace without resistance, and there is no etching on a surface without pain.' When I look at the walls of Eastern State Penitentiary, (specifically those with curling paint fragments) I appreciate the history of the walls and paint, as written by the decaying surfaces. The lost conversations, stories, and emotion are deeply embedded in the walls. Such an experience reminded me of my first visit to Birkenau where the human tragedy cannot be eroded from a surface.

My own personal interest in Eastern State Penitentiary, (and in particular the wall surfaces) can be traced back to my fascination to examine walls and surfaces of buildings and structures which hold historic significance.

In 2013 I created a project for Hidden City Festival in collaboration with The Athenaeum of Philadelphia titled, 'Through The Pale Door'. This involved the discovery of a record in The Athenaeum's collection named, 'Poe's House'. The book is a comparative study of the Edgar Allan Poe House undertaken in 1984. This inquiry was a microscopic paint and color analysis of the interior and exterior of the house, determining the nature and color of the architectural surface coatings. The original record contains descriptive text yet no color samples. I responded by creating a complimentary artist book based on the color descriptions of the Poe House, while referencing color in Poe's own short stories.

While working on the previous mentioned project, I often thought about what Poe himself saw while he was working alone in his study. What colors/ textures/ wallpapers he may have seen, and if this did in fact influence his writing.

My understanding of the Penitentiary was to create a redeemed purpose in the prisoner, perhaps a place where the individual's soul would become regretful and enlightened through time. The act of sitting in a cell (perhaps the way a writer – like Poe would sit in his study) is a physical representation of time, (either writing, thinking or just being) and marking time, or 'doing time'. However, unlike a writer the main interaction the prisoner would have been between the wall and himself.

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The artistic application of adding more paint flakes, with gold leaf applied to a cell (that already contains curling paint) would result in a shimmering constellation, where in a well of natural light the flickering of the gold leaf paint fragments would entice the visitor to pay attention to the walls, (in the same way the prisoner would be forced to during his/ her solitary existence).

II. Why Eastern State Penitentiary?

Ultimately, I am drawn to Eastern State Penitentiary because of its significance as a historic site and most notably the way it has not been altered, but in fact the preservation of time that has ensued. As a visitor, I feel it is possible to insert myself into that history and as an artist I hold a desire to illuminate that history.

Bringing attention to the cell/s themselves is an experience I would like to create through, 'No trace without resistance'. My experience of working with other historic sites in Philadelphia has led me to take notice of other locations that hold historical significance. From my first visit to the Penitentiary, (noticing the peeling layers of paint) and as this creative interest has developed, I have made multiple visits back to Eastern State Penitentiary for research and inspiration. The peeling walls communicate the crumbling passage of time, where the walls themselves have seen prisoners come and go over the years.

Walls are there for projection and protection – they exist as a barrier to another space, yet they can also protect us from harm.

Adding gold leaf to the original paint flakes is not feasible under the current conservation guidelines, therefore I have re-worked this application and created a way to make the paint flakes myself, (gold leaf the underside of them) and then insert them into a cell where the original paint flakes exist, (this is explained further in section 'IV. Maintenance of the project'.)

The use of gold leaf, of marking the space with this luxurious material in a dark cell will give the visitor the opportunity to see a shimmering constellation in a sea of decay, taking careful notice of the walls and considering how the spaces have undergone minimal interventions over time.

Gold grounds began in early Netherlandish painting around the mid- 1420's to depict a space in the painting, or to be added to the halo of a Saint. Many of the painters of this time, (Rogier van der Weyden, Jacques Daret, Jan Van Eyck) used this method of applying gold to a panel, which represented a heavenly realm.

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III. How will this contribute to a visitor's experience of touring ESP?

The work will encourage the visitor to consider the idea of solitary confinement and the spiritual experience of occupying the cell where the prisoner is alone with quiet contemplation. The additional paint flakes inserted into the cell (with gold leaf application) will communicate the idea of the building revealing itself as it decays, peeling back the layers of paint, through a tromp l'oeil effect that has been building up over the years, re-affirming the passage of time. 'No Trace Without Resistance' inspires the visitor to look closer at the cell, to draw attention to the simple yet compelling details and discover for themselves the small accents of gold leaf revealed from the crumbling walls. The installation would not be spectacular in scale, but a slower paced, quiet work that would give the viewer an experience that is related to the time passing, where the opportunity to scrutinize the wall surface can be embraced and encouraged. Hopefully, the original use for gold-leaf to instill a heavenly hopefulness can be communicated through this piece.

IV. List the types of maintenance the piece will require

I applied to do the installation, 'No Trace Without Resistance' in the 2014 application cycle. In this instance the gold leaf would be directly applied to the peeling paint in the prison cell, however due to conservation guidelines this was not permitted. I have since altered the application and worked in consultation with Mary Mcguinn, (Conservator of the murals of the Catholic Chaplain's Office at Eastern State Penitentiary and Paintings Conservator at Wintertur Museum). I met and consulted with Mary Mcguinn in November 2013, January 2014 and May 2014 to consider how my own pre-made paint flakes could be applied to the walls without harming or damaging the pre-existing surface.

Creating the paint flakes themselves has been a challenging process. I initially sought advice from Rick Araluce, <http://www.rickaraluce.com>. Based in Seattle, Araluce is nationally recognized for his experience in creating aged and weathered surfaces through applications of paint. Following Araluce's advice and after a great deal of experimentation with different types of paints ranging from, casein, acrylic, gesso, PVA (as well as combinations of these materials) I worked out that an enamel floor paint (specifically for concrete floors) created the type of paint flake closest to what can be seen in the actual cells at Eastern State Penitentiary. By applying floor paint to a concrete surface and then adding a wet compress on top (leaving it for 1 week) and then removing the compress, the paint peels itself from the surface creating small or large paint fragments, I then apply gold leaf to the underside of the flake.

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Once I was satisfied with the materials and aesthetic of the paint flakes I visited Eastern State Penitentiary again and worked with Mary Mcguinn to do a series of tests where we used a range of adhesives on a blank wall in the Catholic Chaplain's Office. Through these tests, on May 8th 2014 (Look to illustrations 4 & 5) I deduced that either hot glue or BEVA can be used to adhere the paint flakes to the surface. If this were to happen in one of the cells Mary Mcguinn advised that I would firstly brush off any loose dust in the area, that I would add the paint flake, seal that small area with an encapsulation material, (provided by ESP to seal the wall) and then apply the flake. The dry time for the encapsulation material would be around one hour so I would need to keep a record of where the encapsulation material had been applied to the wall.

On June 12th, 2014 I returned to the Catholic Chaplain's Office to test the removal of the paint flakes I had installed. In this instance I worked with Conservator, Lauren Kelly to remove the paint flakes by using a high - powered heat gun. Both the paint and the glue were removed easily with the aid of a spatula and tweezers for removal of the paint, with no traceable residue remaining.

The photographs I included in my application demonstrate the application of paint pieces installed in the Catholic Chaplain's Office as a test, which shows the man - made paint flakes alongside very small fragments of original paint. However, depending on the cell and the size of the paint flakes inside that cell I will be able to customize the paint fragments to match the size of already existing fragments.

V. Will the work create sound? No, the work will not create sound.

VI. Did you attend an artist orientation? Yes, I attended an artist orientation on June 7th. I also attended the site in November 2013, January 2014, April 2014 and May 2014.

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Part 1F: Requesting Funding/ Budget:

Pricing quote from

25 Booklets of Dutch Leaf at \$12.95 / book leaf gold covering 39 sq ft

= **\$323.75**

Rolco Water based Sizing (Aquasize), 3 x 16 oz at \$14.95 each = **\$44. 85**

Assistant for 2 weeks - **\$1500 + De-installation**

Artist Fee - **\$5000**

Heat Gun , Quote from Allspec.com for Steinel Electronic Heat Gun with LCD display- **\$223.30**

BEVA 371 Film (archival adhesive) from TALAS - **\$22.50**

TOTAL = \$7069.55

Part 1g: Previous Work: Titles and Descriptions of Electronic Files:

(**Scott Blackson_1.jpg/ Scott Blackson_2.jpg/ Scott Blackson_3.jpg**)

Through The Pale Door, May-June 2013

The Athenaeum of Philadelphia

Hidden City Festival

As part of Hidden City 2013 I created a complementary artist book that responded to reference book, 'Poe House' which was discovered in the Athenaeum's collection.

An edition of 12 color sample books were made, re-creating the color's in the report and using Poe's own stories to bridge the gap in history. A series of catalogue cards (for the public to take away) and a collection of books and objects were curated as part of the project.

Scott Blackson_1.jpg, Reference Book, 'Poe House', Munsell Color Book and the complementary artist books.

Scott Blackson_2.jpg, Close up of paint samples from the books.

Scott Blackson_3.jpg, View of catalogue cards.

Scott Blackson_4.jpg/ Scott Blackson_5.jpg/ Scott Blackson_6.jpg/ Scott Blackson_7.jpg/ Scott Blackson_8.jpg (Proposal for Eastern State Penitentiary).

Scott Blackson_9.jpg, "Black Mass" Black ballpoint pen on drawing paper, 58" x 39", 2009-2013

Scott Blackson_10.jpg, Detail of "Black Mass".

Scott Blackson_11.jpg, "Colorgraph", Colored construction paper on graph paper, 11"x9", 2013

Scott Blackson_12.jpg, Detail of "Colorgraph"

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Part 1h: Resume/ Curriculum Vitae/ Previous Exhibition List:

Maximum 3 pages per artist.

b. 1982, UK

Lives in Philadelphia, USA

www.ruthscottblackson.com

EDUCATION

2006-2007 Goldsmiths College; The University of London (PGCE – Art & Design)

2004-2005 The University of Sunderland, MA Fine Art – (Distinction)

2001-2004 Norwich School of Art & Design, BA Hons, Fine Art (sculpture) - 2:1

2003 Academie Beeldende Kunsten Den Haag, NL (SocratesERASMUS Exchange)

EXHIBITIONS

June 2014 'Small Wonders: Miniature Books by the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Guild of Bookworkers. The Library Company of Philadelphia.

November 2013 'A Heavy Sky', a night of performance & sound, Ort Café Live

November 2013 'CITYWIDE' Rebekah Templeton Gallery, Group Show, Philadelphia, PA

October/ November 2013 'Line After Line', Church Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, (**solo**)

October 2013 Hanover Project Festival, University of Central Lancashire, UK

May – June 2013 'Hidden City Festival', The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, PA

February - April 2013 'Codicology: The Art & Study of the Book', Wilmington, N.C

July 2012 Grizzly Grizzly Exchange show with COOP Gallery, Nashville, TN

May- August 2012 Shin Jidai: Contemporary Japanese Book and Paper Arts Exhibit. Minnesota Center for Book Arts, MN

December 2011 'Old Habits Die Hard' Film shown as part of 'Rituals' exhibitions, 129 Gallery, Berlin.

June 2011 'Order' film included in Vertical Cinema screening, Cardiff, U.K

June 2011 NARRATOR, edited film shown at Madlab in Manchester, UK

Dec 2010 THE HEURISTICS LABORATORY; group exhibition; Sideshow 2010 commission. Nottingham, UK

Oct/ Nov 2010 Annuunciazioni, Casa Masaccio/ Museo della Basilica. Group exhibition curated by Alessandro Sarri, Saretto Cincinelli and Cristiana Collu. Italy

July 2010 Backlit studio show; tightrope performance; Nottingham

April 2010 Group Show. Galleria Neoncampobase, Bologna, Italy

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September 2009 Château de Sacy, Sacy-le-petit, Picardie, France

May 2009 STREET FEST 09, Video Screening, Shoreditch, London

March 2009 20sqm, lagari in Neukolln, Berlin. Showing Puddle Drawing film.

December 2008 PLATFORM00000008, Performance, Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle – UK.

December 2008 Gymnasium Gallery Open 2008, 'Carbon Drawing' included in exhibition

May - June 2008 Separations; Spacia Arts Group Show, Leeds

PUBLICATIONS

Spring 2009 New Museum, New York, PHAIDON/Younger Than Jesus/ Artist Directory. Census of the generations of artists born around 1980. Work included.

November 2010 Casa Masaccio Arte Contemporanea. Catalogue published in conjunction with exhibition; L'evento immobile, Annunciazioni. Contributors: Alessandro Sarri, Saretto Cincinelli and Cristiana Collu.

COMMISSIONS

May – June 2013 Commissioned to make a piece for Hidden City Festival, working with The Athenaeum of Philadelphia. An editioned book of 12 was created.

PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

October 2009 Invitations d'artistes, Picardie France

October 2006 The Big Draw. Goldsmiths College, London, UK

October 2004 The Big Draw, South Shields, UK

October 2003 The Norwich Fringe Festival, Norwich, UK

AWARDS

June 2009 Arts Council Award, UK

April 2009 British Council Award; transportation grant, UK

April 2006 Arts Council Funding to purchase equipment for The Body Navigation Festival performance in St. Petersburg.

RESIDENCIES

July – August 2009 Château de Sacy, Sacy-le-petit, Picardie, France

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2014 - Taught Advanced Drawing & Figure Drawing with a group of students
in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

2009 - 2011 Artist facilitator in Educational Settings in the East Midlands, UK.

2007-2009 Head of Art & Design at Bede College, Billingham, UK.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

May 2012-Present - David Donahue Book Restorations, Philadelphia - BINDER