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# In Lostness Possibilities are Found:

Is it possible to define the value of lostness through contemporary art practice?



Laura M R Harrison

Institute of the Arts, University of Cumbria

On location, Beckfoot, July

2015

# Lostness: It is all in the mind

Lostness: A feeling of being psychically lost: A vexation of spirit: the sense of being unsure what one is meant to be doing in life: of having unclear direction, desires or aims

## Dictionary definition:

lost: *adj* **1**unable to find one's way: not knowing one's whereabouts: unable to be found: unable to understand or to cope with a situation. **2**that which has been taken away or cannot be recovered: (of time or an opportunity) not used advantageously; wasted: having died or been destroyed.

Oxford University Press 2005

## Etymology:

lost (adj.): "defeated," c.1300: "wasted, spent in vain," c.1500; also "no longer to be found" (1520s), from past participle of *lose*.

[www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)

# Darkness: A time of philosophising

Darkness: *noun* **1** the partial or total absence of light: night: the quality of being dark in colour **2** wickedness or evil: unhappiness or gloom: secrecy or mystery

Dark: *adj* **1** with little or no light: (of a theatre) closed; not in use **2** (of a colour or object): not reflecting much; approaching black in shade: (of someone's skin, hair or eyes) brown or black in colour: (of a person) having such skin, hair or eyes. **3** (of a period or situation) characterised by great unhappiness or unpleasantness: deeply pessimistic: (of an expression) angry: suggestive of or arising from evil; sinister **4** hidden from knowledge; mysterious. *noun* **1** (*the dark*) the absence of light in a place. [mass noun] nightfall. **2a** a dark colour or shade, especially in a painting.

## Getting out there: Creating art in the dark



GoPro camera and custom made boom arm, River Gelt, August 2014



Camera bag and rucksack, Tindale Tarn, February 2015

- Work always undertaken in darkness
- Locations would be easy to navigate in the dark
- Always work in solitude
- Carry a standard set of equipment
- Head torch as only source of light



GoPro camera and foldable grabber arm, Beckfoot, July 2015

# From making to viewing: Installation Art

'There is always a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer... In creating an installation, the artist treats an entire indoor space as a single situation... The spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work.'

Julie H. Reiss  
(1999, p. xiii)

'Installation... adheres to the fundamental definition of the postmodern art object as "neither exclusionary nor reductive, but synthetic, freely enlisting the full range of conditions, experiences, and knowledge beyond the object. Therefore, far from seeking a single and complete experience, the Post-Modern object strives toward an encyclopaedic condition, allowing a myriad of access points, infinitude of interpretive responses.'

Faye Ran quoting Howard Fox  
(2009, pp. 46-47)

'Installation art's multiple perspectives are seen to subvert the Renaissance perspective model because they deny the viewer any one ideal place from which to survey the work'

Claire Bishop  
(2005, p. 13)

The alternative space: Unit 12, Warwick Mill





12

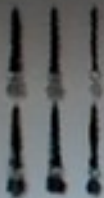
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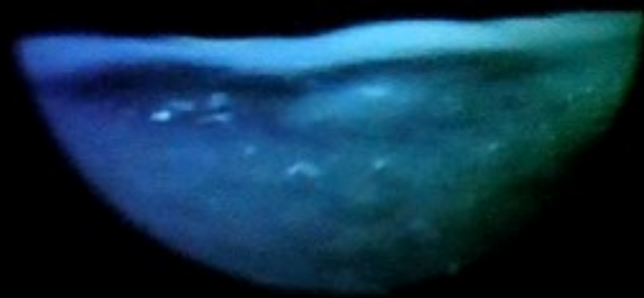
These premises  
are under  
CCTV  
surveillance

*(In the Presence of Darkness*

Laura M R Harrison







## The inquisitive explorer: The light of the torch



Keyring torches given to the audience at *It matters to no one where we are* (Sept 2014) and later at *In the Presence of Darkness* (Sept 2015)

## The inquisitive explorer: The light of the torch



'Rather than heightening awareness of our perceiving body and its physical boundaries, these dark installations suggest our dissolution; they seem to dislodge or annihilate our sense of self...'

Claire Bishop  
(2005, p.82)



'A lantern or flashlight casting its rays into the night serves to illuminate a path but also separate and isolate us from the embracing dark, calling attention to our individualised and atomised selves.'

David Macauley  
(2009, p.64)

