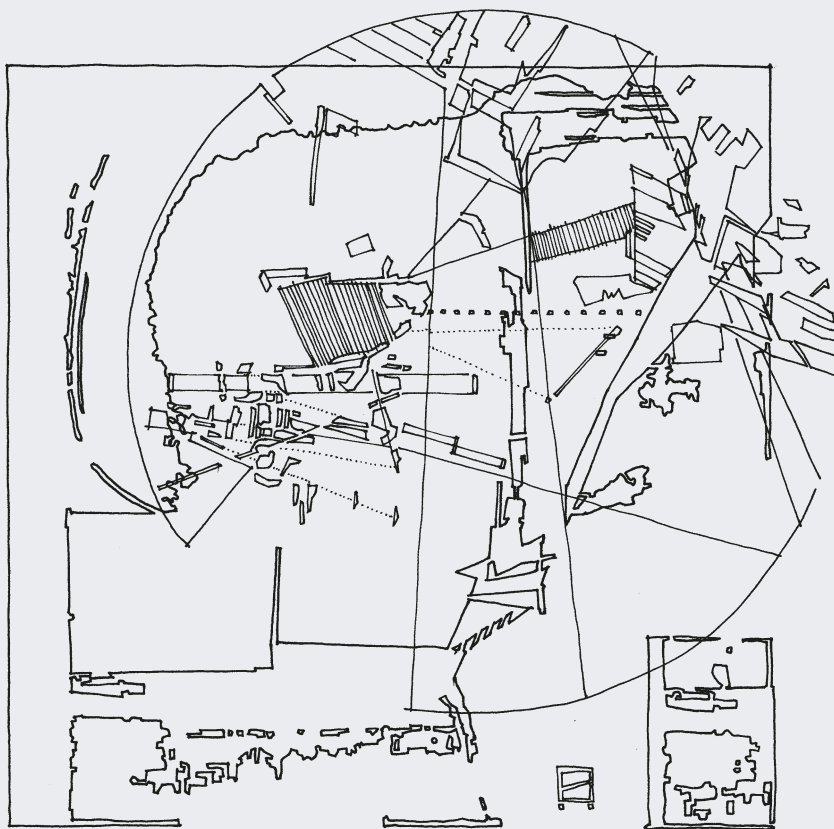


Video Shakkei



by Kreider + O'Leary

Project Details

Practice: Kreider + O’Leary

Designers: Kristen Kreider and James O’Leary

O’Leary and Kreider are partners in the collaborative practice Kreider + O’Leary. The project has joint and equal authorship of the following project elements: performance, video work, installation and book documentation. Academic texts and drawings related to the project are single-authored by O’Leary. Creative writing related to the project is single-authored by Kreider.

Title: Video Shakkei

Output type: Exhibition

Venue: The Centre for Drawing Project Space,
University of the Arts, London, UK

Curator: Avis Newman, Director of the Centre for Drawing

Dates: Performances in Kansai, Japan: 21 June – 7 July 2009;
Installation at the Centre for Drawing Project Space,
University of the Arts, London: 1–31 September 2009;
Exhibition at the Drawing Out Festival at RMIT
University, Melbourne: 6 April – 26 May 2010

Funding: Irish Arts Council Architecture Bursary Award £5,000;
CCW (Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges
of Art) University of the Arts Research Fund £1,500

Budget: £6,500





Statement about the Research Content and Process

Description

***Video Shakkei* is an exhibition documenting a series of performances conducted in the Kansai region of Japan. Drawing from the Japanese spatial practice of *shakkei*, or ‘borrowed landscape’, we visited a number of carefully selected sites—from ancient Shinto spaces of ritual in Ise to the hyper-futuristic Umeda Sky building in Osaka—to perform a sequence of actions or ‘live drawings’ in response to the spatial and material qualities of each location. These actions were recorded from multiple perspectives simultaneously using state-of-the-art video technology and edited together in a series of split-screen video pieces, which are then projected in an exhibition context.**

Questions

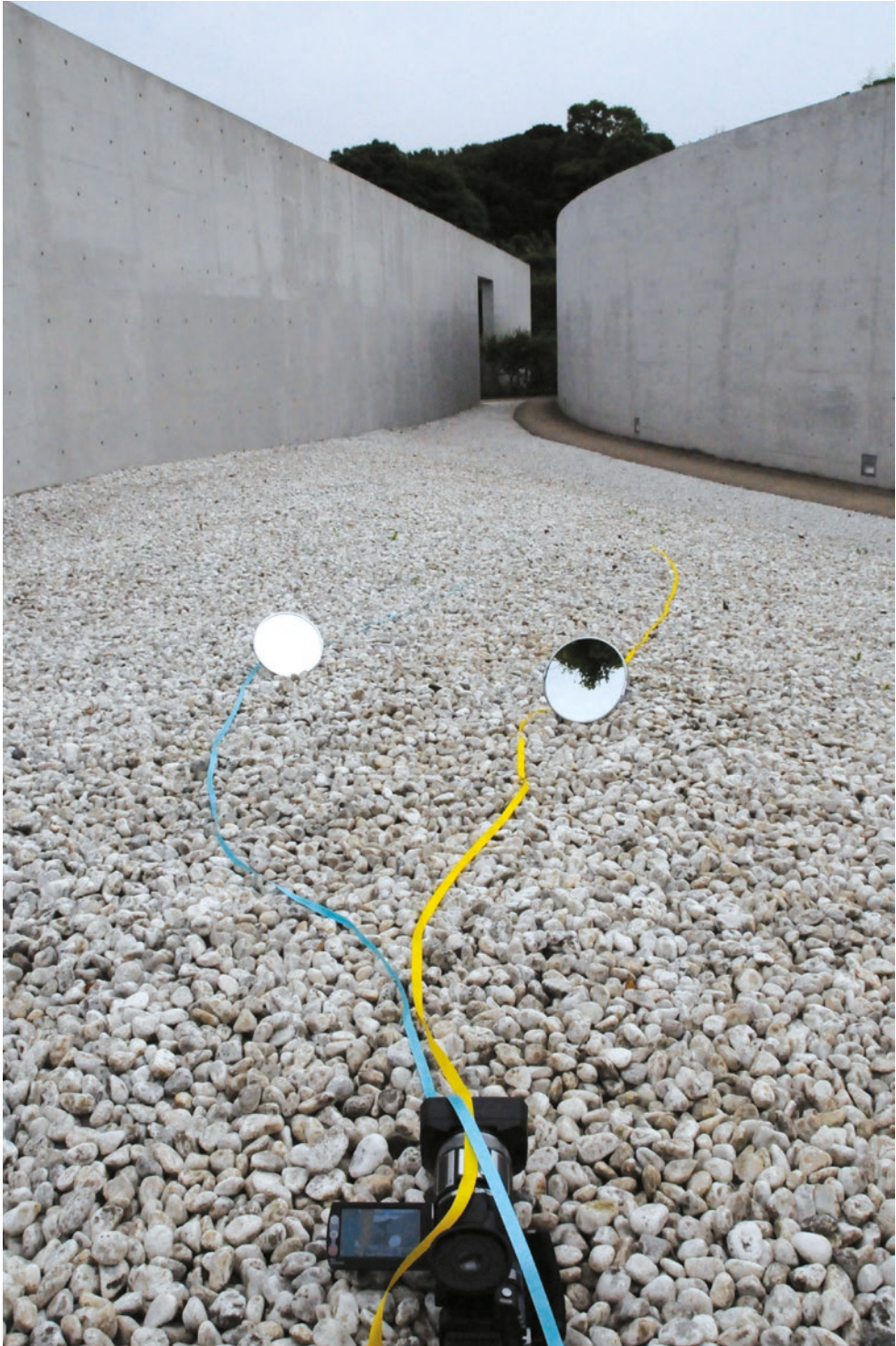
- 1. What can we learn from performance and documentation practice to extend our understandings of place?**
- 2. How can critical and experimental video recordings address gaps in descriptions of sites in conventional architectural drawing production?**
- 3. How can new time-based technology inform contemporary architectural drawing practices?**

Methods

Theoretical and historical research related to concepts and practices of Japanese landscape, followed by interdisciplinary site research and performative work on specific sites. Spatial actions were recorded simultaneously from differing points of view using two hand-held and two miniature high-definition video cameras. These recordings were then edited together as a series of filmic composites modelled on the multi-scaled architectural drawing. Using video technology to ‘capture’ information that otherwise remains beyond the scope of the traditional measured survey drawing, we aimed to enrich and enhance the tools available to architects to understand site and place.

Dissemination

Video Shakkei has been exhibited in London (Sept 2009) and Melbourne (Apr–May 2010). The project has also been the subject of three conference presentations, given in Melbourne (Apr 2010), Salzburg (Nov 2012) and London (Nov 2012).



Introduction

Drawing from the Japanese spatial practice of *shakkei*, or ‘borrowed landscape,’ Kreider + O’Leary visited a number of carefully selected sites – from ancient Shinto spaces of ritual in Ise to the hyper-futuristic Umeda Sky building in Osaka to perform a sequence of actions or ‘live drawings’ in response to the spatial and material qualities of each location. [fig. 1–3]

These actions were recorded from multiple perspectives simultaneously using state-of-the-art video technology, then edited together in a series of split-screen video compositions. [fig. 4] These videos became a central component of an installation work exhibited for one month at The Project Space, Wimbledon College of Art. [fig. 5–7] The result is a hyper-digitised, choreographed and poetically rendered composite image of place relating the landscape or architectural space to performed event, and this to narrative sequence.

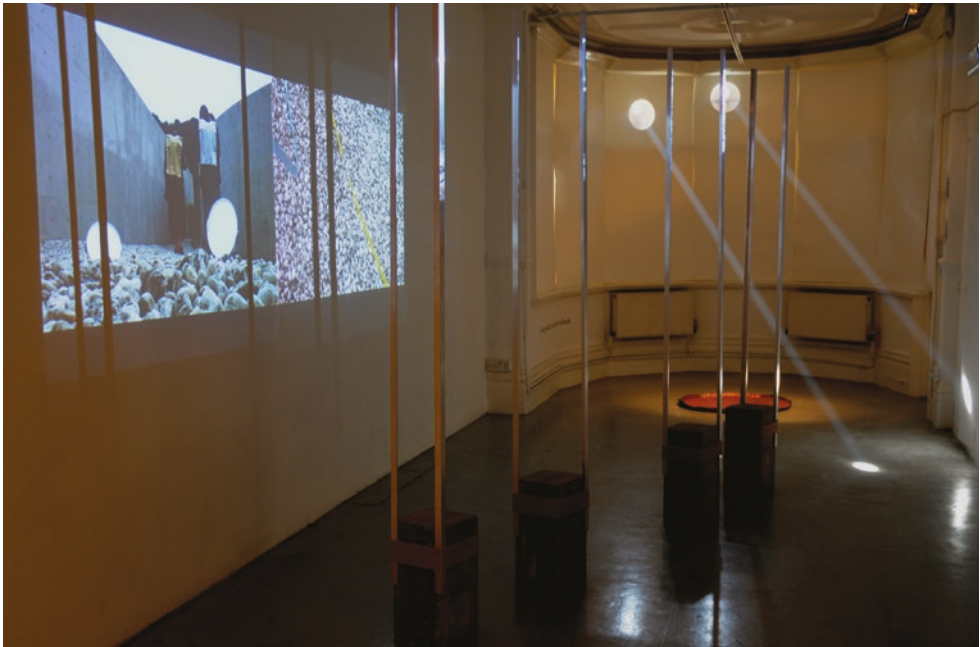
Throughout the project, the research of *Video Shakkei* was performative and film-based. Introducing aspects of performance art practice and its documentation into relation with architectural drawing practices, our aim was to widen the tools available to architects to understand place. Through a durational practice of performance and recording a temporal element is introduced into the work, which reveals a more nuanced understanding of the site and its dynamics. This development of an interdisciplinary method of site analysis has epistemological implications for architecture. Specifically, with its capacity to account for all that lies ‘outside’ the scope of the more conventional site survey, this method leads to the production of a transdisciplinary knowledge and increases understandings of site and place as a basis for architectural proposition.

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Performance still:
Awaji Water Temple,
Awaji Island, Japan

3 (overleaf)
Performance still:
Meoto Iwa, Futami,
Mie, Japan







4
Video still:
Origin building,
Kyoto, Japan

5
Installation views:
Centre for Drawing
Project Space,
London

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this work is to explore the nature of the 'captured' architectural drawing by using a set of drawing performances, collectively entitled *Video Shakkei*, as a case study to explore the relationship between architectural site, performative action and time-based drawing, recorded through the use of digital video technology.

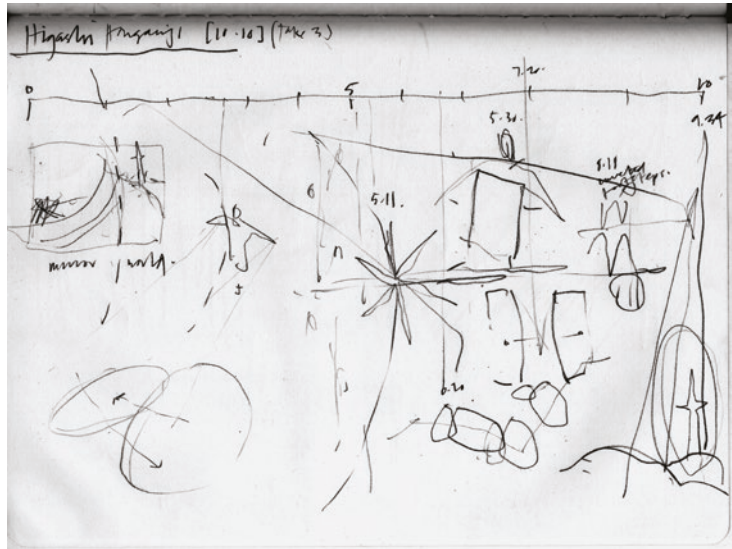
Although quantitative information is commonly recorded in architectural surveys, qualitative information is much less accessible due to its less tangible qualities. This project systematically uses multiple simultaneously recorded digital video images as a surveying tool in architectural production. It aims to add to the broader field of architectural representation by extending the repertoire and potential of the time-based drawing.

Questions

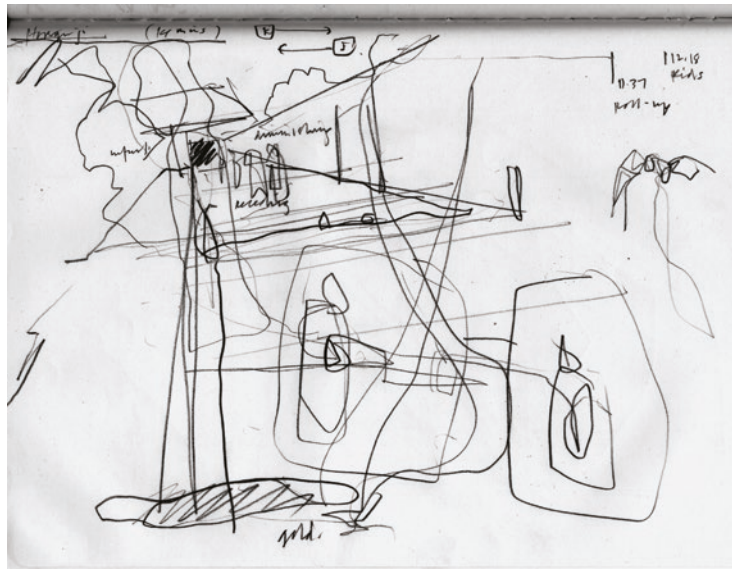
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3. How can new time-based technology inform contemporary architectural drawing practices?







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6 & 7 (previous page)
Installation views:
Centre for Drawing
Project Space, London

8
Site sketch drawing:
Higashi Hongan-ji,
Kyoto, Japan

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Site sketch drawing:
Horyu-ji, Nara, Japan

Context

These investigations are grounded in key thinkers' discussions on: space and place (de Certeau 1984); drawing and site (Evans 1997); notation and representation of event space (Tschumi 1994). Performance art and its documentation (e.g. artist Francis Alys) are displaced into an architectural context, so that site survey information can be enhanced from a time-based and

multi-position perspective. The project extends the scope of architectural representation towards a critical mode of time-based drawing. More broadly, this work operates in the context of increasing globalisation, and the tendency to deny local specificity of place, and where site investigation is becoming increasingly remote and web-assisted.

Methods

Performative site drawing

The range of representation modes the work examines relates to the understanding of sites, in particular how architectural drawings register the qualities, dimensions, and material make-up of the sites under examination, usually with the intention of generating a spatial construct in these locations. Such performative drawings sit on the threshold of registering the historical events of the site and forming a base that provides instructions for new events to occur in space and time. A single document is usually created to provide a kind of map and itinerary.

This act of mapping, registering and drawing the site is an essential activity in any architectural process: a key point of direct contact and physical immersion with the site under investigation. Still, it is often considered merely a preliminary exercise, one that eventually gives way to the 'real' work of architectural design in the studio-based architectural drawing. There is, however, a history of such site surveys and investigative drawings becoming legitimate works of art in their own right, particularly in relation to the European 'Grand Tour' tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries (e.g. Piranesi's four volumes of the *Antichità Romane* series; Ficacci 2005). [fig. 8 & 9]

Counter to contemporary global distancing tendencies, this drawing method positions the architect at the centre of the site, leading the recording work and immersively gaining a thorough understanding of it through an intense period of engagement. Although combining strategies from film, architecture and performance, the work retains the precision, tropes and standards of the traditional architectural drawing: for example, its scaled relationship to site and its composite elements, rendered from differing points of view, which provides a precise and holistic understanding of the three-dimensional make-up of space within the confines of a two-dimensional format. [fig. 10–12]

Video technology

Spatial actions are recorded simultaneously from differing points of view using two hand-held and two miniature high-definition video cameras. These recordings are then edited together as a series of filmic composites modelled on the multi-scaled architectural drawing. The result is not a static artefact abstracting the site into

black-and-white registers of delineation but a record of the full richness of the site in all its idiosyncratic complexity in high definition. Refusing the complete abstraction of architectural projection drawing practices, video documentation privileges a more humanist viewpoint that can, for example, allow a detail to be read in relation to the horizon. [fig. 14]

Using video technology to capture information that otherwise remains beyond the scope of the traditional measured survey drawing, we widen the tools available to architects to understand site and place. [fig. 13 & 15]

Ultimately, *Video Shakkei* aims to elevate the status of the site drawing from a preliminary event in an architectural process to something finished in and of itself, much like Piranesi's *Antichità Romane*, but constructed through current media and technology. There is a conscious intention to explore the limits of contemporary drawing practice, and to redefine architectural drawing through accommodating performance and time-based video practices.



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Site sketch drawing:
Origin building,
Kyoto, Japan



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Site sketch drawing:
Higashi Hongan-ji,
Kyoto, Japan

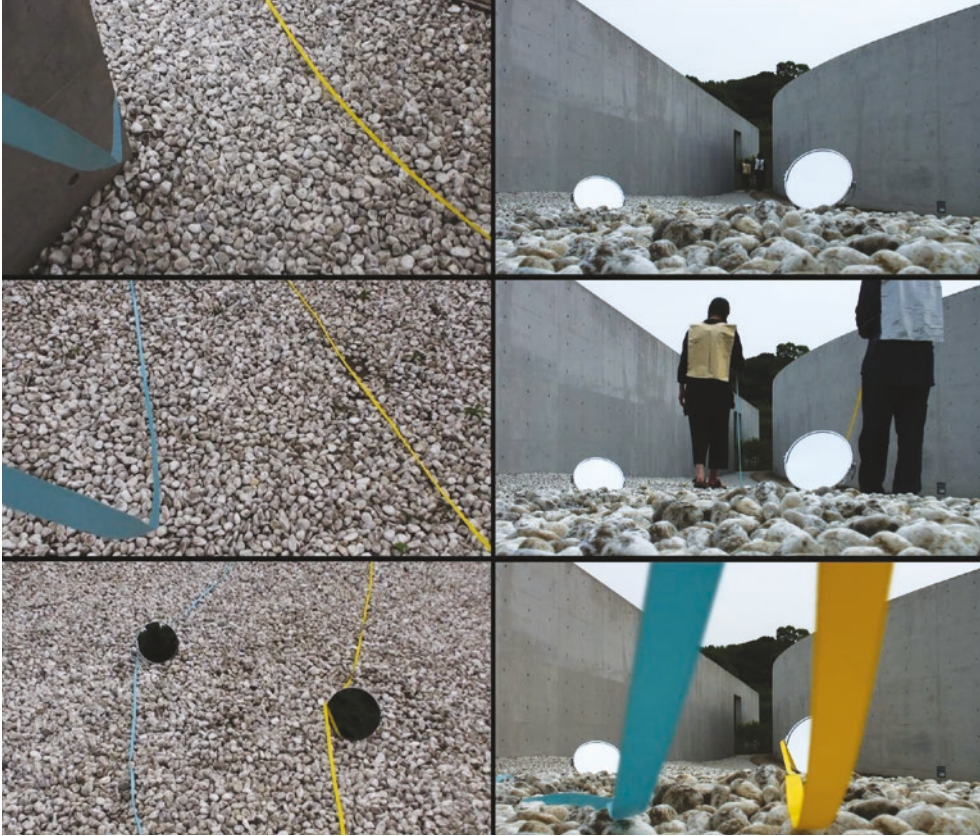


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Site sketch drawing:
Hōryū-ji, Nara, Japan







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13 (*previous page*)
Site photograph:
Sagano Bamboo
Forest, Arashiyama,
Japan

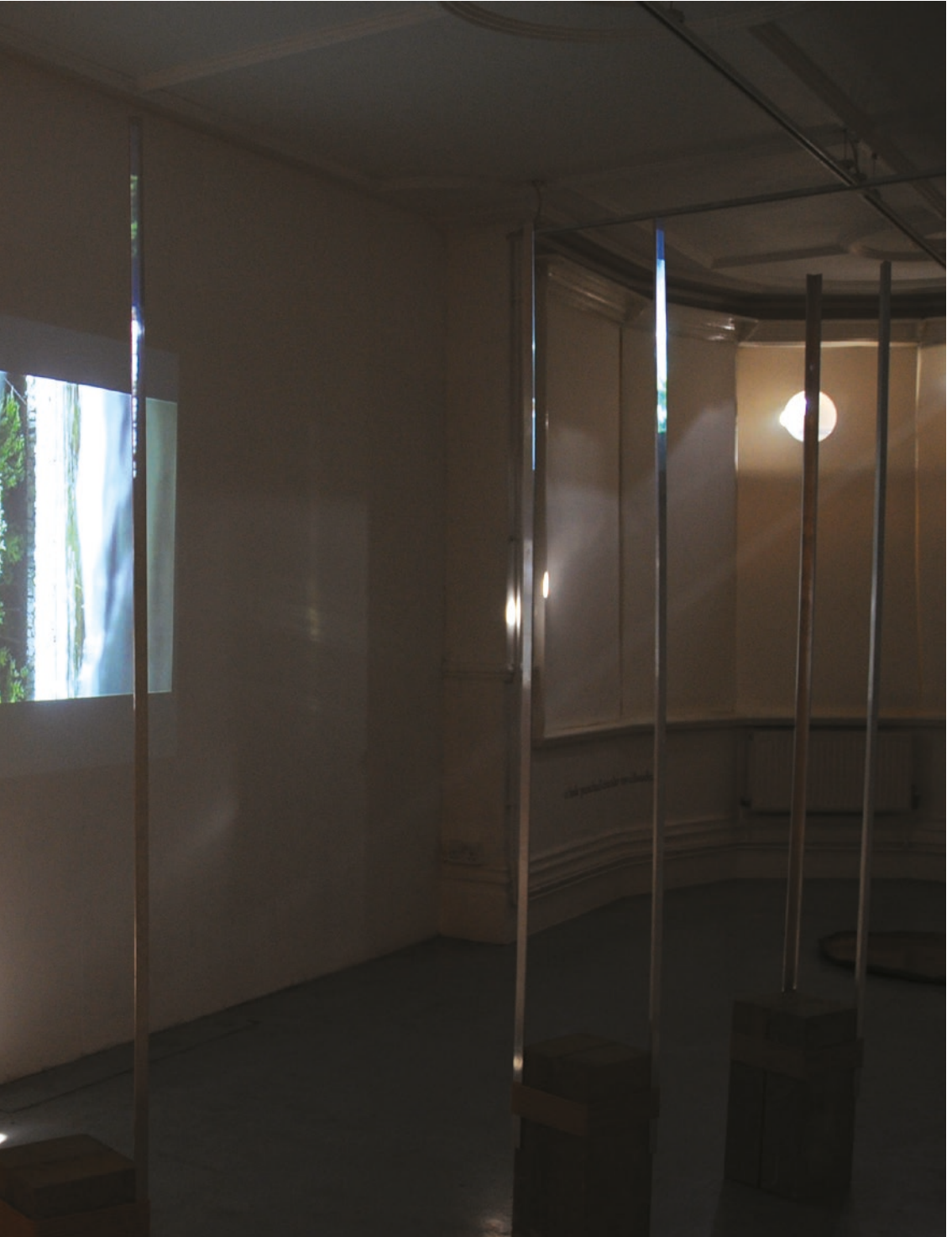
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Video stills: Awaji
Water Temple, Awaji
Island, Japan



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Site photograph:
Naikū, Ise Jingū,
Mie, Japan





Dissemination

Installation

The project was twice exhibited as an installation work. It was installed for one month at the Centre for Drawing Project Space at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts, London (September 2009). Later, it was installed for six weeks at the Drawing Out Festival (curated by Irene Barbaris) at RMIT University, Melbourne (April–May 2010) [fig. 16–19]

Conference presentations

The project has also been the topic of three conference presentations:

‘Video Shakkei – Event space, performance and time-based drawing’ was peer-reviewed and presented at the international, transdisciplinary conference Drawing Out at RMIT University, Melbourne (Apr 2010). It was also published as part of the conference proceedings.

‘Composing “Video Shakkei” – Between video eye and vanishing point’ was peer-reviewed and presented at Performance – Visual Aspects of Performance Practice (3rd Global Conference) in Salzburg, Austria (Nov 2012), and published online as part of the conference proceedings.

‘Transitions from place to space – Architectural drawing at 24 frames per second’ was presented at RIBA Research Matters at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London (Nov 2012).

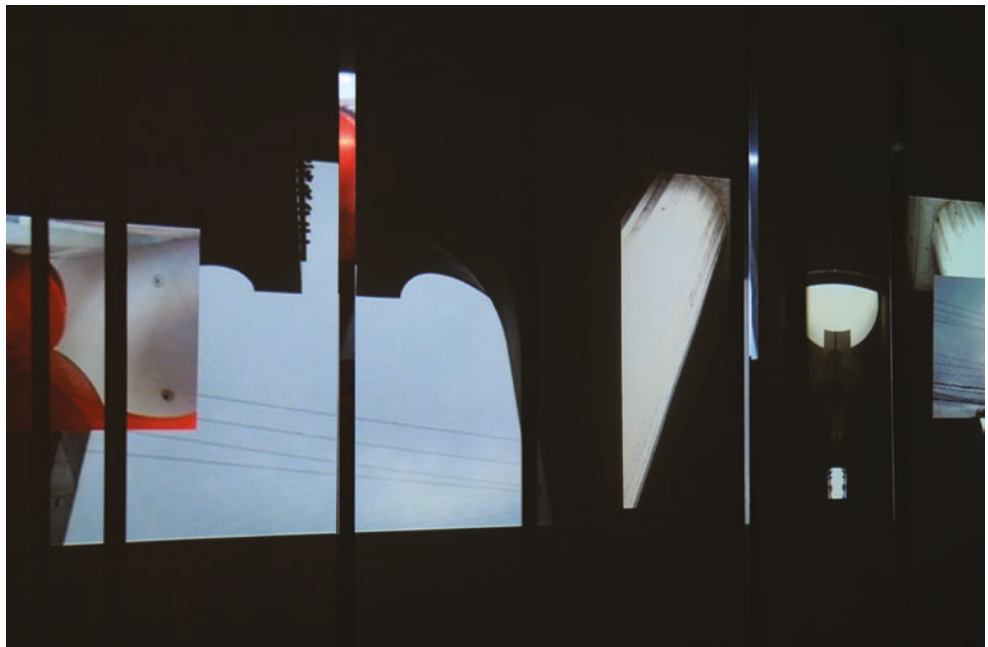
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Installation views:
Centre for Drawing
Project Space, London

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Installation views:
Centre for Drawing
Project Space, London

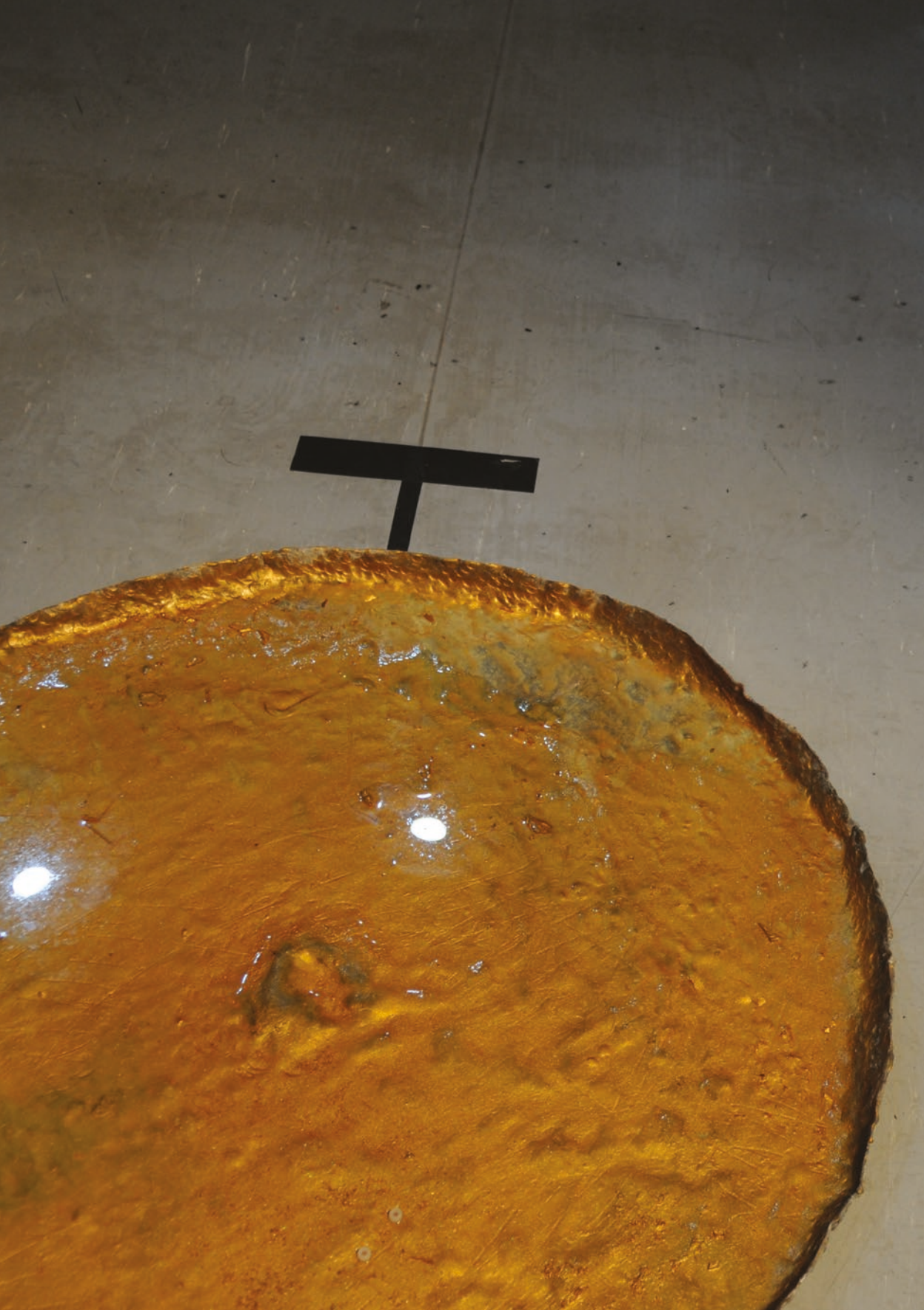
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Installation views:
Centre for Drawing
Project Space, London



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Related publications by the researcher

Conference papers

pp. 32–46

James O’Leary, ‘Video Shakkei–Event space, performance and time-based drawing’.

Presented at Drawing Out Conference, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia (Apr 2010).

pp. 47–56

James O’Leary, ‘Composing “Video Shakkei” –Between video eye and vanishing point’.

Presented at Performance–Visual Aspects of Performance Practice (3rd Global Conference), Salzburg, Austria (Nov 2012). Published online: www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/learypaper.pdf

pp. 57–67

James O’Leary, ‘Transitions from place to space–Architectural drawing at 24 frames per second’.

Presented at RIBA Research Matters, Royal Institute of British Architects, London (Nov 2012).

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