

There Not There
There Not There
There Not There

LEARNING RESOURCE

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, the MA Curating students at The Courtauld Institute of Art develop an exhibition in response to a brief specific to the gallery. This year, the brief was only two words: 'making space'. These relate to the fact that The Courtauld Institute of Art and Gallery are about to embark upon a major renovation, the first since taking up residence in Somerset House in 1989.

The project, called Courtauld Connects, will see the Gallery close for two years. It will ensure The Courtauld can continue to provide the highest quality teaching, research opportunities and visitor experience as it moves forward into the twenty-first century. It also seeks to make the Gallery and the Institute more integrated, with physical access across the two buildings. This will highlight the fact that the institutions are essentially two halves of a whole, with collection and research going hand-in-hand since the foundation of the Institute in 1932. Building on its history to guide the future, the 'old' Courtauld is 'making space' for the 'new' Courtauld – hence the exhibition brief.

There Not There builds upon the idea of familiar places disappearing, as The Courtauld Gallery is about to do. In their works, the artists featured in this exhibition question the opposition between absence and presence, exploring instances of disappearance, acts of erasure and processes of transformation.

This Learning Resource is designed to offer an exploration of certain aspects of the exhibition, as well as to highlight the importance of The Courtauld's history in shaping its future through Courtauld Connects and beyond. The first section, 'History and Future of The Courtauld', offers a contextualisation of the 'making space' brief. The central section, 'Behind the Lens', discusses photographic works and processes, as seen in the exhibition and more broadly in our lives. Finally, a Q&A with one of the curators of *There Not There* presents a 'Behind the Scenes' view of putting on an exhibition.

The Learning Resource aims to provide educators, parents and any visitor who wishes to expand their experience of *There Not There* with an opportunity for further reflection, discussion and activities. The Learning Resource can also be used by those who did not visit the exhibition in person, as many areas for exploration are standalone and do not require prior knowledge of the works or the exhibition.

We hope that this Learning Resource stimulates new and challenging ideas and conversations, leading to an increased appreciation of the themes of *There Not There* and of the exhibition's place in this pivotal moment in The Courtauld's history.

HISTORY OF THE COURTAULD

The Courtauld's Locations Through Time

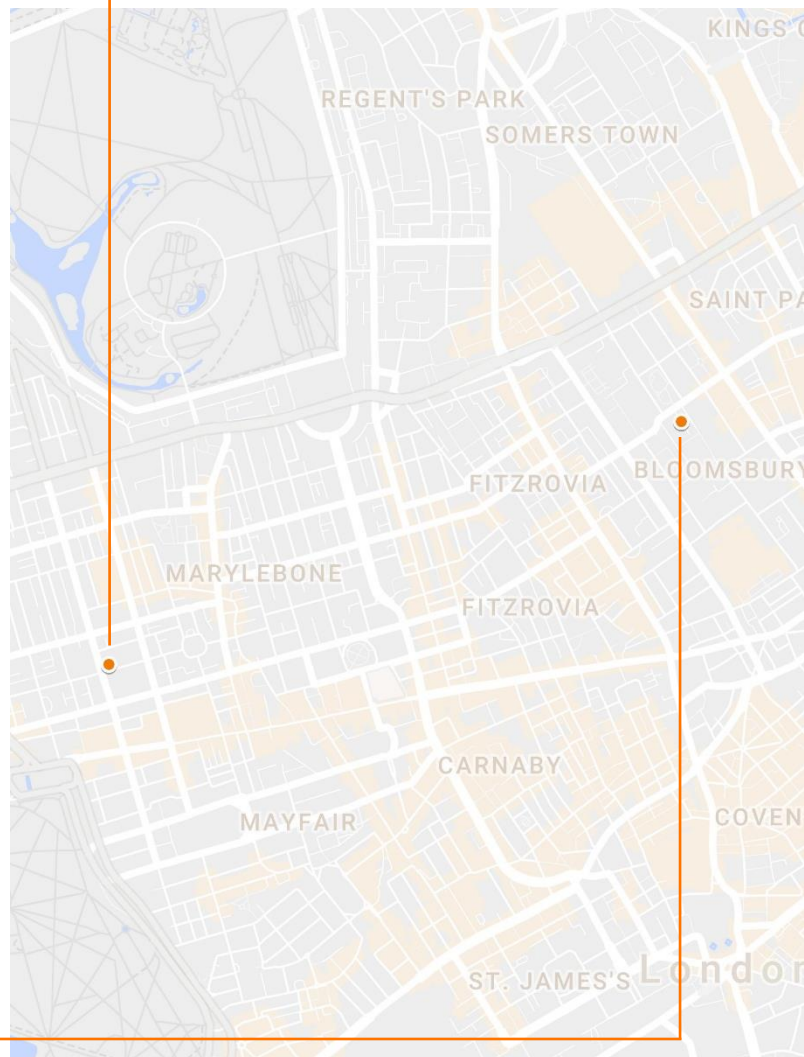
This section maps out the physical movement of The Courtauld over time. Its complex history has seen many attempts to integrate the Institute and the Gallery to fulfil their original function as two halves of a whole, with research and display going hand-in-hand.

Home House, 20 Portman Square

The Courtauld Institute of Art opened in 1932 at 20 Portman Square. Designed in the 1770s by architect Robert Adam, this building was originally the residence of the Countess of Home. Samuel Courtauld took a lease on Home House in 1926, but when his wife Elizabeth died in 1931, he felt unable to stay in the house where they had lived together and started converting it into an institute for the study of art history. However, Home House was never meant to be The Courtauld's permanent location.

Woburn Square

The original design was for The Courtauld to move to Bloomsbury in a purpose-built construction that would accommodate both Institute and Gallery, as per the founders' vision. Plans were made already in the 1930s, but they never bore fruit. The Courtauld Gallery eventually opened on the top two floors of the Warburg Institute. The collection was accessible to public view, but at the cost of being separated from teaching, as The Institute remained in Home House.





Somerset House

As the lease on Home House was about to expire, and because the premises had become too small to accommodate the increasing number of students, just like Woburn Square had become too cramped a space to exhibit the growing collection, plans to relocate had to be made yet again. Somerset House was an attractive location thanks to its history as the former home of the Royal Academy (1779 - 1837), its central location and its capacity to accommodate both Gallery and Institute. The Courtauld opened at its current location on 10 October 1989.

Vernon Square

During the Courtauld Connects development phase, The Courtauld Institute of Art will temporarily relocate to Vernon Square, in a building until very recently occupied by the School of Oriental and African Studies. There, it will find its place among the many University of London buildings in Bloomsbury, close to the British Library. During that time, the Gallery will be closed for refurbishment. Though students and collection will once again be temporarily separated, both will soon return to Somerset House, where The Courtauld's future remains to be written.

Hidden Histories of The Courtauld

Familiar places with secret and untold stories recur in *There Not There*. George Shaw, for instance, paints his local pub, which burnt down and was eventually demolished (image p. 9). With this in mind, we have selected three of our favourite little-known facts about The Courtauld's past to reflect upon overlooked corners of this famous institution.

A Fake Among the Masterpieces



Han van Meegeren, *Procuress* (after Dirck van Baburen),
c.1930s-40s, oil on canvas, 98.7 x 103.9 cm. Courtauld Gallery collection
© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

Procuress entered The Courtauld Collection thanks to a donation from Geoffrey Webb in 1960. It might look like a seventeenth-century Dutch painting, but it is the work of a forger, Han van Meegeren (1889 - 1947).

Unlike other museums that were fooled into buying a **fake** for the price of the original, The Courtauld knew the artwork was a fake. Yet **attribution** remained uncertain: van Meegeren claimed his wife had bought the work in an antique shop and doubts were raised as to whether it might actually be a **copy**.

Scientific analysis proved the canvas dated from the seventeenth century (van Meegeren re-used old canvases by scraping the paint off) but the presence of a modern resin, bakelite (used to fake the effect of old oil paint) finally confirmed its attribution.

The Courtauld During the Second World War

During the Second World War, many people and artworks moved out of London or underground to escape the dangers of bombings, and most cultural institutions closed their doors. The Courtauld was no exception. The Gallery's pictures were sent to the countryside and teaching was severely diminished. Classes were organised in Guildford, Surrey, although the iconic and much-beloved Margaret Whinney kept lecturing at 20 Portman Square.

The attempt to retain normality in everyday life was essential for morale during the Blitz. When the National Gallery sent its pictures to a quarry in Wales, complaints rose that, in such dreary times, it was more important than ever that the public could look at beautiful works of art. The National Gallery responded by setting up the 'Painting of the Month' scheme, retrieving one work per month from storage to put on public display.

However, the need to store artworks underground did not only represent a loss. It also constituted an opportunity to undertake research into the best environmental conditions for conserving paintings (such as humidity, temperature, or light-levels). Nowadays, these conditions are checked regularly to ensure artworks are not unnecessarily damaged.

A Spy at The Courtauld!

Did you know that one of the directors of The Courtauld Institute of Art was a spy? Anthony Blunt (Director from 1947 to 1974) was not only an eminent art historian; he also spied for the Soviet Union during the Second World War, while working for the MI5. Part of the Cambridge Five, he used his scholarly status to hide his activities as a spy until his confession in 1979.

By putting the emphasis on academic rigour, he developed research and postgraduate studies, especially in the fields of Renaissance and medieval art. During the four decades he spent at The Courtauld, first as lecturer and then as director, he played a crucial role in making it into the scholarly centre it nowadays is.

Discussion Points

- The Courtauld has moved location a number of times and each location has influenced the nature of the Institute and its Gallery. Have you ever moved to a new house or school? If so, how did the move impact upon you and shape who you are today?
- Like many places, The Courtauld has a rich history with hidden tales. Are there any stories or secrets behind your hometown?

FUTURE OF THE COURTAULD

Looking Back, Thinking Ahead: An Interview with Dr Barnaby Wright, Daniel Katz Curator of 20th Century Art at The Courtauld Gallery

To get an insider's view on Courtauld Connects and what it means for curators and public alike, we asked Dr Barnaby Wright to share with us his personal involvement with the project.

What is going to happen to the artworks in The Courtauld Gallery during Courtauld Connects? Will the artworks disappear entirely from view or will the public still be able to see them on display elsewhere?

When I tell people that The Courtauld Gallery is closing for a major refurbishment, their first question is: 'For how long will my favourite pictures disappear?' It is certainly true that the pictures will disappear from our galleries in Somerset House but we have been working hard to have them reappear in interesting new places during the period of closure. For example, we have embarked upon a whole series of partnerships with museums across the UK to show works in places they have never been before. We will also lend works internationally. The hope is that by doing so we can reveal parts of the collection to audiences who have never seen it before.

How did you decide where individual artworks would go during Courtauld Connects? Does the closure offer an opportunity to shine a light on lesser-known works, perhaps currently in storage?

Our most famous paintings are in high demand. The idea of taking them away from the public eye and into storage for a long period is out of the question. Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, for example, is part of the cultural landscape. Such works have been a priority to keep on display and there is no shortage of places that would love to show them.

We also hope to take the opportunity to use our partnerships to highlight works that are less well-known, for example our huge and impressive *Prometheus Triptych* by Oskar Kokoschka. This work has not been on display for many years but a request for it to join a major exhibition in Zurich has happily turned into a loan for the whole closure period. In other cases, we will use the closure to conserve certain works such as our Botticelli altarpiece, so that they can be seen in a completely new light when the gallery reopens.

People talk about the closure of an institution as 'going dark'. We've gone to great efforts to keep the lights on as much as possible. And talking of lights, one of the outcomes of the refurbishment project is to relight the whole gallery so that everything will be revealed afresh.

What does moving artworks involve in practical terms? How long ago did you start preparing for the move?

We've been working on this project already for several years. Decanting the whole collection takes enormous preparation. Everybody is closely involved, particularly our **registrars**, **conservators**, and **art handlers**. Each artwork has to be carefully **condition checked**, packed and accounted for at every step of the way to its temporary new home, be that another museum or an off-site storage facility. We need to know where an object is at all times: it is easy to lose track, as maybe forty or fifty works are being carried and wheeled away during any given session. I had a heart-stopping moment recently when I thought a work had disappeared on my watch, only to discover a short time later that it had been packed together with another work in a single crate!

Since our exhibition contains many works that deal with the emotional consequences of loss and change, we would like to explore the move from a more personal angle. Beyond the practical implications of the project, how has Courtauld Connects affected you thus far on a more emotional level?

It is always rather moving to see how carefully the works are handled – treated like newborns and carefully swaddled in wrappings. It reminds you how precious and vulnerable works of art are – an enduring and timeless image like Van Gogh's *Self Portrait with a Bandaged* really only survives as pigment clinging onto a thin canvas. It reminds us that our first duty as custodians of a great collection is to care and protect. And when those works are removed from their grand settings within a gallery and are put on a table or easel, or even taken out of their frames, their vulnerability and physicality is truly revealed. It changes your relationship with them somewhat. You see them differently.

As you prepared for the move, did you rediscover any works in the Courtauld Collection?

I was particularly pleased to be reunited with an old friend during this process, Kokoschka's *Prometheus Triptych*, that I mentioned earlier. I hadn't seen this monumental work for about ten years since mounting an exhibition devoted to it. It was great to be reminded of what a knock-out painting it is. This immediately made me feel guilty because it has been off display for so long – its enormous size makes it very difficult to show in our spaces. I felt doubly guilty because I recently reread Kokoschka's letters – in them, he writes that he fears nobody will understand the painting and it will end up 'in an attic'! I hope that now that it has been rediscovered, we will find ways of preventing it from disappearing again!

Discussion Points

- What is your favourite artwork in The Courtauld Gallery's collection? Which one will you miss most during the Gallery's temporary closure?
- Courtauld Connects aims to ensure the Gallery and Institute continue to be world-class institutions in the twenty-first century. What do you think the role of museums and galleries is in society today? How should they engage audiences and reach out to all parts of the community?



George Shaw, *The End of Time*, 2008-2009, enamel on board, 147.5 x 198 cm
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © George Shaw. Courtesy Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London

PHOTOGRAPHY IN *THERE NOT THERE*: GIVING A PRESENCE TO ABSENCE

The exhibition *There Not There* features many photographic artworks. This is very unusual at The Courtauld Gallery, whose collection contains only one photograph, a record of Richard Long's performance *A Line Made By Walking* (which we have included in the exhibition) – though the **Conway Library** contains thousands of archival photographs used for teaching and research. Thanks to loans from the **Arts Council Collection**, we obtained a range of photographs by contemporary British and international artists: Andy Goldsworthy, Karl Ohiri, Paul Seawright, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Armando Andrade Tudela. This section discusses the key themes in *There Not There*, such as memory, mark-making, and capturing the ephemeral.



Karl Ohiri, *Untitled* (from the series 'How to Mend a Broken Heart'), 2013, C-type print, 9 x 9 cm
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Karl Ohiri. Courtesy Karl Ohiri

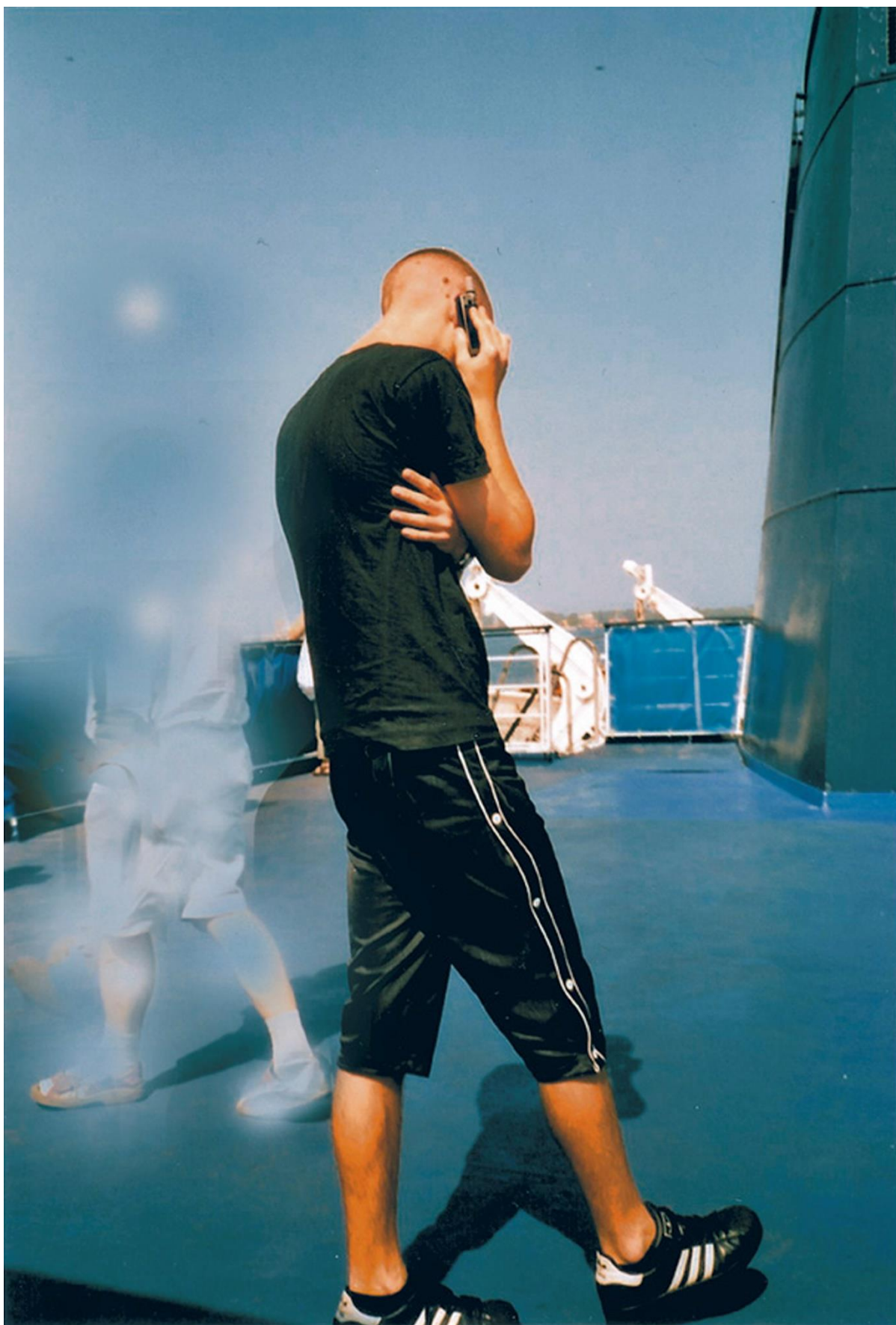
Alternate Realities: Photographic Editing

Photography is often considered to reflect an image faithful to reality, yet *There Not There* features two photographs that have been manipulated and that blur the line between truth and untruth. In Karl Ohiri's series *How to Mend a Broken Heart* (2013), the artist's mother has used a blue pen to deface her ex-husband. Similarly, in *Gedser* (2004), Wolfgang Tillmans has used a retouching software to partially remove a figure. What is striking about these pictures is that the truth has not been totally concealed to deceive us, as is often the purpose of photo-editing. Instead, the obvious traces left by the editing tools – whether digital or manual – emphasise the manipulations. For instance, Tillmans does not try to fool us into thinking there is only one man on the ferry boat: it is clear there were two.

Though editing might be insincere in nature, Tillmans is sincere in acknowledging his action. As the artist says, 'a photograph always lies about what is in front of the camera, but never about what is behind it'. The image betrays its author's intentions and interpretations. The picture's grainy aspect, low resolution, harsh cropping, saturated colours, tilted composition and the roughness of the photo-editing are not mistakes; they are deliberate. These imperfections are the marks left by the photographer's tools and Tillmans evokes the photographic process by preserving them. Showing that *Gedser* is the product of a series of creative choices, he draws attention to the difference between reality and its image. Like any photograph, it is a carefully constructed image that records an individual perspective on the world, not a factual reality.

In *How to Mend a Broken Heart*, as in *Gedser*, the attempt to remove a person from the photographic record remains unsuccessful. The marks do not conceal a presence; instead they reveal it, as they draw our attention to the figures. Looking at Ohiri's work, the first thing we notice are the scribbles. Similarly, when faced with *Gedser*, we are immediately intrigued as to the identity of this semi-erased man and as to the reason why he has been erased. There is a paradox between reinforcing the presence (by raising attention to it) and fragilizing it (by partially concealing it). The figures appear in a strange limbo between presence and absence, between being 'there' and 'not there'. In this sense, they are like a distant memory, something just out of reach.

Like editing, forgetting can help come to terms with a difficult presence. We do not know why Tillmans concealed one of the men, but for some reason his presence was undesirable. Taken at a happy time in the artist's parents' relationship, Ohiri's photographs were drawn over after the break-down of their marriage. But just like a memory cannot be forgotten, the figures cannot be erased. There is no clean slate, only the new page of a continuously-growing book. People do not disappear from our lives, they merely become more distant as new layers of experience cover and taint our recollections of them. Edited, these pictures disclose a personal memory, a former moment re-written by later experience.



Wolfgang Tillmans, *Gedser*, 2004, C-type print, 61 x 50.8 cm
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Wolfgang Tillmans. Courtesy Maureen Paley, London

Capturing a Mark: Photography and Ephemeral Art

'Each work grows, stays, decays – integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its heights, marking the moment when the work is most alive.'

– Andy Goldsworthy

Akin to memories, photographs prevent forgetfulness as they help remember the past. They act as mementos, visual reminders of a moment now gone. This is the documentary function of photography: to record a fleeting moment and preserve a trace of its former existence. Though documentary photography is a genre in its own right, the archival function of the medium also plays a key role in documenting ephemeral artworks, such as land art and performances.

British environmentalist artists Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy, whose works feature in *There Not There*, have both used photography to record their ephemeral interventions on the natural environment. Using the weight of his body, Long traced a line in the grass by repeatedly walking back and forth along the same axis (*A Line Made By Walking*, 1967). Andy Goldsworthy is famous for his play on the contrast between solid materials and melting snow, as in *Hole in Snow* (1979) and *Black (Soil Covered) Snowball* (1979). Made only of organic materials, these artworks obey the cycle of nature; they are bound to erode and eventually disappear. To keep a record of their work, the artists each photographed the imprint they had left on the landscape.

Long's and Goldsworthy's photographs capture an ephemeral instant, a mark soon to disappear. They freeze a moment in time and preserve a temporary state of being. When Long's impression has disappeared from the grass and Goldsworthy's snowballs have melted, the pictures remain the only traces of a presence that no longer exists. In the absence of the mark, its record, the photograph, becomes its substitute. The photograph materialises what is lost and, in doing so, turns absence into presence. In this sense, the photographs are somewhat like portraits of those we have loved and lost: they serve as memorials, objects to cherish, giving pause to reflect.

Although Long's and Goldsworthy's photographs do not include a human figure, its presence is implied in the mark. Looking at Long's line, for instance, we immediately get a sense of the bodily process of treading over grass and perceive the mark-maker's former presence. Like an animal's track, the mark indicates the existence of a being that remains unseen. By preserving this trace, the image also acts as a record of the artist's movement. The mark will disappear and so will the artist, but both live on through the photograph. There is a paradox between the artists' humble, small-scale and short-lived interventions in nature and their commitment to conserving an enduring trace of them. Though both Long and Goldsworthy work with nature, neither escapes the human impulse to halt the passage of time, and in doing so, avoid – or at least delay – death.

Discussion Points

- Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking* shows how the artist uses his body and physical movement to leave a visible trace on the world, even after he is no longer present. What kind of mark would you like to leave on the world, either physical or otherwise?
- In *Gedser*, Wolfgang Tillmans uses digital software to alter the image and partially erase a figure. Have you ever used digital editing tools, like an Instagram filter or a cropping function? If so, why did you decide to modify the picture you had taken? Was it to remove somebody, to make the image look better, or for some other purpose?
- Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy both create art by marking the natural environment, yet their interventions remain minimal, bearing only a minor and fleeting impact on the world. In what other ways, temporary or permanent, visible or invisible, have humans left a trace on nature?

BEHIND THE LENS: HOW PHOTOGRAPHS ARE MADE

It is now easier than ever to take photographs. Grab your phone, snap a picture, and voilà! Most of these images are shared, exhibited and stored digitally or online. By contrast, the photographs on display in museums and galleries are tangible: they have a material existence as physical objects in space. How, then, are those images transferred from the camera to the paper?

In the Camera: The Film

In the camera, the image is captured onto a **photosensitive film** (or sensor chip in the case of a digital camera), which records the impact of light. Photographic film is made of a sheet of transparent celluloid coated in gelatine that contains silver halide crystals. When exposed to light, the silver halide crystals undergo a chemical reaction and cluster together to form the dark areas of the picture. The image thus produced on the film is called a **latent image** because it exists in chemical form but remains invisible until the film is processed.

From Film to Negative

Before the photograph can be printed, the film must be developed into a **negative**. In a **darkroom**, the **film** is placed in three chemical baths. The first one, called developer, turns the clustered silver halide crystals into silver metal. This chemical reaction is halted using a stop bath. Then the silver halide crystals are dissolved in a fixer bath. Finally, the film is rinsed of its chemicals with water and left to dry.

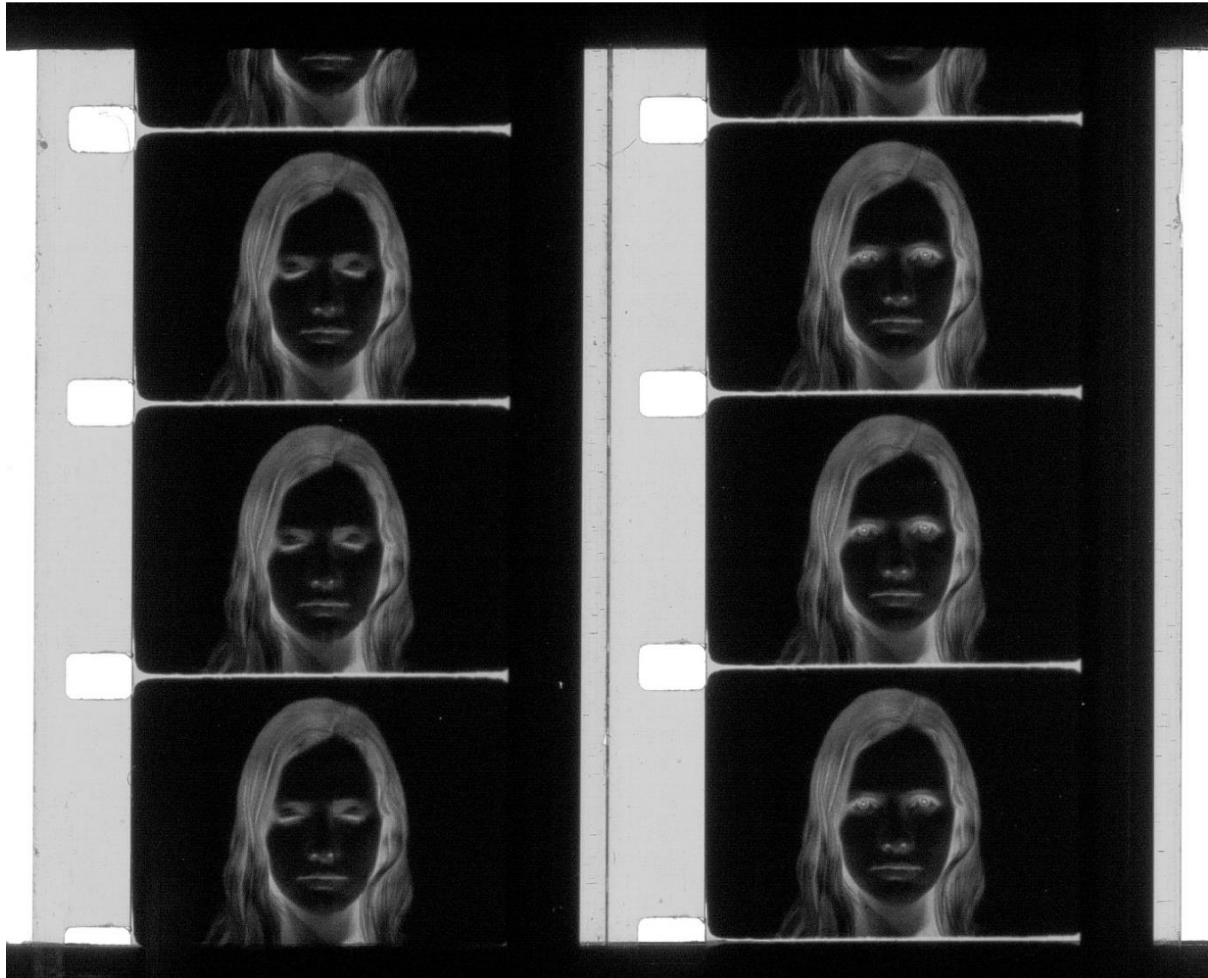
At the end of this process, the **latent image** is revealed: the areas of film that were exposed to light in the camera are now covered with silver metal and visible as dark areas, whereas the areas not exposed to light have no silver and are therefore not visible. On the processed film, colours are reversed: areas that are bright in reality appear dark and dark areas appear bright, hence the name 'negative'.

From Negative to Print

The process of printing the photograph from the **negative** is similar to that of developing the negative from the film. It also happens in the **darkroom** and uses three baths. The transfer from **film** to paper is sometimes done through direct contact, but more generally an **enlarger** is used.

Photographic paper can be made with different materials but is always coated with **photosensitive** chemicals. As light is projected through the negative onto the paper, the colours are reversed: high levels of light pass through clear areas of the film, meaning that much light hits the photosensitive chemicals, and these areas become dark. Conversely, little to no light passes through the dark areas of the negative, meaning that low levels of light hit the chemicals, and the paper retains its original white colour.

Once the image has been transferred from negative to print, the paper is processed in the three baths (developer, stop bath, fixer). It is then washed to remove any remaining chemicals. When dry, the printed photograph is ready.



Runa Islam, *Stare Out (Blink)*, 1998, 16mm film, running time: 3 min
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Runa Islam. Courtesy Runa Islam

Silver Gelatine Prints

Silver gelatine printing has existed since the 1870s and was the most common printing process for producing black and white photographs throughout the twentieth century. Always black and white, these photographs are characterised by their smooth finish, as can be seen in Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking*.

Silver gelatine prints take their name from the thin layer of silver halide gelatine that coats the surface of the paper. Because the same chemicals are involved, the process of printing a silver gelatine print is very similar to that of developing a **negative**. Exposed to light, the silver halide crystals turn into silver metal. Again, the image remains **latent** until the paper is developed in the three baths.

C-type Prints

C-type or chromogenic prints were introduced by Kodak in 1942 and quickly became the most common types of printed colour photographs, as they are easy and cheap to produce. *There Not There* includes many such photographs, among which Karl Ohiri's *How to Mend a Broken Heart*, Wolfgang Tillman's *Gedser*, and Armando Andrade Tudela's *Billboards*.



Armando Andrade Tudela, *Billboard 12* (from the 'Billboards' series), 2003, C-type print, 42.4 x 58 cm
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Armando Andrade Tudela. Courtesy Arts Council Collection

To make a colour photograph, a colour **negative** must first be produced. The process is similar to that of developing black and white negatives. The only major differences are that the **film** is coated with not one but three layers of gelatine, and that the gelatine contains dye couplers among the silver halide crystals.

The silver halide in each layer is sensitised to a different primary colour from the additive system. When the film is dipped in the chemical baths, the crystals interact with the couplers to produce a dye of the **complementary colour**: the red-sensitive layer produces a cyan dye, the green layer a magenta dye, and the blue layer a yellow dye. Together, the three layers can produce the entire range of the colour spectrum.

The photographic paper on which the image is printed is also covered in three layers of gelatine, silver halide and dye couplers. When developed, the image is enlarged and the colours are again reversed into their complementaries to reveal the printed positive image.

Because the chemicals involved in chromogenic printing are complex, c-types remain very sensitive to light, even after the image has been developed. If exposed to light, the colours will deteriorate and eventually fade. For this reason, museums can only display photographs in low light and for short periods of time, before returning them to storage. If the print is too fragile, it might even be impossible to display it at all.

Cibachrome Prints

Dye destruction or dye bleach prints are most commonly known under their brand names, Cibachrome and Ilfochrome. The dye destruction process was invented in the 1930s, but the necessary materials stopped being commercially produced in 2012.

Instead of using a negative, as with silver gelatine and C-type prints, Cibachrome printing involves the use of a colour **positive**, which makes for stable and vibrant colours. In the **darkroom**, the light projected through the positive hits a paper coated with at least three layers of **photosensitive** gelatine. Each layer reacts to a different coloured light (red, green, blue) and contains dyes of the **complementary** colour (cyan, magenta, yellow). Contrary to C-type printing, whereby the development process enables the formation and release of dyes, in this case the dyes are in the gelatine from the start and the **latent image** is developed by bleaching out the unnecessary dyes.

Because the paper has a polyester base and because the dyes are embedded in the gelatine, rather than being formed chemically, these prints are much more durable and stable than C-types. Cibachrome prints are characterised by their sharp image, strong colours, and smooth, glossy finish, as can be seen in Goldsworthy's two photographs, *Hole in Snow* and *Black (Soil Covered) Snowball*.

Activity: Make Your Own Camera Obscura

A camera obscura, literally, a dark room, is a basic optical device that works very similarly to a camera. However, it is a much older technology that artists have been using as an aid to precise and accurate drawing since the sixteenth century. This activity shows you how to easily build your own camera obscura using common household items.

For this project, you will need:

- An empty cereal box and its plastic bag
- A pin or needle
- Tape
- Scissors

1. Using a pin or needle, make a small hole at the bottom of the cereal box.
2. Cut a rectangular opening on one of the large sides of the cereal box. This opening should be approximately 12 x 5 cm and be about two thirds from the bottom.
3. Cut one of the sides of the plastic bag, fold it in a step shape, and insert it into the opening so that the middle section of the bag is perpendicular to the bottom of the box. Tape the top flap of the bag to the outside of the box, and the bottom flap to the inside.
4. To view the image, look into the box. If the image is too dark, you might need to move closer to a source of light.

BEHIND THE SCENES: MEET THE CURATORS

Putting on an exhibition takes months of planning and research. What is presented to the public is the last stage in a much longer and often overlooked process. To investigate how *There Not There* was developed, we asked some questions to one of the students of the MA Curating the Art Museum at The Courtauld Institute of Art. The student curator revealed the curatorial journey that led to this exhibition.

How did you decide on a theme?

Our brief for this exhibition was two words: 'making space'. We responded to it by exploring a wide variety of ideas before deciding on *There Not There*. The brief was linked to the forthcoming major renovation of The Courtauld Gallery, which will be closing for two years from September 2018 onwards, as part of Courtauld Connects. The 'old' Courtauld Gallery is physically 'making space' for the new! With this in mind, we wanted to organise a show that explores what it means for familiar places and people to disappear from our lives. The Courtauld Gallery will be missed during its closure but it will return, building on its history and looking forward to the future. The themes of the exhibition – transformation, disappearance, absence and presence – stem from this transitional moment in The Courtauld's history.

What was it like working as part of such a large group?

There are 12 students on the MA Curating the Art Museum and we all worked together on the exhibition. As you can imagine, in a team of 12 creative individuals with wide-ranging ideas, many hours were spent discussing every aspect of the exhibition, from the overall theme to the size of the pamphlet font. Working with such enthusiastic and open-minded young curators was exciting and motivated us to make decisions we were all happy with. Having determined the theme and selected the artworks, we divided up roles so we each had our own responsibilities. These ranged from planning for the artworks to be installed, to marketing, programming events, and writing the **text and interpretation** that accompanies the exhibition. Although we continued to work together on the core of the exhibition, dividing up responsibilities enabled us to work more efficiently and have a stronger attention to detail.

Were there works you wanted to include in the exhibition but didn't or couldn't?

Lots! The works we selected came from two collections – The Courtauld Collection and the **Arts Council Collection**. Both have thousands of works across all media: paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, video... the list goes on. We spent hours searching online databases, selecting works we liked and then discussing how they fit into our theme, if at all. We narrowed our selection down to a list of 20 or 30 works. Sadly, some of our choices were not

available for the dates of our exhibition, as they were already promised for loan elsewhere. This was frustrating but it wasn't all bad news: it helped us whittle down our long list! How we made our final choices was by thinking about how the artworks related to each other and to the gallery space itself. For our final decision, we printed out small-scale images of the works and positioned them in a **scale model** of the exhibition room. We moved them around, imagining how they would look to visitors. By doing that, we realised that some works didn't feel quite right in the space. After much deliberation we decided on our final list of works that feature in the exhibition.

Did you encounter any unexpected challenges?

We were surprised at how difficult it was to write texts, such as object labels, the wall text and the exhibition pamphlet. We spent the best part of six months thinking and talking about the exhibition theme and the artworks, but when it came to shape these thoughts into succinct descriptions, we really struggled! The small amount of written text that accompanies the show is the bite-size product of a huge process of distillation. All the planning and research behind the exhibition is boiled down to just a few short sentences that attempt to convey the most important and stimulating information. We found this very difficult because there are many complex ideas in *There Not There*. Writing clearly and concisely was a real challenge!

Did you take inspiration from anywhere else?

Putting on an exhibition really makes you notice things in other shows. We visited many museums and galleries in the lead up to our exhibition. Some gave us ideas of elements we could include, whereas others showed us what to avoid! The video work in our exhibition, Runa Islam's *Stare Out (Blink)*, raised many questions during planning, as the work is a **16mm film** with specific display requirements and logistical considerations. Seeing how other galleries displayed such films was incredibly helpful and gave a sense of how to maximise impact without detracting from other works in the show. We also took inspiration from exhibitions we liked for things such as lighting, length of wall text and visitor-engagement strategies. As first-time curators, we were keen to learn from the successes of past exhibitions to put on the best possible show.

What was the biggest surprise?

I don't think any of us anticipated how different wall colours look in different lights. To choose the colour for the walls in the exhibition space, we selected samples, painted a small sample board in each colour and placed these around the exhibition room. A colour that looked pink in the **swatch** looked mushroomy-brown when placed in the exhibition room! The artworks in our show have varied tones and hues, so selecting a colour to suit every piece was always going to be a challenge. In the end, we opted for a neutral colour that we hope will show each artwork in the best environment.

Discussion Points

- Responding to a brief often leads to many varied ideas. How would you interpret the brief 'making space'? What do these words suggest to you?
- *There Not There* features artworks in many different media, such as painting, photography, prints, sculpture and film. What do you think are the difficulties of showing so many different media in one, fairly small exhibition? How do the different media and the way they are grouped influence the experience of an exhibition?
- Cities and the urban landscape are constantly changing, with old buildings demolished and new ones constructed. Some of the works in *There Not There* show examples of urban change and dilapidated buildings. How can urban regeneration affect individuals and communities? Have you experienced change in your hometown which has had a particularly powerful impact upon your personal identity or the identity of your community?
- Organising our own exhibition made us notice details we had previously overlooked, such as the type of paper in the leaflets and the colour of the gallery walls. Look around you. What can you see which you might not usually notice? How might a different wall colour change your perception of the room? How important do you think the background environment is to the experience of a gallery or other public place?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Michael Craig-Martin's artwork *Kid's Stuff* uses mirrors and textual descriptions to encourage the viewer to reflect upon their physical appearance and emotional experiences at different stages in their life. Make an image of yourself at half your current age, of yourself now, and of yourself when you are twice as old as you are now.

In *There Not There*, Christine Hatt plays with the contrast between the white paper and the dense, dark mass of individual lines of graphite and coloured crayon. The repeated, overlapping, variable lines preserve a trace of the artist's creative movement and reflect the centrality of the physical process of drawing to this work. Using pencil, crayon or other drawing medium (or many in combination), create a shape made by repeated lines and marks on a contrasting background colour. What does the end result look like? How would you title your artwork?

Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking* records a journey by the artist, leaving a physical trace even after he is no longer present. Map a trip you have made recently or the route you take as part of your daily life. Print a picture or map of the area and draw a line which shows where you were physically present. What places does this journey connect? What does this reveal about your life?

The billboards in Armando Andrade Tudela's photographs were once bright signs advertising desirable goods and lifestyles. His photographs capture the dilapidated versions of these billboards, traces of former structures. Take a photo of something which is in a state of ruin or decay. Create an artwork of how you imagine this site looked before it became derelict, or how you imagine it could be transformed into something new.

The objects and recognisable cultural symbols in Jasper Johns' *The Seasons* relate to the artist's personal experiences. What objects or symbols do you find important in your life? Create an artwork which includes those objects and symbols that represent your personal identity.

How artworks are arranged in relation to each other is fundamental to the experience of an exhibition. Print out a selection of your favourite artworks and think of how you might display them if they were hung together in an exhibition. You can then use bluetack to hang your own home-exhibition.

GLOSSARY

Art Handler

A technician trained in safely and securely manipulating artworks. Art handlers move the works from storage to display spaces, pack and de-pack them, install and de-install them for exhibitions.

Arts Council Collection

A national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art. Founded in 1946, the Arts Council Collections engages with audiences through loans to other institutions, touring exhibitions and outreach projects. It is constantly expanding its collection, seeking to acquire, display and safeguard works by artists working in the UK.

Attribution

The belief that an artwork is made by a certain known artist. When a work is said to be 'attributed to' a certain artist, this implies that the specified artist is the most likely author of the work, though this is not entirely certain.

Complementary Colours

Pairs of colours that contrast with each other more than any other colour. When placed side-by-side, they make each other look brighter.

Condition Check

The examination of a work of art to assess its physical condition and how that has changed over time. Condition checks are often carried out before and after moving an artwork to keep a record of any damage that might have occurred during transportation.

Conservator

A specialist who preserves and restores works of art. Conservators have expert skills and knowledge that allows them to ensure that artworks remain in the best possible condition for as long as possible. This sometimes involves treatment and restoration work, which conservators carry out after years of specialist training.

Conway Library

Part of The Courtauld Institute since its foundation in 1932, this library contains over a million images, including many archival photographs of architectural constructions. The core of the collection comes from Lord Conway of Allington, who donated it to support the Institute's research and teaching functions.

Copy

A work of art that reproduces an existing original.

Curator

A professional who cares for the artworks in a museum's collection and organises temporary exhibitions.

Darkroom

A blacked-out room where film is processed and photographs are developed. A darkroom is lit only by low levels of red light to prevent any unwanted exposure of the light-sensitive film.

Enlarger

A projector used to print a photograph from a negative. It consists of a lamp that projects light through the negative and through an enlarging lens before it hits the sheet of photographic paper placed underneath.

Fake

A copy of a work of art or work made in an artist's style that is intentionally made as a deceiving forgery of the original. When believed to be original, fakes can be sold for very high prices.

Film

A thin flexible strip of plastic or other material coated with light-sensitive liquid. The light-sensitive surface is chemically altered when exposed to light and retains an image. Film is used to produce photographs and videos.

Latent Image

The image produced when film is exposed to light. It is 'latent' (present but hidden) because it remains invisible until the film has been processed.

Negative

The image produced when a film is processed. The colours are reversed, so light areas appear dark and dark areas appear light. Negatives are used to create the positive version of the image which can be printed as a photograph.

Photosensitive

In photography, used to describe materials that undergo a chemical reaction when they come into contact with light. 'Photo' originates from the Greek word *phos*, meaning 'light'.

Positive

A positive film is made of the same materials and has same uses as a negative film, except it is not in reversed colours.

Registrar

A museum worker responsible for the movement of objects and artworks within and outside of the institution. The role often includes aspects of collection care, loans management and overseeing installation and deinstallation of works.

Scale Model

A model, for example of a room or building, which has the same proportions as the full-size original but is much smaller. Scale models are used when preparing an exhibition, using scale images of the artworks to decide how to arrange and hang the works in the exhibition room.

Swatch

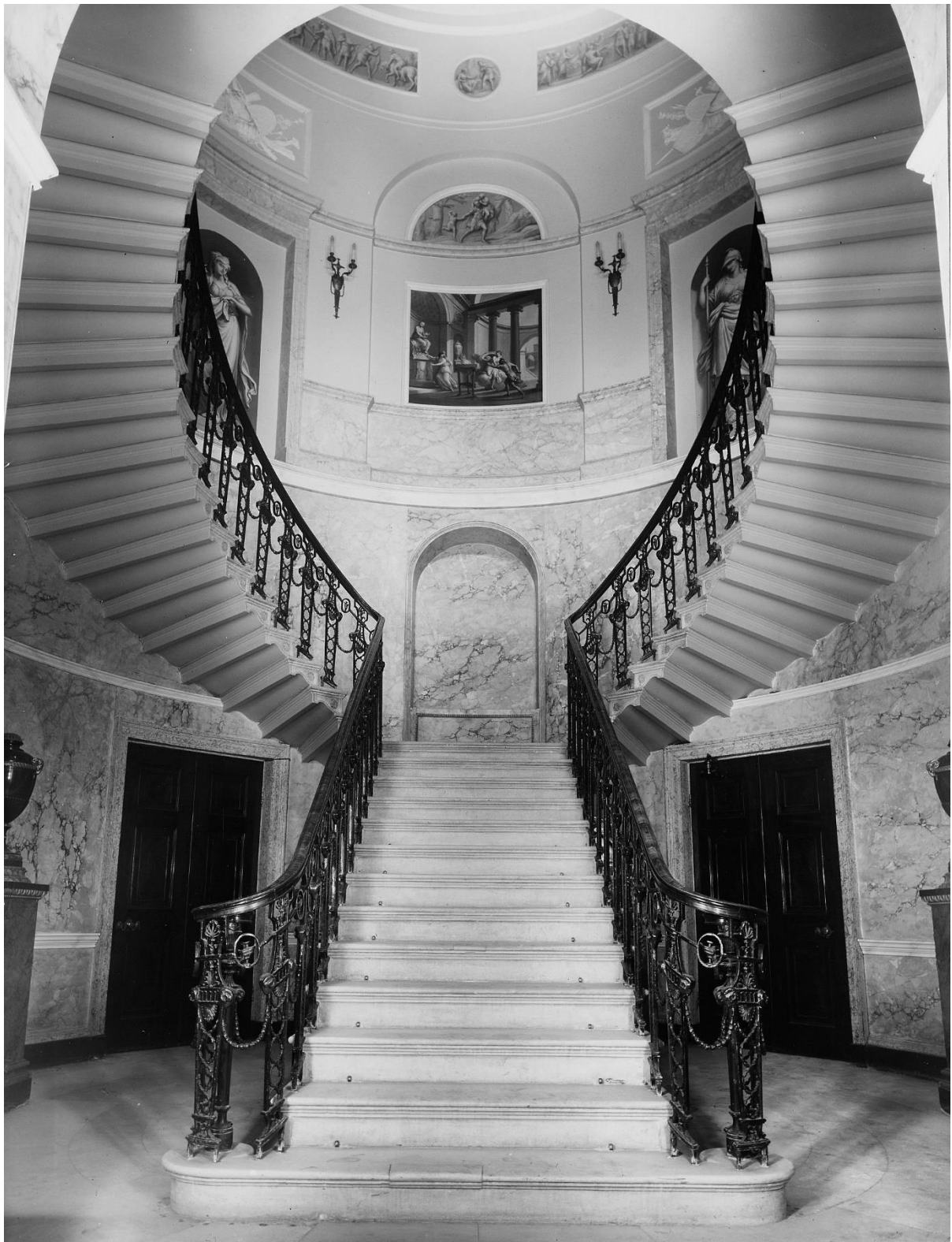
A small sample (often of fabric or paint) designed to represent the larger whole.

Text and Interpretation

The written, visual or auditory material that accompanies an exhibition. This includes the introductory text panel, labels next to artworks, leaflets, pamphlets, catalogues and audio-guides.

16mm Film

A type of film used to make videos, first introduced by the company Eastman Kodak in 1923. 16mm refers to the width of the film. Historically, this was a popular type of film, initially designed for amateur film-makers but later adopted by television and feature-film companies.



Home House staircase, c.1931. Photograph by A. F. Kersting
Conway Library © The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

