

The Space Museum ***Guide***

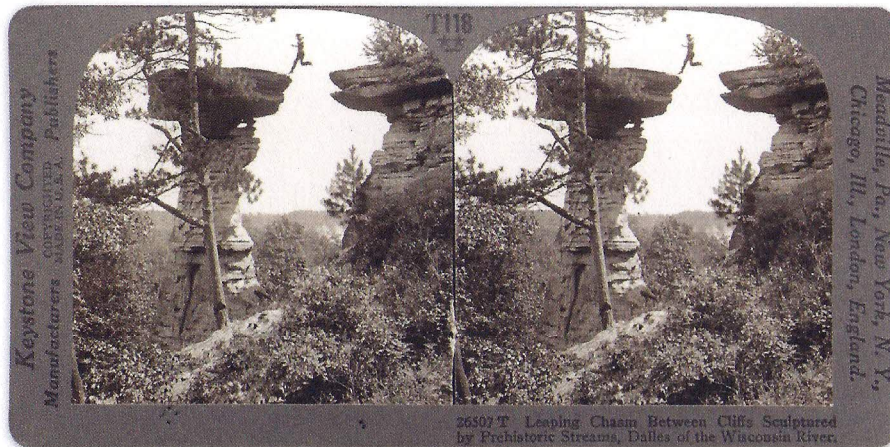
Patrick Pound

The Space Museum

Guide

Staring into space

Allotted space, abandoned space, space mountain, personal space, inside space, outside space, space jam, space filler, space war, space cadet, thinking space, the space between, space junk, space crusher, space heater, lack of space, new space, configuring space, contested space, space programme, space invader, space deficit, difficult space, breathing space, excess space, drawer space, exhibition space, oven space, closed space, space academy, inaccessible space, space travel, space exploration, space age, space suit, making space, measuring space, carving out a space, divided space, dramatic space, deep space, shallow space, unloved space, open space, vast space, vacant space, gutter space, little space, ideal space, remaining space, linear space, changing space, open space, forgotten space, well defined space, rented space, lost in space, waste of space, single space, storage space, eradicating space, artist-run space, reduced space, bench space, time and space.



Half space, good space, relative space, neutral space, stylish space, divided space, too much space, sacred space, unbelievable space, storage space, desirable space, expanded space, challenging space, minimal space, vintage space, moving space, metaphoric space, parking space, visual space, diluted space, pictorial space, soft space, in between space, waste of space, half space, a gap in space, more space, beautiful space, negative space, white space, writing space, empty space, extra space, bad space, my space, back space, dead space, non space, gallery space, storage space, office space, digital space, unlikely space, neglected space, popular space, alternative space, confirmed space, uncertain space, inner space, space centre, space needle.



Space mountain, selling space, dictionary of space, unwanted space, disused space, apparent space, maximum space, vertical space, eliminating space, fixed space, perfect space, making space, double space, cluttered space, temporary space, contemporary space, cupboard space, Soviet space, American space, International space, a safe space, haunted space, illusionistic space, borrowed space, colourful space, the conquest of space, unwarranted space, illusionistic space, space ship, space relations, the space within, space odyssey, intimate space, well thought out space, wardrobe space, space oddity, the space between notes, unfathomable space, covered space, recovered space, Kennedy space centre, space ship, space to swing a cat, packing space, packaged space, appropriate space, in a good space right now, the space between words, horizontal space, space bar, telling space, boot space, meaningless space, corner space, interim space, a plausible space, unwanted space, microscopic space, well thought out space, impenetrable space, staring into space, enough space already.

Some favourite spaces

Literary:

Lewis Carroll's 'Chart of the Ocean'. (A completely empty chart).

Verne's Captain Nemo's submarine (complete with library and museum – it even has an aquarium – making it an essential copy of the world).

Also Verne's *Floating Island*, his *Mysterious Island*, his *Centre of the Earth*, his *Voyage around the Moon* and so on.

Aragon's *Paris Peasant*.

Benjamin's *Arcades*. (Convolutéd).

Perec's *Attempt at Exhausting a Space*. (And the apartment building in *Life A User's Manual*).

Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*.

Butler's *Erewhon*.

Calvino's *Invisible Cities*.

Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau*.

The blank space on the page Sterne leaves the reader of *The Life and Times of Tristram Shandy* to paint their own picture of a desirable woman. He writes "To conceive this right, call for pen and ink – here's paper ready to your hand. Sit down, sir, paint her to your own mind – as like your mistress as you can – as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you 'tis all one to me – place your own fancy in it".

The Swiss Family Robinson's boat within a boat. (And their tree house).

George Cruikshank's etching of *All the World Going To See the Great Exhibition of 1851* in *The Adventures of Mr. And Mrs. Sandboys and Family*, 1851.

The space Spoerri leaves for the reader to leave a cigarette burn on the page...

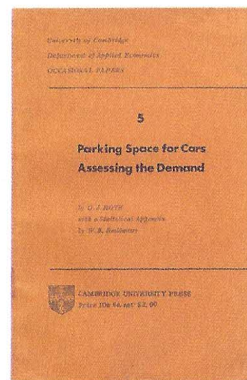


Real world:

Resorts, Traffic islands, Arcades, Department Stores, Museums, Aquariums, Crossroads, Oceans, Islands, Cemeteries, Nests, Stadiums, Sub divisions, Guard towers, Fish tanks, Caravans, Cabins, Terrariums, Tree houses, Best rooms, Booths, Hairpin bends, Halfway lines, Huts, Hardware stores, Prisons, Front bars, Verandas, Back bars, Junkshops, Grain elevators, Glove boxes, Archives, Letter boxes, Conversation pits, Dining Cars, Lounge bars, In trays, Out trays, Ice trays...

Some other Spaces

East of Eden, The Go Between, The Garden of Eden, The Door in the Wall, Lifeboat, One Way Street, A Year of Space, An Atoll, A Crater Lake...



Patrick Pound: *The Space museum and The Collected Works.* *An Interview by George Corvick.*

George Corvick. In one way or another, your work has always had the idea of the collection at its core. From early films using found slides to cell phone photos of collections of knife blocks. Years ago I remember seeing a work of yours called '26 brown things' scattered across the floor of GRANTPIRRIE gallery in Sydney. I thought that work was really funny. (Pauses) Yet somehow, melancholy.

Patrick Pound. I started by collecting things in order to inform my work. What seems to have happened slowly is that the collections eventually became the work. William Carlos Williams famously declared: "No ideas but in things". I was never quite sure exactly what he meant, but I knew it applied to my work.

G.C. Your approach clearly relates to conceptual art. I'm thinking from Ed Ruscha to Gordon Matta-Clark – of Robert Rooney and of the more sentimental work of say Boltanski and Annette Messager, or Kabakov's 'Man who never threw anything away' for that matter.

P.P. Yes all of those people are in there! Along with all those photographers who use the camera as a collecting machine from Walker Evans to the Bechers. As well as Warhol's *Time Capsules*, Broodthaers' *Department of Eagles* and Richter's *Atlas* and Warburg's *Atlas*, and that atlas of ports painted by a character in Perec's *Life a User's Manual*. It's all in the soup. (Pauses) Actually for me, literature is an equally important model and source. I'm interested in how an artwork might be made to hold an idea. This might sound a bit grand, but what I'm actually after is a conceptual lightness of touch. The way tropical fruit seems to hold the sun (laughs).

G.C. Yes I get that. I've also noticed that over the years you seem to be intervening less and less. It's as if you've decided that the found objects are

enough – that they are better left to speak for themselves in their groupings and in their sequences and juxtapositions. You seem to be deliberately avoiding artfulness (pauses) and um letting the viewer put the pieces together.

P.P. I still make things — collages and occasionally paintings, but I definitely want to avoid mannerism. That's fair to say.

G.C. Your work is often funny. I laughed out loud when I saw your collection of found photographers with their thumbs in shot! And that work made up of numerous photographs of people who look dead but probably aren't. People don't talk about humour much.

P.P. Well no one likes to be reduced to explaining their jokes.

G.C. So you think humour is conceptual too?

P.P. Yes, of course, though I've never given it much thought (laughs). I want to put the dad joke into conceptual art. I gave a talk, or a paper, as they called it, at a conference of Australian and New Zealand art historians once and a member of the audience asked me: "Where do you get your ideas?" I said: I think them up. For some reason they thought this was hilarious.

G.C. You are deliberately anti-earnest though aren't you.

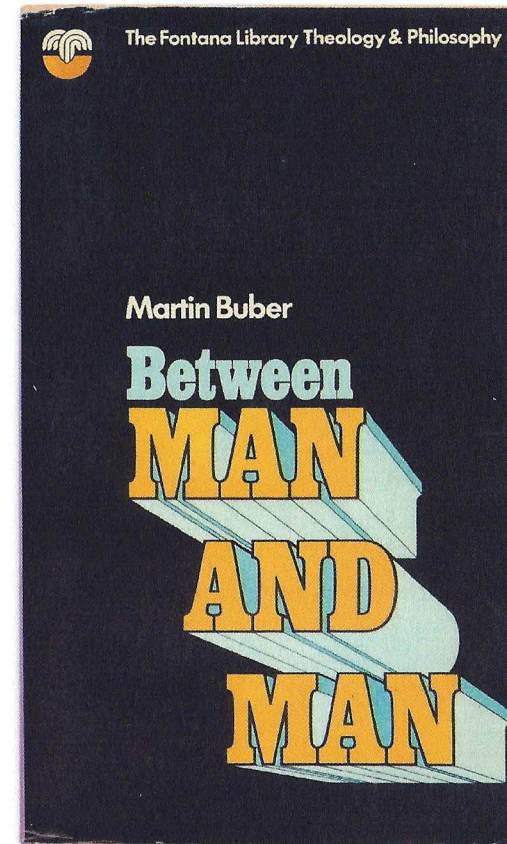
P.P. Yes but that's not anti-serious of course. You even have to think up your jokes. (laughs)

G.C. You alluded to the sentimental before. That's another sticky...

P.P. Yes, I don't mean it in the pejorative sense. It's like the pathetic. That word used to be about the pathos, it wasn't critical at all. My work is really pathetic — as well as sentimental and conceptual. (laughs)

G.C. It is a very personal project though isn't it?

P.P. Well, I make it — or choose it. There's no denying that. It's not heavy handed or earnest though. But putting together collections and artworks is always deeply personal. (Pauses) You know, it's always stuck with me how when Walker Evans invented the idea of "documentary style" photography as he called it, you know, as a self conscious and apparently clinically detached way of recording the world, that to do that, to take the approach of the insurance assessor in the face of an America ravaged by the Depression, took conviction in spades. It was the deliberate avoidance of mawkish



engagement that helped make it art. He was a Vitruvius of the vernacular.

G.C. Is it hard work keeping up the appearance of lightness.

P.P. No that wasn't what I was getting at. I hope the lightness isn't simply a matter of appearances! I want the works to be light but saturated if you know what I mean. I certainly have to work hard to put these collections together but I get a lot of pleasure out of it of course. It's also intuitive. Because it's what I do every day it's not so much casual as matter of fact. It is both considered and habitual — and playful even (laughs).

G.C. Collecting is a melancholy project too isn't it? Your collection of over 100 postcards of different views of the Cliff House in San Francisco which get closer and closer seems clinical enough and then something amazing happens – the building catches on fire! All those postcards showing the fire and then the replacement building and then, later still the renovations over time from — what is it the 1870s till the 1970s? That's surprisingly moving somehow.

P.P. Yes it is – all collections are melancholy performances – at least in retrospect. I guess it's a melancholy project. But I think art is melancholy after all — from Atget to Ruscha. Photography is a melancholy medium. Without trying it records time's relentless melt.

But like Ruscha and unlike Atget I am deliberately making art out of all this. So you have to remember that I collect in order to make art. You know... (breaks off). I'm always a bit reluctant to analyse why I collect. I'm much more comfortable thinking about what a collection might mean. It's as if I'm collecting towards a logic of documents. As if (pauses), as if, we could just get all the pieces together we might solve the puzzle. I always liked that line in Raymond Chandler when the detective said that he hadn't solved it, but at least all the pieces were beginning to look like they belonged to the same puzzle.

For me the Cliff House work like so many of my collection works also includes a little history of photography or the picture post card – and of building and so on. If you look closely you notice that some of the foreground figures in the postcards showing the building before the fire reappear in later cards, after the fire, so you find that photographs have always been doctored. You also notice that the style of the printing of the card just like the styles of the building have changed over time.

G.C. With the work that you call 'The Space Museum' there is an accumulative logic. When I heard the title I immediately assumed it would be a collection about outer space. Pretty quickly looking at the L.P.s, stereoscopes, photos, postcards, books, first day covers, electronic games, coffee mugs, relief maps and so on, I realised that together these things captured all the ways we might think about space. From an empty chart of the Ocean to a coffee mug with the words "Office Space" printed on it...

P.P. Yes it's probably the closest demonstration of my idea that we collect to gather our thoughts through things. There are vinyl records such as The Cure's 'In Between Days' and Burl Ives' 'Mr. In Between'. The museum includes everything from a Dictionary of Space to a cinema lobby card from the film of 'The Go Between'; from a postcard of the narrowest street in the U.S. to a snap of the smallest house in London; from a photograph from 'East of Eden' to a copy of *Erewhon*; from a Space Invaders computer game to a stereo-view of a man jumping between two rocks; from Lewis Carroll's completely empty 'Chart of the Ocean' to a relief map of Australia; from a book of advice for someone taking a 'Gap Year'; to a postcard of the Continental Divide; from a snap of a man leaning on a sign which reads "Enter New Mexico Leave Arizona" to Elvis Presley's 'Separate Ways'. 'The Space Museum' surveys the vast range of ways in which we think about space.

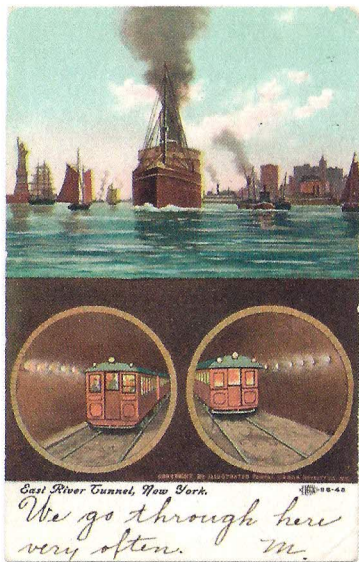
I used it as a sort of thinking machine. It had a utility while I was making it. Now I suppose it's more of an illustration of some ideas of space.

G.C. While collections tend to focus on this category or that, you often deliberately work with a constraint that seems more in keeping with, say, those literary constraints like the famous one where the novelist Georges Perec wrote a novel without the letter 'e'.

P.P. Yes, Perec and co. remain pivotal for me. His *Species of Spaces* is in the museum of course.

G.C. Your collection works function something like a puzzle to be solved. It's up to the viewer to unravel each collection like a complex figure in a Persian carpet.

I'm thinking of works of yours like *Twenty six and One* with its 27 books with a number in their title all collected and arranged chronologically from *Looking at Ground Zero* to *One Touch Photography*, to *A Tale of Two Cities* and so on right on up to Maxim Gorky's *Twenty Six and One*.



P.P. Yes, but there's nothing too complicated about it. In fact the puzzles are solved by the collections. The pleasure remains in the pattern and in its recognition. And then I especially like the way supposedly closed systems let in other systems or constraints. In that work you get anything from 'how to' books to bad novels, a criminal's memoir and so on. Then with other works that rely on a constraint such as my collections of found photos of photographer's thumbs you get examples sneaking in from other categories such as photographer's shadows, or people in the wind and so on.

G.C. Why do you think we collect more generally?

P.P. Cor. I think the collector gets comfort from the process. There is the sense of imposing an order on the chaos of things. There is also a sense, perhaps, of delay — of delaying the inevitable.

G.C. Death or boredom or failure?

P.P. Perhaps a bit of all that and more! (smiles). You know there are several types of collectors and ways of collecting. Some collections are, from the outset, never going to be completed. Some collectors on the other hand are completists. You know, they have to have every single variant. But then again, real collectors never would want to start out by buying a collection that was already made — already complete. It's funny how that would seem daft, yet spending years putting together those same things wouldn't!

G.C. What do psychologists have to say about this?

P.P. Well, they tend to think of collecting as an attempt to make up for a sense of lack.

Obviously collectors don't have much time for that idea! They also note that, very often, collectors had an early experience with 'one that got away' too. So I guess they reckon that the collector is trying to find and replace that loss and that hurt as it were! It's funny but, paradoxically, a similar but opposite, sort of thing is often said of the problem gambler. You know, that they had an early big win, and from then on they are trying to get that feeling again. The collector and the gambler certainly share in some of their addictive behaviour. Sometimes I think eBay is a bit like the pokies.

G.C. Did you have an early one that got away?

P.P. Ha. I walked into that.

G.C. Well?

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The Space museum and The Collected Works.

P.P. There was this scrapbook album that must have been late 19th to early 20th century which was full of newspaper cuttings of crimes. I just couldn't afford it. I was in Wellington, for a show with Hamish McKay, and it was in John Quilter's bookshop.

I used to have a rule that if something wasn't going to directly affect my work I wouldn't buy it. Of course, now it would seem central to what I'm doing.

G.C. I guess you have to have limits.

P.P. I changed that rule. Now it's just a guide. It was only \$80.

G.C. You can't have everything though. For the collector and the artist it would seem that the hunt is the goal.

P.P. Yes that's nice. Collectors certainly get a rush when they find and when they acquire something, but then, almost immediately, that fades and they are after the next thing in the series.

For some people collection is consumption lived. As my collections have become a big part of my work I've turned shopping into work. (Pauses) On that same Wellington trip I photographed a sign outside a junk shop that was written in chalk, on their sandwich board. It said: "ONE OF EVERYTHING".

I love that sign.

G.C. I think we'll leave it there.

COLLECTED WOKS: TELLING THINGS

Patirck Pound

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