

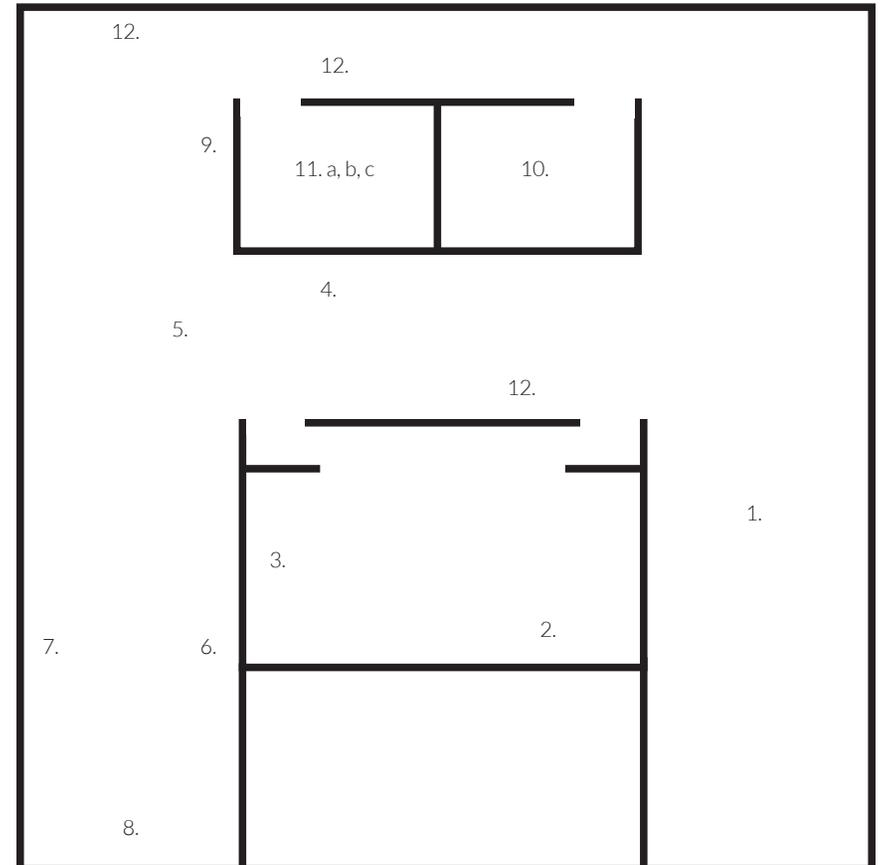
living images
Charlotte Moth
September 26 – December 20, 2015



Charlotte Moth's practice is deeply indebted to history and its cross-references. In the context of this exhibition, British artist Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) is of particular resonance. Moth is one of very few outside eyes to have ever been invited into Hepworth's private sculpture studio, 'Palais de danse', in St. Ives on the Cornish coast of England. One of the rooms Moth photographed was the main hall of the 'Palais de danse' studio, now replete with empty plinths on caster wheels. Previously, when Hepworth completed a sculpture, she would store it on one of these moveable plinths that could easily be rearranged to make room for the next completed work. Reorienting the sculptures on their itinerant bases, Hepworth choreographed them like bodies in space.

The continual movement of these objects was once referred to in an exchange between Barbara Hepworth and fellow artist Reg Butler in a programme run by the BBC called *Artists on Art*. Their conversation was focused on how a sculpture is to be experienced. Between them, it was agreed that a sculpture was to be moved around, continuously rearranged and changed within the context of its space, its viewpoint never singular. When it came to sculpture, both artists were "trying to make a living image"; that is, something that wasn't a substitute for something else that existed in the world, but rather an image or an object that lived autonomously. As Hepworth describes to Butler, "I had a curious image of your sculptures stalking in [my] garden, walking, dancing round solid lumps of rock in my yard, all waiting to be carved." She continues, "There's no limit to the materials one can use, but the great thing is to make this live image."¹

The exhibition *living images* is similar in its open proposition to materials, where research, sculptures, photographs, and film provisionally coalesce. Taking on both the role of researcher, as well as documentarian, Moth's practice involves quiet discernments of the circumstances of her surroundings. Works cross-reference spaces and people that are seemingly remote; Barbara Hepworth and her 'Palais de danse'; Moth's own Paris studio and living space; Banff skies; Patricia Lake, Alberta; poet Joshua Edwards; Marfa, Texas; Rathaus, Marl; artist Naum Gabo, among others. These references span varying temporalities, and in that way each work becomes a proposition for the next. A black and white image of a hand balancing an object is rendered in bronze, and then again in telecined 16mm film; a familiar sky becomes a backdrop thrice-over; vitrines in the Tate Britain archives in London have their composites in Calgary; fragments of an essay are now an installation;



to build an aircraft carrier from pykrete, a substance made entirely from ice and wood pulp. A prototype of this iceberg ship was made in Jasper, Alberta on Patricia Lake, only to be abandoned in 1943. The voiceover script includes fragments of email conversations between Moth and others, poems by Joshua Edwards, an exhibition leaflet from the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl 1978, and history books on Marl, among excerpts. The still images include photographs from the *Travelogue*, and snapshots of a project called Twin Beaches (2013) by Winnipeg-based architect Rebecca Loewen. (Twin Beaches is a house built on shifting foundations on the shore of Lake Manitoba, its design ostensibly giving the house with a quality of flotation.) The entirety of *Story of a different thought* glides above empty rooms and public spaces, down darkened hallways, across oceans, and to other towns. The image frame smoothly manoeuvres over and through the architecture, panning without footsteps, looking without blinking. Accompanying the film are a series of five screenprinted mindmaps, traces of reverberation and of research, as well as two sculptures which are studies in flotation and suspension.

12. *living images*, 2015

Five bronze casts, glass, plastic, paper

Co-commissioned by Esker Foundation and The Banff Centre

This work was created with the support of a Paul D. Fleck Fellowship residency at The Banff Centre

I am five years old. I find myself on my own, standing in front of the wooden desk in the front room of my family home. My chin can rest on the tabletop, which gives my eyes the opportunity to roam over its many trinkets and curious objects. I know I am not allowed to touch anything – must not – but the objects are so inviting. A china bell asks to be rung. A heavy metal ashtray with an engraved surface feels rough and cold when your finger runs over it. A penholder wobbles when pushed, but always returns to its upright position. To the back of the desk, a glass dome is in pride of place. Inside is a stuffed red squirrel, sitting upright, nut in clasped paws, in an arranged scene of dried flowers and grass. Its eyes are dark and beady. I cannot do anything but stare; it is so still and yet seems like it could move at any moment. What happens if by chance I took the glass dome off, and stroked its head? Perhaps it would come back to life? I do it, and one of the ears fall off. I am disappointed, put the dome back on, and walk away.

The artist would like to thank Karen and Don Begg at Bronzart, Cochrane.

a mirrored surface is reiterated in a maquette; a framed image reflects the spillage of light from a sculpture that was made to be filmed. Markers exist along the way, as new characters that enter stage left disappear until summoned later on.

All this is to say: take stock of the images that float in the periphery of your vision. Allow for the chance to alter the perspective of an object with a new glimpse. Change a filter, swap the frame, let history seep in, cite what is past, and consider deeply the spaces and images among which we live.

In addition to a selection of recent films, photographs, and sculptural works, Esker Foundation is pleased to present a co-commission of new work made in partnership with The Banff Centre, supported by a Paul D. Fleck Fellowship residency.

¹ Broadcast on 26 August 1952 on the BBC Third Programme, *Artists on Art* and was originally published in *Barbara Hepworth: Writing and Conversations*, (2015), Ed. Bowness, Sophie. London: Tate Publishing, 49.

1. *Noting Thoughts*, 2011

Steel, wood, glass, text, colour prints mounted on 3mm aluminum folded sheets, coloured filters

Text (in fragmented form) from Alice D. Peinado's "Continuous Trajectories – Broken Utopias," *Bleekede 2009 / Rochechouart 2011* (2011)

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

Since 1999, Charlotte Moth has worked on the *Travelogue*, an ongoing collection of photographs of architecture, landscapes, decorative elements, spaces, and details that she continually updates. Moth constantly revisits these photographs in making new works or as a way to create relationships or dialogues among places, ideas, and people.

In 2010, Moth was invited to the archives of the Museum Rochechouart (France), where she discovered images taken by the Austrian artist Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971) who lived in Ibiza from 1933-1936. She set out to follow the footsteps of Hausmann on the island, a place he prolifically photographed, particularly its architecture. Moth stated, "To him, creating photographs was more like making an anthropological survey of the island – it wasn't just buildings that he liked; he was also taking pictures of people, landscapes, houses, plants, all this kind of stuff. Perhaps he was looking for an untouched land."

In the tracing of his documentation on Ibiza, and in creating her own photographs of the island, Moth met local anthropologist Alice D. Peinado. Inspired by Hausmann's archives and Moth's *Travelogue*, Peinado wrote a text called "Continuous Trajectories – Broken Utopias," which is included here in fragments and dispersed on the *Noting Thoughts* tables, alongside with images made by Moth. *Noting Thoughts* is an iteration of the *Travelogue* where Moth has created a specific relationship among the acts looking and writing, and the ongoing act of research. This work visualizes research and its complexities; each table is an island, a horizon in the space, that can be read as a narrative, a book, or an image. Or, as Peinado states in a section of her text, these images could be read as "a metaphor for all places, any place."

10. *Story of a different thought*, 2014

16mm footage digitally transferred, 35mm colour scanned negatives, digital photographs, digital steady cam footage

28 minutes

Produced by Die Kunstproduzenten

11a. *Variation 1: Flotation and suspension*, 2014

Wood, Plexiglas, Formica, mirror, metal stand, metal chains

11b. *Variation 2: Flotation and suspension*, 2014

Wood, Plexiglas, Formica, mirror, metal stand, plastic tubes

11c. *Story of a different thought: Mind maps 1 to 5*, 2014

Five screenprints

All courtesy the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

Story of a different thought is a 28-minute film that is the result of extensive research into the history of a building and its multitude viewpoints and connections. The Die Kunstproduzenten initiative approached Moth to make a new body of work that would be shown in three separate locations: De Veeshal in Middleburg, Temporary Gallery in Cologne, and Skulpturmuseum in Marl.

Marl, a former industrial town about an hour and a half outside of Cologne, became the focus for Moth's project, specifically the curious architectural sites of its townhall (rathaus) and museum (skulpturmuseum). The film coalesces many elements in Moth's work: fragments of short texts, essays, poetry, film, and still photographs.

Story of a different thought opens on a bronze statue of a bird by artist Max Ernst called *Habakkuk* (1932), which is situated in a shallow pool in the courtyard of the townhall designed by Johan Hendrik van den Broek and Jacob Berend Bakema. Moth's extensive research into this location found that the building was designed around ideas of flotation and suspension, themes that became consistent throughout the film.

Significantly, this site is the central core to Moth's research for the project. Its affective reverberations outwards could be called 'Figura,' a term described as a mode of establishing meaningful relations among different 'things' and 'events'. Moth traces these meaningful relationships through language: Ernst's sculpture led to Donatello's marble sculpture *Prophet Habakkuk* (1427–36), and a spelling mishap led to Project Habbakuk (1942), a British WWII scheme

famous empty plinth in the Parc des Buttes Chaumont in Paris. Together, these images are motifs for disappearance and monuments to forgetting.

8. *Untitled – Coloured Paper*, 2010

80 colour slides, blue tinted mirror
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

Moth's slide installation *Untitled – Coloured Paper* depicts permutations of coloured rectangular paper methodically placed on a wall. Initially, the slides feature only a few sheets of paper, but as the slides progress, the mass slowly builds to encase almost the entire corner of a wall. Sometimes the additions are obvious, and sometimes you barely notice them at all. The image of the slide projection is reflected in a blue mirror that is affixed perpendicularly on the wall. The bifurcation of the image into seemingly infinite colour fields in both the image and its duplicate reflection are interrupted by the subtle loss or addition of the paper within the space of the frame. This work is a touchpoint to *Noting Thoughts* and its tabletop coloured gels, and is also a test site for colour, similar to *Sculpture made to be filmed*.

9. *Backdrops*, 2015

Mirror, wood table, wheels, aluminum-mounted litho and silkscreen print
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

Backdrops features a small mirrored rolling table that references Barbara Hepworth's moveable plinths in her Palais de danse studio in St. Ives. A photographic backdrop is hung neatly above and behind the table's surface. The backdrop is reminiscent of distant clouds floating in an azure sky, or perhaps of crackled linoleum. This familiar image exists elsewhere in the exhibition: *Inserts* (2015) features familiar photographs of Banff skies that are then overlaid on images of hands holding objects; and in *Filmic Sketches* (2015) Moth captures in 16mm a terrestrial view of the clouds, which references Hepworth's tendency to stage and document her sculptures in front of backdrops of cloudy skies. These cross-references are tangible within the space, and each work is part of a web of itinerant interrelations.

2. *Inserts*, 2015

Four vitrines, wood, book cloth, mirror, plastic, paint, black & white photographs
Co-commissioned by Esker Foundation and The Banff Centre. This work was created with the support of a Paul D. Fleck Fellowship residency at The Banff Centre
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

3. *Filmic Sketches*, 2015

Telecined 16mm film
9 minutes 42 seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

Inserts is an investigation into the understanding of an expanded archive. On the occasion of the large retrospective of Barbara Hepworth's work at the Tate Britain, *Barbara Hepworth: Sculpture for a Modern World* (June 24 – October 25, 2015), Moth was approached to create a project in the Tate Archive Room that incorporated items from the Tate's archives. The Tate Archive room has a peculiar cavernous space with two entrances. The room was intended as a vestibule for displaying research; it was designed almost as a thoroughfare for viewing with a series of wall-mounted vitrines. Through her extensive research into these archives, Moth discovered and became interested in Hepworth's specific use of photography in staging the documentation of her sculptures; this was the impetus for the development of this project.

The final outcome in the Tate project are ten inserts that slotted into these permanent display vitrines. Each vitrine speaks to a different 'thought constellation' in Moth's research. The vitrines are a way to organise research around themes, but to also investigate the way in which images or documentation of artworks are choreographed or arranged within various environments such as the studio, the gallery, or the garden. In each vitrine is a constellation of documents and images on small shelves displaying ephemera and photographs dating from 1930 to 1960s, with works by other artists involved and connected to Hepworth, such as Ben Nicholson, Simon Nicholson, Naum Gabo, and Alexander Calder, among others.

Importantly, this work exists in two distinct places at the same time: the London iteration of *Inserts* has its composite here in Calgary, with an alteration: only four out of the ten vitrines are in the exhibition *living images*. The layouts and design of these vitrines are identical to their London counterparts.

At Esker, Vitrine 1: *Image*, features a blue mirrored backing; Vitrine 2: *Light*, a green bookbinding cloth; Vitrine 5: *Studio*, a birch wood backing; and Vitrine 8: *Imagination*, a painted blue background. In Calgary, Moth's visual research has continued in new trajectories, and here newly made images replace ephemera and archival material. The photographs at Esker are shot from several locations: Hepworth's Palais de Danse and Trewyn studios in St. Ives; Truro townhall, UK; the coastline of Cornwall, Rosewall; Moth's own Paris apartment; and Banff, Alberta.

Shown alongside *Inserts* is a new film by Moth called *Filmic Sketches*. The film plucks visual symbolism directly from the images in the *Inserts*, but also simultaneously from elsewhere in the exhibition *living images*. The cloudy background in the film appears again in the work *Backdrops*; a small hand holding a wax paper straw is also rendered elsewhere in bronze, which, in its materiality, connects to the small bronze Habakuk sculpture in Moth's film *Story of a different thought*. More hands enter the frame of the film and exit into our physical space, each holding, sensing weight, and framing other objects.

4. *To see the things amongst which we live*, 2012

Nine black & white analogue photographs
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris

5. *Sculpture made to be filmed*, 2012

Six wooden plywood light boxes, 286 coloured bulbs and controller
Courtesy of the artist and Centre national des arts plastiques, France
(FNAC 2013-0101)

Sculpture made to be filmed is a study in light; a recurrent element in Moth's practice. This work has several box frames, each housing a grid of coloured lights. As an exploration of the kinetic potentialities of objects, the lights in each box are programmed by an algorithm to flash on and off in an individual pattern that creates infinite variations of light and colour. Its proximity to, and reflection in, Moth's photographic series *to see the things amongst which we live* is a crucial example of the role of cross-referencing in Moth's practice. The photographs feature the sort of objects that we accumulate and live with, such as souvenirs, objects, and books. These things are found in the interior of an apartment owned by an unnamed writer whose texts are essential references for Moth. The light from *Sculpture made to be filmed* bounces off the glass surface of the black and white photographs; the view of the work as you approach it is never the same at

any one moment. Here again, other works are referenced throughout the exhibition: the light sculpture is a test site for colour similar to the slide projection at the back of the gallery.

6. *Willa Niespodzianka (Villa Surprise)*, 2012

Black & white mounted and framed analogue photograph, windows and light fixtures covered with blue filters
Courtesy of the artist

7. *...this was the plane – the variously large and accentuated, but always exactly determined plane – from which everything would be made...*, 2012

Black & white mounted and framed analogue photograph, windows and light fixtures covered with blue filters
Courtesy of the artist

Willa Niespodzianka (Villa Surprise) and *...this was the plane – the variously large and accentuated, but always exactly determined plane – from which everything would be made...* are a duo of black and white analogue prints that speak to absent forms and their narratives. The first photograph, *Willa Niespodzianka*, features a pluralisation of framing. While on residency in the garden city of Otwock, Poland, Moth photographed a vacant modernist house. Its architect is unknown, but it was most likely constructed by the Jewish intelligentsia before the Second World War. Upon returning to re-document the site less than six months later she found the home had been destroyed.

The project of investigating this modernist house became an act of repatriation. Through the act of photographing the house, and reinstating it back to its original location in Otwock, Moth has ostensibly reversed time. *Willa Niespodzianka (Villa Surprise)* complicates the act of looking from the outside in. The wooden frame of the analogue photograph frames the staged image of the house framed in the forest, which, in turn, frames the original house that is no longer there. The rephotographed image standing in place of the house also conceals what is behind it. Perhaps remnants remain from its destruction, or perhaps there is no trace at all. In this way, the work is both temporal and concrete, an interrupted *mise en abyme*.

The second photograph *...this was the plane – the variously large and accentuated, but always exactly determined plane – from which everything would be made...* is another permeable frame, a photograph that directs the gaze to the