

Ellipsis

Artist's Statement

The unsaid, exerts great power . . . It is analogous to the unseen for example, to the power of ruins, to works of art either damaged or incomplete. Such works inevitably allude to larger contexts; they haunt because they are not whole, though wholeness is implied: another time, a world in which they were whole, or were to have been whole, is implied. There is no moment in which their first home is felt to be the museum.

It seems to me that what is wanted, in art, is to harness the power of the unfinished. All earthly experience is partial. Not simply because it is subjective, but because that which we do not know, of the universe, of mortality, is so much more vast than that which we do know. What is unfinished or has been destroyed participates in these mysteries. The problem is to make a whole that does not forfeit this power.

Louise Gluck, from *Proofs & Theories*

In August 2005 I moved into my current home in east Belfast, which was previously occupied by two bachelor brothers, both now deceased. In their wake lay numerous quietly hidden^[SEP] or dispersed artefacts, seeming detritus from their lives, lives played out here to the very end. One particular item, a personal journal, which has the impression of a^[SEP] series of lay sermons, was intermittently interlaced with random detailed notations, lists and sketches relating to financial and cosmetic alterations to our dwelling. A box ostensibly filled with work related manuals revealed a substantial number of slides taken in Africa and dated 1981. The journal and slides drew me into their lives swiftly revealing a life centred around religion and acts of philanthropy. On discovering the journals author in his latter years suffered from Alzheimer's its content appear also in some part a fated yet prophetic defence against this unremitting condition

1981 was the year my mother announced that at 10 years of age I was too old for birthday parties. My own religious life was the sum of the sporadic Sunday morning trips to Sunday school at our local country parish church and the illustrated children's bible whose fables and moralities were eclipsed by the luscious illustrations of angels and all things other worldly.

This was also the year the world observed 11 hunger strikers starve themselves to death in the H block and Northern Ireland experienced another year^[SEP] of indiscriminate terror at the mercy of the ongoing campaign of fear and violence played out between two disparate religious communities.

In 1981 our lives were on distinctly unrelated and seemingly divergent paths. Yet in a moment of chance discovery the true nature of the brothers' seemingly indistinctive oddments has altered this forevermore; from this moment on our realities have converged.

By my very nature I was inescapably drawn to these objects, interesting curios that open

a window into the world of two men I shall never meet. Yet despite this divide, in the context of my own life experiences, they are potent with meaning raising within me a myriad of emotions and fractious questions; at the centre of these is the question of authorship of memory. Memory by its very nature is fluid and susceptible to the destructiveness of time. What is fully remembered or partially constructed by the influence of other factors and how can so many conflicting subjective perspectives simultaneously claim authorship over the construction of history both political and personal?

I was at times besieged by, the emotional weight of the personal artefacts of the Gilliland's. I felt akin to the archaeologist and archivist cataloguing, detailing and determining information from the fractured traces of the past. Whilst I may endeavour to negotiate these curious objects, give them form and substance within the framework of a canvas or a piece of paper, my attempts at meaning and significance will forever remain incomplete. Faded photographs, hand written letters, scribbled notes and a stock of accumulated artefacts create a residue from which one can construct a history but not a life.

In possessing these artefacts I am in effect their custodian. I do not, and never can own them, in the same way that I cannot own the reality of the exhibited works as witnessed by the viewer. In essence these works will remain incomplete, unfinished, a series of snap shots from absent family albums. What we do not know or understand more vast and haunting than that which, can only be partially gleaned.

Jennifer Trouton