DESIGN RESEARCH ESSAY

Irradiated Landscapes: Journey to Prospect Cottage

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How does one map a memory of a place, a fragment of time, in a way that is as evocative and vivid as the initial experience? When we prospect a landscape, we witness it as it is now; light and shadow define it, complete with its current solar exposure, humidity and temperature. As we then move through the landscape our brains process this information, leading us to perceive something entirely new. Our memory of that perception is also rewritten each time we recall it.

Intended as a process of design research – based at the late Derek Jarman’s Prospect Cottage on Dungeness beach in Kent, UK – this essay attempts to capture the fluidity of these perceived experiences and freeze them into sited mappings, unique to the temporal and climatic experience of the observer. Centered on the production of digitally-crafted ‘perceptual cartographies’, which are designed/generated from the site, it presents an exploration into ways of seeing architecture and landscape. In doing so, the essay calls for the recording of sites and designs in which emotional responses – induced by light – leave traces of the spaces in the individuals who visit them, creating a temporally sensitive and deeply perceptual experience of that place.

Keywords: Design Research; Derek Jarman; Prospect Cottage; Cartography; Photogrammetry; 3D-Scanning; Atmosphere; Immateriality

RADIO (Introduction)

This essay addresses the use of light in architecture, in all of its radiant forms, as intrinsically linked to space and time. It presents an investigation into ways of seeing, following in the tradition of exploring architecture’s meaning and value beyond the merely formal and economic. Instead, the hope is that it reaches beyond the case studies themselves to offer a new methodology for design research that can be applied to a wide range of investigations.

Intended thus as a process of design research – using material data and written evidence from James Turrell’s Skyspace in Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Mike Webb’s Temple Island project, and Yves Klein’s oeuvre – to explore and understand Derek Jarman’s cottage and garden on Dungeness beach in Kent, UK (Figure 1). The study concludes with the production of digitally crafted artefacts that are half-designed-half-generated from the experience of perceiving the latter site. These are realised in the form of models and drawings to be ‘read’ in conjunction with the text. The thesis structure follows the electromagnetic spectrum, beginning with radio waves – the earliest form of electromagnetic communication, and symbolising here the transmission of knowledge in an introductory form – before transitioning through the spectrum to look at alternate effects of radiation upon a natural landscape.

This ‘field-guide’ follows very much in the vein of Rachel Carson’s 1964 book, The Sea Around Us, and as such attempts to draw together distinct areas of interrelated research – architecture, landscape, film, poetry and contemporary physics – to elucidate an otherwise dense and near-impenetrable subject. In her novel, she blended carbon-dating alongside magniloquent descriptions, using poetic language to draw parallels between the tides of our contemporary oceans and the tidal resonance of the young Earth, in which similar violent forces pulled, not on seas of water, but of liquid rock that eventually tore away to form the Moon itself [1: p.9]. Carson’s lyrical approach, devoid of normative temporal scale, requires the reader to build in their minds the history of the early Earth, therefore understanding it as a complex whole and not as a linear, chronological narrative.
This bold approach to storytelling is reminiscent of British filmmaker Derek Jarman’s work as a whole, especially as custodian of Dungeness’s Prospect Cottage from 1986 until his death eight years later [2]. His output is an astonishingly varied one, and as such, this essay proposes that it is best investigated in an exploratory manner, as a continuous project. His book, *Chroma*, published in 1995, takes similarly fragmented journeys back and forth over the stretched-out years of his life, divided into chapters assigned to specific colours. Jarman recites poems and stories – some personal, others appropriated or historical – which relate to the emotive forces associated with each colour, whilst also incorporating curious micro-histories of the origins of pigments and their geological, scientific and cultural properties.

In exploring Jarman’s ideas through his most intensive work, Prospect Cottage, this essay seeks to add original insights to the discourse about perceptions of time within architecture. This essay adopts as its model the allegory of a ‘solar system’ in which the gravitational centre of theoretical interest sits within this small cottage in Dungeness yet orbited by the work and ideas of other artists and architects. Orbital relationships are notoriously complex, and interaction between celestial bodies can also be turbulent, so linearity will not be attempted. Instead, to structure the essay’s path, one of these orbiting phenomena, Mike Webb’s Temple Island project (*Figure 2*), will be introduced to show how one can bring together abstract mathematical/physical theories and architectural design. Other insights will be provided by James Turrell’s Skyspace, which serves to frame the investigations of light within space, and Yves Klein’s ongoing fascination with the colour blue.

Yet the bulk of the essay’s analysis concerns Jarman’s cottage, garden, films, artworks and diaries in their relationships to time. Cinematic studies of his lyrical films are therefore linked to his garden design, and through close exploration of two of his most celebrated films – *The Garden* (1990) and *Blue* (1993) – is revealed his vision of a ‘Garden of Eden’. The New Eden created at Prospect Cottage will also be represented here through the production of drawings – as generated from film clips, taken from the site – and as models. Their aim is to memorialise a perceived moment in time within a context in which our temporal experiences are increasingly under critical pressure, as observed by Juhani Pallasmaa:

![Figure 1: Rear elevation of Prospect Cottage, Dungeness [Courtesy of the author.]](image-url)
‘The architecture of our own time seems to become increasingly rushed and impatient. This neurotic relationship with time is related to the contemporary ideals of agelessness, newness and limitless consumption of consumerist society.’ [3: p.53]

**MICROWAVE (Context)**

Pragmatically, architecture’s pre-occupation with ‘timeless’ buildings is something that requires re-addressing. We are experiencing vast environmental change at the hands of the built environment: hence the investigation is pertinent to architects today, since we now realise progressively how time must be treated as a factor in any spatial design, or conversely, that buildings erected simply for the here-and-now are creating an ineffectual urban environment. Exploring how a building changes over time – and as such, sits within time – is important for the study of the sustainability of the built environment, and hence for the profession as a whole. This essay thus argues that better temporal understanding of a particular place or site is vital to ‘build’ a sense of empathy into that place.

Phenomenological explorations of how time and space are affected by and influence architecture have been carried out before, by the likes of Pallasmaa. Such investigations will be touched upon, yet the journey followed here takes an even more earthly approach, as a materialist formalism – a concept attributed to Yves Klein’s work by Klaus Ottmann:

‘... which attributes ideological meaning to the materials themselves or inscribes linguistic codes onto them, and in part on a participatory humanism, a renewed involvement in the question of being, in transcendence, and in the social by way of the quality and character of the material.’ [4]
Ottmann refers to it elsewhere as ‘spiritual materiality’, and so this concept will be used in this essay to relate the physical realities of the places being explored to their more immaterial properties. In this respect, Turrell’s Skyspace and Prospect Cottage had samples collected from them, with these being recorded and catalogued to further our understanding of their spatio-temporal conditions. In turn, perceptual artefacts, as abstractions from these samples, were then created as key research markers for the study, generating outcomes that captured a moment in time or even glimpsed an as yet unrealised forecast.

Derek Jarman remains the key component for this essay, tracing how Prospect Cottage was turned into an allegory for his silent protest against a government he felt failed to represent British society. His ‘floral occupation’ of the space at Dungeness, adjacent to a huge nuclear power station, went together with several lyrical films he was making at the time, which highlighted particularly the struggles of the working class and the queer community. These films often retold Classical stories by altering history: in jumping in time between events, places and temporal styles, they represented the Dungeness cottage’s garden as much as this garden represented his films.

INFRARED (Temple Island)

Someone equally fascinated by blurring the constituents of time, light and landscape is Mike Webb, a founding member of the Archigram group, born in Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire in 1937. Marking the beginning of the rowing race at Henley Royal Regatta, Temple Island is a small island in the River Thames on which a small folly, or temple, was designed by the architect James Wyatt in 1771. Two centuries or so later in his project, Temple Island, Webb felt that altering its landscape in any way would be inappropriate, and so instead – inspired by relationships between mass, light and velocity – drew comparisons between perspectival view-cones and the motions of objects as they approach the speed of light. By projecting moments of perception along the course of the boat race as architectural drawings, Webb allows the viewer to imagine and interpret the spatial nature of the investigation he was undertaking.

In Figure 3 the distance between the temple and the observer has been subdivided into 32 equal parts both in the plane of the drawing and the plane of perspective. The distances from the temple to each of the lines of subdivision in the plane of the drawing are measured as if they were in the plane of the perspective. The measurements are then plotted on the grey graph. The curve derived is similar to that expressing the relationship between mass of an object and its velocity (from a formula known as the ‘Lorentz Transformation’: measured mass = mass at rest, divided by the square root of 1–V^2/C^2, where V = speed of object and C = speed of light).

Meanwhile, Figure 4 shows a dot matrix of the course as if seen from a periscope in the river, a giant circular dot located in the landscape behind the island, component dots of which vary in brightness. The giant dot may in fact be an elliptical structure which, when viewed from this position appears circular. The plane of the ellipse would then be sloped relative to the centre of vision.

Figure 5 is a perspectival view of the course from the finish, showing the conventional view on the left, with the ‘white shadows’ generated from the in-motion perspective of a participant looking from the opposite direction on the right. Figure 6, shown here in plan, this drawing details only what the tripper at the start of the race sees, thus objects in the landscape cast negative or ‘white’ shadows. In a later version of this drawing, the intense greens at the beginning of the race blend into blue to represent the shift of distant objects to a blue hue due to Rayleigh scattering.

VISIBLE LIGHT (Skyspace)

Physicalising the immaterial is the running theme in all of these investigations, and light is itself a key element in any such conversation. For millennia, it has driven architectural innovation, with many attempting to use light as a means of defining space. Most efforts have concerned themselves with the reaction of light upon a material, as seen for instance in Louis Kahn’s powerful scenographic designs which frame and direct sunlight to illuminate his buildings. No architects, however, certainly according to Filomena Moscatelli, ‘have so fully considered the “thingness” of light itself, and how the experience of light reflects the wondrous and complex nature of human perception’ [5: p.11]. Through his artworks, James Turrell likewise manages to make us believe that the light itself is in fact ‘material’, so much so that in some cases it is even perceived as solid mass.

Fundamentally, matter is comprised of countless particles, atoms of mass, which are either rigidly structured to form solids or else free-flowing at varying densities to form liquids and gases. In contrast, light (radiation) is usually described as a wave, with colour being determined by the relative length of these waves. White light waves that bounce off matter, like sound waves, are hence affected by the specific structure of...
Figure 3: Michael Webb, “Early Perspective of regatta course,” 1987. Drawing/Oil Painting in *Temple Island* by Michael Webb (London: Architectural Association, 1987).

Figure 4: Michael Webb, “Perspectival dot matrix,” 1987. Drawing in *Temple Island* by Michael Webb (London: Architectural Association, 1987).
Figure 5: Michael Webb, “Perspective of regatta course,” 1987. Drawing/Oil Painting in *Temple Island* by Michael Webb (London: Architectural Association, 1987).

Figure 6: Michael Webb, “Early Perspective of the regatta course viewed by an overhead observer,” 1987. Drawing/Oil Painting in *Temple Island* by Michael Webb (London: Architectural Association, 1987).
the particulate matter, producing its colour. This aligns with the traditional way in which light is used in architecture to 'illuminate' space. Yet quantum theory now offers new ways of conceiving light that allow us to not only treat light as particulate matter, but also as something deeply influenced by our own consciousness and perception.

In 'the double slit experiment', light will form interference patterns, just like waves in water, but we do know that light waves are comprised of tiny particles, photons, which can now be fired individually at the double slit. Logically only a single particle would manage to find its way through one of the slits, if at all, but surprisingly, the photographic film detector picks up an interference pattern, as if the particle has split into two, and interacted as a wave. When the photon is under observation, the particle behaves in the way it is expected to, it does not split in two, there is no interference pattern recorded. These properties, which are not yet understood, have ramifications way beyond architecture, but do allow us to attribute physical properties to light.

Upon viewing a Turrell artwork, we question what we are looking at, since the light itself appears to have volume, colour, opacity, even mass [5: p.11]. Perceptive abilities are being tested as the viewer is required to conceive in their minds something different to what they see with their eyes. For many, this results in a 'doubling-up' of the artwork: one image existing in front of them, beautiful and mysterious, perhaps constructed from solid acrylic, whilst another resides in their mind, prioritising conception over perception [6: p.164]. Duplicity of experience is key to beginning to understand how these kinds of lighting effects, affect how we witness time and space.

Turrell himself could be described as a polymath, having studied mathematics, geology and astronomy as well as receiving a degree in perceptual psychology; therefore, he has deep knowledge of theories about light. He examines with particular interest the so-called 'Ganzfield Effect', a disorienting perceptual experiment that consists of filling one's entire field of vision with a solid, undifferentiated colour. With no contrast to occupy the brain, it acts similarly to sensory deprivation wherein visual blackouts and geometric shapes caused by hallucinations take over one's vision [7]. Turrell's pieces seems to revel in this disorientation, allowing the viewer to create their own artwork, deep within their minds, and beyond the constraints of his framing devices.

Skyspace at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (Figures 7 and 8) is but one of many versions of rooflights created by Turrell, yet is also unique in its situation, lighting and architectural form. Although many Turrell projects use artificial light as projections, the Skyspaces are described by the artist as 'vessels', architectures that capture or apprehend the light we perceive [8]. But these vessels should be seen as more than simply that. They are architecturally designed spaces with highly considered materiality, and some, like at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, are formed by converting an existing building.

Altogether, there are five ways in which the careful manipulation of light affects our perceptions of time within Turrell's artworks, as follows:

**i. Direct light**

Plato famously stated that the material world is but a shadow of the world of ideas, and hence that a drawing is therefore a shadow of a shadow [6: p.40]. Turrell's Skyspaces reduce the medium through which he communicates his concepts through simple light and perception, inverting the notion that shadows are merely remnants of ideas, to one where light illuminates them, bringing them centrally into the visual world [5: p.11].

Due to the latitude of Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the sun is almost always at an angle that precludes it from entering the aperture's frame from the perspective of someone seated; instead it is perceived only by someone entering or standing at the centre of the space, looking skyward. This is depicted in Figures 9–11, where Skyspace is modelled alongside a simulation of solar incidence on the site.

Turrell notes: 'In a way, it's like Plato's cave, where we are sitting in the cave looking at the reflection of reality with our backs to reality. I make these spaces where the spaces themselves are perceivers or in some way pre-form perception' [9: p.7]. However, Plato's notion of drawing becomes here instead a photograph of light being cast through the aperture from the sky above. This direct light, falling upon the interior surfaces, competes with the aperture itself for our attention – an environment similar to a camera obscura.

What it tells us is that we dwell within time as much as in space, and architecture mediates our relationship with this fourth dimension, allowing us to understand its scale as humans [3: p.52]. Like many 'land-art' pieces, perceiving the world as projected inside this lens of the Skyspace leads to a heightened awareness of the sun's motion and environmental conditions outside. We literally see the time passing before our eyes: Turrell's vessel becomes a sundial, with occupants inhabiting the space of time.
Figure 7: Skyspace, Yorkshire Sculpture Park 13:15 28/12/17 [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 8: Axonometric Sections, Southeast Elevation, Plan and Roof Plan of Skyspace at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park [Courtesy of the author].
Figure 9: skyspace, Yorkshire Sculpture Park 13:15 28/12/17 [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 10: Internal perspective of solar incidence on the Dungeness site through an aperture at various times of the year/day [Courtesy of the author].
**ii. Diffused light/Coloured light**

Normally, slight changes in light condition are perceived as irrelevant, sometimes distracting, or else as background occurrences that our visual system is tuned to consciously adjust to during the day [5: p.27]. Turrell brings this background information to the foreground, using the way our brains perceive colour to force us to question what we are seeing. Like the direct projection of sunlight into the Skyspace, indirect diffuse light slowly transforms throughout the day and year, revealing a tempo that can only be examined fully when inside the installation, with the ‘white’ frame in the roof acting as the control. When the sky is viewed through the aperture, its hue and temperature are presented to the observer, giving them a sense of atmospheric time.

Turrell, in ‘composing’ these scenes, uses simple optical tricks to alter perceptions of the sky and its colour, and therefore time. The journey into the inner-zone of the Yorkshire Skyspace begins outside the structure: with the banked earth framing it, and the sky above, we subconsciously take note of the latter’s colour at that given moment before entering the corridor (which sits perpendicular to the main space.) This liminal zone is dark and barely lit, the radiant light from outside bouncing off the grey concrete to condition people’s eyes. The sky’s colour when seen from this point is instantly exaggerated, due to a continuous strip of fluorescent tubes up-lighting the white, canvas-like walls of the space, radiating them with an orange/pink light. This altered colour, complementary to the turquoise-blue of one’s idealised sky, increases intensity and saturation through our own visual mechanism.

*Figure 11: Axonometric section of light cast by solar incidence upon the site [Courtesy of the author]*.
When gazed upon, it can induce the Ganzfield Effect, producing disorientation and removal from one’s current temporal context. Biologically, human perception is explained thus:

‘Visual sensory data are coordinated with incoming contextual information from the other senses related to past experiences of a comparable nature and given attention or not depending on whether the incoming stimulus is classified as signal or noise.’ [10: p.35]

When the brain is deprived of such signals, and receives only a constant visual input, it generates its own, hallucinatory signals based on remembered experience, again affecting our relationship to the past within the present.

**iii. Lowering the sky**

In Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, the famous water channel directed towards the sunset over the Pacific Ocean directs one’s view: due to the subtle stepping down of the terrace towards the sea, it appears the ocean and sun beyond are part of an ‘infinity terrace’ [11: p.186]. This ties the experience within it to the sun, and thus an inescapable celestial experience of time’s passage.

In Turrell’s Skyspace (**Figure 12**), by always tapering the window towards the sky, the edge of the built form is not read, and so the sky above is not understood as distant. His work in general is critical of the

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**Figure 12:** Diagram to show how James Turrell and Louis Kahn ‘pull’ the scene into their spaces: ‘thinning’ of the frame to the sky creates the illusion of reducing the distance between ‘here’ and ‘there’ [Courtesy of the author].
traditional ‘white-cube’ gallery, yet the proportions of the opening of the installation in Yorkshire Sculpture Park, together with its lack of visual boundary, feels exactly like looking at a canvas – albeit one hung flat on the ceiling. It pulls the external atmosphere into our personal space, and on a clear day appears quite otherworldly:

‘There could be no better illustration of an ambition of modern art to put an otherwise distant truth directly in front of us than the heroic gesture of bringing the sky down to the earth of the art gallery for our immediate scrutiny.’ [5: p.13]

Like the Salk Institute, here we experience time through a connection to the heavens; an effect particularly pertinent whenever a passing cloud challenges one’s perception of spatial depth. When seen on a crisp, clear winter’s day, the stratosphere seems to be inside the Skyspace, with us, yet if a rogue cloud then invades the ‘canvas’, our perception is altered. First, the cloud is not seen, seeming perhaps only a white smudge, but as it travels across, it is revealed for what it is. But where is it? How high is it? The motion of the cloud, and its speed, hence affects our experience of time, snapping us back into the present, leaving the timeless world of the Skyspace behind.

A nephological calculation like this happens very fast in our eyes and brains, yet the end result is the same: an altered/altering perception of time in the space, shattered always by passing clouds. Perhaps for this reason there are relatively few of Turrell’s Skyspaces in Britain.

iv. The Deer Shelter/Regionalism

At all of the fifty Skyspaces found globally, their qualities of the light and sky experienced are unique, and so usually are their architectural and historical approaches [9: p.8]. James Turrell seems to enjoy hiding his own clean and minimal architectural stages for perception within surprisingly unexpected, vernacular ‘vessels’.

In general, the Skyspaces in Britain – Tewlwolow Kernow in Cornwall, Cat Cairns and at Yorkshire Sculpture Park – exhibit externally familiar forms, whether round or rectangular, using local materials and constructed in a regionally specific way. Cat Cairns can be said to hark back to the Megalithic structures of ancient Britain, designed to celebrate the sun’s cycles. Even when a converted building, as in the Yorkshire example that is entered through one of two archways of an eighteen-century listed building, the Skyspaces come with architectural baggage.

Although modest in form and detail, the altered agricultural barn at Yorkshire Sculpture Park – once used to shelter the estate’s deer in bad weather – is recognisable as just that: a building from a specific time and place. The timeless peace of Turrell’s inner sanctum is thus preceded by historical experience, grounded in context, a fact recognised by the artist himself as it is the only Skyspace to be named after the original use of the space/building in which it sits.

In discussing Walter Benjamin’s writings on montage, Jonathan Hill writes that ‘montage involves the depletion of previous meanings and the formulation of new ones by appropriation and dialectical juxtaposition of fragments in a new context’ [6: p.45]. This point can also be applied to Turrell’s re-appropriation of an agricultural structure for a regional art gallery, deliberately distorting one’s perception of place and time.

v. Decay

Another unique feature of the Skyspace in Yorkshire Sculpture Park is the decay pattern continually being formed on the exhibit’s concrete floor by weathering (Figure 13). Rain and snow fall through the aperture, casting a particular kind of shadow similar to the projection of solar radiation through direct light. This scarring is pertinent to the analysis here as it sits uneasily with the Classical notion of a fixed artwork, sealed behind glass, not to be touched or marked by human interaction or occupation [6: p.51]. The gradual marking on Turrell’s floor is now larger than the opening above, suggesting a kind of radiant diffraction of weathering as an active agent.

As a critique of the reconstruction of Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion, Jonathan Hill suggests the process sought to pull the work away from architecture and into the realm of art as untouchable object. He observes that ‘water lilies and flags (that fluttered in the wind) are absent from the 1986 pavilion because they would introduce life, climate and decay, all incompatible with the experience of a contemplative artwork’ [6: p.138]. It is reminiscent of the lack of personal control associated with modern sealed interior environments, which for Karsten Harries ‘is not just a matter of creating an artificial environment that offers protection against an often unfriendly world; [for] as important as physical control is psychological control’ [12: p.59]. This ‘unfriendly world’ is one of inclement weather, and therefore of unpredictable time [6: p.9].
In this sense, the echoes of rain and snow add not only architectural mass to Turrell’s Skyspace, but also temporal weight to the exhibit, affecting our perception of its duration and longevity. Scarring and staining thus enhance the perception of celestial movements and realignments so prevalent in Turrell’s artworks, by literally cementing them into the concrete structure:

"These encounters with Turrell’s art tactfully undermine the certainty of our visual experience, but more importantly, expand our sense of malleability and larger creative potential of our perception. How expansive might our perception be? Under the right circumstances what could we see?" [5: p.19]

ULTRAVIOLET (Artefacts)

James Turrell’s medium is often said to be perception itself, made manifest through light and space, whilst the French artist Yves Klein is quoted as declaring: ’My paintings are only the ashes of my art’. As this essay’s intention is to explore how one might record or materialise a moment in time, similarly artefacts can be understood as the remnants of this immaterial experience, through acts of physicalisation. Through such a process, by sampling the DNA of the space, meaning can be seen inscribed as ‘spiritual materiality’.

The three scans (Figure 14) are of cyanotype photographic prints on watercolour paper; they were produced in-situ at the Yorkshire Skyspace. Cyanotype prints are generated when the photographic chemical applied to the medium is exposed to ultraviolet light, converting it into Prussian Blue dye, thereby staining the paper. As cyanotyping is a slow process, it is normally used for photogrammetry, a process that collects two-dimensional data from the three-dimensional world by a process of flattening and recording shadows. Hence the objects are normally placed onto the paper and left to leave their mark created by daylight; in this case, the artefacts record the action of the white ‘shadows’ created by the aperture in the Skyspace.

Each plate reveals a darker region where sunlight has slowly tracked across. Through this process, they reveal daylight’s interaction with the architecture, with its specific quality at that specific time. These
recordings of Turrell’s installation offer attempts to abstract the ideas around it, in line with Pallasmaa’s belief that there has been a shift from linear historical representation in art towards a situation where present and future are fused:

‘In the early years of the 20th century, progressive artists abandoned the idea of an objectified and static world altogether, as depicted by the perspectival representation and the linear narratives, and entered the dynamic experiential reality of perception and consciousness that constantly fuses reality and dream, actuality and memory, present and future.’ [3: p.53]

**X-RAY (Derek Jarman)**

Derek Jarman was an artist, writer, filmmaker and gardener. He was undoubtedly epic in his imagination, writing that: ‘An artist is worth a thousand centuries’ [3: p.53]. His works spanned from 1970 until his death in 1994. Jarman however felt that his entire oeuvre was heavily interrelated [13: p.34], such that it could be experienced as a whole – as ‘an epoch’, in the words of Yves Klein. The lyrical approach in many of Jarman’s temporal works therefore created ripples of architectural implications in his more spatial works, notably his cottage garden. This section will hence introduce Jarman as a filmmaker and theorist, before exploring the Dungeness cottage garden in relation to his cinematic films and his approach to painting.

Jarman’s most celebrated works are those captured on celluloid, over which he assumed great control. His films are known for their acute portrait of late-twentieth century Britain, focusing on the tribulations of many identities that did not conform to the male-dominated, heteronormative society in which he lived. They are brash, demanding, in-your-face pieces, reflections of how he saw society and the characters within them. When we consider his work in its entirety, it is unsurprising that his choice of home and garden echoed the often-abrasive sentiments of his cinematic work. In this regard the cottage is, as space and place, a form of protest. Perhaps it is a quiet protest, but nonetheless one that subverts expectations that one would always choose not to live in the shadow of a nuclear power station, or that one would never try to cultivate a garden in a location, Dungeness beach, that is regarded as Britain’s ‘only desert’.

Jarman trained as a fine artist at the Slade School of Art at University College London and is said to have always regarded himself primarily as a painter [14]. However, he was much influenced by the queer and punk trends so present in the politically charged 1970s world in which he found himself, and so took up and indeed gained notoriety for his sharply observational films.

**i/ Blue (1993)**

‘Blue is constant. Red is quickly spent. An explosion of Intensity. It burns itself. Disappears like fiery sparks into the gathering shadow.’ [15: p.37]

*Blue*, the last film made by Jarman prior to his death, is a 76-minute experimental feature with very little visual content other than a solid blue celluloid representation of his conversations and poetry about his terminal condition. There is the occasional scratch on screen that distracts from an otherwise entirely timeless experience. When viewed in an auditorium, the size of the cinema screen pushes the piece into a Ganzfield Effect-like experience, taking the viewer away from their usual sense of time [16].
Jarman’s fascination with Yves Klein was deep; his final feature, which is still screened in galleries today, is perhaps his most abstract and ‘nouveau-realist’ piece – the movement formed by Yves Klein: Nouveau Réalisme – new ways of perceiving the real. Figures 15 and 16 depict Jarman’s obsession with Klein’s writings on the colour blue and the nature of the immaterial in art. Klein created his monochromes for the viewer to conceive their own images and emotional responses, with references to the sea and sky never far away, and he often used water as a means of explaining his work [13: p.233]. Much in the way that Klein attempted to realise his ideas architecturally, Jarman found films and his garden design to be his ideal media.

Jarman’s films were mirrors of society, addressing issues that he felt needed commenting on, but also mirrors of the artist himself. Blue is hence a reflection of Jarman, by Jarman, when he was losing his sight to

Figure 15: Derek Jarman, ‘Notes on Blue’ (1993), ink/paint on paper, in sketchbook/diary, Tate Britain, London.

Figure 16: Yves Klein, ‘IKB Panel’, pigment/resin on panel, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice; and Derek Jarman, Blue (1993), film, Tate Britain, London.
AIDS-related illness near the end of his life. All his films are highly symbolic and poetic, like Klein using water and the sky as means to convey salvation and ultimate freedom [13: p.179]. None achieved the same level of abstraction that is found in Blue: ‘We may say that the screen of Blue is nothing other than a final ocean mirror’ [13: p.203]. The script for Blue was based on his diary entries in his book, Chroma, reiterating Jarman’s fascination with non-linear time. The text is seemingly random, jumping from diary entry to notes on history, art criticism and colour; however, the entire piece is held together through its chapter headings based on colour. In much the same way, the constant ultramarine screen elevates Blue from radio programme to lyric film, ending with distant ocean sounds that were likely recorded on the shingle at Dungeness: ‘Every moving encounter with art ... slows down and suspends the understanding of time and opens up a view to a calm and tranquil duration. The experience is liberated from the flow of time, we encounter the work as a duration or permanence rather than a passing impression.’ [3: p.55]

ii/ The Garden (1990)

‘I want to share this wilderness of failure
The others have built you a highway – fast lanes in both directions
I offer you a journey without direction
uncertainty and no sweet conclusion
When the light faded I went in search of myself
There were many paths and many destinations.’ [17]

Jarman’s 1990 feature, The Garden, was shot on the headland of Dungeness, with the cottage, garden and sea forming an ethereal backdrop to many of its scenes, removing us from any recognisable time-frame due to their sporadic-ness. As spliced together scenes from multiple, wide-ranging historical periods, the film retells the Passion of the Christ, in which Jesus is portrayed as a persecuted homosexual figure existing within a confusing, aggressive world. Although politically urgent, the pace of the film leaves room for contemplation, much like the experience of actually being in a garden [13: p.166].

Symbolic references are rife in Jarman’s work, particularly those that attempt to subvert the usual heterosexual monopoly over history. In his writings, and of course in films like The Garden, there are many consciously verbose references to queer life and homosexual desire. Yet there are many more hidden in the subtext of what Jarman chose to pull from the past into the present. For example, his use of the blue delphinium – a flower associated with hermaphrodites in Greek mythology – peppered his poems and the closing of his later film, Blue, where it is reserved for his lover [13: p.45].

This queer retelling of history is an important aspect of his work: ‘Jarman’s journal writings attempt to rupture monumental history with the reconstitution of the sacred’ [18: p.166]. To understand why his garden sits so strangely within our space-time continuum, it helps to appreciate that his stories in themselves also sit ‘out-of-time’; at least out of time that we are traditionally led to believe has passed. Instead, his Dungeness garden is intended as a representation of The Garden, rooted in the earliest days of human existence.

Jarman was extremely opposed to the commercialisation of society under Thatcherite Conservatism, and to the exploitation of others [13: p.45]. By combining this social concern with an alternative dialogue with history, he manages to comment upon, by directly disassociating from, his contemporary political context. Architecture does not escape Jarman’s harsh analytical critique; in the twentieth minute of The Garden, we are bombarded by credit-card advertisements, showing the Devil and his servant performing in front of the Lloyd’s Building designed by Richard Rogers Partnership (Figure 17) – used here as a bastion of the supposedly ‘forward-thinking’, free-trade, highly commercialised City of London then being rebuilt.

Figure 17: Derek Jarman, The Garden (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.
Many actors in Jarman’s films play several roles throughout. Tilda Swinton is seen initially as the Madonna with Child (Figure 18), dressed and made-up to echo these icons of Christianity. This image is framed for several minutes within the film, as a hoard of paparazzi in balaclavas vie for her attention and smile. The slow realisation of the changing reality from one end to the other of a 2,000-year scale is matched by the shift in attitudes the characters have for one another. This scene takes a sour turn, as the photographers push beyond their limits, losing respect for their subject, ending the scene as a violent chase. The imagery is jarring and harsh, yet is designed such that we see the director, Jarman, as invasive, by bringing the private into the public for us viewers [13: p.185].

Of his films that are set, at least in part, on Dungeness beach, The Garden is most explicit about the setting and its impact upon the story. The ‘fall’ of humankind from the Garden of Eden holds an interesting relationship to Jarman’s existence here; whether in the exposing of human cruelty in this film, or in the creation of his ‘anti-Eden’, his own, private, seemingly impossible garden. Figure 19, taken from the first ten minutes of The Garden, shows a boy in a white vest dragging a large cutting of irradiated sea kale across some laundry. This is done in an almost ceremonial way, set against the backdrop of the nuclear power station, pulling the present into the past, forging new relevance for an ancient story. The power station itself, with scenes of industrial decay (Figure 20) and shots of crows devouring carrion, all native to Dungeness, become characters in Jarman’s multi-layered critique not only of the place of homosexuality in society, but also of concern for the protection of the environment from industrial pollution.

Figure 18: Derek Jarman, The Garden (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.

Figure 19: Derek Jarman, The Garden (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.

Figure 20: Derek Jarman, The Garden (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.
GAMMA (Prospect Cottage)

Prospect Cottage sits between the only road, and railway on the ness; a harsh working landscape, watched over by the bulk of Dungeness Power Station, containing two active and two decommissioned Magnox nuclear reactors, emitting up to twenty-five-times the average UK background radiation into the surrounding environment [19]. It is one of the largest expanses of shingle in Europe, being designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The headland is also moving, pushed by the waves up the coast towards the south, with the power station edging closer to the sea as the world moves beneath it [20: p.288]. Photographs of this highly atmospheric site are shown in Figures 21–24.

Previously a fisherman’s house, Jarman bought Prospect Cottage in 1986 after being diagnosed with HIV. The quiet iconoclasm associated with the cottage is perhaps due to its distinctive bright yellow window frames set against black tarred wood, painted as such before it was purchased, which offsets it from its bleak context. Gradually spending more time here towards his death in 1994, Jarman’s relationship with the cottage’s garden is complex and well documented; his diaries, Modern Nature, chronicle two years of experiences in the garden – in his typical style, interspersed with anecdotes and past memories sparked by particular flowers and plants.

Dungeness’s climate is harsh, exposed and open to the sea; there are few tall elements, whether man-made or organic, as most plants stay low, forced to do so by the strong wind. Fittingly, the garden at Prospect Cottage is comprised of carefully curated plants, artefacts and stones. It represents an unofficial, technically illegal, imposition of Jarman’s making onto the beach. Many of the recycled objects are positioned to add some verticality into the scene, pulling the landscape and the viewer’s eye upwards towards the dwelling, whilst also structuring the garden in relation to the power lines overhead, allowing for integration into its surroundings and demarcating which plants require support to grow tall against the strong winds [21: p.177].

Figure 21: 1:20,000 general plan of Dungeness [Courtesy of the author, generated by using vector map/geospatial data from the UK Ordnance Survey and EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service].
**Figure 22:** 1:5,000 plan of Prospect Cottage and its garden in context [Courtesy of the author, generated by using vector map/geospatial data from the UK Ordnance Survey and EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service].

**Figure 23:** 1:150 plan and elevations of Prospect Cottage [Courtesy of the author, generated using 3D-model data from Helen Allsopp, HAllsopp_ProspectHouse_Model.3dm].
Although perhaps natural in origin, some of Derek Jarman’s curated stones are arranged into numerous circle formations and clusters (Figure 25). These miniature standing stones are of great significance to Jarman, with him writing in his diary on Friday, 10th August 1990: ‘Beach-combed all day, and finished the grey stone circle–waterfall. In the late evening the moon came up dull and orange on the axis of my dolmens. [22: p.311]. Often referred to in his writings as ‘henges’ [21: p.174] – thus relating them to ancient structures such as Stonehenge – the presence of these monuments evoke a Neolithic recording of seasonal change through the motions of the sun and moon. And in the case of Prospect Cottage, it went beyond simple decoration, for Jarman had also ‘read all the mystical books about ley-lines and circles’ [23: p.47] that were discussed in Alexander Thom’s *Megalithic Lunar Observatories* (1970) – a key text for those obsessed with decoding Britain’s ancient monumental landscapes.

**Figure 26** provides a diagram of the moon-rise and moon-set from our vantage point in Britain, as the moon swings, approximately, between the sunrise and sunset angles also shown; it completes one full swing north-to-south and back again in one lunar month, whereas the sun, as we all know, takes one year [24: p.17, 123]. This relationship was observed and mapped at Neolithic standing-stone sites, and used to predict the coming of summer and to celebrate the repetition of these cycles. For Jarman, these bastions of infinite time were symbolic of his desire to overcome his illness. He states that ‘the gardener digs in another time ...
Figure 25: Standing Stone Circle at Prospect Cottage [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 26: Lunar/Tidal Relationships [Courtesy of the author].
without past or future, beginning or end’ [22: p.30]. Separating gardens from the pressures of life and the reality of death, Jarman sought sanctuary here, in his own personal New Eden, linking his garden to celestial motion and to time [21: p.176].

The vertical elements of Jarman’s garden add to the feeling of suspense shared by many who visit, waiting to bear witness to the power of nature and the extreme weather experienced here. It is reminiscent of Walter De Maria’s Lightning Field (1970), in New Mexico, where nothing normally happens, yet the effect of the lightning rods offered up to the sky across the stark landscape is powerful: ironically, the installation affords great safety if there were a lightning storm. As Hill notes, we welcome these ambivalent feelings: ‘The pleasure of the sublime is at first threatening and then reassuring as comprehension increases and fear diminishes’ [6: p.119].

*Journey to Avebury*, an early film of Jarman’s from 1971 (**Figure 27**), gives clues to his long-lasting obsession with these structures. The journey is silent and short, at only ten-minutes; nonetheless his training at the Slade School of Art becomes clear when watching his collection of scenes where the camera is static, each treated as if a painting. Neither a still photograph, nor capturing a moment in time, the scenes are more akin to how William Turner recorded subjects through various weathers and from multiple angles [25: p.368]. Jarman frames the changing light, colour and atmosphere of each moment, allowing the temporal nature of the journey to be communicated in a lyrical manner devoid of linear narrative.

He also filters the information through colours – in this case yellow – as if sharing a forgotten memory rather than an actual record of a place. Like the use of the ‘Claude Glass’ (i.e. black mirror) device used by Picturesque artists, perhaps these colours represent Jarman’s own memories of how he perceived the landscape at a certain point in his own history: ‘Yellow excites a warm and agreeable impression. If you look through yellow Glass at a landscape the eye is gladdened’ [15: p.92].

![Figure 27: Derek Jarman, *Journey to Avebury* (1971), film.](image-url)
Jarman’s attitude towards communicating abstract ideas is carried forward into his ‘Avebury Series’ of paintings, which he worked on in the 1970s after his film on the subject. Capturing only the landscape features he felt important to show – telegraph poles, the standing-stones themselves, and the red landscape reflecting the orange of the atmosphere – all are portrayed as temporal devices. They are kept austere, but detailed with the shadows cast by the features, which in turn links these views to the sun once more, connecting them to celestial motion and time.

Over a decade after his Avebury paintings, Jarman discovered Prospect Cottage at Dungeness, and immediately spotted affinities. Figure 28, for example, reveals the view across the road from the cottage’s front garden towards the sea, complete with his own standing-stones (made from driftwood) and telegraph poles receding into the distance. The similarity of these scenes is striking, showing that Jarman was interested in three-dimensionalising his paintings on Dungeness beach. Although he never said it explicitly, it seems likely that Jarman wanted consciously to recreate a sense of Avebury’s cyclical time within his garden.

In one of his poems he writes of himself and his partner:

‘Lying awake under the starry constellations
they listen to the music of time,
great ancestral voices
Henge and Dolmen.’ [23: p.47]

This explicit reference to almost unimaginable timescales is the first of several from Jarman upon this theme and offers a key to unlocking his obsession with the re-writing of historical time.

**ii/ Jarman’s New Eden**

‘A personal mythology recurs in my writing ... For me this archaeology has become obsessive, for the experts’ my sexuality is a confusion. All received information should make us invertsad. But before I finish I intend to celebrate our corner of paradise, the part of the garden the Lord forgot to mention.’ [22: p.23]

Describing the lost objects and rubbish that support the blooming plants at Prospect Cottage (Figure 29), Melissa Zeiger also asserts: ‘Over the years it has become a touchstone for a certain way of fashioning a garden, one that can encompass beauty and ugliness, the utopian and the apocalyptic’ [26: p.6]. Perhaps it is also a model for his representations of the past and the future. Jarman was opposed to the Modernist eradication of history [20: p.296] and was dedicated in his work to bringing the past into the present, adapting it to make comments about our time. Gardens appear in many of Jarman’s works, ‘where they are a metaphor for pain and pleasure, for Gethsemane and Eden’ [27], one of the inspirations for which he recalled in his diaries when visiting Rome’s Borghese Gardens. Landscaped from 1605 for the-then Pope’s nephew, Scipione Borghese, this park in central Rome was once the site of extreme frivolity, excess and
indulgence – a kind of paradise, or Garden of Eden, for those wealthy enough to be admitted. Yet it can thus also be seen as a kind of anti-Eden, as the home of the ‘most hedonistic society since the Renaissance’ [18: p.117] – which had also been effectively the home of Jarman himself, as for a brief period in 1946 he had lived nearby.

As cultural attitudes shifted in nineteenth-century Rome, the Borghese Gardens transitioned into public open spaces, for the enjoyment of everybody. Along with this social change came architectural alterations, including the additions of colonial artefacts and monuments to ancient civilisations, taken from places like Egypt [18: p.118]. One of these artefacts was a Water Clock, which Jarman wrote of in terms of its relationship to the way the ancient Egyptians first measured time, through the rise and fall of the River Nile. By ‘civilising’ the newly acquired land of the Borghese Gardens, the Italian state were now enforcing a sense of time into the park by installing such symbols of imperialism.

According to Judeo-Christian tradition, the ‘fall’ from the Garden of Eden gave rise to the unpredictability of weather and the inevitability of human time [28]. Yves Klein, who hated the idea of birds invading his sky [29], and James Turrell’s in his ‘fields’ of light, both attempted through hallucinatory colours to remove us from the earthly realm bound by atmospheric turbulence. Derek Jarman’s garden is of similar vein, subverting the usual course of time to achieve a sublime effect such as that of International Klein Blue (IKB). Relating his own garden to Eden once more, Jarman observed: ‘The word paradise is derived from the Persian – ‘a green place’. Paradise haunts gardens, and some gardens are paradises. Mine is one of them’ [23: p.40]. At Prospect Cottage there is a kind of removal of, or escape from, human time and terminality within its garden, an attempt to regain a personal Eden. As Karsten Harries writes:

‘In paradise man was at home and knew his place; in that bounded garden there was no need for a house. Only the fall, which cast man out of paradise and forced him to toil on cursed ground, brought with it the necessity of building.’ [12: p.59]
iii/ Nuclear time/decay

Much as weather was supposedly born of time arising from the ‘fall’, electromagnetic weather is, at Dungeness, born of the incursion of the nuclear power station since 1965. Whilst William Turner thrived on depicting the mixture of the natural and man-made weathers of industrial England, Jarman was very much aware of the radiant weather flowing across the shingle, making use of it in his writings and films.

Dungeness Power Station (Figure 30), which was due to begin defueling procedures in 2018, but will now operate until 2028, will remain a crucial part of the landscape during its decommissioning phase for centuries to come [30]. And as such, it will continue to emit fields of electromagnetic smog, permeating the buildings around [20: p.298]. Dungeness-A, the original Magnox reactor, completed its defueling in 2012, yet as late as 2006 it was emitting to the public up to 60% of the permitted dose limit of 1mSv [31]. Its so-called ‘care and maintenance’ phase – in which partially radioactive materials, including the reactor core, are left to decay – will now therefore last until 2102, with the final waste processing and site clearance lasting a further century [32]. Nuclear power stations like the original Dungeness-A are thus known to have emitted large amounts of direct radiation into their locale (Figure 31), with long-lasting effects on the environment. As the Environment Agency stated in a recent report: ‘As in previous years … carbon-14 was detected in locally produced foods at concentrations above background values’ [31].

Like a boundless fog of energy, Prospect Cottage Garden has no formal boundary; instead, its ‘edge is perceived rather than felt’ [20: p.301]. Radioactivity across the beach is being absorbed by the vegetation that clings to life on it, especially by the sea-kale that is abundant around the cottage [23: p.15]. Jarman’s garden thus becomes a kind of climate register for the very subject of his environmental protest, growing and absorbing the energy from the decaying power station. He also makes use of the negative space within it [26: p.5], with raked shingle circles and clearings between gorse bushes showing that it is not fully planted – leaving room for visitors to feel exposed and vulnerable to the electromagnetic weather around.

Jarman chose to live in a place dominated by this symbol of ‘modern nature’, decay and time, so as to be able to protest as well as to survive against such forces, thus conflating environmental pollution and his own illness. He populated his landscape with found items, many of them reclaimed from war defence structures, which rusted and changed due to the battery of elemental attacks experienced on the ness.

Figure 30: Dungeness Power Station from the beachfront [Courtesy of the author].
It helped him to ‘create a dialogue with monumentality in the use of rot and decay’ [13: p.200]. The outcome of this process is not always clear, yet remained important, since the presence of dying plants and ruined materials is strong throughout the garden. Steven Holl, writing in his book, *Parallax*, declares:

‘Time is only understood in relation to a process or a phenomenon. The duration of human beings alive in one time and place is a relational notion. The time of one’s being is provisional; it is circumstance with an adopted aim for the time being. Space – and architecture – exceeds the provisional.’ [33: p.183]

Perhaps Jarman felt that the time of his own being at its most vulnerable could be ‘overcome’ through his husbandry of this tough landscape – and that this was best expressed symbolically through a garden that
so openly mediates between the existence that all of us experience within contemporary society, and the continual encroachment of what he saw as the industrial destruction of our environment.

**iv/ Prospect/protest**

Derek Jarman thus used the cottage as a means to protest against the environmental disaster represented by the nuclear power station. ‘Traditionally, threats from outside come in a number of guises, notable inclement weather and undesirable people’, writes Jonathan Hill. ‘Both are associated with the formless, fluid, unstable and unpredictable’ [6: p.9]. Does Jarman’s garden offer a kind of liminal space between the two, as a buffer of protection and personal space? The cottage became a private escape for Jarman, but the garden surrounding it was always what drew attention to the essence of the place: ‘The Garden is a landscape ... it ends at the horizon’ [34].

Dungeness as a community initially grew with no planning restrictions. Located on the southern fringes of Kent, its residences are a collection of once-temporary lodges and architectural experiments, each a memorial to a particular period and technology [20: p.288]. Colin Ward’s writings about the idea of ‘Arcadia’ and its relationship to individual designs and buildings are highly pertinent in this area. Derek Jarman clearly went against the grain in moving to such an isolated location, taking up residence in an old fisherman’s cottage.

On the subject of vernacular architecture, Ward observes that it ‘has never been homogenised, it can never be an international language, for it is rooted in places and their indigenous materials and patterns of life’ [35: p.12]. Prospect Cottage, a tar-coated, wooden-framed, single-storey dwelling is the perfect example of a Dungeness residence, built long before Jarman’s purchase. It still stands, gazing out over the multi-million-pound power station that is slowly collapsing into the shifting sea. Jarman’s diary entry on 24th February 1989 described a great storm, through which the cottage easily survived, standing firm on its foundations – although without power for a week [22: p.19]. His films and paintings seek to reference this place of protest: they use defensive infrastructure (Figure 32) to symbolise the ‘watch-tower’ and the encroachment on the landscape, while also highlighting the strength of his botanical project against the power of time, visualised here as the weather itself in Figure 33.

In his 1976 book, *Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, Ward posits that the post-war Attlee government failed to recognise the seriousness of the housing crisis at the time, giving rise to ‘seizures of empty buildings by homeless returning servicemen, which occurred in 1919 … and the occupation of empty houses at Blantyre in the spring of 1945’ [36: p.19]. Although Derek Jarman did not illegally seize his cottage, he did begin to subvert the premise that there should be no visible border with the property and the rest of the ness, by slowly planting and cultivating his own garden, sporadically, pervading the surrounding scrubland. Much like Frank Lloyd Wright, whose internationally publicised ‘outrage’ at the installation of power lines in front of Taliesin West in the late-1940s [37: p.154], Jarman felt he knew what was best for the landscape here.

Jarman’s ‘vegetal occupation’ can be regarded as example of his willingness to take control of his own surroundings, to ‘force’ a space he could make and rule. (Used here, not in the aggressive sense, but in the botanical, in that his garden was ‘forced’, much like Rhubarb grown in the dark, to grow in irradiated and parched scrubland.) Colin Ward has also pointed out that vernacular architecture’s ‘most disturbing features for the businessman, is its longevity, and its builders’ [35: p.12]. Jarman, although not a builder, was at least a cultivator and protector.

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**Figure 32:** Derek Jarman, *The Garden* (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.
His descriptions of managing his garden showed his reliance upon the ‘surprising survival of herbs and flowers in a place where they should not thrive’ [18: p.115] – a tangible allegory for his support of those communities he supported so vehemently. He would not disappear completely in a society that, under a Conservative government committed to neo-liberal economics, had become overwhelmed by high-rise, high-tech, high-profit architecture, as well as by extreme fear in the wake of the AIDS crisis. Considering there are so many stone dolmens encircling Prospect Cottage, it is interesting to imagine them as a kind of defensive strategy. Jarman certainly made reference to his ‘dragon-toothed garden … to defend the porch, steadfast warriors … even to the end of the world’ [23: p.47]. As Gaston Bachelard suggests, we comfort ourselves by reliving our memories of protection [12: p.60], and so perhaps this linking of time and defence was related strongly in Jarman’s mind.

v/ Light/colour

‘Colour slips through the fingers and escapes. You can’t lock it in a jewel box as it vanishes in the dark.’ [15: p.23]

For Jarman, colour has the power to transcend the immaterial and to influence time. His diaries, written under the title of Chroma, often referred to colour as a spatial medium, and thus architectural in a specific sense. As he recalled: ‘I waited a life-time to build my garden, I built my garden with the colours of healing’ [15: p.68]. It allowed the intrinsic properties of colours to act upon him or any occupant of the garden: ‘In Antiquity, Colour/Chroma was considered a drug. Colour therapy.’ In his film, The Garden, the viewer is presented with many colours, and then, towards the end, several sequences of moving clouds, waves and weather are repeated but each with differently filtered hues (Figure 34).

In Jarman’s view, just as time is linked to space, it is also linked to colour. Explaining a poem about Prospect Cottage’s garden, he wrote:

‘Archaic Green colours time. Passing centuries are evergreen. To mauve belongs a decade. Red explodes and consumes itself. Blue is infinite. Green clothes the earth in tranquility, ebbs and flows with the seasons. In it is the hope of Resurrection.’ [15: p.67]

His garden, conceived as a paradise – as green place – and thus as botanical architecture, came to influence his own perception of time towards the end of his life. In Dungeness, his passing decades were coloured green with the memories of gardens past: ‘Time – as experienced duration – is relative to an individual and to a space’ [33: p.188].

The Inca peoples of South America held the belief that the past, present and future happen concurrently, and that therefore ancestors and potential descendants were sharing the city they inhabited [38]. This was not just an arbitrary belief about how the people could manifest themselves as spirits: it was a literal, and in some way very practical, view of how time actually works. Ironically, due to quantum mechanics, this idea gained new relevance; sober physicists discussing phenomena such as superposition argue that multiple ‘now’s’ are all happening right now, but that only one of these ‘now’s’ manifests itself as ‘The Now’ when it is observed by us as such.
Figure 34: Derek Jarman, *The Garden* (1990), film, Basilisk Communications.

Figure 35: Dungeness lighthouse as viewed from the beachfront [Courtesy of the author].
Alongside the overriding sense of 'controlled' decay associated with Dungeness, and especially Prospect Cottage Garden itself, our sense of time is affected in another way. Jarman’s relationship with light and time was always lyrical, with him stating: ‘Time is what keeps the light from reaching us’ [15: p.115]. This is expressed vividly by the adjacent Dungeness lighthouse (Figure 35), built of concrete rings in 1961, which invades the otherwise timeless beach. The metronomic quality of its revolving light is felt keenly by those who visit or reside there at night; however, like the Water Clock in the Borghese Gardens, the rhythm invades the almost tangible permanence of Jarman’s garden, imposing its ‘civilised’ temporal rule onto his anti-Eden. Turning every eleven seconds [23: p.126], its presence is felt in The Garden [17], preceding close-ups of rusted spiked gardening tools and of a dishevelled Derek Jarman, emphasising its effect on the ‘decaying’ of his own health.

**SHADOW (Perceptual Cartographies)**

‘Shadow is the Queen of colour.’ [15: p.23]

Much like the cyanotypes collected from Skyspace at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the artefacts that I produced from Prospect Cottage record an experience of the architecture and landscape through a process of flattening. Created using various software, [39; 40; 41; 42; 43] the two-dimensional rendering of the three-dimensional Skyspace is contrasted in the pieces from Dungeness by three-dimensional explorations of a four-dimensional space, where time plays an important role. In reproducing these moments, a holistic understanding of the perceived space is achieved: ‘We cannot understand an object “as it is” because the way we perceive affects what we perceive’ [6: p.147]. As with Mike Webb’s Temple Island, these objects serve as miniature memorials to the atmosphere or weather of the specific time and place in Jarman’s garden. By introducing the third-dimension, the weather experienced by the space forms an integral part, with the sky and clouds being pulled down into garden and captured. Figure 36 shows a view from the rear garden towards Prospect Cottage, shown again in plan in Figure 37, with the white ‘shadows’ cast.

*Figure 36: Point Cloud: view over rear garden to Prospect Cottage, 25 seconds, distant clouds, bright, dry, 11°C [Courtesy of the author]*.
Figure 37: Point Cloud plan [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 38: Point Cloud: view from rear garden, 20 seconds, heavy, fast moving clouds, dull, dry, 10°C [Courtesy of the author].
in the observer’s foreground becoming gaps within their perceived view. Thus, the actual image is one from the viewpoint of an architectural projection, in isometric, following Webb’s explanation of one of his images:

‘I have drawn it as if there is an observer up in the sky – who is looking down at what someone standing here is seeing, and only seeing what the person here [on the ground] sees … so there is a white shadow behind.’ [44]

Prospect Cottage and its garden are then represented in further point-cloud mapping (Figure 38) and through the generation of surfaces from the photometric scans. Figure 39 shows the same viewing period but are generated through the use of ‘Delaunay triangulation’ [45], which takes account of a further base-plane from which to extrude the surfaces. Also represented in models shown in Figures 40–43, the results are cartographic representations of the place, including ‘canyons’ and ‘shadows’ of lost and unknown information, with the element of time as duration also inherent within them.

**Figure 39:** Axonometric of Delaunay mesh with base plane on ground plane: view over rear garden towards Prospect Cottage, 25 seconds, distant clouds, bright, dry, 11°C; Axonometric of Delaunay mesh with base plane perpendicular to viewing plane: view over rear garden towards cottage, 25 seconds, distant clouds, bright, dry, 11°C [Courtesy of the author].
Figure 40: Photograph of 3D-printed perceptual cartography model. The details within the landscape facing the viewer are sharp, whereas the ‘white shadows’ in the perceived view have lost resolution and become softer [Courtesy of the author].

Figure 41: Photograph of 3D-printed perceptual cartography model. The clouds and atmospheric disturbances are articulated into invasive spatial forms which affect the view of Prospect Cottage [Courtesy of the author].
**Figure 42:** Photograph of 3D-printed perceptual cartography models as placed on a lightbox show the changing density of solidified weather [Courtesy of the author].

**Figure 43:** Photograph of 3D-printed perceptual cartography model. When atmospheric conditions are more transient, their effect is greater, in some cases connecting to and covering the architecture [Courtesy of the author].
ATMOSPHERE (Conclusion)
Through investigations of James Turrell, Mike Webb and Yves Klein, this essay describes the spatial implications of architectural devices involving light. Just as weather will blemish concrete, studies were carried out into how light can be recorded as it leaves a permanent mark of decay over time – a key theme of architectural phenomenology.

Yet above all, by analysing Prospect Cottage Garden through Derek Jarman’s films, paintings and writings, a stronger understanding of the interconnectedness of his work can be seen (Figure 44). Research into the garden’s formal composition and its relationship to celestial time, electromagnetic weather and nuclear decay are all important in gleaning insights into the continuing effect the space has on the many who make pilgrimage to it. While Jarman’s lifelong preoccupation with protest, lyricism and colour still influence creative practitioners, it is important to link these values to his choices for the garden and the reasons why he purchased this plot for his ‘Anti-Eden’.

In employing perceptual cartographies (Figure 45), this essay also raises potentials for the combination of art, science and computational methods within architectural discourse; without such broad techniques, which are typical of design research, the interrelation between the various case-studies would have been lost. Turrell’s Skyspace aperture, International Klein Blue, and the blue colours depicted in Blue each informed my representations of the sky in the point-cloud drawings and models derived from them. Just as Klein wished his viewers, whom he referred to as ‘lecteurs’, (readers) to be soaked or saturated with ‘raw matter’ [46], so as to make them conceive their own series of images from an artwork, the drawings and models of Prospect Cottage created here are attempts to provoke questions, with the author and reader together becoming creative author-readers who construct different aspects of Jarman’s garden [6: p.149].

Figure 44: Skyspace, Yorkshire Sculpture Park/ IKB/ Blue perceptual artefact drawing 003 [Courtesy of the author].
From such analysis the idea of permanence – as a standstill in time – can be interpreted in different ways. The more constant light in a Turrell installation, devoid of any natural, and thus decaying, elements, offers one obvious display; however, the opposing space in Jarman’s garden can equally evoke similar effects for viewers. The cycle of growth and decay on the English periphery of Dungeness clearly empowered Derek Jarman.

Some argue that the relationship between the hopelessness of his illness and the battle against the odds to keep his garden in bloom was no coincidence, but rather a lived metaphor for the struggle at the end of his life. Much like the way in which radioactive substances degrade, rapidly at first, but then lasting long into seeming-infinity, his garden kept him alive during the ‘Last of England’.

At core, this essay raises questions about the nature of architecture. It proposes that the ‘architecture of the mind’ is just as relevant as, if not more so than, the physical building. In turn, this realisation requires disparate fields to come together to inform sufficiently broad design approaches. It relies upon the ability of each observer/occupant, or lecteur, to conceive their own architecture, after perceiving representations of a particular place and moment through light and motion. This essay thus argues that architecture should be regarded as a holistic pursuit through which diverse ways of seeing are translated into methods of inhabitation. It calls for designs in which emotional responses, induced by light, will leave traces of the spaces upon the individuals who visit them, creating a temporally sensitive and deeply experiential architecture of perception.

**Competing Interests**
The author has no competing interests to declare.

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