

*Thirty spokes meet in the hub,
Though the space between them is the essence of the wheel.
Pots are formed from clay,
Through the space inside them is the essence of the pot.
Walls with windows and doors form the house,
Though the space within them is the essence of the house.*

Lao Tse (C6th BCE)

I am fascinated by the connection between form and function. Hence, Tse's summing up of the Japanese concept of Ma¹ resonates with me. Similarly, I am intrigued by Balderssari's emphasis on the primacy of connection: "Don't look *at* things – look *between* things"². My intentions in 005 were firstly to study the space that purposefully fills volume, and secondly how that space might be pressed into the service of evoking *meaningful connectiveness*. The musician Isaac Stern perhaps best sums up my subject: "that little bit between each note – silences which give form"³.



My study of Hasegawa Tōhaku's 'Pine Trees' (c1600)
2021
Graphite on cartridge paper
59cm x 84cm

Specifically, my 005 work is the result of examinations of three different types of connections: compositional connections between figure and space; structural connections between the various different physical layers of my work and; how a work's meaning emerges from a connection between the work itself and the viewer.

¹ [The Japanese concept of ma - Art Design Asia](#) [The Japanese concept of ma](#) [The Japanese concept of ma](#)
26/10/2021

² Quoted in Ben Weaver [THE LONDON LIST — Dots on Faces](#) 25/09/2021

³ Fletcher, A. (2001) *The Art of Looking Sidewise* p370. Phaidon, New York.

A spine of drawings that investigate the compositional connections between figure and space runs through my 005 work. Those on this page emphasise space either by oversizing it or by filling it with line or colour. Hence, some compositional intrigue is achieved. E.g. the enigmatic pose of 'Printed Man' connects with our imagination, and 'Shaun Berke Study 2' kindles Stern's "little bit between each note" (albeit in a tawdry fashion). Ultimately though, these works lack potency. Perhaps because in each, the space around the figure is merely amplified, and so contributes little additional meaning to the essence of the piece.



Light and Shadow space
2021
Cut paper screen and iPhone torch



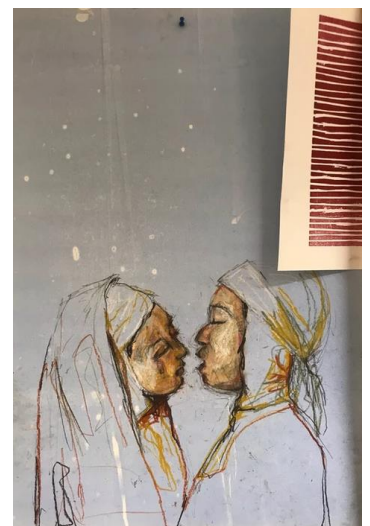
Figure in concrete space
2021
Concrete and polystyrene
70cm x 46cm x 26cm



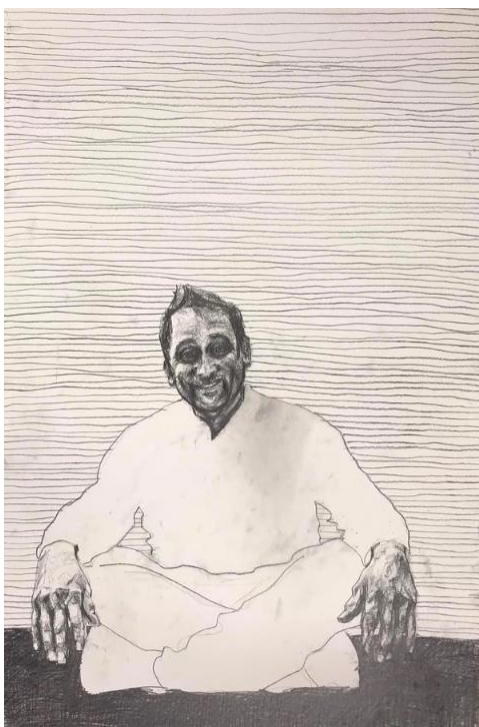
The Art Cupboard #2
2021
Ink on printed paper
42cm x 60cm



Cross legs across spaces
2021
Screen print on paper
122cm x 163cm



Shaun Berke Study 2
2021
Oil pastels on cartridge paper
84cm x 59cm



Self-portrait smiling
2021
Graphite on card
112cm x 77cm



Printed Man
2021
Screen print on cartridge paper
67cm x 56cm



Man in Clay
2021
Pencil in clay
52cm x 35cm

The drawings below are more effective because they present a more dynamic compositional convergence between figure and space. Figures *do* connect meaningfully with the space around them. Some invade the space around them through emotive gesture, while others retreat from it – either seeking sanctuary or inviting the viewer to follow. In these images something vital is happening between the figure and space; there is a choreography. The essential volume in Tse's pot feels present.



Man in chair
2021
Woodcut print on cartridge paper
42cm x 59cm



Let it Out
2021
Graphite on cartridge paper
59cm x 84cm



Shaun Berke Study 1
2021
Graphite on cartridge paper
59cm x 84cm



Red and Blue Dancer
2021
Oils on board
47cm x 60cm



Breaking
2021
Oil pastels on cartridge paper
168cm x 119cm



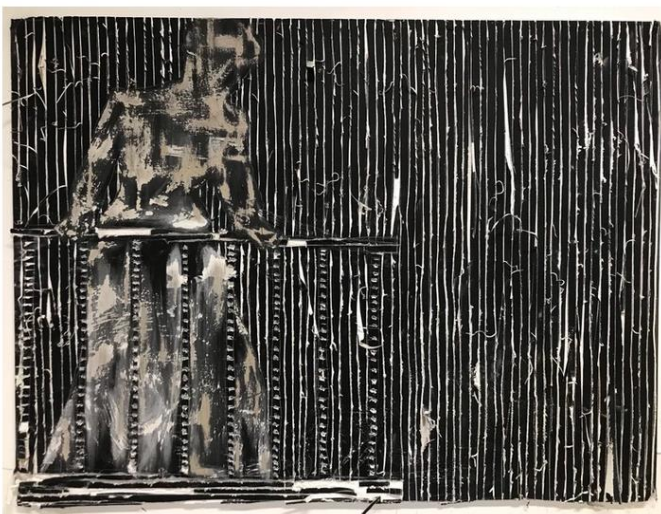
Britain 2021
2021
Printed ink on Cartridge paper
84cm x 59cm

I wanted to transport this meaningful space into my larger plaster works. Kara Walker's powerful silhouettes provided further inspiration. Her pieces clearly emphasise the compositional connection between figure and space, but also require the viewer to connect with the meaning of the work in order to decipher the ambiguity of her silhouettes. Additionally, the scale of the work lends its meaning a sense of gravitas. My plaster works tap into similar dynamics.



Kara Walker
*Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred
 b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her
 Heart* (2015)
 396cm x 1524 cm

My plaster works achieve their best results when no single aspect dominates. My intention was to convey functional connectiveness *between* various aspects; not to shine a light on just the walls of Tse's house. An element of compositional balance is required. "Woman on Balcony" works less well because the peeling paper strips stand too proud. Similarly, the coloured stripes of "More Breaking in Colour" demand too much attention. Its monochrome partner "More Breaking" is a more useful working of the idea of functional connectedness.



Woman on Balcony
 2021
 Blackboard paint on plaster
 90cm x 120cm

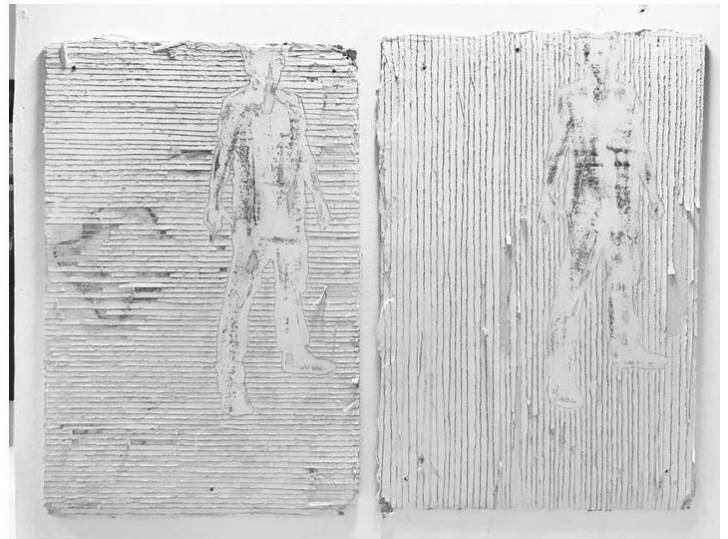


More Breaking in Colour
 2021
 Primer and oils on plaster
 122cm x 90cm

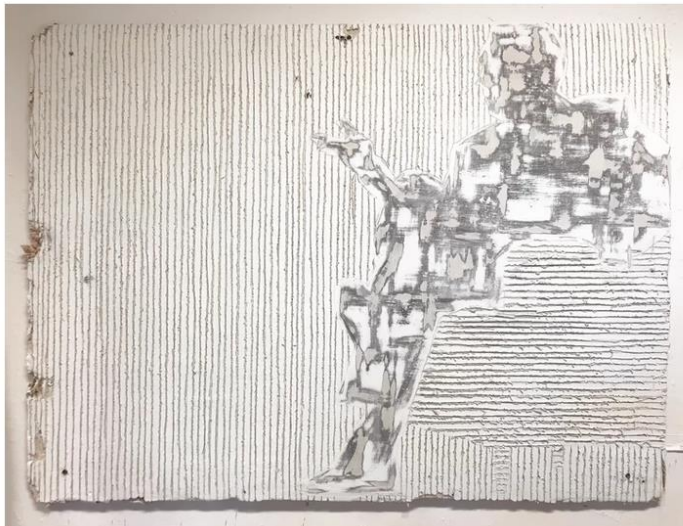
The pieces below more deftly handle the idea of functional connectedness because they are visually more finely balanced. The parallel lines of the plaster surfaces are an amniotic fluid to support the mass of the figure. Figure and space have equal density. Additionally, the ambiguity of these works successfully require the viewer to converge on the hub of each work's meaning: What is the depicted figure experiencing?



More Breaking
2021
Primer on Plaster
122cm x 90cm



Man in Space 1&2
2021
Primer on plaster
90cm x 120cm



Seated Man
2021
Primer on plaster
90cm x 120cm



Foetal Sue
2021
Primer on plaster
120cm x 90cm

The scoring and the distressing of the plastered surfaces of these works is perhaps their greatest strength. Visceral marks reveal the physical connections between the various physical layers. But more than this, the marks are a record of the act of making, and so connect the viewer with the moment of creation.



To view timelapse video of making of “More Breaking” and “More Breaking in Colour” ctrl & click [here](#). (Please view with sound on.)

“Helping Hand” is a revisiting of a previous theme in my work. That of the *multiple selves* that give form to our experience of ourselves (Angyal⁴). But, whereas the selves in “Only Four?” (p7) are disconnected and dysfunctional, “Helping Hand” presents a more optimistic and empowering view of my own experience of self: one self demonstrates the strength and agency to help another self.



Helping Hand
2021
Primer on plaster
120cm x 204cm

⁴Angyal A. (1965). *Neurosis and treatment*. New York: Wiley.



Only Four?
2020
Oil on canvas
60cm x 90cm



Self-portrait crouching
2021
Primer and oils on plaster
122cm x 90cm

“Self-portrait crouching” is something of a departure from the other plasterboards. The intrusive gaze of the more representational figure achieves an immediate connection with the viewer. And, the weight and contrast of the blue space injects some sense of balance with the figure’s bold colours. However, the figure’s brash and colourful paintwork ultimately overwhelms the more politely rendered space; there is insufficient relatedness between the two. Stern is left wincing at the excess number of notes, and Tse scowls at how cramped his house has become.

My future works will seek to find ways of resolving the challenges introduced by colour and greater figurative representation. The pot must not overwhelm its own volume! Compositionally, I will build on those of my works that have been most successful in connecting figure and space via functional interactions.

The distressed plaster surfaces will remain. Those marks are the footprints that lead the viewer to my artistic process.

And finally, I want to leave interpretive room for the viewer – (s)he must be compelled to function to co-create the work’s meaning.

812 words (excluding quotations, image details, footnotes and bibliography).

Please note:

- A digital portfolio of my work for this module can be viewed by ctrl & clicking [here](#).
- Digital exerts from my sketchbook can be viewed by ctrl & clicking [here](#).
- Part 1 of a video overview of my 005 research can be viewed by ctrl & clicking [here](#).
- Part 2 of a video overview of my 005 research can be viewed by ctrl & clicking [here](#).

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