

Topping, Jane (2009) What Is Invisible. [Artefact] (Unpublished)

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What Is Invisible

You are an artist. You have just installed your work in this gallery space[1] and you step back to consider it.[2] There is something wrong. Something is missing. No. Something is present and yet invisible somehow. So you reach out and attempt to look *behind* your work and you feel as if you could almost be lifting up the corner of a rug[3] and discovering that instead of solid floor, the rug is concealing a rug-shaped hollow. No - more of a pit really. And on closer inspection, this pit seems to be of an unfathomable depth, as if defying all your previous notions of size or scale. And in fact as you gaze into this pit you realise that the space *is impossible* and you start to entertain the possibility that there is some kind of quantum-style physical trickery at work here and you are beginning also, to feel a little queasy.

But you stare into the pit until your eyes cannot focus and yet you begin to decipher shapes and colours and maybe even *things* and you realise with a shudder that hiding under this opulent rug[4] is EVERY SINGLE THING THAT YOU HAVE EVER SEEN OR SAID OR HEARD OR TOUCHED OR THOUGHT OF, EVER, IN YOUR WHOLE LIFE LEADING UP TO THIS POINT.[5]

And as you steady yourself, it dawns on you that you can't remember the last time you were able to walk down the street or go to a party or even sit quietly in your kitchen without *recording*. [6] You realise that you have become a greedy, curious animal - snuffling underneath piles of rotting leaves in autumn or riffling through stinking rubbish bins in summer. You realise that you feel a little bit empty all the time and that you fill that emptiness with information[7] and you combine it with other jewel-like nuggets of information you deem precious and you make & model & crush & build & sharpen & discard until you are exhausted and the work is installed and the wine is flowing and the rug looks, well, perfectly serviceable at this particular point in time.

Jane Topping

[1] And forgive my specificity, but imagine a gallery space & not any other kind of space in which you might be experiencing art.

[2] And as an artist you will, I assure you, spend a massive amount of your time considering your work – in your studio or your office or your flat or on a laptop or through headphones or even, and this does actually happen from time to time, in your dreams. You will never, ever have a day in your life when you are not looking at your work in some way and it is exhausting some of the time and exhilarating at other times but mostly it is a genuinely stimulating & fascinating way to spend your life.

[3] Imagine a richly coloured, deep piled, Persian kind of affair. The kind of rug that usually sits on top of honey tinted Parquet flooring in a stately home. Maybe there's an open fire burning in a marble grate near this rug or perhaps there is an intricately inlaid harpsichord standing off to the right in this room that smells of bee's wax and lavender.

[4] Which we are using as a somewhat oblique metaphor for your work, remember?

[5] This random point, this date of exhibition, when you were asked to show your work and you did.

[6] And wouldn't it be incredible if your eyes were in fact cameras? Wouldn't it though?

[7] Any kind of information, in any form because you're nothing if not democratic.