ATTUNING TO FAMILIAR PLACES

Developing Methods for Attuning to the Affective Qualities of a Place:

A Case Study of Brigflatts

RESEARCH PAPER

Attuning to Familiar Places

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ABSTRACT

For several decades, architectural theorists have argued that there is a loss of meaning in architecture, caused by an overemphasis on scientific thinking and devaluing of poetic practices. Some theorists have presented ways to return meaning to architecture: Juhani Pallasmaa has called for empathic imagination and Alberto Perez-Gomez for attuned architecture. However, neither has offered methods for how to achieve those ends.

This research aims to bridge theory and practice by developing methods for attuning to a location and its inhabitants. It focusses on ways to become attuned to a place and people, in order to imagine spaces empathically and tailor architecture to the affective qualities of a place.

In order to best develop methods that identify these qualities, this research looks at familiar places, that is, places we assume to know well and therefore may overlook distinctive features. Accordingly, I have focussed on Brigflatts, my childhood neighbourhood in rural England.

I develop methods for attuning in two ways. First, by drawing upon three fields and their related methods: cognitive science and sensory mapping; anthropology and collaborative design ethnography; and architecture and reflections on atmospheres. Second, by creating physical objects that translate qualities and experiences of place into an interactive form.

My exploration of Brigflatts culminates in four large-format paintings that I express what I became attuned to. I deconstruct and analyse these paintings to indicate how the on-site activities provided insights into the affective qualities of the location. These findings feed into a design project set at Brigflatts.

While this research looked at a familiar, rural location, I show how the methods elaborated at Brigflatts can be adapted to less familiar and urban environments. I discuss their broader application through a set of guiding principles for methods of attunement.

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INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS AN ATTUNED ARCHITECTURE

Since the 1980s, architecture historian and theorist Alberto Perez-Gomez has explored how to restore meaning in architecture. His work claims that there is a loss of poetics in architecture theory and practice, a consequence of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, when scientific thinking, mathematical reasoning, and formalism became valued above the arts.1 Deemed to be less productive, poetic and artistic practices in architecture were lost and as a result architecture was designed without thought for human experience. Looking to restore meaning in architecture, Perez-Gomez turned first to contemporary phenomenology and its rediscovery of perception as the core of experience,2 and more recently called attention to attunement, which he defines as the condition that evokes interiority - the human search for lost integrity, health, wholeness, and holiness.3

Fellow phenomenologist Juhani Pallasmaa similarly critiques the loss of meaning in architecture, stating that "the task of architecture extends beyond its material, functional, and measurable properties... into the mental and existential sphere of life".⁴ From this position, Pallasmaa has argued for an embodied approach to architecture that focuses on existential, poetic, and emotional experiences, suggesting that embodied experience be at the centre of design practice.

In recent years, both theorists have offered ways of restoring meaning to architecture. Pallasmaa suggests teaching students embodied and empathic imagination: the ability to imagine spaces in use and over time, as opposed to merely static and isolated objects.⁵ Perez-Gomez calls for "an architecture that can enhance our human values and capacities, an architecture that is connected – attuned – to its location and its inhabitants." ⁶ However, neither provide practical steps for achieving these ends. As such, this research aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

¹ Perez-Gomez, Alberto. Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science, MIT Press, 1983

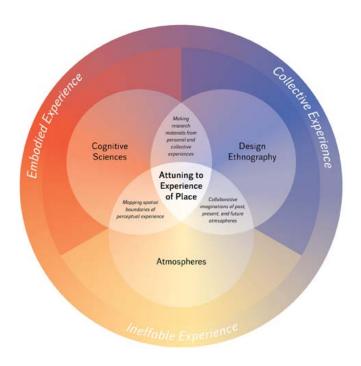
² Mallgrave, Harry. The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture, 2010

³ Robinson, Sarah, and Pallasmaa, Juhani. Mind in Architecture: Neuroscience, Embodiment, and the Future of Design. MIT Press, 2015.

⁴ Pallasmaa, Juhani. Mind in Architecture, 2015

⁵ Pallasmaa, Juhani. Embodied and Empathic Imagination, Bengal Architecture Symposium, 2017

⁶ Perez-Gomez, Alberto. Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science, MIT Press, 2016



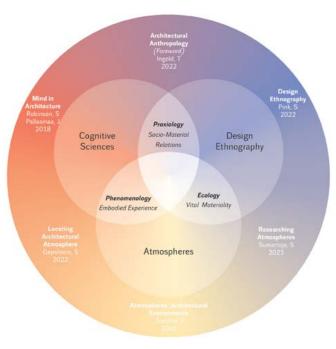


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework
Figure 2: References informing method selection

EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

To create an architecture that is attuned to its location and its inhabitants, the architect must also be attuned. To imagine architecture empathically, the architect must be aware of its dynamics with the environment and interactions with people. Therefore, this research explores methods for attuning oneself to a place and people by focusing on affective qualities and interactions that shape our experience.

I have drawn on methods from three disciplines that explore various aspects of experience. Figure 1 visualises these aspects of experience and how the selected methods overlap in their investigation of material, sensory, and ineffable aspects of environments. Figure 2 situates references within this framework. Used in combination, I aim to develop a practice of attunement to a location and its inhabitants and explore places through a personal and a collective lens.

To understand the embodied experience, I turn to cognitive sciences, and a method for studying the spatial boundary of perceptions called sensory mapping. Pallasmaa suggests that this field can "valorise the poetic" in architecture by offering empirical methods to analyse the affective qualities of environments, and in recent years many architects have looked to the cognitive sciences to study how our

environment influences our experience.⁷⁸ In this research, I draw on a tool by neuroscientist Sergei Gepshtein for mapping the spatial boundaries of perceptual fields in order to identify where affective qualities overlap and generate novel atmospheres (Figures 3 and 4). While the paper studies spatial boundaries of visual perception, I explore how this tool can be used for mapping multiple layers of an embodied experience.⁹

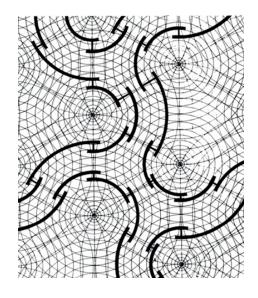
Next, I turn to the discussion of atmospheres in architecture to find a method for investigating the ineffable qualities of our existential, poetic, and emotional experiences. Atmospheres have been explored theoretically and reflectively in architecture discourse, most notably in Peter Zumthor's 2006 lecture. Zumthor's reflections on the topic provide a framework from which to understand "the magic of the real". He names this quality of architecture atmosphere, and in his lecture offers 12 aspects of architectural atmospheres, including: how the light falls, the ways materials react to one another, the intimacy of spaces, the body of architecture, and more.¹⁰ Zumthor breaks down the ineffable experience of architecture into spatial qualities and shows that each element of a space has an affective force on our experience. I use his framework to guide my attention during my site visit as a way to open up my awareness to previously unthought of spatial qualities.

⁷ Mind in Architecture: Neuroscience, Embodiment, and the Future of Design

⁸ Ritchie, Ian. "Special Issue: Neuroarchitecture." Architectural Design, vol. 90, no. 6, 2020.

⁹ Gepshtein, Sergei, and Proietti, Tiziana. "Locating Architectural Atmosphere." Generators of Architectural Atmosphere, edited by Elisabetta Canepa and Bob Condia, New Prairie Press, 2022.

¹⁰ Zumthor, Peter. Atmospheres: Architectural Environments - Surrounding Objects. Birkhäuser, 2006.



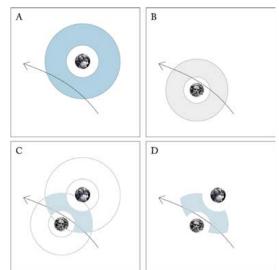


Figure 3: The plan view of a hypothetical "perceptual field", Field Theory, Space as system of places. Paolo Portoghesi, 1964

Figure 4: The ring model of visibility, Perceptual Space as a Well of Possibilities, Tiziana Proietti & Sergei Gepshtein

To understand the experience of people in their environment, I draw on methods from design ethnography, an interdisciplinary field connecting design and anthropology. Researcher Shanti Sumartojo defines design ethnography as a participatory and collaborative practice to bring new information into existence through interventional and imaginative methods. 1112 Sumartojo uses ethnographic methods to study how people experience their spatial surroundings, in particular studying the experience of ineffable atmospheres. Her approach to apprehending atmospheres is an "attunement to our material, sensory, and affective surroundings as they already exist"13 and her methods prioritize the act of making materials through which to think, discuss, and imagine. I draw on Sumartojo's approach and undertake collaborative exercises with

inhabitants of a chosen site, giving them photography prompts to learn about their experiences.

Lastly, I develop a method for expressing affective qualities of place and experiences of people. Inspired by Sumartojo's work and informed by a recent workshop of hers, ¹⁴ I adopted an iterative and open practice for this process, developing this method during the second part of this research.

This set of methods explores the experience of place through embodied encounters, exercises of directing attention, collaborative discussions, and expressing attunement into physical objects. By practicing and evaluating a range of methods, I can gain an understanding for what properties are needed to attune to a place and people.

¹¹ Sumartojo, Shanti. Design Ethnography: Research, Responsibilities, and Futures. 2022

¹² Advanced Research Workshop on Architecture Ethnography, with Prof. Shanti Sumartojo, TU Delft Theory of Architecture Fellowship, November 2023

¹³ Sumartojo, Shanti. Design Ethnography: Research, Responsibilities, and Futures. 2022

¹⁴ Sumartojo, Shanti. Workshop. 2023

ATTUNING TO FAMILIAR PLACES

In order to best develop methods that identify affective qualities, this research looks at familiar places, that is, places we assume to know well and therefore may overlook distinctive features. This decision asks for a conscious effort to attune to that which is "normal" – bringing to light unexamined assumptions and expectations of a place. It develops methods for uncovering the qualities of a place that are rarely given conscious attention.

Accordingly, I have focussed on Brigflatts, my childhood neighbourhood in rural England. I practice the adopted methods during a ten-day visit to Brigflatts and reflect on the effectiveness for gaining new insights and ease of documenting and translating this awareness. I summarize my reflections in a set of guiding principles for future methods of attunement, contributing to the advancement of attunement in architecture practice and adding to its methodology.

The second part of the research explores methods for expressing what I became attuned to. After my site-visit I organized my findings, categorized the identified affective qualities, and defined the terms of the local atmosphere. My goal was to create an "object of attunement,", a physical object that translated qualities and experiences of place into an interactive form.

My exploration of Brigflatts culminates in a series of four large-format paintings, title Life at Brigflatts. In the following chapters I introduce these objects of attunement, deconstruct and analyse them to indicate how the on-site activities provided insights into the location and inhabitants, and reflect on the process of creating these paintings.

A CASE STUDY OF THE FAMILIAR

BRIGFLATTS

As the researcher of this project and the architect of the following design project, I will practice the range of methods in the familiar place of my childhood neighbourhood, known as Brigflatts. From ages 5 to 18, I lived down a narrow lane a mile from the small town of Sedbergh in North-West England, an historic market town in the Yorkshire Dales. I lived down Brigflatts Lane, a carwide, winding road lined with hedgerows and wide gates leading to the fields of sheep on either side. A hundred meters down the lane are a handful of buildings that are in keeping with the vernacular architecture of the area: thick stone walls, pitched slate roofs, and small windows with white frames. Each building has a different history. There is a farmhouse and several converted barns. A group of smaller family homes towards the end of the lane, where the road meets the river that carved the valley in which Sedbergh is nested. The house I grew up in, a fourbedroom house built in 1743, used to be a home for flax weavers, and across the lane from my childhood home is

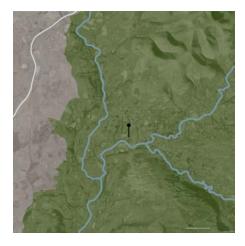
the oldest Quaker Meeting House in North England, built in 1675. Accompanying it is a home for the warden of the Meeting House, some outhouses and a small quaker burial ground. Many of the buildings associated with the Quakers are protected heritage sites.

My experience of Brigflatts Lane has changed over the years. As a child, my neighbourhood was my playground. I played with other children on the lane, in the hedgerows, on hay bales, in the fields, and in each other's living rooms and bedrooms when it was raining outside (which it often was). In the north of England, summer days are long, stretching out towards midnight, and in the winter, they end before you are home from school.

As a teenager, my attitude towards my home changed. The fields I once played in symbolised the distance between me and my schoolfriends who lived in town. I didn't play in the hedgerows or in the fields or on the lane – neighbours moved away, and children grew up. I was apathetic to the







(Top) UK National Parks (Middle) Yorkshire Dales National Park (Bottom) Rawthey Valley

landscape that my Mum spoke so fondly of. I resisted walking my dog through muddy fields and flocks of sheep guarding their lambs. I wanted more stimulus and social connections, and I disliked the peace and quiet of Brigflatts.

At 18, I moved away and have since lived in cities in the US and in the Netherlands. Now, when I am home, I experience Brigflatts as a homesick child, teenager, and adult. My experience is multi-layered and contradictory, and very much weather dependant. During sunny summer visits I marvel at the beauty of the landscape and reminisce about the peace and solitude missing from my city apartment. During the rainy days, especially during the dark winter

months, I barely leave the house. I sit within the cold stone walls, under a woollen blanket and the blanket of the thick grey sky and live slowly and quietly.

My description of my childhood home is only one perspective, and while I can remember details from different stages of my life, these details come from my memories as I write from my present home in a different country. Therefore, during this research I focus on my personal experience as well as that of my parents and neighbours and explore the experience of Brigflatts in the present and in our memories of the past.

RESEARCH STEPS

Given my knowledge of the site, I tailored the research methods to the scale, climate, and culture of Brigflatts. I also adapted my research to work with the time frame of the research project and two site visits. Over the course of ten weeks, I visited Brigflatts twice. I visited during the first week of research, for ten days in mid-November. The days were short, wet, and grey. During this visit I tested each method and gathered research materials such as recordings, sketches, and photographs. I returned in late December for another ten days, this time looking to corroborate the conclusions I had drawn from the research materials, and to begin developing a productive method for expressing what

I have become attuned to. I decided on one productive method to pursue in the month following my second visit and spent the ten days gathering materials needed to create the intended qualities.

The following sections provide an overview of each practiced method during my first site visit. I discuss the design ethnography exercise with my neighbours, sensory mapping in rural places, and reflecting upon Zumthor's aspects of atmosphere. In the next chapter I introduce the productive method that I used to translate the affective qualities and experiences of Brigflatts into physical objects.

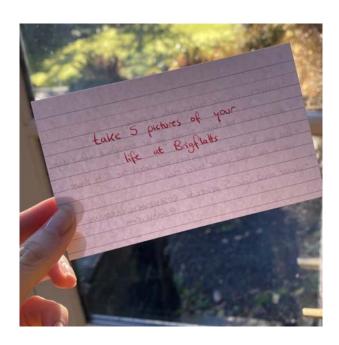




Figure 5 – the ethnography exercise prompt "take 5 pictures of your life at Brigflatts" hand-written on note cards and given to my neighbours.

Figure 6 – materials for the ethnographic exercises, I printed the photographs sent to me on paper, using them as a tool for discussion.

METHOD 1 - DESIGN ETHNOGRAPHY

Of the three methods, I practiced the design ethnography exercise first as it brought me in contact with inhabitants of Brigflatts and my attention to their collective experiences. Our conversations guided my focus to places and qualities deemed meaningful or noteworthy by people who have lived there anywhere from five to 40 years.

Before knocking on my neighbours' doors, I practiced the exercise with my father so check if the initial prompt "Take 5 photos along Brigflatts Lane that remind you of home" would yield the materials I was imagining. Based on this check, I reworded the prompt to "Take 5 photos of your life at Brigflatts." (Figure 5). I changed the name of the study from Brigflatts Lane to Brigflatts, as I noticed how the word "Lane" brought attention to the physical lane as opposed to the areas connected by it. I also replaced "remind you of home" with "of your life." I removed 'home' after talking to my father about his interpretation of the prompt and seeing how each of his photos had our house central to the frame. I wanted a prompt that was clear and free, and decided that what was most important was to see how people experienced Brigflatts - to see their life here.

With a newly defined prompt I asked several neighbours if they'd like to participate in "my research about Brigflatts and what gives it its sense of place." I shared the prompts

and remained flexible if a neighbour didn't have the time to take pictures but was happy just to talk. In that sense, approaching with a simple task opened the door for sharing my interests and connecting with people who were willing to talk about their experiences. I carried out four exercises with five photos submitted by the participants: both of my parents and two neighbours next door. I met with two households who presented family pictures taken over the years, and a household who invited me in for a cup of tea but didn't have pictures to share. With their permission I recorded each conversation, later reviewing the transcripts.

For the participants who followed the prompts, I printed their photographs (see Figure 6), and for each image asked three simple questions informed by Sumartojo's sensory ethnography method: "What is this picture of?" "Why did you take it?" and "What does it make you feel?" The questions allowed for a personal and reflective response with the goal of gaining insights into the value they assigned to their environment. Following their answers, I continued asking questions to gain a deeper understanding about their experience of Brigflatts. A selection of the submitted photographs are presented below (Figure 7). Even without the accompanying transcript, similarities can be found in the experience of residents just by the content of their photographs. For example, two participants showed the

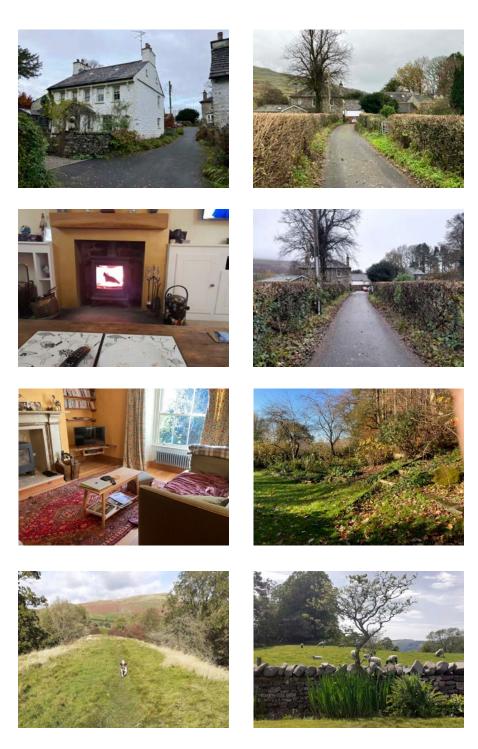


Figure 7 – a selection of the photographs submitted under the prompt "Take 5 photos of your life at Brigflatts".

view coming down the lane from the main road, and two participants included their fireplaces.

This method was useful in understanding the experience of other people and uncovering shared and meaningful experiences of Brigflatts. The feedback from the participants was positive, and they too found it an insightful exercise, revealing to themselves what qualities they found important about the place in which they lived. Quotes from our conversations are woven throughout the analysis of the Life at Brigflatts painting collection.

While not all my conversations with inhabitants of Brigflatts revolved around the photography prompt, my meetings yielded interesting stories and surprising artefacts, such as a photograph taken in the 1950s when the lower end of the lane was a farm and before the barns were converted into houses (Figure 8). My house is visible in the background, and in the middle is a structure no longer standing but believed to have been the workshop of a stone mason who lived at my address. These unintended outcomes gave a special feel to the project, grounding it in the history and perspective of my neighbours.



Figure 8 – a photograph taken in the 1950s that a resident of Brigflatts shared with me during an ethnographic exercise.



Figure 9 – sound recordings taken during first site visit

METHOD 2 - SENSORY MAPPING

Between sharing the photography prompt with my neighbours and waiting for their responses, I practiced mapping my embodied experience of Brigflatts. I had intended to map visual stimuli as well as other sensory inputs, such as sound and touch. I quickly realised, however, that my surroundings were not as simple or easy to map as the example, nor was it clear what was important to map. The example mapped the perceptual boundary of two objects and showed only their bodies in an otherwise empty environment. Standing in my garden, among thousands of plants, animals, and domestic objects, I was overwhelmed with the richness of it all and unsure of what to map. As a result, I became aware of the experience of the whole as opposed to the parts. It was the combination of all the bodies and sensory stimuli that generated the holistic experience of Brigflatts.

In an effort to test the method, I decided to focus on a single sense. As I closed my eyes and tried to map the sounds of the area, the loud and ever-present roar of the river a field away immediately caught my attention. I

realised this was something so familiar that I had tuned it out and needed an exercise of guiding attention to become aware of. Walking up and down the lane, I identified where one could begin to hear the river, and when large features blocked the sound. I recorded sounds on my phone, and in doing so practiced being present and attentive to the sounds of my surroundings, pressing start and stop when I felt I'd gathered "enough." Whereas I had all the information necessary to map, in plan view, the perceptual boundary of the river, I realised I was less interested in where these bodies could be sensed than with the effect that they had on my experience of Brigflatts.

I tested the same method to map my emotional experiences, such as feelings of privacy. I practiced mapping, in plan and section, locations around my house where I felt more private than others, but I still found the method lacked sufficient information as to what generated this feeling. Once again, I became aware that it was the combination of all affective bodies that shaped my experience, rather than any single one.

1 THE BODY OF ARCHITECTURE

The material presence of things in a piece of architecture, collected and combined to create space. Its frame. A sensual effect of a body that can touch me.

2

MATERIAL COMPATIBILITY

How different materials react together. Each composition has a unique arrangement of materials in form, finish, and quantity. Critical proximity for reactions to happen. 3

THE SOUND OF SPACE

Interiors are large instruments collecting, amplifying, transmitting sound. What tone is emitted by spaces in stillness? What sounds when walking through and closing doors?

4

THE TEMPERATURE OF SPACE

Physical temperature of materials, but also psychological, how materials 'temper' and tune our experience through what we see, feel, touch. 5

SURROUNDING OBJECTS

What people surround themselves with and how it comes together in a caring, loving way. Things take their place in a building. A sense of home. 6

BETWEEN COMPOSURE AND SEDUCTIONE

The way architecture involves movement and is a spatial and temporal art. Direction, seduction, letting go, granting freedom, guidance, stimulation, relaxation.

7

TENSION BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

Thresholds, imperceptible transitions from inside and outside. Feelings of being enclosed, enveloped, keeping us together. Arenas for the individual and the public.

8

LEVELS OF INTIMACY

Proximity and distance. Size, mass, the gravity of things and its contrast to my own. Feeling of the interior as a hidden mass. Large spaces intimidating or freeing? 9

THE LIGHT ON THINGS

Where and how the light falls and where shadows are. How surfaces reflect light, are dull or sparkling or having their own depth.

Figure 10 - Atmosphere Reflection Cards, based on notes taken from Peter Zumthor's 2006 lecture 'Atmospheres'.

METHOD 3 - REFLECTING ON ASPECTS OF ATMSOPHERE

The final method I practiced during my site visit was reflecting on Zumthor's nine aspects of atmosphere (Figure 10). I took notes on his lecture and created note cards to take with me on my walks around Brigflatts. I recorded my reflections with my voice recording app, and later read through the transcription.

After speaking with neighbours, walking around the area and gathering other research materials, I reflected on the aspects of atmosphere. Some aspects were easier to explore than others as the characteristics were visible and constant, such as Surrounding Objects and The Body of Architecture. Other qualities, like The Light on Things and The Sound of Space were visible but not constant as they were dependant on the weather and time of day. Aspects such as Between Composure and Seduction and Tension between Interior and Exterior were less objective, requiring an effort to experience Brigflatts through a new lens. While not as straightforward to answer, reflecting on these aspects presented new ways of understanding the affective qualities of the area and resulting atmosphere.

This method was useful in attuning to the ineffable experience of a place by providing a framework for distinct aspects of its atmosphere. In focussing on a single aspect, I was able to study one affective quality (such as Intimacy) or affective body (such as cloud cover) in detail. I explored the relationships between affective bodies and their role in generating the local atmosphere. While reflecting on these nine aspects, I looked for other qualities of the local atmosphere that the framework didn't cover. Despite coming from a single architect whose portfolio features projects mostly within Switzerland, I found Zumthor's framework to be easily transferable to Brigflatts. After the exercise, I found that new insights fell into one of the nine categories, and the vocabulary remained useful in describing the local atmosphere throughout the rest of the project.

Once I returned from my November visit, I read through the transcript of my reflections and defined what I believed to be the most important aspects of atmosphere at Brigflatts. I augmented these conclusions with other materials, such as photographs, sketches, and quotes from conversations with my neighbours. Reflecting on this framework uncovered several affective qualities of Brigflatts and brought my attention to the role local bodies play in generating local atmospheres. I describe these insights during my analysis of the four paintings in *Life at Brigflatts*.

OBJECTS OF ATTUNEMENT

TRANSLATING EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

After my visit, I experimented with ways to communicate what I had found. My goal was to create an object (or set of objects) that could communicate the experience of Brigflatts. The benefit of doing this was two-fold:

- 1. The objects were thinking tools through which I could reflect upon what I had attuned to, externalising my thoughts and enacting my body to translate experiences and ideas into physical forms. One embodied experience informed another: my memories and research findings of Brigflatts now expressed through an embodied process of making physical forms. In doing so, I could react on my ability to communicate the affective qualities of the place I had attuned to, re-experiencing the new forms and comparing this with the experience of Brigflatts.
- 2. The objects could communicate the experience of Brigflatts to people who had never been there. In addition to finding a mode for expressing my attunement for myself, I wanted to create objects that could attune others to what I had found. This desire meant that the objects needed to translate an embodied experience of the local atmospheres.

I call these physical forms Objects of Attunement, referring to the continued attunement to place through making them, and their ability to attune others to place through their interactions with the objects. The main challenge I encountered was to balance the goal of communicating a single aspect of Brigflatts with not isolating it from its

context. My experiments showed that objects expressing only a single concept or quality lost their connection to Brigflatts and therefore their ability to translate the experience of it. This desire to translate the experience of Brigflatts revealed a limitation I would need to contend with: that the full experience of a place cannot be truly captured (as seen in my on-site exercises) or translated because places are dynamic and ever-changing and are experienced holistically through an embodied interaction with the environment. With this in mind, my focus became translating the affective qualities that I had attuned to and expressing them as contextually and holistically as I could.

My method for making these objects followed a similar process to my on-site research: a process of deconstructing the whole into parts, only this time, reassembling them into a new form. My research used methods of directing attention and isolating senses to identify and untangle the affective bodies from the experience of Brigflatts. I categorized these bodies, documented their various states and relationships to other bodies, and determined their affective qualities and influence on the local atmosphere. To produce an object of attunement, I wove these parts back together into a meaningful assembly – a collection of parts that spoke as a whole. This reassembly allowed me to translate not only individual bodies, but a holistic experience of place. The local atmosphere could be sensed through an embodied interaction with the object of attunement.

RESEARCH MATERIALS

Before arriving at my final method for producing objects of attunement, I experimented with different media and methods: ink pens and sketching, clay and modelling forms, cardboard and making scale models, and pencils and paper to depict colours and textures. Each medium and method had its advantages in expressing qualities of Brigflatts, however none were suitable for communicating the embodied experience I had attuned to.

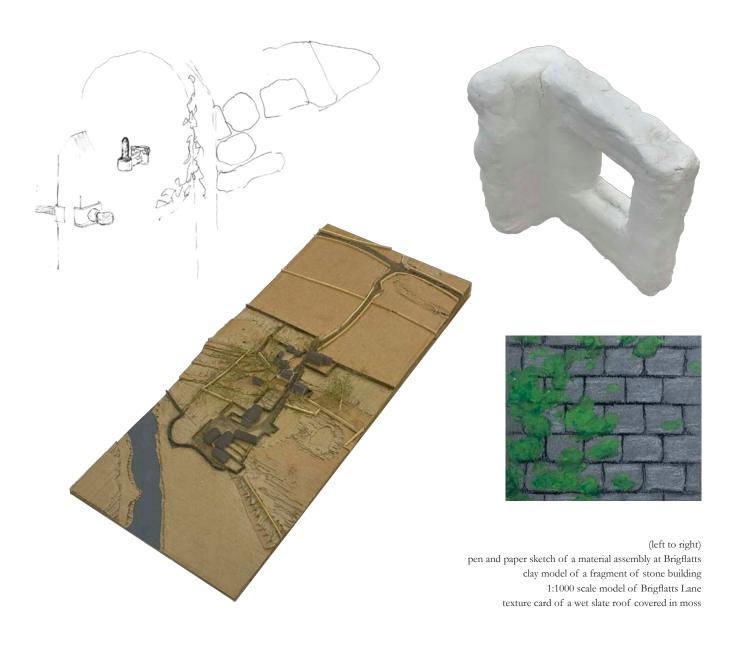
I used ink pens to sketch material assemblies I came across during my visit. While effective in noting the forms and assemblies of material bodies at Brigflatts, and useful as exercises for directing my attention to fragments of the landscape, the sketches portrayed bodies detached from their context and lost the sense of place.

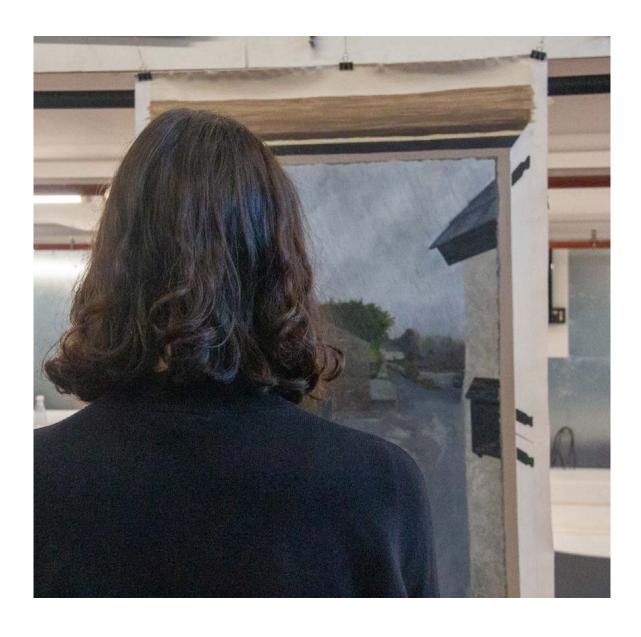
I worked with modelling clay to create singular objects that communicated the form of the local architecture. The clay piece to the left shows a cut out of the thick and uneven stone wall construction and the deep reveals made for windows. Though it was a useful exercise in distilling the information I had gathered about the vernacular architecture, the object didn't convey the experience of being within a space formed by this structural element.

I used cardboard, wood, and paper to make a 1:1000 scale model of Brigflatts. This type of model is informative and a tool that many architects use to communicate topology, land features, and building formations of the site. While useful in situating others to the place I had visited, the object doesn't portray experiential qualities of the place and its scale requires the viewer to 'shrink' themselves in order to imagine being in the scene.

Lastly, I used pencils and paper to create a set of texture cards, focusing more on colour and texture and beginning to explore methods for translating the various states of the affective bodies. The production of these cards was helpful in focusing my attention on their affective qualities. However, as they were isolated from the scene in which they were found, they lost their connection to Brigflatts and attuned viewers to the fragment rather than the place.

While each was useful in its own way, none was adequate to translate fully the experience of place and act as an object of attunement. I learned from these experiments that objects of attunement must provide contextual information, afford an embodied experience, and convey affective qualities that generate the holistic experience of place.





Abovet: Viewer standing before Jan's View, one of the large format paintings in the collection *Life at Brigflatts* p30: Viewer standing before Quaker Burial Ground, from the collection *Life at Brigflatts* p31: diagram of a large format painting with four sections

LARGE FORMAT PAINTINGS

After experimenting with various media, I chose to work with a format large enough to create a confrontation between the viewer's body and the object. After reflecting on the research materials I'd made, I concluded that I would need to effectively translate the colours of the place. Within these coloured surfaces, I could communicate material qualities and depict textures to trigger haptic and motor responses. In doing so I could show the conditions of Brigflatts – the climate, the state and age of materials, and the dynamics of the place. I chose to work with acrylic paints to achieve the intended experience and expression of Brigflatts and painted four scenes on 90 x 210cm cotton canvases.

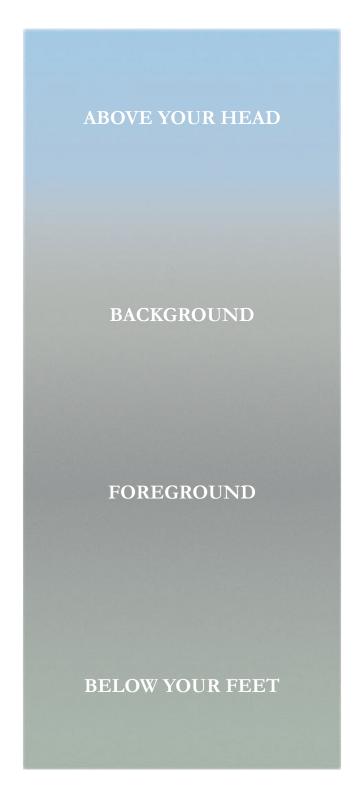
The paintings are large enough to give the impression of being at Brigflatts. They stretch above the viewer's head and extend to the ground. A marker, placed before the painting, positions the viewer's body such that they must look up to the sky above and down to the ground below. The section above their heads conveys information about the space they're in and the atmosphere of the scene. The section below their feet informs them of the ground condition

on which they would be standing. The composition of the scenes considers the height of the viewer's gaze, creating a realistic perspective with a foreground and background.

Unlike the other explored methods of making, this format provides a context for the information being communicated and translates several concepts and qualities within a single object. Moreover, the size of these pieces makes it easy for viewers to imagine the experience of being in the translated place. There is no requirement to scale the object or add an imagined layer of detail. Moving forward, I would test with adding a soundscape for each painting, adding a 360 auditory experience as an extra level of sensory information.

This collection of four paintings, titled *Life at Brigflatts*, expresses the findings of my visit to Brigflatts. They represent that which I became attuned to: the affective bodies and the local atmosphere that they generate, the dynamics of place including the changing climate and human activity, and the experience of the residents. In the following pages I explore the qualities of the large-format paintings that make them effective *objects of attunement*.







AN EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

Standing a meter before the painting, the viewer experiences

a physical confrontation with the scene before them. I

selected frame dimensions that are wider and taller than

the average viewer so that the paintings feel encompassing

as the viewer stands before and "within" the frame.

My desire was to translate the embodied experience of

Brigflatts. As my methodology centred on attuning to

the experience of place and explored methods studying

different aspects of human experience, I explored a format

that would present the viewer with their own attuning

experience.

The size and medium provided this embodied experience.

The size requires the viewer to look up and down and gaze

into the space depicted. The size also allows for detailed

depictions of bodies and an overall feeling arises from

the atmosphere generated by the reconstructed scenes.

Painting at this scale focused my attention on the depiction

of material qualities - colour, form, texture, reflections.

Left: dimensions and dispaly position of the large format paintings

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CURATING & COMPOSING

The large painted scenes are filled with curated affective

bodies, ranging in size from the vast sky and landscape,

structures and materials, to smaller everyday objects. I

had noticed relationships between affective bodies and

the ranges of states these bodies are found in. Across

this collection of scenes, I am able to show these bodies

and states, grouping them depending on the experience

being translated.

The medium of painting gave freedom to composing

scenes, choosing what to add or omit, which bodies to

show in detail and in which state to depict them. With

this freedom of composition, I also played with the

layout of spaces. Whereas the scenes are based on reality,

in order to be recognisable and remain true to what exists,

in order to fit the desired bodies into the 90x210 frame I

shifted, skewed, and layered the subjects.

An example of this can be seen in the placement and

detailed depiction of the letter box in the painting

called Jan's View. The weathering letterbox, with rotting

wood, dripping rain, shining paint, and growing moss,

communicates material reactions to the local climate and

human activity. While it belongs to Jan, it appears on

another wall out of frame.

Left: bodies depicted in Jan's View

p36-37: first sketches of framed views at Brigflatts

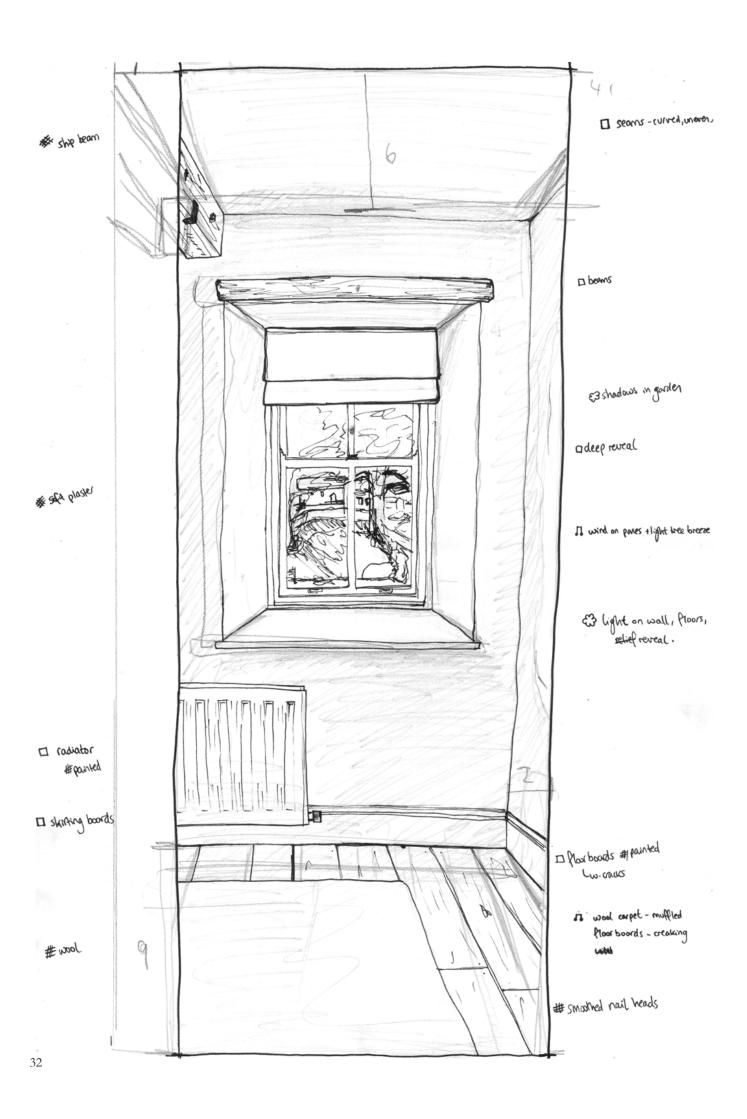
p38-39: detailing the frames with bodies and states

p40-41: finshed painted output of these frames

29



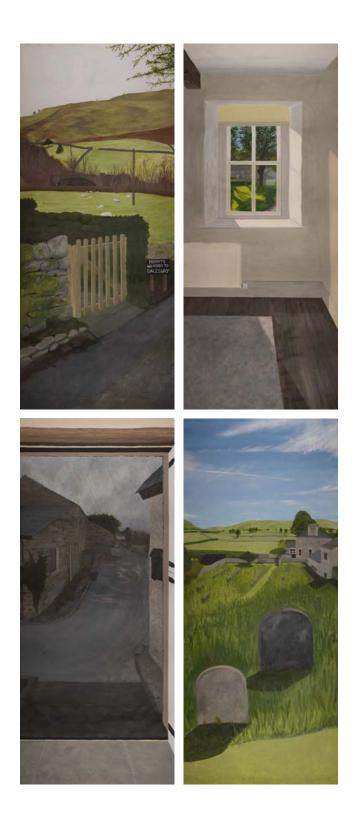




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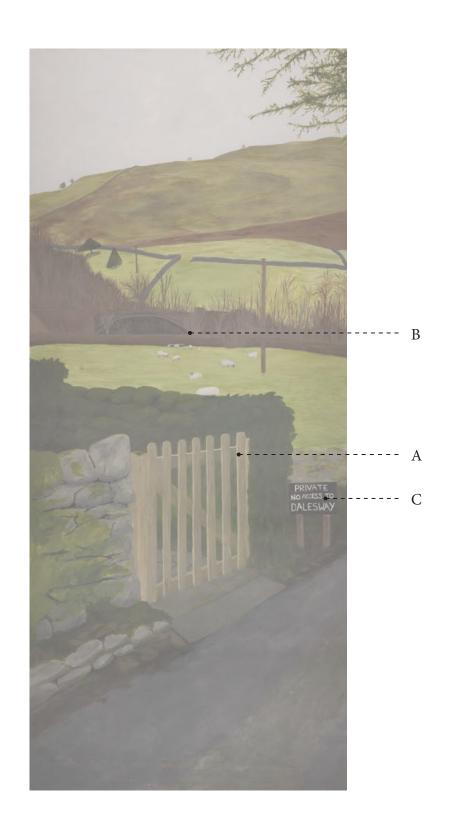
A RANGE OF ATMOSPHERES

By categorizing bodies based on their affective qualities or ideas they communicate, I was able to create a range of scenes -- a set of different experiences and different atmospheres – and show how the experience of place is a result of bodies and their changing conditions. By placing these scenes side by side, the viewer can move between the differing atmospheres, comparing how their experience of the place changes.

The range of methods that I used to attune to Brigflatts produced more than just insights into the affective qualities of bodies. From the design ethnography exercises and my reflections on atmosphere, I uncovered feelings, opinions, and ideas, and saw similarities across many of my conversations with residents. These insights guided me when composing this collection of painted scenes.

The challenge of producing four scenes was to depict the key qualities of Brigflatts that I had attuned to. Guided by my conversations with inhabitants of Brigflatts, I sought to frame views and include bodies that would translate their experiences as well as include what I had become attuned to.

Left - all four scenes in the collection Life at Brigflatts



LAYERS OF INFORMATION

The paintings are a result of exercises to deconstruct and make sense of the whole, but in themselves are an exercise of constructing a scene, made of parts that hold meaning. Like the experience of place, the paintings can be deconstructed into parts. Within them are layers of information:

- A Visual information: objects, materials, states of objects
- e.g. the weathered wooden gate
- B Implied information: evidence of activity or bodies e.g. the iron bridge implies river or ravine and old railway line
- C Informed information: directly adding context
- e.g. the signpost for visitors that adds a location marker

Left: calling out information within *Holme Fell*, one of the 90x120cm acyrlic on canvas paintings in the collection



DIRECTING ATTENTION

These paintings act as objects of attunement similarly to how my field exercises worked – by directing attention. The size of these large format objects and the medium with which they are made means they can be viewed from afar or up close, and within the scene are detailed bodies to investigate closer. The scale draws people in, fingertips outlining bodies of interest.

In producing these objects, my intention was to draw attention and open awareness – to attune the viewer to what I had attuned to it. However, I noticed that viewers interacted with these paintings in unique and unpredictable ways. Each person's interaction revealed what drew their attention – often noting how novel or how familiar something was to them.

By displaying these objects before people who haven't visited Brigflatts, I am able to gain insight into what is unique about the place and spot any affective qualities that went unnoticed during my research. While the methods helped unearth what was familiar and therefore unnoticed, watching people interact with these objects further attunes to my familiar location, being able to see through their eyes and follow their attention.

Left: a viewer's physicial interaction with Holme Fell



TOOLS FOR ATTUNEMENT

A fortunate outcome of using this medium is that these loose canvas paintings can be rolled up – either for easy storage and transport, or to turn them into a scroll.

As scrolls, the paintings are re-framed, showing only horizontal sections across the scene. The user can roll up or down the scene, selecting the width of frame and subject to focus on.

Just as these paintings are a fragment of Brigflatts, the scroll further fragments the scene and directs attention to a single area. This fragmentation turns a scene that is intended to appear realistic into a more abstracted frame. By isolating the section, the viewers have a different experience of the object. In the following analysis of this painting collection, I have used this fragmentation technique to bring into focus details, textures, material assemblies, and affective qualities of Brigflatts.

Left: turning large format paintings into scrolls, a rolled up canvas revealing a horizontal section of across the painting Holme Fell

LIFE AT BRIGFLATTS

DECONSTRUCTING ATMOSPHERES

This series of four, large-format paintings are named after the prompt used in the design ethnography exercise, I gave to my neighbours "Take 5 pictures of your life at Brigflatts". The following analysis of the artworks explores how my research materials influenced their composition and subject matter. *Life at Brigflatts* is the result of the methods of attunement that I practice, as well as additional field notes made on site. Throughout the analysis I link back to quotes from collaborative ethnographic exercises, my reflection of Zumthor's aspects of atmosphere, journal entries, gathered objects, and photographs.

The analysis provides an in-depth review of what I became attuned to during my research and how the on-site exercises led to insights about the affective qualities of Brigflatts. By deconstructing the four frames, I am able to bring attention

to specific fragments of the larger scenes. Each painting is shown in full and then explored in close-up sections.

Within this series are four paintings depicting four different atmospheres of Brigflatts. They explore the place through different seasons, light and weather conditions, and move from outside to indoor scenes. In each scene I include a range of affective bodies in various conditions, together generating an atmosphere that is translated to the viewer through an embodied interaction with the paintings.

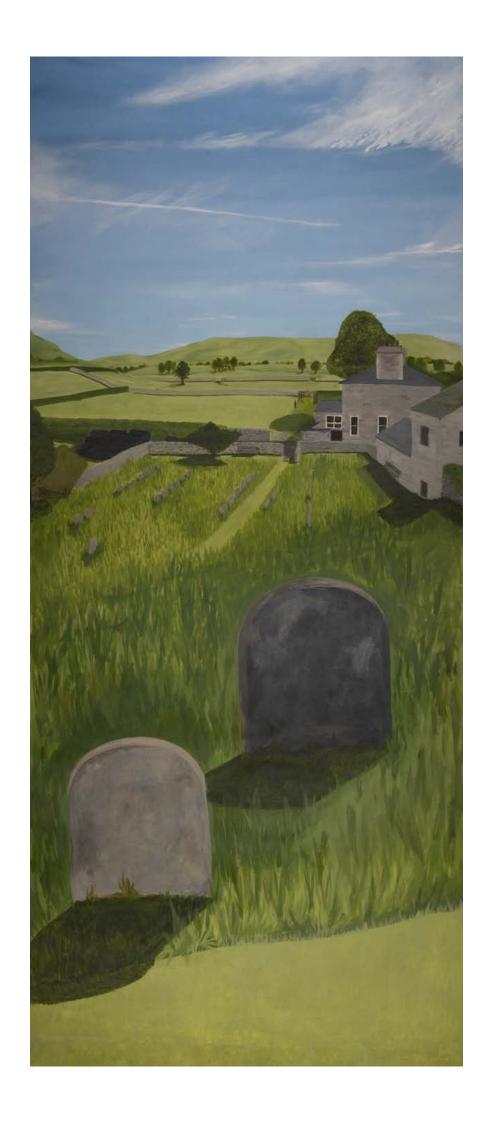
This book is intended to be read alongside the artworks, so the viewer can first experience the paintings before reading the analysis. If the paintings are not available in person, please find links to high resolution scans of each artwork below:

QUAKER BURIAL GROUND

HOLME FELL

JAN'S VIEW

MORNING LIGHT



Analysis of

QUAKER BURIAL GROUND

"I love looking in that little churchyard - the little graveyard. Very modest. Compared to other cemeteries as well it feels like it's welcoming and it's peaceful even though it's just a garden field. In fact, there's even a bench there. Just tucked away around the corner. And the orchard has grown up beautifully." - BW

The first painting in the collection *Life at Brigflatts* introduces the viewer to Brigflatts on a crisp summer day. Vibrant greens and blues fill the frame, interwoven with grey surfaces and outlined by dark shadows cast on the ground. This scene drops the viewer into the rural landscape – an area of gently undulating earth, of grass fields enclosed by dry stone walls, of prominent trees dotted throughout.

Quaker Burial Ground also hints at the historic and spiritual significance of Brigflatts by looking out over a small field filled with lines of headstones. These headstones are unique to Quakerism, a subsect of Christianity formed during the 1600s that follows the testimonies of simplicity, peace, equality, truth and stewardship. Their belief of equality and simplicity manifests in the design of their headstones,

simple shapes carved from stone and used for all people no matter their status. The central position of the headstones informs the viewer of the religious practices at Brigflatts. Not featured in the frame is the Quaker Meeting House just down the lane – a heritage listed building constructed in 1675 and a prominent place for the formation of the faith group. However, the other Quaker-owned properties are partially shown – the schoolhouse and the warden's house are seen in the right of the frame.

This scene contrasts with the other paintings in the collection, which portray a Brigflatts in the more usual cold and wet climate. It pays homage to the sunny days we long for – the affective qualities that attract tourists to visit and show the area in all its beauty.

Left: Quaker Burial Ground, part of Life at Brigflatts series, acrylic on canvas, 90x200cm p48 - looking north towards Winder Fell from the embankment on a summer evening p49 - looking east towards Boar Fell from the embankment on a summer evening







WALKING THROUGH THE LANDSCAPE

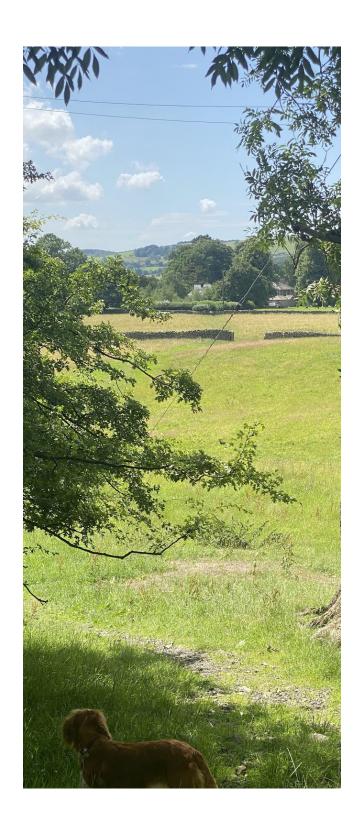
Brigflatts is one mile east of Sedbergh, an old market town just inside the Yorkshire Dales and nested between fells. Looking out from the lane, there are grass covered, smoothed hills rising above the horizon in every direction. There is an intimacy in the landscape, a feeling of being within.

A few fields to the east, between Brigflatts and Sedbergh, is an embankment that once carried the tracks for a railway connecting Settle and Carlisle. In use until the 1960s; today it is a public footpath and field for livestock throughout the year. Dotted in the scene are a few figures walking through the fields and along the embankment, referring to the human activity I observed and discussed with my neighbours: "So that's what first used to bring us to Brigflatts. Walking here from Sedbergh" – B.W.

One neighbour included a picture of the embankment in their five photographs of life at Brigflatts. "That's part of our life at Brigflatts, obviously revolving around taking Daisy [their dog] out. And because you can see it from the house and it's like a divider between us and Sedbergh... It makes me feel very happy because it's so close to home. That we've got the lovely scenery." - C.C

p52 - looking east from the embankment p53 - looking west from the embankement towards Brigflatts







WEATHERED HEADSTONES

The contrasting conditions of the two prominent headstones introduces the theme of weathering to the series, which I continue to explore throughout the different scenes.

The wet climate of north-west England produces weathering reactions from all exposed materials. The headstones in the burial ground are a clear example of how local limestone responds to the open air – darkening with time, spotted with lichen and moss. The staggered, non-uniform rhythm of the growth of the burial ground, one head stone at a time, creates an interesting visual timelapse of weathering. One can read the dates and learn for how long each stone has stood, how many cycles of seasons it has witnessed, and how the stone has weathered in response.

The rows of stones sit in a peaceful field. Trees around the perimeter provide shelter from the winds and the rains, and in sunny weather they provide cool shade for visitors. In the summer, the Quakers maintain the field by mowing the grass only along the path. In the spring, daffodils bloom among the headstones. In the autumn, as pictured on the next page, the voluminous grass wilts. The burial ground remains a peaceful refuge throughout.

p56 - staggered rows of headstones seen in various conditions p57 - fragment of weathered headstone







BUILDING STONE

The vernacular buildings are constructed from local stones – walls built from locally sourced limestone and roofs from quarried and cut slate. The buildings are generally composed of a main pitched roof volume with several additions, resulting in a set of slate roofs varying in size and angle. When reflecting on Zumthor's first aspect of atmospheres – the body of architecture – I began to read these overlapping slate roofs as a frame.

"The things that stand out are the slanted slate roofs that at the moment are shiny because they're wet... and they're kind of overlapping each other."

This reflective exercise made me aware of how aspects of the vernacular are experienced – aware of their affective qualities as well as their objective properties.

During this reflection on aspects of atmosphere I also turned my attention to how the walls were experienced: "[T] broughout you have these stone walls that are waist high, even shoulder high at some places. They run past houses or kind of into houses if the house is made of the same material, so there's this connection between them all. Lines that turn into blobs. And they're not overly ornamented."

p60 - overlapping stone buildings and slate roofs
p61 - date stone embedded into a recently finished stone facade of a garden
studio, built with reclaimed stone from old outhouse and stone dug up when
clearing the foundation pit







SQUEAKING GATES

When walking up and down the lane, through the fields, and into neighbours' gardens, I noticed the prevalence of gates. Openings in the stone walls and hedgerows are filled with gates: there are gates to gardens and to driveways, gates between fields along public pathways, gates wide enough for tractors connecting fields, and small gates fitted in gaps in the walls that allow people but not livestock to pass through.

These gates, made either of wood or metal, become touch points when wandering outside. Residents open and close the gates to their properties every day. Walkers push and pull gates to fields. The metal gates conduct the temperature of the climate which can be felt by the palm of your hand. The wooden gates soaking up moisture, a damp grainy surface read by fingertips.

Each gate, connected to a pole or large stone with metal hinges, has its own sound – a unique squeak when moved and a thud when shut. Moving through property boundaries, a staggered song plays.

These elements guide movement and communicate levels of privacy. Closed gates shutting off private residences. Open field gates indicating the path of least residence for livestock and walkers.

p64: (top) metal kissing gate. p64 (bottom) hinges of a wide metal tractor gate p65: layers of boundaries and gates









MAINTAINED LAND

The scene of *Quaker Burial Ground* is woven with lines of hedgerows and stone walls, portioning off fields, gardens, and lining roads. These bordering elements speak to the use of the land, an area used farming livestock and growing hay to feed the animals through the winter months. There is an ongoing use and care for the land. Sheep graze the fields, tractors move feed, cut and roll grass into hay bales, trim the hedges each year. Residents sync to these rhythms, watching the lambs grow in spring, knowing which fields have cows and how recently the hedges were cut.

"The hedges here have been trimmed and tended recently."- P.R

In this scene I painted a stack of black plastic wrapped haybales. This element suggests the human activity of the area and reminds me of my childhood – climbing up and playing on the haybales during long summer days when the plastic would become sticky under the heat. The hedge rows lining the lane were also a part of my playground, which with a smaller body I could climb into openings, find a seat in the branches and turn it into a secret den with my friends.

p68: met with hay bales and sheep when turning into Brigflatts Lane from the main road
p69: leaving Brigflatts lane amongst leafy hedgerows







Analysis of

HOLME FELL

"Our criteria when moving here was stone walls, sheep and hills." - J.C.

In contrast to the luscious greens and clear blue sky, *Holme Fell* presents Brigflatts after the vibrance of summer has passed under the clouds of a late autumn day, the once full-bodied trees now bare brown sticks spotted with dark evergreen. The colours of the landscape change dramatically.

Compared to *Quaker Burial Ground*, this scene explores the affective quality of bodies that have wilted and blurred together and depicts the landscape during the time of my research visits. I conducted my first round of experiments and reflections in mid-November and returned for another ten days in late December. Of the 20 days that I was home, there were only two sunny days. The first sunny day in November prompted me to write in my journal: "It's sunny. Blue skies. Dad changes plans to be outside. Mum points out the sun rays. Dad points to the shadows "you know what that means"". 17/11 10:30am. By contrast, the next day, when the clouds

had rolled back in, I wrote "Saturday was grey too... I barely woke up. I yawned all day.". With this scene I aimed to convey the sleepy atmosphere of grey days when the clouds feel low and heavy.

Holme Fell is named after the hill to the south of Brigflatts Lane. The viewer looks up and out to the fell, just as it is experienced with boots on the ground. This frame explores interiority in horizontal sections – the branches of a yew tree extend over the top of the viewer, the fell fills the background extending up to a thick grey sky closing in the land like a snug blanket, and strokes of stone walls weave through the frame enclosing fields and lining the landscape. The repeated stone wall elements are shown within one frame in a range of states and distances, exploring how just a single body varies in condition and affect throughout one location.

Left: Holme Fell, part of Life at Brigflatts series, acrylic on canvas, 90x200cm



THE DALES

The Yorkshire Dales National Park covers a series of valleys (known as dales) and hills. Brigflatts Lane sits in the Rawthey Valley and meets the Rawthey river to the south of the lane.

From Brigflatts Lane there are hills in every direction, giving the impression, as one resident described it, as being "in a bowl". Once I heard this description, I imagined ways of representing this feeling, which is translated in the 200x90 object of attunement – one looks up to the fell just as one would when standing on the lane.

I chose to frame Holme Fell, as it is the background to Brigflatts as you enter the top of the lane. I saw it in the background of my neighbour's 30-year-old family photos and framed in several photographs of the ethnography exercise. When describing the photo of Holme Fell that my father had taken, he hinted towards its affective quality:

"And then there's Holme fell in the background. If it wasn't there it would look very different. The hill there and tree add something."

p74: looking east from Winder Fell towards the western landscape of the Yorkshire Dales National Park p75: looking south from the Quaker Burial Ground, Holme Fell seen behind the Brigflatts Meeting House







UNEARTHING GEOLOGY

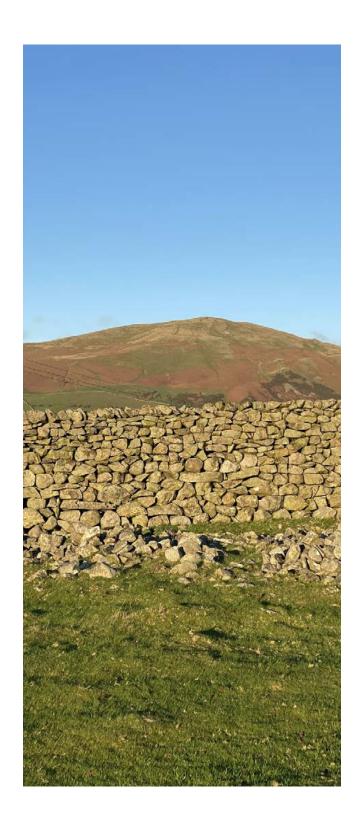
Alfred Wainwright, a famous walker and guidebook writer, described the Howgill Fells as sleepy elephants. These large, grass covered volumes, to the north-west of the Yorkshire Dales, felled and left bare for centuries, shift to different shades of green with each season. I have witnessed this change most of my life. I grew up looking out to Holme Fell from my front door. Until this research, I never wondered what was below the surface of these soft-looking sleepy elephants. I have never read the land as rocky or mountainous. Never considered myself to have come from a land of stone. It is not dusty, sandy, or rocky. Stones are found in rivers and in the soil or stacked and slowly covered in moss. They hide away under the wet layer of nature except for the odd patch of rockface that peaks out from under the blanket of earth. Jagged faces of greyish-blue claw out of the grass. Exposed to the rain and cold, the rock turns to scree and tumbles down the hillside.

Once I read it as a rocky landscape, it was hard to ignore the geology of the area. Rivers rush through massive, angular, solid stone passes that reveal faults in the rock bed. Scree falling from summit to ravine interrupt walking trails. There are clues throughout the land readily awaiting an attentive gaze.

p78 - exposed rock along Sedgewick Trail p79 - falling scree near Cautley Spout p80 - looking towards Winder Fell behind a stone wall and scree p81 - the contrasting geology of the Lake District National Park











DRY STONE WALLS

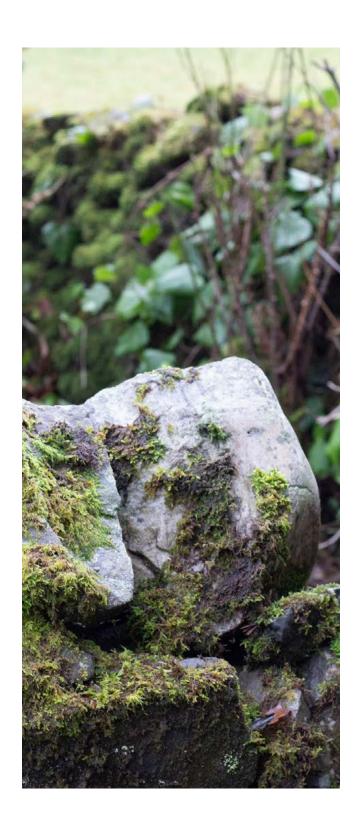
While dry stone walls are seen within all four scenes, they are the main body presented throughout *Holme Fell*. In the foreground the walls are shown in detail, depicting the texture and colour of the stones unearthed from the nearby fields, the dark crevices between them where small rodents hide and roots take hold, and the various plants that grow on and over the walls -- fluffy green splatters of moss, a shiny coat of ivy armour. In the background, the walls are depicted as uneven lines tracing the typology of the land. Though in the distance, the viewer can read the subtle shifts in flow; a crumbling section slowly caving in, an opening for passage to the next field.

This type of boundary is a feature of the landscape. Since the Enclosures Act was passed in 1604, intended to enclose open fields and common land, thousands of miles of stone walls were built across the UK. In this region, where the earth is littered with stones left by glacial deposit many millennia ago, the walls were assembled from stones dug up from the land they border and stacked carefully on top of one another by local hands and hands brought in from further afield.

Reflecting on how the walls are experienced, I wrote in my journal: "the stone walls are interesting because they layer on top of each other from whatever view you're looking at... you're always within".

1. Enclosures Act - Lumen Learning
 p84: driving towards Garsdale, stone walls on a cloudy afternoon
 p85: reference image for stone walls depicted in the foreground







HINTS OF HISTORY

Placed in the centre of the frame is a field of sheep. "For many years we'd look out and see newborn lambs, I could see them from my study" my father recalled when discussing his view of the field next door. "I think of this place as very much rooted in this field and agricultural space."

Having grown up around sheep, they are a normal and familiar feature of the landscape – white dots in the distance, large woolly bodies blocking entrances to fields. I had not known that these sheep and the way of rearing them has remained largely unchanged for six centuries. I learnt this from my mother during her ethnographic exercise. It explains their hardiness to the wet climate.

To the left of the flock of sheep, a bridge blends in with the bare trees surrounding it. The weathered iron matches the reddish-brown of the bark so only its distinct form catches the eye. One neighbour included a picture of this bridge as one of his five "life at Brigflatts" photos.

"When I walk down there and I look at that bridge I have absolute awe that it's in the countryside like this and the Victorians who built it in there, was it 1860? I think fantastic, what aspirations they have"—J.C

p88: the old railway bridge, now closed to public access p89: fields of sheep adjacent to the lane







WET AND WEATHERED

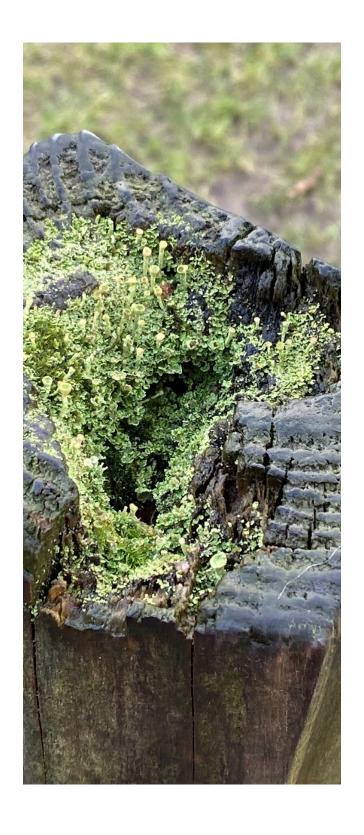
The foreground of *Holme Fell*, a scene on a damp autumnal day under thick clouds, features several damp bodies wet from the past rain shower and weathered from years under the moist air. This weathered state of material bodies, something so known to me after years of living among it, drew in my focussed attention. On closer inspection of the weathered bodies, I came to see patterns, understanding how each material reacted differently, how its form or finish protected or further exposed it to the wet climate.

Wood was either painted or left unfinished, perhaps an acceptance of its fate under the rainclouds. On gate posts, horizontal surfaces support microcosms of life, a hill for moss and lichen to build a castle. The previously clean-cut wood melts away, becoming soggy and loose and fuelling the life growing on top.

Stones become surfaces for moss too, though the larger surface area and vertical shelter from the prevailing winds provides a more suitable home for it to take hold and proliferate. In some cases, moss hints at the age of the wall, larger areas indicating a longer life. In others, moss speaks of the conditions it flourishes under, how much shelter it needs from sun, wind, rain, or how exposed it wishes to be.

p92: moss growing along the top half of a stone wall, through stones providing shelter to the bottom half p93: a microcosm of life atop a wooden gate post







METAL TOUCH POINTS

Continuing with the theme of gates, a slightly greenish wooden gate is front and centre in *Holme Fell*. You might notice that the gate has no handle, which I had planned to add in detail to bring the viewers' attention to that which I had noticed. While this omitted body may be overlooked by viewers, for me it remains a reminder of what I had become attuned to.

As with the description of gates in Quaker Burial Ground, the metal handles are a point of interaction between people and material objects, particularly those along borders and moments of transition between public and private spaces. The environment is mostly made up of earth and stone and vegetation – there is some soft wood, panels and posts and doors and gates, and there is metal too... "The thing that makes the machine work... thin strips of metal everywhere. Really for a function". I concluded while reflecting on Zumthor's second aspect called material assemblies.

On gates, the metal handles are touched – fingers pinch and lift hooks, grab and pull spring loaded latches, hold and unhook secure locks. These interactions range from delicate movements to strength exercises. The tactile experience depends on the climate and the state of the metal body – conducting the heat or lack of it, exposed metal rusting, painted metal chipping.

p96: the omitted metal gate handle, hold the ring and twist p97 (top): painted metal hook, delicately lift and place p97 (bottom): rusted bolt, grab and slide out, align and slide in









BLURRED BOUNDARIES

"Be where your feet are." - a phrase I kept in mind to stay present and notice my embodied experience. A journal entry after a wet morning in the garden: "Damp and deny at my feet. Stones are slippery. My leg muscles tense as I shift weight onto the balls of my feet and faith into the soles of my shoes. I step carefully along slick stone slabs and onto mushy grassy muddy lawn." - journal entry 17/11

My attention shifted to the ground, to the overlapping earth, vegetation, stone bodies. "In November, the plants have lost their plush, vibrant, swelling stems and stretching leaves. It all wilts into a wet mushy damp pile of rusty browns, yellowing leaves, and the evergreens to last through the winter." - journal entry 16/11.

I found that this closer inspection of the world below my feet encapsulated what I had discovered when reflecting on Zumthor's material assemblies. Sharp edges softened. Clean lines blurred as mud and nature creep over and into crevices — a wild land tamed over the centuries, rewilding with every chance. My mother reflected on this dance in her own garden. 'T've been trying to tame some of it just because that's what gardening is, isn't it? Taming the wild. I deliberately leave it wild. There's rabbits and squirrels and all sorts moving in here. I just like that it's untamed in some ways." — L.R

p100-101: when stone assemblies meet the earth







Analysis of

JAN'S VIEW

"My mother goes in every time she comes. And we would take any visitors we have. It was always the focal point of coming over here on one of our walks. So you know it kind of looms large in our perception of the place." – B.W.

Jan's View imagines the view from my neighbour's front door, looking 'up' the lane towards the Meeting House in the distance. While the Meeting House is the only tourist attraction at Brigflatts, it doesn't stand out among the collection of buildings; it doesn't have a strong physical presence compared to the neighbouring buildings (it is shorter than the other white painted building across the lane), nor was it featured in any of the photos during the ethnography exercises. However, when I would ask about the Quaker buildings and community, I found out that two households had first come to Brigflatts to visit the Meeting House and that one neighbour helps clean the building and opens it each day for the public.

I composed this frame with the Meeting House in the middle but in the distance to reflect the central role of the building in Brigflatts history as well as the attention it receives from the residents who pass it each day.

The composition of this scene also centres the lane – the main artery connecting all the properties and pulling off from the main road at the 'end' of the lane. When reflecting on Zumthor's 6th aspect, Between Composure and Seduction, I focussed on the qualities of the lane and the consequent social behaviours 'Thin. One car wide. When you meet a car while walking your dog, the car has to slow down. Hold your dog. Make eye contact and nod your head. Squeeze into bushes. Intimate. Careful. Slow."

While this painting mainly depicts a rainy outdoor scene, it is framed within a doorway contrasting the wet, grey day with the brighter, warmer indoor space. This contrast juxtaposes the two conditions and confronts the viewer with the heightened tension between interior and exterior spaces on dreary days. I contrasted the two to elicit the feeling of resistance to going from inside to outside, of feeling safe within the dry, sheltered space.

Left: Acrylic on Cavnas, 90x120 cm p104: looking 'up the lane' towards the Meeting House from the Farm House p105: looking 'down the lane' between the Meeting House and High Brigflatts







A VERY WET CLIMATE

Of the four paintings in this collection, *Jan's View* feels the most familiar with its grey tones, low clouds blocking the view of Winder Fell, and wet shiny surfaces. When the clouds are low, which is typical from September to April, the sky feels oppressive. And after days of rain showers, it can begin to feel pretty miserable.

"The clouds hide the tops of the fells. We drive into them as we head to the motorway. Soon only road, hedges, and the light grey sky surround us". – journal entry 19/11

This painting depicts several bodies' responses to the wet climate – both materially and behaviorally. Water drips from objects, turns stone surfaces shiny, and pools along the lane. The contrast between inside and outside communicates the resistance to entering the rain, to changing one's own condition when it's oppressive and miserable outside. This is a feeling I am familiar with and one that intrigues me. Growing up in this place means owning several raincoats and leaving your wet, muddy walking boots by the door. It means learning to put on your waterproofs and go outside despite the resistance to doing so. Farmers work the land throughout the year, and livestock were bred to withstand the climate.

p108: video frame of a rain shower p109: rainddrops on my bedroom window







SHELTER

"So, Christmas Day 2015, when it was Storm Desmond, we were staying over in Sedbergh, and the weather was absolutely dreadful, wasn't it? And we went on our guided walk. We had a leader. There was a group of us, and we actually sheltered in the meeting house on Christmas Day 2015, with mince pies and Sherry." — C.C

When it rains, we seek shelter. On rainy days, residents of Brigflatts move from spaces below slate roofs, through protruding porches, to spaces inside curved metal roofs. The cars in this painting remind me of this behaviour, as well as placing the painting in this decade.

This scene also reminds me of a reflection on *The Sound of Space* and *Tension between Interior and Exterior*, two of Peter Zumthor's aspects of Atmosphere.

"The act of opening a door here is interesting because you're not opening it to a lot of traffic outside. You're inside and the outside is muted, and then you open the door, which is louder than the sounds of inside and outside, and you open it up onto muffled sounds. They're loud but muffled. And then you by moving around, make more sound than what you can perceive around you."

p112: open, stone arch entrance to the Quaker Meeting House p113: layers of stone and metal roofs along Brigflatts Lane







STONE SURFACES

During my visits home for this research project, I felt like I was looking with a different pair of eyes. Coming with the intention to understand what gave this place its character, where its sense of place came from, I saw bodies for their affective qualities rather than their function.

One example that stands out is the slate roofscape, which I described as "overlapping shining slate roofs," as that was how they were experienced when walking around the lane, each turn shifting the overlap and the way the light reflected from the wet slate tiles.

I became aware of the stone surfaces covering areas that weren't designated as gardens or enclosed as fields. The lane, a smoothed stone aggregate. Steps assembled from flagstones supported by stones beneath, bringing people up hills or down into sunken building entryways.

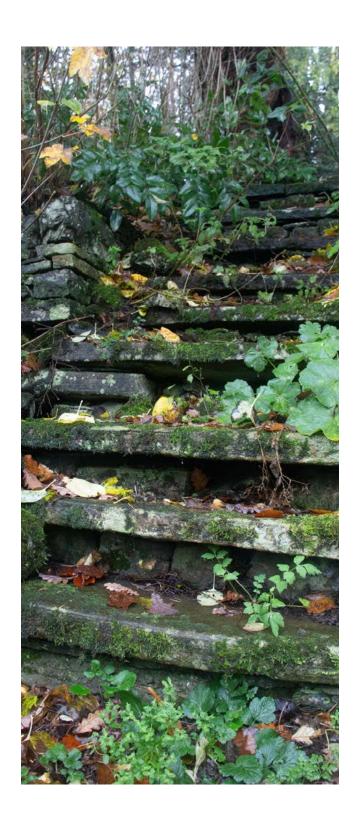
"Straight in front of their kitchen window are stone flags on the ground, stones stacked and cemented into a wall that climes to reach a stone roof — thin, neatly joining slate tiles. From the top, bare tree twigs weave across the fading blue sky. Stacked stones. Stacked stone layers."—journal entry 17/11.

p116: overlapping shiny slate roofs, seen from my garden p117: slate roof and waterproofing details on the Schoolhouse p118: converging stone ground coverings p119: moss covered flagstone steps leading into woodland











MATERIAL REACTIONS

In attuning to the affective bodies of Brigflatts, my attention was drawn to the way materials weather in the climate. I was most aware of these weathering reactions at boundaries between interior and exterior spaces, such as flagstones that remained a light shade of sandy grey if inside and darkened if placed outside. Their colour darkened further if wet, and layers of brown and green built up over the years.

In some cases, there was a gradient in weathering reactions, such as on stone steps under a porch and slight overhanging roof. On the steps furthest from the porch, exposed to more rain than the ones closer and more sheltered by the roof, lichen covered a larger area than the those closest to the porch.

The weathering changes the appearance of the materials, adding texture and variation. It also speaks to changes taking place over time, reacting with each rainfall, building with every year that passes.

This fragment of *Jan's View*, when viewed in isolation from the scene, focuses one's attention on the colours and textures of the flagstones and in itself becomes an atmospheric object of attunement.

p122: contrasting flagstone conditions separated by a doorway p123: gradient of lichen growth on porch steps







PEELING PAINT

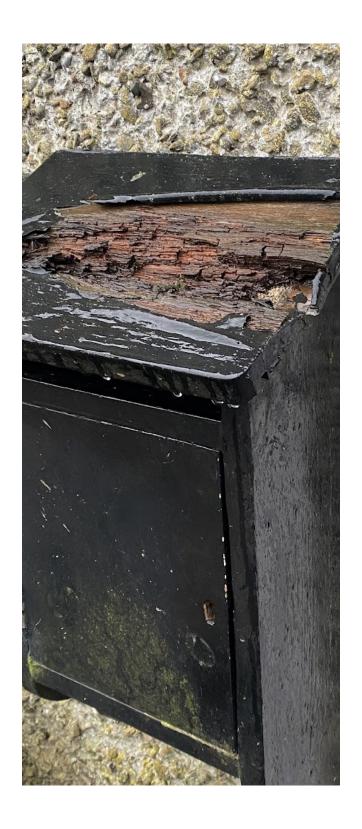
I became aware of the weathering reactions of painted objects – painted stone buildings and painted wooden objects. This letter box caught my attention when I came across it – exemplifying how humans construct objects for the climate, how wood is treated, and how, when the protective layer cracks, the wet environment seeps into the wood and slowly rots it away. At the base of the letter box, moss has begun to grow, clinging to the slippery coat of paint as it clings to the stones in the walls lining the landscape.

Along the lane, only two of the buildings are painted. "One says 1675, that's the Meeting House, and ours says 1742. They've been around a while. They're the same kind of pitched roof, squat, thick walls, and historical." – P.R

These stone buildings should be lime washed in order to be breathable and prevent damp inside, however it wears away in the rain and needs to be replaced every decade or so. I asked my father about his thoughts on the current state of the Meeting House - "The important thing is that is I'm glad it's not pristine. I think it would change the feeling if it was a fresh, bright, even coat of paint. Now it looks a little bit worn and it fits in."

p126: weathered lime wash on Brigflatts Meeting House p127: reference image for Jan's weathered letterbox







ORANGE GLOW

"A visit to the meeting house at dusk. My eyes are adjusted to the grey sky and deep colours of greys and greens, browns and oranges."

– journal entry 16/11.

Jan's View depicts a dark grey scene – grey from the clouds and dark from the time of day. As the sky darkens, small orange squares glow across the landscape, shining out from the stone buildings. As night approaches, these lit up squares become the only light sources as there are no streetlights and the park protects against light pollution by prohibiting excessive outdoor lighting.

"That's the thing I struggled with moving here. Not struggled... noticed... was at night, how pitched back it was."- C.C

The night sky in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is a valued asset.

'It's a good place when it's dark for watching the stars."- J.C

The lack of light pollution brings people in tune with the rhythms of the moon. Compared to nights when there are clouds or no moon and it is pitch black, on full moon evenings the land is lit – the undulations of the land are shaded.

p130: lights on inside High Brigflatts at dusk p131: light inside Brigflatts Meeting House seen from the lane







Analysis of

MORNING LIGHT

"The brightness from the sky, the shadows, the contrast, the fact that light is coming in through the windows and landing on something. Is a very notable change." - Reflection

The last painting in the collection presents the viewer with the experience of standing within one of the thick stone walled houses on the lane. The room is based on a bedroom in the house I grew up in and frames a window that looks out onto the garden and the houses further down the lane.

For this scene I emphasized the low, bright light streaming through the window and casting shadows on the wall and floor. The long shadows are also present in the garden, communicating the low angle of the sun due to the high latitude of Brigflatts.

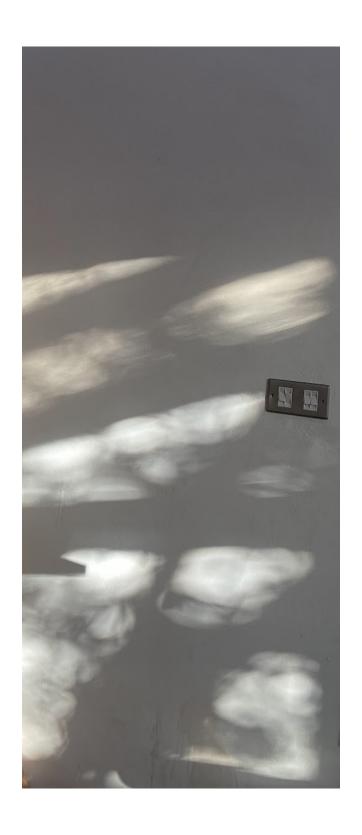
This painting adds another exploration of interiority to the collection. Compared to layers of dry-stone walls or looking outside from within an open doorway, this scene explores how interiority is experienced from within the buildings on Brigflatts Lane. And in contrast to the rainy day of Jan's View, Morning Light represents the effect of a bright day in the winter months, when sunlight penetrates deep into the buildings through the small openings. The scene invites the viewer outside, attracting one's attention to the detailed scene within the window frame.

During the atmosphere exercise, I reflected on Zumthor's third aspect – *The Temperature of Space*.

"The rooms don't necessarily feel warm, but they feel like an enclosure, so warm in that sense. It depends how it is responding to the outside. How much glass? Is it facing the wind? Is it facing a stone wall? The amount of light defines the temperature of the space".

Left: Morning Light, Acrylic on Canvas, 90x210cm p134: Long shadows in a nearby field, November 24th 2023 at 14:20 p135. Low light through the trees cast on the kitchen room wall. November 24th 2023 at 14:00







FRAGMENTS OF THE VERNACULAR

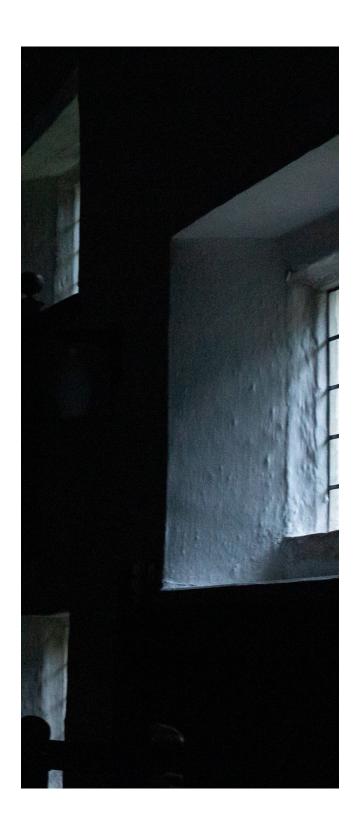
My reflections of Zumthor's first aspect of atmosphere, The Body of Architecture, focused primarily on the contrast of the 'caves' and the 'prairies'. "The caves are our thick stone buildings. The prairie is not flat or expansive but twisty and knotted, unable to follow a single line uninterrupted."

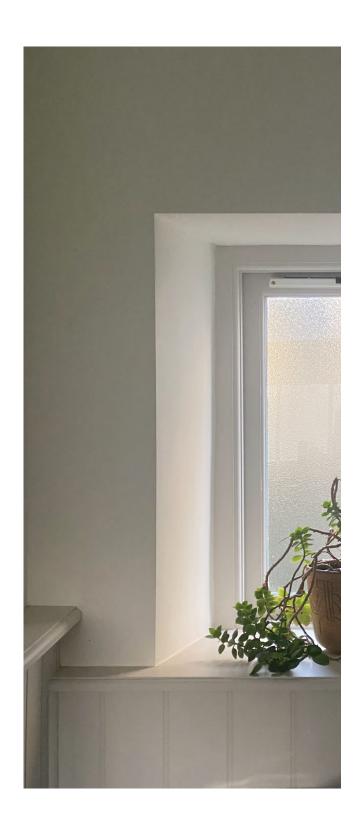
Depicted from within one of the 'caves', I brought together curated elements of the vernacular architecture that are a result of constructing houses out of "these really thick stone walls... as wide as my armpit to my palm — so wide I can hug them."

I grew up in a house with no straight lines. The seams between walls wave and there isn't a single horizontal edge along the ceiling or floor. The windows in these thick stone walls sit within deep angled reveals. On bright days the reveals transform into lightboxes - wide, plastered-stone frames curving around delicate, painted-wooden window frames.

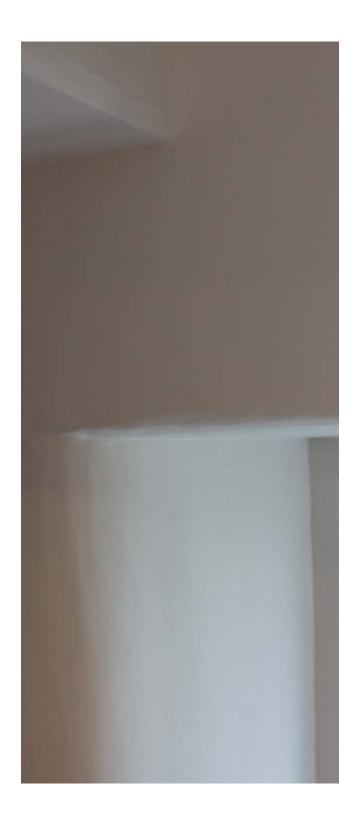
Later additions to these stone houses contrast to the older spaces with their straight edges and orthogonal lines.

p139: window reveals inside the Brigflatts Quaker Meeting House p139: diffused light through a bathroom window p140& 141: wavy edges and gently curved surfaces inside my home











GROUND CONDITIONS

The size of these paintings was chosen so that they would extend above and below the viewer, giving a sense of space and grounding them to the place they were confronted with. In this interior scene, I wanted to depict two ground conditions – floorboards and wool carpets. While not all the homes that I visited during my ethnographic exercises had carpets made of wool, it was important to me to reference this material to show the connection between place and building materials – in this case, the sheep and their wool. In order to show both conditions, I used the flexibility that the medium offered and composed a scene with a wool rug laid on wooden floorboards.

The floorboards are modelled on the floorboards found in my attic, and my memory of the floorboards in my childhood room before they were carpeted over – wide planks with gaps sometimes large enough to lose pencils through and notches big enough to stick your toe in.

The wood in this scene, from the floorboards to the skirting boards, thin window frames to thick ceiling beams, reminds me of how I reflected upon the use of wood during my reflection of Zumthor's aspect of Atmosphere Material Assemblies. 'Panelling, furniture, doors, things that you move through, that you touch, that adds and supports functional use of the space.'

p144: wool carpet p145: worn floor boards







NOTCHED BEAMS

After my ethnographic exercise with my mother, I began to pay closer attention to the construction elements throughout our house. "Indoor details given attention after mum's exercise.: ship beams, thick walls, tapered stone walls, old staircase, limestone wash, window size, stone roof, natural features, gates., metal touches." – journal entry 19/11

This scene is modelled on my house as I had the best knowledge of its characteristics and could easily access various elements in order to study them in detail and paint them with a level of detail to convey additional information.

The wooden beam in the top left of *Morning Light* is painted with enough detail to show its markings and unusual notches. The beams throughout this house show signs of a previous use, and in fact were once ship beams.

The sharp contrast between the dark brown surfaces of the wood and lighter surfaces of the painted walls and ceilings highlights the uneven seams shown in the rest of the painting.

p148: wooden doorway at High Brigflatts - beam, frame, door p149: signs of previous use on sturctural beam at High Brigflatts







VIEWS OUTSIDE

While the view of our garden is one that I'm very familiar with, I was able to learn about my father's impression of it during my ethnography exercise with him. "This is a feeling of the enclosure, which I think is very nice... There are these solid dry-stone walls that border the property on most sides... It feels old and established and solid."

His feelings of an enclosed garden were echoed by other neighbours, who value having a private space looking out onto fields but separated by stone walls to give some privacy while not blocking the view.

"There's just a feeling that things have been here for a long time. And this is a view that is essentially unchanged from when we moved here."

The cottages in this frame are heritage listed, as are the other Quaker properties dotting the lane. Their heritage status and the protection of "character" by the national park means that few changes are allowed. The small windows indicate their age, which predates the Meeting House built in 1685 by several decades.

p152: view lookinh south from the porch on High Brigflatts p153: north facade of grade 2 listed building, Low Brigflatts





REFLECTIONS

ATTUNING TO FAMILIAR PLACES

This research responds to Alberto Perez-Gomez's call for an attuned architecture by developing methods for attuning to a location and its inhabitants. Through the case study of Brigflatts, I tested research methods drawn from a range of disciplines and developed my own method for making objects of attunement. I conclude my findings in this section: I present a set of guiding principles for how to create and evaluate future methods of attunement and explore their broader application in different environments; I discuss the value of developing empathic imagination; and I explore potential design methods for an attuned architecture.

The case study grounded this project to a real location, revealing the importance of locality when discussing atmospheres and attunement in architecture. The rural location of Brigflatts starts off this research in a location where the natural environment outweighs the

built environment in area and impact. This characteristic should be mentioned, as the researched methods may respond differently to a more urban environment given the differences in sensory inputs, aspects of atmosphere, and proximity, diversity, and quantity of residents. So too may they respond differently to less familiar places.

The importance of locality is embodied in the final output of the case study – the four large-format paintings in the series *Life at Brigflatts*. The medium and size of these objects gave space and attention to the range of natural and man-made bodies affecting the local atmosphere. When displayed, they supported an interaction with the object and an experience the place depicted. As such, the paintings serve as the conclusion of my attunement to Brigflatts, and the process of making them presents a new method for further attuning to a place and expressing this attunement for others to engage with.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR METHODS OF ATTUNEMENT

The qualities that I found most productive in the tested research methods are summarized as six guiding principles for methods of attunement. While these findings come from my research at Brigflatts, a rural and familiar setting, I believe they apply equally well to other settings, such as an urban or unfamiliar setting. Following these principles, researchers can gain an awareness of the affective qualities of place through an embodied experience and directed

attention, a focus on the local bodies and on-going dynamics, and an engagement in reflective and productive activities. Just as I adapted methods to my case study, I advise researchers to tailor theirs by taking into account necessary safety precautions for exploring unfamiliar places, the quantity, proximity, and culture of inhabitants, and how comfortable they are with different media.

1. EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

If possible, methods of attunement should be done on-site so as to give the researcher an embodied experience of the place and have in-person connections with inhabitants. A researcher can physically interact with the sensory world and experience emotional responses to it. They can reflect on their memory of the ineffable qualities of a place and refer to embodied memories when making objects of attunement. (If unable to visit, I suggest research methods focus on the embodied experiences of inhabitants).

2. DIRECT ATTENTION

On-site exercises that direct attention to a single aspect of a place or experience are effective in uncovering affective qualities. Focussing on one part of the whole, such as one sense or feeling, a single material, or one aspect of atmosphere, brings attention to the richness within the entire experience of place. Exploring isolated qualities enables a deeper study and awareness of the interaction between bodies and can bring to surface previously unconscious awareness of a place.

3. EMPHASIS ON LOCALITY

Methods should focus on connecting with local people in order to understand the collective experience of a location's inhabitants and what aspects of the place they find meaningful. Similarly, there should be a focus on local bodies, which will uncover aspects of the local atmosphere that they generate. This emphasis on locality should also be present in any objects of attunement, providing a clear connection to the location and translating an embodied experience.

4. AWARENESS OF DYNAMICS

When attuning to the experience of a place, researchers should use methods that take into account the dynamics of the setting. Places are filled with ever-changing processes, continually generating the sense of place. Therefore, methods should not aim to "freeze" or "capture" the experience of place but attune to the interactions and reactions of local bodies. This awareness of dynamics helps to attune to and define the terms of the local atmosphere.

5. REFLECTIVE

Attuning to a place occurs before, during, and after a site visit. Our anticipation of a place reveals affective qualities, as does our experience on-site, and our insights on return. Documenting these thoughts and feelings and reflecting on what causes them facilitates with attunement. Reflections of our on-site experience connects one with their embodied experience and reveal aspects of the place that weren't adequately explored.

6. PRODUCTIVE

Each exercise of attuning to people and place should result in some form of research material, whether written or recorded notes, gathered or created objects, or any form of expressive act. These materials aid the process of attuning to place by providing something external to refer to, reflect on, and discuss with other people. If shown to the inhabitants, they aid in collaborative discussions and uncover new details.

THE VALUE OF EMPATHIC IMAGINATION

This research began by looking at two suggested ways of returning meaning to architecture. Juhani Pallasmaa proposed empathic imagination as a way to centre the human experience when designing new spaces. While the aim of this paper was to develop methods of attunement, the outcome of attuning to Brigflatts was an empathic imagination that "evokes embodied and emotive experiences, qualities, and moods."

The research methods explored the embodied experience of place through on-site exercises and the expression of it through objects of attunement. The reflection on Zumthor's aspects of atmosphere helped uncover and define affective qualities of place, and by discussing Brigflatts with neighbours and keeping a journal I attuned to the moods of different spaces throughout the area. The emotive experience of Brigflatts was translated by the paintings, which depict local materials in various states, objects inferring human activity, and a range of climate conditions, together conveying the local atmospheres.

By attuning to and expressing these aspects of Brigflatts, I acquired the ability to imagine the place empathically. I am aware of the dynamics and interactions of the place: how materials react to the climate, how people interact with structures and domestic items, how the stone walls generate feelings of intimacy, how the light changes the tension between interior and exterior spaces, and how it feels to walk on the wet flag stones or creaking floorboards or luscious grass. I hope, too, that the paintings are effective in building an empathic imagination for the viewers.

With this ability, one can imagine future scenarios and better foresee how people will interact with new structures, and how those structures will react to the natural environment. The ability to imagine spaces dynamically and through an embodied lens will influence architecture as architects recentre human experience at the heart of design.

DESIGN METHODS FOR AN ATTUNED ARCHITECTURE

Following this research, I will undertake a design project at Brigflatts. The project will explore how my findings can inform a design and achieve an attuned architecture. Having attuned myself to Brigflatts and produced a series of paintings summarising the affective qualities I uncovered, I will refer to these objects to "remain" attuned and use to evaluate if I am taking into account the aspects of the local atmosphere and experiences of the inhabitants. The scenes aid in triggering empathic imagination: when I look at a painting, I question how my design would react in the same

environment, how it would add to or change the existing local atmosphere.

The analysis of these artworks then becomes a kind of design toolkit, outlining which aspects of Brigflatts to respond to and which materials to build with. I imagine a similar product could be used in future design projects as a reference and reminder to the architects for what to attune their buildings to. It does not suggest how to do so, as that remains for the architect to determine.

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