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Behind The Curtain

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Introduction

My practice based research artwork is looking to create a space within hanging cloth, which contains experiences within the folds of the cloth. I am aiming to create a space for my art, my audience and I. In the future capturing the audience's responses to the space will become a part of the research. I want to use my skills as an artist to communicate with and give an experience to a wide variety of people that will enable them to challenge the hegemony of a capitalist, consumer society. As an artist I have not really found a way to do that within the art world and want to look at presenting my own work to my audience in a public space that is not necessarily designated for art. I want to provide space for others and myself in a world where there is freedom of movement, no surveillance and where access is open to all regardless of their wealth or cultural capital. John Ruskin wrote about cloth that it has no matrix or boundaries that it shifts into a myriad of shapes responding to the manipulation of artists, taking on a mysterious life of its own (Constantine & Reuter 1997). It is this fluidity within the nature of cloth that made it practically and theoretically useful for me as a medium to create the type of space I want to explore for this project.

To hang cloth is to attach and suspend it from a solid structure which is supporting the cloth but also allowing it to hang freely and take on its own form as gravity naturally pulls it down and it falls into folds and is free to move with a breeze but also resists the wind (Constantine & Reuter 1997) and collects dust. There are

many different reasons why cloth could be hung or suspended including: for a practical purpose, formal, ceremonial, political or decorative. Tapestries are used for warmth, decoration and concealment. Washing is hung on the line for the practical purpose of drying. Clothes are hung up on a rail or a peg as way to keep the house tidy and the clothes crease free. Flags are flown from poles as symbols of authority and pride. A tent is made from putting cloth over a frame to create a shelter. The most common use of hanging cloth is probably curtains, which are decorative and functional and used in a great many situations such as commercial, theatrical and domestic. The diversity of the use of hanging of cloth is a common human experience for both practical and emotional reasons.

Cloth is a good medium for me to use as I also have an emotional attachment to cloth due to the part it played within my family history. My grandparents were tailors who ran a business from their attic and my mother worked in a textile mill in the Yorkshire mill town that I was raised in. So I have strong childhood memories of having been surrounded by cloth and also an awareness of its economic contribution to the family. I did not think of this before I started using the cloth but it now seems significant. Interestingly Louise Bourgeoisie's parents ran a tapestry restoration business and this has been given as a reason for her working in cloth (Parker 2010). I will return to Bourgeoisie's work below. I do have a history of using cloth in my own artwork on my foundation course in Leeds. I felt I needed to stop using it when I started at the Central School of Art in London in 1974, with its clear distinction between painting and sculpture. Also this was an

era when it was hard to be taken seriously as a female art student; I felt that using non-male art materials would not help (Parker 2010).

I started to use cloth again in my artwork about eighteen months ago, as it is a cheap material that I could use to create large pieces of work, to enable me to use all the available space in my studio. My desire to fill up the space in my studio and take control of it came from an essay that I wrote on the subject of space through which I had become interested in Foucauldian ideas about space and power. The result of this was my installation *Behind the Curtain 2014* (Image 1). This piece of work led me to study the baroque fold through Giles Deleuze's book *The Fold*, as I was interested in the meanings and emotions that were contained within the folds of the piece. I started to look at the piece as a baroque façade as described by Deleuze. If my work was a baroque facade then I felt I could further consider the possibility that the experience of my piece was that of the wall of a monad as a result could go into infinity (Deleuze 2006). I will explore these theories fully in a section on Folds. I want to explore the metaphysical meanings of hanging cloth and the space it seems to represent, within a context of the idea of an emotional history of a universal curtain. Using different human experiences of curtains, in a myriad of situations throughout history, particularly through Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1992).

Modernist architects had tried to banish curtains from their buildings but people could not live without them (Allmer 2008). Curtains thrived in post war era of

everyone striving to live a suburban, consumerist life as depicted by the advertising industry. This lifestyle was questioned by the next generation leading to a counter culture emerging in the 1960's and 1970's (Kozlovsky 2004). It is in this spirit of a counter culture to that of the hegemony of today's consumer society, that I wanted to make a piece of art. It is not a commodity to sell on the art market but reveals instead an unfolding of the possibilities within my work, through academic research and through attempting to communicate and engage with my audience.

For me folded cloth has potent, infinite possibilities as it changes shape constantly with movement. I have found that moving my own pieces of work is problematic. If they are moved the nature is changed forever and cannot be recreated in the same way. To move a work to another space would also change the piece, the work seems to need to be created for the specific space that they are going to be shown in. This flexibility and ambiguity allows the viewer to be immersed in the experience of my artwork and project their own feelings back into the piece. My curtain piece was conceived as a hiding place for people to be concealed from the world and at the same time a place where it is possible to stand in an in-between space. This is a resting place to clear the mind, for people to find their own space, as I have found mine through the creation of the artwork. I have now started to work on a piece of artwork *Baroque Tent 2015* (Image 2) for people to enter and immerse themselves in and then record their experiences through making sound recordings, writing or drawing on paper.

I want to be able to understand this very fluid material better to get into its very nature. In order to do this I want to examine particular elements of the space created by *Behind the Curtain* such as the in-between space, which aroused my interest in curtains initially. I will then go on to look at the folds, mental projection onto the curtain, concealment and its qualities of universality. I want to look at this through the theories of Deleuze, Batchelard and Plato's *Allegory of The Cave*. Whilst examining examples of artwork throughout history in various media and styles that have representations of cloth or contain elements that can be compared to it. Including but not exclusively El Greco, Edward Hopper and Yayoi Kusama. Also three short stories two classics *Sarrasine* by Honore Balzac and *Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Gilman Perkins and a contemporary story *Colours Between the Folds* by Mark Say written after experiencing my artwork. What kind of experiences can be explored in the space *Behind the Curtain*?

The In between space

My desire to fill up space in my studio and take control of it came from research I carried out for an essay that I wrote on the subject of space, which explored Foucault's ideas about space and power (Foucault 1971). Through my research and observations of tourist spaces in London I realised that they were provided for the tourist gaze, described by John Urry (taken from the medical gaze as defined by Foucault) as an experience of culture. Although people could apparently wander

freely, they were highly monitored and controlled and it was clear that only certain types of behavior are acceptable (Urry 2002). This led me to think about public spaces within London and how areas such as the riverside are being privatised and private companies decide on what activities are allowed there. One such example is the *More London* estate on the south bank near Tower Bridge, not allowing certain activities such as cycling along a stretch of the riverside owned by the developers. They use corporate values to run what was formally a community space (More London 2015). This issue is of particular importance to artists as property developers in London are converting former artists studios buildings into apartments for the rich investors who often leave them empty or rent them out (Hill 2015). It seems that the artists who are the people who made London the vibrant, attractive city that it is today are being pushed out through lack of affordable studio and living space. This has also happened in New York where the artist organisation *PAD/D* ended up existing only in the archives of MOMA due to gentrification in the Tomkins Square Park area in New York (Sholette 2011). *Behind the Curtain* creates a space within the city for my art; it is a reaction to the shrinking space of the city and is an inclusive space.

It is not only the artist's space that is being encroached by a capitalist consumer society but also their lifestyle and culture. This was raised in the BBC TV Programme *How to Be a Bohemian with Victoria Coren Mitchell* it was suggested that Bohemian lifestyle had now just become another consumer product that people could buy. No longer just the style of artistic individuals or for those from a

counter culture The writer Will Self interviewed on the Programme considered that bohemian fashion from the street formally created by individuals to be unique and done cheaply, now immediately become a part of mass culture. Corporate brands find ways to commodify street fashions and turn them into consumer products to make money out of them. The Reverend Richard Coles on the same Programme suggested that a lot of people were too involved in working to make more money in order to buy more consumer products. He believed that the true bohemians of our age were the people who were trying to live beyond our consumer society and that he was interested to see where that would go (2015). *Behind the Curtain* causes a division in the space it creates reflecting a division in society between the people who can afford consumer goods and those who cannot and in doing so creates an in-between space.

I am fortunate that my artistic space in London is secure as I rent a studio from the charity Acme who provides affordable studio space for artists (Acme 2015). I also had in mind when using cloth that I would not be creating more paintings on stretched canvas that were building up in my studio. The paintings were taking up storage space and reducing my working space where as cloth can be rolled up and takes up less space. So I destroyed some and put the rest into a loft space that I had built in order to be able to take full advantage of my space. These works of art built up because the stretched canvases had the potential to be consumer objects but I do not sell many of them. In my studio space I created my installation *Behind the Curtain* as an artist doing research, creating space for my work and I outside the

hegemony of capitalism in society and the art world. I did this in the hope of engaging with people to achieve a shared experience between the audience and myself.

In my piece *Behind the Curtain* I was trying to achieve an ambiguity as to whether a person is looking in or looking out of the curtains. Like neighbours during the cold war spying on each other looking out of their windows, whilst at the same time they are being spied upon by others looking in through their windows. What is behind the curtain can be a scary place as it is unknown. This reflects an element of life in the USA during the cold war. This came about due to a government policy to turn veterans into homeowners and in particular to promote a suburban life-style. The theory behind this policy was that if people were homeowners and part of a consumer society they would not become communists. This resulted in rows and rows of houses with large picture windows allowing neighbours to see into each other's home so curtains were essential for privacy (Colomina 2004). In the McCarthy era people were encouraged to spy on each other due to the fear of communism. This made it even more intriguing to know what was going on behind the neighbours curtains; who were they meeting what were they talking about (Colomina 2004).

Humans throughout history have used draping cloth as curtains. Curtains can be used for privacy, concealment, warmth, protection from the glare of the sun and to enhance the appearance of a room. A curtain can be a simple piece of cloth hung up

in a squat or a refugee camp in order to gain privacy and protection. Or they can be an expensive status symbol to buy, made of elaborately draped, pleated, expensive silk. They can be a means of impressing the neighbours and at the same time creating a warm homely environment. To gain a deeper understanding of the issues around domestic curtains I visited MODA (Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture) to look through brochures that had been published on curtains by three USA curtain manufacturers The Kirsch Company, Scranton Lace Company and the Quaker Lace Company from the 1920's and 1930's and *The Curtain Book* a British publication from 1950. These brochures gave advice, exclusively aimed at female housewives, on how to choose curtains for their home and were also marketing tools promoting the products of the manufactures. All were free except *The Curtain Book*, which was for sale for a shilling. In these brochures the subject of curtains was taken very seriously and women were encouraged to see them as fundamental to the look of a room. One flatters its readers by admiring the knowledge of women on the important subject of curtains. Also the transformation could be done at a reasonable cost; choosing the right curtains was more important than the price paid. The curtains were the background and set the stage for the room. This created a scenic effect for the architecture and the furnishings creating a wonderful atmosphere for living and entertaining in (Kirstch 1931).

It was important that the curtains worked smoothly and quietly in order to "glide silently and surely into place "(Kirstch 1931 p. 6). It was even suggested that it was more important to spend money on expensive tracks and pulling mechanisms for

curtains than to have expensive fabric; a good track could out last several pairs of curtains (Kirstch 1931). *The Curtain Book* from 1950 asserts that windows let in light therefore it is the focus of the room so curtains can refresh a room as they radiate into every corner with the light coming in from the window. It was suggested that the contemporary approach was to bring light into the room, like a cinema screen. It was considered essential with picture windows that the curtain pulled right back when open and did not obscure the view therefore letting outside in and to use new contemporary fabrics such as flowers and woven textiles. Further advice was given to match the curtains to another feature in the room such as the colour of cushions or add a personal touch such as putting your name on the curtains. This suggests to me that curtains were considered to be a creative endeavor as if the women were creating an in-between space for themselves. Different curtains needed for different rooms such as restful curtains for a bedroom that blocked out the light (The Rufflette People 1950).

In the 1920's and 1930's there was a move away from the heavy, fussy, ornamental domestic curtains of the Victorian period towards contemporary lighter curtains that were more suited to the modern home, reflecting the new values of the era. The back view of the curtain from the street was also important (Pratt 1925). My artwork *Behind the Curtain* is the view of the back of the curtain, as I wanted to emphasise that this was an interesting view. The *Decorators Methods of Window Curtaining* published by the Quaker Lace Company went even further to say that the look of the whole façade of the building should be considered when choosing

curtains. Nets were the modern way to let in light but defuse it and have privacy at the same time (Pratt 1925).

Modernist architect Le Corbusier did try to eliminate curtains from his buildings though this was not always possible for practical reasons. Though he did do drawings for tapestries, which he saw as modern murals that were not fixed in one location (Moonan 2001). Frank Lloyd Wright used curtains as room dividers (Acalya 2008) but only tolerated them for functional reasons (Maile 2012). Houses were designed in the postwar period with large picture windows to let in as much light as possible and to provide a vista of the outdoors in order to bring the outside living space inside. But the people living in the houses still needed curtains for practical reasons for privacy to shade from the sun and warmth. Also for aesthetic reasons as the interiors were angular with straight lines, which appeared cold, and un-homely. So curtains and soft architecture was used to transform the harshness of modern architecture into a harmonious living space (Maile 2012). Drapes and curtains were seen as a part of aspirational living, allowing all people regardless of social class to feel they had their own piece of the life style of the rich and famous. However this is only an illusion as some curtains have "better cultural capital than others" (Doy 2002 p.12). It is the qualities curtains have to transform a space psychologically and physically into an inbetween space that inspired me to create my piece *Behind the Curtain*.

Behind the Curtain is an immersive installation made from cotton duck hung across a wall in my studio, randomly attached to the wall with staples in an ad hoc manner. This work was made from a piece of canvas, which was the cheapest, thinnest canvas I could get. This was six foot wide, which I thought would be a good height to represent the drop of a curtain for an average full-length window. The length of the cloth was twice the length of the wall I wanted to cover, which again related to the proportions of fabric used for actual curtains. I had to get up a ladder with a big piece of canvas in one hand and a staple gun in the other to attach the first corner and the rest was hanging down to the floor. In doing this I was mimicking the same actions as hanging a curtain in a room. The difference was that there was no rail to attach it to or any curtain rings. The rail and the curtain rings would have dictated how a real curtain would be hung however as this was a work of art I gave myself the freedom to hang it in a random manner. I moved across the wall hanging the canvas at varying heights and intervals creating dips and folds in the cloth. By creating the curtain through this intuitive process I allowed it to drape down the wall creating lyrical folds, creases and pleats. After the creation of the piece I then manipulated some of the folds to sharpen the edges of them and add a planned element to this piece to enhance the effect of the work. This produced the effect of a disheveled poorly hung curtain with rings missing, the light can escape and enter through gaps in the curtains giving the feeling of curtain in a squat, refugee camp or just chaotic family home.

After creating the blank canvas curtain I looked at it for a while and knew that I wanted to add colour to create a more formed complex piece that would contain more possibilities of a curtain in different situations. Though I did intend that the cloth folds would create the form, not the colour. I wanted the colour to have a lightness of touch not solid or heavy so I decided to use spray paint to create this formless colour due to its lucidity and fluidity. I used Liquitex artist's acrylic spray paints that could be sprayed directly onto the unprimed canvas. I chose spray paint as it can cover large areas without brush strokes and prevented placing pressure on the cloth and flattening the folds into pleats. I chose six colours intuitively: Transparent black, Transparent White, Florescent yellow, Florescent red, Brilliant Purple and Cobalt Blue Hue. Though I chose the colours intuitively this intuition was backed up by my own knowledge of colour theories and experience of using colour in my practice. I knew the florescent colours would give the highlights that I wanted of lights reflecting on the back of my curtain at night, the cobalt the dark of the night sky and together with the more muted violet colour would contrast with the florescent colours enhancing their effect. The black and white transparent paints I saw as blending to tools to help create the effect of subtle, strength I was looking for.

I dusted the curtain with the spray paint so as to emphasise the folds and illuminate a mystique inside them containing meaning, emotion and hidden treasure. I intensified the hues within the creases and folds filling the folds with the strong vibrant and some florescent colour. I sprayed the colours more lightly

towards the edges of the folds to make it appear that the colours were seeped out of the edges of the folds (Image 3). I enhanced this effect by blending the edges of the folds with the white paint. So there was a hint of colour on the outside as the light faded into a blandness like that of the curtain lining. I used the translucent black spray to create shadows and highlight small creases that occurred outside the large folds. This gave resonance to these creases and minor folds, which were also interesting and gave an extra layer to the folds in the piece. It created an appearance of dust having collected on the fabric in the forgotten area behind the curtain and also highlighted the more brilliance colours of the folds due to the contrasting grey dullness (Image 4). It was very important for me to know when to stop and to leave sufficient blank space on canvas to get the right balance between the strong colours in the folds and giving them enough of the neutral colour of the natural canvas to resonate against, in order to create a physical and metaphysical space. To obtain an air of majestic grandness and faded glamour, but still maintaining strength of character, a sense of history and tradition and stoic dignity. The fluidity of the piece allows the viewer to transcend time, to regain the childhood experience of being behind the curtain in an in-between space. It is place that we look back on with nostalgia that can also be a trap, a dead-end place that ultimately leads us back to a place where our lives both begin and end (Bachelard 1992). This is like a child who instead of venturing out into the world never leaves their parent's home.

Hanging cloth can make links between art and culture and demolish divisions between life and art. Drapery and hanging cloth is something that has always been used and depicted by artists throughout history, whether this is the drapery on a classical sculpture or the painting of drapery in Renaissance paintings. During most of art history cloth was used only as a material to paint on (Constantine & Reuter 1997). Though it was used consistently in the area of craft such as tapestries. Prominent artists, such as Raphael, often designed tapestries and Goya was the Royal tapestry designer to the Spanish Court (Hughes 2003).

However, outside of the arena of large-scale commissions, crafts using cloth was often considered women's work, such as embroidery or quilting. It was with the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960's and 1970's that cloth started to be used in fine art as a political statement. Feminist artists used cloth as a form of political protest, such as Karen Walker's embroidery sampler saying *wife is a four-letter word* 1978 (Parker 2010). We have now moved onto a stage where cloth is used frequently in contemporary art in an era when lots of different materials are now acceptable for use in fine art. Tracey Emin has used cloth in her work to make feminist statements that are very different from the feminist artists of previous decades. She used cloth as a means of personal expression and revelation in her Appliquéd tent *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995*, 1995. She sewed onto the tent the names of every person she had shared a bed with during her life (Parker 2010). Sam Gilliam was one of the artists in the 1960's who redefined abstract painting by removing the canvas from the stretcher and therefore taking it

away from the easel (Constantine & Reuter 1997). Grayson Perry is a contemporary artist who is using the medium of tapestry for social comment. I will comment on his work below.

Curtains have been used to heighten the dramatic effect in theater and film. Even before the show starts the audience are surrounded by the comfort and decadence of curtains. They anticipate the emotional magic of the opening of the curtains to reveal the illusion behind the curtain created by the stage sets, lighting and the performances of the actors (Doy 2002). The painter Edward Hopper explored this theme in several paintings depicting scenes in theatres before the curtains opened. These paintings typically depict an almost empty theatre where the blank closed curtain dominates the composition (Iverson 2004). In *First Row Orchestra* 1951 (Image 5) a couple in front row of the audience are right up in the corner of the stalls, the solid curtain is confronting them they look unsure and wary of what to expect when the curtains open. They are concentrating on reading the theatre programme as if it will throw them a lifeline to make sense of the experience.

In Hoppers Paintings he used elements such as the projection of light to create interior space to give resonance to fragmented childhood memories (Anfam 2004). *Behind the Curtain* created from my scenario takes the viewer back to the childhood experience of hiding behind the living room curtain, with lights projected onto it from behind maybe by a passing car. The cold, dark glass is to the rear and the warm living room in front with the adults, pretending they can't see

you. You are in a secluded corner of intimacy and solitude safety hidden from view and can withdraw into yourself. The experience of this space can be compared to Bachelard theories of another in-between space corners. There is a feeling of intimacy as you press your face against the softness of the curtain material (Bachelard 1992). Maybe there is a feeling of being about to sneeze due to the dust that has settled on the lining of the curtains. There is always the feeling of safety as at the other side of the curtain is the warmth of the living room and the protective adults. My scenario can be compared to the opening of Balzac's *Sarrasine*, which describes a man behind a curtain at a party. He is hiding from the party and is aware of the dark quiet garden behind him and the lively party in front of the curtains. Hiding behind the curtain allows him to eavesdrop on a conversation, which reveals secrets about the rich family who own the house the party is in. These extracts below, which I will examine, demonstrate the thoughts and experiences of the unnamed character secluded behind a curtain.

"I was buried in one of those profound reveries to which everybody, even a frivolous man, is subject in the midst of the most uproarious festivities. The clock on the Elysee-Bourbon had just struck midnight. Seated in a window recess and concealed behind the undulating folds of a curtain of watered silk, I was able to contemplate at my leisure the garden of the mansion at which I was passing the evening. The trees, being partly covered with snow, were outlined indistinctly against the grayish background formed by a cloudy sky, barely whitened by the moon. Seen through the medium of that

strange atmosphere, they bore a vague resemblance to spectres carelessly enveloped in their shrouds, a gigantic image of the famous Dance of Death”.

Balzac (1830)

Here the narrator in *Sarrasine* is aware of the darkness behind in the dark garden beyond the window. He goes beyond seeing it as a dark cold void and starts to see it as symbolising death. Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* uses the scenario of snow outside the house at the other side of dark curtains. The dark material makes the snow whiter than white and the outside world becomes a single colour, which causes the occupants to feel the intimacy and the house in a more heightened way (Bachelard 1992). This extract represents the experiences of being in the in-between space behind a curtain. The character in Sarasin then turns his attention to the warmth and intimacy in front of the curtain, which has been heightened by the coldness darkness behind it.

“Then, turning in the other direction, I could gaze admiringly upon the dance of the living! A magnificent salon, with walls of silver and gold, with gleaming chandeliers, and bright with the light of many candles. There the loveliest, the wealthiest women in Paris, bearers of the proudest titles, moved hither and thither, fluttered from room to room in swarms, stately and gorgeous, dazzling with diamonds; flowers on their heads and breasts, in their hair, scattered over their dresses or lying in garlands at their feet.

Light quiverings of the body, voluptuous movements, made the laces and gauzes and silks swirl about their graceful figures. Sparkling glances here and there eclipsed the lights and the blaze of the diamonds, and fanned the flame of hearts already burning too brightly. I detected also significant nods of the head for lovers and repellent attitudes for husbands. The exclamation of the card-players at every unexpected coup, the jingle of gold, mingled with music and the murmur of conversation; and to put the finishing touch to the vertigo of that multitude, intoxicated by all the seductions the world can offer, a perfume-laden atmosphere and general exaltation acted upon their over-wrought imaginations”.

Balzac (1830)

Here Balzac’s narrator is examining the area in front of the curtain. Which is warm and full of light. It contains all the vibrancy of the salon with its many fine clothes. The party is full of decadency gambling noise and rich important people. The narrator looking at the scene is being seduced by the glamour, even though he is taking a critical view and does not quite approve of it. The room in front of him grows and expands giving potency to his daydreams of a dynamic group of people subject to the winds of change due to their own behavior. This party could be the same as any other party where there is a group of privileged people when witnessed from the in-between space (Bachelard 1992).

“Thus, at my right was the depressing, silent image of death; at my left the decorous bacchanalia of life; on the one side nature, cold and gloomy, and in mourning garb; on the other side, man on pleasure bent. And, standing on the borderland of those two incongruous pictures, which repeated thousands of times in diverse ways, make Paris the most entertaining and most philosophical city in the world, I played a mental macedoine, half jesting, half funereal.

With my left foot I kept time to the music, and the other felt as if it were in a tomb. My leg was, in fact, frozen by one of those draughts which congeal one half of the body while the other suffers from the intense heat of the salons a state of things not unusual at balls”.

Balzac (1830)

The above extract describes the in-between space of behind the curtain, which is like a corner space as described by Bachelard as a haven a place of stillness. The space behind the curtain to me is a type of corner that is part wall and part window it is a place of inside and outside (Bachelard 1992). The character describes the physical aspects of being in this in-between space as he literally has a foot in either side with the one facing in being warm and the one facing out being cold. The physicality of the situation is also reflected in the characters mental state of seeing nature as the coldness of death behind him and the horrible hotness and falseness of the salon in front of him. Though at the same time the narrator realises that this

is the kind of event that makes Paris at that time a vibrant, interesting and important city. His mental state in the in-between space he can see as interesting as it contains the ingredients that make Paris exciting. Bachelard saw the space behind the curtain as a place containing ambiguities as experienced by the narrator in *Sarrasine*, as demonstrated in this extract from *The Poetic Space*

Behind dark curtains, snow seems to be whiter than white. Indeed, everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate.

(Bachelard 1992 p.39)

The character in *Sarrasine* has the feeling of being alive and appreciating the excitement of the city through the contradictions he is experiencing in the in-between space.

It could be as children when we hide behind the curtain we are hoping to find out the secrets of the adult world by listening from our hiding place. Though this is a dangerous thing for a child to do it may be that we will learn things that we regret learning they could lead to a loss of childhood innocence. The physical inbetween space behind a curtain can be used to recreate childhood experiences of daydreams through an emotionally engaged dance between the front and the back of the curtain (Bachelard 1992).

Folds

It is possible for people to have the sensation of being drawn into the folds within *Behind the Curtain* in order to suspend belief that there is a solid wall behind the canvas. To enable them to find a place within the hanging cloth in order to question their own idea of the hegemony of a capitalist consumer society. Deleuze described folds as like the infinite pages of a book. I see the possibility of the folds in hanging cloth also to be able to go into infinity. Deleuze's folds are not to be looked at in isolation but in the context of other folds as they are intimately related to each other. Deleuze concludes that folds endlessly change through folding and unfolding but can return to their original state. In hanging cloth in front of our eyes the folds appear to change constantly even though the folds will physically remain in their original state. Though if a piece of my work is moved then the original folds cannot be recreated and the work will need to be redefined to create new folds. With one piece of cloth the folds can keep on moving and changing giving new definition to the piece for eternity (Deleuze 2006; Walker 2014). Folds continuously flow and turn back on themselves being like the folds of the soul. Deleuze describes the folds of the soul as follows:

Folds are in the soul and authentically exist only in the soul. That is already true for 'innate ideas': they are pure virtualities, pure powers whose act consists in habitus or arrangements (folds) in the soul, and whose completed act consists of an inner action of the soul (an internal

deployment).

Deleuze (2006 p.24)

Deleuze is suggesting that the good qualities of humanity are in the folds of the soul and they exist there through constant folding and unfolding. It is possible for the folds in hanging cloth to emulate the folds of the soul. To give an experience of absorption through into the folds, in order to change and be redefined internally and be open to new possibilities.

Deleuze saw folds as symbols of inclusion and variation through which it is possible to give new meaning and definition, and these qualities can be found in hanging cloth. The folds create a unity through envelopment absorbing influences from the universe. I believe it is possible for *Behind the Curtain* to be able to absorb the individual influences and thoughts of the audience. Through collecting their responses to the piece and incorporating these in future work.

Deleuze uses an example of a city to demonstrate his theories of the fold using the example of city streets.

The city seems to be a labyrinth that can be ordered. The world is an infinite series of curvatures or inflections, and the entire world is enclosed in the soul from one point of view.

Deleuze (2006 p.26)

He believed that it was not possible to look at a single street in a city without seeing it in relation to the whole city and ultimately the universe. With my own piece *Behind the Curtain* I believe that a single fold cannot be looked at without seeing it in relationship to the other folds and the fold within every piece of hanging cloth. This includes even the smallest folds and creases that are within the fabric that further enhance the effect of the folds going into infinity, whilst also emphasising that every fold is an essential part of the whole. (Deleuze 2006; Walker 2014).

Deleuze in *The Fold* portrays an image of a Baroque chapel as room without windows covered in folds that could be made of real fabric or may exist only in our imagination (Doy 2002). This has led me to consider my curtain to be a baroque façade and the space behind it is no longer the breezeblock wall of my studio but it is to me a monad. Deleuze in *The Fold* describes a monad as an inside outside world that is for the world not in the world. The facade is never finished; it extends to infinity and remains open, is metaphysical and unified. Leibnitz theory of a monad as described by Deleuze has two floors. The lower floor is the facade is full of heavy detailed folds and is on view to the public; the upper floor is closed to the outside, and contains the soul. There is a tension between the two floors as folds from both sides are transformed by the cosmos into a mundus. A monad describes the kind of space that can be created within hanging cloth away from the world of consumerism to a place of the soul and contemplation that would be different for each individual viewer with an overarching experience of being a part of humanity

(Deleuze 2006; Walker 2014).

The process of contemplating folds in *Behind the Curtain* can be to encourage the viewer to start to see their environment differently. This installation is currently within the architecture of my studio. Hung on a breezeblock wall roughly painted with white emulsion paint. This is a wall that divides my studio from the one next door but to me it is a blank canvas for looking at and creating art. This *Behind the Curtain* piece transforms this solid utilitarian wall into a space of infinite possibilities. The wall behind the installation no longer seems to be solid. The installation has created a portal through which it seems possible to be transported into another world. The space behind the curtain is a world of the soul, which is reached through the folds of the fabric that to go into infinity as in a baroque façade (Deleuze 1993). These qualities of the fold as described by Deleuze show how the use of hanging cloth and drapery by artists in figurative work can represent abstract concepts. Containing insights into all the different variations of folded cloth "outside real and unreal seen unseen" (Doy 2002 p. 10).

The folds in El Greco's paintings of drapery create a connection and empathy within the folds to allow multiple and changing perspectives. This creates individual ever changing spaces within the folds, which could go into infinity whilst maintaining, the unity of the drapery (Dimakopoulou 2006). Within El Greco's paintings of groups of figures the drapery used to clothe the figures, often takes on a life of its own that dominates and defines the body shape. The pieces of drapery can visually fuse with each other and the background to form an abstract

composition within the figurative paintings. This is particularly the case in *The Opening of the Fifth Seal 1608-1614* (Image 4) where the figures appear to have taken off their robes and holding them up, they become just pieces of coloured cloth held against the sky. The folds in the cloth connect to the stormy sky that appears to contain folds in the form of clouds. A red cloth on the ground links to the giant figures of St John in the left foreground of the painting, wearing a blue robe. St John reaches for the sky the blue folds of his robe thrusting upwards to link with the sky (El Greco 2003). The whole painting appears to be a composition of eternal folds, due to the hanging pieces of cloth being physically or physiologically linked, while all elements within the painting are simultaneously surging upwards towards the sky. In my curtain I have explored this nature of the fold as a continuously changing unresolvable space that never the less "inspires the new harmonies of the baroque" (Dimakopoulou 2006 p 4) to contain these baroque harmonies and the universality of curtains and drapery within art.

Agnes Martin is an artist whose paintings works in this way for me, with her subtle paintings of drawn lines and grids using pastel shades. She considered her paintings to just exist as light they have no form and merge into their surroundings. Of her print series *On a Clear Day 1973* (Image 5) which she created whilst living in Taos, New Mexico (Fritch 2015) in 1975 she wrote:

"If you can go to them and hold your mind as empty and tranquil as they are and recognize your feelings at the same time you will realize your full response to the work."

(Martin 2015 p.124)

In this work Martin was aiming to create a unified image for the whole collection of prints not just a collection of individual images, which gives a subtle shift in human perceptions of life. This shift allows the viewer to experience an unfolding vision of variations, of similar images repeated and transposed into one piece, keeping it open to a myriad of interpretations which are perhaps infinite (Bell 2015). It is possible because of Martin's spiritual aspect to her work (Muller- Schareck 2015) that these interpretations can be seen as the folds of the soul as described by Deleuze. The lines in Martins work have the same effect as folds in hanging cloth as multiple elements, which make up one overall contemplative vision of the piece.

Grayson Perry is a contemporary artist who has unraveled the folds of our capitalist, consumer society using the medium of tapestry to explore his views in his work. In particular *The Walthamstow tapestry 2014* (Image 6) which Perry himself describes as "the Guernica of the credit crunch" (Turner Contemporary 2015 p 8). The tapestry is a reference to the Bayeux tapestry and depicts the invasion of marketing into people's heads in the journey of man from birth to death. It portrays this through the seven ages of man surrounding by a mass brand names from contemporary shopping culture (Turner Contemporary 2015). The use of hanging cloth for this work with its soft loose surface enables the viewer to feel that they are being drawn into the folds of the tapestry's message.

Similarly, the folds of *Behind the Curtain* create the experience of drawing the

viewer in to become immersed in the piece and even deeper to enable them to pass through the baroque facade of a monad as described by Deleuze and find a metaphysical space (1993).

Mental projection

The colours on *Behind the Curtain* provide the effect of lights projected onto the canvas from the dark street behind giving the effect of a cinema screen. I painted the inside of the folds, as behind the curtains after dark the light falls onto the folds from streetlights, the headlights of the passing cars, reflections of flashing neon signs or the moon creating deep shadows and contrasting highlights. I lightly sprayed the small, delicate creases in the fabric with a darker transparent black to emphasise them, giving the appearance of dust collecting. This grey dusty effect contrasted sharply with the stronger colours such as the acrid fluorescent yellow and pinks in the folds producing strong qualities of highlights and deep folds. This effect is intensified by the light that creeps in from outside reflecting the dark of the night sky into a bright cobalt blue. The ambiguity of violet being neither red, blue or grey is the colour that links the others and creates unity within the piece. The lights go into the folds of the curtain lining whilst the rest remains neutral in the dark, like the neutral colour of curtain linings. Enhancing the feeling of the behind the curtain being a neglected, secret place to hide in. Creating a foreboding atmosphere like film Noir in Hopper's paintings (Wagstaff 2004a).

Hopper's painting was also influenced by a reading of Plato's philosophy which included *The Allegory of the Cave*, which dealt with the projection of light to create illusions. (Anfam 2004). Plato uses the analogy of prisoners chained to and facing a cave wall so that they can only see the shadows projected onto the cave wall. These images are created by a fire behind them, which allows images of people and carts moving along a road behind the cave, to be projected onto a curtain behind them and subsequently onto the cave wall. So they only see the shadows of the objects that move along the road and consider this to be reality. Plato believed that if these prisoners were ever taken into the world outside they would continue to believe that the shadows in the cave were the real world. He used the cave as a metaphor to demonstrate that philosophers would make good politicians as they have other interests in life besides politics. The philosophers see things, as they are, whereas people whose only interest in life is political ambition, see shadows of reality, like the prisoners in the cave (Plato c. 380 BC). In Hoppers painting *Excursion into Philosophy* 1956 (Image 9) where a man is sat on a bed. Behind him is a woman who represents earthly pleasures and there is an open book on the bed beside him representing higher values. The man in the painting seems to be lost in a dilemma of making a choice between the two, emphasised by the way the light reflects into the room as two rectangles (Iverson 2004). These two rectangles are created due to the absence of curtains from the windows. This intimate scene is in the stark reality of the bare windows there seems to be no room for shades of grey and compromise in this painting. By using hanging cloth to create my work I am inviting people to project their thoughts into a space that experiences the subtleties of life rather than

black and white answers. Though this is the opposite to Plato's cave I want to encourage people to look at my curtain in order to find new realities and to turn away if only temporarily from the outside world.

The story *The Colours Between the folds* by Mark Say offers a positive view of images projected onto cloth and was written as a direct outcome of the writer's experience of contemplating my artwork *Behind the Curtain*.

It tells the story of a man who is disturbed by a recent divorce, develops a fixation with staring at blank white surfaces and ends up on a psychiatric ward. As a result of some entertainment planned for the patients going wrong he ends up staring at a curtain used as a make shift projector screen that has random coloured light projected on to it. In the following passage the author describes the patient's experience of looking at the curtain with the coloured lights. This extract contains the narrator's description of looking at the lights projected on the hanging cloth depicting the moment in the story when the lights on the curtain transforms the man's life. This to me demonstrates where Say sees the possibilities for human experience together with the potential for changing human perception in the space created by my piece.

"I let my gaze sink into the curtain, and catch the speckles of blue, red and yellow sliding into the crevices. Maybe a draft is causing a mild movement of the curtain, or maybe it's my imagination, but the colours seem to have a sprinkling of life, dancing on the surface of the fabric then sinking into its

perforations. Now I'm intrigued. I stay still but feel myself drifting into the vision, allowing the colours to absorb my attention. The speckles start expanding into light strokes, running along the lines of the folds with subtle variations of intensity. Colours are oozing, blending into each other to create new shades, showing greens, pinks, purples that slither then evaporate into new streaks of white. Now there are stripes, sliding gently, blurring and fading. Now tiny eruptions as one colour explodes from the depths of another. The lights have transformed into little bursts of energy, and I'm engrossed by a sense of life emerging from between the curtain folds. I feel an urge to reach out and place my fingers into the folds, stir the energy to create new sensations for my gaze".

(Say 2015 pp. 4-5)

In the story Colour *Between the Folds* the experience of contemplation on these lights regenerates the character and cures his mental illness. The narrator has previously been taking refuge in the flat white bleakness of empty spaces on the wall. He finds it easier to cope with the trauma of his divorce through looking at space that has no variations. When he is forced to peer into the curtain with lights projected onto it due to the disruption of the planned entertainment, he initially finds this uncomfortable, as he is drawn into a place of energy and uncertainty. He then gradually finds that the lights take him to a place of positivity and creativity. The story ends when he asks the nurse for some paints and coloured pencils so he

can create colorful works of art. The reader is left with the impression that the chaos of the coloured lights within the folds has stimulated his mind from the depths of negativity, providing the spark to turn his life around.

This story uses a piece of hanging cloth with lights projected onto it which and immerses and engages the narrator in such a way that it has rejuvenated him and cured his mental illness. I do think that it is possible for hanging cloth to create a space for transformation but it not necessarily the dramatic transformation as depicted in Say's story. It just gives people space and time to stop and think, maybe change their perception in some small way. I like the idea in this story that the depressed man is stimulated to create art as apart of the turn-around in his mental state. Louise Bourgeoisie this also demonstrates this view with her drawing *Art is a guarantee of Sanity 2000* which contains the words of the title in pencil on pink paper. The Tate Gallery reproduced this drawing onto pink cloth to create an effective t-shirt. I have one that I often wear when working in my studio appreciating it as a piece of hanging cloth that inspires me.

Yayoi Kusama in her work uses dots as a way to of coping with lifelong mental illness creating an environment in which she feels secure rather than threatened (Applin 2012). I use a similar process with the folds in my curtain piece to enable people to find a space to challenge their core ideas about the dominant hegemony of capitalism, yet also feel protected and supported by the folds in the curtain.

Kusama works with mirrors in such works, as *I Want to Keep on Living, But... 2010*

to produce infinity of reflections and offer experience of that is dispersed around the space. This creates an overall effect of disintegrating the space so suspending perception that the viewer is within a solid space. Kusama sees these spaces as projecting out to the universe sending messages of love in a world she perceives as full of despair (Kusama 2012). Folds in hanging cloth can be used to produce the same experience of an illusion of infinity, and expansive coherence, as dots in space. This is space that is a softer experience where people can find a space to reflect and see the world differently. Where as Kusama's dots examine a darker side the "claustrophobic horror" (Bishop 2005 p 92) of mental illness.

I see a similarity in my own work with folds and in Kusama's use of polka dots, which she has used since the late 1960s (Bishop 2005). She uses dots to break up form and creates a new space for the viewer to contemplate, in the same way that I am using folds in cloth, which are more irregular and organic. In Kusama's *I am Here but Nothing* 2010 she covers a living room with brightly coloured dots in order to break up the space into an "infinite web of polka dots" (Applin 2012 p 189). This disintegration of space gives her the same feeling of "self -obliteration" (Applin 2012 p 189) that her mental illness causes. She further enhances this effect by placing herself inside the environment wearing clothes, a form of hanging cloth, with dots on to match environment, such as in *Dots Obsession* 1996 (Image 10). By doing this she expresses her feelings of "self -obliteration" (Applin 2012 p 189) through dissolving and separating visually into her work creating a space for her

audience (Applin 2012; Walker 2015). In the same way folds on a curtain can detract from the curtain as a whole.

With the *Endless Love Shows* in New York during the 1960's psychedelic free love era she used live performance to reach out to the audience. This reflected the rebellious counter culture at the time where it was thought that free love could be used to fight capitalism. This counter culture was formed due to a generation rebelling against the suburban life style and consumerist culture that their parents had signed up to during the cold war (Kozlovsky 2004; Walker 2015). As I have been looking for a space for a counter culture to the consumer society in my work, as a reaction to the current age of austerity.

Behind the Curtain can be a place for reflection and projection of images, feelings and memories. The nature of the sprayed paint in the folds creates a visual delicacy of the spray paint which, when contrasted with the harshness of the gaudy fluorescent colours, can create an ambiguity that allows people to project their own mental images onto the piece, giving them access to the space created by the folds.

Envelopment and concealment

My work *Behind the Curtain* is a piece of hanging cloth that physically and symbolically covers a wall in order to create a space, that can convey an experience of concealment found within curtains. Edward Hopper used curtains in his paintings to conceal or obscure what is happening in an interior to create an evocative atmosphere within the space of the painting. This is particularly

apparent in *August in the City 1945* (Image 11) where yellow curtains echo sunlight in August whilst giving only a glimpse of the interior and what is going on inside. This draws the viewer into speculating the emotions of the woman inside. The glimpse through the curtain enveloping the woman gives us an insight into the interior of her home and the internal state of her mind. Is this woman merely enjoying the sun through the window on a summers day as the painting superficially suggests or on closer examination is there a darker side to this picture and the life of the woman in the painting?

This painting is of a house on a curved corner with windows the whole way round. The windows have curtains inside through them we get a view of a woman who looks tense. The building, its windows and its yellow curtains surround her along with the yellow sunlight and the heat, as it is 'August in the city'. Though there are shadows cast on either side of the building that are dark straight-lined and angular in between them is the window with the lady and the harsh light. This provides a stark contrast with the light and curves of the interior causing the figure to stand out as if she were on a stage under a spotlight. The space in front of the house is empty with just a few regimentally planted trees off to the side which all echo the yellow of the curtains, helping to connect the figures with the outside environment. The woman appears trapped by the heat, the curtains and the building, and seems to be looking out with longing beyond the interior of the house; but it is unclear as to whether or not she wishes to engage with the outside world. (Iverson 2004).

There is a door to the side of the building, separate from the interior, which may be difficult for the woman to find. It red, in shadow, and does not convey the yellow glare of the rest of the picture. It seems to indicate that the woman is looking out of the window as a means of escape, but for some reason cannot physically go through the door. This was the era of the Cold War and it could be that the red door represents that the escape from domestic dullness could be communism – an idea that was unthinkable in a country obsessed by 'reds under the bed' at the time (Colomina 2004).

The curtains seem to be oppressive and liberating at the same time. They appear drawn fully across the front windows, protecting the inside from the glare of the strong sunlight. On the side windows the curtains are open so the woman can see out and we can see in. In addition we can see through the curtains to the windows at the other side and through those windows to the other side of the street. This gives the impression that the woman is in a goldfish bowl she can be seen from all sides and is trapped like a goldfish doomed to go round and round on a solitary eternal journey. There is a similar feeling in Hopper's seminal work *Nighthawks* 1942 where isolated figures in a diner at night can be seen through a street corner window. This diner scene like other paintings of Hopper's has the atmosphere of film noir. There are no curtains in *Nighthawks* and we can see the figures clearly within the interior of this public space. In private with curtains or in public without curtains, we still get of sense of Hopper's use of light and paint to give the viewer a glimpse of the artist's views on the complex internal states of the human mind,

conveyed through the characters he placed within the scenes of his paintings (Wagstaff 2004 b).

The woman in *August in the City* seems like a part of the universe, the windows all around her make her appear to be in an inside outside space (Bachelard 1992).

This is enhanced by her immersion in the sunlight further emphasized by the yellow curtains. Even though she appears to be in a space accessible to the outside it seems that she could be imprisoned in the stifling summer heat, in the claustrophobia of her living room. She seems to be trapped maybe as the housewife left at home to do nothing but housework. Or it could be more sinister such as being the prisoner of a violent marriage. Also it is possible that the anxiety is being created by agoraphobia she is trapped by imagined or real threats from the outside. She could feel that in her goldfish bowl she is being spied upon or she could be spying on somebody else as this is in the era of the cold war (Colomina 2004). We are left with the mystery because there are no other people in the painting to contextualize the scene.

The painting uses curtains to frame a glimpse of the mundane living room together with the figure of the woman inside who appears to be emotionally complex. These contrasting elements in the scene leave the viewer guessing at the nature of her angst. This image of the woman immersed in yellow brings to mind the story *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins-Gilman in which a woman suffering from a mental illness is being kept in a room by her husband, a doctor. The woman sees

images within the yellow wallpaper the reader is unsure whether these images are supernatural or part of the woman's mental illness, also as to whether her husband is trying cure her or make her worse. The extract below describes how she sees the yellow wallpaper.

"There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously. It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw -not beautiful like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things."

(Gilman 1892)

I believe the same kinds of ambiguities are present in the Hopper painting as in this story. The yellow in the living room of the painting could be as frightening to the woman in the painting as the yellows are in the wallpaper to the character in Gillman's story. The yellow curtains seem to surround the woman in the painting. The viewer peers in at her from the outside, we can see the contrast of the suburban comfort and the tension of the woman in the room. Portraying a counter intuitive view of what should seem to be a secure, safe, comfortable environment for this woman to live in. It is interesting that the curtains add to her sense of entombment as curtains at the time this picture was painted were seen as the concern of women (Maile 2012). She appears to have chosen this environment along with the curtains she has hung in her living room. She is immersed in the

fusion of the yellow curtains and the yellow sunlight seems to want to be with the universe (Bachelard 1992), like a canary trapped in a cage that wants to fly free.

Liz Rideal's *Boudoir* series, one of her photo booth, works uses pictures of people and drapes in a photo booth. The original piece was commissioned as a safety curtain for the Birmingham Hippodrome theatre. The design for the curtain was made up from a series of passport sized photos taken in a photo booth so the piece contains multiple identities. In Rideal's photo booth work the sitters tend to be obscured by the curtains inside the booth even though they are free to arrange the curtain as they wish, unlike the lady in Hopper's painting. In the *Boudoir* series this involved using red velvet curtains with gold tassels and sometimes only the hand of the sitters is seen pulling the curtain across themselves. The mood of the piece is sensuous and claustrophobic like it contains the secrets of a brothel. This piece is again emphasising the relationship of curtains to a female domain, a place to seek seclusion or to be trapped (Doy 2002). I think of my own curtain as a place creating a private space within the folds of the cloth and giving people a place to retire to. Rideal's work conveys the sense of something going on behind the surface, with multiple images of curtains within the final curtain. It is something I aim to portray in my work, creating a space behind my curtain with multifaceted folds. My *Behind the Curtain* is a place of concealment, taking a rest from responsibilities and pressure, or a place to hide where we can face our darkest fear or revel in our greatest pleasure.

Universality

My curtain does not have the formality of a curtain attached to a rail it is free form. This lack of a ridged structure gives it the ability to transcend a curtain in a particular space or situation allowing it to represent a universal curtain, which could be in either the public or private domain. By universality I mean that my curtain is representative of every curtain that has ever existed through time or ever will exist and fulfills the functions provided by curtains of concealment and protection (Walker 2015). The qualities that transform this piece of work into a universal curtain are the softness and intimacy, which all curtains give to the architectural spaces within which they are hung as in Bachelard theories of corners (Bachelard 1992).

A sense of a universal aspect to curtains is provoked by this advice to housewives in *How to Drape Windows*. They are asked to imagine a room they know with curtains and then to imagine it without curtains suggesting the horror and coldness of such a room in order to help them realise how important curtains are in their home. They were told that the choice of curtains could be used to transform a room and infuse it with their personality; a "humble cottage or a mansion alike" (Kirstch 1931 p. 5). This conceptualization also reflects qualities in my installation a feeling of curtains that could be grand like those at a theatre and yet can also reflect the intimacy of a domestic environment and so contains a universal experience of curtain. Hopper was also trying to create a universal experience in his paintings.

The paintings are visually clearly iconic representations of the U.S.A. during the post war era. However he wanted his paintings to be to be Universal, not just an insight into American society at the time but the human condition as a whole (Wagstaff 2004).

Even though the curtain is a universal experience it does not mean that all people will experience it in the same way. Bachelard wrote that some people looking out of the window from behind the curtains observing a storm would feel threatened and terrified whilst others may enjoy the drama of the storm and feel that the house is being protected in the arms of the storm. When viewing *Behind the Curtain* people will bring their individuality in order to experience the universal space created by this curtain (Bachelard 1992 p.42; Walker 2015).

Curtains can be of emotional significance to children. This can be shown through their artwork. As explained by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* one of the first things a child draws is a house, one that represents their own home. The representation of curtains in these homes can signify the difference between a happy and an unhappy home. For example Jewish children who were hidden in small spaces to escape the Nazis would draw curtains that were rigid and motionless. Children brought up in a happy home will draw flowing curtains (Bachelard 1992 p.72; Walker 2015).

Hanging cloth is universal as it contains a common experience of humanity

throughout history and culture particularly through curtains. The experience of the space behind the curtain is common to humanity and therefore it seems that people in the space behind the curtain will feel an affinity for their fellow human beings behind my curtain, or any other curtain that exists or ever will exist.

Conclusion

I made *Behind the Curtain* as I was looking for a space within hanging cloth to examine the experiences of my audience and I, to create a space that is free and assessable to all. In the television programme *How to Be a Bohemian with Victoria Coren Mitchell* The Reverent Richard Coles said that to be a true bohemian today, is to live outside the consumer society and that this is interesting to see how bohemian culture will evolve (2015). For an artist to produce artwork that is not a consumer product is interesting too. To make artwork in this way it needed to be made with cheap materials, by me in the space of my studio, without the help of assistants and be exhibited in a public space not necessarily an art gallery. So I created *Behind the Curtain* that could be hung in a public space such as a corridor where there is a continuous flow of people.

It was the creation and contemplation of this piece, which inspired my research. This research has in turn informed the work that leads me to explore the experience of the space of *Behind the Curtain*. I have done this by looking at the elements of in-between space, the folds, mental projection, concealment and universality, using examples of art, literature and philosophy to reach my

conclusions.

The element that first attracted me to curtains is that they create an in-between space. A curtain is neither inside the warmth of the interior and not quite in the coldness of the outside. A curtain allows a person to stand in the in-between space contemplating its ambiguities and remain detached; they have a choice like Balzac's narrator in *Sarrasine*. This space is physically and psychologically divisive it can be a force for good, for example, not getting involved in an argument that is not your business, or it can be, on the negative side, an unwillingness to commit to anything in life so missing out on experiencing the highs or lows of life. However, the in-between space can also be a place for thought and contemplation before making a decision, reflecting the ambiguities of hanging cloth.

Within my curtain the folds are the element that draws the viewer into the experience, which is enhanced by the strong colour in the larger folds. This draws people to look into the folds as they focus on one fold initially before their eyes start to wander around the curtain as a whole. They can then see the details of subtler, smaller folds that are less highly coloured. The folds are like those of a baroque facade as described by Deleuze, as they are endlessly changing in front of the eyes. New folds are noticed, continuously drawing the viewer deeper into the piece. Although there is a breezeblock wall behind the curtain, belief may be momentarily suspended and an infinite space 'behind' may open up. It may be possible to start to find a space behind the artwork, which could be the metaphysical space of the monad as described by Deleuze (1993).

The sprayed paint effect together with the use of gaudy colours give the piece the effect of light being projected onto the cloth like a cinema screen. A curtain allows the viewers to project their own thoughts and beliefs onto the curtain. So they are using it as a space to inspire them to have their own individual creative experience. As in the short story *Colour Between the Folds*, which has as its climax the narrator's life being rejuvenated by his experience of seeing lights, projected onto hanging cloth.

Behind the Curtain creates a space of envelopment and concealment where some may feel protected from the fears and worries of the world and others may feel a claustrophobic sense of imprisonment. As they are not going to be physically held within the space it could be just that the occupant feels trapped as they just do not want a quiet space and time to think, as that may be disturbing for them. The space is a resting place, a safe haven from the world that also reflects the world; here people can feel invisible, free from interruption and have time to contemplate life. In my piece *womb 2015* (Image 12) I wrapped a model up in a piece of cloth and asked her to make a voice recording of her feelings whilst inside the womb. She explained her experience as feeling nice, comfortable and protected.

Hanging cloth is an experience common to humanity throughout history and across cultures and is endowed with emotions as demonstrated by Bachelard's example of children's drawings of curtains in their childhood homes (Bachelard 1992 p.72).

The experience of standing in front of a universal curtain is a feeling of connection with each other and the universe as a whole. This can be experienced whether the curtain is grand or humble.

This research has enabled me able to gain an insight into the myriad of experiences physical, psychological and metaphysical contained in the space of hanging cloth. It seems to me that these experiences could like, Deleuze's folds; go on into infinity (Deleuze 2006).

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Image 3



Image 4



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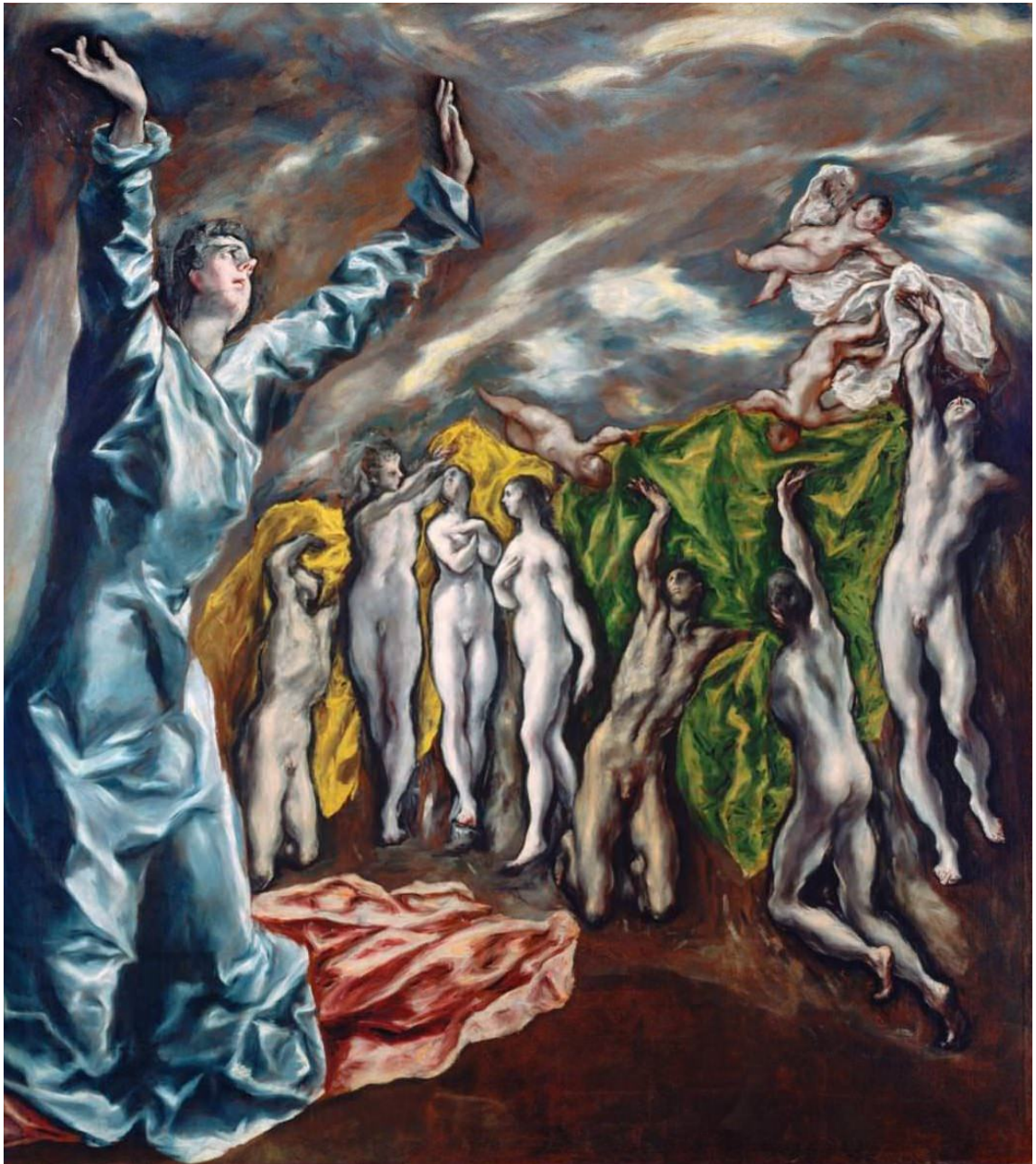


Image 6



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9

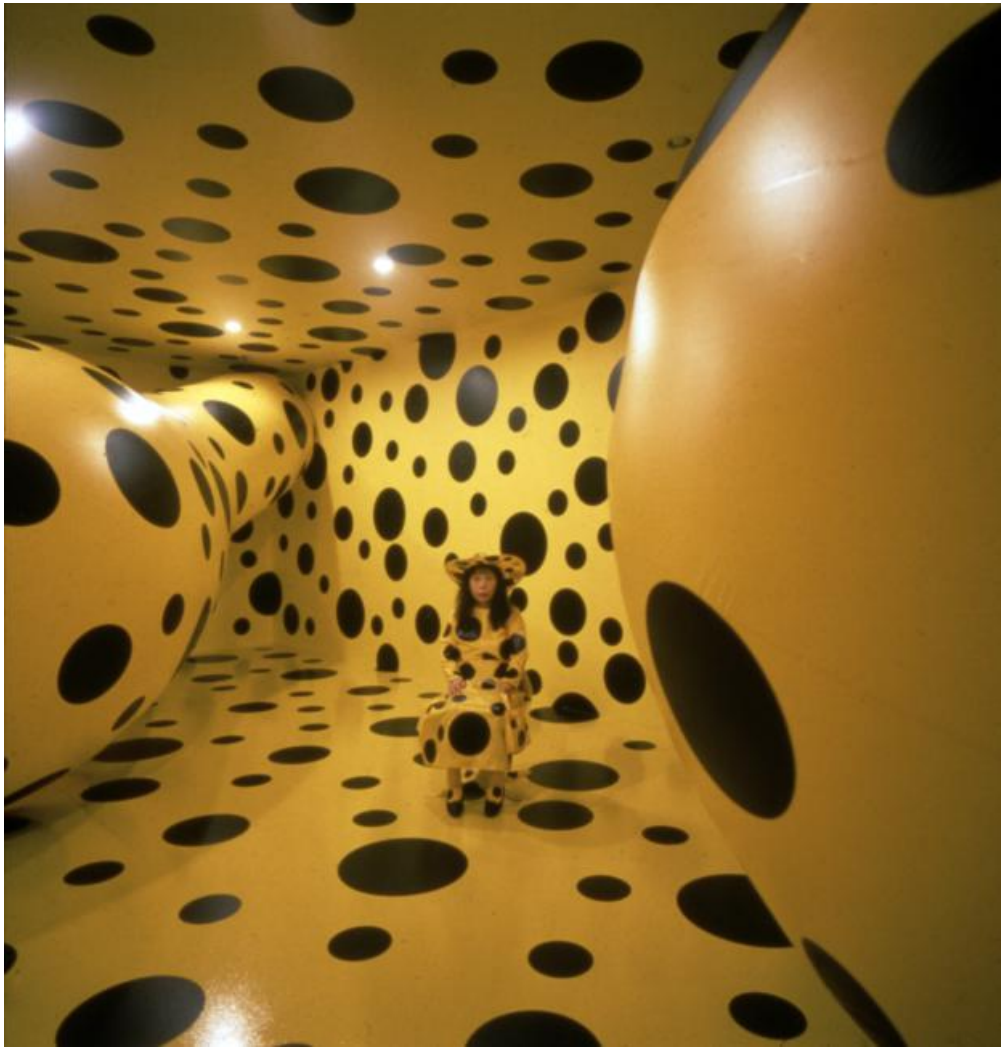


Image 10

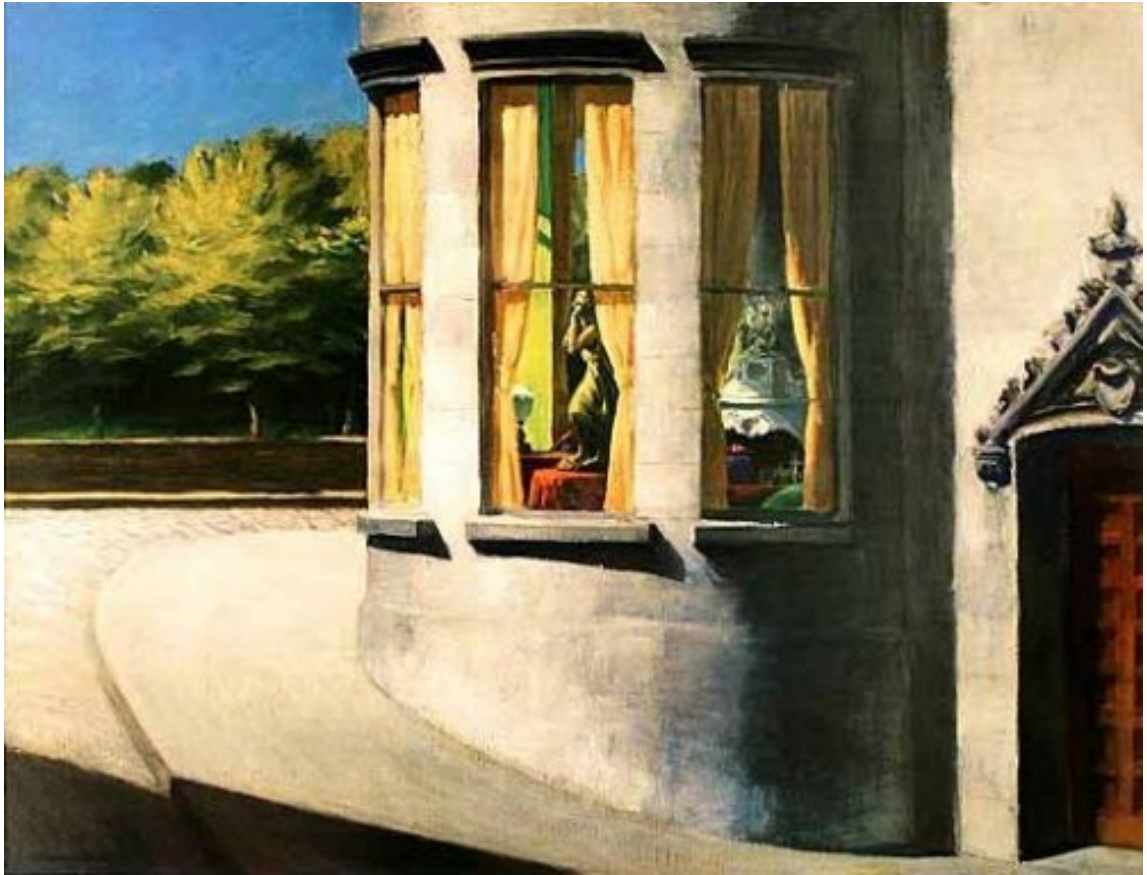


Image 11



Image 12

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